Valentin Naumescu
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Diana Petruț

(Editors)

THE EU AND NATO APPROACHES TO THE BLACK SEA REGION

Proceedings of the second edition of the international conference

*The European Union's External Relations
and the Perspectives of the Global Order (EUXGLOB)*

Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of European Studies
May 5-6, 2022

2/2022

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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Table of Contents

Editors' Note and Acknowledgements

The present volume brings together some of the contributions presented at the second edition of the annual EUXGLOB international conference held in Cluj-Napoca on May 5-6, 2022. The topic of this year's conference, which is already becoming a prestigious academic tradition, was **The EU and NATO Approaches to the Black Sea Region** and the event was held against the background of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which had begun only two months earlier. Discussions about the implications of this war took centre stage during the debates and highlighted the precarious security environment of the Black Sea region and the vulnerabilities it faces during these difficult and uncertain times.

The conference was organised by the EUXGLOB Centre of the Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University as a two-day hybrid event, bringing together 70 academics, researchers, policymakers and specialists who presented their contributions across 11 panels. The conference concluded with a high-level roundtable debate organised jointly with the Initiative for European Democratic Culture think tank on the topic of *The European and Global Order after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine*. The closing of the event was marked by the launching of the online Platform for Regional and Black Sea Security Studies (www.euxglob.ro), designed as a forum for discussions, debates, exchanges of ideas on topics of regional and international interest reuniting specialists in various fields (international relations, security, strategy, energy, etc.) from countries such as Romania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia and Bulgaria.

The conference participants were welcomed by the Rector of Babeș-Bolyai University, Professor Daniel David, as well as by the Dean of the Faculty of European Studies, Associate professor Adrian Corpădean and the Director of the Centre for International Cooperation of BBU, Professor Sergiu Mișcoiu. Mr. David Muniz, Chargé d'affaires, a.i., US Embassy Bucharest,

also delivered a few poignant opening remarks. The keynote speakers of the second EUXGLOB conference included **Ms. Burcu San**, Director of NATO Operations Division, **Professor Aurel Braun** from the University of Toronto and the Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies of Harvard University, **Dr. Jamie Shea**, Visiting Professor at Exeter University and Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at NATO, **Dr. Tom Casier**, Jean Monnet Chair, Director Global Europe Centre, and Associate Professor Corneliu Bjola from Oxford University.

The conference works, held in a hybrid format (online and onsite), provided a great opportunity for debates, networking, analyses and discussions regarding the current international and regional context, making for a very successful and enjoyable event organised soon after the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted.

This volume includes 32 contributions based on the conference presentations delivered by the participants, grouped into four parts: keynote speeches, war and security issues in the Black Sea area, regional politics, economy, energy, cultures and society in the Black Sea area and student contributions. Inside the sections, the chapters are arranged alphabetically by the authors' last names. We hope that these chapters, most of which deal with the many facets and implications of the Russia-Ukraine war, will serve as useful instruments in understanding the causes and consequences of this major event affecting the international order and the world we are living in.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the **Black Sea Trust** and the **European Union**, whose generous financial contribution made possible the organisation of the conference, the creation of the online Platform and the printing of this volume. We are extremely thankful for their continued support, and we hope our excellent collaboration will continue in the future.

We are already planning the next edition of the EUXGLOB international conference, to be held in Cluj-Napoca in 2023, and we are confident it will be yet another successful event in a series that is already becoming a cherished academic tradition.

Valentin Naumescu, Raluca Moldovan, Diana Petruț
Editors

November 7, 2022

EUXGLOB II
International Conference Programme

Facultatea de Studii Europene

Str. Emmanuel de Martonne nr. 1, 400090 Cluj-Napoca
Tel.: 0264-593770; Fax: 0264-590251
Email: euro@euro.ubbcluj.ro; Web: euro.ubbcluj.ro

The annual international conference of the Centre for the Study of the EU's External Relations and the Global Order – EUXGLOB

Second Edition

The EU and NATO Approaches to the Black Sea Region

(Hybrid format)

May 5-6, 2022

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2022

- 18.30 – 20.30 *Welcome Dinner* at the Pyramid Restaurant of Babeș-Bolyai University.

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THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022

- 9.00 – 9.30 *Registration of participants* (Faculty of European Studies, 2nd floor, outside Room Schuman).

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Plenary session (Robert Schuman Room)

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1S GFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

- 9.30 - 9.35 *Welcome Address and Opening of the EUXGLOB II*, Prof. **Daniel David**, Rector of Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 9.35 - 9.40 *Opening Remarks,* **Mr. David Muniz**, Chargé d'affaires, a.i., US Embassy Bucharest.
- 9.40 – 9.45 *Developing International Cooperation at BBU*, Prof. **Sergiu Mișcoiu**, Director of the Centre for International Cooperation of BBU.
- 9.45 - 9.50 *Introductory Remarks on Behalf of the Faculty of European Studies*, Assoc. Prof. **Adrian Gabriel Corpădean**, Dean of the Faculty of European Studies.

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9.50 Panel 1 (Room Schuman) *Introduction to the first panel, plenary format*

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE 1SGFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

Chair: Prof. **Valentin Naumescu**, Director of the EUXGLOB Centre, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University

- 9.50 – 10.05 *NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture and the Black Sea Region*, **Ms. Burcu San, Director** of NATO Operations Division.
- 10.05 - 10.20 *NATO and the Imperatives of Geopolitical Security in the Black Sea Region*, **keynote speaker Prof. Aurel Braun**, Professor of International Relations and Political Science, University of Toronto, and Associate at Davis Centre Harvard University.

- 10.20 – 10.35 *Orange Code of Geopolitical Competition: Romania and the Global Realignment*, **Iulian Fota,** Secretary of State for Strategic Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania.

- 10.35 – 10.50 *Western Policy Balancing between Russia and China*, **keynote speaker Dr. Jamie Shea**, former NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Emerging Security Challenges.

- 10.50 – 11.05 *The Power Game between Russia and the West: The Role of Uncertainty*, **keynote speaker Dr. Tom Casier**, Jean Monnet Chair, Director Global Europe Centre.

- 11.05 – 11.20 *Artificial Intelligence and Crisis Management: The Case of the Black Sea Region,* **keynote speaker Prof. Corneliu Bjola**, Associate Professor of Diplomatic Studies, University of Oxford.

- 11.20 – 11.40 Questions & answers.

- 11.40 – 12.00 Coffee break.

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Panel 2 (Robert Schuman Room)

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1S GFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

Chair: Assoc. Professor **Raluca Moldovan,** Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University

- 12.00 – 12.15 *Black Sea Geopolitical Echoes and the World Power Distribution*, Assoc. Professor **Silviu Nate**, Global Studies Centre, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu.

- 12.15 – 12.30 *The Consequences and Perspectives of the Russian War against the West in the Black Sea Region,* Professor **Valentin Naumescu**, Director of the EUXGLOB Centre, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj.

- 12.30 – 12.45 *Restraint! The Security Implications of Paradigmatic Shifts in American Foreign Policy,* **Marius Ghincea,** Senior Teaching Assistant at Johns Hopkins University Bologna and researcher at European University Institute (EUI) in Florence.

- 12.45 – 13.00 *The Challenges of the EU's Strategic Autonomy. Can Europe Live up to Expectations in Its Immediate Neighbourhood?* Assoc. Prof. **Georgiana Ciceo**, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.

- 13.00 – 13.30 Questions and answers.

*

Panel 3 (Institute of International Relations and Area Studies IIRAS)

Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/4214494897?pwd=bTg3eEkxU3lKNitxNHlYa0liaVdVUT09

Chair: Senior Researcher Dr. **Oana Poiană**, the Institute for International Relations and Area Studies, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj

- 12.00 – 12.15 *Why Don't We Have Energy Cooperation in the Black Sea Region?*, **Cristian-Dan Tătaru** – FEL Romania, Intelligent Energy Association, adviser for the Washington D.C. Eurasia Energy Chamber.
- 12.15 – 12.30 *The Energy Policy of Unrecognized States in the Wider Black Sea Region*, **Isac Mihai**, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Geopolitics and East-European Social and Cultural Interferences MA, Karadeniz Press.
- 12.30 – 12.45 *Biomass Energy in a Black Sea Region Country such as Armenia*, **Satenik Shahbazyan** – Attorney at Law "Aratta Counsulting'' LLC, Legal advisor at "Electric Networks of Armenia" Closed Joint-Stock Company (CJSC).
- 12.45 – 13.00 *SMR and NLG, an American Response to the Russian Gas Weaponisation in the Black Sea Region*, **Cristian Bordei** – Senator, Senate of Romania, and researcher PhD candidate.
- 13.00 – 13.15 *The Shift from Reactive to Proactive. Black Sea Energy Insecurity and Regional Power Redistribution after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine*, **Dr. Oana Poiană** – Senior researcher, Institute of International Relations and Area Studies, Faculty of European Studies, UBB.
- 13.15 – 13.30 Questions and answers.

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- **13.30 – 14.30 Lunch (the Pyramid Restaurant of BBU).**

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Panel 4 (R. Schuman)

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1S GFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

Chair: Senior Lecturer PhD **Kateryna Shynkaruk**, National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy

- 14.30 – 14.45 *Russian Invasion in Ukraine: a Game-Changer for the Black Sea Region*, **Sergiy Gerasymchuk**, Deputy Executive Director at Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism".
- 14.45 – 15.00 *US-Russia Negotiations and the EU's Interest*, Assoc. Prof. **Gabriela Ciot**, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj.

- 15.00 – 15.15 *Nuclear Security in the Black Sea Region: Contested Spaces and Security Challenges*, Dr. **Ioana Constantin-Bercean**, Researcher at "Ion I.C. Brătianu" Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest.

- 15.15 – 15.30, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Making Sense of the New Security Reality*, **Kateryna Shynkaruk**, Senior Lecturer, National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy.

- 15.30 – 15.45 *The War in Ukraine as a Factor in Creating a New Collective Security System in Europe*, **Dr. Oleksandr Rusnak**, Assistant Professor, Department of History of Ukraine, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University.

- 15.45 – 16.00 *Doctrinal Aspects Regarding Russia's Cyber Actions*, Professor **Ion Roceanu**, "Carol I" National Defence University Bucharest.

- 16.00 – 16.30 Questions and answers.

- 16.30 – 17.00 Coffee break.

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Panel 5 (IIRAS)

Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/4214494897?pwd=bTg3eEkxU3lKNitxNHlYa0liaVdVUT09

Chair: **Diana Petruț**, researcher PhD candidate, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj

- 14.30 – 14.45 *EU's Route towards Geopolitical Resilience: A Comparison between EU and NATO's Response towards Russia's Foreign Policy in 2014 and 2022*, **Tana Foarfă**, counselor at the European Parliament and researcher PhD candidate, "European Paradigm" Doctoral School, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.

- 14.45 – 15.00 *Misperceptions and Imperial Dreams. The Role Played by Subsystemic Factors in Russia's Decision-makers Misevaluations Leading up to the Ukraine Invasion*, **Ştefan-Ioan Cianga**, MA in International Relation Foreign Policy and Crisis Management, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj.

- 15.00 – 15.15 *Increasing the Effectiveness, Visibility and Impact of the Security Policy Promoted by Romania in the Black Sea Region*, **Bogdan-Constantin Pagnejer**, researcher PhD candidate, Carol I National Defence University Bucharest.

- *Implications of NATO's Transformation Process on Romania's National Security* **Mircea Chiriac Dănuț & Floris-Adrian Ionescu**, Professor, respectively researcher PhD candidate at Carol I National Defence University Bucharest.

- 15.30 – 15.45 *The Black Sea-Pivot Between East and West*, **Iulian Paladic** – MA student, Development, International Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, SNSPA, Bucharest.
- 15.45 – 16.00 *The Big Bully: Russia's Aggressive Foreign Policy towards Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia*, **Diana-Nicoleta Petruț**, researcher PhD candidate, "European Paradigm" Doctoral School, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 16.00 – 16.30 Questions and answers.
- 16.30 – 17.00 Coffee break.

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Panel 6 (R. Schuman Room)

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1S GFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

Chair: **Dr. Dorin Popescu**, President of the Black Sea House Association Constanța, former diplomat in the Romanian MFA

- 17.00 – 17.15 *The Ongoing Crisis in the Black Sea Region: When the Quest for Values Becomes a Matter of Life and Death*, Professor **Silviu Rogobete**, West University of Timișoara.
- 17.15 – 17.30 *The Silent Conflict of the Black Sea Region: Disputes over Canonical Jurisdiction after the Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine*, Professor **Radu Carp**, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest.
- 17.30 – 17.45 *The Identity Crisis in Ukraine and the Process of Forming the Ukrainian Identity*, **Valentin Constantinov**, Researcher at the History Institute of Moldova, and Professor at Tiraspol State University.
- 17.45 – 18.00 *Remembering the Diversity of the Black Sea Region*, **Yevhen Mahda**, Associate professor at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute.
- 18.00 – 18.15 *The Russian Federation – Power and Identity in the Black Sea Region*, **Pașcu Cătălina-Laura**, Post-doctoral researcher, Doctoral School of Philosophy and Social-Political Science, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași.
- 18.15 – 18.30 *Europa Christiana – The Geopolitical Role of The Orthodox Church in The Black Sea Region*, **Done Cătălin-Gabriel** – researcher PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science of University of Naples "Federico II".
- 18.30 – 19.00 Questions and answers.

*

Panel 7 (IIRAS)

Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/4214494897?pwd=bTg3eEkxU3lKNitxNHlYa0liaVd VUT09

Chair: Lecturer PhD **Ovidiu Vaida**, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj

- 17.00 – 17.15 *Bird on the Wire: The Russia-Ukraine War and Turkey's (New) Balancing Act*, **Raluca Moldovan**, Associate Professor, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 17.15 – 17.30 *China's Policy vis-a-vis the Countries of the Black Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative*, **Ana Pantea**, Lecturer, Head of the International Relations and German Studies Department, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 17.30 – 17.45 *Turkey's Role as a Mediator and Enabler in the Regional Wars*, **Florina Caloianu,** MA student in International Relations, Foreign Policy and Crisis Management, Faculty of European Studies.
- 17.45 – 18.00 *Europeanization and Turkey's Changing Foreign Policy Roles in the Black Sea,* **Ahmet Cemal Ertürk & Seyyide Sena Türkdoğan** – Istanbul Kultur University, Department of International Relations.
- 18.00 – 18.15 *The History of Cultural Minorities from Turkey*, **Nicoleta Şchiop**, researcher PhD candidate, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 18.15 – 18.45 Questions and answers.

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19.00 – 20.30 Cocktail (the Pyramid Restaurant)

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FRIDAY, 6 MAY 2022

Panel 8 (R. Schuman Room)

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1S GFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

Chair: Professor **Sergiu Mișcoiu**, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj. Discussant: Mr. **Vladimir Mitev**, Co-Founder of Cross-Border Talks.

- 9.00 – 9.15 *From National Populists to Citizen's Populists. Populisms or the "Business as Usual" in Bulgarian Politics*, **Petia Gueorguieva** - Sen. Assist. Prof. Ph.D., New Bulgarian University.

- 9.15 – 9.30 *A Typology of Populism in the Republic of Moldova*, **Vincent Henry** - Université Paris Est Créteil.

- 9.30 – 9.45 *Populism as a Recipe for Success: A Case Study of Presidential and Parliamentary Campaign in Ukraine in 2004-2019*, **Maryana Prokop** – Adjunct, Jan Kochanowski University Kielce.

- 9.45 – 10.00 *The Return of Far-right Populism in Romania. A.U.R. – An Offspring of the Pandemic?*, **Sergiu Mișcoiu** - Professor, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.

- 10.00 – 10.15 *Populism as Policy Practice: The Case of Turkish Foreign Policy Practice*, **Toygar Sinan Baykan** - Assistant professor of Politics at Kirklareli University, Turkey.

- 10.15 – 10.30 *Public Opinion and Support for the Euro-Atlantic Organisations in the Bucharest Nine Member States*, **Ovidiu Vaida**, Lecturer PhD at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj.

- 10.30 – 11.00 Questions and answers.

- 11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break.

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Panel 9 (IIRAS)

Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/4214494897?pwd=bTg3eEkxU3lKNitxNHlYa0liaVdVUT09

Chair: Dr. **Ioana Constantin Bercean**, researcher at the Institute for Political Science and International Relations of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest

- 9.00 – 9.15 *Security Dilemma for Georgia amid the Russian-Ukrainian War*, **Khatuna Chapichadze** - Associate Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Engineering Economics, Media Technologies and Social Sciences, Georgian Technical University (GTU), Tbilisi, Georgia; Adjunct Faculty Member, Department of Political Science, San Diego State University (SDSU).

- 9.15 – 9.30 *The Implications of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine for UN's Legitimacy*, **Georgiana-Despina Popescu**, researcher PhD candidate, "European Paradigm" Doctoral School, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.

- 9.30 – 9.45 *The Reincarnation of the Cold War in Cyberspace? Perspectives on the Great Powers' Battle of Words in the Context of the Ukraine War*, **Maria-Georgiana Roman** researcher PhD student, Faculty of European Studies, Babes-Bolyai University.

- 9.45 – 10.00 *Considerations on Historical West-East Bipolarity: Cold War 2.0*, **Floris-Adrian Ionescu**, researcher PhD candidate, "CAROL I" National Defence University Bucharest.
- 10.00 – 10.15 *Implications of Defence Management on National Objectives*, **Simona-Daniela Bordea**, researcher PhD candidate, Carol I National Defence University Bucharest.
- 10.15 – 10.30 *The Geopolitics of Crimea: Thalassocratic Ambitions of a Continental Power*, **Bogdan Adrian Ionuț**, BA student, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 10.30 – 11.00 Questions and answers.
- 11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break.

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Panel 10 (R. Schuman)

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1S GFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

Chair: Professor **Silviu Rogobete**, West University of Timișoara

- 11.45 – 12.00 *The Black Sea Region as a Zone of Irreconcilable Strategic Interests*, Dr. **Natalia Stercul**, Program Director, Department Eastern Studies: Ukraine and Russia, Foreign Policy Association of the Republic of Moldova.
- 12.00-12.15 *Did Russia Lose Influence in Black Sea Region? Great Powers Competition in the Regional Security Complex*, **Adrian Pogăcian,** Chairman of ReThinking Europe.
- 12.15 – 12.30 *The Black Sea: Another Battleground in the East-West Divide*, **Andrei-Ștefan Enghiș**, policy officer at the European Commission and researcher PhD candidate, European Paradigm Doctoral School, Faculty of European Studies BBU, and European Commission.
- 12.30 – 12.45 *The Hybrid Design of the New World Order: A Black Sea View*, **Dr. Dorin Popescu**, President, Black Sea House Association, Constanța, Romania.
- 12.45 – 13.00 *Great Britain's Interest in the Black Sea and the Eastern Flank in the Post-Brexit Age,* **Marius-Mircea Mitrache**, Associated Professor PhD at Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 13.00 – 13.15 *Romanian Naval Forces, 160 Years of Excellence in the Maritime Domain. The Contribution of the Romanian Naval Forces to Ensuring Stability and Security in the Extended Region of the Black Sea*, **Counter Admiral Mihai Panait**, Head of the Romanian Navy Chiefs of Staff.
- 13.15 – 13.45 Questions and answers.

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Panel 11 (IIRAS)

Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/4214494897?pwd=bTg3eEkxU3lKNitxNHlYa0liaVdVUT09

Chair: **Oana Poiană**, senior researcher, IIRAS, Faculty of European Studies, BBU

- 11.30 – 11.45 *Gender Dimension of Migration from Moldova: The Case of Gagauzia*, **Mihaela Șerpi**, MA student in International Relations, Foreign Policy and Crisis Management, Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of European Studies.
- 11.45 – 12.00 *The Dynamics of Challenges to the Energy Security Sector in European Union Following the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, **Ioana Vancea,** researcher PhD candidate, European Paradigm Doctoral School, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University.
- 12.00-12.15 *Cultural Heritage Shaping Nowadays Identities*, **Iosefina Blazsani-Batto**, researcher PhD candidate, European Paradigm Doctoral School, Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj, and Lecturer of Romanian Language and Civilization at Azerbaijan University of Languages in Baku.
- 12.15 – 12.30 *The Challenges to Global Governance and EU External Action: A Path towards a Climate Diplomacy*, **Diana-Cristina Moiș**, MA student, College of Europe.
- 12.30 – 12.45 *Anti-access and Area Denial Military Structures, Destabilisation Factors in the Extended Black Sea Region*, **Andrei Mazere**, researcher PhD candidate at CAROL I National Defence University Bucharest.
- 12.45 – 13.00 *The Fate of the Black Sea Region Security in a Cold War 2.0 Era*, **Dr. Alexandru Lăzescu**, Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, "Al. I Cuza" University Iași.
- 13.00 – 13.30 Questions and answers.

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- **13.45 – 15.45 Lunch (Pyramid Restaurant).**

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- **16.00 – 18.00 (R. Schuman).**

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1SGFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09

Round table discussion with experts from the EUXGLOB Centre and the think tank ICDE (Initiative for European Democratic Culture) – *The European and Global Order after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine.*

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- **18.00 – 18.30 (R. Schuman)**

Zoom link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88673490882?pwd=UzROUHdZb2pBbUE1S GFOSGU5MnQ5Zz09.

Launch of the *Platform for Regional and Black Sea Security Studies* (www.euxglob.ro).

Closing remarks for EUXGLOB II.

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- **18.30 – 20.00 Farewell Dinner (Pyramid).**

Part One

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Artificial Intelligence and Diplomatic Crisis Management: Addressing the "Fog of War" Problem

CORNELIU BJOLA

Abstract. Artificial Intelligence promises to revolutionize the way in which international crises are anticipated, understood, and managed. Specifically, AI systems could provide assistance to diplomats and decision-makers in times of crisis by helping them make sense of what it is happening (descriptive analytics), chart possible trends or patterns of evolution of the crisis (predictive analytics) and assess the validity of the response strategies (prescriptive analytics). What is less known, however, is how these models could work in practice and the conditions that AI models need to meet in order to deliver results. Drawing on the case of the international crisis generated by the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, the study advances a framework for applying AI to crisis management and discuss the opportunities and challenges of integrating AI in diplomatic decision making.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, diplomatic crisis, Russia-Ukraine war, fog of war.

Introduction

The term "artificial intelligence" (AI) was first coined by an American computer scientist, John McCarthy, in 1956, who defined AI as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs."[1] While the quest for Artificial Intelligence has travelled through multiple "seasons of hope and despair" in the past

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[1] John McCarthy, "What Is AI?/Basic Questions," 2011, http://jmc.stanford.edu/artificial-intelligence/what-is-ai/index.html.

decades,[2] there is a growing consensus that the current stage of AI development is qualitatively different. Owing to the fast-paced development of complex machine and deep learning algorithms, AI applications have now reached the point at which they can learn on their own using statistical models and neural-like networks without being explicitly programmed.[3] AI disruption could therefore have a strong impact on crisis management, especially since digital platforms have emerged as critical tools for assisting decision-makers manage crises in the digital age. They already help embassies and MFAs make sense of the nature and gravity of the events in real-time, streamline the decision-making process, manage public expectations, and facilitate crisis termination.[4] At the same time, they need to be used with great care as factual inaccuracies, coordination gaps, mismatched disclosure levels, and poor signalling practices could easily derail digital efforts of crisis management.[5]

As discussed in more detail elsewhere,[6] AI systems could aid diplomats in times of crisis by helping them make sense of what it is happening (descriptive analytics), identify possible trajectories of the evolution of the crisis (predictive analytics), and prescribe possible response strategies (prescriptive analytics). AI has been already hailed as a possible solution for forecasting geopolitical events,[7] predicting outbursts of violence

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[2] Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*, 1st edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6-11.

[3] Harry Collins, "The Science of Artificial Intelligence and Its Critics," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 46, no. 1–2 (2021): 53–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2020.1840821.

[4] Corneliu Bjola & Michaela Coplen, "Digital Diplomacy In the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Lessons and Recommendations," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Diplomatic Reform and Innovation*, edited by Paul Webster Hare, Juan Luis Manfredi-Sánchez & Kenneth Weisbrode (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[5] Corneliu Bjola, "How Should Governments Respond to Disasters in the Digital Age?," The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), September 11, 2017, https://rusi.org/commentary/how-should-governments-respond-disasters-digital-age.

[6] This section draws on a more comprehensive examination of AI applications to diplomacy that can be found in Corneliu Bjola, "Diplomacy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," EDA Working Paper, January 2022, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52c8df77e4b0d4d2bd039977/t/5e3a9a45d29b7f336bbda061/1580898895236/EDA+Working+Paper_Artificial+Intelligence_EN+copy.pdf, 28.

[7] Fred Morstatter et al., "SAGE: A Hybrid Geopolitical Event Forecasting System," IJCAI International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence, 2019, 6557–59, https://doi.org/10.24963/ijcai.2019/955.

and probing their causes[8] or for improving strategic intelligence assessments regarding the use of coercive and non-coercive tactics in complex social circumstances.[9] The main challenge for AI is the semi-structured nature of the decisions to be taken. Given the high level of uncertainty in which crisis decision-making operates and the inevitable scrutiny and demand of accountability to occur if something goes wrong, AI integration can only work if humans retain some level of control over the process. As a SIPRI study points out, AI systems may spectacularly fail when confronted with tasks or environments that differ slightly to those they were trained for. AI algorithms are also opaque, which often makes difficult for humans to explain how they work and whether they mask inbuilt biases that could lead to problematic—if not dangerous—behaviours.[10]

Building on this literature, this paper seeks to advance the debate about the opportunities that AI can generate for diplomatic decision making in times of crisis by theorising about the challenges that diplomats face in times of crisis and developing a prototype model for understanding how unfolding crises can be monitored, analysed, and responded in real time. To this end, the paper will first explain the uncertainty challenge facing decision makers in times of crisis, then introduce the AI prototype model that may help address the said challenge and conclude with a short discussion of the advantages and limitations of the model.

The "Fog of War" Problem

How do Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) handle uncertainty in times of crisis? We know from the classical literature on crisis management[11]

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[8] Weisi Guo, Kristian Gleditsch & Alan Wilson, "Retool AI to Forecast and Limit Wars," *Nature* 562, no. 7727 (October 2018): 331–33, https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-018-07026-4.

[9] Aaron Frank, "Computational Social Science and Intelligence Analysis," *Intelligence and National Security* 32, no. 5 (May 2017): 579–99, https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2017.1310968.

[10] Vincent Boulanin (ed.), *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk*, vol. 1, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI, May 2019, https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/other-publications/impact-artificial-intelligence-strategic-stability-and-nuclear-risk

[11] Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of*

that uncertainty is a critical challenge that decision makers experience in times of crisis. The issue is, of course, hardly new. In his *magnus opus On War*,[12] Clausewitz actually proposed two terms for describing the problem of uncertainty: the "fog of war" and "friction." The first term, *the fog of war*, refers to the diminished level of accuracy and reliability of the information exchanged in times of war and the difficulties encountered by political and military leaders when seeking to compensate for this limitation and maximize the value of the data used for taking decisions. According to Clausewitz, "three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty."[13] For example, the series of incidents taking place in Transnistria, the breakaway territory in Moldova bordering on Ukraine and controlled by Russia, have raised fears that the Ukraine conflict may be spreading.[14] The lack of accurate information about the intention and capability of the parties involved is a good illustration of the "fog of war" problem.

Friction, on the other hand, refers to the interaction of chance and action and can be caused by many factors, including enemy forces, friendly actions, or the environment. For Clausewitz, friction differentiates "real war from war on paper," those surprising things that happen during wartime that make even the "simplest thing difficult."[15] One may think that the surprising impact of new weapons (e.g., drones), the arrival of a natural disaster or pandemic, or unforeseen political events may fall in this category. The two terms, the fog of war and friction, offer us different perspectives on how to reflect on the problem of uncertainty in times of crisis and encourages us to pay closer attention to the distinction between what is relatively controllable (given the quality and amount of available information) and

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Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascos (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[12] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[13] Clausewitz, *On War*, 101.

[14] Laurence Peter, "Transnistria and Ukraine Conflict: Is War Spreading?," BBC News, April 27, 2022, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-61233095.

[15] Clausewitz, *On War*, 119.

what is less manageable (chance or unexpected events, which are harder to predict). In Clausewitz terms we might be able to handle the fog of war by making it less "foggy," but it would be difficult if not impossible to avoid friction as the future is hardly predictable regardless of how much high-quality information we may manage to acquire.

It is important to note, at this point, that the goal of this paper is not to examine how military commanders or MoDs handle uncertainty, but how diplomats and MFAs cope with it. The distinction is important. MoDs are primarily interested in wining military campaigns, and they use lethal forces to achieve that. The military needs accurate and reliable information because it seeks to maximise the level of damage and casualty that they can inflict upon the enemy, and to minimize both onto themselves. MFAs, on the other hand, are interested in building coalitions to minimize the overall costs of the conflict (economic, military, political, reputational) and they use diplomatic instruments to achieve that (bilateral and multilateral engagement, strategic communication, international law). Different goals, different means, and by extension, different approaches to managing the "fog of war."

That being said, how does the issue of the "fog of war" apply to international crises from a diplomatic perspective? The answer revolves around the idea of signals that MFAs send and receive from one another. More specifically, MFAs are interested in understanding how other governments position themselves on key aspects informing and shaping the collective management of the crisis (e.g., international sanctions, military assistance, UN resolutions, peace negotiations), how robust their commitment to these positions is (any weak links?), and under what conditions their positions are likely to change. To this end, MFAs rely on their extensive networks of embassies and specialized departments to gather and analyse relevant information to assist them in their decision making. The capacity to collect and read signals is definitely important, but MFAs' ability to reduce the uncertainty induced by the "fog of war" also depends on how well the signals are communicated by other parties and how free from interference they circulate through the network of formal and informal channels of communication that parties used in times of crisis.

According to signalling theory (ST), some of the signals that parties send to each other in times of conflict are easier to decipher. To project their

resolve, intentions, and/or capabilities, parties may try to indicate that they are prepared to incur higher costs (ex-ante and ex-post) in order to reach their objectives.[16] For example, as its military aggression against Ukraine has started to falter, Russia has insisted that it will be able to achieve its political objectives regardless of how high the military and economic costs the war may prove to be. At the same time, one should also bear in mind that parties do not always have a clear and consistent idea of the signals they would like to broadcast, and these signals may constantly evolve in line with the trajectory of the crisis (see, for example, Germany's conflicting positions about supporting delivery of weapons to Ukraine). Parties may also try to send signals not to demonstrate resolve but to confuse others about their intentions (see, for instance, Russian officials' statements before the start of the war in Ukraine falsely claiming that no invasion was planned). In addition, the receiver may have reason to doubt the signal received or may not have the capacity to read it properly. In short, the "fog of war" is a dynamic process influenced by a combination of factors pertaining to the clarity of the signals sent, the credibility of the message and the messenger, the suitability of the communication channels used for the exchange, as well the ability of the receiver to decipher, interpret and react to the message received.

AI Modelling and Crisis Management

The argument advanced in this paper is that AI can help MFA cope with the "fog of war" by adjusting the impact of the factors that contribute to reducing vs increasing uncertainty in times of crisis. Drawing on the typology used in data analytics to distinguish between descriptive, predictive and prescriptive models,[17] the paper advances a conceptual model

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[16] Erik A. Gartzke, Shannon Carcelli, J. Andres Gannon, Jiakun Jack Zhang, "Signalling in Foreign Policy," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.481.

[17] Katerina Lepenioti, Alexandros Bousdekis, Dimitris Apostolou & Gregoris Mentzas, "Prescriptive Analytics: Literature Review and Research Challenges," *International Journal of Information Management* 50 (February 2020): 57–70, https://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJINFOMGT.2019.04.003.

for integrating AI into crisis decision-making based on three components as shown in Fig. 1:
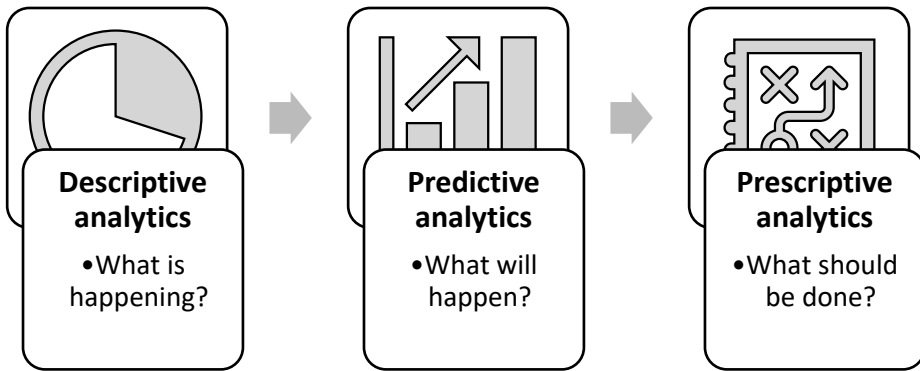
Fig. 1. Data Analytics: The Descriptive - Predictive - Prescriptive Model

The first component, *descriptive analytics*, involves contextual mapping and the extraction of relevant information that can provide an accurate picture of the nature of the problem. The key question this component seeks to answer is what is happening? In the context of a crisis, MFAs are interested in detecting patterns that may indicate a potential challenge or opportunity for managing the crisis. Recalling the case of the war in Ukraine, questions that MFAs may ask could refer to how the positions of the parties involved in the conflict and of their key supporters evolve in real time? What aspects do they prioritize? How well these positions align or diverge from each other? The second component, *predictive analytics*, is about forecasting possible courses of action and their possible implications by testing and validating certain assumptions about the nature and the cause of the problem (what will happen?). How the positions of the parties involved in the crisis may evolve in view of the changing circumstances? Will country X likely support the EU ban on Russian oil and gas? If so, under what conditions? The last component, *prescriptive analytics*, encourages decision makers to integrate the information gathered in the previous steps and use the result to determine the best course of action to be taken (what should be done?). What implications the course A vs course B of action will have for the MFA's relations with others? Shall country X take the lead of international efforts aiming to lift the Russian blockade of Ukraine

grain in the Black Sea? How may such a decision affect the diplomatic unity among EU or NATO members?

All three components can be processed, of course, with no AI assistance. In fact, MFAs should be able to conduct such analysis in times of crises, and they have doing so on a regular basis, using in-house and commissioned expertise. What AI can presumably add to this is real-time insight and a more accurate evaluation of the substance and credibility of the signals that parties exchange with each other. AI may not be able to completely dissolve "the fog of war," but they may be able to provide sufficient or actionable confidence in the value of the information used for taking decisions in times of crisis. To do this, an AI model need to take into consideration the factors that can blur crisis signalling and reduce the level of uncertainty that they induce as much as possible. As indicated in Fig. 2, AI modelling starts with a process of aggregation of the data gathered by the MFA and its network of embassies from static (e.g., macro-economic indicators, socio-demographic data) and dynamic sources (e.g., social media feeds, official statements, newspapers stories).[18] The dataset so generated would then be split into two subsets (usually 70% training, 30% testing) to be used for training and testing models created with AI algorithms. After running and fine-tuning competing models of topic, social network and engagement analysis, an optimal AI model would be then selected to offer insight to assist decision-making. The model should be able to indicate the set of themes, the network of influencers, and the format of engagement that could most effectively capture the signals communicated by the relevant actors in the conflict. The framework may also include an assessment of the feasibility of integrating other AI models (marked with * in the diagram) from partnering countries or international organisations in an effort to further reduce the uncertainty induced by the "fog of War". The insight gained from data analysis could be then converted into a plan of action to inform official reactions and policy responses to the crisis. The process continues with another round of data collection that feeds directly into data analysis,

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[18] For a more detailed discussion of the conditions for designing AI models for diplomacy, see Bjola, "Diplomacy," 34-41.

allowing decision makers to trace and react to novel developments in real time during the crisis.
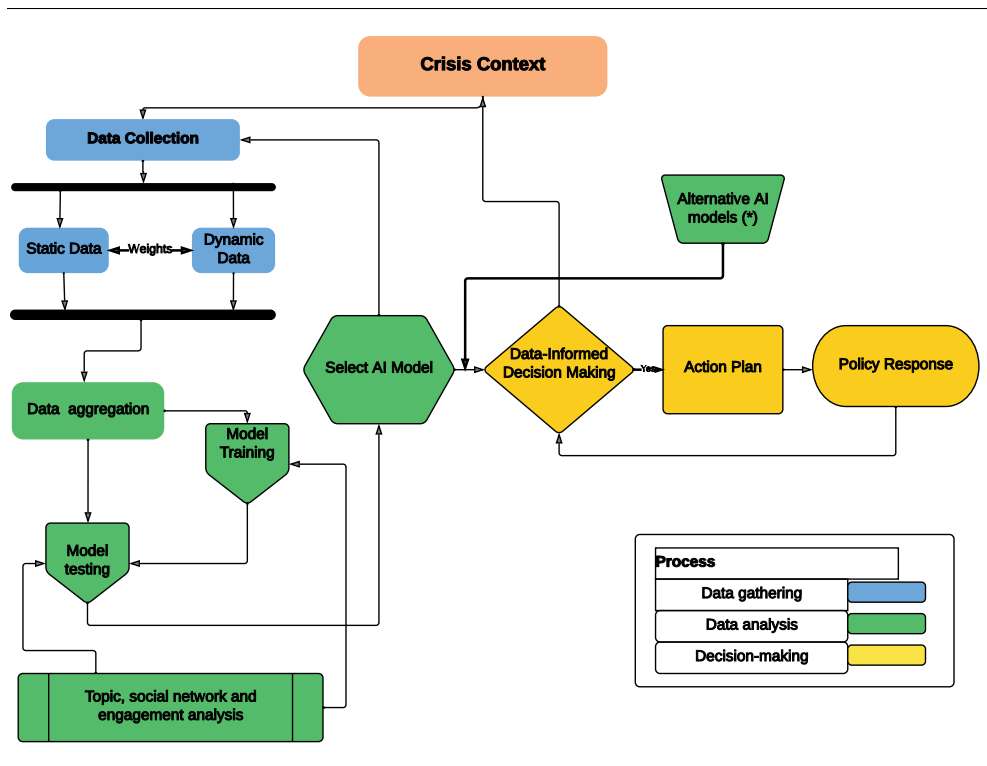
Fig. 2. AI-Based Crisis Management Model

While the model presented in Fig. 2 equally applies to any of the three analytical components discussed above, it should be noted that the complexity of AI modelling and by extension its analytical value for crisis decision-making considerably varies between the descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive formats. The main difference lies with the quality of the data required to power the machine learning (ML) techniques of each component as well as with the degree of sophistication of these techniques. The data necessary for tracing and analysing the evolution of a crisis is more readily available and can be processed using relatively conventional ML algorithms. This is so because descriptive analytics rely on decisions that have been already taken and on actions that have been already implemented. The situation arguably becomes more complicated once the AI system is asked

to predict possible courses of action and to assess the viability of the response strategies as the information required to generate such responses is based on decisions not yet taken and actions that are yet to be implemented. It is therefore important that discussions about the application of AI to crisis management pay close attention to the descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive sequence, so that the knowledge developed in each case can properly inform the development of AI solutions in the other cases. For this reason, the following section will focus on understanding the conditions of application of AI to the first component (descriptive analytics), with the hope that the lessons learned from this stage could be subsequently applied and expanded for developing AI solutions to support predictive and prescriptive analyses of crisis management as well.

AI Modelling and the War in Ukraine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine represents the case study used in this paper for designing and testing an AI prototype to assist decision making in times of crisis. The objective of the prototype is to provide a preliminary evaluation of the capacity of AI systems to reduce the risk of the "fog of war" that diplomats may experience in times of crisis by improving the accuracy of the signals they receive from other parties involved in the conflict, as well as the time of reaction to these signals. To this end, the analysis will draw on a dataset containing Tweets extracted in real-time from 28 accounts representing the ministries of foreign affairs of the belligerent parties (Ukraine, Russia), as well as the countries closest to the conflict (the three Baltic states, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Finland). The dataset also includes Tweets posted by other international actors with a sensible stake in the conflict (United States, UK, China, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Japan, Australia, Taiwan, Korea, Israel as well as the EU, NATO and the UN). Tweets have been extracted from the Twitter API on July 14, 2022, and then processed in real time on the basis of an AI model developed by the author using the Orange data visualization, machine learning and data mining toolkit developed by the University of Ljubljana.

For the first, descriptive stage of the analysis, the AI model combines the following techniques: data extraction from Twitter API (max. 75 tweets

per account) followed by pre-process textual tokenization, filtering and normalization; topic modelling of underlying themes in the dataset based on clusters of words found in each tweet and their respective frequency; multidimensional scaling (MDS) of the distance between the positions of each tweet relative to the dominant topics; network analysis of the frequency words in tweets; and multi-class sentiment analysis of the set of emotions framing each tweet. The data extraction phase has generated a corpus of 3985 tweets in total, which has been subsequently reduced to 729 tweets after the removal of messages not mentioning Ukraine.
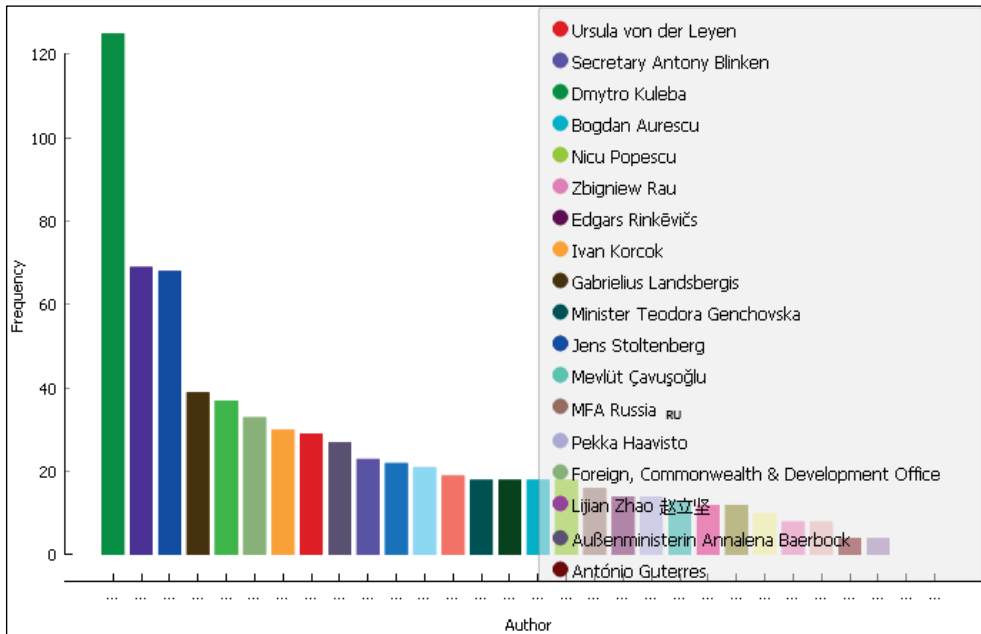
Fig. 3. Tweet frequency distribution by author

The frequency distribution of the 729 tweets by author is presented in Fig. 3, which unsurprisingly shows the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Dmytro Kuleba, as the most active communicator during this period (17.15%). He is followed by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel (9.47%), the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg (9.33%), the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabrielius Landsbergis (5.35%), and the UK Foreign Office (4.53%). Interestingly, the US State Secretary, Antony Blinken, has made fewer interventions on Twitter during this period (3.16%),

probably because of the overlapping visit of President Biden in the Middle East, slightly below the number of messages posted by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen (3.98%), and that of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Annalena Baerbock (3.70%). The Latent Semantic Indexing algorithm used for topic modelling has revealed five coherent themes in the data corpus. The dominant topic is defined by keywords such as "Ukraine, support, we, Russia, war, EU, discuss," suggesting the presence of a pro-active, solidarity-oriented narrative of international actors with Ukraine.
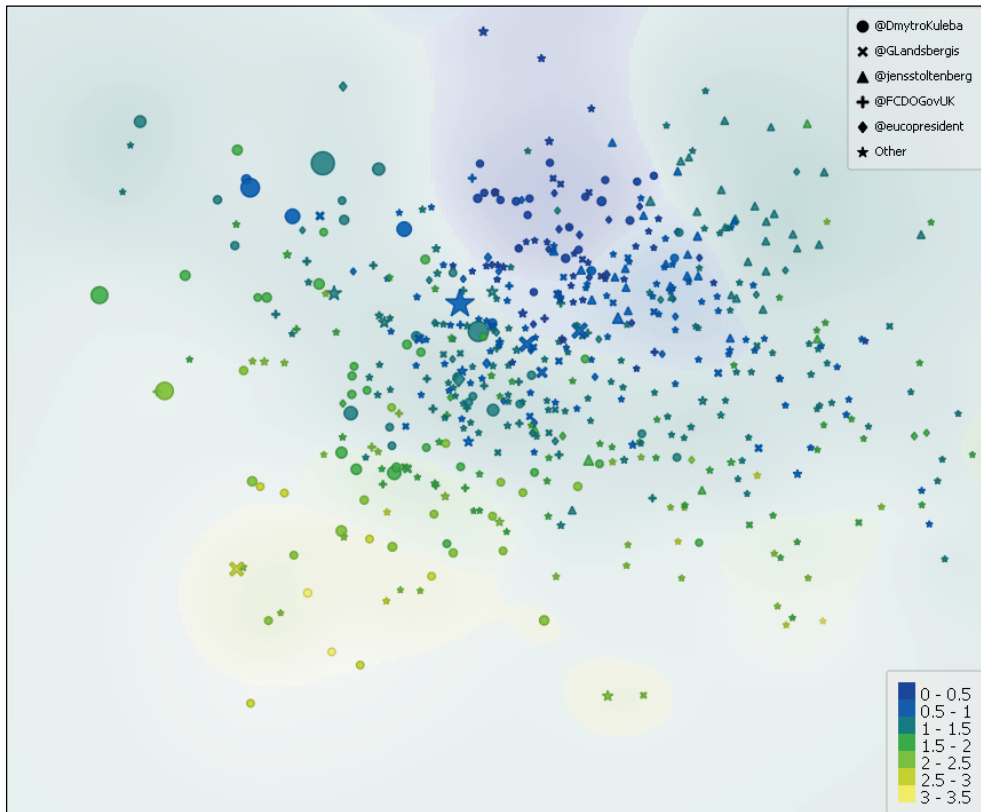
Fig. 4. Relative position of individual messages within the dominant topic

As Fig. 4 shows, the emerging narrative is reasonably robust (the yellowish the colour, the more coherent the narrative) with Kuleba and Landsbergis promoting it most actively, followed by Charles Michel and Jens Stoltenberg. At the same time, the graph suggests that messages are

relatively spread out with no clear "attractors" to facilitate their coagulation. This implies that the emerging narrative is likely to remain in a rather fluid and unstable configuration. This observation is confirmed by the graph in Fig. 5, which offers the results of a network analysis of the most connected words in the dominant topic. The strongest and shorter ties in the narratives are between nodes labelled "support," "Ukraine," "EU," and "aggression." From a communicational perspective, the presence of these ties suggests the EU and international support for Ukraine remains strong after five months of war, but in rather generic, broad terms. Interestingly, the tie between the nodes of "food" and "security" appears to be strengthening, but it seems to remain outside the core area of discussion, at least for the time being.
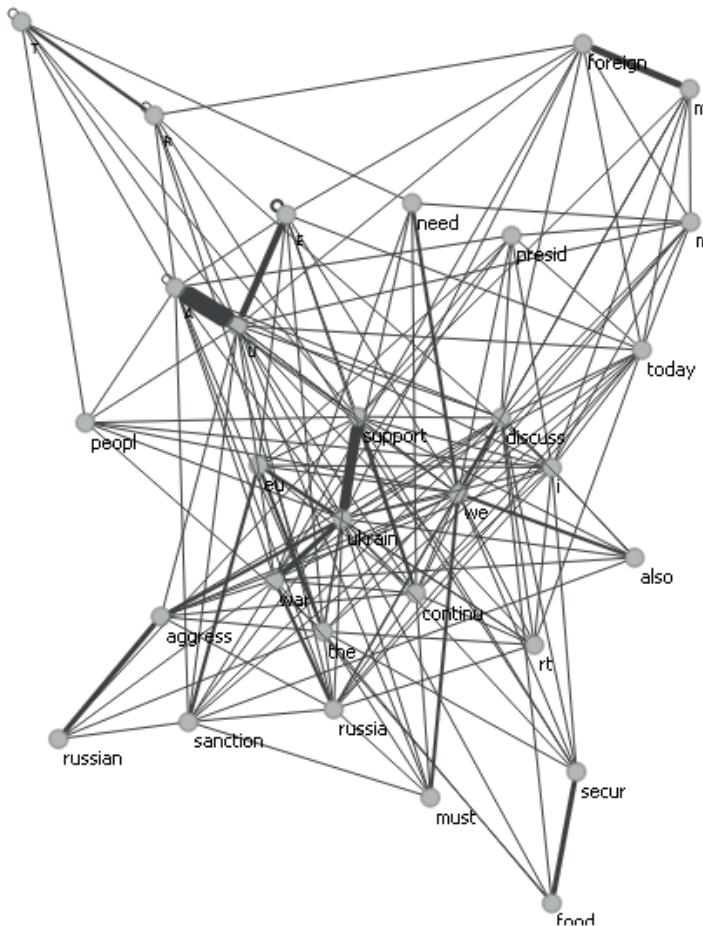
Fig. 5. Core textual connections within the dominant topic

That being said, statistical analysis of the list of words with lower p-values reveals a more nuanced picture of the positions of the various actors after five months of war. Lower p-values (<0.01) indicate a higher likelihood that the words in the list are significant for the selected authors. As Table 1 shows, the EU signals, for instance, through the messages of its two Presidents, Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel, that is committed to supporting the long-term reconstruction of Ukraine, but also to demonstrating solidarity with other countries that might be threatened by Russia, such as Moldova. The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, as well as the US State Secretary, Antony Blinken, insist that the Russian aggression should lead to stronger efforts of military preparation, collective deterrence, and coordinated support for Ukraine. Finally, the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, calls attention to the severe humanitarian costs of the war, not only for Ukraine and the region, but for the international community at large.

Table 1. List of words highly relevant for individual messages (p-value in brackets)

Ursula von der Leyen		Charles Michel	Jens Stoltenberg		Antony Blinken		António Guterres	
Long	(1.7e-08)	Solidarity(6.8e-04)	Support	(2.4e-12)	Ukraine	(5.4e-06)	Energy	(5.0e-04)
Reconstruct	(4.4e-06)	Moldova(1.9e-03)	Defence	(1.3e-11)	Insecurity	(1.1e-05)	Immediate	(3.7e-03)
Ukraine	(1.4e-05)	Moment(4.3e-03)	Allies	(1.9e-11)	Coordinate	(6.5e-05)	end	(5.9e-03)
reform	(1.7e-05)	sanctions(5.8e-03)	prepare	(4.9e-09)	Russia	(3.8e-04)	action	(6.7e-03)
invest	(1.7e-05)	EU (6.2e-03)	presid	(9.9e-09)	brutal	(8.3e-04)	besiege	(8.5e-03)
take	(1.8e-04)	Marshal(7.1e-03)	meet	(6.9e-08)	g20	(1.7e-03)	catastrophe	(8.5e-03)
lead	(2.2e-04)	Now (9.7e-03)	contribute	(2.2e-07)	arm	(2.6e-03)	delusion	(8.5e-03)
			deter	(2.2e-07)	American	(3.5e-03)	fossil	(8.5e-03)
			leader	(2.2e-07)			fuel	(8.5e-03)

Finally, sentiment analysis helps us capture the emotional framing of the messages posted on social media by the main actors in our sample. As graph in Fig. 6 indicates, participants experience a range of emotions when communicating about Ukraine. Sadness (depression) and anger are clearly the dominant emotions in the dataset. This is actually to be expected given the context of the war and the constant flow of news regarding the atrocities committed by the Russian army, the loss of civilian lives, and the destruction of Ukrainian cities. These sentiments are likely to continue to dominate the way in which messages related to Ukraine will be exchanged online by

MFAs and diplomats. At the same time, it is important to observe how the balance between "fatigue" and "vigour" may evolve over time. Traces of "fatigue" currently appear to increase in intensity, but "vigour" is also present, especially in messages posted by the representatives of Estonia, Slovakia, NATO, the EU, and Ukraine.
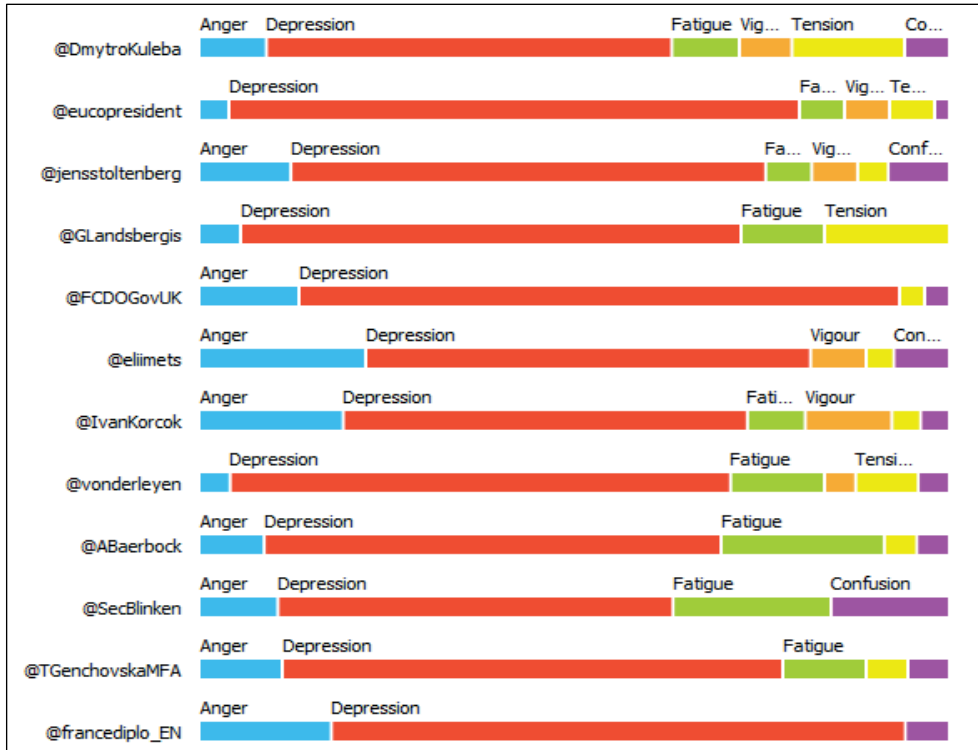
Fig. 6: Sentiment analysis by authors

Conclusion

The main objective of the paper has been to explore, from a diplomatic perspective, the added value and feasibility of using AI solutions for managing international crises. It has been thus argued that AI can help MFAs cope with the "fog of war" by adjusting the impact of the factors that contribute to reducing vs increasing uncertainty in times of crisis. Due to space and technical constraints, the paper has only focused on exploring the

contribution that AI can make to decision crisis management from the angle of descriptive analytics. To this end, the paper has sought to identify the relevant factors and patterns that can help diplomats make sense of unfolding crises in real time. An AI prototype has been built for this purpose using as a case study the international crisis generated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The model allows diplomats to trace in real time what international actors are most active and confident in terms of signalling, how these signals coalesce or diverge from each other, and to what extent these signals are consistent and predictable. At the same time, the model draws on a specific type of data (tweets) and uses conventional techniques, which are applied to a small data set. The performance of the AI model needs therefore to be improved by using a wider range of data (social media, newspapers stories, official statements) and more robust ML techniques. To increase confidence in the model and facilitate adoption, the results of the AI prototype also need to be compared, in terms of accuracy and speed, with those obtained from experiments conducted with a group of experts seeking to address and solve the same type of tasks. Despite the inherent constraints of the study, the expectation is that the lessons learned from this study could be subsequently applied and expanded for developing AI solutions to support predictive and prescriptive analyses of crisis management as well.

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NATO and the Imperatives of Geopolitical Security in the Black Sea Region

AUREL BRAUN

Abstract. History itself should have certainly informed us of the profound importance of geopolitical security in the Black Sea Region. Russia's massive invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, however, has highlighted the fact that the region also functions as a testing ground for the viability of NATO and is forcing the West to confront certain inconvenient truths, from the failure of Western deterrence, to dubious assumptions made about the reliability of interdependence and the current limited effectiveness in geopolitics of soft power. Further, leadership, as that of President Zelensky matters profoundly, and Ukraine survival of the massive onslaught by the Kremlin has given both Kyiv and NATO a second chance. Collectively, the West has vast and unmatched capabilities, but these must be intelligently mobilized in a cohesive, realistic strategy and purposeful diplomacy pivoted on the true motor forces driving Russian foreign policy. Here, NATO ought to make the most of enlargement, overcome its energy vulnerabilities and ensure that the defeat of Putin's aggression is a clearly-thought-out strategic goal.

Keywords: NATO, Black Sea, geopolitical security, Russia, Ukraine.

A vital security area

Traditionally, the Black Sea region has occupied an important international role, whether in geostrategy, commerce, migration, or tourism. Months before the Russian-induced new conflict began on February 24, 2022 in Ukraine, it should have been evident then that the US pivot to the Pacific should not have led to an assumption that the Black Sea region would just fade into history, for this vital strategic area remains crucial in terms of the threat that the Kremlin is currently posing here and is likely to pose in the

future in the realms of security, maritime trade, offshore resource extraction and even global food security. Moreover, that Russia would eventually engage in widespread brutal aggression was also not unpredictable. Some of us have argued, as far back as 2014, that unless sanctions were made much tougher in the wake of Russia's 2014 aggression (that included the illegal annexation of Crimea), Vladimir Putin was not likely to resist the temptation to seek considerably more control, or at least sway in the region.[1]

In the 2022 Russian attack on Ukraine, and by extension in the Black Sea region, we are now witnessing not only the stark return of geopolitics but a reversion with a vengeance and shocking violence. And the horrors of this war are challenging us to re-examine so many of our beliefs and assumptions. Moreover, we need to get it right, as painful as recognizing mistakes and missed opportunities may be, because otherwise we will not be able to prevent such aggression in the future. It is difficult to understate just how much is at stake. The Kremlin's aggression, which has had a ghastly impact on the Ukrainian people, is also a major threat to security in the Black Sea region, as noted, and it is at the same time a brazen attack on international law, and a conceivably fatal undermining of the United Nations, which is proving to be impotent in its central mission of peace and security, as it has been unable to stop the conflict. We know that when collective security failed in 1935 as the League of Nations did not stand up to Mussolini's aggression in Abyssinia, this debacle had a devastating impact on the viability of the League.[2]

The League, based in Geneva, never recovered and when the international community in 1945 decided to have a second attempt at creating a system of collective security it was careful not to use the same pre-war title for the organization since the League had fallen into such utter disrepute.

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[1] Aurel Braun, "TOUGHER SANCTIONS NOW: Putin's Delusional Quest for Empire," *World Affairs* 177, no. 2 (2014): 34–42, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43556200.

[2] Gaynor Johnson, "Philip Noel-Baker, the League of Nations and the Abyssinian Crisis, 1935–1936." In *Collision of Empires. Italy's Invasion of Ethiopia and Its International Impact*, 1st ed., ed. G. Bruce Stang (London: Routledge, 2013), 53–71.

Unfortunately, in 2014, and even more starkly in 2022 when collective security faced naked aggression in Ukraine by Russia - a permanent member of the UN Security Council - aggression prevailed. To use the late Abba Eban's unflattering description, the UN "folded like an umbrella at the first sign of rain."[3] The hapless statements and the fruitless visits by the Secretary General of the UN António Guterres when it comes to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022[4] testify to the possible fatal damage that the Putin regime inflicted on the UN. Similarly, Russia dealt an enormous blow to international law not only because its unprovoked aggression to Ukraine is a violation of *jus cogens* but also because it ignored a specific agreement, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum.[5] Moreover, as the world elided the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which had assured Ukraine that its territorial integrity would be protected as it was persuaded to give up the then world's third largest nuclear arsenal, we are also witnessing a powerful new incentive for nuclear proliferation. Here, in sum then, the regional may foreshadow what may happen in the international.

Along these lines, while Russia's conquest and annexation of Crimea has already shifted the balance of power in its favour in the Black Sea, if it succeeds in adding southern Ukraine, perhaps all the way to Moldova, it will dramatically change that balance and be able to fundamentally alter trade, navigation and energy exploration in the Black Sea basin to the great detriment of Ukraine, of course, but also of Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria and ultimately Turkey. Yet, as noted, this would only be the beginning of all the harm that the Kremlin could visit on the larger world. Consequently, we are seized by multiple issues across an entire spectrum. The most pressing ones

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[3] Fred Smith, "Remembering Abba Eban's Rousing Remarks: What He Said to the UN Security Council on Day 2 of the Six-Day War," *New York Daily News*, April 8, 2018, https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/remembering-abba-eban-rousing-remarks-article-1.3223738.

[4] Colum Lynch, "The Reluctant Peacemaker," *Foreign Policy*, April 28, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/28/un-guterres-putin-russia-ukraine-peacemaker/#:~:text=In%20the%20weeks%20leading%20up,Kyiv%20and%20topple%20the%20government.

[5] Brooklyn Neustaeter, "What Is the Budapest Memorandum and How Does It Impact the Current Crisis in Ukraine?," CTVNews, March 3, 2022, https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/what-is-the- budapest-memorandum-and-how-does-it-impact-the-current-crisis-in-ukraine-1.5804369.

challenge ready assumptions, long-held beliefs and intellectual fecklessness. I propose to examine the ten most glaring ones.

Motivating factors

First, the contention that the domestic systems of states do not really matter in terms of international behaviour, a proposition put forth by what I would call the *crude realism* school represented by scholars like John Mearsheimer[6] and Stephen Walt,[7] stands in sharp contrast to the *classical realism* of the profoundly influential Hans Morgenthau[8] and of Robert Strausz-Hupe[9] who emphasize the importance of the quality of government. *Crude realism* is most demonstrably wrong, at the very least, in the case of Russia. It ought to be evident in any assessment of Russian foreign policy and behaviour that it was surely no mere coincidence that economic failure and increased repression[10] in a personalist regime run by Vladimir Putin occurred just as it also engaged in large-scale external aggression against Ukraine. Specifically, it would be tone deaf to assume that it was mere coincidence that the Putin regime prior to the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine moved to suppress civil society in Russia[11] and attempted to poison and then jailed the top opposition leader Alexei Navalny.[12] Such repression in fact reflected both political and economic failure and it should not have been surprising that Vladimir Putin reached into the well-trodden tool box of dictatorship to divert Russian attention away from domestic problems rather than address them.

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[6] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, 2014, http://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Why-the-Ukraine-Crisis-Is.pdf.

[7] Stephen M Walt, "The Ukraine War Doesn't Change Everything," *Foreign Policy*, April 13, 2022, https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/ukraine-war-doesnt-change-everything.

[8] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, Sixth edition (New York: Knopf, 1985), 155-63.

[9] Robert Strausz-Hupé and Stefan T. Possony, *International Relations in the Age of the Conflict between Democracy and Dictatorship* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950).

[10] Daniel Treisman, "Putin Unbound," *Foreign Affairs*, June 15, 2022, https://www.foreign affairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-06/putin-russia-ukraine-war-unbound.

[11] Treisman, "Putin Unbound."

[12] Steve Rosenberg, "Russia Navalny: Poisoned Opposition Leader Held after Flying Home," BBC News, January 17, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55694598.

Russia, in reality, if we use what I call the 30-year rule - where 30 years after the Second World War we see the devastated Axis powers, Germany Italy and Japan, re-emerge as vibrant democracies with thriving, internationally competitive economies - is in crucial ways a failed state. Despite some pockets of excellence and the ability of the Russian military to wreak widespread and horrific human devastation, Russia is not a modern state. Despite being the largest territorial state in the world, with unparalleled natural resources, and great scientific talent, its per capita GDP is lower than that of Turkey and Romania[13] as has been its economic growth rate for several years.[14] Instead of addressing fundamental domestic issues forthrightly Vladimir Putin employs a kind of Magical Political Realism (PMR)[15] where he combines the real with the fantastic to try to persuade the population both of the regime's successes and invincibility. Vladimir Putin has especially emphasized PMR as he faced a political legitimacy crisis that was both fuelled and made evident by the mass protests[16] following widely discredited parliamentary elections in 2011 and presidential ones in 2012,[17] and his use of it though creative, it has been dangerous. It resembles in some ways "magical realism,"[18] the innovative literary technique used successfully by great writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez.[19] However, combining the real with the fantastic in politics can ultimately lead to a

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[13] The World Factbook, "Real GDP per Capita," Central Intelligence Agency, 2021, https://www.cia.gov/the-world- factbook/field/real-gdp-per-capita/country-comparison.

[14] Anders Åslund, "Putin's Last Gasp?," Project Syndicate, December 14, 2021, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/putin-declining-russia-mobilization-against-ukraine-by-anders-aslund-2021-12?barrier=accesspaylog.

[15] Oliver Kaplan, "García Márquez' Magical Realism: It's Real," Political Violence at a Glance, February 19, 2020, https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2014/05/16/garcia-marquez-magical-realism-its-real/.

[16] BBC News, "Russian Election: Biggest Protests since Fall of USSR," December 10, 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-16122524.

[17] Open Democracy, "Dissecting Russia's Winter of Protest, Five Years On," December 5, 2016, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/dissecting-russia-s-winter-of-protest-five-years-on/.

[18] Christopher Shultz, "How Is Magical Realism Different from Fantasy?," Lit Reactor, August 9, 2019, https://litreactor.com/columns/how-is-magical-realism-different-from-fantasy.

[19] Ashley Fetters, "The Origins of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Magic Realism," *The Atlantic*, April 17, 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/04/the-origins-of-gabriel-garcia-marquezs-magical-realism/360861/.

deleterious outcome, one of evading issues by retreating into fantasy rather than by finding solutions to fundamental problems. Some of the hallmarks of this approach have been Putin's highly publicized, utterly ridiculous staged feats of personal strength,[20] wildlife rescues,[21] and underwater archaeology.[22] Domestically, this has yielded a bizarre mix of the repressive and the ridiculous. Combining real, brutal power and mythical claims for the leader, PMR, an elaborate form of political gaslighting, has been not only an evasion of the responsibility to address fundamental problems realistically but crucially also cantered on avoiding democracy, the latter which Putin has viewed as an insurmountable danger to his power. Consequently, as the reality of relative economic decline and the absence of political legitimacy sinks in, Putin, whose primary goal is to stay in power at all costs has no choice but to try to divert people's attention from these intractable problems by seeking foreign policy "successes." Let's not forget that Putin's popularity skyrocketed after the 2014 invasion[23] and annexation of Crimea. In some ways, as noted, this is a classic use of a manufactured external threat right out of the toolbox of dictatorships. Yes, Putin has undoubtedly disliked the enlargement of NATO and deplored the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Russia's humiliating loss of superpower status, but what has truly haunted him is the spectre of democracy, and a successful democratic Ukraine next door would present a grave, and in his eyes, an absolutely unacceptable threat of democratic "contamination."

Second, it is essential that we stop confusing cause and excuse. The Putin regime vociferously claims that NATO enlargement, and more fantastically, the alleged hijacking of political power in Ukraine by drug-

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[20] HuffPost, "This Week's World Photo Caption Contest," December 7, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/worl-photo-caption-contest-shirtless-putin_n_3263512.

[21] BBC News, "Russia's Putin Admits Wildlife Stunts Are Staged," September 13, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19591179.

[22] Tom Parfitt, "Vladimir Putin's Greek Urns Claim Earns Ridicule," *The Guardian*, August 12, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/12/vladimir-putin-greek-urns-ridicule.

[23] Adam Taylor, "Putin's Approval Rating Hits 80 Percent," *The Washington Post*, December 1, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/03/26/putins- approval-rating-hits-80-percent/.

addled neo-Nazis, forced Russia to invade.[24] Yet, a reasoned analysis quickly reveals that these are transparent excuses with little credibility. After all, Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014 in reaction to Ukraine choosing a government at the Maidan that would try to build relations with the European Union rather than with the Moscow-controlled Eurasian Union.[25] NATO was not an issue at the time since there was not much inclination on the part of Ukraine to join the Alliance or any realistic possibility of being offered membership. The reality is that even though undoubtedly Moscow has long resented NATO enlargement, as noted, what it fears most is the spectre of democracy[26] domestically for that could well end Putin's increasingly despotic rule. Witness then, for instance, the brutal repression of political opposition and of civil society by the Kremlin prior to the latest external aggression that illuminated the all-out effort by Putin to stay in power regardless of the cost. A Ukraine that would become a successful, prosperous stable democracy - a large Slavic state right on Russia borders – would present, as noted, a real danger of "contagion and contamination"[27] that would put the Putin regime in grave danger of losing its power. Rejecting democracy, under Putin, in keyways, Russia is a corrosive kleptocracy in search of an ideology. Consequently, perhaps, more than anything else, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, again, is an indication of the Putin regime's intent to do anything to hold onto power domestically and its citing of external threats as the driving force for its attack on Ukraine just does not meet even the most basic elements of causality.

Third, although the differentiation of hard from soft power is quite useful for analytical purposes, as Joseph Nye has written,[28] in practice the

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[24] Anton Troianovski, "Why Vladimir Putin Invokes Nazis to Justify His Invasion of Ukraine," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/17/world/europe/ukraine-putin-nazis.html.

[25] David R. Marples, "The Maidan Revolution in Ukraine," E-International Relations, July 1, 2020, https://www.e-ir.info/2020/07/01/the-maidan-revolution-in-ukraine/.

[26] Roger Cohen, "The Making of Vladimir Putin," *The New York Times*, March 26, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/26/world/europe/vladimir-putin-russia.html.

[27] Cohen, "The Making of Vladimir Putin."

[28] Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, June 3, 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2004-05-01/soft-power-means-success- world-politics.

two are inexorably intertwined. In the current manifestation of geopolitics, in fact we see all too often the primacy of hard power and with Russia, we are witnessing it in its violent military form. Analysts of Russian and foreign and security policies have tended to focus mistakenly, I would suggest, on what was labelled the Gerasimov doctrine[29] which combines high-tech, cyber and information warfare together with military power in a continuum where all these in a sense make politics a continuation of military action. Not only was this a mistake, and it seems that this is a conclusion reached by Mark Galeotti,[30] who was viewed widely as the 'father' of the Gerasimov doctrine, but I would contend that in reality what we face is a different doctrine, one that is very much real and threatening, and which for a better name I will call the *Rogozin Doctrine*. It was enunciated, perhaps unwittingly, by Dmitry Rogozin,[31] a former Russian ambassador to NATO and Deputy Prime Minister, a bombastic, provocative politician, who in 2015 dismissed sanctions and withholding of visas by Western countries as insignificant. He grandly declared, "tanks do not need visas."[32] Though Dmitry Rogozin has been dismissed[33] by the Kremlin as head of the Russian Space Agency Roscosmos in July 2022, for the long time, in essence, he symbolized and perhaps clumsily enunciated the Putinite approach to foreign policy where bullying has been preferred to persuasion and force is favoured over reason. Whatever Rogozin's personal future career may turn out to be, his bombast and bullying in essence accurately reflects what Russian foreign policy is

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[29] Mark Galeotti, "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and Russian Non-Linear War," In Moscow's Shadows, September 17, 2017, https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine- and-russian-non-linear-war/.

[30] Mark Galeotti, "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'," *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/.

[31] Loren Grush, "Russia Ousts Boisterous Space Chief Dmitry Rogozin," The Verge, July 15, 2022, https://www.theverge.com/2022/7/15/23219955/russia-roscosmos-dmitry-rogozin- replaced-nasa-crew-swap.

[32] Agence France-Presse, "Russian Official: 'Tanks Don't Need Visas'," Defense News, August 8, 2017, https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2015/05/25/russian-official-tanks-don-t-need-visas/#:~:text=MOSCOW%20%E2%80%94%20An%20outspoken%20deputy %20prime,don't%20need%20visas.%22.

[33] Euronews, "Putin Removes Firebrand Dmitry Rogozin as Head of Roscosmos," July 15, 2022, https://www.euronews.com/next/2022/07/15/russia-has-a-new-space-chief-putin-replaces-dmitry-rogozin-with-yuri-borisov.

right now. At the centre of this is a dismissal or at least a major downgrading or soft power by Russia, with an emphasis on hard power and particularly the use of violent military power projection. This is driven not only by domestic Russian imperatives to divert attention away from intractable domestic problems in the country but also by a strong belief in the Kremlin that the West has become too decadent to use, or to confront hard power, especially when such hard power is wielded violently and with determination by an opponent.

Fourth, it is crucial to "right size" Russia. Certainly, every country deserves respect and it is expected to protect its legitimate national interests, but exaggerating the power of a state that engages in threats or actual aggression often leads to *deference*, which in fact undermines or destroys deterrence. By "deference" in this case we mean to use it according to the definition in the Collins English Dictionary as "submission to or compliance with the will, wishes, etc., of another."[34] Deterrence on the other hand is a psychological relationship where, despite respect, there is a determined effort, indeed a policy, where party A seeks to induce party B to engage in a calculation where the latter will conclude that on the basis of a cost-benefit calculation any potential gain in attacking A or harming A's interests will be more than outweighed by the cost that A would exact. Party A would of course not be able to induce such a calculation on the part of Party B if it is overawed by or overstates the strength of party B and it becomes intimidated or *deferential*. *In sum, overestimating an opponent's power may be as dangerous as underestimating it*. Currently, in light of Russia's new invasion of Ukraine, we need to face the inconvenient truth that NATO deterrence has failed in the Black Sea region. The American administration predicted the Russian invasion but did not prevent it. One of the key reasons for this is that the West had an exaggerated perception of the Russian power and often responded with deference, (which is not entirely dissimilar to appeasement),

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[34] "Deference Definition & Meaning," Dictionary.com, accessed August 10, 2022, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/deference#:~:text=This%20shows%20grade%20level%20based%20on%20the%20word's%20complexity.,noun&text=respectful%20submission%20or%20yielding%20to,in%20deference%20to%20his%20wishes; https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/deference.

rather than deterrence. The reality is that Russia is a superpower in terms of nuclear weapons only, with an economy that, despite a population of 143 million, in nominal terms is no bigger than that of Italy,[35] a per capita GDP smaller than Turkey's[36] and an economy that cannot compete internationally except for the exports of energy, weapons and grains.[37] The West had also badly miscalculated the effectiveness of the Russian army, suaded by massive spending by the Kremlin over the past 10 years on its military.[38] What was not understood was that the vast corrosive corruption that suffuses Russian society also deeply affected its military where so much was stolen and so many have been demoralized. The poor performance of the Russian military,[39] therefore, should not have been that surprising and more could have been done to support Ukraine before the invasion and also in the early weeks of the war when significant territory was lost in the south and in the Donbass regions of Ukraine.

Fifth, NATO failed to appreciate (or at least did not do so adequately) that it must incorporate in its strategic posture the imperatives of the geopolitical security of the Black Sea region. Whereas, President Biden, prior to the invasion and immediately in its wake, kept emphasizing that Article 5 of the Washington Treaty was "ironclad,"[40] he also stressed that it only

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[35] OECD, "GDP and Spending - Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - OECD Data," 2022, accessed August 8, 2022, https://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-gdp.htm.

[36] CIA, "Real GDP per Capita," The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, 2021, https://www.cia.gov/the- world-factbook/field/real-gdp-per-capita/country-comparison.

[37] Aurel Braun, "NATO as the Necessary Pillar of 21st Century Global Security," in *The New Transatlantic Relations and the Perspectives of the Global Order: Proceedings of the First Edition of the International Conference the European Union's External Relations and the Global Order (EUXGLOB): Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of European Studies, April 15, 2021*, eds. Valentin Naumescu, Raluca Moldovan, Anda Ghilescu (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021), 295-324.

[38] Statista, "Military Spending in Russia from 1993 to 2021," Statista Research Department, April 25, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1203160/military-expenditure-russia/.

[39] Mariusz Ziomecki, "The Collapse of the Russian Military Machine," GIS Reports, May 13, 2022, https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/russian-military-power/; *The Economist*, "War in Ukraine: Why Is Russia's Army so Weak?: The Economist," YouTube, May 9, 2022, https://youtu.be/x8C7aMeunE0.

[40] Andrew Restuccia, "Biden: U.S. Commitment to NATO's Article 5 Is Ironclad," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/russia-ukraine-latest-news/card/biden-u-s-commitment-to-nato-s-article-5-is-ironclad-FLUwDonlrwwk8GNS93J8.

applies to Alliance members. Here, that is with the Alliance's boundaries, United States, Biden declared, the US and the West would not "concede a single inch."[41] In terms of a strict legal interpretation, he was of course correct. The Washington Treaty did not create a legal obligation to non-members. That is the restrictive legal nature of international treaties that underpin an international organization. Further, Biden took great pains to explain that there would be no direct confrontation with Russian forces, no NATO troops would enter Ukraine and that essentially the West would try to minimize provocations of Putin.[42]

At one level these declarations were certainly understandable in terms of wanting to avoid a war with Russia, or the possibility of a Third World War and the potential danger for a nuclear conflagration.[43] At the same time, however, it was a grave misunderstanding about the efficacy of *deterrence which cannot stop neatly of the borders of NATO*. What happens on the other side of the border of Poland or Romania, (whether in Ukraine or Georgia) matters deeply in terms of the security not only the Black Sea region but also of the entire Alliance. The timidity of the Biden administration, the sharp segregation of "inside/outside" Alliance security interests and the original unwillingness of the German government to supply even defensive weapons to Ukraine[44] only emboldened Putin rather than deter him. Perhaps he viewed it as possible "greenlighting" in Ukraine. It is also not difficult to imagine that had president Zelensky of Ukraine followed the Biden administration's accommodationist, if well meaning, advice to evacuate

[41] Michael D. Shear, "As Russia Announces Pullback, Biden Warns Ukraine Invasion Is Still Possible," *The New York Times*, March 30, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/02/15/world/russia-ukraine-news.

[42] Maureen Chowdhury et al., "Biden Pledges US Forces 'Are Not Engaged and Will Not Engage in the Conflict with Russian Forces in Ukraine'," CNN March 2, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/biden-state-of-the-union-2022/h_433c328db888b10c4bfb9dc918730de7.

[43] Scott D. Sagan, "The World's Most Dangerous Man," *Foreign Affairs*, March 22, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2022-03-16/worlds-most-dangerous-man.

[44] Ben Hall, "Ukraine Blames Germany for 'Blocking' NATO Weapons Supply," *Financial Times*, December 12, 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/1336c9be-f1c9-4545-9f85-3b07fcb746d6.

(President Zelensky memorably retorted "I need ammunition, not a ride"[45]) in the hours after the invasion, the subsequent collapse of morale in Ukraine could well have led to a quick Russian victory.

Sixth, what happened to Ukraine also speaks to levels of analysis in international relations: the individual; the unit; and the system.[46] And with globalization there has been a considerable emphasis on the "system," though usually, it is recognized that all three levels interact to a certain extent. What we are witnessing now, however, is the overwhelming, though not the exclusive role of the individual leader. The Russian regime, as noted, is a personalist rule system where power has been so centralized in the hands of Vladimir Putin that the aggression and the threats to the international system are a result of his personal decisions and his quest to stay in power indefinitely. He bears primary responsibility for the conflict in Ukraine and any peaceful conflict resolution depends on his decisions or on his removal from power.

In the case of Ukraine, the democratically elected government is not a personalist one, but nonetheless the personal example of remarkable courage and strategic vision by President Zelensky in the face of aggression has undoubtedly had an enormous impact both in preserving the morale of the Ukrainian people, and in inspiring domestic resistance and external support. President Zelensky's Churchillian stance, in fact, has had a profound international impact in both inspiring and shaming Western European states into altering their policies so that they could transcend their timidity towards Russia. In the case of Germany, as Ukraine defied the odds and not only survived the massive Russian onslaught but pushed Russian forces back from Kyiv, the government led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz appeared to dramatically change policy from decades of deference to Moscow. Chancellor Scholz proclaimed that there was a *zeitenwende* - a change of era or turning point – where Germany would seek to spend an

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[45] Sharon Braithwaite, "Zelensky Refuses Us Offer to Evacuate, Saying 'I Need Ammunition, Not a Ride'," CNN, February 26, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/26/europe/ukraine-zelensky-evacuation-intl/index.html.

[46] Owen Temby, "What Are Levels of Analysis and What Do They Contribute to International Relations Theory?," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 4 (2013): 721-42, https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.831032.

additional 100 billion euros on its military and would try to ensure that it would commit at least 2 percent of its GDP yearly to its defence.[47]

Seven, it is essential to an understanding of how the imperatives of geopolitical security work in the Black Sea region and elsewhere, to differentiate between strategy and tactics. Vladimir Putin has been widely praised as a clever, if brutal tactician in light of his longevity in power and his successes in military power projection in Georgia 2008,[48] Ukraine/Crimea in 2014[49] and Syria in 2015.[50] The full-scale invasion of Ukraine however involves a strategic decision that speaks to the larger political, economic and security interests of Russia over the long arc of history. The intent by Vladimir Putin here was to crush an independent Ukraine, deny the possibility of democratic development and its consequent probable contamination spreading to Russia, divide NATO and to overturn the post-Cold War order. Putin showed in his broad demands prior to the invasion that his ambitions were not restricted to Ukraine.[51] It was also the case that NATO seemed particularly vulnerable. For instance, Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, had provocatively claimed that NATO suffered from "brain death."[52] The Alliance thus seemed ripe for pressure and intimidation.

Though, the ultimate outcome of the war inside Ukraine is difficult to predict, what is already evident is that Russia's aggression has been a great strategic miscalculation. Most of Ukraine has not fallen and Russian forces have suffered humiliating and grievous loses as they were pushed back from

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[47] Maria Sheahan and Sarah Marsh, "Germany to Increase Defence Spending in Response to 'Putin's War' – Scholz," Reuters February 27, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/germany-hike-defense-spending-scholz-says-further-policy-shift-2022-02-27/.

[48] Natia Seskuria, "Russia Is Reenacting Its Georgia Playbook in Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, February 22, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/22/russia-ukraine-invasion-georgia-2008-south-ossetia-tskhinvali/.

[49] Steven Lee Myers and Ellen Barry, "Putin Reclaims Crimea for Russia and Bitterly Denounces the West," *The New York Times*, March 18, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/19/world/europe/ukraine.html.

[50] BBC News, "Russia Joins War in Syria: Five Key Points," October 1, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34416519.

[51] Paul Kirby, "Why Has Russia Invaded Ukraine and What Does Putin Want?," BBC News, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56720589.

[52] Jonathan Marcus, "NATO Alliance Experiencing Brain Death, Says Macron," BBC News, November 7, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50335257.

Kyiv and Kharkiv, as noted.[53] Further, far from weakening NATO, Putin has managed to awaken a sleeping giant whose united power he can never hope to match. Additionally, two neutral states that for decades had strived assiduously to have good relation with Russia, Finland and Sweden, decided to join the Alliance because of the dire and imminent Russian threat that they perceived with the newest invasion of Ukraine.[54] If Russia, through its latest aggression could alienate two countries that had tried so hard to be accommodating and continuously worked to avoid provoking Moscow, that itself powerfully highlights Moscow's strategic blunder. There is in fact a perverse irony here that Putin's constant rage against NATO enlargement combined with his aggression may have seminally contributed to further NATO expansion.

Sweden and Finland have now made the monumental decision to join the Alliance.[55] Further, NATO has moved with remarkable speed to allow these two new applicants to join the Alliance, and by early August 2022, 23 member states followed NATO's decision to accept the application and as these states' legislatures ratified this acceptance.[56] Sweden and Finland joining the Alliance, however, is more than just powerful symbolism; it also changes the strategic balance in Europe because both of these states are highly advanced countries with significant military potential and Finland has a more than 800-mile border with Russia. It is not difficult to imagine that for strategic planners in the Russian military this is a little

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[53] CBC News, "Ukraine Says Russia Has Withdrawn from Kharkiv, but Continues Offensive in the East," May 15, 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-russia- war-may14-1.6453497.

[54] NATO, "Finland and Sweden Complete NATO Accession Talks," NATO, July 4, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_197737.htm; "Finnish President Tells Russia 'You Caused This' as He Signs Security Pact with UK," YouTube, May 11, 2022, https://youtu.be/MhLNBxpo8zY.

[55] Karoun Demirjian, "Senate Votes to Approve NATO Membership for Sweden and Finland," *The Washington Post,* August 4, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/08/03/senate-nato-sweden-finland/.

[56] Patrick Smith, "Finland's Leaders Urge NATO Bid in Blow to Putin; Russia Vows Response," NBC News.com May 12, 2022, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/finland-leaders-support-join-nato-russia-ukraine-invasion-putin- rcna28094.

short of a nightmarish outcome of Vladimir Putin's attempts to intimidate European countries on Russia's periphery.

Eight, concepts of interdependence, including complex interdependence[57] need to be re-examined. Particularly in Germany, but in some other parts of Western Europe as well it has long been assumed that increasing trade relations and other ties with Russia would create a mutuality of interests which would restrain Russian aggressiveness, would reassure the Kremlin of Western good intentions and induce the kind of cost/benefit analysis in the Kremlin that would prevent disputes from turning violent.

This seemingly reasonable reliance on interdependence went back to Soviet days when Germany pursued a policy of *Ostpolitik[58]* which was intended to be a form of constructive engagement. Consequently, warnings, especially to Germany, that dependence on Russian energy was dangerous[59] were long ignored by Berlin and by some other European capitals. Following the Russian invasion on February 24, however, the new German government of Olaf Scholz, as noted, was forced into a deep re-examination of these assumptions and it consequently took a 180 degree turn in its policies - *zeitenwende* - belatedly recognizing that interdependence with dictatorships does not create the kind of constraints that it does on democratic governments, as noted.[60] This recognition came late, and the high current cost to the West of imposing sanctions, that include energy, is in key ways a result of the flawed assumptions about interdependence. Now we are witnessing the unpleasant spectre of Germany and of the countries possibly having to ration gas and oil.[61] In the poorer countries in Europe, the energy

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[57] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Realism and Complex Interdependence," *International Political Economy* (1996): 53-63, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24443-0_5.

[58] Carole Fink, "Ostpolitik, 1969-1974: The European and Global Response," KB Home, Ohio State University, Mershon Centre for International Security Studies, May 12, 2006, https://kb.osu.edu/handle/1811/30220.

[59] Rick Noack, "Trump Accused Germany of Becoming 'Totally Dependent' on Russian Energy at the U.N. the Germans Just Smirked," *The Washington Post*, September 25, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/09/25/trump-accused-germany-becoming-totally-dependent-russian-energy-un-germans-just-smirked/.

[60] Sheahan and Marsh, "Germany to Increase Defence Spending."

[61] Philip Oltermann, "Germany Worries about Gas Rationing as Supply from Russia Halted," *The Guardian*, July 19, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/19/germany-worries-about-gas-rationing-as-supply-from-russia- halted.

crisis, that the Russian invasion and the subsequent enhanced sanctions have created, means not only economic pain and the political risk to the governments in these states but there is a danger that this might undermine support for Ukraine as other countries might possibly follow Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's rather unsavoury policies regarding Russia where his personal sympathies for Putin's dictatorial rule has combined with his need to try to safeguard energy supplies[62] which still largely come from Russia.

Ninth, though a willingness to use diplomacy and engage in negotiations is one of the greatest strengths of Western societies and governments it is also essential to appreciate the limitations. *Foremost, it needs to be understood that both diplomacy and negotiations are means, not ends*. Further, for either to possibly be effective they must be underpinned by a clearly thought-out strategy. Aimless negotiations or impulsive meetings are hardly cost-free. They can send the wrong message, contribute to misperception, create a false sense of security and possibly result in a diversion from dealing realistically with the problems that can all incur a high opportunity cost. In the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine some of these problems have become evident when Western leaders sought negotiations or dialogue with Vladimir Putin without proper preparation or a clear strategy. What we have seen, in one example, is the mistaken assumption by leaders such as President Macron of France, who has engaged in numerous, endless but ultimately fruitless consultations and conversations with Vladimir Putin under the belief that somehow an open channel and repeated conversations are inevitably a benefit.[63] In reality, Macron's relentless reaching out to Putin may have helped the French leader in his re-election and in parliamentary support, but unfortunately these talks have yielded nothing beneficial for the people of Ukraine so far, to say the least.

Tenth, it is vital to appreciate the impact of corrosive corruption in a dictatorial society. The poor performance of the Russian military surprised

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[62] Krisztina Than, "Hungary's Orban Expects Gas Deal with Russia This Summer," Reuters, July 29, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/hungary-pm-sees-deal-with-russia-by-end-summer-more-gas-supplies-2022-07-29/.

[63] Michele Barbero, "There's a Method to Macron's Madness," *Foreign Policy*, June 15, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/15/macron-putin-france-russia-ukraine-war/.

much of the West. It should not have been a revelation. A clear appreciation of how pervasive and corrosive corruption works in a society should have signalled to us that no institution, including the military could be exempt in Russia. It is well known that *Transparency International* ranks Russia as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.[64] It also should be evident, when it comes to the rank-and-file of any military, that when people who are tasked with potentially laying down their lives to protect society, are underpaid, disrespected and witness the unbound enrichment by contractors and senior officers, it is extremely likely that not only will there be low morale but also widespread theft of equipment, ineffective training and poor maintenance of equipment.[65] No wonder, therefore, that when Russian forces tried to replenish equipment from the vast military equipment storage facilities they found that many parts for tanks, artillery pieces and aircraft in warehouses had been stolen and sold off, rendering key weapon systems inoperable.[66]

Conclusion

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 represented a tectonic geopolitical shift. It illuminated not only the dangers to and the imperatives of geopolitical security in the Black Sea region but ought to induce a thorough re- examination of pat assumptions and a willingness to admit mistakes. On the plus side, such willingness could also lead us to viable solutions and a more secure future. There are several steps, however, that need to be taken.

First, there ought to be a recognition that NATO is relevant and that soft power is not a substitute but is a companion of hard power. And it is hard power that is at the centre of the effectiveness of the Alliance. This pertains, particularly in a crisis such as the current one in Ukraine which so deeply affects the Black Sea region.

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[64] Transparency.org, "2021 Corruption Perceptions Index - Explore the Results," 2021, https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021.

[65] OCCRP, "A Most Reliable Ally: How Corruption in the Russian Military Could Save Ukraine," April 13, 2022, https://www.occrp.org/en/blog/16192-2022-04-07-16-58-47.

[66] OCCRP, "A Most Reliable Ally."

Second, we need to appreciate that, as noted, NATO deterrence has failed. Had it worked properly, (and the American Administration gave plenty of warning time about the impending assault and tried to warn the Kremlin off[67]), Russia would have been deterred from invading Ukraine. Consequently, there has to be an honest, even if it is painful, examination as of the causes for that failure.

Third, we need to appreciate that even though Article 5 guarantees legally only apply to members of the Alliance, NATO deterrence cannot abruptly stop at his borders. What happens in Moldova, Ukraine or Georgia profoundly affects the safety and security of the Alliance. And that includes, as well, the areas in the Nordic region where Finland and Sweden, deeply alarmed by Russia's rising aggression in Ukraine, have rushed to join the Alliance and are on track to become members quickly through an accelerated process of ratification by the 30 members of NATO.

Fourth, in the current conflict NATO needs to have a clear strategy. The Western leader who has enunciated such a strategy most concisely is former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson who memorably declared shortly after Russia's aggression that, "Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine must fail, and must be seen to fail."[68] That is, not only must Ukraine be supported and its territorial integrity protected, but the perception of Russian failure is crucial for the restoration of NATO deterrence. Such visible failure on the part of Putin could also possibly lead to a change of government in Russia to one that would be more responsive and less dictatorial.

Last, we need to face a particularly harsh reality. That is, that in light of the personalist regime that Putin runs and the way he has a consistently sought to divert popular Russian attention away from fundamental domestic problems and crises by looking to external victories, it is the case that as long as he is in power, there may be a pause in the conflict or a possible

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[67] BBC News, "Ukraine Crisis: Biden Warns Russia May Invade Next Month," January 28, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60164537.

[68] Patrick Wintour, "Russia 'Must Fail and Be Seen to Fail' If It Invades Ukraine, Says Johnson," *The Guardian*, February 19, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/19/russia-johnson-munich-security-conference-putin-ukraine.

diminishment of the level of violence as a result of some negotiations, but not a genuine resolution.

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Dealing with Russia and China
in the Current Strategic Context

Jamie Shea

Abstract. The war in Ukraine may go on for a long time and sustaining the course of economic pressure on Russia, isolation of the Putin regime and assistance to Ukraine may prove even more important than the immediate flourish of gritty resolve that the allies showed in the first month of Russia's "special military operation." In recent times, Washington has publicised intelligence that indicates that Putin, faced with setbacks and stalemate in his Ukraine campaign, has turned to Beijing for help. According the *The New York Times*, Putin has sent Chinese President Xi a long shopping list of military equipment including drones, surface to air missiles, armoured vehicles, secure radios, logistics and even Meals Ready to Eat to feed the Russian forces in Ukraine that are already suffering from lack of food and fuel. Future historians may well conclude that keeping China out of the Ukraine conflict avoided a relapse into the Cold War and preserved the multilateral order and globalisation despite the enormous harm that Putin has inflicted on them. The liberal democracies can survive Putin's Russia as long as it remains an isolated pariah. This is now the task for western diplomats and they should leave no stone unturned in trying to achieve it.

Keywords: Russia, China, United States, global competition, Russia-Ukraine war.

In recent weeks, President Joe Biden has been in Brussels for the NATO summit and for meetings with EU and G7 leaders. Ukraine is clearly the dominant theme and the agenda for all three meetings has largely written itself. In the first place, demonstrating the unity and resolve of the transatlantic democracies in opposing the Russian invasion of Ukraine and ensuring that Putin and his regime pay the highest possible price for their

unprovoked aggression. The war in Ukraine may go on for a long time and sustaining the course of economic pressure on Russia, isolation of the Putin regime and assistance to Ukraine may prove even more important than the immediate flourish of gritty resolve that the allies showed in the first month of Russia's "special military operation." Biden has committed the United States to a permanent military presence on NATO's eastern flank and this, together with the establishment of four new multinational battalions in the Black Sea region, will be welcome news to NATO member states that now feel themselves to be in the front line of Moscow's ambition to reconstitute a Tsarist sphere of influence, if not a new Tsarist empire in eastern Europe. The United States has announced new sanctions against Russia, particularly targeting the Duma, and has urged the European allies to go further and faster in reducing their oil and gas purchases from Moscow. Washington's offer to supply more of its LNG to Europe and build the infrastructure to increase its export volumes could make it easier for European allies to transition rapidly from dependency on Russia than has seemed possible or probable up to now. The United States is also encouraging the allies to keep up their supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine and to ramp up their production of anti-air and anti-armour missiles to ensure that the supply does not dry up at just the moment when the Ukrainian forces are pushing the Russian forces back along the Black Sea coast and regaining territory. At the NATO summit the UK announced that it was sending a further 6000 missiles to Kyiv, Sweden 5000 and Germany 2000. All very helpful to Ukraine but given the intensity of the fighting these supplies will be used up in weeks.

Yet Biden put a fourth priority on the NATO and EU tables this week as the final leg of a successful strategy to ensure that Putin loses in Ukraine-both militarily and politically. This is keeping China out of the conflict. In pursuing this goal, Biden is following a time honoured precept of conflict management : if you are not intervening yourself in a war (and Biden has made clear over the past few weeks that the United States will not put its troops on the ground in Ukraine nor its fighter jets in its airspace), then it is vital that you prevent other powers intervening in support of the other side. Some readers of this analysis will be reminded of the Spanish Civil War in

the 1930s when France and the United Kingdom laboured intensely in the League of Nations to enforce an arms embargo and policy of neutrality vis a vis the conflict only to see Mussolini and Hitler send their troops and air forces to support the nationalists under Franco. Needless to say, Franco won and then imposed an iron fist on Spain for the next 40 years. Could China now come to the rescue of Russia?

In recent times, Washington has publicised intelligence that indicates that Putin, faced with setbacks and stalemate in his Ukraine campaign, has turned to Beijing for help. According the *The New York Times*, Putin has sent Chinese President Xi a long shopping list of military equipment including drones, surface to air missiles, armoured vehicles, secure radios, logistics and even Meals Ready to Eat to feed the Russian forces in Ukraine that are already suffering from lack of food and fuel. In addition, Russia is looking for financial assistance, Russian access to the Chinese bank payments clearing system as an alternative to the SWIFT system that has been largely blocked by Western sanctions and the use of Chinese shipping, ports and supply chains. Even before the invasion, Russia had signed deals with Beijing to supply more oil and gas as well as the timber and raw materials that fuel the Chinese economy. Russia has also offloaded much if its wheat surplus onto the Chinese market given China's own poor harvest last year. Now Putin is hoping for advance payment from Xi for these exports to help cushion the blow of Western asset freezes and disinvestments.

Will Xi be minded to give Putin the help he wants? At first sight the answer would seem to be yes as Xi has invested heavily in his relationship with his fellow authoritarian, Putin. Beyond factors like personal chemistry and the tactical support that the two strongmen can give each other in defying international criticism, there are three strategic reasons why Russia's friendship is useful to China.

In first place, security on China's northern border allows Beijing to shift its military spending from its army to its navy, and to challenging the United States in the Indo-Pacific. In 1969 there were military clashes between the Soviet Union and Mao's China as both countries disputed islands and the border demarcation along the Amal and Ussuri rivers. Yet in 1989 they signed a treaty agreeing on the border with the result that a less strategically

vulnerable China has been able to focus on power projection in the East and South China seas. This also includes building up the long range missile, maritime and amphibious capabilities to launch an invasion of Taiwan as well as turn the reefs and shoals occupied by Beijing in the South China Sea into permanent Chinese military bases. The border agreement has also be benefited Putin in that he has been able to transfer military units from the Far East to fight in Ukraine.

In second place Russia has become, as said already, a primary supplier of energy, food and raw materials to China, including fertiliser, nickel, uranium, zinc, palladium and iron ore. It has also transferred considerable amounts of military technology in aircraft design and jet engines and ship building expertise including in aircraft carrier design and submarines. The technology also extends to satellites and space exploration and Moscow and Beijing have been working on a mission to the Moon in 2024. If Russia emerges weaker and isolated after the war in Ukraine, with many of the sanctions remaining in place, Beijing will be able to drive some hard bargains for its Russian imports given that Moscow may well be shut out of other markets. A weakened Russia as junior partner is in China's interest. Russia has the added advantage of being contiguous to China so that supply chains and transportation routes are secure in contrast to more easily disrupted and extended maritime links and road and rail routes across the Middle East and Central and South West Asia.

Finally, Putin has value to Beijing as a spoiler, frustrating the efforts of successive US administrations to pivot fully to the Indo-Pacific, and to strategic competition with China. Whether it was Trump having to fend off accusations of Russian interference in the US elections and collusion with his own election campaign or Biden now having to confront Russia on NATO's borders, Putin is a timely agent of diversion for Xi. The additional troops, aircraft, ships and equipment that Washington is sending to Europe to bolster NATO's eastern flank, many of which will remain permanently and possibly for several years, cannot be sent to Guam, the Philippines or Japan. Putin's interventions in Syria, Libya or his use of Wagner Group mercenaries in the Sahel keep the Pentagon and the US intelligence agencies focused on Moscow and divert assets away from tracking China. Having the United States fighting on several fronts is clearly a core Chinese interest.

In deciding whether to assist Russia, Xi may also feel constrained by the Joint Declaration that he signed with Putin on February 4 when the latter visited Beijing ahead of the opening of the Winter Olympics. This was not the first joint declaration as Moscow and Beijing have been churning out these texts since 2001. Yet the latest iteration is certainly the longest and most detailed. It states that there are "no limits" to China-Russia cooperation and covers the whole gamut of security, foreign policy, science and technology, economic cooperation and forming a common stance towards the rest of the world. Putin would undoubtedly have informed Xi of his intention to invade Ukraine while he was in Beijing as not to do so would constitute a serious breach of trust, but Putin might not have revealed the full extent of his "special military operation," nor his ultimate war aims in Ukraine. This would be a delicate issue as China has invested heavily in Ukraine as part of its Belt and Road programme. It has spent $1.7 billion in building a deep port basin in Odessa and in Ukrainian agriculture, transport and technology projects, including in the health and aviation sectors. So it has much to lose as Moscow destroys the infrastructure associated with these projects. Yet faithful to the Joint Declaration, China has given Putin a good deal of rhetorical support. Xi has said that China is "on the right side of history" in backing Russia. Beijing has refused to condemn Russia or refer to the war in Ukraine as an invasion. It has followed the Moscow line in blaming NATO and its policy of enlargement for the confrontation and supported Russia's failed attempts to pass a UN Security Council Resolution on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine (which does not mention Russia's responsibility for causing this catastrophe).

Yet at the same time, Beijing seems taken aback and even embarrassed by the scale of the war in Ukraine and the shockwaves it is provoking throughout the global economy. China has repeatedly called for a ceasefire and says that it "regrets" the conflict. It has given humanitarian aid to Ukraine (although so far only a miserly $1.6 million). Moreover it abstained in the votes condemning Russia's sanctions in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly. It has offered to mediate although so far without seeking to assume the pro-active engagement shown by Israel and Turkey. Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, has asserted defiantly that

"China will never accept any external coercion or pressure and opposes unfounded accusations," but beyond Moscow friendly rhetoric, Beijing's actions thus far have been much more circumspect. China has denied that it is giving Russia military or financial support - also at least thus far. So what will be influencing Beijing's calculus behind the scenes?

Certainly the fear of secondary sanctions against China if it is found to be helping Russia, overtly and covertly. The Chinese leadership, rather like its Russian counterpart, will have been surprised by the unity of the transatlantic allies and the liberal democracies more broadly in standing up to Moscow and imposing far reaching sanctions on Russia. The autocracies have long assumed that the democracies are too used to their creature comforts and too divided in their economic and business interests to go beyond symbolic sanctions and declarations of moral condemnation. Yet NATO has been revived, Germany is increasing its defence budget to 2% of GDP and spending €100 billion on the modernisation of the Bundeswehr. The EU and North America have stood together in imposing severe pain on Russia's financial system and international trade. They are tightening export controls and now even targeting Russia's energy exports. International business is fleeing Russia, the rouble is collapsing and the stock market is seizing up. Not only the oligarchs but the entire Russian population is being impoverished in a way that could over time promote social unrest. The West is decoupling from Russia in a manner that is likely to be lasting and perhaps irreversible. This is a strong message to Beijing. The Chinese have been trying to reduce their reliance on the dollar denominated international trading and financial system for some years now so as to better withstand sanctions and Western anti-coercion responses to China's trade practices. Yet the yuan is not yet an international trading currency nor fully convertible. Recently China has asked Saudi Arabia to use the yuan rather than the dollar for its oil sales to Beijing and Russia and China are moving their trade in commodities into euros. Yet Chinese economists calculate that it will still take several years before Beijing has financial autonomy from the dollar and the US banking system. It has massive assets in foreign banks and foreign currency. It has extensive overseas investments and is much more reliant on trade in advanced goods and services and the smooth functioning of global supply chains than Russia which is essentially a commodities exporter.

Moreover China has witnessed the growing mood of firmness vis a vis Beijing in the US Congress and in Europe and Asia. Already before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China was subject to a number of sanctions due to its treatment of its Uighur minority and clampdown in Hong Kong. The European Parliament has frozen approval of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment for nearly 2 years and is taking Beijing to the World Trade Organisation for its economic bullying of Lithuania after the latter opened a Taiwan representation office in Vilnius. So in a nutshell China can no longer feel secure that the current mood of Western resolve to face down Putin will not also extend to China if it is seen to help Russia to use force successfully in Ukraine and return Europe to Cold War confrontation. Beijing needs to hedge its bets. The signals of a common US-EU stance towards Beijing emerging from this week's NATO, G7 and EU summits in Brussels will be key in influencing Xi's calculus of the balance of risk and opportunity in siding with the Kremlin.

Moreover the Ukraine conflict has given more credibility to the notion of an epochal clash between liberal democracy and authoritarianism on the global stage. There were many sceptics of this narrative dear to the Biden administration before Putin's invasion but they will now have a harder time trying to refute the thesis that liberal democracy versus the authoritarians is the defining principle of global politics in the 21st century. President Zelensky has made this his central message in his emotional and effective speeches to the US Congress, the European Parliament and a multitude of other parliaments throughout Europe and Asia. He has framed Ukraine as the defensive bulwark of freedom and liberal democracy globally and as the test case for peace and deterrence versus more aggression and war. In Chinese social media and indeed the mainstream media this point has been picked up by Chinese nationalist commentators, not normally friendly to the West, who worry that China is being sucked by Putin into this narrative in a way that will also isolate China, limit its options and force it prematurely to confront a newly recharged West before it is economically and militarily ready. The nationalists know also that a military humiliation for Putin in Ukraine would make him politically vulnerable in Moscow. Putin's fall would be a major blow to the image of the strongman which Xi

cultivates as well. If Beijing comes to believe that Putin's survival is at risk it may make its mediation offer more active. Indeed several leaders, including President Zelensky or the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan have appealed to China to put pressure on Moscow to stop the war. Yet if China's intervention only offers Putin a face saving exit (for instance immunity from war crimes indictments) or China introduces peacekeepers into Ukraine to freeze Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territory and its forces in place, Western interests and certainly Ukraine's sovereignty and independence would be compromised.

So, there are some restraints on China's freedom of manoeuvre in assisting Russia. How can the transatlantic allies build on these to develop a successful strategy to keep Beijing on the sidelines of the Ukraine conflict?

First is to stay united and stick to a common stance. This is not the moment for the EU to reprise old debates about being equidistant between Washington and Beijing in order to assert its own distinct and autonomous foreign policy trying to balance competition and the defence of EU values with engagement. When the EU leaders hold their summit with President Xi at the beginning of April they should deliver the same firm message that President Biden delivered to him in a recent phone call; and which was also delivered by Jake Sullivan, the US National Security Adviser when he met his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, in Rome two weeks ago.

The second element is for the EU to join the United States In rallying support for the sanctions against Russia in the UN and wider world, targeting their diplomatic efforts on those countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America that so far have chosen to sit on the fence. A joint approach where both Washington and Brussels use their respective relationships and levers of influence will be more successful than if they work in isolation. China prides itself on its good relations with countries in the G77 and non-aligned community. So the more it sees the EU and the United States building a broad coalition beyond the western liberal democracies to condemn Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, the more it will fear the harm to its own image as a champion of peace and development aid.

Next is to keep China on the TV screens and front pages of the international media. Beijing likes to operate in the shadows where its actions

will not attract scrutiny and criticism. So publicising China's actions and using intelligence driven operations and disclosures, as the United States has done throughout the Ukraine crisis to keep its adversaries on the back foot, will force Beijing to react, and either acknowledge what it is doing or issue denials - as it did recently regarding Chinese weapons deliveries to Russia. It will again focus China on the reputational risk of being too close to Russia.

Finally, the Chinese have been studying Russia's campaign in Ukraine closely. They have seen with alarm what happens when a military action is poorly prepared and executed and when the invading country has not properly prepared itself economically to face the blowback of sanctions. It has seen the consequences of military planning based on false assumptions about the speed of progress and the adequacy of supply chains or the local and international reactions. Beijing has also seen how a determined popular resistance can frustrate a much larger invading force. So Ukraine's plucky resistance at great cost In terms of the physical destruction of the country has probably won time for the people of Taiwan. China will now need to think how it can achieve the overwhelming military superiority and economic autarky needed for a successful occupation of Taiwan. So Putin's invasion has been a useful reality check for Xi, but it has also bought time for the United States and its allies to see which further assistance they can give to Taipei to enhance the country's capabilities for resistance and resilience. If Xi is focusing first and foremost on Taiwan, then Putin's invasion has not helped his cause, and siding with Putin will only make Taiwan's unification with China by force of arms more costly and more risky.

Future historians may well conclude that keeping China out of the Ukraine conflict avoided a relapse into the Cold War and preserved the multilateral order and globalisation despite the enormous harm that Putin has inflicted on them. The liberal democracies can survive Putin's Russia as long as it remains an isolated pariah. This is now the task for western diplomats and they should leave no stone unturned in trying to achieve it.

Part Two

WAR AND SECURITY ISSUES
IN THE BLACK SEA AREA

Nuclear Security
in the Black Sea Region

Ioana Constantin-Bercean

Abstract. The extended region of the Black Sea is currently the hottest point on the European map, and one of NATO's most important concerns. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has generated multiple security concerns, the most menacing of which is the nuclear threat. Threats with the use of nuclear weapons, the irresponsible actions at Chernobyl and the capture of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant have intensified the concerns and discourse regarding the nuclear danger. To these is added an older problem, the trafficking of nuclear components from the Black Sea region, an activity which, in the context of the war and the lack of law enforcement control, has an escalation potential. This essay offers an overview of perceptions on nuclear security risks in the wider Black Sea region, along with some assessments of how the level and nature of those risks have changed in Ukraine since 2014. The research addresses the three levels of the mentioned nuclear risk with a special focus on the potential use of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNPs). The Black Sea region, which has proven to be a crossroads of vulnerability in the conflict, requires a renewed strategic approach and strengthened cooperation between riparian states, on the one hand, and between these and the European and transatlantic partners, on the other.

Keywords: Black Sea, nuclear security, cooperation, Ukraine, Russia, nuclear non-proliferation, tactical nuclear weapons.

The Black Sea region in the emerging bipolar world

The Black Sea region is one of the world's critical crossroads, a strategic intersection of east–west and north–south corridors that enable the free flow of people, ideas, and goods from Asia to Europe and from the

former Soviet territory to the Middle East and Africa. However, the ongoing Ukrainian crisis has prompted deep security concerns with regard to the future of the relations between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community on the one hand, and the security balance in the Black Sea region on the other hand. Across the region – which brings together the six littoral states (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) and a hinterland including the South Caucasus and Moldova – there is deep and legitimate concern regarding the nuclear security issues, whether they are related to a possible Russian attack or related to the nuclear smuggling cases.

The international order has entered a new era that is characterized by dramatic changes, in terms of both structure and process. Within this evolving new bipolar world, the Black Sea region just became a geopolitical point of interests. However, the security issues revolving around it are complex and challenging. One of key issues that have shaped the profile of the region to date, and will continue to define its future, is related to nuclear security. If this article had been written before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, nuclear security in the Black Sea region would have been discussed in black market terms, caused by the dissolution of the former Soviet Union (USSR) and its integrated system of governance and control of a vast nuclear fuel cycle. This was a primary nuclear security concern just at the dawn of the new unipolar era. In the 2000s the concern about nuclear smuggling was combined with the fear that nuclear and radioactive materials would be used in mass-impact terrorist attacks. By the 2010s the nuclear security agenda had expanded further, to take account of new risks such as the targeted use of poisonous materials in terrorist attacks and the vulnerability of critical facilities to cyberattacks. However, recent developments in the wider Black Sea region are raising more issues related to nuclear security, mainly related to the not so veiled threat of the Kremlin to use nuclear capabilities in the war in Ukraine, but also the use of nuclear power plants as weapons.

The Ukrainian crisis can be described as the last important episode of a geopolitical battle between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community to promote and defend their respective interests in the Black Sea region, still characterized by a persistent strategic vacuum and a zero-sum game. The critical level of Russia-West tensions raised by the February 2022 invasion –

most probably the highest since 1991 – is likely to reshape the Black Sea security balance, as the area is particularly susceptible to strategic rivalries and power ambitions. Since the beginning of the crisis, NATO has increased its military activity to reassure Eastern and Central European allies, while Russia has been pursuing a wide-ranging plan to strengthen its military capabilities after the March 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Given these new realities, this essay will evaluate nuclear security and the normative behavior of states in the extended Black Sea region on three levels: the trafficking of radioactive substances (present in the so-called contested spaces), the threat of the use of nuclear weapons by the Kremlin and the use of civilian nuclear power plants as a shield.

Cautionary predictions and the need for an eclectic approach

In her 2007 book, *Nuclear Logics*, Etel Solingen asked a deceptively simple but extremely important question: Why have some states sought to acquire nuclear weapons while others have chosen to forego such capabilities? International relations scholars have paid much attention to nuclear deterrence and nuclear interaction between the Great Powers, but the motivations behind the policies to acquire such arsenals have often created disputes at the theoretical level.[1] The most frequent explanations were offered in a realist key, especially in the logic of deterrence (US vs. USSR, India vs. Pakistan, Israel vs. any regional actor with hostile intentions) or political survival of autocratic leaders (North Korea.) But Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the restraint of the West (NATO/USA) from intervening other than by providing logistical, financial support or supplying armaments, brings into discussion another fundamental question – does the nuclear arsenal constitute a real capability to discouragement? Or will its possession, in the future, allow other nuclear states to invade non-nuclear states, under the premise that NATO will never engage in a conflict with a nuclear state? And the first natural reaction to this dilemma could be to rethink national policies in the direction of nuclear armament. For

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[1] Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 55.

example, for Japan and South Korea, the main motivation behind nuclear decisions will be the perceived reliability of security assurances provided by the United States.

Therefore, realism explain states' behaviour through the lens of survival. Consequently, power politics among states creates spheres of influence that are the default mode of international relations. So, the realists are seeing the war in Ukraine as a manifestation of a classic "security dilemma."[2] In terms of this vision, the international liberal order of the last three decades was a form of naïve parenthesis, and we are now back to the normal dynamics of relations among states. Moreover, Russia claims to strengthen the so-called buffer zone between NATO member states and its border.

On the other hand, the liberal position contends that, because our global order is guaranteed by international institutions designed to enhance cooperation among states, and because we live in a highly interdependent world, starting a war of such magnitude is so counterproductive that it could only be the result of an irrational (or very ill-advised) decision. Thus, liberalism has a very limited ability to explain Russia's strategy. Constructivism offers an alternative analysis on the role of ideational rather than material factors in international relations. At a very simple level, this is helpful as provides more insight into the mindset of the Russian leadership and the "irrational"[3] decision to invade Ukraine. For example, Russia's increasingly antagonistic behaviour has long been seen as based on a "renewed sense of confidence and recovery from the humiliation it felt in the wake of the Cold War."[4] However, because this war intertwines both the imperial memory of Russia and very strong material dimensions, this is only part of the explanation.

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[2] John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2 no. 2 (July 2011): 157-80, https://doi.org/10.2307/2009187.

[3] Stephan Davidshofer, Siobhán Martin, "Theoretical Thinking and Policymaking: Are We Really All Realists Once Again?," in *The Russia-Ukraine War's Implications for Global Security: A First Multi-issue Analysis*, eds. Thomas Greminger and Tobias Vestner (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 2022), 9.

[4] Dominique Moïsi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation, and Hope are Reshaping the World* (New York: Anchor, 2010), 44.

From this succinct outline, it appears that realism is best suited to explain the ongoing geopolitical situation surrounding the war in Ukraine. Among other examples, the European Union's quite reactive actions since February 24, 2022, show that the Russian invasion was – to some extent – a wake-up call for the member states on forgetting the importance of power politics. And, accordingly to Stephen Walt, "realism is one of the theories that have been vindicated by the war in Ukraine, while others have fallen flat."[5] And by those that have fallen flat he means liberalism and constructivism, which have been on the defensive since the outbreak of the war, trying to reassert their relevance by making "additions to their original claims."[6] However, the realist approach is refuted by Fiona Hill and Angela Stent in an essay published in August 2022 in *Foreign Affairs*, the two authors arguing that Russia's president invaded Ukraine not because he felt threatened by NATO expansion or by Western "provocations,"[7] but he ordered his "special military operation"[8] because he believes that it is Russia's divine right to rule Ukraine, to wipe out the country's national identity, and to integrate its people into a Greater Russia.[9] So Hill and Stent propose an interconnection of realism with constructivism, offering an identarian-imperialist perspective of the reasons behind Moscow's decision to invade Ukraine.

The nuclear non-proliferation regime was built around the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The NPT is the normative barricade against threats to use nuclear weapons. But it is embedded in a fabric of other agreements, practices and norms that require international cooperation and leadership from the major nuclear powers. Russia, along with the International Atomic

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[5] Stephen M. Walt, "An International Relations Theory Guide to the War in Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, March 8, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/08/an-international-relations-theory-guide-to-ukraines-war/.

[6] Francis Fukuyama, "A Country of Their Own. Liberalism Needs the Nation," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022, 80-92, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-01/francis-fukuyama-liberalism-country.

[7] Fiona Hill and Angela Stent, "The World Putin Wants. Distortions about the Past Feed Delusions about the Future," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2022, 78-93, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/world-putin-wants-fiona-hill-angela-stent.

[8] Hill and Stent, "The World Putin Wants."

[9] Hill and Stent, "The World Putin Wants."

Energy Agency (IAEA), played a central role in the non-proliferation regime. This situation will be difficult to manage (unless there is a return to the original norms) in an international system where there is a nuclear state considered responsible before the illegal and unjustified invasion of a neighbouring state, but which has now become a pariah state which has evaded international norms and taboos, and which is still so actively involved in the nuclear arena. In addition to changing the global non-proliferation regime, Russia may have sent an ominous signal regarding the future of arms control, an area in which all treaties and agreements have either expired or been abandoned by both the Russian Federation and by the US.

As proven by the evolution of global politics in recent decades, international relations are not a binary world, in 1s and 0s, but rather a complicated system which allows the researcher to propose an eclectic approach, therefore to analyse the very same event through a combined theoretical lens. It is important to make the counter-intuitive effort to challenge the one-size-fits-all approach in order to avoid superficial analysis.

The future of the nuclear normative order

At the end of the Cold War, the concerns regarding nuclear weapons shifted to nonproliferation, terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons and toward the black market. The NPT was given a permanent extension in 1995, while the United States and Russia embarked on dramatic reductions in their nuclear arsenals. However, the new nuclear age increased regional and international tensions and the key norms that have underpinned the existing nuclear order – most crucially deterrence, non-use, and nonproliferation – are under stress. A new norm of disarmament has emerged but it is deeply contested, while other norms, such as arms control, are disappearing altogether. Most disturbingly, nuclear weapons "are being relegitimised in states' security policies."[10]

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[10] Nina Tannenwald, "The Great Unraveling: The Future of the Nuclear Normative Order," in *Meeting the Challenges of the New Nuclear Age: Emerging Risks and Declining Norms in the Age of Technological Innovation and Changing Nuclear Doctrines*, eds. Nina Tannenwald and James M. Acton (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Science, 2020),

Norms are shared expectations about behaviour.[11] They can be highly formalized, as in a codified legal regime (for example, the nonproliferation norm of the NPT), or they can be de facto norms, such as the norm of nuclear non-use. Norms depend for their maintenance and strengthening on some degree of behavioural compliance, which may differ for different norms. Scholars debate how much noncompliance will unravel a norm. Noncompliant behaviour does not necessarily invalidate a norm, but over time increasing noncompliance does erode norms.[12]

From an ethical point of view, the nuclear weapons themselves are inherently immoral. President Barack Obama's remarks at Hiroshima in May 2016 highlighted this ethical perspective. In the first-ever visit to Hiroshima by a sitting US president, a highly symbolic moment, Obama called on the international community to pursue a nuclear-free world and stated that preventing the catastrophe of nuclear war demands a "moral revolution"[13] as well as "progress in human institutions."[14] From this perspective, nuclear weapons, even "small"[15] ones, are taboo. The risk of escalation is ever-present, and use would open a Pandora's box of more use. As President John F. Kennedy stated in a meeting on NATO policy in December 1962, "once one resorts to nuclear weapons one moves into a whole new world. There is no way to prevent escalation once the decision is made to employ nuclear weapons."[16] Thus any use of nuclear weapons, no matter how small, would

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https://www.amacad.org/publication/emerging-risks-declining-norms/section/3#toNote2, 6-31.

[11] Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 41.

[12] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52 no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 878–917, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601361.

[13] The White House, "Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan at Hiroshima Peace Memorial," May 27, 2016, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/27/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan-hiroshima-peace.

[14] The White House, "Remarks by President Obama."

[15] Tannenwald, "The Great Unraveling," 10.

[16] Memorandum, "NATO and Nuclear Matters," conversation between President John F. Kennedy and the Foreign Minister of Denmark, U.S. Department of State, December 4, 1962 quoted in Tannenwald, "The Great Unraveling," 10.

be morally unacceptable. In this view, there is no such thing as an ethical nuclear bomb. In the long run, even deterrence itself is also immoral,[17] because relying on a policy that threatens to kill millions of innocent people is fundamentally wrong, while the risk of accidental or intended use can never be eliminated.

Moreover, the non-use and disarmament norms face powerful norms that run in the opposite direction: those that associate nuclear weapons with prestige and great power status.[18] After Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Moscow's rhetoric regarding the use of nuclear weapons, those are once again being celebrated as symbols of national power. For the older nuclear powers, nuclear capabilities have become a matter of both national identity and habit. According to Britain's former Prime Minister Tony Blair, the utility of nuclear weapons is "non-existent in terms of military use."[19] Nevertheless, Blair wrote in his memoir, giving up Britain's arsenal would be "too big a downgrading of our [Britain's] status as a nation."[20] And just following this paradigm, Russia increasingly relies on its nuclear arsenal for signalling and prestige. For disarmament to succeed, supporters will have to dismantle a powerful sense of "nuclear exceptionalism"[21] – leaders' views of their nations "as somehow exceptional and thereby entitled to nuclear weapons."[22]

The Ukrainian crisis and the nuclear peril in the Black Sea region

Since Russia's aggression against Ukraine, there have been direct implications in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation,

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[17] Tannenwald, "The Great Unraveling," 10.

[18] Anne Harrington de Santana, "Nuclear Weapons as the Currency of Power: Deconstructing the Fetishism of Force," *Nonproliferation Review* 16, no. 3, (November 2009): 327, https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700903255029.

[19] Tony Blair, *A Journey: My Political Life* (New York: Vintage, 2011).

[20] Blair, *A Journey*.

[21] Blair, *A Journey*.

[22] Kjølv Egeland, "Change the Incentives: Stigmatize Nuclear Weapons," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 15, 2016, https://thebulletin.org/change-incentives-stigmatize-nuclear-weapons9261#wt.

particularly in the Black Sea region. The most important issues are the freezing of the US-Russia strategic stability dialogue and the allegations and actual threat of the use of nuclear force. The recurrent menaces by Russia to use nuclear weapons against NATO countries if they interfered with the war as well as the search for justifying the use of (tactical or low-yield)[23] nuclear weapons against Ukraine seriously contributed to increasing the level of the nuclear risk. This risk was aggravated by a combination of three main factors.

First, the ambiguity of the 2020 Russian nuclear doctrine,[24] which would justify the use of nuclear weapons in case of an "existential"[25] threat against the state, without specifying whether this would include a threat against the regime. Moreover, Moscow implied that it might authorize the use of nuclear weapons even against a non-nuclear weapon state (Ukraine in this case) in case of its association with a nuclear-weapon state (NATO military support) or its use of weapons of mass destruction (hence the "false flag"[26] Russian allegations of Ukrainian preparation for acquiring nuclear weapons and the use of chemical or biological weapons).

In the 2000 Russian Military Doctrine, Moscow stated the possibility of using nuclear weapons in a regional war "under critical circumstances when conventional means proved their inefficiency."[27] Deterring conventional conflicts (especially regional wars) with nuclear weapons means that nuclear weapons are regarded as a reactive measure, serving as the main insurance that Russia will neither be defeated in nor even engaged with regional war.

From multiple angles, it seems unlikely that the introduction of nuclear deterrence has removed the limited use of nuclear weapons in a

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[23] Marc Finaud, "Implications for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation," in *The Russia-Ukraine War's Implications*, 30.

[24] Petr Topychkanov, "Russia's Nuclear Doctrine Moves the Focus from Non-Western Threats," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, October 1, 2020, https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2020/russias-nuclear-doctrine-moves-focus-non-western-threats.

[25] Finaud, "Implications."

[26] Finaud, "Implications."

[27] Arms Control Association, "Russia's Military Doctrine," August 27, 2018, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000-05/russias-military-doctrine.

regional conflict from the range of contingencies. If faced with a major defeat in a conventional conflict, Russia is nonetheless likely to cross the threshold. In 2014, Russia's Military Doctrine introduced the notion of conventional deterrence, which has, at a minimum, heightened the nuclear threshold and introduced the possibility that the same category of conflicts could be waged and terminated without resort to nuclear weapons. In this document, the clause of nuclear weapons use was abbreviated to: "when the existence of the state is in jeopardy,"[28] but still, the nature of the threat was not clarified.

Words such as "nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence,"[29] "strategic stability,"[30] and "unacceptable damage"[31] were widely used in 2017, within *The Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Naval Operations for the Period Until 2030* document. A noteworthy passage can also be found in the *Russian Deterrence Fundamentals* (2020) regarding the Black Sea region. Among the "red lines"[32] for nuclear weapons use, Article 19C notes an "attack by an adversary against critical governmental or military sites of the Russian Federation, disruption of which would undermine nuclear forces response actions."[33] Over the last couple of decades, Russia gradually tried to turn the Black Sea into a Russian basin with the help of its navy and the effective combination of its nuclear and conventional deterrence posture, all of which provide it with anti-access, area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. This arsenal includes the so-called "March 1st weapons,"[34] a term which pertains to four types of new strategic nuclear weapons introduced by President Vladimir Putin during his Federal Assembly speech on March 1, 2018.

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[28] Arms Control Association, "Russia's Military Doctrine."

[29] Anna Davis, *The Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Naval Operations for the Period Until 2030* (Newport: Russia Maritime Studies Institute/United States Naval War College, 2017), https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=rmsi_research.

[30] Davis, *The Fundamentals of the State Policy.*

[31] Davis, *The Fundamentals of the State Policy.*

[32] Polina Sinovets, "Hot off the Press, Colder in Scope: Russia's Nuclear Deterrence Fundamentals 2020," *Ponars Eurasia*, August 7, 2020, https://www.ponarseurasia.org/hot-off-the-press-colder-in-scope-russia-s-nuclear-deterrence-fundamentals-2020/.

[33] Sinovets, "Hot off the Press."

[34] Polina Sinovets, "The Real and Projected Strategic Dimension of the Russian Black Sea Fleet," *Ponars Eurasia*, December 21, 2020, https://www.ponarseurasia.org/the-real-and-projected-strategic-dimension-of-the-russian-black-sea-fleet/.

Second, the Russian nuclear drills[35] and demonstration of capabilities (Kinzhal[36] hypersonic missiles, Sarmat[37] intercontinental missiles, etc.) that may not only send signals but also result in misunderstandings, false alarms, unintended escalation, accidental or unauthorized launches, etc.

Third, the potential disruptive use of new or emerging technologies[38] such as cyberwarfare, artificial intelligence for autonomous weapon systems, or anti-satellite warfare that can affect command-and-control systems of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, another aspect regarding nuclear security in the Black Sea region is related to tactical nuclear weapons (TNW). These capabilities could be defined as weapons of mass destruction, also designed as non-strategic nuclear weapons or theatre nuclear weapons, and refer to nuclear weapons which are intended to be used on the military battlefield, and are not covered by the New START regime.[39] As defined by the *Department of Defence Dictionary of Military Terms*, the tactical use of nuclear weapons is "the use of nuclear weapons by land, sea or air forces against opposing forces, supporting installations or facilities, in support of operations that contribute to the accomplishment of a military mission of limited scope, or in support of the military commander's scheme of manoeuvre, usually limited to the area of military operations."[40]

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[35] Ivana Saric, "Russian Forces Hold Drills with Nuclear-capable Missiles," Axios, June 1, 2022, https://www.axios.com/2022/06/01/russian-nuclear-force-drill-missile.

[36] Lia Sokol, "Russia's Kinzhal Hypersonic Missile: A Game-Changing Weapon or a Distraction?," Nuclear Threat Initiative, April 7, 2022, https://www.nti.org/atomic-pulse/russias-kinzhal-hypersonic-missile-a-game-changing-weapon-or-a-distraction/.

[37] Mike Wall, "Russia conducts 1st Full Flight Test of New 'Sarmat' Intercontinental Ballistic Missile," *Space*, April 22, 2022, https://www.space.com/russia-test-launch-sarmat-icbm.

[38] Bernard Norlain ed., *Les nouvelles technologies et la stratégie nucléaire* (New Technologies and Nuclear Strategy) (Paris: Initiatives pour le désarmement nucléaire, 2021), 23.

[39] The New START regime signed by the United States and the Russian Federation on April 8, 2010 in Prague, limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons. See Grant Schneider, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons, NATO and Russia," in *A Collection of Papers from the 2010 Conference Series*, ed. Mark Jansson (Washington DC: CSIS Project on Nuclear Issues, 2011), 47.

[40] The dictionary is available on the Department of Defence website: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/.

During the Cold War, the Black Sea region witnessed the deployment of TNWs on air and sea platforms, as well as on land-based systems. Whereas the USSR was believed to possess anywhere from 15,000 to 25,000 nonstrategic nuclear weapons stored in 500 to 600 facilities in the late 1980s and early-1990s, the US had decreased the number of TNWs from more than 7,000 in the mid-1970s to fewer than 1,000 by the mid-1990s.[41] It is believed that nowadays Russia may have between 1,000 and 2,000 operational TNWs (see Table 1) stored in around 50 bases across the country. In turn, NATO also deployed US nonstrategic nuclear weapons in the Black Sea region, in Turkey and Greece. Ankara hosted US theatre nuclear weapons as early as the 1960s: in 1961, the US deployed 15 nuclear tipped medium range Jupiter ballistic missiles at Cigil airbase, near Izmir.[42] After 1991, both the US and NATO decreased the importance of TNWs in their strategic doctrines, and while the Clinton Administration denuclearized the surface fleet, the George W. Bush Administration withdrew US nonstrategic weapons from Greece altogether by dispatching them to the United Kingdom and the Ramstein US airbase in Germany.[43] Today, is believed that US has "around 200 B-61 free-fall gravity bombs dispatched to six bases located in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Turkey."[44] Among these 200 bombs, Turkey is reportedly hosting 60 to 70 TNWs at the US air force base of Incirlik.[45]

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[41] Amy F. Woolf, "Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons," *Congressional Research Service Report*, January 3, 2014, https://sgp.fas.org/crs/nuke/RL32572.pdf, 8-21.

[42] Aaron Stein, "Turkey and Tactical Nuclear Weapons: A Political Love Affair," *Edam Non-Proliferation Policy Briefs*, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, 2012, http://www.mustafakibaroglu.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/edam-nuclearsecurity-turkishperspective-chapters-march2015.pdf, 2.

[43] Michaela Dodge, "US Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Critical for Transatlantic Security," The Heritage Foundation, no. 2875, February 18, 2014, https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/BG3311.pdf, 4.

[44] Dodge, "US Nuclear Weapons," 6.

[45] Igor Delanoë, "Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Persisting Security Challenge to the Black Sea Region," Centre for International and European Studies, July 2015, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/193512/NeighbourhoodPolicyPaper(16).pdf, 3-4.

Table 1. Russia and US/NATO TNWs[46]

	Russia	US/NATO
Overall number of TNWs	1,000-2,000+	1,100
Sea-launched	330 to 700	320
Ground Forces	170 to 210	0
Land-based Missiles and Air Defense	166 to 430	0
Air-launched	334 to 730	500+
Deployed in the Black Sea Region	Information unknown	60 to 70
Sea-launched	Information unknown	0
Land-based	Information unknown	0
Air-launched	Information unknown	60 to 70

Table 2. TNWs on the six Black Sea riparian states
(Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine)

	Nuclear weapons
Bulgaria	No
Georgia	No
Romania	No
Russia	Yes – Strategic and tactical nuclear weapons
Turkey	Yes – NATO's tactical nuclear weapons
Ukraine	No

Therefore, as can be seen in Table 2, of all the riparian states, only Russia has its own nuclear capabilities, while Turkey is hosting some of the NATO's TNWs. Moreover, the Western analysts believe that the war in Ukraine could open the path to a growing number of deployed Russian TNWs in the Black Sea region. Russian political and military elites point to three main factors which weigh on their strategic calculus and impact policy making: the steady US progress in the development of a global missile defence system; the dramatic increased capabilities of non-nuclear weapons systems that can perform strategic missions; and the growing Chinese

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[46] The data presented in this table was collected from a study by The Heritage Foundation. For more details see Dodge, "US Nuclear Weapons."

capability to increase its nuclear arsenal, should it want to.[47] The Black Sea region matches the two first factors. In its 2010 Military Doctrine, Moscow describes NATO as well as "the deployment of troop contingents of foreign states (groups of states) on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation and its allies, and also in adjacent waters" as an essential danger."[48] Moreover, it is likely that any attempt to militarily retake Crimea, which is considered by Moscow as part of the territory of the Russian Federation, would trigger a response in line with 2014 Russia's National Security Doctrine.[49]

Whereas some have argued that if Russia is going to use its nuclear arsenal, the possible hit will be limited to a single demonstration[50] – such as a high-altitude test, which would be intended not to cause any direct casualties[51] – others have predicted more dire forms of possible Russian nuclear use. For example, Siegfried Hecker, a former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, says that "if Putin is going to use a nuclear weapon, he's going to use it. He's not going to do a demonstration."[52] Hecker's prediction is based on the fact that Russia does not have to make a demonstration of its own nuclear arsenal, because it is well known. A simple nuclear demonstration could even be counterproductive, showing that Russia is not willing to use its TNWs and thereby undermining nuclear deterrence. If President Putin decides that the use of nuclear weapons will

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[47] Dmitri Trenin, "Nuclear Deference," *Foreign Policy*, February 21, 2013, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/21/nuclear-deference/.

[48] "2014 Russian Military Doctrine," Full text available (in Russian) on the Kremlin's website, http://static.kremlin.ru/media/%20events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf.

[49] Delanoë, "Weapons of Mass Destruction."

[50] Eric Schlosser, "What If Russia Uses Nuclear Weapons In Ukraine?," *The Atlantic*, June 20, 2022, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/06/russia-ukraine-nuclear-weapon-us-response/661315/.

[51] Lauren Sukin, "Has the Russia-Ukraine War Blown up the Global Nuclear Order?," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June 28, 2022, https://thebulletin.org/2022/06/has-the-russia-ukraine-war-blown-up-the-global-nuclear-order/.

[52] John Mecklin, "Siegfried Hecker: Putin Has Destroyed the World Nuclear Order. How Should the Democracies Respond?," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April 21, 2022, https://thebulletin.org/2022/04/siegfried-hecker-putin-has-destroyed-the-world-nuclear-order-how-should-the-democracies-respond/.

compensate the military losses (or simply will keep him in power), Russia could ultimately use nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Former deputy secretary general of NATO and former US undersecretary of state for arms control and international security Rose Gottemoeller puts the chances of Russian nuclear use at "greater than one percent."[53]

To prevent such apocalyptic scenarios, the US and its allies have few tools at hand. The West has to send a clear message to Kremlin that there would be a major global response if Russia were to use nuclear weapons. Engaging Russia's partners – including China, India, and states throughout the Global South – to reaffirm the threat of political and economic fallout from any nuclear use would be essential. Moreover, the US must reiterate its security guarantees to its allies in order to strengthen extended deterrence.

Therefore, considering the exposed events, some stage conclusions can be drawn. Within the international relations field, "bigger and stronger translates to military power, and in nuclear terms, that means ever-greater numbers of ever-better nuclear weapons."[54] In the theory of nuclear deterrence, an enemy is deterred, or daunted, from launching a nuclear attack because it might know that its action will unleash an overwhelming retaliation on itself. The pitfall of such a scenario is that this also provides a strong incentive for any actor to overcome such a disadvantage by building enough weapons to overcome or preferably pre-empt such a retaliation. So, if all the actors want to avoid losing the strategic edge, they will embark on an ever-expanding arms race with all sides chasing the chimera of absolute prevalence.

Nuclear Power Plants as Weapons

The second level of the debate on nuclear security in the Black Sea region is represented by the uncertain situation surrounding the Ukrainian civil nuclear power plants. Russia's nuclear threats and its attacks on nuclear facilities, including the Chernobyl exclusion zone and the Zaporizhzhia

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[53] CISAC Stanford, "The Russia-Ukraine War: Would Putin Go Nuclear?," June 1, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gznYbFLCjiE.

[54] Mark Wolverton, *Nuclear Weapons* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2022), 202.

nuclear power plant (NPP), represent major departures from the norms that guided previous conflicts. Rebuilding these norms will be a critical global challenge moving forward.[55]

Russia's occupation of Europe's largest nuclear power station has triggered a threat of radiological disaster from a wartime incursion on an operating nuclear power plant. The occupation of Zaporizhzhia site and its use as a pre-positioned nuclear weapon is meant to threaten and intimidate not only Ukrainians but millions of Europeans across a dozen countries. This is against any war conventions agreed by both Russia and Ukraine. The violations of international norms, such as the Geneva Conventions or the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) safeguards could cause the release of destructive radioactive factors and consequent severe losses among the civilian population.

The risk around NPP Zaporizhzhia is real. The facility has six separate reactors, it is the largest nuclear power plant in Europe and the 10th largest in the world. While its containment structures are stronger than those at Chernobyl and built to withstand an airplane crashing into them, the power plant needs electricity to cool the reactors and prevent a meltdown. The military confrontations around the plant caused temporary losses of energy which affected the cooling of the reactors. Moreover, nuclear fuel and waste containers stored at the site could be damaged, releasing radiation. Finally, the plant's location on the Dnipro River means that any release of radiation could also spread to the Black Sea.[56] The international community and institutions, particularly IAEA, have asked Russia to allow inspectors access and to create a demilitarized zone around the facility. U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for all military forces to be withdrawn from the plant, a call that the US, Ukraine and at least 40 other countries have supported.

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[55] Sukin, "Has the Russia-Ukraine War Blown up the Global Nuclear Order?"
[56] Mary Glantz, "Russia's New Nuclear Threat: Power Plants as Weapons," United States Institute for Peace, August 24, 2022, https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/russias-new-nuclear-threat-power-plants-weapons.

By attacking nuclear power plants and even forcing operators to work multi-day shifts at gunpoint,[57] Russia not only violated a critical norm against warfighting at or near nuclear facilities but also emphasized the vulnerability of these facilities to terrorists, mercenaries, and foreign militaries. Rose Gottemoeller even compares Russia's actions against Ukrainian nuclear facilities to "nuclear terrorism."[58] Moreover, Russia repeatedly rejected calls for its withdrawal and has accused Ukraine of shelling the facility and has demanded that it stop. Foreign ministry spokesman Ivan Nechayev even declared, "proposals for a demilitarized zone around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant are unacceptable"[59] because "their implementation will make the plant more vulnerable."[60]

Following the IAEA's Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi repeated requests and after a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, the Russian President Vladimir Putin allowed IAEA's inspectors to investigate the situation on site. Even though the results of tests and direct observations do not indicate a deterioration to the critical point of Zaporizhzhia NPP, Putin's nuclear blackmail, used in order to accomplish its political goals, will only encourage Russia, or other rogue actors, to do the same in future.

While Russia's actions most directly threaten Ukraine and central Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea regions, its military use of a nuclear power plant for war advantage is a first in the history of military confrontations, and a precedent that shatters principles undermining the security of all 430-plus[61] nuclear power reactors operating in more than 30 countries worldwide. The Kremlin's actions around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant represent a new dimension in warfare and a clear violation of international humanitarian law, using a peaceful nuclear facility as a potential nuclear bomb.

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[57] Sukin, "Has the Russia-Ukraine War Blown up the Global Nuclear Order?"

[58] CISAC Stanford, "The Russia-Ukraine War."

[59] Interfax, "The Russian Foreign Ministry Considered Unacceptable Proposals for a Demilitarized Zone around the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant," August 18, 2022, https://www.interfax.ru/world/857219.

[60] Interfax, "The Russian Foreign Ministry."

[61] IAEA, "Nuclear Power Reactors in the World," Reference Data Series no. 2, 2022, https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/RDS-2-42_web.pdf, 51.

The nuclear black market in the Black Sea Region

In the 1990s, the dissolution of the Soviet Union generated a range of challenges for the Black Sea area. One of these is the third level of this discussion on nuclear security in this region. Two important databases that list illicit nuclear-trafficking incidents underscore the Black Sea region's dark nuclear image. The first one, the IAEA's *Illicit Trafficking Database* (ITDB, Figure 1) reports incidents that have been confirmed by the governments of member states,[62] and the second, the University of Salzburg's *Database on Nuclear Smuggling, Theft, and Orphan Radiation Sources*[63] (Figure 2) lists incidents that have been the subject of investigation and verification by independent proliferation experts and academics.

With a single exception, the reports of illicit nuclear trafficking in these two databases identify Russia as the known or suspected source of the contraband.[64] The two mentioned reports also identify Turkey[65] as the preferred destination, because it is a place where willing sellers can find willing buyers. As Al Qaeda's former leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, declared in an interview for a Pakistani journalist, "[I]t is not difficult. If you have $30 million, you can go to the black market in Central Asia, make contact with a disgruntled Russian scientist, and get from him suitcase nuclear weapons."[66] Therefore, the unwanted conclusion is that even Al Qaeda's leadership was

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[62] IAEA's Illicit Trafficking Database, "Incidents of Nuclear and Other Radioactive Material out of Regulatory Control 2020 Fact Sheet," 2020, https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/20/02/itdb-factsheet-2020.pdf.

[63] Vitaly Fedchenko and Ian Anthony, "Nuclear Security in The Black Sea Region. Contested Spaces, National Capacities and Multinational Potential," Stockholm Peace Research Institute, December 2018, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/sipripp49_nuclear_security_black_sea.pdf, 4.

[64] Bruce Lawlor et al., "The Black Sea: Centre of the Nuclear Black Market," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, December 15, 2011, https://thebulletin.org/2011/12/the-black-sea-center-of-the-nuclear-black-market/.

[65] Lawlor et al., "The Black Sea."

[66] Peter Bergen, "Reevaluating Al-Qaeda's Weapons of Mass Destruction Capabilities," *CTC Sentinel* 3, no. 9 (September 2010), https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss9.pdf.

looking at the Black Sea region as a black market with high potential. In that context, a main concern has risen: an emerging pattern of involvement by organized criminal groups in nuclear-trafficking cases.[67]
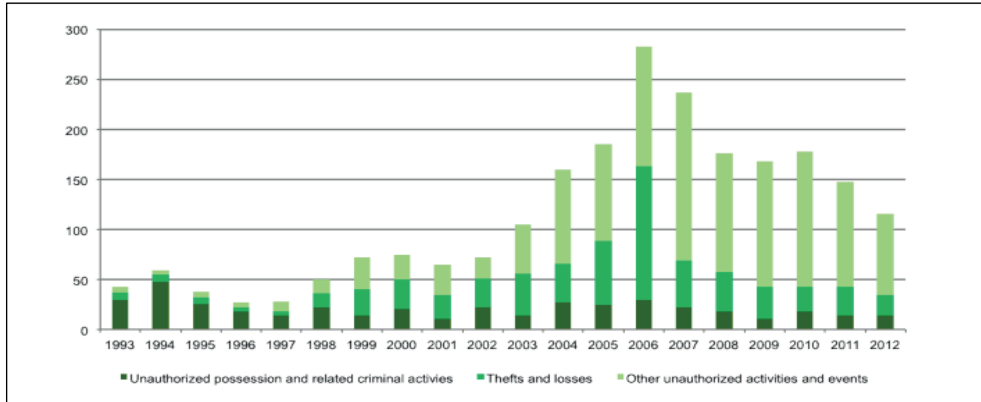
Fig. 1. Trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and other radioactive materials confirmed by states to the International Atomic Energy Agency's Incident and Trafficking Database between 1993 and 2012[68]
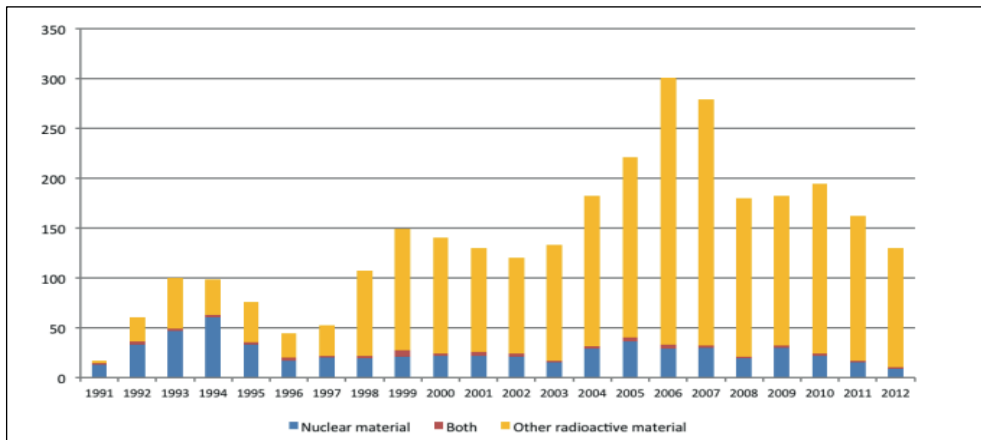
Fig. 2. Trafficking and other loss-of-control incidents recorded in the Database on Nuclear Smuggling, Theft, and Orphan Radiation Sources (DSTO), 1991–2012[69]

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[67] Lawlor et al., "The Black Sea."

[68] IAEA Incident and Trafficking Database (ITDB), "Incidents of Nuclear and other Radioactive Material."

[69] Lyudmila Zaitseva and Friedrich Steinhäusler, "Database on Nuclear Smuggling, Theft, and Orphan Radiation Sources (DSTO)," Division of Physics and Biophysics, University of

According to Vitaly Fedchenko and Ian Anthony, there are at least five main reasons behind the poor nuclear security environment in the Black Sea region. In their *SIPRI* report, the two authors identify the following causes of the expansion of nuclear traffic (Figure 3) in the region under discussion. *First*, the USSR produced and placed throughout its own territory and that of its allies' large quantities of nuclear and other radioactive materials, including sealed radioactive sources. The dissolution of the Soviet state and its security apparatus left those materials and sources without proper oversight, abandoned or located at facilities with inadequate physical protection, accounting and control.[70]
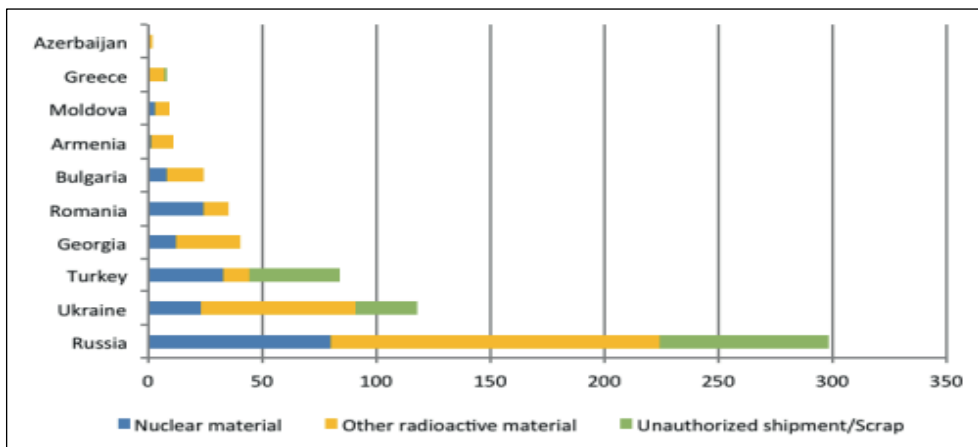
Fig. 3. Trafficking and unauthorized shipment incidents in the Black Sea region countries as recorded in the Database on Nuclear Smuggling, Theft, and Orphan Radiation Sources (DSTO), 1991-2012[71]

Second, the dissolution of the USSR and the subsequent economic fall endured by the population has created fertile ground for theft and corruption. Some of those hardships have been enhanced by the Ukrainian crises and the other conflicts in the region. *Third*, after the fall of the USSR,

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Salzburg, Austria, April 2014, https://www.nonproliferation.eu//wp-content/uploads/2018/10/lyudmilazaitsevafriedrichsteinhausler53451ed0bbecb.pdf.

[70] Fedchenko and Anthony, "Nuclear Security in The Black Sea Region," 4.

[71] Lyudmila Zaitseva and Friedrich Steinhäusler, "Nuclear Trafficking Issues in The Black Sea Region," EU Non-Proliferation Consortium, April 2014, https://www.nonproliferation.eu//wp-content/uploads/2018/10/lyudmilazaitsevafriedrichsteinhausler53451ed0bbecb.pdf, 9.

conflicts and acts of aggression that ensued in the former Soviet territory created contested spaces,[72] such as Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Trans-Dniester. Due to their nature and the reasons for their existence, it is almost impossible to establish internationally recognized controls on material in contested spaces.[73] *Fourth*, conflicts over territory or due to deep political divisions undermine the process of combating nuclear smuggling across the region by hindering or completely preventing nuclear security cooperation between states. For example, nuclear security cooperation between Russia and Georgia stopped in 2008 following the former's invasion in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Moscow's ties with other relevant stakeholders in and outside the Black Sea region have deteriorated after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. In other cases, countries in the region effectively abstain from cooperating with each other on nuclear security issues due to territorial disputes.[74] *Fifth*, for some countries in the region the deterioration of nuclear security cooperation is caused by internal instability. For example, the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, and the resulting purges of the Turkish civil service, judiciary, military and police, sparked a further shift away from international cooperation on nuclear security issues: according to some nuclear security stakeholders in the region, Turkey might have become less effective in detecting and preventing nuclear smuggling through its territory due to the loss of experienced personnel.[75]

Moreover, a successful smuggling transaction has three essential components: a way to acquire contraband, the means of contacting potential buyers, and a mode of transporting the ill-gotten goods.[76] In most known attempts to traffic in nuclear material in the Black Sea region, there were the employees of a country's nuclear program who stole the nuclear material. In those cases, by and large, the theft was discovered precisely because those insiders were not smugglers experienced with networks of buyers and

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[72] Fedchenko and Anthony, "Nuclear Security in The Black Sea Region," 4.
[73] Fedchenko and Anthony, "Nuclear Security in The Black Sea Region," 4.
[74] Fedchenko and Anthony, "Nuclear Security in The Black Sea Region," 4.
[75] Fedchenko and Anthony, "Nuclear Security in The Black Sea Region," 5.
[76] Lawlor et al., "The Black Sea."

methods of moving the material across country borders. However, during the last decade, a few cases illustrates that this pattern is changing. In Georgia and Turkey, the law enforcements have caught organized groups that have tried to sell highly enriched uranium through some intermediaries from the Republic of Moldova and Bulgaria. The tradecraft involved suggests that experienced international traffickers have teamed up with nuclear insiders to create a more secure distribution chain.[77]

The IAEA is the most important and authoritative nuclear security agency in the world. It has a well-deserved reputation as an objective, non-aligned, science-based organization and, therefore, carries great moral authority. Its influence is further enhanced by its willingness to maintain the confidences of member states that cooperate with it. However, close cooperation between regional stakeholders and the agency is required, because the IAEA inhibits rather than enhances nuclear security. Because nuclear smuggling is an international issue, the key to successful operations against such trafficking is information sharing among law enforcement agencies in different countries.

Conclusions

The logic of deterrence theory, developed by Thomas Schelling in 1966, claim that successful nuclear deterrence does not depend upon whether policymakers believe in their own commitment in carrying out a nuclear threat.[78] The effectiveness of nuclear deterrence is explicitly justified and sustained by others believing in it. Schelling explains this as the "rationality of irrationality"[79] and he argues that the rationality of nuclear deterrence does not rest on whether or not it is rational to carry out a nuclear attack, but rather on whether it is rational to make your opponent believe that you will.[80] Nuclear deterrence is about beliefs and credible threats,[81] not

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[77] Lawlor et al., "The Black Sea."

[78] Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

[79] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*.

[80] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*.

[81] Tarja Cronberg, *Renegotiating the Nuclear Order: A Sociological Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 118.

about implementing the nuclear option. The value of the weapons lies in what the threat of their use can yield, not what their actual use can yield. Sometimes, this threat of use is clearly expressed through concrete, threatening behaviour against an adversary state. At other times, this threat remains latent, but is nevertheless symbolized by their state of high alert.[82] Nuclear-weapon states, regardless of how many nuclear weapons they have, control the issue of nuclear threats – the core of security based on nuclear deterrence. Therefore, Russia's nuclear threat also has a sociological component, through which Kremlin leaders try to obtain pre-emption in the war in Ukraine.

Hence, nuclear security in the Black Sea region needs various degrees of approach. Of course, the Russian invasion of Ukraine will have dire consequences for the future of the nuclear order. Not only has the war raised the spectre of a possible nuclear use, but it has also devolved norms around the use of nuclear weapons and the protection of nuclear facilities during wartime. Russia's nuclear aggression has decimated the chances of continued cooperation on arms control, nuclear power production, and nonproliferation efforts. As Siegfried Hecker, a former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, put it, President Vladimir Putin has "blown up the global nuclear order… The global order has allowed us to have the benefits outweigh the risks of nuclear energy. And I see that order being destroyed by what Putin has done in Ukraine, every facet – from nuclear deterrence, to nonproliferation, to the prevention of nuclear terrorism, and the future of nuclear power."[83]

Security challenges in the Black Sea region posed by Russia's revisionist actions have brought substantial changes in the defence policies of all the countries in the region. The Black Sea is seen by Russia not only as an important transit corridor for goods and energy resources but also as its access point to the Mediterranean region, where Russia's role has been growing significantly in recent years. The Russian military operations in Syria would be nearly impossible, for instance, without the "Syrian

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[82] Cronberg, *Renegotiating the Nuclear Order*, 118.
[83] Mecklin, "Siegfried Hecker: Putin Has Destroyed the World Nuclear Order."

Express"[84] logistic supply network operating from Russia's Black Sea bases. Possession of Crimea also advances Russia's defences by several hundred kilometres and gives Russia coverage of most of the Black Sea even with land-based missiles. If Ukraine succeeds in conquering the Crimean Peninsula, the balance of power, implicitly the nuclear security paradigm in the Black Sea region will change.

Threats of using TNWs and using civilian nuclear power plants as redoubts or turning them into actual weapons, plus nuclear smuggling, are clear indications that the second nuclear age has begun. The war between Russian and Ukraine has led to major blows to the integrity of international law, particularly weapons law and disarmament treaties. Among its main consequences, we are also witnessing significant increases in armament and military expenditure worldwide, including long-term programs of modernization of nuclear weapons and nuclear stockpile increase.

Given this context, there are two possible scenarios for the foreseeable future. *First*, because of the broken trust, the US-Russian Strategic Stability Dialogue is shattered and, at least for now, there is no future in sight for the New START Treaty which will expire in 2026, ending any form of control on the bilateral nuclear arms race. With the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty fallen into disuse and no revival of the OSCE arms control system (Vienna Document, CFE Treaty, Open Skies), deployment of intermediate range missiles in Europe accompanied with force concentration on the NATO-Russia contact zone dangerously increase the risk of military confrontation and global war.[85] *Second*, comparable to the Cold War when East-West tensions and proxy wars (Cuba, Vietnam, Middle East, Czechoslovakia, etc.) did not impede the adoption of important arms control and disarmament agreements, the Great Powers must realize that it is in their mutual interest to prevent escalation, stop incentives to proliferating states, and rebuild a global security architecture.

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[84] Alexandra Kuimova and Siemon T. Wezeman, "Russia and Black Sea Security," *SIPRI* Background Paper, December 2018, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/bp_1812_black_sea_russia_0.pdf.

[85] Finaud, "Implications for Arms Control."

Nuclear deterrence has limited the war in Ukraine in profound ways. The existence of Russian nuclear weapons has so far deterred the US from directly intervening in the conflict, and US nuclear power, combined with that of France and Britain, has so far deterred Moscow from resorting to a nuclear attack.[86] And if there is any sense left in the Kremlin, this status quo should endure. On the other hand, these constraints have become increasingly frustrating for many of the advocates of direct US intervention in Ukraine. It is frustrating for Ukraine, for the West, and for any rational person who is helplessly watching at Russia's illegal aggression. Moscow has the means to use its nuclear capabilities and has even explained how it might choose to use them.[87] NATO and the US have stated that they will not allow such action to go unpunished, but the purpose of deterrence is to never reach that point, and at least so far in this war, both sides have managed to do just that.

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Georgia's Security Dilemma
Amid the Russian-Ukrainian War

KHATUNA CHAPICHADZE

Abstract. In this paper, we attempt to find out which approach may be more problematic for Georgian security: the Georgian government's particularly diplomatic, although not very exclusive, position, and careful rhetoric and actions towards Russia and its leadership even during a direct assault and massive Russian invasion of Ukraine (avoiding joining sanctions against Russia, maintaining visa-free regime for the Russian citizens, etc. in parallel with demonstrating quite clear support to Ukraine though, sending humanitarian aid, supporting Russia's suspension from international organizations, etc.), the perspective that could harm Georgia's EU and NATO aspirations, or – a much stronger denouncement of Russian actions demanded fiercely by the dominant part of Georgian civil society, youth and opposition, allowing for more direct and mobilized involvement of Georgian volunteers fighting in the Ukrainian war, etc., which might realistically create no less an open threat to the country, taking into account a significant emphasis on Georgia and Moldova as the next potential targets for the Russian aggression after Ukraine, raised even in the Russian media.

Keywords: Security dilemma, Georgia, Russian-Ukrainian war, EU, NATO.

Introduction

There are various aspects of security for Georgia to be taken into consideration during the ongoing, unprecedented by its scale, assault in Europe after the World War II – the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which was launched by the Russian Federation as a full-scale invasion of the country on February 24, 2022. In fact, it is a continuation of the events started in February 2014 that initially addressed the status of Crimea and the Donbas, recognized by international law as parts of Ukraine.

There is deep belief in the Georgian society about the country's progress towards future complete Euro-Atlantic Integration as one of the major ways for providing security for the post-Soviet republic. This great support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic future has been being continuously illustrated not only by the general public almost on a daily basis, including different civil gatherings and currently, due to the Russian-Ukrainian war, pro-Ukrainian and often anti-governmental demonstrations criticizing the Georgian authorities' considerably cautious stance on Russia, and diverse institutions guided by the Western official and non-official standards for the corresponding multidimensional development of society at large, but also by the systematic public opinion polls showing predominantly pro-Western attitudes, including one of the most significant recent studies of Georgian public opinion specifically on the war in Ukraine conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia).[1]

The latest public opinion survey

The recent study of Georgian public opinion on the war in Ukraine was carried out by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia) from March 7 to March 10, 2022 (fieldwork dates) as a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) survey with random digit dialling. The sample size was 1,092, while the margin of error was 2.96%, and the response rate was 24%. The survey is representative of the adult population of Georgia.

The telephone survey on the war in Ukraine aimed to explore Georgian public opinion on the following issues:
- Responsibility for the war in Ukraine;
- Georgia's response to the war in Ukraine;
- Steps the public wants the government to take in response to the war;
- Domestic politics.[2]

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[1] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion on the War in Ukraine," March 15, 2022, https://crrc.ge/uploads/tinymce/documents/ Projects/Georgian%20Public%20opinion%20on%20the%20war%20in%20Ukraine_EN.pdf.

[2] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 1-3.

According to the study, the Russian Federation holds the most responsibility for the war in Ukraine with 43% of the respondents claiming it, while 37% of the interviewees are blaming Vladimir Putin personally, and only 3% of those surveyed are naming the United States of America in this context. 1% blame Volodymyr Zelensky personally, 1% - NATO, 1% - the EU, 1% - the Ukrainian authorities, 2% - others, 9% do not know the answer, and 1% refuse to answer.[3]

To the question what was Russia's reason for the war based on the personal beliefs of the interviewees, when respondents were allowed to name up to two responses only, 34% of those asked indicated increasing the size of its territory / conquering territory in first place. 25% of the surveyed named conquering Ukraine in second place, while 20% of the respondents answered reviving the Soviet Union. 17% - preventing Ukraine from joining NATO, 7% - reviving the Russian Empire, 7% - preventing Ukraine from joining the EU, 4% - dissolving Ukraine, 2% - hampering the development of Ukraine, 1% - changing Ukraine's pro-Western orientation, 5% - other responses, 15% did not the answer, and 1% refused to answer.[4]

61% of the interviewees believe that the Government of Georgia should support the Government of Ukraine more, while 32% think that the Georgian leadership supports the Ukrainian colleagues sufficiently. Only 2% of the surveyed considers that the Government of Georgia should support the Government of Ukraine less. 1% think the Georgian leadership should not support the Ukrainian colleagues at all, 4% do not know the answer, and 1% refuse to answer.[5]

To the question, how acceptable or unacceptable it would be if the Government of Georgia took the following steps in relation to Ukraine, 85% of the interviewees regard supplying Ukraine with humanitarian assistance, such as food and medicine as fully acceptable, 12% consider it as more acceptable than unacceptable, and 2% do not know the answer.

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[3] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 4.

[4] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 5.

[5] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 6.

79% of those surveyed think that temporarily accepting Ukrainian refugees is fully acceptable, 17% regard it as more acceptable than unacceptable, while 2% do not know the answer.

Providing financial assistance to Ukraine is fully accepted by 69% of the respondents, 22% consider it as more acceptable than unacceptable, while 4% claim it as more unacceptable than acceptable, 2% as fully unacceptable, and 3% do not know the answer.

42% of the interviewees believe that allowing volunteers from Georgia to go to Ukraine to fight is fully acceptable, 24% regard it as more acceptable than unacceptable, 11% name it as more unacceptable than acceptable, 12% regard it as fully unacceptable, and 10% do not know the answer.

Introducing restrictions on the entrance of citizens of the Russian Federation in Georgia is fully accepted by 40% of the respondents, 19% claim it as more acceptable than unacceptable, 18% - more unacceptable than acceptable, 13% - fully unacceptable, and 9% do not know the answer.

31% of the interviewees consider supplying Ukraine with weapons and military equipment as fully acceptable, 22% - more acceptable than unacceptable, 14% - more unacceptable than acceptable, 16% - fully unacceptable, and 16% do not know the answer.[6]

Because of the attack against Ukraine, Russia and a number of high level officials were sanctioned by the European Union, the United States, and other aligned countries. 71% of the respondents believe that these sanctions should be made more severe. 10% think they should remain in their current form. 4% support the easing of the sanctions. 3% are in favour of removing sanctions against Russia entirely, and 11% do not know the answer.[7]

To the question if Georgia should take part or not in the sanctions imposed by the European Union, the United States, and other allied countries against Russia and high level Russian officials, 39% of the interviewees think that Georgia should participate in all established sanctions. According to 27% of the respondents, the country should take part

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[6] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 7.

[7] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 8.

in some of the established sanctions. 19% oppose Georgia's participation in any of the sanctions. 14% do not know the answer, and 1% refuse to answer.[8]

58% of the interviewees fully support Georgia's membership in the EU, while 17% rather support it, 9% partially support and partially not support, 4% - generally do not support it, 4% - do not support it at all, and 6% do not know the answer.

54% of the respondents fully support Georgia's membership in NATO. 16% rather support it, 12% - partially support it, 4% - generally not support, 5% - do not support it at all, and 8% do not know the answer.

63% of those surveyed do not support at all Georgia's membership in the Russian dominated regional integration model – the Eurasian Union. 12% generally do not support it, 6% - partially support it, 4% - rather support it, only 2% - fully support it, and 14% do not know the answer.[9]

To the rather sensitive question for Georgia (considering that the country so far has failed to achieve any tangible progress towards this issue), i.e., how much respondents support or do not support Ukraine/Georgia becoming a candidate for membership in the European Union, 66% of those interviewed fully support Ukraine's membership, while in the case of Georgia, the percentage of such respondents is 61%. 14% rather support Ukrainian, and 17% Georgian EU accession. 3% and respectively, - 4% express partial support, 2% and 3% - rather do not support, 2% and 2% - do not support at all the countries' membership in the EU. 12% and 12% do not know the answer, and 1% and 1% refuse to answer.[10]

Regarding the assessment of the performance of the Georgian Media in relation to the recent events related to the war between Russia and Ukraine, 61% of the respondents provide a positive evaluation, 4% - very positive, 13% - negative, 4% - very negative assessment, while 17% do not know the answer, and 1% refuse to answer.

In the case of more neutrally positioning and balancing between different antagonistically perceived players, the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili's performance is assessed as follows: 57% - positively,

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[8] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 9.

[9] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 10.

[10] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 11.

7% - very positively, 11% - negatively, and 4% - very negatively 19% do not know the answer, while 2% refuse to answer.

As for the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, the percentages are: 34% - positively, 7% - very positively, 24% - negatively, and 15% - very negatively evaluate his leadership. 17% do not know the answer, while 3% refuse to answer.

Finally, the performance of Georgia's Parliament has been assessed as positive by 31%, very positive by 3%, negative by 30%, and very negative by 12% of those interviewed. 22% did not know the answer, while 2% refused to answer.[11]

To the question if parliamentary elections were held tomorrow, which of the parties would the respondents vote for, the ruling Georgian Dream party appeared to be supported by 22% of those surveyed. Former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's currently opposition party, perceived as the major opposition force in the country, the United National Movement, got 10% of the respondents' support. Other parties, mainly also opposition ones, like For Georgia, Lelo, Girchi More Freedom, the Patriots' Alliance (criticized as a pro-Russian organization) have been supported by – 3%, 3%, 2%, and respectively 2% of the interviewees. 2% opted for another party. 16% declared their support for no party. 4% would not participate in elections. 18% did know the answer, and 20% refused to answer.[12]

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili's performance in relation to the recent events concerning the war between Russia and Ukraine has been assessed as predominantly positive by all parties – 62% of the Georgian Dream, 56% of the opposition, 58% did not know or were no party supporters, and 50% refused to answer. 15% of the Georgian Dream, 5% of the opposition, 6% of those who did not know were no party supporters, and 3% of those who refused to answer very positively evaluated Salome Zourabichvili's performance. 15% of the opposition, 12% of those who did not know or supported no party, 4% of the Georgian Dream sympathizers, and 10% of those who refused to answer have negatively assessed it, while 7% of the opposition, 6% of those who did not know or supported no party,

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[11] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 12.
[12] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 13.

114

1% of the Georgian Dream supporters, and 3% of those who refused to answer very negatively assessed Mrs. President's wartime policies. 16% of the Georgian Dream, 17% of the opposition, 16% of those who did not know or were no party sympathizers, and 28% of those who refused to answer did not know the answer, while 6% of those who refused to answer refused to answer.

In the case of the Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, 55% of the Georgian Dream, 27% of the opposition, 26% of those who did not know or were no party supporters, and 34% of those who refused to answer have positive assessments, while 21% of the Georgian Dream, 5% of the opposition, 2% of those who did not know or were no party sympathizers, and 3% of those who refused to answer very positively evaluated his performance. 10% of the Georgian Dream, 26% of the opposition, 30% of those who did not know or were no party supporters, and 25% of those who refused to answer view him negatively, while 2% of the Georgian Dream, 29% of the opposition, 20% of those who did not know or were no party sympathizers, and 8% of those who refused to answer very negatively assessed the PM's policies during the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation. 10% of the Georgian Dream, 12% of the opposition, 21% of those who did not know or were no party supporters, and 23% of those who refused to answer did not know the answer. 3% of the Georgian Dream, 2% of those who did not know or were no party sympathizers, and 8% of those who refused to answer refused to answer.[13]

It is noteworthy to provide the corresponding **conclusions** we can discern, based on the survey analysis:

- The vast majority of the public blames Russia or Vladimir Putin for the war;
- The public wants the Government of Georgia to increase its level of support for Ukraine;
- A majority of the public approves of almost all means of support for Ukraine mentioned in the survey;

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[13] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 14.

- The Georgian public remains committed to a Euro-Atlantic future for the country;
- The Georgian public is broadly supportive of Salome Zourabichvili's performance in relation to the war;
- The Georgian public is significantly less approving of Irakli Garibashvili's performance in relation to the war.[14]

Important to find out what is more dangerous

It is of high priority to discuss which approach among those provided below may be considered as in fact more problematic for the Georgian security – Scenario A or Scenario B.

Scenario A – in action

The Georgian government's greatly balanced and immensely diplomatic, even though not very rare, position, and extremely mild attitude in relation to Georgia's current occupier Russia and its tough administration in the period of an open, unprecedented by its scale, another Russian massive annexation – the invasion of Ukraine, the other sovereign state, regarded as the closest strategic ally of Georgia, with which the latter shares common geopolitical, as well as frequently internal challenges too.

The **illustration** of such a compromise policy conducted in reality by the Georgian authorities towards Russia and its leadership, whose actions are hard to predict, have been the following significant events:

- Georgia continues to avoid joining the sanctions imposed by the European Union, the United States, and other aligned countries against Russia and its high level officials, which in fact means that the country, i.e. Georgia did not impose national economic sanctions on Russia. The post-Soviet state has not been alone in this as for example, another former Soviet republic, and Georgia's strategic partner, Moldova, also chose the same policy due to the similar vulnerability enhanced by the rising security concerns during the

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[14] Caucasus Research Resource Centre Georgia (CRRC-Georgia), "Georgian Public Opinion," 15.

war and ethno-territorial conflicts. However, the Georgian government still seems to align politically with the international community over its sanctions on the aggressor Russia for invading Ukraine, and has made it "very clear" that "no sanctioned individual or company" will be allowed to use Georgia to bypass them, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said[15] in June 2022, during a panel discussion at the Qatar Economic Forum. The PM gave the example of closing the sanctioned Russian VTB Bank in Georgia in order to manifest the Georgian government's compliance with the sanctions.

- Georgia maintains visa-free regime for the Russian citizens unilaterally. Tens or hundreds of thousands of the citizens of the Russian Federation keep increasingly arriving in Georgia after the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, reportedly in order to also avoid the effects of international sanctions imposed against Russia due to its aggression against Ukraine. There are quite contradictory reports about the exact number of Russian visitors coming to Georgia or on the detailed amount and profile of their newly registered businesses in the occupied state since the events started in February 2022. This process of intensive emigration from the occupant country raises even more and newer security concerns among the Georgian society, which historically, as well as recently too has directly experienced how the so-called Russian citizens' card works in the country's two breakaway and conflictual regions of Abkhazia and "South Ossetia." Russia traditionally plays this card when it aims to legitimize its imperialistic purposes while entering the territories of sovereign states, claiming to "defend" the Russian citizens almost anywhere in the world. Until now, like citizens of nearly 100 other countries, Russians can enter Georgia without a visa and stay up to a year. In response to the spikes in security issues connected with the increasing number of so-called Russian tourists entering and staying in Georgia actually for indefinite periods, the significant part of the Georgian opposition called on the authorities at the beginning of

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[15] Agenda.ge, "PM: Georgia Aligns Politically with the International Community on Russia Sanctions," June 21, 2022, https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/2355.

August 2022 to introduce visa procedures, albeit simplified ones, for Russians and Belarussians. In parallel with the reluctance on the part of the Georgian government and ruling party to change their compromise stance and decisions, an online petition was launched on August 3, 2022, calling on the authorities to restrict stays for Russians and Belarussians to three months, quickly gathered more than 20,000 signatures.[16] Among such measures, it is worth mentioning the Kartlis Deda Declaration[17] launched by the initiative group The Kartlis Deda Partisans in April 2022. The Kartlis Deda Partisans position themselves as defenders of Georgia's territorial integrity, supporters of Ukraine, and those who encourage the Russian citizens taking shelter in Georgia to publicly express their opposition against their own government and army by signing the Kartlis Deda Declaration. The Kartlis Deda Partisans stand for the principles symbolized by Kartlis Deda: Georgian wine for friends, Georgian swords for enemies.[18]

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[16] Manifest.ge, "Introducing the Visa Regime for the Russian and Belarusian Citizens," (in Georgian), August 3, 2022, https://manifest.ge/petitions/304478/%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A1%E1%83%94%E1%83%97%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%91%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A1%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A5%E1%83%90%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90%E1%83%A5%E1%83%94%E1%83%97%E1%83%90%E1%83%97%E1%83%95%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%95%E1%83%98%E1%83%96%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%9F%E1%83%98%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%A8%E1%83%94%E1%83%9B%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A6%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%90?fs=e&s=cl&fbclid=IwAR1AX10BjWCPPWNh5XaDvJSmRZaK1KeIAPiO8-HWoqBaTnFaKMPeueucMaU.

[17] Change.org, "Kartlis Deda Declaration," April 2022, https://www.change.org/p/%E1%83%A5%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%93%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%99%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90-kartlis-deda-declaration-%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%81-%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B0?recruiter=1259902883&recruited_by_id=73ec77c0-b4b5-11ec-b268-b74f739300ab&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=petition_dashboard.

[18] Facebook.com, "The Kartlis Deda Partisans' Facebook Page," April 5, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/TheKartlisDedaPartisans.

- One should always objectively underline **Georgia's clear support for Ukraine** in spite of every other critical aspect discussed above.
- The Georgian government, but first of all, its public keeps mobilizing and sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine.
- Georgia has openly supported Russia's suspension from a number of international organizations, including the United Nations Human Rights Council, Council of Europe, etc. Overall, starting with February 2022, Georgia has already issued and or joined hundreds of various international statements, declarations and decisions supporting Ukraine.
- Georgia is in compliance with the financial sanctions imposed by the international community against Russia and its high level officials.

The perspective described above has a potential to harm Georgia's EU and NATO aspirations.

Scenario B – a wiser alternative?

Different from what has been considered earlier, and from what actually takes place, at the same time though, another scenario illustrated below might depict even more danger or could also cause serious and direct challenges for the Georgian security: Georgia is often encouraged internationally, as well as pressured domestically to denounce more strongly the Russian actions against Ukraine, a position that has been broadly promoted and claimed by the prevalent part of Georgian civil society, youth and opposition. This would allow a more direct and mobilized involvement of Georgian volunteers, members of the Georgian Legion or other fighters, who are taking part and even losing their lives in the Ukrainian war, which might realistically create no less an open threat to the post-Soviet South Caucasian state, taking into account the significant emphasis on Georgia and Moldova as the next potential targets for the Russian aggression after Ukraine, raised popularly even in the Russian media.

Conclusions

In an attempt to raise the critical questions due to the timeliness and severity of the problem addressed in the paper, and when trying to provide the corresponding answers, preferably as clear as possible in the first place, we arrive at the conclusion that as Russia increasingly remains the critical factor, therefore it seems really hard to issue any reliable forecasts. That leads to the question if, under given circumstances, clearer answers are possible at all or not.

After analysing the scenarios discussed in the article, the prospects for Georgia do not sound much optimistic; the post-Soviet state tends to lack any real choice for avoiding the dangers coming from its aggressive and unpredictable northern neighbour – Russia. Among the proposed options, a major issue overall seems to be the importance of time – Scenario A may literally qualify to include the time bomb, while another option – Scenario B could shortly escalate into a direct confrontation with the occupant country.

Finally, when so much depends on such a critical variable, i.e. Russia in the given context, we might end up with quite a fatalistic sentiment that Georgia's security perspectives at least at the moment do not in fact depend on Georgia itself.

Table 1. Conclusions

Are clear answers possible?	Does Georgia have a real choice?	Do Georgia's security prospects depend on Georgia?
- Russia – the *critical factor* for making any solid predictions	- The *time bomb* or facing a threat directly/ face-to-face?	- *Does it all make any sense?*

Source: The Author

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Implications of NATO's Transformation Process on Romania's National Security

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Abstract: Considering the institutional perspective, NATO can be outlined as a unique, singular, and atypical entity. On the one hand, it is an intergovernmental organization that does not deviate from the principle of national sovereignty and the veto right of each member state, on the other hand, a systemic prism, the defining feature of the Alliance often transcending private and individual state interests. The aim of this paper is to develop the organizational transformation of NATO in relation with the particularities of contemporary politico-military crises. We want to outline the systemic transformations, stressing the constants, but, especially, the particularities of the epochal politico-military crises that generate an Allied transformational process, aiming at doctrinal and operational aspects. Consequently, we will develop the implications of NATO's organizational transformations on Romania's national security and redefine NATO's eastern flank in the context of large-scale challenges and the resettlement of fronts with impunity.

Keywords: Strategic Concept, confrontation, transformation, crises.

Exordium

Recent history reveals a world insufficiently prepared for the fading of previous crises and the undoing of developing crises. In support of this aspect, as an edifying lesson/crisis, the pandemic crisis arose-developed-faded, an unprecedented situation for current generations due to the nature of the evolution of the spread. Beyond the medical side and the implications on freedom of movement, the crisis generically called COVID-19 has

accelerated and brought back to the fore the crises of the past, with tectonic implications on the borders of the world.

The thorough and fair analysis of the effects and consequences after the sunset of a crisis represents a first step towards anticipating future disruptions and systemic preparation for an amplified impact. During a crisis, beyond the effort of management and resolution, there is the possibility that the very physical existence of an entity (institutional, state, transnational) will be rethought towards contrasting, defending and securitizing its founding purpose.

Briefly, but by no means superficially, the analysis of the war at the eastern end of NATO's borders reveals a set of lessons learned and, at the same time, rules to be followed for the future European and planetary security setting.

The most pressing lesson of the Ukrainian war may be the outlining and plausibility of a direct military confrontation between NATO and the Russian Federation. The insinuation (repeatable, but total and, to some extent, assumed by the state) of the Russian Federation beyond the territories of the separate pseudo-state entities towards the heart of Ukraine represents a new black milestone in the continental history, by bringing the armed conflict back to the level of state politics. For more than two decades, starting after the detente in the Balkans, Europe was not scarred by conventional military confrontations, the only present scourge being isolated terrorism. In other words, the war of continental dimensions became plausible again with the offensive of the Russian Federation towards the West.

Secondarily, but of incredible importance for the years to come, the intervention of the Russian Federation in Ukraine put the allied cohesion, already eroded in the past, to the test. The organizational response has been timely and coordinated so far. In any hypothesis, the erosion generated by an external crisis on an organism, in the present case - NATO, represents, beyond the shock felt at the systemic level, an opportunity for regulation, adjustment and/or regeneration.

The Alliance is distinguished by its uniqueness, singularity and atypical ethos. On the one hand, it is an intergovernmental structure that is not based on the principle of national sovereignty and the right of veto of

each member state; on the other hand, from a systemic perspective, the defining elements of NATO are pencilled over the individual/private interests of the states.[1]

The present paper highlights the nuances of the transformative path of the Alliance in opposition to the particularities of contemporary political-military crises. Beyond the distinct and contrasting elements of the crises in which NATO has been wilfully involved or drawn, the general, indubitable and significant feature is the omnipresence of the crisis. Other nuances of the aspect can be found under the name of universality and ubiquity of the crisis/crises.[2] By infusing this attribute into the organizational body, the following aspects (results) are denoted, whose previous status undergoes changes and transformations: the reconfiguration/redefinition of the status-quo, basically, this aspect is derived from the resettlement of the elements involved in a political-military crisis on distinct positions versus the moment before the development of the crisis; the relativity of the metabolization of the seen and unseen effects of the crisis on the structural edifice, in this sense, NATO impacts the effects in direct proportionality with the effort of the encompassing members, sometimes direct actors of the crises, in a state-specific way; perhaps the most sensitive aspect of the allied evolution is represented by the potential for the crisis to escalate into a military conflict; a final summative aspect, but not necessarily exhaustive, is denoted by the adjustment of the military decision-making process (MDMP).

The perpetual Eastern flank

Continental stability is increasingly weakened in ways that go beyond the classical purpose of conventional warfare. The general allied perception, being the easiest to metabolize, is that according to which Russia

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[1] Vibeke Schou Tjalve, "Gaining Muscle, Losing Soul? Zombie NATO," Danish Institute for International Studies, May 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13287.

[2] Arjen Boin, Paul Hart, Eric Stern, Bengt Sundelius, *The Politics of Crisis Management* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4. See also Floris Ionescu, "NATO's Resilience against Crisis Ubiquity," in *Proceedings of The 11th Conference on Knowledge Management: Projects, Systems and Technologie*s (Bucharest: "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, 2019).

is manifesting an aggressive expansionism and trying an accelerated form of destructive interference in the internal affairs of the European states and in the post-Soviet space, the main concern being that of provoking the West.[3] As a consequence (immediate and even alarming), NATO must anticipate and prevent the escalation of the crisis in the kinetic register of military actions, the ultimate argument being Article 5 of the founding act of the Alliance.[4] Through a significantly different prism, it is emphasized that Russia's historical fear of foreigners has generated a defensive, even paranoid, mentality among Moscow's leaders.[5]

In the current decade, the probability of a strategic surprise has become dangerously high, being higher than it has been for decades. Challenges to strategic stability in Europe are looming on multiple fronts. Most visibly, Russia has rejected the West, using (openly and assumed) the brutality of military intervention in Georgia and Ukraine (the revitalization of the issue gives us chills), stating that the West is, in fact, invading. Vladimir Putin's regime constantly protests against the incursion of Western institutions and values into the former Soviet space and considers this to be a direct threat to the national interests of the Russian Federation.[6] Russia's military and, above all, nuclear capabilities are propagated and amplified in

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[3] Iulian Chifu, "Rusia în Balcani: ruptură, separatism şi un nou război în Bosnia-Herţegovina," (Russia in the Balkans: Rupture, Separatism and a New War in Bosnia-Herzegovina), *Adevărul*, November 10, 2021, https://adevarul.ro/international/europa/ rusia-balcani-ruptura-separatism-new-war-bosnia-Herzegovina-1_618b60715163ec427160 d213/index.html.

[4] NATO, "The North Atlantic Treaty," Art. 5, Washington D.C., April 4, 1949, http://www.orniss.ro/ro/legislatie/pdf/acorduri/state_nato.pdf. The full official text of the treaty can be found in Annex 1.

[5] Among recent publications debating the subject, we mention Andrew Monaghan, *Dealing with the Russians* (Cambridge: Polity Press, Cambridge, 2019); Sten Rynning, "NATO's Futures: The Atlantic Alliance between Power and Purpose," NDC Research Paper No. 2, NATO Defence College, Rome, March 2019, https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php? icode=1285; Alexander J. Motyl, "Putin May Want to be an Emperor, but Russia Isn't an Imperial Power," *Foreign Policy*, October 28, 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/28/ putin-may-want-to-bean-emperor-but-russia-isnt-an-imperial-power/

[6] For more detailed analysis of the anti-Western attitude of the Kremlin regime, see Michael Kofman,"Drivers of Russian Grand Strategy," *Frivärld*, April 2019, https://frivarld.se/wp-content /uploads/2019/04/Drivers-of-Russian-Grand-Strategy.pdf

a propagandistic way, added to the clear ability to keep the European continent in sight and in tension.

In our opinion, a correct analysis of the systemic transformations of NATO must include the repetitive, constant features of the present political-military crises, but, in a much more edifying way, their particularities must also be detected, in relation to doctrinal adjustment and changes in aspects operational.

Contemporaneity follows naturally from the lessons of the past, however, their wrong, incomplete or erroneous interpretation brings (recurringly) humanity, through the decisions or inactions of the great actors, to the threshold of planetary conflict. In the light of the present and in the setting of large-scale challenges for the resettlement of the flank from the eastern neighbourhood of the Alliance in a discretionary and violent manner, organic transformations of NATO are developing, simultaneously with the adjustment of the perspective through which Romania projects its national security.

We summarise the rhetoric regarding the opportunity offered by a crisis, emphasizing the duality of the aforesaid one, thus, beyond the negative aspect of the individual, state and/or world threat, the path for individual reset and systemic reconfiguration emerges under the auspices of the balancing moment. Today it is drawn in security volatility, uncertain in terms of territoriality, under the complexity of the amalgam of subsequent crises and denotes ambiguity through the solutions thought by NATO. At this moment, the results of the expeditionary war against terrorism, carried out mainly on the front in Afghanistan, are not very well defined, but NATO sees itself, once again, in the position of a security outpost for the entire European continent in the face of the violent expansion of the Russian Federation.

In the 73 years of its existence, NATO has gone from agony to ecstasy, but also vice versa, causing, in turn, silence, but also hearsay in terms of security.[7] Irrespective, but not independent, of the status of the political-military ensemble propagated outside (and recently, inside the

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[7] NATO intervened, using air raids, in Kosovo (March 24 - June 11, 1999) without the approval of the UN Security Council, which created a precedent.

organization), with its two extremes - new (robust) and old (outdated), NATO found the inner strength to (re)size and (re)invent. These very times are a test for the credibility and strength of NATO, the latter striving to contain, stop and avoid the transformation of the pandemic crisis into a security crisis.

The systemic genesis was facilitated (forced) by the conjugation of the democratic values of the initiators, by the cruel memory of the recent world conflagration at the beginning of the decade and by the trend of balancing the Soviet totalitarian threat.

More than seven decades since its establishment found NATO in the shadow of the controversy regarding its financing. Utterly uninspired, the voice of the US and intimate allies within the wider body has shifted the centre of gravity of the earliest and most prodigious military alliance from dominant achievements to internal, pecuniary turmoil.

"NATO was created to deal with crises,"[8] and the historical anamnesis provides sufficient benchmarks for allied positivity. After the end of the Cold War, the Alliance was ascribed structural superfluity. Despite the speculation, NATO has survived and is (once again) a bastion against the Russian Federation.

Romania, a border state of NATO, is positioned at the congruence between western democracy and eastern expansive totalitarianism. At the same time, a prominent member of NATO, but in the second world of the European Union (EU), it represents a bastion of European defence and a gateway to the economy.

The year 2022 represents a notable milestone for the two organizations treated separately, but above all, an unprecedented milestone through which both entities redefine their organizational purpose (NATO), on the one hand, and affirm their security objectives (EU), on the other. Both

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[8] "NATO was created to deal with crisis. So we can help. And our Alliance is playing its part," the statement that the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, made on April 2, 2020, after the first meeting in history by video conference of foreign ministers to decide the measures that NATO takes in the context of combating the global health crisis caused by the new coronavirus pandemic. Last accessed on January 20, 2021 from the online address https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_174772.htm.

initiatives were materialized in programmatic documents, these representing statements and assumptions of the areas of interest and, above all, of the solutions chosen to solve the problems affecting the organizational systems.

Both NATO and the European Union are engaged in a cycle of continuous adaptation, generating, as a corollary, a process of reflection meant to rebuild (at this epochal moment, with applicability foreseen for a decade, at least) the pillars of strategic security thinking.

The stake of the guiding products of the two organizations – NATO's new *Strategic Concept* and the EU's new *Strategic Compass* - should be represented by the congruence of common goals, potentials and design of tasks.[9] In addition, synergistically, those two aforementioned deal with security competences, as follows: the primacy of territorial defence and the prevalence of resilience, the identification of the way to design the operational effort, in the twilight of expeditionary operations and defence planning, simultaneously with the development of capabilities.[10]

The matter of NATO-EU cooperation is recurrent, being at the centre of the development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) since the end of the 1990s. The discussion is divided into three levels of debate: the relationship and complementarity between the two entities; the effort of the European states within NATO and the augmentation of the transatlantic link. The need to synergize the security effort of the two defence institutions finds its argument in more than twenty years of inter-institutional debates and cooperation interspersed with a series of unfulfilled objectives and commitments, as well as frictions over duplication, overlap, European strategic autonomy and division tasks.[11]

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[9] For EU-NATO cooperation in the dawn of Strategic Compass see "EU-NATO cooperation and the Strategic Compass," European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2021, https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/SI-EUISS%20-%20EU-NATO%20and%20Compass%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

[10] Sven Biscop, "EU and NATO Strategy: A Compass, a Concept, and a Concordat," Egmont Institute, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep30609.

[11] For a breakdown of the lessons learned from over 20 years of inter-institutional cooperation based on parallel agendas, see Thierry Tardy, "For a New NATO-EU Bargain," Egmont Institute, 2021, http://www .jstor.org/stable/resrep30606.

Romania's national interests, beyond those established and assumed institutionally at the state level, can be broken down into several essential aspects to ensure the strategic balance on the European side of the world and necessary to be achieved in order to maintain the integrity and health of the state.

In this sense, we believe that the maintenance and augmentation of the EU in order to ensure non-discretionary access to the single market and avoid the multiplication of forced evacuations of the area, such as BREXIT, is of particular importance in the context of national economic fragility. In terms of force, the maintenance of the US military footprint in Europe constitutes a guarantor of NATO intervention in the imminence of a large-scale conflict. Adjacent, curbing Turkey's whims and synchronizing it with states with pure European DNA becomes a sine qua non condition for NATO's revalidation as the most credible military alliance in modern human history.

Another decisive aspect in maintaining and reaffirming Romania's state capacity is embedded in the nationalist insinuations coming from neighbouring states. In this direction, Hungary's attitude towards the denial of historical facts, argued by provocative attitudes and isolated acts of incitement, is outrageous.

A last pillar of stability, figuratively speaking, of the instability of the present, could be represented by the need for the Russian Federation to give up the accumulation of frustrations and special operations to validate imperialist intentions.

Romania's achievements within NATO in the recent past are remarkable. Taking a leap downstream of the article, Romania was offered an opportunity to assert itself through its peripheral geographical position on the Eastern flank of the Alliance. The reflected moment refers to the annexation of Crimea, a landmark for emphasizing the role of regional leader, doubled by the accelerated modernization of the national armed forces.

Afterword

By reducing reality to its founding principles, NATO is poised between adaptation and/or revolution. The crossroads overlaps the major

turbulences of the security environment, viewed from the perspective of any of the members in the logical sequence national-European-trans-Atlantic-planetary. Adaptation develops in paradigmatic change, processual transformation and institutional reformation. In contrast, organizational revolution would entail re-founding, deep review, institutional rebuilding and major restructuring.

We believe that NATO, in a contrasting allegory with the European Union, which needed the adoption of generative changes and successive treaties for potentiation and survival, is the result and beneficiary of a visionary and comprehensive generative document (even in these tumultuous times), or this institutional advantage provides the way and the answer for adaptation.

The North Atlantic Treaty, under the auspices of its form and substance, was comprehensive and justifiable for all the historical balances traversed by the organization. We recall, in chronological logic, the Cold War, the expansion of the Alliance after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the operations outside its defined territory (Kosovo and Afghanistan) and the cohesion of the members against the scourge called terrorism. The trend denotes a global approach to political-military crises, whilst the process of developing the new strategic concept came to an end. The argument for taking a new strategic approach is represented by the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and, above all, the ambiguity of the global security environment.

The primacy of NATO cohesion and unity is imposed to limit self-triggered/self-determined vulnerabilities. Prominent leaders of the member states competed in loud statements, later proven excessive, affecting, however, the protection capacity of the ensemble.

It is no less true that all history reveals the crises that NATO not only survived, but used them in favour of multiplying and increasing organizational strength: we recall here the Turkey-Greece rivalry, the attempt to overthrow the regime in Cyprus, the withdrawal of de Gaulle's France from the military structures and the relocation of headquarters from Paris to Brussels, Ronald Reagan's Star Wars Program,[12] George W. Bush's

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[12] The Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), derisively nicknamed the "Star Wars program," was a proposed missile defence system intended to protect the United States from attack by

war on terror and terrorism and the perspective split from the time of Iraq 2003. Beyond these operational and/or decisional touchstones and tests, NATO has built a consensual dialogue among allies and survived by preserving the fundamentals of collective defence. In essence, the Alliance sought an agreement in all these disagreements (*we agree to disagree*).

Further, in the historical downstream of facts, the Russian Federation keeps NATO alive, but alert, Moscow's behaviour being obviously offensive, an aspect proven by the annexation of Crimea, the aggression in Eastern Ukraine, the call for military combat substances as chemical weapons, the interference in the electoral process, the solid nuclear threat and the conventional and hybrid danger on the Eastern flank and, once again, the aggression in Ukraine. The Alliance's reactive approach to Russian threats must be systemically dimensioned, but also channelled in relation to the level of formulated, perceived and/or real risks.

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Restraint! The Security Implications of Paradigmatic Shift in U.S. Foreign Policy

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Abstract. World politics is at a turning point, with systemic shifts taking place in much of Eurasia. These shifts undermine long-standing U.S. foreign policy and the American hegemonic ordering project. Consequently, the United States must decide what course of action it will adopt in the years and decades to come. In this chapter, I examine the U.S. foreign policy debates of the past few years and discuss the implications of the "restraint" stance adopted by an eclectic coalition of actors that seek to upend the mainstream liberal internationalist paradigm still dominant in Washington. I argue that, contrary to expectations, A U.S. foreign policy driven by "restraint" may produce comparatively higher costs than "engagement," its paradigmatic foe.

Keywords: United States foreign policy, restraint, liberal internationalism, paradigm shift, world order.

Introduction

The United States foreign policy has become the topic of intense debate over the past decade, as the American hegemony has been called into question and multiple strategic blunders in the Middle East have undermined domestic support for an America engaged in the world. The U.S. foreign policy has been challenged both domestically, by an increasingly large and heterogeneous political coalition,[1] and externally by allies and foes alike.

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[1] Daniel Deudney, and G. John Ikenberry, "Getting Restraint Right: Liberal Internationalism and American Foreign Policy," *Survival* 63 no. 6 (2021): 63–100, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2021.2006452.

In this context, a decades-old debate about the future of U.S. foreign policy re-emerged in the United States, with worldwide implications. This debate is divided between those that support continued "engagement" in world affairs, maintaining U.S. commitments to promote liberal values and support its allies, and those advocating for a shift to "restraint" in world politics and a narrower focus on the national interest.[2] While both positions in this debate have a long intellectual genealogy that can be tracked back to the founding fathers of the American republic, its stances are not simple reiterations of old political adages and have potentially crucial implications both for America's stature in the world and for the rest of the international system. It would be also rather easy to dismiss the "restraint" advocates as just a new iteration of an old and decrepit "isolationist" stance that has never had substantial traction in post-War American politics and society. However, Donald Trump's presidency, his preference for an almost neo-mercantilist trade policy and a heavily unilateral and transactional foreign policy shows that "restraint" is a challenge to be taken seriously by mainstream American politics. It has behind it the support of an eclectic group of influential actors, including a surprising alliance between George Soros and Charles Koch.[3]

In this chapter, I seek to examine the current political debates surrounding the future of U.S. foreign policy from an international perspective. My aim is to provide a non-American view on a quintessentially American debate that has global consequences. In so doing, I seek to show that "restraint" is not a suitable foreign policy orientation for the United States. This is so because, as I will show in this chapter, its costs exceed the purported benefits its advocates promise to deliver. No policy option for America's grand strategy is without costs or benefits, but some have lower

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[2] Emma Ashford, "Strategies of Restraint: Remaking America's Broken Foreign Policy Essays," *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 5 (2021): 128–41; Ravi Agrawal, "Is America Overextending Itself?," *Foreign Policy* (blog), 2022, accessed September 5, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/24/us-restraint-ukraine-taiwan-wertheim-interview/; Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801470875; Stephen Wertheim, "The Ukraine Temptation," *Foreign Affairs*, April 22, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-04-12/ukraine-temptation.

[3] Hal Brands, "Can a Koch-Soros Team Change U.S. Foreign Policy? Not Easily," August 6, 2019. https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-08-06/koch-soros-think-tank-won-t-easily-end-the-forever-war.

costs and higher benefits than their alternatives. When it comes to choosing between "engagement" and "restraint," the latter brings benefits to the United States in terms of lower defence spending that can be re-directed to domestic welfare needs. However, it also brings substantially higher costs in terms of an unstable global economy and trade, increasing conflicts that will undermine economic growth at home, political insecurity, and spillovers from foreign conflicts. Comparatively, "engagement" also entails substantial costs in financial and institutional terms, lower fiscal resources for domestic needs, but also relatively higher benefits coming from a more stable security environment, predictable sources of raw materials, and a stable and safe international market where U.S. businesses can export their goods. In a gist, far from bringing a net-positive, "restraint" is likely to increase U.S. overall economic and strategic costs than if it would continue engaging in and promoting a liberal international order.

This chapter continues as follows. In the first section, I discuss contemporary U.S. domestic politics over the country's foreign and security policy. In so doing, I outline the two major "camps" we can identify in this ongoing debate, their principled positions about the ends and means of U.S. foreign policy, their influence in Washington, and political composition. In the second section, I examine in more detail the "restraint" propositions regarding U.S. grand strategy and foreign policy, exploring its potential security implications both for the U.S. and for the rest of the world. Finally, I discuss the costs and benefits of "restraint" vis-à-vis those of its competing stance, "engagement," and I posit that those advocating for reducing the current level of U.S. global engagement fail to make clear the costs implied by a grand strategy driven by "restraint" as the key principle driving U.S. foreign policy. I conclude with some brief remarks about the potential direction of U.S. foreign policy in the years to come.

Domestic Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy

A country's foreign policy is the product of overlapping international and domestic conditions.[4] International events and shifts in the material

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[4] James D. Fearon, "Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, no. 1 (1998): 289–313, https://doi.org/10.1146/

structure matter for the conduct of foreign policy, but they matter only after they become politically meaningful. International events are meaningless until they gain meaning through domestic politics and sense-making processes.[5] Domestic politics – the struggle between different domestic actors over the key issues affecting the state – shape how international events are interpreted and understood, shaping the way a country will behave internationally.[6] In democracies, there is always a plurality of views and ideological perspectives through which world events are interpreted and become politically meaningful. Political parties, social movements, think tanks and even business organizations are shaped by sometimes starkly different ideologies, worldviews, and normative commitments.[7] Thus, to understand how a country conducts its foreign policy, we need to look not only at what happens outside the state, but also within it as there are a continuous feedback loops between the domestic and the international. Domestically, what interpretive narratives become culturally and politically dominant, shaping what counts both as legitimate renderings of world events and legitimate responses, matters because these constrain what ends up being politically possible in the foreign policymaking process.[8]

The post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy has been defined by a cross-party consensus around liberal internationalism. Its key principle has been "engagement" in world affairs, promoting the American ordering project, maintaining stability, and promoting liberal norms and institutions across the world. However, in the wake of the Great Recession and following

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annurev.polisci.1.1.289; Juliet Kaarbo, "A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on the Domestic Politics Turn in IR Theory," *International Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (2015): 189–216, https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12213.

[5] Jutta Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 3 (1996): 275–318, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066196002003001; Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[6] Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 171–200, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.23.1.171.

[7] Brian C. Rathbun, *Partisan Interventions: European Party Politics and Peace Enforcement in the Balkans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Stephanie C. Hofmann, *European Security in NATO's Shadow: Party Ideologies and Institution Building* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[8] Weldes, "Constructing National Interests."

several strategic blunders in the Middle East, this paradigmatic foreign policy narrative is increasingly challenged domestically by those who see "engagement" synonymous with military adventurism or even imperialism.[9] The bipartisan consensus that sustains "engagement" as the preeminent principle guiding U.S. foreign policy as the world's "indispensable nation" has been gradually eroding in response to these domestic challenges. The Republican Party, now dominated by Donald Trump and his "America First" foreign policy vision, is increasingly drifting towards abandoning the liberal internationalist paradigm that defined American foreign policy over the past three decades.[10]

From Dupont Circle to K Street and up to the Capitol Hill, America's bipartisan commitment to liberal internationalism and continued engagement in world affairs can no longer be taken for granted. Instead, a growing debate is emerging between those defending "engagement" from a crowing and eclectic coalition of politicians, practitioners, and academics pushing for "restraint." While liberal internationalists still reign in Foggy Bottom and in Arlington, the debate is far from over and its cultural implications are yet to be fully understood. While the public still provides solid support for continued U.S. leadership around the world, as the 2021 Chicago Council survey shows, public opinion can be swayed if elites shift focus and prefer a restrained position internationally.[11] As I will show later in this chapter, an interesting characteristic of this emerging debate is that

[9] Ashford, "Strategies of Restraint;" Rajan Menon and Andrew Bacevich, "U.S. Foreign Policy Restraint—What It Is, What It's Not," *Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft* (blog), August 16, 2021, https://quincyinst.org/2021/08/16/u-s-foreign-policy-restraint-what-it-is-what-its-not/; Stewart M. Patrick, "The Case for Restraint: Drawing the Curtain on the American Empire," *World Politics Review* (blog), August 26, 2019, https://www.world politicsreview.com/the-case-for-restraint-drawing-the-curtain-on-the-american-empire/.

[10] Thomas Wright, "The Point of No Return: The 2020 Election and the Crisis of American Foreign Policy," Lowy Institute for International Policy, October 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26114; Mitchell B. Reiss, "Britain in a Contested World," *Survival* 63, no. 3 (2021): 181–92, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2021.1930415.

[11] Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, Karl Friedhoff, Craig Kafura, and Emily Sullivan, "A Foreign Policy for the Middle Class - What Americans Think," Chicago Council on Global Affairs, October 7, 2021, https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/ccs2021_fpmc_0.pdf; see also Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020) on precedents on shifting public opinion.

the "restraint" position is promoted by what Deudney and Ikenberry have described as an eclectic coalition of libertarians, anti-imperialist leftists, and Realists.[12] This eclecticism can be best observed in the Quincy Institute, one of the main think tanks created to promote the "restraint" foreign policy paradigm in Washington, DC and which is funded by both Charles Koch and George Soros.[13]

The "restraint" thesis for U.S.'s grand strategy is defined by two main propositions. First, those supporting restraint as the preeminent principle of American foreign policy make a vigorous critique of liberal internationalism and unrestrained "engagement" in world affairs. Second, after outlining all the ills and shortcomings of liberal internationalism, most of them fair and legitimate, they propose "restraint" or, in the case of Realists, "offshore balancing" as a superior alternative to the current ideological paradigm guiding U.S. foreign policy.

The forceful critique of liberal internationalism and unrestrained engagement in world affairs is built on four general pillars. First, restrainers claim that liberal internationalism is the source of its own crisis. John Mearsheimer[14] and Stephen Walt[15] have both identified the ills of liberal internationalism in their "delusional" normative commitments and the expectation to push liberal norms and institutions across the world. Where they differ is in the key factors, proposing complementary propositions. Mearsheimer is looking at liberal ideology defining American society, while Walt looking at the "blob" – that is, the liberally oriented foreign policy professionals forming what is popularly called the "establishment."

Second, liberal internationalism has been criticized for generating international instability and for intensifying security dilemmas. Leftist anti-

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[12] Deudney and Ikenberry, "Getting Restraint Right."

[13] Armin Rosen, "Washington's Weirdest Think Tank," Tablet, 2021, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/quincy-trita-parsi-soros-koch-armin-rosen.

[14] John J. Mearsheimer, "Realism and Restraint," *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 14 (2019a): 12–31; John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (2019b): 7–50, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00342.

[15] Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

imperialists, Realists, and libertarians alike have blamed liberal internationalism for enabling and legitimizing American military adventurism in the Middle East and beyond in the name of democracy promotion and human rights. Liberal internationalism, they condemn, allowed the Bush administration to destabilize the Middle East and spend away trillions of U.S. dollars on ideological attempts to reshape the world. This has produced, in the view of scholars such as Stephen Wertheim[16] or Barry Posen,[17] an intensification of security dilemmas with China and Russia, who were afraid of forced "democratization" attempts sponsored by the U.S., such as the "coloured revolutions" that took place in the post-Soviet space in the late 2000s.

Third, proponents of restraint argue that the continuous engagement in world affairs over the past three decades has undermined American hegemonic power and that it has squandered U.S. power in costly norm-based interventions abroad. These interventions are seen not driven by cold-blooded calculations aiming of furthering the American national interest, but delusional attempts to reshape the values and institutions of far-away societies. Restrainers criticize American foreign policy for what they deem as ideologically driven use of U.S. material power with no tangible benefits for the wellbeing of the everyday American.

Fourth and last, liberal internationalism is blamed for fermenting anti-American resistance abroad, particularly terrorism but not only. The ideological push for promoting American-style democracy and values across the world has produced, restrainers argue, a backlash both in the form of non-state terrorist activity against the U.S. and state-led actions to subvert and thwart American hegemony. U.S. military interventions and political engagement in the Middle East is said to have produced anti-American resistance coming from newly formed terrorist networks, while alleged American involvement in the post-Soviet space and East Asia are said to have fuelled revisionist foreign policies in Moscow and Beijing.

Several of these criticisms of liberal internationalism represent legitimate concerns and are based on undisputable empirical manifestation

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[16] Wertheim, "The Ukraine Temptation."

[17] Posen, *Restraint*.

of U.S. foreign policy over the past three decades. However, it is less than clear if some of the gruesome of these have been caused by liberal internationalist thinking and not by some of its competitors, such as the neoconservatism that fuelled Bush Jr. foreign policy in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, as Ikenberry has argued.[18] While it is undisputable that the U.S. foreign policy has had several misguided turns over the past two decades, it is less than clear if all of these should be imputed to the paradigmatic liberal internationalism.

By blaming liberal internationalism for the misguided turns of U.S. foreign policy of the past two decades, critics carve political space for a different proposition. They propose a different principle to guide the U.S. grand strategy and foreign policy: "restraint." As I will discuss in the next section, "restraint" is seen as a normatively and instrumentally superior principle guiding foreign policy, helping policymakers avoid previous mistakes, safeguarding U.S. power resources, and eliminating a key source of instability and security dilemmas in the world.

Beyond Engagement? Restraint in U.S. Foreign Policy

Critics of liberal internationalism are increasingly advocating for "restraint" in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Restraint is seen as a virtue of a great power and as a guiding principle for a previously superpower that needs to pick its fights in a world where its supremacy is no longer taken for granted. But what does "restraint" actually mean in more practical terms? What counts as restraint when it comes to American grand strategy? Over the past decade the diverse coalition promoting restraint has outlined several key characteristics of a foreign policy driven by "restraint." Most of the characteristics outlined are defined in negative opposition to what they claim are the failures of "engagement." That is, they say what they will no longer do.

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[18] G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order," *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009): 71–87, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592709090112; G. John Ikenberry, "The End of Liberal International Order?," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 7–23, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241.

As an alternative to "engagement," restraint seems to seek four key changes in U.S. foreign policy. First, a restricted use of U.S. military forces overseas and only to protect America's "vital security interests." These security interests tend to be narrowly defined as being related only to the endurance of U.S. as a great power. Second, restraint entails abandoning democracy-promotion and sponsoring political or civil societal projects promoting liberal values and institutions. Third, restrainers argue in favour of focusing on a "bounded order" encompassing Europe, East Asia, and the Americas. These areas, populated by relatively democratic societies or of primary geopolitical interest to the U.S., particularly the two American continents, should constitute the basis for U.S. security. However, this does not seem to mean continued engagement at the same level even inside these regions, restraint meaning sharing responsibility and costs with allies in Europe and Asia for increasingly defence expenditures. Finally, restrainers have argued in favour of recognizing key states such as Ukraine or Taiwan as belonging to the sphere of influence of Russia and China, respectively. For the sake of international stability and peace, the West should not pull away countries that other great powers rightfully consider, for historical or cultural reasons, as belonging to their sphere of influence of political community.

These four policy prescriptions represent some of the most concrete illustrations of what "restraint" would mean in practice, if adopted as the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy. If implemented, it would represent a historical shift in U.S. foreign policy that would turn many of the current political premises of American international conduct on its head. Many of today's taken-for-granted policies and stances would become unworkable and beyond the scope of U.S. foreign policy, producing potentially systemic consequences both for the United States and the for the rest of the world.

The proponents of "restraint" rarely discuss the concrete security implications and the costs emerging from adopting their policy position as the guiding principle of American grand strategy. This may very well be a strategic move to frame the policy debate in the terms of costs of "engagement" vs. benefits of "restraint," but it is a disingenuous way of framing an intellectual debate. Proponents of restraint should better assess

and discuss both the benefits and potential costs and implications of their proposition. Liberal internationalists have not steered away from acknowledging the costs and benefits of "engagement" in world politics, making clear the implications of their position. Proponents of "restraint" should adopt a similar position and make clear both the benefits and the costs of their propositions. Make transparent the trade-offs of "restraint."

From an international perspective, "restraint" as a core principle guiding American conduct has potentially seismic consequences for world security, regional stability everywhere, and immense economic reverberations. These are rarely discussed by its proponents and when they are, they are too easily dismissed by claiming that the U.S. only has the responsibility to ensure its security, not of the entire world.

Based on the main concrete consequences for the conduct of American foreign policy of adopting "restraint" as its guiding principle, we can deduce several key security implications for the rest of the world. These implications can be seen either as advantages or disadvantages of American restraint and should be openly discussed by its proponents.

First, a less engaged United States in the world, who would no longer behave as the indispensable nation, would produce power and security vacuums across every major continent except South America. Mearsheimer argues that "restraint" would reduce the number of wars and will ease antagonisms with non-democracies.[19] Likewise, Walt argues that "offshore balancing" would allow for a better balance of regional challengers.[20] Contrary to these positions, we should expect that the main security implication of "restraint" would be more instability, regional conflicts, and disturbance of value chains and world trade. Take, for instance, the Middle East. The neoconservative-driven intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan has, indeed, unsettled the region but what transformed it into a completely unstable region has been the rather abrupt withdrawal of most American presence from the region. This has allowed regional powers and outsiders to fill the security and power gap left behind. These have fuelled a regional and sectarian conflict between Iran, Saudi Arabia with the involvement of others,

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[19] Mearsheimer, "Realism and Restraint;" Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail."

[20] Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions*, 262.

such as Russia. American restraint in the area between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean intensified latent tensions as regional powers sought to fill the power gap left by the U.S. An American foreign policy defined by restraint in world affairs would create new power and security vacuums across the world, in Africa, Asia, in Europe, as the Ukrainian crisis illustrates, and in Australasia. The intensification of insecurity and regional conflicts will, in turn, endanger American access to foreign markets and strategic raw resources and production capacities, such as those necessary for high-tech chips. Proponents of "restraint" have yet to provide solutions to such implications that may actually endanger not only U.S. standing across the world, but also domestic stability and economic prospects.

Second, adopting restraint in world politics will mean more proxy-wars, not less. A less interventionist American foreign policy will still seek to defend its strategic interests, but not by directly engaging in world affairs. Instead, as Mearsheimer has ceded, the U.S. would need to engage in proxy-wars where it does not intervene directly but where it provides assistance to local actors, as it has done in Syria and in the fashion, it currently does in Ukraine.[21] As Aaron McKeil has put it, "restraint" does not offer different solutions to security crises such as the one in Ukraine.[22] The U.S. would still get engaged, but in an indirect and potentially more costly manner, creating the context for protracted conflicts that last for decades, as it has been the case in Syria. As Berman and Lake have put it, "if the U.S. does less, it must rely on others to do more."[23] These others will require financial, military and know-how support, meaning that the U.S. ends up just outsourcing the actual conduct of wars without actually reducing its costs in material terms. An American foreign policy guided by restraint will condemn the 21st century to a perpetually expanding number of proxy wars between great powers.

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[21] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin Essays," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): [i]-89.

[22] Aaron McKeil, "The Limits of Realism after Liberal Hegemony," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (2021): ogab020, https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogab020.

[23] Eli Berman, David A. Lake, Gerard Padró i Miquel and Pierre Yared, "Introduction: Principals, Agents, and Indirect Foreign Policies," in *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents,* eds. Eli Berman, David A. Lake (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 3.

Third, adopting restraint as the guiding principle of American grand strategy will enable rival powers to assert their civilizational, cultural, and ideological models as legitimate competitors of the liberal societal and political script present in the West. In a world highly technologized, with access to numerous social media and mass media channels, a less engaged America in the world would enable its competitors to eventually control the narrative and displace liberal values and worldviews as "mainstream," as the reference point *vis-à-vis* which the rest are assessed. This will have consequences not only in the international politics field, but also domestically, within the U.S. and other Western countries, where there are already growing resentment against the status quo. American democracy may become less liberal and potentially undemocratic if alternative cultural views become dominant across the world. Liberal institutions and values should not be taken for granted at the domestic level.

In a gist, "restraint" is a guiding principle advocated by critics of liberal internationalism and its alleged failures over the past two decades. Many of the failures they point to are legitimate concerns, while others cannot be imputed to liberal internationalists. Restraint is seen as an alternative to a continuous engagement in world politics and the promotion of liberal values and institutions. Proponents of "restraint" would see the U.S. involved in the world only in pursuit of its narrowly defined security interests, giving up on key tenets that defined American grand strategy after the end of the Cold War. However, proponents of restraint have not openly discussed the trade-offs of their proposition. As I have shown, an American foreign policy defined by restraint would have security consequences that go against what the proponents of restraint seek to achieve.

Conclusion: Is Restraint Better Than Engagement?

The security implications of a U.S. grand strategy guided by the principle of "restraint" has the potential to upend world order in ways that go beyond anything we have seen in the past three decades. It thus begs the question if it is worth it. Would the U.S. get more out of "restraint" than they are currently getting out of "engagement? The latter principle comes with

steep costs for the U.S. taxpayer, which needs to support a large military presence around the world and a continuous engagement of the U.S. in foreign conflicts. However, "restraint" comes with its own costs provoked by the implications of disengaging from the world, which I have discussed in the previous section. In a gist, the American public needs to decide if it makes sense to switch to restraint as the guiding principle of U.S. grand strategy and foreign policy.

Considering the likely implications of "restraint" discussed earlier, it is plausible to expect that the costs coming from "restraint" would be of a different nature than the current types of costs entailed by following a principle of "engagement. However, it is unlikely that in an increasingly unstable world we would be able to expect lower levels of costs. Nature and degrees of costs are different characteristics. "Restraint" is likely to just shift the nature of the costs entailed by the U.S. as a great power but not necessarily the degree, as long as "restraint" does not mean – as most of its proponents always assert – isolationism and complete disconnect from world affairs.

As long as the United States remains and has the ambition of being a great power, adopting "restraint" as a guiding principle of its foreign policy is likely to increase its relative costs because its absence from significant regions of the world would leave power vacuums that will enhance regional conflicts, incentivizing other great powers to fill the void left by the United States. Moreover, it is unlikely that in the future the U.S. would be able to successfully follow through with such a principle, considering that its economic development and technology relies both on raw resources and technology that are primarily present in other regions of the world, sometimes far away from the U.S. mainland. Securing transport routes and access to those resources and technology would force the U.S. to alter its commitment to a foreign policy driven by restraint. This will necessarily increase its costs without likely providing all the benefits it would gain if it would maintain "engagement" as its guiding principle.

While in this paper I do not engage in a full costs-and-benefits calculation, such a task going beyond the scope of a single paper, it is apparent that the benefits that restrainers are proclaiming are substantially offset by the likely larger costs associated with restraint.

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The Fate of the Black Sea Region Security in a Cold War 2.0 Era

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Abstract. Will the Black Sea region security, with its widespread challenges, from the fate of the Republic of Moldova to the Middle East, get a top priority status within NATO after the Ukraine invasion? While it is difficult to predict the impact of the war outcome, Russia will likely try to incorporate the entire Black Sea seashore belonging now to Ukraine. This will have a major impact on Romania's security while putting the exploitation of the undersea gas reserves under a big question mark. The evolutions in the region will essentially depend on the West being able to preserve its unity in the wake of new challenges such as energy crisis and the deteriorating economic situation, or old ones, such as a potential transatlantic rift and the geopolitical impact of the revisionist powers' assault on the current world order.

Keywords: Ukraine war; Black Sea security; a new cold war; NATO vs Russia; Western unity.

The paper discusses the overall security situation in the Black Sea extended region and its future perspectives departing from several key questions:

- Will the Black Sea region security, with its widespread challenges, from the fate of the Republic of Moldova to the Western Balkans or the Middle East turmoil, get a top priority status within NATO after the Ukraine invasion? And how is its ability to develop a coherent policy affected by Turkey's (a NATO member), independent foreign policy?

- The Battle on the Ground: will Russia be able to incorporate the entire Black Sea seashore now belonging to Ukraine? This becomes a key issue for the fate of the Ukraine war.

- Will the West be able to preserve its unity, in the wake of the challenges posed by the popular discontent fermented by Moscow playing the energy card in Europe? In a broader context, other factors will be also important to monitor: the potential transatlantic rift, a product of the isolationist temptations in America and the EU ambition to become "sovereign," decoupled from the US, which has not vanished because of the Ukraine war, the EU ability to counteract the Russian efforts to instil instability in the Western Balkans, the East-West tensions within the EU or the Turkish geopolitical ambiguity playing on many fronts.

The chapter is structured as follows:

1. The REGION itself, with the main actors' perspectives.
2. The SITUATION on the GROUND and the expected and preferred outcomes of the Ukraine War within Western and Eastern Europe, United States and Britain, Russia, and Ukraine itself. In this sense, the fate of the battle for the control of the entire Black Sea seashore seems to be an essential element.
3. The broader GEOPOLITICAL impact of the Ukrainian war in the context of the revisionist powers' push for a New International Order.

1. The region

a. The NATO / Western perspective

"It has been the world's bloodiest body of water since the Cold War—and not just because of Ukraine. The Black Sea is, after all, where many of the world's largest powers come together—Russia, the European Union, Turkey, and NATO, bringing with it the United States, though none has the ability to dominate," writes Maximilian Hess in *Foreign Policy*.[1] Indeed, an

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[1] Maximilian Hess, "Welcome to the Black Sea Era of War," *Foreign Policy,* April 25, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/25/black-sea-war-russia-ukraine-turkey/.

astounding number of 10 wars have taken place on or near the Black Sea littoral since the end of the Cold War, more than any other maritime space in the world. It is in the Black Sea region, not in the Baltics, where Russia conducted military operations in the last two decades, in Chechnya, Georgia (2008), Crimea and Donbas (2014-15) and now in Ukraine, observes the author.

In a similar way Gabriel Elefteriu in *The Spectator* states that "it is time for the West to wake up to the full strategic realities of the Black Sea region and recognise that it is here, not in the Baltics, where the long-term struggle against Russia's expansionism will be decided. Whatever the outcome of the Ukraine war, countries like Romania or Moldova are now potential flashpoints in Eastern Europe's new security landscape"[2] It is quite strange, after all, that the Western strategists' attention has been absorbed almost entirely by the Baltic countries and the Suwalki Gap, when Russia has always emphasised Ukraine and the Balkans as its main "southern strategic interests" in terms of its military activities. That makes the author conclude that, although it is quite late, "consolidating and unifying NATO's eastern flank is now the first strategic priority."

There are various reasons for this past NATO "attention" asymmetry. Such as the perception that the small size of the Baltic states, which until 1991 have been part of the defunct Soviet Union (just recently former Russian prime minister and president, Dmitri Medvedev, said that they regret letting Estonia, a staunch supporter of Ukraine, be free!) are far more vulnerable against a potential Russian aggression than the countries from the South-eastern flank. In fact, a Rand corporation simulation states that in that case it would be extremely difficult for NATO to react. But another strong reason is the significant influence of the Nordic countries, Poland and the Baltic states themselves in Washington.

As Gabriel Eleferiu points out in a *Spectator* article, "NATO's eastern flank has been unbalanced by design since the Alliance's 2016 Warsaw Summit which established an 'enhanced Forward Presence' in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and the Baltic Sea; and a much weaker 'tailored

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2 Gabriel Eleferiu, "NATO's Black Sea Blindspot Endangers Us All," *The Spectator*, March 24, 2022, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/nato-s-black-sea-blindspot-endangers-us-all.

Forward Presence' in Romania and the Black Sea (which is now being hastily upgraded in response to the war). The latter may have contributed to NATO's failure to deter the Russian invasion," adding that "to make matters worse, the network of relationships – among officials, politicians, experts, businesspeople – and mutual interests and ties between west European and Baltic states, including Poland, has no real equivalent around the Black Sea." But he is also critical of Romania (and Republic of Moldova) for opting "for a lower-key, unimaginative foreign policy" for lack of vision and, in the case of Moldova, out of fear of Moscow reactions.

During a Hoover GoodFellows edition[3] dedicated to the war in Ukraine, general H.R. McMaster, a former White House NSC Head, also stated that a stronger naval NATO presence in the Black Sea (possible in spite of the limitations imposed by the Montreux Treaty) would have made far more difficult a Russian blockade of the Ukraine ports, essential for the majority of the country's exports, including cereals and fertilizers.

Of course, the situation is further complicated by Turkey, which instead of being the main promoter of NATO interests in the area, plays its own strategic games. While remaining inside NATO, Ankara, under Erdoğan, often adopted decisions in plain contrast with those of its "formal" Western Allies, including the United States, and maintains friendly relations with Russia, China. And Iran.

b. The Russian Perspective

What are Moscow's main objectives in Ukraine?

Three days before the Russian army began its "special military operation" in Ukraine, Vladimir Putin gave a virulent televised speech. "Ukraine is not just a neighbouring country for us," Putin said. "It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture, and spiritual space." For him, Ukraine's borders have no meaning, they remain just some form of the administrative division of the former Soviet Union: "Modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia." This strongly contradicts the view of those who

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[3] The Hoover Institution, "Vlad the Impaled. GoodFellows: Conversations From The Hoover Institution," YouTube, March 5, 2022, https://youtu.be/n9qbC_srCCI.

argue, like John Mearsheimer, that the security fears due to NATO's expansion in the East are the reason Russia decided to attack Ukraine. "In this reading, Kyiv's pro-Western outlook over the past decade is only the latest form of external interference—this time by the European Union and the United States—aimed at dividing Russia against itself. Ukraine suffers from a 'forced change of identity,' and 'Ukraine and Ukrainians, aren't just naturally part of Russia; they don't even really exist'," writes Anna Reid, a former Kyiv Correspondent for *The Economist*.[4] According to Putin, Ukraine leaning toward West, not only as part of NATO, but also of the EU, is "comparable...to the use of weapons of mass destruction against us."

These declarations should be corroborated with other key statements, strategy documents or positions expressed during influential talk shows on Russian State Television, such is the one hosted by Vladimir Solovyev. "In recent years, Ukraine has mentally turned into the Third Reich, as a result, this country will suffer the same fate, warned Dmitri Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, stressing that the goals set by Vladimir Putin, demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine,' can be achieved only on the battlefields."

What does this mean in detail it is at length described in a programmatic document published on April 4, 2022, by the official news agency RIA Novosti and can be summarised as Françoise Thom explains,[5] as the "liquidation of the Ukrainian nation." But as the French historian states, this is only a first step. According to Medvedev, "the objective [of the denazification of Ukraine] is the peace of future generations of Ukrainians and the possibility of finally building an open Eurasia — from Lisbon to Vladivostok." political scientist Vladimir Mojegov says, in an article entitled "Russia Launched a Clock in the Opposite direction from the Apocalypse,"[6] that the de-Europeanization of Ukraine is only a prologue to the de-Europeanization of all of Europe. "Our goal in Ukraine is not to move the

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[4] Anna Reid, "Putin's War on History," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022, https://www.foreign affairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-06/putins-war-history-ukraine-russia.

[5] Françoise Thom, "Russian Ideologues Aim to Liquidate the Ukrainian Nation," Desk Russie, April 08, 2022, https://en.desk-russie.eu/2022/04/08/russian-ideologues-aim-html.

[6] Vladimir Mogojev, "Russia Launched a Clock in the Opposite Direction from the Apocalypse," *Vzglyad*, April 6, 2022, https://vz.ru/opinions/2022/4/6/1151558.html.

anti-Russian area 1,000 kilometres to the West, but to create on our western borders a bridge and a springboard to a new Europe, not to the current Europe of chaos and decadence, but to the Europe of Tradition." There is a sort of bravado in all these kinds of statements. The goal is to impress and scare the outside world and to encourage and motivate the internal public opinion. But even so they reflect the broad scope and give a deep significance to the "special military operation" against Ukraine

Vladimir Putin's public statements, especially the 7,000-word essay under Putin's by-line with the title "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians" published in July last summer, which become part of the required curriculum for all service members in the Russian armed forces, made it quite clear what are Russia's strategic objectives. In fact, there have been many signals about Kremlin's strategic objectives in the newly defined "near abroad" space, which obviously includes Ukraine, as well as in the former Soviet Union Eastern Europe sphere of influence. But they have been largely ignored in the West.

In May 2004, Viktor Yanukovych, Putin's choice for Ukrainian president, was introduced to Condoleezza Rice, as the former White House national security adviser, at the time, recalled recently during an interview. She concluded that Mr. Putin had arranged the surprise encounter to signal his close interest in the election's outcome. But, unfortunately for Putin, Yanukovych's initial election victory in the elections which took place during the same year was marred by allegations of fraud and voter intimidation. Following weeks of massive street protests and strikes, branded as the "Orange Revolution," Ukraine's supreme court ordered a new vote, which pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko won. The Russian leader was convinced that everything was arranged by the Western powers and three months later Vladimir Putin described the breakup of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

Later, in January 2007, Vladimir Putin expressed his frustrations about the West and the current World Order that in his view needed to change, at the annual Munich Security Conference. He denounced the U.S. for trying to rule a unipolar world, accused NATO of expanding into Europe's East, and "called the West hypocritical for lecturing Russia about

democracy." A chill descended on the audience of Western diplomats and politicians at the luxury Hotel Bayerischer Hof, with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert Gates, and U.S. Senator John McCain in attendance. "We didn't take the speech as seriously as we should have," recalled Wolfgang Ischinger, a German diplomat and the chairman of the Conference. "It takes two to tango, and Mr. Putin didn't want to tango anymore."[7]

In reality, the episode was quickly forgotten. And even the following events, the Russian military intervention in Georgia, in 2008, and the one in Ukraine, in 2014, when Moscow took under its control parts of the Ukraine Donbas region and annexed Crimea, did not substantially change the way the West saw Putin's strategic objectives, despite the fact that some moderate EU sanctions were imposed on Russia. Even now, in some Western capitals there is still hope that Kremlin will accept a negotiated solution for the war in Ukraine, which ignores the fact that what Vladimir Putin, and the Russian elites want, is a "world where Russia presides over a new Slavic union composed of Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and perhaps the northern part of Kazakhstan (which is heavily Slavic)—and where all the other post-Soviet states recognize Russia's suzerainty. He also wants the West and the global South to accept Russia's predominant regional role in Eurasia." "This is more than a sphere of influence; it is a sphere of control, with a mixture of outright territorial reintegration of some places and dominance in the security, political, and economic spheres of others".[8]

And there is another common mistake. Historian Dominic Lieven, a professor at Cambridge University, whose great-great-grandfather, one of Tsar Alexander II's friends, was the founder of Donetsk, believes, like

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[7] Michael R. Gordon, Bojan Pancevski, Noemie Bisserbe and Marcus Walker, "Vladimir Putin's 20-Year March to War in Ukraine - and How the West Mishandled It," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 1, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/vladimir-putins-20-year-march-to-war-in-ukraineand-how-the-west-mishandled-it-11648826461.

[8] Fiona Hill and Angela Stent, "The World Putin Wants," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/world-putin-wants-fiona-hill-angela-stent?utm_medium=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&utm_source=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&utm_campaign=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&utm_content=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&utm_term=PANTHEON_STRIPPED.

another well-known American historian, Stephen Kotkin, that it is a mistake to look at the present military intervention in Ukraine and like others from the past just through the prism of Putin's personal ambitions.[9] They are, above all else, says Dominic Lieven, the expression of the feelings of anger and humiliation of the Russian elites towards the decline of their country from the status of an imperial power, of a superpower in the period of the Soviet Union, to the current one. For the past hundred years, he also points out, the Russian imperial elites have lived with a sense of a special destiny, of an exceptional historical civilizational mission that they had to accomplish. This is still true today and explains why personalities such as the great director Nikita Mikhalkov or the conductor Valeri Gerghev rallied around Kremlin's official narrative on Ukraine war, a relevant example being a documentary made by Nikita Mikhalkov on this subject. One should also remember that Pushkin wrote a poem in 1831 in which he condemned those who wanted to support the Polish insurgents in their confrontation with the army of Tsarist Russia.

That is why calls for a negotiated settlement that would involve Ukrainian territorial concessions, an idea advanced among others by Henry Kissinger this year in Davos, seem to be at best just a temporary solution. Putin seems uninterested in a compromise that would leave Ukraine as a sovereign, independent state. "Putin's goal is not negotiation but Ukrainian capitulation," write Fiona Hill and Angela Stent in the above-mentioned article. This makes it very difficult to imagine a reasonable formula for ending the hostilities in the near term. "The West must understand that it is dealing with a leader who is trying to change the historical narrative of the last hundred years—not just of the period since the end of the Cold War. Vladimir Putin wants to make Ukraine, Europe, and indeed the whole world conform to his own version of history."[10]

Some in the West seem ready to almost accept such a solution, considering Russian claims somehow reasonable. But the problem is that

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[9] Trinity Japan, "Dominic Lieven: The Ukrainian Crisis: the View of an Imperial Historian," moderated by Gerhard Fasol, YouTube, March 17, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkXZYqWJX6k.

[10] Hill, Stent, "The World Putin Wants."

Russia "lacks the power of attraction," believes Robert Kagan.[11] So, what was left is to use the military force as in Georgia, in 2008, or in Ukraine, in 2014 and now. "Russians may believe they have a natural, geographic, and historical claim to a sphere of interest in eastern Europe because they had it throughout much of the past four centuries" writes Kagan. "The problem for Putin—and for those in the West who want to cede to both China and Russia their traditional spheres of interest—is that such spheres are not granted to one great power by other great powers. Even the Americans learned that claiming a sphere of interest is different from having one."

But while Russia has difficulties in this respect, they have been quite successful in destabilising things within Europe and the United States. In his book from 1997, *Foundations of Geopolitics*, Alexandr Dugin hints at the old KGB strategies, embraced by the Russian elites, who dream of reviving the glory of the former Tsarist Empire, in relation with the "Collective West" (a name heavily used these days in Moscow). "If Russia wants to be successful, we need to split the UK from Europe and promote culture/race wars in the US by supporting literally every radical group regardless of their political affiliation," writes Dugin. Unfortunately, in the West people did not pay attention to the old KGB "subversion" recipes which Yuri Bezmenov talked at length about four decades ago.[12]

c. The impact on the Wider Region: the Western Balkans, Turkey, the Middle East and the Caucasus region

The Western Balkans are famously unstable. The division of former Yugoslavia created a lot of fault lines and divisions among the entities which resulted after the split. While Slovenia and Croatia are part of the EU, Serbia, although is in the position of a candidate member, remains a staunch ally of Russia. And serious tensions remain around Kosovo and Bosnia, in a region

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[11] Robert Kagan, "The Price of Hegemony," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022, https://www.foreign affairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-06/russia-ukraine-war-price-hegemony?utm_medium =promo_email&utm_source=special_send&utm_campaign=ukraine_russia_022422&utm_ content=20220406&utm_term=all-actives.

[12] Nicholas Marshall, "Full Interview with Yuri Bezmenov: 'The Four Stages of Ideological Subversion' (1984)," August 22, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yErKTVdETpw.

where Russia is hugely influential, as Antonia Colibășanu points out in her analysis about the Ukrainian war impact for the Balkans.[13] For example, immediately after Russia started the invasion, Kosovo asked the United States to establish a permanent military base in the country and speed up its integration into NATO after saying it would also impose sanctions against Russia.

"The conflict in Ukraine began with Russia recognizing the independence of the two separatist republics," writes Antonia Colibășanu. "A renewed crisis in the Balkans could start with Dodik (the leader of Republika Srpska, which has a very good personal relationship with Vladimir Putin) thinking it's time for Russia to recognize the independence of Republika Srpska from Bosnia. He has expressed support for the Russian invasion and said he is dissatisfied with Bosnia's decision to co-sign the EU statement condemning it." All these evolutions complicate the overall strategic playground in the Western Balkans and the broad Black Sea area, giving Moscow plenty opportunities to destabilise the region.

As for Turkey, here are the main conclusions of an analysis of the CATS Network– Center for Applied Turkey Studies, released in March 2022, soon after the war in Ukraine started:

- Turkey has long pursued a balancing act between Russia and the West. It cooperates with Russia when it sees fit but also remains committed to NATO.
- As long as Russia remains a significant regional player, Turkey will likely continue its balancing act.
- NATO might be as relevant as ever to Turkey, but re-joining "the strategic West" is not easily convertible to a fundamental reorientation in Turkey's foreign policy, which would imply a value shift too.
- The Russia-Ukraine war may urge Turkey and China to cooperate in several potential areas.

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[13] Antonia Colibășanu, "What the Ukraine War Means for the Balkans," *Geopolitical Futures* and *Real Clear World*, March 01, 2022, https://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2022/03/01/what_the_ukraine_war_means_for_the_balkans_819418.html.

- Russia's exclusion from the Western SWIFT system has concerned both Beijing and Ankara. China and Turkey, which have long been discussing a payment system for bilateral trade in their local currencies, are now likely to accelerate their currency cooperation efforts further.

Until now, Erdoğan was able to exploit quite well the crisis generated by the Ukrainian war by presenting himself as a bridge between the West and Russia. He maintains personal links with Vladimir Putin with whom he met in Tehran in July 2022, during a trilateral meeting Russia – Turkey – Iran, three powers which after the American retreat right now play a leading role in the security equation in the Middle East region. They also met later during a visit in Sochi. In a joint statement after this meeting the two leaders "reaffirmed a common will to further develop Russian-Turkish relations based," despite the current regional and global challenges, and "stressed the key importance of sincere, candid and trustful relations between Russia and Turkey in achieving regional and international stability."[14]

"Turkey's Erdoğan Walks the US-Russia Tightrope," writes *Asia Times*, with the Turkish president seeming to have the upper hand over Putin because of Russia relative global isolation.[15] "Such a foreign policy may help Ankara achieve some of its geopolitical goals not just in the Black Sea region, but also in the Middle East, as well as in the South Caucasus." But the interests of Turkey and Russia collide in different parts of the region. For example, while Ankara would like to move against the Kurdish militants in the North of Syria, the Kremlin, which supports Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, asked Erdoğan before the meeting with Putin "not to destabilize" Syria, since any such action that could "jeopardize Syria's territorial and political integrity." Russia and Turkey are also on the opposing sides in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh area, where Russia has almost 2,000 peacekeeping troops. While Moscow supports Armenia, Turkey supports the other side.

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[14] Armenia News, "Putin and Erdogan Make Joint Statement," News.am, August 5, 2022, https://news.am/eng/news/715101.html.

[15] Nikola Mikovic, "Turkey's Erdogan Walks the US-Russia Tightrope," *Asia Times*, August 9, 2022, https://asiatimes.com/2022/08/turkeys-erdogan-walks-the-us-russia-tightrope/.

On the other hand, Erdoğan plays his cards well exploiting the Ukrainian war, mainly in relation with the United States. Turkey's approval is necessary for Sweden and Finland to join NATO and the country agreed not to sell Bayraktar drones, which have been very effectively used by Ukrainians in the war, to Russia. This could be used as a bargaining chip in trying to convince Americans to give up their opposition to Turkish intervention against the Kurds. But probably this will go too far by further damaging Ankara's relations with Washington and with NATO after Turkey decided to buy Russian S-400 anti-missile systems in 2019. At the same time, Ankara, which decided not to join Western sanctions against Russia, continues its close economic cooperation with Moscow. Moreover, Putin and Erdoğan have recently agreed that Ankara will start making payments for Moscow's natural gas in roubles. Also, despite sanctions, Bloomberg reported that Russia's state-run nuclear-power giant Rosatom recently transferred "around $5 billion" to a subsidiary in Turkey for building the US$20 billion nuclear power plant in the country's Mersin province.[16]

Overall, this means that it is extremely difficult to develop a coherent NATO Black Sea policy when by far its most important member from the region, in term of military capabilities, has its own distinct approach concerning the regional policies and alliances. This will allow Moscow to remain a significant actor in the Black Sea area and impedes NATO's ability to counteract a strong Russian naval position around Ukraine coast.

2. The Battle on the Ground

Will Russia be able to incorporate the entire Black Sea seashore now belonging to Ukraine?

Speaking in April at a defence industry meeting,[17] Major General Rustam Minnekaev, the Deputy Commander of Russia's Central Military

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[16] Firat Kozok, "Russia Is Wiring Dollars to Turkey for $20 Billion Nuclear Plant," *Bloomberg*, July 29, 2022, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-29/russia-is-wiring-dollars-to-turkey-for-20-billion-nuclear-plant.

[17] TASS, "В Минобороны назвали задачи второго этапа спецоперации на Украине" (The Ministry of Defence named the tasks of the second stage of the special operation in Ukraine), April 22, 2022, https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/14446141?utm_source=newsweek.com &utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=newsweek.com&utm_referrer=newsweek.com

District, said that the Russian Armed Forces plan to "make passage" into the region — in Moldova's East, bordering Ukraine and less than 30 miles from the port city of Odessa — to create a "land corridor to Crimea." He added that the measure was part of Russia's second phase of the "special military operation" in Ukraine, which involves establishing full control over the Donbas Region and all Ukraine's coast along the Black Sea. "This (control over the Donbass - TASS notes) will make it possible to provide a land corridor to the Crimea, as well as to influence the vital facilities of the Ukrainian [military forces], Black Sea ports, through which agricultural and metallurgical products are delivered to [other] countries." The goal is to provoke a lethal impact to the Ukraine economy.

Minnekaev cited the strategic value of the region, claiming "control over the south of Ukraine is another exit into Transnistria (a separatist region of the Republic of Moldova, where nearly 1,500 Russian troops are stationed, part of the gallery of "frozen conflicts" areas within the former Soviet Union space) where there are also facts pointing to the oppression of the Russian-speaking population," the usual pretext Moscow uses to intervene militarily in its "near abroad" region, adding, ominously, that "apparently, we are now at war with the whole world, as it was in the Great Patriotic War, all of Europe, the whole world was against us."

A few months later, the situation on the ground is more complicated. While the Russian army managed to retain control in almost all the Donbas region, the Ukrainian military started a counter-offensive in the South trying to get back control of Kherson and Mykolaiv regions. Although the evolutions are fluid and there are contradictory accounts about the situation on the ground from the Russian and Ukrainian sides, it became quite clear that Moscow has not only faced significant difficulties in its attempt to implement the strategy mentioned by general Minnekaev and further advance toward Odessa, but risks losing some of the positions already gained at the beginning of the war.

At this moment, the battle in the South of Ukraine, along the Black Sea coast, could become a key turning point of the war if Kyiv manages to gain ground, not only from a military perspective but also from a symbolic one since this could send a signal in the West that Ukraine is able to create big problems to the Russian army provided the Western support remains in

place. In this sense HIMARS missiles proved to be a game changer. The targets they have reached deep inside Russian controlled territory create a new tactical reality.

In a similar way, Ukraine's Crimean strikes, the attack on the Russian Saki airbase from Crimea near Novofedorivka on the peninsula's western coast, which destroyed a number of aircraft and severely damaged the base itself as well as a drone hit of the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine occupied Crimea region, mark "a new stage of the war," writes Mark Galeotti, a well-known expert on Russian issues.[18] Alongside the direct military impact (the strikes complicate the logistics for the Russians since they have to disperse their supply depots), Galeotti stresses that the political and psychological blow of the attack is even more important. "Zelensky has signalled in an emphatic way that Putin should not presume that this is a war that can be confined to Ukrainian soil." While Zelensky did not refer explicitly to the blasts in a speech afterwards, he noted that "the Russian war against Ukraine began with the occupation of Crimea" and "must end with Crimea – with its liberation."

"Many western governments have long privately encouraged Zelensky to accept that he may eventually have to surrender Crimea as the price for peace, or at the very least counselled 'strategic ambiguity' – leaving the Russians guessing, and retaining some diplomatic wriggle room for the future," writes Galeotti. "Zelensky has shown himself time and again supremely uninterested in the usual diplomatic etiquette." Especially important is the impact of such strikes inside Russian controlled territory on the Russians' support for the war which started to diminish, according to some recent opinion polls despite the continuous pro-war propaganda mainly on the state TV channels. In this sense, the fact that the audience of these channels recently dropped more than 20 percent (as reported by *The Telegraph*) must be a worrying sign for Kremlin. "In the face of incidents like Saki, it becomes harder and harder for the Kremlin to maintain the pretence that this is a 'nice, victorious little war' (as a tsarist official once claimed the disastrous 1904-5 Russo-Japanese war would be)," concludes Mark Galeotti.

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[18] Mark Galeotti, "Ukraine's Crimean Strike Marks a New Stage of the War," *The Spectator*, August 11, 2022, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/ukraine-s-crimean-strike-marks-a-new-stage-of-the-war.

Still, at this stage it is extremely difficult to see an outcome for the war in the near future. Russia's objectives in Ukraine remain so far unchanged, we continue to hear the same narratives, as stressed by Vladimir Putin when the invasion was launched. So, it is clear at this stage that Moscow is prepared for a long battle in Ukraine. Will the West be willing to continue to provide a long time support for Kyiv? This is an open question. The initial optimism in the West about the Russian difficulties in dealing with the military operations and the sanctions impact has cooled down. Winter is coming and the energy crisis orchestrated by Moscow has started to bite.

It is very unlikely that Russia will accept a peace agreement if Ukraine could come off after that as a significant actor in Europe. A Ukraine with the Donbas incorporated within the Russian Federation and devoid of its entire Black Sea coast would be probably the limit of what it might consider. At least temporarily, since such a dysfunctional country could be an easy target in the future. That is why the battle for the control of the Ukrainian Black Sea shore is a key element in the war.

3. The broader geopolitical angle

How strong is the Western unity? Will the West be willing to continue to provide a substantial support for Ukraine or will some of the major European powers, mainly Germany and France, press for a negotiated ceasefire more or less on Putin's terms?

Despite the rhetorical expression of unity, the Western front is not as united as it seems, not only Hungary, but also Germany and Austria, being among the weak links. And with the upcoming Italian elections, Rome could complete the list. Kremlin believes that under the economic pressures put on the Europeans by the higher energy prices, constant intimidations with tactical nuclear strikes, the huge Ukrainian refugees flow and media fatigue, the West will gradually abandon Ukraine and slow down the promised dramatic increases in defence spending. At the same time Moscow hopes that in the longer run the transatlantic rifts will re-emerge.[19]

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[19] Josef Joffe, "Will Germany's Foreign Policy Turnabout Last?," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/germany-turnabout-scholz-russia-ukraine-invasion-berlin-gas-gazprom-nord-stream-exports-swift-sanctions-putin-xi-11646232325

Might Russia be right? A perfect welfare state like Germany is unlikely to max out defence spending overnight, especially while Covid "is claiming billions of euros," writes Joseph Joffe, a former editor of the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, in *The Wall Street Journal*. He believes that while a Putin victory in Ukraine will shift the balance of power against Europe, the Germans will still have to live with a nearby Russia and "won't want to anger this ruthless giant forever." "Baiting the bear isn't a sustainable strategy. Geography is destiny." Mr. Joffe may be right, but this is not good news for the countries on the Eastern front, including Romania, which have been already informed of the Russian request addressed to the United States that NATO should retreat to the positions prior 1997. All these countries saw that the only major powers that have significantly helped Ukraine are the United States and Britain, both outside EU.

"Winter in Europe May Be Springtime for Putin," writes *The Wall Street Journal*.[20] With Russia skilfully playing the "energy card," the West, and in special Germany, seems to have no real solutions in store. "Russia's energy war deploys high prices to promote social turmoil and empower populist parties," write the authors, in line with a Vladimir Putin strategy he laid out in St. Petersburg during an economic conference in June: "the high energy prices will bring hardship as they radiate through the European economy, which will create social turmoil and this in turn will bring to power populist parties" that will, to use his own language, change 'the elites' in Europe" by bringing to power governments that are not committed to supporting Ukraine and so fracture the Western coalition.

Indeed, the great unknown is, of course, the trajectory of European public opinion on the war. In the former East Germany, a recent poll revealed that 58 percent of the citizens blamed America for the conflict and wanted Berlin "not to provoke Russia." And even in the rest of Germany, where anti-Americanism is also widespread, things did not look much better (40 percent of West Germans see things in a similar manner).

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[20] Daniel Yergin & Michael Stoppard, "Winter in Europe May Be Springtime for Putin," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/winter-in-europe-may-be-springtime-for-putin-ukraine-energy-gas-supplier-war-european-union-shipments-pipeline-11659556722?mod=hp_opin_pos_6#cxrecs_s.

In an analysis for *The Spectator*,[21] German historian Katja Hoyer quoted a German journalist who told her that Vladimir Putin is "keeping our country on a leash." As winter approaches, the initial debates on the diversification of energy sources and crisis solutions have turned into a real panic. Only BASF's giant chemical plant in Ludwigshafen needs as much as half of Denmark's total gas consumption. This leads the president of the German concern to say that if Putin turns off the "gas tap," his country will face the worst economic crisis since the end of the Second World War.

That is one of the reasons why, as Politico observes, France and Germany continue to have serious misgivings about what a Ukrainian win could entail, and whether the war can be won without an escalation that possibly involves NATO more directly. There is a distinction in this sense between what is being said in public, and the private views of Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and the most senior people around them. The prospect of escalation of the war outside Ukraine, especially the fear about tactical nuclear strikes on the European mainland would also test the cohesion of the NATO alliance. "While nobody wants to be quoted on the record, senior Europeans are already whispering to sympathetic journalists about concerns that the Biden administration is escalating too far and too fast,"[22] writes Walter Russel Mead.

But besides the prospect of losing support of the public opinion and the likely ascent of populist parties exploiting the crisis, there is another serious challenge within the EU: the internal tensions due to the different positions not only about the war in Ukraine but also about its impact on the distribution of power on the continent. "The greatest obstacle to the West providing all-out military support to Ukraine is our inability to imagine a new power configuration in Eastern Europe - one that would rest on the NATO's Baltic-to-Black Sea intermarium corridor of countries aligned with the US," believes Andrew Michta, criticising the rising chorus of politicians

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[21] Katja Hoyer, "Germany Is Caught in Putin's Trap," *The Spectator*, July 23, 2022, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/germany-is-caught-in-putin-s-trap.

[22] Walter Russell Mead, "Another Cuban Missile Crisis?," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/another-cuban-missile-crisis-russia-nuclear-strike-test-risk-war-ukraine-austin-pelosi-gerasimov-visit-putin-zelensky-11651527022?mod=opinion_major_pos9.

and national security experts pressing for an "immediate ceasefire" and the reluctance, mainly from the German and French part, of providing heavy weapons to Ukraine which would allow the country "to turn the tables on Russia and liberate captured territory."[23] In his view, at a geostrategic level "the emergence of a free, independent and successful Ukraine aligned with the West would also end the two-frontier crisis that the Sino-Russian alliance has sought to create for the U.S. Securing Europe's Eastern flank should be done by relying on countries that see their continued close alliance with America as vital to their security and are ready to do their share to shore up defences. The U.S. would then be free to focus on the upcoming contest with China in the Indo-Pacific, rendering the so-called "pivot to Asia" debate largely moot." Michta believes that a potential defeat of the Russian army in Ukraine "would pave the way for a fundamental reconfiguration of the power distribution in Europe, shifting the centre of gravity from the Franco-German tandem to a Central European constellation to include Germany, Poland, the Scandinavians, the Baltics and, most of all, Ukraine.

There are two main problems with these two desired outcomes. First, it is quite unclear how a "defeat of the Russian military" can be defined. Even if one does not embrace the catastrophic view of John Mearsheimer which fears that escalating the Western support for Kyiv means "playing with fire"[24] because of a potential Russian nuclear reaction, this is something not so easy to imagine. There are even a good number of pessimistic views about the possibility of a Ukrainian victory. MIT professor Barry Posen thinks, for example, that this is a pure fantasy.[25] He might be right but, on the other hand, the diplomatic solution that he advises to be quickly considered ignores the fundamental objectives Russia had when launching the war: that

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[23] Andrew Michta, "Ukraine Could Be an Inflection Point for the West," *Politico*, June 11, 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-could-be-an-inflection-point-eu-us-west-war-russia/.

[24] John J. Mearsheimer, "Playing with Fire in Ukraine: The Underappreciated Risks of Catastrophic Escalation," *Foreign Affairs*, August 17, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/playing-fire-ukraine.

[25] Barry R. Posen, "Ukraine's Implausible Theories of Victory," *Foreign Affairs*, July 8, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-07-08/ukraines-implausible-theories-victory.

is, to have, at least in the end, a dysfunctional country, depleted of Donbas and a Black Sea coast territory, which in the future, sooner or later, will be completely absorbed by Russia, a prospect impossible to accept by Kyiv.

Secondly, especially in Berlin and Paris, a strong East European axis built around Poland and Ukraine is not at all a desirable outcome. It is something that will keep a strong American presence on the continent (in contrast to the goal of the European Strategic Sovereignty (ESS) envisioned by France and also by Germany) and will dilute the considerable power the Franco-German duo enjoys within the EU institutions. In fact, both Germany and France were very much in line with Russia when they used to talk about a "multi-polar world." Emmanuel Macron signalled quite explicitly in the past that he wanted a new security arrangement between a sovereign EU and Russia to be able to push, in time, the US outside the continent. Of course, the Ukraine invasion ordered by Putin now makes such a project completely obsolete, but does this mean that this vision it is completely off the table?

Conclusions

Are we in a new Cold War, 2.0 edition? And if the answer is yes, how will this affect Romania and the overall Black Sea region? Regarding the second question, much will depend on the outcome of the Russian attempt to control all the Ukrainian Black Sea seashore. At this moment the problems encountered by the Russian army in the south do not make this likely. But one cannot exclude entirely this possibility.

The first question needs a broader answer. Until the Ukrainian war started, many rejected the idea despite raising geopolitical tensions. Now it is difficult to say that, although some still strangely believe it even in this new context.[26] Historian Niall Ferguson pointed that out a few years ago, and when he said that during a conference in Beijing, no one objected. "The

[26] Stephen Wertheim, "The Ukraine Temptation: Biden Should Resist Calls to Fight a New Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, April 12, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2022-04-12/ukraine-temptation.

Cold War Never Ended," writes Stephen Kotkin in *Foreign Affairs*,[27] saying that "to argue that the Cold War ended, in other words, is to reduce that conflict to the existence of the Soviet state," a false presumption which distorted the way the Western elites saw the geopolitical landscape and embraced the idea of a universal liberal order. "The mistaken belief that the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union spurred some fateful foreign policy choices in Washington. Believing that the ideological contest had been settled definitively in their favour, most American policymakers and thinkers shifted away from seeing their country as the bedrock of the West, which is not a geographic location but a concatenation of institutions and values—individual liberty, private property, the rule of law, open markets, political dissent—and which encompasses not only western Europe and North America but also Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and many other places, as well. In place of the concept of the West, many American elites embraced a vision of a U.S.-led 'liberal international order,' which could theoretically integrate the entire world—including societies that did not share Western institutions and values—into a single, globalized whole." As we clearly realise now, says Kotkin, "the fever dreams of a limitless liberal order obscured the stubborn persistence of geopolitics. The three ancient civilizations of Eurasia—China, Iran, and Russia—did not suddenly vanish, and by the 1990s, their elites had clearly demonstrated that they had no intention of participating in one-worldism on Western terms."

For the major EU powers, Germany and France, the very idea of a new Cold War is not easy to digest when only a short time ago they made plans for a "sovereign Europe," seeing the EU as "a soft power superpower," largely decoupled from the United States, as a major actor in a multipolar world. The Ukraine war abruptly dissipated these dreams. That explains also the fundamental different vision about the Ukraine War and its expected outcome between the "Anglo-sphere" (US, UK) and the major EU powers (Germany, France). For the United States, the fate of the Ukraine War is seen

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[27] Stephen Kotkin, "The Cold War Never Ended," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2022-04-06/cold-war-never-ended-russia-ukraine-war?utm_medium=promo_email&utm_source=special_send&utm_campaign=ukraine_russia_022422&utm_content=20220406&utm_term=all-actives.

in the context of their geopolitical competition with China, Russia and other revisionist powers who want to "de-Americanise" the world. Something that will be perceived as a Russian victory will create enormous problems for Washington in this global battle.

On the other hand, especially in France and Germany, the view is quite different. And, despite the Ukraine war, it is very unlikely that in the longer, even in the medium term, things will change in a structural way because anti-Americanism in Germany, France and in other parts of Western Europe did not vanish overnight. Nor did France's ambition for a "Sovereign Europe," which implies a certain security arrangement with Russia. "It has become obvious in recent months that many European states care more about ending the war than about who wins," writes Ralph Gert Schöllhammer in *The Wall Street Journal*.[28] "Germany in particular seems to be interested in keeping the option to return to the pre-Ukraine war status quo."

It is also important to note that outside the Western space, many countries refused to join Russian sanctions (not only China, but also India, the Gulf countries, Africa, Mexico and almost all South America), one reason being their residual grievances toward the West. They see the Ukraine war not as an aggression against a country by a major power but as a confrontation between the West and Russia, another clear sign of the new Cold War global reality. Because of that, they will very likely opportunistically decide their future geopolitical positioning based on the fate of the war in Ukraine. That explains the major efforts made by Russia and China to attract the Global South on their side. For Moscow, this is nothing new. During the first Cold War, for the KGB it was a strategic priority to attract the "Third World" to its side.

On the other hand, in the Western World, mainly in Europe, there is "widespread incredulity about the seriousness of the threat we face," a "product of decades of post-Cold War globalist dogma that weakened the West's ability to acknowledge adversity and fight for what it holds dear,"

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[28] Ralph Gert Schöllhammer, "Why Europe Hedges Its Support for Ukraine," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-europe-hedges-its-support-for-ukraine-russia-crude-oil-lng-gas-imports-exports-kyiv-war-eu-membership-zelensky-putin-germany-france-poland-11653247453?mod=hp_opin_pos_2#cxrecs_s.

thinks Andrew Michta.[29] In Europe, many buy the Russian propaganda narrative that the U.S.-led NATO expansion in the East is to blame for the Ukraine war, coupled with what Andrew Michta describes as a "thinly veiled disdain for 'Eastern Europeans' evident in many Western European newspaper editorials." Because of this widespread confusion, Europeans seem to not fully understand the gravity of the situation. As Damir Marusic, the former executive editor of *The American Interest*, now with the Atlantic Council, wrote on Twitter, they must realise that there is no going back to the easy life from the past and that a peaceful, prosperous future is out of reach for them. "The weird thing about some of the moaning coming out of the West about prolonging the war in Ukraine is the unstated assumption that some kind of peace deal would involve restoring normal energy flows with Russia. On the contrary, any peace deal would immediately turn focus to planning for the next round. And any normalization of relations with Russia will have to be viewed in light of Moscow's ability to re-arm. Re-opening the energy spigots to what they were is out of the question. It's time to accept that war has come to Europe and will be here for a generation at least."

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[29] Andrew Michta, "China, Russia, and the West's Crisis of Disbelief. Globalist Dogma Has Weakened America's Ability to Acknowledge and Confront Adversity," *The Wall Street Journal,* August 7, 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-russia-and-the-wests-crisis-america-democracy-fight-military-threat-disarmament-cold-war-putin-xi-response-11659892566?mod=e2two.

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Great Britain's Interest in the Black Sea
and the Eastern Flank in the Post-Brexit Age

MARIUS MITRACHE

Abstract. The June 2021 Black Sea incident involving HMS *Defender* near the Crimean Coast brought to front page the established British presence in the region. In the post-Brexit age, Britain's interest in Europe's Eastern maritime flanks is coupled with the growing assertiveness of rivalling great powers like Russia but also China and Turkey. Seen by London as a gateway between the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific, the Black Sea region together with the Baltic Sea are a vital element in Britain's "Royal Route" towards South-East Asia. A supporter of Ukraine and Georgia's NATO membership, a framework nation of NATO Battlegroups in Estonia, with a military presence in the Black Sea, Britain's recent trilateral security alliance with Ukraine and Poland is a testimony of its growing interest and future commitment in the region. This contribution explores the UK's motivations, forms of involvement and predicaments of its renewed interest in the Black Sea region.

Keywords: Great Britain, Black Sea, Eastern Flank, Russia-Ukraine war.

Introduction

Following the 2016 referendum on leaving the European Union,[1] which eventually prompted the so-called Brexit process,[2] it appeared that

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[1] On the manifold causes, both internal and external that amounted to Britain's historical decision to leave the EU see Rudolf G. Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2019), Kevin O'Rourke, *A Short History of Brexit* (London: Penguin Books, 2019).

[2] On the baroque and painstaking Brexit process regarding Britain's departure from the EU see Tim Oliver, *Understanding Brexit: A Concise Introduction* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2019). For an insightful French point of view, see the memoirs of the EU's chief-negotiator, Michel Barnier, *La Grande Illusion. Journal secret du Brexit (2016-2020)* (translated in English under the name *My Secret Brexit Diary: A Glorious Illusion*) (Paris: Gallimard, 2021).

Great Britain was about to sail into uncharted waters. Not since the 1956 Suez Crisis, had the country confronted itself with a political, but mostly identity and even existential crisis of such magnitude that had profound and historical implications both on its domestic policy and foreign policy.[3] It seemed as if Churchill's warning to De Gaulle came to life, when in 1943 at the Casablanca Conference,[4] the British Prime-Minister told the leader of the Free French: "every time we have to decide between Europe and the open sea, it is always the open sea we shall choose." However, in those days, Great Britain could count on its vast and bountiful colonial empire, its prestige in the eyes of the Western public opinion in fighting a just war, a great-power status, and a competent leadership facing formidable adversities. In the aftermath of the 2016 referendum, things looked significantly different, with an antagonizing European Union, a plummeting worldwide popularity, a less than adroit political leadership, a vacillating special relationship with the United States, and an acute need to find a new role for itself. It seemed a return to the situation Dean Acheson, then-US Secretary of State, diagnosticated in 1963 when he said: "Great Britain has lost an empire and has not yet find a role. The attempt to play a separate power role apart from Europe … based on a 'Special Relationship' with the United States [or] being

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[3] Regarding the prospects for the British foreign policy after Brexit, see Christopher Hill, *The Future of British Foreign Policy: Security and Diplomacy in a World after Brexit* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2019), Peter Ricketts, *Hard Choices: What Britain Does Next* (London: Atlantic Books, 2021), Philip Stephens, *Britain Alone: The Path from Suez to Brexit* (London: Faber and Faber, 2021).

[4] At the Casablanca Conference of 1943, De Gaulle, constantly sidelined and exasperated by the Churchill-Roosevelt duumvirate, tried to drive a wedge between the two allies. Churchill's full quote is: "To get this quite clear, every time we have to decide between Europe and the open sea, it is always the open sea we shall choose. Every time I have to decide between you and Roosevelt, I shall always choose Roosevelt." Incidentally, De Gaulle remembered Churchill's warning and when Great Britain, deprived of its colonial empire and facing economic problems, tried to join the Common Market (the precursor of the EU), De Gaulle vetoed its accession bid twice (in 1963 and 1967), claiming civilizational reasons, arguing that the British are not, in fact, Europeans because of their national character and history, but also for strategic reasons, by considering Britain as "the Trojan horse for American influence." For more on the thorny relations between the Allies, among others, and for the ever-shifting Anglo-French relations see the exhaustive Robert Tombs and Isabelle Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The British and the French from the Sun-King to the Present*, (London: Random House, 2010), and Robert Tombs and Émile Chabal, *Britain and France in Two World Wars: Truth, Myth and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

head of a 'Commonwealth' which has no … unity or strength…this role is about played out."[5] More recently, Zbigniew Brzezinski in his influential geopolitical survey, *The Grand Chessboard* (1997), painted a not so flattering image of a Britain that is "neither a restless major power nor is it motivated by an ambitious vision," but rather is "a retired geostrategic player resting on its splendid laurels, largely disengaged from the great European adventure in which France and Germany are the principal actors."[6] Nevertheless, the current renewed age of great-power competition forced Great Britain out its retirement just as Brexit made it choose "the open sea" for a journey with an unknown destination.

The new risks of the great-power competition became apparent for London when in June 2021, Britain and Russia were involved in a naval spat in the Black Sea that made headlines. The relationship between the two countries were already under strain because of the Skripal (or Salisbury) Affair and because of the suspicion of Russian involvement in the outcome of the 2016 referendum through a fake news campaign.

As it happened, the 2021 incident took place in a region were Britain and Russia had not faced each other since the Crimean War (1853-1856). On June 23, 2021, the Royal Navy destroyer HMS *Defender*, detached to the Black Sea on "its own [unspecified] set of missions" from a Carrier Strike Group (CSG) in the Mediterranean, was on its way from Odessa, Ukraine to Batumi, Georgia. It passed approximately nine kilometres off Cape Fiolent on the southwest coast of the Crimea peninsula. According to Moscow's side of events, a Russian border guard patrol ship shot a warning fire and a Su-24M plane carried out a preventive bombing (four OFAB-250 bombs were dropped) along the route of the HMS *Defender*. It should be stated that previously, Russia promulgated a temporary restriction on innocent passage[7] in the Black Sea some three weeks before the Carrier Strike Group left Britain. For the UK Parliament, the HMS *Defender* was exercising

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[5] John Coles, *Making Foreign Policy: A Certain Idea of Britain* (London: John Murray, 2000), 36.

[6] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 43.

[7] The expression "innocent passage" is a concept in the law of the sea that allows for a vessel to pass through the archipelago and territorial waters of another state. Passage is innocent if it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order of the security of the costal state.

"innocent passage through *Ukrainian* territorial waters" under international maritime law and specified that Great Britain "does not recognize any Russian claim to these waters."[8]

The message was clear, London considered Russia's Crimean annexation illegal, and it was going to behave accordingly, all the more because Anglo-Russian relations were already at their lowest level since 1989, being further deteriorated by Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, an aggression that was dubbed by the Kremlin as a "special military operation."

The historical context of Britain's involvement in Eastern Europe

During the nineteenth century up to 1871, Great Britain had two rivals to worry about, France and Russia, especially because of their geopolitical ambitions, wheatear these were in Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, or Central Asia. After France's defeat by Prussia in 1871, its main rivals were still Russia and this time a German empire forged "through blood and iron" by Chancellor Bismarck, the French threat being gradually replaced by that posed by Berlin's *Weltpolitik*. During the interwar period, especially the 1930s, Britain's rivals were still a Nazi Germany[9] and the Soviet Union, the period's most vociferous revisionist powers committed to dismantle the post-Versailles order of 1919. However, in both World Wars, London preferred a Russian alliance against Germany and its allies.

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8 David Turns, "The HMS Defender Incident: Innocent Passage versus Belligerent Rights in the Black Sea," *American Society of International Law* 25, no. 16 (2021), https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/25/issue/16#_edn10.

9 It should be noted that during the 1920s, Great Britain had a sympathetic posture towards Weimar Germany. This went in accordance with its traditional diplomacy of making amends with a former rival, but it was also generated by a fear of an increased French influence in Europe, especially in East-Central Europe where Paris was building a defensive security system with the newly created states after the peace conference. Another reason for London's positive approach towards Weimar Germany was the belief shared by British policymakers, influenced by John Maynard Keynes' ideas published in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), that Europe's and Britain's prosperity depended on a recovery of the German economy and that the Versailles Treaty was too harsh. See Richard S. Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy 1924-1929* (London: Routledge, 1997).

This trajectory of "sharp swings" embodies what was called the "pendulum-like"[10] nature of the Anglo-Russian relations that imply a pattern of "oscillation between distant coolness, friction and some degree of warmth."[11] However, it should be noted that the mechanism behind these pendulum swings was of course the balance of power, Great Britain's most important principle of foreign policy before 1914. The balance of power[12] posited that if a continental power was strong to pose a threat to British interest, London would ally itself with the second power in order to counter that threat. When it came to Europe, that threat was Germany and its allies, and the second power was France. For British foreign policymakers, as for the French, East-Central Europe was a mental map in countering primarily Germany, not Russia. On the other hand, the threat of Czarist Russia was acutely perceived in the Middle East, and Central Asia, but with the Ottoman empire, London's traditional ally in the region, now gravitating towards Berlin, differences between the two rivals had to be put aside.[13]

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[10] Duncan Allan and Ian Bond, "A Russia Policy for post-Brexit Britain," Chatham House, January 27, 2022, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/01/new-russia-policy-post-brexit-britain/uk-russia-relations-2000.

[11] Alex Pravda, "Introduction: Pre-perestroika Patterns," in *Soviet-British Relations since 1970s*, eds. Alex Pravda and Peter J. S. Duncan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.

[12] For a discussion on the importance of the balance of power for British foreign policy prior to 1914, see the iconoclast book of John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain, the Balance of Power and the Origins of First World War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999) and the elegant chapter of Thomas Otte, "'Almost A Law of Nature?' Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Office and the Balance of Power in Europe, 1905-1912" in *Power and Stability: British Foreign Policy, 1865-1965*, eds. Erik Goldstein and B.J.C. McKercher (London: Routledge, 2003). For a theoretical debate on the balance of power, see Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations: Metaphors, Myths and Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[13] This was done through the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention that was the second element of the Entente, and which effectively settled the British-Russian rivalry in Central Asia. Regarding the Middle East and its partition into spheres of influence after the Great War, the practice of secretive diplomacy of Britain and France is (rightfully) condemned when it comes to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. However, a more complete name would be the Sazonov-Sykes-Picot Agreement, after the name of Serghei Sazonov, Foreign Minister of Czarist Russia (1910-1916), today forgotten, but at the time a prime-mover of the agreement, and actively involved in negotiations for a Russian sphere of influence. Had it not been for the 1917 revolution, in the event of an Allied victory, Russia was to receive Constantinople, the Straits and other large parts of north-eastern Turkey. This comes as a

Ultimately, it was *Realpolitik* that imposed the use of the balance of power against Germany. Eyre Crowe, permanent under-secretary (PUS) at the Foreign Office (1920-1925) and one of the most important British high civil servants at the turn of the last century, wrote in 1907 his famous *Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany* that British foreign policy should be "so directed as to harmonize with the general desires and ideals common to all mankind,"[14] but he also exhorted the use of the balance of power that London practiced since the eighteenth century, considering that Britain's vital material and security interests were in pursuing a strategy that prevented a state or a group of state from reaching a preponderance of capabilities which could threaten its territorial integrity, its sea routes with the Empire or could threaten its dominant commercial position in world trade.[15]

The aftermath of the First World War brought significant geopolitical and policies changes regarding London's strategic foreign policy. Now, with a new Europe emerging in East-Central Europe through the creation of a series of states out of the former empires and with the threat of Bolshevism coming from Soviet Russia, the mental maps of British policymakers changed again. These newly created countries were seen as a buffer zone and formed a continuum stretching from Poland to Yugoslavia and Greece that was perceived, both by the French and the British as forming a *cordon sanitaire* against the expansion of Communism. This approach was echoing the tenets of geographer Halford Mackinder, the founder of the English school of geopolitics.[16]

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testimony of Russia's constant interest in this region, as proven today by its involvement in the Syrian Civil War. For more on this subject, see Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011) and James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (New-York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

[14] Sir Eyre Crowe, "Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany," (1907) in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, vol 3, eds. G.P. Gooch and H.W.V. Temperley (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1967), 402.

[15] David Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: An Introduction to British Foreign Policy since 1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 18.

[16] Paolo Pizzolo, *Eurasianism: An Ideology for the Multipolar World* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020), 133.

Mackinder presented his ideas in the 1904 article "The Geographical Pivot of History" regarding the existence of a World-Island and a Heartland, and soon after the war he revisited his initial geopolitical theories in a 1919 essay entitled *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, where he announced his famous dictum "Whoever rules the Eastern Europe commands the Heartland, whoever rules the Heartland will rule the World-Island, and whoever rules the World-Island commands the world."[17] Moreover, Mackinder considered that Germany and Russia need to be separated in order to prevent an alliance that would lead to the control of the Eurasian landmass and ultimately endanger the existence of the British empire itself. For Mackinder it was imperative that London stopped any Germano-Russian *rapprochement*.[18]

Because, as the saying goes, personnel is policy, between the end of the Great War and until 1924, British diplomacy was conducted by Lord Curzon, who shared many of Mackinder's ideas and closely collaborated with him. It should be stated that the two were part of a group of Liberal Internationalists who came into prominence during the Edwardian age and were inevitably imbued with a pre-war hostility towards Russia. Moreover, Curzon was a staunch anti-Communist, believing that Soviet Russia was the British empire's real enemy in the years to come. By means of its nationalistic propaganda in some of the empire's colonies through the spread of its ideology among Britain's numerous working-class, British foreign policymakers and politicians (including Churchill, an arduous anti-Bolshevik in the early 20s) were convinced the greatest threat for their country would come from Russia.[19] However, with the balance of power discredited, together with the secretive practices of the "old diplomacy" that were considered responsible for the horrors of war, London's approach consisted mainly of an *avant la lettre* policy of containment of Soviet Russia, both through the East-Central European *cordon sanitaire* and a string of Caucasian republics. Britain's main strategic focus was defending what came

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[17] Robert D. Kaplan, *Răzbunarea geografiei. Ce ne spune harta despre conflictele viitoare si lupta împotriva destinului* (The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate) (Bucharest: Editura Litera, 2014), 122.

[18] Pizzolo, *Eurasianim*, 134.

[19] Gill Bennett, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period, 1919-1924* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 63.

to be considered as the "gateways to India," and this forced London to articulate a foreign and defence policy based on a domino theory scenario[20] (if one gateway falls, others would follow) that will have a lingering influence in the decades to come.[21]

After Curzon's departure in 1924, Great Britain would concentrate further on its cooperative diplomacy towards Weimar Germany, with the conclusion of the Locarno Treaty 1925 that guaranteed only Western Europe's frontiers, leaving those in Eastern Europe open to revision. Because British foreign policymakers were avoiding taking any formal commitments towards the East-Central European countries, they tried vainly to replicate their diplomatic success on a regional level, promoting arrangements like an "Eastern Locarno" or a "Balkan Locarno" that never amounted to anything because of animosities between the concerned countries.[22] This unsuccessful pursuit was doubled by a diplomatic disengagement from this region fuelled by a sense of weariness. On the other hand, their cooperative diplomacy towards Germany, conducted especially outside the framework of the League of Nations, would morph into a full-blown appeasement policy under the cabinets of Baldwin and Chamberlain from the mid-1930s onwards.[23]

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[20] Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 216.

[21] One can observe a domino theory approach in the reasoning that made Great Britain (together with France and Israel) initiate the failed Suez Campaign in 1956. Of course, this time it was not about safeguarding India (independent since 1947) but rather the rich oilfields in the Middle East on which Britain's economic prosperity depended. With his usual razor-sharp analytical mind, Ivone Kirkpatrick, Foreign Office PUS at the time, summed up London's grim prospects in case of losing Suez with a domino reasoning: "If Middle Eastern oil is denied to us for a year or two, our gold reserves will disappear. If our gold reserves disappear, the sterling area disintegrates. If the sterling area disintegrates and we have no reserves, we shall not be able to maintain a force in Germany, or indeed, anywhere else. I doubt whether we shall be able to pay for the bare minimum necessary for our defence. And a country that cannot provide for its defence is finished." Quoted in Ann Lane, "The Past as Matrix: Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick," in *Whitehall and the Suez Crisis*, eds. Saul Kelly and Anthony Gorst (London: Frank Cass, 2009), 209.

[22] Andras Becker, *Britain and Danubian Europe in the Era of World War II* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 28.

[23] Sanders, *Losing an Empire*, 27-29.

As for Soviet Russia, because of its duplicitous foreign policy, at the same time both a revisionist and a *status-quo* power, British policymakers oscillated on what approach was best suited in dealing with it. Curzon was gone, but anti-Communists still remained in powerful positions, like William Tyrrell, who succeed Eyre Crowe as Foreign Office PUS (1925-1930), and for who matters were clear, "Soviet Russia was the enemy."[24] Moreover, distrust regarding Moscow was to be found not only among Whitehall civil servants, but also among politicians, especially in the ranks of the Conservative Party that dominated the interwar period.[25] Even for the choice of appeasement policy there might be arguments brought forward that it was driven by the faulty assumption that Nazi Germany could become a bulwark against a Communist aggression.[26]

Starting with the 1938 Munich Accords, the height of the appeasement policy, and by Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, it became clear for British foreign policymakers that Nazi Germany was their immediate menace on the continent and East-Central Europe became once again a mental map of their foreign policy after several years of abandonment, thus restarting the difficult task of coalition-building. Breaking with its tradition of no Eastern continental commitments, London offered in March 1939 guarantees to Poland,[27] and later in April to Romania, but only against a German aggression, not a Russian one.[28] Because the British Chiefs of Staff were worried that Romanian oil and Yugoslavian

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[24] Keith Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 28.

[25] It should be said that by the end of the 1930s there was a group of Conservative politicians grouped around Churchill, ironically giving his previous anti-Communist stances, who advocated a *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union. For their overtures, see the insightful diary of Moscow's ambassador to London, Ivan Maisky (1932-1943), ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Maisky Diaries: Red Ambassador to the Court of St James's 1932-1943* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

[26] Sanders, *Losing an Empire*, 31.

[27] For technical precision it should be noted that London was willing to guarantee the sovereignty of Poland, but not its territorial integrity. It was by the virtue of this British guarantee that after Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939, Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany. See William R. Rock, "British Guarantee to Poland, March 1939: A Problem in Diplomatic Decision-making," in *South Atlantic Quarterly* LXV (1966): 229-40.

[28] Christopher Catherwood, *The Balkans in World War Two: Britain's Balkan Dilemma* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 35. I am grateful to my fellow colleague, Mihai Dumitrescu, researcher at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute, for our conversation on this subject.

mineral resources might fall into German hands a series of British-conducted sabotage operations started on their territories.[29] However, geography made it impossible for the British military come to these countries rescue in reasonable time, hence the need for Britain to find much stronger ally, like Turkey, the eternal key of the Black Sea region, or *horribile dictu*, the Soviet Union. Therefore, the British foreign policymakers founded themselves before another dilemma because the East-Central European mistrust towards Soviet Union obliged these countries to demand British guarantees against a possible Russian aggression.[30] Which of course, London, given its previous animosities with Moscow, was not willing to give, because among many other reasons, East-Central Europe was primarily a mental map for Britain's foreign policy in case of a German menace, not a Russian one, and secondly, it was one thing to wage war against Germany, and another to do it against Russia.[31] After the failed attempts at forming a Grand Alliance with France and the Soviet Union, a revival of the Entente during the First World War, Britain had only France by its side in front of the Nazi menace, but from the fall of France in the summer of 1940, and until the Anglo-Soviet Agreement of July 1941, it was forced to stand alone.

Russia and the Black Sea region in the Integrated Review

The latest strategic framework that establishes Great Britain's national security and international policy objectives is the 2021 Integrated Review of Security and Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, that is also titled *Global Britain in a Competitive Age* (hereafter: the *Integrated Review*). The title makes a reference to Boris Johnson's, then-Foreign Secretary, notion (or "vague aspiration" according to diplomat Peter Ricketts[32]) regarding the future of British foreign policy after leaving the EU, that "evoked a world of opportunity" and new horizons.[33]

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[29] Catherwood, *The Balkans in World War Two*, 12.

[30] Catherwood, *The Balkans in World War Two,* 16-17.

[31] Catherwood, *The Balkans in World War Two,* 85.

[32] Peter Ricketts, *Hard Choices: What Britain Does Next* (London: Atlantic Books, 2021), 194.

[33] Jeremy Shapiro and Nick Whitney, "Beyond Global Britain: A Realistic Foreign Policy for the UK," European Council on Foreign Relations, December 15, 2021, https://ecfr.eu/publication/beyond-global-britain-a-realistic-foreign-policy-for-the-uk/.

The new strategy document that is meant to provide the intellectual underpinnings for Global Britain, departs from the previous risk-based models of analysis and chooses to embrace a threat-orientated framework taking into account the return of great-power competition and "is driven by an understanding of the systemic threats that ultimately hold everyone at risk."[34] It should be noted that the lead author of the *Integrated Review* was John Bew,[35] a scholar on international relations and closely associated with the Conservative think-tank *Policy Exchange*.

As identified by multiple strategic papers, like the 2021 *Integrated Review* and the Defence Command Paper, Great Britain's rivals for the decades to come seem to be again Russia and, this time China, the current revisionist powers of the liberal international order's *status-quo*. Because Eastern Europe, seen as the region between the Baltic and Black Sea, became a mental map for British foreign policymakers, how London decides to engage with its two new rivals will be consequential for Britain's presence in the region.

The Black Sea region came to be seen by British foreign policymakers as a bulwark in Great Britain's outer defence system. The region soon became important not only for the Euro-Atlantic area but also for Britain's much vaunted Indo-Pacific "tilt" (but not pivot). Initially at the periphery of the British foreign policymakers' interest and neglected in various strategic papers, following the growing Russian threat, it gradually took centre stage in their preoccupations. For instance, if in the 2010 *National Security Strategy* and *Strategic Defence and Security Review* neither the Black Sea nor Ukraine is mentioned, in 2015 in the aftermath of Crimea's annexation by Russia, Ukraine is mentioned several times, but the Black Sea is not cited. In the

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[34] Gabriel Elefteriu, "The Integrated Review – Policy Exchange's Reflections," Policy Exchange, March 22, 2021, https://policyexchange.org.uk/the-integrated-review-policy-exchanges-reflections/

[35] John Bew (born 1980), a Professor of History and Foreign Policy at King's College London and a member in Johnson's Number 10 Policy Unit, is also the author of a monograph on the intellectual genealogy of the concept of *Realpolitik* and its translation from German to Anglo-American statecraft and diplomacy. See John Bew, *Realpolitik: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For a profile on him see Charlie Cooper, "The Man Who Knows What 'Global Britain' Means," Politico, January 14, 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/john-bew-global-britain-uk-eu/

context of the previously discussed Brexit referendum and with the emergence of the "Global Britain" concept, coined by then-Foreign Secretary Johnson, the *Integrated Review* mentions the Black Sea once, whereas the Defence Command Papers does it five times.

Now, as then, London has a strategic interest in upholding an open and rules-based international order, by supporting the freedom of navigation (as with the HMS *Defender* incident) and international trade. In the nineteenth century competition with Russia, Great Britain favoured an alliance with the Ottoman empire to protect its passageway towards India. The construction of the Suez Canal and later its acquisition by the British Crown provided a policy shift "from Istanbul to Cairo," the Eastern Mediterranean region becoming of vital importance for its Royal Route towards Middle East, India, and Southeast Asian possessions (like Honk Kong).[36] Nevertheless, a control of the Black Sea, especially by a hostile power, could still exert pressure on the Eastern Mediterranean, blocking military projection towards what today is called the Indo-Pacific.

For these reasons, for Great Britain, a geopolitical redline was always keeping open to free navigation (and at other times preferably controlling) the axis streaming from the Black Sea passing through the Straits (Bosporus and Dardanelles) towards Eastern Mediterranean, crossing the Suez Canal and reaching India. Inevitably, present-day Russia, by its actions of sealine and trade routes continentalization and by closing the Sea of Azov and other maritime spaces, and by its military aggression towards Ukraine, is putting a considerable pressure on the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean regions.

In the immediate context of the 2014 Crimean annexation, but also the Trump administration's *America First* doctrine and the United States' Indo-Pacific pivot, Great Britain came to fill the space left in the region, as Europe's biggest sea power with its ability to control maritime communication lines from Gibraltar to Cyprus and beyond. Moreover, regarding NATO's Eastern Flank military posture, the British Army and the

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[36] Philippe Chassaigne, *La Grande Bretagne et le monde, de 1815 à nos jours* (Great Britain and the World, from 1815 until Today) (Paris: Armand Colin, 2021), 65-67.

Royal Air Force (RAF) are forward-deployed within NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Baltic and Black Sea policing missions.[37]

The 2021 *Integrated Review* already has stated that "the UK will be the greatest single European contributor to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area to 2030 [and that] the UK will remain the leading European ally in NATO."[38] The same strategic paper mentions the intensification of geopolitical competition and identifies Russia as the "most acute threat"[39] to the UK and NATO. The *Integrated Review* also reaffirms that Great Britain will operate "across the Euro-Atlantic region" with a "focus on the northern and southern parts of the Eastern Flank" and that it will support the collective security from "the Black Sea to the High North, in the Baltics, the Balkans and the Mediterranean."[40]

The British presence in the Black Sea region

By choosing this strategy, the Black Sea region inevitably becomes the centre of Britain's outer defence perimeter. To understand Britain's current engagement in the Black Sea region, we need to take a closer look at the operating model presented in the *Integrated Operating Concept* strategic paper, which can be seen as a "blueprint for operations" and presents four sub-functions: protecting the base, engaging with partners and opponents, constraining activity, and if necessary fighting and proposes to "lead fundamental transformation in the military instruments and the way it is used."[41]

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[37] Ministry of Defense, "UK Forces Arrive to Reinforce NATO's Eastern Flank," February 26, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-forces-arrive-to-reinforce-natos-eastern-flank.

[38] Cabinet Office, "Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security Defense, Development and Foreign Policy," March 21, 2021, 60, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security__Defence__Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf.

[39] Cabinet Office, "Integrated Review," 26.

[40] Cabinet Office, "Integrated Review," 74.

[41] Ministry of Defence, "Integrating Operating Concept," September 30, 2020, 7, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014659/Integrated_Operating_Concept_2025.pdf.

Great Britain's current operating model is that of "campaigning" or "competition" which is recently added models of comprehension, credibility, capability, and communication. This recently adopted operating model recognizes that there is need for a more active deterrence: "which includes a more competitive posture and way of operating to better compete below the threshold of war in order to deter war, and to prevent its adversaries from achieving their objectives in *fait accompli* strategies."[42]

According to this approach the military will no longer be held as a force of last resort, but become more present and active around the world and will be used to dissuade or deter geopolitical rivals by establishing a geostrategic presence and by making Britain's partners more resilient, as specified in the Defence Command Paper, issued by the Ministry of Defence: "Our capacity building missions, which includes both land and maritime training, will support the development of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and their interoperability with NATO. We will work with other partners in the Black Sea, notably Bulgaria, Greece and Romania and Turkey,[43] to ensure freedom of navigation and security. As part of this we will continue to exercise our freedom to operate in the Black Sea, in strict accordance with the Montreux Convention, both through NATO and on stand-alone deployments."[44]

Regarding the place of Turkey in British foreign policy, the Command Paper highlights the country's crucial role as NATO ally for the regional security and the fact that is "dealing directly with Russia's military interventions in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions," and therefore assures that "we will work to cement a long-term relationship on operations (including NATO reassurance measures), capabilities and industrial co-operation."[45]

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[42] Ministry of Defence, "Integrating Operating Concept," 12.

[43] One can notice that these are precisely the countries towards which British diplomacy turned in the wake of the Second World War, from 1938 to 1939 in order to create a Balkan Pact against a possible German aggression and to stabilize a region that it considered vital for its routes towards India.

[44] Ministry of Defence, "Defence in a Competitive Age," March 22, 2021, 30, https://assets. publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974 661/CP411_-Defence_Command_Plan.pdf.

[45] Ministry of Defence, "Defence in a Competitive Age," 30.

After the Crimean annexation and the NATO Wales summit of 2014, London cultivated its geopolitical ties with the Black Sea region's countries through a series of strategic partnerships and trade agreements, as a sign of manifesting both military but also commercial engagement. For instance, in the case of Bulgaria, after signing a strategic partnership in 2014, London manifested its support for a tailored Forward Presence (tFP) in 2016; with Georgia it concluded a strategic partnership and cooperation agreement in 2019, after establishing in 2014 a framework for annual strategic dialogue with many positive results, the so-called Wardrop Strategic Dialogue; with the Republic of Moldova it has both a strategic partnership and a trade and cooperation agreement; with Romania, Britain has a strategic partnership since 2003 and expressed support for tailored Forward Presence in 2016; with Turkey, the security agreement concerning the protection of defence classified information from 2016 was followed by a framework agreement on military cooperation in 2019 and the following year with a free trade agreement.[46]

In the case of Ukraine, Great Britain set up Operation ORBITAL in 2015 with the purpose of training over 22000 personnel in order to enhance the resilience and the fighting power of the Ukrainian Armed Forces; in 2020, between the two countries a political free trade and strategic partnership was signed, followed the next year in 2021 by a framework agreement on official credit support for the development of the capabilities of the Ukrainian Navy. Prior the February 24, 2022, Russian military aggression of Ukraine, London expressed its plans for a Poland-Ukraine-UK trilateral.[47]

It was the 2020 Strategic Partnership Agreement that eventually made it possible for Great Britain to provide Ukraine with the necessary Brimstone naval missiles, NLAW anti-tank weapons and the Startstreak surface-to-air missile system. With the 2021 framework agreement, Britain took the responsibility to supply Kyiv with two minehunters, eight missile craft and the commitment to partake in Ukraine's frigate program. As for the

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[46] Alexander Lanoszka and James Rogers, "'Global Britain' and the Black Sea Region," Council on Geostrategy, March 29, 2022, https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/research/global-britain-and-the-black-sea-region/.

[47] Lanoszka and Rogers, "'Global Britain' and the Black Sea Region."

new trilateral that was announced, its purpose was to facilitate cooperation in four priority areas: coordinating the international Crimea Platform; the issue of cyber security; energy security; and strategic communications to counter disinformation, especially coming from Russia. The reason for the creation of this trilateral alliance was to show that there is no need for an EU membership as a requirement for a commitment in defending Europe's Eastern Flank and thus confirming Great Britain's role as a security provider for its European allies, both EU and non-EU members, in spite of Brexit. Moreover, one can argue that it is precisely the geopolitical challenges of the current great-power competition that influenced the very nature of this much flexible plurilateral format.[48]

Regarding Poland, a country that of course does not border the Black Sea, but plays a determinant role in the region, the British-Polish relations are deeply anchored in the history of the past century. Their more recent ties include the 2017 Treaty on Defence and Security Cooperation, an important (albeit controversial) military support during the 2021 migrant crisis and the presence of 200 British troops as part of NATO's enhance Forward Presence. Similarly, for the Baltics, Britain is present through NATO's eFP and is actively consolidating its deterrence posture. In past years, London was careful to cultivate its ties with the Baltic and Scandinavian states, adding a northern dimension of its foreign policy. This engagement goes back with the creation of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), another plurilateral format that was established in 2014 at the initiative of Michael Fallon, then-Minister of Defence, and it brought together Baltic and Nordic state in different military exercises that sought to enhance their naval interoperability. Even since 2017, countries like Sweden and Finland that were not at the time NATO members were participating in this JEF, and eventually in May 2022, in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, these two countries, with a long history of neutrality, have signed a mutual defence agreements with London, and immediately afterwards expressed their intention of joining NATO, a significant departure from their historical military and political traditions.[49]

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[48] Lanoszka and Rogers, "'Global Britain' and the Black Sea Region."
[49] Lanoszka and Rogers, "'Global Britain' and the Black Sea Region."

Through its actions, London is seeking to restore and uphold the freedom of navigation and maritime law in keeping with its sea power tradition, but it also pursuing a policy of assisting its NATO allies and partners at the Black Sea in trying to improve their military capabilities, especially in the case of Ukraine, taking into consideration the fact that in the aftermath of the February 2022 events, improving the local armies of its regional allies with strike capabilities could prove useful in deterring a possible Russian aggression. This comes in line with its own warfare tradition, brilliantly espoused by famed strategy scholar Basil Liddell Hart in his seminal seminar *British Way of War*. According to him, it is in the English (and then British) tradition to sustain peripheral operations and have a preference for deploying an indirect strategy because of Great Britain's geographic nature as an island.[50]

The troubled home front

Looking at the map, one cannot help but observe that Great Britain has formed an array of strategic partnerships and is militarily present, precisely on the buffer zone once identified by the geographer Mackinder as vital in keeping in check the Heartland, in tune with his famous dictum, "Whoever controls Eastern Europe controls the Heartland." Moreover, it is the same buffer zone where Lord Curzon, the last Liberal internationalist Foreign Secretary, tried to create a *cordon sanitaire*, from Poland to Greece to stop what he, alongside many other of his generation, believed to be a threat for their country and Europe. In fact, although the current Conservative Party rhetorically reclaims the legacy of Benjamin Disraeli, one its most illustrious eighteenth-century Tory prime ministers and a practitioner of *Realpolitik*, its current foreign policy resembles a lot that of his Liberal rival, William Gladstone. Many traits regarding the Conservative foreign policy pursued today either by the Johnson or the Truss governments are similar with those espoused in the late nineteenth century by Gladstonian Liberal

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[50] Robert Johnson, "United Kingdom," in *Comparative Grand Strategy: A Framework and Cases*, eds. Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 130-31.

internationalism:[51] a firm faith in the virtues of Cobdenite free trade, an infused sense of morality in its actions, and a search for reconciliating internationalism and liberal nationalism[52] (inevitably resurgent now, not only after Brexit, but also in the context of the Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invasion[53]).

Alas, the Johnson government seemed to ignore Gladstone's first principle for a successful foreign policy: "good government at home."[54] Despite receiving a solid mandate in 2019 to deliver Brexit, Boris Johnson and his government navigated from crisis to crisis, and from scandal to scandal. The latest, tellingly dubbed "Partygate," proved powerful enough to force his resignation after being disowned by his own ministers and party members, thus prompting an intra-party race for his successor. Nevertheless, despite his eccentric governing style, in the immediate aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Johnson proved to be a staunch ally of Kyiv, being the first Western leader to visit the country after February 24. It was Great Britain that helped Ukraine with armament both before and after the invasion. It was thanks to Britain's supply of defensive weaponry, especially "thousand NLAW portable anti-tank guided missiles which have proven very effective against Russian armour," that the Ukrainian Armed Forces managed to resist the first days of the invasion.[55]

In total, Johnson took three trips to Ukraine (in April, June and August) where he was each time triumphantly received, a chance for him to

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[51] For more on this subject see Keith A. P. Sandiford, "W.E. Gladstone and Liberal-Nationalist Movements," in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 13, No. 1 (1981): 27-42; Martin Caedal, "Gladstone and a Liberal Theory of International Relations," in *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain: Essays in Memory of Colin Matthew*, eds. Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[52] John McInally, "PM Should Heed Gladstone on Good Government," *Financial Times*, February 4, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/25/boris-johnson-russian-money-britain-mafia-state-security.

[53] Francis Fukuyama, "This War Can Save Liberalism," UnHerd, March 24, 2022, https://unherd.com/2022/03/this-war-can-save-liberalism/.

[54] Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880-1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 41-42.

[55] Simon Anglim, "The Review and the Army Revisited: The Implications of the War in Ukraine," King's College London, May 24, 2022, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/the-review-and-the-army-revisited-the-implications-of-the-war-in-ukraine.

channel the figure of his personal hero, Winston Churchill, about whom he wrote a biography, but also an opportunity to escape from the scandals that eventually forced his resignation. Among them was the fact that under Johnson's mayorship of London, the capital became a safe haven for many Russian oligarchs close to the Kremlin and involved in illicit financial schemes.[56] This prompted some to consider that there was a *Primat der Innenpolitik* in the British diplomacy towards the Ukrainian crisis fuelled by a domestic contestation the prime minister was facing.[57] Johnson distanced himself from other EU leaders, like the French president Emmanuel Macron or German Chancellor Olaf Scholz who advocated not only de-escalation and dialogue with Moscow but also a ceasefire at the expense of Kyiv even recognizing its territorial losses. Unlike Macron and Scholz, Johnson took a hardline and promoted the necessity of Ukrainian military victory over the Russian armed forces and advised President Volodymyr Zelensky not to negotiate a ceasefire with Russia. So hawkish was Johnson's stances on this issue that he even managed to surpass the Biden administration's more prudent approach towards the ongoing Russian aggression of Ukraine.[58] According to a piece published by Fiona Hill and Angela Stent in *Foreign Affairs*, Russia and Ukraine might have agreed on a negotiated interim settlement to stop hostilities in April,[59] but as reported by Ukrainian sources (and this is not mentioned in the Hill and Stent article) it was Johnson's intervention that convinced Zelensky not to accept.[60] After his forced

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[56] Oliver Bullough, "Boris Johnson Claims the UK Is Rooting out Dirty Russian Money. That's Ludicrous," *The Guardian*, February 25, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/25/boris-johnson-russian-money-britain-mafia-state-security.

[57] A *Primat der Innenpolitik* situation similar to the way in which David Cameron, wanting to appease the Eurosceptic fringes within the Conservative Party, proposed a referendum on Britain's departure from the EU, without ever believing that it will pass, and with the historical consequences that followed.

[58] Joseph R. Biden Jr., "What America Will and Will Not Do in Ukraine," *New York Times*, May 31, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/opinion/biden-ukraine-strategy.html.

[59] Fiona Hill and Angela Stent, "The World Putin Wants. How Distortions about the Past Feed Delusions about the Future," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2022, https://www.foreign affairs.com/russian-federation/world-putin-wants-fiona-hill-angela-stent.

[60] Roman Romaniuk, "Possibility of Talks between Zelenskyy and Putin Came to Halt after Johnson's Visit," *Ukrayisnka Pravda*, May 5, 2022, https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/05/5/7344206/.

resignation, Kyiv expressed fears that UK's policy might change, but British foreign policymakers and the Conservative intra-party most prominent pretender, Liz Truss, the former Foreign Secretary, addressed these speculations and pledged Britain's further support for Ukrainian efforts against Russia.[61]

Nevertheless, the Conservatives' inner race for a new prime minister revealed some interesting fault-lines and signalled futures challenges that might affect the British approach towards the Black Sea region and foreshadow future dilemmas. If on Russia, London's position stands clear, since the *Integrated Review* identifies it as a threat, things are much more complicated concerning China that is regarded as a "strategic competitor" but also a partner in many areas.

In the past years, the UK's relations with China zigzagged confusedly,[62] revealing an inability both from politicians but also from policymakers to set and keep a course. At the beginning of the past decade, Prime Minister David Cameron and his Foreign Secretary William Hague arduously promoted a *rapprochement* with Beijing that was hailed as "golden era" of relations between the two countries.[63] This came in spite of repeated warnings from Britain (but also US) intelligence agencies concerning the risk of not only sharing information with China but also allowing Chinese company to acquire critical infrastructure. Even during the Trump administration's confrontational approach with China, London chose a more business-orientated course, especially when it came to companies like Huawei, until the Special Relationship prevailed, and Theresa May's government opted (some might argue that it was pressured) for a hardline towards Beijing.[64]

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[61] Reuters, "'Ukraine's Greatest Friend' UK's Truss Pledges more Support for Kyiv," July 29, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/ukraines-greatest-friend-uks-truss-pledges-more-support-kyiv-2022-07-28/.

[62] James Crabtree, "Boris Johnson's Remarkable U-Turn From Sinophile to China Hawk," *Foreign Policy*, August 3, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/03/boris-johnson-sinophile-china-hawk/.

[63] Thomas Colley and Caroljin van Noort, *Strategic Narratives, Ontological Security and Global Policy: Responses to China's Belt and Road Initiative* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2022), 103.

[64] Tom McTague, "Why Britain Changed Its China Stance," *The Atlantic*, August 2, 2022, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/08/britain-china-us-foreign-policy-changes/670959/.

Boris Johnson, a self-avowed Sinophile,[65] as hawkish as he proved himself towards Russia, when it came to China, he revealed to be surprisingly dovish, and departed from the previous hard-line advocated both by his transatlantic partners within the Biden administration and Britain's own intelligence agencies. During the Conservative intra-party race to elect his successor, Rishi Sunak, coming from the business-orientated Treasury, and endorsed by William Hague, passed as a dove on China despite his best efforts not too.[66] On the other hand, Liz Truss, having proven her track-record as Foreign Secretary, displayed a surprisingly hawkish attitude towards Beijing, and promised that once elected she will revise the *Integrated Review* and name China as "a threat" on the same level with Russia, thus changing the previous "strategic competitor" label.[67] Moreover, a Truss premiership is highlighting more British involvement in the Indo-Pacific, by emphasizing the role of other plurilateral formats like AUKUS or the Five Eyes, with the initial tilt becoming a full-fledged pivot.

Truss also pledged to rise military expenditure, by an increase in defence spendings to reach 3% of the GBP by 2030, which inevitably foretells the return of the proverbial military-fiscal state that made modern England, all the while privileging once again the Special Relationship with Washington, especially when it comes to the Indo-Pacific. During the same time when the Tories were electing the country's new prime minister and Truss had the opportunity to present her views for the future, Admiral Ben Key, First Sea Lord, delivered in July 2022 an important speech where he stressed what and where Britain's priorities should be. He started by reaffirming that while "the immediate geostrategic focus is on events in Eastern Europe […] we are still an island and the importance of the sea […]

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[65] Patrick Wintour, "Boris Johnson Declares He Is 'Fervently Sinophile' as UK Woos China," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/feb/21/boris-johnsons-warm-words-on-china-likely-to-infuriate-backbenchers.

[66] Freddie Hayward, "Rishi Sunak Reinvents Himself as a China Hawk," *The New Statesman*, July 26, 2022, https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/conservatives/2022/07/rishi-sunak-reinvents-himself-china-hawk.

[67] Sean Meleady, "'Hawkish Stance!' Liz Truss Set to Declare China an Official Threat If She Wins No. 10 Race," *Daily Express*, August 29, 2022, https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1661671/Liz-Truss-China-Treasury-Rishi-Sunak-Xi-Jinping-Aukus-Belt-Road-ont.

matters no less and probably more." Most significantly, he warned that "focusing solely on the Russian bear risks missing the tiger," and acknowledging that while "Russia represents a near and present danger to us, and to which we must respond" he warned that "[t]he risk of focusing solely on Russia is that you miss the long term strategic challenge posed by China."[68]

However, if Great Britain under Liz Truss or any other leader gears up for more involvement in the Indo-Pacific and an even stronger Special Relationship with the US,[69] which will translate into a similar policy towards Beijing, questions might arise on how a British armed forces, already stretched thin and under significant fiscal strain, can fulfil its obligations towards all its allies, and be present both on the Euro-Atlantic area, including NATO's Eastern Flank and the Black Sea region and also in the South China Sea. In a future where two powerful countries like Russia and China that are also revisionist powers of the current *status-quo* will be labelled by an upgraded *Integrated Review* as "threats" to Great Britain, the British strategic foreign policy risks finding itself entangled in the same painful dilemmas (and perhaps choices) of the past, like during the interwar period when London also confronted itself with a revisionist Germany and Soviet Union.

Conclusions: a very British predicament

Great Britain's return to the Black Sea region was ultimately prompted both by its departure from the European Union and by Russia's growing assertiveness towards London, its menacing behaviour in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, and ultimately its aggression towards Ukraine. But gone are the days when Disraeli could have simply sent the Royal Navy to the Straits and successfully deter the Russians from entering

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[68] Sir Ben Key, "The Speech by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key, to the Council on Geostrategy at the Naval and Military Club in London on 19 July 2022," July 19, 2022, https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2022/july/19/20220719-1sl-speech.

[69] Ben Judah, "Liz Truss Is Ready to Flex London's Muscles Abroad," *Foreign Policy*, August 10, 2022, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/the-review-and-the-army-revisited-the-implications-of-the-war-in-ukraine.

Constantinople. Also gone are the days when the mere reputation of British diplomacy would have made its representatives seems like demigods in the eyes many European countries, or when Britain's guarantee was the diplomatic Holy Grail of the interwar period.

After Brexit, Great Britain confronted itself not only with a legal imbroglio, but also with an existential crisis, similar with the one after the failed Suez campaign. It seemed that Dean Acheson's cynical, but truthful question was making a comeback, and London had neither a role, nor an empire, hence inevitably nostalgic projections of the past contrasted painfully with a stern present. It is true that Britain was a maritime state, whose empire was in reality the supply-chain of commodities and resources that fuelled its strength and made its health, but Britain's survival has always played out in Europe. Among its constant rivals there was Russia, a threat especially in Central Asia, always seemingly a menace towards India, Britain's most prized possession. And yet, during two world wars, the inexorable logic of the balance of power made London seek a rapprochement, and eventually an alliance with Russia. The 1930s were particularly the litmus test years for British strategic foreign policy (diplomatically, military, commercially) because the Versailles order it helped create in 1919-20 was rapidly unravelling by the actions of the most menacing revisionist powers of that time, Germany and Soviet Russia.

In our current age of great-power competition, the revisionist powers that want to change the status-quo seem to be (once again) Russia and this time China. British grand strategy was always influenced in its formulation by the prominence of history. The latest strategic paper, the *Integrated Review*, labelled Russia a "threat" and China a "strategic competitor," a rival in some respects in the current strategic competition, but also a valuable trade partner. Against the Russian threat, especially after Ukraine's invasion, the region between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, a region Britain (and France) helped create in 1919-20, (re)became a mental map for British foreign policymakers, and London reinforced its military and deterrence posture on NATO's Eastern Flank. Prime Minister Boris Johnson acted like a staunch ally and pledged his moral and military support that continued even after his replacement with Liz Truss.

By its prompt actions, Great Britain capitalized on Germany and France's numerous hesitations towards Russia, therefore consolidating the UK's reputation among East-Central European/Black Sea region states, something that will certainly help London in its future spats with France and Germany in Brussels's technocratic area. But Johnson, as hawkish as he was towards Russia, had a much more accommodating position towards the second revisionist great-power, China. His successor, Liz Truss, promised that she would upgrade the *Integrated Review*, and declare China also "a threat" to the UK, and consequently engage in a larger naval presence in the Indo-Pacific.

King Frederick the Great of Prussia shrewdly remarked that "he who defends everything, defends nothing." Great Britain risks to find itself in a difficult position being present both on the Eastern Flank and in the Indo-Pacific, considering that confronting two countries like Russia and China might entail massive efforts, both logistically and regarding its military capabilities. Therefore, by declaring both China and Russia threats, the Albion risks finding itself again in the dire predicaments in which interwar British foreign policymakers found themselves when dealing with two revisionists powers and were forced to make almost impossible choices.

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Bird on the Wire: The Russia-Ukraine War and Turkey's (New) Balancing Act

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Abstract. The outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine at the end of February 2022 seemed likely to force Turkey to pick a clear side, although for years, the Ankara regime and president Erdoğan had tried to chart a steady course between Turkey's status as a NATO member and its good relations with both Moscow and Kiev. Turkey has so far refused to close its air space to Russian aircraft or join the list of countries imposing sanctions against Russia, although it did vote in favour of the UN General Assembly Resolution condemning Russia's invasion in Ukraine. Turkey has also offered its services as a mediator, hosting the Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers at a high-level summit in Antalya on March 10, and helped negotiate the crucially important grain deal in July 2022.

It is, certainly, too early to tell how Turkey will reconsider its strategic balancing act of trying not to antagonise Moscow too much (given its interests in Syria, where Russia has indicated that it can weaponize both refugees and Islamist rebels in the Idlib province against Turkey, and its dependence on Russian oil, gas and tourism money), support Ukraine (especially considering its fears that a permanent Russian presence in Crimea will definitely upset the balance of power in the Black Sea to its detriment) and prove its loyalty and dependence as a NATO member in an attempt to mend some of the bridges it burnt with Washington through its purchase of Russian S-400 missiles. But president Erdoğan undoubtedly understands that, if Turkey is to demonstrate its strategic importance and diplomatic clout, he must pick a side sooner rather than later, also considering that 2023 is a presidential election year and his popularity has taken a significant dip in recent polls.

So, despite the uncertainty of the endgame, could Turkey once more choose to see this turbulent context as a golden opportunity and throw its lot with the West, as it did in 1945? This is the question that the present chapter

attempts to answer, based on the evolution of events up to the moment of writing.

Keywords: geopolitical balancing, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Black Sea.

Introduction

Undeniably, the ties between Russia and Turkey are long, complex, and steeped in history. The two countries have rarely, in the course of many centuries, found themselves on the same side of any issues and have gone to war on more than ten occasions starting with the 16th century, when the clashing geopolitical ambitions of the Tsarist and Ottoman Empires put the two countries on a collision course.[1]

In the interwar period, the USSR provided significant financial assistance to the young Turkish republic and even returned some Eastern Turkish provinces that had come under Russian imperial control in 1878. The two countries signed a friendship and neutrality treaty from which the Soviet Union unilaterally withdrew in 1945. In this period, Turkey became increasingly aware of the Soviets' geopolitical ambitions, especially in the Black Sea region, and their inclination to meddle in the domestic politics of weaker states.[2]

During the Cold War, the West saw Turkey as a bulwark against the Soviet Union and supported its NATO membership (Turkey became a member in 1952), despite the country's questionable democratic track record, while after the fall of the USSR, Turkish elites have often tried to maximise the country's interests in the former Soviet space, particularly in the Black Sea.[3] The start of Russia's invasion in Ukraine, on February 24, 2022, seems

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[1] Galip Dalay, "Deciphering Turkey's Geopolitical Balancing and Anti-Westernism in Its Relations with Russia," German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Centre for Applied Turkey Studies, No. 35, May 2022, https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/deciphering-turkeys-geopolitical-balancing-and-anti-westernism-in-its-relations-with-russia, 1.

[2] Dalay, "Turkey's Geopolitical Balancing," 2.

[3] Aaron Stein, "Turkey's Response to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis," Foreign Policy Research Institute, January 2022, https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/turkeys-response-to-the-russia-ukraine-crisis-1.pdf, 2. One should also mention here Turkey's "zero problems

to have placed Turkey in quite a favourable position to reassert its regional, and perhaps, global role. But doing so requires Ankara to be able to maintain a delicate geopolitical balancing act by which it seeks to antagonise neither Russia nor the West.

In the period after the 2016 coup, Turkey pursued a closer relationship with Moscow, as both actors were driven by a shared sense of anti-Westernism doubled by a strong personal, functional and interest-based relationship between the two presidents, Recep Erdoğan and Vladimir Putin.[4] Certainly, their anti-Westernism differs in nature, origin and manifestations: the Turkish one is more selective and issue-based, or policy focused, while the Russian one is more structural and all-encompassing.[5] These differences result in significant policy implications, especially after the start of the war in Ukraine, Ankara's signature geopolitical balancing being made more difficult by the fact that now NATO and the West explicitly consider Russia as the enemy.

Turkey has had a functional bilateral relationship with Moscow for some time now, based on strategic regional cooperation, military procurement (particularly the purchase of the Russian S-400 air defence system, which poisoned its relations with Washington[6]) and geopolitical engagement in the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh – where the two states back opposing sides.[7] This relationship has survived a series of tense moments in recent years, such as the 2015 shooting down of a Russian warplane in Syria by Turkish forces, Russian airstrikes in Syria that killed 33 Turkish troops and the assassination of Moscow's ambassador to

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with neighbours" foreign policy, developed by former foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu, which has proven to be less than successful.

4   Dalay, "Turkey's Geopolitical Balancing," 1; Stein, "Turkey's Response," 10.

5   Stein, "Turkey's Response," 10. For instance, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov Spoke of ending US and western dominance of the international system as the core goal of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

6   Dimitar Bechev, "Turkey, between a Rock and a Hard Place on Russia," Politico, March 2, 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-on-russia/.

7   Swasti Rao, "Why Turkey's Rise in Russia-Ukraine War Is a Masterclass in Balancing, Hedging Strategy," *The Print*, July 1, 2022, https://theprint.in/opinion/why-turkeys-rise-in-russia-ukraine-war-is-a-masterclass-in-balancing-hedging-strategy/1019611/.

Ankara.[8] The two countries also have considerable economic ties. This balancing policy is driven both by a sense of discontent with the West and a particular understanding of global politics which, in Ankara's view, is becoming more multipolar and less West-centric.[9] For president Erdoğan especially, the two – friendly ties with Moscow and balancing between Russia and the West – are not mutually exclusive.

On the other hand, Turkey has also had a close relationship with Ukraine, especially in the field of defence: even before the start of the conflict with Russia, the Ukrainian army used the now famous Bayraktar drones to strike against Russian forces in the Donbas region.[10] Turkey has supplied them since 2019 and, during Erdoğan's visit to Kyiv in February 2022, the two countries agreed to set up a factory to produce the drones in Ukraine.[11] After February 2022, the Turkish drones have been used to great effect against Russian invasion forces on the territory of Ukraine, and Ankara has deflected Russian criticism against this measure with the dubious claim that such drone sales are purely private transactions. This fact demonstrates that, in Erdoğan's view, supporting Ukraine, while at the same time not antagonising Moscow or the West - two seemingly contradictory actions – can actually coexist owing to his country's policy of efficiently compartmentalising its foreign policy measures to maximise the pursuit of its own strategic interests. Undoubtedly, Turkey's interests would be much better served by an independent Ukraine than a Ukraine under Russian political and military domination.[12]

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[8] Victor Jack and Leyla Aksu, "Black Sea Balancing Act: Turkey's Erdogan Treads a Fine Line on Russia," Politico, April 5, 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-recep-tayyip-erdogan-russia-vladimir-putin-ukraine-war-peace-talks/.

[9] Dalay, "Turkey's Geopolitical Balancing," 2.

[10] Stein, "Turkey's Response," 2. See also Ishan Tharoor, "Turkey's Awkward Role in the Russia-Ukraine War," *The Washington Post*, May 20, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/20/turkey-ukraine-erdogan-russia-nato/.

[11] Jeffrey Mankoff, "Turkey's Balancing Act on Ukraine Is Becoming More Precarious," *Foreign Policy*, March 10, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/10/turkey-ukraine-russia-war-nato-erdogan/.

[12] Mankoff, "Turkey's Balancing Act." Speaking in Ankara on March 8, 2022, Erdoğan, referring to his country's balancing act, stated that "Everyone with conscience and common sense will acknowledge what a distinct and positive stance Turkey has been adopting [on Ukraine]." (Quoted in Fehim Tastekin, "Ukraine War Shakes up Turkey's Ties with Russia

At the start of the Russian invasion, Turkey's reaction was rather restrained, as it abstained from voting to suspend Russia from the Council of Europe and declined to join the EU and American sanctions against Russia. But, as the carnage increased, Turkey joined the majority voice at the UN condemning Russia, moved slightly closer to the West and offered its services as a mediator in the conflict.[13] Turkey also triggered Article 19 of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which denies passage through the Bosporus and Dardanelles to military vessels of belligerent parties (in this case, Russian) unless they return to their home bases.[14] The sinking of the Russian warship Moskva in the Black Sea on April 14, 2022, now means that Moscow has to persuade or force Turkey to open the two straits if it wants to replace its lost flagship, or move the Black Sea fleet away from Ukraine, which it can hardly afford to do now.[15]

Turkey's behaviour since the start of the crisis in Ukraine should be analysed both through the perspective of its domestic politics and systemic imperatives, especially at regional level, as in a profoundly changed international environment, Ankara should be more wary than ever of the risks posed by this new phase of Russian revisionism that seems poised to encroach on its sphere of interest.[16] The main drivers of Turkey's reactions to the Ukraine crisis since 2014 have included: i) an assessment of Russia's motivations that regarded them, before February 2022, as a strategic

and NATO," *Al-Monitor*, March 8, 2022, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/ukraine-war-shakes-turkeys-ties-both-russia-and-nato.

[13] Selim Yenel, "Can Russia's War on Ukraine Drive Turkey and the West to Reconcile?," The German Marshall Fund, March 15, 2022, https://www.gmfus.org/news/can-russias-war-ukraine-drive-turkey-and-west-reconcile.

[14] Asli Aydintasbas, "Where Does Turkey Stand in a New Cold War? It Shouldn't Be Complicated," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/05/turkey-russia-ukraine-position-nato-west/; Bechev, "Turkey, between a Rock and a Hard Place."

[15] Seref Isler, "Turkey Wants to Be Neutral in the Ukraine War. But a Treaty from 1936 Has It on a Tight Rope," CNBC, April 27, 2022, https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/28/black-sea-and-bosporus-treaty-tests-turkeys-stance-on-ukraine-war.html.

[16] Saban Kardas, "The War in Ukraine and Turkey's Cautious Counterbalancing Against Russia," The German Marshall Fund, March 3, 2022, https://www.gmfus.org/download/article/20616.

challenge rather than an existential threat; ii) a fear of perceived abandonment at the hands of the EU and the US, especially after the 2016 coup, which drove Ankara (always taking a risk-averse approach to volatile contingencies) closer to Moscow, seen as a possible counterbalance to the West; iii) maintaining a precarious balance of power in the Black Sea, particularly after the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea; iv) the US as a threat to Turkey's regional interests, both in the Middle East (especially Syria) and in the Black Sea – which, again, pushed Ankara towards Moscow, given that both consider the US has been trying to undermine the delicate balance in the region.[17]

Russia's attack against Ukraine has finally put an end to Moscow's strategic ambiguity and made its intentions clear, which means that, in a sense, Turkey is waking up to the future, realising it is no longer possible to find comfort in the idea that Russia's actions were confined to alleviate its security concerns vis-à-vis the West. Now, its main challenge could very well be how to maintain a constructive engagement with a declining great power entering a very volatile period in its existence.[18] Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to examine the changes in Turkey's balancing act in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and to see whether these point to an increased rapprochement between Ankara and the West which would bring Turkey, once more, into the fold and allow it to exercise greater clout in regional and global politics. To this end, the first section will look into Turkey's new geopolitical balancing, the second will be largely focused on its role as a mediator since the start of the conflict, while the conclusions will attempt to speculate on Turkey's future role in a few likely scenarios concerning the evolution of the Russia-Ukraine war.

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[17] Kardas, "The War in Ukraine."

[18] Kardas, "The War in Ukraine." According to the author, "Considering its inherent economic and political limitations, strategic vulnerabilities and domestic fragility, a weakening Russia will produce a new set of problems for Turkey, starting in the Caucasus and Black Sea and extending to the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey is likely to suffer the most from emerging instability in its neighbourhood if the coming phase of Russian revisionism is mishandled."

Turkey's geopolitical balancing in the Russia-Ukraine conflict

The main characteristic of Turkey's position in the conflict so far has been to engage both sides, while simultaneously pursuing its own strategic interests – primarily, returning to the great players' table by proving it can be a valuable mediator. This, in turn, would ensure greater visibility for Erdoğan, which plays well to domestic audiences, especially considering he is facing a dicey presidential election in 2023. Like any skilled populist, Erdoğan knows how to present himself as a "strongman" against perceived enemies at home and abroad: adopting a tough stance against Sweden's and Finland's NATO membership[19] and hitting back against Greece al contribute to a "siege mentality" which is likely to be the cornerstone of his election campaign in the coming months to focus attention away from the deep economic crisis currently affecting the country.[20] Since the start of the conflict, Ankara has continued to support Ukraine militarily,[21] engage with Moscow and resist outside pressures to independently support coercive actions against Russia[22] and it has been maximising the opportunity of

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[19] Ostensibly, the reason for this opposition has to do with Turkey's accusation that the two countries provide safe haven to Syrian Kurdish YPG (People's Defence Units) militants.

[20] Ali Bilgic, "Ukraine War: Crisis between the West and Russia Gives Turkey a Chance to Strengthen Its Hand at Home and Abroad," The Conversation, May 26, 2022, https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-crisis-between-the-west-a...-turkey-a-chance-to-strengthen-its-hand-at-home-and-abroad-183757. According to a recent poll, a majority of Turks blame the current war not on Russia, but on the US and NATO for provoking the conflict – a clear result of years of anti-Western rhetoric in the media, especially by Erdogan himself. See Tharoor, "Turkey's Awkward Role," and Aydintasbas, "Where Does Turkey Stand."

[21] Turkey considers Ukraine a strategic partner, especially in the field of military equipment exports. Moreover, it rejected the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and has repeatedly supported Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence. The value of trade between the two has increased visibly since 2014, reaching $7.4 billion in 2021, and Ankara and Kyiv signed a free trade agreement a few days before the start of the invasion. See Kardas, "The War in Ukraine," Mankoff, "Turkey's Balancing Act," and Tom Wheeldon, "Turkey Juggles Relationships with Russia, Ukraine amid Economic Crisis," France 24, March 31, 2022, https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20220331-turkey-juggles-relationships-with-russia-ukraine-amid-economic-crisis.

[22] Stein, "Turkey's Response," 19.

positioning itself as the only actor that can talk to both warring parties.[23] Both Erdoğan and Putin are long-term strategists rather than short-term speculators and, in this case, Putin's crisis is shaping up to be Erdoğan's opportunity. As Soner Cagaptay, a leading expert on contemporary Turkey has put it, "Erdoğan's strategy in Ukraine is to provide quiet military support to Kyiv even as he seeks to sustain diplomatic channels to Putin and economic profits from Russia."[24]

So far, the Turkish president has proven to be very adept at steering his country's relationship with both Moscow and Kyiv all while avoiding joining ranks with the West completely, without endangering his own geostrategic calculations. The mediator role which he was eager to take on means that Turkey is now conveniently placed not only in the middle of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but also within the broader struggle between Russia and the West, a position that, if used carefully, can yield many potential benefits.[25] Moreover, playing the mediator means Turkey does not have to join Western sanctions against Russia, a move which would undermine its credibility.[26]

As things stand at the time of writing (mid-August 2022), Ankara cannot afford outright hostility towards Moscow, since no other Western country is as exposed to Russia geopolitically and economically as Turkey is – and Moscow can impose heavy costs on Turkey without even triggering a NATO response, since the two are involved in many conflicts not covered by NATO security commitments, in Syria, Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh.[27] Turkey still fears the possibility that Russia could weaponize refugees in Syria's northern Idlib province and send them over the border.[28]

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[23] Joshua Keating, "How Turkey Is Turning the War in Ukraine to Its Own Advantage," June 8, 2022, https://www.grid.news/story/global/2022/06/08/how-turkey-is-turning-the-war-in-ukraine-to-its-own-advantage/.

[24] Quoted in Tharoor, "Turkey's Awkward Role."

[25] Iliya Kusa, "Turkey's Goals in the Russia-Ukraine War," Wilson Centre, June 13, 2022, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/turkeys-goals-russia-ukraine-war.

[26] Tharoor, "Turkey's Awkward Role;" Bechev, "Turkey, between a Rock and a Hard Place."

[27] Dalay, "Turkey's Geopolitical Balancing," 3; Stein, "Turkey's Response," 19.

[28] Bechev, "Turkey, between a Rock and a Hard Place." See also *The Economist*, "Turkey's Rapprochement with Russia May Not Survive the War in Ukraine," February 26, 2022,

Additionally, Russia is Turkey's principal supplier of energy (Turkey gets a third of its entire gas supply from Russia) and grain (Russia provides 70% of Turkish wheat),[29] as well as tourism revenue (19% in 2021).[30] Also, as mentioned in the introduction, Russia and Turkey share a great deal of historical particularly US-centric anti-Westernism – and it remains to be seen whether the current context, in which the EU and the US have both expressed appreciation for Turkey's mediation offices, will ease some of the political and geopolitical tensions that have marked its relationship with the West.[31]

Even though both Erdoğan and Putin have used similar narratives in criticising Western hegemony, extolling state sovereignty, and expressing suspicion towards supranational institutions, a frustration with what they see as the West's hypocritical human rights lectures and a desire to restore their nations to their former glory,[32] this does not mean that their methods of dealing with their discontent are similar. Unlike Moscow, which has long comprehensive grievances and has sought to negotiate the future of European security with the US alone, Ankara seeks a more prominent position in international affairs and parity with major European powers such as France, German or the UK. Its NATO member status enables it to be both critical of and a beneficiary of the West-led international order.[33]

Russia's recent geopolitical revisionism, especially in the centre of gravity of Turkish-Russian relations, the Black Sea, has inevitably made Ankara consider whether it might be better off throwing its lot together with the West because, should Russia be successful in its pursuits, this will greatly

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https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/02/24/turkeys-rapprochement-with-russia-may-not-survive-the-war-in-ukraine.

[29] Wheeldon, "Turkey Juggles Relationships."

[30] Bechev, "Turkey, between a Rock and a Hard Place;" see also Kemal Kirisci, "Can the Russia-Ukraine Crisis Offer an Opportunity to Re-Anchor Turkey in NATO?," Brookings Institution, February 16, 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/16/can-the-r...ia-ukraine-crisis-offer-an-opportunity-to-re-anchor-turkey-in-nato/.

[31] Politically speaking, some of the sources of animosity range from opposition to Turkey's EU membership, issues with the personalisation of power and authoritarianism in the country and the West's lukewarm response to the 2016 coup, while geopolitically, Washington's support for the Syrian Kurds and Turkey's disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean have been major issues. See Kirisci, "Can the Russia-Ukraine Crisis," 4.

[32] Keating, "How Turkey Is Turning the War."

[33] Kirisci, "Can the Russia-Ukraine Crisis," 5.

reduce Turkey's room for manoeuvre and undermine its standing from the Black Sea to the Balkans and the from the South Caucasus to Central Asia.[34] The buffer zone that now exists there would be lost and the military balance of power would irreversibly tilt in Russia's favour.[35] However, even though this rapprochement between Turkey and the West might well happen, it is doubtful that the West will once more become as indispensable as a geopolitical anchor to Turkey as it was during the Cold War, since Erdoğan's ambitions for his country to be a major regional player hardly allow for Turkey to be a second-class power in the Middle East and the Black Sea. Turkey might very well want to pivot to the West, but not necessarily return to a club of democracies and Erdoğan certainly does not want to be forced to change his domestic conduct and open himself up to internal challenges.[36] In case Russia loses the war, Erdoğan wants to be on the right side of history, but on his own terms.

After Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, two main priorities became evident for Turkey, in its quest to reposition itself it as a regional superpower: i) preserving Turkey's global and regional status amidst a strong coalescence of NATO and EU against Russia, in which the country could not remain on the sidelines, especially considering that the economic, social, political and transnational consequences of the war have threatened the stability of several regional issues crucial to Turkey's security and ii) reinforcing Ankara's influence to further its economic, political and geopolitical expansion: by forcing the conflicting parties to consult with and through Ankara on issues of war, peace, trade, and wheat exports, Turkey has emerged as a key and credible actor upon which a solution to the conflict might hinge. The circumstances could also position Turkey as a major gas transit hub for Europe, since the country has lobbied for the building of a long-discussed undersea pipeline between Israel and Turkey, which would

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[34] Kirisci, "Can the Russia-Ukraine Crisis," 6. See also Keating, "How Turkey Is Turning the War."

[35] Emil Avdaliani, "Turkey Re-Evaluates Its Position in the Wider Black Sea Region – Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, April 15, 2022, https://www.eurasiareview.com/15042022-turkey-re-evaluates-its-position-in-the-wider-black-sea-region-analysis/.

[36] Aydintasbas, "Where Does Turkey Stand."

allow Eastern Mediterranean gas to reach Europe, thus easing dependence on Russian imports.[37]

Erdoğan sees this time as being ripe to persuade the West to drop the sanctions against the Turkish defence industry and to launch a new military operation in Northern Syria against the US-backed Kurds, counting on the fact that Washington's attention is diverted elsewhere. In all likelihood, Ankara's prominent position in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is neither about Russia, nor about Ukraine; it is all about Turkey and ensuring that any settlement of this issue will take its interests into account, despite Mr. Erdoğan's February 23, 2022, statement that Turkey cannot give up in either Russia or Ukraine.[38] This means that Turkey, even though it might find itself under increased pressure to pick a side, it is also in a position to impose conditions of its own.[39]

Turkey's winning diplomacy – so far

President Erdoğan recognised the opportunity to capitalise on his country's unique position in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and, so far, has emerged as the key mediator between the two warring parties, starting as early as March 2022, when Ankara hosted a trilateral summit with the participation of Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers, Sergey Lavrov and Dmytro Kuleba, which unfortunately reached a dead end.[40] These attempts have been part of his desire to expand his country's "soft" political footprint in the region,[41] to ensure domestic support at a time when his popularity is rather low and to make his decision not to join anti-Russia sanctions more palatable to Western actors.[42]

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[37] Kusa, "Turkey's Goals."

[38] Quoted in *The Economist*, "Turkey's Rapprochement."

[39] Seth J. Frantzman, "Russia-Ukraine War Is Turkey's Chance for New Clout – Analysis," *Jerusalem Post*, March 6, 2022, https://www.jpost.com/international/article-700492.

[40] Mankoff, "Turkey's Balancing Act."

[41] Yevgeniya Gaber, "Grain Drain: Why Turkey Can't Afford to Ignore Russian Grain Smuggling from Ukraine," Atlantic Council, July 25, 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/turkeysource/grain-drain-why-turkey-cant-afford-to-ignore-russian-grain-smuggling-from-ukraine/.

[42] Dalay, "Turkey's Geopolitical Balancing," 3.

In July 2022, Turkey mediated a deal by which Russia agreed to allow Ukraine to resume grain exports through the Black Sea – an event hailed as a major breakthrough to ease the looming regional food crisis. The deal, the result of a two-month negotiation process, was signed in Istanbul by Turkey, Russia, Ukraine and the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and includes, among other provisions, the inspection of the ships by Turkish authorities to allay Russian fears of weapons smuggling and Russia agreeing to a truce while ships move.[43] The deal, hailed as a major diplomatic victory for Turkey, also provides for the creation of a Joint Coordination Centre in Istanbul to ensure the efficient implementation of the deal and to put an end to the burgeoning illegal trade in Ukrainian wheat shipped by Russia (mainly to Turkey and Syria – something that may raise serious questions about Ankara's credibility as a mediator) from the territories it has occupied in Ukraine.[44]

Shortly after the start of the war, the emergence of Turkey as a mediator hardly seemed the most logical choice, particularly to Russia: after all, it cannot claim to be a neutral party since it is a member of NATO, Moscow's mortal enemy, and it has a fairly long and solid partnership with Ukraine. Yet paradoxically, these very attributes prove Turkey's mediation clout and usefulness: as a NATO member, Turkey could persuade its American and European allies to accept an eventual cease-fire agreement and even to provide some support for Russia's reconstruction, depending on the terms of the possible cease-fire.[45] Moreover, Turkey has consciously built a role for itself as a mediator in several conflicts (such as the Israeli-Palestinian one, the Astana Process or the one between Somalia and the separatist region of Somaliland) over the past two decades. Ukrainian president Zelensky has hailed Erdoğan's mediation efforts and considers him to be the one who could offer security guarantees for his country.[46]

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[43] BBC, "Food Crisis: Ukraine Grain Export Deal Reached with Russia, Says Turkey," July 22, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62254597. Despite the terms of the deal, Russia violated it only a day later, when it attacked the Odessa harbour.

[44] Gaber, "Grain Drain."

[45] Juan Diaz-Prinz, "To Sustain Hopes for Peace in Ukraine, Keep an Eye on Turkey," United States Institute of Peace, April 28, 2022, https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/04/sustain-hopes-peace-ukraine-keep-eye-turkey.

[46] Eric Tlozek, "As Russia's Invasion in Ukraine Rolls On, Turkey Is Caught between Major Powers – but Could Be Crucial to Ending the Fighting," ABC News, March 8, 2022,

As the conflict has progressed, president Erdoğan has continued to position his country as the only actor who can play the role of mediator, and his recent actions underscore this belief. In July 2022, he attended a summit in Tehran (the 7th summit in the Astana Format), where he met with Vladimir Putin (who was left awkwardly standing alone in front of the cameras, waiting for Erdoğan for several minutes – perhaps a sign of Erdoğan's growing boldness) and Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi, ostensibly to discuss the Syrian peace process, but in fact to assess whether Russia might object to a Turkish offensive in northern Syria against the Kurds – a fact that did not go unnoticed by Kremlin, where there are strong suspicions that Turkey wished to start a "special operation" in Syria.[47] This only proves the extent to which the Turkish president is using the opportunity afforded by the Russia-Ukraine conflict to advance his own agenda.

Erdoğan's shuttle diplomacy was once more in full display on August 5, 2022, when he flew to Sochi to discuss personally with Vladimir Putin about bilateral ties (in the fields of economy, trade and energy) and international issues, including the war in Ukraine, as announced by the Turkish media, which offered no other specific details on the matters to be approached during the meeting.[48] Two weeks later, on August 18, Erdoğan, together with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, travelled to Lviv to attend a high profile summit with Ukrainian president Zelensky, during which he threw Turkey's support behind Ukraine and warned of the risk of another Chernobyl that might occur at the Russian-held nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia, while also pledging help to rebuild Ukraine's destroyed

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https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-09/russia-invasion-ukraine-turkey-caught-major-powers-end-fighting/100891796.

[47] France 24, "Iran, Russia, Turkey Presidents to Talk Syria War in Tehran," July 18, 2022, https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220718-iran-russia-turkey-presidents-to-talk-syria-war-in-tehran. See also Andrew Wilks, "Turkey's Erdogan to Meet Putin in Russia: What to Expect," Al Jazeera, August 4, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/4/turkeys-president-erdogan-will-meet-with-russias-putin.

[48] Diyar Guldogan, "Turkish President Set to Visit Russia to Have Talks with Putin," August 4, 2022, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkish-president-set-to-visit-russia-to-have-talks-with-putin/2653107.

infrastructure and to find a peaceful resolution to the war.[49] The visit was meant to expand the scope of the July grain deal and to use Turkey's momentum to persuade both parties to negotiate a truce. Kyiv also promised to "champion" Ankara's causes across Europe.[50] The meeting was hailed as yet another diplomatic success for Turkey: in the words of Kamal Alam, a military analyst and non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, "Erdoğan's visit comes at an opportune moment as Türkiye emerges as a diplomatic winner from the current Ukraine crisis. Erdoğan has deftly used his Russian leverage borne out of Syrian, Libyan and the Azerbaijan-Armenian wars to deliver a much needed relief to Ukraine."[51]

Through his actions so far, Erdoğan has succeeded in proving that, in the current context, the West needs Turkey more than ever and that its approach has been more efficient that the Western recipe of economic sanctions and military aid to Ukraine. Even US president Biden has praised Turkey's mediation efforts, especially as far as the signing of the grain deal was concerned and agreed to sell forty F-16 fighter jets to Turkey (pending Congressional approval), a transaction that was put on ice after Ankara bought the S-400 missile defence system from Russia.[52] Despite this rapprochement with Washington, there still are concerns across the Atlantic that Erdoğan might yet veto Sweden's and Finland's NATO membership in the coming months (possibly until the sale of the F-16s goes through), regardless of his assertions not to oppose the two countries' membership bids after securing an agreement with Stockholm and Helsinki by which the two Scandinavian countries pledged to act against terrorist organisations and join extradition agreements with Turkey to enable the latter to prosecute

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[49] *Le Monde*, "Erdoğan Throws Turkey's Support behind Ukraine," August 18, 2022, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/08/18/erdogan-throws-turkey-s-support-behind-ukraine_5994013_4.html.

[50] Murat Sofuoglu, "Why Is Erdogan's Visit to Ukraine So Significant?," TRT World, August 18, 2022, https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-is-erdogan-s-visit-to-ukraine-so-significant-59852.

[51] Quoted in Sofuoglu, "Why Is Erdogan's Visit."

[52] Michael Crowley, "Turkey's Leader Remains a Headache for Biden despite Aiding in Ukraine Deal," *The New York Times*, July 23, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/23/us/politics/turkey-nato-ukraine-russia.html.

PKK members living in those countries.[53] Additionally, Turkey's plan to mount an offensive against the US-backed Syrian Kurds emphasises Erdoğan's commitment to serve his country's interests (and, ultimately, his own aims) above all other considerations and the fact that he is in the unique opposition of being, formally, in the Western camp while sometimes taking the liberty of acting against his allies. Some senior US officials argue that the Turkish president's problematic behaviour is an indicator of his political weakness at home, where the Turkish economy is collapsing, burdened by an 80% inflation rate, and his popularity is visibly diminished.[54] Moreover, Erdoğan's approval ratings have dropped from almost 56% at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to 38.6% at the end of 2021, while the governing AKP party has been steadily losing popular support, being down to 23.9% in the polls. Under these circumstances, Erdoğan's political opposition stands a real chance of winning next year's elections if they are reasonably free.[55]

Certainly, since the war in Ukraine seems, unfortunately, far from over at the time of writing (August 2022), it is difficult to anticipate how the warring parties and other main actors will react to events in the near and mid-term future – but what is certain is that Turkey will continue to be at the heart of events and its pugnacious president will use every opportunity to climb ever higher on the ladder of chaos to secure the prominent international position he so dearly covets.

Conclusions in medias res

Eight months have passed since Russia started its invasion of Ukraine, and an end to the conflict does not appear within sight. Quite the contrary, the West and Russia may now be entering the ultimate stages of a dangerous insecurity spiral characterised by a multitude of destabilising choices which could lead to even greater tragedy and bloodshed. In scholarly terms, this spiral is also known as the stability-instability paradox, in which states that find themselves stalemated in the nuclear realm, might be more

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[53] Crowley, "Turkey's Leader."
[54] Crowley, "Turkey's Leader."
[55] Kirisci, "Can the Russia-Ukraine Crisis."

willing to escalate a conventional war.[56] The sanctions regime against Moscow does not appear to be working as efficiently as it was expected (and punitive measures adopted before the invasion, including a more active NATO presence on the Eastern flank, have failed in preventing the start of the war) and it will not be able to force Russia to change course. What might ultimately be needed is a new containment strategy that would increase the war costs to Russia to such a degree that it forces an internal change to bring about the downfall of Putin's regime[57] – which would solve at least some problems, but not all of them; after all, a Russia without Putin would not suddenly turn into, say, Canada. Unfortunately, for now at least, Putin and his circle are keeping Russia and its people hostage and it is more difficult for Putin's domestic enemies to escape persecution if they are trapped, as an old Russian saying goes, on Putin's submarine.[58] As Liana Fix and Michael Kimmage argue in their Foreign Affairs essay, "the futility of the costs spent on a lost war, the human toll, and the geopolitical decline will define the course of Russia and Russian foreign policy for many years to come, and it will be very difficult to imagine a liberal Russia emerging after the horrors of this war."[59] Even if the war were to end soon, the trauma already inflicted by the violence would last for at least a generation.

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[56] Emma Ashford, Joshua Shifrinson, "How the War in Ukraine Could Get Much Worse," *Foreign Affairs*, March 8, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-08/ho...&utm_content=20220311&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017.

[57] Ivo H. Daalder, "The Return of Containment," *Foreign Affairs*, March 1, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-01/retur...ampaign=election_&utm_content=20220304&utm_term=all-special-send. In the author's view, the three pillars of this new containment strategy would be maintaining US military strength, decoupling Western economies from Russia and isolating Moscow internationally. Additionally, he argues that "Containing Russia will therefore require paying attention to China. One way to increase the West's leverage over Beijing would be to strengthen the political, economic, and military ties between the advanced democracies in Asia, Europe, and North America."

[58] Andrei Koleshnikov, "Will Putin Lose Russia?," *Foreign Affairs*, March 3, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2022-03-03/will-putin-los...ampaign=election_&utm_content=20220304&utm_term=all-special-send. The proverb referenced above asks the question "where do we go from the submarine?".

[59] Liana Fix, Michael Kimmage, "What If Russia Loses?," *Foreign Affairs*, March 4, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-04/what-...mpaign=election_&utm_content=20220304&utm_term=all-special-send.

In all this time, one cannot really say that there have been many windows of opportunity for the two parties to reach a truce of some sort, as both Russia and Ukraine seem more inclined to entrenchment and unwilling to compromise or reconsider their terms. The most progress done in this respect so far is the Turkey-mediated grain deal signed in July 2022. So, in this concluding sections, it would be worth considering three scenarios highlighting the challenges and opportunities that all three main actors involved (Russia, Ukraine and Turkey) might face depending on how events play out and what is at stake for each of them.

i) Scenario 1: Russia wins the war

Things in this scenario are quite clear-cut, as a newly emboldened Russia might very well demand free movement for all its ships through the Straits, would push Turkey to maintain strict neutrality if it launched a military operation in the Black Sea against, for instance, Romania or Georgia and could even go so far as to force Turkey to share its newly discovered Black Sea natural gas resources. Should all this happen, Turkey would become ever more dependent on Moscow (including militarily) and its economic situation would continue to worsen.[60] However, as a NATO member, such circumstances might drive Ankara closer to the Northern Alliance, as it would seek to benefit from its collective security umbrella as a bulwark against Russian aggressiveness in the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean. In order to prevent such a rapprochement, Russia would have to counteract by delivering a second batch of S-400 missiles to Turkey and/or offer it much discounted grain and gas. Putin and Erdoğan would maintain their cordial relationship and the former could even offer the latter a joint sphere of influence in the South Caucasus. It goes without saying, under this scenario, all Turkish weapons sales to Ukraine would cease.

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[60] Eugene Kogan, "The Impact of the War in Ukraine on Russian-Turkish Relations and Black Sea Security: Three Potential Scenarios," Middle East Institute, May 26, 2022, https://www.mei.edu/publications/impact-war-ukraine-russian-turkish-relations-and-black-sea-security-three-potential.

ii) Scenario 2: Russia loses the war

Certainly, a Russian loss in Ukraine would have far-reaching consequences and a military defeat could even lead to the dissolution of the Russia Federation, following the model of the USSR fall. The balance of power across Eurasia would suffer significant changes and threats against countries such as Georgia, Moldova, Bulgaria and Romania would be greatly reduced. For Turkey, Russia's defeat would mean strengthening its strategic position in the Black Sea and the South Caucasus, which was one of Erdoğan's goals all along. Ukraine-Turkish military ties would continue to flourish and Turkey's economy would be given a boost to overcome the threat of generalised recession. Additionally, a much weakened Russia could well seek to maintain its economic ties with Ankara, which would further contribute to easing the pressures on the Turkish economy.[61]

iii) Scenario 3: Stalemate

This scenario implies the emergence of yet another frozen conflict in the heart of Europe, in which each side would bide its time to try and weaken the other one and take any opportunity to come out victorious. Economically, Turkey would continue to struggle, its diplomacy might lose the upper hand and domestic political turmoil would be very likely to occur. In this scenario, there would be no silver lining for any of the 3 actors – but for Russia at least, this would be a familiar situation, given that it would be a repeat of the status quo in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria or Nagorno-Karabakh. For Ukraine, this would be the worst possible scenario, given that the West might grow exhausted, especially on account of the looing prospect of a fiercely difficult winter, and its unity and resilience might wane. This situation would also fuel the Russia propaganda machine which would spin the narrative that Russia, yet again, won a Great Patriotic War and that the human toll, however great, is the necessary price victory requires. A stalemate would also mean that the Russian threat in the Black Sea would persist, and so Turkey, but also Romania and Bulgaria, would have to remain vigilant.[62]

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[61] Kogan, "The Impact of the War."
[62] Kogan, "The Impact of the War."

Of course, there is no telling now which scenario – if any of those outlined above – would come to pass. Maybe new developments will emerge that will completely change the endgame. What is true, for the time being at least, is that Russian-Turkish relations are based on shared interests and a mutual understanding that preserving a balance is preferable to a state of hostility. Scenario 2 highlights the incentives Putin might be prepared to offer Erdoğan if Russia wins the war and it would also imply that Turkey might continue to drift further away from the West and NATO as long as its president is not willing to change his domestic policies. Scenario 2 has some clear advantages for Turkey, as long as these advantages are doubled by realistic expectations in Ankara. Scenario 3 underscores the many uncertainties that lie ahead and the inability of the international community to back Russia into a corner and make it give in, which would spell difficult times ahead for Turkey as well.[63] Whatever the future holds, Turkey will undoubtedly continue to pursue its own strategic interests and attempt to maximise whatever advantages it can draw out of the international context. So far, this course of action seems to be paying off.

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[63] Kogan, "The Impact of the War."

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Black Sea Geopolitical Echoes
and World Power Distribution

SILVIU NATE

Abstract. World power distribution turns towards bipolarity, where the US and China will face an increased dynamic for dominance. The Black Sea represents an East-West collision point of significant ideological and institutional arrangements, reflecting global geopolitical stakes and tendencies. Accumulated tensions and regional struggles are part of a greater competition for the new global architecture with strong political reverberations in world chancelleries. The Black Sea has a distinct strategic feature and a geopolitical node profile that elucidates broader phenomena vis-à-vis European and transatlantic security. The operationalization of strategic dilemmas and myths of the Black Sea players brings more practicality and vision for consolidating the coercive profile of NATO's eastern front members. Analytical variables used to understand the security phenomenon in the Black Sea are applicable and obtain relevance for drawing the perspectives of global power.

Keywords: Black Sea region, great power distribution, Russia-Ukraine war, bipolarity.

The Black Sea's Strategic Paradox

The Black Sea security became a perceptible international issue after Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014, but more so after Russia continued its war operation on a large scale against Ukraine on the February 24, 2022.

Although three NATO members (Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria) are coastal Black Sea states, the internationalization of the subject was not approached before by extensive research to address the geopolitical dilemma of the Black Sea from an academic perspective. Consequently, the Black Sea

region has not been a priority agenda but a marginal issue for the Western world. Therefore, understanding how things have evolved in NATO's and the EU's eastern neighbourhoods is extremely important.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Black Sea region entered a transition of power where Russia increasingly acquired a regional military status but also the profile of a declining hegemon.

Framing the Black Sea's reality, we notice the region's geography conditions it. We have become accustomed to accepting the static profile of this basin due to the access restriction to the Black Sea through the Turkish straits – the Bosporus and the Dardanelles. The maritime sovereignty exercised by Turkey over the straits somewhat had the role of (not constantly) limiting the military access of the Soviet Union and, later, Russia to the Mediterranean Sea. This strategic requirement to protect from the growing Russian presence on Europe's southern flank has allowed Moscow to operate unhindered in the Black Sea, projecting a regional status quo. The Montreux Convention limits the freedom of navigation and delineates the principle referring to the coastal states and those having a passing way. Even though the Montreux Convention is perceived as an essential pillar for Turkey's maritime security, an extended perspective is also necessary to support the relevance of the Alliance. If Turkey cannot project stabilization in the Black Sea by itself using straits sovereignty, Ankara's contribution to allies' security in the region becomes less relevant.[1]

Russia's use of the Crimean port of Sevastopol to access the Mediterranean Sea from the Black Sea extended the Kremlin's southern European geopolitical relevance. Moscow's military assistance in the Syrian and Libyan wars demonstrated the tactic capacity to jeopardize Western projections, whether energy, intra-Mediterranean economic development, or stabilization interest. Consequently, the illegal annexation of Crimea made it easier for Russia to develop and use a Black Sea naval fleet for pressing

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[1] Centrul de Studii Globale, "Canalul Istanbul și perspectiva transformării Mării Negre din 'lac rusesc' într-o 'mare NATO'" (The Istanbul Canal and the Perspective of the Black Sea Turning from a "Russian Lake" into a "NATO Sea" - Opinions), Hotnews.ro, April 27, 2021, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-opinii-24763254-canalul-istanbul-perspectiva-transformarii-marii-negre-din-lac-rusesc-intr-mare-nato.htm.

south-eastern Europe.[2] In reality, Russia wants to access the Atlantic and question Western Europe's and the USA's transatlantic security through the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea.

Beyond its maritime power in the Black Sea, Russia has made considerable efforts to keep political regimes in the region in its orbit. In order to ensure that its influence will endure, it embedded artificial conflicts under the pretext of protecting Russian minorities on the territory of neighbouring states. This tactic consisted in sending occupation forces into the territory of other sovereign states. Moscow deliberately called them peacekeeping forces to provide them with international legal recognition. The West is perfectly aware of the reasons behind having them implanted in those territories inhabited by Russian minorities. Whenever the Kremlin's exercise of political control in the neighbouring countries failed, the use of force became the acceptable option for maintaining the regional status quo.

At the same time, in the absence of economically persuasive tools and driven by the desire to exert regional control, Russia's only option is to keep regional actors below its level of development – a mentality of instrumenting client and vassal states. A hegemon's decline tends to be associated with financial closure, instability, and the creation of competing regional blocs.[3]

Soft power loss pushes declining hegemons toward survival strategies, and aggression usually becomes an acceptable option. The struggle for survival and the fear of not falling into geopolitical isolation brings Russia closer to the realist paradigm, grounding Moscow's choice for war. According to Organski's realist thinking, competition for dominance occurs when the dissatisfied party anticipates significant benefits and privileges if a conflict is successfully conducted rather than if the current status quo is maintained.[4]

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[2] Silviu Nate, "Libia și noua hartă a mizelor geopolitice în Bazinul Levant" (Libya and the New Map of Geopolitical Stakes in the Basin of Levant), Hotnews.ro, January 28, 2020, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-opinii-23626152-libia-noua-harta-mizelor-geopolitice-bazinul-levant.htm.

[3] Helen V. Milner, "International Political Economy: Beyond Hegemonic Stability," *Foreign Policy*, Special Issue: Frontiers of Knowledge, no. 110 (Spring 1998): 112–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/1149280.

[4] A.F.K. Organski, "Power Transition," in *Realism Reader*, eds. Colin Elman and Michael A. Jensen (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), 207-10.

If Russia could not achieve the status quo in the Black Sea and South Caucasus, increasing destabilization became a new strategic mantra. While the Black Sea has not benefited from so-called maritime internationalization, the region has always been subject to abuse by Russia. This geopolitical reality or strategic oblivion has somehow been neglected by the exception whereby the US has tolerated the existence of a space in which it does not exercise global maritime hegemony. This exception ultimately led to the multiplication of Russia's ambitions in the Black Sea region and a form of dependence of the coastal states on a security broker able to provide external support and guarantees. We are not wrong if we admit that the Black Sea region remains a complicated space with weak premises for shaping a joint stability project.

Russia's Declining Hegemony

In an attempt to determine whether Russia is a hegemon, Keohane's formula is quite relevant. From his point of view, a hegemon:

- can create, implement and maintain international rules;
- demonstrates the will to do so;
- exercises decisive dominance in the economic, technological, and military fields.[5]

In the case of Russia, we observe aspirations for broader hegemonic status, but without being economically and politically persuasive, its profile falls within the framework of a declining hegemon.[6] As its primordiality cannot be achieved using soft-power tools or coercive diplomacy, it resorts to the direct use of military force.

Additional to the military arsenal is the will to impose ideological models, energy blackmail, and diplomatic and political pressure under the "attractive" umbrella of corruption networks and oligarchs.[7]

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[5] Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[6] Silviu Nate, "Russia's Quest for Regional Hegemony: Appearances vs. Realities," *UA: Ukraine Analytica* (blog), August 31, 2021, https://ukraine-analytica.org/russias-quest-for-regional-hegemony-appearances-vs-realities/.

[7] Nate, "Russia's Quest."

As with any crisis comes a series of opportunities; Russia's war in Ukraine induces an awareness among allies of the need for increased security in the Black Sea. The lack of Western attention to this particular geopolitical space has accentuated the vulnerability that Moscow has revealed in its desire to project its regional hegemony. Putin used this strategic vacuum to attack Ukraine, launched long-range missiles from the sea to support his land offensive, and advanced a revisionist agenda by publicly supporting the Kremlin's goal of reconfiguring Europe's borders and returning to the Cold War order. Putin's statements and incursions confirmed Russia's desire to escape the geopolitical isolation it had recently entered.

The new geopolitical reality of a declining hegemon drives Russia's growing aggression, resulting in excessive militarization in the Black Sea. Also, the military threat to the North and Central Atlantic region remains the Russian Federation.[8] Once Russia acknowledged the imminence of geopolitical isolation, its options narrowed to regional stakes. This new situation has amplified Russia's ambition in the Black Sea and complicated the regional security climate.

Weaponizing Energy

The assumption that Nord Stream 2 was not designed to be a project with economic stakes, but was aimed at becoming a geopolitical tool has been proven right, considering that the same volume of natural gas was provided to Europe through Ukraine before. The alleged maintenance issues on Nord Stream 1, invoked by Gazprom during the summer of 2022 have been used as a coercive measure against Germany, seeking to deter the open support for Ukraine, clearly stated by the German government. Also, Gazprom's disruption of natural gas supplies to Germany[9] guiltily coincided with the absence of a priority political agenda of Brussels over Belarus.

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[8] Luke Coffey, "NATO Summit 2021: Black Sea Strategy Needed," The Heritage Foundation, June 10, 2021, https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/nato-summit-2021-black-sea-strategy-needed.

[9] Reuters, "No Russian Yamal Gas Flows into Germany for a Third Day," November 8, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russian-yamal-gas-flows-into-germany-remain-eastbound-again-3nd-day-2021-11-08/.

Moscow's energy policy turned into a political pressure tool toward importing states. Weaponizing energy has profound geopolitical implications that condition the EU energy-dependent countries' relations with Russia. It also affects the EU's eastern neighbourhood, which Moscow considers her direct sphere of influence.

For a small state like the Republic of Moldova, weak military power and the absence of *de facto* guarantees offered by NATO and the EU place the country on exposed and vulnerable ground. Besides the regional insecurity caused by the Russo-Ukrainian war and massive refugee flows, complex global dependencies have led to skyrocketing energy prices, high inflation, disruption of supply chains, and loss of investment and trade opportunities.

Putin has always feared the flourishing of democracies on Russia's border and that they could inspire Russian society; thus, the "energy weapon" is used as a lever for blackmailing and exerting socio-political pressure. As already stated, the supply of natural gas was designed from the beginning as a geopolitical tool by Moscow and has turned into an unconventional, complementary tactic of war for the highly energy-dependent states of the region.

The pressure exerted and the energy blackmail of Gazprom – the Kremlin's short and cold arm, aim to activate the opposition parties in the Republic of Moldova in Putin's attempt to support the pro-Russian political forces.

Energy is a sensitive chapter for which Romania, Germany, and France are looking for addressability through the Support Platform for the Republic of Moldova, an instrument initiated by the three states, accumulating a financial package of over 700 million euros. This mechanism includes 47 participants - states and institutions.[10]

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[10] European Commission, "The EU Further Increases Its Budget Support to Moldova, Providing in Total €135 Million since End of Last Year," July 15, 2022, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-further-increases-its-budget-support-moldova-providing-total-eu135-million-end-last-year-2022-07-15_en.

The Nuclear Factor and Russian Information Warfare

President Putin, surrounded by the mafia, has accustomed us to the bluff game over time. A few days after launching the invasion, President Putin ordered the Russian nuclear forces to be on high alert. These highly charged psychological practices are used as a pressure factor to deter Ukrainian military response and Western commitment to Kyiv while pushing discussion channels in which the Kremlin unilaterally announces claims to end the war on its terms.

The Russian Federation has included nuclear rhetoric to gain more influence and control in its information warfare strategy. The fear of a nuclear attack produces social incitement. The induced anxiety accentuates scepticism towards a Western conventional military result and fragments public support for Ukraine in certain European countries.

Even if nuclear rhetoric would not decisively influence European support for Ukraine, the effervescence surrounding the topic diverts debate and attention from the atrocities committed by the Russian army in Ukraine. The aggressor's ability to occupy the information ecosystem with a "mobilizing subject" drives the narrative and public concern in the desired direction.

Moscow used an uninspired combination of coercive diplomacy[11] and deterrence.[12] While the deterrence doctrine refers to a threat-based strategy to prevent an adversary planning from initiating an illegitimate action, coercive diplomacy aims to stop an already taken step by someone else. Because Russia is the aggressor and not the aggrieved party, both concepts are misused in Moscow's diplomacy. Coercive diplomacy operates on two key variables: the magnitude of the demand made on the adversary and the motivation of the adversary not to comply.

The subject of a potential nuclear attack induces a kind of magnitude in the negotiations pursued by Russia. President Putin sends a subliminal message that Russia is willing to deal only with similar atomic power.

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[11] Kenneth A Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[12] John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 23-66.

Advancing the formula of direct talks with the US, Moscow strives to inoculate in the collective mind the perception that agreements will be made beyond the control and will of the Europeans and, consequently, the US would have illegitimate interests. In contrast, the US Administration resorted to inclusive forms of consultation with allies.

While China and the United States admit the path to a bipolar world, Vladimir Putin promotes global multipolarity, trying to save Russia from geopolitical isolation. Consequently, Vladimir Putin has amplified nuclear rhetoric to perpetuate the myth of great power, contrasting Russia's weakening, which in reality has turned it into a vindictive regional actor.

Nuclear rhetoric is profoundly subversive and psychological; it is an instrument of blackmail, deterrence, social demoralization, and fragmentation of opinions. The Kremlin's approach aims at undermining the cohesion of allies and is just another propaganda vector designed to support the ambitions of a delusional dictator.

Russia's intimidation game is specific to great powers competition that takes offensive actions. In practice, Russia evaluates the balance of power and how other states react to its moves. The zero-sum game promoted by the Kremlin implies a complicated regional cohabitation in the Black Sea and usually tends to obstruction or escalation.

If not of regime collapse, then what is Putin afraid of?

We could hypothesize that an internal struggle in Russia should open the civilizing path in a political and social sense amid the background of the coercive actions of the West. But how close are we to such an outcome?

The diminishing perception of Russia as a great power entails the loss of levers of international influence. As Russia's relationship with the West is at an impasse, approaching the Global South seems much more attractive to Moscow. Russia's invitation to form alliances with North Korea and African and Latin American countries in exchange for the promise to share Russian military technology sent Moscow into the club of dictators and failed states. This geopolitical outcome should wake up Europeans who credited

Vladimir Putin and advocated a return to business as usual with Russia during the invasion of Ukraine.

The dictum Russia now marches on is the destabilization and depreciation of the international system, believing that this is the only way it can gain geopolitical relevance. While no sane person could enjoy the upsurge of international anarchy, the paradox is that out of a desire not to turn Russia into a peripheral actor, Putin has ended up working with the global political periphery.

It is unclear how much credibility Russia has among third-world countries to credit Putin's "good imperialist" intentions garnished with abuses, sovereignty violations, and international law.

We could admit that two perspectives are increasingly evident: (1) Putin's regime will not fall quickly or easily, but Moscow will enter a period of agony, turning into an increasingly opaque and isolated international system; (2) Russia will remain a status quo contender in the Black Sea, and Putin, as long as he rules the country, will not give up his dominant ambitions.

In Ukraine, Putin intends to stage the organization of falsified referendums to declare the independence of some regions. Regardless of the "endurance" of these political emanations, they will be reflected in the domestic propaganda press as a success and justification of the "special operation." However, it remains to be seen to what extent the Ukrainian military, with Western support, will close the window of war launched by Putin.

Putin's desire to reverse Atlanticism

By placing the Black Sea at the centre of the global map, we see that this region borrowed some valences of the Iron Curtain and sheds light on the larger picture of the great power dispute.

Putin's claims to return to the Soviet-era global order were declaratively and factually directed against NATO. Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, NATO's first Secretary-General, famously said the purpose of the Alliance was "to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the

Germans down."[13] We all know that both World Wars started in Europe, and the American presence offered a stabilizing factor in the old realm. Consequently, Putin's plan was to inverse the existential principle of NATO, relying on Germany's energy dependence and increasing its European relevance with Russia, and discrediting the US's role in Europe.

Putin's short-term option as a window of opportunity was to turn to historical revisionism by using the frozen conflicts in the Wider Black Sea Region and the union with Belarus to extend pressure on Europe and NATO. Although Putin's calculations have not proved to be very effective, his main goals have been to change regimes to keep non-NATO states in Russia's orbit and encourage nationalism by inviting greedy states to revisionism. Putin relied on a weak European response and a fractured European relationship amid Germany's energy dependence. If his script had had a high success rate, then, amid European failure, the echo would have rolled to Washington by reversing Lord Ismay's stated principle. Considering such a scenario, this is probably the new order that Putin dreamed of and which he secretly whispered to President Xi Jinping before the Winter Olympics.

One world made up of many other parallel worlds

The Black Sea is also a landmark for global cultural and ideological boundaries, a crossroad of European, Slavic, and Middle East civilizations. Within the invasion speech, Putin wanted to demoralize and show his intention that the current global order based on liberalism and international law is failing and that Europe is vulnerable to Russia.

On the other hand, China promotes multilateralism as a stronghold of its foreign policy. In this context, clarification is required. Factually, multilateralism without a commitment to the rule of law, human rights, and international norms creates a parallel world based on faked multilateralism. It hides a kind of *left-wing internationalism* and develops frameworks for competing multilateral organizations, opposing multilateralism based on the

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[13] NATO, "Lord Ismay, 1952-1957," accessed September 6, 2022, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_137930.htm.

liberal order – from which institutions such as the United Nations and the EU were born.

Julia Morse and Robert Keohane describe the concept of *contested multilateralism* as a situation that "involves the use of different multilateral institutions to challenge the rules, practices, or missions of existing multilateral institutions" based on liberal values.[14]

The war in Ukraine and the future of China

China has reached unprecedented international status, but the lack of experience of a long-established power barely supports this challenge.

So China, as a young power, is exposed to mistakes that might cost it, and if we look at its desire to become a hegemon, the profile is not yet complete. China's economic paradigm has spawned a military paradigm, but it does not benefit from a vast system of alliances and is not ideologically persuasive. The lack of critical attributes indispensable to being a prime global player raises several questions about how China might see its ascent without altering the climate of international relations.

Regarding Eastern Europe, China's economic diplomacy stretches between the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Adriatic. Still, mainly the Black Sea sits at the crossroads of all these challenges. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing established the 17+1 (now 16+1 since Lithuania pulled out in May 2021) cooperation mechanism with Central and Eastern European countries. Chinese investment has focused mainly on infrastructures such as the transportation, energy, and telecommunications sectors. While Moscow shares Beijing's antipathy toward Washington, China's expanding influence in Europe also presents challenges.[15]

The irony is that Putin accepted the status of being China's junior partner but rejects that Russia falls into geopolitical isolation. Putin's

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[14] Julia C. Morse and Robert O. Keohane, "Contested Multilateralism," *The Review of International Organizations* 9, no. 4 (2014): 385–412.

[15] James Jay Carafano, Silviu Nate and Oana-Antonia Colibășanu, "How a Rising China Complicates Europe's Future," *19FortyFive* (blog), September 20, 2021, https://www.19forty five.com/2021/09/how-a-rising-china-complicates-europes-future/.

unfortunate failure in Ukraine also has many negative consequences for China, as Putin can no longer represent a winning playing card, while Russia's international image has already been tarnished. Putin's state is turning into a day-to-day dictatorship. In the long run, the economy is collapsing, and the more he provokes the West, the more he hurts Russia. Putin's failure pushes China into a corner and creates a geopolitical disturbance unanticipated by President Xi.

Following Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, Western sanctions have favoured Moscow's rapprochement with Beijing. As already stated, in the new equation, Putin accepted the role as junior partner of Xi Jinping but underestimated the magnitude of the Western response he would face following the invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin thought there would be some new sanctions and, therefore, everything would be managed by further dependence on China and nothing more.

Putin's calculations have been proven wrong. Russia's economic asymmetry with China is constantly growing, and the leverage China will obtain in the coming years will be more and more accentuated if Moscow does not stabilize its relationship with the West. Therefore, "China may be able to dictate the terms of Russia's military cooperation with Beijing's regional rivals in the future."[16]

President Xi Jinping gained three significant achievements in close cooperation with Russia: (1) a heightened economic dependence of Moscow on Beijing; (2) a strategic comfort of China concerning Russia, which, based on the mutual dialogue, has cancelled historical worries about a Russian security threat on the common border; (3) a China-Russia diplomatic collaboration within the UN Security Council and supporting China's concern for asserting itself as a pillar of global order in a post-American world.

Putin's war brought to light its geopolitical constructions sooner than China would have liked. Although China could have transitioned to a total market economy by the end of this decade, Putin's war has complicated

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[16] Jonathan Tepperman, "Putin in His Labyrinth: Alexander Gabuev on the View from Moscow," Substack newsletter, *The Octavian Report* (blog), March 14, 2022, https://octavian.substack.com/p/inside-the-bear-alexander-gabuev.

matters and made China nearly impossible to decouple itself from Western markets. China's ability to employ a corporate sector in Russia is quite limited.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine had the opposite effect, acting as a remarkable catalyst and bridge to the engagement of democratic societies. The new situation could overturn the thesis of the last ten years, according to which China was moving inexorably towards the status of a regional and global hegemon. On the other hand, the European stance regarding business with China is also unclear.

The war will weaken Russia, and a post-Putin era should find formulas for lifting Western sanctions. Historically, Moscow has predominantly developed its business with Europe, and Putin's successors will likely continue to do so. To maintain and carry out the three significant joint achievements, Xi Jinping will strive to save Vladimir Putin and by no means "throw him under the bus." The perpetuation of Vladimir Putin in power can provide the Chinese president with support in the ideological, economic, and military competition with the West.

On the other hand, a prolonged war does not put China at a disadvantage. Although it lacks the infrastructure and experience of a global hegemon, it will learn from this crisis, using it as a strategic opportunity. Protracted confrontation results in high costs on both sides of the conflict or on its sidelines, and once the war ends, Russia will be more dependent on China. Beijing signed lucrative energy deals with Russia after the invasion of Ukraine. The isolation of Russia by the West could boost bilateral economic relations with China, the condition being that Xi Jinping would save Putin.

In this dangerous game, China must not forget that it has weak leverage in containing the eccentricity displayed by Putin and that supporting Russia's effort to depreciate the European security environment has the consequence of a geopolitical boomerang effect.

While the old kingdom was established in the Atlantic, the competition for the new empire will take place in the Indo-Pacific. In this equation, the Black Sea is a geopolitical node and a critical variable in global geopolitical calculus. We will not assert that the war in Ukraine is about

China, but the fall of Russia will shatter circumstances for the so-called China-Russia "unlimited" partnership. Also, we might assist with the practical need for countering a global ideological threat shown by China and Russia together. Therefore, the Black Sea is somehow echoing broader efforts and the East-West greater power competition for recalibrating the international relations system.

This new geopolitical reality of great power competition diminishes the relevance of Russia because it does not have the tools and resources of a comprehensive player in the Pacific. For Putin, the window of opportunity is shrinking, and Russia's coercive potential vis-à-vis Europe will decline dramatically in the upcoming period.[17]

In idealistic terms, since Moscow is heading to geopolitical isolation, an acceptable option for China would be participating alongside international norms and searching for a win-win strategy with the West. Xi Jinping's global and regional hegemonic aspirations look more like a realist thought which will push China to collide with international law commitments and more comprehensive stability projections – a similar pattern followed by Putin, seasoned with boycotts, disapproval, and collective resistance.

Final Remarks

Increased instability in the Wider Black Sea Region, considering Ukraine, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova, will directly and in the long-term disturb NATO's eastern frontline allies - an issue Russia will use to question Europe's security in the future.

Even if the Europeans are characterized by strategic amnesia and do not draw proper lessons after the war in Ukraine, it is more critical that rationalism will prevail to preserve and innovate the international liberal order because actors' choices are determinants for power structuring. At the same time, value foundation is a mirroring behaviour. Cognitive, political,

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[17] Silviu Nate, "Russia's Real Goal Might Not Be Ukraine: A Takeover of Belarus?," The Heritage Foundation, February 11, 2022, https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/russias-real-goal-might-not-be-ukraine-takeover-belarus.

societal, inter-state, and global variables highlight the regional structural dynamics and processes.[18]

Even if we accept that Turkey continues to exert straits control as a critical pillar of its maritime security, land-to-sea, navy, and airpower supremacy must be achieved by NATO members in the Black Sea. While few EU members (some prominent members) show dependency on Russia, a successful Black Sea strategy is possible under the US leadership and US commitment to become a Black Sea Power. It may sound idealistic, but last year's American Congress hearings already suggested it.

On October, 27, 2021, hearings were held in the American Congress, Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation, entitled *Black Sea Security: Reviving US Policy Toward the Region*.[19] Two of the three American experts consulted consider that Romania must become a regional security hub. In this context, research is needed to address the challenges and mechanisms that will support the US policy in the region under the USA-Romania Strategic Partnership.

The NATO members will have to neutralize Putin's most dangerous weapons, establishing energy independence and security and adequate conventional and strategic deterrence. Designing a stable climate in the Black Sea requires creativity, long-term vision, and political will. Under the EU and US coordination through the Three Seas Initiative, the reconstruction of Ukraine and the interconnectivity through infrastructure and economy should be supported. Still, the neighbouring democratic regimes can also be strengthened.

Supporting the Republic of Moldova's objective accession to the EU comes with package advantages. Romania can provide the necessary expertise for its alignment with the Community acquis. Supporting Maia Sandu's administration has become a pan-European desire and direct

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[18] Stephen J. Andriole, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Gerald W Hopple, "A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Foreign Policy Behaviour," *International Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1975): 160–98.

[19] Foreign Relations Committee, "Black Sea Security: Reviving U.S. Policy Toward the Region," United States Senate Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation, October 27, 2021, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/black-sea-security-reviving-us-policy-toward-the-region102721.

interest in increasing stability in the region. The long-term gains are easy to see if the Republic of Moldova is supported to pursue its legitimate aspirations to join the European democratic functional core.

To be a geopolitical player, the European Union must be a force at home by reducing its strategic divergencies and vulnerabilities. The European Commission has tools to bring Serbia closer to the functional core of democracies and to support the reconstruction of Ukraine, including investing in new navigation canals that will connect the Black Sea with the global oceanic map and bring sustainable value to the European economy and security.

Beyond the accumulated historical imperial culture, France finally understood Russia's game and used the strategic opportunity, becoming a consistent military support in the Black Sea region. Through these efforts, Paris is gaining more political influence and favourable perceptions. President Macron's strategic engagement is based on a new kind of leadership where France scores essential points ahead of Germany – although it has accumulated great historical power, it has never managed a great empire. Will Germany learn from the Kremlin's malignant political performance that its European authority has been undermined? Berlin has the economic capacity to support and transform the European programs dedicated to the Black Sea region and the eastern neighbourhood into genuine geopolitical projects, pushing the EU into a consistent formula of *strategic power* alongside the US, UK, Canada, Norway, and other non-EU allies, thus complementing the European leadership projected by France.

The Black Sea highlights a complicated geopolitical landscape with hegemonic tendencies characterized by Russian imperialism, Turkish Ottomanism, mixed Anglo-American Western Atlanticism on the one hand, and Brussels-European on the other. We find ourselves on a map with disjointed perspectives and numerous failures resulting from different strategic cultures.

So, can we talk about a different strategic destiny of the Black Sea? Are there formulas for stabilizing the security environment?

One thing is sure, from a geographical standpoint Russia can never leave the Black Sea and has no way of doing so; geography would contradict

us, and the reality of political regimes in the region complicates the formulas for strategic improvement. For now, the only stabilization formula is possible through reliance on guarantors. Consequently, it would not be too much to say that the best option for the region's security would occur if the US decides to become a great power in the Black Sea and NATO and the EU become part of a strategic power equation winning. Without committing so, the US will accept that it is not a complete hegemon, and Russia will always frighten the whole of Europe from the Black Sea region.

While Russia has set its sights on disrupting the international system, becoming both an aggressor and a catalyst for increased security in Europe, the opportunity lies in creating a unified NATO-EU strategic culture to manage this challenge while committing to long-term efforts to implement the legitimate principle of the internationalization of the Black Sea.

For now, the ambition to redraw the European borders is reduced to a regional war, but because it will be difficult to accept defeat, a retaliatory policy with the medium-term direction of the entire arsenal of Russian intelligence services against Ukraine will most likely become the priority of the Kremlin. Until then, the bandit state strengthens itself by contracting even more; citizens' liberties will be confiscated to keep social discontent under control. A political implosion is not out of the question. Because the population has little power in changing the repressive regime, specific social segments, under the propaganda empire, will perceive the West as the main enemy. The salvation of Russia may come from the various circles of government power that may begin to push their plans, a challenging mission that will collide with elements of the power architecture around Putin.

A temporary pacification, without a systemic political change in the Kremlin, does not mean the elimination of aggression but its postponement in various forms until a new threshold of strategic opportunity is reached.

On December, 1, 1991, 92.3% of Ukrainian citizens at the polls approved the declaration of independence adopted by the Parliament of Ukraine on August 24, 1991.[20] To better understand this collective behaviour, 31 years ago, the overwhelming desire of the citizens of Ukraine was to reject

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[20] Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ukraine - Independent Ukraine," https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/Independent-Ukraine, last accessed September 6, 2022.

a draft treaty to recreate the Soviet Union. A Ukrainian victory against Russia would represent a paradigm shift for European security, similar to what happened in 1989 in Eastern Europe. The consequences could lead to the liberation of Belarus from dictatorship and the weakening of Moscow's influence over Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

If the Black Sea has temporarily become a refrain of the Iron Curtain, Ukraine's struggle is not only about its liberation but also the second liberation of Eastern Europe after 1991.

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The Consequences and Perspectives of the Russian War against the West in the Black Sea Region

Valentin Naumescu

Abstract. Russia is engaged in a conflict with the West, not only with Ukraine. To get back the sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and restore the Russian Empire at the limits of the Soviet extension, President Putin asked NATO to stop the "open doors policy," to guarantee that Ukraine will never be accepted in the Western world and to withdraw the Alliance's troops and military equipment to the pre-1997 alignments. On the south of the Eastern Flank, the Black Sea region represents, strategically speaking, what the Baltic Sea is for the north of the Eastern Flank.

Russia uses a large variety of conventional and hybrid war methods: exploiting gas dependency, increasing energy prices or ceasing delivery, cyber-attacks, disinformation, fuelling social and political instability in the countries of the region, using ethnic separatism as a weapon against sovereign states. The Black Sea area now takes centre stage in this conflict. This paper explores the consequences and perspectives of the Russian aggression in the region.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, invasion, Black Sea region, EU, NATO, USA.

Introduction. How this war became possible and why did the West tolerate the increasing aggressivity of the Putin's regime without a proper response?

Putin's war, or at least its narrative, has been prepared for years and years. He started with a huge anti-western propaganda and smaller aggressions in the Black Sea region, to test the reaction and firmness of the West. Blocking the westernization, democratization and liberalization of the post-Soviet European republics was an older idea that preceded the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The invasion of Georgia in August 2008 followed by the seizure of the provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, then the annexation of Crimea and the secessionist war in Donbas in 2014 were just preliminary tests in the much bigger project of restoring the empire. It is already commonplace to illustrate this dystopic project with the famous and controversial statement made by Vladimir Putin in 2005 in the Russian Parliament: "The dissolution of the Soviet Union represents the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."[1]

What is really surprising in this tragic story is the long naivety of the West, especially of the western European leaders. For more than 22 years, Vladimir Putin has been in power in Russia and all he did was to consolidate his dictatorship, to kill or imprison his opponents and to prepare militarily for this war of restoring the Russian empire in Eastern Europe. His lies are now worldwide famous. He said he is not interested in taking Crimea and he annexed Crimea. He said Russia had no plans to attack Georgia and he invaded Georgia. He said he would not invade Ukraine and he invaded Ukraine.

From Gerhard Schröder to Emmanuel Macron, there is a long list of European politicians from Germany, France, Italy, Austria etc. who failed to resist the temptation of believing that Putin's regime is a reasonable one and the West should keep doing normal business with Russia. US Presidents Obama and Trump also failed in having the "right reading" of Putin's real intentions. Only some of the political leaders and mainly the specialists in Central and Eastern Europe from Poland, Romania, the Baltic States, or the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood signalled frequently about the growing threat represented by Putin for Europe and the entire Western liberal order. Unfortunately, their political and academic signals, which can be now found in a long series of publications,[2] were ignored. Also ignored were the crimes, poisonings, imprisonments and executions of the Russian dissidents and

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[1] President of Russia, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation," April 25, 2005, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931.

[2] See, for example, Vitalie Ciobanu, Sabina Fati, Valentin Naumescu, Ioan Stanomir, Marian Voicu, *Vin Rusii! Cinci perspective asupra unei vecinătăți primejdioase* (The Russians Are Coming! Five Perspectives on a Dangerous Neighbourhood), Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018.

independent journalists such as Anna Politkovskaya in 2006, Boris Nemtsov in 2015, Alexei Navalny and many others.

An attempt to structure the reasons of this long period of naivety and illusions of the West in relation to the hidden agenda of the Putin regime leads us to the following possible causes for this political blindness and lack of significant reaction:

a. The massive *gas dependency* on Russia of some European economies such as Germany (approx. 50%), Austria (64%), Italy (46%), Finland (94%), Greece (51%)[3] etc.

b. The strong and profitable commercial, economic and investment *connections of the Western European economies with the Russian markets* and resources.

c. The tradition of the ambiguous, "two-faced" or rather *good political relations* with Moscow of Paris, Berlin, Rome, Vienna, Budapest etc.

d. The *disengagement of the USA from Europe* during Obama's and Trump's terms (January 2009 - January 2021).

e. The disinformation, the *populist illiberal wave*, the fake news campaigns and the pro-Russian propaganda conducted through social media networks in the past years.

f. The permanent *lies, cheating and disguise* of Putin's regime in relation to the West, which succeeded in creating the largely accepted illusion that Russia is not a real threat for the West, while only the "hysterical" Est-Europeans have something against a "friendly and peaceful" Russia.

These are the six main reasons why the West's vigilance was annihilated by the Russian regime in the past two decades.

The strategic and geopolitical place of the Black Sea region in the Russian war against the West

Because of its conflictual history, heterogenous culture and explosive geopolitics, the Black Sea region now takes centre stage in this war. In its

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[3] Statista Research Department, "Share of gas supply from Russia in Europe in 2021, by selected country," Statista, July 14, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/—1201743/—russian-gas-dependence-in-europe-by-country/.

coastal meaning, the Black Sea region means six countries: two of them are members of both the EU and NATO (Romania and Bulgaria), one is a NATO member and EU candidate (Turkey), and the remaining three are post-Soviet republics: the Russian Federation (hostile to both NATO and the EU) plus two Western oriented countries, of which one is an EU candidate (Ukraine) and the other one is associated[4] with the European Union (Georgia). From a quantitative perspective, it should be a clear pro-European region.

In its wider meaning, defined by the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the region has thirteen members: the six coastal states already mentioned plus Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to this geopolitical definition, the Black Sea wider area is a much larger space and rather balanced on the pro-West vs. pro-East dimension.

It is self-evident that such a heterogenous region, in its narrower or broader geopolitical definition, is a mosaic of very different cultures, religions, historic heritages, political traditions, social and educational models which are active in countries located from Central Europe to the Balkans, South-Caucasus, Middle East and even Asia.

The strategic importance of the Black Sea region was ignored in the West for a long period of time. Romania, for instance, started to signal since 2005 the growing relevance and the need to secure this region and to put more focus on Western policies and strategies because of the Russian threat. Older regional formats, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, established in 1992 in Istanbul, proved to be weak, ineffective, and "paralyzed" by Russia and Turkey.

The Black Sea Synergy, an EU initiative proposed by Romania in 2007 and officially adopted in 2008, was rather neglected and mitigated by the European Union, especially after the launch of the Eastern Partnership. *The Black Sea Forum* (2006) or the *NATO Black Sea Fleet* (2017-2018) are just two more Romanian projects in the past years, which did not convince the Western powers to get deeper involved in the region. Some regional cooperation or security projects covering the Black Sea region were indeed

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[4] In the sense of the Association Agreement.

more successful, but only when they referred to larger territories, such as *The Three Seas Initiative* (3SI) including the Central European EU member states located between the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea, and the *Bucharest 9 (B9)* format, with the NATO allies located on the Eastern Flank.

The Western awareness about the Black Sea region appeared only when it became evident that Russia had had an aggressive plan in the region for a long time. One could say *too little, too late* to prevent the war and protect Ukraine of being invaded. Even in February 2022, only a few days before Russia invaded Ukraine and started the war in Eastern Europe, President Macron paid a visit to Kremlin, declaring that he was ready to discuss with President Putin "a new European order of stability and security including Russia"[5] so that "Moscow would receive concrete security guarantees."[6] In November 2019, only two years and three months before Russia invaded Ukraine, Macron said that "NATO is experiencing brain death"[7] and it is obsolete, because the North-Atlantic alliance was founded during the Cold War and the Soviet Union did not exist anymore.

When he was Foreign Minister, the current President of Germany, the social-democrat Frank-Walter Steinmeier, pleaded in 2016 for the phasing-out of Russia sanctions after the annexation of Crimea: "Sanctions are not an end in themselves. They should rather give incentives for a change in behaviour. […] An all or nothing approach, even if it sounds good, doesn't work."[8] Steinmeier rejected criticism at the time that he was acting like an

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[5] Luana Pavaluca, "Emmanuel Macron, după 5 ore și jumătate de discuții cu Vladimir Putin: Rusia trebuie să primească garanții 'concrete' de Securitate" (Emmanuel Macron, after 5 Hours of Discussions with Putin: Russia Needs "Concrete" Security Guarantees), Digi 24, February 8, 2022, https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/emmanuel-macron-dupa-5-ore-si-jumatate-de-discutii-cu-vladimir-putin-rusia-trebuie-sa-primeasca-garantii-concrete-de-securitate-1830155.

[6] France 24, "As It happened: Key Takeaways from Macron's Diplomatic Mission to Moscow," February 7, 2022, https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220207-live-macron-in-moscow-in-push-for-diplomatic-solution-to-mounting-ukraine-crisis.

[7] Emmanuel Macron, quoted in *The Economist*, "Emmanuel Macron Warns Europe: NATO Is Becoming Brain-dead," November 7, 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe—2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead.

[8] Reuters Staff, "Germany's Steinmeier Favors Gradual Phasing-out of Russia Sanctions," Reuters, June 19, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-germany-steinmeier-idUSKCN0Z50AI.

"advocate for the Kremlin." However, in April 2022, he accepted that "it was a mistake, admitting Germany should have heeded earlier warnings from eastern European countries on Russian aggression."[9] Among Western democratic leaders, pro-Russian attitudes were also expressed by Austria and Italy. In the post-communist part of Europe, Hungary under the Orbán government remained the only pro-Russian EU member state and NATO ally, while Serbia under the Vucic regime continues to play a populist double-faced discourse, pretending to be both Russia and EU-oriented.

The consequences and perspectives of the war in the Black Sea region

Putin's War against the European security order has deep and long-term consequences in the Black Sea region. We expect to see major strategic, political, military, economic, energy, infrastructure developments and even social-cultural changes and clarifications in this space of frontiers, one way or another, in the next decades. Strategies, policies, and attitudes on both sides of the barricade will become bolder, more active, and more explicit oriented towards multiple dimensions of hard and soft *security.*

For obvious geopolitical reasons, the Black Sea region seems to remain for a long time a borderline between the West and Russia but also a crucial point of interference between the two rival worlds, between the integrated space of democratic and liberal values and the authoritarian, illiberal and revisionist systems.

Turkey, a key regional player, a NATO ally but also a frustrated anti-Western state, whose integration was refused by the EU, must decide which side will take on a long run. At the same time, there are strong signs that Ukraine, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova will come closer to the West, more precisely to the European Union. However, much of the future of the Black Sea region will depend on the result of the present war.

The consequences and perspectives of the war in this region can be structured on the following seven dimensions:

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9 Deutsche Welle, "German President Steinmeier Admits 'Mistakes' over Russia Policy," April 5, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/german-president-steinmeier-admits-mistakes-over-russia-policy/a-61362153.

a. *Strategic.* The US and NATO already decided to strengthen their presence on the South of the Eastern Flank while most of the coastal states in the Black Sea region will adopt measures to significantly reduce the influence and presence of Russian and Chinese companies, propaganda, or agents of influence. The "reinvention" of the transatlantic West, more than 30 years after the end of the Cold War, and the rapprochement between Russia and China could also have an impact on the global order, leading to a bipolar system centred on the USA (the West) and China (the Sino-Russian pole of revisionist powers).

b. *Political and doctrinal.* The war has deep political consequences and will induce turbulences both in the Western democracies and in the non-Western political systems, including in Russia, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Turkey, Israel, the Western Balkans, Kazakhstan, Central Asia etc. The politics and doctrines of most parties will not be the same after this war. Basically, all the countries neighbouring Russia or Ukraine will introduce adaptive changes in the public policies of their governments. The EU and NATO will also make structural changes and reforms in the aftermath of the war. Even China will have to address this conflict one way or another, and this will represent a challenge for the doctrine of the Chinese Communist Party, which is obviously anti-American and more recently anti-NATO, but which traditionally supports the principle of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

c. *Military.* The most evident and immediate consequences are the military ones. The establishment of four NATO battle groups in the South of the Eastern Flank (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia) and the transfer of about 10.000 troops and military capabilities in the region represent an important change of vision. The NATO Summit in June 2022 decided not only a new strategic concept, but also a substantial (rotational) military presence on the Eastern Flank, including the Black Sea region.

d. *Economic.* The sanctions imposed on Russia as well as the devastation of the Ukrainian economy and agriculture, and the caution approach

of the Western investors about making new plans in the Black Sea region could lead to a regional economic recession even deeper than the forecasted global one. A European, if not a global economic recession, is expected this year, due to increasing prices and inflation, possibly associated with a shortage of some agricultural commodities and turbulences in the food industry.

e. *Energy.* This is the field with the most substantial impact, having undergone, economic, industrial, and technological changes, and garnering substantial public interest in the past years and nowadays. Undoubtedly, the war and especially the sanctions against Russia will have a great impact on the energy sector. Among them, obtaining the energy independence of the EU in relation to the Russian gas and oil, as well as diversifying the suppliers of energy resources, are already recognized as strategic priorities in Europe for the following years.

f. *Infrastructure.* Not only the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, but most of the Black Sea regional infrastructure must be renewed and developed by the end of this decade. For example, the ports need terminals for LNG (liquified natural gas). The network of roads, motorways, bridges and railways needs to be extended. Better interconnections in the region will improve regional cooperation. A massive wave of public and private investments is expected after the end of the war.

g. *Cultural, social, education changes.* The war will leave deep and long-term traces. Education, mentalities, and cultural values will suffer a reset for at least two generations. Regardless of whether countries and societies on the Eastern Flank of NATO such as Romania, Poland, the Baltic States were already Russophobe or Russo-sceptic long before this war, the hostile feelings against Russia grew in the entire region, including of course the Black Sea area. There is no doubt that Ukrainians will hate Russia for at least two generations (parents and children affected by the invasion) until a total healing of the wounds and war crimes inflicted by Russia becomes possible. But countries who used to be "in between" or have rather moderate pro-

Western or neutral governments, such as Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova or even Turkey or Israel understood the situation and clarified their perceptions about what the real Russia is like. This perception and the memory of the war will be internalized and transmitted to the next generations as a deep cultural model in the wider region. On the other hand, the relations between countries which were in the past decades rather cold or reluctant, for example between Ukraine and Romania, have improved considerably and are likely to improve even further. The transformative experience of this war will impact the Black Sea region for a long time, and it will also connect the region with democratic Europe in deeper and more diverse forms. One essential question to be clarified in the future is *the profile of post-Putin Russia*.

In conclusion, the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the war crimes and atrocities perpetrated by the Russian troops, the persistent military threat and the entire aggression over the European post-1991 security order will create the conditions for a multilevel and multidimensional "reinvention" of the Black Sea region. The "Putinist" face of the old Russian imperialism made Russia a country without friends in this region and will drive other countries to improve their mutual and regional collaboration.

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Romanian Naval Forces, 160 Years of Excellence in the Maritime Domain. The Contribution of the Romanian Naval Forces to Ensuring Stability and Security in the Extended Region of the Black Sea

MIHAI PANAIT

Abstract. Defending Romania's maritime and riverine water borders was the basic idea behind the foundation of Romanian Naval Forces (RNF) 160 years ago. Nowadays, it remains one of its fundamental missions. The strategic turning point of joining NATO offered the RNF the opportunity to extend their responsibilities to fulfil Romania's commitments to the Alliance's common defence. Currently, when the security environment in the Black Sea region has been degraded to an armed conflict, RNF bring their contribution to defend, together with our allies and partners, our part of the Black Sea. Meeting the responsibilities of both national and Allied defence in the near future is possible only through the modernization of the Romanian Naval Forces.

Keywords: Romanian naval forces, Black Sea region, NATO, security, stability.

Introduction

With a coastline of 245 km, Romania holds an important place among the countries bordering the Black Sea, in terms of the size of the land area with access to the sea. The maritime area of responsibility of the Romanian Naval Forces covers about 30,000 sq. km, twice the size of the Dobrogea Region.[1] The area is rich in hydrocarbon resources and hosts critical Romanian

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[1] The Dobrogea Region is the land area limited by the Danube River in the West and North (including the Ukraine border at North), the land border with Bulgaria in the South and the Black Sea in the East.

infrastructures such as maritime oil and gas rigs and the pipelines for transport. On the Danube River, the Romanian Naval Forces are responsible for the 1.075 km, which represents 38% of the total length of the Danube, an important navigation route to the interior of the European continent.

Romania, as a European maritime country, a member of the European Union (EU) and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), asserted a recognized role in the geopolitical space of the Black Sea, according to its status.

Romanian Naval Forces

History

The development of the Romanian Navy began to take shape in 1859 with the unification of the Romanian Principalities, which led to the unification of the flotillas of the two sister countries, Moldavia and Wallachia, on October 22, 1860, under the name of the Flotilla Corps. After the Independence War, 1877-1878, Dobrogea returned to the mother country, which opened the access to the Black Sea and led to the formation of the maritime component of the Romanian Navy.

Role

The Romanian Naval Forces are the Armed Forces service designated to promote and defend the Romanian national interests and sovereign rights in the Black Sea and on the Danube River, independently, jointly, or part of a multinational force; moreover, the Romanian Naval Forces continue to be an active contributor and promoter of regional security and stability, as part of the different regional cooperation initiatives within the Extended Black Sea Region.

Missions and Tasks

In order to achieve the main designation, the Romanian Naval Forces must be able to fulfil the following missions and tasks:

- Protect the freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and on the Danube River;
- Repel any aggression from the sea or across the river;
- Participate in the Article 5 and Non-Article 5 operations alongside our Allies and partners;
- Support the national civil authorities in fighting against terrorism and illegal activities at sea;
- Conduct naval surveillance and early warning ashore, at sea, and on the river;
- Evacuate the Romanian citizens from conflict areas around the world;
- Participate in regional cooperation initiatives;
- Support the governmental organizations in case of natural disasters;
- Conduct search and rescue operations at sea and on the river.

Within the national chain of command, the Romanian Naval Forces are working jointly with the other services support commands; nonetheless, the Romanian Naval Forces are coordinating with the other national governmental organizations, directly or through the National Defence Staff.

Structure

The Naval Forces structure is organized on 4 pillars:
- The first pillar comprises the combat units - the backbone of our Naval Forces: the Fleet and the River Flotilla, together with their combat ships squadrons, as well as the combat support assets;
- The second pillar consists of specialized structures, directly subordinated to the Naval Forces Staff;
- The third pillar is represented by the logistic component, namely the Naval Logistics Base and the subordinated support units;
- The fourth pillar is represented by the naval education system, a pillar which provides an outstanding opportunity for our youngsters to join the Navy at an early stage.

Forces and Capabilities

In order to accomplish the assigned missions and tasks, the Naval Forces rely on the following combat assets:

- The Fleet, which coordinates the maritime assets such as frigates, corvettes, fast patrol boats, mine countermeasures ships, a minelayer, helicopters, and naval strike missiles;
- The River Flotilla with its outstanding firepower, consisting of river assets such as monitors, armoured boats, and patrol boats.

Additionally, the Naval Forces include specialized units like EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), SEAL-like teams (Sea-Air-Land), and deep-sea divers, together with their support ships, and, last but not least, a naval infantry regiment, capable of operating along the coast and in the Danube Delta.

Currently, the Romanian Naval Forces are continuing the tradition of defending the river and own maritime borders and contributing to the development of naval military diplomacy, wherever necessary, in accordance with our national interests. After Romania's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance in 2004, over 3.000 sailors from the Romanian Naval Forces have participated in missions and operations, both at sea and on land.

The contribution of the Romanian Naval Forces to stability and security in the extended region of the Black Sea and beyond

Based on the requirements of modern warfare and the current international geopolitical situation, the specifics of the naval force we design must meet the following criteria: efficient command and control, balanced force structure, interoperability, and appropriate infrastructure to adequately meet the requirements of counteracting modern warfare at sea, on the coast and in its depth.

As a state bordering the Black Sea, located near the insecurity zones and at the entrance of the main river transport axis between the Middle East and Western Europe, Romania must have a credible and well-structured naval force with a fighting power in accordance with its responsibilities at sea and on the river. In the context of the contemporary evolution of the

security environment, the maritime power of the country is a factor of vital importance, and the Romanian Naval Forces are its main pillar.

NATO missions in the extended region of the Black Sea

In the time frame 2005-2011 and in 2013 Romania has participated annually with a frigate (the frigates "Regele Ferdinand" and "Regina Maria") in the NATO Operation "Active Endeavour," the only NATO-collective defence Article 5 maritime operation, with the chief-objective to combat terrorism, detect and prevent terrorist actions in the Mediterranean Sea. In 2011, the Romanian Naval Forces participated in the NATO Operation "Unified Protector," with the frigate "Regele Ferdinand," mandated to impose arms embargo on Libya. That was the first real combat mission executed by a Romanian military ship after World War II. "During the mission, the frigate's crew rescued about 150 people in distress aboard a civilian boat, which was drifting in the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast."[2]

After the deterioration of the security situation in the Black Sea in 2014, the Romanian Naval Forces focused their main efforts on the missions and exercises in the Black Sea and ensured the presence of the fighting ships on sea and on the Danube River all year long. In 2017, the annual participation of Romanian military ships to Allied missions in the Mediterranean was resumed with the participation to the NATO Operation "Sea Guardian" (OSG), designed to monitor naval traffic and deter illegal actions on NATO's southern flank.

In 2020, a Romanian military ship assumed, for the first time in the history of the Romanian Armed Forces, the leadership of a NATO Standing Naval Force, which carried out, for six months, specific missions in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, last year, the minesweeper "Viceamiral Constantin Bălescu," the frigate "Regina Maria" and the minesweeper "Locotenent Lupu Dinescu" were involved in 5 deployments as part of the NATO Standing Naval Forces in the Black Sea, bringing a

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[2] https://seawaves.com/?p=14933, last access August 2022.

significant contribution of the Romanian Naval Forces to the development of the regional security climate, on the southern and eastern flank of NATO.

Missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo

In the theatres of land operations, the Romanian Naval Forces participated with naval infantry detachments in the KFOR (Kosovo Force) mission of the Multinational Peacekeeping Force - within Operation Joint Enterprise, in the west of Kosovo, between March 2008 and March 2009, as well as the NATO "Resolute Support" mission in Afghanistan, in 2019, for 6 months. In addition, between 2010-2020, about 100 combat divers (special operations forces) participated in NATO missions in the Afghanistan theatre of operations.

EU Missions

In 2012, the Romanian Naval Forces extended the contribution to international commitments, while participating with the frigate "Regele Ferdinand" in the EU Operation "Atalanta," fighting the naval piracy in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden, registering several premiers in the recent history of our country such as: participation in a combat operation with a Puma Naval helicopter on-board the frigate, night flights over the ocean, medical evacuation from sea to land, the annihilation of a suspect boat with the weapons on-board the helicopter, transiting the Suez Canal, crossing the Equator and participation in a real mission in the Southern Hemisphere, conducting missions of naval diplomacy in ports from Tanzania and Djibouti, to the Seychelles Islands and Israel.

In 2021, the minelayer "Vice Admiral Constantin Bălescu" (274), for a period of 3 months, was integrated into the permanent EU naval group in the Mediterranean and carried out missions to ensure compliance with the arms embargo imposed on Libya by the UN (United Nations Organization) and combating the illicit trafficking of petroleum products, drugs, and people, by monitoring maritime traffic and by carrying out inspections of suspicious vessels in the Mediterranean Sea.

During the three months of participation in the "IRINI" Operation, the minelayer 274 covered 10,000 nautical miles, during 1.200 hours of navigation, interrogated more than 230 commercial ships transiting the area of responsibility, executed 25 actions of the IMINT type (Imagery Intelligence – analysing the cargo of ships by means of photography), and ten of their visits were carried out to promote the values of the European Union and to raise awareness of the importance of regional maritime security.

The participation of the Romanian Naval Forces in the EUNAVFOR MED Operation "IRINI" contributes to the fulfilment of the objectives of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union, as well as to the improvement of the security situation in the Mediterranean Sea.

This is the second military ship of our country participating in an operation under the EU mandate, the first participation being recorded ten years ago, in 2012, as it has been highlighted above, with the participation of the "Regele Ferdinand" frigate in the EU Operation "Atalanta."

The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on training and educational activities

The COVID-19 pandemic affected many areas of activity specific to the Romanian Naval Forces, but the training and educational activities were resized and adapted to the new health context, and the Naval Forces command managed to identify optimal solutions for fulfilling the main missions and commitments to our allies and partners.

New operational procedures have been developed, adapted to the measures taken in order to prevent the spread and infection with the new coronavirus, which have been implemented on board ships, helicopters and in all Naval Forces structures, which has ensured the development and consolidation of personnel skills and streamlined the process of training.

The field of military naval education has also been adapted to the context of the health crisis, the educational process taking place mainly online, on e-learning platforms. A new master's degree programme was accredited at the Naval Academy "Mircea cel Bătrân," the action plan for the

time frame 2020-2025 was elaborated at the Navy Petty Officers School, and at the Naval Forces Training School were launched projects for the establishment of two simulators, one tactical and one for navigation.

Russia's aggression and the act of war against Ukraine. Implications to Black Sea, and Euro-Atlantic Security

Unfortunately, starting with the first part of 2022 the security situation in the extended Black Sea basin degraded, and the worst-case scenario happened. The frozen conflicts have turned into hot points in the zone and lately explosive in the world. "Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades, has shattered peace in Europe and is causing enormous human suffering and destruction."[3]

Against this background, the Romanian Naval Forces together with Romania's partners and allies are taking measures to constantly evaluate the situation, anticipate the evolutions that may occur, increase vigilance and prudence, but also act when the situation requires it.

"These actions have a more practical character starting with the middle of March when in the north-western part of the Black Sea - implicitly in the RNF area of responsibility, the threat of maritime mines was manifested."[4] Measures were immediately taken to establish, through the Maritime Hydrographic Directorate – the national authority in the field of hydrography, a system of lanes and routes recommended for the safe conduct of naval traffic in the area of responsibility. A plan for the systematic surveillance of these SLOC (Sea Lines of Communications) is also being carried out with naval and air combat capabilities of RNF as well as with the support of the structures from the national defence system. Romania's

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[3] Pierre Morcos, Luis Simon, "NATO and the South after Ukraine," Centre for Strategic International Studies, CSIS Briefs, May 9, 2022, https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-and-south-after-Ukraine.

[4] NATO, "Risk of Collateral Damage in the North Western, Western and Southwest Black Sea," September 12, 2022, https://shipping.nato.int/nsc/operations/news/-2022/risk-of-collateral-damage-in-the-north-western-black-sea-2.

partners and allies support this effort by balancing the statutory responsibilities with the security situation in the Black Sea.

Noteworthy is the action of the minelayer ship "Viceamiral Constantin Bălescu," which executed on March 28 an intervention for the destruction of a marine mine discovered at a distance of approximately 39 nautical miles across Cape Midia. The ship's crew and the EOD team – demining divers - conducted the mission safely using standard operating procedures to identify the type of mine and to carry out its destruction. This is an example that proves the level of training of sailors, their ability to react, and the capability of the RNF to carry out the missions received, ensuring in this case the SLOC for naval traffic in the area of responsibility.

Also, the EOD combat divers on the evening of Sunday, July 31, carried out a mission to neutralize and destroy a drifting sea mine at a distance of approximately 2 nautical miles (3.6 km) in the Romanian coast, across from the Eforie aria. "The Navy diving team began their mission and moved to the scene in two speedboats, where they applied standard operating procedures for such interventions. The military squadrons found that there was a YAM-type marine mine, which represents a danger for safe navigation in Romanian territorial waters,"[5] they transported the mine to a safe area and destroyed it by explosion.

"After the start of the unprovoked military aggression by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, on February 24, 2022, this was the second intervention of the Romanian Naval Forces for the destruction of a sea mine, which originates from the maritime districts of northern Romania, where it is carried out war actions."[6]

During this period, military actions have been carried out to survey the river communication routes and the infrastructure in the area of the Danube mouths with river naval combat capabilities and marine infantry structures belonging to the River Flotilla as well as with support structures of Logistic Naval Base (LNB).

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[5] Mihai Cistelican, "Floating Offshore Naval Mine Destroyed," Stiri pe surse, August 1, 2022, https://www.stiripesurse.ro/floating-offshore-naval-mine-destroyed_2494925.html.

[6] Andrei Chirileasa, "Naval Mine Found 3.6 Km from Romanian Shore," Romania Insider, August 1, 2022, https://www.romania-insider.com/mine-eforie-aug-2022.

Perspectives of Romanian Naval Forces' participation in international exercises and NATO/EU mission and operations

For the execution of Romania's defence missions, the Romanian Naval Forces traditionally organize, plan, and conduct a series of exercises such as SEA SHIELD, POSEIDON, EP MCM DIVE, SUMMER STORM and RIVERINE. Romanian Naval Forces are also participating in international exercises, such as BREEZE, SEA BREEZE, ARIADNE, NUSRET, DOGU AKDENIZ and BALTOPS, all of them being opportunities to build bridges between the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Taking in consideration the security situation in the area, part of these exercises organized and conducted by Romania or other partner countries have been cancelled or rescheduled, the effort being directed to the countering of local or regional security challenges.

In order to bring the Romanian contribution to NATO/EU missions and operations, the Romanian Naval Forces intend to participate in 2022 in the operations SEA GUARDIAN, IRINI and in the activation of the NATO Standing Naval Forces, maintaining a balance between the contribution to both NATO and EU operations. The reserve of the priority of ensuring national defence responsibilities first is maintained too.

Conclusions

The fulfilment of the commitments assumed towards our partners in the North Atlantic Alliance depends to a large extent on the modernization of the Romanian Naval Forces, according to the multi-annual development projection, on the endowment with ships, battle platforms and new equipment, as well as on the development, without syncope, of the overhaul and modernization programs. The modernization of the Romanian Naval Forces will have beneficial effects, not only on the development of our capabilities to counter any threat to national security but will also strengthen personnel morale and increase the attractiveness of the military sailor profession and the interest of young Romanians towards it.

As a concluding remark, to the quote of a former Romanian prime-minister, M. Kogălniceanu, who said that "the key for our redemption is the road paved by the Danube River to the open sea," underlines the importance of developing the maritime and riverine conscience of the Romanian citizens and Romania's state institutions.

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The Hybrid Design of the New World Order:
A Black Sea View

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Abstract. The war in Ukraine is reconfiguring maps and redrawing the global order. We are already living through a remaking of the current global order, and Russia's imperialist designs are accelerating the manifestation dynamics of this paradigm. The main global aims of the Russian Federation refer to a substantial calibration of its capacity to influence major world decisions.

In Moscow's view, the principal explicit objective of the new global order is to dismantle the hegemonic power of the West/the US and to put an end to the "unipolar model of American hegemony". This is the underpinning that drives the circulation of this ideology in both the cabinets and the underground of Kremlin's decision-makers. In the absence of this dictum, the ideological foundation of their own vision is still rudimentary and confusing.

In the worst case scenario, the Black Sea region could play the part of a platform from which Russia could spring back into the great global geopolitical game and manifest its growing influence in designing the new global order, according to its own strategy underlying the outbreak of its current war against Ukraine and the West. The opposite, best-case scenario (in which the Russian Federation is defeated in the war and the West maintains a la longue its political, geopolitical, economic, technical and military support, even perhaps until the 2014 border between Russia and Ukraine is restored), would be tantamount to a substantial diminishing in Russia's geopolitical place in the world, an even greater geopolitical tsunami for the Russian Federation than the fall of the USSR.

The paradigm of rebuilding the new world order will take some time still to emerge, and its dynamics will not bring about a swift conclusion. What is certain is that Russia will no longer occupy an ambiguous place in it: it will either dominate it (together with the US and China) or be absent from it altogether.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, global order, hybrid warfare, Black Sea region.

The paradigm of rebuilding the new global order is accelerating

Regardless of its outcome, duration or scope, it is already certain the War in Ukraine is reconfiguring maps and redrawing the world order.

We are already living through a remaking of the current world order, a paradigm pronounced theoretically and in many other ways by al global actors in the years preceding the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine. Russia's imperialistic designs are accelerating the manifestation dynamics of this paradigm.

This war has at least three components: a local one, meant to destroy Ukraine's geopolitical potential; a regional one, to prevent the West from moving its infrastructure to the East, and a global one, to reposition the Russia Federation on the global stage, redefine its role and remake the current world order.[1]

It seems that the Russian Federation's global priorities refer to a substantial recalibration of its capacity to influence major world decisions,[2]

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[1] "Putin has a personal need to secure his presumed role in the great history of the Russian Federation. And now Vladimir Putin is facing the biological imperative of exiting his own life and the great history of the Russian Federation without a notable project. After the fall of the USSR, he wants to restart a Russian hegemonic project. These are the causes behind Putin's decision to rethink a territorial and geopolitical expansion project, a war to redraw the world order directed against the current international law order, a war against the supremacy and world hegemony of the US, a war to bring the Russian Federation back into the foreground of global affairs." Ioan-Radu Gava, "Începutul sfârșitului pentru Rusia. Dorin Popescu: Putin a fost mințit la fel ca Nicolae Ceausescu. A crezut ca lumea i se va inchina la picioare" (The Beginning of the End for Russia. Dorin Popescu: Putin Was Lied to, Just like Nicolae Ceausescu. He Thought the World Would Bow at His Feet), DC News, March 25, 2022, https://www.dcnews.ro/inceputul-sfarsitului-pentru-rusia-dorin-popescu-putin-a-fost-mintit-la-fel-ca-nicolae-ceausescu-a-crezut-ca-lumea-i-se-va-inchina-la-picioare_863493.html.

[2] "Moscow thus aims at reviving an imperialist geopolitical project, the USSR 2.0 project, whose main role is to create additional global control and influence tools, to flex its geopolitical muscles. Ukraine is merely the theatre for conventional operations of this hybrid war; a first theatre of operations in a series of victims on the shortlist, in Putin's nightstand drawer." Dorin Popescu, "URSS 2.0 – ieșirea din scenă și din istorie," (USSR 2.0

one that could be based on: the rebuilding of its imperialistic power and influence in a wide area that used to belong to the former USSR (in the form of not only a post-imperial project, but also a neo-imperial one, such as USSR 2.0), particularly in its near abroad;[3] undermining the Western hegemony, especially that of the US, through any means available; consolidating its ideological rapport and cooperation with relevant global actors with a similar anti-American outlook, such as China;[4] completing the process of creating a global power pole with countries belonging to the current non-aligned movement that does not fit into the power competition between the US and China and would regard and acknowledge Russia as the decision-making centre of such a pole, agreeing to act as satellites in Moscow's hegemonic project.[5]

In Moscow's view, it seems that the main explicit aim of the new global order, is to dismantle the hegemonic power of the West/the US and to bring an end to the "unipolar model of American hegemony." This is obsession that ensures the circulation of this ideology both in the Kremlin decision-makers' cabinets and underground world.[6] The Russian Federation

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– Exiting the Stage and History), Spotmedia.ro, March 23, 2022, https://spotmedia.ro/stiri/opinii-si-analize/urss-2-0-iesirea-din-scena-si-din-istorie.

[3] With the help of two primary and complementary tools: the de facto occupation of new territories and, respectively, bringing others into its own geopolitical sphere and to a state of geopolitical vassals. In this sense, Moscow is using a wide array of means, from the mirage of the Russian world to energy blackmail, from favours to reprisals; one of its preferred tools is the method of using the Russian nationals living in neighbouring countries to fulfill its territorial ambitions, according to the political action algorithms described by Agnia Grigas in *Crimeea și noul imperiu Rus* (Crimea and the New Russian Empire), Bucharest: Corint, 2022, revised and expanded edition.

[4] China's interest in a "multipolar" world in which the global influence of the US is reduced could represent an avenue for a strategic Russian-Chinese cooperation.

[5] The idea of the Russian Federation taking over the specific role of coordinating, leading and controlling a wider power pole (that would attract the state actors who are frustrated by the domination of the China-US binome and who do not belong to either of the pro-US or pro-China camps of the current binome) is one that points to the impossibility of the Russian Federation to autonomously develop great power capabilities; the Russian Federation could thus become a great power once more, a relevant political actor, exclusively in the role of centre/nucleus of this power pole (modelled on the USSR, whose integrated strength was considerably augmented by its geopolitical satellites).

[6] To exemplify, we would like to quote a fragment from president Vladimir Putin's address to the participants of the Sankt Petersburg International Legal Forum, the 10th edition, June

opposes the Western view of the world based on rules and norms, a view promoted by the West (the US, NATO, the EU) and the liberal democratic model, also endorsed by the West. Russia puts forward a competing view to the two complementary outlooks, on a strictly theoretical level, namely a world based on laws[7] and, respectively, the freedom of states to choose their own model of development (not necessarily a liberal one).[8]

Apart from this obsession, the ideological construction of its own vision is still rudimentary and confused. Rhetorically, Moscow puts forward concepts that it directly violates, such as the indivisibility of collective security or the freedom to choose one's own path to development, a notion

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30, 2022: "It is true, a multipolar system of international relations is now being formed. It is an irreversible process; it is happening before our eyes and is objective in nature. The position of Russia and many other countries is that this democratic, more just world order should be built on the basis of mutual respect and trust, and, of course, on the generally accepted principles of international law and the UN Charter. Some states are not ready to accept losing their supremacy on the international stage, and they are striving to preserve the unjust unipolar model. Under the guise of what they call order based on rules, and other questionable concepts, they try to control and direct global processes at their own discretion, and hold to a course of creating closed blocs and coalitions that make decisions for the benefit of one country, the United States of America. The natural rights of others in international relations are being ignored; the fundamental principle of indivisibility of security is being used selectively. The West's unilateral, illegitimate sanctions against sovereign states have reached an unprecedented scale. In sum, the domination of one country or a group of countries on the global stage is not only counter-productive, but also dangerous and inevitably creates global, systemic risk. The multipolar world of the 21st century does not have a place for inequality or for discrimination against states and peoples. Therefore, our country speaks for the practical realization of the pivotal international legal principle of the sovereign equality of states and the right of each state to pursue its own development model. The Russian foreign affairs agenda has always been and remains constructive. We develop multipolar relations with all who are interested in them and place great value on cooperation within the UN, the G20, BRICS, the SCO and other associations. President of Russia, "Address to the Participants of the 10th St Petersburg International Legal Forum," June 30, 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/68785.

[7] *A world based on rules/norms* (the US, the EU) vs. *a world based on laws* (The Russian Federation, China, etc.).

[8] While the West emphasizes the democracies vs. autocracies dichotomy, Moscow promotes the dichotomy between the liberal model of development vs. one's own model of development, hypocritically highlighting, of course, the virtues of the latter, namely the freedom every state to decide for itself while, in practice, it directly and barbarically violates the right of neighbouring countries to have their own geopolitical options.

that denotes or explicitly confirms the cynicism of Russian foreign policy (while it endorses this concept, Moscow is using tanks and rockets to stifle Ukraine's freedom to independently choose its own geopolitical design, its own model of development, at the same time threatening other neighbouring states with the prospect of similar punitive military interventions – as in the case of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova).[9]

The Black Sea between two paradigmatic scenarios

The Russian military invasion of Ukraine is redrawing maps and new geopolitical realities, announcing a new world order which comes after three decades of geopolitical calm, and the Black Sea is both de jure and de facto regaining its strategic relevance.[10] In the Black Sea region, the new distribution of forces can be briefly anticipated as follows:

The active phase of the war is surreptitiously moving towards the west of the southern flank. Lately, it has become certain that the city of Odessa is on the list of Russian Federation targets that are to be attacked, occupied and annexed by Moscow. There are several credibly clues in this regard. The fact that the Russian army has gone around the cities of Nikolaev and Odessa does not fit into the "Russian style" from the perspective of a future Russian political and administrative frontier in the western Herson region – the Kremlin cannot abandon such important cities in the immediate neighbourhood of its future south-western administrative frontier (the Western Herson region) and will expand (when and if the dynamic of the front will allow it, most likely in a future active conflict phase, which could

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[9] Evidently, Moscow seems willing to "protect" the right to choose one's own development path only for states who would manifest their "willingness" to see Moscow as a guarantor of this model – in other words, only for its vassals and geopolitical satellites.

[10] "Acknowledging the strategic importance of the Black Sea means a certain positioning of the West regarding the conflicts and the regional security order, as well as a confirmation of the validity of Romania's foreign policy assessments since 2005. The Black Sea now occupies a central position on NATO maps and will stay that way for a long time:, argues Valentin Naumescu in his essay entitled "Atunci când iluziile se sfârşesc: noul NATO în noua lume a confruntării" (When Illusions End: the New NATO in a New World in Conflict), Spotmedia.ro, June 30, 2022, https://spotmedia.ro/stiri/opinii-si-analize/atunci-cand-iluziile-se-sfarsesc-noul-nato-in-noua-lume-a-confruntarii.

occur in a few months' or a few years' time) the current southern front towards Nikolaev and Odessa, as soon as it has the necessary resources and will be able to create some specific opportunities. Therefore, in the coming weeks or months,[11] the Russian Federation is expected to attempt to completely cut off Ukraine's access to the Azov and Black Seas in the long run, occupying (again, in the medium or long run) a significant territory in the form of a land corridor, from the Donbass to Romania's south-eastern border and the Republic of Moldova, a territory that completely or partially includes the regions of Lugansk, Donetsk, Zaporozhe, Herson, Crimea, Nikolaev and Odessa (*Novorussia*).

In this scenario, the Black Sea would de facto become a Russian lake. The future Russian frontier in the region, even without international recognition, would directly border Romania/NATO, as a result of the anticipated military Russian push towards Nikolaev, Odessa, Bugeac, with or without annexing or occupying territories belonging to the Republic of Moldova and completing the land bridge with the Transnistria separatist entity in the Republic of Moldova.

Imposing an expanded Russian frontier on this side of the Black Sea's northern flank will exponentially multiply Russia's territorial presence in the region and will create the premise for long-term Russian militarisation following the Crimea model. In this scenario, in the medium and long run, one can estimate a considerable consolidation of the Black Sea fleet and permanent tensions in the current regional security environment. In the short run, Moscow will impose its forcible military, political and administrative control in the occupied territories in southern and south-eastern Ukraine, all along the narrow strip of land near the Romanian border towards Donbass, thus creating in these territories a model of subordination similar to the one existing in the occupied Donbass, which Russia has implemented in those captured territories since 2014.

According to this scenario, Russia will exert its long-term military, political and administrative control over this territory which represents the de facto core of the infamous Novorussia project, whose implementation Moscow has long prepared.

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[11] A few months or a few years.

Still according to this scenario, in the short term, the Russian Federation's force and capacity for action will rapidly diminish, considering the significant war effort that Russia is expending to being about the Novorussia project. On the other hand, in the medium and long runs, this project (namely, the consolidation of the occupation methods in those territories) will become a priority for Russia's foreign policy, thus becoming the existential project upon which Russia's future global role depends.

In the long run, Ukraine will represent a much more complicated territorial issue than the Donbass one. According to the worst case scenario, the current occupied territories will have an unclear legal status for several decades (most of them will be annexed by Russia, even though the international community will refuse to acknowledge this fact), and Ukraine will make it a priority to attempt to liberate them in a hybrid war scenario a la longue, a kind of expanded Donbass. Ukraine's military and economic strength would rapidly decline in this case. Ukraine would lose its sea access, as well as its navy and would no longer avail itself of the resources and export infrastructure for its products that sea lanes now provide. Ukraine's economy would shrink considerably. On the other hand, the two countries, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, would engage in a permanent conflict over these territories and would spend significant domestic resources to equip their troops with arms and combat technology means to give them an edge for reprising direct military hostilities when the circumstances become allow for this.

In the medium and long runs, NATO will consolidate its defensive infrastructure on the territories of the Black Sea members (Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey). NATO's military presence in these states will become a solid and permanent one. Romania's role in the region will considerably increase, while the direct and indirect threats against it and NATO will also increase and become permanent, since a militarised and hostile Russia will be close to the direct Romania/NATO border.

Turkey and Bulgaria will continue to dwell in a moderate paradigm of fulfilling their specific roles as NATO members in a region characterised by a significant degree of geopolitical turbulence, however, as the pressure from the US, the EU and NATO will increase in these countries, Bulgaria is

expected to rally to the NATO vision concerning the provision of regional security in the new context, and Turkey is likely to become a permanent mediator and facilitator in the Russian-Euroatlantic dialogue, as least for as long as Erdoğan continues to be president.

In this scenario, the Black Sea region could become what I have long anticipated – not only a testing ground for the new world order, but also a region where this is experienced. The region will become, in a tense and unstable area, the expression of a new world order within a paradigmatic regional model and, moreover, it will turn into a nucleus generating international relations policies and structures that will play out for a long time among the main global and regional actors involved in the region (the Russian Federation, the US, the EU, NATO, the Black Sea countries and, by extension, China).

In this scenario (in which the Russian Federation de facto occupies large territories in southern and south-eastern Ukraine) in the medium and long runs, the Black Sea region could become once more a platform from which Russia could launch itself into the great world geopolitical game, with a growing influence in drawing the new world order according to its own strategy that also underlined the current war against Ukraine and the West.

In equal measure, the opposite scenario (a defeat of the Russian Federation in the war, based on maintaining a la longue the political, geopolitical, economic, technical and military support of the West, which would allow for the liberation of occupied territories and the withdrawal of the Russian army from this region, perhaps even the reestablishment of the 2014 frontier between Russia and Ukraine) would be tantamount to a substantial decline in Russia's global geopolitical role, an even greater geopolitical tsunami for the Russian Federation than the fall of the USSR.[12]

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[12] "This war reduces massively and irreversibly Russia's role in the current contemporary world, in the medium and long runs it weakens its potential to express itself plenary in the world and significantly diminished its chances to function as the centre of the Russian world and to catalyse alliances and partners in its attempt to sabotage the current world order." Popescu, "USSR 2.0."

The Russian Matryoshka at the Black Sea. "Putin after Putin"

In the classic Russian civilisation model, the Matryoshka tells a story. Its pieces are parts or episodes in a story. In the case of an authentic and superior quality Matryoshka, the story is an initiatic or traditionalist one, inspired by the canon of great Russian story tellers, such as Pushkin.

Putin claims to love Pushkin, even though he sleeps with Machiavelli's books under his pillow. Putin believes in the intiatic virtues of Pushkin's stories and used them, by reinventing them, in order to keep an entire country captive, a nation whose collective mindset was shaped by these stories.

Putin has reinvented the traditional Russian Matryoshka. Today, the Matryoshka no longer tells a story, but a narrative. More precisely, a series of narratives, like a serial detective novel. In order to reach the Matryoshka's essence, its secret code, one needs to remove its pieces one by one.

In the Ukraine war, one single piece of this huge symbolic Matryoshka was written. A single piece was removed. And now, we are trying to read what other surprises lie concealed in the Matryoshka's corset. We do not know what surprises Putin's Matryoshka is hiding and least of all what its last piece, the finale, looks like.

However, there are some certainties in Russia's war against Ukraine that I would like to briefly present in order to sum up the first months of the Ukraine war and, at the same time, to put forward a few analytical hypotheses I consider significant.

Russia has prepared itself for a long-term war with the collective West, which could evolve according to several scenarios. The first objective seems to have been creating an ambitious geopolitical project modelled after the USSR 2.0. Personally, Putin needs a grand project similar in scope to the Russian tsars' wars. Overall, the Russian society is ready to stand behind such a project. The Russian elites expect this project to be carried out at any cost. The collective Russian desire to support an imperialist country project is substantial, beyond our little wish lists or the inflated figures of opinion polls. In the last 30 years, Russia has lived without the country project that has fuelled the history of its last century. This is not merely a project imposed by propaganda trolls or the decrees of Tsar Putin. This is a project that a

substantial majority of both Moscow's political circles and ordinary Russians expect.

Every day, the Russian propaganda machine trumpets the same song. Allow me to quote: *The motherland is in danger. Hannibal ante portas. The Collective West wants to erase Russia from the world. The US are leading the devil's orchestra.* The Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov recently declared that the Collective West is carrying out a military, political, geopolitical, economic, cultural and informational war against Russia, and this threat is an existential one for Russia. Russia is forced to defend itself and it will do so to the last soldier. In Ukraine, Russia is defending its own right to exist.

Ordinary Russians live a life in which they are ideologically fed Russia's messianic myths. Their vast majority think that the survival of the Russian Empire is more important than their small individual joys. Russia is ready for sacrifices. For the first time in the last eight decades, someone is giving them a paradigmatic project on the same scale as the one for which their grandparents died. Someone is asking them for the sacrifice for which they have long been prepared.

We need to understand that, beyond Ukraine's eastern frontier, a new world begins. Until recently, this world started at Ukraine's western frontier. Ukraine's European project has moved the mental border between Europe and Russia. The Russian world is populated daily by thousands of Putins, but only one of them seems dangerous to the West. The system has built a pyramid of power that can be climbed only by political soldiers who believe in Russia's messianic role.

Russia is used to living in the "Putin after Putin" paradigm. The other political soldiers are insignificant. The others are living in the 21st century. The others are escaping to Europe. The others are living in prisons. The others are committing suicide. Russia is now experiencing a suicide frenzy. It seems that more and more Russians have issues with their lives, they no longer understand or love their own existence (sic!)

From this perspective, Russia will continue to be a long-term threat for the West, and the borders between the two worlds will rapidly turn into trenches under our very eyes. Beyond these trenches, Russia will prepare new wars as soon as it is done with this one. Beyond these trenches, new

Putins will reinvent Matryoshka dols for the new wars. There are two major topics for debate in this paradigm.

The first one: what counter-project the West will build[13] as a reaction against the Russian mindset that rejects modernity and prepares, beyond the borders between the two worlds, new imperialist military projects.

The second: how can we repair what Russia destroyed during this war.

It is clear that Russia is prepared to stay in Crimea militarily, politically and administratively (even if partially) in the regions of Herson, Zaporozhe, Donetsk, Lugansk, even Kharkov. Every passing day will consolidate its control over these regions. Each passing day brings these occupied territories closer to annexation.

Russia does not seem to have major problems in providing human and logistic resources to keep these territories under its control. When it start having human resource issues, it will being in soldiers from the Far East. Russia is prepared for a long-term sanctions war. If these persist, it will move its own markets in Asia. A fairly large world is still waiting for the reconfiguration of these markets. The contours of this word are already clear – Asia, Africa, Latin America. There are 24 plus 58 countries who voted against excluding Russia from the UN Council on Human Rights or abstained from voting. These 82 countries who voted against or abstained form the core of the new Russian project to reshape the world order.

We do not know what resources Ukraine still has to carry out a war to liberate these territories. And it will be very difficult to build a new Western cohesion around the project of supporting the recovery of these

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[13] "Ukraine and Taiwan are the litmus tests for the changing of world order. They demonstrate how the system of Western security guarantees and America's world supremacy are being tested. The shape and essence of the world in which we will live in the coming decades depends upon the way in which the US and the Est will be able to manage both efficiently and justly the expansionist demands of Eastern illiberal regimes, as well as on how liberal democracies, the EU, NATO and the global security order will survive in a logic of liberal, democratic values and the international law, punishing the aggressors or will disappear through petty calculations of compromising with the aggressors (since we are also talking about a rather serious economic crisis. In either case, the illusions of continuous and guaranteed progress that perpetuates itself, are over. We are now entering the era of great paradigmatic confrontations." Naumescu, "When Illusions End."

territories by Ukraine, especially considering that the current cohesive project required the isolation of a few impertinent, rebel voices in Europe. These voices could grow in number and tone as the effects of the war will advance on to the West, atop armoured tanks or not.

The eight years of attempts to recover Donbass have resulted in the current war. To recover the current occupied territories in Ukraine, more is needed, namely a massive Western project. As soon as the active phase of the war is over, the project of rebuilding Ukraine's territorial integrity will begin. This will be a long, complicated and costly project. It will be turbulent and hybrid.

There will be no peace in this part of the world for decades. The paradigm of rebuilding the new world order will take some time still,[14] and its dynamic will not bring about a rapid conclusion. What is certain is that Russia will no longer have an ambiguous position in this new world order: it will either dominate it (together with the US and China) or be absent from it altogether.

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[14] According to the scenarios for the evolution of the war in Ukraine and the analysis of its short, medium and long-term consequences formulated by Valentin Naumescu, there is also the prospect of a long-term war: "What will be the final alternatives in the case of a very long war? Either Russia's political, economic and military decline and the cultural end of Russia's imperial idea, perhaps even the disintegration of the Russian Federation (as some historians predict) or the de facto fall of Ukraine, if the West puts an end to its financial and military aid, in which case this will be followed by the Republic of Moldova or, even worse, a clash with NATO and the dismantling of the EU if some countries refuse to continue sanctions against Russia or if they come to be dominated by the populist, nationalist and sovereigntist exploitation of growing discontent within European societies. The longer the war lasts, the more devastating will be its denouement for the losers." Valentin Naumescu, "Rusia lui Putin trăiește, la un secol distanță, delirul imperialist al Germaniei naziste. Ce poate urma," (Putin's Russia Is Living through Nazi Germany's Imperialist Delusion, One Century Later. What Could Come Next), Spotmedia.ro, August 27, 2022, https://spotmedia.ro/stiri/opinii-si-analize/rusia-lui-putin-traieste-la-un-secol-distanta-delirul-imperialist-al-germaniei-naziste-ce-poate-urma

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The Black Sea Region
as a Zone of Irreconcilable Strategic Interests

NATALIA STERCUL

Abstract. The expansion of Russia's Black Sea security presence over the last decade and the modernization of its armed forces are part of a long-term strategy by Moscow to assert control across the region. The Russian foreign policy strategic direction is struggling to internalize new conflict configurations and the dynamics of confrontation with the West in this vast and complex area. Today the main results of the Russian revisionist policy and main consequences of its irreconcilable strategic interests on the Black Sea are evident. The Russian full-scale war against Ukraine has a significant impact on the concerns about increasing risks for the Black Sea security in the broadest sense, including military challenges, secure trade and travel, as well as agricultural exports to the global market. According to the new 2022 Russian Naval Doctrine, the Black Sea is an important zone for Russia's maritime security. In these new, dramatic conditions a lot depends on how long the war will last, on the efficiency of the Ukrainian resistance and on the future of security cooperation based on the new western strategy for the Black Sea region as opposed to the strategic objectives of Russia's maritime ambitions.

Keywords: geopolitical competition, irreconcilable strategic interests, Black Sea region, revisionist policy, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, maritime doctrine, regional security.

The Black Sea region is the place of convergence of different civilizations, religions and cultures that has become a heterogeneous contact zone from a civilizational and geographic point of view, a so-called geopolitical and geostrategic region throughout history, as it represents the transit zone between the East and the West, between the north and the south

as well. At the same time, this region has become the important boundary between the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War. The concern of Moscow over the expansion of NATO to its borders has led to a new tension in the region. The events that have taken place over the past decade of the new century show the desire of Russia to defend its geopolitical interests at any costs. Defending "traditional values" in the face of the "decadence" of Western mores to which Russia resorted along Westphalian lines, has become an integral part of the Russian foreign policy. Gradually the nature of Russian power has become more and more authoritarian and increasingly repressive. The Kremlin's use of such categories as non-interference, influence sharing, zero-sum territorial disputes, military power, and the action of secret services have contributed considerably to the escalation of the tensions between the West and Russia over the last years. The 2014 annexation of Crimea and the subsequent military build-up on the peninsula, as well as the incursions into Donbas, marked the crystallisation of a Russian Black Sea security strategy.

The aim of this article is to analyse the main consequences of irreconcilable strategic interests in the Black Sea Region as a result of the geopolitical competition among great powers for the control over the territory of the Black Sea region. The war is already seriously affecting the whole Black Sea region, as well as regional and European security, and requires carefully calibrated policies from the part of the regional and international players in order to prevent Russia's dominance in the Black Sea.

The combination of the different approaches and scientific methods in this research, in particular the systemic approach, the structural and functional approach, chronological order, as well as general scientific methods, will allow us to trace the re-balance of the Black Sea region, the militarization process of the region before Russia's invasion of Ukraine and to construct scenarios of the future development of the Black Sea security in the near future.

The re-balancing of the Black Sea Region

The strategic significance of the Black Sea region has always been of particular interest among scientific researchers, representatives of the expert

community, political leaders with a focus on the geopolitics of the Black Sea, geopolitical competition among great powers for control over the territory of the region, natural resources, important geographic positions or places such as ports, canals, river systems. The central question was how to achieve the balance between the regional actors and western actors. One of Russia's most important goals is to prevent players from outside the region from dominating the region and re-balancing it. From the military point of view, Russia considers NATO, Georgia and Ukraine as participants seeking to change the balance in the region.

Russia had an advantage in the Black Sea from the start. Prior to 2014, both countries maintained naval fleets in Crimea under a treaty signed in the 1990s. When Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces annexed the Crimean Peninsula, they also took over about 75 percent of Ukraine's fleet.[1] After 2014 primary attention was paid to the significance of Russia's militarization of Crimea. The annexation of Crimea not only strengthened the Russian presence in the Black Sea, but also made it possible to control the whole of Ukraine and the Sea of Azov, and the Kerch Strait.[2] The number of Russian soldiers stationed in Crimea has doubled, same as the number of Russian ships stationing on the peninsula. Thus, Russia strengthened its direct contacts with separatist forces in eastern Ukraine and completely eliminated the impact of Ukraine in the region.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine as a consequence of irreconcilable strategic interests in the Black Sea Region

Russia was expanding its missile capabilities. Radars deployed in Crimea allow Russia to identify targets in the entire Black Sea area. Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine did not have and do not have

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[1] Megan Eckstein, "After 2014 Decimation, Ukrainian Navy Rebuilds to Fend off Russia," *Defense News*, August 9, 2021, https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2021/08/09/after-2014-decimation-ukrainian-navy-rebuilds-to-fend-off-russia/.

[2] Adilbek Yermekbayev, A. Khairuldayeva, Zh. Medetkhanov, "Russia's Geopolitics in the Black Sea Region," *Bulletin of KazNU. Series International Relations and International Law* 92 no. 4 (2020): 13-21, https://doi.org/10.26577/IRILJ.2020.v92.i4.02.

sufficient missile and naval forces to counterbalance the Russian advantage. While the potential of the Turkish navy is comparable to that of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Russia's missile systems can reduce its effectiveness, because Turkey does not have similar missile capacities. The Ukrainian navy has been almost deprived of its ability to perform tasks beyond the defence of the western coastline after Russia took most of its ships in 2014. The key features of the Black Sea theatre have changed drastically in the last years, and Russian strategic culture is struggling to internalize new conflict configurations and the dynamics of confrontation with the West in this vast and complex area. Moscow has sought to maximize the advantages of establishing dominance at the core of this theatre, which was secured by the annexation and fortification of Crimea by courting Turkey, interfering with NATO exercises, and blocking the Kerch Strait for Ukrainian ships.[3] All these have created such conditions that today Black Sea is a zone of irreconcilable strategic interests.

The Russian revisionist policy designed to rethink foreign policy and improve its own role in world policy has become a direct threat to the security of the Black Sea region and has led to a change in the European security architecture. The changed landscape of inter-state interaction within the Black Sea region has reignited questions pertaining to ensuring and maintaining security, including strengthening the military potential of states in light of asymmetric military power, regulation of armed and frozen conflicts, addressing the issue of separatist regimes and other forms of their manifestation. The threat that Russia posed to the Black Sea region moved out of the grey zone on February 24 when the Kremlin launched a fully-fledged invasion of Ukraine. Kremlin's broader geostrategic objectives, beyond the absorption of Ukraine into the Russian sphere of influence are opportunistic within a strongly formulated strategic vision – restoring Russia to the status of an imperial power, which involves spoiling the

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[3] Pavel Baev, "New Perspectives on the Black Sea Theatre in Russian Strategic Culture," George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, no. 040, September 2019, https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/new-perspectives-black-sea-theater-russian-strategic-culture-0.

prevailing Euro-Atlantic order and preventing neighbours from becoming part of it.

In the early days of the current war, Russia's navy moved quickly to enact a blockade of the Ukrainian coast. It closed off the Kerch Strait, which connects the smaller Sea of Azov to the Black Sea. The important Sea of Azov port cities of Berdyansk and Mariupol have since fallen to Russian forces.[4] The militarization of the Black Sea has also served as a staging ground for the Russia forces to launch an attack on Ukraine. Also, the most important is the fact that the Black Sea was rarely considered among the world's most important strategies spaces. The Black Sea is after all the space where many of the world's largest powers come together, though none has the ability to dominate. The unstable balance of power around it risks turning these into further major conflicts. Framing the Black Sea as its own security space highlights the dangers of multipolarity. The Kremlin has created such conditions that the Black Sea region has become involved in a violent conflict at least for the short term. Given that a Russian victory is far from certain, how the Black Sea region will look in the medium term is not known. A lot of depends of geopolitical possibilities. The first question is about the material or financial capabilities of the Russian Forces.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, was not only a violation of international humanitarian law and an encroachment on the sovereignty of an independent country. This move has put the security of all European countries at significant risk, as the Kremlin's main focus of aggressive rhetoric in recent years has been the West. Even before the massive offensive in Ukraine, Moscow used disinformation and lobbyists, energy and logistics, and even secret agents to destabilize the situation in European countries. The states of the Black Sea basin are in a particular position in the context of Russian aggression. For geographic and historical reasons, Russia seeks to maintain the region's political and economic leadership. Moscow is threatening three Black Sea countries – Georgia,

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[4] Joshua Keating, "Why the Battle for the Black Sea May Be the Most Important Showdown in the War – for Ukraine and for the World," Grid, May 25, 2022, https://www.grid.news/story/global/2022/05/25/why-the-battle-for-the-black-sea-may-be-the-most-important-showdown-in-the-war-for-ukraine-and-for-the-world/.

Moldova, and Ukraine – with military means. The other three, Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey, belong to the NATO bloc, which the Kremlin sees as a hostile alliance. At the same time, the Russian government included Bucharest and Sofia in the list of "unfriendly capitals." In addition, pipelines delivering Russian gas to the countries of Southern and Central Europe have been laid in the Black Sea and the region. Moscow is interested in keeping transit volumes and new projects in this area. In addition, Russia's strong position in the Black Sea states also allows the Kremlin to pursue political and economic expansion in the Balkans and the Middle East.[5]

The Black Sea as an important zone for Russia's maritime security in the framework of the new Maritime Doctrine of the Russia Federation

On July 31, President Vladimir Putin signed a new edition of the naval doctrine, which emphasises ensuring the security of Russia's interests in the "world ocean," with a particular focus on the military aspects. The doctrine aimed at ensuring the implementation of the national naval policy. The doctrine identifies the Azov Sea, the Black Sea, the Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk, and the straits of the eastern Mediterranean, the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Kuril Straits as well as the main sea routes along the Asian and African coasts as strategically important zones for Russia's maritime security in the broadest sense.[6]

Released against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, this doctrine is noticeably more focused on the country's naval difficulties than its 2015 predecessor. The 2022 doctrine is more specific and highlights a more nationalist approach seeking to position Russia as a powerful maritime nation with a permanent global presence. This has been clearly stated in the first strategic objective as the "Development of the Russian Federation as a

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5 Mikhailo Drapak, "Policy Brief: The Reaction of the Black-Sea Countries on Russia's Full-scale War against Ukraine: Analysis of the Objections," Ukrainian Prism Foreign Policy Council, July 1, 2022, https://www.esga.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Mykhailo-Drapak-policy-brief.pdf.

6 Andrzej Wilk, "Russia's Naval Doctrine," Centre for Eastern Studies, August 3, 2022, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2022-08-03/russias-naval-doctrine.

great maritime power and the strengthening of its position among the leading maritime powers of the world."[7] This document identifies fourteen national interests, as opposed to seven in the previous doctrine. The doctrine clearly indicates the US and NATO as Russia's main antagonists.[8] Despite this, the new document still contains several of the previous doctrine's themes and flaws, including a failure to address how Russia will deliver on its maritime ambitions.

Conclusion

Russia's war in Ukraine highlights the Black Sea's importance. If, despite initial failures, the Kremlin achieves its geopolitical objectives in Ukraine, Russia will enjoy a position of supreme dominance – even hegemony – over the Black Sea region, which may further allow the Kremlin to consolidate its hand in South-eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. This will improve the authority and popularity of Putin's regime within Russia and will create conditions for Russian domination in the Black Sea region. A victorious Russia, however depleted, would be able to position itself as the dominant power in the Black Sea. An emboldened Russia may threaten other Black Sea countries, such as Moldova or Georgia. In case Russia did not achieve the realization of all its objectives in this war and failed to take full control over Ukraine, it would remain a major strategic challenge in the Black Sea region. It is hard to see how commercial activity in and around the Black Sea, including maritime movements, would be organized. The U.S. assistance plan for the Black Sea, which included both NATO and non-NATO members, is important for the future of the Black Sea geopolitics. There is an obvious need to engage the US in regional security.

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[7] Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated 31.07.2022 N 512 "On the Approval of the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation," http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_423278/.

[8] Sarabjeet Singh Parmar, Ranendra S. Sawan, Kamlesh K. Agnihotri, "Maritime Doctrine of the Russia Federation 2022: An Analysis," National Maritime Foundation, August 17, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362733679_MARITIME_DOCTRINE_OF_THE_RUSSIAN_FEDERATION_2022_AN_ANALYSIS.

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Part Three

REGIONAL POLITICS, ECONOMY, ENERGY, CULTURES AND SOCIETY IN THE BLACK SEA AREA

Populism as Policy Practice: the Case of Turkish Foreign Policy Practice

Toygar Sinan Baykan

Abstract. The mainstream scholarship on populism focuses on domestic politics and conventional political institutions and dynamics such as parties, leaders, party systems, regime types, ideologies and political discourses as the realm of the phenomenon. But, as the firm grip of populist parties and leaders tighten over power, scholars diverted their attention towards the impact of populism in power and started to scrutinize policy formations under populist incumbents. In this respect studies devoted to the examination of the relationship between populism and foreign policy represent a burgeoning sub-literature that problematizes the impact of populism on the realm of policy. This paper focuses on the literature on the relationship between Turkish foreign policy and populism, presents a critical review of existing studies and proposes a broader understanding of the relationship between populism and foreign policy through the analysis of the case of Turkey by focusing on a few important foreign policy incidents during the AKP years. What is emphasized in this paper is that the impact of populism on foreign policy is not confined to the realm of foreign policy discourse –that is in congruence with the domestic "populist script" that populist incumbents deploy - but is deeply related to the institutional organization and practical implementation of foreign policy: populist foreign policy, as testified by the case of Turkish foreign policy, tends to be highly personalistic, unmediated, pragmatic-erratic-tactical, focused on short-term concrete gains and profoundly appealing to the common sense of popular sectors supporting populist incumbents while also deploying a language that is distinguishing between conspiring international power holders abroad and pure virtuous people at home. The paper, however, argues that the populist foreign policy practice –or populism's impact on organizational and practical aspects of foreign policy conduct - should be more seriously taken into account. In order to shift the focus from foreign policy discourse to the organization and implementation of foreign policy –

or the "foreign policy practice" - the paper proposes to move beyond ideational approaches to populism and embrace more performative understandings of populism that are capable of equipping researchers with better tools for analysing incumbent practice. Thus, this paper draws attention to the blurring of boundaries between domestic and foreign policy, personalization of foreign policy, populist performances on the stage of diplomatic interactions and a crude, showy, short-term tactical orientation – or a kind of *metis* - that is appealing to the popular astuteness as major implications and dimensions of populist foreign policy practice are revealed by the Turkish foreign policy throughout the AKP era in Turkey.

Keywords: Populism, ideational approach, discursive-performative approach, foreign policy practice, Turkey, *metis*.

Introduction

We are living in an era of populism. Populism, however one would like to define it, has changed our lives for good or bad. Populism is about the distinction between the elites and the people, about constructing socio-political identities and new conflict axes and about mobilizing supporters around controversial leaders. But populism, especially in power, is also about how public policy is designed and implemented, how wealth is distributed, how institutions and bureaucracies are constructed, reconstructed, reformed and run and how very mundane day-to-day affairs of national and local government are handled. By diverging from the existing studies on the phenomenon based on a conventional understanding of politics, this paper proposes to understand populism as a responsive political/governmental practice that has concrete, diffuse and comprehensive implications.

Today there are four commonly used approaches to populism: the ideational perspective by Mudde[1] and researchers following this particular scholar's approach, the strategic/organizational approach of Kurt Weyland,[2]

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[1] Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004): 541-63.

[2] Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1(2001): 1-22.

the socio-cultural/performative approaches of Pierre Ostiguy[3] and Benjamin Moffitt[4] and the discourse theoretical approach of Laclau[5] and scholars embracing his theoretical perspective. The specific domains/realms these different approaches focus on for the study of populism are "ideology" for the ideational approach, "organizational/electoral strategy" for Weyland, "style/public communication performance" for Ostiguy and Moffitt and "discourse" for Laclau. While pointing out differences between these approaches and the domains they look for the phenomenon of populism, this paper highlights a particular understanding of politics that is common to all of these approaches. The paper asserts that predominant approaches see the phenomenon of populism as something strongly tied to the conventional politics of parties and movements that are mostly visible at the national scale.

In this paper I explore another realm that may entail implications for studies on populism: more mundane, day-to-day practices of government and administration by populists in office. Hence, one of the questions of this inquiry would be as follows: can we define (a) distinctive way(s) of populist administration of people and things? This question will lead to a broader theoretical discussion focusing on the nature of populism: Is populism something necessarily "redemptive" as Margaret Canovan[6] argues? Is it politics *par excellence*, in full contradistinction with administration, as Laclau[7] argues? Or is it possible to talk about the "dirty institutionality" of populism in power as asserted by Pierre Ostiguy?[8] Can we understand populism as the colonization of "modern governmentalities" from below? This paper is also an initial attempt to relate studies on populism with the literature on governmental practice (and resistance) stretching from Foucault to Michel

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[3] Pierre Ostiguy, "Populism A Socio-Cultural Approach," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristobal R. Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina O. Espejo and Pierre Ostiguy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 73-97.

[4] Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[5] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

[6] Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy," *Political Studies* 47, no. 1 (1999): 2-16.

[7] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.

[8] Pierre Ostiguy, "Populism in Power: 'Dirty Institutionality,' Shifting Frontiers, Plebeian Ways, and the Incorporation of Excess" (paper presented at the APSA Annual Conference, Philadelphia, 1-4 September 2016).

de Certeau[9] and James C. Scott.[10] Thus the paper also suggests that populism can well be related to the form and the practice of administration more than to the ideational-discursive content. Populism also strongly reveals itself as a policy practice.

By moving beyond conventional understandings of politics as the business of movements, parties and leaders and by formulating a "diffused" comprehension of what is political (or not) in a theoretical dialogue with works by Michel de Certeau,[11] James C. Scott[12] and Michel Foucault,[13] this paper proposes to focus on the more mundane, day-to-day impact of populist politicians and parties in office on citizens' lives through political/governmental/administrative practices at micro and macro levels. The paper also proposes to understand populism as a *responsive political/governmental practice* that attaches utmost importance to immediacy in the design and conduct of public policy at the local, national and international levels.

In congruence with the expectations and socio-cultural proclivities of its audience, populist parties and politicians tend to design public policy and investments around short term targets and achievements. The motto for the populists is "now and here for the supporters." Hence, populist parties, leaders and movements prefer clientelistic solutions to well-planned universal frameworks, short term benefits to long term credibility and investment, quantity over quality, immediate material gains over long-term preservation and prudence in economy, foreign policy, culture, local government and urban politics. While this tendency makes populists "heroes" of low-income constituencies with a restricted cultural capital, it costs the societies under populist governments in the long run in economic

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9 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

10 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008); *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999).

11 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

12 Scott, *Arts of Resistance; Seeing like a State*.

13 Michel Foucault, *Power-Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984-Volume 3,* trans. R. Hurley and others (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

and cultural terms. Thus, this paper, with reference to Foucault's work on governmentality, proposes to understand populism in power as the disruption and stealth and incremental colonization of modern governmental rationalities from below.

In this paper, it is reiterated that populism is not only an idea/worldview/ideology, discourse, strategy or style/performance but it is a particular way of governing things, a specific political/governmental praxis. Hence, the paper argues that the understanding of populism should be extended in a way that covers the domain of policy making and implementation, and more mundane, day-to-day issues of politics and administration. This kind of understanding of the phenomenon of populism certainly requires a much broader understanding of politics. Politics is certainly about parties, elections, campaigns, political leaders, social movements and struggles for office and power (including conflictual and consensual relations) and the kind of ideologies, discourses, strategies and styles the actors of party politics and electoral competition generate and embrace for this struggle. But this paper, based on the theoretical and empirical evidence demonstrated in the following parts, and in line with a post-structuralist theoretical view, proposes to adopt a much wider lens to see the phenomenon of populism as a particular political/governmental practice.

The paper, thus, asserts that politics is also about the relations of grassroots functionaries with the electorate for solving day-to-day problems, the way local government is run, the approach to local, national as well as international policy making and implementation and so on and so forth. In all these rather more diffuse, mundane aspects of politics behind the stage of much more spectacular electoral processes and struggles for office and power, populists tend to prefer the concrete over the abstract, they tend to be responsive, majoritarian and ocular-centric in congruence with popular tastes and expectations but they are also short-sighted, personalistic, particularistic and clientelistic. The paper emphasizes that, in order to understand populism at work, as a political/governmental practice, researchers should focus on international, national as well as local levels, macro as well as micro, the stage of electoral politics as well as less spectacular political/governmental/administrative practices behind the

scenes. Only such a broad understanding of politics helps us to achieve a better account of how populism has shaped our world and politics, for good and bad, in the last two decades. This paper, therefore, while, on the one hand, draws the attention of populism scholars towards the large domain of governmental/administrative practice and public policy, on the other hand, invites the scholars of public policy and administration to a more profound engagement with theories of populism.

Methodological and theoretical approach

In the context of this paper, Turkey should be seen as a crucial representative case which, in several respects, can provide researchers with rich empirical material in an analysis of populist governmentality. Since 2002, Turkey has been ruled by a clearly populist government, and throughout this period, the AKP deeply transformed administrative practices and policy implementation in almost every domain of policy in line with a populist logic. While some of these transformations have been positive, some of them—such as what we are currently experiencing in Turkey in the domain of economic policy—have had devastating consequences. In other words, the case of Turkey under AKP represents a "full populism" by not only revealing discursive, ideational and strategic features in the realm of electoral–political competition, but also by embracing a populist governmental practice that attaches enormous importance to responsiveness while being repeatedly unsuccessful at responsible government. This is why this paper contains a "thick description"[14] of the populist governmental practice in the case of Turkey, which was the inspiration for the entire theoretical proposition in the paper. It should also be mentioned here that, before the emergence of populist politics in the realm of conventional politics and macro-level electoral competition, populism was a constant dimension behind the scenes of Turkish electoral politics at the national level.[15]

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[14] Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana Press, 1993).

[15] Toygar Sinan Baykan, "'İdare-i maslahatçılık' tan 'popülizm' e Türkiye'de duyarlı siyasal Pratik. 'Popülizm yapıyorsun!'" (Sensitive Political Practice in Turkey from "Islamic Maslahatcilik" to "Populism." "You Are Making Populism!"), *Birikim* 353, (2018c): 15-36.

The approach in this paper is more about populist practice than its implications for political representation and regime types, which is skilfully discussed by scholars such as Müller,[16] Urbinati,[17] Panizza,[18] Arditi,[19] Laclau[20] and Stavrakakis.[21] In contrast, I try to focus on the practice of populism in everyday administration and policy implementation. No doubt that populist practices in the policy realm have concrete consequences regarding the legitimacy of populists in the political realm. The responsive functioning in the administrative/policy realm may indeed consolidate the democratic legitimacy of populists in power. Nevertheless, such responsiveness/ immediacy usually has long-term negative consequences, which may diminish the legitimacy of populists in the long run due to their disregard for prudent government. This paradox or dilemma is, in fact, inherent to the phenomenon of populist governmental practice as a political/administrative reality, as following examples regarding recent incidents in Turkish foreign policy demonstrates.

Such an approach to populism—understanding it as a diffuse governmental practice penetrating into mundane interpersonal relations— has implications for some of the major contentions regarding the nature of the "political," On the one hand, this kind of approach to populism—and therefore to politics—requires us to rethink Schmitt's[22] contention regarding the conflictual nature of politics. Many mainstream definitions of populism tend to highlight the conflict/antagonism central to the phenomenon of populism at the level of electoral politics. However, when we adopt a broader lens and try to see the implications of populism in policies, in localities and in interpersonal relationships on the ground as a "political/governmental practice," we see much more complex dynamics in

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[16] Jan Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[17] Nadia Urbinati, *Me the People* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2019a).

[18] Francisco Panizza, "Populism and Identification," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, 406-25.

[19] Benjamin Arditi, "Populism as an Internal Periphery of Democratic Politics," in *The Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 72–98.

[20] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.

[21] Yannis Stavrakakis, "Populism, Anti-populism and Democracy," *Political Insight* 9, no. 3 (2018): 33-35.

[22] Carl Schmitt, *Siyasal Kavramı* (Political Concepts), trans. E. Göztepe (İstanbul: Metis, 2018).

the construction of a populist praxis that may be located in a grey zone containing conflictual as well as consensual, resentful as well as compassionate relationships and emotions. I also believe that populism and its governmental practice has important implications for Weber's[23] framework regarding legitimate types of domination.[24] While populism—and its governmental practice—is usually in clear contradistinction with rational–legal domination, it nonetheless is not always congruent with charismatic or traditional legitimate domination either. The legitimacy that populists enjoy in the eyes of popular sectors may require us to reconsider the discussions regarding legitimate domination in line with the realities of modern mass democracy, particularly with its populist embodiments in the global periphery.

In this part of the paper I would also like to draw attention to a few other methodological and theoretical premises embraced in this research. First of all, I tend to understand populist governmental practice as a fundamentally relational phenomenon that connects populist actors and audiences/supporters/voters as well as non- or anti-populist political/ bureaucratic actors at the national and local and macro and micro levels. From a more abstract epistemological standpoint, the approach in the paper leads me towards a rather more interpretivist perspective. This is to say that the paper will also be an attempt to unravel the schemes of meaning attributed to their practice by the actors taking part in populist interactions. Therefore, although the research for this paper was by no means a full-scale ethnographic study, it nevertheless relied upon a certain "ethnographic sensibility," as Schatz[25] termed it. This paper will strive to understand the phenomenon of populism from the perspective of its powerful and subordinate actors.

In this regard it is really important to locate the approach in this study into the context of current discussions on the phenomenon of

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[23] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, trans. E. Fischoff and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

[24] Pierre Ostiguy, "Pierre Ostiguy ile söyleşi [Interview with Pierre Ostiguy]," interview by Toygar Sinan Baykan, *Birikim* 354, October, 2018: 57-67.

[25] Edward Schatz ed., *Political Ethnography* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

populism. An ideational approach would lead us to focus on and examine the impact of populist ideas in the policy field. However, this paper, in fact, focuses on the populist practice itself and the many different relationships it creates among populist politicians, bureaucrats and citizens. Hence, the impact of populism is not really simply about the implications of populist ideas in the policy field, such as the emergence of anti-immigration policies and tougher penal attitudes towards crime in the domain of public security and order. This may or may not be the case in populist governmental practice. From the perspective of the view developed in this paper, populism is more about the implementation, and it is more about practice than policy content in terms of what populism embodies in the realm of public policy and administration.

Understanding populism as policy practice: a review of the theoretical literature

To a certain extent and with the exception of Albertazzi and McDonnell's[26] crucial study,[27] the phenomenon of populism in power has not been subject to widespread scholarly attention. But if researchers want to understand populism's impact on foreign policy, they, first and foremost, understand the impact of populism in power on administrative practice. When scholars, particularly political theorists such as Müller[28] and Urbinati,[29] focus on populism as a governmental phenomenon, their focus is on populism's impact on conventional political institutions and realms, such as constitutions, parties, party systems, regime types (democracy or authoritarianism), state apparatuses, electoral systems, media and civil society. All these excellent theoretical takes on populism, however, lack robust contact with (and an ethnographic grasp of) the reality on the ground regarding the implications of populism in the daily lives of millions of people

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[26] Daniele Albertazzi & Duncan McDonnell, *Populists in Power* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[27] Please see my review of this study: Toygar Sinan Baykan, "Book review: *Populists in Power*, by D. Albertazzi and D. McDonnell," *Political Studies Review* 14, no. 4 (2016): 588-89.

[28] Müller, *What Is Populism?*

[29] Urbinati, *Me the People*.

across the globe. While these scholars put forward a sophisticated account of how populism in power affects conventional political institutions at the macro level, they barely touch upon how populists shape and implement policies at the local and international level and how these leaders are distinguished from non-populist or anti-populist actors on the ground when it comes to public policies that have concrete implications for citizens' lives. The outstanding volumes edited by Kaltwasser et al.,[30] de la Torre,[31] Stockemer[32] and Oswald[33] mainly focus on the phenomena in the realm of what I call "politics proper," such as its impacts on political institutions and actors (e.g., parties, party systems, social movements and political discourses) in the political systems of polities in very different parts of the world; instead, these scholars only partially touch upon the broader governmental performance of populism. Ultimately, their interest in populism's impact on office and policy remains within the boundaries of questions regarding how populists shape macro political institutions and discourses.

Here, Albertazzi and McDonnell's[34] account deserves closer attention within the body of literature on populism –and its governmental experience-- since it systematically tests the governmental performance of populists. In an in-depth, comparative account of the experiences of three European populist parties in power (the People of Freedom and the Northern League in Italy and the Swiss People's Party in Switzerland), Albertazzi and McDonnell compellingly test what can be called the "administrative incapacity" hypothesis regarding populists in power, and they demonstrate that, in fact, populists can rule effectively when in office. However, the method Albertazzi and McDonnell employ in their study is more empirical/comparative than ethnographic/historical/comparative. In fact,

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[30] There is only one exception in Kaltwasser et al.'s *Oxford Handbook of Populism* volume, in a chapter written by Jason Frank, which draws attention to the peculiar political praxis of populism on the ground: Jason Frank, "Populism and Praxis," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, 629-43.

[31] Carlos de la Torre ed., *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism* (London: Routledge, 2019).

[32] Daniel Stockemer ed., *Populism around the World* (Cham: Springer, 2019).

[33] Michael Oswald ed., *Palgrave Handbook of Populism* (New York: Palgrave, 2022).

[34] Albertazzi & McDonnell, *Populists in Power*.

they overwhelmingly focus on policy and governance outcomes instead of the policy processes and practices embraced by populists. In other words, Albertazzi and McDonnell's otherwise excellent account devoted to the analysis of "populism in power" focuses on exploring the "outcomes" of populism in power in terms of governmental performance instead of the characteristics/qualities of the governmental and administrative practices carried out by populists when they come into power. In addition, Albertazzi and McDonnell's account only focuses on European cases of populism in power, where populists must function within more restrictive liberal governmental and institutional frameworks than a case like Turkey.

Here, it should also be noted that all these accounts on populism in power more or less embrace a similar theoretical/methodological approach to the phenomenon of populism (with the partial exception of some contributors to Kaltwasser et al.'s volume, most notably Ostiguy[35] and Frank[36]). All of these accounts consider populism first and foremost as an ideational/discursive phenomenon,[37] and this very ideational/discursive core of the phenomenon, according to the established literature, defines the political practice of populism in power. In other words, all of these studies encourage researchers to focus on populism from a top-down perspective, or from the vantage point of the interaction at the elite level between "populist storytellers" and their enemies. This paper, in contrast, proposes to understand populism from a bottom-up perspective, from the standpoint of its actors and audiences on the ground and from the angle of the mundane interactions of—and exchanges between—populists and their supporters. Although such ethnographically oriented studies are by no means missing in the field of populism studies (see especially Auyero[38]), the body of literature on populism in power is far from adopting a bottom-up perspective that focuses on the rich governmental/administrative/political

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[35] Ostiguy, "Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach."

[36] Frank, "Populism and Praxis."

[37] For a comprehensive discussion of the ideational approach used in studies on populism, see Kirk A Hawkins et al. eds., *The Ideational Approach to Populism: Concept, Theory, and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2018).

[38] Javier Auyero, *Poor People's Politics* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2001).

praxis of populism around the world. This is understandable since the realm of interest in ideational/discursive approaches to the phenomenon is the discursive aspect of populism, and it is no doubt very important to understand the commonalities and differences of the populist scripts in very different parts of the world. However, in my view, such macro- and top-down perspectives are not very helpful in understanding what is going on "behind the stage" of electoral and institutional politics at the national level because they focus mainly on the elite-driven dimensions of the broader phenomenon of populism as a linkage strategy, political praxis and bodily experience.

There are fundamental differences among various schools of thought in populism studies today, and these differences direct researchers' attention to very different domains of politics. Moreover, I believe these different approaches substantially define what researchers think regarding the fundamental nature of politics and power. From an ideational perspective, or from a perspective that attaches paramount importance to the discourses generated by populist actors, it is inevitable to focus first and foremost on party politics, electoral competition and elites generating discursive frameworks for the power struggles at this macro-political level. However, a rather more performative approach that takes the praxis of populism— albeit at the stage of electoral competition— into account has the potential to draw scholars' attention to the broader political/governmental practice of populism. In fact, such socio-cultural and performative definitions of populism[39] have the potential to enlarge our perspective of politics and power in relation to populism. By pointing out the importance of unconventional dimensions of modern mass politics, such as the public image and "stage performance" of populists, such approaches have considerably enlarged our view of what is politics and political power today.[40] There is only one more step to be taken in this direction—and

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[39] Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*; Ostiguy, "A Socio-Cultural Approach."

[40] I would like to draw attention to an important recent work by Chou et al., which demonstrates the emerging interest in local politics and "localism" in populism studies. See Mark Chou, Benjamin Moffitt, and Rachel Busbridge, "The Localist Turn in Populism Studies," *Swiss Political Science Review* 28, no. 1 (2022): 129-41.

presumably also for moving beyond socio-cultural and performative approaches—which is to reach a more diffuse and comprehensive understanding of politics and political power that connects the theoretical discussions on populism to the post-structuralist approaches that deploy a comprehensive view of politics. Such approaches have greater potential to demonstrate the diffuse impacts of power relations in modern societies.

In fact, populist discourses and ideas are, to a considerable extent, the consequence of diffused populist practices and lived experiences on the ground, not the other way around. This also brings me to another lacuna in the current conventional ideational/discursive approaches to populism: many contributors to the literature of populism are embracing ideational/discursive approaches to populism, and particularly those in the field of political theory, such as Müller[41] and Urbinati,[42] have an overwhelmingly top-down (and as a consequence, restricted) view regarding the political practice of populists on the ground as well as the operations populist parties and actors undertake in neighbourhoods, on the streets and in distant localities of national polities as well as on the international realm. For political theorists, this is all too understandable, but I do believe that such top-down views need to be complemented with bottom-up perspectives sensitive to the reality on the ground. This paper, therefore, is an initial attempt to contribute to the established literature on populism (which embraces an overwhelmingly macro-political, institutional and discursive orientation) with a bottom-up perspective informed by empirical and ethnographic experience in the field.

The literature on the relationship between populism and Turkish foreign policy

The relationship between populism and the Turkish foreign policy has been the subject of scholarly examination in recent years since the case of Erdoğan's AKP is globally one of the major examples of "populism in

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[41] Müller, *What Is Populism?*

[42] Nadia Urbinati, *Me the People*; "Liquid Parties, Dense Populism," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 9-10 (2019b): 1069-83.

power" today. Many researchers analysed the impact of populism on Turkish foreign policy throughout the AKP years. Most of these studies, however, embrace a mainstream ideational approach to populism and they mostly focus on the foreign policy discourse.[43] These works either emphasize the stress upon the distinction between conspiring international elites and the pure people in the foreign policy related discourse generated by populists as the hallmark of a populist foreign policy or they point out the anti-Westernism as an important consequence of populism in the realm of foreign policy. This is mainly a consequence of understanding populism as an "ideational phenomenon".[44] Nevertheless, even in these studies embracing a mainstream ideational approach to populism, there are clear signs that populism is not really exclusively an ideational phenomenon. It is in fact deeply related to a certain kind of political practice defined by pragmatism, personalism, anti-institutionalism and a taste and orientation that is sensitive to popular common sense and sentiment.

In a concise and informative article Balta[45] demonstrates the overall transformation of Turkish foreign policy over the AKP years. What Balta emphasizes regarding the Turkish foreign policy under a populist incumbent is its "dramatic shifts and abrupt reorientations,"[46] the blurring of the boundaries between domestic and foreign policy, and more precisely the use of foreign policy to mitigate domestic crises, and the increasing

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[43] Evren Balta, "The AKP's Foreign Policy as Populist Governance," *Middle East Report* 288, (2018): 14-18; Alper Kaliber & Esra Kaliber, "From De-Europeanisation to Anti-Western Populism: Turkish Foreign Policy in Flux," *The International Spectator 54*, no. 4 (2019): 1-16; Burak Bilgehan Özpek & Nebahat Tanriverdi Yaşar, "Populism and Foreign Policy in Turkey under the AKP Rule," *Turkish Studies* 19, no. 2 (2018): 198-216; Sandra Destradi, Johannes Plagemann & Hakkı Taş, "Populism and the Politicisation of Foreign Policy," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2022): 1-18, doi.org/10.1177/136914812210 75944; Emre İşeri & Metin Ersoy, "Framing the Syrian Operations: Populism in Foreign Policy and the Polarized News Media of Turkey," *International Journal of Communication* no. 15 (2021): 2870-93; Alper T Bulut & Nurhan Hacıoğlu, "Religion, Foreign Policy and Populism in Turkish Politics: Introducing a New Framework," *Democratization* 28, no. 4 (2021): 762-81.

[44] Mudde, "Populist Zeitgeist;" Hawkins et al., *The Ideational Approach to Populism: Concept, Theory, and Analysis*.

[45] Balta, "The AKP's Foreign Policy."

[46] Balta, "The AKP's Foreign Policy," 15.

predominance of Erdoğan in the foreign policy realm.[47] Very similarly Kaliber and Kaliber[48] highlights the fact that the AKP has deployed foreign policy in order to consolidate its position in power in domestic politics. They also draw attention to the increasing emphasis on anti-Westernism in the foreign policy discourse and the rising prominence of Erdoğan in foreign policy related issues, and particularly his personal connections with world leaders –especially with those revealing populist attitudes such as Trump.[49] Özpek and Yaşar[50] too emphasize the pragmatism of the AKP in the foreign policy realm and draw attention to how the party deployed foreign policy discourse to consolidate its power in domestic politics. Destradi et al.[51] too, with reference to Turkish foreign policy, alongside India's foreign policy under Modi, highlight that populists politicize the foreign policy for domestic mobilization to hold on power. İşeri and Ersoy[52] too, in a very similar vein, argue that the AKP mitigates domestic political failures with a highly populist discourse on foreign affairs. Here, a particularly nuanced analysis belongs to Taş[53] in which, alongside populisms' impact on foreign policy discourse and content, the author puts a special emphasis on the procedural dimensions of a "populist foreign policy." In line with Destradi and Plagemann's[54] contention, Taş emphasizes that "populism impacts the style and processes rather than the substance of the foreign policy".[55] According to Taş, the "people-centrism in the form of anti-institutionalism has two main consequences for foreign policy decision-making in countries ruled by populists. The first consequence is the personalization of decision-

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[47] Balta, "The AKP's Foreign Policy," 18.

[48] Kaliber & Kaliber, "Turkish Foreign Policy in Flux."

[49] Kaliber & Kaliber, "Turkish Foreign Policy in Flux," 9.

[50] Özpek & Yaşar, "Populism and Foreign Policy in Turkey."

[51] Destradi et al., "Populism and the Politicisation of Foreign Policy."

[52] İşeri & Ersoy, "Framing the Syrian Operations."

[53] Hakkı Taş, "The Formulation and Implementation of Populist Foreign Policy: Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Politics* (2020): 1-25, https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2020.1833160.

[54] Sandra Destradi & Johannes Plagemann, "Populism and International Relations: (Un)predictability, Personalisation, and the Reinforcement of Existing Trends in World Politics," *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 5 (2019): 711-30.

[55] Taş, "Implementation of Populist Foreign Policy," 19.

making along with the centralization of power in the hands of the populist leader. The prioritization of the hyper-empowered populist leader, rather than the long-established patterns, defines the foreign policy agenda. Subsequently, foreign policy issues, relying progressively less on precedent, are politicized to mobilize the domestic audience. The second consequence is the gradual sidelining of established diplomatic and bureaucratic institutions, shifting the core of decision-making from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the office of the chief executive. In many countries, populist leaders stigmatize and weaken their own diplomats as part of their larger campaign targeting the establishment. While these processes now lack the accumulated knowledge and experience of senior bureaucrats, a small enclave of advisors in the Presidential House assumes a decisive role in foreign policy. Likewise, the personality-driven approach also gravely affects the language and mechanisms, privileging ad hoc processes, bilateral one-on-ones, and the direct communication of foreign policy issues on social media while circumventing established processes of diplomatic declaration, consensus-seeking, and compromise-building."[56]

Therefore, the taste and expectations of ordinary majorities deeply shape the substance as well as the procedural forms of foreign policy under populist governments, as the following examples demonstrate.

Populist practice in Turkey: the domestic and the foreign policy practice

Before focusing on populist foreign policy practice with special reference to the case of Turkish foreign policy I would like to demonstrate the approach embraced in this paper with a couple of recent examples to show what I mean by the term "populist governmental practice." I should also note here that, in clear cases of populism in power, such examples are abundant and can be seen in every domain of policy practice. For example, in a discussion regarding the demolition of abandoned buildings in provincial Turkey, the Minister of the Interior urged the governors of those districts (who are appointed to high-ranking bureaucratic positions in the

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[56] Taş, "Implementation of Populist Foreign Policy," 6-7.

Turkish administrative system) to demolish abandoned buildings during the night, without waiting for court verdicts: "We have achieved considerable progress in the struggle with drugs. I kindly ask you to be courageous. It is a nightmare for us to watch our children poison themselves in these [abandoned buildings]. (…) There were 110.000 abandoned buildings, and we demolished more than 75.000 and restored 15.000 of these. I visited those provinces a couple of days ago and saw our neighbourhood headmen (*muhtarlar*) in Diyarbakir, Adana and Istanbul. They said to me, 'Sir, there are abandoned buildings all over, but we cannot demolish them.' My friend, you demolish them during the night, and the court decisions come later because as long as those buildings remain there, youngsters will use drugs in those buildings. Our citizens ask the neighbourhood headmen about the measures regarding these buildings, and the headmen say, 'There is no court decision, we cannot demolish them.' And I tell them to bring bulldozers in the middle of night and demolish these buildings. Who demolished them? How can we know?"[57]

After this call by the minister from the AKP, governors in different provinces across Turkey started ordering the demolition of abandoned buildings.[58] What we see in this incident is a clear example of a populist governmental practice that circumvents procedures in order to be responsive and quick for the solution of a highly visible problem of public order and security. While this measure carefully takes the majority opinion and sensitivities into account it certainly disregards the rights of property owners.

In another recent incident stemming from the domain of foreign policy, we can clearly see the functioning of a populist governmental practice which carefully takes majority public opinion into account, risks the emergence of long-term negative consequences while at the same time avoiding an imminent radical rupture in the policy field with "behind the

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[57] *Yeniçağ Gazetesi*, "Süleyman Soylu: Metruk binaları gece yık, mahkeme kararı bizim arkamızdan gelsin" (Süleyman Soylu: Destroy Derelict Buildings at Night, Let the Court Decision Follow), October 27, 2021, https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/soyludan-muhtarlara-dozer-metruk-binalari-yiksin-kim-yikti-nereden-bilelim-483027h.htm.

[58] *Karar*, "Bırak yargıyı yık binayı" (Drop the Judiciary, Demolish the Building), October 28, 2021, https://www.karar.com/guncel-haberler/birak-yargiyi-yik-binayi-1637387.

scenes" manoeuvres.[59] On November 18, 2021, ten embassies (those of Canada, France, Finland, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United States) published a statement requesting the release of Osman Kavala, a political prisoner held in custody in Turkey for more than four years on allegations of organizing the Gezi unrest in 2013.[60] President Erdoğan's response to the statement was extremely harsh. The following day, he declared in a public speech that he had ordered the Minister of Foreign Affairs to prepare to designate the ambassadors of the countries declaring their support for Kavala as *persona non grata*.[61] While the devastating consequences of such a move in diplomatic and economic terms was evident,[62] Erdoğan felt compelled to give this harsh response, most probably due to reasons tightly related to his constituency's negative perception of such a statement by "foreign powers".[63] Nevertheless, the pragmatism of the populist governmentality played a role in this incident as well, and this harsh public response by Erdoğan did not quickly turn into concrete measures to expel ambassadors.[64] An intense "behind the scenes" diplomacy carried out by top figures in the foreign policy administration

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[59] I would like to thank Yaprak Gürsoy for drawing my attention to this particular incident.

[60] U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Türkiye, "Statement on Four Years of Osman Kavala's Detention," last modified October 18, 2021, https://tr.usembassy.gov/statement-on-four-years-of-osman-kavalas-detention/.

[61] *Hürriyet*, "Son dakika! Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan '10 büyükelçi' talimatı! 'İstenmeyen adam' ilan edilecekler" (Last Minute! '10 Ambassadors' Instruction from President Erdogan! They Will Be Declared 'Persona Non Grata'), October 23, 2021, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/son-dakika-cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-10-buyukelci-talimati-istenmeyen-adam-ilan-edilecekler-41923443.

[62] Ece Göksedef, "10 büyükelçinin 'istenmeyen kişi' ilanının engellenmesiyle hafifleyen son kriz ne anlama geliyor?" (What Does the Latest Crisis, Which Has Been Alleviated by the Prevention of 10 Ambassadors Being Declared Persona Non Grata, Mean?), *BBC Türkçe*, October 25, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-59042861.

[63] Ayşe Sayın, "10 büyükelçiliğin Osman Kavala açıklaması ve sonrasında yaşananlar, AKP ve MHP kulislerinde nasıl yorumlanıyor?" (How Is the Osman Kavala Statement of the 10 Embassies and What Happened after It Was Interpreted in the AKP and MHP Backstage?), *BBC Türkçe*, October 28, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-59079381.

[64] *Duvar*, "'Persona non grata' bilmecesi: 'Bize resmi bildirim gelmedi'" ("Persona Non Grata" Riddle: "We Haven't Received Any Official Notification), October 23, 2021, https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/persona-non-grata-bilmecesi-bize-resmi-bildirim-gelmedi-haber-1539432.

resulted in the formulation of an ambiguous restatement (emphasizing that these embassies are bound by international agreements and responsibilities regarding staying out of the internal affairs of countries they are located in) by the embassies previously declaring their support for the release of Kavala.[65] This new statement solved the problem domestically for Erdoğan since it was possible to present it to the Turkish public as the "stepping back of Western powers before the will of Erdoğan."[66] Nevertheless, in Western media, this solution was presented as Turkey backing down to avert risks in its international relations.[67] In the end, a diplomatic crisis and a foreign policy issue were solved in a deeply populist manner. While Erdoğan did not remain indifferent to, from his own constituency's perspective, an interventionist statement by "foreigners," and he attached paramount importance to "responsiveness and immediacy," he also rendered it possible for the foreign policy bureaucracy to drag their feet "behind the scenes," delaying the implementation of his will and opening room for manoeuvres for both himself and for the ambassadors in order to prevent an economic and diplomatic crisis. In this respect, "acting as if"[68] is also one of the fundamental aspects of populist governmental practice since it helps populist parties and leaders to be seen as responsive while helping them to avoid any concrete consequences of radical policy decisions.

In another foreign policy related incident in 2016, Erdoğan threatened the EU representatives by "opening the borders" and "sending refugees to Europe." According to the leaked meeting records between

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[65] *Duvar*, "Reuters büyükelçi krizini çözmek için yürütülen görüşmeleri yazdı" (Reuters Wrote of Talks to Resolve Ambassador Crisis), October 26, 2021, https://www.gazete duvar.com.tr/reuters-buyukelci-krizini-cozmek-icin-yurutulen-gorusmeleri-yazdi-haber-1539683.

[66] *TRT Haber*, "Büyükelçiler geri adım attı, Türkiye olumlu karşıladı" (Ambassadors Took a Step Back, Turkey Welcomed), October 25, 2021, https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/buyukelciler-geri-adim-atti-turkiye-olumlu-karsiladi-620072.html.

[67] *Duvar*, "'Geri adım' tartışması: Dünya basınına göre vazgeçen taraf Erdoğan" ('Backward' Debate: According to the World Press, Erdogan Is the One Who Gave Up), October 26, 2021, https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/geri-adim-tartismasi-dunya-basinina-gore-vazgecen-taraf-erdogan-galeri-1539664?p=7.

[68] Lisa Wedeen, "Acting 'As If:' Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 3 (1998): 503-23.

Erdoğan and EU representatives regarding the financial support by the EU to Turkey for containing the refugee flow, Erdoğan threatened the EU representatives in a very direct manner: "We can open the doors to Greece and Bulgaria anytime and we can put the refugees on busses. If you say 3 bn for two years [instead of 3 bn per year], no need to discuss further. Greece got more than 400 bn Euro during Euro crisis. We should have invested some of that money into a safe zone in Syria, which would have solved all problems with refugees. …So how will you deal with refugees if you don't get a deal? Kill the refugees? …the EU will be confronted more than a dead boy on the shores of Turkey. There will [be] 10.000 or 15.000 [refugees]. How will you deal with that? The attacks in Paris is all about poverty and exclusion. These people are uneducated, but will continue to be terrorists in Europe."[69] While, from a diplomatic point of view, this is an excessively frank way of expressing demands, such a tone in international relations is exactly deeply appealing for the domestic populist audience. As the AKP spokesperson later on commented on a question regarding these leaked meeting records, for the populist audience, "these are words that makes us [them] only feel proud."[70]

In another foreign policy related incident, the Turkish Police detained an American evangelical pastor on the accusation of political and military espionage. Later on, the issue turned into a diplomatic crisis between the US and Turkey. In a meeting with Erdoğan in Washington, Trump requested the release of pastor Brunson from Erdoğan. Hastily, Brunson's situation turned into a blackmail opportunity for Erdoğan in order to receive Fethullah Gülen from the US, the leader of Gülen Community –which involved in a failed coup d'état after a long process of state colonization in Turkey in a partnership with the AKP. In a public

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[69] *Cumhuriyet*, "Erdoğan'ın pazarlık tutanağı ortaya çıktı: 3 milyar avro ise hiç konuşmayalım" (Erdogan's Bargaining Report Revealed: 3 Billion Euros, Let's Not Talk at All), February 8, 2016, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/erdoganin-pazarlik-tutanagi-ortaya-cikti-3-milyar-avro-ise-hic-konusmayalim-477710.

[70] BBC News Türkçe, "Erdoğan'dan AB'ye mülteci krizi tepkisi: Alnımızda enayi yazmıyor" (Erdogan's EU Response to the Refugee Crisis: We Don't Have Suckers on Our Foreheads), February 11, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/02/160211_erdogan_omer_celik_multeciler_aciklama.

speech in Turkey Erdoğan revealed his take of the issue very clearly, in obvious populist style: "They [the US] say that 'give us the priest.' You [the US] have another priest [Fethullah Gülen]. You give him back to us and we do whatever necessary in the judicial process to give him [Brunson] back to you." While initially this blackmail diplomacy worked in favour of Erdoğan and resonated very well with his constituency's expectations, it later on turned into a diplomatic failure on the part of the AKP after a wave of serious sanctions by the US. The priest was ultimately released and returned to the US and Turkey received nothing back from the US in return.[71]

In some cases, populist practice in the foreign policy realm is not that transactional and may well be the reflection of the spontaneous reaction of the populist leader. This was the case when Erdoğan harshly criticized the then president of Israel, Şimon Peres, by accusing Israel of "killing children" in a public panel in the 2009 Davos Economic Forum. When he was not allowed to continue by the moderator of the panel, he protested and left the panel in the middle of it.[72] While this attitude was criticized by old school diplomats in Turkey from a conventional international relations view,[73] it was, nevertheless, received very well by Erdoğan's audience.[74] Thousands of Erdoğan's supporters waited for him in the Atatürk Airport for his arrival and he gave them a short speech in the middle of night: "Tonight, with your silent and graceful stance here, you say that 'we do not want politicians who says different things behind closed doors, in the media or at meeting spaces.

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[71] Sertaç Aktan, "Adım adım Brunson krizi: Nereden çıktı, nasıl çözüldü?" (Step by Step Brunson Crisis: Where Did It Come from, How Was It Resolved?), *Euronews*, October 12, 2018, https://tr.euronews.com/2018/10/12/adim-adim-brunson-krizi-abd-turkiye-iliskilerinde-yaptirimlar-noktasina-nasil-gelindi-.

[72] *DW Türkçe*, "Erdoğan Davos'u terk etti" (Erdogan Leaves Davos), January 29, 2009, https://www.dw.com/tr/erdo%C4%9Fan-davosu-terk-etti/a-3988806.

[73] *Deniz Haber*, "Diplomatların Gözüyle Davos Çıkışı" (Davos Exit Through the Eyes of Diplomats), January 31, 2009, https://www.denizhaber.com/gundem/diplomatlarin-gozuyle-davos-cikisi-h15539.html

[74] Emre Erdoğan, "Dış Politikada Siyasallaşma: Türk Kamuoyunun 'Davos Krizi' ve Etkileri Hakkındaki Değerlendirmeleri" (Politicization in Foreign Policy: Turkish Public Evaluation of the 'Davos Crisis' and Its Effects), *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 10, no. 37 (2013): 37-67.

…We want politicians who frankly says everywhere the same true things that he believes in'".[75]

Turkish foreign policy throughout the AKP era, therefore, was not only defined by a ruthless pragmatism amounting to blackmail or "hostage"[76] diplomacy and by "acting as if" but also by the spontaneous reactions of Erdoğan. But perhaps, more important than these, and in line with theoretical evaluations regarding the relationship between populism and foreign policy, one of the major implications of populist foreign policy in Turkey has been the "personalization" of this deeply technocratic and procedural realm of policy. Erdoğan has come to the forefront of all the major foreign policy issues throughout the AKP rule. His direct relations with presidents of major world powers such as Russia and the US has increasingly defined the Turkish foreign policy. According to a news report relying on information leaked from high-ranked American bureaucrats, Trump had the greatest number of calls with Erdoğan during his tenure.[77] According to the same report "President [Trump] was woefully uninformed about the history of the Syrian conflict and the Middle East generally, and […] he was often caught off guard, and lacked sufficient knowledge to engage on equal terms in nuanced policy discussion with Erdoğan [on the phone]. 'Erdoğan took him to the cleaners,' said one of the sources."[78]

What we see in these incidents is not simply the reflection or implication of populist "ideas" or "worldviews" in concrete policy issues. In fact, these incidents are just some individual illustrative examples of populist governmentality, that is, combining immediacy, responsiveness and effectiveness while circumventing procedures and principles. In the foreign

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[75] *Hürriyet*, "İstanbul'da miting gibi karşılama" (Welcoming Like a Rally in Istanbul), January 30, 2009, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/istanbulda-miting-gibi-karsilama-10887578.

[76] Taş, "Implementation of Populist Foreign Policy."

[77] Euronews, "Trump'ın dünya liderleriyle yaptığı telefon görüşmeleri; 'Erdoğan onu (Trump) soyup soğana çevirdi'" (Trump's Phone Calls with World Leaders; "Erdogan Has Robbed Him (Trump)"), June 30, 2020, https://tr.euronews.com/2020/06/30/trump-n-dunya-liderleriyle-yapt-g-telefon-gorusmeleri-erdogan-onu-trump-soyup-sogana-cevir.

[78] Carl Bernstein, "From Pandering to Putin to Abusing Allies and Ignoring His Own Advisers, Trump's Phone Calls Alarm US Officials," CNN, June 30, 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/29/politics/trump-phone-calls-national-security-concerns/index.html

policy realm these orientations, in fact, turn into a kind of "street smart foreign policy," a kind of *metis*[79] which is extremely pragmatic, flexible, short-term, personalized and spontaneous – and that is profoundly lacking a longer time horizon.

Conclusion

This paper proposes to understand populism as a political-governmental practice that is in congruence with the socio-cultural orientations and tastes of the represented ordinary domestic majorities. When in power populism has concrete implications for the policy practice. In fact, populist parties and leaders embrace a populist way of governing things and people, a certain kind of "governmental practice" which tends to be responsive, personalized, ocular-centric, pragmatic, flexible, tactical and short-term. This also means that populism, as a governmental practice, tends to circumvent institutionalized and procedural ways of conducting governmental affairs. This is not simply a conscious outcome of a populist "thin ideology" or "discourse" that is based on a distinction between "pure people" and "corrupt elite." It is a reflection of a much richer, denser socio-cultural experience and interaction that tightly connects populist elites and their audiences. Populist political-governmental practice – as an experience - containing a tight rapport between populist elites and audiences, in fact, is the source that inspires and generates populist ideas and discourses. In other words, populist ideas and discourses are the outcome more than the source of populist practices.

In this respect, as a case of governmental practice, the more striking aspect of Turkish foreign policy is not its discursive content, its people-centric emphases and anti-Western, anti-elite ideological orientations but its approach to the organization and implementation of foreign policy. As the literature on Turkish foreign policy and the incidents analysed above demonstrate, with the rise of a visibly populist government, Turkish foreign policy has become more personalized, circumvented conventional foreign

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[79] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

policy institutions and procedures. Populism also "politicized" the realm of foreign policy in congruence with the domestic needs of the AKP. Thus, this analysis has also implications for the theoretical literature focusing on the relationship between populism and foreign policy. A few important studies, in this respect, tend to highlight the importance of the discursive content in identifying the relationship between populism and foreign policy.[80] Not surprisingly, however, these studies also underline the "inconsistencies" in populists' foreign policies and "reaction to institutions and processes on the international and transnational levels," the focus on "immediate national interests"[81] by populists, variation in the content of foreign policies of different types of populist parties,[82] and a "centralised and personalized" orientation[83] as part and parcel of populist foreign policy. In fact, especially Destradi and Plagemann clearly put an emphasis on the change of the procedural aspects of foreign policy in relation to populism.[84] In this respect, it is puzzling to see that all these theoretical works on populism and foreign policy nexus embraces an ideational approach to populism. But ultimately, it should be asserted that, such an emphasis on the organizational and practical change in foreign policy implementation requires an understanding of populism that is sensitive to the style and practice.

From a broader theoretical perspective, populist governmentality is about the colonization of modern rational–legal governmentalities from below by populist politics that embrace the majoritarian, pragmatic/tactical and ocular-centric orientations of common people. Hence, this paper does not only speak to the literature on populism and public policy and administration, but is also an attempt to theoretically articulate works by

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[80] Angelos Chryssogelos, "Populism in Foreign Policy," *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics*, 2017, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780190463045.001.0001/acref-9780190463045-e-467; Bertjan Verbeek & Andrej Zaslove, "Populism and Foreign Policy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, 384-405; Destradi & Plagemann, "Populism and International Relations."

[81] Chryssogelos, "Populism in Foreign Policy."

[82] Verbeek & Zaslove, "Populism and Foreign Policy."

[83] Destradi & Plagemann, "Populism and International Relations."

[84] Destradi & Plagemann, "Populism and International Relations," 724.

scholars such as Foucault,[85] Scott[86] and de Certeau[87] with studies on populism. In other words, it is an attempt to interpret diffuse relations of power, resistance and micro politics from the vantage point of populism studies. As such, this paper is an initial attempt to complement analyses of modern governmentalities by focusing on the different modes of articulations between democratic and/or populist politics and modern schemes of "governing people and things" (rational public management and policy). Thus, the paper in general, and the central theoretical argument in particular, is not really about the relationship between populist parties/leaders and public administration/policy but about inherently populist practices in the administrative/policy sphere.

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[85] Foucault, *Essential Works*.

[86] Scott, *Arts of Resistance; Seeing like a State*.

[87] De Certeau, *The Practice*.

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The US-Russia Relations and the EU's Interest

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Abstract. Bearing a strategic importance for the international order, the US-Russia relation has a long history and has been subject to many controversies. An ongoing competition for securing spheres of influence, this relation has reached its lowest level after the Russian invasion in Ukraine, an action which the US as well as its Western allies condemn firmly. In many regards, the EU's interest related to this West-East competition overlaps with its transatlantic priorities but there are still significant challenges arousing from the bloc member states' bilateral ties with Russia, as in the case of natural gas resources.

Keywords: US, Russia, European Union, Ukraine war.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War represented an important shift in the global systemic configuration. From the bipolarity that has characterized this era, International Relations were understood in a completely new context of a (transitional) unipolar system, in which the United States (US) emerged in a dominant position, a change that was considered unprecedented in history.[1] What followed was the somehow inevitable multipolar order, given the rapid technological development, among other elements, a system in which multiple (state and non-state) actors interact, either cooperatively or conflictual.

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[1] G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, William C. Wohlforth, "Introduction: Unipolarity, Behavior and Systemic Consequences," *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (Jan 2009): 1-27, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40060219.

The balance of power that functioned during the Cold War period, a concept understood by realists as an anti-hegemonic mechanism,[2] is still applying in the contemporary multipolar global order. Neorealist Christopher Layne, in his book entitled *The Peace of Illusions*, discusses the grand American strategy in the last 60 years as one of expansion, enabling the US to achieve extra regional hegemony,[3] beyond its hemispheric dominance. We will further bring into attention NATO's and EU's expansion as well, including from the Russian perspective.

However, Layne observes that this expansionist strategy existed in the US mentality long before the Cold War and that then was only a propitious moment to fuel it. In the realist vision, the strategy (encompassing the export of democracy and free trade) is not a wise option, as the Wilsonian ideology attracts unnecessary military complications and insecurity for the US.[4]

If we mentioned expansionism, Russia's ambitions were long debated within this paradigm, under the umbrella of its neoimperialist strategy. Based on a series of ideological, military, political and economic interests, the Russian Federation seeks to maintain the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine within its sphere of influence, as it perceives them as part of the Russian intricate sphere of interest.[5]

In the race for securing their influence abroad, invoking the wellbeing of respective peoples and of the international system in itself, the US and Russia are struggling with a complicated, unstable relation, nevertheless of crucial, strategic importance for the good functioning of the world system, characterized in the present days by global interdependencies and multiple challenges that cannot be overlooked.

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[2] See Alfred Vagts, "Balance of Power: Growth of an Idea," *World Politics* 1 (1948): 82-101, https://doi.org/10.2307/2009159; Kenneth Waltz, *Teoria politicii international* (Theory of International Politics) (Iasi: Polirom, 2007); T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz and Michael Fortmann, *Balance of Power. Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[3] Christopher Layne, *Pacea Iluziilor* (The Peace of Illusions), trans. Simona Soare (Iasi: Polirom, 2011), 61.

[4] Layne, *Pacea*, 67.

[5] Agnia Grigas, *Crimeea și Noul Imperiu Rus* (Crimea and the New Russian Empire), trans. Cristina Ispas (Bucharest: Corint 2022), 173.

In the contemporary international system, harmony and balance can only be ensured through diplomatic negotiations and cooperation. From the initial approaches to conflict resolution dating half of century ago, negotiation has become a very sophisticated diplomacy tool. Understanding the complex networks, anticipating the actions of the diverse global and regional actors requires in-depth knowledge of the mechanisms and functioning procedures, especially from the perspective of negotiation processes in which the actors are engaged.

The evolution of the Ukrainian conflict has determined many representatives of the epistemic community to discuss the idiosyncrasies of the Russian foreign policy and decision-making process. The present paper aims to distinguish the EU's interest and positioning within the US-Russia relation, by taking into consideration also the individual member states' traditional cooperation with Russia in various fields.

The US and its Western allies were conducting negotiations with the Russian part regarding Moscow's security concerns months before the country invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Negotiations between the US and Russia on the demands were launched on 11 January 2022, in three separate formats: bilateral, as part of a strategic stability dialogue agreed by Presidents Biden and Putin at their June 2021 summit; in the NATO-Russia Council, convened for the first time since 2019; and in the OSCE format, which includes Russia, the US, Ukraine and 54 other countries from Europe, Asia and North America. Although further talks were taken into consideration on matters such as missile deployments and military exercises, the American part concluded that NATO enlargement will continue. All these formats of negotiations did not manage to reach an agreement on any of the points on the agenda. Bilateral talks have continued, but the US is also consulting with NATO allies and Ukraine.

Particular attention must be given to the cultural factors in the negotiations process, in other words to the cultural networks, the organizational, professional and national culture aspects undoubtedly influencing the developing of discussions and a potential agreement or compromise.

Samuel Huntington underlined that, in the post-Cold War world, the most important disparities between peoples are not ideological, political or economic, but cultural.[6]

The Russian negotiation style is very much focused on military power, a dimension that many European and Western leaders consider to belong to an obsolete diplomatic practice, especially as nowadays the smart power concept is gaining more and more ground in the field of International Relations.[7]

For a proper understanding of the current status quo, it is worth revising briefly the history of the US-Russia relations. We will focus on the interactions in the post-Cold War period.

US-Russia relations. A timeline

Former presidents Vladimir Lenin and Woodrow Wilson expressed divergent geopolitical perspectives, stimulating ideological divisions that continue to manifest in the present days. The second half of the 20th century was dominated by proxy wars and the arms race of the Cold War. Despite several trials of rapprochement between the US and Russia, initiatives of cooperation on non-proliferation, conflict resolution in the East, counter-terrorism or space exploration and security, bilateral relations remained strained.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and disbandment of the former Warsaw Pact, signs of openness between Washington and Moscow were recorded. The START I (1991) and START II (1993) Agreements were signed in order to limit nuclear capabilities of both powers, fuelling hopes about new US-Russia cooperation.

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[6] Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," in *Foreign Affairs* 72 no. 3 (Summer 1993), http://doi.org/10.2307/20045621.

[7] InfoCluj.eu, "Gabriela Ciot: În spatele pozițiilor Ungariei despre războiul din Ucraina sunt influențe ruse" (Gabriela Ciot: There Are Russian Influences behind Hungary's Position on the War in Ukraine), May 13 2022, https://infocluj.eu/eveniment/gabriela-ciot-spatele-pozitiilor-ungariei-despre-razboiul-din-ucraina-sunt-inflăuente-ruse?fbclid=IwAR2jdINx-33oepDb2VT20hPvFBKLDEh3gZsdFNF2p7KlOJjAdmu3YThOKQk.

In December 1991, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council was created, with the aim of extending "the hand of friendship" to former Warsaw Pact states, including the ex-USSR. Later on, in 1994 the Partnership for Peace program entered into force, meant to stimulate trust between NATO and the former Soviet republics. The majority of them joined by 2004, which has attracted Moscow's discontent, disinterested in becoming a member as well and perceiving NATO as a threat.

On February 1, 1992, Boris Yeltsin and G.H.W. Bush met at Camp David to sign the declaration on Russian-American cooperation, with prospect a new era of "friendship and partnership." Western aid, US included was offered to the former Soviet states in the following period.

Ethnic and cultural conflicts were recorded in various regions of the newly independent states - Transnistria, the Caucasus region (between Armenia and Azerbaijan and between pro-Russian separatists in Abkhazia and the Georgian government, respectively), and Chechnya.

NATO's intervention in the Yugoslav War in 1995 enraged Moscow, who later invoked the Alliance's bombings in Bosnia and Kosovo as a justification for the annexation of Crimea in 2014. On May 27, 1997, Russia and NATO signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act, pledging to "build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security."[8] Russia later invoked this agreement as favouring the permanent stationing of NATO troops in former Warsaw Pact countries, but NATO rejected the claims.[9]

Then 9/11 followed and the Russia expressed solidarity with the American people. Subsequently, the US initiated its invasion in Afghanistan – the longest in American war history lasting until the 2021 withdrawal- and it unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) signed with the Soviet Union in 1972, much to the objection of Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Former US President George Walker Bush stated: "I have concluded the ABM treaty hinders our government's ways to protect our

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[8] US Department of State Archive, "NATO-Russia Founding Act," May 15, 1997, https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eur/fs_nato_whitehouse.html.

[9] "U.S.- Russia Relations: Quest for Stability," https://usrussiarelations.org/2/timeline, accessed Sept. 1, 2022.

people from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks." US attention will have then focused on the axis of evil (Iran, Iraq), disregarding the positions of France, Russia and Germany.

NATO enlargement continued in 2004 with the admission of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, a movement that Russia considered an infringement on its national interests and a destabilization of world order. Anger was stirred up more on account of Georgia and Ukraine's likelihood of becoming NATO members in the future.

The colour revolutions supporting pro-European leaders in former Soviet countries intensified tensions in Moscow. Similar events were organized in Georgia (Rose Revolution - 2003), Ukraine (Orange Revolution - 2004) and Kyrgyzstan (Tulip Revolution - 2005).

Russian internal reforms, including the restrictions of its free press, and its foreign policy behaviour were criticized by American leaders. Delivering his speech at the Vilnius Conference on May 4, 2006, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney pointed to Russia "unfairly and improperly restrict[ing] the rights of her people" while using its natural resources as "tools of intimidation or blackmail, either by supply manipulation or attempts to monopolize transportation. And no one can justify actions that undermine the territorial integrity of a neighbour, or interfere with democratic movements,"[10] he argued.

Further action by the US in the same spirit of combatting what they called "rogue states" (Iran, North Korea), saw the creation of missile defence complexes in Poland (10 interceptor missiles) and the Czech Republic (a radar tracking station) abandoned only in September 2009, met with visible Russian opposition. "The creation of a U.S.-European anti-missile base can only be regarded as a substantial reconfiguration of the American military presence in Europe,"[11] said in an interview the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin.

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[10] Office of the Vice President, "Vice President's Remarks at the 2006 Vilnius Conference," May 4, 2006, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/05/20060 504-1.html.

[11] Bruce I. Konviser, "U.S. Missiles in E. Europe Opposed by Locals, Russia Kremlin Calls Proposed Interceptors a 'Clear Threat'," *The Washington Post*, January 28, 2007, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2007/01/28/us-missiles-in-e-europe-

In December 2007, another US-Russian agreement of nuclear forces was abandoned, as Moscow suspended its adherence to the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) accord, designed to limit troops, tanks, artillery, warplanes, and concentrated military deployments within Europe.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's proposal of a new security arrangement in the post-Cold War international system in which the United States, European Union (EU), and Russia were seen as the "three branches of European civilization"[12] was not taken into consideration by Western counterparts. In 2008, in response to NATO deployment of missile defence systems in Central Europe, Russia uncovered its intention to install Iskander short-range and nuclear-capable tactical ballistic missiles in Kaliningrad.[13]

The New START Treaty was signed by Presidents Obama and Medvedev on April 9, 2010 to replace the previous Treaty of Moscow, expiring in 2012. Following the Arab Spring protests, the Syrian Civil War began in March 2011. NATO intervened in Libya, despite Russia's abstention in the UN Security Council. Fights ended in late October that year with the capturing and killing of revolutionary leader Muammar Gaddafi.

In 2014, the Ukrainian province Crimea was annexed by Russia, an action ultimately sanctioned by the US, the EU, Canada, and Japan among others. Soon war began in the Eastern part of Ukraine, the Donbass region. After the failure of the first agreement, the Minsk II Accord signed by Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany was meant to put an end to this conflict. Nonetheless, provisions were not implemented in their entirety and tensions continued.

First the Russians in 2015, and then the Americans in 2017 decided to intervene military in the Syrian civil war. Currently, there is no "end date"

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opposed-by-locals-russia-span-classbankheadkremlin-calls-proposed-interceptors-a-clear-threatspan/b1c7ef2a-92f6-4b8d-9955-8adc63d7b537/.

[12] Oleg Shchedrov, "Russia Comes in from Cold, Medvedev Says in Berlin," Reuters, June 5, 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-medvedev-security-idUSBAT00225020080605.

[13] Adarsh Vijay, "Iskander-M in Kaliningrad: The Changing Equations of Deterrence," Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Nov. 9, 2016, http://www.ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=5172.

when the US troops should withdraw from the operation, as stated by Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the Commander of US Central Command, in 2019.[14]

As Donald Trump won against his Democrat counter candidate, Hillary Clinton, an ample debate ensued on the issue of Moscow's interference in the 2016 US presidential elections, followed by the expulsion of several Russian diplomats appointed in the US. Retaliation came from Moscow as over 750 U.S. diplomats were expelled from Russia in the summer of 2017.

Defensive weapons were sent to Ukraine from America to resist Russian-backed forces in the Eastern part of the country. Russia and the US continued the offensive weaponry supremacy race. President Trump's U.S. Nuclear Posture Review released in 2018, a kind of "escalate to de-escalate" strategy,[15] significantly changing the country's nuclear agenda by introducing low-yield nuclear weapons, was met with criticism by Russia perceiving it as "focused on confrontation and…anti-Russian."[16] Another step US President Trump made was to withdraw from the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA), much to the discontent of major European allies and the surprise of the global community as well.

Washington and Moscow accused each other of violating provisions of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), raising concerns about Russia's development of cruise missiles and of the US anti-ballistic missile system, Aegis Ashore, respectively. On February 2018, the US announced its withdrawal from the Treaty. "This withdrawal is a direct result of Russia's sustained and repeated violations of the treaty over many years and multiple presidential administrations," affirmed the then defence Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper.[17]

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[14] Lara Sellgman, "No 'End Date' for U.S. Troops in Syria," *Foreign Policy*, Nov. 25, 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/25/no-end-date-for-u-s-troops-in-syria/.

[15] Olga Oliker and Andrey Baklitskiy, "The Nuclear Posture Review and Russian 'De-Escalation:' A Dangerous Solution to a Nonexistent Problem," War on the Rocks, Feb 10, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/nuclear-posture-review-russian-de-escalation-dangerous-solution-nonexistent-problem/.

[16] "U.S.- Russia Relations: Quest for Stability."

[17] C. Todd Lopez, "U.S. Withdraws From Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty," US Department of Defence, Aug 2, 2019, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1924779/us-withdraws-from-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-treaty/.

In a May 2019 National Defence Authorization Act, the US Senate Armed Services Committee stressed that "our margin of military supremacy has eroded and is undermined by new threats from strategic competitors like China and Russia."[18] The same posture was advanced by the American military leaders, as U.S. Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said "Russia is a competitor, and the NATO advantage over a resurgent Russia has eroded."[19] At the same time, Russia perpetuated the message that the liberal idea has become obsolete. Another point on this matter was raised during the 2021 session of the Annual Valdai Discussion Club in Sochi, when President Putin took the occasion to position himself critically towards the so-called Western "cancel culture" and the liberalization of values.[20]

Moscow had been the subject of multiple US (and not only) economic sanctions (see for example the case of Russia's annexation of Crimea, its involvement in 2018 Kerch Straight Attacks, the case of Nord Stream 2 Pipeline, the case of fraudulent Russian oligarchs, or the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and opposition leader Alexey Navalny). This has additionally intensified its tensions and rivalry with the American part.

Moreover, the disinformation phenomenon was another element of dissent within US-Russia relations and it continued to manifest during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the first time in a decade, in December 2010 the Russian navy has been reported to participate in joint exercises together with NATO members. These involved ships from Russia, Pakistan, the US, the UK, China, Japan, Turkey, the Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.[21]

The December 17, 2021 Russian official proposal of security guarantees, including the prevention of NATO's enlargement as to accept

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[18] US Government Publishing Office, "National Defence Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 2020 - Report," June 11, 2019, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRPT-116srpt48/html/CRPT-116srpt48.htm.

[19] David Brennan, "NATO Superiority Over Russia Has 'Eroded,' Forcing Alliance to Create New Strategy, U.S. General Says," *Newsweek*, Sept. 18, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/nato-superiority-russia-eroded-forcing-alliance-create-new-strategy-u-s-general-1459893.

[20] "U.S.- Russia Relations: Quest for Stability."

[21] "U.S.- Russia Relations: Quest for Stability."

Ukraine as a member were to receive a "principled and pragmatic evaluation." However, the main request regarding Ukraine's accession was rejected by Washington. Open confrontation was then expected. The pro-Russian separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk were officially recognized by Moscow on February 21, 2022. Only three days later, on February 24, a special operation to demilitarize and "de-Nazify" Ukraine began,[22] transforming into a lasting war.

The EU position on the axis of US-Russia relations

Generally speaking, the EU top priorities align with the US and NATO objectives. If we talk about ideology and geopolitical influence, the transatlantic partnership remains the cornerstone relationship of the international system. Of course, there were also other dimensions, we mention here the economic, energetic, cultural or academic cooperation that had a positive development in the last decades, overall. Especially in the present context, marked by emerging security, humanitarian, economic, technological or environmental challenges, the EU-US cooperation needs to thrive.

Over the years, the European countries did not always agree with American foreign policy decisions, see for instance the interventions in the Middle East. There were also economic disputes, as in the case of the well-known TTIP, which was put on the back burner, as the two did not manage to agree on several vital points, like the use of GMOs, fracking technology, the transparency of the negotiation process, among other issues. Frictions arose also on climate matters, after President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. With the election of Joe Biden, a shade of hope reappeared for the Euro-Atlantic relation – as in 2014, after it had reached a low point in

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[22] Olivia B. Waxman, "Historians on What Putin Gets Wrong About 'Denazification' in Ukraine," *Time*, March 3, 2022, https://time.com/6154493/denazification-putin-ukraine-history-context/.

the previous years. Such a version of a "consolidated West"[23] would not have been perceived favourably by Moscow.

When it comes to the other pillar of our analysis, the EU on the one hand acknowledges the importance of Russia but it disagrees with Moscow's internal policy and its actions targeting the civil society, the free press, and the electoral process.[24] On the other hand, Russia sees mainly the economic potential of the community bloc, otherwise considering the EU a platform for US policy in this area, heavily dependent on the Americans in many regards and not a desirable cooperation partner in general.[25]

However, we must stay aware of the individual bilateral ties that some EU countries developed with Russia and that are still in place today. Especially in the economic/energetic field, the great dependence on the Russian gas supply has rendered European countries highly vulnerable, in a quest for new alternatives now as the Russian-Ukrainian war continues.

Security matters

It can be read both ways. In the post-Cold War era, the Europeans and Americans engaged to ensure and protect the security and stability of the international system by further developing their collaboration in this field. Sometimes questioning the US dominant position on the continent, the EU gave signs it wants to build a better security framework with its own forces and eventually achieve its independence (still a controversial issue), while complementing NATO's efforts whenever necessary. What is important is that EU states preferred transatlanticism over EU-Russia relations on security matters.

We have so far observed a gradual ambition of European leaders to develop a European defence and Security Identity (later transformed into the

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[23] Andrey Kortunov, "Russia–EU Relations in 2020: Opportunities, Limitations and Possible Trends," RIAC, December 6, 2019, https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/russia-eu-relations-in-2020-opportunities-limitations-and-possible-trends/.

[24] Nivedita Kapoor, "Russia-EU Relations: The End of a Strategic Partnership," Policy Commons, March 11, 2021, https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1424345/russia-eu-relations/2038619/, 7.

[25] Kapoor, 10.

Common Foreign and Security Policy) - meant to both consolidate EU's own military capabilities and to strengthen the European pillar within NATO -, as well as an EU strategic autonomy, especially on the wave of unpredictability spurred by Donald Trump's administration.

Nevertheless, NATO has remained the most credible international format of transatlantic cooperation in the fields of security and defence. Its relevance as a defensive political and military organization is a fact in the post-Cold War period, as it was able to identify, frame and adapt to the newly emerging threats of the 21st century. It can, however, improve its efficiency in the future, by investing more in the credibility of defence.

The EU-US security and defence cooperation has developed towards a better coordination process starting with 2009. Contrasting with the rather confrontational style of his predecessor in the White House, President Barack Obama's new approach to Europe and European integration, his willingness to employ "soft power" tools alongside with the traditional military instruments the US possessed, "a radical shift from the neo-conservatives' belief in America's hegemony,"[26] opened up enthusiastic prospects for the EU's vision of a global order framed in the spirit of multilateralism.

Introducing the broader US vision of a globalised, interconnected society and their new perspective of the international community in international relations during Obama's time in office, Álvaro de Vasconcelos affirmed that an important change in American foreign policy was the recognition - as apparently viable since the fall of the Berlin Wall - of the US as an European actor, interested in the EU's unity and further integration.[27]

Discussing this generally positive trend – metaphorically denominated as the "Obama bounce" and the transatlantic renaissance – Marcin Zaborowski said in that "the Obama phenomenon has reversed a dramatic decline in America's image and prestige in Europe during the Bush

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[26] Álvaro de Vasconcelos, "Introduction – Responding to the Obama Moment: the EU and the US in a Multipolar World," in *The Obama Moment-European and American Perspectives*, eds. Álvaro de Vasconcelos, Marcin Zaborowski (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2009), 11-12, https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/The_Obama_Moment__web_A4_0.pdf.

[27] de Vasconcelos, "Introduction," 15.

period and the Europeans are now again in love with America and open to its leadership."[28]

In this context of revitalizing the transatlantic strategic security relation, the EU-US positions also needed to be revised and rebalanced, as, generally speaking, strategic dialogue was actually and mostly developing bilaterally, between individual (stronger) EU Member States and the US, causing resentments due to unequal engagement of the Union in its entirety.

One particular point on the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Relations' 2009 report stated that the EU-US summits should be organized twice a year.[29] Ironically, one year later leaders decided that these official encounters would not take place automatically anymore, but only when deemed necessary by the parties, on the basis that the transatlantic relation had evolved to that extent that it no longer need such political reconfirmation to take place yearly. With the occasion of the Brussels Forum in March 2010, the EU HR, Catherine Margaret Ashton, said that "We will have a summit when we both feel the need for one. Meanwhile, the relationship goes on."[30]

The creation of a Transatlantic Political Council to deal with foreign and security matters was another point raised by the EP in 2009. The council was thought to be chaired by the HR/VP of the Commission and by the US Secretary of State and to meet at least every three months.[31] It has not, however, materialized to date, though MEPs continued to pledge for it even in 2018, in the context of the new paradigm imposed by President Trump's America First policy.[32]

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[28] Marcin Zaborowski, "Capitalising on Obamamania: How to Reform EU-US Relations?," in *The Obama Moment*, 230.

[29] Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament, "Report on the State of Transatlantic Relations in the Aftermath of the US Election," 2008/2199(INI), (Rapporteur: Francisco José Millán Mon), Brussels, March 23, 2009, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-6-2009-0114_EN.html.

[30] Valentina Pop, "EU-US Summits to Take Place 'Only When Necessary'," Brussels, March 27, 2010, https://euobserver.com/foreign/29782.

[31] Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament, "Report."

[32] European Parliament, "'America First' Policy Goes against EU-US Partnership, Say MEPs," September 12, 2018, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/nl/press-room/20180906IPR12109/america-first-policy-goes-against-eu-us-partnership-say-meps.

For the first time since the Lisbon Treaty became effective, starting abruptly with the credo that "defence matters,"[33] the European Council reunited in Brussels in 2013 discussed thoroughly defence-related aspects and identified the main actions for enhanced EU cooperation, on three dimensions: "increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of CSDP, enhancing the development of capabilities and strengthening Europe's defence industry."[34] The Conclusions of the Council reiterated the fully complementary character of the CFSP with regard to NATO, in the already agreed format of the transatlantic strategic partnership and compliant with the autonomous decision-making and procedures of each.[35]

Based on the 2015 European Council mandate, the EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy, as presented by HR Federica Mogherini, was adopted on June 28, 2016 at the European Council in Brussels, to replace the previous 2003 European Security Strategy and suit the need of a "credible and responsive Union." The strategy represented a step forward in the EU's struggle to speak "with a single voice" on important matters bearing a global impact. It addressed a wider range of security-related aspects, such as defence, counter-terrorism, cyber security and energy security.

Invoking the concept of "strategic autonomy" and the necessity for the EU to be strengthened as a "security community," while also cooperating with NATO ("the bedrock of Euro-Atlantic security for almost 70 years"), the EU Global Strategy stated: "As Europeans we must take greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats. While NATO exists to defend its members – most of which are European – from external attack, Europeans must be better equipped, trained and organized to contribute decisively to such collective efforts, as well as to act autonomously if and when necessary. An appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important for Europe's ability to foster peace and safeguard security within

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[33] European Council, "Conclusions of the European Council 19/20 December 2013," Brussels, December 20 2013, http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-217-2013-INIT/en/pdf, 1.

[34] European Council, "Conclusions," 2.

[35] European Council, "Conclusions," 2.

and beyond its borders (…) A more credible European defence is essential also for the sake of a healthy transatlantic partnership with the United States."[36] The EU will not depart from its relation with the US to partner instead with Russia. This is partly due to the countries' close association within the NATO framework.[37]

The geopolitics of enlargement

As in the case of NATO, after 1990 the EU continued to receive new members in its community, including the Baltic states, which adhered in 2004, along with the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. As laid out in the "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation," the "geopolitical expansion pursued by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU)" is seen as a "containment policy" against Russia.[38]

The EU and NATO both support the idea of Ukraine joining each of the two organizations. On what the European Council President Charles Michel called a "historic moment," the EU leaders have made the step forward and granted candidate status to Ukraine as of 23 June 2022, thus confirming the European perspective of the country.[39] Heads of State and Government reunited in June 2021 at North Atlantic Council in Brussels declared: "We reiterate the decision made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance with the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as an integral part of the process; we reaffirm all elements of that decision, as well as subsequent decisions, including that each partner will be

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[36] Federica Mogherini, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe- A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy," June 2016, http://www.eeas. europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf, 19-20, 36.

[37] Dmitri Trenin, "Russia and Germany; From Estranged Partners to Good Neighbours," Carnegie Moscow Centre, June 2018, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Article_Trenin_ RG_2018_Eng.pdf.

[38] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation," February 18, 2013, https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/ official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186.

[39] Alexandra Brzozowski, "EU Leaders Grant Candidate Status to Ukraine and Moldova," Euractiv, Jun 23, 2022, https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/eu-leaders-grant-candidate-status-to-ukraine-and-moldova/.

judged on its own merits. We stand firm in our support for Ukraine's right to decide its own future and foreign policy course free from outside interference."[40] However, NATO membership for Ukraine remains a sensitive topic, as it still needs to fulfil the necessary criteria including anti-corruption reforms, and the Russian occupation of part of its territory poses another challenge for the Alliance that makes it remain cautious.

There are criteria that have to be met, both for EU and NATO membership. Beyond this, we observe the transatlantic willingness to export as much as possible the democratic, liberal values that form the very core of this relation. It is a way to enlarge the sphere of influence (though in a modern paradigm it might not be understood as in the past, in terms of dominance over the member countries, even if this too is still debatable) and securing a liberal order for the global system as a whole.

Russia was also trying to enlarge its sphere of influence and here we bring into discussion the mentally inherited historical vision of the imperial state. While NATO continued to expand on the European continent, Russia alongside with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, announced the foundation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as of June 15, 2001. The Eurasian format accounts for the world's largest regional organization, to succeed the former Shanghai Five (reuniting China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan) and it is aimed at encouraging initiatives of cooperation on matter of politics, trade, economy, and culture to education, energy, and transportation.[41]

The Cold War period revealed somehow of an equilibrium of forces between the US/NATO and the USSR/Warsaw Pact in terms of conventional and nuclear military strength, but nowadays cooperation in the NATO framework cannot be compared to Russia's relation with the Collective Security Treaty Organisation countries - Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Russia's failure to support Kyrgyzstan in 2010 or Armenia during its 2020 war with Azerbaijan renders the organization's commitment to mutual defence debatable. In January 2022, CSTO launched

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[40] NATO, "Brussels Summit Communiqué," June 14, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/ natohq/news_185000.htm..

[41] Eleanor Albert, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Council on Foreign Relations, Oct. 14, 2015, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/shanghai-cooperation-organization.

a peacekeeping mission to Kazakhstan as its first ever intervention.[42] Contrarily, Russia has no intention of joining the EU, but instead it seeks to build a different identity.[43]

Transatlanticism challenged

US-Russia economic relations are currently at a low level. It is not the same for the EU, as in some cases, the members states' economies are far more integrated with Russia's. Additionally, there are EU countries not satisfied with the bloc's sanctions on Russia.

Table 1. Russia among the EU's main partners for trade in goods, 2021
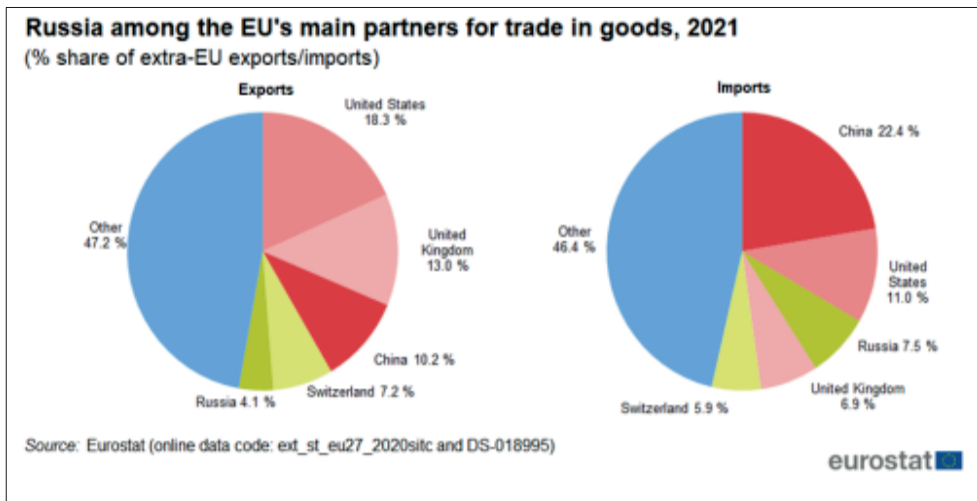
Source: Eurostat

Individual stances by EU countries like Germany or Hungary were met with disagreement by politicians and the public as well. It is the case of the German Social-Democrat views of partnering with Russia in the energy field or the Hungarian position (a country heavily dependent on the Russian gas) criticizing the imposition of EU sanctions on Russia arguing that this

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[42] Catherine Putz, "CSTO Deploys to Kazakhstan at Tokayev's Request," The Diplomat, Jan. 6, 2022, https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/csto-deploys-to-kazakhstan-at-tokayevs-request/.

[43] Kapoor, "Russia-EU Relations," 12.

strategy has had a negative effect on the bloc's natural gas imports, considerably dependent on the Russian supplies.[44]

The Nord Stream 2 pipeline passing through the Baltic Sea has generated many controversies between Germany and the US. In the EU there is partially the fear that such a project would render Europe even more dependent on the Russian natural gas resources. Regardless of US-imposed sanctions and calls by the European Parliament, Berlin and Moscow went on with the construction of the pipeline that was finalized in September 2021. Nevertheless, it has not yet become operational, as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, a former supporter of the project,[45] suspended its certification on February 22, 2022,[46] in response to the official recognition of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic by Russia.

Megatrends impacting upon the US-Russia relation

The National Intelligence Council's Global Trends 2030 report has identified several "megatrends" that could potentially impact upon the core of the U.S.-Russian relationship over the next decade. Among these we mention:

- a bipolar world: the United States and China will remain the two principal global powers in the major fields - military, economic, technological, and diplomatic; multiple power centres at the international and regional levels, Russia included, will strive to exert their influence in specific areas. The influence of non-state actors will be increasingly remarked in the new systemic power configuration;

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[44] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Orban Calls For U.S.-Russia Talks On Ukraine War, Saying Kyiv Can't Win," July 23, 2022, https://www.rferl.org/a/orban-ukraine-war-us-russia-talks/31956804.html.

[45] Alexandra Brzozowski, Magdalena Pistorius and Philipp Grüll, "German Government, Businesses Come Forward in Support of Nord Stream 2," Euractiv, Jan. 26, 2021, https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/german-government-businesses-come-forward-in-support-of-nord-stream-2/.

[46] Sarah Marsh and Madeline Chambers, "Germany Freezes Nord Stream 2 Gas Project as Ukraine Crisis Deepens," Reuters, Feb. 22, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/germanys-scholz-halts-nord-stream-2-certification-2022-02-22/.

- a proliferated world: the emergence of technology could facilitate the appearance and proliferation of new threats;
- a more conflict-prone world;
- a strategically unstable world: in the event of the US and Russia developing more sophisticated and lethal weapons, many of which not currently limited by arms control agreements;
- a technologically transformed world with a series of innovations impacting upon the global economy and on the very nature of the international system.[47]

Conclusions

Present-day Russia cannot compare itself with the military superpower that the Soviet Union was decades ago, though many times its actions were catalogued as depicting an imperialist conduct. The US-Russia relation, of great importance for the international system's stability, remains strained. Most of the bilateral arms control agreements supporting the fragile military balance between Washington and Moscow have disappeared.

The US, Russia and the EU have all strived to expand their sphere of influence in the post-Cold War period. In many respects, including security arrangements, transatlanticism prevails over EU-Russia cooperation and it represents the cornerstone relation at global level.

The EU as a group is pursuing its transatlantic agenda on geopolitical, security, humanitarian and energetic matters, condemning the Russian behaviour outside its borders and the long-term consequences. Bilateral ties that individual EU member states share with Moscow, for instance in the energy field, remain a challenge that the Union has to address comprehensively.

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[47] Richard Sokolsky, Eugene Rumer, "U.S.-Russian Relations in 2030," Carnegie Endowment for Democracy, June 15, 2020, https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/15/u.s.-russian-relations-in-2030-pub-82056.

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The New cycle of Populist parties in Bulgaria: from the "people's" to the "citizens'" Populists

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Abstract. The chapter aims to shed light on the new political actors in Bulgaria, which appeared in the extraordinary electoral year 2021. For the first time in the country's democratic history, three consecutive national elections were held in one year: on April 4, on July 11 and on November 14, 2021. They took place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a deepening political crisis, mass citizen protests in 2020 against the ruling party Citizens for the European development of Bulgaria (GERB), coupled with the radicalisation of the attitudes of politicians, parties, and voters. A new major dividing line was imposed: "new parties" or "protest parties" (in the name of the "sovereign" or of "the ordinary citizens") from the extra-parliamentary opposition versus all established and parliamentary parties. Our attention is focused on the new political actors because their role - constructive or disruptive - matters for the quality of the liberal parliamentary democracy and the EU and NATO integration of the country.

Keywords: elections 2021, Bulgaria, populism, instability, radicalisation.

Introduction

More than 32 years since the end of the communist rule, Bulgaria which joined NATO in 2004 and became a member of the EU in 2007, is still struggling to consolidate its democracy. The country has regularly been classified as a semi-consolidated democracy.[1] Corruption and poverty have

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[1] Freedom House, "Nations in Transit 2022. From Democratic Decline to Authoritarian Aggression," 2022, https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/NIT_2022_final_digital.pdf, 14.

been the main marks of Bulgaria for decades. Bulgaria is also a country with strong historical pro-Russian feelings amongst a part of the populations and parties. Geopolitical crises such as the Russian war in Ukraine risk to put into question how deep its integration in NATO and the European Union is. Like other East-European countries, Bulgarian democracy suffers from weaknesses and among the main concerns remain the unreformed judicial system and the Rule of Law. Studies on transitions in East-Central Europe have pointed out that "the new transitology," focused on the effectiveness of regimes and on informal power networks, uses now concepts such as "competitive authoritarianism," "patronalism," "neopatrimonialism," and "mafia-state" to describe political and international security processes in the region.[2] The party Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria and its founder Boyko Borisov have established and maintained for 12 years their political hegemony and have developed a network of clientelism and patronage, while weakening opposition, civil society, and the freedom of media. The elections in 2021 were the expression of the rejection of the model of government, imposed by GERB, defined by the opposition forces as "authoritarian," "state capture," "mafia," etc.

In the Bulgarian political history, there are traditions for the emergence of different types of populisms - from the extreme right to progressive ones. One example is the "green" or "peasants' dictatorship" of the agrarian leader Alexander Stambolijski (1919-1923), who served as a prime minister after the debacle in the aftermath of the Grande guerre. This government was ended by a military coup d'état on June 9, 1923, while Stambolijski was cruelly killed by members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO).

The populist phenomena and parties in the new democratic period in Bulgaria have been analysed by a great number of studies, books[3] and a

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[2] Mikhail Minakov, "The Transition of 'Transition:' Assessing the Post-Communist Experience and Its Research," in *Meandering in Transition. Thirty Years of Reforms and Identity in Post-Communist Europe*, eds. Ostap Kushnir and Oleksandr Pankieiev (Lanham: Lexington Books, Rowman&Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., 2021) 25-37.

[3] Petia Gueorguieva, "L'Apologie de la Nation Bulgare" (The Apology of the Bulgarian Nation), in *Populismes. L'envers de la démocratie* (Populisms. The Reverse of Democracy), eds. Marie-Claude Esposito, Alain Laquieze, and Christine Manigand (Paris, Editions

special issue on "National populism."[4] Different populist cycles have evolved from the discontent with the established parties. The core issue of each populist cycle has constantly been the corruption and the sense of injustice and the inequalities between the winners and the losers of transformations. The elections in 2001 provided for the victory of the former king Simeon the Second and his National Movement Simeon the Second (NDSV), which for months in 2001 became the largest party in the country, causing electoral losses to the traditional democratic right. The very personalised NDSV was defined as "centrist populist" party. In 2005, the populist radical right party Ataka made its first electoral breakthrough and achieved its first parliamentary representation.

In 2009 a new populist and personalized formation around the personality of Boyko Borisov – "Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria" (GERB) emerged. During this populist cycle, other parties appeared such as Law, Order and Justice. GERB succeed in imposing its political hegemony and won all parliamentary elections from 2009 to July 2021. The mass protests against the corruption and established parties in 2013-2014 paved the way for the electoral ascent of the populist radical right

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Vandemiaires), 193-203; Petia Gueorguieva, "Les Patriotes unis aux rênes du pouvoir" (The Patriots United at the Reins of Power), in *Nationalismes en Europe, Revue L'Action nationale* (Nationalisms in Europe. The National Action Review), ed. Hubert Rioux, vol. CVIII, no. 3 (March 2018): 104-18; Petia Gueorguieva, "La 'normalisation' de la droite radicale populiste en Bulgarie après 2009" (The "Normalisation" of the Radical Populist Right in Bulgaria after 2009), in *L'Etat face à ses transformations* (The State and Its Transformations), ed. Benjamin Biard (Louvain: La-Neuve Academia, L'Harmattan, Collection Science Politique, N° 22, 2018), 259-78; Blagovesta Cholova, and Jean-Michel De Waele, "Populism in Bulgaria: The Politics of Resentment," in *Southeastern Europe* 38 no. 1 (2014): 56-86, https://doi.org/ 10.1163/18763332-03801003; Anna Krasteva and Gabriella Lazaridis, "Far Right. Populist Ideology, 'Othering' and 'Youth'," in *Populism, Media and Education. Challenging Discrimination in Contemporary Digital Societies*, ed. Maria Ranieri (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 9-25; Emilia Zankina, "Populism, Voters and Cleavages in Bulgarian Politics," in *Politologicky Casopis/ Czech Journal of Political Science* 1 (2017): 56-71; Birte Siim, Anna Krasteva, Anna Aino Saarinen eds., *Citizens' Activism and Solidarity Movements. Contending with Populism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Ildiko Otova and Evelina Staykova, *Migration and Populism in Bulgaria* (London & New York, Routledge, 2022).

[4] Special Issue "Politics in Time of Crisis," *Political Studies*, Sofia, Bulgarian Political Science Association Review no. 1-2 (2021).

partis National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria (NDSV), Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization VMRO-BND, and the revival of Ataka.

Nevertheless, neither NDSV in 2001, nor GERB in 2009 and afterwards achieved an absolute majority in the National Assembly. In consequence, the country had to adapt to governmental coalitions. The first GERB government from 2009 to 2013 was a one-party minority cabinet which benefited from the parliamentary support of parties such as Ataka or Law, Order and Justice or non-allied deputies. GERB put in place a strategy of division of parties and co-optation. The second GERB government from 2014 to 2017 was a minority coalition led by GERB with partners the democratic right parties coalition Reformist Bloc and the populist leftist coalition Alternative for Revival of Bulgaria (ABV). The government was supported in parliament by the alliance Patriotic Front made up of two populist radical right parties, the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO-BND). The third government from 2017 to 2021 was a coalition between GERB and the alliance United Patriots consisting of three populist radical right parties: the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization VRO-BND and Ataka. In 2017 a small, personalized populist radical right party, Voliya (Will), also entered parliament. The GERB's political dominance has allowed and facilitated the legitimation and the institutionalization of populist radical right parties. For more than two decades, the fight against corruption has been a fertile ground for the appearance of number of parties and movements: NDSV; Ataka; GERB; Law, Order and Justice; Will; Da, Bulgaria! etc.

The elections of 2021 are distinguished by the number of new anti-corruption challengers which appeared at the same time: There is such a People!, Stand Up! Mafia get Out!, We continue the change!. All these actors compete against the established parties and among each other. Their successes are different, and it is too early to consider their institutionalisation. Nevertheless, there is a new anti-corruption populist cycle which could have durable impact on the party system.[5] In this wave,

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[5] Rumiana Kolarova, "2021 Triple Parliamentary Elections Phenomenon in Bulgaria," *Political Studies. Special Issue Politics in Time of Crisis*, no. 1-2 (2021): 28-57; Antony Todorov,

the populist radical right in not in the forefront. Except for the new far-right anti-European, anti-NATO, pro-Russian party Revival (Vazrazhdane), the new challenger and populist parties differ from the established populist radical right and their nativist, xenophobic, nationalist and anti-European stances. New parties and movements like There is such a People! (ITN), Stand Up! Mafia Get Out! elaborate anti-establishment messages in the name of the empowerment of "the sovereign" (ITN); the "ordinary people" (Stand Up. BG!). We continue the Change! appeared to achieve "zero corruption," to reform the country and to give voice to "all honest and honourable people."

Political crisis

A special issue of the Bulgarian Political Science Association' review *Political Studies*, mentioned above, focuses on this extraordinary situation of three consecutive national elections held in the same year 2021. In 2021, over 61 per cent of Bulgarian citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with democracy.[6] Also 73% of Bulgarian respondents are concerned about the final results of an election being manipulated;[7] 70% are concerned about people being pressured to vote a particular way.[8] The attitudes towards the work of government are traditionally negative but the highest rates – 60% of negative attitudes were registered in September 2020 in the end of to the third government of GERB.[9] (Alpha Research). Similarly, the attitudes toward the work of the National Assembly are traditionally negative with the highest levels of dissatisfaction registered in September 202, 61% with only 7% of positive attitudes in December 2020.[10]

"Elections of Change or Failure?," *Political Studies. Special Issue Politics in Time of Crisis*, no. 1-2 (2021): 5-27.

[6] European Union, "Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020-2021," April 2021, https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2355.

[7] European Commission, "Special Barometer 507. Democracy in the EU," March 2021, https://fronteirasxxi.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ebs_507_en.pdf, 18.

[8] European Commission, "Special Barometer 507," 23.

[9] Alpha Research, "Attitudes Towards the Work of Government 2008-2022," n.d., https://alpharesearch.bg/monitoring/27/.

[10] Alpha Research, "Attitudes towards the Work of the National Assembly," n.d., https://alpharesearch.bg/monitoring/31/.

Table 1. Political Crisis in Bulgaria 2021-2022

I. April 4th, 2021 elections of the 45th National Assembly	II. July 11th, 2021 early elections of the 46th National Assembly	III. November 14th, 2021 early elections of the 47th National Assembly	IV. October 2d, 2022 early elections of the 48th National Assembly
• pick of the third wave of Covid-19; • regular elections after the end of the 44th National Assembly and of the third government of the party GERB (2017-2022) in coalition with the populist radical right alliance United Patriots; • results: GERB remains firtspolitical force but is in isolation; fragmented parliament - 6 parties and coalitions elected • breaktrough of new parties and coalitions : "There is Such a People!", "Stand Up! Mafia get Out!" • failure to elect new government and lack of majority in Parliament • 12 May 2021 - dissolution of the 45th National Assembly and early elections • Caretaker government appointed by the President R. Radev, PM Stefan Yanev	• more favourable sanitary situation but lower tutnout; • mandatory machine voting is implemented in all sections with more than 300 registered voters; • results: fort the first time since 2009 GERB loses its hegemony of first political force from the populist party "There is such a People!" • fragmented parliament - 6 parties elected; • failure to elect new government because of the radical strategy of "There is Such a People!"and the isolation of GERB; lack of majority, • 15 Seeptember 2021 - dissolution of the 46th National Assembly and new early elections. • Caretaker government appointed by the Preisdent R. Radev, PM Stefan Yanev	• rise of the fourth wave of Covid-19; lower turnout; • results : new challenger wins the elections - a coalition called "We continue the Change!"; fragmented parliament: 7 parties elected; breakthrough of the far-right party Vazrazhdane (Revival) • new coalition government formed by four parties and alliances : We continue the change! , Bulgarian Socialist Party, "There is such a People!' and Democratic Bulgaria (13 december 2021 - 2 august 2022) • There is such a People leaves the coalition i n June 2022; GERB initiates a vote of non confidence, • failure to form new parliamentary majority and to elect new government; • 2 August 2022: dissolution of the 47th National Assembly • caretaker government of appointed by by the Preisdent R. Radev ; PM Galab Donev	

The first regular elections were held on April 4, 2021, after the end of the legislative term of the 44th National Assembly and the third government of Prime-minister Boyko Borisov and his party GERB. It is important to note that this was the first national government since 2009 to complete the entire four years mandate provided by the Constitution. These elections were marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, mass discontent and radicalisation. In July 2020 the country was shaken by mass protests calling for the resignation of Prime minister Boyko Borisov and his government and the resignation of the Prosecutor general Ivan Geshev, appointed in 2019. Before the first elections held on April 4, 2021, the extra parliamentary opposition imposed a new dividing line and conflict: the cleavage opposing the "parties of the protest" to all established parties.

Table 2. Results of parliamentary elections held on April 4, 2021 in Bulgaria

Party, Coalition, Initiative Committee	Valid Votes	%	Parliamentary seats / 240
GERB-SDS	837 707	26.18%	75
There is such a People!	565 014	17.66%	51
BSP for Bulgaria	480 146	15.01%	43
Movement for Rights and Freedoms - DPS	336 306	10.51%	30
Democratic Bulgaria – Union (Da Bulgaria, DSB, Green Movement)	302 280	9.45%	27
Stand Up! Mafia Out!	150 940	4.72%	14
VMRO-BND	116 434	3.64%	-
BNO	94 515	2.95%	-
Revival	78 414	2.45%	-
Patriotic Coalition – Will and NFSB	75 926	2.37%	-

Source: Central Electoral Commission, https://results.cik.bg/pi2021/rezultati/

The GERB party remained the first political force but was in a severe isolation, while its allies from the populist radical right lost their parliamentary representation. The extra parliamentary opposition of the protest parties achieved parliamentary representation. The new populist party There is such a People! of showman Stanislav Trifonov became the second political force with 51 seats out of 240. The coalition Democratic Bulgaria (Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria, DA, Bulgaria! and the Green movement) won 27 seats out of 240. The coalition "Stand Up! Mafia get Out!" received 14 seats. The established opposition – the Bulgarian socialist party lost electoral support and became the third parliamentary force for the first time since 1990. The cooperation among these four anti-GERB forces was not possible, because Democratic Bulgaria and There is Such a People! refused to cooperate with the BSP. The impossibility to form a majority and to elect a government led to the dissolution of the 45th National Assembly and to early elections

Table 3. Results of early parliamentary elections, July 14, 2021

Party, Coalition, Initiative Committee	Valid votes	%	Parliamentary seats
There is such a People	657 829	24.08%	65
GERB- SDS	642 165	23.51%	63
BSP for Bulgaria	365 695	13.39%	36
Democratic Bulgaria – Union (Da Bulgaria, DSB, Green Movement)	345 331	12.64%	34

Party, Coalition, Initiative Committee	Valid votes	%	Parliamentary seats
Movement for Rights and Freedoms – DPS	292 514	10.71%	29
Stand Up! Mafia Out!	136 885	5.01%	13
The Bulgarian Patriots – VMRO, Will, NFSB.	85 795	3.14%	-
Revival	82 147	3.01%	-
Citizens' Platform Bulgarian Summer	49 833	1.82%	-

Source: Central Electoral Commission, https://results.cik.bg/pi2021_07/rezultati/index.html

The early elections on July 11, 2021 were won by the populist party There is such a People!. For the first time since 2009 the GERB party was not the winner of parliamentary elections. The chairman of There is such a People!, Stanislav Trifonov proposed a minority government of its own party, even though it had only 65 seats out of 240. They declined the possibility to form a coalition with other protest parties. This move provoked indignation on behalf of all other anti-GERB opposition parties. During the 46th National Assembly, the conflicts between the "protest parties" dominated and led to the early elections on November 14, 2021. The elections on July 11, 2021 confirmed the beginning of long lasting electoral changes, such as the decrease of the common weight of the established parties like GERB, BSP or DPS and possible transformation of the entire party system.[11]

Table 4. Results of the early elections on November 14, 2021

Party, Coalition, Initiative Committee	Valid votes	%	Parliamentary seats
We Continue the Change	673 170	25.67%	67
GERB-SDS	596 456	22.74%	59
Movement for Rights and Freedoms	341 000	13.00%	34
BSP for Bulgaria	267 817	10.21%	26
There is such a People	249 743	9.52%	25
Democratic Bulgaria – Union (Da Bulgaria, DSB, Green Movement)	166 968	6.37%	16
Revival	127 568	4.86%	13
Stand Up BG! We Come!	60 055	2.29%	-

Source: Central Electoral Commission, https://results.cik.bg/pvrns2021/tur1/rezultati/index.html

The third early elections, held on November 14, 2021 presented two surprises: the ascent of a new movement "We continue the change!" that

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[11] Todorov, "Elections," 20.

became the first political force, and the success of the far-right party Revival which achieved a parliamentary representation. The parliamentary populist radical right parties incurred major losses during the three elections held in 2021. Parties such as Ataka, the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB) or the short-lived party Volya (Will) have almost disappeared. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation also suffered the defeat even though it has two MEPs who ensure the party's visibility. These parties tried different coalitions for the three elections in 2021 but it was not enough to reach the threshold of 4% to enter parliament. The nationalist votes went to the new populist party There is such a People! or to other minor political formations. The party Vazrazhdane (Revival) benefited from the instability and the consecutive elections.

Table 5. Electoral results of Populist radical right parties in Bulgaria 2005-2021

Parlia-mentary elections	ATAKA Votes, %	VMRO-BND Votes, %	NFSB Votes, %	Volya (Will) Votes, %	Vazrazhdane (Revival) votes, %	Bulgarian Summer	Total Votes
2005	296 848, 8.93%		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	296 848
2009	395 733, 9.36%		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	395 733
2013	258 481, 7.29%	66 803, 1.88%	131 169, 3.70%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	456 453
2014	148 262, 4.52%	Coalition Patriotic Front 239 101, 7.28%		n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	387 363
2017	Coalition United Patriots 318 513, 9.31%			145 637, 4.26%	37 896, 1.11%	n.a.	502 046
4.2021	15 659, 0.49%	116 434, 3.64%	Patriotic coalition Volya and NFSB 75 926, 2.37%		78 414, 2.45%	94 515 2.95% (BNO)	380 948
7.2021	12 585, 0.46%	Coalition Bulgarian patriots 85 795, 3.14%			82 147, 3.01%	49 833, 1.82%	230 360
11.2021	12 153, 0.46%	28 322, 1.08%	coalition Patriotic Front 8 584, 0.33%	7 067, 0.27%	127 568, 4.86%	n.a.	183 694

Source: Central Electoral Commission

In the three 2021 parliamentary elections the support for all populist and challenger parties that received more than 1 percent of all valid votes, grew from 33.79% in April 2021 to 44.93% in November 2021. Their share of parliamentary seats also increased from 65 in April to 105 in November 2021. The trends are uneven between the parties. In July 2021, the party "There is

such a People" became the first political force and the first party able to get ahead of the GERB party since the 2009 elections. In November 2021 the newly appeared political challenger – "We continue the change!" became the first political force while the coalition Stand Up! We Come! lost its parliamentary representation. The party "There is such a people !" received its lowest results in 2021 with less than 400 000 votes in comparison with the previous elections.

Following the elections on November 14, 2021, a fragile governmental coalition was formed by four parties and coalitions: We Continue the Change!, the Bulgarian socialist party, There is such a people! and Democratic Bulgaria. Kiril Petkov was elected as Prime minister.

The main characteristic of this coalition was its heterogeneity and an impossible union of oppositions. During its brief existence, the coalition went through internal differences and divides. The party There is such a People! was opposed on issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic and sanitary measures. The Russian aggression in Ukraine revealed divisions on geopolitical questions. On the one hand, Democratic Bulgaria and We continue the Change! are pro-European, pro-NATO and clearly opposed to the Russian aggression in Ukraine. They called for strict sanctions on Russia, for helping Ukraine with military aid and for the end of the gas dependence on Gazprom and Russia. The government of Kiril Petkov refused to pay in roubles to Gazprom and at the end of April 2022 Gazprom cut the supplies to Bulgaria and Poland. On the other hand, the Bulgarian socialist party has opposed the sanctions on Russia, the supply of military equipment to Ukraine, and the end of contract and ties with Gazprom. The BSP repeatedly affirmed that Russia has been a friendly state and the party has been opposed to the expulsion of 70 Russian diplomats and personnel from the Russian embassy in Bulgaria in June 2022.[12] The Bulgarian socialist party and There is such a People! rejected the possibility that the Republic North Macedonia start negotiations of accession in the EU. In June 2021, the coalition partner "There is such a People!" decided to leave the coalition formally because of the conditions to unblock the start of negotiations between the Republic

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[12] Christian Oliver, "Bulgaria Expels 70 Russian Diplomats and Spies," Politico, June 28, 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/kiril-petkov-bulgaria-expels-70-russian-diplomats-and-spies/.

North Macedonia and the EU. The opposition party GERB initiated a no-confidence vote and on June 22, 2022 the coalition government collapsed with 123 votes for the end of the government and 116 votes in favour of the government.[13]

Populism

For decades, numerous analyses, books and studies have been focusing on the populism. At the same time, populist parties became more and more influent, institutionalized and entered parliaments and governments in Western and in East-Central European countries. Ilvo Diamanti and Marc Lazar defined the transformations of democracies as "popolocrazia."[14] We will mention here only few studies and authors. The "minimal definition" of populism is "a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people."[15] Populism is founded on three core concepts: the pure people; the corrupt elite and the general will. All manifestations of populism are based on the moral distinction between "the pure people "and "the corrupt elite." "In summary, we define populism as thin centred ideology with three core concepts and suggest that in the real world the populism hardly ever exists by itself. It has a 'chameleonic' character: populism can be left-wing or right-wing, organized in top-down, or bottom-up fashion, rely in very strong leader or even leaderless.[16]"

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[13] Deutsche Welle, "Bulgarian Government Collapses after a No-confidence Vote," June 22, 2022, https://www.dw.com/en/bulgaria-government-collapses-after-no-confidence-vote/a-62224345.

[14] Ilvo Diamanti and Marc Lazar, *Peuplecratie. La métamorphose de nos démocraties* (Peoplecracy. The Metamorphoses of Our Democracy) (Paris: Gallimard, 2018).

[15] Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition: An International Journal of Comparative Politics* 39 no. 4 (2004): 543, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x.

[16] Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America," in *Government and Opposition* 48, no 2 (2013): 153.

Populist radical right

The maximum definition of populist radical right parties encompasses a combination of three core ideological features: "nativism, authoritarianism, and populism."[17] The populist radical right believes that society should be structured according to strict rules and that the rule of law should be upheld at all costs.[18] The key issue of the authoritarian program of the populist radical right is the fight against crime through "an uncompromising (kompromissloses) approach against criminals," calls for a "zero tolerance" policy on crime. "The populist radical right further calls for a significant strengthening of the independence of the judiciary and police force. They want both institutions be free from (party) political influence. Regarding the judiciary, many parties claim that the judges are politically appointed and thus serve their partisan political masters, while the police are seen as being hindered in their work by political correctness and lack of political backup because of the cowardice of the established parties."[19] Populist radical right parties appeal to return the word to the people and to use plebiscitary instruments.

Centrist and technocratic populists

In his study "Throwing Out the Bums: Protest Voting and Unorthodox Parties after Communism," Grigore Pop-Eleches has focused on protest voting – "the practice for voting for a party not because of the actual content of its electoral message but in order to 'punish' other parties."[20] He proposed three types of unorthodox parties: radical left, extreme nationalists, and new/centrist populists. The new/ centrist-populist parties "do not adopt radical ideologies but rather attempt to sidestep ideology altogether by claiming to be nonideological antipolitical formations" and the

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[17] Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22.

[18] Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 145.

[19] Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 146.

[20] Grigore Pop-Eleches, "Throwing Out the Bums: Protest Voting and Unorthodox Parties after Communism," *World Politics* 62, no. 2 (2010): 223.

most prominent case is the Bulgarian National Movement Simeon II (NDSV)."[21] Their leaders create the parties "as vehicles for their personal political ambitions usually just prior the elections. Such parties are almost completely unencumbered by ideological constraints and are therefore free to tell the voters what they want to hear." These new/centrist-populist parties avoid anti-Western and anti-capitalist stances and they promise to fight corruption.

In their analysis of Andrej Babis and his party ANO 2011 (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens 2011), Vlastimil Havlik, Lenka Bustikova and Petra Guasti have developed the concept of "technocratic populism" and the populist politics of "ordinary people." "Technocratic populism uses the appeal of technical expertise to connect directly with the people, promising to run the state as a firm, while at the same time delegitimizing political opponents and demobilizing the electorate by instilling civic apathy."[22]

Havlik emphasizes the features of technocratic variant of the centrist populism: anti-political technocratic discourse; emphasis on anti-corruption and anti-elite rhetoric; ideologically unfocused - they avoid traditional labels "left" or "right" and present themselves as standing above what they consider to be outdated ideological conflicts; not so radical as populist radical right parties; the leaders proclaims themselves to be outsiders without political experience but often they are successful businessmen, etc. "An important part of ANO's populist anti-political narrative was de-ideologisation, or even depoliticization, and its resistance to being presented in terms of traditional party families or a left-wing ideological orientation. Although the party initially leaned to the right…it soon decided to sidestep a clear ideological profile and sought to target all groups of voters with non-ideological appeal."[23]

Milada Anna Vachudova develops the concept of ethnopopulism, which is "different from ethnic nationalism in that it is far more flexible and

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[21] Pop-Eleches, "Throwing Out the Bums," 231.

[22] Vlastimil Havlik, "Technocratic Populism and Political Illiberalism in Central Europe," *Problems of Post-Communism* 66 no. 6 (2019): 369-84, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216. 2019.1580590; Lenka Bustikova and Petra Guasti, "The State as a Firm: Understanding the Autocratic Roots of Technocratic Populism," *East-European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 33, no. 2 (2019): 302.

[23] Havlik, "Technocratic Populism," 369.

can cast a wider net. For ethnopopulists, 'the people' need not be defined only as a nation; they can also be defined very flexibly in terms of a culture, ethnicity, religion or even civilization."[24] The "enemies" are also flexible and can be adapted to different contexts and crises - the refugee crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Ethnopopulism can mix with a technocratic frame.

For Catherine De Vries and Sara B. Hobolt, most populist parties can also be classified within a broader category of "challenger parties" – "those parties that have not (yet) had the opportunity to control policy or government" and have every incentive to challenge the dominance of existing players through political innovation."[25] Challenger parties are most likely to succeed throughout a twofold innovation strategy based on "issue entrepreneurship" and on anti-establishment rhetoric to weaken the competence advantage of established parties."[26] Anti-establishment groups seek to devalue the dominant party's "brand" as a whole, to condemn the ruling classes as an elite pursuing only their own self- interest. They point out that if all populists are anti-establishment, not all parties that employ anti-establishment rhetoric are populist. The effects of successful challenger parties on national politics could be positive or disruptive. They can change the composition of parliaments; provide greater choice to voters and may increase feeling of representation. On the other hand, the success of challenger parties can increase the fragmentation and the polarization of the party system and make difficult the formation of governments which are less stable and effective.

In the next part we will focus on two parties: There is Such a People! and We continue the Change! which won the elections in July and in November 2021.

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[24] Milada A. Vachudova, "Ethnopopulism and Democratic Backsliding in Central Europe," *East European Politics* 36 no. 3 (2020): 320-21, https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1787163.

[25] Catherine E. De Vries and Sara B. Hobolt, "Challenger Parties and Populism," in *Populism. Origins and Alternative Policy Responses*, eds. Andrés Velasco and Irene Bucelli (London: London School of Economics Press), 54-55.

[26] De Vries and Hobolt, "Challenger Parties," 63-65.

There is Such a People! – between antisystem and technocratic populism

The party Ima takuv narod / There is such a People (ITN) is a personal and personalized political project of showman Stanislav Trifonov, popular among generations of Bulgarians because he stared his TV career at the beginning of the post-communist transition. Slavi Trifonov is a professional in the show business. In 2016 Slavi Trifonov and its team initiated a national referendum aimed to change radically the political system.[27] The Constitutional court declared as unconstitutional some questions proposed by Slavi Trifonov: the reduction in the number of representatives in the National Assembly from 240 to 120; the direct election of chiefs of police under a majoritarian rule in two rounds with an absolute majority. Bulgarian voters supported all three proposed changes at the referendum with majority, but because of the insufficient turnout, the its results were not validated.

Table 6. Results of the National referendum on November 6, 2016

Questions	"YES" votes	"NO" votes	Without a clear answer	Invalid votes
Question 1: "Do you support the national representatives to be elected by majoritarian electoral system with an absolute majority in two rounds?	2,509,864; 71, 95%	560,024; 16.05%	330,928; 9.49%	87,668; 2.51%
Question 2: "Do you support the introduction of compulsory voting in elections and referendums?"	2,158,929; 61.89%	905,691; 25.96%	336,180; 9.64%	87,668; 2.51%
Question 3: "Do you support the annual subsidy for financing the political parties and coalitions to be 1 BGN for every valid vote in the last parliamentary elections?	2,516,791; 72.16%	523 759; 15.02%	359,778; 10.31%	87,668; 2.51%

Source: Central Electoral Commission https://results.cik.bg/pvrnr2016/tur1/referendum/

In 2019 Slavi Trifonov announced the launch of its own TV channel 7/8 TV and his intention to enter politics and to form a political party. The

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first attempt to register a party called "There is no such State" failed. The second attempt to register a party called "There is Such a People!" succeeded on June 22, 2020. From the beginning, the party acts as an anti-system party, its aim is to change the system. Nevertheless, in applying the typology proposed by Zulianello, There is such a People! fits the category of "half house" parties, that are integrated in the system but question some of its core characteristics.[28] The behaviour of the chairman and its team is anti-elitist and anti-establishment. The attitudes towards institutions like Constitutional court, media, parties, parliament aims at their delegitimation. Trifonov rejects media and journalists; he makes declarations and addresses exclusively on his own TV channel 7/8 TV directly to citizens and audience. The party started as a TV party. ITN refused to form a coalition with other parties after the elections in July 2021. There is Such a People! caused the end of the four-party coalition in June 2022 and the dissolution of 47th National Assembly.

There are similarities between There is such a People! and the Italian populist party Five Star movement, and also between There is Such a People! and the populist right party Kukis'15 founded by the former rock star Pawel Kuskis. The focus in the populist rhetoric of Slavi Trifonov is put on "the sovereign people" and the moral element in politics and in general.

"There Is Such A People! is a party of free Bulgarian citizens who believe in democracy and civil society," announces the website of the party. "Bulgaria is a free country, but The Bulgarian citizens aren't free," "the political class in a rude and demonstrative way ignores people's wishes and is caring only for its own benefit and de facto takes power away from its own people."[29] The party appeals for an "Unmediated power to the sovereign people:" "Article 1 of the Constitution provides that 'the entire power of the state stems from the people.' It means that according to the Constitution the Bulgarian people is at the top of the power. We want to transform Bulgaria

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[28] Mattia Zulianello, "Anti-System Parties Revisited: Concept Formation and Guidelines for Empirical Research," *Government and Opposition* 53, no. 4 (2018): 668, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2017.12.

[29] Politicheska partia Ima takuv Narod (The Political Party Ima takuv Narod), n.d., https://pp-itn.bg/, last access September 2022.

into a genuine free country where the society takes the decisions, and the politicians execute them."[30] The party's goals are: "enhanced citizens' participation in the decision making throughout direct popular consultations; change of the electoral system from proportional to two rounds majoritarian with absolute majority required; decreasing the number of MPs in the National Assembly from 240 to 120; e-voting at elections and referendums; introduction of mandatory voting; direct citizens' election of the chiefs of regional directions and of the directions of district of the ministry of internal affairs, the general prosecutor of the Republic, the Ombudsman of the Republic; reform of the public health system and ensuring equal access for all citizens to quality and adequate health care; implementation of reform of the administrative system."[31] There is such a People! is for the enhancing the role of Republic of Bulgaria in EU, the country's integration in the Schengen agreement and the Bank Union of the EU for the integration in the Eurozone.

An important feature of the party is the authoritarian personalized style of leadership of Slavi Trifonov. In August 2022, the party proposed a new national referendum for the transformation of the parliamentary into a presidential regime. Ahead of the early elections on October 2, 2022, There is such a People! run with the populist and antisystem slogan "Alone against All. Together with You." In relation with the different types of populism discussed earlier, ITN has some characteristics of the technocratic populism and of the ethnopopulism. Further institutionalization may lead to more conservative and nationalist identity or even to the populist radical right.

The President of the Republic and the new populist cycle

Several events have led to the protest cycle in 2020, but two have had an important impact on the citizens' mobilization. The first was the attempt

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[30] Politicheska partia Ima takuv Narod (The Political Party Ima takuv Narod), n.d., https://pp-itn.bg/, last access September 2022.

[31] "Statutes of Political Party There Is Such a People," n.d., https://pp-itn.bg/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/%D0%A3%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B2-%D0%98%D0%A2%D0%9D.pdf, last access September 2022.

on July 7, 2020 of the chair of the then extra-parliamentary opposition party "DA, Bulgaria!" (part of the coalition Democratic Bulgaria) Hristo Ivanov and his colleague Ivaylo Mirchev to reach by boat the public beach near the property of the honorary chairman of the party "Movement for Rights and Freedoms" (DPS), Ahmed Dogan. The bodyguards, who turned out to be from the National Service of Protection, pushed them back.[32] The purpose of their beach-embarkation at Rosenets park was "to show that Bulgarian people are not allowed to use a piece of land, which is a public state property and belongs to them and that Dogan enjoys some kind of privileges which includes violations of the law."[33] Hristo Ivanov served as a Minister of Justice in the second GERB government but he resigned in 2015 because of the lack of will to reform the judiciary and to limit the uncontrolled powers of the prosecutor general, a position which is considered to be politicised and used to protect the corruption among politicians and their networks. In 2017 Hristo Ivanov founded the party DA, Bulgaria!, which joined in 2018 the coalition Democratic Bulgaria along with two other parties – Democrats for a strong Bulgaria and the Green movement. Hristo Ivanov's action on the boat of was livestreamed on Facebook and became viral.

The second event that fuelled the mass protests was the action of the Prosecutor general Ivan Gechev's office on July 9, 2020 during which police officers entered the building of the Presidency of the Republic and arrested the president's advisers. This action was perceived by the civil society and opposition parties as a violation of the separation of powers and democracy and gave the signal for the long-lasting mass protests in Sofia and several other cities. President Roumen Radev, elected in 2016 as a candidate of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, has been the most popular politician for years. The prosecutor's action has mobilised even the democratic right parties in defence of the head of State in the name of protecting democracy. The citizens and parties that joined the protests were heterogenous: the civil

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[32] Novinite.com, "Democratic Bulgaria, Hristo Ivanov: There Must Be Early Elections, People Are Ready For Them," July 13, 2020, https://www.novinite.com/articles/205262/Democratic+Bulgaria%2C+Hristo+Ivanov%3A+There+Must+Be+Early+*Elections*%2C+People+Are+Ready+For+Them.

[33] Novinite.com, "Democratic Bulgaria."

society organizations, left-wing and right-wing parties, the extreme right party Vazrazhdane (Revival) but united against what they saw as an attempt to impose an authoritarian rule on behalf of GERB. In this context president Roumen Radev joined the protesters on July 9, 2020 and with his fist raised in the air declared: "I see people from all political horizons, it is no coincidence, I see young and old people and it is no coincidence (…)The Bulgarian mafia has achieved the impossible: it has united the honest people against itself (…) It is up to us, up to all of us, to throw the mafia out of the executive power, to throw the mafia out of the prosecution. The mafia uses the prosecution as its own shield and for political repressions, the Bulgarian mafia is abrupt because we have tolerated it for too long …but today the anger pours on the square, the anger from the lies from the robbery …it is our fight for a modern and European Bulgaria (…) I would like to remind the words of the judge Giovanni Falcone which used to be my foe '*Cowards die every day, the brave – only once*!'…No to the fear! We will get Bulgaria back! Moutri out! (Mafia out)."[34]

This populist statement is important for the understanding of the cleavage that divided the "protest parties" of "the honest," "ordinary people" versus all established parties, represented in parliament. This stance allowed the rise of new challenger populist parties during the elections in 2021: the coalition called "Stand Up! Mafia get Out" and We continue the Change!, and the "Bulgarian Rise." The president of the Republic has legitimized the populist divide of "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite" and has emotionally defined en bloc as "mafia" all members, deputies and militants of some established parties. In this way, President Radev justified an exclusionary approach by suggesting who is the good and the pure people who has the right to be in parliament and to govern and who is not and fostered the radicalisation and moralisation in politics. As Nadia Urbinati notes, "the central claim of all populist movements is to get rid of the establishment, or whatever is posited as lying between 'us' (the people outside) and the state" and that "the attack against the political establishment

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[34] Bulgarian Free Television, "The Declaration of President Roumen Radev on July 9th 2020 at the Protest for Democracy," July 9, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwyVTR9f9nU.

is the 'spirit" of populism in power'."[35] Cas Mudde emphasizes that the populism is based on monism and moralism.[36] As a monist ideology it sees the people "as one" and one group is legitimate, "because the elite are corrupt and therefore do not deserve the rights and protections of a legitimate opposition."[37] The moralism is "central" for populism that distinguishes the morally pure from morally corrupt. Urbinati points out that "antiestablishmentarianism does not belong to populism but is a category that populism takes from democracy. The thing that makes populist antiestablishmentarianism distinctive (…) is the way in which it is constructed according to the binary assumption that breaks politics and its actors into two different groups, defined according to the position they occupy in relation to the state power (…) from the assumption of the existence of predefined polarized groupings and enmity."[38]

President Radev provided an opportunity structure for the appearance of new challenger parties, by appointing caretaker governments. Two new challenger/ populist parties appeared from the caretaker governments in 2021: the party "We continue the change!" and the party of the former prime minister of the caretaker government Stefan Yanev, "Bulgarian Rise". President Radev ensured the promotion of Kiril Petkov and Asen Vasilev by appointing them as ministers of the economy and of the finances in the first caretaker government he created in May 2021. Petkov and Vassilev, both businessmen and graduates from the University of Harvard, undertook decisive and mediatic actions of monitoring, reforming, and fighting the corruption. They became very popular due to the media and especially to the social media. In September 2021, after the dissolution of the 46th National Assembly, Petkov and Vassilev revealed they intention to launch a new political platform. On September 19, 2021 they announced the project "We continue the Change" and the creation of "a coalition of the

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[35] Nadia Urbinati, *Me the People. How Populists Transform Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 40-75.

[36] Cas Mudde, "Populism in Europe: An Illiberal Democratic Response to Undemocratic Liberalism (The Government and Opposition/Leonard Schapiro Lecture 2019)," *Government and Opposition* 56 no. 4 (2021): 579, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.15.

[37] Mudde, "Populism in Europe," 579.

[38] Urbinati, *Me the People*, 74.

honourable" citizens. They claimed that their candidates "have high levels of integrity, have a carrier and successful life outside the politics, it is very important for us because being independent means to have an alternative."[39] Also, they affirmed that with the right instruments their goals can be achieved: "it means that we are not going to raise taxes, but we are going to attract investments, to free the business from corruption, to ensure more revenues for retirees, better public health, better education, in other words we cannot tell that we are on the right "with right methods to achieve left goals."[40] They tried to attract several small parties. To run in the elections, they registered the coalition "We continue the Change!" with two other small parties: the European middle class and Volt. "We continue the Change" won the elections on November 14, 2021 without a clear political program, without having built a political party. This is not a precedent, 20 years earlier the NDSV won the elections in 2001 without a registered party. In April 2022 "We continue the Change" created a political party.

The project "We continue the Change" defines itself as a project of the government of Bulgaria that will achieve "a high economic growth through zero corruption and expertise at all levels." The party announces 17 principles and priorities: zero corruption; stop wasting public resources; empower independent, competent and decent people in the government; work for a quick, effective and fair administration and justice; don't change taxes, but collect them, etc.[41] As a Prime minister Kiril Petkov affirmed: "Yes, I truly believe we can (run out corruption)… Our entire party came mostly from the private sector, from businesses. We are all just sick and tired of connecting Bulgaria and corruption as common brands. Our true dream is in four years when we say corruption, Bulgaria to be a positive brand, due to strong leadership in the anti-corruption campaign Bulgaria has been able

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[39] Mediapol, "Вече официално: Кирил Петков и Асен Василев поемат с летящ старт към изборите (видео)" (It's Now Official: Kiril Petkov and Asen Vassilev Are off to a Flying Start to the Elections (video)), September 16, 2021, https://www.mediapool.bg/veche-ofitsialno-kiril-petkov-i-asen-vasilev-poemat-s-letyasht-start-kam-izborite-video-news326382.html

[40] Mediapol, "Вече официално."

[41] Produljavame promianata (We Continue the Change), "Prioriteti" (Priorities), n.d., https://promeni.bg/prioriteti/, last access September 2022.

to eradicate the levels of corruption. So, I really hope to have a Harvard case in about four years, where we can say leadership can kill corruption in very fast way."[42]

Based on some elements of its rhetoric, the party We Continue the Change! could be defined as a centrist populist challenger and/ or technocratic populist party. The statement of Kiril Petkov on 28, 2022 on the Ukrainian refugees who were more acceptable than the Syrian refugees provoked indignation and accusations of racism. Petkov said: "These are not the refugees we are used to; these people are Europeans...These people are intelligent. They are educated people.... This is not the refugee wave we have been used to, people we were not sure about their identity, people with unclear pasts, who could have been even terrorists."[43] On the front of fighting corruption, Petkov and We Continue the Change! counted on the strongman Boyko Rashkov, who served as minister of the Interior. On March 17, 2022 former PM Boyko Borisov was arrested, but then released without charges.[44] These points evoke the concept of ethnopopulism, defined by Vachudova.

We Continue the Change! appeared as a challenger party based on centrist populism and some technopopulism. Since the electoral campaign for the early elections on October 2, 2022, We continue the Change! has tried to develop a more centre-left identity. The leadership refused the proposal of the centre-right coalition Democratic Bulgaria to form an electoral alliance with the argument that the later has been too right-wing.[45] We continue the Change! in power achieved the greatest separation from Russia since 1990 and has affirmed the European identity of Bulgaria and its place in NATO.

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[42] BBC HARDtalk, "Kiril Peskov, Prime Minister of Bulgaria," February 11, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNDxlo1Gy0U.

[43] Associated Press, "Europe's Different Approach to Ukrainian and Syrian Refugees," February 28, 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/europe-racism-ukraine-refugees-1.6367932.

[44] Christian Oliver, "Arrest of Bulgaria's Borissov Marks Start of Major EU Rule-of-law Showdown," Politico, March 23, 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/arrest-bulgaria-boyko-borissov-start-major-eu-rule-of-law-showdown/.

[45] Valentin Evstatiev, "Asen Vassilev: Continue the Change Is Centrist, Not Rightist," Bulgarian News Agency, August 14, 2022, https://www.bta.bg/en/news/bulgaria/311768-asen-vassilev-continue-the-change-is-centrist-not-rightist.

However, the results of the early elections held on October 2, 2022 and the third early elections in a row since July 2021, are rather inconclusive for the institutionalisation of the two challenger parties There is Such a People! and We continue the change!. The electoral trajectory of ups and downs of There is Such a People! reflects the weight of the protest voting, of the electoral volatility and the destabilisation of the Bulgarian party system. In a year and a half, this populist party ran in the elections for the first time in April 2021 and placed second behind the incumbent party GERB; then won the July 2021 elections and became the first political force to achieve a victory over GERB but lost electoral support in the November 2021 elections when it became the fifth parliamentary force and finally disappeared from the parliament in October 2022, failing to reach the 4% threshold.

Its successes in 2021 caused the disappearance from parliament of the traditional populist radical right parties, which was considered to be a shift from the national populism to a more citizens populism. However, the debacle of There is Such a People! in October 2022 goes along with the spectacular growth of the far right, pro-Russian, anti-European, anti-American and anti-NATO party Vazrazhdane (Revival). Revival won more votes than the Bulgarian Socialist Party which follows the trajectory of continued marginalisation similar to the Polish, Hungarian or Czech socialist and social democratic parties.

A new political party, Bulgarian Ascent, created in 2022 by Stefan Yanev, succeed to enter the parliament in October 2022. This conservative leader's party is another example of top-down political engineering influenced by the Presidency. A former army general and former Prime minister of the caretaker governments appointed in May and September 2021 by president Radev, Stefan Yanev served also as a minister of Defence from December 2021 to March 2022 in the government of Kiril Petkov. Yanev was pushed to resign by Petkov because of his refusal to define the Russian aggression in Ukraine as a war. He and his party joined the presidential camp and the political forces such as the Bulgarian Socialist Party and Revival that oppose the provision of military aid to Ukraine.

<p style="text-align:center;">**Table 7.** Results of the early parliamentary elections October 2, 2022</p>

Party/ coalition	Valid Votes	% of valid votes	Seats
Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	634 627 (+ 38 171)	25.33%	67 (+8)
We Continue the Change!	506 099 (- 167 099)	20.20%	53 (-14)
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS)	344 512 (+ 3 512)	13.75%	36 (+2)
Revival (Vazrazhdane)	254 952 (+127 384)	10.18%	27 (+14)
Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) for Bulgaria	232 958 (-34 958)	9.30%	25 (-1)
Democratic Bulgaria	186 528 (+19 560)	7.54%	20 (+4)
Bulgarian Ascent	115 872 (+ 115 872)	4.63%	12 (+12)
There is Such a People!	96 071 (-153 672)	3.83%	0 (-25)
"I don't support any party"	87 635 (+51 890)		

<p style="text-align:center;">Source: Central Electoral Commission, https://results.cik.bg/ns2022/rezultati/</p>

In the eighteen months from April 2021 to October 2022, the Bulgarian political landscape provided an exceptional "laboratory" for testing the fortunes of parties but without resolving the political crisis. The citizens voted in four general elections where the supply side of protest, populist challenger parties from the radical right to the centre has been expanding. The multiplication of crises and the war in Ukraine along with traditionally high levels of disapproval of institutions have created the political opportunity structure for radicalisation and for the quick appearance and disappearance of parties.

Four main points should be summed up to conclude this brief overview of the new challenger parties which entered the political scene during the long electoral year 2021.

Firstly, the fragmentation and the polarisation of the party system is not a Bulgarian exceptionality. Early elections, and rise of populism are visible in several European countries too. The main hypothesis to be confirmed is that the elections in 2021 would lead to the replacement of the existing parties with new ones. At this stage, the fragmentation is confirmed, and the formation of national governments has become more and more difficult. Since parties act in an uncertain environment, they remain in electoral campaigning mode and refuse to make compromises in order to form a national government with the GERB party or DPS on the grounds of the European and NATO orientation of the country. The newly elected 48th National Assembly in October 2022 seems to be incapable of moderation, or

a constructive approach to coalition building even following the appeal of GERB to find common ground and build a government of pro-European and pro-NATO parties against the pro-Russian forces. The GERB attempt to impose the cleavage related to the foreign policy which opposes the pro-European to pro-Russian forces is not successful. The protest parties from the right, the centre, or the left refuse to cooperate with GERB. It seems that the rejection of the model of government developed by GERB since 2009 creates a deeper cleavage and an insurmountable division between GERB on the one hand and We Continue the Change, Democratic Bulgaria, Bulgarian Socialist Party, on the other. At the time of writing the probability of new elections looks real. Hence, the elections do not resolve crises and do not bring stability. Parties prove to be incapable to be moderate and to form a stable government and parliament.

Secondly, while the established populist radical right has been marginalised, new populist actors fulfilled their niche again with the promise to fight corruption and with anti-establishment rhetoric. These new challengers are close to centrist populist and technocratic populist types, well spread in Central and Eastern Europe. There is one great exception – the ascent of the populist radical right party Revival, which is anti-European, anti-NATO, pro-Russian and does not hesitate to undertake violent protest actions. Revival, which is like a renewed version of the party Ataka, has been on the path of continued growth of its electoral support. It entered the parliament for the first time in November 2021 elections and has doubled its votes and parliamentary seats in the October 2022 elections.

Third, the populist cycle is something Bulgarian voters know well from 2001 and the victory of the movement of the former king Simeon the Second and then in 2009 with the arrival of the GERB party. The Bulgarian citizens continue to vote for populist entrepreneurs mainly to express their protest vis-à-vis the established parties. In 2021-2022 elections, they proceeded by test and error choices by supporting new radical parties like There is such a People! which promised to "expunge" GERB from power, and then by giving the victory to We Continue the Change! whose leaders appeal for zero-corruption. These forces seemed to be the most prone to put an end to GERB's hegemony. However, GERB again won the elections in

October 2022 which could be a sign that the voters are fed up with the radicalisation and look for stability and moderation. The fatigue from the repeated elections is reflected in the decreasing turnout: 42.19% of all registered voters voted July 2021; 40.23% voted in November 2021 and they were only 39.% to vote in October 2022. The continued radicalisation of political parties and their leaders do not match the expectations and the concerns of citizens.

Forth, the duration of the political crisis gave more powers to the President of the Republic. The Presidency has interfered in the parliamentary and parties' stances and work. His caretaker governments ruled the country for long periods in 2021 and in 2022. The caretaker government is not the result of democratic elections but depends on the personal decisions of the Head of State. The president defends more consensual attitudes with Russia and Gazprom and at the same time tacitly encourages parties which disagree with the EU sanctions on Russia and Gazprom. In the absence of parliament, a parliamentary majority and government, all important decisions lay in the hands of the caretaker government including those in the field of foreign policy. Two political forces have raised voices in favour of rule by the President: There is Such a People, which proposed a referendum for the introduction of a Presidential regime, and the far-right party Revival.

The lack of capacity of parties and leaders to reform or to moderate risks to transform the current political crisis is a crisis of the parliamentary democracy in Bulgaria.

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Remembering the Diversity
of the Black Sea Region

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Abstract. The Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and the Crimea occupation have dramatically changed the power balance in the region. The peninsula has been militarized and has become a severe threat not only for Ukraine (as a foothold for the further invasion) but for the whole Black Sea area. Russian occupation of Crimea was legitimised (in Russia itself) by the idea of the exclusive importance of Crimea for the Russian identity. I deconstruct the parts of this historical narrative and pay special attention to the ontological level of war.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Black Sea, diversity.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and the Crimea occupation have dramatically changed the power balance in the region. The peninsula has been militarized and has become a severe threat not only for Ukraine (as a foothold for the further invasion) but for the whole Black Sea area and even the entire world. The all-out invasion, which started on February 24, 2022, has made it evident that the militarisation of Crimea and the region can endanger global security – notably, the safety of worldwide food and grain supplies. The connection between the narrative "Crimea is Russian territory" and "Tatars have no right for this land" and the possibility of hunger in some regions was brought into the light and became dreadfully visible.

The Russian occupation of Crimea was legitimized by the idea of the exclusive importance of Crimea for the Russian identity. This narrative has been used for domestic and international audiences but with considerable

differences and nuances. Despite these, the significant components of the idea were as follows: 1) Sevastopol is a city of Russian military glory (Crimean war, WWII); 2) prince Volodymyr the Great, who brought Christianity to the Kyivan Rus, is, in fact, the Russian national hero.

This narrative is pseudohistorical, manipulative and used for political purposes. It shadows the long and rich part of Crimean history, which is essential for the whole Black Sea region. I mean the history of Crimean Tatars and their state - the Crimean Khanate, Greek and Genovese colonisation and trade network, and the history of other ethnic groups. Shadowing these parts of the Crimean past is essential for legitimising the exclusive right of Russia to own and rule the peninsula. On the contrary, unveiling the history of other ethnicities and political entities would undermine the Russian authority. It would show the minor and not pleasant role of the Russian people and the Russian Empire (and also the USSR) in the region's history.

The effect could be even more impressive if we compare the politics toward the Crimean Tatars during Soviet rule and the Russian occupation after 2014. The repressions against the Tatar activists started the following months after the occupation since the Tatars did not welcome the Russian authority in their majority.[1]

The Black Sea region has a rich and diverse history that provides modern politics with different symbols and connotations. Crimean history needs profound rethinking and thoughtful reflection, which requires time. And maybe after dozens of conferences and publications, the Russian rule would be treated as a period of cruel colonisation, repressions, and ineffective militarisation that brought hardly any advantages to Russia but brought a lot of uncalculated dangers to the world.

Therefore, we come up with the question of mnemonical security or ontological security from a broader perspective. This is one of the significant

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[1] Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, "Кримські татари залишаються найбільшими жертвами репресій в окупованому Криму – результати моніторингу" (Crimean Tatars Remain the Biggest Victims of Repression in Occupied Crimea - Monitoring Results), October 23, 2021, https://uacrisis.org/uk/krymski-tatary-zalyshayutsya-najbilshymy-zhertvamy-represij-v-okupovanomu-krymu-rezultaty-monitoryngu.

levels of war since the Russian-Ukrainian war takes place on different ones – conventional level of warfare, emotional and psychological levels, and level of narratives. Also, the symbolic level is essential – it marks the space, and all those statues and memorials mark the streets and cities as "ours" or "theirs," familiar or adverse.

Ontological security means the level of confidence of social actors in the absence of significant threats to their way of life and identity (as Anthony Giddens understands it).[2] The ontological security concept helps to explain the choice of attacked and promoted narratives and symbols. For example, the attacked narrative is "Crimea is the territory of Ukraine." The Russian aim was to show that the Crimean Peninsula is Russian territory. It was simply "a present" from the Soviet leader Mykyta Khrushchev to Ukraine.[3] And, of course, Crimea should be returned to Russia – due to its extreme importance to the Russian national identity and imperial myth, adjusted and fixed up to the 21st century. It seems that the modernised imperial myth does not pass the spaghetti test, but it is still being used anyway.

During that meeting with historians on November 5, 2014, Vladimir Putin indicated that Kyivan Rus and Russia are identical concepts. In the spring of 2014, the term "Kyivan Rus" disappeared in the Russian version of Wikipedia, which has come to replace it as the "old Russian nation." That meeting predictably turned its attention to Sevastopol, the city of Russian sailors and the "historical, spiritual font." With the baptism of Prince Volodymyr of Kyiv in Chersonesos, Putin also linked it to Russia, with no mention of Kyiv and Ukraine. More recently, he attempted to co-opt another historical figure. In a statement during his visit to Paris in May 2017, Vladimir Putin declared that the marriage of the "Russian" princess, Anna

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[2] Karl Gustafsson, Nina C. Krickel-Choi, "Returning to the Roots of Ontological Security: Insights from the Existentialist Anxiety Literature," *European Journal of International Relations* 26, no. 3 (2020): 875-95, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120927073.

[3] Ria Novosti, "Хрущев подарил Крым Украине ради укрепления своей власти, заявили в РВИО" (Khrushchev Gave Crimea to Ukraine to Strengthen His Power, RVIO Says), https://ria.ru/20220322/krym-1779486577.html. The eye-opening material on this myth here: "Крым в обмен на Крым Украина отдала России собственные территории?) (Krym in exchange for Krym Ukraine Gave Russia Its Own Territories?), December 31, 2014, http://likbez.org.ua/crimea_was_not_exchanged.html.

Yaroslavna was the beginning of French-Russian relations. Historians emphasise that such an interpretation is exceptionally far from the truth because Anna did not consider herself either Russian or Ukrainian. Anna Kyivska (Anna of Kyiv) is the actual inscription on the monument dedicated to her in Senlis, which appears to be the closest to her self-identification as the wife of the French king. (Senlis is a town in France where Anna Yaroslavna is buried and where her monument was built with the assistance of the Ukrainian authorities).

"Chersonesos? What is this? Sevastopol," said the Russian President. "Can you imagine the connection between spiritual sources and national components? It refers to the struggle for a place for Crimea as a whole, for Sevastopol and Chersonesos. The Russian people for many centuries struggled to get up from their historical, spiritual font."[4]

This raises a paradoxical situation: the historians are well aware of the fact that the Russian President, to put it mildly, is talking nonsense when trying to adapt a solution for Russia's geopolitical objectives by manipulating historical facts and tailoring irrelevant interpretations.

One of the most protected and hitched Russian narratives is connected to Sevastopol history. Generally speaking, it sounds like "Sevastopol is the city of Russian military glory," and the details refer to the battles of the Crimean (Eastern) war and the Second World War. This narrative and its variations aim to maintain the militarization of Sevastopol and the Crimean Peninsula after the Russian occupation in 2014.

In fact, this narrative and its variations do not pass the spaghetti test. The Crimean war 1853-1856 was a sign of the weak state capacity of the Russian Empire and ended with the Paris peace treaty, unfavourable for Russia. And the sieges of Sevastopol in 1854-1855 and 1941-1942 ended with the pull-back of the Russian/Soviet army and the city's occupation. The unequalled heroism of soldiers could not help the whole army's weakness and obviously could not save the city.

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[4] Tatiana Melikyan, "Путин на встрече с историками осудил Ярослава Мудрого: ошибся с преемниками" (Putin at a Meeting with Historians Condemns Yaroslav the Wise: He Made a Mistake with His Successors), November 5, 2014, http://www.mk.ru/politics/2014/11/05/putin-na-vstreche-s-istorikami-osudil-yaroslava-mudrogo-oshibsya-s-preemnikami.html.

Another case is Volodymyr the Great – the prince of Ancient Rus (963-1015), who is also connected to Sevastopol and medieval Korsun (Chersonesus). He was baptised there and from the Black Sea coast of Kyiv, where early Christianity first began. From the Russian point of view, it is here, in Chersonesos – the city of Russian princes – where Russia finds its faith and history again. The fact is that Volodymyr is valued as a historical figure whose identification in the Russian Empire increased significantly in the late 18th century. The revival of interest in the person and work of Volodymyr was part of the impetus for joining Crimea to Russia.

In the 21st century, after the annexation of Crimea, Russia once again elevated him to the status of the primary patron saint in Russian history. One of the signs is the building of a massive monument to St. Volodymyr in Moscow in 2015.[5] The idea is to show Volodymyr as a Russian prince, underlining the shared past of Ukraine and Russia in medieval times. One example of how this topic is used in modern politics is Putin's statement that Kyivan Rus was the core of the Russian Empire. Since then, Russians and Ukrainians have had a shared history, culture, and mentality, as well as similar languages. Hence the conclusion – the Russians and Ukrainians are one people. Such statements are an ideological justification for the right not only to interfere in the internal affairs of Ukraine but to pursue a policy of its full incorporation into the Russian state.[6]

Significantly, the Kremlin's "privatisation" of Volodymyr the Baptist began in preparation before the aggression against Ukraine. On July 31, 2013, after large-scale celebrations in Kyiv and Sevastopol for the 1,025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus, the President of Russia established a particular working group for preparing events dedicated to the millennium anniversary of Prince Volodymyr's repose.[7]

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[5] Caroline Wyatt, "The Monument to a Russian Warlord Called Vladimir," June 15, 2015, BBC News, https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33109476.

[6] В. Лозовий, "Інтерпретації історії у політиці Російської Федерації як загроза національній безпеці України. Аналітична записка," *Національний інститут стратегічних досліджень* (Vadim Lozovy, "Interpretations of History in the Politics of the Russian Federation as a Threat to the National Security of Ukraine. Analytical Note," National Institute of Strategic Studies, May 13, 2015, https://niss.gov.ua/doslidzhennya/ gumanitarniy-rozvitok/interpretacii-istorii-u-politici-rosiyskoi-federacii-yak.

[7] А. Копатько, "Проект «Креститель»: как Россия «присваивает» себе князя Владимира Великого," March 17, 2015, *Релігія в Україні,* (Alexey Kopatko, "The 'Baptist' Project: How

The Russian imperial myth has seriously endangered the ontological security in the Black Sea region. The Russian history narrative became the element of aggression's background. Unfortunately, NATO or the EU did not manage to develop solutions for securing the area in general. Ontological security falls outside the attention of Ukrainian strategic planning as well. Ukraine should have provided mnemonical security and protection herself, especially for the Crimea region, which is highly diverse and complicated. Maybe it is time to start talking about mnemonical security. Maria Mälksoo writes that "genuinely agonistic mnemonic pluralism would enable different interpretations of the past to be questioned, in place of pre-defining national or regional positions on legitimate remembrance in ontological security terms."[8] Maria Mälksoo also claims that memory is unconjurable. As the Russian hybrid aggression has shown, it is under constant threat.

The symbolic level is fundamental – it marks ontological security. Russia tried to build a monopoly on the past and future of the region, but for now, it has completely lost the battle of symbols. The symbolic level of the war is worth separate research, but I would like to point out one anyway. The guided-missile cruiser of the Russian Navy was the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The "Aircraft carrier killer" sank in mid-April due to the Ukrainian missile attack – which is shocking because Ukraine is a failed state without an army in the Russian mind. Moreover, the Ukrainian state managed to privatise even the sunk warship. Now it is the object of the underwater cultural heritage of Ukraine No. 2064.[9] And this means Ukraine is ready to make lemonade from the lemons and appropriate and creatively rethink the awful heritage of the war.

Russia 'Appropriates' Prince Vladimir the Great), *Religion in Ukraine*, March 17, 2015, https://www.religion.in.ua/zmi/ukrainian_zmi/28551-proekt-krestitel-kak-rossiya-prisvaivaet-sebe-knyazya-vladimira-velikogo.html.

[8] Maria Malksoo, "In Search of a Modern Mnemonic Narrative of Communism: Russia's Mnemopolitical Mimesis during the Medvedev Presidency," *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 1, no. 2 (2015): 317-39.

[9] Фокус, "'Культурна спадщина:" крейсер 'Москва' що затонув, отримав новий статус в Україні" ("Cultural Heritage:" The Sunken Cruiser "Moscow" Received a New Status in Ukraine), Focus, April 22, 2022, https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/513201-kulturnoe-nasledie-zatonuvshiy-kreyser-moskva-poluchil-novyy-status-v-ukraine-video.

Warships named "Moskva" were not successful in Russian military history. Both of them ended up at the bottom of the Black Sea. The first one – a destroyer – sank near Constance port in June 1941 after a few shots. Soviet propaganda claimed the shots were highly effective and worth the ship's loss.

The fate of the Black Sea in the nearest future depends on the fate of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The upcoming liberation of the southern regions of Ukraine, occupied after February 24, 2022, raises a question about using military power to fight back in the peninsula. This sounds possible due to the growing weakness of the Russian army. The defeat of one of the giant armies of the Black Sea region opens the possibility of complete demilitarisation of the area to secure global safety and stability.

For the moment, the Black Sea has primarily lost its trade potential, becoming an arena of hostilities. Hence the Black Sea countries' perspectives and alliances seem to be paused. Dozens of mines block marine trade passages and threaten the tourist prospects of the region.

Whenever the Russian-Ukrainian war ends, the Black Sea region faces transformations in its economic structure and political orientation. The Russian ports would be for international trade, at least for some time. The same is correct for the Ukrainian ports, which could suffer from the lack of staff, ships, equipment, and security.

The Black Sea region faces new alliances and associations with new or new-old actors. These new alliances should be grounded on the values of tolerance and respect for diversity. The well-known term of Blair Ruble – the capital of diversity – could become useful again, but in the political dimension. And remembering the region's diverse history could become the background for the new political reality. Rethinking history might become an impulse for the new regional quality of regional security. Common history may provide a ground for the search for a common vision for the new security architecture after the Russian defeat. Unveiling the past and the rights of the Crimean Tatars and other ethnic groups in the Crimean Peninsula would make future international relations fairer and more resilient.

It is possible to talk about the new frontline between civilization and barbarism, between the wild and the order. And finally, Ukraine is on the

side of civilization, representing and protecting the hand of European civilization.

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The Ukrainian Dimension
of Populism

MARYANA PROKOP

Abstract. Political parties use populist rhetoric in their communication with society while running electoral campaigns. Populist slogans could be one of the successful instruments to win elections. The assumptions of Ukrainian populism were formed under the influence of the socio-political situation in the country. The populist politicians adjusted their demands to the expectations and preferences of society, thus creating the desired reality, which was not even slightly realized later in practice. The purpose of the article is to analyse the peculiarities of Ukrainian populism through the prism of identifying the factors determining its shape.

Keywords: populism, Ukraine, Ukrainian political system, political parties.

Introduction

The issue of populism has become an integral part of election campaigns and one of the ways to express the demands of candidates and political groups in line with the electorate's voting preferences. Catchy electoral slogans and the populist rhetoric of political actors are aimed at gaining as much support as possible enabling them to obtain and hold the power.

The functioning of the Ukrainian party system was characterized by a long search for an appropriate voting formula, as well as by balancing between proportional and majority electoral systems. A significant influence in the given process was represented by the political situation in the country and the crucial changes in the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government, which largely imposed constitutional

changes as a result of the "Orange Revolution" and the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan). The model of government introduced by the 1996 Constitution was to some extent a political consensus between the main actors on the Ukrainian political scene. Years later, it became clear that the Constitution required amendments, as its premises could provide grounds for abuse of power by the president. However, it was not until December 8, 2004 that the Law on Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine was adopted, which was the result of an agreement among the political elite during the "Orange Revolution." On the other hand, in 2010 the Constitutional Court of Ukraine declared the Constitutional Law, adopted as part of the "Orange Compromise," to be inconsistent with the Ukrainian Constitution and restored the pre-2004 provisions. In the wake of the Euromaidan, on February 21, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted by a constitutional majority a resolution to restore certain provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine, as amended in 2004.[1] Along with legal changes in the state's political system, there were also changes in the party system. As one of the elements of the political system, it has transformed in practical terms. On the Ukrainian political scene there were new actors presenting a slightly different dimension of rhetoric than the former elite. Their approach to politics and their demands have contributed to the crystallization of the Ukrainian civil society and to a change in political demands, which have had a significant impact on the electorate's voting preferences. The evolution

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[1] Конституція України (Constitution of Ukraine), 1996, https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/44a280124.pdf; Закон України Про внесення змін до Конституції України (Law of Ukraine On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine), 2014, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Ukraine_2014.pdf?lang=en; Рішення Конституційного Суду N 20-рп/2010 (Decision of the Constitutional Court N 20-рп/2010); Maryana Prokop, *Badanie nad reżimami hybrydalnymi. Case study systemy polityczne Ukrainy i Rosji w latach 2000–2012* (Research on Hybrid Regimes. Case Study of the Political Systems of Ukraine and Russia in 2000–2012) (Kielce: Wydawnictwo UJK, 2020), 105-8; Oleh Mashtaler, "Reforma konstytucyjna na Ukrainie: poszukiwanie optymalnego systemu rządów czy walka o władzę" (Constitutional Reform in Ukraine: Searching for an Optimal System of Government or a Struggle for Power), in *Zagadnienia ustrojowe państw poradzieckich* (Systemic Issues in Post-Soviet States), ed. Jacek Zaleśny (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2020), 144-47; "Конституційна реформа в Україні. перебіг, стан і перспективи, Національна безпека і оборона" (Constitutional Reform in Ukraine. Progress, State and Prospects, National Security and Defence), Razumkov Center, 2007, http://www.uceps.org/ukr/journal_pos.php?y=2007&cat=1&pos=180.

from soft authoritarianism to democracy was taking place in Ukraine. Thus, there arose a task before the subjects of the electoral process to comply with the emerging expectations by developing postulates, which undoubtedly became the premise for the crystallization of the populist tendencies of those in power. The populist approach in the electoral process has become an integral part of conducting an election campaign in the struggle for gaining electoral votes.

This article aims to analyse the peculiarities of Ukrainian populism through the prism of identifying the factors determining its shape. The main research problem takes the form of the following question: to what extent have the intra-state shifts in Ukraine affected the evolution of populism pursued by Ukrainian leaders" Posing questions of a specific character is worth noting: whether and to what extent did politicians adapt the dimension of their polemics with the public to the general trend of the populist wave prevailing in the state? Whether and to what extent did the populists in Ukraine take into account the issues of the most relevant values for the Ukrainian society at a given stage of its development?

Defining populism

The precise operationalization of the category of populism is not the purpose of the paper, however, the identification of its essential elements will make it possible to determine the attributes to be considered in the analysis of the Ukrainian dimension of populism, as well as the factors determining its functioning in Ukrainian conditions. Yuriy Matsieyevski and Oleksandr Koshynsky, studying the phenomenon of populism in Poland, Ukraine and Romania, point to the existence of a negative relationship between populism and the state of democracy in the countries. The assumptions of the theory and the Freedom House indicators became the basis for the statement that weakness and instability of democracy leads to the emergence of populism, and therefore the rule of populists does not lead to the consolidation of democratic principles.[2] One can hardly disagree with

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[2] Юрій Мацієвський & Олександр Кашинський, „Витоки популізму у Центрально-Східній Європі," Ідеологія і *політика* 2, no. 8 (2017): 31-33. (Yurii Matsievskyi &

the assumption that populism highly impacts the level of democracy in the country, especially when the election victory is mainly based on populist slogans rather than a real electoral program. Beata Ociepka, on the other hand, finds the popularity of populist parties and movements in the crisis of the representative democracy. This process is accompanied by the growing role of the media in politics, which can be considered as a result of citizens' dissatisfaction with existing models of governance.[3] Modern digital media, undoubtedly, can serve the development of populism by enabling politicians to communicate with voters, which contributes to their growing popularity. Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser & Cas Mudde point out that populism in political reality can be considered toxic both to democracy, political stability and the integrity of elections. Populism as a strategy is a way to implement a populist agenda. The strategy defines the methods used by a leader to seek or execute a power.[4] Cas Mudde defines populism as an ideology which considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite." Populism idealizes the people and stands on the sides while criticizing the elite. The people feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups and that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people.[5]

According to Jan Jagers and Stefan Walgrave, populism is a style of political communication by political actors that includes references to the people, appeals to the people, identifies with the people or aspires to speak for the people. Political actors, according to the researchers, are politicians and political parties, as well as leaders of social movements, representatives of interest groups, and journalists.[6] A common populist practice includes referring to the leader as an ordinary man of the people, which boosts his

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Oleksandr Kashinskyi, "The Origins of Populism in Central-Eastern Europe," *Ideology and Politics* 2, no. 8 (2017): 31-33).

[3] Beata Ociepka, "Populism and National Identity," *Polish Political Science* XXXV (2006): 97.

[4] Cas Mudde & Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing the Contemporary Europe and Latin America," *Government & Opposition* 48, no. 2 (2013): 147-74.

[5] Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition* 39 no. 4 (2004): 541-63.

[6] Jan Jagers & Stefaan Walgrave, "Populism as Political Communication Style: An Empirical Study of Political Parties' Discourse in Belgium," *European Journal of Political Research* 46 no. 3 (2007): 321-22.

reliability and the validity of his populist rhetoric. Moreover, the elite, in the form of those in power or the opposition – depending on the masses from which the populist comes – are often criticized for not ruling effectively, being corrupt and not carrying out the will of the people.[7] Populist parties and movements are characterized by a charismatic form of leadership, severe criticism of a representative form of democracy and an anti-elitist (anti-establishment) attitude. At the same time, populism can be considered as a warning sign for a political system in which representativeness is not fully achieved, because the principles of political pluralism do not work as expected.[8]

According to Polish scholars Artur Lipinski and Agnieszka Stępińska, we can notice that the definitions of populism appearing in the Polish literature are most often enumerative in nature based on the listing of populist features. The vast majority of authors emphasize that populism is an ambiguous category, extremely difficult to define, with no precise content that resembles political ideologies or doctrines.[9] The researchers' approach seems to be correct in the context of research on the essence of populism in the theoretical dimension. The empirical dimension on the other hand refers to distinguishing the characteristics that define the phenomenon of populism, which is even essential for studying the specifics of populism in a given country. On the other hand, according to Roman Tokarczyk, one should operationalize populism through the prism of ideology, as an eclectic, ideological mental construction, sometimes called a syndrome, pretending to be an independent political doctrine, composed of elements plucked from various political doctrines to shape the political beliefs of the people.[10] Roman Bäcker recognizes populism as a way of political thinking

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[7] Yunus Sözen, "Populist Peril to Democracy: The Sacralization and Singularization of Competitive Elections," *Political Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (2019): 237-38.

[8] Ociepka, "Populism and National Identity," 99.

[9] Artur Lipiński & Agnieszka Stępniewska, "Przegląd badań nad populizmem w Polsce" (Review of Research on Populism in Poland), in *Badania nad dyskursem populistycznym: wybrane podejścia* (Research on the Populist Discourse: Selected Approaches), eds. Artur Lipiński, Agnieszka Stępniewska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa, 2020), 24-25.

[10] Roman Tokarczyk, *Współczesne doktryny polityczne* (Contemporary Political Doctrines) (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zakamycze, 1998), 541.

between ideology, fundamentalism and post-tribal thought, pointing out that the primary goal of the populist leaders is to gain power, while their highest public recognition is gained through phraseological and programmatic resources.[11]

Maryana Prokop, looking at the dimension of populism on the basis of the actions of President Zelensky's Servant of the People Party, points out that in order to study the peculiarities of Ukrainian populism, the important aspects are: relying on the values and needs of Ukrainian society; advocating dissatisfaction with the situation in the state by criticizing those in power for their incompetent governance (lack of substantial reforms); creating a community based on partnership and solidarity; making a leader out of the people who is identified with the problems of society; and presenting the possibilities of making rapid changes with simple solutions.[12]

Ukrainian scholars propose the concept of neo-populism defined as the conscious effort of a person and / or a candidate for a political leader in a neo-society, which does not aim to achieve excessively common selfish goals and aspirations but to realize the significant positive needs of the general public.[13] Thus, the neo-populism compared to populism, acquires positive meaning and comes down to the formation and realization of important demands in a given country.

Peculiarities of the Ukrainian Party System

Political parties have not been among the strongest actors on the Ukrainian political scene. This was caused by the strong position of the president, the oligarchisation of the political system and also the instability of the party system. The process of shaping the Ukrainian party system took

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[11] Roman Bäcker, *Rosyjskie myślenie polityczne za czasów prezydenta Putina* (Russian Political Thinking under President Putin) (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2007), 37-38.

[12] Prokop, *Badanie nad reżimami hybrydalnymi*, 121.

[13] Костянтин Корсак, Юрій Корсак, *Людмила Антонюк*, et al., "Ноомислення як засіб ліквідації частини загроз Духовно-інтелектуального колапсу," Вища школа 7 (2019): 32-45. (Korsak Kostyantyn, Yuriy Korsak, Lyudmila Antonyuk et al., "No-thinking as a Means of Eliminating Part of the Threats of Spiritual-Intellectual Collapse," High School 7 (2019): 32-45).

place in 1988-1989. The monopoly of the Communist Party was broken with the emergence of civic movements such as the Democratic Party, the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance, the "Lion's Society," the Union of Independent Ukrainian Youth, the Ukrainian Helsinki Union and the People's Movement for Reconstruction.[14] Formally, it was not until June 16, 1992, that the Verkhovna Rada adopted a the law of Ukraine "About association of citizens," introducing two categories of people's organizations, i.e. social organizations and political parties.[15]

After 1991, the Ukrainian party system went through an evolution, which was triggered by frequent changes in the election law. Therefore, the debate on the future of the party system has been going on for more than twenty years. Several types of electoral systems have been operating in Ukraine over the years, from the solutions used in the socialist state to the hybrid system (proportional-majority) and these guided the debates on the issues related to the choice of the appropriate electoral law formula (i.e., the rules or sets of rules that determine how the votes gained in the elections are to be converted into specific mandates in the electoral districts and which candidates are eligible to receive the mandates).[16]

Further debates on the future of Ukraine's party system contributed to the adoption of a parallel mixed political system and its application in the 1998 and 2002 elections. Considering the political instability in the country and the volatility of solutions to the functioning of the state, these contributed to the decision of applying a mixed system under the existing

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[14] Олексій Гарань, Убити дракона: З історії Руху та нових партій України (Київ: Либідь, 1993), 12-17. (Oleksii Haran, *To Kill the Dragon: From the History of the Movement and New Parties of Ukraine* (Kyiv: Lybid, 1993)); Maryana Prokop & Iwona Galewska, "The Amendment of Ukrainian Electoral Law and the Principle of Alternation in Power (Parliamentary Election in 2012)," *Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne* (Athenaeum. Polish Political Studies) 40 (2013): 21-24.

[15] Prokop, *Badanie nad reżimami hybrydalnymi*, 13-34.

[16] Bartłomiej Michalak, "Badanie zależności pomiędzy systemem wyborczym a systemem partyjnym przy wykorzystaniu metody indeksowej. Przypadek mieszanych systemów wyborczych w Rosji i na Ukrainie oraz proporcjonalnej reprezentacji w Polsce" (The Study of the Relationship between the Electoral System and the Party System Using the Index Method. The Case of Mixed Electoral Systems in Russia and Ukraine and Proportional Representation in Poland), *Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne* 36 (2012): 44-45; Prokop & Galewska, "The Amendment of Ukrainian Electoral Law," 21-24.

conditions of conflict between the president and the parliament, which seems to be an appropriate approach. Changes also occurred within the subjects of the electoral process. After the constitutional reform in 2004, the political parties gained the status of the main subject of the electoral process. Ukrainian parliamentarians have started to identify themselves with political parties, and consequently their preferences have reflected the interests of the party. In turn, the weakening position of the head of state in Ukraine mainly contributed to the implementation of the proportional system, bringing the Ukrainian party system closer to the European model.[17] The 2011 law on elections restored the pre-2005 provisions of electoral law in Ukraine. The electoral threshold was raised from 3 to 5%, and electoral blocs were not considered to be qualified as subjects of the electoral process. It is worth noting that a specific feature of the Ukrainian party system is also the widespread migration of party elites (leaders) from party to party.[18]

The evolution of the party system has accompanied transformations in the state's political system, while the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government has had a significant role in it. The lack of long-standing traditions and experience in the field of electoral regulation contributed to a prolonged process of finding their own solutions, which consequently turned into a problem of balancing between the majority and proportional systems. An attempt to get out of the impasse was the introduction of a proportional system in 2005, as an antidote to the flawed nature of the previous system. In turn, the application of a similar scenario during the 2012 elections to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine raised the

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[17] Wojciech Sokół, "Zmiany systemów wyborczych na Ukrainie jako element demokratyzacji" (Changes in the Electoral Systems in Ukraine as an Element of Democratization), in *Geneza i ewolucja systemów wyborczych w państwach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej* (The Genesis and Evolution of Electoral Systems in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe), ed. Wojciech Sokół (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2007), 483-510.

[18] Світлана Конончук, & Олег Ярош, Партійна система України: ідеологічний вимір (Київ: Український незалежний центр політичних досліджень, 2010), 37-40. (Svitlana Kononchuk, & Oleg Yarosh, *The Party System of Ukraine: Ideological Dimension* (Kyiv: Ukrainian Independent Center for Political Research, 2010)); Prokop & Galewska, "The Amendment of Ukrainian Electoral Law," 21-24.

question of whether the patterns that worked in the circumstances of the late 1990s were likely to work fifteen years later.[19]

Ukraine's party system after 2000 has received a number of boosts to foster changes. The shaping of the party system in 1994-1998 has been very slow, which was strongly related to the prolonged search for the appropriate model of electoral system and undoubtedly reflected the degree of implementation of political pluralism. The first free elections were held according to proportional representation, and out of the 30 groups registered at that time, 14 political parties entered parliament. However, no political force obtained the ability needed to form a permanent majority. The 1998 elections involved 21 political parties and 9 electoral blocs, with a total of 19 parties. The Communist Party of Ukraine was the one that exceeded the 4% electoral threshold with a notable result of 24.65%, together with the National Movement of Ukraine gaining nearly 40% of the votes.[20] In 2000, 12 new parties were registered, in the year 2001 – 7, and in the year 2002 – only 2.[21] Among the formations, it is possible to distinguish the division of political parties according to their sympathy for the presidential camp, pro-presidential and anti-presidential parties, with the number of registered parties increasing to 120.

Thus, the increase in the number of parties, on the one hand, has contributed to the dispersion of the party system, on the other – it promoted the fusion of political actors into electoral blocs and coalitions. In the period of 2002-2007, we can observe a considerable renewal of the Ukrainian political scene, through the emergence of new political parties. In the year 2003, 2 new political parties were registered, in 2004 – 4, in 2005 – 24, and in 2006 – 11. It presents the current list of political parties registered in Ukraine

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[19] Michalak, "Badanie zależności pomiędzy," 94-102.

[20] Николай Рагозин, "Развитие партийной системы Украины," Полис Научный и культурно-просветительский журнал 1 (2004): 89-100. (Nikolai Ragozin, "Development of the Party System in Ukraine," *Polis Scientific and Cultural and Educational Journal* 1 (2004) :89-100); Sarah Whitmore, *State Building in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Parliament 1990–2003* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 97-101.

[21] Міністерство юстиції України, "Відомості щодо зареєстрованих у встановленому законом порядку політичних партій станом на 01.01.2021," 2021, https://minjust.gov.ua/ m/4561. (Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, Information on Political Parties Registered in Accordance with the Procedure Established by Law as of January 1, 2021).

without taking into account those that have no longer existed or are operating under another political formation.[22] The rivalry on the political scene of the state was between three leading forces: the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc, Our Ukraine-People's Self-Defence Bloc, and the Party of Regions, while the rest acted on strengthening their positions, largely relying on being invited to join the winning coalition (the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Lytvyn Bloc, the Socialist Party of Ukraine, and the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine).[23]

According to data as of December 2006 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, a total of 124 political parties were registered. In the year 2005, 24 new parties were formed as well. In 2007 there is largely the same scenario as in 1994, when the dependence between rival parties was shaped on the basis of favourability or its lack towards the presidential centre. This was shaped on the basis of the political crisis caused by the struggle between the president and parliament. In the year 1994, this type of rivalry led to the formation of a strong presidential centre, while in 2007 it became a cause for the dissolution of the parliament. The early elections to the Verkhovna Rada became a continuation of the polarization of the party system that had been formed on the basis of the 2004 presidential elections, in terms of two competing spheres of influence, associated with antinomic views (the pro-Russian Party of Regions, the pro-European Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defence Bloc). It is worth noting that under such conditions, 4 new actors appeared on the Ukrainian political scene.[24]

In 2008, 18 new actors appeared on the Ukrainian scene, in 2009 and 2010 – 12 parties respectively, in the following year – 13, in 2012 – 7, in the year 2013 – 5. A significant increase in new actors occurred after the events of the Revolution of Dignity, as up to 36 parties were registered in 2014, in the following year the number of new parties increased from the previous one more than twice up to 78, in 2016 there were 42 registered parties, in the

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[22] Міністерство юстиції України, "Відомості."

[23] Magdalena Resende & Hendrik Kraetzschmar, "Parties of Power as Roadblocks to Democracy The Cases of Ukraine and Egypt," Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Policy Brief 81, 2005, 1-7; Prokop, *Badanie nad reżimami hybrydalnymi*, 130-34.

[24] Міністерство юстиції України, "Відомості."

year 2017 – 3, in 2018 – 1, in the year 2019 – 4, and in 2020 – 17. The official website of the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice does not provide information on registered parties in 2021 and 2022, as the data status is as of January 1, 2021. Considering the year 2022 and the political situation in Ukraine after February 24, 2022 due to Russian military aggression, the emergence of new subjects was hampered.[25]

A brief overview of the evolution of Ukraine's party system enables us to conclude that it was a part of the transformation of the political system in Ukraine. The lack of long-standing traditions and experience with electoral regulations contributed to the prolonged process of finding its own solutions, which consequently became a problem of balancing between the majority and proportional systems. An attempt to get out of the impasse was the introduction of a proportional system in 2005, as an antidote to the frailty of the previous system. In turn, the application of a similar scenario during the 2012 elections to Verkhovna Rada raises the question of whether patterns that worked in the realities of the late 1990s can work fifteen years later.[26] The frequent changes also affected the functioning of actors on the Ukrainian political scene, which implied a decrease or, conversely, significant increase in the registration of new actors in the electoral process, and this undoubtedly had implications for the formation of the populist narrative.

The populist phenomenon in the Ukrainian Government

The emergence of populism in Ukraine was to a large extent a result of the socio-economic situation in the country after gaining independence in 1991. The first years of Ukraine's independence reflected an emergence from the post-Soviet period and the formation of Ukraine as an independent state in terms of internal and external politics. In the case of foreign policy, Ukraine was characterized by balancing between the East (cooperation with Russia) and the West (integration with Western countries) by 2004, described as a policy of multi-vectorism. It is noteworthy that during Kuchma's second presidency (1999-2004), the policy of multi-vectorism began to shift toward

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[25] Міністерство юстиції України, "Відомості."
[26] Prokop & Galewska, "The Amendment of Ukrainian Electoral Law."

a pro-Russian foreign policy dimension. Notable in this case was the fact that the 1996 Constitution of Ukraine provided extremely broad powers to the head of state, so it was then-President Leonid Kuchma who mainly shaped the dimension of the Ukrainian state's goals and actions, emphasizing cooperation with Russia. The key changes for the state occurred in the early 2000s, when public dissatisfaction with President Kuchma's rule strongly increased and a number of protests took place, including the "Ukraine without Kuchma" protest and the "cassette scandal" related to the murder of the Ukrainian journalist Georgi Gongadze, which were described as an "unrealized revolution."[27]

However, it is also worth noting that the entry of new populists into parliament became possible only as a result of the 2002 elections. Viktor Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" party and Yulia Tymoshenko's "Batkivshchyna" (Fatherland) party became the opposition to the former ruling elite. Taras Kuzio points out that the reasons for the outbreak of the "Orange Revolution" and the hyper-activity of the Ukrainian society – previously unknown in the conditions of the independent Ukrainian state – were not only premises related to the falsification of elections, but also social factors and dissatisfaction with the living standards of citizens.[28] The new players on the political scene used populist slogans in their statements, criticizing the previous government and promising a new better dimension of politics, both internal and external. President Yushchenko promised to move away from the multi-vector nature of Ukraine's foreign policy and to focus on cooperation with Western structures (EU and NATO). He also promised thorough economic reforms to ensure the development and stability of the Ukrainian state, as well as the elimination of clan-oligarchic dependence, which for years had significantly affected the functioning of the state and the

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[27] Prokop, *Badanie nad reżimami hybrydalnymi*, 85-149; Maryana Prokop, "Kształtowanie się zasad polsko-ukraińskiego partnerstwa strategicznego w dobie transformacji" (Shaping the Principles of the Polish-Ukrainian Strategic Partnership in the Era of Transformation), in *Stosunki międzynarodowe we współczesnym świecie: regiony i problem* (International Relations in the Modern World: Regions and Problems), ed. Marcin Grabowski (Krakow: Goblin Studio, 2011), 269.

[28] Taras Kuzio, "Populism in Ukraine in a Comparative European Context," 2011, http://www.taraskuzio.net/Files/Populism_Ukraine_Paper.pdf, 7-8.

actions of politicians who came from a certain environment. The given economic and social premises and, above all, the unfulfilled electoral promises of the Yushchenko-Tymoshenko "orange" coalition became the reason for the split of the coalition and, as a consequence, the loss of both presidential and parliamentary elections that followed. The Orange Revolution demonstrated that the Ukrainian people had woken up from post-communist hibernation and wanted to create their own state, although the high expectation of transformation and the incapacity of the government elected as a result of the revolution led to great public disillusionment, which enabled the pro-Russian Party of Regions led by Viktor Yanukovych to come to power.[29]

In the year 2012, another political actor appeared in Ukrainian party system – the Radical Party of Oleh Liashko. The relevant social issues at the time were the elimination of unemployment, the increase in wages and pensions, and the problem of rapid price increases. A decline in support for Tymoshenko's and Yushchenko's parties fostered the emergence of new players on the political scene, partly as a counterforce to the Party of Regions. The Radical Party of Oleh Liashko and the All-Ukrainian Union "Freedom," commonly known as Svoboda, focused on gaining an electorate, mainly based on economic and social demands. Under the Party of Regions government, Tymoshenko and Liashko were focused on producing their populist rhetoric in opposition to the ruling party, which enabled them to rebuild support for Tymoshenko and also to note an increase in support for Liashko.[30]

Y. Matsiyevski points out that the lack of programmatic parties, in a given period, was one of the reasons for the formation of an ineffective hybrid regime in Ukraine, which allowed left-wing or right-wing populists to gain power but also to hamper the attempts of society to work for democratization and modernization of the state.[31] Ukrainian society can be

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[29] Prokop, *Badanie nad reżimami hybrydalnymi*, 85-149; Tadeusz Olszański, *A. Trud niepodległości. Ukraina na przełomie tysiącleci* (The Trouble of Independence. Ukraine at the Turn of the Millennium) (Krakow: Instytut Studiow Strategicznych, 2003), 125-27.

[30] Мацієвський & Кашинський, "Витоки популізму," 29-30.

[31] Юрій Мацієвський, У пастці гібридності: зигзаги трансформацій політичного режиму в Україні (1991–2014) (Чернівці: Книги – XXI, 2016). (Yuriy Matsievskyi, *In the*

described as hybrid, because on the one hand, it is characterized by political apathy, and on the other hand, if its vital rights are violated, it mobilizes and presents activity at the highest level, such as during the "Orange Revolution" and the "Revolution of Dignity."[32]

The recent 2019 parliamentary elections held in Ukraine have contributed to significant changes on the Ukrainian political scene. First and foremost, the emergence of new actors whose leaders came from the world of entertainment, including the "Servant of the People" (ua: Sluha narodu) Party of artist and comedian Volodymyr Zelensky, and the "Voice" (ua: Holos) Party of singer "Okean Elzy" – Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, as well as the rivalry of the "old" leaders, among others Tymoshenko and Poroshenko. The following section presents a brief analysis of the political formations that entered the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as a result of the recent 2019 parliamentary elections, in terms of the used populist rhetoric.

Vakarchuk's party, as a new actor, put emphasis in its statements on the novelty and dissimilarity of its assumptions, and above all on differentiating the party's members from the old oligarchic elite that had been at the helm of the Ukrainian government for years. It is worth mentioning that among its members there were many people from outside politics, such as experts and cultural activists, among them the well-known TV presenter Serhiy Prytula. However, despite the freshness and intentions to create new qualitative developments for Ukraine, the political program contains many postulates based on the assumptions of populism. In the election program, the Voice Party relied on uniting with people – "the state is the people, we are with you," and their goal was not to enrich themselves at the citizens' expense. Like Viktor Yushchenko after his victory as a result of the "Orange Revolution," the party postulated that it would take up the challenge of fighting the oligarchic system of Ukraine in all dimensions of its functioning. Another point on the agenda were promises to realize the

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Trap of Hybridity: Zigzags of Transformations of the Political Regime in Ukraine (1991–2014) (Chernivtsi: Knigi – XXI, 2016)).

[32] Maryana Prokop, "Hybridity of Ukrainian Society in the Years 2000 – 2012. Between Political Activity and Political Apathy," *Kultura i Edukacja* (Culture and Education) 4, no. 114 (2016): 150-61.

potential of the Ukrainian state, which others had only talked about for many years. The need to change the weakest element in the Ukrainian state – the ineffective government – was also advocated, which was formed by politicians of the old, unfair, generation with unprofessional management, who had been stealing the future from Ukrainians for 28 years.[33] The party's program premises undoubtedly shows that it formed its position in opposition to the government of the day, significantly criticizes the current situation of the state and the actions of its predecessors, identifies with the people and promises new unconventional solutions to improve the state, which makes it possible to describe the program of the party in the journalistic stream.

The party "Opposition Platform – For Life," in the 2019 parliamentary elections, was the only one entering parliament that officially manifested pro-Russian views, so its program was primarily focused on strengthening relations with the Russian Federation. In addition, it was characterized by clear anti-Ukrainian rhetoric, which enabled it to gain the support of the electorate in the Eastern part of Ukraine and to obtain a second position in the elections. The given party described itself as oppositional to other subjects of the functioning government. The party's premise was to criticize both President Poroshenko, the newly elected President Zelensky and also the actions of the parties from which the given leaders came. Like previous formations, the party used populist tricks, defining its goal to be guided by interests of the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian state, by addressing the challenges facing the state, while the party's main goal was to achieve peace and stability in Ukraine. It also postulated that the task of the party is to guarantee the rule of the people and to ensure the possibility of communication and education in Russian and in the language of national minorities.[34]

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[33] Передвиборна програма партії "Голос" (Pre-election program of the "Voice" party), 2019, https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/showdoc2pf7171=389pid409=27.

[34] Передвиборна програма політичної партії "Опозиційна платформа- 'За життя'" (Pre-election program of the political party Opposition Platform - For Life), 2019, https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/showdoc2pf7171=393pid409=27.doc.

It is worth pointing out here that the status of the Russian language in Ukraine has long been a matter of contention. In fact, the Russian language is the second most spoken language in Ukraine, after Ukrainian, according to the 2001 census. It is used by more than 14 million Ukrainians, however, taking into account the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022, this number may be considerably lower, due to the fact that a large part of Ukrainians, mainly living in the eastern and central regions of Ukraine, declare their conversion to the Ukrainian language.[35] In the 1996 Constitution of Ukraine, we can find a provision that the Ukrainian language is the state language of Ukraine. The state ensures the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life. It guarantees the free development, use and protection of the Russian language and other languages of national minorities in Ukraine.[36] In the 2012, under the government of V. Yanukovych, a law was implemented allowing the use of bilingualism in individual regions. After his government was overthrown, the law was repealed by the Ukrainian parliament, although the decision of the Verkhovna Rada only took effect in 2018, based on a decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.[37] In the year 2019, a law on supporting the functioning of the Ukrainian language as a state language was implemented. The provisions of the law impose an obligation to use the Ukrainian language in the public sphere (in public institutions, universities, schools, transports, gastronomic locations, cultural sphere and mass media). This Law shall not apply to the sphere of private communication and the conduct of religious rites. Thus, the goal of the language law was to restrict the Russian language in the public space and to ensure the development of

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[35] Державний комітет статистики України (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine), 2001, https://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/.

[36] Конституція України, 1996.

[37] Рішення Конституційного Суду України, "У справі за конституційним поданням 57 народних депутатів України щодо відповідності Конституції України (конституційності) Закону України 'Про засади державної мовної політики'," 2018. (Decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. 2018. In the case based on the constitutional submission of 57 People's Deputies of Ukraine regarding the compliance with the Constitution of Ukraine (constitutionality) of the Law of Ukraine "On the Basics of State Language Policy").

the Ukrainian language, for which the Commission on the Status of the State Language was established.[38]

Those regulations on the status of the Ukrainian language as a state language were exactly the ones referred to by the Party's "Opposition Platform. For Life," interpreting them as linguistic restrictions and oppressions against the Russian language. Thus, the party stresses that the rights of citizens to use the Russian language were violated as they were forced to use the Ukrainian language. Like previously analysed formations, the party in its program provides a very generalized and simplified way of implementing state reforms, and according to the program premises, all the changes in a simple and clear way are going to be carried out.[39]

The 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine showed a change in the form of a campaign strategy. Ukrainian artist Volodymyr Zelensky made his political debut by running for president of Ukraine; and his party, Servant of the People, took part in the parliamentary elections as an example of a new political power based on populism. Zelensky's party built its electoral promises on values that are quite important to Ukrainian society, for instance: freedom, guarantee of law, fairness of power, equality, common country, cooperation of elites with society. During the presidential and parliamentary campaigns, many populist slogans were prepared, among them "Zelensky unites the country."[40] In previous elections, candidates have referred to the differences between the eastern and western parts of Ukraine, with V. Yushchenko described as a pro-Western candidate in 2004 and Yanukovych as a pro-Eastern candidate in 2010, like Tymoshenko and Yanukovych respectively.[41]

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[38] Закон України, "Про забезпечення функціонування української мови як державної," Відомості Верховної Ради (ВВР), № 21, 2019, ст.81. (Law of Ukraine. "On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language," (Vedomosti Verkhovna Rada (VVR), No. 21, 2019, Article 81).

[39] Передвиборна програма політичної партії "Опозиційна платформа- 'За життя'."

[40] Передвиборна програма Володимира Зеленського, 2019, https://program.ze2019.com/ (Pre-election program of Volodymyr Zelensky, 2019); Maryana Prokop & Ketevan Maisuradze, "Specifics of Ukrainian Populism. A Case Study of the Servant of People Party's Campaign 2019," in *Contemporary International Challenges*, ed. Rafal Zajęcki (Kielce-Łódź: ArchaeGraph, 2020), 124-27.

[41] Prokop & Galewska, "The Amendment of Ukrainian Electoral Law," 20-24.

Therefore, the task of the rhetoric used by the leader of the "Servant of the People" was to meet the expectations of citizens living in the west and east of the country. Zelensky created the image of a man of the people, also thanks to the previously transmitted TV series with an identical name to that of the party, presenting the fictional character of a teacher of history who accidentally becomes the President of Ukraine, in which he played the main role. In his demands, he proclaimed, "If I become president, it means that everyone who voted for me is also a president." "Anyone can be a president." The emphasis was on showing that he was a man of the people. He emphasized the diversity of Ukrainians: "We all are so different, but so similar," portraying himself as a president of all. He did not attack individual candidates, but the entire political elite, for lack of actions, inefficiency and corruption. Noteworthy, the party's campaign was marked by the use of new technologies and social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). Zelensky launched a new dimension of electoral campaigning (i.e. e-campaigning) and used a new kind of populism, called populism 2.0, mainly because his core electorate was the youth. The party's political program also included promises to implement a series of economic reforms, without specifying the stages and manner in which they would be made, or proposed making too many impossible reforms in a short period of time, such as lowering taxes for business, but increasing social benefits. He did not explicitly speak out against the status of the Russian and Ukrainian languages, due to his reliance on both Ukrainian and Russian-speaking electors.[42]

The political party "European Solidarity," that is, the party of President Petro Poroshenko, which changed from the Petro Poroshenko Bloc before the last elections, in the previous composition of the Verkhovna Rada, formed after the elections as a result of Euromaidan, was the party in power and the dominant actor in terms of the number of seats in parliament. Moreover, it is notable that its leader Petro Poroshenko won the presidential election in the first round, achieving the support of more than 50% of votes, which was unprecedented for Ukraine for the entire history of its

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[42] Передвиборна програма політичної партії "Слуга народу," 2019, https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/showdoc2pf7171=403pid409=27.doc (Pre-election program of the "Servant of the People" political party); Prokop & Maisuradze, "Specifics of Ukrainian Populism," 124-27.

independence. Unlike the previously presented parties, Poroshenko's party could not criticize its predecessors in its election demands, as it would have to criticize its own actions. Therefore, the election program focused on highlighting the achievements of the party's governments and Petro Poroshenko as a President of Ukraine. In addition, the party based its program on the expectations of the Ukrainian society related to being a member of European structures (EU and NATO). It considers the signing of Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU as its main merit, which did not happen during the presidency of V. Yanukovych, becoming one of the premises for the outbreak of the "Revolution of Dignity" also known as Euromaidan. The populist premises in the program concern making power effective and accountable and strengthening citizen participation in it. A noticeable aspect of the political program is the way it is presented and the lack of specific approaches to achieving the goals promoted by the party.[43] It is noteworthy that in the rhetoric of the party leader Petro Poroshenko, following his loss in the 2019 presidential election and the resignation of the presidential seat to Volodymyr Zelensky, there was a lot of criticism of the authorities, above all, the emphasis was placed on the latter's incompetence and his entrance into politics from the world of entertainment, being a comedian.

Yulia Tymoshenko's political party "Batkivshchyna (Fatherland)" in the 2019 parliamentary elections stressed changes, emphasizing a new economic dimension in its program. This was mainly caused by the incompetence of the governments of the "orange coalition" and the gas scandal involving its leader as well as her imprisonment. Further functioning in the world of politics required the party members to make radical changes, including in the electoral program. Like the previous actors, the party failed to avoid the assumptions of populism in its program. It was underlined that with their victory, the citizens would experience positive changes in their lives. Also it was noticeable that the party identified itself with the people by emphasizing "We," "Us," "We need a clear and transparent plan of actions

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[43] Передвиборна програма "Європейської солідарності," 2019, https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/showdoc2pf7171=335pid409=27.doc. (Pre-election program of "European Solidarity").

both in the short and long term perspective." It identified itself as a part of the nation, not the elite. Criticism of the authorities was reflected in claims about the expectations of the Ukrainian people for decisive actions, and who in return got empty promises and lack of implementation. We can also observe, as in the case of Poroshenko's party, considerable simplification in the perception of the reforms and actions that the party intended to make. The guidelines suggested many changes and reforms, needed for the effective functioning and stable development of the state, although the program did not include step-by-step proposals on how to make these changes. So, very general proposals without a detailed plan for their implementation, while indicating the uniqueness and comprehensiveness of the given election program. The party promised an effective implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU, stressing the fact that "our future" is in the European Union.[44]

An analysis of the electoral programs of the formations which entered parliament in 2019 revealed that among those who most frequently turned to populist tricks in their rhetoric were the party "Opposition Platform. For Life," the "Fatherland" party and the "Servant of the People" party. Much fewer populist premises were seen in the programs of the "European Solidarity" party and the "Voice" party.

Conclusions

The phenomenon of populism as an element of election campaigns has also functioned in Ukraine. Candidates successfully used the populist rhetoric to gain and maintain a power. The purpose of the article was to analyse the peculiarities of Ukrainian populism. The main research task was to find the answer to the question to what extent the intra-state changes in Ukraine impacted on the shape of populism implemented by Ukrainian

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[44] Передвиборна програма Всеукраїнського об'єднання "Батьківщина," 2019, https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2019/showdoc2pf7171=328pid409=27.doc. (Pre-election program of the All-Ukrainian Association "Batkivshchyna"); Новий курс України, 2019, https://nku.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Novyj-kurs-Ukrayiny.pdf (The New Course of Ukraine).

leaders. Answering the given question, it should be stated that the shape of populism in Ukraine was largely determined by the political situation in the country. Politicians successfully adapted the dimension of their ongoing polemics with the public to social expectations and populist trends.

The dimension of populism was largely based on long-standing expectations of citizens for changes in the state and the implementation of real reforms. The functioning of the Ukrainian political reality was undoubtedly influenced by the periodical changes in the functioning of the Ukrainian party system, as well as changes to the Basic Law of Ukraine in the context of regulating the relationship between the legislative and executive powers, as well as the events of the "Orange Revolution" and the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan). These factors were reflected in the rhetoric of politicians, guaranteeing political stability and the implementation of reforms. The emergence of new actors on the Ukrainian political stage did not mean a departure from the use of populist assumptions, but rather the adaptation of the given tricks in terms of the expectations of the electorate. From the perspective of the already functioning players, there was a challenge of adapting their demands to the changing political reality and the actors competing for power.

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Doctrinal Aspects
Regarding Russia's Cyber Actions

ION ROCEANU

GEORGE-DANIEL BOBRIC

Abstract. Cyberspace represents, together with the other four operational domains (land, air, maritime and space), the place where various entities have different interests, develop different kinds of power and prepare troops for confrontation. Russia is one of the super powers which has many capabilities in cyberspace used especially for fulfilling its national and international interests. Some of Russia's interests are related to information anywhere it is generated, disseminated, storage or used by machines, IT systems or humans, if it is considered as being valuable. Consequently, all kinds of operations dealing with information are coordinated under the umbrella name "information warfare or informatsionnoe protivoborstvo." Cyber operations are planned and conducted in order to offer to the Russia Federation access to relevant data or to deny for all considered enemies access to their IT systems, data and services. Cyber operations are employed in conjunctions with other kinds of operations, military or otherwise, as the recent events in Ukraine proved.

Keywords: Cyber security, Russian cyber operations, Information operations, cyber operations against Ukraine.

Introduction

In recent years, the Russian Federation has steadily developed its cyber warfare capabilities, representing one of the key players in cyberspace. Cyber actions associated with the Russian Federation in general and non-state actors supported by the Kremlin administration, in particular, have targeted and threatened the national security of its neighbours (Estonia,

Georgia and Ukraine). Starting from these two ideas, it can be stated that the tendency of imposing the geostrategic vision through the use of cyber actions by the Russian Federation can represent a risk to the national security of Romania.

Thus, the main objective of the present scientific approach is to identify the doctrinal and conceptual substratum that represented the basis for carrying out operations in cyberspace, by the entities of the Russian state apparatus, supported by it or affiliated with it, during the entire period of the conflict in Ukraine and especially before the beginning and during the so-called "special military operation."

1. What is the connection between hybrid warfare, information warfare and cyber warfare (from a Russian perspective)?

2. What is the share of the use of cyber actions in order to obtain the desired results on different levels (political, military, economic, etc.)?

3. What are the doctrinal changes in recent years regarding the cyber environment and its specific actions?

The new warfare – a conceptual approach

Cyberspace represents, together with the other four operational domains (land, air, maritime and space), the place where various entities, with a variety of personal or collective reasons and possessing specific and increasingly sophisticated tools, carry out actions in order to fulfil certain objectives. Depending on certain characteristics of the operational environment and of these actors, the impact of cyber actions can vary considerably, from the unavailability of certain digital resources to the decommissioning of some systems within critical infrastructures.

The development of cyberspace has recorded, in the last two decades, an increasingly high speed, given all the subsequent progress or the evolution of the emerging technologies in close connection with the digital environment. In this regard, it is easy to understand that, along with its development, both the opportunities and the threats were on increasingly steep evolutionary steps. Thus, at present, every microsecond is marked by the execution of a cyber action in any part of the globe, a significant number of which are malicious in nature and with a highly destructive potential.

Opportunities to achieve certain objectives, regardless of their nature and level (tactical, operational or strategic), have been noticed and analysed by Russian military thinkers and analysts since the beginning of this century (and even earlier). Thus, in 2008, with the military operation conducted by the Russian Federation against Georgia, the particularly important role of cyber actions in an overall military conflict, as well as the extraordinary potential for changing the balance of power in military operations, were clearly delineated. Thus, also in the case of the Russian Federation, this was the moment that led to an extensive process of modernization of cyberspace from an operational, legislative, organizational, technological and conceptual point of view.

Cyberspace can be viewed from the perspective of three distinct domains: physical, cognitive and informational. At the intersection of these three domains lies the idea of power, with such a long history that begins as early as the time of the great ancient empires before Christ, but with such a high impact in the tumultuous geopolitical present. Regardless of whether it is soft power (the ability of an entity to cause another person or group to perform certain actions deliberately, without using force or coercion, but through persuasion) or hard power (the difference between it and soft power is given by the use of force or coercion instead of persuasion), cyberspace has a particularly important role, identified countless times, especially in the last decade.

Closely related to the idea of power is also the notion of war, from which the West seemed to have moved away more and more, but which became extremely used in this period characterized by the conduct of an open conflict near NATO's borders, initiated by one of the great powers of the world. For the Western school of thought and the political and military leaders of these states, the universally accepted notion for today's wars is that of *hybrid*. At the European Union's level, hybrid threats are considered to be "the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare."[1] Similarly, the same vision is shared at the NATO level,

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[1] European Commission, "Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats. A European Union Response," Brussels, 2016, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016JC0018.

with hybrid warfare being defined as the "use of asymmetrical tactics to probe for and exploit weaknesses via non-military means (such as political, informational, and economic intimidation and manipulation) […] backed by the threat of conventional and unconventional military means."[2]

On the other hand, the oriental schools of thought, marked especially by the Russian and Chinese ones, seem to use slightly distinct notions, but whose particular elements are identified with those of their western counterparts. In this vein, in the following section, a short theoretical foray into the notion of hybrid war will be carried out, through the comparative analysis of the main subsequent constituent elements of the two concepts.

Hybrid warfare from a Russian Perspective. The domestic concept of information warfare, the role of cyberspace

In recent years, special attention has been paid by Russian military analysts to the concept of hybrid war which, from a domestic perspective, has received the title *gibridnaya voyna*. In this sense, the following important parallelism between the two concepts is noted (Table 1):

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the two concepts

	Hybrid warfare	Gibridnaya voyna
Ofer Fridman[3]	It emerged following the analysis of conflicts fought with non-state actors such as the Taliban, Hezbollah or Al-Qaeda.	It emerged following the analysis of conflicts and military operations carried out exclusively by state actors.
	The main focus is on military operations and the tactics used during them.	It encompasses a much wider set of ideas and concepts, with applicability in most spheres of activity from a given country.
	It represents a combination of specific elements, for example, conventional and irregular forces, with the combined use of operational techniques and tactics.	It presents the confrontational environment as the battlefield where some warring parties seek to destroy the socio-cultural cohesion of the enemy while protecting their own.

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[2] NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "Hybrid Warfare: NATO's New Strategic Challenge?," 2015, https://natolibguides.info/hybridwarfare/reports.

[3] Ofer Fridman, "Hybrid Warfare or Gibridnaya Voyna?: Similar, but Different," *RUSI Journal* 162, no. 1 (2017), quoted in Maria Eduarda Buonafina Dourado, Alexandre Cesar Cunha Leite and Fábio Rodrigo Ferreira Nobre, "Hybrid Warfare vs. Gibridnaya Voyna: the Different Meanings of Hybrid Conflicts for West and Russia," *Revista da Escola de Guerra Naval* 24, no. 2, (2018): 51-52.

	Hybrid warfare	**Gibridnaya voyna**
Timothy Thomas[4]	Western analysts have applied, at least in the last decade, the subsequent actions of this type of war, to the conflicts and military operations carried out by the Russian Federation.	Russian analysts refer to the actions carried out by the West in the last two decades, which they (the Russians) may implement together with asymmetric and indirect methods.
Samuel Charap[5]	Western analysts examined the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, from the period 2013-2014, and the actions performed by the Russian Federation through the prism of this concept.	Russian strategists use this concept to describe US efforts to weaken and remove unfriendly governments from power, using a wide range of kinetic and non-kinetic methods. Thus, they perceive that the US used this type of war at the end of 2013 in Ukraine to remove the Yanukovych government and to install a puppet regime in Kyiv.
Stephen Covington[6]	The application of this concept by the Russian Federation has been seen as the use of special forces, information warfare, cyber-attacks, political sabotage, economic pressure and energy blackmail to achieve its own strategic objectives.	From the Russian perspective, hybridity consists of the unitary application of two distinct forms of warfare, through the use of means considered ambiguous with those "in sight" (conventional and nuclear troops). From a cyber point of view, attacks are part of the category of ambiguous means, which have the ability to temporarily or permanently block the enemy, destabilize the battlefield and create a series of advantages by weakening and disorienting the enemy.

It can be observed, therefore, that the Russian school of thought is different from the one of Western origin, regarding the concept of hybrid war. If for the NATO states the hybrid war consists of the mixture of conventional troops with irregular groups that use a complex set of techniques and tactics, for the Russian Federation the notion of hybrid is much closer to the real meaning of the concept. Thus, for Russian analysts,

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[4] Timothy Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," *The Military Review*, July-August 2017, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20170831_THOMAS_Russias_Way_of_War.pdf, 41.

[5] Samuel Charap, "The Ghost of Hybrid War," *Survival* 57, no. 6 (2015): 51.

[6] Stephen Covington, "The Culture of Strategic Thought Behind Russia's Modern Approaches to Warfare," Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, October 2016, https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/Culture%20of%20Strategic%20Thought%203.pdf, 9-10.

the notion of hybrid war is much closer to the West, while in the local understanding the hybrid nature of war is generated by the intelligent use of non-conventional means (such as cyber-attacks, operations specific to information warfare, subversion and blackmail operations, etc.) with those "in sight" (conventional and nuclear deterrence troops). In this way, the conflict can be maintained at the optimal level, from a distance, firstly by decreasing the enemy's desire to engage in battle, and secondarily by weakening, step by step, the military capabilities, the political/economical potential and the population's support towards the political leadership of the state and trust in government institutions (including the army).

For Russian strategists and analysts, the concept of information warfare is much closer to their own vision and the subsequent tactics were used in the operations carried out by the Russian Federation in recent years. Its main advantages are: much lower costs (than the de facto use of weapons and troops), the blurring of physical borders and the significant reduction of the distance to the enemy (by using the cyberspace), reduced possibilities for detection and early warning of possible information campaigns, high chances of gaining specific objectives through psychological operations (deception, manipulation) and, not subsidiarily, the reduced possibility of the victims to accurately identify the author of these actions. In this sense, the role of the information war will remain high in the conflicts that will follow, because "wars will be resolved by a skilful combination of military, nonmilitary and special nonviolent measures that will be put through by a variety of forms and methods and a blend of political, economic, informational, technological and environmental measures, primarily by taking advantage of information superiority. Information warfare in the new conditions will be the starting point of every action now called the new type of warfare, or hybrid war, in which broad use will be made of the mass media and, where feasible, global computer networks."[7]

As in the case of hybrid war, Russian analysts and strategists do not operate with the concept of cyber warfare, and when they do, they refer to

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[7] Sergey Chekinov, Sergei Bogdanov, "Forecasting the Nature and Content of Wars of the Future: Problems and Assessments," in *Military Thought*, no. 10 (2015): 44-45.

the ideological substratum of Western origin. Thus, through this term, the NATO states refer to a series of predominantly technical aspects, seeing cyberspace as a global domain that is part of the information environment and includes all the networks through which the informational content is circulated, the subsequent physical systems and processes and, last but not least, the Internet. On the other hand, the Russian school of thought has adopted, as a key term, the notion of information war, which can be, given the final target of the action, "*information-psychological warfare* (to affect the personnel of the armed forces and the population) which is conducted under conditions of natural competition, i.e. permanently; [and] *information-technology warfare* (to affect technical systems which receive, collect, process and transmit information), which is conducted during wars and armed conflicts."[8]

In this vein, even if the similarity between cyber and information warfare, from the Russian point of view, is more significant in the informational-technological part, these actions are also undertaken within the informational-psychological subcomponent, with a wide range of manipulation and disinformation actions taking place through cyberspace. Therefore, it can be concluded that the central notion is information, the analysis of the doctrinal evolution in the next subchapter referring to the information space, its specific threats, subsequent actions, etc.

The doctrinal/legislative substratum related to the Russian informational/ cyber warfare

One of the most important legislative documents is the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, adopted in 2021. Regarding the informational domain, special attention was paid to the informational security, providing a series of subsequent measures, among which we list the creation of a sovereign part of the Internet, strengthening measures to counter cyber-attacks, strengthening and developing domestic technologies

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[8] Vladimir Kvachkov, *Russia's Special Purpose Forces*, Voyennaya Literatura, 2004, quoted in Keir Giles, *Handbook of Russian Information Warfare* (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2016), 9.

and resources and reducing dependence on imports and, last but not least, establishing "forces and means of information confrontation."[9]

Another programmatic document relevant to the informational domain is the Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation, according to which the threat to the informational security of the Russian Federation can be defined as "a combination of actions and factors creating a risk of damaging the national interests in the informational sphere."[10] From the spectrum of these threats, the main one was established as follows: "a number of foreign countries are building up their informational technology capacities to influence the informational infrastructure in pursuing military purposes."[11] At the same time, according to the document, the informational security of the Russian Federation is marked by the use of informational technologies for military purposes, the increase in the complexity of computerized attacks on critical information infrastructure, the dependence of the domestic industry on imports of foreign informational technology, the low level of resilience of the population to informational security-related aspects etc.

The importance given to the informational war is also revealed in the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, in which a series of external and internal threats are presented, that are based on the actions carried out in the informational domain. In order to counteract these risks and threats, one of the main tasks is to equip the specialized subunits with special equipment, in order to "enhance capacity and means of informational warfare."[12]

In the specialty literature, other such documents with a legislative character and applicability in the informational domain have been identified, but they deal with approximately the same aspects, with a higher level of detail and specificity. Also with applicability to cyberspace, a series of

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[9] Michael Duclos, "Russia's National Security Strategy 2021: the Era of 'Information Confrontation'," Institut Montaigne, August 2, 2021, https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/russias-national-security-strategy-2021-era-information-confrontation.

[10] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation," 2016, https://afyonluoglu.org/PublicWebFiles/strategies/Asia/Russia%202016%20Information%20Security%20Doctrine.pdf.

[11] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Doctrine of Information Security."

[12] The Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," 2015, https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029.

legislative documents were identified that aimed at closing sites with inappropriate content, controlling the population's access to certain informational content, banning the use of virtual private networks (VPNs), creating an effective mechanism for monitoring and censoring the Internet within its own borders, inspecting Internet traffic originating from outside the country and censoring it, registering the identity of instant messaging users, obtaining and maintaining the unique role of legislating the Internet delimited by physical borders and expanding the local model of Internet sovereignty at an international level, with the support of other like-minded states.[13]

At the international level, China is the most important partner of the Russian Federation when it comes to cooperation in the informational domain. In the last decade, several actions have been performed to push the concept of sovereignty over this domain also internationally, an effort partially completed in 2019 through the signing of a bilateral treaty that provides for extensive cooperation on digital content.[14] These efforts were complemented by other such peculiar actions, both in bilateral formats and at the level of the organizations in which the two states are part: the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc.

The effects of the implementation of the legislative-conceptual aspects specific in the informational domain

Relevant to the cyber domain is the structural change that was announced shortly after the 2008-conflict against Georgia. The deficiencies identified during this operation led to the need to establish informational troops, which "should be composed of diplomats, experts, journalists, writers, publicists, translators, operators, communications personnel, web designers, hackers and others [...] to construct information countermeasures, it is necessary to develop a centre for the determination of critically

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[13] Alena Epifanova, "Deciphering Russia's 'Sovereign Internet Law'," German Council on Foreign Relations, January 16, 2020, https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/deciphering-russias-sovereign-internet-law.

[14] Eric Siyi Zhang, Rogier Creemers, "Russian Perspectives on China as an Actor in Cyberspace," Leiden Asia Centre, January 2021, https://leidenasiacentre.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-Russian-Perspectives-on-China-final-version.pdf, 6.

important information entities of the enemy, including how to eliminate them physically, and how to conduct electronic warfare, psychological warfare, systemic counterpropaganda, and network operations including hacker training."[15] It is still unclear how these troops were established and used, given the fact that in the informational architecture of the Russian Federation there are three types of cyber entities: within the state apparatus, supported/accepted by the state and affiliated to the state.

Those entities that work directly for the government structures, fulfilling the objectives set by them, are part of the state apparatus. These entities have the full support of the government, regardless of its nature, and the main source of financing is state funds. Among those supported/accepted by the state are the cyber actors who are not part of the government structures, but can be employed by them to serve certain purposes or their actions can be "overlooked" if the effect on the target intersects with the vision and objectives of the state leadership. The category of state-affiliated entities includes groups/individuals who identify themselves with the ideology of the state they support and act for its benefit, having no connection with any kind of structure within the respective state apparatus.

The latter category was especially highlighted shortly before and immediately after the initiation, on February 24, 2022, by the Russian Federation, of the conflict against Ukraine. Thus, the members of the following groups declared and, in some cases, supported the actions of the Russian Federation:[16]

► through cyber-attacks: Conti, UNC1151, Killnet (which also targeted the Romanian cyber infrastructure), XakNet, Stormous, Digital Cobra Gang, Freecivilian, The Red Bandits, The Coomingproject;

► through disinformation spread on social media platforms: UNC1151 (Facebook), Zatoichi (Twitter).

In the category of Russian entities from the state apparatus and those supported by them, four main structures were identified, three of which

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[15] BBC Monitoring, "Russia Is Underestimating Information Resources and Losing out to the West," Novyy Region, October 29, 2008, quoted in Keir Giles, "'Information Troops' - A Russian Cyber Command?," Proceedings of 3rd International Conference on Cyber Conflict, Tallinn, 2011, 52.

[16] Emma Vail, "Russia or Ukraine: Hacking Groups Take Sides," The Record, February 25, 2022, https://therecord.media/russia-or-ukraine-hacking-groups-take-sides/.

have clearly-established external objectives (GRU - The Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, FSB - The Federal Security Service and the SVR - Foreign Intelligence Service) and one internally (FSO - Federal Protective Service). Figure 1 shows the structures with impact over the states' borders, their subunits responsible for fulfilling the subsequent objectives in the cyber/informational domain and the main groups affiliated with them (the majority of them being referred to as APT - advanced persistent threat).
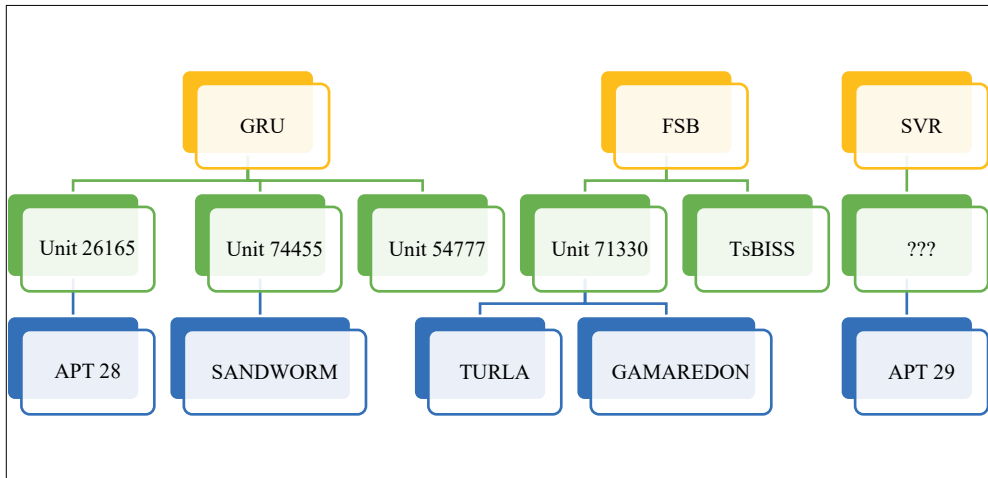
Fig. 1. The main Russian cyber-related entities[17]

It is possible that a much higher number of cyber entities are affiliated with these structures, or that this organizational chart is much more complex. Certainly, the dynamic with which new cybernetic structures and entities appear within the state apparatus or are affiliated with the Russian state is a growing one, other such actors being identified in the specialty literature, but which could not be assigned with a high degree of veracity to one of these state structures.

The entire process of developing the subsequent conceptual, doctrinal and legislative foundation of the cyber/informational domain probably resulted in the delimitation of the role of each separate structure,

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[17] Congressional Research Service, "Russian Cyber Units," 2022, https://crsreports.congress. gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11718.

the clear establishment of the objectives of each, the determination of the spheres of interest and/or influence, the creation of new subunits with specific missions and targets, the consolidation of the defensive cyber potential and, in particular, the offensive one, and the possible affiliation of certain groups with a high level of sophistication to these structures. The conflict in Ukraine, intensively monitored and analysed during the approximately nine years since its beginning by analysts from all over the world, represents one of the most eloquent examples of the implementation of doctrinal aspects subsumed to cyberspace.

The actions of Russian/State affiliated cyber groups in the context of the "special military operation" in Ukraine

If the structural-organizational effects and those related to the idea of sovereignty over the Internet have been presented, it is also important to analyse the impact of the process of implementing the doctrinal aspects related to the informational space on the battlefield. In this sense, the most current event is the armed conflict initiated by Russia in February so, in this subchapter, a brief analysis of the cyber events allegedly performed by the Russian cyber groups/affiliated with the Russian state will be carried out.

Cyber-attacks attributed to Russia before the conflict

In the first half of January (13.01), a cyber-attack carried out against the Ukrainian cyber infrastructure through the use of the WhisperGate wiper led to the unavailability of dozens of computer systems belonging to two government agencies. The malware used gave the impression, initially, that the attack was a ransomware-type one, but the real, final goal was to completely delete the data from the respective computers and servers while blocking access to them. In the first phase, the wiper blocked the portion of the hard drive responsible for booting the operating system, displaying a message requesting $10k in Bitcoin. In the meantime, the other two phases were executed, at the end of which the data from the respective systems was being deleted according to their extension, thus becoming unrecoverable

even if the payment had been eventually made[18]. Responsibility for this attack was attributed to a group affiliated with the Russian state, known as Ember Bear.[19]

In the same period (January 13-14) there was a cyber-attack that targeted the websites of approximately 70 Ukrainian government structures, during which the attackers modified the initial page of the website with the message "be afraid and expect the worst." Ukraine's Ministry of Digital Transformation accused Russia of being behind the attack.[20] Later, on January 19, the Gamaredon group was alleged to be behind a phishing cyber-attack targeting an (unspecified) Western government entity in Ukraine.[21]

In February, prior to the actual outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine, a series of cyber-attacks against Ukrainian infrastructure were reported. In this regard, between February 15-16, a massive Distributed Denial-of-Service cyber-attack campaign took place targeting several government departments, the banking system and radio stations, a campaign which was attributed by the UK's National Cyber Security Centre to the GRU.[22]

It is also interesting that, on the day before the launch of the offensive actions against Ukraine, the Russian actors had already started the cyber machine, probably to support the actions in the real environment, to create panic among the Ukrainian population or to mark the beginning of the conflict in their own style. Thus, on February 23, another wiper malware

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[18] Kim Zetter, "Dozens of Computers in Ukraine Wiped with Destructive Malware in Coordinated Attack," Zero Day, January 18, 2022, https://zetter.substack.com/p/dozens-of-computers-in-ukraine-wiped.

[19] Crowdstrike, "Who is EMBER BEAR?," Crowdstrike Blog, March 30, 2022, https://www.crowdstrike.com/blog/who-is-ember-bear/.

[20] Pentasecurity, "Ukrainian Government Suffers Massive Website Defacement Attack," January 20, 2022, https://www.pentasecurity.com/blog/security-weekly-ukrainian-government-suffers-massive-website-defacement-attack/.

[21] Kyle Alspach, "Microsoft Discloses New Details on Russian Hacker Group Gamaredon," Venture Beat, February 4, 2022, https://venturebeat.com/2022/02/04/microsoft-discloses-new-details-on-russian-hacker-group-gamaredon/.

[22] Government of the United Kingdom, "UK Assesses Russian Involvement in Cyber-attacks on Ukraine," February 18, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-assess-russian-involvement-in-cyber-attacks-on-ukraine.

called HermeticWiper was launched[23] by the Russian group known as Sandworm against hundreds of Ukrainian military and government networks. Also, on the same day, Russian cyber actors allegedly executed a significant cyber-attack against the Ka-SAT satellite network, operated by the company Viasat. The attack was probably primarily aimed at disrupting Ukrainian military communications, but collateral victims included tens of thousands of European users.[24]

A timeline of the cyber-attacks performed before the initiation of the military conflict has been depicted in Figure 2:
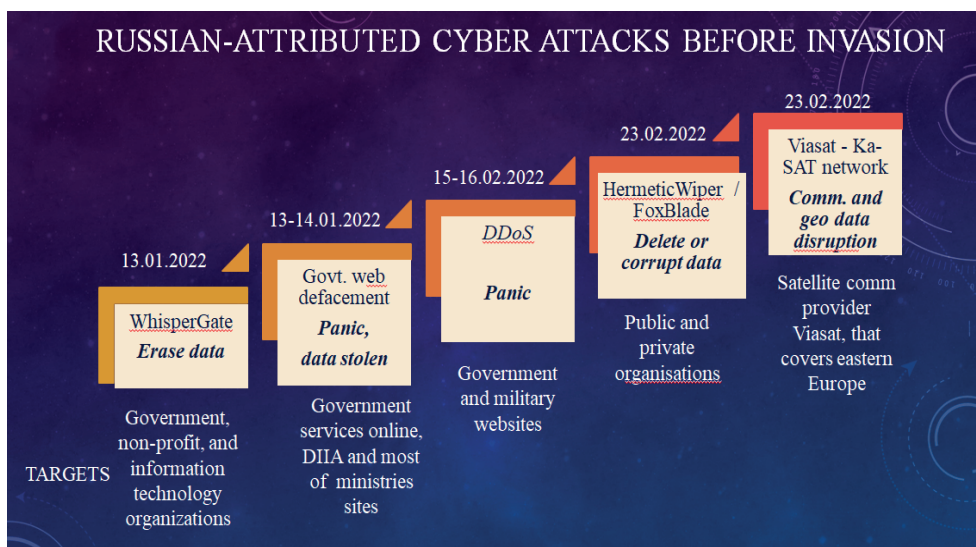
Fig. 2. Timeline of Russian-attributed cyber-attacks against Ukraine

Cyber-attacks attributed to Russia during the conflict

The pace of cyber actions has been maintained, after the start of the conflict, at a level roughly similar to the speed of military operations. Thus, between February 24 and July 15, multiple cyber actions attributed by

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[23] Mitchell Orenstein, "Russia's Use of Cyberattacks: Lessons from the Second Ukraine War," Foreign Policy Research Institute, June 7, 2022, https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/06/russias-use-of-cyberattacks-lessons-from-the-second-ukraine-war/.

[24] Carly Page, "US, UK and EU Blame Russia for 'Unacceptable' Viasat Cyberattack," Tech Crunch, May 10, 2022, https://techcrunch.com/2022/05/10/russia-viasat-cyberattack/.

international specialists to entities affiliated/supported by the Russian state, carried out against the Ukrainian cyber infrastructure, were identified. In figure 3 (note: this figure represents only a part of the original one,[25] intended to present only the operations after February 24) the main actions attributed (from a technical point of view or only politically) by the European Union to some cyber actors of Russian origin or having Russian Federation's support were presented.

Fig. 3. Cyber-attacks against Ukraine after 24 February[26]

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[25] European Parliamentary Research Service, "Russia's War on Ukraine: Timeline of Cyber-attacks," June 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733549/EPRS_BRI(2022)733549_EN.pdf.

[26] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733549/EPRS_BRI(2022)733549_EN.pdf.

It can be seen that the cyber efforts subscribe to a more complex operational vision, subsumed by the overall effort supported by the Russian armed forces in the land, maritime and air domains. From the analysis of these events, it can be concluded that these operations were probably aimed at degrading the Ukrainian infrastructure, blocking the Ukrainian government's networks in order to discredit it, disrupting financial services and energy supply, and instilling fear among the civilian population. In rarer cases, targets in the real environment coincided with those in cyberspace, suggesting a possible connection between subunits operating in cyberspace and those involved in the offensive actions in the real operational environment.

Conclusions

The second armed conflict launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine (the first considered to be the one started in 2014) represents an event that shocked the entire world and produced a series of consequences that are difficult to predict in the medium and long term, especially in the field of international relations. Within this conflict, the reforms implemented in the last decade by the Russian leadership on the military level were particularly reflected, but on a secondary level, the implementation of a doctrinal substrate with high relevance for cyberspace can be observed.

The reforms carried out by the entire Russian state apparatus (at the conceptual, legislative, organizational level etc.) on its own cyber environment were channelled along three main lines of action: strengthening the offensive cyber capabilities and the specific tools, creating a mechanism for intensive control of the informational content circulated in the cyberspace delimited by the physical borders and the implementation (especially externally) of the concept of sovereignty over its own cyberspace.

Regarding the first course of action, the expected outcome of this evolutionary process has fallen short of the level expected by the international community, given the significant cyber campaigns associated with entities of Russian origin conducted in the last decade, but which have not been remarked during this year's conflict.

From the analysis of the implementation of the doctrinal aspects specific to the cyber environment of Russian origin during the conflict launched against Ukraine, it can be observed that, to a lesser extent, cyber-attacks, in conjunction with a series of measures adopted at other levels (military, economic, energetical, political, diplomatic, etc.), can represent a warning indicator regarding possible malicious intentions of the Russian Federation against states considered "unfriendly."

To a greater extent, cyber-attacks are part of the hybrid warfare arsenal (in the Western view of the concept) that the Russian Federation has been actively using in recent years. As part of informational warfare, Russian entities use cyberspace for its psychological component as well, not only for the technical one, to spread informational content especially formed to serve certain purposes and to degrade the cohesion between the population of the targeted state and its leadership.

Last but not least, the analysis of cyber-attacks attributed to Russian entities shows that they were used, before the start of the conflict, on the one hand, to boost the political process and to send ultimatum-type messages to the parties involved in the negotiations, and on the other hand, to prepare the offensive arsenal designed to serve the strategic objectives of the conflict. Later, during the "special military operation," cyber-attacks primarily targeted critical infrastructure and government networks, in order to weaken the defence of the opposing side. At the same time, they were executed, at certain operational tempos, in order to support the tactical actions of the Russian armed forces, as well as to increase the panic level within the population by limiting/interrupting access to financial-banking facilities, energy, etc.

In conclusion, from the analysis of the doctrinal evolution related to cyberspace, multiple aspects of interest can be determined regarding the future courses of action of the Russian leadership and/or its objectives. At the same time, although unfortunate for the Ukrainian people, the Russian offensive in Ukraine has provided the entire international IT community and cyber security specialists with a unique opportunity to analyse how the Russian cyber entities use the cyber arsenal in times of war/armed conflict. Thus, the current period represents a good opportunity to identify various indicators regarding the real intentions of the Russian leadership from the

combined analysis of doctrinal aspects with the actions carried out by domestic cyber entities.

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Biomass Energy in a Black Sea Basin Country such as Armenia

SATENYK SHAHBAZYAN

Abstract. This article comprises a short analysis of the issue of using biomass as the source of energy in Armenia. The author analyses the corresponding legislation and assesses the current legal and regulatory framework conditions with regards to the biomass sector in Armenia.

Keywords: biomass energy, Black Sea region, Armenia, renewable energy.

Definition of biomass

According to Article 2 of the RA Law "On Energy Saving and Renewable Energy," biomass is an organic and (or) combustible product that originated from human biological or economic activity or has animal origin.[1] To put it differently, biomass is a raw or processed organic matter endowed with chemical energy. Products produced during the biological activity of materials of biological origin, as well as organic waste generated during their processing, are considered biomass.

From the study of the RA legislation, it becomes clear that the terms "biomass" and "biological mass" are identical and the RA legislation is using both terms. For example, in the decision No. 88-N of the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission on 22.04.2015 both terms are used.[2]

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[1] Republic of Armenia Law No. LA-122 On Energy Saving and Renewable Energy, November 9, 2004, https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/Law%20on%20 Energy%20Saving%20and%20Renewable%20Energy.pdf.

[2] Decision No. 88-N of the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission, April 22, 2015.

Advantages of biomass as a renewable source of energy

First of all, the usage of biomass as a renewable source of energy has environmental benefits. Renewable energy production mainly has a positive long-term impact on the environment, as it reduces fossil fuel-based energy production, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Renewable sources of energy have the advantage not only because they reduce pollution, but also because they can add new economically sustainable energy sources to existing means of electricity generation. Dependence on imported fuels for energy production makes the country vulnerable to fluctuating prices as well as disruptions in fuel supply.

Because renewable energy technologies are not dependent on fuel markets, they are not subject to price fluctuations due to increasing demand, declining supply, or market transactions. As renewable energy production is local, it is not subject to interruptions from outside the region or the country.

Maximum utilization of renewable energy potential is one of the main priorities for the energy sector development in Armenia, which is fixed in the basic document for the development of the energy sector of Armenia, the Strategic Program for the Development of the Energy Sector of the Republic of Armenia (until 2040). According to this document, maximum utilization of the potential of renewable energy, taking into account that it is a part of the plan for the development of electricity generation capacities with minimal costs, is one of the main priorities for the development of the energy sector.[3]

Biomass as one of the directions of the development of bioenergy in Armenia

In general, bioenergy has three directions of development:
- Biogas

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[3] Appendix N 1 Strategic Program for the Development of the Energy Sector of the Republic of Armenia, Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia N 48-L, January 14, 2021,
http://91.221.229.155/u_files/file/energy/Energy%20Strategy_%20Jan%2014%202021_English.pdf.

- Bioethanol
- Solid biomass

The economically justified potential of solid biomass for biofuel production in Armenia is about 544 thousand tons, of which it is possible to produce about 500 thousand tons of solid biomass, which contains about 2000 terajoules of energy.[4]

In recent years, small-scale pilot projects for the production of solid biomass in rural communities with the support of international organizations[5] have shown that this area has great potential for development and there is a need for commercialization of the sector. Biomass production has a great potential for development, especially in rural communities, as some of the rural communities of Armenia are not gassified, but they have a great potential for raw materials suitable for biomass production.

In our country, solid biomass is produced mainly from straw and sawdust. Within the framework of various UNDP programs for the development of the mentioned sphere, small and medium companies have been established in the Basen and Akhuryan communities of the Shirak region, in the Mets Parni community of the Lori region.

Today, the production of solid biomass in Armenia is a relatively underdeveloped sector, the main reasons for this being the inaccessibility of international biomass production technologies due to high prices, the imperfection of domestic technologies, the lack of adapted and accessible technologies and equipment.[6]

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[4] ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈՒՄ ԿԵՆՍԱԶԱՆԳՎԱԾԻ ԿԱՅՈՒՆ ԶԱՐԳԱՑՈՒՄԸ ՉԵՌՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՆՊԱՏԱԿՈՎ (Biological Sustainable Development in Armenia), 2020, https://tinyurl.com/4wbc2nwh.

[5] The GEF Small Grants Programme in Armenia, "Introduction of Integrated Land and Water Management Practices to Sustain Livelihoods in Basen Community," 2015-2016, https://tinyurl.com/mr3afv4v; The GEF Small Grants Programme in Armenia, "Expanding Production of Solid bio-fuel and Application of Energy-efficient Stoves in Akhuryan Community of Shirak region (Strategic Project)," 2017-2018, https://tinyurl.com/2p93a9us.

[6] Gevorg Petrosyan, Khacik Sahakyan, "Entwicklungsperspektiven für das Energiesystem der Republik Armenien: Energiesicherheit und Erneuerbare Energien" (Development Prospects for the Energy System of Armenia. Energy Security and Renewable Energies), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2021, https://www.kas.de/documents/269781/0/Entwicklungs perspektiven+für+das+Energiesystem+der+Republik+Armenien%D6%89+Energiesicherhe

In order to promote the receipt of energy from the biomass, the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission on May 26, 2021 adopted the decision No. 198-N, according to which the tariff for electricity supplied from biomass power plants mentioned in paragraph (a) of the decision No. 88-N of the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission on April 22, 2015 (for electricity manufacturing stations which have a received electricity production license until December 31, 2020), is 47.013 AMD (0,099 EUR)/kWh without value added tax. And the tariff for electricity supplied from biomass power plants mentioned in paragraph "b" of the decision No. 88-N of the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission on April 22, 2015 (for electricity manufacturing stations which have up to 30 MW (including) deployed capacity and have a received electricity production license after January 1, 2021), is 26.185 AMD (0,055 EUR)/kWh without value added tax. The mentioned tariffs will be in effect in Armenia from July 1, 2020, until July 1, 2022.

From my point of view, in order to promote the production of electricity from biomass, the state can set a higher tariff compared with electricity tariffs delivered from solar power plants, which is almost the same. It should be noted that in order to stimulate the production of renewable energy, the RA Law "On Energy" has extended the term of purchase of electricity produced using renewable sources to 20 years.[7]

Thus, Part 1 of Article 59 of the RA Law "On Energy" provides that using other renewable energy resources (wind, solar, geothermal, biomass), the power plants guarantee the purchase of all the electricity produced for twenty years. Despite these facts, business initiatives to generate energy from biomass have not yet received sufficient impetus and development processes are slow. For the real promotion of the biomass energy sector, there is a need to develop favourable legislation and policies specifically for that sector, and to develop and implement appropriate strategies by government agencies, especially for the widespread introduction of biomass.

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it+und+Erneuerbare+Energien.pdf/3d05ad83-8215-01b2-92ff-c6de903faf9e?version=1.0&t=
1645085172101.

[7] RA Law On Energy.

Without that intervention, the development of the sphere will proceed at the current slow pace.

The medium and large farms, especially those engaged in cattle-breeding, have a real potential here, as their animal faeces decompose in the open air, causing various environmental problems. In this case, there is a gap in the law in the sphere of utilization of this type of industrial waste. If this problem is brought to the legislative field and some preferential financial means are provided in the beginning, the problem will be easily overcome, and the country's energy potential will be developed. In this case, if certain steps are taken for the production of solid biomass, then the potential for liquid biomass is not used at all.[8]

Other legislative regulations

The production of energy from biomass involves the regular supply of biomass to the electricity generating organization. Therefore, it is important to discuss the relationship between the regular supply of biomass, the identification of possible restrictions applicable to such relationships, as well as the long-term supplier-producer relationship, the regulation of civil law and competitive law applicable to such contracts.

Civil law

According to Article 437 of the RA Civil Code, citizens and legal persons are free to enter into a contract. The terms of the contract are determined at the discretion of the parties, unless the content of the relevant condition is defined by law or other legal acts (Article 438 of RA Civil Code).

One of the conditions of the contract is its term of validity, therefore, unless otherwise provided by law. The contracts for the supply of biomass can be concluded at different intervals, at different times, depending on the will of the parties. RA legislation does not envisage any restriction regarding this, which may be conditioned by the fact that the discussed sphere has not yet been regulated in detail in the RA, due to the lack of experience.

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[8] Petrosyan, Sahakyan, "Entwicklungsperspektiven."

Competition law

The producer of energy from biomass will have a dominant position in the market, but this will not be considered as a violation from the point of view of the RA legislation. According to the RA Law on the Protection of Economic Competition, the fact of having a dominant position of an economic entity is not considered a violation. In accordance with part 2 of Article 7 of the discussed law, an economic entity shall be deemed to have a dominant position in a goods market if:

(1) it has a market power in the goods market, in particular, if it does not encounter any significant competition as a seller or acquirer, and/or based on its financial standing or other qualities has the ability to have a decisive influence on the general conditions of circulation of goods in that goods market and/or oust other economic entities from the goods market and/or obstruct their entry into the goods market; or

(2) in the goods market, as a seller or acquirer it captures at least one third of the given market in terms of sale or acquisition volumes; or

(3) each of the two economic entities having the largest sale or acquisition volumes in a goods market shall be deemed to have a dominant position in the specific goods market if they jointly capture, as sellers or acquirers, at least one third of the market in terms of sale or acquisition volumes; or

(4) each of the three economic entities having the largest sale or acquisition volumes in a goods market shall be deemed to have a dominant position in the specific goods market if they jointly capture, as sellers or acquirers, at least two thirds of the market in terms of sale or acquisition volumes.[9]

From the point of view of the legislation, only the abuse of a dominant position is considered as a violation. According to Part 1 of Article

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[9] Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia, "Law of the Republic of Armenia on Protection of Economic Competition," December 5, 2000, https://www.aipa.am/en/EconomicCompetitionLaw/.

8 of the RA Law on Protection of Economic Competition, abuse of monopolistic or dominant position by economic entities shall be prohibited.

Licensing

Licensing relations in this sphere are regulated by the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission. According to Point 37.1. of the Decision No. 374-N of the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission on November 1, 2013, a license for the production of electricity from biomass electricity generation plants is issued:

1) if, as a result of the issuance of the license, the total capacity of the plants producing electricity from biomass as of December 31, 2020, does not exceed 0.9 MW;

2) for the period from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021 inclusive, without limiting the total capacity, for stations with a capacity of up to 30 MW (installed).

According to paragraph 38 of the same decision, licenses for the production of electricity from biomass with a capacity exceeding 30 MW, for wind power plants with a capacity exceeding 30 MW and for solar power plants with a capacity exceeding 5 MW are issued under public-private partnership transactions. The licensing process for the production of electricity from biomass electricity generation plants is carried out in a general manner, defined by the Decision No. 374-N of the RA Public Services Regulatory Commission on November 1, 2013. Annex N 2 of the discussed decision provides the documents required for licensing.

Regional energy cooperation

The power grid of Armenia is currently connected to the power grids of Iran and Georgia. In this regard, the existing relations with Iran and Georgia in the field of energy have strategic importance. Armenia's electric power system operates in parallel with Iran's electric power system, which significantly increases the reliability of Armenia's energy system.

The construction of a new Armenia-Iran 400 kV power transmission line and the Caucasus power transmission network are being implemented. The operation of the new infrastructure will enable the export of electricity within the framework of the gas-electricity exchange program, reaching at least 5.0 billion kWh. Electricity exports will reach its maximum by the end of 2025.

The electric power system of Armenia is also connected to the electric power system of Georgia. However, it is subject to various technical restrictions, taking into account the fact that Armenia works synchronously with Iran and Georgia works synchronously with Russia. In order to eliminate the existing restrictions, the program of construction of the Caucasus Power Transmission Network (Armenia-Georgia transmission line / substations) is being implemented, which will give a new impetus to the cooperation between the two countries in the field of energy. Relations with Georgia are also important as a transit country for natural gas in terms of supplying natural gas from Russia to Armenia.

Armenia, being a Eurasian Economic Union member state, participates in the development of the Eurasian Economic Union's common energy market. At the same time, Armenia has signed a Comprehensive and Extended Partnership Agreement with the European Union, which envisages the gradual implementation of the European Union energy directives. In this context, scientific-technical cooperation is envisaged, including the exchange of technologies for the development and improvement of technologies in the fields of energy production, transportation, supply, consumption, with a special focus on energy-efficient and environmentally friendly technologies.

Cooperation under the Comprehensive Extended Partnership Agreement also covers such areas as the use of renewable energy sources. It is planned to bring the energy regulations of the Republic of Armenia in line with European standards, as a result of which the investment climate in the energy sector will become more attractive, trade with neighbouring countries in the energy sector will be stimulated, energy security and diversification will increase. New incentive tools will be introduced for the

use of renewable energy sources, as a result of which new players will appear in the market.[10]

Thus, we can conclude from the above that in terms of the development of renewable energy (including biomass energy), Armenia cooperates mainly with the European Union. Some of the renewable energy technologies in Armenia, such as hydropower, biomass, solar and wind energy, are priority candidates for commercialization and large-scale deployment.

To date, almost all EU member states have implemented effective policies to support the development of renewable energy, which in recent years has led to a huge acceleration in the introduction and dissemination of renewable energy.

Armenia has a significant potential for renewable energy and renewable energy can become one of the most important guarantees of the country's energy independence and security in case of the implementation of relevant sectoral policies and mechanisms of practical application.

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The GEF Small Grants Programme in Armenia. "Introduction of Integrated Land and Water Management Practices to Sustain Livelihoods in Basen Community." 2015-2016. https://tinyurl.com/mr3afv4v.

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[10] Appendix N 1 Strategic Program for the Development of the Energy Sector of the Republic of Armenia.

The GEF Small Grants Programme in Armenia. "Expanding Production of Solid bio-fuel and Application of Energy-efficient Stoves in Akhuryan Community of Shirak region (Strategic Project)." 2017-2018. https://tinyurl.com/2p93a9us.

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Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia. "Law of the Republic of Armenia on Protection of Economic Competition." December 5, 2000. https://www.aipa.am/en/EconomicCompetitionLaw/.

Why Don't We Have Energy Cooperation in the Black Sea region?

Cristian-Dan Tătaru

Abstract. The paper looks at energy cooperation in the Black Sea region in different energy sectors. The purpose of this paper is to identify what were the factors that facilitated trans-national energy cooperation and what were the motives that hampered it. By comparing successful and failed energy projects we can identify common features that lead to energy cooperation in the region. The data is from official sources provided by companies involved in energy projects and from international energy agencies but also from assessments made by experts. The study concludes that in order to have a successful energy cooperation in the Black Sea region, certain criteria need to be met: companies with proved technical and financial capabilities need to be involved in the projects, a step-by-step approach with lower targets at the beginning and then followed by a scale up. Turkey is a regional player and was involved in most of the major trans-national regional projects that were successful. Another issue that needs to be addressed to increase the chances of a project's success is legislative harmonization. For further study it will be good to have a more detailed study on how certain geopolitical conditions and financial cycles influenced the energy projects in the Black Sea, as this will broaden the scope of our current research and will contribute to a better understanding of the reasons that influence regional energy cooperation.

Keywords: energy security, Black Sea, energy, energy cooperation, energy policy, energy cooperation.

Introduction

The title of the paper poses a question. It implies that we do not have energy cooperation in the Black Sea region. But is it true? Well, it depends. On the one hand, we had energy cooperation within transnational projects

between certain countries, but such projects involved either Russia or Turkey. On the other hand, there was a lack of energy cooperation between other riverain countries when they tried to develop projects that aimed to reduce their Russian energy dependence or to increase their energy production. The paper tries to identify what were the factors that spurred energy cooperation in the Black Sea region and what factors hampered it.

The paper will analyse energy cooperation in the Black Sea region in the gas, oil, renewable and nuclear sectors and will look at the projects that have involved littoral countries, to keep the area of research confined to the Black Sea.

The method used for this paper is that of comparative analysis between successful regional trans national energy projects and projects that failed to be realised. To have a better understanding and to avoid comparing unrelated variables it was necessary to cluster energy projects based on the commodity they produced, gas, oil, nuclear energy, renewable energy. The sources for this paper are primary sources of data provided by governments, companies, international organizations but also secondary sources comprised of assessments made by experts.

The Gas Sector

In the gas sector we have the oldest pipeline as a result of energy cooperation, the Trans Balkan pipeline, a legacy of the Soviet Union going around the North, Northwest, West and South-West of the Black Sea. It was constructed in 1987 before the fall of the URSS. And is a legacy of a system that was designed to export raw materials and energy from Russia to Europe and to former Soviet republics. So here the cooperation was realized in a strict system where Moscow dictated the strategic energy projects. One goal was to supply gas to the Balkans and to deliver gas to a big energy consumer, Turkey, and as a result increasing Russia's influence in a region. In 2002 the second string of the pipeline was completed.

Russia realized Turkeys growth potential as a market for its gas and tried gain more influence on it, but at the same time Turkey, in order to increase its energy security, started to pursue a policy of diversification and in 1996 signed a memorandum of understanding and long-term contracts for 22 years with Iran[1] for building the Tabriz-Ankara gas pipeline. Tabriz-Ankara pipeline, bringing 14 billion cubic meters of gas from Iran to Turkey, was finished 5 years later in 2003.[2] Russia did not back down and in 1999 were signed the memorandum of understanding and long-term purchases agreements for 28 years between Ankara and Moscow for the Blue Stream gas pipeline that will deliver gas directly from Russia to Turkey through the Black Sea. After 6 years in 2003 the Blue Stream was lunched.[3] By the end of the 1990s western companies and the US tried to access Azerbaijan's resources of oil and gas but at the same time to diminish Russia's grip on transport routes, the solution was a pipeline that would link Azerbaijan to Turkey through Georgia. In 1999 a consortium of multiple companies from Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey was formed along with companies from Russia, Norway, Iran, UK, Spain and Malesia to build the Baku-Tbilisi - Erzurum pipeline. It the beginning it was envisioned as a first leg of a trans-Caspian pipeline that would also link other Caspian nations including Turkmenistan. The pipeline was finished in 2007[4] and brought 20 billion cubic meters of Azeri gas to Georgia and Turkey. The main drivers for cooperation in this project were the national oil companies from Turkey (BOTAS) and Azerbaijan (SOKAR) but also the western backers. Seen as a

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[1] Elin Kinnander, "The Turkish-Iranian Gas Relationship: Politically Successful, Commercially Problematic," Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, NG38, January 10, 2010, https://ora.ox.ac.uk/catalog/uuid:8e185897-da99-4c1f-9ac4-c3ce28cd7508/download_file?file_format=application%2Fpdf&safe_filename=NG38.pdf, 7.

[2] Mirsaeedi-Farahani Shabnam, *Energy Sector Diversification in Iran: Evolving Strategies and Interests* (Berlin: Springer 2015), 192.

[3] TASS, "Putin Says Russia, Turkey May Expand Blue Stream Pipeline," December 3, 2012, https://tass.com/economy/686361.

[4] The Australian Pipeliner, "Turkey Finishes Laying Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Pipeline," March 20, 2007, https://www.pipeliner.com.au/internationalnews/turkey-finishes-laying-baku-tbilisi-erzurum-pipeline/.

success, Turkey and Europe wanted to tap more into Azerbaijan's gas reserves and initiated[5] in 2013 another gas pipeline project called TANAP-TAP that would initially bring 10 billion cubic meters of gas to Turkey and 6 to Europe, mainly Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and Italy. The backers of the project were again SOCAR and BOTAS along with the UK firm BP. Also, the EU backed[6] the project as an alternative to Russian gas and was financed through the Project of Common Interest scheme and was excepted from unbundling rules.

After the 2 projects that brought Azeri gas in the Black Sea region, Russia again came with even more gas to compete and gain market share. The point of landing was again Turkey for the project Turk Stream[7] that would bring 15.75 billion cubic meters for Turkey and another 15.75 billion cubic meters destined for Europe and the Balkans. The project was started in 2014 after the EU blocked the initial project that had a landing point in Bulgaria and Russia was forced to modify the route and the volumes planned, but it adapted and managed to finish Turk Stream in 2020.[8] Turk Stream was also an attempt to divert gas deliveries that went through Ukraine through Balkan-Stream and deprive Ukraine of transit fees and leverage over Russia. The cooperation between Russia and Turkey over the project moved fast because it was agreed at the highest level and Russia paid and planed the construction.

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[5] Vladimir Socor, "SCP, TANAP, TAP: Segments of the Southern Gas Corridor to Europe," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 8, no. 11, January 15, 2014, https://jamestown.org/program/scp-tanap-tap-segments-of-the-southern-gas-corridor-to-europe/.

[6] European Commission, "Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1391/2013 of 14 October 2013 amending Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure as regards the Union list of projects of common interest," October 14, 2013, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1391.

[7] Sarah E. Garding, Michael Ratner, Beryl E. Taylor, Cory Welt, Jim Zanotti, "TurkStream: Another Russian Gas Pipeline to Europe," Congressional Research Service, April 11, 2019, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11177/2.

[8] Olesya Astakhova, Can Sezer, "Turkey, Russia Launch TurkStream Pipeline Carrying Gas to Europe," *The Moscow Times*, January 8, 2020, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/01/08/turkey-russia-launch-turkstream-pipeline-carrying-gas-to-europe-a68837.

The common feature is that gas projects created after the 1990s in the Black Sea region had one country, Turkey, involved and all projects that were meant to link net-exporters from the region with consumers. The projects were completed in 6-7 years on average and involved long term contracts (LTCs) commitments. Also, Russia managed to complete its own projects in the Black Sea region because it was flexible and did most of the financing and planning of its projects.

Another feature that can be observed in the projects that were completed is that 2 natural gas companies (NGCs) were involved and used their financial and technical power, namely GAZPROM and BOTAS. And in the Azerbaijan projects the national energy company SOCAR was involved also.

But we also have unfortunately a negative answer (Fig.1) to the question of energy cooperation and it involves Romania. The project that was closer to the finish line was Nabucco,[9] which started as an idea in 2002 between five companies representing Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Hungary and named after a Verdi opera they watched in Vienna. The project had obtained EU financing[10] and willingness to overcome the different legislative burdens, a memorandum of understanding between governments was signed and in 2009 the first long term contract commitment to sell gas from Azerbaijan to Bulgaria was drafted. So in terms of the projects that materialized, we had MoU, LTCs but the main problem was that the gas producing country, Azerbaijan, was not involved from the start. In addition, the other producer, Russia, lunched a competing project South Stream, and some actors were involved in both namely Bulgaria, and Austria trough OMV. That created uncertainty about demand for Azeri gas in countries that were involved in both projects. Romania in 2012/2013

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[9] The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), "The Nabucco Gas Pipeline: A Chance for the EU to Push for Change in Turkmenistan," December 1, 2019, http://www.qcea.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/rprt-nabucco-en-dec-2009.pdf.

[10] Honor Mahony, "EU Stands By $6.5 Billion Injection," Bloomberg, January 9, 2009, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2009-02-09/eu-stands-by-6-dot-5-billion-injection?leadSource=uverify%20wall.

started[11] to explore and to dig offshore wells in the Neptune Deep perimeter and there were signals that gas is to be found so the future demand in Romania also was volatile. Azerbaijan then as now was not keen on competing head on with Russian gas for tight markets and chose another route through Turkey-Greece-Albania to a bigger gas market, Italy. The Nabucco project died, and the TANAP-TAP was born in 2013.[12] Azerbaijan did not have the resource base for both projects. Therefore, another lesson that can be drawn is that understanding the resource base (the offer) and the demand is crucial to having viable projects in the region.
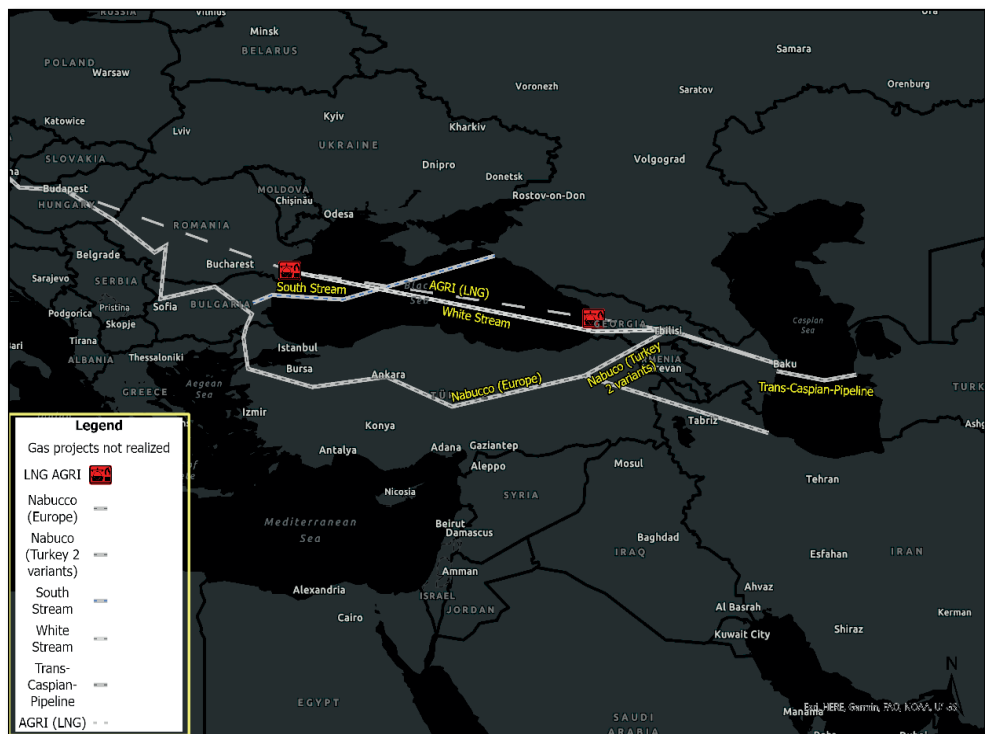
Fig. 1. The gas pipeline/LNG projects that were not realized in the Black Sea

[11] Europe Petrole, "ExxonMobil and OMV Petrom Start Drilling Domino-2 Well in Romanian Black Sea," July 21, 2014, https://www.euro-petrole.com/exxonmobil-and-omv-petrom-start-drilling-domino-2-well-in-romanian-black-sea-n-i-9910.

[12] Steve Levine, "The World's First Pipeline War Has Officially Come to an End," Quartz, December 2, 2014, https://qz.com/304742/the-worlds-first-pipeline-war-has-officially-come-to-an-end/.

South Stream is a gas pipeline project that was cancelled in the Black Sea region,[13] but more fair is to say that it was reduced in scope and modified, morphing into the TurkStream with both its legs offshore and onshore.[14] It is a project that is important to be analysed in order to distinguish the Russian approach to regional energy projects. First it was a project that aimed to bypass Ukraine after the first 2006 Ukraine-Russia quarrel over gas transit. It was a project that was based on a collaboration with Italy (ENI), both Russian and Italian companies had worked on Blue Stream before. For energy cooperation is useful to have already a joint successful project as a basis. Russia also brought the Franco-German European engine in the project through EDF and Wintershall. Through those collaborations Russia used western backing to advance its interest in the region. Furthermore, Russia signed agreements with as many countries as they could get using the "snake approach" promising partners and countries that they will all get free transit money and cheap gas with the pipeline going through all of them. But the goal was to start the first leg that would cross the Black Sea and will bring another pipeline into Europe. Already in 2009 Greece Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey were involved in the project. In 2012 Macedonia was also brought[15] into the project. But all the agreements were not in line with EU legislation and after the Crimea annexation, the EU got involved, probably a little bit late, and Bulgaria was forced to drop the agreement. It was at that time designated the landing point for South Stream. The project was trimmed down but it showed to what lengths Russia was willing to go to compete with Nabucco and lure European countries into its project that was meant to bypass Ukraine and Romania. It is important to

[13] Svetlana Burmistrova, Osamu Tsukimori, "South Stream Cancellation Means Anxious Wait for Pipemakers," Reuters, December 12, 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/southstream-pipes-idCNL6N0TN1X820141212.

[14] Jonathan Stern, Simon Pirani, Katja Yafimova, "Does the Cancellation of South Stream Signal a Fundamental Reorientation of Russian Gas Export Policy?," Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, January 2015, https://a9w7k6q9.stackpathcdn.com/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Does-cancellation-of-South-Stream-signal-a-fundamental-reorientation-of-Russian-gas-export-policy-GPC-5.pdf.

[15] Republic of North Macedonia – Ministry of Finance, "Macedonia to Join South Stream Project," June 22, 2012, https://finance.gov.mk/macedonia-to-join-south-stream-project/?lang=en.

note that Russia was a factor that hampered cooperation in the region by undermining the projects that created competition to its gas in Europe. It was the energy king in the Black Sea area, having the resource basis to supply the region.

Another pending gas project in the Black Sea region is the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector (AGRI). It was envisioned as a way to increase capacity and diversify EU gas imports. In 2011, RO-AZ-GE (Transgaz, COGC, SOCAR) signed the Baku declaration[16] for its implementation. A feasibility study was done in 2015. Hungary MVM also participated in the newly created JV Agri SRL. It is still theoretically on the agenda for COGC and SOCAR and in the Romanian Gas Transport Plan for 2020-2029[17] it is envisioned as an LNG terminal built in Constanta with a final investment decision (FID) to be taken in 2024.[18] But the project is expensive and in 2013 it was taken down from the EU Project of Common Interest list (PCI list). As we saw, in successful cooperation projects big companies need to be involved and the gas demand to be clear. It is worth mentioning that with the war in Ukraine we have more uncertainty in the Black Sea and a sustained diplomatic effort to attract powerful EU countries to back it up is needed. Another aspect is the resource base, is not clear that Azerbaijan has enough resources, it may opt to increase TAP-TANP capacity and export more gas through that corridor. And recent negotiations with the European Commission made it clear that the increase of TAP-TANAP

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[16] Aynur Karimova, "Declaration on AGRI Proves Baku's Goal to Be Active Energy Player," Azer News, June 25, 2015, https://www.azernews.az/oil_and_gas/84431.html.

[17] Adi Moșoianu, "Planul Transgaz - România va avea terminal de import de gaze naturale lichefiate la țărmul Mării Negre" (The Transgaz Plan – Romania Will Have an LNG Terminal on the Shore of the Black Sea), *Profit.ro*, May 5, 2020, https://www.profit.ro/povesti-cu-profit/energie/planul-transgaz-romania-va-avea-terminal-de-import-de-gaze-naturale-lichefiate-la-tarmul-marii-negre-19351907.

[18] David O'Bryne, "AGRI LNG Plan Post 2024," Natural Gas World, May 8, 2019, https://www.naturalgasworld.com/agri-lng-plan-for-post-2924-68527.

capacity is the option financed and backed by EU.[19] And for a successful project LTCs are needed and AGRI lacks buying commitments.

White Stream is an underwater AGRI variant that has many of the problems that AGRI faces. Not to mention that underwater pipe laying will be very difficult in the war zone that unfortunately Black Sea has become.

Another project that in the region has stagnated for a long time is the Trans Caspian Pipeline that would have resolved the resource base that we encounter when dealing with Azerbaijan and will unlock the reserves of Turkmenistan and probably even Kazakhstan for Europe. The project faced problems due to geopolitical tensions and Russia's influence over the countries involved. But the fact that in 2021 Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan signed an MoU to jointly[20] explore Dostlug field is encouraging but still much work is to be done to make it viable.

For all pipeline projects there was a competition between two or three producers (Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran) for the gas market that was in the Black Sea region and that created an environment prone to a win-lose game given the fact that the market was not large enough and the volumes that could be exported were disproportionate – Russia with a big resource base and Azerbaijan and Iran with a modest one. The proximity between countries exposed the projects to regional instability or even worse, regional instability hampered the prospect of projects.

LNG prospects

Liquified natural gas (LNG) eliminates the proximity factor and also the imbalance regarding the resource base, LNG being a big market where any volumes can be bought thus offering flexibility. The only problem with

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[19] Reuters, "EU Signs Deal with Azerbaijan to Double Gas Imports by 2027," July 18, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/eu-signs-deal-with-azerbaijan-double-gas-imports-by-2027-2022-07-18/.

[20] Azer Tass, "Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan Sign MoU on Joint Exploration and Development of 'Dostlug' Field in Caspian Sea," January 21, 2021, https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijan_Turkmenistan_sign_MoU_on_joint_exploration_and_development_of_Dostlug_field_in_Caspian_Sea-1693989.

LNG for the Black Sea region is that LNG tankers, due to Turkey's safety concerns are not allowed [21] to pass through Bosporus strait. Given those circumstances, the countries that are net-importers of gas from the Black Sea area need to access LNG terminals from the Mediterranean (Fig.2), Marmara, or Baltic Sea. This will foster cooperation to build interconnectors and to find ways to create a common market. The fact that the EU is creating a mechanism for countries to make shared purchases is a step in the right direction. The Black Sea countries like Croatia, Greece, Turkey and Poland are countries that can give them access to LNG. Currently very high gas prices are making LNG projects for the region more attractive.

Two Projects are under development, Alexandropoulos in Greece and Soros in Turkey that will bring 13.8 bcm to the regional market. Also, the Krk LNG terminal from Croatia will double[22] its capacity reaching 6.1 mt/year by 2025 (Fig. 3). Cooperation is evolving in countries securing LNG through LTCs and stakes in LNG terminals (Bulgaria took a stake in Alexandopolus LNG facility).[23] Turkey needs to develop its Epias platform for selling gas (LNG).[24] Better models to project demand would help to assess the need for LNG in the future and foster long term contracts (LTCs).

Still even if LNG is an open market not bound by fixed links between sellers and buyers, the harmonization of legislation in the Black Sea region is needed to facilitate trade. Different legal zones were always a problem concerning regional energy cooperation. LNG may resolve it. With more entry points for gas in the EU, the chance to have less transit issues with non-

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[21] Oil and Gas 360, "Turkey Says No to LNG Tankers in the Bosporus Strait, Cuts off Black Sea Shipping," March 24, 2015, https://www.oilandgas360.com/turkey-says-no-to-lng-tankers-in-the-bosporus-strait-cuts-off-black-sea-shipping/.

[22] CEE Energy News, "Croatia Will Double the Capacity of Krk LNG Terminal to 6.1 bcm/year Says PM," June 22, 2022, https://ceenergynews.com/lng/croatia-will-double-the-capacity-of-krk-lng-terminal-to-6-1-bcm-year-says-pm/.

[23] Ports Europe, "Bulgaria Takes 20% Stake in Gastrade, Including the Alexandroupolis LNG Facility," January 8, 2020, https://www.portseurope.com/bulgaria-takes-20-stake-in-gastrade-including-the-alexandroupolis-lng-facility/.

[24] EPIAS, "Natural Gas Futures Market Was Launched in the Simulation," June 30, 2021, https://www.epias.com.tr/en/announcements/corporate/the-futures-natural-gas-market-was-launched-in-the-simulation/.

EU countries is reduced. Regional cooperation within the same legal zone is helpful. An interesting initiative that tries to tackle the issue is the EE-NGP[25] fostered by USAID and USA in 2020 (Fig. 4).
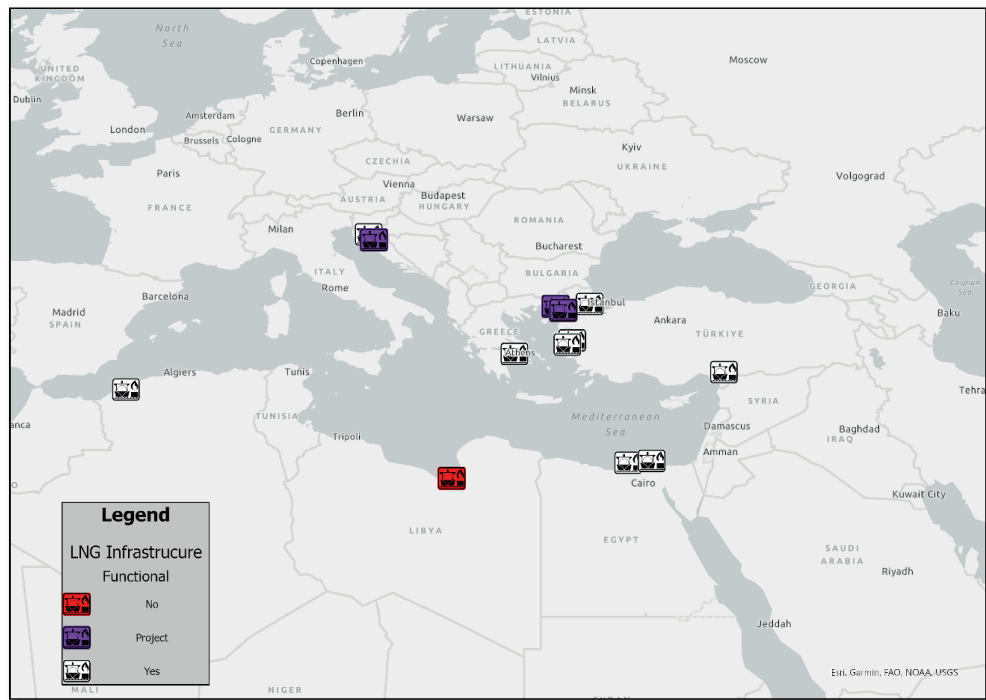
Fig. 2. LNG terminals operational and under development in the proximity of the Black Sea

25 USEA, "Eastern Europe Natural Gas Partnership (EE-NGP)," n.d., https://usea.org/program-categories/eastern-europe-natural-gas-partnership-ee-ngp, last accessed August 2022.
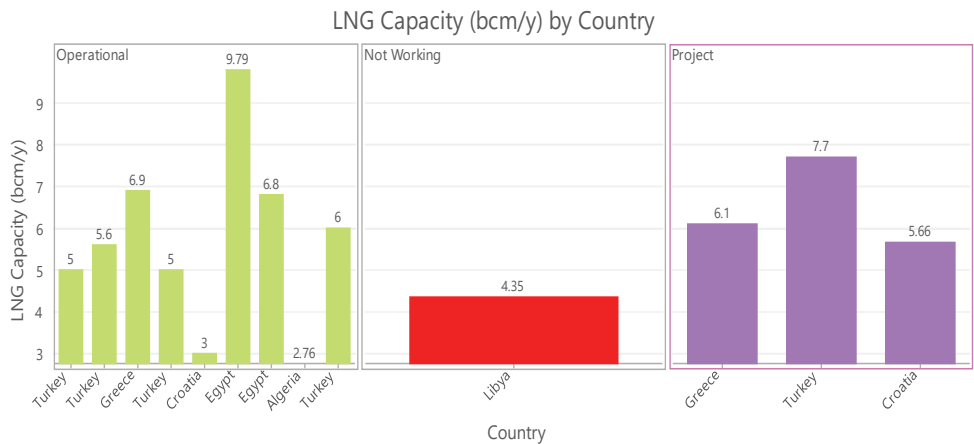
Fig. 3. LNG Actual import capacity and projected capacity.
Source: BP, author's calculations for conversion from mta to bcm.

The region is a complex market with different legal systems, political systems, economic power and purchase capacity and above all with a war between Ukraine and Russia (Fig. 5). Complexity makes cooperation harder. An integrated approach is useful. Also, complexity is a fertile ground for "divide and conquer" tactics. Acknowledging the regional complexity and working to achieve energy security is the right way forward to develop energy cooperation in the region.

Fig. 4. European Eastern Natural Gas Partnership (EE-NGP) initiated in 2020

Developing the resource base in the Black Sea

In the exploitation and production of oil we see limited cooperation in the Black Sea region among the littoral countries. Oil majors form outside the region that have technical and financial capability are participating in exploration and development, but given the limited reserve size, institutional capability and infrastructure that is not fully developed, they tend to put the region as a second tier limiting their level of ambition or the level of losses they are willing to take. As a result, national oil companies are now more interested in developing the reserves in the Black Sea (Fig. 6), as we see with Romgaz and Turkish Petroleum Company (TP). But these companies are not major oil and gas companies that have experience and cash flow for deep sea exploration. In the case of Turkey the government bought ships that were able to find and drill for gas exploration wells but in order to develop the Sakharia field, western firms such as Schliberger and

Subsea 7 were contracted for the next phase development[26] that received the engineering, procurement, construction, and installation (EPCI) contract in 2021. Also, Norwegian geophysical services company Shearwater GeoServices conducted[27] a 2,000km² 3D seismic survey in the Sakharia field.

Fig. 5. Map showing the complexity of the gas sector with different legal systems and ownership of infrastructure and contested territories

Cooperation between national oil companies would reduce the costs, shared knowledge about particularities of Black See could increase the chances of success. But secrecy and the competition logic are barriers for developing such an approach. By looking at the map we can see that Neptun Deep and Sakharia fields are not so distant from each other (approx. 116 km)

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[26] Bojan Lepic, "Subsea 7, Schlumberger Get Sakarya Field Gig Offshore Turkey," Rig Zone, October 15, 2021, https://www.rigzone.com/news/subsea_7_schlumberger_get_sakarya_field_gig_offshore_turkey-15-oct-2021-166732-article/.

[27] Offshore Technology, "Sakarya Gas Field Development, Black Sea, Turkey," October 26, 2021, https://www.offshore-technology.com/projects/sakarya-gas-field-development-black-sea-turkey/.

(Fig. 7) and both are at a water depth above 2000m. Cooperation can be envisioned between Romania and Turkey in developing those fields. But for now, both countries try to develop their resource base on their own with help from different western partners.

The energy gas system is a complex one (Fig.5) with many parts and players. In the Black Sea area, we have a big energy producer, Russia, that has interests in gaining and retaining market share and uses divide and conquer tactics. Countries in the region need to cooperate and develop mechanisms for cooperation in order to create a viable gas market that will deliver energy security in all its dimensions, affordability, security of supply and respecting climate goals.

Fig. 6. Companies present in the Black Sea off-shore gas exploration perimeters and contested territories and waters (in red). Source: companies' press releases.

Fig. 7. Map showing the proximity of Neptun Deep gas reserves
and Sakharia gas field in Turkey, market with a red tear pin.

The Oil Sector

The oil market is a market governed by trade rules and, given the transport particularities and its fungibility cooperation, it was based on commercial interest and security of supply was not a matter of concern until Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the measures taken by the EU to impose an embargo[28] on Russian oil. Before the war, the only concern was the capacity of oil that went through the Bosporus strait, which due to size and security

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[28] Jacopo Barigazzi, Barbara Moens, "EU Leaders Agree on Russian Oil Embargo," Politico, May 31, 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-leaders-agree-on-russian-oil-embargo/.

concerns has a limited capacity forbidding[29] the passage of very large crude carriers (VLCCs). In this regard there were projects that fostered cooperation to mitigate such limitations (Fig.8) and increase security of supply such as: the Pan European pipeline (PEOP) proposed in 2002 that had the goal of bringing oil from the Mediterranean Sea to Black Sea region by pipeline. PEOP was inked by a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in 2007[30] between Croatia, Italia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. Slovenia due to environmental concerns got out from the project followed by Croatia.[31] Another project was the Burgas-Alexandropolis oil pipeline meant to bypass the Bosporus strait but protests over environmental concerns made the Bulgarian government abandon[32] the project. At the same time another project, Samsun-Ceyhan, was in the making but ENI, one of the backers, was not allowed by the Turkish government to be part of it. Both projects, the Burgas-Alexandropolis and Samsun-Ceyhan, were backed by Russia that wanted to bypass the Bosporus straits for its oil exports. Given the current environment with Russian oil supplies under a future embargo in Europe and with the Black Sea that is part of a war, some alternatives may be again reiterated to form a basis of cooperation to bring more non-Russian oil into the region. But compared to 2000-2010 a new layer is added when assessing oil projects, they need to be aligned with the goal of reaching net-zero by 2050 and this aspect will make the economics of future collaboration in oil pipeline projects more challenging.

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[29] Judy Clark, "Turkey Restricts Supertanker Passage through Bosporus, Dardanelles Straits," *Oil and Gas Journal*, November 19, 2002, https://www.ogj.com/pipelines-transportation/article/17247833/turkey-restricts-supertanker-passage-through-bosporus-dardanelles-straits.

[30] OGJ Editors, "Five European Countries Support Pan-European Oil Pipeline," *Oil and Gas Journal*, April 4, 2007, https://www.ogj.com/pipelines-transportation/article/17287598/five-european-countries-support-paneuropean-oil-pipeline.

[31] Reuters, "Croatia Puts PEOP Pipeline on Hold, Seeks New Ways," September 28, 2009, https://www.reuters.com/article/croatia-peop-idAFLS28073720090928.

[32] Novenite, "Bulgaria Abandons Burgas-Alexandroupolis Oil Pipeline," December 7, 2011, https://www.novinite.com/articles/134623/Bulgaria+Abandons+Burgas-Alexandroupolis+Oil+Pipeline.

Fig. 8. Oil pipelines in the Black Sea Region, with disputed/annexed territories (red) and one crowded Bosphorus strait.

The Renewable Energy Sector

Renewable energy and green transition are areas where we can finally say that there is no major player that can derail collaboration in the region, but still remains the problem of different legal jurisdictions. Even in an area where two countries are in a more similar jurisdiction (EU) we see that the lack of institutional capacity hampers collaboration. Under the EU regulations, Bulgaria and Romania need to work together to develop the "Cross-border Maritime Spatial Planning for the Black Sea - Bulgaria and Romania" - MARSPLAN-BS II that will be needed also for the offshore wind projects, but both countries are still working on the plan

from 2016[33] (Fig. 9). A regional framework for cooperation will be needed to develop a joint offshore wind farm project that would be beneficial to both Romania and Bulgaria and will tap into Black Sea wind energy potential of 435 GW[34] (Fig. 10). Meanwhile, Romania seems to be more advanced in its offshore wind development and a German company, WPD,[35] already has projects (Black Sea 1 and Black Sea 2) amounting to 3000 MW. WPD also has projects planned for Bulgaria,[36] so the company tries to work in both countries and this endeavour can enhance collaboration between the 2 countries,[37] these projects are eligible for financing through the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund,[38] another initiative that wants to foster regional cooperation. Given the fact that wind potential for offshore is significant in the E-NE of the Black Sea, a collaboration to develop offshore projects is possible especially between Romania-Bulgaria and Ukraine. But the governments in the region need to speed up the legal framework that is awaited by investors.

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[33] Adrian Stoica, "MARSPLAN-BS II: Offshore Winds of Change in the Black Sea," *Energy Industry Review*, August 18, 2021, https://energyindustryreview.com/renewables/marsplan-bs-ii-offshore-winds-of-change-in-the-black-sea/.

[34] World Bank, "Offshore Wind Technical Potential in the Black Sea," n.d., https://documents1. worldbank.org/curated/en/718341586846771829/pdf/Technical-Potential-for-Offshore-Wind-in-Black-Sea-Map.pdf, last accessed July 2022.

[35] Roxana Petrescu, "Germanii de la WPD vor două proiecte eoliene uriaşe în Marea Neagră: Discutăm deja cu autorităţile locale. Avem alte proiecte de 1.300 MW în derulare în România" (The Germans from WPD Want Two Massive Wind Power Project at the Black Sea: We Are In Talks with the Local Authorities. We Are Currently Carrying out 1300 MW Projects in Romania), *Ziarul Financiar*, February 15, 2022, https://www.zf.ro/companii/germanii-de-la-wpd-vor-doua-proiecte-eoliene-uriase-in-marea-neagra-20525522.

[36] Renewables Now, "Germany's WPD Plans 75-100 MW Wind Parks in Bulgaria – Report," March 21, 2022, https://renewablesnow.com/news/germanys-wpd-plans-75-100-mw-wind-parks-in-bulgaria-report-777767/.

[37] Renewables Now, "Bulgaria, Romania to Explore Joint Energy, Infrastructure Projects," April 29, 2022, https://renewablesnow.com/news/bulgaria-romania-to-explore-joint-energy-infrastructure-projects-govt-782855/.

[38] Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund, n.d., https://3siif.eu/, last accessed August 2022.

Fig. 9. Cross-border Maritime Spatial Planning for the Black Sea
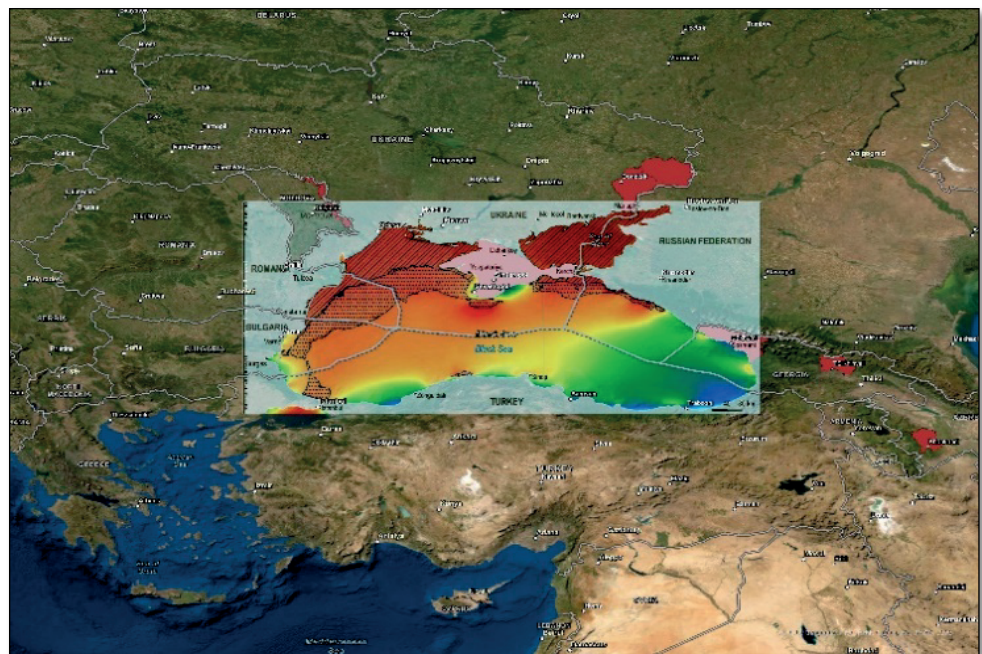
Fig. 10. Black Sea wind energy potential of 435 GW

The Nuclear Energy Sector

In the nuclear field every country in the region has its options and Russia is the only regional country that has developed significant capabilities in this field to build and operate on its own nuclear power plants (NPPS). Turkey decided to build its first nuclear power plant with Russia at Akkuyu, under a build-own-operate[39] (BOO) scheme. The scheme means that Russia will provide most of the financing for the Akkuyu NPP but also will operate the plant in order to gain its investment back over the years. This model is very appealing to developing countries because it requires less financial commitment from the host country but on the other hand creates a strong dependency on Russian expertise and fuel long before the nuclear power plant has been built. Bulgaria has its reactors filled with Russian fuel at Kozlodui and before February 24, 2024 it was exploring some options to make another project with Russia at Belene with the already paid two reactors. Given the fact that Belene is at the border with Romania these create tensions between the two countries.[40] Romania uses Canadian CANDU theology for its nuclear power plant and plans to build two other reactors using the same technology. And Ukraine uses Soviet/Russian reactor types but tries to cut all its dependency on Russia for its reactors and for that aim is working with Westinghouse[41] to produce all the nuclear fuel it needs in Sweden. As we can observe there is little room for collaboration between riparian countries on old nuclear technology, the countries are working either with western companies or with Russia to develop their old nuclear power plants. But in the future there can be some prospects for collaboration

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[39] World Nuclear News, "Akkuyu Construction to Be Completed by 2026, Says Project CEO," February 10, 2021, https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Akkuyu-fully-operational-by-2026,-says-project.

[40] Emiliya Milcheva, Krasen Nikolov, "Nuclear Project with Russian Reactors Shakes Bulgarian Politics," Euroactiv, February 21, 2022, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/nuclear-project-with-russian-reactors-shakes-bulgarian-politics/.

[41] Kamen Kraev, "Sofia Aiming To Introduce Westinghouse-Made Nuclear Fuel by 2024," NUCNET, March 16, 2022, https://www.nucnet.org/news/sofia-aiming-to-introduce-westinghouse-made-nuclear-fuel-by-2024-3-3-2022.

on new nuclear technologies. All Black Sea countries except for Russia express their interest in developing new small modular reactors and to be part of the future technological exchanges and supply chains for such technologies. The common factor is that NuScale plans and signed agreements with Romania, Ukraine[42] and Bulgaria[43] to develop the SMR technology that will use even local expertise in the R&D phase. Given the proximity of those countries supply chains will be easy to establish using and fusing human and technological potential form those 3 countries. The old generation NPPs did not manage to foster cooperation in the region but new technologies have the potential to create cooperation in the nuclear filed in the region.

Conclusions

Some conclusions can be drawn from observing successful and failed energy cooperation projects that happened in the region. Companies with financial and technical capabilities need to be involved in regional projects. Consolidation of regional major players is needed. The companies/states involved in projects should avoid being involved in competing projects. A step-by-step approach is helpful, based on earlier cooperation. Joint successful projects are a basis for fostering ambitious cooperation. Understanding the resource base (the offer) and the demand is crucial to having viable projects in the region. That is why the OECD and IEA are important international organizations that have effective methodology to assess the demand and supply needs of their member states. But local forecasting capabilities and data driven energy policies are a must if we want investors to come to the region. Long term contracts and commitments are needed for successful projects, but they also represent a way to put pressure

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[42] World Nuclear News, "NuScale SMR under Consideration for Ukraine," September 2, 2021, https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/NuScale-SMR-under-consideration-for-Ukraine.

[43] Balkan Green Energy News, "Romania, Bulgaria Intend to Build Small Nuclear Power Plants," November 10, 2021, https://balkangreenenergynews.com/romania-bulgaria-intend-to-build-small-nuclear-power-plants/.

in case of a lack of institutional capacity. Harmonization of energy legislative space is needed for energy cooperation. The EU plays a role in this endeavour but countries should also work together to have legislation that fosters transnational cooperation. Turkey is a key player in the region and most of the projects that involved Turkey were realized. Understanding its role in the region is important for having a better integrated market. Russia tried to derail any project that it was not part of and used all its capabilities to gain market share at fast as possible, leaving little room for other projects that wanted to compete with its own. Although in the current situation after the invasion of Ukraine, Russia is seen as undesirable for new projects, we still have to be aware of its capacity to derail new energy cooperation projects and to counter its malign influence.

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Part Four

STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS

The Geopolitics of the Black Sea:
Thalassocratic Ambitions of a Continental Power

ADRIAN IONUȚ BOGDAN

Abstract. Rarely has a maritime space played such an important role in geopolitics and the regional and international balance of power. The last twenty years have brought dramatic changes to the international system and demonstrated that the end of history predicted by Fukuyama in the 1990s has not come true. Although separated by almost 8000 km, the Seas around China and the Black Sea have reached a symmetrical position in the new confrontation between the Euro-Atlantic allies and the new Sino-Russian axis. Just as the seas in the east and south of China represent a front in the struggle to change the international system between Communist China and the US together with its Asian allies (Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea), so the Black Sea has become a geopolitical space of confrontation between Russia on one side and Europe and the US on the other. The research "The Geopolitics of Crimea: Thalassocratic Ambitions of a Continental Power" wants to analytically present how Moscow tried to achieve thalassocratic ambitions through its expansionist policy in the case of the Invasion of Georgia in 2008, the Annexation of Crimea in 2014, and with the Attack on Ukraine this year. In the centre of these expansionist policies there have always been reasons such as the expansion of the Russian sphere of influence, and the blocking of the Euro-Atlantic enlargement, but to all this was also added, in a complementary way, a historical thalassocratic ambition of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: Thalassocratic ambitions, coastline control, Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine, the regional and international balance of power, the symmetry between the Black Sea and the South and East China Seas.

Introduction

The Black Sea has always been crucial in the geopolitics of Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East. It is a connecting bridge between

them, a huge source of oil and gas, and a commercial hub. The history of the geopolitics of this sea is as spectacular as the history of the countries that have access to it. If after 1991, the security of the Black Sea seemed to be a settled matter, the war in Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, and the invasion of Ukraine would prove otherwise. Today, thanks to the aggressive and expansionist actions of the Russian Federation, the Black Sea is once again a tense geopolitical space, armed and prepared for a conflict of supremacy. Over the course of 14 years, the Black Sea, like the South and East China Seas, became a real battlefront between Western democracies (USA, NATO, EU, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) and authoritarian regimes (Russia, China, North Korea, Iran), a theatre of operations from which large-scale changes can occur, capable of affecting the system of international relations.

This article consists of four sections, with fundamental aspects of the recent evolution of the regional (the Black Sea area) and partly global power balance, highlighting the maritime ambitions that Russia had on the occasion of the attack on Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Also, Russia's global condition has concretely shaped the objectives regarding the Black Sea, and these things are dealt with globally in a dedicated section.

At the basis of this article, there are clear research objectives that offer this scientific approach all the credit to be considered innovative in the field of international relations. The main objective is to find out how the Russian Federation managed to achieve its thalassocratic goals and ambitions during three wars around the Black Sea. This research analyses three distinct events not in a descriptive way, but through an analytical approach that highlights how Russia has managed to achieve its plans regarding the control of the Black Sea. Also, in the same vein, other objectives of this article consist in carrying out complementary analyses of Russia's contextual situation from an economic and political point of view but also understanding how these changes in the geopolitics of the Black Sea bring changes not only in the regional balance of power but also in the global one. The work's component parts present substantial subtleties that individually cannot be fully understood, but by analysing them jointly, important information can be

extracted. The relevance and novelty of the theme are offered by the present context, but also by the integration of important elements such as the idea of the symmetrical comparison of the Black Sea with the seas around China, a truly neo-realistic idea, but which has not been highlighted until now in previous research or, very importantly, the direct calculation of the Russian sphere of influence on the Black Sea. Therefore, we are talking about an article that relates to previous events, but also a current one. Through this, it captures overall observations that are very relevant to the geopolitical study of the Black Sea.

First of all, Georgia, 2008

After declaring independence in 1991, Georgia tried to establish good relations with the Russian Federation, but tensions arose over some Georgian regions: Abkhazia and South Ossetia, both of which were strongly supported by Russia in a large separatist movement. Even so, the real problem between the Russian Federation and Georgia was not the two breakaway provinces themselves, but Georgia's refusal at the time to join Russia in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), Boris Yeltsin's project to create a sphere of Russian influence (economic, political and military) in the ex-Soviet space. The loss of Georgia from this project could not be allowed, as the Russians did not initially recognize Georgia's independence, *and Boris Yeltsin conditioned this gesture on the reconciliation between the two sides through Georgia's accession to the CIS.*[1] Shortly after Georgia declared independence, the two separatist regions would try to become independent as well, but Georgia would prevent this with a dynamic intervention against the rebel forces.

A long period of diplomatic war began between Moscow and Tbilisi over Russia's support for Ossetia and Abkhazia. In the desire to capture the support of the West, break away from Russia definitively, and possibly be invited within NATO, the leadership of Georgia decided on very bold

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[1] Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit, trăiască Rusia!* (The USSR Is Dead, Long Live Russia!) (București: Artemis, 2010), 176.

measures, all because *Saakashvili wants to prove to everyone that he is not afraid of Moscow*.[2] In the following period, Georgia strengthened its administration, increased the defence budget considerably, and managed to defeat the last secessionist cells in the territory of Ossetia and Abkhazia supported by Russia, establishing leadership within the two regions. Also, many Russian diplomats in the capital Tbilisi would be accused of espionage and forced to leave the country, but the most unexpected thing was that *Georgia, a member of the WTO (World Trade Organization), used its veto power to block the negotiations for the preparation of Russia's entry into this world organization*,[3] something that affected both Russia's international prestige and the economic interests of the Russian state. All these measures taken by Georgia seemed bold at first glance, but they were caused by *a real anti-Russian resentment of the Georgians, which had its origins in the history of relations between the two peoples*.[4]

The climax of the Russian-Georgian diplomatic confrontation was when *at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, which took place from 2-4 April 2008, the allies engaged in a heated and dramatic debate over the right to grant Georgia and Ukraine access to the Alliance Accession Action Plan, a program designed to help candidate countries better prepare for eventual accession.*[5] In his last months in office, George W. Bush would have liked both Georgia and Ukraine to receive this acceding country status, but opposition from Germany and other Western European states blocked this. Without inclusion in the MAP, *Saakashvili had few illusions about the West coming to Georgia's military assistance if it fights the Russians*,[6] realizing the extremely dangerous situation in which he had engaged the country. The only thing the alliance leaders agreed to do, mostly under pressure from President Bush, was to say: *We agree that Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become NATO members*,[7] but this was only a mere political statement without substance.

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[2] Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit*, 197.

[3] Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit*, 197.

[4] Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit*, 48.

[5] Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World - Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2010), 111.

[6] Asmus, *A Little War*, 29.

[7] Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit*, 201.

Fig. 1. Agreement Protocol

In August 2008, Ossetian and Abkhaz rebels started new clashes with Georgian law enforcement, and Georgia decided to attack the Ossetian separatist capital of Tskhinvali, but the operation to stop the rebels led to a large-scale Russian intervention, and initial Georgian victories were followed by an extremely strong Russian counter-offensive in both Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russian convoys of ammunition, armoured vehicles, tanks, and military supplies for the offensive in Ossetia and Abkhazia arrived in Georgia through the Roki Tunnel. The war began on August 7 and ended five days later on August 12 with the tactical defeat of the Georgians, and the Russian government officially recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia a month later. Georgia definitively lost control of the two regions, but with the diplomatic intervention of Nicolas Sarkozy, Tbilisi was no longer conquered, and Georgia remained independent, even with

massive territorial losses. The saving initiative for the Georgian state consisted of a *six-point ceasefire plan*[8] (Fig. 1) drafted by Sarkozy during the French presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Fig. 2. Georgia in 2008

The end of the Russian-Georgian confrontation destroyed any chance of Georgia joining NATO, left the country without a significant percentage of the population, without almost half of the access to the Black Sea coast (Fig. 2), and led to a real economic decline, amplifying and more the Georgian's dependence on Russia. From a rational perspective, Russia's actions brought it far more benefits than costs. Russia not only blocked a possible expansion of the North Atlantic organization but gained geostrategic military bases on the territory of Abkhazia and Ossetia, having the possibility to easily control the future of Georgia and the Caucasus. Although in the case of Georgia we can appreciate a very visible maximization of power, concerning the expansion of NATO and the American sphere of influence, we are discussing a double maximization that Russia achieved. On the one hand, by preventing the situation of having a NATO state on its southern border, Russia considerably maximized its security, but at the same time, by taking de facto control of Abkhazia and Ossetia, Russia also maximized its power vis-à-vis NATO in the South

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[8] Carrère d'Encausse, *URSS a murit*, 199.

Caucasus region. The occupation of Abkhazia and thereby half of the Georgian coastline considerably increased Russian influence in the Black Sea but also paved the way for an increasingly expansionist Russian foreign policy. The attack on Georgia in 2008 and the occupation of key Georgian territories would outline and prepare Russia's new target: Crimea.

Fear of the West and Thalassocratic Ambitions: Crimea

What Russia wanted to achieve from the war in Georgia was not only the conquest of strategically crucial areas for the South Caucasus, this short war was also meant to act as a *signal and warning*[9] for Kyiv, but things were not like that, and following large demonstrations, collectively called EuroMaidan, the leadership of Ukraine made the historic decision to orient itself in the direction of a possible European and North Atlantic integration.

For the Russian Federation, the mere prospect of a rapprochement of Ukraine with the West was seen as ungrateful, but a possible Euro-Atlantic integration was considered a direct danger to Moscow. Even before the events of 2014 in Ukraine, the propagandist of territorial expansion policies and theorist of contemporary Russian geopolitics, Aleksandr Dugin, stated that "the absolute imperative of Russian geopolitics in the Black Sea is Moscow's total and unhindered control over the entire northern shore, from Ukrainian territories up to the Abkhazian ones."[10] In the opinion of the Russian propagandist from Moscow, *Ukraine should remain only a cordon sanitaire*[11] to serve Russia's interests in the Black Sea, but also in the West.

What Dugin stated in his more or less scientific works at the end of the last two decades would materialize with the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the support of pro-Russian rebels in the frozen

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[9] Adrian Ionuț Bogdan, "Between Russian and Chinese Expansionism. NATO and Its Challenges," in *The New Transatlantic Relations and the Perspectives of the Global Order*, eds. Valentin Naumescu, Raluca Moldovan and Anda Ghilescu (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021), 393.

[10] Aleksandr G. Dugin, *Bazele Geopoliticii – Volumul I – Viitorul geopolitic al Rusiei* (Foundations of Geopolitics. Vol. 1 – Russia's Geopolitical Future) (București: Eurasiatica.ro, 2011), 231.

[11] Aleksandr G. Dugin, *Teoria Lumii Multipolare* (The Theory of the Multipolar World) (Chișinău: Universitatea Populară, 2014), 194.

conflicts in eastern Ukraine, in Donbas. What drove Russia to take such a risky, illegal, yet expansionist action was a real fear of the prospect of a West reaching Russia's western borders, *a fear that will always be used by Putin in a geopolitically way.*[12]

Geopolitically, Russia benefits from a complex set of advantages that transforms it into a continental power of unprecedented proportions: *to the north protected, but also blocked by the ice of the Arctic Ocean, to the south by the impressive desert cold expanses of Central Asia, in the Caucasus by a mountain range that protects it from the storms of the Middle East,*[13] but the West remains the weakness due to the vast plain and proportions that will always need a buffer zone, and this buffer can only be provided by the Baltic states, Belarus and Ukraine. Given the rapid integration of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia into Euro-Atlantic structures and Belarus's traditional affinity for Russia, the only card in this geopolitical game remains Ukraine. However, it was not only the survival instinct that shaped the actions that Russia would undertake, but rather a categorically re-emerging desire to put Russia back in the power play of major decisions within international relations, to which, one can add, obviously, the tsarist ambitions of Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

No one could ever say with certainty, before the reference year 2014, that an episode similar to the one in Georgia in 2008 would happen again. The results of the West's underestimation of Russia were seen in this defiance of international law, an abrupt shift from the "force of law" to the "law of force" that would continue to mark the international system for decades to come. The annexation of Crimea had obvious effects on the evolution of the balance of power at the international level and reopened the way for aggressive international policies, and this only reconfirms the realist's perspective on international relations. The prospect of occupying the Crimean peninsula and other Ukrainian territories was animated by Russia's

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[12] Nikolay Silaev, Andrey Sushentsov, "Russia and the Geopolitics of Eurasia," in *Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development* No. 9 (2017) 120-35.

[13] Robert D. Kaplan, *Răzbunarea geografiei. Ce ne spune harta despre conflictele viitoare și lupta împotriva destinului* (The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate) (București: Litera, 2020), 287.

fierce desire to reassert,[14] *the necessity to create a buffer zone*[15] between West and East, *exploiting Ukraine's moment of weakness, the rich resources in the eastern area*,[16] the special agricultural capabilities due to the very fertile soil, the much more temperate climate, but also the major geopolitical role of the Crimean peninsula at the level of the Black Sea geostrategy and the satisfaction of the thalassocratic ambitions of the Russian continental power. Crimea is the trophy for which an impressive number of state formations have fought throughout history, from the Tatar khanates to the wars between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, all of them wanted control *of this strip of land which through its geographical centralism ensured extraordinary advantages to the Black Sea to the one who possessed and controlled it*.[17]

In February 2014, Russian troops specially trained for the annexation of the peninsula had the mission of capturing the main administrative buildings, in the days that followed, the Russian military presence became stronger and stronger, so that later, against its background, Crimea would illegitimately proclaim its independence and eventually become part of the Russian Federation as a federal subject following a March 2014 referendum contested by the entire world with few exceptions from states allied to Moscow or states not recognized among them (Transnistria, Ossetia, Abkhazia). The shock of this campaign *destroyed any hope of a partnership between Russia and the West, NATO stopped any political and military collaboration with Moscow, and the G8 decided to exclude Russia*.[18]

By occupying Crimea and carrying out frozen conflicts on the territory of Ukraine, in the eastern Donbas region, Moscow managed to

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[14] Tim Weiner, *Nebunie și Glorie – America, Rusia și războiul politic 1945 – 2020* (The Folly and the Glory: America, Russia, and Political Warfare 1945-2020) (București: Litera, 2020), 9-11.

[15] Valentin Naumescu, Sabina Fati et al., *Vin Rușii* (The Russians are Coming!) (București: Humanitas, 2018), 105.

[16] Agnia Grigas, *Crimeea și Noul Imperiu Rus* (Crimea and the New Russian Empire) (București: Corint, 2016), 176-77.

[17] Paul Stronski, *What Is Russia Doing in the Black Sea?*, 2021, https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/05/20/what-is-russia-doing-in-black-sea-pub-84549.

[18] Heidi Blake, *Din Rusia, cu sânge – Programul de asasinate brutale ale Kremlinului și războiul secret dus de Vladimir Putin împotriva Vestului* (From Russia with Blood – Kremlin's Brutal Assassination Programme and Putin's Secret War against the West) (București: RAO, 2020), 328.

strengthen its control over the Black Sea, but also to prevent any Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the future presidential administrations from Kyiv. By annexing Crimea, Russia obtained a geostrategic territory, a base for launching any naval operations off the Black Sea, and an operational command centre that allowed the achievement of thalassocratic ambitions that were indispensable for a continental power in its desire to reaffirm and change the balance of power at the international level. Russia also gained a population of approximately 2.4 million inhabitants, of which more than two-thirds were ethnic Russians, but also access to the commercial hub represented by the city and southern port of Sevastopol, which represented an interest in China's project to restore the trade route known as the New Silk Road. The tragic historical context means that only 8 years after these events, in the same fateful month of February, now in 2022, Ukraine was once again in the sights of Russian expansionist policies, this time with even more aggressive intentions, on an unprecedented scale.

Russia 30 years after the fall of the Soviet Union

The annexation of Crimea gave Russia a whole new set of assets from the perspective of Eastern European geopolitics, allowed the expansion of Russian maritime space at the expense of Ukraine, and paved the way for increasingly aggressive policies from Moscow in relations with other global actors.

But what Moscow was less aware of following the occupation of Crimea was the *devastating effect*[19] of the combined US and European Union economic sanctions on the Russian economy. In the figure above, we can see a decrease of almost 40% **(**Fig. 3) of the GDP from about 2060 billion dollars in 2014 to 1267 billion in 2016.

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[19] Steven Rosefielde, *Putin's Russia: Economy, Defence and Foreign Policy* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2020), 434.

Fig. 3. The Russian Economic Evolution (2011-2020)[20]

This huge impact on the Russian economy almost instantly cancels the prestige of the geopolitical changes achieved, because the downgrade from the eighth position in the global economic ranking to the eleventh represented a major degradation of economic prestige, a devaluation of the rouble, and a loss of investor confidence, an economic suicide in the medium and the long term.

Aware of the economic disaster, President Putin decided to sign an agreement brokered by France and Germany in Minsk almost a year later. Simultaneously, on January 1, 2015, another important event in the recent history of Russia took place, the Eurasian Economic Union entered into force and was officially created, an economic and political union that brought together states such as Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, a fact which demonstrated the special interest Moscow had in the political and economic destiny of the ex-Soviet space a quarter of a century after the disappearance of the Soviet Union. The recovery of the Russian economy after the annexation of Crimea has been extremely difficult, without the expected effect, and an extremely slow one.

The historical evolution and balance of power relations from 2008-2014 once again allowed for increasingly *striking antagonism*[21] between

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[20] Russia's economic evolution (2011-2020), data collected from TheGlobalEconomy.com, Compare Countries Section, https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/compare-countries/, accessed May 2, 2022.

[21] Weiner, *Nebunie și Glorie*, 15.

Russia and the West, restoring the traditional state of rivalry between Russia and the United States, restoring mutual suspicions and waging political war, but more importantly, the escalation of growing tensions between the two blocs. In the international disorder, which constitutes by its very existence a form of order, Russia has an increasingly unclear role. In this political-economic-military dispute between Washington and Beijing, which every day is becoming more and more pronounced, Moscow has very few options left, among them: *the consolidation of Sino-Russian relations, the formation of the third pole of power, or adopting neutrality in this conflict*.[22] Certainly, with the annexation of Crimea, the option of collaboration with the West was partially out of the question, but now, after the tragic events that began with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 24, 2022, such a scenario is categorically becoming impossible. Certainly, any rational and analytical mechanism of thinking in international relations tends to offer a rapprochement with China and the formation of a Sino-Russian pole at the international level as a response, but, as in any newly created alliance, *it must be based on the establishment of some rules regarding hierarchy*,[23] and the prestige assumed by Putin's re-emerging Russia cannot be satisfied with a secondary role, in the "shadow and back of Beijing," precisely from here arises the insecurity and fragility of such an alliance. We also cannot ignore fundamental differences culturally, politically, ideologically, and even about what a new world order should mean for both superpowers. The historical context, the old Sino-Russian rift, but also Beijing's clandestine policy of populating Eastern Siberia with ethnic Chinese pose serious problems to this alliance as well.

The formation of a third pole of power at the international level is not possible, Russia cannot engage a considerable number of states that are capable of competing economically or militarily with the United States or the People's Republic of China.[24] Moreover, the idea of neutrality in the Sino-

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[22] Valentin Naumescu, *Războiul pentru supremație SUA-China și cele cinci forțe care schimbă lumea: Consecințe pentru România* (The US-China Was for Supremacy and the Five Forces Changing the World: Consequences for Romania) (Iași: Polirom, 2022), 139-44.

[23] Naumescu, *Războiul pentru supremație*, 139.

[24] Naumescu, *Războiul pentru supremație*, 141.

American competition cannot be seen as an option for a superpower that wants to stand out at the global level. The only option that remains within Moscow's reach, therefore, is rapprochement with China, but in terms that do not harm Russian interests and prestige.

NATO and Russia are currently in a state of tension not seen since the Cold War. Against the background of accelerating tensions and the War in Ukraine, the negotiating bridge between Russia and the West seems to be disappearing. The alarm signal that the international relations analyst Agnia Grigas brings in this context is the highlighting of a weakness that the alliance has in the Baltic countries, and more precisely, the considerable Russian minority, but which could be used by Moscow in organizing some rebellions, *which would lead to a pressing dilemma for NATO*:[25] direct intervention and the possibility of a war with the Russian Federation or non-involvement and permanent discrediting of the North Atlantic Alliance.

On December 26, 2021, the Russian Federation completed three decades since its formation, commemorating also the same period since the disappearance of the former Soviet Union, but what is interesting is the subsequent evolution of the balance of power, which in the course of 30 years brought Russia back to the antagonistic position from which it started at the end of 1991, this being a circularity and symmetry that we can rarely see in history, all the more so in the field of international relations or geopolitics.

The war in Ukraine (February 24, 2022)

February 24, 2022, unfortunately, remains a fateful and sad day in the history of Ukraine and Europe. The legacy of lasting and long peace in Europe, from the end of the Second World War until now, has been shaken by a cruel, criminal and illegitimate decision. The Putin regime in Moscow shocked the whole world by invading Ukraine and placing Europe and the whole world in *unprecedented tension in the international system*.[26] The dice of

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[25] Grigas, *Crimeea și Noul Imperiu Rus,* 217.

[26] Christopher M. Smith, *Ukraine's Revolt, Russia's Revenge* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2022), 298.

war were cast by Moscow, but the West has a historical mission to contribute to the fall of these dice in favour of Ukraine.

Although initially, the war in Donbas was represented entirely under the guise of an ethnically motivated secessionist war[27] (due to the Russian majority in eastern Ukraine), the massive intervention and the Russian invasion of Ukraine proved that this was not the case. Russia has always intended to keep Ukraine away from the chance of Euro-Atlantic integration, and when the Putin regime realized that this was no longer possible peacefully, it resorted to this method. Russia's intention and objectives are clear: the occupation of the country, the annexation of considerable territories of the Ukrainian state, and the installation of a pro-Russian puppet regime in Kyiv, which would allow the transformation of Ukraine into a buffer zone, an observation developed earlier in the previous section. As of this writing, none of these objectives have been fully accomplished, so the fate of the war remains to be decided in the coming months.

Even *without achieving the mentioned objectives*,[28] a major problem for the geopolitical security of the Black Sea is the colossal illegitimate expansion of the Russian coastline. From 2008 to the present, Russia has gone from a Black Sea coastline of about 800 km to a total coastline of about 3,500 km, an incredible and extremely dangerous fact. More than 2,500 km of the Ukrainian coast came under Russian control, and half of the Georgian coastline, 150 km, is also under the control of the Russian Federation. In the adjacent image created during the research (Fig. 4.), the important difference between Russia's rightful coastline (in blue) and the coastline illegally annexed and occupied by Russia (in red) can be easily seen. What must be understood from all this exposition is that Russian thalassocratic ambitions figured prominently as a complementary objective in Moscow's plans for the ex-Soviet space. Any military move by Russia also meant a continuation of expansionist ideals regarding the Black Sea.

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[27] David R. Marples, *The War in Ukraine's Donbas: Origins, Contexts, and the Future* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2022), 144-56.
[28] Iosefina Pascal, Cozmin Gușă et al., *Războiul din Ucraina* (București: RAO, 2022), 299.

Fig. 4. Russian control of the Black Sea

It is very important to be aware of these numbers because Russia has reached the repossession of almost 90% of the former coastline controlled by the Soviet Union, which is a cause for concern, but also a particular impulse in changing the military strategies regarding the Black Sea. *The need for a harder military paradigm seems to be the only viable solution at the moment*[29] and comes as a natural consequence of three major conflicts that Russia has started.

One thing is certain, *no one can predict, at least not yet*[30] the outcome of the war in Eastern Europe. A Ukrainian victory against Russia could have a particularly important impact on the Putin regime and would lead to a loss of Russian control of the northern Black Sea. On the other hand, an unwanted Russian victory in Ukraine would pave the way for the Russian Federation to have full control of the Sea of Azov and majority control of the Black Sea, with more than half of the coastline. This latter scenario would represent a catastrophe for the other NATO member states with access to the Black Sea.

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[29] Dan Dungaciu, *The Geopolitical Black Sea Encyclopaedia*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, 453-465.

[30] Pascal, Gușă et al., *Războiul din Ucraina*, 313.

States such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey would become obliged to increase their maritime security by purchasing new warships and improving the capabilities of the fleets they possess. At the same time, the fate of the war in Ukraine will play a particularly important role in the evolution of the international system. A Russian victory may pave the way for a military move by China against Taiwan and provide an incentive for the world's authoritarian states to resolve their differences militarily, which would return the international system to a new era of early realism.

Conclusions

Throughout the history of Eastern Europe, Russia has always represented an actor difficult to ignore, and after the fall of the Soviet Union and the installation of Putin in power, Moscow became interested in the destiny of the ex-Soviet space again. The system of international relations is in a strong dynamic, and in the three decades since the end of the Cold War until now, the global balance of power has undergone far-reaching changes. Russia has gone from a pro-Western foreign policy in the 1990s to a true state of Cold War tension following its invasion of Ukraine this year. All these things also led to an increasingly aggressive foreign policy regarding the Black Sea and paved the way for the annexations or gaining control of the largest parts of the littoral of Ukraine and Georgia. Currently, Russia controls more than half of the Black Sea coast, and this affects militarily and economically NATO countries in the area, forced to increase their maritime capabilities.

There are many other elements worth mentioning in the discussion of Russia and its thalassocratic ambitions such as the role that Russia will play in the new Beijing-Moscow axis, the country's economic evolution, and the continuity of the Putin regime. All these things can weigh a lot in the future of the Black Sea. The global situation often tends to translate almost identically to areas or regions, with important interconnectivity between the regional and global balance of power. Any bold movement with devastating effects in the Black Sea will be felt not only in this region but will also catch an unsuspectedly important echo in other areas such as the seas around

China where the fight for the balance of power is just as big and intense, thus proving the interconnectivity and interesting symmetry between these two spaces separated by thousands of kilometres.

The Russian Federation has always realized that it is a continental power, and throughout history, it has always faced the desire to gain access to warm seas, the northern seas not offering it the necessary strategic and economic advantages. Russia has always continued to pursue an expansionist policy in the Black Sea, even if it meant violating the sovereignty of states and international law. It is also a certainty that the attack on Georgia in August 2008, the annexation of Crimea in February 2014, and the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 were motivated by a whole series of factors such as the blocking of NATO and EU expansion, the expansion of Russia's sphere of influence, however, the thalassocratic objective regarding the Black Sea was also added in a complementary way to Russian intentions.

Finally, this analysis of the three conflicts under consideration does not only present us with specific objectives achieved regarding the number of kilometers of coastline, the annexed territory, the population, and so on, but the present analysis also presents a very bleak Russian geopolitical plan for the Black Sea, a scenario that the entire democratic West will have to make impossible.

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The EU's Route Towards Geopolitical Resilience: a Comparison Between the EU's Response Towards Russia's Foreign Policy in 2014 and 2022

TANA ALEXANDRA FOARFĂ

Abstract. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has announced its intention to focus on economic and social recovery, but most importantly on strengthening its resilience. It hence transformed this concept into a compass for four dimensions of EU policies: social and economic, green, digital and geopolitical. The test for the geopolitical resilience of the EU came on February 24 2022, when Russia launched a military invasion of Ukraine, causing a major security conflict inside the EU and challenging the global international order. This research draws a comparison between the EU response towards Russia's aggression in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 and will present conclusions on how the response influences the geopolitical resilience of the EU and will issue further reflections on the EU's geopolitical resilience evolution.

EU priorities after COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic brought on economic and social consequences on the European Union that determined it to refocus its approach towards future policy-making. This focus can is essence be synthetized through the concept of resilience, a term that lies at the core of the EU's financial response towards the pandemic, namely the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Achieving a more resilient Europe was not a priority limited only to an economic and social dimension for the

EU but is rather part of a strategy to develop more foresight recommendations and policies for future decision-making. Consequently, in 2020 the European Commission launched the first annual Strategic Foresight Report that focused on how to achieve a more resilient Europe on 4 dimensions: green, digital, social and economic and, last but not least, geopolitical.

Geopolitical resilience, as defined by the Strategic Foresight Report, "relates to Europe bolstering its 'open strategic autonomy' and global leadership role."[1] Interestingly enough, the geopolitical dimension is rather limited in its understanding to the concept of strategic autonomy, a notion explained as "the EU's commitment to open and fair trade, preserving the benefits of an open economy and supporting partners around the world to lead the renewed and reinvigorated form of multilateralism the world needs. At the same time, the EU is aware of the need to reduce its dependency and strengthen its security of supply across key technologies and value chains."[2] The geopolitical dimension is restricted to the needs and challenges seen at the moment of the pandemic, understood through an economic, trade and industrial perspective. These perspectives are reflected in the way the prospects of geopolitical resilience are analysed in the report, namely exploring the capacity to face future shocks, the potential vulnerabilities that can worsen the negative impact of the challenges on the geopolitical dimension and, last but not least, the opportunities that can increase the geopolitical resilience. For an overall picture they have been summarized in the following table.

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[1] European Commission, "2020 Strategic Foresight Report – Charting the Course towards a More Resilient Europe," September 8, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/foresight_report_com750_en.pdf, 14.

[2] European Commission, "Europe's Moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation," May 27, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-europe-moment-repair-prepare-next-generation.pdf, 12.

Table 1. Summary of the geopolitical resilience capacities, vulnerabilities and opportunities

Geopolitical resilience	Capacities	Vulnerabilities	Opportunities
	EU is considered a trusted partner and responsible leader	Multilateralism and the global financial system are under increasing pressure from narrow national interests	The shift towards an increasingly multipolar world offers a new opportunity for Europe to reinforce its role in the global order and lead the revival of multilateral governance structures
	Europe's extensive global trade capacity underpins its geopolitical power and resilience	Growing economic and political weight of emerging players, supported by their demographic weight, as the EU's share in the world population and in global GDP diminishes	Strong cooperation with like-minded democracies is increasingly important
	EU is a space power	Increasing use of hybrid threats, space and cyber warfare, disinformation, and the growing role of non-state actors	Boosting Europe's open strategic autonomy is an imperative
	EU builds resilience in its neighbourhood and beyond	Managing migration in an orderly way	A reliable supply of food also needs to be ensured across the EU
	EU has a long-standing capacity and legacy in shaping international standards and norms	A lack of EU member states unity in specific foreign and security policy areas is a source of fragility	Being more strategic about raw materials is fundamental
	EU is in a strong position to shape the multilateral system of global economic governance, develop mutually beneficial relations to boost its competitiveness, and to advance and set global standards for the green and digital transitions	The COVID-19 crisis has revealed Europe's overreliance on non-EU suppliers for critical raw materials, and has highlighted how supply disruptions can affect industrial ecosystems and other productive sectors	A stable rules-based trading system and a level playing field are key objectives for the EU
		Trade and investment have plunged, undermining global prosperity and stability	Industrial alliances can be at the forefront of this change, bringing together investors, public institutions and industrial partners to help industry develop strategic technologies

Geopolitical resilience	Capacities	Vulnerabilities	Opportunities
		Europe's economic sovereignty is at stake. Other global powers are combining geopolitical and economic interests to increase their influence in the world. This includes protectionism, export control and the international role of currencies	
		The crisis accelerated attacks from authoritarian regimes against democratic systems via misleading narratives.	

A couple of considerations need to be further explored. First, the geopolitical resilience dimension seems to be limited to a specific negative consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the acknowledgement that the EU economy and industry have become dependent on key materials, products and equipment. From this, the geopolitical resilience can be achieved through ensuring security and consolidation to EU key value chains and consequently, the geopolitical resilience is tightly link to a strong trade capacity and to an open strategic autonomy. Second, the main EU advantage that is promoted to be further consolidated is the normative power and influence that EU ensures on the international stage and the opportunity of further promoting multilateralism, cooperation and democratic values. Third, the main threats that seem to be on the horizon were the economic expansion of the global powers and of emerging players, with a rather long-term prospect on the hybrid threats and disinformation and propaganda attacks against the EU democratic system. All in all, back in 2020, the report presents a rather narrow foresight, concluding that the geopolitical resilience of the EU could be achieved through promoting an open strategic autonomy, preserving the normative power and consolidating the economy and competitiveness on the global markets.

In 2021, the Strategic Foresight Report continues the same narrative regarding the geopolitical resilience, although not specifically mentioned. The concept of open strategic autonomy evolves from a clear necessity

towards a long-term vision towards 2050, from a concept towards ten areas of action that link the domestic and external policy agenda:[3]

<p align="center">**Table 2.** Areas of action of geopolitical resilience</p>

Number	Area of action
1	Ensuring sustainable and resilient health and food systems
2	Securing decarbonized and affordable energy
3	Strengthening capacity in data management, artificial intelligence and cutting edge technologies
4	Securing and diversifying supply of critical raw materials
5	Ensuring first-mover global position in standard-setting
6	Building resilient and future-proof economic and financial systems
7	Developing and retaining skills and talents matching EU ambitions
8	Strengthening security and defence capacities and access to space
9	Working with global partners to promote peace, security and prosperity for all
10	Strengthening the resilience of institutions

The most important distinction related to the current research is that the 2021 strategic report makes a clear reference to Russia's foreign policy that creates instability in the region, threatens and challenges the EU democratic system that represents the core of its member states: "With Russia, the EU needs to continue its principled approach of defending its interests and promoting values based on the implementation of the five agreed principles.[4] The EU must insist that the Russian leadership demonstrate a more constructive engagement and stop actions against the EU and its Member States and partner third countries."[5]

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[3] European Commission, "2021 Strategic Foresight Report," 21.

[4] On March 14, 2016, the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, together with the EU foreign minister agreed on the five guiding principles of the EU's policy towards Russia, which continue to be the foundation of EU-Russia relations: (1) insisting on full implementation of the Minsk agreements before economic sanctions against Russia are lifted; (2) pursuing closer relations with the former Soviet republics in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood (including Ukraine) and central Asia; (3) becoming more resilient to Russian threats such as energy security, hybrid threats, and disinformation; (4) despite tensions, engaging selectively with Russia on a range of foreign-policy issues, among them cooperation on the Middle East, counter-terrorism and climate change; (5) increasing support for Russian civil society and promoting people-to-people contacts, given that sanctions target the regime rather than Russian people.

[5] European Commission, "2021 Strategic Foresight," 18.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine: the first test for the EU's geopolitical resilience

Following the analysis of the 2020 and 2021 strategic foresight reports, it seems fair to conclude that the EU interpretation of geopolitical resilience was rather structured around the concept of open strategic autonomy and around elements that constitute the advantage EU presents as normative power.

The geopolitical resilience of the European Union was about to be tested very soon, when Russia transformed, in the eyes of the EU, from a static threat into a concrete enemy, from an actor that was maintaining tensions in the Eastern neighbourhood and challenging the EU values and democratic system towards an actor that launches a military invasion to prove its hard power on the international stage.

Already since April 2021, President Volodymyr Zelensky, elected in 2019, has accused Russia of massing troops on Ukraine's borders, as ceasefire violation acts occur in Donbass. Russia justifies this act as a response to NATO and US military exercises, referring to the fact that Ukrainian decision-makers displayed on several occasions a desire to join NATO. President Zelensky decided to shift its narrative, from encouraging dialogue towards assuming a stronger position towards his country's perspective of becoming a member of both NATO and the European Union.[6]

Six months later, the EU leaders started preparing for a Russian aggression in Ukraine, as satellite images released in early November showed Russian tanks and other military vehicles near the Ukrainian border. As a defence argument for the troop movements, President Vladimir Putin accused the EU and the US of delivering weapons to Ukraine and carrying out military exercises in the Black Sea.[7]

The end of 2021 determined the EU to take a unified position against Russia's demands, a challenging task considering that the EU common

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[6] Lauren Walker, "Path to EU Begins: Ukraine Handed Membership Application Form," *The Brussels Times*, April 9, 2022, https://www.brusselstimes.com/216028/path-to-eu-begins-ukraine-handed-membership-application-form.

[7] Reuters, "Kremlin Defends Logic for Actions in Ukraine, Berates Hostile EU," February 28, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/kremlin-says-eu-weapons-supplies-ukraine-are-dangerous-2022-02-28/.

foreign and security policy is a special competence enshrined in the EU treaties which requires unanimity in its decision-making. Russia came forward with requirements towards the US and NATO, among which: NATO member states that entered NATO before its enlargement in 1997 must undertake not to deploy arms in the Eastern Europe countries; NATO must commit to not enlarge towards Ukraine or Georgia. At the European Council of December 16-17, the EU member states reaffirmed their support towards democratic values and more specifically towards Ukraine, followed by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borell's declaration that Russia's claims contravene the EU principles and foundation of European peace, stability and security.[8]

In parallel, NATO announced placing troops on alert to strengthen its defence in Eastern Europe. On January 24, US President Joe Biden attended a videoconference meeting with several EU leaders and concluded by calling on Russia to take de-escalation measures in the Ukrainian conflict, emphasising that it will face "massive consequences"[9] if it attacks Ukraine again. Statements were complemented by bilateral dialogue attempts from several EU member states. President Emmanuel Macron met Vladimir Putin to discuss solutions to resolve the crisis, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz travelled to Kyiv and to Moscow to try to obtain immediate assurance of de-escalation from Putin. Nevertheless, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen warned further that there were no signs of reducing Russian troops on the Ukrainian border and reiterated that, if Putin chose violence, the Europeans would respond in a united and strong way.[10]

Concrete proof that dialogue attempts failed came on February 21, when Vladimir Putin signed the act of recognition of the two separatist territories of Donbass in Ukraine: the People's Republic of Donetsk and the

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[8] Lucas Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine: chronologie des événements" (War in Ukraine: Chronology of Events), Toute l'Europe, last updated September 1, 2022, https://www.touteleurope.eu/l-ue-dans-le-monde/guerre-en-ukraine-chronologie-des-evenements/.

[9] Arthur Olivier, Ukraine: les Européens veulent une désescalade" (Ukraine: The Europeans Want to De-escalate), Toute l'Europe, January 25, 2022, https://www.touteleurope.eu/l-ue-dans-le-monde/ukraine-les-europeens-veulent-une-desescalade/.

[10] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."

People's Republic of Luhansk. Immediately after, Russian armoured vehicles and troops entered Eastern Ukraine. The EU, together with the United States, the UN and the majority of the members of the UN Security Council condemned this decision by Russia, considering it a violation of international law. The US and the EU revised the sanctions that were applied to Russia since 2014 following the illegal annexation of Ukraine and announced that they would proceed with new sanctions against Moscow, while Germany suspended the commissioning of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.[11]

Despite the fact that President Putin showed no interest in finding a common ground with the EU and the US, his next move was an unforeseen event that determined the EU to remember the crucial importance of security and defence in its essence, namely the military, hard power dimension of the geopolitical resilience. In an unprecedented step, Vladimir Putin announced a major military operation on the Ukrainian territory with the objective, according to him, of defending the separatists of Donbass. But the military aggression of Ukraine did not stop in that region, as powerful explosions hit several major cities, including the capital Kyiv. Following this invasion, President Volodymyr Zelensky instituted martial law in his country.[12] In the aftermath, tens of thousands of Ukrainians rushed to the borders with Romania, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary and tried to flee their country. In only ten days, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights counted 351 civilian victims killed, as well as 707 injured, with more than 1.3 million Ukrainian refugees in neighbouring countries.[13]

The attacks further intensified in March, Russian strikes caused a fire in the largest atomic power plant in Europe, located in Zaporizhia in the centre of the country, causing fears of a nuclear accident, especially since Ukraine has a total number of 15 reactors on its territory. At the same time, Russian army bombed a Ukrainian military base near the Polish border and the strategic cities of Kyiv and Mariupol were still besieged and surrounded by the Russian armed forces. Moscow increased attacks against civilians and

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[11] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."
[12] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."
[13] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."

residential areas in Ukraine, bombarding a Mariupol theatre sheltering hundreds of civilians.[14]

Nevertheless, even if Russia managed to conquer several tens of thousands of square kilometres of Ukrainian territory, the Russian offensive appeared to be blocked. After four weeks of war, the Kremlin was suffering major tactical setbacks and the goal of defeating Ukraine in a few days became out of reach. Their attacks had a severe impact on the Ukrainian population, as after one month of war, more than 3.4 million crossed Ukrainian borders.[15]

Soon enough, Ukraine managed to regain control of Kyiv and the Russians redeployed their troops from the north to the east and south of Ukraine. This was the moment when the images of hundreds of dead civilians scattered in the streets of the city of Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, are made public to the world.

Furthermore, Russian troops started to suffer blows, one of the most serious being the loss of Moskva, the main cruiser of the Kremlin fleet and one of the flagships of the Russian Navy. The Ukrainians claimed to have hit the cruiser with missiles while the Russians evoked a fire on board. This event stoke fears of a new escalation in the conflict, as Russia threatened to intensify its strikes in Kyiv. Two days later, Russia carried out a series of bombardments in Kharkiv, but also in Kyiv, also targeting Lviv with missiles and intensifying the conflict in Donbass.[16]

These bombardments continued during the month on May, with Russian army focusing on the east of Ukrainian territory in order to take control of the city of Sievierodonetsk in Donbass. On May 20, Russia announced that it had completed the conquest of Mariupol. Taking into account the failures of the Russian assaults in northern Ukraine and Kyiv during the first days of the invasion, this conquest represents a major strategic success from the Russian point of view, after nearly three months of intense conflict. Russia gains ground in Sievierodonetsk but the Ukrainians manage to resist.[17]

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[14] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."
[15] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."
[16] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."
[17] Da Silva, "Guerre en Ukraine."

The fears for a nuclear disaster exacerbated in the last period, as the Zaporizhia plant lost external power and had its last remaining power line cut from the national grid.

The EU response towards Russia's foreign policy in 2022

Following Putin's decision to military invade Ukraine, the European community, the European leaders together with the United States, United Kingdom and Canada strongly condemned Putin's actions and issued during the month of February several statements, repeatedly insisting upon a peaceful solution of this conflict and reiterating that a military aggression was not an option for the liberal democracy consolidated in the European continent and further condemning Belarus' involvement and support of this aggression: "The use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the 21st century. Tensions and conflict should be resolved exclusively through dialogue and diplomacy."[18] Furthermore, the EU leaders requested Russia to cease its military actions, to withdraw its forces and military equipment from Ukraine and to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. At the same time, the EU leaders publicly expressed their support for Ukraine and its citizens, providing signals that they will help Ukraine in its European path.

However, soon enough, pressure began to increase on foreign leaders to act and to transform the words into actions. Consequently, the EU focused on two sets of instruments. First, it expanded the already existing sanctions against Russia imposed back in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Crimea, but it also created additional sanctions with a broader range. In parallel, it provided Ukraine with humanitarian, political, financial and military support.

The purpose of the sanctions was to weaken and isolate Russia's economy and its capacity to finance the war and to deprive it of critical

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[18] European Council, "European Council Conclusions, 24 February 2022," February 24, 2022, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/02/24/european-council-conclusions-24-february-2022/.

technologies. The first package of sanctions,[19] adopted on February 23, targeted members of the Russian State Duma who voted in favour of the recognition of the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. The sanctions imposed restrictions on the economic relations with Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as general restrictions on Russia's access to the EU's capital and financial markets and services. Two days later, on February 25, more individual sanctions were approved, against those that were the main individuals responsible for Ukraine's invasion: Vladimir Putin, Sergey Lavrov and members of the Russian State Duma and National Security Council. The sanctions expanded towards other industrial sectors such as energy, transport and technology. Furthermore, the EU introduced the suspension of visa facilitation provisions for Russian diplomats and other Russian officials.[20]

But so far, nothing different from the sanctions imposed back in 2014. The novelty came with the third package,[21] adopted on March 2, which was looking into the details of how to concretely tackle Russian transactions and the money flow into the Russian economy. Consequently, the EU, together with the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom decided to apply a SWIFT ban for seven Russian banks,[22] while also prohibiting transactions with the Russian Central Bank or provision of euro-denominated banknotes to Russia. This decision brought a certain novelty in the EU foreign affairs approach, as it represented a concrete measure with quantifiable negative consequences for Russia. Nevertheless, we must not overestimate the results of this decision, because Russia had been developing a transaction reading system on its own, and transactions towards these seven Russian banks were still possible, but only through the Chinese transaction reading system, which indeed places a supplementary burden. Another new initiative was the suspension of broadcasting in the EU of media outlets Russia Today and Sputnik, media outlets known to be propaganda and disinformation

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19 European Council, "EU Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," last reviewed September 12, 2022, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-response-ukraine-invasion/.
20 European Council, "EU Response."
21 European Council, "EU Response."
22 European Council, "EU Response."

channels. This time, the package of sanctions did not target only Russia, but also Belarus individuals,[23] a country which announced its involvement in Russia's military invasion against Ukraine.

These sanctions against Belarus extended on March 9, with a SWIFT ban for three Belarusian banks, prohibition on transactions with the Central Bank of Belarus, limits on financial inflows from Belarus to the EU and prohibition on the provision of euro-denominated banknotes to Belarus.

The fourth package[24] of sanctions was approved on March 15 and introduced individual sanctions against Roman Abramovich, prohibition on all transactions with certain state-owned enterprises and further prohibitions on new investments in the Russian energy sector, on exports to Russia of luxury goods and on imports from Russia to the EU of iron and steel. These were complemented by the fifth package of sanctions on April 8,[25] cancelling imports of coal and other solid fossil fuels, of wood, cement, seafood and liquor from Russia, closure of EU ports to all Russian vessels, prohibition on Russian and Belarusian road transport operators from entering the EU.

The sixth package[26] of sanctions approved on June 3 further expanded the list of prohibited imports, of crude oil and refined petroleum products, a SWIFT ban for an additional three Russian banks and one Belarusian bank, suspension of broadcasting for another three Russian media channels and symbolically, sanctions against individuals responsible for the atrocities committed in Bucha and Mariupol.

More recently, the Council adopted a decision entering into force on September 12 that suspends the visa facilitation agreement between the EU and Russia for all citizens, which burdens the administrative process for Russian citizens wishing to obtain a visa to enter the EU.[27]

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[23] European Council, "EU Response."

[24] European Council, "EU Response."

[25] European Council, "EU Response."

[26] European Council, "EU Response."

[27] European Commission, "Commission Presents Guidelines on Stricter Visa Processing for Russian Citizens," September 9, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_5430.

Since the war has two sides, the EU sanctioned the aggressor through comprehensive sanctions. But it also needed to become the ally of the victim and therefore elaborated a programme to support Ukraine and its citizens, apart from the bilateral support the country is receiving from different Member States. Since the beginning of the invasion, the EU evoked the principle of solidarity towards the people of Ukraine and their unfortunate situation. Concretely, the help provided by the EU translated into providing protection for people fleeing the war such as the temporary protection mechanism and offering 20 billion euros[28] as support for member states hosting temporarily displaced Ukrainian citizens, it provided material assistance to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries through the EU civil protection mechanism and it offered over 300 million euros to Ukraine and Moldova as humanitarian aid, and over 10 billion euros as assistance and support for overall stability and for the equipment of Ukrainian armed forces.

But, as in all situations, for every action there is a reaction. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the EU response are having a disruptive effect on global markets. At the EU level, there has been a high inflation registered for key commodities, in particular fuels. Furthermore, since Russia is the biggest supplier of natural gas to the EU, the war caused uncertainty about the security of the European energy sources. The EU imports 90% of the natural gas used to generate electricity, heat homes and supply industry, with Russia supplying almost 40% of EU gas and a 25% of its oil.[29] Furthermore, the attacks of the Russian army hampered the Ukrainian transport infrastructure, a fact that prevented the Ukrainians from exporting agri-food production.

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[28] European Council, "EU Response."

[29] European Commission, "In Focus: Reducing the EU's Dependence on Imported Fossil Fuels," April 20, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/focus-reducing-eus-dependence-imported-fossil-fuels-2022-apr-20_en.

Russia Exports by Country	Last	Previous	
European Union	188114.60	166096.40	USD Million
China	68028.90	61635.10	USD Million
Netherlands	42155.40	37891.40	USD Million
Germany	29647.40	26662.80	USD Million
Italy	19322.00	16643.30	USD Million
United States	17537.80	15879.20	USD Million
South Korea	16896.80	14597.10	USD Million
Poland	16723.10	14569.30	USD Million
Japan	10747.60	9439.40	USD Million
France	9839.10	8555.10	USD Million

Fig. 1. Russia Exports by Country 2021

As part of the response of these challenges, in May 2022, the European Commission came up with a plan for the EU to become independent of Russian fossil fuels. The REPowerEU proposal[30] is a long-term plan to strengthen EU's energy independence and calls for more diversification of energy supply sources, faster deployment of renewables and improved interconnections of energy networks.

But perhaps the most important and powerful action, at least symbolically, that EU has taken since the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the historic moment in which it offered the EU-candidate status to Ukraine.[31] This decision, first by the Commission to positively assess Ukraine's request for membership, the endorsement provided by the European Parliament and the Council decision to grant the EU-candidate status marks an important commitment for the European Union and sends a strong message of

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[30] European Commission, "REPowerEU Plan: Affordable, Secure and Sustainable Energy for Europe," April 18, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_en.

[31] European Council, "Conclusions on Ukraine, the Membership Applications of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, Western Balkans and External Relations, 23 June 2022," June 23, 2022, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/23/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-the-membership-applications-of-ukraine-the-republic-of-moldova-and-georgia-western-balkans-and-external-relations-23-june-2022/.

ensuring stability and democracy in its Eastern neighbourhood. After years of stagnation in the enlargement policy, the European Union, under pressure from the threat of conflict escalation in the region and under the imminence of war at its borders, decided that the enlargement policy could play a key role in guaranteeing stability. Consequently, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova now officially have candidate status. Notwithstanding, this update does not mean that the two countries will automatically become EU member states. The pre-accession process remains the same as before, meaning that the countries will need to meet the Copenhagen criteria,[32] an accomplishment which can only be achieved through serious reforms to be undertaken in the respective state. With a country currently concentrating all of its efforts on winning the war, Ukraine's prospects are rather on a broader long-term. Nevertheless, the country seems very determined to follow this path as at the beginning of July it presented at the Lugano conference[33] dedicated to the recovery of Ukraine a historic reconstruction plan, similar to the recovery and resilience plans created by the Member States under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, but with an obvious and natural post-war component. The Ukrainian reconstruction plan consists of three main steps:[34]

- The first step focuses on solving the urgent essential needs for Ukrainians, such as water supply, critical infrastructure that need to be repaired as soon as possible.
- The second step is the rapid reconstruction process, which will be launched as soon as the war ends, focusing on short-term measures such as temporary housing, rebuilding of health and education infrastructure.

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[32] The Copenhagen criteria were established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in 1995. They are: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU; the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the acquis), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

[33] Official website of the Ukraine Recovery conference in Lugano: https://www.urc2022.com/.

[34] Official website of the Ukraine Recovery Plan: https://recovery.gov.ua/en.

- The third step is the one of increasing resilience, of country development in the long-term, through reforms and investments.

The EU announced that it will support Ukraine at every step, already providing significant aid for the first step to be achieved. Furthermore, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced, at the Lugano conference as well, that the European Commission plans to set up a dedicated platform that could help with raising the financial help requested by Ukraine in its post-war reconstruction, estimated at 750 billion dollars.[35]

All in all, one can conclude that the EU response towards Russia's invasion of Ukraine was made up of three types of key messages: reactive, pragmatic and proactive. The reactive message consisted in the statements issued immediately after Russia's aggressive behaviour towards Ukraine, complemented by the adoption of individual sanctions. The pragmatic message consists in the focus on isolating Russia's economy in order to become unable to support the war in the long-term. The economic and commercial sanctions, especially the ones banning the imports of energy supply by Russia, represent a commitment to assume a strong global role as a normative power that will sanction those who do not wish to respect the principles of liberal democracy, including state sovereignty. Finally, the proactive message showed that the EU has a strategic thinking in supporting Ukraine not only verbally, but also financially and with humanitarian aid, but most importantly, in the long term, support it during its reconstruction. All of these afore-mentioned elements lead towards the ultimate goal of the EU: to extend its presence in the Eastern Partnership, a fact confirmed by the speed with which Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova received the candidate-status.

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[35] Tana Foarfă, Angela Grămadă, "De ce vorbim despre reconstrucția Ucrainei înainte de a se încheia războiul?" (Why Are We Talking about Ukraine's Reconstruction before the End of the War?), Panorama, August 18, 2022, https://panorama.ro/de-ce-vorbim-despre-reconstructia-ucrainei-inainte-de-a-se-incheia-razboiul/.

2014 and 2022: a comparison

If one compares the response of the EU to the Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine, there are some differences between the 2022 reactions and the 2014 reactions to the illegal annexation of Crimea. The comparative analysis between the responses will determine how the geopolitical resilience of the EU has changed between 2014 and 2022.

While verbally the statements made by the EU leaders condemning the acts of Russia were as strong in 2014 as in 2022, there are two particular elements that emerge to be distinctive between the two responses: first, it is about the type of response and secondly, about the duration of the decision-making process.

When it comes to the type of response, the EU sanctions coordinated with the United States back in 2014 initially targeted individuals and entities involved in the annexation, as well as anyone wishing to do business in or with Crimea. Therefore, they were imposed predominantly at regional level, whereas the 2022 packages of sanctions, although starting in a similar manner, were soon complemented by general positions against disinformation, banning the SWIFT for the most important Russian banks. Consequently, the type of response evolved, became more courageous, more nuanced and indicated a higher level of seriousness and commitment to stop the financing of this war. In 2014, while the sanctions did not impact Russia directly, they constructed significant barriers for doing business in Crimea that imposed financial costs for the Russian government. Russia missed a potential 479 billion dollars in foreign investment, which was around a third of Russian GDP.[36] As for 2022, it is still too early to predict the economic impact of the sanctions against Russia, but it is rather the overall package of measures that together are isolating Russia from the international market, coupled with the decisions through which the EU wishes to show that its normative power does not rely only on statements, but it has practical

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[36] World Bank in the Russian Federation "Russia Economic Report," April 2015, https://www.world bank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/russia/rer33-eng.pdf, 5.

consequences. Economists[37] projected, six months after the start of the war, that the depth of the economic downturn for the Russia's economy would overcome the figures from the financial crisis, mainly due to the economic sanctions and to the measures taken to isolate Russia from the global markets, measures that are stronger than the 2014 sanctions taken following the occupation of Crimea.

Consequently, the 2022 response was more complex and elaborated than the 2014, producing more negative consequences for Russia than previously. In this specific situation, namely the EU approach towards Russia's foreign policy in Ukraine, the evolution of the sanctions leads to the conclusion that there is a certain level of resilience achieved between 2014 and 2022 in terms of immediate position to guarantee security and stability in the region.

As regards the duration of the decision-making process, there is improvement to be witnessed here as well. In 2014, Jorge Manuel Barroso made the following statement: "The Ukraine crisis is the biggest threat to security in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall with greater potential for destabilisation than the Balkan wars of the 1990s. European countries had decided to support Ukraine and to show that Russia's actions had to have consequences. But settling on a united response is still a work in progress given different views by EU member states."[38]

The last phrase was and remains eloquent and relevant for the EU decision-making process, which is often characterized as being slow due to the fact that on key issues, in particular common foreign and security policy, some decisions need general consensus in the Council of the EU. The fact that in 2014, two months after the annexation of the Crimea peninsula by Russia the EU member states were still discussing the EU response to the crisis provoked by Ukraine shows that unitary political commitment often led to a lack of positioning and EU leadership in crucial moments. Moreover, it shows that the unity of 27 member states is an important step forward that

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[37] Vladislav Inozemtsev, "Russian Economy after Six Months of War," Riddle, August 30, 2022, https://ridl.io/russian-economy-after-six-months-of-nbsp-war/.

[38] Reuters, "EU's Barroso Says Europe Divided over Ukraine Crisis," May 9, 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-crisis-barroso-idUKKBN0DP0OD20140509.

balances the geopolitical resilience spectre of the EU. This unity emerged in 2022, when the EU managed to adopt the first package of sanctions at the very beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a fact that translated symbolically into the EU being perceived as a powerful and united actor that has an influence at global level. Further on, this unity also positively reflected in the short time needed for adopting the first package of sanctions, which further consolidated the EU's political voice on the global scene. Nevertheless, in order for this flexibility and quick reaction to positively reflect into the increase of the EU geopolitical resilience, it needs to become the exception, not the rule. For the moment, the decision-making process of the common security and defence policy seems to remain rigid, but examples such as the one explained above could serve as an incentive.

All in all, the duration of the decision-making process needed for adopting the sanctions represents a beneficial factor for the geopolitical resilience of the European Union and there is definitely an improvement when specifically analysing the difficulty for the EU to take a decision as a fast reaction to Russia's action back in 2014 and the response in 2022 that was adopted in hours, maximum days away, not months as was the case back in 2014.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the evolution of the geopolitical resilience of the European Union and its prospects, a concept that has only recently been officially mentioned by the EU, as a strategic foresight concept following the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to be able to identify factors that influence the geopolitical resilience, a specific case-study has been selected, in the form of the analysis of the EU response towards Russia's Foreign Policy in 2014 and 2022, more specifically the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 versus the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The analysis of the two behaviours reflects several conclusions. First of all, there has been an evolution of the complexity of the EU response, differing from a sanctions adopted in 2014 after a lengthy process and only targeting individuals and Crimea, in comparison with the six packages of sanctions adopted in 2022 that were more complex and comprised decisions

that isolated Russia on the international market and produced concrete consequences. Furthermore, these packages were complemented by the EU decision to grant the EU-candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, which can be interpreted as a strategic decision to preserve stability and guarantee security in its eastern neighbourhood. Furthermore, the fact that the EU was able to unanimously decide on this course of action now in 2022, in comparison with 2014, represents another aspect that positively influences the strategic geopolitical position of the EU on the international stage of global powers. When it comes to the speed of the decision-making process of the EU response towards Russia, here there is also an improvement that can be noticed, when comparing the lengthy process required for the EU to agree on the sanctions back in 2014 in comparison to the rapid response witnessed in 2022.

Throughout the analysis the elements mentioned represent a clear evolution from 2014 to 2022 and they definitely have a positive influence on the EU geopolitical resilience. Nevertheless, in order to understand whether the geopolitical resilience of the European Union will evolve based on these elements, it is worth considering their impact on several elements.

First, the geopolitical resilience definition that it is considered in this analysis relates to the capacity to increase the notion of open strategic autonomy and to reinforce the global leadership role. Based on this specific and narrow definition, the EU has made efforts to consolidate its global leadership role and there is an improvement that can be witnessed when comparing the response to Russia's aggression in 2014 and 2022. The fact that the EU managed to have a unified position that proposed a more complex package of sanctions complemented by symbolic and historic decisions that consolidate the EU's security in the long-term definitely plays a positive role into the EU geopolitical resilience.

Second, regarding the notion of open strategic autonomy, there is also a potential for the EU to consolidate its role, but this potential emerged rather as a necessity for the EU to become energy independent from Russia. From this point of view, it is too early to assess whether the EU will reach this objective because the steps that are required to be taken into this direction are still under discussion at the EU level. Some decisions regarding

a common approach towards purchasing oil, capping oil prices, decoupling oil and electricity prices, diversifying energy supply sources, as well as developing renewables need to be taken, in order to be able to reach strategic autonomy in the energy sector. Therefore, the EU seems to be on the path towards enhancing its open strategic autonomy, but decisions need to be taken in order to see that the commitment towards strategic autonomy will also be put in practice.

Last but not least, enhanced geopolitical resilience will be achievable only if the good practices explored in this study are consolidated on a long-term basis. After all, flexibility in the decision-making process is needed, alongside rapidity, in order to consider that the EU has become more resilient in foreign and security policy.

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Considerations on Historical West-East Bipolarity: Cold War 2.0

FLORIS-ADRIAN IONESCU

Abstract. The 21st century is taking place under the paradigmatic auspices of crises. The basis of this scientific communication represents an analytical argument for the fact that the security setting of contemporaneity can be detected and properly understood in the thesis-synthesis-antithesis dialectic. Our analysis develops the strength of NATO's active and assertive actions, starting from the western European side, paradigmatically and ideologically opposed to the accelerated form of destructive interference in world affairs proven by the Russian Federation from the eastern flank. Against this confrontation background, it is necessary to rethink the European and global security attribute, with a strong emphasis on the re-dimensioning of NATO partnerships and their reaffirmation as an integral part of identity and adaptation.

Keywords: Cold War 2.0, cyclicity, partnerships, crises, repugnance.

Preliminary considerations

After the end of the Cold War, the United States enjoyed a unipolar moment.[1] As the sole superpower, Washington had the freedom to shift its focus away from Russia, strengthen and expand its global alliances, and promote and support democracy around the globe. Russia could not substantially challenge US foreign policy. In the first two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia focused primarily on domestic issues, struggling to combat the economic collapse, hyperinflation, privatization,

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[1] Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990): 23-33, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1990-01-01/unipolar-moment.

and widespread corruption that resulted from the cataclysmic transition from a communist structure to a disorderly state in the search for identity.

In other words, Europe witnessed the beginning of a glacial crisis that was exacerbated for centuries and tempered after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the years following the Second World War. The emergence of a strategic symmetry, embodied in NATO's allied safeguarding against communist expansionism and quantified in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, has been linked to the cold bipolarism. The continent, which is still experiencing and smelling a cyclical crisis, has suffered as a result of subsequent geopolitics of disorder. Borders have transformed into vibrant organisms as the epic uncertainty has demonstrated that nothing can be demonstrated. Coeval security's impetus—or, to use a derogatory term, chaos—is unpredictable. In the 1980s, who could have foreseen the collapse of the Soviet Union? Also, can anyone guarantee NATO's continued existence (transformation) within a century from now on? Against or in accordance with the Russian Federation?

The purpose of this article is to argue and exemplify the cyclical unfolding of history by placing two different ideologies within an actionable and political register. At the same time, the validation of NATO's return to its initial state of establishment is manifested by historical and geographic landmarks of the adversary.

Russian has never fully embraced the unipolar construct and has spent the past 30 years rethinking its ability to influence political action beyond its own borders. Building on its Soviet-era relationships and revitalizing its capabilities, the Russian Federation has stepped up its efforts to augment its global influence, efforts that have accelerated since 2014. After Russia's active and assertive actions in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria, the rest of the world was forced to rethink its global role, political and security objectives.

Defined from the perspective of the fields that generate it and on which it exerts its influence, security (national or international) "refers to the foreign, economic and military policy of the states, their intersection in areas

of exchange and dispute, as well as the general structure of the relations that create."[2]

    The attention of the Russian Federation in the present century is directed, above all, to the states belonging to its own sphere of influence, prior to the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the exception being the states in the Baltic region.[3] In the proximity of the collapse of the Soviet area, foreign policy objectives had peripheral geographical expansion, mainly due to resized and limited state capacities. We can describe the main objective of those times as the preservation of (limited) peripheral influence and the prohibition of external influences and threats, basically, the former union state entered a phase of preservation. But, almost simultaneously with the extinction of the previous construction, the political message was vigorous and protesting against the multiplication and expansion of the spheres of influence of NATO and the EU. This aspect is not alarming *per se*, as the Russian Federation, in congruence with any other modern state, has increasing levels of interest based on the proximity of perceived threats to its own territory. The security environment of the existence of the big actors reaches a critical boiling point, in cyclical terms, in this sense we highlight the actuality of the Herzian concept of the security dilemma.[4] However, over

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[2] Danut-Mircea Chiriac, *Politici si strategii de securitate la începutul secolului XXI* (Security Policies and Strategies at the Start of the 21st Century) (Bucharest: "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, 2005), 9.

[3] The shaded area includes Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. At the same time, we emphasize the fact that "near abroad does not have an undisputed geographical area." See Andrew Radin and Clinton Bruce Reach, "Russian Views of the International Order," Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, RR-1826-OSD, 2017, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1826.html, 10.

[4] According to John H. Herz, the security dilemma arises from the individual's awareness that others seek to destroy him, therefore there is always a need for self-defence, which in turn can make others feel insecure. What is true for individuals is equally relevant to understanding group behaviour. In fact, Herz argues that the security dilemma is more acute in groups for the simple reason that they can develop means of self-defence that are far more destructive than those of individuals. Moreover, as they come to equate their identity and value with that of the group to which they belong, individuals may be prepared to sacrifice their lives in the name of group survival. Thus, even if the most optimistic hypothesis is made about the nature and motives of individuals and groups, the security dilemma will persist as long as there are groups that do not submit to a higher

the past decade, Russia's interests have expanded far beyond its immediate geography.[5]

Historical frustrations under different auspices

From the very beginning, we need to emphasize the conceptual scaffolding that was used to construct a presumptive past and, on the other hand, draw the convergence of ideology and utopia (futurology). We are knowingly adhering to geographical theories that provide historical context for future conflicts and the struggle against destiny. The argument that geography merely serves as a backdrop for the arrangements that result from human choices is something that we absolutely cannot deny.[6]

Adjoining we announce the well-known dialectics of Hegel with three landmarks: synthesis, thesis, and antithesis.[7] The linear nature of progress suggests a type of society or government (thesis) that makes it easier for another type of society or government to emerge (antithesis); due to their opposing ideologies and perspectives on reality, thesis and antithesis naturally come into conflict. A hybrid society (synthesis) would emerge if the opposition remained unabated for an extended period of time without either side winning. When nuclear and missile weapons become objects of totemic value, aversion can take on tragic characteristics that even pose a threat to humanity as a whole. We would suddenly forget everything and collapse...

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authority. In the modern world, these are sovereign states. See Floris Ionescu, "John Herz and His Security Dilemma," SNEE 2016 Scientific Communications Session - National, European and Euro-Atlantic Security, Volume 1 (Bucharest: "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, 2016).

[5] Kari Roberts, "Understanding Putin: The Politics of Identity and Geopolitics in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse," *International Politics* 72, no. 1 (2017): 28-55, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0020702017692609.

[6] Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," in *The Geographical Journal* 170, No. 4 (December 2004): 298-321, http://www.iwp.edu/docLib/20131016_MackinderThe GeographicalJournal.pdf.

[7] See "Hegel's Dialectics," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2016, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-dialectics/.

The strategic stability of the European continent, despite the tensions during the Cold War, was based on two important landmarks. First, although clearly a substantial military threat to NATO, the Soviet Union equally had to face the possibility that any war in Europe could escalate into global nuclear war, in which case victory for either side would have lost its importance among the catastrophic effects.[8] This first aspect established, we could say, there was a gentlemen's agreement between the two opposing entities, the balance of power being characterized by excessive caution. A second aspect that facilitated stability is rooted in NATO's homogeneity of those times, based on shared political values, collective defence, and the decades-long commitment of the United States of America to European security. Although the Cold War went through numerous crises that brought the world to the brink of cataclysmic war, even at its hottest moments, there was a common interest in stabilizing the crisis, the risks of escalating war had to be clearly and bluntly assumed, ensuring, throughout this process, a continuous dialogue between the two superpowers to maintain that fragile peace.[9]

Synchronously with the growth of the conventional combat posture, Russia developed and perfected a secondary war horizon plan - non-military, asymmetric, hybrid actions. The most alarming aspect of the mentioned mode of action is given by its very efficiency and effectiveness in weakening the resistance and affecting the resilience of the European block of NATO. The means used, such as political measures, information warfare, the weakening of critical infrastructures have been enshrined in elements distorted in understanding, but very distorting in effects.

On the European side, the debates and problems developed by the migratory phenomenon and the economic benefits of European integration and integrity have weakened security confidence, facilitating the partial

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[8] US President Ronald Reagan's mantra – "nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" - was the foundation of his amicable relationship with the leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev. See "Soviet-United States Joint Statement on the Geneva Summit Meeting, November 21, 1985," www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/112185a.

[9] Schuyler Foerster, Jeffrey A. Larsen, "The Need for a New NATO Strategy in a More Dangerous World," NATO Defence College, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep 32245.8.

reconnection of some states to the nationalist phenomenon and creating the premises for weakening the ethos of the European project. Despite the fact that it is not a phenomenon felt at the level of the entire NATO system, the small-scale effects of a state's nature at the individual level of the members constitute a refractory nuance.[10] The Trump administration's equivocal stance of the US commitment to transatlantic security has raised serious doubts among European allies and placed the sustainability of the commitment in doubt, exacerbating the already centrifugal forces challenging the alliance's cohesion. Precisely in the light of these positions, the Biden administration prioritized solidifying the American commitment to the stabilization of the European continent.

Without delving into the real motivation behind Russia's innuendo, we can state that it is demonstrably improving its capabilities to advance political goals while operating below a threshold that would trigger a consensual NATO decision to invoke the collective defence commitment in accordance with Article 5 of the generating treaty. With military force in the background as a backdrop for intimidation, Russia is increasingly able to threaten NATO's security interests and present the West with a political *fait accompli*, a redrawn *status quo*, incipient without the overt use of force, becoming drastically violent. This is a clear form of strategic instability.[11]

NATO's design over the next decade

In understanding the current objectives and interests of the Russian Federation, we emphasize perhaps the only common point in the dialogue between the two entities: both NATO, on the one hand, in a defensive

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[10] On the promotion of populism on the European continent, see Matt Browne, Dalibor Rohac and Carolyn Kenney, "Europe's Populist Challenge: Origins, Supporters, and Responses," Centre for American Progress, May 10, 2018, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/europes-populist-challenge/ and Ivan Krastev, "Eastern Europe's Illiberal Revolution: The Long Road to Democratic Decline," *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 3 (May 2018): 49-59.

[11] Douglas Barrie, Ben Barry, Lucie Beraud-Sudreau, Henry Boyd, Nick Childs, Bastian Giegerich, "Defending Europe: Scenario-based Capability Requirements for NATO's European Members," International Institute for Strategic Studies, May 2019, https://www.iiss.org/blogs/research-paper/2019/05/defending-europe.

manner, admits the status, and Russia, on the other hand, in an expressive manner asserts its status as a (reborn) great power. In the following, we offer the explanation we associate with great power status, as follows: a nation that has the desire and ability (ways and means), through a combination of diplomatic, informational, economic and military means, to influence (interfere with) the behaviour other states, not only in their own territorial proximity, but on a global scale. For almost 20 years after the collapse of the communist edifice, the Russian Federation had the political will, calibrated the political harangue in accordance with the aspirations, but was deprived of the action elements of a great power. Despite the limiting power, we can argue the attribute of great power, through the constancy of the nuclear status and permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). However, these attributes did not exactly ensure the exercise of the statute in accordance with the political wishes of the Russian Federation, the Russian revitalization taking place starting from 2010.[12]

The contemporary challenges to NATO's security and area are greatly amplified in relation to the worrisome aspects of the Cold War period, when nuclear and conventional military (im)balances were the dominant variables. Current and future threats encompass new technologies in new domains that defy the traditional application of deterrence and defence theories. Furthermore, non-military instruments can be just as disruptive, if not destructive, as military forces. While NATO clearly appreciates, through its official rhetoric, the magnitude of this challenge, it is an entirely different matter to integrate new defensive capabilities, policies and procedures into a plan established and implemented at the macro-organizational level.

One of the anticipated purposes of the NATO 2030 reflection process, along with the crystallization of a new programmatic document, is to reflect on the role of the Alliance in ten years, on its challenges and on how it should

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[12] The arguments for the Russian Federation being considered a great power in the process of revival and regaining its historical status are found in the U.S. Department of Defence, "Summary of the 2018 National Defence Strategy of the United States of America," Washington, D.C., January 2018, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/ Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf, 2.

adapt to an increasingly more uncertain and competitive. As I have argued before, partnerships are an integral part of this discussion because they are a technical means that enhances the political side of NATO, ensuring access to other actors on a global scale. The rhetoric of maintaining and/or developing NATO's partnership relations encompasses a number of aspects that we will deal with subsequently.

From our perspective, there are premises for expanding the Alliance's partnership agenda, with the assumed intention of maximizing the organizational role of a military and security nature. The diversity of threats and the individual particularity of the actors involved in crisis management and the prevention of political-military conflicts are an infallible argument for maintaining the comprehensive approach (*Comprehensive Approach)* at the level of all NATO's encompassing processes.[13]

The history of NATO offered several moments in which the political-military organization perfected decisions in the spectrum of the dual approach (dual-track decisions), based on a solid defence, simultaneously with an institutional dialogue, versus the security challenges of those times. The moment taken as a landmark is represented by the Harmel Report from 1967,[14] which emphasized the complementarity of defence and the de-escalation of dialogue, another being the position adopted in The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) from 1979. In recent years, the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, frequently spoke of the need for "defence and dialogue" as essential to building a stable relationship with the Russian Federation.[15] Such a strategy would also bring with it the homogenization of intra-organizational political support for continued defence investment.

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[13] *Comprehensive approach* represents a modern and efficient planning model, which considers the use, simultaneously or consecutively, of all power tools available to a state, coalition or alliance. See Major General Dr. Ştefan Danila, "Cuvânt introductiv" (Introduction) in *Manualul de planificare a operaţiilor* (Operation Planning Manual), no. S.M.G.-65/2011 (Bucharest: Technical Editorial Centre of the Army, 2011), 5.

[14] NATO, "Report of the Council on the Future Tasks of the Alliance," 1967, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67927.htm.

[15] "Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to 'NATO Engages: the Alliance at 70'," 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_165212.htm?selectedLocale=ru.

Collaborative defence and security are complementary, rather than competing, approaches to strengthening strategic stability in Europe. Ultimately, sustaining strategic stability in Europe will depend on a comprehensive political, economic, social, diplomatic and military approach to fundamental changes in the European strategic environment. In this context, NATO will have to develop a coherent security strategy that includes, as complementary instruments, the multiplication of the defence sector and the pursuit of an adversarial collaborative relationship with the Russian Federation.

The integration of defence and collaborative security as complementary elements in the NATO strategy represents the institutional desire. On the one hand, incorporating offers of cooperation with a potential adversary is good policy when advocating for improved defences. It is also a sound strategy: the current security environment is too dangerous and prone to miscalculation if NATO and the Russian Federation (knowingly) move towards a strategic competition. Decisional control is apparent and stable at the NATO level, but it cannot control the decisions of the strategic opponent, thus, the main concern must be decisional coherence and its own institutional logic.

In the coming decade, three strategic approaches that NATO can take are crystallizing, each integrating (largely) controllable political and military actions, but only one of these will truly serve as a balanced approach to strategic stability. The Alliance can guide itself towards a force scenario, by empowering military capabilities and **strengthening postural stability**, in an attempt to address the relationship with adversity, in relation to a nuclear opponent, operationally deployed on the Alliance's periphery. However, we must take into account the fact that such semi-aggressive behaviour would bring with it political and economic disturbances whose effects are not clearly foreseen. Alternatively, NATO could bring back into its policy a lesson learned from history, strengthening the defence posture, but enhancing the dialogue with the Russian Federation, as in the year 1967 - the Harmel Report or in the case of The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), when NATO called to the **dual approach**, based on solid defence and dialogue. The third, boldest approach would be to directly

address Europe's most prominent strategic instability and facilitate a **new European security architecture**.

Conclusions

Today contrasts in defining terms with the previous decades, with the focus being on the security register. The daily security threats, risks and vulnerabilities for the states of the Euro-Atlantic region are multiplied, difficult to quantify and define, having to do with terrorism, drug trafficking, people, weapons and technologies, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, militant extremism, natural disasters, etc. A common feature of the previously stated appeals to the cross-border nature, as a consequence their containment and eradication require a concerted international effort. This aspect urges NATO participation and serves as an argument for overturning the (historical) isolationist paradigm!

A well-known fact: the world is about to enter a new era of superpowers. The geography and history of Russia demonstrate that it cannot be underappreciated, as was mentioned above. Even though it is only partial, its renaissance is just another chapter in an old story that has been expanded, shattered, and reborn multiple times. The cyclical nature of history brought NATO back to its original state, reducing Soviet expansionism. After the expeditionary war in Afghanistan, the European region is thus once more the focus of effort.

The interaction between the two entities is influenced by the general perception of the Alliance as a symbol for the strategic defeat of the Soviet bloc, which is heightened by a complex of the defeated one. NATO, on the other hand, claims to be the most prestigious military alliance in history; however, recent events have brought to light some weak points. The crisis in Ukraine demonstrates that the hybrid dimension escalated more rapidly than the Euro-Atlantic response. Additionally, social media amplifies the rage, ecstasy, and virtue because of the propaganda that is used in hybrid warfare. Inclusion, exclusion, tolerance, and acceptance will widen as a result of confrontational dialogue with the Russian Federation and forceful demonstrations- Cold War 2.0. As a corollary, Moscow's reaction causes

NATO's expansion into the Eastern region to be delayed or slowed down, with Russian Federation feeling suffocated and threatened.

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Anti-Access and Area Denial Military Structures, Destabilisation Factors
in the Black Sea Extended Region

ANDREI MAZERE

Abstract. Increasingly, the dynamic of the extended Black Sea region is heading toward the transformation from a smouldering conflicts area to a battlefield area. Nowadays, most of the actions are contributing or can be reasons to start a regional conflict. We are observing clashes, without curtain, between the US/NATO on the one hand and Russia on the other in buffer areas or in proxy states. Each side wants to gain more influence and before establishing another straight line, they are massing military forces at the border. To be able to project effects on the adversary's side, both power poles emplaced defensive capabilities, able to counter react in the worst case scenario and to ensure security and stability for their sphere of influence. The new concept of anti-access area denial (A2AD) is a part of the defence strategy in which military capabilities like air defence, surveillance and reconnaissance, costal missile, air force, and so on, are emplaced on a fixed continental location or are displaced through international waters to have a real show of presence and to deter any intention of aggression. These sorts of actions generate intrigues and security imbalances.

Keywords: A2AD structures, asymmetric warfare, security imbalances, spheres of influence.

Increasingly, the dynamics of the Black Sea area tends to materialize in an area where smouldering conflicts lead to actions closer and closer to contributing to a starting point or an additional reason for the outbreak of an open armed conflict, a fact that already started on February 24, 2022 between Russia and Ukraine. More and more regional or local conflicts lead to their

concentration in a buffer zone between Russia on the one hand and NATO on the other, which has as its main member the United States of America (US).

The chosen theme, if we are to read less closely, is one as banal as it is axiomatic, bringing the Black Sea area back to attention, as a known area where sociocultural, geopolitical, economic and spheres of influence have always clashed. There are countless papers, doctoral thesis, articles, papers that present the Black Sea as a very volatile security region, in which any wrong step can lead to a real turmoil of tensions. However, the question was and still remains: "Why is the Black Sea area still a topic of global discussion?" It does not have a unanimous answer, and more than that, it does not have a solution that can last forever. In order to deepen the bitterness or as it might be said, to put the candy on the cage, I come and bring another element as conceptually known and discussed, as inexhaustible and an endless spring at this moment of discussion, when it comes to the "war of teasing."

People unfamiliar with this region should know that the Black Sea area forms:

- an intersection of continents, Europe and Asia; what connects the European continent;
- a bridge between the European continent, Russia, the Caucasus area, the Middle East and Central Asia;
- an intersection of strategic directions;
- an economic potential;
- a transit zone for goods;
- a source of underground natural energy resources;
- ethnic and cultural diversity;
- projection area for military powers.

For more than two centuries, Russia tried to gain exclusive control over the Black Sea, which came to be practically considered a "Soviet lake" during the Cold War even if in 1936 after the Montreux Convention this name was not, in my opinion, 100% justified because the Turks controlled the entrance and exit of it. Indeed, the Soviet Union had influence in most Black Sea countries, but allowed it to exploit its strategic direction only in one sense, towards Asia, with restricted mobility to the planetary ocean

through the Mediterranean Sea, a situation created after the Convention. From ancient times Russia sought the control of the Bosporus and Dardanelles Straits to close the sea for exclusivity and monopolization, but the Ottoman Empire each time proved to be more agile and managed to get out of every situation, including the transformation of situations due to the political context itself in its favour (e.g. the Montreux Convention). If Romania as a NATO member does not increase its importance as riparian country, Russia and Turkey will be consider the owners of the Black Sea and will share it.[1]

Anti-access-area denial (A2AD) is a concept that can lead to increased tensions in the area. It is nothing else than bringing more weapons in the area in order to create intimidation barriers between the powers involved. This American concept has its main purpose to create a barrier to reaction capabilities for prevention and deterrence, limiting and prohibiting the opponent in case of entering a space.

Even if the dispersed elements taken are not new things in the geopolitical approach, namely the Black Sea area and the concept of A2AD in the military approach, taken together lead to the hypothesis from which I start my article: The elements of the A2AD system contribute to the destabilization of the security zone in the Black Sea region. There are elements that are not part of a recognized A2AD system, like Russian's military means, these elements can be considered similar with NATO/US ones.

These elements, part of the A2AD systems, currently emplaced in the Black Sea region could be the spark that can counterbalance peace and conflict. Below are described couple of elements considered to be examples of destabilization needles:

a) Russian air defence systems positioned around NATO's eastern flank:

The current context puts the Russian Federation in a position to react or, above all, to be proactive to certain threats from Western states and it

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[1] Sabina Fati, "Marea Neagră riscă să fie un lac împărțit între Rusia și Turcia? Ce face România" (The Black Sea Risks Becoming a Lake Divided between Russia and Turkey? What Is Romania Doing?), Deutsche Welle, August 08, 2022, https://www.dw.com/ro/marea-neagră-riscă-să-fie-un-lac-împărțit-între-rusia-și-turcia-ce-face-românia/a-62737727.

proved this in Ukraine. It seeks to counteract the actions of NATO, especially the actions of the most important member of the Alliance, by making the most of the forces and means to reduce the capacity of the US to project its force. Even since 2019 it was mentioned that "Russia's systematic deployment of A2/AD capabilities along NATO's North-eastern and Southern flanks is a genuine cause for concern."[2] This capability creates vulnerabilities for NATO and it "means NATO allies will only be able to gain superiority after neutralizing or successfully negotiating the interdiction threat. It also means Moscow would have an early advantage in escalation control, especially during the initial phase of a war."[3]

As it is well known, the US has great possibilities for the structures to be deployed by air. Russia wanted this capability to be as low as possible, and for this reason it fully exploited or even gained territory or the necessary influence to successfully deploy modern anti-aircraft systems (S-400 Triumph or the new S-500 still in the test stage), weapons which can protect itself on the one hand, and on the other hand expand its space of influence.

The S-400 Triumph anti-aircraft complex is now considered the most modern anti-aircraft combat system. Although its tactical and technical characteristics remain confidential, some elements have been discovered by observing the mode of action in combat conditions. If we are to compare them, the missiles of the Triumph system outperform the characteristics of the American Patriot and THAAD systems by their higher speed of movement (4.8 km/sec), the flight height (185 km) and the distance from which they can engage the target (400 km). At such performances, air defence systems located in Crimea can cover the entire Black Sea surface as well as the entire coastal zone.

Russia struggles to counterbalance the capabilities located in Romania and Poland adding more strike means in order to annihilate the countless considered threats.

On the other hand, Turkey, a NATO country, has acquired S-400 Triumph systems that can be used in the A2AD system following clashes and

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[2] Keir Gile and Mathieu Boulegue, "Russia's A2/AD Capabilities: Real and Imagined," *Parameters* 49, no. 1 (2019), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.2860.

[3] Gile and Boulegue, "Russia's A2/AD Capabilities."

a failure of Alliance agreements. Turkey still underlines the fact that it bought the system for self-protection and not against the Alliance means.

Even though there are numerous Russian A2AD systems deployed on NATO's Eastern flank, "it is uncertain, for instance, how well integrated the long-, medium-, and short-range air defence assets (respectively, S-400, S-300, and *Pantsir*-S1) are, but it is quite certain that they are not integrated with long- and medium-range coastal defence missile systems (*Bastion*-P and *Bal*)."[4]

b) the presence of Kalibr and Bastion missile systems, with the possibility of hitting from the sea and the coast, including from the harbour Sevastopol, as well as the high probability of equipping the Russian Black Sea Fleet (FRMN) with the Iskander-M missile type:

Kalibr missiles are among the most technologically advanced weapons Russia has. They are manufactured in several variants: cruise missile; ground, ship or plane based lunching; anti-ship, anti-submarine as well as against land targets. In the current version, the maximum distance at which the target can be hit is about 2500 km. Russia is currently working on a modernized variant with a beating of about 4500 km. Even the current, unimproved version allows hitting targets that would include any country in central Europe or any place on the territory of Syria, from a ship positioned in the harbour, without even having to be lunched at sea.

The K-300P Bastion-P coastal missile complex is equipped with Oniks type cruise missiles, which are capable of destroying targets up to more than 500 kilometres away.

Iskander (OTRK) operational tactical missile systems are armed with a unique, long-range missile capable of hitting targets up to 2,000 kilometres, although so far OTRK capabilities have been limited to a distance of only 500 kilometres. This makes it possible to hit about half of the European continent if such a system were installed in Crimea. Latest information shows that this

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[4] Pavel K. Baev, "New Perspectives on the Black Sea Theatre in Russian Strategic Culture," George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, no. 040, September 2019, https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/new-perspectives-black-sea-theater-russian-strategic-culture-0.

type of missile was brought to the North of Ukraine also. The most important thing about this kind of weapon is that the variant 9K720 Iskander-M (SS-26 Stone) can carry nuclear warheads. The presence of this weapon close to the NATO borders is something all strategic analysts fear, as they consider the possibility of it being used.

c)   the withdrawal from the short-range and medium-range missile treaty:

In addition, the element that deepened the threat, and also led to the lack of regulatory limitation in the use of these medium-range capabilities, was the annulment of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). Against the backdrop of China's development of missiles and their positioning in the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea, as well as allegations of non-compliance with the treaty by Russia, US President Donald Trump in 2019 withdrew the country from the treaty. As a result, Russia fulfilled only a formality by withdrawing it-self, effectively cancelling the treaty.

The allegations turned out to be well founded, and the decision to cancel the treaty came with the positioning of approximately 48 ground-based missile systems 3M54 Kalibr in the Crimea area.

"Russia's deployment of roughly 48 land-based 9M729s (the land-mobile version of the 3M54 Kalibr) led to the end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and much diplomatic tension between the West and Russia, but the total launch capacity of the two fleets is almost three times this number."[5]

What did this INF treaty meant? It prohibited the possession of nuclear missiles, ground-based, short-range (500-1000 km) and medium-range (1000-5500 km) of action. This treaty did not apply to missiles launched from air or sea. However, positioning a permanent ground-based operating system is much less costly and credible than supporting nuclear systems that

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[5] Gustav Gressel, "Waves of Ambition: Russia's Military Build-up in Crimea and the Black Sea," European Council on Foreign Relations, September 21, 2021, https://ecfr.eu/publication/waves-of-ambition-russias-military-build-up-in-crimea-and-the-black-sea/.

can only be launched from the air or from the sea, the latest taking a longer operational time in order to create effects.

By analysing the above data, systems positioned in Crimea and those on ships can hit any type of targets in the Black Sea and further extend the effects to the Eastern half of Europe.

d) the repercussions of the Montreux Convention in the context of the positioning of vessels with A2AD capabilities:

At first glance, in the present context Turkey would be the most viewed and can use the two straits, Bosporus and Dardanelles, at will, which even so it is, and even this fact brings great disservices to the Russian Federation by the fact that they cannot have control over the freedom of movement from the Black Sea to the planetary ocean. Equally, the non-riparian states, according to the same Convention, cannot stay in the Black Sea for more than 21 days, which in the context of the A2AD brings a service to Russia by the fact that any threat entering the seashores can only remain for a short period of time. In addition to this restriction there is also the volume of water deployed in tons that foreign vessels from outside the riparian countries can have cumulatively at sea, namely 30000 tons by one state, and 45000 tons in total, leading to an accentuation of the role of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey respectively in creating A2AD capabilities on their own vessels and a package of international, rotating naval forces that do not exceed the tonnage limits. Making a minimal calculation, in which a modern frigate has about 5000 tons dislocated volume, corvettes about half, and small vessels are not taken into account, an international structure of naval forces could not extend more than 2-3 frigates supported by support ships in the same time.

To continue in the same idea there are notification days in order to cross the straits and to enter the Black Sea, respectively 8 for riparian and 15 for non-riparian, this measure giving time for any country to take minimum of measures against warships that will act in Black Sea.

These are couple of reasons why Turkey plays a double role on the same level of importance for NATO and Russia.

e)   Turkey's arbitrary use of the straits including the Alliance:

As mentioned above, Russia has been trying for a long time to create manoeuvre room towards the planetary ocean regardless of climatic conditions. As the Baltic Sea does not provide enough conditions, the most favourable is the Mediterranean Sea, which is a warm sea offering the gateway to the ocean. After the Montreux Convention of 1936, Turkey was granted exclusive rights to the two straits, Bosporus and Dardanelles. This made use of Treaty prerogatives for both Black Sea and non-riparian countries in the transit of civilian and military vessels. Depending on the interests of the time, it restricted or allowed access to the region through the straits, indirectly intervening in the policies of the countries that had an interest in the area.

These elements made Russia need Turkey to have its way to the Mediterranean regardless of the regional security situation. During the Cold War, the Federation had a particularly privileged status through the free passage and tacit transit of submarines. However, Turkey has not always allowed access. In 1993, Russia was forced to bring submarines to the Mediterranean Sea from the Northern Fleet because it was not allowed to cross the Black Sea Fleet.

The ban on access to ships was also granted to Alliance ships. NATO was halted from the planned intervention in Georgia in 2008 when a US hospital ship intended to enter to support the conflict in Georgia and was not allowed to pass, even if Turkey is a NATO member.

It is possible that there is still a tacit agreement between Russia and Turkey in that at this time Russia uses the Montreux Convention provision that any ship of the riparian countries can exit the Black Sea for repairs. This is why Russia frequently takes out submarines and disposes them in areas of interest in the Mediterranean Sea. On the other hand, we can also tilt the balance to the fact that there is no agreement between the two sides and only legislative speculation on the part of Russia, because the submarines are taken exactly to the port of Tartus, Syria for repairs and then used in conflict

zones from Syria and Libya where Russia and Turkey are in opposing camps.[6]

This being said, although it has exclusive rights, it cannot stop everything and monopolize the Black Sea, but there are certain legislative loopholes that Moscow skilfully manages to exploit to its advantage, and the Turks, strangely, do not retaliate to these acts. Also, somehow, to bypass the Montreux Convention, Turkey has in plan to build the Istanbul canal that has as a main goal to increase the volume of goods transferred from Mediterranean Sea to Black Sea and vice versa,[7] but in the background it has the monopoly on transit, with a possible blockade in the actual strain due to a so called maintenance issue. At the same time, "the channel could have a major discouraging impact offering an alternative for the Bosporus weight restrictions."[8]

In conclusion, whether Russia or NATO like or not, Turkey will use the strain in their benefit each time they can gain an advantage. The measures taken by this country will majorly affect not just the maritime operations in the Eastern Europe, but will also influence the strategic decisions in the region

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f)   possible development of nuclear capabilities in Crimea:

Two years after the annexation of the Crimea peninsula, the first signs appeared that Russia did not miss the opportunity to be closer to Europe and even acted to expand the possibilities of hitting the old continent with nuclear capabilities. There was no treaty prohibiting the storage of nuclear arsenal on its own territory, same as nowadays. Therefore, overcoming the dilemma of Crimea being a piece of Ukraine or Russia's land,

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[6] H. I. Sutton, "Russia Is Using Treaty Clause to Change Submarine Balance in Mediterranean," Naval News, July 7, 2020, https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2020/07/russia-is-using-treaty-clause-to-change-submarine-balance-in-mediterranean/.

[7] Dan Dungaciu, Sergiu Medar, Şerban Cioculescu, Adriean Parlog, Adrian Popa, and Silviu Nate, "Canalul Istanbul şi perspectiva transformării Mării Negre din 'lac rusesc' într-o 'mare NATO'" (The Istanbul Canal and the Perspective of Turning the Back Sea from a "Russian Lake" into a "NATO Sea"), Hotnews.ro, April 27, 2022, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-opinii-24763254-canalul-istanbul-perspectiva-transformarii-marii-negre-din-lac-rusesc-intr-mare-nato.htm.

[8] Dungaciu et al., "Canalul Istanbul."

there are limited levers to stop this action of storing nuclear weapons. Until now, intelligence and suspicions continue to circulate until close to the time of writing when US sources confirmed that four former military sites are being upgraded for nuclear weapons in the Krasnokamenka base area also known as Feodosia-13. Even if there is no evidence at this time that such large-scale mass destruction capabilities have been brought in, there are at least in theory other categories of fire systems and missiles present in the area that could carry nuclear warheads. The location of these capabilities would compress operational time and reduce the warning time and reaction time of NATO and European countries to react.

One thing is certain. Russia is massing forces in Crimea and trying to create capabilities to station its troops for a long period of time, without the need for resupply from within the mother country. During the seven years since it annexed the peninsula, it modernized most of the military bases and created storage facilities, modernized the main ports, created easy connections between the Asian continent and the peninsula, and tried to solve the problems of population subsistence.

The results have been seen in the ongoing war that from the peninsula and from the Black Sea Russia sent missiles directly against the main cities on the Black Sea shore. Nuclear capabilities have been moved just to show Russian nuclear power.

g) possibilities to project force from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea:
In 2021 Russia proved how, by water it can project its force from East to West using waterways. The best example is that of crossing the Volga-Don canal with 15 smaller Caspian Fleet battleships to support the Black Sea fleet.[9] The main purpose of the action was to demonstrate the projection capacity of force, even though the vessels were intended for maritime descent, artillery bearing vessels and logistical support vessels. Although the canal has around 13-15 locks and a length of about 100 km, this action shows

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[9] Paul Goble, "Moscow Moving 15 Warships From Caspian Sea to Waters off Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 18, no. 59 (April 13, 2021), https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-moving-15-warships-from-caspian-sea-to-waters-off-ukraine/.

that the Federation manages to deploy important forces on the border with Ukraine.

This potential can be translated, as analysed, into vessels from the Caspian flotilla, such as: at least 2 Gerard class frigates, 6 Buyan class corvettes, ships of the descent classes named Dyugon, Akula and at least 6 Serna. All of these vessels do not have large transport capacities, but they are tailored for shallow waters. Frigates and corvettes have more possibilities for carrying Kalibr missiles. The advantage these ships bring in is their ability to detach troops to the shores of the Sea of Azov and not only, advantage that the other larger ships do not have. It is unclear at this moment if Russia used all the ships brought in the last year, but one thing is clear: this is an example of how they can supply their forces and how they can project more vessels from Caspian Sea.

h) fast-paced modernization of the Black Sea fleet:

Russia began the modernization of its Black Sea fleet as soon as it was able to access Crimea ports. Looking at how he concentrated his material effort, it is certain that most of the focus was directed to this structure at the expense of the other fleets in the seas to which Russia is riparian. The guided cruiser *Moskva* and the two Krivak class frigates have been added to three Admiral Grigorovich frigates, and the fourth one is already being built. *Moskva* was sank in 2022 after it was hit by Ukrainian forces. The new frigate class is a guided missile carrier. Also, six new Kilo-class submarines (Project 636.3) diesel (based the brigade in Novorossiysk) were added to the fleet, and the number of patrol vessels and sea descent doubled. By studying the models of the descent vessels (class Alligator and Ropucha), these together can carry 160 armoured/fighting machines. To these are added the most modern information collection vessel Ivan Khus (modernized in 2018), and another 3 non-modernized.

In order to sustain a strong fleet in the Black Sea, there is also a need for a structure and support facilities on the mainland. For this, the best positioned natural harbour in the sea basin is Sevastopol. The already existing infrastructure had only to be upgraded and expanded in such a way as to simultaneously support a large number of ships. In this idea were

included in the modernization plans of the harbour facilities and the management of an increased number of submarines, creating the conditions for mooring 5 submarines simultaneously out of a total of 6 deployed. This facilitates their presence and control of the sea.

In addition to the modernization of naval capabilities, the revitalization of aviation facilities led to the operationalization of an aviation division and two naval aviation regiments that can generate about 100 means of attack by air and air-ground.

All these structures created a strong barrier for the Ukraine vessel fleet, controlling the Black Sea and blocking all the production of grain in the harbours. Ukraine was ripped from the sea access being in the impossibility to honour the contracts with Africa and Middle East. This lack of exports leads inevitably to a low level of income that will be translated into a decreasing standard of living.

i) mutual threats and measures taken by Russia, NATO and the European Union in Ukraine problem:

A few months ago I was describing the situation in and in the vicinity of Ukraine, with "The Bear" that will use all the opportunities, possibly based on the lack of reaction from the NATO side which will put in practice the darkest scenario for President Zelensky. Due to President Zelensky's ambitions to regain public confidence for future mandates, supported by the US which under the NATO umbrella sent weapons inside Ukraine. Considering the idea of transforming Ukraine into a NATO member, Russia considered the conflict to be the only way to solve the crises. One thing is more than certain, NATO will continue to support Ukraine while trying to avoid a global conflict.

One thing is clear, Russian thinkers exploit very well the lack of prompt response of the Alliance and also the lack of consensus among contributing countries.

More and more effects are revealed after the beginning of the conflict and the sanctions imposed by both sides. The most significant is the gas resource access and its price. Most European inhabitants and companies are

suffering from the rapid increase of the price, but also Russia is looking for other markets in order to sell the resource.

j) continuous monitoring of the situation in the Black Sea:

The presence of an increased number of modern vessels with the mission to monitor and collect data and information, i.e. the research vessel Ivan Khus and Kilo-class submarines, means that whatever moves in the Black Sea basin is closely monitored. In the same vein, Russia is increasingly using high endurance multirole aircraft on Sukhoi or Tupolev platforms as part of intelligence gathering, which allows them to maintain information coverage of all maritime, coastal and air space.

Deploying a significant number of remote hitting equipment on both air and sea, connected with high-precision surveillance and detection and target acquisition systems makes military power ready at any time to employ high-value targets in all operating environments. This is seen in numerous reports of surveillance and interception of ships and planes that use the Black Sea for military purposes. The Monolit-B system and other types of radar support the long-distance and early warning and target acquisition.

A decisive role as mentioned before is the maintaining of Kilo-class submarines in the area for the interception of maritime transit. The submarine is very difficult to detect due to its building characteristics, and so it can circulate unhindered and supervise without being detected and without being able to carry out undetectable covered actions, without the constant fear that such action can be monitored by a tacit opponent. This is the part of controlling the sea but without showing the vessel and making the counterpart take extra measures to conduct its actions.

The other face of monitoring the sea is revealing the fleet power and conducting daily patrols, covering all the key points, blocking the harbours, seizing the islands and employing new intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities in order to cover all the battle space environments: underwater, surface, air and the electromagnetic spectrum/ cyberspace.

k) the new capability proven by Russia, namely that of hypersonic and thermo-baric missiles:

Modern warfare is once again seeking influence through the supremacy of capabilities as it was during the Cold War. Ingenious solutions do not cease to appear. By defending increasing interest in space control, or rather controlling communications on Earth with satellites, new ways of annihilating them have emerged. Their destruction is possible from space, but the most important thing is to find solutions to be attacked from within the atmosphere and not from outside, which would not be unpredictable at all and would be very expensive. Russia had the upper hand by launching a hypersonic missile that could be launched from the air by a carrier MIG-31 platform, and then they would be the ones who demonstrated the capability of destroying orbiting extra atmospheric objects, by destroying its own satellite with a rocket launched from the ground on November 16, 2021.

How can this missile become invisible is explained in a couple of words: "the missile flies with an advanced fuel that the Russians say gives it a range of up to 1,000 kilometres. And it's so fast that the air pressure in front of the weapon forms a plasma cloud as it moves, absorbing radio waves and making it practically invisible to active radar systems."[10]

These missiles can also be used to hit targets on the Earth's surface, making it difficult to detect because they have a speed nearly 27 times the speed of sound and have the ability to change direction and altitude, making detection difficult.

Second, thermo-baric missiles being considered mass destruction weapons became fashionable in contemporary conflicts in order to kill humans and not affect buildings. This type of weapon is more efficient than dispersive bombs, and probably Russia will increase the usage of them for important targets. Meanwhile, Russia is using in the Ukraine conflict the most efficient and least costly from all its weapons, artillery.

"On February 28, 2022, the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States confirmed that Russia had used a "vacuum bomb," killing 70 soldiers,

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[10] Blake Stilwell, "Why Russia's Hypersonic Missiles Can't Be Seen on Radar," 2022, https://www.military.com/equipment/weapons/why-russias-hypersonic-missiles-cant-be-seen-radar.html.

as part of its illegal invasion of Ukraine. Two days prior, CNN reported that Russian TOS-1 rocket launchers, which can launch up to 30 rockets armed with thermo-baric warheads, were mobilized in eastern Ukraine. Thermo-baric weapons have been described as the biggest non-nuclear bomb, but there is a massive leap in the destructive power to a weapon of mass destruction."[11] This type of weapons is not new, but they are very useful for massive destruction.

l) the presence of the Alliance's A2AD destroyers and vessels in the Black Sea and the involvement of NATO member countries' naval forces in international waters:

International waters have general rules and do not fall under the special treaties of riparian states. For this reason, no matter the country flag, activities may be carried out to protect interests. NATO is trying through its actions to implement its plans to deter Russia in the Black Sea and implement the plan to restrict freedom of movement while protecting maritime trade lines. For this reason, naval manoeuvre locations are mainly in the Crimean area, which increasingly irritates spirits and maintains the vitality of the conflict. The main inconvenience is that its actions are constrained by the duration of its stay in the Black Sea limited to less than a month. Also, the presence of battleships extends the Alliance's A2AD capabilities to the maximum, but they cannot be sustained for long periods. NATO is able to rotate the forces and bring many US vessels in order to maintain a permanent presence into the Black Sea, from the *USS Porter* to *USS Mount Whitney* that are the stars of the U.S. 6th Fleet.[12]

With the presence of the Alliance's ships, there are the numerous incidents in which Russian forces fire real ammunition to intimidate the enemy and change course, although both sides are trying to avoid direct contact. Such events have increased in intensity from 2021 especially on the

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[11] Centre for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, "Russia's Use of Thermobaric Weapons in Ukraine," March 01, 2022, https://armscontrolcenter.org/fact-sheet-russias-use-of-thermobaric-weapons-in-ukraine.

[12] Alison Bath, "US Warships Sail to Black Sea, Drawing Russian Ire," Stars and Stripes, November 2, 2021, https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2021-11-02/us-warships-enter-black-sea-draws-russian-ire-3467449.html.

route of Ukrainian ports and Georgian ports. The main missions for NATO members have the role to ensure access to the ports of NATO partners. After the beginning of the conflict the role of the Alliance ships in the Black Sea has increased and they are maintaining and guaranteeing the security of NATO countries.

The presence of maritime forces also attracts multinational exercises with massive deployments of both naval and aviation techniques and special operations forces. All these exercises can become easily a battle space if any mistakes happened.

m) the new anti-missile shield in Poland up to the end of 2022:

There have been many controversies over the missile shield installed in Deveselu/Romania, which generated particularly furious reactions from Russian officials. Against this background, an extremely tense situation and numerous threats from the eastern side have been created. Amid the escalation of the conflict situation in the Black Sea region and beyond, the US and NATO are trying to create a permanent A2AD system in the north-eastern part of the Alliance, a system that was founded almost a decade ago, and which faced numerous delays. This project is part of a plan to ensure the security of NATO's eastern borders.

Poland will benefit from a more advanced system than the one in Romania capable of detecting and hitting short and medium-range missiles, as well as intermediate missiles between intercontinental and medium-range missiles (up to 5 500 km). The system arrived in the Republic of Poland in 2018, according to the plan, but the location where it should be placed has undergone numerous changes, as it is said to be in line with the local sights. This extended the construction of the facilities, because the system is intended to be functional for a period of between 5 and 75 years.

Rear Admiral Tom Druggan, commander of the Naval Surface Warfare Centre (NSWC) said in 2019 that "he expects the Aegis Ashore site in Poland to be operational by the end of 2022,"[13] but so far there are no signs that it work.

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[13] C. Todd Lopez, "Aegis Ashore in Poland on Target for 2022," US Department of Defence, November 19, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2849023/aegis-ashore-in-poland-on-target-for-2022.

It is possible that, after the beginning of the conflict, the pressure of finalizing the project earlier than planned may increase, but we are approaching the deadline and no media release show that the ADA site is functional.

With two functional high-tech systems it is normal for Russia to be irritated and to put pressure on the two countries to somewhat destabilize, by media and political means, the expected effects on the beneficiaries (the Eastern Flank of the Alliance).

In conclusion, the presence of weapons in one particular area is proven to create uncertainty, but in our dynamic word where leaders have too many nationalist aspirations a warranty is needed. One possible solution was the A2AD system that was the guardian of security until something unpredictable tipped the scale and transformed goodwill arms in a reason of conflict. It is something axiomatic that weapons will bring war no matter what their first purpose is.

Thinking about the operational environment's classic domains, land, air and maritime, weapons are spread everywhere at this time at the border between Russia and NATO, but there are the new domains ready to be conquered: space, electromagnetic spectrum and last but not least human population. It is a tremendous battle between powerbroker countries for the space leader. It is like continuing what was left from 1972 when it was about the battle for the first man on the Moon soil. It will not be strange in the future if the inhabitants in the surroundings of the Black Sea will be used in an artificial intelligence scenario as a key weapon in order to influence a global decision. If this happened, we can discuss about more than military equipment but a whole human social system that is integrated into the concept of regional control, which can defend or attack as a human shield.

Electromagnetic spectrum is a domain that is hard to control. Everyone can use it without restriction, but the most important thing is how its use can influence the adversary part. The information sent to this channel of communication is very complex and hard to be intercepted and decoded. Who will control this domain will gain in my opinion the absolute control on everything that uses electromagnetic wave or electricity. All the things that we know are connected to this spectrum in large or narrow portions.

The combination between artificial intelligence and controlling the electromagnetic spectrum will decide the fate of the word.

That being said, A2AD systems are increasing day by day in the Black Sea due to the fact that there are unsolved conflicts and an ongoing massive one that needs a solution. These systems are just a new form of influence and security, evidence of protection, something that has existed from ancient times but in other forms. It is possible that in the future we will have other precise weapons that can be considered the warranty of peace.

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Increasing the Effectiveness, Visibility and Impact of the Security Policy Promoted by Romania in the Black Sea Region

BOGDAN CONSTANTIN PAGNEJER

Abstract. The Black Sea region is an extremely important area in ensuring not just European, but also transatlantic security, marking the borders of the European Union and NATO.

In terms of its geographic position, Romania is a pole of regional stability, and the security policy promoted by our country has always focused on promoting and developing the interests of the Union and strengthening the strategic partnership with NATO.

The recent aggressive actions of the Russian Federation reshape the actual geopolitical context, which requires a rethinking of Romania's directions of action, in accordance with its responsibilities and commitments, to ensure the safety of both its citizens and allies.

Keywords: Black Sea, threat, vulnerability, security.

General considerations

At the level of Romania's proximity area, the security environment has known the most complex fifty years in the history of the last decades, and the current transition period, as it is called in specialized analyses, has important implications both at regional and global levels.

The area of geopolitical and geostrategic interest of our country, respectively the Central and South-Eastern European area has been and remains under the influence of the European, Asian and transatlantic developments, which means the changes that take place in this part of the

world, especially security-related events, have multiple and diverse causes, often determined by the interests of global security actors.

The recent evolutions in Romania's vicinity have known very complex and dangerous processes and events for the stability of the whole area, which have questioned the territorial integrity of some states like Ukraine, Serbia, Moldova and Macedonia, or have created favourable premises for outbreaks of tension and new secessionist tendencies. These have negatively influenced the expected progress of resolving conflicts and state tensions, thus allowing destabilizing factors inside or outside the area to exert new pressures.

In the context of the expansion of the NATO and EU borders, the Black Sea ceases to be a sea exclusively under the influence of ex-Soviet countries and becomes a sea of cooperation on a new, equal basis, in which the presence of the North Atlantic Alliance is no longer symbolic, but substantial.

NATO's growing involvement in crisis management beyond its area of responsibility makes the Black Sea basin and its adjacent area a necessary and useful outpost for the Alliance in designing stability and security throughout the region.

The near-simultaneous enlargement of the EU and NATO introduced a new strategic factor in the region by including three states bordering the Black Sea - Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey - in the prosperous area of the single market and in future arrangements on common security and defence policy.

The development of relations between the EU and Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova highlights its growing interest in the Black Sea region, which is increasingly perceived as a bridge to energy resources and sales markets in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Romania's reaction to the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict since the beginning of 2022

Without a doubt, the most important security issue in 2022 is the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict. The aggressive actions of the Russian

Federation, materialized by the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, represent serious violations of civil rights and freedoms, severely affecting the security of Europe and raising concerns about the future manifestations of this state.

At the beginning of the year, the security risks in Ukraine's proximity increased significantly, and the hybrid threats orchestrated by the Russian Federation, especially after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, increased.

Romania's reaction to this security crisis was, as expected, in full solidarity with the other EU and NATO member states, our state fulfilling its commitments within the EU or NATO by implementing initiatives and measures against the Russian Federation.

After the CSAT meeting on January 26, 2022, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis stated "The current security crisis created by Russia is not just about Ukraine, it is not just about regional security on the Black Sea and not even just about European security, but about the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area."[1]

We notice that the troops gathering on the borders of Ukraine are a growing cause for concern, both for the security of Romania, a country neighbouring Ukraine, and for the European community and NATO. The Russian troops amassed on the borders of Ukraine are a growing cause for concern, both for the security of Romania, as well as for the European Union and NATO.

In the same period, Russian officials were again questioning the existence of anti-missile shields installed in Romania and Poland, saying it is a danger to the security of their state. On this subject, Mircea Geoană, NATO's deputy secretary general, reaffirmed that the Deveselu land-based

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[1] Administrația Prezidențială, "Declarația de presă susținută de Președintele României, Klaus Iohannis, la finalul ședinței Consiliului Suprem de Apărare a Țării" (Press Statement by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis at the End of the Meeting of the Supreme Council for the Defence of Romania), January 26, 2022, https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/declaratia-de-presa-sustinuta-de-presedintele-romaniei-klaus-iohannis-la-finalul-sedintei-consiliului-suprem-de-aparare-a-tarii.

missile defence shield was designed for "threats coming from the Middle East and has nothing to do with Russia's concerns."[2]

At the same time, we can safely argue that Romania has shown its solidarity with our neighbours, and during the conversation with Volodymyr Zelensky, the Romanian President expressed his clear support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and rejected the aggressive actions of the Kremlin. Concurrently, we can say that the Russian claims about the withdrawal of NATO troops from Eastern Europe were shattered by the US announcement about sending new troops to Poland and Romania, thus showing the Alliance's consistency for consolidating the eastern flank and complying with its foreign security policy.

In this context, the visit of NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to the military base from Mihail Kogălniceanu on February 11, 2022 is a proof of the Alliance's involvement in protecting its members and confirms Romania's status as a regional stability pole in ensuring the Black Sea's security.

February 24, 2022 will remain for a long time a black day in history, the invasion of Russia in Ukraine and the outbreak of the military conflict representing the most serious violation of international rights and state sovereignty after the end of the Second World War in Europe. Ensuring the security of the Black Sea region is becoming a priority at the moment, and strengthening NATO's eastern flank is a step that must be taken quickly.

Thousands of refugees crossed the borders of Ukraine in the days and weeks following the invasion, seeking to protect themselves and their families from the atrocities of the conflict. Romania provided the humanitarian-aid and socio-economic support for these refugees, strengthening the good cooperation that existed between the two countries.

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[2] Digi 24, "Geoană: Scutul de la Deveselu, pur defensiv. Dacă Rusia doreşte inspecţii reciproce, să vadă cu propriii ochi, n-avem nimic de ascuns" (The Deveselu Shield Is Purely Defensive. If Russia Wants Mutual Inspections, Let Them Come See for Themselves, We Have Nothing to Hide), February 4, 2022, https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/geoana-scutul-de-la-deveselu-pur-defensiv-daca-rusia-doreste-inspectii-reciproce-sa-vada-cu-propriii-ochi-n-avem-nimic-de-ascuns-1826369.

The EU is setting up an international humanitarian donation centre for Ukraine in Romania to efficiently conduct the caring operations for refugees as soon as possible.

Subsequently, through the visit of US Vice President Kamala Harris to Romania on March 11, 2022, we note the reaffirmation of NATO solidarity for its partners, but also the important role our country has as security provider in the region in the current geopolitical context.

Sea mines, identified in the Black Sea, hinder naval traffic and pose a real danger to sailors and attest once again how affected the regional security is at the moment. Concerns for European security are at the forefront these days, so on the occasion of the extraordinary NATO Summit, organized in Brussels, Jens Stoltenberg aimed at "sending four new NATO combat groups to Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. We will have a total of eight fighting groups on the entire eastern flank, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea."[3]

The security risks generated by the war in the vicinity of Romania have been further confirmed. A naval mine was discovered near the Romanian coast, and the Ministry of National Defence successfully completed its mission to neutralize it through the minesweeper "Vice Admiral Constantin Bălescu" and the team of EOD specialists in the navy. Naval traffic continues to be hampered, and the presence of Russian warships in the Black Sea and other military devices and equipment is a real danger to civil society.

Although Russia has recently reduced the intensity of attacks in the region, the danger remains high.

Romania's response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine was based on actions in various areas of interest such as the creation of digital platforms, the access of Ukrainian citizens to Romania, obtaining asylum in Romania, medical services, work and other support measures. An example

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[3] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "NATO to Beef up Eastern Flank with Four More Battle Groups," March 23, 2022, https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-eastern-flank-reinforcement/31766949.html.

in this sense is the government platform, developed in partnership with the civil society, dopomoha.ro that contains information needed for those fleeing the war: legal status, safety measures, support, housing, call centre, education, health and transport.

We note that the security policy of the European Union is becoming more and more robust and is proving at the moment the importance of security organizations in achieving European and regional security. It must be highlighted that the solidarity of European states against the new threats has reached high levels during this period, cooperation and cohesion being fundamental values in terms of security.

The Security policy promoted by Romania

Romania's decisions on security policy aim to increase its role within the security organizations of which it is a part, in order to protect its citizens and to define a pivotal role in ensuring regional security.

All states involved in shaping the European security have pledged to take concrete steps to strengthen co-operation, increase stability and reduce the possibility of an armed conflict. The security environment offers, in the short term, a favourable opportunity for full integration into the North Atlantic Alliance and the strengthening of the profile within the European Union.

Romania has clearly demonstrated its commitment in this direction. The development of external partnerships for achieving security has been and continues to be one of our strategic objectives. Romania must capitalize on this opportunity.

One can argue that Romania has among its clearly defined objectives the improvement of the relationship with the EU and the support of the initiatives and mechanisms within the organization in order to ensure a safer security climate for the Romanian citizens.

Romania supports the prioritization of areas that provide a strengthening of the way in which the EU copes with potential crises, those

that strengthen cooperation between states in order to optimize health and measures to combat the negative effects of the pandemic. The Member States of the European Union need a unanimous, prompt and effective response.

Romania is determined to take the necessary steps and measures aimed at increasing the coherence of its internal market, the national economy and the labour force, supporting investment policies and the fundamental principles of the internal market of the European Union. Their purpose is to significantly reduce the differences between Member States. Another main goal is to ensure respect for fundamental rights and freedoms as well as to ensure the free movement of persons.

Romania's Mr. Klaus Iohannis stated in 2020, in the National Defence Strategy: "From the position assumed since our country became a member state of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and a privileged strategic partner of the USA, Romania is, at this historical moment, in a consolidated institutional framework to ensure its extended national security, with a high degree of strategic credibility and consistent national security values, with favourable premises for the sustainability of this strategic position."[4]

In particular, Romania aims to strengthen the country's profile within the EU and especially to acquire the status of an important security provider in the region. At the same time, Romania supports the enlargement process in Eastern Europe and pursues a policy of encouraging the EU aspiring countries, an important objective for Romania being the accession of the Republic of Moldova.

In the context of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, upon the joint initiative of our President, Mr. Klaus Iohannis and the President of Poland, Mr. Andrzej Duda, on November 4, 2015 the Bucharest Format 9 (B9) was born.

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[4] Administrația Prezidențială, "Strategia Natională de Apărare a Țării pentru perioada 2020-2024" (The National Defence Strategy 2020-2024), June 30, 2020, https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf, 8.
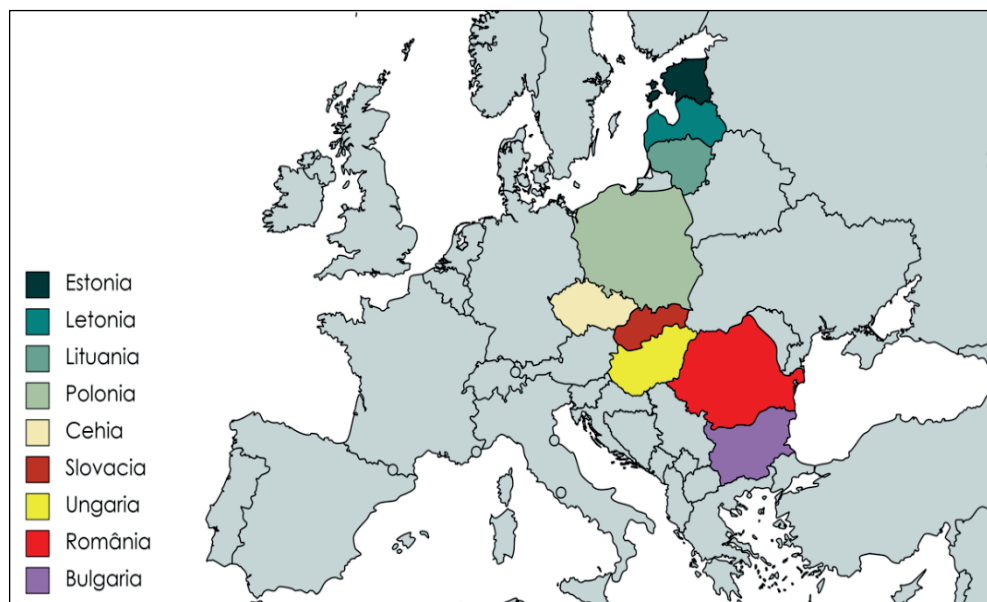
Fig. 1. Countries participating in the Bucharest Format 9[5]

The aim of this initiative is to establish a dialogue between states on promoting NATO's objectives, respecting national interests, gaining a common front in addressing security and stability in the Eastern European region (Baltic and Black Sea area) and supporting a unitary perspective within the major security organizations.

Another existing cooperation framework in which Romania is involved is the Three Seas Initiative (I3M), which appeared in 2016 and which includes EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

The aim of this initiative is to increase cooperation and cohesion and to reduce the economic gap between different EU Member States by streamlining interoperability in the region in the fields of energy, transport and digitalisation. The initiative is based on the respect and promotion of the European values and the strengthening of interstate relations.

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[5] Map created using https://www.mapchart.net/, last access September 2022.

Fig. 2. 3SI project - Via Carpathia [6]

One of the important projects for Romania within the I3M is the operationalization of the European route Via Carpathia, which involves the construction of a highway that will connect the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea. The successful completion of such project is likely to attract economic development for Romania and encourage trade relations between partner states, including cultural promotion and tourism facilitation.

Also on the same premises is the Rail2Sea project, which contributes to the development of railway infrastructure and which will create a railway

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route that will connect the Polish port of Gdańsk on the Baltic Sea and the Romanian port of Constanța on the Black Sea.

Such an initiative promoted by Romania, which seeks to deepen the cohesion of NATO member states in Eastern Europe, through dialogue, the experience of participating countries and common security objectives, are clear expression of the firm security posture of Romania and confirms the country's position as an important promoter of regional stability.

Conclusions

It is beyond doubt that since its conception, the European Union (EU) has acted as a pole of stability in maintaining European security. At the same time, in order to counter the new threats, consolidate the European states need to enhance and strengthen their cooperation, by establishing forms of joint action for all nations that share common interests and values.

The recent aggressive actions of the Russian Federation reshape the actual geopolitical context, which requires Romania to rethink its directions of action, in accordance with its responsibilities and commitments, both to ensure the safety of its citizens and allies.

The Black Sea region represents for Romania a special strategic value. Consequently it is necessary to develop a security policy that combats existing risks and threats and prevents the emergence of other sources of conflict, in order to obtain a stable security zone. Romania must support and facilitate, within NATO and the EU, the development of the transport and energy corridor in the area adjacent to the Black Sea, with the aim of achieving the status of regional leader in the field of energy. We consider that it has been demonstrated that Romania's decisions within the promoted security policy contribute to the achievement of national objectives and interests.

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The Big Bully: Russia's Aggressive Foreign Policy Towards Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia

DIANA-NICOLETA PETRUȚ

Abstract. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is being watched by the whole world in horror. However, this is not the first time that the Russian Federation has responded by using force in order to protect its interests in the former Soviet space. This paper will analyse the Russian foreign policy towards three countries in the Black Sea region, namely Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. In so doing, it will draw some parallels between these countries, by looking at the Russian-backed conflicts in Crimea, Donbas, Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. The conclusion is that Russia is utilising frozen conflicts to enhance its position in the region and curb the Western aspirations of countries it considers within its sphere of influence.

Keywords: Russia, foreign policy, aggression, frozen conflict, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to provide an analysis of the Russian foreign policy towards three countries in the Black Sea region, namely Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. To do so, it will start by providing a theoretical background and examining Russia's foreign policy aims towards the Black Sea region in general, and towards the three countries in particular. Then, it will provide a short historical background and evaluation of the Russian-backed conflicts in these states, in chronological order, starting with Moldova and the Transnistrian conflict, continuing with Georgia and the provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and then looking at the 2014 crisis in Crimea and Donbas, as well as the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Finally, the

article will explore the consequences of the invasion of Ukraine for the three countries and their responses to Russian aggression.

Thus, the research questions this article will attempt to answer are the following:

1. What are Russia's foreign policy aims towards Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the Russian-backed conflicts in Crimea, Donbas, Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia?
3. What are the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine for the three countries?

The main research method chosen for this article is secondary data analysis, as the majority of the sources utilised are journal articles, political analyses, and commentaries, as well as reports drafted by reputable organisations. Still, news articles provide a useful source of primary data and were used especially for the analysis of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, since it is an ongoing event and primary sources are more readily available than secondary ones.

Theoretical background

This article will analyse Russian foreign policy through a realist lens. One of the oldest International Relations theories, realism has many different branches, some of them broader and focusing on general patterns of IR, and others more specific, tackling foreign policy analysis. Their overarching characteristic is the focus on external factors: the position of a state within the international system in relation to other states, as well as the conditions of the international system itself. States' actions are determined by their rational self-interests and the competition for power and resources, which are vital to ensure the survival and security of the state within the anarchic system.[1]

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[1] Elena Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," in *Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Andrei P. Tsygankov (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 44-46.

An important trend within Russian foreign policy studies is the growing popularity of neoclassical realism, a realist sub-school which seeks to analyse, in addition to the general – systemic effects and general trends in IR, the particular – the foreign policies of states, and pay more attention to the unit level. Thus, neoclassical realism attempts to include the systemic/structural, domestic, and ideational factors into a more coherent and systematic analysis, and at the same time to show how these variables interact with each other. In so doing, they begin by analysing the systemic/structural variables, namely a state's power, its position in the international system, and its interactions with other states. In the second stage of analysis, they turn to the unit level and look at the intervening variables: ideational ones - perceptions of the international position of the state, as well as of other states, by decision-makers and the society, and domestic factors – the personality of decision-makers (psychological factors), domestic power division (conflicts or consensus among coalition parties; legitimacy), features of the state (political character, ideology, nationalism, identity, narratives), and others. These intervening variables are introduced to better identify and define the influence of the international system, not to reject it.[2]

Realists have studied Russia's quest for more power and influence in international relations. For example, Elena Kropatcheva used a neoclassical perspective and to study the conflict-cooperation dynamic between Russia and the West. She considered the impact of an external factor, China's rise, on NATO-Russia relations, arguing that Russian foreign policy actions depend on its policy makers' perceptions of global power shifts. These perceptions have been changing, as before the Ukraine crisis, two hypothetical alliances were brought up: one with China against NATO, and another with NATO against China. Nowadays, Russia's alliance with China plays a crucial part in its foreign policy, as China takes up a very important economic role in alleviating the pressure of Western sanctions on Russia. Thus, Russia is cooperating, competing, or even conflicting with NATO or China at the same time, depending on the issue at hand and the shifting

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[2] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security."

international trends. These different foreign policy paths are influenced by competing domestic perceptions, as well as by tactical attempts to benefit as much as possible from these two alternatives, while at the same time searching for suitable responses to external pressures.[3]

In another study, Bertil Nygren introduces the "Putinism" variable, linking perceptions and domestic institutions and developments even closer, to show how domestic factors, such as Vladimir Putin's ideological paradigms, state centralisation, securitisation and militarisation of the society, and others influence Russia's power aspirations. The "Putinism" variable suggests that Russia's foreign policy is aimed at enhancing its position and influence on the regional and global scale, and that this policy will remain one of continuity, no matter whether it matches the available resources or not.[4]

Studying Russian aspirations for status and prestige, Jeffrey Mankoff illustrates that, especially in cases such as the Russia-Georgian war of 2008, Russian foreign policy is determined by whether it sees itself as a satisfied or revisionist power. As Russia has been dissatisfied with its international status, one of its main foreign policy aims is revising the international order.[5]

While domestic factors have been increasingly used by realists in their analyses, they still give primacy to systemic ones. For instance, Mankoff analysed domestic power struggles in Russian foreign policymaking, particularly the differences between Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev during the 2008-2012 period. He concluded that the external factor, namely the changing strategic landscape that Russia must tackle, has a greater influence on Russian foreign policy than the personality of the leader in the Kremlin.[6]

Moreover, the notion of power is expanded by realist scholars by introducing the perceptions variable, referring to how Russian policymakers perceive power and international power distribution and shifts, as well as by highlighting that power means social status and prestige. While

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[3] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 48-50.
[4] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 48-50.
[5] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 48-50.
[6] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 48-50.

ideational/social variables have been addressed by liberal and constructivist theories, they also fit well into realist approaches, and they became an integral part of realist strategies. Consequently, states also seek social status, besides power and security in material terms. However, as opposed to liberal and constructivist theories, realism links ideational/social variables to material and systemic ones. Wohlforth explained that perceptions of power coexist and are interrelated with material resources, as well as with changes in real capabilities. Social status is driven by security, as states seek to convert material resources into status, and status-related conflicts are dependent on material capabilities and on the polarity of the international system. Thus, ideational, and domestic factors are introduced by realists in order to define the impact of the systemic variable.[7]

According to systemic/structural approaches, Russian foreign policy is much more logical when viewed from a long-term perspective. Its main aims remain the same – power, status, and security – but what changes are the strategies it employs to achieve them. These are influenced by changes in capabilities and the international system, helping us to understand the international factors that enable and constrain Russian foreign policymaking.[8] Thus, realist approaches, especially neoclassical ones, provide useful explanations of Moscow's behaviour on the international stage, which is why they were selected to examine its aggressive actions in the cases of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine.

Russian foreign policy aims and narrative

In order to understand Russia's foreign policy objectives, one must look back to the dissolution of the USSR, which led to major transformations of the world order. The United States emerged as the undisputed winner of the Cold War, and the new world order was based on US hegemony. As such, the Russian Federation, the successor of the USSR, lost its status as a global power, and had to find its place within the new international relations system.

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[7] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 48-50.
[8] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 55.

The foreign policy conducted by Russia today is rooted in the Primakov doctrine of 1996, named after Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov.[9] Based on this doctrine, there are five key concepts that form the core of Russian foreign policy: i) the view that Russia is an indispensable actor in global politics with an independent foreign policy; ii) a vision of a multipolar world managed by a group of major powers; iii) the acceptance of Russia's primacy in the post-Soviet space and in Eurasia; iv) the opposition to any NATO expansion; v) and a partnership with China as a cornerstone of Russian foreign policy.[10] Looking at Russia's actions since the early 2000s, it becomes clear that its main foreign policy aims in the Black Sea region are to counter Western influence and NATO expansion, while at the same time enhancing its own strategic position in the former Soviet bloc.

Moreover, Russia believes that it is entitled to a historical sphere of influence, or the "near-abroad," and is anxious about foreign infringement in it.[11] Given the concepts of the Primakov doctrine, we can infer that this sphere of influence encompasses the post-Soviet space and Eurasia. As such, it comes as no surprise that Moscow has been striving to maintain its influence over the former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

In order to achieve its aims in the region, Russia has been using frozen conflicts as a foreign policy tool, threatening its neighbours into submission, and curbing their Western aspirations. It has developed a pattern for its military operations in which the presence of ethnic Russian populations is utilised as a pretext for the Kremlin to step in as their saviour.[12] This idea is enshrined in President Vladimir Putin's new foreign policy doctrine based around a "Russian World." The doctrine states that the

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9 Sanu Kainikara, "Russia's Return to the World Stage: The Primakov Doctrine – Analysis," Eurasia Review, November 5, 2019, https://www.eurasiareview.com/05112019-russias-return-to-the-world-stage-the-primakov-doctrine-analysis/.

10 Kainikara, "Russia's Return."

11 Benjamin Dodman, "Moldova, Then Georgia, Now Ukraine: How Russia Built 'Bridgeheads into Post-Soviet Space'," France 24, February 22, 2022, https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220222-moldova-then-georgia-now-ukraine-how-russia-built-bridgeheads-into-post-soviet-space.

12 Dodman, "Moldova, Then Georgia, Now Ukraine."

Russian Federation should "protect, safeguard and advance the traditions and ideals of the Russian World," and that it "provides support to its compatriots living abroad in the fulfilment of their rights, to ensure the protection of their interests and the preservation of their Russian cultural identity."[13] In effect, this new policy affirms what Russia has been doing for quite some time, by intervening in foreign countries in support of Russian speakers, as the cases of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia will illustrate. Thus, this article will continue by providing an analysis of Russian foreign policy towards these three countries, particularly of the use of frozen conflicts to advance its objectives in the post-Soviet space.

Moldova and the Transnistrian conflict

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, a conflict emerged between the local authorities in Transnistria, on the one hand, and the central government in Chișinău, on the other. The newly independent republic was striving to restore the Romanian identity of the country and was seeking closer cooperation with Romania. As such, the Moldovan elites proclaimed Romanian as the official language, and replaced the Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin one, in order to reverse the Russification policy that Moscow had promoted during the Soviet era.[14]

Fearing the possibility of unification with Romania, the Transnistrian elites opposed these measures, wanting to preserve their power and benefits, and sought to maintain their ties with Russia. The Russian-speaking population of Transnistria also feared the loss of their culture and language, as well as the high professional and social status it had acquired during Soviet times. Consequently, the region seceded from Moldova and declared its independence in 1990. In March 1992, the tensions between the two banks

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[13] Reuters, "Putin Approves New Foreign Policy Doctrine Based on 'Russian World'," September 5, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-approves-new-foreign-policy-doctrine-based-russian-world-2022-09-05/.

[14] Inessa Baban, "The Transnistrian Conflict in the Context of the Ukrainian Crisis," NATO Defence College Research Paper no. 122 (December 2015): 3-4, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10271.

of the Dniester River escalated into a civil war, following clashes between central Moldovan forces and the separatist forces.[15]

Backed by the Russian Fourteenth Army that was still stationed in Transnistria, the separatists defeated the Moldovan army and started shelling areas still under Moldovan control. Fearing another Russian offensive, Moldova's then president, Mircea Snegur, met with his counterpart, Boris Yeltsin, in Helsinki and signed a ceasefire on 7 July 1992. However, Russian troops continued to attack Moldovan villages in and around Transnistria, so Snegur travelled to Moscow to negotiate another ceasefire. Yeltsin suggested that Snegur and the Transnistrian leader, Igor Smirnov, sign the ceasefire, but the Moldovan president refused, not wanting to legitimize the claims of the Transnistrian side. The resulting ceasefire, known as the Yeltsin-Snegur Agreement, was signed on July 21, 1992, but did not bring a permanent solution to the conflict.[16]

The Moldovan authorities proposed to offer Transnistria a special status within the country and the right to secede if Moldova united with Romania, which the separatists refused. Instead, a demilitarised zone was created between Moldova and Transnistria, to be monitored by a trilateral peacekeeping force comprising Russian, Transnistrian, and Moldovan troops.[17] Furthermore, there were no mechanisms to facilitate the reintegration of Transnistria into Moldova, and the former managed to establish its own constitution, political and judicial organs, military and security apparatus, currency, passports, etc.[18] Supported and protected by Moscow, the authorities in Tiraspol have sought to build a "Transnistrian nation," having no incentive to reintegrate with Moldova and using the ceasefire agreement to consolidate their *de facto* independence.[19] Thus, Transnistria has been operating as an independent state for the past thirty years, although it is not internationally recognised, not even by Russia. The

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[15] Baban, "The Transnistrian Conflict."

[16] Keith Harrington, "Moldova Marks 30 Years Since Ceasefire Ended War on Costly Terms," Balkan Insight, July 21, 2022, https://balkaninsight.com/2022/07/21/moldova-marks-30-years-since-ceasefire-ended-war-on-costly-terms/.

[17] Harrington, "Moldova Marks 30 Years."

[18] Baban, "The Transnistrian Conflict."

[19] Harrington, "Moldova Marks 30 Years."

only entities that recognise it are Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, other breakaway regions supported and recognised by Russia.[20]

In effect, Transnistria's existence and autonomy depend on Russia's economic support and military presence in the region. Russian support consists of significant contributions to the pensions and salaries of citizens, subsidies for the army and Ministry of State Security, free gas supply for the region, and indirect assistance in the form of remittances from expatriate workers and Russian investments. Furthermore, it maintains a military presence in the area of about 1,500 troops as "peacekeepers," who are also guarding the vast ammunition stockpiles left there from the Soviet period.[21]

Moscow's justification for its intervention in the war was the need to stop the "civil war" and "protect the Russian population" in Transnistria, calling Moldova a "fascist state" and its authorities "war criminals." In reality, the frozen conflict in Transnistria allows Moscow to have influence over the domestic and foreign policy of Moldova. Unless the conflict is resolved, Moldova cannot become a member of the EU or NATO, thus keeping it from moving closer to the West. Transnistria also has an important geostrategic position, located between Moldova and Ukraine, in close proximity to the Black Sea and NATO's eastern borders. Despite various requests from Moldovan authorities, Russia refuses to withdraw its troops from the region until a political settlement is reached, in order to keep the country within its sphere of influence and block its Westernisation prospects.[22]

Georgia and its breakaway regions, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia

Similar to the Transnistrian conflict, the tensions between Georgia and its two breakaway regions, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, started amid the disintegration of the USSR in 1990. During the Soviet era, South Ossetia had the status of autonomous oblast within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. In September 1990, South Ossetia declared independence within

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[20] Baban, "The Transnistrian Conflict."
[21] Baban, "The Transnistrian Conflict," 5-6.
[22] Baban, "The Transnistrian Conflict," 6-9.

the Soviet Union, to which the Georgian authorities reacted by abolishing the region's independent status.[23]

From December 1990, an armed conflict broke out between the Georgian authorities and the separatists, lasting until a ceasefire agreement, known as the Sochi Agreement, was signed in June 1992 between Georgia and the Russian Federation. The parties agreed to the cessation of hostilities, the creation of a demilitarised zone and of a peacekeeping force comprising Russian, Georgian, and South Ossetian troops to monitor the implementation of the agreement and maintain security in the region. However, the agreement was undermined by the mistrust between the parties, and while it prevented major outbreaks, small clashes still occurred. With Russia's help, South Ossetia established its own governance structures, further deteriorating the political situation and determining Georgian authorities to adopt tougher measures to regain control over the area.[24]

Abkhazia, on the other hand, had lost its independent status during Soviet times, being downgraded to an Autonomous Soviet Republic and thus, being unentitled to secede from the USSR. Amid the USSR's disintegration and Georgia's declaration of independence in 1991, tensions regarding Abkhazia's status increased and culminated with its secession from Georgia in July 1992. As a result, hostilities broke out between the separatists and Georgian forces, lasting from 1992 to 1993.[25]

An initial ceasefire agreement was signed in September 1992, ensuring the territorial integrity of Georgia, as well as the neutrality and non-intervention of Russian troops deployed in Abkhazia. However, the agreement was not observed, and hostilities re-emerged, until another ceasefire was agreed in July 1993. An international peacekeeping mission was established, and a Russian military contingent, which had to maintain neutrality, was stationed temporarily to implement the ceasefire, and maintain security. The following month, the United Nations Observer

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[23] NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "Humanitarian Aid in the Russo-Georgian Conflict," 2013, 211-12, https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/humanitarian_aid_rus_geo.pdf.

[24] NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "Humanitarian Aid".

[25] NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "Humanitarian Aid."

Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was established, being mandated by the Security Council to monitor the ceasefire agreement. In May 1994, a peacekeeping force under Russian leadership, from the Commonwealth of Independent States, was deployed to Abkhazia, but instead of preventing violence, it further augmented the tensions. Consequently, the Georgian authorities accused Russia of supporting the separatists and hampering their efforts to regain control of the region.[26]

A notable event was the 2004 election of President Mikhail Saakashvili in the wake of the Rose Revolution. He launched major reforms, promoted Georgia's eventual accession to NATO, and refused to accept Moscow's control over the two provinces.[27] Consequently, between 2004-2008, Georgia's relations with the separatists in both regions, as well as with Russia, worsened drastically. After a series of clashes and mutual accusations, Saakashvili ordered Georgian troops to push back against the Russian-controlled South Ossetian forces that were shelling Georgian villages on August 7. The following day, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Georgia, and hostilities broke out in Abkhazia on August 9. On August 12, after five days of intense fighting, Georgia agreed to a ceasefire with Russia, and the latter recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.[28]

Russia's narrative for its war with Georgia, in support of the separatists, was based on humanitarianism, similarly to the one used in the Transnistrian conflict. Russia claimed that it was acting for humanitarian reasons as an impartial and neutral actor, in accordance with international law. In its view, it was Georgia who broke international law, Georgia was the aggressor, while Russia was only acting in self-defence, in order to protect the civilian population in the two provinces, including Russian citizens.[29]

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[26] NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "Humanitarian Aid."
[27] Peter Dickinson, "The 2008 Russo-Georgian War: Putin's Green Light," Atlantic Council, August 7, 2021, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/the-2008-russo-georgian-war-putins-green-light/.
[28] NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "Humanitarian Aid," 213-16.
[29] NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, "Humanitarian Aid."

In reality, it was Georgia's path to democratisation and closer cooperation with NATO that made Russia use force to ensure the country stays within its sphere of influence. The Russo-Georgian war took place just a few months after the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit, during which NATO leaders promised that Georgia, together with Ukraine, would one day become members of the alliance. Since NATO offered Georgia no security guarantees, Russia had free reign to intervene, as a direct challenge to both countries' willingness to pursue a Euro-Atlantic path. Still, while the invasion caused severe economic and political harm, it pushed Georgia even further away from Moscow. The country signed an Association Agreement with the EU in 2014, together with Moldova and Ukraine, and strengthened its strategic partnership with the US and NATO, even though membership seems far away.[30]

The reaction of the international community was slow and weak, with Russia facing few consequences for its actions. French President Nicolas Sarkozy negotiated a ceasefire agreement that the Kremlin has been violating without any sanctions, by militarising and maintaining *de facto* control over the two provinces and pushing their borders further into Georgian territory. EU leaders blamed Georgia for firing first and tempting Putin, while the US rejected Tbilisi's request for anti-tank and air defence weapons, failing to deter further Russian aggression in the Black Sea region. Even more, the Obama administration was soon promoting a reset of Western relations with Moscow. These responses led Putin to believe the gains outweighed the losses and set the stage for further Russian aggression in the post-Soviet space, specifically in Ukraine.[31] The international community was very naïve and did not recognise the red flag that the Russian invasion of Georgia represented. Instead, it continued to treat Moscow as a strategic partner rather than an adversary, thinking that the efforts to integrate Russia in a

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[30] Natia Seskuria, "Russia's "Hybrid Aggression" against Georgia: The Use of Local and External Tools," Centre for Strategic & International Studies, September 2021, 1-3, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210921_Seskuria_Russia_ Georgia.pdf?__d9rw2TtaDba9xaHASf6lCEmJ.oqhA7.

[31] Dickinson, "The 2008 Russo-Georgian War."

collective security framework and the promotion of closer economic ties with it would keep it on the democratic path. However, the increasingly assertive tendencies of Moscow proved that the international community was wrong in this assessment.

Realists have offered multiple explanations for the Russo-Georgian war. Emmanuel Karagiannis employed John Mearsheimer's offensive realism, arguing that Russian competition with the US in the global and regional context was the main cause of the war. US interests in the South Caucasus were to balance Russia's position in the region and prevent it from becoming a hegemon, as well as take advantage of the energy resources there. In his view, Russia acted in a very calculated manner and seized the opportunity to re-establish its hegemony in the South Caucasus by intervening in Georgia, without having to resort to occupying other territories due to high costs, mainly the worsening of relations with the West. Russia needed to fight a war against a weak opponent in order to reassert its position in the region and survive in the anarchical system.[32] This explanation could be applied to Moldova's case. In the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, Russia was in a weak position on a regional and global level, so it seized the opportunity to fight in Transnistria in order to reassert itself as a regional power, to show its neighbours that it can still exert influence over them, and also to ensure its survival in the post-Cold War global order.

Hans Mouritzen and Anders Wivel examined the war through a more complex perspective, by analysing the reactions of different actors – Russia, Georgia, the US, the EU, states in Russia's "near abroad," and China. They concluded that a purely systemic/structural view explains the best Russia's behaviour and the factors behind its policy, the most important being the increasing influence of the US and Georgia's closer relations with NATO.[33]

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[32] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 50-51.
[33] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 50-51.

Ukraine – The 2014 crisis

The roots of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine can be traced back to the Euromaidan protests. In November 2013, Ukraine's President, Viktor Yanukovych, decided not to sign an Association Agreement with the EU and opted to revive economic relations with Russia. This sparked protests in the capital Kyiv, especially after Yanukovych met with President Putin to initiate talks on a strategic partnership between the two countries.[34]

By February 2014, the protests turned violent, and the President and opposition leaders signed a peace pact mediated by the EU, involving a unity government and presidential elections to be held by the end of the year. The power-sharing agreement collapsed on 22 February, with the Ukrainian parliament voting to impeach Yanukovych, who fled the country, and install a new government that focused on closer EU integration. Later that month, pro-Russian forces covertly seized control of airports and government buildings in Crimea, a Ukrainian peninsula with a majority Russian population.[35]

In March, the Russian Duma approved Putin's request for Russian troops to be used in Ukraine, amid the extraordinary situation in the country and the threat to the lives of Russian citizens. The Crimean assembly adopted a declaration of independence, and a subsequent referendum to secede from Ukraine and unite with Russia was backed by over 95% of voters. The EU and the US refused to recognise the referendum as legal or legitimate and imposed travel bans and asset freezes on officials from Russia and Ukraine. On March 21, 2014, Putin signed a law formalising the annexation of Crimea, despite new sanctions. As a result, Russia was banned from the Group of Eight (G8), and its actions were condemned by the UN General Assembly, which voted against the recognition of the referendum's result.[36]

By the end of the month, Russia had amassed several thousand troops near Ukraine's eastern border, and in early April, pro-Russian protesters tool

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[34] Nigel Walker, "Ukraine Crisis: A Timeline (2014-Present)," House of Commons Library, April 1, 2022, 4-14, https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9476/CBP-9476.pdf.

[35] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis."

[36] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis."

control of regional government buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk (the Donbas), calling for an independence referendum to be held on May 11. The separatists announced landslide victories in the referendums and declared independence, although Ukraine and the international community do not recognise the results. In response, Ukraine's acting president launched an "anti-terrorist operation" against the rebels. By the summer of 2014, the Ukrainian forces were close to victory, so Russia sent troops to the Donbas in support of the separatists.[37]

After almost five months of fighting, the Ukrainian government and the separatists in Donbas signed a ceasefire agreement, known as the first Minsk Agreement, on September 5. However, the ceasefire collapsed within a few days and fighting resumed, until the second Minsk Agreement was signed on 12 February 2015. Despite the condemnations and sanctions imposed by the West, Russia has been controlling Crimea and supporting separatists in the Donbas ever since. Although the second Minsk Agreement involved a ceasefire, the pull out of all foreign troops and constitutional reform recognising the special status of Donetsk and Luhansk, hostilities between the Ukrainian authorities and Russian-backed separatists have continued, with the situation re-escalating in 2021.[38]

Like in the case of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Putin employed the "protection of Russian citizens" card. He framed the Euromaidan Revolution as a fascist coup d'état orchestrated by the West, threatening the lives of the Russian population in Crimea. While he denied at first the presence of Russian troops in the region, he later justified the annexation as a rescue operation, saying that the West crossed the line in Ukraine. Putin used a similar narrative to justify support for the separatists in the Donbas, another region largely populated by Russians, referring to the area as Novorossiya (New Russia), a concept dating back to 18th century Imperial Russia.[39]

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[37] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis."

[38] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis."

[39] Jonathan Masters, "Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia," Council on Foreign Relations, April 1, 2022, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia#chapter-title-0-3.

Nevertheless, the ousting of Yanukovych and Ukraine's commitment to a closer cooperation with the EU and NATO was the trigger for Putin's actions in Crimea and Donbas. Much to his frustration, the Crimean tactics had limited success in the rest of the country and Moscow's aim of using the breakaway regions to stifle Ukraine's Western aspirations failed. President Petro Poroshenko signed the EU Association Agreement by mid-2014, and support for NATO and EU membership has increased significantly, especially in response to Russian aggression.[40]

As in the Georgian case, realists such as John Mearsheimer explain Russia's annexation of Crimea and its efforts to destabilise the East of Ukraine as a defensive reaction to the policies of the West, in particular NATO and EU expansion and democracy promotion. They see Russia's assertiveness in Georgia, Ukraine, and even Syria as logical and predictable, given the history of Russian relations with the West. Mearsheimer argued that NATO expansion would compel Russia to counteract at some point and called for a "Russia first" approach, in which the US has more interest in maintaining good relations with Moscow, rather than supporting the Western aspirations of its smaller neighbours.[41] This approach could explain why the Obama administration was promoting a reset of Western relations with Russia after a few months following the war with Georgia in 2008. However, despite the accommodating position of the West, Moscow went ahead with the annexation of Crimea just six years later, an action which contradicts this view, so there have to be other factors determining Russian foreign policymaking.

In addition, Stephen M. Walt explained that the frozen conflict in Ukraine is enough to achieve Putin's core aim of preventing Russia's international position from declining even more. Putin is fighting a series of short-term, smaller-scale wars to achieve this goal, instead of implementing a long-term national strategy to increase Russia's power and status.[42] This

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[40] Jeffrey Mankoff, "Russia's War in Ukraine," Centre for Strategic and International Studies, April 2022, 6-9, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/220422_Mankoff_RussiaWar_Ukraine.pdf?tGhbfT.eyo9DdEsYZPaTWbTZUtGz9o2_.

[41] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 50-51.

[42] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 50-51.

explanation can also be applied to the cases of Moldova and Georgia, in which Russia employed military means and created frozen conflicts, which serve the role of increasing Russian influence in the region and on the global scale.

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine

Tensions between Ukraine and Russia re-escalated in November 2021, as Russia began amassing military forces along the border with Ukraine for the second time in a year, totalling nearly 100,000 troops, with further forces being deployed to Belarus. To defuse the crisis over Ukraine, Russia presented a very controversial list of security demands, which included a legal guarantee that Ukraine would never become a NATO member and that NATO would give up any military activity in Eastern Europe and Ukraine, returning to its 1997 border.[43]

In January 2022, the Foreign Office of the United Kingdom unveiled evidence of a plot to install a pro-Russian government in Ukraine, with former Ukrainian MP Yevhen Murayev as a potential candidate to run it. Following the refusal of the US and NATO to conform to Russian demands, Putin said they have not addressed Moscow's main security concerns. At the same time, President Biden announced that more US troops will be deployed to eastern Europe, with more forces to be repositioned in Romania, Poland and Germany, to defend the eastern flank against Russian aggression.[44]

On February 14, Russia's ambassador to the EU said that, if it needed to protect Russian citizens in eastern Ukraine, Moscow would have the right to launch a counterattack. The next day, the Russian Duma voted to ask President Putin to recognise the self-proclaimed independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. Despite various international efforts to de-escalate the situation, on February 21, Putin recognised the two Ukrainian breakaway regions as independent, signed cooperation treaties with their leaders, and deployed "peacekeeping" troops into the territories.

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[43] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis," 27-38.

[44] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis."

The decision was criticised by Western leaders, who called it a violation of the Minsk Agreement and imposed the first series of sanctions on Russia.[45]

Just days later, on 24 February, Putin announced in a televised address that Russian forces will carry out a "special military operation" in Ukraine, launching a full-scale invasion of the country from Belarus in the north, Crimea in the south, and Russia in the east. The move came after fighting in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions intensified and the leaders requested Moscow's help "in repelling the aggression of the Ukrainian armed forces."[46] In his speech, Putin said the "special military operation" was aiming to protect people, including Russian citizens, facing "genocide" in Ukraine.[47] Furthermore, he proclaimed that Russia's war aims are the "unconditional consideration for Russia's legitimate interests in the sphere of security, including recognition of Russia's sovereignty over Crimea, achieving the objectives of the Ukrainian state's demilitarization and denazification, and ensuring its neutral status."[48] In effect, Putin used the same rhetoric as the one employed in the Moldovan and Georgian cases, using the presence of Russian citizens who need protection as a justification for invading Ukraine, starting the biggest attack on a European state since World War II.

By June, given the shifting situation on the battlefield and Ukraine's firm resistance, Russian forces regrouped to the south-east of Ukraine. Putin took a step back from the goals listed initially, declaring that the "ultimate aim" of his war is "the liberation of the Donbas, the defence of its people, and the creation of conditions which would guarantee the security of Russia itself."[49] These goals were more aligned with the situation on the ground, as the Russian troops were striving to achieve control of Ukraine's south-

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[45] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis."

[46] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis," 41.

[47] Natalia Zinets and Aleksandar Vasovic, "Missiles Rain Down Around Ukraine," Reuters, February 25, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-orders-military-operations-ukraine-demands-kyiv-forces-surrender-2022-02-24/.

[48] Mary Glantz, "Russia's Ukraine War Has Narrowed – But Not Its Goals," United States Institute of Peace, July 18, 2022, https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/07/russias-ukraine-war-has-narrowed-not-its-goals.

[49] Glantz, "Russia's Ukraine War Has Narrowed."

eastern provinces of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.[50] At the end of September 2022, Putin signed a document to formally annex the territories of the four regions, following "referendums" that were organized in those areas. According to Russian propaganda, a vast majority of the population in those regions voted to join Russia. However, the voting was often done at gunpoint and, similar to the Crimean referendum of 2014, has no legal or legitimate value and is not recognized by the international community.[51]

As can be seen, the response of the international community was starkly different this time, compared to the reaction to the occupation of Georgia, for instance. While in Georgia's case, the international community was quite silent, with the ceasefire agreement being violated several times by Russia without any consequence and with the Obama administration calling soon for a reset of relations with Russia, the same cannot be said in Ukraine's case. From the start of the invasion, the international community was very vocal in condemning Russia for its actions, imposed sanctions on it, banned it from international organizations such as the Council of Europe, provided assistance and armaments to Ukraine, and attempted to mediate the crisis at various times. In an ironic twist, the UN Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution that would end the invasion, due to one single country's use of veto – Russia itself. Consequently, a UN General Assembly resolution that denounced the Russian invasion and demanded the immediate withdrawal of its troops from Ukraine was adopted with a resounding majority.[52] In the same vein, a draft resolution that called for the condemnation of the sham referendums and for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops of Ukraine was not adopted by the Security Council because Russia vetoed it, even if its close partners, China and India, chose to abstain.[53] This major shift in response can be attributed to the shifting

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[50] Glantz, "Russia's Ukraine War Has Narrowed."

[51] Yulia Gorbunova, "Fictitious Annexation Follows 'Voting' at Gunpoint," Human Rights Watch, September 30, 2022, https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/30/fictitious-annexation-follows-voting-gunpoint.

[52] Walker, "Ukraine Crisis," 39-42.

[53] Al Jazeera, "Russia Vetoes UN Resolution on Ukraine Annexation, China Abstains," October 1, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/1/russia-vetoes-un-resolution-on-ukraine-annexation-china-abstains.

perception of the international community with regards to Russia. After the Russo-Georgian war, the West continued to treat Russia as a partner rather than an adversary, naively promoting efforts for its inclusion in a common security framework and greater economic and energy cooperation. However, these efforts failed to prevent the Crimean crisis of 2014, proving to the West that a conciliatory attitude towards Russia was no longer possible. Annexing the territory of a sovereign state was an action that went against international law and that could not be condoned by the international community. This time, Moscow could no longer justify its actions under the guise of a "peacekeeping mission," no matter how it tried to frame the conflict in its propaganda. Even more, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which represents a threat to the entire European security order, was met with swift and decisive responses, sending a clear signal that Russia is isolated internationally and that its actions will have severe consequences. Also, the geopolitical position of Ukraine is very important, because it is much closer to the EU than Georgia, and particularly states such as Romania and Poland feel the effects of events in Ukraine very close to their borders and put pressure on both the EU and NATO for a very firm response to counteract Russian aggression.

To interpret Russia's policy towards Ukraine, scholars have been developing neorealist concepts and using neoclassical realism in their analyses. For instance, Elias Götz pointed to the gap in Mearsheimer's argument, namely the issue of how larger states interact with their smaller neighbours, which has been lacking attention. He argued that, besides seeking to obtain the greatest amount of material capabilities in their region, powerful states also aim to restrain the foreign policy autonomy of their smaller neighbours, while also seeking to advance their geopolitical and geo-economic interests. Götz identified as an independent variable the level of external pressure, meaning the efforts of smaller states to ally themselves with great powers from other parts of the world, which determines the strategies and means used by major powers to assert their influence in their region. When the level of external pressure is low, the regional power will utilise soft power means to dominate the area, but when the level of external pressure is high, the regional power will resort to more assertive tools,

including the use of force. A mixture of soft and hard power means can be used in case the neighbouring countries pursue multi-vector policies. He concludes that this logic can largely be applied to explain Russia' policy towards Ukraine in the last 25 years, including its current policy.[54] In effect, given that Ukraine has been pushing toward a closer cooperation with the US and NATO, as well as with the EU, especially since the Crimean crisis, the level of external pressure was high. Not only that, but the West's firm stance on the Ukrainian issue in the lead up to the invasion served to enhance this variable, which in turn led to Moscow's use of hard power means to assert its regional power and influence. De-escalating strategies failed in this case, as Moscow was perceiving the level of external pressure to be too high to turn back and decided to use all its resources to invade Ukraine.

Furthermore, Andrej Krickovic developed and expanded upon the realist security dilemma concept, highlighting that it can be generated by domestic insecurities. He argued that due to its own insecurities, particularly the problem of legitimacy and fear of colour revolutions, Russia perceived Ukraine's Euromaidan protests and the ousting of Yanukovych as instigated by the West. Thus, Russia's domestic vulnerabilities and concerns about foreign interference compelled it to adopt policies that arise the same suspicions in NATO countries, creating a security dilemma on both sides. The effect of this is a vicious circle in which the efforts of one side to increase its own security threaten the security of the other.[55] This security dilemma has only been exacerbated in the years since the annexation of Crimea, culminating with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This in turn led NATO to strengthen the military capabilities of its members on the Eastern flank, fuelling Moscow's perceptions that the West is using Ukraine as a puppet-state to curb Russia's regional power. This spiral of insecurity is never-ending until this point, and this explanation shows why neither side is willing to stand down and negotiate at this stage of the war.

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[54] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 51-52.
[55] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 51-52.

Conclusion

Russia has demonstrated a pattern of intervening militarily in the former Soviet republics when it feels that its influence is waning. The three case studies presented throughout this article have shown how Moscow utilises tactics such as frozen conflicts and even full-on invasions to threaten its neighbouring states into submission, enhance its strategic position in the region, and block their path towards democratisation and Westernisation. Thus, the wars with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are a direct challenge to the countries' right to choose a Euro-Atlantic future. This is confirmed by current realist analyses of Russian foreign policy, which show that Russia's aggressive tendencies should have been expected and that it was only a matter of time until it seized the opportunity to reassert its regional influence and, as a consequence, increase its power position on the international stage.[56] Thus, realist explanations are useful in showing how systemic conditions have encouraged Russia's behaviour, as well as its motivations, but also in pointing out the West's mistake of ignoring Russia's increasingly assertive tendencies. In retrospect, the weak international response to Russia's war with Georgia allowed Moscow to attack Ukraine just a few years later. Had the response been as firm as it is now, maybe the invasion of Ukraine could have been avoided.

The 2022 invasion of Ukraine is not only about gaining territories on the battlefield, but also about challenging the European security order as we know it. It is not just Russia versus Ukraine; it is actually Russia versus the West. Understanding this fact, the leaders of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia applied for EU membership as a consequence of the invasion. While Ukraine and Moldova have been granted candidate status, Georgia still has to work to achieve it, with the EU being "ready to grant candidate status once the outstanding priorities are addressed."[57] Still, both Moldova and Georgia are in a very precarious position, because neither is a NATO member, and that makes them susceptible to future Russian aggression. Nevertheless, it is clear

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[56] Kropatcheva, "Power and National Security," 53.

[57] Jessica Parker, Joe Inwood & Steve Rosenberg, "EU Awards Ukraine and Moldova Candidate Status," BBC, June 23, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61891467.

that Russia's aggressive foreign policy has exactly the opposite effect of what it hopes to achieve – the more aggressive it becomes, the more it drives post-Soviet republics further towards the West that it so much despises.

To conclude, the aim of this article was to provide an analysis of the Russian foreign policy towards three countries in the Black Sea region, namely Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. To do so, it has started by providing a theoretical background and examining Russia's foreign policy aims towards the Black Sea region in general, and towards the three countries in particular. Then, it has provided a short historical background and evaluation of the Russian-backed conflicts in these states, in chronological order, starting with Moldova and the Transnistrian conflict, continuing with Georgia and the provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and then looking at the 2014 crisis in Crimea and Donbas, as well as the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Finally, the article has explored the consequences of the invasion of Ukraine for the three countries and their responses to Russian aggression.

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The Implications of Russia's Invasion in Ukraine for the UN's Legitimacy

DESPINA GEORGIANA POPESCU

Abstract. In accordance with the UN Charter, the UNSC has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, at the basis of which lies the principle of non-intervention, as stated in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter. Russia's invasion of Ukraine violates the principle of non-intervention, being a strike at the core of the UN Charter. Its actions affect the legitimacy of the institution itself even more so considering that Russia is a permanent member of the UNSC with a veto right. With one of its permanent members involved in the conflict, the UNSC has found itself at a stalemate, as Russia has already blocked the UNSC's attempt to adopt a resolution on the situation in Ukraine. As far as the international community is concerned, it largely condemns Russia's actions, which are considered an attack on the international community itself. This is also mirrored in the General Assembly's response to the matter. Given this context, the question arises whether the UN will be able to adapt in order to preserve its legitimacy, staying relevant beyond the current tensions, or whether it is at risk of becoming obsolete.

Keywords: United Nations Organization, legitimacy, UN Security Council, Russia-Ukraine war.

The UN Security Council and its decisional process

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the UNSC was founded as the central pillar of the new international order, having a key role in dealing with international crises that pose a risk to the international peace and security. According to the UN Charter, the Council is the only institution with the legal authority to determine whether a crisis poses a risk to

international peace and security, and in this sense, as the first article of the Charter sets out, the only one "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace."[1]

One of the principles that lies at the basis of the organization is the principle of non-intervention, which was placed at the core of the new international order, and according to which, as stated under article 2(4) of the UN Charter: "all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."[2]

The international compliance with the principle of non-intervention and therefore its legitimacy are directly linked to the role of the UN Security Council, whose responsibility is to preserve international peace and security, regulating states' behaviour through the principles of the UN Charter, including the non-intervention principle.[3]

According to the UN Charter, intervention in the domestic matters of a state is allowed, but only under very specific circumstances, such as self-defence and collective security, the latter also including humanitarian intervention in cases of mass human-rights violations. These require nonetheless the authorization of the UNSC, the only legal authority to make decisions in this sense. According to Article 39 of the UN Charter, "the Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security."[4] The article makes clear the fact that legal intervention in the domestic matters of a state is limited to interventions authorized by the UN Security Council, thus any

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[1] United Nations, "United Nations Charter," Article 1.1, June 26, 1945, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter.

[2] United Nations, "United Nations Charter," Article 2.4.

[3] Gerd Hankel, "The United Nations, the Cold War, and Its Legacy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, eds. Donald Bloxham, A. Dirk Moses (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 580-81.

[4] United Nations, "United Nations Charter," Article 39.

other unilateral intervention being considered illegal and a breach of the non-intervention principle.

In what regards the decisional process of the UN Security Council, it is closely bound to its member states, especially to the permanent five members. The UN Security Council membership consists of five permanent member states, namely the US, the UK, France, China and Russia, plus ten other non-permanent members that are elected every two years by the General Assembly. The five permanent members play a decisive role in the decisional process, as they have their inalienable right to veto any resolution proposed at the Security Council table. The veto right of the permanent members has represented the main disruption of the institution's decisional process, as one can also see both over time, and during the current crisis in Ukraine, their national interests weighing heavily at the table of the Council.

To be more precise, for a resolution to be adopted, it requires a minimum of nine votes in favour, and, at the same time, that none of the five permanent members veto the resolution.[5] Concurring votes of the permanent members are instead accepted. These are considered when a permanent member abstains from voting for or against a resolution, thus not blocking the resolution as long as it has the nine positive votes.[6]

Given the conditions under which the decisional process of the UN Security Council takes place, reinforcing its Charter principles has not been an easy task for the Security Council over the years, as there was a need for states to reach consensus on a case-by-case basis. Thus, its decisional process has displayed a selectivity in what regards addressing international crises, and it has been largely criticized for not being effective enough. Addressing the UNSC's shortcomings has nonetheless started to receive more attention over the years, especially after the end of the Cold War. At the same time, the UN has gradually started to gain the legitimacy an institution needs in

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[5] Daniel F. Runde, "Competing and Winning in the Multilateral System: U.S. Leadership in the United Nations," Centre for Strategic and International Studies, May 1, 2020, https://www.csis.org/analysis/competing-and-winning-multilateral-system-us-leadership-united-nations.

[6] Ian Hurd "The UN Security Council," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Security*, eds. Alexandra Gheciu, William C. Wohlforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 668-82, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198777854.013.45.

order to be able to determine states' compliance, at least more than it did during the Cold War period. According to Clark, the process by which a norm/institution acquires legitimacy is much more complex than its initial adoption/founding. One must gain legitimacy in time, and this is only possible by means of recurrent implementation, which in turn is influenced by an institution's legitimacy and ability to regulate actors' behaviours, thus making the process of the UN acquiring legitimacy a continuous, laborious cycle.[7]

The process of the UN Security Council acquiring legitimacy and why reform is needed

Over seventy years ago, after the occurrence of the Second World War, the UN was founded as the pillar of the new international order, and the UN Charter was adopted, the organization being fundamental to the current liberal order we live in. Nonetheless, after more than seventy years of existence, its structure is criticized for not being up to date anymore, the organization receiving criticism regarding its structure and its "weak" functioning. The number of international crises that occurred at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, and the organization's failure to address them timely and effectively, such as in the case of Rwanda, have nonetheless determined a reform initiative among the international society. Starting with this period, there was a tendency towards a more supportive approach among the members for the UN principles, which reconsidered the way they chose to cooperate through the institution of the UN. Some of the improvements made were the foundation of the Human Rights Council, and the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect as the new norm on humanitarian intervention. Nonetheless, ongoing criticized aspects of the organization were to remain the same due to the stiffness of the system when it came to major structural and functional changes, the most notable being the issue of the veto right.[8]

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[7] Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

[8] Richard Gowan, "The Ukraine War and UN Reform," Relief Web, May 6, 2022, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/ukraine-war-and-un-reform.

Some of the most important reform proposals nonetheless raised questions about the representativeness, functionality, and efficacy of the institution. In what regards the representativeness of the UN Security Council, there have been initiatives to make it more representative by expanding its permanent membership, in order to include states such as Brazil, Germany, India, Japan or South Africa. Another reform in what regards its functionality was to create a way to override the Security Council vetoes, which can block any important decision, which is seen not in the interest of one or more of the permanent members. One suggested way to do this was through an approval of two-thirds of the General Assembly members, plus that of four of the five permanent members of the Security Council. A third notable reform initiative was the voluntary suspension of the permanent member vetoes in cases of "mass atrocities," the proposal having the formal support of 104 out of the 193 U.N. member countries. The initiative has also been included in the initial Responsibility to Protect report, but it was dropped before the report was adopted in 2005.[9]

This has proven once again the stiffness of the institution in what regards the issue of the veto right and the centrality of the states' interests, even when it came to mass violations of human rights. Although in what regards the norm of humanitarian intervention, changes to the discourse have been made, such as redefining sovereignty as the responsibility of states towards their citizens rather than an inalienable right, this being consolidated through the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect, at the implementation level selectivity has continued to be displayed, proving once again that universal consensus to norms is a difficult if not impossible target to reach, as the implementation of norms and whether actors abide by them are influenced by factors other than just the norm itself.[10] The case by case implementation has an important implication for the process of acquiring legitimacy of the norm, as its implementation or lack thereof is the one that

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[9] William B. Taylor; James Rupert, "The Ukraine War Escalates Demands to Reform the United Nations," United States Institute for Peace, April 29, 2022, https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/04/ukraine-war-escalates-demands-reform-united-nations.

[10] Steven Dixon, "Humanitarian Intervention: A Novel Constructivist Analysis of Norms and Behaviour," in *Journal of Politics & International Studies* 9 (2013): 154.

determines the actors to consider it legitimate, and abide by it down the line or not.

The bottom-line of the failed reform attempts is that without a drastic change of the international order, there is no way the current "states in power" will accept to willingly give up their privileges at the table of the UN Security Council, this being the main reason they accepted be a part of it in the first place, namely to be able to defend their interests when these would be at stake. Thus, selectivity in implementing the UN Charter principles that is closely linked to the interests of the great powers, and the extent to which they are able to cooperate through the UN Security Council in order to put an end to crises over the world will continue to be displayed without a major reform. Nonetheless, this was the way the institution was meant to function from the beginning, namely not to go against the interests of its permanent members, which would not have joined the organization, if they had had no veto right to ensure their leverage over the resolutions that the institution would adopt.[11]

This dynamics of never going against the interests of the great powers has a deep impact on the legitimacy of the institution, which is more and more regarded as only "representative," rather than an efficient institution with a real decisional power. If we are to look at this dynamic by making use of the agent-structure interaction, the case-by-case implementation of the UN principles has an important implication for the institutions' process of acquiring legitimacy. Even though it is considered the only legitimate authority in addressing international crises, and it is supposed to regulate the behaviour of its member states, its efficiency or lack thereof are the factors determining state actors to consider it legitimate and abide by it or not.

The UN Members are legally bound by the Charter, thus bound to respect its principles. Unfortunately, however, these only become binding by means of a UN Security Council resolution. Given the veto right, resolutions

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[11] Thomas G. Weiss, "UN Security Council Is Powerless to Help Ukraine – but It's Working as Designed to Prevent World War III," The Conversation, April 8, 2022, https://theconversation.com/un-security-council-is-powerless-to-help-ukraine-but-its-working-as-designed-to-prevent-world-war-iii-180936 .

can often be blocked by permanent member states whose interests are at stake, thus the UN Charter's binding character becomes relative and is applied on a case-by-case basis. If it continuously fails to be reinforced at the implementation level, such as in the case of Ukraine, then what happens to the legitimacy of the Charter, and thus of the organization itself?[12] Will its members still consider it relevant to act through the UN as the main pillar of the current system and to "shape" their behaviours in accordance to the UN Charter principles?

In a nutshell, criticism against the efficiency of the UN Security Council is justified. Even if the institution is functioning according to the way it was created in 1945, for it to stay relevant and acquire legitimacy to keep states compliant, reform is needed. Forward looking, every failed implementation of the principles of the UN is a downgrade of its legitimacy, giving way to further breaches of the principles, if they are not accordingly sanctioned.

Nonetheless, on a positive note, although its fundamental structure and way of functioning cannot be changed due to the veto right and its normative regulations, if we are to look at the way states positioned themselves towards the UN over its seven decades of existence, their approach, and to a certain extent "identity" did change in time, thus leading to step-by-step reforms. This has also been proven at the beginning of the 21st century, when the discourse around human-rights and humanitarian intervention has moved from a restrictive to a more solidary approach, leading eventually to a significant change in the form of the Responsibility to Protect report. Moreover, as Martha Finnemore affirmed, the period of multilateralism has played a significant role in this sense, as during that time decision making at the table of the Security Council in a cooperative, "multilateral" manner was considered by states much more righteous than unilateral intervention, and despite existing attempts to disrupt the decisional process through the use of veto, coordination among the member states was shown, the prioritization of the Security Council authorization

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[12] Hurst Hannum, "International Law Says Putin's War against Ukraine Is Illegal. Does That Matter?," The Conversation, February 25, 2022, https://theconversation.com/international-law-says-putins-war-against-ukraine-is-illegal-does-that-matter-177438 .

when it came to addressing international crises prevailing.[13] The international society's identity has therefore been "shaped" itself to a certain degree over the years, even though it has happened at a slow pace. After all, the UN Security Council has in these 70 years managed to become a central diplomatic institution, much more influential than it used to be during the Cold War. Nonetheless, its role is at this time once again challenged, given the current Ukraine crisis, even more so as the dynamic of the conflict includes one of the permanent members as the perpetrator of the unilateral invasion.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the UN response

Needless to say, the ongoing Russian invasion in Ukraine, as well as the recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, go against the core principles of the UN, namely the principles of state-sovereignty and non-intervention.[14] Russia justifies its invasion to which it refers as a "special operation" by making use of the principles of the same UN Charter. In its narrative, Russia referred to article 51 as an act of self-defence, as well as to the Responsibility to Protect principle, making allegations of genocide against Ukraine.

This, nonetheless, does not change the illegality of Russia's acts, which directly violate the principle of non-intervention stated in Article 2(4), according to which states "shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."[15] The wording used in the article is clear and very important. The term "use of force" in the article means what it says, the actual violation of a state's sovereignty. Countries cannot avoid their international obligations by pretending their actions are for self-defence

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[13] Leslie Vinjamuri, "The Future of International Security Norms," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Security*, 375.

[14] Kieran O'Meara, "Understanding the Illegality of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," E-International Relations, March 13, 2022, https://www.e-ir.info/2022/03/13/understanding-the-illegality-of-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/, 8.

[15] United Nations, "United Nations Charter," Article 2.4.

against a "perceived threat," as Putin is arguing.[16] Moreover, in what regards the humanitarian mission that Russia claims to be leading in Ukraine, it also infringes upon the UN Charter, as even though human rights violations were to be occurring, the UN Security Council is the only one to have the legitimate authority to sanction a humanitarian intervention, by adopting a resolution, any unilateral intervention being considered illegitimate.

Nonetheless, the UN Security Council is facing criticism regarding its efficiency once again in the context of the current crisis. As the only legitimate authority to sanction the use of force under the UN Charter in order to maintain international peace and security, why does the UNSC not intervene in the Ukraine crisis? This time the dynamic of the conflict is the one that has tied the Council's hands, making it unable to adopt a resolution that would legally bind the international society to intervene and put a stop to the violations. The answer to the above question is clear, namely that the option is unrealistic due to Russia's permanent seat on the Council.

Immediately after the beginning of the invasion, the UN Security Council held a meeting in an attempt to prevent the inevitable. There was a resolution proposed, S/2022/155, that asked Russia to "immediately cease its use of force against Ukraine" and "immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukrainian territory within its internationally recognized borders,"[17] which would include the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

As expected, its initial attempt to adopt a resolution that would urge Russia to put a stop to its aggression was vetoed by the country, a privilege it has as a permanent member of the Council, leading thus to great tensions at the table of the institution, which found itself at a stalemate, not being able to fulfil its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.[18]

Nonetheless, in an attempt to show the solidarity of the international society with Ukraine, on February 27, the Security Council voted to request

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[16] O'Meara, "Understanding," 7.

[17] United Nations Security Council, "S/2022/155," UN Documents, February 25, 2022, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96 FF9%7D/s_2022_155.pdf.

[18] O'Meara, "Understanding," 1.

an emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider the same draft resolution. This is provided for under the first section of the General Assembly resolution 377(V) "Uniting for Peace," in which the General Assembly can decide whether or not to override a veto in the UN Security Council and thus adopt the previously vetoed resolution as one of its own in the name of peace. On the March 2, the draft resolution was adopted by the General Assembly, condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine with 141 supporting votes, 5 against and 35 abstentions. Although a proof of the international society's solidarity with Ukraine and against Russia's illegitimate actions, as well as a bold attempt to overrule the incapacity of the UN Security Council to address the crisis and put a stop to it, the UNGA resolutions are not legally binding, unlike the UNSC resolutions. Therefore, these cannot determine intervention on behalf of the UN, representing just recommendations on behalf of the General Assembly. What the adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly did, nonetheless, was to display international agreement regarding the unacceptability of Russia's behaviour, and the diplomatic isolation of Russia, making it clear for the Russian state that the vast majority of states condemn its invasion of Ukraine, considering it also as an attack on the UN's principles, and thus on the international community itself.[19]

Thus, given the UN Security Council stalemate, in an attempt to assume the organization's diplomatic role, the General Assembly has over the past few months adopted several resolutions directly related to the war in Ukraine. The first, which, as previously stated, accumulated 141 votes, developed on the failed attempt of the Council to adopt a resolution, condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the second focused on the humanitarian consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, receiving 140 votes, and a third resolution, which had the support of 93 member states, suspended Russia's membership in the U.N. Human Rights Council.[20]

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[19] O'Meara, "Understanding," 2.

[20] Shamala Kandiah Thompson, Karin Landgren and Paul Romita, "The United Nations in Hindsight: Challenging the Power of the Security Council Veto," Just Security, April 28,

In what regards the inability of the Council to act in the crisis of Ukraine and to show international support for the principles of the UN as generally applicable, the General Assembly has taken a rather bold step towards trying to make the UN Security Council accountable for its decision process. Through the adoption of the A/RES/76/262 resolution on April 26, the General Assembly calls for its members to meet whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council. Thus, every time a veto is cast by a permanent member of the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly will be able to call for a meeting, where the vetoed matter will be discussed, the member or members who have cast a veto being listed on the speakers' list. Although arguably a small, insignificant change, this is the first time a UN body has taken action to modify the use of the veto. As a veto elimination is unlikely to happen, given that it would require a Charter amendment that in turn needs the support of all permanent members, the General Assembly's decision is nonetheless a way of imposing greater accountability for veto use. Even though its impact will be minimal, the initiative might be a first step in a longer reform initiative. At a time when questions have been raised about the Council's ability to carry out its mandate according to the Charter and multilateralism is under severe strain, the General Assembly's recent actions may be much needed and a reminder of its capacity to take action in the face of a Council stalemate.[21]

Even though the actions of the UN General Assembly have proven the international society's support and trust in the role of the UN and its principles, displaying the society's discontent with the ongoing crisis, the General Assembly is not able to tackle the main reasons why Russia has been able to carry out the invasion without being held accountable for its actions at the UN table. Its expulsion from the UN has been demanded by many, nonetheless, this is not possible, as a member of the UN can only be expelled by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. This would require that no veto be cast by one of the permanent members. Given its permanent membership, Russia is there to stay. In what regards its

2022, https://www.justsecurity.org/81294/the-united-nations-in-hindsight-challenging-the-power-of-the-security-council-veto/

[21] Thompson, Landgren and Romita, "The United Nations in Hindsight."

membership in other diplomatic organizations or institutions, Russia has been removed from the Council of Europe and from the Human Rights Council.

Taking into consideration the human-rights violations that Russia has undertaken, just to name a few, like the bombing of a train station in Ukraine where many were gathered to evacuate, or the murder of countless civilians in the city of Bucha and other areas, as well as many other pieces of evidence of Russian atrocities against Ukraine, there are voices that call for justice for the countless victims by bringing the perpetrators to justice. Such allegations have also been made by US President Joe Biden, who claimed that the Russian leader, Vladimir Putin, should be tried for war crimes. Nonetheless, the Russian prosecutors have another alibi besides the veto right that "protects" them from international law, namely the fact that the Russian state is not a member of the International Criminal Court. Neither the US, China nor Russia ratified the Rome Statute, the treaty that lies at the foundation of the international institution. Therefore, the three great powers are not subject to the jurisdiction of the ICC. To briefly review the role of the institution, the ICC was founded in 1998 and its role is to try the most serious cases of human rights abuses, such as the case of the president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, who was tried for war crimes and genocide. By not being a member of the ICC, Russia, or its leaders, cannot be tried for war crimes, and the only way they could be is if the Security Council votes to refer them. As Russia has the veto right, that option remains unfeasible.[22]

In what regards the notorious Responsibility to Protect, the current crisis lays bare its flaws as well, R2P being considered the norm whose time has never come. The discourse revolution that the adoption of the report has brought about, by redefining state-sovereignty as a responsibility of states rather than an inalienable right, has been an important step towards improving the UN's efficiency, but its implementation still relies on the reasoning of the member states, regardless of the scale of a conflict and the expensive price paid in human lives. The decisional process of the UN has always been linked to the reasoning of its member states, which as we could

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[22] BBC, "Ukraine, the UN and History's Greatest Broken Promise," April 9, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61021862.

also see in the case of Ukraine, interferes with the decisional authority of the organization due to economic, political and other interests. The lack of an impartial institution that would generally address crises that pose a risk to international peace and security in a timely and efficient manner is for sure one of the reasons why international norms are implemented in a rather flawed, double-standard manner.[23] However, despite its criticized "state-dictated" decisional process, the UN has played a balancing role on the international stage over the years. Considering its failures and addressing them is necessary, nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that it still has a central role in preserving international order, and, as it was also stated in the R2P report, "the task is not to find alternatives to the Security Council as a source of authority, but to make the council work better."[24]

Outlooks on the UN's legitimacy beyond the current crisis

As Thakur Ramesh perfectly captured it, "the legitimacy of the UNSC as the authoritative validator of international security action has been subject to a steady erosion as it has been perceived as being unrepresentative in composition, undemocratic in operation, unaccountable to anyone 'below' (e.g. the GA) or 'above' (the World Court), and ineffective in results."[25] These problems remain unsolvable, if the organization is not changed from the ground up, the lack of representativeness, the structural problems and, most importantly, its inefficiency to address international crises might transform the UN into the eyes of the international community into nothing but the great powers' instrument. Despite these criticisms and the selectivity that has been displayed over the years, and most recently its inability to address the Ukraine crisis, the role of the UN has increased in importance since its

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[23] Charles Cater and David M. Malone, "The Genesis of R2P: Kofi Annan's Intervention Dilemma," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect*, eds. Alex J. Bellamy and Tim Dunne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

[24] Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect: Revisiting Humanitarian Intervention," in *Foreign Affairs*, Nov./Dec. 2002, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/responsibility-protect.

[25] Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 392.

founding over seventy years ago. Its balancing role has over the years been able to achieve more coordination among the great powers, which would have not been the case had the organization not been founded.

Nonetheless, the organization has and still does face the risk of becoming obsolete, given its clear challenges to reinforce international law, challenges which have been laid bare most recently by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. For the organization to truly have the agency it takes to address crises all over the world without depending on national interests, these issues cannot be overlooked. Despite the fact that its role over the years was to inspire, to lead states towards supporting human-rights and diplomacy beyond national interests, which at the beginning of the 21st century was more successful than ever through the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect, its principles starting to acquire a life of their own and to finally shape actors' identity towards supporting the UN Charter principles, the failure to reinforce the UN Charter in particular cases over time can on the other hand weaken its rules and principles, and embolden others who might follow in Russia's footsteps, and make the UN's efforts to prevent such behaviour much harder.

Despite the major criticism it has received about the Ukraine crisis, the UN cannot make at once changes that have not been made for 70 years for obvious reasons. As noted, the UN Security Council reform is held hostage by the veto right of the permanent members. Requests such as the expulsion of Russia from the UNSC, the overruling of the veto right and the intervention in Ukraine are all not feasible, as they all require the votes of all permanent members, hence the vote of the prosecutor, Russia.

The impact of the war on the international society has, in these last months, challenged the UN once again, determining significant innovative changes carried out mostly by the General Assembly with the support of a vast majority of member states. Arguably, these changes have not been enough to address the crisis, which is true, as they are not. Despite significant diplomatic activity regarding the Ukraine crisis and the ambitious steps taken by the General Assembly, given that the Security Council is unable to adopt a resolution, the UN continues to be largely criticized for not fulfilling its duty once again. However, it is important to highlight the fact that its

diplomatic activity has played a balancing role, as isolating Russia entirely will make a diplomatic solution to the conflict even harder. As the dynamic and outcome of the conflict are of great importance for the international society, the war will certainly determine an extended debate regarding the UN's reformation, maybe also having the US in favour of it. Similar to past attempts to reform the organization, the main changes requested remain unfeasible due to the normative limits, but the international society seems once again prone towards supporting UN principles, thus raising hopes that the system will not remain unchanged.[26]

To conclude, given the dynamic of the conflict that has as its perpetrator one of the permanent members of the UNSC, the current crisis will, down the line, have an impact in what regards the UN process of acquiring legitimacy, as Russia's acts and the failure of the international community to punish them could spur further violations of the principles, by using the same justifications. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is even more revolting in what regards the disrespect it has displayed towards the UN's principles, as in its quality of permanent member of the UNSC, Russia perpetrates the very violations it is expected to prevent and punish.

Although the structure of the UN is normative, it is the actors who choose to comply or not, depending on their own interests, the political will of states being the one that has the final say in the implementation of the UN's norms. Although the lack of implementation such as in the case of Ukraine questions the legitimacy of the Council, it is important that it keeps its balancing role, its overall role being an important one, explaining why even the most powerful countries continue to find it useful to act through it.[27]

By looking at the last decades, one could say that, had it not been for the United Nations, the world would have been a much more unstable place. However, if the United Nations does not amend its issues in authority and functioning, the implementation of the UN Charter principles might continue to be selective, its legitimacy being weakened.[28] This might

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[26] Gowan, "The Ukraine War."

[27] Vinjamuri, "The Future of International Security Norms," 375.

[28] Thakur, *The United Nations*, 315-19.

determine the UN to reach a state similar to the one during the Cold War, when it was paralyzed by the constant use or threat of use of the veto right. On the other hand, moments such as the Ukraine crisis bring about the circumstances under which the UN is pressured to change its ways. Moreover, such tragedies can also shape the international society's identity to a certain extent, creating a general agreement towards a matter, and gaining even the support of hesitant state actors, thus also determining them to engage in normative changes for the longer term in order to preserve the world order as one ruled by law instead of war.[29]

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[29] Taylor, Rupert, "The Ukraine War Escalates."

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The Reincarnation of the Cold War in Cyberspace? Perspectives on the Great Powers' Battle of Words in the Context of the Ukraine War

MARIA-GEORGIANA ROMAN

Abstract. In the weeks before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, both the United States and Russia released conflicting statements regarding the purported objective of the Russian military exercise near the Ukrainian borders. The United States publicly shared detailed intelligence information in what has been described as unprecedented due to the level of details and the amount of information published. In this paper, we are going to analyse the statements of the Russian Federation and the information disclosed by the United States following the Russian military build-up and analyse the stakes of these disclosures, thus attempting to explain the communication strategy employed by the United States and Russia by using the hybrid warfare framework.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, NATO, propaganda, hybrid warfare, intelligence.

Introduction

The current war in Ukraine is possibly the most anticipated and televised war in history. Weeks before the beginning of the Russian offensive, the media environment was already saturated with information regarding the military build-up near the Ukrainian borders and hypotheses on the Kremlin's next move. The United States did not leave much room for speculation and attempted to disclose their version of events through several statements on the matter. While this is not particularly unusual, the level of information that was declassified and shared with the public was nothing

short of unprecedented.[1] This strategy is far from common and raises many questions. Why did the US take the risk of potentially compromising the advantage of this knowledge and why did it communicate it to the public instead of simply disclosing it to its partners and the Ukrainian government? In this paper we are going to attempt to shed some light on this strategy and analyse its advantages as well as its limitations. We will briefly explore the resurgence of Cold War paradigms and address some of the main threats linked to propaganda and hybrid warfare in the era of new media, the polarizing effect of social media filter bubbles and what can be done to limit the effect of deliberate and malicious use of false information without reinforcing false narratives in the process of combating them. Lastly, we will focus on pre-emptive debunking of disinformation as a potential defence strategy against propaganda, and the instruments that can be used by democratic states to respond to informational offensives while upholding democratic values and avoiding emotional fatigue or disengagement inside their own political bases.

The war before the war – prelude and battle of declarations

As Europe was nearing its most shocking escalation of violence in decades, the battle of words between international powerhouses was already in full swing with the US and the Russian Federation at its epicentre. In early November 2021 the US reported an unusual military movement near the Ukrainian border as satellite images began circulating online against the background of bellicose rhetoric coming from Russia.[2] Soon, estimations on the number of troops and military equipment began to pour in as the US

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[1] Stephen B. Long, "Sharing Top-secret Intelligence with the Public Is Unusual - but Helped the US Rally the World against Russian Aggression," University of Richmond, March 5, 2022, https://urnow.richmond.edu/features/article/-/21084/sharing-top-secret-intelligence-with-the-public-is-unusual---but-helped-the-us-rally-the-world-against-russian-aggression.html?utm_source=news&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=features-story.

[2] Amy Mackinnon, "U.S. Eyes Russian Military Movement Near Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, November 1, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/11/01/us-russia-military-movement-ukraine/.

warned Russia about economic sanctions if it proceeded with the aggression. The ultimatums did not manage to dissuade the Kremlin from following through with its plans, but it has nevertheless built a great deal of anticipation and brought the issue to the centre of attention as news regarding Russia's moves began to flood the media landscape.

As a response to these threats, Putin claimed that Ukraine's military development, backed by the West, constituted a threat to his country even if formal NATO membership was not granted to Ukraine.[3] Justifying its hostile actions and shifting the blame on the collective west is one of the key points in Russian discourse. The Kremlin insisted that it was doing nothing more than protecting its own security, sovereignty, and its own kin, whether inside of its borders or not. On the other side of the informational barricade, NATO and EU warned Moscow against recognising the self-declared Republics of eastern Ukraine.[4] Apart from the formal recognition of these self-declared republics, a thornier issue was the measures Putin was willing to take to secure a clear the separation between these regions and the Ukrainian state against a backdrop of unusual, large-scale military activity near the Ukrainian borders.

Although Russia repeatedly denied intending to attack Ukraine and claimed that the movement of its troops on its own territory is a matter of no concern for anyone, even qualifying it as an artificial hysteria and unfounded attempt to create tension,[5] US officials disclosed to the press information which indicated that Russia's movements along the border could not be related to mere routine military exercises as blood supplies and medical

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[3] Vladimir Soldatkin and Gabrielle Tétrault-Farber, "Putin: Ukraine's Western-Backed Military Development A Threat To Russia," *Reuters*, October 21, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-western-military-backing-ukraine-threatens-russia-2021-10-21/.

[4] France 24, "Biden Says Russian Attack in Ukraine 'Still Very Much a Possibility'," February 15, 2022, https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220215-live-russia-says-pulling-back-some-troops-from-ukraine-border.

[5] Eugene Kiely and Robert Farley, "Russian Rhetoric Ahead of Attack Against Ukraine: Deny, Deflect, Mislead," FactCheck, February 24, 2022, https://www.factcheck.org/2022/02/russian-rhetoric-ahead-of-attack-against-ukraine-deny-deflect-mislead/.

materials were also delivered to the area and constituted a clear indicator of preparation for a much more violent scenario.[6]

Putin's response was an attempt to create confusion and discredit NATO sources. On February 18, Russia announced a retreat of troops from the border, information that was promptly dismissed by NATO member states who stated that their intelligence did not suggest a pullback, but it in fact an increase of military presence along the border by around 7000 troops with the total numbers rising to over 150,000 as of February 15, along with the deployment of attack aircraft suggesting an imminent offensive.[7]

In the media, content denigrating NATO and Ukraine was also noted to have increased, to potentially blame the two for an escalation.[8] If it could not justify an offensive act nor shift the blame completely, the Kremlin could at least cast doubt on the purported offensive actions of the collective West that eventually shifted the balance towards escalation. The initial wave of relief after the more peaceful declarations of a retreat coming from Russia was however short lived. In a sobering warning,

Biden stated that despite claims of a pullback, the threat of an invasion remained high, and that Russia might attempt to create a pretext for that purpose.[9]

Cold War revival?

This battle of declarations is interesting because it highlights a struggle over narrative dominance and an attempt to frame reality according

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[6] Phil Stewart, "Russia Moves Blood Supplies near Ukraine, Adding to U.S. Concern, Officials Say," Reuters, January 29, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/exclusive-russia-moves-blood-supplies-near-ukraine-adding-us-concern-officials-2022-01-28/.

[7] Becky Sullivan, "U.S. and NATO Officials Say They've Seen No Evidence that Russia Has Withdrawn Troops," NPR, February 16, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/02/16/1081276661/russian-troops-ukraine-nato.

[8] Shane Harris and Paul Sonne, "Russia Planning Massive Military Offensive against Ukraine Involving 175,000 Troops, U.S. Intelligence Warns," *The Washington Post*, December 3, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/russia-ukraine-invasion/2021/12/03/98a3760e-546b-11ec-8769-2f4ecdf7a2ad_story.html.

[9] Ellen Nakashima et al., "U.S. Intelligence Shows Russia's Military Pullback was a Ruse, Officials Say," February 17, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/02/17/ukraine-russia-putin-nato-munich/.

to one's worldview. Following these recent developments, the academic literature is witnessing a Cold War paradigm revival, albeit there is no shortage of material that is critical of such an approach. Indeed, an increase in hybrid threats targeting NATO and the EU following the outbreak of conflict in Ukraine threatens the stability of the entire region but can we talk about the emergence of Cold War 2.0? The Kremlin is promoting an "us versus the West" worldview, actively trying to portray the current world order as unfair and unipolar, while trying to gain the support of other side-lined actors whose sovereignty is equally undermined by the West. On the other hand, the North Atlantic Alliance can use the renewed Russian threat to rethink its role. Matthew Kroenig argues that the Ukraine conflict has revitalised NATO after the alliance had previously been deprived of its *raison d'être* following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.[10]

The Cold War 2.0 narrative is bolstered by the Kremlin, which asserts that it is defending itself from the interests of western powers led by the hegemon US that try to impose their values and threaten to destabilize Russia in pursuing an unfair and unipolar world order. This rhetoric is reminiscent of the Cold War dichotomous thinking and seems to support the hypothesis of a Cold War revival or a new Cold War where the fight between ideologies is replaced by a fight between civilizations.[11] By promoting non-linear strategies and adopting defensive narratives of the Western aggression, Russia mythologizes the conflict between the West and the East,[12] and revives Cold War paradigms. The Cold War is deeply engrained in the common understanding of international affairs, particularly when it comes to relations with Russia but is mostly a metaphor in contemporary

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[10] Matthew Kroenig, "Facing Reality: Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War," *Survival* 57, No. 1 (2015): 50-51, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1008295.

[11] Mason Clark, "Russian Hybrid Warfare," Institute for the Study of War, September 2020, https://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Hybrid%20Warfare%20ISW%20Report%202020.pdf, 14.

[12] Holger Mölder and Vladimir Sazonov, "Information Warfare as the Hobbesian Concept of Modern Times. The Principles, Techniques, and Tools of Russian Information Operations in the Donbass," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 31, no. 3 (2018): 326, https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2018.1487204.

IR.[13] This myth is more advantageous to the Kremlin, however, as in light of the current power imbalance, it can help antagonize the United States and its allies while allowing it to present itself as an actor who is cornered and forced to defend itself, thus covering offensive actions under defensive pretences. For the sake of preserving its soft power, western countries, particularly the United Stated ought not to fall into the trap of binary thinking so as not to reinforce the image of an insatiable hegemon.

While the Russian Federation continues to represent a threat for the stability of the EU and NATO due to its attempts to undermine the post-Cold War international order, actions that bolster the bipolar logic and bellicose and polarizing narratives should be limited. Giving too much credit to the sphere of influence mindset would be detrimental to the cause of NATO and EU states in the long run.

Destabilizing the domestic political base of the Alliance nations and undermining defence solidarity is a known strategic direction of Russia's hybrid threats but its "actions in and around Ukraine have reinforced the notion that the security environment in Europe is becoming increasingly unpredictable."[14] Internal disagreements between members of the alliance not only put the weakness of multinational bodies on display but facilitate Moscow's information-warfare campaigns[15] which is why the need to show unity and decisiveness is vital.

Hybrid threats and propaganda battles

When it comes to hybrid warfare, there are many attempts at defining the term in the literature, however most of the definitions highlight the grey zone between conventional and non-conventional tactics used in modern warfare that accompany the use of conventional capabilities and focus on the

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[13] Richard Sakwa, "'New Cold War' or Twenty Years' Crisis? Russia and International Politics," *International Affairs* 84, no. 2 (2008): 241, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2008.00702.x.

[14] Ralph D. Thiele, "Crisis in Ukraine – The Emergence of Hybrid Warfare," *ISPSW Strategy Series* No. 347, May 2015, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/190792/347_Thiele_RINSA.pdf, 3.

[15] Rod Thornton, "The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare," *The RUSI Journal* 160, no. 4 (2015): 45, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2015.1079047.

mix of instruments employed to achieve strategic goals. This ambiguity has led some to dismiss it as an umbrella term and to question its relevance while others have tried to bring further theoretical clarification. It must be noted that not all hybrid operations constitute a form of hybrid warfare. While its conceptual usefulness is up for debate, even some of its most fervent critics agree that it remains an essential part of policymaking navigation in the present context.[16] Despite critiques concerning its definition and conceptual usefulness, the term has been used by NATO in strategic documents and declarations, although its operational value is also contested and even deemed detrimental to the strategic thinking and the clarity of assessment of facts on the ground as the approach blurs the line between war and peace.[17]

Monaghan provides a much-needed distinction between hybrid warfare and mere hybrid threats. According to him, "hybrid threats combine a wide range of nonviolent means to target vulnerabilities across the whole of society to undermine the functioning, unity, or will of their targets, while degrading and subverting the status quo"[18] and target the people and decision-making bodies, while hybrid warfare is a response to the complexity of twenty-first-century warfare and seeks to erode the effectiveness of conventional military operations.[19] The diversity and multiplicity of actors involved, and the complexity of the methods used can be most conveniently conveyed through such collective term that emphasises the blurry lines to the point where some argue that traditional distinctions between war and peace are blurred as well.[20]

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[16] Ofer Fridman, "A War of Definitions: Hybridity in Russia and the West," in *Hybrid Conflicts and Information Warfare: New Labels, Old Politics*, eds. Ofer Fridman, Vitaly Kabernik and James C. Pearce (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019), 67.

[17] Murat Caliskan and Michel Liégeois, "The Concept of 'Hybrid Warfare' Undermines NATO's Strategic Thinking: Insights from Interviews with NATO Officials," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 32, no. 2 (2020): 308-9, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2020.1860374.

[18] Sean Monaghan, "Countering Hybrid Warfare: So What for the Future Joint Force?," *PRISM* 8, no. 2 (2019), https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/prism/prism_8-2/PRISM_8-2_Monaghan.pdf?ver=2019-09-17-231051-890, 87.

[19] Monaghan, "Countering Hybrid Warfare."

[20] James K. Wither, "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare," in *Connections* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 74, https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.15.2.06.

Indeed, if we are to analyse whether two actors are at war by using this concept, it would be difficult to assess the situation, as at least one aspect that falls under the umbrella of hybrid warfare would be present at all times due to natural competition-driven behaviours that states have been engaging in for the better part of history. However, it remains a useful instrument when it comes to increasing awareness of potential threats and catalysing defence development efforts.[21] Conflicts emerge even in the absence of traditional understandings of war and peace, and concepts such as grey zone warfare or political warfare[22] can be integrated in a wider-reaching and all-encompassing view provided by the umbrella of hybrid threats or hybrid warfare. From a policy point of view, intangible weapons targeting civilians with little to no geographic or temporal constraints require policy focused on non-traditional tools, such as the East StratCom Task Force.[23]

The 2014 annexation of Crimea is regarded as a turning point for the conceptualization of hybrid warfare, most notably for the integrated character of conventional and irregular operations and the unprecedented level of coercive information operations in undermining the legitimacy of the state, exploiting social vulnerabilities, and weakening institutions as public perception was assigned the central role in "new generation warfare."[24] Russian hybrid warfare is mainly defined as "population-centric."[25]

It is worth noting that, despite a renewed interest in hybrid tactics and information warfare in recent years, particularly after Russia's 2014 intervention in Ukraine, hybrid warfare is neither a new nor a completely Russian invention.[26] Even though it draws upon the infamous Soviet-style subversive propaganda techniques, Russia's contemporary information

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[21] Caliskan and Michel Liégeois, "The Concept of 'Hybrid Warfare'." 308.

[22] Donald Stoker and Craig Whiteside, "Blurred Lines: Gray-Zone Conflict and Hybrid War," *Naval War College Review*, 73, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 16, https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol73/iss1/4.

[23] Miranda Lupion, "The Gray War of Our Time: Information Warfare and the Kremlin's Weaponization of Russian-Language Digital News," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 31, no. 3 (2018): 352, https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2018.1487208.

[24] Wither, "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare," 76.

[25] Christopher S. Chivvis, "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare' and What Can Be Done About It," RAND Corporation, 2017, https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT468.html.

[26] Nicu Popescu, "Hybrid Tactics: Neither New nor Only Russian," *EUISS Issue Alert*, vol. 4, 2015, https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Alert_4_hybrid_warfare.pdf, 1.

warfare has been characterised as "old wine in a new bottle."[27] Some critics question the novelty of the so-called "Gherasimov doctrine" and go so far as to argue that Russia's hybrid warfare strategy is neither Russian nor comprehensive enough to be considered a strategy *per se*[28] and the events that unfolded in 2014 in Ukraine were a "unplanned succession of different tools to fit different—often unexpected—operational realities."[29] Moreover, although the term is also present in works authored by Russian analysts, they employ it in reference to Western conceptualizations of war and not as a domestically forged paradigm or even dismiss it as a Western fabrication used to discredit their country.[30] Some dismiss Russia's hybrid warfare strategy as a myth created by western analysts and claim that the use of information operations and cyberspace was not in fact the main area of its operations but rather an area of support for more traditional offensive endeavours.[31]

The Soviet lexicon on political warfare provides some useful notions in describing covert influence activities, the so-called "active measures" being one of the most popular and referenced by western researchers. The essence of these approaches is the systematic use of deliberate but covert disinformation targeting public opinion and/or decision-making elites while maintaining plausible deniability.[32] The latter is essential because of Western dominance over the *Infosphere* granted by technological advantage and its

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[27] Taras Kuzio, "Old Wine in a New Bottle: Russia's Modernization of Traditional Soviet Information Warfare and Active Policies Against Ukraine and Ukrainians," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 32, no. 4 (2019): 485-86, https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2019.1684002.

[28] Sandor Fabian, "The Russian Hybrid Warfare Strategy – Neither Russian nor Strategy," *Defense & Security Analysis* 35, no. 3 (2019): 322, https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2019.1640424.

[29] Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer Look at Russia's 'Hybrid War'," Wilson Centre, April 2015, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/7-KENNAN%20CABLE-ROJANSKY%20KOFMAN.pdf.

[30] Bettina Renz, "Russia and 'Hybrid Warfare'," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 286, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201316.

[31] Fabian, "The Russian Hybrid Warfare Strategy," 322.

[32] Martin Kragh and Sebastian Åsberg, "Russia's Strategy for Influence through Public Diplomacy and Active Measures: The Swedish case," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 6 (2017): 778, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1273830.

cultural-ideational output,[33] which can be best explained by the "force of cultural contamination and ideational infiltration."[34]

Weaponizing polarization

Moscow makes no secret of its dissatisfaction with the current neoliberal international order. Undermining the legitimacy of this order has long been regarded as paramount to Russia's national interest, but recent technological developments provide it with a new channel for its narratives, often disguised as divisive anti-establishment and populist discourses, amplified by social media's filter bubble effect,[35] spreading polarizing discourses that threaten to cause social unrest and erode the stability and ultimately the security of "unfriendly" countries from within. As search engines and social media algorithms improve on their personalisation and recommendation settings, they filter the information flow according to the user's past interaction patterns and thus the more people engage with a certain type of content, the more likely they are to encounter it the next time they use the platform, which has the inadvertent effect of separating people into virtual social bubbles that become *echo chambers*[36] which reinforce pre-existing views and ideas. This can lead to potentially destabilizing levels of ideological polarisation and can play a key role in the political course of a society, as it has been the demonstrated by the recent populist political wave.[37]

Disdain for Western organizations is often a feature of polarizing narratives, presented as alternative viewpoints of the international political

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[33] David J. Betz, "The More You Know, the Less You Understand: The Problem with Information Warfare," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (2006): 509-10, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390600765900.

[34] Betz, "The More You Know, the Less You Understand," 510.

[35] Paolo Gerbaudo, "Social Media and Populism: An Elective Affinity?," *Media, Culture & Society* 40, no. 5 (2018): 746-47, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718772192.

[36] Alex Bruns, "Filter Bubble," *Internet Policy Review* 8, No. 4 (2019): 1-2, https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.4.1426.

[37] Bruns, "Filter Bubble," 1.

debate.[38] This is not to say that critiques should automatically be regarded as illegitimate and potentially subversive. Contentious matters inevitably arise and are bound to test the resilience of a system and offer a healthy and necessary re-evaluation of its decision-making processes. However, when contesting approaches are intentionally manipulated from the outside, and instrumentalized to challenge the international normative power of an actor such as the EU, to diminish trust in the liberal-democratic model from within and contribute to a wider geopolitical struggle, the contour of a "narrative offensive" takes shape.[39]

While attempting to influence public attitudes and behaviours in foreign countries is not unheard of, systematic attempts of destabilising and polarizing the civil arena while preventing decisive responses is a clear indication of a hybrid threat which warrants counter measures.[40] Solidarity, interoperability and resilience are essential to any credible deterrence strategy, as the attribution of aggression generates the legitimacy needed to bolster decisive action.[41] The response must not deviate from policy and must uphold the principles put in place to shield civilians from subversive influence but counter disinformation through accuracy and fact.[42]

The erosion of the moral high ground of Western powers is attempted through the exploitation of divisions, exposing the weaknesses and flaws of democratic institutions, claiming the moral high ground for themselves.[43] Needless to say, dividing, destabilizing and ultimately

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[38] Andrey Makarychev, "Russian 'Cognitive Propaganda:' The Case of Impressum Club in Tallinn," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 37, no. 2 (2020): 58, https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2020.1804259.

[39] Andriy Tyushka, "Weaponizing Narrative: Russia Contesting Europe's Liberal Identity, Power and Hegemony," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 30, no. 1 (2021): 115-16, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1883561.

[40] Monaghan, "Countering Hybrid Warfare," 90.

[41] Monaghan, "Countering Hybrid Warfare," 90.

[42] Elizabeth Oren, "A Dilemma of Principles: The Challenges of Hybrid Warfare From a NATO Perspective," *Special Operations Journal* 2, no. 1 (2016): 63, https://doi.org/10.1080/23296151.2016.1174522.

[43] Maxim A. Suchkov, "Whose Hybrid Warfare? How 'the Hybrid Warfare' Concept Shapes Russian Discourse, Military, and Political Practice," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 32, no. 3 (2021): 429, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2021.1887434.

neutralizing NATO has long been a central goal of Russia and the 2014 crisis in Ukraine has raised concerns linked to the Baltic states and these concerns lead the Latvian MoD to increase preparedness strategies and elaborate public guidelines focused on resilience under occupation and resistance to propaganda.[44]

The clash over the genuine interpretation of the truth gives way to discursive struggles that materialises in attempt to discredit the Other while consolidating one's own interpretation but this purported objectivity and the denial of the validity of an alternative automatically bolsters the latter while destabilizing the dominant interpretation.[45] Social media proves to be a useful tool in the rapid dissemination of high volumes of content that can change opinions and attitudes so as to meet specific political and military objectives.[46] Cyber-enabled information warfare poses an existential threat and has the potential to shake the foundations of contemporary democratic self-government systems[47] as mass data mining provides adversaries with large sets of personal data that can be employed to direct targeted malign messages, facilitating the creation of media bubbles and echo chambers that reinforce pre-existing beliefs while hiding said messaged from the scrutiny of larger public view.[48]

Democratic states are inherently more vulnerable to cyber-enabled political warfare threats[49] but the question of how to respond to strategic narratives is especially thorny in their case since Western liberal democracies

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[44] Duncan McCrory, "Russian Electronic Warfare, Cyber and Information Operations in Ukraine," *The RUSI Journal* 165, no. 7 (2020): 36, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2021.1888654.

[45] Mario Baumann, "'Propaganda Fights' and 'Disinformation Campaigns:' The Discourse on Information Warfare in Russia-West Relations," *Contemporary Politics* 26, no. 3 (2020): 288, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2020.1728612.

[46] Shahbaz Aslam, Noor Hayat, Arshad Ali, "Hybrid Warfare and Social Media: Need and Scope of Digital Literacy," *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 13, no. 12 (2020): 1294, https://doi.org/10.17485/IJST/v13i12.43.

[47] Herbert Lin, "The Existential Threat from Cyber-enabled Information Warfare," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 75, no. 4 (2019): 188, https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2019.1629574.

[48] Lin, "The Existential Threat," 190.

[49] Thomas Paterson and Lauren Hanley, "Political Warfare in the Digital Age: Cyber Subversion, Information Operations and 'Deep Fakes'," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (2020): 446, https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2020.1734772.

need to maintain their *democratic self-image*[50] and uphold the same principles they advocate internationally without resorting to the same methods they condemn when it comes to other actors. The use of nonviolent, civilian-led mobilization presents western democracies with more than one dilemma because responding to nonviolent tactics may put them in a lose-lose scenario[51] thus action restricting the free flow of information or the right to protest for instance can be as detrimental to its credibility and image as non-action. Supplying weapons to a party in conflict is a decision that is difficult to navigate for democracies[52] and another side of the democratic dilemma.

When it comes to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, overreliance on hard power as a deterrence instrument falls short of addressing to irregular threats[53] but the organisation needs to tread lightly on constructing its own information and psychological operations, even defensive ones, so as not to alienate its own political base given the fact that if the Alliance were to deviate "from policy to compete with the Russian strategy, it would break principles established to protect civilians from manipulation and subversive foreign influence."[54]

"Hybrid warfare emerges as the embodiment of uncertainty for the EU and NATO,"[55] and uncertainty can be weaponised as well. In his paper titled "Propaganda, Authoritarianism and Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," Maxim Alyukov's research shows that, similar to other authoritarian

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[50] Maria Hellman and Charlotte Wagnsson, "How Can European States Respond to Russian Information Warfare? An Analytical Framework," *European Security* vol. 26, no. 1 (2017): 153, https://do.org/10.1080/09662839.2017.1294162.

[51] Maciej Bartkowski, "Nonviolent Civilian Defence to Counter Russian Hybrid Warfare," International Centre on Nonviolent Conflict, 2018, https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/GOV1501_WhitePaper_Bartkowski.pdf, 10.

[52] Bartkowski, "Nonviolent Civilian Defense," 18.

[53] Peter Pindják, "Deterring Hybrid Warfare: A Chance for NATO and the EU to Work Together?," NATO Review, Opinion, Analysis And Debate On Security Issues, November 18, 2014, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2014/11/18/deterring-hybrid-warfare-a-chance-for-nato-and-the-eu-to-work-together/index.html.

[54] Oren, "A Dilemma of Principles," 63.

[55] Maria Mälksoo, "Countering Hybrid Warfare as Ontological Security Management: The Emerging Practices of the EU and NATO," *European Security* 27, no. 3 (2018): 379, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2018.1497984.

regimes, the effect of political communication in Russia is not limited to persuasion but rather fosters cynicism and political apathy,[56] which demonstrates that political messaging seeks to persuade the public if possible and politically disengage it if not. Taking these findings into consideration, it would not be too far of a stretch to assume that Russia would use informational overload and conflicting information to instil emotional burnout and apathy in publics abroad in order to disengage them from the Ukrainian cause. As Ecker has demonstrated in his 2017 study on the effectiveness of rebuttals in combatting misinformation, intensive propaganda and statements that suggest an impossibility of assessing the truth about a certain topic can confuse, fatigue, overwhelm and finally disengage the public.[57]

Pre-bunking as defence strategy

Malign messaging is used to exacerbate existing political, social, ethnic, or economic fractures that split people on the basis of an "us-against them" logic at the expense of tolerant and balanced discourse.[58] Disinformation and propaganda are undoubtedly threatening to the stability of states but responding to such threats comes with its own set of challenges and engaging with such threats is also sometimes seen as counterproductive. Refutation and other traditional responses to propaganda have been observed to yield limited and at best mixed results.[59] Fortunately, a growing body of research suggests that pre-bunking might offer an answer to this challenge.

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[56] Maxim Alyukov, "Propaganda, Authoritarianism and Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," *Nature Human Behaviour* 6 (2022): 764, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01375-x.

[57] Ullrich K. H. Ecker, "Why Rebuttals May Not Work: The Psychology of Misinformation," *Media Asia* 44, no. 2 (2017): 86, https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2017.1384145.

[58] Kevin P. Riehle, "Winners and Losers in Russia's Information War," *Intelligence and National Security* 36, no. 7 (2021): 1061, https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2021.1877405.

[59] Richard Hornik, "A Strategy to Counter Propaganda in the Digital Era," in *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* 14, no. 2 (2016): 61, https://ies.lublin.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/riesw_1732-1395_14-2-268.pdf.

Pre-emptive debunking or pre-bunking is a strategy meant to build resistance against misinformation and is a central component of inoculation theory that has two major elements: 1) a forewarning regarding about an impending exposure to misinformation and 2) a pre-emptive refutation of the persuasive arguments that the target audience will be exposed to.[60] When faced with misinformation or disinformation, the effectiveness of de-bunking is often debated but if it is to be successful, any correction needs to be accompanied by a believable alternative explanation.[61] However, if the initial or alternative information comes with a political or ideological baggage, the correction might still not be accepted because of the partisan affinities of the audience and the credibility assigned to the source along with its attributed motives shape the perceptions of the information beyond the relevance of the evidence presented.[62] Partisanship and the perceived credibility of a source, especially political figures, is used to evaluate the truthfulness of information.[63]

Fake grassroot campaigns, referred to as *astroturf* in the literature, present an even more difficult challenge because they create a false sense of legitimacy. In the context of Russian foreign propaganda and online astroturfing, the political opinions of individuals remained influenced by the *astroturf* messages even when inoculated against it.[64] Pre-existing attitudes have been proven to be resistant to corrections, and interventions can even have adverse results due to the "worldview backfire effect" which causes a

[60] Melisa Basol et al., "Towards Psychological Herd Immunity: Cross-cultural Evidence for Two Prebunking Interventions against COVID-19 Misinformation," *Big Data & Society* vol. 8, no. 1 (2021): 2, https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517211013868.

[61] Stephan Lewandowsky and Sander van der Linden, "Countering Misinformation and Fake News Through Inoculation and Prebunking," *European Review of Social Psychology* 32, no. 2 (2021): 354, https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2021.1876983,

[62] Lewandowsky and van der Linden, "Countering Misinformation," 355-56.

[63] Briony Swire, Adam J. Berinsky, Stephan Lewandowsky and Ullrich K. H. Ecker, "Processing Political Misinformation: Comprehending the Trump Phenomenon," *Royal Society Open Science* 4, no. 3 (2017): 16-17, https://doiorg/10.1098/rsos.160802.

[64] Thomas Zerback, Florian Toepfl and Maria Knöpfle, "The Disconcerting Potential of Online Disinformation: Persuasive Effects of Astroturfing Comments and Three Strategies for Inoculation against Them," *New Media & Society* 23, no. 5 (2021): 1094-95, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820908530.

reinforcement of prior beliefs if the corrective evidence comes into contradiction with those beliefs.[65]

When it comes to *astroturf* disinformation attacks, research has demonstrated that pre-bunking outperforms debunking and strategic silence in terms of damage to organizational reputation and social amplification of disinformation.[66] Astroturfing conceals the source of a deliberately misleading message by attributing it to a fake grassroot organisation sometimes sponsored through other shell organisations.[67] These organisations can generate movements that are seemingly grassroot but that are covertly sponsored by parties that wish to promote their interests in a an inconspicuous manner. In the social media era, people are not mere consumers of content but actively engage with it and contribute in spreading it to their network, separating organic engagement from engagement that has been generated through astroturfing is difficult[68] and responding to such threats is far from an easy task given their apparent legitimacy.

Reactive approaches are not only inefficient but can potentially have the unintended effect of reinforcing the debunked rhetorical frame as the repetition of information increases perceived truthfulness and have a *continued influence effect*.[69] This happens even if there is no motivation to believe or disregard the correction and can happen due to the improper way a correction has been done, for instance when disinformation is repeated more than necessary in trying to debunk it and in turn contributes to its

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[65] John Cook, Stephan Lewandowsky, Ullrich K. H. Ecker, "Neutralizing Misinformation through Inoculation: Exposing Misleading Argumentation Techniques Reduces their Influence," *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 5 (2017): 2, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0175799.

[66] Courtney D. Boman, "Examining Characteristics of Prebunking Strategies to Overcome PR Disinformation Attacks,"
Public Relations Review 47, no. 5 (2021): 7, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102105.

[67] Boman, "Examining Characteristics of Prebunking Strategies," 2.

[68] Abdulsamad Sahly, Chun Shao, and K. Hazel Kwon, "Social Media for Political Campaigns: An Examination of Trump's and Clinton's Frame Building and Its Effect on Audience Engagement," *Social Media + Society* 5, no. 2 (April 2019): 10, https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119855141.

[69] Sander van der Linden et al., "How Can Psychological Science Help Counter the Spread of Fake News?," *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 24, no. 25 (2021): 1, https://doi.org/10.1017/sjp.2021.23.

spreads or makes it more familiar,[70] increasing its psychological *fluency* or "ease of information recall"[71] that can facilitate its use in future information processing.

Controversy over policy-relevant facts encourage two dynamics: heuristic-driven information processing and identity-protective cognition,[72] both of which are difficult to tackle in part due to the predisposition of defending the beliefs that fit in our worldview. When faced with corrections that are dissonant with their worldview, individuals either counterargue or refuse to engage with and acknowledge the correction especially in the case of information susceptible to partisan polarisation.[73] As such, scholars such as Ecker argue that it is best to accept that hard evidence will not convince hard believers and redirect their efforts towards the undecided majority.[74] As such, resources will not be wasted on attempts that may yield limited results.

Conclusions

While sharing intelligence with the public is not the most usual defence strategy against propaganda and coercive information tactics, it has the potential of reducing the legitimacy of counter-narratives, especially when the pre-emptive refutation exposes cracks in the communication efforts of an adversary. In practice, these strategic communications reduced the ability of Moscow to distorts facts and conceal goals or claim a legitimate intervention based on a fabricated offence on Ukraine's part. A false-flag operation was expected given the past intervention in Crimea but the

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[70] Ecker, "Why Rebuttals May Not Work," 83.

[71] Adam J. Berinsky, "Rumours and Health Care Reform: Experiments in Political Misinformation," *British Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 2 (2015): 241, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123415000186.

[72] Dan M. Kahan, "Ideology, Motivated Reasoning, and Cognitive Reflection," *Judgment and Decision Making* 8, no. 4 (July 2013): 408-9, https://journal.sjdm.org/13/13313/jdm13313.pdf.

[73] Stephan Lewandowsky et. al., "Misinformation, Disinformation, and Violent Conflict: From Iraq and the 'War on Terror' to Future Threats to Peace," *American Psychologist* 68, no. 7 (2013): 491, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034515.

[74] Ecker, "Why Rebuttals May Not Work," 85.

credibility by such an operation would have been placed under much scrutiny as past statements of Russia regarding its military exercises at the border with a Ukraine have been demonstrated to be false.

The main advantages of this strategy are the increased source legitimacy, the establishment of a narrative superiority that fills information gap and the increased resilience to future attempts of the same nature. The statements of NATO officials targeted disinformation before it spread and warned about the potential of such information being released to the public in an attempt to thwart decisive action or diminish support for the cause that it advocated. Key components of pre-bunking can be identified in allied discourse, namely a forewarning regarding potential attempts of disinformation and false-flag operations as well as a deconstruction of potential persuasive arguments that could be used by the Kremlin. Countering disinformation with facts helps member states navigate the democratic dilemma and bolster the legitimacy of the defending party and increase domestic resilience to future information offensives by establishing trust. Firm stances emphasising preparedness and offering reassurance of the commitment to uphold values can help improve domestic support and address the uncertainty inherent to crises of this magnitude. While public warnings against Moscow did not prevent the escalation, they set in place clear expectations on future courses of action and possible scenarios. Confusion and uncertainty in times of crises can be mitigated by setting clear expectations and help the domestic public prepare for a potentially distressing scenario.

Partisanship will limit the effects of such communications but, as previously established, it is best to target the undecided majority rather than hard believers. This is where the limits of the approach come into play. Another major limitation of this approach is the continued influence of the *worldview-backfire effect* that can cause the unintended strengthening of the offensive narrative through repetition. The terminology used by the Kremlin to describe the attack was not repeated by officials of the member states, as NATO and EU officials used a completely different set of words to describe Russia's actions in Ukraine, which helps avoid reinforcing the narrative that it was trying to combat. Statement reiterating the unity of the alliance and its

readiness to respond to security challenges directed against it can offer some reassurance to the domestic public.

In addressing Putin's claims, NATO officials did not reinforce the Russian narrative by increasing the *fluency* of its version of events through repetition, but focused on its own narrative, limiting the *continued influence effect*. The line between public engagement and disengagement is fine and the quantity of the information released as well as the frequency of the releases can make the difference between a public engaged with the content of the message or one fatigued, emotionally burnt-out, overwhelmed and disengaged by the volume of information received. As such, short, precise and fact-based statements should be planned carefully and restricted to essential information, steering away from divisive and inflammatory rhetoric that can further aggravate internal divisions and ideological or political polarizations potentially destabilizing to European societies.

While these theoretical considerations are limited, they can provide the basis of a future research focused on the public's response that could shed some light on the practical implications of NATO's communication strategy in the context of the current security crisis.

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The History of Cultural Minorities
in Turkey

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Abstract. Turkey, a bridge between Europe and the Orient, has been a strategic point with various influences for a long time. Over time it has faced crises both within and outside its structure and has had both effective and less effective approaches to resolving crises.

In addition to the focus on major international and national events, minorities and the influence of religion should not be overlooked. Being European citizens, it seems normal for us to have rights and to have our ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc. values respected. We offer rights to national minorities and support pluralism, including religion. But how do minorities in Muslim countries, such as Turkey, feel from this perspective?

This topic is a relevant one, and the changes brought by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Turkey are currently being felt in a negative light. The model proposed by Turkey does not have the security mechanisms of existing controls in other countries, such as the United States. Erdoğan's changes have limited citizens' rights. The prime minister's office disappeared, making way for a powerful executive chairman backed by vice presidents. The president has the power to appoint cabinet ministers without asking for a vote of confidence from parliament, to propose budgets, and to appoint more than half of the members of the nation's highest judiciary.

In order to solve the problems, both the efforts of the countries that are primarily involved in respecting minorities and the efforts of the communities in Turkey are present.

Keywords: Turkey, minorities, Kurds, religious minorities, legislation.

Introduction

In Turkey, minorities have problems with the affirmation of their own cultural identity regarding human rights. Although Atatürk has tried

to secularize the Turkish state, unfortunately, the influence of the Muslim religion and the diminution of minority rights, especially religious ones, are now being felt. This interesting topic is under-researched in our country, also in light of recent events. Events in the vicinity of the European Union are also making their mark, influencing its functioning (for example, Turkey has been considered a buffer country in the refugee crisis).

In the context of minority rights, it is important to highlight the history of the most representative ones from Turkey. We presume that minority rights are not fully respected in the Turkish state. The research question is how international legislation was implemented in the human rights domain.

With regard to minority rights, European countries have been involved in regulating legislation and urging Turkey to respect it. The methodology consists in analysing the most important international legislation toward minorities and its implementation in Turkey. The purpose of this article is to study the implementation of human rights concerning the issue of ethnic minorities in Turkey. For the article we have chosen the most relevant Turkish minorities (Kurdish, Roma, the religious minorities).

The theoretical concepts are related to ethnicity and how it was developed over time, related to relevant authors. After the theoretical framework is shown, we emphasize the most relevant Turkish minorities, and then we study the legislation through the content analysis method.

The theoretical framework

In international law there is no exact and generally accepted definition of national minority. Even within the UN, it was not possible to formulate a broad consensus definition, despite discussions that lasted more than two decades.[1] However, there are several elements that refer to national minorities. These refer to the fact that they live on the territory of a state and have citizenship, that they maintain long-term, lasting and permanent ties with that state, that they have distinct ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic

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[1] William Kymlicka quoted by Levente Salat în Eugen Patraș (ed.), *Minoritățile naționale din Ucraina și Republica Moldova: Statutul Juridic* (National Minorities in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova: Judicial Status) (Cernăuți: Alexandru cel Bun, 1999), 11.

characteristics, that they are sufficiently representative, even if they are smaller in number than the rest of the population of a state or within a region,[2] that they have the motivation to preserve together what constitutes their common identity, including culture, traditions, religion or language.[3]

By clearly specifying the differences between persons, but with the same rights, minorities are included, even if they are ethnic, religious, etc. Identity has to do with the interactions or lack thereof between various racial groups.[4] The general approach in the social sciences regarding identity is described by the features and the way of expressing the individuality of a person who belongs to a group or a community, it highlights both objective and subjective aspects and has various connotations.[5]

Studies on minority ethnic groups have generally not been encouraged in Turkey because of the assimilationist model.[6] Christine Inglis presents models within ethnic diversity. Assimilation is the process by which various cultural groups become more and more alike. When assimilation is complete, there is no longer any difference between the respective groups.[7] In the model of differentiation, a functional distinction between the institutions and the institutional system for minority societies is realized.[8]

Nurcan Kaya and Clive Baldwin can be mentioned as representative authors on the issue of minorities in Turkey. They bitterly insist that officially

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[2] Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, *Diplomația publică* (Public Diplomacy), last updated July 20, 2020, http://www.edrc.ro.

[3] Adrian Liviu Ivan, "Diplomația publică şi minoritățile etnice şi naționale" (Public Diplomacy and National and Ethnic Minorities), n.d., http://europa2020.spiruharet.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Diplomația-publica-si-minoritățile-etnice-si-naționale-2.pdf.

[4] Bill Ong Hing, "Beyond the Rhetoric of Assimilation and Cultural Pluralism: Addressing the Tension of Separatism and Conflict in an Immigration-driven Multiracial Society," in *California Law Review* 883 (1993): 866.

[5] Mircea Brie, "Identity as Frontier in Central and Eastern Europe. The Case of the Republic of Moldova," in *The European Space Borders and Issues. In honorem professor Ioan Horga*, eds. Mircea Brie, Alina Stoica, Florentina Chirodea (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2016), 400.

[6] Christine Inglis, Wei Li, Binod Khadria, *International Migration* (London: Sage Publications, 2019), 2-13.

[7] Nicki Lisa Cole, "How Different Cultural Groups Become More Alike," January 26, 2018, https://www.thoughtco.com/assimilation-definition-4149483.

[8] Cristian Bratu, "Asistența socială a minorităților etnice" (Social Welfare for Ethnic Minorities), 2010, https://www.scribd.com/document/97579888/Asistenta-Sociala-a-Minoritatilor-Etnice.

recognized minorities are few compared to their actual numbers.[9] The Kurds and Roma have been studied to a greater extent.

Studies about the Roma have been carried out, especially by Suat Kolukırık, and Şule Toktaş,[10] but research in this regard has also been started by non-governmental organizations. The studies carried out on non-governmental organizations were done through research programs, but studies were also started by the research institute or the authorities interested in this subject. Unlike other topics, for the issue of minorities in Turkey, there are not many studies on all types of minorities, and in some of these studies, minorities are only partially discussed.

We will analyse the most relevant minorities. Roma people, Kurds are large numerically compared to other minorities. Also, it is important to take into consideration the religious minorities and we have chosen those statistically relevant.

The Kurds

The Kurds are a Persian people who settled along the Zagros Mountains in northern Mesopotamia; Sumerian artifacts from the third millennium BC speak of the "Land of the Kardians." Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, while a significant minority, are Alevi or Shia Muslims.[11] There were forms of their statal organizations before the common era.

Among the first forms of state organization is the Kingdom of Corduene (189-384 BC). It was born from the remains of the Seleucid Empire. Throughout history the Kurds have been under foreign rule (Alexander the Great, Roman Empire, Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Armenian Empire, Mongols, Medieval Persia, Ottoman Empire, British, French, United States of

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[9] Nurcan Kaya, Clive Baldwin, "Minorities in Turkey: Submission to the European Union and the Government of Turkey," July 2004, https://en.rightsagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/313_minorities_in_turkey.pdf.

[10] Suat Kolukırık, Şule Toktaş, "Turkey's Roma: Political Participation and Organization," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 5 (2007): 774.

[11] David Romano, "Social Movement Theory and Political Mobilization in Kurdistan," in *The Kurdish Question Revisited,* eds. Gareth Stansfield, Mohammed Shareef (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 28-30.

America).[12] They adapted to the dominant culture, preserving their ethnic and cultural identity until the 21st century.

From the 4th century before our era, the Kurds came under the influence of the Macedonians, the Parthians, the Sassanids, and the Romans. The last major Kurdish dynasty fell in 380 BC, while smaller Kurdish principalities survived to become medieval Kurdish dynasties until the flourishing period of the 12th century.[13]

The Mongol invasion followed by that of the Safavid and Ottoman empires led to the destruction of Kurdish settlements in waves and deportations. The last autonomous Kurdish principalities disappeared in 1867. The response to these systematic and ongoing devastation was that nationalism was born in Turkey.[14]

Turkey has the largest Kurdish population in the world. The idea of a Turkish Kurdistan dates back to the 16th century, when several Kurdish principalities fell under the influence of the Ottoman Empire. Rapid urbanization in the 20th century forced many Kurds to change their nomadic way of life, increasing nationalist sentiments among the Kurdish population. Today most Kurds accuse the Turkish state of marginalization and discrimination, but also of forced attempts at Turkification.[15]

The Treaty of Sèvres signed on August 10, 1921 referred to an independent Kurdish state to cover large portions of former Ottoman Kurdistan, but was abandoned when France and Britain divided Ottoman Kurdistan between Turkey, Syria and Iraq and formalized this division in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.[16]

Ever since the Ottoman Empire the Kurds have shown nationalist tendencies in the context of the establishment of borders in the Middle East, where the western imperial powers were exhibiting their influence. Kurdish nationalist tendencies from the period of the Ottoman Empire had no effect.

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[12] Romano, "Social Movement Theory," 28-30.

[13] Romano, "Social Movement Theory," 17.

[14] The Kurdish Project, "Kurdish History," n.d., https://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-history/, last access August 3, 2022.

[15] Maria Teresa O'Shea, *Trapped between the Map and Reality: Geography and Perceptions of Kurdistan* (London: Routledge, 2004), 3.

[16] "Kurdish History."

The countries where the Kurdish minority makes its presence felt in a large proportion are Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Kurdish identity was formed around the three great cultures in their vicinity: Turkish, Persian and Arabic.[17] These cultures represented real challenges over time for the Kurds, but they preserved their traditions without being endangered.

Addressing any aspect of Kurdish history and culture intersects and overlaps with the shaping and evolution of Kurdish national consciousness.[18] Fortunately for the Kurds, they were able to retreat into the mountains to preserve their sanctuary. This protection saved them from destruction and allowed them to survive as a distinct ethnic group.[19] During Hafez al-Assad's rule, in the 1970s, Turkey appropriated part of the Hatay peninsula, a Syrian province that is still part of Turkey today, although some Syrian maps still show it as part of their country, according to Joshua M. Landis.[20]

Approximately 30,000,000 – 38,000,000 Kurds live today spread all over the world and are considered the largest ethnic group in the world without their own state.[21] They still hope for the ideal Kurdistan promised after World War II, but never really guaranteed.

Since the problems with the Kurdish separatists arose, Turkey spent about six billion dollars annually until 2014 to try to solve the problems. Saddam Hussein in Iraq during his time of influence tried several times to exterminate millions of Kurds.

The Kurds have never felt understood, appreciated, helped in any period of history. Even in Armenia and Azerbaijan they are fighting for freedom and to preserve their culture. They do not give up the goal of having

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[17] Jordi Tejel, "New Perspectives on Writing the History of the Kurds in Iraq, Syria and Turkey: A History and State of the Art Assessment," in *The Kurdish Question Revisited,* 13.

[18] Adriana Tămăşan, *Identitate şi alteritate la kurzi în secolele XIX, XX* (Kurdish Identity and Alterity in the 19th and 20th Centuries) (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2009), 239.

[19] Smaranda Toader, *Analiza conflictului dintre Turcia şi Siria* (Analysing the Conflict between Turkey and Syria), May 29, 2013, https://www.slideshare.net/smarandatoader/conflictul-siria-turcia-relatii-internationale.

[20] "Kurdish History."

[21] Nicu Pârlog, "Kurzii: despre destinul unui popor fără ţară" (The Kurds: The Fate of a People without a Country), in *Descoperă* (Discovery), June 9, 2014, http://www.descopera.ro/cultura/12717263-kurzii-despre-destinul-unui-popor-fara-tara.

their own state, taking as example the descendants of Saladin, the one who defeated and eliminated the crusaders from the region.

The Kurds are an ethno-linguistic group inhabiting a mountainous region in the northern Middle East (including northern Iraq, north-western Iran, north-eastern Syria, and south-eastern Turkey), collectively referred to as "Kurdistan."[22]

The Kurds live mostly in North Kurdistan, in south-eastern and eastern Anatolia. Large Kurdish populations can be found in western Turkey due to internal migration. According to Rüstem Erkan, Istanbul is the province with the largest Kurdish population in Turkey.[23]

The Kurds consider themselves the descendants of the Hurrians who inhabited these mountains in the third, second and first millennium BC, as well as the descendants of the Indo-Europeans who flooded the area in the first millennium BC.[24]

Archaeological discoveries in the places where Kurds lived highlight artifacts from thousands of years ago. These artifacts include working the land, raising animals, and various occupations.

The occupations were carried out by weaving looms, pottery, metallurgy, and archaic urbanization. The Hurrians stood out, but about four millennia ago the first Indo-European nomadic migrants moved to that area. The Hurrian heritage was not completely assimilated, being an important element of Kurdish culture and identity. It followed that these experienced warriors formed free dynasties and the nobility of Mittens, Kassites, and Hittites. Organized Kurdistan in the European area is three millennia old.[25]

The approach to any aspect related to the history and culture of the Kurds intersects and overlaps with the shaping and evolution of the Kurdish national consciousness.[26]

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[22] Pârlog, "Kurzii."

[23] Time Turk, "En Buyuk şehri Istanbul" (The Largest Kurdish City, Istanbul), March 25, 2021, https://www.timeturk.com/.

[24] "Kurdish History."

[25] "Kurdish History."

[26] Tămăşan, *Identitate şi alteritate*, 239.

Archaeological discoveries in the territories inhabited by the Kurds highlight 8,000-12,000 year-old artifacts of animal husbandry, agricultural practice, and advanced crafts such as weaving looms, pottery, metallurgy, and archaic urbanization. The Hurrians stood out, but about 4,000 years ago the first Indo-European nomads settled in that area, and these experienced warriors would form the ruling castes and the aristocracies of the Mittan, Kassite and Hittite populations. The political and social entity of Indo-European Kurdistan dates back 3,000 years. The Hurrian heritage was not fully assimilated, being an important element of Kurdish culture and identity.

From a physical and cultural point of view, the Kurds do not resemble Turks or Arabs at all. Their physiology, skin and eye colour is Mediterranean-Aryan, meaning a large proportion of people with green and blue eyes. There are two racial substrates, the dark paleo-Caucasian type, but also an Alpine type "blondism" in the historical centre of Kurdistan. The "Aryanization" of the Kurds was achieved by introducing the racial elements of the Persians, Scythians and Alans, and the Kurdish language is a north-western subdivision of the Iranian languages in the Indo-European language family. The Kurds are mostly Sunni or Shiite Muslims, but there is also Yardanism, or the cult of angels, condemned by Islam.

Kurdish literature is rich, the oral tradition is even richer, and folklore and music are distinct from their neighbours.[27] The traditional costumes contain elements from the Persian tradition, intertwining with parts of the Turkish culture, but also from the Arab tradition in the basic elements and in the female ornaments. In traditional music the subject of the desired country is often encountered, alongside themes of struggle for the lost ideal. And in contemporary musical culture, there are traditional substrata that refer to history. Therefore, the Kurdish area, although less developed from certain points of view, hides a rich culture.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party was founded in 1978 by a group of students led by Abdullah Öcalan ("the uncle"); it emerged as a response to the Turkish government's oppression of the Kurdish population – the traditional Kurdish language, clothing, or dress being banned by law. It is

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[27] Pârlog, "Kurzii."

based on Marxism and revolutionary socialism, initially aimed to establish an independent and socialist Kurdistan state, and began guerrilla warfare against the Turkish government. Since 1984 it has turned into a paramilitary group and launched terrorist attacks on the entire Turkish government apparatus. In the 1990s, the party launched hundreds of bomb attacks on the Turkish government from Syria (with the help of the Syrian government). Turkey forced the Syrian authorities to end aid to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, even threatening armed intervention; the party has been classified as a terrorist organization by the US, EU, and NATO. As a result of the conflict between this party and Turkey, 50,000 people lost their lives and another 3,000,000 were forced to flee. After 1999 the group gradually abandoned its guerrilla tactics, but also its Marxist ideology. Today under the name the Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan, the group campaigns for "democratic confederalism." Despite repeated efforts, the Turkish government has failed to put an end to the organization's activities.[28]

The US supported Kurdish autonomy in Iraq and Syria without the idea of independence because of the instability this event would create in the Middle East. They wanted to avoid the deterioration of relations with Turkey. Russia opposed independence, being in favour of peaceful dialogue to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq, Iran, etc. They would rather accept autonomy. China has shown itself willing to accept an independent Kurdish state, only if the countries of the Middle East give their consent. The EU saw an independent Kurdistan as a factor that could destabilize the region. Israel officially supports the creation of an independent Kurdistan.[29]

The Roma minority

Another minority without their own state are the Roma. Their relationship with the Turkish state was not as controversial as in the case of the Kurds.

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[28] O'Shea, *Trapped*, 165-66.

[29] Russel Goldman, "Kurds Voted for Independence. Here's Who Else Has a Say," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/world/middleeast/kurds-independence-referendum-explainer.html.

The political situation in the Republic of Turkey, maintaining as much as possible an assimilationist and nationalist line of reasoning, does not encourage studies and research related to ethnicity, which would support a cultural pluralist and a heterogeneous society.[30] Modern Gypsy populations in Turkey include Romani, Domari and Lomari, three major linguistic groups under the general term "Gypsy." They each maintained a distinct culture (including to a greater or lesser extent their historic languages) and many of the traditional occupations and crafts that populations elsewhere had long since lost.[31] Among the last countries where Roma have been able to formally create ethnically based political organizations are Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria and Russia.[32]

Most Roma are sedentary and are found in larger cities, but some are still nomads who follow predetermined itineraries throughout the country.[33] There are approximately 1,000,000 Roma in Turkey.[34]

Regarding the Roma, in 1475 they were registered for the first time in the Ottoman territories. They were registered mainly for tax purposes.[35] Most are Muslim, only a few are Christian. Members of the Roma community are widespread, but they are stigmatized and excluded from most of Turkish society. However, there is little record of reported incidents of public or government harassment directed against them.[36] Research and statistics on Roma in Turkey are still limited.

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[30] Adrian R. Marsch, Melike Karlıdağ, "Study of Research Literature Regarding Turkish Gypsies and the Question of Gypsy Identity," *European Roma Rights Centre Country Reports Series*, nr. 17, 2008, http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/biz-buradayız!-türkiye'de-romanlar-ayrımcı-uygulamalar-ve-hak-mücadelesi.pdf, 156.

[31] Adrian R. Marsch, "A Brief History of Gypsies in Turkey," *European Roma Rights Centre Country Reports Series*, nr. 17, 2008, https://eriac.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Marsh-Adrian-2008-A-Brief-History-of-Gypsies-in-Turkey.pdf, 20.

[32] Kolukırık, Toktaş, "Turkey's Roma," 774.

[33] European Roma Rights Centre, "Turkish Authorities Destroy Romani Neighbourhoods for Urban Development," November 13, 2006, http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2702&archiv=1.

[34] The UN Refugee Agency, "UNHCR," n.d., https://www.unhcr.org/, last access August 3, 2022.

[35] European Roma Rights Centre, "Turkish Authorities Destroy."

[36] European Roma Rights Centre, "Roma Rights Field," n.d., http://errc.org/rr, last access August 3, 2022.

Settlement law no. 2510 of 1934 explicitly discriminates against Roma ("itinerant Gypsies"), prohibiting their settlement in Turkey. In addition, the Roma are frequently treated as second-class citizens and therefore discriminated against in terms of employment, housing and access to health care.[37]

The "invisibility" of the Roma in data collection and policy-making certainly indicates a challenge in terms of providing reliable data on the population and geographic distribution of Roma citizens in Turkey.[38]

The civil status of the Roma in the Ottoman Empire was quite complicated, as they were differentiated not on religious criteria like the rest of the population, but rather on ethnic criteria. However, it appeared that the status of Roma in the Ottoman Empire was overall higher than that of Roma in Western Europe during the same time period.[39]

The fate of the Roma in the Turkish territories is primarily endangered by the fact that they are not formally recognized as a minority by the authorities. This means that any of their attempts to organize themselves culturally can be interpreted as an act against the Turkish state and punished accordingly.[40] Similarly, this means that a Roma person cannot legally claim to have been harmed on the basis of ethnicity, which means that "discrimination" cannot exist in legal terms in Turkey with regard to the Roma.

The Roma in Turkey speak the Romani language, which is heavily influenced by Turkish, Kurdish and Greek words and expressions. Roma in Turkey are either Muslim or Christian.[41]

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[37] The European Commission, "Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)," n.d., https://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary%20/accession%20_criteria_copenhague_en.htm, last access August 3, 2022.

[38] Başak Koyuncu, Cengiz Çiftçi, Mert Altıntaş, Özge Konuralp, Şeyda Aykulteli, "Roma Social Inclusion in Turkey," 2015, https://www.academia.edu/29935705/Roma_Social_Inclusion_in_Turkey.

[39] "Türk ceza kanunu" (Turkish Penal Code), 2004, https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5237.pdf.

[40] European Roma Rights Centre, "Roma Rights Field."

[41] European Roma Rights Centre, "Issues Brief: Roma Rights in Turkey," n.d., http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2254&archiv=1.

Religious minorities

According to the 2017-2018 census, Sunni Muslims are 80.5% in the Turkish state, Shia Muslims 16.5%, Koranic Muslims 1%, spiritual, but not religious 1%, others 0.8%, Christians 0.2%. The rest of the population belongs to other religions, especially Christian denominations (Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Syriac Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant) and Judaism, mostly Sephardi Jews and a small Ashkenazi community.[42]

The majority of those belonging to other religions are Apostolic Armenians, Assyrians, Orthodox Greeks, Roman Catholics and about 26,000 Jews, mainly Sephardic. According to a 2002 report from the Pew Research Centre, 65% of Turks thought religion was very important, while a 2005 Eurobarometer survey found that belief in the existence of God was important.[43] (for 95% of Turks).

Throughout history there have been various events that have left their mark on the demographic structure of the country.[44] The genocide of the Syrians, Assyrians, Greeks, Armenians and Chaldeans, the exchanges of population between Greece and Turkey,[45] the First World War and the emigration of Christians (Greeks, Armenians, etc.) to foreign countries (especially in Europe and America), which actually began at the end of the 19th century and increased in the first quarter of the 20th century, especially during the First World War, gradually led to demographic changes.[46] Taking into account the relatively current international crises, there were more than 200,000–320,000 people of various Christian denominations, representing about 0.3% of the population of Turkey,[47] including an estimated number of

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[42] United Nations Population Fund, "Turkey–a Brief Profile," 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20070719103604/http://www.unfpa.org.tr/countryinfo.htm.

[43] İbrahim Kaya, *Social Theory and Later Modernities: The Turkish Experience* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003).

[44] Emilia Nicoleta Șchiop, "The Protection of Orthodox Patrimonia in Turkey," in *Redefining Community in an Intercultural Context* 1 (2020): 37.

[45] Nikolaos Andriotis, "The Refugees Question in Greece (1821-1930)," *Issues of Modern Greek History* (2007): 116-71.

[46] Efraim Karsh, "Editors' Introduction: Why a Special Issue? Disappearing Christians of the Middle East," *Middle East Quarterly* 1 (2001): 3.

[47] Central Intelligence Agency, "Religions," 2007, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html#tu.

80,000 Eastern Orthodox.[48] There have been no significant changes since that census. The issue of minority rights is treated seriously in the member countries, but also in the case of those that accede to the EU.

Throughout history, there have been various events that have left their mark on the demographic structure of the country. [49]

In Turkey, a pseudo-consultative policy was used regarding the rights of minorities following requests and pressures from the European Union. Turkey created an image of being responsible for meeting the criteria, but in fact it did not create any significant measure of support in the process of accession negotiations and continued its traditional policies towards minorities. The Turkish state began to cooperate with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but within the framework of the cooperation the main basis was to support tolerance and eliminate discrimination against Muslims. Secondly, there are restrictive measures regarding work and, implicitly, minorities are discriminated against, including religious ones.

Unfortunately, the Romanian authorities do not know the number of Orthodox Romanians in Turkey or vaguely estimate it; following the decision to build a mosque in Bucharest, an attempt was made to find out more information about the Orthodox Romanians in Turkey. [50] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania has no way to identify Romanian citizens based on belonging to one religion or another, because they are not obliged to declare their religion with the embassy. Thus, it cannot compile any record based on their religion. The State Secretariat for Religions declared that it has no powers regarding believers from outside the country. The Patriarchate, however, believes that there are approximately 14,000 Orthodox Romanians in the Istanbul region and that hundreds of thousands of Romanians pass through Turkey every year, most of them tourists. Father Sergiu-Marcel Vlad

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[48] Today's Zaman, "Foreign Ministry: "89,000 Minorities Live in Turkey," December 15, 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20110520084230/http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_get NewsById.action?load=detay&link=161291.

[49] Emilia Nicoleta Șchiop, "Protejarea patrimoniului ortodox în Turcia" (Protecting the Orthodox Patrimony in Turkey), *Tabor* 1 (2020), 84.

[50] Istanbul Tour Studio, "Patriarchate Church," n.d., https://istanbultourstudio.com/things-to-do/fener-greek-ortodox-church, last access August 4, 2022.

from the Church of the Holy Martyr Paraschevi Pikridion in Istanbul specified that he is forced to hold the service in the courtyard on the occasion of the great holidays, because a large number of believers participate. The Romanians from our country have been involved since 2002 so that those from Istanbul receive land for the cemetery in the Kilyos area on the outskirts of Istanbul. The cemetery was received as a reciprocal gesture to the fact that the Romanian state offered the Turkish-Tatar community various lands in Dobrogea. The Romanian cemetery has an area of 3,000 square meters and is located approximately 40 kilometres away from the church. Also based on reciprocity, there were discussions regarding a new Romanian church after the decision to build a mosque in Bucharest.[51]

When discussing the issue of religious minorities in Turkey, one cannot lose sight of the importance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, an emblematic institution of Orthodoxy. Indirectly, thanks to the secularization started by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople managed to have a harmonious development.[52] This is also known as the Church of Saint George, being considered one of the most important Orthodox buildings in the whole world. In this framework, in 2015, to ensure the protection and survival of Orthodoxy in Istanbul, the Russian Orthodox Church, through deputies of the State Duma, requested the return of Saint Sophia to the Orthodox Church. This was stated by the Chairman of the Committee on Property and the Coordinator of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for the Protection of Christian Values, Sergei Gavrilov. At that time the Russian-Turkish relations were in a "process of resistance," friendly mutual initiatives and proposals being of particular importance; the Russian side considered possible a future reference to the question of Saint Sophia, the ancient shrine of the Christian world, an old Byzantine cathedral associated with the history of the universal Christian church. Russia reportedly tried to make efforts to participate financially, but also wanted to involve the best Russian architects and scientists in the restoration of the universal Christian monument. This step would have helped Turkey and Islam to demonstrate that goodwill

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[51] Șchiop, "Protejarea patrimoniului ortodox în Turcia," 84.
[52] Șchiop, "Protejarea patrimoniului ortodox în Turcia," 87.

would be above politics. Along with the edifice of Orthodoxy in Istanbul, Saint Sophia, the Orthodox faith has been preserved over time and with the help of the Greeks from the Fener district of Istanbul.[53]

Fener is an area in the middle of the Golden Horn in the Fatih district of Istanbul. The streets in the area are still full of historic wooden houses, churches and synagogues from Byzantine and Ottoman times. Its name comes from the Greek (fanari) and means lantern; during the Byzantine period of the city, a monument in the form of a column was placed which was surrounded by a lantern. After the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453, the Fener neighbourhood became the home of most of the Greeks who remained in the city. The Greek inhabitants were called Phanariotes. In 1599 the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople moved to the area and is still located there. So Fener is often used as shorthand for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, just as the Vatican is used for the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church. Under Ottoman rule the Ecumenical Patriarch was responsible as ethnarch for all Orthodox in the Ottoman state, assuming all administrative and legal responsibilities in civil cases concerning Orthodox Christians. Thus, Fener was the centre of Orthodox Christian culture under Ottoman rule. So, the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch is St. George's Cathedral. The Fener Greek Orthodox College was founded in 1454 and is located near the cathedral, and in the 16th century a Greek school, the Great School of the Nation, was established. This is the high school today for the ethnic Greek residents of Istanbul.[54]

The Orthodox Church has had its seat in Istanbul since the 4th century. However, Turkey does not recognize the ecumenical status of Patriarch Bartholomew I, the primary bishop among equals in the traditional hierarchy of Orthodox Christianity, and forces the Church to operate under significant restrictions (some of the church's properties and schools, such as the Büyükada Island Orphanage and the Theology from Halki, were expropriated or closed).[55]

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[53] Şchiop, "Protejarea patrimoniului ortodox în Turcia," 88.

[54] Orthodox Wiki, "Phanar," 2012, https://orthodoxwiki.org/Phanar.

[55] Kaya, *Social Theory*, 3.

The Romanian church is called Holy Martyr Paraskevi and it is one of the wonderful little Orthodox churches in Constantinople. It is located in the Hasköy neighbourhood, cared for and served by Father Silviu State. The place of worship of the Romanian Orthodox community in Turkey is located in the European part, on the eastern shore of the Golden Horn bay, in the old Byzantine neighbourhood of Prikidion. The shrine of the little church is the Holy Martyr Paraschevi, celebrated on July 26.[56]

A 12th century Armenian Orthodox church in Turkey, believed to have been the first in Anatolia, reopened in 2009 after a year of renovations; the services were officiated by Archbishop Aram Ateshian of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey, located in Istanbul (northwest).

An important role for the Christian communities in Turkey is played by the Syrian Orthodox Church, therefore it is essential to observe its organization and the way in which it positively influences the activity of Christians.[57]

The analysis of the legislation

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Turkey has practiced a policy of "Turkification," a form of cultural assimilation, which does not recognize the rights of individuals to ethnic, national and religious self-identification and aims at the forced assimilation of Turkish identity.[58] It includes several strategies whose rationale violates, in one way or another, the international standards guaranteed for the rights of minorities.

These strategies further include: denying formal recognition to minority groups, preventing their access to the press, limiting their political participation by violating their freedom of expression (especially in their own language), hindering their religious freedom by refraining from

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[56] Emilia Nicoleta Şchiop, "Comunitatea ortodoxă din Turcia" (The Orthodox Community in Turkey), *Tabor* 7 (2019): 86.

[57] Crestin Ortodox.ro, "Biserică armenească din secolul al XII-lea, redeschisă în Turcia" (12th Century Armenian Church Reopens in Turkey), n.d., https://www.crestinortodox.ro/stiri/cauta/biserica%20armeneasca%20istanbul/, last access August 4, 2022.

[58] The European Commission, "Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)," n.d., https://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary%20accession%20_criteria_copenhague_en.htm, accessed on 27.10.2022.

facilitating the freedom of movement and choice of residence and practicing or tolerating various other forms of direct and indirect discrimination.[59]

That is, the preamble of the constitution openly avoids any effort to affirm cultures, education in the mother tongue or other activities that do not have Turkish in common. Initiatives or actions considered anti-Turkish, secessionist or simply divergent to national interests are seen as negative. Thus, by referring to the existence of minorities, the provisions of the constitution consider this fact "the creation of minorities," and the activities as such have been criminalized in Turkish law.

Turkey bases its minority policies on the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and claims to be bound only by that treaty, which is itself outdated in light of current international standards for the protection of minority rights.[60] Undoubtedly, Turkey's ability to resolve minority issues greatly influences especially, but not exclusively, relations with the EU.

When in December 2004 the EU gave the green light and scheduled the launch of Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU for October 2005, it was assumed that Turkey had sufficiently met the so-called Copenhagen political criteria, which include stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.[61]

Moreover, while the Treaty of Lausanne provides protection for all non-Muslim minorities, all Turkish governments since 1923 have interpreted the treaty to guarantee protection to only three minority groups: Armenian Orthodox Christians, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Jews. Furthermore, these groups are only recognized as religious - not ethnic – minorities. [62]

While mother tongue education would be allowed in private schools, education in a language other than Turkish would not be allowed in public schools.[63] The democratization package that was launched in 2013 does not establish new rights on this subject, but offers a new solution to the problems

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[59] The European Commission, "Accession Criteria."

[60] Kaya, Baldwin, "Minorities in Turkey."

[61] Kaya, Baldwin, "Minorities in Turkey."

[62] Kaya, Baldwin, "Minorities in Turkey."

[63] Ergun Özbudun, "The Turkish 'Democratization Package'," October 15, 2013, https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkish-democratization-package.

that arose in 2005. Despite being the largest minority group in Turkey, the Kurds are still not officially recognized. Thus, the Kurdish question is one of the most vital minority issues. The Turkish state's denial of Kurdish existence, identity and culture plays a key role in this issue.[64]

In addition to the set of standards, principles and mechanisms of international law adopted by the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe, designed for the protection of minority rights, which are legally or politically binding for Turkey, the EU accession, which Turkey is striving for, would require the Turkish state to comply with EU standards on the treatment of minority groups.

Conclusions

The political situation in the Republic of Turkey maintains as much as possible an assimilationist and nationalist line of reasoning, does not encourage studies and research on ethnicity in general that would support a cultural pluralist and heterogeneous society. In order to target the way in which rights are respected in the respective country, we highlighted the contradictory legislative statements regarding the rights of minorities, including the legislation used against them. Also, the attempts of the Kurdish organizations are to be appreciated, but in order to have an important say, they should be combined with a legislative basis.

There are contradictory legislative statements regarding minority rights, including legislative articles used against them. The political situation in Turkey maintains assimilationist and nationalist ideas. Studies and research that would emphasize a heterogeneous society are not encouraged, nor are those related to ethnicity in general. Ideas of cultural pluralism are not supported. The authorities only partially pursued the rights and the controversial points faced by the representatives of the minorities in the exercise of their rights were raised.

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[64] Ceren Belge, "State Building and the Limits of Legibility: Kinship Networks and Kurdish Resistance in Turkey," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 1 (2011): 95, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743810001212.

In short, suggesting minority rights reform in Turkey is a delicate matter, which is complicated by the fact that there are many distinct minority groups living in the country. It is indeed difficult to solve these problems, regardless of whether one wants to implement maximum or minimum reform.

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Name Index

"Let me from the outset commend the Faculty of European Studies of the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, and Professor Naumescu for this timely initiative. This conference takes place at the most appropriate moment as, with a new Administration in Washington, the decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic are currently working diligently on renewing and strengthening the transatlantic partnership. We, in the EU, are encouraged by the positive signals received from Washington so far, and feel determined to continue our efforts in favor of giving a new impetus to the transatlantic relationship."

H.E. Klaus Werner Iohannis, the President of Romania
(EUXGLOB I, April 2021)

"I am very enthusiastic to attend this event and I will join President Iohannis in commending Professor Naumescu and the organizers for the substantial first edition of this annual conference. I am confident that this event will become a well-acknowledged landmark in addressing the most salient issues of international relations."

Professor **Bogdan Aurescu**, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania
(EUXGLOB I, April 2021)