Towards a New European Security Architecture

Edited by
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Foreword by
Dr Antonios Nestoras

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Foreword: Towards a New European Security Architecture

Dr Antonios Nestoras, Deputy Executive Director, European Liberal Forum

In the face of a rapidly evolving global landscape, the European continent finds itself at a critical juncture. Recent events, most notably Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have not only disrupted the geopolitical order but have also fundamentally challenged the long-standing principles that underpin European security. These seismic shifts necessitate a comprehensive reassessment of the European security architecture, prompting the publication of the study *Towards a New European Security Architecture*.

From its inception, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been central to the collective security of Europe. NATO's first Secretary General, Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, succinctly captured the essence of the organisation's purpose when he quipped that it had been created to 'keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down'. This witticism underscored the prevailing wisdom that shaped European security, one that became even more pertinent as the process of European integration unfolded, culminating in the formation of the European Union.

The fundamentals of European security were often articulated in slightly more formal language, such as consolidating and strengthening the transatlantic partnership, deterring totalitarian expansion, and ensuring that war became materially impossible. These principles remained remarkably resilient over the years, enduring through numerous historical milestones. European security relied on the presence of the United States as a steadfast guarantor, the containment and retreat of Russia, and the relative military restraint of Germany despite its economic might.

The Americans have been pivoting towards Asia for decades now and the Germans have not been entirely dormant or docile for some time. However, it was the Russian invasion of Ukraine that shattered the above long-held assumptions about the fundamentals of European security. The eruption of a full-scale conflict on European soil highlighted the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the existing security architecture. The realities on the ground – the proximity and intensity of the conflict – challenged the notion of a stable and secure European order, leading policymakers to confront the urgent need for a profound re-examination of European security in order to respond effectively to the emerging threats and challenges.

This is the starting point of our study *Towards a New European Security Architecture*. It endeavours to provide a comprehensive and policy-oriented perspective on the transformative changes occurring in European security and the European Union's response. At a time when certainties about security and peace have been shattered, policymakers in Brussels and national capitals must look beyond the immediate crisis and chart a course that safeguards our shared European values and the liberal democratic order.

The scope of the study extends beyond the conventional domains of foreign policy and defence cooperation, embracing a wider understanding of security. It examines critical issues such as energy security, institutions, democratic resilience, EU strategic autonomy, and more. By adopting this comprehensive approach, and by presenting fresh ideas and approaches, the study aims to anticipate and shape the discussions and political agendas that will define the future of European security.

The chapters contained in this study cover a diverse range of topics and offer valuable insights and innovative ideas. They delve into the dynamic fluctuations in transatlantic relations, underscore the importance of Western support for Ukraine, and analyse the multifaceted consequences of Russia's invasion on diplomacy, defence, economics, and the foundational principles of liberal democracy. The study also delves into other crucial security

dimensions, such as energy security, supply chain security, cybersecurity, critical infrastructure protection, enlargement, and accession. Moreover, it examines the complexities and significance of European security for key regions such as Africa, the Eastern Neighbourhood, and the Western Balkans.

By delving into these pressing themes, the study equips policymakers, scholars, and concerned citizens with the knowledge and insights necessary to navigate the complex security landscape of Europe. It is a collective effort that aims to inform decision-making processes, influence policy discussions, and contribute to the development of a new European security architecture, one that ensures peace, stability, and the preservation of the liberal democratic order.

In an era marked by uncertainty and evolving threats, studies at the intersection of theory and practice stand as a beacon of knowledge and guidance for those responsible for shaping Europe's security agenda. The authors, researchers, and contributors have shared their expertise and insights to produce a work of exceptional depth and rigor. Their collective efforts have yielded a comprehensive examination of some dimensions of the changing fundamentals of European security and the necessary pathways to forge a new security architecture fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

As we embark on this journey towards a new European security architecture, we must recognise the significance of open dialogue, inclusive decision-making, and the pursuit of shared goals. It is through our collective dedication that we can shape a future that upholds the values of peace, stability, and prosperity for all. The study will undoubtedly stimulate robust debate, guide policy formulation, and contribute to the creation of a secure, resilient, and prosperous Europe.

I extend my sincerest appreciation to the authors, researchers, and contributors who have dedicated their expertise and insights to produce this study. Most of all, my gratitude goes to the editor, Francesco Cappelletti, for taking care of every single element of this publication. These collective efforts have yielded a work that can serve as an invaluable resource for those engaged in shaping the future of European security. It is my fervent hope that this study will serve as a catalyst for meaningful change and will pave the way towards a new European security architecture that upholds the values and aspirations of a united and secure Europe.

Liberal World Order after Ukraine

Georg Sørensen

ABSTRACT

What kind of world order is emerging and what are the roles and tasks of the European Union (EU) within it? We must begin with Russia's attack on Ukraine; for many observers this major event marks a severe setback for an open, rule-based liberal world order. In its wake, we are experiencing a return to a realist world of anarchy, power competition, and security dilemmas. This is in stark contrast to the liberal optimism that prevailed especially in the first decade after the end of the Cold War. The division between liberal optimists and sceptical realists is the primary fault line in the debate about world order. After a brief discussion of the war in Ukraine, the chapter turns towards the broader picture of current international relations. It will appear that both realists and liberals make valid points and display shortcomings. The final part of the chapter focuses on the consequences of all this for the EU in both the international and the domestic domain.

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REALISM, LIBERALISM, AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Events such as the Russian attack on Ukraine do not explain themselves; they require interpretation. For that, we need theories. Several realist observers (e.g. Walt, 2022; Mearsheimer, 2022) find that offensive realism has been vindicated by what happened: Russia competes with the West and worries about security in its near abroad. Ukraine was drifting towards the West, seeking NATO and European Union (EU) membership; Russia had to react: this is Realist Power Politics 101. Thucydides made the point in the context of the Peloponnesian war: 'the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must'.

But the Russian reaction was not self-evident in the way implied by realism. Russia was also opposed to NATO membership for the Baltic countries. Yet already in 2001 Vladimir Putin declared that 'we cannot forbid people to make certain choices if they want to' and that Baltic membership was 'no tragedy' for Russia. When it actually happened in 2004, there were, according to the US ambassador to Moscow, 'few complaints' from Russia (Banka, 2019).

Additional objections against the parsimonious realist understanding can be made (Kleinschmidt, 2019). At the very least, we must note that the realist focus on threat balancing cannot be the core issue in an analysis of the Russian attack. We must draw in domestic affairs in Russia (and Ukraine) as well as the changing international scene in Eastern Europe; the concentration of power in Russia around Putin; his increasingly rampant nationalism combined with his view that the West is timid, weak, and even leaderless after four years of Donald Trump's focus on America first; and the US retreat from global responsibility. Putin's Russia was not fearful of Western strength; it was animated by a belief in Western weakness after successful Russian interventions in Syria, Crimea, and Georgia.

The veneration of realism is often accompanied by a sharp critique of liberal International Relations theory (Walt, 2022). The liberal view is much more optimistic than the realist view. The optimism is built on three pillars: democracies make up a zone of peace since they do not go to war against each other; international institutions provide fora for peaceful conflict resolution; and finally, cross-border trade and other relations of interdependence create a mutual interest in avoiding conflict. Russia is an autocracy, so the first pillar will not work. That leaves institutions and interdependence. International institutions have not played a large role in relation to Ukraine, and the United Nations Security Council is sidelined by Russian veto power. And economic interdependence, so critics claim, has not prevented Russia's armed aggression.

But there is something else going on here. The Russian leadership is well aware that integration into the world economy is a double-edged sword: it might produce opposition and resistance at home, which would threaten its hold on power.

The Russian leadership is well aware that integration into the world economy is a double-edged sword: it might produce opposition and resistance at home, which would threaten its hold on power.

That opposition would come not only from people in the streets but also from business elites increasingly integrated with the West and therefore less willing to be dominated by an autocratic regime. To counter this, the regime might seek, paradoxically, to combine integration with isolation. 'Aggressive isolationism' (Krastev & Holmes, 2014: 6) is an attempt to re-nationalise Russia's business classes, and the confrontation over Ukraine is meant to 'scandalize the West in order to increase Russia's economic, political, and cultural isolation from the world' (Krastev & Holmes, 2014: 6). This puts Putin in a dilemma, of course, because isolationism obstructs economic growth, which remains an important source of legitimacy for the regime.

In any case, the war in Ukraine is a troublesome issue for liberalism but also a complicated one for realism. In order to find out what kind of world order is emerging, we must look at the larger context of states and their relationships, including the major challenges that they must confront.

HOW MUCH LIBERAL PROGRESS?

It should be recalled that Francis Fukuyama's vision of 'the end of history' (1989; 1992) is a normative statement. His message was that after the defeat of fascism and communism, liberal democracy and the market economy are the undisputed basis for the good life. Islam was never a serious alternative; the variants of autocratic and nationalistic regimes in China and Russia, where the state controls the people to an extreme extent, do not present themselves as viable options either. In that sense, Fukuyama was right.

And liberal democracy has indeed prospered. According to Freedom House (2022), there were 41 free countries in 1975; by 2021, there were 82. The major driving force behind more democracy is the modernisation of society, therefore, Fukuyama. That process has yielded other gains: the average global life expectancy was 40 years in 1950; today it is 70 years. In 2000, 27.7 per cent of the world's population was under the poverty line ($1.90 per day); by 2018 it was 8.2 per cent (World Bank, 2022).

Writing in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, another item should be underlined. Even if the world of today is full of violent conflict, there is one area in which the level of conflict is historically low. That is with regard to interstate war, meaning war between independent states. Wars are usually defined as conflicts that cause at least 1,000 battle deaths per year; according to this definition, the annual number of interstate conflicts in the new millennium has been between zero and two (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2020).

Several factors are in play here: consolidated democracies make up a peaceful security community; in relation to non-democracies, institutional cooperation and interdependence play an important role (even if they could not prevent the Ukraine war). Nuclear weapons also make a contribution to peace. That is because war between nuclear powers is irrational; such a war cannot be won in any meaningful sense of the word because both sides would stand to suffer irredeemable destruction (Waltz, 1990; Sørensen, 2016). The last major interstate war was between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s, with some 500,000 casualties. The vast majority of violent conflict today is within fragile states in the Global South (e.g. Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, and Ethiopia). They are civil wars, in several cases internationalised in the sense that groups from neighbouring countries participate in the conflict (Brock et al., 2011).

So things are better, but they are also bad (Rosling, 2018). The world is not becoming more democratic at the moment. Since 2013, the number of democracies has fallen from 90 to 82. Less than 20 per cent of the world's population live in countries that are free (Freedom House, 2022); by some counts, the percentage is as low as 6.4 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021). India's decline from 'Free' to 'Partly Free' plays a major role here. At the same time, the quality of democracy has deteriorated in several countries in the Western heartlands of democracy. Most liberals believe that good things go together: modernisation brings better living conditions, welfare, economic growth, and democracy. Political development may happen, but so may political decay. Sceptical liberals were clear on this point from early on. There is no law of progress built into history. 'History has no libretto', said Isaiah Berlin (1988) in a phrase borrowed from Alexander Herzen.

In short, liberal progress is mixed with political decay. As for interstate war, the Ukraine war appears to be an exception: the long-term trend is towards a much decreased importance of interstate war.

INCREASINGLY FRAGILE STATES ALL AROUND

The term 'fragile states' was originally intended for the weak states in the Global South. These states were fragile at independence and have remained so to the present day. They have not stood still; there has been some economic growth in several countries and also processes of state- and nation-building. Even so, the economic sectors in fragile states remain weak and externally dependent. Governance is poor in that public institutions are ineffective and corrupt. There is not a strong national community because citizenship is undeveloped (the state has very little to offer) and loyalties are directed towards local ethnic communities rather than towards the state (Brock et al., 2011).

But problems with state fragility are also emerging in the modern liberal states of Europe and North America. Over several centuries, these states became increasingly stronger: they built robust national economies, able to provide a foundation for the good life for most citizens. They created effective and responsive state machineries with the ability to oversee and direct social development for citizens, and to provide for security and protection. The whole process helped create strong national communities bound together by cultural, political, and historical bonds.

Recent decades have paved the way for less social cohesion in advanced liberal states. Neoliberal globalisation helped push economic growth, but formerly national economic networks are now interlocked in transnational processes of production, distribution, and consumption. Ordinary people are increasingly dependent on decisions at international and transnational levels, rather than on the national level. Winners in the globalisation game tend to be well-educated elites, while losers suffer the downsides of globalisation – unemployment, reduced incomes, and marginalisation.

Inequality is rising: the middle 60 per cent of American households took home 26.6 per cent of total income in 2020; the share of the richest 1 percent was 27 per cent (Tanzi & Dorning, 2021). A similar trend can be seen in Europe and Japan. The squeezing of the middle class from above is combined with an influx of immigrants who often occupy the low-skilled jobs in the industry and service sectors. That exerts pressure on the middle class from below.

It is most often a coalition of 'globalisation winners' that dominate the political scene in the advanced democracies. The result is an increased gulf between citizens and their governments that populist politicians have been quick to exploit. Declining social cohesion may then lead to political gridlock as well as apathy and frustration among large groups of the population, as in the United States and France.

Modernising states, such as China, India, and Russia, face very serious problems with corruption and poor governance. The Russian economy is now being shattered by war and sanctions; China struggles with acute problems tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, and long-term environmental challenges combined with demographic changes threaten continued high economic growth and development. Indian society is hierarchical, exacerbated by the caste system; corruption and poor governance are major problems. In short, modernising states have made impressive progress with respect to economic growth. But they are also fragile states with severe weaknesses in terms of social cohesion.

Overall, we are at a point where interdependence has tied countries closer together than ever before and the need for cooperation across borders in order to confront a host of economic, financial, and social issues (including climate change) is acute. Yet countries increasingly face inwards in order to tackle problems of domestic decay and social cohesion. In the best of worlds, strong regional cooperation, such as in the EU, may present a way forward. Before turning to this, we need to look at bit closer at the international relations that the EU is facing.

AN ILLIBERAL WORLD

Let us return to the debate among liberal optimists and sceptical realists, personified by Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington. In 2018, Fukuyama celebrated the 25th anniversary of the publication of Huntington's article 'The Clash of Civilizations'. His message was clear: 'At the moment, it looks like Huntington is winning' (Fukuyama, 2018). Note that Fukuyama's normative statement had not been defeated: liberal democracy and the market economy remained the best basis for the good life. Nor had Huntington won in the sense that we are experiencing a grand 'clash of civilizations'. After 9/11, many observers thought we were seeing the projected clash playing out between the West and Islamic groups; but Islamic international terrorism never became the global menace envisioned in the 'Global War on Terror' (Bush, 2001). The current war in Ukraine is taking place within Slavic, Orthodox civilisation.

Yet Huntington had made other points that remain valid: political development can be replaced by political decay. Democracy has not moved forward in the world recently. Modernisation does not necessarily equal Westernisation; modernising states build their own systems, based on their own cultural values. In other words, culture matters, and political systems and political behaviour are heavily shaped by culture.

At the same time, it is less helpful to put religion at the centre of culture as Huntington did; world order today is structured not by religious affiliations, but by more specific identities (Fukuyama, 2018). Putin's autocracy is driven by an exclusionary and aggressive nationalism that descends from the czars, complete with a historical justification for the 'right' to subdue Ukraine, a country which, according to Putin, has no historical claim to sovereignty (Putin, 2021). Autocratic communist rule in China fits into a Chinese tradition of empire, with unconstrained power in the hands of a small leadership and an emerging supreme leader, Xi Jinping. The increasingly illiberal government in India is based on an exclusionary Hindu nationalism. It has intensified the oppression of Muslims and is moving against both democracy and secularism (Parth & Pierson, 2022).

In the United States, identity politics has increased fragmentation dramatically. On the left, supporters of 'Wokeness' see racism everywhere while basing themselves on exclusive notions of 'lived experiences' for an endless array of groups with claims to particular rights. On the right, Trump has promoted the rise 'of white nationalists and the alt-right, which see themselves as persecuted and marginalized minorities in much the same way as the leftwing identity groups' (Fukuyama, 2018). As a result, the United States has turned inwards, with a focus on national problems rather than global leadership.

In short, identity politics is on the rise, often combined with nationalism, in an increasingly illiberal world. The United States remains the strongest power in the world in material terms: it has a vast lead in terms of military capabilities and is very strong economically and with regard to technology. But material capability is not all. There must also be a willingness to pick up the mantle and take responsibility for the creation of a stable and legitimate world order. After Trump, the rest of the world has become unsure about US commitment in this respect.

There is also the issue of soft power. After the Second World War, there was no doubt that most of the world wanted to emulate the American version of the good life. Today's American society is a less attractive model; liberal Europe also has problems, as we saw earlier. Current liberal-democratic societies stand in need of repair.

Finally, rising powers are now strong enough to demand substantial influence in international institutions and on international rules. In that sense, a form of multipolarity has already arrived. But the emerging powers cannot take over the system and construct an alternative world order, nor do they have any intentions in that direction (Sørensen, 2016). They focus on their respective regions, which makes regionalism a more pronounced aspect of the present order. It is this larger context that the EU faces at a point where it also, for the first time since the Second World War, is confronting a major interstate war in Europe.

THE EUROPEAN UNION: CHALLENGES, OPTIONS, AND TASKS

It is no surprise that the war in Ukraine has animated debate about the defence of Europe. A proposal from Brussels calls for the centralisation of security policy with the aim of creating an EU army under the control of the European Council through qualified majority voting. A European Defence Union, together with a European Defence Fund, would 'pool national capabilities, overcome inefficient duplication, and address inadequate economies of scale in military procurement' (Szewczyk, 2022). concrete deliveries in relation to these visions are presently rather modest; the newly adopted EU 'Strategic Compass' aims to 'defend the European security order'; it aspires to have 5,000 troops on call by 2025.

At the same time, cooperation within NATO has been revitalised by the Russian attack. Twenty-five allies and partners are sending sophisticated military equipment in support of Ukraine. The leading contributors so far are the United States and the United Kingdom. This 'coalition of the willing' has worked swiftly and efficiently; it has been a *condicio sine qua non* for the defence of Ukraine. Further, the whole process of providing military aid has been legitimated by the decisions of national governments. This is not a trivial point: defence of the realm is a substantial and emotional issue, high on most people's agenda. The spectacular changes manifested in Finland's and Sweden's applications for NATO membership would never have surfaced if they were not overwhelmingly supported by the people of both countries. Their membership will be a historical boost to Europe's and NATO's security in that sensitive part of the world.

It might be that intensified EU security cooperation under a supranational regime will be relevant in

cooperation with other democracies. The EU is first and foremost a community of values, as expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights of persons to belong to minorities. (Official Journal of the EU, 2012)

These values can be threatened both from outside and from within. The primary responsibility for upholding them in the EU rests with the Member States. I briefly touched upon state fragility in relation to liberal democracies in the EU and elsewhere earlier in this chapter. A strong state in relation to liberal core values rests on three pillars: democracy/ accountability, the rule of law, and an effective state, capable of making and implementing rules in a corruption-free way, for the welfare and the safety of the population (Fukuyama, 2011; Sørensen, 2001).

Several EU Member States have problems on one or more of these three dimensions: democracy/accountability, the rule of law, and effective statehood. Furthermore, neoliberal economic policies, while promoting economic growth, have led to sharper inequalities and less social cohesion in the EU. In spite of the widely acknowledged need for close cooperation, this has strengthened the voice of sceptical citizens and populist politicians. The EU institutions may be aware of all this, but so far they have not done enough to address the problems. One must grant that it is a complex task which requires unorthodox thinking and innovative solutions (for an analysis that faces these issues head-on, see Zielonka, 2018).

My larger point is that there is no contradiction between strong Member States in the sense defined here and a strong EU. Quite the contrary: deficient Member States will set the EU up for failure. That is why internal EU efforts to strengthen statehood are just as important as external efforts to provide security against threats from the outside.

Finally, if and when the EU assumes a more pronounced role in developing a stronger liberal world order, it will face a dilemma that has rested on the shoulders of the United States for quite a while. The dilemma is built into the liberal foundation itself; liberals make a universalistic claim to liberty and freedom for all people. Liberals also emphasise

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the future. But it should emerge by popular demand or at least be strongly supported by the people of the EU countries. The immediate task must be to strengthen national security capabilities in all relevant sectors and to make more effective use of sanctions, the area where the EU can make the most important contribution (Buras, 2022).

It was pointed out earlier that we live in an increasingly illiberal world. The liberal West must stand together; Europe and the United States will continue to need each other, no matter who occupies the White House (or Le Palais de l'Élysée). 'Russia's war in Ukraine has highlighted the enduring roles of non-EU powers — above all, the United States and Britain — as European powers and security guarantors of the first order' (Szewczyk, 2022). Australia's offer of military aid to Ukraine and Japan's willingness to receive Ukrainian refugees are indications of liberal democratic solidarity.

There is a domestic EU dimension to the current focus on external security threats and the EU's

pluralism, that is, equal respect for people who think and act differently from us. Liberals support negative liberty, or the ability to act unimpeded by others; they also support positive liberty, that is, the creation of appropriate conditions for freedom to thrive everywhere. These postures can be condensed to a Liberalism of Imposition and a Liberalism of Restraint. Imposition accentuates that liberal principles are morally superior to others and universally valid. It supports activism and intervention, not excluding removing dictators by force; some would call the posture one of liberal imperialism. Restraint, by contrast, emphasises tolerance of diversity, moderation, holding back, non-intervention, and peaceful cooperation (Sørensen, 2011).

The unparalleled position of liberal democracies, and especially the United States, after the end of the Cold War, combined with the resolve to 'do something' about our enemies after 9/11, emerged as a particularly virulent Liberalism of Imposition under George W. Bush, his neoconservative backers, and the coalitions of the willing. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq followed. Imposition was not a success. Barack Obama turned to a Liberalism of Restraint; even when his red lines were crossed in Syria, for example, he did little, and that paved the way for major Russian influence on the war. Trump leaned towards Restraint most of the time; Joe Biden is struggling to find his way between Imposition and Restraint.

This dilemma will be persistent for Biden as well as for the EU. There is no simple road to a reformed Liberalism of Restraint order, and a Liberalism of Imposition is not feasible either. Take fragile states in the Global South: liberal democracies cannot step in and take over, but nor can they leave people to die due to the actions of self-seeking elites. In the liberal world economy, free markets produce transnational 'goods' as well as transnational 'bads', such as sharply rising inequalities and climate change. A better state–market balance that avoids excessive deregulation and excessive state control surely needs to be found, but how exactly?[1] And how best to promote liberal values in an increasingly illiberal world that will fiercely resist any Liberal Imposition while a Liberal Restraint of wishing for the best might not take us very far?

The debate about the best way forward will continue. My personal preference is for the EU to focus on becoming the best possible model for others. That would require confronting the need for stronger states as defined earlier, economic inequality, marginalisation and fragmentation, climate change, and an effective migration system that is both humanistic and realistic in terms of the carrying capacity of Member States.

I know all this is a tall order, but we must entertain a bias for hope (Hirshman, 1971: 28). Liberal progress will not take place automatically; it will depend on individuals and states moving the liberal world order in the right direction. Western democracies face tensions and dilemmas that undercut liberal progress. This is a particularly good time for the European Union to demonstrate that it can help move the world in the right direction.

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The Transatlantic Community as a Guarantor of Europe's Security Architecture: Beyond the Ukraine Challenge

Thibault Muzergues

ABSTRACT

The chapter discusses the fluctuating transatlantic relationship and the renewed sense of purpose brought on by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It highlights the importance of Western support for Ukraine to preserve the global inviolability of borders in Europe and prevent further Russian expansion. The paper also emphases the need for a 360-degree view of geopolitical challenges, which extend beyond the east to the south and southeast, and the potential impact on the security of the eastern Mediterranean. Ultimately, the chapter argues that the fate of Europe rests on the West's ability to remain united and supportive of Ukraine, and failure to do so could lead to the decline of the transatlantic community and the return of systemic insecurity on the European continent.

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INTRODUCTION

'*Nous sommes tous Américains*.' On 12 September 2001, Jean-Marie Colombani, director of France's main newspaper *Le Monde*, dared to publish an editorial headline that was bold for the time – and may appear even bolder today. The title, and the contents of the article, were an expression of French and European solidarity after the horror of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States (to date the one and only instance in which NATO members triggered the famed Article 5, according to which an attack against one is an attack against all), but it was also a homage to the long-term relationship that Europeans and Americans had built over the previous decades. Colombani's 'We are all Americans' mirrored John F. Kennedy's '*Ich bin ein Berliner*' speech of 1963: just as Kennedy had expressed empathy and a sense of togetherness with the besieged Berliners right after the construction of the Wall, so the Europeans could only express their sense of a shared destiny with New Yorkers after 9/11.

Looking back at this op-ed more than 20 years on, one wonders whether a dramatic event on this scale today would still trigger the same feelings of solidarity on both sides of the Atlantic. The events that have unfolded in the early 2020s and the reactions on both sides of the Pond provide conflicting answers, some suggesting a continued sense of common purpose and others pointing to a more strained relationship. Europeans' answer to the 6 January 2021 assault on the US Capitol was very muted, and if there was commiseration, it was often tainted with many shades of *schadenfreude*, sprinkled with a hint of told-you-so. A few months later, as the US pulled out of Afghanistan in a less-than-glorified way, European reactions were also quite ambivalent: although embassy staff and

politicians showed solidarity with their American allies, criticism of the unilateral pull-out (and unilateral war) abounded, along with calls for more European strategic autonomy.

Fast-forward just a few months though, and the picture had become radically different. True, no journalist dared to write '*Nous sommes tous ukrainiens*' in an op-ed. Nor did any politician immediately utter an '*Ich bin ein Ukrainer*' – although many of them did turn up in Kyiv in the months following the invasion to express their support to a European country facing a war of aggression by Russia. At the time of writing this piece in the summer of 2022, it seemed that the West had found itself again in Kyiv: President Volodymyr Zelensky's decision to stay in Kyiv in the first days of the invasion (and his defiance from day one: 'I need ammunition, not a ride', as he allegedly put it himself to US diplomats) (Braithwaite, 2022), the Ukrainians' heroic resistance at the gates of Kyiv, Mykolaiv, and Kharkiv, and the West's decision not only to provide assistance to Ukraine, but also to help Ukrainians fight back, all emboldened a transatlantic community that had been doubting its mission in recent years. Little over two years after French President Emmanuel Macron's infamous 'brain dead' comment about NATO, the Atlantic Alliance was now enlarging to two new members, Finland and Sweden, as the US announced the biggest increase in its troop presence on the continent since the end of the Cold War.

In many ways, the transatlantic community could thank Vladimir Putin for offering this new sense of togetherness in NATO and the idea of the transatlantic community. After all, alliances need enemies to survive, with NATO being the only example so far of an alliance surviving the defeat of its main foe. The Alliance had been flailing dangerously in recent years, as Macron's 'brain-dead NATO' comment showed. By its reckless behaviour and its direct challenge to the fundamentals of Europe's security architecture, Russia once again brought together allies that felt more estranged from each other than at any time since the 1970s.

The question, of course, is whether this renewed sense of purpose can last beyond the urgency of Russia's war in Ukraine. The unity of the transatlantic community in the face of Russia's invasion has been surprisingly strong in both scope and longevity, but the gas and food crises, with their load of inflation and political instability, will put the solidity of the Alliance (and that of member states' public opinion) to the test; and Vladimir Putin is clearly betting on indirectly winning the war by weakening the home front in the West.

Practically everyone, from Washington to Moscow to Brussels (via Berlin, Bucharest, Vilnius, Paris, and Rome, among others), has understood that the fate of Europe is being decided on the battlefield in Ukraine: if, on the one hand, the West is united and can remain supportive of Ukraine, it will be strengthened by the ordeal of 2022. If, on the other hand, Europeans and Americans become more divided and offer Russia an opportunity for victory, either by design or inattention, the year 2022 may well be remembered as yet another step towards the decline of the West, the continued weakening of the transatlantic community, and the return of systemic insecurity on the European continent.

Russia's war in Ukraine is as much an ordeal for Europe as it is an opportunity for the West to make amends and project itself into the future. This is not the first time the transatlantic community has faced such a turning point, and it is therefore important to put the current events into perspective: thus, while 2022 may well be a 2016 in reverse, it also represents a turning point in a constantly fluctuating transatlantic relationship, in which the division between Anglos and Euros has always constituted a potential problem. That relationship, much like the stock market, alternates between bullish and bearish cycles, but those should not preclude more profound tendencies, which can strengthen or weaken the transatlantic bond in the long term. Identifying what belongs to the short or even long cycles and what belongs to long-term trends is therefore of utmost importance to identify what needs fixing if the transatlantic relationship is to be preserved, both as the guarantor of peace on the European continent and as a project of shared prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic.

IS 2022 THE NEW 2016?

If 2022 looks like a turning point in the history of Europe and the transatlantic relationship, it is not only because Russia's invasion of Ukraine has broken practically every rule that everyone had considered natural in the continent's post-1945 security architecture. After all, there is a case to be made that 2020, through the COVID-19 pandemic (but also Joe Biden's election and Turkey's reckless behaviour in the Mediterranean) was just as momentous. Indeed, 2020 did change a lot of things in Europe and the world, starting with the image of China: previously seen as a non-threatening entity across the continent, the People's Republic of China became a source of worry for a large majority of Europeans almost overnight (see Reynié, 2022).

However momentous they were, these shifts took time to translate into policies: the fact that

European public opinion changed about China didn't immediately translate into fundamental policy changes, as the attempt by the European Council and the Commission to push for a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China in late 2020 and early 2021 attests. Meanwhile, Russia's invasion of Ukraine had almost immediate effects, among them the rapid decoupling of the Russian and European economies – considered physically impossible just a year before. Furthermore, one of the outcomes of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been the enlargement of NATO to Sweden and Finland, here again following a massive shift in public opinion (Henley, 2022). Unlike with China, where it can be argued that shifts in public opinion took time to translate into policy changes, the consequences were almost immediate in 2022, with both countries being invited to join NATO following the Madrid Summit in June of that year.

In many ways, 2022 is thus likely to be remembered as a turning point in the international climate. Like many others, this turning point is in fact validating many undercurrents that had been ongoing for some years, such as the drive towards deglobalisation and decoupling between the economies of free and authoritarian regimes, Russia's increasingly aggressive and revisionist stance on the world stage, and increased demands for Sweden and Finland to join NATO. All these background tendencies were put to the forefront of the public debate in and after February 2022, bringing together the West in ways that had not been anticipated just a few months before. It might therefore be argued that the year 2022 brought together transatlantic allies just like 2016 tore them apart. That year, three events came to crystallise what had been a slow but long-term estrangement between the Anglos, that is, an Anglo-Saxon culture of fast change driven by previously marginal (or populist) movements, and the Euros, continental Europeans who seemed to be reacting very differently to the political upheaval of the time, in the follow-up to the financial, economic, and migration crises of the late 2000s and early 2010s. Before 2016, that rift looked worrying. After 2016, it clearly threatened to lead to divorce.

The first event that tore Anglos and Euros apart was the British vote to leave the European Union in June. Although Britain had always been, to use Andrew Adonis's (2018) terms, half-in, half-out of the European Union, struggling to find its place in a system it had not created and had to join (by necessity more than ideology) in the mid-1970s, the

United Kingdom represented an important player in the European Union: it was its third-largest country in terms of population, and its second-largest economy in terms of gross domestic product. But the United Kingdom was also a cultural, institutional, and strategic bridge between continental Europe and the Anglosphere, the two pillars of the Atlantic Alliance. The Brexit vote and the long and acrimonious divorce that followed have certainly damaged that bridge, and time may show that it has been entirely destroyed.

The United Kingdom was a key player (with France) in the building of a common European defence, and it also demonstrated to all allies, including the smaller, transatlantic countries such as the Baltic states and the Netherlands, that a common European defence would never come at the expense of the transatlantic Alliance. Without London to offer those guarantees, proposals and oppositions to the project became much more acrimonious over the following years, with an artificial contrast presented between the aspirations

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of European strategic autonomy and the reality of a European security architecture being currently guaranteed by NATO (and, *in fine*, the United States).

Brexit, however, was only the start of a larger political disruption that rocked the West and changed the face of Anglo politics: on 8 November 2016, the election of Donald J. Trump as president of the United States further deepened the rift between Anglos and Euros. This was not only because Trump had shown a clear disdain for Europeans and the transatlantic Alliance, but also because the Trump movement, much like the Brexit movement, was a sign that the Anglos were now advocating for a clean break with the Euros, which were seen as part of the problem for the West. The picture that seemed to emerge in the following months was that of a deepening rift between the two families of the West, with the Anglos embracing political disruption, while the Euros mostly opted to preserve the status quo. Exactly six months after the US presidential election of 2016, the French people voted in

Emmanuel Macron, then the symbol of the permanence of an ordo-liberal vision of society and world order, as president of their country.

In-between Brexit and the election of Trump came another incident that may seem anecdotal compared with these two momentous events but remains notable because it crystallised a split on the left side of the spectrum of the transatlantic world: the controversy over the ban on burkinis on France's beaches in the summer of 2016. As the French left-of-centre government supported a ban on this beachwear, it got caught up in a global controversy about the role of the state with regard to religious artefacts. Perhaps naively, the French socialists, and with them much of Europe's left, hoped that the *New York Times* and other mainstream news outlets which they considered beacons of reason would side with them, or at least remain neutral. After all, to them the burkini (and with it the burqa) was an expression of women's submission to religion rather than emancipation through reason, pretty much like the religious scarf for women had been in the days when governments had to enforce secularism on religious authorities, at least in Catholic Europe. They had forgotten that American secularism had been built to protect religions against persecution, while theirs had been constructed against religious persecution.

Not only did the *New York Times* side with the burkini supporters, it also explicitly condemned what it portrayed as French racism and bigotry (New York Times, 2016), opening another intellectual rift between the politics of the two sides of the Atlantic, with the centre-left in the United States embracing identity politics while the French, Germans, and Italians (among others) either remained indifferent or were much less permeable to it. Nowhere has this divorce been more profound than in France, where many on the centre-left have viewed the accusations of racism from America's mainstream media as an act of treason against the ideals of the Enlightenment, at a time in which they had to contend with the rise of home-grown Islamist terrorism and far-right politics. Many prominent French intellectuals broke with the American left as opposition to the burkini crystallised over two views of liberalism: the one defended by Europeans (and, in its most extreme version, by the French) was more anticlerical and integrationist in nature, while the one defended by the Americans was more multicultural and, in many ways, moral and religious in its undertones.

The rift was not only symbolic but also philosophical. The Euros had come to embody the very pillars of an ordo-liberal ideology that favoured globalism, economic and social liberalism, and a strong emphasis on redistribution via a 'social market economy'. By contrast, the 'populist' surges that were successfully fuelling disruption in the Anglosphere proposed a radically different approach based on more state intervention in the political and economic scene; a kith-and-kin approach where race and ethnic background would trump any other considerations such as geography or economic interest; and the idea that 'the West', as a concept and as a glue for the transatlantic world, was finished. Whether it was portrayed as inherently racist (on the left) or in a state of terminal decline because it had forgotten its Christian heritage or its ethnic groups (on the right), the idea was that 'the West' that had dominated the world for the past century was no longer relevant and should be abandoned as a meaningful tool for foreign policy in the United States and in the United Kingdom – in other words, whether condemnable or rotten, the West was over (see Kimmage, 2020), and the logical conclusion was that Anglos and Euros should part ways.

ANGLOS AND EUROS: THE LONGER STORY

In the Anglos versus Euros narrative, 2022 was a real reversal of fortune, as it turned the 2016 dynamic on its head. All of a sudden and almost overnight, it became once again acceptable in policy circles in Washington and Brussels to talk positively about 'the West', and that West included both Anglos and Euros. Even though Russian and Chinese outlets continued to promote narratives of 'Westlessness', those seemed to be no longer fashionable West of Moscow. In many ways, the West's return to favour was exemplified by the huge popular success on both sides of the Atlantic of the movie *Top Gun: Maverick*, which itself was reminiscent of another time in history when 'the West' and the transatlantic relationship had come back from a dead end in the 1970s with a new confidence and sense of mission. In many ways, Atlanticist circles sensed that 'we've been here before' in the late spring and early summer of 2022, with the idea of a strong West coming full circle: just like in the 2010s, the transatlantic Alliance of the 1970s had gone through a crisis of confidence, with the United States pulling out of Vietnam and Western societies facing contestation at home; and just like in the 1980s, the 2020s seemed to mark a quick change of fortunes, with a more confident West emerging following the overreach of its rivals.

This interpretation tends to suggest the presence of regular cycles in the transatlantic relationship, with two-decade-long 'bearish' moments being followed by another 20 years of confidence

in which Western ambitions (and budgets) seem to be limitless – those 'bullish' moments usually end at the moment in which economic difficulties turn into social and political unrest, opening a new cycle of self-doubt and introspection. In this sense, the 'bearish' period from 2008 to 2022, with the West on the defensive, would find echoes in the 1968–1980 and 1929–1943 periods, which would themselves be mirrored by the 'bullish' periods 1950–1965, 1985–2008, and possibly from 2022 onwards.

This idea of cycles regulating history is nothing new. In the 1950s, the venerable Arnold Toynbee (1951) had used a cycles theory to explain the alternation between war and peace in Europe in the previous 200 years. However tempting, it was disproved by the following 70 years of relative peace on the continent (it was at first as much of a Cold War as a Long Peace) (Gaddis, 1987), thereby showing that although cyclical dynamics exist, they are also redefined either by unforeseen events, or by new dynamics which come along and break the cycles.

The relationship between Anglos and Euros is therefore best analysed by the description and analysis of recurring themes (rather than inelastic cycles) in the transatlantic relationship, some of them tending towards the two sides of the Atlantic coming together, others towards them becoming estranged. In the post-1945 world, the prevalence of one or the other has usually been dependent on the perceived strength or weakness of the United States, on which the security architecture of Europe (and, previously, Western Europe) currently depends. Whenever America went through a cycle of confidence and success, Europeans tended to be attracted to America's soft power, and Americans were sensitive to the idea that they were strong also because they could rely on allies around the globe. This was clearly the case in the 1950s in Western Europe, despite a strong current of anti-Americanism in Europe fuelled by the various communist parties, and again in the 1990s, when the United States was seen as triumphant in the aftermath of the Cold War. By contrast, just like the late 1960s, the 2010s were a period of self-doubt not because they corresponded to a set of dates, but because the public perception on both sides of the Atlantic was that America's leadership was declining, maybe forever, and therefore the transatlantic relationship might not be as valuable as it had previously been, because it was perceived as less beneficial for each actor.

It might sound paradoxical that the transatlantic Alliance, whose sense of community is primarily perceived as depending on a set of shared core values (freedom, democracy, and the rule of law), is actually highly dependent on the well-understood interest of each side of the Atlantic to sustain it. When this interest is in doubt, allies on both sides of the Atlantic tend to deconstruct it and doubt its utility: this was certainly the case when both German and French leaders tried to pursue a more independent foreign policy (De Gaulle with his late 1960s foreign policy choices, Willy Brand and his Ostpolitik in the 1970s), or when Richard Nixon decided to pull America out of the Bretton Woods system, thereby killing a monetary system that was perceived as benefiting Europeans to the detriment of Americans. In the same way, the 2010s signalled a return to this sense of doubt about the usefulness of the transatlantic Alliance, with the emergence of a divide not so much between the two sides of the Atlantic, but between the Anglos and the Euros. This led to the Brexit divorce, and to the difficult relationship between Trump and the Europeans – although the frustrations expressed by the 45th president of the United States echoed, albeit in a less conventional way, those that had already been voiced by the Obama administration just a few years before, notably on defence spending.

One of the remarkable features of the recurring themes in the history of the transatlantic relationship is the permanence of the arguments to promote or reject them. Shared values are thus often promoted as the main glue for the Alliance, along with a history of successes, both material and moral, during the bullish periods of the relationship. At the same time, the arguments associated with bearish moments are also remarkably similar throughout history: Europeans' calls for more autonomy and more say in a de facto unequal relationship were an almost permanent feature of the 1960s, just as Americans' calls for Europeans to pay more for their defence were. Those arguments were voiced by Macron and Trump in a different style but with exactly the same content by figures such as Charles De Gaulle, Willy Brandt, and Richard Nixon in the late 1960s and the 1970s. In the same way, the resentment of some Europeans towards America – 'because it [stands] for the most dreadful of nightmares: the end of history and the American salesman' (Maçães, 2020: 51) – can be applied to the present day (as the Russian anti-American narratives attest) as easily as it was to homegrown anti-Americanism in the 1930s. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY VERSUS ATLANTICISM: A FALSE DEBATE

The sometimes heated debates between the partisans of 'strategic autonomy' for Europe (in its most ideological form a strategic autonomy 'from' any

other actor, including the United States) and those who argue for a continued sole reliance on NATO as a guarantor of peace and security in Europe is not new, and the arguments have varied little since the early 1950s. The European Defense Community project presented by the French government of the time was a concrete answer to US demands for more European engagement in the defence of the continent at a time when the Americans were themselves engaged in the Korean War and were afraid of having to fight on two fronts. The rejection of the project in the French parliament by the Gaullists and the Communists echoes the current opposition in France to the transatlantic idea among the populist right and left.

The remarkable consistency of the arguments and positions of political actors in the debate over the future of the transatlantic relationship may appear disheartening to those who care about the future of that relationship. The discussants often commit the same mistakes in defining the terms of the debate, leading to a succession of monologues where the same arguments are presented over and over again, with occasional updates to fit the agenda and

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geopolitical context of the day. This might be so because the reality, meaning the real terms of the debate, has not changed since the 1950s – the only notable exception being that the Europe America has to defend is now much larger, but this is the result of American choices more than anything else.

This may be something that few Americans realise, but today, even more than in the 1950s, Europe's security architecture is the result of conscious and unconscious US policy choices, from Woodrow Wilson's 13 points to America's decisions (or absence thereof) to intervene in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. More than any other region of the world, today's Europe is the Europe that America made, to echo the title of one of Robert Kagan's (2012) books. Over the past 120 years, the European continent (and, indeed, Europe's borders) have been shaped more than anything by America's engagement with it: by the two world wars the United States reluctantly entered into, by the post-war settlements it helped negotiate (including that of the post-Cold War), but also by the inspiration the United States

provided to the European Union project from its inception to the modern day. Today, US engagement in Europe via NATO remains the main glue that keeps the continent's security arrangement going, as is evident when one looks at American involvement in providing military aid to Ukraine: over the first four months of the war, America's military assistance dwarfed not only that of other allies taken individually, but also taken together, and by a large margin.[1] This should not surprise anyone: more than the Europeans themselves, the US government needs to preserve the Europe America made because this Europe shaped by America fundamentally serves its own interest, which is to have a peaceful trade partner that has little chance to evolve as an aggressive rival.

Not only does this current European security architecture serve the interests of the United States, it also serves the interests of Europeans. This is why the idea of strategic autonomy 'from' the United States does not make sense: in many ways, going against the Atlantic Alliance would amount to going against the settlement that has guaranteed peace (and stable borders west of Ukraine) for the past 30 years (75 in Western Europe). Without the NATO military umbrella, which remains de facto a US military umbrella, Europeans would have to spend much more on their defence, which would probably in turn mean that they would need to make painful choices with regard to their generous social model. Without the US to provide weapons and valuable intelligence to Kyiv, Ukraine would probably have been defeated by Russia, and Europe would now live in a very different strategic environment than just a few months ago, with a need to rearm rapidly and confront a growing threat. But there are also more direct economic benefits: within a system of alliances dominated by the United States, European firms gain fair access to the US market and can find themselves in a position where they can actually compete (and gain market shares) against their US rivals in America. None of this would be possible without the current security architecture in Europe, which is a product of America's deep involvement on the continent and of its guarantees of protection against threats from the East.

The fundamentals of the transatlantic alliance thus remain what they've always been since 1945, in the sense that the Atlantic community that keeps Europe united and shielded against an Eastern conventional threat is glued together not only by shared values, but also by the understanding that it is in both Europe's and America's interest to uphold

it. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that this makes the Alliance bullet-proof, as the bearish cycle of the past two decades has shown. On their side, US officials are right to question their levels of commitment at a time when their long-term geo-political challenge is situated far from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. America needs to commit more troops and diplomatic efforts to Asia, and it can only do so if Europeans shoulder more of their share of the burden for their own defence. In this sense, strategic autonomy is absolutely compatible with the idea of continued transatlantic defence of Europe, as long as it is thought of as a strategic autonomy 'to do' those things that the transatlantic Alliance cannot (such as securing Europe's southern border, for example), rather than a strategic auton-omy 'from' someone or something.

This in turn puts the problem of the strate-gic autonomy debate not towards a geopolitical choice, but towards a question of capacity. This is where the real difficulties start, not only between Europeans, as this raises the question of organising a European army with a single doctrine, equipment, and training, but also importantly how to orga-nise a defence industry that could live on its own and equip Europe's armed forces. This is where the real potential for hard conflict between Europeans and Americans lies: the defence industry is a multimillion-dollar business, and it often collides with the government's perceived national inter-est. Then French defence minister Florence Parly's comments that transatlantic solidarity should be expressed solely by NATO's Article 5, and not by an unwritten 'article F-35' through which those who want to be protected need to buy US equipment (B2 The Blog of Geopolitical Europe, 2019), shows clearly the dilemmas Europe's government(s) face in building up an integrated defence industry within NATO. As Bruno Maçães points out, 'the European Union will not create a common defense and secu-rity policy without in the process diminishing the inordinate weight of the American defense industry in Europe' (Maćães, 2020: 175).

On their side, Americans will only be able to get Europeans to better share the burden if they allow Europeans more autonomy; in many ways, the US now has a real incentive to see Europeans take more responsibility in uniting their foreign policy and defence efforts, but also in policing their neigh-bourhood – this, however, requires a sense of coordination, and this is made more difficult by the disagreements Europeans and Americans may have over the future of Europe's eastern and southern neighbourhoods. In particular, the question of the relationship with Turkey, a member of NATO whose foreign policy has become much more assertive (and at times conflicts with that of the West) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has the potential to divide not only Anglos and Euros, but also Europeans between themselves, as responses to Turkey's aggressive behaviour in the eastern Mediterranean range from confrontational (for Greece and France) to fully accommodating (for Germany, for example). Managing these ambiguities and confronting a southern challenge that is much more loose and impersonal than the eastern flank problem will be one of the keys to the continuation and strengthening of the transatlantic community in the years to come.

LOOKING AHEAD: THE FUTURE OF THE TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNITY IS TIED TO HOW THE UKRAINE WAR ENDS

All these discussions, however, may be of little importance for the future of the transatlantic Alliance and its role in securing a 'Europe whole, free and at peace' if Ukraine is defeated in its war against Russia's expansionism.[2] At the time of writ-ing this article, Kyiv was still at loggerheads with Russia in what had clearly become a war of attrition, in which Vladimir Putin himself has made it clear that much more than Ukraine's fate is at stake, as his war is not against just one country but against the whole West (Belton, 2022). In this type of warfare, peace can only return when a status quo acceptable to both sides is reached (which is an unlikely sce-nario at the time of writing), or in the case of the collapse of one side. For the Ukrainians, that col-lapse could be prompted by lack of support from the West, whether militarily or politically, and Putin has been clearly betting on the latter scenario to obtain at least part of what he wants from Ukraine, which includes the expansion of Russia in Ukraine's east and south. Should Western support falter, or should Russia manage to find an exit route where it could annex vast expanses of Ukrainian soil, then the West will have failed to guarantee the global inviolability of borders in Europe. Russia would then stop for a while in order to regain strength, but that would only be a strategic pause before the Kremlin's next move in contesting the post-1991 settlement in Europe and beyond. That move might come directly in the Baltic states, but possibly also by proxy in places such as the Western Balkans, where tensions continue to mount and the peace settlements of the 1990s show signs of fatigue. Finally, Moscow could benefit from tensions between allies, especially in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean seas, where Greece and Turkey remain at loggerheads, where all resident powers are now rearming quickly, and

where many external actors, from China to Iran and of course the United States, are also building up their presence.

It is also to be expected that even a partial Russian success in Ukraine would reopen old divisions between those Europeans seeking to accommodate Russia in Europe – they would then try to live with a new settlement where European borders (but not their own) would be contested – and those whose very existence depend on the neutralisation of Russia. Finally, if Russia were to prevail, this would be yet another defeat for the Western Alliance, just a few months after the chaotic retreat from Afghanistan. Such a defeat would fuel Russian (and Chinese) narratives of Western decline and would be self-defeating as well: nothing can be more deadly for a military alliance than a string of military defeats.

Ukraine's success currently depends on three things: the continued resistance (and strategic intelligence) of the Ukrainian army and population; the maintenance of the 'home front' in Europe and the United States, well behind the lines of combat; and finally a larger international front running from the Black Sea to Southern Africa, which will be directly impacted by the food crisis Russia has been engineering from day one in order to weaken Western positions in Africa and the Middle East and gain influence, new markets, and a North–South geopolitical footing capable of allowing Russia (and potentially China) to cut off Western access to the East. Much of what happens on that front will be conditioned by what happens for the security of the eastern Mediterranean, which in itself is quickly becoming a new front line in the clash between Western democracies and authoritarian regimes. It is thus of utmost importance for European and American allies not only to look at the war in the east but also to develop a common, 360-degree view of the geopolitical challenges they face in the early 21st century. Many of these point not only to the east, but also to the south and south-east.

NOTES
1. See the Kiel Institute for the World Economy Ukraine Support Tracker, https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/.
2. Although shared in many other circles, the idea of a 'Europe whole, free and at peace' was famously coined by George H.W. Bush in his Mainz speech of 31 May 1989, https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm.

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A New Burden-Sharing Formula in the Making? How the EU and NATO Can Organise Security Together

Aylin Matlé

ABSTRACT

Large-scale warfare returned to the European continent on 24 February 2022 when Russia launched its renewed and full-fledged attack on its neighbour Ukraine. Due to the war, the question of territorial defence has taken centre stage in European and Euro-Atlantic security debates once more, strongly affecting not only nation states but also the two most important institutional players in charge of European and Euro-Atlantic security and defence: the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Thus, this chapter aims to analyse and assess how NATO and the EU can meaningfully organise security and defence in a nascent European security order.

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INTRODUCTION

Large-scale warfare returned to the European continent on 24 February 2022 when Russia launched its renewed and full-fledged attack on its neighbour Ukraine. Due to the war, the question of territorial defence has taken centre stage in European and euro-Atlantic security debates once more, strongly affecting not only nation states but also the two most important institutional players in charge of European and euro-Atlantic security and defence: the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Thus, this chapter aims to analyse and assess how NATO and the EU can meaningfully organise security and defence in a nascent European security order. In addition, this chapter intends to discuss the likelihood of the emergence of a new burden-sharing formula between NATO and the EU in the organisation of security. After the provision of some background on how the two organisations have interacted in the past, the focus will be on the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine for NATO and the EU as security actors individually and in concert.

HOW DID NATO AND THE EU ARRIVE AT CLOSER COOPERATION?

The history of EU–NATO relations is simultaneously a tale of the United States' attitude towards the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). US presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush initially expressed concern about the EU's growing interest and initiative in the establishment of a common security and defence policy. Most of the unease was aired in connection with possible competition with and duplication of NATO structures and capabilities. Thus, 'U.S. support for greater European defence

efforts has always been conditional. Successive US administrations have supported European moves to bolster their defence capabilities, provided that such efforts would strengthen, rather than weaken, the political cohesion of the Atlantic alliance' (Binnendijk, Hamilton, & Vershbow, 2022). Then US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright boiled down the conditions the United States had in mind most prominently in 1998 when she spoke of the 'three D's' in an article published in the *Financial Times* (cited in Rutten, 2001). In the piece, she cautioned EU Member States about *discrimination* against non-EU NATO countries, *decoupling* of the Euro-Atlantic security sphere, and *duplication* of the Alliance's command structure lest Washington withdraw its support for greater European efforts in the realm of security and defence (cf. Drent, 2018: 3). However, a common misperception seems to be that the call to avoid duplication translated into US wishes that Europeans not invest in defence capabilities at all – in fact, quite the opposite held

US insistence on greater European contributions to common defence efforts were contingent upon those efforts taking place within the Alliance rather than Europe developing independent capabilities and command structures.

and still holds true. In fact, since institutionalised Euro-Atlantic security and defence relations, embodied in the shape of NATO, first came into being in 1949, consecutive US administrations have called upon European allies to increase their investments in capabilities within the Alliance. In turn, 'U.S. concerns have centered more on the danger of [EU] competition and duplication with NATO structures and planning processes, along with doubts about the capacity of European militaries to conduct even small-scale operations without U.S. support' (Binnendijk, Hamilton, & Vershbow, 2022). Thus, US insistence on greater European contributions to common defence efforts were contingent upon those efforts taking place within the Alliance rather than Europe developing independent capabilities and command structures.

These issues only arose after the Cold War ended; during the decades shaped by the systemic rivalry between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the tasks of

NATO and the EU did not overlap. Only with the EU's development of a common foreign security policy in 1992, and later a security and defence policy in 1999, did the two organisations' competencies and areas of responsibility begin to intersect. While in practice a sense of competition between the two Brussels-based institutions surfaced, steps were taken to direct the relationship into a complementary and cooperative lane. Consequently – especially in order to alleviate US concerns about the EU developing into a counterweight to NATO (cf. Hopia, 2013) – both organisations stressed their common intention to avoid duplication and a competitive relationship. Thus, the North Atlantic Council – NATO's most important decision-making body – adopted the 'Berlin agreement' in 1996 (cf. NATO, 1996). In it, NATO members pledged to support the EU's growing security and defence policy realm by providing the Union with the capability to conduct military operations on its own if it so desired. In the same spirit, the allied member states once more committed themselves to help strengthen the EU's CSDP in NATO's Strategic Concept of 1999 (cf. NATO, 1999). In 2003, the relationship between the two organisations was further elevated with the passing of the 'Berlin Plus' framework agreement. The goal of the deal was to avoid the duplication of crisis management capabilities. To that end, the agreement contained a provision allowing EU Member States access to NATO planning capacities among other things. Furthermore, an information exchange agreement was reached and regular consultations between the two bodies were established (cf. European Union, 2003). However, in reality cooperation proved to be less constructive than was assumed on paper. Part of the reason for that boiled down to political animosity between Turkey and Cyprus (the latter joined the EU in 2004, one year after the 'Berlin Plus' framework was agreed upon): 'Turkey and Cyprus could exercise, in NATO and the EU respectively, vetoes on each other's participation in a joint EU–NATO endeavour' (Williams, 2018). In addition, 'Berlin Plus ... avoided the problematic questions of whether there should be a division of labour between the two organisations and whether either would have a right of first refusal over engagement in crisis management operations' (Hofmann & Reynolds, 2007: 2). Going forward, formal relations and cooperation between the two bodies were directly blocked by Turkey: 'Formal meetings between PSC [the EU's Political and Security Committee] and NAC [the

North Atlantic Council] were suspended as Turkey objected ... to Cyprus sitting in on such meetings without a NATO security agreement – which Turkey refuses to allow' (Smith, 2019). The political problems notwithstanding, exchanges of an informal nature have been possible at various levels (cf. Hofmann & Reynolds, 2007). Against this backdrop, it is adequate to recognise that relations between the EU and NATO amounted to treading water for quite some time.

Yet a fundamental shift in attitudes can be detected starting in 2014, when Russia annexed the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea illegally and began instigating a covert attack on the country's eastern region. Besides unanimously condemning Russia's actions, the two organisations responded with a Joint Declaration in July 2016, which was signed by then President of the European Council Donald Tusk, then President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Junker, and NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. The Declaration identified seven policy areas that ought to be prioritised in the institutional relationship: 1) defence against and response to hybrid threats; 2) operations, including in the maritime sphere; 3) cyber security and defence; 4) defence capabilities; 5) defence industry and research; 6) exercises (including hybrid scenarios); and 7) partner resilience building (cf. European Council, 2016). A few months later, a list containing 42 concrete measures to fulfil the pledge to work together more closely was established. The addition of 32 projects to this list in 2017 was supposed to underline the importance both bodies attached to joint actions and cooperation. A second Joint Declaration, published in 2018, essentially corroborated the content of the preceding document and expanded the scope and depth of the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO. Measures against and dealing with the spread of disinformation in the run-up to elections were added to the list of joint endeavours (cf. European Council, 2018).

All in all, the two organisations with the largest role in shaping Euro-Atlantic security and defence have moved closer together in view of Russia's revisionist behaviour since 2014. In addition to the changed security environment on the European continent highlighting the need to cooperate more intimately, the United States' more relaxed attitude towards greater European defence efforts can be adduced to explain these changes. The next section will zoom in on the strategic foundations on which both the EU and NATO currently rest in order to gauge whether (joint) strategic action can be hoped for from both bodies.

FROM STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS TO (JOINT) STRATEGIC ACTION?

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has underpinned the urgent need to address the matter of territorial defence once more, which oftentimes is equated with collective defence. The heightened prominence of the overlapping tasks of organising security and defence in and for Europe 'means for NATO a renewed focus on its original raison d'être ... [which] is more difficult to navigate for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)' (Perot, 2022: 3). It stands to reason that the tasks for which the CSDP was initially set up and towards which it has been geared ever since – that is, the conduct of crisis management operations – will take a back seat to territorial defence matters. Parsing NATO's New Strategic Concept, which was adopted by all 30 member states at the Alliance's annual summit in Madrid in June 2022, reveals that the changes in threat perception and thus task prioritisation are adequately reflected. Consequently, the NATO Alliance singles out the Russian Federation as 'the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area' (NATO, 2022: 4). While it should not have come as a surprise that the peril emanating from Putin's Russia would take centre stage in NATO's updated strategic thinking, it was also – rightly so, as it turned out – anticipated that the Alliance would 'maintain the triad of deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security (in other words, the open-door policy and partnerships with non-NATO states)' (Matlé, 2022). The expected changes and continuities notwithstanding, another conceptual adjustment is notable in comparison with the predecessor document dating back to 2010: the concept of collective defence is regarded as the guiding principle, including the other two core tasks NATO is upholding. According to the new allied strategy, crisis management and cooperative security should complement deterrence and defence to guarantee the security of all NATO member states. In that sense, collective defence is an overarching responsibility which is supposed to be safeguarded via different means and channels. Furthermore, parsing the new Strategic Document brings to the fore that while a 'conceptual gradation of the three main tasks' is avoided, conventional and nuclear deterrence and defence constitute the unofficial *primus inter pares* of NATO's renewed strategic outlook (Matlé, 2022). In conclusion, 'the new-old guiding principle of the alliance for the coming years is collective defense' (Matlé, 2022). While this task – along with the corresponding allied force structure – is mainly directed at hedging

against a possible Russian attack on NATO territory, the 30 member states stress that 'NATO is determined to safeguard the freedom and security of allies. Its key purpose and greatest responsibility is to ensure our collective defence, against all threats, from all directions' (NATO, 2022: 3).

Analysing the EU's equivalent to NATO's New Strategic Concept – the Strategic Compass (SC) for Security and Defence – it becomes apparent quickly that the Alliance will continue playing the central role in the collective defence of Europe and the Euro-Atlantic arena, as even the SD itself readily acknowledges: 'Russia's aggression against Ukraine has shown ... how essential NATO is for the collective defence of its members ...' (European Union, 2022: 5). Yet this is not to say that the EU cannot contribute to the security and defence of its Member States meaningfully beyond crisis management operations, for which the Compass recommends setting up a Rapid Deployment Capacity, allowing the Member States to 'quickly deploy up to 5,000 troops for different types of crises' (European Union, 2022: 6).

> ## *According to the new allied strategy, crisis management and cooperative security should complement deterrence and defence to guarantee the security of all NATO member states.*

Supporting and contributing to the collective defence task in a territorial sense, which will most likely dominate the strategic outlook of the Euro-Atlantic arena in the years, possibly even decades, to come, can be done by the EU in indirect and direct terms, as pointed out by Perot (2022). Indirect steps may include, among other things, further enhancing military mobility on the continent – which is desperately needed in order to forge the logistical and legal perquisites of troops and military equipment being able and allowed to move across Europe quickly (Antinozzi, 2022). In a scenario involving an attack on one or more NATO allies situated along the eastern flank, 'the rapid transfer of large numbers of troops and military equipment from Western Europe' (Perot, 2022: 4) would be required. Military mobility is one of 60 common Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects, in which not only EU members but also third countries, including the United States, Canada, and Norway, participate. Recently,

the United Kingdom joined the initiative as well (cf. Antinozzi, 2022). Additionally, and in structural terms, the EU, according to Perot, ought to consolidate its efforts in the realm of defence capability development and production.

Next to instruments that are supposed to enable EU Member States to make headway in this regard – including the European Defence Fund, PESCO, and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence – the Commission is 'push[ing] member states to engage in more joint defense procurement' to offset 'years of uncoordinated European defense cuts' (Besch & Quencez, 2022). To that end, the Commission has put forward other proposals as well since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Among other things, a short-term instrument aimed at reinforcing joint defence procurement has been set up by the Commission, dedicating 500 million euros to the endeavour through 2024. Beyond the short term, the Commission came up with a 'European Defence Investment Programme' regulation to set out the conditions and criteria for a 'European Defence Capability Consortium'. The rationale is

> guided by the aim to procure and develop defence capabilities jointly within the EU (cf. European Commission, 2022: 9–10). The capabilities that are needed and that are supposed to be acquired through these channels include 'long-range cruise missiles, air defence systems, armed drones or artillery' to be able to engage in 'state-on state, high-intensity warfare' (Perot, 2022: 4).

> Furthermore, the acceleration of production is another issue that EU Member States (and those of NATO, for that matter) ought to address given 'the short-term need to replenish and expand defence stocks including to compensate for the military assistance to Ukraine' (European Commission, 2022: 1). When it comes to a direct role for the EU in collective defence, the Member States can, if desired, resort to Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union. The Article states that '[i]f a Member States is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter' (European Union, 2012: 27). While the Article was invoked once by France in response to terrorist attacks perpetrated on French soil in 2015 (cf. Traynor, 2015), and although the 'wording of Article 42.7 is much stronger ... in comparison to NATO's [collective defence] Article 5' (Tidey, 2022), the EU's provision is not yet backed up by 'practical arrangements for its implementation' (Perot, 2022: 4). Limitations

include the lack of a common command structure and a deficit of military capabilities. It could become even less important in light of EU members Finland and Sweden striving to join NATO given that both countries have been adamant about further development and implementation of the EU's collective defence clause in years past (cf. Puglierin, 2016: 4). With the prospect of both countries being allowed into NATO, 'only four EU member states will not be part of the Alliance ..., [thus] the collective defense of the EU is almost entirely covered by Article 5' (Besch & Quencez, 2022). Hence, it is more than plausible that collective territorial defence will remain in the hands of NATO instead of being taken over by the EU. The likelihood of this scenario unfolding calls for a reinvigoration of NATO's 'European pillar' (cf. Ringsmose & Webber, 2020).

This concept ('European pillar') could be put into practice by implementing what some experts have referred to as European 'strategic responsibility' (cf., e.g., Alphen Group, 2022). According to Binnendijk, Hamilton, and Vershbow (2022), European allies ought to hone in on two military goals: 'First, [they] should build their conventional military capabilities to a level that would provide half of the forces and capabilities, including the strategic enablers, required for deterrence and collective defense against major-power aggression.'[1] The second element of 'strategic responsibility' includes the development of military means to 'conduct crisis management operations in Europe's neighborhood without today's heavy reliance on U.S. enablers ...' (Binnendijk, Hamilton, & Vershbow, 2022). If put into practice, the concept of 'strategic responsibility' could thus be used as a bridge for the two organisations to work together closely, complementing instead of competing (with) each other.

CONCLUSION: NEW BURDEN-SHARING ARRANGEMENT IN THE MAKING

Both NATO and the EU are and will be in charge of working towards the security of their respective member states (though with Finland and Sweden most likely joining the Atlantic Alliance soon, the overlap of membership will increase). The analytical part of this chapter has brought to the fore that NATO will continue being the major provider of collective defence – in fact, the recently released third joint EU–NATO declaration supports that deduction in that the statement underlines that 'NATO remains the foundation of collective defence for its Allies and essential for Euro Atlantic security' (Michel, von der Leyen, & Stoltenberg, 2023) in the light of Russia's war against Ukraine and its intentions to rewrite the map of Europe.

In this context, it should not be forgotten that President Putin put forward his ideas about a future European security architecture in December 2021. Couched in ultimatums directed at the United States and NATO, Putin insisted on, among other things, the reversal of NATO enlargement and a de facto American (nuclear) withdrawal from the European continent (cf. Fischer, 2021). Against this backdrop, it is prudent to further put NATO in charge of securing allied territory (which for the most part overlaps with EU territory on the European continent anyhow), especially along the particularly exposed eastern flank, to prevent a Russian fait accompli.

At the same time, the coordinating and regulating power of the EU should not be underrated. Not least, the quick announcement of nine sanction regimes during 2022 targeting Russia in response to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine underlines the organisation's value in the joint efforts to counter Moscow. Furthermore, and relating more closely to the matter of collective defence, the EU is continuing to follow a path 'as a capability provider and defense industrial power rather than as an operational defense power' (Besch & Quencez, 2022). NATO being in the lead on collective defence while the EU is making good on its aspirations to become an industrial power could well set the foundation for a clear-cut and functioning burden-sharing formula for the years and decades ahead.

NOTE

1. N.B.: Others have argued that the European pillar within NATO should even carry as much as 70 per cent of the conventional burden by 2035 (cf. Mölling et al., 2022).

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After the Weaponisation of Gas Exports: No Security without Energy Security

Silvia Nadjivan and Lukas Sustala[1]

ABSTRACT

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent multifaceted EU sanctions on Russia have thrown Europe into multiple crises – of diplomacy, military defence, economic, financial, social, and energy policies, and liberal democracy. This unprecedented situation has also made it clear that holistic views are the *sine qua non* for appropriate, multifaceted solutions. Focusing on long-term energy security strategies within the EU Member States and the Western Balkan Six (WB6), this chapter argues that overcoming the current energy crisis is closely interlinked with overcoming the liberal democracy crisis.

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## INTRODUCTION: RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE IN FACTS AND FIGURES

On 24 February 2022, the Russian military invaded Ukraine, acting brutally against civilians to capture Ukrainian territory and ending a long period of naiveté regarding energy security and security policy in Europe. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine impacts not only the people of Ukraine but also, through its imperialistic intent, brings negative consequences and even threats, including nuclear ones, to the European continent and beyond (Coles et al., 2023; Horovitz & Wachs, 2022; Daniels et al., 2022).

It is invidious to quantify the costs of a war, but data from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) show the magnitude of the atrocities: from 24 February 2022 to 2 January 2023, 17,994 civilian casualties were recorded in Ukraine, of whom 6,919 were killed and 11,075 were injured (OHCHR, 2023). It is, however, difficult to estimate the total number of all victims, both civilian and military, among the Ukrainians, or those among the Russian military occupiers in Ukraine, as the war and propaganda are ongoing. According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, by 15 February 2023, more than eight million Ukrainian refugees had been recorded across Europe. The number of refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe was close to five million by 15 February 2023 (UNHCR, 2023). According to the Kyiv School of Economics, as of December 2022, the damage to housing facilities due to Russian bombing was estimated at US$54 billion. A further US$35.6 billion of losses were recorded from damage to infrastructure. In 2022 the total damage to physical infrastructure during the war was estimated at US$138 billion (Kyiv School of Economics, 2023), while the rate of damage has continued apace in 2023.

Central Europe is especially dependent on Russian gas

Share of Russian gas imports in total energy consumption (in %, 2020)

10 20 30 35 40 50
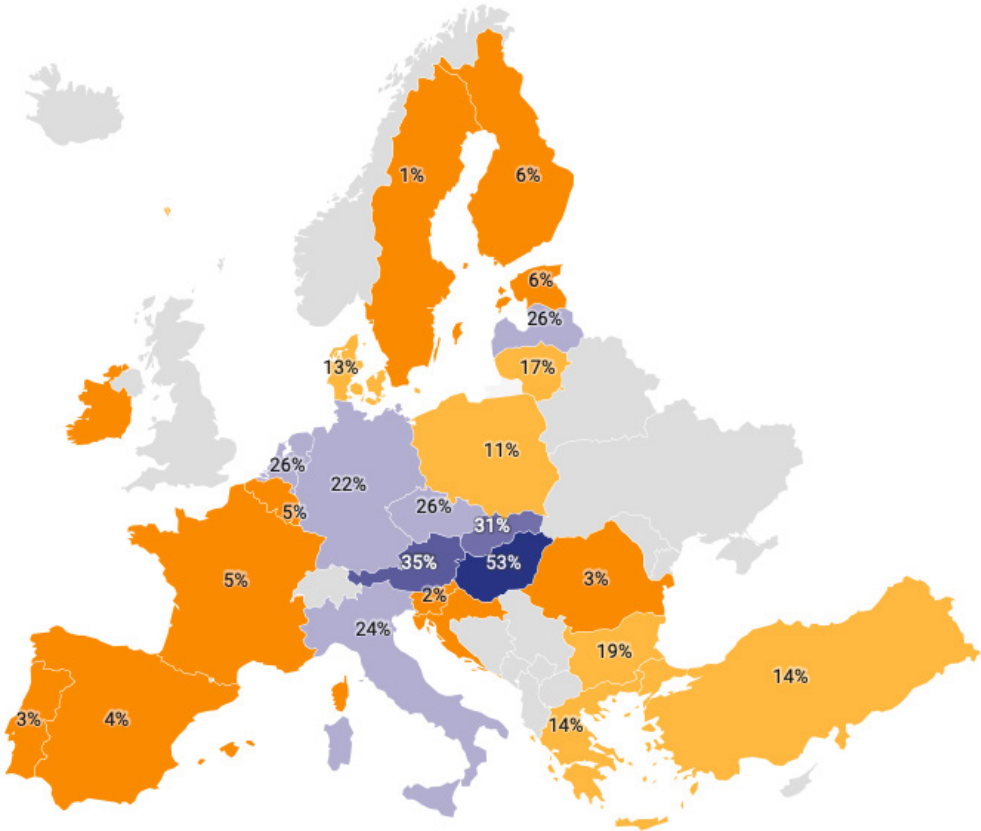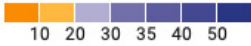
Quelle: International Monetary Fund (2022).

Reuters reported in late July 2022 that Ukraine had lost control of 22 per cent of its territory to Russia since 2014, including part of the coastline so essential to the Ukrainian economy (Faulconbridge, 2022). The economy has been completely crippled in some parts of the country by the war, and in other parts it has been completely destroyed. Massive damage to homes and infrastructure, as well as mines, weapons, and ammunition left behind, make return impossible for many refugees for the time being.

Since the Russian invasion in February 2022, the EU, its Member States, and European financial institutions have mobilised nearly €10 billion to support Ukraine and maintain its economic, social, and financial processes and provide rapid crisis and humanitarian assistance. In addition, there is

about €2.5 billion in military aid from the European Peace Facility and €435 million from the Union Civil Protection Mechanism budget (European Commission, 2022).

At the same time, Russia's war in Ukraine has exposed the high importance of oil and gas in Europe and fragilities in the global and European economies, with secondary problems such as globally rising food prices, as well as rising inflation in the EU, the United States and other countries that were already struggling with high inflation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Oil and gas exports from Russia accounted for a significant portion of the energy imported by European economies (Abnett, 2022). According to data from the IMF (2022), countries such as Austria, Hungary, and Slovakia have been especially dependent on Russian gas. For some

European countries, Russian gas accounted for nearly 100 per cent of gas imports prior to 2022.

While it was rarely mentioned before the war began, both Russia and Ukraine also play a major role in many different markets, from metals to food and fertiliser. The two countries combined produce 30 per cent of the global demand for wheat and 75 per cent of the demand for sunflower oil (Duggal & Haddad, 2022). As its impact on the global food situation shows, Russia's war in Ukraine is a war in Europe, but it poses threats for global developments that will affect the world for years to come. In that sense, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has created new global challenges.

EUROPE'S MULTIFACETED *ZEITENWENDE*, OR WATERSHED MOMENT

In the years before the current war, Russia's threat to Ukraine was not at the top of the European Union's security agenda (Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 2016; Coles et al., 2023). After Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its interference in eastern Ukraine, the West imposed economic sanctions against Russia. The economic sanctions of the European Union, United States, Canada, and other allies and partners affected the Russian finance, banking, energy, and defence sectors (Hunter Christie, 2015). However, individual votes called for gradually lifting the sanctions imposed on Russia after the Crimean annexation (Spiegel, 2017). Most of the political decision-makers and experts assumed that the situation in Crimea would become a 'frozen conflict' and were not pushing for a timely, politically stable, and peaceful resolution of the conflict (Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 2016; Bechev, 2023b). A neutral Ukraine in close partnership with the EU was seen as a desirable outcome, as the European Union was preoccupied by EU enlargement fatigue, Europe's migration (policy) crisis in 2015, and the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020. As a matter of fact, the conflict over eastern Ukraine was forged by Russia (OSCE, 2020) while it was overlooked by Europe.

Similarly, energy security in most Western European economies did not play a vital role in policy debates even after the annexation of Crimea and repeated conflicts over Russian gas deliveries in Ukraine (e.g. in 2009). The dependency on Russian gas actually increased in some European economies between 2014 and 2022. However, a number of academics and think tanks warned against the possible weaponisation of gas exports by Russia – without gaining much attention. The concept of energy security was actually well established in the literature, and a couple of indices were developed

to capture the extent of Russia's political leverage. In 2021 the Russian state-run gas firm Gazprom chose to use gas as a geopolitical weapon against Europe by depleting Gazprom-controlled storage facilities to increase uncertainty about energy security prior to the invasion. In 2022 Russian gas was visibly used as a tool of economic warfare, as Russia reduced exports through its Nordstream 1 pipeline to a trickle over the summer of 2022 (McWilliams et al., 2022; Reuters, 2022). The pipeline was later destroyed by sabotage.

Russia's brutal invasion in February 2022 thus marks a watershed moment, or, according to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (2023), a 'Zeitenwende: an epochal tectonic shift' and a return of 19th-century imperialist machinations to Europe.

In contrast to 2014, after the illegal annexation of Crimea, this time Russia and its elite immediately faced wide-ranging international economic, financial, banking, and trade sanctions (European Council, 2023). At the same time, Western countries, along with their partners and allies, started to send financial, humanitarian, and military help to Ukraine. It soon became apparent that NATO and therefore its most powerful member state, the United States, had taken the lead in providing military support to Ukraine. Europe's previously emerging public debate on more strategic autonomy swiftly ended. Moreover, Finland and Sweden, both hitherto neutral states in Russia's neighbourhood, promptly applied for NATO membership, which also gave a clue to Europe's strategic and military capability. Meanwhile Finland entered NATO as the 31st member state.

Compared with the period of the Cold War, European countries today find themselves with low defence budgets. The break-up of state socialism and the fall of the Iron Curtain gave rise to hopes for a new path leading to a common peaceful, democratic, and prosperous society in Europe. In spite of the horrible wars and countless war crimes committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1999, most European states have spent the last 20 years reducing their military capabilities in favour of other budget areas. With the Russian war against Ukraine and its aftermath, Europe finds itself in its most complex situation since the Cold War, but without the capabilities of that era. At the same time, Europe is dealing with multiple crises which have intensified due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the war in Ukraine and the subsequent international sanctions against Russia: social polarisation and a crisis of liberal democracy, inflation, security crises, and the energy crisis as many European states still depend on Russian

FIGURE 2: **Who is helping Ukraine?**

Who is helping Ukraine?
Bilateral aid grouped by kind of help, Top 20 countries and institutions, in billion Euros

■ Financial ■ Humanitarian ■ Military

USA	15.05 / 9.9 / 22.86 — 47.82
EU	30.32 / 3.1 — 34.99
UK	4.13 / 7.08
Germany	5.45
Canada	3.78
Poland	3
France	1.42
Norway	1.21
Netherlands	0.85
Sweden	0.81
Italy	0.67
Denmark	0.64
Japan	0.61
Czech Republic	0.59
Austria	0.58
Spain	0.38
Estonia	0.34
Portugal	0.34
Australia	0.32
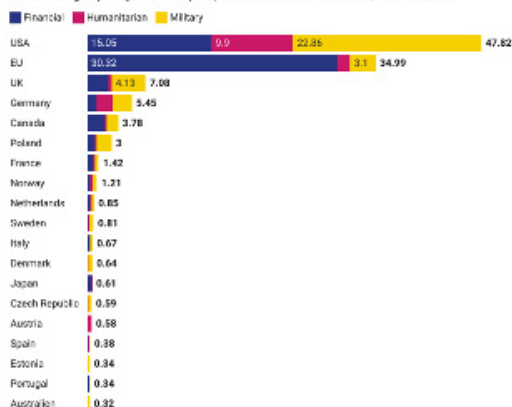
Source: IfW Kiel/Ukraine Support Tracker

gas (Feierabend, Nadjivan, & Susatala, 2023). This especially refers to countries in Russia's immediate neighbourhood and the Western Balkan states, which have been stagnating in the EU enlargement process for years while Putin's regime, through its energy supplies, has increased its ideological influence as well as political intrigues enormously through disinformation and fake news in the region. To 'prevent asymmetric shocks from weakening the EU', a broad solidarity with and support for these most affected countries is crucial, as Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, highlighted shortly after the war began (Borrell, 2022).

NEW BOOST FOR EUROPE'S ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

In a common spirit of solidarity and support during the European Council meeting in June 2022, accompanied by an encouraging trend in public opinion, Ukraine and Moldova were granted the status of 'candidate countries', while Georgia was reassured of its European future (Scholz, 2023; Spöri, 2022). At the same time, the Western Balkan states (WB6) gained new attention after years of frustration spent in the EU enlargement waiting room. The so-called Berlin Process was again put on the EU agenda in order to not lose this region in the face of other global players' geopolitical interests – first Russia, and then China. At least since Russia's attack on Ukraine it is clear that only an inclusive and enlarged Europe can defend its political independence, liberal democratic values, and security against autocratic influence from abroad, mostly interlinked

with anti-democratic populists from the inside. Apart from a new security architecture, a diversification of energy suppliers and routes has also proved to be a *sine qua non* for abolishing Europe's dependence on Russian gas and thus Russia's political influence on Europe (Sustala, 2023). This applies especially to some Western Balkan states that, experiencing European enlargement fatigue in recent years, increased their economic cooperation with China and especially with Russia and, besides receiving Russian gas deliveries, were also infiltrated by Russian propaganda. This is mostly the case with Serbia and Republika Srpska, one of the two entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After the EU took these decisions (probably emotionally) in June 2022, the number of participants in the EU waiting room increased and, with that, the expected frustration in the years to come. This is because there are clear EU accession criteria, limited financial resources on side of the EU, and – due to the consequences of the war in Ukraine – shrinking economic as well as infrastructural capacities among the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

Systemic corruption and organised crime are serious issues not only in the WB6, but also in Ukraine. A look at the success in combating such phenomena in EU states and previous candidate states makes one doubt that there would have been rapid improvement there even in peacetime. The situation has now been further aggravated by the war, and Ukraine has actually been set back further on its path to accession. The decision is therefore roughly reminiscent of the promise the Union made to the Western Balkan states in Thessaloniki in 2003. That was 20 years ago and, apart from Croatia (which became an EU Member State in 2013), no other Western Balkan state has managed to join. Hopes were raised among the citizens that have not been fulfilled, leading to disappointment and frustration. As a result, nationalist-oriented governments in the Western Balkans have turned towards China, Turkey, Arab states, and other geopolitical actors who are pursuing their own agendas in the region while strengthening domestic autocrats, or 'stabilocrats', in their positions (Bieber, 2022). These dangers cannot be ruled out for Ukraine either.

The term 'stabilocracy', a combination of stability and autocracy, describes 'hybrid, semi-authoritarian regimes with evident democratic shortcomings and autocratic tendencies which claim to offer pro-EU regional stability' (Zweers et al., 2022: 9; Nadjivan & Schubert, 2020). However, the WB6 countries are not all characterised as stabilocracies to the same extent or intensity. While Serbia under the multi-year

presidency of Aleksandar Vučić has turned from a 'semi-consolidated democracy' to a 'hybrid regime', in both North Macedonia and Montenegro pro-European democratic oppositions have been elected, which suggests progress towards a process of democratic consolidation (Zweers et al., 2022: 9f.). Accession negotiations with Montenegro began in 2012, and with North Macedonia and Albania in 2022. Democratisation and the EU integration process appear promising in all three countries, as all the governments therein have minimised their cooperation with and thus the influence of Russia. North Macedonia and Montenegro had moreover battled Russian influence for many years, ranging from propaganda measures to an attempted coup to prevent Montenegro's accession to NATO (BBC, 2019). By contrast, Serbia, which entered the EU accession process in 2013, seems to be developing increasingly autocratic, clientelistic, nepotistic, and illiberal structures under President Vučić (Nadjivan & Schubert, 2020).

Due to Vučić's inconsistent balancing between the EU, Russia, and China, this opportunism leaves the door open for further escalation so that conflicts in Serbia and Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, cannot be ruled out (Stradner, 2023). Such worrying developments were expected by international observers even before the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022 (Báchora et al., 2020; Barnet et al., 2022). The nationalist developments in parts of the Western Balkans region are additionally fostered by the massive array of Russian propaganda and targeted disinformation (Bechev, 2023a; Prelec & Emini, 2023).

Since the war against Ukraine, Russia has made even greater use of its communications channels in the Western Balkans to spread disinformation about the war, the United States, the EU, and all its other so-called enemies (Gavrilović, 2022). This corresponds with Vučić's use of Serbian nationalist propaganda to distract from the country's socio-economic problems, broad social dissatisfaction, and high brain-drain rates.

Nationalistically motivated disputes with the government of Kosovo and collaboration with the government of Republika Srpska against the government of the nation state Bosnia and Herzegovina, both of which are supported by Russian propaganda, might be seen in such a light. As evidenced by the aggressive protests and firing of shots by Serb demonstrators on the night of 1 August 2022 in northern Kosovo and the further escalation of the conflict over licence plates between Serbia and Kosovo in the autumn of 2022, future conflicts can be expected (Bechev, 2023a).

Another example of Russian attempts to influence regional politics appeared to be the parliamentary elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2022; however, the nationalist parties suffered defeat because Russian-influenced ethno-nationalistic propaganda failed to sway the population. Meanwhile, in December 2022, Bosnia and Herzegovina was granted EU candidate status, meaning Kosovo remains as the last member of the WB6 for which a compromise must be found with Serbia regarding its state autonomy (perhaps similar to East and West Germany) in order to continue the EU enlargement process. To sum up, '[t]he stability of the Western Balkans is crucial for European security', as highlighted by the Austrian Ministry of Defence in its Security Policy Annual Forecast (Barnet et al., 2022).

However, or perhaps for that very reason, strengthening liberal democracy through European integration, close cooperation, and freeing the Western Balkan region from Russia's political intrigues and especially gas dependency appears more important now than ever before.

THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SECURITY

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its weaponisation of gas exports have plunged Europe into an unprecedented energy crisis. Gas prices briefly rose to more than €200 per MWh, a more than tenfold increase over the price in 2019. The subsequent inflation shock was the largest since the two oil price shocks of the 1970s.

Energy policy became an important, pressing concern for European policy-makers given the economic sanctions against Russian energy exports, changes to the European energy architecture, and efforts to diversify away from Russian gas and lower demand for the scarcer resource. The European Commission also mobilised €300 billion to invest in and expand renewable energies (Lütkehus, 2022). However, the expansion of renewables has not reached the speed that would be needed to make these steps truly short-lived (Daniels et al., 2022).

In spite of the common consensus that renewables are an important part of the solution to Europe's energy security problem, the EU is – at least for now – far from being able to meet its needs purely from renewables in the near future. Fossil fuels are still essential for the EU, as industry, energy production, and consumers still need to use gas. EU countries have thus diversified away from Russian imports and signed contracts to import vastly more gas in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG). This is more expensive than pipeline gas, but gas prices dropped significantly during the winter months of

2022/2023 as gas storage levels remained elevated and gas imports from Norway or via LNG compensated for the loss of Russian imports. The European Commission's goal is to achieve complete independence from Russian gas well before 2030 (EU Commission).

Taking all this into account, it becomes clear that the pressure is particularly high on those countries which depend heavily on Russian fossil fuels, especially gas. This is especially true for the Western Balkan region. In addition to the differences and asymmetries between Western and Southeastern Europe, and within the WB6 region, the Russian war against Ukraine since 2022 has additionally intensified the enormous oppression of those states that are heavily dependent on Russia. This pressure comes from both Russia and Europe. Data from the European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators show approximately 100 per cent dependence of North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on Russian gas, while in Serbia it was 89 per cent, according to the latest available data (Buchholz, 2022; Cretti, Imeri, & Ristovski, 2022: 2). By comparison, the use of natural gas is minimal,

In the long run, there is no way around regional cooperation for decarbonisation.

as it shows in Bosnia and Herzegovina the share 2.5 per cent, 9 per cent in North Macedonia, and 13 per cent in Serbia (Buchholz, 2022; Cretti, Imeri, & Ristovski, 2022: 2).

The energy crisis resulting from gas shortages and rapidly increasing electricity prices was discussed at the Western Balkan Summit in Berlin on 3 November 2022. Energy security was in fact the top priority, as participating government representatives discussed intensifying their collaboration in terms of energy and pushing forward the transition to renewables. It quickly became clear that the EU and WB6 must increase their level of cooperation to overcome the energy crisis (Cretti, Imeri, & Ristovski, 2022: 1) as the WB6 region, due to its enormous dependence on Russian gas, suffers most from the energy crisis in Europe. This, however, also affects political decision-making. For this reason, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have not yet imposed sanctions against Russia. All other WB6 countries have done so, but so far with no penalty from Russian side (Cretti, Imeri, & Ristovski, 2022: 2).

Possible alternatives to such a dependence on Russian gas might include the use of LNG, but only in theory as building the necessary infrastructure would take years. For now, only Montenegro and Albania, due to their geographical position, might aspire to adopting LNG, although it is probably too expensive. The revival of coal production as a pragmatic but not green alternative to gas was emphasised by Serbia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia (Cretti, Imeri, & Ristovski, 2022: 2f.). In the long run, there is no way around regional cooperation for decarbonisation. Thus, the WB 6 have been included in, or at least invited to, the EU energy platform, building up 'a solidarity mechanism for joint gas and hydrogen purchases' (Cretti, Imeri, & Ristovski, 2022: 3). Kosovo, however, has no gas in its energy mix, and Serbia has a three-year gas supply contract with Gazprom, the Russian energy supplier.

Key elements for future energy security are LNG and hydrogen as well as massive investments in renewable energies. All three energy sources require massive financial investments, especially when they are introduced, because their network requirements differ from those currently in place. In addition, there is still a certain 'not in my backyard' attitude in Europe against wind farms near populated areas (Gurzu, 2018). Therefore, the challenge of converting to renewable energy also lies in awareness-raising measures, citizens' participation, and education.

Europe is already working on common solutions involving all WB6 countries and including renewable energy. Moreover, a respectable level of financial support is foreseen, as proclaimed during the latest Western Balkan Summit in 2022, all with the common goal to diversify energy sources and to include higher shares of renewables in the energy mix (Cretti, Imeri, & Ristovski, 2022: 4).

Becoming independent from Russian gas would, in the long term, mean reduced ideological influence and political intrigue by Putin's regime and, therefore, strengthened European values, human rights, and freedom of speech, which would in the end strengthen liberal democracy in Europe.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EU POST-WAR RELATIONS WITH POST-PUTIN RUSSIA

In the course of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, public awareness increased regarding several issues with long-term consequences. For example, it became clear that there can be no sovereignty for a country that is heavily dependent on just one energy supplier, in this case Russia. Russia weaponised its gas exports in 2022, and there is little reason not to expect that it will do so again in

the future. The EU should thus seek more diversification, more energy production within Europe, a reduction in the demand for gas, and the expansion of renewable energy production (Feierabend & Reiter, 2022). Autarky was an important concept in security policy long before the war in Ukraine, but independence, or at least the absence of dependence on any actor, has gained more publicity as a result of the war. Therefore, Europe should conclude that security policy must become independence policy. High energy prices in Europe are making the United States a more attractive partner once again. Other fossil fuel exporting countries are now expected to step in for Russia. This time, Europe must not betray its democratic principles and liberal values for low energy prices and alleged energy security. Apart from diversification, renewable energy has also received an unprecedented boost due to the war, which goes hand in hand with finally implementing climate protection.

Apart from all the destruction and tragedy, this war has put enlargement back on the EU's agenda. With the candidate status of Ukraine and Moldova, as well as the start of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, new hope for European unification has emerged. Although the end of the war cannot be foreseen, it is necessary to make plans for the post-war period and for the EU's relations with post-Putin Russia (Bechev, 2023b) because it will not be possible to reset EU–Russia relations on their pre-war basis.

In accordance with Stefan Meister (2022) from the German Council on Foreign Relations, we provide a number of recommendations for future EU strategies.

Foster EU enlargement and revive the EU neighbourhood policy

This means a stronger focus on Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus, and the Black Sea region to foster connectivity, trade, and economic cooperation and to reach oil and gas diversification within the frame of strong conditionality.

Take energy security in Europe seriously

Given the importance of energy to Russia, the focus on sustainable and secure energy systems in Europe is of utmost importance. To provide stability, the EU must not forget to foster energy supply security for the European neighbourhood as well. By doing so, Russia's influence on the economies and politics of the countries in the WB6 can be reduced, and kleptocratic and corrupt mechanisms can be prevented.

Support Russian civil society

A clear distinction has to be made between the Putin regime and the totally silenced and oppressed members of civil society still living in Russia. International platforms among the Russian diaspora abroad and opposition in Russia should be supported to offer a safe, hybrid space for social, cultural, and scientific exchange and to show the 'Other Russia' against the background of common liberal-democratic values. These civil society actors should be involved in the development of a post-Putin Russia. In that sense, the mistakes made in building up the post-Yugoslav states, when liberal-democratic civil society actors where not appropriately represented so that consolidating democracies turned into stabilocracies, should be avoided.

Create a reliable European visa regime

As there is no harmonised European visa regime for people fleeing Russia, but rather decision-making on the national level, an agreement should be found on the European level. This is complicated by the disagreement on whether Russians leaving their country pose a risk to Europe or not. With a standardised and smart checking system, the motivation and background of each asylum seeker should be easy to clarify so that Europe might respond adequately in the course of possible future repressions by the Russian regime.

Avoid the total isolation of Russia

The current sanctions against Russia, or concretely against the Putin regime, are not meant to be implemented in the long run, as the long-term financial and technological isolation of Russia from the European market would lead to a vicious cycle of isolation, as the case of Iran shows. International contacts with the liberal-democratic opposition in Russia have to be constantly maintained in order to strengthen pro-European forces on site. This may prove to be an important strategic step, as no one can foresee if and when the Putin regime might be overthrown.

To sum up, energy security marks the soft power of security strategies, which have had to be developed in order not to succumb to the blackmail and threats of the Putin regime. Such independence, on an existential level, serves as a guarantee for the European way of life, which means being granted checks and balances, equal rights, and freedom of expression, which is part and parcel of liberal and deliberative democracy, understood as a constant and vivid process of exchange.

NOTE

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Energy Solidarity as Part of a New European Security Structure

Ricardo Silvestre

ABSTRACT

One of the aims of the European Union (EU) is to contribute to solidarity among people within its borders. The EU is seen primarily as a union of values, cohesion, solidarity, and these ideas need to permeate the European project. The success of this endeavour depends on the creation of mechanisms of internal assistance, as was observed during COVID-19 or with the creation of the Next-GenerationEU fund. This solidarity between EU Member States is not only intuitively beneficial as it is also a feature of the theory of international relations constructivism. One crucial need, frequently stressed by European leaders, is *energy solidarity*. Apart from improving the security and quality of life of people, it prevents populists from tricking voters into thinking that their simplistic, protectionist, Eurosceptic policies have merit.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of the European Union (EU) is to 'contribute to solidarity … among peoples'within its borders (European Union, 2023). Likewise, regarding the place of the EU in the world, the mission statement of the Diplomatic Service of the European Union is to assure that 'Europe's security starts abroad. … In the face of increased global instability, the EU needs to take more responsibility for its own security and increase its capacity to act autonomously.'[1] If there is an area where these two factors are crucial, both regionally, inside the EU, and externally with partners (and foes), in the existing world order, it's energy access.

Even before the attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine, where President Putin was, possibly, counting that Europe and the EU would be held hostage to his expansionist impulses due to their dependence on the giant in the east for energy, EU institutions were already working to assure energy independence, diversification of sources, and energy markets stability. Moscow's hostile act(s) merely accelerated those needs.

However, for the EU, it's not only a question of having safe, reliable, friendly partners from whom to buy energy. There is also the need to create the conditions, across its Member States, for energy to transit between multiple entry points and production areas. This allows them to help countries in need, and, when necessary, reverse the flows. This applies to existing infrastructures, such as those for natural gas or liquified natural gas (LNG), but also to ones being developed, like energy grids and corridors, all the way to an eventual European green hydrogen market. The main engine for these policies and initiatives should not just be EU institutions but also Member States' governance, politicians, and European citizens. This *energy solidarity*, when needed, is not only intuitively beneficial but also justified by political science theories in International Relations.

This chapter aims to describe some of the key factors that call for political measures to develop a more resilient and solidary EU when thinking about energy management. In addition, challenges and opportunities to ensure that a European energy market is running properly will be discussed. Finally, we end with recommendations for policymakers when thinking about infrastructure development, energy security and diversification, modernisation, and solidarity mechanisms.

WHEN THE NEED CREATES THE WILL

An informal meeting of the Heads of State of Governments of the Nation States of the EU took place in Versailles, France, from 10 to 12 March 2022. A mere two weeks before, the Russian Federation launched an unprovoked and unjust military attack on the neighbouring country of Ukraine, in clear violation of international law. The Declaration produced as a result of the meeting (European Council, 2023b: 3) states that, 'confronted with growing instability, strategic competition and security threats, we decided to take more responsibility for our security and take further decisive steps towards building our European sovereignty, reducing our dependences [from energy] …'. These decisive steps include three major areas: defence capabilities, a robust economic base, and reducing the energy dependencies in the EU. A set of proposals are presented in the Declaration (Section II) that include accelerating the reduction of fossil fuel usage, diversifying suppliers and routes, developing a hydrogen market, speeding up development of renewables, and improving energy efficiency, as well as a call for the European Commission to propose a REPowerEU plan, which has come to fruition.

However, one point deserves special attention. Subsection e) of Section II states that '[we agreed to phase out our dependence on Russia by] completing and improving the interconnection of European gas and electricity networks and fully synchronising our power grids throughout the EU'. This was such an important point that even before the informal meeting began, the Portuguese prime minister, Antonio Costa, mentioned it to the media, making the case that the Iberian Peninsula is under-delivering energy to the rest of Europe due to the lack of cross-border energy interconnections. This reality undermines the peninsula's potential role in renewable energy and in future green hydrogen markets, undercuts its privileged connections to North Africa for natural gas, and the existence of deep seaports in Portugal and Spain capable of receiving LNG from North America and the Middle East (Agência Lusa, 2022). In fact, as early as 2018, there were calls from the European

Commission for the Iberian Peninsula to stop being an 'energy island' (European Commission, 2018). Six months after the Versailles meeting, this need was again echoed during the visit of Spain's prime minister Pedro Sanchez to Germany, for a meeting with the chancellor, Olaf Scholz. Both leaders emphasised the need to continue to 'lobby for a higher interconnection of the Iberia Peninsula in order to enhance its contribution to the security of supply to the whole of the EU' (Nienaber & Soto, 2022). Implicit in that declaration was the need to pressure France to stop resisting the idea of building a natural gas pipeline across the Pyrenees (the MidCat pipeline). The French government's challenge was based on two arguments: firstly, the cost of the project and its feasibility (Messad, 2022), and secondly, the risk of creating new dependencies if most of the natural gas flowing from the Mediterranean to Southwest and Central Europe are of African origin (Agência Lusa, 2022). While those arguments were being presented, at the forefront of the news was the launch of the Baltic Pipe. On 27 September, an inauguration ceremony took place in Goleniów, Poland, where a key route had been finished to connect Norway to Poland, via Denmark, and to transit up to 10 billion cubic metres of gas from Norway to Poland, and up to three million from Poland to Denmark (European Commission, 2022).

This was one of many projects supported by the Trans-European Networks for Energy to enhance diversification of supply in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. This development was in line with the start, in May of the same year, of the commercial operations of the Poland–Lithuanian Gas Interconnector (European Commission, 2022a), a project supported by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Commission (European Commission, 2023). It wasn't long before France, Portugal, and Spain presented a project to build a gas pipeline across the Mediterranean Sea, the BarMar, whose name comes from the two extremities of the pipeline, Barcelona and Marseille. The connection is aimed to transport green hydrogen and other renewable gases, and, for the short term, it can also be used to transport natural gas to alleviate the pressure on Western countries of the EU (Pinedo & Carreño, 2022). During the celebration of the agreement, Pedro Sanchez referred to the need for 'solidarity from our European partners'; Costa mentioned that 'one of Europe's oldest blockades has been overcome'; and the French president, Emmanuel Macron, stressed the 'imperative that Europe remains united'.

Soon thereafter came the news that Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and Romania had agreed on

an upgrade of the interconnection and transport capacity for natural gas between the countries, the so-called Vertical Gas Corridor. Like the Baltic Pipe, this connection also has the capacity to reverse the flow of gas, if necessary (Koutantou, 2022). Following the old expression 'if there is a will there is a way', in this case, if there is a political will, there are European Union projects that can support the way.

NEW POLICIES FOR MANAGING DEPENDENCIES AND DIVERSIFYING SOURCES

This new paradigm was reinforced with the introduction of REPowerEU: A Joint European Action for More Affordable, Secure and Sustainable Energy (European Commission, 2022b), presented in March 2022. This plan includes a group of measures to diversify gas supply, accelerate the scaling of renewable gases, and discontinue the use of polluting sources for heating and power generation. These objectives entail diversifying gas supply with imports from friendly and dependable economic and strategic partners; increasing production of biomethane and renewable hydrogen; repurposing households, industry and power systems; and

The creation of a European LNG market has been a long-term objective of the European Commission.

'boosting energy efficiency, increasing renewables and electrification, and addressing infrastructure bottlenecks' (European Commission, 2022b). It also plans to roll out photovoltaic energy over 320 GW by 2025 (European Commission, 2023a), to produce 10 million tons of domestic renewable hydrogen, and to import 10 million by 2023, as presented in the Hydrogen Accelerator strategy (European Commission, 2022c). Similarly, the EU External Energy Strategy aims to facilitate energy diversification and the creation of robust and trustworthy commercial relations with energy suppliers, while accounting for a just energy transition and assistance to member candidates to the EU, such as Moldova, Ukraine, Western Balkans, and Eastern Partnership countries (European Commission, 2022b).

One of the energy sources included in the search for diversification of suppliers is LNG. The creation of a European LNG market has been a long-term objective of the European Commission, which already in 2020 stated that this kind of energy could 'significantly contribute to the diversification of gas supply and thus considerably increase energy

security' and that 'all Member States [should] have access to liquid gas markets' (European Commission, 2023b). The Trans-European Networks for Energy (European Union, 2022) is among the policies that aim to better connect Member States' energy infrastructures. This policy identifies 11 priority corridors, ranging from electricity to the offshore grid, hydrogen, and electrolysers. Regionally, the corridors also have a wide reach. On electricity, there are the north–south interconnections in Western Europe (NSI West), the north–south interconnections in Central-Eastern and Southeastern Europe (NSI East), and the Baltic energy market interconnection plan in electricity (BEMIP). On offshore grid corridors, there are those in the North Sea (NSOG), the Baltic Sea (BEMIP offshore), south and west (SW offshore), south and east (SE offshore), and the Atlantic offshore grids.

Finally, in terms of hydrogen, there are plans to build a Western Europe corridor (HI West), with the creation of new infrastructures and the repurposing of existing ones for gas from Greece to Czech Republic, with ramifications to the north (all the way to Denmark) and to the south (all the way to Malta), and with particularly extensive connections in Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, to give some examples). At the same time, a Central and Southeastern Europe corridor (HI West) for hydrogen has been proposed, extending to countries including Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, and Greece, all the way to Cyprus. Finally, there is also a plan for the Baltic, the BEMIP Hydrogen, to include Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden.

However, solving the energy crisis, managing energy dependency, and diversifying energy sources are not just statements of intentions. In fact, a lot has been done since Russia stopped being a preferential or even a commercial partner in good standing. The imperative to stop purchasing energy from Moscow, and thus to cease supporting Putin's regime, created the need to look for new solutions for energy and its usage. An Energy Prices toolbox (European Commission, 2021) allowed Member States to deploy measures at the national level to ease the pressure from high energy prices felt in industry and by the regular citizen. Minimum gas storage requirements were introduced, and a target of 15 per cent gas demand reduction was instituted to balance supply and demand. This was also reflected in measures to reduce electricity demand, proposals for joint purchases of gas, price limiting mechanisms, transparent infrastructure use, and stability in the energy market (European Commission, 2023c).

Some of the effects of these initiatives have already been seen, for example in diversifying supply for natural gas with agreements such as the Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the EU, Egypt, and Israel (European Union, 2022a), the Memorandum of Understanding with Azerbaijan (European Commission, 2022d), and the United States' commitment to provide up to 15 billion cubic metres of LNG in one year (Reuters, 2022). Meanwhile, in the first half of 2022, 14 billion cubic metres were imported from Azerbaijan, Norway, the United Kingdom, and North Africa (European Commission, 2023c). Regarding the objective of reducing demand, the European Gas Demand Reduction Plan (European Commission, 2022e) was adopted to facilitate the goal of Member States reducing their usage of natural gas by decreasing consumption by around 15 per cent. Legislation was passed aiming to have EU underground gas storage filled to 80 per cent of capacity until the first of November 2022; that goal was surpassed, reaching 90 per cent of storage capacity (European Commission, 2023a).

> **Less dependence on a single energy provider, for example by a bloc of nations such as the EU, leads to more negotiating power and increased security.**

SECURITY DILEMMA AND CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The measures presented above have, and are aimed to, mitigate problems due to energy dependence on untrusty and erratic commercial partners. Such problems arise when the EU assumes that it can proceed with 'business as usual' when buying energy from energy giants to its east and south. In fact, precedents exist from 2008, before the attack on Ukraine, when interruptions to the delivery of natural gas from Russia affected countries in Eastern Europe (CNN, 2008); at that time, 11 Member States were directly or indirectly dependent on Russian energy (Ellyatt, 2019). Even earlier, in October 1973, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, known as OPEC, imposed a ten-day oil embargo after the start of the Yom Kippur War, with the effects seen in many major world economies, including some in Europe (Ditté & Roell, 2006). More recently, in November 2022, a diplomatic breakdown between Morocco and Algeria caused a drop in gas distribution to Spain

via the Maghreb–Europe, a 13.5 billion cubic metre pipeline (Rashad, Ahmed, & Chikhi, 2021).

The theory of economic interdependence argues that relations between states can lead to reciprocal gains. In fact, this is a liberal idea that flows from the thinking of Hugo Grotius in his work *The Free Sea*, Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*, and David Ricardo in *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. However, at the same time, economic dependencies, if clearly asymmetrical, can lead to vulnerability when guaranteeing the defence of the state, leading to a security dilemma, since a dependence on the trade or purchase of a good, such as energy, can lead to both political and economic conflicts (Krickovic, 2015).

Concurrently, an increasingly offensive stance by one state towards another can lead to instability and a search for increased security and sovereignty (Polachek, 1980). Meanwhile, less dependence on a single energy provider, for example by a bloc of nations such as the EU, leads to more negotiating power and increased security. That materialises in the purchase of energy from friendly and strategically aligned nations, and when external relations on energy matters are developed, as with the EU Energy Diplomacy (EEAS, 2021) and the EU External Energy Engagement (European Commission, 2022f). This is vital when thinking of a union of countries whose charter, the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 194), states the need to 'ensure the functioning of the energy market' and 'ensure security of energy supply in the Union' (European Union, 2007).

The previously mentioned need for solidarity between nations when building a joint European project is also a feature in the theory of international relations constructivism. This theory states that significant variables that relate to the proper operation of international relations are based in concepts and ideas, being historically and socially constructed. Identity and interests are motivators, and these are socially constructed and able to evolve. Following the work of Alexander Wendt, structures of human association are 'determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces' (Wendt, 1999). When thinking about state security, one must account for culture and identity, and related behaviours. The EU is seen primarily as a union of values, cohesion, solidarity, and these are the ideas that need to permeate the European project, which emanates not only from treaties but also from functioning and policymaking (European Union, 2023).

This applies also to energy security, apart from the need to manage dependencies and diversify sources. The success of the EU resides in the creation of mechanisms of internal assistance, as was observed during the COVID-19 crisis and the creation of the NextGenerationEU fund for the recovery and resilience of Member States after the worst of the pandemic had passed.[2] An EU where people in need are helped by people with plenty is one destined to thrive and succeed. Regarding energy, the creation of infrastructures that can help transport energy from countries with more natural resources to those with fewer, and that is able to reverse the flow in case of need, should be advocated for and pursued *now*, and in the future, by institutions, leaders, politicians, and citizens.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
Expansion
There should be an effort to enhance and facilitate the creation of partnerships for common projects. An important expedient for EU energy needs is the Projects of Common Interest (PCIs). These are projects that aim to improve cross-border infrastructures, linking energy systems in Member States. Associated goals of PCIs include the availability of affordable, secure, and sustainable energy, and the long-term decarbonisation of the European economy. These are important policy and climate objectives in accordance with the Paris Agreement (European Commission, 2023d). These projects also align with the priority corridors discussed earlier. The PCIs need to include, naturally, more than one country, have a significant impact on the relevant energy markets, aim to diversify energy sources, and contribute to the EU's overall energy security.

In 2021, the European Commission adopted the 5th PCI (in force after April 2022) with 98 projects, including electricity transmission and storage, smart grid deployment, gas interconnections and corridors, and cross-border carbon dioxide networks (European Union, 2021). Regulation (EU) no. 247/2013, now revised, presents the guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure (TNE-E Regulation) for a modernised energy infrastructure. The identification and selection of PCIs are carried out by regional groups of ministries, national regulators, individual gas and electricity transmission systems operators, the electricity and gas European Network of Transmission Systems Operators, the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, and the European Commission (European Commission, 2023e).

The Commission regularly launches stakeholder consultations on candidate PCIs and Projects of Mutual Interest, or PMIs (European Commission,

2022g). Other areas of interest in infrastructure expansion are LNG terminals and floating storage and regassification units, some of which are already planned, including in Poland (Gdansk), Lithuania (Riga), Estonia (Tallin and Paldiski), France (Le Havre), Italy (Portovesme, Empedocle), and Greece (Dioriga, Argo), or under construction (Alexandroupolis in Greece) (European Council, 2023a). Projects led by the EU include the extension of the Świnoujścia terminal in Poland, the new Brunsbüttel and Wilhelmshaven terminals in Germany (European Commission, 2019), and investments in the terminals from Krk in Croatia, Gothenburg in Sweden, Shannon in Ireland, and Vasilikos Bay in Cyprus (European Commission, 2019a).

Security
Because energy is so important for modern industry and for society to function, it is crucial to secure supplies and guarantee storage. Such operations must be coordinated centrally and regionally. The EU has regulations in place for this. There is a proposal for an amendment to Regulation 2017/1938 (European Commission, 2022h) that deals with correcting market imbalances and ensuring storage of natural gas in the EU, to absorb supply shock in situations of strong demand or disruption of supply. Originally, the regulation laid the framework for EU emergency preparedness and resilience in case of gas supply disruption, once more with the goal of regional cooperation and solidarity. It also aimed to promote cooperation between EU Member States, in regional groupings, to access common suppliers and facilitate bi-directional capacity on cross-border interconnections (European Union, 2017).

Another area of interest for policymaking is to develop the solidarity arrangements provided for in the regulation by means of bilateral technical, legal, and financial arrangements for natural gas solidarity. Some examples of this kind of bilateral cooperation are in place, including Germany–Denmark, signed in 2020; Germany–Austria, signed in 2021; Estonia–Latvia, Lithuania–Latvia, Italy–Slovenia, and Finland–Estonia, all signed in 2022 (European Commission, 2023f). The same extends to electricity supply, where the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package (European Commission, 2023g) drives EU countries to cooperate and ensures that in a crisis, electricity can flow to where it is needed the most. Member States are expected to agree on certain measures to offer assistance to one another. Here also, the European Commission produced a recommendation on key elements regarding technical, legal, and financial arrangements for the application

of the assistance mechanism under Article 15 of Regulation (EU) 2019/941 (European Union, 2019).

Diversification

To respond to the need to diversify energy sources, the conditions faced by EU institutions and Member States when procuring energy suppliers outside the continent must be understood. As mentioned previously, important agreements (with Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, and North Africa) and memorandums of understanding (EU, Egypt, and Israel; Azerbaijan) are in place. Still, the EU will continue to look outwards to find reliable partners for energy needs. Close attention has been paid to Africa due to its proximity to Mediterranean Member States, where Algeria plays a crucial role. This also extends to Niger and Nigeria. The NIGAL gas pipeline is planned to cross those three countries and add to the flow of natural gas to Europe via Medgaz and TransMed (Holleis & Schwikowski, 2022).

Other projects are in development, such as gas fields in Senegal and Mauritania (Larson, 2022). The focus on Africa also extends to renewable energy, where projects to use renewable sources to generate electricity are under way with connections being built to Europe; examples include the submarine cable connecting Egypt to Greece (Euronews, 2022) and those between Spain and Morocco (Córdoba, Fernández, & Louzão, 2011). These are just some of the collaborations that fit into the Africa–EU energy partnership (European Commission, 2023h), which will extend to other types of energy, such as renewable hydrogen, with countries including Namibia (European Commission, 2022i) and Egypt (European Commission, 2022j).

Additionally, contracts for the acquisition of LNG are also critical. Already mentioned are the agreements with the United States, with long-term contracts from different buyers in Member States (France, Germany, and Portugal). The United States has a considerable capability to sell gas to Europe, which was reflected in a 137 per cent increase in sales in the first 11 months of 2022 when compared with 2021. This tendency is set to remain for 2023 (Maguire, 2022) and for the foreseeable future. This is especially important given that another major provider of energy, Qatar, is vulnerable to political turmoil in the region (Reed, 2017), while scandals related to bribery and corruption could hamper its commercial trade (Cocklin, 2023). In this context, the need for cooperation between the EU and (reliable) providers in terms of infrastructure, assuring its safety, controlling market prices, and maintaining good diplomatic relations is vital.

Modernisation

Regarding the regulation of energy markets, the EU relies on different instruments for stakeholders to contribute to policy decisions on investment protections, trade, and transit of energy. This includes improving the articulation between EU funds and private capital in major projects, such as investing in the recovery and resilience of Member States and creating well-managed and productive private–public partnerships. An example of rules for these partnerships is the Energy Charter Treaty.

In 2022, this treaty was the subject of extensive negotiations to modernise its content (European Commission, 2022k). Some of the key aspects that were updated relate to sustainable investments, legal certainty, and the pursuit of clean energy transition goals in the setting of the Paris Agreement objectives. This includes the decision to phase out protections for fossil fuel investments, new definitions of 'investment' and 'investor', the protection of labour principles, an end to 'non-regression' clauses that lead to the lowering of standards, and carrying out environmental impact assessments. Further contemplated are some key goals for liberal minded politicians and policy-makers liberals, such as provisions on transparency, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development. Updates in regulations regarding energy markets and investments are also essential, as shifts in the world order, and in energy access, have been dramatic. Some of the examples of this kind of work are Regulation EU 2017/1938, concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply, and the TEN-E Regulation for EU rules for cross-border energy infrastructure.

Solidarity mechanisms

As argued in this chapter, solidarity is a key concept for the future of the European project. There is a need to promote the awareness and the involvement of Europeans at this level – for them to demand more from themselves, their communities, and their leaders. Solidarity leads to better management of crises and better distribution of assistance between Member States. However, more important is the creation of unity between people, where the strong and wealthy care for the less fortunate, which is also a liberal value. The most important result of this solidarity, apart from improving the quality of daily life, is preventing populists from tricking voters into thinking that their simplistic, protectionist, Eurosceptic policies have merit.

Some of the measures presented to Europeans to help mitigate the energy crisis and manage dependencies in Europe (European Council, 2022) took a longer view beyond the emergency response. One

example is the possibility of joint energy purchases by Member States and energy companies, creating a common pool and increasing their negotiating power while stopping Member States from outbidding each other. Another proposal is for the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators to develop new complementary price benchmarks for stable and predictable prices for LNG transactions and to mitigate intra-day management mechanisms.[3] Other proposed regulations related to markets are temporary correction mechanisms to limit gas prices. These kinds of actions, understandable in a moment of crisis to help industry and society cope, is the kind of measure where EU institutions and state governments may interfere excessively in the functioning of the market(s), something that should be prevented.

The European Commission also proposed a temporary EU revenue cap, which should also be phased out when possible. But, once again, these measures were implemented with a noble purpose: to permit governments in Member States to divert these revenues to help energy consumers, for example, through compensation for reducing consumption, lower costs for limited volumes, promotion of investment in renewables projects, and compensation to suppliers for delivering energy below market costs (European Commission, 2023c). As mentioned previously, there are also instruments for more collaboration between Member States under the purview of the European Commission (Regulation EU 20147/1938), for example, the previously discussed Security and Supply Regulation bilateral solidarity agreements, the majority of which are yet to materialise. There is also a proposal for the creation of a mechanism to request solidarity in a situation where a Member State cannot secure 'critical gas volumes needed for their electricity systems' (European Council, 2022), depending on a set of rules that include protection of certain customers such as households and social services, energy for the production and transport of gas, and critical infrastructures that are essential for the proper functioning of the military, humanitarian, and national security services.

The EU, and by extension other liberal democracies in Europe that desire to join the Union, can benefit from the existence of energy solidarity, an idea also presented elsewhere (Zuleeg, 2022). This ambition relates to an ongoing discussion about the benefits of more European integration, resulting in a larger and more complete project. Moreover, there are positive precedents of EU solidarity in action.[4] The intriguing aspect of the concept of energy solidarity is that the (perceived) traditional asymmetries of the EU do not apply; that is, it is a case of

integration where economic power and advanced industrialisation are not the only determining factors. There is a complementarity in the question of energy in the EU that is worth exploring, where proximity to international providers and entry points in the continent play a role; where access to maritime routes and deep-water ports is important; and where certain geographical and climatic characteristics (solar radiation levels, wind currents, rivers and dams, seacoasts) provide an advantage. This is an opportunity to increase the solidarity inside the EU and allow energy – electricity, hydrogen, and, temporarily, natural gas – to flow in Europe, with a change in directionality as needed to assure assistance, provide comfort, and reinforce unity. This, then, supports the creation of a new European security architecture and facilitates managing dependencies and diversifying sources, while making the EU project more successful and resilient.

NOTES

1. See https://www.eeas.europa.eu/_en, 'What we do', 'EU security, defence and crisis response'.
2. Visit https://next-generation-eu.europa.eu/index_en.
3. Visit https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/institutions-and-bodies-profiles/agency-cooperation-energy-regulators-acer_en.
4. Visit https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/coronavirus/european-solidarity-in-action/, https://next-generation-eu.europa.eu/index_en, and http://www.inclusion-europe.eu/eu-solidarity-corps/.

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Strengthening EU's Security Architecture: The Crucial Role of Mediterranean Security

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ABSTRACT

The Mediterranean region's complex nature makes it crucial to comprehend and scrutinise the current security framework. The region continues to serve as a battleground for the great powers' influence games, with inefficient security mechanisms, the European Union's absence, and the ongoing migration crisis contributing to the instability and deep fragmentation of Maghreb countries. Nonetheless, North Africa could be a valuable partner for the European Union's ambitious ecological transition initiative. This paper analyses the issue of Mediterranean security in the context of a newly reformed European Security Architecture, outlining its essential role and potential for enhancing cooperation between countries form the two continents.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean region was crucial to the rise of the greatest empires in ancient and medieval history. It remains a significant territory today, uniting cultures, religions, autocracies, and flawed democracies in a symbol of equality and diversity. The Mediterranean continues to be a strategic arena from many points of view, and the crises that followed the Arab Spring, especially the establishment of foreign influence, the past colonial empires of Europe or the current influence of China and Russia, have contributed to making this area a stage for soft and hard power games that have made the area highly unstable. Increasing American disinterest and the European Union's (EU) failure to act decisively leave the future of the countries concerned uncertain.

The Mediterranean region has a unique personality. There are competing loyalties: Arab countries are Arab first and Mediterranean second, and Southern European countries are European first and Mediterranean second (Gawad Soltan, 2010). As a result, it is impossible to identify a solely Mediterranean country. The natural result of these identities is the emergence of various sub-regional security concerns. Although the countries of the Mediterranean Sea share a common destiny, geographic location, and heritage, competing sub-regional security concerns have often prevented the formation of a Mediterranean identity and community. The presence of a triple disequilibrium, consisting of demographic, economic, and socio-cultural imbalance, as well as the presence of historical conflicts such as the disagreement between Turkey and Greece, the Cyprus issue, dissent between Algeria and Morocco on Western Sahara, the conflict between Tunisia and Libya, ethnic rivalries in the Balkans, and the Arab–Israeli conflict, have made the Mediterranean one of the most unstable and insecure regions in the world.

However, with the sudden increase in the need for energy following the Russian aggression in Ukraine, the Maghreb area has again drawn the attention of the EU, with numerous visits and agreements about to be signed. This chapter focuses on identifying the security mechanisms that currently exist in the area and contributes to the ongoing discussion about the security framework in the Mediterranean. In addition, the opportunities for the European Union will be outlined (Ormanci, 2000).

A FRAGMENTARY SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

A myriad of initiatives and security mechanisms exist in the Mediterranean (Cohen-Hadria, 2018). Three categories can be identified. Firstly, ad hoc security tools are those designed to address a specific security issue or crisis at the initiative of states or international organisations. Secondly, sub-regional security fora are intergovernmental mechanisms that deal with various security issues with varying degrees of institutionalisation. The third category concerns broad security initiatives (i.e., not related to a specific crisis) taken within the framework of more comprehensive international organisations. While the proliferation of configurations can be explained in part by the diversity of objectives and geographical scopes, it also reveals and demonstrates how fragmented the Mediterranean security landscape is. Some security mechanisms may compete with each other and be sponsored by parties with conflicting interests. Therefore, it can be argued that, even when combined, all these initiatives do not constitute a comprehensive and coherent security structure as defined above. The reasons for this fragmentation are well known. Firstly, the absence of a genuine peace process in the Middle East and the difficulties in reaching a two-state solution continue to fuel resentments and tensions across the Mediterranean. Secondly, states in the region are challenged by non-state actors (particularly jihadist groups) and sub-state actors (e.g. Kurds or local Libyan groups) competing for power. Finally, some global actors continue to use the Mediterranean as a battleground and to assert their renewed global ambitions. Energy geopolitics continues to be key to understanding these fault lines, shifting regional interests, and alliances.

The EU concentrated its actions on economic and social growth in the region and undertook many projects during the 1990s to address the risks and threats posed by the Mediterranean and to make it an area of peace and shared prosperity. The projects were based on the idea that international economic cooperation could be used to promote stability and establish regional security. For instance, the Barcelona Process's Euro Mediterranean Partnership served as the primary framework for the new multilateral partnerships. In the same vein, the NATO Dialogue was a pillar that existed alongside those European initiatives. However, while security is usually linked to development factors and prosperity, this is not enough on its own. Many security situations cannot be solved according to this principle.

In 2001, the attacks of 11 September made security a priority (European Council, n.d.). Without security, neither stability nor economic development could be achieved. This change in perception brought new concepts on which the current international order is based. Security must be understood within a global and multidimensional framework, known as the global approach (Algora Weber, 2017). This has since led to a change in the political position of the West that has directly affected Euro-Mediterranean policy. Therefore, 'security architecture' is an ever-changing field that is adapting to the new scenario.

THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN: A SECURITY ROLE?

Although the Mediterranean can be considered a well-defined geographical region, no well-defined global security system connects all the region's countries. For many years, the development of numerous defence initiatives that addressed complementary tasks within the region was influenced by the formation of a strategic view searching for a suitable 'security architecture'. These projects have demonstrated all the tools and resources required to ensure that the risks and threats present in the Mediterranean do not encourage the start of hostilities. Yet there is currently a discussion ongoing about how they might be used more effectively to further the shared peace that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership envisions.

According to several studies, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), with its 43 member states, can be identified as the most comprehensive organisation in the region, encompassing the highest number of countries. This intergovernmental organisation, established in 2008, aims to promote cooperation and dialogue between the countries of the Mediterranean region. Although the UfM does not have a direct security mission, the connections between the development agenda it supports and security should not be underestimated, and it has developed several initiatives to address security challenges in the Mediterranean. Based on a roadmap drawn up by the UfM Secretariat, several ideas were put forward to strengthen the UfM's

political and, to some extent, security mission. Examples of these concepts include the creation of a regional discourse on combating radicalisation and terrorism.

One of the critical elements of the UfM's approach to security is the promotion of regional cooperation and coordination. The organisation brings together countries from the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean, providing a platform for discussion and cooperation on security issues. It also works closely with other regional organisations and initiatives, such as the EU and African Union, to coordinate efforts and share best practices.

Another significant aspect of the UfM's approach to security is its focus on the root causes of insecurity in the region. This includes issues such as economic development, social stability, and environmental sustainability. It has developed several initiatives to promote economic growth in the area, such as creating a regional investment platform and focusing on developing renewable energy sources. The organisation has also strongly emphasised fostering social cohesion and inclusion, mainly through initiatives focusing on youth employment and education. In addition to these broader initiatives, the UfM has also developed several more specific initiatives focused on security. For example, the organisation launched a project to support the development of maritime security in the Mediterranean, aimed at improving the capabilities of coastal states to respond to maritime security threats such as piracy and smuggling. The UfM has also developed a project to support the development of border management in the region, focusing on improving cooperation and information sharing between countries.

Overall, the UfM's security approach is focused on promoting regional cooperation, addressing the root causes of insecurity, and developing specific initiatives to address security challenges in the Mediterranean. While the organisation faces many challenges, including political instability and economic disparities, its efforts represent an essential step towards a more secure and stable Mediterranean region. Despite the will to engage in practical collaboration on issues such as border security, trafficking, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, water and food security, energy and climate infrastructure, and disaster management, it appears that the UfM member states are not working together to steer the UfM in this direction. The 'common principles' that the European Neighbourhood Policy (European Parliament, n.d.) formerly referred to have not been upheld as authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt have begun to violate human rights and ignore escalating inequality. The Algerian civil war, the 9/11 attacks in New York, and the pressure from Islamic movements in most countries have all contributed to a climate of mistrust. The UfM has been criticised by the Schuman Foundation for choosing stability over advancing democracy and human rights (Joannin, 2020).

At the same time, countries in North Africa such as Algeria and Egypt, argue that the UfM's mission should not be expanded beyond its current development-related objective. Some northern European nations also support this statement.

5+5 DEFENCE INITIATIVE: THE ALTERNATIVE FOR A REGIONAL STABILISATION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Despite the coexistence of numerous diverse political, demographic, economic, and cultural subsystems, languages, faiths, and civilisations along its coasts, the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean once shared and still share similarities resulting from a comparable climate and, to some extent, a shared past. These similarities became more apparent when the Mediterranean emerged as a significant route for legitimate and illicit trade between East and West, North and South. Many threats to the stability of Europe have been attributed to the southern Mediterranean region, including illegal immigration, Islamic fundamentalism, the proliferation of light weapons, organised crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, energy security, potential threats to surface lines of communication (SLOCs), asymmetric economic development, and a widening demographic gap. Many of these issues are intrastate issues rather than interstate security issues, the latter of which are usually addressed by confidence-building measures.

The 5+5 Defence Initiative is a multilateral cooperation forum between the two shores of the Western Mediterranean. Bringing together five states from the southern coast of the Mediterranean (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia) and five states from the northern shore (France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, and Spain), it provides a preferential framework for mutual knowledge and exchanges on the common security issues of the 5+5 area (terrorism, migration flows, and trafficking in particular). A network of relationships built on trust that differ from established relationships within the context of security initiatives has been pushed by the 5+5 Defence Initiative. Instead of addressing the issue of re-territoriality, it emphasises regional cooperation with member equality. It operates under the principles of democracy, rule of

law, and consensus. Each participant was a founder member, and there are no plans to expand the programme. This demonstrates that they have a range of interests in common, and they have received training in how to work together. They work to realise a shared strategic objective. This requires promoting mutual understanding, which is a significant issue. The decision not to expand the alliance is mainly related to not wanting to add more conflicts to the agenda. For instance, extending the alliance forum to a '6+6 Dialogue' that includes Egypt and Greece (Carriço & Cardoso Reis, 2014) i would mean bringing the Arab–Israeli conflict and the Greek–Turkish–Cypriot conflict to the table.

Last but not least, its purpose is to maintain informal discussions, free from the notion of establishing a structured international organisation, which would raise the annual budget for resources, both financial and human, and result in difficult political choices. These are the main factors that explain its success. Indeed, the Department of Defence's 5+5 Programme has been experiencing a steady and rapid expansion of its activities since 2004. Given the sensitivity of the region, this indicates excellent progress and the development of a network to advance 'diplomacy of defence'. It could lead to an integration paradigm for the Mediterranean area that has more significant security benefits than political ones. The annual meeting of defence ministers supports the basic guidelines towards a solid shared strategic vision and the will to maintain training for joint operations, even in a scenario where progress in this area is always dependent on the foreign policy of each member state.

A TICKING TIME BOMB READY TO BURST AGAIN: MIGRANTS CROSSING THE MEDITERRANEAN

Regular cooperation is also desirable to deal with all aspects of south–north immigration. What is commonly referred to as the 'refugee crisis' is a profound European political crisis that erupted in 2015, paralysing decision-making and causing deep, possibly irreparable, divisions among EU Member States. As a result, it is better understood as a European political crisis or a crisis of European identity. The Mediterranean component of the overall crisis has a long history, with a series of long-running, localised concerns that continue to this day. It includes migratory routes into Italy, Malta, and Spain and related humanitarian and political issues. Even though public opinion and debate seem to have reduced along with the media noise around the

landings at the peak of the arrivals. After a peak in 2015, when more than 990,000 people crossed the Mediterranean to reach Europe, about five times as many as in 2014, the number of people making these crossings has been on a downward trend that began even before the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, 123,300 individualswere reported, preceded by 95,800 in 2020, 123,700 in 2019, and 141,500 in 2018. Despite the decrease in the number of crossings, however, fatalities increased sharply. In 2022,some 3,231 people died or went missing at sea in the Mediterranean and Northwest Atlantic. In 2020, the number recorded was 1,881, in 2019 it was 1,510, and in 2018 it was over 2,277. The number is even higher if one includes the dead and missing along land routes through the Sahara Desert and in remote border areas (UNHCR, 2023).

These figures remain extremely alarming, especially when compared with the number of deaths in Ukraine in one year. As of 12 February 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner

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for Human Rights (UNCHR) had confirmed a total of 7,199 civilian deaths caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Statista, 2023). Taking into account that most migrants lose their lives during the journey before they are able to embark to European shores or are held hostage in Libyan prisons, the actual number of deaths among migrants is much higher.

One of the main pull factors driving these people to migrate is climate change. Most of the refugees come from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa region, where severe droughts and other climate emergencies are already crippling national economies. The Mediterranean region is highly vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. The EU can support efforts to mitigate these risks and promote sustainable development in the area and work with its Mediterranean partners to develop climate adaptation strategies, invest in sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and protect the Mediterranean's unique biodiversity.

However, recent international meetings, such as the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) and the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, did not address the issue of climate-related migration. Indeed, 'climate-driven displacement' is absent from the agenda, missing an important international opportunity for discussion.

It is worth emphasising that greater stability and security in the southern Mediterranean region, as well as in the broader Middle East and North Africa, are clearly in the national interests of EU Member States both in the Mediterranean and the EU as a whole. Looking south, the EU must commit to ensuring greater cohesion of its internal and external security measures to stem the tide of terrorists and criminal networks and recognise the need to address humanitarian crises in countries at war and those hosting refugees through development cooperation, asylum rules, and humanitarian aid.

WHAT PROSPECTS EXIST FOR THE EU IN THE MEDITERRANEAN IN TERMS OF ENERGY SECURITY?

The hunt for reliable energy has been heightened by the global COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has led to increased collaboration between the southern Mediterranean countries and Europe (Algora Weber, 2017). Nonetheless, the situation has also served as a reminder of the southern Mediterranean's incredible wealth in natural resources, particularly gas, a reliable supply of energy for interim use. The Mediterranean region is rich in natural gas and has significant renewable energy potential. The EU can work with its Mediterranean partners to develop new energy projects, such as offshore wind farms, solar energy, and natural gas pipelines. This would help diversify the EU's energy supply and reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. For instance, Egypt is a potential source of clean energy (solar and wind), which will only become more significant as time passes. Many influential European players are also considering other nations in the region, including Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, as potential major suppliers of gas and clean, renewable energy. With the significant offshore hydrocarbon reserves and the region's vital location as a hub for the transportation of energy resources from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe, energy security is a core issue for the Mediterranean region. However, factors including geopolitical tensions, the desire to diversify energy supplies, and the development of sustainable energy have an impact on the degree of energy security in the Mediterranean.

Since the European Commission has emphasised that the EU cannot fulfil the environmental and climate goals of the European Green Deal by itself,[2] this makes it even more essential to take an inclusive stance and make the European Green Deal's associated financing and cooperation structures available to countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean Thus, collaboration on issues of ecological transition can be a strategy to strengthen ties with North Africa, within the framework of the UfM and EU's neighbourhood policy in the southern Mediterranean, which includes collaboration on biodiversity conservation, climate change, and sustainable energy. The transition from fossil fuels to clean energy presents significant opportunities for complementarity between European and North African states as they work to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. According to the EU, this alliance serves both its political and its economic goals, including gaining access to North Africa's natural resources and retaining its political clout in an effort to limit migration across the Mediterranean into the EU.

However, several authors share the view that the EU's approach to North African countries should be reviewed. Indeed, the criticism that is often made is that the focus is on bilateral relations between countries, rather than approaching regional differences in these areas in a cohesive manner (Bennis, 2021). It is challenging to implement a centralized strategy since some countries have severe fragmentation. A weakness of the EU's strategy for its Mediterranean partners is its propensity to overemphasise bilateral ties, ignoring the fact that many local issues require a regional approach. It is necessary to address this major issue to ensure that the investments they make as part of the European Green Deal are tailored to create local workforce opportunities, increase inclusive employment, reduce poverty, and ultimately help mitigate the migration challenges in the EU's southern neighbourhood by increasing stability on the continent. To achieve this, the EU should engage in a political dialogue with local authorities at different levels and especially take into account non-state actors. In order to achieve this objective, the EU should engage in policy dialogue with local authorities at different levels and especially account for non-state actors.

Should the EU take the appropriate actions in the years ahead, North Africa might participate significantly in Europe's energy transition. The potential for renewable energy in North Africa is great, especially for solar and wind energy, the excess of which could easily be exported to Europe. Clean power from North Africa would be a significant

medium-term option to help diversify Europe's energy mix and decrease dependency on imported fossil fuels in the long run, even though it is not a short-term answer to Europeans' fossil fuel woes as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

CONCLUSION

The Mediterranean region continues to be at the centre of the European debate due to its significance and its new central position as a source of energy, as evidenced by the numerous agreements and meetings that have recently taken place between some European powers and Maghreb countries, such as Italy and Algeria. This region also remains crucial because of the migration problem, which is predicted to get worse owing to the exacerbation of climate change.

One approach to a new security architecture in the Mediterranean could involve the development of a cooperative framework that promotes security, stability, and prosperity in the region. This framework could be based on shared principles of respect for human rights, democratic values, and the rule of law.

Investments in increased and strengthened cooperation with the countries concerned is in the interests of states on both shores of the Mediterranean. Existing international cooperation provisions, such as Defence 5+5, are key to strengthening cooperation aiming at a common security strategy. However, critical analysis and a change of strategy is urgently needed to create a regional, less centralised approach to dialogue with an area that is still deeply fragmented.

Such a framework could focus on a number of critical areas, including:

1. Counterterrorism: This would involve cooperation among Mediterranean countries to share intelligence and coordinate efforts to combat terrorist groups and prevent the radicalisation of individuals.

2. Maritime security: Given the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for trade and transportation, there is a need for enhanced cooperation in areas such as maritime surveillance, search and rescue, and the prevention of piracy and illegal fishing.

3. Energy security: Cooperation on energy security could involve the development of shared infrastructure, the promotion of renewable energy sources, and the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks. Energy security is an essential issue in the Mediterranean region given the offshore hydrocarbon reserves and the region's strategic location as a transit point for energy resources from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe.

4. Environmental security: The Mediterranean region is also facing significant environmental challenges, including pollution, desertification, and the effects of climate change. Cooperation on environmental protection could involve measures to reduce pollution and combat climate change and initiatives to promote sustainable development.

At the same time, the possibility of having the Maghreb countries at its side in the process of reducing carbon impact and investing in renewable energies is a concrete chance for the EU to present itself as a central player in the international scene. This opportunity should be seized to further accentuate the EU's prominent role in the process of reducing emissions. Hence, the EU has the chance to leverage the European Green Deal's international component to strengthen European leadership and influence in its southern neighbouring countries.

Overall, ensuring energy security in the Mediterranean requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the region's immediate challenges and long-term strategic priorities. This includes investing in infrastructure, promoting renewable energy sources, and developing policies and regulations that support cross-border energy cooperation and trade.

NOTES

1. Maria Tortorella holds a MA in European Affairs from Sorbonne University, Msc in International Relations from University of Naples and BA with Hons from Oxford Brookes. She did an internship at the Italian Embassy in Skopje, and collaborated with the European Liberal Forum Policy and Research Unit. She now focuses on EU affairs, innovation and migration.
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The Issue of Submarine Cable Security

Domenico Frascà[1] and Luca Galantini[2]

ABSTRACT

Submarine cables are responsible for about 99 per cent of global data traffic, making submarine cable networks a physical manifestation of transnational digital connectivity. Geographical imperatives are determinant for the physical infrastructure of cyberspace, and geopolitical considerations further influence how it is created. Maritime choke points play a decisive role in determining undersea cable routes. Big technology companies such as Amazon, Meta, Alphabet, and Microsoft are increasingly becoming the global leaders in cable development. From 1863 to 1913, the protection of undersea cables appeared on the agenda of seven international conferences. The level of reliability of undersea cable networks is not appropriate to the level of reliance the global economy has developed on the Internet. Growing reliance of digital societies on global communications also means more exposure to risk and threats. The vulnerability of the cables that criss-cross the seabed poses a new risk to our way of life.

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INTRODUCTION

The submarine cable network represents one of the main strategic assets of the contemporary world. One fact is enough to understand its fundamental importance: about 97 per cent of global Internet traffic travels through fibre-optic cables lying deep beneath the oceans, carrying around US$10 trillion of financial transfers and processing around 15 million financial transactions per day (Sunak, 2017). The unstoppable and overwhelming evolution of the cybernetic space has allowed the Internet to assume the role of the largest information container in the world (Teti, 2015: 49). Furthermore, cables are responsible for about 99 per cent of global data traffic, making submarine cable networks a physical manifestation of transnational digital connectivity (Nielsen et al., 2019). Besides being vital to the interconnected global economy, submarine cables are also very important from a geopolitical perspective, since they physically and digitally connect two or more distant countries, strengthening their economic, political, and strategic ties.

This chapter focuses on the security of submarine cable networks in order to identify and understand their main vulnerabilities and highlight the need to ensure their security from both physical and cyber threats. It approaches the topic from a multidisciplinary point of view, focusing primarily on the European Union (EU).

The chapter begins by discussing the importance of undersea cables as a critical infrastructure for digital societies. It then describes the geographic distribution of submarine cable networks, underlining how maritime choke points play a decisive role in determining their main routes. A description of some of the main EU submarine cable hubs is also provided. Subsequently, it explores the undersea cable industry, emphasising the new role of big technology companies in the market. The chapter then provides an overview of the legal protection of

cables, pointing out that the current international regime does not fully protect cables from a legal perspective. Finally, it specifically addresses the issue of submarine cable security, describing the main threats posed to critical infrastructure.

UNDERSEA CABLES AS A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE DIGITAL ERA

The first submarine communications cables were laid in the mid-19th century and carried telegraphy traffic, establishing the first instant telecommunication links between continents, such as the first transatlantic telegraph cable, which became operational in 1858 (Guarnieri, 2014). The first official telegram to pass under the Atlantic Ocean was a letter of congratulations from Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom to US President James Buchanan. Subsequent generations of undersea cables carried telephone traffic, then data communications.

As of early 2023, there were 552 active and planned submarine cables (TeleGeography, 2023). The total number of active cables is constantly changing as new cables enter service and older cables are decommissioned. Their use is growing exponentially, especially for bandwidth-intensive applications such as streaming and cloud-based services, with an estimated average increase between 2015 and 2019 of around 26 per cent of the annual available capacity on the main routes (Nielsen et al., 2019).

Ensuring the resilience of undersea cables is vital for digital societies. Submarine cables have been described as 'critical communications infrastructure' and 'vitally important to the global economy and the national security of all States' by the General Assembly of the United Nations (2010). Indeed, the issue of protecting submarine fibre cables has become an international concern as more and more cables continue to be damaged. While the most frequent cause of damage to undersea cables remains physical damage from commercial shipping, they are also particularly vulnerable to hostile threat actors compared with other digital infrastructures (Burdette, 2021). Cables are vulnerable to physical and digital attacks from sea, on land, and in cyberspace. The locations of most undersea cables are publicly available, and they must travel through narrow bodies of water, such as the Strait of Malacca or the Suez Canal. At these maritime choke points, there are greater risks of damage from commercial shipping and geopolitical disputes, since multiple countries have competing interests at these strategic points (Burnett, Davenport, & Beckman, 2013), thus highlighting the strategic significance of undersea cable networks.

Submarine cables are infrastructures laid on the sea or ocean floor between land-based stations to carry telecommunication signals across the maritime domain. There are two categories of undersea cables as defined by their function: submarine communications cables, used to transmit huge amounts of data communications; and submarine power cables, used to transmit electrical power. These should not be confused with submarine pipelines, which are used for the transport of crude oil and natural gas resources. In addition to serving different functions, submarine communications cables, power cables, and pipelines are of different sizes, consist of different materials, and have varying degrees of importance to the international community.

Early cables used copper wires in their cores. Since the late 1980s, commercial undersea telecommunication cable owners have used optical fibres – thin, flexible, and highly transparent glass or plastic strands – to facilitate transcontinental communications. Lasers on one end fire at extremely rapid rates down thin glass fibres to receptors at the other end of the cable. These glass fibres are wrapped in layers of plastic, and sometimes steel wire, for protection (TeleGeography, 2023). Indeed, optical fibres allow signals to be sent over long distances using light pulses instead of electricity, which, when compared with traditional copper lines, results in a clearer signal, less signal loss over long distances, greater bandwidth, and less electromagnetic interference (Congressional Research Service, 2022). Thanks to this innovation, a flow of hundreds of gigabytes of information per second became possible, providing a substantial impetus to setting up a global telecommunication network. The first transatlantic fibre-optic cable, called 'TAT-8' (Transatlantic No. 8), was laid in 1988, physically linking the United States, the United Kingdom, and France (Bray, 2002). Over the following years, fibre-optic cables were laid across the world, connecting economies and societies increasingly dependent on telecommunications. The Internet could not have existed otherwise.

The length of these cables depends on the path they have to cover. Cables can be very short, such as the 'Botnia' that connects Finland and Sweden, or very long, such as the 'Asia–America Gateway' (AAG) that connects the West Coast of the United States with mainland China and several Southeast Asian countries.[3] While initial submarine cables were laid on a point-to-point basis, technical advances have permitted branching so that one cable can service a sequence of submarine cable hubs – for example, Africa and South America. Every undersea

cable has at least two landing points, or the locations where the cable meets the shoreline. Facilities at these landing points can provide multiple functions, including terminating an international cable, supplying power to the cable, and acting as a point of domestic and/or international connection (Sherman, 2021).

Cable networks have become one of the world's most indispensable pieces of infrastructure, as submarine communication cables can transmit large amounts of bandwidth at low cost and with minimal delays. Moreover, satellite technology is currently unable to handle modern digital economic and societal requirements (Chapman, 2021). Were undersea cable networks to disappear, the entire capacity of the Earth's satellite network could handle just 7 per cent of the communications currently sent via cable from the United States alone (Sunak, 2017). Thus, undersea cables are essential for digitally connecting all countries of the world.

Submarine cables are still the main instrument for international communication for two technical

Were undersea cable networks to disappear, the entire capacity of the Earth's satellite network could handle just 7 per cent of the communications currently sent via cable from the United States alone.

reasons: latency and data carrying capacity. On the one hand, a geostationary satellite must be placed in orbit at a height above the Earth's surface of about 36,000 kilometres, so the round-trip distance covered by the radio signal is more than 72,000 km. A cable ideally laid between London and New York would instead have a length of about 5,600 km. This means that latency – that is, the time needed to transport information from a sender to a receiver – is much higher in satellite communication than in cable communication. Perceptible latency has a strong effect on user satisfaction and usability in the field of human–machine interaction. On the other hand, the total data carrying capacity of submarine cables is in terabits per second, while satellites typically offer only 1,000 megabits per second – in order to better understand the difference, it is noted that 1 terabit/second = 1,000,000 megabits/second. In addition, the costs of satellite communications are much higher. In summary, fibre-optic submarine cables are much faster, more efficient,

and cheaper than artificial satellites (Sunak, 2017). However, cable broadcasts can exclude remote or rural geographic areas; by contrast, satellite communications are available almost everywhere, requiring only a clear view of the sky.

CHOKE POINTS AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF CABLES

Geographic imperatives are determinant for the physical infrastructure of cyberspace, and geopolitical considerations further influence how it is created. Geography is a major factor strongly influencing the configuration of the undersea cable network and the location and relative strength of submarine cable hubs. A submarine cable hub is essentially a point where undersea cables interconnect with each other; it is also the location where submarine cables very often terminate or at least extend a branch. The location of cable landing stations is vital to the resiliency of the whole cable infrastructure.

Although the nature of cyberspace may appear to be autonomous, it is not actually independent of the physical infrastructure (Caligiuri, 2016: 20). While cyberspace reduces concepts such as time and space, geographic setting still matters in the use of cyber power, and the physical infrastructure of cyberspace maps the contours of contemporary geopolitics (Sheldon, 2014). It may seem as if cyberspace has replaced geography and the concept of territorial sovereignty, but in reality it is linked to a geographical context and has a geopolitical meaning (Sheldon, 2014).

Submarine cables largely run along naval routes that have already been traced and used for centuries for the exchange of goods and information, and they are subjected to similar geographical constraints (Starosielski, 2015). It is no coincidence that the largest number of cables pass through the Pacific Ocean, connecting Canada and the West Coast of the United States with Japan and Southeast Asia, and through the Atlantic Ocean, connecting Northern Europe with the eastern United States. The Asia-Pacific has seen significant submarine cable laying activities supporting its economic development in recent years. The other main route is that connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the East China Sea, passing through the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. In other words, the shipping routes that humans have used for centuries to connect different continents remain highly relevant even in the digital age.

Maritime choke points play a decisive role in determining undersea cable routes. A choke point is

a strategic narrow route providing passage through or to another region. In the maritime domain, these are typically key straits or canals through which high volumes of traffic pass due to their geographic and economic advantages. But, where there are choke points, there are also points of failure (Starosielski, 2015).

With the general stabilisation of national boundaries and the reduction in territorial disputes, land-based choke points tend to become prominent only when active conflicts occur. However, maritime choke points are a constant geopolitical concern, as the main transport mode for global trade is ocean shipping. Indeed, around 90 per cent of traded goods are carried over the waves (ICS, 2022). Thus, they are highly vulnerable in times of conflict. While the high seas also have risks, the most dangerous places for ships are those where land-based piracy, terrorism, and military conflict can easily target them as they move slowly through narrow straits or canals.

The primary maritime choke points around the world are the following: 1) the Strait of Hormuz between Oman and Iran at the entrance to the Persian Gulf; 2) the Bab-el-Mandeb passage from the Arabian Sea to the Red Sea; 3) the Strait of Malacca between Malaysia and Indonesia; 4) the Panama Canal connecting the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans; 5) the Suez Canal connecting the Red Sea and Mediterranean Sea; 6) the Strait of Gibraltar along the Atlantic Ocean entering the Mediterranean Sea; 7) the Turkish Straits of Dardanelles and Bosporus; and 8) the Cape of Good Hope, although not technically a chokepoint since it is open on one side. There are also several secondary maritime choke points, including the English Channel separating the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea.

Disruption to any one of these choke points could cause unpredictable consequences in terms of economics and communications. Many of these straits are in close proximity to politically unstable nations, which increases navigation risks and compromises access and use. This is the main reason why these locations are generally safe and are kept clear by the international community and major powers, whose economies and standards of living depend on these choke points remaining open.

With regard to the European Union, the Suez Canal has become one of the Internet's most strategic choke points, mainly because its geography contributes to the concentration of submarine cables in the area. Built in 1869 and expanded over the years, the Suez Canal is an Egyptian sea-level waterway that provides a vital shipping and communication route between Europe and Asia. Indeed, the passage through the Red Sea is the shortest and most practical submarine route between the two continents. To date, there are 16 submarine cables that run from the Indian Ocean across the Red Sea for almost 2,000 km before reaching the Mediterranean Sea (Bueger, Liebetrau, & Franken, 2022). Over the last two decades, this route has become one of the biggest global maritime choke points for digital connectivity and presumably represents the most vulnerable place in the submarine cable network serving Europe.

The Suez Canal has also recently been the subject of attention from the European Parliament. In a 2022 report (Bueger, Liebetrau, & Franken), it highlighted the risk of a large-scale Internet outage, emphasising the dangers in the area posed by violent extremism and maritime terrorism: 'The most vital bottleneck for the EU concerns the passage between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean via the Red Sea because the core connectivity to Asia runs via this route'.

Another problem concerns the diversification of submarine cable hubs. Maintaining geographical distance between cable landing stations, and detaching the locations of landing bases for submarine cables from large settlements or port facilities, reduces the risks of simultaneous failures or attacks. Thus, the EU should improve the resiliency of its submarine cable network by diversifying the locations of cable landing stations (Miller, 2019). Below is a description of some of the main EU submarine cable hubs for global connectivity.

Before the United Kingdom officially left the European Union in 2020, most transatlantic traffic entered the EU on the south-western coast of England, basically through the localities of Bude, Highbridge, and Porthcurno. Nowadays, data from the Atlantic Ocean enters the EU after crossing the maritime choke point of the English Channel, thanks to the 28 existing links between Great Britain and mainland Europe – the cable landing hotspots of Calais in France, Ostend in Belgium, and Zandvoort in the Netherlands are the most important (Bueger, Liebetrau, & Franken, 2022). Since the Brexit referendum in 2016, plans for four subsea cables that will bypass the United Kingdom in favour of other EU countries have been announced. Several of these will directly connect Ireland's data centre cluster to other landing stations for subsea cables, including the Irish branch of the 'Havfrue' cable to the American New Jersey Fiber Exchange (NJFX), the 'WINS' (Western Ireland–Northern Spain) cable from Galway to Bilbao in Spain, and the 'IFSC' (Ireland–France Subsea Cable) infrastructure from Cork to Lannion in France (Bueger, Liebetrau, & Franken, 2022). Still, the English Channel continues

to be a maritime choke point of strategic importance for the interconnection of the EU with the Atlantic Ocean, passing through the United Kingdom.

The Mediterranean Sea has a series of submarine cable hubs of notable strategic importance for Europe, as they physically connect its coasts with the Americas, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean through a series of maritime choke points – that is, the Strait of Gibraltar, the Strait of Sicily, and the Suez Canal. Two hubs are of particular relevance: the 'Marseille Hub' and the 'Sicily Hub'.

Situated in the Provence region of southern France, Marseille is a typical example of a submarine cable hub where all submarine cables landing there terminate and interconnect with other submarine cables and long-haul trans-European terrestrial cables. In recent years, Marseille has been the fastest-growing interconnection hub in Europe – the city has become the seventh Internet hub in the world, having been in 44th position in 2015.[4] Indeed, its geographical position at the heart of the Mediterranean Sea makes it an excellent gateway for submarine cables linking Europe to Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. To date, there are 16 submarine cable systems from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia landing directly in the French hub, encouraging the progressive establishment of data centres in the area; built by a consortium led by Orange and Meta, '2Africa' was the last undersea cable to land in Marseille in 2022.[5] Besides being one of the main submarine cable hubs, Marseille is also one of the most important EU Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), together with Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris, and Sicily. An IXP can be simply defined as a physical infrastructure through which participating Internet infrastructure companies such as Internet service providers exchange data destined for their respective networks.

As another main submarine cable hub in the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily plays a very important global interconnection role. Indeed, through the nodes of the cities of Catania, Mazara del Vallo, Palermo, and Trapani, the Italian island is connected by 19 transcontinental cables coming from the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Located closer to North Africa and the Middle East than any other European peering point, the 'Sicily Hub' can intercept most of the submarine cables that cross the Mediterranean Sea. Among these, there are several cables that cross the Atlantic Ocean to reach the United States; two cables that go in the direction of the African continent, with a first entry in Libya and Tunisia respectively; two cables that connect the eastern Mediterranean reaching Greece, Turkey, and Israel; and finally four other cables that point to the Far East.[6]

THE UNDERSEA CABLE INDUSTRY AND THE NEW ROLE OF BIG TECH

The evolution of digital markets and the introduction of new technologies have significantly extended the concept of digital ecosystem. Alongside infrastructures for the 5G network, the cloud, artificial intelligence, the data economy, and the microchip supply chain, other activities are becoming increasingly important in the digital era. Among others, the construction, laying, and maintenance of submarine cables are currently experiencing unprecedented demand growth.

Since the submarine cable industry began in the 19th century, transatlantic routes have played a fundamental role. In particular, the New York–London route has been the most competitive from a commercial point of view, as it allows the direct passage of data between two of the main economic and financial hubs on the planet. However, as big technology companies such as Amazon, Meta, Alphabet, and Microsoft are increasingly becoming the global leaders in cable development, routes are diversifying significantly from their origins. Indeed, with the rise of the Big Techs in the industry, the transatlantic market is shifting away from the connection of large population centres – which characterises the interests of traditional telephone operators, originally those most interested in submarine cable infrastructures – to the connection of data centres for content providers (Burnett, 2021).

Transpacific routes are undergoing the same transformation, that is, a rapid shift of market interests towards the interconnection of data centres instead of population centres. Indeed, main cloud service providers in the region – such as Alibaba Cloud, Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud, and Microsoft – are investing significant resources in infrastructure development throughout East Asia and the Pacific Ocean, focusing on new installations of data centres (Burnett, 2021).

Undersea cables are produced and owned by private companies representing individual countries, multinational consortia. Regarding the ownership of submarine cables, there are three main typologies: 1) consortium, 2) multilateral development bank (MDB), and 3) single owner. By far the most common model is historically represented by the consortium. About 90 per cent of submarine cable funding over the past three decades has come from consortia, worth about US\$43 billion (Duvernay, 2018). This approach involves a group of companies that have a common interest in the construction of

a submarine cable along a specific route sharing its data transport capacity and financial risk. The second model is represented by MDBs, such as the World Bank, which finance construction projects, offer lower interest rates and more flexible terms, and are more lenient in case of insolvency by states and companies.

The construction of submarine cables by a single owner is the latest model, which significantly increases the financial risk for the owner company, although it reduces the complexity of managing such systems. Submarine cables offer huge economies of scale, making investing in optical technology extremely profitable for a single company. Initially of limited relevance, this model has experienced strong growth in recent years, especially thanks to the activity of the Big Techs, which have begun to build cables of which they retain single ownership or share it with a very limited number of partners (Brake, 2019).

As with ownership, the submarine cable construction financing system is also divided into multiple lenders, single lenders, and construction projects financed by MDBs. To date, the companies that dominate the international undersea cable construction market are, among others, the Swiss–American TE Connectivity, the Finnish–French Alcatel Submarine Networks, the Japanese NEC Corporation, and the Chinese HMN Technologies (Report Linker, 2022).

Historically, submarine cables were predominantly owned by consortia of telecommunications companies. However, today's investments are mainly driven by big technology companies. The great interest of these companies in submarine cables is primarily explained by the exponential development of the data economy recorded in recent years. Indeed, the way individuals use and access data has changed significantly, moving from local or personal data storage to cloud storage-based file and application services.

Initially, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, and Microsoft opted for the consortium strategy, but recently they have decided to start building these infrastructures according to the single owner model (Brake, 2019). The Big Techs have significantly increased their investments in the sector since 2016, and as of 2023 they own or use more than half the capacity of submarine cables. According to 2019 estimates, Alphabet owned about 8.5 per cent of the submarine cables, and its longest cable, called 'Curie', measures about 10,500 km, connecting Los Angeles in California to Valparaíso in Chile, with a branching unit for future connectivity to Panama. The company is the sole owner of some submarine cables, but it also participates in several consortia

with other companies. Another prominent project is the cable called 'Jupiter', which was built in 2021 by a consortium led by Meta and Amazon and is approximately 14,600 km in length, connecting the West Coast of the United States to East Asia. All these massive investments have led to a sharp decline in subsea capacity prices, which continue to decrease at an estimated 25–28 per cent per year (Brake, 2019).

The growing interest of the Big Techs in the sector represents a deep paradigm shift that goes beyond the ownership and financial profiles of submarine cables. Indeed, the boost given to the sector by the entry of Western tech companies has created the conditions for extremely rapid technological developments. The innovations are not just about the extension of the laid cables – for example, the new '2Africa' undersea cable will connect the three continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe, for a total of about 45,000 km – but also include structural improvements such as the use of aluminium conductors and strategic innovations such as the introduction of self-powered ocean buoys, which do not have to receive energy from the mainland thanks to a combination of wave energy converters and solar panels.

In addition to the huge investments of Western technology companies, the last decade has also been characterised by the expanding presence of Chinese state-owned enterprises in the submarine cable market. The two main Chinese companies active in the sector are the aforementioned HMN Technologies and Hentong, which have built one of the most important international cables, called 'Peace': it is a 12,000-km-long infrastructure that connects Europe – specifically France – to Pakistan via the Suez Canal and the Horn of Africa. Building digital infrastructure – including 5G networks, undersea cables, and data storage systems – is part of the Digital Silk Road strategy, created in 2015 as a technology component of the Belt and Road Initiative. Through the Digital Silk Road projects, which have involved investments of around US$95 billion since the strategy's launch, China intends to increase its political, economic, and technological weight in the developing countries of Asia and Africa (Ma, 2020).

OVERVIEW OF THE LEGAL PROTECTION OF CABLES

The legal regime governing submarine cables is a patchwork of international conventions, customary international law, and national implementation. Understanding the international laws governing cables is essential to protecting them.

Unclear international governance does not always guarantee their protection, leaving global information networks vulnerable to sabotage and espionage. First of all, laying these cables is a meticulous operation that requires studying the seabed and the criticalities resulting from natural and anthropic activities. To reduce the risk of damage associated with human activities, national authorities can establish Cable Protection Zones, which extend along the length of the cable and several metres in width. Within these areas, neither anchoring nor fishing activities are permitted.

Submarine cables have been recognised since the beginning as a public good that ought to be protected and regulated by states. From 1863 to 1913, the protection of undersea cables appeared on the agenda of seven international conferences. Between 1884 and 1982, the international community adopted four main legal instruments that addressed the rights and obligations of states with respect to submarine cables (Davenport, 2015). These are: 1) the 1884 Convention for the Protection of Submarine Telegraph Cables; 2) the 1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas; 3) the

In the modern geopolitical environment, the vulnerability of undersea communications cables stands out as a major cyber security concern.

1958 Convention on the Continental Shelf; and 4) the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which came into force in 1994 (CCDCOE, 2019).

UNCLOS is the most comprehensive of all the aforementioned treaties and is the international agreement with the largest number of ratifications; therefore, it is considered the applicable international legal regime governing submarine cables. In particular, UNCLOS seeks to establish a 'legal order for the seas and oceans' by delimiting areas of juridical competence and assigning various rights and duties to coastal states and other users of the maritime domain. These maritime zones can be generally classified into three categories: 1) areas under territorial sovereignty; 2) areas outside sovereignty but within national jurisdiction, such as the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf; and 3) areas beyond national jurisdiction, such as the high seas and the deep seabed. According to UNCLOS, the territorial sea can be defined as the area which extends up to 12 nautical miles from the

baseline or low-water line along the coast (United Nations, 1982).

UNCLOS addresses the rights and obligations of states for both the protection of submarine cables and the freedom to lay, repair, and maintain such cables, but it does not fully protect cables from a legal perspective. Indeed, significant gaps remain. The shortcomings of the legal regime can be partly explained by the fact that UNCLOS dates from before submarine cables assumed their current prominence. For instance, outside territorial waters – namely in the EEZ, continental shelf, and high seas – there are explicit provisions in Articles 113–115 of UNCLOS on the protection of cables that apply (United Nations, 1982). However, under UNCLOS there is no obligation on coastal states to adopt laws and regulations to protect submarine cables within areas under their territorial sovereignty. Within their territorial waters, coastal states have only an express right to adopt laws and regulations 'relating to innocent passage through their territorial sea' in order to protect submarine cables. Countries also have a general competence to enact laws to protect undersea cables within such territorial waters, but no obligation (Davenport, 2015).

Moreover, it should be noted that some important countries, including the United States and Turkey, have not ratified UNCLOS, meaning its provisions are not recognised by the entire international community (Barker, 2018). Most importantly, the current legal regime does not explicitly prohibit states from treating submarine cables as legitimate military targets during wartime (Sunak, 2017). In 'The Challenge of Defending Subsea Cables' (2018), Pete Barker points out that, under current international law, it is legally difficult to protect submarine cables in times of war, especially when they are located outside national jurisdiction and lie at the bottom of the sea.

In the modern geopolitical environment, the vulnerability of undersea communications cables stands out as a major cyber security concern. Indeed, in addition to physical threats, today submarine cable systems face significant virtual vulnerabilities. One of the main questions is whether a cyber attack on an undersea cable, located outside the jurisdiction of a state, can be qualified as an 'armed attack' in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. If this condition occurs, a sovereign state can legitimately respond with force to the aggressor, exercising its right of self-defence.[7] The *Tallinn Manual 2.0: International Law Applicable to*

Cyber Operations (2019) states that the effects of a cyber attack are comparable to those of a kinetic attack. However, that statement lacks clarity as it does not establish when a cyber operation can be qualified as an armed attack (Schmitt, 2017).

Furthermore, there is no consensus as to whether the consequences of a deliberate breach of a submarine cable are serious enough to be equated to the outcome of an armed attack. If not, states would not have the right to use military force to defend their integrity. According to the *Tallinn Manual 2.0*, the simple collection of information from submarine cables that simultaneously transmit military and civilian data does not correspond to an attack by itself. In any case, if an attack involves cables, the response must always be subject to the principles of proportionality and precaution in order to minimise the damage to the civilian population. Given the variety and types of data transported and the services potentially involved, assessing the proportionality of the response could be quite difficult.

Finally, it is necessary to go back to the 1884 Convention for the Protection of Submarine Telegraph Cables, still valid and effective, to find a normative source that clearly and unequivocally attributes a coercive power to warships – including detention of the vessel and the right of visit – against all ships of the contracting states which have caused the breaking or damage of submarine cables.[8]

Formed in 1958, the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) is the only global organisation dealing with submarine communication cables. It was created to be the leading international private authority providing leadership and guidance on issues related to submarine cable planning, installation, operation, maintenance, dismission, and protection against human and natural hazards. As of early 2023, the ICPC has more than 190 members from over 65 countries, including submarine cable owners, submarine cable maintenance authorities, cable ship operators, undersea cable route survey companies, and national governments.[9] However, it is not an intergovernmental organisation having status under international law.

In 2022 the ICPC published the document 'Government Best Practices for Protecting and Promoting Resilience of Submarine Tele-communications Cables' to assist national governments in developing laws, policies, and practices to foster the development and protection of submarine cable networks. As best practices, the ICPC recommends that states designate submarine cables as critical infrastructure; gather and assess data regarding vulnerabilities of, and threats to, undersea cables; and develop and implement policies to reduce those vulnerabilities and threats (ICPC, 2022).

The European Union has so far not laid out a regulation, policy, or strategy that exclusively and explicitly addresses the protection of undersea data cables from a legal perspective. However, there are at least five policy fields in which the protection and resilience of the submarine data cable infrastructure is a concern, albeit with different priority levels: 1) maritime security; 2) cyber security; 3) ocean governance; 4) digital and infrastructure policy; and 5) external action, including development policy and security and defence policy (Bueger, Liebetrau, & Franken, 2022). Moreover, the mandates of several EU agencies – such as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the European Defence Agency, the European Fishery Control Agency, the European Maritime Safety Agency, and the EU Agency for Cyber Security – are relevant for submarine cable security, although they are not explicitly tasked to address this issue.

In order to achieve greater strategic autonomy, in recent years the EU has paid increasing attention to the security and resilience of its critical infrastructures. In the Versailles Declaration of 10–11 March 2022 on the Russian aggression against Ukraine, European leaders recognised the need to prepare for fast-emerging challenges, including by 'protecting ourselves against ever-growing hybrid warfare, strengthening our cyber-resilience, protecting our infrastructure – particularly our critical infrastructure – and fighting disinformation' (European Council, 2022). Adopted in 2022, the so-called NIS 2 Directive improves cyber security risk management and introduces reporting obligations across 'sectors of high criticality' such as digital infrastructures – for example, IXP providers or cloud computing and data centre service providers (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2022). Moreover, the proposed Directive on the Resilience of Critical Entities (CER Directive) should increase the resilience and security of such entities against a range of threats, including terrorist attacks, insider threats, and sabotage (European Commission, 2020).

The international legal regime arguably does not provide adequate protection for critical infrastructure such as undersea cables. Due to their vital importance, the question is how current international frameworks for protection and national implementation of such frameworks can be improved.

SECURITY ASSESSMENT ON SUBMARINE CABLES

The Internet is an essential asset for digital societies. It is characterised as an indispensable public utility service and therefore a critical infrastructure, similar to electricity or water distribution networks (Baldoni, De Nicola, & Prinetto, 2018). The physical infrastructure of cyberspace includes land and undersea cables, which provide connectivity between landmasses and oceans. This infrastructure is vast, complex, and interconnected, and it covers the entire globe (Sheldon, 2014). Compromising the physical infrastructure of submarine cables disrupts the system; thus it is possible to remove or compromise an information system through kinetic interventions (Libicki, 2009). Most of this infrastructure is privately owned, but there is also government participation in some consortia. This is geopolitically significant because it reinforces the idea that cyberspace is a domain as well as a global 'common good' (Sheldon, 2013: 310–311).

The security of submarine cables is a global concern and can be influenced by multiple factors, including political tensions, economic activity, cyber threats, and other geopolitical factors. Physical and cyber attacks can come from many different sources and can be conducted by criminal actors, hacker groups, or government organisations. In addition to service interruptions caused by technical failures or system malfunctions, the submarine cable network can be exposed to four types of threats:

1. The first type is natural events and disasters. For instance, the violent eruption of the underwater volcano Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai in 2022 totally isolated the small Polynesian country of Tonga from the rest of the world. The resulting tsunami destroyed about 80 km of the 'Southern Cross Cable Network', which connects the Tonga Archipelago to the Fiji Islands (Miller, 2022).
2. The second type is accidental damage resulting from human activity, especially from fishing or anchoring operations. For instance, damage to the 'SHEFA-2' cable linking the Faroe Islands to mainland Scotland in 2022 is believed to have been caused by a fishing vessel (Martin, 2022).
3. The third type involves kinetic and cyber attacks, including sabotage, by state and non-state actors. Cutting off undersea communication cables during or prior to conflict could enable one state to gain a direct military advantage over the other by causing the strategic isolation of the enemy. Moreover, cable attacks could sabotage a competitor economically, serving as an extreme form of economic warfare. As stated by Sheldon (2014), kinetic action to damage submarine cable infrastructure may be undertaken for the purposes of national interest, economic imperative, political ideology, and/or criminal intent.
4. The fourth type is undersea espionage. This is a vital intelligence function for enabling intelligence agencies to sift for evidence of serious international crime and ensure that as much as possible is known in advance of strategic and/or military actions against adversaries. Undersea espionage can be achieved throughout several methods, including inserting back doors during the cable manufacturing or maintaining process, targeting onshore landing stations linking submarine cables to networks on land, or tapping the cables at sea (ODNI, 2022).

Published in 2010 by the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, the report 'The Reliability of Global Undersea Communications Cable Infrastructure', already recognised the need to improve the reliability, robustness, resilience, and security of submarine communications around the

The primary state threats to undersea cable networks in Europe come from the Russian Federation.

world (Rausher, 2010). In particular, the author, Karl F. Rauscher, argues that the level of reliability of undersea cable networks is not appropriate to the level of reliance the global economy has developed on the Internet. The growing reliance of digital societies on global communications also means more exposure to risk and threats. One of the most delicate scenarios concerns the intentional damage that submarine cables can suffer from piracy, sabotage, or international terrorism, since this would paralyse any country that operates on a sophisticated technological level.

The primary state threats to undersea cable networks in Europe come from the Russian Federation. The '2021 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community' (ODNI, 2021) found that Russia 'continues to target critical infrastructure, including submarine cables'. The document also highlighted that the Kremlin has expanded its control over domestic technology firms to serve its foreign policy agenda. For instance, Russian state-owned telecommunication firm Rostelecom has been linked to Border Gateway Protocol hijackings. Indeed, Rostelecom deliberately rerouted

global Internet traffic across Russian borders, with the main goal of acquiring sensitive Internet data (ODNI, 2021).

Russia directly threatens the cables via submarines and surface vessels that are operated by the Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research (GUGI), which is a submarine intelligence service established in 1976. Such vessels include the 'Losharik' and the 'Yantar'. Powered by a nuclear reactor, the 'Losharik' has been described as a mini spy submarine that could possibly be used to tap into or sever underwater communications cables. The hull is designed to withstand extreme pressures, allowing the submarine to operate at depths of up to a kilometre (Roth, 2019). The modified Oscar-class submarine 'Belgorod' was specially refitted in order to transport the 'Losharik', acting as its mothership, in support of GUGI operations (Sutton, 2020). The 'Yantar' is a special purpose intelligence collection ship with equivalent sabotage capabilities, as it also possesses devices that can tap undersea cables (Sanger & Schmitt, 2015). All these spy vessels could cause considerable damage to submarine cable networks and obtain strategically valuable data that crosses them.

In 2015 it was revealed that several Russian submarines and spy ships sailed for months near the main transoceanic ridges in order to precisely map the path of each individual undersea cable (Sanger & Schmitt, 2015). This raised several concerns in US military and intelligence circles since its intent appeared to be to plan the disruption of Internet backbones in future moments of international tension or conflict. During his 2017 Annual Chief of the Defence Staff Lecture, British Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach stated:

> There is a new risk to our way of life that is the vulnerability of the cables that crisscross the seabed. Can you imagine a scenario where those cables are cut or disrupted, which would immediately and potentially catastrophically affect both our media and economy, as well as other ways of living? Therefore, we must continue to develop our maritime forces, working very closely with our allies, to match and understand Russian fleet modernisation. (RUSI, 2017)

In the same year, then British MP Rishi Sunak (2017) produced a report for Policy Exchange warning that Russia was 'operating aggressively' in the Atlantic Ocean where submarine cables connect Europe and the United States. In the foreword to the report, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe James Stavridis said that Russian submarine forces had undertaken detailed monitoring and targeting activities nearby the North Atlantic submarine cable infrastructure, with the ability to cause 'potentially catastrophic' damage. At the same time, former Commander of NATO's Submarine Forces Andrew Lennon has observed intense Russian underwater activity near submarine cables (Birnbaum, 2017).

In general, in recent years there has been apparent interest from Russia in the submarine cables connecting North America and Europe. This could demonstrate the Kremlin's willingness to damage them or tap sensitive data. Given the increase in Russian submarine activity, in 2017 the Atlantic Alliance decided to raise the level of alert and monitoring against these activities by Moscow, especially through the deployment of naval units and aircraft specialised in intercepting submarines, such as the Boeing P-8 Poseidon. More recently, even without a direct reference to the protection of submarine cables, NATO is developing a series of projects and technologies to increase its submarine situational awareness (NATO, 2017). Furthermore, the Atlantic Alliance is conducting a series of operations, such as Sea Guardian, with the strategic purpose of maritime and submarine surveillance.[10] Significantly, the threat from Russian undersea aggression has remained despite the ongoing war in Ukraine. Attacks on undersea cables by Russian vessels and tapping by Russia's state-owned enterprises are likely to continue to threaten the security of submarine communication infrastructure.

A protection strategy for submarine cables cannot depend solely on military action since it is impossible to secure the entire undersea cable network given its global reach. The geographic area requiring protection is simply too large to cover, even for the mightiest of naval fleets. Consequently, national strategies should focus on alternative methods of safeguarding information exchange. For instance, increasing the level of redundancy within the system by placing additional cables would help differentiate the risk of attacks or accidents.

The ICPC believes there is enough diversity in the international submarine cable network (Barker, 2018). This could be true if the only threat came from accidental damage. However, given the threats identified in this chapter, the perspective of failure caused by a natural event could give way to a more realistic perspective of sabotage risk (Barker, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The security of submarine cables is a constant concern for telecommunications companies and governments around the world, and measures are being taken to ensure their protection. However,

several factors, including the asymmetrical nature of the threat, the complexity of the infrastructures involved, and the porosity of the security perimeter, make it essential to further strengthen defence, containment, and reaction capabilities at a systemic level. The fully distributed nature of the network exposes the Internet to various attacks. On the one hand, the attacks allow traffic to be fraudulently hijacked so that it can be analysed without the need for direct access to the equipment or terminal lines, with obvious impacts on the confidentiality and/or integrity of the traffic itself. On the other hand, they allow the interruption of crucial services for significant lengths of time, through both the cybernetic and kinetic dimension.

Regardless of the type of device used, what matters are the nodes, the quality and quantity of a connection that passes through physical assets, which are perceived by customers as commodities but on which the entire infrastructure actually depends (Del Barba, 2017).

Subsea cables have a unique vulnerability that makes them difficult to protect and are subject to an uncertain international regime. Undersea cables are critical infrastructures from both an economic and a military point of view, therefore recent concerns are more than justified. States will face exceptional challenges in defending these cables in a deteriorating geopolitical environment.

Given the strategic relevance of submarine cable networks and the EU's dependence on digital connectivity, this chapter makes the following recommendations: 1) raise the level of awareness and knowledge of the issue; 2) adopt a common policy or strategy focused on the security of undersea cables; 3) develop regional agreements or an international treaty to provide legal certainty on the rules and responsibilities of states in international waters; 4) enhance the EU's surveillance capabilities in the maritime domain and its response mechanisms; and 5) improve coordination and information sharing between NATO and the EU. Preparedness in the area of cyber security and traditional security of critical infrastructure is now more essential than ever.

NOTES
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2. Political Analyst (Asia-Pacific, Security and Internalisation) at Frascà&Partners.
3. 'Asia-America Gateway', https://asia-america-gateway.com/.
4. 'Port de Marseille Fos', https://www.marseille-port.fr/projets/cables-sous-marins.
5. '2Africa', https://www.2africacable.net/.
6. 'Sicily Hub', https://www.tisparkle.com/our-platform/cloud-data-center-platform/sparkle-sicily-hub.
7. 'United Nations Charter', https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text.
8. 'Convention for the Protection of Submarine Telegraph Cables', https://www.iscpc.org/documents/?id=13.
9. 'International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) Member List', https://www.iscpc.org/about-the-icpc/member-list/.
10. 'Operation Sea Guardian', https://mc.nato.int/missions/operation-sea-guardian.

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How Central Europe Can Embrace the EU's Strategic Autonomy

Wojciech Przybylski

ABSTRACT

The objective of strategic autonomy for the EU may become less contested and divisive if it includes more than just military dimensions. Strategic autonomy from malign dependencies on strategic rival powers would be consistent with the United States' values-driven approach and prevent powers such as China and Russia from driving a wedge in the transatlantic alliance. Reforming the EU's strategic autonomy concept to include a Central European perspective would increase the potential for the EU to play a larger global role in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of strategic autonomy for the European Union (EU) is too important to abandon and at the same time too vague and in need of a clear definition. It demonstrates the EU's global ambition and has been the backbone of new defence policies developed by the EU over the past ten years. It gained particular political prominence during the presidency of Donald Trump and has been propelled primarily by long-standing French ambitions to limit dependence on the leadership of the United States.

Such a perspective has been a source of divergence between many Central European countries and the rest of the EU Member States. For Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries such as the Baltic states, Czechia, Poland, and Romania, threatened for years by Russia's posture, the US has been the only power capable of deterring Russian military aggression. At the same time, the EU has been primarily seen through the prism of its economic pillar – as a soft security add-on to NATO.

In the light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Poland and the Baltic states' warnings have been proven correct. Hence, the CEE perspective on EU strategy has become more critical than ever. Additionally, the CEE states' bold moves to deliver military assistance to Ukraine and at the same time to upgrade their armies has increased their contribution to EU capabilities.

Yet, in the current context and for many years to come, it is quite obvious how futile it would be to rely on the EU's military resources alone.

At the same time, Central European states, like the other EU members, have benefited from the increasing autonomy of the EU to deliver security in all other dimensions besides the military one. Strategic autonomy, understood as the freedom to act without dependencies on strategic rivals, includes a number of areas that are critical from the point of view of today's 360-degree defence

concept but that are not purely military in nature, such as a principled approach by the EU to upholding values-driven policy and democratic institutions that enable coherence in pluralistic societies.

Until the EU's strategic autonomy concept is reformed to include non-military dimensions of security, it will remain a divisive issue between EU

Russia's malign influence is premeditated and primarily aimed at undermining the foundations of the liberal world order

Member States, one that can be easily exploited by the EU's strategic rivals.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The revised EU Global Strategy should address strategic autonomy from the point of view of accomplishments that have increased Europe's capacity to act.
- The concept of strategic autonomy should be adapted according to the new EU Strategic Compass, underlining the need to end dependencies on systemic rivals such as Russia and China.
- The Foreign Affairs Council should follow the example of the NATO 360 security concept and reform the strategic autonomy concept in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy.
- Central European governments should embrace a reformed idea of strategic autonomy, one which explicitly underlines the EU's autonomy from autocratic powers and strengthens multilateral partnerships, primarily with the US and other allies.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND STRATEGIC AUTONOMY
Despite many voices heralding the end of the European Union's strategic autonomy (Dempsey, 2023), it remains an up-to-date concept that should retain a prominent place in the future revision of the EU's Global Strategy. However, its constructive potential for the whole of Europe will depend on it accounting for the voices of CEE Member States and reforming the approach to meet fundamental security concerns and future common ambitions.

While European autonomy in terms of military action is neither quickly achievable nor easily agreeable without a new political foundation for effective and democratic oversight, the EU has made noteworthy progress in attaining more resilience and the ability to act over the course of the past ten years, since the concept was first formulated. Since 2013, and even earlier, the EU has been

building the foundations of its future capabilities as well as reducing dependencies on foreign actors. This has been particularly important in non-military domains that have been ruthlessly exploited for covert influence or disruption.

The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, which started in 2014 and turned into a hot conflict in 2022, has demonstrated how dangerous the modern militarisation of energy, economic, and even cultural spheres has been. The weaponisation of gas supplies, strategic corruption, and strategic communication have all been targeted at undermining social cohesion across Western democracies. This process was already underway before 2014 (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014), but it gained more momentum after the Euromaidan revolution in November 2013.

At the same time, Russia's malign influence is premeditated and primarily aimed at undermining the foundations of the liberal world order. In 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that 'the liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population' (quoted in Barber & Foy, 2019). It is noteworthy that this claim targets the very foundations of the European Union and its institutions, all of which rest on the modern liberal paradigm.
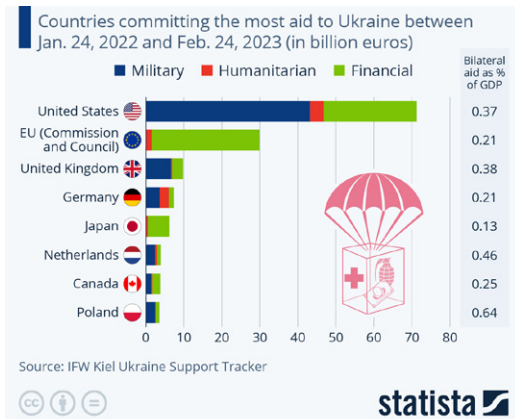
But Russia's aggressive posture has not been the sole test of the EU's capacity to act in delivering security to its citizens. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021, the Brexit negotiations (2016–2018), energy policy packages in the past two decades, and consecutive enlargements have led to a gradual increase in the EU's non-coercive power. Along with the success of the eurozone, the EU's reality is far from the gloomy predictions from the late 1990s about its imminent collapse.

As will be explained later, the EU has been gradually building up its strategic autonomy precisely in areas that matter in the post-modern world just as much as the old-fashioned deadly power of military hardware. But the EU's responsiveness to these crises has never been adequate, and it has not done enough to elevate its strategic autonomy in terms of military defence.

Conceived during the European debates over the EU's defence industrial potential, the goal of 'strategic autonomy' was first announced in November 2013 as a way to support the objectives of the Common Security and Defence Policy. Three years later, it was adopted as the key concept underpinning the EU Global Strategy. This strategy was formulated with a clear objective to deliver security in

Countries committing the most aid to Ukraine between Jan. 24, 2022 and Feb. 24, 2023 (in billion euros)

■ Military ■ Humanitarian ■ Financial

	Bilateral aid as % of GDP
United States	0.37
EU (Commission and Council)	0.21
United Kingdom	0.38
Germany	0.21
Japan	0.13
Netherlands	0.46
Canada	0.25
Poland	0.64

Source: IFW Kiel Ukraine Support Tracker

statista

the EU's neighbourhood and to ensure that the EU is able to defend itself without relying on US military assistance to the extent that it had in the past.

In the light of US leadership to assist Ukraine and the supportive role played by the EU, it is clear that while the general objective remains valid, it is far from being fulfilled. Europe clearly needs the US military to deliver hard security to its neighbours and eventually also to save itself. In parallel, the US is relying on the EU to play a leading role in terms of financial assistance and welcomes a significant increase in military exports, which benefit both the United States' and EU Member States' defence sectors.

By November 2022, the EU institutions' and Member States' deliveries of military assistance to Ukraine amounted to nearly one-third of that delivered by the US in terms of monetary value. At the same time, it had surpassed the US by about the same magnitude in terms of financial assistance necessary for Ukraine to continue the fight.

It is instructive to compare these contributions to those during the Balkan Wars, when the EU provided a greater share of the humanitarian aid but its military commitment was simply not there. This is one of many examples of how the EU has been acquiring more strategic autonomy to deliver security in non-military domains.

SHIFTS TOWARDS STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Over the past two decades the EU has been gradually shifting towards more autonomous positions. Understanding that security is underpinned by several factors, in which military capabilities play a critical but not the sole role, a number of developments have led to an increase in Europe's ability and resolve to act.

For example, the EU has made continuous efforts to build up its energy mix, starting from increased dependence on fossil fuels to the general objective of future green independence. The remarkable success of the euro as a global currency and of the EU single market allowed for the generation of additional revenues. The Next Generation EU (an entirely new chapter in the history of European integration) provided financial security and allowed for more ambitious funding schemes. Along with responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has massively upgraded its autonomous toolbox.

European autonomy also grew when the bloc managed to stay united and assert an agreed position during the Brexit negotiations. Similarly, its ambition to be a foreign policy actor was made clear in its decisions to step up the stalled enlargement process and to bring key international partners closer to the Union, defying Russian and Chinese influence campaigns.

Finally, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU upgraded its strategic document, laying the foundation for united action on Russian sanctions and a record high level of foreign military support to Ukraine as well as to several other conflict zones. For the first time in its history, the EU has autonomously decided to back up its values with concrete tools that translate into foreign policy interests. From this point of view, the EU's strategic autonomy has never been greater.

A closer look at some of the above-mentioned developments clarifies how the CEE perspective might be better aligned with such an understanding of strategic autonomy, enabling the adoption of a common position.

EU ENERGY PACKAGES

A total of five energy packages have been adopted by the EU since 1996. The first two focused on liberalising national gas and electricity markets. The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty more than a decade later officially granted Brussels the competence to coordinate a bloc-wide energy policy. This occurred against a backdrop of increasingly assertive behaviour from Europe's largest single gas supplier, Russia, as it proceeded to invade Georgia in 2008 before temporarily halting gas supplies to Ukraine a year later.

The transit crisis of 2009 left a number of South-Eastern European countries without heating for nearly two weeks during the winter season, culminating in calls from the most vulnerable CEE states to reduce dependence on Russian gas.

The Third Energy Package (TEN), passed in spring 2009, served as an inflection point for the securitisation of energy in the EU. The new gas model stipulated in the TEN required the 'unbundling' of transmission assets (i.e. pipelines) in order to promote competition but also to weaken the natural monopoly of gas sellers, who also happened to be the owners of distribution networks – notably Russia's energy giant Gazprom. The securitisation trend further added geopolitical weight to institutions such as the European Commission. In 2013 it launched an investigation into Gazprom's anti-competitive behaviour. The state giant was eventually found to be in violation of the EU's anti-trust rules, overcharging five countries in the CEE market by up to 40 per cent, and it was threatened with a hefty fine unless it switched course.

The average duration of Gazprom's contracts between 2015 and 2018 was 14 years (Russell, 2020), a marker of Russia's continued market dominance in spite of efforts by Member States to gradually switch to spot markets. Long-term contracts account for 75 per cent of the EU's overall gas demand, 40 per cent of which were signed with Gazprom (EU Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, 2022). Investment in the Nord Stream project – pipelines carrying natural gas from Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea – meanwhile, has driven a wedge between commercially driven Berlin and its Central European counterparts, who interpret the venture as a threat to regional security and existing transit routes in the east.

Instead of the expected partitioning of the market, however, the CEE countries reacted and adapted to their diminishing transit role by increasing interconnections and building bidirectional pipeline capacity (reverse flows), which has more than doubled since 2009 (Sedláček, 2019). In contrast to bigger pipelines such as TurkStream or Nord Stream, smaller projects to improve infrastructure connection in the region and diversify gas supplies have made up some of the most important Projects of Common Interest that benefit from EU funding:

- Liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals in Poland, Lithuania, and Croatia
- Klaipeda–Kursenai pipeline enabling LNG deliveries
- Baltic Pipe (Denmark–Poland)
- Gas interconnectors: Poland–Lithuania, Finland–Estonia, and Estonia–Latvia.

Poland is an excellent example of how greater flexibility in gas supply equates to more autonomy: the Central European country has the means to satisfy over 90 per cent of its natural gas imports through reverse flows from its southern and western neighbours (Harrison & Princova, 2015). It has been building up connections to other Visegrad countries and Germany. Furthermore, the Poland–Lithuania interconnector, which opened in May 2022, integrates the Baltic states and Finland into the common EU market – allowing the parties to import from new sources, such as Polish or Lithuanian LNG and Norwegian gas via the Baltic Pipe.

North–south gas flows have led to a clear increase in energy price convergence of the Baltic and CEE markets since 2009 (Bublyk, Kurbet, & Yukhymets, 2022), while east–west reverse flows running through Slovakia have contributed to a convergence with German hub prices in the CEE countries. Ultimately, energy prices in the region have gradually become less reliant on each country's relative dependence on Russian gas and, by extension, its political relations with the Kremlin.

Therefore, at the outset of Russia's aggression, Europe was taking energy policy decisions in line with its overall strategy. It took action that would for now cut it off from Russian resources and in consequence stop funding the Kremlin's military effort. This was particularly important for smaller and more dependent economies, while Germany has proven to be adaptable and resourceful enough to shift away from its energy dependency on Russia, which had been increasing, to reach zero dependency on Kremlin-controlled fossil fuels within just over a year.

FROM JOINT VACCINE PROCUREMENT TO EU HEALTH SECURITY

The European Commission's joint vaccine procurement strategy, unveiled in June 2020, delegated a more authoritative role to the EU in the previously core state competency of public health. The strategy was premised on the logic of protecting the internal market to avoid wasteful intra-EU competition amid a worldwide scramble for supplies and rising vaccine nationalism. The EU's role in negotiating supply contracts on behalf of Member States and working to ramp up domestic manufacturing capacity was a step forward in terms of strategic autonomy. It has been contrasted with the perilous situation in neighbouring countries to the EU, in which individual countries were in a much weaker position to secure even basic critical personal protection equipment on their own.

As a result, by the end of 2021, the EU had managed to reach its 70 per cent target for fully vaccinated adults, to boost its manufacturing output to 300 million vaccine doses per month, and to

become the only regional bloc to donate over half of its vaccine production overseas. That same year a new body, HERA, was launched under the auspices of the Commission to prepare contingencies for a more autonomous response to future public health emergencies.

The Commission admittedly faced certain difficulties with supply chain management, largely owing to a lack of negotiating experience with the pharmaceutical industry, and an initial roll-out delayed by administrative barriers. However, vaccine scepticism has proven to be a more significant obstacle in the medium term, leading to highly uneven rates of inoculation. Countries with the lowest share of fully vaccinated adults include Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia – all of whom lag behind the EU average by roughly 20 per cent. As the worst-performing region, the CEE countries host the largest proportion of vaccine-hesitant and anti-vax populations among EU Member States (Eurobarometer, 2022a) and are 20 times more exposed to COVID-19 disinformation on average than their Western European counterparts (Popa et al., 2022).

Satisfaction with how the EU has handled the vaccination campaign, at 53 per cent, is only slightly higher than the average satisfaction levels with national governments. More than half of respondents surveyed (Eurobarometer, 2022a) agree that public authorities have not been sufficiently trans-

The CEE countries host the largest proportion of vaccine-hesitant and anti-vax populations among EU Member States

parent about the development, testing, and authorisation of COVID-19 vaccines. Better transparency on the procurement of goods is a key takeaway from the pandemic experience because it has shown that lack of trust in institutions among the citizenry can undermine crisis management while scaling down any perception of achievement.

Collective action by the EU has nonetheless provided equal vaccination conditions across the continent. The lowered cost of doses negotiated by the Commission is of particular benefit to smaller and poorer Member States that would otherwise be disadvantaged by being overcharged on the competitive market. A similar joint purchasing mechanism is now being considered for other critical resources, exploiting the bloc's collective bargaining power. Hence, it can be seen that the external pressure on

security of supply is contributing to a Europe-wide market failure, which in turn is carving out a more proactive role for EU institutions.

It should also be mentioned that the collective EU response, while challenged by Russian and Chinese attempts at vaccine diplomacy, was one of the world's most successful overall. After a short period of international media activity by Russia, showing delivery of containers with Sputnik V vaccine, Russia focused on sponsoring anti-vaccine messaging to undermine European resilience. At the same time, Chinese vaccine technology did not live up to its promise in terms of efficiency, and its zero-COVID policy had disastrous effects on its own population. Both developments undermined the soft (and sharp) power of autocratic states and boosted the EU's relative position.

BREXIT MADE THE EU BEHAVE AS A FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR

The United Kingdom's departure from the EU was a watershed moment in the bloc's history, but it did not result in the Union's subsequent political and economic disintegration as had been feared; in fact, public support for membership across the EU rose by 9 per cent over the course of the Brexit negotiations between 2016 and 2018. In response to the unprecedented challenge to the Union's *raison d'être*, the EU-27 have expressed the unity and resolve of a maturing strategic polity as opposed to the usual intergovernmental horse-trading seen in previous waves of crises, which were characterised by sharp divisions.

The ability of the institutional triangle to tone down power rivalry in favour of preserving polity cohesion generated high levels of trust among Member States. The European Commission's transparency bolstered this trust in spearheading the negotiating process. The Commission effectively leveraged the 'red lines' of other institutional actors such as the European Parliament as a negotiating tactic, spoiling London's efforts to reach bilateral understandings with different parties. As a result, both withdrawal agreements concluded under the May and Johnson governments strongly reflected the EU's polity's core interests.

The EU's decentralised model of democratic governance showed its aptness for managing political diversity when unity on Brexit was far from inevitable. At the very outset, the Commission framed the progression of talks as conditional on addressing the concerns of Ireland, a smaller EU state with less political clout than the larger states but greater

vulnerability to Brexit. Although such a move risked derailing negotiations and received lukewarm support from larger Member States who prioritised reaching a financial settlement, Brussels succeeded in excluding the option of a hard border with Northern Ireland as part of the withdrawal agreement. The EU continues to defend its 'non-negotiable' commitment to the Northern Ireland Protocol and launched infringement proceedings against the UK over its lack of compliance in June 2022 while keeping the option of a retaliatory trade response open.

Overall, the outcome of the Brexit negotiations contributed to a more autonomous Europe with greater immunity to Eurosceptic forces. The favourable terms achieved by the EU's collective bargaining in contrast to the hurdles experienced by the UK dealt a blow to the formation of an attractive 'British model' of differentiation and — at least in the short term — disincentivised more exits. However, the impetus to unite as a bloc has not translated into consensus on the substance of future institutional reform.

The same internal structure that upheld the interests of Ireland in the Brexit negotiations continues to shield countries such as Poland and Hungary against democratic backsliding (Kisilowski & Przybylski, 2019). The institutions' effectiveness will

An increase in defence spending is needed to compensate for the massive underinvestment of the past decade

be tested again as Brussels becomes more entangled in state competencies and Member States seek deeper involvement in the decision-making process.

EU DEFENCE SPENDING

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, lacklustre cooperation between Member States on security and defence cost between 25 billion and 100 billion euros annually (EEAS Press Team, 2022). Without a single integrated procurement system for military equipment, 80 per cent of defence procurement is managed on a purely national basis, while in 2020 only about 11 per cent of overall defence investment was spent collaboratively. This is 24 per cent below the agreed benchmark and reflects a persistent and widespread reduction in collaborative investment after the global financial crisis of 2008.

An increase in defence spending is needed to compensate for the massive underinvestment of the past decade, whereas EU coordination is required to avoid the inefficient and costly duplication of defence capabilities. The Commission has proposed a range of financial incentives to stimulate joint investment in strategic defence capabilities, including 500 million euros from the EU budget and a VAT waiver for the procurement of equipment needed to address the evolving security situation. A more long-term perspective foresees the development of a framework for joint defence procurement that eliminates capability gaps and replaces industrial dependencies with indigenous solutions (European Commission, 2022).

The European Defence Fund, launched in 2021, is another instrument that strengthens European autonomy, with a special focus on upgrading the fragmented defence industrial cooperation among EU countries. In July that year, the Commission unveiled plans to invest almost 1.2 billion euros in 61 collaborative research and development projects. Research actors from the western part of the EU dominate the defence industry consortium responsible for these projects: 342 entities are based in Western Europe and 413 entities are from Southern Europe, in comparison with just 186 entities from the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) countries.[1]

Such underrepresentation of the region in European defence development risks a manufacturing bias towards national industries in the west and south, which would only reinforce Central Europe's resistance to the idea of strategic autonomy in defence (Brudzińska & Marusic, 2021).

In March 2021, the EU consolidated the financing of its Common Foreign and Security Policy missions and support for external partners under a single mechanism, the European Peace Facility. As of the end of 2022, the EU had issued a total of 3 billion euros in military aid to the Ukrainian Armed Forces since Russia's full-scale invasion in February — over half of the total funds available under the off-budget mechanism until 2027. While the EU has previously provided defence-related assistance bilaterally or through regional and international organisations to other countries, its commitment to Ukraine represents the bloc's first-ever provision of lethal equipment to a third country.

BATTLE OF NARRATIVES AROUND STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

The above case studies illustrate that the EU is increasingly pursuing its own collective strategic

interests, which include containment of malign foreign influence and dependencies. At the same time, the concept of strategic autonomy lives on in the political communication sponsored by the very powers the EU defines as its key global rivals.

The meeting between German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Chinese President Xi Jinping in November 2022 is a case in point. Xi reportedly said that 'China always regards Europe as a comprehensive strategic partner, supports the European Union's strategic autonomy', and insisted that 'China–Europe relations are not targeted at, subjugated to, or controlled by any third party' (Xie, 2022). These comments clearly demonstrate that China hopes to drive a wedge between the transatlantic partners by means of referring to strategic autonomy.

Russia's President Putin echoed that tone in January 2023, saying 'Europe will somehow restore its sovereignty. Apparently, this may require some time' (TASS, 2023). The comment came immediately after Germany had finally committed to sending Leopard tanks to Ukraine alongside other partners and illustrated how Putin's intentions in strategic communication were perfectly aligned with Xi's.

This point clearly illustrates the battle of narratives over the key idea defining the future of Europe, which cannot simply be abandoned – as many analysts who insist on the transatlantic link would wish. The concept of strategic autonomy will remain a key pillar in EU policies. But until it is clearly linked with NATO and underscores the ambition to limit malign dependencies from actors who do not respect democratic values it will pose a danger to the EU itself. It will continue to be misused and employed by actors who want to undermine European unity.

Strategic autonomy is a key political concept serving the global ambitions of Europe. It cannot be simply abandoned, because it would be immediately picked up and used in the strategic communication of the EU's adversaries, as previously demonstrated. The only way forward is to further define it within the bloc to retain strategic coherence and clarity. Moreover, the case of the Strategic Compass provides a useful example of how the EU has mustered its strengths and overcome the opaque language of earlier drafts to attain a level of clarity and focus to help shape further action. The sixth and final draft of the Strategic Compass, similar to NATO's Strategic Concept adopted at the 2022 Madrid Summit, gives a higher priority to the 'Dragonbear' alliance – with Russia being mentioned 25 times in the context of a direct threat to European security and China described as a challenge a total of nine times. Naturally, whether the tougher language of the Compass signals a genuine strategic shift by the EU will depend on future material decisions and the development of modern military capabilities (Zaborowski, 2022).

CEE REALISM ABOUT EUROPE'S AUTONOMY

Some CEE countries see the danger of prematurely decoupling from the United States and its protective reach, especially given Russian and Chinese rhetoric about European strategic autonomy. The Baltic states, along with Poland and several other CEE countries, fear that pursuing strategic autonomy will undermine the transatlantic pillar of security and turn the EU's attention away from immediate problems and towards distant and vague talk of Europe as a superpower.

At the same time, these countries have been the most exposed to the recent isolationist narratives of former US President Trump. While on the ground the US has been the key security provider and in the near future is likely to play an increasing role in shaping European power dynamics, it must be recognised that another isolationist moment may come sooner or later, which begs the question whether the EU will be prepared to stand on its own two feet in shaping the security architecture on the continent – and to pay the necessary price for it.

Some new policy research is heading in that direction. The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) has published a 360-degree strategic autonomy 'wheel' to improve foresight with a holistic approach (Damen, 2022). This analytical approach includes the rule of law and democratic institutions, roads, infrastructure, and climate – and therefore is probably too general and unspecific to be useful in crafting strategy without first determining priority levels. And prioritising – a necessity of strategic thinking – would in consequence put some of the EU's interests ahead of others.

Similarly, should the EU continue to prioritise its autonomy through massive reshoring,[2] it would be faced with another dilemma, that of losing the influence it enjoys through global economic links. Breaking away from dependencies is, after all, a double-edged sword, as Richard Youngs (2021) has noted. Once Europe had cut ties to countries on which it had been dependent, Youngs argues, it would also put at risk the influence it has on foreign actors. There is an obvious truth in that claim, but only up to a certain point. Large-scale dependence on Russian fossil fuels and European investments in China have resulted in little if any influence on the two countries' agendas.

At the same time, public opinion in the EU Member States has been voicing higher expectations of the EU

delivering on general security objectives. An opinion poll released by Eurobarometer on 6 October 2022 demonstrated Europeans' clear expectation (72 per cent of respondents) that the US will continue to act as a security provider (Eurobarometer, 2022b). Meanwhile, the public also expects the EU to step in and manage relations with Russia.

CONCLUSION

Would defence sector production alone help the EU to become more autonomous? In the light of Ukraine's military needs, the European defence sector has a clear opportunity to upgrade basic production of ammunition. Ukraine needs heavy armour to defend the European security system from a terrorist state, but simultaneously it will need a lot more ammunition to make it useful.

In consequence, the EU defence industry should increase its production capabilities. In future, such a change would help it avoid embarrassing episodes such as occurred during the 2011 intervention in Libya, when Europeans had to ask the US for ammunition because their stockpiles and production were too low (DeYoung & Jaffe, 2011).

Yet, as the EU's defence sector grows, it will need to maintain a continuous partnership with the US to remain largely under the NATO umbrella. EU–NATO coordination is therefore a prerequisite of the future growth of European industrial potential that required not just defence industry policy but a sustainable energy mix or research and development base. In consequence, Europe will also be able to demonstrate its autonomy, understood as the capacity to act, when NATO obligations require it. Irrespective of the political justifications, or lack thereof, for the Iraq War, and its regrettable consequences, Europe did not have the sort of autonomy to act that the US did, and it provided only around 25 per cent of the total troops in the Multi-National Force–Iraq.

Thinking beyond military capabilities, the EU's strategic autonomy has been undermined for many years by a number of dependencies – with a prominent role played by the energy sector and fossil fuels. It has also been undermined by disinformation and inadequate policies regarding new technologies, allowing strategic rivals to exploit European weaknesses to their advantage.

The new 360-degree review of strategic autonomy clusters proposed by the EPRS offers an opportunity to rethink and reform strategic autonomy and to give it a more up-to-date meaning.

The strategic autonomy concept cannot be defined from a sectoral interest perspective. In order to provide the EU with the capacity to act, it needs a strategic approach, encompassing malign dependencies in all sectors. Even more importantly, it needs to be consistent with the values-driven approach that allows the EU to act on the principle of its own best interest.

NOTES

1. Three Seas Initiative countries include 12 EU member states: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia . Despite having twice the number of Member States, the CEE has half the number of entities participating as Western Europe or Southern Europe.
2. The practice of bringing manufacturing and services back from overseas.

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Eastern European Enlargement and Accession: From Geography to a United Europe

Mira Kaneva

ABSTRACT

The Central and Eastern European enlargement of the European Union has been sold to the public as the ultimate success story of European 'horizontal' integration. This chapter argues that as far as the accession negotiations are concerned, there has been a consistent tendency towards involvement of domestic elites with a liberal-democratic agenda to facilitate a positive outcome by applying tactics of concession and commitment. The post-accession process, however, paved the way for a conservative backlash which has led the Member States to proceed more reluctantly in their integration efforts by foot-dragging or maintaining a 'hurting stalemate'. The research draws on the theoretical debate on enlargement and is based on a comparative analysis of the pre-accession and post-accession policies of three sub-regional pairs. The conclusions give some insight to the implications of external factors such as the imminent security threats posed by Russian aggression.

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EUROPEAN ENLARGEMENT: A TERMINOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

The European integration glossary encompasses a plethora of concepts aimed at representing the complexity of enlargement. *Sensu stricto*, enlargement refers to the horizontal dimension of the integration process. Therefore, spatiality, as part of its essence, is reflected in the semantics of core and periphery, hub and spoke, concentric and overlapping circles, (multi)-tier, or (multi)-level. Apart from the geographical meaning of proximity and distance, enlargement has temporal connotations as far as it extends over time and presupposes either accelerating and decelerating speed, or taking gradual steps. Drawing upon the academic debate on the heterogeneity of integration strategies within the European Union (EU), Stubb (1996: 285–286, table) categorises differentiated integration into three main categories. The first refers to time and is based on the pull factor of the leading example by which differences can be overcome; the second refers to space and admits to unattainable differences and irreversible divisions within the Union; and the third is based on the option for each Member State to choose a policy area of participation (integration à la carte). Yet this taxonomy provides a blurred distinction since the three categories can converge in cases of external impact, such as crises and conflicts. Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, and Rittberger (2015: 4–5) also measure and map differentiated integration, simplifying and enlarging Börzel's fine-grained measurement.

The post-Cold War accession process illustrates this terminological confusion. The pre-accession efforts and accession results on behalf of Central

and Eastern European (CEE) states (2004, 2007, and 2013 EU enlargement) demonstrate the temporal differentiation in the division between front runners from the Visegrad-4 subgroup and laggards in the case of Bulgaria and Romania; it also manifests the functional differentiation between fully and partially integrated, as the latter two are still queueing in the waiting room for the eurozone and the Schengen area. The post-accession process complicates the differentiation in subject matter even further because domestic pressure from home-grown conservative, far-right populism, along with tensions exerted by the international environment, such as the economic recession, the migration crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic, precondition some opt-out decisions that have now and then undermined basic European values. At the same time, these crises have highlighted two anachronistic black-and-white Cold War divisions – the North versus the South during the sovereign debt crisis, as well as the West versus the East during the refugee influx. However, an in-depth analysis would not benefit from such generalisations. De Neve has coined the homophonic term 'European Onion' in order to visualise 'governance in Europe segmented not only by policy areas and levels of government – as has been the conventional wisdom – but also by subgroups of European states' (De Neve, 2007: 504). This botanical trope is useful not only for the static depiction of concentric circles, but also for research into the dynamics of peripheral states' policies, which are either pulled towards the core of a closer Union or pushed away from it due to their autonomous aspirations.

This chapter introduces two hypotheses in this regard. Firstly, the above-mentioned three rounds of European enlargement, with the increase in the number of EU Member States, resulted in delays in decision-making procedures and even in abstention from unanimity and difficulties in reaching consensus. While during the pre-accession stage the candidate states have been packaged in relatively homogeneous regional groups, which allows for shared institutional practices and common normative solutions, during the post-accession stage they tend to behave according to heterogeneous patterns due to their differing preferences and divergent objectives as to a federalist or functional vision of the EU. Thus, on both an institutional and a normative level, the enlarged EU in the horizontal dimension usually entails a less deepened EU in the vertical dimension. The second hypothesis goes further to problematise this two-dimensional thinking and takes account of some critical events and structural transformations in the external environment.

The post-post-accession stage (i.e. the loss of enlargement inertia after Brexit) can suddenly and inadvertently lead to homogeneity in thinking and action due to external shocks that question the mere existence of the integration community, such as the Russian aggression in Ukraine. So, on an essential (value system) level, crises and conflicts can accelerate integration as both a widening and a deepening process. That is how a refocusing takes place – from differentiated integration as an imminent feature of EU diversity to staged integration as another imminent feature of the EU's evolution. Apart from the empirical evidence, we will verify these suggestions by research on the evolution of the conceptual framework of EU enlargement – a process that starts from a geopolitical necessity, as explained by liberal intergovernmentalism, and culminates in a civilisational awareness of rights and liberties as presumed by neo-functionalism and post-functionalism.

A THEORETICAL OUTLINE – FROM DIFFERENTIATED INTEGRATION TO STAGED INTEGRATION

European integration theories, albeit derived from classical liberal thinking about trade liberalisation, have gone beyond that context. Liberal intergovernmentalism, which is predominantly American-born and bred, relies on assumptions about complex interdependence. It shares the liberal optimism about states' cooperative behaviour based on mutual, predominantly economic, benefit which can be enhanced through an institutional framework. States, as completely rational actors with strong material incentives, remain the main gatekeepers for the decisions taken. European integration is largely about the pursuit of economic preferences because 'integration is a distinctive policy response of modern welfare states to rising economic interdependence' (Moravcsik, 1993: 476) and thus enlargement can be analysed through the prism of interstate bargaining as a result of intrastate preferences. As Börzel and Risse (2019: 4) argue, 'standard theories of European integration expect economic interdependence to go together with regionalism'. Their comparative analysis of regional non-European integration tendencies shows that by pooling sovereignty in international regimes or regional communities, states may lose authority, but they gain legitimacy and problem-solving capacity (Börzel & Risse, 2019: 10).

However, the European example of vertical integration, as explained by neo-functionalism, shows that while lessons are learned in the economic sector, they may spill over to several political areas

and thus lead to politicisation. Even the founding bloc for integration, the European Steel and Coal Community, had more to do with creating a security community (overcoming the plight of century-old wars) than economic interdependence. This sense of community is the main line of argument for post-functionalist thinkers – they maintain the idea that at least some we-feeling (Deutsch, 1957), apart from gains-and-losses calculations and rational choice considerations, is a minimum to set up a sustainable community with common values (Hooghe, Lenz, & Marks, 2019). The initial optimistic federal prospects have been abandoned, however, and the post-Cold War scenarios about horizontal integration have become more pragmatic.

Regional integration can contract as well as expand; as Marks and Hooghe (cit. in: Crouch and Streeck, 2006: 207–208,) argue, '[t]he European polity has no fixed centre, but is a network of jurisdictions with variable membership, variable decision rules and of variable durability, depending on need and acceptability'. EU enlargement has gone beyond its material geographical dimensions, with its further politicisation exposing the controversies

European integration is largely about the pursuit of economic preferences.

of common policies among a widening circle of political actors, especially on a state-centric level (the left versus right cleavages, national versus European identity). This has led to more sovereigntist decisions because European vertical integration has moved to core areas of state sovereignty and thus has made the political discourse more reactive and in a way reactionary. Hooghe and Marks (2009) term this transformation of popular and sometimes populist attitudes as a transition from 'permissive consensus' to 'constraining dissensus'. Schmitter, in a commentary on Marks and Hooghe's concept, describes the politicisation as 'the mobilization of mass public opinion', which might open up a rift between elites, who by and large favour EU enlargement, and the Eurosceptical masses (Schmitter, 2009: 211); this process can be authentic, stemming from the people themselves, or they may be exploited by opportunistic far-right conservative politicians. A controversial example of a populist passing the buck when popular tendencies towards disintegration arise is Brexit. The dissensus issue may be interpreted as a legitimate divergence of opinion, but when it stalls the process of

integration and thus thwarts the evolutionary logic, it may become a threat.

Differentiated integration is also based on divergence, because it allows states to integrate to different degrees and at different speeds. It can similarly be elaborated on through the prism of grand integration theories, since liberal intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism share the hypothesis that heterogeneity of economic interests and capacities is the main driver of differentiation; by contrast, post-functionalism sees heterogeneity of national identities in domestic factors as the main motivator for differentiation (Schimmelfennig & Winzen, 2019: 9).

Differentiated integration is defined as 'any modality of integration or cooperation that allows states (members and non-members) and sub-state entities to work together in nonhomogeneous, flexible ways' (Lavenex & Križić, 2019: 3; see also Leruth & Lord, 2015); the political idea was promoted in a report on the future of European integration written by then Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans (1975). Differentiated integration can be spatially represented in the term 'variable geometry', which means that the larger normative and institutional framework (e.g. regulation on border control) is looser than that on some common goals and tasks (e.g. regulation of the internal market). This allows for the establishment of regional and sub-regional groupings which possess variegated levels of Europeanisation – in objective terms, this is about rules and policies; in subjective terms, it is about identity formation. Sometimes the varieties, such as in the Bulgarian case, go so far as to denote much 'Europeanisation on the surface' (benefits through EU funding) and little in-depth Europeanisation (delayed implementation of rule of law).

Differentiated integration can be functionally represented as integration à la carte; it is applicable to neo-functional and liberal intergovernmentalist thinking. This culinary metaphor epitomises each member's choice out of the integration 'menu' of policies or sectoral regimes, and it encompasses mainly the vertical dimension by deepening the scope, starting from the minimum. Dahrendorf (1979: 20–21) introduces the notion as 'common policies where there are common interests without any constraint on those who cannot, at a given point of time, join them'.

The last representation of differentiated integration is the temporal one, with reference to different tempos of Europeanisation. The multi-speed concept encompasses the horizontal dimension by widening the scope from leaders or core members to followers or newcomers, who are aiming at the

maximum; it is applicable to federalist thinking. In this chapter we adopt the term 'staged differentiation' (cf. an alternative interpretation in Brunazzo, 2022) as it refers to both the spatial and temporal scales of the process, that is, accession to specific sectors of the Union, pending full membership; it is a means to 'achieve progressive integration while avoiding the delays and potential stalemate of the membership/no-membership binary' (Alesina, 2022: 8). Boundaries within the EU are no longer fixed in the traditional sense of the term – they tend to harden in times of internal populist crises and soften and consolidate in times of external crises.

All in all, differentiated integration poses a classic collective action problem 'whereby a policy that is advantageous to most or all concerned can get blocked or rendered sub optimal' (Bellamy & Kröger, 2017: 2). Differentiated integration, when instrumental, allows for sporadic economic opt-outs and therefore brings about an inevitable heterogeneity (united in diversity). When, however, it amounts to persistent opt-outs and doubts about the constitutional set-up of the community, it may undermine the very idea of a political community based on shared rights and obligations of membership because it widens the gap between insiders and outsiders and thus deepens the boundaries within. What we have established as a paradoxical recent development is that an external security threat with internal implications may amalgamate the political community and make it more 'cohesive' on the basis of shared values.

The next two sections will compare the enlargement stages in the post-Cold War period by applying the liberal dilemma to the analysis – whether and to what extent pairs of states in three sub-regional groups embrace democracy, rule of law, and solidarity.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENTIATED EASTERN INTEGRATION IN THE LATE 1990S AND 2000S: DIFFUSE BORDERS

The promotion of democratic and effective governance has been the pull factor for the Eastern enlargement of the EU (in 2004 – the four Visegrad countries, the three Baltic states, and Slovenia; in 2007 – Bulgaria and Romania; in 2013 – Croatia). Seen through the neo-functional and liberal intergovernmentalist prisms, compliance with the Copenhagen criteria on enlargement is the indispensable condition for the accession of these countries; thus, the whole pre-accession process can be interpreted in terms of bargaining for favourable outcomes. On the EU's behalf, the preferred device is 'a sophisticated tool box, called "golden carrot" that heavily draws on "reinforcement by reward", i.e. positive conditionality, and "reinforcement by support", i.e. capacity building' (Börzel & Schimmelfennig, 2017: 280). Positive conditionality refers to the synchronisation of the regulatory framework in the sectors that comprise the negotiation chapters (*acquis communautaire*), while capacity building refers to technical assistance in strengthening the institutions (cohesion funds). In terms of the external geopolitical environment, the Western integration perspective was unrivalled in terms of modernisation and progress in the first decade after the end of the Cold War.

Still, a receptive domestic environment is a must so that transformations can take root. Firstly, the CEE countries were on a path towards democratic change even without the prospect of membership. We contend, though, that the transformative path would have been easily reversible without membership. Secondly, the elites in the CEE countries had calculated the political costs before making concessions and had dealt with veto players and domestic opposition.

A detailed comparative review shows that the most decisive domestic factor that facilitated the Eastern enlargement was the fact that during the conclusive phase of the pre-accession negotiations, the incumbent political parties and coalitions were on the liberal side of the political spectrum. Thus we may argue that there existed a relative transnational liberal consensus that corresponded to the federalist vision of a wider Europe at that time.

Slovenia was, with a one-year exception, ruled by Liberal governments (Party Liberal Democracy of Slovenia) – the Drnovšek governments (1992–2002) and the Rop government (2002–2004). The domestic political consensus, with the exception of an insignificant nationalist party, has been endorsed by public opinion in polls and has been maintained on the whole in intellectual and expert discussions, although in the last pre-accession years the latter tended to sound more Euro-realistic (Adam, Hafner-Fink, & Uhan, 2002: 143–144). The pro-European liberal argument is further substantiated by the fact that the centre-left, pro-European President Milan Kučan, albeit an ex-Communist functionary, took an active role in campaigning for EU membership in the 2003 referendum. Slovenia constitutes another exception among former Yugoslav republics since it has not been involved in violent ethnic conflicts nor been damaged by a severe socio-economic crisis. What's more, EU membership was defined as a national project even before Slovenia's formal independence, which is a sign of authentic Europeanisation, or maybe, as

Fink-Hafner speculates, 'a kind of substitute for the old ideology' (Fink-Hafner, 1999). The only problem with the pre-accession negotiations were three minor concessions that the Slovenian negotiators had to make regarding estate entitlements for foreigners (which triggered populist fears of occupation), and two economic compromises concerning the free movement of goods and labour. Slovenia also successfully applied the technique of integrative bargaining when reconciling two issues with neighbouring Italy and Austria – the first one concerning property compensations in Istria traded for the non-recognition of minority rights, and the second one achieving safety monitoring measures instead of closure of the Krško nuclear power plant (Fenko & Urlić, 2015: 122–123).

Croatia, for its part, was predominantly ruled by the conservative Sanader governments, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), since the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in 2005. However, the second Sanader government (2007), the Kosor government (2011), and the Milanović government (2011) reached out to broader coalitions with progressive pro-European partners such as Social Democrats, Liberal Democrats, Agrarians, and regional factions. This tendency indicates ripening within the pre-accession negotiations, which cleared the way for maturity and accelerated the rate of concessions at the bargaining table. The concessions dynamic has actually been more hastened and more demanding than they it was in the case of Slovenia. EU institutions applied political conditionality to Croatia more extensively and meticulously than it did to Slovenia, including over border issues and collaboration with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This was due to a different assessment of the two states' starting points in the process of accession negotiations and a difference in the two states' performance in meeting the criteria (see an exhaustive content analysis in Fenko & Urlić, 2015: 112), which cost the incumbent parties in terms of domestic popularity. Similarly to Slovenia, the referendum for EU membership resulted in a prevailing yes vote, but the low turnout can be attributed to a general mistrust of the elites, both national and European (Šeperić, 2011: 477). This dissensus paved the way for a later populist conservative backlash.

In all Central European countries (which formed the front-runner Visegrad-4 group) there was some reaction to Europeanisation pressures throughout the pre-accession process, but it wasn't particularly value-ridden due to the prevalence of liberal-minded politicians, the active role of the non-governmental sector, and the anti-communist sentiments among citizens. For example, some fundamentalist Polish Catholic circles had reservations about Western liberal secular threats to traditional conservative values, and some Eurosceptic rhetoric was heard from the controversial Czech opposition politician, and later president, Václav Klaus, but such attitudes remained marginalised. Rather, the criticism towards Brussels stemmed from impatience with the Commission's fairly stringent and numerous demands, especially towards some economic sectors (Pridham, 2000: 60), but still the democratic consensus over EU membership as a civilisational belonging dominated.

Hungary took a relatively consistent path in its pre-accession relations with the EU. It maintained pluralism without much controversy with predominantly centre-left, pro-European-led coalitions (Hungarian Socialist Party and Alliance of Free Democrats, 1994–2010). Orbán's first Fidesz (the Hungarian Civic Alliance) coalition government came to power shortly before the state's accession to the EU (1998–2002). Curiously enough, Fidesz lived through several ideological reincarnations, starting from a left-liberal and anti-Marxist movement before the fall of the Berlin Wall, adopting some hybrid form of liberal-conservatism in the mid-1990s, then nationalism for a short term in power at the beginning of the century, and returning to governing Hungary up to the present as a far-right, conservative, and Eurosceptic party.

Polish governments also demonstrated sustainable liberal inclinations, with cabinets in the 1990s formed by coalitions around the anti-communist symbol Solidarnost (Solidarity Electoral Action 1997–2001, Democratic Left Alliance 2001–2004). The conservative U-turn came only one year later with the right-wing, populist party Law and Justice (PiS). The overhaul of the justice system through control over the appointment of judges and the abortion crackdowns have represented a flagrant departure from EU democracy and rule-of-law principles.

Czech cabinets in the pre-accession period followed a consistent trend of moderate pro-European coalitions, mainly led by the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), with smaller partners such as the Freedom Union–Democratic Union. Slovak EU policy was to a great extent determined by two nationalist Mečiar cabinets up to the late 1990s (HZDS, or Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, aligned with the Slovak National Party), although they exploited the ethnic and religious radical narrative only for domestic use. When in opposition, HZDS rapidly swung across from Euroscepticism to pro-Europeanism and joined the European

Democratic Party (EDP), although it did not profess the EDP's liberal ideology. The two consecutive Dzurinda cabinets balanced between various democratic factions (Social-Democratic, minority, civic) in the run-up to accession.

Although Romania and Bulgaria were falling behind on conditionality, still 'a policy of not encouraging them at least to try was not an option' (Noutcheva & Bechev, 2008: 115). The selective implementation of EU-compatible reforms and the protracted transition can be partially attributed to former elites (the so-called nomenklatura) who were eager to profiteer from their stay in office as long as possible; still, some explanation can be sought in the immature and passive civil society, together with the deficit in democratic legacy. Apart from the objective differentiation between the front runners from the Visegrad-4 and the Eastern European laggards, Bulgarian policy-makers pushed the agenda for the rejection of the linkage approach in EU negotiations because they were afraid that their neighbouring country's poorer performance would interfere with the overall accession

The Eastern European Member States have relied on a softer version of Euroscepticism since 2004.

assessment; yet the accession negotiations actually concluded six months apart.

In domestic terms, Romania, due to its semi-presidential system, is more dependent on the foreign policy stance of the presidential office. After an initial infatuation with the controversial populist figure Ion Iliescu (National Salvation Front), Romania took the path of modernisation under Emil Constantinescu (Christian Democrats and Agrarians); then Iliescu returned in a new 'progressive' disguise, associated with the Social Democratic Party, to be succeeded by Traian Băsescu (Democratic Liberal Party), who maintained a committed Euro-Atlantic position.

Bulgaria's integration path was no less thorny. Domestic reforms up to 1997 were so tortuous that veto actors such as the former Communist Party (simply renamed as the Bulgarian Socialist Party) in practice obstructed the early stages of Europeanisation up to the mid-1990s. Paradoxically, the catastrophic economic and social policy of the 'progressive' Socialist government, with its ostensibly conservative ideological platform, drove the

country to an existentially dangerous hyperinflation and bankruptcy, which was overcome by International Monetary Fund austerity measures and practically annulled any chance of EU talks. The accession was seriously delayed despite the resolute radical reforms undertaken by the Kostov government (United Democratic Forces, 1997–2001) and the more modest ones by the controversial former tsar Simeon von Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (the centrist National Movement Simeon II, 2001–2005). A relatively consensual pro-European partner throughout the transition period has been the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, representing the Turkish ethnic and Islamic religious sectors of society. The 'Triple Coalition' government (populists, former communists, and ethno-centric liberals) faced three post-accession safeguard clauses because it ostensibly lost inertia in the fight against corruption and failed to enact structural institutional reforms.

In geostrategic terms, the sixth enlargement extended the territory of the European Union from Central to South-Eastern Europe and made the Black Sea its external border. This geographical expansion has had three geopolitical consequences: firstly, it gave the other Western Balkan countries carte blanche to negotiate accession despite the negative post-conflict labelling of the region; secondly, it moved the south-eastern exterior border closer to the Middle East and exposed it to vulnerabilities from radicalism, terrorism, and irregular migration; and thirdly, it extended the north-eastern exterior border further to the post-Soviet space a year before the war in Georgia in 2008.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENTIATED EASTERN INTEGRATION IN THE 2010S AND EARLY 2020S: HARD BORDERS

Since EU member states were quite sceptical about the state of preparedness of Bulgaria and Romania, the post-conclusion monitoring for the 2007 enlargement was far more formal and structured than the previous one after 2004; it also evolved, highlighting the adaptive capacity of the integration community (Phinnemore, 2009: 245) and its reliance on benchmarks for the improvement of the process. The post-accession negotiations included annual reports on progress made, and their conclusions had some negative repercussions in terms of the benefits of EU membership – suspension of EU funds for Bulgarian infrastructure projects, for example.

Systemic factors such as economic fluctuations, lack of visionary political leadership, and the conflictual environment in the Western Balkans and the Eastern neighbourhood put a halt to EU enlargement for more than a decade. This tendency can

be attributed to inertia since random external pressures actually aborted any chance for consolidated purposeful behaviour. We will focus on the domestic conditions for enlargement fatigue, which can be ascribed predominantly to the widespread rise of populism. We argue that there existed a relative transnational conservative dissensus that corresponded to the post-functionalist vision of a more disintegrated Europe at that time.

The conservative backsliding in the aforementioned CEE countries resulted in, firstly, the moral erosion of the Western Balkans membership perspective, and secondly, the discouragement of the Eastern neighbourhood (EaP) countries from the consistent pursuit of accession or at least, closer association. This tendency can be accordingly attributed to the relatively targeted resistance on behalf of the domestic political elites.

This is why the European Union has often lost most or part of its leverage over countries once they have joined. Steunenberg and Dimitrova (2007: 12) argue that the 'expiration date' of conditionality arrives when the Commission ceases to maintain uncertainty about the outcome as a bargaining tool, and the intermediate post-accession period sees a sharp decrease in compliance across all policy areas. This means that the post-accession interaction provides no stimuli for reform and may even push the Member State back to Eurosceptical sovereigntist policy.

A cursory comparative review shows that the incumbent parties and coalitions in the post-accession period were predominantly on the conservative end of the political spectrum, which accounts for some of their reactionary decisions. Almost all of Slovenia's post-2004 governments preserved its liberal stance, with the exception of the Janša radical cabinets (Christian Democrats, Slovenian People's Party), but the latter were delegitimised due to corruption charges and the overall ideological inconsistency of the hard-liner prime minister; the 'Slovenian Trump' took advantage of the society's disenchantment with the EU over its failure to deal resolutely with the debt crisis. The Balkan non-papers (documents of unknown origin leaked by online media in 2021) which envisaged the redrawing of boundaries or a revived 'balkanisation' further upset the fragile equilibrium in the Western Balkans. Croatia, in a similar vein, resisted the draw of Euroscepticism and, under the Sanader presidency, the centre-right HDZ adopted a pro-European position, strengthened by pluralism in broad coalition governments and the professionalism of technocratic prime ministers (e.g. Orešković and Plenković).

After the two short-lived pro-European coalition cabinets of Gyurcsány and Bajnai, Hungary entered a spiral of four consecutive Orbán governments of the rightist catch-all party Fidesz. Poland, with the exception of the five-year term of Civic platform, has so far been predominantly governed by PiS presidents, including Kaczyński and Duda. What fuelled this populist turn was the vast 'disappointment with the outcomes of transformation' as well as 'a fear to lose national culture, tradition and religion' (Styczyńska, 2017: 141, in Leruth, Startin, & Usherwood, 2017).

The nativist argument plays a better part in the rationale for the rise of hard Central European Euroscepticism. The sovereigntist narrative, which sounds very much like an anti-globalist cliché, is based on a rebuttal either against a 'dictatorship' from Brussels and its impersonal 'empire bureaucrats' (Csehi & Zgut, 2020: 6–7), or against double standards, as the fundamental European principle of the rule of law has been contested by PiS. Thus the Central European far-right conservative parties made only loose commitments to intergovernmentalism since they were more prone to negative than to affirmative discourse. Specifically, Orbán has been very effective in hardening the borders within the EU because his anti-immigration policy went directly against the solidarity principle; for example, by building a physical barrier on the border with Serbia and Croatia, he fabricated the image of refugees as external archenemies of ethno-populism (Vachudova, 2020: 3), along with enemies from within, such as the Soros foundation.

The Eastern European Member States have relied on a softer version of Euroscepticism since 2004, employing two subtle tactics: foot-dragging and fence-sitting (Börzel, 2002: 194). Bulgaria and Romania have resorted to foot-dragging in addressing systemic deficiencies such as low administrative capacity and lack of transparency in dealing with EU subsidies, specifically agricultural ones. These manoeuvres can be explained through the prism of the domestic post-communist polity – highly hierarchical state structures, political parties with weak grassroots organisations, and state-dominated corporatism (Tanasoiu, 2012: 176). Still, the former linkage approach has become irrelevant – in terms of the fight against corruption, Romania's National Anticorruption Directorate showed visible results and was supported by President Iohannis, though only during his first term, before the second-term setback due to political instability. In contrast, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov (right-centrist Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, GERB) has perfected the skill of delaying

costly reforms for three terms of office altogether – for example, by proposing ineffective constitutional amendments whenever yet another corruption scandals become mediatised. This has manifested the trend for mainstream parties to embrace protest causes and to take unprincipled, even controversial decisions for the sake of staying in power and preserving 'stability'. This populist instrumentalisation of the European integration agenda is what Neumeyer terms 'soft Euroscepticism' or 'Eurorealism' (Neumeyer, 2008: 139).

The post-accession tactic of fence-sitting is characteristic of the ebbs and flows in the bilateral relations of both states towards two of their neighbour candidate countries, respectively North Macedonia and Moldova. For nearly a decade Bulgaria has maintained the principled position that support for North Macedonia's integration is contingent on resolving sensitive identity issues that have nurtured hate speech. Only in 2019, under Bulgaria's EU Presidency, did both countries make sustainable efforts to overcome the stalemate by signing and ratifying a Treaty of Friendship, Good-

The war in Ukraine has simultaneously minimised and maximised the salience of differentiated integration.

Neighbourliness and Cooperation. However, implementation of the clauses remains deadlocked due to the irregular sessions of the joint commission on historical and educational issues. The enlargement process was further stalled by several domestic cleavages within the ruling coalitions that have for several years now been dependent on veto players – small nationalistic parties with a rigid traditionalist ideology and volatile constituencies (VMRO/VMRO-DPMNE). Recent developments in bilateral relations have once again been met with a veto, which this time was overcome thanks to EU institutional pressure for the beginning of accession talks.

We have so far established that most of the Eurosceptic rhetoric has served to mimic deeper domestic structural problems. Firstly, horizontal integration has been recognised as the epitome of modernisation and democratisation and, as such, is indicative of the post-communist popular consensus. However, deeper integration efforts in other areas, such as the Economic and Monetary Union and the Schengen conditionality, became the outlet for what was purely domestic underperformance.

To some extent, external factors also had an effect – due to the flimsy Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, Europeanisation has been, to put it mildly, 'highly superficial' (Dimitrov & Plachkova, 2020: 10); we may even suggest that, until recently, with the initiation of disciplinary procedures against Hungary, Europeanisation even seemed reversible, firstly, because the high authoritarian stake for the preservation of Orbán's regime could have made Hungarian European membership obsolete, and, secondly, the resilient supporting political cliques across almost all EU Member States could have maintained the detrimental Eurosceptic surge.

INCONCLUSIVE SPECULATION ON THE FUTURE OF DIFFERENTIATED INTEGRATION: CHALLENGED BORDERS

The securitisation of the integration process means it has been confronted with existential threats that necessitate urgent measures, including not only the textbook case of migration but also the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy deficit, and Russia's aggressive actions in its near abroad. Thus securitisation has had a consolidating effect on the community as it has urged it to adopt a common institutional approach based on shared values such as solidarity, democracy, and rule of law, and it has inspired innovative and operative solutions in terms of diversification of resources.

Previous crises have given three types of impetuses to staged integration. The Cold War enlargement necessitated some improvement in policies (the political decision-making process, as unanimity versus qualified majority voting) to bridge the French–British divide in the 1970s and accommodate the transition to democracy of the non-democratic regimes in Greece, Spain, and Portugal in the 1980s. The post-Cold War enlargement, which occurred in two stages (in the 1990s and in the 2000s), presented the EU with the urgent need for a normative and institutional reform of the polity itself (from community to union, or from Maastricht to Lisbon). The recent critical period of the migration, debt, and COVID-19 pandemic polycrisis has led to stalled instead of staged integration; the consequent solutions call for more sustainability in thinking and resilience in action.

The current Cold War 2.0 period, initiated by the Russian intervention in Ukraine, presents staged integration with ethical imperatives. The war in Ukraine has simultaneously minimised and maximised the salience of differentiated integration. It has minimised it in the sense that EU Member States' positions have become unified in their solidarity with Ukraine. Apart from the unanimous

support on behalf of Poland, Romania, and the Baltics, this homogeneity was exemplified in the joint ammunition procurement with the unprecedented full commitment of Hungary and the non-commitment (or fake commitment via intermediaries) of Bulgaria (Gotev, 2023). Differentiated integration is no longer morally and pragmatically adequate in the face of existential threats to the survival of democracy, market liberties, and human rights; it has been exposed as a tool for domestic dual use.

The war in Ukraine has maximised the salience of staged integration and left differentiation outside its borders. The near future of EU horizontal integration should have the following outline:

Firstly, integration should be tailored to the specific context – the Western Balkans (the post-Yugoslav space) and the Eastern neighbourhood (the post-Soviet space) – so that it does not adopt unrealistic expectations for the transformative power of the EU, as we have demonstrated in the comparative review.

Secondly, integration should accommodate the pace of development of the respective societies so that they take their time and recognise the process as an authentic participatory one, without being circumvented by populists, or whipped through by bureaucrats.

Finally, integration should be inclusive of the semi-periphery 'new' Member States who remain vulnerable to external threats. They can play the role of honest brokers and exemplars of good, if not best, practices, because they are expected to have learned the lesson of unity the hard way.

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Key Determinants of the Enlargement Stalemate and How to Address Them

Miloš Pavkovič

ABSTRACT

The European Union's (EU) enlargement policy has been one of the most successful EU policies since the creation of the European Communities. However, it recently reached an impasse: no new countries have joined the EU since 2013. The enlargement policy in the Western Balkans was not as successful as many had hoped. This chapter aims to analyse the EU's enlargement policy in the 2013–2023 period. In the first part, it identifies five main causes for the stalled enlargement process In the second part, it tests the novel approach for staged accession to the EU vis-à-vis the determinants of stalemate that have been identified.

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INTRODUCTION

Often described as the European Union's (EU) 'most successful policy' (Walldén, 2017: 1), the enlargement of the EU stalled after Croatia joined in 2013. How unsuccessful the enlargement policy has been is most clear in the number of countries that have acceded to the EU since 2013 – zero. Periods in which no countries accede to the EU are not problematic per se, but in the last nine years, none of several candidate countries has managed to make any sufficient progress to join the EU. This indicates a problem in the approach to enlargement that deserves elaboration. The stalling of the enlargement process in the past decade can be explained by multiple factors. This chapter identifies five main causes and provides recommendations on how to overcome the impasse.

In the previous decade, the EU could allow itself not to enlarge. The stalemate was made possible by the EU's confidence in the loyalty of its neighbours and their willingness to join the club. This made EU leaders believe that it was only their neighbours that needed the enlargement, not the EU itself. This assumption has been proven to be wrong, however, as enlargement has begun to look like a necessary factor for the EU's own stability and influence, both regionally and globally. This is the overarching element that defines the discourse about enlargement, which looks different than it did five years ago. Thus, the EU can no longer afford to maintain the enlargement stalemate because the geopolitical reality has changed. Major geopolitical actors such as China, Russia, and Turkey are competing with the EU over its neighbours. If the EU does not engage actively with its neighbours and ensure their integration into the club, it may soon lose their loyalty (both in the Western Balkans (WB) and in the Eastern Partnership) to its non-democratic geopolitical competitors. For this reason, it is increasingly important to turn to

the past and analyse the structural reasons for the enlargement impasse in order to identify what the EU must do to change this situation in the coming years – before it is too late.

The aim of this article is twofold: first, it identifies the key determinants in the demise of the enlargement policy in the last decade; and second, it offers recommendations on how to overcome the impasse and integrate the new Member States into the club of 27 countries. Thus, it offers a structured list of five key determinants with detailed explanations and tests how the approach of staged integration may help address the problematic points of enlargement policy. Given that in the observed period only states from the WB region were recognised as future members of the EU, more attention is dedicated to them. However, the recently recognised East European countries of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine will also be considered.

IDENTIFYING KEY DETERMINANTS IN THE PREVIOUS DECADE

The EU has not shown great interest in integrating new members since Croatia's accession in 2013. A variety of reasons for this have been suggested, including negative public perceptions of enlargement to the WB (and enlargement in general), low absorption capacity in the EU, corruption in (potential) new Member States, different cultural orientations and values compared with European values and culture, unresolved bilateral issues of those countries, statehood issues, and many others. Among all these, this chapter identifies and argues for five key determinants which represent the most important hurdles coming from key stakeholders in the process: one from the EU itself (absorption capacity), one from negative public perceptions of enlargement (Member States), one from the candidates themselves (insufficient administrative capacities), one from external influence (wave of authoritarianism), and one from bilateral issues in the region. These five determinants explain why the EU has not enlarged in the past ten years, the details of which are discussed below.

First determinant: the absorption capacity of the EU

The EU's 'absorption capacity', or 'integration capacity' as it has been renamed, can be defined as '[t]he EU's capacity to integrate new members' (Gidişoğlu, 2007:124). 'While the acceding countries must be ready to fully assume the obligations of membership, the Union must be able to function effectively' (European Commission, 2006; Euractiv, 2006). Absorption capacity was first mentioned

at the Copenhagen Summit in 1993, establishing it as one of a number of important accession criteria – better known as the 'Copenhagen Criteria' (European Council, 1993). These criteria are confirmed in Article 49 of the Lisbon Treaty (TEU, 2007). As such, it is part of the EU *acquis* and represents an important element for the Commission and the Council when deciding upon enlargement. Therefore, the first prerequisite for a state to join the EU is actually that the EU itself is ready to accept it and integrate it without its accession affecting the functioning of the Union.

The integration or absorption capacity of the EU has basically been non-existent since 2013. First and foremost, the EU experienced a shock after the 'Big Bang' enlargement. After integrating ten new Member States in 2004, plus Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013, the Union suddenly had 25 members in 2004 and 28 in 2013, respectively. This represented a serious challenge for the institutions and overall functioning of the EU and eventually led to the treaty revision in 2007. The decision-making processes for 15, 25, and 28 Member States cannot be the same if the EU is to function smoothly. That is why the treaties of Amsterdam and Nice were widely regarded as modest changes, and another revision of treaties was pursued in order to improve EU decision-making structures to better fit the newly enlarged Union (Risse & Kleine, 2007: 75). As of early 2023 there were ten countries waiting in line for membership, including countries that had already started negotiations (Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, and Turkey),[1] candidate countries (Moldova, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)), and potential candidates (Kosovo,[2] and Georgia). Integrating ten new Member States would require yet another treaty revision as the current decision-making process based on unanimity would not be sustainable for a Union consisting of 35 Member States.

The second element that affected the EU's absorption capacity and maintained it at a low level was the multiple crises that Europe faced in succession. After the NATO intervention in Libya in 2009 and Syria in 2010, Europe suffered the consequences of these military endeavours in the form of an increased inflow of migrants from these countries. The number of migrants peaked in 2015, causing Europe's biggest wave of immigration since the Second World War, better known as the 'migration crisis' (Connor, 2016; Hampshire, 2015). While the migration crisis was reaching its peak, the United Kingdom held a referendum on leaving the EU (Brexit) in 2016. These two crises were ongoing simultaneously until 2020, when the COVID-19

pandemic struck around the world. While the UK left the EU in 2020, the economic consequences of the pandemic were felt immediately. The latest in this series of crises – Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, an associated EU state and part of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy – is perhaps the most worrisome and has put the EU under extreme stress. It raised questions about Europe's collective security, defence, and foreign policy, exposing Member States to unenviable risk. Support for the principle of Ukrainian territorial integrity has put the EU in an unenviable position. The harshest sanctions in EU history have been imposed on Russia, and at the same time unprecedented financial and military support has been provided to Ukraine (European Commission, 2022a; Council of the European Union, 2022; Tamma, 2022; Government Offices of Sweden, 2022; Cohen & Reed, 2022). The migration crisis, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic downturn, Russian aggression, and the subsequent energy crisis are the events that marked the last decade. Those crises kept the Commission and the Council busy resolving them, thus effectively sidelining the enlargement policy and postponing enlargement for the time being.

Second determinant: lack of political will for enlargement

Public opinion in the EU Member States, which has been predominantly negative lately, is one of the main drivers for political elites in democratic states. In the 2014–2022 period, public support for integrating new Member States into the EU in the most influential Member States has been very low. For instance, in the Netherlands, the share of people in favour of enlargement steadily decreased from 2009 to 2018 (Statista, 2022). In 2019, public attitudes towards enlargement were mainly negative in the biggest and most influential EU Member States – Germany, France, Netherlands, and Austria (Tcherneva, 2019). Public opinion represents an important consideration for political leaders in the decision-making process. This can explain the decision of France, Netherlands, and Denmark to block the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in 2019 (Tidey, Chadwick, & Koutsokosta, 2019). However, the latest Eurobarometer results show that in almost all EU Member States the number of those opposing further enlargement has decreased, while the number of people in favour of accepting new Member States is increasing (Eurobarometer, 2022: 43). For instance, 56 per cent of the Dutch and 52 per cent of Germans support enlargement, while France remains sceptical

towards enlargement, with 46 per cent of the population against and 40 per cent in favour, but a positive trend is recorded when it comes to those who support enlargement (Eurobarometer, 2022: 43). Overall, 57 per cent of EU citizens favour further enlargement and 33 per cent oppose it (Eurobarometer, 2022: 43). These changes in public opinion can be expected to positively affect EU enlargement policy in the future.

Due to the dearth of support for further enlargement among Member States' populations, there is also a lack of political will for it. During the previous period, heads of states and governments have been hesitant about and have lacked an appetite for enlargement. Given their role in the European Council, which is instrumental for channelling the interests of Member States, it is not surprising that the whole process was stalled. Another driving force behind blocking further enlargement is fear of the EU becoming dysfunctional with more veto players. The most vocal leader to use this argument was French President Emmanuel Macron, who blocked the enlargement policy in 2019, calling for internal reform of the EU prior to enlargement

In 2019, public attitudes towards enlargement were mainly negative in the biggest and most influential EU Member States.

(Fouéré, 2019). Afterwards, Bulgaria blocked the start of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania over an identity dispute. The Bulgarian blockade lasted two years before it was finally overcome in July 2022 (Politico, 2022). Such episodes showcase how single members can block the entire enlargement process due to lack of political will for enlargement.

Third determinant: administrative capacities of candidates

Joining the EU is not just about being part of the club or sharing common values, nor is it only about enjoying the benefits of membership. Candidate states must demonstrate that they have sufficient administrative capacities to implement and enforce the EU body of law – also known as the *acquis communautaire*. The *acquis* represents many thousands of laws, including but not limited to two main EU treaties (the Treaty of the European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations, opinions, and the practice and judgments of

the Court of Justice of the European Union. The first problem with such a cumbersome legal body is that WB (and other) candidates and potential candidates do not possess sufficient administrative capacities to enforce EU law effectively (Karini, 2017). As the Commission's six annual progress reports show, none of the countries have sufficient levels of preparation in public administration reform, nor have any of them made significant progress (European Commission, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e, 2022f, 2022g). Annual reports of the European Commission and reports of relevant think tanks show that necessary reforms are not yet finished and that their progress is slow. Furthermore, the EU *acquis* itself is constantly evolving, which makes it even more difficult for the candidates to align national legislation and implement it, as this is an ongoing process that continues after accession. All in all, the constantly evolving EU *acquis* and a lack of reforms have affected the preparedness of WB states for membership, explaining why there have been no new Member States in the EU since 2013.

The earliest definitions of administrative capacity define it as a core intrinsic trait of a political

New democracies are fragile and susceptible to backsliding towards authoritarianism.

system to respond to or 'absorb' new demands arising from its social and international environments (Eisenstadt, 2017). The rule of law is an integral part of the administrative capacity of a state. All WB states have issues with the rule of law (European Commission, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e, 2022f, 2022g). Since a functioning rule of law, its independent operation, and impartiality are among the core EU values, the lack of reforms in this area have prevented WB states from making serious progress towards membership. As Kmezić (2020) argues, for the three decades since the beginning of democratisation in the WB, these countries were not able to establish a functioning rule of law, which subsequently affected the democratisation process. For instance, if one takes Serbia as an example, the level of preparation, according to the Commission's reports, has been stagnating since the beginning of negotiations, while assessments of the functioning of the judiciary have seen no changes (Pavković, Paunović, & Omeragić, 2021). The picture is not much different in other WB states, thus showing that the EU had valid reasons not to integrate them in previous years.

Lastly, corruption represents another major issue for WB countries seeking EU membership. For example, all five WB states recorded below-average scores in the latest Corruption Perception Index (CPI) report (Transparency International, 2021).[3] The fight against corruption is an integral part of Chapter 23 (Council of the European Union, 2016: 9), which is one of the most important chapters in the negotiation process, the so-called blocking chapter. Progress in this chapter is conditional on opening and closing other chapters in the process of negotiations, and since WB states' CPI rankings were not encouraging, it was unrealistic to expect the EU to accept states with such high corruption risks into the club.

Determinant four: democratic backsliding

'Any European State respecting values [of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights] and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union' (TEU, 2007: 17, 43). Additionally, the functioning of democratic institutions represents an integral part of the fundamentals in the revised enlargement methodology (European Commission, 2020). Obviously, democracy, alongside other European values such as the rule of law, human rights, and freedoms, is the first criterion for a country to join the Union. While states currently acceding to the EU may have been democratic at the point of applying for membership, that may no longer be the case. Democracy is not a permanent state. Instead, new democracies are fragile and susceptible to backsliding towards authoritarianism. That is actually what happened to the WB countries in the past decade (Freedom House, 2022).[4]

As of early 2023, there were seven states with the official status of candidate country for membership in the EU: Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Ukraine, and BiH. According to Freedom House, none of them can be considered democracies but are instead hybrid regimes (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022). The situation is equally worrisome in the potential candidate states of Kosovo, and Georgia, which are also categorised as hybrid regimes (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022). Democratic backsliding in these countries can be observed as part of a trend of democratic regression that goes beyond the WB region (Cianetti, Dawson, & Hanley, 2018). The evident democratic regression confirms V-Dem – a renown institute for democracy assessment. Multiple indicators measured by V-Dem, such as Liberal Democracy

Index and Institutionalised democracy, are declining in the case of Serbia. At the same time, Castaldo called it a 'double transition' – to and from democracy in less than two decades (Castaldo, 2020). According to Freedom House data, Serbia has not been considered a democracy since 2020 (Freedom House, 2020), nor has Montenegro. Meanwhile, BiH was never considered a democracy, and North Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo have not been considered democracies in the last seven Freedom House annual reports. Some authors refer to 'democratic stagnation' rather than backsliding, since labelling WB states as democracies was problematic in the first place (Bieber, 2020). The factors contributing to democratic backsliding or stagnation are common to the WB states, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. They include problems with the rule of law, freedom of the media, and state capture (European Commission, 2018). Additionally, foreign actors may influence democratic backsliding by providing support for authoritarian leaders (Tolstrup, 2015). For instance, in the case of Serbia, Russia and China can be perceived as non-democratic actors; in BiH, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Russia (in Republika Srpska) play that role; and in Albania and Kosovo, Turkey is again involved. All these facts demonstrate that countries aspiring to join the EU are not fulfilling the basic criteria – being democracies.

Determinant five: bilateral issues

If a state does not have clear borders and good neighbourly relations, it is not likely to be able to accede to the EU. Due to the acrimonious break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, present-day states have many bilateral disputes, border issues, strained relations, and, in some cases and periods, no diplomatic relations at all. Firstly, Croatia and Serbia have a border dispute at the Danube River that has gone unresolved for more than 30 years. Secondly, Montenegro has a border dispute in the north with Serbia (Milekic & Zivanovic, 2017). Thirdly, Serbia does not recognise the independence of Kosovo,[5] and the process of normalisation of relations, which has been ongoing for more than a decade, has not yielded credible results. The status of non-recognition is not unusual for the region, as the FR Yugoslavia refused to recognise Croatia as a state for six years after it proclaimed independence and was internationally recognised. The truth is that the EU is not ready to integrate countries with unresolved bilateral disputes, which has been reiterated on multiple occasions (European Commission, 2018: 3).

Besides bilateral disputes between candidates (and potential candidates), bilateral disputes between Member States and candidates may be even more problematic. Vivid examples of Greece blocking the start of accession negotiations with (North) Macedonia for over a decade, then Bulgaria blocking the same country for two more years after it changed its name, represent a major obstacle to achieving membership. There is no doubt that such disputes will hijack enlargement policy in the future too, and the EU does not have a formal mechanism to resolve them (Bechev, 2022). The example of the limited effectiveness of the Belgrade–Pristina Dialogue facilitated by the EU with the aim of normalising relations (Zweers & de Boon, 2022: 7) demonstrates that in cases where the EU mediates, it is not able to guide parties towards resolution. One might also mention the institutional crisis in BiH, in which political representatives of Republika Srpska have left the federal institutions and are preparing laws to transfer competencies back from the central government to the institutions of the Serb entity. The ongoing crisis has been described as BiH's biggest political crisis since the end of the war (Brezar, 2021). All these examples highlight the EU's inability to resolve them while they were effectively blocking, or at least slowing down, the integration process. Lastly, the developments in Ukraine and the Russian annexation of four Ukrainian regions (Sauer & Harding, 2022) may add an additional burden to the EU's enlargement policy.

STAGED ACCESSION AS AN EXIT FROM THE STALEMATE?

As the previous analysis has shown, five identified determinants have effectively caused an enlargement impasse. Academics, experts, politicians, and researchers all believe that enlargement has stalled and that changes are necessary to restart it. It has become clear even to bureaucrats in Brussels that enlargement requires reform, as the revision of the enlargement methodology in 2020 revealed (European Western Balkans, 2020). However, reform of the enlargement methodology has not been able to give enlargement a new 'push' (CEPS, 2021; Kovacevic, 2022) because the main problem is not of a bureaucratic nature but is rather (geo)political. Any methodology will only work if there is a strong intention to make it work. Hence the war in Ukraine and the increasing influence of autocratic regimes around and inside Europe may serve as the main drivers for the revitalisation of the enlargement policy, as experts and politicians have started developing proposals for further reorganisation and reconstruction of the policy. Following the Conclusions from the June 2022 Summit of the European Council agreeing to the 'gradual integration' of

new Member States (European Council, 2022: 5), it became clear that the binary 'in' or 'out' approach to membership no longer corresponds to geopolitical realities (Alesina, 2022: 7).

Emerson et al.'s (2021) 'Template for Staged Accession to the EU' builds upon the revised methodology to propose the integration of new Member States in four stages. The key point of staged accession is that it is a path towards full membership, not a substitution for it. The model proposes means for integrating new states while at the same time addressing concerns about the much-needed internal reform of the EU. Staged accession envisages integration in phases, whereby countries would gradually get access to EU institutions and sectorial policies while simultaneously making use of increased pre-accession funds. In exchange for earlier access to more funds and EU institutions, new Member States would give up their veto right (in Stage III) for a limited period to allow time for the EU to reform the decision-making process. Advantages of this proposal are that it offers a major incentive for candidates to complete the necessary reforms (Lazarević & Pavković, 2022: 12), and it addresses concerns about the Union becoming dysfunctional because it limits newly admitted Member States to qualified majority voting (QMV) for a limited period (Lazarević & Pavković, 2022: 13). The following section explores in more detail how staged accession stands with regard to the five determinants identified previously.

Testing the staged accession approach against the stalemate determinants

The staged accession model addresses all five determinants of the enlargement stalemate and offers a solution for bridging the problem of the enlargement impasse. Starting with integration capacity, it offers a simple solution to this obstacle. A primary aim of staged integration is to enable the accession of new Member States without affecting the functioning and decision-making process within the EU (Lazarević & Pavković, 2022: 13). The model recognises the need to carry out internal reforms of the EU while not blocking the enlargement at the same time. Since unanimity is extensively used in the decision-making process, the model introduces a 'New Member State' stage during which new members will vote only when the QMV procedure is initiated while leaving veto rights for the next stage of integration (Emerson et al., 2021). At the same time, it avoids the trap of second-class membership by enabling the same rights for the citizens of new Member States in Stage III and providing for any derogations to be time-bound (Emerson et al., 2021:

7–14; Lazarević & Subotić, 2022). The candidates would draw closer to the EU in two pre-accession stages, after which formal accession would follow with an avant-garde image. The WB states would be avant-garde in that they would reflect how the EU would look and function in the future.

The implementation of staged accession would also leave EU leaders who lack the political will for enlargement with fewer excuses because they would no longer need to fear that integrating new members would make the Union dysfunctional. At the same time, the geopolitical context has changed since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and political will does not seem to be a problem anymore. The events in Ukraine led the European Council to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova and to move forward with the enlargement process with Albania and North Macedonia in June and July 2022. Finally, EU leaders approved the long-awaited candidacy status for BiH in December 2022. These are all signals that the situation has changed and that there is political will to pursue enlargement. The staged accession proposal facilitates the gradual integration of the candidates, as called for by the European Council (2022).

Administrative capacity represents a severe challenge for all the WB countries as well as for the three East European states. The staged accession model also includes the quantification of Comission reports to incentivise competitiveness among countries, as well as a more precise track record in the areas of the rule of law, the fight against corruption, and public administration reform (Emerson et al., 2021). Another issue is that these countries do not possess the administrative capacity to absorb and spend all the financial help they would receive through IPA, so it would be even harder for them to absorb and spend the increased funds. This is not a novelty. The Central and East European countries that joined the EU in 2004 had the same problem. In the early years, they were not able to draw large amounts from the European Structural and Investment funds due to their limited administrative capacity (Horvat, 2005). That is precisely why new members need to be integrated gradually – to give their administrations time to become familiar with EU funds and the EU *acquis*, to train their staff, and to use the pre-accession stages (in which candidates do not provide a contribution to the EU budget) to prepare themselves for competition with other Member States.

While democratic backsliding is a much broader problem than the enlargement policy, the staged accession approach can provide an incentive when it comes to democracy as well (Pavković, 2021: 46).

The model emphasises the importance of fundamentals and proposes a quantification for the sub-area of functioning of democratic institutions covered by the Commission's reports (Pavković, 2023). By doing this, the Commission and the Member States would have clear insight into the state of democracy in candidate countries and could respond in the case of evidence of backsliding or stagnation. The most important tool to prevent backsliding in this and any other area is the reversibility mechanism, which empowers the Commission and Member States to reverse the candidate's stage in the pre-accession stages and closely monitor their progress in the post-accession stages (Emerson et al., 2021). By creating two important tools – the quantification of Commission reports and a reversibility mechanism – staged accession offers a clear means to prevent democratic backsliding in acceding countries.

Lastly, bilateral issues between candidates, and between candidates and Member States, have seriously threatened the whole enlargement process. In order to address this issue and prevent bilateral issues from hijacking the enlargement policy, the model for staged accession proposes that the EU introduce QMV for the enlargement policy (Emerson et al., 2021). Additionally, gradual integration is intended to have a positive influence on candidates and discourage bilateral issues between them as they are gradually acceding to the EU.

Policy Recommendations for the EU and Acceding States

- The staged integration approach represents the concrete operationalisation of the European Council's call for 'gradual integration'. It has the potential to overcome the current problems of enlargement and be the model for integrating East European countries in the future.
- Given the changed geopolitical context in Europe, the EU needs to react quickly and draw the WB states closer to itself in order to compete with other actors in the region. By gradually integrating new members, the EU will increase its presence as a democratic actor in those countries, while at the same time it will reduce the access and influence of non-democratic political actors such as China, Russia, and Turkey, which often support authoritarian leaders. The EU's transformative power could be restored, and democratic processes stimulated.
- Candidates have been reluctant to implement reforms because accession was not on the horizon, and the EU's transformative power has been decreased. With the clear prospect for membership

that staged accession offers, candidates will have strong incentives to complete the necessary reforms and join the EU.
- The EU has served as a good mediator in disputes when there is political will to reach an agreement, for example between Greece and Macedonia and between Bulgaria and Macedonia. With gradual integration and an open path towards membership, acceding countries will have additional incentives to resolve all outstanding bilateral issues in good faith.

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Turkey in the New European Security Architecture

Samuel Doveri Vesterbye

ABSTRACT

This article examines the needs and challenges linked to integrating Turkey into the European security architecture. The heightened level of spillover and intra-trade, migration policy and supply-chain geography has tied the EU and Turkey together to unprecedented levels. This interconnection is a link which render the partnership inseparable, yet also very vulnerable to divergences, instability and a non-harmonized EU and Turkish foreign and security policy. Decoupling remains an unrealistic option, while the status quo and a failed accession process also presents a series of unsustainable challenges. Analysed through the prism 'weaponization', this paper suggests that in order to avoid current and future instability it remains vital for EU-Turkey relations to increasingly focus on security cooperation through platforms like EPC. An unpredictable election in May 2023 calls for the EU to prepare itself for multiple outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) and Turkey have a long-standing relationship. Twenty-one EU members (soon to be 22) and Turkey are part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the latter has been a member since 1952, when it was granted membership together with Greece. Throughout most of the relationship between the EU and Turkey, the driving force in relations has been economic ties, not security. On 12 September 1963, the EU's predecessor – the European Economic Community – signed the Ankara Agreement. It is telling that the first four articles of the agreement highlight the importance of the EU–Turkey economic relationship, noting that 'the aim of this Agreement is to promote the continuous and balanced strengthening of trade and economic relations between the Parties'.[1] In 1995, Turkey officially became part of the EU's Customs Union, an economic zone of countries in which tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade are either non-existent or significantly lowered, while members collectively impose common external tariffs on all goods entering the Union. Geo-economically, Turkey is uniquely positioned as the sole non-EU country with such economic access to the EU's internal market. The domestic and international economic results prove this: between 2002 and 2007, Turkey's annual growth rate averaged 7.2 per cent according to the European Commission and the World Bank (Aytuğ et al., 2017; World Bank, 2014). Global investor confidence and German supply-chain relocation to Turkey doubled in a decade, in large part supported by the incentives provide by the EU–Turkey Customs Union and the accession process, as well as substantial EU financing, pre-accession funds (IPA), and Turkey's own efforts in terms of domestic legislative harmonisation (e.g. EU *acquis*) (WYG Turkey, n.d.). During the 1990s and 2000s, the initial logic of EU–Turkish relations being based solely on economic conditions continued to make sense, while EU–Turkey

security considerations remained a lesser priority. The Annan Plan ("United Nations Cyprus Unification Plan") had not yet failed; China had just entered the World Trade Organization (WTO); and Russia had not yet invaded Georgia and Ukraine. It was not long, however, before cracks started appearing in the EU–Turkey relationship. What caused this split remains heavily contested, but most academics and policy-makers share the view that the following factors were key: i) the failure of the Annan Plan; ii) the lack of an EU membership perspective; iii) the authoritarian policies and tendencies of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan; iv) diverging views over Syria (e.g. Da'esh/ISIS and PKK[2]/YPG[3]/ PYD[4]); v) deteriorating US–Turkey relations (e.g. Russia/S-400s, technology transfer, Syria); and vi) the changing geopolitical environment caused by the rise of US–China global competition. A series of other divisions have also been fundamental, including tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, Libya, Greco-Turkish maritime disputes, the 2016 failed coup, the mobilisation of Turkish electorates inside the EU, and trade disagreements between the EU and Turkey.

The 2022 invasion of Ukraine increased the strategic importance of EU–Turkey relations.

Despite this challenging relationship, ties between the EU, its Member States, and Turkey have continued to expand across various sectors, including trade, supply chains, energy, migration, bilateral defence, green transition, and connectivity. The 2022 invasion of Ukraine increased the strategic importance of EU–Turkey relations, in part incentivised by the revival of the so-called Middle Corridor, which connects Central Asia with the EU through Georgia and Turkey, providing an alternative to traditional routes through Russia. Despite the forces of geography, combined with decades of positive multilateral, inter-institutional, and economic ties between, the EU and Turkey now face deteriorating relations due to what political scientist Mark Galeotti describes as 'the weaponization of everything', an international and European environment in which all relations, ranging from finance and migration to supply chains and energy, are prone to blackmail (Galeotti, 2022). This poses a complex conundrum: does the EU retreat and decouple from arguably its most important geographical and geostrategic economic ally (Turkey), or does it aim to integrate its rising neighbour into a shared European security architecture to decrease the likelihood of conflict and weaponisation?

This chapter examines in detail how the EU's deep and intertwined geo-economic relationship with Turkey is at risk of 'weaponisation' (Galeotti, 2022). At the same time, it recognises that the 'handbrake option' (e.g. economic decoupling) appears increasingly unrealistic since EU–Turkey economic relations remain strong while the geopolitical relevance of Turkey has continued to grow post-2022. The ongoing war in Ukraine has exacerbated Europe's need for alternative transport, critical raw materials (CRM), energy, and supply-chain corridors eastwards, which are located largely in Turkey and Georgia. At the same time, Turkey is dependent on the EU for financing, foreign direct investment (FDI), employment, and – since the devastating earthquake in February 2023 – emergency relief and reconstruction support. In order to overcome the ongoing divergence between the EU and Turkey, one policy option exists: the development of a *common European security architecture* which takes Turkey into account. The aim would be to avoid a spiral of deteriorating relations and the weaponisation or blackmail of shared policies and interests, which would likely lead to the undesirable scenario of lose–lose geo-economics and geopolitics.

The first subsection discusses Galeotti's definition of security (e.g. 'the weaponization of everything') and how this idea is increasingly reflected in multipolar theory, while also spilling over into EU–Turkey relations. The second subsection argues that it would be unrealistic for Turkey to be decoupled economically from the EU, despite the fact that diverging foreign and security interests are a ticking time bomb for Euro-Turkish economic interests. The third subsection asserts that NATO remains a vital European security guarantor in the context of the war in Ukraine despite facing some limits vis-à-vis Turkey, across the Caucasus, and in Central Asia. It goes on to examine the obstacles to EU–Turkey security cooperation and presents the European Political Community (EPC) as a potential vehicle for practical strategic sovereignty in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The final subsection concludes by examining how the upcoming Turkish elections could impact the aforementioned considerations.

HOW DO WE DEFINE SECURITY?

It is vital that an updated and clear definition of security is given, since 'security' is both a defining part of this chapter and of rising importance for the future of the EU and its Member States. In the

1990s and early 2000s, security issues took a back seat among EU policy-makers, who placed greater emphasis on economic development. This changed between 2001 and 2023 due to the geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China, Russia's numerous acts of aggression against neighbouring countries (e.g. Georgia, Ukraine), and the EU's need for strategic autonomy or sovereignty. In his 2022 book *The Weaponization of Everything*, Galeotti notes that international institutions, financial instruments, banking services, migration policies, disaster management, energy and CRM sources, social media platforms, fibre-optic cable subcontractors, and the supply chains of multiple and at times conflicting countries and unions have become interdependent and intertwined as a result of decades of globalisation (Galeotti, 2022). China's entry into the WTO and the global reach of its social media and internet providers (e.g. Huawei and TikTok) are recent examples, as is the increase in EU–Chinese trade. Galeotti argues that this, in turn, creates the risk of interdependency becoming utilised, or weaponised, for geopolitical purposes as tensions and divisions inevitably grow. The argument is especially relevant as it comes at a time in world history in which the global order is moving away from multilateral and 'globalised peaceful co-existence' towards a state of increased multi- or bi-polarity in which regions like the United States, the EU, China and Russia find themselves in opposing camps, which is best exemplified by Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the US push for gradual decoupling from China. Mark Leonard makes a similar point in his recent book *The Age of Unpeace*, in which he reiterates Galeotti's concerns: 'Beijing's leaders have identified the second battleground of the age of unpeace: competition through the physical infrastructure of globalization' (Leonard, 2021: 111). There is a high degree of economic, financial, geographic, legal, security, and institutional overlap between the EU and Turkey, which can best be defined as heightened interdependency. This is the context in which the term 'security' should be understood and in which the relationship between the EU and Turkey must be examined.

EU AND TURKEY: A RELATIONSHIP OF INTERDEPENDENCE

The interdependent relationship between the EU and Turkey is the result of decades of legal harmonisation and economic interaction facilitated by the EU–Turkey Customs Union, the Turkish accession process, and geographical proximity. Such processes, as well as key bilateral relations, render the EU and Turkey difficult to separate in terms of FDI, trade and supply chains, banking sector integration, energy, waste management, and migration management. In the light of Galeotti's security concept, the figures presented below demonstrate an urgent need for the EU to begin the process of including Turkey in its security architecture to avoid the undesirable outcome of diverging foreign and security policies, which would have a negative impact on European economic, migratory, and other key interests.

In terms of trade, Turkey is by far the EU's most important 'accession/neighborhood trading partner' and its sixth-largest trading partner (€198.1 billion).[5] Turkey is even more dependent on the EU's consumer market: 26 per cent of Turkey's goods imports come from the EU, while 41 per cent of its exports go to the EU.[6] This translates into a complex and voluminous network of supply chains upon which Turkish exporters, as well as German, Dutch, Italian, and other EU-based companies, heavily depend. Germany alone is estimated to have over 7,000 companies operating inside Turkey, not to mention the tens of thousands of companies that rely on difficult-to-move supply chains across Turkey. The difficult-to-move component is due to Turkey's infrastructure, industrial knowhow, resource and logistic hubs (harbours and land connections), skilled labour force, and proximity, resulting from years of business, regulatory harmonisation, and IPA investments.[7] Motor vehicle parts, machinery, and pharmaceuticals are assembled or manufactured across Turkey, either subcontracted or directly produced by Germany's leading vehicle, white-goods, machinery, medicinal, and textile companies. In an interview, one trade expert described the economic relationship between the EU and Turkey: 'Without Turkey, the price, timing and quality of German or Dutch business products would suffer significantly. A cut-off from supply-chains is unimaginable and would severely damage major EU countries' economies. Turkey's simply too big and well-integrated to fail.'[8]

In terms of FDI, the nature of investments renders the relationship less interdependent compared with supply chains and trade in goods. It should nevertheless be noted that, as of 2020, six of the ten largest global investors in Turkey were European, with Italy taking the lead and the Netherlands in third place.[9] In terms of banking, the interdependency and vulnerability to shocks is far higher. Spain's second-largest bank, BBVA, continues – as of 2022 – to have an 86 per cent stake in Turkey's fifth-largest bank, Garanti Bank (Aguado, 2022). Other major European banks, including Italy's UniCredit, France's BNP Paribas, Dutch ING, and the UK's HSBC, also

have high exposure rates due to heavy investments in Turkey, and at far higher rates than across other neighbouring non-EU countries (Reuters, 2018).

In terms of CRMs, the EU is dependent on Turkey for 99 per cent of its imports of boron, which is used in textile, glass, pharmaceutical, and detergent fabrication as well as being vital for the functioning of nuclear reactors. With regard to energy, Turkey remains a resource-dependent country with no substantial fossil fuel reserves. Due to the country's geographic location, however, it continues to play an important transit role for natural gas from Azerbaijan and Russia, as well as for liquified natural gas (LNG) transported via cargo ships through the Bosphorus and via coastal terminals. Turkey's role as a transit hub has declined, however, due to decreasing imports of Russian natural gas (TurkStream/Blue Stream), while a newly built interconnector and the Alexandroupolis LNG terminal in Greece have decreased the EU's dependence on Turkey. Despite those factors, Turkey is home to the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project, which transports significant and growing amounts of Azeri gas to Greece and Italy via the Trans Adriatic Pipeline.

As of 2020, six of the ten largest global investors in Turkey were European.

Azerbaijani exports are set to rise to approximately 3 per cent of the EU's overall imports, while the potential for Turkmenistani reserves (the sixth largest globally) remains strategically important, as does Turkey's role as a provider of hydrogen and renewable energy for the EU (Muradov, 2022). Finally, France currently imports 43 per cent of its uranium from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a procedure which has traditionally necessitated transiting through Russia and exporting via ports in St Petersburg. As of December 2022, the only alternative route, known as the trans-Caspian option, was being tested for its potential for uranium transportation. This new development, coupled with rising pressure on France to decouple from Rosatom, has added additional strategic significance to this facet of EU–Turkey relations (Greenpeace, 2023).

Finally, migration adds another complex layer to this existing relationship of needs and pressure. Germany alone is home to 21.1 million people of migrant background, including approximately 2.7 million (13 per cent) Germans of Turkish origin.[10] This figure is likely to be significantly underestimated, since the method of classifying a person with a 'migrant background' as someone born with at least one parent without German citizenship excludes anyone who grew up with Turkish culture, or who speaks the language, but is of the third or fourth generation, with both parents holding German passports.[11] Past elections, particularly since 2017, have increased policy-makers' awareness of this situation. Turkey's politicians are dependent on electorates residing inside the EU, while EU governments in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere have become increasingly uneasy about the politicisation of their citizens through electoral campaigns, non-governmental networks, and funding. It should be noted that migrant communities remain a core pillar of interdependence between the EU and Turkey due to their sheer volume. In 2015, the members of the European Council and Turkey agreed the EU–Turkey Statement, also known as the EU Migration Deal. Considered unethical by some, the 2016 Statement remains essential for the management of irregular migration for EU Member States while providing substantial funding for Turkey across vital sectors ranging from social support and infrastructure to employment skills and business. It is inevitable that EU–Turkey migration management cooperation will remain important due to the high displacement and irregular migration figures across the Middle East and Africa. Water scarcity, climatic factors, and dormant conflicts render this relationship of interdependence even more urgent. Member States' internal divisions over a common asylum policy further accentuate the risks. In addition, Turkish opinion polls show that the level of anti-immigration sentiment in the country has reached new and unprecedented levels across Turkey's political and sociological landscape (Cagaptay, 2019). To avoid the risk of migration policies becoming weaponised, the EU and Turkey urgently need to tackle the roots of irregular migration, namely through common security policies, conflict resolution, development aid, and resilience across the European neighbourhood.

Ranging from supply chains and finance to migration and energy, it is clear that the EU and Turkey need one another. Attempts have been made to decrease the level of interdependence (e.g. energy) in order to counter the risk of blackmail and 'weaponisation'. However, the reality remains that areas of interdependence are multiple, voluminous, and critical as a result of geography, history, and legal/economic agreements and institutions. As this subsection has shown, perhaps the most intricate level of integration is at the regulatory level as well as across economies, financial services, and supply

chains. In addition, few (if any) realistic alternatives exist for EU supply-chain reshoring, as Turkey continues to attract business due to price, skills, infrastructure, culture, proximity, and legal/economic frameworks. While the Balkans remain a competitive supply-chain hub for the EU as an alternative to Turkey, other options such as Morocco and Egypt are lacking in scale and capacity, infrastructure, technology, know-how, and subcontractor availability, while potential supply-chain hubs Ukraine and Moldova remain at war and face the risk of conflict, respectively.[12]

These interconnections are likely to further spill over into well-documented foreign and security policy divergences between the EU and Turkey, namely concerning Syria, Libya and the Sahel, Russia, the South Caucasus, the Balkans, the Aegean, and the Eastern Mediterranean (Doveri Vesterbye, 2022). It is beyond this chapter's scope to examine each of those conflicts in detail. However, the subsection below looks in more detail at available platforms for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Turkey with the aim of defusing such divergences across multiple regions, while examining the potential for integrating Turkey into the European security architecture.

THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA: A ROLE FOR THE EPC AND EU–TURKEY ENGAGEMENT?

Despite NATO's fundamental role in both the EU's and Turkey's security architecture, it is crucial to recognise that (for the time being) the difficult relationship between the US and Turkey does not allow for developments in the Euro-Turkish security sphere in accordance with actual security demands on the ground. For example, the stability of the South Caucasus and Central Asia – where NATO is less capable of wielding influence – is an important area of potential discussion regarding EU–Turkey security concerns. A new security platform like EPC is of particular relevance, since it aims to build a pan-European security architecture, which includes bringing non-EU members like Turkey 'back to the table'. The war in Ukraine should be seen as a catalyst for the urgent discussion of security considerations linked to connectivity, supply chains, migration, disaster management, energy, digitalisation, and regional stability in all the aforementioned areas (Leino, 2023). The EU and Turkey both require strategic access to Central Asia as an alternative land route to Asia, in part for consumer market access, supply-chain needs, the potential relocation of Chinese supply chains in the future, and energy and CRM demands. It similarly plays an

important role for both the EU and Turkey in the maintenance of regional stability, the prevention of violent extremism, and migration management, among other future potential security considerations. A hurdle to this strategic vision remains the stability of the South Caucasus and improved relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, notably with regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute and the Lachin corridor. The successful implementation of a Middle Corridor therefore depends on the EU's and Turkey's involvement in resolving the conflict in the South Caucasus, which will depend on US support but remains beyond the current capacities of NATO due to the region's sensitive relationship with Moscow. A potential peaceful settlement in the South Caucasus will likely require a strong economic incentive, which could be found in the spillover effects (supply-chain hubs, economic growth, connectivity transit spillover, etc.) of a successfully implemented Middle Corridor connectivity strategy. The primary platform for such security considerations remains the EPC, whose first meeting, held in Prague on 6 October 2022, was attended by presidents and ministers from the following countries: all 27 EU Member States, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, as well as the President of the European Commission and the European Council. The stated purpose of the meeting was to 'foster political dialogue and cooperation' and to 'strengthen the security, stability and prosperity of the European Continent' with an emphasis on the energy crisis and Russia's war in Ukraine.[13] The meeting is acknowledged to have been spearheaded and guided in large part by France, Germany, and Turkey. An important milestone was the informal discussions that were held between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the creation (and later two-year extension) of the temporary EUMCAP Mission, which thereafter became the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMA), staffed with 103 personnel, as part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) along the Armenian border with Azerbaijan.[14] Its aim is to contribute towards human security in conflict-affected areas in Armenia and build confidence between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The follow-up EPC meetings are likely to be held in Moldova, followed by Spain and the United Kingdom. The new EPC platform has the potential to tackle some of the security concerns shared by the EU and Turkey, namely surrounding stability in the South Caucasus, as a first step by utilising the new economic potential of energy

needs, cross-Caspian logistical supply chains, and the prosperity that such developments would inevitably entail for the region at large.[15] It is too early to speak of Central Asia, since the countries of the region were not invited to the EPC, but it should be noted that the logical evolvement of the EPC needs to take into consideration Central Asia, since the prosperity and stability of the South Caucasus also depends on cross-Caspian economic, infrastructure, and digital interconnectivity. It is noteworthy that the EU has heightened its involvement in the South Caucasus as well as in Central Asia since the war began in Ukraine. This can be seen in France's renewed attention to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; the EU's Global Gateway initiative;[16] the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's 2023 impact assessment for connectivity (Usov, 2022); the Samarkand EU–Central Asia Connectivity Conference; and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's prioritisation of water management, digital and satellite development, and energy and CRMs. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's 2023 visit to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (Rickleton, 2023), as well as high-level visits by the

NATO unquestionably remains the most important security guarantor for its EU members and for Turkey.

German and UK foreign ministers, EU President Charles Michel, and HRVP Josep Borrell in 2022, indicate a more engaged approach to the region.

THE LIMITS OF AND POTENTIAL FOR EU–TURKEY SECURITY COOPERATION

When examining possible avenues for EU–Turkey security cooperation, it is important to stay grounded in reality. NATO unquestionably remains the most important security guarantor for its EU members and for Turkey, but it is clear that the role NATO can play in developing EU–Turkey security cooperation is limited due to the currently difficult US–Turkey relationship as well as NATO's restricted role in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Since NATO engagement in these regions is not welcome due to the potential for backlash from Russia and China, it is paramount that other security platforms (e.g. CSDP, EPC) are taken into account to support the EU's interests and the stability of the European security architecture in the region, including the need for peace, stability, water management,

energy supplies, border management, digitalisation, infrastructure, supply-chain routes, and CRMs.[17] At first sight, the obvious venue for EU security cooperation would be through Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) or alternatively the EU's CSDP. Both options could yield important forms of cooperation, while the EU and Turkey have an existing track record of CSDP cooperation (e.g. Balkans). Such initiatives could help foster trust and practical cooperation to align security perspectives while simultaneously cementing inter-institutional connections. However, such avenues of cooperation remain largely blocked due to Turkey's current position vis-à-vis UN Security Council Resolutions 541 and 550 proclaiming the Turkish Cypriot unilateral declaration of independence legally invalid.[18] In turn, the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) holds veto rights to block any cooperation with third-party countries under PESCO, as well as for new CSDP missions. It is therefore clear that any form of EU–Turkey security cooperation through PESCO or CSDP (or alternatively through the European Defense Fund) remains unlikely at this time. In the eventual case of EU–Turkey Customs Union reform (proposed by the European Commission after the 2016 impact assessment), the likelihood of significant economic spillover across Member States, including the ROC, could increase the chances of implementing such security cooperation in the field of CSDP. This, however, remains a speculative proposal which may take additional years to complete. Customs Union reform should nevertheless be unblocked in order to advance economic and eventually security relations between the EU and Turkey. The argument for its blocking (e.g. human rights, as argued by the German government) is increasingly redundant considering the entry into force of Germany's due diligence legislation (LsGK) as of 1 January 2023.[19] In the meantime, the new EPC platform currently represents the most realistic option for the EU to involve Turkey in its new security architecture post-2022. However, in order for such a platform to yield substantive results, the development of an EPC administration and budget would likely be needed, while France and Turkey would equally need to increase their bilateral engagements to better coordinate their perspectives regarding the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The upcoming EPC meetings will be a litmus test of whether the EU is capable of cooperating with its European neighbours. Its success (or failure) will be determined by the sustained relevance of the Middle Corridor, followed by the portfolios,

budgets, and level of Franco-Turkish, German, and British engagement in upcoming EPC meetings. In terms of portfolio, it is clear that the promotion of peace, prosperity, and stability in the South Caucasus should remain high on the agenda, while cooperation between the EU and Turkey is key for the normalisation of Armenian–Turkish relations as well as the Armenia–Azerbaijan peace process. The latter will depend on the economic incentives provided by increased trans-Caspian connectivity, new supply-chain hubs, and a reformed EU–Turkey Customs Union. For this reason the EU's Central Asia Strategy, its mapping of supply chains, and EU-supported common economic development for Armenia and Azerbaijan are vital elements of any future EPC discussions.

CONCLUSION: TURKEY'S ELECTIONS ARE THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

This chapter shows the limited options available for EU–Turkey security cooperation, despite the clear need to align and harmonise foreign and security objectives. Potential risks of economic decoupling stand to have unmanageable effects on FDI, trade and supply chains, banking, energy, CRMs and waste, socio-stability, and migration management. The obvious platforms for EU–Turkey security cooperation (e.g. CSDP, PESCO) remain blocked due to the ROC and Turkey, while NATO engagement is limited by geography (e.g. South Caucasus and Central Asia) and increasingly difficult due to strained US–Turkey relations. Instead of opting for decoupling, which is considered unrealistic given the sheer volume of economic ties between the EU and Turkey, this chapter instead suggests that renewed attempts at political and security integration are needed. With a frozen (and unlikely) accession process, blocked Customs Union reform, and a myriad of bilateral tensions, the EPC is left as the only remaining realistic option, provided that a strong Middle Corridor strategic perspective is pursued by its members in terms of connectivity, CSDP engagement, digital security, disaster and border management (e.g. EU Civil Protection Mechanism, Border Management Programme in Central Asia), and supply-chain integration (e.g. hubs).

In conclusion, it should be noted that all the above considerations come at a time of extreme unpredictability in Turkey due to the elections scheduled for May 2023. The EU should therefore be prepared for multiple outcomes, including one in which the government wins the electoral vote; one in which the opposition wins the electoral vote; and a third option, which includes electoral disputes and sustained instability. Based on these premises, this chapter makes the following recommendations:

1. In the case of a Turkish government win, the EU should return to the status quo as discussed here, in which the EPC will continue to be of utmost relevance for security cooperation between the EU and Turkey.
2. In the case of a Turkish opposition win, the EU and Turkey are likely to have more avenues for cooperation due to post-electoral momentum, promised reforms, and revived levels of trust. In this case the option of CSDP and PESCO cooperation becomes more theoretically likely, despite the fact that the Turkish opposition in many respects share the existing government views on the ROC.
3. In the case of an electoral dispute and sustained instability, the EU should support stability, prosperity, democracy, peace, and unity in Turkey through the restoration of order through all legal means available. The risk of foreign influence during or after a disputed election (including Russian interference) should be considered a high priority for the EU.

It has become clear that globalisation is a double-edged sword which both binds us together in prosperity and runs the risk of 'weaponising relations'. The EU and Turkey have fallen victim to this reality, yet it is too late to decouple and abandon one another. During this time of high global volatility and electoral uncertainty, it is more important than ever to support security and inter-institutional cooperation while preparing for worst-case scenarios.

NOTES
1. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ. do?uri=OJ:L:1996:035:0001:0046:EN:PDF.
2. Kurdistan Workers' Party.
3. People's Defense Units.
4. Democratic Union Party.
5. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/turkiye_en.
6. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/turkiye_en.
7. https://www.handelsbblatt.com/unternehmen/industrie/ahk-umfrage-zwischen-panik-und-profit-warumes-deutschen-unternehmen-in-der-tuerkei-so-gut-geht/27805012.html?ticket=ST-9573046-AVsl40vJqbmxI3gxZEBB-ap6<AU: This URL is not valid; please provide a working link>.
8. Interview conducted with an economist from the private sector.
9. https://www.invest.gov.tr/en/library/publications/lists/investpublications/foreign-direct-investments-in-turkiye-2021.pdf.
10. https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2020/07/PE20_279_112511.html
11. https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2020/07/PE20_279_112511.html

12. https://rfxcel.com/supply-chain-africa-2/
13. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/10/06/
14. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/euma/eu-mission-armenia-euma_en?s=410283
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19. https://www.csr-in-deutschland.de/EN/Business-Human-Rights/Supply-Chain-Act/supply-chain-act.html

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Infrastructure Diplomacy in Africa: Comparing EU and Chinese Infrastructure Initiatives

Maria Adele Carrai

ABSTRACT

The global infrastructure gap in the Global South, particularly Africa, has led to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) becoming a significant development finance source, causing concern among Western countries. To counter this, the US and EU have launched initiatives like Build Back Better World (B3W) and Global Gateway. This chapter examines the BRI and Global Gateway, proposing recommendations for the EU and US to succeed in Africa. Key suggestions include avoiding zero-sum thinking, clarifying initiative complementarity, promoting higher standards involving China, transitioning from aid to investment, and fostering equal partnerships. The chapter highlights the importance of better coordination between Western countries and China, efficient resource allocation, and addressing the real needs of the developing world.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure development in the Global South has garnered renewed attention in the past years, after decades of neglect by developed countries and international development institutions. Although infrastructure is essential for sustainable and inclusive development, the global infrastructure gap is estimated to exceed US$40 trillion. The African Development Bank estimates that the infrastructure financing needed for Africa alone will be US$170 billion a year by 2025, with an estimated gap of around US$100 billion a year (African Development Bank Group, 2018, 2022). China's hugely ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has highlighted infrastructure needs in Africa, where it has become a prominent source of development finance. China's promise to spend trillions of dollars on infrastructure through the BRI has given hope to many developing countries, while raising concerns in the West about the country's increasing global presence and the standards and norms it promotes.

Several initiatives have been launched to counter the BRI – including the QUAD Infrastructure Coordination Group, the Africa Agenda 2063, the Masterplan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, the United Kingdom's Clean Green Initiative, and many more – but chief players are the United States and the European Union (EU). Both have redefined their relationships with China, now considered a relevant player, as well as with Africa, an increasingly important strategic partner. At the 2021 G7 Summit, the US launched the Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative to build infrastructure, set new standards that reflect the values of Western democracies, and balance China's global reach. In 2021, the EU also launched its Global Gateway, pledging €300 billion in investments up to 2027 to boost sustainable and

trusted infrastructure that improves health, security, competitiveness, and global supply chains (European Commission, 2021). In June 2022, the G7 countries launched the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investments (PGII) with similar goals (White House, 2022).

While these initiatives all aim to tackle the infrastructure deficit globally, Africa has received special attention. It is a key region for economic, security, and political reasons. During the COVID-19 pandemic the number of African countries indebted to China became evident, as did the potential use of that debt in economic statecraft. In conjunction with launching infrastructure initiatives to address China's presence, the EU and the US have revised their strategies towards Africa. In 2020, the EU outlined its vision for the future of the ten-year-old EU–Africa Partnership in the Joint Communication 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa' (European Commission, 2020). Its goals are clearly aligned with those of the B3W and the Global Gateway, infrastructure investment being a key component – a way to counter China but also to contribute to the continent's sustainable growth. This chapter compares the approaches, strengths, and limitations of China's BRI and the EU's Global Gateway. It identifies complementarities then provides recommendations for making EU infrastructure initiatives more successful in Africa.

2. THE INFRASTRUCTURE GAP IN AFRICA AND WHY IT MATTERS TO THE EU

For Adam Tooze (2022), we are entering the African century. As Africa's population increases to 2.5 billion by 2050 (Paice, 2021), it will become the continent with the largest young labour force, as well as being home to 30 per cent of the world's critical minerals. Africa may have the world's largest middle class by 2050, contributing to its prosperity and access to natural resources. At the United Nations (UN), African countries have 28 per cent voting power, representing one of the largest voting groups; they are important players in the international order and can either strengthen or weaken global agendas (Harris, 2017). Africa's development is of political, economic, and security concern to its close neighbour the EU (European Union External Action, 2020). As Josep Borrell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has said of EU–Africa relations, 'Africa has become a field for geopolitical competition – a competition for resources, and they have immense resources, and for influence' (European Union External Action, 2020). China's deepening ties with Africa are likely to reduce EU and US economic and political leverage

there; although it is not a zero-sum game, in our current geopolitical environment a missed opportunity for the EU and the US often means a greater win for China.

Infrastructure is essential for the global circulation of people and goods, contributing significantly to human development, poverty reduction, and the attainment of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (African Development Bank Group, n.d.). Over the next two decades, it is said that developing countries will require more than US$40 trillion to bridge their infrastructure gaps and prosper, especially in the wake of COVID-19.[1] As Africa will host 25 per cent of the global population by 2050, the supply of reliable electricity, affordable housing, transport, and connected industries capable of creating new jobs will be a key challenge. There is still no intra-continental railway or highway network efficiently connecting West and East Africa. The World Bank has identified insufficient infrastructure as a cause of high trade costs between African countries, estimating that it costs more to ship a car from Kenya to Nigeria than from Japan to Kenya (Van Staden, 2018). This, combined with the structure of production, explains why African intra-continental trade, at 18 per cent of its total trade, is the world's lowest (Van Staden, 2018). The African Continental Free Trade Agreement, enacted in 2021 by 54 of the 55 African Union (AU) nations to boost such trade, will be ineffective without suitable infrastructure.

But returns are not immediate. As private investors in the past decades were unwilling to take the political, social, and environmental risks associated with constructing infrastructure in the developing world, such investments from Western economies fell, particularly from the 1990s. Between 1996 and 2000, the share of US direct investment in developing economies fell from 37 per cent to 21 per cent (Jackson, 2017: 6). As for the World Bank Group, in the mid-20th century 70 per cent of its financing went towards economic infrastructure; now the number is 30 per cent (Dollar, 2020). High-income nations have come to favour investment in social services, administration, and democracy at the expense of hard infrastructure.

Enter China. Through official development financing and the BRI, China has been actively filling the gap in global infrastructure construction. Launched in 2013 and extending to Asia, Europe, Africa, and even Latin America, the BRI aims to reconnect Eurasia with the world through trillions of dollars in investments in connectivity – rail, highways, ports, energy, and telecommunications. Despite a mixed record to date in terms of standards and economic, social, and environmental sustainability, it has

brought countries closer together and increased trade volumes. Now, with thousands of projects underway, its impact is evident (Xinhua, 2020). Trade in goods between China and BRI countries has grown; between 2013 and 2018, it surpassed US$5 trillion, and foreign direct investment (FDI) exceeded US$70 billion (Xiao, 2021: 6). The BRI has brought infrastructure and Africa back to the centre of international debate, highlighting the persistent gap between developed and developing countries. More quietly, the US and the EU remain the largest providers of aid to Africa − but they lag behind on infrastructure investment.

3. CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND AFRICA

China has championed infrastructure development at an unprecedented scale. As European nations withdrew from such investments in the developing world in the 1990s, Beijing tried to fill the void (Gurara et al., 2017: 14−16). China's economic rise, starting in the 1980s, was supported by one of the highest rates of infrastructure investment as a percentage of GDP (China Merchant Bank, 2022). These initiatives have continued apace (China Merchant Bank, 2022: 3). The BRI capitalises upon China's strengths and needs: facing diminishing returns at home, China can now use its surplus capital, know-how, and overcapacity abroad.[2] It has considerable institutional capacity to mobilise development financing, insurance, and construction.

The BRI has been made possible through strong government support and sovereign loans. From 2013 to 2017, China Development Bank (CDB) extended US$170 billion to some 64 BRI countries, China's Export Import Bank (Exim Bank) signed over 1,200 contracts worth some 800 billion RMB (Xiao, 2021: 16), and the Bank of China invested more than US$460 billion (Xiao, 2021: 16). To increase the pool, Chinese enterprises have increasingly considered new business models, such as public−private partnerships (PPPs) and build−operate−transfer (BOT) contracts (Xiao, 2021: 10). The BRI seems to reflect a Chinese vision for an overall system: with the private sector as a tool serving the state's strategic interests, it integrates various regions and draws economic, political, and security profits. The BRI's success has been helped by China's relative ease in operationalising support. Beijing offers a one-stop shop for finance, insurance, and building for host countries, and its processes are often cheaper and faster than negotiations with Western financiers.

This may be why China funds 20 per cent of all infrastructure projects in Africa, becoming the continent's largest single financier, and why one-third of Africa's infrastructure projects are built by Chinese firms (Herbling & Li, 2019). According to a McKinsey & Company report (2017: 10), in 2017 more than 10,000 Chinese-owned firms operated in Africa.

Many low- and middle-income countries on the continent look to Beijing as financier of first resort, preferring state-backed loans over higher-cost, shorter-term private funding (Dollar, 2020). Western financiers are said to apply more stringent rules and conditionalities that slow projects down and make them more expensive (Li, 2017; Levitsky & Way, 2006). Financing recipients appreciate that China's know-how can be easily transmitted through strong government action; Chinese ministers are aligned, and policies are coordinated under the central government's purview. Government departments that support the BRI include, inter alia, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry

As Africa will host 25 per cent of the global population by 2050, the supply of reliable electricity, affordable housing, transport, and connected industries capable of creating new jobs will be a key challenge.

of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, and the People's Bank of China. Chinese financial institutions likewise act at the forefront, particularly Exim Bank, the CDB, and China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinosure). Led by clear state policy, these institutions tend to operate in tandem and remain tied to construction companies that China finances and insures. In addition, China has created the Silk Fund and leads the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, although these do not and could not fund most BRI projects.

For many developing countries, China is the largest source of development finance and the only source of large infrastructure investments (Ray et al., 2021). Over time, this becomes risky. Besides the manifold political risks inherent to host countries, the BRI's reputation has been challenged by a lack of loan transparency, inadequate economic sustainability of some projects, unsustainable debt,

and financial overdependence. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, some countries' inability to repay debt to China led to various debt renegotiations, resulting mostly in extended repayment terms rather than debt forgiveness or asset seizure (Kratz, Feng, & Wright, 2019; Gelpern et al., 2021).

In the early years of its 'Going Out' policy, launched in 1999, China often adopted a 'build and they will come' approach, forgoing studies on risks and economic returns. With many projects having heavy environmental and social impacts, it has since made serious efforts to create rules to limit such damage. Cognisant of the substantive environmental ramifications of some BRI projects and hoping to become a global leader in 'green growth', President Xi Jinping launched the BRI Green Development Coalition in 2019 (Kratz, Feng, & Wright, 2019). This alliance of 134 partners aims to make BRI investments sustainable and adherent to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. So far, studies have shown that the Coalition and the Agenda have many synergies (Yin, 2019).

Beijing offers a one-stop shop for finance, insurance, and building for host countries, and its processes are often cheaper and faster than negotiations with Western financiers.

Africa has become a key region for China and the BRI. Since the Third Forum on China–Africa cooperation in 2006, China–Africa relations have flourished. China became Africa's largest trading partner in 2009. Since 2000, Chinese FDI flows into Africa have grown at an average of 40 per cent per year, overtaking US FDI in 2013 (Runde, 2021). In 2021 the State Council Information Office issued a white paper on 'China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals', outlining the key elements of 21st-century China–Africa relations: 'China supports Africa in making infrastructure development a priority for economic revitalization. It encourages and supports Chinese enterprises to adopt various models to participate in the construction, investment, operation and management of infrastructure projects in Africa.' Key aims are building a stronger China–Africa 'community of shared destiny' by pursuing cultural prosperity, common security, harmony between humanity and nature, agricultural and digital development, industrialization in Africa, and expanded cooperation in education, medicine

and health, poverty reduction, science and technology, and environmental protection' (State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2021). Africa's prominence for China is underlined by a large number of high-level diplomatic visits. As president, Xi has visited Africa four times.

The BRI is part of China's strategy to develop long-term economic relations with Africa and protect its investments there, ensure a predictable flow of commodities for its increasing needs, and create new allies. Selected East African countries have also been included in the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road project, which plans to strengthen China's connectivity via the Indian Ocean through the ports of Mombasa and Djibouti, then the Suez Canal and Europe.

Infrastructure investment may have significant spin-offs for African economies in tourism, trade, and industrialisation. Yet, if not well planned, it can waste public money on white elephant projects while facilitating the import of cheap Chinese goods that hamper local industrialisation and development. Beyond short-term boosts to growth, if profit expatriation exceeds domestic productivity gains and their retention, the long-term impact will be negative. BRI success stories have been accompanied by stories of failure, corruption, environmental degradation, resource exploitation, and poor economic performance (Kalantzakos, 2021; Patey, 2021). Africa is also becoming overly reliant on Chinese credit, which now accounts for 30 per cent of its debt payments (Runde, 2021; Usman, 2021).[3] Allocating loans with conditionality clauses that leave few opportunities for local actors, a non-transparent selection of projects, and indebtedness is unsustainable. On the ground, people have accused China of building projects that do not promote good governance and have poor results.[4] Many BRI infrastructure developments have been characterised by unfavourable financial, technical, and environmental conditions for African partners. Often, the Chinese state firms that conduct assessments also eventually build the proposed infrastructure (Nyabiage, 2019). While China's offer has advantages in terms of cost, speed, and a less patronising tone, host countries have little negotiating power when it is the only option.

4. FROM THE EURO-ASIAN CONNECTIVITY STRATEGY TO THE GLOBAL GATEWAY

With projects all over the world, it is unsurprising that the BRI has magnified non-Chinese concerns about China's soft power. Several countries have

scrambled to create their own masterplans. After the EU's Euro-Asian Connectivity Strategy, launched in 2018 to exploit existing networks and engage Asian partners through 'a sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based approach to connectivity' (D'Ambrogio, 2018), did not take off, the European Commission launched the Global Gateway in December 2021, 'Europe's new strategy to develop smart, clean and secure digital, energy and transport links and to strengthen health, education and research systems worldwide.'[5] Seen by many as an answer to the BRI, it was announced as 'a template for how Europe can build more resilient connections with the world', and it committed €300 billion over six years in support of global infrastructure development (European Commission, 2021). According to Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission:

> The European model is about investing in both hard and soft infrastructure, in sustainable investments in digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research, as well as in an enabling environment guaranteeing a level playing field. We will support smart investments in quality infrastructure, respecting the highest social and environmental standards, in line with the EU's democratic values and international norms and standards. (European Commission, 2021)

It clearly aims to be value-driven, showing how democratic principles offer certainty and fairness for investors, sustainability for partners, and long-term benefits for citizens, as demonstrated by the green energy project worth €1.6 billion over five years announced in February 2022 in Morocco (Arab Weekly, 2022).

Rather than adding more money, the Global Gateway repackages and coordinates existing initiatives; it seeks to put things on the global map in a more structured way. After all, the EU and EU countries lead the world in terms of official development assistance – Europe's role as donor is much more significant than China's (Tagliapietra, 2022). Cumulatively, Europe disbursed €66.8 billion in 2020 (46 per cent of world's total figure) and its official development assistance represented 0.50 per cent of GNP; this is expected to rise to 0.70 per cent by 2030, well above the sums given by the US (0.18 per cent) and the average given by Development Assistance Committee members (0.21 per cent). In the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027, the Neighbourhood, Development Cooperation and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), which combines all existing EU instruments, is worth €79.5 billion, of which €29.2 billion is dedicated

to sub-Saharan Africa (Council of the European Union, 2021).

Although the Global Gateway does not integrate strategic goals with private companies as the BRI does, the private sector is a key partner. Through the Team Europe approach, the Global Gateway brings together the EU and EU Member States with their financial and development institutions, and the European Investment Bank with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), seeking to mobilise the private sector for a transformational impact. However, it is yet to really appeal to private businesses. An idea under debate is the creation of a European Export Credit Facility to complement existing export credit arrangements at Member State level and increase the EU's firepower in this area; this could make assistance more coherent and bring the private sector to new markets. It would help level out the playing field for EU businesses in third-country markets, where they must increasingly compete with peers receiving substantial government support.

The Global Gateway draws on the new financial tools in the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027. NDICI-Global Europe, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III, Interreg, InvestEU, and the research and innovation programme Horizon Europe all allow the EU to leverage public and private investments in priority areas, including connectivity. In particular, the financial arm of NDICI-Global Europe, the European Fund for Sustainable Development+, will make available up to €135 billion in guaranteed investments for infrastructure projects over six years, the EU budget will put in up to €18 billion in grants, and European finance institutions have up to €145 billion in planned investment volumes. Moreover, the Global Gateway builds on the achievements of the 2018 EU–Asia Connectivity Strategy, the Connectivity Partnerships with Japan and India, and the Economic and Investment Plans for the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership, and the Southern Neighbourhood. It is aligned with the UN's 2030 Agenda, its Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement, and, like the United States' B3W, it presents itself as part of the G7 leaders' June 2021 commitment to a values-driven, high-standard, and transparent partnership to meet global infrastructure development needs.

The Global Gateway states that among its priorities are the provision of high standards and transparent digital infrastructure; climate, energy, and transport; convergence with European or international technical, social, environmental, and competition standards; reciprocity in market access; health;

and a level playing field in transport infrastructure planning and development. A key regional priority is Africa, where Team Europe is due to disburse €150 billion to accelerate the green and digital transitions and sustainable growth, improve working conditions, enhance health and pharmaceutical systems, and improve education and training (Tagliapietra, 2022).

The geopolitical goal is to counter Russian and Chinese influence in Africa and possible dependencies. While Chinese investments in Africa today (2023) are decreasing, in 2020 China held 62.1 per cent of its bilateral external debt (Bertrand & Zoghely, 2021). Meanwhile, China is expanding its security footprint in Africa, and its first overseas military base, mainly tasked with protecting Chinese companies, is in Djibouti. Beyond economic and military concerns, in a possible competition for political models the EU should support democracy on the continent 'to be able to meet the central challenges of the "Anthropocene" and to meet Europe's long-term political and security interests in Africa' (Bloj, 2022).

Von der Leyen, visiting Senegal in February 2022, stated that the summit should identify a first set of strategic interventions in infrastructure, value-chain and private-sector development, vocational training, and health (AFP, 2022). A signal of Europe's determination to renew its relationship with Africa and respond to the growing presence of China and Russia was the choice of Addis Ababa, seat of the AU, as von der Leyen's first official visit as European Commission president in 2019. The EU's 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa' communication of 2020 already identified five partnerships or priority cooperation areas which structured exchange during the 2022 EU–AU Summit: a green transition and access to energy; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; and migration and mobility (European Commission, 2020).

Euro-African relations have traditionally been conducted through development policy aimed at promoting European values. Over the years, this strengthened Brussels's status as a normative power, with the objective, stipulated by the Treaties, of 'reducing and, in the long term, eradicating poverty' (Article 208 TFEU), as part of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. Following the financial crisis of 2008, with the migratory flows of 2015, and amid the politicisation of the EU's external action, its development aid policy has reoriented towards other objectives, notably related to security and migration control (Hackenesch, Bergmann, & Orbie, 2021). In terms of trade, although partnerships exist in several sectors, such as the automotive and aeronautics industries, the EU's share has decreased in all North African countries, dropping from 67 per cent to 53 per cent in terms of exports and from 55 per cent to 39 per cent in imports between 1999 and 2019. As a result, the EU has been overtaken by China and India as Africa's largest trading partners (Ahipeaud et al., 2021).

5. DIFFERENCES AND COMPLEMENTARITIES OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES

The Global Gateway is a values-driven initiative aiming to promote democracy and high standards. One long-held Chinese foreign policy cornerstone is respect for sovereignty; Beijing shows little interest in a top-down approach to influence host countries' legal and political structures (Carrai, 2021; Tang, 2020). But as its overseas interests grow, this stance may change and its influence in other countries' internal affairs may become more apparent (Duchâtel, Bräuner, & Hang, 2014; Ghiselli, 2021). While it is not plotting debt traps to seize other countries' sovereign assets, new research shows that the terms of Chinese loans, while not necessarily court-enforceable, could limit a sovereign debtor's crisis management options and make debt renegotiations more difficult (Gelpern et al., 2021). Yet the fact that China is not a democracy and does not promote democracy through the BRI does not mean it has no interest in improving standards and good governance, especially in environmental terms. China has shown that it is trying to develop higher standards and more transparency in its infrastructure investments abroad (BU Global Development Center, 2021).

The EU should continue pushing for high standards, mindful that these are likely to increase the cost of projects and make them less attractive to host countries. When countries receive money from the IMF or the Paris Club, they are required to carry out expensive policy adjustment plans but often lack the resources to do so; EU-led initiatives are also not necessarily advantageous or even possible for host countries. Andreea Brinza, vice president of the Romanian Institute for the Study of the Asia-Pacific, has said that '[t]he biggest obstacle may be the cost of implementing projects [with high standards]. Developing countries really need infrastructure, but if it's too expensive they can't afford it [and] there will also be profitability issues' (cited in Standish, 2021).

The EU should not see the promotion of high standards as oppositional to China, which is learning and working towards implementing best practices.

Finding synergies with China would pave the way for both parties to operate with similar standards and reduce social, environmental, and financial risks, to the benefit of all parties. 'The EU's biggest challenge will be to find the perfect combination of quality infrastructure and affordable prices', Brinza said. 'If the EU [can] blend high standards with affordable costs, it will definitely succeed, especially considering that the BRI is passing through a phase of disappointment and criticism' (cited in Standish, 2021).

Many new synergies can be found between China and the EU, firstly between the public and private sectors. Although China is increasingly exploring PPP and BOT, the BRI is still mostly funded by public banks and can offer financing, insurance, and building together. In contrast, the Global Gateway seeks to leverage private funding and has no such convenient package. It is challenging to convince private companies in G7 countries to invest in the developing world; there are simply not enough incentives. In many projects, the economic returns are much less than the political returns, especially in unstable or unfavourable investment environments. Bank loans are the largest source of funding for infrastructure; equity investment remains inadequate, including that created by China, such as the Silk Road Fund and the China–Africa Development Fund. Only 0.20 per cent of infrastructure investments in Asian countries are private (Xiao, 2021: 17). One path forward might lie in PPP, but the private sector cannot do it alone. The European Export Credit Facility could complement existing export credit arrangements at Member State level, making assistance more coherent and helping bring the private sector into new markets.

The EU is better positioned than the US to compete with the BRI, but it lags behind China in infrastructure diplomacy and requires more coordination of its various actors. It may be more productive for the EU to reassert its soft power in other ways, such as leveraging Chinese construction of basic infrastructure around the developing world to advance its service, education, health, and diplomatic ties. The EU can use targeted blended finance and share technology, knowledge, and standards to provide an alternative to the Chinese model. Infrastructure should be understood as part of a broader ecosystem: if China builds a road, the EU builds a hospital, and the US builds a school, this would be a win–win situation for all parties. There are many such complementarities among projects. A well-funded effort coordinating healthcare, highways, and complementary industries can provide lasting, sustainable goods and services to host countries.

It is prudent to identify areas where the EU cannot cooperate for national security reasons, but also to explore cooperation between China and Western countries. Given the differences between models, the EU should try to focus on synergies while insisting on an open and inclusive system of rules. By cooperating and competing where needed, the parties could ameliorate each other's development models and contribute to global sustainable development. Financially, such cooperation is already happening. The CDB and Exim Bank have discussed cooperation with the EBRD. Similar talks have taken place between the CDB and the French Development Agency. Another example is the China–CEE Countries Inter-bank Association, established in 2017.

While the EU will struggle to build the financial muscle to rival Beijing's infrastructure investment, it is already the world's largest donor, and the

Finding synergies with China would pave the way for both parties to operate with similar standards and reduce social, environmental, and financial risks, to the benefit of all parties.

Global Gateway may succeed in coordinating and rebranding its efforts. Taken together, Europe, the US, Japan, and others far outspend China on funding, as the pace of investment through the BRI has decreased since its peak in 2017 (Kynge & Wheatley, 2020). While the BRI has occupied major headlines, the EU and US have less noticeably provided millions of dollars in aid and investments and funded hundreds of millions of dollars of contracts to Chinese firms under the United States' Millennium Challenge Corporation compacts. It is vital that the EU and US coordinate, document, and market their efforts. It is important to have an overall vision of the projects to make the most of their synergies.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To succeed in Africa and balance the Chinese presence there, Western powers must deprioritise countering China and instead prioritise addressing African countries' needs, in a non-paternalistic way,

while promoting democracy, human rights, and sustainable development. China is a competitor in different domains, but infrastructure is not a zero-sum game, and many complementarities exist. It is crucial to transcend a Cold War mentality, instead identifying occasions for collaboration on specific projects to efficiently address the infrastructure deficit. China is still evolving its approach; if the US and EU, remaining cognisant of security issues, choose to include China in the promotion of higher standards, China will increase its familiarity with best practices and be less inclined to take a defensive stance.

In the attempt to establish more equitable relations with Africa and in the context of the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area – which should eliminate 90 per cent of intra-African tariff barriers – trade and support for small- and medium-sized and very small enterprises should play a central role for the EU and the US, on top of existing development aid programmes. The EU's quest to diversify and relocate value chains to develop strategic sovereignty could also benefit the countries around the Mediterranean. Indeed, cooperation in the Mediterranean basin should be at the centre of these discussions for Europe.

Accordingly, this chapter makes the following policy recommendations:

- Cease thinking of infrastructure investments as a zero-sum game and find synergies and complementarities with China, especially when overall goals are aligned.
- Clarify the complementarity of the B3W, PGII, and Global Gateway and give substance to the promises made so that they do not remain empty words.
- Publicise existing projects.
- Push for high standards that include China.
- Move from aid to investment. Identify and build links between African, US, and EU markets where businesses are incentivised to invest and avoid patchwork investments.
- Realise a paradigm shift towards partnership on a more equal footing. Debunk the outdated idea of Africa's low importance to security and economic prosperity. Increase high-ranking official visits and other exchange programmes.
- Think about Africa in an integrated way by taking advantage of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, connecting the dots with a focus on small, medium-sized, and very small enterprises.

If the EU and US come together around this kind of strategy, they will be able to compete with China in its infrastructure diplomacy and profit from these actions in a matter of years. But the EU and the US are dysfunctional, with shifting government priorities and different interests. Rather than concentrating resources on the difficult if not impossible mission of competing with China's infrastructure investments in Africa, it would be more effective to maintain a strong presence in sectors where they enjoy competitive advantages, such as in services, education, finance, health, technology, and science. They should cooperate with Beijing where possible and promote better international standards, creating a positive presence in Africa and making sure its demographic revolution is supported by job creation. Infrastructure diplomacy is one step in that direction, but not the only one. The EU should not just counter the increased Chinese presence in Africa but use it and find synergies that contribute to bringing more sustainable goods to African markets.

It is vital that Western powers and China better coordinate international infrastructure investments, effectively allocate resources, and avoid doubling up. The real needs of the developing world must be considered, rather than simply geopolitics. Recipient countries are tired of empty rhetoric, not willing to fall into a new Cold War divide, and they have an urgent need for basic infrastructure.

NOTES

1. The numbers vary; for instance, for the Global Infrastructure Outlook report released by the Global Infrastructure Hub, from 2016 to 2040, the global infrastructure investment demand will increase to US$94 trillion.
2. Various explanations have been offered for China's large current-account surplus. For some, Chinese national savings and saving behaviour are at the root of the surplus of capital; for others, it is the demographic transition and the implementation of the one-child policy; and for others, it is capital inflows disguised as a current-account surplus. For a discussion of the reasons, see Huang (2010); Huang and Tao (2010).
3. Usman (2021) writes: 'China's lending portfolio is large but declining. China provides the largest volume of loans, bilaterally to African countries, but the nature of these loans is changing. According to SAIS-CARI researchers, Chinese financiers have committed $153 billion to African public sector borrowers between 2000 and 2019. After rapid growth in the 2000s, annual lending commitments to Africa peaked in 2013, the year the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was launched. By 2019, though, new Chinese loan commitments amounted to only $7 billion to the continent, down 30 percent from $9.9 billion in 2018.'
4. On the limitations on good governance, see, for example, Horsley (2018).
5. For more, see D'Ambrogio (2021).

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In the face of a rapidly evolving global landscape, the European continent finds itself at a critical juncture.

This study endeavours to provide a comprehensive and policy-oriented perspective on the transformative changes occurring in European security and the European Union's response. The chapters delve into the dynamic fluctuations in transatlantic relations, underscore the importance of Western support for Ukraine, and analyse the multifaceted consequences of Russia's invasion on diplomacy, defence, economics, and the foundational principles of liberal democracy.

By examining critical issues such as energy security, institutions, democratic resilience, and EU strategic autonomy and presenting fresh ideas and approaches, the study aims to anticipate and shape the discussions and political agendas that will define the future of European security.

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