

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

GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE

No.300 January - February 2025 | www.pulsulgeostrategic.ro

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EDITORIAL



The Different Agendas and Actions of International Actors Are Generating Unpredictable Developments for Europe

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„Success is not final, failure is not fatal: the courage to continue is what counts”

Winston Churchill

Trying to make predictions with the highest possible level of probability regarding the politics of world and the evolution of international relations proves harder than we expected. Even in the context of events that are planned and marked on the calendar, such as electoral processes, summits, discussion regarding issues that require urgent resolution, unforeseen circumstances can affect forecasts and predictions regarding their results and subsequent developments both at the regional and global levels.

For example, in 2024, the evolution of the entire world was seriously influenced and marked by a calendar full of electoral processes in various parts of the world, as well as by the decline in collective power within many international organizations, but also by the relative increase in the importance of other new alliances, groups of states or cooperation in various fields.

Looking at international developments in 2025, current events and major future trends show that Europe is facing a confluence of challenges, risks and threats that could mark the most dangerous year of the century so far for this region of the world. Political fragmentation, economic weakness and geopolitical tensions intersect, creating a volatile landscape.

Domestically, some European states are affected by fragile leadership, internal unrest, societies that seem tired, with restricted budgets or redistributed to other areas and an increase in the importance of defence and security. Across the continent, unity has become elusive, as states remain divided due to the focus on



Source: <https://www.reneweuropegroup.eu/news/2025-02-17/renew-europe-unveils-plan-to-make-europe-safe-calls-on-eu-leaders-to-be-daring>

different critical issues, from securing energy resources, managing migration, but now also on ensuring an efficient and effective defence and security, in a word providing optimal resilience in all areas. In the current global context, politically, economically and socially, Europe is becoming increasingly vulnerable. Stagnation in many areas, inflation and energy uncertainty have affected Europe's common resilience, reducing the ability to address crises simultaneously by all Member States.

Therefore, it is more important than ever that all these weaknesses and vulnerabilities are identified and managed very well to avoid their aggravation by the current unpredictable international environment. The war in Ukraine confronts Europe with a trilemma: increasing involvement without significant support from the US and other states on other continents may generate a profound increase in risks and threats from Russia; insufficient commitment to stopping the conflict in Ukraine could encourage Russian aggression in other parts of Europe; and a prolonged stagnation in resolving the situation in Ukraine may also prolong the entire instability in the region.

These assessments and forecasts may also become more pronounced in the context of current developments in the Middle East, where a potential second geopolitical front is open and where tensions have risen, tensions involving both ethnic entities such as Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as other states, such as Syria, Iran, Lebanon and Israel, and risk triggering a wider conflict, with ripple effects that also threaten the security and cohesion of Europe. The fact that the interests and commitments of the USA, China, Russia, Europe and Iran take place and interact in the geopolitical hotspots of the Middle East and Eastern Europe make these two regions two strategic theatres of operations.

By abruptly conditioning security commitments through the imposed and sudden increase in European states' defence spending within NATO, by further reducing US support for Ukraine and by imposing increased tariffs on European exports, it could create a favourable environment for the weakening of the American pillar of the North Atlantic Alliance, an evolution that could generate major challenges for the whole of Europe. As a result, the uncertainties triggered at the international level raise major questions about the transatlantic cooperation and the future of NATO. A less supportive approach to decision-making by consensus or even divisive approaches and policies could fracture European unity, thus generating an environment favourable to the individualization and separation of states susceptible to and affected by manipulation and other various hybrid actions put into operation by various external third powers, which want to affect NATO and, implicitly, the future of Europe.

In the context of the current precarious international situation, we can say that the division and fragmentation of Europe could be the main objective of third states and, in such a context, could become the greatest liability of all European states in the years to come. The failure generated by the lack of collective action and consensus in decision-making risks affecting the continent as a geopolitical pawn in the strategies of other international actors. To navigate efficiently and effectively both in this turbulent year, and in the future, Europe must overcome the effects and even counteract divisions at the internal level and design common plans and actions, capitalizing on its collective power to address these cascading risks and threats. Without decisive action, Europe may face a definite year of fragmentation, instability and diminished influence in the decision-making process at the global level.

As geopolitical rivalries intensified, the EU's Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 highlighted enlargement as a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity for the next political and legislative cycle.

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU has revived its enlargement plans to support Ukraine, reinvigorating the accession process of the Western Balkans. Reaffirming the Western Balkans' commitment to EU membership, together with the need for long-term irreversible reforms based on EU values, is essential at this time to maintain the momentum and credibility of this entire process.

As the year 2025 unfolds, EU Member States must face the dual challenges of integrating candidate countries affected by war and conflict, while maintaining and strengthening internal unity and addressing increasingly pronounced security uncertainties efficiently and effectively. Failure to align possible future enlargements with robust security measures could exacerbate vulnerabilities. To prevent the reversal of current situations or future developments, a clear strategy is essential to achieve a clear and optimal connection between enlargement and security, thus strengthening the EU and increasing regional stability.

NEW WORLD ORDER

**BRICS - The Dawn of a New World Order?**

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During the last two decades, the international order dominated by the US hegemonic superpower (following the demise of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991) showed signs of decay, signalling the dawn of a new international order, based on a more balanced power sharing. Starting with September 11, 2001, the limits of the US hegemony began to be visible and many international experts argued that the world was moving towards another phase, characterized by multipolarism. Within this phase, other regional powers emerged as significant actors on the world stage (Brazil, India, South Africa), beside the traditional world powers aiming at reinventing themselves (China, Russia). Their main common interest was to challenge the US and western hegemony at international level and promote the legitimacy of their own interests, as representatives of emerging nations of the so-called “Global South”.

One of the main events that brought these countries closer to one another was the 2003 US-led military intervention in Iraq, when these countries (but especially Chi-



Source: <https://infobrics.org/post/41537/>

na and Russia) criticized the move as having a neo-colonialist and economic-driven character, under the guise of a pretended freedom fight for eliminating weapons of mass-destruction and terrorism. Other events, such as the Russian-Georgian War of 2008, served to show that there were some parts of the world where western powers could not intervene to influence the situation and where other non-western powers could impose their views. As a result, in 2009, four of these countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China, or BRIC) joined in a common summit in Yekaterinburg (Russia) in order to signal their will of having a greater say in world economic issues, to reform the UN system in order to acknowledge the growing importance of some of them (Brazil and India) and to fight the global food crisis. At the next summit, in 2010 in Brasilia, South Africa joined the group, thus providing more legitimacy by its representation of the African continent.

The main reasons for which this grouping became increasingly relevant at world level were demography (around 40% of world population in 2009), geography (25% of the total world surface) and economy (18% of world GDP in 2009, more than any other country or regional group, except the EU)¹. At the same time, it advocated for a changing world view in which western interests and institutions (the Bretton-Woods system, established after 1945) were less important and the interests of the developing world became highly relevant.

Currently, the group has reached a number of ten member states, following the 2024 expansion, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, and the accession of Indonesia in January 2025. Other eight countries (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Syria and Venezuela) have applied for membership during the last two years. Nine other countries are BRICS partners (Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda and Uzbekistan), with other three (Algeria, Turkey and Vietnam) having been invited into this position². What common features do all these countries share? What are their common interests at world level? What global view do they share that could impact the world of tomorrow? Below, we will briefly try to answer these questions.

Founding Members

Of the five founding members, two are the most populated nations of the world (2024): China and India, each with 1.4 billion people. The other three also have significant populations: Brazil – 217 million (7th in the world); Russia – 147 million (9th in the world); South Africa – 63 million (23rd in the world). In terms of surface, Russia is the largest country at world level (17,098,246 sq. km), China is the third (9,596,960 sq. km), Brazil is the fifth (8,510,346 sq. km), India is the seventh (3,287,263 sq. km) and South Africa is the 24th (1,219,090 sq. km). In what concerns the total GDP (2024), China is the largest economy in the world (37 trillion USD), India is the third (16 trillion USD), Russia is the fourth (6.9 trillion USD), Brazil is the seventh (4.7 trillion USD) and South Africa is the 33rd (1 trillion USD)³.

Apart from these cold numbers, in terms of political regimes, three of them are liberal democracies, one of them with a competitive pluralistic system, even if it is a presidential federal republic (Brazil), the other two with dominant parties and British-inspired parliamentary systems (India and South Africa). Another one is an illiberal democracy with authoritarian presidential tendencies and insignificant opposition (Russia) and the last is a communist regime dominated by the single-party (China). In terms of economic openness, three are free market economies (Brazil, India and South Africa), while two are state-centred market economies (China and Russia). However, each of them has specific internal structures and interests, which cannot be neglected in grasping their particular visions over the future world order.

If we take a look at Brazil, for instance, we can notice that it has a solid pluralistic democratic regime, with a myriad of political parties going from extreme right to extreme left, but generally gathered around a leftist and a rightist pole. For the moment, left wing president Lula da Silva managed to come back from political retirement to avoid the country's populist turn under former president Jair Bolsonaro and a potential Trump-style coup against the result of democratic elections. Lula's policies favour interests of Brazilian big companies, but also support the fight against deforestation of the Amazon region and the interests of small indigenous communities. The main internal challenges, though, are the high level of organized crime within the country (drug, person and arms trafficking), development disparities between the coast region and the interior, poverty and corruption. At international level, Lula's interest is to consolidate Brazil's regional supremacy in South America (by virtue of its surface, population and economic might – both as agricultural resource reservoir and industrial capacity, including oil production) and get a place at the table of great powers, possibly under the form of a permanent member of the UN Security Council. That is why, Brazil's interest is to have good relations both with China and the US, although relations with the former were strengthened considerably during the last decade (China is currently Brazil's main economic partner). At the same time, Lula also favours

¹Carl Haub, "The BRIC Countries", April 24, 2012, in <https://www.prb.org/resources/the-bric-countries/>, accessed on 2 February 2025.

²Amandine Afota, Valentin Burban, Pavel Diev, Fabio Grieco, Théo Iberrakene, Karine Ishii, Margarita Lopez Forero, Quentin Paul, Frank Sammeth, Cécile Valadier, "Expansion of BRICS: what are the potential consequences for the global economy?" in *Bulletin de la Banque de France*, 250/2, January-February 2024, p. 1.

³UNFP, "World Population Dashboard" in <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard>, accessed on 9 February 2025; CIA, "Definitions and notes: Area" in, *World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>, accessed on 9 February 2025; IMF, "World Economic Outlook Database" in <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2024/October>, accessed on 2 February 2025.

good relations with the EU, supporting the trade deal between the European organization and Mercosur⁴. Thus, Brazil seems to be a peaceful actor encouraging good relations between all world power centres, but with a particular interest in dominating South America.

In Russia's case, the Putin regime has achieved a practical restoration of the Soviet Union, by turning the country into a façade democracy with certain authoritarian features, such as physically eliminating any significant political opposition and subordinating the country's economy to the state structures (mainly the coercive civil and military entities). Thus, the country is controlled by an oligarchy made up of Putin's protégés, mainly based in Moscow and Sankt Petersburg, while the rest of the country is unequally developed. The legal system is totally subordinated to the political leadership, only providing the illusion of a constitutional state, while in fact it is a captured empire. Nevertheless, Moscow's assets are its natural resources (gas, oil, diamonds and to lesser extent others), its military industry (providing weapons all over the world) and its nuclear capabilities⁵. At international level, although it is part of the post-war power directorate (permanent member of the UN Security Council), Russia is a challenger of western rules-based world order and supports a multipolar world made up of regional great powers controlling exclusive influence spheres (such as the former Soviet space, in Moscow's case) and competing with each other for global supremacy. To achieve this end, the Russian Federation does not exclude use of military means (as wars in Georgia and Ukraine show, but also military support for certain regimes in the Middle East and Africa), but also diplomacy among the strongest international actors (Yalta style).

In what concerns India, "the largest democracy of the world" has witnessed an unbalanced evolution during the last decade. On one hand, the supremacy of Hindu nationalists, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, only limited democratic pluralism, although the opposition of the Indian National Congress is still significant. However, Modi's authoritarian government style has managed to see a crippled economy prosper and even boom in some fields (IT, for example), without significant state involvement. The country is, currently, one of the biggest exporters of agricultural products in the world and is becoming a hub for some industrial sectors (car manufacturing and textiles, among others) at regional level. Still, India's internal issues are present, such as religious conflicts among Hindus and Muslims, a predominantly conservative society, corruption, endemic poverty and poor health conditions. At international level, New Delhi has good relations with most international actors, going from traditional alignment with the UK and other Commonwealth nations (such as membership of the Quad), significant weapons and gas imports from Russia, cordial relations with the EU and US to diplomatic agreements with China (although the two countries have long-time border disputes in the Himalayas). The only regional conflict of India concerns Pakistan and its interest over the Kashmir state, but that did not stop the two countries to become members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2017. At the same time, India acts as a regional great power, by regularly sending peace-keeping forces or mediating conflicts in neighbouring countries (such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka or the Maldives)⁶. On the whole, India is interesting in preserving the international strategic balance, but also in promoting its status of significant emerging great power coming from the Global South, with strategic interests at world level (possibly as permanent member of the UN Security Council).

Coming to China, its status as a main challenging actor of the western supremacy at world level cannot be disputed. The consistent economic development of the last four decades turned the Chinese state from a Third World country into one of the world giants. From a political point of view, though, Beijing has preserved the single-party totalitarian communist system, by eliminating all significant opposition and gradually recovering control over former western colonies such as Hong Kong and Macao. This rather closed political system was nevertheless accompanied by a market-oriented economy, with some form of state control but giving priority to massive exports towards the rest of the world. Thus, China is nowadays the new "workshop of the world", becoming the first trading partner for many countries from Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and Oceania. However, at internal level there are still significant development gaps between the coast and the inner countryside, translated into significant social imbalances, while autonomy claims of ethnic minorities (such as Tibetans or Uyghurs, but also Mongols) are quickly suppressed. In terms of international affairs, China has tense relations with the US, mainly due to Washington's support for the *de facto* independent Taiwan (*Republic of China*), but also for traditional regional opponents such as Japan, South Korea

⁴BBC News, "Brazil country profile", 2 May 2023, in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18909529>, accessed on 9 February 2025.

⁵CIA, "Russia" in *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/russia/>, accessed on 9 February 2025.

⁶BBC News, "India country profile", 10 June 2024, in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12557384>, accessed on 9 February 2025.

and Philippines. To counterbalance this, China has launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), by which it is trying to improve relations with countries in continental Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe (including EU), and also increase its economic investments and revenues worldwide. Also, Beijing offered its support to anti-western structures such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and acts as main ally to isolated repressive regimes such as Cuba, North Korea or Venezuela. At the same time, China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and a nominal supporter of the international status-quo, but it regularly challenges US and western initiatives and tries to develop its own alternative institutional entities (such as the New Development Bank, an official BRICS institution based in Shanghai)⁷. Not least, China is a nuclear and space great power and closely collaborates with Russia at military level, therefore its interest in changing the status-quo at world level cannot be denied.

For South Africa, becoming a member of BRICS was a surprising step towards gaining additional international legitimacy. Following the removal of the apartheid regime in 1994, with significant western support, the new Pretoria regime seemed to quickly evolve into a liberal democracy. However, the predominance of the African National Congress (ANC) as leading party for the last three decades was rather detrimental to the country's pluralism and social development. Currently, in spite of significant economic development (mainly due to natural resources, such as diamonds, gold and other metals), South Africa has serious internal issues, such as rampant corruption, significant organized crime, AIDS, poverty and persisting revenue gaps among urban and rural regions, as well as among black and white populations. All these affected the country's international status, although it is well-aligned with the western world (for example, as full member of the International Criminal Court) and an important member of the African Union (it hosts the Pan-African Parliament). BRICS membership confers to South Africa the status of regional African power (it is in fact the dominant force of the South African Development Community/SADC – including other 14 countries in the region).⁸ Pretoria would like to become a permanent member of the UNSC and participate to the creation of a new world order, where the Global South would have more influence.

New Members

In 2024, BRICS has received a new impetus, following the accession of four new members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Other two countries, Argentina and Saudi Arabia were invited to join but eventually decided to stay out, mainly due to their interest in giving priority to relations with the US. In 2025, Indonesia joined the organization, while other eight countries have applied for membership and nine others are partners of BRICS.

As far as Egypt is concerned, its accession to BRICS was not a surprise, if we take into account its history of non-alignment during president Nasser's rule in the 1960s. After the US-friendly Mubarak regime was ousted in 2011 by the Arab spring revolts, the military gradually recovered control over a country dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood fundamentalist organization. Since 2013, the regime of former general El-Sisi has been ruling Egypt, being concerned to have good relations with all international great powers, including the US, China and Russia, but also the EU (Egypt has signed an agreement with the EU to tackle illegal migration). Currently, Egypt is one of the most densely populated African and Arab countries, with over 107 million people, even if only 11% of its huge territory (1,018,408 sq. km) is inhabited, the rest being covered by desert. Its economy mainly relies on exports of agricultural products (grown around the Nile River), oil and gas resources and tourism. Its main challenges at regional level are containment of Turkey's influence over the country (as main supporter of the suppressed Muslim Brotherhood) and preventing Israel from gaining relative power in the Middle East and pushing Palestinian refugees from Gaza to Egypt. It also militarily supports official governments in the internal conflicts from neighbouring Libya and Sudan⁹. Internally, though, the Cairo regime has to deal with persistent Islamic terrorism (also directed against Coptic Christians), poverty and endemic corruption.

Another African new member is Ethiopia, also a densely populated country, with 133 million people (of which, though, 67% are Christian), and with a huge surface (1,104,300 sq. km). After collapse of the communist regime in 1991 and the secession of Eritrea (1993), the Ethiopian state lost access to world seas and developed a sort of federal parliamentary regime in order to keep all the strong local tribes together. However,

⁷CIA, "China" in *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/china/>, accessed on 9 February 2025.

⁸BBC News, "South Africa country profile", 9 July 2024, in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094760>, accessed on 9 February 2025.

⁹CIA, "Egypt" in *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/egypt/>, accessed on 16 February 2025.

at internal level, the country was confronted with regular uprisings of local populations, such as the Afar, Amhara, Oromo and Tigray. The scarcity of water resources led the country to propose a dam project on the Blue Nile, which is vividly opposed by Egypt. Other internal problems include poverty and corruption, although it has one of the fastest growing economies in the world (10-11% between 2004 and 2014) based on exports of agricultural products (coffee, sorghum, sweet potato, sesame and many others), textiles and minerals (gold, gemstones). Its main economic partners are China, US, UAE and India. At international level, Ethiopia is a member of the African Union, hosting the African Union Commission in its capital city, Addis Ababa¹⁰. It generally supports peaceful resolution of conflicts, but also its access to world seas, including a UAE brokered agreement with Somaliland, a breakaway region of neighbouring Somalia.

Iran is another BRICS new member, this time from the Middle East. It is one of the biggest countries in the region, with a population of around 86 million people and a surface of 1,648,195 sq. km. The country has significant oil (10% of world reserves) and gas (15% of world reserves) resources, being a founding member of OPEC. Also, during the last two decades, the country has developed important nuclear energy capabilities (with Russian assistance). Since 1979, following the Islamic Revolution that has deposed the Shah, the country has been ruled by an Islamic Shia regime led by the religious spiritual leader (*Grand Ayatollah*, currently Ali Khamenei – since 1989). Although it allows for regular parliamentary elections and different political factions, the internal politics of Iran is regulated following religious principles defended by the Guardian Council subordinated to the spiritual leader. Democratic opposition is violently repressed and forbidden, including any women emancipation movement. At international level, Iran supports the principle of Islamic revolution, also achieved by military means. Thus, it finances Shia parties in Iraq and terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Palestinian Authority), Houthi (Yemen). Apart from good economic relations with Iraq, Lebanon and Syria (until December 2024), it also has close relations with Russia, China, North Korea and Tajikistan (ethnically kin country)¹¹. Its main purposes, at international level are to become the most significant actor in the Middle East, acquire nuclear weapons and destroy the western world order imposed by the US.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a relatively new actor at international level, mainly due to its significant oil resources (it is also an OPEC member). It has a relatively small population (11 million people) and surface (83,600 sq. km) and it has been independent only since 1971 (from British rule). However, during the last three decades, this federation of Arab emirates has managed to achieve a remarkable economic development, based on oil revenues. Its GDP per capita is one of the highest in the world, at the level of around 77,000 USD (2024). Nevertheless, at internal level, UAE is still a quasi-absolute hereditary monarchy, with a high level of immigrant labour (88% of the total population, but without political rights) and a dire record of respect for human rights. Most of the labour force is living in poor conditions, in high contrast with the lavish living standards of the small native population. Also, all political opposition is generally suppressed by the federal government. At international level, the UAE was traditionally an ally of the US and the former colonial power, the UK, and even has diplomatic relations with Israel, but also with the Taliban regime from Afghanistan. However, lately, UAE has developed good relations with countries like China, Egypt, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia. UAE was involved in supporting various factions in some Middle East civil conflicts (rebels in Libya and Sudan, governmental forces in Yemen), also with military forces. It has also acted as mediator in some international crises, such as the wars in Ukraine (2022) and Gaza (2024). Its main regional opponents are Iran (maritime border issues concerning some islands in the Persian Gulf) and Qatar (local economic rivalry)¹². Generally, UAE is profiling as an international mediator, having good relations with all significant world actors.

Indonesia is one of the world's largest nations in terms of population (4th), with over 282 million people (2024). It covers a surface of 1,904,569 sq. km, situated over no less than 17,000 islands (922 with permanent inhabitants). A former Dutch colony (until 1949), the Indonesian state is currently one of the largest economies in the world (member of the G20 and main international exporter of palm oil, plastics, textiles and footwear), the largest Muslim nation on Earth and one of the largest oil and gas exporters at international level (OPEC founding member). Traditionally a significant US ally in Southeast Asia, Indonesia was ruled until 1998 by a military dictatorship led by former general Suharto. Even after the country's democratization, the

¹⁰BBC News, "Ethiopia country profile", 2 January 2024, in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13349398>, accessed on 16 February 2025.

¹¹CIA, "Iran" in *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/iran/>, accessed on 16 February 2025.

¹²BBC News, "United Arab Emirates country profile", 7 September 2023, in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703998>, accessed on 16 February 2025.

military still holds an important role, especially as a deterrent factor against Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. The dispersed feature of the country is also fuelling its main internal issues: there are important development gaps between urban and rural areas, as well as between the island of Java (hosting more than half of the country's population and its capital city, Jakarta) and the rest of the islands (separatism is an issue in regions such as Aceh, Western Sumatra, or West Papua); there are often religious conflicts between the majority Muslim and Christian minorities (for example in Sulawesi); the presidential political system often tends to use authoritarian measures in order to quell regional dissent. At international level, Indonesia is trying to portray itself as a regional power, being involved frequently in peace-keeping missions in conflicts all over the world (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, DR Congo, Egypt, Haiti, Lebanon, Mali, Namibia, Sudan, South Sudan, Western Sahara among others). At the same time, it has some maritime border disputes with neighbouring countries, such as Australia, Malaysia, Philippines, and a contentious relation with East Timor, which it occupied between 1975 and 1999. Indonesia has diplomatic relations with 190 countries, which makes it a likely mediator at international level. It has close economic relations with China, the US and India¹³.

Common Features and Interests

At a first glance, the current members of BRICS are a rather heterogeneous gathering of several different important countries from all corners of the world. But, when we look more thoroughly, we can discover some common features leading to common interests of its members.

Firstly, the leaders of the respective countries are all strong personalities, inclined, more or less, to rule in authoritarian manner, like "fathers of their nations". Some of them were democratically elected, others were imposed by ruling elites in non-transparent manners, but all claim to represent the "will of the people". Their personal relations account for an important part of the relations between their countries, as each considers the others as reliable partners in the common endeavour to change the Bretton-Woods status-quo.

Secondly, with the notable examples of Brazil and South Africa, and partially India and Indonesia, most of them are authoritarian regimes, some disguised in façade electoral democracies (Russia, Iran, Ethiopia), others plainly repressive of any significant opposition (China, Egypt, UAE). Even within democratic regimes, though, there are issues concerning a predominant political force (India, South Africa) or personalized politics (Brazil, Indonesia).

Thirdly, every BRICS member has a wide range of internal issues, which were not properly tackled by a sound governance and are minimized by their leaders, or plainly hidden from sight by state censorship over public media and information. In order to manipulate public opinion, BRICS leaders are usually trying to prioritize foreign policy projects that do not directly tackle upon their internal issues but instead occupy public attention with other "grand projects": an identity war against a neighbouring country or an attempt to control sea trading corridors, acquiring nuclear weapons to deter a dangerous neighbour (three of BRICS countries are nuclear powers), establishing parallel international institutions to compete with western ones etc.

Fourthly, most of BRICS members have historically had an experience concerning Marxist governments (Russia, China, Ethiopia), or at least influenced by Marxism, in what concerns the leading force (India, South Africa, Brazil). That had a lasting influence over the manner in which they conceive government (from dictatorship of proletariat to dictatorship of the majority, importance of the military), economy (an important state control over the main sectors) and foreign policy (international cooperation). On the other hand, the four other members are countries where Islam plays an important role, from leading force (Iran, UAE) to main opposition group (Egypt, Indonesia).

Fifthly, if we are looking at the profiles of candidate, partner and invited countries of the BRICS, we could notice their resemblance to the current members. Thus, some of them are isolated authoritarian (or even communist) regimes trying to consolidate their internal and international legitimacy and economic development (Algeria, Belarus, Cuba, Vietnam), others are dominant party democracies with serious economic or internal issues (Bangladesh, Bolivia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Syria, Uganda, Uzbekistan), others are autocratic regimes with economic advantages (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Thailand), while others are important democratic countries with dominant leaders, aiming at regional supremacy (Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey).

Not in the least, every BRICS member considers itself a great power and aims at acquiring regional supremacy in order to impose its priorities over smaller nations. Thus, in some cases, there are two (or even three) rivals from each region which tend to tackle each other's supremacy: China, India and Indonesia from

¹³CIA, "Indonesia" in *The World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/indonesia/>, accessed on 16 February 2025.

South-East Asia; Iran and UAE from the Middle East; Egypt and Ethiopia from North-East Africa; Ethiopia and South Africa from the African Union; Russia and China from North-East Asia. Only Brazil escapes this trend, as Argentina (its South American rival) refused to become a member. This shows a rather awkward manner to join an organization, in order not to let the rival state to acquire significant regional advantages.

However, there are also important common interests, shared by all BRICS members. Among these are the thrive to increase their power share at world level (economically, but also politically and militarily), challenging the western order, gathering the discontents of the Global South, changing the institutional design of the UN (mainly the UNSC, except for China and Russia), establishing new funding tools for the developing world (often in exchange for influence), exchanging advanced informational technologies, military equipment and other kinds of industrial technologies, getting better prices for their agricultural products. Thus, at some point, BRICS encourages a new international system, rivalling the traditional western-led WTO-IMF-World Bank one. At the same time, it is a system of great regional powers, each controlling (or aiming at controlling) a slice of the new world (Brazil – South America, Russia – Eurasia, India – South Asia, China – East Asia, South Africa – Southern Africa, Egypt – North Africa, Ethiopia – East Africa, Iran – Middle East, UAE – Arabian Peninsula, Indonesia – South-East Asia).

Perspectives

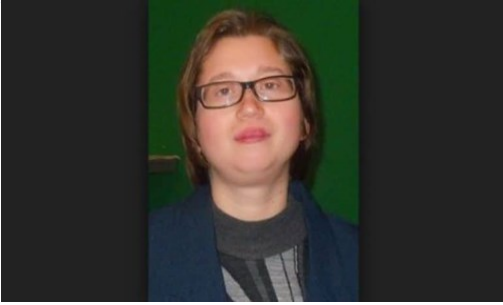
BRICS has evolved over the last two decades, from a loose coalition of states opposing western international supremacy into a significant group, gathering some of the most important emerging powers from the Global South and former communist world. Currently (2023), the 10-member organization has a total population of 3.25 billion people (41.5% of the world population), a total area of 39,746,220 sq. km (26.7% of the world surface) and a combined GDP of 25.85 trillion USD (a little more than the G7)¹⁴. Thus, its influence over the future organization of the world (or the so-called “new world order”) is likely to be considerable.

Taking into account the interests of BRICS member countries, the new world order is certainly going to be different than the present one. Thus, in terms of political regime, the supremacy of liberal democracy in the world is likely to fade away in favour of authoritarian regimes (the so-called “illiberal democracy”, which the Trump regime also currently promotes within the US and also around EU member countries), which could use the advantages of artificial intelligence (AI) in order to achieve greater control over the population. In terms of economy, the free trade world of the last three decades (governed by WTO norms) is most likely to leave place to a world of competing economies that want to carve a greater share of the international economic space for themselves (similar to the manner in which colonial empires tried to do at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century). However, in what concerns foreign affairs, the BRICS new world would rather present itself as a space of settled influence spheres (following the model of the Tordesillas and Zaragoza treaties of 1494 and 1529, or the Anglo-French Convention of 1898 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907), with each member state holding influence over its neighbouring region.

A special mention must be made, nevertheless, in what concerns China, whose advantages during the current world economic setting cannot be denied, but whose interests could evolve even further. Therefore, as the main actor of BRICS (43% of population, 24% of surface and 70% of GDP), China could turn into a new global superpower, rivalling the US for world supremacy, as during the former bipolar rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union (1945-1991). From this point of view, BRICS could be seen as an organization promoting China’s supremacy in the world, as opposed to the former Bretton-Woods institutions, which promoted US supremacy. So, instead of promoting multipolarism at world level, it could end up supporting a new bipolar era. However, this new bipolarism could revolve less around political ideologies and more around competing economic trading principles: Chinese globalism vs. American protectionism. Following this line of reasoning, the EU could find itself more inclined to join BRICS nations, even if its political values are different (but more like democratic nations such as Brazil, India and South Africa), than to remain a close ally of the US, if the perceived power of Washington (both hard and soft) in the world would seem to decay.

¹⁴Afota, Burban, Diev, Grieco, Iberrakene, Ishii, Lopez Forero, Paul, Sammeth, Valadier, loc. cit., p. 3.

NEW WORLD ORDER



China-US Relations in Light of Donald Trump's New Mandate in the White House

Mona AGRIGOROAIE (Romania)

Donald Trump's term in office from 2017 to 2021 has been marked by an unconventional approach and, in many cases, a significant break with traditional US foreign policy. Instead of a multilateralism policy, characteristic of previous administrations, Trump has promoted a unilateralist policy, focused on prioritizing US domestic interests and undermining traditional alliances. This principle was summarized in his famous motto "America First", which has guided most of his foreign policy decisions. One of the most important areas of interest has been the relationship with China, which has been radically reconfigured under his leadership.

The principle of "America First" has been essential for understanding how Trump has approached US foreign policy. Instead of the US's traditional commitment to free trade and a rules-based global economic organization, Trump has chosen a protectionist policy, aimed at reducing the US trade deficit and protecting American industry. At the heart of this vision was a strong criticism of economic multilateralism



Source: <https://wccftech.com/china-counter-trump-us-tariffs-preferring-made-in-china-goods-for-official-use/>

and international trade agreements, which he believed favored other countries to the detriment of US economic interests. To implement this policy, Trump used numerous economic instruments, the most significant being trade tariffs and economic sanctions. These measures targeted not only smaller partners, but also major economies such as China, the European Union, and Mexico. Within this system, China was undoubtedly the Trump administration's main economic adversary.

One of the most notable shifts in US foreign policy under Trump has been how he handled the relations with China. Under Trump, economic and diplomatic relations between the two superpowers have been marked by heightened competition, including a trade war and aggressive technological and military moves.

Starting with 2018, Trump launched a trade war with China, imposing high tariffs on Chinese imports and accusing Beijing of unfair trade practices. These practices included intellectual property theft, forced technology transfers, and currency manipulation. These accusations were based on the belief that economic relations with China were unfair and that the US needed to protect its economic interests and rebalance its trade balance.

Trump imposed 25% tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese imports, and China responded with similar tariffs on American products. Trump also warned American companies to reduce their dependence on Chinese manufacturing and promoted the “repatriation” of jobs to the US. These measures had a significant impact on the economies of the two countries, as well as on the global economy, generating considerable volatility in international financial markets.

In addition to the trade war, Trump has also brought to the fore another type of competition: in the technological field. A key part of his vision for relations with China has been the concern for national security, especially regarding China’s technological expansion. Trump has banned the Chinese giant Huawei from the US market and pressured other countries not to use its equipment in the implementation of 5G networks. Accusations of cyber espionage and the use of Huawei technologies to collect data for the Chinese government have fueled this policy of “isolating” the company globally.

Furthermore, Trump has imposed economic and trade sanctions on Chinese companies such as ZTE and TikTok, accusing them of threats to national security and violations of data protection laws. These measures have led to a deepening fracture between China and the United States in the technological field, and some analysts have spoken of the beginning of a “digital cold war” between the two nations.

On national security, Trump has adopted a more assertive policy toward China, continuing to support Taiwan, an island that Beijing considers part of its territory. The Trump administration has sold advanced weapons to Taiwan and organized official visits to the country, a move that China has seen as provocative. Trump has also strengthened U.S. alliances in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, in an effort to counter Chinese expansion in the South China Sea and strengthen “freedom of navigation” in this strategic region.

Trump’s foreign policy has also been characterized by a rejection of multilateralism and withdrawal from numerous international organizations and global agreements. In 2017, Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement on climate change, arguing that the agreement was harming the US economy while disproportionately benefiting other countries, including China. His administration also withdrew the United States from the World Health Organization, accusing the WHO’s director-general of mismanaging the COVID-19 crisis and favoring China.

Similarly, Trump has been highly critical of NATO and has questioned US commitments to the organization, calling on member countries to increase defense spending and take on more responsibilities. The “America First” policy has led to a partial isolation of the US on the international stage, which has raised concerns among America’s traditional allies.

Traditionally, American foreign policy has been based on multilateral engagement and the promotion of a rules-based international order, supporting international institutions such as the United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. Trump has bucked these traditions by placing a much greater emphasis on US economic and national interests, and in many cases has preferred bilateral approaches, which have allowed him to play stronger in the short term but have sidestepped the constraints of international institutions.

This break with American diplomatic tradition has been clearly provocative, but it has also had a significant impact on international relations. For example, the withdrawal from international agreements and global organizations has created a power vacuum that has been quickly filled by other great powers, notably China, which has adopted a much more active policy on the international stage, seeking to become a global leader on issues such as climate change and world trade.

Donald Trump’s foreign policy has been a significant departure from the traditions of American diplomacy, marked by a unilateralist and protectionist approach. In his relations with China, Trump has adopted a much more aggressive and combative stance, which has included economic and strategic measures designed to counter what he sees as unfair behavior on the part of Beijing. While this style of foreign policy has had immediate results, such as reducing the trade deficit or strengthening the US position in the technological field, it has also generated a climate of uncertainty and instability on a global scale. It remains to be seen how these policies will evolve in the post-Trump era and whether they will leave a lasting legacy on international relations.

Trade War: A Global Economic Conflict

The trade war between the United States and China, which officially began in 2018, has been one of the most significant economic conflicts in recent years and has had a major impact on global economies, international trade structures, and the strategies of multinationals. Under the leadership of Donald Trump, US foreign policy has been oriented towards protecting the American economy by combating what were perceived as

unfair trade practices on the part of China. The trade war has had an impressive scope and included drastic economic measures, such as tariffs imposed by both sides, sanctions, and restrictions on key companies, which has led to a major change in global trade relations.

The main accusations that the Trump administration has leveled against China during the trade war center on three fundamental aspects of Chinese economic behavior:

- **Intellectual property theft:** The US has accused China of systematically stealing intellectual property, such as patents, copyrights, and trade secrets, from American companies. According to official reports and independent studies, American companies operating in China have been forced to reveal their technology as part of a practice of “forced technology transfer.” The US estimated that China stole hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of intellectual property annually.

- **Forced technology transfer:** American companies that wanted to invest in China or sell products on the Chinese market were often forced to share technology with local partners. This mechanism was considered a form of economic coercion and a way for China to strengthen its domestic technology at the expense of the economic development of other countries.

- **Currency manipulation:** The US has accused China of manipulating its currency, the yuan, to make its exports more competitive in international markets. Although China has denied the allegations, the Trump administration has argued that the practice has contributed to a significant increase in the US trade deficit.

In the face of these accusations, the Trump administration has argued that the United States must take a tougher approach to protect domestic industry and correct what it sees as systemic inequities in the economic relationship between the two nations.

In March 2018, Trump began imposing tariffs on Chinese imports, initially on high-tech electronics and products, including semiconductors and mobile phone components. These tariffs were gradually raised and, within months, were extended to a much broader range of products, including consumer goods, textiles, and industrial equipment. The tariffs imposed by the United States have now exceeded \$370 billion, affecting a large portion of bilateral trade.

In response, China has imposed reciprocal tariffs on American products, including soybeans, automobiles, and other agricultural products that are essential to the American economy. These measures have had a significant impact on industries in both economies, as well as on interconnected global economies.

Trump has also imposed restrictions on Chinese companies, most notably Huawei, the telecommunications giant, which he accuses of economic espionage and national security threats. The administration has pressured U.S. allies to ban Huawei equipment from their markets, leading to a deterioration in relations between the United States and several countries in Europe and Asia.

In January 2020, after nearly two years of negotiations and escalations, the United States and China signed a “phase one” trade deal to ease tensions and end a significant part of the trade war. The deal included several commitments from China:

- **Purchases of American goods:** China pledged to buy an additional \$200 billion in American goods over the next two years, mainly agricultural products, energy, and manufactured goods. These commitments were intended to reduce the US trade deficit and help economies in areas most affected by the trade war, such as the agricultural states of the Middle America.

- **Protection of intellectual property:** The deal included measures to protect intellectual property rights and reduce forced technology transfers. China also agreed to toughen sanctions against piracy and intellectual property theft.

- **Currency and exchange rate manipulation:** China agreed to stop artificially devaluing the yuan and to allow greater transparency in its monetary policies, a key point of the negotiations.

In exchange for these commitments, Trump reduced tariffs on some products but did not lift all the sanctions he imposed. However, the agreement did not resolve the fundamental disputes over Chinese government subsidies and industrial policy, which remained a major source of tension.

The trade war has not only impacted the economies of the United States and China, but also had repercussions for the global economy. The tariffs imposed by both sides have led to higher prices for a wide range of products, affecting not only consumers in their respective countries but also emerging economies that depend on trade with American and Chinese products.

The global supply chain industry has also been severely affected. Many Chinese suppliers that export critical components to American manufacturers of electronics, automobiles, and industrial equipment have been forced to rethink their production and distribution models. Many American companies have begun to move their production to other countries in Asia or even to other regions, in an attempt to avoid tariffs imposed

on products made in China.

The trade war has also led to a blockage in investment flows and created an atmosphere of uncertainty in international financial markets, with the effect of decreasing confidence in the stability of global trade and slowing economic growth in many regions of the world.

The trade war between the United States and China has been one of the most significant economic conflicts in decades, with a significant impact on global economies and international relations. While the 2020 phase one agreement represented a temporary cessation of escalation, many of the underlying disputes have not been resolved and remain a source of tension between the two economies. The trade war has brought to the fore the globalized nature of contemporary economies and the interdependence of supply chains, and its effects will continue to shape global economic policy for many years to come.

Taiwan and the South China Sea Policy: A Firm and Provocative Approach

Donald Trump's tenure has been marked by a much more aggressive foreign policy regarding China's behavior in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly regarding Taiwan and the South China Sea. The Trump administration's foreign policy has been one of deterrence and active support for countries and regions that oppose Chinese territorial expansion. In this direction, Trump has taken concrete steps to support Taiwan in the face of Chinese pressure and has challenged China's actions in the South China Sea, two essential themes in Asia-Pacific foreign policy. Taiwan is an extremely sensitive issue for China, which considers the island to be part of its national territory. Although it has never officially declared "war" against Taiwan, Beijing is determined to "reunify" Taiwan with the rest of China by any means possible, including diplomatic, economic pressure and, in extreme cases, the use of force. In this context, any international support for Taiwan is perceived by China as a direct challenge to its authority over the island. During his term, Donald Trump has taken a firm stance on Chinese policy towards Taiwan. Although the "one China" policy was formally adhered to by the US, the Trump administration has actively strengthened relations with Taiwan without officially abandoning this policy. This was a change from previous administrations, which focused on maintaining a balance between not offending China and discreetly supporting Taiwan.

One of the most significant actions of the Trump administration has been the continued sale of arms to Taiwan, including the delivery of advanced air defense systems and missile equipment that have strengthened the island's military capability. Throughout his term, Trump has authorized billions of dollars in arms sales, including F-16 fighter jets, anti-ship missiles, and missile defense systems. These arms sales have been essential for Taiwan in protecting its sovereignty in the face of potential Chinese aggression. In addition to arms sales, Trump and his administration have strengthened diplomatic relations with Taiwan. For example, in 2020, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lifted restrictions on official relations between the US and Taiwan, which was seen as a significant step towards strengthening bilateral ties. In December 2020, high-level US officials visited Taipei, a visit that was perceived by China as a major provocation, given that it represented the escalation of the official relations between the two countries. These actions were seen by Beijing as provocative, and China reacted with angry statements and direct threats. For example, on several occasions, China warned that it would react harshly if the United States continued to support Taiwan this way, including by intensifying diplomatic and economic pressure on the country. Trump has also been less reserved in his public statements about Taiwan. Unlike his predecessors who adopted a more discreet policy, Trump has made statements in which he emphasized support for Taiwan and its right to decide its own future. In 2019, Trump declared that he would support Taiwan "firmly", thus attracting the attention of the entire region, but also China's, which believed that these American positions could erode the "one China policy".

These positions have increased tensions between the US and China, but have also had a positive effect on Taiwan, strengthening the sense of security among its citizens. Despite the harsh rhetoric from China, American support has had a deterrent effect, preventing immediate action from Beijing. The South China Sea is another crucial region for US foreign policy in relation to China, given its strategic importance for global trade and natural resources (especially gas and oil). China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a vast maritime territory that includes disputed islands, such as the Spratly¹ and Paracel² Islands, under Beijing's

¹The Spratly Islands are a group of over 750 reefs, islets, atolls, cays, and other islands in the South China Sea. The archipelago lies off the coast of the Philippines and Malaysia (Sabah). It is located halfway between the Philippines and Vietnam.

²The Paracel Islands, also known as the Xisha Islands or Hoang Sa Archipelago, are an archipelago in the South China Sea whose ownership is disputed between the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The archipelago includes approximately 130 islands and small coral reefs, most of which are grouped into the Amphitrite Group in the northeast or the Crescent Group in the west.

control. It is also claimed by other countries in the region, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

During his term, Trump has taken a firm stance on these Chinese territorial claims, continuing to support “freedom of navigation” in the South China Sea. This has meant challenging China’s claims to control the territory’s resources and denying other nations access to international shipping lanes.

The Trump administration has continued to conduct military exercises in the South China Sea, both with its traditional U.S. allies such as Japan and Australia, and with countries in the ASEAN region that dispute China’s claims. These exercises, which have included naval exercises and international waters patrols, have been designed to demonstrate the United States’ commitment to “freedom of navigation” and to reaffirm the right of all countries to navigate these waters freely.

In addition, the Trump administration has publicly supported countries that oppose China’s expansion in the region. For example, the U.S. has condemned China’s construction of new artificial islands and military construction on islands in the South China Sea, calling them violations of international law.

Furthermore, Trump strengthened bilateral relations with other Southeast Asian nations, including by providing defense assistance and supporting international initiatives that challenged China’s actions. The United States also continued to use diplomatic tools to support the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes and promote an international system based on respect for international law.

In the context of U.S. policy in the South China Sea, Trump provided strong support to allies in the region, particularly Vietnam and the Philippines, which oppose China’s territorial claims. The United States strengthened military and economic ties with these countries, including through the sale of defense equipment and by strengthening the U.S. military presence at bases in Asia.

Furthermore, Trump supported these countries’ diplomatic actions, condemning the opening of new artificial islands and Chinese military construction on disputed islands in the South China Sea. These measures demonstrated the United States’ commitment to supporting a system of order based on respect for the rule of law and national sovereignty.

Overall, Donald Trump’s foreign policy towards Taiwan and the South China Sea has been firm and provocative in the face of Chinese aggression. Active support for Taiwan and challenging China’s actions in the South China Sea have been key elements of American strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. While this approach has caused tensions and generated virulent reactions from China, it has also strengthened relations between the US and its allies in the region, giving them a sense of security and support in the face of increasingly assertive Chinese power. It remains to be seen to what extent this policy will continue to evolve under a possible second Trump administration or under a new American leadership.

A key dimension of Donald Trump’s foreign policy towards China has been the struggle for global technological dominance, a battle that is being fought on multiple fronts – including in the areas of 5G networks, artificial intelligence (AI), and other advanced technologies. At the end of his term, Trump began to actively support the creation of a global anti-China bloc to counter China’s growing influence in these strategic sectors. Such an alliance could include the United States and its traditional allies, such as the European Union, Japan, and India, and would aim to protect the economic and national security interests of these states in the face of Chinese technological expansion.

This global bloc would involve not only increased cooperation between advanced economies in the technological field, but also a series of concrete measures aimed at isolating Chinese companies from the global market and protecting American technologies. Countering China’s influence in areas like 5G, AI, and global technology infrastructure could become a strategic priority for the Trump administration and mark a significant step in the economic and technological war between the two global powers.

5G: A Critical Battleground for Global Security

One of the most important dimensions of the “tech war” between the United States and China is the 5G telecommunications networks. 5G technology promises to revolutionize global communications infrastructure, with critical applications in areas such as the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, smart cities, the healthcare industry, and even military technologies. Control over 5G deployment and standards could give a country not only economic advantages but also global strategic power.

Huawei, the Chinese technology giant, is the world’s leading supplier of 5G equipment. However, the United States and many of its allies have raised major national security concerns, fearing that Huawei could use 5G infrastructure to spy for the Chinese government or sabotage the telecommunications networks of other countries. There are also concerns that a Huawei-dominated 5G network could leave states vulnerable to China’s geopolitical influence, which could manipulate or control global information flows.

In light of this, Trump has adopted an aggressive policy to combat Huawei. In 2019, the US administration included Huawei on the US Department of Commerce blacklist, prohibiting American companies from selling equipment or technology to Huawei, including essential components for mobile phones and telecommunications equipment. In addition, Trump has pressured his allies to ban the use of Huawei equipment in their 5G networks, claiming that it posed a threat to national security.

To counter Huawei and China's influence in the global 5G infrastructure, the Trump administration has encouraged the formation of a pro-US global bloc focused on developing an alternative, secure 5G network independent of Chinese technology. This bloc would include large, advanced economies such as the European Union, Japan, India and Australia, which are also concerned about the risks associated with reliance on Chinese technology. Within this bloc, alliances would focus on developing and deploying alternatives for 5G networks, such as Nokia (Finland) and Ericsson (Sweden), which are considered more secure and less susceptible to Chinese state influence.

Trump has also actively supported investments in emerging telecommunications technologies, such as "Open RAN" (Open Radio Access Networks), a 5G network approach that allows for a greater degree of interoperability and decentralization compared to traditional models controlled by companies such as Huawei or ZTE. Promoting this type of technology could allow countries in the anti-China bloc to build networks that are more secure, more efficient, and more independent of Chinese companies.

Artificial Intelligence and Protecting American Technologies

Another key area in the global technological competition is artificial intelligence (AI). In recent years, China has made significant progress in the field of AI, investing heavily in research and development and implementing AI solutions in strategic sectors, from population surveillance to the application of advanced technologies in industry and trade.

For the United States, maintaining an advantage in the field of AI is considered crucial, with implications not only economic, but also in the field of national security. AI has applications in sensitive areas such as autonomous weapons, cyber defense, and even intervention in international conflicts. AI is also essential for key industries such as healthcare, transportation, and education.

To protect sensitive technologies and prevent the transfer of knowledge and innovation to China, Trump has promoted a stricter export control policy, including by restricting Chinese companies' access to advanced American technologies. In addition, tougher regulations have been applied to Chinese investments in American technology companies to prevent strategic acquisitions of advanced technologies by Chinese entities. Furthermore, the US has been active in encouraging closer collaboration between allied states on AI research and development. For example, in 2020, the US and the European Union announced collaborative initiatives in the field of AI, including joint research in areas such as AI ethics and data protection. Trump has also supported initiatives to protect personal data and critical infrastructure from cyber risks that could arise from the use of technologies developed in China.

Another important step of the Trump administration was to isolate large Chinese companies that dominate certain global technology sectors. In addition to Huawei, companies such as ZTE and Tencent have also been targeted by economic sanctions and trade restrictions. These measures were aimed at limiting these entities' access to essential technologies and international markets.

Trump banned the use of Chinese software in critical US infrastructure and blocked the acquisition of US technology by Chinese companies, especially in the areas of 5G, AI and high-performance computing. The United States also banned US companies from cooperating with Chinese firms that are involved in industrial espionage or activities that could endanger national security.

A global anti-China alliance in the technology field could become a key factor in shaping international relations and determining the future of the global economy. By supporting the development of safe technological alternatives, promoting international cooperation, and protecting American innovation, the Trump administration has sought to protect U.S. national security and limit China's influence in strategic areas. Creating a global bloc that supports these goals could play a fundamental role in reducing reliance on Chinese technologies and maintaining a global "technological order" based on the principles of safety, transparency, and competitiveness.

Opportunities for the China-U.S. Cooperation despite Geopolitical Conflicts

While U.S.-China relations are undoubtedly marked by intense competition and geopolitical tensions, there are significant areas in which the two superpowers could cooperate, especially where their interests align.

Such a framework could be created even in the face of open conflict, given the global challenges that require collective action. Donald Trump, even with his “America First” policy, could recognize the importance of a pragmatic relationship with China, especially in areas where both countries have common interests and can contribute to solving major global problems, such as climate change, arms control, and global health.

Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century, and inevitably an area where China and the United States, as the world’s largest polluters, must work together to address the disastrous effects of global warming. Despite their political, economic, and ideological differences, both countries have a shared interest in managing climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which are essential for the stability of global ecosystems and the safety of future generations.

Under the Trump administration, the United States has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, but even in the context of a domestic policy less favorable to international climate cooperation, there is a possibility that Trump will recognize the need to work with China on this issue. Both China and the United States have made significant progress in developing and deploying green technologies such as solar, wind, and electric vehicles.

In a pragmatic relationship, the two nations could collaborate on initiatives to reduce emissions and develop sustainable infrastructure, through investments in green technologies and partnerships to promote energy efficiency. There could also be opportunities to promote carbon capture technologies, solutions to reduce air pollution, and initiatives to protect global biodiversity through joint projects. This cooperation could help reduce pressure on natural resources and manage the effects of climate change, in a framework that could address both the economic and environmental needs of both countries.

Another area where there is significant potential for cooperation between the United States and China is arms control. In the context of an increasingly polarized world, in which nuclear risks and regional conflicts are increasingly evident, both sides could be motivated to seek solutions to reduce arms and avoid an escalation that could threaten global security.

Although the Trump administration has taken a more skeptical approach to international arms control agreements, there could be an opening for dialogue and collaboration with China, particularly on nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. Despite their differences, a pragmatic approach could allow for negotiations on key areas such as limiting nuclear arsenals and preventing the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.

The United States and China have been embroiled in several conflicts of interest related to regional security, but at the same time, there is also a shared interest in avoiding open war, which could lead to global instability. Trump could understand the need for continued military dialogue with China to avoid conflict in critical regions such as the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula. Such discussions could help establish confidence-building measures, avoid accidental incidents, and prevent violent escalation of geopolitical tensions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brutally demonstrated that new global threats know no borders and cannot be solved by a single country, regardless of its economic or military strength. Although relations between China and the United States have been strained since the beginning of the crisis, there is significant common ground in the field of global health and scientific research.

A clear example of potential cooperation could be in the field of scientific research and the development of vaccines and treatments for future pandemics. Both countries have huge capacities in the field of biotechnology and medical research, and cooperation in this regard could accelerate progress in the fight against new threats to global health. Collaboration between laboratories in the United States and China, but also between international health institutions, could become a successful example of how two superpowers, despite economic and political competition, can work together for the common good of humanity.

Despite the tensions and economic blockades imposed by the United States on Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE, there are areas where technological collaboration between the two superpowers could be beneficial. Although there are significant risks in terms of national security and intellectual property protection, both countries could cooperate in emerging areas of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and renewable energy.

Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are areas where research and development can benefit from transnational collaboration. Both countries are world leaders in the field of AI, and a partnership to carry out research and development projects in this area could lead to significant advances in technologies that can revolutionize multiple industries, from healthcare to transportation and automation. Although there is significant risk related to data security and control of sensitive information, Trump may be willing to recognize the advantages of pragmatic collaboration in these emerging areas, given that the technological benefits could outweigh the geopolitical challenges.

Despite geopolitical and economic rivalry, there are a number of areas in which the United States and China could cooperate effectively to address fundamental global challenges. Pragmatic engagement, particularly in areas such as climate change, arms control, combating global pandemics, and research into emerging technologies, could offer significant opportunities to avoid a complete breakdown in relations and promote global stability. Despite political and economic differences, both countries have a shared interest in maintaining global balance and addressing challenges that threaten not only their security but also all of humanity.

NEW WORLD ORDER



Can the Traditional International Meetings in Davos and Munich Still Shape the World?

PhD. Eng. Cristian-Marcel FELEA (Romania)

“As many people around the world hope, a multipolar world could prove to be more just, fairer, perhaps even more peaceful. But it could also reverse progress, fuel inequality, undermine human rights, hinder the resolution of global problems, and make global war more likely. If we are to maintain common ground in a world of multiple actors and increasing polarization, we must all support the reaffirmation of the international rules established in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which everyone has agreed. A multipolar world must not become a world in which each pole acts as it pleases, nor in which the rule of law is undermined at both the international and national levels.”¹

Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, President of the Munich Security Conference

On Monday, February 3, the Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree (re)establishing the international music contest “Intervision”, which is intended to be Russia’s answer to the well-known “Eurovision”. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated in December last year that more than 25 countries, including several from Latin America, had expressed interest in participating in the “Russian Eurovision”. Mikhail Shvydkoi, V. Putin’s special representative for international cultural cooperation, revealed to the press that there would be participants from about 20 states, including BRICS+ members, de facto or aspiring.

“Intervision Song Contest” was the name of a pop music contest organized in the former communist region between 1965 – 1968 and then between 1977 – 1980. Since 1994, the Russian Federation has sent participants to “Eurovision”, and in 2008 it won the contest through the performer Dima Bilan, with the song “Believe”. In 2009, “Eurovision” was organized in Moscow, at the Olympic Stadium. Let’s remember the context: In 2005, V. Putin, in a speech in the Duma, designated the collapse of the USSR as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the past century”. In 2007, at the Munich Security Conference, the West announced that Moscow no longer wants cooperation but competition, perhaps even confrontation. In 2008, Moscow’s troops attacked Georgia and occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2014, they occupied Crimea and directly supported the military actions of the separatists in Donetsk and Lugansk.

In May 2014, Russian musician and producer Igor Matvienko announced that the “Intervision Song Contest” would be revived and would be held in Sochi, the city that hosted the Winter Olympics that same year. At the time, there was talk of participants from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The announcement did not materialize in 2014 nor since then. However, in 2025, the Kremlin is directly involved, so that “Intervision” can be revived and give a befitting political response to the “degenerate” “Eurovision”, hosted this year by the Swiss city of Basel.

¹<https://securityconference.org/en/publications/munich-security-report-2025/>.

The “Intervision” decree is the political expression of the warning issued 18 years ago by V. Putin in Munich: you and we are not friends, and from now on you and we are enemies. Why? Because you caused the collapse of the USSR, and we, the Kremlin “siloviki”² elite, cannot forget and forgive this. On the path chosen for confrontation for a new world order, this decree is of equal importance to the ultimatum given to the West in December 2021, through the draft “Agreement on measures to ensure the mutual security of the Russian Federation and NATO³ member states”.



Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xuexiang at W.E.F. Davos 2025

For the Kremlin, the future does not even belong to that multipolar world that Beijing talks so much about and that Europe is willing to take into account – in the terms described by the “Multipolarization” Report of the Munich Security Conference, 2025⁴ – but on the contrary, it is a future of spheres of influence and permanent confrontation, of a zero-sum game. The world of the future imagined by V. Putin is a mirrored West that operates according to the rules of Orthodox and imperialist Moscow.

Davos 2025: with China, without Russia

Post-WW2, several international political leaders have thought of forums, conferences and other types of collaborative platforms that would host debates with the widest possible participation, with the aim of replacing the tendency to slide towards confrontation with the desirable cooperation. Since June 1997, an international economic forum has been organized in St. Petersburg, an event that since its tenth edition (June 2006) has come under the “high patronage” of President V. Putin, and announced great ambitions: to compete with similar traditional debate platforms.

Post-WW2, several international political leaders have thought of forums, conferences and other types of collaborative platforms that would host debates with the widest possible participation, with the aim of replacing the tendency to slide towards confrontation with the desirable cooperation. Since June 1997, an international economic forum has been organized in St. Petersburg, an event that since its tenth edition (June 2006) has come under the “high patronage” of President V. Putin, and announced great ambitions: to compete with similar traditional debate platforms. The 27th meeting in June 2024 was attended by representatives from 139 states: the presidents of Bolivia and Zimbabwe, the presidents of the unrecognized republics of Abkhazia and Srpska, and high representatives of the royal families of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. In 2007, at the opening of the forum in St. Petersburg, a concert was held with the participation of the German band “Scorpions” and the star of the “Bee Gees”, Robin Gibb. The official car brand was “Audi”. In 2024, on the occasion of the forum sessions, local bands and bands from invited states performed (classical music and folk traditions); the official car brand was “Hongqi” – FAW Group.

When V. Putin’s “little green men” took control of the Crimean Peninsula, a territory belonging to the sovereign state of Ukraine, world public opinion remembered V. Putin’s speech in 2007 in Munich, in which he stated the Kremlin administration’s intention to steer the Russian Federation on a collision course with the West. The war against Georgia, in 2008, was not enough for the world to understand that the ex-KGB officer was serious.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at W.E.F. Davos 2025

Following V. Putin’s example, more and more heads of state have since stated that they want to rebel against the post-WW2 world order, including the current one of the United States, Donald John Trump. Present at Davos, Frederick Kempe, the CEO of the “Atlantic Council”, sent in a telegram some warm impressions from Switzerland, naturally focusing on the megalomaniac performance of President Donald John Trump during the speech he gave. Frederick Kempe observed: “In my three decades of attending this Forum, no leader has

²<https://hotnews.ro/interviu-cu-armand-gosu-rusia-de-la-bolseviki-lui-lenin-la-siloviki-lui-putin-401260>.

³<https://mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1790803/>.

⁴Ibidem

dominated the discussion the way Trump did last week. This was true even before Trump made his grand appearance last Thursday, albeit virtually, delivering his speech to the audience on a colossal screen. More than any of the fifty heads of state and government who spoke this week, he held the audience's attention, mostly skeptically, self-congratulatory, with comic moments, ridiculing former President Joe Biden and pleading with global elites for transactionalism and condescension."

Geopolitics in dramatic transformation – Ursula von der Leyen and Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Ding Xuexiang spoke about this, to give just two relevant examples – has raised the stakes of the Davos meeting. Why? Because the list of global hot spots is no longer topped only by aggressive leaders from Moscow or Tehran, but also by US President Donald John Trump, who has not ruled out the use of force to take control of Greenland or the Panama Canal. The question therefore arises among world leaders what will prevent Beijing from doing the same in the case of the island of Taiwan? And if all this happens, how will the world then be able to overcome the successive crises that will feed off each other, uncontrolled?

Five landmarks of Davos 2025, extracted after the event closed its doors and the maintenance staff began to clean up, should be analyzed. "AI, technology, industry: a race against time", the first thesis. With "Industries in the Smart Age" as one of the Forum's key themes, the potential of the "AI Agent" was a phrase that was constantly brought up. Sessions focused on the future of electric vehicles, cybersecurity, smart factories, and the implications of AI for governments and national security.

Under the theme "Economic Growth, Finance: Trust is Key," organizers noted that "tariffs" was one of the words of the week at Davos, and the world's "love-hate" relationship with the US dollar was also the focus of economists in a session called "State of Play: The US Dollar" – which explored the status of the US currency as the main international payment instrument and expectations for its future. We also see European reactions anticipating the evolution towards a digital dollar, announcing the "Digital Euro"⁵.

"Geopolitics: The Need for Constructive Optimism" analyzed the great fears of the future, the grounds for the confrontations between the two major competing blocs and their efforts to curry favor with the "Global South". After all, the global implications of Donald Trump's return to the White House were at the center of most of the debates at Davos, especially the anticipated implications of the policies that the American president announced on tariffs, deregulation and energy. In close connection were the debates on the topic "Climate, Nature, Energy: Can I Get Back on Track?", but which is the track, as long as the moderate and certainly competent voice is not listened to by the militants of the extremes?

That is, of the fundamentalists who defend the environment and the theory of climate change, respectively of the denialist conservatives (with the Bible in hand) for whom there is no basis that would lead us to give up fossil fuels, respectively to burning them to have cheap energy. The Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, posed a rhetorical question to the audience during the "All Hands on Deck for the Energy Transition" debate: "What is more important: energy security or energy transition? Which should we prioritize?", offering the answer: "It's an annoying rhetoric, because we can simply do both!"

Finally, on the topic of "Jobs, Health, Inclusion: Moving Forward, Not Backwards", during the session, experts reiterated the need to reduce gender gaps in health, politics, and the economy; providing equal opportunities for women is a way to stimulate progress in society. "If women's contribution to the economy were equal to men's, the world's GDP would be 20% higher," said Anna Bjerde, Chief Operating Officer at the World Bank, during the "Adding Trillions with Gender Parity" session.

Munich 2025: On Multipolarism, with an Eye on Washington

The Munich Security Conference is a traditional milestone in the history of post-WW2 cooperation between democratic states concerned with the permanent adequacy of the global peace and security architecture, which supported the world order established with the creation of the United Nations in October 1945.

The "Munich Conference for a Security Policy" – an initiative promoted by a handful of former Nazism opponents was first organized in 1963. The main promoter of the event was Ewald-Heinrich Hermann Konrad Oskar Ulrich Wolf Alfred von Kleist-Schmenzin (Ewald-Heinrich von Kleist-Schmenzin for short), who remained the main animator of the Conference until 1998. The sixty-first edition of the Conference was scheduled for three days on the weekend of February 14-16 this year and was opened by a speech by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the President of Germany.

The MSC 2025 had as the theme of debate proposed by the organizers, global multipolarization – a topic dear to China, which Europe seems open to discussing. In January, in Davos, the Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang mentioned in his speech: "I believe that we have the wisdom and ability to find a 'win-win'

⁵https://www.ecb.europa.eu/euro/digital_euro/html/index.en.html.

and ‘all-win’ solution, one that is based on a mutually beneficial cooperation, through communication and coordination. We should not only make the economic globalization pie bigger, but share it better. Secondly, we must jointly uphold and practice true multilateralism. Multilateralism is the right way to maintain world peace and promote human progress. It is the ‘golden key’ to solve the difficulties and challenges facing this world.”

The new White House team descended on Europe in force, with Vice President J.D. Vance at the lead, along with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defense Peter Hegsegh, Pam Bondi, Secretary of Justice and Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent. As in Davos, Donald John Trump tried to capture everyone’s attention with the spectacle of launching negotiations between Washington and Moscow on the topic of the war in Ukraine – as Keith Kellogg had previously hinted – and a new global security arrangement. The performance was opened by the telephone conversation between Trump and Putin on Wednesday, February 12 this year.⁶

Through the voices of J.D. Vance, Peter Hegsegh, and Keith Kellogg, the White House offered some positioning details: Ukraine to give up the eastern territories and Crimea, already occupied by Russia, the Europeans to guarantee security on the demarcation line and what remains of Ukraine and to pay most of the costs of the operations, the United States will continue to deliver weapons and military equipment and other types of financial assistance based on a substantial collateral offered by Kiev, namely the commercial exploitation of strategic metal reserves.

And China – is true, more discreetly, through diplomatic channels – has sent a proposal to organize a summit on stopping the war in Ukraine, without inviting the Ukrainian president to the talks. The Chinese offer, it is said, includes the deployment of troops of the People’s Army to the Ukrainian front as “blue helmets”. In fact, the proposal reveals Beijing and Xi Jinping’s concern, that Washington and Moscow will not negotiate a global arrangement without Beijing. And the trump card in Beijing’s hand is the very economic and military support (unrecognized) it offers Russia, which allows Vladimir Putin resist sanctions and continue to wage his war against Kiev.

The European Union insists that the fate of the conflict in Ukraine cannot be decided without Kiev’s participation, but the approaches to the issue of Donald J. Trump’s team and the Kremlin are different. Putin considers the Kiev government illegitimate, and Washington does not see the alignment with Brussels as relevant, while assuming that the presence of President Volodymyr Zelensky at the talks is not necessary. And one detail that cannot but raise questions: Keith Kellogg is not part of the negotiating team with the Russians.

D.J. Trump spoke for 90 minutes with V. Putin on the phone and they agreed to meet just the two of them in Saudi Arabia and discuss how to divide Ukraine, then how to divide their influence in the world, according to the principle of I give, you take. After the conversation, D.J. Trump made press statements, then called Volodymyr Zelensky and updated him on the situation in an 18-minute conversation. Then J.D. Vance, Marco Rubio, Peter Hegsegh and Keith Kellogg came with clarifications during the Munich conference. And Donald J. Trump commented from the Oval Office: Kiev’s representatives would do well to meet with Moscow’s on the sidelines of the MSC, for a round of exploratory talks.



US Vice President James David Vance at the Munich 2025

Conference Foreign Minister Hurezeanu was also present in Munich. I don’t think he was able to do much, apart from a few protocol meetings to try and find out – the burden of the US Vice President’s speech was extreme. Interesting in this context is Nicușor Dan’s idea: Romania should join the Weimar Triangle: Germany, France and Poland. But I don’t know if it can be done, because it is not clear what Bucharest can bring to this format. Coming back, I think everyone noticed that no one was interested in the main topic of discussion proposed in the Report presented in the preview of the Conference, especially after the speech given by J.D. Vance in the plenary, in which he harshly attacked “Europe’s declining democratic standards”, compared to the American ones⁷. Punctually, he accused the cancellation of the presidential elections in Romania and targeted former European Commissioner Thierry Breton:

“For years, we have been told that everything we fund and support is in the name of our shared democratic values, everything from our policy on Ukraine to digital censorship is presented as a defense of

⁶<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c04n622gzx7o>.

⁷<https://hotnews.ro/vicepresedintele-american-spune-ca-alegerile-din-romania-au-fost-anulate-pe-baza-suspiciunilor-slabe-ale-unei-agentii-de-informatii-si-la-presiunea-enorma-din-partea-vecinilor-sai-continental-1902124>.

democracy. But when we see European courts annulling elections and senior officials threatening to annul others, we should ask ourselves whether we are holding ourselves to a high enough standard. The situation has gotten so bad that in December, Romania outright annulled the results of its presidential election based on weak suspicions from an intelligence agency and enormous pressure from its continental neighbors.”

“From what I understand, the argument was that Russian disinformation infected the Romanian elections. But I ask my European friends to look at the whole picture. You may think it is wrong for Russia to buy advertising on social media to influence your elections – we certainly do – and you may condemn this on the world stage. But if democracy can be destroyed with a few hundred thousand dollars paid for digital advertising by a foreign country, then it is clear from the start that it was not very strong.”

The audience in Munich – vexed. Bucharest – bewildered. Călin Georgescu, the referenced “problem” candidate – happy; he believes that the American vice president will be his support on the road to Cotroceni. He also believed this after the Venice Commission drew attention to the fact that election cancellation is dangerous in a state governed by the rule of law, that it can only be an exception, a last resort. J.D.’s speech Vance at the MSC 2025, even though his topic was Brussels and Bucharest, was undoubtedly aiming for the legislative elections in Germany.

In fact, J.D. Vance avoided meeting Olaf Scholz in Germany, predictably, but he made time to meet with Alice Weidel, the leader of the far-right AfD party. Elon Musk is the most well-known supporter of this extremist German party, which has given clear signals that it has pronounced affinities towards the Kremlin and intends in the medium term to remove Germany from the European Union, that is, in short, to destroy the Union. But what to put in its place? A central European empire, of course, because this is the big idea of the AfD ideologists.



Keith Kellogg, President Trump’s special envoy to the Munich Security Conference 2025

A note here: it seems that both the White House and the Kremlin are united in their interest in contributing to the disintegration of the European Union. The Kremlin – because it wants to return to the Soviet sphere of influence, up to the Elbe, in the Balkans and even further; if it can, why not? The United States with a different vision, discerned by Viktor Orbán – a return to the common market format, a weak political union and an excellent outlet, which would change the sign in the balance of trade between Europe and America.

But has anyone thought about China? China seems to be the only power that talks seriously about a future multipolar world and that has no reason to dislike an integrated European Union, which shares the same vision of a multipolar world.

If the plan to freeze the Russian-Ukrainian conflict materializes, and Beijing brings – for the first time! – troops to Europe, with the status of blue helmets, China’s arguments in support of the idea of a strong Brussels may surprise strategists in the White House and the Kremlin. Although, any “Go”⁸ player, even a beginner, understands perfectly why Beijing would have to act in this way.

The second set of questions was raised when Keith Kellogg intervened, who, although not part of the negotiating team for the summit in Saudi Arabia, provided some details about the negotiating plan and the American tactics in question. In short, the Trump administration will negotiate directly with the Kremlin. Yes, it will consult with Kiev and the Europeans, but they will not have the possibility of a veto on the direction of the negotiations. Kiev must agree to the agreement on the exploitation of strategic metal reserves that Scott Bessent put on the table of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Europe must participate with troops, military equipment and money in the mission to maintain the ceasefire on the demarcation line between Russia and what will remain of the 2014 Ukraine. And, in general, Europe should do well and open its purse from now on to balance spending in NATO: Europe’s defense must be supported by the Europeans.

When, more than five years ago, Emmanuel Macron warned that “NATO is in clinical death”⁹, he anticipated exactly this moment! That is why, once again, history was written in Munich! And as a result, two days after Munich, Paris hosted a meeting of the main European leaders to find the answer to the Trump-Putinist challenge. With a little luck, Europe can become a relevant global actor as a Union, and not for the rivalries between the powers on the continent.

⁸https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Go_Game.

⁹<https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>.

Dubai and Deciphering the Future of International Cooperation

I believe that Davos and Munich are and will remain landmarks in shaping the global world for many years to come, even if there are alternative initiatives promoted or supported by both Moscow and Beijing, as well as other world capitals, in search of relevance. On a map of international relevance – where Moscow, Saint Petersburg or Shanghai are not recent players – of late, the Gulf kingdoms have firmly put themselves out there: Riyadh, Dubai, Doha, Qatar.; e.g. the first meeting of an American president – Donald J. Trump with the Russian president – Vladimir Putin after February 24, 2022 will be hosted by the Saudi kingdom. Relevant in the discussion is the “World Government Summit” event, organized starting with 2022 in the United Arab Emirates and hosted by Dubai. WGS 2025 took place this year between February 11 and 13, the meetings having as a common theme “Shaping the Future of Governance”¹⁰. The Summit brought together leaders, global opinion leaders, experts and other decision-makers from around the world to identify innovative solutions to the challenges of the future. Six sessions were organized: (i) effective governance and accountability; (ii) financing the future and the global economy; (iii) climate, crisis mitigation and resilient cities; (iv) a people-centered future and building skills; (v) global health care transformations; (vi) emerging frontiers and the future. The sessions addressed multiple and interconnected themes. These included the importance of international cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for partnerships between governments, private institutions and international organizations. The focus was on innovative models that can help achieve global aspirations and develop solutions to various global challenges. Speakers argued that such initiatives aim to build a better future and bring about significant transformations in communities, education, healthcare and economies, resulting in sustained growth, prosperity and stability. Speakers at WGS 2025 stressed the urgent need for innovative solutions to societal challenges, advocating for strengthened international development initiatives that leverage the combined capabilities of government agencies, private institutions, and international organizations in key humanitarian and development areas.¹¹ The same Frederick Kempe (Atlantic Council), in one of his traditional dispatches, this time in Dubai¹², conveyed some warm impressions, taken from discussions with various participants at the WGS 2025. “The United Arab Emirates has clearly expressed its intention to be a global leader in investment and development in AI,” Fred Kempe noted. “Just this week, Bloomberg reported that MGX, the UAE-based tech investment vehicle that has already invested in OpenAI and xAI, is in talks to invest in a San Francisco-based Anthropic, which developed the popular Chabot named ‘Claude.’ What was once a regional reliance on US security guarantees has now become a big bet on artificial intelligence as an alternative to deepening ties with China.”



The “Tolstoy” Conference, October 1944 – photo: Churchill and Stalin

China is a deep concern for the Washington establishment, and understandably so, as the Chinese economy emerges as the most resource-rich competitor to threaten the United States’ global position. “His (Donald Trump’s) desire to confront China in order to force a trade renegotiation that leads to better outcomes is particularly popular in this region,” explains Fred Kempe, “where Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are among China’s most important energy suppliers.” “Middle Eastern officials see Trump’s modest 10% trade tax on Chinese imports, instead of the 60% he had threatened, as an olive branch, as were (other Trump gestures) such as inviting Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend his inauguration or the executive order that suspended the ban on (social media platform) TikTok. Officials I spoke to here see an additional positive signal regarding China as due to the influence exerted by billionaire Elon Musk, who spoke to participants via online video link on Thursday (February, 13).” Davos and Munich are annual events of strategic importance and cannot be undermined by other international initiatives, at most complementing them while maintaining their position as referential events. From the meetings in Switzerland and Germany, world leaders are taking the pulse and here we have seen the signs of all the crises of the last five decades. The world is changing, we know this, and in Davos and Munich we find out why and where the global landscape is heading in the future. The same happened in January and February 2025. History is being written before our eyes.

¹⁰<https://www.worldgovernmentssummit.org/>.

¹¹<https://www.wam.ae/en/article/15f20ya-wgs-office-developmental-affairs-stresses>.

¹²<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/inflection-points/dispatch-from-dubai-trump-is-seeking-to-upend-the-global-chessboard/>.

NEW WORLD ORDER



Recent Relations and Confrontations between Various International Actors Are Giving Rise to Abrupt, Unpredictable, Chaotic and Irreversible Changes at the Global Level

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"Victory belongs to the most persevering."

Napoleon Bonaparte

1. Introduction

The developments that characterize the current world in recent times seem to generate an increasingly accentuated global image of instability and unpredictability now more than ever since the end of the Cold War. The heightened geopolitical tensions, the increasingly differentiated and difficult to understand positions of the major international actors, the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and the uncertainties in the global risk environment make the international outlook increasingly blurry for the coming years.

The global order has been fragmenting for some time and seems to be changing irreversibly. For some time now we have been talking about the transition towards a multipolar world at an accelerated pace, with the erosion of the dominance of the Western world and multilateral institutions being subjected to more pressure, and even the evolution of some major international actors towards bilateralism, of course in accordance with their own strategic interests.

Middle powers will also play an increasingly important role

in shaping geopolitics in a landscape marked, as I have said, by major and irreversible shifts in the global balance of power. One of the biggest questions for 2025 is whether President Donald Trump's second term will usher in a more volatile period in global affairs. Some of his policies promise to be disruptive in an already chaotic world. Among the key geopolitical developments to watch will be how the US, under Mr. Trump, deals with allies, adversaries and competitors. The future course of relations between the US, Russia



Source: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/shifting-dynamics-global-power-politics-in-2024>

and China will continue to be the most significant strategic dynamic in the years ahead. Given Trump's already unpredictable personality, Sino-American relations, on one hand, and Russian-American relations, on the other, will either see a further escalation of tensions or some kind of grand bargain, driven by a transactional approach based solely on one's own strategic interests. In such an evolving context, Control Risks a London-based risk consultancy company predicts that the next year national security will be "the guiding principle of international trade and investments".

The basic model and standards of democracy will continue to be challenged and changed around the world, and the trends in the coming years will not be encouraging, as political polarization continues in many countries and politics becomes increasingly fractured and volatile. The erosion or even disappearance of the middle ground and the weakening of voter trust in politicians seem to have become a global phenomenon. This is closely linked to the rise of right-wing populism, which continues to spread across much of Europe also seen in other parts of the world. This global trend of democratic erosion, recorded by many international organizations, is expected to persist, with increasing "autocratization". Global think-tanks assessing the health of democracy in the world are all quite pessimistic about future developments. Political systems, in general, are seen as failing to deliver at a time when public expectations are high and amplified by social media. Global risk intelligence, assessment and forecasting companies see that all these risks that generate social unrest are increasing significantly in most regions of the world.

2. The End of the Dream of Multilateralism and the Rise of Multipolarism

Building international norms and institutions that regulate global relations is perhaps the first step towards understanding the future of the world. Ángel Saz-Carranza – director of the Center for Geopolitics and Global Economy at ESADE Business School in Barcelona – also emphasizes this idea. "This model of governance has never been perfect, but it has been able to generate certainty, cooperation and global stability for more than five decades," says the aforementioned expert. "Today, only the skeleton remains: it is functional in less relevant matters and dysfunctional when dealing with important issues. To give a few examples: the US – the guarantor and designer of the system – has paralyzed and violated the World Trade Organization (WTO). China has ignored the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and Russia has demolished the principle of territorial integrity. Meanwhile, the rest of the countries are helpless observers or silent accomplices." The return of D. Trump to power is likely to accelerate this trend. In his first term, he oversaw the US withdrawal from important multilateral agreements and institutions. Today, he seems determined to deepen this strategy, to prioritize bilateral frameworks in which force prevails over common norms. "This dynamic is a problem for civilization, because it is very difficult to peacefully address global problems or resolve bilateral conflicts without institutions," Saz-Carranza continues. "Unfortunately, it is not easy to imagine the re-foundation and return of multilateralism. The challenge now is to overcome multilateralism, to find alternative mechanisms to hold the world together and govern it. Perhaps one way forward is to use governance models based on multilateral agreements. But this outcome is neither easy nor guaranteed. The alternative is geopolitical confrontation and, ultimately, brute force."

The increasingly exclusive, ruthless pursuit and implementation of national interests by many international actors and, at the same time, the deterioration of an increasingly ineffective and much-criticized multilateral framework in favor of a multipolar framework constitute the context that led to the creation of today's chaotic and conflict-ridden environment.

As a result, in the coming period, we will witness the emergence and intensification of significant changes, as follows:

- a worsening economy in many states and, implicitly, an increase in economic gaps, as those who are highly connected and those who are familiar with significantly superior technologies advance at an accelerated pace, compared to those who have less access to digital tools and less training or skills to exploit them effectively;
- a power increase for large companies with significantly superior technologies as they exploit market advantages and mechanisms, such as artificial intelligence (AI), in various ways that seem to further erode the privacy and autonomy of their users;
- the multiplication and accelerated growth of disinformation as multipolarism will induce a competition between the poles of power, a competition that will create an environment favorable even to the outbreak of conflicts in various environments and fields. The deepest concern is related to the seemingly unstoppable manipulation of the public perception, emotions and action through online disinformation – lies and speeches deliberately weaponized to propagate destructive biases and fears, which can cause significant damage to stability and social cohesion.

Therefore, one of the most important risks that is already looming is ~~that~~ the one generated by a threat that is difficult to define, but which can cause effects and situations for the evolution of any state. In conclusion, in the period ahead we will see a world that will face geopolitical tensions and challenges in all areas, mostly in economy, challenges that will test the resilience of nations, as well as the capacity of the international community to develop collective responses to common problems. Under such circumstances, one must not forget Alvin Toffler's predictions regarding the deep and irreversible evolution of the entire world.

3. From “Soft Power” and “Hard Power” to “Smart Power” and a multipolar world

I remember with great satisfaction that, in December 2020, in the content of an article published in a renowned publication, I argued that it had become very clear that a country can obtain its “soft power” characteristic mainly from the exploitation of three resources: *culture, internal values and foreign policies* - when these are seen as legitimate and lead to moral authority, prestige and, ultimately, to the creation of the image of a desirable partner in international relations. Analyzing the economic trade activities carried out by China and the investment capital offered, to date, to nations in several parts of Europe, we can say that all of this has clearly contributed to the reputation and influence of this large and powerful country at the regional level; but, in reality, the imposing economic power of the Asian giant is between “soft power” and “hard power”, the two forms contrasting each other, because the first comes, as I have previously emphasized, from diplomacy, culture and history.

The notion of “soft power”, introduced by Joseph Nye, in 1990, refers to “the ability to obtain what is desired mainly through attraction, rather than through coercion, constraint or payment”. J. Nye also explained the distinction between “hard power” and “soft power” and was the pioneer of the “soft power” theory. The notion of “smart power” (“the ability to combine “hard power” and “soft power” in a successful strategy”) became popular with the use of this expression by members of the two American administrations, Clinton and Obama. At the same time, I emphasized that international analysis circles were looking for answers to several key questions: What form does Beijing's “soft power” projection take at a regional level? Can we talk about “smart power”? To what extent do China's “soft power” efforts alone help it fully achieve its objectives, for example in Europe? What else might be necessary for future research on China's “soft power” and “smart power” capabilities around the world?

In March 2023, in the issue no. 288 of the Geostrategic Pulse magazine, which was published online (www.pulsulgeostrategic.ro), we emphasized that on various continents or in various regions of the world, there are states that are ready to become poles of power, some of which may even aspire to the role of great power in the future. One of the most eloquent examples that has had such an evolution is the one I mentioned earlier, namely that of China, a state actor that shows the tendency to want and be able to achieve overwhelming superiority in economic, financial and, why not, political and military terms at the regional and global levels.

It has become extremely clear that today's world is facing a series of urgent environmental, economic, energy and security challenges, most of the time proving to be insufficient to deal with them. Global security is at a critical juncture, with numerous challenges that can emerge in real time and are very difficult to quantify and manage. Global growth in 2025 is set to remain stable but “unfavorable” at just 3.2%. Only 17% of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are on track. Health and well-being are in a fragile balance. The energy transition to a positive future remains in its early stages; only about 10% of the low-emission technologies needed by 2050 have been deployed. All this is happening as companies and countries struggle to harness the potential resources and benefits, but also mitigate the risks that are poised to reshape economies and societies as a whole. Generative artificial intelligence has the potential to add between \$2.6 trillion and \$4.4 trillion annually to the global economy, but there are unanswered questions about how to share this benefit fairly and prevent misuse of the technology.

This challenging context raises a fundamental question: what form of global cooperation is needed to effectively and efficiently address the challenges of this emerging new era?

4. Reshaping the “Plots” of Today's World - a Fierce Competition between Various International Actors

China's desire to multilaterally reshape international institutions and create new ones is based in part on its ability to obtain significant support from other states for the success of its regional and global initiatives, eloquent examples in this regard being, in addition to Europe's, which we mentioned earlier, those of the Middle East, the Gulf region and Africa.

In this context, it is imperative to remember that the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, made an historical visit to Riyadh, from 7 to 10 December 2022, inspiring thousands of media headlines about what this special event meant for other international actors, but especially for the US as an important international actor in the Middle East and the Gulf. The China-Arab States Summit, on December 8, 2022, was another diplomatic activity, which was hailed as a first that marked the beginning of a new era of international relations.

Analyzing the developments, relations and activities that took place, at the international level it was concluded that the China-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Summit generated the greatest interest. China's priority was to announce the areas of cooperation for the next three to five years: oil and gas, finance and investment, innovation and new technologies, aerospace, language and culture. Again, many of these were promoted for cooperation through the well-known "Belt and Road Initiative"¹ or CASCF² frameworks.

The series of summits and visits that took place in the Middle East with China's the important participation has probably raised many question for Washington, even though the US is the main entity at a global level that bases its relationship building and competitions' mindset on the "win-win" principle.

The fact that its main strategic competitor was and continues to be perceived as gaining serious ground in a region of great geopolitical importance and with many of America's key allies and partners, seems to be a serious but solvable problem.

We say this because over the past decade, China's transnational interests and influence have expanded, especially among developing countries, and we can say that the days when Chinese foreign policy was guided by Deng Xiaoping's doctrine of "hide your power and bide your time" are over. Now, under Xi's leadership, China is taking a more direct role in all regions of the world, including the Middle East, and is pursuing a global agenda.

In the diplomatic field, China has recently demonstrated its ability to bring together both opposing states with different interests, and some time ago even brokered an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran to reset political ties after seven years of tensions and conflicts. At the time, Saudi Arabia and Iran's decision to restore diplomatic relations took many experts and analysts around the world by surprise, as some commentators claim that the US could never have brokered such an agreement, and the question remains: how important and real and what was China's diplomatic role actually based on and focused on?

In recent times, we can say that the US and China are still on a sinusoidal path of evolution of bilateral relations, and the occurrence of a collision at a strategic level cannot be ruled out. The new Trump administration seems ready to revive tough trade policies: higher tariffs, stricter export controls, and more intense control of technology investments already made or likely to be made by China in the US. The evolution of the US-China relationship will largely depend on how China sees the US' current actions: either as preparation for a bilateral agreement, or a belief that the Trump administration's goal is to pursue a unilateral decoupling of relations. Furthermore, China's strategy towards the US will depend on several factors, but they go beyond the economic dimension.

But on February 5, 2025, as expected, China, which has major interests in the Middle East, firmly rejected the plans "broadcast internationally" by US President D. Trump to "take over" the Gaza Strip, declaring that it opposes the forced displacement of Palestinians to neighboring countries. Beijing "has always believed that 'Palestinians governing Palestine' is the fundamental principle of post-conflict governance in Gaza," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told the media. "We oppose the forced displacement of people in Gaza," Lin stressed, adding that Beijing "hopes that relevant parties will seize the opportunity of the ceasefire and post-conflict governance in Gaza to bring the Palestinian issue back on the right track of a political solution based on the two-state solution, so as to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East."

¹The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), known in China as One Belt One Road (OBOR), is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in over 150 countries and international organizations. It is considered a centerpiece of Chinese leader Xi Jinping's foreign policy. The BRI forms a central component of Xi's "Major Country Diplomacy" strategy, which calls for China to take a greater leadership role in global affairs in line with its growing international power and status. It has been compared to the American Marshall Plan. As of January 2023, 151 countries were listed as having signed up to the BRI.

²The China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) is an official dialogue initiative between China and the Arab League, established in 2004. This forum serves as the main multilateral coordination mechanism between China and the Arab states. CASCF was the first forum for cooperation between the Arab League and any other country or region. CASCF members consist of China and the Arab League, which officially represents its twenty-two member states as a relatively unified body. CASCF therefore serves as the main multilateral coordination mechanism between China and the Arab states. This coordination by the Arab League allows Arab states to actively negotiate for collective projects involving multiple states, such as railway projects, nuclear power projects, and Dead Sea initiatives. Since the suspension of their membership in the Arab League in 2011, Libya and Syria have individually participated in CASCF. Since 2018, China considers CASCF to be under its Belt and Road Initiative.

As I have emphasized on other occasions and in previous articles, China has always pursued and continues to accelerate its global dominance, although it initially sought to be discreet and to progress more covertly and with less access to its knowledge profile by other states. However, for some time now it seems that, in the context of new developments at the global level, China is seeking to signal more and more often and intensely that the era of discretion is gradually being replaced by a bolder and more assertive approach.

But now, in the Middle East, the reality is that Israel has all but annihilated Hamas and has considerably weakened the so-called “Axis of Resistance,” coordinated by Iran. The Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – after a protracted military campaign that has earned Israel the indignant repudiation of much of the international community – may agree to stop the offensive, allowing Mr. Trump to score political points while garnering support for his annexation plans. Israel’s brutal use of force might eventually produce a period of stabilization. But it is hard to believe that the result will be a definitive peace. “The Middle East has already demonstrated the fragility and limited credibility of this strategy – cessation of hostilities, lacking sufficient capacity or consensus to seek lasting solutions,” says Carme Colomina, senior researcher at the Barcelona Center for International Affairs (CIDOB). Syria’s uncertain future – following the sudden fall of Bashar Al-Assad’s dictatorship – underscores the sometimes unpredictable consequences of the current state of instability. Just as the weakness of Assad’s partners – Iran, Hezbollah and Russia – because of their involvement in other conflicts facilitated his overthrow, Azerbaijan took advantage of the Kremlin’s distraction in 2023 to resolve the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with a military coup.

The year 2025 is shaping up to be a powerful accelerator on the path to a new world order. It has become abundantly clear that multilateralism is in the process of total disintegration, many old alliances are deteriorating, new ones are strengthening, protectionism is widespread, and democracy is facing unprecedented threats. China has long sought a change of agreements and pacts between nations that better align with its interests. Russia shattered the post-Cold War balance in 2022, when V. Putin catapulted the globe into a new geopolitical era with his large-scale invasion of Ukraine – a violent challenge to the previous world order. And, starting January 20th – the day of Trump’s inauguration as US president – the global population will have to understand and accept the reality that certain international actors, once global players, now want a new, different global order.

However, we must not overlook an important question for 2025 and for the future: whether other international actors will attempt similar moves, taking advantage of the impunity afforded by an ineffective multilateral framework. A key issue is whether any country will attempt to test Trump’s commitment to defending US allies, whether in Eastern Europe or Asia.

5. The US Has Begun Testing the Entire Global Environment on the Uncertainties Generated by the Hotly Debated Topic of Forming a New World Order

So, in such an uncertain context, it is significant to emphasize here that, on February 5, 2025, President Trump’s proposal that the US “take over” the Gaza Strip and permanently resettle its Palestinian residents was quickly rejected and denounced by allies and adversaries alike, including China and Russia. Trump’s suggestion came at a White House press conference on the occasion of an official meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who smiled several times as the US president detailed a plan for the construction of new settlements for Palestinians outside the Gaza Strip and for the US to take “ownership” for the redevelopment of the war-torn territory in the “Riviera of the Middle East.” “The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it,” Trump stressed.

Saudi Arabia, an important US ally in the Middle East region, quickly analyzed and weighed the idea launched by Trump to take over the Gaza Strip through a clear statement and noting that his call for an independent Palestinian state is the result of a “firm, firm and unwavering position”. “Saudi Arabia also emphasizes what it has previously announced regarding the absolute rejection of the violation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, whether through Israeli settlement policies, the annexation of Palestinian lands or efforts to remove the Palestinian people from their land”, as was shown in the official statement of this mentioned state. The prime ministers of Australia and Ireland, the foreign ministries of China, New Zealand and Germany, and a Kremlin spokesman reiterated their support for a two-state solution. “Australia’s position is the same as last year, as it was 10 years ago,” Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese stressed.

However, we can say that the positions of these international actors were foreseen by D. Trump, who through his many previous statements gave rise to numerous debates and different stances global level. The American official tested and provoked while introducing surprise topics regarding the purchase of Greenland, the annexation of Canada and the possible takeover of the Panama Canal.

However, at first, nobody could clarify whether the idea of taking over the Gaza Strip was a well-thought-out plan or a challenge, but especially a way of stimulating negotiations. “The comments were, of course, very worrying,” said the Irish Prime Minister, Micheál Martin. “I always take the approach when it comes to the US administration: judge them by what they do and not by what they say.” The Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Trump’s proposal for “deportations from Gaza is not something that the region or we would accept.” “Even thinking about it, in my opinion, is wrong and absurd,” Fidan said. As expected, separately, the current Afghan leadership called Trump’s statement a “blatant violation of international law.” According to the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs “Gaza is an integral part of the Palestinian territory and no one else has the authority to determine the fate of its people”. The Taliban-led interim administration, in its own statements, urged “influential nations advocating for justice around the world to adopt a unified, pragmatic and timely stance against such a conspiracy.” Speaking at a roundtable on Ukraine with ambassadors in Moscow, the well-known Russian leader, S. Lavrov, argued that this “culture of cancellation” has now become especially evident in relation to the situation in the Middle East. Highlighting the decisions of the UN Security Council, he said that these decisions, “which were recognized by everyone, without exception, a month and a half ago as a necessary basis for actions to create a Palestinian state, have simply been canceled.” In turn, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on the United Nations to “protect the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights,” making it clear by expressing his own point of view that what D. Trump wanted to do would be “a serious violation of international law.” The current leaders of Hamas, the entity that triggered the war in the region following its attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, for their part, were keen to emphasize that D. Trump’s proposal is a “recipe to create chaos and tension in the region.” “Instead of holding the Zionist occupation accountable for the crime of genocide and displacement, it is rewarded, not punished,” the militant group emphasized in a press release, of course in line with its interests in the region.

But here in the US, politicians from the opposition were quick to reject Trump’s idea, with Democratic Senator Chris Coons calling his comments “offensive and crazy, dangerous and reckless.” “The rest of the world risks thinking we are an unbalanced and unreliable partner because our president is making crazy proposals,” Coons said, noting that the proposal came shortly after Trump decided to dismantle the US Agency for International Development. “Why on earth would we abandon decades of well-established humanitarian programs around the world and now launch one of the world’s greatest humanitarian challenges?” Coons said. In turn, Democratic Representative Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian-American member of Congress from Michigan, accused Trump in a post on social media of “openly calling for ethnic cleansing” with the idea of relocating the entire population of Gaza.

6. BRICS Pays More Attention than Ever to The Regions of the World and, Implicitly, the Middle East

As I have already emphasized in a previous paragraph, China now likes to position itself as a leader both regionally and globally, especially in the developing world. In its National Security Strategy, published in October 2022, the J. Biden administration stated that the greatest challenge to US interests comes from a rising China, so that Washington’s main focus has been on supporting and strengthening the US’s potential for action in competition with China, especially in the context of China’s increasingly visible and stronger connections with the Gulf states, the Middle East and Africa, developments that could influence cooperation with Washington, the main strategic ally and security partner of many states in various regions. Why could such a development occur? Because it is already known that on January 1, 2024, states such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates joined BRICS³. However, it is significant to mention here that on that same date, Saudi Arabia was also invited to join, but in mid-January 2024, officials in Riyadh announced that they were still considering this issue, and in April 2024 they announced that the issue was still under discussion. Other countries in the region are also interested in joining Chinese-led organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation

³BRICS is an intergovernmental organization currently consisting of ten countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. It is considered to be the counterpart and alternative to the G7 bloc of the world’s largest economies and, together, represents almost half of the world’s population. The founding countries are Brazil, Russia, India and China, who initially co-opted the name BRIC and formed a multipolar grouping or informal diplomatic club, where their governments could meet annually in formal summits and coordinate multilateral policies. In April 2010, South Africa attended the 2nd BRIC summit as an invitee, joining the organization in September 2010, renaming the organization BRICS. South Africa attended the 3rd BRICS summit in 2011 as a full member. Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates attended their first summit as member states at the 2024 summit in Russia. Indonesia officially joined as a member state in early 2025, becoming the first member from Southeast Asia. The acronym BRICS+, or its expanded form BRICS Plus, has been used informally to reflect the new members in 2024.

Organization (SCO) and the “BRICS plus”, proposed in 2017. An eloquent example in this regard is that of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have become new dialogue partners of the SCO, while Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) seem to want to follow their example.

In such a context, we can say that the visits of Chinese leaders and the major interest shown by China demonstrate a clear vision of what it wants in the Middle East, the Gulf region and Africa, this vision being articulated and aligned with the agendas of the states in these areas of the world. Currently, we can appreciate that the US is the main international actor competing with China, but it must respond with its own positive vision of how all regions of the world fit into its broader strategy, while also addressing the concerns of its allies and partners.

From a strategic point of view, it is significant to mention here that China is nevertheless recording significant progress in all areas and not only in economy. For example, military spending is increasing: The budget of the People’s Liberation Army has doubled by over 293.35 billion USD since Xi came to power, re-affirming China’s position as the second largest military spender in the world. Economically, the “Belt and Road Initiative” has seen an estimated \$1 trillion invested in projects around the world.

China’s deepening ties with the Arab world, as a major power in the current world and a member of the BRICS, should be seen as a strategy put into action in the context of the US’s declining strategic presence in the region. It is true that the Saudi-US relationship is not at its best, but the US remains Saudi Arabia’s and the Middle East’s largest security partner, and China is its largest economic partner, as various political analysts have pointed out over the years.

China’s total trade with the region has increased significantly since the beginning of the 21st century and is steadily growing, increasing from \$180 billion in 2019 to \$259 billion in 2021. On the other hand, the Middle East’s total trade with the US decreased from \$120 billion in 2019 to \$82 billion in 2021. China continues to work to strengthen its economic ties, moving beyond regional divisions, which helps consolidate its position as the largest trading partner for regional powers such as Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, adding that Saudi Arabia is increasingly committed to putting its own national interests above all others. We must not forget that: “Twenty years ago, China was the largest trading partner for only 12 nations in the world. Today, it is the largest trading partner for over 120 nations in the world, or 60% of all nations,” as Al-Ansari said. China’s growing global engagement, and by extension, in the Middle East, only confirms that the plans, strategies, and policies of all states in the region are based more than ever on continuing to develop a rapidly emerging perception that it is very important for the entire Arab region to have strong relations with the Chinese nation.

It has become very clear that the international and regional situation is significantly marked at present and will continue to undergo profound, complex, and far-reaching changes in the future, which makes China’s strategic and global importance, and by extension BRICS’, relations with the Middle East more prominent.

7. There Is Also a Great Deal of Interest in Africa

Africa is the largest bloc in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, with 28% of the votes, compared to 27% for Asia, 17% for the Americas, and 15% for Western Europe. Africa also holds more than a quarter of the votes in all UN governing bodies and is the largest bloc in other international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the Group of 77, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

This makes African votes in international institutions extremely important for China’s efforts to implement its strategy of redesigning the world order and global institutions. China’s foreign policy priorities are summarized in the doctrine: “Great powers are the key, China’s periphery is the priority, developing countries are the foundation, and multilateral platforms are the stage.”

The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have undermined the ability of many African nations to service their external debts. Currently, 22 African countries with low financial resources are already in debt distress. Chinese creditors account for 12% of Africa’s private and public external debt, which has increased more than fivefold to \$696 billion from 2000 to 2020. China is a major creditor to many African nations, but its loans have declined in recent years and is set to remain at low levels. This situation is likely to worsen in 2025, limiting the ability of African nations to have the financing capacity needed to provide broader improvements in social development for their populations and to respond to various disruptive factors, including climate change. China’s substantial exposure to some African economies, combined with its central role in global governance and economic influence, means it is well placed to help find a solution to the problems created by African sovereign debt.

It is noteworthy that China’s former foreign minister, Qin Gang, spent a week in Africa, a visit that marked a continuation of the long-standing tradition, since 1991, of each foreign minister starting the year

with a visit to Africa.

Qin, who also served as China's ambassador to the United States, made his first official overseas trip in the role, visiting Ethiopia, Gabon, Angola, Benin and Egypt. While in Egypt, Qin met with Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit in an effort to strengthen thawed relations between China and Arab nations. While in Ethiopia, Qin held bilateral talks with Moussa Faki Mahamat, the chairman of the African Union Commission, as part of efforts to strengthen ties with the entire continent and promote multilateralism. When announcing the visit, China's Foreign Ministry said the visit showed that China still attaches great importance to its traditional friendship with Africa and the development of China-Africa relations.

In 2016, with African support, China sponsored the UN Trust Fund for Peace and Development with a contribution of \$200 million over 10 years. The fund supports peacekeeping security, rapid response, and conflict prevention and mediation. In 2018, again with African lobbying, China placed an 8,000-strong standby force at the disposal of the UN for missions in crisis zones. China's increased multilateral contributions have increased its voting power in the multilateral system, giving it a greater say in the formation of global institutions and their norms and working methods.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with observer status at the UN, however, rarely have visibility and knowledge of how China and its African partners leverage their representational power. For example, during the 2018/2019 UN budget negotiations, China reportedly expressed its desire to reduce funding for human rights monitoring within UN missions, reduce NGO observers at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and reduce government cooperation with civil society. While these proposals failed to pass, China has made clear its willingness to exercise its power within multilateral institutions in ways that serve its own objectives and interests. Some UN members (including African countries) have supported the adoption of decisions that would have removed NGOs from the UNHRC and reduced investigative capacity at the UN level. These include missions to the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan, where some of the most serious human rights violations have occurred.

Africa has proven to be central to China's ongoing efforts to build an alternative architecture of global institutions. For example, South Africa is a founding member of the Beijing-based New Development Bank, created in 2014 by the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa) to provide a mechanism outside the World Bank for accessing loans guaranteed by China.

Theories abound as to why African countries seem so determined to help China selectively reshape certain global institutions. In this context, it is noteworthy that African leaders express a variety of motivations, ranging from solidarity with China due to its support for their anti-colonial and anti-apartheid wars, to the belief that a strengthened China will make the world increasingly multipolar, and multilateralism should not be ruled out.

8. We Can Conclude That...

In the current evolving context at the regional and global levels, it is not clear whether Beijing's "zero conflict" policy can remove China from the diplomatic pressure to define the final geopolitical alignments.

As a result, the Middle East is preparing to become an arena for multipolar competition, but this competition may not be vertical nor with very rapid developments and significant effects generated. Therefore, the great powers must respond to the realities on the ground by listening and monitoring carefully the developments and attitudes of the forces in the region and adapting to regional concerns that are in a process of profound change at the global level.

Beijing may want to generate blocs of allied nations according to its image, strategy and objectives, but it will still have to face the challenge of outlining clear objectives and finding the human, material and financial capital to achieve them. We must take into account the tempting headlines according to which, at present, there are still states seeking to join the BRICS, but some of them have calmed down, as I also noted the position adopted by Saudi Arabia, confirming the forecast I mentioned a long time ago according to which the prospect of these two rivals Riyadh and Tehran joining the same multilateral organization, theoretically intended to promote the economic prosperity of all member nations, still seems like science fiction. We say this because, at a certain point, China was courting and trying to attract Saudi Arabia to the BRICS, in a somewhat aggressive way, with the aim of weakening its deep relationship with the West and, implicitly, with the US. Stopping and eliminating the historically tense relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, so that both countries align with China, would be equivalent to a historical evolutionary process at a regional and global level that has never been seen before. BRICS wants to be, theoretically, an ideal instrument to carry out geopolitical transformations in any part of the world, wishing, especially through the impetus generated by China, to become the main leader in an increasingly dynamic Middle Eastern region, but which now seems to be seeking

more independence from the US.

However, we can appreciate that BRICS has not yet carried out all the necessary objective assessments and has not fully fulfilled its mandate and may quickly become an empty vessel for the foreign policy objectives of its most influential members. Why? Because lately a natural question has arisen in the current developments of the whole world: can the BRICS member states facilitate a viable alternative to the introduction of another currency in competition with the US dollar? Developments in all areas worldwide and the current ongoing global financial crisis, but also the confrontational foreign policy of various states and groups of states for changing the world order, could explain why the BRICS member countries have intensified their efforts to launch an alternative currency to the US dollar, the possible consequences and implications of such a move being very difficult to quantify for all economies of the world, but especially for African economies.

It has now become abundantly clear that economic and trade ties, which often give way to and foster political engagement between two states, facilitate close cooperation in other areas, including defense, and should ultimately lead to the development of intelligence and security cooperation, but such a development is very difficult to estimate and forecast for the future of the entire world.

Today, leaders need new mechanisms to work together on key priorities, even if they disagree on others. Recent years suggest that this is possible, and there are strong signs of cooperation. To move forward, leaders will first need to address urgent global security challenges. They must also remain open to new approaches to cooperation that may offer the greatest chance of providing effective solutions. In practice, leaders will need to be careful opportunists. Governments can create new dialogues and open lines of communication as part of an effort to track signals that may run counter to their assumptions or conventional thinking. Companies can strengthen internal geopolitical expertise, implement mechanisms for reading signals, and empower teams to make decisions, all to pave the way for safe and stable growth. The world has changed and is still changing. Mechanisms of cooperation must change with it. Across all domains, public and private sector organizations will need to find new ways to work with actors they may view as competitors and even antagonists.

Current and potential future belligerents will pay even less attention to the suffering of human societies. It has become abundantly clear that various leaders may be operating various tests to see if they can seize pieces of a neighboring state's territory. Most wars today seem to be developing, perhaps in some cases, even with periods of ceasefire until geopolitical developments change or other opportunities arise for the annihilation or even elimination of rivals. It is surprising, but D. Trump could make deals with Pyongyang or even Tehran to restore security in Asia or the Middle East, or with Beijing to prevent competition in various fields from escalating into military conflict, or with Moscow to temporarily calm V. Putin's intentions to expand influence and dominance globally. Yet, in the same context of current developments, we cannot rule out nightmare scenarios – an explosion of conflict in Asia, a wider European confrontation or an attempt to overthrow the Iranian regime, or the mass expulsion of Palestinians, which could trigger a Middle East conflagration. As the pace of change accelerates, the world seems poised for a paradigm shift. The question is: will it happen at the negotiating table or on the battlefield?

NEW WORLD ORDER



To Better Resist Trump's Blackmail, Let's Create a Federation Next to the European Union!

PhD. Jean MARSIA (Belgium)

Obviously, the world is becoming more unstable and threatening. To induce Putin to distance himself from China, Trump risks forcing Ukraine to capitulate, which would encourage Russia to claim more victims, such as Moldova or the Baltic states. Trump and Putin agree to share zones of influence in their neighbourhood. Trump has said he will not refuse to use force to annex Greenland, which contains hydrocarbons, uranium and rare earths, which the melting ice makes more easily exploitable, just as it makes the Northwest Passage, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans via the Arctic, more navigable.

In response to these threats, the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council forget that the remedies for our downgrading and erasure can only come from us and they limit themselves to a call to strengthen a transatlantic link that the American President now sees only as a means of selling us military equipment. They do not envisage much to implement the recommendations set out in the reports of Mr. Letta, Mr. Draghi and Mr. Niinistö¹, even though this would strengthen the transatlantic link.

Let us stop counting on others to take responsibility for us. Only a dozen years after its conception and enunciation, on 9 May 1950, the political project of European Union was reduced to an economic and free trade area, because of the refusal, by the Benelux countries and Italy, of the transition to confederation, pending federation, as proposed by de Gaulle and Adenauer. The reduction of this project to Germany and France did not really succeed, the Bundestag having emptied the 1963 Élysée Treaty of its meaning, subordinating it to the Washington Treaty of 1949, establishing the Atlantic Alliance.

Faced with Trump's threats to hit Denmark with prohibitive customs duties if he does not cede Greenland, the High Representative is inaudible and the Commissioner in charge of foreign trade, whose exclusive competence it is, seems to have prepared nothing as a response.



Source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/events/details/the-future-of-eu-s-open-strategic-autono/20230215WKS04981>

¹See Olivier Hanrion, "The European Union paralyzed in the face of the Trump and Musk duo, the position of the ostrich Coué?" in RTBF Actus, <https://www.rtb.be/article/focus-sur-l-europe-l-union-europeenne-tetanisee-face-au-duo-trump-musk-la-position-de-l-autruche-coue-11487412>, 10/1/2025.

Faced with these dangers, several attitudes are possible for European leaders:

- ignore them, look the other way, and continue their sleepwalking, like their predecessors before the two World Wars;
- judging that the dangers concern only others, the Ukrainians, the Danes and the Canadians, for example;
- bowing to threats, like Chamberlain and Daladier, who in 1938, in Munich, cowardly abandoned Czechoslovakia in the face of Hitler, which led almost all of Europe to submit to the implacable yoke of the Nazis, prolonged in Central and Eastern Europe by the equally inhuman yoke of the Bolsheviks;
- look reality in the face and mobilize our intelligence, our heart and endeavour to act.

This is the courageous attitude advocated by Mr. Jean Chrétien, who was Prime Minister of Canada from 1993 to 2003. On February 11, on the occasion of his 91st birthday, he published an article in *La Presse* and the *Globe and Mail*². He refused to allow Canada to become a member of the United States of America, because Canada's health and pension systems are much better than those of the United States of America, and yet Canada has the lowest debt and deficit in the G7. Inflation is at 2% per year, unemployment is replaced by a shortage of labour. Canadian values differ from the American: Canadians are more tolerant, generous and supportive. They speak two official languages, which strengthens their union. People from all over the world want to come to Canada because it is a good place to live. Mr. Jean Chrétien urged the Canadian political class, both federal and provincial, to react more vigorously and be less defensive in the face of Trump's threats, and to make Americans aware that Trump is doing the opposite of what he promised during the election campaign. He had announced tax cuts and increased tariffs, which will be paid by the American consumers. Mr. Jean Chrétien was urging the countries attacked by Trump to organize to fight against his raw and unreasonable power, because they need strength in numbers, especially to force him to recognize Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage. This is the best way to prevent Communist China from interfering and landing in Greenland.

The European Union (EU) seems to be devoid of statesmen of this calibre. It has no ground troops, no navy, and no combat aircraft. To deter Trump from invading Greenland, and Putin the Baltic States, the EU can only wave trade retaliation, which is already proving insufficient to prevent the escalation of tariffs between the two sides of the Atlantic and has been totally ineffective in ending the war in Ukraine. The EU's impotence risks leading us to the partition of Europe, as Poland has done too many times in its tragic history.

History teaches us that peace must be earned, and that the price of cowardice is immeasurable. It is better, courageously, to pay for the cost of physical, mental and cultural freedom. If we really care about our dear "values", let's give ourselves the means to defend them. In a world of 8 billion people, European States with only half a billion inhabitants risk being crushed if they remain disunited. On the other hand, federated, they would be able to defend our interests and promote our values.

The Europeans have so far neglected to set up the Federation announced by Schuman on 9 May 1950. The consequence of this is the decline that began a quarter of a century ago, when it would be enough for a few European leaders to finally have the courage to federate their States, as advocated by the Resistance movements at the end of the Second World War.

For nearly eighty years, the United States of America has helped to keep the peace in Europe. Unfortunately, they have entered a new era, which seems to be less favourable to us. The EU is not capable of ensuring our defence, nor of ensuring public health, nor of preserving the rule of law, nor of conducting a credible foreign policy, nor of having a coherent environmental policy, and this will be the case as long as Europe is not a federal State, democratic and legitimate, respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

Our small national states do not know how to collectively care for the common good, but some of them could federate, to be together capable of guaranteeing democracy, preserving the integrity of our territory and ensuring our independence in the face of the autocrats who govern nearly 2 billion people, who generate an annual GDP of nearly 50,000 billion €, more than two and a half times the EU's GDP. The EU has by contrast a trade surplus of €37 billion and accounts for 16% of world imports and exports.

²To see Jean Chrétien, "Jean Chrétien: Canadians will never give up the best country in the world to join the U.S." in *The Globe and Mail*, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-jean-chretien-canadian-leaders-donald-trump-plan/>, 11/2/2025; Jean Chrétien, "Trump has united Canadians more than ever" in *The Press*, <https://www.lapresse.ca/dialogue/opinions/2025-01-11/lettre-de-jean-chretien/trump-a-unifie-les-canadiens-plus-que-jamais.php>, 11/1/2025.

It is now that European citizens should encourage governments to act, because the process of federalisation, union and the construction of a European defence will take time, which will be used by those who do not share our values and do not have our interests to harm us.

The time for a rupture, for a peaceful coup d'état, has come. Europe known how to do it, it has been doing it for so many decades! Before the Europe of the Six, there was the Benelux! Before the Schengen zone, there was the Benelux. At the origin of the euro zone, when the Maastricht Treaty was signed, only 9 states were members, and now there are twenty. Bringing about a European federal state must be our priority for 2025. Long live Europe, our common homeland!

NEW WORLD ORDER



The Human Cost of Regional Conflicts and the Path to Security Solutions

Abaho Gift CONRAD (Uganda)

In a world increasingly shaped by geopolitical shifts, regional conflicts remain a harrowing reality, leaving behind a trail of devastation that affects millions. The growing refugee crisis stands as one of the most urgent challenges of our time -one that crosses borders, ideologies, and socio-political divides. Beneath the staggering statistics lies a human narrative of loss, courage, and survival that demands a compassionate, well-rounded response.

The Human Stories Behind the Numbers

The scope of regional conflicts is often discussed through numbers like millions displaced, thousands killed, and hundreds of camps established. Yet these figures cannot capture the depth of suffering or the resilience of those affected. Behind every statistic is a life interrupted, a story of survival against unfathomable odds, and a hope for a better future.

Take the story of Amara, a mother from South Sudan who fled her war-torn village with her two children after armed militias attacked. Her journey through perilous terrain was marked by hunger, fear, and uncertainty. Upon reaching a refugee camp, she found relative safety but safety came with its own challenges, including inadequate shelter, insufficient healthcare, and no access to education for her children. Her eldest daughter, just seven years old, dreams of becoming a teacher, yet without schooling, her aspirations remain a distant hope.

Then there's Ahmed, a 16-year-old from Syria who lost his home and family to relentless bombings. Living in a host country, he struggles to find work or education, leaving him vulnerable to exploitation and radicalization. Despite his circumstances, Ahmed speaks passionately about his dream of becoming a doctor to help others. His determination is a testament to the resilience of displaced individuals, yet it highlights the systemic barriers that inhibit their potential.

These stories are not isolated incidents but reflections of a broader crisis. Refugees are not passive victims; they are individuals with hopes, dreams, and the ability to rebuild their lives. They represent untapped potential that, if nurtured, can contribute to global peace and prosperity.



Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/identity-access-management-cornerstone-secure-enterpri-kelly-hammons-0u6bc>

The Roots of Regional Conflicts

Understanding the refugee crisis requires delving into the underlying causes of regional conflicts. These conflicts are rarely spontaneous; they emerge from a web of socio-political, economic, and environmental factors. Among the most prominent causes are:

1. Weak Governance and Corruption

Many conflict-prone regions are characterized by fragile states with weak institutions, pervasive corruption, and limited capacity to address public grievances. These conditions create fertile ground for political instability, civil unrest, and the rise of armed groups.

2. Ethnic and Sectarian Divisions

Historical grievances between ethnic or religious groups are often exploited by political elites, leading to violence and displacement. In regions like the Middle East and parts of Africa, unresolved ethnic tensions fuel long-term instability.

3. Resource Competition and Environmental Degradation

Climate change has exacerbated conflicts over resources such as water, arable land, and energy. In the Sahel region, desertification and dwindling resources have heightened tensions among communities, pushing them into violent confrontations.

4. External Geopolitical Rivalries

Regional conflicts are often aggravated by external powers seeking to advance their strategic interests. Yemen, for instance, has become a proxy battleground for regional and global actors, intensifying the humanitarian crisis.

5. Socioeconomic Inequalities

Chronic poverty and inequality, coupled with a lack of opportunities for youth, create frustration and despair, making communities more susceptible to radical ideologies and violence.

These factors often intersect, creating a vicious cycle of violence and displacement. Addressing the refugee crisis requires not only humanitarian aid but also long-term strategies to mitigate these root causes.

The Complex Dynamics of Displacement

Refugees often face challenges that go beyond the immediate trauma of displacement. Host countries, particularly in the Global South, are frequently overwhelmed by the influx of refugees, straining their already limited resources. In countries like Uganda, which hosts over 1.5 million refugees, the burden falls disproportionately on local communities, leading to tensions and competition for resources.

Moreover, the protracted nature of modern displacement means that many refugees spend years, even decades, in camps or urban slums. Without access to education, healthcare, or meaningful work, they are trapped in a cycle of dependency and marginalization. This not only robs them of their dignity but also deprives host countries of the economic and social benefits that refugees could bring if properly integrated.

Security Solutions: A Human-Centered Approach

Traditional responses to regional conflicts have often prioritized military solutions and political negotiations. While these are essential, they are insufficient on their own. A truly effective approach must be human-centered, focusing on empowering individuals and addressing the systemic issues that drive conflict. Key strategies include:

1. Empowering Refugees Through Education and Livelihoods

Refugees must be seen not as burdens but as contributors to their host communities. Investing in

education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship can unlock their potential and create opportunities for self-reliance. For example, programs that provide microloans to refugee entrepreneurs have demonstrated success in fostering economic integration and reducing dependency.

2. Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation

No country can address the refugee crisis alone. Regional organizations like the African Union and international institutions such as the United Nations must collaborate to mediate conflicts, coordinate humanitarian responses, and develop long-term peacebuilding initiatives. Financial and technical support from developed nations is essential to sustaining these efforts.

3. Tackling Structural Inequalities

Addressing the root causes of conflict requires investment in governance reform, infrastructure development, and climate resilience. Initiatives like the Great Green Wall in Africa, which aims to combat desertification and create sustainable livelihoods, demonstrate the potential of integrated solutions to prevent displacement.

4. Protecting Refugee Rights

Governments must uphold their commitments under international law to protect refugees and ensure their access to basic services. This includes combating xenophobia and creating pathways for legal resettlement and integration.

The Role of the Global Community

The refugee crisis is not a regional issue, it is a global responsibility. Wealthy nations must do more to share the burden, from increasing financial aid to accepting more refugees for resettlement. Equally important is the need to shift public narratives about refugees, countering misinformation and emphasizing their resilience and contributions.

The private sector also has a role to play. By investing in refugee-led businesses, developing technologies to improve humanitarian responses, and advocating for inclusive policies, corporations can contribute to sustainable solutions.

A Call to Action

The human cost of regional conflicts cannot be measured in numbers alone. Behind every statistic is a life disrupted, a family displaced, and a dream deferred. As global citizens, we have a moral imperative to act and not just out of compassion, but out of a recognition that our shared humanity binds us together.

Building a future of peace and security requires more than political agreements and military interventions. It demands a commitment to empowering individuals, fostering cooperation, and addressing the systemic issues that fuel displacement. Each life saved, each child educated, and each community rebuilt is a step toward a more just and compassionate world.

In the words of Ahmed, the Syrian teenager: “We may have lost our homes, but we have not lost our hope.” Let this hope inspire us to take action, not just for refugees, but for the future of our shared humanity.

NEW WORLD ORDER



UN Reforms: Pact of the Future or Illusion; Calls of the “Global South”

Gargi AWASHTI (India)

Prime Minister Modi addressed the ‘Summit of the Future’ at the United Nations in New York. The theme of the Summit is ‘Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow’. The Summit witnessed the participation of a large number of world leaders. In his address, Prime Minister highlighted India’s vision for shaping a sustainable world for future generations. He noted that he was speaking at the Summit on behalf of one-sixth of humanity which seeks global peace, development and prosperity. The Prime Minister highlighted India’s success at scaling sustainable development initiatives and, in this regard, noted that the country had lifted 250 million people out of poverty in the last decade. He noted that India is open to sharing its digital public infrastructure for greater public good. He also underlined India’s commitment to “One Earth, One Family, One Future” as a guiding principle.

For the first time, a U.N. summit document has a detailed paragraph on UN Security Council reform, said Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri¹.

Mr. Misri said that India looks forward “eventually to the beginning of text-based negotiations in a fixed time-frame going forward.” The Summit concluded with the adoption of an outcome document – ‘A Pact for the Future’; along with two annexes, Global Digital Compact and A Declaration on Future Generations. Reaffirming the commitment of UN Member States to sustainable development, peace, and stronger global governance. The Pact’s five broad focus areas include Sustainable development includes a pledge to move faster towards achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement commitments on climate change; International peace and security: Redouble efforts to build and sustain peaceful, inclusive and just societies and address the root causes of conflicts and protect all civilians in armed conflict; Science and technology and digital revolution: Science, technology and innovation have the potential to accelerate the realization of the aspirations of the United Nations across all three pillars of its work; Youth and future generations: Listen to young people and include them in decision-making, at the national and global levels; Transforming global governance: Build stronger partnerships with civil society, the private sector, local and regional autonomy.



Source: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/many-countries-agree-on-reforming-un-security-council-but-how/2693664>

¹Vikram Misri (born 7 November 1964) is an Indian diplomat. He is currently the 35th Foreign Secretary of India, since July 2024. Previously, he was the Deputy National Security Advisor of India from 1 January 2022, succeeding Pankaj Saran, until 14 July 2024. He also served as India’s Ambassador to China from January 2019 to December 2021.

The Global Governance Reforms

Allow me to present India's views on the three key areas of global governance reform.

First is the reform of the UN and its subsidiary bodies. The world has evolved into a smart, interconnected, and multi-polar arena. Yet, the UN remains a prisoner of the past. As a result, the UNSC struggles to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security, undermining its effectiveness and credibility. Without reforms, including expansion in both categories of UNSC membership, its lack of effectiveness will only continue. Expansion and proper representation in the permanent category is a particular imperative. Asia, Africa and Latin America- the Global South cannot continue to be short changed. They must be given their legitimate voices. Real change needs to happen, and happen fast.

The second issue is the reform of the International Financial Architecture. The Bretton Woods institutions have to now focus on urgent issues dictated by persistent development challenges and pressing climate change.

Financing and investment gaps for SDGs, estimated at up to USD 4 trillion annually, need to be addressed urgently. As key anchors of the global development financing landscape, MDBs must be made more robust, expansive, and effective.

Significant strides, with the collective support, were made during India's G20 Presidency in this regard. G20 Leaders had called for expanding development and climate finance from billions to trillions. They had encouraged MDBs to refine their vision, incentive structures, operational approaches and financial capacities, to maximize their developmental impact. Brazil's Presidency, as we all appreciate, has continued the momentum. The 2024 G20 Roadmap for better, bigger, and more effective MDBs, builds on the New Delhi mandate and the recommendations of the 2023 G20 Independent Expert Group on Strengthening MDBs.

The third issue is reform of the Multilateral Trading System. India remains unwavering in its commitment to a rules-based, non-discriminatory, fair, open, inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core.

To foster a favourable trade and investment environment, we must ensure a truly level playing field and fair competition. Market-distorting practices and protectionism must be firmly discouraged. India calls for comprehensive reform of the WTO to enhance its functions through an inclusive, member-driven, and transparent process. It remains committed to constructive discussions for realizing a fully operational and effective dispute settlement system accessible by all members. A reformed and fair multilateral trading system is vital for our future to be more equitable and inclusive.

The Illusion of UNSC Reforms

Established in 1945, the UNSC was designed to reflect the geopolitical realities of the post-World War II order. Its composition—five permanent members (P5) with veto powers (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms—has remained unchanged despite seismic shifts in global power dynamics.

The council's exclusivity has been criticized for disproportionate representation as "The P5" represent a bygone era, excluding rising powers like India, Brazil, and South Africa, and side lining regions like Africa and Latin America. The UNSC has been deemed ineffective and the deadlocks among the P5 often paralyze the council, undermining its ability to address pressing global crises. Many nations question the democratic legitimacy of a body where five nations hold disproportionate power over decisions affecting the entire world.

Proposals and Obstacles

Various proposals for UNSC reform have been tabled over the years, including Expansion of Permanent Membership: Adding new permanent members, such as Germany, India, Japan, and Brazil (the G4 proposal); Abolition or Restriction of Veto Powers: Limiting the use of vetoes to prevent P5 deadlocks; Increased Regional Representation: Allocating seats to underrepresented regions like Africa and Latin America.

Permanent Membership: Adding new permanent members, such as Germany, India, Japan, and Brazil (the G4 proposal); Abolition or Restriction of Veto Powers: Limiting the use of vetoes to prevent P5 deadlocks; Increased Regional Representation: Allocating seats to underrepresented regions like Africa and Latin America.

Despite these ideas, progress has been stymied by Veto Power Entrenchment which implies any reform requires a two-thirds majority in the UN General Assembly and ratification by all P5 members, who are reluctant to dilute their influence. The Diverging National Interests comprising of Competing regional powers (e.g.,

India vs. Pakistan, Brazil vs. Argentina) often oppose each other's bids for permanent membership. Then there are Geopolitical Rivalries where the growing tensions among the P5, particularly between the US, China, and Russia, have made consensus on reforms increasingly unlikely.

Illusions of Change

The rhetoric surrounding UNSC reforms often creates an illusion of progress, with high-profile discussions and symbolic commitments. Yet, the structural and political barriers remain insurmountable. This illusion serves to placate discontented nations while maintaining the status quo. The support for a specific nation's bid for permanent membership is often tied to broader geopolitical alliances and calculations.

True reform of the UNSC requires a paradigm shift in how global governance is approached.

Building Consensus and Carrying Out

A united effort by the Global South, coupled with diplomatic engagement with the P5, is essential for pushing the UNSC REFORMS in a passed and timely manner.

Strengthening Regional Organizations: Empowering regional bodies like the African Union or ASEAN to address conflicts could reduce dependence on an unresponsive UNSC.

The pursuit of UNSC reform is often portrayed as a beacon of hope for a more equitable global order. However, the entrenched interests of powerful nations and the structural rigidity of the UN system have turned it into an illusion.

Failures of UNSC in Conflict Management

Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The UN has failed to resolve the conflict, and Israel has maintained control over Palestine. The UN has also failed to prevent war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Rwandan genocide

The UN was accused of failing to protect civilians and vulnerable populations. In 1994, the UN's role was limited and nearly one million Tutsi² civilians were killed.

War in Ukraine

The UN has failed to take decisive action to prevent civilian casualties or destruction. The UN's human rights office has estimated that 10,582 civilians have been killed.

Darfur conflict

The UN intervened years after the conflict began, and the situation remains dire.

Iraq invasion

The UN Resolution 1483 led to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, which resulted in instability and the rise of ISIS.

Syrian civil war

The UNSC limited action in the Syrian war, which led to a prolonged and devastating conflict.

Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar expressed strong concerns about the United Nations' inability to adapt to contemporary realities, stating that it remains a "prisoner" of the past. He emphasised that countries of the Global South can no longer afford to be "short-changed" and that their proper representation in a reformed United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a "particular imperative."

Calls of the Global South and India's Leadership

Jaishankar made these remarks during the 2nd Foreign Ministers meeting of G20 Brasil 2024, centred on the theme of "Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet." He highlighted the evolution of the global landscape, noting, "The world has evolved into a smart, interconnected, and multipolar arena."

²The Tutsi are a social group (caste) living in the East African states of Rwanda and Burundi, as well as in the eastern border area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The minister insisted that the expansion and proper representation of countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America—essentially the Global South—are critical. Jaishankar noted that the current configuration of the UNSC, established in 1945, and asserted that India rightfully deserves a permanent seat at the UNSC. UN Secretary-General also backed the sentiment calling UNSC outdated.

In addition to UNSC reform, Jaishankar reiterated India's commitment to a "rules-based" and equitable multilateral trading system, centred around the World Trade Organisation (WTO). He stressed the importance of fostering a level playing field and discouraging market-distorting practices and protectionism.

India calls for comprehensive WTO reforms to enhance its functionality through an inclusive and transparent effective dispute settlement system accessible to all members. Also underscored the necessity for reforming the international financial architecture, urging Bretton Woods institutions to focus on pressing issues related to development and climate change. He highlighted the substantial financing and investment gaps for the Sustainable Development Goals, estimated at up to USD 4 trillion annually, and called for making Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) more robust and effective.

During India's G20 presidency, it should be noted that G20 leaders called for expanding climate funding a momentum that he stated has been continued under Brazil's presidency. He emphasized that bold, transformative action is necessary for a more equitable and inclusive future, urging the G20 to take the lead in this regards.

MISINFORMATION



A World Epidemic: Deepfakes

Paul MANTEA (Romania/USA)

Deepfakes, a term derived from “deep learning” and “fake” refer to synthetic media in which a person’s likeness is digitally manipulated or created using artificial intelligence (AI). The phenomenon has gained significant attention due to its technological sophistication and potential societal impacts. This paper explores the technological foundations of deepfakes, their applications, associated risks, and potential solutions to mitigate their adverse effects.

Technological Foundations

Deepfakes are predominantly created using Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), a type of machine learning model. GANs consist of two neural networks: a generator and a discriminator.

The generator produces synthetic images, videos, or audio, while the discriminator evaluates the authenticity of the generated content. Over multiple cycles, the generator improves its output until the discriminator can no longer distinguish between real and fake media.

The ability of GANs to mimic human faces, voices, and even mannerisms stem from vast datasets used in training these models. By analyzing thousands of images, audio clips, or videos, GANs learn patterns and details that make the generated content realistic. While this technology has legitimate applications, such as in film production and virtual reality, its misuse poses significant challenges.

Applications

Deepfakes have both positive and negative applications. On the positive side, they are used in the entertainment industry to create realistic special effects or to “revive” deceased actors for new projects. For instance, deepfake technology has been employed to de-age actors or to synchronize dubbed voices with lip movements in foreign films.



Source: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/navigating-the-deepfake-dilemma-government-oversight-in-the-age-of-ai>

In education and training, deepfakes can create realistic simulations for medical, military, or technical training. For example, they can simulate emergency scenarios, providing trainees with immersive experiences that enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, artists and creators use deepfake tools to experiment with innovative forms of storytelling and visual art.

However, the misuse of deepfakes has overshadowed their benefits. Politically, deepfakes have been weaponized to create false narratives, undermining public trust in media and institutions. Videos depicting politicians making inflammatory statements or engaging in unethical behavior can spread rapidly, influencing public opinion and potentially destabilizing governments.

In the realm of cyber-crime, deepfakes facilitate identity theft, fraud, and blackmail. For instance, criminals have used AI-generated voice deepfakes to impersonate executives to authorize fraudulent transactions. Additionally, malicious actors create non-consensual explicit content using deepfakes, targeting celebrities and private individuals alike. These actions not only violate personal privacy but also perpetuate online harassment and abuse.

Associated Risks

The proliferation of deepfakes raises several ethical, legal, and societal concerns. One significant risk is the erosion of trust in digital content. As deepfakes become more realistic, it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between authentic and manipulated media. This ambiguity undermines the credibility of legitimate news sources and fuels misinformation campaigns.

Moreover, deepfakes exacerbate the spread of disinformation. During elections, for instance, a well-timed deepfake video could influence voter perceptions and outcomes. Such content is often amplified by social media platforms, where algorithms prioritize engagement over accuracy.

Another concern is the psychological and reputational damage inflicted on individuals targeted by deepfakes. Victims of non-consensual explicit content or fabricated scandals may face significant emotional distress and long-term harm to their personal and professional lives.

Furthermore, the lack of robust legal frameworks to address these issues complicates efforts to hold perpetrators accountable.

Mitigation Strategies

To combat the negative impacts of deepfakes, a multi-faceted approach is required. Technological solutions include developing AI tools to detect and flag deep fake content. Researchers are working on algorithms that analyse inconsistencies in lighting, shadows, and facial movements to identify manipulated media. Companies like Microsoft and Facebook have invested in deepfake detection technologies to safeguard their platforms.

Public awareness campaigns are another crucial component. Educating individuals about the existence and capabilities of deepfakes can help them critically evaluate digital content. Media literacy programs should be integrated into educational curriculums to equip future generations with the skills to discern authentic information from manipulated media.

On a regulatory level, governments must establish clear legal frameworks to address the misuse of deepfakes. Policies should criminalize the creation and distribution of malicious deepfake content while balancing freedom of expression. Additionally, collaboration between governments, tech companies, and civil society organizations is essential to create industry standards and enforce accountability.

Technologies to Combat Deepfakes

• AI-Based Detection Algorithms:

Machine learning models trained to identify inconsistencies in facial expressions, lighting, blinking patterns, and audio-visual mismatches. Examples: Mismatch in lip synchronization, unnatural eye movement, or irregular skin textures.

• Video and Audio Forensics:

Analysing metadata and pixel-level anomalies to detect tampering.

Detecting audio artifacts¹, such as unnatural pitch shifts or timing mismatches.

¹1. False image appearing in histological preparations, produced artificially or due to defects in fixation or staining. 2. Parasitic signal subjected to information, in the meaning of which it plays a null or negative role.

- **Neural Networks:**

Advanced neural networks like Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to detect manipulated content. GAN (Generative Adversarial Network) reversal to recognize the footprints of the generation process.

2. Blockchain² and Digital Authentication

- **Blockchain for Media Verification:**

Timestamped and immutable records for videos and images to verify originality and authenticity.

- **Provenance-Based Tools:**

Using cryptographic signatures to trace the origin of media files and ensure their integrity.

3. Watermarking Technologies

- **Invisible Watermarks:**

Embedding imperceptible markers into videos or images that reveal tampering when altered.

- **Dynamic Watermarking:**

Real-time addition of watermarks to live-streamed content.

4. Biometric Authentication

- **Liveness Detection:**

Real-time facial recognition combined with movement or interaction prompts to ensure authenticity.

- **Voice Biometric Analysis:**

Advanced tools to verify voice authenticity using unique vocal characteristics.

5. Real-Time Monitoring and Detection Tools

- **Cloud-Based Platforms:**

Services that scan and flag deepfakes in real time.

- **Social Media Filters:**

Integrating AI detection in social platforms to identify and label deepfake content.

6. Collaboration with Industry and Governments

- **Content Authenticity Initiative (CAI):**

Collaboration between tech companies to embed and verify metadata in media.

- **Policy and Regulation Tools:**

Legal frameworks to criminalize malicious deepfake creation and dissemination.

7. Public Awareness and Education

- **Educational Campaigns:**

Teaching users how to identify deepfakes and critically evaluate online content.

- **User-Friendly Apps:**

Tools for non-experts to detect manipulated media on personal devices.

These technologies and practices must evolve continuously to stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated deepfake techniques. Collaboration across industries, governments, and academia is essential for a robust defence against deepfakes.

²Blockchain is a technology for storing and transmitting information, which is based on the principle of distribution and security. It is a digital, decentralized and transparent database that records transactions and events permanently, the technology that secures the storage of cryptocurrencies, transactions between cryptocurrencies and the computer relationships that support the purpose of the cryptographic project.

Conclusion

Deepfakes represent a double-edged sword in the digital age. While they offer innovative opportunities in entertainment, education, and art, their potential for misuse poses significant risks to individuals and society. As the technology continues to evolve, addressing its challenges requires a combination of technological innovation, public awareness, and robust legal measures. By fostering a collective effort to understand and mitigate the impact of deepfakes, society can harness their potential while safeguarding against their misuse.

HYBRID THREATS



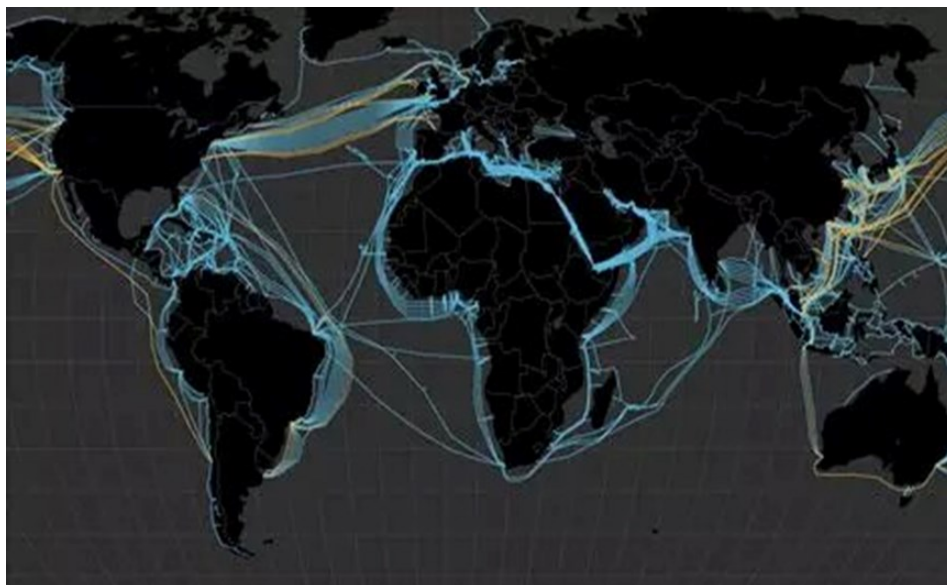
The Submarine Cables Warfare

Jean-François ROUGÉ (France)

On January 2025, NATO decided, in response to “recent incidents of suspected sabotage, and damage to communication cables reportedly caused by the Chinese vessel Yi Peng 3”, to Deploy a Drone Fleet (“at least 20”) to Combat Baltic Sea Cable Sabotage. On another theater of operation, Chinese operations particularly threaten Taiwan’s international connectivity. A new era of hybrid warfare opens, making the Internet infrastructure the new domain of the war. In fact, NATO used to witness nearly 100 cable cuts annually, most of them are accidental, but the concentration of these “incidents” changes the game. As pinpointed by the Business Insider on January 2025, 18: “Russia is escalating dangerous shadow wars against NATO”. So do China. As soon as January 27, two new cables have been sabotaged between Latvia and Sweden. Facing this situation is a huge challenge engaging the very survival of our economies.

Before engaging the core of our topic, let us remembering two basic facts:

- 1- Cables, with a length of 1.4 million kilometers concentrate at least 95% of the internet traffic. Even when it is possible to substitute satellite connections, the bandwidth of the latter is only a fraction of that of cables. For instance, two cables linking Taiwan to Matsu has been disabled on January 15; They had a combined transmission capacity of 1,310 Gbps (gigabits per second), but while the bandwidth provided by microwave communication can only reach 12.6 Gbps.



2-Western economies are now completely dependent on the Internet; mostly with the surge of the Cloud computing since the COVID crisis. Without these cables, nothing from the basic payment systems to the procurement of vital flows will stop: the blue screen of Windows could be the death of the economy.

Having in mind this situation, this paper will concentrate on two questions. What is the strategic interest to cut submarine cables for NATO's enemies? And how can we protect these installations mostly in a perspective of an open conflict?

Why Are Submarine Cables Such Attractive Targets?

Liu & Alii (2020) find "that as many as 64.33% of all web resources accessed from a specific country rely on the SCN. Despite the explosive growth of data center and Software Defined Networking infrastructure around the world, at least 28.22% of the SDN-hosted resources traverse a submarine cable." The impact of Submarine Cable Network is then, both societal, and economic. NATO estimate that undersea cables handling over \$10 trillion in daily financial transactions., public health, and safety implications. That explains the utmost interest they represent for governments. This is also a pretty good reason to consider these networks as an effective way to enslave an opponent's will.

Despite this importance, Submarine cables are very vulnerable to sabotage due to their nature and to their concentration in very High density Maritim traffic area. Properly managed a sabotage operation to cut them may be very discreet and difficult to attribute to their initiator. That make them perfect targets for hybrid war. Moreover, they present two interesting advantages for NATO's enemies in terms of retaliations. First, an attack on submarine cables is scalable and controllable compared to cyberattack or starwar. Second, Russian and Chinese networks are much less vulnerable to this kind of attack limiting the risk of proportional retaliation.

The Comparative Advantage of Undersee Cable War in Regard to Cyberwar and Star Wars

Despite their huge efficiency to damage economy, contrarily to the common wisdom cyberwar and Star Wars are not such an easy business. And it is obviously incompatible with the willingness to stay in a hybrid war. Both domains present important limits that restraint their full usage at least as long as the situation is not of total war.

The Limits of Cyberwar against a Global Power

At a time when cyberattacks are more and more frequent and more and more damaging and costing, one could wonder how I may speak of limits. To defend this proposition, I will refer to the book of B. Valeriano and RC Maness: "Cyberwar versus cyber realities"¹:

- The first limit of cyberwar is that "massive and truly dangerous cyber operation are beyond the means of most countries" Without no doubt China mostly but Russia also, have these means and the argument do not hold in our case.
- "The complexity of cyber space weaponization make cyber offence less easy and defense more feasible than generally appreciate." (P26)²
- Much of the successful attacks in the cyberspace owe their successes to errors made by victims. (P28)
- When the attack is discovered, its tools can be considered as useless. In other words, event the most dangerous malware, for instance STUXNET, are one shot arms, despite their cost and difficulties to create and implement. Once used, enemy analyze the attack and deploys countermeasures to neutralize the effect of this cyberweapon. Worst, he may return this tool against its creator.
- And much more annoying according the authors: "what happens in the cyberspace does not stay in the cyberspace" (P27); as their biological counterparts, the spread of viruses and others malwares is very difficult to control, endangering the attacker or his allies. "Finally, the tactic is too expansive to control. It is nearly impossible to limit the amount of damages done to civilian infrastructures if cyber capabilities are utilized" (P48)

¹B. Valeriano and RC Maness (2015) "Cyberwar versus cyber realities. Conflict Cyber in the international system, Oxford University Press.

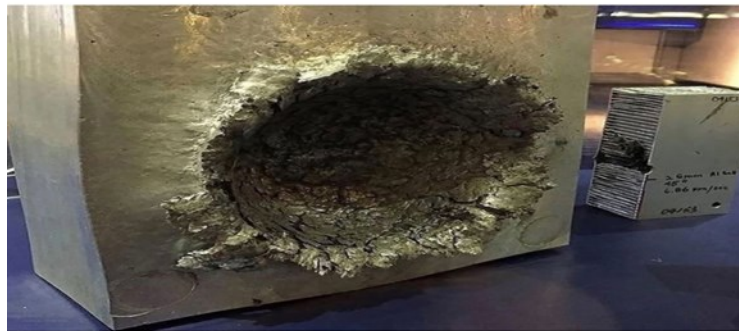
²See also H PRUNKCKUN. (2018), *Cyber Weaponry. Issues and implications of digital arms*, Springer.

For them despite “Internet and cyber interactions are more stable that most believe “(P37) and “the true danger in cyber conflict is that one state will overuse the tactic and push other states to do the same” (P19) For a similar reason, the Star War is not a panacea.

The Limits of Star Wars

Space is now commonly integrated as a plain dimension of battle field. Much investments and researches have been made to militarize it. Obviously, no modern war can be conduct without the help of satellites. Nevertheless, a huge distinction has to be made between the different possibles uses of satellites in a war. No rational restrictions may limit their intensive use for communication and intelligence to support conflict. Likewise, despite international conventions which may prohibit them, installations of weapons aim at the Earth seems highly previsible (and imputable). The difficulty surge when considering the destruction of a hostile satellite. The reason is simple: destroying a single satellite will create too many lethal and uncontrollable debris. Just to fix ideas, the picture billow shows the result of ½ inch plastic piece in space.

Here's what happens when a 1/2-inch plastic piece hits aluminum at 15,000 mph in space.



As a result, it is statically sure that the destruction of a single adversary satellite will be follows by the destruction of other, in an exponential and uncontrollable way, putting at risk your own constellation of satellites. Enough to think twice before engaging a starwar until technical progress will allow to annihilate their capacities without destructing the satellites .

These arguments do not refute the importance of cyber and stars area in the modern warfare; they just highlight their limits in the context of a hybrid conflict. Beyond these technical reasons, western submarine cables are attractive targets for geopolitical reasons.

The Asymmetric Situations of Russian & Chinese Networks

Russian and Chinese Internet are quite different from the occidental model, both in terms of network structure that in terms of regulation (censure). Less connected with the rest of the world and more controlled by the state, their networks are less fragile that ours. Moreover, these two states have continental dimensions which isolate them from the risks of retaliation through their own (submarine) networks. Let us examine those points.

Less Connected (with the rest of the world) Networks

As soon as 2018, a bill presented to the Russian Parliament required Internet service providers (ISPs) to guarantee the complete independence of the Russian Internet space (Runet). Since, Russia has been practicing cutting off its telecommunications network from the global Internet, conducting large-scale exercises whenever its technical capabilities allow. The stated objective is clearly to promote the self-sufficiency of the Russian Internet in the face of the Occident; since 2021, Russian law encourages the nationalizations of the Internet players and oblige the use of local DNS servers to strengthen the control over the technical structure. The task will not be easy: With over 5,000 autonomous systems, 41 Internet exchange points, multiple international gateways, and a completely decentralized Internet service provider market, it is virtually impossible to completely isolate the Russian Internet.

Concerning China, the situation is even more sophisticated: Government authorities not only block the content of certain sites, but are able to monitor each person's Internet access. Its, Internet control apparatus is considered more extensive and advanced than in any other country in the world.

A More Regulated Space

Where occidental Internet is still supposed to be a space of freedom, in Russia and China, it is mainly a space of regulation.

Russian Internet legislation aims ensuring the digital security through a trend toward digital isolation (2019), an increased state control and censorship. Internet service providers have to direct their traffic through government-controlled routing points, making it easier to censor and block non-compliant content. Since mars 2024, even the use of Virtual Private Networks is forbidden; providers being responsible to monitor and stop every encrypted traffic.

China's first Internet regulations date back to the 1990s, establishing a foundation for information system management and security. Their first aims were to prohibit the dissemination of information deemed harmful or subversive. Since, Internet providers are held responsible for the content they distribute and its conformity to the official policy of the state. Since September 2023, a new text forbids the access to internet between 22H to 6H to the young people under 18, and restrict their time of connection to two hours a day.

Continental Networks

Russia and China are “developing alternative cables routes and systems that could reduce Western control over global communication infrastructures”³ By the way, the continental dimension of the main Internet traffic of Russia and China make them less vulnerable. Their needs for submarine cables are quite limited compare to the occidental ones:



The fact is that Russian and Chinese Internet connections are much less fragile that ours, and make any proportional retaliation hypothetical. The necessity to protect our networks is all the most important.

How to Protect Submarine Cables?

Protecting submarine cable becomes a priority due to the multiplication of attacks. Traditionally, in International Relations, four usual means are used for that purpose: the law (international conventions), the intelligence, the deterrence and the retaliation. Let us consider these points:

The International Conventions

In the post WW1 & WW2 era, international law used to be considered has the “civilized” way to mitigate conflicts between nations. It has been the essence of the creation of the United Nation Organization... Factually, “The combination of physical vulnerability, technical sophistication, and geopolitical complexity (of our Internet submarine cables) creates unique challenges that require innovative solutions and unprecedented international cooperation”⁴

In practice, few countries have special laws dedicated to the protection of their undersee cables. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the See (UNCLOS) aims at governing the rights of installation and protection of the submarine cables. Coming into force in 1994, it has been ratified by 168 states and the European Union. Concerning our topic, the main dispositions of this treaty require that “ratifying states introduce

³Niklas Swanstrom (01/2025) <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7290338174742990849/>.

⁴Ibid.

legislation for their flag-bearers against intentional or negligent damages” (Art 113, 114 & 115). That is not very biding... The situation is complicated by the fact that “states allow private ownership of critical international infrastructure while failing to introduce legislation to protect this infrastructure”⁵

To sum up, even in case of voluntary aggression, the best that seems to be expected from legislation is some kind of “formal” apologies and a minimal reparation⁶. The legal situation is also complicated by the two major facts: An aggressor country is permanent member of the UNO; The president of the United States of America is openly willing to annihilate the international legal “order” to impose bilateralism.

The Intelligence

Intelligence and counterintelligence have a key role in the protection of our infrastructures. For instance, China becoming the most innovative country of the world, it is important to consider it seriously and to have a permanent and in-depth watch on its technological progress. This is how we learned that engineers from China’s Lishui University sought a patent in 2020, for a submarine cable cutting device, following a similar earlier attempt by China’s State Oceanic Administration. It undoubtedly raises Global Concerns and has to be carefully studied to anticipate future evolutions. Efforts in the area of intelligence has to be amplified, facing adversaries who become smarter and smarter.

The Deterrence

Deterrence is the art of making know what you want done or not done and enforcing this willingness through threat. It rests on the credibility of the one who use it (the application of the threat if the warning is not eared.); on a clear definition of what is expected or won’t be tolerated and on the capacity of threat implementation.

- In 2011 the White House declared that cyber incident is similar to an act of war, punishable with conventional means⁷. A “Plan X” has been developed as a program to find the source of an incident and automatically retaliate against the predator without any human intervention. This automation of the answer is a key factor of efficiency and credibility of the deterrence. In practice, even if it is possible to assimilate submarine cables sabotage to cyber incident, the automaticity of the response is difficult to implement in both cases but the message is clear: “we do not want you to attack our networks”
- The clear definition by NATO of the “protected” matters is also without ambiguity: our Internet networks. Submarine cables are a core part of them.
- The capacity of the threat implementation is less clear. Even if NATO is still the main military power its position is severely challenge by China and openly contested by less powerful states first of them Russia, but also Iran and North Korea. Even dotted with a nuclear capacity, the single fact that such a small (25 million inhabitants) and horribly poor country may be able to blackmail the world, is quite worrying. Furthermore, main challengers to its power are authoritarian regimes with a clear vision of what they want; NATO is still ruled by democratic principles which are slower to be efficient.

Obviously, these threats do not impress neither Russia, nor China that continue to send ships in the vicinity of NATO’s vital cables as we still can see on January 25, 2025:



Ministry of Defence  
@DefenceHQ · Suivre



"We see you, we know what you're doing and we will not shy away from robust action to protect this country".

@RoyalNavy vessels have been tracking a Russian spy ship in the English Channel just weeks after it was caught loitering over critical undersea infrastructure.

⁵E. HINE & Alii (2024), *Submarine cables and the risks to the digital sovereignty, Minds & Machines, July*. In December 2020, 59% of undersea cables were owned by private firms.

⁶Like what happened following the destruction of an Azerbaijani airliner on December 26, 2024. (only after the president expressly demanded this apology).

⁷Since it has been integrated in the TALLIN Manual 2013.

The vessel in question apparently only changed its behavior after a Royal Navy submarine surfaced nearby. In the situation of hybrid war, it then seems that deterrence is relatively ineffective. As long as long as no direct retaliation against the aggressor ship (with all the risks associated). Even with an efficient deterrence, it could be safer to reinforce the protection of our networks.

The Protections

In fact, protecting NATO's submarine networks is an extremely complicated job that will become even more harder. In addition to the arguments discussed above, the majority of the targeted networks are located in extremely busy geographic areas⁸ and with low sea depths⁹.

⁸Screen capture of the maritime traffic around Europe on January 31, 2025: <https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/home/centerx:6.7/centery:51.0/zoom:4>.

⁹The Baltic See, which is the most targeted area, is 364 800 km² and its average depths is only 55 m (Wikipedia); The English Channel is 75,000 km² large and its average depths is 63m.

SECURITY AND RESILIENCE



Understanding National Security

Part V: The Component of Maritime Security

Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Georgios KOUKAKIS (Greece)

“Together with air, outer space and the cyberspace, the sea is an increasingly contested strategic domain. At a time of growing geopolitical tensions, the EU must learn to speak the language of power also at sea.”

Josep Borrell, EU High Representative/Vice-President

Abstract

This article is the fifth part of an article series that aim to present the various components of *national security*, a dimension of security that has recently been under the spotlight due to the numerous crises that have emerged and the plethora of threats that prevail in the contemporary security environment. It focuses on maritime security, a component of national security that is interconnected with a significant number of policy fields and therefore affects the proper functioning of states and the well-being of their citizens. Its purpose is to clarify the context of this component, present its interconnection with other components of national security, analyse its impact to a variety of policy fields and finally highlight its importance for peace and stability. Its main conclusion is that maritime security is a very important component of national security and must not be overlooked.

Introduction

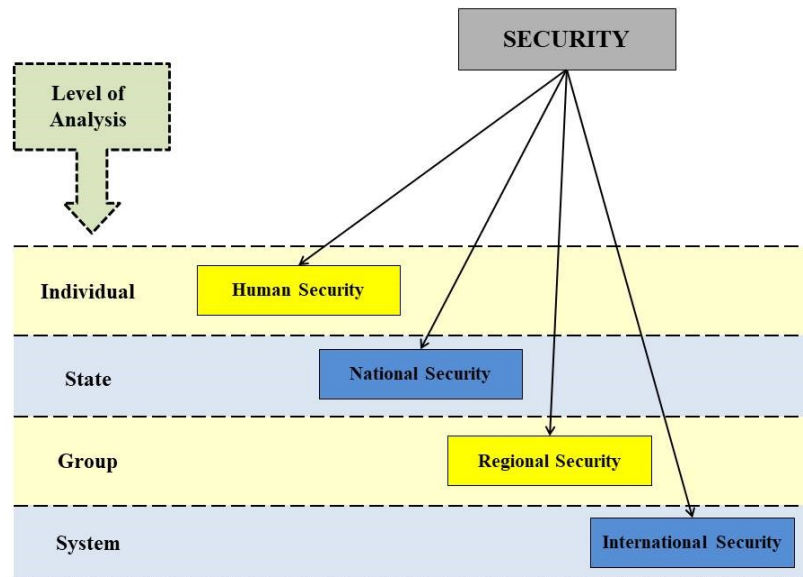
The contemporary security environment has been characterised as an environment of *polycrises* (multiple crises) and *permacrises* (permanent crises)¹, due to the numerous long-lasting and different types (military, economic, energy, food, health, etc.) of crises that have occurred. In this context, national security is of vital importance for every state, as it contributes greatly to the promotion of its national energy interests and the wellbeing of its citizens, since security and development are interconnected². One of the components of national security is *maritime security*, the importance of which has been highlighted through several incidents that are going to be presented in the article, having a direct or indirect impact on several policy fields.

The article presents the content of maritime security, a significant component of national security. Its importance lies in the fact that maritime security is very important for every state (especially maritime ones), as it ensures the states' *proper function* and the well-being of its citizens. Current research indicates that the hostile contemporary security environment of polycrises and permacrises forced states to re-evaluate their policy regarding maritime security in order to enhance their overall national security, thus the article contributes to the existing literature as it provides additional information that can help *citizens* understand the need for enhancing maritime security and *policy makers* plan and implement respective policies in a more effective way.

¹Koukakis, G. (2023). *Permacrises and Polycrises: Outlining the Contemporary Security Environment through References to Strategic Documents of Regional and International Actors*. HAPSc Policy Briefs Series, Vol 4 (2). 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.36661>.

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

Its purpose is to clarify the context of maritime security, present its interconnection with the other components of national security and policy fields, and highlight its importance for peace and stability. The main conclusion is that maritime security is a very important component of national security and must not be overlooked, as this will have major consequences to many policy fields. As far as the structure of the article is concerned, it initially clarifies the concept of national security and explains the context of maritime security, after that presents the main international collaborative scheme and several recent incidents in regard to maritime security, it then proceeds to a brief analysis of the interconnection between maritime security and other policy fields, and concludes by referring to the main challenge and opportunity that lies in the future as far as the aforementioned component of national security is concerned.



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

The Concept of Security

The term *security* originates from the Latin word *securitas/securus* whose first compound is the word *sine* meaning *without* and the second compound the word *cura* meaning *fear, worry, anxiety*, etc³. Thus, security is the state in which fear, worry, and anxiety are absent, due to the necessary actions taken by an actor (individual, group, state, organization, etc.) in order to be protected against threats and/or risks. Therefore, security can be categorized according to the level of analysis (*Picture 1*) into *four types*; *Human Security* at the individual level, *National Security* at the state level, *Regional Security* at the group level, and *International Security* at the system level (**Picture 1**).

At first security was mainly related to *national security* (the protection of the state), a concept that was introduced by the United States of America (USA) through the *National Security Act* signed in 1947⁴. This new paradigm related security to the internal structure of each state, reflecting its interaction with the security environment, a relation that is based on the state's perception of insecurity⁵. Later on, the United Nations (UN) related security to people and the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment⁶, introducing the concept of *human security* through the *Human Development Report* that was published in 1994⁷.

³Neocleous, M. (2000). *Against security*. *Radical Philosophy*, 100, 7-15. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/against-security>.

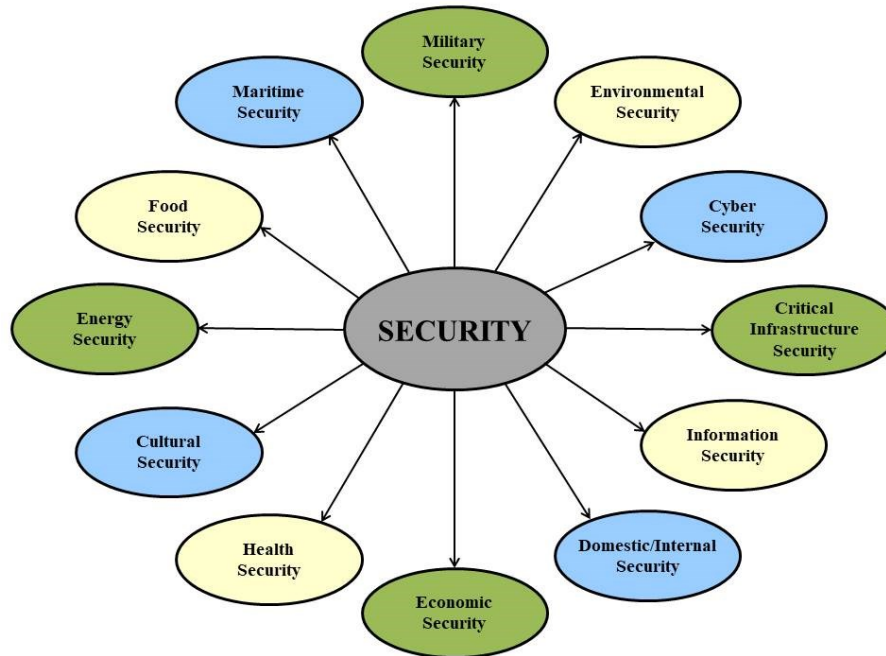
⁴Department of State. (n.d.). *National Security Act of 1947 [Official Document]*. [https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Act%20of,National%20Security%20Council%20\(NSC\)](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Act%20of,National%20Security%20Council%20(NSC)).

⁵Buzan, B. (1983). *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. *Wheatsheaf Books*, 69.

⁶Buzan, B. & Hansen, L. (2009). *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. *Cambridge University Press*, 203.

⁷United Nations Development Programme. (1994). *Human Development Report 1994*. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1994encompletenostatpdf.pdf>.

As far as *regional security* is concerned, despite the fact that it (etymologically) comprises the national security of the states of a specific region, it also expresses the strong relations developed among them due to their similar cultural, political and legal systems⁸. Therefore, it enables them to act collectively against common threats and cooperate in several fields in order to facilitate development –as security and development are two closely related terms⁹– leading to the establishment of several regional organisations such as the EU¹⁰



Picture 2: Indicative dimensions/components of security

Source: Compiled by Georgios Koukakis

Finally, *international security* is closely related to globalization¹¹, mostly dealing with global threats through international organizations such as the United Nations¹². Moreover, security – regardless the institutional level in which it is examined – encompasses several *dimensions/components*, depending on the specific aspect/policy field that is endangered and/or the origin of threats/risks. These include, but are not limited to the following: (1) military security, (2) economic security, (3) energy security, (4) critical infrastructure security, (5) maritime security, (6) food security, (7) environmental security, (8) health security, (9) domestic/internal security, (10) cyber security, (11) cultural security, (12) water security, (13) demographic security, (14) information security, and (15) space security (**Picture 2**).

The Context of Maritime Security

Taking into consideration the aforementioned definition of security, it is understood that maritime security is the protection of a state's *infrastructure* (e.g. ports) and *assets* (e.g. ships) that are related to its maritime environment and the protection of its overall infrastructure, its maritime zones and its citizens from any threat/risk that is directed or originates from the maritime environment.

⁸Graham, K. & Felicio, T. (2005). *Regional Security and Global Governance: A Proposal for a 'Regional-Global Security Mechanism' in Light of the UN High-Level Panel's Report*, Egmont Paper, 4. <http://aei.pitt.edu/8985/>.

⁹Krause, K. & Jütersonke, O. (2005). *Peace, Security and Development*, *Security Dialogue*, 36(4), 447-462. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0967010605060449>.

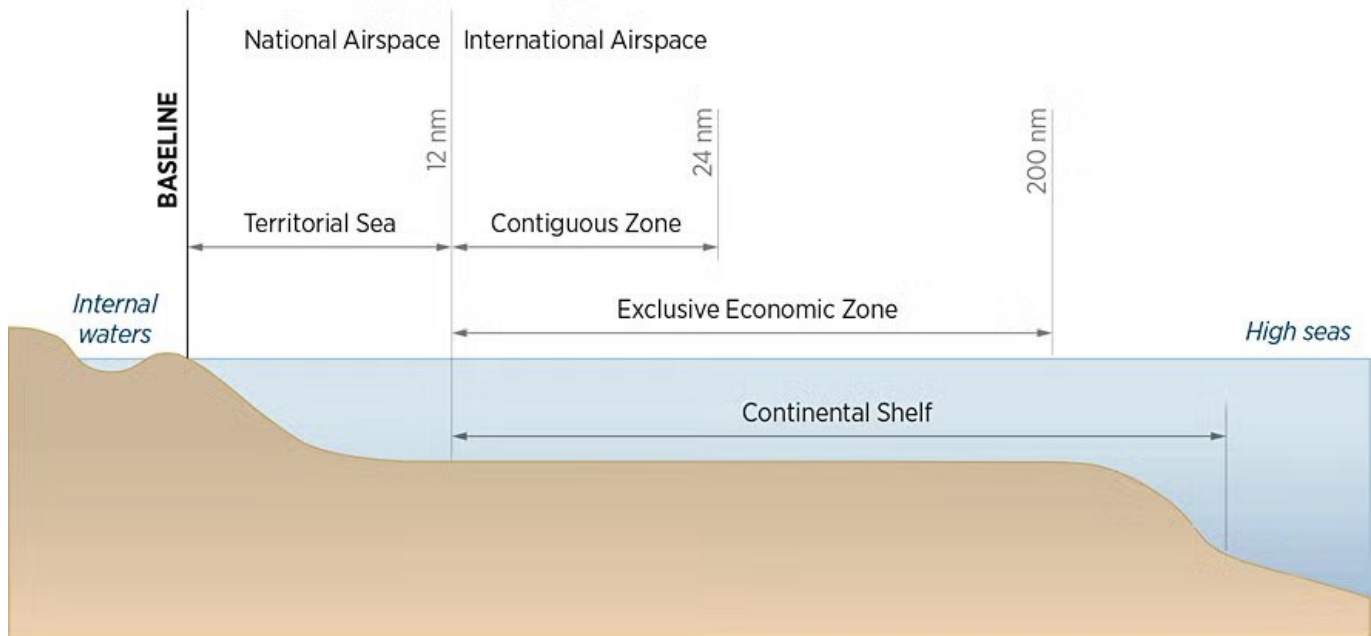
¹⁰Bailes, A. & Cottey, A. (2006). *Regional security cooperation in the early 21st century*, in Bailes, A. (ed.) *SIPRI Yearbook 2006: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*. Oxford University Press, 195–223.

¹¹Cha, V. (2000). *Globalization and the Study of International Security*, *Journal of Peace Research*, 37(3), 391-403. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343300037003007>.

¹²United Nations. (2023). *Determined: Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization [Official Document]*. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_annual_report_2023_en_0.pdf.

FIGURE 1

U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea: Defined Waters



MARITIME BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS


Territorial Sea. Sovereign territory of the state. Foreign civilian and military vessels have right to innocent passage.

Contiguous Zone. State may exercise control necessary to prevent infringement of its customs, fiscal, immigration, or sanitary laws.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Sovereign rights for exploring and exploiting resources, preserving marine environment, establishing artificial islands and structures.

High Seas. All parts of the sea that are not included in the EEZ, the territorial sea, or in the internal waters of a state. No exclusive rights.

SOURCES: *Law of the Sea: A Policy Primer*, "Maritime Zones," The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2017, Chapter 2, <https://sites.tufts.edu/lawofthesea/chapter-two/> (accessed March 11, 2021), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Maritime Zones and Boundaries," https://www.gc.noaa.gov/gcil_maritime.html (accessed March 11, 2021).

BG3608  heritage.org

Picture 3: *The maritime zones as defined by UNCLOS (1982)*

Source: <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/unclos-china-india-and-the-united-states-navigate-unsettled-regime>

As far as *maritime zones* are concerned, they are defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which was signed in 1982 (**Picture 3**)¹³, and are closely related to a state's sovereignty and sovereign rights, also affecting its economy as – depending on the zone – they provide the right to exclusively exploit several resources (e.g. fisheries, hydrocarbon deposits, etc.). They comprise the following:

1. Internal waters.
2. Territorial Sea.

¹³United Nations. (1982). *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*. https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

3. Contiguous Zone.
4. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
5. High Seas.
6. Continental Shelf.

As far as the *European Union* is concerned, it endorsed its first *EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS)* in 2014 and updated it in 2023¹⁴, having as its strategic objectives to: (i) Step up activities at sea, (ii) Cooperate with partners, (iii) Lead on maritime domain awareness, (iv) Manage risks and threats, (v) Boost capabilities, and (vi) Educate and train. In this context, the importance of maritime security for the EU was also highlighted by Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius through his following statement:

“We should take the strategic importance of our oceans seriously. The maritime dimension is key to the EU’s strategic autonomy, as the prosperity of the European Union and its Member States depends on a safe and secure ocean. The updated Maritime Security Strategy will better protect our citizens and promote our blue economy activities and our interests at sea. We will tackle the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on maritime security, strengthen maritime surveillance tools, enhance our defences against cyber and hybrid threats, and reinforce the protection of critical maritime infrastructure”.¹⁵

In order though for the context of maritime security to be fully comprehended, the article analyzes the following maritime security elements:

1. **Threats:** As far as maritime security threats are concerned, it must be stressed that they include both *state* and *non-state actors*. The first category usually includes a states’ Naval Armed Forces (warships), while the second one mostly includes terrorism, disruption to vital maritime trade routes, attacks on maritime infrastructure or shipping (including cyber-attacks), transportation of illegal items by sea, people smuggling and human trafficking.

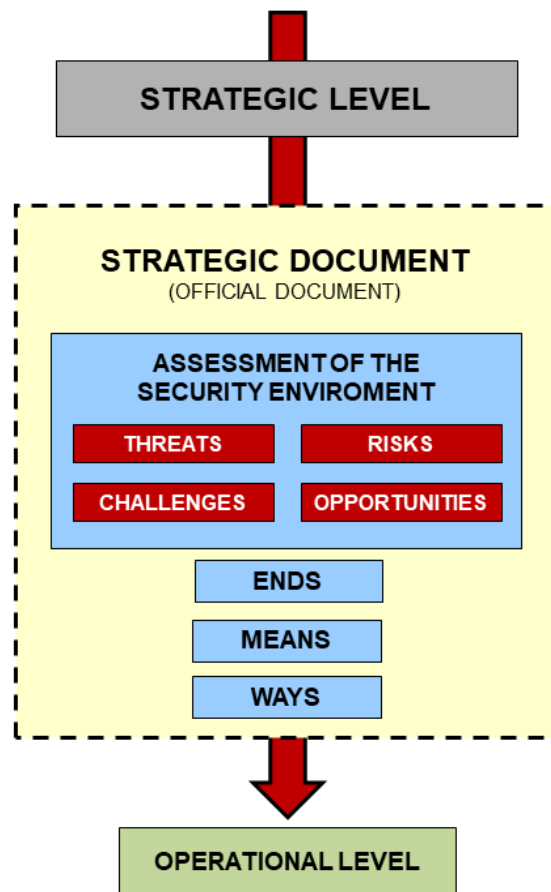
2. **Means:** As far as the means that an actor may use to threaten the maritime security of a state, they usually include physical means, cyber means, or administrative/operational means. Moreover, a state’s maritime security can be threatened (unintentionally) by a technical situation (malfunction) or a natural phenomenon (e.g. a disaster, climate change, etc.).

3. **Ways:** As far as the ways that the aforementioned means are used, the most common ones include the implementation of embargos, the restriction of exports, cyberattacks and physical attacks against a state’s maritime infrastructure or assets.

4. **Goals/Objectives:** The main goal that an actor aspires to accomplish by disrupting the functioning of a state’s maritime infrastructure and cause damage to its assets is to impose its will by coercion. As far as the objectives are concerned, they usually include the *malfunction* and/or *degradation* of an actor’s *economy, trade, defense, and/or supply chain* and/or the *deprivation* of its critical maritime resources in order to cause the overall malfunction of a state and public unrest which will put pressure on the state’s leadership and thus manage reach to a favorable agreement.

¹⁴European Commission. (2023, March 10). *Maritime Security: EU updates Strategy to safeguard maritime domain against new threats* [Press Release]. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1483.

¹⁵Ibid.



Picture 4: The function of Strategic Documents
 Source: Compiled by Georgios Koukakis

5. **Strategic documents:** As far as the strategic documents that are related to maritime security are concerned, they include either national security strategic documents such as the *National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS)* of the United Kingdom¹⁶, the *Global Strategy for Maritime Security (GSMS)* of Denmark¹⁷, the *Maritime Security Strategy (MSS)* of New Zealand¹⁸, and the *National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS)* of Spain¹⁹. Their main purpose is to provide the framework –by assessing the conditions (threats, risks, challenges and opportunities) of the maritime security environment, defining the desired ends (goals), necessary means, and preferable ways of using them– in which the related departments of the public sector will implement their respective strategies (**Picture 4**).

6. **Decision-making:** As far as the decision making process regarding issues related to maritime security is concerned, due to the fact that it is a policy field with very important political, diplomatic and social consequences that must be coordinated with other actors, the decision for the implementation of a certain maritime security policy is usually taken in the higher strategic political level (Head of State/ Government).

¹⁶HM Government. (2022). *National maritime security strategy [Official Document]*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-maritime-security-strategy>.

¹⁷Marine Link. (2025, February 06). *Denmark Releases Maritime Security Strategy*. <https://www.marinelink.com/news/denmark-releases-maritime-security-522037>.

¹⁸New Zealand Government. (2024). *Maritime Security Strategy [Official Document]*. https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Report/MSS_V6_U.pdf.

¹⁹Department of National Security/Office of the Presidency of the Government of Spain. (2024). *National Strategy for Maritime Security [Official Document]*. https://www.dsn.gob.es/sites/default/files/2025-01/Accessible%20ENSM2024%20EN_0.pdf.



Picture 5: *The logo of the International Maritime Organization*
Source: *International Maritime Organization*

The International Maritime Organization (IMO)

As states gradually understood that the development of international regulations is the best way to ensure maritime security, they established in 1948 the *International Maritime Organization (IMO)*²⁰, an international organization of 176 members-states²¹ that entered into force in 1958²², having – according to article 1 of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization²³ – the following purposes:

1. To provide machinery for co-operation among governments in the field of governmental regulation and practices relating to technical matters of all kinds affecting shipping engaged in international trade, and to encourage the general adoption of the highest practicable standards in matters concerning maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of marine pollution from ships; and to deal with administrative and legal matters.

2. To encourage the removal of discriminatory action and unnecessary restrictions by Governments affecting shipping engaged in international trade so as to promote the availability of shipping services to the commerce of the world without discrimination; assistance and encouragement given by a Government for the development of its national shipping and for purposes of security does not in itself constitute discrimination, provided that such assistance and encouragement is not based on measures designed to restrict the freedom of shipping of all flags to take part in international trade.

3. To provide for the consideration by the Organization of matters concerning unfair restrictive practices by shipping concerns.

4. To provide for the consideration by the Organization of any matters concerning shipping that may be referred to it by any organ or specialized agency of the United Nations.

5. To provide for the exchange of information among Governments on matters under consideration by the Organization.

In the context of its mission, IMO endorsed in 1960 the *International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)*, an international convention that covered several aspects regarding the safety of ships (**Picture 6**).²⁴

²⁰Its initial name was *Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO)*.

²¹IMO. (n.d.). *Member States, IGOs and NGOs*. <https://www.imo.org/en/About/Membership/Pages/Default.aspx>.

²²IMO. (n.d.). *Brief History of IMO*. <https://www.imo.org/en/About/HistoryOfIMO/Pages/Default.aspx>.

²³IMO. (1948). *Convention on the International Maritime Organization*. <https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/Convention-on-the-International-Maritime-Organization.aspx>.

²⁴IMO. (1974). *International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974*. [https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Safety-of-Life-at-Sea-\(SOLAS\)-1974.aspx](https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Safety-of-Life-at-Sea-(SOLAS)-1974.aspx).

How does IMO's ship safety treaty make a difference?

The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) contains 15 chapters covering the following topics:



Picture 6: Infographic of IMO regarding the SOLAS

Source: https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/About/Events/Documents/WMD%202024%20SOLAS%20digital%20cards/SOLAS%20explained%20infographic_01.pdf

Contemporary Incidents Related to Maritime Security

As far as the contemporary incidents related to maritime security are concerned, one of the most famous one regards the *explosions* that took place on 26 September 2022 on the Russian *Nord Stream* gas pipelines that provided gas to Germany, an incident that led both Russia and the West to accusing each other for sabotage.²⁵

Another incident that occurred on 23 March 2021, when the large container ship ‘*Ever Given*’ was grounded in the Suez Canal for 106 days due to a crash into the canal’s bank, having as a result to cause a major disrupt in the global trade.²⁶

A third recent case of maritime insecurity is the 2023 Houthi’s attacks on several ships that were crossing the Red Sea, which was addressed by the EU by the deployment of the ongoing Greek-led maritime security operation ‘*EU NAVFOR ASPIDES*’.²⁷

Finally, another case of maritime security that affects the overall regional security in the Eastern Mediterranean is the Turkish aggressive foreign policy, in the context of which Turkey has been violating the Greek territorial waters²⁸, signed an illegal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Accord

²⁵Adomaitis, N. & Ahlander, J. (2024, February 07). *Nord Stream: What’s known about the mystery pipeline explosions?*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/qa-what-is-known-about-nord-stream-gas-pipeline-explosions-2023-09-26/>

²⁶Nadeen, E. (2021, July 07). *Ever Given container ship leaves Suez Canal 106 days after getting stuck*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/ever-given-container-ship-set-leave-suez-canal-2021-07-07/>.

²⁷Koukakis, G. (2024). *The European Union Maritime Security Operation ‘EUNAVFOR ASPIDES’ in the North-Western Indian Ocean, the Enhanced Role of the Hellenic Republic (Greece), and the Future of Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific*. South and South East Asia Security Research Centre Research Note, 3. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.28083.03363>.

²⁸Hellenic National Defence General Staff. (n.d.). *Violations of Territorial Waters*. <https://geetha.mil.gr/en/category/violations-of-territorial-waters/>

Government of Libya in 2019 for the delimitation of their maritime zones disregarding the provisions of UNCLOS²⁹, and harassing several vessels that were conducting surveys in the Cypriot EEZ³⁰.

The Interconnection of Maritime Security with other Policy Fields

As far as the interconnection of maritime security with other policy fields is concerned, it must be noted that when maritime facilities and ships are threatened, both the public and private sectors that are related to them malfunction as they cannot operate properly. In addition to that, maritime security is closely related to the following sectors:

1. **Economy:** The first sector that comes in mind when referring to maritime security is the economy, as maritime routes are vital – due to the fact that they are more quick and less expensive – for trade thus have an enormous impact the economy.

2. **Security & Defence:** Another sector that is interconnected with maritime security is the sector of the security & defence, as most maritime states depend on greatly on their Navy, as sea is the first line of their defence.

3. **Resilience:** Though it is not always stressed enough, resilience is a prerequisite of maritime security, as it aims inter alia to minimize the *vulnerabilities* of maritime infrastructure so that they are not an easy target for hostile actors. It must also be stressed that resilience is nowadays one of the most important capacities for actors.³¹

4. **Public Health:** As far as public health is concerned, maritime security plays an important role as the proper function of *healthcare* relies inter alia on the medicine that are being transferred by maritime routes.

5. **Technology:** Technology has also a great (both positive and negative) impact to maritime security, as it facilitates *innovation* not only as far as *countering* maritime threats/risks is concerned but also inventing new means and ways of *attacking* them by hostile actors. Moreover, it plays a vital in navigation and communications, which are vital in maritime navigation.

6. **Environment:** As far as the environment is concerned, maritime security is very closely related to environmental security, as maritime facilities and ship damages can contribute to the pollution of the environment and the maritime ecosystem.

7. **Public Administration:** The relation between public administration and maritime security mainly refers to maritime states, which usually have established a respective agency/department, such as the *Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy* of Greece that is responsible for all the matters that relate to maritime affairs.³²

8. **Intelligence:** Last but not least, intelligence is another sector that is related to maritime security, as it not only enhances the overall maritime threat awareness, but also provides information about the vulnerabilities of maritime infrastructure and ships leading to the enhancement of maritime resilience.³³

²⁹Koukakis, G. (2022). *The 2020 EEZ delimitation agreement between Greece & Egypt [Short Comments]*. HERMES Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy. <https://nebula.wsimg.com/9d13717091236cfaef0c31b8d39910cb?AccessKeyId=401F75AAF8C61A96E174&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>.

³⁰Kathimerini. (2021, September 28). *Turkish warship harasses research ship off Cyprus*. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1168670/turkey-renews-harassment-of-research-ship-off-cyprus/>.

³¹Koukakis, G. (2023). *Resilience: Highlighting its Importance for Security and Development through References to (National) Security Strategic Documents of International Actors*. HAPSc Policy Briefs Series, 4(1), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.35186>.

³²Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy. (n.d.). *Homepage*. <https://www.ynanp.gr/en/>.

³³Kanellopoulos, Anastasios-Nikolaos & Ioannidis, Anthony. (2024). *Enhancing Maritime Security Adopting an Integrated Intelligence Strategy in the Shipping Sector*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387517779_Enhancing_Maritime_Security_Adopting_an_Integrated_Intelligence_Strategy_in_the_Shipping_Sector.

Concluding Remarks

Taking into consideration the information presented in this article it is concluded that maritime security is a very important component of national security and must not be overlooked, as this will have major consequences to many policy fields, such as security & defence, energy, transportation, the economy, public health, the environment, public administration, health, etc. In fact, in order for a state to achieve the goals set in each one of these fields it must be able to protect its maritime infrastructure and assets in order to function in proper way and protect its national interests that stem from the exploitation of its maritime zones.

As far as the main *challenge* that most maritime states are facing, it lies in the ability to keep up with the *technological advancement* – especially as far as cyberspace is concerned – in order to maintain a satisfactory level of maritime security. As for the main *opportunity* that lies ahead, actors must take advantage of the existing technology and collaborate with each other in order to increase their maritime resilience and ensure that maritime regulations are being followed. Finally, it is imperative that everyone keeps in mind the importance of cooperation in enhancing security in every level, as according to *Franklin D. Roosevelt*:

*“Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves”.*³⁴

³⁴Filski, M. (2013, February 25). Comment: Competition versus cooperation. *International Accounting Bulletin*. <https://www.internationalaccountingbulletin.com/comment/commentscomment-competition-versus-cooperation/>.

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LAW ENFORCEMENT



Emerging Trends in Policing - A Comprehensive Review of Technological and Human-Centric Approaches

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Abstract

This article provides an in-depth examination of rising trends and current concerns in law enforcement. It uses a range of scientific articles, studies, and books to explain how predictive policing, artificial intelligence, extended reality applications, and advances in police equipment are altering the future of law enforcement. The human components of policing are also discussed, such as the change towards community-oriented initiatives, the consequences of decriminalisation, the function of emotional intelligence and empathy in law enforcement, and the significance of employment stability in the policing profession. The article emphasizes that the usefulness of smart technology and artificial intelligence in policing is determined not by the technology itself, but by how law enforcement agencies use it to serve and connect with their communities. These changes are changing not only how law enforcement functions, but how the public perceives it. The ramifications of these changes for law enforcement, lawmakers, and the communities they serve are significant and far-reaching. As we move forward, it is vital that we continue to talk and do study on these critical issues to ensure that the growth and future of policing correspond with society expectations and requirements. Despite the potential for these trends to dramatically enhance police, the study identifies numerous obstacles, including potential misuse, invasion of privacy, rapid technical innovation, and the need for ongoing updates and regulation. The article continues by stating that continued study and development are critical to addressing these difficulties and ensuring that the growth and future of police are consistent with society expectations and demands. This is a step towards the objective of providing law enforcement agencies with the most effective tools, strategies, and information to combat crime in the digital era.



Source: <https://tcsupfitting.com/blog/law-enforcement-trends/>

Keywords: artificial intelligence, community-oriented strategies, decriminalization, emotional intelligence, empathy, job stability predictive policing

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Introduction

This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the emerging trends and contemporary issues in the rapidly evolving landscape of law enforcement services (LES). The responsibilities of policing are constantly changing as new research and technologies emerge, and LES must adjust their practices to offer the type of service that society has come to expect.

The article is divided into two main categories: “*Human Aspects in Policing*” and “*Technology in Policing*”. The former covers the shift towards community-oriented strategies, the implications of decriminalization and beyond, the role of emotional intelligence and empathy in LES, and the importance of job stability in the policing profession. Various topics have emerged in this context, such as “Balancing Security and Privacy” [1], and “*Exploring Emotional Intelligence*” [2].

The “*Technology in Policing*” section explores the rise of predictive policing and the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the increasing focus on cybercrime and digital forensics, and the advent of new technologies such as body-worn cameras, drones, and social media platforms in policing. Predictive policing will continue to leverage advanced algorithms and data analysis to forecast potential criminal activity. AI will expand its influence in LES, supporting various policing activities from facial recognition for suspect identification to analyzing complex regional crime data sets for unseen patterns. “*Extended Reality*” (XR) applications in policing will be used to create simulated scenarios that train officers in handling different situations, improving decision-making skills. In investigations, augmented reality tools allow for reconstructing crime scenes, analyzing evidence, and enhancing forensic processes. Advancements in Police Equipment and Gear are also expected in 2024, with advanced body-worn cameras with real-time streaming capabilities to improved non-lethal weaponry.

These trends are not only transforming the way police work is conducted but also the way it is perceived by the public. As we delve into these trends, we will explore their implications for LES, policymakers, and the communities they serve. This article serves as a guide to navigating the complexities of modern policing and a starting point for further discussion and research into these critical issues. It could encompass all these trends as a comprehensive review or a research paper on the evolution and future of policing. It is important to note that smart technology is not the tech but the people and organizations that use it. Policing technology will only ever be as valuable as the processes it supports, and in LES, that means serving and engaging with their communities.

1. Human Aspects in Policing

This section focuses on the human elements of police, which are a vital component of LES. This category focuses on police techniques and approaches that prioritize human contact, community participation, emotional intelligence, empathy, and job stability.

Community-oriented methods imply a trend towards strengthening linkages between LES and the communities they serve. These initiatives seek to increase trust, improve communication, and foster collaboration between police and community people. Decriminalisation and beyond are important terms for LES since they refer to continuing conversations and policy changes about the management of certain offences.

Reducing the load on the criminal justice system and emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment are the goals. In LES, emotional intelligence and empathy are equally significant as they entail identifying, comprehending, and controlling our own emotions as well as those of others. Understanding and sharing the emotions of others, or empathy, is a necessary skill for building relationships and having productive conversations with the community.

In the context of police, emotional intelligence is essential for decision-making, stress management, communication, and conflict resolution. In a same vein, employment stability—which is defined as the safety and consistency in one’s line of work—is crucial to preserving employee morale, output, and public confidence in LES.

We will go into more detail on each of these subjects and consider how they affect LES, legislators, and the communities they serve in the sections that follow. This investigation will offer a thorough grasp of the human elements of law enforcement and their function in contemporary LES.

1.1. Community-Oriented Policing

The British statesman Robert Peel, referred regarded as “the founder of modern policing,” proposed the “Principles of Democratic Policing” in the 19th century, which is when community-oriented policing first emerged [3]. These ideas offered a way to stop crime without significantly encroaching on people’s lives.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the phrase “community policing” was coined [4]. Community policing began to take shape in the 1960s as a result of the civil rights movement’s exposure of the shortcomings of the conventional policing paradigm. The administration was alerted to the causes of racial tension and prejudice, especially the police, by widespread protests and riots against racial injustices.

In reaction to this public upheaval, the President’s Commission on LES and the Administration of Justice urged that the police adapt to the realities of a constantly changing society [4]. One area that needed major improvement was the police’s negative relationship with minorities, notably African Americans.

In 1994, the Violent Crime Control and LES Act (H.R. 3355) was passed, authorizing \$8.8 billion in spending over six years, leading to the creation of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) (cops.usdoj.gov). The strategy known as “community-oriented policing” places a strong emphasis on collaborating and forming relationships with local residents. In order to proactively address the underlying causes of public safety concerns including crime, social disorder, and fear of crime, this policy promotes collaboration between the police and the community [5]. It is an approach that blends the conventional elements of LES with problem-solving techniques, community involvement, preventative strategies, and community alliances [6].

In terms of COPS, recent research has found that community-oriented policing enhances the connection between the police and the community, resulting in higher trust in the police, enhanced police legitimacy, and lower fear of crime [7]. While the COPS programme has numerous advantages, it also has some potential downsides. These include the militarization of police forces, which can undermine the LES’ brand and may not improve safety, resulting in unwarranted arrests [8]. Community police expectations can lead to occupational fatigue, with required overtime and a persistent need for specialist jobs [9]. Empowering private police with full police powers might result in increased administrative burdens for local governments that license private police [10].

Some opponents believe that police forces have historically been repressive and aggressive, and that reforms have been ineffective. They argue that defunding the police enables experts to intervene [11].

1.2. Decriminalization and Beyond

In an era marked by the changing landscape of drug policy and community well-being, the province of British Columbia, Canada, has lately begun on a historic adventure. Decriminalization, a legislative procedure that eliminates criminal sanctions for certain actions, has been tested in a variety of settings and circumstances. For example, Scheim et al. [12] conducted a comprehensive analysis of the impact of drug decriminalization on drug availability, usage, and related health and social problems worldwide.

While decriminalization does not completely remove the repercussions, it does direct attention away from criminalizing drug possession and toward treatment, harm reduction, and administrative infractions [13], [14], and [15]. By shifting funds from the criminal justice system to health systems, decreasing prison rates, expanding access to treatment, and eliminating racial inequities in drug-related LES and sentencing, this policy places a strong emphasis on public health and safety.

Legalization and decriminalization are not the same thing. They are not the same, even though they both include altering the legal standing of substances. Decriminalization is the process of removing criminal consequences for drug use and possession and frequently substituting administrative or civil punishments [16]. Although decriminalized drugs are still illegal, the penalties are far less harsh. For instance, anyone discovered in possession of the substance (even in little amounts) can face drug treatment, drug education, or a civil fine rather than going to jail [17]. However, legalization refers to the process by which a substance that was formerly illegal is now allowed by federal or state legislation [17]. People using the drug don’t have to worry about getting caught or paying fines. However, there may be some restrictions set forth with the legalization of a drug to ensure user safety.

For a number of reasons, the idea of decriminalization is essential in police study. Decriminalization may cause LES efforts to be directed away from activities that are no longer seen as criminal, which may have an impact on how police resources are distributed [18]. Decriminalization may also have a positive effect on community relations by enhancing public perceptions of the police in cases when the public believes that particular laws are unfair [19]. Additionally, policymakers may better understand the impacts of decriminalization and make informed judgments regarding drug policy in the future by researching its implications [13]. Studies can shed light on the relationship between decriminalization and public safety as well as crime rates [20]. Last but not least, decriminalization is frequently discussed in relation to larger issues of social fairness, and research can help these conversations by offering information regarding its results [18]. In conclusion, the idea of decriminalization offers a useful prism through which to examine a range of policing-related topics,

including the distribution of resources, community relations, and policy success. It is an essential field of research for police science because of its intricacy and ramifications for several LES and societal domains.

1.3. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is becoming widely acknowledged by LES leaders as a critical component of successful leadership. The capacity of law enforcement officials to identify, comprehend, and control both their own and other people's emotions is known as emotional intelligence (EI) [21]. It is often mentioned as being essential to improving ties between the community and the police. Officers with high EI had lower rates of criminal activity and delinquency. But in order to work properly, emotional intelligence (EI) is a complicated psychological process that requires a nuanced interplay of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional skills. The unpredictable, stressful nature of the events that officers face and the requirement for alertness make this process much more difficult in the context of police.

Although EI has significant benefits, it can also have negative effects on police work. Vicarious trauma, dissociation, deregulation, and depersonalization can all be brought on by high EI. Depression, drug misuse, and suicide ideation are possible outcomes. Furthermore, cops may be more vulnerable to serious mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and burnout as a result of compassion fatigue, which is frequently made worse by organizational stresses and a lack of community appreciation [22].

1.4. Empathy in Law Enforcement

In order to provide comprehensive, effective, and compassionate services, public servants must possess empathy, which makes them able to comprehend the needs of the people they serve. It is regarded as a fundamental ability in public service, necessary for developing policies and carrying out public services efficiently [23]. Empathy promotes justice and raises the caliber of services provided by enabling public employees to engage with residents on a deeper level. Public employees who practice empathy are better able to meet the needs and feelings of the general public, which enhances job satisfaction, expedites dispute resolution, and improves performance [24]. Fundamentally, empathy serves as the cornerstone of public service, directing activities and behaviors to improve the lives of people it serves [25]. The capacity of law enforcement officials to comprehend and empathize with the emotions of people is known as empathy in LES, and it is essential for fostering trust and productive community relations [26]. It's frequently mentioned as a crucial component of improving community-police relations. People with empathy are less prone to commit crimes or be delinquents. But in order to work correctly, empathy is a complicated psychological process that depends on the delicate interaction of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive capacities [27]. The unpredictable, stressful nature of the events that officers face and the requirement for alertness make this process much more difficult in the context of police.

However, empathy may have detrimental effects on the mental health of police officers. Vicarious trauma, detachment, deregulation, and depersonalization are possible outcomes. Depression, drug misuse, and suicide ideation are possible outcomes. Furthermore, cops may be more vulnerable to serious mental health conditions including PTSD, depression, and burnout as a result of compassion fatigue—which is frequently made worse by organizational stresses and a lack of gratitude from the community [27].

1.5. Job Stability

Despite LES's defined career path, perks, and pension plan, job stability remains a challenging problem. The high-stress workplace, possibility of physical harm, and emotional toll of crime may all contribute to burnout, high turnover rates, and public scrutiny. Officers may feel isolated or unfairly targeted, lowering morale and work satisfaction. Budget cuts, financing changes, and economic downturns can all contribute to employment losses or uncertainty. To address these concerns, a multidimensional strategy is required, which includes mental health care for police, fair accountability mechanisms, and reliable financing for law enforcement. The reality is more complex, even as LES jobs sometimes imply a certain level of employment security because of defined advancement, perks, and pension plans [28]. Job burnout can come from the high stress environment, bodily risk, and emotional toll of dealing with crime [29], [30], which may in turn cause a high turnover rate [31], [32], [33].

Moreover, public criticism and attention, especially in the wake of contentious events, might affect job stability. Officer morale and work satisfaction may suffer if they feel unsupported or unfairly singled out [33]. Furthermore, employment losses or uncertainty within LES may result from budget cuts and changes in financing. Studies reveal that officers who exhibit more enthusiasm for public service also tend to have higher

levels of work satisfaction [33]. Nonetheless, there is a significant danger of burnout and high involvement in the policing profession [29]. As a result, resolving these problems calls for a multipronged strategy that includes financing for LES agencies, fair and open accountability procedures, and assistance for officers' mental health [34].

In conclusion, although while careers in LES might be stable in certain ways, employment instability can also be caused by a number of other circumstances. The success of LES and the welfare of its officers depend on resolving these problems. There are several ways in which improving police services depends on employment stability. Better performance is connected to increased work satisfaction [33]. Officers are more likely to become experts in their profession and have more work satisfaction when they feel safe in their positions [35].

Motivation is also increased by job stability. Officers who are confident in the longevity of their position are more likely to perform their jobs well [36]. Police job may be demanding, which can lead to unfavorable attitudes that affect motivation and productivity [35]. However, by offering a sense of security, work consistency might lessen this negative. Furthermore, a stable work environment helps people retain their knowledge and abilities, which are vital in law enforcement where experience and a grasp of the community are crucial [37]. Finally, job stability can decrease employee turnover, which is often associated with low job satisfaction and morale [38].

2. Technology in Policing

As LES all over the globe incorporate more and more electronic platforms and tools into its operations, technology's role in policing is growing in importance. For example, predictive policing enables law enforcement agencies (LES) to more effectively deploy resources and deter criminal conduct by utilizing data analytic tools to identify possible criminal activity before it occurs. Furthermore, a range of AI applications, including face recognition software and predictive analytics, are being employed in law enforcement. Large volumes of data may be processed fast and precisely with the use of AI, which improves operational effectiveness and decision-making.

Digital forensics and cybercrime are other expanding disciplines in LES. The capacity to look into and stop digital crimes becomes more and more important as our lives become more and more digitized. In terms of technology and law enforcement, the deployment of drones, social media, and body-worn cameras has completely changed how police work is done. These technologies provide fresh approaches to gathering data, keeping an eye on events, and communicating with the public. A new trend in training that offers LES officers realistic and engaging experiences is virtual reality training. Better decision-making abilities and more readiness for everyday life can result from this.

We will examine each of these subjects in more detail as well as its ramifications for LES, legislators, and the communities they serve in the sections that follow. This investigation will yield a thorough grasp of the function of technology in contemporary law enforcement.

2.1. Predictive Policing

Predictive policing is a data-driven strategy that uses advanced analytics and machine learning algorithms to estimate crime patterns and pinpoint prospective hotspots. This strategy, based on decision theory, focuses on identifying and prioritizing possible areas of concern [39].

Machine learning is a subset of artificial intelligence that uses statistical models and algorithms to evaluate and predict data [40]. Interestingly, deep learning, a subset of machine learning, models complicated input-output interactions using artificial neural networks with several layers. These technologies have the ability to address the problem of crime prediction in a variety of ways.

There has been a lot of research done on the use of machine learning to crime prediction [41]. Predicting crimes before they happen has been shown to save lives and stop property damage. Numerous datasets and techniques are employed in these investigations; most of them rely on supervised machine learning, which assumes the existence of previously labeled data [41].

To conclude, predictive policing is a noteworthy development in the realm of law enforcement science. Effective techniques to avoid and respond to criminal actions may be developed by LES through the utilization of machine learning and deep learning technologies [40]. Predictive policing is novel, but it is not without problems. If the data used to train the prediction models is biased, the method may reinforce systemic prejudices, like racial profiling [42].

This raises serious concerns about over policing of some populations. Furthermore, privacy issues are brought up by the heavy dependence on data, and it is challenging for the general public to comprehend how

predictions are generated due to the proprietary nature of the algorithms utilized [43]. Moreover, not every LES has the technological know-how or access to the data required to implement predictive policing successfully. Because crime is complicated, assessing predictive policing's efficacy is difficult as well [44]. And lastly, there's a chance that predictive policing may be abused in the absence of adequate legislation and supervision. Predictive policing may therefore enhance LES, but only if these flaws are fixed before it can be applied fairly and successfully [42].

2.2. Artificial Intelligence in Policing

Predictive policing is one of the many facets of police where artificial intelligence is being used more and more. One of the most prominent uses of AI in LES is predictive policing, a data-driven strategy that forecasts crime trends and locates possible hotspots using machine learning algorithms and sophisticated analytics [45]. This strategy is predicated on the idea that certain elements of the social and physical environment promote criminal misconduct on a regular basis and that altering those elements may prevent future crimes [45].

AI is also being used to autonomously identify suspicious behaviors; a notion known as 'smart' LES [46]. In some cases, technology can identify suspicious behaviors more successfully than human police personnel. This has prompted lawmakers and LES to examine the adoption of AI-based LES technologies, particularly in areas where they have proven to be highly beneficial [46]. However, the application of artificial intelligence in police is not without its limitations. Concerns have been made concerning the possibility of misuse and prejudice, privacy violations, a lack of transparency, restricted access to data and algorithms, difficulties determining efficacy, and the need for sufficient regulation and control [47].

2.3. Cybercrime and Digital Forensics

The intricacy of crimes committed online is growing along with technology, which is why cybercrime and digital forensics are receiving more attention. Cybercrime, a rising issue in the digital era, is the illegal use of digital tools for a variety of illicit purposes, such as phishing schemes, online sexual harassment, and unauthorized access and harmful code insertion [48]. The strategies employed to stop cybercrime must change as it gets more complex.

Digital forensics is among these techniques. It entails locating, gathering, analyzing, and preserving evidence from digital material using scientific methods [49]. Numerous types of cybercrimes, such as those that target computer systems, those that employ computer systems as tools, and those involving online material, can be looked into using digital forensics. But there are a number of difficulties facing the area of digital forensics. The requirement for forensic preparedness, which is becoming ready for a digital investigation before a cybercrime happens, is one of the primary obstacles [49]. This covers methods for stopping cybercrime as well as safeguarding security and privacy [48]. The speed at which technology is developing is another problem. With the emergence of new technology, cybercrime also takes on new forms. This necessitates regular changes to digital forensic methods and instruments [50]. In summary, even though cybercrime poses serious obstacles, digital forensics is a viable strategy for comprehending and thwarting these crimes. Ongoing research and development, however, are essential to stay up with the ever-changing cybercrime scenario. Research is needed to comprehend these technologies and how they might be used for illegal purposes because new technologies also bring out new types of cybercrime [48].

New digital forensic tools and procedures are required because cybercriminals are always coming up with new ways to avoid detection. For example, if cybercrime changes, current digital forensic techniques could become less useful. However, continued research and development might help make these tools better [49]. Research may assist identify these new requirements and guide the creation of training and education programs. As cybercrime evolves, so do the knowledge and skills needed to combat it. In order to ensure that laws and regulations keep up with the changing landscape of cybercrime and do not impede the efficient use of digital forensics, research may also be used to guide these decisions [50]. Therefore, ongoing research and development are crucial in the fight against cybercrime, helping to ensure that LES are equipped with the most effective tools, techniques, and knowledge to combat cybercrime.

2.4. Body-Worn Cameras

Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs) are increasingly being employed in law enforcement to improve openness, accountability, and confidence. These devices record encounters between police personnel and the general people, offering an unbiased picture of occurrences. It should be mentioned that BWCs were first used in LES in the United Kingdom in 2005 as part of a trial program run by the Devon and Cornwall Police Departments [51]. By 2006, the initiative has expanded to a national scale in the United Kingdom [52].

In the United States, the West Lafayette Police Department in Indiana was the first LES to implement police body-worn cameras in 2012 [53]. Later, in 2012, three American towns (Mesa and Phoenix, Arizona; and Rialto, California) launched their own police body camera trial programs [51]. By 2016, 47% of the 15,328 general-purpose LES in the United States have received police body cams [54]. The implementation of BWCs expanded dramatically after 2014, when Michael Brown was shot in Ferguson, Missouri, prompting public calls for enhanced police accountability [55].

Nevertheless, there are several difficulties with using BWCs. The main issues are privacy invasion and abuse potential [56, 57], as well as when and where these cameras should be utilized and who should have access to the video. Research has demonstrated that BWCs can have a favorable effect on both police and civilian behavior despite these obstacles [56]. They can lower citizen complaints, lessen police use of force, and enhance the general standard of interactions between the police and the public [57]. The usage of BWCs has also been linked to further paradoxical outcomes. According to the self-awareness idea, for example, cops may occasionally be more vulnerable to attack while they are under the observation of BWCs [57].

To summarize, while BWCs have the potential to dramatically enhance police, further study and development are required to solve these issues and assure their effective and ethical usage [56].

2.5. Drones in Policing

Unmanned aerial vehicles, sometimes known as drones, or UAVs, are being utilized more frequently in LES for a range of tasks, including as surveillance, search and rescue missions, and natural disaster response [58]. They provide a number of noteworthy advantages, including payload characteristics, aerial operations, and quick mobility [59]. Nonetheless, there are a number of drawbacks and difficulties in using drones for law enforcement. The possible violation of privacy is one of the main worries [58]. Because drone surveillance activities infringe upon residents' basic right to privacy, they may be quite troublesome. When these drones have facial recognition software installed, this worry is magnified even further. The speed at which technology is developing is another problem. New criminal activities follow the development of new technology. Drone tools and tactics must thus be updated continuously [59]. In addition, there are concerns regarding who should have access to the video and when and where these drones should be utilized [58].

In several nations, including certain EU members, the use of drones for border enforcement is already commonplace [60]. The use of drones for less obvious but nonetheless legal objectives, including surveillance, is extremely troublesome.

2.6. Social Media and Policing

Law enforcement agencies use social media for a variety of objectives, including communication strategies and decriminalization initiatives. Social media has become a regular tool in police operations across the world, changing the landscape of communication and information exchange [61]. Law enforcement agencies are beginning to use social media methods to broaden the reach of their communication efforts [62]. The usage of social media in LES varies from open-source intelligence and community participation to crisis communication.

Nonetheless, there are a number of drawbacks and difficulties with using social media for law enforcement. The possibility of abuse and privacy infringement is one of the primary worries [62]. In addition, there are concerns regarding who should have access to the material and when and when these social media tactics should be applied [63]. Additionally, residents' expectations of services are evolving. The public is becoming more and more accustomed to expecting public services to be continuously available regardless of physical location and to respond more quickly. Nonetheless, it is extremely troublesome when social media is used for less obvious and acceptable reasons, including monitoring [58].

2.7. Virtual Reality Training

Virtual Reality (VR) is used to deliver immersive training experiences for law enforcement agents. Virtual reality is a computer-generated simulation technology that blends computer graphics, artificial intelligence, sensor technology, and parallel processing technologies [64]. VR has grown into a variety of modalities, including Head Mounted Displays (HMDs), which give a more immersive experience than Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (CAVE VR) systems because to the increased sensory stimulation [64].

VR is employed in a variety of skill-training applications, and its effectiveness is dependent on both technological maturity and contextual fit [65]. A thorough grasp of advanced VR characteristics, both technological and experiential, their potential impact on certain learning objectives, and the use of suitable evaluation procedures are required for the effective use of VR technology.

Virtual reality training does, however, come with a number of drawbacks and difficulties. Time lags between the real and virtual worlds, falling or hitting objects, obtrusiveness (bulky, heavy equipment), the need for significant processing power and data bandwidth, and the “uncanny valley” effect—which notes the limit in emotional response to humanlike robots—are some of the primary issues [66]. The potential need for sporadic updates for VR training presents another difficulty. To keep your program up to date, hardware, software, and accessories might need to be updated [67].

Conclusion

To sum up, this work has given a thorough summary of the newest developments and pressing problems in law enforcement. We have looked at how developments in police technology, artificial intelligence, extended reality applications, and predictive policing are influencing the direction of LES. The human side of police has also been explored, including the move toward community-oriented tactics, the effects of legalization, the significance of employment security in the policing industry, and the function of emotional intelligence and empathy in LES. The article emphasizes that the value of smart technology in policing is not in the technology itself, but in the people and organizations that utilize it to serve and engage their communities. As we traverse the complexity of modern policing, it becomes evident that these trends are not only changing the way police work is done, but also how the public perceives it. The repercussions of these shifts for LES, politicians, and the communities they serve are significant and far-ranging. As we move forward, it is vital that we continue to talk and do study on these critical issues to ensure that the growth and future of policing correspond with society expectations and requirements.

Disclosure of AI use:

This article acknowledges the use of artificial intelligence tools in its development. QuillBot was employed to check and correct punctuation and translation errors. Additionally, Microsoft Copilot was utilized to search for and organize the bibliography for this article. The integration of these AI technologies aimed to enhance the accuracy and quality of the content presented.

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AFRICA



Shadow Armies: Examining the Role and Impact of Private Military Contractors in African Security Geopolitics

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Introduction

The involvement of Private Military Contractors (PMCs) in Africa has significantly transformed the continent's security landscape. Operating in a complex legal and ethical environment, these entities provide a range of services, from combat assistance and logistical support to training local forces and protecting critical infrastructure. As geopolitical tensions escalate, the operations of PMCs in Africa have substantial implications for state sovereignty and local communities. Understanding their influence is essential for assessing the security dynamics across the region.

Historical Context

The presence of PMCs in Africa dates back to the Cold War, when they offered states a cost-effective solution for security challenges without direct military involvement. The 1990s saw a surge in their activities, particularly during the violence in countries like Somalia and Rwanda. Post-9/11, the role of PMCs became more formalized, with rising demands for security in unstable regions. This historical backdrop emphasizes how PMCs have not only supported military endeavors but have also become integral to the evolving security landscape in Africa.



Source: https://www.military.africa/?attachment_id=3416

Current Landscape

Major Players and Their Operations

Prominent PMCs in Africa include Wagner Group, Aegis Defence Services, and DynCorp International. Wagner Group has gained prominence due to its involvement in countries like Libya, Mali and the Central African Republic, where it offers military support to government forces. Aegis Defence Services has expanded

its footprint in Africa, particularly in securing infrastructure projects. DynCorp International operates in South Sudan, focusing on logistical support and training missions.

Areas of Engagement

PMCs operate in various areas, including protection of international resources and investments, training of local forces, and logistical support for military operations. They also contribute to capacity building by offering training programs for governmental and paramilitary forces. Additionally, PMCs assist in providing security for aid agencies operating in conflict-prone regions.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

PMCs operate within a complex legal framework, often crossing national and international laws. Ethical considerations arise from the nature of their operations, which can involve direct combat, surveillance, and training for local forces. Key factors include accountability, inconsistent enforcement of laws, and potential human rights violations.

These elements reflect the ongoing debate over the roles and responsibilities of PMCs, highlighting the need for greater oversight and more robust legal frameworks.

Impact on Local Economies

PMCs significantly influence local economies through various channels. On the positive side, they create job opportunities by hiring local personnel for support roles. Conversely, their presence can undermine local economies by diverting resources and attention from local governmental structures. The impact on existing industries, such as hospitality and transportation, creates a mixed economic scenario.

Security Dynamics in Africa

Security dynamics in Africa are characterized by internal conflicts, geopolitical interests, and the growing role of PMCs. These contractors often step in where state capabilities are limited, offering services ranging from training local forces to direct engagement in combat operations. Their presence can alter the balance of power, contributing to immediate security operations but raising questions about accountability and long-term stability.

Case Studies: Notable Private Military Contractors in Africa

Wagner Group

Wagner Group has been particularly active in Libya, Mali and the Central African Republic, where it provides military support to government forces. Their activities often raise international concerns regarding sovereignty and human rights implications.

Aegis Defence Services

Aegis Defence Services, known for its operations in Iraq, has also expanded its footprint in Africa, particularly in securing infrastructure projects. Their presence illustrates the diverse functions that PMCs can undertake, often intertwining with corporate interests.

DynCorp International

DynCorp International has operated in South Sudan, focusing on logistical support and training missions. Through these case studies, it is evident that the influence and operational scope of PMCs in Africa continue to evolve amid varying security challenges.

Future Trends

As the security landscape in Africa continues to evolve, PMCs are likely to adopt increasingly diversified roles. Given the region's unique challenges, these contractors may transition from traditional combat roles to advisory and capacity-building functions, aiding local security forces in enhancing their operational effectiveness. The growing demand for security in unstable areas will likely increase the presence and influence of PMCs. Technological advancements will also shape the future of PMCs in Africa, allowing them to offer enhanced operational capabilities.

Conclusion

Understanding the role and impact of PMCs in Africa is vital for comprehending their influence on regional security, stability, and governance. These entities often fill gaps left by local governments, providing critical services that range from training military forces to securing valuable resources. The engagement of PMCs in Africa fundamentally shapes the security landscape, impacting diplomatic relations among African nations and between Africa and global powers. Awareness of these dynamics fosters informed discussions about the ethical implications and governance of security arrangements in Africa. As these contractors continue to adapt to the unique needs of African nations, their impact on local governance and security frameworks warrants careful examination.

AFRICA



Energy Independence and Regional Power: A Geostrategic Assessment of the Dangote Refinery and Africa's Refining Capacity

Oluwasogo Joseph DAIRO (Nigeria)

Introduction

Africa, a continent rich in natural resources, has long grappled with the paradox of being a major crude oil producer while heavily reliant on imported refined petroleum products. This dependency not only strains national economies but also exposes them to global market volatility and geopolitical risks. The recent inauguration of the Dangote Refinery in Nigeria marks a pivotal moment in Africa's quest for energy independence. This analysis will delve into the geostrategic implications of the Dangote Refinery, its impact on Nigeria's energy landscape, and its broader influence on Africa's refining capacity and regional power dynamics.

The Dangote Refinery: A Transformative Force

Technical Specifications and Innovations

The Dangote Refinery, located near Lagos, Nigeria, is the world's largest single-train refinery with a refining capacity of 650,000 barrels per day (bpd). As of February 2025, the refinery is operating at 85% capacity, processing approximately 550,000 bpd, with plans to reach full capacity within 30 days. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the refinery is designed to produce a range of high-quality refined products, including gasoline, diesel, naphtha, jet fuel, and polypropylene. Additionally, the refinery features an integrated power plant with a capacity of 435 megawatts, ensuring self-sufficiency and contributing to the stability of the local power grid.

Enhancing Nigeria's Energy Independence

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and oil producer, has historically struggled with insufficient local refining capacity. The Dangote Refinery is poised to change this dynamic by meeting up to 100% of Nigeria's domestic fuel demand, significantly reducing the country's reliance on imported refined products. This shift will not only save billions of dollars in foreign exchange but also enhance Nigeria's energy security by reducing vulnerability to global oil price fluctuations.

Regional Influence and Economic Implications

The impact of the Dangote Refinery extends beyond Nigeria's borders. Neighboring countries, such as



Source: <https://southernafRICANTimes.com/dangote-oil-refinery-begins-supplying-nigerias-fuel-market-aiming-for-energy-independence/>

Ghana, are exploring the possibility of importing refined products from the Dangote Refinery to reduce their dependence on more expensive European imports. This shift could lead to more favorable trade balances and strengthen regional economic ties. Furthermore, the refinery's operations are projected to boost Nigeria's GDP growth from 4.15% in 2024 to 6.21% by 2030, potentially increasing Nigeria's GDP to over \$400 billion.

Job Creation and Economic Empowerment

The Dangote Refinery is expected to be a major driver of job creation in Nigeria. The project is projected to generate over 570,000 direct jobs and more than 100,000 indirect employment opportunities. By reducing unemployment, the refinery will increase economic activity, boost household incomes, and contribute to government revenue through taxes. This economic empowerment will enhance the circulation of money within the Nigerian economy, further stimulating growth.

Challenges and Strategic Considerations

Despite its promising prospects, the Dangote Refinery faces several challenges. One of the primary issues is securing a consistent supply of crude oil. While the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is expected to supply a portion of the required crude, the refinery has had to import additional supplies to meet its processing needs. This situation emphasizes the complexities of local crude sourcing and the broader implications for Nigeria's oil sector. Addressing these challenges will require strategic planning and investment in infrastructure to ensure a stable supply chain.

Broader African Refining Landscape

The Dangote Refinery is a significant addition to Africa's refining capacity, which has seen a resurgence in recent years. Several other projects are underway across the continent:

- Angola: The Cabinda Refinery is expected to commence operations by late 2025 with an initial processing capacity of 30,000 bpd, expanding to 60,000 bpd. The Lobito Refinery, with a capacity of 200,000 bpd, is under construction and will be Angola's largest when completed.

- Egypt: Egypt's refining capacity stands at 893,000 bpd, with key refineries such as Mostorod (142,000 bpd), El Nasr (100,000 bpd), and MIDOR (160,000 bpd) contributing significantly to domestic fuel production.

- South Africa: South Africa's total refining capacity is 500,000 bpd, with key refineries including Sapref (180,000 bpd), Enref (135,000 bpd), and Astron Energy (100,000 bpd).

These developments collectively aim to reduce Africa's dependence on imported refined products and enhance energy self-sufficiency. However, challenges remain, including the need for investment in infrastructure and modernization of existing refineries.

Geostrategic Implications

The operationalization of the Dangote Refinery positions Nigeria as a pivotal player in Africa's energy sector. By potentially transforming Nigeria from a net importer to a net exporter of refined petroleum products, the refinery could alter regional power dynamics, foster economic growth, and enhance energy security across West Africa. This shift could also strengthen Nigeria's geopolitical influence, making it a key partner for regional and international stakeholders.

However, realizing these benefits will require addressing existing challenges, particularly those related to crude supply logistics and regional infrastructure. The Nigerian government must also focus on diversifying the economy, investing in infrastructure, and enhancing regulatory oversight to ensure the benefits of the Dangote Refinery are realized for all Nigerians.

Conclusion

The Dangote Refinery represents a monumental step towards Africa's energy independence and regional power dynamics. Its impact on Nigeria's economy and energy security is significant, and its influence extends across the continent. As Africa continues to expand its refining capacity, the Dangote Refinery serves as a beacon of hope and a model for future projects. Addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities presented by this transformative project will be crucial for Africa's journey towards energy self-sufficiency and economic stability.

AFGHANISTAN



The Geopolitics of Intervention: Analyzing Potential U.S. Re-Engagement in Afghanistan

Oluwasogo Joseph DAIRO (Nigeria)

Introduction

The prospect of American re-engagement in Afghanistan under President Donald Trump's administration represents a significant potential shift in U.S. foreign policy with far-reaching implications for regional stability and global power dynamics. As the administration contemplates a renewed strategic presence, centered primarily on Bagram Air Base, this analysis examines the multidimensional considerations that would shape such an intervention, from military and diplomatic challenges to broader geopolitical ramifications.

Strategic Value of Bagram Air Base

Bagram Air Base's significance transcends its military utility; it represents a critical node in the complex web of Central Asian geopolitics. Located approximately 40 miles north of Kabul, the base offers unparalleled strategic positioning:

- Proximity to China's western frontier: Bagram provides a vantage point for monitoring activities in Xinjiang and along the Belt and Road Initiative corridors, a consideration explicitly acknowledged by President Trump.

- Intelligence gathering capabilities: The base's infrastructure supports sophisticated ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) operations across Central and South Asia.

- Power projection platform: Bagram enables rapid deployment capabilities throughout a region where conventional U.S. military access is increasingly constrained.

The administration's focus on Bagram reflects an understanding of its value as a geopolitical linchpin in an era of great power competition. However, President Trump's assertion that "China has Bagram" requires contextual clarification. While China has expanded its influence in Afghanistan through economic investments and diplomatic engagement with the Taliban, there is no evidence of direct Chinese military presence at the base. Rather, the facility remains under Taliban control, though significantly diminished in operational capacity compared to its former status.



Source: <https://quincyst.org/research/beyond-may-1-the-future-of-u-s-engagement-in-afghanistan/>

Military and Logistical Challenges

Any effort to re-establish an American presence at Bagram would confront formidable obstacles:

Operational Constraints

The 2021 withdrawal fundamentally altered the operational landscape. Re-establishing a military foothold would require:

1. Access negotiations: Securing entry routes through either Pakistan or Central Asian states, both of which present political complications.
2. Force protection: Deploying sufficient personnel to secure a facility that previously housed thousands of troops.
3. Infrastructure rehabilitation: Restoring degraded facilities after years of minimal maintenance.

Equipment Recovery Complexities

The administration's stated objective of recovering abandoned military assets presents particular challenges:

- Inventory dispersion: Equipment has been widely distributed, with some reportedly crossing into neighboring countries.
- Taliban-controlled assets: Sophisticated weaponry, including aircraft and vehicles, now under Taliban control would not be relinquished without significant pressure.
- Technological compromise: Sensitive technologies may have already been examined by regional actors, potentially including Pakistan, Iran, China and Russia.

Diplomatic and Political Dimensions

Taliban Resistance

The Taliban's dismissal of Trump's statements regarding Bagram as a "dream" indicates the formidable political resistance any re-engagement would face. After consolidating control over Afghanistan, the Islamic Emirate would perceive any U.S. return as an existential threat to its authority. Their spokesperson's statement reflects confidence in their position, bolstered by:

- Expanded international recognition efforts
- Strengthened security apparatus using captured equipment
- Diversified foreign relationships beyond traditional Pakistani support

Regional Power Dynamics

Re-engagement would trigger complex reactions across the regional chessboard:

- Pakistan: Likely to view American return with ambivalence, balancing counterterrorism benefits against sovereignty concerns.
- Russia: Would oppose re-establishment of U.S. presence in what it considers its sphere of influence.
- Iran: Would intensify anti-American activities through proxy groups in western Afghanistan.
- China: Would accelerate economic and security integration with the Taliban regime to counter American influence.

Domestic Policy Considerations

The administration's investigation into the 2021 withdrawal, including potential court-martials for senior military officers, introduces a domestic political dimension that could influence operational decision-making. This retrospective accountability focus:

- Potentially creates tension between civilian leadership and military brass
- Risks politicizing military planning and operations
- Could divert resources from forward-looking strategic imperatives

Counterterrorism Imperatives

A compelling rationale for limited re-engagement stems from counterterrorism considerations. Recent intelligence assessments indicate:

- Al-Qaeda reconstitution: Evidence of the group rebuilding operational capabilities in eastern Afghanistan.

- ISIS-K expansion: Increased attacks demonstrating the Islamic State Khorasan's growing footprint.
- Intelligence gaps: Significant reduction in human intelligence networks following withdrawal.

These developments create pressure for some form of counter-terrorism presence, though not necessarily at the scale of previous deployments.

Economic and Resource Considerations

Afghanistan's mineral wealth, estimated at over \$1 trillion including rare earth elements critical to advanced technology, represents a strategic resource dimension that shapes great power competition. Chinese firms have already secured mining rights to significant copper and lithium deposits. An American re-engagement would inevitably intersect with these economic interests, potentially:

- Securing access to strategic resources
- Countering Chinese economic entrenchment
- Creating leverage for influence with the Taliban regime

Assessment and Outlook

The administration appears to be pursuing a calibrated approach that balances symbolic statements with pragmatic constraints. A full-scale military re-occupation of Bagram remains highly unlikely given the enormous political and military costs. More probable scenarios include:

1. Limited counter terrorism footprint: Negotiated access for intelligence collection and targeted operations.
2. Diplomatic leverage creation: Using the threat of re-engagement to extract concessions from the Taliban on counter-terrorism cooperation.
3. Regional balancing strategy: Strengthening military positions in neighboring countries while maintaining pressure on Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The geopolitics of potential U.S. re-engagement in Afghanistan exemplify the complex interplay between military capability, diplomatic leverage, and strategic competition that defines contemporary international relations. While presidential rhetoric may emphasize Bagram's symbolic importance, practical implementation will likely reflect a more nuanced approach that acknowledges the transformed regional landscape since 2021.

The administration's ultimate policy will reveal much about its broader approach to great power competition, counter-terrorism priorities, and the evolving American role in Central Asia. What remains certain is that Afghanistan, despite hopes to the contrary, continues to occupy a critical position in U.S. strategic calculations, reflecting its enduring geopolitical significance at the crossroads of Asia.

Biographies of the authors



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He is a civil servant, political science researcher and English translator. In 2001, he graduated from the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest, Political Science section in English, with the bachelor thesis Sources and Features of Ethnic Conflict. In 2003, he graduated from the Master's Degree in International Relations of the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Bucharest, with the dissertation Ethnic Conflict Resolution Perspectives in Southeast Asia. Between 2003-2019 he was a researcher at the "Ovidiu Șincai" Social-Democrat Institute, since 2004 serving as coordinator of the Department of International Relations and project manager at the "Ovidiu Șincai" European School (project carried out under the auspices of the Council of Europe). Since 2019, he is a civil servant in the International Relations Department of the National Public Pension House and a PhD candidate in political sciences at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Bucharest, defending in October 2023 the thesis entitled The role of identity in shaping the

European policy of the Russian Federation at the beginning 21st century. He has published articles on topics such as: the geopolitics of Eastern Europe, European nations and identities, conflicts and cooperation organizations in the Balkans, the transition in Romania, the foreign and security policy of the Russian Federation, in English, Romanian and Russian for magazines and publications online from Romania, Russia, Slovenia and Kosovo. He is the co-author of Contemporary Social Democracy – Between Tradition and Globalization (2004; chapters on social democracy in Great Britain, Latin America and North America) and The Dark Side of Globalization (2016; chapters on guerrilla movements in Colombia and Peru). He translated works on contemporary social democracy, modern and contemporary history of Romania and Europe, respectively international relations during the Cold War.



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Georgios KOUKAKIS is a graduate of the Hellenic Military Academy (2002), the Hellenic Army War College (2020) and the Hellenic Supreme Joint War College (2023), with a strong professional and academic background in the field of security & defence, international relations, and adult training. He holds a Master of Arts in International Relations in "Governance, Development and Security in the Mediterranean" from the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece) and is a Senior Researcher and Secretary General of the "Center for International Strategic Analyses" (KEDISA), a member of the "Hellenic

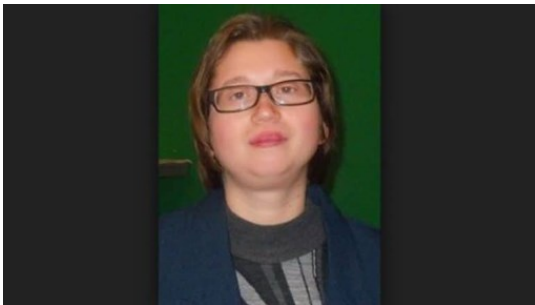
Institute of Strategic Studies" (HEL.I.S.S.), a Research Associate of "HERMES Institution of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy", a member of "ALLILON" (the Global Network of Greeks and Friends of Greece for Solidarity in the Professional Field) and a member of the "Mercury Negotiation Academy" (MNA). He has participated as a speaker in several seminars/conferences regarding international relations in the fields of foreign policy, security and defense, while several of his articles and research papers have been published in many scientific journals, the official "Military Review" journal of the Hellenic Army General Staff, the "Foreign Affairs The Hellenic Edition" magazine, the "Policy Journal", "HuffPost Greece", "Geopolitics & Daily News", "Liberal", as well as other international relations, security and defence websites. His research interests include National Security, Grand Strategy, EU Affairs, Greek Foreign Policy, Military Diplomacy, Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Cultural Diplomacy, and International & Regional Organizations (NATO, UN, EU, OIC, EfM, etc.). He is the co-author of the book "National Security: Myths and Reality" (in Greek) that was published in April 2023 and the Academic Head of the Educational Programmes "Security Studies in the Mediterranean" and "Getting to know Security Studies through the work of Thucydides" of the Continuing Education-Lifelong Learning Center (CE-LLC) of the University of the Aegean.





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He completed engineering studies at the University of Petroșani (former Institute of Mines) and master's and doctoral studies in mines, oil and gas. He also completed post-graduate studies at the "Carol I" Defense University and the "Al.I.Cuza" Police Academy, being an SRI reserve officer. He is a columnist at RepublikaNEWS Ploiești and a contributor to Contributors – HotNEWS.



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Born on August 8, 1984, in Iasi. She graduated in Political Science - Bachelor and Master in Political Marketing and Communication at "Al.Ioan Cuza" University in Iași. In 2023 she also graduated with a second master's degree "Security and Diplomacy" at SNSPA, Bucharest. She followed an internship at the "Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning during her studies at SNSPA. She specializes in academic research and exploration of Western Balkan political and security topics, publishing several analyzes in

the media of this area in various newspapers in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia. Also published two books of poems in Albanian language in Pristina, Kosovo in 2014 and 2022.



PhD. Colonel (Ret.) Jean J. MARSIA (Belgium)



He is President of the European Defense Society INPA (SED). He graduated in 1975 from the Royal Military School in Brussels, obtaining a master's degree in Social and Military Sciences. After several posts in the logistics corps of the land forces, he obtained an additional master's degree in Administrative Science. He was then selected for the School of Military Administration. He served in the General Staff of Defense in several positions related to the management of financial resources and procurement. In 1999, he became an advisor to the Minister of Defense, primarily responsible for military procurement, scientific research and education. In 2003, he was appointed director of the Royal Military School, where he served until his retirement in 2009. He then became a PhD student at the Free University of Brussels. From January 2013 to October 2014, he was Defense Adviser to the Belgian Prime Minister. In 2015, he became a Doctor of Political Science at the Free University of Brussels and a Doctor of Social and Military Sciences at the Royal Military School. Since late 2015, he has served as founding president of the European Defense Society, an international non-profit association working to reinvigorate Europe's political union and achieve an effective European defense better suited to burdensharing and the international risk inherent in NATO. He is fluent in French, Dutch, German and English.





Abaho Gift CONRAD (Uganda)

Bachelor of Commerce at Makerere University. He is dedicated Human Rights Activist and Author with over 8 years of experience in program management, operations, and advocacy for peace and human rights. I bring a global perspective on issues ranging from refugee welfare to international peace efforts, through my leadership of humanitarian initiatives and my work as a correspondent and author. I aim to leverage my expertise in human rights, risk management, and global advocacy to contribute insightful analysis and articles at Geostrategic Pulse Magazine.

*Executive Director
Humanity HEART Charity*

2022 – Present

- *Lead initiatives to rescue and rehabilitate child soldiers, and facilitate trauma healing in refugee camps across Uganda, focusing on Kyaka 2, Rwamwanja, and Nakivale Camps.*
- *Promote peace and reconciliation through music and cultural exchanges, addressing domestic and tribal conflicts within refugee communities.*
- *Expanded humanitarian efforts by establishing programs across multiple refugee camps, impacting hundreds of lives through community healing and conflict resolution.*
- *Collaborate with international partners to raise awareness and advocate for refugee rights, child welfare, and human dignity.*

*Africa Correspondent
Duniya Journal (Canada)*

2020 – Present

- *Provide in-depth coverage of humanitarian issues, human rights violations, and peacebuilding efforts across Africa.*
- *Analyze political, social, and environmental issues affecting vulnerable populations, offering a balanced, fact-driven global perspective.*
- *Publish articles highlighting stories of resilience and advocacy within refugee camps, with a focus on amplifying marginalized voices in international discourse.*

*Ambassador of Peace
Musical Ambassadors of Peace (Colorado, USA)*

2013 – 2020

- *Led cross-cultural peace initiatives by using music and storytelling as tools for reconciliation and healing among conflict-affected communities.*



Oluwasogo Joseph DAIRO (Nigeria)

He is a very good professional in the field of open source intelligence analysis and ensures safe working conditions in documentation and information management.

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He is a distinguished author, editor, and independent researcher in Ecolinguistics and Critical Environmental Discourse Analysis. He holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Moulay Ismail in Meknes, Morocco. Dr. Mliless has authored several influential books and numerous articles on legal and environmental discourse, focusing on critical contemporary challenges. He actively promotes global collaboration and knowledge exchange. His expertise is widely recognized through his editorial roles in academic journals, including the Scopus-indexed ARBITRER, and his contributions as a reviewer for various international journals.



Jean-François ROUGÉ (France)

Initially fascinated by the thoughts of Machiavelli and Napoleon, I really discovered military strategy at the „Ecole Militaire Spéciale”. Since then, my dual academic specialization as a teacher of international business law and economic intelligence has led me to take a particular interest in geo-economics... and then hybrid warfare. For instance, I have published researches on both global tax warfare and cyberwarfare (cf: Researchgate).”



Paul MANTEA (Romania/USA)

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Gargi AWASHTI (India)



She is proficient in devising and managing information gathering systems for collecting data on policies and impacts. She has excellent interpersonal, analytical and public communications skills.

Bachelor of Tehnology, Mechanical Engineering at Chandra Shekhar Azad University in Kanpur.

She has experience to United Nations, ISPPR, as Policy Analyst and Diplomat, New Delhi, from 12/2022 until now.

She participated in multilateral negotiations concerning regional security initiatives sponsored by United Nations. She organized meetings with foreign government officials to discuss areas of mutual interests.

She built and updated crisis communication plans to handle diverse situations. She is engaged in public diplomacy activities such as briefings, interviews, lectures and workshops designed for students interested in learning more about Foreign Services careers.



PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU (Romania)



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





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