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Prospects on Europe's Security Architecture in the Context of Russia's War of Aggression Against Ukraine. Views from Eastern Europe

The impact of Russia's aggression on reshaping tomorrow's world

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Prospects of Europe's security architecture in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. A View from Ukraine

Vira Konstantinova

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict impact on the Republic of Moldova

Alexandru Solcan

Perspectives on Europe's energy security architecture in the wake of Russian aggression in Ukraine. An Eastern European perspective

Dumitru Chisăliță

A frank discussion about a new security architecture in Europe has become critical after Russia's aggression against Ukraine

Narciz Bălășoiu

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Russian full-scale war of aggression in Ukraine was a game changer. It is the least we could say. The impact of the reshaping of tomorrow's world stays in the evolution in Ukraine and the impact on European security, the relations of the EU to China and the perspectives of the full-scale, high-intensity long term war at the global level that could emerge in the foreseeable future. The impact could be tremendous more important than expected and it could come also with huge costs on those who move to the war in the mid of the 21-st century for ill-explained reasons, personal ambitions and perceived lack of recognition of the power range from fellow international actors.

1. Ukraine's future scenarios, developments and options

Prospective scenarios¹ are now piling up, on the eve of **Ukraine's announced counter-offensive** to reclaim its territories and create clear strategic advantages in the perspective of any negotiations with Russia². And while **the criteria and indicators** of a short and medium-term development are easier to determine, as is the **aspirational goal of Ukraine gaining all its occupied territories**³, there are numerous **inflection points** that may emerge, just as a number of **game-changers** are looming, elements that would radically change the reality and the course of the known trend. With this in mind, we have taken the liberty of drawing here an updated draft of **Ukraine's future developments, scenarios and options** in Russia's full-scale war of aggression, developments that naturally also influence what will happen to the post-war World.

Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine: Prospective studies. Prospective scenarios.

Prospective studies⁴ are a specific type of future studies implying identifying critical indicators, tipping points, inflection points and relative certainties to build up scenarios on **short, mid and long term** with **continuity, discontinuity and black swan possibilities** in order to cover a known possible evolution

¹ Iulian Chifu, *Studii prospective și metodologii alternative. Eșafodajul de securitate în secolul 21*, Editura RAO, București, 2022, ISBN 978-606-006-820-4, Volumul 3 din tetralogia *Reconfigurarea securității și a Relațiilor Internaționale în Secolul 21*; Iulian Chifu, *Reconfigurarea securității și relațiilor internaționale în secolul XXI*, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, București, 2022, ISBN 978-630-6523-01-6.

² Rajan Menon, *Ukraine's Best Chance. A Successful Offensive Could End the War With Russia*, *Foreign Affairs*, 12 April 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/ukraines-best-chance>

³ Opening statement by Celeste A. Wallander, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, before the 118-th Congress Committee of Armed Services, US House of Representatives, 26 April 2023, at <https://armedservices.house.gov/sites/republicans.armedservices.house.gov/files/04.26.23%20Wallander%20Statement.pdf>.

⁴ Iulian Chifu, *Analiză prospectivă. Experiența internațională și o abordare românească (Prospective analysis. International experience and a Romanian approach)*, *Revista Română de Studii de Inteligență*, no. 10, December 2013, Bucharest, ISSN 2067-3353, pp. 167 – 186.

of a specific event, area and phenomenon. The aim of this methodology is **to avoid strategic surprise** and to keep decision makers in line with possible evolutions⁵.

The world has evolved from a **bipolar world** in the Cold war to a somewhat **globalized world, interdependent and driven by market economy**. 9.11, terrorism in Europe and the West, the Color Revolutions, the Arab Spring, the Pandemic and the emergence of social media as well as other disruptive technologies **brought changes to the international order**, but without a dramatic change (more of a transformational change) without establishing **where the transition period leads our world**. Now, the **aggressive war of attrition of Russia in Ukraine** has transformed itself in a long war, and is threatening to change dramatically the landscape.

We maintain our position⁶ that the future of the 21st century world marked a **dispersion and dissipation of power** as a result of new technologies and the scarce resources required for them, which makes the **leap already identified** from the two superpowers of the Cold War through the uni-multipolarism of the transition era to the **two great power system, none of them being Russia, and numerous regional powers**, with the perspective of a China-US rivalry that could fall into a war. But above all, we are contemplating a more democratic world in which niches of power or resources can overnight transform **a state, however small, into a relevant power** in terms of the resources or technology⁷ it possesses, and which are needed by the whole world.

In the case of Ukraine, the context established the **red lines of the West** related to the transfer of technologies. **Using military means by Russia** in the mid of the 21-st Century is unacceptable, but, at the same time, the support for the aggressed democratic country, Ukraine in that context, **should not break international law**, create **escalation patterns**, on the contrary, it should just help Ukraine defend its territory and its citizens. This means **no Western boots on the ground**. This also means that the weapons delivered to Ukraine should be **proportional with the Russian attacks on its territory** and the range of those weapons should not allow Ukraine **to attack targets on the territory of Russia**(so outside its own territory)⁸.

This doesn't mean that US or any other state **will prevent Ukraine to develop its strategies** that are developed outside its national territory, including in Russia. Those strategies could include also **targeting weapons, groups of soldiers, railways or fuel storages** outside of its borders, in an attempt **to break the supply lines of the aggressor**, but this should be done **with its own means**, Special Operations Forces and Ukrainian weapons, but not those transferred from other sources. Some of those Western weapons deliveries come explicitly with those **caveats**.

Key indicators and criteria for the evolution of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine in the short and medium term

There are **four key conditions, indicators and criteria** that will define the evolution of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine in the short and medium term, which we can place in a **3+1 format** depending on our **current ability to anticipate**:

5 Iulian Chifu, *Prospectives on Ukraine Crisis. Scenarios for a mid-long term evolution*, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale al Academiei Române, București, 2014, ISBN 978-606-8656-01-4, 174 p.

6 Iulian Chifu, *Studii prospective și metodologii alternative. Eșafodajul de securitate în secolul 21*, Editura RAO, București, 2022, ISBN 978-606-006-820-4, Volumul 3.

7 Iulian Chifu, *Securitate tehnologică. Un nou domeniu de strictă actualitate a securității viitorului în Infosfera*, nr. 2/2021, pp.13-22. Iulian Chifu, *Când tehnologia și social media întâlnesc Covid-19. Relativizarea adevărului și soarta social media*, în *Romanian Intelligence Studies Review*, nr.25/2021, pp.100-113.

8 *Unclassified, Statement of General Christopher G.Cavoli, United States Army, United States European Command, 26 April 2023*, at <https://www.eucom.mil/document/42351/gen-christopher-g-cavoli-2023-posture-statement-to-the-hasc>; *Arme nu tinesc in Rusia*

- **The resilience of Ukraine and Ukrainians.** The military capacity to resist on the front line, to lead the war effort and the capacity of the population to sustain that effort in the long term. We have seen that **morale and the will to fight** for a purpose matter first and foremost. The Ukrainians are defending their territory, their population and are **fighting their real War of Independence** with the strongest motivation, while Putin has failed to produce a sustainable and credible narrative as to **why he sent his troops into Ukrainian territory** (continuing Putin's "Christmas tree" narrative that contains **Nazis in the mix, coup d'état, defense of Russians everywhere and countless other passivisms** about the cradle of the Russian state's birth or ignoring independence of the states and creating narratives of **state-civilizations** that would have oversized and dominant rights in relation to the neighborhood, doomed to remain their **sphere of influence**⁹). But equally important is **the effort behind the front** and the capacity to avoid attacks on cities and civilians. As long as frontline fighters know their families are safe, they can fight less constrained than if they learn daily of **new attacks on apartment blocks, streets or offices** in towns far behind the front.
- **Western resilience in supporting Ukraine.** It is about public support for the war effort **directly**, through humanitarian aid, export corridors, military aid, financial-budgetary aid to support the war, but also **indirectly**, through inflation, energy costs and many other elements of influence. As long as Western citizens can maintain this commitment, and **the resilience of the West is assured**, there remains a major element of **transforming the traditional defense industry into a war industry** with large-scale production, which all allies must develop in the perspective of this long, large-scale war, but also of a larger deterrence driven and war effort that may come shortly after the current war in Ukraine, in the Indo-Pacific¹⁰.
- **Ukraine's ability to absorb the Russian offensive and conduct its own successful counteroffensive.** Of course, Ukraine has demonstrated that it can absorb the spring offensive and the frontline fighting at Vuhledar and Bahmut showed **Russia's inability to generate substantial gains** even with huge losses of men and military capabilities. However, the mandatory point remains the forthcoming **Ukrainian counter-offensive**¹¹, which must show penetration capability and **substantial strategic gains** that will break the front in two - South and East - and put solid and credible pressure on Crimea. Only then would we have the preconditions for Russia to wish, demand and participate to serious negotiations. **A possible stalemate in the Ukraine's offensive with limited gains and major losses** would enshrine the stagnation of the front and the inability of the parties to make further territorial gains through combat, with negative effects on the perspectives of the war.
- **Vladimir Putin's ability to maintain the vertical of power.** It is a condition we can anticipate in theory but cannot credibly substantiate for two reasons: **the opacity of Putin's system** and the conformity of the elites and group around him, and above all the autocratic nature of the regime which **can implode at the slightest and most insignificant trigger**¹². The lack of foresight does not mean that this indicator (+1) should be eliminated, on the contrary, **it can always determine the fate of the war**, at moments that are difficult to predict.

⁹ *The Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 229, March 31, 2023, at <https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/concept-foreign-policy-russian-federation>.*

¹⁰ Timothy Garton Ash, *Postimperial Empire. How the War in Ukraine Is Transforming Europe*, Foreign Affairs May/June 2023, Published on April 18, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/europe-war-russia-postimperial-empire>.

¹¹ Rajan Menon, *Ukraine's Best Chance. A Successful Offensive Could End the War With Russia*, Foreign Affairs, 12 April 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/ukraines-best-chance>

¹² Andrei Kolesnikov, *Putin's Second Front. The War in Ukraine Has Become a Battle for the Russian Psyche*, Foreign Affairs, April 7, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/putins-second-front>

Scenarios of a war's end. From the Western aspirational position to the alternatives on the ground

Russia's war of aggression has, as an aspiration aim, only one endgame for any democratic actor concerned with the rules-based world and the prospects of world realignment:

- **Russia must lose the war, Ukraine must win.** It's a legal and moral solution capable of strengthening the criteria and **rules-based world**. Any half-measure would set a **precedent** whereby an aggressor state could take over chunks of its neighbors' territory after such a precedent, especially after the famous pleadings in the sphere of the **security-versus-territory** doctrine¹³, questionable in the Middle East but **unacceptable in post-Helsinki Europe**, of the commitment not to change borders by force and to recognize the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of every CSCE/OSCE and UN member state.
- **Russia must pay.** As countless analyzes indicate, the lack of **post-Cold War costs** to Russia as the successor at the treaties to the former USSR has led to a **readiness to resort to war** to solve Russia's problems in international relations and satisfy its excessive levels of ambition. On the other hand, the question of the **costs imposed on Russia** includes payment for launching a war of choice, payment for the reconstruction of Ukraine, individual and collective payment for **war crimes** and crimes against humanity, as well as for the **crime of aggression**, as well as conceding guarantees that **Russia will never use the war as alternative for its ambitions in international relations**(we have precedents with Japan and Germany after the World War II, but the level of sophistication nowadays increased dramatically and we could find better options for weapons control and double use products and industries in order to grant Russia staying away for any type of aggression for the foreseeable future).
- **The states, companies and consultants who helped Russia circumvent the sanctions must pay.** Western citizens have taken on the multiple costs, revealed above, with the hope that their children and grandchildren will live even in a form of **imperfect democracy**, but at least to have the right to choose. Not to live under an autocrat like Putin telling them **how to live and what to think, say, do**. That is why it is the responsibility of governments to identify the **war profiteers** enriched by war, individuals, companies or states that are helping to circumvent sanctions and make them pay for it¹⁴. This creates **the moral high ground** needed to demand public support in such confrontations in the future.

Of course, if these are the **goals and aspirational target**, the evolution of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine can take many forms. **Russia is not yet defeated**, it has enough population and military reserves that it can bring into the war grinder, as well as many capabilities, mostly from stockpiles, that are morally outdated, but which can help Putin **continuing the war in the medium and long term** precisely so as not to pronounce an admission of defeat. However, the fighting is almost entirely taking place on Ukrainian territory, where the destruction is also taking place, so **Russia and Putin can always claim some form of victory**. The alternatives would be:

- **Ukraine's complete victory in the war.** Liberation of the entire territory and claiming victory and independence from Russia with a gun in hand.
- **Strategic victory in the war followed by a negotiation to Ukraine's advantage.** With a **separation of the southern and eastern fronts** and serious pressure on Crimea, the

¹³ Aarts, Paul. 1999. "The Middle East: A Region without Regionalism or the End of Exceptionalism?" *Third World Quarterly* 20 (5): 911–925; Adler, Emanuel and Barnett, Michael N. 1998. *Security Communities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴ Matias Spektor, *In Defense of the Fence Sitters. What the West Gets Wrong About Hedging*, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2023, Published on April 18, 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/global-south-defense-fence-sitters>

elements of a relevant strategic victory in the war for Ukraine are in place and any kind of negotiation from this point on can be advantageous and auspicious for Kiev.

- **Standstill: inability of Ukrainian offensive, loss of Western support/insufficient support.** Fatigue, lack of resources or sufficient Western capabilities and ammunition may indeed lead to a **de facto freeze in the conflict**, which would effectively turn into a long-term war of attrition, with **Russian/Ukrainian stop-and-go** moments and periodic resumption of offensives, but with modest advantages, and pushing developments towards a **Korean variant**¹⁵.
- Apparently satisfying Russian strategic victory - full conquest of Donbas, heavy destruction of the Ukrainian army on the offensive, full occupation of territories formally annexed by Russia and their Russification. But there would never be peace here, because there will always be the possibility of renewed conflict, hence the need for a long-term commitment.
- **Russia's complete victory**, i.e. the achievement of all the original objectives of the invasion: change of power in Kiev, occupation of a large part of the territory, de facto or de jure seizure of Ukraine – becoming a second Belarus - or the independence of **the landlocked Little Ukraine**. All that remains is for its neighbors, whether post-Soviet or NATO member states, to ask themselves **who is next?** Sustainable peace is not possible under these circumstances¹⁶.

Game changers. Prospects for the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict on a global scale

We have identified **three game changers** that, once they occur in Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, would dramatically change both the situation on the ground and the outlook for the world tomorrow. For sure there are more of them possible, and we will suggest some others, with different levels of relevance. Most importantly, they would pave the **way for the escalation of the conflict globally**, drawing in forces and driving an expansion of the conflict geographically and **in scope, as well as in strategic stakes**. A prospect that the US, NATO and the West as a whole has tried and is working hard to avoid. Here the three formulas would be **the involvement of China in the conflict**¹⁷, **the direct involvement of NATO troops in the fighting in Ukraine** or **the launch of tactical nuclear weapons by Russia**. The three can be linked and determine each other.

China's involvement in the conflict¹⁸

Today China provides formal, declarative, political, economic, financial and non-lethal technological support to Russia. Dual-use and non-sanctions goods can mean support for Russia but without Beijing taking on the costs of war or providing a steady supply line of weapons to Putin's Russia. But this may change, first through covert arms transfers and with the ambiguity of a credible denial of this direct involvement in the supply of lethal weapons, possibly by assuming the transfer through intermediaries of just components rather than easily identifiable Chinese weapons on the ground. But developments

¹⁵ Richard Haass and Charles Kupchan, *The West Needs a New Strategy in Ukraine, A Plan for Getting From the Battlefield to the Negotiating Table*, *Foreign Affairs*, April 13, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/russia-richard-haass-west-battlefield-negotiations>

¹⁶ David Miliband, *The World Beyond Ukraine. The Survival of the West and the Demands of the Rest*, *Foreign Affairs* May/June 2023, Published on April 18, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/world-beyond-ukraine-russia-west>

¹⁷ Liana Fix and Michael Kimmage, *How China Could Save Putin's War in Ukraine. The Logic—and Consequences—of Chinese Military Support for Russia*, *Foreign Affairs*, April 26, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/how-china-could-save-putins-war-ukraine>

¹⁸ Seth G. Jones, *America's Looming Munitions Crisis. How to Fill the Missile Gap*, *Foreign Affairs*, 31 March 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/americas-looming-munitions-crisis>.

may even move towards an open, publicly assumed transfer or full scale supply line of lethal weapons to Russia, which would bring about a radical change in the situation on the ground¹⁹. This does not mean that Russia could automatically win the war, but the delivery of lethal weapons by China is both a relevant turning point and a possible game changer in the war.

Western involvement, NATO, US, Coalition of the Willing in Ukraine

As we presented below, NATO, the US, the West as a whole has placed its support for Ukraine in the key of **limiting direct intervention** or the **presence of its troops on the ground** - with the exception of mercenaries on their own account and, perhaps, trainers on specific missions on the ground. However, the prospect of a Ukrainian defeat or Chinese involvement in the conflict, or even worse, Russia's use of tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine, may also **push it beyond this limit**, to avoid **the prospect of pushing the confrontation to NATO borders**. The West's explicit military involvement, in whatever form, of its own troops in Ukraine turns Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine into **the battle of the next century on Ukrainian soil**. The stakes are raised significantly and **the defeat of Ukraine is assumed to be an important loss, in not the defeat of the West** and the rules-based world order in the face of revisionism, neo-imperialism and the world's autocracies. China's involvement in the conflict would directly transform the battle in Ukraine into the key **confrontation of systems, democracy versus autocracy** and the right of states to freely choose their system of government, i.e. it would permanently alter state sovereignty and territorial integrity as a principle in the absence of Western intervention in support of Ukraine²⁰. **The prospect of abandoning Ukraine is conceptually unacceptable.**

Russia's use of nuclear weapons in war

Here would be the most significant game changer in the state of international relations since the Second World War. **Russia's use of nuclear weapons** is an implicit admission of conventional defeat to Ukraine but also a **complete exit of Russia from the world system**, with major costs of real isolation from all states of the world. We would no longer be talking about the autocracy versus democracy rivalry, but about **an actor in the system, moreover, a permanent member of the Security Council, that has completely escaped all logic and control**. China, India and the states of the Global South would find it very difficult to support Russia in any way, its **expulsion from the Security Council and complete isolation** would be matched only by the effort to rescue Ukraine, which would receive all the support it needs, including the presence of NATO troops directly on the ground, **to liquidate the consequences of such a hit** and to obtain the liberation of its territory.

There could also be some **other significant game changers**. To give just an example, a new front between Russia and the Global West somewhere else, from the territory of the Baltic states or in the post-Soviet space or in remote areas like, why not, Sudan. That would mean **a continuous escalation of the war Russia-West**, in geographic terms, that once.

All of these elements would directly affect the **developments in the 21st century world**. But also the forms of conflict management, the structure and security framework or even the **survival and cohesion formulas** of some states, primarily **Russia and Ukraine**. However, they would primarily influence the rules, or lack of any rules, by which the international relations of states will evolve in the

¹⁹ Dan Kurtz-Phelan *How to Avoid a Great-Power War. A Conversation With General Mark Milley, May 2, 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/podcasts/how-to-avoid-great-power-war-mark-milley>*

²⁰ Bilahari Kausikan, *Navigating the New Age of Great-Power Competition. Statecraft in the Shadow of the U.S.-Chinese Rivalry, Foreign Affairs, April 11, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/china-great-power-competition-russia-guide>*

21st century²¹. In this context, **the classical discussions of unipolarism, Sino-American bipolarism or multipolarism** claimed by Russia and China would be meaningless, as would the **temptation to come back and claim again spheres of influence** and move to new types of power games of the big players.

2. European China policies: aligning with the red lines of global economic competition

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's speech at the meeting organized by the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Center revealed **a comprehensive and realistic European strategy on China**, adjusted to the latest developments²². These **foreshadow the EU's future Economic Security Strategy**. The major outstanding European issues in the relationship with China remain on the table: The EU between China and the US, in the context of the debate about **Beijing's usefulness in dealing with Russia** and possible arms deliveries; the possibility of **concomitant EU decoupling from Russia and China**; but above all the need for **real war preparedness of European industries**. The refusal to see the competition of democracies with China going to war leads to the **rejection of the instrument of real deterrence of Beijing's march** towards a new global war. This while French ambitions and **obsession with strategic autonomy**²³ undermine EU unity, and Germany has been forced by Macron's post-Beijing tirades to restore **clarity to the European position and red lines on China**.

European Economic Security Strategy. An important step towards realising the prospect of China's global war

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen gave **a keynote speech on China** at a meeting organized by the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Center. On this occasion, the **EU's strategic approach to China** became very clear. We thus saw, for the second time in European documents, speeches and policy approaches, after the **policy on stabilizing migration in North Africa** in the volume signed by Joseph Borrell Fontanelles²⁴, a strategy in the full force of the word, **a comprehensive and realistic European strategy on China**, adjusted to the strictly topical developments of Beijing and Xi Jinping's one-man authoritarianism. An extremely pleasant surprise, a profound approach, foreshadowing **the future EU Economic Security Strategy** expected in the second half of this year.

President von der Leyen's speech was framed by the **complication and difficulty of deciphering** today's **global affairs** because **the facts themselves are in question** - a direct allusion to the

²¹ Michael J. Mazarr, *Why America Still Needs Europe. The False Promise of an "Asia First" Approach*, *Foreign Affairs*, April 17, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/why-america-still-needs-europe>

²² European Commission, *Speech by President Von der Leyen on EU-China relations at the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Center*, 30 March 2023, at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_2063.

²³ Paul Taylor, *Why Macron is failing on Strategic autonomy?* *Politico*, 26 May 2022, at <https://www.politico.eu/article/macron-fail-strategic-autonomy-france-eu-presidency-2022/>

²⁴ Joseph Borrell Fontelles, *European Foreign Policy in Times of Covid 19*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, ISBN 978-92-9238927-7, at https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/european_foreign_policy_in_times_of_covid19.pdf. *The geopolitical implications of the Covid-19 pandemic*, AFET Committee of the European Parliament, at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/603511/EXPO_STU\(2020\)603511_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/603511/EXPO_STU(2020)603511_EN.pdf)

components of information warfare widely used to **battle public perceptions** of reality²⁵. Yet a good understanding of the world as it is, not as we wish it to be, is a good basis for developing **effective policies based on decrypted accurate information**. And in this key, his speech is dedicated to all those - individuals, institutions, European officials - who have been incorrectly placed on the **Chinese government's sanctions lists**, including a number of MEPs²⁶.

China's assertiveness heralded by the latest Chinese Communist Party documents from last year's Congress and President Xi Jinping's subsequent statements have reshaped **the relationship of European policies to China**²⁷, aimed at managing these developments in the context of future European economic prosperity and security. The most important concern is **China's level of ambition for 2049**²⁸, when it aims to lead the world through "an overlay of national power and international influence", i.e. making China **the world's most powerful nation. And not with the most benign tools**.

China's strengthening of its strategic power has been planned and forcibly developed, with **deliberate amplification of its global strategic posture**, for some time. And this is being achieved through measures and actions **with exponentially increasing assertiveness**. While President Xi's maintenance of "Friendship without limits" with Putin's Russia²⁹ can be interpreted as **exploiting Moscow's weakness due to the war waged in Ukraine** and a way to increase leverage in relations with Moscow, the **blatant and inverted asymmetry** between the two is already a given and the balance of power has shifted dramatically over the past 30 years.

Of course, the President of the European Commission addresses the issue **of China's responsibility to the principles and values of the UN Charter**, as a permanent member of the Security Council, including towards the **advancement of a just peace**, taking into account the **sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine**. While Beijing mentions principles in its 12-point document³⁰, it stops short of **identifying the aggressor, Russia**. Moreover, it argues in its national position that **"both sides have legitimate security concerns"**³¹, a reason to emphasize a relative equality of responsibility for the war, not an **identification (and consequent sanctioning) of the aggressor**. On this basis, the European Union will also define its relations with China according to **how Beijing interacts with Putin's Russia**, which is the determining factor in bilateral relations³².

²⁵ European Commission, *Speech by President Von der Leyen on EU-China relations...op.cit.*

²⁶ The European Parliament, *European Parliament resolution of 20 May 2021 on Chinese countersanctions on EU entities and MEPs and MPs (2021/2644(RSP))*, at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0255_EN.html.

²⁷ European Commission, Secretariat-General, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The European Council and the Council EU-China – a strategic Outlook*, Document 52019JC0005, at <https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2019-03/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>.

²⁸ Overseas Development Institute, *Global China 2049 Initiative*, at <https://odi.org/en/about/our-work/global-china-2049-initiative/>; Nikkei Asia, *Transcript: President Xi Jinping's report to China's 2022 party congress, 18 October 2022*, at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/China-s-party-congress/Transcript-President-Xi-Jinping-s-report-to-China-s-2022-party-congress>.

²⁹ Dean Cheng, *The Chinese-Russian relationship: it's complicated!* Westminster Institute, 17 April 2022, at <https://westminster-institute.org/events/the-chinese-russian-relationship-its-complicated/>

³⁰ Partley Policy Initiative, *China's 12 points Peace Plan Explained*, 5 March 2023, at <https://www.parleypolicy.com/post/china-s-12-point-peace-plan-explained>

³¹ Gregorio Sorigi, *EU: Macron and von der Leyen were united in the room with China's Xi*, Politico, April 11, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-says-macron-von-der-leyen-were-united-in-china-beijing-taiwan-mamer-unilaterally-change/>

³² Alexander Gabuev, *What's Really Going on Between Russia and China. Behind the Scenes, They Are Deepening Their Defense Partnership*, Foreign Affairs, April 12, 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/whats-really-going-between-russia-and-china>

In addition to its relationship with Putin, **Beijing's assertive approach to its own neighborhood** - the demonstrations of military force in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, the undermining of the legitimate interests of the EU's partners - is added to the **list of irritants and criteria defining the relationship with China**, the dominant component of cooperation, strategic competition and direct conflict, peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait - **serious human rights violations in Xinjiang**, but also China's **rampant but solidly reinforced military build-up, policies of disinformation and economic and trade coercion**, especially the deliberate use of dependencies and economic leverage against small states³³.

The conclusions from the actions evoked underscore escalatory actions to the point where **China has become more repressive at home and more assertive internationally**, turning the page from an era of "reform and opening up" to one of giving rise to **security threats** and **excessive control** over its own people and the world. On this list is the habit of forcing, by law, all Chinese companies to **collect information for the Chinese state in secret**, but also the inclination to make **China less dependent on the world and global trade** and the **world much more dependent on China** as a state policy or, as President Xi Jinping has explicitly said, China must control international supply chains and dependence on China in order to have **a strong countermeasure and deterrence capability against all**.³⁴

The President of the European Commission's **trenchant assessment of China's situation to date**, based on information from all the European and national institutions of the EU states, continues with the **darkest of aspirational trails**. Control of current production chains **is critical for emerging technologies and the economy of the future**, as well as for national security, and is achieved through *quantum computing*, robotics and *artificial intelligence*, among other means. Beyond the security component, these actions fundamentally affect **the logic of the free market and free trade** that China is cheating and distorting³⁵. In addition, we can add **President Xi Jinping's exhortation to the Chinese people to prepare for battle**, an important indicator of the mission he is preparing for the Chinese nation, once the Chinese Communist Party has taken on the clear goal of **systemic change in the international order** to place **China at the center of the world, of imposed rules and global control over all**, with human rights subordinate to national security at home and around the world, and with security and economics taking precedence over civil and political rights. That is, a **complete undermining of democracy**, wherever it develops, with Chinese-controlled institutions carving out a **parallel, underground world to rival the current international system** and rules-based world³⁶.

Of course, after such a starkly explained reality and ambitions, the speech also touched on the themes **of a realistic stance towards China and the EU's reaction** in this context. And these options start with the struggle to **strengthen the international system** itself, strengthening institutions and systems in which states can compete and cooperate and gain mutual benefits. **Diplomatic stability and open communication with China** are part of the European solution, because decoupling from China is neither viable for Europe nor in its interest, so **the interest is in eliminating or mitigating risks**, not in economically decoupling the EU from China, which is impossible in the age of globalization.

33 Bilahari Kausikan, *Navigating the New Age of Great-Power Competition. Statecraft in the Shadow of the U.S.-Chinese Rivalry*, *Foreign Affairs*, April 11, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/china-great-power-competition-russia-guide>; How to Avoid a Great-Power War. A Conversation With General Mark Milley, *Foreign Affairs*, May 2, 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/podcasts/how-to-avoid-great-power-war-mark-milley>

34 John Pomfret and Matt Pottinger, *Xi Jinping Says He Is Preparing China for War. The World Should Take Him Seriously*, *Foreign Affairs*, March 29, 2023. at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/xi-jinping-says-he-preparing-china-war>

35 Jose Ignacio Terrabianca, "Strength has to start at home": Interview with Borrell on the EU's response to the coronavirus, 6 May 2020, la https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_strength_has_to_start_at_home_interview_with_borrell_on_the_eus/; Andrew, Small, *The meaning of systemic rivalry: Europe and China beyond the pandemic*, *ECFR*, 13 May 2020, la https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_meaning_of_systemic_rivalry_europe_and_china_beyond_the_pandemic/.

36 John Pomfret and Matt Pottinger, *Xi Jinping Says He Is Preparing China for War...*, op.cit

The EU does not want **to sever economic, societal, political or scientific ties** with China, which is a vital trading partner, accounting for 9% of EU exports and more than 20% of imports of goods into the European market. Of course, **imbalances are growing in the balances of payments of European countries and with the EU** as a whole, but if the rules of fair competition are to be enforced, trade in goods and services with China is **a mutual benefit and is largely non-discriminatory**. Of course, the imbalance comes and is increasingly affected by the **distortions created by China in the capitalist system**, hence the need to rebalance the relationship on the basis of transparency, predictability and reciprocity by **eliminating economic risks**. At the same time, free trade does not concern the **merging elements of China's military and commercial sectors** and especially with regard to **sensitive technologies** such as dual-use goods or even investments that come with the forced transfer of technology and knowledge to China. And this capacity depends on **the EU's own resilience and dependencies**, particularly in the area of its defense industrial base.

On **solutions**, President Ursula von der Leyen presents four points. First, making the economy and industry **more competitive and resilient** by **eliminating dependence on China** as the sole supplier of 98% of rare metals, 93% of magnesium and 97% of lithium, and the list goes on. Then, **better use** must be made **of the trade instruments** at the EU's disposal. **Developing defensive instruments** in certain critical sectors is also important, in the context of China's latest policy changes, especially in *high-tech sensitive* areas such as **microelectronics, quantum computing, robotics, artificial intelligence, biotechnologies**, etc. Last but not least, the de-risking strategy requires **cooperation and alignment with other partners**, especially democratic states and the G7 and G20 partners in particular, with whom we have most in common³⁷.

French ambitions undermine EU unity in China policies

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen correctly identified that the **Chinese state has become "more repressive at home and much more assertive abroad"**, that security and control substantially outweigh any other concerns of the regime, and that **Beijing is very easily resorting to political and economic coercion and control**, exploiting other states' dependencies on China, which China even encourages **in order to create new and new levers of influence**. Equally correct and straightforward is President Xi Jinping's preparation of China for **a long-term struggle, with violent components, with the United States** to achieve his 'very clear goal' of '**systemic change of the international order with China at its center**'. In fact, as much of the press rightly notes, no other leader has presented such a clear dissection of Xi Jinping's agenda, which will underpin European policies towards China.

As clear as this message was, the **position of many countries** that rushed to Beijing after the vote to extend President Xi's mandate, practically for life, **by reintroducing the third term after more than 30 years, was ambiguous and distinct**. They were joined in March by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who became the first leader to meet Xi after his summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. Next came the duo of Emmanuel Macron, president of France, and Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission. Later, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock arrived in Beijing. The big winner of this sarabande was the Chinese president, who not only **made no concessions on key European issues**, but also managed to divide European leaders, mainly by exploiting Emmanuel Macron's weaknesses and exaggerated level of ambition.

So Xi Jinping offered **a three-day official state visit to Macron**, including a six-hour bilateral meeting and countless economic contracts to French firms. In return, the European Commission president had a few brief protocol meetings with little pomp and circumstance. In **their joint meetings, the two**

³⁷ European Commission, *Speech by President Von der Leyen on EU-China relations at the Mercador Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Center, 30 March 2023, at* https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_2063

European officials demonstrated unity³⁸ but more on a **variant of role-sharing**, Macron's good cop and the European Commission President's bad cop³⁹. The result was also a public variant of splitting the perception of the two, with the French President appearing to maintain **the illusion of the possibility of real reciprocity in bilateral relations**, while the impact of advocating fundamental European interests was not done with much heart. Moreover, on **Taiwan**, President Macron appeared to make the US solely responsible for the rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait and to attempt **a false insularity between China, Taiwan and the United States**⁴⁰. And the ambiguity comes from the approach he associated with France as **puissance d'équilibres, Balancing Power**, which ended up, however, only reverberating on the balancing elements of the United States and **even sliding into an anti-American agenda** that even ended up discrediting the last traces of rationality in the concept of **"European sovereignty" he introduced**.

Despite the Joint Communication of the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament on **relations with China** of March 2019, European states maintain **diverse relations with China** and the European Union still has important steps to take before it can **establish an EU consensus on Xi Jinping's current China** and even implement what has already been agreed and agreed in its relations with China. The European Union is in the process of **defining its own red lines**, and von der Leyen's speech is very eloquent on their content, but until the **EU's Economic Security Strategy** in the second half of the year various slippages by various states as well as attempts by Beijing to create rifts between Europeans will continue.

Most EU Member States are effectively leaning towards *de-risking* **China** rather than **de-coupling from China**. The variant presented during Chancellor Olaf Scholz's visit to Beijing was very clear, involving both criticism of **human rights and treatment in Xinjiang province** in relation to the Uighur population, and **China's relationship with Taiwan**, and **China's domestic issues** with its own population - mass surveillance, control. And China's discouragement agenda on Taiwan is based on the same German and European Union document advocacy in place.

Macron and China: France's level of excessive ambition, with Europe on the back foot

It must now be made very clear that **French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to China** is hardly open to criticism in substance, perhaps only in terms of politeness towards Ursula von der Leyen, whom he invited to join him, and the **ineffectiveness of his positioning**. Otherwise, the positive elements were mainly in his overall objective of **getting concessions from Xi Jinping on the stance towards Ukraine and Russia** and **"bringing Russia to its senses"**.

Unfortunately, **Emmanuel Macron has achieved nothing** on this issue, and the failure has been described as such by the French press as "a cold shower". He did, however, win support on the **nuclear issue, on Russia's avoidance of nuclear weapons in Belarus**, a theme that was echoed in Xi Jinping's statements. The need to **respect humanitarian law** and strengthen efforts to **combat impunity** and **respect for UN principles** (sovereignty, territorial integrity, respect for human rights), the **imperative need to end the war in Ukraine, while respecting its sovereignty and integrity**, were also endorsed. Of course, he did not get a word from his Chinese counterpart for criticizing Russia for violating these principles, of course.

38 Gregorio Sorigi, *EU: Macron and von der Leyen were united in the room with China's Xi*, Politico, April 11, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-says-macron-von-der-leyen-were-united-in-china-beijing-taiwan-mamer-unilaterally-change/>

39 Tessa Wong, *Macron and von der Leyen: Europe's good cop and bad cop meet Xi Jinping*, BBC News, 6 April 2023, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-65186222>.

40 Thorsten Benner, *Europe Is Disastrously Split on China*, Foreign Policy, 12 April 2023, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/12/europe-china-policy-brussels-macron-xi-jinping-von-der-leyen-sanchez/>

But it has won from China a certain kind of **support for France and its own agenda** of strategic autonomy, albeit a controversial approach at EU level, support for improving global governance in a multipolar world by **rejecting the bloc-based logic**, as Xi Jinping has called it, and support from China for the **EU as "an independent pole in a multipolar world"** and, above all, readiness to support France's efforts to **achieve strategic autonomy**. But also for the European Union, he explicitly **called for restraint and reason to avoid escalation, especially nuclear escalation**, and the **need for a rapid relaunch of peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia**, leading to the realization of an effective and lasting peace and security architecture in Europe.

On the **negative side**, Emmanuel Macron exhibited a certain **French unilateralism**, betraying the fact that he went to Beijing to sign advantageous contracts with China and took the EU President with him only as a **measure to legitimize his own positions**, not to fully respect the European position. His constant harping on the **need for EU strategic autonomy**, a divisive issue in the European Union, is shaping up as an obsession of his own, and the great failure remains that the **Chinese President has not offered concessions on Ukraine and the relationship with Russia**⁴¹. The Chinese leader's remarks during the visit repeated without addition or nuance what constitutes the official Chinese line on the war: a **call for peace negotiations, condemnation of the use - or threat of use - of nuclear and chemical weapons**, but **no express condemnation of Russian aggression**. The absence from the French President's public discourse of the **issue of disengagement from China**, in whatever form, and his **reluctance to comment on the question of Taiwan** remain notable.

But perhaps **China's most ominous approach** came immediately after his return to the country, in an interview with the newspaper *Les Echos*, where the President of France launched into a **tirade of rhetoric about strategic autonomy**, which he wants to achieve *sui generis*, **at all costs**. And the difficulty of defending these positions stems above all from the **opposition to the US of its own position**, which **undermines its own European position** because of **the lack of confidence in a European leadership of France against America**. Even the example in the subsidiary used above about the **memory (and perspective) of the Trump administration proves insufficient**.

Macron's obsession with strategic autonomy is pushed so assertively to the forefront also because of a certain **embarrassed reserve on the part of Europeans**, including those in the East, to give Macron a reply, which is seen by the Elysée as a **manifestation of constructive ambiguity**, if not **positive acquiescence to Macron's French ambitions**, cut off from French reality and completely detached from European and world reality. Clearly, his statements constitute a real **act of splitting European unity** by pronouncing in the name of Europe on unconventional issues: **the relationship with the US, the relationship with China** in a variant far from or even contrary to those agreed in the 2019 Joint Communication, in force, and EU documents. These forms of **French unilateralism and exceptionalism** are counterproductive both to European unity and to the prospect of resolving the Ukrainian problem. The very reference to the **new European security framework including Russia, i.e. involving China**, is a prospect of obvious division among EU member states.

Macron's **third way of positioning himself** becomes a crack in the European, Euro-Atlantic unity of democracies. **Lessons learned during the Cold War about the politics of non-alignment** seem to be missing from the panoply of sophisticated French diplomacy around the president at a **time of deep polarization and war**⁴². You cannot be indifferent or neutral between victim and aggressor, **you cannot defend democratic principles and values sequentially or infrequently**. In addition, Emmanuel Macron managed to formulate on this occasion **his first explicit public position towards the United States**, whether or not he wished to express it publicly in this way. And **his policy of argumentation** is rather *cherry picking* - only arguments favorable to his claims are chosen.

⁴¹ Kyiv Post, *Explained: Macron Raises Ukraine In China. Has Macron Managed to Move China's Ambiguous Position?*, April 7, 2023, at <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/15523>

⁴² Luke McGee, *As the Ukraine war grinds on, the EU finds it needs China more than ever*, CNN, Fri April 7, 2023, at <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/07/europe/russia-ukraine-eu-needs-china-intl-cmd/index.html>

Thus, **Macron's claims** are as follows: the worst case scenario for Europeans would be **to find themselves in the position of following and adapting to American and Chinese dynamics**. Europe must not use the pace imposed by others and must assess its own interests, because the **European priority must not be to adapt to the agendas of different actors** in certain regions of the world; Europe is building its strategic position and **must avoid the pitfalls of global deregulation and crises that do not belong to it** - with reference to Taiwan; in the event of an **escalation of the US-China relationship**, Europe will not have the time and the means to finance its strategic autonomy and **will become 'vassal' to the US**; Europe needs a few years to **build itself as a global third power**. In addition, Macron's claim is that France **has won the ideological battle in Europe over strategic autonomy**, evidenced by recent developments in the idea of European defense, the Chips Act, Net Zero Industry and the Critical Raw Material Act. **Strategic autonomy** must be Europe's goal in order not to depend on others in critical areas. Without **choice in energy, defense, social networks or artificial intelligence** due to a lack of necessary infrastructure, Europe could be out of history, says Macron.

In the same vein of the **need to present more important achievements in foreign policy at home**, in order to cover as much as possible the noise of public demonstrations against his otherwise useful and compulsory pensions policy, President Macron also claims that, from a doctrinal, legal and political perspective, **there has never before been such a major acceleration of European power**, the foundations of which were laid before the pandemic crisis by the **Franco-German concerted action** that enabled progress to be made in terms of **European financial and budgetary solidarity**[. **American influence on Europe has increased in the context of growing energy dependence**, necessary in the logic of diversification of sources (US, Qatar, but also other countries) to eliminate Russian gas, Macron also admits.

One could see a certain **level of reserve**, including among those close to **him, even in commenting** on this public interview. Public analyzes have suggested that **France's positioning** and a possible similar positioning of Europe at a distance from the US and China **risks annoying the US and some Europeans**, while at the same time **being misunderstood by the French**, who could see this approach **as a pact with the Chinese dictatorship**. Analysts qualify their assessment of France's position by placing it in a particular geopolitical context, dominated by **growing hostility between Washington and Beijing**, which is progressing towards a (potentially warming) cold war. This **first public detailing of France's position on US policy towards China** cannot help European unity, indeed it **singles out France on this dimension**⁴³.

The major outstanding European issues in relations with China

With or without *Macronist* approaches, however, Europe faces a set of pending issues, with the potential to divide member states, and all linked to the relationship with China. A situation that will have to be **debated, then decided** very clearly and, above all, **followed up by all member states**. How does the **EU position itself between China and the US**? Such a discussion was settled at the beginning of the current Commission's mandate, when the High Representative for Foreign and Defense Policy, Josep Borrell, came back to make the point that the **EU is a meeting of democratic states**, and that it **can never be in the middle between the US and China**, obviously standing by its democratic partner overseas.

Nor is the argument of a need for a **benevolent approach by China to resolve the situation regarding Russia** an acceptable explanation for a contrary behavior. And the past cannot be revisited even when the fundamental issue at stake is the **relationship between China and Russia**, and the question is whether **China will deliver arms to Russia**. President von der Leyen's position is very clear here. **The assertion that China would deliver military aid to Russia** even if it were true, it does not

⁴³ Michael J. Mazarr, *Why America Still Needs Europe. The False Promise of an "Asia First" Approach*, *Foreign Affairs*, April 17, 2023 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/why-america-still-needs-europe>

really cover a **transfer of Chinese military capabilities to Moscow**, but only much more sequential elements, *know-how* support and elements that do not single it out and damage its prestige, especially vis-à-vis the Global South, or **make Beijing pay for Russia's war - adventure** in Ukraine.

Then there is the open debate about possible **simultaneous decoupling from Russia and China**, which the United States would suggest. This is not the case, nor **has the US done so**, trade volumes have increased even after **the economic war of taxation launched by Donald Trump**, but this does not mean that **measures** should not be taken **to avoid the risks associated with relations with China** already revealed above. Already the **EU-China Investment Agreement** has been halted and is to be reviewed, **political differences and the EU's assumed systemic rivalry** are a fact, while the **sanctioning of some MEPs who have criticized China's treatment of the Uighurs** is making any kind of more robust rapprochement even more difficult.

The most complicated point of the European dilemmas paradoxically links Russia and China. It is about the lesson learned from supporting Ukraine in Russia's full-scale war of aggression and the need to have **armies, resources and reserves, and mass-produced military production capable of sustaining large-scale war over long periods of time**, hence war production. **The prospect of a confrontation with China**⁴⁴ that would draw the entire free and democratic world into the conflict, including EU member states, points to the need for **this leap, complicated by the scale of the investment to be made, to be achieved as quickly as possible**, given the time needed to fill empty stockpiles, to provide the necessities for a long-term war to its own armies and to support allies, including the United States and Asia-Pacific partners. **Actual war preparedness**, even if only in the perspective of creating **the conditions for global deterrence of China**, remains the thorniest issue to be debated, publicly communicated and funded in the period ahead.

Germany and Annalena Baerbock: restoring European clarity on China policies

Of course, the current review of EU-China relations could not pass without addressing the subject of **German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's visit to Beijing**. And its importance is all the more relevant as it had the role of clarifying all EU positions after the **ambiguity of President Macron's previous visit**, but especially after the public statements he made. And the German Foreign Minister appeared unabashedly, in the familiar vein given by Chancellor Scholz, claiming that, **as far as EU-China relations are concerned**, China remains "**partner, competitor, systemic rival**", according to the Strategic Compass in force. The novelty comes from the German Foreign Minister's other communication, when he told Chinese partners that **the direction in which the needle of the European relationship with China moves will be determined by China's choices and options**. She stressed that neither Germany nor the EU as a whole "**can be indifferent to the current China-Taiwan tensions**", warning China to de-escalate these tensions because **a war in the region would have disastrous consequences not only for China but for the whole world**. "A military escalation in the Taiwan Strait, through which **50% of the world's trade** passes **every day**, would be a horror scenario for the whole world,"⁴⁵ said Annalena Baerbock at a press conference in Beijing with her Chinese counterpart Qin Gang⁴⁶.

These claims are consistent with bilateral interests, especially since, in the case of any war with such an impact, the first to be affected are **states dependent on foreign trade**, especially China and Germany. Moreover, the EU's position on Taiwan was directly evoked as "consistent and clear" without having

44 John Pomfret and Matt Pottinger, *Xi Jinping Says He Is Preparing China for War. The World Should Take Him Seriously*, *Foreign Affairs*, March 29, 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/xi-jinping-says-he-preparing-china-war>

45 Philip Oltermann, *German foreign minister warns of 'horror scenario' in Taiwan strait*, *The Guardian*, 14 Apr 2023, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/14/germany-annalena-baerbock-warns-horror-scenario-taiwan-strait-china>.

46 Reuters, *China says it hopes Germany supports peaceful Taiwan 'reunification'*, April 15, 2023, at <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-hopes-germany-supports-peaceful-taiwan-reunification-foreign-ministry-2023-04-15/>

changed: The EU "**remains fully committed to the <<One China>> policy**", which recognizes the Chinese government as "the sole legal government of China", but reserving the right and assuming **to develop cooperation in various fields with Taiwan**. To these public remarks, the Chinese side replied that "China once supported the reunification of Germany and hopes and believes that **Germany will also support the peaceful unification of China**."⁴⁷

Of course, the German Foreign Minister also addressed the **EU's position on China's respect for human rights**, again focusing on the themes of competitiveness, trade and a fair economy: '**when companies gain advantages at the expense of human rights, we are not dealing with fair competition**'⁴⁸, insisting that Germany has noted with concern that human rights are increasingly being diminished or ignored in China.

As for Ukraine, also in a public format, Annalena Baerbock insisted that she wondered why the Chinese position did not include **a call to the aggressor state Russia "to stop the war"** while, on the other hand, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Defense Policy Joseph Borrell asked President Xi Jinping to have a conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart, **Volodymyr Zelensky**.

In the run-up to the adoption of Germany's own (first) National Security Strategy, the Chinese side also publicly requested at the press conference that **Germany should not be too critical of the strategy being developed**⁴⁹. Alongside human rights and trade issues, the subject of Ukraine was among those that highlighted the divergence between Germany and China, with the **European Union's clear positions on the various issues of divergence** being mentioned each time.

3. Returning to hard and pure realism: deterring future Global Warfare. When Russia blinked too quickly in Ukraine

For the last 80 years after the Second World War, one of the main concerns of the major powers and key players in the development of security strategies and international relations frameworks has been the **avoidance of another large-scale war**⁵⁰. And as decisive elements, an entire component of thinking was devoted to **anticipate and deter the use of nuclear weapons**, a second one was devoted to arrangements for the **Great Powers not to confront each other directly**, and a third to systems for **detering the use of war as an instrument of state policy**, i.e. the construction of mechanisms for **managing the "hot crises"** that **erupted** when weapons spoke internationally. Well,

⁴⁷ Kawala Xie, *Beijing warns Berlin against strategic missteps in new China policy*, Deutsche Welle, 16 Apr, 2023, at <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-eu-cannot-be-indifferent-to-china-taiwan-tensions/a-65298426>; European Commission, Secretariat-General, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The European Council and the Council EU-China – a strategic Outlook...*, op.cit.

⁴⁸ Nicolas Camut and Hans von der Burchard, *Germany's Baerbock warns China that war over Taiwan would be a 'horror scenario'*, Politico, 14 April 2023, at <https://www.politico.eu/article/taiwan-china-war-germany-annalena-baerbock-horror-scenario/>.

⁴⁹ Philip Oltermann, *German foreign minister warns of 'horror scenario' in Taiwan strait*, The Guardian, 14 Apr 2023, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/14/germany-annalena-baerbock-warns-horror-scenario-taiwan-strait-china>; Deutsche Welle, *Germany: EU 'cannot be indifferent' to China-Taiwan tensions*, April 13, 2023, at <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-eu-cannot-be-indifferent-to-china-taiwan-tensions/a-65298426>.

⁵⁰ Bilahari Kausikan, *Navigating the New Age of Great-Power Competition. Statecraft in the Shadow of the U.S.-Chinese Rivalry*, Foreign Affairs, April 11, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/china-great-power-competition-russia-guide>.

the **contemporary rivalry between China and the United States**⁵¹ against the background of the lessons learned from Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine should make us realize that we have returned to the **hard-nosed realism** that calls for the creation of sufficient military capabilities, hence of **arsenals impressive in size**, in storage and training, and of **armies capable of fighting a long war, on a large scale**, if the **deterrence** built up by these investments is to preserve peace in the years to come, and if **the West is to defend the world on the rules based order**, if it is to be truly able to defend itself against contemporary threats and if it is to leave no room for the **indiscriminate and unpunished use of military force** in international relations.

Russia blinked too quickly, ruining possible under-the-radar plans of China

Russia's full-scale war of **aggression in Ukraine**⁵² has brought back the use of military force in international relations, through full-scale warfare in the 21st century, to **solve perceived problems in international relations**, to manage an **exaggerated level of ambition** – Russia's global superpower ambition – or to solve Moscow's **internal problems** through media coverage and credible domestic justification, using the model of **rallying its own population under the flag**.

This fundamental shift has brought back to the forefront of the West's attention **the threat of large-scale, long-lasting war**, which was no longer in the panoply of any nation. On the contrary, the contemporary military transformation has been achieved through research, knowledge and the **production of cutting-edge but limited capabilities** and **professional armies**, programmed to defend presumed national territory from major threats for a limited time and to carry out **limited actions at strategic distance** with allies to block the arrival of war on national territory.

But we don't know how happy China was when **Russia brought large-scale warfare as a threat back to the forefront**. Because by doing this, Russia blinked a little too early, before Beijing had implemented **its own policies of military build-up**, hybrid control of **high-tech production** and **dominance over scarce resources**, and **control of major production chains** of components indispensable to modern warfare.

Of course, **China is not Russia**. It has a different level of technology: having used espionage to circumvent intellectual property rights⁵³, it has developed **its own technologies** to a level never before achieved in Russia, even if **some components have failed to be fully covered** – special, high-quality semiconductors, microchips, elements of the space or nuclear industries. But China will certainly be a **much more competitive Great Power in the next 5-7 years** than the Soviet Union ever was if only by the **economic capability** behind the military machine and **force projection capabilities**.

According to publicly available data, China will achieve **near parity in nuclear weapons with Russia and the United States** by 2030⁵⁴ (about 1000 new weapons, according to satellite photos of the desert where the new silos are being built). Also, at the pace launched and identified at the 2019 pre-pandemic

⁵¹ Andrew Small, *The meaning of systemic rivalry: Europe and China beyond the pandemic*, ECFR, 13 May 2020, https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_meaning_of_systemic_rivalry_europe_and_china_beyond_the_pandemic/; How to Avoid a Great-Power War. A Conversation With General Mark Milley, *Foreign Affairs*, May 2, 2023, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/podcasts/how-to-avoid-great-power-war-mark-milley>.

⁵² France24, February 24, 2022: the day Russia invaded Ukraine, 14 February 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230214-february-24-2022-the-day-russia-invaded-ukraine>.

⁵³ Nicole Sganga, *Chinese hackers took trillions in intellectual property from about 30 multinational companies*, 4 May 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/chinese-hackers-took-trillions-in-intellectual-property-from-about-30-multinational-companies/>.

⁵⁴ Idrees Ali, *China likely to have 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035: Pentagon*, 29 November 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-likely-have-1500-nuclear-warheads-by-2035-pentagon-2022-11-29/>.

level, China would have had **full control of almost all of the world's rare metals**⁵⁵ - placed mainly in China, Siberian Russia, Mongolia and African states. **Sources of rare metals and resources for new technologies** are also crucial for today's weapons, not just the **weapons of the future**.

If the trend has stalled, from 92-97% of controlled production to only 52-54%, no one can guarantee today that **Russia, completely dependent economically and as a market on China**, will still be able to dispose independently of some of its resources – even if it would agree to exploit them through Western rather than Chinese investment, that **the Central Asian states** will have the freedom of movement to cooperate with the West to exploit their own resources, that **Mongolia will have the independence and possible routes** to export its rare metals to third markets outside China, or that in **Africa**, beyond the Sino-Russian dispute and the **elimination of European investment by former metropolises**, it will be able, independently of Beijing, to allow the West access to the rare metal resources there.

At this level, we cannot forget **the lesson of the Covid-19 pandemic**, when, at the beginning of the epidemic, when all countries needed the same products at the same time, all manufactured in China, **Beijing used political leverage and conditioning** to give trade privileges and priority to some weaker states at the expense of others⁵⁶. On the same occasion, the world discovered in the harshest and most unpleasant way possible, at a time of major crisis, that **major and excessively large global production chains in various products are being cornered by China**, which has made an economic policy of its own, impacting on global and individual state security, of **taking over by dumping, conditioning, blackmail or corruption these chains**, then exploiting them by monopolizing and operating them through various companies registered in countless places in the world but with the same owners, or by **privatizing and buying up similar competitive companies in the West**.

The return of rhetoric and nuclear calculations to the forefront of the balances of terror

It was also Russia that re-launched **the debate about nuclear strategies**, the use of nuclear weapons in war and the balance of terror in general, half a century after **Mutually Assured Destruction**⁵⁷, the strategy that followed the Cuban missile crisis. **Russia's nuclear rhetoric** is the desperate appeal to the last resources of a state that has shown that **it has capsized conventionally** not even in the face of the West, but in the face of a Ukraine equipped with **the same post-Soviet weaponry** and some local improvements, an army with **some Western reforms in strategy and equipment** developed in the last seven years before the invasion, and with **Turkish Bayraktar drones** and some more **modern equipment** ordered before 23 February 2022.

But this reopens a debate with tragic overtones, especially as the **START 3 Treaty (also called New START) expires in October 2023**, while the world moves towards finding a formula and balance not between two, but between **three relevant nuclear weapons players**, the US, Russia and China (by 2030, as I said). China has refused to join **any kind of nuclear negotiation**, despite the US request, on the grounds that they are not yet a state with an arsenal comparable to the first two, and the current moment is completely inappropriate **to expect big concessions or big mood swings** between the three protagonists.

In the same vein, the blowing up of **the Budapest Memorandum agreements** has created a major problem for established **nuclear non-proliferation** solutions. Ukraine was left without nuclear

⁵⁵ Christina Lu, *The Critical Minerals Club*, 14 April 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/14/us-china-critical-mineral-security-europe-rare-earth-energy-transition/>.

⁵⁶ Bonny Lin, Matthew P. Funaiolo, Brian Hard and Hannah Prince, *China Is Exploiting the Pandemic to Advance Its Interests, with Mixed Results*, 30 September 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/china-exploiting-pandemic-advance-its-interests-mixed-results>.

⁵⁷ Britannica, *Mutual Assured Destruction*, 17 July 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mutual-assured-destruction>.

weapons as a result of its entry into the NPT⁵⁸, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but saw its **guarantees signed by the US, UK and Russia** – and countersigned by France and China, the other two permanent members of the Security Council – unenforceable, in 2014, 20 years after the agreement, because the **aggression by annexing Crimea** was carried out by one of the signatories itself, which had plundered Ukraine's territory and integrity⁵⁹.

More recently, the amendment of the Belarusian Constitution and the **prospect of Russia's nuclear weapons being placed** on its territory⁶⁰, however strategically useless they may be, tear a new thread from the Budapest Memorandum. It is no coincidence that other states (see Poland) **are rethinking their position and want to place nuclear weapons on their territory**⁶¹, even though they have already received answers and evidence of the futility and lack of added value of such an undertaking for the global balance.

Finally, **non-proliferation** as a concept is entering a new and more dangerous era, as is the pressure for third states to possess nuclear weapons. Of course, these have different profiles: some are **maverick states**, others are **autocracies** with an eye to **guaranteeing their own regime internally** – see Iran, North Korea – others are in the category of **legitimate defense of democracies** – the case of Poland, which has been more vocal on such a dimension, even if it did not directly want the weapon but only the placement of weapons within the American nuclear shield of Europe – in other cases it is a question of **the need to counterbalance the situation of a possible nuclear weapon coming into the possession of an intractable enemy** – Saudi Arabia in relation to Iran. It remains to be seen how much **constructive ambiguity** can be maintained in other cases in order to keep the **nuclear deterrence of war** as a valid element, especially after **the doubt about the rational choices of states** resulted from the **experience of Russia's large-scale war of aggression in Ukraine**.

Great Power arrangements beyond spheres of influence and concerts of power

It was also Russia that brought up another major theme of international relations on the verge of a new settlement in the 21st century: **Great Power arrangements**. Through the Foreign Policy Concept (Strategy), Russia introduces the **concept of state-civilization**⁶² – a kind of tribute to Samuel Huntington – which it actually means a new formula **for qualifying actors in the Great Powers sphere** (distinct, unique, globally relevant civilization) and which would confer at the same time the **(self-assumed) right to spheres of influence** and the **right to participate in the Concert of Powers**. **Russia, China, the EU, the USA** would qualify in this league, to which **BRICS states** should be part, and not G7 or G20 members recommended by economic power, military power, technological power or geopolitical relevance of states.

In fact, **the revisionist and vindictive Russia** is still looking for a **motivation for its large-scale invasion in Ukraine**, but especially to carve out its **role as a Great Power** and claim its seat at the table where Global Governance will be discussed and shaped. As neither military nor economic power recommends it any longer, it has invented this **matrix of the civilization-state**. Of course its

⁵⁸ Mariana Budjeryn, *Ukraine and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, 15 October 2018, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukraine-and-the-treaty-the-non-proliferation-nuclear-weapons>.

⁵⁹ *The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, Seven years since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea*, 25 February 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/seven-years-russia%E2%80%99s-illegal-annexation-crimea_en.

⁶⁰ Reuters, *Belarus referendum approves proposal to renounce non-nuclear status – agencies*, 28 February 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/launchpad-russias-assault-ukraine-belarus-holds-referendum-renounce-non-nuclear-2022-02-27/>.

⁶¹ *The Guardian, Poland suggests hosting US nuclear weapons amid growing fears of Putin's threats*, 5 October 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/05/poland-us-nuclear-wars-russia-putin-ukraine>.

⁶² Ivan N. Timofeev, *A State as Civilisation and Political Theory*, 23 May 2023, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/a-state-as-civilisation/>.

elucubrations are unacceptable, but its agitation and the provoked war affecting the whole world have raised the question of new **Yalta-type arrangements, of Great Power deals at the expense of smaller states.**

The rules-based world and international law would be completely out of hand if the **sovereign equality of states** were denied. If Russia were to echo among the permanent members of the Security Council and obtain that **all international action and relations should be subordinated to the UN**, denying the right of association of states and the right to form international organizations, regional structures, new institutions, which would have their own objectives and debate in new frameworks any kind of issue, **without Russia or any other member of the Security Council having a veto** on any issue discussed at international level.

Along the same lines of **consequences and lessons learned** from Russia's full-scale war of aggression in Ukraine are the themes of **globalization and de-globalization** or **(liberal) security through interdependence**. In the case of de-globalization, halting or reversing globalization, the **process has gone too far to be reversed**, despite rivalries, muscular competition, global trade constraints, protectionist zones and policies, or US-China economic and trade wars.

In fact, **the natural interdependencies formed are increasingly difficult to break**, despite sophisticated new sanctions regimes such as decoupling along the various lines of force. It also teaches us **how sanctions are applied** and especially the ways of circumventing them identified by Iran and North Korea in the past, today by Russia. As for **liberal security through interdependence**, Europe and the West has learned the hard way what it is like to be **interdependent with an actor that does not respect rules, principles and international law**. And to turn interdependence into **dependence and even coercion** at the most critical, most unfavorable moment, when the original interdependence is speculated and exploited by the actor outside the rules and system.

The market economy and free trade are the panaceas that have shaped today's world. And China has taken advantage of precisely these rules, which it still wants to keep in place, even if they were **dynamited by Putin's Russia** in the recent war. Add to this the whole issue of **security** components of **supply chains** and the issue of **the emblem of secure producers**. Because if de-globalization and total decoupling from an actor of China's global magnitude and relevance is impossible, the **need for supply chain security and quality brands of secure producers and suppliers** which will not use their supplies of products on the market as a tool of political coercion, make de-risking – the **EU's prepared de-risking strategy towards China** – mandatory.

Discouragement and preparedness in the face of imminent war: *Si vis pacem, para bellum*

The most complicated point of the European dilemmas paradoxically links Russia and China. It is about the lesson learned from supporting Ukraine in Russia's full-scale war of aggression and the need to have **armies, resources and reserves, and mass-produced military production capable of sustaining large-scale war over long periods of time**, hence war production.

The **prospect of a confrontation with China** that would draw the entire free and democratic world into the conflict, including the EU member states, points to the need for **this leap, complicated by the scale of the investment to be made, to be achieved as quickly as possible**, given the time needed to fill empty stockpiles, to provide **the necessities for a long-term war** for its own armies, and to support allies including the United States and Asia-Pacific partners.

Real war preparedness, even if only with a view to creating **clear, credible and sufficient conditions for China's global deterrence**, remains the thorniest issue to be debated, publicly communicated and funded in the period ahead. It is difficult to communicate the **need to allocate relevant budgets to rearming or rebuilding the attractiveness of the military function** and the creation of strong and numerous armies, maintained from generous budgets, all the more so when the issue of **large-scale,**

nationwide creation of reservists and the reintroduction of **compulsory military service is** at stake. But the current technological outlook does not allow for many alternatives – even if cyborg armies, drone armies, research into new weapons and new technologies are announced.

China has already announced **its level of ambition in the Indo-Pacific**. 2027 could be the deadline for Taiwan's reunification⁶³, including by military means, **2049 for full world domination**⁶⁴ – if we are to discuss the documents of the last programmatic Chinese Communist Party Congress in 2022. We can add **Chinese behavior, including with hybrid instrumentation, in the South China Sea**, especially in relation to its neighbors, and the numerous exercises to fully encircle Taiwan.

China's new foreign policy strategy is equally worrying, does not rule out the use of armed force and is embedded with **Xi Jinping's** same **ambitions of global domination**. On such a developing trend, **the return of hard and pure realism** is more than evident, and **the prospects of a future Global War** increasingly worrying.

⁶³ Amy Hawkins, *Taiwan foreign minister warns of conflict with China in 2027*, 21 April 2023,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/21/taiwan-foreign-minister-warns-of-conflict-with-china-in-2027>.

⁶⁴ Bloomberg, *Xi's Vow of World Dominance by 2049 Sends Chill Through Markets*, 26 October 2022,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-10-26/xi-s-vow-of-world-dominance-by-2049-sends-chill-through-markets>.

Prospects of Europe's security architecture in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. A view from Ukraine

Vira Konstantinova

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine destroyed the international order which was established after WWII. Erosion of security architecture for regional states put on the agenda the request for a reassessment of existing capabilities and forming of alliances for backing long-lasting peace on the European continent. The Vilnius summit of NATO could reflect on these concerns.

Ukraine continues to fight with the strong will of its people for victory. As we are approaching 500 days of war, that according to Russian estimation should last for no more than up to 3-7 days, and under the pressure of upcoming Ukraine's counteroffensive the issue of restoring security for long-term perspective remains in focus of both the international community and regional powers.

Neighbouring countries especially Moldova or Romania remain vulnerable to the consequences of the unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine being at the front line, strongly feeling the reverberations of the Russian-Ukrainian war at the security, economic and political levels. Eastern Europe is going through a particularly difficult period of uncertainty.

The Russia-Ukraine war gave Eastern Europe an opportunity to form defense-integrated partnerships and regional alliances with NATO and within NATO to effectively solve security problems and strengthen Alliances' Eastern flank while relying on its own strength. It means that increasing the resilience of societies is key to an adequate response to the threats Russia's war gave rise to.

1. Russian-Ukrainian war impact on Eastern Europe states

The impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on Eastern European states has been trying to be assessed by international experts for more than a year. Due to the fact that the war would be continued for some time, such states as Romania and Moldova as well as Ukraine should be prepared for long-term consequences.

For Romania as an EU and NATO member state the attack on Ukraine crystallised military issues with concerns about the country's defense capabilities. In other words, the issue is how long Romania would be able to resist if Russian aggression spread beyond Ukraine's borders.

The direct war implications reflected changes in the priorities of the Romanian government. The increase in Romania's defense budget with the launching of additional military modernization programs is one of the main visible impacts. Despite meeting the requirement of 2 per cent of GDP for defense spending before, the Romania defense budget is worth \$8 billion in 2023 and is expected to achieve a CAGR of more than 2% during 2024-2028⁶⁵.

Being a part of the eastern flank of the NATO deterrence system and a key logistics hub, the Romanian government paid significant attention to investment in the national production arms industry, adding large defense contracts to Romania's procurement list. To combat Russia's threat, NATO responded by increasing its presence and strengthening Romanian capabilities on the ground and air.

The third impact is on national economies, including the rise in energy prices in Romania, and Moldova, which required both governments and the European Union to coordinate work. In Romania, new

⁶⁵ Romania Defense Market Report Overview: <https://www.globaldata.com/store/report/romania-defense-market-analysis/>

measures to set a ceiling and subsidize energy prices, in an attempt to curb inflation were introduced⁶⁶. Taking into account Moldova's significant dependence on Russian energy resources before the war, the Moldovan government

Romania's regional role as Black Sea power had evolved. Being an important transit hub for the Ukrainian grain, Romania proved itself as a reliable partner both for Ukraine and for the international community in preventing global hunger. The Romanian Black Sea port of Constanta remains one of the most important routes for the export of Ukrainian grain.

The other issue is forced migration and displacement of Ukrainian citizens. Both Moldova and Romania as Ukraine's closest neighbors have experienced the flow of Ukrainian refugees from the first days of the invasion. According to the UNHCR report on the Ukraine Refugee Situation as of May 2023, there are 132,362 refugees who were granted temporary protection in Romania, and there are 94,179 refugees present in Romania. The other figures say that since February 24, 2022 border crossings from Ukraine to Romania accounted for more than 2,3 million people with border crossings from Moldova to Romania being almost 980 thousand people⁶⁷. In the name of solidarity, the Romanian and Moldovan governments undertook all measures available to help Ukrainian citizens and protect them from Russia's war.

While the Republic of Moldova suffered all the above-mentioned consequences the country had found itself under direct threat to national security due to the presence of the Russian contingent in Transnistria and attempts of the Russian occupation army to build a corridor, reuniting Russian forces. The potential success of Russians meant not only the destruction of Ukraine's statehood but the challenge of Moldova's independence as well. Ukraine's defense forces would ensure this will never happen. But these risks would be stable until Russia would be defeated.

Ukraine has been deterring Russia in different domains for more than a year but the Ukrainian society has already counteracted Russian aggressive foreign policy and propaganda activities since 2014. With Ukraine's short-term goal to win this war and to win peace on its terms, the state faces military, economic, financial, infrastructural, social, and physiological consequences.

In 2022 Ukraine survived the worst GDP decline since the restoration of its independence in 1991. According to the World Bank data the reduction is estimated to be 29.2%, taking into account 3.4% growth in 2021. This year Ukraine's GDP is expected to grow by only 0.5% in 2023⁶⁸.

The Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) Institute conducted estimations of the amount of direct documented damage to the infrastructure of Ukraine during the year of the full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation that reached \$143.8 billion (at replacement cost). The largest share in the total amount of damages belongs to the housing fund (37.3% or \$53.6 billion) and infrastructure (25.2% or \$36.2 billion)⁶⁹. Donetsk, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kyiv are the most affected regions. This damage could be covered with Russian financial resources blocked abroad.

One more additional concern is the social dimension. Ukraine's labor market partially lost its highly qualified labor force which had to move to neighboring countries. As long as Russia continues its war, the Ukrainians are forced to stay abroad. The further pressure on the Romanian and Moldovan labor markets and social protection systems could cause increasing unemployment among their citizens. The human capital of Ukraine is a crucial condition for reconstruction. In this context, a reasonable social

⁶⁶ Romania takes further steps in response to the energy market prices: <https://cms-lawnow.com/en/ealerts/2022/09/romania-takes-further-steps-in-response-to-the-energy-market-prices>

⁶⁷ UNHCR Romania _ Ukraine Refugee Situation Update - 26 May 2023: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100968>

⁶⁸ The World Bank Ukraine Overview: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ukraine/overview>

⁶⁹ Report on Damages to Infrastructure Caused by Russia's War against Ukraine One Year after the Start of the Full-Scale Invasion (March 2023): https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ENG_FINAL_Damages-Report_.pdf

policy that ensures the creation of conditions for the return of refugees to Ukraine would be one of the main tasks for the Ukrainian government during the war and after the war ends.

In addition, the threat to the mental health of Ukrainians is tremendous. The data collected by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine shows that at least 15 million citizens⁷⁰ are in need of psychosocial support, and experience deterioration of their psycho-emotional state of varying degrees of severity. The WHO expects that approximately 9.6 million people in Ukraine may have a mental health condition⁷¹.

Ukraine has already launched initiatives to mitigate physiological effects. With the support from the European partners, the Ukrainians who stayed in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees abroad try to deal with the mental aftermath of Russia's full-scale war.

All three states are experiencing quite similar threats from Russian full-scale aggression despite the fact that active military actions are conducted within the territory of Ukraine.

2. Influence on Transatlantic Relationships

Transatlantic relationships became strong enough to counteract Russian military gambles. The damage to transatlantic unity caused by the Trump Administration was restored. But this unity should be projected not only on the security field but to consider its influence on other spheres, including the world economy.

The GMF Visiting Fellow Nicolas Bouchet argues in his article "The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Transatlantic Relationship", the impact of the war on transatlantic economic ties is likely to be much weaker than expected. Ukraine and even Russia are simply not consequential factors in transatlantic economic relations compared to their near-existential role in the security sphere (Bouchet, 2022)⁷².

The war in Europe proved NATO's viability despite the fact that the Alliance itself is not directly involved in the conflict. The additional point is any format of cooperation with the Alliance cannot replace full-fledged protection under Article 5 of the NATO Chapter.

At the same time, prior to the war, there were broad discussions about whether the EU should fully rely on the U.S. in terms of security and defense or whether the concept of the EU strategic autonomy (EU-SA) should be fully implemented. With the war started the political and academic debates on the EU's strategic autonomy refocused on the practical dimension. Steps towards achieving EU strategic autonomy are being taken, while some of the EU Member States which are also NATO members did not perceive much need for a separate EU defense policy.

The increasing in the EU's capacity to act in the defense dimension is likely to be the second main outcome of the war in Europe. In the short term, the war encourages EU Member States to reflect on their own national security and the importance of collective self-defense within NATO. In a negative scenario, the projected 5 000 troops expected to form an 'EU Rapid Deployment Capacity' (an EU

⁷⁰ *Mental Health Report (Research data as of 22-26 September 2022):*

https://gradus.app/documents/308/Gradus_Research_Mental_Health_Report_short_version.pdf

⁷¹ *Scaling-up mental health and psychosocial services in war-affected regions: best practices from Ukraine (December 16, 2022):* <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/scaling-up-mental-health-and-psychosocial-services-in-war-affected-regions--best-practices-from-ukraine>

⁷² *The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Transatlantic Relationship (May 10, 2022):* <https://www.gmfus.org/news/impact-war-ukraine-transatlantic-relationship>

Strategic Compass flagship component) could be delayed, or simply not materialize, in the face of more acute defense spending needs⁷³.

Today the broad transatlantic community finds itself more united in countering the threats and challenges that Russia's war posed. Further implementation of the EU strategic autonomy is required, but the U.S. would remain the key contributor to the new security architecture of Europe after the war ends.

Meanwhile, maintaining transatlantic unity not only in light of Russia's defeat but also during the post-war period is important. The unprecedented unity among NATO member states could be threatened by longer-term protracted clashes.

3. Role of the United States of America in Eastern Europe

The U.S. remains the main security partner for Europe, especially Eastern Europe and highly valued its alliances and partnerships, especially, at the time of the ongoing Russia's war. According to the National Security Strategy, "Alongside our allies and partners, America is helping to make Russia's war on Ukraine a strategic failure. Across Europe, NATO and the European Union are united in standing up to Russia and defending shared values." Ukraine had proved it on the same page with other nations.

At the same time, the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory and "will continue to build and deepen a coalition with allies and partners to prevent Russia from causing further harm to European security, democracy, and institutions"⁷⁴.

It should be underlined that the United States of America has demonstrated outstanding leadership in providing military support and creating a coalition of more than 40 states known as the Rammstein format, which works together to provide Ukraine with the necessary weapons and equipment to defend itself. Without a strategic partnership with Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, such a rapid response would be problematic.

Since joining NATO in 2004 Romania became a key pillar of NATO's security in south Eastern Europe. With Finland joining NATO and Sweden that is on track, Ukraine and Moldova could deepen their security partnership with the U.S.

Romania plays an important role in NATO's air defense. Romania hosts a key element of the U.S. European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) missile defense effort for NATO. Moreover, the country accommodated the U.S. military presence, which already has approximately 3,000 personnel at several military bases throughout Romania⁷⁵. And at the NATO Summit in Madrid last year, U.S. President Biden announced additional ground troops to be deployed in Romania.

According to the Joint Statement on the U.S.-Moldova Strategic Dialogue (23 March 2023), the bilateral agenda of the U.S.-Moldova relations covers reforms, human rights, media environment, countering disinformation, energy diversification and resilience, defense modernization and transformation, border management, cyber security, combating illicit trafficking, countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials, addressing the needs of refugees, and expanding people-to-people ties etc.

⁷³ EU strategic autonomy 2013-2023: From concept to capacity (July 2022):

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733589/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)733589_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733589/EPRS_BRI(2022)733589_EN.pdf)

⁷⁴ The U.S. National Security Strategy (October 2022): <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

⁷⁵ Bureau of Political-Military Affairs / Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Cooperation with Romania (February 14, 2023):

<https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-romania/>

The U.S. support of Moldova's integration with the European Union and the implementation of an ambitious reform agenda is consistent. "The United States discussed continued support to Moldova for reforming and consolidating its security and defense sector capacity, grounded in the respect for Moldova's constitutional neutrality"⁷⁶.

Despite the results of the U.S. presidential campaign, it seems that Eastern Europe would remain in the focus of the White House due to the fact the U.S.-Eastern Europe partnership is a strategic investment in the stability of the Black Sea region. In addition, the U.S.-Romania security cooperation track on the Romanian path to NATO could be a model for Ukraine and Moldova during the pre-accession period. Notwithstanding the deep cooperation that exists between the U.S.-Ukraine and the U.S.-Moldova, the U.S. Administration's vision and position of America's allies in Europe on outcomes of the Washington NATO summit in 2024 would determine the outlines of the post-war security architecture.

4. Connecting Ukraine to the West: the road from political statements to a feasible project

Ukraine is already in the active phase of increasing its level of integration and connectivity with the European Union due to the new reality. Ukraine applied for EU candidate status on the fourth day of the war and was granted candidate status in June 2022. The goal setting by President Zelenskyy for 2023 to start negotiations on joining the EU already this year⁷⁷ seems to be achievable.

Despite the war, Ukraine's European track is likely to be more dynamic and much more positive and predictable. Many European politicians have expressed their support for the earliest possible opening of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU.

When Ukraine was granted candidate status, seven criteria were defined by the EU, the fulfilment of which is a mandatory condition for further rapprochement, including for the start of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU.

According to Ukrainian officials, Ukraine was provided with the entire list of 29,000 acts of EU *acquis*, which should become part of the national legislation before Ukraine joins the EU⁷⁸. The Ukrainian side has taken a proactive position and started a self-screening, which would be carried out together with European colleagues.

Meanwhile, Ukraine does not stop at the steps defined in the seven recommendations of the European Commission and continues the process of reforms, in particular in the implementation of anti-corruption reform. Ukraine is also working hard to implement the recommendation on combating money laundering.

For the first time, as a candidate country, Ukraine is participating in the preparation of the EU 2023 Enlargement Package. Recently, in April 2023 Ukraine submitted information to the European Commission regarding the progress achieved over the past year in implementing EU law in all areas, as well as the fulfilment of political and economic criteria for joining the EU. For the first time, Ukraine will

⁷⁶ Joint Statement on the U.S.-Moldova Strategic Dialogue (23 March 2023): <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-u-s-moldova-strategic-dialogue/>

⁷⁷ Our goal is to start negotiations on joining EU already this year – Volodymyr Zelenskyy following the Ukraine-EU summit in Kyiv (February 3, 2023): <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/nasha-meta-pochati-peregovori-pro-vstup-do-yevrosoyuzu-vzhe-80769>

⁷⁸ The Committee on the Integration of Ukraine into the EU heard the reports of the ministries on the state of implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU (March 2023, in UA): https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/news_kom/233913.html

be included by the European Commission in the Enlargement Package, which is expected to be announced by the European Commission in October 2023⁷⁹.

At the NATO summit in Vilnius in July 2023, Ukraine expects to receive a positive political decision regarding its membership and a timeline for joining the organization. Since the fall of 2022, Ukraine has been working on signing relevant declarations with all members of the Alliance regarding its Euro-Atlantic integration. The relevant declarations of intent to support were signed by nine states – the Czech Republic, Belgium, Montenegro, Lithuania, Poland, Italy, Latvia, Iceland, and Slovenia.

NATO's recognition of Ukraine's contribution to the defense of the free world, as well as the level of interoperability that Ukraine has achieved with its partners is reflected in statements and resolutions adopted by the key bodies of the Alliance. Recently, an important declaration in support of Ukraine was unanimously adopted by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly⁸⁰. Parliamentarians of the member states of the Alliance confirmed that they see Ukraine as a future full-fledged member of the Euro-Atlantic family and called on the allies at the NATO Summit in Vilnius to determine the next essential steps on the way to membership.

The document contains clear signals of support for Ukraine's activities in restoring its sovereignty and territorial integrity in internationally recognized borders of 1991, raises the voice for the need for firm security guarantees and determines that the path to a long-lasting, just peace lies through the implementation of President Zelensky's Peace Formula. There is great advocacy behind each of its points.

According to the statement made by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg made on May 25, 2023, a perspective exists to agree on "a multi-year program by NATO and NATO Allies to help Ukraine to transition from Soviet-era doctrines, equipment, standards, to NATO doctrines, equipment and standards"⁸¹. From Ukraine's point of view, during the Summit, Ukraine also expects the approval of the updated Comprehensive package of NATO assistance to Ukraine with the aim of achieving full interoperability with the Alliance and a comprehensive transition to NATO standards.

This would not be enough for countering a full-scale invasion. Ukraine has already experienced security assurances in exchange for deterrents like nuclear weapons. And these assurances were neglected by the nuclear power and the UN Security Council permanent member.

Ukraine requested security guarantees from NATO member states, which cannot be considered as an alternative to full membership in the Alliance. Meanwhile, Russia should receive a signal that any of the Russian government's arguments are no longer taken into account. After launching the bloody brutal and unprovoked war of aggression in the center of Europe Russia has lost any credibility.

Ukraine's path to the West relies not only on Ukraine's progress in achieving EU membership criteria. Connecting Ukraine and the West depends on the will and readiness of the West as well. Both parties should do their homework.

79

<https://www.facebook.com/goeei.ua/posts/pfbid024SMnV9V1xrTBFNQhThfcpdLjXA1GVVwhPQchoQCtsj6i6QYNeNqGb1kTJJ3y2rtGHI>

80 NATO PA pledges unwavering support to Ukraine, appeals for accelerated delivery of military equipment:

<https://www.nato-pa.int/news/nato-pa-pledges-unwavering-support-ukraine-appeals-accelerated-delivery-military-equipment>

81 Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in a conversation on "The Road to Vilnius" at the Brussels Forum organized by the German Marshall Fund of the United States: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_214799.htm

5. Republic of Moldova: between western aspirations and fear of Russia

Since the election of President Maia Sandu in 2020 Moldovan domestic politics has faced resistance from the Russian political proxies. There are several factors that kept Moldova within the Russian circle. Transnistria issue and Russian so-called peacekeeping corps, energy dependence are among them. According to the media reports, Russia had developed a 10-year plan to destabilize Moldova⁸², later the existence of such a plan was confirmed by the Moldovan side. There is no doubt the plans to “destroy Moldova” using hybrid means could be real taking into account pro-European orientation and increasingly noticeable drift away from Moscow.

The European integration of Moldova would be challenged by Russian factors. Like Ukraine, Moldova was granted candidate status in June 2022 and asked to meet nine blocks of conditions (consisting of 13 measures) to come closer to the pre-accession dialogue⁸³. The Moldovan government progressed in terms of reforms and level of alignment with the EU's body of laws.

Following the internal political changes of government, the prominent gathering of 80,000 people in the square in the center of Chişinău without any party flags became symbolic. The rally adopted a resolution in support of Moldova's European integration that notes Moldova strives to become a full-fledged part of the European Union, which can guarantee stability and allow it to realize its potential.

The participants also called on all political forces to support the European course of the country, recording in the Constitution of Moldova its goal of joining the EU, ensuring the early start of negotiations on joining the Union and supporting the strengthening of state institutions to achieve this goal, and completing the interconnection of the energy networks of Moldova and the EU to rid of Russian blackmail.

The political consequences of this gathering are even more extensive. Taking into account the decrease in public support for the PAS party and the possible loss of the majority within the Parliament it seems important to boost the start of negotiations with the EU even before the presidential elections scheduled for the fall of 2024.

The political will that could be observed from the EU side is a historical opportunity not to be wasted. Moldova, as a host country for the European Political Community meeting in June 2023, received an opportunity to advocate the start of the EU pre-accession negotiations as soon as possible. Following the address of President Sandu prior to the summit, and statements made by the European officials confirmed the good chances for Moldova to receive a positive enlargement report in October 2023.

On the other hand, Moldova's own commitment to European integration was confirmed by its position which was expressed by withdrawing from all Commonwealth of Independent States agreements and not participating in the work of the organization.

In addition, May 9 marker holiday for pro-Russian forces has ceased to be so after the drastic decisions of the authorities. Moldova approved legislation to make the demonstration of the "Colorado tape" a punishable act and such symbolism has sharply lost popularity. Also, the Moldovan regulator has

⁸² Secret document reveals Russia's 10-year plan to destabilise Moldova (March 2023):

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/16/europe/russia-moldova-secret-document-intl-cmd/index.html>

⁸³ The EU Accession Prospects of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia (March 2023): [https://www.ceps.eu/wp-](https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CEPS-In-depth-analysis-2023-06_EU-Accession-Prospects-of-Ukraine-Moldova-and-Georgia.pdf)

[content/uploads/2023/03/CEPS-In-depth-analysis-2023-06_EU-Accession-Prospects-of-Ukraine-Moldova-and-Georgia.pdf](https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CEPS-In-depth-analysis-2023-06_EU-Accession-Prospects-of-Ukraine-Moldova-and-Georgia.pdf)

suspended the license of TV channels that spread disinformation about Russian aggression against Ukraine⁸⁴. The reaction of the Russian side was predictable, accusing Moldova of "destroying dissent".

One of the important dimensions of European support of Moldova is sanctions introduced against persons who threaten the stability and security of the country. In April 2023 the EU imposed sanctions against 7 individuals "targeting persons responsible for actions aimed at destabilizing, undermining or threatening the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Moldova, and the regime addressing the actions which undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine"⁸⁵. This signal was sent to the forces affiliated with Russia, and the European Union is ready to protect Moldova's democracy.

Building the resilience of Moldova's society is crucial and should be based on the Ukrainian experience in pre-war and wartime periods. Solving issues of energy security, economic well-being, the rule of law, and financial stability would become possible with the implementation of nine recommendations. The contribution of the European institutions would be highly valued. Recently the European Union officially launched a civilian mission for Moldova (EUPM Moldova), the purpose of which will be to increase the country's resilience against hybrid threats.⁸⁶

Voices of support for Moldova's European track are heard not only within the European Commission. In the resolution of the European Parliament parliamentarians call on the Moldovan government to continue resolutely with its reform agenda on democracy and the rule of law⁸⁷, advance work towards the full implementation of the country's EU Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, tackle organized and serious international and transnational crime, and push ahead with efforts to increase the country's energy security.

The western aspirations of Moldova to become a reality the government should take into account the success of Ukraine's counteroffensive and perspectives of further stabilization, internal political unity on the path towards EU and NATO, and Romanian contribution to peace and security within the Black Sea region. Russia would try to keep Moldova away from the EU and NATO. As an adequate response the speeding up trilateral initiative Romania-Moldova-Ukraine.

6. Conclusions

Without security, there would be no sustainable development or economic prosperity. Both Ukraine and Moldova had been granted EU candidate status. Both countries' security would remain vulnerable until they join NATO. Temporary transitory security guarantees would be required following the example of Finland and Sweden.

84 Moldova's Commission for Emergency Situations Approves Measures on Energy Security, Protection of Information Space (December 16, 2022): <https://gov.md/ro/content/cse-aprobat-masuri-privind-securitatea-energetica-si-protectia-spatiului-informational>

85 Republic of Moldova: 7 individuals listed for their destabilising actions and for undermining the territorial integrity of Ukraine (May 2023): <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/05/30/republic-of-moldova-7-individuals-listed-for-their-destabilising-actions-and-for-undermining-the-territorial-integrity-of-ukraine/>

86 Moldova: EU launches civilian mission to strengthen the resilience of the security sector in the areas of crisis management and countering hybrid threats (May 2023): <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/05/22/moldova-eu-launches-civilian-mission-to-strengthen-the-resilience-of-the-security-sector-in-the-areas-of-crisis-management-and-countering-hybrid-threats/>

87 Parliament reaffirms its commitment to Moldova's EU membership (April 2023): <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230414IPR80128/parliament-reaffirms-its-commitment-to-moldova-s-eu-membership>

Moldova needs “strategic investments” in resilience in order to solve the problems with Russian proxies. And such an investment could be provided by regional partners like Romania and Ukraine, or the European Union as an organization. Ukraine’s experience in constructing social and informational resilience also could be an added value for Moldova and its Euro-Atlantic future.

Assurances as well as sanctions have failed to be an effective tool for preventing war and ensuring well-constructed deterrence of adversaries. Meanwhile, any statements about any security guarantees without full membership in NATO mean that the questions of Ukraine’s or Moldova’s membership in NATO are intentionally or unintentionally pushed into the background.

For long-lasting peace in the region, the security of the three states should not be divided. Creating a space of indivisible security should be the ultimate goal of any regional alliance.

One of the key elements of post-war Europe’s security architecture is a mutually integrated and combined air defense system which reduces the risks of destruction of economic power.

Successful defense, as well as deterrence, starts with society’s readiness to protect itself by all available means. National arms production, diplomatic, political, informational etc. tools, instruments are just instruments that should be on the table in proper hands, well-trained hands of both civilians and men and women who are in military service.

There is no sign that Russia plans to end its aggression. The new Cold War reality is outdoors. While Europe has a window of opportunities, the NATO summit in Vilnius should bring a NATO membership perspective for Ukraine as well as Moldova due to several reasons. This war demonstrated that countries should rely on their own defense capabilities first.

While Russia is likely to become a declining power, Ukraine would become a driver of economic growth in Europe when the reconstruction starts. This war should end on Ukraine’s terms. Standing with Ukraine means to stand for international rule-based order, for principles of peaceful coexistence, identified in the UN Charter, for peace and long-term security. But this war has been demonstrating that each nation should be ready to protect itself, to rely on its own defense capabilities, but cooperation remains vital.

Post-war Europe’s security architecture should be based on a realistic vision of Ukraine’s and Moldova’s roles in NATO’s eastern flank deterrence system. Ukraine had proved its capabilities and capacities to defend its borders as borders of the Alliance. NATO needs Ukraine for a new European security architecture to be built. Moreover, the decision on Ukraine’s membership should be made before the de-occupation of all Ukrainian territories within internationally recognized borders. The German experience of joining NATO in 1949 before the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification could be an argument in favor of such a step.

The leading role that Romania could play in supporting Ukraine and Moldova on their path to EU and NATO would allow the country to strengthen its regional leverage. Three states realize the importance of ensuring security in the Black Sea taking into account the militarization of temporarily occupied Crimea. The trilateral format on security issues that took place for the first time in 2022 in Odesa, Ukraine between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine reiterates the Black Sea region as a region of strategic interest.⁸⁸

Both Ukraine’s and Moldova’s membership in NATO is an only-way solution for sustainable deterrence of adversaries and long-lasting peace in Europe. The Armed Forces of Ukraine is de facto a part of the NATO deterrence system whether there is a full political consensus in the transatlantic community on Ukraine’s membership in the Alliance or not. NATO membership for Ukraine is the best long-term

⁸⁸ *Foreign Ministers and Defense Ministers of Ukraine, Romania and the Republic of Moldova met in Bucharest (April 13, 2023); <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/u-bukharesti-u-formati-trykutnyka-vidbulasia-zustrich-kerivnytstva-zovnishnopolitychnykh-ta-oboronnykh-vidomstv-ukrainy-rumunii-ta-respubliky-moldova>*

guarantee of territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as guarantees for both a European and global prosperous future.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict impact on the Republic of Moldova

Alexandru Solcan

The war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine is shaping up to be the most important military conflict since the end of World War II. The Russian-Ukrainian war is not just a regional war. It is the war that marks a rupture in the relations between Russia and the West, a war that will have profound repercussions both for Europe and for the whole world.

Any war, especially of this intensity, which we are witnessing in Ukraine, is usually an element of political-military and economic-social change, which conditions changes in the security dimension as well. For a better understanding of the impact of the war in Ukraine on the Republic of Moldova, we focused on geopolitical aspects, economic security, energy security, as well as the social-political dimension, especially regarding the relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, trying to analyze the main challenges and identify solutions.

The Republic of Moldova in the context of the war in Ukraine

The war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine has a double impact on the Republic of Moldova. Along with negative factors, which prevail, the war also opens some windows of opportunity for the Republic of Moldova. The war in Ukraine highlighted the main risks to the country's security. In this study we will review the following aspects:

7. the risks coming from the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria);
 - economic domain;
 - energy dependence;
 - the socio-political dimension.

Eastern zone of the Republic of Moldova

More than three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the proclamation of independence, the eastern area of the Republic of Moldova remains one of the main problems at the national and regional level. The Russian Federation's open military aggression against Ukraine has brought the Transnistrian region back into the spotlight. The eastern area of the Republic of Moldova, or the self-declared "r.m.n." has an area of 4163 km, which is approximately 12% of the country's territory and a population of approximately 505153 inhabitants (according to the 2014 census)⁸⁹. In the last 10 years, the population of the eastern region has decreased by about 11.1%⁹⁰. Currently, according to the data provided by the Public Services Agency, on March 31, 2023, on the left side of the Dniester and the municipality of Tighina, 362,926 inhabitants were recorded in the State Register of the population⁹¹.

As a result of the conflict of March 2, 1992, the Russian Federation, benefiting from all the possible support of the Russian Federation, developed the structures of a quasi-state, having its own

⁸⁹ Horia C. Matei, Silviu Negut, Ion Nicolae. *Enciclopedia Statelor Lumii. (Editura Meronia, București, 2016), 447*

⁹⁰ Populația Transnistriei înregistrează o scădere de aproape 59 mii de oameni. <https://www.moldova.org/populatia-transnistriei-inregistreaza-o-scadere-de-aproape-59-mii-de-oameni/>

⁹¹ Datele Agenției Servicii Publice despre numărul de locuitori din regiunea transnistreană care dețin cetățenia Republica Moldova. <https://tvr.moldova.md/article/3374fb0a10bd8bf2/datele-agenției-servicii-publice-despre-numarul-de-locuitori-din-regiunea-transnistreana-care-detin-cetatenia-republica-moldova.html>

administration: presidency, parliament, currency. With reference to the Transnistrian region, the situation is ambiguous: on the one hand, the focus of interest and resources towards the invasion of Ukraine has weakened Moscow's financing of the region, on the other hand, Transnistria remains the region with an increased risk that the Russians will open a new one to invade Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Positioned between Moldova and Ukraine, the Transnistrian area represents a geopolitical consequence of the Cold War.

For a better understanding of the impact of the Transnistrian area on regional security, the current study focuses on aspects that make this territory the subject of special attention, namely: the role of Transnistria in the geostrategic and military projects of the Russian Federation, the military arsenal stored in the region, human resources.

Russia's increased interest in the Republic of Moldova is also due to its geographical location. The Republic of Moldova is a country where Western powers meet, and Moscow, most likely, "will remain politically paralyzed in the short or even medium term", claims the American agency Stratfor. The geographic location of Moldova makes it important for Russia, being a traditional invasion route from the Southwest and the Balkan states. It is located near the strategic port of Odessa and the Crimean peninsula, where Russia, until 2014, stationed its fleet on the Black Sea and is part of the energy transit network that connects Russia with Europe and Turkey⁹².

With the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, the emphases changed, the geostrategic role of the peninsula increased, and the geostrategic role of the Republic of Moldova for Russia decreased. The war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine has once again brought to the attention of the international community the role that the Transnistrian area can play in Russia's strategies.

Although there is a decrease in the geostrategic importance of the Republic of Moldova for the Russian Federation, however, Russia, according to the provisions of the Foreign Policy Concept of December 12, 2016, considers Moldova, according to Article 58 of the Concept, as an area for which the Russian Federation shows interest and pronounces in favor of preserving the special status of the Transnistrian area⁹³. In the new version of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, adopted on March 31, 2023, the Republic of Moldova is addressed in the context of CIS member states⁹⁴.

An important aspect that deserves attention is the activity of some companies in the eastern part of the country. The most famous are the enterprises "Pribor", "Metaloruca", "Kirov Electrical Appliances", the industrial complex "Electromaş" located in Tiraspol and the metallurgical and hydraulic industrial complex in Râbnîţa, which, under the official cover of production of electrical appliances and household items, they dealt with the illegal production of armaments. The range of weapons illegally manufactured in these industrial complexes is varied. Among the models of weapons manufactured illegally in the Transnistrian area can be mentioned: 20-tube multi-launchers, placed on "ZIL 131" and "Ural 365" vehicles (they were exported to conflict zones, such as Abkhazia). Other weapons models are also produced: Spig-7 and Spig-9 anti-tank grenade launchers, 82 and 120 mm mines, 50 mm portable mine launchers, Katran model. Also are illegally manufactured revolvers of this model 9mm Pm, 7.62mm Tt, 5.45mm Psm, 7.62 and 5.45mm Ak 47 Kalashnikov Assault Weapons, 9mm Compact Machine Guns, Pcela and Gnom Grenade Launchers, Vasiliok mines (some of which were sold to the Chechen rebels), Duga mobile weapon launchers, Npgm-40 grenade launchers designed for use on Ask

92 *Forțele armate transnistrene, avangarda noului dispozitiv militar rus* (<http://www.interlic.md/2007-11-26/3163-3163.html>)

93 *Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 2016 года.* (http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2542248)

94 *Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации (утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В.Путиным 31 марта 2023 г.)*. https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents/1860586/

74 machine guns, 82 mm mine launchers, anti-personnel mines Pnd in wooden case, Gp-15 model 40mm grenade launchers⁹⁵.

In this context, the military depot at Cobasna, located near the town of Râbnîță, in the north of Transnistria, is of interest. Located on an area of about 132 ha, about 42 thousand tons of conventional weapons, ammunition and war material from the ex-Soviet period were stored at the military warehouse in Cobasna. The town of Cobasna is 2 kilometers away from the border with Ukraine. The ammunition depot at Cobasna in Transnistria preserves the weapons heritage of the former 14th Army of the Soviet Union, but also part of the armaments of the former GDR and Czechoslovakia: more than 20,000 tons of ammunition are currently stored here. During the Soviet period, the warehouse in Cobasna was known as warehouse no. 1411 artillery munitions, representing the strategic arsenal of the South-West Military District of the USSR. Most of the ammunition was stored here after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), Czechoslovakia and other former Warsaw Pact countries⁹⁶.

The experts from the Academy of Sciences of Moldova carried out some analyzes and estimates, back in 2005, according to the known data about the content and quantity of ammunition stored on the left side of the Dniester. Thus, according to the studies carried out by AŞM experts, a possible explosion of the military warehouse in Cobasna can be compared to the detonation of a nuclear bomb with a capacity of 10 kilotons, which was dropped on the city of Hiroshima in 1945⁹⁷.

Considering that the town of Cobasna is in a rural environment, the radius of action of the explosion can reach 40-50 kilometers, affecting the district center of Orhei. The effects of the explosion can be compared to the damage caused by an earthquake of 7-7.5 degrees. Also, according to experts' estimates, the explosion of the ammunition depot in the village of Cobasna will lead to the impact of the population, to a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe in the north-eastern region of the Republic of Moldova and on the territory of Ukraine over an area of 500 to 3000 square kilometers.

The recycling and evacuation of the armament is in this case the only possibility to prevent any spontaneous explosion of the munitions in the military warehouses in Transnistria⁹⁸

Currently, Moscow maintains about 20 thousand tons of ammunition on the territory of the Transnistrian region. These munitions and military troops were to be unconditionally and completely withdrawn from the territory of the Republic of Moldova by 2002, in accordance with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (FACE) and the OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration of 1999. In 2007, Russia suspended its participation in the FACE Treaty, and now conditions the complete withdrawal of its ammunition and troops from the Republic of Moldova, delaying the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, a position that does not coincide with that of Chişinău, focused on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of ammunition and military troops.

In the composition of the military and paramilitary forces of Transnistria there are 16 thousand effective, subdivided into 4 motorized infantry brigades deployed in Tiraspol, Râbnîța and Dubăsari, equipped with advanced equipment and technology. The complex has 18 tanks, 107 armored vehicles, 73 guns, 46 anti-aircraft installations and 173 antiquarian units. The air fleet consists of 9 Mi-8T

⁹⁵ Paolo Sartori. *La Transnistria chiave del Caucaso?* LIMES. (Rivista italiana di Geopolitica. nr.6. Roma: L'Espresso, 2006), 75.

⁹⁶ Transnistria susține că au fost trase focuri de armă dinspre Ucraina asupra depozitului de muniții al armatei ruse de la Cobasna. <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/transnistria-sustine-ca-au-fost-trase-focuri-de-arma-dinspre-ucraina-asupra-depozitului-de-munitii-al-armatei-ruse-de-la-cobasna-1919373>

⁹⁷ Ce fel de muniții se află în depozitul de la Cobasna? <https://timpul.md/articol/ce-fel-de-munitii-se-afla-in-depozitul-de-la-cobasna-159067.html>

⁹⁸ Pericolul de la Cobasna: În caz de deflagrație, puterea exploziei ar putea echivala cu cea a unei bombe atomice, aruncată pe Hiroşima. <https://unimedia.info/ro/news/c310d0072e2328e4/pericolul-de-la-cobasna-in-caz-de-deflagratie-puterea-exploziei-ar-putea-echivala-cu-cea-a-unei-bombe-atomice-aruncata-in-hirosima.html>

helicopters, 6 Mi-24 helicopters, Mi-2 helicopters and An-2, An-26 and Yak-18 aircrafts⁹⁹. Officially, there would be around 1200 Russian soldiers in the area. In the context of the conflict in Ukraine, the Kiev press wrote that at least 5 thousand soldiers would be present in Transnistria¹⁰⁰.

Also, it should be mentioned that currently in the eastern area there is the following flock:

1. The Ministry of Defense and the General Staff, the city security company. Tiraspol - about 200 soldiers;
2. 1st Motorized Infantry Brigade, Tiraspol, 700 soldiers;
3. 2nd Motorcycle Infantry Brigade (Training Center) or. Bender 600 soldiers;
4. 3rd Motorized Infantry Brigade. Rîbnița 420 soldiers;
5. 4th Motorized Infantry Brigade. Dubăsari 450 soldiers;
6. The independent special destination battalion Tiraspol 100 soldiers;
7. The independent artillery regiment of the village of Parcani, about 200 soldiers;
8. The anti-aircraft artillery regiment of Tiraspol, about 200 soldiers;
9. The independent aviation detachment or. Tiraspol approx. 150 soldiers;
10. The independent transmission battalion of Tiraspol, about 200 soldiers;
11. The battalion of independent genius in the village of Parcani, about 220 soldiers;
12. Aviation technical base Tiraspol;
13. Base of repair or. Tiraspol;
14. Independent repair battalion or. Tiraspol;
15. The training center of the 4th Infantry Brigade in the village of Afanasievca, about 200 soldiers.

Making a calculation, according to the sources cited in 2001, a potential of about 4500 military technical units was concentrated in the eastern area¹⁰¹. Currently, the military formations of the "Dniester Moldavian Republic" ("RMN") are structured in accordance with their own military doctrine no. 686, adopted on February 17, 2016¹⁰², which provides for the maintenance of units with reduced staff, but capable of growing the staff threefold in case of need. Thus, each infantry brigade includes deployed command, guard and security subunits (which ensure the daily activity of the unit), as well as one deployed infantry battalion (which ensures the training of recruits and the permanent formation of the military reserve).

In case of military danger, the deployment of units to states of war is foreseen. The material basis of the "RMN" military formations is the combat technique, weapons, equipment, ammunition and other material sources transmitted from the military units of the 14th Army both during the armed conflict of 1992 and in the following period.

At the endowment of the military formations of the Ministry of Defense are: T-64 tanks - 18 units; armored fighting vehicles - 84 units; BTR-60 - 24 units; BTR-70 - 26 units; BTR-80 - 11 units; BTR-D - 12

99 R. Moldova și Federația Rusă: Parteneriat strategic versus Parteneriat realist, previzibil și viabil
<http://www.timpul.md/articol/r-moldova-i-federatia-rusa-parteneriat-strategic-versus-parteneriat-realist-previzibil-si-viabil-32858.html>, p.78.

100 *ibidem*

101 *Aspectul militar în soluționarea conflictului din zona de est a Republicii Moldova. Chișinău, Institutul de Politici Publice. 2001*

102 Указ об утверждении Военной доктрины Приднестровской Молдавской Республики №636, 17 февраля 2016 г.
<http://pravo.pmonline.com/View.aspx?id=uEP%2FDPSm6uysITsr0AwjzQ%3D%3D>

units; BRDM - 7 units; BMP - 3 units; MTLB - 1 un. Artillery pieces about 10 units: self-propelled howitzers 122-mm type "Gvozdika" - 18 units; anti-tank guns 100-mm MT12 - 16 units; 85-mm guns - 12 units; M120 mine launchers - 45 units; 82-mm mine launchers - 40 one; launch systems for reactive projectiles BM-21 "Grad" - 20 un. Anti-aircraft guns - 49: caliber 100-mm type AZP100 - 10 units, caliber 57-mm type C-60 - 12 units; caliber 23mm type ZU 23-2 - 24 units; "Alazani" - 3 un.; complex medium-range (1-18 km) anti-aircraft missile defense systems of the Osa-2 type; short-range (0.3-5km) Igla-type anti-aircraft defense complexes, about 40 "FAGOT" type anti-tank missile complex units, about 30 units; ammunition with bullets about 20 000 un. The aviation subunits have: 6 helicopters - MI-8T; 2 helicopters - MI; 1 plane - AN-26; 4 aircraft - AN-2 (2 under conservation); 2 aircraft - IAK-18 (50), 10 IAK-52 aircraft. The MI-8T helicopters are equipped with installations for launching "NURS" type missiles.

Under the management of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are: the internal troops are intended for the protection of state objects and the performance of various service and combat tasks. In the composition of the internal troops are: the Special Purpose Battalion "Dniester" deployed in the city of Tiraspol, 2 patrol detachments Prevomaisk and Parcani, 7 patrol militia sections, the "Dniester" Battalion is directly subordinated to the Minister of Internal Affairs of the a. z. MRI The workforce has about 400 people. In the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova, there are weapons: 82mm mine launchers, anti-tank grenade launchers, machine guns, machine guns, sniper rifles, etc. The total strength of the subunits of the internal troops is subordinated to about 700 people.

Another institution that has military forces is the Ministry of State Security of the so-called "Dniester Moldavian Republic". The following components are part of the Armed Forces of the "RMN": the "Delta" special purpose battalion (located in the city of Tiraspol) with a force of 150 soldiers. Also under the management of the "Ministry" are: armored cars, grenade launchers, light weapons, etc.¹⁰³.

A component of the forces of the "Ministry" is also the independent Cossack Regiment of Border Guards (stationed in the city of Tiraspol) with an effective number of 300 soldiers. The regiment is equipped with infantry weapons and about 20 BTR-60, BTR-70 armoured personnel carriers. Other military forces present in the Transnistrian area are the border guard troops formed by a training detachment (located in the city of Tiraspol), 7 commands (Camenca, Rîbnița, Dubăsari, Grigoriopol, Bender, Tiraspol, Slobozia), 29 border guard pickets and 30 of border control posts. In the Transnistrian area, there is weaponry: armored fighting vehicles, mine launchers, grenade launchers, light weapons and a military force of about 1,500 people¹⁰⁴.

Also, Cossack troops from the Black Sea Region (ЧерноморскоеКазачьеВойско) are present in the Transnistrian area. The Cossack troops are the main reserve of the "RMN" FA. In the organization "ЧерноморскоеКазачьеВойско" there are 7 Cossack districts, established according to the territorial principle and which bring together the Cossacks from the nearby localities (towns). The number of Cossacks who can be mobilized reaches the figure of 3000 people (the total number of Cossacks and family members is about 10000 people).

The territorial defense corps (people's militia and civil defense) (народное ополчение) (formed on the basis of the decree of I. Smirnov of March 17, 1992) and the civil defense (formed in 1992) is the reserve of the Armed Forces of the RMN and is structured into territorial battalions. In peacetime, the popular militia and the civil defense have permanent headquarters located in the district centers. The deployment of battalions is carried out in case of military danger or for concentration and training applications. The battalion staff is supplemented by permanent personnel from battalion commander to company commander. The general staff has a staff of about 20 people and has an armament of

103 Cebotari S. *Zona transnistreană a Republicii Moldova – amenințare la adresa securității naționale.*
https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/56-64_6.pdf

104 *Aspectul militar în soluționarea conflictului din zona de est a Republicii Moldova.* Chișinău, Institutul de Politici Publice. 2001

about 150 submachine guns. Also, the staff of the general staff constantly conducts combat training exercises with the battalion and company commanders.

The popular militia and civil defense has its own structure: the headquarters of the popular militia corps (Tiraspol) and 5 headquarters of the territorial battalions (Rîbnița, Dubăsari, Grigoriopol, Bender, Parcani), the permanent staff of the territorial defense corps (a.z. popular militia and civil defense) constitute up to 300 people, most of whom are reserve officers. After completing the battalions with personnel in case of military danger, the Territorial Defense Corps can reach the figure of 2000 people. It should be noted that the independent tank battalion of the GOTR includes 80 tanks. This is the quantity that corresponds to one regiment according to both Russian and European standards. At the same time, the independent tank battalion of the RMN FA includes 18 tanks that correspond to the structure of two companies¹⁰⁵.

Even if today the Republic of Moldova is not attacked conventionally, Russia has been exercising actions of hybrid aggression for a long time, and lately, they are becoming more and more obvious. There were several attempts to challenge from Tiraspol during the years 2022-23. Thus on April 25, 2022, the media in the Transnistrian region reported that the so-called Ministry of State Security in Tiraspol was bombed with grenade launchers, even though the building was empty at the time of the attack. Later, in the morning of April 26, two explosions rang out in the Grigoriopol district, as a result of which two radio antennas of the "Maiak" center were put out of operation¹⁰⁶. An attack on the military airfield in Tiraspol was also announced.

Another danger indicator for regional security was the organization by the Russian military of military exercises and applications with grenade launchers in the Transnistrian region, an announcement made by the Russian Ministry of Defense itself. The authorities in Kiev have more than once sounded the alarm about new threats to Ukraine's security coming from the left of the Dniester¹⁰⁷.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Oleg Serebrian, on June 8, 2023, during the meeting held with the members of the Friendship Parliamentary Group for Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova and Romania, declared: "The "5+2" negotiation format will remain frozen on the duration of military hostilities in Ukraine, and Chișinău will continue to interact with all partners involved in order to move forward in the settlement process"¹⁰⁸.

The economic field

Immediate and medium-term effects of the war in Ukraine on the economy of the Republic of Moldova, according to the director of Expert-Group, Adrian Lupușor:

- the suspension of several supply chains of the Republic of Moldova with food products, including from the basic package;
- suspension of raw material imports for processing industries, for example the furniture industry;
- the continuous increase in the prices of energy resources;
- the need for companies to adapt, identifying other sources of import;

¹⁰⁵ Aspectul militar în soluționarea conflictului din zona de est a Republicii Moldova. (Chișinău, Institutul de Politici Publice. 2001), 28-31.

¹⁰⁶ Cebotari S., „op.cit”

¹⁰⁷ Benchei M. Impactul războiului ruso-ucrainean asupra securității Republicii Moldova.

https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/224-229_17.pdf

¹⁰⁸ Întrevederea vicepremierului Oleg Serebrian cu delegația Bundestagului. <https://gov.md/ro/content/intrevederea-vicepremierului-oleg-serebrian-cu-delegatia-bundestagului>

- increase in transport and logistics costs;
- inflationary effects¹⁰⁹.

The Republic of Moldova was strongly affected by inflationary effects, especially following the COVID-19 crisis and then the invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. According to data provided by the National Bank of Moldova, inflation skyrocketed for 8 months from 18.52% in February to 34.62% in October 2022¹¹⁰. After that inflation went down. Thus, by May 2023, the annual rate of inflation was 16.26 percent, registering quotes up to the war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

Maintaining a high rate of inflation and, related to it, the decrease in the standard of living of the population led to the increase of discontent of the population. This is why the pro-Russian party from the Republic of Moldova was used. Against the backdrop of inflation and rising prices, starting on September 18, 2022, the "ȘOR" Party organized a series of protests in Chișinău, Balti, Orhei and Găgăuzia, aimed at destabilizing the situation internally. Following the intervention of the authorities, although delayed, the intensity of the protest movement has decreased.

An important aspect of the war in Ukraine is the fact that exports from the Republic of Moldova in 2022 exploded. If in 2021 exports totaled 3.1 billion dollars, in 2022 they increased to 4.3 billion dollars. According to the expert Veaceslav Ioniță, the war in Ukraine brought back to life the railway in the Republic of Moldova, which was practically inactive. The volume of transport services operated by rail in 2006 was 3.7 billion tons/km. A steady decline followed, reaching 0.6 billion tons/km in 2020 and rising to 0.7 billion tons/km in 2021.

Railways, at the beginning of the period of independence, transported 75% of all goods, during the Soviet period it even reached 90%. Now it is less than 10%. They were practically on the verge of extinction. In the year 2022, against the background of the war in Ukraine, transporting goods from and to Ukraine, the volume of services transported by rail suddenly increased. These have almost doubled compared to 2021, reaching 1.2 billion tons/km. Economic expert Veaceslav Ioniță noted that the national budget in 2022, due to the reduction in population consumption, had a modest increase, but Ukrainian refugees contributed to its formation. Ukrainian refugees living in the Republic of Moldova consume goods and services, either from their own money or from the money they receive as aid. By consuming these goods and services, whether they procure them or someone procures them for them, they generate income in the form of VAT and excise duties for the state budget. Five thousand of the Ukrainian refugees have already taken up employment in the Republic of Moldova¹¹¹. They pay social security, medical and other taxes and fees. All these bring income to the state budget.

Energy dependence

Due to the 80 percent dependence of the Republic of Moldova on the electricity delivered by the Cuciurgan Power Plant, in the Transnistrian region, Moscow has kept Chișinău under pressure for three decades. The war in Ukraine, including the energy crisis, has a direct impact on the energy security of the Republic of Moldova, highlighting a multitude of state vulnerabilities and inabilities present in the energy sector¹¹². Considering that the energy sector of the Republic of Moldova has been ignored for over 30 years, an alternative source for the country would be the restart and implementation of the natural gas delivery project through the Iasi-Ungheni-Chișinău gas pipeline. The exploitation of this

109 Războiul din Ucraina va arunca economia moldoveană în recesiune, crede Adrian Lupușor, Expert-Grup.

<https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/ucraina-impact-economie-moldova/31750973.html>

110 Rata anuală a inflației. <https://www.bnm.md/ro/content/rata-inflatiei-0>

111 Refugiații din Ucraina au influențat pozitiv economia din Moldova, analiză. https://www.ipn.md/ro/refugiatii-din-ucraina-au-influentat-pozitiv-economia-din-moldova-7966_1095967.html

112 Cebotari S., Iovu E. Securitatea energetică a Republicii Moldova în contextul războiului ruso-ucrainean.

https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/p-27-30_0.pdf

pipeline at maximum levels covers a good part of the natural gas needs of the Republic of Moldova. The experience of the 2022-2023 winter period, when gas consumption is higher, proves that the capacities of the Iasi-Ungheni-Chișinău gas pipeline allow the Republic of Moldova, except for the districts on the left of the Dniester, to be supplied with natural gas. The gas purchased from Gazprom, in a volume of 5.7 million cubic meters, it was delivered entirely to Transnistria for the production of electricity at the Cuciurgan Power Plant and for the consumption of the population in the region. Therefore, the maximum exploitation of the capacities of the Iasi-Ungheni-Chișinău gas pipeline can cover a large part of the supply needs of the Republic of Moldova with natural gas, represents an alternative and will minimize the dependence on the gas supplied by the Russian Federation.

In the issue of electricity supply, dependence on the Russian Federation is maintained through energy exported from the secessionist region (fed with Russian gas). Interconnection with international suppliers would allow minimizing this dependence, bypassing the region controlled by the Russian Federation. In this sense, the Republic of Moldova and Romania will develop a joint action plan in case of an energy crisis, establishing a series of measures for the supply of electricity and natural gas: providing each other with alternative fuels in order to produce thermal energy 29 of the systems of central heating and electricity and thermal energy in cogeneration¹¹³, thus, harmonizing national and European legislation in terms of energy.

The European Commission, in the context of the war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, is ready to provide support to Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia to ensure reliable and sustainable energy, ensuring the emergency synchronization of the electricity networks of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova with the European continental network¹¹⁴. The Republic of Moldova was connected to the European energy network ENTSO-E (March 2022)¹¹⁵, protecting itself from the perspective of energy security and minimizing the dependent influence on the secessionist region of the country. The beginning of the electrical interconnection between Romania and the Republic of Moldova will be possible after the construction, equipping and commissioning of a 500Mw Back-to-Back station in Vulcănești and a 330kV line to Chișinău which will allow the import of a larger amount of electricity from Romania. Also, the second part of the Moldova-Romania electrical interconnection project involves the development of the 400 kV lines Iași-Ungheni-Strășeni and the 400 kV line Bălți-Suceava¹¹⁶.

Although the interconnection to the European energy system is crucial for the development of the country's energy sector, the natural gas market is currently a priority. Thus, the expansion of the Iași-Ungheni-Chișinău gas pipeline is possible by implementing it in parallel with the interconnection carried out on the electricity market in Romania¹¹⁷. In this context, the Republic of Moldova will be able to diversify both its natural gas and electricity supply sources. In this way, the Republic of Moldova has the chance to reduce its electricity dependence on the secessionist region and Gazprom's natural gas dependence. In the conditions of the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis, the international assistance granted to the Republic of Moldova, to overcome the created situation, was crucial in relation to the dependence options presented by the Russian Federation. The integration carried out in the European energy space contributed to diminishing the dependence on the secessionist regime, as well as on the

113 Ursula von der Leyen o asigură pe Maia Sandu că Republica Moldova nu va rămâne fără gaze.

<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ursula-von-der-leyen-o-asigura-pe-maia-sandu-carepublica-moldova-nu-va-ramane-fara-gaze-1714285>

114 REPowerEU: acțiune comună la nivel european pentru o energie mai accesibilă din punctul de vedere al prețurilor, mai sigură și mai durabilă. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ro/ip_22_1511

115 Republica Moldova și Ucraina – conectate cu succes la rețeaua europeană de energie electrică!

<https://realitatea.md/republica-moldova-si-ucraina-conectate-cu-succes-la-reteaua-europeana-de-energie-electrica/>

116 Ministerul Afacerilor Externe și Integrării Europene. <https://mfa.gov.md/ro/content/energie>

117 Interconectarea energetică cu UE: Rețeta pentru diminuarea dependenței față de regiunea transnistreană și Rusia.

<https://www.expertgrup.org/ro/biblioteca/comentarii/item/1255-interconetarea-energetica-ue-deniscenusa&category=5>

Russian Federation. Thus, maintaining relations with European partners in providing security support in the field has accelerated the reorientation of the Republic of Moldova to the European energy system. If in the matter of natural gas, we can say that the Republic of Moldova, with the support of Romania and its development partners, in general, achieved its independence, then the supply of electricity remains a challenge and the solutions will come in time.

The social-political dimension

The refugee crisis and the help offered to refugees from Ukraine by citizens and authorities, represent a challenge to society in the Republic of Moldova. Since February 24, 2022, approximately 688,000 refugees from Ukraine have crossed the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Currently, the Republic of Moldova hosts over 80,000 refugees from Ukraine, more than half of whom are children. Thus, on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, refugees from Ukraine have full, free and non-discriminatory access to medical assistance services. At the same time, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova ensured that the general education institutions in the country offer opportunities for all children from refugee families from Ukraine to participate in the educational process¹¹⁸.

Analyzing the impact of the war in Ukraine on the Republic of Moldova, it should be noted that it served as a window of opportunity on the dimension of Moldovan-European relations. Influenced by the war in Ukraine, relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union reach one of the highest points of cooperation. Thus, on February 28, Ukraine applied to join the EU, and the next day, on March 1, 2022, the MEPs approved with a majority of 637 votes the resolution that offers Ukraine a European perspective. For the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, which together with Ukraine are part of the group of countries of the Eastern Partnership, this moment serves as the European perspective and the objective of becoming full members of the EU. In the circumstances of the war in Ukraine, two days away from Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova submitted applications to join the European Union. For these countries, the status of a candidate country serves as a political shield of protection against Russia, which has never agreed to the rapprochement of the Eastern Partnership states with the EU¹¹⁹. The step that brought the Republic of Moldova closer to the EU was the signing on March 3 by President Maia Sandu of the request for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union¹²⁰.

Thus, March 3, 2022 is a historic date for the Republic of Moldova, it is the date when the application for accession to the European Union was officially submitted. This step marks a significant change in the relations between the Republic of Moldova and the EU, as the Republic of Moldova has also officially started the EU accession process. This evolution of relations will have a significant effect on the EU requirements for the Republic of Moldova and on the approach of the Republic of Moldova towards the European Union. Even if the existing Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the EU is very demanding, the accession request of the Republic of Moldova will raise the requirements to a higher level.

A no less important moment in the strengthening of Moldovan-European relations in the context of the war in Ukraine was the submission of the European Commission's questionnaire regarding the

118 Situația din Republica Moldova, prezentată la Reuniunea de toamnă a Adunării Parlamentare a OSCE de către deputatul Igor Chiriac. <https://multimedia.parlament.md/situatia-din-republica-moldova-prezentata-la-reuniunea-de-toamna-a-adunarii-parlamentare-a-osce-de-catre-deputatul-igor-chiriac/>

119 Analiză | Integrarea Ucrainei, Georgiei și a Republicii Moldova în UE în timp de război: quo vadis?

<https://agora.md/stiri/99539/analiza-integrarea-ucrainei-georgiei-si-a-republicii-moldova-in-ue-in-timp-de-razboi-quo-vadis>
120 Baciu A. Maia Sandu a ținut un discurs în Parlamentul European: Acordarea statutului de țară candidat este decizia cea bună (LIVE). <https://agora.md/stiri/102605/maia-sandu-a-tinut-un-discurs-in-parlamentul-european-acordarea-statutului-de-tara-candidat-este-decizia-cea-buna-live>

application for EU accession to the Republic of Moldova¹²¹. After receiving Moldova's request, the Council invited the European Commission to present its opinion on Moldova's request, as the EU's first step in the accession process. In order to draft such an Opinion, the Commission presented a detailed Questionnaire to the Republic of Moldova. Based on the answers to the Questionnaire, which were elaborated and sent by the Republic of Moldova, the Commission issued its opinion with the following recommendations:

1. To recommend the granting of Candidate country status for Moldova and the possibility for Moldova to start accession negotiations.
2. To recommend the granting of Candidate status, but only after the fulfilment of specific conditions by Moldova.

The Member States of the EU took the decision regarding the request for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the EU, deciding unanimously, based on the Opinion of the Commission. Once the Republic of Moldova received the status of a Candidate country, the date for the opening of EU accession negotiations was set (most likely after the Republic of Moldova will fulfil additional conditions). The accession negotiations are an endurance process that will continue until the country meets all the requirements for EU membership. A real challenge will be the fulfilment of the political criteria, as the fundamental values of the EU, as defined in Article 2 TEU, are assessed under the political criteria. Once the accession conditions of the Republic of Moldova are agreed upon, the Accession Treaty is negotiated, approved and signed by Moldova and all EU Member States and the accession date is set. Also, in order to legitimize this step, the Republic of Moldova will organize a referendum in which its citizens will decide on the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union. Also, the Accession Treaty must be approved by the European Parliament and ratified by the Republic of Moldova, as well as by the national parliament of each EU Member State before it enters into force.

On June 23, 2022, the Republic of Moldova receives the status of a candidate country for accession to the European Union (EU). By granting candidate status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the EU enlargement paradigm changed, and the enlargement policy received a new boost, qualifying the decision of the EU leaders as "a big step" and a historic step. Next, it is necessary for the Republic of Moldova to fulfil a series of accession conditions, as well as to apply European legislation in all areas. Experts in the field of international relations and European integration mention that the European path of the Republic of Moldova is difficult and that, in the context of the challenges faced by the EU, but also the countries with candidate status for accession, it may last an indefinite period.

Meanwhile, on February 7, 2023, the European Union and the Republic of Moldova organized the seventh meeting of the Association Council. The representatives of the EU and the Republic of Moldova discussed EU-Republic of Moldova relations in the context of the status of the Republic of Moldova as a candidate country for the EU, with a special focus on:

- political dialogue and reforms;
- economic and sectoral cooperation, especially in the field of energy;
- trade and matters related to trade;
- cooperation and convergence in the field of foreign and security policy¹²².

The Summit of the European Political Community on June 1, 2023, attended by 49 presidents, prime ministers and senior European officials, put Moldova at the center of Europe. During the summit, the

¹²¹ Expert: *Chestionarul e o treaptă, reformele sunt scara spre Uniunea Europeană*. <https://stiri.md/article/social/expert-chestionarul-e-o-treapta-reformele-sunt-scara-spre-uniunea-europeana>

¹²² *Consiliul de asociere UE-Republica Moldova, 7 februarie 2023.*

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2023/02/07/>

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, also referred to the prospect of the Republic of Moldova joining the European Union, noting that the problem related to the Transnistrian region cannot block the country's European path¹²³.

The President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, announced that the Economic Development and Investment Plan for the Republic of Moldova, initiated in June 2021, will increase from 600 million to 1.6 billion euros. As the European official mentioned, this package includes five concrete initiatives, which provide for: the reduction starting from 2024 of roaming tariffs between the Republic of Moldova and the EU states, additional economic support, support for the energy sector, the security and resilience sector and the significant increase of the number of members of the EU delegation in Chişinău to facilitate the process of integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union. Accordingly, the Republic of Moldova will be able to participate in several programs intended for the private sector and investment projects¹²⁴.

By the end of 2023, a decision is to be adopted for the start of EU accession negotiations for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. We hope it will be a positive one.

Conclusions

Analyzing the impact of the war in Ukraine on the Republic of Moldova, we find that it constituted a real challenge to society in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, the war highlighted several risks to the security of the Republic of Moldova.

During this period, the districts of the Republic of Moldova on the left side of the Dniester remain the region with increased risk to national and regional security. For the Russian Federation, the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova represents an area of geostrategic interest, and this interest is determined by the following needs:

- a) preserving Russia's strategic positions in Eastern Europe;
- b) maintaining the link with the military-industrial complex in the Transnistrian area.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Russian Federation has a substantial arsenal of weapons, ammunition and human resources. A danger to regional security is presented by the arsenal of weapons and ammunition at Cobasna. A possible deflagration at the warehouses in Cobasna will result in a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe in the north-east of the Republic of Moldova and in the neighboring regions of Ukraine.

The war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine has direct repercussions on the economy of the Republic of Moldova. Inflationary processes that reached high levels led to the deterioration of the living standards of the population, which caused the intensification of the protest movement and the activation of the pro-Russian party.

The new context revealed even more the vulnerabilities related to the energy security of the Republic of Moldova. The efforts made by the authorities and the massive support from Romania and the development partners allowed to overcome many problems related to the supply of natural gas and electricity, the Republic of Moldova managing to get out of the sphere of energy influence of the Russian Federation by diversifying and by reorienting to the system European energy.

123 Summit CPE/Josep Borrell: „Transnistria nu e o problemă pentru procesul de integrare a Republicii Moldova în Uniunea Europeană”. <https://anticoruptie.md/ro/stiri/summit-cpejosep-borrell-transnistria-nu-e-o-problema-pentru-procesul-de-integrare-a-republica-moldova-in-uniunea-europeana>

124 Cel mai mare pachet de ajutor din partea Uniunii Europene pentru Moldova. <https://www.mold-street.com/?go=news&n=16221>

At the same time, the war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine opened a window of opportunity for the Republic of Moldova in promoting the European agenda and strengthening security on all dimensions: economic, political, military, etc. Analyzed from the perspective of opportunities, the war in Ukraine attracted increased attention for this region from the western states, opening possibilities for the associated states from the eastern neighborhood, including the Republic of Moldova, to obtain the status of a candidate country for EU integration.

In addition to those mentioned, there are other issues on the agenda that require special attention, such as:

1. Continuation of actions to counter the hybrid war launched by the Kremlin through propaganda and subversive actions against the government in Chişinău.
2. The status of neutrality constitutes an impediment in ensuring the military security of the Republic of Moldova.
3. The need to accelerate the pace of economic reforms, by creating opportunities for businessmen and investors, in order to reduce social problems with a strong political impact.

All these topics, as well as others, are and alone will be the subject of future studies.

Perspectives on Europe's energy security architecture in the wake of the Russian aggression in Ukraine. An Eastern European perspective

Dumitru Chisăliță

2022 was a complicated year for energy, full of challenges and multiple firsts. These are inevitably linked to the conflict in Ukraine. Specifically, these are:

- Stopping the direct flow of gas to Western Europe;
- The historically high price for natural gas and electricity;
- Significant reduction in the direct flow of crude oil from the Russian Federation to the EU;
- Partial suspension of gas and electricity market liberalization, which is in opposition to the principle for which the EU was founded and developed - "free movement of goods and people";
- The achievement of maximum LNG import;
- Admitting that "there is life" without Russian energy.

Energy security is a concept that has made a career in political discourse over the last decade, but on a pragmatic level the measures taken have not reflected an equivalent level of ambition. In a pragmatic sense, energy security means providing alternatives to supply sources and routes, as well as the integrity of specific transport infrastructure. The outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine has put the thorniest issue on the agenda, namely identifying sources that would significantly reduce dependence on Russian gas. There is a seemingly insurmountable gap between political wishes and pragmatic technical and financial realities, at least if we operate with short-term scenarios.

As far as dependencies are concerned, Romania is one of the countries that benefit from a clearly favorable context compared to certain countries in the European Union, or with the EU average. However, a common, coherent and realistic strategy is needed for the transition to take place without dramatic costs or structurally affecting the European economy.

In this context, a thorough understanding of the causes that have led to today's particularly complicated and unfortunate situation, both from a geopolitical perspective and a pressing need to highlight the specifics of the energy sector architecture, is appropriate:

- Europe's energy stability before February 2022;
- There are no conflicts without resource stakes;
- The importance of differentiating between the Green Deal as a media project and the strategic one;
- The main alternatives to Russian energy sources;
- The role and potential of green technologies;
- Revitalizing the nuclear dimension;
- Between Romania's energy independence and security;

A no-holds-barred analysis of Europe's pre-conflict situation in Ukraine reveals the real causes of the situation that led to the post-conflict energy crisis:

- Europe's dependence on imported primary energy (70%) and especially on energy from a single import source (27% from Russia) was extremely dangerous, but not properly addressed;

- The purely theoretical approach to energy issues and the attempt to impose a single energy profile on all countries was a mistake given the heterogeneity faced by different EU countries (cultural, behavioral, social, technological, financial etc.);
- Lobbying in Brussels, but also at the level of some governments, in order to sell products and services, has led to serious deviations from the normality of energy activities (unnecessary investments that should have been optimized later, delayed or non-implemented operation and maintenance activities);
- Disregard for Russia. Europe invoking long-term gas contracts signed with Russia with prices that in 2021 averaged approx. 22 euro/MWh on the one hand and on the other hand invoking market price formation, gas sales with gas sales prices formed after LNG, whose average level in 2021 was ca. 91 Euro/MWh;
- Greed of Europeans, who wanted to take advantage of buying cheap gas and selling it at high prices;
- Lack of functioning "Invisible Hands", due to unprepared and poorly managed, unnatural liberalization, which has turned into an oasis of "smart guys" who can earn high revenues with little effort;
- Governments that have indulged in becoming "energy smart guys", indulging in excessive energy taxation to build an oversized and overly bureaucratic state apparatus;
- Overestimation of the possibility of exclusive use of renewable sources;
- The burden of accepting gas and nuclear energy as transitional fuels;
- Failure to include new technologies such as SMRs in the development of the energy sector.

In this context, it is not by chance that actions (media or social incitement) are being taken to harass new technologies: hydrogen, SMR, unconventional gases, etc.

Rejecting these technologies would be a big mistake for Europeans (for Romanians even bigger than the mistake made in blocking gas exploitation in the Black Sea), a mistake that would only be visible when it is too late and darkness could descend over Europe.

In 2021, the prices of various forms of energy will have risen to extreme levels worldwide compared to 2020. This has been blamed on rising energy demand. It was a readily accepted explanation, and it practically took a conflict to realize the impact of these increases.

The outbreak of the conflict, even in the absence of disruptions to energy supply flows, in the absence of crises, in the absence of increases in energy demand, extreme temperatures, etc., brought about another phenomenon, a large price explosion during the first months of the conflict.

A look back in history shows that Europe started in 1968, with the signing of the contract between Austria and the USSR, the construction of the first gas pipeline to transport natural gas to Europe. It was the moment when Europe's dependence on energy imports began to build.

The USSR's need for currency and goods 55 years ago and Western Europe's need for energy opened up a mutually beneficial collaboration that contributed to Europe's subsequent prosperity based on sufficient and cheap energy.

The years have passed, Europe's dependence has increased, gas and other forms of cheap energy from Russia have brought handsome revenues to the budgets of European countries through the tax and excise systems imposed on energy (when you have cheap energy there is a willingness to come up with additions up to the limit of accepted purchasing power), but also for firms and individuals in Western and Eastern Europe. So things have evolved by 2020 to an import dependency of 70.4% of EU primary energy (including uranium), of which 27.4% from Russia.

Increasing concern about the depletion of primary energy resources in the world, but also in Europe, has led to a signal from the EU, dressed up in a nice, non-alarmist form - the Green Deal, promoting the development of alternative sources to reduce dependence on primary energy imports. In recent years, Europe has increased its share of renewable energy, but the increase in energy consumption has not significantly reduced its dependence on imports.

The high dependence on Europe's essential imports, combined with the high dependence on a single source, which is also the cheapest, has created an economic, social and security vulnerability that could only be overcome by a united force and a unified coordination of EU member countries in 2022.

Analyses of reducing energy dependence on Russia, which have been tried repeatedly in Europe, have always been viewed with reluctance, but they proved effective in the first winter without direct gas and oil imports from Russia (helped by a mild winter):

- Keeping existing gas quantities in underground storage in the run-up to 2022,
- the possibility of additional LNG imports,
- supplementing the quantities imported via pipelines from outside Russia,
- reopening of partially closed fields for non-technical reasons (Groningen),
- reopening of coal-fired or nuclear power plants which could make the natural gas burned available for electricity production,
- changing gas flows to supplement gas quantities, especially in countries with 100% dependence on Russian gas (Bulgaria, Baltic States, Finland),
- implementing energy efficiency measures.

All wars have been born out of the need to control resources. The conflict in Ukraine has led to actions which, dozens of negotiations in years of peace, have brought no results. The "world realignment" into spheres of influence is based on an energy crisis that has been looming for at least 10 years, a potential food crisis, the prospect of a metals crisis needed in high-tech and a possible drinking water crisis.

In this context, Europe's main energy direction is towards the development of renewable energy resources, to be supported by gas, oil and coal resources by 2050.

But Europe also depends on 80% of critical renewable energy materials coming from China. China being the country that in 2020 produced 71% of the panels produced in the world, 28% of the wind turbines produced in the world, 63% of the batteries produced in the world, etc.

At the same time, China is the country that has the majority of the resources of the metals needed in high-tech, and has the capacity, technology and cheap human resources to use its strength to develop the technology to capture renewable resources, the resources that should replace the coal, oil and gas that Europe is so dependent on.

Green' and 'digital' policies have triggered an explosion in demand for critical raw materials and producing countries led by China will dominate this cut-throat competition with increasingly strategic supplies.

Europe finds itself at the crossroads of these crises, and simultaneously under the impact of the dilemma of choosing between independence from Russia and dependence on China.

The cynicism displayed by some European countries has built up dependence on cheap primary energy from Russia in order to make profits for companies and money for the state budget through a system of high energy taxation, which charges the difference between low imported energy prices and socially bearable prices.

The greed race of European companies that relocated production to China, without being interested in the political system there, profiting from the exhausting work of robotic and terrorized Chinese. This situation has led to the Chinese appropriating all the existing technologies in the world and laying the foundations for new future dependencies, the dependence on rare materials, technologies and products for obtaining renewable energy, as well as non-oil transport. The Chinese have set themselves the goal of being the world's research and innovation laboratory in 2050, not just the manufacturing plant. Huge investments in R&D show they mean business.

In other words, they have research, technology, material, human and financial resources and, above all, strategies for the future, and if we do not want them to dominate us in a generation, we need to wake up to reality while we still have a choice and even have the upper hand.

Western companies have many services in the production chain to cover jobs, and states, many taxes, thus increasing the price of a cheap product (energy or goods) from Russia or China. Changing this paradigm means lower living standards in the West, which is difficult to accept but impossible to avoid.

Resilience and independence, two words learned from the last two major crises (Pandemic and the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine) are the elements that should define our future strategies, strategies that should not replace an independence even from Russia with another dependence even from China.

The EU's measures to save Europe from the gas crisis in 2022 were also measures to collapse the principles on which the EU was founded.

You cannot intervene in the European energy market and just change where you want what you want, so that it turns out what you want it to look like and pretend that things will also work.

The liberalized energy market emerged in the 1980s. Commercial buying and selling activities were separated from 'pipes and wires' which were regulated. Grid codes were developed to govern the interface between system operators and system users. And the market developed.

And indeed, step by step new legislation was proposed and implemented. It started with the Transit Directive in 1990, but the real start was the first package of legislation adopted in 1996, the 2nd package opened the market to all consumers and the 3rd package established the EU institutions ENTSO-E and ACER. Then we had the 4th package, or the clean energy package, which didn't add much to the design of the electricity market. But one of the things this package did was that it confirmed the importance of free price formation and the removal of price caps. The Commission opposed the introduction of capacity markets and, under the new rules, such mechanisms are only allowed for a limited period of time. It was therefore important to stress that deficit prices must be able to be formed, as otherwise producers would not be able to recover their full fixed costs.

This question: Did the energy market work after the EU's anti-crisis measures? Or was an additional capacity market needed to reward generation resources for their availability? has been debated since the beginning of liberalization. The key point in this historic debate was whether society and politicians would accept high prices in times of scarcity or whether they would intervene. The debate has remained undecided in the years leading up to 2022. In the past no one has experienced a disruption due to real capacity shortages.

And the answer to the questions was given in 2022: High prices are too hard to bear. Vulnerable consumers, households and businesses, need to be compensated. But more importantly, the EU decided that this should, at least in part, be financed from a levy on producers. The argument is that energy producers with some technologies would make extraordinary profits. These technologies are low variable cost power generation plants (such as wind, photovoltaic, hydro and nuclear). The price in the market is set by the plant with the highest variable cost needed to meet the commercial and technological demand of the transmission/distribution system. The so-called marginal price principle.

The marginal plant is often a coal or gas plant, and because of the extremely high price of gas or the high cost of burning coal, the electricity price set was also extremely high in 2022.

The high gas price in 2022 was the result of reduced gas supplies to Europe and a lack of sufficient alternatives to Russian gas. Excess profits collected by some producers are high and it was felt that they should be extracted to compensate consumers for energy bills. But in fact there is no EU market model and therefore it was not possible to intervene in the market model.

Basically, the price is determined by the quantity of supply and demand. The market model, i.e. how supply and demand meet, does not determine the price level.

High prices are the result of high demand and low supply. So when we intervene and cap energy prices, supply will fall (no imports in the short term, no investment in the long term). So the action comes back to us with a rebound. Market intervention therefore means that consumers will pay even higher prices for energy in the future.

Of course, the energy crisis requires action. The best approach is to facilitate more supply and less consumption. The price signals are clear, but if there are still barriers for producers or consumers to respond, they must be removed.

One issue that needs attention is mutual solidarity between countries when things get really tough and supply declines could become a reality. In this case, a Member State may be tempted to stop exports to neighboring countries in order to protect supplies for its own citizens. This is something that is visible in the EU.

The idea of joint procurement adopted in Europe.

The idea of an Energy Union, out of concerns about security of supply due to tensions between Russia and Ukraine, is an old one. But the idea of an Energy Union has not been put into practice, probably because the idea of joint EU energy purchases would not be compatible with the internal market. Anyway, new times mean new opportunities. Poland's original 2014 proposal for an Energy Union has been brought to the table again. Surely, it should not only deal with common energy procurement. That is probably not realistic. But one could also think about European strategic reserves with European rules for filling and use. Member States are traditionally afraid of transferring competences to "Brussels". But this discussion must be taken seriously.

Despite the shortcomings exposed, it is possible for the economy to function with the help of alternative energy sources. For this to happen, the Green Deal must be understood and differentiated as a strategic project from a media project, and the following conditions must be met simultaneously:

1. Political will;
2. Technological developments;
3. International cooperation and collaboration;
4. Massive capital investment;
5. Reform of the financial-banking system;
6. Removing barriers;
7. Launch a generation of engineers, researchers, economists, workers, etc. capable of launching and driving the economy powered by these new energy sources.
8. Rethinking the energy tax system

Otherwise we will be trapped in the following dilemmas:

1. There are no economically viable alternatives to oil (economic and technical viability).

2. We are not motivated to introduce alternative energies on a large scale unless
3. oil prices become enormous.
4. When oil prices become enormous, the risk that the economy will collapse is high and it will not be possible to finance the switch to alternative energies.
5. Aggressive programs to reduce consumption will drive down the price of oil, removing the incentive to switch to alternative sources, until it is already too late.
6. The raw materials used in many alternative energy sources, such as silicon, copper and platinum, are already in short supply around the world. Any attempt to control these necessary resources for a large-scale transition to alternative energies will be met with fierce competition.

The only viable solution for Europe is to reduce current energy consumption and initiate the development of technologies capable of generating enough energy (renewable energy, SMR, waste energy, other forms of clean energy) to make oil and gas reserves last as long as possible and ensure a natural transition to a new clean, secure and sustainable energy mix.

Is there a real alternative to Russian energy?

In 2021, 28% of Europe's primary energy came from Russia, in 2022 the dependence is likely to have fallen to around 16%, but different forms of energy end up in different countries around the world that make import needs available and are thus redirected to Europe or reselling energy in Europe, often at higher prices.

In 2022 the main measures that have enabled Europe to get through the year, partly without Russian energy or based on voluntary reductions in gas consumption, voluntary switching of electricity and heat generation to other fuels, increased gas supplies from Norway, Africa and Asia, but above all increased LNG imports. Apart from LNG imports all measures are unsustainable in the long term.

According to CREA analyzes, not only has Russia not decreased its energy and fuel sales in recent months, but they have increased. The same analysis shows that while pipeline gas deliveries have decreased, LNG deliveries have increased. It can also be seen that while sales of coal, crude oil and petroleum products to the EU have decreased, sales to other countries have increased, which has increased energy sales to Europe.

The think tank Bruegel has carried out an analysis of the gas import situation after the conflict in Ukraine and it can be seen that although imports from Russia via pipelines have fallen by approx. 4 times compared to the pre-conflict period, they have increased by approx. 3 times more imports from Turkey and LNG imports doubled. Given that Turkey buys most of its gas from Russia and Russian LNG imports have increased significantly post-conflict, I estimate that significant amounts of Russian gas have arrived in Europe, either re-exported or in the form of LNG swaps from various sources around the world by traders.

Assuming we do not enter a global economic recession, Europe will continue to apply the methods used in 2022 and import energy in 2023-2024 from new sources accessed after the conflict in Ukraine (USA, Azerbaijan, etc.), but also from intermediate countries (importing energy from Russia, swapping it with energy from other sources or re-exporting it to Europe) and will probably slowly, over time, start to resume direct energy imports from Russia.

The "meta-global" energy crisis comes as no surprise. It was not triggered by the situation in Ukraine, but by the limited energy resources - of which we have all been warned repeatedly - and the lack of clear solutions.

Russia can reduce gas exploitation to a certain level, but not to zero, and this element could be played by the EU. After the European Commission (EC) started talking in autumn 2022 about capping the price

of Russian gas, it fell by 44% on the Amsterdam stock exchange. When sources said there would be no cap, the price rose by 12%.

The embargo on Russian crude in the EU and the oil price cap has brought major changes around the world, both in terms of continuing to rewrite the world's energy map and in terms of the crises that will inevitably erupt on all sides. Even if the apparent production of Russian crude oil exported is only 8% of total world production, this will affect demand and thus generate economic and social effects.

It can be said that there have been oil crises before! But how does this oil supply shock differ from previous shocks

Traditionally, oil supply shocks have arisen from civil unrest in oil producing countries or from the 1990 military conflict that led to the destruction of oil production facilities when Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Instead, the main reason why Russian exports of crude oil and refined products will be subject to the embargo is due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In addition, shipping rates of Russian crude oil to various destinations have risen to record levels, reflecting public pressure on oil companies to avoid buying Russian oil, fear of official sanctions on Russian energy exports, and attacks on ships in the Black Sea.

Another dimension in which the current event differs from historical precedent is that the reduction in Russian oil exports was preceded by a reduction in Russian natural gas exports to Europe. Natural gas is used for heating homes, power generation and industrial production. The resulting price increases in varying degrees have spread across the globe through the trade in liquefied natural gas.

The extent of the decline in Russian real oil exports may determine how oil prices rise or fall in 2023. Oil producers are also worried about slowing demand if large economies go into recession and are paying attention to market signals and how prices rise/fall.

Analysts have considered various scenarios to make up the shortfall:

- China, the world's largest oil consumer, to keep its energy consumption low in the future, an unlikely approach.
- increasing oil production elsewhere in the world to compensate for the lack of Russian oil.
- Increased ability of US shale oil producers to significantly boost oil production in the short term, but limited by supply chain bottlenecks, labor shortages and public investors' insistence on capital discipline.
- Putting Iranian and Venezuelan oil back on the energy map. Unlikely to be agreed, but even so Iranian/Venezuelan oil production, would respond slowly, and increases would be much smaller than the shortfall likely to be covered.

Expensive fossil fuels boost energy efficiency growth and improve business development for renewables and new technologies without subsidies. When combined with massive European support for research, development and innovation, such as the EU Innovation Fund, NextGenerationEU and other instruments, high energy prices will ease the route to market for innovations. Scaling them up will reduce the cost of new technologies. Energy transition technologies are available. The path to Zero Net CO₂, requires a leap to a new low-carbon, investment and transition that goes beyond behavior towards old fossil fuel infrastructures. For this to happen, macroeconomic stability and strong political acceptance of the energy transition is needed. High energy prices or high carbon prices can jeopardize both directions and could jeopardize the European benefits of the future energy market. Addressing these challenges should be at the top of the political agenda. The EU has a coherent system and a clear vision for its energy and climate, anchored in legislation and approved after much democratic debate.

Europe can only reduce its real dependence on Russia, but no sooner than 10 years, through a successful Green Deal Policy, coupled with a strong Energy Resilience Policy and access to existing global security sources after the relocation of Russian sources globally.

As the world moves towards the energy transition away from fossil fuels it is important to analyze and research how we create our energy future, looking at the whole value chain of renewable energy sources, minimizing as much as possible the impact on the environment and people.

No matter what we build the energy mix to look like, it will always have two faces. As we innovate and adopt new renewable and clean energy technologies, there will be hidden environmental impacts now and for future generations.

Awareness of the importance of analyzing carbon, water and energy efficiency footprints across the chain in support of energy policies is key to increasing the share of renewable energy in the EU's generation mix as a substitute for Russian resources in the coming years. For now, this trend is timid and more marketing constructions are being pursued, which may not allow the transition to succeed.

But the EU is far from succeeding in replacing all conventional resources with renewable energy in the short term. These can help reduce dependence, but Europe needs important security resources over the next 10 years, which are difficult to obtain by totally eliminating Russia from the energy game (directly, but especially indirectly).

Revitalizing the nuclear dimension is a European Energy Security necessity. Since the beginning of the construction of nuclear power plants there has been a strong awareness of the potential danger, both of nuclear criticality and of the release of radioactive materials from nuclear power generation.

As in other industries, the design and operation of nuclear power plants aims to minimize the likelihood of accidents and avoid major human consequences when they occur.

In 70 years of civil nuclear activity there have been three accidents, including two major reactor accidents in the history of civil nuclear power - Chernobyl and Fukushima Daiichi. Chernobyl involved an intense fire with no provision for containment, and Fukushima Daiichi severely tested containment, allowing some release of radioactivity.

These are the only major accidents to have occurred in over 70 years of commercial nuclear power operation in 36 countries.

55 reactors are under construction in 15 countries, equivalent to about 15% of existing capacity, and about 30 countries are considering, planning or starting nuclear power programs, with a further 30 countries expressing interest at some stage (11 in Europe, 14 in the Middle East, 10 in Africa, 7 in Central and South America and 18 in Asia and Australia).

The fact that countries such as those in the Middle East, where crude oil is abundant, where the minimum annual energy that can be captured from the sun is up to 2500 kWh/year (compared to 1200 kWh/year on average in Europe), are planning to build nuclear power plants, in the absence of any specific infrastructure for this activity, shows the importance that is attached to clean safe energy in ensuring energy security in the full green evolution.

The transition to clean energy brings a major structural change in the generation profile of power systems around the world. Generation from renewable sources with variable output has increased greatly over the last decade, driven by cost reductions and favorable policy environments, a trend that is set to continue and even accelerate in line with climate change targets. Meanwhile, conventional power plants, especially those using coal, nuclear and hydro, are stagnating or in decline. While policies have ensured access to renewable electricity generation, risks have emerged that were not present in the past: the risk of cyber-attacks, the risk of supplying raw resources (many clean energy technologies rely on metals and minerals owned by a limited number of nations).

The energy transitions that have begun and the increase in cybercrime (and even physical crime, see the destruction of Nord Stream 1 and 2), must decisively change the concept of energy security and above all impose a secure energy mix in which clean secure energy (MicroHydropower, SMR, Cogeneration) is strongly represented.

It would be very hard to imagine our modern societies without a secure electricity supply. Although electricity currently accounts for only a fifth of primary energy consumption, it is indispensable to the economy and increasingly digital. The recent difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic remind us of the critical importance of electricity in all aspects of our lives, such as keeping medical equipment running in hospitals and IT systems available for telematics and videoconferencing. The effects of a prolonged outage far outweigh the power system or the value of the lost power purchase itself.

Cyber resilience is mandatory for future activities.

Digital technologies offer a number of opportunities that can benefit electricity consumers, such as improved efficiency, cost savings and shorter outage times. They could also help accelerate transitions to clean energy, but only within a secure mix, where SMRs are key technologies. Connected devices and the Internet of Things, along with other smart grid technologies, can unlock greater demand response resources, improve energy efficiency and facilitate the integration of greater shares of variable renewables in a cost-effective and secure manner.

Cyber-attacks are among the top ten global risks in terms of likelihood and impact, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2020. For power systems, the threat of cyber-attack is substantial and growing, and threat actors are becoming increasingly sophisticated in carrying out attacks - both in their destructive capabilities and their ability to identify vulnerabilities.

Massive rethinking of the design rules for these critical infrastructures is also required. For example, things might have been different if, when Nord Stream was built, economists had not intervened to remove the shut-off valves on these pipelines (the engineers who built the first gas pipelines 100 years ago were required to place shut-off valves at a certain distance, which could even automatically shut off a section of the pipeline in the event of a pipeline rupture, thus eliminating the amount of gas lost and making repairs easier), and politicians would not have forced the rapid completion of these pipelines without serious analysis of the environmental risks that a pipeline rupture could create.

European energy and climate policy will now be put to the test. The energy price shock is a reminder to move the green deal to the center of economic policy and needs to be done diligently to manage the risk of creating price instability, taxation and social imbalances. All of this requires strong policy coordination, including social and energy security, to maintain carbon-free energy investment decisions throughout the critical period of high energy prices. The European Union together with the Member States must tackle energy price volatility in a targeted way, while maintaining the benefits of the European energy market and doubling the speed of the energy transition.

A Frank Discussion About a New Security Architecture in Europe Has Become Critical After Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine

Narciz Bălășoiu

At the beginning of May 2023, in Republic of Moldova, experts from 14 EU Member States, together with representatives of Frontex, Europol and Cefpol, assessed during the working sessions how to implement the Security Hub roadmap, given the worrying consequences of the Russian aggression in Ukraine in the field of cross-border crime and terrorism. Such formats, identified a few months after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, come to adjust the European security architecture to crisis situations in order to strengthen the security of the European space. Due to its geographical position, the Republic of Moldova has a key role to play in addressing the criminal and security implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It is not only the Republic of Moldova that is gaining a more important position because of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Another measure in support of the European architecture is Finland's accession to NATO. Finland and Sweden, traditionally militarily non-aligned nations, applied to join NATO last year in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

Stockholm's application was blocked due to disagreements with Turkey, but Finland officially became NATO's 31st member on 4 April 2023. Finland's border with Russia stretches almost 1,300km and is already closely monitored. Finland's accession doubles the alliance's land border.

Perhaps the most relevant signal for the need to shape a new security architecture in Europe are the conclusions of the Munich Security Conference 2023. Europe's future security architecture was the main topic on the agenda of the final day of the Munich Security Conference, in a dedicated session featuring Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson and Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas as keynote speakers. Officials discussed the subject with the head of EU diplomacy, Josep Borell.

Before reviewing the conclusions of the meeting, it should be recalled that for the second time in a row, the Munich Security Conference was not attended by a representative of the leadership of the Russian Federation. Last year, there was an invitation in the name of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who decided not to attend, which at the time was interpreted as a signal that the decision to launch the Russian invasion of Ukraine had already been taken.

Moreover, unlike in previous years, Iranian officials and representatives of the controversial German party "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD) were excluded from the guest list. The party has been present in the Bundestag since 2017 and has elected members in 15 of the 16 state parliaments. According to polls, the AfD currently enjoys the support of 13 percent of voters; in some federal states in eastern Germany, the percentage is even much higher.

China was not absent from the meeting, present to show its involvement in the global competition, but also to take the pulse of the fusion of interests and values between European, North American and Indo-Pacific democracies.

The concept around which the entire conference was built was "Re:vision". In short, the leaders present, from the President of France to the Chancellor of Germany, from the Vice-President of the US to the Prime Minister of the UK, and from the leaders of the EU and NATO to the leaders and representatives of the member states of the two organizations in Central and Eastern Europe, were challenged to respond to how the world's democracies will act, beyond the already assumed response, in relation to the competing world order proposed by autocracies such as China and Russia, portrayed as the "revisionist attackers" of the rules and norms-based order.

More succinctly, the fierce systemic competition between democracies and autocracies, prophetically or otherwise trumpeted by US President Joe Biden, has become the de facto state of international relations. All transatlantic players recognize it, even if they express it in different shades.

Conclusions of the Munich security conference on a new European architecture

Of course, in order to talk about a new security architecture in Europe, the Russian-Ukrainian war must first be concluded. In a rather emotive and more political rhetorical note, the conference participants tried to inoculate the idea that Ukraine could win the war, without giving too many details about this outcome.

In reality, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict could end in two scenarios. The first, a de facto physical cessation of hostilities, is a dangerous scenario because it allows a so-called frozen and protracted conflict to take hold and foresees the possibility of prolonging a security crisis unprecedented in the last 80 years in Europe.

The second, with a peace agreement, is the scenario that is being worked for, but for that to happen, Ukraine must hold the upper hand on the battlefield. That is why one element of clarity is that the defeat of Russia means the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity. It is equally clear that this war remains far from over in the immediate aftermath.

How post-conflict Ukraine and post-conflict Russia will look will influence the new European security architecture. After the Second World War, the European security order was determined by two rival actors, the US and the USSR. It was a situation similar to what Russia is now trying to define in Ukraine and in the eastern neighborhood of NATO and the EU, namely a security order based on spheres of influence, which the West categorically rejects. In parallel, all options are being considered in Western chancelleries.

For the political solution to ending the war in Ukraine to lead to a new, stable European security architecture, several aspects need to be taken into account. The first signals were given as early as last year, when Finland and Sweden took the historic decision to join NATO and end the era of military non-alignment, and when the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine became candidate states to the European Union.

Sweden's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance only requires resolving Turkey's objections and overcoming Hungarian opportunism. But between the time of a possible Russian defeat and the restoration of European security parameters, those windows of opportunity will be created for countries like Ukraine and Republic of Moldova to step up the EU accession process. It could, for what it's worth, be a repeat of the first 15 years after the end of the Cold War, when Central and Eastern European countries went the way of NATO and the EU.

On another front, Finland's accession gives the North Atlantic Alliance an advantage in the Baltic Sea, a strategic waterway bordered by the Russian city of St. Petersburg and some of NATO's most vulnerable members, the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. This opens up a new route for strengthening the Baltic states. At present, this depends on the Suwalki Corridor that separates Russian-controlled Kaliningrad from Belarus, which Russia could try to close in the event of a conflict.

Finland's accession also means an increased NATO presence in the Arctic. Finland is a member of the Arctic Council, an organization that oversees the world's northernmost areas and whose members include Russia, Canada, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Denmark and the United States. With their membership, Arctic security would become increasingly important on the NATO agenda. As more than 50% of the Arctic Ocean coastline is Russian territory, it could also be on Moscow's agenda, although the Arctic is considered a success story in NATO-Moscow relations.

Russia has warned that it will have to take "retaliatory measures" to respond to what it called the security threats created by Finland's NATO membership. Moscow has already warned that it will strengthen its defenses along its border with NATO if the alliance deploys troops or brings in additional equipment for its new member.

But the European security architecture is not just about expanding these Western structures, it is also about understanding and applying the new geography. Berlin sees Europe's center of gravity shifting eastwards. Germany, which for four decades has been NATO's eastern flank, has launched this geopolitical approach to finding its place in this new geography.

At the same time, NATO says it treats the Alliance's eastern flank in a homogenous way, encompassing the entire eastern border from north to south in a homogenous way of thinking: from Scandinavia, through the Baltics, Poland, Romania and the Black Sea to Turkey and Greece.

The new European security architecture will have several defining actors. While allies on the Eastern flank will support the pre-eminence of the US as the guarantor of this security, Berlin will become another guarantor through its post-Zeitenwende policy, as German foreign and security policy enters a turning point that will impact the way European and Euro-Atlantic defense will be thought about. Paris will also have its own ambitions to lead the European defense pillar within the EU and NATO, while London will play the same linking role between continental Europe and Atlantic Europe. Warsaw will undoubtedly also become an important player, with Poland's investment in defense doubling its diplomatic skills, strategic influence and forward thinking.

In this new security architecture, Romania's role will also be repositioned. Our country has already seized the opportunity to include the Black Sea in the new order of security and stability, while we will have a historic duty to anchor the Republic of Moldova in this structure. In times of war and post-conflict that are reshaping the security environment, no subject is taboo anymore.

And in order to have an accurate x-ray image of what happened in Munich, we must try to take *cum grano salis* the emphatic proclamations about European solidarity and common goals that took center stage at the Munich Security Conference and see the signs that certain threats are becoming increasingly evident. It seems the only people smiling at this year's security conference were defense contractors. Arms sales are booming by all accounts.

Why is there a need for a debate on shaping a new security architecture in Europe only a year after the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war?

The truth is that many observers were taken by surprise by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They may well have miscalculated that the forces massed on the Ukrainian border in February 2022 were too few for a hostile takeover. Or perhaps the historical and demographic relationship between the two states led them to perceive an unthinkable state of war.

But the reality is that Europe has been on a warpath for a long time, and only the elitism of modernity and the illusion of enlightenment in international relations would have caused Western analysts not to see the danger on NATO's eastern flank. The eastward expansion of the Organization has always been a matter of concern to Russian officials. It became a red line the further east the Organization expanded.

The main consequence for Europe was that it clarified beyond any doubt the negative prospect of forming a common European security order with Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. The undercurrent of the Russian invasion must also be sought in Western actions to support and shape an anti-Russian school of thought in Ukraine in the wake of the Euromaidan of 2013-2014. Put together, all of these smaller and larger actions led to the return of conventional armed confrontation on the borders of NATO and the European Union.

Claims, taken for granted by some analysts, that Russia's imperialist ambitions can be reshaped by a decisive military victory for Ukraine should be treated with skepticism, since *revanchism* can just as easily follow humiliation on the battlefield or, as the Treaty of Versailles more than a century ago showed, at the negotiating table.

The Russian military's poorer-than-expected performance on the battlefield so far has led many to question whether Russia remains a great power (there is reluctance in using that label even when we talk about Russia of the last three decades). Whether we continue to speak of Moscow as a great power or only as an average regional and civilizational power, Russia remains a vast, populous and nuclear-armed country.

Moscow cannot be excluded from any new configuration of the European architecture. Even if you don't do it with it... you do it in relation to it. Presumably, the Kremlin will retain a large stake in Europe's security system, even as it tramples on every norm of security order in Europe today. How to give it a place in Europe's future security architecture that also satisfies some of its status and self-image remains a difficult but unavoidable task.

What would a new continental order look like?

Unfortunately, the burden of defining a new continental order comes from the fact that contrasting fundamental views on the principles that should legitimately underpin the European security order are a major causal factor in today's war.

In the short term, European states and NATO must address the dynamics of the war in Ukraine and ensuring strategic stability on the continent, both of which are indispensable tasks. In the longer term, they remain closely linked to the question of what principles should underpin a new security order on the continent.

Today, it has become difficult to imagine any agreement emerging on the nature of the fundamental principles of a Western European rules-based order. Moreover, it could even be argued that the principles of specifically Western security rules are abstract and inherently subject to contested interpretations, which can generate disagreement and, over time, resentment. Pretty much what happened and led to the war in Ukraine.

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At present, it has become difficult to imagine that agreement could emerge on the nature of the fundamental principles of a rules-based order in Western Europe. Moreover, it could even be argued that the principles of specifically Western security rules are abstract and inherently subject to contested interpretations, which can generate disagreement and, over time, resentment. Much like what happened and led to the war in Ukraine.

The European security order has also changed fundamentally since its current basic principles were agreed in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. While that agreement reinforced mutual recognition between the Cold War-era blocs, applying its principles has become a thornier issue today, when the balance of power in East and West has shifted dramatically a decade and a half later. Since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO has become the undisputed security leader in Europe.

What is more, since 1975 and 1990, another actor has emerged on the scene, one that may not enjoy a broad capacity to generate a security order but can certainly influence it: The European Union. The European political agenda-setting capacity, collective bargaining power and absolute pull of the European Union have transformed the continent's economic and political order into a normative and regulatory orbit centered around the Brussels bureaucracy.

If the Helsinki order and its duopolistic framework have not already collapsed in the context of these developments, then war - which is the traditional way of changing the international order - has ensured that it disappears. However, there are vociferous demands from states considered revisionist that all Euro-Atlantic states abide by the principles of the Helsinki Agreement. However, these only go to show that the European order based on these principles has unequivocally reached its end.

Of course, a future security configuration in Europe will revolve around Ukraine and the role it will play as a counterweight or "hinge" between Russia and the rest of the continent. Theoretically, before the outbreak of war, there may have been room for compromise between Russia and Western states on the notion of Ukraine's right to choose its orientation.

Such a compromise would have implied a kind of long moratorium on NATO expansion, which would have eased Moscow's security concerns while allowing the transatlantic alliance to claim that its open-door policy remained intact. Today, such an outcome has become unthinkable. All the more so because, with or without NATO membership, Ukraine is now effectively part of the Euro-Atlantic camp thanks to the armaments on its territory and the relations it has developed during the war year.

Moreover, the role of neutrality or third-country status in Europe's order as a means of achieving security has also been almost taken into illusory by the war. Sweden and Finland now believe that NATO membership is an important insurance policy to guarantee their national security. The accession of Finland, considered a neutral state, to NATO has completely changed the thinking and seems to have the potential to tip the regional balance of power towards the West.

If we try to look at it from Moscow's perspective, Belarus' attempts to transform itself into a safe space for East-West dialogue were extinguished after Alexander Lukashenko's crackdown on protests following the 2020 presidential elections. The erosion of neutrality as an attractive or even viable option for states in the orbit of Moscow-NATO relations highlights the fundamentally changed context of relations between the two blocs, with implications for how a new paradigm for European security can be constructed.

The freedom of a state to choose in its foreign and security policy whether to align itself with a bloc, or the associated option of neutrality, also touches directly on the unresolved dilemmas facing Russian nationalism and its vision of a new European security order.

Addressing these issues in the current context will therefore prove extremely difficult, especially given the changing attitudes and political developments in both Ukraine, Russia, and the political reverberations that the war is having in changing the perception of security and international relations decision-makers on the continent.

However, given the right conditions, there may be more room to gradually argue that the security concerns of all European states are legitimate, especially if the Russian-Ukrainian conflict does not close soon and turns into a frozen one. Instead of arriving at agreed interpretations of the high principles on which a future European order should be based, which seems implausible in the current circumstances, it should take the form of gradual confidence-building measures between states and especially between blocs.

As a first step, confidence-building measures between states could involve open discussions between major European powers with members of the Russian elite about sources of conventional and nuclear risk on the continent, with the aim of achieving greater technical clarity about prohibited behavior and red lines that must not be crossed. The fact that the sources of Russian behavior in Ukraine are multifaceted only strengthens the case for a period of confidence-building caution on the continent.

Pushing decision-makers towards a path that puts Europe on the way to a more durable and sustainable security order is imperative, given that the next conflict may prove even more catastrophic than the current one. Potential scenarios range from a Russian escalation in the face of the gains Ukraine currently enjoys on the front, to a more assertive Moscow following a Russian victory, to a

stalemate that portends a rebuilding of the Russian military followed by a more organized assault on Ukraine now or in a few years.

What role should the EU Security and Defense Policy play in this?

The resurgence of interstate warfare in Europe has led to an increased focus on deterrence and territorial defense, and a reinvigoration of NATO's role on the continent, with the US spearheading it. What does this mean for the future of the European Union's Security and Defense Policy, especially given the latter's traditional focus on 'low-intensity' crisis management operations outside Europe?

Certainly, the need to strengthen deterrence against a major nuclear power underlines NATO's role as the main organization on the 'short call list' for most European countries, including EU member states. There is a debate about how Article 42.7 of the EU Treaty provides a basis for collective defense within the EU, and how common defense might work if an EU member state is attacked and NATO refuses to retaliate.

However, Finland and Sweden's decision to apply for NATO membership sends a clear signal: when it comes to core deterrence and defense activities, the European Union is no match for NATO. This is hardly surprising; it was well known even before the war. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has only intensified the decision of some states to turn to NATO and seek conformity in providing security.

The European Union's experience in the field of security and defense is relatively recent and has mainly focused on low-intensity crisis management operations outside Europe. These have often been of a 'civilian' or what in specialist parlance is called 'civ-mil' rather than military nature. Apart from a small support cell, the EU has no permanent assets for military planning, command and control of operations and no experience of deterrence and defense. Moreover, it explicitly recognizes NATO's primary role when it comes to deterrence and territorial defense. Statements by leaders in Brussels, as well as EU heads of state and government, focus on how the Union should act in concert with NATO.

Moreover, the EU-NATO roadmap speaks of complementarity in the actions of the two organizations in an attempt for one of them to acquire a better configured role in the European security architecture and in the machinery that will define a new order in the system of international relations.

On the other hand, the North Atlantic Alliance has a state-of-the-art multinational command and control structure, highly developed defense and force planning processes, permanently deployable forces and assets, and most importantly, in the thick of the battle under its command it includes the United States and the United Kingdom, two nuclear powers that extend nuclear deterrence guarantees throughout the Allied territory.

Should the European Union, therefore, simply abandon its policy of becoming a more important security actor and leave the business of deterrence and collective defense in Europe to NATO, sticking only to low-intensity crisis management operations and capacity building for partners beyond Europe?

Actions across the European Union following the outbreak of war in Ukraine make it clear that NO. Continued pursuit of American leadership in NATO would condemn the European Union to strategic and political irrelevance, ultimately weakening Europe and the NATO alliance. But how can the European Union contribute to deterrence and territorial defense in Europe?

While recognizing NATO's leadership as a military and security power on the continent, the European Union can still make an indirect but critical contribution by helping to equip military resources and facilitating deterrence and defense against state and non-state actors whose security threats have intensified in recent times.

When it comes to industrial and technological innovation or the development of military capabilities - so essential for supporting military and nuclear deterrence alike - the European Union has significant competitive advantages over the rest of NATO.

The fact that it has a significant multiannual budget, its extensive experience in areas such as research, technology or the development of new industries, gives it a head start in this development race. This, coupled with the use of specific instruments such as the European Defense Fund (EDF), the Permanent Structured Cooperation in the field of Defense (PeSCo), the European Peace Facility (EPF) or the strengthening of the European defense industry through joint procurement (EDIRPA), underlines the potential of the European Union to contribute to the generation of technologies, capabilities and skills needed for military deterrence.

Even if such technologies, capabilities and capacities are eventually channeled operationally through NATO forces, the European Union can play a critical role in their development and applicability on the battlefield, whether conventional or cyber, space or otherwise.

Enhancing deterrence - directly and in complementarity with NATO - should be the main objective for the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy. To achieve this goal, European decision-makers need to address a number of policy directions.

First and perhaps most importantly, any effort to address deterrence and territorial defense within the EU should be done in close coordination with NATO and would require a radical reconceptualization of the EU-NATO relationship. Until now, EU-NATO relations have been primarily structured around external crisis management, even if the recent EU-NATO declaration includes references to cooperation in areas such as cyber, space, resilience or military mobility. It is clear that the focus should be on strengthening cooperation in these areas for joint action should the security situation require it.

Deterrence and territorial defense should be at the heart of the implementation, as well as a possible revision, of the EU's Strategic Compass. The document, which outlines the European Union's strategic priorities in the field of security and defense, should focus the work of the Brussels bureaucracy and the Member States around at least three of the four so-called strategic directions of the compass: capability development, strong partnerships and resilience.

For the medium term, the European Union should focus its spending on efforts to strengthen deterrence. A "deterrence first" thinking should also translate to the EU's defense financial mechanisms and lead to an increase in the necessary allocations to EDF and EPF, a prioritization of EDIRPA and their reorientation towards deterrence and territorial defense.

Last but not least, the European Commission should consider elevating defense modernization to the top rung of its political-strategic priorities, alongside the green transition and digital transformation. This could have a number of practical and concrete implications, such as applying possible exemptions for defense spending in the context of the Stability and Growth Pact, or including a dedicated pillar for increased defense spending in the Next Generation EU.



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