

## IN THIS ISSUE

---

*Igor PEJIĆ, Milovan SUBOTIĆ*

**HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE AND STRATEGIC CULTURE OF RUSSIA:  
A REFLECTION ON MEARSHEIMER'S WORK ON UKRAINE**

*Birgül DEMİRTAŞ, Zuhul YEŞİLYURT GÜNDÜZ*

**WHEN THE SHIFTING INTERNATIONAL ORDER HITS THE DOMESTIC AGENCY:  
THE CASE OF TURKEY AND THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT**

*Daniyal REZAPOUR*

**THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION (2004–2024)**

*Branislav MILOSAVLJEVIĆ, Veljko BLAGOJEVIĆ*

**THE CONCEPT OF DETERRENCE IN CURRENT RELATIONS  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

*Jelica STEFANOVIĆ-ŠTAMBUK, Slobodan POPOVIĆ*

**CHINA'S EMANCIPATORY DIPLOMACY FOR A PEACEFUL,  
DEMOCRATIC, AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

*Vesna ĆORIĆ, Fernanda FLORENTINO FERNANDEZ JANKOV, Ana KNEŽEVIĆ BOJOVIĆ*

**INVESTMENT MIGRATION FROM THE STANDPOINT  
OF INTERNATIONAL AND EU LAW**

# The Review of International Affairs

---

ISSN 0486-6096

UDK 327

Three issues per year

VOL. LXXV, No. 1192, SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 2024

## **Publisher**

Institute of International Politics and Economics  
25 Makedonska, 11000 Belgrade

## **For the Publisher**

Branislav ĐORĐEVIĆ, Ph.D.  
Director

## **Editor-in-Chief**

Nenad STEKIĆ, Ph.D.

## **Deputy Editor-in-Chief**

Nevena ŠEKARIĆ STOJANOVIĆ, Ph.D.

## **Secretary**

Pavle NEDIĆ, MA

## **Publishing Council**

Prof. Huang PING, Full professor, Centre for Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao Studies,  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, President of the Publishing Council

Prof. Richard SAKWA, Full professor, University of Kent, Canterbury

Dr. Laurence WEINBAUM, Israel Council on Foreign relations, Jerusalem

Prof. Darko TANASKOVIĆ, Full professor, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade

Dr. Slavenko TERZIĆ, Full member of Serbian Academy of Science and Art, Belgrade

## **Editorial Board**

Prof. Zhang YUYAN, Full Professor, Institute of World Economics and Politics,  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing

Prof. Liu ZUOKUI, Professor/Senior Research Fellow,  
the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Historical Sciences, Beijing

Prof. Dr. Taro TSUKIMURA, Full Professor, Doshisha University, Kyoto

Prof. Dr. Edward NEWMAN, Full Professor, School of Politics and International Studies,  
University of Leeds

Prof. Dr. Stefano PILOTTO, Full Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Trieste

Prof. Dr. Milimir STEPIĆ, Full Professor, Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade

Prof. Denis SULLIVAN Jr, Professor, Co-Director of Middle East Center,  
Northeastern University, Boston

Dr. Valentin KATRANZHIEV, Associate Professor, Diplomatic Institute,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Bulgaria

Dr. Iulia Monica OEHLER-ȘINCAI, Senior Researcher, Institute for world Economy,  
Romanian Academy, Bucharest

# The Review of International Affairs

---

Prof. Dr. Bojan MILISAVLJEVIĆ, Full Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade

Prof. Dr. Predrag BJELIĆ, Full Professor, Faculty of Economy, University of Belgrade

Prof. Dr. Saša MIJALKOVIĆ, Full Professor, University of Criministics and Police Studies, Belgrade

Prof. Dr. Ulrico AGNATI, Full Professor, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy

Dr. Ritsa PANAGIOTOU, Senior Research Fellow, Centre of Planning and Economic Research, Athens

Dr. Elena SAFRONOVA, Leading Researcher, Institute of China and Contemporary Asia  
of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

Prof. Dr. Mher SAHAKYAN, Associate Professor, Fulbright Visiting Scholar, SAIS, Johns Hopkins  
University; Director China-Eurasia Council for Political and Strategic Research, Armenia

Prof. Dr. Dragan PAVLIĆEVIĆ, Associate Professor, Xi'an Jiaotong – Liverpool University, Xi'an

Prof. Dr. Gokhan TEKIR, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations,  
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Turkey

Prof. Dr. Sanja TEPAVČEVIĆ, Adjunct Professor, Department of Modern Philology and Social Sciences,  
University of Pannonia, Koszeg Campus, Hungary

Prof. Dr. Matteo MARCONI, Assistant professor, History of International Relations,  
University of Udine

## **Layout**

Sanja BALOVIĆ

## **Language editor**

Maja NIKOLIĆ

## **For information on annual subscription please contact**

BiFS doo, Books and Periodicals, Supilova 10

11000 Belgrade, Serbia,

Tel/fax: +381 11 20 84 229

E-mail: [bfsbooks@sezampro.rs](mailto:bfsbooks@sezampro.rs)

## **Printed by**

Donat Graf doo, Beograd

## **Web Address**

[www.thereviewofinternationalaffairs.rs](http://www.thereviewofinternationalaffairs.rs)

The Review of International Affairs is the National journal of international significance, classified M24, according to the classification by the Ministry of Science, Tehnological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

---

Publishing of *The Review of International Affairs* is funded by  
the Ministry of Science, Tehnological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia

# The Review of International Affairs

---

Vol. LXXV, No. 1192, September–December 2024

UDK 327 ISSN 0486-6096

## Contents

*Igor PEJIĆ, Milovan SUBOTIĆ*

HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE AND STRATEGIC CULTURE OF RUSSIA:  
A REFLECTION ON MEARSHEIMER'S WORK ON UKRAINE 311

*Birgöl DEMİRTAŞ, Zuhâl YEŞİLYURT GÜNDÜZ*

WHEN THE SHIFTING INTERNATIONAL ORDER HITS THE DOMESTIC AGENCY:  
THE CASE OF TURKEY AND THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT 335

*Daniyal REZAPOUR*

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION (2004–2024) 361

*Branislav MILOSAVLJEVIĆ, Veljko BLAGOJEVIĆ*

THE CONCEPT OF DETERRENCE IN CURRENT RELATIONS  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST 383

*Jelica STEFANOVIĆ-ŠTAMBUK, Slobodan POPOVIĆ*

CHINA'S EMANCIPATORY DIPLOMACY FOR A PEACEFUL,  
DEMOCRATIC, AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL COMMUNITY 405

*Vesna ĆORIĆ, Fernanda FLORENTINO FERNANDEZ JANKOV, Ana KNEŽEVIĆ BOJOVIĆ*

INVESTMENT MIGRATION FROM THE STANDPOINT  
OF INTERNATIONAL AND EU LAW 437

## REVIEWS

*Ivana DUNJIĆ*

SQUARING THE CIRCLE – NAVIGATING CHANGES  
IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS 463

*Nataša PAJIĆ*

UNPACKING CHINA'S HESITANT HEGEMONY:  
A LAYERED LOOK AT CHINA'S SECURITY POLICY 469



## HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE AND STRATEGIC CULTURE OF RUSSIA: A REFLECTION ON MEARSHEIMER'S WORK ON UKRAINE

Igor PEJIĆ<sup>1</sup>, Milovan SUBOTIĆ<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the arguments presented by John Mearsheimer in his work on the Ukrainian crisis. Guided by the principles of neorealism, Mearsheimer fundamentally portrays Russia as a declining power forced to defend itself due to Washington's reckless policies. Policies driven by liberal ideals rather than the principles of realpolitik led to NATO's expansion into parts of Europe that constitute Russia's sphere of interest, ultimately resulting in the conflict in Ukraine. While we agree with certain aspects of Mearsheimer's work, we believe that specific deficiencies create a misleading picture of Russia and its policies in Central and Eastern Europe. Our analysis focuses on aspects of Russian history in these areas and the development of its strategic culture. Based on these foundations, we come to understand that Russian strategic culture is deeply rooted in its historical experience and largely adheres to principles of offensive strategy. Its policy in Ukraine, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe, represents a historical continuity of Russian military activity, which is not a reaction to Washington's policy but rather a part of a broader strategic culture and the way Moscow formulates foreign policy and perceives the international environment.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:  
19 June 2024  
Revised:  
23 July 2024  
Accepted:  
2 August 2024

### KEYWORDS

international relations; Russia; strategy; strategic culture; United States.

**Cite this article as:** Pejić, Igor, and Milovan Subotić. 2024. "History of the Empire and Strategic Culture of Russia: A Reflection on Mearsheimer's Work on Ukraine". *The Review of International Affairs* LXXV (1192): 311–334. [https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe\\_ria.2024.75.1192.1](https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_ria.2024.75.1192.1)

<sup>1</sup> Researcher, Strategic Research Institute, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [igor.pejic@mod.gov.rs](mailto:igor.pejic@mod.gov.rs), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9296-7547>

<sup>2</sup> Senior Research Fellow, Strategic Research Institute, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [milovan.subotic@mod.gov.rs](mailto:milovan.subotic@mod.gov.rs), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8729-5742>

## Introduction

The conflict in Ukraine represents one of the most significant events of the 21st century, attracting the attention of numerous researchers and serving as the central subject of many studies in the field of international relations. John Mearsheimer's paper, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault", has had a profound impact on the academic community, which largely sided with Ukraine as a victim of Russian aggression with the onset of the crisis in this country in 2014. On the other hand, Mearsheimer, guided by realist principles, provides arguments as to why and how the crisis occurred and why Russia is not the sole culprit. The main argument Mearsheimer presents in his work is that NATO expansion after the Cold War triggered the conflict in Ukraine and that such a policy was driven by the idealistic impulses of Western states rather than a realism-based policy. Essentially, as Mearsheimer sees it, the West does not understand the international environment in which it finds itself. On the other hand, new rivals are guided by the foundational principles of 19th-century *realpolitik*, which is why the United States makes mistakes and enters unnecessary conflicts. Ultimately, as the author points out, Russia does not have the capacity to pose a threat to the United States given that it is a declining power, and it would actually be better to win it over to more effectively contain China (Mearsheimer 2014, 12).

In his article, Mearsheimer portrays Russia as a relatively weak and benign power that, due to poor international circumstances imposed by the West's imprudent policy, is forced to fight for its survival.<sup>3</sup> Although we agree with the argument that the West bears a significant degree of responsibility for the 2014 crisis in Ukraine, Mearsheimer's perspective on Russia has several issues. One of the primary problems in his analysis of Russia is the neglect of Russian history and policy in this region of Europe, its intentions, and the numerous aspects of its strategic culture, all of which have often been in the realms of offensive-expansionist actions. By neglecting these factors, Mearsheimer (2014, 5) sees Russian actions in Ukraine as a defensive-realist policy through which Moscow seeks to preserve the state's security and great power status. Therefore, Mearsheimer perceives Russian policy primarily as a reaction to Washington's poor strategy, implying that it might not have been such if the circumstances were different.

---

<sup>3</sup> Though Mearsheimer does not explain in detail why he sees Russia as a declining power in the article, his assumptions were most probably based on the overall factors that impact one country's performance in terms of being a great power. Such factors can be seen in various publications (Oliker and Charlick-Paley 2002; Shlapentokh 2006; Oxenstierna 2016; Wimbush and Portale 2017).

These “different circumstances” Mearsheimer (2018, 171) primarily views through the lens of American policy mistakes in the context of supporting NATO expansion, given that the international circumstances at the time allowed Washington to do what it wanted rather than what it had to. In other words, the policy of achieving so-called liberal hegemony should have been replaced with a policy of restraint, thereby not jeopardising Russia’s position as a great power on the old continent. The proposed solution appears intuitive, but it neither explains nor takes into account what would have happened in the region of Eastern and Central Europe if NATO expansion had not occurred after the Cold War. The idea Mearsheimer (2018, 172) reiterates is that Moscow, at the end of the Cold War, wanted to support NATO’s presence in Europe, ostensibly to contain Germany after reunification, but not its further expansion.

To counterpoise some of Mearshimer’s arguments, we believe it is necessary to analyse Russian history and strategic culture, which exert a strong influence on contemporary Russian policy. By analysing these factors, we will see that throughout history, Russia has pursued an offensive policy towards Europe to project power and achieve some form of regional hegemony. Moreover, Russian strategic culture does not reject the principles of offensive actions, nor is this a characteristic of states that see themselves as great powers. Although a discussion that includes historical aspects, or those concerning strategic culture, goes beyond the narrower framework of neorealism, we believe that we remain within similar methodological boundaries, given that Mearsheimer also touched upon the political principles on which the American administration operates. Additionally, by examining these factors, we remain at the level of analysing the second image of international relations that Kenneth Waltz (2001) referred to when he attempted to create a methodological framework for the realist school.

In the first part of this paper, we will focus on the historical aspect of Russian policy in Eastern and Central Europe, primarily starting from the Great Northern War in 1700, when Russia managed to legitimise itself as one of the European powers. Although the nature of this paper does not allow for a detailed analysis of specific events during this long period, by reviewing the retrospective of Russian conquests and the development of strategic interests during this time, we can understand the character of Russian foreign policy and how the empire transformed into one of the great powers of the old continent. In examining this part of Russian history, we observe that Russian policy was inclined towards offensive actions and utilised the weakness of its opponents to impose its interests or conquer territory for future geopolitical positioning. Despite being a victim of European great power politics during certain periods, such as the Napoleonic wars and the First and Second World Wars, Russian overall strategy did not differ from its European counterparts in terms of conquest and power projection.

In the second part of this study, we will analyse various aspects of Russian strategic culture, examining the conditions of its emergence and assessing the extent to which historical factors shape its ongoing development. Our analysis of Russian strategic culture leads us to conclude that Russia is deeply entrenched in its historical legacy, which predominantly emphasises expansionism and advocates for an offensive policy and strategy. While we agree with Mearsheimer that the Ukrainian crisis stems from Western policies in some part, it is erroneous to assume that a state viewing the Soviet Union's superpower status as ideal would refrain from extending its influence and control over Ukraine or from attempting to expand its reach over the former Warsaw Pact nations. The involvement of Western powers in the Ukrainian crisis can, therefore, be interpreted as preemptive action aiming to secure the achievements made by the United States after decades of Cold War struggles rather than a policy solely guided by liberal ideals.

In the third part of this paper, we will briefly outline our counterarguments regarding other viewpoints presented by Mearsheimer in his work. These viewpoints include portraying Russia as a declining power that does not pose a threat or problem to the United States, advocating for cooperation with Russia to contain China, and criticising the American administration for being guided by idealism rather than realpolitik.

### **Historical Overview of Russian Policy in the Broader Region of Eastern and Central Europe**

We begin our analysis with events like the Great Northern War, where Russia defeated Sweden in 1721, securing its role as a European power. The weakness of Poland and Russia facilitated the development of the Swedish Empire during the 16th and 17th centuries, allowing Stockholm to maintain control over much of northern Europe (Hatton 1971, 649). Declaring war on Sweden in 1700, Russia aimed to reclaim territories lost during the Time of Troubles and secure Baltic ports for commercial and military purposes. According to some historians, the conquest of Baltic seaports was the primary reason Peter the Great went to war with Sweden (Bushkovitch 2006, 495-496). The Russo-Swedish War that ensued as retaliation from Stockholm in 1741-1743 also ended poorly for the Swedes and affirmed Russia's dominance in this part of Europe. The war demonstrated Russia's ability to project power beyond its borders and deep into enemy territory (LeDonne 1997, 37).

Peter the Great's contribution to the development of the Russian Empire can be seen through various aspects of politics and society. Paul Bushkovitch highlights that during Peter the Great's reign, Russia embraced various aspects of European civilisation, including how statesmen viewed international politics.

According to this author, Russian rulers understood how European states protect and advance their interests while employing different political means to justify conquests. Bushkovitch (2006, 498) argues that Peter the Great was guided by geopolitical interests and understood the significance of military strength and victory in providing diplomatic opportunities for a state.

In the second half of the 18th century, Russian and, to a large extent, European politics were shaped by the reign of Catherine II. During her rule, Russia expanded its territory by approximately 200,000 square miles to the west and south. Catherine's diplomatic acumen enabled Russia to establish itself as a great power following the Seven Years' War. Catherine II's foreign policy was primarily influenced by two ideological directions. The first, militaristic direction advocated for a policy of "classic" expansion towards Europe, whereby Russia would seize new territory when the opportunity presented itself. The second direction, for which Catherine was more inclined, focused on political control over other actors and their gradual integration into the Russian sphere of interest (Davies 2005, 388-389). Both ideological directions materialised in Russian foreign policy during the partition of Poland and the Russo-Turkish War of 1768.

By winning the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, Catherine II significantly increased Russia's control over the Black Sea basin and effectively pushed the Ottoman forces out of the northern part of the Black Sea. While the focal point of military operations during the war was on land, Russian naval victories over the Ottoman Empire in the Aegean Sea allowed Russia to present itself as one of Europe's major maritime powers (Scott 2001, 199). The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was signed in 1774, marking a pivotal moment for Russia. It resulted in Russia separating Crimea from the Ottoman Empire, portraying itself as a protector of the Orthodox Christian population in the region, and securing free navigation for its merchant fleet in the Black Sea (Ragsdale 2006, 505). As John P. LeDonne (1997, 105-111) points out, "with this peace, Russia began the process of dismembering the Ottoman Empire". The annexation of Crimea in 1783 and the conquest of Izmail in 1790 were further steps that enabled Russia to establish a military foothold on the Black Sea, laying the groundwork for its power projection across the entire basin.

During the late 18th century, despite geopolitical developments on its southern borders, Russia actively engaged in Central European politics, particularly concerning Poland. Russia positioned itself as a defender of the Polish constitution, aiming, as Alexander Kamenskii (2019, 175) highlights, to utilise Poland as a "buffer zone" against Western European powers. To achieve these goals, Russia worked to maintain Poland's internal weakness and division, facilitating easier manipulation of its domestic politics (Scott 2001, 105). Furthermore, Russia played a significant role in the partitioning of Poland, which unfolded in three stages. The first partition occurred in 1772 at the initiative of

Prussia, where Russia gained a substantial territory of approximately 36,000 square miles (Scott 2001, 220). The second partition followed in 1792, facilitated by the military intervention of the Russian armed forces, and was formalised by the Russo-Prussian Agreement of 1793. The Russian court justified its armed intervention as necessary to “prevent the spread of immediate danger arising from the spread of the spirit of rebellion and innovation” within Poland. Finally, after unsuccessful uprisings by some Polish nobility, the third partition took place in 1794/1795, resulting in Poland losing all forms of sovereignty. This series of partitions significantly diminished Poland’s territorial extent and political independence, solidifying Russia’s influence in the region and highlighting its strategic manoeuvres in Central Europe during that era (LeDonne 1997, 58-60).

Although it is debatable to what extent Russia desired the partition of Poland, Paul W. Schroeder argues that the political events surrounding the partition not only secured Russian possessions in Eastern Europe but also deepened rivalries between the Habsburg Empire and Prussia. According to Schroeder, as a result, France lost influence in the region. He contends that these developments, along with conflicts involving Sweden and Denmark in the Baltic, created favourable conditions for Russia and brought it closer to achieving regional hegemony (Schroeder 1996, 19). Furthermore, Russia’s influence in Central European politics was strengthened following the war between Prussia and the Habsburg Empire in 1778-1779. Prussia’s unfavourable outcome in the war forced it to sign the Treaty of Teschen in 1779, where Russia positioned itself as a protector of the German constitution. This move enhanced Russia’s prestige in Europe and provided opportunities for influencing German politics. In summary, Schroeder’s analysis underscores how the partition of Poland and subsequent geopolitical developments in Central Europe bolstered Russia’s strategic position and international prestige during the late 18th century (Ragsdale 2006, 511; Kamenskii 2019, 179).

In the early 19th century, Russia’s grand strategy underwent no significant changes. Despite facing considerable challenges, such as the Napoleonic Wars, Russia managed to acquire new territories and expand its influence at the expense of the Ottoman Empire (a policy that persisted until 1878). Specifically, through the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807, Russia gained French support in its struggle against other powers, effectively securing French non-interference in further partitioning of the Ottoman Empire and strengthening the Russian sphere of interests in Eastern and Southeastern Europe (Aksan 2007, 243). After the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812, concluded with the Treaty of Bucharest, Russia obtained a large portion of Bessarabia and significantly expanded its possessions to the banks of the Danube River. Victory over Napoleon’s army further affirmed Russia’s status as a great power in Europe, and following the Congress of Vienna, Russia managed to re-establish dominance over Poland (Scott 2006, 359).

During the 19th century, the Crimean War and subsequently the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 marked Russia's imperial policy in Europe. The Crimean War was ostensibly launched under the pretext of protecting Christian populations but fundamentally represented the continuity of Russian geopolitical ambitions (Taylor 1955, 61; Almond 2009, 182; Badem 2010, 65; Baumgart 2020, 29). Its significance was amplified because Russia was perceived as a serious threat capable of disrupting the continental balance of power in Europe at the time. As Oleg Rudolfovich Airapetov explains, by the mid-19th century, when conflicts arose, Russia ceased to be viewed as a "desirable ally" from the periphery of the continent by other European powers. Following the Napoleonic Wars, Russia managed to position itself as a major power on the European stage, asserting its claim to primacy, which also influenced how other European powers perceived the threat it posed. The alignment of France and Great Britain with the Ottoman Empire, as well as Vienna's refusal to cooperate with Russia, underscored the magnitude of Russian power and the seriousness of the threat in the context of its expanding influence towards Ottoman territories in the Balkans and the Black Sea basin (Айрапетов 2023, 298-306).

After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, Russia's position did not significantly change. Despite its victory, Russia was viewed as a serious threat, whose expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire could have negative implications for the rest of Europe. For example, Great Britain perceived a threat of Russia's expansion towards the southern part of the Black Sea basin, concurrent with Russian conquests in Central Asia. The Treaty of San Stefano, which proposed the creation of Greater Bulgaria, further influenced the decisions of European powers, as it would have *de facto* allowed Russian control over key sea routes (Kissinger 1994, 151-154). The sovereignty of Greater Bulgaria was seen by European powers as a fiction. The entire project was viewed as an intermediate step in Russian policy, with the ultimate goal of pushing the Ottomans out of Europe and seizing Constantinople. Moreover, the creation of Greater Bulgaria would likely have granted Russia access to the port of Kavala in the northern Aegean Sea, thereby securing access to the Mediterranean (LeDonne 1997, 141). At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, the Treaty of San Stefano was revised, replacing the project of Greater Bulgaria with the creation of smaller entities and preserving Ottoman authority in these regions.

During the first half of the 20th century, Russian expansionism in Eastern Europe was relatively limited. However, despite facing two major wars and a civil conflict, Russia managed to regain control over parts of Eastern Europe. Under Stalin's leadership, Moscow annexed the Baltic states, executed another partition of Poland, occupied parts of what was then Romania, and seized a portion of Western Karelia. Stalin's policies secured a significant geostrategic space that would prove practical during World War II. With its victory in World War II and

the formation of the Warsaw Pact, Moscow established dominance over this part of Europe and maintained this *status quo* until the late 20th century. Through stringent policy and repressive measures, the Soviet Union ensured that its influence in Eastern Europe persisted during the Cold War despite dissatisfaction among the populations of certain states in this region. During the Cold War, the significance of Eastern and parts of Central Europe for the Soviet Union and Moscow's political activities in this region were well-established concepts in international politics. Therefore, we will not delve extensively into this period.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a significant loss for Moscow, materially and politically. The Kremlin no longer had complete control over the resources of the former Soviet republics, and its influence in these territories and international politics diminished. While the end of the bipolar era ushered in a unipolar world order, much of Russia's post-Cold War political leadership viewed it as the beginning of multipolarity. For instance, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov argued that the new democratic multipolar order required equal participation of all states and could not be controlled by the dictate of military power of individual actors (Lo 2002, 92). Despite the "democratic" visions of international order, Russia never fundamentally relinquished its status as a great power, nor did it wish to be treated as "just another state" by other actors. Analysing Russian literature, Bobo Lo explains that Russia essentially saw the new world order as an opportunity to recreate the concept of great powers akin to those in Europe during the 19th century. In such an environment, Russia, alongside other great powers, would shape regional and global politics (Lo 2002, 92-94).

Taking into account the reflections of former Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov on international politics, it becomes evident that Russia's intentions towards the West were no less "benign" than during the Soviet Union era. Primakov's doctrine emphasised the importance of balancing American power, securing influence in the post-Soviet space, and halting NATO expansion (Rumer 2019). Essentially, the collapse of the Soviet Union did not significantly alter Russia's foreign policy or its leaders' perception of international relations. On the contrary, Russia aimed to leverage its Soviet legacy to reaffirm its status as a great power, which included asserting dominance over much of Eastern Europe and the Black Sea basin. As some analysts underscore, the doctrine was geared towards constructing a multipolar order that would undermine American power. To achieve these objectives, the doctrine envisioned forming a broad informal coalition of states seeking to counter the United States, notably involving China (Kainikara 2019).

The vision of international politics presented in the doctrine of Russia's former Foreign Minister continued to evolve in the early 21st century. Bobo Lo highlights that with Vladimir Putin coming to power, the Russian political elite viewed

European politics through the lens of a Concert of Powers, aiming to strengthen the positions of France and Germany, and above all, Russia, on the old continent. Such a distribution of power would place Russia at the forefront of European politics and remove outsiders like the United States and the United Kingdom from Europe. Lo argues that by establishing such a geopolitical framework, Russia lays the foundation for projecting power across the Eurasian landmass in the future. The essence of Russian policy lies in strengthening bilateral cooperation with specific states, which simultaneously undermines the multilateral frameworks of the EU and NATO (Lo 2015, 180-161). For Russia, NATO, which determines the direction of European security policy development, has always represented a fundamental geopolitical challenge aside from its primary security concerns (Lo 2003, 86).

### **Russian Strategic Culture and Historical Legacy**

The concept of strategic culture is relatively ambiguous and a subject of methodological debate. However, those who utilise it largely agree that strategic culture represents, explicitly or implicitly, historical patterns of behaviour by individual states when using armed force to achieve political interests (Johnston 1995a, 1). Veljko Blagojević observed that this concept is inherent in all states and their elite decision-makers who shape policy. Indeed, all political regimes, including totalitarian ones, operate in relation to and in accordance with existing emotions, metaphors, myths, ideological discourses, and “rules from the past” that constitute an integral part of political culture. These elements shape simultaneously and are also shaped by the culture, as they share common beliefs, ideas, and reference points (Благојевић 2019, 166).

Some of the more prominent definitions of strategic culture have been proposed by Jack L. Snyder and Alistair Ian Johnston. Snyder emphasises that strategic culture is permeated by history and past experiences that shape strategic discourse and individuals within a state’s strategic community. The evolution of strategic concepts in such circumstances is relatively marginal and maintains a high level of continuity with history. Therefore, Snyder highlights that decisions are not made solely based on rational thinking expected in concepts like game theory but also on cultural experience and the environment in which they operate (Snyder 1977, 9). Johnston presents similar observations, emphasising that strategic culture can explain why political elites facing similar circumstances may make different decisions. While strategic culture does not reject rationality, a fundamental assumption of realism, specific experiences, and social contexts create a unique framework of thinking that can vary from state to state (Johnston 1995b, 35).

It appears that Russian strategic culture is deeply rooted in history and geography, as evidenced by the continuity of policies and strategic interests primarily focused on maintaining great power status (Eitelhuber 2009, 2). The

influence of history on the development of strategic culture is also observed in social consciousness, which largely relies on history rather than the present (Antczak 2018, 229). The strategic culture that nurtures the cult of power and the memory of Russia as a great power shaping events in international politics is grounded in two historical factors. The first factor involves the policy of expansionism that peaked during the imperial period. The second factor is associated with the Soviet Union and the legacy that this system left behind, which still influences Russian politics today.

Russian strategic culture includes expansionism as one of its fundamental characteristics, conditioned by its specific geographic position. Expansionism is viewed as a historical necessity stemming from Russia's vulnerable geographic position and is perceived in a defensive rather than offensive sense (Borozna 2022, 24-25). For certain anthropologists, the association of expansion with enhancing security began in the 14th century, when Russian strategic culture adopted characteristics from the Mongolian. The impacts of nomadic culture blending with European elements created a unique strategic mindset where a clear distinction between offensive and defensive actions is blurred. According to anthropologist Emilio Willems, there is no better way to counteract hostile actions than by subjugating the adversary (Soundhaus 2006, 29).

John LeDonne (2004, 139) argues that the expansion of the Russian Empire during the 18th century significantly influenced the formation of a strategic culture that prioritises conquest and power, presenting them as legitimising factors for authority. Lev Gudkov also spoke about the importance of expansionism and empire-building. This Russian sociologist believes that the concept of the empire is equated with vast territory and the projection of power, which provides a strong sense of respect and greatness for the ordinary Russian person. The collective consciousness rooted in such premises greatly contributes to the strengthening of social pride, which has often been subjected to chronic humiliation, failures, and poverty in the past (Khvostunova 2021).

The desire for power expansion is viewed as a matter of prestige in Russian society, and a "positive" characteristic of authority can be seen in how the people perceive individual rulers. Stalin, who elevated the Soviet Union to the status of a superpower, is considered one of the main leaders in Russian history despite the tyranny that accompanied his regime (Lo 2015, 22).<sup>4</sup> On the other

---

<sup>4</sup> Stalin, as observed by Lo, is not portrayed in Russia as a tyrant directly responsible for the deaths of numerous individuals and the creator of an inherently unsustainable system. On the contrary, Stalin is seen as a historical figure who brought glory to Russia and positioned the country as a superpower. A critical examination of the life and work of Joseph Stalin, grounded in historical facts, is often interpreted as an attempt to revise Russian history and an attack on national identity. Confronting the dark side of Soviet history is presented by the Kremlin as an effort by foreign powers to harm the state.

hand, Gorbachev, who secured many personal freedoms and rights that Russian citizens enjoy today but also directly participated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union, is regarded as one of the poorer leaders in the history of this state (Abalov and Inozemtsev 2020, 6-7).

Alexander Abalov and Vladislav Inozemtsev offer a coherent explanation as to why the issue of expansion is deeply ingrained in Russian strategic culture. Unlike European powers that evolved into empires over time, Russia was created as an empire from its inception. This distinction is crucial because it shaped the way Russia developed and formed the foundation of its national identity. Specifically, Russia did not have the option to separate its colonies from the central part of the state, thus creating a distinction between a core, which served as the basis for the development of the national state, and the colonial part of the empire, which eventually became sovereign, as happened with European powers over time. The process of expansion towards the east and west, including the settlement of vast territories such as Siberia, the Urals, and the Far East, began before Russia had fully outlined its national state. As highlighted by Abalov and Inozemtsev, the intensive expansion of territory also posed one of the main challenges contributing to Russia's struggle to form a national state throughout its history. The identity of this "new" state and its society were primarily based not on a shared history but on the extent of territory it could appropriate (Abalov and Inozemtsev 2020, 1-4). In conclusion, these authors argue that Russia became an empire out of necessity rather than choice, which serves as a cautionary note for other states when engaging in policy with Russia (Abalov and Inozemtsev 2020, 7).

Dmitry Adamsky explains that the continuity of Russia's concept as an imperial power largely relies on historical experience ingrained in the political discourse of Russian authorities (past, present, and likely future). Emphasising this continuity, despite the challenges that have plagued the state over centuries, reflects on strategic culture and the development of state strategy. Adamsky argues that the Russian approach to strategy is essentially holistic, viewing strategy as a continuous struggle with opponents on both domestic and foreign fronts, without distinct boundaries between periods of war and peace. The only distinction lies in the intensity with which the strategy is implemented. The rivalry with adversaries, which drives the development of the strategy, is unquestioned and often seen as a prolonged, continuous process (Adamsky 2024, 61). This perspective on Russian strategy, as well as its strategic culture, is significant because it largely confirms suspicions that the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union did not fundamentally signify the end of the struggle with Washington and Western powers for Moscow. In other words, while the altered international circumstances at the end of the 20th century influenced the intensity of the struggle, as Adamsky discusses,

they did not bring about an end to the rivalry that represents a deeper historical continuity in Russian strategic culture.

The political legacy of the Soviet Union is another significant factor that influences contemporary Russian strategic culture. Tracey German highlights that, after the Cold War, Russian strategic culture did not undergo fundamental changes apart from shedding the Communist ideological dimension prevalent during the Soviet era. Moreover, she argues that this historical continuity has been further reinforced by the current political elite in the Kremlin, which matured during the Cold War (German 2020, 6). For the Russian political elite, history serves as a cornerstone upon which the modern Russian state rests.

Graeme Herd emphasises the critical political function of history in Russia, evident in the actions and statements of individuals within the Russian government and various institutions (Herd 2022, 53-55). According to Herd, the Russian leadership of the past two decades has invested considerable effort and time in revitalising and consolidating political patterns that enabled the Soviets to position the state as one of the world's foremost powers. This political approach involves stringent population control, invoking significant historical events, and perpetuating external threats to a level of paranoia. This strategy, in turn, frees up space for enhancing the armed forces and pursuing policies orientated towards some form of expansion (Herd 2022, 81-102). Overall, the persistence of Soviet-era political strategies and historical narratives underscores the enduring influence of the Soviet legacy on contemporary Russian strategic culture, shaping both domestic governance and international relations.

During the Cold War, Soviet strategic thought was characterised by a monolithic structure deeply integrated into the politics of the Soviet Union. The goals and ideas guiding the policy of this communist giant often had a strong military backdrop, with the armed forces seen as a crucial instrument of state strategy. Yitzhak Klein (1991, 16) observes that Soviet methods of strategic planning had a pronounced offensive dimension. Moscow unmistakably emphasised the dynamic use of the armed forces and the application of force to achieve political goals through war, with the ultimate outcome being the destruction of enemy regimes and territorial occupation. Soviet strategic culture viewed the world through the lens of zero-sum games, where cooperation with other actors served to satisfy their own interests rather than seeking win-win solutions. This mindset was present during Stalin's and Lenin's eras, where politics was seen as a struggle for survival and class warfare (Skak 2024, 165). Analysing Stalin's speeches reveals a strong influence of Darwinism on Soviet political thought. Specifically, when discussing the state and its position relative to other actors, Stalin highlighted that those who lag behind inevitably become victims (Leites 1951, 79). George Kennan warned about such attitudes in Soviet strategy in his famous telegram, noting that Soviet policy followed the "logic of

force” and adjusted its course of action accordingly. In other words, Moscow would not engage in risky military ventures unless the adversary clearly demonstrated the political will and necessary material capacities to resist (Kennan, 1946). Thus, Soviet strategic culture during the Cold War was marked by a militarised approach where the use of force and military means played a central role in achieving political objectives, reflecting a worldview rooted in power dynamics and a zero-sum mentality.

Bobo Lo argues that the continuity of Soviet and Russian strategic culture rests on the relationships between major powers, which fundamentally did not change after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The relations between the United States and Russia in the early 21st century, despite attempts at “resetting”, have not significantly deviated from the patterns established in the previous century (Lo 2015, 172).<sup>5</sup> After the Cold War, the Russian political elite continued to nurture attitudes that shaped the foreign policy strategy of the Soviet Union. The Russian vision of multipolarity was not rooted in a genuine idea of a multipolar world but rather in the concert of different powers that would collectively oppose Washington (Lo 2002, 24-25). Lo (2015, 51), like previous authors, observes that the thinking of the Russian political elite is based on the premise of a zero-sum game in relation to the United States. In other words, what is detrimental to Washington, in most cases, would be beneficial to Moscow.

In the conclusion of our analysis, it is essential to address the personified political phenomenon of Vladimir Putin. For President Putin, Russia has always represented a great power. Russia, according to his view, does not need to prove itself as a major power because this status naturally belongs to it based on its vast potential, culture, and history (Herd 2022, 30). As the formal and *de facto* leader of Russian politics for the past 25 years, President Putin has had a far-reaching impact on various spheres of societal, political, and economic life. The political discourse under Putin’s rule tends to establish a direct connection with the imperial legacy of the Russian Empire, often relying on myths to justify current geopolitical interests. As noted by various authors, this discourse stretches from Kievan Rus through the Grand Duchy of Moscow to the imperial and Soviet eras. In this manner, Moscow legalises spheres of influence as part of its historical legacy while downplaying other historical circumstances that are

---

<sup>5</sup> The “reset” policy was interpreted by Moscow as a sign of Washington’s weakness and an opportunity to gain certain concessions from the United States in various areas of Russian foreign policy. In other words, Moscow viewed the desire for better relations with Russia as an acknowledgement of its power and great influence by Washington. However, as Bobo Lo points out, this was not the case. Although the Obama administration sought to improve relations with Russia, it was not prepared to make any serious concessions that would satisfy Russia’s geopolitical aspirations. Essentially, the United States did not perceive Russia as a power of equal capacity.

less advantageous. Herd highlights that, through his political actions, President Putin has deeply influenced Russian strategic culture, making him a systems-forming figure who shapes the system itself (Herd 2022, 14). Therefore, Vladimir Putin's leadership has not only reinforced Russia's self-perception as a great power but also embedded a narrative that links contemporary geopolitical actions to a historical continuum.

Such political attitudes and narratives have been increasingly proliferating since the onset of the invasion of Ukraine. An article by President Putin published in 2021, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians", further consolidates the historical narrative of Russian great power status. Although the article resonates with a benevolent tone regarding the centuries-old camaraderie between the Russian and Ukrainian populace, it suggests, in essence, that Ukrainian state sovereignty cannot exist without Russian consent. Wanting to be recognised as a great power and secure regional dominance is an important aspect of Russian strategic culture. Elias Götz and Jørgen Staun (2022, 485-486) found numerous examples of such behaviour in speeches and writings of Russian state officials. For example, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov argued that Russia can exist within its present borders only as a great power. Both President Yeltsin and Putin strived for this status and claimed that Russia represents one of the power poles in world politics.

In such political discourse, the Ukrainian question prevails as the most important aspect of the Russian claim for greatness. Historically, Ukraine has become an inseparable part of Russian state identity and strategic culture. Officials such as Sergey Kortunov, presidential adviser during the Yeltsin era, said that Russia cannot expect to be a great power without a strategic alliance with Ukraine. For others, Ukraine is seen as an integral part of the Eurasia project that provides the link between the continents and a gate for Russia into Europe (Götz and Staun 2022, 486-487). Given the importance of the Eurasian project for Russia's achieving a sustaining great power status, Ukraine has again become the centrepiece of the puzzle (Krickovic and Pellicciari 2021). Kiev's departure from the Russian sphere of influence was perceived as a cardinal sin on numerous levels, including historical and cultural. After Maidan in 2014, Ukrainian cooperation with the West became the centrepiece of Russian foreign policy. The prevailing narrative was that, from a historical perspective, such political events are dangerous for Russia and constitute a national security threat (German 2020).

However, as Götz and Staun (2022, 490-491) point out, the Ukrainian issue is not strictly a security issue. By pulling Ukraine away from Russia, the West is essentially stripping Russia of its great power status. For the West, Ukraine is a geopolitical entity, while for Moscow, this state gives global significance. Returning to the previous article President Putin published, we can see how

granting sovereignty to “lesser” countries is a mark of great power. By retaining Ukraine in the Russian sphere of influence, Moscow essentially protects its self-understanding image of great power (Gotz 2017, 237). The country, in many ways, represents a crucible of Russian state identity, history, and strategic culture while, at the same time, providing Moscow with a gateway for projecting power and influence into Europe. The invasion of Ukraine, despite numerous miscalculations, is understandable from the Russian vantage point and is in line with the broader historical development of its strategic culture.

While the previous analysis of Russian strategic culture may give the impression that the authors hold deterministic views rejecting the possibility of change in this sphere, this was not their aim, nor do the authors believe such a stance is correct. While dismissing the possibility of change in strategic culture would be erroneous, radical transformations in this area are relatively rare. Strategic culture encompasses a set of values, behavioural norms, and beliefs historically rooted in and accepted by society. Certainly, there is a degree of flexibility, but changes that occur often represent a complementary enhancement of existing strategic culture rather than its displacement from its historical foundation. We contend that John Duffield’s observations regarding political culture, as a phenomenon that slowly and infrequently accepts changes, largely apply to strategic culture as well (Duffield 1998, 23).

### **The Decline of Russia’s Power, Russia as an Ally against China, and the Idealistic Approach of the American Administration**

Examining the decline of a state requires caution, as it involves assessments based on a multitude of variables that may or may not accurately reflect the true state of a nation and its people. Moreover, portraying a country as a declining power can often be a subjective judgement rooted in the author’s perceptions and the indicators they consider crucial. Can anyone truly assert that Russia fared worse in the second decade of the 21st century compared to the first, or perhaps the final, decade of the 20th century? Furthermore, even if Russia is indeed a declining power, the process of decline is not guaranteed and can be reversed, as noted by Dragan Simić and Dragan Živojinović (2010).

Declining powers, despite their problems, can still influence international politics and even pose a threat to certain actors. Take the Habsburg Monarchy, for example. This state was under pressure from various forces for centuries. After the War of Spanish Succession, the Habsburg Monarchy definitively entered a phase of decline that lasted until the end of World War I, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the final successor of this European power, ceased to exist. Despite the difficult geopolitical situations Vienna repeatedly faced, the Danubian Empire managed to survive and exert significant influence on political

developments both in Europe and beyond. As Wes Mitchell (2018, 4-5) points out, considering the duration of its existence, the number of successful wars and alliances, as well as the enormous influence the Habsburg Monarchy wielded during its time, this European power must be viewed as geopolitically successful.

Other states have also faced similar circumstances but managed to maintain their positions. For example, the Ottoman Empire experienced a long period of decline while simultaneously exerting strong influence across the Balkans and the Middle East. Furthermore, the sick man on the Bosphorus was viewed as a key player in the region, guaranteeing a balance of power. The United States has faced similar analyses of decline for decades, yet no other country in the world, perhaps except China, has come close to matching its quantum of power. Ultimately, if Russia is indeed in a phase of decline, this should not lead to Washington's indifference on the matter. On the contrary, as Mearsheimer notes in his concluding reflections in the renowned work "Back to the Future", accelerating the decline of an adversary is in the interest of every power. It is difficult to expect that states will not seize the opportunity to hasten the downfall of a rival when circumstances in international politics allow for it (Mearsheimer 1990, 53).

The notion that Russia should align with the West against China is mainly a product of neorealist thinking rather than a reflection of actual political circumstances. Over the past twenty years, Russia and China have managed to forge strong ties, not so much due to the unconsidered actions of the United States in Eastern Europe but rather because of the different visions of international order that Beijing and Moscow share in contrast to Washington. Robert Kagan has observed that the fundamental problem in Western cooperation with Russia is based on a mistaken perception of the post-Cold War order. While disputes occur over various weapons systems and specific political manoeuvres by individual actors, the primary reason for Russia's difficulty in cooperating with the West and its inclination towards revisionism is its dissatisfaction with the overall shape of the international order that emerged after the Cold War (Kagan 2007).

In the early 21st century, Moscow and Beijing developed extensive cooperation in various fields such as economy, energy, diplomacy, and military affairs. Although collaboration and the strengthening of a major power in close proximity might seem like an imprudent strategy from a neorealist perspective, certain theoretical approaches within the realist school can explain Moscow's behaviour. If Russia is a dissatisfied state, as Kagan suggests, it could be positioned between the so-called "jackals" and "wolves" in Randall Schweller's (1994, 100-105) analogy of revisionist powers. The behaviour of such states is relatively similar, with differences in the intensity of aggressive policies and the willingness to accept greater risks. While it is difficult to describe Russia as a

wolf state, a combination of dissatisfaction with the post-Cold War order and fear of further loss of power might drive the country to adopt a policy that entails higher risk and potentially greater reward. If Russia is indeed a declining power, as Mearsheimer argues, Moscow has equal chances of cooperating with China as with the West. Furthermore, consulting the theoretical concept presented by Joshua Shiffrin (2018, 13-41), Russia holds real strategic value for China, which suggests that Beijing is likely to exert more effort to keep Russia on its side.<sup>6</sup>

Schweller's theoretical concept of underbalancing can also clarify the cooperation between China and Russia. States may choose not to balance against an actor whose accumulation of power is dangerous and whose intentions are aggressive. Schweller (2006, 10) attributes this to the internal politics of states, the functioning of elites, how politicians calculate external threats, and the potential costs of balancing for the state and the regime in power. Opportunistic behaviour is a significant aspect here, where the ruling authorities assess at various levels whether it is worthwhile to balance against a potential threat, considering both external and internal politics. Underbalancing an obvious threat for potential gains has historical precedent in Russia's case. The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany ended poorly for the Soviet Union, although it initially allowed Moscow to gain immediate control over parts of Central and Eastern Europe.

Ultimately, claims that mistakes in American foreign policy arise from idealistic inclinations of the state administration are not entirely accurate. In other words, United States foreign politics are governed by false illusions of promoting liberal values while neglecting real strategic interests (Mearsheimer 2018). It is difficult to speak of American foreign policy as being solely based on *realpolitik*. Even during the Cold War, when the system's structure required great powers to behave according to realist principles, Washington did not abandon the principles of democracy and liberalism. Moreover, the ideological framework of policy can serve to achieve *realpolitik* objectives. The Marshall Plan is a prime example of such a policy. The plan aimed to maintain a favourable balance of power on the continent by providing financial aid to

---

<sup>6</sup> The theoretical concept proposed by Shiffrin also provides insight into why Russia is more inclined to cooperate with China than the United States. As this author highlights, rising powers, despite having aggressive intentions towards declining powers, occasionally see benefits in them and reasons to assist rather than hasten their decline. In this context, China, as an ascending power, has an interest in collaborating with Russia to further weaken the U.S. Moreover, Russia holds greater strategic value for China than it does for the United States. The recent events in Ukraine and the seemingly tacit support China extends to Russia align with the strategy of bolstering that rising powers implement towards declining partners.

European countries on the condition that their regimes adhere to democratic and liberal principles, thereby sidelining communist parties from power. The architects of the Marshall Plan skillfully exploited the unfavourable position of Europeans to secure their influence on the old continent while simultaneously curbing potential Soviet ideological expansion (Leffler 1988, 277-306). The promotion of ideology served both superpowers as a means of *realpolitik*, a way to constrain the opponent's influence. As Melvyn Leffler (1988, 283) points out, one of the ideas behind the Marshall Plan was to draw Eastern European states into cooperation with the rest of the continent, thereby pulling them away from the Kremlin's orbit.

Sebastian Rosato presents intriguing observations regarding the structure of the international system and its impact on the ideological aspects of states. In his monograph, Rosato offers a series of compelling arguments demonstrating that the ideological beliefs and ideas underpinning the European Union are fundamentally based on realist principles and a sense of threat perceived from the Soviet Union at that time (Rosato 2011). Although we cannot fully apply this analogy to the current situation, the facts Rosato presents suggest that the ideological framework serves more as a "wrapping paper" for strategic interests from which states cannot deviate. Thus, American engagement in Ukraine should not be seen as an ideological issue but rather as an opportunity to remove a rival from the international arena (Mitchell, 2023; Grygiel and Mitchell, 2024).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The analysis of historical events in Eastern and Central Europe reveals that Russia has often conducted military campaigns aimed not merely at defending the state but at conquering and controlling territory. The principles guiding the policies and strategies of the Empire were rooted in power projection, which became undeniable when Russia attempted to expand towards the Black Sea. The situation was not markedly different in the last century, as the Soviet Union invested substantial resources to breach the American barrier in Eurasia and extend its influence to other parts of the world. Following the Cold War, despite the significant problems and challenges faced by Russian society, the Kremlin did not abandon this part of Europe. Moreover, the architects of Russian foreign policy viewed Western powers as rivals, with the goal of restoring the state to its historical status as a great power.

The analysis of Russian strategic culture reveals that the outcomes of Russian policy are not solely attributed to a series of historical circumstances. Rather, contemporary Russian strategic culture has deep-seated origins, possibly tracing back to the mediaeval era during the Mongol invasions. The

development of the Russian Empire differed notably from that of other European powers, as the expansion into new territories often involved direct integration with the central core of the state. Furthermore, the policies of the Soviet Union largely perpetuated this approach, seeking ideological justification under communist rule. The strategic doctrine formulated during this period typically exhibited an offensive posture with a clearly identified adversary, a stance that has persisted beyond the Cold War era. The continuity of Russian strategic culture suggests that systemic changes in the international order do not necessarily lead to changes in the behaviour of states and the policies of great powers.

Based on the aforementioned points, we consider Mearsheimer's hypothesis regarding Ukraine to be not entirely accurate. Specifically, historical circumstances and strategic culture, which have developed in parallel and in accord with them, primarily indicate a strong continuity in Russian policies and strategies in the Eastern and Central European regions. It is difficult to expect that not expanding NATO in these areas would lead to a different outcome in Russian relations with the West. Moreover, Russia would likely strive to fully reclaim its sphere of influence, which, on the one hand, undermines American efforts during the Cold War while, on the other, draws Russia closer to creating a regional hegemony, as discussed by Schroeder. Such a scenario would be unacceptable according to the theoretical framework advocated by Mearsheimer, which posits that existing regional hegemonies do not want to see similar power capabilities elsewhere in the world (Mearsheimer 2013, 88). Whether Russia truly lacks the capacity to revert to its old borders is also debatable, which, at the very least, does not mean that Moscow would refrain from attempting such a policy. Considering its evolving relationship with China over the past decades and its perception of the post-Cold War order, we cannot assert with certainty that Moscow perceives a clear threat in Beijing's policies, nor would it necessarily accept Western offers aimed at containing this power.

Mearsheimer's perspectives on Russia and its engagement in Ukraine are partially correct; however, they overlook historical context and other realistic explanations that suggest alternative directions in Russian policy. Moreover, an analysis steeped in extensive criticism of the American administration and its policies guided by liberal principles also demands an understanding of Russian policy and the strategic culture upon which it is grounded. The absence of Russian strategic culture in Mearsheimer's analyses creates a misguided impression that Washington's current rivals are rational actors liberated from the burdens of history and ideology when formulating foreign policy. Conversely, strategic culture offers a framework that addresses the limitations of the realist approach, which prioritises rationality while often overlooking other critical factors and circumstances.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT:** This paper was developed as part of the Ministry of Defense project: “Security Challenges of the Western Balkan Countries within the European Security Paradigm”, No. ИСИ/ДХ1/24-25, conducted by the research team of Strategic Research Institute and external collaborators during the period 2024-2025.

## References

- Abalov, Alexander, and Vladislav Inozemtsev. 2020. “Russia: The Everlasting Empire?”. *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 13 (3): 329-338
- Aksan, Virginia H. 2007. *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged*. London: Routledge.
- Almond, Ian. 2009. *Two Faiths, One Banner: When Muslims Marched with Christians across Europe’s Battlegrounds*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Antczak, Anna. 2018. “Russia’s Strategic Culture: Prisoner of Imperial History?”. *Athenaeum* 60: 223-242.
- Badem, Candan. 2010. *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Baumgart, Winfried. 2020. *The Crimean War 1853-1856, Second Edition*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Borozna, Angela. 2022. *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy Assertiveness*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bushkovitch, Paul. 2006. “Peter the Great and the Northern War“. In: *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume II Imperial Russia 1689-1917*, edited by Dominic Lieven, 487-503. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, Norman. 2005. *God’s Playground: A history of Poland in two Volumes - Volume I The Origins to 1795*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Duffield, John S. 1998. *World Power Forsaken: Political Culture, International Institutions and German Security Policy after Unification*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Eitelhuber, Norbert. 2009. “The Russian Bear: Russian Strategic Culture and What it Implies for the West“. *Connections* 9 (1): 1-28.
- German, Tracey. 2020. “Harnessing protest potential: Russian strategic culture and the colored revolutions“. *Contemporary Security Policy* 41 (4): 541-563.
- Gotz, Elias. 2017. “Putin, the State, and War: The Causes of Russia’s Near Abroad Assertion Revisited“. *International Studies Review* 19 (2): 228-253.

- Götz, Elias, and Jørgen Staun. 2022. "Why Russia attacked Ukraine: Strategic culture and radicalized narratives". *Contemporary Security Policy* 43 (3): 482-497.
- Grygiel, Jakub, and Wess A. Mitchell. 2024. "5 Rules for Superpowers Facing Multiple Conflicts", *Foreign Policy*, February 12, 2024. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/12/us-ukraine-middle-east-taiwan-geopolitics-strategy-conflict-russia-china/>.
- Hatton, Ragnhild. 1971. "Charles Xii And The Great Northern War". In: *The New Cambridge Modern History Volume VI: The Rise Of Great Britain And Russia*, edited by J.S. Bromley, 648-680. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herd, Graeme P. 2022. *Understanding Russian Strategic Behavior: Imperial Strategic Culture and Putin's Operational Code*. London: Routledge.
- Johnston, Alastair Iain. 1995a. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Johnston, Alastair Iain. 1995b. "Thinking about Strategic Culture". *International Security* 19 (4): 32-64.
- Kagan, Robert. 2007. "End of Dreams, Return of History International rivalry and American leadership", *Hoover Institution*, July 17, 2007. <https://www.hoover.org/research/end-dreams-return-history>.
- Kainikara, Sanu. 2019. "Russia's Return To The World Stage: The Primakov Doctrine – Analysis", *Eurasia Review*, November 5, 2019. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/05112019-russias-return-to-the-world-stage-the-primakov-doctrine-analysis/>.
- Kamenskii, Alexander. 2019. "Catherine the Great's Foreign Policy Reconsidered". *Journal of Modern Russian History and Historiography* 12 (1): 169-187.
- Kennan, George. 1946. "Telegram", *The National Security Archive The George Washington University*. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.
- Khvostunova, Olga. 2021. "Lev Gudkov: "The unity of the empire in Russia is maintained by three institutions: the school, the army, and the police", *Institute of Modern Russia*, May 3, 2021. <https://imrussia.org/en/opinions/3278-lev-gudkov-%E2%80%9Cthe-unity-of-the-empire-in-russia-is-maintained-by-three-institutions-the-school,-the-army-and-the-police-%E2%80%9D>.
- Kissinger, Henry. 1994. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Klein, Yitzhak. 1991. "A theory of strategic culture". *Comparative Strategy* 10 (1): 3-23.

- Krickovic, Andrej, and Igor Pellicciari. 2021. "From "Greater Europe" to "Greater Eurasia": Status concerns and the evolution of Russia's approach to alignment and regional integration". *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 12 (1): 86-99.
- LeDonne, John P. 1997. *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700-1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- LeDonne, John P. 2004. *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650–1831*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leffler, Melvyn P. 1988. "The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan". *Diplomatic History* 12 (3): 277-306.
- Leites, Nathan. 1951. *The Operational Code of Politburo*. RAND Corporation. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/commercial\\_books/CB104-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/commercial_books/CB104-1.html)
- Lo, Bobo. 2002. *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era Reality, Illusion and Mythmaking*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lo, Bobo. 2003. *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy*. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Lo, Bobo. 2015. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 1990. "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War". *International Security* 15 (1): 5-56.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2013. "Structural Realism in International Relations". In: *Theories Discipline and Diversity*, edited by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith, 71-88. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2014. "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin". *Foreign Affairs* 93 (5): 77-89.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2018. *The Great Delusion Liberal Dreams and International Realities*. New Heaven: Yale University Press.
- Mitchell, Wess A. 2018. *The Grand Strategy of Hapsburg Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mitchell, Wess A. 2023. "A Drawn-Out Ukraine War Should Not Change U.S. Strategy", *Foreign Policy*, June 14, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/14/ukraine-war-russia-china-geopolitics-us-strategy-pacific-asia/>.
- Oliker, Olga and Tanya Charlick-Paley. 2002. *Assessing Russia's Decline Trends and Implications for the United States and the U.S. Air Force*. RAND Corporation. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1442.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1442.html)
- Oxenstierna, Susanne. 2016. "Russia's defense spending and the economic decline". *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 7 (1): 60-70.

- Ragsdale, Hugh. 2006. "Russian foreign policy, 1725–1815". In: *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume II Imperial Russia 1689-1917*, edited by Dominic Lieven, 504-529. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosato, Sebastian. 2011. *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Rumer, Eugene. 2019. "The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action", *Carnegie Endowment of International Peace*, June 5, 2019. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/05/primakov-not-gerasimov-doctrine-in-action-pub-79254>.
- Schroeder, Paul W. 1996. *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schweller, Randall L. 1994. "Bandwagoning for Profit Bringing the Revisionist State Back In". *International Security* 19 (1): 72-107.
- Schweller, Randall L. 2006. *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Scott, Hamish M. 2001. *The Emergence of Eastern Powers 1756-1775*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, Hamish M. 2006. *The Birth of a Great Power System 1740–1815*. London: Routledge.
- Shiffrinson, Joshua Itzkowitz R. 2018. *Rising Titans, Falling Giants How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Shlapentokh, Vladimir. 2006. "Russia's demographic decline and the public reaction". *Europe-Asia Studies* 57 (7): 951-968.
- Simić, Dragan R. i Dragan Živojinović. 2010. "Od Sputnjika do Lenova: Šest talasa američkog deklinizma posle Drugog svetskog rata". *Godišnjak Fakulteta političkih nauka* 4 (4): 269-290.
- Skak, Mette. 2024. "Russian Strategic Culture: A Critical Survey of the Literature". In: *Routledge Handbook Of Strategic Culture*, edited by Kerry M. Kartchner, Briana D. Bowen and Jeannie L. Johnson, 164-178. London: Routledge.
- Snyder, Jack L. 1977. *The Soviet Strategic Culture Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*. RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2154.html>
- Soundhaus, Lawrence. 2006. *Strategic Culture and Ways of War*. London: Routledge.
- Taylor, Alan J. 1955. *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe: 1848-1918*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Waltz, Kenneth. 2001. *The Man, State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Wimbush, Enders S., and Elizabeth M. Portale. 2017. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation.
- Adamsky, Dmitry. 2024. *The Russian Way of Deterrence: Strategic Culture, Coercion, and War*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Ајрапетов, Олег Рудолфович. 2023. *Спољна политика руске империје 1801–1914 Том I*. Андрићград – Вишеград: Андрићев институт.
- Благојевић, Вељко. 2019. “Стратешка култура и национална безбедност”. *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке* 170 (2): 163-178.

#### **ISTORIJA IMPERIJE I STRATEŠKA KULTURA RUSIJE: OSVRT NA MIRŠAJMEROV RAD O UKRAJINI**

*Apstrakt:* U radu ispitujemo argumente koje je Džon Miršajmer predstavio u svom radu o Ukrajinskoj krizi. Rukovodeći se principima neorealizma Miršajmer Rusiju suštinski predstavlja kao silu u opadanju koja je primorana da se brani usled nepromišljene politike Vašingtona. Politika rukovođena idealima liberalizma, a ne principima realpolitike vodila je do ekspanzije NATO saveza u delove Evrope koji predstavljaju rusku zonu interesa, što je na kraju rezultiralo sukobom u Ukrajini. Iako se slažemo sa jednim delom argumentacije koju je Miršajmer predstavio, smatramo da postoje određene manjkavosti koje utiču na stvaranje pogrešne slike o Rusiji i njenoj politici u regionima centralne i istočne Evrope. Naša analiza fokusirana je na aspekte ruske istorije na ovim prostorima i razvoju njene strateške kulture. Na ovim osnovama dolazimo do saznanja da je ruska strateška kultura utemeljena na istorijskom iskustvu i u velikoj meri sledi principe ofanzive strategije. Njena politika u Ukrajini kao i na prostoru istočne i centralne Evrope predstavlja istorijski kontinuitet ruskog vojnog delovanja koji nije reakcija na politiku Vašingtona, već je deo šire strateške kulture i načina na koji Moskva formuliše spoljnu politiku u vidu međunarodno okruženje.

*Ključne reči:* međunarodni odnosi; Rusija; strategija; strateška kultura; Sjedinjene Države.

## WHEN THE SHIFTING INTERNATIONAL ORDER HITS THE DOMESTIC AGENCY: THE CASE OF TURKEY AND THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

Birgül DEMİRTAŞ,<sup>1</sup> Zuhâl YEŞİLYURT GÜNDÜZ<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Turkish foreign policy has been attracting ever-increasing attention in the academic literature as the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government has been pursuing proactive, multilateral, and flexible international relations, including many shifting partnerships, fluctuations, and contradictions. Turkey's attitude towards the recent Russian-Ukrainian conflict presents an important case to deconstruct the main components of the AKP government's foreign policy under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan towards a flashpoint in the neighbourhood. This article aims to explore Ankara's approach to the war between Russia and Ukraine based on the interaction of changes in global structure and domestic politics. It argues that the shifting global system, accompanied by the new identity construction of the AKP, has played a determining role in the formulation of Turkish foreign policy towards the conflict based on balancing and pragmatism. The article also concludes that Turkish foreign policy provides an important case study to understand how *sui generis* middle powers have been responding to global conflicts in a changing global system.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:  
8 September 2024  
Revised:  
9 October 2024  
Accepted:  
13 October 2024

### KEYWORDS

Turkish Foreign  
Policy; Russia;  
Ukraine; *Sui Generis*  
Middle Powers;  
Identity;  
Pragmatism; Global  
Conflicts; Black Sea

**Cite this article as:** Demirtaş, Birgül, and Zuhâl Yeşilyurt Gündüz. 2024. "When the Shifting International Order Hits the Domestic Agency: The Case of Turkey and Russian-Ukrainian Conflict". *The Review of International Affairs* LXXV (1192): 335–359. [https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe\\_ria.2024.75.1192.2](https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_ria.2024.75.1192.2)

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr., Department of Political Science and International Relations, TED University, Part-time Lecturer, Ankara; Migration Research Foundation, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: [birgul.demirtas@gmail.com](mailto:birgul.demirtas@gmail.com), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3214-1081>

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Dr., Department of Political Science and International Relations, TED University, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: [zuhal.gunduz@tedu.edu.tr](mailto:zuhal.gunduz@tedu.edu.tr), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6825-423X>

### Introduction<sup>3</sup>

“When we strengthen our relations with the East, we will also seek ways to improve our rooted relationship with the West... Only if Turkey simultaneously improves its relations with the East and the West can it be a powerful, prosperous, respected, and influential country. Any other path will harm Turkey, not benefit it, and will take it out of the equation. Therefore, as some people suggest, we do not have to choose between the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the European Union. On the contrary, we need to develop our relations with these and other institutions on a ‘win-win’ basis”.<sup>4</sup> President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech at the Naval War College Diploma and Flag Handover Ceremony of the National Defence University, August 31, 2024. (Akbulut Yazar et al. 2024).

“The East or the West?” That has become an important question in Turkey’s history of modernisation, starting from the Ottoman era. Which countries/regions should be the priority of the Ottoman/Turkish decision-makers? Which countries can become an inspiring role model for the country’s development and modernisation? Which countries can the Ottoman Empire/Turkey trust? What should be the orientation of its policies in the realm of domestic politics and economics? Especially from the 19th century onwards, the leading cadres of the country have been trying to find an appropriate alignment for the country and an accompanying identity for the Turkish nation.

“The East or the West?” is not just a question of finding a model for the development and modernisation of the country. It is also a question with important implications for the country’s foreign policy. With which countries can Turkey establish partnerships/alliances? Which countries are Turkey’s “true friends”? Which countries can Turkey rely upon if it faces any security threat? These questions have been answered differently by Turkey’s leaders at different periods. The answers to these questions have helped Turkish decision-makers formulate Turkey’s international relations path for many decades.

<sup>3</sup> In deciding about the title of the article, the authors have been inspired by the following paper: “When Europe hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change”, published by Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse in the *European Integration Online Papers*, Vol. 14, No 15 (2000).

<sup>4</sup> The original text is as follows: “Doğu ile ilişkilerimizi güçlendirirken Batı ile köklü işbirliğimizi ilerletmenin yollarını arayacağız... Türkiye, Doğu ve Batı ile ilişkilerini eş zamanlı bir şekilde geliştirirse güçlü, müreffeh, itibarlı ve etkin bir ülke olabilir. Bunun dışında her yol Türkiye’ye fayda değil, zarar verir, denklem dışına atar. Dolayısıyla biz birilerinin iddia ettiği gibi Avrupa Birliği ile Şangay İşbirliği Teşkilatı arasında bir tercih yapmak mecburiyetinde değiliz. Tam aksine, hem bunlarla hem de diğer kuruluşlarla ilişkilerimizi ‘kazan-kazan’ temelinde geliştirmek durumundayız” (Akbulut Yazar et al. 2024).

The recent news about Turkey's membership application to the BRICS+ in September 2024 revived those discussions. The international press reported that Turkey formally applied for membership at the BRICS+ "to bolster its global influence and forge new ties beyond its traditional Western allies" (Hacaoglu and Kozok 2024). The spokesperson of the AKP government, Ömer Çelik, did not deny the claim, stating that Turkey's wish to become a member of the BRICS has been clear (Çelik 2024). This new information reignited the discussion on Turkey's primary global alignment. And, once again, the question "the East or the West?" has resurfaced.

Another occasion to discuss Turkey's foreign policy orientation has been the invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime that started on February 24, 2022. Turkey has been implementing a policy of "double balance"<sup>5</sup> between Russia and Ukraine on the one hand and between Russia and the West on the other hand. Although Turkey has criticised the Russian invasion and supported Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity from the very beginning of the conflict, it has not joined the sanctions of the European Union (EU). It has maintained its dialogue with both Russian and Ukrainian leadership and tried to mediate between them to achieve a ceasefire.

This article aims to explore Turkey's approach to the Russian-Ukrainian war. Why does Turkey prefer to pursue the policy of double balance? What is the impact of the international structure and domestic agency in the formulation of AKP's foreign policy? In searching for answers to those questions, the article benefits from primary official sources, newspapers, and academic literature, as well as from interviews with Russian and Ukrainian migrants in Turkey, the representatives of Crimean Tatar organisations, and a former Ukrainian diplomat. Besides using primary and secondary literature, it is crucial to use fieldwork. Shortly after the Putin regime invaded Ukraine, the authors conducted interviews with Ukrainians and Russians living in Turkey. Some of them have been living here for years, and some have fled from the war. For the authors, it is important to listen to the voices of people affected by the decisions of these states' leaders. To obtain a more comprehensive picture, the most current interview was conducted with a Turkish bureaucrat.

The article argues that Turkey's approach to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict can be explained by the combination of international and domestic factors. The changing dynamics of the international system have been accompanied by the construction of a new foreign policy orientation by the AKP based on multiple

---

<sup>5</sup> Isachenko uses the concept of "double balance" to refer to Turkish policy in the Black Sea. She states that Turkey implements a policy of double balance in the Black Sea between littoral and non-littoral states on the one hand and between Russia and itself on the other (Isachenko 2023, 6).

identities, flexible orientation, and sacralisation of Turkish history. An identity of exceptionalism was constructed under the AKP elite (Yanık 2023, 640-657) that also affected the parameters of Turkey's international relations.

There have been some tectonic changes in the global political and economic structure since the 2008 economic crisis. The share of BRICS countries in the global economy has been increasing. The share of BRICS countries in the international economic system was about 26.5% in 2010 and has risen to 37% in 2023 (Sputnik 2023).

In 2024, China, as a super-BRICS country, will become the biggest economy in the world based on purchasing power parity (IMF 2024). This change in the structure of the global economy has implications for international politics as well (Öniş and Kutlay 2020, 123-142).

There is extensive literature on the shifting global system. Many scholars argue that we live in a post-Western and post-liberal global order. How this change in the global economic structure will impact global politics is an ongoing debate. We argue that the current global economic order is multipolar and the political order is rather non-polar since none of the great powers makes any substantial effort to maintain order and peace in the international system.

Currently, two violent conflicts take place in the international system: the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Although some great and regional powers tried to reach a ceasefire, none of the great powers exerted any serious and persistent attempt to end the wars and reach a durable peace. In other words, there is no great power that tries to bring enduring stability back to the international system. Therefore, we argue that the current system can be labelled as non-polar since none of the poles takes care of the maintenance of order and peace in the global structure. Whether the system will evolve to multipolarity or not remains to be seen in the following years.

These tectonic changes in the global political and economic system have been accompanied by changes in the Turkish domestic agency. As the AKP came to power in 2002, it started focusing on a discourse by emphasising Turkey's multiple identities. The then architect of the AKP's foreign policy, Ahmet Davutoğlu, stated that Turkey did not only have a European identity but also Asian, Balkan, and Caucasus identities. The quotation by President Erdoğan at the beginning of the article, emphasising the importance of developing relations with Eastern and Western countries, indicates that multilateral foreign policy has been an important feature of Turkey's international orientation.

The paper consists of five sections. Following the introduction, the next section explains how the shifting dynamics in the global system, accompanied by changes in the domestic structure, affect Turkish foreign policy. Then, Turkey's attitude toward the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will be explained. The following

section discusses the Turkish leadership's interpretation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict within the current international system. In the concluding section, we will explore what the Turkish case tells us about the foreign policy orientations of *sui generis* middle powers in a shifting global system.

### **A Shifting Global Order and a Changing Domestic Agency**

As the bipolar system ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the new international structure was defined by the concept of liberal global order. The free market system, freedom of trade, multilateral institutions, and the spread of democratisation and liberal norms were considered the main components of the international system (Acharya 2017, 272-274). The US was considered the only great power in the 1990s. Indeed, a new wave of democratisation and liberalisation swept most of the world, leading to transitions from authoritarian regimes to democratic systems and from socialism to neoliberalism. In addition, as the only superpower, the US tried to play the guardian of this international system by attempting to provide stability and end the conflicts. The US foreign policy towards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the wars of Yugoslav dissolution can be given as examples.

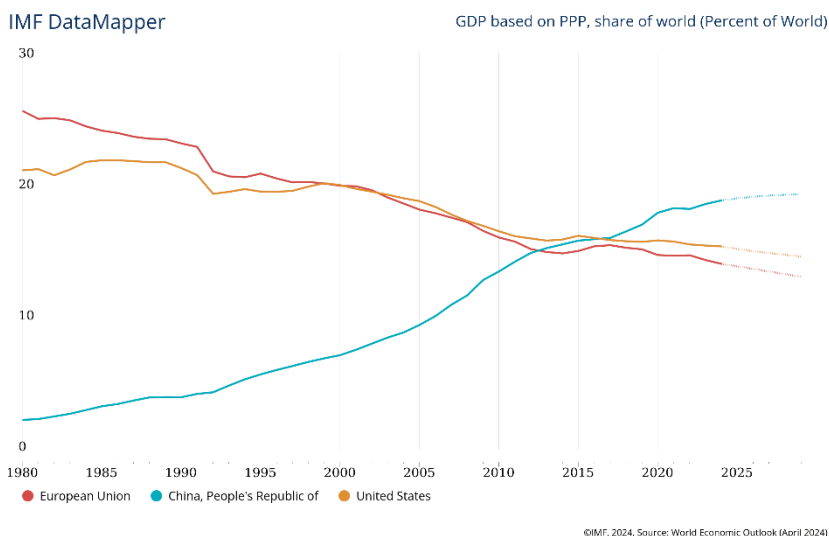
However, this system, based on liberalism and US hegemony, started to crumble after the global economic crisis that began in 2007. The collapse of the mortgage system in the US and the bankruptcy of some of the prominent financial institutions in the Western world sent shock waves to the rest of the world. Following this crisis, the BRICS was formally established in 2010 as a loose cooperation organisation among the rising powers, Brazil, Russia, China, India, and South Africa. Its basic aim has been to increase their influence on the global political economy. It has established the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Agency to increase economic cooperation among the member states. In 2024, the BRICS admitted four new members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. Thus, the new expanded BRICS is called the BRICS+.

The BRICS+ countries have been enjoying an increasing share of the global economy. The share of the BRICS+ in the global economy is currently about 37%, while the share of the EU is just about 14.5 % (Jütten and Falkenberg 2024, 1). Hence, the share of the BRICS+ in the global economy is twice as high as that of the European Union. The comparison of the BRICS with the G7 is meaningful as well. The G7 countries account for 31.6% of the global economy, lower than the share of the BRICS+ (Afota et al. 2024). The share of the BRICS+ countries in the global economy has been increasing, while that of the US and the EU member states has been declining.

As the biggest economy in the BRICS, China is called the super-BRICS state. In 1980, China's share in the global economy was just 2.2%, while the share of

the US was 21.31% and of the EU 25.84%. However, in 2024, China's economic share has risen to 19.01%, while the share of the US economy decreased to 15.5% and the EU economy declined to 14.17% (IMF 2024).

Figure 1: GDP based on PPP, share of world



Source: IMF 2024.

This tectonic shift in the global economic structure based on the high growth rates of emerging countries, especially that of China, has been accompanied by anti-globalisation and anti-regionalisation tendencies in some Western countries. The then US President Donald Trump's protectionist trade policy between 2017 and 2021, based on his conceptualisation of "America First", has weakened the international role of the US. In addition, Britain's exit from the European Union in 2020 was the first of its kind in the history of the EU. Fifty-two per cent of the British electorate voted for Brexit.

These changes in the global economy and domestic tendencies in some major Western countries started a new period called the post-Western global order. How this order will look is still unknown. We can say that we are still in the transition period. As none of the great powers has been trying to end the current conflicts in the Black Sea and the Middle East and to stabilise the international system, we can say that the current system is non-polar.

As the unipolar moment in the post-Cold War world weakened, middle powers and rising states became more influential. Global history provides ample evidence that middle powers have greater flexibility in their foreign policy during

periods of global system change (Giacomello and Verbeek 2024, 520). The interwar era can be an example of that. The multipolarity of the period allowed many middle powers, like Turkey, to have autonomy in formulating their international relations.

The founding of the BRICS and the MIKTA<sup>6</sup> is an important development in this regard. Turkey is one of the MIKTA countries and has been considered a middle power in the International Relations (IR) literature. According to Teo, a middle power can be defined as “a state that quantitatively ranks below the major powers but above most of the rest of the states; identifies and is regarded by others as a middle power; and employs behavioural strategies such as investing in multilateralism and relying on persuasive or soft power” (Teo 2023, 5).

There are different approaches to middle powers in the literature. According to one of the categorisations, middle powers can be differentiated by their material power (position approach) or their identity as middle powers by their own and others’ perceptions or their foreign policy behaviour (Teo 2023, 14). In general, in the IR literature, middle powers have been defined as countries with more material power compared to their neighbours. They define themselves and are defined by other states as middle powers. In addition, they are supposed to support the status quo in the international system, use soft power instruments, and initiate niche areas in foreign policy. It is also assumed that they are reliable partners and have a consistent foreign policy. There is a lively discussion in the current IR literature of how Turkey has performed as a middle power in its neighbouring regions in recent years. Turkey’s greater material capabilities compared to many of its neighbours, its pro-active foreign policy, and its niche diplomacy initiatives have been comprehensively dealt with in different academic works. (Öniş and Kutlay 2017, 164-183; Parlar Dal 2016, 1425-1453; Parlar Dal 2018, 1-31).

This paper argues that Turkey can be defined as a “*sui generis* middle power”, as it has some of the characteristics of middle powers defined in the literature. However, some features of Turkish foreign policy are different from traditional middle powers. First of all, Turkish decision-makers use not only soft power but hard power as well, as seen in northern Iraq since the 1980s and in North Syria since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. That reveals a difference in comparison to “classical” Turkish foreign policy, which had been based on the principles of Westernisation (based on capitalism and democratic and secular life) and status quo for decades (based on anti-revisionism and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s famous maxim of “Peace at home, peace abroad”).

---

<sup>6</sup> MIKTA was established by Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of South Korea, Turkey, and Australia in 2013 as a platform of consultation. For further information, see MIKTA n.d.

Most Turkish governments proceeded with a foreign policy following and adhering to international law and legality (Oran 1996). However, the foreign policy of Turkish governments since 1984 reveals a difference. Turkey's military presence and operations in Northern Iraq since 1984 and Syria since 2011 are important evidence of how Turkey has used military instruments in recent decades. The AKP government has widened the use of force in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East through its operations in northern Syria. The Turkish army currently controls parts of North Syria, and there is no information about the exit strategy. In its relations with Greece, Turkey uses the threat of force as a foreign policy instrument.

Another *sui generis* characteristic of Turkey's international relations is its inconsistency. Zigzag(s) and quick changes become a routine of policymaking. Turkish foreign policy does not only make U-turns but turns around like a wind rose (Yılmaz 2024). The traditional principles and maxims of Turkish foreign policy seem to be forgotten. It is not easy to find the general patterns in Turkish foreign policy because it changes so fast from time to time by showing fluctuations (Yeşilyurt Gündüz 2024, 114-115). For example, Turkey has had cycles of tensions and crises in its relations with Germany, the European Union, Egypt, Syria, and Israel, among others, during the AKP period. However, after a certain period, it tried to normalise its relations with those countries. The fluctuations of the AKP leadership, from crises and high tension in bilateral relations to normalisation, have been a recurrent feature of Turkish foreign policy, especially after the Arab Uprising.

Thirdly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Minister, and other cabinet members lost their institutional autonomy under the so-called Turkish version of the presidential system, which has been in operation since 2018. Increasingly, there is a one-person rule - President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has become the main decision-maker. Baskın Oran, a distinguished professor of International Relations, uses the abbreviation "EDP" (*Erdoğan Dış Politikası* - Erdoğan Foreign Policy) instead of "TDP" (*Türk Dış Politikası* - Turkish Foreign Policy) (Oran 2024).

We argue that because of these characteristics, namely the use of hard power and inconsistency, Turkey can be labelled a "sui generis middle power". Although it carries some characteristics of middle powers, such as material power, niche diplomacy, and middle power identity, for the reasons mentioned above, it diverges from them.

Another significant characteristic of the AKP's foreign policy is its emphasis on multiple identities and multidimensionality. President Erdoğan has used the metaphor from Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi, a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Islamic scholar, to explain the multidimensionality of Turkish foreign policy.

Mevlana stated, “The needle leg of the compass is fixed; it is in my religion, but with the other leg I go around seventy-two nations” (Toğuşlu 2011, 152). The Turkish President expressed the view that they will set the fixed end of the compass to the interests of the country, as in Mevlana’s metaphor of the compass, and that they will encompass the whole world with the other end. He further stated, “We will approach the issues with a 360-degree perspective and evaluate the developments with the widest possible perspective. While strengthening our relations with the East, we will look for ways to advance our deep-rooted cooperation with the West” (Akbulut Yazar et al. 2024).

Meanwhile, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mehmet Kemal Bozay, stated that before Copernicus, it was assumed that the planets and the sun revolved around the Earth. In the same way, the EU presumes that the dynamics of all foreign policy revolves around it, but Turkey has its own foreign policy and priorities. In this framework, Turkish Vice Minister Bozay further argues that the EU needs a Copernican revolution, which requires considering the orbits and rotations of other actors and getting rid of the approach that all foreign policy revolves around it. The EU should develop a compromised foreign policy that does not ignore the interests of actors such as Turkey (Bozay 2024). In addition, an interviewed Turkish diplomat argues that Turkish foreign policy is like a sailboat and can change according to the wind (Interview 10).

These discourses refer to the fact that Turkey tries to formulate an autonomous foreign policy without any fixed alliances or partnerships. The current shifting global order and the AKP’s construction of a new foreign policy identity provide the way for its implementation.

Turkey’s decision-makers emphasise their view that there are changing dynamics in the global order and the uncertainties are rising. Stating that there are conflicts and disputes in the world as well as increasing political and economic rivalry among countries, they think that Turkey should be strong “at the table and on the field” (“sahada ve masada güçlü Türkiye”) (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s proclamation, “We are now a country with a fundamental place both on the ground and at the table”, reflects an assertiveness in strengthening its geopolitical position and role in global affairs by diplomatic as well as military means (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye 2020).

According to Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, geopolitical dynamics is shifting and strategic equations are reconfigured. He further claims that globalisation did not end but has gone off the rails. He asserts that Turkey was at the centre of these dynamics and equations (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2024b). Similarly, President Erdoğan argues that “the pillars of the rules-based international system are being shaken. Challenges such as terrorism,

Islamophobia and xenophobia, irregular migration, climate change, disruptions in energy and food security, as well as in supply chains, are exacerbating the geopolitical tremors” (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye 2024b).

These discourses show us that Turkish decision-making elites acknowledge the changes in the global system and the increasing uncertainties. Under these circumstances, they assume Turkey should have a multidimensional and flexible foreign policy and achieve partnerships with different countries.

The way Ankara approaches the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is impacted by a number of factors, including the shifting global system, how Turkish decision-makers view it, how Turkish foreign policy is defined, how much stress is placed on Turkey’s many identities, and how flexible it is.

After analysing the changes in the global context and the main characteristics of the domestic agency, the next section will focus on the evolution of the Turkish approach to the conflict in the Black Sea.

### **The Evolution of Turkey’s Attitude towards the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict**

February 24, 2022, marks the day when war returned to Europe after 23 years. What seemed impossible has happened—the Putin regime’s war against Ukraine began. While the EU and the US had a clear stance from the very beginning, the foreign policy of the AKP government was based on balancing the conflicting parties. This part will set out the AKP’s position on the Putin regime’s war against Ukraine and will address the main parameters of the AKP’s foreign policy. This section provides an overview of Turkey’s position between two chairs and its balancing act.

#### ***A Historical Anatomy of Turkish-Russian Relationship: Cooperation Despite Differences***

Duygu Sezer (2000, 6) emphasises that the glue that binds the regional and domestic factors shaping Turkish-Russian relations is history. For centuries, they lived together as neighbours, in rivalry and even at war against each other from time to time. With the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottomans, the Russian Empire, which represented the Slavic/Orthodox civilisation, and the Ottoman Empire, which represented the Turkish/Islamic civilisation, began forceful confrontations in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

After the end of the First World War, an unusual phase of empathy and understanding began between the young states and their heads of state, Vladimir Lenin and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The military and economic support

of the Soviet Union was important for the Turkish victory in the War of Independence, which was sealed with the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923. This treaty demilitarised the straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and placed access to and from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean under the control of an International Strait Commission. However, as the political situation in Europe deteriorated before World War II, Turkey tried to change the agreement. With the Treaty of Montreux, the Strait Agreement of July 20, 1936, which regulates the free movement of ships in the Black Sea, Turkey regained full sovereignty and control over the Sea of Marmara, the Dardanelles, and the Bosphorus.

After the end of World War II, relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union deteriorated because of the Soviet territorial claims to parts of Turkey's northeastern provinces and the demand for a Turkish-Soviet joint control regime over the Turkish straits. Faced with the escalation of East-West tensions, Turkey institutionally joined the West and became a member of NATO in 1952. Both were in opposing camps during the remaining period of the Cold War. During the *détente* era, there was a period of rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow.

Mutual negative images lasted for a long time, nurtured the negative opinions of both sides about each other, and were produced and reproduced on the social and political levels. With the end of the Cold War, the "virtual rapprochement" began in the 1990s (Sezer 2000, 62). Virtual rapprochement refers to a state of bilateral relations in which public manifestations of hostilities at the state level have mostly disappeared and the importance of cooperation for the promotion of national interests is publicly articulated. However, a hard core of mutual fear and mistrust remains in the minds of decision-makers and political elites.

A historically and regionally unique economic cooperation was established by both sides, close to mutual interdependence. However, this interdependence is asymmetrical in favour of Russia, especially regarding energy. Russia has become the main supplier of natural gas and oil to Turkey. Cooperation in the energy and gas sectors increased Turkey's dependence on Russian gas. Turkey obtains over 42% of natural gas (Temizer 2024) and 51% of oil and diesel fuel from Russia (Sağlam 2024). Turkish construction companies in Russia and the number of Russian tourists in Turkey skyrocketed. It has been a historical pattern that whenever their relations with the West deteriorated, Turkey and Russia were able to come together and thus cooperate in different realms.

Despite their conflictual histories and deep structural differences, both states were able to deepen their relations even further from 2003 onwards. That also resulted from the resentment of both countries against the internationally controversial invasion of Iraq by the US in March 2003. Besides,

Russia and Turkey also favoured stability and disapproved of potentially chaotic regime change in Iraq (Hill and Taşpınar 2006, 81-82).

### ***Russia, the West, and the Issue of NATO Enlargement***

In order to understand Russia's view, it is necessary to look back on an important day in history, February 9, 1990. On that day, then-US Secretary of State James Baker assured then-Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev not once but three times that NATO would expand "not one inch eastward". He agreed with Gorbachev's statement that "NATO expansion is unacceptable". Baker promised Gorbachev: "Neither the President nor I intend to extract any unilateral advantages from the processes that are taking place". Then, he added that the Americans understood that "not only for the Soviet Union but for other European countries as well, it is important to have guarantees that if the United States keeps its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction" (National Security Archive 2017).

This assurance on NATO enlargement was part of many promises regarding Soviet security given by Western decision-makers to Gorbachev and other Soviet politicians during the process of German unification in 1990. The promise was that NATO would not expand even "one inch eastward" (National Security Archive 2017). The reality was different: Whereas the Warsaw Pact dissolved in 1991, NATO survived, flourished, and doubled its members at that time from 16 to 32, with Finland and Sweden joining in 2024.<sup>7</sup> It is important to keep this Western promise in mind when considering the current situation. However, the dispute on NATO enlargement does not justify the current Russian war against Ukraine. According to international law, all disagreements should be settled via diplomatic means.

One region that is important for Russia is the Black Sea. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, new states emerged on the border with the Black Sea (Ukraine and Georgia). As a result, Russia lost two-thirds of its coastline after the end of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet era, almost half of its foreign trade had been via the Straits. With the NATO membership of Romania and Bulgaria, Turkey became Russia's only "partner" in the Black Sea. Bulgaria and Romania pursued policies that supported the entry of the US and other NATO countries into the Black Sea. Turkey and Russia have cooperated in opposing the entry of warships of non-littoral countries into the Black Sea. Ukraine, which

---

<sup>7</sup> The negative impact of NATO's enlargement for Russian security has been emphasised by one of the interviewees (Interview 8).

had turned to the West in pursuit of NATO and EU membership, followed a similar policy. While Russia feared that the Black Sea would turn into a “NATO Sea”, Turkey always feared the violation of the Montreux Convention (Tellal 2010, 211).

### **Turkey’s Policy of Balance and the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict**

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian troops showed that Russia, like the US, is an imperial power that cannot be deterred by either the United Nations or international law. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan clarified Turkey’s ambiguous position one day before the Russian invasion. He stated, “We cannot give up either of them (Russia and Ukraine)” (Işık and Gündoğan 2022). Ankara has remained true to this approach. The Turkish Foreign Ministry, on the one hand, called the invasion “unacceptable” and a “serious violation of international law” when it began on February 24, 2022 (Wheeldon 2022). However, Turkey’s leadership made an immense effort to maintain friendly relations with the Russian side.

With the increasing violence and shock of the war in Ukraine, the government expressed its criticism of Russia and its support for Ukraine, called on Russia to immediately end this illegal act, and complied with the resolutions of the UN General Assembly criticising Russia. However, in the Council of Europe, Turkey abstained from the decision to suspend Russian membership.

Meanwhile, Turkey did not follow EU and US sanctions against Russia. On the one hand, Turkey was convinced that sanctions could hardly be successful. On the other hand, the sanctions came from the EU and the US but not via a UN resolution, which would make them legally binding according to international law. That is why Turkey does not feel bound by it. However, it seems that Turkey started partially abiding by sanctions as Turkish companies prevented the re-export of Western goods to Russia (İşçi, Aydın, and Çelikpala 2024, 8-9).

On February 27, 2022, three days after the war started, then Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu described Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a “war”, which enabled Ankara to make full use of Article 19 of the Montreux Convention of 1936 and thus to block the passage through the Turkish straits to the Black Sea for warships unless they return to their home bases. (Yenel 2022). That complicated Russia’s power projection capabilities in the eastern Mediterranean and saved the Ukrainian coastal city of Odesa from major losses.

Although Turkey tries not to provoke its neighbour Russia, at the same time, it tries to cultivate good relations with Ukraine as well, including in the military field. The sale of armed drones to Ukraine can be seen as an example of this

policy. In a seminar at TED University in Ankara on the second anniversary of the war, the Ambassador of Ukraine, Mr. Vasyl Bodnar, stated that many newborn boys in Ukraine were named after the surname of the producer of the drones—Bayraktar (Bodnar 2024). It seems that the gratitude of many people is that high. However, unlike other NATO members, Turkey has neither joined the sanctions against Moscow nor closed its airspace to Russian civilian planes.

Ankara and Moscow have vastly diverging views and different stands on many international issues, from the Nagorno Karabagh to Libya and Syria. However, when it comes to energy and trade, they have deepened their cooperation since the end of the bipolar system. Putin and Erdoğan's "friendship" is surprisingly deep—perhaps also because of their similarities in political style, authoritarianism, conservatism, and their stance on patriarchy and gender (Yeşilyurt Gündüz and Demirtaş 2022, 47).

In the first weeks after the outbreak of the war, 85,000 Ukrainians and 100,000 Russians fled to Turkey. That shows not only how important Turkey is for both states but also how much many Russian opponents of the war suffer from this war.

Turkey's policy in the Ukraine war is a balancing act. Özgür Uluhisarcıklı describes Turkey's unique position as "pro-Ukrainian" but "not directly anti-Russian" (Wheeldon 2022). Thus, the AKP seeks a policy of balance towards both while supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and moderating criticism of Russia without participating in sanctions (Yeşilyurt Gündüz and Demirtaş 2022, 44-49).

### **Perceptions of the Russian-Ukrainian War by the AKP Elite**

The first official statement of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the Russian aggression started was as follows:

"We do not accept the military operation that was started by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and we reject it. This attack not only destroys the Minsk agreements, but it is also a severe violation of international law and a serious threat to our regional and global security. Turkey believes in respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries, and it is against the change of borders through arms. We call upon the Russian Federation to end this unfair and unlawful action as soon as possible. Turkish support for political unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine will continue" (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022).

This statement can be regarded as an example of the AKP's attitude towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. On the one hand, the decision-makers of the AKP expressed their full support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and

respect for international law; on the other hand, they just took the Russian labelling of the invasion as “a special operation” as it was at the beginning of the conflict. They did not question the Russian naming of “special operation” when the aggression started. Only after three days did Turkey’s decision-makers recognise it was, in fact, a “war”.

The Turkish leadership expressed “soft criticism” of Russia throughout the war. However, it should be noted that this soft criticism by the AKP leadership started in 2014 during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> Turkey’s ruling political elite, in all its declarations, statements, and speeches, emphasised the violation of international law by the Russian action but was always careful about the wording and not using harsh rhetoric. In the case of Israel, we hear the criticisms of “state terrorism” and “genocide” from the AKP political elite loud and clear. But Turkish decision-makers have never made harsh criticism towards Russia, although the Turkish political Islamist leaders claimed to be supporting the victims in global politics.

On the first and second anniversary of the Russian invasion, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued declarations that did not include the word “Russia” at all. It is worthwhile to analyse the original declarations. On the first anniversary, the following declaration was issued:

“Despite all our attempts, the war, which began in Ukraine one year ago today, still goes on. Unfortunately, the heavy cost of war is felt not only in the two countries but also throughout the world. On every platform, we emphasise the need for a just and lasting end to this war as soon as possible through negotiations. We support efforts towards a solution through initiatives such as the Istanbul Grain Deal. We will keep on extending every support and exerting every effort towards ending this war, which we have denounced since the outset, so as to restore Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2023).

On the second anniversary, the Turkish Foreign Ministry made the following declaration:

“As the war in Ukraine leaves its second year behind, the devastating impact of the conflict on Ukraine is growing, and its negative regional and global consequences are deepening. The conditions conducive to the revitalisation of the diplomatic process will eventually emerge. With this understanding, we offer constructive input to both sides. Turkey’s efforts for a just and lasting solution based on Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity will continue” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2024a).

---

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on the issue, see Demirtaş 2024, 342-357.

Both declarations emphasise the negative consequences of war and Turkey's attempts and hopes to reach peace. Both underline Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, none of them mention the word *Russia*. That is evidence of how Turkey has implemented its balanced policy by not confronting Russia directly. In the second declaration, it is stated that Turkey has been offering constructive input to both conflicting parties. That has been the main focus of Turkish communication with both sides.

Turkish President Erdoğan stated that the killings in Buca, Irpin, and Kramatorsk by the Russian army were "negative developments". What happened in these Ukrainian cities was called a massacre or ethnic cleansing by many observers and experts around the world (Hern 2022). However, Turkey's ruling elite refrained from using any harsh rhetoric against Russia. That is another proof of how the AKP elite did everything to criticise Russia softly and not damage ties with Moscow.

Another significant point is that Turkish decision-makers have insistently argued that, in fact, the war indicates the failure of the global order. The AKP elite claims that there are grave problems in the current international structure that resulted in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The main point of the AKP elite is that the global order established after 1945 has not been functioning anymore. Therefore, it cannot solve any important global problems. They argue that the failure of the global order is the fundamental problem. President Erdoğan has repeatedly stated that the world is bigger than five, criticising the structure of the United Nations Security Council (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye 2022). Erdoğan condemned the structure of the Security Council, stating that it grants the five permanent member countries undue privilege in governing the international system.

For the Turkish leadership, all conflicts ranging from Syria to Yemen, Ukraine, and Gaza are just manifestations of how the current global system lost its relevance and became dysfunctional (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye 2024a). The AKP elite thinks a fairer, more representative, more inclusive, and more effective global order should be established (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye 2022). It is interesting to note that instead of condemning and criticising Russia directly, Turkish leadership relocated their criticism to the deficiencies of the current international system.

This approach has two benefits for Turkey: First, Turkey could keep good relations with the Russian leadership. Turkey is dependent on Russia, especially regarding energy, as explained above. Besides, there is an ever-growing cooperation in the construction sector, with many Turkish construction companies working directly in Russia. Most tourists visiting Turkey come mainly from Germany, and Russia. Whenever Turkey's or Russia's relations with the West

deteriorated, they came together somehow to overcome their isolation. Still, there is a deep mistrust between these two geographically close and historically and culturally distant countries (Yeşilyurt Gündüz and Demirtaş 2022, 45).

Ankara and Moscow have differing views on many different international topics. However, when it comes to energy and gas, they fully agree. Therefore, maintaining good ties with Putin is crucial for Erdoğan. This approach allows Turkey to continue with its policy of dual balance and flexible partnerships, as seen in the compass metaphor of Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi. Second, this approach allows Turkey's decision-makers to raise their voices regarding the current international system. Since the AKP rulers want to create an image of Turkey as a rising global star, this discourse has a special meaning.

### **Impressions on Turkish Foreign Policy: What Do the Interviews Tell Us?**

It seems that Ukraine is generally satisfied with Turkey's policy of balance towards the conflict. Former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Ukraine on March 18, 2014, just two days after the referendum, was appreciated by the Ukrainian authorities because he was the first foreign minister to visit Ukraine after the referendum (Interview 1).<sup>9</sup> Turkey's importance in the Black Sea, its sovereignty over the Straits, and its second-biggest army in NATO make Turkey a special country for Ukraine. A former diplomat from Ukraine states that there is an expectation that Turkey should support Ukraine proactively and join the Western sanctions as much as possible (Interview 1). Meanwhile, Turkey's mediation attempts and its role in the grain deal and exchange of prisoners of war have been appreciated by the international community. These policies can be considered positive results of Turkey's balanced attitude.

Meanwhile, how Turkish NGOs interpret Turkish foreign policy is important to understand the public opinion on Ankara's approach to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. NGOs of Crimean Tatar origin citizens are mainly interested in analysing and interpreting Turkish foreign policy towards the war. Crimean Tatar NGOs in Turkey follow Turkish foreign policy closely. There is a general understanding that Turkey needs to follow the policy of balance. However, there are more expectations from Turkey, especially regarding the discourse. It is stated that Turkey's naming of Russian policy in Crimea in 2014 as "illegal annexation" might not reflect the whole truth and it should be named "occupation". (Interview 7) There is an understanding that Turkey's geopolitical position pushes it to pursue the policy of balance. Turkey's help for Crimean Tatars is appreciated, especially

---

<sup>9</sup> See also Agence France-Presse 2014.

in helping the release of Crimean Tatar prisoners from Russia (Interview 7). Another interviewee stated that Turkey's political and economic interests force it to pursue its current policy. However, there is still the expectation that Ankara should work further to bring back peace to the region (Interview 6).

In addition, the general evaluation of the interviewed Ukrainians living in Turkey regarding Turkey's policies on Crimea since the Russian annexation in 2014 is mostly positive. They recognise Turkey's support for "the integrity of Ukraine's borders since 2014" (Interview 3) and the fact that Turkey "considers Crimea the territory of Ukraine" (Interview 4).

However, the evaluation of Turkish politics regarding the Ukrainian war is mixed. Although most of the interviewed Ukrainians highlight Turkey's role in the Black Sea and the support it has given to Ukraine, it becomes clear that this is insufficient. An interviewee stated: "Despite this position and all the help given to Ukraine, Turkey is still buying Russian petrol, gas, etc., which are the main income of the Russian budget. There are no sanctions against Russian politicians and oligarchs. They buy real estate in Turkey; they are welcome to flee to Turkey, and some of them do. So, is it neutrality or business?" (Interview 2).

Similarly, another interviewee said: "In my opinion, Turkey has not yet decided which country it supports. Turkey sells bayraktars<sup>10</sup> to Ukraine and, at the same time, creates conditions for visiting Russian tourists in resort towns. Turkey seems to care more about how much money it makes. Turkey creates the illusion that it wants to stop the war, but it is clear that Turkey is showing sympathy for Putin" (Interview 9).

As a final note, one interviewee stated their hope: "We are grateful to our Turkish friends for their support, shelter and open hearts. We are refugees who have to flee the war and save our children, their future, but each of us is waiting for victory and wants to return home to Ukraine." (Interviewee 5).

As explained above, our interviews with Russian and Ukrainian refugees and the association of Crimean Tatars in Turkey put forward that, in general, there is an understanding of Turkey's balanced attitude. However, some expect more from Turkey.

---

<sup>10</sup> Bayraktar is a tactical unmanned aerial vehicle. It is used to collect intelligence for surveillance and reconnaissance missions and attacks. It is produced by Baykar Company. The chairperson of the board of directors of the company is Selçuk Bayraktar, who is the son-in-law of President Erdoğan.

## Conclusion: Making Sense of New Turkish Foreign Policy

While the foreign policy of the last two decades under the AKP government reveals some similarities to former governments in geopolitical terms aiming at broadening its scope, further diversification becomes apparent. The current Turkish government tries to establish the country as a *sui generis* middle power in the multipolar world order, striving for an active foreign policy and building relationships to influence international politics. In doing so, it shows growing self-confidence and, at the same time, increasing mistrust of other states. Although Turkey remains a Western state, the AKP is trying to broaden its scope. As Turkey tries to cooperate with Eastern and Western countries simultaneously, the Western anchor, the main pillar of Turkish foreign policy since 1945, has been losing its monopoly in Turkey's international relations. Turkey's new foreign policy is exemplified by its handling of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Its justified criticism of the world order established after the end of the Second World War is getting louder. Referring to the injustice of the UN Security Council, according to which the five permanent members (US, Russia, France, Great Britain, and China) have a veto right, President Erdoğan has declared consistently that "The world is bigger than five" and called for a fairer, more representative, more inclusive world order. This critique has echoed globally. At this point, Turkey, as a middle power, can contribute to bring about a change in the global system. However, Turkey's foreign policy under the AKP government, or rather under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has become increasingly unpredictable and inconsistent. Whether Turkey's balanced approach to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will remain as such in the future depends on many domestic and international factors.

President Erdoğan's opportunistic endeavour to play the West against the East and the East against the West cannot be a real and long-lasting policy. Turkey is trying to find its place in the multipolar global order. However, while increasingly turning away from the West with a supposed "balance policy", it also weakens itself vis-à-vis the East. The deeper and better Turkey's relations with the West are, the healthier its relations with other states and regions become. Erdoğan's biggest mistake is to misuse foreign policy for domestic political purposes. Thus, Erdoğan's statements and actions are those of an eager trader out for quick material gains but not those of a serious statesperson. (Yeşilyurt Gündüz 2022, 71). The primary distinction in the AKP's current policy is that - it is evident from the party's statements and actions, particularly those of President Erdoğan—the AKP government appears to be more focused on money and economic interests (Yeşilyurt Gündüz and Demirtaş 2022, 49).

This article argues that Turkey's policy of balance towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is a result of changes in the current global system, the AKP's

interpretation of these changes, and its construction of a new foreign policy for the country. Inspired by Copernican physics and Mevlana philosophy, there is a new understanding among the Turkish decision-making elite that the new foreign policy of Ankara must be centred around the interests of the country. Hence, flexibility, pragmatism, balanced approach, and multilateralism are important keywords.

Future research should focus on domestic determinants of Turkey's approach to the invasion of Ukraine. How the issue of regime survival is affecting Turkey's balanced foreign policy is an important question. Another important research question is the impact of the personal ties between Erdoğan and Putin and similar political systems on bilateral relations. In addition, the question of whether the Crimean Tatar associations in Turkey have a substantial impact on Turkish foreign policy is worth exploring further.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Part of this research was conducted by Prof. Dr. Demirtaş during her research stay at the Cologne Center for Comparative Studies at the University of Cologne, between June 20 and September 17, 2024 with a scholarship from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

The authors would like to dedicate this article to the memory of Prof. Dr. Fuat Keyman, a prominent professor of International Relations at Sabancı University, who passed away on 18 October 2024 and Şefkat Utsucarçı Tulun, a distinguished EU Expert at the Directorate for EU Affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and PhD candidate at the Department of International Relations of Middle East Technical University, who passed away on 23 October 2024.

## References

- Acharya, Amitav. 2017. "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order". *Ethics and International Affairs* 31 (3): 271-285.
- Afota, Amandine, Valentin Burban, Pavel Diev, Fabio Grieco, Théo Iberrakene, Karine Ishii, Margarita Lopez-Forero, Quentin Paul, Frank Sammeth, and Cécile Valadier. 2024. "Expansion of BRICS: What are the Potential Consequences for the Global Economy", *Banque de France*, February 13, 2024. <https://www.banque-france.fr/en/publications-and-statistics/publications/expansion-brics-what-are-potential-consequences-global-economy#:~:text=The%20gap%20between%20BRICS%2B%20and,with%202028.2%25%20for%20the%20G7.>

- Agence France-Presse 2014. "Turkey refuses to recognize 'unacceptable' Crimea referendum". *Hurriyet Daily News*, March 18, 2014. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-refuses-to-recognize-unacceptable-crimea-referendum-63674>
- Akbulut Yazar, Başak, Gökçe Karaköse, Elif Küçük, Mehmet Yusuf Melikoğlu, and Büşra Alakoyun. 2024. "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: AB ile Şangay İşbirliği Teşkilatı arasında tercih yapmak mecburiyetinde değiliz", *Anadolu Ajansı*, August 31, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ab-ile-sangay-isbirligi-teskilati-arasinda-tercih-yapmak-mecburiyetinde-degiliz/3317799>
- Bodnar, Vasyl. 2024. "Russian-Ukrainian Conflict and Turkish-Russian Partnership". Speech at TED University, February 20, 2024.
- Börzel, Tanja, and Thomas Risse. 2000. "When Europe hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change". *European Integration Online Papers* 14 (15). ([https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=302768](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=302768))
- Bozay, Mehmet Kemal. 2024. "Gençler, Avrupa Başkent'te". Speech at Başkent University, Europe Day Activities, May 15, 2024.
- Çelik, Ömer. 2024. "BRICS'e üye olma talebimiz açık", *Medyascope*, September 3, 2024. <https://medyascope.tv/2024/09/03/omer-celik-bricse-uye-olma-talebimiz-acik/>
- Demirtaş, Birgül. 2024. "À la carte Global Order and Regional Powers: A Comparative Analysis of Turkish and Serbian Attitudes towards the Russian War in Ukraine". In: *Global Security and International Relations After the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dusan Prorokovic, Paolo Sellari, Rich Mifsud, 342-357. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University, and Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade.
- Giacomello, Giampiero, and Bertjan Verbeek. 2024. "Foreign Policy of Middle Powers". In: *Oxford Handbook of Foreign Policy Analysis* edited by Juliet Karboo and Cameron G. Theis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hacaoglu, Selcan, and Firat Kozok. 2024. "Turkey bids to join BRICS in push to build alliances beyond West", *Bloomberg*, September 2, 2024. <http://https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-09-02/turkey-submits-bid-to-join-brics-as-erdogan-pushes-for-new-alliances-beyond-west>
- Hern, Alex. 2022. "Satellite images of corpses in Bucha contradict Russian claims", *The Guardian*, April 5, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/05/satellite-images-of-corpse-in-bucha-prove-russian-claims-wrong>

- Hill, Fiona, and Omer Taspinar. 2006. "Turkey and Russia: Axis of the excluded?". *Survival* 48 (1): 81-92.
- IMF. 2024. "GDP Based on ppp, Share of World", *International Monetary Fund*, Accessed September 1, 2024. <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PPPSH@WEO/EU/CHN/USA>
- Isachenko, Daria. 2023. "Turkey in the Black Sea region: Ankara's reactions to the war in Ukraine against the background of regional dynamics and global confrontation", *SWP Research Paper, No 12*, German Institute for International and Security Affairs.
- İşçi, Onur, Mustafa Aydın, and Mitat Çelikpala. 2024. "A Precarious Interdependence between Russia and Turkey: Economic Cooperation, Energy Ties and Sanctions". *Global Academy, No 2024/2*. <https://www.globacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/July-Report-2024.pdf>
- Işık, Esin, and Barış Gündoğan. 2022. "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Rusya ve Ukrayna'nın ikisinden de vazgeçmemiz mümkün değil", *Anadolu Ajansı*, February 23, 2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-rusya-ve-ukraynanin-ikisinden-de-vazgecmemiz-mumkun-degil/2511116>
- Jütten, Marc, and Dorothee Falkenberg. 2024. "Expansion of BRICS: A Quest for Greater Global Influence", *European Parliament Briefing*, March 2024. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760368/EPRS\\_BRI\(2024\)760368\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760368/EPRS_BRI(2024)760368_EN.pdf)
- MIKTA. n.d. "What is MIKTA?", *MIKTA*, Accessed September 1, 2024. <http://mikta.org/about/what-is-mikta/?ckattempt=1>
- National Security Archive. 2017. "NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard. 2017", *National Security Archive*, December 12, 2017. <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>
- Öniş, Ziya and Mustafa Kutlay. 2020. "The new age of hybridity and clash of norms: China, BRICS and challenges of global governance in a postliberal international order". *Alternatives* 45 (3): 123-142.
- Öniş, Ziya, and Mustafa Kutlay. 2017. "The dynamics of emerging middle-power influence in regional and global governance: the paradoxical case of Turkey". *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71: 164-183.
- Oran, Baskın. 1996. "Türk Dış Politikası: Temel İlkeleri ve Soğuk Savaş Ertesindeki Durumu Üzerine Notlar". *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi, Prof. Dr. Oral Sander'e Armağan* 51 (1-4): 353-370.
- Oran, Baskın. 2024. "TDP kalmadı, çoktandır EDP servis ediyoruz", *Artigerçek*, September 5, 2024.

- Parlar Dal, Emel. 2016. "Conceptualising and testing the 'emerging regional power' of Turkey in the shifting international order". *Third World Quarterly* 37: 1425-1453.
- Parlar Dal, Emel. 2018. "Profiling Middle Powers in Global Governance and the Turkish Case: An Introduction". In: *Middle Powers in Global Governance. The Rise of Turkey*, edited by Emel Parlar Dal, 1-31. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. 2020. "Artık hem sahada hem de masada asli yeri olan bir ülke durumundayız", *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*, October 2, 2020. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/122235/-artik-hem-sahada-hem-de-masada-asli-yeri-olan-bir-ulke-durumundayiz->
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. 2022. "Şanghay İş Birliği Zirvesi'nde Yaptıkları Konuşma", *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*, September 16, 2022. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/139690/sanghay-is-birligi-zirvesi-nde-yaptiklari-konusma>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. 2024a. "Antalya Diplomasi Forumu'nda Yaptıkları Konuşma", *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*, March 1, 2024. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/151457/antalya-diplomasi-forumu-nda-yaptiklari-konusma>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. 2024b. "Şanghay İşbirliği Teşkilatı Zirvesi'nde Yaptıkları Konuşma", *Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye*, July 4, 2024. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/152899/sanghay-isbirligi-teskilati-zirvesi-nde-yaptiklari-konusma>
- Sağlam, Mühdan. 2024. "Rusya petrol ve gazda Türkiye'nin ana tedarikçisi oldu", *Gazete Duvar*, June 19, 2024. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/rusya-petrol-ve-gazda-turkiyenin-ana-tedarikcisi-oldu-makale-1699603>
- Sezer, Duygu Bazoğlu. 2000. "Turkish-Russian relations: the challenges of reconciling geopolitical competition with economic partnership". *Turkish Studies* 1(1): 59-82.
- Sputnik. 2023. "How do BRICS stack up against G7?", *Sputnik*, August 26, 2023. <https://sputnikglobe.com/20230826/how-do-brics-stack-up-against-g7-1112913972.html>
- Tellal, Erel. 2010. "Zümrüdüanka: "Rusya Federasyonu'nun Dış Politikası". *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*. 65 (3): 189-236.
- Temizer, Murat. 2024. "Türkiye'nin doğalgaz ithalatı geçen yıl yüzde 7,64 azalışla 50,48 milyar metreküp oldu", *Anadolu Ajansı*, June 20, 2024. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/turkiyenin-dogal-gaz-ithalati-gecen-yil-yuzde-7-64-azalisla-50-48-milyar-metrekup-oldu/3253890>
- Teo, Sarah. 2023. *Middle Powers in Asia-Pacific Multilateralism. A Differential Framework*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

- Toğuşlu, Arzu. 2011. "Mevlana Aşkın Dansı' ile Evrenselliğe Odaklanmak". *Yalova Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* October 2010-March 2011 (1): 151-166.
- Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2022. "Rusya Federasyonu Tarafından Ukrayna'ya Yönelik Başlatılan Askeri Operasyon Hk.", *Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 24, 2022. [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-62\\_-rusya-federasyonu-tarafindan-ukrayna-ya-yonelik-baslatilan-askeri-operasyon-hk.tr.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-62_-rusya-federasyonu-tarafindan-ukrayna-ya-yonelik-baslatilan-askeri-operasyon-hk.tr.mfa)
- Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2023. "Press Release Regarding the First Year of the War in Ukraine", *Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 24, 2023. [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-56\\_-ukrayna-savasinin-birinci-yili-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-56_-ukrayna-savasinin-birinci-yili-hk.en.mfa)
- Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2024a. "Regarding the Two Year Anniversary of the Beginning of the War in Ukraine", *Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 24, 2024. [https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-35\\_-ukrayna-savasi-nin-baslangicinin-ikinci-yil-donumu-hk.en.mfa](https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-35_-ukrayna-savasi-nin-baslangicinin-ikinci-yil-donumu-hk.en.mfa)
- Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2024b. "Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Hakan Fidan'ın NATO Dışişleri Bakanları Toplantısı Kapsamında Basına Yaptığı Açıklama", *Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, April 4, 2024. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-hakan-fidan-in-nato-disisleri-bakanlari-toplantisi-kapsaminda-basina-yaptigi-aciklama-4-4-2020-bruksel.tr.mfa>
- Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. n.d. "'Türkiye Yüzyılı'nda Milli Dış Politika", *Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Accessed September 2, 2024. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/dis-politika-genel.tr.mfa>
- Wheeldon, Tom. 2022. "Turkey juggles relationships with Russia, Ukraine amid economic crisis", *France 24*, March 31, 2022. <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20220331-turkey-juggles-relationships-with-russia-ukraine-amid-economic-crisis>
- Yanık, Lerna K. 2023. "The making of Turkish exceptionalism: The west, the rest and unreconciled issues from the past". *Turkish Studies* 24 (3-4): 640-657.
- Yenel, Selim. 2022. "Can Russia's War on Ukraine Drive Turkey and the West to Reconcile?", *GMF*, March 15, 2022.
- Yeşilyurt Gündüz, Zuhâl and Birgül Demirtaş. 2022. "'Für die Ukraine' aber 'nicht direkt gegen Russland'. Balanceakt der Türkei im Ukrainekrieg". *WeltTrends - Zeitschrift für internationale Politik* 190: 44-49.
- Yeşilyurt Gündüz, Zuhâl. 2022. "Von Ost nach West und wieder zurück? Die erstaunliche Außenpolitik der AKP-Regierung". *WeltTrends - Zeitschrift für internationale Politik* 194: 70-71.
- Yeşilyurt Gündüz, Zuhâl. 2024. "Türkei: Außenpolitik oder: Erdoğan-Politik". *WeltTrends - Zeitschrift für internationale Politik* 200: 114-115.
- Yılmaz, Mehmet Y. 2024. "'U' değil, 'rüzgâr gülü dönüşü!'", *T24*, January 25, 2024.

### List of Interviews

- Interview 1: A former Ukrainian diplomat, May 21, 2022, online interview.
- Interview 2: Ukrainian migrant, Turkey, May 22, 2022, via E-mail.
- Interview 3: Ukrainian migrant, Turkey, May 24, 2022, via WhatsApp.
- Interview 4: Ukrainian refugee, Turkey, May 25, 2022, via WhatsApp.
- Interview 5: Ukrainian refugee, Turkey, May 25, 2022, via WhatsApp.
- Interview 6: Expert at Kocaeli Crimean Tatars Culture and Solidarity Association, May 25, 2022, online interview.
- Interview 7: Namık Kemal Bayar, Secretary General of the World Crimean Tatar Congress, Vice President of Crimean Turks Culture and Solidarity Association, May 25, 2022, online interview.
- Interview 8: Russian migrant, Turkey, May 26, 2022, via E-mail.
- Interview 9: Ukrainian refugee, Turkey, May 26, 2022, via WhatsApp.
- Interview 10: Interview with a Turkish diplomat, August 20, 2024.

### **KADA PROMENLJIV MEĐUNARODNI POREDAK POGODI DOMAĆU AGENSNOŠT: SLUČAJ TURSKE I RUSKO-UKRAJINSKOG SUKOB**

*Apstrakt:* Spoljna politika Turske privlači sve veću pažnju u akademskoj literaturi jer vlada Stranka pravde i razvoja (AKP) sprovodi proaktivne, multilateralne i fleksibilne međunarodne odnose, uključujući brojna promenljiva partnerstva, fluktuacije i kontradikcije. Stav Turske prema nedavnom sukobu između Rusije i Ukrajine predstavlja važan slučaj za dekonstruisanje glavnih komponenti spoljne politike vlade AKP-a pod vođstvom predsednika Redžepa Tajipa Erdogana prema kritičnoj tački u regionu. Ovaj članak ima za cilj da istraži pristup Ankare ratu između Rusije i Ukrajine, na osnovu interakcije promena u globalnoj strukturi i domaćoj politici. U radu se tvrdi da je promenljiv globalni sistem, praćen novom konstrukcijom identiteta AKP-a, odigrao presudnu ulogu u formulisanju turske spoljne politike prema sukobu zasnovane na balansiranju i pragmatizmu. Članak takođe zaključuje da spoljna politika Turske predstavlja važnu studiju slučaja za razumevanje kako sui generis srednje sile odgovaraju na globalne sukobe u promenljivom globalnom sistemu.

*Gljučne reči:* Turska spoljna politika; Rusija; Ukrajina; Sui Generis srednje sile; identitet; pragmatizam; globalni sukobi; Crno more.



## THE FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION (2004-2024)

Daniyal REZAPOUR<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The Caucasus region has received less attention from Eurasian scholars and policymakers in recent years due to the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine and the turmoil in the West Asian region. However, the Caucasus region, especially the South Caucasus, suffers from severe geopolitical fragility due to internal and external reasons. As the post-Cold War rivalry between Russia and the United States has reached its highest point, their process of engagement and competition in this sensitive part of Eurasia deserves attention. Therefore, while examining the bilateral relations between Moscow and Washington in the Caucasus, the author aims to explain the current situation in the region and the logic of cooperation and competition between the two countries in recent years. The main objective of this research is to answer the question of what policies the United States and Russia have adopted towards the crises in this region and the reasons and logic of these two countries for these policies. The hypothesis put forward in response to this main question is that different perceptions of how to gain strategic, security, and military benefits have led to the competitive policymaking of Russia and the United States in the crises of the Caucasus region. This research also focuses on the cooperative logic of the United States and Russia in relation to the processes of resolving ethnic and political conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, which is in line with preserving the perceptual structure of the international system. While relying on the theory of attribution error and the descriptive-analytical approach to examine these hypotheses, the study method is based on documentary research using library data collection and analysis, websites, articles, and Internet resources.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:  
17 July 2024  
Revised:  
14 September 2024  
Accepted:  
28 September 2024

### KEYWORDS

Caucasus; United States; Russia; attribution error; competition; cooperation.

**Cite this article as:** Rezapour, Daniyal. 2024. "The Foreign Policy of Russia and the United States of America in the South Caucasus Region (2004-2024)". *The Review of International Affairs* LXXV (1192): 361–381. [https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe\\_ria.2024.75.1192.3](https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_ria.2024.75.1192.3)

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor of International Relations, Political Science Department, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran. E-mail: [danyalrezapour@guilan.ac.ir](mailto:danyalrezapour@guilan.ac.ir), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7964-1377>.

## Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union created new challenges and opportunities for the countries of the South Caucasus region. The three countries of this region (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) have taken different and sometimes contradictory paths, participating in various alliances, treaties, organisations, and programmes. This ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity has led to a wide range of ethnic and religious conflicts and, in some cases, devastating wars. The northern part of this geographical area is Christian, and the south is inhabited by Muslims. These ethnic and religious differences have led to the long-standing conflict between Yerevan and Baku over Nagorno-Karabakh, which still persisted when this article was written. In the northern parts of this geographical area, we also see the conflict between the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the central government. The consequences of this conflict were the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and the autonomy of the two regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Pilehvard and Zarmehri 2015, 40). Along with the emerging geopolitical and economic opportunities, these developments have prompted several foreign actors to turn their eyes to this part of Eurasia after nearly 70 years of Soviet dominance over the Caucasus.

The United States has had a significant impact on the security of the region in the past three decades as the global hegemon. It has been the main factor in preventing Russia's political and security ambitions in the region. However, it can be argued that the security issues in the region are more the product of foreign developments than the influence of regional actors. In fact, since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the regional dynamics, although not reflecting the complete situation of the region, have often been interpreted in the Russia-United States dichotomy (Sushentsov 2018). Russia and the United States are engaged in a risky confrontation, with Washington accusing Russia of violating international law in Ukraine and Moscow claiming that the West has violated the same laws in the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa. This current confrontation stems from these conflicting reports, which, given the current world order, raise the question of who the "revisionist power" and the primary producer of threats to international stability is. However, Ukraine is now the main focus of this confrontation in the post-Soviet space, and more literature is focused on the Moscow-Washington disputes around the 2022 Russian war in Ukraine. It seems that the issues of the Caucasus play a secondary role in this context. Even the Georgia-Russia war and the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict are studied as preconditions for the Ukraine conflicts in 2022 or in connection with the annexation of Crimea to Russia.

Although the armed conflicts after the collapse of the Soviet Union have many similarities, the interventions of Washington and Moscow in each of these crises and their support for different forces have had contradictory reasons. Moreover, there is no single pattern in the United States and Russia's relations regarding conflict resolution processes or security issues in the post-Cold War era, particularly in the Caucasus. Therefore, while recognising the serious consequences of the Ukraine crisis on Moscow and Washington's approaches across Eurasia, the developments in the Caucasus region should be considered from the perspective of the challenges and opportunities of this region from the disintegration of the Soviet Union to the present. Accordingly, this article seeks to answer the question of what policies the United States and Russia have adopted towards the crises in this region and the reasons and logic of these two countries for these policies. The hypothesis put forward is that different perceptions of how to gain strategic, security, and military benefits have led to the competitive policymaking of Russia and the United States in the crises of the Caucasus region. This research also focuses on the cooperative logic of the United States and Russia in relation to the processes of resolving ethnic and political conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, which is in line with preserving the perceptual structure of the international system.

### **Literature Review**

Elamiryan argues in the article "World Order and Shifting Regional Security Landscapes: The U.S. Policies in The South Caucasus" that international relations in the 21st century have witnessed a transformation in the global order, which has impacted the US priorities in various parts of the world, including the South Caucasus. The author discusses the US interests in the South Caucasus within the framework of the "Asia Pivot" policy and the revised National Security Strategy (2017), as well as the temporary National Security Guidance of President Biden (2021) regarding Europe and the Middle East. The author concludes that the US no longer finds the South Caucasus strategically appealing. This strategy is related to the US policy of re-focusing its strategic attention towards Asia and the Pacific, reducing interest in Caspian Sea energy resources, and withdrawing its military presence from Afghanistan (Elamiryan 2023).

Rumer, in a research project at the Carnegie Endowment titled "Losing Ground: Russia and Its Neighbors in Times of War", argues that Russia's war against Ukraine has significantly changed the Eurasian landscape as countries in Central Asia and the South Caucasus seek to diversify their economic, diplomatic, and security relations to protect themselves against Russia's

imperial ambitions. As a result, Russia has lost its influence in its immediate vicinity. However, due to its control over key transportation routes and extensive economic resources, Russia remains a major power in its claimed sphere of influence (Rumer 2023).

Neset and colleagues, in the strategic plan titled “Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War. Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry”, argue that the 45-day war over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 significantly changed the geopolitical landscape and redrawn new borders, altering the regional power balance. Additionally, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has further destabilised the regional situation and added new threats to an already unstable security environment. Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan initially tried to establish connections with the West while avoiding Russia’s attention. Overall, the space for foreign players has increased, and awareness of the change in the regional power balance between Russia and Turkey is evident among regional powers and foreign powers (Neset et al. 2023).

In the article “The US, Strategic Environment in the South Caucasus and Armenia: A Sight on the Future”, Elamiryan focuses on identifying the main interests of the US in Eurasia and attempts to define its strategic interests and priorities based on the region. The main question in this writing is centred on US relations with the South Caucasus and, in particular, with Armenia after the Ukraine conflict. This article simulates and tests four scenarios for future US interactions with the South Caucasus. The scenarios for future US interactions with the South Caucasus are based on these scenarios, which suggest that despite the lack of strategic interests in the region, the Ukraine conflict has led the US to increase its presence in the South Caucasus. This study is based on strategic documents, including the US National Security Strategy (2017), the 2021 National Security Guidance, other white papers, reports, and studies of US foreign policy (Elamiryan 2022).

In contrast to most works, this research attempts to explain the strategic policies of Russia and the US in the South Caucasus using the theory of attribution error, showing the reasons behind the Kremlin’s and the White House’s policies in the South Caucasus, which are rooted in different political, military, and economic policies of these two countries.

### **Theoretical Framework (Documentary Errors)**

The four main attribution errors are:

a) Fundamental Attribution Error: The reality is that in our judgements, we usually ignore external factors and do not attach much importance to them

while paying more attention to internal and dispositional causes. This demonstrates an error that Ross calls the fundamental attribution error. Even when there are obvious environmental factors, there is still a tendency to find personality and internal causes in attributional judgements. This bias seems to stem from the fact that when observing the behaviour of others, we focus our attention on actions and place the situation in which the behaviour occurs in the background. Therefore, the concept of fundamental attribution error, coined by social psychologist Lee Ross in 1977, is used to describe people's tendency to underestimate the influence of situational factors on human behaviour and to overestimate dispositional factors (Ross 1977).

b) Self-Serving Bias: According to the self-serving bias, individuals tend to attribute their failures to environmental and situational factors and their successes to internal factors and their own stable traits and characteristics. For example, one can refer to the attributions of politicians after success (based on hard work and effort) and failure (based on external conditions such as unfair competition and uninformed people) in elections. Due to the self-serving bias, many people consider their own negative actions justified and forgivable. Still, the similar negative actions of others are considered irrational and unforgivable, which can pose serious risks to interpersonal relationships (Ross and Nisbett 1991, 14-18).

c) Egocentrism: This is a tendency in which individuals see themselves as the centre of events more than reality, i.e., they believe they have been the main actor in controlling and influencing the occurrence of events and the behaviour of others (Abdoli and Ahmadi 2017, 4-5).

d) Causes of Errors: Several views have been presented on why these errors occur in our attributions, most of which fall into two categories: cognitive and motivational explanations. The cognitive model states that self-serving bias is essentially due to certain tendencies in how information is processed. We attribute positive results to internal causes and negative results to external causes because we expect to succeed and tend to attribute expected results more to internal causes than external causes. In contrast, the motivational explanation believes this bias stems from our need to maintain and enhance self-esteem. Although both motivational and cognitive factors may play a role in this attribution error, research evidence seems to support the motivational interpretation more. These biases, whatever the reason, can cause many disagreements between individuals. Also, due to this bias, many people consider their own negative actions rational and justifiable but consider similar actions by others as irrational and condemn them. Given these adverse effects, self-serving bias is considered one of the attribution errors that poses serious risks to interpersonal and even international relations (Aronson 2007, 81).

In the case of US-Russia relations, the phenomenon of attribution errors is often realised in the fact that one side (the US or Russia) tends to explain its own behaviour fairly based on external conditions but explains the behaviour and actions of the other side in terms of the aggressive and domineering nature of the respective country. This interpretation is often applicable to Russia and US regional policies, especially in the post-Soviet space. For example, Russia is often criticised for negatively interfering in the democratisation process of Eurasian countries, which in turn is attributed to the fundamental weakness of the Russian regime in the face of democratic developments. In contrast, Russian policymakers believe there are “great conspiracies” behind US foreign policy actions towards Russia (Rojanski 2019), explicitly rejecting the idea that policy may be the product of an individual’s emotions, inter-organisational mismanagement, or simply an opportunistic act. Therefore, the application of attribution errors in this research is to explain the asymmetry in the perceptions of the US and Russia and to clarify the reasons for the wrong conclusions of the two countries that have caused biases and challenges in the Caucasus region.

### **The Geopolitical Mismatch between the United States and Russia in the Caucasus**

To identify the differences and convergences between the United States and Russia, it is first and foremost important to assess the significance of the Caucasus region for both powers. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow defined the South Caucasus from a motivational perspective as its “near abroad” and considered ensuring stability in the Caucasian republics as a prerequisite for peaceful domestic development and maintaining its territorial integrity. Without any exaggeration, Russia can be considered a Caucasian country; seven electoral districts of the Russian Federation (Adygea, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachayevo-Cherkessia, North Ossetia, and Chechnya) are located in the North Caucasus region. Four other districts of Krasnodar, Stavropol, the Rostov region, and Kalmykia are located in the steppe foothills of the Caucasus. In addition, the Black Sea coast in the Krasnodar region and the Caucasian mineral water region in the Stavropol region are also part of the Caucasus region. Therefore, the territory of the Russian North Caucasus is larger than the three independent countries of the South Caucasus combined. Moreover, as a practical matter, the ethnic and political tensions that have arisen in the Russian states are closely related to the existing conflicts in the South Caucasus. The dynamics of the conflict in Georgia and South Ossetia have had a serious impact on the Ingush conflict in North Ossetia, Russia, and the situation in Georgia and Abkhazia has

influenced the demographic policy and identity of Circassia in Russia. The security environment in Chechnya and Dagestan has also been linked to developments in the Pankisi Gorge of Georgia. Russia and Azerbaijan, as neighbouring countries, have also faced the issue of ethnic groups (Lezgins and Avars), so it is in Russia's interest to have a positive relationship with Baku, regardless of its strategic military cooperation with Armenia (Janse 2021). Therefore, the Kremlin cannot achieve stability in the North Caucasus without a stable situation in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

The approach of the United States is completely different from the Russians. As Eugene Rumer and his colleagues correctly stated, "The United States has important interests in the South Caucasus that are not vital, including maintaining regional stability, preventing the outbreak of new ethnic-tribal wars, supporting democratic changes and better governance, and fully integrating Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia into the Western Front" (Rumer, Sokolsky, and Stronski 2017, 5). The egocentrism of US policy towards the Caucasus is linked to the reality that a lack of willingness regarding regional issues is not beneficial for the hegemon. This initial lack of intervention means that the United States has not been able to work on a number of broader security and military issues in the face of Russian strategies in the Caucasus. For example, Georgia is seen by US policymakers as a weak link among the former Soviet republics that Moscow can use as a tool to establish dominance over Eurasia. On the other hand, Azerbaijan is considered a secular, reliable partner and energy supplier for European countries. Armenia also has an important position for Westerners, which has somewhat placed it on the general course of US foreign policy in recent years through political tools, including a campaign to recognise the Armenian genocide by the Ottomans. However, the Caucasus issues play an incomparable role in US domestic politics compared to Russia, and the activities of lobby groups are more visible (Galstyan 2016, 8). Therefore, the Caucasus issues are examined as part of the larger geopolitical puzzles of the greater Middle East, the wider Black Sea region, energy policies, and democratisation. As a result, we observe a definite asymmetry in the importance of the Caucasus for the two superpowers, so these two countries have different motivations, and their engagement with regionally designed programmes is different.

### **The Rivalry between the United States and Russia in the South Caucasus**

The reasons for the competition and conflict between the United States and Russia in the Caucasus are numerous. They can be categorised into three main areas: First, the great power rivalry in both countries is still vibrant. As

Mark Kramer correctly noted, “the Cold War metaphor has gained widespread popularity in recent years, especially with the increase in East-West tensions” (Kramer 2018). The hostilities that have occurred in Ukraine and the Russian army’s invasion of Ukrainian territory are analysed as proxy conflicts between Washington and Moscow. Even local debates about Russia’s interference in the US presidential election and the ongoing information confrontation between the media of the two countries have reinforced these narratives (Chekov et al. 2019, 5). In this regard, the Caucasus, with its geopolitical situation that provides a wide advantage to regional rulers, is the arena of competition for powers that have highlighted the traditional features of the “love and hate” relationship between Russia and the US. Since security interests are very important for Russia, the successful initiative of one country is considered a defeat and challenge for the other. Second, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many conflicts in the Caucasus region have been directly or indirectly influenced by the United States. While Washington has allocated millions of dollars in aid to the South Caucasian republics, US government agencies and private companies have participated in every major political, economic, military, or humanitarian project in the region to sideline Moscow (Elamiryan 2022, 8). Third, what makes the situation critical is that the two sides have repeatedly supported rival, sometimes even reciprocal initiatives: the Southern Gas Corridor pipeline project against the Nabucco project, the GUAM Organisation against the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, Georgia’s territorial integrity against the secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and so on. Furthermore, the geographical location of the Caucasus causes this region to be involved in other regional geopolitical puzzles, primarily Central Asia and West Asia, which creates greater risks for Russia’s foreign policy in the near abroad.

Even though Moscow declared the near abroad as part of its vital interests, in 1994, the United States created an interagency working group for the newly independent countries. Also, in 1997, the US National Security Strategy announced its goals in the region: “We have prioritised working with countries in the region [Caspian and Caucasus] to establish multiple pipeline companies to ensure access to oil” (Elamiryan 2023, 7). However, Russia has always viewed the Caucasus as an interdependent system where the processes in the South Caucasus affect the North Caucasus and vice versa. Therefore, based on the self-serving bias, Moscow has always considered regional security much more sensitive than other issues and views the US initiative in the Caucasus as a cause of insecurity and a factor for greater influence on the most unstable region of Russia (the North Caucasus). Over the past 30 years, Washington has experienced three important stages in its Caucasus strategy, each with its own specific implications for bilateral

relations and its own “fundamental problem”. The first, in the 1990s, was the “getting acquainted with the region” stage. US policy at the time consisted of two factors: 1) establishing partnerships, including military partnerships, with the newly independent countries of the region, which led to the penetration of US military companies into the region. 2) Securing energy projects in the Caspian and Black Seas, in which US companies had a large share. For example, four major US oil companies, ExxonMobil, Chevron, Dun Energy, and Hess, along with the International Azerbaijan Consortium, accounting for 40% of the shares, were formed to develop oil reserves in the Republic of Azerbaijan, ensuring that no major threat to US national security emerges in the region (Markedonov and Suchkov 2020, 7).

### **The Context of Intensification of Competition between the US and Russia in the North Caucasus**

Economic interests, resource policy, and the promotion of democracy have been portrayed as the dominant image of US security intervention in the region. Therefore, when the United States first began NATO-led military exercises in the Black Sea in the 1990s, Russia perceived this country’s security strategy in the region as threatening. However, Moscow lacked the necessary resources and political will to stand against this strategy and, due to the bloody and costly conflict in Chechnya, was forced to agree to only a reactive policy, although Moscow was concerned about foreign military activity near its borders and considered these activities a direct threat to its national security. It was at this time that a fundamental attribution error took shape that has subsequently worsened bilateral relations to this day: In most developments in the North Caucasus, the US view differed from Russia’s. Certainly, Russian military operations carried out in the region or human rights violations related to these operations have been a focal point for US intervention. However, other issues have also been on the agenda. Since the first Chechen campaigns (1994-1996), the issue of human rights violations by the Russian Federal Security Forces has become a popular topic among many Western analysts, journalists, and human rights activists on both sides of the political spectrum. Using historical analogies, they pointed to Russia’s imperialist methods of suppressing the indigenous people of the North Caucasus. They also argued that Russia, under the pretext of fighting terrorism, was imposing the most severe repression against the region’s indigenous population and that the United States should express its position on this critical situation. The idea that the Russians were fighting “violent jihadists with freedom fighters” was promoted at a high level. This concept was based on the assumption that Russia was actually implementing a brutal “neo-colonial” policy in the North Caucasus, and arguments were made

that the insurgents were fighting against the Kremlin's oppression and injustices. Thus, Moscow's discriminatory actions (fundamental attribution errors) are considered the main factor of chaos in the region (Applebaum 1999, 12-18).

Certainly, the Kremlin has committed and continues to commit many strategic errors in the North Caucasus: widespread poverty, high unemployment rates among youth, population growth, and alarming migration statistics make the people of this region more susceptible to fundamentalist ideas. However, the different language used in US and Russian discourse on these issues goes beyond subtle linguistic differences among researchers and should be explained as a fundamental attribution error. Westerners reflect harsh interpretations and define highly polarised and horrific narratives for the international community. Therefore, to a large extent, there are still two contradictory narratives about the situation in the North Caucasus. This contradictory narrative has created a major obstacle to effective counter-terrorism cooperation between Russia and the United States and spread the seeds of mistrust and mutual suspicion. Conceptually, it is difficult for many US analysts and politicians to think outside the "stereotypical pattern of oppression of the Chechen people" and recognise other actors involved in this process. Some still deny the relationship between the infamous Caucasian states and Al-Qaeda, and US decision-makers believe that the two countries face challenges of different natures (Williams 2007, 156-178). Western politicians believe that while the US and its allies deal with Islamic fundamentalist groups, separatism in the North Caucasus is of an ethnic nature and is merely a "Russian issue". These high-risk ideas push the US towards cooperation with some Islamic groups, which is not at all beneficial for the advancement of bilateral relations in the region. The truth, however, is that the ethnic-nationalist agenda of the 1990s is over and has quickly been replaced by extreme Islamism. Since then, much of the North Caucasus has been one of the frontlines in the war against global Islamist terrorism, as the relationships between terrorist groups in the North Caucasus and the Greater Middle East, whether in terms of ideology, financial flow, or operational activity, have been evident and proven (Yarlykapov 2017, 5). This is the second misconception of the current situation in the region that leads to contradictory public opinion in the US regarding the Caucasus. As a result, Russia and the United States have fundamental differences on this issue, leading to conflicting disagreements that remain unresolved.

### **Revisionism or Maintaining the Status Quo in the South Caucasus**

The situation on the other side of the Caucasus mountain range was not better due to the instability of the South Caucasus republics in the 1990s. Four out of eight armed conflicts in the post-Soviet space in the late 1980s

and early 1990s took place in the South Caucasus. Additionally, several destabilising factors emerged in the region, such as Moscow's recognition of autonomous regions (Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia) as independent countries. However, contrary to popular US narratives suggesting that the Kremlin uses the potential for regional conflict to manipulate the perceptions of local elites in Russia's orbit, the Kremlin has never shown a desire to engage in conflict with South Caucasus countries. Analysing nearly three decades of Russian foreign policy in the region, two fundamental positions that drive Russia's actions can be identified:

1. A "revisionist position" defined by recognising the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the escalation of the conflicts from 2004 to 2008 and the subsequent war with Georgia in August 2008.

2. Russia's relatively neutral reaction to the recent conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020. Moscow perceives the balance of power has shifted in favour of Azerbaijan over the past two decades, and Armenia has been unreasonable and uncompromising instead of adhering to a more or less acceptable agreement. Russia's silence regarding Armenia is also related to the fact that Russian diplomats, both in the past decade and currently, feel that Yerevan has wasted time when it could have peacefully resolved its territorial dispute. Experts believe that while Russia has sought to display more power on the global stage during Putin's era, the conflict in the near abroad, in the former Soviet Union territory, is a challenge to Russian authority, and this agreement should be considered an achievement. Russia has demonstrated its competence in achieving diplomatic victory by mediating and ending the six-week war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh (Zare and Zargar 2021, 32).

Since 2016, Russia's foreign policy strategy towards the independent republics of Georgia includes "assisting in the establishment of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia as modern democratic countries, strengthening their international positions, and ensuring reliable security and improving the economic situation of these two republics" (Komakhia 2023, 2). This position demonstrates Moscow's interest in creating two independent countries supported by the international community, especially the United States. In Russia's foreign policy strategy, Moscow has expressed interest in normalising relations with Georgia in areas where the Georgian government is willing to establish peace, considering the current political conditions in the South Caucasus. In practice, this means maintaining the status quo created after recognising the independence of the two former Georgian republics in the region. Therefore, from Moscow's perspective, the South Caucasus consists of five countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia) rather than three. Moscow has established its

relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia based on bilateral agreements: “Strategic Partnership and Alliance” (with Abkhazia on November 24, 2014) and “Alliance and Integration” (with South Ossetia on March 18, 2015). Even if these agreements somewhat solidify Moscow’s political and military presence in both republics (currently, the South Ossetian Army is integrated into the Russian Armed Forces), they can hardly be considered new turning points in the region. These agreements will remain in place as long as Moscow guarantees the security, economic and social improvement, and progress of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Markedonov 2018). These two agreements have their own distinct characteristics. The differences can be explained by the fundamental divergence in these two issues:

While Abkhazia strives to maintain its independence (with Russia’s political and security guarantees), South Ossetia sees independence not as an ultimate goal but as a transitional stage towards unification with North Ossetia within Russia. Regarding Abkhazia, the elites of this republic try to make it clear that Russian citizens do not have the right to obtain Abkhazian citizenship or access to land resources and real estate. On the other hand, South Ossetia is interested in maximum integration with Russia, including annexation similar to Crimea. As a result, it appears that a segment of the important strategic Baku-Supsa line has come under Tskhinvali’s control. Currently, the South Ossetian border post is located 450 meters from the highway connecting Azerbaijan, Armenia, and eastern Georgia to the Black Sea ports and Turkey. (Neset et al. 2023, 24).

Despite Russia’s support for these two republics, Moscow’s influence on the elites of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is primarily examined from the perspective of military or financial support, and many internal processes in both republics have a logic independent of the Kremlin’s strategic policies, based on fundamental attribution errors. For example, in 2014, the leader of Abkhazia was changed due to widespread protests. However, opposition protests did not stop after the election of another leader, Raul Khajimba. In January 2020, Khajimba left his post due to protesters’ activities, despite Russian support. In 2017, Anatoly Bibilov became the president of South Ossetia, while Vladimir Putin openly showed his support for his main rival (the current president), Leonid Tibilov. Additionally, a series of electoral campaigns in Georgia during 2013-2016 significantly changed the Georgian domestic political landscape. After the removal of Mikheil Saakashvili, along with the United National Movement party, tangible changes occurred in Georgia-Russia relations, although these changes remained tactical and selective. Moreover, the entire normalisation process depends on internal dynamics in Georgia, and the escalation of the political crisis between Russians and Georgians in 2019 clearly demonstrated this (Pourahmadi and

Feizollahi 2023, 42). The new leader of Georgia, representing the Georgian Dream Party, maintained loyalty to the strategic approaches of the previous government: “orientation towards NATO and the EU”. At the same time, the Georgian Dream Party, unlike Saakashvili, made serious changes in its tactical approaches. The strategic goal of NATO and EU membership is now observed not with open confrontation with Russia but with a pragmatic approach in relations with Moscow. In 2023, this country did not have diplomatic relations with Russia. Besides, there was a lack of air communication lines between the two countries and clear condemnation of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, defending and supporting Ukraine’s territorial integrity, and declaring a positive vote in UN resolutions in favour of Ukraine. These were examples of the Georgian government’s actions in moving against Moscow’s policy (Ambrositti 2022). On the other hand, in early February 2017, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin and Georgian Prime Minister’s Special Representative for Russia, Zurab Abashidze, expressed interest in returning to the six-year treaty to open trade corridors between the Russian Federation and Georgia (Ellyatt 2019). This treaty has not been successful in practice as it affected the interests of Tbilisi and Moscow but also of Yerevan and Baku and individuals who are somewhat known. However, the fact of proposing some constructive initiatives despite existing differences was a very positive signal. Today, the only topic of potential cooperation between Moscow and Tbilisi is the fight against terrorism, especially considering the radicalisation of the population in Georgia’s Akhmeta district (Pankisi Gorge) bordering Russia and the joining of natives of this region in various jihadist movements in the Middle East and primarily in the Ukraine crisis.

Regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, changes in Russia’s relations with Armenia—its most loyal partner and only official ally in the South Caucasus, as well as a country where it has two military bases—are the best indicator of geopolitical change in the region. The 2020 war was a serious test for the relationship between the two countries, in which Russia failed. Its lack of interest in supporting Armenia throughout the crisis was evident. Putin, attending the annual gathering of foreign academics and journalists in October 2020 at the height of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, was asked whether Russia would stand by Armenia against Azerbaijan and Turkey. He replied: “Russia has always had special relations with Armenia, but we have always had special relations with Azerbaijan as well... Armenia and Azerbaijan are both equal partners for us” (President of Russia 2020). A few days later, as the conflict continued, Putin rejected a formal request for urgent consultations on providing assistance to Armenia when Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan asked Moscow for help. Instead, the Russian Foreign Ministry announced that if the conflict directly occurred on the Armenian territory, it

would provide all necessary assistance (Toksabay 2020, 3). The deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces after the signing of a ceasefire agreement mediated by Russia by Armenia and Azerbaijan in November 2020 has been an important move by Russia that strengthens its role as a key player between Baku and Yerevan. However, Russia's motivational and peace-seeking approach has been deeply disappointing for Armenia, as during repeated conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russian peacekeepers did nothing to prevent the capture of key sites in Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijani forces (Hosseinzadeh and Nasiri Lotum 2023, 64). Major conflicts that began in September 2022 resulted in the deaths of more than 200 Armenian soldiers and 80 Azerbaijani soldiers, and the conflicts spread to the Armenian territory. Peacekeepers again took no action to prevent it or to prevent the capture of additional territories by Azerbaijan. The feeling of betrayal during and after the Second Karabakh War has led Armenia to reconsider its close relationship and reliance on Russia, to the extent that Pashinyan said in June 2023, "We are not Russia's ally in the war against Ukraine" (France 24 2023). The negative attitude towards Russia worsened in 2023. In a March survey, 50 per cent of respondents described relations with Russia as good and 49 per cent as bad. Russia fell to fourth place in the ranking of Armenia's most important political partners after France, Iran, and the United States. It also fell to third place as Armenia's most important security partner after Iran and France. Fifty per cent of respondents placed Russia as a source of political threat, ranking third after Azerbaijan and Turkey (Rumer 2023, 32). Therefore, there can be no doubt that the outcome of the 2020 war and Moscow's failure to save Armenia have been the main reasons for the change in attitude towards Russia.

Despite the fact that Moscow-Washington relations have reached their lowest point after the 2022 Ukraine crisis, US diplomats positively evaluate Russia's leadership role both in the process of escalating military conflict and in supporting the negotiation process. Therefore, the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement process may be the only relatively successful framework for US-Russia interaction in the post-Soviet space. Washington, like Moscow, maintains a balance between different stakeholder groups because, on the one hand, issues related to energy security and Caspian geopolitics bring US policymakers closer to Baku. On the other hand, the liberal views prevailing in Washington are closer to the positions of the Armenian lobby. In this regard, Washington supports the principle of territorial integrity of all newly independent Caucasus countries, and the deployment of more than 80 US troops on Armenian soil could be a guarantee against possible Azerbaijani attacks on Nagorno-Karabakh or Armenia itself. However, Washington's action in this region, which has vital interests for Moscow, will not be without risk.

Moscow views the strengthening of Washington's partnership in the Caucasus as a self-serving bias of the Biden administration, using the Ukraine crisis to challenge Russia's influence in the region. The latest US proposal to unblock the Lachin corridor is to open an alternative route for Nagorno-Karabakh through the Azerbaijani city of Aghdam. According to Tigran Grigoryan, a political analyst and head of the Regional Centre for Democracy and Security (a Yerevan-based think tank), even if the Lachin corridor and Aghdam route are opened, Baku's capacity to close them again remains. The Biden administration should use its leverage over Azerbaijan to ensure the end of the Lachin corridor blockade while simultaneously working towards a solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that both recognises Azerbaijan's sovereignty and provides enforceable guarantees to defend the rights and future security of the Armenian population, which likely requires coordination with Russia (Dersimonian 2023). Although such a scenario may be difficult to imagine, Washington and Moscow have cooperated on Nagorno-Karabakh in the past despite strained relations in other regions. Now, due to tensions in this region, such coordination becomes justifiable.

### **The Impact of the Ukraine Crisis on the South Caucasus**

While most analysts may view the Ukraine crisis in 2022 as related to the near abroad or Eastern Europe, this unresolved crisis has certainly sparked a broader confrontation in Russia-US relations. Some shocks from the Ukraine crisis have also reached the South Caucasus, one of the regions prone to changing the course of conflict between Russia and the West. This is because, firstly, there is considerable doubt among South Caucasus elites about the ability of European institutions and US diplomacy to resolve conflicts in the post-Soviet space. The responsible elites in Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Baku realised that in the event of a serious war in the region, no international institution or organisation, or any major European power, is ready to defend the interests of these countries in case of a military war with Russia. Secondly, the South Caucasus countries found themselves in an irreversible position: the perceptual shock from the Ukraine crisis showed that decision-making and recklessness regarding European and Eurasian integration come at a high cost, and the time for the right choice for Baku, Tbilisi, and Yerevan may be running out.

For Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, Russia's invasion of Ukraine entails (new) security risks for a region that has been burdened by such a security environment since the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. For Armenia, Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh can influence the Armenian government and public opinion in line with Russian interests. However, increasing

dissatisfaction within Armenia may also jeopardise the independence of the elected government. For Azerbaijan, Russia's egocentric thinking may be in line with Azerbaijan's (along with Turkey's) geostrategic role in relation to energy policies with Western countries. Russia may pressure or influence Azerbaijan's decision-making by increasing or decreasing its room for manoeuvres in the post-Second Nagorno-Karabakh War environment. Georgia may experience a worsening situation in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and of Russia's efforts to create power through this conflict. Russian propaganda may also increase in Georgia, exacerbating social and political polarisation (Civil Georgia 2023). All countries in the region must mitigate the consequences of Russian pressure and protect their national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. If Ukraine's territory changes due to the war, this will potentially have severe consequences for the South Caucasus countries. In addition to the severe security risks the region may face, the South Caucasus has already experienced significant economic pressure due to the war and mainly extensive sanctions against Russia. Factors such as the downward trend of the Russian ruble and the decline in trade and economic activity are having an impact. Moreover, all three countries have large diaspora communities in Russia who regularly send money to their relatives. Evidence suggests a decrease in these remittances even before the sanctions took effect (Elamiryan 2023, 21). Russia may also try to use its networks and dependency structures in these three countries to circumvent sanctions and place countries in opposition to the United States, the European Union, and other parts of the international community.

There is also a possibility that the shock of Russia's actions in Ukraine and the change in international order may alter the behavioural patterns of intervening powers. In the worst-case scenario, the spillover effects of Russia's war on Ukraine may lead to more disagreements between South Caucasus countries as they try to remain on Russia's side to prevent its aggression and gain maximum autonomy. In the best-case scenario, the spillover effects of the war could lead to unity against a common threat. To illustrate the worst-case scenario, on February 22, 2022, just two days before Russia invaded Ukraine and one day after Russia recognised Donetsk and Luhansk as independent countries, Azerbaijan signed an agreement with Russia. This agreement was a joint cooperation pact aiming to bring Azerbaijan's relations with Russia to the level of Armenia-Russia relations and secure Azerbaijan's gains after the Second Karabakh War. However, the 43-article agreement also states points that may restrict Azerbaijan's room for manoeuvres in international relations (points 4 and 7) and its aspiration as an energy supplier with Turkey and the Caspian Sea route to Europe (point 25). This meeting was described more as a humiliation of the President of Azerbaijan in how it

occurred, the meeting procedures, and the date of the meeting, similar to the Treaty of Turkmenchay, which was implemented on February 22, 1828 (Neset et al. 2023, 43-46). However, some developments indicate a better scenario: One of these events is the bilateral peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, facilitated by the European Union without Russian involvement (although Moscow is not expected to withdraw). Following a meeting between senior representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan coordinated by the EU in Brussels on March 30, 2022, another meeting was held on April 6, after which the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, said: The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan met and agreed to move towards a peace agreement. Furthermore, the fact that the three South Caucasus countries have many common challenges with Russia could potentially be a unifying force among them (Ambrosetti 2022). However, currently, such a process lacks a suitable foundation, but it is likely to be a good starting point given that the region has had little experience of cooperation.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the data obtained in this research, we should now examine the question and hypothesis within the framework of the concept of attribution errors. According to the idea of attribution error, in the world of politics, we will not seek to understand how an actor behaves. Our only purpose is to understand the reason for performing a political action or behaviour. Therefore, we seek to obtain the causes of each state's behaviour, but the point here is that we understand the causes when we look for attributions of individual behaviour. As shown in the behaviour of Russia and the United States in this article, the actions of these two countries in the South Caucasus in various events, starting from Ossetia and Abkhazia and reaching the Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine incidents, have been influenced by misunderstandings of each other and a lack of understanding of each other's positions. However, it was shown that each country considered its own behaviours to have valid and correct reasons while viewing the other's actions as erroneous and malicious. In fact, the sense of mutual insecurity they receive from each other and the analysis that each has of the other's behaviour from the outside causes an attribution error between the two countries. Therefore, based on the existing hypothesis, different perceptions of how to gain strategic, security, and military benefits have led to competitive policymaking by Russia and the United States in the crises of the Caucasus region. These perceptions in the issues of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia showed that the two powers, in recognising each other's behaviour, did not try to pay attention to the underlying reasons for

such behaviour. Instead of moving towards cooperation, each considers the other responsible for the existing conditions, and a competitive state has prevailed. Consequently, the logic of cooperation in this region, especially after the Ukraine crisis, has reached a state of perceptual deadlock, at least until the time of writing this research.

## References

- Abdoli, Hadi, and Mohammad Reza Ahmadi. 2017. "Attribution Errors and Their Role in Human Behavior from the Perspective of the Holy Quran". *Bi-Quarterly Journal of Lifestyle Research* 3 (4).
- Ambrosetti, Eleonora Tafuro. 2022. "A New Regional Order In The Making: The Coming Geopolitics Of The South Caucasus", *ISPI Dossier*, Italian Institute For International Political Studies, November 2022. [https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/dossier\\_caucasus\\_november\\_2022.pdf](https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/dossier_caucasus_november_2022.pdf)
- Applebaum, Anne. 1999. "Ethnic Cleansing, Russian Style", *The Weekly Standard*, December 20, 1999. <https://www.anneapplebaum.com/1999/12/20/ethnic-cleansing-russian-style/>
- Aronson, Elliot. 2007. *Social Psychology*, 4th edition, translated by Hossein Shokrkon. Tehran: Roshd Publication.
- Chekov, Alexander D., Anna V. Makarycheva, Anastasia M. Solomentseva, Maxim A. Suchkov, and Andrey A. Sushentsov. 2019. "War of the Future: A View from Russia". *Survival* 61 (6): 25-4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2019.1688563>
- Civil Georgia. 2023. "PM: NATO Enlargement 'One of the Main Reasons for Ukraine War'", *Civil Georgia*, May 30, 2023. <https://civil.ge/archives/545397>.
- Dersimonian, Artin. 2023. "Can the US work with Russia in Nagorno-Karabakh?", *Responsible statecraft*, September 12, 2023. <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/armenia-azerbaijan-nagorno-karabakh/>
- Elamiryan, Ruben. 2022. "The US, Strategic Environment in the South Caucasus and Armenia: A Sight on the Future". *Journal of Political Science: Bulletin of Yerevan University* 1 (3): 25-35. <https://doi.org/10.46991/JOPS/2022.1.3.025>.
- Elamiryan, Ruben. 2023. "World Order and Shifting Regional Security Landscapes: The U.S. Policies in The South Caucasus". *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 11(1): 1-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.54945/jjia.v11i1.186>.
- Ellyatt, Holly. 2019. "Tensions between Russia and Georgia are on the rise again: Here's why it matters", *CNBC*, July 11, 2019. <https://www.cnbc.com>

- com/2019/07/11/russia-and-georgia-tensions-are-rising-heres-why-and-why-it-matters.html.
- France 24. 2023., “‘Not our friends’: Anger with Russia builds in Armenia”, *France 24*, April 16, 2023. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230416-not-our-friends-anger-with-russia-builds-in-armenia>.
- Galstyan, Areg. 2016. “Karabakh Curves in the US Foreign Policy”, *International Affairs*, April 27, 2016. <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/15177>.
- Hosseinzadeh, Vahid, and Behzad Nasiri Lotum. 2023. “The Impact of the Ukraine War on Caucasus Transit Corridors”. *Journal of Country Studies* 2.
- Janse, Diana. 2021. “Georgia and the Russian Aggression”, *SCEEUS Reports on Human Rights and Security in Eastern Europe* No. 7, November 18, 2021. <https://sceeus.se/en/publications/georgia-and-the-russian-aggression>.
- Kramer, Mark. 2018. “U.S.-Russian Relations and the “New Cold War” Metaphor”, *PONARS Eurasia*, November 16, 2018. <https://www.ponars Eurasia.org/u-s-russian-relations-and-the-new-cold-war-metaphor/>
- Komakhia, Mamuka. 2023. “Russia’s New Foreign Policy Concept and the Occupied Regions of Georgia”, *Rondeli Foundation*, April 24, 2023. <https://gfsis.org.ge/blog/view/1576>.
- Markedonov, Sergey M., and Maxim A. Suchkov. 2020. “Russia and the United States in the Caucasus: cooperation and competition”, *Caucasus Survey*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23761199.2020.1732101>.
- Markedonov, Sergey. 2018. “Russia and the conflicts in the South Caucasus: main approaches, problems, and prospects” *Caucasus Edition - Journal of Conflict Transformation*, December 20, 2018. <https://caucasusedition.net/russia-and-the-conflicts-in-the-south-caucasus-main-approaches-problems-and-prospects>.
- Neset, Siri, Mustafa Aydin, Ayça Ergun, Richard Giragosian, Kornely Kakachia, and Arne Strand. 2023. “Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry”. *CMI Report No. 4*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Pilehvard, Alireza, and Abed Zarmehri. 2015. “South Caucasus; Discouraged by the European Union and Disappointed by the Russian Federation”. *Central Asia and Caucasus Quarterly* 90.
- Pourahmadi, Hossein, and Mehdi Feizollahi. 2023. “Zero-Sum Game in the South Caucasus (Focusing on the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War)”. *Central Asia and Caucasus Studies Quarterly* 123.
- President of Russia. 2020. “Meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club”, *President of Russia*, October 22, 2020. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64261>.

- Rojanski, Matt. 2019. "Understanding the US-Russia Relationship", *The Wilson Center Podcast: Need to Know*. <https://soundcloud.com/the-wilson-center/need-to-know-episode-1-understanding-the-usrussia-relationship-matt-rojansky?in=the-wilson-center/sets/need-to-know>
- Ross, Lee, and Richard E. Nisbett. 1991. *The Person and the Situation: Perspectives of Social Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ross, Lee. 1977. "The Intuitive Psychologist and His Shortcomings: Distortions in the Attribution Process." In: *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 10, edited by Leonard Berkowitz, 173-220. New York: Academic Press.
- Rumer, Eugene, Richard Sokolsky, and Paul Stronski. 2017. "U.S. Policy Toward the South Caucasus: Take Three", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 31, 2017. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2017/05/us-policy-toward-the-south-caucasus-take-three?lang=en>
- Rumer, Eugene. 2023. "Russia's Wartime Foreign Policy: Regional Hegemony in Question", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August 17, 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/08/russias-war-time-foreign-policy-regional-hegemony-in-question?lang=en>
- Sushentsov, Andrey. 2018. "Psychological Underpinnings of Russia-US Crisis: Symmetrical Paranoia", *Valdai Discussion Club*, September 4, 2018. <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/psychological-underpinnings-of-russia-us-crisis-sy/>
- Toksabay, Ece. 2020. "Turkish arms sales to Azerbaijan surged before Nagorno-Karabakh fighting", *Reuters*, October 14, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/turkish-arms-sales-to-azerbaijan-surged-before-nagorno-karabakh-fighting-idUSKBN26Z237/>
- Williams, Brian Glyn. 2007. "Allah's Foot Soldiers: An Assessment of the Role of Foreign Fighters and Al-Qaida in the Chechen Insurgency". In: *Ethno-Nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus*, edited by Moshe Gammer, 156–178. London: Routledge.
- Yarlykapov, Akhmet. 2017. "Terrorism in the North Caucasus", *Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute Expert Comment*, March 23, 2017. [https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/5c6/Yarlykapov\\_Akhmet.\\_Terrorism\\_in\\_the\\_Nort.pdf](https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/5c6/Yarlykapov_Akhmet._Terrorism_in_the_Nort.pdf)
- Zare, Ali, and Afshin Zargar. 2021. "Russia's Comparative Policy in the Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine Crises". *Journal of Political Interpretation Knowledge* 3 (10).

## **SPOLJNA POLITIKA RUSIJE I SJEDINJENIH AMERIČKIH DRŽAVA U REGIONU JUŽNOG KAVKAZA (2004-2024)**

*Apstrakt:* Region Kavkaza je u poslednjih nekoliko godina dobio manje pažnje od strane evroazijskih stručnjaka i donosioca politika zbog tekućeg oružanog sukoba u Ukrajini i previranja u regionu Zapadne Azije. Međutim, region Kavkaza, posebno Južni Kavkaz, pati od ozbiljne geopolitičke krhkosti usled unutrašnjih i spoljnih faktora. Kako je rivalstvo između Rusije i Sjedinjenih Američkih Država nakon Hladnog rata dostiglo svoj vrhunac, njihov proces angažovanja i konkurencije u ovom osetljivom delu Evroazije zaslužuje pažnju. Stoga, u analizi bilateralnih odnosa između Moskve i Vašingtona u Kavkazu, autor ima za cilj da objasni trenutnu situaciju u regionu, kao i logiku saradnje i konkurencije između ove dve zemlje u poslednjih nekoliko godina. Glavni cilj ovog istraživanja je da odgovori na pitanje koje su politike Sjedinjene Države i Rusija usvojile prema krizama u ovom regionu, kao i razloge i logiku ovih politika. Hipoteza izneta kao odgovor na ovo glavno pitanje je da su različite percepcije o načinu sticanja strateških, bezbednosnih i vojnih prednosti dovele do konkurentskih politika Rusije i Sjedinjenih Država u krizama u regionu Kavkaza. Ovo istraživanje se takođe fokusira na logiku saradnje Sjedinjenih Država i Rusije u vezi sa procesima rešavanja etničkih i političkih sukoba u Abhaziji, Južnoj Osetiji i Nagorno-Karabahu, što je u skladu sa očuvanjem perceptivne strukture međunarodnog sistema. Oslanjajući se na teoriju atribucione greške i deskriptivno-analitički pristup u ispitivanju ovih hipoteza, istraživačka metoda zasniva se na dokumentarnom istraživanju koristeći prikupljanje i analizu podataka iz biblioteka, veb sajtova, članaka i internet izvora.

*Ključne reči:* Kavkaz; Sjedinjene Države; Rusija; atribuciona greška; konkurencija; saradnja.



## THE CONCEPT OF DETERRENCE IN CURRENT RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Branislav MILOSAVLJEVIĆ<sup>1</sup>, Veljko BLAGOJEVIĆ<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Deterrence has long been present in international politics, but it became particularly significant during the Cold War due to its role in great power relations. In contemporary relations, it is necessary to adapt old narratives to reflect new and complex realities, as the challenges posed by the modern world complicate the formulation of deterrence strategies. Nevertheless, the goal of deterrence remains to convince the opponent, through various means and methods, that the costs of taking action far outweigh the potential benefits it could achieve. The authors analyse the concept of deterrence using multiple theories in the domain of theoretical considerations, among other things, and its application in the current relations in the Middle East. After discussing the general theoretical viewpoints, the concept of deterrence is analysed further through the case of Israel and Iran and the relationship between the United States and the Houthis, a non-state actor, to elucidate its specifics. Besides historical circumstances, the analysis also examines current events to understand how the most significant actors have applied the concept of deterrence. Recent events between Iran and Israel, particularly in the political and military context, confirm the relevance of the deterrence concept in international relations.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:  
7 August 2024  
Revised:  
15 October 2024  
Accepted:  
27 October 2024

### KEYWORDS

deterrence; Middle East; Houthis; foreign policy; international relations.

**Cite this article as:** Milosavljević, Branislav, and Veljko Blagojević. “The Concept of Deterrence in Current Relations in the Middle East”. *The Review of International Affairs* LXXV (1192): 383–403. [https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe\\_ria.2024.75.1192.4](https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_ria.2024.75.1192.4)

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Faculty of Business Studies and Law, “Union - Nikola Tesla” University, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [branislav.milosavljevic@fppsp.edu.rs](mailto:branislav.milosavljevic@fppsp.edu.rs), <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1263-3108>.

<sup>2</sup> Senior Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [veljko.diplomacy@bg.ac.rs](mailto:veljko.diplomacy@bg.ac.rs), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6981-0560>.

## Introduction

The concept of deterrence is most commonly used to gain a better understanding of the nuclear arms race and crises in international relations. However, the concept is significantly broader since deterrence involves the use of threats by one party in an attempt to convince another party to refrain from certain actions. Typically, deterrence is the practice of discouraging or restraining a single state from undertaking undesirable actions, such as armed aggression. That includes efforts to stop or prevent actions, in contrast to the closely related but distinct concept of “coercion”, which attempts to force participants to take specific actions. Deterrent threats have a dual intent: immediate deterrence is directed against a direct attack on the defender, while extended deterrence aims to prevent attacks on allies (Mazarr 2018, 2). Although immediate and extended deterrence are usually considered separately, these concepts are interconnected. There are two main types of deterrence: general and immediate. Immediate deterrence pertains to the relations between opposing states, where one side is seriously contemplating an attack while the other threatens retaliation to prevent that attack from occurring (Morgan 1977, 28). Immediate deterrence relates to crises and the attempts of political leaders to avert further escalation of the crisis and its eventual transition into armed conflict. Additionally, general deterrence refers to adversaries maintaining armed forces to regulate their relations, even when neither side is close to launching an attack (Morgan 2003, 86). Despite various theoretical considerations and viewpoints, “deterrence in its broadest sense signifies convincing an opponent not to initiate a specific action because the perceived benefits do not justify the assessed costs and risks” (Mearsheimer 1983, 14).

In general terms, successful deterrence implies that the challenger backs down after the defender threatens retaliation, while failure of immediate deterrence leads to the challenger attacking despite the defender’s threats. Nevertheless, deterrence through the use of threats (explicit or implicit) by one side to convince the other to maintain the status quo is a general phenomenon not confined to any specific time or place. According to classical deterrence theory, there is a challenger (seeking to change the status quo) and a defender aiming to deter the challenge. In this context, the challenger decides whether to pursue cooperation (maintaining the status quo) or to launch an attack. The defender also has two options: acceptance (of the status quo) or rejection, leading to conflict. In a typical deterrence model, mutual confrontation or reconciliation often rests on “shaky ground” (Quackenbush 2011, 741-746).

The decision to initiate armed conflict is not based solely on military factors and the assessment of a military’s ability to achieve its objectives; non-military aspects also play a role in deterrence, which must be considered. If a successful

military action can result in considerable political gains, then a number of specific factors impacting decisions need to be examined. Decision-makers or political leaders must consider risks and costs that are not associated with the military dimension. That includes an objective assessment of potential reactions from allies and adversaries, consideration of various aspects of international law, possible responses in international organisations like the UN, and an evaluation of the impact on the national economy (Morgan 2003, 44).

Although deterrence has been a foreign policy tool since ancient times, it remains subject to numerous limitations. By its nature, it requires a common foundation for particular actions and the continuous examination of circumstances, which change constantly through effective communication channels. This emphasises how important it is for a state to find a balance between employing adaptive deterrence and maintaining its political identity. For deterrence to succeed, policymakers must consider the need for qualified and tailored approaches with the internal and external behaviour models specific to particular participants (Filippidou 2020, 16).

In this context, the theory of perfect deterrence is particularly compelling because it posits that the credibility of a state's threat depends on its preference between withdrawal and conflict, explaining the dynamics of deterrence in an extended concept (massive retaliation and flexible response). This theory is based on the assumption that states have different inclinations; some are more prone to withdraw rather than fight, while others prefer to engage and thus possess credible threats. It highlights two dimensions of capability as essential conditions for deterring threats. The physical aspect relates to the ability to carry out a threat. Notably, threats that can be neutralised by a preemptive strike from the other side lack deterrent capability, indicating a low probability of successful deterrence if the challenger has first-strike capability. The second dimension, the psychological aspect of capability, pertains to the cost assessment by a potential attacker. If the challenger perceives that the burdens of conflict are less daunting than the costs of inaction, deterrence fails. An example cited is US deterrence regarding North Vietnam, where the issue was not disbelief in the threats but rather that the North was more inclined to accept punishment than to cease support for the war in the South (Zagare and Kilgour 2004, xx, 290-291).

For successful deterrence, the credibility of the threat is particularly significant and linked to reciprocity in the relations between two states. States tend to exchange friendship for friendship and vice versa (as in "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"). From the perspective of this theory, establishing reciprocity is equated with strengthening credibility, which increases the likelihood of cooperation. Generally, the success of deterrence depends on actors' assessments of the current situation, their capabilities, threats, and the

interaction of their credentials. Deterrence will not always succeed if the necessary capabilities are lacking. Higher chances of success exist when the current situation is highly valued, when threats are credible, or when the challenger lacks credibility. In cases of direct deterrence, where the challenger and defender are identified, the success of deterrence is nearly assured, provided that the defender's retaliatory threat is very convincing (Zagare & Kilgour 2004, 296-297, 301).

On the other hand, theoretical considerations take into account the possibility that deterrence may not work in all circumstances. Specifically, with some adversaries, it is unlikely that the means available to a state will deter them. When such an adversary arises, only containment or eradication may be viable options. In this context, understanding the culture, interests, and goals of the opposing side has the potential to reduce the number of adversaries that cannot be deterred (Lowther 2012, 3).

Deterrence has become increasingly complex, partly due to the presence of multiple actors, including non-state actors, which reflects the need to strengthen the communication aspect of deterrence. Given the more intricate deterrence environment, there is a risk of failure when a participant does not understand the opposing side. This lack of understanding can be linked to cultural, religious, political, or historical differences between actors. It may also occur if an actor is not fully aware of the opponent's capabilities or approaches. In any case, the likelihood of deterrence failure is heightened (Prior 2018, 66).

When deterrence can be applied, policymakers must determine the appropriate instruments to secure effective communication of the desired state of affairs (*status quo*) and ensure it is accepted by the target audience. Additionally, the success of deterrence depends on the ability to understand the opponents' behaviour and their possible counteractions. Without such an adequate assessment, deterrence will remain at the theoretical level without a specific connection to real conditions. Furthermore, while it may not be possible to deter all non-state actors, it may be feasible to deter many. Only by understanding non-state actors can the US and its allies target what they most desire. Although it is often emphasised that the Islamic fundamentalists are fearless, they strive to achieve tangible worldly goals (Robinson, Crenshaw, and Jenkins 2006, 2010-2018).

Possessing a value system that differs from Western norms does not render an opponent irrational. That requires increased knowledge and understanding of the context by the United States and its allies if deterrence is to be successful. A desirable approach is to shape the situation on the ground without resorting to the threats characteristic of deterrence interactions. In this sense, states should develop coherent and comprehensive approaches applicable to the

global security environment, strategically utilising all instruments of power to achieve desired objectives. In such a context, states would focus on and adapt their strategies according to the characteristics of the threat (Lowther 2012, 4).

That represents an opportunity to develop an effective set of deterrence policies encompassing all aspects of diplomacy, armed forces, and the economy. To the extent that rebels, terrorists, and other groups pose challenges to national and international security, they operate outside the accepted laws of conflict; however, widespread claims that non-state actors are irrational by nature are entirely misguided (Dutter and Seliktar 2007, 430-438).

### **Changing Israel-Iran Relations and Concepts of Deterrence**

Since its inception, Israeli foreign policy has consistently sought to break the wall of political isolation in the region, pursuing recognition from regional actors. Such efforts led to Turkey's recognition of Israel and the establishment of diplomatic relations at the end of 1949. In the early 1950s, Iran also recognised Israel. However, relations between the two countries became more complex, particularly after Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh accused Israel of colluding with the US and Britain in their involvement in the 1953 coup against the Iranian government. During this period, the authority of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was particularly pronounced, as he maintained close ties with Israel and a pro-Western foreign policy. The two countries maintained strategic relations, with Israel interested in establishing ties with Iran and other nations as part of its strategy to counter the Arab enemy. Conversely, Iran shared a common interest with Israel in resisting the spread of pan-Arabism and harbouring resentment towards Arab states over nationalist ambitions, manifested in the Arab struggle to change the name of the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Gulf (Rezaei and Cohen 2014, 443-445).

For Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, relations with Israel were indispensable and served as a basis for US support. However, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, there was a transformation in Iranian foreign policy. That marked the beginning of a new rivalry in the region and a new phase in Israel-Iran relations. Additionally, domestically, the Iranian Revolution signified the start of a dramatic phase in the relationship between politics and Islam, as it overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty, rejected the monarchy as un-Islamic, and established the Islamic Republic, which continues to this day (Brown 2000, 161).

Khomeini's revolution was based on the following main principles: spreading the Islamic revolution against "deviants" in the region and intensifying the civilisational conflict with the "infidel" West; opposing hegemonic control over the Islamic and Arab world, especially in the oil-rich Persian Gulf; and committing to the destruction of Israel (Shapira & Diker, 2007: 33-34). After the Islamic

Revolution, the strategic interests of the two states intersected during the 1980s. For example, the Iran-Iraq War, in which Iran engaged in open conflict with Iraq, provided Israel with an opportunity to arm Islamic Iran against Iraq. Between 1981 and 1983, Israel sold Iran weapons worth \$500 million, the majority of which were paid for by oil (The Israel-Iran Connection 1987, 210-212).

From these dealings, which marked a new phase of support for Iraq, Israel aimed to improve its relationship with that country, assessing that Iraq was a significant military power and a greater threat while anticipating that the new regime in Iran would reconsider its relationship with Israel and recognise the benefits of common interest. During the Cold War, Iran, a major oil supplier and a key player in controlling access to the Persian Gulf, was an important ally of the US. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Saddam Hussein in 1991 eliminated two common threats that had sustained strong mutual strategic interests for over three decades (Parsi 2005, 247).

Starting in the 1990s, Iran's perception of threat increasingly focused on the US and Israel, clearly indicating the end of another phase in the strategic relations between the two states. Initiated by the Oslo Accords and the rapprochement between Israel and Arab states, the development of the Arab-Israeli conflict also influenced the interstate relations between Israel and Iran. Iran has long viewed the Palestinian issue as primarily concerning the Palestinians and Arab countries, so the Iranian regime has never adopted hostile rhetoric towards Israel or engaged in a direct confrontation. Conversely, due to various events in the regional and international spheres, then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin concluded that a peace formula with Arab states would better serve Israel's long-term security than the rising Islamic fundamentalism in Iran. Israel's response is often explained by the concept of threat balance (Maher 2020, 229). With Iraq defeated and Arab countries pursuing diplomacy, Iran emerged as the only remaining state in the region with offensive capabilities that could threaten Israel. Consequently, this perspective of Iran as an undeniable threat, given its growing offensive capabilities, became a common rhetoric among all Israeli governments formed after Rabin (Parsi 2005, 249).

Iran lacks a fully developed doctrine of conventional deterrence (Grinberg 2013, 1). However, two events were particularly significant in shaping its approach to deterrence. The Islamic Revolution not only resulted in a fundamental regime change but also redefined its enemies, namely the US and Israel. The second event was the Iran-Iraq War, which highlighted Iran's failure to deter Iraq and underscored the need to create various tools and mechanisms for deterring new enemies (Kam 2021, 22).

Learning from the lessons of the aforementioned conflict, Iran began developing missile systems that now include a variety of ranges, which it aims

to expand. Iran was astonished by Iraq's missile capabilities to strike civilian targets, which had a devastating effect on Iranian morale. Simultaneously, the Iranian air force, with its outdated aircraft, struggled to contend with the air forces of the US and Israel (Kittrie, Bowman, and Taleblu 2024, 21). Consequently, the Iranian missile system became the primary means of deterrence against major adversaries, including the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and terrorist organisations operating against Iran. In addition to ballistic missiles, Iran enhanced its arsenal with various types of missiles, including cruise missiles and anti-ship missiles. Along with continuous attempts to increase missile accuracy for strikes on strategic and military targets, this enhanced Iran's ability to attack drones used in September 2019 attacks on Saudi oil infrastructure and boats in the Gulf. Iran's missile arsenal also includes the missile stockpiles of Hezbollah, the rocket arsenals of Iraqi Shiite militias, and the arsenal of the Houthi rebels in Yemen (Kam 2021, 22-23).

However, Iran is aware that the US possesses significant military, technological, and economic superiority and that it lacks sufficient capacity to deter American power. Therefore, it seeks to build military capabilities that will deter and convince the US that, despite its military superiority, the cost of any potential attack will be high. To this end, Iran employs several deterrence tools against the US and its allies in the Middle East, contributing to a form of mutual deterrence between the two states. For instance, during the attacks on Saudi oil facilities in September 2019, Iran showcased its proxy network as part of its military power and deterrence strategy, indicating the potential for military intervention in other countries, as seen in Syria, and influencing regimes in states with Shiite populations (Safi and Wearden 2019).

Iran's deterrence space includes the Persian Gulf and Iraq, where the US forces are heavily present. Therefore, its strategic goal is to reduce this presence and deter the US. Given the strategic advantage of the US, Iran is particularly cautious regarding American red lines, avoiding actions that could lead to escalation and large-scale conflict. Among the limited steps Iran has taken or could take against the US, a few are noteworthy. Iran has interfered with the free passage of oil tankers and vessels from certain countries, including the United States. However, Iran has never closed the Persian Gulf (Nilufer 2012).

In these situations, Iran had to be cautious and moderate, fearing a US response. In this context, continuous low-level provocations may significantly contribute to the escalation of conflicts. In other words, managing risks and ongoing calculations at the operational level are crucial for achieving strategic goals. Additionally, Iran's rhetoric directed at its adversaries emphasises that its extensive missile system has a range of 2,000 kilometres, covering the entire Middle East, including all US military targets in the region. Iran has continuously threatened to attack American ships because they jeopardise its security in the

Gulf. Moreover, Iran has highlighted that it possesses sea-to-sea missiles with a range of 700 kilometres and, in the event of armed conflict, it could sink US aircraft carriers (Shabad 2014).

Generally, Iran aims to achieve deterrence in two primary ways: by establishing an adequate nuclear arsenal and using proxies to enhance its strategic interests across the region. Possessing nuclear weapons is an attractive option, as it is a more certain means of deterrence (Bracken 2013, 142-148). Iran's use of proxies throughout the region fosters instability and grants Iran influence over the internal affairs of its neighbours. Driven by its isolation and the perception of being surrounded by threats, Iran's proxy strategy serves multiple purposes. Without significant direct influence, these proxies can impact regional states, leading to instability and an increased number of refugees. Importantly, this approach gives Iran allies throughout the region, many of whom possess significant political or military influence (Badran and Schanzer 2019).

In Israel's defence doctrine, deterrence occupies a key position in the triad (deterrence, early warning, decision) formulated by former Prime Minister Ben Gurion. The primary consideration is Israel's inability to bear the high economic and military costs of maintaining a constant state of hostilities, attrition wars, or a permanent state of high readiness. Effective deterrence aims to relieve Israel of the need to maintain a continuous high level of readiness and military deployment that could exhaust its economy. Additionally, Israel has established a low threshold regarding enemy behaviour that will be deemed provocative enough to warrant an Israeli response, ensuring that the enemy is aware of this threshold and believes in its credibility (Meridor and Eldadi 2019, 11-12).

Israeli deterrence should be tailored to the enemy and based on continuous analyses of opponents' characteristics, capabilities, decision-making processes, and more. For each enemy, deterrence must be contextual and cumulative over time, aiming to preserve the current situation and define the "rules of the game" favourable to Israel. During a crisis, deterrence must be specific and directed at compelling the enemy to act or to refrain from action to prevent further escalation. Effective deterrence requires credible threats, which include the grouping of the Israeli forces demonstrating their capabilities and readiness, psychological operations unequivocally indicating Israel's willingness to take risks, and limited offensive actions signalling readiness to engage and demonstrating to the enemy that they are in a hopeless position. To achieve adequate results, Israel must establish a low threshold regarding enemy behaviour that will be deemed provocative enough to elicit an Israeli response, ensuring that the enemy is aware of this threshold and believes in its credibility. A significant aspect of Israel's deterrence concept is the strategic partnership with the United States, as it provides a broader political and military manoeuvring space in response to aggression, enhances Israel's operational capabilities to inflict damage on its

enemies, and presents the threat of American intervention on Israel's behalf. However, this strategic partnership with the US can also have negative connotations. An example of this is the US intention to engage Iran in the fight against ISIS, which met with disapproval from the Israeli side because it represented a potential strengthening of a regional adversary. This means that any attempt by the US to support the establishment of a regional defence system could undermine Israel's qualitative military advantage and the established deterrence concept (Golov 2016, 91-94).

The Israeli concept of total defence is particularly characterised by the "campaign between wars", based on the understanding that the period of "deterrence renewal" is time-limited, with the possibility of extension if Israel conducts precise and limited operations against strategically valuable targets. This serves to remind the enemy of the extent of potential damage they can expect from escalating the situation and the negative cost-benefit balance of their activities. The "campaign between wars" encompasses routine security operations against Hezbollah, Iran, and its proxies in Syria, as well as Palestinian terrorism, but also addresses threats from countries with which Israel does not share borders (Bar 2020, 332-333).

### **Israel-Iran Deterrence in Practice**

Current events between Israel and Iran are surprising because they diverge completely from the usual direct attacks on each other's territory, and notably, both sides have avoided further escalation. That clearly indicates that the form of their mutual deterrence has been altered, though not entirely transformed. In this particular case, Iran and Israel reached a critical point but have almost certainly realised that catastrophic escalation is not the most likely outcome of inevitable conflicts. For decades, both states have been burdened by a shadow conflict involving assassinations, bombings, cyberattacks, proxy clashes, and more, which can be disputed by its nature (Katz and Hendel 2012, 134-137).

Until April 2024, this conflict encompassed airstrikes, drones, proxy militias, assassinations, and similar tactics. There are many drivers behind this shadowy conflict. However, in recent years, it has evolved into a relationship where Iran and Israel seek to shape each other's behaviour. For Iran, this entails attempting to deter the technologically and militarily superior Israeli armed forces from attacking Iran or effectively neutralising Iranian proxies like Hezbollah in Lebanon. For Israel, before October 7, 2023, this meant a gradual secret escalation designed to diminish Iran's ability to use Israel's deterrence network and convince it of the futility of fighting a state possessing nuclear weapons. However, the dynamics of covert escalation changed after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023. The ensuing tension escalated, contributing to Israel's decision to carry out an airstrike

on the Iranian consulate in Damascus on April 1, 2024, where two Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps generals were also present.

For Israel, this was an opportunity to destabilise further the leadership of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and simultaneously send a direct message to Iran that such proximity to the Israeli border poses a risk, especially as Israel has continued its comprehensive war in Gaza against Hamas, in which the Iranian side has partially engaged in solidarity. Israel assessed that the military strike, although escalatory, would fit within the framework of its shadow war with Iran and that any potential Iranian retaliation would likely be covert and possibly directed against Israeli diplomatic representations elsewhere (Stratfor 2024a).

On the other hand, Iran did not perceive the Israeli strike in the same way because the consulate is Iranian territory. Moreover, the killing of General Mohammad Reza Zahedi (responsible for coordinating Iran with the Syrian government and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah) represented a political red line. That required preparing a new response against Israel to establish a new and clearer red line. In order to demonstrate to Israel that its military technology can penetrate the ostensibly invincible Israeli air defences and seriously harm military objectives, Iran launched an attack on April 13, 2024, employing a large-scale deployment of drones and ballistic missiles. Implicitly, the attack showed that Iran could expand strikes to Israeli civilian targets with further escalation (McKernan et al. 2024).

Additionally, the action showed that Iran has the political will to dismiss US warnings about regional escalation. Unquestionably, this attack will be remembered since it was the first time Iran has specifically and directly targeted Israeli soil. Following this, on April 19, the Israeli Air Force conducted airstrikes on a radar site associated with an S-300 air defence battery in the vicinity of nuclear facilities in central Iran (Koettl and Triebert 2024).

However, even without diplomatic efforts, shuttle diplomacy, or the adoption of a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire between the conflicting parties, the escalation ended. That was absolutely unexpected. This unequivocally indicates that there was a mutual, silent understanding that any continuation of escalation would mean open war, for which neither side had plans. Iran considered the Israeli attack ineffective, while Israel affirmed that deterrence was restored by its airstrike near Isfahan. From a political perspective, both sides possess narratives for establishing open and more intense conflict but also reasons for finally achieving effective de-escalation and deterrence. By establishing effective deterrence, Israel remained focused on the war in Gaza, which is its national security imperative. It continued its fight against the Palestinian militant group Hamas, as well as preparing for a potential

ground war in Lebanon. However, in a major conflict with Iran, the likelihood of Israel achieving victory is low. Specifically, Israel lacks a land corridor to deploy its ground forces for operations. Although its air forces are advanced, they cannot execute the actions against Iran necessary to eliminate the threat of recurring ballistic missile strikes and drone attacks. On the other hand, Iran can threaten Israel only with missiles, drones, and proxies. An unlimited war with Israel would, among other things, have consequences for military and civilian infrastructure, which Tehran, burdened by sanctions, cannot afford. Any eventual expansion of the conflict could also finally draw the US to Israel's side. These limitations have always represented an upper boundary for escalation, but there has always been concern that either Israel or Iran could cross these thresholds. However, recent events have shown that after successful deterrence, there is less cause for concern, as both sides have demonstrated the ability to control the escalation of conflict (Crisis Group 2024).

The conflicting parties have dismissed the stereotype that they can carry out military strikes without provoking a general war. Considering the analysed event, it is evident that strikes on military targets without casualties or significant damage are tolerable for their governments. Furthermore, it can be concluded that Iran possesses the resources to counter direct strikes on Israel but that its allies, particularly the US and Gulf Arab states, are so determined to avoid regional escalation that they will play only a defensive role during such confrontations. It is also evident that Iranian technology can overcome some advanced Israeli air defence systems, which is a reality that will shape the debate in Israel about how far the Israeli government can go in escalating against Iran. Finally, this has allowed the Iranians to gain valuable combat information about the effectiveness of their barrage tactics and drone and missile technology against advanced forces. Little in these lessons suggests that Tehran wants this episode to be repeated. With diminished options, Iran seems prepared for another Israeli provocation rather than attempting to create one itself. Despite having threatened to advance the nuclear programme towards armament, Iran, at least for this round, has been waiting for the next Israeli action instead of taking preemptive steps in terms of reassessing its foreign and nuclear doctrine. In other words, Iran may now assume it can retaliate against Israel without provoking a war or direct conflict with the US. However, its strategic doctrine seems to favour waiting for sufficient Israeli action to justify such a move (Nadimi 2024).

Iran has shown a willingness to attack Israel directly. However, this threat is counterbalanced by the intention of Israel's allies to avoid regional confrontation to the point where they acted as a shield against the Iranian attack on April 13. Meanwhile, although some Iranian missiles struck Israeli territory, the vast majority were intercepted by Israel's advanced air defence systems, such as the

Strela and David's Sling. This indicates that the threat of ballistic missiles from Iran may not carry the same risks as previously feared. The episode also shows that Israel can directly strike territory near sensitive Iranian nuclear sites, and Tehran's overall desire to avoid war is significant enough that such attacks may go unanswered. Nevertheless, Israel's favourite and frequently applied strategy against Iran remains covert escalation, continuing to degrade Iranian allies and reshaping its environment to prevent events like those of October 7 from recurring. However, the extent to which Israel is willing to take risks in pursuing this strategy has certainly changed after the events of April 2024, which have contributed to the ongoing question of how far the state will go to secure its immediate environment from ideological adversaries (Stratfor 2024b).

In future events, either Israel or Iran could carry out strikes that they believe fall within a changed strategic paradigm. However, this could lead them down a path of escalation. The eventual repetition of April's events is entirely possible, with Israel continuing to maintain a shadow conflict in Syria, where Iranian forces are also present. Both Iran and Israel might decide that they need greater force to demonstrate a desire to return to deterrence. However, such circumstances do not rule out the possibility of miscalculation by either side. Their escalation could also take another path, such as in southern Lebanon, where Israel has signalled it could execute an invasion once its campaign in Gaza is free of significant fighting. Israel might want to signal to Iran the dangers of direct intervention in another war between Israel and Hezbollah and conduct an escalated covert campaign to reduce Iran's supply and logistical support while eroding Iran's political will to intervene potentially in such a conflict. In the event of another Lebanese war, Israel could target the Iranian embassy in Beirut or other locations sensitive to Iran that are significant for Hezbollah's campaign against Israel. Such strikes could bring Iran back into direct confrontation with Israel, with the possibility of repeating the April escalation to persuade Israel to reduce its anti-Iranian war influence in Lebanon.

### **The Houthis as Maritime Terrorists and the Failed US Deterrence**

The Red Sea exits to the Mediterranean Sea to the north via the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden to the south through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, thus connecting Europe and Asia. Both exits, Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal, form the basis for two other strategic points: the Strait of Malacca (the main shipping route between East Asia and Europe) and the Strait of Hormuz (through which Gulf oil flows westward). Compared to other maritime routes, the Red Sea represents the shortest route linking the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, making it the main shipping lane for transporting oil to Europe. In addition to its economic significance, the Red

Sea is the shortest communication line for navies between the East and the West, which is particularly crucial for maritime strategic and operational aspects (Al-Anazi 2001, 1-2). Bab el-Mandeb is a narrow southern entrance to the Red Sea, less than 30 kilometres wide and divided into two channels by the island of Perim. For centuries, it has been a trade route where goods from the East were transported through the Red Sea to Egypt and then loaded onto caravans before being shipped to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea (Al-Yadomi 1991, 6-8). The Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb gained significant strategic importance with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1896. In modern times, Bab el-Mandeb's strategic importance lies in its location between two vital maritime routes—the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean—and the region's resources, particularly the oil reserves in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. Approximately 20 thousand ships pass through the strait annually, carrying an average of 3.4 million barrels of oil per day (Anderson 2013, 25-26).

Yemen shares the strait with Eritrea and Djibouti, and, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1987, it has a 12 nautical mile territorial waters zone in Bab el-Mandeb. However, the weakness of Yemen's central government has allowed non-state actors to exploit the country's strategic location in the Red Sea for illegal activities, including human trafficking, arms smuggling, and terrorist attacks. In 2014, supported by Iran, the Houthis seized the capital city and launched a military campaign, capturing major ports and cities along Yemen's western coast. With Iranian militia commanding the Red Sea, the civil war in Yemen quickly escalated into a regional conflict in March 2015, with direct military intervention led by Saudi Arabia (Hokayem and Roberts 2016, 158-181).

While the better-equipped coalition adopted conventional tactics involving around 170 combat aircraft, the inferior Houthis favoured an indirect and guerrilla approach heavily reliant on Yemen's geographical factors. It was only a matter of time before the conflict spread to the waters, as the Houthis began operations against coalition ships in the Red Sea. The maritime insurgency took the form of sporadic attacks, using unconventional tactics such as guided boats, speedboats, drones, cruise missiles, mines, and more (Knights and Almeida 2015).

The Houthis, taking advantage of the lack of maritime width, successfully launched rockets from the coast, targeting military and oil vessels. The first attack occurred in October 2016 against the Emirati ship HSV-2 Swift, using a Chinese anti-ship missile, the C-802, which caused significant damage. A similar attack was carried out against a US destroyer, but the missile was intercepted before it could reach its target. In addition to targeting military ships, the Houthis also aimed at commercial assets using cruise missiles, particularly targeting Saudi oil shipments, which forced Saudi Arabia to suspend oil exports through the strait (Williams and Shaikh 2020, 3-6).

Although oil shipments resumed, the Houthis effectively demonstrated their capabilities to the coalition. Furthermore, the Houthi militias used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to attack ships and maritime infrastructure. In June 2016, a UAV-laden explosive boat was used in an unsuccessful attack on a Saudi loading facility in Jizan, southern Saudi Arabia. However, in July 2017, the Houthis successfully struck the port of Mokha in Yemen, and a ship from the United Arab Emirates docked there. Despite causing minor damages, the Saudi-led coalition downplayed the incident. Additionally, reports indicated that the Houthis laid mines in the Red Sea, floating for tens of kilometres around Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden. Four detonation incidents happened, and 44 mines were discovered in the region in 2017, according to the United Nations Expert Panel's annual Yemen report for 2018 (Knights and Nadimi 2018).

Since 2015, strategic maritime trade routes near Yemen have been increasingly threatened, with vessels near the Yemeni coast coming under attack by the Houthi militants. Several countries have identified the Houthi militias as a threat to navigation in Bab el-Mandeb following attacks on numerous commercial ships. Supported by Iran, the Houthi militias have once again threatened to target international shipping routes and oil tankers in the Red Sea (Shay 2017, 1). The Houthi leader Saleh al-Samad threatened on January 8, 2018, to block international navigation through the Red Sea as a strategic option if coalition forces continued advancing westward in Yemen. This threat arose amid offensives by the Yemeni military and losses suffered by the Houthis on multiple fronts in Yemen (Morton and Cassidy 2018).

The United States led several series of retaliatory strikes against certain armed groups in the Middle East at the beginning of 2024. In January, they began conducting strikes against the Houthis in response to their attacks on ships in the Red Sea. In February, they carried out airstrikes on groups in Syria and Iraq accused of killing American soldiers at a base in Jordan. The US response in both cases revealed the difficulties and controversial results of using conventional deterrence against armed groups. The clearest indicator of successful deterrence is the obvious reduction of the opponent's threat. A less clear indicator is the extent to which the opponent abandons their long-term hostile intentions. According to the first indicator, the American strikes on the Houthi bases were initially successful, as attacks on ships in the Red Sea decreased. However, subsequent attacks in Iraq, Syria, and the Red Sea unequivocally demonstrated that the strategic will of these groups had not changed, as the Houthis continued with attacks sufficient to deter international ships. That indicates, among other things, that armed groups possess certain advantages that compensate for their military inferiority. In this regard, the most important is the strategic resilience, coming from popular support, which brings them new recruits, freedom of manoeuvre, and the ability to evade. Over the

past 20 years since the first uprising in 2004, the Houthis have shown remarkable resilience. On the other hand, efforts to combat armed groups include an additional problem, considering that although such groups may be deterred from stronger operations, they often continue to exist as alternative bases of state power, using increasingly sophisticated and numerous weapon systems. Iran has played a variable but crucial role in improving the capabilities of the Houthis, accompanied by the group's additional efforts to build their own capacities and enhance military efficiency. The Houthis, like many other armed groups ( Hamas, Hezbollah, and others), have not been deterred or led to change their strategic stance. On the contrary, these armed groups have maintained a steady growth of strategic capabilities. The large-scale attacks Hamas executed on Israel on October 7, 2023, and the arsenal available to the Houthis in the Red Sea in recent months have shown the level of development of their capabilities. The fear that Hezbollah's capabilities in Lebanon might have grown at a similar pace has significantly influenced Israeli policy in southern Lebanon (Raine 2024).

Multinational initiatives to safeguard vessels in the Red Sea from the Iran-supported Houthis in Yemen have heightened pressure on the US to address the escalating conflicts they seek to avoid. This was one of the factors leading to the creation of Operation Prosperity Guardian, designed to protect commercial ships from increased attacks by the Houthi militant group. The operation involves collaboration among several nations, including the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain. In response, the Houthis declared their intention to target all commercial vessels bound for Israel via the Red Sea. This action also serves as a protest against Israel's military operations in Gaza. It is clear that the Houthis have not been dissuaded by repeated warnings from the US regarding the repercussions of their continued assaults, which jeopardise global trade and other essential American interests (Stratfor 2023).

The continued air and naval strikes on the Houthi targets in Yemen present the same problem as the retaliatory US airstrikes in Syria and Iraq against the Shia militias. This is reflected in the fact that the US cannot reliably re-establish deterrence against a non-state actor driven by complex strategic motives. Specifically, US attacks in Yemen have already resulted in the Houthi reprisals targeting US Navy ships and commercial vessels. As a result, Washington has been responding with more severe attacks, which could lead to a Middle East conflict that the Biden administration says it wants to prevent. Even after multiple repeated US strikes in Yemen, a "return to deterrence" remains a distant outcome (Rothman 2023).

## Conclusion

The relationship between Israel and Iran illustrates current dynamics in the Middle East, as well as the complexity of deterrence, marked by shifting alliances, historical contradictions, and regional power. Israel views Iran's nuclear ambitions and support for militant groups ( Hamas, Houthis) as existential threats, prompting a complex deterrence strategy. Conversely, Iran relies on proxy forces like Hezbollah and various Shiite militias in the region. This intricate interaction and differing perceptions complicate effective communication and increase the risk of miscalculations, clearly highlighting the need for nuanced approaches in deterrence strategies.

Moreover, the importance of extended deterrence is underscored by Iran's missile attacks on Israel. At the same time, Hezbollah seeks to prevent Israeli strikes on its forces and locations, which can provoke a potential Israeli response to Iran. However, Israel's retaliation against Hezbollah attacks suggests that counterstrikes are unlikely to deter this group. As a result, cross-border exchanges are likely to continue, bringing Israel and Hezbollah closer to a broader conflict, especially if either side misjudges the scale or impact of an attack.

On the other hand, there is also a noticeable weakening of the concept of extended deterrence. Despite the support it received, Israel faced difficulties in achieving its goals of neutralising Hamas and securing the release of hostages from Gaza. As a result, the opposing side was encouraged to escalate the conflict further. This suggests that we may be at the beginning of new rules of engagement between Israel and Iran, where neither side will have clear dominance or the ability to establish effective deterrence on its own. Instead, the intervention of a major international power, such as the US, may be necessary to manage the situation and deter the conflicting parties from continuing reckless attacks that could have potentially catastrophic consequences (Gomaa and Mohsen Al Kindi 2024).

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** The paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the research project "Serbia and Challenges in International Relations in 2024", financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia and conducted by the Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, during the year 2024.

## References

- Al-Anazi, Turki. 2001. *Strategic Importance of the Red Sea*. Pennsylvania, US: US Army War College.
- Al-Yadomi, Hussian. 1991. *The Strategic Importance of Bab Al-Mandab Strait*. Pennsylvania, US: US Army War College.
- Anderson, W. Evan. 2013. *Global Geopolitical Flashpoints: An Atlas of Conflict*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Badran Tony, and Jonathan Schanzer. 2019. "Lebanon, Hezbollah and Iran's Emerging Client State", *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2019. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/lebanon-hezbollah-and-irans-emerging-client-state-11568847112>.
- Bar, Shmuel, 2020. "Israeli strategic deterrence doctrine and practice". *Comparative Strategy* 39 (4): 321-353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1772624>
- Bracken, Paul. 2013. *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger, and the New Power Politics*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Brown, L. Carl. 2000. *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics, Khomeini and Shi'ite Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dutter, Lee E., and Ofira Seliktar. 2007. "To Martyr or Not to Martyr: Jihad Is the Question, What Policy Is the Answer?". *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30 (5): 429-443.
- Filippidou, Anastasia. 2020. *Deterrence: Concepts and Approaches for Current and Emerging Threats*. Cham: Springer
- Golov, Avner. 2016. "Israeli deterrence in the 21st century", *Memorandum No. 155, Institute for National Security Studies*, 83-97. <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/israeli-deterrence-in-the-21st-century/>
- Gomaa, Mohamed, and Reem Mohsen Al Kindi. 2024. "The Erosion of Iran-Israel Deterrence and the Subsequent Direct Escalation: Causes and Implications, Trends Research and Advisory", *TRENDS Research & Advisory*, April 21, 2024. [https://trendsresearch.org/insight/the-erosion-of-iran-israel-deterrence-and-the-subsequent-direct-escalation-causes-and-implications/?rsrltid=AfmBOorvuXyBT2gJ3bCH3qv370h9jENaND4GU\\_dBBaKGnK5H\\_H1-LJk7](https://trendsresearch.org/insight/the-erosion-of-iran-israel-deterrence-and-the-subsequent-direct-escalation-causes-and-implications/?rsrltid=AfmBOorvuXyBT2gJ3bCH3qv370h9jENaND4GU_dBBaKGnK5H_H1-LJk7)
- Grinberg, Alex. 2013. "The Concept of Deterrence in Arab and Muslim Thought – Iran", *13<sup>th</sup> Annual Herzliya Conference*, Working Paper, June 12. <https://www.runi.ac.il/media/5hhnyunf/iranalexgrinberg.pdf>
- Hokayem, Emile, and David B. Roberts. 2016. "The War in Yemen". *Survival* 58 (6): 157-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2016.1257202>

- International Crisis Group. 2024. "Middle East and North Africa Egypt's Gaza Dilemmas", *Briefing N°91, International Crisis Group*, May 16, 2024. [https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/b091-egypt-gaza-dilemmas\\_1.pdf](https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/b091-egypt-gaza-dilemmas_1.pdf)
- Kam, Ephraim. 2021. "Iran's Deterrence Concept". *Strategic Assessment* 24 (3). <https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Irans-Deterrence-Concept.pdf>
- Katz, Yaakov, and Yoaz Hendel. 2012. *Israel vs. Iran: the shadow war*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books.
- Kittrie, Orde F., Bradley Bowman, and Ben Behnam Taleblu. 2024. *Deterring Iran's Dash to the Bomb*. Washington: Foundation for defense of democracies.
- Knights Michael, and Alex Almeida. 2015. "The Saudi-UAE War Effort in Yemen (Part 2): The Air Campaign", *The Washington Institute*, August 11, 2015. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-saudi-uae-war-effort-in-yemen-part-2-the-air-campaign>
- Knights, Michael, and Farzin Nadimi. 2018. "Curbing Houthi Attacks on Civilian Ships in the Bab al-Mandab", *The Washington Institute*, July 27, 2018. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/curbing-houthi-attacks-on-civilian-ships-in-the-bab-al-mandab>
- Koettl, Christoph, and Christiaan Triebert, 2024. "Satellite imagery shows that a precision attack damaged an air defense system at an Iranian base", *The New York Times*, April 19, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2024/04/18/world/israel-iran-gaza-war-news>.
- Lowther, Adam B. 2012. *Deterrence: rising powers, rogue regimes, and terrorism in the twenty-first century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maher, Nora. 2020. "Balancing deterrence: Iran-Israel relations in a turbulent Middle East". *Review of Economics and Political Science* 8 (3): 226-245.
- Mazarr, Michael J. 2018. *Understanding Deterrence*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- McKernan, Bethan, Emma Graham-Harrison, Julian Borger, and Peter Beaumont. 2024. "Iran launches hundreds of drones and cruise missiles at Israel in unprecedented attack", *The Guardian*, August 1, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/13/israel-under-fire-as-iran-launches-extensive-drone-strikes>
- Mearsheimer, John J. 1983. *Conventional Deterrence*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Meridor, Dan, and Ron Eldadi. 2019. "Israel's National Security Doctrine: The Report of the Committee on the Formulation of the National Security Doctrine (Meridor Committee), Ten Years Later", *Memorandum 187*,

- Institute for National Security Studies*. <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/israels-national-security-doctrine-report-committee-formulation-national-security-doctrine-meridor-committee-ten-years-later/>
- Morgan, Patrick M. 1977. *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Morgan, Patrick M. 2003. *Deterrence Now*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morton, Miranda, and Matthew Cassidy. 2018. "Gulf of Aden Security Review", *Critical Threats*, January 9, 2018. <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-january-9-2018>
- Nadimi, Farzin, 2024. "Only a Credible Offensive Threat Can Deter Iran from Climbing the Escalation Ladder", *The Washington Institute*, August 9, 2024. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/only-credible-offensive-threat-can-deter-iran-climbing-escalation-ladder>
- Nilufer, Oral, 2012. "Transit Passage Rights in the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's Threats to Block the Passage of Oil Tankers". *American Society of International Law* 16 (16). <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/16/issue/16/transit-passage-rights-strait-hormuz-and-iran%E2%80%99s-threats-block-passage>
- Parsi, Trita, 2005. "Israel-Iranian relations assessed: strategic competition from the power cycle perspective". *Iranian Studies* 38 (2): 247-269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210860500096329>
- Prior Tim, 2018. "Resilience: The 'Fifth Wave' in the Evolution of Deterrence". In: *Strategic Trends 2018*, edited by Oliver Thränert and Martin Zapfe. Zurich: Center for Security Studies.
- Quackenbush, Stephen L. 2011. "Deterrence theory: where do we stand?". *Review of International Studies* 37 (2): 741-762. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000896>
- Raine, John. 2024. "The erratic results of deterrence against non-state armed groups", *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, April 2, 2024. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/03/the-erratic-results-of-deterrence-against-non-state-armed-groups/>
- Rezaei, Farhad, and Ronen A. Cohen. 2014. "Iran's nuclear program and the Israeli-Iranian rivalry in the post revolutionary era". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41 (4): 442-460.
- Robinson, Kristopher K., Edward M. Crenshaw, and J. Craig Jenkins. 2006. "Ideologies of Violence: The Social Origins of Islamist and Leftist Transnational Terrorism". *Social Forces* 84 (4): 2009-2026.

- Rothman, Noah. 2023. "The U.S. Must Restore Deterrence in the Red Sea", *National Review*, December 18, 2023. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2023/12/the-u-s-must-restore-deterrence-in-the-red-sea/>
- Safi, Michael, and Graeme Wearden. 2019. "Everything you need to know about the Saudi Arabia oil attacks", *The Guardian*, September 16, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/16/saudi-arabia-oil-attacks-everything-you-need-to-know>
- Shabad, Rebecca. 2014. "Iranian admiral says US aircraft carriers would be targeted in war", *The Hill*, June 5, 2014. <https://thehill.com/policy/international/205283-iranian-official-says-us-warships-a-target-in-case-of-war/>
- Shapira, Shimon, and Dan Diker. 2007. "Iran's Second Islamic Revolution: Strategic Implications for the West". In: *Iran, Hizbullah, Hamas and the West: A New Conflict Paradigm for the West*. Jerusalem: Center for Public Affairs
- Shay, Shaul, 2017. "The Houthi maritime threats in the Red Sea basin", IPS Publications Institute for Policy and Strategy. [https://www.runi.ac.il/media/n1pl4lsw/redseabasinshaulshay25\\_9\\_17.pdf](https://www.runi.ac.il/media/n1pl4lsw/redseabasinshaulshay25_9_17.pdf)
- Stratfor. 2023. "In the Red Sea, Houthi Attacks Force the U.S. to Mull a Tougher Response", *Stratfor*, December 18, 2023. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/red-sea-houthi-attacks-force-us-mull-tougher-response>
- Stratfor. 2024a. "Iran's Response to Israel's Audacious Damascus Strike Will Not Deter Escalation", *Stratfor*, April 4, 2024. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/irans-response-israels-audacious-damascus-strike-will-not-deter-escalation>
- Stratfor. 2024b. "Israel launches measured attack Iran escalation risks remain", *Stratfor*, April 19, 2024. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/israel-launches-measured-attack-iran-escalation-risks-remain>
- "The Israel-Iran Connection". 1987. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16 (3): 210-212. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536816>
- Williams, Ian, and Shaan Shaikh. 2020. "The Missile War in Yemen", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 9, 2020. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/missile-war-yemen>
- Zagare, Frank C., and D. Marc Kilgour. 2004. *Perfect Deterrence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## KONCEPT ODVRAĆANJA U AKTUELNIM ODNOSIMA NA BLISKOM ISTOKU

*Apstrakt:* Odvraćanje je dugo prisutno u međunarodnoj politici, ali je postalo posebno značajno tokom Hladnog rata zbog svoje uloge u odnosima velikih sila. U savremenim odnosima, potrebno je prilagoditi stare narative kako bi odražavali nove i složene realnosti jer izazovi savremenog sveta komplikuju formulisanje strategija odvrćanja. Ipak, cilj odvrćanja ostaje isti – ubediti protivnika, kroz različita sredstva i metode, da su troškovi preduzimanja akcije daleko veći od potencijalnih koristi koje bi mogao postići. Autori analiziraju koncept odvrćanja koristeći više teorija u okviru teorijskih razmatranja i, između ostalog, njegovu primenu u trenutnim odnosima na Bliskom Istoku. Nakon rasprave o opštim teorijskim gledištima, koncept odvrćanja se dalje analizira kroz slučaj Izraela i Irana i odnos između Sjedinjenih Američkih Država i Huta, jednog nedržavnog aktera, kako bi se objasnile njegove specifičnosti. Pored istorijskih okolnosti, analiza ispituje i aktuelne događaje kako bi se shvatilo kako najznačajniji akteri primenjuju koncept odvrćanja. Nedavni događaji između Irana i Izraela, posebno u političkom i vojnom kontekstu, potvrđuju relevantnost koncepta odvrćanja u međunarodnim odnosima.

*Gljučne reči:* odvrćanje; Bliski Istok; Huti; spoljna politika; međunarodni odnosi.



## CHINA'S EMANCIPATORY DIPLOMACY FOR A PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC, AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Jelica STEFANOVIĆ-ŠTAMBUK<sup>1</sup>, Slobodan POPOVIĆ<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This research explores the theoretical formation of the People's Republic of China's diplomacy. Despite efforts to relate its theorisation into communicable terms, the West considers them a thin veneer for the ruling Communist Party's propaganda. China's diplomatic actions are portrayed as manipulations of a power-greedy state for global might, ready to tear apart the existing arrangements and overtake the United States on the apex of world power. Although a "wolf-warrior" stream in diplomatic practice can sometimes run high, studying China's theorisation of diplomacy reveals the ideational normativity of willpower for relationships of mutuality. Xi Jinping's "Thought on Major Country Diplomacy", formatively shaped in 2014, shows that China's diplomacy emancipatory crux is frightening to those alarmed by the country's might. We will test this proposition by conducting a contextual content analysis of relevant sources. The Chinese emancipatory diplomacy conceives the use of the state power for the joint sharing of life, time, and the planet. It is poised to lead to the principled and just consent of all states to achieving an inclusive, equitable, fair, democratic, and peaceful international order of balanced and just autonomous development and global governance through mutually ascertained multilateralism in a human community with a shared future.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:  
31 August 2024  
Revised:  
13 September 2024  
Accepted:  
16 September 2024

### KEYWORDS

China; diplomatic theory; Xi Jinping's Thought on Major Country Diplomacy; Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence; Belt and Road; Global Community of Shared Future; Liberal International Order.

**Cite this article as:** Stefanović-Štambuk, Jelica, and Slobodan Popović. 2024. "China's Emancipatory Diplomacy for a Peaceful, Democratic, and Sustainable Global Community". *The Review of International Affairs* LXXV (1192): 405–436. [https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe\\_ria.2024.75.1192.5](https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_ria.2024.75.1192.5)

<sup>1</sup> Full Professor of Diplomacy and International Studies, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [vzorin@gmail.com](mailto:vzorin@gmail.com), [jelica.stefanovic@fpn.bg.ac.rs](mailto:jelica.stefanovic@fpn.bg.ac.rs), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5154-7186>.

<sup>2</sup> Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [slobodan.popovic89@yahoo.com](mailto:slobodan.popovic89@yahoo.com), [slobodan.popovic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs](mailto:slobodan.popovic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8094-8445>.

“He who conquers others is strong; He who conquers himself is mighty”,  
Lao Tze (老子).

### Getting Right the Core of China’s Diplomacy

A scientific inquiry into the People’s Republic of China’s (the PRC, China) diplomacy requires addressing its distinct tenets scrupulously. The unbiased dealing with this country’s official conception of what diplomacy is and why, who should manage, implement, oversee, and conduct it, when, where, and how, and with what outcomes, effects, and impacts, does not imply valuing any as appropriate. Deciding to have an open epistemological stance allows sensible distinction of nuances. Further, an impartial analysis of the Chinese theoretical conceptualisation of diplomacy can lead to research on whether this state’s diplomatic actions sincerely “walk the talk” of theorisation. If we perform the latter task responsibly now, it will enable us to do the former task properly later on. Directed attention to the unfolding of China’s way of theorising diplomacy requires a more extensive and in-depth probe. To grasp its way of diplomacy, the focus needs to be on the uniqueness of the very theorisation process.

The key to solving the puzzle of China’s theorisation of diplomacy is how diplomatic theory-building is performed. The Chinese practice a collective diplomacy theory-building. Although institutionalised, this process is still held out of analytical sight. Since 1971, the *ad hoc* Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs (外事工作会议) has been organised by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. The second one was held in 1991, and the third in 2006. This analysis of the collective theorisation of diplomacy is focused on how it was done at the Fourth Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs held in Beijing on November 28 and 29, 2014.<sup>3</sup> Delving into the emancipatory design of China’s diplomacy includes meticulous care for contextual and theoretical inweaving of the unique state identity with changes in long-term planning, strategic orientation, and day-to-day diplomatic work. The complete analytical apparatus of the text analysis of the foundational theorisation of emancipatory diplomacy can be found in the Annex.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The Fifth Conference, the next significant event in the evolution of Chinese diplomatic theory and strategies, was organised on June 22 and 23, 2018 (Xinhua 2018). The most recent, the Sixth Conference, held on December 27 and 28, 2023 (SCPRC 2023), further solidified the regularity and increased involvement of political and social actors, including specific local communities and the business sector in this collective diplomatic theory and strategy-building process.

<sup>4</sup> The entire protocol for quantitative and qualitative content text analysis of the officially published reports is attached in the Annex to this article.

Of primary importance is the theoretical prism of the Communist Party of China. It is put together from Deng Xiaoping's theory (邓小平理论)<sup>5</sup>, the in-depth principled guiding theory of the "three represents" (三个代表)<sup>6</sup>, and the Scientific Outlook on Development (科学发展观)<sup>7</sup>. This theoretical prism is used to get an overview of systemic conditions appropriate to China's strategic opportunity for thriving while pursuing its goals through diplomacy. The aim is to gradually transcend the limitations of the infeasible international system. It became burdened with crises and overloaded with indeterminacy. The Party leadership felt obliged to prove able to keep the strategic opportunity for the country's secured peace and development safe by adjusting the course in global affairs. Preservation of the undisturbed systemic environment for peaceful development was then, as it is now, the must. Henceforth, after the 2008 world's tumult and the generational change at the Communist Party's helm in 2012,<sup>8</sup> the circumstances were ripe for the theoretical refreshing of Chinese diplomacy and its operations.

More clearly than ever, China's diplomacy emancipatory crux and style were thoroughly configured "from head to toe" at the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress. In his Report<sup>9</sup> to this congress, then-General Secretary Hu Jintao elaborated on the

<sup>5</sup> Deng Xiaoping, a key figure in the development of the socialist system, drew on Vladimir Ilich Lenin's New Economic Policy theory to design a policy of economic reform. This policy, tailored to the system's own characteristics and needs, demonstrated the system's capacity for self-improvement.

<sup>6</sup> Jiang Zemin introduced the Three Represents Theory. This theorisation of socio-political relations between the party and the people stipulates that the party must always represent and promote "the advanced productive forces, the orientation of the development of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China" (Zemin 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Hu Jintao (Hu 2007, 8) presented the Outlook as the socio-political theory on China's future development at the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPC, underscoring how it "takes development as its essence, putting people first as its core, comprehensive, balanced, and sustainable development as its basic requirement, and overall consideration as its fundamental approach."

<sup>8</sup> At the 18th Congress of the CPC, Hu Jintao concluded his term as the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Xi Jinping took this post on November 15, 2012, through party selection and the election process. He was the first CPC member born after the new communist China was established to hold this position.

<sup>9</sup> This report was, as habituated, a quite long document. It contained the following 12 chapters: "I. Our Work in the Past Five Years and the Basic Experience We Have Gained in the Past Ten Years; II. Achieving New Victory for Socialism with Chinese Characteristics; III. The Goal of Completing the Building of a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Deepening Reform and Opening Up in an All-Around Way; IV. Accelerating the Improvement of the Socialist Market Economy and the Change of the Growth Model; V. Keeping to the Socialist Path of Making Political Advance with Chinese Characteristics and Promoting Reform of the Political Structure; VI. Developing a Strong Socialist Culture in China; VII. Strengthening Social

necessity and direction of emancipation in global terms. He stated that China has been following the right path and must stay the course since:

“Mankind has only one earth to live on, and countries have only one world to share. History teaches us that the law of the jungle will not lead to the coexistence of human society and that the arbitrary use of force cannot make the world a better place. To pursue peace, development and cooperation and oppose war, eliminate poverty and avoid confrontation in order to build a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity – this is what the people of all countries long for” (Hu 2012).

From the 18<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress onwards, the rhythm of reviving the theoretical outlook of international relations has fastened. Therefore, the utmost sensitivity is in high order in foregrounding the endogenous conditions and exogenous influences from which the Chinese contemporary diplomatic agency is theoretically sculptured. In that regard, there is a dual puzzle. Concomitantly, China’s theorisation of diplomacy has been undermined, while claims abound that it is overtaking the world’s ordering.

Since China lavishes on diplomacy, although many researchers suspect it is backed by diverse means of coercion, it follows that the Chinese diplomatic actions, despite lacking theoretical grounding, are succeeding in altering world order. Elizabeth Economy (2024) is among analysts who assume the Chinese are engaged in establishing an “alternative order”. Her thesis is that this gives the United States (US) a learning opportunity to counter the alternative construction of order while avoiding unnecessary confrontation. She pictured (Economy 2024, 8) it as indisputable that Xi Jinping wants to change the entire global system, break apart Washington’s relationships, and remove what he considers to be “Western” principles from international organisations. He aims to overthrow Washington’s dominance over important technologies and dethrone the US dollar. Chinese ideas about shared security and economic development, as well as principles of state-determined political rights and technology, will all serve as the foundation for global institutions and norms in a new multipolar system. China will not have to struggle to take the lead, as its economic prosperity, ideals of state-determined political rights, and technology

---

Development by Improving the People’s Wellbeing and Making Innovations in Management; VIII. Making Great Efforts to Promote Ecological Progress; IX. Accelerating the Modernisation of National Defence and the Armed Forces; X. Enriching the Practice of “One Country, Two Systems” and Advancing China’s Reunification; XI. Continuing to Promote the Noble Cause of Peace and Development of Mankind; XII. Making Party Building More Scientific in All Respects” (Hu 2012).

will contribute to its primacy. It assumes the leadership in global relations and is undoubtedly central (Economy 2024, 8).

We are partly in agreement with the above assumption. Yes, China has developed an autonomous conceptualisation of how international relations can unfold differently, how the international system can be different, and how global governance regulation can accordingly be changed. Yet, from here on, our argument differs. We propose that all these aspects of the ideated altering stem from the Chinese conceptualisation of diplomacy. Straightforwardly, in a unique constellation of unprecedented conditions for profound change, their quest for a reformed global order is built upon diplomacy. Diplomacy is posited as the virtuous apparatus for freeing the state from multiple fears, allowing it to govern jointly and justly, as equal with all other states, a sustainable and resilient world for the current and next generations. It normatively roots transcending anarchy, the consequent security dilemma rationalisation of inescapably self-driven interstates' competitiveness, and international relations as the struggle for power regulated by the capacity of the preeminent state or group of them to keep others in check. We consider this modality of the Chinese thought on diplomacy as a conception of an emancipatory mode.

Emancipation is a signature trait of their thinking and acting for altering the global order and not merely a metaphor. Findings of one comparative study of multilateral diplomacy (2022) in the shifting relations between the United States, the European Union (EU, Union), and China suggested a trend of multilateralism's change only metaphorically categorised as emancipation:

“One could claim that the current transformations of multilateralism resemble a process of emancipation. It can be seen as an emancipation from the US as sole hegemon and more broadly an emancipation from Western domination in many multilateral institutions. In addition to this, it may even be an emancipation from the state-centric origins of multilateralism. But whether or not the metaphor of emancipation does justice to the process of change that multilateralism is currently undergoing: while we can identify current trends... not only further research will be needed but also patience” (Wu, Gaenssmantel, and Giumelli 2022, 273).

In Xi Jinping's *“Thought on Major Country Diplomacy”* as the theoretical conceptualisation of China's diplomacy, the emancipatory potential of state-centric diplomacy is set unambiguously. It accorded to diplomacy the liberation of the state from the fear and dangers of both anarchy and domination and hegemony, either institutionalised or informal. The certainty that ongoing unprecedented change allows China to diplomatically nudge other states to liberate themselves through diplomacy from the fears of a hegemon and the need for hegemony is puzzling. It might even seem too bold. Its implication is

not only the emancipation of states from fierce competition and the vagaries of power politics, but almost a negation of the well-known Tilly's (1975, 42) statement, "War made the state, and state made war". For some, it might look overly idealistic. For others, it can be solely a part of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) "mirage industry".

Why do the Chinese purport that the change in the international system does not necessitate the waging of war, but the order-making unfolds through the diplomatic activities of states? In their vision of order, the very cause of friction and confrontations among states is their uneven and unequal development, expressed in the balance of power, interests, and threats. If states deploy diplomacy towards the attainment of balanced, just, and autonomous development through the assistance of developed states to the less developed ones to boost their prosperity according to their own needs, the root causes of war will be eliminated. Then, the decline of the international order of US hegemony can be peacefully overcome by diplomatic actions orientated towards establishing an international order of balanced, just, and autonomous development for all. Hence, neither the hegemon nor the balance of power is needed. The democratically revived United Nations will be the main institution of this mutually ascertained multilateral order instead of mutually assured destruction. Consequently, global governance regulation founded upon the norms of international law, which are applied diligently, will guarantee the rule of law and interstate democracy in decision-making. Pluralism and diversity being fully recognised and respected will be the sources of thriving states and all peoples jointly caring for their well-being and the planet's wellness in sharing the future as a human community.

The above summary of China's thinking of the international and global system's transformation centred on diplomacy brings to the analytical focus its emancipatory mode and how it was theoretically developed. Not enough attention was paid to studying the process of Xi Jinping's *"Thought on Major Country Diplomacy"* evolving and what makes the Chinese diplomacy mode emancipatory. The ruling canon of diplomatic theory, prevalently Western in construction and outlook, cannot be mechanically applied to understanding the Chinese theoretical stance on diplomacy. Scientific dialogue on these two strands of thinking about diplomacy is still missing. That matter is waiting for researchers to take the helm. The prerequisite for such an endeavour is to start it free from biased assumptions. Therefore, delving into Xi Jinping's *"Thought on Major Country Diplomacy,"* supposing that it conceptualises a type of emancipatory diplomacy, must begin from when it was expounded and debated. It was at the Fourth Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs (外事工作会议) held in 2014.

To proceed thoroughly, the methods and research materials will first be presented. A critical review of the literature on China's diplomacy and the classical understanding of European state diplomacy unalloyed with the theoretical additions of International Relations over time is the central aspect of this part. The elements of the classical knowledge of state-centric diplomacy will be applied in developing key analytical categories for the textual analysis, pre-tested on the actual Chinese diplomatic actions. The results of contextual qualitative textual analysis of the theoretically emancipatory layout of Xi Jinping's *"Thought on Major Country Diplomacy,"* elaborated in 2014, will be explained in the next part. The discussion will review the main theorisation tenets solidified before the Sixth Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs held at the end of December 2023. At this two-day meeting, the theoretical progress was discussed to conform diplomacy to new demands posed by percolating tensions in global relations. The conclusion will succinctly answer the research questions in what respect China's theoretical conception of diplomacy is emancipatory to enable further research on whether its diplomatic actions confirm that it is practised.

## Research Methods

The Chinese visibly started to assert the right to legitimate its diplomatic authoritative might in 2014. This has been received by the United States and the Western part of the world as almost bordering on the intention of stripping the US of its global hegemony. In recent years, the growing weariness with the strain of the "wolf-warrior" diplomatic boldness of some Chinese diplomats and state officials has been adding fuel to the fire. Even invocations of the looming nightmare of the Hobbesian state of global affairs were not rare. Alleged China's drive for world preeminence has caused it. Here, obviously, a realist understanding of the international overpoweringly intervenes. It assumes China has overgrown its allotted place in the International Liberal Order. Hence, the chosen way to free itself from the restraints will be to challenge and subvert the power of the US as the hegemon. According to the always mighty realist dictum, also lingering on the margins of liberal internationalism, "the freedom of choice in any one state is limited by the actions of all others" (Waltz 1959, 204). Upon his command to the thinking process, it is pondered that Chinese free choice could not be anything other than actions for tearing apart the existing order-established rules limiting their freedom of choice by other states' actions.

Therefore, China's conduct on the international analytical radar has been in the spectre of a "revisionist" to a "revolutionary" rather than a "reformist" state (e.g., Chan et al. 2021; Chu 2020; Huiyun 2009; Mitter 2022; Shambaugh 2001). Inclination to Schweller's (1994; 2015) view of states' dissatisfaction with

an international order when it constrains their rising power has suggested a “tragic world” (Schmidt 2013). Mearsheimer’s (2001) “tragic realism” condemns the great powers to the tragedy of their “power politics”. But what if the rising state achieves power status determined to avoid the pitfalls of great power politics yet deems the existing order unsatisfactory to itself and the majority of states? One possibility rarely accounted for and investigated is the freedom of choosing diplomacy to address the shortcomings of order and use diplomatic means to transcend them peacefully.

Why did China conceive such an avoidance of the “Thucydides Trap” (Allison 2017)? In what ways does China use diplomacy to avoid falling into the “Kindleberger Trap” (Nye 2017)? China’s riddle becomes even more intriguing since it has continued to provide global public goods instead of a free ride. Nothing is inevitably dramatic or tragic, even in the rising turmoil. Diplomacy’s inventiveness to restrain power is enormous. Even when the crumbling of order starts because the hegemon begins to behave like any other state, it does not equal the “iron law,” as the “power transition theory” sets out. Neither China’s free choice of diplomacy is inevitable. Nevertheless, one could think that its “territorial incompleteness” enforces strategic restraint to using force and opting for ample diplomatic tools. On the other hand, China’s choice of diplomacy can be attributed to unique Asian or domestic wisdom translated into a theory. But these are all wagers. Whether or not the theoretical understanding of Chinese diplomacy is mirrored in real-world behaviour is only a matter of conjecture and belief if the scientific impartial evaluation is missing.

The theoretical grounding methods for this research are historical-comparative and model methods. The model method is used to derive analytical categories from the classical theorisation of diplomacy in diplomatic theory. In the empirical part, the case study method (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2000) will be applied for generalisation from a single case study of the theoretical foundation of Chinese diplomacy in 2014 and the relevant subsequent precisions. The qualitative technique of content analysis (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2023) will be applied to extracts from the relevant official Chinese textual documents on how Xi Jinping’s “*Thought on Major Country Diplomacy*” was theoretically grounded in this very constitutive moment of conceiving diplomacy as emancipatory. The theoretical outline of emancipatory diplomacy will then be processed to see if the main elements hold after the constitutive theoretical enterprise. The representative selection of China’s core bilateral, regional, multilateral, and interregional diplomatic actions during 2023 was used to pre-test empirically the analytical categories of diplomacy theorisation. From the findings, it will be possible to infer whether the gathered evidence corroborated our leading hypothesis that the Chinese theoretically developed the mode of emancipatory state diplomacy. We will use three specific

collections of materials in the research. The first consists of scientific monographs on China's diplomacy. The second set contains theoretical works on diplomacy. The third set of materials is primary Chinese sources related to the theorisation and the practice of their diplomacy.

Chinese diplomacy has gotten into the focus of analysts' attention since the change of cadres at the Communist Party of China's helm in 2012 and later in 2013 at the ruling position of the state (e.g., Ali 2023; Cheng 2020; Freeman 2020; Iida 2020; Jia 2021; Jiechi 2013; Jianfei 2017; Jiemin 2016; Kurlantzick 2008; Liu and Liu 2023; Shixue 2024; Sun 2021; Wang 2019; Wang 2022; Xiao and Men 2021; Yi 2013; Yi 2016; Yuan 2023; Zeguang 2018; Zhang 2018; Zhang 2021; Zhang and Hong 2023; Zhong 2019; Zhu 2016). Some authors researched China's bilateral diplomacy in detail (e.g., Akdağ 2024; Jiechi 2014; Loh 2024; Zhang 2022; Zhang and Yang 2023), as well as the bimultilateral form (e.g., Mu and Menglong 2023; Yang 2023). Others devoted their investigation to China's multilateral diplomacy in a similar period (e.g., Jiechi 2011; Liu 2021; Miaofa 2010; Ruipeng 2020; Shamim, Nasim, and Shah 2023; Wuthnow, Li, and Qi 2012; Zhirui and Lin 2023; Zhimin 2012). China's substate diplomacy was also studied (e.g., Wei 2021). Reading thoroughly through those works, we have found many relevant points to solve the riddle we are dealing with. Yet, interconnecting these threads into a coherent understanding has China brought out the theorisation of diplomacy in its new mode, which is what it has been lacking.

The two most common directions in the diplomatic theory and the study of the diplomatic practice are fixed to its Western modernity form. Diplomacy is a European invention that became global through the expansion of Europe and, later, the US. One conceives diplomacy metaphorically as international relations' "engine room" (Cohen 1998). This almost mechanistic industrial metaphor was partially relaxed by another direction introduced by Bull (Bull 2002). He conceptualised diplomacy as "a custodian of the idea of *international society*, with a stake in preserving and strengthening it" (Bull 2002, 176). Again, the metaphor was used to explain diplomacy. This time, it was one with Biblical origins and religious overtones. It secularises the European theological position of God's given custodianship to humans for the care of its creation, thus socialising them while preserving Eurocentric god/human duality. Both directions universalised the history of European diplomacy as the theory of diplomacy quelling histories of relations of sharing life, time, and the Earth within other civilisations. Myriads of entanglements made international relations and international societies of states more diverse in the past than both of these metaphors for defining diplomacy capture. Nevertheless, they tend to set Europe's history of diplomacy as a universal one. Some of these entanglements led to oppositional paths even in the European history of diplomacy as they do currently. To understand the Chinese conceptualisation of diplomacy in the second decade of the 21st century, both

directions of unilinear and historically incorrect unification of diplomacy meaning are unsatisfactory.

Neither is it helpful to think of diplomacy as “divorced” from the state. The usual state-centric understanding is reductionist. Diplomacy is seen as an instrument of statecraft (Freemen 2023, 41) or as one of the state’s tools for implementing foreign policy. On the opposite side, unspecific thinking of diplomacy is going on. It is conceived as “the mediation of estrangement” (Der Derian 1987, 42). Attempts to specify mediation as an “essence” of diplomacy lead to either keeping separateness (Sharp 2009) or trying to overcome it by inserting the dose of humanism by pinning it back to individual introspection as:

“Homo-diplomacy”—that is negotiating identity borders, one’s own interests, and needs—not just strategic “hetero-diplomacy,” that is concerned with persuading or controlling others by way of implementing given policy” (Constantinou 2013, 144).

The unspecified “dealing with difference” (Adler-Nissen 2015, 22) stays affiliated with diplomacy in International Relations as a discipline that took diplomacy under its wing of understanding and explaining.

To get to the definition of diplomacy that accommodates non-linearity and plurality of lived experiences, it is necessary to go back almost a hundred years to the diplomatic theory. In that regard, Ernest Satow’s (1922) effort to isolate its modern meaning is indispensable. He defined diplomacy as “the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, extending sometimes also to their relations with vassal states” (Satow 1922, 1). His explanatory fix of diplomacy to the knowledge and the unique manner of official interstates’ relations making them the prerogative and responsibility of their governments is unambiguous: After the overview of diverse understandings of diplomacy over the period since the coining of the word in English and its meanings by Edmund Burke in 1796, Satow concluded:

“When we speak of the ‘diplomacy’ of a country as skilful or blundering, we do not mean the management of its international affairs by its agents residing abroad, but their direction by the statesman at the head of the department. Many writers and speakers are deposed to put the blame for a weak or unintelligent diplomacy on the agent, but this mistake arises from their ignorance of the organisation of public business. The real responsibility necessarily rests with the government concerned” (Satow 1922, 4-5).

Therefore, the categories for empirical analysis of diplomacy’s theoretical conceptualisation must start from the conceiving of diplomacy’s relatedness to the state. Next are the organisation of state governance and the purposes of state-led diplomacy. The following taxon is the set of diplomacy goals (strategic, specific, state-individual, and directive to practising diplomacy). The categories of concrete diplomatic conduct (innovations in diplomacy and organisation of

diplomatic work), types of diplomatic actions (bilateral, multilateral, bimultilateral, regional, and interregional), and values pertinent to diplomacy will lead to the comprehensive categorisation of diplomatic approaches enveloped within the theoretical conceptualisation.

## Results

In 2013, Xi Jinping, the newly elected President of the PRC, spread further the concept of “a community of common destiny”<sup>10</sup> for a global systemic change. In the same year, he also launched the vision to renew the multiplication of transnational cooperation along the ancient “Silk Road”. The initiative was initially dubbed the “One Belt One Road” (OBOR), to be renamed the Belt and Road Initiative. It involves cooperating in diverse sectors and geographies and getting a thin multilateral institutionalisation through the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation<sup>11</sup>. The early dynamic generator

---

<sup>10</sup> In his speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Affairs (MGIMO) in March 2013, Xi Jinping presented a unique perspective on international relations. He described the world as a common home of all humanity, emphasising the unprecedented interconnectedness and interdependence among countries. This view, which he elaborated on in a manner reminiscent of Western hermeneutics, was also deeply rooted in Chinese wisdom, evidently in the statement: “In this world, the level of interconnectedness and interdependence among countries is unprecedentedly raised. Human beings are living in common global village, in one time and space in which history and present are meeting. Thus, it is more and more becoming the community of common destiny with me in you and you inside me” (Xi 2013a). This innovative approach to understanding international relations will have this emancipatory idea of mutuality as pervasive human intra-connectedness as the fil rouge.

<sup>11</sup> Three high-level meetings of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, or the Belt and Road Forum for short and with the acronym BRF, have been held thus far. The first high-level meeting of this forum was convened in 2017 in Beijing to stir close collaboration and joined-in coordination of the practical deliverability of multidimensional interconnectivity projects in various sectors networking Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America. The second high-level meeting of the Forum platform was held in Beijing in 2019, resulting, among other outcomes, in instituting the BRI International Green Development Coalition on the initiative of China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment. At the third high-level meeting organised in 2023 in Beijing, the platform branched thematically to coordinate “Trade Connectivity, Maritime Cooperation, Clean Silk Road, Think Tank Exchanges, People-to-People Bonds, and Subnational Cooperation” (BRF III 2023, point 2). Ahead of this meeting, a CEO conference was also held. Further, it is concluded that strengthened international Belt and Road cooperation requires additional institutionalisation. China has committed to “work with Belt and Road partner countries to strengthen the building of multilateral cooperation platforms covering energy, taxation, finance, green development, disaster risk reduction, anti-corruption, think tanks collaboration, media, culture, and other fields. China will continue to host the BRF and establish a secretariat for the Forum” (BRF III 2023, point 7(8)).

of the foreign investments later served as the model for infrastructural grounding of the desired change with global scope (Xi 2013a). In a speech delivered at the Nazarbayev University in Astana, Xi gave the following outline and rationale for the new initiative with its historical roots in the ancient Silk Road's connectivity throughout Eurasia to Africa. The OBOR is conceived:

“To forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development space in the Eurasian region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an ‘economic belt along the Silk Road’. This will be a great undertaking benefitting the people of all countries along the route. To turn this into a reality, we may start with work in individual areas and link them up over time to cover the whole region” (Xi 2013b).

The innovation process of diplomacy theorisation at the Fourth Conference in 2014 was the culmination point in ideational and, therefore, normative transforming of the Chinese worldview in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The CPC's central leadership convened this most representative gathering of the Chinese ruling echelon, devoted entirely to the theoretical uplifting of diplomacy and revamping its spirit demanded by “the underlying trend of the times” (Xinhua 2014). Li Keqiang<sup>12</sup> presided over the two-day deliberation. Attendees, among other party and state notables, were Zhang Dejiang<sup>13</sup>, Yu Zhengsheng<sup>14</sup>, Liu Yunshan<sup>15</sup>, Wang Qishan<sup>16</sup>, and Zhang Gaoli<sup>17</sup>. Xi Jinping delivered a key address outlining the foremost elements of his thoughts on Major Country Diplomacy. He summed up the first achievements, as habituated in this type of collective theory-building enterprise. Xi emphasised the successes of Chinese diplomatic engagement with the world and in relating to the world after the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC. His main argument was built around continuity and consistency. He praised the Chinese foreign affairs community for its diplomatic success. Its members posted abroad were primarily credited

---

<sup>12</sup> At that time, the member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Premier of the State Council.

<sup>13</sup> Then, the member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

<sup>14</sup> At the time, he was a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

<sup>15</sup> Then, the member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau and member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee.

<sup>16</sup> At the time, he was a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Central Commission for Disciplinary Inspection of the CPC Central Committee.

<sup>17</sup> He was then a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Vice Premier of the State Council.

for the positive results. Building upon these diplomatic accomplishments, the second part of his address brought a significant remake of diplomacy. It upgraded the theoretical facets of China's emancipatory diplomacy mode.

It transpires that Xi understood diplomatic theory-building as a scientifically reflexive knowing that must be firmly aligned with the "trend of the times" (Xinhua 2014) for the seminal endeavour of relationships-making, using the state power for shaping jointly with others the just sharing of life, time, and the Earth (Stefanović-Štambuk and Joksimović 2023). Strivings towards achieving universal relations of mutuality were set forth. China's diplomacy's emancipatory thrust in bringing closer the sovereign independent states through methodically woven liberating relationships from hegemonic forces expressed the willpower for relationships of the socialist state. In a diversified global setting of rapidly changing international and global systems' relations, mired in uncertainties, diplomacy has been given a significant quadruple purpose.

First, in the turbulent external environment, Chinese diplomacy's social purpose must be the realisation of the "Chinese dream" (中国梦). Xi emphasised the following:

"Keeping in mind new tasks that should be carried out under new conditions, we have worked hard to creatively pursue China's diplomacy in both theory and practice, highlight the global significance of the Chinese dream and enrich the strategic thinking of peaceful development" (Xinhua 2014).

The "Chinese dream" is the national interest purposefully concretised to be attained by the time of the "Two Centenary" in 2049. A reformed China's diplomacy must contribute to the materialisation of "the great renewal of the Chinese nation" (Xinhua 2014) in honour of the centennials of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China. The great renewal was defined as the achievement of two sets of goals. One set relates to "doubling the 2010 GDP and per capita income of urban and rural residents and finishing the building of a society of initial prosperity in all respects" (Xinhua 2014). Another set of goals was to make China "into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious" by that time (Xinhua 2014).

We discovered that the second purpose of Chinese diplomacy is the holistic human one. It is to yield China's prosperity to the whole of humanity by embedding systematically through new types of win-win cooperative international relationships its growing welfare into the growth of other states and their nations' welfare. All the directions in which such purposed diplomacy of building a new type of international relations creates them, as distinct special types having the holistic human purpose of betterment of all, are marked by the fact of supporting and imbuing mutuality through the winning cooperation

(“win-win cooperation”). This is the most contentious point from almost all perspectives of modern Western thought of the international order. From their standpoints on human nature and human associative relationships, it is impossible for one to have “a cake”, eat it, share it with others, and make it that way larger for all.

Therefore, confrontations with this Chinese worldview from every Western theoretical wing are focused on rebuking this stance on cooperation as mere empty propaganda unreasonable and easily deniable by the simple laws of physics. Yet, what is clearly sensed and reasoned is that China is laying the groundwork for supplanting the West’s “*homo economicus*” determinism and pursuit of selfish individual “life plans” in a constant struggle for relative gains. The new model of balanced and just development purported by China is a linchpin for the new international system free from power politics, the balance of power, and hegemony. Its offer is essentially the same as what sustainable development conceives. This goal of diplomacy at the international system level provides a concrete means of realising the shared worldwide concept of sustainable development. It was reached at last in 1992 following intense negotiation. The goal stems from the recognition that sustainability serves as a conceptual road map for understanding how the problems and obstacles facing humanity today result from the world’s erroneous arrangement brought about by technology and war in relations-making. This unsustainable existing meshwork must be transcended. That imperative necessitates change towards sustainable development, prefiguring “*homo harmonious*” envisaged by the old Chinese wisdom inherited from the range of their ancient thinkers, not only or solely Confucius.

Henceforth, creating a new type of international relations, in addition to supportive mutually win-win cooperation, includes putting forward and following “a policy of upholding justice and pursuing shared interests” (Xinhua 2014), championing “a new vision featuring common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security” (Xinhua 2014).

Awareness of China’s success in making itself a powerful state by freeing close to 800 million inhabitants from poverty (World Bank 2022) is almost palpable. The Bank’s (2022) data from tracking global extreme poverty, defined by the International Poverty Line as living daily with incomes below \$1.90, shows China’s contribution to “close to three-quarters of the global reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty. At China’s current national poverty line, the number of poor fell by 770 million over the same period”. Poverty was inflicted by colonialism and ill governance. Yet, this recent transformation from “rags to riches” was not distorted into greed for strength but prod the emancipation to might. Lao Tze held this as the wisdom of ruling the state, and the CPC accepted it as its creed. Internationally, China overcame

its dependency and imperialist subjugation to become a responsible participant with a high stake in the ordered world. It did not translate its newly gained strengths into a towering power figure. Self-legitimation is intentionally formed with the might to be a “major country” rightfully and not a “big power” or “superpower”, since it leads diplomacy appropriately to the multiplicity of its culturally pervaded identity over millennia of civilised life. From there stems the holistic humanity’s purpose of co-existence in peace on the shared planet as the precondition for having a future not just for the sake of survival but for thriving life in well-being. Thriving today enables the next generations to lead good lives unconstrained by erroneous conceptions of life expounded by the living generations.

The third purpose of emancipatory diplomacy is to build a global community with a shared future. A major country’s new model of relations must first and foremost be shown in creating and maintaining friendly, sincere, inclusive, and mutually beneficial relations with neighbours (Xinhua 2014). China’s bilateral diplomacy, in general, has to be orientated to making diverse partnership relations short of alliances, neither defensive nor offensive. Relations without blocks or security alignments must be sought everywhere, particularly in Africa, where they must feature “sincerity, delivering outcomes, affinity and good faith” (Xinhua 2014). All these ties, be they bilateral, multilateral, regional, or interregional, are weaving a human community with a shared future governing jointly and respectfully peaceful and just sharing of life, time, and the Earth.

The fourth purpose of China’s diplomacy, which will become more salient in years to come, is a universal purpose: to help restore harmony between humanity and nature. This constitutive relationality is the most distinctive standpoint in ancient Chinese philosophical thought. Human misguided actions must not disturb the joint pulsation of Heaven and Earth. Mindfulness and care for an undisturbed energy flow must underpin the human reverence for nature. Such a relationship with nature is what we refer to as sustainability today. Ancient Chinese thinkers perceived this ability as a profound and noble-centred understanding of the universe’s interconnectedness in human thoughts and actions. Today, China reaffirms this same conception, insisting that:

“We should make our world clean and beautiful by pursuing green and low-carbon development. It means bidding farewell to the destructive exploitation of resources and preserving and enjoying the lush mountains and lucid waters. Humanity coexists with nature. Any harm we inflict on nature will eventually come back to haunt us. We often take natural resources such as air, water, soil and blue sky for granted. But we could not survive without them (SCIOPRC 2023).

The four-pronged approach to practising emancipatory diplomacy was envisioned. Its theorisation will stay open for enrichment and further development, while diplomacy will be conducted boldly with “a salient Chinese

feature and a Chinese vision” (Xinhua 2014). It will “uphold the CPC’s leadership and socialism with distinctive Chinese features” (Xinhua 2014), which is firmly tied to China’s “development path, social system, cultural tradition, and values” (Xinhua 2014). New self-confidence and determination are glaring and a precursor of later comments on Xi’s new “24-characters” daring doctrine and assertive “wolf warrior” diplomacy.

## Discussion

There is a penchant for devaluation not only of the relevance but also of the prudence of “Marxist-Leninist Thought with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era”. Even its close entwinement with system thinking inwoven with the ancient philosophical traditions is either outright dismissed or only Confucianism inheritance is singled out, diluting influences of other philosophers. Any coherent theoretical thought on diplomacy, even after the formalisation of Xi Jinping’s “*Thought on Major Country Diplomacy*” (大国外交理论), has been undervalued. Allegedly, China conducts diplomacy without any meta-theory guardrails. Additionally, there has been an overexploitation of the claim that no prior comprehensive theoretical overlay existed. China’s diplomacy is seen to be led by pragmatic handling of learning on the spot. Diplomacy conducted as circumstances command was considered the source of ex-post systematisation as playing the role of theory-building. From time to time, the CPC translated the gained practical experiences as knowledge accrued into summaries of practice for further “diplomatic work”.

Consequently, the unique theorisation of peaceful coexistence diplomacy (和平共处外交), peaceful development diplomacy (和平发展外交), harmonious world diplomacy (和谐世界外交), win-win cooperation diplomacy (共赢外交), and most recently emancipatory diplomacy of building a global community of a shared future (命运共同体外交) remains yet underexplored.

Although diplomacy’s relatedness to the state was not directly mentioned in the first conceptualisation in 2014, all other references indicated what Xi Jinping spelt out in 2019. He defined diplomacy as the “concentrated embodiment of the will of the state” (Xi 2019, 550) in world-making. As for the organisation of the state and its conduct of diplomacy, he stressed that “diplomatic powers must be held by the Party Central Committee” (Xi 2019, 550). The struggles to liberate Chinese people from the suffering, misery, and humiliation brought upon them by foreign oppression and monarchic internal mismanagement were entwined with the rise of the Communist Party of China. It is not a small matter that China’s emancipation from the yoke of colonialist and imperialist states of the then-nascent West, which started near the end of the 19th century, had ingrained today’s power of the CPC. In the decisive battle

for independence and unification, the CPC prevailed. A pride of China's populace in a long and formidable continuous civilisation, again flourishing in the gained freedom from oppression in 1949, was offended and hurt in the same year. Then, the decision was made to segregate this state from the Liberal International Order's main multilateral institution, the United Nations (UN). The new communist government's right to represent the Chinese state in the UN was withdrawn. This move, spearheaded by the United States, enraged by China's loss to communism, left a deep fault line in the construction of this country's diplomacy.

"Leaning to one side", to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was not just an ordinary ideological choice of relationships. It was also the extorted action of coercion by exclusion from the international society of states and the international community. Disdain for oppressiveness, colonialism, imperialism, domination, power politics, and hegemonism in international relations has been firmly engrained from these new encounters of subjugation by the most powerful state at that time, i.e., the US and its allies. This injustice has been remembered not only within the CPC's ranks and files. It is also carved in the hearts and minds of people from all walks of life. The contempt and mistreatment of the Chinese state because of the free choice of the social, political, and economic system and the form of domestic governance that was found to be appropriate and good, could hardly be separated from the feelings that rejection from the states' system in 1949 stemmed from the US and the West European countries' disrespect for the different, diverse, and distinct civilisation, culture, and even race.

Already in 1953, Zhou Enlai, at that time China's foreign affairs minister, started to introduce in diplomatic intercourse with the newly independent India's government the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (和平共处五项原则). They were envisaged as guidance for the new type of international relations, first and foremost between decolonised states. In 1954, China and India jointly affirmed these principles as the basis for their relations. Officially, the Principles formed the irrefutable foundation of China's external relationships' praxis and theoretical work. They were constitutionally enshrined as a set of open and inclusive international law principles:

"...China pursues an independent foreign policy, observes the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, mutual noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence..." (PRC Constitution 2019, Preamble).

Faced with the US-orchestrated exclusion from international affairs, the leadership of China's ruling Communist Party ventured into a mode of "revolutionising diplomacy". It experimented with the Marxist-Leninists' permanent internationalised struggle to extricate the state from imposed

subjugation. Until the normalisation of relations with the US in 1971, “anti-diplomacy” (Der Derian 1993, 29) was almost made the Chinese communists’ own brand. The social purpose of diplomacy, be it “revolutionising”, particularly in the 1960s, or “normal” ever since partaking in the US “triangular diplomacy” (Hanhimaki 2003), the assumption of the rightful representation in the UN and gaining back the legitimate standing in the international system, was own emancipation and the world’s emancipation from underdevelopment and power politics. Since the country’s “opening up”, it has never been severed from its forwarded positively holistic humanity’s purpose.

Using its own theoretical prism, the leadership of the Communist Party of China has come up with an answer to the most challenging questions of the suddenly uncertain times in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main problem occurred with the 2008 global financial crisis and the extremely slow recovery of the US and the EU’s economies. The chosen austerity policies have deepened societal distress in these polities. Hence, the main questions were whether such a shift holds the strategic opportunity for China and whether its early emancipatory diplomacy is sustainable and sufficient in that regard. This concern was considered for China’s sake and the planetary good. Transcending peacefully to a new era of interhuman relationships and humanity relating to nature was considered a prerequisite for the continuation of the Chinese state and society on the path towards attaining their strivings for a better-ordered world and joint, peaceful, and just global governance. Transboundary crises accumulating in fast succession bothered ruling China’s circles the most. Therefore, they got emboldened by coming out relatively unhurt from these crises.

Without significant losses in their own system’s stability and prepared for the foreseen sharpening of international contradictions, they have come to see that they must double down on diplomacy to preserve the strategic opportunity. This stepping up was not taken upon as any “idealistic” mission to save the world by its own writ or newly gained might. Finally, the last shred of expectations that the administration of the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barak Obama, was planning to upgrade relations with China commensurable with its new relative significance was fast lost in 2009. The joint management of the global economic crisis through the summit mechanism of the Group of 20, where China and America would supposedly act in concert as almost the G2, dissipated as a possibility at Obama’s first press conference in 2009.

China’s emancipatory diplomacy design is fully articulated in an explanation of its roots sustained by wisdom of mutuality throughout the relatedness of many-faceted relations spanning diverse nations, cultures, and ages of their existence given in the White Paper “A Global Community of Shared Future: China’s Proposals and Actions” (SCIOPRC 2023):

"All civilizations around the world have manifestations of the concept of a global community of shared future. Ancient Greek philosophers conducted primary research on this concept based on city-states, believing that humanity as one community should act in concert to pursue common interests and thus must live in harmony. Ancient Indian literature records the motto "Under Heaven—one family". The African philosophy of Ubuntu holds that "I am because we are," emphasizing interdependence of humanity. The concept of a global community of shared future reflects the common interests of all civilizations – peace, development, unity, coexistence, and win-win cooperation. A Russian proverb holds, "Together we can weather the storm". The Swiss-German writer Hermann Hesse proposed, "Serve not war and destruction, but peace and reconciliation." A German proverb reads, "An individual's effort is addition; a team's effort is multiplication." An African proverb states, "One single pillar is not sufficient to build a house". An Arabian proverb asserts, "If you want to walk fast, walk alone; if you want to walk far, walk together". Mexican poet Alfonso Reyes wrote, "The only way to be profitably national is to be generously universal". An Indonesian proverb says, "Sugarcane and lemongrass grow in dense clumps." A Mongolian proverb concludes, "Neighbors are connected at heart and share a common destiny". All the above narratives manifest the profound cultural and intellectual essence of the world" (SCIOPRC 2023).

Also, the fourth purpose of emancipatory diplomacy of China, which might be styled as geadiplomacy or telluric diplomatic purpose, is one of the main theorisation tenets approved by the worsening of the "triple planetary crisis" (UNFCCC 2022). It is elaborated in more detail in 2023:

"Industrialisation has created a level of material wealth never seen before, but it has also inflicted irreparable damage on the environment. We must not exhaust all the resources passed on to us by previous generations and leave nothing to our children, or pursue development in a destructive way. Lush mountains and lucid waters are invaluable assets. We must follow the philosophy of harmony between humanity and nature and observance of the laws of nature and pursue a path of sustainable development so that everyone is able to enjoy a starry sky, lush mountains and fragrant flowers" (SCIOPRC 2023).

## Conclusion

Although China does not label its diplomacy emancipatory in all but the "name," it is thus. Starting from this main assumption, the inquiry into enigmatic China's theorisation of diplomacy led to findings speaking clearly of its prowess to harness the power of diplomacy. It is understandable that the Western states are finding themselves challenged by the state and society that they have been looking down upon from their self-styled summit of invented modern times for

mighty affluence and sturdy influence belonging exclusively to them. China is the most puzzling among alleged challengers to the imposed Liberal International Order with its vision of betterment for all the planet's peoples, the planet, and the commonized future for the generations to come.

We assumed that the Chinese theory of emancipatory diplomacy had developed gradually through the collective process of the ad hoc convened Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs. The emancipatory diplomacy mode branched out from historical grievances of harm done to China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the beginning of the 1970s. Diplomacy is conceived as a state-centric power based on scientifically reflexive knowledge for jointly sharing life, time, and the Earth in an inclusive, participatory, democratic, and peaceful way of the world free from empire, dominance, political integration on exclusionary Western terms, its hegemony, and the hegemon power of the US. It is a full-fledged theorisation of a new type of international relations of China with the world and the world with China. Its state organisation requires the central leadership of the Communist Party of China. Apart from the conduct of party diplomacy, it holds the reins of diplomatic powers of state diplomacy:

“As diplomacy is concentrated embodiment of the will of the state, diplomatic powers must be held by the Party Central Committee. We must strengthen our consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment. We must work harder to uphold authority and centralized, unified leadership of the Central Committee, closely follow the Central Committee in terms of our thinking, political orientation, and actions, and ensure the strict enforcement of orders and prohibitions and the coordination of relevant parties” (Xi 2019, 553).

Threaded through the strivings for making “autonomous development” for itself and all others regularised to systemically better everyone and everything with inter-human mutuality and humanity’s harmony with nature made the humanistic emancipatory purposes of China’s diplomacy whole. Since 2014, theoretically, all layers and aspects of diplomacy have been rounded plenilaterally. It means that all activities have been pervasively interwoven in a multi-directional, multilateral, multi-stakeholder, multi-level, many-layered, and multifaceted manner that must free the international system from power politics and balance-of-power strategies. This emancipatory design first determined the putting of self-restraints on China’s own diplomatic agency to prevent it from degenerating into strategising for the balance of power. Relation-making of mutuality is devised to guard China against straying towards converting its power into the might constitutive of hegemony.

The Belt and Road cooperative projects, the Global Development Initiative (Xi 2021), the Global Security Initiative (Xi 2022), and the Global Civilisational Initiative (Xi 2023a) operationalise responsible and accountable self-restraints

to China's power not to degenerate into strength but constitute its might with the vision of a human community with a shared future. At the same time, all these working mechanisms of emancipatory diplomacy are conceived as enablers of liberating the international system, global order, and governance from the need for either the hegemon or world government. Yet neither archic nor anarchic outlook thwarts conceiving the possibility of the international system organised for achieving a balanced and just development through mutually ascertained multilateralism. It has to be synchronised through bilateral, regional, and interregional mechanisms joined in the democratic global governance of sharing peacefully life, time, and Earth.

China tends to harness science and diplomacy in world-making, free from violence against nature and consequently emancipating humans to do even politics consensually rather than coercively and oppressively. The fourfold emancipation from violence, the zero-sum structure of reality, the anarchy of international, and the past and present as reserved for the well-being, growth, and flourishing of only some states, societies, and peoples at the expense of others make China's diplomacy different. In these regards, it differentiates itself from all the Western past and present understandings of diplomacy. Critics will certainly sharpen the pen and words to strike out that China works to peacefully share life, time, and Earth. They will likely state that nothing emancipatory could come out of diplomacy where "diplomatic powers must be held by the Party Central Committee" (Xi 2019, 550).

However, China's diplomacy holds many key answers to questions related to the present and the future of the planet and humanity. Their emancipatory diplomacy has opened the competition for more beneficial cooperation between the West and the long-marginalised Global South countries. It is an intensely disturbing fact for the US and the European Union. While they are in such distress, most governments across the Global South are pretty comfortable with China's new gravitas. From this, more choices are provided to them by the competitive West, trying to outbid the Chinese offers. The Global South in world affairs—all nations whose sweat, blood, and tears the Western great powers took for granted—finds nothing wrong with the Chinese "heavyweight" and readiness to shoulder global responsibilities accordingly. In most of these states and societies, China is regarded as one of them in accomplishing domestic prosperity, leaving no one behind, and reordering the world towards integrity, dignity, worth, wellness, calm, and equity of all those sentient or not, everywhere.

In the New Year's speech, President Xi Jinping (2023b) unequivocally summarised 2023 regarding China's achievements and its reaffirmed commitments. He underlined the central tenets of emancipatory diplomacy, reiterating that China, as a responsible major country, will "work closely with the international community for the common good of humanity, build a

community with a shared future for mankind, and make the world a better place for all.” This reassurance in the continuation of China’s emancipatory diplomacy can liberate states, if from nothing else than from fears of daring to think boldly about the alternative to the present unsustainable world order.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT:** This work is supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation Republic of Serbia [grant number 451-03-66/2024-03 from January 26, 2024]. Additionally, the paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the research project “Serbia and Challenges in International Relations in 2024”, financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia and conducted by the Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, during the year 2024.

## References

- Adler-Nissen, Rebecca. 2015. “Just greasing the wheels? Mediating difference or the evasion of power and responsibility in diplomacy”. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 10 (1): 22-28.
- Akdağ, Zekeriyya. 2024. “China’s Assertive Foreign Policy and Global Visions Under Xi Jinping”. *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* 19 (1): 204-221.
- Ali, Hemn Shawkat. 2023. “China’s Non-Western Soft Power Policy in Establishing a New Order: a review of Strategy and Resources.”. *Jurnal Tapis: Jurnal Teropong Aspirasi Politik Islam* 19 (1): 124-144.
- Allison, Graham. 2017. *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- [BRF III] The Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. 2023. “Building an Open, Inclusive and Interconnected World for Common Development”. *beltandroadforum.org*, October, 18, 2023. <http://www.beltandroadforum.org/english/>.
- Bull, Hedley. 2002. *The Anarchical Society* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). New York: Columbia University Press.
- [CCGOW] China’s Central Government’s Official Webportal. 2013. “Xi Jinping - “Important Speech of Xi Jinping at Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference”. *China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development*, October 30, 2013. [http://en.cciced.net/NEWSCENTER/LatestEnvironmentalandDevelopmentNews/201310/t20131030\\_82626.html](http://en.cciced.net/NEWSCENTER/LatestEnvironmentalandDevelopmentNews/201310/t20131030_82626.html)

- Chan, Steve, Huiyun Feng, Kai He, and Weixing Hu. 2021. *Contesting revisionism: China, the United States, and the transformation of international order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cheng, Dean. 2020. "Challenging China's "Wolf Warrior" Diplomats". *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* 3504: 1-10.
- Chu, Yun-han. 2020. "A reformist, not a revisionist: The emerging global role of China." In: *The decline of the western-centric world and the emerging new global order*, edited by Yun-han Chu and Yongnian Zheng, 186-212. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, Raymond. 1998. "Putting Diplomatic Studies on the Map". *Diplomatic Studies Program Newsletter*. Leicester: Centre for the Study of Diplomacy.
- Constantinou, Costas M. 2013. "Between Statecraft and Humanism: Diplomacy and Its Forms of Knowledge". *International Studies Review* 15 (2): 141-162.
- Der Derian, James. 1987. *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Der Derian, James. 1993. "Anti-diplomacy, intelligence theory and surveillance practice". *Intelligence and National Security* 8 (3): 29-51.
- Economy, Elizabeth. 2024. "China's alternative order: and what America should learn from it". *Foreign Affairs* 103 (3): 8-24.
- Freeman, Chas W. Jr. 2020. "Diplomatic Doctrine and Style with Chinese Characteristics". *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 16 (2-3): 370-380.
- Freeman, Chas W. Jr. 2023. "A Diplomatic Taxonomy for the New World Disorder". In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Diplomatic Reform and Innovation*, edited by Paul Webster Hare, Juan Luis Manfredi-Sánchez and Kenneth Weisbrode, 41-58. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gomm, Roger, Martyn Hammersley, Martyn, and Peter Foster. 2000. *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts*. London: Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Hanhimaki, Jussi. 2003. "Selling the 'Decent interval': Kissinger, triangular diplomacy, and the end of the Vietnam war, 1971-73". *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14 (1): 159-194.
- Hu, Jintao. 2007. "Speech at the 17th Party Congress". *Centro Studi sulla Cina Contemporanea*, October 15, 2007. [https://www.csc.it/upload/doc/full\\_text\\_of\\_hu\\_jintaos\\_report\\_at\\_17th\\_party\\_congress\\_\\_qiushi\\_journal.pdf](https://www.csc.it/upload/doc/full_text_of_hu_jintaos_report_at_17th_party_congress__qiushi_journal.pdf).
- Hu, Jintao. 2012. "Firmly March on the Path of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive to Complete the Building of a Moderately Prosperous Society in all Respects". *International Department Central Committee of CPC*, November 8, 2012. <https://www.idcpc.gov.cn/english/>

- cpcbrief/18thParty/index.html#11https://www.idcpc.gov.cn/english/cpcbri  
ef/18thParty/index.html#11.
- Huiyun, Feng. 2009. "Is China a revisionist power?". *Chinese journal of international politics* 2 (3): 313-334.
- Iida, Masafumi. 2020. "Xi Jinping's diplomacy and the rise of his political authority". *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 9 (2): 127-143.
- Jia, Qingguo. 2021. "A Bumpy Ride: China's Search to Be a Responsible Power". *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 16 (2-3): 348-357.
- Jianfei, Liu. 2017. "Major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics reflects trends of the times". *China International Studies* 64: 28.
- Jiechi, Yang. 2011. "The Evolving International Pattern and China's Diplomacy". *China International Studies* 26: 4.
- Jiechi, Yang. 2013. "Conducting Chinese Diplomacy under New Circumstances". *China International Studies* 38: 4.
- Jiechi, Yang. 2014. "China's New Foreign Relations for a Complex World". *China International Studies* 44: 5.
- Jiemian, Yang. 2016. "Constructing discourse power in major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics: Mission and challenges". *China International Studies* 61: 38.
- Kuckartz, Udo, and Stefan Rädiker. 2023. *Qualitative Content Analysis: Methods, Practice and Software* (2nd edition). Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Kurlantzick, Joshua. 2008. "China's New Diplomacy and its Impact on the World". *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 14 (1): 221-235.
- Liu, Hongsong. 2021. "Chinese perception of China's engagement in multilateralism and global governance". In: *China Debates Its Global Role*, edited by Shaun Breslin and Ren Xiao, 113-140. London: Routledge.
- Liu, Xiao, and Zhaoyi Liu. 2023. "The Formation of China's Diplomacy and its Features". *Sociopolitical Sciences* 13 (1): 155-162.
- Loh, Dylan MH. 2024. *China's Rising Foreign Ministry: Practices and Representations of Assertive Diplomacy*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton.
- Miaofa, Wu. 2010. "China's Flourishing Multilateral Diplomacy". *China International Studies* 21: 25.
- Mitter, Rana. 2022. "China: Revolutionary or revisionist?" *The Washington Quarterly* 45 (3): 7-21.

- Mu, Ren, and Li Menglong. 2023. "Interpreting China's Strategic Discourse: Strategic Objectives and Approaches of the Silk Road Economic Belt (Sreb)". *Удмуртского университета. Социология. Политология. Международные отношения* 7 (1): 67-75.
- Nye, Joseph S., Jr. 2017. "The Kindleberger Trap." *Project Syndicate*, January 9, 2017. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trump-china-kindleberger-trap-by-joseph-s—nye-2017-01?barrier=accesspay>.
- [PRC Constitution] *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*. 2019. Beijing: The State Council of the People's Republic of China.
- Ruipeng, Mao. 2020. "Multilateralism and China's UN Diplomacy". *China International Studies* 85: 44.
- Satow, Ernest Mason. 1922. *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice* (Volume I). London: Longmans, Green and co.
- Schmidt, Brian C. 2013. "A modest realist in a tragic world: John J. Mearsheimer's The Tragedy of Great Power Politics." In: *Classics of international relations*, edited by Henrik Bliddal, Casper Sylvest, and Peter Wilson, 230-239. London: Routledge.
- Schweller, Randall L. 1994. "Bandwagoning for profit: Bringing the revisionist state back in." *International security* 19 (1): 72-107.
- Schweller, Randall. 2015. "Rising powers and revisionism in emerging international orders." *Valdai Papers* 16: 1-15.
- [SCIOPRC] The State Council Information Office of the PR China. 2023. "A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions". *The State Council Information Office of the PR China*, September 2023. [https://english.news.cn/20230926/689e17beb34c44e6a41aead2e0475223/20230926689e17beb34c44e6a41aead2e0475223\\_XxjwshE007016\\_20230926\\_CBMFNOA001.docx](https://english.news.cn/20230926/689e17beb34c44e6a41aead2e0475223/20230926689e17beb34c44e6a41aead2e0475223_XxjwshE007016_20230926_CBMFNOA001.docx).
- [SCPRC] The State Council of the People's Republic of China. 2023. "Central conference on work relating to foreign affairs held in Beijing". *The State Council of the People's Republic of China*, December 27, 2023. [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202312/28/content\\_WS658d704fc6d0868f4e8e293b.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202312/28/content_WS658d704fc6d0868f4e8e293b.html).
- Shambaugh, David. 2001. "China or America: which is the revisionist power?". *Survival* 43 (3): 25-30.
- Shamim, Syed Jazib, Misbah Mohammad Nasim, and Haider Shah. 2023. "Role of China's diplomacy in the Middle East and Saudi-Iran peace deal: implications for the region". *Asian Journal of Politicology and Allied Studies (AJPAS)* 1 (1): 11-21.

- Sharp, Paul. 2009. *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shixue, Jiang. 2024. "China's Diplomacy towards Developing Countries and the Building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind". *China International Studies* (104): 23.
- Stefanović-Štambuk, Jelica, and Jadranka Joksimović. 2023. "Seeing an Emergence of a New World Order through the Lenses of Sustainability". Paper presented at the 7th IPSA World Congress of Political Science: *Politics in the Age of Transboundary Crises: Vulnerability and Resilience*. Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 15-19, 2023.
- Sun, Jisheng. 2021. "China's efforts to shape and improve its international discursive power: Diplomatic practice". *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 16 (2-3): 334-347.
- Tilly, Charles. 1975. *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- [UNFCCC]. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. 2022. "What is the Triple Planetary Crisis?". *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, April 13, 2022. <https://unfccc.int/news/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis>
- Waltz, Kenneth N. 1959. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wang, Jianwei. 2019. "Xi Jinping's 'Major country diplomacy:' A paradigm shift?". *Journal of Contemporary China* 28 (115): 15-30.
- Wang, Renmin. 2022. "The Construction of China's International Image of a Major Country with a Sense of Responsibility in Diplomatic Discourse". *Insight-Information* 4 (1): 65-72.
- Wei, Chen. 2021. "Between club diplomacy and network diplomacy: exploring the diplomatic role of cities in China since 2012". *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 16 (2-3): 277-298.
- World Bank. 2022. "Lifting 800 Million People Out of Poverty – New Report Looks at Lessons from China's Experience". *World Bank group*, April 1, 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/04/01/lifting-800-million-people-out-of-poverty-new-report-looks-at-lessons-from-china-s-experience>.
- Wu, Chien-Huei, Frank Gaenssmantel, and Francesco Giumelli. 2022. "Conclusion – Multilateralism in Peril". In: *Multilateralism in Peril: The Uneasy Triangle of the US, China and the EU*, edited by Frank Gaenssmantel, Francesco Giumelli, and Chien-Huei Wu, 262-274. New York: Taylor & Francis.

- Wuthnow, Joel, Xin Li, and Lingling Qi. 2012. "Diverse multilateralism: Four strategies in China's multilateral diplomacy". *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 17: 269-290.
- Xi, Jinping. 2013a. 国家主席习近平在莫斯科国际关系学院的演讲(全文). *The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China*, March 24, 2013. [http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-03/24/content\\_2360829.htm](http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-03/24/content_2360829.htm).
- Xi, Jinping. 2013b. "Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, at Nazarbayev University". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, September 8, 2013. <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/BR/20130907.O1E.html>.
- Xi, Jinping. 2019. *On Building a Human Community with a Shared Future*. Beijing: CCTP (Central Compilation and Translation Press).
- Xi, Jinping. 2021. "Full text of Xi's statement at the General Debate of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly". *The State Council of the People's Republic of China*, September 22, 2021. [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202109/22/content\\_WS614a9d11c6d0df57f98e0a81.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202109/22/content_WS614a9d11c6d0df57f98e0a81.html).
- Xi, Jinping. 2022. "Rising to Challenges and Building a Bright Future Through Cooperation". *BOAO Forum for Asia Annual Conference*, April 21, 2022. [https://www.boaoforum.org/ac2022/html/detail\\_2\\_486\\_15865\\_meeting\\_Message.html](https://www.boaoforum.org/ac2022/html/detail_2_486_15865_meeting_Message.html).
- Xi, Jinping. 2023a. "Full text of Xi Jinping's keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting". *The State Council of the People's Republic of China*, March 16, 2023. [http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content\\_85171478.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/16/content_85171478.htm).
- Xi, Jinping. 2023b. "Full text of President Xi Jinping's 2024 New Year message". *The State Council of the People's Republic of China*, December 31, 2023. [https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202312/31/content\\_WS65915c7ec6d0868f4e8e2aba.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202312/31/content_WS65915c7ec6d0868f4e8e2aba.html).
- Xiao, Xi, and Honghua Men. 2021. *Chinese diplomacy in the new era*. Singapore: Springer.
- Xinhua. 2014. "Xi eyes more enabling int'l environment for China's peaceful development", *Global Times*, November 30, 2014. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/894240.shtml>.
- Xinhua. 2018. "Xi urges breaking new ground in major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics", *Xinhua*, June 24, 2018. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/24/c\\_137276269.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/24/c_137276269.htm).
- Yang, Xiao. 2023. "The "Wolf Warrior Cycle": Chinese Blockbusters in the Age of the Belt and Road Initiative". *The China Quarterly* 256: 1053-1067.

- Yi, Wang. 2013. "Exploring the path of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics". *China International Studies* 41: 5.
- Yi, Wang. 2016. "2015: A year of flying colors for pursuing major-country diplomacy with distinctive Chinese features". *China International Studies* 56: 5.
- Yuan, Shaoyu. 2023. "Tracing China's diplomatic transition to wolf warrior diplomacy and its implications". *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 10 (1): 1-9.
- Zeguang, Zheng. 2018. "Major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics in the new era". *China International Studies* 70: 5.
- Zemin, Jiang. 2001. "Jiang Zemin's Speech at the Meeting Celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China". *China.org.cn.*, July 1, 2001. <http://www.china.org.cn/e-speech/a.htm>.
- Zhang, Denghua. 2018. "The concept of 'community of common destiny' in China's diplomacy: Meaning, motives and implications". *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 5 (2): 196-207.
- Zhang, Qingmin, and Lize Yang. 2023. "Withering Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Evidence from China". In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Diplomatic Reform and Innovation*, edited by Paul Webster Hare, Juan Luis Manfredi-Sánchez, and Kenneth Weisbrode, 167-192. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Zhang, Qingmin. 2021. "Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics". *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 16 (2-3): 358-369.
- Zhang, Xiaoling, and Tony Hong. 2023. *China's Non-State Soft Power Actors: Tai Chi, Traditional Culture, and the Practice of Public Diplomacy*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- Zhang, Yun. 2022. "The Disintegration of State-Society Relations and Its Moderating Effects on Japanese Diplomacy towards China". *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 17 (4): 643-653.
- Zhimin, Chen. 2012. "International Responsibility, Multilateralism, and China's Foreign Policy". In: *State, Globalization and Multilateralism: The challenges of institutionalizing regionalism*, edited by: Mario Telò, 79-95. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Zhirui, Chen, and Wu Lin. 2023. "China's Shift to Multilateralism in Building Global Partnerships". *China International Studies* 102: 5.
- Zhong, Feiteng. 2019. "Major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics". In: *The Routledge Handbook of the Belt and Road*, edited by Cai Fang and Peter Nolan, 249-253. London: Routledge.
- Zhu, Zhiqun. 2016. *China's new diplomacy: Rationale, strategies and significance*. London: Routledge.

## Annex<sup>18</sup>

### The protocol for quantitative and qualitative content analysis of Chinese diplomacy-related documents

#### *Purposes of diplomacy*

- 1.1. Social: achieving the “Two Centenary” Goals
- 1.2. Human holistic: “International relations underpinned by win-win cooperation”
- 1.3. Global: building a human community with a shared future
- 1.4. Telluric: harmony with nature

#### *Diplomacy goals*

##### *Strategic goals*

- 2.1.a. “fostering a more enabling international environment for China’s peaceful development”
- 2.1.b. “peace, development, cooperation and win-win”

##### *Specific goals*

- 2.2.a. “pursuing China’s overall domestic and international interests and its development”
- 2.2.b. “pursuing security priorities in a balanced way”

##### *Individual goals*

- 2.3.a. “focusing on the overriding goal of peaceful development and national renewal”
- 2.3.b. “upholding China’s sovereignty, security and development interests”
- 2.3.c. “maintaining and sustaining the important period of strategic opportunity for China’s development”

##### *Diplomacy directive*

- 2.4.a. “building of a new type of international relations”
- 2.4.b. “building a new model of major-country relations”
- 2.4.c. “put forward and practised a neighbourhood policy featuring amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness”

---

<sup>18</sup> Analysed source and quotes (Xinhua 2014).

- 2.4.d. “sincerity, delivering outcomes, affinity and good faith” in relations with Africa
- 2.4.e. “promoting democracy in international relations”
- 2.4.f. upholding “the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”

### ***Diplomatic innovations and reforms of diplomatic work***

- 3.1. “opening new horizon in China’s diplomacy”
- 3.2. enhancing “the central and unified leadership of the Party”
- 3.3. abandoning the concept of peripheral diplomacy (CCGOW 2013)<sup>19</sup>
- 3.4. “consistency of China’s foreign policy, strengthened overall planning and taken bold initiatives, thus achieving notable progress”
- 3.5. “advancing China’s diplomacy under new conditions”
- 3.6. reforming and improving “institutions and mechanisms concerning foreign affairs, step up their coordination among different sectors”
  - 3.6.a. “always base ourselves on our own strength in pursuing the development of the country and the nation, and follow our own path unswervingly”
  - 3.6.b. “reform and improve institutions and mechanisms concerning foreign affairs”
  - 3.6.c. “step up.. coordination among different sectors, government bodies and localities:
  - 3.6.d. “increase strategic input”
  - 3.6.e. “ensures well-regulated foreign affairs management”
  - 3.6.f. “strengthen the ranks of official managing foreign affairs”

### ***Types of diplomacy***

#### ***Bilateral diplomacy***

- 4.1.a. well-manged “relations with other major countries”
- 4.1.b. building “a sound and stable framework of major-country relations”

---

<sup>19</sup> On October 24 and 25, 2013, the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference was held in Beijing, which is an important conference for the CPC Central Committee to well arrange diplomatic work in the new situation. The conference is mainly to conclude lessons, study and judge the current situation, unify thoughts, exploit the future, determine strategic objectives, basic guidelines and overall layout in the next five to fifteen years and specify the working roadmaps and schemes for solving major peripheral diplomacy problems.

- 4.1.c. expanding “cooperation with other major developing countries”
- 4.1.d. strengthening “unity and cooperation with other developing countries”
- 4.1.e. closely integrating China’s own “development with the common development of other developing countries

*Multilateral diplomacy*

- 4.2.a. advancing “multilateral diplomacy”
- 4.2.b. working “to reform the international system and global governance”
- 4.2.c. increasing “the representation and say of China and other developing countries”
- 4.2.d. actively advancing “the building of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road”
- 4.2.e. working “hard to expand the converging interests of various parties, and promote win-win cooperation through results-oriented cooperation”

*Regional diplomacy*

- 4.3.a. autonomous leadership in building regions and institutionalising regional cooperation
- 4.3.b. participating in regional economic integrations and free trade areas
- 4.3.c. autonomous leadership in building regional “communities with a shared future” (“common destiny”)

*Interregional diplomacy*

- 4.4.a. BRICS partnership
- 4.4.b. BRF Network

***Values pursued in the conduct of diplomacy***

- 5.a. mutuality
- 5.b. sincerity
- 5.c. amity
- 5.d. inclusivity
- 5.e. equity
- 5.f. justice
- 5.g. fairness
- 5.h. interconnectedness

### ***New diplomatic approach***

- 6.a. “on the basis of summing up our past practice and experience, enrich and further develop diplomatic perception”
- 6.b. “conduct diplomacy with a salient Chinese feature and a Chinese vision”
- 6.c. “uphold the CPC’s leadership and socialism with distinctive Chinese features”
- 6.d. “stick to our development path, social system, cultural tradition and values”.

### **EMANCIPATORSKA DIPLOMATIJA KINE ZA MIRNU, DEMOKRATSKU I ODRŽIVU GLOBALNU ZAJEDNICU**

**Apstrakt:** Ovo istraživanje proučava teorijsko oblikovanje diplomatije Narodne Republike Kine. Iako se ulažu napori da se njena teorija predstavi u pojmovima koji su razumljivi, Zapad ih smatra tankim prekrivačem za propagandu vladajuće Komunističke partije. Diplomatske akcije Kine se prikazuju kao manipulacije države željne moći koja teži globalnoj dominaciji, spremne da razruši postojeće aranžmane i preuzme mesto Sjedinjenih Američkih Država na vrhu svetske moći. Iako “vuk-ratnik” pristup u diplomatskoj praksi ponekad može biti izražen, proučavanje kineske teorije diplomatije otkriva normativnost ideja o volji za uspostavljanje odnosa uzajamnosti. „Misao o diplomatiji velike sile“ Si Đinpinga, formativno oblikovana 2014. godine, pokazuje da je emancipatorska suština kineske diplomatije zastrašujuća za one koje brine moć ove zemlje. Ovu tezu ćemo testirati sprovođenjem kontekstualne analize sadržaja relevantnih izvora. Kineska emancipatorska diplomatija zamišlja upotrebu državne moći za zajedničko deljenje života, vremena i planete. Cilj je da se postigne principijelni i pravedni pristanak svih država za ostvarivanje inkluzivnog, pravičnog, fer, demokratskog i mirnog međunarodnog poretka uravnoteženog i pravednog autonomnog razvoja i globalnog upravljanja kroz međusobno utvrđen multilateralizam u ljudskoj zajednici sa zajedničkom budućnošću.

**Ključne reči:** Kina; teorija diplomatije; Misao o diplomatiji velike sile Si Đinpinga; Pet principa mirne koegzistencije; Pojas i put; Globalna zajednica zajedničke budućnosti; Liberalni međunarodni poredak.

## INVESTMENT MIGRATION FROM THE STANDPOINT OF INTERNATIONAL AND EU LAW

Vesna ĆORIĆ<sup>1</sup>, Fernanda FLORENTINO FERNANDEZ JANKOV<sup>2</sup>,  
Ana KNEŽEVIĆ BOJOVIĆ<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Investment migration programmes are used by over eighty states globally and pose serious security and criminal risks. Their existence is additionally complex in the EU, as EU citizenship opens up its internal market and grants a set of political rights. Relying predominantly on the normative-legal method, the authors analyse the compatibility of investment migration with international and EU law. The purpose of this analysis is twofold. First, it determines whether national autonomy in citizenship matters is subject to limitations by international and EU law since they impact the legality of investment migration. Second, implications of the *Nottebohm* case are analysed to determine the relevance of the genuine link criterion for the international recognition of nationality. It was concluded that the genuine link criterion does not affect the legality of investment migration in international and EU law. Instead, legality is achieved if investment migration programmes comply with rules on combating corruption, money laundering, and tax evasion. While authors give due regard to the autonomy of EU law, the need to avoid the danger of the “vertical aspect” of international law fragmentation, i.e., incoherence between EU and international law, and to avoid the creation of an imbalanced legal environment is considered a priority.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:  
16 July 2024  
Revised:  
15 September 2024  
Accepted  
23 September 2024

### KEYWORDS

investment migration;  
citizenship by investment;  
residence by investment;  
international law;  
European Union;  
nationality; genuine link; EU citizenship;  
sincere cooperation.

**Cite this article as:** Ćorić, Vesna, Fernanda Florentino Fernandez Jankov, and Ana Knežević Bojović. 2024. “Investment Migration from the Standpoint of International and EU Law”. *The Review of International Affairs* LXXV (1192): 437–462. [https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe\\_ria.2024.75.1192.6](https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_ria.2024.75.1192.6)

<sup>1</sup> Senior Research Associate, Institute of Comparative Law, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [v.coric@iup.rs](mailto:v.coric@iup.rs), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4240-7469>.

<sup>2</sup> Post-doctoral Programme Fellow, Law Faculty of the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. E-mail: [fernanda.jankov@usp.br](mailto:fernanda.jankov@usp.br), <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9737-4293>.

<sup>3</sup> Senior Research Associate, Institute of Comparative Law, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: [a.bojovic@iup.rs](mailto:a.bojovic@iup.rs). <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3746-5747>.

## Introduction and Conceptual Background

Investment migration is defined by the Investment Migration Council as a form of legal migration used by more than eighty sovereign states globally. It encompasses various immigrant investor programmes (citizenship and residence by investment programmes), allowing individuals to gain citizenship or residence rights in exchange for investments in their host countries (Investment Migration Council 2019, 1). They are commonly referred to as golden programmes (Zhang 2024) or immigrant investor programmes (IIPs) (Džankić 2018).

Contemporary investment-based migration laid its roots in the early 1980s and has spread all over the globe in recent years. The first wave of IIPs emerged in the early 1980s when the government of Australia introduced its Business Migration Programme, granting residence rights based on investment (Stevens 2016). The concept was followed by numerous African, American, and European countries (Džankić 2018, 66). The second wave of wealth-based immigration programmes appeared in the aftermath of the Great Recession that began in mid-2007. It reflected a tendency according to which investment migration programmes were created during a crisis (Hartwig-Peillon 2021, 1). More specifically, certain island nations off the coast of Africa, North America, and Oceania introduced wealth-based immigration programmes at the time of the 2007-2009 global financial crisis. Most investment migration programmes in the European Union (EU) were launched or revived in the aftermath of the subprime mortgage crisis between 2011 and 2013. By 2016, each EU member state had launched at least one legal mechanism for facilitating investment-based migration, either through an investor citizenship scheme based on the state's discretion to naturalise or through a residence by investment programme granting "a path to citizenship" (Džankić 2018, 65-66). In 2019, there were only three EU member states (Bulgaria, Malta, and Cyprus) granting citizenship by investment (CBI) without requiring physical residence, while at that time, 20 EU member states were running residence by investment (RBI) schemes (Zabrocka 2023, 48).

Although the CBI and RBI schemes became more popular in the previous decade, the concept seems to have started fading out recently. By 2023, the respective landscape in the EU changed due to the multiple political pressures and criticism of the practice by EU bodies. Namely, since 2014, the European Parliament has persistently opposed the CBI and RBI programmes, calling for the termination of the CBI schemes and the comprehensive EU-level regulation of the RBI schemes (Zhang 2024). Two resolutions addressing concerns regarding investment schemes adopted by the European Parliament in 2014 and 2019 (Zabrocka 2023, 53) were followed by a European Commission

(Commission) Report in 2019 (2019 report). The 2019 Report comprehensively scrutinised the existing RBI and CBI schemes in the EU member states and identified risks they pose, but also asserted some of the Commission's positions regarding the CBI schemes in particular. Following up on the 2019 Report, in April 2020, the Commission reiterated its concerns and instituted infringement procedures against Malta and Cyprus (EC 2020). In November, following the suspension of the Cyprus CBI Programme, Malta introduced new policies based on constructive feedback. In March 2022, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution with proposals to the Commission on the CBI and RBI schemes in the EU (2022 Resolution) (EP Res. 2021/2026(INL)). The 2022 Resolution supported the Commission's endeavours aimed at the termination of the CBI schemes and called again on the Commission to establish EU standards that would govern the RBI schemes. Interestingly, the 2022 Resolution also called on the Commission to exert pressure on non-EU countries to abolish their CBI schemes and reform their RBI schemes in a way that would align them with EU law and standards (EP Res. 2021/2026(INL), para. 25). This request concerned those non-EU countries that have the CBI and RBI schemes in place and benefit from visa-free travel to the EU.

For now, there remains only one EU member state—Malta—granting the CBI programmes without the condition of physical residence and 12 EU member states running the RBI programmes in the EU. In September 2022, the Commission referred Malta to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) for its CBI scheme (EC 2022).

The issue of investment migration schemes introduced by some states has been surrounded by controversy and is at the heart of a lively legal and socio-political debate over the last decade (Zabrocka 2023, 52). It has been argued by academics and policymakers that both CBI and RBI types of schemes pose serious security risks and risks of money laundering, tax evasion, fraud, and criminal activities, including corruption and the financing of terrorist activities (Weiler 2024; Hartwig-Peillon 2021, 8; Xu, El-Ashram, and Gold 2015, 8; Brillaud and Martini 2018, 31). In addition, concerns were raised due to the emerging trend of commoditising citizenship and treating it as nothing more than a sellable good, which implies that investors do not necessarily need to establish a "genuine link" with the country offering naturalisation for investment (Shachar 2021, 544; EC 2020). In that context, some scholars (Parker 2017; Tanasoca 2016; Shachar and Hirschl 2014) examined the ethical dimensions of the link between citizenship and money, underscoring the benefits and challenges of selling citizenship. Other scholars have explored the impact of investment migration schemes around the globe on global inequality (Boatcă 2015; Christians 2017; Zabrocka 2023, 72) and concluded that they pose a grave risk to vulnerable individuals and set a troublesome trend. Now, access to desirable

locations could be bought, and those who cannot afford it would be left behind. The schemes strengthen the existing distinction between “wanted” and “unwanted” immigrants and create first- and second-class citizens (Shachar 2021, 545).

Some scholars point out the apparent migration-sustainability paradox since migration plays a role as a driver of unsustainability, as a part of economic globalisation, while simultaneously representing a potential force for sustainable development. In other words, it has been argued that migration affects positively some sustainability dimensions in general while having adverse effects on others. Therefore, the net effect remains ambiguous. In that context, the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability were revisited in order to determine how they can benefit from improved migration governance (Gavonel et al. 2021, 98, 106). It is believed that the recognition of migration, including investment migration, as a core development consideration by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) will pave the way for greater collaboration between the migration and development sectors and thus contribute to overcoming the aforementioned paradox (IOM 2018, 14). From the standpoint of the 2030 Agenda, migration is considered “an important item in the toolbox for reducing poverty”, which affects the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (Hagen-Zanker, Postel, and Vidal 2017, 11). It also impacts multidimensional poverty (SDGs 1, 3, and 4), economic growth and employment (SDG 8), and innovation (SDG 9), which can have indirect effects on poverty. Finally, it can give rise to increases or decreases in inequality, relevant to SDG 10 (Hagen-Zanker, Postel, and Vidal 2017, 5). The proponents of investment migration programmes may also rely on the 2030 Agenda calling for the need for a strengthened framework for progress towards “coherence between migration and development agendas”, considering that migration policies can improve development outcomes and development policies can improve migration outcomes. (IOM 2018, 14) Further, proponents of the CBI programmes posit that the granting of citizenship can potentially lead to economic growth (FATF/OECD 2023, 5). Also, they underline that since nationality matters constitute a “last bastion of sovereignty” (Shachar 2018, 69), states have been reluctant to accept any commitments that would limit their sovereignty in that respect.

The unique and complex character of the EU makes the problem of investment migration in the EU member states more important than in third countries. Namely, the EU is specific in terms of having a more emphasised cross-border nature of investment migration due to the unique character of the internal market lacking border controls. Further, the EU is based on the principle of cooperation and is also specific in respect of overarching EU law and a unique link between concepts of national and EU citizenships (Zabrocka 2023, 60).

Consequently, socio-political and legal implications of investment migration programmes in the EU differ from those applied to the same programmes on a global scale and require special attention.

Without getting into the socio-political arguments, the authors posit that the legal nature and implications of investment migration within the EU remain complex and that it is needed to explore to what extent the concept of investment migration is in line with international and EU legal frameworks. Firstly, the authors will examine to what extent the existing investment migration programmes are in line with international law instruments. In their research, they will rely on the premise that concepts of RBI and CBI schemes are mutually interlinked, since RBI schemes are often considered a prelude for CBI. Therefore, in case of the lack of applicable international legal sources governing the RBI schemes, findings reached with regard to the legality of the CBI schemes will be extended to the RBI schemes as well. Secondly, the authors will explore the compliance of the investment migration programmes with the EU law. This analysis is important for several reasons.

It should not be forgotten that all states, including the EU member states, are also subject to international law and that the EU member states often rely on international law standards to reinforce or complement the EU norms. Therefore, there are various sources of international public law, both regional and universal, which should be carefully taken into account by the EU member states when they develop their regulatory frameworks.

At the same time, in the research, due regard must be given to the concept of autonomy of EU law, which implies that the EU treaties lay down “a constitutional order” (Lindeboom 2021). However, the authors point out that EU-level rules governing investment migration schemes must be carefully aligned with international law to avoid incoherence between EU and general international law. In its reports, the International Law Commission (ILC) underlines the danger of the development of a “vertical aspect” of the fragmentation of international law, which amounts to the incoherence between regional and general international law and its serious adverse implications for legal certainty. The authors, therefore, give priority to the need to avoid the danger of the “vertical aspect” of fragmentation of international law.

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the legal norms and legal developments in the EU do not shape migration investment schemes only in the EU member states. They also influence the norms and practices of the countries in the EU accession process through external conditionality. In other words, changes in EU legislation, jurisprudence, and policies directly affect whether an accession country will adopt a given law on its path to joining the EU. This means the approach towards the RBI and CBI schemes taken by the

EU is reasonably expected to impact not only the EU member states but also the accession countries, the third countries having close relationships with the EU, and the general international legal arena. Against this background, the existence of various CBI or RBI schemes in the EU accession states is currently under close scrutiny of the EU, and the final stance that the EU bodies take *vis-à-vis* these schemes in the EU member states will be of considerable interest to them.<sup>4</sup> The authors will apply a normative-legal method combined with a sociological method to analyse the compatibility of the concept of investment migration with international and EU law.

### **Compliance of the Investment Migration Programmes with International Law**

It is important to examine whether international law affects the power of sovereign states to adopt the CBI and RBI programmes. The purpose of such an analysis is twofold. First, the analysis will determine if national autonomy in matters of citizenship is subject to limitations by rules of international law since those may impact the legality of investment migration programmes. Second, the relevance of the genuine link criterion for the international recognition of attribution of nationality will be determined, as it also may affect the legality of investment migration programmes.

#### ***National Autonomy in Matters of Citizenship under International Law and its Impact on Investment Migration***

When it comes to the legality of national investment migration schemes, they can be considered allowed in terms of international law if states retain national autonomy in matters of citizenship. As regards the sources of universal international law, the Hague Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws of 1930 (Hague Convention), adopted under the auspices of the Assembly of the League of Nations, was the first international attempt to ensure that all natural persons have a nationality (Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNHCR 2005, 8). Its Article 1 specifies that each State Party has the right to determine its nationals, and the laws governing nationality matters of that state must be respected by other states as far as they are consistent with “international conventions, international customs, and the principles of general law recognised with regard to nationality” (Hague Convention 1930).

---

<sup>4</sup> Serbia has proposed and, after the Commission’s interventions, withdrawn a law that would allow fast-track acquisition of citizenship. (EC [2023]SWD/2023/695 final).

In other words, the so-called internal aspect of nationality, which refers to the acquisition and loss of citizenship, remains an exclusive attribute of states (Zabrocka 2023, 69). On the other hand, the international aspect of nationality, which pertains to the question of whether, and to what extent, states parties have a duty to recognise the granting or loss of the nationality of another state party, is partially limited under the above-mentioned Article 1 of the Hague Convention, considering that the nationality laws of that state must be respected by other countries as long as they are in line with “international conventions, with international customs and the principles of general law recognised with regard to nationality” (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 105).

This approach, designed to reduce statelessness, was subsequently employed and refined in various other international instruments aimed at improving the status of stateless persons and addressing citizenship stripping (Irving 2016, 1). These are the 1957 New York Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the 1963 Convention on the Reduction of Cases of Multiple Nationality and on Military Obligations in Cases of Multiple Nationality, and the aforementioned 1997 European Convention on Nationality (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 109-110).

Besides the aim of the reduction of statelessness, what the above-mentioned universal international conventions on citizenships have in common is a low number of state parties. Consequently, the guarantees against statelessness embedded in them do not “reach” many states, at least not as obligations stemming from treaty law (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 108). Such a record can be attributable to the fact that states are very cautious about accepting international obligations that limit their sovereignty in nationality matters (von Rütte 2022, 205).

Parallel to this development, the right to citizenship was proclaimed a human right in Article 15(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR) (UN General Assembly 1948). Although declarations do not have a binding force under international law, a large part of the UDHR, including Article 15, has been codified in international conventions and has become international customary law (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 107).<sup>5</sup> Given the aforementioned limited reach of universal international conventions governing citizenship, it is noteworthy that the UDHR has also been incorporated in several international conventions in the area of human rights, which contain provisions concerning nationality and have a considerable number of state parties. These include the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1979

---

<sup>5</sup> According to proponents of different approaches (de Groot and Vonk 2015, 41), Article 15(1) UDHR has no binding force under international law.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 108). Also, the preamble of the previously mentioned Convention on the Nationality of Married Women includes an affirmation of Article 15 of the UDHR (Irving 2016, 2). From the perspective of combating statelessness, however, the main shortcoming of Article 15 is that it does not impose the obligation on any state to confer citizenship. What is more, it does not provide a definite answer as to whether investment migration schemes are allowed. .

When it comes to European countries, including the EU member states, particular attention should be given to the European Convention on Nationality (ECN) of 1997, a relevant source of regional international law. This was the first comprehensive convention on citizenship ever concluded. Adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe (CoE), the ECN is considered the most modern source of international law in the area of citizenship. However, the ECN was ratified by a total of 21 CoE Member States, while fifteen of them are EU member states. This still means that not all EU member states are its signatories (CoE 2024). Moreover, many provisions contained within the ECN constitute a mere systemisation of the pre-existing rules of customary international law. The national impact of the ECN has remained limited due to high numbers of reservations and a lack of an independent reviewing body (Pilgram 2011, 1). Even though not formally binding for non-state parties, the ECN serves as an example of good practice, which influenced recent amendments to their respective national legislations (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 110).

To sum up, it is indisputable that the analysed body of international legal norms does not tackle the issue of RBI. Considering that RBI is regularly considered a prelude to CBI, the findings reached regarding the existing national autonomy in CBI matters under international law are equally applicable to the RBI schemes.

### ***Relevance of Genuine Link Criterion for Investment Migration under International Law***

In the academic literature, the concept of citizenship is understood as a form of defining national identity that presupposes some form of a link or connection between an individual and the country in question (Maftai 2015, 225–226). Such an understanding is further supported by some traditionally practiced and predominant methods of citizenship acquisition, such as *ius sanguinis* (“the right of blood” or “citizenship by descent”) and *ius soli* (“birthday citizenship”), both of which can be deemed to be different forms of the genuine link criterion (Weil 2001, 19). This recognition of the importance of an “individual’s genuine link” with a state adds a new component to the right to nationality (von Rütte 2022, 133).

The commonly cited the *Nottebohm* case of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (ICJ Judgement 1955, 23) also serves as a strong argument brought by the supporters of the necessity of the genuine link requirement for citizenship acquisition (Maftai 2015, 225–226). However, some scholars rightly notice that the impact of the *Nottebohm* decision has been exaggerated in the past and therefore must be reconsidered (Sarmiento 2019; Spiro 2019). Namely, the genuine link requirement in the *Nottebohm* case was only applied *vis-à-vis* the recognition of Liechtenstein's nationality for the purpose of diplomatic protection. Therefore, this was a case about diplomatic protection, not about citizenship in general. Consequently, the concept of genuine link applied in *Nottebohm* was of very "limited" scope (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 105-106). Moreover, the concept was even not applied in the context of attribution of nationality, since it was not "and never was a requirement for international recognition of the attribution of nationality" (Spiro 2019, 2). Also, the genuine link requirement does not have any bearing on residence matters, and consequently, no bearing on RBI schemes. Although the judgement in the *Nottebohm* case was rendered more than half a century ago, it is interesting that the genuine link test was not applied in the subsequent case law of the ICJ. This criterion has also been disregarded in the context of international law, *inter alia* by the ILC, which expressly rejected the genuine link criterion as a ground for the exercise of diplomatic protection (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 106-107). Consequently, there is no relevant body of international case law that would shape the development of investment migration schemes.

International public law instruments are also silent as to whether the genuine link constitutes a strict requirement for granting nationality. Hence, the exact scope of the genuine link concept has remained debatable in the scholarly literature. Some authors are in favour of a more restrictive approach to the scope of the genuine link criterion. They identify the factors of birth and descent as connections that "are sufficient to establish a link between the individual and the state" as a requirement for international recognition of the attribution of nationality (Batchelor 1998, p. 161). In that context, it is further argued that the *ius pecuniae*, or, put differently, "the right to money" or "the sale of citizenship", which includes citizenship through investment schemes, cannot be treated as a "genuine link" for the purpose of citizenship acquisition (Zabrocka 2023, 69).

The second group of supporters of the genuine link requirement for the attribution of nationality argue in favour of its more extensive scope. Toth (2014, 47), for instance, claims that the concept of the genuine link should be widely formulated as to include "property or investment in the receiving state" as one of its key components. In other words, a broad approach to the concept of "genuine link" also allows the application of *ius pecuniae* as a valid ground for the attribution of nationality, and by doing so, it legitimises the CBI practices

(Džankić 2019, 8). Such a broader approach appears more convincing, as the practices where the granting of nationality is exclusively based on *ius sanguinis* (“the right of blood” or “citizenship by descent”) and *ius soli* (“birthday citizenship”) are outdated. For instance, the national legal frameworks of many countries provide for granting nationality to distinguished artists or athletes. Such comparative practices go far beyond the *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli* criteria. Furthermore, the aforementioned broader approach to the concept of “genuine link” may also serve as a convincing justification for the introduction of the CBI programmes.

### **Compliance of the Investment Migration Programme with European Union Law**

The issue of investment migration in the EU is characterised by additional layers of complexity compared to international law, which stems from the delimitation of competencies between the EU and its member states regarding the rules on the acquisition and termination of nationality. In light of the multi-layered structure of the EU legal system, the question of whether the CBI or RBI schemes are compatible with EU law needs to be assessed against a number of considerations: the relationship between EU citizenship and the nationality of a member state; the impact of this relationship on the autonomy of the EU member states in prescribing rules on acquisition or their nationality; the requirement of existence of a genuine link when awarding nationality in the context of the principle of sincere cooperation between the EU member states.<sup>6</sup> Most of these concerns were raised in the context of the infringement proceedings pending against Malta. Different approaches towards the RBI and CBI schemes within EU law will also be examined.

#### ***Different Approaches towards CBI and RBI***

It is needed to assess whether the CBI and RBI schemes implemented in the EU member states are to the same extent compatible with EU law. So far, EU bodies have not been consistent in their approach to this issue. Although the 2019 Report points to the fact that the CBI and RBI schemes differ from each other, it still identifies joint risks that equally result from the CBI and RBI schemes. Nevertheless, in its subsequent infringement proceedings initiated against Malta and Cyprus, the Commission focused only on the legality of the CBI schemes while paying no regard to the RBI schemes in other member states,

---

<sup>6</sup> This paper shall not delve into the examination of the issue of proportionality.

although they pose almost identical risks and, what is more, are quantitatively more serious.

The key difference between the RBI and CBI schemes relates to the fact that the existence of the former does not have anything to do with the legal issues of genuine link and national autonomy in nationality matters, which are affected by the complex balance between European and national citizenship. Weiler (2024) rightly notices that in practice, the RBI schemes are quite often a prelude to naturalisation. However, while the RBI schemes enable free movement and other benefits of the EU internal market, they do not entail a full set of rights that stem from EU citizenship. The Commission seems to oppose the CBI schemes more fervently as they appear to circumvent the existing EU *acquis* related to the residence of third-country nationals (Directive [EU] 2003/109). Notwithstanding these differences, it appears that both types of schemes can be potentially in line with EU law as long as they are carefully implemented in a manner that fully respects all the existing preventive measures against the identified risks, already available under EU law, such as the Schengen Information System (EC 2024) and the Anti-Money Laundering Directive (Directive [EU] 2015/849).

### ***EU Citizenship and National Citizenship of the EU Member States***

In the complex setting of delimitation of competences between the EU and its member states, nationality is seen as a prime example of an exclusive member state competence. (Oosterom-Staples 2018). The concept of EU citizenship, referred to as “multi-level citizenship” by some authors (Parker 2017), has gradually evolved both in normative terms and through the jurisprudence of the CJEU. Introduced by the Maastricht Treaty (TEU 1992, Article 8), EU citizenship was clearly set as a consequence of national citizenship, which is therefore a prerequisite element of EU citizenship (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 111). The concept of EU citizenship gradually evolved—the Amsterdam Treaty included an additional norm stating that it “complements and does not replace national citizenship” (TEC 1997, Article 17). Currently, Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) explicitly states that citizenship of the Union is additional to and does not replace national citizenship. It goes on to list some of the rights stemming from EU citizenship, such as the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the member states; the passive and active voting rights in the European Parliament and municipal elections in the member state of residence; diplomatic protection; the right to petition the European Parliament, etc. This means that EU citizenship entails a set of additional rights. Some scholars argue that the departure from complementarity of EU citizenship to it being firmly established

as an addition to national citizenship has, on the one hand, confirmed that EU citizenship is dependent on national citizenship but, on the other hand, has rendered EU citizenship “paradoxical in nature” (d’Oliveira and Ulrich, 2018). While Article 20 TFEU may give the impression that EU citizenship is somehow secondary to national citizenship of a member state, in fact, the CJEU has consistently underlined that EU citizenship is intended to be the fundamental status of nationals of the EU member states (CJEU Judgement C-184/99, para. 31; CJEU Judgement C-291/05, para 32; CJEU Judgement C-50-/06, para 32).

Legal scholars have criticised this stance of the CJEU (Weiler 2024) as unsubstantiated and a “judicial invention arising *ex nihilo*”. It seems that, while the text of the TFEU takes a more restrictive position, underlining that EU citizenship is only an addition to the national citizenships, where the Member States have autonomy in prescribing the conditions for acquisition of national citizenship and also its loss, the CJEU takes a more expansive approach to the issue. This expansive stance may be attributed to the fact that, so far, the CJEU jurisprudence vis-à-vis national citizenship and EU citizenship has been mostly focused on the issues of loss of national citizenship and protection of EU citizens, or, in other words, on the issues of conflict of nationality. (Šišková 2023). In this body of case law, CJEU has utilised a rather concrete approach aimed at protecting the rights guaranteed to the citizen. In doing so, the CJEU has affirmed two positions: first, it is on each member state to lay down the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality. Second, when the member states exercise their powers in the sphere of nationality, they must have due regard to European Union law (CJEU Judgement C-369/90, para.10; CJEU Judgement C/179/98, para. 29). This is why some scholars observe that the CJEU case law on this issue seems to simultaneously erode national autonomy and reaffirm the core of retained powers of the member states (Bellenghi 2023). Other scholars assert that the CJEU has employed an “interpretative exercise” to identify the limits of the member states’ rights to determine their nationality and reinforced the relationship between nationality and EU citizenship (Wagner 2024). However, it is still undisputed that EU citizenship’s existence independently of national citizenships is impossible (Kochenov 2019) or, in other words, that it remains *ius tractum* (Kochenov 2009). Nevertheless, it seems that the Commission, in its 2019 Report referring to European citizenship as a fundamental status of nationals of the member states, has exaggerated the relevance of European citizenship over the relevance of national citizenship. By doing so, it endangered the delicate balance that should have been maintained between the two in the sense of the TFEU provisions. Moreover, such a stance implying that the European interest should prevail over the member states’ prerogatives was wrongly labelled by the Commission as consistent with the Treaties. It opened the door to further EU pressures towards revoking the

investment migration programmes in the EU, although it was inconsistent with the Treaty provisions.

When refracted through the lens of the compatibility of the CBI schemes with EU law, it remains clear that all naturalisation rules remain firmly within the purview of the member states but with a caveat of due regard to EU law. It is interesting to notice that due regard in the relevant CJEU case law concerning nationality is, in some cases, cited as a general principle rather than in the context of some specific facets of EU citizenship, other than the importance attached to it by the Founding Treaties (CJEU Judgement C-135/08, paras. 41/56).

### ***The Genuine Link Requirement in the Context of EU Law***

In strictly normative terms, the EU *acquis* remains completely silent on the issue of whether a genuine link, be it *ius sanguinis* or *ius soli*, is necessary for a legitimate award of the nationality of a member state. Also, the bodies of the EU failed to define the scope of the general link criteria. Consequently, one could be led to an easy conclusion that the genuine link requirement remains within the domain of national laws in terms of acquisition and termination of nationality and the domain of international law when it comes to the recognition of nationality awarded by other EU member states. The situation, however, is not so straightforward, and some conclusions may be inferred from the existing case law of the CJEU and the positions taken by the European Parliament and Commission regarding CBI.

First, one of the decisive cases on the member states' nationality and EU citizenship, the *Micheletti* case (CJEU Judgement C-369/90), did impose on the member states the obligation to recognise the granting of nationality by another member state. However, the CJEU has done so without relying on the genuine link test (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 114). Recently, the CJEU seems to be pivoting towards recognising the importance of a connection between residence and enjoyment of EU citizenship (Kochenov 2019). Namely, it has ruled that EU law does not preclude national legislation whereby the nationality of a member state may be lost by virtue of law in cases that also entail the loss of residency in the given member state. Despite this, it cannot be claimed that the genuine link requirement is clearly set within EU law nor accepted in the CJEU case law.

The 2019 Commission Report (EC COM [2019]12 final) can be seen as a pivotal point in the determination to reduce or fully eliminate the CBI schemes by reliance on EU law. While some point out that the report was written in a "sober" tone (Weiler 2024) and as a result of a comprehensive study, at closer

inspection, the report seems to come with some predetermined positions about the existence and implications of the said schemes.

First and foremost, the 2019 Report asserts its position that the granting of citizenship of a member state against a monetary payment without requiring the existence of a genuine link with the given state is a practice contrary to the principle of sincere cooperation between EU member states. (EC COM [2019]12 final, 5-6). Sincere cooperation, a principle embedded in the Treaty on the EU (TEU 2016),<sup>7</sup> aims to ensure that when the member states exercise their exclusive competence, they do not encroach on the policies and objectives of the EU (Oosterom-Staples 2018). In the context of the award of nationality, this principle could be deemed negatively affected if the member states carry out large-scale unjustified naturalisations (Opinion of AG Poiares Maduro C-135/08). However, it was rightly observed by some scholars that in the 2019 Report, the Commission gave due regard to the principle of sincere cooperation while fully ignoring the relevance of Article 4(3) TEU (TEU 2016), which determines that the EU shall also respect the equality of the member states before the Treaties, their national identities, and the safeguarding of national security. To recall, national security, which the Report identifies as a key concern in terms of the application of the CBI schemes, remains the sole responsibility of each member state. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Commission has applied a rather piecemeal approach instead of utilising a recourse to a better-balanced interpretation of those clauses by reading one in conjunction with another.

In arguing that the CBI scheme is in contravention of the principle of sincere cooperation, the 2019 Report unconvincingly invokes the judgement in the *Nottebohm* case (ICJ Judgement 1955, 4) and elaborates on what is traditionally considered to be a genuine link: descent, origin, marriage, or effective prior residence in the country for a meaningful duration. In doing so, it also neglects a broader approach to the genuine link requirement, as elaborated earlier in this paper. The approach taken in the report thus seems somewhat disingenuous, as it chooses to focus only on the rules and implications of the CBI schemes in three countries—Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Malta—which do not require what the Commission finds to constitute a sufficiently genuine link. Conversely, the report neglects the fact that not only do the CBI naturalisation schemes fail to require the existence of a genuine link, such as prior residence, but that this also applies to other instances of privileged naturalisation, such as those awarded to prominent athletes, scientists, and artists, as discussed previously in this paper. All these cases also may not require previous residency in the state granting

---

<sup>7</sup> Article 4 of the TEU reads: Pursuant to the principle of sincere cooperation, the Union and the member states shall, in full mutual respect, assist each other in carrying out tasks that follow from the Treaties.

citizenship. Furthermore, the report seems to preclude the position of the CJEU with regard to the compatibility of the CBI or RBI schemes with EU law. After all, the CJEU has not ruled on this issue explicitly so far. This, however, will soon change. As indicated above, the Commission has initiated proceedings against Malta before the CJEU for failure to fulfil its obligations under the Treaties in connection to Malta's CBI scheme.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, the Commission firmly relies on two concepts: the concept of a genuine link, which it finds to be lacking from Malta's CBI scheme, and the principle of sincere cooperation.

The proceedings, which are still pending at the time of writing this paper, have produced a lively scholarly debate in anticipation of the CJEU decision. Two main lines of reasoning can be identified regarding the expected stance of the CJEU in the Malta "golden passport" scheme.

One group of scholars (Wagner 2024; Chamon 2024) finds that the case presents an opportunity for the genuine link principle to be fully integrated into EU law. However, even these scholars recognise that such a decision could give rise to additional problems, as other preferential nationalisation rules and practices (fast-track issuing of passports to athletes and others) would surely come under the EU's scrutiny, particularly if they are not strictly residence-based nationalisations.<sup>9</sup>

The second, larger group of scholars, led by Spiro (2019), stands firmly on the position that the EU bodies should not rely on the *Nottebohm* case (ICJ Judgement 1955, 4) or the narrowly understood concept of genuine link when deciding on the member states' rules on acquisition of nationality. In supporting this stance, they first address the positions related to the effects of *Nottebohm* in international law in general. Their arguments follow similar reasonings as those elaborated earlier in the paper: they argue that this decision should have never been read as mandating the existence of a genuine link for the international recognition of attribution of nationality (Spiro 2019, 2) and that the *Nottebohm* case (ICJ Judgement 1955, 4) is not suited as a key element of an argument against Malta's CBI scheme as it concerns recognition, not acquisition of nationality. Additionally, scholars such as Jessurun d'Oliveira (2018) posit that international law is silent about the role of EU law in controlling the competence of the member states in matters of nationality, meaning that reliance on the *Nottebohm* case (ICJ Judgement 1955, 4) is not mandated by international law. The second argument put forward by this group of scholars concerns the relevance of the *Nottebohm* case (ICJ Judgement 1955, 4) and the

---

<sup>8</sup> The procedure is launched under Article 258 of the TFEU (TFEU 2016).

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of the member states nationalisation practices, see Kochenov and van den Brink (2023).

genuine link requirement in the specific context of EU law. Namely, they point out that, so far, the CJEU has consistently rejected the *Nottebohm* case (ICJ Judgement 1955, 4) in its case law (van den Brink 2022), and that would be ill-advised for that jurisprudence to be reversed, as it would jeopardise freedom of movement guaranteed to EU citizens. They also agree that acceptance of the genuine link requirement deemed to stem from the *Nottebohm* case (ICJ Judgement 1955, 4) would necessarily spill over to other naturalisation schemes while at the same time rendering the EU and the member states' legal framework unfit for the realities of the modern world. Some scholars oppose the very approach utilised by the Commission in both its reports and the pursuit of legal action against Malta as being based on its moral positions rather than on sound legal reasoning, pointing out that opposition to the RBI schemes is inconsistent with other EU values (Kochenov 2020). We should recall that the Commission introduced the title "European Values are Not for Sale" in its recent press release as a mere rhetorical device and moral statement in the part of the press release where it explains the reasoned opinion (Weiler 2024).

Some scholars also indicate that the Commission is utilising the Malta case to regulate an issue that is essentially outside its competence (Weingerl and Tratnik 2019, 122). In addition to this line of reasoning, there are also calls for the EU to regulate the minimum requirements for the acquisition of the nationality of the member states (van den Brink 2020) and thus substantively address both qualitative and quantitative risks posed by various naturalisation schemes. The position proposed by the European Parliament, where the RBI schemes are harmonised on the EU level while the CBI schemes are left within the purview of the member states but put through more robust scrutiny, seems better balanced. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that a narrower approach taken by the EU *vis-à-vis* the genuine link requirement and the limits of national autonomy in setting rules on naturalisation could have three sets of consequences that would spill over the EU itself. First, it would affect the national autonomies of EU candidate countries with regard to their naturalisation rules. Second, it could induce a further race to the bottom of the RBI and CBI schemes among countries not directly influenced by the EU, creating further security, corruption, and money laundering risks. In the long term, it could also affect the approach in international law in general terms of unilateral refusals by certain states to recognise naturalisation based on the CBI schemes that would not be supported by rules of international law but based solely on reliance on EU law. That could create an imbalanced approach between the relevance of EU law and international law in the global legal arena. Such an imbalanced approach would further lead to the development of incoherence between EU and general international law and create serious adverse implications for legal certainty within international legal order. It should

not be forgotten that the autonomy of EU law, implying that the EU treaties lay down “a constitutional order”, is given due to legal theory (Lindeboom 2021). Such autonomy has been instrumental in protecting the internal institutional and constitutional structure of EU law against normative interference by public international law and was developed through the case law of the CJEU (former European Court of Justice) (Lindeboom and Wessel 2023, 1248). However, it is in stark contrast with legal certainty, which constitutes one of the foundational rule of law principles. Therefore, the EU-level rules governing investment migration schemes must be carefully aligned with international law to avoid incoherence between EU and general international law and limit the wide discretionary powers left to the CJEU in deciding on the definitive meaning of EU law.

### **Conclusion**

The CBI and RBI schemes and programmes are burgeoning around the world. The occurrence, labelled as the commodification of citizenship, has been seen as problematic for several socio-political reasons: it goes in favour of a select wealthy few, it can present a fertile ground for corruption and money laundering, and thus presents a serious security risk. The existence of such schemes is additionally complex when employed by the EU member states, as they open the EU internal market benefits, where CBI additionally awards a set of political rights connected with EU citizenship in addition to benefits stemming from the acquisition of the nationality of an EU member state.

While the socio-political implications of investment migration schemes raise valid concerns, the issue of their formal legality in the context of international law and EU law must be carefully considered. This is because the rules on the award of nationality mostly remain a sovereign power of any given state. In terms of international law, attempts have been made to regulate the issue through conventions, but their reach remains limited and the principle of national autonomy in matters of citizenship remains dominant. More specifically, the so-called internal aspect of nationality, which refers to the acquisition and loss of citizenship, remains an exclusive attribute of states, meaning that the national autonomy in nationality matters remains fully untouched. On the other hand, the international aspect of nationality, which pertains to the question of whether, and to which extent, State Parties must recognise the granting or loss of the nationality of the other specific State Party, is partially limited under Article 1 of the Hague Convention, considering that the nationality laws of that/one state must be respected by other countries as long as they are in line with “international conventions, with international customs and the principles of general law recognised with regard to nationality.

Furthermore, various international bodies monitoring the implementation of international law do not have developed jurisprudence in this regard. The *Nottebohm* case, decided back in 1955 by the ICJ, remains pivotal for understanding the requirement of the existence of a genuine link between the host country and the person to whom nationality is being awarded, which is introduced herewith. However, this case is challenged by legal scholars for several reasons, most notably due to its limited applicability and incompatibility with the modern world. Moreover, it is considered an isolated case that was not followed by subsequent case law of the ICJ and supranational courts. These same critiques become even more pronounced when attempts are made to rely on the *Nottebohm* case in assessing the legality of the CBI schemes from the standpoint of international law. Currently, there seems to be an overwhelming consensus that the rules on the award of nationality remain firmly a sovereign right of states, and the genuine link requirement should not be interpreted strictly since comparative practices of some/selected European countries prove that the notion of genuine link also includes connections attributable to investments (Toth 2014). Although international hard law instruments do not contain relevant guidelines for the legality of the RBI programmes, we find that findings reached regarding the CIB schemes are also relevant for the RBI schemes since they are mutually interdependent and RBI is often considered a prelude to CBI.

On the other hand, the legality of the CBI schemes has additional layers of complexity in the EU. While, nominally, the EU member states have exclusive competence to adopt rules relating to the acquisition and termination of their nationality, the existence of EU citizenship and related rights, coupled with the principle of sincere cooperation and facilitated cross-border dynamics, seems to warrant some level of intervention from the EU. Raising the same concerns related to security, corruption, and money laundering, the European Parliament and the Commission seem set on abolishing the CBI schemes. The pressures put by the Commission have so far resulted in Bulgaria and Cyprus forgoing their schemes. The Maltese CBI programme is currently being challenged by the Commission before the CJEU. Curiously enough, when bringing proceedings against Malta, the Commission has failed to mention any of the universally acknowledged faults and risks of the CBI schemes both worldwide and in the EU and instead has chosen to rely on what is seemingly an antiquated and isolated ruling of the ICJ in the *Nottebohm* case. The prevailing view of legal scholars is that such a legal underpinning against the Maltese CBI programme is not convincing and will not be upheld by the CJEU.

The situation, however, calls for a rethinking of the EU approach to migration rules; an introduction of the minimum standards *vis-à-vis* various types of naturalisation schemes, regardless of whether they are offered on the grounds

of investment or other grounds such as sports prowess or cultural contributions, could be a way forward. Minimum standards should also be equally applied to the CBI and RBI schemes, as both pose equal security risks. At the same time, it is evident that all naturalisation schemes would need to be supported by a more robust utilisation of the existing EU-level pre-vetting and monitoring mechanisms in terms of risks already identified by the EU bodies, i.e., security risks, money laundering, and tax evasion. Therefore, it seems that on the road to achieving legality and legitimacy, the EU bodies should offer clear rules on investment migration schemes that will be properly interlinked with the existing broader rules on measures combating corruption, money laundering, and tax evasion. Given that the EU does not function in a legal vacuum, the standards that would be introduced concerning the CBI and RBI schemes would also have to be carefully aligned with the predominant approach in international law so as not to create an imbalanced legal environment and incoherence between EU and international law. If such a balance is not achieved, it will have adverse consequences for legal certainty within international legal order. This issue is particularly important given that the effects of the EU *acquis* extend beyond its borders and influence the legislation of countries partaking in the EU accession process. Finally, the introduction of minimum standards at the EU level could additionally boost efforts in addressing the migration-sustainability paradox.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT:** This paper is a result of the research conducted at the Institute of Comparative Law financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia under the Contract on realisation and financing of scientific research of SRO in 2024 registered under no. 451-03-66/2024-03/200049.

## References

- Batchelor, Carol A. 1998. "Statelessness and the Problem of Resolving Nationality Status". *International Journal of Refugee Law* 10 (1-2): 156-182.
- Bellenghi, Guido. 2023. "The Court of Justice in JY v. Wiener Landesregierung: Could we expect more?". *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law* 30(1): 83-94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1023263X231161017>
- Boatcă, Manuela. 2015. *Global inequalities beyond Occidentalism*. London: Ashgate.
- Brillaud, Laure and Maira Martini. 2018. "European Gateway: inside the murky world of golden visas", *Transparency International and Global Witness*, October 30, 2018. <https://transparency.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/>

REPORT-European-Getaway-Inside-the-Murky-World-of-Golden-Visas\_web.pdf

- Chamon, Merijn. 2024. "A Rejoinder to Citizenship for Sale (Commission v Malta): Some Remarks and Counterarguments", *Verfassungsblog*, April 15, 2024. <https://verfassungsblog.de/a-rejoinder-to-citizenship-for-sale/>
- Christians, Allison. 2017. "Buying in: Residence and Citizenship by Investment". *St. Louis University Law Journal* 62 (1): 51-72.
- [CJEU Judgment C-135/08] *Janko Rottman v Freistaat Bayern*, Case C-135/08. Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment, 2 March 2010, ECLI:EU:C:2010:104. <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?num=C-135/08>
- [CJEU Judgment C-179/98] *Belgian State v Fatna Mesbah*, Case C-179/98. Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment, 11 November 1999, ECLI:EU:C:1999:549. <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?language=en&num=C-179/98>
- [CJEU Judgment C-184/99] *Rudy Grzelczyk v. Centre public d'aide sociale d'Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve*, Case C-184/99. Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment, 20 September 2001, ECLI:EU:C:2001:458, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A61999CJ0184>
- [CJEU Judgment C-291/05] *Minister voor Vreemdelingenzaken en Integratie v. R. N. G. Eind*, Case C-291/05. Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment, 11 December 2007, ECLI:EU:C:2007:771. <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=71494&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=2941143>
- [CJEU Judgment C-369/90] *Mario Vicente Micheletti and others v Delegación del Gobierno en Cantabria*, Case C-369/90. Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment, July 1992, ECLI:EU:C:1992:47. <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?num=C-369/90>
- [CJEU Judgment C-50/06] *Commission v. the Netherlands*, Case C-50/06. Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment, 7 June 2007, ECLI:EU:C:2007:325. <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/showPdf.jsf?text=&docid=63238&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=2988684>
- [CoE] Council of Europe. 2024. *Chart of signatures and ratifications of Treaty 166-European Convention on Nationality*. Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=signatures-by-treaty&treaty=166>
- d'Oliveira, Jessurun and Hans Urlich. 2018. "Union citizenship and Beyond", *EUI Working Paper Law* 2018/15.

- de Groot, Gerard-René, and Oliver. W. Vonk. 2015. *International Standards on Nationality Law: Texts, Cases and Materials*. Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers.
- Directive (EC) 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 16/44, 23 January 2004. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32003L0109>
- Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Directive 2006/70/EC (Text with EEA relevance), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 141, 5 June 2015. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/En/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32015L0849>.
- Džankić, Jelena. 2018. "Immigrant investor programmes in the European Union (EU)". *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 26 (1): 64-80.
- Džankić, Jelena. 2019. *The Global Market for Investor Citizenship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [EC] European Commission. 2019. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Investor Citizenship and Residence Schemes in the European Union, COM/2019/12 final. January 23, 2019. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52019DC0012>
- [EC] European Commission. 2020. "Investor Citizenship Schemes: European Commission Opens Infringements against Cyprus and Malta for "Selling" EU Citizenship", *European Commission*, IP/20/1925, Press Release, October 20, 2020. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1925](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1925)
- [EC] European Commission. 2022. "Investor citizenship scheme: Commission refers MALTA to the Court of Justice", *European Commission*, IP/22/5422, Press Release, September 22, 2022. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/RO/IP\\_22\\_5422](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/RO/IP_22_5422)
- [EC] European Commission. 2023. COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2023 Report Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement policy SWD/2023/695 final, November 8, 2023. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023SC0695>

- [EC] European Commission. 2024. “Schengen Information System”, *European Commission*, Accessed July 7, 2024. [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-information-system\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-information-system_en)
- [EP] European Parliament. 2022. Resolution of 9 March 2022 with proposals to the Commission on citizenship and residence by investment schemes (2021/2026(INL)) (2022/C 347/08) *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 347/104, 9 September 2022. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022IP0065>.
- FATF/OECD. 2023. *Misuse of Citizenship and Residency by Investment Programmes*. Paris: FATF. [www.fatf-gafi.org/content/fatf-gafi/en/publications/Methodsandtrends/misuse-CBI-RBI-programmes.html](http://www.fatf-gafi.org/content/fatf-gafi/en/publications/Methodsandtrends/misuse-CBI-RBI-programmes.html).
- Gavonel, Maria Franco, William Neil Adger, Ricardo Safra de Campos, Emily Boyd, Edward R. Carr, Anita Fábos, Sonja Fransen, Dominique Jolivet, Caroline Zickgraf, Samuel NA Codjoe, Mumuni Abu, and Tasneem Siddiqui. 2021. “The migration-sustainability paradox: transformations in mobile worlds”. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 49:98–109.
- Hagen-Zanker, Jessica, Hannah Postel, and Elisa Mosler Vidal. 2017. “Poverty, migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. Briefing, OPI, September 2017, <https://media.odi.org/documents/11743.pdf>
- [Hague Convention] Convention on Certain Questions relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws, 1930. Signed at the Hague, April 12, League of Nation Treaty Series 1937/ 90-113. <https://docs.pca-cpa.org/2016/01/Convention-on-Certain-Questions-relating-to-the-Conflict-of-Nationality-Laws-1930.pdf>.
- Hartwig – Peillon, Rose. 2021. “Citizenship and Residency by Investment”. Policy Paper, Europeum, May 2021. <https://www.europeum.org/data/articles/policy-paper-rhp.pdf>.
- [ICJ Judgment 1955] *Nottebohm (Liechtenstein v Guatemala)*. International Court of Justice, Judgment ICJ Rep. 1955 (April 6): 4-27. <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/18/018-19550406-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf>.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNHCR. 2005. “Nationality and Statelessness: A Handbook for Parliamentarians”, No. 11, *UNHCR*. <https://www.refworld.org/policy/legalguidance/unhcr/2005/en/67509>.
- Investment Migration Council. 2019. “Understanding Citizenship and Residence by Investment”. *Investment Migration Council*. <https://investmentmigration.org/about/what-is-investment-migration/>
- [IOM] International Organization for Migration. 2018. *Migration and the 2030 Agenda. A Guide for Practitioners*. IOM. <https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-and-2030-agenda-guide-practitioners>

- Irving, Helen. 2016. *Citizenship, Alienage and the Modern Constitutional State: A Gendered History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kochenov, Dimitry and Martijn van den Brink. 2023. "Legal Residence and Physical Presence: The Law and Practice of Naturalization in EU Jurisdictions". Working Paper No. 165-2023, *Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society, University of Oxford*. <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023-165-Legal-Residence-and-Physical-Presence-The-Law-and-Practice-of-Naturalization-1.pdf>
- Kochenov, Dimitry. 2009. "Ius Tractum of Many Faces: European Citizenship and the Difficult Relationship Between Status and Rights". *Columbia Journal of European Law* 15(2): 169-237
- Kochenov, Dimitry. 2019. "The Tjebbes Fail". *European Papers* 4(1): 319-336
- Kochenov, Dimitry. 2020. "Genuine Purity of Blood: The 2019 Report on Investor Citizenship and Residence in the European Union and Its Litigious Progeny". LEQS Paper No. 164/2020. *LSE*. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/european-institute/Assets/Documents/LEQS-Discussion-Papers/LEQSPaper164.pdf>
- Lindeboom, Justin and Ramses A. Wessel. 2023. "Introduction: The Autonomy of EU Law, Legal Theory and European Integration". *European Papers* 8(3): 1247-1254.
- Lindeboom, Justin. 2021. "The Autonomy of EU Law: A Hartian View". *EJLS* 13(1): 271-307.
- Maftai, Jana. 2015. "Some Aspects of Citizenship from the Perspective of International Law". *European Integration - Realities and Perspectives Proceedings* 10: 225-233.
- Oosterom-Staples, Helen. 2018. "The Triangular Relationship Between Nationality, EU Citizenship and Migration in EU Law: A Tale of Competing Competences". *Netherlands International Law Review* 65: 431-461. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40802-018-0122-9>
- [Opinion of AG Poiares Maduro] *Janko Rottman v Freistaat Bayern*, Case C-135/08. Court of Justice of the European Union. Opinion of Advocate General Poiares Maduro, 30 September 2009., ECLI:EU:C:2009:588. <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?num=C-135/08>
- Parker, Owen. 2017. "Commercializing Citizenship in Crisis EU: The Case of Immigrant Investor Programmes". *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55 (2): 332-348. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12462>
- Pilgram, Lisa. 2011. "European Convention on Nationality (ECN) 1997 and European nationality laws". EUDO CITIZENSHIP Policy Brief No. 4, *European University Institute*. [https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/51626/RSCAS\\_EUDO\\_CIT\\_PB\\_2011\\_03.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/51626/RSCAS_EUDO_CIT_PB_2011_03.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

- Sarmiento, Daniel. 2019. "EU Competence and the Attribution of Nationality in Member States". Investment Migration Working Papers IMC-RP2019/2, *Investment Migration Council*. <https://investmentmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/IMC-RP-2019-2-Sarmiento.pdf>
- Shachar, Ayelet and Ron Hirschl. 2014. "On Citizenship, States, and Markets". *Journal of Political Philosophy* 22 (2): 231-257.
- Shachar, Ayelet. 2018. "Coda". In: *Debating Transformations of National Citizenship*, edited by Rainer Bauböck, 69-73. Cham: IMISCOE Research Series, Springer Open.
- Shachar, Ayelet. 2021. "Unequal access: wealth as barrier and accelerator to citizenship". *Citizenship Studies* 25 (4): 543-563.
- Šišková, Eva. 2023. "From Rottman and Tjebbesto a Current Danish Nationality Case", In: *Cofola International 2023*, Conference Proceedings, edited by Klára Drličková, Radovan Malactha and Patrik Provaznik, 215-246. Brno: Masaryk University.
- Spiro, Peter. J. 2019. "Nottebohm and 'Genuine Link': Anatomy of a Jurisprudential Illusion". Investment Migration Working Papers IMC-RP2019/1. *Investment Migration Council*. <https://investmentmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IMC-RP-2019-1-Peter-Spiro.pdf>
- Stevens, Rachel. 2016. *Immigration Policy from 1970 to the Present*. London: Routledge.
- Tanasoca, Ana. 2016. "Citizenship for Sale: Neomedieval, not Just Neoliberal?". *European Journal of Sociology* 57(1): 169-195.
- [TEC] Treaty establishing the European Community (Amsterdam consolidated version). 1997. *Official Journal* C 340, November 10, 1997. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A11997E%2FTXT&qid=1720720537201>
- [TEU] Treaty on European Union. 1992. *Official Journal*, C 191, July 29, 1992. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A11992M%2FTXT>
- [TFEU] Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. 2016. *Official Journal of the European Union* C 202, June 7, 2016. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02016E%2FTXT-20200301>
- Toth, Judith. 2014. "The 'Genuine Link' Principle in Nationality Law". *Hungarian Yearbook of International Law and European Law* 1: 45-56.
- UN General Assembly. 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 217 A (III), December 10, 1948. <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1948/en/11563>

- van den Brink, Martijn. 2020. "A Qualified Defence of the Primacy of Nationality Over European Union Citizenship". *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 69(1): 177-202. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020589319000538>.
- van den Brink, Martijn. 2022. "Revising Citizenship within the European Union: Is a Genuine Link Requirement the Way Forward?" *German Law Journal* 23(1): 79-96. <https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2022.4>.
- von Rütte, Barbara. 2022. *The Human Right to Citizenship: Situating the Right to Citizenship within International and Regional Human Rights Law*. Leiden and Boston: Brill Nijhoff.
- Wagner, Lorin-Johannes. 2024. "Long Live Nottebohm: The Potential Revival of Nottebohm at 70 in Commission v Malta", *Verfassungsblog*, April 26, 2024. <https://verfassungsblog.de/long-live-nottebohm/>, DOI: 10.59704/e807d3c3a383efd9.
- Weil, Patrick. 2001. "Access to Citizenship: A Comparison of Twenty-Five Nationality Laws". In: *Citizenship Today: Global Perspectives and Practices*, edited by Alexander T. Aleinikoff and Douglas Klusmeyer, 17-35. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Weiler, Joseph. H.H. 2024. "Citizenship for Sale (Commission v Malta): Who of the Two is Selling European Values?", *Verfassungsblog*, April 14, 2024. <https://verfassungsblog.de/citizenship-for-sale/>, DOI: 10.59704/f3c2e8cfd7fcbbe7
- Weingerl, Petra, and Matjaž Tratnik. 2019. "Citizenship by Investment Programs from the Perspective of International and EU Law". *LeXonomica* 11 (2): 95-126. <https://doi.org/10.18690/lexonomica.11.2.95-126.2019>.
- Xu, Xin, Ahmed El-Ashram, and Judith Gold. 2015. "Too Much of a Good Thing? Prudent Management of Inflows under Economic Citizenship Programs". IMF Working Papers, WP/15/93. IMF. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2016/12/31/Too-Much-of-a-Good-Thing-Prudent-Management-of-Inflows-under-Economic-Citizenship-Programs-42884>
- Zabrocka, Magdalena. 2023. "The Sale of EU Citizenship and the 'Law' Behind It". *Statelessness & Citizenship Review* 5 (1): 45-75.
- Zhang, Nicholas. 2024. "The Vanishing Path to EU Citizenship, Doomed Future for Malta Golden Passport", *Globevisa*, March 29, 2024. <https://www.globevisa.com/the-vanishing-path-to-eu-citizenship-doomed-future-for-malta-golden-passport/>.

## INVESTICIONE MIGRACIJE U SVETLU MEĐUNARODNOG PRAVA I PRAVA EVROPSKE UNIJE

**Apstrakt:** Više od osamdeset država u svetu koristi programe investicionih migracija, koji sa sobom nose ozbiljne bezbednosne i krivičnopravne rizike. Programi investicionih migracija dodatno su složeni u kontekstu Evropske unije, budući da građanstvo EU otvara njeno unutrašnje tržište i sa sobom nosi i važan set političkih prava. Autorke, koristeći se dominantno normativnopravnim metodom, analiziraju usklađenost investicionih migracija sa međunarodnim pravom i pravom Evropske unije. Svrha ove analize je dvostruka. Kao prvo, njome se utvrđuje da li u međunarodnom pravu i pravu EU postoje ograničenja nacionalne autonomije država u oblasti državljanstva, budući da ona mogu uticati na zakonitost investicionih migracija. Kao drugo, analiziraju se implikacije presude u predmetu *Nottebohm* kako bi se utvrdio značaj kriterijuma stvarne veze za međunarodno priznanje državljanstva. Autorke zaključuju da kriterijum stvarne veze ne utiče na zakonitost investicionih migracija u međunarodnom pravu i pravu Evropske unije. Umesto toga, zaključuje se da su ovi programi zakoniti pod uslovom da je u njima obezbeđeno poštovanje pravila o suzbijanju korupcije, pranju novca i izbegavanju plaćanja poreza. Iako u radu autorke uvažaju načelo autonomije prava EU, prioritet daju potrebi da se izbegne vertikalna fragmentacija međunarodnog prava, odnosno neusklađenost međunarodnog prava i prava Evropske unije, i izbegne stvaranje međusobno neusklađenih pravnih pravila.

**Ključne reči:** investicione migracije; državljanstvo putem investicija; boravak putem investicija; međunarodno pravo; Evropska unija; državljanstvo; stvarna veza; građanstvo Evropske unije; iskrena saradnja.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: SQUARING THE CIRCLE – NAVIGATING CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

In the modern age, characterised by rapid technological advancements, shifting power dynamics, and pervasive global challenges, the complexity of international relations has become increasingly evident. Contemporary conflicts, challenges, risks, and threats jeopardising global, regional, and national security are constantly transforming. Understanding these phenomena is crucial for advancing scholarly research and guiding state institutions in navigating crises in international relations (Đorđević and Cvetković 2024).

For that purpose, the international scientific conference *Squaring the Circle: Navigating Changes in Contemporary International Relations* was held at the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, on June 4th and 5th, 2024. The conference, co-organised by the Institute of International Politics and Economics (IIPE) and the University of Belgrade-Faculty of Security Studies, was supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

The conference, which served as a unique platform for scholars and practitioners to critically assess current tumultuous changes in global relations and the likely dynamics in the future, aimed to provide space unimpeded by widening groupthink in the world, even academia. The two-day event unfolded in two plenary sessions—the opening and the closing—and three parallel thematic sessions focused on mapping out and unearthing global, regional, and subregional changes. Experts and representatives from sixteen countries presented their contributions and participated in a lively exchange.

During the conference opening ceremony, the Rector of the University of Belgrade, Professor Vladan Đokić, underlined the importance of this scientific event in the prominent work of the University nowadays. In his opening address, H.E. Mr Marko Đurić, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, pointed out that Belgrade is currently the best place in Europe for free debating the ongoing changes in international relations. The minister underscored the complexity of the challenges, causing severe and serial crises that undermine

order and feed instability, making global peace and security precarious. The Dean of the University of Belgrade Faculty of Security, Professor Vladimir Cvetković, described the state of world politics as restructuring, pregnant with the creation of a new form of modern global order. In concluding the opening session, Professor Branislav Đorđević, Director of the Institute of International Politics and Economics, reminded participants of the fact that the IIPE and the Faculty of Security Studies cooperate traditionally in organising prestigious scientific events and that the scientific conference *Squaring the Circle: Managing Changes in Contemporary International Relations* would be a new intellectual jewel (see: Serbian MFA [2024]; IIPE [2024] on this subject).

The first working panel, “Global Changes and the Role of Great Powers”, moderated by Aleksandar Mitić, aimed to decipher the current challenges and transformations the global system emerging from the peaceful end of the Cold War has faced. While Dejan Mihailović underlined the possibility of global conflict among different forms of capitalism because of contemporary system crises characterised by wartime economies and ecological collapse, Richard Sakwa and Alfred de Zayas discussed challenges to the United Nations system and its importance for preserving global peace. Sakwa highlighted the challenges as a consequence of actions misaligned with the UN Charter. De Zayas continued emphasising the lack of authority and credibility within the United Nations system, which requires institutional reform. A significant change in contemporary international relations is the growing influence of transnational actors as opposed to the dominant state-centric system (Baker 2024). Roozbeh B. Baker, therefore, pointed out the new field of “transnational studies” and offered a theoretical lens for assessing the agency of transnational actors in shaping the behaviour of states. Slobodan Janković and Aleksandar Mitić analysed strategic narratives of the great powers, presenting opposing visions of world order and their potential for realisation. Vladimir Trapara and Ana Jović-Lazić examined the rules-based order concept in international relations, contrasting it with alternative proposals from various countries. Dušan Proroković and Nenad Stekić focused on the People’s Republic of China. They explored the growing economic power of China, highlighting the transformative effects of its growth and the emergence of new contours of world order in its aspirations to be positioned as a critical player in global affairs (Proroković and Stekić 2024b). On the other hand, Erin Rowland Carlin emphasised the importance of micro-level research for understanding crises and focused on the process of peace mediation and the role of mediators. Mihajlo Vučić concluded by reflecting on the legal implications of freezing Russian Central Bank assets to pay reparations to Ukraine, warning it could further erode relations between the West and Russia (see, e.g., Proroković and Stekić [2024a] on this subject).

The European security architecture and the role of regional actors within it were the topics of the second working panel, moderated by Nevena Šekarić-Stojanović. Paolo Sellari and Stefano Valente discussed the place and role of the Mediterranean in contemporary international relations. Sellari problematised the established historical-economic constant of the role of the Mediterranean as a pivotal point in global trade flows, emphasising its main role as the point of passage. Valente argued through the evolution of the concept of the Eastern Basin that the region is becoming increasingly important in the broader oceanic order related to the complex multipolar world order dominated by regional and transnational balances. Birgül Demirtaş portrayed *à la carte* global order and regional actors in the context of the war in Ukraine. She argued that more flexible types of partnerships were preferred instead of stable alliances in a changing environment (Demirtaş 2024). Case studies of regional powers like Turkey and Serbia showed that they conducted an “*à la carte* foreign policy” towards the war in Ukraine by criticising in parallel Russian aggression, maintaining relations with Moscow, and abstaining from the European Union’s sanctions (Demirtaş 2024). Ekaterina Entina highlighted the shifting balance of power in Southeast Europe due to the influence of non-Western actors and new value chains, changing the region’s geopolitical landscape. Conversely, Igor Istomin dissected the threatened European security, contrasting multilateralism with block structures post-World War II. Aleksei A. Davidov referred to evolving US relations with Central and Eastern Europe, noting a shift from post-Cold War cooperation to new confrontations with China and Russia. The positions and relations of states in the changed European security architecture were also discussed on this panel. Poland’s role in the changing geopolitical environment through the Three Seas Initiative was the topic of Marko Babic’s presentation. Tony Mileski analysed the Prespa Agreement’s impact on North Macedonia’s EU accession, noting challenges despite NATO membership in 2020. In the conclusion of the panel, Dejan Vuletić explored Russia-Turkey relations and their implications for the Western Balkans, highlighting their pragmatic partnership based on mutual distrust of the West and economic cooperation (see, e.g., Proroković and Stekić [2024a] on this subject).

The third panel, moderated by Bogdan Stojanović, addressed the conflicting interests of global actors in the Balkans, the relevance of the BRICS, regional issues, the Ukraine crisis, potential new crises, energy security, green transition, and regional economic cooperation opportunities. Alexis Troude highlighted the strategic interests of global powers in the Balkans, focusing on Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence, Western companies’ interests in natural resources, and the EU as a destabilising factor. Francesco Barbaro described the Balkan geopolitical puzzle as a futile effort to square a circle, presenting the region as transitional with conflicting global interests. Aleksandar Raković

highlighted the preservation of Serbian identity in Montenegro from 2017 to 2023, noting the lack of significant foreign interference. Building on the discussion on foreign factors in the Western Balkans, Bojan S. Dimitrijević, Milenko Đeletović, and Ivica Lj. Đorđević compared the BRICS with the G7 and the EU, discussing reforms, de-dollarisation, and opportunities for Serbia-BRICS cooperation. When speaking about energy security in the Western Balkans, Jelena Zvezdanović Lobanova highlighted the region's limited progress in renewable energy development and emphasised the need for a synergy between energy security and environmental protection. EU membership is still the shared prime foreign policy goal among the Western Balkan countries, Sanja Jelisavac Trošić and Mitko Arnaudov reassessed. They examined the determinants influencing the policy goals of the Western Balkans Six, noting that slow regional cooperation progress had a significant impact (Jelisavac Trošić and Arnaudov 2024). Building on the previous, Marina Kostić Šulejić and Veljko Blagojević analysed Serbia's and Croatia's policies in the context of the Ukraine crisis's tenth anniversary, predicting potential new crises caused by polarisation and militarisation in the Balkans. In concluding remarks, Bogdan Stojanović and Nataša Stanojević presented the survey's results on the rise of pro-Russian sentiment in Serbia, particularly after 2022. They found that perceptions of Kosovo and Metohija issues have significantly influenced pro-Russian attitudes. Meanwhile, negative views of non-traditional values and disappointment with the European Union played a lesser role (Stojanović and Stanojević, 2024).

In concluding the review of this conference, it is appropriate to say it was a tour de force. The conference outputs will be invaluable reading for new and seasoned students in International Studies and the general public interested in getting the most up-to-date available knowledge on changes in an ever-evolving global landscape. Consequently, discussions offer necessary insights and charted possibilities for untying the knots of the unknown in contemporary international relations and effectively squaring the circle for navigating changes successfully.

## References

- Baker, Roozbeh B. 2024. "Rethinking transnational influence: A new framework for understanding state dynamics". In: *Global Security and International Relations after the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari and Rich Mifsud, 69-101. Belgrade, Rome and Clarksville (TN): Institute of International Politics and Economics, Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University and Faculty of Security Studies. [https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb\\_book&y=2024&issue=iipe\\_gsires-cu-2024&i=3](https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb_book&y=2024&issue=iipe_gsires-cu-2024&i=3).

- Demirtaş, Birgül. 2024. "Á La Carte Global Order and regional actors: A comparative analysis of Turkish and Serbian attitudes towards the Russian War in Ukraine". In: *Global Security and International Relations after the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari and Rich Mifsud, 342-357. Belgrade, Rome and Clarksville (TN): Institute of International Politics and Economics, Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University and Faculty of Security Studies. [https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb\\_book&y=2024&issue=iipe\\_gsirescu-2024&i=14](https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb_book&y=2024&issue=iipe_gsirescu-2024&i=14).
- [IIEPE] Institute of International Politics and Economics. 2024. "Squaring the Circle: Navigating Changes in Contemporary International Relations". Accessed July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. <https://www.diplomacy.bg.ac.rs/en/2024/06/05/squaring-the-circle-navigating-changes-in-contemporary-international-relations/>.
- Demirtaş, Birgül. 2024. "Á La Carte Global Order and regional actors: A comparative analysis of Turkish and Serbian attitudes towards the Russian War in Ukraine". In: *Global Security and International Relations after the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari and Rich Mifsud, 342-357. Belgrade, Rome and Clarksville (TN): Institute of International Politics and Economics, Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University and Faculty of Security Studies. [https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb\\_book&y=2024&issue=iipe\\_gsirescu-2024&i=14](https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb_book&y=2024&issue=iipe_gsirescu-2024&i=14).
- Jelisavac Trošić, Sanja, and Mitko Arnaudov. 2024. "Political antagonisms, misaligned security policies, and economic integration efforts in the Western Balkans: Present challenges and future perspectives". In: *Global Security and International Relations after the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari and Rich Mifsud, 429-454. Belgrade, Rome and Clarksville (TN): Institute of International Politics and Economics, Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University and Faculty of Security Studies. [https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb\\_book&y=2024&issue=iipe\\_gsirescu-2024&i=19](https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb_book&y=2024&issue=iipe_gsirescu-2024&i=19).
- Proroković, Dušan, and Nenad Stekić, eds. 2024a. *Squaring the Circle: Navigating Changes in Contemporary International Relations*. Book of Abstracts, International Academic Conference, June 4-5, 2024 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia. Institute of International Politics and Economics and Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade.
- Proroković, Dušan, and Nenad Stekić. 2024b. "New Balance of Power in the International Relations and the Role of China". In: *Global Security and International Relations after the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari and Rich Mifsud, 132-152. Belgrade, Rome and Clarksville (TN): Institute of International Politics and Economics,

Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University and Faculty of Security Studies. [https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb\\_book&y=2024&issue=iipe\\_gsirescu-2024&i=5](https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb_book&y=2024&issue=iipe_gsirescu-2024&i=5).

[Serbian MFA] Republic of Serbia Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2024. "Djuric: Serbia pursues a policy based on a vision of a common European future". Accessed July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. <https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/press-service/statements/djuric-serbia-pursues-policy-based-vision-common-european-future>.

Stojanović, Bogdan, and Nataša Stanojević. 2024. "Profiling Serbian population: Exploring the rise of pro-russian leanings". In: *Global Security and International Relations after the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari and Rich Mifsud, 570-591. Belgrade, Rome and Clarksville (TN): Institute of International Politics and Economics, Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University and Faculty of Security Studies. [https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb\\_book&y=2024&issue=iipe\\_gsirescu-2024&i=25](https://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs/volume.php?pt=eb_book&y=2024&issue=iipe_gsirescu-2024&i=25).

Đorđević, Branislav, and Vladimir Cvetković. 2024. "Publisher's Foreword". In: *Global Security and International Relations after the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis*, edited by Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari and Rich Mifsud, 11. Belgrade, Rome and Clarksville (TN): Institute of International Politics and Economics, Sapienza University, Austin Peay State University and Faculty of Security Studies. [https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe\\_gsirescu.2024](https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_gsirescu.2024).

Ivana DUNJIĆ

## **UNPACKING CHINA'S HESITANT HEGEMONY: A LAYERED LOOK AT CHINA'S SECURITY POLICY**

Nenad Stekić, *A Hesitant Hegemon: Layers of China's Contemporary Security Policy*, Belgrade, Institute of International Politics and Economics, 2023, pp. 278.

In the 21st century, and especially in its second decade, there has been a significant restructuring of global power dynamics. The decades-long American supremacy is declining, while China is on the rise. Its accelerated growth in the economic sphere has expanded to the political and security domains, particularly in the last ten years. Thanks to the introduction of several initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and newly proposed Global Development, Global Security, and Global Civilisational initiatives, as well as its prominent role in international organisations and forums, China has made a monumental ascension in the international arena. This global stride by China has brought remarkable changes and attracted much attention, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. China's rapidly growing economic, technological, military, and diplomatic power has raised (Western) concerns that its pursuit of hegemony has been changing to become more assertive. Therefore, China's behaviour and its evolving role in international relations have become the backbone of numerous academic debates. Most academics focus on China's security agenda from the perspective of its competition with the US (Schweller and Pu 2011; Zhao 2019) and the (im)possibility of continuing its peaceful rise to the international throne (Buzan 2010; Brooks and Wohlforth 2015). However, there is a dearth of research in English that analyses China's role in the world through the prism of its security policy. To fill this gap, Nenad Stekić has offered a fresh perspective on China's global position through a multidimensional analysis of China's security policy in his book *A Hesitant Hegemon: Layers of China's Contemporary Security Policy*. As a result of many years of rigorous academic research, this monograph represents an extensive and innovative study of China's security policy in the post-pandemic world.

Dr Stekić sheds new light on China's role in international politics through the lens of the "hesitant hegemon" concept. The author argues that the hesitation is pivotal to explaining China's role in the post-pandemic security landscape. Starting from that premise, the author progressively unpacks the

reasons behind China's restraint in asserting full dominance across all domains and provides a nuanced understanding of its strategic goals by assessing the decision-making processes and intricate factors shaping China's behaviour on the global stage. By taking this systematic approach and placing the analysis of the layers of security policy in the wider context of Grand Strategy evolution, the author tends to fill in the gap in the current research regarding China's security policy.

At the very beginning, the author provides a brief executive summary of the entire book in English, Chinese, and Serbian. It is valuable for readers because they can quickly grasp the core ideas and the book structure and assess whether it aligns with their interests. This synopsis helps readers understand the book's structure and provides a path so they may quickly delve further into the subjects that pique their interest. The summary accurately reflects the book's content, comprised of an introduction and five thematic chapters systematically organised from more general to particular.

The introduction outlines the contents in more detail and explains the rationale behind taking the endeavour to dive deeper into the evolving position of China in the realm of global security from a novel perspective. The author emphasises an ideologically unbiased approach and reaffirms its dedication to scientific and "rigorous scholarly work based on empirical research and analysis" (Stekić 2023, 32).

The first chapter, "Understanding China's New Global Agenda: Theory and Method", establishes the theoretical foundation of this study, exploring the philosophical and historical underpinnings of China's foreign and security policy. The author opts for assessing China's peaceful rise within the Hegemonic Stability Theory and places its security policy considerations within the context of Grand Strategy "as its dominant toolkit" (Stekić 2023, 35). The author claims that the diplomatic positioning of China, particularly in the light of the (post) COVID-19 pandemic period, has been predominantly shaped by its peaceful rise, which eventually paved the way for more assertive behaviour. Furthermore, in this chapter, readers can familiarise themselves with basic concepts such as hesitancy, otherness, comprehensive national power, global security *locus*, and decoupling. The methodological part of the chapter is of particular importance as the author employs an innovative and original "layered" approach to analysing China's security policy. Dr Stekić deploys "sequencing" as an analytical tool, providing a multidimensional framework for understanding China's security policy strategic priorities through several layers: spatial-hierarchical, functional, and institutional.

*Evolution of the Chinese Global Agenda* is the title of the second chapter dedicated to the evolution of China's four grand strategies, especially

emphasising the post-pandemic landscape shaping the way for the Fifth Grand Strategy. The author acknowledges the impact of Confucianism and Taoism on China's global stance and behaviour in the international arena and then dives deeper into each of the four Grand Strategies, noticing the evolution from internal consolidation to a more assertive role that China embraced during its third Grand Strategy period (1990-2003) and the expansion of economic influence through different initiatives in the fourth Grand Strategy period (2003-2020). Lastly, the author initiates a discussion on the potential development of the Fifth Grand Strategy amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Each chapter acts as a building block, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive picture of China's security policy and adding different dimensions to the author's argument. However, the third chapter, *Sequencing the Layers of China's Contemporary Security Policy*, acts as the central pillar, providing a comprehensive analysis that makes up over a third of the book. The author provides an in-depth analysis of China's response to different threats in the changing global environment, arguing that Western containment forces China to act more assertively. The chapter is divided into three sub-chapters that align with the three layers of China's security policy. The first section tackles hierarchical-spatial layers. The author differs between a) a hierarchical sub-layer that looks into China's global security agenda (with an emphasis on the Global Security Initiative proposed in 2022), national security concerns, and human security (highlighting the role of the Global Development Initiative), and b) a spatial sub-layer that deals with policies for regions of special interest to China (East Asia, Persian Gulf, Arctic, Africa, and Oceania), including its space policy. The author also raises the question of the Belt and Road Initiative becoming obsolete in the context of rising Sino-scepticism. The section also examines the role of China in the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023. The second layer is functional and delves into Indo-Pacific security dynamics, China's diplomatic efforts, its role in mediating the Ukraine conflict, and the security vacuum in Afghanistan. This layer also encompasses issues related to the semiconductor industry, technology, arms trade, artificial intelligence, and China's cultural diplomacy. Lastly, the institutional layer provides valuable insights into the decision-making process by focusing on the roles of different entities, predominantly the Communist Party of China, state and national administration, and the People's Liberation Army (Navy), as well as the position of China in international organisations, which is significant for understanding China's efforts in shaping global norms.

Following the extensive analysis of each of the layers of China's policy in the previous chapter, the fourth chapter, *China's Security Policy in the Eyes of*

*the United States*, brings to the forefront different perceptions and delves into two sides of the coin: a) how the Pentagon views China's rise, its hegemonic ambitions, and capabilities, and b) how China perceives the global impact of US hegemony. The Pentagon's perception, based on the analysis of annual reports on China's military and security developments (2001-2021), shows that the focus of the Pentagon has shifted from China seeking supremacy to very specific security concerns, such as the Taiwan issue, thus leading to changes in US foreign policy on countering China (Stekić 2022). The Pentagon's view on three layers of China's security policy, particularly during 2022 and 2023, shows that China is about to become more militarily assertive, pushing the US to become more supportive of China's neighbouring countries. China's first-ever response to these reports came in 2022, when China rejected hawkish propaganda on "Chinese threat" and military developments, highlighting its use as a tactic for interfering in China's internal affairs (Stekić 2023). The author also analyses the "reversed perception", that is, China's view of US hegemony. Such analysis is based on reports released by the Chinese government in 2021-2023, criticising US hegemony and proving its negative effects on the global community, thus concluding that American democracy is in further decline (Stekić 2023, 230).

The title of the fifth chapter, the final one, is a thought-provoking question: "Will China continue to be a hesitating leader"? The author of this monograph avoids a definite single answer but instead presents and explores three distinct scenarios for China's future trajectory within the international system, ranging from a power content with the existing order (*status quo*), China becoming more assertive in pursuing security policy with Chinese characteristics, to a complete reshaping of the global landscape with China as the dominant unipolar leader. While the first scenario is more obsolete in current circumstances, the third one is less likely given the unwillingness of the US to cede global leadership peacefully, which would have different global implications, including "the Cold War-style standoff" (Stekić 2023, 250). In light of this, the author concludes that, at least until 2030, China becoming more assertive is the most likely scenario. In the chapter conclusion, the author reflects on China's Fifth Grand Strategy, pointing out that it has already been operational for several years.

Based on the profound analysis of theory and practice, the author contemplates two explanations for China's hesitancy: a) its philosophy and civilisational legacy that form the basis of China's benevolence (Stekić and Obradović, 2019) and b) "calm before the storm scenario", that is, China's strategy to gain time to harden its hegemony and exert dominance across different fields (Stekić 2023, 257). The findings presented in this book imply that the second explanation is more adequate.

The study's limitations are reflected in the period it covers since it focuses on factors and events that have shaped China's security policy since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic until March 2023. This period is marked by rapidly developing global changes that strongly impact China's security. On the other hand, the first two chapters provide a broader context, which, combined with the analysis of layers, enables a deeper understanding of China's intentions and its global security agenda. What sets this monograph apart is a profound analysis of an extensive variety of factors and events in the stated period and a novel methodological approach based on "sequencing" into three layers. That is also its main contribution. Considering its comprehensive and systematic approach to dissecting China's security policy through layers, this book deserves to be mandatory reading for students of international relations, politics, and security studies. Besides being beneficial to scholars and researchers, it is a valuable source of information for a broader audience interested in understanding China's foreign and security policy and, especially, its evolving role in the changing world order.

### References

- Brooks, Stephen G., and William C. Wohlforth. 2015. "The rise and fall of the great powers in the twenty-first century: China's rise and the fate of America's global position." *International security* 40 (3): 7-53.
- Buzan, Barry. 2010. "China in international society: Is 'peaceful rise' possible?." *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3 (1): 5-36.
- Schweller, Randall L., and Xiaoyu Pu. 2011. "After unipolarity: China's visions of international order in an era of US decline." *International security* 36 (1): 41-72.
- Stekić, Nenad, and Žarko Obradović. 2019. "Velika strategija Narodne Republike Kine kao činilac konvergencija bezbednosnih politika u Aziji". In: *Integracioni procesi u Evroaziji*, edited by Dušan Proroković and Ana Jović-Lazić, 45-64. Beograd: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu.
- Stekić, Nenad. 2022. "Are the Hawks Watching Closely? Reports on China's Military Power for the US Congress, 2001–2021". *The Review of International Affairs* LXXIII (1186): 33-60.
- Stekić, Nenad. 2023. *A Hesitant Hegemon: Layers of China's Contemporary Security Policy*. Belgrade: Institute for International Politics and Economics.
- Zhao, Minghao. 2019. "Is a new Cold War inevitable? Chinese perspectives on US–China strategic competition." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12 (3): 371-394.



## LIST OF REVIEWERS

- AJZENHAMER, Vladimir, Associate Professor, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- ARMAN, Necip Murat, Associate Professor, Aydin Adnan Menderes University, Turkey;
- BABOVIĆ, Aleksandra, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Osaka University, Japan;
- COLAK, Abello Alexandra, Research Fellow, Latin America and Caribbean Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK;
- ĆEMALLOVIĆ, Uroš, Senior Research Associate, Institute of European Studies, Belgrade, Serbia;
- DIMITRIJEVIĆ, Duško, Principal Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia;
- DOSTANIĆ, Dušan, Research Fellow, Institut of Political Studies, Belgrade, Serbia;
- DRAGIČEVIĆ RADIČEVIĆ, Tatjana, Full Professor, Faculty of Applied Management, Economics and Finance Belgrade, University Business Academy in Novi Sad, Serbia;
- DŽUVEROVIĆ, Nemanja, Full Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- EJDUS, Filip, Full Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- GRBIĆ, Milka, Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics, University of Kragujevac, Serbia;
- HAČEK, Miro, Full Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Political Science, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- HRUBOŇ, Anton, Associate Professor, Department of Security Studies, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic;
- IVANOVIĆ-DRENOVAK, Mirjana, Full Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- IVANOVIĆ, Vladan, Full Professor, Faculty of Economics, University of Kragujevac, Serbia;
- IRRERA, Daniela, Full Professor, Centre for High Defence Studies, Rome, Italy;
- KARTSONAKI, Argyro, Researcher, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Germany;
- KORAC, Srđan, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Political Studies, Belgrade, Serbia;

- KOVAČEVIĆ, Marko, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- KOLÅS, Åshild, Research Professor, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway;
- KULINTSEV, Yury, Research Fellow, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Science, Russia;
- LOJANICA, Nemanja, Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics, University of Kragujevac, Serbia;
- MARKOVIC-KHAZE, Nina, Lecturer, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia;
- MILOŠEVIĆ, Aleksandar, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- MOLNAR, Dejan, Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- NESTOROVIĆ, Milica, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Belgrade, University Business Academy in Novi Sad, Serbia;
- POPESCU, Liliana, Associate Professor, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA) Bucharest, Department of Political Science and European Studies, Romania;
- ROKVIĆ, Vanja, Associate Professor, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- STANKOVIĆ, Miloš, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, Serbia;
- TODOROVIĆ LAZIĆ, Jelena, Senior Research Associate, Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, Serbia;
- TRAILOVIĆ, Dragan, Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia;
- UZER, Umut, Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey;
- VUČIĆ, Mihajlo, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia;
- VUJOVIĆ, Slavoljub, Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia;
- VUKOVIĆ, Nebojša, Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia;
- ŽUPANČIČ, Rok, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

*The Review of International Affairs* is scientific journal dedicated to international legal, economic, political and security relations. Established in 1950 as the first Yugoslav scholarly journal in its field, *The Review of International Affairs* is one of the oldest and best-known periodicals in the Balkans that cover research in International Relations.

The journal *The Review of International Affairs* publishes original papers and review articles. The journal also publishes lectures given by foreign ambassadors at the IPE's Ambassadorial Forum, as well as a substantial book review section that identifies the most salient work of both emerging and enduring scholars of International Studies.

We strongly encourage papers on politics, economics, security and international law issues in the Balkan regional context. Aside from the Balkan-related issues, we are welcoming papers on other regional studies as well. However, this focus thus not presuppose limitation for articles, studies and comments on other relevant international topics.

The journal is published three times a year in English with abstracts, both in English and Serbian. Authors that speak the BHS language should submit their abstracts in the Serbian language, and for the authors from other countries, Editorial Team will provide translation in the Serbian language. In Serbia, readers are the diplomatic representatives of foreign countries, foreign news agencies, universities, research institutions, and prominent political, academic, economic and cultural figures. Abroad, readers are the diplomatic representatives of Serbia, policy-makers at the national and international levels, chambers of commerce, companies, universities, research institutes etc. The journal is distributed in more than 150 countries.

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

*The Review of International Affairs* is a peer-reviewed journal that focuses on the theoretical, methodological and practical dimensions of international affairs. We strongly encourage papers on politics, economics, security and international law issues in the Balkan regional context. Aside from the Balkan-related issues, we are welcoming papers on other regional studies as well.

However, this focus thus not presuppose limitation for articles, studies and comments on other relevant international topics.

Submission of a manuscript implies: that it is not under consideration for publication anywhere else; that the work described has not been published before; that its publication has been approved by all co-authors, if any, as well as by the responsible authorities – tacitly or explicitly – at the institution where the work has been carried out. The publisher will not be held legally responsible should there be any claims for compensation. Manuscripts should be submitted by email to the editorial office: [RIA@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs](mailto:RIA@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs) and [riadiplomacy@gmail.com](mailto:riadiplomacy@gmail.com)

Together with the submission, the authors should send a signed Author's statement form that is available on the website of journal. Statement should be signed and scanned, as an attachment, in the .pdf format, and sent to the same e-mail addresses: [RIA@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs](mailto:RIA@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs) and [riadiplomacy@gmail.com](mailto:riadiplomacy@gmail.com)

Papers should be written in English. Papers must be proofread. Authors whose first language is not English should ask a native speaker to proofread manuscript before the submission. In addition, author from BHS language region should provide abstract in Serbian language. For authors from other region, editorial team will provide translation of the abstract. The manuscripts submitted for publication are subject to anonymous peer review. The author should remove all personal identification data from the text.

The Editorial Board will make an initial screening of all manuscripts received. Selected manuscripts will be reviewed by at least two referees on the basis of anonymity. The review process takes between two and six months. Submitted papers which do not comply with Instructions for authors will not be included in the review procedure. Papers which have received positive reviews with suggestions for changes/improvements will be sent to the authors together with the anonymous reviewers' comments.

### **EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Editor is responsible for deciding which articles submitted to *The Review of International Affairs* will be published. Decision is guided by the Editorial Policy and constrained by legal requirements in force regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism.

The Editor reserves the right to decide not to publish submitted manuscripts in case they do not meet relevant standards concerning the content and formal aspects prescribed by the Editorial Policy. The Editorial Staff will inform the authors whether the manuscript is accepted for

publication within a reasonable period from the date of the manuscript submission.

The Editor and the Editorial Staff must hold no conflict of interest with regard to the articles they consider for publication.

The Editor and the Editorial Staff shall evaluate manuscripts for their intellectual content free from any racial, sexual, religious, ethnic, or political bias.

The Editor and the Editorial Staff must not use unpublished materials disclosed in submitted manuscripts without the express written consent of the authors. The information and ideas presented in submitted manuscripts shall be kept confidential and must not be used for personal gain.

The Editor and the Editorial Staff shall take all reasonable measures to ensure that the reviewers remain anonymous to the authors before, during and after the evaluation process and the authors remain anonymous to reviewers until the end of the review procedure.

### **AUTHORS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

The authors warrant that their manuscript is their original work, that it has not been published before and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Parallel submission of the same paper to another journal constitutes a misconduct and eliminates the manuscript from consideration by Editorial Staff. The authors also warrant that the manuscript is not and will not be published elsewhere in any language without the consent of the copyright holder.

In case a submitted manuscript is a result of a research project, or its previous version has been presented at a conference in the form of an oral presentation (under the same or similar title), detailed information about the project, the conference, etc. shall be provided in the footnote at the beginning of the text. A paper that has already been published in another journal cannot be reprinted in *The Review of International Affairs*.

It is the responsibility of each author to ensure that papers submitted are written with ethical standards in mind. The authors affirm that the article contains no unfounded or unlawful statements and does not violate the rights of third parties. The Publisher will not be held legally responsible should there be any claims for compensation.

### **REVIEWERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

The reviewers are required to provide written, competent and unbiased feedback in a timely manner on the scholarly merits and the scientific value

of the manuscript. The reviewers assess manuscript for the compliance with the profile of the journal *The Review of International Affairs*, the relevance of the investigated topic and applied methods, the originality and scientific relevance of information presented in the manuscript, the presentation style and scholarly apparatus.

The reviewers should alert the Editor to any well-founded suspicions or the knowledge of possible violations of ethical standards by the authors. The reviewers should recognize relevant published works that have not been cited by the authors and alert the Editor to substantial similarities between a reviewed manuscript and any manuscript published or under consideration for publication elsewhere, in the event they are aware of such. The reviewers should also alert the Editor to a parallel submission of the same paper to another journal, in the event they are aware of such.

The reviewers must not have the conflict of interest with respect to the research, the authors and/or the funding sources for the research. If such conflicts exist, the reviewers must report them to the Editor without delay.

Any selected referee who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or knows that its prompt review will be impossible should notify the Editor without delay.

Reviews must be conducted objectively. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate. The reviewers should express their views clearly with supporting arguments. Any manuscripts received for review must be treated as a confidential document. The reviewers must not use unpublished materials disclosed in submitted manuscripts without the express written consent of the authors. The information and ideas presented in submitted manuscripts shall be kept confidential and must not be used for personal gain.

## **REVIEW PROCEDURE**

The submitted manuscripts are subject to a peer review process. The purpose of peer review is to assist the Editor-in-Chief in making editorial decisions and through the editorial communications with the author it may also assist the author in improving the paper. The review is anonymous and conducted by the reviewers. Reviews must be finished in the period no longer than 30 days after the date on which the manuscript was received by the reviewers. The complete reviewing process should not be longer than 6 months.

The choice of the reviewers is at the Editors' discretion. The reviewers must be knowledgeable about the subject area of the manuscript; they must

not be from the authors' own institution and they should not have recent joint publications with any of the authors.

In the main review phase, the Editor sends submitted papers to two reviewers, both experts in the field. The reviewers' evaluation form contains a checklist in order to help referees cover all aspects that can decide the fate of a submission. In the final section of the evaluation form, the reviewers must include observations and suggestions aimed at improving the submitted manuscript; these are sent to the authors, without the names of the reviewers.

All of the reviewers of a paper act independently and they are not aware of each other's identities. If the decisions of the two reviewers are not the same (accept/reject), the Editor may assign additional reviewers.

During the review process, the Editor may require the authors to provide additional information (including raw data) if they are necessary for the evaluation of the scholarly merit of the manuscript. These materials shall be kept confidential and must not be used for personal gain.

The Editorial team shall ensure reasonable quality control for the reviews. With respect to the reviewers whose reviews are convincingly questioned by the authors, special attention will be paid to ensure that the reviews are objective and high in academic standard. When there is any doubt with regard to the objectivity of the reviews or the quality of the review, additional reviewers will be assigned.

## **PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE JOURNAL THE REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Anyone may inform Editors and/or Editorial Staff of the journal *The Review of International Affairs* at any time of suspected unethical behaviour or any type of misconduct by giving the necessary information/evidence to start an investigation.

### **Investigation**

Editor-in-Chief will consult with the Editorial Board on decisions regarding the initiation of an investigation.

During an investigation, any evidence should be treated as strictly confidential and only made available to those strictly involved in investigating.

The accused will always be given the chance to respond to any charges made against them.

The Editor-in-Chief, in consultation with the Editorial Board, and, when appropriate, further consultation with a small group of experts should make any decision regarding the course of action to be taken using the evidence available. The possible outcomes are as follows (these can be used separately or jointly):

- Publication of a formal announcement or editorial describing the misconduct.
- Informing the author's (or reviewer's) head of department or employer of any misconduct by means of a formal letter.
- The formal, announced retraction of publications from the journal in accordance with the Retraction Policy (see below).
- A ban on submissions from an individual for a period of two years.
- Referring a case to a professional organization or legal authority for further investigation and action.

When dealing with unethical behaviour, the Editorial Staff will rely on the guidelines and recommendations provided by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE): <http://publicationethics.org/resources/>.

## RETRACTION POLICY

Legal limitations of the publisher, copyright holder or author(s), infringements of professional ethical codes, such as multiple submissions, bogus claims of authorship, plagiarism, fraudulent use of data or any major misconduct require retraction of an article. Occasionally a retraction can be used to correct errors in submission or publication. The main reason for withdrawal or retraction is to correct the mistake while preserving the integrity of science; it is not to punish the author.

Standards for dealing with retractions have been developed by a number of library and scholarly bodies, and this practice has been adopted for an article retraction by *The Review of International Affairs*: in the electronic version of the retraction note, a link is made to the original article. In the electronic version of the original article, a link is made to the retraction note where it is clearly stated that the article has been retracted. The original article is retained unchanged, save for a watermark on the PDF indicating on each page that it is "retracted".

### Reporting standards

A submitted manuscript should contain sufficient details and references to permit reviewers and, subsequently, readers verify the claims presented

in it. The deliberate presentation of false claims is a violation of ethical standards. Books and conference reviews should be accurate and they should present an objective perspective.

The authors are exclusively responsible for the contents of their submissions and must make sure that they have permission from all involved parties to make the data public.

The authors wishing to include figures, tables or other materials that have already been published elsewhere are required to obtain permission from the copyright holder(s). Any material received without such evidence will be assumed to originate from the authors.

### **Authorship**

The authors must make sure that only the persons who have contributed significantly to the content of the manuscript are listed as their authors.

If persons other than the authors were involved in important aspects of the research project and the preparation of the manuscript, their contribution should be acknowledged in a footnote or the Acknowledgments section.

### **Acknowledgment of Sources**

The authors are required to properly cite sources that have significantly influenced their research and their manuscript. Information received in a private conversation or correspondence with third parties, in reviewing project applications, manuscripts and similar materials, must not be used without the express written consent of the information source.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors should disclose in their manuscript any financial or other substantive conflict of interest that might have influenced the presented results or their interpretation.

### **Fundamental errors in published works**

When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in his/her own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal Editor or publisher and cooperate with the Editor to retract or correct the paper.

By submitting a manuscript, the authors agree to abide by the Review of International Affairs' Editorial Policies.

## PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism, where someone assumes another's ideas, words, or other creative expressions as one's own, presents a clear violation of scientific ethics. Plagiarism may also involve a violation of copyright law, punishable by legal action.

Plagiarism includes the following:

- Word for word, or almost word for word copying, or purposely paraphrasing portions of another author's work without clearly indicating the source or marking the copied fragment (for example, using quotation marks);
- Copying equations, figures or tables from someone else's paper without properly citing the source and/or without permission from the original author or the copyright holder.
- Any paper which shows obvious signs of plagiarism will be automatically rejected and the authors will be permanently banned from publishing in the journal.

In case plagiarism is discovered in a paper that has already been published by the journal *The Review of International Affairs*, it will be retracted in accordance with the procedure described below under Retraction policy, and the authors will be permanently banned from publishing in the journal.

## OPEN ACCESS POLICY

Journal *The Review of International Affairs* is available in accordance with the open access principles. It is issued in hard-copy and digital forms. The articles can be downloaded free of charge from the website and distributed for academic purposes. The Journal adheres to the Budapest Open Access Initiative which states the following:

*By "open access" to [peer-reviewed research literature], we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.*

Journal enables free access to all its articles, without subscriptions and free of any related charges. Its content is released without any delays (such

as the embargo period) and its materials may be used without asking for a specific permission on the condition that a reference to the original document is provided.

### COPYRIGHT POLICY

The published articles will be disseminated in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA), allowing to share - copy and redistribute in any form or medium – and adapt - remix, transform, and build upon it for any purpose, even commercially, provided that an appropriate credit is given to the original author(s), a link to the license is provided, it is stated whether changes have been made and the new work is disseminated under the identical license as the original work. The users must provide a detailed reference to the original work, containing the author name(s), title of the published research, full journal title, volume, issue, page span and DOI. In electronic publishing, users are also required to link the content with both the original article published in the journal and the licence used. The authors may pursue separate, additional contractual arrangements for the non-exclusive distribution of the journal's published version of the work (e.g., post it to an institutional repository or publish it in a book), with an acknowledgement of its initial publication in *The Review of International Affairs*.

The Author(s) warrant that their manuscript is their original work that has not been published before; that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere; and that its publication has been approved by all co-authors, if any, as well as tacitly or explicitly by the responsible authorities at the institution where the work was carried out.

The Author(s) affirm that the article contains no unfounded or unlawful statements and does not violate the rights of others. The author(s) also affirm that they hold no conflict of interest that may affect the integrity of the Manuscript and the validity of the findings presented in it. If copyrighted works are included, the Author(s) bear responsibility to obtain written permission from the copyright owners. The Corresponding author, as the signing author, warrants that he/she has full power to make this grant on behalf of the Author(s). If the Author(s) are using any personal details of research subjects or other individuals, they affirm that they have obtained all consents required by applicable law and complied with the publisher's policies relating to the use of such images or personal information.

The Journal allows Author(s) to deposit Author's Post-print (accepted version) in an institutional repository and non-commercial subject-based

repositories, or to publish it on Author's personal website and departmental website (including social networking sites, such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu, etc.), at any time after publication. Publisher copyright and source must be acknowledged and a link must be made to the article's DOI.

Upon receiving the proofs, the Author(s) agree to promptly check the proofs carefully, correct any typographical errors, and authorize the publication of the corrected proofs.

The Corresponding author agrees to inform his/her co-authors, of any of the above terms.

### **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in the published works do not express the views of the Editors and Editorial Staff. The authors take legal and moral responsibility for the ideas expressed in the articles. The Publisher shall have no liability in the event of the issuance of any claims for damages. The Publisher will not be held legally responsible should there be any claims for compensation.

## MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

*The Review of International Affairs* publishes the following types of articles:

**Original research article** presents the results of research with clear contribution with a view of expanding and/or deepening of existing knowledge. It should be structured to include the following elements: general context and aim of research; theoretical background (review literature) clearly stated in the introduction; departing hypothesis or research question; applied methods; presentation and explanation of the results; conclusion discussing the main research findings, departing hypothesis or research question.

**Review article** provides a comprehensive summary of research on a certain topic or a perspective on the state of the field by describing current areas of agreement as well as controversies and debates. Review article identifies gaps in knowledge and the most important but still unanswered research questions and suggest directions for future research.

**Book review** is a systematic description and/or critical analysis of the quality and significance of a book, edited volume, and textbook. Book review should include a general description of the topic and/or problem addressed by the work in question, summary of the book's main argument, basic biographical information about the author, summary of contents, strengths and weaknesses, as well as a concluding statement summarizing reviewer's opinion of the book.

In preparing manuscripts authors are kindly requested to comply with the following rules:

### FORMAT

All types of manuscripts should be submitted in Word and saved in .doc or .docx format.

Use Times New Roman font in size 12, with single-lined spacing, and with an empty line between paragraphs.

Use continuous line numbers starting on the first page, with page numbers on the right side of the bottom of the page.

## **LENGTH**

**Articles range from 6000–8000 words (excluding abstracts and bibliography).**

**The length of book review essays is up to 1500 words.**

## **NAME AND AFFILIATION**

Divide the article in two separate files:

### **1. File “Cover page”, which contains:**

- a. Article title;
- b. Authorship data (in accordance with the below-mentioned):

Below the title, insert your full name with a corresponding footnote in which you state your research title, the complete name of your employing institution, its seat, your e-mail and ORCID ID. Capitalize your last name.

Author’s affiliation is the affiliation where the research was conducted.

In case of two co-authors, the names should be written next to one another, with each containing the affiliation footnote. Although manuscripts co-authored by more than two researchers are untypical, they may be considered in rare occasions, depending on the scale of the research, its topic, main elements, structure and the extent of correspondence with the Editorial Policy.

In the footnote, the author also provides all details regarding the project under which the research presented in her/his article is conducted and/or sources of financial and other support. The author also may point to readers that some of the views presented in the article express her/his own opinion and not the one of the institution she/he works for

### **2. File “Main text”, which contains:**

- a. Article title

TITLE

Use bold for the article title (size 14).

The title should not only accurately describe the content of manuscript (i.e. convey the main topics of the study and highlight the importance of the research) but it should be concise.

- b. Text, that is formatted in the following way:

## ABSTRACT AND KEY WORDS

Below the author's name include abstract of 150–200 words that describes the material presented in the manuscript.

For original research article, the abstract must summarise the entire article, including theoretical background, the departing hypothesis or research question, the aim, a concise account of the methods, a clear description of the most important findings, and a brief presentation of the conclusions.

For review article, the abstract should include the primary objective of the review, the reasoning behind choice, the main outcomes and results of the review, and the conclusions that might be drawn, including their implications for further research, application, or practice.

The author provides up to 10 key words for the main idea of the article which can be used for indexing purposes. Key words should not repeat the title.

Authors that speak BHS language should submit, as well, their abstracts in the Serbian language at the end of the reference list. For authors from other countries, the editorial team will prepare a translation of the abstract.

## MAIN TEXT

The basic text should be justified.

Use no more than three levels of headings (all should be centred):

First-level headings – **Heading**

Second-level headings – *Heading*

Third-level headings – *Heading*

Do not number headings.

Define all abbreviations at first mention in the abstract and in the main text by giving the full term, then the abbreviation in parentheses, and use them consistently thereafter.

Only the following form of quotation marks should be put in the text: “ ”. In case the additional quotation marks are to be put within these ones it should be done in the following way: ‘ ’.

The text should be clear, readable, and concise. Manuscripts should be well presented, with correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. If the English is unsatisfactory, we will return the manuscript for correction without review.

Please use British (-ise) spelling style consistently throughout your manuscript.

Latin, Old Greek and other non-English words and terms in the text should be italicised (e.g. *status quo*, *a priori*, *de facto*, *acquis communautaire*).

## CITATION STYLE

**The Review of International Affairs** uses the author-date reference style based on *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th ed). Sources are cited in the text, usually in parentheses, by the author's surname, the publication date of the work cited, and a page number if necessary. Full details are given in the reference list (use the heading References).

In the text, the reference should be placed just before punctuation. If the author's name appears in the text, it is not necessary to repeat it, but the date should follow immediately:

Johnson and Axinn (2013, 136) argue that killing with emotions is morally superior to killing without emotions, because military honour demands a clear will to assume a risk of sacrifice of health and life.

If the reference is in parentheses, use square brackets for additional parentheses:

(see, e.g., Johnson and Axinn [2013, 133–136] on this important subject).

In text, separate the references with semicolons:

(Jabri 2007; Herman 2004; Rohrbach 2020)

If citing more than one work by an author, do not repeat the name:

(Jabri 2007, 2011; Gregory 2014a, 2014b)

## Book

Reference list entry:

Jabri, Vivienne. 2007. *War and the Transformation of Global Politics*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou, and Anuradha Chenoy. 2007. *Human Security: Concepts and Implications*, 2nd ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Vasquez, John A., Sanford Jaffe, James Turner Johnson, and Linda Stamato, eds. 1995. *Beyond Confrontation: Learning Conflict Resolution in the Post-Cold War Era*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bentham, Jeremy (1907) 2018. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Reprint, London: Clarendon Press. [www.econlib.org/library/Bentham/bnthPML.html](http://www.econlib.org/library/Bentham/bnthPML.html).

Dal Lago, Alessandro, and Salvatore Palidda, eds. 2010. *Conflict, Security and the Reshaping of Society: The Civilization of War*. Oxon & New York: Routledge.

Hayek, Friedrich A. 2011. *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition*. Edited by Ronald Hamowy. Vol. 17 of *The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek*, edited by Bruce Caldwell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988–.

In-text citation:

(Jabri 2007, 59)

(Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007)

(Vasquez et al. 1995)

(Bentham [1907] 2018)

(Dal Lago and Palidda 2010)

(Hayek 2011, 258)

### **Journal article**

Reference list entry:

Nordin, Astrid H.M. and Dan Öberg. 2015. "Targeting the Ontology of War: From Clausewitz to Baudrillard". *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43 (2): 395–423.

Adams, Tracy, and Zohar Kampf. 2020. "'Solemn and just demands': Seeking apologies in the international arena". *Review of International Studies*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210520000261>.

In-text citation:

(Nordin and Öberg 2015, 401)

(Tracy and Kampf 2020)

### **Article in edited volume**

Reference list entry:

Herman, Michael. 2004. "Ethics and Intelligence After September 2001". In: *Understanding Intelligence in the Twenty-First Century: Journeys in Shadows*,

edited by Len V. Scott and Peter D. Jackson, 567–581. London and New York: Routledge.

Reference list entry:

(Herman 2004)

### **Conference paper (if not published in conference proceedings)**

Reference list entry:

Korać, Srđan. 2016. “Human Security and Global Ethics: Can International Organizations be Moral Agents?”. Paper presented at the Third International Academic Conference on Human Security, Human Security Research Center (HSRC), Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, November 4–5.

Reference list entry:

(Korać 2016)

### **Book review**

Reference list entry:

Firchow, Pamina. 2020. “Measuring Peace: Principles, Practices and Politics”, Review of *Measuring Peace*, by Richard Caplan. *International Peacekeeping* 27 (2): 337–338.

Reference list entry:

(Firchow 2020, 337)

### **Legal and official documents**

#### ***International treaties***

Reference list entry:

[PTBT] Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water. 1963. Signed by US, UK, and USSR, August 5. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20480/volume-480-I-6964-English.pdf>.

[TFEU] Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. 2012. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 326, October 26. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN>.

[UN Charter] Charter of the United Nations, October 24, 1945. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/introductory-note/index.html>.

In-text citation:

(PTBT 1963, Article III, para. 3)

(TFEU 2012, Article 87)

(UN Charter, Chapter X)

### ***UN documents***

Reference list entry:

[UNSC] UN Security Council. Resolution 2222, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, S/RES/2222. May 27, 2015. <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2015.shtml>.

[UNGA] UN General Assembly. Resolution 67/18, Education for Democracy, A/RES/67/18. November 28, 2012. <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/RES/67/18>.

In-text citation:

(UNSC Res. 2222)

(UNGA Res. 67/18)

### ***National legislation***

Reference list entry:

[Constitution RS] Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. 2006. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 98/2006.

Homeland Security Act. 2002. United States of America, 107th Congress, 2nd Session (November 25). [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/hr\\_5005\\_enr.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/hr_5005_enr.pdf).

In-text citation:

(Constitution RS 2006, Article 111)

(Homeland Security Act 2002)

### ***Official reports***

Reference list entry:

[YILC] Yearbook of the International Law Commission. 2014. Vol. 2, Part Two. [https://legal.un.org/docs/?path=../ilc/publications/yearbooks/english/ilc\\_2014\\_v2\\_p2.pdf&lang=ES](https://legal.un.org/docs/?path=../ilc/publications/yearbooks/english/ilc_2014_v2_p2.pdf&lang=ES).

[The 9-11 Commission] U.S. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. 2004. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Government Publication Office.

US Congress. 1993. Nomination of R. James Woolsey to be Director of Central Intelligence: Hearing Before the Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate. 104th Congress, 1st session, February 2–3, 1993. <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/hearings/103296.pdf>.

[USAFH] United States Air Force Headquarters. 2014. United States Air Force RPA Vector: Vision and Enabling Concepts: 2013–2038. [www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/news/USAFRPAVectorVisionandEnablingConcepts2013-2038.pdf](http://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/news/USAFRPAVectorVisionandEnablingConcepts2013-2038.pdf).

In-text citation:

(YILC 2014, 321)

(The 9-11 Commission 2004, 437)

(US Congress 1993, 125)

(USAFH 2014)

### ***EU legislation***

Reference list entry:

Regulation (EU) No. 1052/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 establishing the European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 295, 6 November 2013. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1052&from=EN>.

[EC] European Commission. 2010. The EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five steps towards a more secure Europe, COM(2010) 673 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, November 22. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0673&from=GA>.

Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing

Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Directive 2006/70/EC (Text with EEA relevance), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 141, 5 June 2015. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015L0849 &from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015L0849&from=EN).

In-text citation:

(Regulation [EU] No. 1052/2013, Article 11, para. 4)

(EC COM[2010] 673 final)

(Directive [EU] 2015/849)

### ***Decisions of international courts and tribunals***

Reference list entry:

[ICJ] International Court of Justice. Accordance with the International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo, Advisory Opinion, 22 July 2010, ICJ Reports. <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/141/141-20100722-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>.

[ICJ Order 1999] *Legality of Use of Force (Yugoslavia v. United Kingdom)*. International Court of Justice, Order ICJ Rep. 1999 (June 2). <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/113/113-19990602-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>.

[ICTY Indictment IT-98-32-A] *Prosecutor v. Vasiljevic*, Case No. IT-98-32-A. International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Indictment, 30 October 2000. <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/vasiljevic/ind/en/vasonly-ii000125e.pdf>.

*Costa v Ente Nazionale per l'Energia Elettrica*, Case 6/64, [1964] ECR 585. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A61964CJ0006>.

[CJEU Judgment T-289/15] *Hamas v Council*, Case T-289/15. Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment, 6 March 2019, ECLI:EU: T:2019:138. <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/documents.jsf?language=EN&critereEcli=ECLI:EU:T:2019:138>

[Opinion of AG Bobek] *Région de Bruxelles-Capitale v Commission*, Case C-352/19 P. Court of Justice of the European Union. Opinion of Advocate General Bobek delivered on 16 July 2020(1), ECLI:EU:C:2020:588. <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?jsessionid=485A5D9AC129179D3D2F2.EC571A384CD?text=&docid=228708&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&oc=first&part=1&cid=5064004>.

In-text citation:

(ICJ Advisory Opinion 2010, 411)

(ICJ Order 1999, para. 3)

(ICTY Indictment IT-98-32-A)

(*Costa v ENEL*)

(CJEU Judgment T-289/15, para. 23)

(Opinion of AG Bobek C-352/19 P)

### **Newspapers and magazines**

Reference list entry:

Gibbs, Samuel. 2017. "Elon Musk leads 116 experts calling for outright ban of killer robots", *The Guardian*, August 20.

Power, Matthew. 2013. "Confessions of a Drone Warrior", *GQ*, October 22. <https://www.gq.com/story/drone-uav-pilot-assassination>.

*Economist*. 2015. "Who will fight the next war?" October 24. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2015/10/24/who-will-fight-the-next-war>.

In-text citation:

(Gibbs 2017, A10)

(Power 2013)

(*Economist* 2015)

### **Audio and visual media**

Reference list entry:

Scott, Ridley. [1982] 2007. *Blade Runner: The Final Cut*. Directed by Ridley Scott. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Blue-Ray disc, 117 min.

*Future Weapons*. 2019. Waddell Media. Aired on August 7–16 on Discovery Science HD, 3 seasons, 30 episodes (43 min. each). <https://go.discovery.com/tv-shows/future-weapons/>.

Tech Legend. 2020. "Best Drones 2020 – Top 8 Best Drone with Cameras to Buy in 2020". Uploaded on February 7, 2020. YouTube video, 27:20 min. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6\\_4JU5Mspw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6_4JU5Mspw).

In-text citation:

(Scott [1982] 2007)

(Future Weapons 2019)

(Tech Legend 2020)

## Social media

Reference list entry:

National Library of Australia. 2020. "National Library of Australia's Facebook Page". Facebook, August 1, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/National.Library.of.Australia/>.

Kruszelnicki, Karl (@DoctorKarl). 2017. "Dr Karl Twitter post." Twitter, February 19, 2017, 9:34 a.m. <https://twitter.com/DoctorKarl>.

Trapara, Vladimir. 2018. "Victory or nil". *Unwrapping the Essence* (blog). May 29, 2018. <https://unwrappingtheessence.weebly.com/blog/pobeda-ili-nista>.

In-text citation:

(National Library of Australia 2020)

(Kruszelnicki 2017)

(Trapara 2018)

## Doctoral dissertation

Reference list entry:

Rohrbach, Livia. 2020. *Beyond intractability? Territorial solutions to self-determination conflicts*. Doctoral dissertation. Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen.

In-text citation:

(Rohrbach 2020)

## Internet source

If citing an undated online document, give an access date and use the year of access as year of publication.

Reference list entry:

Oxford Library. 2012. "Library Strategy". Oxford Library. Accessed 3 June 2012. <http://www.ol.org/library/strategy.html>.

Google Maps. 2015. "The British Library, London, UK". *Google*. Accessed February 5, 2015. <https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/The+British+Library/@51.529972,-0.127676,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x48761b3b70171395:0x18905479de0fdb25>.

IIPE [Institute of International Politics and Economics]. n.d. "Mission". Accessed August 1, 2020. <https://www.diplomacy.bg.ac.rs/en/mission/>.

In-text citation:

(Oxford Library 2012)

(Google Maps 2015)

(IIPE n.d.)

### **Personal communication (letter, emails, telephone conversation)**

Personal communications include conversations, interviews, lecture material, telephone conversations, letters and e-mail messages. Place references to personal communications such as letters and conversations within the running text and not as formal end references, because they do not contain recoverable data:

... as mentioned in an e-mail to me from Dr Slobodan Jankovic, December 10, 2019 ...

When in published collections, letters are cited by date of the collection, with individual correspondence dates given in the text:

In a letter to Mary Louise Green from University of Belgrade, May 13, 2017 (Green 2012, 34), ...

### **Secondary source**

If you read an article or book which cites or quotes some information that you want to use, always refer to both the original source and the source where you found the information:

In-text citation:

In his 1975 book *Power* [Macht], Luhmann bases his understanding of power mainly on the social exchange and community power literature (cited in Guzzini 2013, 79).

Reference list entry:

Guzzini, Stefano. 2013. *Power, realism, and constructivism*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

## **TABLES, FIGURES AND GEOGRAPHICAL MAPS**

It is necessary to give their number and full title – e.g. *Table 1: Human Development Index among EU members* or *Figure 2: State-Building or Sovereignty Strategy* or *Map 1: Maritime jurisdiction and boundaries in the Arctic region*.

It is particularly important that you have been given written permission to use any tables, figures, and geographical maps you are reproducing from another source before you submit manuscript.

## **REFERENCE LIST**

The list of references should only include works that are cited in the text, tables, figure legend, and footnotes, and that have been published or accepted for publication.

Personal communications and unpublished works should only be mentioned in the text. Do not use footnotes or endnotes as a substitute for a reference list.

Reference list entries should be alphabetised by the last name of author or editor. If no author/editor, order by title.

If the reference list contains two or more items by the same author in the same year, add a, b, etc. and list them alphabetically by title of the work:

Gregory, Derek. 2014a. "Drone Geographies". *Radical Philosophy* RP 183: 7–19.

Gregory, Derek. 2014b. "The Everywhere War". *The Geographical Journal* 177 (3): 238–250.

**Manuscripts that do not comply with the above-mentioned guidelines will not be taken into consideration for reviewing process.**

Editorial Board

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији  
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

327

The REVIEW of International Affairs  
/ editor-in-chief Nenad Stekić. - Vol. 1,  
no. 1 (1950)- . - Belgrade : Institute of  
International Politics and Economics, 1950-  
(Beograd : Donat graf). - 24 cm

Tri puta godišnje.  
ISSN 0486-6096 = Review of International Affairs

COBISS.SR-ID 3154178

# SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

From the  
**INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND ECONOMICS**  
(all publications in Serbian unless otherwise noted)

## JOURNALS:

*The Review of International Affairs*

A scholarly journal of international relations  
Published in English

*Međunarodni problemi/International problems*

A scholarly journal in English and Serbian

*Međunarodna politika*

A scholarly journal of international relations  
Published in Serbian and English

*Evropsko zakonodavstvo*

A scholarly journal for European Union law  
Published in Serbian

## BOOKS:

*Harvesting the winds of change: China and the global actors*, Volume I, Aleksandar Mitić, Katarina Zakić (Eds.), Volume II, hard cover, 2024, 506 p.

*Harvesting the winds of change: China and the global actors*, Volume II, Aleksandar Mitić, Katarina Zakić (Eds.), Volume II, hard cover, 2024, 546 p.

*Дуг одјек 1999.*, Јекатерина Ентина (ур.), 2024, броширано, 242 стр.

Јелица Горданић, *Невладине организације у међународном праву*, броширано, 2024, 282 стр.

Невена Станковић, *Србија и Европска унија: спољнополитичке дилеме, ограничења, импликације – Поглавља 35 и 31*, броширано, 2024, 218 стр.

*Геостратегија Индо-Пацифика: велики полигон глобалног сучељавања*, Небојша Вуковић, Михајло Копања (ур.), броширано, 2024, 308 стр.

Александар Јазих, *Основни инструменти цивилне заштите Европске уније: тренутно стање и изазови*, 2024, 142 стр.

Марина Костић Шулејић, *Војна неутралност и нуклеарно оружје – између поседовања и забране*, броширано, 2024, 247 стр.

Данило Бабић, *Јагма за Подсахарску Африку у XX и XXI веку*, тврд повез, 2024, 518 стр.

*Global security and international relations after the*

*escalation of the Ukrainian crisis*, Dušan Proroković, Paolo Sellari, Rich Mifsud (Eds.), тврд повез, 2024, 618 стр.

Сања Јелисавац Трошић, *Динамика развоја интелектуалне својине у међународним економским односима*, броширано, 2023, 180 стр.

Жаклина Новичић, *Сукоб националног и над-националног у Европској унији: уставни идентитети*, броширано, 2023, 120 стр.

Митко Арнауодов, *Отворени Балкан – економска интеграција између политичких и безбедносних размимоилажења*, броширано, 2023, 170 стр.

Nenad Stekić, *A Hesitant Hegemon: Layers of China's Contemporary Security Policy*, paperback, 2023, 278 p.

Владимир Трапара, *Русија и Украјина: порекло једне трагедије*, броширано, 2023, 310 стр.

*Eurasian Security After NATO*, Dušan Proroković, Ekaterina Entina (Eds.), paperback, 2023, 316 p.

Dragan Petrović, *Politika Francuske Republike u jugoslovenskoj krizi 1990–2001.*, broširano, 2023, 544 str.

Наташа Станојевић, Катарина Закић, *Економски успон Кине – стратегије и динамика међународних економских односа*, броширано, 2023, 524 стр.

Милош Петровић, Маја Ковачевић, Ивана Радић Милосављевић, *Србија и Европска унија две деценије након Солунског самита*, броширано, 2023, 428 стр.

Александар Јанковић, *Глобализација 2.0 – ка другом веку НР Кине*, броширано, 2023, 252 стр.

*Rat у Украјини: оно што знамо и оно што не знамо*, Небојша Вуковић, Михајло Копања (ур.), броширано, 2023, 270 стр.

Драгољуб Тодић, Михајло Вучић, *Природни ресурси: између права и конфликта*, броширано, 2022, 316 стр.

Драган Петровић, *Украјинска криза и украјинско-руски сукоб*, броширано, 2022, 164 стр.

Михајло Вучић, *Слобода изражавања и историјски злочини*, броширано, 2022, 178 стр.