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THREATS

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES ON A CHANGING STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

THIBAULT MUZERGUES AND ROMAIN LE QUINIOU

The Transatlantic space in general, and Europe in particular, woke up to a sad new reality when Russia launched its large-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. With war back on the European continent, the time was right for *Zeitenwende,* an epochal turning point, as Chancellor Olaf Scholtz put it. Of course, beyond the strategic surprise that such violence can cause (the shock and awe that is a key component of psychological warfare), the return of war should not have been a shock for Europeans. As co-editor of this publication Thibault Muzergues pointed out in a recent book written before the invasion, war had already started crawling back into Europe long before 2022.[1] In fact, although many Europeans had forgotten it, violent conflict had never really left Europe as a geographical entity in the past thirty years.

The wars in the Balkans (1991-1999), Nagorno-Karabakh (1992 and 2021), Transnistria (1992), Georgia (1992-1993 and 2008), the invasion of Crimea and Russia's war in the Donbass (2014-present) all show that even though it had a local character, war actually continued to rage in Europe almost continuously after the Cold War. War was there, but most Europeans looked away, perhaps in some cases because the fighting was going on too far away from the centers of decisions, in places that most decision-makers knew too little - but perhaps also because they were considered as vestiges of a time gone by, and hindrances to cashing in on the dividends of peace. The fact that European (and Transatlantic) leaders considered peace on the continent a mission accomplished and did little to prepare for the return of war in Europe is likely to go down as one of the major mistakes of early 21st century European thinking.

Mistakes and regrets notwithstanding, what European and Transatlantic planners need to do most urgently is to adapt to a new geopolitical situation. For the second phase of the war in Ukraine (which started in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the undercover invasion of the Donbass) represents a turning point for the security of Europe. In fact, it colors the way regional security is perceived on both sides of the Atlantic. This is particularly true for several European Union Member States that until the very end refused to see Russia's build-up for what it really was. Furthermore, the relatively low levels of ammunition that

are actually available for export to Ukraine compared to the extremely high needs of the Ukrainian military, show how ill-prepared Europeans and Americans were for a prolonged high-intensity conflict over a large part of the Eurasian mainland.

Today, Europeans have woken up to the realities of a largely deteriorated strategic environment, where rivals and events are more threatening than at any time since the end of the Cold War. That being said, those threats and problems are not only coming from Russia: the ever-increasing territorialization of the Eastern Mediterranean is another major problem for European security, and although it is made worse by Russia's war in Ukraine, it involves many different actors and raises many issues for Europe and NATO beyond the recognition of borders and the exploitation of gas reserves.

European leaders are thus facing a major challenge: fixing multiple strategic deficiencies in the face of ever-increasing threats. In reaction, European Union Member States have moved quickly to isolate Russia, reorganized their energy supplies at risk of disruption and political unrest, and opened concrete discussions – leading to equally concrete decisions – reevaluating their defense and security strategies and capacities. For Europe, there will assuredly be a clear historical divide between the times before and after the February 2022 Russian invasion. And the after will undoubtedly be a more unpredictable, more dangerous geopolitical future for Europe but also for the Transatlantic community, with war no longer impossible, and geopolitical tensions right at the alliance's borders (if not within these borders).

A year after the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there are reasons for Europeans and North Americans to be satisfied with the short-term reactions of their Transatlantic allies. Russia's invasion led to an immediate, strong, and efficient response, particularly in terms of military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, financial sanctions against Russia and, on the European side, an unprecedented move to disentangle the EU's market from its dependence on Russian gas. The fact that, beyond the occasional hiccup, these decisions were made almost unanimously underscore the born-again

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1.   See Thibault Muzergues, War in Europe? From Impossible War to Improbable Peace, London: Routledge, 2022. The original version, in French, was published in the late spring of 2021.

unity of the Transatlantic alliance, which French President Emmanuel Macron had called "brain-dead" just three years earlier. However, after more than a year of conflict, these encouraging steps should not fool Transatlantic leaders; ensuring NATO's long-term support to Ukraine will remain a continuous challenge, and the alliance will face numerous headwinds. These range from energy security to migration crises to the reaction of Western citizens to the financial burden of the conflict to the risk of compassion fatigue (which Vladimir Putin is betting on, if not to win the war, then at least not to lose it).

But as important as it is, unity over the war in Ukraine is only one of the challenges faced by the Transatlantic alliance in the short- and long-term. In fact, Europe and the United States face a global geostrategic environment that has been almost constantly deteriorating for the past 20 years. The challenges are many: not only must Western allies join forces to face aggressive behavior from authoritarian states challenging democracy and the rules-based international order, they also need to worry about power vacuums on their south and southeastern flanks. These could spawn polities such as the so-called Islamic State – and the threats would pose a totally different set of challenges from the war in Ukraine, as France's struggles in the Sahel and America's in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown. It is one thing to make war on an enemy that uses mainly a regular army to occupy territories, quite another to face irregulars who can withdraw from battle and hide within the civilian population.[2] Furthermore, the migration triggered by war, climate, economic, and demographic change will likely become a recurring problem for the West, as will be the question of re-organizing supply lines and energy routes in the context of increasing decoupling (if not outright de-globalization) of the world economy. Facing these and many other questions implies to develop a common understanding between allies of what these challenges actually are, and priorities will need to be set to design a common and proactive strategy involving shared initiatives and capacities.

This perception of challenges and even threats differs from actor to actor within the Atlantic alliance, and disagreements over the prioritization (and sometimes even the very existence) of potential confrontations will persist among Western allies. This is normal. Whether taken as a cultural unit (Europe and North America) or as a larger economic one, based on shared values (Europe, North America, and the Pacific Rim), the collective West represents a very large polity, and a different geography naturally leads to different perceptions of priorities. Indeed, people view the world and their environment very differently, even within states. To take one edifying example, in the case of Italy, a state that had to create a full diplomatic doctrine out of the many political traditions that had stemmed from the myriad of states and city-states that dotted the peninsula in the millennium and a half before unification, the outside world looks very different depending on whether one lives in Sicily, facing North Africa, or in Puglia, where separation from Albania is only a few hundred miles, or in Turin, where businesses look to France and Germany, or in the northeast around Trieste, where economic opportunities come more from the East and North East. That does not mean that these perceptions are irreconcilable, as Italy's rich history shows, but in the case of the *bel paese,* it helps to have a centralized administration seated in Rome's Farnesina building to make a coherent whole out of very different regional strategic interests. In the absence of such a centralized administration for the Transatlantic world, divisions between allies over the strategic priorities of the alliance and on ways to best act together will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. And if these challenges are not addressed – or at least admitted, they may become dangerous strategic divergences for the future of the alliance.

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2. See Jakub J. Grygiel, Return of the Barbarians, Confronting Non-State Actors from Ancient Rome to the Present, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018

In fact, the issue of threat perception is closely linked to those long-term debates that can at times weaken the alliance (at least when they are not addressed), such as the complementarity (or not) of NATO and EU initiatives in security and foreign policy, geographical priorities, or the long-time issue of better sharing the financial burden of Europe's defense within the alliance. All these have been issues within NATO almost from day one, and while it is unlikely that they will be resolved any time soon, they can be mitigated by a stronger transatlantic dialogue.

Understanding the nature of the divergences that threaten the cohesion of the alliance is key to lessening the risk of division. While some divergences are cyclical, due to limitations in material, human, financial, and technological capacities, or the particular positioning of national elites, many others are structural. Geography is one of them, but so are historical memory, political culture, and even civil-military relations and the dominant strategic culture(s) inside given states. And strategic culture, which is not strictly limited to the few elements mentioned here, is central in determining the threat perceptions of a particular state.

But while they are structural, strategic culture divergences are not insurmountable, as the constant evolution of NATO since 1947 (and indeed, its persistence beyond the Cold War) indicates. As such, changes in the perception of geopolitical threats are possible over time – and they can allow for strategic convergence between allies. Such results can be obtained through immediate responses to specific external developments viewed as turning points (9/11 or Russia's invasion of Ukraine come to mind), but

they remain impossible without intensive and engaging dialogue between stakeholders. One concrete example is the threat perception convergence towards Russia over the past few years, which has accelerated (rather than changed) after February 2022.

In general, political and diplomatic circles have not sufficiently discussed differences in threat perception within the Transatlantic alliance in the past few decades. As a result, strategic cohesion within the Transatlantic space has taken shape too slowly – or has not moved at all on several important topics and challenges – and left the alliance with worrying strategic loopholes, which undermine the West's capacity to address critical challenges.

The objective of this publication is to engage in discussion on the differences in threat perception across the Transatlantic alliance. By compiling seven different case studies (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Greece, and Sweden) carefully selected according to their geographical environment, size, and geostrategic roles, this publication identifies strategic divergences while stimulating discussion on the ways to strengthen strategic unity between allies. By presenting these different case studies in one unique publication and allowing the reader to not only recognize differences, but also to link the dots that could bring allies together, we hope that it will be a useful instrument in NATO circles and beyond, to think together about the threats and challenges the alliance collectively faces in the coming years and decades.

FRANCE

01

EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN A SHAKEN WORLD ORDER: A FRENCH PERSPECTIVE

DOMINIQUE D'HERBIGNY AND CHRISTOPHE CAYRON

France actively supports and promotes the idea of European strategic autonomy. President Emmanuel Macron has mentioned European autonomy several times since 2017, especially in his speech on the French defense and deterrence strategy last February. If Macron's intensive use of the phrase is relatively recent, the concept is quite ancient in France's foreign policy and defense approach. This is unsurprising, as strategic autonomy corresponds both to a political option and a practical necessity.

As an option, the concept of strategic autonomy reflects French ambitions for a united Europe, and it is rooted in the threefold traumatic experience France went through during the 20th century. These were the limits of the interwar European security architecture, during which France often felt isolated in the face of the threat represented by Nazi Germany; the debacle of May-June 1940, which resulted in a four-year-long occupation and Vichy's political collaboration with Hitler; and the 1956 Suez Canal operation which led France to conclude that pursuing an independent nuclear deterrence was the only way to ensure its vital interests could be defended. These experiences informed the French preference for a defense and security policy organized in concentric circles: a national, strictly defensive and sufficient nuclear deterrence combined with significant conventional forces; a collective defense that relies on NATO; and a European defense built around comprehensive European political and economic solidarity.

As a necessity, strategic autonomy is linked to an American, rather than a French concept: burden sharing. Some would argue that Europeans do not need more autonomy in order to contribute more. But this is shortsighted; most European allies are also members of the EU and the efforts they consent to inside the autonomous framework undoubtedly benefit the alliance. Additionally, dependence on U.S. capacities and leadership has disincentivized many allies, especially since the end of the Cold War, because they were never held accountable for their responsibilities by NATO when arbitrating in favor of other public expenditures against defense spending. Finally, the classic European-centered, burden-sharing discussion during the Cold War does not have the same implications in the context of the U.S. pivot toward Asia and the Pacific.

The French vision of European strategic autonomy has been shaped by this history, but it has also been strongly influenced by the current strategic context. In a world of growing geostrategic competition, the EU must increase its resilience and its capacity to act on the international stage to promote Western interests and values, and to shape international cooperation and the multilateral order.

Three main paradigm shifts in the hardening strategic context can be identified: The first is a strategic shift outlining a global uninhibited great-power competition, with blurred lines between competition and confrontation generating risks and undermining security and stability. The EU's strategic environment has deteriorated sharply over the past decade. Crises endure and a broad variety of military as well as non-military threats have materialized, while the balance of power shifts and international security architecture is torn down at an accelerating pace.

This evolution occurred because of three main trends:

1. The perception, at least until Russia's war against Ukraine, of the risk of U.S. disengagement or withdrawal from Europe and Eurasian affairs. This started with President Obama's decision not to intervene in Syria and not respond appropriately to Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and continued under the Trump and Biden administrations, as we saw with the former's rhetoric against both NATO and EU as well as the withdrawal from Afghanistan;

2. More ambiguity and assertiveness by competitors in our neighborhood and beyond, with a new offensive posture from Russia, China and, to a lesser extent, Turkey, of which the re-invasion of Ukraine by Russia is the most recent and brutal illustration. The international order, not only the post-Cold War order, but also the 1945 order, is threatened as we are faced with the consequences of Russia's behavior and the shadow of totalitarian Soviet mentality. Putin stated it openly in his Valdai speech of October 2014 ("The world order: new rules or a game without rules?").

3. Cross-cutting threats or challenges on a new scale, be it terrorism, mass migration, or the COVID pandemic. The fusion of military and non-military instruments represents a pervasive and continued challenge to France's founding values, our shared security interests, and our political and economic systems, affecting our societies. The return of great power competition combined with the development of greater military capabilities by emerging powers (Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea) – including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction their means of delivery – poses a significant challenge to our security.

Second, the crisis of multilateralism and the regression of law caused by a new balance of power and assertive postures has sparked a political and legal paradigm shift, as mentioned above. The vision, norms, and instruments developed since the end of the Cold War, including robust peacebuilding interventions, the responsibility to protect (R2P), and the International Criminal Court have been increasingly challenged and, as a result, have effectively receded. The UN, starting with the Security Council, has been increasingly blocked and impeded, sometimes by strategic competitors, and universal multilateral bodies are being hampered by China, as we saw with the COVID pandemic in the World Health Organization, and by Russia with its behavior at UNESCO or UNICEF since the beginning of its war against Ukraine. Regional organizations like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) face the same problems. Even more coherent organizations like NATO or the EU (regardless of Brexit)

have experienced greater difficulties in showing unity and credibility, not least because of a reluctance on the part of member states to entrust them with more power. The EU is economically and militarily powerful, yet in comparison with the U.S., disunited.

Third, and finally, a technological paradigm shift serves as a catalyst for other strategic changes and trends by increasing uncertainty and possibly disrupting long-standing balances. The intensifying technological competition now extending to all fields and in new domains (outer space, AI, and cyber) has a direct impact on our military priorities and potentially on our daily lives. Europe's sovereignty is therefore at stake if investments in critical technology remain low or are scattered nationally and uncoordinated. In terms of defense, as in other fields, no single European country can face a constantly deteriorating security environment alone.

All of these trends and divisions were identified in the 2017 French national strategic review and its 2021 update. They have been confirmed and even amplified ever since. The series of shocks we've recently been through and the post-Russian invasion of Ukraine only confirmed in French eyes the need for Europe to progress toward strategic autonomy. The third chapter of the 2017 strategic review, under the title *Building European Strategic Autonomy* presented four very clear headings: Emerging European Security Threats, Pragmatically Strengthening European Common Security and Defense Policy; NATO: A Key Component of European Security, and "A New Approach to Defense Cooperation."

France Military Budget
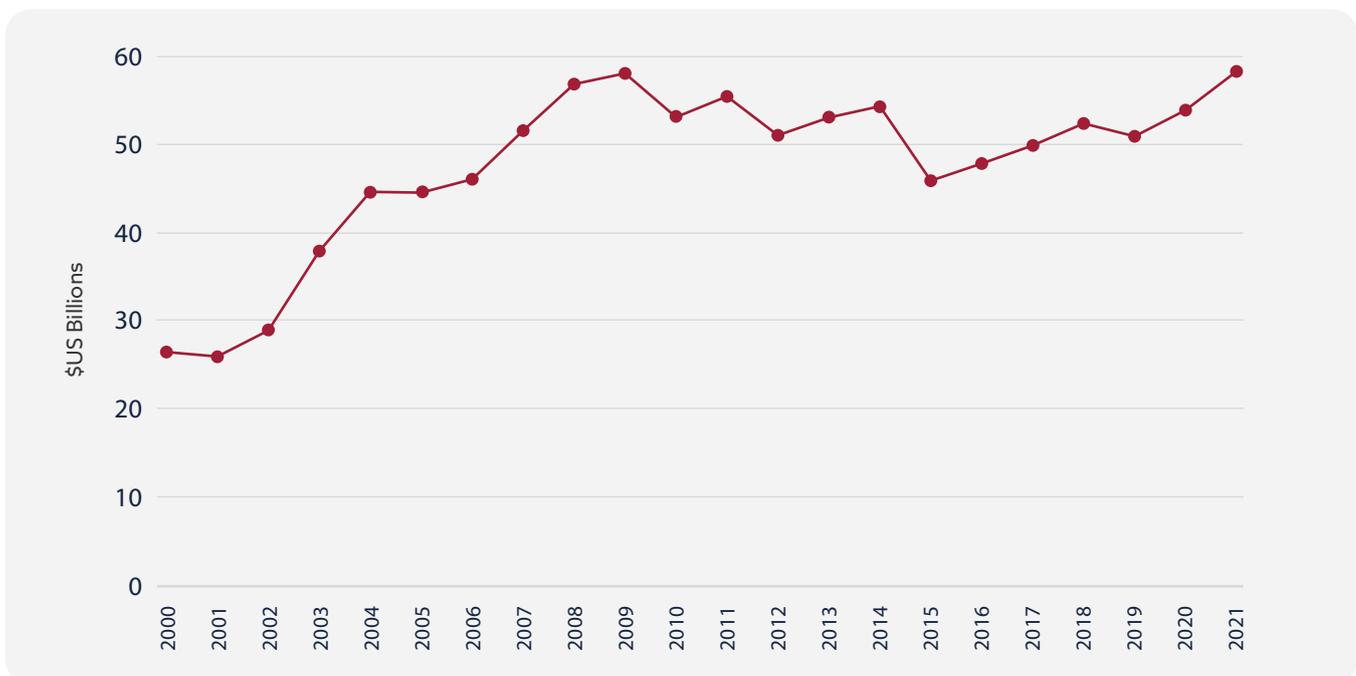
What is the French vision of strategic autonomy? France is advocating for Europeans to anticipate and be capable of having their own assessment of their strategic environment and act accordingly. This goes hand in hand with the notion of European sovereignty, by which we mean the capacity for Europeans to decide their own strategic, technological, digital, or economic future. Europeans need to take better control over their collective destiny. No one will do that for them. In other words, European sovereignty is what we need to protect and guarantee our security, and it should not be artificially opposed to our commitments as allies. Building Europe's strategic autonomy requires Europeans to make the necessary investments to guarantee it, especially in the defense sector and in future technologies, because ultimately, sovereignty has a price. It is the distinction Carl von Clausewitz was making between two types of objectives, *Zweck* and *Ziel*, i.e. the political purpose and the military aim.

Because of this vision, the French belief is that European strategic autonomy and sovereignty can help protect the transatlantic bond and make the Atlantic Alliance stronger, not weaker. In France, EU strategic autonomy and a strong transatlantic relationship are indeed not mutually exclusive. France supports the strengthening of EU defense to benefit a stronger transatlantic bond. Some high-profile opinion makers in allied countries have often (wrongly) suggested that because France likes to single itself out and push for more defense integration in Europe, it has not been a reliable ally since de Gaulle's term and his foreign policy of *grandeur*. History actually shows the opposite. France proved to be both a faithful and capable ally during the Cuban missile crisis (1962), the Berlin crisis (1953-1963), the Euromissile crisis (1983), the Persian Gulf war (1990), and in the Balkans (1999). Since it started back in 1998, the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CDSP) has proven to be less of a challenge than a complement to NATO.

The 2017 strategic review (paragraph 181) reads: "As the instruments of global security and stability are challenged, France must fully commit to rebuilding a collective and multilateral order in collaboration with its allies and partners. From a defense perspective, this *commitment must first focus on Europe, bilateral European cooperation agreements, and the transatlantic relationship.*"[3]

Existing transatlantic interests require a powerful EU, capable both in political and economic terms, especially in defense, of operating jointly with NATO. NATO is and will remain the cornerstone of European collective defense and security. After the messy American withdrawal from Afghanistan, the rise of the Russian threat underlines the importance of a return to basics. France has supported changes to NATO to keep it strong, agile, responsive, and balanced. But NATO is not necessarily equipped to fully respond to all present dynamics. Given the security and military challenges emanating from state

competitors, defense will remain a core dimension of transatlantic cooperation. Given the "new Cold War" with Russia and bearing in mind that, for Western Europe at least and notwithstanding conventional escalation, the threat will most probably remain hybrid, the EU/NATO relationship will be essential and will require a stronger transatlantic economic integration.

Combining NATO hard power and EU soft power efficiently will be key.

First, there is a need to enforce stronger EU/NATO cooperation. EU/NATO cooperation has been increasingly emphasized by Ministers of Foreign Affairs over the years but has not yet materialized. Two joint declarations (in 2016 and 2018) addressed the evolution of our strategic environment on defense capabilities, fighting cyber and hybrid threats, operational cooperation, maritime security, and collective security. These joint declarations call for an efficient, tailored, and collective response based on the added value to the two organizations, but continue to focus on redundant policy issues, which is not always useful. Before the invasion of Ukraine, NATO once more demonstrated its relevance in terms of intelligence sharing, while the EU again showed its formidable soft power by enacting the toughest package of economic sanctions ever taken against an adversary. That said, at this stage, such a complementarity has not yet helped the West successfully control escalation. EU and NATO's responses against Russia's aggressive behavior were both late and weak.

Since Russia's first hybrid invasion of Ukraine in 2014, both organizations have failed to deter Moscow successfully. The West has proved weak against Russia on several occasions. This applies to the 2014-2022 hybrid warfare against Ukraine as well as to cyber and informational attacks against Western democracies beginning in 2016, which mainly targeted U.S., German, French and UK institutions. The decision in 2017 of the then-U.S. administration to provide lethal arms to Ukraine did not correct the dovish stance taken by the EU countries, not least Germany. Such a stance opened increased opportunities for the Kremlin to further meddle in Western political landscapes, destabilize the security situation in Europe and eventually launch a full-fledged conventional attack against Kyiv. Strategic dialogue needs to take place at all levels between the EU and NATO to ensure that both organizations truly capitalize on each other's "hard" and "soft" power to achieve full escalation dominance for the benefit of the West in its standoff against Russia and, potentially, China.

The credibility of NATO deterrence requires that the alliance swiftly integrates EU members Sweden and Finland. They already contribute to the defense of Europe, they offer still greater potential (this, of course, is irrespective of the Kremlin's frequent objections). Furthermore, it is in the interest of both EU and NATO members to offer concrete

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3. See "Defense and National Security Strategic Review," Republique Francaise. Open Repository Base on International Strategic Studies. 2017. pg.56. https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/document/defence-and-national-security-strategic-review-2017.

security assurances to Kyiv as soon as the high-intensity combat ceases in Ukraine. Such security insurances should certainly encompass, mainly from the EU side, increased supplies of high-tech weaponry alongside NATO membership for Ukraine with a view to deterring another aggression.

Second, relaunching transatlantic discussions on trade and investment is indispensable. Such discussions have stalled since 2012-2013, not least because of a very defensive French posture. They ended when U.S. President Donald Trump decided to leave the Paris Climate Accords. President Joseph Biden re-joined in 2021 and, despite previous pledges by President Macron that he would welcome the resumption of trade discussions between the U.S. and the EU, this has not occurred yet except in the field of energy and key technologies the U.S. and EU want to insulate from both China and Russia (so-called friend-shoring trade).

The scope of such discussions should go beyond trade and cover sensitive issues like procurement, investment, and energy. The economic gains of such a transatlantic deal would be huge for both the EU and U.S., if it materializes. That's in addition to unquestionable benefits in terms of international security and geopolitical competition. As early as 2012, when negotiations were ongoing, the EU Commission and the U.S. Trade Representative assessed the potential growth gains as very significant. In the face of fierce geo-economic competition by ruthless actors such as China and, to a lesser extent Russia, deeper economic integration between the EU and the U.S. is of common interest. While the U.S. can deter Beijing militarily, the EU can challenge it economically and politically. Whereas the European military leaders will have to prioritize the Russian threat, American and EU economic power can create a dilemma for China businesses along the new "silk roads." This would require the U.S. and the EU to coordinate investment, energy, and procurement policies with respect to third states. Later, nothing would preclude this bilateral trade instrument from developing into a comprehensive partnership agreement encompassing a security part on, for instance, EU/NATO cooperation.

Building transatlantic coalitions of the willing against state and non-state adversaries will also be important.

In confronting strategic competitors, it will not always be possible for allies to agree on NATO-led high-intensity operations or rely operationally on a bilateral EU/U.S. institutional framework. Instead, on some occasions, ad hoc coalitions will be necessary. Bilateral and even triangular ad hoc arrangements will be necessary with an appropriate command and control system (C2) to jointly plan and conduct military operations. This requires enhanced intelligence cooperation with systematic joint assessment reports, regular exchanges of expert input, common memos, and trends analysis. France could be invited to join the Five Eyes community. There is little doubt that, on military aspects, an integrated C2 component with an intelligence dimension would have better calibrated the joint U.S.-French-British intervention of Syria in 2018. Planners should draw the lessons from past interventions if they want to conduct larger scale operations.

Combating state-sponsored terrorism requires more attention. Depending on the military situation in Ukraine, spillover effects could possibly impact NATO territory, likely without resulting in an open conventional conflict between NATO and Russia. State-sponsored terrorism is another hybrid tool, such as cyberattacks or informational warfare. Long before February 24, and following a sinister tradition dating back to the Soviet Union, Russia-sponsored state terrorism struck Ukraine (not only in occupied territories). The West mostly failed to respond or even put sanctions in place (as, for instance, the absence of proper Western response after the bloody terrorist attack targeting civilians at the Sports Palace in Kharkiv in February 2015).

The 2018 GRU-led chemical attack in Salisbury, England was met with nearly no response by the West with the exception of a few Russian diplomats declared persona non grata. This made Putin think he could operate beyond the hybrid threshold, which he then did, first in Syria and then in Ukraine. This is not unprecedented; Western agencies monitored a similar trend of Soviet-backed cover operations and high-intensity terrorism in Europe in the 70s and 80s, which could re-occur as part of the ongoing confrontation between Russia and NATO, especially if Russia loses. Conventional Western law enforcement institutions are currently poorly equipped to face a sharp increase in state-sponsored terrorism in Europe. Maybe NATO, as part of its deterrence against hybrid attacks, should consider the re-emergence of the latter threat.

There is little doubt that for kinetic operations, in the coming decades, NATO will remain the core of European defense, be it for territorial defense or in support of a coalition of like-minded allies (U.S., France, and U.K. for instance). In cases where neither NATO nor the U.S. are willing to step in, the EU could perform low-to-medium intensity operations. From an intelligence perspective, France will have to continue to rely on its own technical indicators, as well as, whenever possible, sovereign assessment.

But all this will depend on renewed and better-balanced U.S.-Europe relations.

Whether we like it or not, U.S. priorities have evolved. The recently published 2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy identifies China as the "most consequential strategic competitor" and a "pacing challenge."[4] Europeans must make themselves ready for a world in which U.S. guarantees of European security and its consideration of European interests might be less of a given. For France, AUKUS's announcement provides further evidence of this reality: like in Afghanistan only weeks earlier, it came across as a unilateral, uncoordinated statement by the Anglosphere in the Indo-Pacific on the very day the EU published its own vision for the region. It convinced Paris that, with its European partners, France should intensify work toward a stronger European strategic autonomy and engagement, including in Asia.

While insisting on the challenges emanating from the Eastern Mediterranean and Africa, and despite ongoing work on the Asia Pacific, France will, as a result of the invasion of Ukraine, continue to focus on core issues of European security. While Paris and Washington will continue to keep communication channels open with Moscow, France will agree to any strategy aimed at containing Russia, economically and politically. For Paris, the U.S. pivot to Asia and the resulting risk of EU/U.S. strategic decoupling will remain both a concern and an incentive to build a stronger and a more capable EU. France on its own is not capable of simultaneously dedicating military and civilian resources to Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific, and will therefore continue to advocate for the EU's strategic autonomy.

Due to the perception that the U.S. prioritizes Taiwan over Ukraine and that the cost assessment of a direct U.S. intervention in Ukraine confirms the pivot, France will further call for strengthening the EU's CSDP or, at the very least, for a European capacity to prioritize Europe's security interests within NATO. This means that the French will maintain their position that NATO should continue to prioritize the Russian threat over the Chinese threat, bearing in mind that other Western institutions, such as the EU, are better equipped than NATO to face the numerous challenges posed by China. In this context, it is of critical importance for the West that the U.S. continue to support NATO nuclear deterrence.

Currently, the main assets that France brings to the alliance are the expeditionary nature of its armed forces and the resilience of its energy mix. France's main strategic flaws pertain to the challenges of high-intensity warfare against a ruthless strategic competitor such as Russia, as well as recent societal challenges mainly related to perceived economic decline, identity, and mass migration issues.

The first asset France can put at the disposal of the alliance is its ability to contribute effectively to NATO's conventional deterrence, as well as the strength and experience of its military to challenge a strategic competitor. The French armies are also in a position to exhaust and harass the latter's resources on theaters that may be deemed of secondary importance - notably South of the Mediterranean.

France already made a significant contribution to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EfP) in Estonia, Lithuania, and Romania. It will further increase its military footprint in the region as long as the security situation in Eastern Europe continues to deteriorate. However, while providing Kyiv with a limited, yet relatively modern number of military systems, Paris is shying away from any direct NATO involvement in Ukraine and will almost certainly not take any proactive steps in this respect. That said, Paris has the capability and potentially the political will to contribute to challenge the aggressor elsewhere, whether in Western Africa or in the Levant. Paris is dismayed by the behavior of Russia-backed Wagner Group mercenaries in Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Central African Republic, but the phasing out of the Barkhane operation in Africa does not mean the end of French engagement in Western Africa. France will update and further modernize its capacities and indicators in the region. This also holds true for the Levant.

Another asset that France brings to the alliance is that its energy security does not rely on the shipments of fossil fuels by strategic competitors. The French presidency of the EU in the first half of 2022 has played a critical part to ensure that the EU as a whole imposed an oil embargo on Russia and reduced its imports of Russian gas to close to zero as of December 2022 (with the exception of Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia). Paris is determined to transition to renewables. As early as the 1980s and 1990s, Paris substantially diversified its energy sources, with Russian gas making up less than 10 percent of its imports as of 2009. Then, due to long-term contracts signed in 2006-2009, this doubled until 2022, yet remained far below the EU average (around 35 percent) before 24 February 2022. In 2020-2021, Paris publicly criticized the Russian-German pipeline project Nord Stream II, which aimed at increasing Europe's dependency on Russian gas and which did not materialize due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. As a result, the EU will have to rely, at least partially and temporarily, on the import of shale gas and liquid natural gas notably from the U.S. In the long run however, further steps are necessary, such as the development of the Midi-Catalona (Midcat, linking France and Spain) and EastMed pipelines (linking Israeli and Cypriot gas fields to Greece and Italy); and the expansion of renewables, including wind, solar, and nuclear energy with a diversified supply of uranium (originating for France from Niger, Australia, Kazakhstan, and Canada). It is in both French and American national interest to phase out fossil fuels and expand the production of renewables. In this respect, France is lagging far behind Germany, but it is catching up.

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4. See "2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Including the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and the 2022 Missile Defense Review." U.S. Department of Defense. 2022. Pg. 111. https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF.

Total Energy Supply, France

Legend: Coal · Natural gas · Nuclear · Hydro · Wind, solar, etc. · Biofuels and waste · Oil
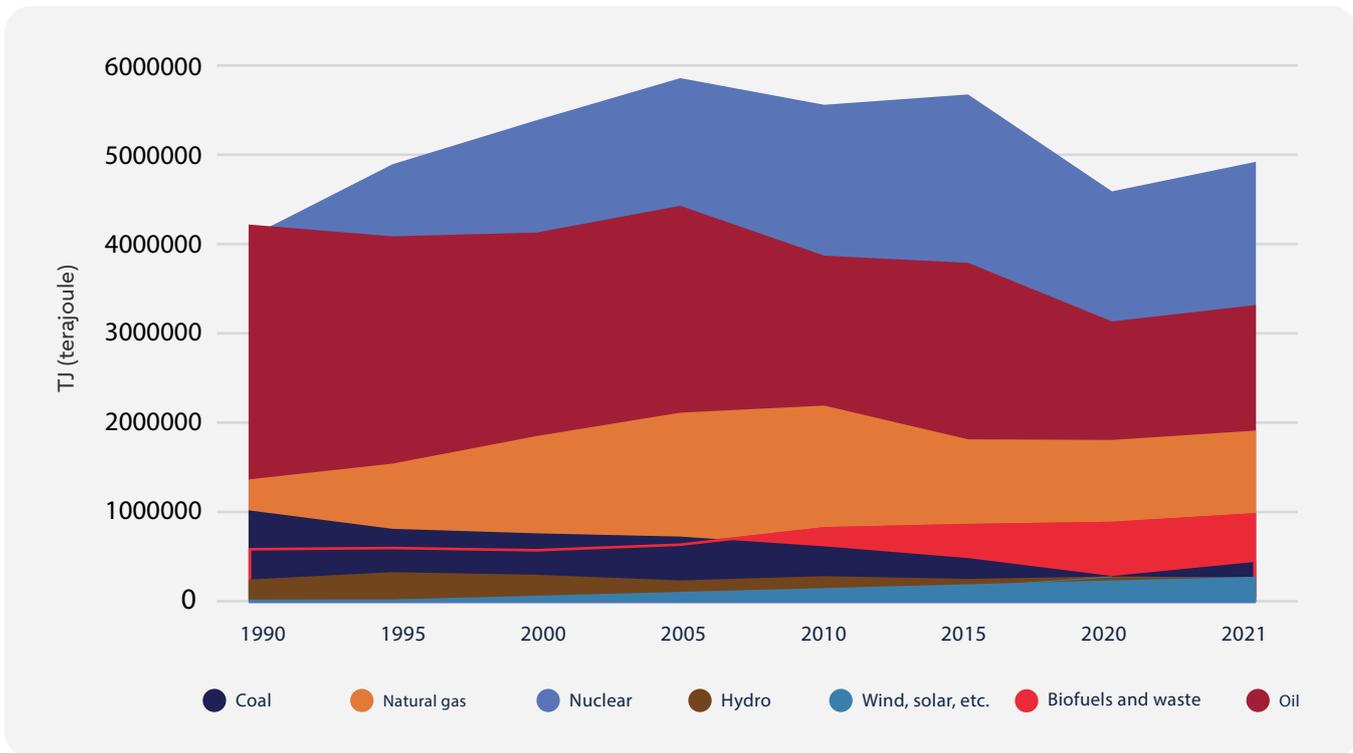
The aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine also underlines the strategic impact of food and agriculture. The supply of grain and other commodities shrank significantly in the first half of 2022 following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, bringing about economic turmoil, food insecurity, and security challenges around the world and especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. One should note that this issue has risen less because of the reduced supply than because of the increased prices which many developing countries cannot afford to pay. That said, the French presidency of the EU prioritized food supply and helped ensure that most of Ukraine's output was shipped via land or Romania's Black Sea ports. Prices took time to decline and have remained high, yet Ukraine's international clients have continued to receive a large part of their imports. It is therefore critical that the EU maintains self-sufficiency and a secure supply in this domain. As highlighted by the COVID crisis, re-localizing and diversifying supply chains and moving strategic industries (cyber, pharmaceuticals, etc.) out of China is important and a common interest for the EU and the U.S.

Turning to weaknesses, the first and obvious challenge pertains to readiness for high-intensity warfare against reckless state competitors. This has been explored by the French Parliament in a recent information report. Since the end of the Cold War, French military capacities have been focused on overseas expeditionary operations, not confronting high-profile adversaries with sophisticated and modern weaponry. Similarly, since the 90s, the French intelligence community has disinvested from Russia and the post-Soviet world and currently has difficulties in recruiting personnel with language and civilizational skills.

The French military continues to adapt its C2 system to a multi-domain combat environment. This is far from being a complete process. Eventually, French society's resilience in the face of high-intensity conflict will be an issue. It has been reported that one reason France could not do more than it did in arming Ukraine was due to the state of its own weapons and ammunition stockpiles and reserves.

Overcoming societal challenges is another necessity. For at least two decades, France has faced a broad variety of societal challenges, which, if they continue not to be met, could weaken the relevance and reliability of the country as an effective ally and partner for the U.S. France is facing economic decline in relative terms, difficulties in implementing key economic reforms, immigration and related identity issues, underfunded education and health systems, among other challenges. Social resentment is exacerbated by radical political groups, on both the right and left fringes, and made worse by information warfare campaigns waged by foreign powers. Three out of the five main candidates running for the recent presidential campaign in France last year were pro-Kremlin.

The EU remains the best way to address these weaknesses. Far from claiming, as some did in the past, that the EU should serve as the continuation of French power by other means, we believe European strategic autonomy will generate more responsibility and better possibilities. No less important than U.S.-enablers, EU access to contested domains (cyber, outer-space and maritime) needs to be an objective of EU efforts, as foreseen in the updated EU strategic reviews.

There is also a strong belief in France that a nimble and able Europe, technologically speaking, is of paramount importance to fortifying both the transatlantic bond and European strategic autonomy. By demonstrating its mastery of emerging and disrupting technologies (EDTs), Europe will become a more capable and credible ally. Reinforcing the transatlantic relationship in the realm of research, development, and innovation is key to maintaining the West's technological edge. First and foremost, we must know what we are talking about when addressing EDTs. They encompass cyber security, 6G, AI, quantum communication and computing, biotechnologies, cloud computing, lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) and space, among other topics.

These technologies will bring changes to the status quo, including accelerating decision-making, improving intelligence gathering and processing, enhancing sustainability and resilience in operations, or developing new systems that can help to achieve operational and strategic superiority, among others. They will also bring new threats, among them a new arms race to EDT capabilities, the destabilization of democracies and public services through disinformation and cyber-attacks, or the uncontrolled escalation following the misuse of EDTs which are often dual capabilities and are not defined by a clear set of rules of engagement between rivals. The debate over what Estonia's answer should be to the massive cyber-attacks that came from Russia and disabled the networks of the country in 2007 is a good example of the dilemmas that actors can be confronted with when attacked through EDTs (which cyber was at the time).

In this context, and to better consider new technologies in the concept of strategic autonomy, France calls for action in several directions:

- Establishing European digital sovereignty based on four pillars: strong security in the European digital environment; the capacity to innovate and secure supply chains to be constantly innovative and not depend on other countries for crucial technologies; the promotion of its standards to become a true normative power; the development and defense of key digital infrastructures.

- Elaborating and deepening essential defense and security tools in order to support regional investment in security and defense so as to keep Europe at the forefront of research and technology; to exchange and establish common standards preserving our ethical, democratic, and commercial interests, as illustrated by the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) or the initiatives undertaken in Artificial Intelligence by actors such as the European AI alliance; to reinforce the European Industrial Base through a dedicated industrial strategy, strengthened European cooperation (via the Permanent Structure Cooperation, or PESCO) and cross-domain synergies between civilian, space, and defense sectors; to modernize European defense capabilities with an increase in defense spending (as has been the case since 2016) and the launch of future combat systems and cutting-edge capabilities (examples include the TWISTER missile defense system project, the Future Combat Air System or FCAS, and the Main Ground Combat System or MGCS). When it comes to military capacities, from an economic and security perspective, Europe should remain a place where weapons systems are produced and exported and where defense industries flourish. In many EU member countries, not least France, defense exports remain an important part of GDP. EU legal and institutional instruments should allow regional defense industries to increase their competitiveness and achieve economies of scale. To ensure that EU defense industries have an incentive to develop and increase their competitiveness, the scope of any transatlantic agreement on trade and investment should exclude at least temporarily defense procurement. EU capacities must be NATO-interoperable, as well as designed for medium and high-intensity operations.

All these aspects are crucial for strategic autonomy and the EU's ability to help ensure the security and defense of Europe, autonomously and with partners. As Fareed Zakaria, a columnist for the Washington Post wrote on March 10, 2022, a few days after the start of the war in Ukraine: "The greatest strategic opportunity lies with Europe, which could use this challenge to stop being the passive international actor it has been for decades. We now see signs that the Europeans are ready to end the era of free security by raising defense spending and securing NATO's eastern border. Germany's remarkable turnaround is a start. If Europe becomes a strategic player on the world stage, that could be the biggest geopolitical shift to emerge from this [Ukraine] war. A U.S. joined by a focused and unified Europe would be a super-alliance in support of liberal values."[5]

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5. See Zakaria, Fareed. "Putin's Invasion Of Ukraine Marks the Beginning Of A Post-American Era." Washington Post. March 10, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/10/why-the-west-cant-let-putin-win-in-ukraine/.

GERMANY

02

GERMANY – A NEW ERA FOR SECURITY AND DEFENSE

THERESA CAROLINE WINTER

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused a global geopolitical shift, which has caught many Europeans (and especially Germans) by surprise. Beyond the initial shock, for NATO and the EU, the reality of a war at their borders has proven to be a unifier and has at least momentarily solved a lingering identity crisis. However, as the war lingers on, old tensions may reappear and unity may prove difficult to maintain in the coming months and years. For Germany, the Russian war of aggression primarily means a fundamental shift in security thinking, necessitating a comprehensive reshaping of its foreign, security and defense as well as economic policies. For the past thirty years, German foreign, security, and defense politics have been defined by so-called "peace dividend policies."

These policies resulted in an abandonment of military conscription and a drastic decrease in personnel, capabilities, and overall defense spending, with the German government focusing on fostering arms control regimes, committing to nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures.[6]

German Military Personnel
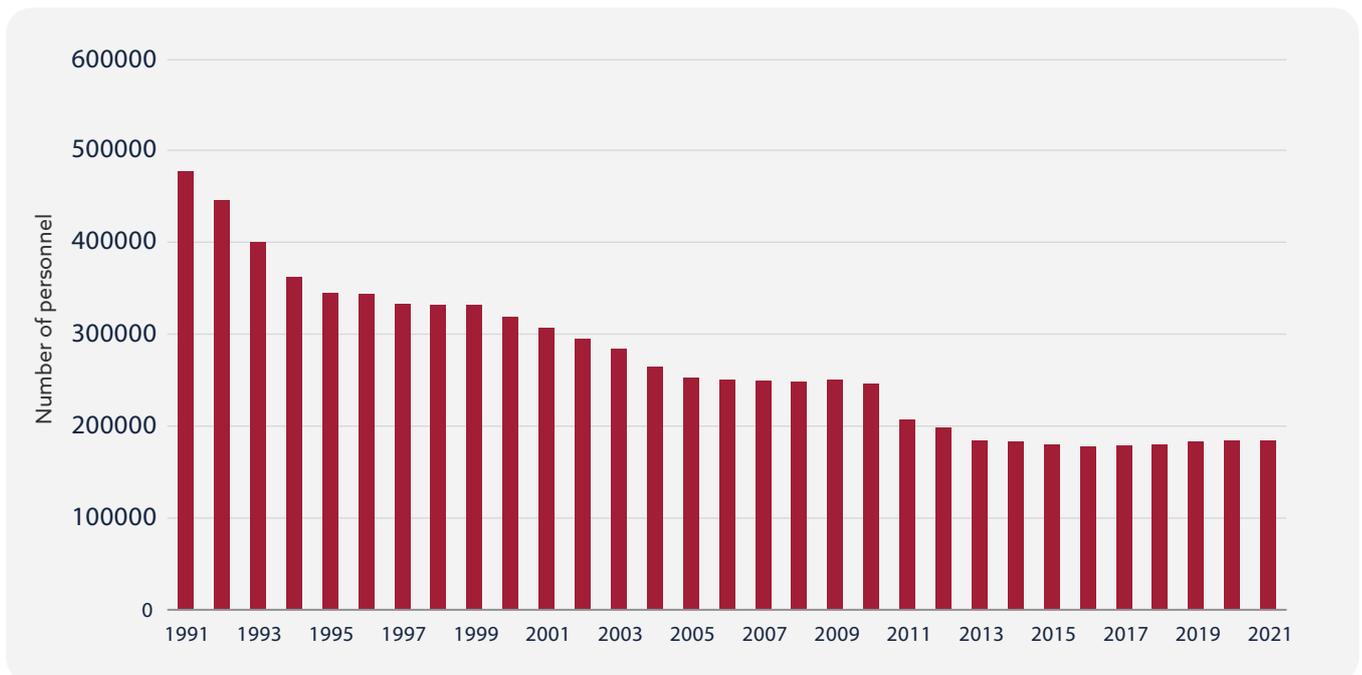
6. Between 1991 and 2021, the troop strength of the German Armed Forces was reduced by more than 70 percent; in 1991, the number of troops of the German Armed Forces was 476,288, compared to 306,087 in 2001, 206,091 in 2011 and 183,725 in 2021. Wehrbeauftragte, 'Unterrichtung durch die Wehrbeauftragte. Jahresbericht 2021 (63. Bericht), Bundestag, Berlin, Bundestag, 2022, p. 152, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/009/2000900.pdf, (accessed 16 March 2022). The expenditure in the German federal budget for the Federal Ministry of Defence decreased to 32.81 billion Euro in 2013. However, since 2014 it has steadily increased, to 46.93 billion in 2021.
    Statista Research Department, 'Ausgaben im deutschen Bundeshaushalt für das Bundesministerium der Verteidigungs von 2012 bis 2020 und Planung für 2021 statista, 2022, https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/809435/umfrage/ausgaben-im-haushalt-des-ministeriums-fuer-verteidigung/, (accessed 16 March 2022). German military expenditure measured in GDP decreased from 1.5 percent in 1995 to 1.2 percent in 2011. Lowest in the years 2014 to 2017, it rose to 1.4 percent in 2021. Statista Research Department, 'Anteil der Militärausgaben am Bruttoinlandsprodukt (BIP) in Deutschland von 1995 bis 2020 ', statista, 2022, https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/183106/umfrage/anteil-der-militaerausgaben-am-bip-in-deutschland/, (accessed 16 March 2022).

In direct response to the military invasion of Ukraine, the German government announced a *Zeitenwende* (a 'turn of eras') in its security politics.[7] This entails a significant increase in defense spending to mend existing capability gaps and ensure adherence to commitments made to NATO, such as nuclear deterrence and air defense, as well as the overall percentage of defense spending measured against gross domestic product (GDP). Chancellor Olaf Scholz made a swift decision on hitherto politically sensitive topics such as the decade-long debate about the arming of drones and the replacement of Germany's nuclear-capable fighter jets. From political foundations to think tanks and civil society organizations, the discourse on security has found new momentum, bringing even highly specialized topics, such as the taxonomy of weapon systems, into large parts of society.

Post-World War II Germany strongly believes in and commits to multilateralism and partnership. Alliances, first and foremost with NATO, form the bedrock of German security and defense policy. All decisions on military equipment and capability development are aligned with NATO's requirements and strategy. At the same time, collective European efforts to consolidate defense spending and capability development are also increasingly shaping spending decisions, although they are subordinate to NATO objectives. The Russian invasion of Ukraine led to a vigorous rethink of security in Germany, reassessing its own capabilities and refocusing on territorial defense. However, it did not lead to more nationalism or protectionism in Germany; any decisions related to German military capabilities or to German weapon deliveries to Ukraine are made in close coordination with NATO partners. In fact, German Chancellor Scholz repeatedly argued he did not want a German *Alleingang*, a national solo effort, when it comes to sending military aid to Ukraine.

This reasoning exasperated numerous partners, especially Poland, but also led to tensions in the German-U.S. relations. As an example, without a German commitment to send main battle tanks, it was seen as unlikely that other European countries would send theirs. The German decision to send fourteen Leopard-2-A4 tanks to Ukraine in late January 2023 has relieved tensions and paved the way for a joint European effort to deliver two Leopard 2 tank battalions.[8] The preceding diplomatic tug-of-war demonstrates that the security political shift in Germany runs at a different pace than other partner countries expect. While the German chancellery required the support of NATO partners, especially the U.S. and France, before committing to deliver these systems, European partners and the U.S. expected Germany to take the lead and allow others to follow.

Overall, the future viability of the shift in Germany's security policy has yet to be put to the test. If anything, it strengthened Germany's pragmatic effort to further European Strategic Sovereignty and further invest in NATO and the Transatlantic relationship. Previously reluctant to take on leadership in security provision in Europe, the Federal Ministry of Defense signaled a willingness to assume new lead roles in defense exercises.[9] This effort will need to withstand current deficiencies in personnel, equipment, and planning, and it will require harmonization with NATO. Thirty years of down-prioritizing the German military has created massive capability gaps and depleted munition and spare part stocks. Consequently, decisions to increase participation in collective military exercises and to send weapons and munition to Ukraine are limited. However, the course for a new security policy era in Germany has been set.

Another drastic policy change concerns energy security and the financial sector. In particular, the rapid turnaround with regard to dependency on Russian oil, gas, and coal represents a vigorous rethinking of the long-pursued German interpretation of interdependency of 'change through trade' (in German, *'Wandel durch Handel'*), the decades-long basic premise of German foreign and security policy, particularly regarding economic relations with Russia. Germany assumed economic interdependencies would lead to a convergence in values and deter all parties involved from risking their economies by violating the rules-based international order. The Russian war on Ukraine was thus deemed unthinkable given the repercussion such action would have on the Russian economy. The current rethinking of German foreign, security and defense politics constitutes a drastic shift in the country's long-established fundamental assumptions of geopolitics and the impact of trade relationships and interconnectedness. It requires a greater socio-political debate and political education to allow for the sea change in security politics to be sustainable.

Taking a step back, the following subchapters will discuss Germany's position on defense consolidation on the European level, its stance on the Transatlantic relationship and NATO, and the strategic interests, strengths, and weaknesses of German foreign, security, and defense policy. This is to provide a general overview and to convey a first impression of German security perceptions and strategic thinking about defense.

7. The original speech is on the German Parliament website: https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2022/kw08-sondersitzung-882198
8. See press release 24 (2023) of the German government. German Federal Government, 'Bundesregierung kündigt Lieferung von Leopard-2-Panzern an die Ukraine an', Bundesregierung, 2023, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/bundesregierung-kuendigt-lieferung-von-leopard-2-panzern-an-die-ukraine-an-2160236, (accessed 26 January 2023).
9. The German defense ministry announced that the German Armed Forces will provide the majority of the EU battle groups in 2025. German Federal Ministry of Defence, 'Rat für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten: Ministerin erörtert auf EU-Ebene die Lage', Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2022, https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/ministerin-beim-rat-fuer-auswaertige-angelegenheiten-der-eu-5377490, (accessed 29 March 2022).

GERMANY AND EUROPEAN STRATEGIC SOVEREIGNTY

Historically, Germany is strongly connected to and reliant on the Transatlantic alliance for its security. While the German federal government is a stark proponent of furthering European integration at large, support of the concept of European Strategic Autonomy, or Strategic Sovereignty, in defense has only recently received further attention, particularly in the past four years. Arguably, tensions in Transatlantic relations during the Trump administration, but particularly because of the United Kingdom leaving the EU, have contributed to the intensification of European efforts to consolidate their defense. This had become important after the first Ukraine crisis in 201,4 leading to the Russian annexation of Crimea, and has now become paramount in light of the ongoing Russian war in Europe. In the 2016 German White Paper, the federal government declared the creation of a European Security and Defense Union a long-term goal (p.73).[10] In the White Paper there is no mention of the term 'strategic autonomy,' that was coined in the EU Global Strategy of the same year.[11] However, the German government strongly advocated for further integration of defense capabilities, industrial cooperation, and institutionalization of defense co-operation mechanisms within the EU institutions, including the so-called Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), as outlined in the Lisbon Treaty of 2009.

Only in the new coalition treaty of the current three-party government (Social Democrats, Greens, and the Liberal Free Democrats) did the term European Strategic Sovereignty solidify. The previous agreement by the Grand Coalition (consisting of the two major parties, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) of 2018 dedicates a short paragraph on the need for a powerful common foreign, security, defense and development policy and the need to synchronize EU and NATO planning processes.[12] It does not mention or detail a concept along the lines of European strategic autonomy/sovereignty. By contrast, the recent coalition treaty specifies strategic sovereignty as Germany's goal of a more capable EU through a comprehensive approach:

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"We want to advance European Strategic Sovereignty. This means first and foremost establishing our own capacity to act in the global context and being less dependent and vulnerable in important strategic areas, such as energy supply, health, raw material imports and digital technology, without isolating Europe. We will better protect critical technology and infrastructure, align standards and procurement, and initiate a European Open Source 5/6G consortium."

(translated by author, Koalitionsvertrag 2021 p. 132) [13]

The German interpretation of European defense consolidation is that of coherence and complementarity to NATO, and a unified, strengthened European capability provision within the greater Alliance.[14] While the tonality and political support for European defense integration increased significantly because of the Russian war on Ukraine, the priority security alliance remains NATO.

The increasing support of European Strategic Sovereignty manifests itself in some German-led initiatives, for instance, the focus on fostering European security and defense integration in the current EU Commission and the development of the EU's Strategic Compass, the first joint threat assessment of all EU countries. Former German Defense Minister and President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen made it a core objective of her presidency to better position the European Union in world politics. This includes a strengthened Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Under the German EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020, then-German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer initiated the EU Strategic Compass, a joint policy document proceeding

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10. Instead of a national security strategy, Germany irregularly publishes so-called White Papers, which formulate security policy for the coming years. Previous White Papers were published in 1971/72, 1973/74, 1975/76, 1979, 1983, 1985, 1994, 2006 and 2016. German Federal Ministry of Defence, 'Was ist ein Weißbuch?', Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2017, https://www.bmvg.de/de/themen/dossiers/weissbuch/faq/was-ist-ein-weissbuch--12388, (accessed 22 April 2022). The first national security strategy for Germany is expected in the first quarter of 2023.

11. The 2016 Global Strategy is the strategic framework guiding the EU's foreign and security policy. It replaced the 2003 European Security Strategy. See European Centre of Excellence of Civilian Crisis and Security Management, 'A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy', https://www.coe-civ.eu/kh/a-global-strategy-for-the-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy.

12. CDU, CSU, SPD, 'Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD. 19. Legislaturperiode', 12 March 2018 (p.145).

13. SPD, Grüne, FDP, 'Mehr Fortschritt wagen. Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen und FDP', November 2022.

14. Bundesregierung, 2016 German White Paper 'Weißbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr', 13 July 2016 (p.73 ff.); German Federal Foreign Ministry, 'Die Gemeinsame Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik (GSVP)', Auswärtiges Amt, 2021, https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/europa/aussenpolitik/-/201802, (accessed 19 April 2022).

from a shared assessment of the threat landscape facing the EU. During the French EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2022, the EU Strategic Compass was published; the duality of this Franco-German aspect of the initiative was intentional and underlined the two countries' commitment and close cooperation. By and large, the Franco-German axis within the CSDP is an important driver of defense integration, and it furthers strategic autonomy/sovereignty on the European level, though the two countries' relationship and approach to defense policies is constrained and divergent at times. Even though major differences persist in key aspects of security provision (the commitment to NATO, the different nuclear policies, the approach to military peacekeeping operations in Africa, to name just a few) French and German policymakers are committed to further integration.[15] This becomes apparent in major Franco-German-driven armament projects such as the Future Combat Air System and the Main Ground Combat System, and also in cooperation on strategic policy guidelines, for instance, on the approach to security in the Indo-Pacific. This is also underlined in the current coalition treaty, which highlights a strong Franco-German partnership, and, by extension, strengthens the Weimar Triangle group – Germany, France, and Poland.[16] These efforts are all geared toward creating a stronger European defense alliance and fostering the concept of strategic autonomy, or sovereignty.

In sum, from a German perspective, European Strategic Sovereignty is a new concept that merely describes and specifies long-term movement toward further defense integration at the European level. Indecisiveness on how to demarcate European defense capability while emphasizing the commitment to NATO and a strong Transatlantic bond slowed down the acceptance of the term 'strategic autonomy' at the German political level. The term autonomy, which was chosen by the French, was felt to alienate the U.S. and imply independence, while Germany instead aimed at highlighting the advantage of a strong European defense capability within NATO. The now-established term strategic 'sovereignty' reflects this debate – the term sovereignty should imply own strength while not excluding external (U.S.) partners.

Despite the political commitment to stronger European defense, critical voices point to these efforts as being merely symbolic politics.[17] The above-outlined discourse on terminology accedes to this point. However, the Russian war against Ukraine profoundly altered German security perceptions and its approach to security. The decisions to allocate a 100 billion euro special budget for modernizing the German Armed Forces, to deliver weapons to Ukraine – a heretofore unthinkable move –, and to increase the number of German troops in the Baltics indicate readiness and a commitment to act. Political and material impediments remain, which will be discussed in the third subchapter. Before discussing German strategic interests, strengths, and weaknesses in security politics, the next subchapter depicts Germany's relationship with NATO and its vision for the future of the Transatlantic alliance.

GERMANY: NATO, THE FUTURE OF THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE AND BURDEN–SHARING

The history of the *Bundeswehr,* the German Armed Forces, goes hand in hand with Germany's NATO membership. Without NATO, there would have been no alternative cooperative defense alliance to rearm Germany after the dissolution of the German military at the end of the Second World War. Plans in the 1950s for establishing a European army in which a German military would have been integrated failed, leaving NATO the only alternative option.[18] At the same time, in the context of the military build-up of the Soviet Union, having West Germany join NATO was crucial to the Alliance. In May 1955, Germany formally joined NATO. In response, the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact, which included the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Thus, both Germanies played a major role in security policy and political developments in Europe. It was also a linchpin for NATO.

In the context of its contribution to NATO, Germany managed to rearrange its foreign and security policy without alienating its neighbors. Despite political ambivalence vis-à-vis NATO commitments prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, German federal politics always recognized the importance of NATO. In the 2016 German White Paper, a policy document closest to a national security strategy, the German government highlights that:

"Germany was able to rely on the solidarity and readiness of the Allies over a period of almost forty years during the Cold War. It therefore recognizes its duty and responsibility to contribute to collective defense on the basis of solidarity. Alliance solidarity is a fundamental principle of German governance." [19]

15. See Hans Stark, ‚Die deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit in der europäischen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik', Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2013, https://www.bpb.de/themen/europa/frankreich/152438/die-deutsch-franzoesische-zusammenarbeit-in-der-europaeischen-aussen-und-sicherheitspolitik/ (accessed 20 April 2022).

16. See SPD, Grüne, FDP p. 136

17. Tobias Bunde (2021) Defending European integration by (symbolically) integrating European defence? Germany and its ambivalent role in European security and defence policy, Journal of European Integration, 43:2, 243-259.

18. See the so-called Pleven Plan, a French initiative envisioning the forming of a European Army under a European defense minister. Initiated in 1950, the plan aimed at a close integration and, hence, control over German troop contingents in European structures. The French National Assembly rejected the ratification of the treaty establishing the European Defence Community, drafted on the Pleven Plan, in 1954. https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/das-europalexikon/177193/pleven-plan/ (accessed 30 March 2022).

19. 2016 German White Paper, p. 49.

While this quote shows German political commitment to NATO, it also depicts an inherent dilemma in Germany's 21st century security politics: the emotional argument of Germany's historical debt after the horrors of the Second World War and solidarity as a necessary step towards redemption, the apparent lack of a real threat perception, and recognition of NATO as an essential security guarantor. This feeds into the discussion on strategic interests, strengths, and weaknesses in German security provision, to be discussed next.

NATO plays a major role in German defense planning today. All eight so-called recognized missions are within NATO, as well as three out of nine deployments, the others being in the context of the United Nations and the EU.[20] Since the end of the Cold War, the German Bundeswehr regularly contributes to NATO deployments.

Today, Germany contributes troops to KFOR (Kosovo), Counter Daesh/Capacity Building Iraq, Sea Guardian (Mediterranean), enhanced Forward Presence (Lithuania), enhanced Vigilance Activities (Slovakia) and a number of SNMGs (Standing NATO Maritime Group) and SNMCMGs (Standing NATO Mine Countermeasure Group), as well as Air Policing Baltics, and enhanced Air Policing South (eAPS, deployed in Romania).[21] In addition, according to the German Ministry of Defense, as of February 2022, 13,700 German troops are on standby for the NATO Rapid Response Force, a multinational, mobile unit rapidly able to react to crisis management and collective defense needs.[22]

Germany & NATO Missions

20. Generally, any deployment of the German military requires approval by the German Parliament. The so-called "recognized missions" are an exception; they occur all within NATO territory and do not need additional approval. ; https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/170952/3d6aaa83856f3cd718f06b9e85368ff1/download-einsatzkarte-data.jpg (accessed 01.06.2022).
21. https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/170952/3d6aaa83856f3cd718f06b9e85368ff1/download-einsatzkarte-data.jpg (accessed 01.06.2022).
22. See https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/bundeswehr-engagiert-sich-in-der-nato-auf-vielen-ebenen-5362104 (accessed 22. April 2022).

In addition to providing troops to NATO deployments, Germany hosts a number of NATO facilities, such as the Rapid Deployable German-Netherlands Corps in Münster and the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Uedem. More prominently, the headquarters of Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) in Ramstein, the NATO School in Oberammergau, the logistics hub of NATO JSEC (Joint Enabling and Support Command) in Ulm, a NATO Air Base in Geilenkirchen, and Alliance Ground Surveillance in Friedrichshafen and Immenstadt are all in Germany.[23]

Despite the significance of NATO for Germany, particularly in the aftermath of the Second World War, the public knowledge of it is poor. Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the German public and most policymakers hardly appreciated the importance of the NATO defense planning process for defense procurement and capability development, the contribution of German troops to NATO exercises, deployments, and the many NATO facilities in Germany. This became particularly apparent in the burden-sharing debate, which surged after German reunification and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and became prominent again during the Trump administration. Over the course of the past thirty years, the discussion on burden-sharing strained the German-Transatlantic relationship. In 2006, NATO defense ministers agreed to the notorious two percent defense-spending goal, a commitment reiterated at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales by all heads of state, including Germany.

Six years later, Germany has still not reached two percent and has yet to adjust its long-term federal budget planning to reflect a respective increase. Now, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the need to enhance defense capabilities and reinforce collective defense put the spending commitment high on the agenda. Chancellor Scholz not only emphasized his commitment to spending at least two percent of GDP on defense, but also announced a 100 billion euro special budget for military equipment and modernization.

Germany Defense Budget
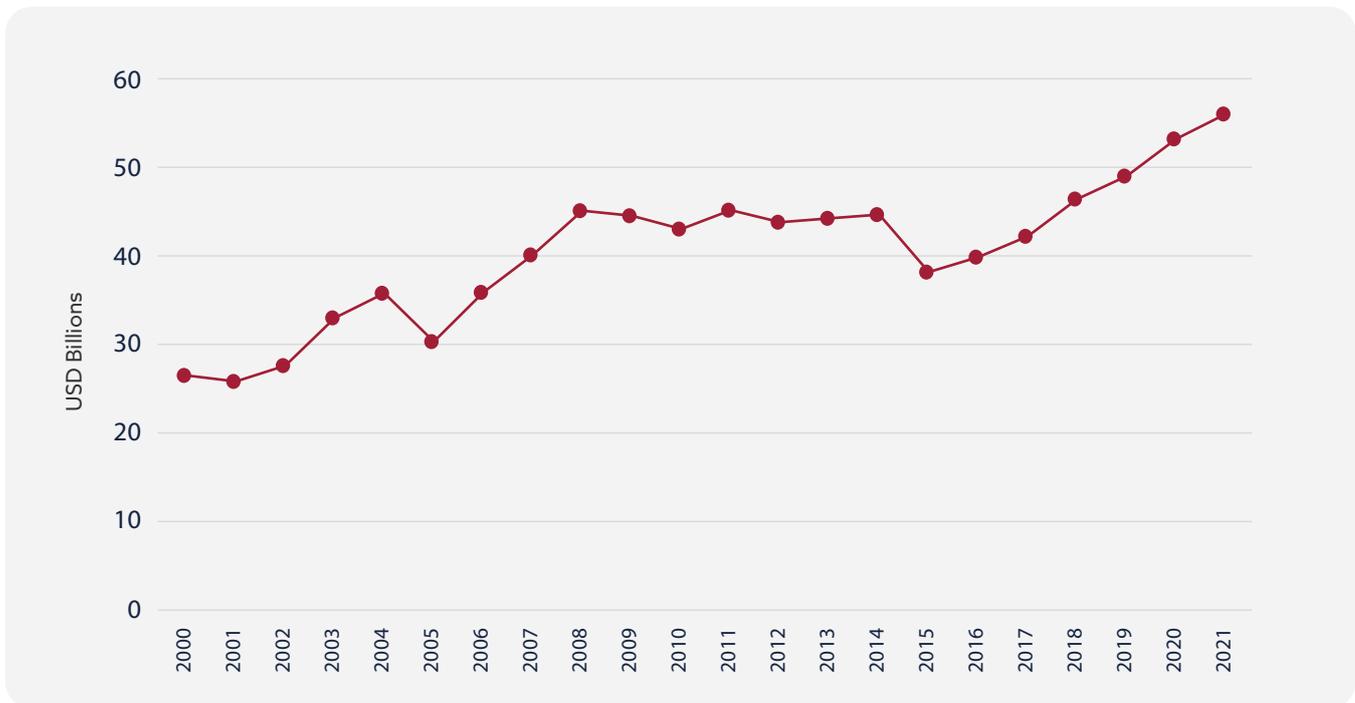
23. See "NATO on the Map" https://www.nato.int/nato-on-the-map/#lat=53.844338683177554&lon=-11.568613407345703&zoom=2&layer-5&infoBox=51 (accessed 2. May 2022) and https://shape.nato.int/germany (accessed 29. April 2022).

German Defense Budget
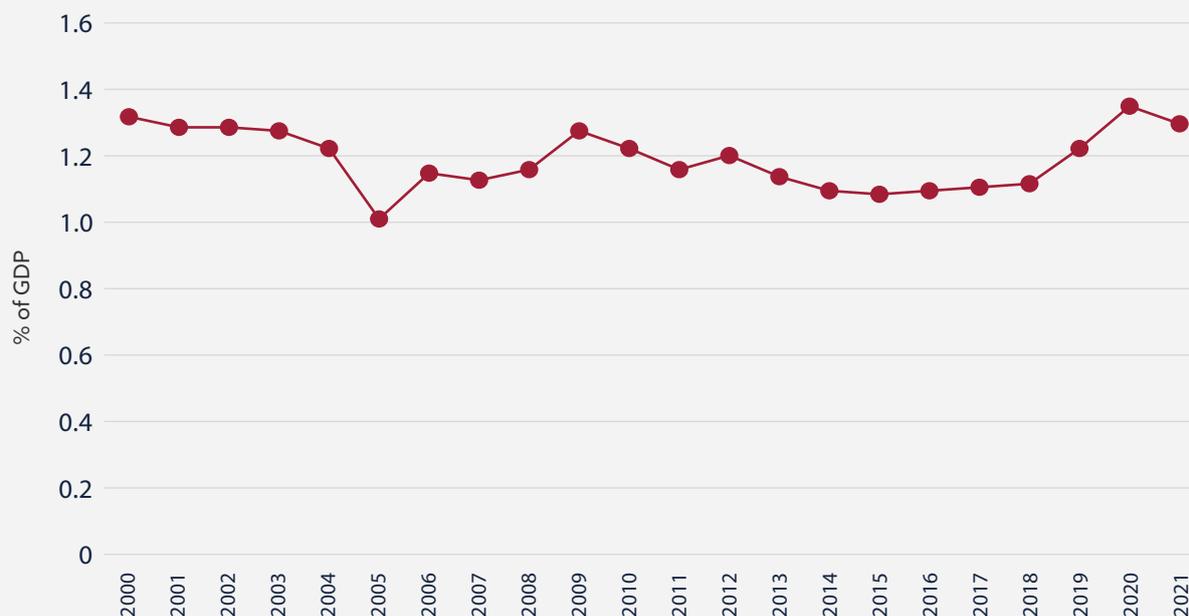
In sum, Germany's security is heavily intertwined with NATO. For the past seventy years, the Alliance has been the most important security pact for Germany and it will continue to be paramount in the near- and long-term future. The war in Europe revealed weaknesses in European security provisions but also unified Europeans and NATO allies, and it has underscored the power and importance of NATO. While Germany has yet to overcome historically-rooted but outdated inhibitions with regard to its security policy, the federal government unequivocally supports NATO. A good hint at Germany's vision for the future of NATO is the strong endorsement of membership for Finland and Sweden. In Germany's view, their joining would strengthen the Alliance and will carry it through the new era of security that dawned in February 2022.

STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF GERMANY; STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

For a long time, security circles within Germany and European and NATO allies abroad characterized Germany as not being threatened by anyone or anything. While the military might object to this assessment, this certainly holds true for the majority of political decision-makers and the public before February 2022. Strategically, Germany thus far has kept a low military profile, a focus on economic interrelationships, and a steady commitment to development aid abroad. Security through alliances and other partnerships, as well as an emphasis on domestic prosperity, provided the basis for German security thinking.

The notorious *Wandel durch Handel* (induce change through trade) and appeasement politics toward Russia fed into the German narrative of peace politics through soft power. This certainly has changed with the ongoing war in Ukraine, yet a distinct new approach, other than the current ad hoc reactive response, still needs conceptualizing.

For Germany, the focus on relationship-building, economic ties, and economic strengths are both an asset and a curse. In Europe and with like-minded (democratic) partners, interconnectedness and interdependence have proven to be a foundation for lasting peace. The early beginnings of European integration started with an economic pact, and right after the Second World War, the integration of markets was what allowed peace to grow sustainably. The relations between France and Germany especially needed an urgent investment to avoid war from ever breaking out again. Today, with almost 78 years of peace, the European project is considered successful, a fact that is particularly emphasized in Germany. Similar to the European rapprochement, West Germany introduced the so-called *Neue Ostpolitik* (new eastern policy) in the early 1970s, which foresaw the normalization of relations with Eastern Europe, particularly the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Instead of combatting the Communist government in East Germany, the newly elected Social Democrat government under Willy Brandt focused on cooperation. Ultimately, the ensuing policy of détente vis-à-vis the Soviet Union led to the reunification of Germany and subsequently, the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

There are certainly more factors that allowed for the Cold War to end as peacefully as it did, but many German thought leaders and policymakers focus on détente diplomacy as the ultimate factor for success: creating cooperative ties leading to honest relations and a positive development towards democratic values. With the positive developments in the East – at least from a German and Western perspective – the Russian government succeeding the Soviet Union was received with open arms. And for the past thirty years, the German government focused on furthering economic and cultural ties with Russia, assuming the European model would work just the same. This approach has led to now apparent serious vulnerabilities in energy and food supplies and, arguably, has blinded Germany and other partners to Russia's rancorous pursuit of its geopolitical interests by force of arms. With the ongoing war in Ukraine, European partners look to Germany, as the strongest economic power in Europe, to assume leadership in substantiating the fighting for European values – be it through financial aid or, especially, the delivery of weapons to Ukraine. Although Germany is one of the largest providers of financial, humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine, the government communicates poorly and hesitates to lead in key decisions regarding the sending of heavy weapons. To not further alienate some of its partners and risk tensions within Europe, the German government needs to address these weaknesses as soon as possible.

By and large, German security politics stands out because of the country's strategic ambivalence on committing hard power assets and assuming leadership in anything defense-related. This is rooted in a historically grown pacifism, and a fear of triggering images of an over-assertive Germany. It has led to conspicuous hesitancy in key security decisions. Now, the Russian war against Ukraine led to a *Zeitenwende*, or the complete turnaround in German foreign and security policy. Across the political landscape, with the exception

of the Left, there is consensus on the need to invest in defense and deterrence capabilities, and first attempts at a reform process of the highly bureaucratized defense procurement processes are underway.[24] However, large parts of the administration of security-relevant assets (procuring military equipment, deployment decisions) still require lasting reform.

In sum, it is in Germany's strategic interest to contribute and keep the Transatlantic alliance strong, while at the same time promoting a more capable and interoperable European Union that can be a strong security actor in Europe. Germany is neither capable of, nor willing to revert to nationalism and protectionism; its security policy parameters are intrinsically linked to alliances and partnerships. One of Germany's most prominent weaknesses has been the lack of threat perception by the majority of policymakers. This is reflected in the largely under-equipped Bundeswehr, the lack of a strategic culture, and heavily bureaucratized parliamentary control mechanisms and procurement processes all in urgent need of reform.

Arguably, compared to other European countries and despite the criticism related to the German government's apparent weakness in promoting its new security approach and in communicating its decision-making process related to weapons deliveries, Germany has changed a lot since Russia invaded Ukraine. From not being threatened by anyone or anything to identifying its security interests is a long way. This certainly has been accelerated by the Russian war against Ukraine and now needs intrinsic continuation in the German public debate. If the economic strengths of Germany was an asset before, Berlin now has to handle serious setbacks and undergo a complete rethink of trade relations. Taking the lead in fostering a strong alliance of liberal democracies could be a way to prove reliability and leadership while maintaining this new approach to geopolitical challenges.

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24. See the so-called Beschaffungsbeschleunigungsgesetz that passed Parliament approval in July 2022, aiming at speeding the military procurement processes. German Ministry of Defense, 'Parlamentsbeschluss: Beschaffung für die Bundeswehr wird beschleunigt' (07/2022), https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/beschluss-beschaffung-fuer-die-bundeswehr-wird-beschleunigt-5450574.

ITALY

03

ITALY'S FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY GUIDELINES

GABRIELE CHECCHIA AND FABRIZIO W. LUCIOLLI

The Italian foreign and security policy represents the outcome of a process that is simultaneously simple and complex. In fact, since the end of World War II and the emergence of a new European order, Italy has assumed that its national interests can be better pursued through participation in international organizations. Thus, it is no surprise that Italy is among the founding members of both NATO and the European Union. Italy has always considered participation in these two organizations as complementary and mutually reinforcing. Thanks to the post-war Italian leader Alcide De Gasperi and his Foreign Minister Gaetano Martino, the country successfully combined Atlanticism and Europeanism. Italy's participation in NATO and the EU is also inscribed in the wider framework of the principles and values of the United Nations Charter. Almost all Italian peacekeeping missions have been carried out according to the UN framework. Indeed, while Italy was only allowed to join the UN in 1955 due to the logic of the Cold War, in which every new state from one camp had to be balanced by the entry of a state from the other camp, UN membership is considered essential since the birth of the Italian Republic. Italy's participation in NATO, the EU, and the UN represents the bedrock of the country's foreign and security policy of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

ITALY'S POSITION ON THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP

As a founding member of NATO and the EU, Italy has always promoted the strengthening of the transatlantic bond. Italy's place as a credible European pillar of NATO, working in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way, has always been considered essential.

Since the foundation of NATO, Italy has participated in both its political and military dimensions. In terms of politics and leadership, Italy has been able to have nine Italians among the 16 NATO Deputy Secretary Generals named. Moreover, Rome considers NATO a unique and indispensable forum for transatlantic discussion on security issues. By 2026, Italy intends to use two percent of its GDP for defense. That said, the country is stressing that the two percent criteria should be regarded in a comprehensive way, taking into consideration the so-called three Cs, i.e., cash, capabilities, and commitment. While understanding NATO's emphasis on the two percent target, Italy has always underlined the importance of considering capability development and peacekeeping operations commitment in defense budgetary discussion.

In terms of financial capabilities, Italy's military spending has significantly increased recently.[25] Due to Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine, the Italian Parliament has committed the government to gradually increase defense spending to quickly achieve the two percent target.[26] This signals a growing awareness of the importance of military spending among lawmakers beyond traditional military and diplomatic circles.

25. T. Kington, "Italy hikes 2021 defense spending, finds cash for Tempest", DefenseNews, 08/05/2021, available at: https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/08/05/italy-hikes-2021-defense-spending-finds-cash-for-tempest/
26. O. Lanzavecchia, "Italian Parliament votes to raise defence budget to 2% of GDP", Decode39, 03/17/2022, available at: https://decode39.com/3052/italy-defence-budget-2-gdp-vote/

Italy Military Budget
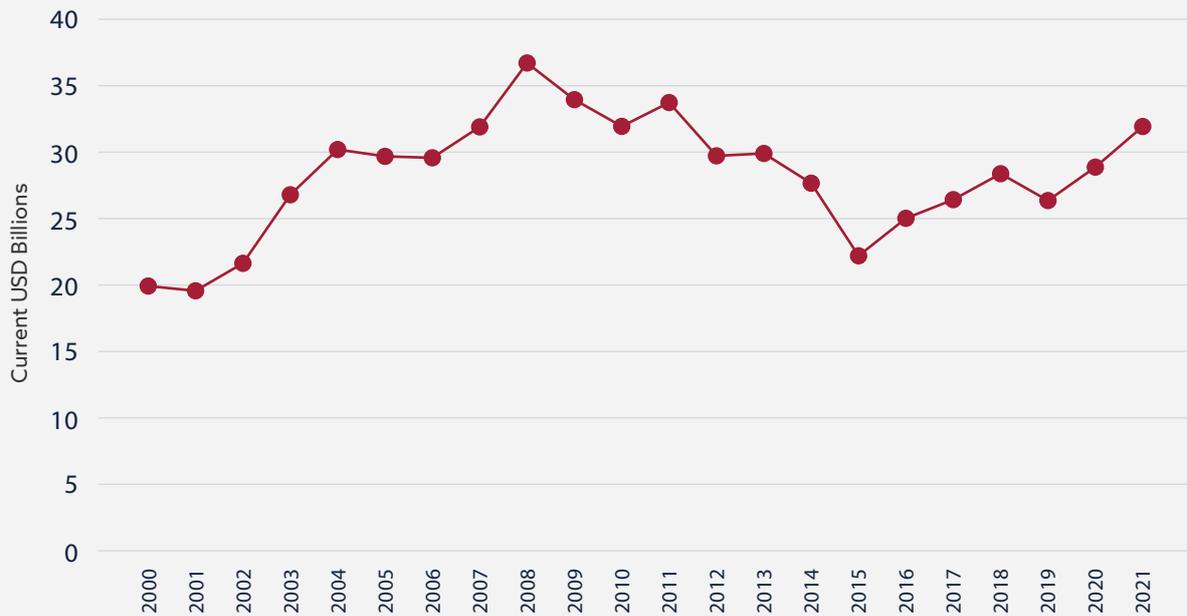
As far as capability is concerned, Italy is well positioned. Over 20 percent of its military budget goes to investment, with a significant part to research and development.[27] The Italian Armed Forces spent years training and operating with its allies and partners. Italy has always participated in NATO and multilateral military exercises; interoperability is crucial to NATO and Italy is engaged in improving it. For instance, in 2021 the Italian Cavour aircraft carrier gained full qualification to conduct operational deployment. The Cavour uses fifth-generation F-35B fighters, which operate jointly with U.S. aircraft carriers.[28] Later that year, Italian and British F-35Bs performed cross-deck exercises at sea, thereby allowing Italy to become the first European Allied fully interoperable at sea with US and UK aircraft carriers.[29]

With reference to the commitment issue, Italy is currently NATO's first troop-contributing country. Since May 2022, Italy leads the NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI), deploying 1,100 troops on a total of 4,000 allied forces.[30] In addition, the Italian Armed Forces are contributing to NATO's mission in Kosovo which is crucial for the stability of the Western Balkans, a region particularly close and interconnected

with Italy and which has again acquired special importance after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Italy is also contributing to the reassuring measures of NATO's Air Policing missions on the eastern flank of the alliance.[31] Several NATO and U.S. bases are hosted in Italy. The NATO Allied Joint Force Command of Naples and the military facility in Sigonella (which is hosting the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance Global Hawk Fleet) are of paramount importance for U.S. and allied operations. Furthermore, Italy, along with Germany and Turkey, significantly contributes to the NATO nuclear sharing policy, which allows NATO member countries without nuclear weapons on their own to participate in the planning for the use of these nuclear weapons by the alliance. This constitutes a key component of NATO's deterrence policy ensuring that the benefits, responsibilities, and risks of nuclear deterrence are shared across the Alliance.

Due to its geopolitical and strategic characteristics, Italy is fully engaged in addressing all the challenges and threats on the European continent, while its 5,000 miles of coastline make it vulnerable to the instability of the Mediterranean. Therefore, Italy has always supported a NATO 360-degree

27. Data available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/6/pdf/210611-pr-2021-094-en.pdf
28. More info available at: https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2021/its-cavour-conducts-successful-f35-trials
29. D. Mahadzir, "U.K. Aircraft Carrier, Italian Navy Carrier Cross-Deck F-35Bs in Mediterranean", USNI News, 11/24/2021, available at: https://news.usni.org/2021/11/24/u-k-aircraft-carrier-italian-navy-carrier-cross-deck-f-35bs-in-mediterranean ; S. Pioppi, "Italy to lead NATO's Iraq operation after US withdrawal", Decode39, 07/28/2021 available at: https://decode39.com/1736/italy-lead-nato-iraq-us-withdrawal/
30. E. Braw, "Italy Is a Quiet Pillar of NATO's Aerial Policing", Defense One, 02/20/2022, available at: https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2022/02/italy-quiet-pillar-natos-aerial-policing/362230/
31. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_133127.htm

approach, which combines both the eastern and southern flanks of the Alliance across the land, air, maritime, cyber and space domains, and against all threats and challenges in a comprehensive strategic vision.[32] Italy supports all three NATO core tasks: collective defense and deterrence, crisis management, and cooperative security. Rome devotes special attention to the cooperative security concept, which is an essential tool to address the multiple security challenges emerging from the south. As threats and challenges have continued to multiply along NATO's Southern flank, Italy supports a revitalization of NATO's partnerships with non-NATO countries, including in the Middle East and North Africa, which have not received much attention due to Russia's continuous escalation in the East.

Finally, Italy fully supports NATO's efforts in cyberspace, space, and strategic communication. Italy considers these critical for the alliance's long-term resilience. Regarding strategic communication, Italy is acutely aware of the importance of information warfare and of the necessity to counter malign misinformation and disinformation promoted by autocratic regimes.

PRIORITIZING ITALIAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS

Priorities

Italy's foreign and security policy is the outcome of participation in a multilateral framework together with a special combination of multiple complex elements. Italy is both a continental European country and a Mediterranean one. It has political, security, economic, and cultural ties to both these geopolitical areas. Moreover, Italy sees what its diplomats call the "Enlarged Mediterranean" as the center of its national interests. This concept of Enlarged Mediterranean is peculiar to Italian foreign and security policy, as it identifies a geopolitical area that stretches from Gibraltar and the African Atlantic shore to the Suez Canal and the Arabian Gulf. Furthermore, preserving freedom of navigation in the Mediterranean and ensuring the security of its sea lanes is a crucial national interest. Italy has a twofold interest in upholding freedom of navigation in the region since it imports raw materials for manufacturing. As an advanced export-oriented economy, Italy has extensive economic and commercial interests across the world. In particular, the country has a large network of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and Italian foreign policy leaders are always keen to promote and protect them.

Italian foreign policy must also account for a large diaspora. For historical reasons, there are significant Italian and Italian-descent communities across the world, particularly in Europe and the Americas. Over five million Italian citizens live abroad, and these official numbers do not capture the full extent of the phenomenon. Some calculations show that Italian citizens abroad and people of Italian descent across the world number between 60 and 80 million (Italy's total population, including citizens and non-citizens, is around 60 million). Italian officials have always tried to assist these communities while using them as a bridge to promote links to other countries and cultures. In this perspective, Italy attaches particular importance to cultural diplomacy and to the diffusion of the Italian language abroad.

Added value and strategic assets

Italy is the NATO member that can best understand and implement a 360-degree approach to address the security threats and challenges of the evolving strategic landscape. Rome has consistently emphasized the interaction between the southern and eastern sides of the arc of crisis and instability stretching from Eastern Europe to the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions.

While maintaining its unwavering loyalty to NATO, Italy has historically tried to foster a mutually beneficial dialogue with the Russian Federation. In 2002, the Pratica di Mare Summit launched the NATO-Russia Council, which seemed to open a new era in the relationship between the alliance and Moscow. However, Italy has always made clear that this dialogue with Russia is only possible alongside its commitment to NATO and Western interests and values. Rome has wholeheartedly supported NATO's and the EU's reaction to Russia's destructive wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

While Italy subscribes to the main tenets of the Transatlantic alliance, which currently contains the obvious threat from the east, it has always promoted a NATO 360° approach – since the Madrid 2022 Summit, an official policy of the alliance encompassing both the eastern and the southern flanks. Indeed, Russia's war in Ukraine and its actions in Syria, South Sudan, Libya, and the Mediterranean basin should not be viewed as isolated actions but as part of a global strategy by the Kremlin to use the arc of crisis and instability against NATO's collective interests. As a global strategy against NATO, it requires a response by NATO that does not isolate the challenges on its Southern and Eastern flanks.

In the Mediterranean, Italy has specific military as well as technological capabilities which bring added value to the alliance: for example, due to its peculiar geographic

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32. Ref. to the Italian Defense White Paper, ed. 1985, part I, para 6 on guidelines of the defence policy.

configuration, Italy plays a key role in ensuring the security of underwater communication cables crossing the Mediterranean. In this regard, the Italian firm Sparkle is among the top ten global operators in communication infrastructure, which helps secure communications across the Mediterranean. In addition, La Spezia is home to the NATO Center for Maritime Research and Experimentation. This scientific facility delivers innovative and field-tested science and technology solutions to address the defense and security needs of the alliance, with research in crucial Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs) such as AI, Quantum-enabled and hypersonic technologies, or new energy and propulsion methods. Moreover, Italy also has a well-developed aerospace industry. The aerospace and defense industry giant Leonardo is the third-largest European company in the field. Finally, Italy is developing a sophisticated satellite system for military communications (SICRAL).

Weaknesses

Domestic political instability has always been a weakness of Italian foreign and security policy. During its 76 years of existence, the Italian Republic has had 67 governments. However, domestic political instability has almost always been overcome by a shared sense of priorities when it comes to major security and foreign policy issues, in the political class as well as in diplomatic and military circles. The end of the Cold War solidified Italy's Western consensus: all parties in Parliament fully support Italy's membership in the EU and NATO, even if some differences of opinion remain.

During the 2010s, the rise of populism in Europe led to the rise of disruptive parties in the Italian Parliament, which challenged Italy's foreign policy consensus. The 2018 elections ushered in the victory of the Five Star Movement (M5S), which became the biggest parliamentary group in both the House of Deputies and the Senate. The government formed by M5S in coalition with another populist movement, *Lega*, promoted deeper cooperation with the Russian Federation and China's Belt and Road Initiative to explore new economic opportunities and support the Italian economy and its network of SMEs.

However, these new overtures from the government proved to be temporary and have since been reversed. In the long term they did not impact the Euro-Atlantic path of Italian foreign and security policy, which was clearly articulated first by President Giuseppe Conte in his second government and then followed by President Mario Draghi's administration. President Giorgia Meloni has followed a similar path.

One of Italy's foreign and security policy's main weaknesses is the country's public financial situation. After the end of the Cold War, Italy decreased its military spending, and serious economic crises significantly impacted its foreign assistance and military budgets. However, Italy has offset this cash flow issue with disproportionally large commitments in NATO and EU/UN-led peacekeeping missions. Moreover, while financial problems and constraints remain a factor, in recent years, Italy's military spending has significantly increased. Russian President Vladimir Putin's renewed aggression against Ukraine has solidified Italy's Western consensus and raised awareness of the need for an even more active foreign role.

ITALY'S POSITION ON STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

As a founding member of the Atlantic Alliance and of the EU, Italy is committed to promoting the European political and institutional integration process while reinforcing its Transatlantic bond. Such a mutually reinforcing and complementary approach dates back to the aftermath of the Second World War, and it has stayed relevant after the Cold War, even when Italian public opinion debated the enduring relevance of NATO as an alliance after the fall of the USSR.[33]

Italy's parallel commitment to both the European and Atlantic alliances is seen in Rome as the bedrock of a coherent participation in Europe's security architecture. Successive Italian governments have offered armed forces and logistical support to both organizations, in spite of the defense budget and military personnel constraints that it faced in the years 1991-1999.

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33. Ref. to the Italian Defense White Paper, ed. 1985, part I, para 6 on guidelines of the defence policy. ; Ref. to the Italian Defense Model, ed. 1995, para 3 and 4 on European, transatlantic and national security policy.

THE ITALIAN CONCEPT

Italy subscribes to the idea of the EU's strategic autonomy, which implies the capability to act sovereignly in terms of political will, resources, and operational capabilities as a global security provider. This autonomy needs to be built with NATO, particularly in terms of crisis management and cooperative security duties.[34]

More specifically, it requires:

1. To project security and stability and to promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in line with the principles of the UN Charter. This is a shared approach with NATO and the EU, whose founding treaties showcase a clear aim to prevent crises and conflicts and promote stability.[35]

2. To develop the capabilities and instruments to launch initiatives, missions, and operations to accomplish the EU's political aims. In concrete terms, this means creating common tools and instruments and fully implementing the EU's goals through a shared strategic culture coherent with NATO's commitments.

3. To establish and reinforce the organizations and procedures that launch and coordinate any of these efforts, whenever and everywhere they are necessary. NATO and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) structures of the EU must coordinate their actions to become faster and more streamlined, including in high-intensity situations and all operational domains.

Relevant Key Issues and Guidelines for Italy's Defense Policy

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine both highlight the urgency of addressing strategic vulnerabilities, which are not only military but also geo-economic, such as dependency on energy resources. Italy needs an industrial policy to address new geo-economic vulnerabilities and threats. Italy must amend its rules of competition and government subsidies to industry. The idea here is to promote a few industrial champions and capacity building in strategic sectors while avoiding the current high level of fragmentation, which is clearly penalizing European firms' competitiveness in some strategic sectors. These policies require consistent financial resources and investment of the type that the post-COVID EU recovery fund has been providing to member states like Italy. NextGenerationEU, a post-pandemic economic stimulus plan, is a tool that can support European strategic autonomy.

Scientific research and technological innovation, including AI, quantum technologies, and next-generation high-performance computing, must also be an EU priority. It will reduce shortfalls in digital capabilities and competences, reinforce resilient infrastructure, and improve knowledge dissemination for the benefit of European industry, governments, and citizens.[36]

The Defense Ministry's current guidelines confirm the centrality of both NATO and the EU for Italy's security. The Atlantic Alliance represents an essential pillar for the deterrence and collective defense needed to face global threats, with a special focus on the southern flank of the alliance, the Enlarged Mediterranean and Africa. Concomitantly, Italy is committed to reinforcing the EU's CSDP and achieving strategic autonomy at all levels: technological, industrial, and in terms of military intervention capabilities. Italy supports the process in full synergy, coherence, complementarity and interoperability with NATO. The principle of European autonomous decision-making should be viewed as a natural and consistent reinforcement of the European pillar of the Alliance to strengthen the transatlantic relationship, as outlined in the NATO Summit of 14 June 2021.

Concrete actions to achieve strategic autonomy are based on the EU Global Strategy, adopted in 2016, through the new Strategic Compass. This document assesses threats, risks and focuses on challenges, ideas, and recommendations in four areas of intervention: crisis management, resilience, capabilities development, and partnership. These four areas are the building blocks for clear and feasible objectives for political guidelines for military planning. The European Defence Action Plan, EU-NATO joint declarations, and support for the European Peace Facility are instruments to further implement the military activities of CSDP and the assistance to the partner countries. These concepts are the foundation of the new NATO Strategic Concept adopted at the Madrid Summit of June 2022, which will also consider the threat from Russia, strategic competition and challenges originating from China, disruptive technologies, and climate change.

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34. These principles are also in line with the national constitution, art 11, which allow some "delegation" of national sovereignty to international organisation aimed to peace and stability.
35. From the Revised Italian Non-Paper on the "Conference on the Future of Europe" (2021-2022)
36. https://movimentoeuropeo.it/images/Documenti/All._4_Non-paper_aggiornato.pdf

At the EU level, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) plays a key role in enhancing the Process Systems and Design Control Laboratory (PSDC) and to further integrating European security and defense. Italy is currently engaged in 34 projects (out of 60) under PSDC, including the EuroMALE for the development of a European medium altitude long endurance drone and the Twister project for the development of a network of space sensors to support Europe's missile defense. The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) is intended as a key instrument to identify gaps and vulnerabilities in the European military capabilities better and more clearly, supporting cooperation between member states in parallel with NATO military planning. The European Defence Agency will be reinforced in terms of staffing and financial resources to better accomplish its key role in capabilities development.

In the financial domain, the European Defence Fund (EDF), even if recently reduced to 7.9 billion EUR, constitutes the most important incentive to researching and developing new military capabilities in a cooperative perspective for both sides of the Atlantic.

Italy supports joint EU-NATO exercises to promote the culture of cooperation and information and intelligence sharing, as well as a longer-term strategy to address climate change through interagency and multidimensional networks in line with related international initiatives.

European Defense Fund Spending
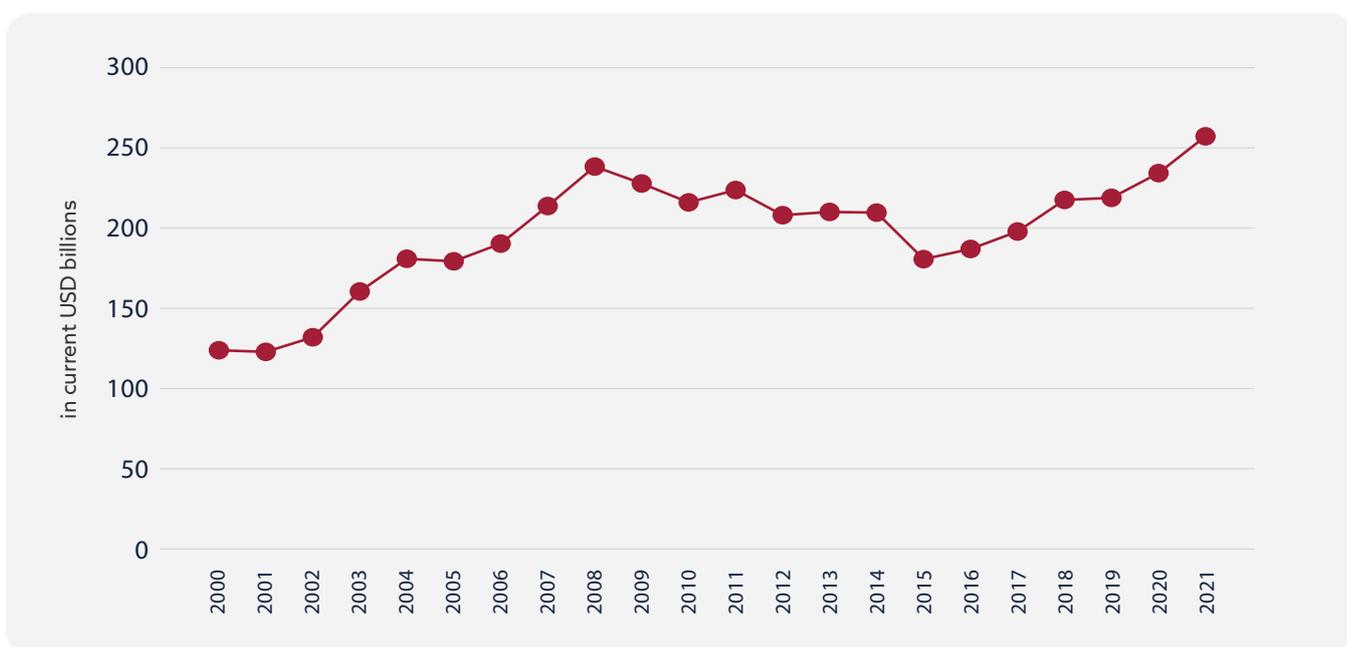
CONCLUSIONS

Italy fully supports EU strategic autonomy as an essential tool to accomplish political and institutional principles for a more secure, stable, and prosperous society and community. Italy considers EU strategic autonomy vital to achieving closer cooperation with all allies and sharing NATO's values, credibility, and effectiveness.

Italy does not see a contradiction between the need to increase European resilience, improve European capabilities, become an ever more credible player in the new strategic scenario, and the aim of preserving and further reinforcing Transatlantic relations. In this respect, Italy will keep doing its best to consolidate the remarkable cohesion characterized by the Western response to Russia's brutal and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. Ukraine is a partner country that must be fully supported via all available means, as far as allowed by the relevant articles of NATO's and EU's founding treaties.

Italy believes that any European strategic autonomy should be seen not as autonomy from something – the Atlantic Alliance – but on the contrary, as autonomy for the fulfillment of complementary functional objectives pursued by NATO. This is why strategic autonomy is to be seen and implemented as not only compatible but complementary to our NATO-related obligations; it would allow the EU to reinforce its role as a security provider, thereby contributing to the strengthening of Transatlantic relations. This idea was outlined in a recent article for the German Marshall Fund, suggesting that Italy "could become the European driver of a "'transatlantically sustainable' definition of European strategic autonomy."[37]

37. September 02, 2021, The German Marshall Fund of the United States. https://www.gmfus.org/news/italy-positions-itself-driver-transatlantically-sustainable-european-strategic-autonomy

POLAND

04

POLAND'S THREAT PERCEPTION

MACIEJ SOBIERAJ

Despite numerous internal challenges, such as a relatively poor healthcare system, demographic depression, lurking threats of water shortages, and an urgent need for costly reform of the energy sector, Poland's analysis of its security environment is strongly focused on risks coming from the outside. Once the Cold War ended, so did Warsaw's understanding of the global, bi-polar security environment. Now, that environment is more diverse and includes threats coming from non-state actors, international crime, terrorism, energy supply, and mass migrations, among others. Poland is no exception; however, its approach differs from some other countries as it is still strongly focused on military security and constant fear of potential aggression from the East.

This realization of risk, if not insecurity, is not confined to military circles; it also transpires in national public opinion.

In 2018, as many as 40 percent of Poles were of the opinion that Polish independence was in danger.[38] This conviction makes Polish people more open to increasing defense expenditures and makes them arguably one of the most pro-NATO countries in the Alliance, as 84 percent of Poles say that NATO is important for the security of their country.[39] Now, as global tensions rise and with a war on Poland's doorstep, these trends will only accelerate. Sadly though, Moscow does not pose the only threat. The rise of China and the aftermath of the global war on terrorism are also of strategic importance. However, Warsaw is ready to rise to any challenge as long as it has reliable allies with whom it can cooperate.

Threats to Polish Independence in Public Option
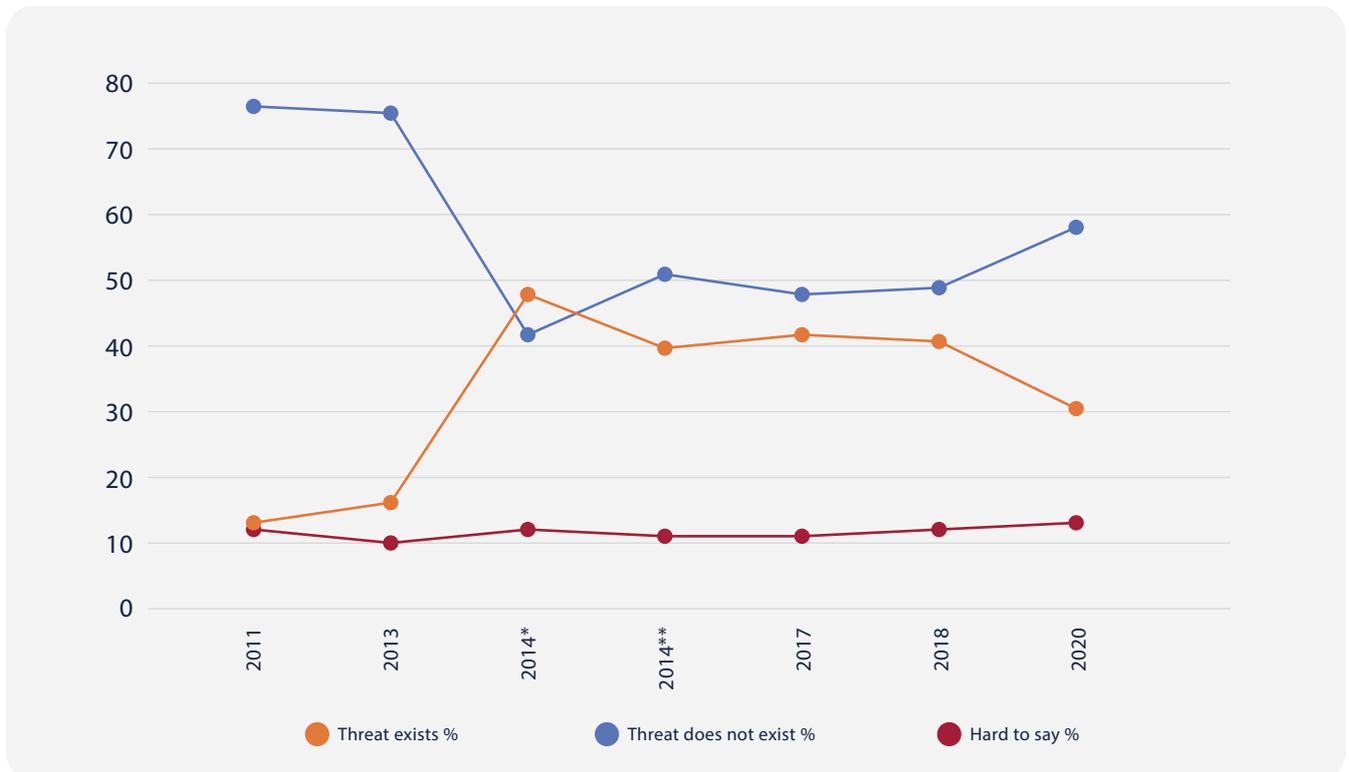
*First half of the year.

**Second half of the year.

38. Postrzeganie bezpieczeństwa państwa i stosunek do NATO; Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej CBOS; No. 28/2020; https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_028_20.PDF [access 21.03.2022]; p. 2.
39. Transatlantic trends 2021; German Marshall Fund of the United States; https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/TT2021_Web_Version.pdf [access 21.03.2022]; p. 23.

RUSSIA'S LONG SHADOW

"We know very well that today it is Georgia, tomorrow it will be Ukraine, the day after tomorrow the Baltic States, and later maybe time will come for my country, for Poland" - said the then-President of Poland Lech Kaczynski in Tbilisi on August 12, 2008, during the Georgian War. This sentence depicts well Polish politicians' and citizens' greatest concern: Russia's aggressive and hostile policy has worried Poles not only for decades, but for centuries. During the war in Ukraine, this threat is felt even more strongly in Warsaw.

Tension and hostility have characterized Polish-Russian relations since the beginning of the tsarist empire. The common history of both countries is important because it determines our mutual relations to this day, and this should not be underestimated. For example, today in Russia, one of the most important national holidays is Unity Day, celebrated on November 4th to commemorate the expulsion of Polish troops from the Kremlin in November 1612. From a Polish perspective, the long history of wars with Russia, Russian dominance in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, and atrocities committed by the Soviets during the Second World War are still shaping the Polish worldview and relationship.

Because of these historic experiences, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Poland quickly did everything possible to join NATO (1999) and the European Union (2004). Joining these structures was not only an expression of Poland's ever-present pro-Western ambitions, but also a reflection of the fear of falling into Moscow's sphere of influence again. This is clearly visible in Polish defense strategies. The National Security Strategy of 2014, issued shortly before

the annexation of Crimea, emphasized in parallel with the identification of asymmetric threats (e.g., international terrorism) the risk of a conventional war in Eastern Europe and warned against the neo-imperial policy of the Russian Federation.[40] The 2020 Strategy went even further and reads as follows: "The most serious threat is the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation, pursued also by means of military force."[41] Unfortunately, at the time of writing, it is also clear that the over 400-year-old history of rivalry with Russia is still far from over. And nor should Poland take its independence for granted, even though joining Western security structures has increased the country's security position.

Warsaw is most afraid of military aggression from Russia, both against its territory and against other allies on NATO's eastern flank. Therefore, for over 20 years, Poland has spent more and more on defense. Even the 2008 global financial crisis did not affect this trend. The impetus of this is more than just Poland's desire to have a strong army for its own use.[42] Warsaw realizes that in today's conditions, in case of a conflict, Poland holds a special strategic position for NATO. This is so for several reasons. First, Poland is a country in the middle of NATO's eastern flank, and it is the only country there that shares a border with Germany, currently a hub for NATO forces in Europe. In the event of war with Russia, Germany would provide the biggest transfer of forces to the east, meaning that Poland will be a necessary stopover regardless of where the supplies are headed. Shipments of weapons and humanitarian aid from all over Europe going to Ukraine pass through Poland. But this is not the only challenge created by Poland's geography.

Poland Military Expenditure
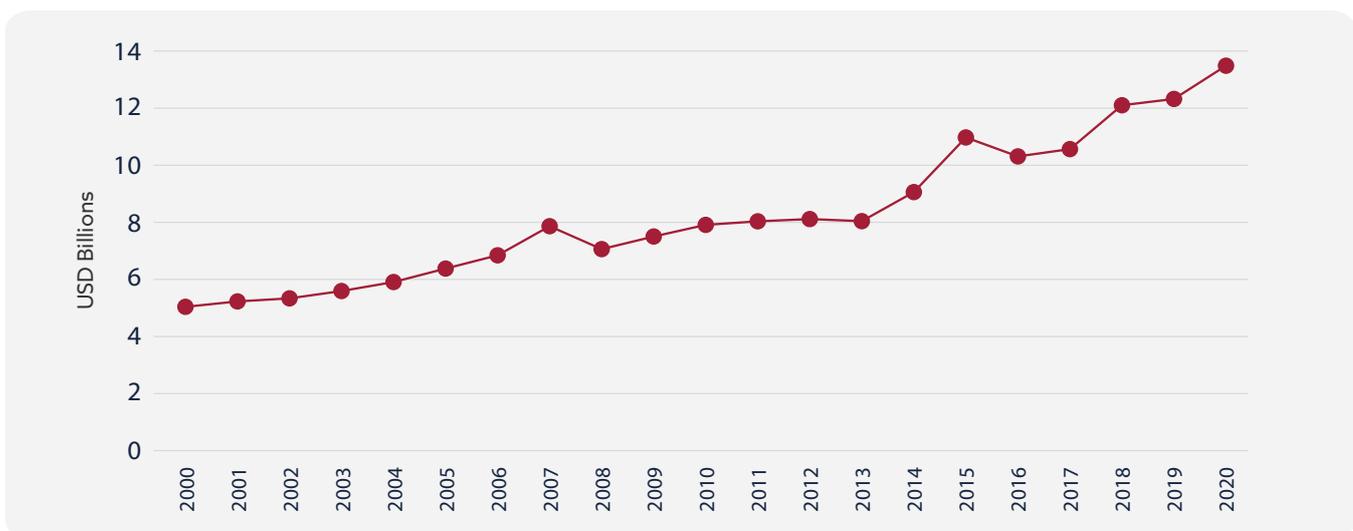
40. National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/NSS_RP.pdf [access 21.03.2022]; p. 20; 21-22.
41. National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland 2020; https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/National_Security_Strategy_of_the_Republic_of_Poland_2020.pdf [access 21.03.2022]; p. 6.
42. SIPRI military expenditure database. Military expenditure by country 2021; https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932020%20in%20constant%20%282019%29%20USD%20%28pdf%29.pdf [access 21.03.2022].

From the perspective of maintaining the eastern flank, the so-called Suwałki gap is crucial. It is a very narrow corridor, about 60 km long, along the Polish-Lithuanian border. Both banks of this corridor are marked by Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast on one side, and Belarus on the other. From the Polish town of Augustów, there are only two roads leading toward the Baltic states, to Vilnius and Kaunas, respectively. These are also the only land routes through which NATO can supply Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in case of a potential conflict. The Suwałki Gap is the choke point of the northern part of the eastern flank. Nevertheless, considering the growing dependence of Belarus on Russia, maintaining the narrow Suwałki Gapposes is a huge challenge for the Polish Armed Forces, which would be stuck defending it and facing attacks from both sides, from Kaliningrad and Belarus simultaneously.

Poland's Strategic environment and the Suwałki Gap
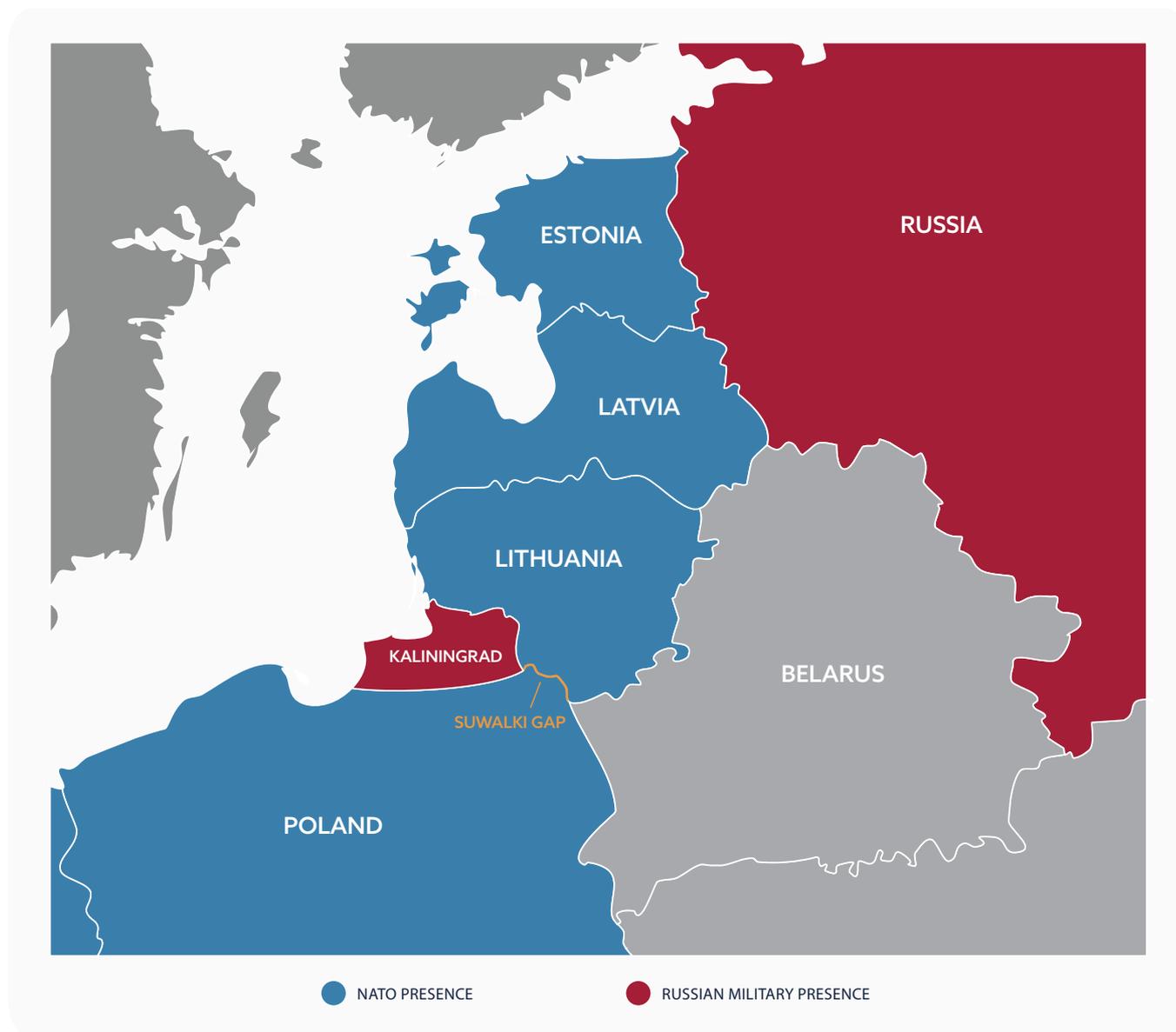
Geography is not the only factor dictating Poland's policy/ perception of threats in the event of a war with Russia. There is a significant difference in the military potential of the two countries. Currently, Poland has an army composed of approximately 155,500 soldiers, including tens of thousands of people serving in the territorial defense and reserve forces. Currently, politicians of the ruling party, and at least some members of the military, claim that these numbers are far too low. They want Poland to build an army of 300,000, of which 50,000 soldiers would be territorial defense. This idea prompts doubt in expert circles and among journalists. They draw attention to the fact that the implementation of such a goal would exceed Poland's budget capabilities. Even now, maintaining 155,500 soldiers requires Poland to spend 2 percent of its GDP on defense. Moreover, since 24 February 2022, there is an ongoing debate about the allocation of resources, which includes a debate about territorial defense, i.e., the constitution of a large army reserve. So far, this idea is a political declaration that has not been written into a document.

However, military potential is not only defined by the number of soldiers; it also consists of the equipment in use. Sadly, in the Polish Armed Forces, some weapons and equipment are often outdated and need to be modernized or replaced as soon as possible. Additionally, equipment that has been sent to Ukraine to support Kyiv's war effort needs replacement. Poland needs to develop new capabilities to prepare itself for modern requirements on the battlefield. This technical modernization of the armed forces in turn raises the question of allocation of resources in a state budget that remains constrained. A particular concern is the lack of a modern and adequate modern short- and medium-range air defense system. These needs are already partially satisfied by modernization programs. But the process is long-lasting, expensive, and requires strategic cooperation with allies, since Poland itself does not possess many of the key technologies required, for example, to build precision missiles. According to agreements concluded by the Polish Ministry of National Defense, the key partners in this modernization of the armed forces are the U.S. and the U.K.

NON-MILITARY THREATS

Nevertheless, hard power is definitely not everything in today's security environment. In Poland, the list of non-military threats includes those related to the energy sector, especially the gas supply. After 1989, Poland was dependent on gas from Russia. People were concerned about this not only because of the gas' country of origin but also because of Russia's near monopoly. Russia's dominance hampered the Polish negotiating position around subsequent (usually unfavorable and long-term) contracts, such as Poland's 2010 Yamal gas contract with Russia's Gazprom. According

to the contract, Poland had to buy a specific, contracted amount of gas each year, regardless of the country's actual consumption for a period of 12 years. In addition, the Russian gas supplier Gazprom had repeatedly charged Poland inflated prices for gas. This was proven by an arbitration court ruling in Stockholm in 2020, which forced the Russian giant to refund Poland an overpayment of as much as approximately 1.5 billion USD.[43]

From Poland's perspective, dependence on Russian gas is a political risk. The Kremlin could use Poland's dependence to force its will on the country. There are ample examples of Russia's ability to do that. The interruption of gas supplies to Ukraine in January 2009 (in the middle of winter) highlights this. Back then, this dispute between Kyiv and Moscow prompted Russia to cut off gas supplies running through Ukraine. This caused an energy crisis in many European countries, which received gas from Russia through the Brotherhood pipeline in Ukraine. Considering that Poland is supplied with Russian gas through only one pipeline (Yamal) and generally has bad relations with Russia, gas-related arguments have always been a cause for concern among Poles. Therefore, despite deep political divisions, the diversification of gas supply sources has been a cross-party objective in Poland in recent years. Since 2022, Poland can say with satisfaction that it managed to achieve diversification.

A good example of this is the liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal in Świnoujście, which can receive 5 billion normal cubic meters (Nm3) of gas annually, a number that will increase to 7.5 billion Nm3 per year after expansion.[44] The decision to build it was made in 2006, and despite several changes of government in the meantime, it became operational in 2015. In addition, the Baltic Pipe pipeline, which already transports Norwegian gas to Poland has a capacity of 10 billion Nm3 per year.[45] This is important, given the current geopolitical (and energy) situation. Thanks to those two investments and some homeland gas production, Poland is working to free itself from the specter of Russian blackmail.

Due to its own and its neighbors' negative experiences with Russian gas supplies, Poland was always very nervous about Germany increasing its own energy dependence on Moscow. A perfect example of this was the Polish stance towards the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. In Poland's and other Eastern European countries' perception, Nord Stream 2 is a purely political project which does not serve any other purpose than to bypass Ukraine in the gas supplied to Europe. Russia's willingness to use this new gas pipeline as political leverage was clear already in 2021, when it reduced the volume of gas transported to Europe, thereby raising energy prices. At the same time, Moscow promised that it would increase gas transfer again but only if Europeans sped up the completion of Nord Stream 2.

43. V. Afanasiev: Gazprom loses court appeal against PGNiG; www.upstreamonline.com; 9.03.2022; https://www.upstreamonline.com/production/gazprom-loses-court-appeal-against-pgnig/2-1-1182009 [access 21.03.2022].
44. LNG Terminal's in Świnoujście website; https://terminallng.gaz-system.pl/en/terminal-lng/terminal-lng-w-swinoujsciu/ [access 21.03.2022].
45. Ibid.

In other words, the blackmailing had already started even before the launch of the gas pipeline. It should also be mentioned that, notwithstanding the current inoperability of Nord Stream 1 and 2 due to Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine and the sabotage operation of September 2022, Nord Stream 2 is hugely expensive, and difficult to justify from an economic point of view. For example, already-existent gas pipelines would never operate at 100 percent capacity, and the construction of a gas pipeline on the seabed has proven very expensive and much more challenging than expanding existing lines or even building a new pipeline on land.

Today, however, the spectrum of non-military or asymmetric threats is much broader. International terrorism is one such threat, with particular emphasis on Islamic terrorism, as well as right-wing or left-wing terrorism. Poland, like other Western countries, was shocked by the attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York City, the 2004 train bombings in Madrid, the attacks in Paris in 2015, and many others. As in other Western countries, counterterrorism is a fixed point in Polish national security strategies, and Polish soldiers have accompanied their NATO allies on many missions, including in Afghanistan. However, this might be more a manifestation of Polish involvement in Western structures and globalization than a response to real threats against the Polish people. Unlike other European countries, Poland has no experience of bloody terrorist attacks on its territory. Therefore, in the so-called Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TESAT) reports issued by Europol, Poland always ranks among the countries with the lowest number of arrests under suspicion of terrorist activity.[46] Nevertheless, Polish decision-makers are updating the national counter-terrorism system to put it in line with international obligations by creating new organizational units within the relevant services and adopting new laws such as the Anti-Terrorist Activities Act of 2016.

EMERGING NEW THREATS

In addition to terrorism and the fear of conventional armed conflict, Poland is currently threatened by other activities below the so-called threshold of war, which the media often refers to as hybrid warfare. This includes disinformation and cyberattacks, but perhaps the most glaring example of a completely new threat was the 2021 Polish-Belarusian border crisis, triggered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka. In his long political career, the Belarusian dictator has had fluctuating relations with Russia, as well as with the EU and Poland. There were periods of increased

cooperation as well as increased hostility. Nevertheless, a true gamechanger was the presidential election in Belarus in 2020, when the Belarusian opposition, despite repression and often without leaders (whom the regime put in prison), had a real chance to win the election and get rid of Lukashenka.

According to various surveys, the opposition won that election decisively, which only intensified the backlash and repression on the part of the Belarusian authorities, who were desperately trying to hang on to power. At that time, Poland and Lithuania extended a helping hand to the Belarusian people, accepting those who decided to leave the country, organizing help for affected families and supporting independent social organizations in Belarus.[47] Lukashenka's answer came when, at the turn of spring 2021, Belarusian authorities engineered a migration crisis on the Belarus-Lithuania border, which they then spilled over to the Belarus-Poland border as well.

Belarus managed to cause an artificial migration crisis on the eastern borders of the EU using migrants mainly from the Middle East. Through travel agencies in these countries and for an appropriate fee, the Belarusian security services brought migrants to Belarus and then helped them reach the EU border. Some part of the fee was kept by the security services, which means Belarus can be credibly accused of human trafficking.[48] It is hard to guess what exactly Lukashenko was after, but most likely he was hoping for a repeat of the 2015 migration crisis that divided Europe and caused political instability in many countries. However, this did not happen, for at least two reasons.

First, EU countries and EU elites behaved differently toward this migration crisis than in 2015. The EU seemed to know that it was not dealing with a wave of spontaneous migration but with a deliberate action of the Belarusian services.[49] Significantly, the head of the European Council did not rule out co-financing barriers all along the Polish-Belarusian border, which in 2015 would have been considered an example of right-wing populism.[50] This change in the EU's policy allowed Poland to take the necessary steps to stop the whole crisis at the source. The EU was able to limit the number of flights most often from Iraq to Belarus, which limited Lukashenka's ability to attract new migrants.

Second, from the very beginning Poland adopted a strong policy aimed at sealing the border with Belarus. Polish resolve rose along with the surge in the number of illegal migrants trying to cross the border. In August, troops were sent to guard the border, and on September 2, a

46. European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2021; Europol; https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/tesat_2021_0.pdf [access 21.03.2022]; p. 17.
47. B. Fraszka; The Situation on the Poland-Belarus Border: Background, Geopolitics, Narratives; www.warsawinstitute.org 23.12.2021; https://warsawinstitute.org/situation-poland-belarus-border-background-geopolitics-narratives/ [access 21.03.2022].
48. Ibidiem.
49. Ibidiem.
50. L. Bayer; Michel opens door to EU funding for border walls; www.politico.eu 10.11.2021; https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-money-for-border-infrastructure-legally-possible-charles-michel-says/ [access 21.03.2022].

state of emergency was declared in the border regions. At peak moments, the number of Polish soldiers on the border with Belarus exceeded 15,000, a little bit less than a third of the Polish Land Forces in total.[51] Poland, with diplomatic support from the EU, managed to cope with this threat, but it is worth noting that Warsaw had to leverage considerable resources (most notably thousands of soldiers) to rise to this challenge. Physical border protection will be an important priority for Poland to be better prepared in the future.

UNITY OF THE WEST

Poland tries to do as much as possible by itself to stay safe, but the complete security of Poland can only be achieved through strong cooperation with its allies. Therefore, it was at times upsetting to observe the divisions within NATO. Because of the war in Ukraine, we are finally able to see some unity once again. Before the invasion, we witnessed fragmentation, with some countries focusing their attention on different areas at the expense of others. For example, the American pivot to the Pacific and quarrels with the German government led to U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw as many as 12,000 US troops from Germany. At the same time, French President Macron delivered a speech calling NATO "brain dead," and talked much about the "strategic autonomy of Europe." Back then, Poland was especially concerned about these events as they undermined NATO's unity and political deterrence, thereby making Eastern Europe more vulnerable to Russian influence. An appeasement approach towards Russia will only further destabilize Eastern Europe, as the ongoing war in Ukraine demonstrates. Poland also cannot accept the weakening of NATO's capacities, particularly at a time when Russia's threatening posture is clear for all to see.

But, of course, Poland is aware of the rising challenges beyond Europe. Poland's National Security Strategy acknowledges a wide range of threats coming from around the world, including migration pressure from Africa and the rise of China. It is also worth mentioning that Poland proved itself to be a reliable ally when it participated in wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and in EU missions in Africa and Georgia. Poland also became a participant member of the Eurocorps (Europe's multinational military corps) in 2022. Polish Minister of Defense Mariusz Błaszczak said that Poland joined the Eurocorps because "we treat it as a manifestation of Poland's commitment and practical contribution to Euro-Atlantic security - the possibility of demonstrating that Poland is not a security consumer, but a security provider."[52] Warsaw is always open to helping allies, wherever and whenever they need it, but it expects the same from them. Poland may well be less aware of threats emerging from Africa or East Asia, but Warsaw is surely open to discussions on how NATO and the EU should address them. Polish people also seem to be of the same opinion and, as some studies show, are even in favor of more Western military involvement in the Middle East, even though Poland doesn't have any significant influence or interests in the region.[53]

CONCLUSION

The greatest threat to Poland originates from Russia. Moscow is a challenge for Warsaw in military, economic, and energy terms. It also challenges the Polish security system through hybrid activities such as disinformation, cyberattacks, and other measures. It is mostly Moscow's actions and painful experiences from the 20th century that shaped the Polish worldview in terms of security. Terrorism and the rise of China and other global threats also influence Poland's policies, but these threats are not as immediate as those coming from Russia.

In this combination of old and emerging threats, Poland knows very well that it must be prepared, but also that it needs staunch allies. Warsaw cannot on its own deter Russia or stop an influx of migrants, regardless of their place of origin. Poland is a security consumer in the West, but it is also apparently willing to be a security provider now and in the future.

51. Białoruś: 15 tys. polskich żołnierzy przy naszej granicy. Nigdy tylu nie było; www.rp.pl 24.01.2022; https://www.rp.pl/dyplomacja/art19318381-bialorus-15-tys-polskich-zolnierzy-przy-naszej-granicy-nigdy-tylu-nie-bylo [access 21.03.2022].
52. Polska szóstym państwem ramowym Eurokorpusu; www.gov.pl 25.01.2022; https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/polska-szostym-panstwem-ramowym-eurokorpusu [access 21.03.2022].
53. Transatlantic Trends. German Marshall Fund of The United States. Pg. 27.

ROMANIA
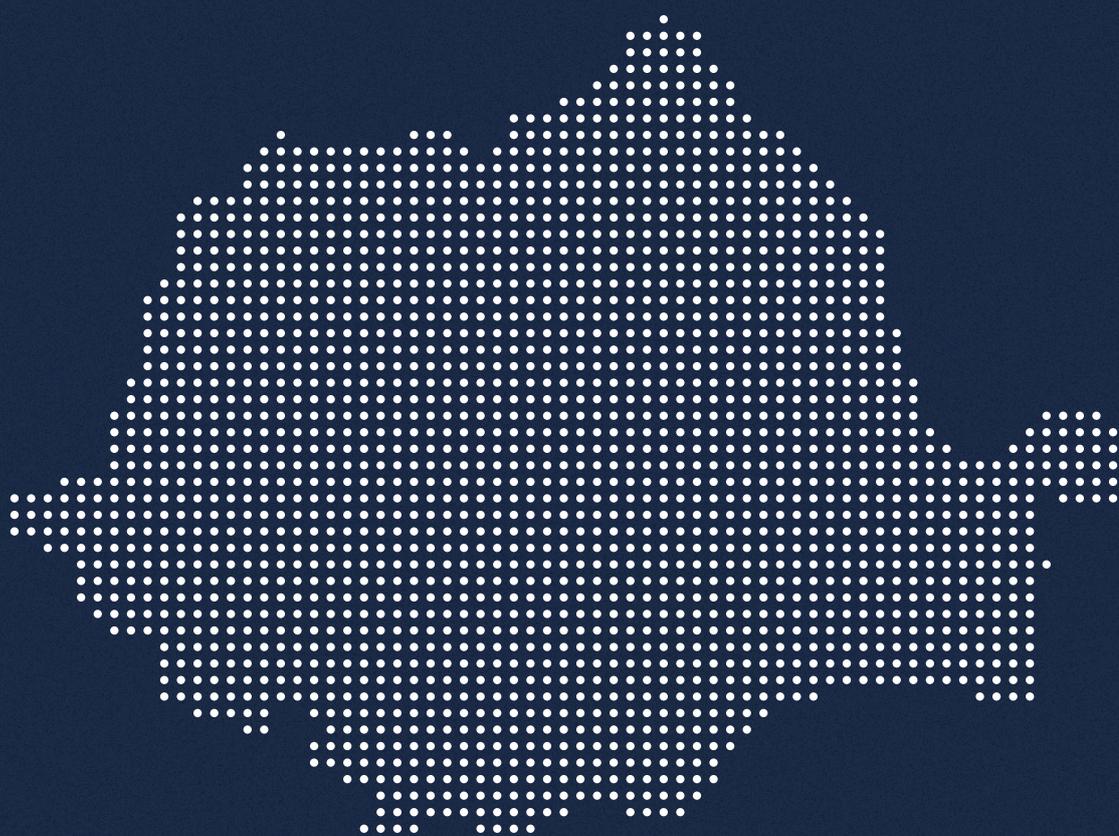
05

ROMANIAN VIEWS ON EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

RADU ALBU COMĂNESCU

After centuries of geopolitical pressure, largely because of its geographical location, Romania has an acute interest in security and survival. Romania's political elites have a fascination with power, force, and might: the United States and the Soviet Union being, for many adults, the main wielders of all three - for better (the U.S.), or for worse (the Kremlin). The absence of power politics from the European integration project explains, to a great extent, Romania's subconscious passiveness in EU affairs. As such, there is a divergence between the country's involvement in EU economic integration – which is seen as crucial in its regional context – and its non-participation in the European political construction. Leaders in Bucharest do not see Brussels as a source of power and security, and so do not regard it as a reliable political actor. On the contrary, the U.S. offers more guarantees, especially recently, as the global dynamics regarding China and Russia – at political, military, and economic levels – are of great impact on Romania's foreign policy.

ROMANIA'S POSITION IN EU STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

When the concept of strategic autonomy became the main priority of French President Emmanuel Macron's EU sovereignty, the reaction of Romanian diplomats was initially a deep silence. Bucharest took its time and looked for additional explanations, hints, and clearer definitions of the much-invoked strategic autonomy label. Romania's official position on this came very late. It was only in November 2020, when Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, published an op-ed offering the country's take on strategic autonomy.[54] This initiative was timely, after the publication of the 2020-2024 Romanian National Security Strategy (where Russia's aggressiveness was identified as a threat) and in a context of intensive strategic debates at the EU level (Macron's "braindead NATO" comment and his repeated calls for a unilateral dialogue with Russia as well as his calls for a "new architecture of trust and security").

Aurescu's op-ed started with a trilateration of Romania's foreign policy pillars: the bilateral partnership with the U.S. as well as NATO and EU membership. These were described

in terms of values – a way to ensure security, freedom, and prosperity – not only of circumstantial benefits. Aurescu indicated Romania's attachment to a free and democratic society, the rule of law, acceptance of international law, and support for multilateralism.

The op-ed was a polite rejection of a country that embraces opposite views. Romania could not work with Russia as a partner as long as the Kremlin did not change its behavior. Romania thus rejected France's initiative. But this led Romania to a wide-ranging analysis of what strategic autonomy could mean if the Elysée's suggestion was eventually embraced.

First, Romania could not support strategic autonomy because it would put NATO and the U.S. in the back seat on security. Instead of playing with tensions between EU capitals and Washington over the future of NATO as Macron did at the time of the Trump administration, Bucharest expressed a preference for more dialogue between transatlantic partners. Romania advocated a process addressing contentious issues to strengthen mutual understanding and bring all allies on board for a new approach to NATO's role, with a better share of responsibilities on the two sides of the Atlantic. It is why Romania supported transatlantic allies in favor of updating – and deepening – the Alliance's strategic concept to answer ongoing and forthcoming strategic challenges more efficiently, not forgetting to address this in relation to discussions about the future of Europe.[55] "It is in Romania's interest that these processes should lead to the adaptation of the two organizations to present and future challenges, while maintaining the fundamental elements that make them viable and underpin Romania's membership," Aurescu stated.

Romania held the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2019, which led to its expanded involvement. European affairs, as a topic, had been eclipsed in Romania by a focus on the transatlantic priority and by a limited understanding of EU membership (especially regarding its technical functioning and its economic global opportunities). Since 2007 and Romania's accession to the EU it has largely remained a passive member,

54. Op-ed Calea Europeană. Bogdan Aurescu: Valorile comune în spațiul transatlantic – Coerență în politica externă a României și contribuția la rolul global și reziliența strategică ale UE [Op-ed Bogdan Aurescu: Common values in the transtlantic area - coherence in Romania's foreign policy and the contribution to the global role and the strategic resilience of the EU], online at https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/op-ed-bogdan-aurescu-valorile-comune-in-spatiul-transatlantic-coerenta-in-politica-externa-a-romaniei-si-contributia-la-rolul-global-si-rezilienta-strategica-ale-ue/, accessed March 2022.
55. Aurescu, op. cit. All quotations in this chapter have the same source.

focusing on domestic affairs and economic growth with no or little interest in shaping EU policies.[56] After 2019, traditional band-wagoning was dropped and proactivity seemed prioritized, coinciding with changes in the national political landscape and a new dynamic in relations with the U.S.[57] The American relationship influenced Romania's understanding of how the Atlantic alliance should evolve and strengthened Bucharest's opposition to initiatives linked to EU strategic autonomy.[58]

On the one side, Aurescu insisted on reinforcing the transatlantic alliance as a community of values and security. He emphasized that any divisions were temporary, and he stressed the personal role that U.S. President Joe Biden played in shaping U.S. policy in the Black Sea when he was the Vice President. On the other side, Aurescu noted that the concept of strategic autonomy was left undefined, involving the use of several indicators such as autonomy, sovereignty, or responsibility. To clarify Romania's position, Aurescu decided to engage in definition and clarified that in security and defense areas, "despite the extensive interpretations of some," Romania understands autonomy as an indicator of the EU's "capacity to act, whenever possible, in coordination, cooperation and complementarity with its partners, the US and NATO (...), and, when necessary, on its own." Bucharest rejects all institutional frameworks that would challenge or unnecessarily duplicate NATO's tasks.

Beyond these aspects, Aurescu considers that "Subsequent developments, not least the crises, including that generated by COVID-19, have shown that beyond the field of security and defense - where the debate automatically involves a discussion on the harmonization of the Union's ambitions taking into account the level of coordination and cooperation with NATO - there are other areas of interest, perhaps even more so, for the debate on strategic autonomy, such as the financial, economic-industrial, scientific and technological or health sectors." The minister extended his judgement:

"We are in fact talking about two sides of the same coin, and the concept of autonomy must be discussed both from the EU's internal perspective and from that of the Union's external action. From an internal perspective, the concept is linked to that of resilience, insofar as it is about avoiding massive dependence on external actors that do not share our values and interests in areas such as strategic industries, including defense, supply chains, digital, connectivity, on the one hand, and strengthening links with like-minded partners and actors on the other. (...) The Union as a whole should be resilient enough to maintain the functionality of the economy and the common market, even in adverse global conditions. (...) From this point of view, I think we should rather talk about the EU's strategic resilience, a concept that can partly replace the concept of autonomy."

Romania understands that the effectiveness of EU resilience relies, however, on the principle of solidarity and on the EU member states' ability to implement concerted action. As such, resilience depends on each member state's willingness to frame the defense of European interests as the defense of its own national interest through a process of negotiation based on good faith and mutual understanding. If done properly, this mechanism is the one leading to EU integration, and therefore to the integration of European interests. A strong transatlantic partnership and NATO's increased capacity to perform its tasks are central and non-negotiable interests for Romania. Bucharest does not refute, however, that the EU should assume a leading role in international relations—based on its economic weight, population size, military strength and, above all, because of its values, defined by human rights, the rule of law, and democracy.

For this reason, Aurescu emphasized:

...the construction of a distinct European profile must take place without accentuating differences with close partners, and within the broader framework of actors that are part of what we have called the political 'West.'

Opposing, as it was done by the promoters of the strategic autonomy, the two shores of the Atlantic, "risks ultimately reducing the chances of success of [Europe's] own solutions and, further, undermining the very framework that is being sought." Strategic autonomy, according to the Minister, "can only be the result of a process of evolution involving all Member States", with Romania being "interested in participating in this process by expressing values that define us and by pursuing our national interests." But these interests must be subsumed to a normative global order, Aurescu continues:

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56. Romania is largely perceived as a country which is punching below its weight, in: Claire Busse, Ulrike Franke, Rafael Loss, Jana Puglierin, Marlene Riedel, Pawel Zerka, EU Coalition Explorer, July 2020, special report online at: https://ecfr.eu/special/eucoalitionexplorer/, accessed February 2022.

57. At the end of May 2019, Liviu Dragnea, mastermind of the Social-Democratic Party -led governmental coalition—getting closer to illiberal patterns of governance and altering the rule of law—was arrested in a civil case opened against him. ; See below, the next chapter.

58. The Romanian Presidency of the EU never addressed the subject, which was tacitly set aside as excessive. None of the former or current presidential counsellors on defence and security supported, in public or private, the project of European autonomy, nor the rapprochement with Russia; none of the leading political parties in the country included the concept on their agenda, except for a few voices in USR, a centrist political group temporarily part of the government coalition (December 2020-September 2021). The consensus on a strong, privileged relationship with the USA is bipartisan. It also reflects (or reflected before January 2022) the lack of depth in the French-Romanian relations, the outcome of an ever-increasing distance created by the 2nd Iraq War of 2003.

"For a country with a geographic location such as Romania, means and responses to challenges as well as needs are not limited but enhanced by the European community. The credibility of an EU member state is multiplied by EU membership and by the defense of the set of values coming with the current international system based on rules."

ROMANIA AND THE FUTURE OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

In reality, challenges towards the current international system and the future of transatlantic relations (which includes changes in institutions) are not topics of public discussion in Romania. Neither is the debate around strategic autonomy, the Romanian public understanding the transatlantic partnership as the one and only general framework for its national security. In reality, Romanian political and diplomatic elites give equal importance to the US-EU-NATO pillars that constitute Bucharest's main foreign policy framework. The Transatlantic relationship is therefore extremely important for Romania, the cooperation with Washington being one of these pillars.

After 1989 (and before joining the EU), building a transatlantic partnership was Romania's most intense strategic effort. As Romania could not join the first group of NATO enlargement states in 1997, Bucharest considered a strategic bilateral partnership with the U.S. as the best alternative and a strategic objective.[59] The process of NATO adhesion was eventually launched on 11 July 1997, when American President Bill Clinton visited the country to support Romania's commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration, a positive message for the quest for stability and security in the very troubled Southeastern Europe of the 1990s. A few months later, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, Marc Grossman, visited Bucharest to identify areas of common interest for the partnership. Bilateral relations with the U.S. thus became the first effective gesture of support for Romania's efforts at political, economic, military, and administrative reform.

Romanian economic reforms and its assistance in the war on terrorism consolidated U.S. support for the country's integration into NATO.[60] Romania provided significant assistance to the U.S.-led international coalition, including for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq alongside increased bilateral cooperation in specific counter-terrorism actions. Romania joined NATO in March 2004. This was followed by an Agreement on the Activities of U.S. Forces Stationed on Romanian Territory (Access Agreement, December 2005/July 2006), another important step in the bilateral relationship - enabling U.S. military access to several bases in Romania and facilitating defense cooperation and joint military exercises.[61]

Negotiations on the legal framework for the deployment of U.S. missile defense components on Romanian territory started in June 2010. The final draft was completed a year later, after several rounds of negotiations between US and Romanian delegations and experts. The Agreement on the Deployment of the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense System was signed by the Romanian and American foreign ministers during the Romanian President's trip to Washington on 13 September 2011. The two countries then signed a Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century, confirming the "excellent, long-term and growing partnership between the two countries." It set out eight pillars of cooperation: political dialogue, security, economy, people-to-people contacts, science and technology, research, education, and culture.[62] In 2012, the two countries initiated a strategic dialogue that includes both political-strategic meetings and intermediate-strategic meetings at a technical level. A task force was set up to implement the principles agreed upon in the joint declaration; its all-encompassing membership reveals the extent and the diversity of U.S.-Romanian collaboration.[63] The two countries also agreed to set up sectoral working groups on political and military issues, cybersecurity and digital affairs, economic and trade issues, energy security, education, science, innovation, technological cooperation, and culture. The economic aspects of the strategic partnership are important in terms of investment, bilateral trade, identifying areas of common economic interest, and facilitating interaction between Romanian and American businesses. The kick-off meeting in June 2013 launched a working group dedicated to energy security, which would become crucial by the end of the decade.

59. From November 1996 to December 2000, Romania was governed by the Democratic Convention, an alliance of several democratic, anti-Communist and center-right political parties. It was active from 1991 to 2000; its leading representatives (Ion Rațiu, Radu Câmpeanu, Gh. Coposu, Mircea Ionescu-Quintus, etc) were involved in politics and diplomacy during the Kingdom of Romania before 1947. The Convention's presidential candidate, Emil Constantinescu, was elected president in November 1996.

60. In addition, bilateral cooperation in the fight against unconventional risks (such as drug and human trafficking, financial crime, etc.) led to the opening of the FBI office in Bucharest in May 2001.

61. By this time the President of Romania, Traian Băsescu (2004-2009, 2009-2014), had positioned himself as a resolute Atlanticist, maximizing cooperation with London and Washington. He took a firm position against Russia, which was a unilateral—and unsuccessful—attempt at becoming a regional leader in the Black Sea area,.

62. Full text in Romanian on the website of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mae.ro/sites/default/files/file/2011.09.13_declaratie.pdf (accessed March 2022).

63. The task force involves representatives of the following state institutions : Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of National Defence; Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Public Finance; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Information; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of National Education; Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration; Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; the Romanian Information Service; Romanian Office for Adoptions; Department of Energy; Department of SMEs, Business Environment and Tourism; Department of Infrastructure and Strategic Investments, and alsothe U.S. embassy and U.S. government agencies represented in Bucharest. The American Chamber of Commerce in Romania (AmCham) and the American-Romanian Business Council (AMRO) may also be invited to participate in task force meetings.

Subsequent meetings in November 2013 and September 2014 continued to focus on the implementation of the 2011 Joint Declaration. These two editions were specifically devoted to the economy with the participation of the American-Romanian Business Council (AMRO). In November 2015, the U.S.-Romania meeting was used as an opportunity to review the state of bilateral relations, particularly in the fields of political, military, and economic cooperation.[64] A new bilateral achievement – extending the scale of U.S.-Romanian partnership –was reached in May 2016, when the operational capability of the Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System (AAMDS) at the Deveselu Military Base was certified according

to NATO standards. A month later, the NATO Summit in Warsaw announced the decision to put the U.S. Deveselu military facility under Allied command. By September, the fifth task force meeting took place: the two countries adopted a joint declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between Romania and the United States of America.[65]

Donald Trump's election to the White House required a tenacious and different approach to the U.S. of the White House by the Bucharest executive. Confronted with Trump's negative comments on the functioning of NATO, Romania preferred emphasizing the benefits of a

Missile Defence: NATO Capabilities

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64. It brought together the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the State Department, the U.S. Ambassador to Romania, and representatives of the Romanian and US Presidential administrations, ministries, institutions, and specialized agencies, etc.

65. Available at https://www.mae.ro/node/38549, accessed March 2022. The event was attended by high-level representatives of the Prime Minister's Chancellery, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business Environment, as well as other Romanian officials. This delegation reflected the importance of the bilateral relationship. The sixth annual dialogue was held in June 2018, with delegations led by the Deputy Prime Minister for the Implementation of Romania's Strategic Partnerships and the Assistant for European and Eurasian Affairs to the U.S. Secretary of State. One year later, in July 2019, the Romanian-U.S. Intermediate Strategic Dialogue Meeting took place, with Romania represented by the Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Justice.

reinforced bilateral relationship, a formula that ultimately gained Trump's support. Romania was not trading off NATO for alternative gains potentially obtained through bilateral US-Romanian relation, but cunningly adapted its approach to the transatlantic relationship to the peculiar vision of the American president at that time. It ultimately worked, as demonstrated by the high-level dialogue between Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and Trump, and it proved fruitful during Iohannis' visits to Washington in June 2017 and August 2019. The 2019 meeting proved to be important because it allowed the two countries to add a medium-term development roadmap to the new joint declaration adopted by the presidents.[66] The roadmap covered much of the long-term Strategic Partnership (defense, energy security, trade, investment, good governance and the fight against corruption). It introduced two new areas of cooperation, 5G network security and the civil nuclear sector, formalized through Memoranda of Understanding concluded in August and September 2019.[67]

This chronological review is necessary to understand why the relationship between the U.S. and NATO took precedence over Romania's accession to the EU. It also explains why Romania did not dedicate time and effort to broaden discussions on U.S.-NATO-EU relations and their institutional construct unless it touched on the future of NATO.

If the topic of the U.S.-NATO-EU partnership arose, Bucharest would prefer solutions based on using existing tools, such as strengthening the TTIP over economic issues or increasing the role of NATO's Parliamentary Assembly to provide space for political dialogue more often. Bucharest reacted positively to subregional security and economic arrangements, bi-, tri- or multilateral, as the creation of the "Bucharest 9" platform demonstrates. – The "Bucharest 9" is a regional platform for dialogue that includes Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Such initiative embraces minilateralism within the larger frame of transatlantic relations, if minilateralism supposes coordination with already-established key regional players under the U.S.'s aegis.[68] In addition, Romanian participation in the Three Seas Initiative – a geopolitical instrument promoting cooperation between Central and Eastern European countries for the development of infrastructure in the energy, transport, and digital sectors – which has bipartisan American support, is also illustrative. In fact, the 2023 annual Three Seas Initiative Summit will be held in Bucharest.[69]

66. Full text in Romanian, on the website of the Presidency of Romania, available at https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/comunicate-de-presa/declaratia-comuna-a-presedintelui-romaniei-domnul-klaus-iohannis-si-a-presedintelui-statelor-unite-ale-americii-domnul-donald-j-trump (accessed March 2022).
67. 2020 marked new ways of strengthening the Strategic Partnership, through mutual aid (including the air transport of medical materials to Romania), repatriations of citizens, best practice exchanges, and the deployment of a Romanian medical team in the U.S. state of Alabama to help local health authorities to overpass a Covid pandemic peak. By September, in a quick shift from a investment agreement with China, Romania signed a cooperation and financing agreement with the U.S. regarding the construction of two nuclear reactors at the Cernavodă powerplant on the Danube. The $8 billion project is the largest financing package in energy in Romanian history and can serve as a framework for future Romanian-American development projects.
68. For instance, the Poland-Romania-Turkey trilateral dialogue; see the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018, available at https://www.mae.ro/node/46833 (in Romanian, accessed March 2022).
69. "H[ouse] Res[olution] 672 of November 18, 2020, "expressing support for the Three Seas Initiative in its efforts to increase energy independence and infrastructure connectivity thereby strengthening the United States and European national security," at https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/672/text (accessed March 2022).

Bucharest 9 Countries

ASSESSMENT OF VULNERABILITIES AND THREATS; PRIORITIES

Romania's security needs, which the partnership with the U.S. and the NATO membership cover, derive from a perception of vulnerabilities and threats. The 2020-2024 National Defense Strategy (NDS) – published in 2020 –[70] examines these in detail. It contains a list of national strategic interests, starting with the defense of sovereignty, national character, territorial integrity, and the unity and indivisibility of the state. It also touches on strengthening Romania's constitutional democracy and the rule of law.[71] These interests are listed in three categories, one of which pertains to territorial defense and security. The other two are dedicated to the efficient functioning of state institutions and policies, and to "strengthening Romania's profile within the transatlantic system of alliances, partnerships and collective defense," with a focus on the advantages derived from Romania's geostrategic position.[72]

Romania is aware that it brings 238,000 km² of European territory to the defense and security of NATO, land that is protected by the natural fortress of the Carpathian Mountains and which controls half of the Danube, Europe's largest river. Romania's position, as a gateway to Eurasia and the Caucasus, via the Black Sea, and toward Southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean (by land for the former and via the Black Sea for the latter), as well as to Central Europe (through Transylvania), makes it crucial for NATO logistics.

Last, but not least, Romania is interested in building stability in an area shaken by warfare and frozen conflicts, and its leaders underscore foreign policy values defined by the following:[73]

a. **efficiency** aiming at continuously adapting the response to the existing security threats and challenges

b. **trust** defined as citizen' trust in Romanian institutions, these institutions' investment and support for their mission as Romania's trust in its partners, alliances, and communities of values, and the allies' trust in Romania in terms of responsibilities and obligations

c. **pragmatism** including decisions tailored to the concrete nature of a situation and bringing together all institutional actors in order to efficiently implement defense and security policies

d. **professionalism and compliance** with expert knowledge

e. **prevention and anticipation** focused on identifying and employing the necessary means to counter risks, threats, and vulnerabilities through an integrated civilian-military approach

f. **a pro-active attitude** aiming to identify and take responsibility for choosing an appropriate response in accordance with threats, risks, and vulnerabilities, and addressing them as early as possible

g. **the judicious management of national wealth** referring to "the entirety of the material and spiritual values of Romania, including our cultural heritage

70. The National Defense Strategy (hereafter NDS), is available in Romanian at https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/Documente/Strategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_2020_2024.pdf, the website of the Presidency of Romania (accessed March 2022). According to the document, threat, risk and vulnerability have a meaning identical to those defined iny the previous National Defense Strategy (2015-2019) and its guide. They are as follows: Threats: Actions, facts, or states of affairs, capabilities, strategies, intentions, or plans that may affect national security values, interests and objectives and/or are likely to directly or indirectly jeopardize national security, affecting national character, sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity, the normal functioning of state institutions, the life and physical integrity of citizens and the organization of human communities. Risks: Probabilities of any event, situation, condition with potential uncertain outcomes, whose realization would lead to an effect on the normal functioning of state institutions, the organization and functioning of human communities, as well as of the life and physical integrity of citizens in a given or specific context. Vulnerabilities: Functional-systemic/structural deficiencies that can be exploited or contribute to the materialization of threats or risks, weakening the state's capacity to mitigate the impact of events with potential to seriously affect the normal functioning of its institutions, the life and physical integrity of citizens, and the organization of human communities, as well as the capacity to protect, defend, and promote national security values, interests and objectives.Additionally, the Military Strategy of Romania, issued in 2021 (available in Romanian), https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/STRATEGIA-MILITARA-A-ROMANIEI-1.pdf (accessed March 2021)

71. Implying the safeguard, defense, and guarantee of the fundamental rights and liberties of citizens, with their individual and collective security.

72. I.e. guaranteeing the right to preserve, develop, and express the ethnic, cultural, and religious identity of national ethnic groups, according to existing laws and constitutional democracy; sustainable economic development by judiciously managing resources in order to provide well-being for citizens; guaranteeing the right to education and health care; bridging development gaps and upgrading the major public systems (health, education, social care, and transport), in order to ensure the provision of high-quality services to citizens, etc. Source: NDS, ut supra. ; By participating in the EU's cohesion and integration processes; by strengthening NATO's capacity to efficiently respond to current and future security threats and challenges, by staying committed to a "strong transatlantic relationship and the indivisible security of the allied states;; the enhancement of EU contributions to security and defense in coordination with NATO "in order to ensure the security and stability of Europe;" and strengthening multilateralism and an international order based on the rules, such as consecrated by the UN Charter and by OSCE founding documents. Source: NDS, ut supra.By participating in the EU's cohesion and integration processes; by strengthening NATO's capacity to efficiently respond to current and future security threats and challenges, by staying committed to a "strong transatlantic relationship and the indivisible security of the allied states;; the enhancement of EU contributions to security and defense in coordination with NATO "in order to ensure the security and stability of Europe;" and strengthening multilateralism and an international order based on the rules, such as consecrated by the UN Charter and by OSCE founding documents. Source: NDS, ut supra.

73. Such as the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, war in Transnistria, intervention in Kosovo, war in Georgia, war in Ukraine and, for the region, war in Syria, ISIL's emergence of ISIL, waves of refugees, etc.

The NDS identifies 17 potential threats. They can be sorted into three categories: geopolitical (most known and discussed), cyber-threats, and economic (plus, circumstantially, the fallout from the pandemic).[74]

Six concerns dominate the list of threats in the NDS. Two relate to Russia's post-2014 regional strategy. One concerns Russia's military behavior in the vicinity of Romania and NATO's eastern flank. This includes military exercises and stronger capabilities for both offensive and defensive operations in the region, as well as in Crimea and near the Black Sea. The second is Russia's aggressive behavior near Romania and the Black Sea region, which creates economic instability that might have negative ramifications for people living in those areas.

Romania has pushed NATO and its allies to address these threats related to Russia. Romania specifically focused on "the imbalances along the Eastern Flank" and "the positions of some allies regarding the Russian Federation," two factors which negatively influenced Romania's security situation, and which were seen as direct security threats. However, Bucharest generally showed restraint in calling out publicly those it considered to be Russian appeasers among EU governments. Those who professed a concerning degree of openness towards Russia were France and Hungary but also Germany, Italy, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia and Slovakia, still on the list back then. Still, Romania was among those who openly rejected Emmanuel Macron's designs for an "architecture of trust and security" in Europe based on a Russian alliance, and the resulting "autonomy" that was a purported outcome.

Romania insisted that instability in the Middle East and North Africa presents "major security threats in the European and particularly Western areas, mainly associated with Islamic radicalization". Instability also exists in other regions such as the Western Balkans where there are "limited prospects for solving frozen conflicts" (such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo-Serbia or in the South Caucasus). These factors of regional instability exists also in the Middle East and North Africa and appear as "security threats in the European Western areas".

The list of threats is completed with state and non-state entities that follow strategies of interference. These threats are being orchestrated by propaganda networks targeting Romania's strategic projects and state decisions, especially partnerships and policies related to the country's EU and NATO membership. Despite no names being given, Russia is portrayed indirectly in the NDS.

Cyber-attacks launched by state and non-state entities on critical information and communications infrastructure, disruptive technologies (artificial intelligence) multiplying threats, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime (Romania is used for illegal migration and international drug trafficking), financial cybercrime: all of these constitute threats. So are the "actions, facts, strategies, intentions or plans of states and non-state actors, aimed at undermining the Romanian state's authority and affecting its fundamental attributes" or "incitement to acts that could negatively affect the rule of law."[75] These include distortions in energy markets, actions (or a lack of action) that could damage Romania's economic interests, and interference and/or hostile foreign takeovers of national infrastructure such as telecommunications, energy, and ports. Concerns about Russia and China can be read between the lines.

In conclusion, Romania's leaders seem to have benefitted from contact with the U.S. Romania's latest assessment of threats and of security is, in general, more sophisticated and strategic than in the past. The NDS combines continuity and stability with flexibility, adaptability, and resilience, and is based on the acknowledgment of contemporary security concepts. It puts citizens at the core of security concerns. However, political security is missing in Romania's strategic thinking as it is not discussed, nor mentioned. Romania being a young democracy, political security could constitute a substantial security vulnerability. Different aspects can be addressed under this concept: governance, quality of democracy, corruption, party system resilience, etc. The 2025 edition of the National Defense Strategy should therefore be completed with a new chapter.

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74. This is mentioned only in one article (§ 118) as capable of severely affecting the world economy and testing transatlantic and EU cohesion.
75. Source: NDS, ut supra

GREECE

06

THREATS PERCEPTION AT A CROSSROAD IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: GREECE AND THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

ANNA ZAHARIADOU

In order to fully comprehend Greece's concept of strategic autonomy, it is crucial to assess the country's geostrategic importance and the historical security challenges that have shaped its defense, security, and foreign policy. Having access to three different seas (the Aegean, Ionian, and Libyan Seas), Greece is, in essence, a corridor between three continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa, while connecting the Balkans to southern Europe. Greece's location alone is indicative of the country's role and geostrategic influence, as history demonstrates. Explaining those challenges will serve as a basis for our upcoming analysis.

Greece's primary security challenges are mainly in regard to its relations with neighboring Turkey, which have been tense for many years, particularly because of the two countries' differing perceptions of certain interpretations of international law. Turkey has not ratified or signed the UN's Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS) of 1973, as it argued that the convention would give Greece substantial supremacy in the Aegean Sea. Greece controls a large number of islands in the Aegean, which are subject to the 12-mile territorial sea rule. According to the convention, every island or coastal state is entitled to the possession of continental shelf and therefore has full legal and financial rights over its resources.[76] In practice – and according to UNCLOS – Greece's territorial waters could rightfully be extended to 12 nautical miles from the country's furthest piece of land, giving it access to mineral and marine wealth inside this area. Turkey questions Greece's sovereignty over several islands located in the eastern Aegean and, by extension, its right to the benefits conveyed by the Law of the Sea. Turkey has issued a list (known by the acronym EGAYDAAK for its Turkish title) of 152 islands, islets and barren rocks over which, it contends, Greece does not have sovereignty.

Turkey characterizes this matter as a casus belli if Greece exercises its right to expand its territorial waters to 12 nautical miles in the southeastern Aegean. Turkey has codified the legal maritime space across the EGAYDAAK (a group of 152 disputed islands and islets in the Aegean and Cretan Seas) as "unclear." The so-called "gray zone" theory which ended up turning into a dogma embedded in Turkish foreign policy, was proposed in 1996 after the Imia crisis.[77] It is important to note that the aforementioned maritime territorial water dispute raises additional problems for Greek jurisdiction in search and rescue missions in the area, as well as for the delimitation of maritime borders.

Similar concerns apply to airspace. Turkey questions Greece's lawful decision to extend its airspace from six to 10 nautical miles in the southeast Aegean Sea, despite having already created a legal precedent by accepting the 10-mile extension for many decades after the Presidential Decree of 1931. To highlight this, Turkish military planes have regularly violated Greek airspace since 1970. Ankara argues that Greece does not have sovereign rights on the southeastern Aegean beyond six nautical miles and demands that aircrafts flying over the eastern Aegean Sea request clearance from the Turkish Area Control Center (ACC) instead of Greece, because Turkey claims that the area is part of its own Flight Information Region (FIR), not Greece's.

Demilitarization of the Greek islands Limnos, Samothrace, Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Ikaria, as well as the island group of the Dodecanese, is one of the main sources of tension in the region.[78] Given Greece's concerns over its past with its neighboring country and assessing the ongoing situation as critical, it regularly trains troops on these islands, demonstrating that it considers its sovereignty

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76. United Nations. (1982). United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [online].

77. The crisis begins on December 26, 1995, when the Turkish cargo ship Figen Akat ran aground on the rocky island of Imia and the Turkish captain refused Greek assistance, claiming that the vessel was in Turkish waters. The Turks tried to apply their interpretation of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), by which the Dodecanese had been ceded to Italy as a whole and not in name, and to dispute Greek sovereignty of some rocky islands.. On December 27, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that there is a sovereignty issue with the Imia islets. Finally, the ship was set afloat on December 28, 1995, by Greek tugboats. More about the Imia crisis can be found here https://greekreporter.com/2022/12/12/imia-greece-turkey-war-crisis/

78. The military status of these islands is not uniform and is established by different international agreements. The islands of Lemnos and Samothrace are governed by the 1923 Lausanne Convention on the Straits, which was replaced by the 1936 Montreux Convention. The islands of Mytilene, Chios, Samos, and Ikaria are governed by the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, and the Dodecanese by the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty. Turkey systematically overlooks this fact, despite having in the past officially recognized Greece's right to militarize these islands.

Greek Islands in 1832

After Balkan Wars, 1913

After WWII, 1947 (prev. Italy)

Retained by Turkey
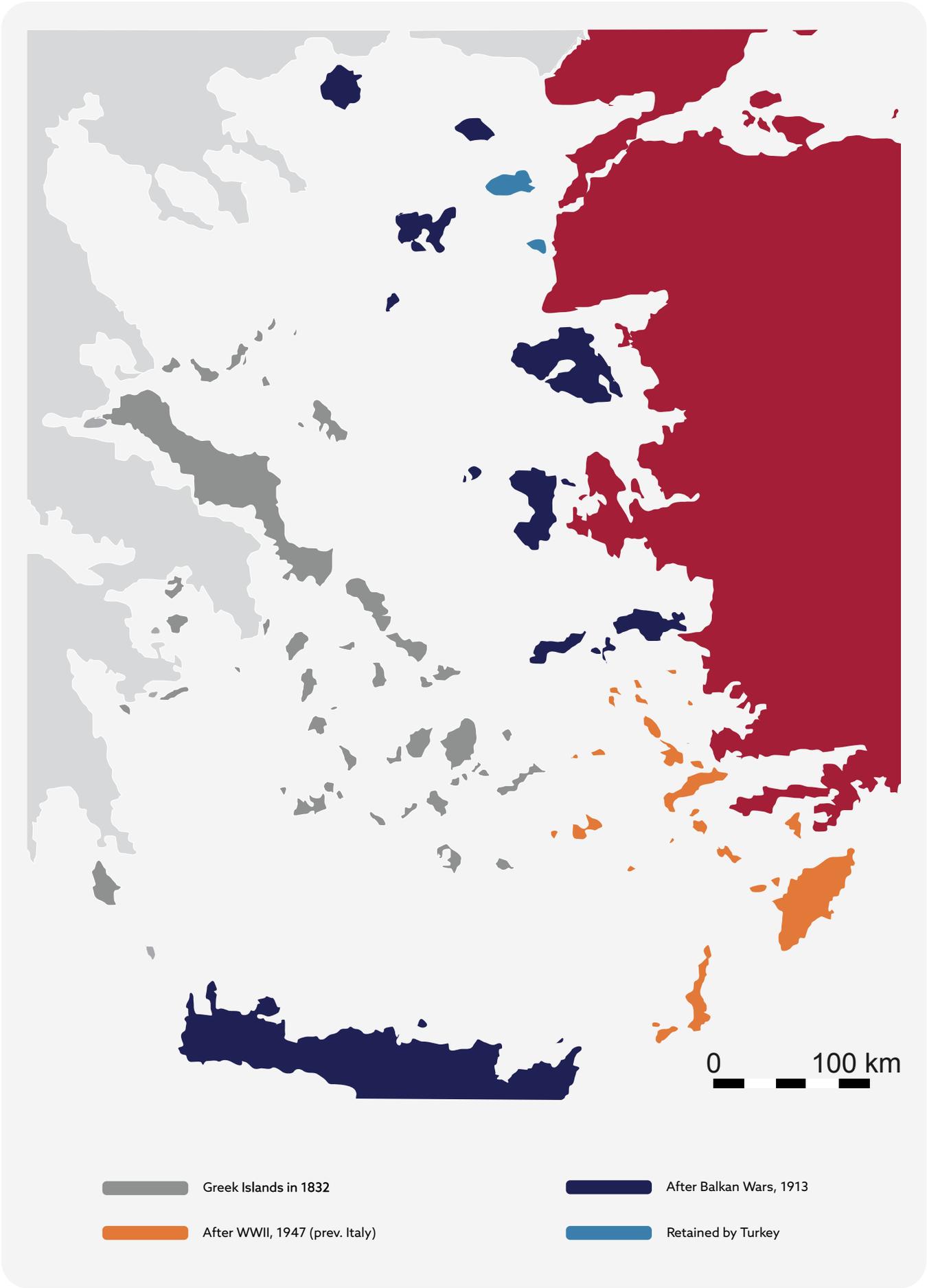
threatened and of strategic importance. Without training, Athens argues, the country would be unable to predict, prevent, or respond to Turkish action aiming to destabilize the region. For its part, Turkey interprets Greece's trainings as a direct military threat. This issue also relates to one of the world's most complicated contemporary challenges: border security and control of migrant and refugee flows, which have been unsettling for multiple states in the recent years.

Greece is also focused on a major unresolved issue with its "brother" nation of Cyprus. Greece and Cyprus share a common history, culture, and ethnicity that can be traced back to before the pharaohs of Egypt. For this reason, the invasion and partition of the island by Turkey in 1974 (the Cyprus problem) created a sensitive national dispute. Greece has been involved in pre- and post- conflict negotiations and has shared the burden of political and emotional consequences.[79]

Cyprus marks the beginning of Greece's permanent political reality since the beginning of 1970, when tensions with neighboring Turkey began to rise. Though diplomatic relations have fluctuated over the years, there has not been a time when Greece and Turkey maintained absolute trust and stability. In fact, since Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rise to power and the subsequent shift in Turkish foreign policy, Greco-Turkish relations have worsened and now seem to be at their nadir. In 2022, Greece recorded more than 11,000 violations of its airspace. That's the highest record of violations over the past decade.[80] Aggressive rhetoric has also escalated significantly.

In addition, in 2019 Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of National Accord of Libya to establish an exclusive economic zone in the southeastern Mediterranean. This is a highly contentious move which practically overlooks Greek sovereignty in the area and its rights to seabed resources.[81] The move was characterized by the Greek government as unlawful and was officially condemned by, among others, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Council.[82] The EU was moreover shaken by the crisis, with thousands of refugees staying in northern Greece (Evros), while Greece accused Turkey of weaponizing the refugees in a form of hybrid war. It was an incident that forced Greece to protect its borders by employing strict measures which indicates, inter alia, the need for all-encompassing security for Greece as well as Athens' move towards strategic autonomy.

For all these reasons, Greece has been traditionally in favor of strategic alliances, as reflected in its contribution to shaping European foreign and defense policies. By supporting the formation of a European defense and security policy from the very beginning, Greece aimed to achieve a two-fold objective: on the one hand to ensure high-level European support when it comes to its long-running bilateral conflicts (as described in the previous pages) and on the other to elevate them to a European level.

As Greece recovered from its bloody civil war (1946-1949), it aimed to be part of an alliance that would help improve its economy, its institutions, and its security. This strategy was evidenced by the country's two initial strategic accomplishments: its accession to NATO in 1952 and its connection to the European Community in 1959. Greece was the first country to acquire this status.[83] Incorporating a security and/or defense sector into the European integration process appeared, from the Greek perspective, as an eminently realistic request.[84] The idea, though, was not substantially reflected in the Single European Act (1987) since it did not include extensive cooperation on defense and security. Greece had already started to promote its own foreign policy agenda, mainly in regard to Turkey's potential EU accession and the resolution of the Cypriot issue. In the years that followed, prior to the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), Greece proved to be a valuable European partner by proactively encouraging the frontrunners of the European construct to move forward on bringing member-states closer to integration. Greece's general concerns regarding the creation of the European Monetary Union, German reunification, the new European vision, and more, were "converted" to a memorandum drafted by the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which

79. In 1878 the island of Cyprus, in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, came under British control. Its population is made up of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriot majority desired the removal of British rule and union with Greece, known as Enosis. In August 1960 Cyprus became a republic but, in the following decades, it was plagued with violence between the Greek and Turkish communities. In 1974 a Greek military coup, which aimed to unite the island with mainland Greece, led to a Turkish invasion and the division of the island between Turkish Northern Cyprus and the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus. Cyprus remains divided to this day. More on the history of the Cyprus problem can be found here https://mfa.gov.cy/efforts-to-resolve-the-cyprus-question.html

80. Mpourdaras, G.(2022). Παραβιάσεις ρεκόρ από την Τουρκία το 2022 – Έφτασαν τις 4.734 [online]. Available from: https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/562014646/paraviaseis-rekor-apo-tin-toyrkia-to-2022-eftasan-tis-4-734/ [Accessed 23 February 2023].

81. United Nations.(2019).Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of National Accord-State of Libya on Delimitation of the Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean [online]. Available from: https://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/TREATIES/Turkey_11122019_%28HC%29_MoU_Libya-Delimitation-areas-Mediterranean.pdf [Accessed 21 February 2023].

82. eKathemerini.(2022).EU rejects legality of Turkey-Libya memorandum [online]. Available from: https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1194757/eu-rejects-legality-of-turkey-libya-memorandum/ [Accessed 23 February 2023].

83. Couloumbis, T. (1966). Greek political reaction to American and NATO influences. Yale: Yale U.P.

84. Kazakos, P. and Ioakimides, P.K. (1994). Greece and EC membership evaluated, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Greece requested, among others, "the support of the effort towards a political and institutional development of the Community without reservation or limitation and the integration of the European Union as soon as possible."[85] Specifically, the memorandum outlined six policy areas the EEC should focus on in order to achieve further integration, including a common foreign and defense policy. During the negotiations, Greece referenced its full participation in the defense functions of the EU and the addition of provisions (articles, etc.), which would henceforward contribute to the resolution of its security concerns in the east. Greece encouraged the incorporation of "mutual assistance" and "protection of territorial integrity" clauses into the Common Foreign and Defense Policy (CFSP), despite those requests being deemed too ambitious at that time.[86] Similarly, Greece continued to support defense and security integration in the process towards the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), particularly after the collapse of the political order in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia. Athens reckoned that the instability and turmoil stemming from those crises represented additional proof that the EU constituted an alliance, which could potentially guarantee the realization of its foreign policy objectives.[87]

During the negotiations for the Treaty of Nice (2001), Greece requested the closing of any pending legislative and institutional issues in the defense sector. Among those were the establishment of a Political and Security Committee (in Greek, πολιτικοστρατιωτική Επιτροπή). During the intergovernmental conferences Greece encouraged the inclusion of an "enhanced cooperation" clause to the CFSP sector and especially in defense, supporting, along with Italy, a system of collective security.[88] The far-reaching role the country played in the establishment of the European Defense Agency during the European Council held in Thessaloniki in 2003 (a year when Greece held the presidency) is therefore no surprise. Extensive Greek participation can also be traced in Operation Atalanta and in multilateral cooperation with Romania and Bulgaria in the context of the EU Battlegroups.[89]

The above analysis serves as a brief explanation of the country's historical engagement with the concept of strategic autonomy. Greece has traditionally been a fierce supporter and a strong advocate for any initiative that would reinforce its strategic power and guarantee its territorial integrity. European strategic autonomy, with the potential formation of a pan-European military, found strong support among Greek politicians and public opinion. From a military point of view, Greece elevated its geostrategic concerns to a European level, ensuring that any threat against its sovereignty and territorial integrity would constitute a threat to the entire EU – a threat that could be tackled with the use of European hard power.

Furthermore, the concept of European strategic autonomy would automatically resolve the long-standing issue of dispute-settling between NATO members Greece and Turkey. Since NATO appears to be hesitant to interfere decisively, from a Greek perspective, it is likely that an additional form of strategic alliance would deter Turkey from acting aggressively against its western neighbor. Lastly, from a diplomatic perspective, Greece could use its military alliance to "trap" Turkey into a frame of democratization and modernization by pushing it toward a form of "oppressive" compliance.[90] Therefore, despite the notion of strategic autonomy being subconsciously linked to the development of a common fighting force, it entails a concept of diplomatic, political, and potentially military leverage in a contemporary international environment in which stability seems to be fading away.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP?

Greece has traditionally supported multilateralism given its geostrategic position, its security concerns, its early accession into NATO, and its overall participation in the alliance. Greece has been one of very few NATO members to reach the alliance's two percent GDP defense expenditure goal and has continued to reinforce its fleet and modernize its army. In addition, Greece has formed strong diplomatic ties with its transatlantic partners that go well beyond NATO and military cooperation. The Greek population in the U.S. amounts to almost three million people, corresponding to around a third of the overall diaspora, according to recent findings.[91]

Following the restoration of democracy, Greece has tried to make its foreign policy and security claims clear to its American counterparts, despite finding barriers because

85. «Contribution in the Discussion on the Way Towards the Political Union" and Council 6457/90, 16.05.1990

86. Similar to the Article 5 of the Treaty of Brussels (Brussels Pact/Treaty of WEU) 1948-1954, which states that "If any of the High Contracting Parties should be the object of an armed attack in Europe, the other High Contracting Parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, afford the Party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power." The proposal found almost all of the member-states, including the U.S. (apart from Italy and the Commission) adopting a negative stance.

87. Hellenic Centre for European Studies. (1995). The European Community and the Balkans. Athens: Ant. Sakkoulas.

88. Ioakimides, P. (2007). The Treaty of Nice and the Future of Europe. Athens: Themelio.

89. European Union External Action.(2020). EU Naval Force; Operation Atalanta. Available from: https://eunavfor.eu/ [Accessed 1 March 2023]. ; European Union External Action. (2017). EU Battlegroups [online]. Available from: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/33557/EU%20Battlegroups [Accessed 25 February 2023]. ; Dokos, T. (2007). Greek National Security Policy in the 21st Century. Athens: ELIAMEP

90. Ioakimides, P.K. (2007). The Treaty of Nice and the Future of Europe. Athens: Themelio.

91. Wichmann, A.(2023). The Greek diaspora around the world [online]. Available from: https://greekreporter.com/2023/01/19/greek-diaspora-around-the-world/ [Accessed 20 February 2023].

Greece Military Budget
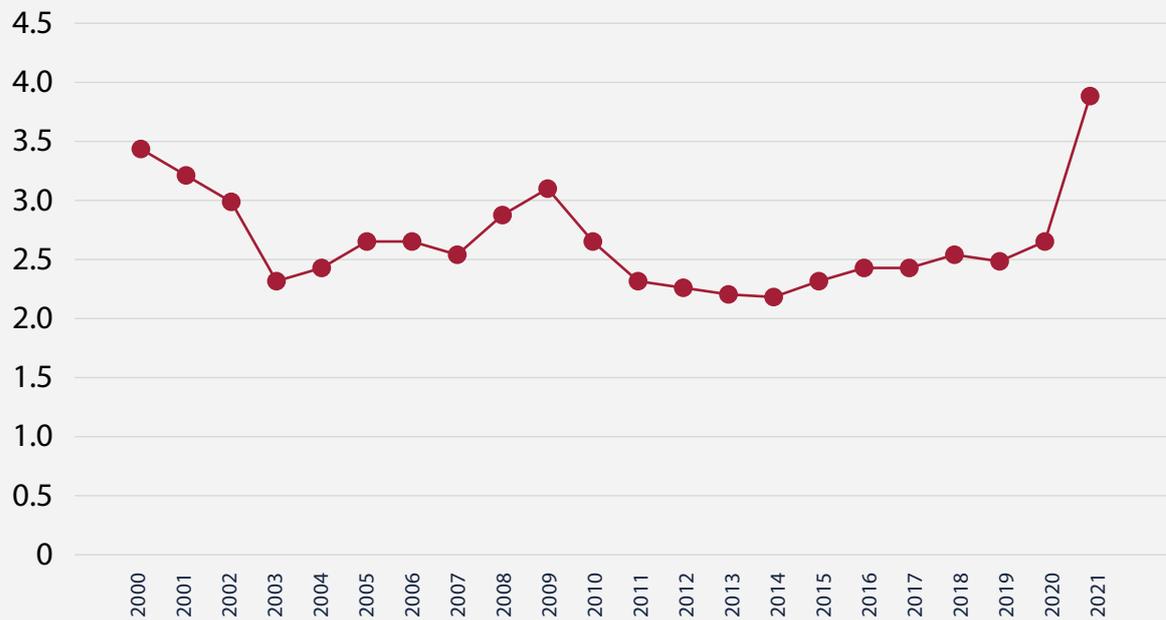
of the U.S. desire to maintain good relations with Turkey. What appeared to contribute to a change was a shift in American-Turkish relations due to Erdogan's foreign policy stance and his estrangement from the West. Even during U.S. President Donald Trump's time in the White House the U.S. and Greece maintained cohesive diplomatic relations, as expressed through multiple high-level meetings and through cooperation in defense. Then-Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' visit to the White House in 2017 was successfully followed by the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo to Athens in 2020. In 2020, on his visit to the White House during Donald Trump's presidency Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis highlighted the security stakes in play in Greece's relations with Turkey by making particular reference to the signing of the Turkish-Libyan memorandum for the unlawful delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean.[92]

U.S. President Joseph R. Biden's term has so far been characterized by flourishing Greco-American relations, with Greece intensifying its efforts to acknowledge security threats by the international community. During a historic 2022 trip to Washington, Mitsotakis condemned multiple Turkish provocations, including maritime and airspace violations, Turkey's role in delaying Sweden's and Finland's accession in NATO, and its stance in the Russo-Ukrainian war. He urged the U.S. not to sell any updated F-16 fighter jets to Turkey. Greece and America furthered their strategic convergence with the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019, a piece of legislation "constituting a comprehensive recalibration of American diplomatic, military, and economic policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean and a strong and prosperous alliance between the United States, Greece, Israel, and Cyprus."

92. United Nations.(2019).Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of National Accord-State of Libya on Delimitation of the Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean [online]. Available from: here [Accessed 21 February 2023].

THE EAST MED ACT:

- Lifts the prohibition on arms sales to the Republic of Cyprus;

- Authorizes the establishment of a United States-Eastern Mediterranean Energy Center to facilitate energy cooperation between the U.S., Israel, Greece, and Cyprus;

- Authorizes Foreign Military Financing (FMF) assistance for Greece;

- Authorizes International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance for Greece and Cyprus;

- Requires the White House to submit to Congress a strategy on enhanced security and energy cooperation with countries in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as reports on malign activities by Russia and other countries in the region.[93]

An obvious dilemma arising from the present discussion is the potential relation of the new (military?) entity to the already existing military alliance, in which most EU Member States also participate. If the EU is to achieve strategic autonomy, what would that mean for its relationship to NATO? Will the two entities be able to balance their military power in Europe, and what would that mean for NATO's jurisdiction in the area? Generally, many EU member-states – even before the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war – expressed skepticism over a venture of this magnitude, fearing that any parallel structure would either weaken the alliance or simply remain dormant and cease to exist over time. This argument found supporters among eastern, Baltic, and central EU countries, which fear that an initiative based on the concept of European strategic autonomy would see their biggest fears – namely the Russian threat – realized.

On the other hand, countries in western and southern Europe argue that the EU should develop its own defense mechanisms. Greece has sided with the latter, especially after tensions with neighboring Turkey significantly escalated, having repeatedly expressed its concerns about NATO's ability to ease tensions between members. This is why Greece has been reinforcing its diplomatic arsenal in the form of bilateral deals, notably with France, to serve as additional guarantors for its territorial integrity. In any case, Greece supports NATO's strategic vision and would most likely welcome a form of integration that sets common and clear goals while avoiding duplication, decoupling, or discrimination.[94]

Strategic Assets and Flaws: What is Next?

Since Greece strongly supports the gradual development of European strategic autonomy, what is the added value that Athens gains? This is a plausible question, especially if considering the way many states regard security and the impediments they face when developing defense and military capabilities. In the wake of the Russo-Ukrainian war, some nations were forced to shift their official opinion on the concept of strategic autonomy, while others had to reconsider their entire strategic dogma. This was not the case in Greece. Due to its complicated geostrategic background, the country remains at the center of the European strategic autonomy discussion.

In the last three years, Greece has developed coping mechanisms to handle even the most pressing strategic threats. The 2021 refugee crisis, investment in defense, and a stronger foreign policy have elevated Athens into a serious international interlocutor. In addition to compliance with NATO's two percent provision, in 2021 and 2022 Greece surpassed the U.S. in defense expenditure as a share of GDP, making it the country with the highest contribution of all NATO members (3.82 and 3.54 percent, respectively).[95] In addition, Greece significantly improved its equipment expenditure (as a means of defense expenditure), jumping from 12.3 percent in 2019 to 38.3 percent in 2021 and 45.3 percent in 2022.[96] According to the Global Firepower Index, which utilizes over 60 factors to determine a given nation's power index, Greece's military strength remained ranked in the 30th position for 2023.[97]

93. Congress Gov. (2019-2020). S.1102 - Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019 [online]. Available from: https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1102/text [Accessed 3 March 2023].

94. Duplication = to repeat the already existing mechanisms, decoupling = disengagement from NATO in security issues, discrimination = to have decisions by the EU that favor EU MS that are also NATO members

95. NATO.(2021).Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021) [online].Available from: here [Accessed 4 March]

96. NATO.(2019).Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019) [online].Available from: here [Accessed 4 March] ; NATO.(2021).Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021) [online].Available from: here [Accessed 3 March] ; NATO.(2022).Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2022) [online].Available from: here [Accessed 4 March]

97. Global Firepower.(2023).2023 Military Strength Ranking [online]. Available from: https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php [Accessed 4 March].

Equipment Expenditure of % of Total Greek Military Budget
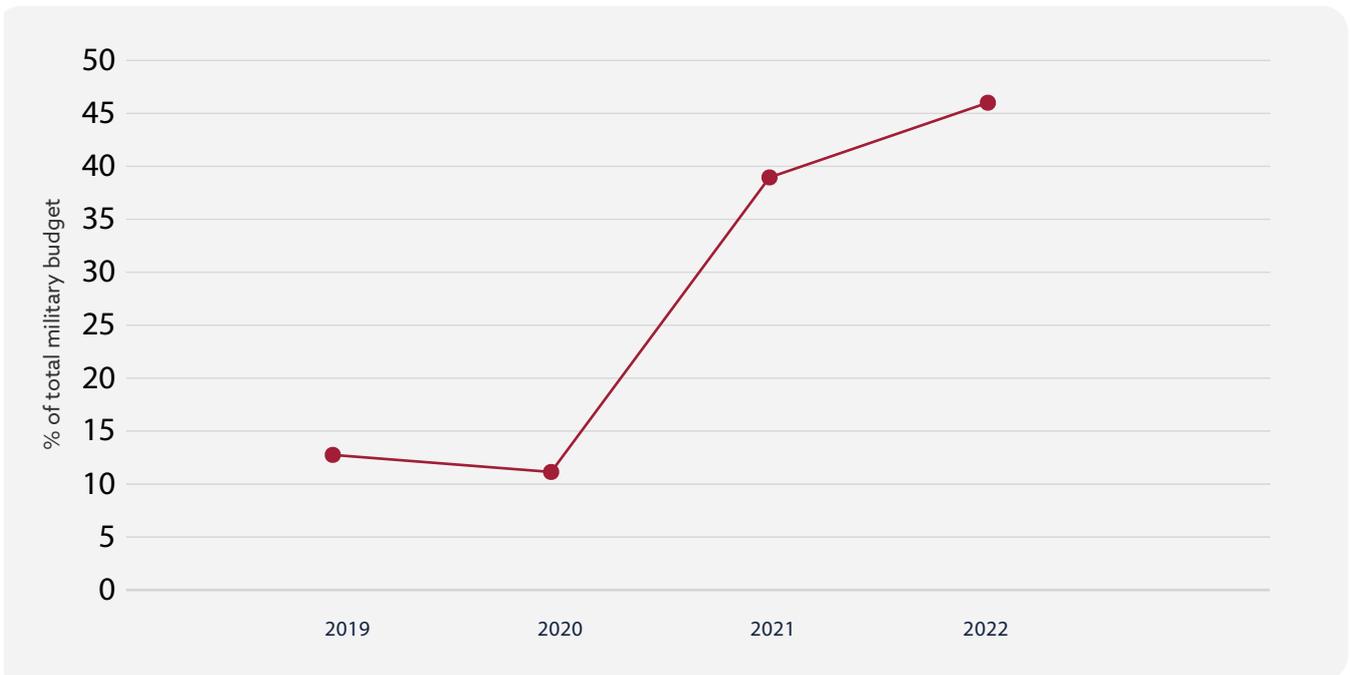
Apart from its purely military capabilities, Greece has strengthened its diplomatic position by establishing strategic alliances with key partners throughout the region. In 2021, Greece and France sealed a new defense and security deal, guaranteeing cooperation beyond their obligations within the EU and NATO and agreeing to a mutual defense assistance clause in the event of an attack. This, in essence, forms a "strategic duo," which takes the concept of strategic autonomy one step further.[98] Also in 2021, Greece signed a $1.65 billion defense agreement with Israel in which the two countries agreed to military cooperation, notably through air force collaboration.[99]

Greece has also signed several deals in energy, finance, and defense sectors with several countries. The list of deals includes the Accord on Maritime Zones in the Ionian Sea with Italy in 2020, the Maritime Treaty with Egypt in 2020, a $4.2 billion investment partnership agreement with the UAE in 2022 that focuses on foreign policy and defense to safeguard security, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as two memoranda on energy infrastructure with Bulgaria in 2023. Furthermore, Greece expanded its diplomatic relations across the globe with countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.[100]

98. Wichmann, A.(2021). The entire France-Greece Defense and Security Agreement [online]. Available from: https://greekreporter.com/2021/09/28/the-entire-france-greece-defense-and-security-agreement/ [Accessed 29 February 2023].

99. Reuters. (2021). Israel and Greece sign record defense deal [online]. Available from: https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-greece-sign-record-defence-deal-2021-04-18/ [Accessed 3 March 2023].

100. Kampouris, N. (2021). Italy ratifies Exclusive Economic Zone Agreement with Greece [online]. Available from: https://greekreporter.com/2021/05/29/italy-ratifies-exclusive-economic-zone-agreement-with-greece/ [Accessed 29 February 2023]. ; United Nations. (2020). Greece – UN Treat Collection (pdf) [online]. Available from: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=080000028058a22f&clang=_en [Accessed 4 March 2023]. ; United Arab Emirates Ministry of Economy (2022). UAE Minister of Economy Discusses with Greek Prime Minister Boosting Economic Partnership & Mutual Investments in the Coming Period [online]. Available from: https://www.moec.gov.ae/en/-/uae-minister-of-economy-discusses-with-greek-prime-minister-boosting-economic-partnership-mutual-investments-in-the-coming-period [Accessed 4 March]. ; eKathemerini.(2023). Greece, Bulgaria sign memoranda that 'change the energy map of SE Europe [online]. Available from: https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1204875/greece-bulgaria-sign-memoranda-that-change-the-energy-map-of-se-europe/ [Accessed 8 March 2023]. ; More on the Greek foreign policy can be found in the official site of the Hellenic MFA https://www.mfa.gr/en/index.html

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Greece proved a valuable partner in dealing with the war's spillover onto other socioeconomic sectors. Since the start of the war, energy security has been one of the most fundamental issues worldwide, and Greece has reacted immediately and built strategic resilience in this field. Apart from the already existent liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal on the islet of Revathi, Greece inaugurated two more terminals in 2022 in the north and central parts of the country, in Alexandroupoli and Corinth. These allowed Greece to strengthen natural gas supply for Europe and the Balkans (via the TAP and IGB pipelines, connecting with the IGB pipeline and the Greece-North Macedonia interconnecting plan). With an estimation of 10.8bcm regasification capacity of LNG per year (as of 2023), and in an era when security goes beyond traditional threats, Greece is turning into an energy hub by playing a key role in advancing European independence from Russian energy resources.

When it comes to strategic autonomy, Greece's flaws stem from internal factors rather than strategic unpreparedness. Most importantly, one can argue that Greece's geostrategic location, although in many ways advantageous, is also a central obstacle in maintaining its national security. The same might apply to the challenges Greece faces on its borders and in the management of migratory flows. In addition, Greece's domestic politics, with shifting foreign and defense policy approaches depending on who is in power, have been a longstanding problem for the country's coherence in its strategic prioritization. These changes can be reflected in defense expenditures and equipment acquisition in the years following each governmental term. Obviously, this can pose dangers not only for the smooth development of Greece's defense policy, but also for the future of its strategic diplomacy per se.

It is difficult to predict whether NATO and EU Member States will move further than simply increasing their defense expenditures after the end of the war in Ukraine, or whether the deliberation will stop after the cessation of hostilities. In every case, the trigger for defense integration is stronger than ever, and could serve as the perfect opportunity for Europe to (further) develop those systems that will eventually lead to a strong, autonomous strategic construct. As far as Greece is concerned, the discussion is as timely as ever. In the words of former Prime Minister Mitsotakis: "Greece believes in a multilateral approach to the complex challenges of today. But I am also a firm believer in the absolute necessity of Europe's strategic autonomy. Recent events have clearly demonstrated that we must be both willing and able to do more as Europeans on our own. This should not come at the expense of our transatlantic bonds. If anything, a European Defense Union will strengthen NATO. It will oblige European countries to address issues of interoperability and meager defense budgets. It will accelerate our cooperation on cyber and space."[101] The rest remains to be seen, planned, and implemented.

101. Ελληνική Δημοκρατία Πρωθυπουργός (2021). Prime Minister Mitsotakis' address to the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly [online]. Available from: https://primeminister.gr/en/2021/09/24/27541 [Accessed 7 March 2023].

SWEDEN

07

SEALING THE BALTIC SECURITY GAP

ARVID HALLÉN

Before 1991, the Baltic Sea was highly contested. Its southern and southeastern coasts were both part of the Warsaw Pact states. The northern shores belonged to non-aligned but heavily armed Finland and Sweden. Only the Danish Straits, the Jutland Peninsula, and the lands surrounding the Kiel Canal were NATO territory.

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic became something of a geostrategic backwater. The new Russian Baltic Fleet found itself in a terrible and dilapidated state, short on training, maintenance, and money. Its bases were reduced to Baltiysk in the Kaliningrad exclave and Kronstadt at the inner end of the narrow, shallow, and vulnerable Gulf of Finland.

FINLAND

SWEDEN

NORWAY

USSR

ESTONIAN SSR

LATVIAN SSR

DENMARK

LITHUANIAN SSR

BALTIC SEA

BELORUSSUIAN SSR

FRG

GDR

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF POLAND

● NATO   ● Non-aligned countries   ● Warsaw Pact
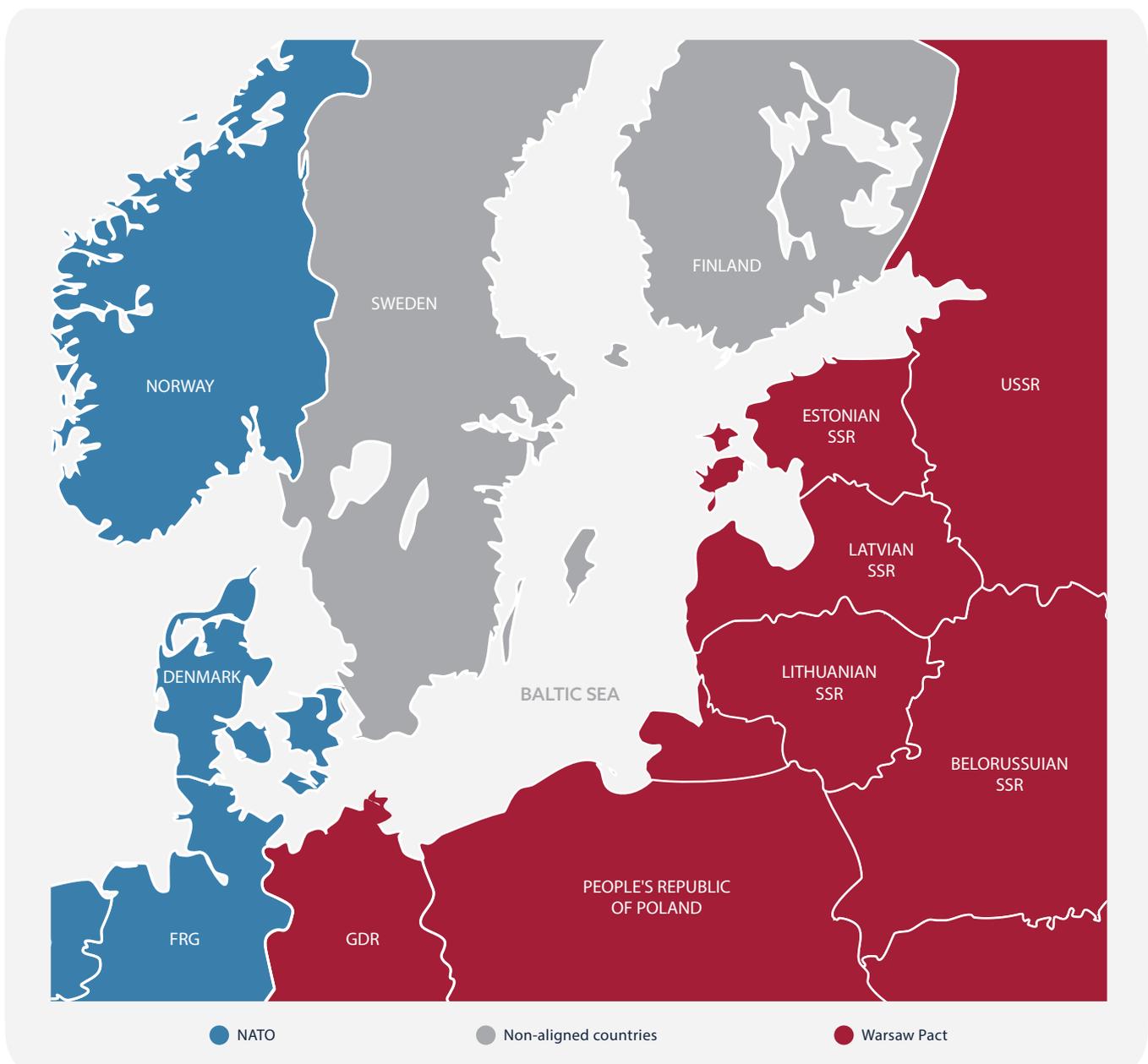
NATO'S EASTERN FLANK:
STRONGER DEFENCE AND DETERENCE

40,000
TROOPS UNDER DIRECT NATO COMMAND

130
ALLIED AIRCRAFT AT HIGH ALERT

100,000
US TROOPS DEPLOYED TO EUROPE

140
ALLIED SHIPS AT SEA

ESTONIA

LATVIA

LITHUANIA

POLAND

24/7 AIR PATROL & SURVEILLANCE

SLOVAKIA

HUNGARY

ROMANIA

AMPHIBIOUS TASK FORCE

BULGARIA

JUNE 2022

All numbers indicative

CARRIER STRIKE GROUP
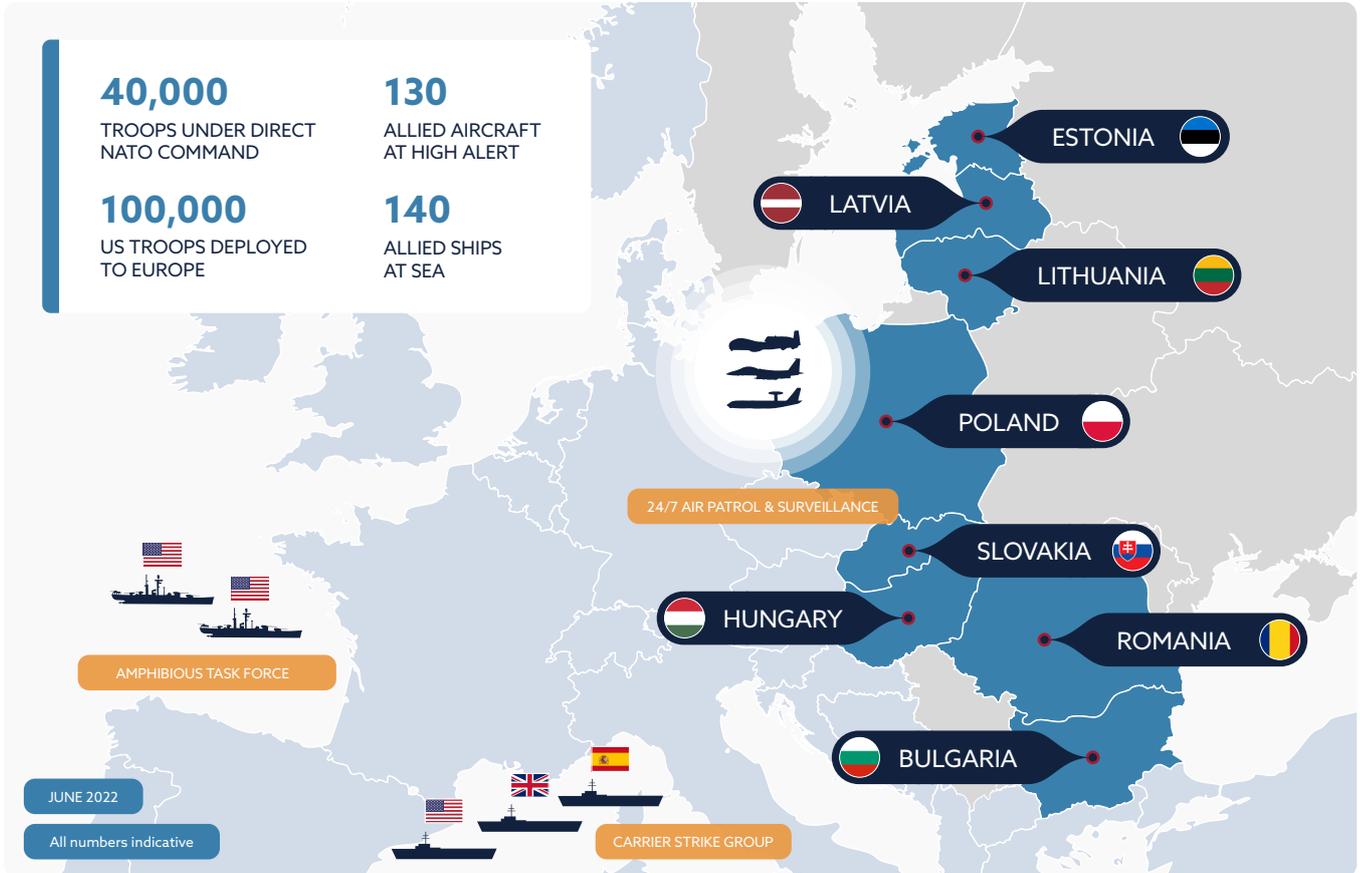
ESTONIA
ALLIED TROOPS **2,200**
HOST NATION **10,500**

BULGARIA
ALLIED TROOPS **1,650**
HOST NATION **27,400**

SLOVAKIA
AIR DEFENCE
ALLIED TROOPS **11,600**
HOST NATION **122,500**

POLAND
AIR DEFENCE
ALLIED TROOPS **11,600**
HOST NATION **122,500**

HUNGARY
ALLIED TROOPS **900**
HOST NATION **21,400**

LITHUANIA
ALLIED TROOPS **3,700**
HOST NATION **17,200**

ROMANIA
AIR DEFENCE
ALLIED TROOPS **4,700**
HOST NATION **75,000**

LATVIA
AIR DEFENCE
ALLIED TROOPS **4,000**
HOST NATION **7,500**

The weakening of the Russian threat resulted in a regional peace dividend – the relatively large littoral navies of Finland and especially Sweden underwent serious cutbacks, resulting in considerable reductions in the numbers of hard-hitting assets such as missile boats and diesel-electric submarines.

Even the 1999 admittance of Poland into NATO, and that of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 2004, made little difference to the regional strategic picture. Russia was still weak, and thus there was no tangible threat. The Baltic thus remained of little geopolitical relevance during those years.

Things started to change in 2008 with the Russo-Georgian war. The new Russia was shown to be, to quote Trotsky's line, the same "old vagabond Russia" it had always been: aggressive, imperialist, and without respect for the sovereignty of its neighbors.

Furthermore, the relative ineffectiveness of the Russian military campaign in Georgia led to a massive military reform, lavishly funded and aimed at modernizing and recreating the Russian armed forces as an effective military tool.

The gravity of the new threat was further underlined in 2014 by the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, which in 2016 led to the deployment of NATO tripwire forces in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland under the policy of Enhanced Forward Presence.

Thus began a curious period in Baltic security, especially for Sweden. But to understand the current Swedish security situation, one must first take a closer look at Swedish strategic thinking during the Cold War.

SWEDISH STRATEGIC THINKING DURING THE COLD WAR

During the Cold War, Swedish security policy was focused on three central concepts: neutrality and non-alignment, the Marginal Doctrine, and the idea of the dual invasion.

NON-ALIGNMENT AND NEUTRALITY

By not aligning with either NATO or the Warsaw Pact, Sweden aimed to avoid becoming entangled in a European war. Under this policy, policymakers were emulating previous generations of Swedish politicians, who through a mix of luck, skill, and ruthlessly amoral realpolitik, had managed to keep Sweden out of previous world wars. Neutrality would thus be the preferred policy of Sweden in the event of another cataclysmic conflict in Europe.

Neutrality, however, had its limits. If Sweden itself came under attack from someone (inevitably the Soviet Union and members of the Warsaw Pact), the tables would turn, and Sweden would be forced by circumstances to abandon its neutrality. It is impossible for a country to remain neutral towards an invading power, as the only options are to fight or to capitulate. It was clear to all that in the case of an invasion, Sweden would have to fight.

THE MARGINAL DOCTRINE

Swedish policymakers were under no illusion that Sweden could prevail alone against the Soviet Union if it were to throw all its available forces at Sweden. But under the so-called Marginal Doctrine, it was assumed that only a fraction of the total Warsaw Pact forces would be available for operations against Sweden, as the majority of these forces would be tied up in a war against NATO.

Swedish defense policy was thus aimed at creating a force that could defeat the Soviets on the margin, that is, the forces which were considered likely to be available for operations against Sweden. This strong Swedish defense capability would, it was hoped, deter the Soviet Union from attacking Sweden in the first place, making it possible for Sweden to stay out of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war.

This in turn implies a central assumption: that an isolated Soviet attack against Sweden was impossible. Sweden would only become involved in a war against the Soviet Union if first NATO and the Warsaw Pact went to war with each other for whatever reason, and secondly, if Sweden failed to stay out of that conflict.

The shape such a Soviet-Swedish war would take was seen as part of a greater NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict, and the extensive secret and politically fraught Cold War military cooperation between Sweden and NATO must be seen in that context.

THE DUAL INVASION

Swedish Cold War operational planning usually assumed that a Soviet invasion would take the shape of two main thrusts: one as an overland invasion in the High North via Finland, and the second in the form of a massive amphibious assault on several major beachheads in southern Sweden.

The threat of a naval invasion explains the size and composition of the Swedish Cold War Navy: focused on anti-invasion tools for sea denial, like submarines, mines, and missile boats, rather than on the larger escort vessels needed to maintain sea control. The Soviets were the ones who were assumed to be interested in control of the Baltic Sea to protect their amphibious assault force, while the Swedish Navy sought to disrupt that capability in the event of war.

While the High North scenario remains somewhat relevant, it is less interesting from a current Baltic perspective due to its geographic distance from the Baltic Sea. The coastal invasion scenario, however, remains highly interesting today, though for a very different reason than during the Cold War.

WHY ATTACK SWEDEN?

But why would the Soviet Union have wanted to invade Sweden during the Cold War instead of leaving the country alone, even in the event of a NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation? This question was rarely raised in Swedish public debate during the Cold War, possibly because such discussion might touch on politically sensitive issues, such as the covert Swedish relationship with NATO. But generally speaking, many Swedes saw the Soviet Union as an aggressive dictatorial superpower, and for Swedish public opinion that was enough of a justification for high defense spending.

But seen from a strategic perspective in the context of a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, a Soviet attack on Sweden did make some sense.

THE CENTRAL COMBAT ZONE AND SEA LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The central combat zone of a Third World War would probably have been West Germany. It was often assumed by NATO planners that it would begin with a Warsaw Pact armored thrust through the Fulda Gap on the inter-German border. Barring the extensive use of tactical nuclear weapons, the outcome of the battle of West Germany was often assumed to hinge on the timely arrival of American reinforcements, which would help stem the flood of Soviet troops. Convoying these reinforcements across the Atlantic was deemed important enough for NATO strategy to warrant the large and annual REturn of FORces to GERmany (REFORGER) military exercise, where American troops were deployed from the United States to Western Europe during the Cold War.

By this same logic, the main mission of the Soviet Navy during a war with NATO would be to cut the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) between Europe and North America, thus blocking or reducing American reinforcements to the central combat zone in West Germany.

Norway would have been a prime basing area for such operations, especially for Soviet naval aviation. And to get to Norway, Soviet planners might have found it convenient to first punch through Sweden. This was deemed a serious threat to Sweden, but it was also the hope among Swedish policymakers that the Soviets could have been deterred, and therefore would have been persuaded to circumvent Sweden in operations aimed at Norway and the Atlantic SLOCs.

THE BALTIC SEA AS THE MINI–ATLANTIC

The Cold War is long since over. How is this history relevant to current security issues?

In a way, one might imagine the Baltic Sea as a smaller-scale version of the great Atlantic security problem of long ago. The assumed main combat zone in a NATO-Russia conflict is no longer West Germany but the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, perhaps with the city of Narva taking the place of the Fulda Gap.

The outcome of a battle over the Baltic states might well be dependent on how swiftly heavy NATO reinforcements can arrive to bolster the forces of the Baltic countries and the NATO tripwire forces based there. The only overland supply route stretches from Poland to Lithuania via the highly exposed 65-kilometer narrow Suwałki Corridor, sandwiched between the Kaliningrad exclave and Belarus.

A more attractive supply route is the Baltic Sea itself. In this scenario, it plays the role held by the Atlantic Ocean during the Cold War, the crucial SLOCs which Russia must cut to win the war in the main combat zone before the U.S. Cavalry arrives to save the day.

This raises yet another question: from where can the Baltic SLOCs be threatened?

GOTLAND

In the Swedish public defense debate of the last decade, the Baltic island of Gotland has played an outsized role. Located in the middle of the Baltic Sea between the Swedish mainland and Latvia, this idyllic island of 60,000 people is the ideal spot from which to cut the Baltic SLOCs.

Often described as an unsinkable aircraft carrier, Gotland is perhaps even more valuable as a launch platform for anti-ship missiles and long-range surface-to-air missiles. A well-trained force equipped with modern weapons deployed on Gotland can arguably create an Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) "bubble" in the southern Baltic, effectively denying or seriously threatening the use of the water and airspace needed to supply and support the Baltic states from the sea.

The Swedish army's disbandment of the regiment on Gotland in 2004 as part of a program of military cutbacks made this issue even more worrying. After the regiment was disbanded, the only Swedish military presence on the island was a small territorial part-time unit of Home Guard light infantry, so the temptation to grab Gotland with a force of "little green men" during a crisis might become

considerable. In response to this risk, the Gotland regiment was re-established in 2018. It consists of an armored battalion, radically increasing the risk and threshold for launching a coup de main against the island.

In fairness, all the arguments about Gotland can also be made about the Danish island of Bornholm, located in the even more constricted waters between Sweden and Poland. But there is a fundamental difference between Gotland and Bornholm: Bornholm is NATO territory – Gotland (at least at the time of writing this piece) is not.

NEVER SAFER, NEVER IN GREATER PERIL

In a way, Sweden is militarily safer than it has ever been before. All foreign shores of the Baltic are controlled by NATO member states, with the Kaliningrad exclave and the St. Petersburg area as the only exceptions. The NATO presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the former East Germany creates a considerable practical impediment to the traditional Cold War threat of large-scale Russian amphibious action against Swedish territory. In the High North, the large and skilled army of Finland stands as a highly reassuring bulwark between Sweden and Russia.

But seen from another perspective, the situation could hardly be worse. There is a glaring weakness in the center of the Baltic, which threatens not only Sweden, but NATO itself. This is the nightmare scenario: the Baltic Security Gap.

NIGHTMARE SCENARIO: THE BALTIC SECURITY GAP

During a period of increased tension between NATO and Russia, the Russian threat toward Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania is bound to increase. The NATO security guarantees enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty should, however, provide strong deterrence – provided that they are credible. But there is a way Russia could weaken the deterrent force of the Article 5 guarantees.

If Russia can make the Baltic states undefendable by creating a credible threat that they will fall to Russian aggression before NATO reinforcements can arrive, NATO will be put in a very unenviable position. Instead of having to defend its Baltic member states, NATO will have to assemble a strong force to liberate them from the fait accompli of Russian occupation. It is not hard to imagine that Russia, in turn, might try to deter such a counteroffensive through the use of nuclear brinkmanship, including the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons, according to the stated Russian nuclear doctrine of escalating to deescalate.

One way in which Russia could attempt such an outcome would be to launch an attack against Swedish Gotland or Danish Bornholm, deploying advanced long-range weapon systems to create an A2AD bubble, thus cutting the SLOCs in the Baltic. Then, the main ground offensive against the now cut-off Baltic NATO member states would follow. Still, such a scenario would mean all-out war against NATO, and it is, thankfully, hard to assign this scenario a high probability.

There is unfortunately another less-unlikely scenario which might result in the same or an even more attractive outcome for Russia: an isolated attack on Sweden, combined with the threat of a massive deployment on the borders of the Baltic NATO member states.

Russia could attack a strategic piece of Swedish territory in the Baltic, for example Gotland, or perhaps even isolated coastal parts of the Swedish mainland, claiming that it is only a temporary presence to deter "NATO aggression." Deployment of Russian A2AD systems on Swedish territory could then threaten the Baltic NATO member states with a situation where they would be very hard to defend or supply, despite no state of war existing between NATO and Russia.

This is a situation where the defense of the territory and sovereignty of the Baltic states is seen as militarily hopeless and would require a joint NATO counterattack, were Russia to attack. This may, in the worst-case scenario, lead to a loss of resolve in certain other NATO member states who might be unwilling to confront Russia in a "hopeless" situation. This could undermine Article 5 and NATO itself. Without even firing a single shot, NATO might collapse under its own weight, a calamity with terribly negative effects far outside the Baltic region.

The main insurance against a situation where a weak Sweden, willingly or unwillingly, would allow Russia to exploit her territory to threaten the Baltic states and undermine NATO, is strong Swedish armed forces in general, and a strong defense of Gotland in particular. Having recognized these risks, Swedish policymakers have been shoring up the Swedish military position during the last few years.

Perhaps the idea of a race between Russia and NATO to deny the use of Gotland to the other side in the event of a crisis helped Swedish policymakers sober up. No matter how much Swedes like their international friends and neighbors, an unannounced visit to Gotland during a Baltic crisis by a regiment of U.S. Marines and German *Fallschirmjäger* might come as a rude shock.

SEALING THE GAP

At the end of the day, the only iron-clad measure which will deter Russia from exploiting Swedish weakness in order to hurt NATO is for Sweden to join NATO, which at the time of writing this article is still a work in progress. Then any Russian war games aimed at Gotland or other parts of Swedish territory to indirectly confront NATO become meaningless, as aggression towards Sweden will be aggression against NATO itself. Swedish NATO membership is the only way to fully seal the Baltic Security Gap.

Swedish membership in NATO will, however, not only close a gap in the armor of NATO. It will, together with Finnish membership, also strengthen the defense of the Baltic NATO member states.

The integration of Swedish and Finnish air and naval assets into NATO structures and the full use of Swedish and Finnish territory will strongly simplify NATO efforts at sea control in the Baltic Sea. It will help secure the maintenance of the Baltic SLOCs necessary to supply the Baltic NATO member states in the event of conflict with Russia. Access to air bases in Sweden and Finland will also greatly increase NATO air force capacity to interdict in the Baltic theater in the event of a conflict.

In essence, with the accession of Finland and hopefully soon that of Sweden to NATO, the Baltic Sea will become a NATO lake, and the northern flank and eastern front of NATO will become far more secure.

To sum up: for the sake of the security of Sweden, Finland, the Baltic states, and for all of NATO, the quicker the membership negotiations for Sweden are concluded, the better.

CONCLUSION

THIBAULT MUZERGUES AND ROMAIN LE QUINIOU

The Pop artist Andy Warhol used to say that "perception precedes reality." While his statement applies to the arts, it also rings particularly true in geopolitics and international relations, where threats and interests are not only defined by facts on the ground, but also (and sometimes primarily) by the perceptions of elites, heads of government and groups of people at any given time.

Perception matters in international politics, and in the introduction, we mentioned Italy's geopolitical position, which is perceived very differently depending on where someone sits: the Sicilian will (rightly) see the Mediterranean as her main horizon and border, while the Piedmontese will see his future inextricably linked with France and the Alpine region. This is true for every country, and the same can be said about transatlantic allies, whose perception of their own geopolitical positions and vulnerabilities depend not only on their history and geography, but also on how they perceive the present moment. In the absence of a superpower willing and able to decide unilaterally what the common interest is, it is therefore perfectly normal that differences in perception of threats exist between the 31 members of NATO, as the nine case studies in this publication demonstrate.

Recently, Finland became the 31st member of the Atlantic alliance, and it is likely that Sweden will become the 32nd. This is good news for NATO, despite the context in which this enlargement happened. But while we should rejoice, we should also be mindful of the potential risks that this momentous event carries for the future. When a security organization enlarges it adds more forces, but each addition comes with it its own point of view. The risk is always that diversity comes at the cost of coherence.

But when it comes to the Atlantic alliance, this is not necessarily the case. As the nine case studies presented in this publication show, differences in threats and geopolitical perceptions are often more nuanced rather than irreconcilable disagreements. A few others are more structural and point to real divergences, both in terms of strategic culture and of geo-strategic priorities. The very recent example of NATO's enlargement to Finland and hopefully soon Sweden is very telling: the never-ending negotiations between the alliance, the two candidates and Turkey had often more to do with Middle Eastern security than the immediate threat posed by Russia.

This is a serious issue for the alliance, but one must also look at the bigger picture. And this picture tells us that, overall, transatlantic allies share similar values and long-term objectives. They also cohesively identify the most important challenges facing them and their main competitors on the international stage. In other words, among members, there is a common understanding of the raison d'être of NATO's existence. Transatlantic allies generally share a common responsibility, and the famous description of Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, NATO's first secretary general, that the alliance was created to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down (or rather, in the current context, as one among many in Europe's collective security) still holds.

There is no doubt that the year 2022 and the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine have reaffirmed the need for transatlantic strategic unity and commitments to the defense of the current international order. After all, alliances are usually forged against a common threat. Russia's behavior has reminded all allies that the impetus for NATO still has value today. The Russian invasion came just three years after French President Emmanuel Macron's declaration that the alliance was "brain-dead" and a few months after the disastrous American pullout from Afghanistan. The June 2022 NATO summit in Madrid proved that the alliance is alive and well and anticipating an even greater role in the future.[102]

This new honeymoon period between transatlantic allies comes after a long period of estrangement. Just a few months before the invasion, it would have been hard to imagine a French mainstream outlet publishing "Nous sommes tous Américains"("We are all Americans") on its front page after the pullout in Afghanistan, as *Le Monde* had done on September 12, 2001.[103] Democratic and transatlantic solidarity can be expressed in many ways, but it is always most forcefully expressed when the allies face what they perceive as a common, immediate threat: the Soviet Union during the Cold War, terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11, Russia since the start of Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

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102.   NATO Madrid summit declaration, June 29, 2022. Available here: NATO - Official text: Madrid Summit Declaration issued by NATO Heads of State and Government
103.   See Thibault Muzergues, War in Europe? From Impossible War to Improbable Peace, London: Routledge, 2022, pp.286-310

INCREASE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Ever since the start of its all-out invasion of Ukraine, Russia has ensured that a common perception of threats is not an issue within the transatlantic community, at least on the surface. But as the remarkable exceptions of Turkey and Hungary show, this cohesion is not absolute, and with time and external events, it is likely that the perception of priorities will change, at least in some countries. If Transatlantic allies want their partners to better understand their national positions and strategic interests, they should first clearly identify and communicate them to the alliance. This may sound either simplistic or overly idealistic, but transatlantic allies should explain their positions unambiguously to their partners within the NATO framework, even though everyone understands that the game to be played between the generally converging but at times competing interests of 31 allies encourages some ambiguity for the sake of keeping internal cohesion.

A key tool for greater strategic clarity is the regular production of official public strategic documents detailing the interests, positions, and resources of each ally. The most important of these is the national security strategy document, which should ideally be published and updated regularly, and encompass all aspects of national defense doctrine and strategy. As surprising as it may seem, there is currently a lack of uniformity across the transatlantic alliance in this field, as some countries do not regularly update their documents, if they update them at all. Russia's invasion of Ukraine thus provides an extraordinary opportunity for transatlantic allies to officially update their national strategies. Some countries, like France, release it on a regular basis, while for others, like Germany, the process is more irregular. Berlin has just released its first ever national security strategy in June 2023 after delays due to internal differences.[104] Such strategic exercise should, ideally, be done by all transatlantic allies in the coming months, with regular updates.

It is also important that transatlantic allies are able to regularly produce strategic documents which reflect the current challenges they face collectively (and not only as a collection of individual nation-states). In this regard, 2022 has been a prolific year. Indeed, on the margins of the 2022 summit in Madrid, NATO released its 2022 strategic concept, a concise but precise document that updates the purpose and principles of the alliance as well as its tasks and objectives. The European Union also produced a strategic document called the Strategic Compass in the spring of 2022.[105] Such documents are important as they present a unified strategic vision of the transatlantic alliance to external partners and rivals. They are also helpful for allies when it comes to strategic cooperation and the division of labor between allies. As the West faces a defining strategic moment, there is a sense of urgency inside NATO to agree on what this division of labor and whether Europeans should pursue more "strategic autonomy", even though it has been clear to all since the start of the war that the U.S. and NATO remain the first pillar of European security. On its side, the EU should fulfill complementary important strategic tasks that contribute to security across the transatlantic space.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXISTENCE OF DIFFERENT THREAT PERCEPTIONS

Transatlantic allies must accept that differences in the perception of external and internal threats will continue to exist. The objective here is to achieve a convergence of views, not a utopian uniformization of threat perceptions within the transatlantic space which will, in any case, not be possible, considering how wide the alliance has become. Different threat perceptions exist because of multiple factors: history, geography, national interest, defense capabilities, the nature of civilian-military systems, etc. Even if transatlantic allies face the same global challenges, countries still sometimes end up with different perceptions of danger. Allies prioritize threats in a different way depending on their own assessments of their national security environment. These differences can be organized in two main categories.

On the one hand, transatlantic allies have a different understanding of threats depending on their geographical position. It seems rather logical that Poland and Greece do not evaluate the threats coming from the eastern flank and from the eastern Mediterranean the same way. But to take things more systematically, transatlantic allies face a range of threats which form a geographical arc going from the north-east to the south-west, which includes the Arctic, the eastern flank, the Middle East and North Africa. To these geographical areas, one must add more distant regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and the Indo-Pacific (which may be distant for Europeans, but immediate and crucial for North Americans). Faced with a multiplicity of challenges, allies have no other choice but to prioritize them according to the perception they have of their national perceived strategic environment. Some countries focus on one geographical theater only, others on multiple ones depending on their capabilities and strategic goals – and most if not all must make painful strategic decisions to focus on what they perceive as their most immediate

104.   French Ministry of Defense, Revue Nationale Strategique, November 9, 2022. Available here: rns-uk-20221202.pdf (sgdsn.gouv.fr). ; Henning Hoff, Germany's national security strategy is in limbo, Internationale Politik Quartely, January 4, 2023. Available here: Germany's National Security Strategy Is in Limbo | Internationale Politik Quarterly (ip-quarterly.com).
105.   NATO, NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, June 29, 2022. Available here: NATO 2022 - Strategic concept ; European External Action Service (EEAS), A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense, March 21, 2022. Available here: strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf (europa.eu)

threat, sometimes to the detriment of the actual greatest common threats. A few countries have even considered for a while that they were not threatened by anyone, a rather naïve assessment that turned out to be mistaken.

Since the end of the Cold War, geography has often contributed to highlighting divisions within the transatlantic alliance, in particular over the level of engagement on NATO's southern and eastern flanks and their complementarity. This strategic dilemma has led to fragmentation in the years preceding the Russian invasion and led to Macron's "NATO brain-dead" comment to *The Economist* in November 2019, which had more to do with expressing France's dissatisfaction at seeing the southeastern flank of NATO completely neglected than anything else.

Beyond geography, transatlantic allies have had intensive debates about the nature of the threats they are facing. If some countries on the edge of the alliance are concerned about a military invasion, others, situated in the depths of the European continent, put greater emphasis on non-military threats – or at least did so before February 24, 2022. France, Spain, and Belgium, to mention a few, have particularly focused on terrorist threats, which require specific approaches and capacities and, to a certain extent, a projection of power beyond NATO's traditional sphere to deal with terrorist sanctuaries anywhere on the globe.

More generally, transatlantic allies are facing an evolutive international environment where new threats have emerged and piled up over the years. In the 2000s, and even more in the 2010s and 2020s, these new threats revealed strategic unpreparedness and capacity insufficiencies, if not technical deficiencies in some cases. Examples abound: Estonia suffered a massive cyber-attack back in 2007, the U.S. presidential election (and others) experienced large-scale electoral interference in 2016, and Lithuania was under full-scale economic coercion by China in 2021. Due to this evolving environment, some countries changed their defense priorities and switched from countering conventional threats to making unconventional ones a priority (be they cyber, counterterrorism, etc.). As a result, transatlantic allies focusing predominantly on unconventional threats seem to have endangered their capacity to answer conventional threats. This is true in Ukraine, as transatlantic allies struggle to keep up with the gigantic needs of ammunition and equipment necessitated by a long, high-intensity war.

Reduce the Impact of Threat Perceptions Differences through Regional Cooperation and Technical Specialization

Acknowledging differences in threat perceptions does not mean transatlantic allies should not work to mitigate the risks of strategic disunity. Individual nations will continue to have their own priorities, but there are ways to harmonize the hierarchization of threats. Allies should keep in mind that regional cooperation and technical specialization are vital for this work.

Some Allies can create and strengthen sub-regional cooperation formats inside NATO. When it comes to a threat in a geographically identifiable space, some countries are more experienced and have better capacities and expertise to deal with it than others. They can therefore use more geographically restrained formats to trailblaze different ways to respond to that threat. The Bucharest 9 group offers an example of this type of format: born out of a 2015 Polish-Romanian initiative with the objective of coordinating transatlantic strategy toward Russia's annexation of Crimea, the group also includes Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia. Regular meetings allow for greater coordination between partners on the eastern flank; they can then have more weight when discussing priorities with other allies. This is why U.S. President Joe Biden was invited to attend, symbolically, a B9 Summit back in 2021. German, British, and French leaders also attend occasionally.

More recently, the B9 group and Nordic countries have strengthened their cooperation because of the war in Ukraine. Another example is the EU Med Group, initiated by Spain and Cyprus in 2013 to coordinate on issues of common interest for nine Mediterranean and southern European countries in the EU. However, it should also be noted that the presence of such groupings does not guarantee clarity and coherence among the regional grouping: in the case of the EU Med group, the positions of the nine members were largely divergent during the 2020 crisis with Turkey over Greece's and Cyprus's territorial waters.

Subregional cooperation also runs the risk of making NATO a mere grouping of divergent regional interests and should therefore remain limited. Instead of focusing solely on their main region of interest, allies should be encouraged to pay more attention to other geographical theatres, even in a limited way, to promote mutual understanding. One example is provided by several Central European countries' strategy of limited involvement in the EU's southern neighborhood. They participated in the French-led anti-insurgent mission Barkhane in the Sahel region, traditionally a zone of direct interest for Paris, and this in turn helped convince the French to increase their presence on the eastern flank as part of NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission.

If a country is particularly sensitive to a certain type of threat and focuses primarily on it, it will certainly develop specific strategies and tools to deal with it. Over time, some countries have developed technical specialties.

Estonia is a good example, as it had to react after a large-scale cyber-attack in 2007. Following this unconventional attack, Estonian leaders invested heavily in cyber-security, including for the military. As of today, Estonia, the fourth smallest country in the transatlantic space, is the leading power among its allies in cyber-defense, and it shares its knowledge, notably through the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE). This is only one of the alliance's Centres of Excellence (CoE) in countries with certain technical specializations. There are currently 28 of these CoEs; they are nationally or multi-nationally funded and have multiple objectives, including providing training for transatlantic allies' leaders. This often involves sharing best practices, lessons learned, and working on strategic doctrines and concepts.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTINUITY OF THREATS

While some threats evolve in nature, others remain a constant in NATO strategic thinking. Out of these, Russia is without doubt the biggest immediate threat facing NATO today, even though the intensity and geographic scope of that threat has changed over time. After Georgia in 2008, Russia launched a war with Ukraine in 2014, which transformed into a full-scale invasion in 2022. Russia de facto annexed Belarus in 2020 and it intervened in Syria and Libya to regain a strategic military presence in the Mediterranean. It is active in Africa with its Wagner militias (in Mali and the Central Africa Republic, to mention just two countries). The Russian threat is multi-dimensional, and this must be recognized by Western allies, who face not one specific challenge but a multi-faceted north-east south-west arc of threats, from the Artic to West Africa.

China's global strategy, symbolized by the Belt and Road Initiative, represents a different, but equally strong and urgent threat for NATO. Strategic confrontations with China mostly occur in the Indo-Pacific region, but Beijing's aggressive behavior also represents a threat to other regions. This is demonstrated by its strategic passivity in Ukraine (and support of Russia, via economic and political means); its investment in key infrastructure projects in Africa, Southeast Asia, and also in the Western Balkans; its land grabs in Africa; its disinformation activities all over the transatlantic space; and its so-called "wolf-warrior" diplomacy, which seeks to impose new diplomatic narratives where might makes right.

Threats, of course, are evolving. Kyiv is currently facing a mix of military (conventional warfare) and non-military threats (including informational, cyber and economic warfare, among other forms of hybrid warfare) from Moscow. Ukraine has been able to defend itself thanks to a mix of conventional and unconventional capacities, made possible by international military assistance. Intelligence

sharing, particularly with the U.S., has also played a key role. The allies should not forget that unconventional warfare is now a full part of the battlefield, which necessitates preparation and resilience at both military and civil levels.

The current multiplication of threats should act as an incentive for the allies to act quickly to fulfil their commitment to a minimum budget of 2 percent GDP for defense and security. Two percent should be seen as a minimum: it is far from enough to address the threats transatlantic allies are facing today and will face tomorrow. Indeed, those states on the front line have acknowledged that and have raised their defense spending. Despite a difficult financial situation in the 2010s, Greece earmarks 3.76 percent for defense, and Poland passed a law that should make the country reach the 3 percent mark in 2023.

ENLARGE THE SCOPE OF TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

As mentioned previously, NATO partners have reacted strongly to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Transatlantic unity has clearly strengthened in the face of the invasion. But that does not mean that structural issues within the alliance have disappeared. Indeed, divergences are still there, and they could turn into much deeper divisions depending on the international situation, for example if the war in Ukraine was to be partly superseded by a major crisis in the Mediterranean or the Taiwan Strait.

Almost since its beginnings, NATO has struggled with the risk of geographic discontinuity. One can identify several gray zones in the NATO area, in the Western Balkans (Serbia, Kosovo), Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Moldova) and even northern Europe, at least as long as Sweden is not a member. In these areas, several key countries have expressed strong interest in NATO and/or EU membership. Aspirations to join Euro-Atlantic structures should be encouraged, not because enlargement is a naturally good thing, but because in this case the benefits outweigh the costs if integration is done in the right way.

Countries located in these gray zones are currently affected by important threats and do not have the security guarantees provided by the Euro-Atlantic structures. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown it painfully, non-membership to NATO means vulnerability, sometimes extreme vulnerability to the aggressive behavior of authoritarian actors whose goal is to destabilize the region and challenge the current geopolitical order.

Second, if the Euro-Atlantic space has geographical limits, transatlantic allies' cooperation with third countries does not. Strengthening cooperation with third countries in regions such as Africa, the Middle East, and Indo-Pacific areas should be a strategic objective for the allies.

Exchanges and partnerships (whether in terms of regular diplomatic exchanges, armament cooperation, or common drills) not only build operational synergies in the defense of the transatlantic space, but they also bring to the allies a better understanding of the out-of-area regions, which remain tied to NATO through globalization and global supply chains.

One obvious example is the Indo-Pacific region, which is getting the attention of many NATO allies. Now, several European countries have designed outreach strategies for the Indo-Pacific, mainly (and logically) with their national interest in mind. The U.S.'s strategy has been devised with China in mind. Germany has focused on freedom of navigation. And France is taking an approach based on its presence in the region, especially on the many islands it holds in the South Pacific and on its large exclusive economic zone, the second biggest in the world, largely thanks to its Indo-Pacific territories. The United Kingdom and The Netherlands are also proactive in the region.

A unified transatlantic strategy toward the Indo-Pacific region is far off, but transatlantic allies could benefit from cooperation and dialogue with third countries such as Japan, Australia, India, and South Korea that share their values (democracy, freedom, free market economy, etc.), and objectives (countering China's aggressive behavior or ensuring peace, security, and prosperity). Of course, these third countries themselves have diverging views on priorities and threats, with India and Indonesia particularly reluctant to engage in a formal alliance. The diversity of interests and views is not antonymic with the convergence of these interests, as the diversity of formats, such as AUKUS, QUAD, attests. And when it comes to the wide diversity of strategic visions in the Indo-Pacific, NATO's diversity can also be an asset: in the cases of India and Indonesia, France can on some issues such as armament be a better partner precisely because of its insistence on strategic autonomy, as opposed to, say, the UK.

Finally, transatlantic allies should be aware of topics which are not directly linked but are nonetheless connected to defense and security. Economics is a key part of the transatlantic relationship. This is even more true as the end of the global free trade era produces tensions between decoupling blocs and, at times, even between allies. If globalization knows no borders, protectionism builds new ones everywhere, including with allies. Tensions between the U.S. and the EU as a result of the Inflation Reduction Act is just one example of an issue that could be destructive for the transatlantic relationship; and protectionism can be witnessed on both sides of the Atlantic. Agreements about free trade are a matter of bilateral discussion between the U.S. and the EU, and these discussions should consider industrial goods and services as well as raw materials like oil and gas. A coordinated approach to rare earth and other components crucial for the energy transition is vital.

Of course, there are, and will always be, limits to cooperation and synergies. In the end, international alliances are simply the product of a common interest between sovereign nation-states who might not share priorities on every issue. But it is important that the allies remain cognizant of the threats they have to face together, even if they sometimes have different perspectives and different toolkits. Making these perspectives compatible and the toolkits complementary is the ultimate goal of any alliance, and NATO is no exception. We hope that this publication has helped make opportunities for compatibility and complementarity clearer to all.