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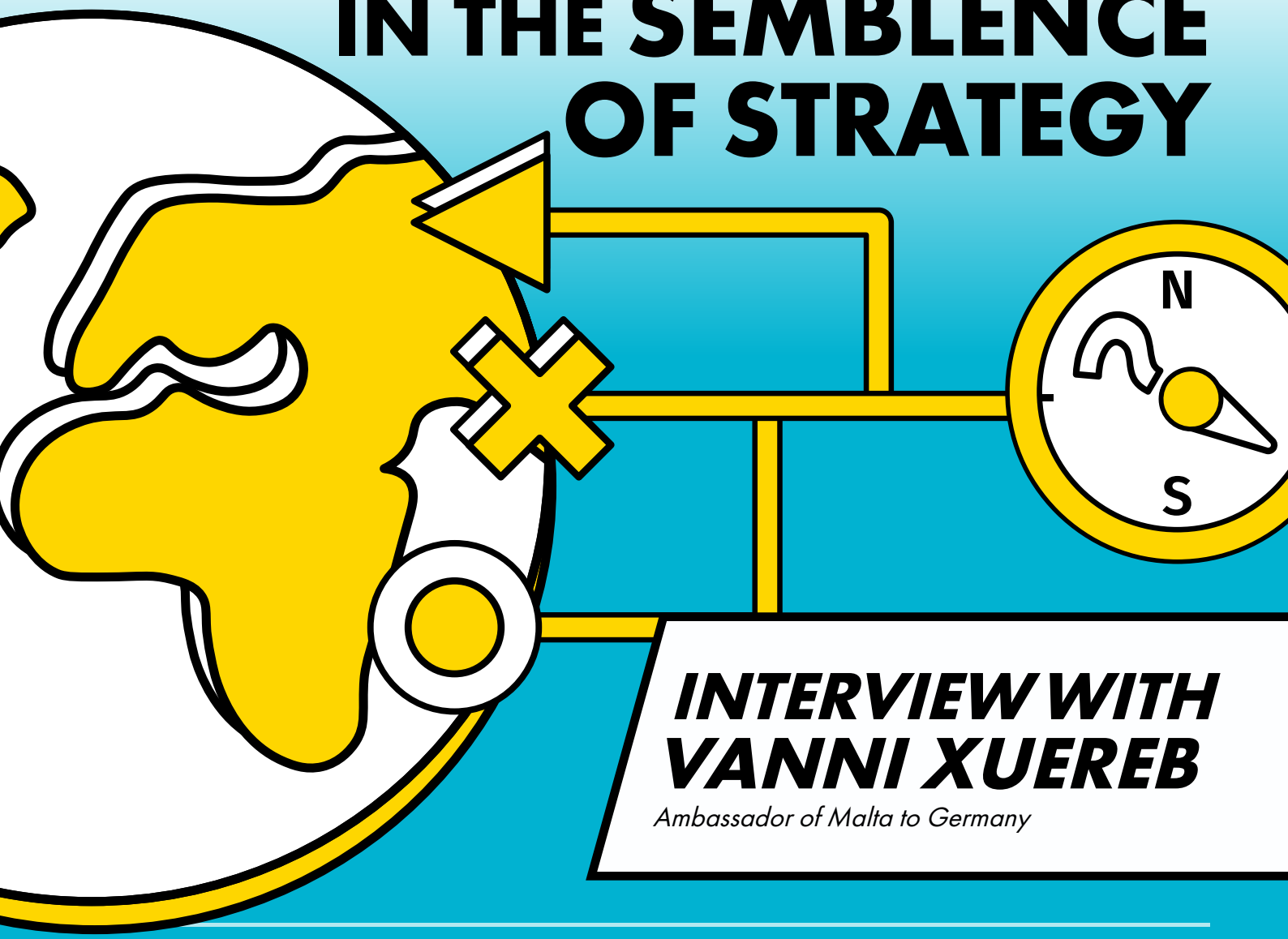
# IN THE SEMBLENCE OF STRATEGY




## INTERVIEW WITH VANNI XUEREB

*Ambassador of Malta to Germany*

### What Will Biological Warfare Look Like in the 21st Century?

From the perspective of a natural scientist, how will today's technology change biological warfare in the 21st century? Over the last two decades, breakthroughs in synthetic biology, biological engineering and biological AI have radically changed what is possible in terms of biological weapons research. But despite potentially gaining new capabilities, the deployment of biological weapons remains unlikely given their military disadvantages and the challenges involved in acquiring them.

### Facing Russia's War Economy

Russia's war economy has defied initial predictions of collapse following Western sanctions. Instead, Russia's GDP has grown, and its military spending has increased to 6% of GDP. However, the economy faces challenges, including human capital flight, reliance on fluctuating energy prices, and possibly capital depreciation. The limits of sanctions highlight the need for the West to bolster its military capabilities to effectively counter Russia's aggression.

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# FOREWORD


**Theodor Himmel**

Theodor Himmel graduated law at the University of Cologne and did his LL.M. at the University of Leiden During. He is currently working as a political consultant in Berlin and finishes his second state exam. At EPIS, he edits the magazine as editor-in-chief, focusing on international foreign and security policy.



**Pablo Mathis**

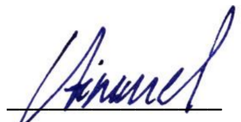
Pablo Mathis holds a BSc. (Hons.) in Security Studies from Leiden University. In September, Pablo will commence the MA in War Studies programme at King's College London.


## About the Magazine

The world has become more violent — and impacts us directly. The war in Ukraine is still raging with immeasurable brutality, and the situation in the Middle East is worsening day by day. These wars have also had a very personal impact on our work on this issue of the EPIS Magazine. Our layout designer is Ukrainian and works from Kyiv. Due to Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, the electricity is repeatedly cut off for long periods of time. This makes the work on the issue more difficult and the layout is progressing slowly. The attacks on Israel were also not without consequences for EPIS Magazine. Research Fellows and authors of the EPIS Think Tank were in Israel. They were unable to leave the country in the meantime and therefore could not continue working on their articles. These delays are annoying. But they are just minor issues compared to the other, great sufferings. And yet they stand as examples of the far-reaching and unexpected effects of wars, no matter whether they seem to us so distant.

Beyond this distance, further conflicts appear. They are outside the limited horizon of our attention. They have not yet escalated, but are already simmering. Even if you may suspect it, their outbreak will still come as a surprise. The danger lies within this moment of surprise, because most people approach it in a rush and without being informed. In this way, information can defuse the situation and rob the conflicts of their explosiveness. In our issue of EPIS Magazine, we are therefore devoting ourselves not only to the big issues, but also to the issues on the conflicts that are rarely given any fora. However, it is difficult to select. Or do you know how many issues there are that you have not heard of? A strategy in this selection is crucial. What strategy should you pursue? When should you develop a strategy? Where should the strategy begin? A lot of things still seem as if we are groping in the dark. Let us start by address a few of the many unknowns. Shed a little light in the great darkness. Call a quiet voice into the great silence. Only in this way can we - before it escalates, before it affects us - look behind the semblance of strategy.

We the editors, thank the authors for their participation, the partners for their support and readers for their interest in this issue.



Theodor Himmel
Editor-in-chief and chairman of
EPIS Thinktank e.V.

# GREETINGS FROM YOUNG TRANS-ATLANTIC INITIATIVE

**Lukas Winkelmann**

Lukas Winkelmann is the incumbent president of the Young Transatlantic Initiative. He studies at the John-F.-Kennedy-Institute in Berlin. His special interests are transatlantic trade and defence cooperation, as well as US foreign policy with regard to the Indo-Pacific.

YTI

## Dear readers of EPIS Magazine,

The Young Transatlantic Initiative values EPIS as an important partner. As the new president of the YTI, it is, therefore, a particular pleasure for me to write this welcoming address as a sign of our close partnership and cooperation.

We live in difficult and challenging times. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the ongoing war in the Middle East and the rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific region are the most obvious signs of that. Additionally, our Western societies face a lot of internal conflicts as well. However, if we stand together and keep on fighting for our common values of freedom and democracy, no force on this planet can stop us. That is why the transatlantic alliance is so crucial. The friendship of the United States and the European nations is the beacon of hope in this increasingly difficult world.

Young people on both sides of the Atlantic are the key to the future stability of this friendship. Therefore, I want to encourage our generation to answer the call and keep this friendship alive. It is not a matter of mere politics; it is essential for the preservation of freedom and democracy on this planet.

We should also not forget about the importance of Canada and Mexico in this endeavour. Both countries bring strong economies to the table and share our common values. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the EU is an important element of this. All remaining EU members should speed up the ratification of this agreement.

Before I finish my address, I want to reiterate my call on all NATO members to meet the two percent defense spending target. Our common defense of freedom and democracy can only be sustained when everybody does their fair share of heavy lifting.

My special thanks to EPIS Magazine, which provides a platform for foreign policy debates. Let me close with the words of the great Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States: "Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people. Those who have known freedom, and then lost it, have never known it again."

I wish you a stimulating read and new insights. We look forward to further cooperation with our colleagues at EPIS.

*Sincerely Yours,*
*Lukas Winkelmann*
*President of the Young Transatlantik Initiative*

# GREETINGS FROM EURODEFENSE

**Patrice Mompeyssin**

Brigadier general (retired) Patrice Mompeyssin is secretary general of the EURODEFENSE network. During the Former Yugoslavia conflict, he did a Tour in Bosnia within the NATO Stabilization Force in Sarajevo. At the end of his career, he specialized in international relations.

The cooperation agreement between the EURODEFENSE network and the EPIS Think Tank has been signed in Brussels on 22 May 2024. It is an excellent thing and exchanges of contributions in the EPIS Magazine and EURODEFENSE newsletter have already started. An interview by Theodor Himmel of the President of EuroDefense Austria, former Minister of Defense Werner Fasslabend, is planned by end of July.

It has, unfortunately, become a banality to write that the threats are increasing day after day, and I will not list all of them. It is a true and very sad reality, that citizens and politicians have realized, after "taking the dividends of peace" for too many years. We must hope that all leaders in the World will keep calm and be wise enough, well advised by their generals and diplomats, to avoid the chain of event leading to a World War. We must hope that nuclear weapons will not be used. We must hope the end of long wars and conflicts with thousands of soldiers and innocent civilians killed. But we must be prepared to defend ourselves with the proper weapons in the last resort, which takes several years. That involves means but also will of the rulers and resilience of the societies

The EU has a greater role to play for lowering tensions, providing it becomes more united, powerful, and autonomous.

What can do EPIS and EURODEFENSE? They can't be in the heads of the leaders of their countries, who have key information in hands and are in charge to take the decisions. Critics or advises are easy but art is difficult. However, we must have an educational role towards the people of our nations, to allow them to consciously vote and act with the right information.

Young members of EURODEFENSE and EPIS will be sooner or later in charge of heavy responsibilities. The senior members must pass them their experience and help them to prepare this moment, considering that new situations may involve new behaviors and decisions. Future is in their hands

EURODEFENSE is proud of the confidence showed by EPIS towards its members!

*Patrice Mompeyssin, former Secretary General of EuroDefense France*

# What Will Biological Warfare Look Like in the 21st Century?

**Leif Sieben**

Leif Sieben is currently pursuing his Master in Interdisciplinary Sciences majoring in Chemistry and Computer Science at ETH Zurich. In his Master thesis, Leif is developing AI models to accelerate the discovery of novel antibiotics.

Imagine a world devastated by a highly contagious disease that ravages through the population, killing millions and grinding the world economy to a halt. People shelter at home, individual liberties are curtailed, and democratic systems are pushed to their limits. Distrust, rumours and, at worst, mass hysteria begin to spread as the normal functioning of society breaks down. These days, envisioning such a scenario requires less imagination than active short-term memory, as such dystopian thought experiments became reality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the enormous potential for devastation, how likely is it that infectious diseases could be used as biological weapons in the future, and what will biological warfare look like in the 21st century? The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a heightened sense of threat from biological weapons in governments, intelligence agencies and also the public as the potential consequences of a small, let alone a pandemic-sized, attack have become incredibly imminent. The pandemic years outlined the real-life damages associated with an exponential form of disease transmission, but many today fear an equally exponential increase in the capabilities to develop and procure biological weapons fuelled by scientific advances in recent years. Two main trends stand out: First, advances in biotechnology and in what is called "synthetic biology" could augment the development of biological warfare agents. Second, artificial intelligence (AI) has proven to facilitate the development of engineered cells and could work in tandem with the trends listed above to further accelerate biological weapons research. AI could substantially lower the barrier of entry in developing novel biological weapons, particularly for non-state actors such as terrorist organisations.

Such assessments are based on the idea of "dual-use technologies", i.e. scientific capabilities including research methods, infrastructure or biological material, which can plausibly be used for both civilian as well as military research. Nearly all biological research can be seen as dual-use in some way, yet most are difficult or simply uninteresting from an army perspective to exploit for biological weapons research. So, to analyse how the threat from biological weapons will develop in the future, one must not only consider whether possible new dual-use technologies exist, but whether these technologies are particularly suited for biological weapons research.

This article will limit itself to living warfare agents and explicitly exclude discussions concerning toxins derived from biological sources. A common example is ricin, a potent toxin that can be isolated from the castor oil plant, which, in its handling and security concerns, is not essentially different from other synthetic toxins. Biocrime, or the intentional use of biological weapons against specific individuals, such as in a murder or assassination, will also not be further discussed as the role of biological agents is analogous to the use of any other weapon in these incidents.

Biological weapons are unique in a number of ways, not least given their long, if mixed, history of regulation by international conventions. Ultimately, biological weapons do not exist in a military vacuum, and to project their role in 21st-century warfare, both the potential for harm as well as the likelihood of deployment of biological weapons need to be assessed. Two questions emerge from this: First, how have recent technological advances, in particular the fields of synthetic biology and biological AI, changed the threat from biological weapons? And second, have these developments made

the use of biological weapons more likely in the 21st century? In the following, a historical overview of the use of biological weapons and their regulation by international conventions is provided. Subsequently, the impact of synthetic biology and AI on biological weapons research is discussed, and, lastly, an outlook, including concrete policy advice on biological weapons in this century, is given.

## 1.The History of Biological Weapons

Although not understood as such at the time, biological weapons date back to at least 400 BCE when Scythian archers dipped their arrows in blood, manure or corpses. A famous example of an early use of infections in warfare took place in 1346 during the siege of the Genovese port city Caffa (now Feodosia, Ukraine) by the Mongols, who catapulted cadavers carrying the bubonic plague. Those who fled the city may have brought the plague to the rest of Europe in the 14th century (Metcalfe, 2002).

### 1.a. State Actors

During the First World War, only Germany seriously attempted to use biological weapons, though its target was horses, not humans, given their importance as transport animals. Unlike Nazi Germany, which never seriously considered biological weapons during the Second World War despite Allied fears, Japan had a robust biological weapons programme that at its height employed more than 5'000 people, testing at least 25 different disease agents on prisoners and civilians during the war at multiple research facilities. After the war, Japanese scientists were tried for war crimes but were granted immunity in exchange for information on human trials by the Americans.

The U.S. was at the forefront of biological weapons research after the Second World War, conducting multiple open-air experiments on animals, human volunteers and unsuspecting civilians. In 1966, a group of U.S. Army researchers used light bulbs filled with a mostly harmless strain of bacteria to infect the New York metro system to simulate the spread of anthrax. The U.S. abandoned biological weapons research in 1972. The Soviet Union maintained a large biological weapons programme called "Biopreparat", at one time employing more than 50'000 people and stockpiling multiple tons of anthrax bacilli and smallpox virus (Frischknecht, 2003).

Among the stated reasons for invading Iraq in 2003 given by the U.S. was to eliminate the threat of weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons. Saddam Hussein's attempt at developing biological weapons was discovered during investigations conducted by the U.N. following Iraq's defeat in 1991 in the Gulf War. The Iraqis saw biological weapons as part of a comprehensive threat of mass destruction in combination with nuclear and chemical weapons, more useful with regard to their psychological threat than their military effectiveness. The biological weapons programme received little attention from Iraqi army officials, and it is now believed that the limited arsenal which was accrued would have proven ineffective in combat (Trevan 2016).

In rare cases, biological weapons were also expressly developed against internal threats, such as by the South African Apartheid regime. While mostly focused on chemical weapons, the programme did include some biological toxins for potential use in quelling internal dissent. While this was not the intent of the South African weapons programme, biological weapons have been used to systematically target ethnic groups. In 1763, British soldiers used blankets exposed to smallpox to repel a siege by Native Americans, who were more susceptible to the disease than Europeans (Gould & Folb, 2002).

In general, however, biological weapons have seen relatively little use in modern warfare. The Allies developed the "N1 bomb" during the Second World War. However, the 200 kg biological cluster bomb never saw any combat action. Fears about the use of biological weapons were rampant immediately after the Second World War, and speculations remain as to whether the US used biological weapons in the Korean War (1950–1953). Except for an Israeli operation known as "Cast Thy Bread" which poisoned water wells with typhoid in Arab villages during the war of 1948 (Morris & Kedar, 2022), no known incidents of biological weapons in combat are known since the end of the Second World War (Metcalfe, 2002). Nonetheless, at least four countries – Iran, North Korea, China and Russia – are believed to be pursuing some form of offensive biological weapons research today based on US intelligence (U.S. Department of State, 2024).

### 1.b Bioterrorism

The immense potential destruction based on only a few disease agents or infected individuals combined with the enormous fear and possible mass hysteria biological weapons can cause have inspired interest in various terrorist organisations in the past. Bioterrorist attacks however display a relatively high failure rate even when executed by professionals Furthermore, the illegal research activities necessary are often difficult to conceal. In 1995, American bacteriologist and open white-supremacies Larry Wayne Harris ordered plague-carrying bacteria from a research institute but was later caught by the police after his behaviour alarmed colleagues. The deadliest act of bioterrorism to date occurred in 2001, when several letters infected with anthrax, an infectious bacterium, were mailed to various media offices and two US Senators, killing five people (Oliviera et al., 2020).

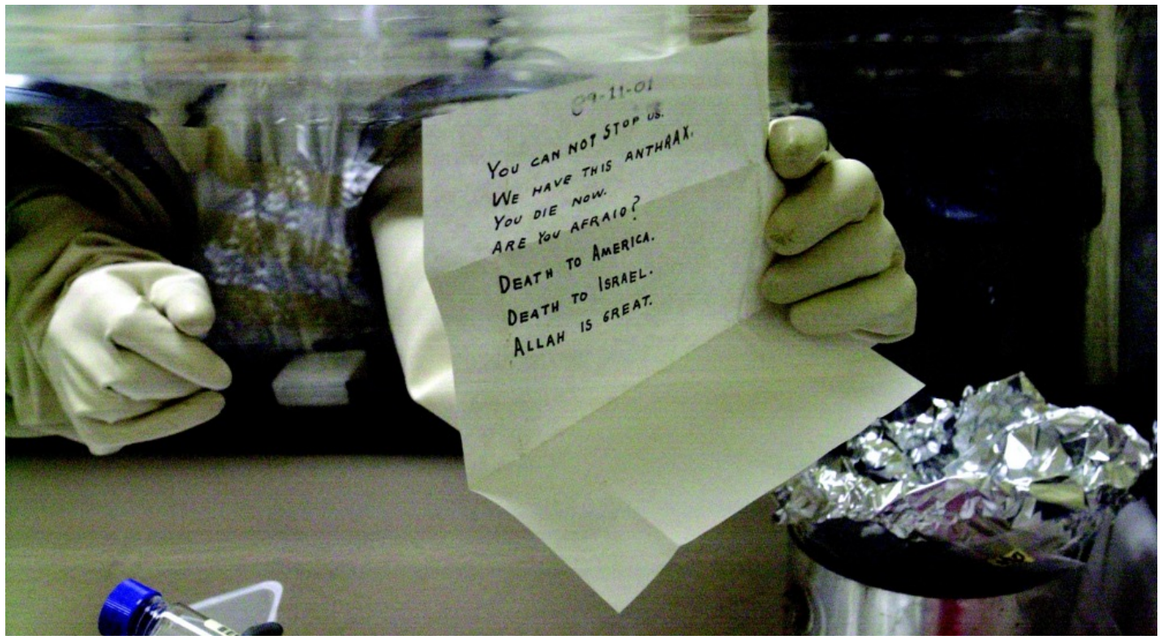



Figure 1. A laboratory technician presents an anthrax-laced letter that was sent to the office of US Senator Patrick Leahy in 2001 (FBI Media, 2001).

Biological weapons have not only been used by rogue actors but also by larger organisations. In 1984, a religious sect known as the Rajneesh movement attempted to win a local election by incapacitating the voting population with Salmonella infections spread through salad bars in eleven restaurants in Wasco, Oregon. The primitive attack with a relatively common disease agent infected 751 people but was ultimately unsuccessful in swaying the election. Al-Qaeda maintained a biological weapons programme during the 90s but to little avail. The Japanese religious group Aum Shinrikyo notoriously tried to release anthrax bacteria from a building in Tokyo in the early 1990s. Despite four years of concerted research work by up to twelve trained scientists and a multi-million dollar budget, the group ultimately failed to produce a deadly bacterial strain. Aum Shinrikyo underlines how difficult it is to utilise even organisms often considered as relatively easy to work with, such as anthrax. Due to these difficulties, the group resorted to the chemical nerve agent Sarin for their attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995, killing thirteen people (Leitenberg, 2001).

### 1. c. International Biological Weapons Controls

Even early on, biological weapons were often considered a particularly cruel and morally questionable form of warfare. When the French King Louis XIV (1638–1715) was presented with a biological weapon, he paid an Italian chemist a full pension to ensure his invention remained secret (Metcalfe, 2002). The first attempts at banning biological weapons date back to two declarations – 1874 in Brussels and 1899 in The Hague – but failed to curb Germany's use of biological weapons in World War I due to the absence of any proper means of control (Frischknecht, 2003). The 1925 Geneva Protocol explicitly bans the use of "bacteriological methods of warfare" and was supplemented in 1972 by the Biological Weapons and Toxin Convention (BWTC), which nowadays has 185 state parties, including all major geopolitical powers. The BWTC allows “prophylactic, protective or other peaceful” research but otherwise bans the use, production and stockpiling of biological weapons. However, parties are only obliged to partake in so-called "confidence-building measures" in which states report information on research centres, production facilities and infectious disease outbreaks to the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs. In reality, only about half of all states submit such confidence-building measures every year.

The development of biological weapons is also limited through access to synthetic DNA, which is provided by a relatively small number of companies around the world, many of which screen both customers and gene sequences for potential dual-use applications. Many routes to biological weapons today would not be realistic without an option to commercially acquire synthetic DNA, but these screenings remain voluntary and have been criticised for being too lax. Individual countries also typically have export controls for biological agents, but there exist no international treaties and few standards regarding this type of trade (Hoffmann et al., 2023).

### 2. Who Is Likely to Deploy Biological Weapons, and Why Have They Not Used Them?

Potent biological weapons have existed for over a century now, and dangerous diseases which could theoretically be used to harm one's enemies have been around for even longer. Why, then have biological weapons not been widely used in the past? While it is true that biological weapons have always been seen as a cruel or even impermissible form of warfare, such moral considerations alone have certainly not stopped the deployment of other incredibly destructive weapons in the past. Any argument that current technology raises the threat from biological weapons not only needs to show that biological weapons can be more easily procured or that these have become more lethal, but it must also demonstrate why the use of biological weapons should become more likely relative to other current weapon systems. In brief, superior biological weapons do not immediately translate into a higher level of threat if these remain unlikely to be deployed. Historically, this has certainly been the case. As Richard Nixon once put it: "We’ll never use the damn germs. So what good is biological warfare as a deterrent? If someone uses germs on us, we’ll nuke ’em" (Nixon, n.d., as cited in Hoffmann, 2009, para. 2).

**Dual-use technology:**
Scientific capabilities, equipment or biological material (e.g. a strain of bacteria) which can plausibly be used both in a civilian and military context are considered “dual-use”. Essentially all biological research may be considered dual-use and large biological weapons programmes can relatively easily be concealed as civilian research projects. This complicates the regulation and monitoring of biological weapons and also poses a challenge for intelligence agencies tasked to uncover these programmes.

Very few state actors have pursued major biological weapons programmes in the past, with the notable exceptions of the Soviet Union, Iraq and possibly North Korea. Major players, such as the U.S., did not see a necessity in competing with their geopolitical rivals in this area. This lack of interest cannot easily be explained by moral hesitance alone. Fundamentally, biological weapons suffer from a number of major drawbacks from a military perspective.

First, biological weapons are not weapons of mass destruction but mass killing, as they leave infrastructure and other organisms intact. Even very small-scale operations can quickly spiral out of control and may persist in a theatre of war for prolonged periods of time. In the case of endemic or even pandemic spread, the threat to the offensive party will likely outweigh any tactical benefits gained in the short term. Bluntly put, releasing the bubonic plague on the battlefield is as likely to hurt one's own soldiers as the enemy's. Second, biological weapons typically become active over days or weeks and thus suffer from a meaningful tactical delay, allowing the enemy to respond and making it impossible for them to be used in a surprise attack. Lastly, biological weapons have few advantages to offer to an organised military force compared to chemical warfare agents. A nerve gas such as Sarin can be deployed with wind directions in mind to minimise friendly fire causing immediate, wide-spread but contained damage.

These drawbacks, however, can become advantages for minor players engaged in an asymmetric conflict. Biological weapons allow for effective and covert attacks, such as those by military intelligence agencies. The long delay of effect and the fact that a

biological weapon can be difficult to distinguish from a routine disease outbreak means that such attacks can be conducted in secrecy. Furthermore, biological weapons can be concealed as dual-use technologies. The risk of hurting unintended targets remains, however, and such attacks will nearly always lead to substantial civilian casualties, let alone being illegal under international law. Similar to nuclear weapons, a very severe biological attack can also make it impossible to enter an affected zone after an offensive.

Biological weapons are, therefore, most attractive to actors who care little about the unintended harm caused by such attacks. In theory, this may tip the balance of power towards small actors such as terrorist organisations, which can have outsized, adverse effects through a single successful strike. The psychological damage associated with biological warfare only further multiplies the negative impact of such attacks, and even just the fear of a biological attack can satisfy the goals of a terrorist organisation.

> Fundamentally, there remain very few cases in which biological weapons retain a tactical edge over other weapon systems, such as chemical warfare agents.

## 3. The Role of Synthetic Biology

Over the last two decades, biologists have become increasingly interested in not only studying but controlling biological systems. Synthetic biology, for example, is concerned with introducing human-made design elements into organisms to endow these with new capabilities. These concepts have been used to enable white blood cells to recognise and kill cancer cells, which otherwise evade detection from the immune system. This type of "cell therapy" is nowadays used to treat certain blood cancers.

These endeavours are also closely related to "biological engineering," which prefers using existing biological processes that are then optimised to solve a specific problem. For example, biological engineers have developed naturally carbon-consuming bacteria which specifically target oil spills. The final step in projects, both in synthetic biology and biological engineering, is always to produce such an optimised organism on a large scale. This is the domain of biotechnology which is concerned with using organisms on a reactor-scale, e.g. for the production of antibodies from bacteria or for brewing beer.

The distinctions between these three fields are fluid, and all of them could plausibly be useful in biological weapons research. Within the context of this article, the design of novel capabilities is particularly relevant, and all three of these aspects will be collectively referred to as synthetic biology approaches. All of these fields have made massive steps forward over the last two decades, and their techniques have become widely adopted both in academia and industry. But how does this change the threat posed by biological weapons today?

First, the procurement of disease agents, such as viruses or infectious bacteria, has not become substantially easier over the past two decades. Samples for many of these agents can be obtained from laboratories or illicit vendors, as was done by the Aum Shinrikyo cult, or collected directly from places where the disease is actively spreading. However, scientists have also reconstructed some of these agents in the lab from scratch such as the Poliovirus in 2002 (Cello et al., 2002). This proves that even diseases which have been eradicated could still be used for biological weapons research today. At the same time, the very fact that these diseases could be eradicated indicates that an effective vaccine or cure is likely available.

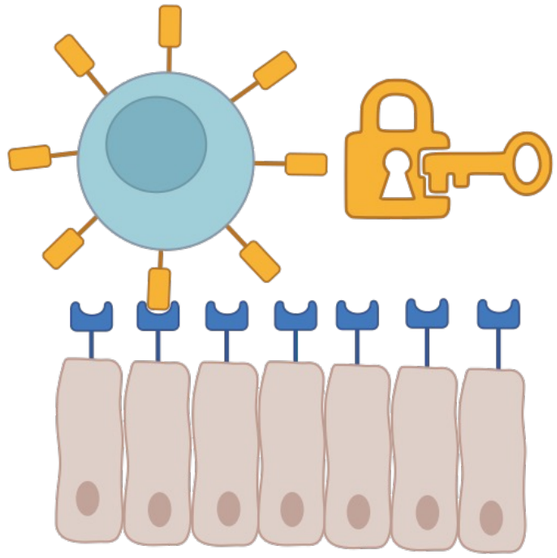


Figure 2. Cells can be designed so they only become active once they recognize a certain surface marker. This is often described as a "key-and-lock" interaction, where the surface marker figuratively unlocks the effect of the cell. This has been used to selectively activate immune cells to kill cancer cells while ignoring healthy ones.

The widespread adoption of biotechnology means that most rich countries today have access to the know-how and equipment needed to produce bacteria and to a lesser degree viruses on a large-scale. While the barrier of entry has plausibly been lowered over the past two decades, such technology has been available for nearly 50 years now.

In one way, synthetic biology and biotechnology have substantially changed the threat environment from biological weapons. Most notably, synthetic biology could in theory allow biological agents to gain novel capabilities. For example, an infectious bacterium that was previously susceptible to antibiotics could be modified to become multi-drug resistant. Alternatively, genetically altered bacteria which can digest paints, concrete or fuels have been studied by civilian scientists to clean up waste in the environment. Such dual-use technology could enable attacks on military fuel stores or increase the wear and tear of enemy equipment. The U.S. has retained interest in such non-lethal biological weapons which meaningfully damage military targets with relatively little and controllable harm to civilians (van Aken & Hammond, 2003).

Synthetic biology could plausibly be used to overcome one fundamental limitation of biological weapons: their lack of specificity. Theoretically, a biological warfare agent could be developed that becomes active only under specific environmental conditions, e.g., being inactive on land but infectious at sea to target naval crews. There exists a real danger that a disease could be made specific to certain genetic markers to create a biological weapon which is only lethal to a certain ethnic group. However, the design of such a weapon with state-of-the-art synthetic biology tools seems essentially unfeasible.

Synthetic biologists spent nearly 30 years trying to get immune cells to target cancers, which in comparison is a much easier prob-

lem. Normal immune cells already precisely detect and then kill a specific target cell. Researchers could then simply get immune cells to also recognise cancer cells. Nothing comparable has been achieved for bacteria or viruses, which would need to acquire such new capabilities from scratch. Any such approach also hinges on a precise definition of the target cue: What actually distinguishes a maritime from a land environment? Temperature, humidity and surface acidity for example fluctuate a lot and are insufficient to ensure that the disease agent is only active in the target zone. Similarly, it is generally difficult to find genetic markers shared across a large group of people, such as an ethnicity. Without a way to define the target in this case, biological weapons will remain fundamentally indiscriminate.

The tactical value of such a biological weapon would remain low in any case. Soldiers are not generally more closely genetically related than any other group of people, which means finding a shared genetic marker that distinguishes them from friendly forces is extremely unlikely. Furthermore, this biomarker would need to be known long in advance to the actual attack for such a target-specific weapon to be developed. Most likely, both a weapon and its antidote, e.g. a vaccine, would need to be devised simultaneously for such a weapon to provide tactical value. This is theoretically possible, but substantially increases the scientific complexity of such a weapon. Furthermore, this approach is risky given that potential mutations may develop once the warfare agent has spread. This could negate any advantage from an antidote, just like a vaccine can become obsolete as a virus spreads rapidly.

Lastly, the biggest difficulty in developing any biological weapon remains the method of dispersion. This was a major bottleneck for both the Aum Shinrikyo cult and the Iraqi weapons programme. Living organisms, unlike toxic chemicals, are prone to death themselves and are thus likely to become ineffective before ever reaching their target. A virus that typically spreads through bodily fluids, such as snot, does not easily lend itself to being sprayed from an aeroplane. Similarly, a bacterium that needs to be ingested cannot simply be scattered into the open. Even today, there exist very few tested means of dispersion for biological weapons and while some new technologies could aid in this, such as microencapsulation or lipid nanoparticles, this currently remains a major stepping stone for most biological warfare programmes.

## 4.Does AI Lower the Barrier to Entry?

Of particular interest currently is the impact that artificial intelligence (AI) tools may have on the threat posed by biological weapons. Recently, for example, the RAND corporation conducted a red-team study to assess the impact of AI on biological warfare (Mouton et al., 2024). This study focuses on the use of large language models such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Claude to develop biological weapons. It should be clearly stated that these are generally not the same type of models used by biologists today to solve scientific problems. While AI is indeed being rapidly deployed today to solve diverse problems in synthetic biology and beyond, this normally involves specifically developing models for a given application. Essentially all biological AI tools today still require substantial research efforts, scientific expertise and access to computing resources before these can be deployed.

Out of the box, large language models are currently mostly useful to scientists in reviewing literature or to come up with new ideas. In the red-team exercise conducted by the RAND Corporation, large language models generally just ended up summarising already available information on the internet. However, AI models specifically made with applications in biology in mind are being built. Currently, these efforts require researchers to first produce or at least curate a large body of data, for example through large-scale experiments performed by robots. But already tools can help scientists choose the right genes to manipulate, predict how such interventions will change the behaviour of cells or even conduct such experiments in an automated way. Initial training is the most burdensome for these models, and it is plausible that many future use-cases could make do with only minor changes to the model and little additional data, in an approach known as fine-tuning. Currently, a lot of interest is directed towards not only having the interpretation but also the generation of this data be automated. A so-called “self-driving lab” may perform tens of thousands of experiments without the need for human supervision and could be integrated seamlessly with AI models that plan, analyse and learn from these experiments.

AI is giving scientists new capabilities already and will facilitate the engineering of cells in the future, but these models are no crystal balls. Typically, biological AI is at its most effective when a model has been specifically designed for a particular step in the synthetic biology process. An AI model could, for example, output a list of genetic alterations needed to turn a bacterium antibiotics-resistant. An answer from a general-purpose model would be too generic and vague to be useful. But a more specific model would likely require more precise input, such as the exact strain of bacteria or a sequence of its genome. It is then ultimately upon the scientist to plan out how to perform these genetic alterations with the equipment available, all of which still requires substantial experience, know-how and resources.

Fundamentally, AI tools are a dual-use technology like any other. Plausibly, large language models may already be helpful to rogue actors trying to obtain biological weapons. But real accelerations in research are more likely to come from smaller, more tailor-made models, which will continue to require a lot of real-world equipment and supervision by trained staff. Even if these technologies will be a boon to military research, for the time being, AI offers no obvious way to overcome the underlying limitations that keep biological weapons from being used today.

## 5. The Real Risk of Exaggerating Biological Weapons Threats

Biological weapons are most useful both for state actors as well as terrorist organisations as a means of instilling fear in those seen as enemies. This was the primary raison d'être of the Iraqi biological weapons programme and explains why the anthrax attacks in the U.S. in 2001 was a particularly nefarious and effective use of biological weapons. The threat from an infectious and deadly disease outbreak is easily understood by the public and media alike, in particular after the COVID-19 pandemic. The perception of such a threat alone can have real-world impacts, as it did when it was used to partially justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This took place in the context of a prolonged period of heightened media attention to threats from bioterrorism.

It will always be possible to speculate about the development of extremely danger-

ous new biological weapons based on novel discoveries and emerging technologies. Essentially, any scientific progress could plausibly be turned to military use as well. Regarding the first research question, this paper finds that new technology will only have a limited impact on biological weapons research in the future. Synthetic biology has opened the door to biological weapons, gaining completely novel capabilities. In the future, biological weapons may be gene or environment-specific, gain far-reaching drug-resistances or be targeted against infrastructure and supplies rather than humans. AI tools designed for biological research could help to substantially accelerate some of these development steps and may someday even autonomously supervise such research projects. However, the legitimate anticipation of these threats must also consider how plausible or even likely the actual use of these weapons will be in the future. Neither synthetic biology nor AI tools are poised to make the actual deployment of biological weapons any more likely.

Certainly, there remain straightforward steps to mitigate the risk from biological weapons that should be taken today. This includes expanding the screening of synthetic DNA for unethical use to cover 100% of suppliers. Scientific journals should also reconsider their publication guidelines for articles which present results that are directly useful for biological weapons research, such as reconstructing viruses from scratch. In these cases, the paper could be published without an extensive methodology part. Such a section could, for example, only be confidentially revealed to reviewers, but journals might also consider rejecting such papers outright. Scientists, of course, have other ways of making their results public, but without a path to publication, very few legitimate scientists would be interested in pursuing this type of research. Lastly, a stronger verification protocol for the Biological Weapons and Toxins Convention (BWTC) should be adopted. Proposals for such a mechanism have existed since the 1990s and would give the convention some actual enforcement mechanisms for the first time.

As exciting as the promises from the fields of biological AI, biotechnology, and synthetic biology are, they are unlikely to substantially change the threat posed by biological weapons in the 21st century. Fundamentally, there remain very few cases in which biological weapons retain a tactical edge over other weapon systems, such as chemical warfare agents. Both AI and synthetic biology are unlikely to change this in the near future. The most interesting application of biological weapons to a modern military would likely be in a targeted strike against infrastructure without causing harm to civilians, e.g. by infecting or consuming a military oil reserve.

While the threat of bioterrorism remains a real one, such an attack is most likely to be based on biological weapons available for decades, such as unmodified anthrax bacteria. The required expertise and cost evolved in engineering cells as well as developing methods of dispersion are still prohibitive. AI tools could plausibly reduce the barrier of entry to biological weapons development by summarising public information, but this is not nearly as much of a watershed moment as the invention of the internet itself.

Lastly, with respect to the second research question, the likelihood for the use of biological weapons in the 21st century remains mostly unchanged, and they are likely to remain a minor geopolitical and security focus in this century. On an optimistic note, this may give reason for cautious optimism in the capacity of science to make new discoveries without simultaneously intensifying the risks associated with its abuse.

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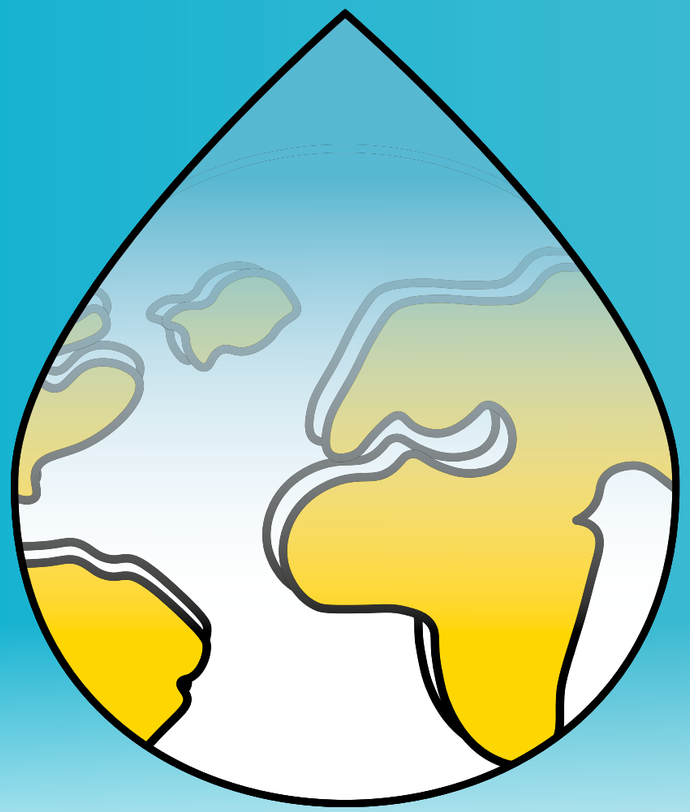

# Flowing into Uncertainty:

## Climate Change and Water Security Risks

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For India, the rivers are not only the heart and soul of their culture but also of their growth, with 12 major rivers running through the country. However, its water resources are precious. Despite India being home to over 18% of the world's population, it possesses only 4% of the world's water resources, many of which are polluted by wastewater, intensive agriculture, infrastructure development, and industrial production (World Bank, 2022). Over recent decades, India's booming economy, population growth, and rapid urbanisation have contributed to India's water stress, compounded by its scarce natural water resources (Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), 2024). A significant portion of the water is used for irrigation, and it is projected that by 2025, more than 80% of the demand will be for irrigation alone. Extreme climatic changes could further threaten the sustainable water supply for agricultural production. Not only is India affected by water stress, but many surrounding countries face similar challenges shaped by analogous climates and interconnected river systems. Nations such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal depend heavily on shared river basins like the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Indus. These basins are crucial for sustaining the agricultural sectors, which are primary contributors to these countries' economies (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2023)

The region's geopolitical dynamics add another layer of complexity to water security. Transboundary rivers can be a source of cooperation or conflict, depending on how their management is handled. Existing agreements and treaties have aimed to balance the distribution and administration of these shared waters, yet challenges persist (World Bank, 2022). With climate change, there is an upcoming thirst for solutions as global warming aggravates changes in rainfall patterns, disrupting traditional water cycles (Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC), 2023). How will climate change affect the current water stress in Asia? Are existing treaties capable of addressing the challenges posed by climate change, or is a more cooperative solution needed? Given the looming risks from water scarcity and climate-induced conflicts, this paper delves into a critical question: How do water stress and climate change shape the geopolitical landscape of Asia? This article provides an overview of two main water-stress-related conflicts in Asia, focusing on their implications for geopolitical stability. It highlights the various factors contributing to water stress and insecurity, including hydrologic and socio-economic environments, and examines how water scarcity impacts security and inter-nation relations.

Through detailed case studies of India, Pakistan, and China, the article illustrates how water stress has heightened tensions and threatens regional stability. Ultimately, it contends that water scarcity, intensified by climate change, is a noteworthy catalyst for conflict and instability in Asia. The article suggests that this issue should be addressed within existing or future treaties to ensure effective management of limited water resources.

### 1. Water – A Vital Lifeline

We all need water to survive. Living under constant water stress can endanger jobs, resources, food and energy security and threaten global peace and security. However, what exactly is defined as water stress? *"Water stress measures the ratio of total water demand to available renewable surface and groundwater supplies."* (Kuzma et al., 2023, p. 11). Demand, in this definition, is interchangeable with withdrawal. While there are other indexes used to calculate water scarcity or water stress, this cal-

culation is the most common way to calculate blue water stress in a specific area. Blue water and green water are the two types of freshwater on earth. Blue water is the water found in lakes, rivers, groundwater or frozen in glaciers and the polar caps, whilst green water refers to rainfall and moisture in the soil (Falkenmark & Rockström, 2006). Water stress is most acute in regions where the demand significantly exceeds the available supply. As visible in Figure 1, the so-called water risk atlas, those regions most underwater stress are coloured dark red. In Asia, the Indus River basin, shared by India and Pakistan, and the Brahmaputra River, originating in China, are prime examples of areas experiencing severe blue water stress.

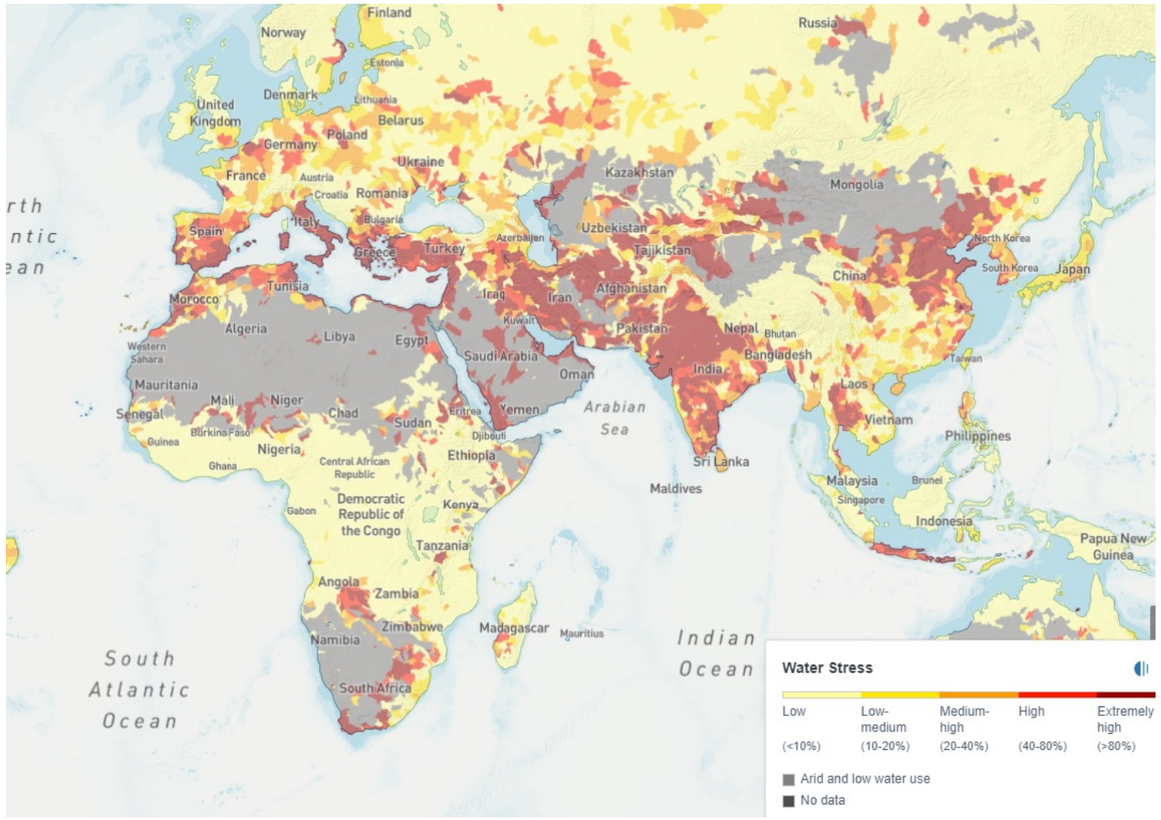


Figure 1: Regions with the Highest Water Stress, highlighted in dark red on the Water Risk Atlas map (World Resources Institute, 2024)

## 2.Water Accessibility and Availability

When our favourite flow of life is depleted by heat, countries may not only face severe thirst but also experience escalating inter-nation conflicts and intensifying existing disputes. One of the objectives of sustainable development goals (SDGs) is to ensure that all individuals have access to safe and affordable drinking water. The fulfilment of this goal depends on availability and access. How can we be certain that there will be enough water for all humans and the entire ecosystem upon which our survival depends?

While water seems like an endless source in many countries and is easily accessible, it is not so for everyone. A study by Mekonnen and Hoekstra (2016) found that 71% (4.3 billion people) of the global population live under conditions of moderate to severe water scarcity for at least one month of the year. The number of people experiencing severe water scarcity during at least four to six months per year is estimated to be up to 2.9 billion. Even though over 70% of the earth's surface is covered by water, it does not mean that all water can be used. Availability does not equal accessibility. The term water availability refers to what quantity of water is physically available and whether that available water is actually of quality, e.g. safe to use. Accessibility, on the other hand, depends on various factors, such as physical access, economic access, culturally acceptable access, and political access. All the factors summarising availability and accessibility have to be present to ensure water security.

Taking a glance at the most important factors they can be broken down into three main categories. What determines water security seems to be the a.) Hydrological environment, b.) the socio-economic environment and c.) change in the future environment (e.g. climate change). This article will investigate the case studies based on these three main factors.

### 2.a. Hydrological Environment

The hydrological environment includes, as previously stated, naturally occurring water resources, such as surface and groundwater. The key determinants for natural water availability are precipitation patterns, river flows and the presence of aquifers. Regions with low precipitation rates and high evaporation rates, such as arid and semi-arid zones, are prone to water scarcity. The countries discussed in the case studies fall within these zones. Even if the total quantity of annual rainfall in a region is substantial, it might be unevenly distributed across time with seasonal fluctuations. Subsequently, the region will still experience periods of scarcity (UN Water, 2020).

### 2.b. Socio-Economic Environment

Population growth, urbanisation, and economic development increase the demand for water in domestic, agricultural, and industrial sectors, thereby putting pressure on water resources. Economic disparities worsen unequal access to water, with affluent communities securing ample water supplies while marginalised groups face chronic shortages (Mekonnen & Hoekstra, 2016). Additionally, political issues and conflicts significantly affect water security. Transboundary water disputes, for instance, arise when rivers and aquifers cross national borders, leading to tensions and potential conflicts over water allocation. These disputes can hinder cooperative water management and development efforts, resulting in more severe water scarcity for certain groups of people or nations. In essence, the intertwined economic, social, and political factors underscore the complexity of water security challenges and the need for comprehensive approaches to address them.

### 2.c. Future Environment and Climate Change

Changes in the future environment pose an additional significant threat to water security. Rising temperatures lead to increased evaporation rates, altering precipitation patterns and reducing snowpack and glacial melt, which are critical sources of freshwater in many regions. The IPCC projects that climate change will intensify the water cycle, causing more severe and frequent droughts and floods. This variability will challenge water management systems, particularly in regions already experiencing stress. Changes in climate also affect the quality of water, as higher temperatures can worsen pollution levels and disrupt ecosystems that purify water naturally, further reducing the amount of water that is readily available (IPCC, 2021).

As one can imagine, the mentioned factors do not act in isolation but flow together in complex ways. For example, socio-economics development can both mitigate and exacerbate hydrologic impacts through good or poor water assessment and management strategies. In the same way, advanced water management technologies and infrastructure can improve efficiency and reduce scarcity, but economic activities like mining and industrialisation can degrade available water resources (UN-Water, 2019). Each of the three elements—the hydrological environment, the socio-economic context, and future developments like climate change—contributes to water insecurity in unique ways and carries distinct risk factors.

**Water Stress:**
Water stress measures the ratio of total water demand to available renewable surface and groundwater supplies. This condition occurs when the demand for water exceeds the available amount during a certain period or when poor quality restricts its use.

Water scarcity aggravates existing social problems, especially poverty. In communities, it is generally the poor who are the first to suffer when water levels drop, facing heightened challenges in accessing safe and affordable water. Naturally, the lack of water especially impacts the poor, who rely on agricultural production for their livelihoods. As agricultural output declines, communities are forced to import food at much higher prices, compromising food security. In proportional terms, the poor pay more for their water than richer people and receive water of lower quality. Also, women tend to suffer greater losses than men due to the degradation of water resources (Castro, 2004)

At the WEF 2015, water was ranked as the predominant risk to societies. Nevertheless, water, environmental factors, and food security are not considered under the traditional security paradigm. The traditional concept of security is confined to military and defence. In the 21st century, with a growing population, there is a race for resources, and water, in particular, is a crucial component in each sector. Any discourse or policy decision addressing traditional challenges to national growth or new challenges such as migration, refugees, or natural disasters will be incomplete without a clear understanding of the water. Recognising the fundamental aspects of water—its composition, uses, ownership, and users reveals that water security is a key challenge that transcends borders, necessitating new and bold thinking (Vishwanth, 2019). While water may not be the first weapon that comes to mind in international conflicts and security challenges, it is becoming an increasingly significant issue exacerbated by climate change.

## 3. Water Wars in Asia – A Growing Threat?

While outright "water wars" are not a foregone conclusion, the potential for conflicts over water is real and growing. Triggers for such conflicts include unilateral water projects, lack of effective transboundary water agreements, and climate change exacerbating existing water shortages.

In India, Pakistan, and China particularly, these effects are acutely felt. In India, approximately 70% of the country's agriculture is dependent on groundwater (World Bank, 2019). Over-extraction has led to a sharp decline in water tables (the level below which the ground or soil is saturated with water), threatening crop yields and farmer livelihoods. Pakistan faces similar challenges. The country is highly dependent on the Indus River, which supplies 90% of its agricultural water (Adeel, 2017). Rapid population growth and inefficient water management have led to severe water stress, particularly in Sindh and Balochistan provinces. This situation is exacerbated by transboundary water disputes with India, impacting water availability downstream (Mustafa, 2010.)

To explore the individual conflicts in Asia more thoroughly, we will examine two specific river systems: the Indus River and the Brahmaputra River. Is there a real chance of water wars? Additionally, what changes have occurred in these areas over time regarding water availability and temperature fluctuations?

### 3.a. Indus River Basin

While no conflict has occurred solely due to water issues, water scarcity has been a significant contributing factor to tensions in the Indus River region. Challenged by many conflicts, marked by diverse territorial disputes and occasional attempts at diplomacy and reconciliation, are the two countries India and Pakistan. Their relationship has been strained for various reasons, and water issues have not necessarily eased the tensions.

To understand the root causes of these conflicts, we need to look back at the history of the two nations. In the summer of 1947, the partition of the British Indian Empire led to a watershed moment in both British Imperial and South Asian history. It resulted in the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims, while India emerged as a secular state with a large Hindu majority and a significant Muslim population (Roy, 2014). Consequently, India became the upper riparian and Pakistan the lower riparian region (regions or countries bordering on transboundary inland water), meaning India controlled the headwaters of the rivers that flowed into Pakistan. This geographical division made Pakistan highly dependent on upstream water flows controlled by India, threatening its agricultural productivity and water security and potentially leading to conflicts. Thus, the legacy of partition and the resulting hydropolitical dynamics have created a persistent source of tension between the two countries, making water a critical yet contentious issue in their bilateral relations.


Figure 2: The Indus River Basin (Pravettoni, 2015)

The Indus River system is a crucial source of fresh water and vital not only for agricultural production and drinking water for humans, animals, and plants but also for maintaining whole riverine and deltaic ecosystems. With a total length of 318 kilometers, it flows from the Tibetan plateau to the Arabian Sea (see Figure 2). For Pakistan, it is the only freshwater source in the country and provides 80% of the water consumed. The Indus basin, one of the largest river basins in Asia, spans approximately 1 million square kilometres. It extends

across north-eastern China, eastern India, north-western Afghanistan, and the plains of Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan (Nasir & Akbar, 2012).

In 1960, the two rival countries signed the Indus Water treaty, insinuated by the World Bank after nine years of negotiations. In the middle of so many conflicts and tensions in the area, this treaty is a notable achievement. But how does the Indus Water Treaty work? The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) is often cited as one of the few fruitful settlements of boundary water basin conflicts, having stood the test of time for over six decades. The treaty allocated control of three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej) to India and three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) to Pakistan. Under the IWT, water governance determines who gets what water, when, and how much, as well as who has the right to water-related benefits (Kalair et al., 2019)

> The key to preventing water conflicts lies in enhancing cooperation, building robust international water management frameworks, and addressing the underlying socio-economic and environmental issues that contribute to water scarcity.

According to a stakeholder analysis by Shah and Panchali (2017), some water experts in the Pakistani government regard the treaty as a robust document that effectively addresses all issues in the Indus Basin. However, other experts express concerns about climate change and advocate for these issues to be incorporated into the treaty. Regarding groundwater mining, there is concern that excessive groundwater extraction on the Indian side of the border might impact the groundwater gradient, potentially harming Pakistan. From the Indian point of view, the key theme is that there is a political deadlock and lack of prioritisation, which hinders cooperation between India and Pakistan. Water is a state subject in India, and there are more disputes within states over water sharing and hydropower development than at the transboundary level. As for climate change, Indian officials regard it as an emerging issue and further research is needed. Moreover, they do not consider it beneficial to raise the issue with the water commissioner or to adapt the treaty until more comprehensive and collaborative research on climate change and its impact on the Indus River basin has been conducted. They recognise that the issue of groundwater mining in India is becoming increasingly serious, and research on this topic would be beneficial.

With the changing environment, older treaties might not be accurate enough to pick up the right solutions to the conflict, and wrong rules might be in place. One major issue is the altered precipitation patterns in the Indus basin, leading to variability in river flows. This variability disrupts the predictable allocation of water stipulated by the treaty, creating tensions between the two countries. Periods of intense rainfall and glacial melt can cause severe flooding, while extended droughts lead to water scarcity, straining the treaty's framework, which was designed based on historical flow data that are increasingly unreliable due to climate change (Wescoat, 1991). Furthermore, climate change-induced extreme weather events, such as flash floods and prolonged droughts, exacerbate existing political and social tensions between India and Pakistan. The treaty lacks provisions for cooperative adaptation strategies to address these emergent challenges, making it increasingly inadequate in fostering long-term water security in the region. Overall, the lack of data complicates hydrological assessment and modelling work, which makes it difficult to know the current state of the basin, the challenges it faces, and how these may be addressed. Cooperative research and data collection on how the river basin is changing in the face of climate change would be an important step to flow into the future with more safety (Azeem & Panchali, 2017).

### 3.b. Brahmaputra River

The Yaluzangbu-Brahmaputra River serves as the lifeblood of regional security discussions, its flow symbolising the interconnected nature of stability and cooperation in the area. As the world grapples with the climate crisis, nations are increasingly turning to renewable energy sources to reduce their carbon footprint. One such effort is China's ambitious hydropower development plan on the Brahmaputra River. This initiative aims to harness the river's vast potential to generate clean energy.

Originating in the Himalayan Mountain range, the Brahmaputra River flows east through southern China, into eastern India, and further into Bangladesh. As shown in Figure 3, the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers converge with the Meghna River to form one of the world's largest river deltas (Nepal & Shrestha, 2015).

All of the riparian countries – India, China, and Bangladesh - are under increasing pressure due to climate change, severe water scarcity, and rising demands from population growth. It is, therefore, no surprise that


Figure 3: Map showing the major rivers of Ganges and Brahmaputra in northeastern India (Wikimedia Commons, 2011).

the water management and distribution of the Brahmaputra River system is becoming an important point on the political agenda. Recent water and infrastructure developments have influenced Sino-Indian relations, which historically have been shaped by mutual distrust and diplomatic engagements. Since the 1950s, India and China have engaged in various forms of dialogue to address water-related issues, although progress has often been hampered by broader geopolitical tensions. (Fent et al., 2019).

Additionally, climate change issues are becoming more relevant. Climate models project a faster rise in both maximum and minimum temperatures in the Brahmaputra Basin from 2000 to 2100. By the end of the century, the average temperature of the basin is projected to increase by up to 3.5 °C. Changes in temperature will lead to changes in the water cycle. Climate change will likely decrease the water availability of the river (Immerzeel, 2008). At the same time, it is predicted that the volume of water flowing through the river (river discharge) and the duration of flood waves would increase during both the pre-monsoon and monsoon seasons due to changing weather and precipitation patterns (Ghosh & Dutta, 2012). Extreme events, therefore, might become more frequent. It is essential to remember and not underestimate that river systems interact with each other as interconnected entities. For instance, climate change could significantly impact meltwater in the Indus Basin, potentially leading to an increased flood risk in the Brahmaputra Basin (Nepal & Shrestha, 2015).

India fears that the Chinese hydropower projects could reduce water flow during dry seasons and cause sudden floods during monsoons. Despite China's assurances that these dams are "run-of-the-river" projects, which supposedly do not store or divert significant amounts of water, mistrust persists (Saleem, 2024). The development of the power plants poses significant challenges for downstream countries like India and Bangladesh, which rely heavily on the river for their water needs. The Brahmaputra is a lifeline for these countries, providing water for agriculture, drinking, and industrial purposes. The development of power plants poses significant challenges for downstream countries like India and Bangladesh, which rely heavily on the river for their water needs. Any alteration in the river's flow can have profound impacts on these regions, jeopardising food security, economic stability, and social harmony.

This scenario presents a paradox: while China's move towards hydropower is a step towards solving the climate crisis, it simultaneously exacerbates water scarcity issues for downstream countries already stressed by climate change. China's hydropower plans on the Brahmaputra are part of its broader strategy to increase its renewable energy capacity, aiming to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Hydropower, which is a reliable and continuous source of clean energy, is a key component of this strategy. The Brahmaputra offers significant potential for hydropower generation due to its steep gradient and high flow volume. Proposed projects include several dams and reservoirs, the most notable being a dam at the Great Bend, expected to produce more electricity than the Three Gorges Dam. (Shrestha et al., 2021).

One of the primary concerns is the potential for reduced water flow downstream. Large dams can significantly alter the natural flow of rivers, affecting water availability in downstream regions, trapping sediments, reducing water quality, and disrupting the natural timing of river flows, which are crucial for agriculture and fisheries. The Brahmaputra has been a source of diplomatic friction between China, India, and Bangladesh for decades, with China's unilateral decision to proceed with these projects without consulting downstream neighbours exacerbating these tensions and raising fears of future water wars. Or as Peter Bosshard of the International Rivers Network says: "Rivers unite us, but dams divide us" (BBC News, 2014, para. 11).

If these plans move forward, the Himalayan region will soon have the world's highest concentration of dams, with vast implications for its landscape, ecology, and economy. Diverting the river would cause a significant drop in water levels as it enters India, leading to severe impacts on agriculture and fishing in downstream areas due to increased salinity. By hastily building dams on the Brahmaputra, both nations risk creating environmental impacts beyond the river's capacity, threatening the livelihoods of over 100 million people who depend on its waters (Mahapatra & Ratha, 2016). Further, the reality of the situation is challenging to grasp. The dams are hidden from view, nestled in remote valleys and deep mountain gorges. In these secluded areas, the persistent tension between politics, development, and the environment plays out, creating a complex and partly invisible conflict.

The situation is further complicated by the lack of a comprehensive water-sharing agreement among the riparian countries. Unlike the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan, there is no binding international agreement governing the use of the Brahmaputra's waters (Biswas, 2008).

Several dilemmas hamper effective transboundary water cooperation. Firstly, the broader Sino-Indian diplomatic relations are often strained due to border disputes and political rivalries, affecting trust and cooperation on water issues. Secondly, China has little motivation to engage in cooperative water management without clear benefits, especially since it perceives itself as shouldering more responsibilities while receiving negative feedback from India. This is due to China's upper riparian status and the significant impact its water management decisions can have downstream. The future of Sino-Indian water relations will likely depend on the broader geopolitical dynamics and the willingness of both nations to engage in meaningful dialogue and cooperation. The potential for conflict remains, but so does the opportunity for collaboration if both countries can navigate their differences and prioritise sustainable and equitable water management (Feng et al., 2019).

## 4. Conclusion

Water scarcity in Asia, driven by climate change and rapid population growth, presents a substantial threat to regional stability and security. Against this background, this paper inquired the cases of the Indus and Brahmaputra rivers to illustrate the intricate balance required to manage transboundary water resources amidst political tensions and environmental changes. In response to the research question, this article finds that existing treaties like the Indus Waters Treaty have provided a framework for cooperation but must be adapted to address emerging challenges such as climate change. The key to preventing water conflicts lies in enhancing cooperation, building robust international water management

frameworks, and addressing the underlying socio-economic and environmental issues that contribute to water scarcity. Without comprehensive agreements and cooperative management, the potential for conflict remains high. To mitigate these risks, nations must prioritise sustainable and equitable water management practices, invest in research and technology, and engage in continuous dialogue to build trust and foster regional cooperation. Addressing water security with a forward-thinking approach is essential to ensure the well-being and prosperity of millions of people dependent on these vital water resources. As we navigate these challenges, we must remember to make waves with innovative solutions and keep our heads above water to secure a sustainable future. Water truly is the lifeblood of our planet, and ensuring its availability and accessibility is principal for our collective well-being.

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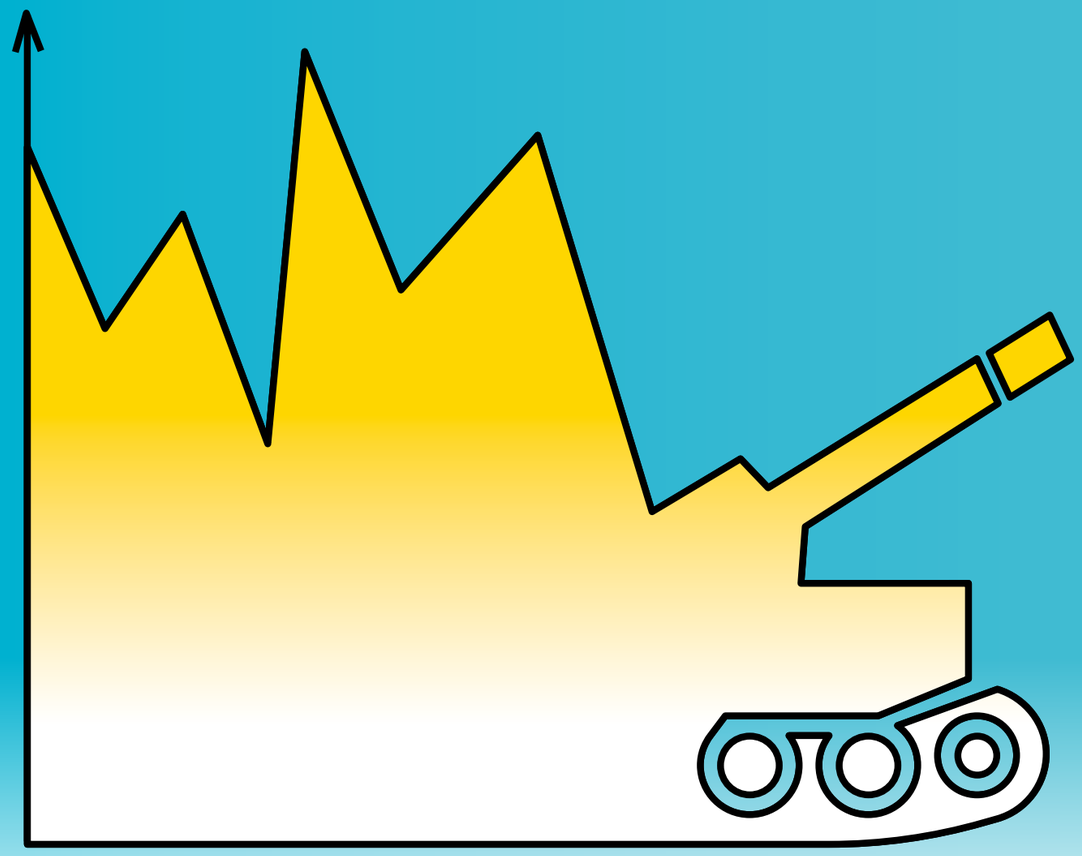

# Facing Russia's War Economy

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Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, public discourse has been full of speculations. While some proved to be right, and others proved to be wrong, they often shared the commonality of being strongly influenced by wishful thinking or current short-term developments on the battlefield. The initial belief that Ukraine would fall in a handful of days gave way to stark optimism after successful reconquests by the Ukrainian military in October 2022. Concerning Russia's economy, many economists predicted an unbearable decline after the introduction of sanctions.

However, Ukraine's counter-offensive in 2023 and the net effect of Western sanctions arguably fell short of expectations. Over two years, politicians and the public confront a bitter realisation: The war in Ukraine does not appear to be ending anytime soon. While Ukraine remains resilient, even optimists deem major territorial gains on the battlefield unlikely. And Russia, though having achieved only small advances at high costs, shows no sign of fatigue so far. Most interestingly, its economy seems to defy all sanctions and predictions of collapse whilst adapting to the new priority: war-making. Particularly concerning is that Russia allocates 6% of its GDP towards its military-industrial complex (Bloomberg, 2023). Meanwhile, the West seems to act irresolute. Against this backdrop, it becomes clear that for the future of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, one important factor is how well its war economy is doing. Hence, this article aims to answer the questions: What is the state and prospect of Russia's war economy? What can the West do to face it?

The first section of this article introduces the necessary historical and theoretical background. It defines what a war economy is and explains the historical "guns versus butter" debate, which relates to the role of defence spending for economies. Thereafter, it employs economic growth theory and a political cycle to discuss determinants of growth and productivity and how they relate to the Russian war economy. The second section evaluates the power and limits of Russia's war economy by referring to the introduced background and looking at economic data and trends. The third section assesses the actions of Western states, explaining why sanctions failed and what they should do in the future.

The article shows that the Russian war economy is resilient. Predicting its durability and future course is difficult, as will be explained. However, there is no reason to assume that it will collapse soon. Combined with the fact that Western sanctions have not had the desired effect and that the war is here to stay, I argue that Western countries have no alternative but to increase their military capacities in order to confront and deter Russia's aggression.

## 1. Historical Background: What Characterises a War Economy?

Broadly speaking, a war economy is a national economy that is primarily oriented towards the allocation of resources for military purposes. Government spending and policies related to the private sector incentivise or even force the redirection of labour, capital, and technological goods towards the military-industrial complex. This typically comes at the expense of investment into other sectors, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, or social security. Conceptually, a war economy must not be engaged in active conflict but can also relate to a heavily militarised economy (e.g. North Korea), which is

focused on maintaining a high state of military readiness during peaceful times.

Historically, defence spending played an important role in shaping national economies and, as some argued, even in the process of state formation itself. Political scientist Charles Tilly prominently stated that "war made the state and the state made war" (Tilly, 1975, p.42). Warmakers needed access to economic resources, creating the need for taxes and bureaucracy, which led to a permanent effect on the size of the state. The fiscal system is innately linked to the need to raise resources for wars.

Particularly during conflict, countries increase their military spending to match war demands, which in turn causes profound changes in their overall economic structure. Perhaps this became most apparent during World War II, as belligerents invested unprecedented amounts to sustain their war efforts. At the height of the war in 1943, military spending represented 47 per cent of the United States' GDP, 57 per cent of the United Kingdom's GDP, and 76 per cent of both the Soviet Union's and Germany's GDP (Harrison, 1988). These figures seem unreal in light of the discussions about NATO's 2% guideline. After World War II the ensuing arms race of the Cold War meant that defence spending continued to play a crucial role. Both superpowers (the United States and the Soviet Union) engaged in a race towards technological superiority and nuclear weapons, which had major consequences. The economic strain of sustaining such high levels of military spending was noted as contributing to the collapse of teh Soviet Union (Sakwa, 2013). Defence spending significantly fell after the Cold War ended in 1991, amounting to between one-third and one-half of previous levels. The economic benefits of decreased military spending were infamously termed the "peace dividend".

The economic dilemma faced by nations when deciding on the allocation of their resources is historically called the "guns versus butter" debate. It illustrates a trade-off: Nations must provide both security, for which they need military spending (guns), as well as civilian goods (butter) like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Although the detrimental effects of military spending on civilian goods are empirically disputed (Carter et al., 2020), the analogy has influenced the public debate. Finding an optimal balance is often the subject of budget negotiations and electoral campaigns. But how do economists view the guns versus butter debate, and what problems could war economies face with military spending?

## 2. Theoretical Context: What Determines Economic Growth and Productivity?

Economists and political scientists introduced models that help to comprehend dynamics and relationships regarding war economies. For one, the Solow-Swan model reflects on determinants of economic growth and productivity in general. For another, political scientist Heidi Peltier introduces a cycle concerning military spending, industrial power, and economic dependence. Let us examine the economic side of the equation first before turning towards potential political implications.

**Gross Domestic Product in Constant Prices:** Gross domestic product (GDP) is the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time. Measuring GDP in constant prices (real GDP) involves adjustment to account for changes in price levels, thereby allowing for the comparison of economic output without distortions caused by inflation.

To gain a better understanding of both the status quo and prospects of the Russian economy, as well as the possible consequences of increased military spending, we should take a step back and think about the general determinants of economic growth and productivity. Economists put forward several models, the arguably most common and widespread of which is the Solow-Swan model (Solow, 1956) of economic growth. Since its publication, it has been extensively discussed, expanded to include more factors, and continuously adapted to new developments. Despite this increase in complexity, its basic reasoning is rather simple and can be illustrated with the help of Figure 1.

Every national economy produces goods and services. Their combined value reflects a nation's gross domestic product (GDP). The higher a nation's GDP is, the wealthier its economy is and the more resources the state has. Figure 1 illustrates this by the level of y on the y-axis. GDP, in turn, depends on multiple production factors, such as labour (total workforce of a country) or the available production technology. However, one critical factor is the amount of capital, which is denoted by k on the x-axis. Economists define capital as equipment and facilities that can produce goods and services (Mankiw & Taylor, 2023). Two principles apply now: First, the more capital a nation has, the higher its GDP, which is illustrated by the function f(k) and the corresponding green line. For every capital stock on the x-axis, there is a level of GDP on the y-axis. Second, capital has diminishing marginal utility. This means that each additional unit of capital comes with a slightly smaller benefit than the previous unit. Why? Imagine moving from an old machine to an average machine. This usually brings a high increase in productivity for modest costs. Thereafter, upgrading to the best machine again boosts productivity, but the increase is comparatively smaller than for the previous step, while costs are relatively higher.

Next, economists separate GDP into different components since produced goods and services differ. One central distinction is made between consumption goods and investment (or capital) goods. The latter broadly denote goods that can be used as productive inputs themselves, thus adding to the capital stock of a nation's economy and enhancing its future productivity. This includes both physical infrastructure (buildings, roads, etc.) as well as production equipment (machinery, software, etc.). The former, consumption goods, correspond to all other goods and services that do not serve this purpose. Notably, the term is defined broadly, including not only short-term consumables (food, clothing, etc.) but also long-term durables (cars, furniture, etc.). Building on that, the share of a nation's GDP being used to produce investment goods is called its investment rate. The investment rate is illustrated in Figure 1 with the function sf(k) (black line). This is simply a nation's GDP function f(k) multiplied by its investment rate s. Notably, the difference between f(k) and sf(k), i.e. the area between the lines, equals a nation's consumption rate. Basically, every nation must decide how much of its scarce resources it allocates towards consumption or investment respectively. Finally, the depreciation rate k (red line) in Figure 1 signifies how much of the capital stock is being used up or breaks down every year and needs to

be replaced. After all, no machine runs indefinitely, and every factory eventually requires renovation. Logically, the higher the capital stock of an economy is, the more capital depreciates every year, which is why k continuously increases.

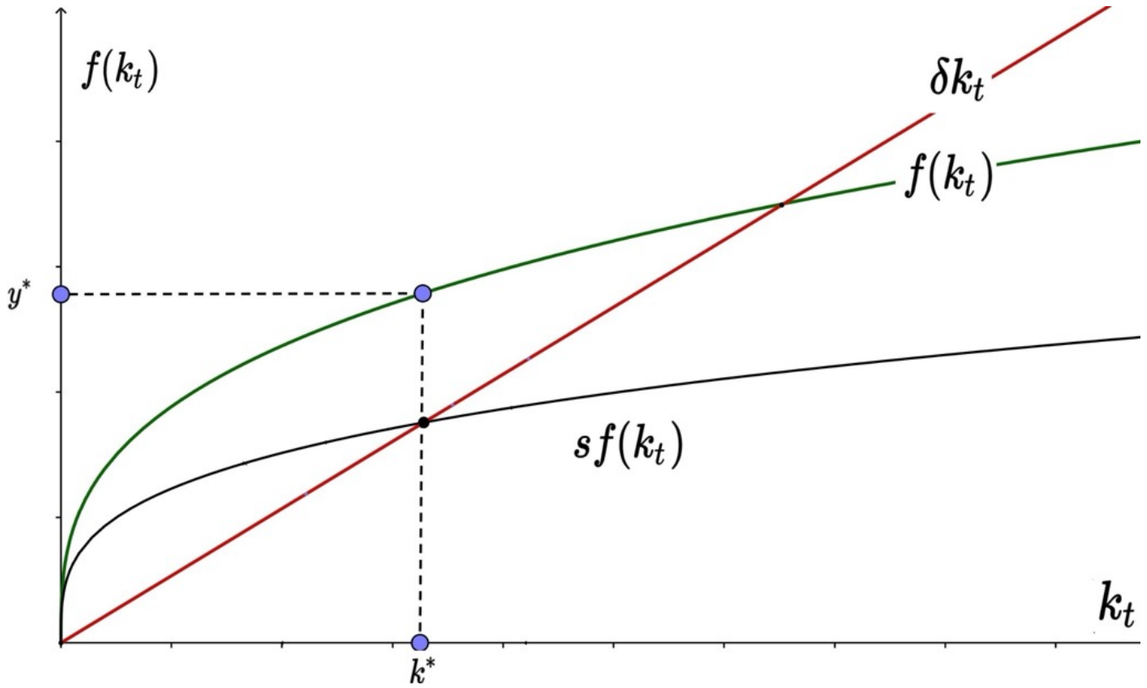


Figure 1: Simplified Solow-Swan Model (JonskiC, 2017)

Bringing everything together, what does this model tell us about the conditions and prospects of economic growth and productivity? Essentially, every national economy tends to move towards an equilibrium, which in Figure 1 is characterised by some capital stock k* and some level of productivity y* = f(k*) resulting from that. Importantly, the location of this equilibrium is not random but rests at where the investment rate and depreciation rate intersect. Why? When a country invests more in its capital stock than it depreciates, i.e. if for some level of k, the black line lies over the red line, the capital stock grows, and GDP increases. However, the grown capital stock leads to a higher depreciation rate. The dynamic comes to a halt at equilibrium. Importantly, the same goes the other way. When a country invests less in its capital stock than it depreciates, i.e. if, for some level of k, the black line is under the red line, the capital stock shrinks, and GDP decreases. This happens as not all depreciated capital is being replaced, and in consequence, less capital is available to produce goods and services.

Now to the main implication: Countries can influence the state of their economy and GDP with their investment rate. When a nation invests more of its GDP, the function sf(k) rises and moves closer to the GDP function f(k). Its capital stock grows until it corresponds to the depreciation rate. The new equilibrium is further to the right of the previous one: The nation has a higher capital stock and, hence, a higher GDP but "pays" by having fewer resources available for consumption. As mentioned above, the dynamic applies to the other direction, which possibly reflects the problem of Russia's war economy.

If a country like Russia uses more of its scarce resources to build weapons and ammunition, it has less of its resources at its disposal for investment goods such as roads, equipment, or factories. Even though it may sound counterintuitive at first, tanks and warplanes are, in that logic, consumption goods. One cannot produce further goods and services with (at least most types of) military equipment. This might lead to different temporal consequences. In the short run, one may witness a booming economy and rising output. However, in the long run, the capital stock shrinks as capital depreciates. Therefore, the years ahead might be more challenging. In the future, it will be difficult for Russia to sustain military consumption while maintaining its capital stock. Either Russia compromises on some of its capital stock or increases its external debt by borrowing from abroad. Both options would prove detrimental to its prospects for economic growth and prosperity.

Beyond this economic perspective, there are political dynamics that could cement the mentioned consequences, as political scientist Heidi Peltier analyses. For Brown University's Costs of War project, Peltier (2023) assesses the implications of increased military spending and puts forward a cycle related to the policy process surrounding it. She postulates that increased defence spending and the resulting profits of military contractors over time lead to the military-industrial complex amassing power, which it uses to further entrench its position in the political system while framing military spending as being too important to cut. Consequently, military spending increases more and more. Peltier contends that the strong share of U.S. military spending skewed the economy and government priorities, weakening vital sectors like infrastructure, healthcare, and education whilst perpetuating high defence budgets. This dynamic can be expected to unfold (at least to some degree) in an even more corrupt Russia.

## 3. Can We Predict the Prospect of Russia's War Economy?

Predicting the prospective development of Russia's war economy against this background is challenging. There are three main reasons why: First, economies and their surrounding dynamics are incredibly complex, which is why economists regularly disagree about which models apply. The quality of models is assessed by how accurately they predict reality or the future. By this measure, economists performed poorly, given that nearly every prediction at the onset of the war (even those by the Central Bank of Russia in 2022) considerably underestimated the resilience of Russia's war economy. Second, the performance of models depends on the quality and validity of available data. However, Russia is a highly authoritarian state. This permits serious doubt about the figures published by their government statisticians and economists. Thirdly, the future of Russia's economy hinges on factors that are barely predictable. How will energy prices develop in the future? How many dual-use goods will China export in the coming years? Forecasts about the long term are very susceptible to fluctuations in such factors.

## 4.The Power and Status Quo of Russia's War Economy

Therefore, let us first look at the present state of the Russian economy. Doing so reveals that it is faring surprisingly well, as current data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF,

2024) shows. In the first year of the war, Russia's GDP at constant prices diminished by 1.2 per cent from 135.8tn ₽ in 2021 to 134.1tn ₽ in 2022, as Figure 2 shows. However, in 2023, it rose again by 3.6 per cent to 139tn ₽, exceeding pre-war levels. For the next years (2025 to 2029), the IMF estimates growth rates of around 1.5 per cent. Beyond this primary economic indicator, a similar picture can be observed. Russia's total investment in per cent of GDP increased from 22.7% prior to the war to 26.8% in 2023 and is currently predicted to steady around 24% in the near future. The general government gross debt in per cent of GDP is projected to rise from 18.5% in 2022 to nearly 24% in 2029, whereas Russia's structural deficit in per cent of GDP is expected to level off from -1.26% in 2022 up until 2029. Regarding foreign trade, Russia's imports have corrected upwards by 16% in 2023 after a plunge of 14.6% in 2022. And although its exports were hit harder, dropping by 8.4% in 2022 and 15.6% in 2023, they are forecast to grow by an average of 5% annually between the years 2025 and 2029. Looking at the concerns of the average Russian citizen shows that inflation for consumer prices, while remaining manifest, slowed from 13.8% in 2022 to 5.9% in 2023 and is expected to stabilise around 4% over the following years. And all this while the unemployment rate of 3.94% in 2022 is estimated to settle at 3.5% in the near future.

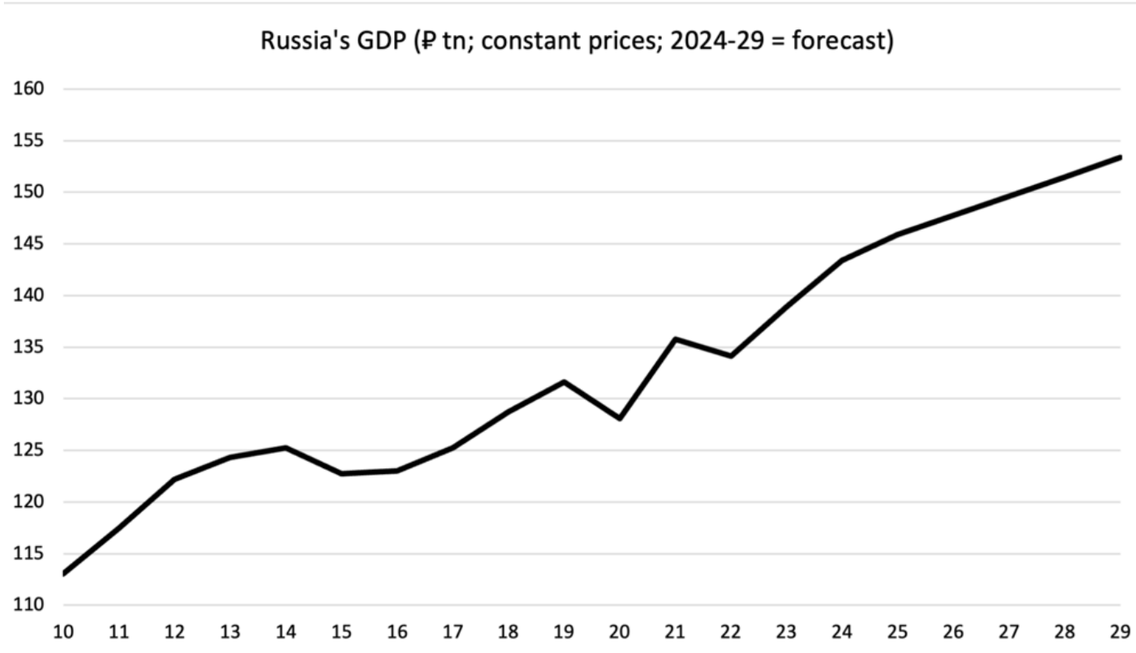


Figure 2: Development of Russia's GDP (own work based on IMF (2024) data)

Now, what to make out of these statistics? Although individual economic indicators should be treated with caution, and aforementioned predictions are surrounded by uncertainty, they do paint a clear picture. Growth rates may be below average when compared to Western countries, and inflation might persist, but Russia's economy appears to be in solid shape and shows no signs of slowing down. Could the figures be better? Surely. Do they portray an economy at rock bottom? Not really.



Several reasons are able to explain why the Russian economy is outperforming expectations. Dabrowski (2023) points out the role of Russia's monetary and fiscal policies, which were conservative before its invasion and managed to respond well to the new situation after the invasion. For instance, to counter a massive capital outflow, Russia's Central Bank implemented transaction restrictions and elevated interest rates to 20 per cent (Inozemtsev, 2022). These measures stabilised Russia's currency. In addition to that, high global energy prices played a relevant role (Dabrowski, 2023). While the price of a barrel of crude oil plunged below $20 in 2020, it soared to over $100 for multiple months in 2022 (Financial Times, 2024). Finally, as elaborated below, sanctions against Russia largely underperformed.

> Looking at economic data, (…) Russia's war economy outperformed expectations, seems to be resilient, and shows no signs of slowing down.

### 5.The Limits and Challenges of Russia's War Economy

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulty of predicting the future course of Russia's war economy, and though divinations of downfall have not materialised, there are challenges that Russia likely faces in the short and in the long run. First, energy prices fluctuate. Although Russia has long benefited from high energy prices, they could plummet again at any time. This would hit the Russian economy, which depends on high energy prices. Second, Russia is experiencing a serious "brain drain", which describes the economic cost of an unparalleled human capital flight. Since February 2022, reportedly up to one million Russians have left the country (Al Jazeera, 2024), though it is difficult to provide exact figures. Strikingly, in the five days after President Putin declared a partial mobilisation decree on 21 September 2022, over 261.000 men allegedly left the country (Novaya Gazeta, 2022). The situation in academia is similar. Since the war began, 2.500 scientists have left Russia (Novaya Gazeta, 2024) due to international isolation, oppression of academic freedom, and challenges with organising capital-intensive scientific equipment. As Russian physicist Vladimir Marakhonov puts it: "The trouble is that it is primarily smart people who leave." (The Barents Observer, 2024, para. 9). Past skilled workers, there are hundreds of thousands of men who were mobilised to fight in Ukraine (Reuters, 2023). Last but not least, there are estimates of nearly 500.000 Russians being killed or wounded in the war (UK Defence Journal, 2024). Taken together, the IMF (2024) projects the Russian population to shrink from 146.7m in 2022 to only 142.9m in 2024, which places a considerable burden on the Russian labour market and its prospects.

Thirdly, aggregate economic figures might look better than they actually are since they often fail to reflect the underlying variation. Yes, Russia's GDP and its investment rate ap-

pear to be unchanged. However, according to economist Sergey Guriev (2024), Russia's economy has been divided into two parallel sectors recently. The military sector, driven by government spending, has experienced growth. In contrast, the civilian sector suffers from human capital flight, robust inflation, and high credit rates. Overall figures mask the 10% collapse in civilian production, which will likely have a detrimental impact on Russia's capital stock and conditions for long-term growth.

Finally, there are costs and a dilemma that are related to the war itself and its consequences. As of June 2024, Russia is clinging to the territories it has illegally conquered and annexed. There is no foreseeable military or political way to force Putin to relinquish them. Assuming that Russia desires to hold on to these territories in the future, it will have to rebuild them. This will be hugely expensive. In its Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (2023) report, a group around the World Bank estimates that reconstructing Ukraine would cost $486bn over the next decade, a large part of which corresponds to Russian-occupied territories. Mariupol alone experienced $14bn in damage (Kyiv Independent, 2022). Renaud Foucart (2024, para. 16), economist at Lancaster University, argues that the "cost of rebuilding and maintaining security in a conquered Ukraine would be too great". Russia faces a notable dilemma: Its economy depends on the war since a large portion of its GDP hinges on defence spending. Stopping the invasion would negatively impact its economy, at least in the short run. On the other hand, Russia cannot afford the costs of reconstructing occupied territories and is lagging behind its growth potential due to an ongoing brain drain, Western sanctions, and a capital stock that is likely to depreciate.

## 6.The West's Economic Strategy in Facing Russia

Against this backdrop, Western states have pursued two strategies to face and inhibit Russia: Sanctions and armament. With the former, they tried to cripple Russia's $2.2trn economy and aimed to restrict its ability to produce military equipment. By striving for the latter, they want to come to an equal footing in the defence industry. Let us examine both paths, starting with the former.

Starting on the first day of Russia's invasion, Western countries introduced an unprecedented battery of sanctions on Russia (S&P Global, 2024), thereby turning it into the most sanctioned country since WWII (The Economist, 2022). Sanctioning countries encompass the G7 and the European Union (Castellum.AI, 2024). Remarkably, these countries boast over 20 times the GDP of Russia: Over $50trn versus $2.2trn (IMF, 2024). Sanctions consist of trade embargoes and financial measures. The former banned or limited exports to and imports from Russia. The latter targeted individual persons (such as oligarchs or politicians), banks, and companies by freezing their assets and restricting their actions. At present, respective blacklists amassed over 20.000 targets (Castellum.AI, 2024) and are frequently updated to prevent circumvention, which also explains why new sanctions are constantly being issued. Prominently, $325bn worth of assets from the Russian Central Bank remain frozen to date (BBC, 2024).

Western sanctions are focused on multiple strategic objectives (European Commission, 2024). Most importantly, they strive to diminish Russia's productive and financial capacities, thus limiting its ability to produce (sophisticated) military equipment and fund Russia's warfare. Ursula von der Leyen (2023, para. 6), President of the European Commission, declared: "Our sanctions are eroding sharply its economic base, slashing any prospect to modernise it."

Over two years after Western sanctions began, it seems reasonable to question their success. Providing a definitive answer is challenging since it hinges on the yardstick employed to measure "success". Have sanctions diminished Russia's productive capacities? Yes. According to calculations by the US Treasury in 2023, the Russian economy is estimated to be 5% smaller than it would be without Western sanctions. At the same time, however, sanctions have underperformed several expectations.

While the International Monetary Fund expected a reduction of 10% between 2021 and 2023 at the beginning of the war, the Russian economy actually grew slightly over that period. Although Western countries tried to block Russia from its technological goods, it e.g. imported more than $1bn worth of semiconductors designed in the West in 2023 (Bloomberg, 2024). One principal reason stands out: Over 120 countries that represent almost 40% of the world's GDP did not join the West's sanctions regime (The Economist, 2024). India and China buy record amounts of Russian energy, thus thwarting import bans, while Central Asian nations sell technological goods to Russia, thereby obstructing export restrictions. In addition, financial sanctions are less constraining in a world relying ever less on the US dollar and offering ever more alternatives (JPMorgan Chase, 2023). Moving towards multipolarity, the West's economic power is increasingly limited. Western countries should recognise those limitations. Pushing sanctions further, e.g. through secondary sanctions (Dow Jones, 2024), is a dangerous gamble. They would necessarily affect those fence-sitting countries that the West is trying to win over, which entails the risk of further isolation from the West.

## 7.A Bitter Realisation: There Is No Alternative to Armament

Let us bring the various insights together. As we have seen, the Russian war economy appears to be in solid shape and shows no signs of slowing down soon. Yes, there are problems that the Russian economy will likely encounter in the future, particularly an ongoing human capital flight and a depreciating capital stock. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether and to what extent these problems will materialise. In addition to that, Western sanctions have severely underperformed expectations. With this in mind, Western nations should not rely on wishful thinking or luck but rather take action to confront Russia.

If it was not evident before, it is now at the latest: Sanctions cannot substitute for armament. For European security, there is no alternative to a considerable expansion of their military capabilities. Russia ramped up its military-industrial complex, investing over 6% of its GDP (up from 2.7% in 2021) and 40% of its government budget into its war-making efforts (Bloomberg, 2023). Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine is raging on. The fact that a record 23 NATO members reach their 2% target is a good start (AP News, 2024), but it is likely to be too little. Particularly given that Western promises of armament supplies, such as the delivery of one million artillery shells, often appear too late (Euractiv, 2024). The West must do more, and especially Europeans must strive for leadership .

## 8.Conclusion: Resilience, Uncertainty, and the Need for Armament

Two years after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, we can confidently say that two major predictions made in the early days of the war turned out wrong. On the one hand, Ukraine and its military are much stronger and more resilient than expected. On the other hand, the same can be said about Russia's economy, which appears to defy all calls for its demise in a surprisingly resilient way. Consequentially, politicians and the public gradually realised that the war in Ukraine would not end soon.

The future of Russia's invasion considerably depends on the performance of its war economy, which currently allocates over 6% of its GDP on its military (Bloomberg, 2023). The present article thus examined: What is the state and prospect of Russia's war economy? What can the West do to face it?

Looking at economic data, the article demonstrated that Russia's war economy outperformed expectations, seems to be resilient, and shows no signs of slowing down. Instead of a predicted 10% slump, the Russian economy has slightly grown its GDP since February 2022. Moreover, it remains difficult to predict its prospects. Past forecasts by economic models proved to be false, economic data from Russia's authoritarian government must be taken cautiously, and there are several critical factors (e.g. global energy prices) whose development is impossible to anticipate.

Despite its relatively good performance, there are several areas that could cause problems for the Russian economy in the future. First, falling energy prices could cause budget deficits for a country that heavily relies on hydrocarbon exports. Second, an unparalleled human capital flight and casualties on the battlefield already put pressure on the labour market. Third, aggregate economic figures mask differential trends within the Russian economy. While the military industry booms, the civilian industry contracted by over 10%, which could eventually depreciate Russia's capital stock. Finally, the most difficult might be the dilemma of Russia's war economy. For one, its huge military production depends on the war and contributes a great deal to national GDP. But for another, Russia cannot afford the exorbitant costs of reconstructing the territories it illegally occupied.

The West's reaction to the Russian invasion involved two strategies: Sanctions and armament. Two years later, it becomes clear that sanctions largely fall below expectations and do not have the desired effects. That does not imply that they are wrong. However, in times of growing multipolarity, they are limited. Western countries must recognise that. For the future of Ukraine and European security, there seems to be no alternative to armament. Yet, efforts to date are often too little, too late.

Given uncertainty regarding the commitments of the United States towards defending Europe and intensified Russian military spending, Europeans in particular are required to step up and do more. General Vigilant's article for EPIS Magazine explains how they can do this within NATO.

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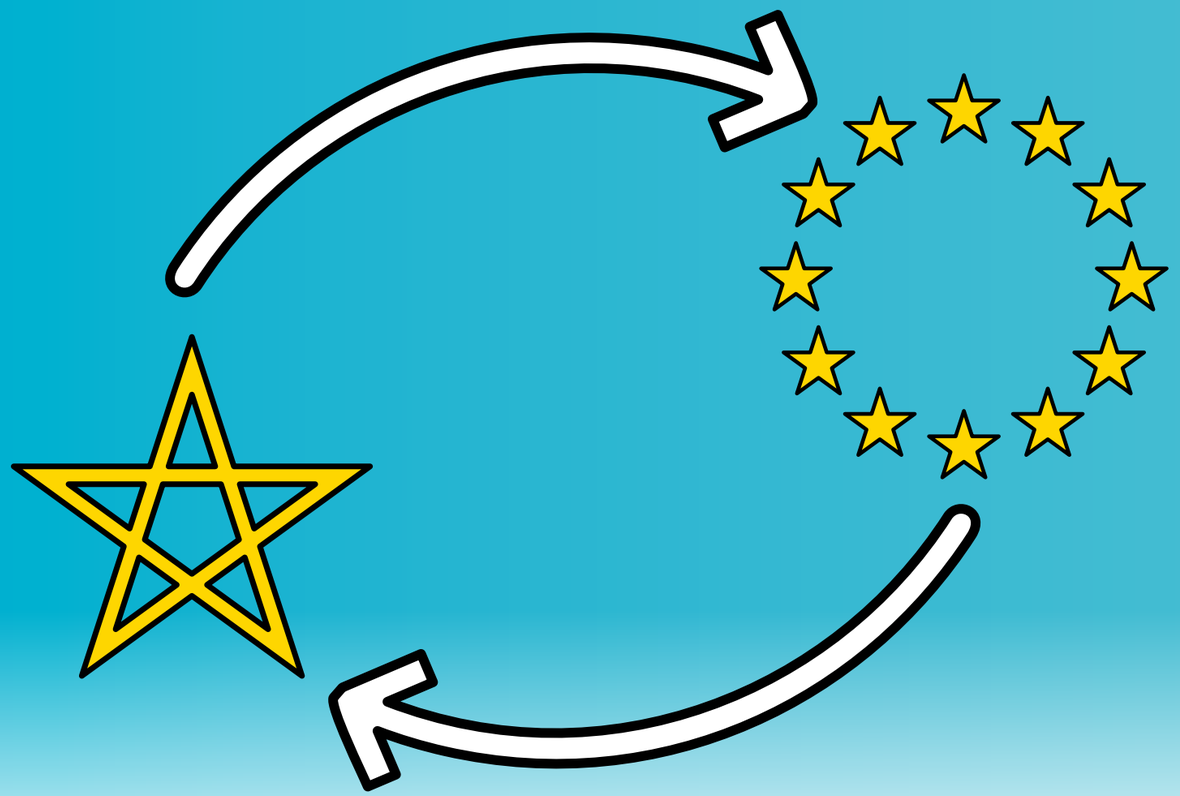

# Implications of the EU's Nearshoring Activities in Morocco

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The political world has undergone extensive changes during its history. Once again, we stand at such a crossroads that will determine what the future will look like. Due to the power shifts and the rise of some developing countries like China, the world has moved away from the Western liberal order (Éliás, 2021). Consequently, a country no longer allies itself only with a fixed group of countries. Instead, countries now have a complex net of diplomatic relationships, even with countries that may be hostile towards each other. Investment-induced alliances will play a pivotal role in the 21st century, where the existing power structure is being renegotiated. This paper examines how the European Union (EU) and Morocco's strategic partnership could serve the EU's goal of diversifying its economic structure and pursuing a more stable geopolitical playing field amidst these global shifts. Specifically, this paper investigates the role of nearshoring activities in achieving these goals. Thus, this paper will aim to answer the question of How the strategic partnership and nearshoring initiatives between the EU and Morocco can serve to address the EU's economic diversification and geopolitical stability goals in the context of 21st-century global shifts.

For the EU, nearshoring could resolve several issues it currently faces. Firstly, by bringing manufacturing closer to its borders, the EU makes itself more geopolitically secured in light of future crises. Secondly, eliminating global shipment of half-produced goods also benefits its vision of becoming a net-zero emitter and thus, a global "sustainable" leader (Ashby, 2016). Lastly, by relocating its manufacturing capacities to Morocco, it can strengthen its ties with the Kingdom. In return, this paper argues that the EU will be able to politically access the African Union (AU) and, as such, reduce the influence of China in the region.

With this information in mind, this article will begin by exploring the long and complex history that the EU and Morocco share. The second chapter of this paper will dive into Morocco's capabilities and explain why the Kingdom provides opportunities for the EU. The third chapter will pose questions regarding the challenges that will inevitably come with such investments. However, this chapter will also aim to address these challenges and propose possible solutions. The following section will then expand on the proposed strategic implications that were illuminated above. Lastly, the final chapter will conclude this paper and provide a possible future outlook of the EU-Morocco relationship. In conclusion, the EU can reap the economic benefits and stabilise the Maghreb region if it proactively engages with the challenges that come with shifting its diplomatic focus to Morocco.

## 1.Historical Background

The Kingdom of Morocco has a complicated history, being at the frontlines between the influences of Spain (and other European countries) and the Arab world (Barbour et al., 2024). Before the 20th century, neighbouring countries tried to conquer Morocco without success. Thus, Morocco independently served as a gateway between Europe and Africa for hundreds of years. Nonetheless, this status quo was broken when France established a protectorate over Morocco before the beginning of World War I in 1912 (Barbour et al., 2024). This protectorate was then split between the French in the North and the Spanish in the South after the end of the following war, World War II. Although officially independent in 1956, when the French uni-

laterally gave Morocco its new status, the last Spanish troops left the country only in 1975. This has led to a new conflict over the territories of Western Sahara as Morocco asserted its sovereignty over the new territory and fought the indigenous Sahrawi people who demanded independence (Ghaedi, 2023). To this day, this conflict remains unresolved, as only two countries have recognised Moroccan claims over the territory (Ghaedi, 2023). Furthermore, this conflict undermines the stability of the entire region, making it harder to ensure the trust needed to relocate manufacturers into the country.

Nonetheless, after nearly half a century of the renewed independence, in 2000, Morocco and the EU signed an association agreement to face common challenges such as economic development, climate change, and security (Morocco, 2024). Since then, the relations have only grown stronger. In 2008, the two partners signed a 'Joint Document on the Strengthening of Bilateral Relations/Advanced Status', which was meant to strengthen their cooperation even more (Martín, 2009). This document aimed to address the political and security threats, integration of markets, and introduction of new actors within this relationship (EEAS, n.d.). Now, both countries cooperate in the Mediterranean region, a difficult area for cooperation due to the number of countries surrounding it, differences in the regimes governing it, and the issue of conflicting exclusive economic zones. Furthermore, the countries are trying to design their future cooperation on an even deeper level.

The EU needs to sustain and improve its relationship with Morocco in order to sustain its global influence and to improve the stability in the region, both of which will be elaborated on later in this paper. This is not, however, a one-way relationship. Morocco requires the EU to maintain and enhance its market access, trade, and investment opportunities, given that the Union represents its largest trading partner. Nonetheless, Moroccan elites do not view such deep dependence on the EU as a good step towards their future as they fear the country's overdependency on the Union (European Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Furthermore, for many, especially the youth, the EU's continuing support for the existing regime posits an issue, as it failed to address the internal economic inequality and regional tensions (Palacio, 2019; Fakir, n.d.). Nonetheless, the EU remains a strategic partner to Morocco. In the past, the two parties cooperated on a vast array of regional issues.

To illustrate, Morocco played a pivotal role in the migration crisis and can resolve the EU's dependency on Russian oil and gas. In terms of the former, an agreement between the two parties is in place. Similar to the EU-Turkey Deal, Morocco will receive funds in order to strengthen its border controls and, thus, limit the number of people entering the Union through the kingdom (International Rescue Committee, 2023; European Commission, 2023).

When Algeria stopped their supply of natural gas to and through Morocco in 2021, Spain and other importing countries in Europe suddenly experienced a drop in supplied gas (Rashad, 2021). To address this issue, Morocco began talks with other suppliers in the region. Thus, if the discussions succeed, the kingdom could potentially act as a transition state between the EU and other states in the Western part of Africa, thus reducing the EU's dependency on Russian oil and gas (Rahhou, 2024). More specifically, Nigeria and Morocco plan to build a pipeline that would connect 13 countries in Western Africa and potentially Europe (Onyango, 2024). Furthermore, based on its geographical positioning, it can serve as a source of renewable (wind, solar, and hydrogen) energy that can be supplied to Europe (Josephs, 2023).

**Nearshoring:**
Nearshoring is the strategy where a company relocates its production operations closer to its home country. This approach aims to reduce production costs, improve supply chain resilience, and mitigate risks associated with traditional offshoring.

## 2.The Case for Nearshoring in Morocco

The idea of nearshoring, an activity where a company decides to relocate their production (or a part of it) closer to their home country, has lately become a predominant topic in international discussions (Chaisse & Rodríguez-Chiffelle, 2023). Beginning with the financial crisis of 2008, the increasing global instability has pushed companies to reevaluate their existing strategies – offshore their productions as the costs of production are lower in the developing world (De Lucas et al., 2021). Moreover, crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, US-China trade tensions, and the war between Russia and Ukraine made the vulnerability of Global Supply Chains (GSC) in critical sectors even more visible (Chaisse & Rodríguez-Chiffelle, 2023; Bontadini et al., 2022). Now, together with the rising costs of production abroad and an alternative to automate manufacturing closer to the home countries, companies opt more often to offshore production closer to their borders (Chaisse & Rodríguez-Chiffelle, 2023).

Nearshoring is one of the strategies that the EU can use in order to enhance its economic resilience and geopolitical stability. There are several countries that the Union can choose from, such as the Balkans, Turkey, and countries in the South Caucasus or the Maghreb region. Morocco, however, stands out for its unique combination of economic and political advantages.

One of the main reasons for Morocco's position as a potential nearshoring country for the EU is its competitive labour costs. Compared to the employment costs that are expected in the EU as well as in a traditional offshoring destination, Morocco offers significantly lower wages. For instance, the average wage in China for 2023 was approximately $12,850 annually, while in Morocco, it was around $3,670 annually in the same period (Worlddata, n.d.). This directly translates into a higher competitiveness of existing companies operating in Morocco as they can lower prices for their products.

These lower wages, however, do not compromise the quality of the workforce available in Morocco. Over the past decades, the kingdom has heavily invested in the education and vocational training of its population (World Bank Group, 2023). The main areas in which the government has invested align with the demands of modern markets and those of the EU – programs that enhance the technical skills and language proficiency of individuals (World Bank Group, 2023). In sum, Morocco possesses a workforce equipped with skills and knowledge that allow it to compete in the automotive, aerospace, and IT sectors while maintaining relatively low wages.

In terms of industries, Morocco already serves as a base for various economic players. One of the most prominent is the automotive industry, which has seen significant growth over the past couple of years, achieving a 27% increase in 2023 (Rahhou, 2024). For instance, large car manufacturers such as Renault have already established their productions in the country, using it as an export base for lines of their electronic vehicles (Hancock, 2023). These companies not only create jobs and capital influx into Morocco but also help to develop local supply chain networks, which in turn reduces the logistical burden for any newcomers (MoroccoNow, 2023). Furthermore, by creating these supply chains in a country near Europe with developed ties to the continent, the likelihood of supply chain disruptions is minimised.

Similarly, the aerospace industry in Morocco has been growing significantly, with over 140 companies established in the country (Oliver, 2024). The government has been instrumental in fostering the right environment through initiatives such as the Industrial Acceleration Plan and the establishment of specialised zones like the Casablanca Aeronautics Free Zone, creating incentives for international investments (tax breaks or support for training programs) (Oliver, 2024). These policies have already attracted many large companies, including Boeing, Airbus, and Bombardier, to establish their operations in Morocco. For the EU, establishing deeper cooperation with Morocco means access to an already well-developed aerospace hub that can support various aspects of its strategy, from R&D to manufacturing.

Moreover, Morocco has heavily invested in infrastructure projects, resulting in one of the largest ports in the region, functioning as an economic hub (Tanger Med Special Agency, n.d.). This mostly benefits the EU as such a hub serves as an export base for any products manufactured in the kingdom. Additionally, Morocco has invested in roads and railways that connect this hub with major cities and manufacturing bases. This connectivity ensures the smooth transportation of manufactured goods across the country, which is necessary for the easy functioning of businesses (Minster et al., 2024). Thus, not only can companies ensure a reliable supply of goods across the country, but also gain access to international markets.

Morocco has also developed a robust energy infrastructure focusing on renewable energies. The Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex exemplifies the country's commitment to sustainable energy solutions (African Development Fund et al., 2017). Now, around 8% of Morocco's energy comes from renewable sources (Ritchie et al., 2020). This is a very important factor because the EU aims to eliminate its carbon footprint and, to do so, sometimes enacts controversial solutions. One of them is the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which is to be fully functional by 2026 and functions as a tax system for goods that release CO2 into the atmosphere during their production (European Commission, n.d.-a). By manufacturing in a country with a sustainable production of electricity, these costs are minimal, resulting in a higher profit margin for the producers.

While Morocco has some issues regarding internal political stability, which will be elaborated on in the following chapter of this paper, these conflicts do not significantly affect the functioning manufacturing companies. The World Bank defines political instability as "a perception of the likelihood of political instability and/or politically motivated violence" (World Bank, n.d., para. 3). As illustrated in Figure 1, countries like Turkey and Egypt score lower on the World Bank Political Stability Indicator. A lower score, thereby, indicates a more volatile investment environment. Morocco's stability benefits the willingness of companies to invest in the country. Subsequently, Morocco offers a comparatively stable political situation that benefits businesses.

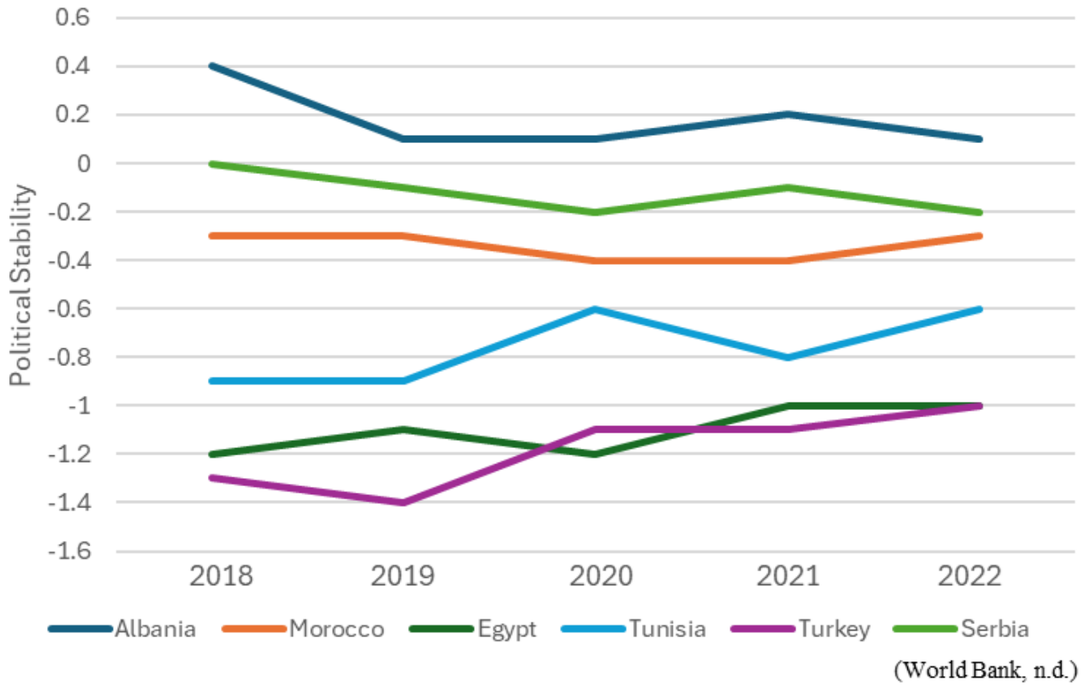



Figure 1: Political Stability

Lastly, Morocco's geographical location at the crossroads of Europe and Africa means Morocco constitutes a gateway to both continents. Its proximity to the European market reduces transportation costs compared to more distant offshoring locations. Not only do these geographically close supply chains result in a lower probability of disruptions, but they also guarantee enhanced efficiency and ensure better responsiveness to market demands. Having partial control over one of the busiest critical trade junctures in the world, the Strait of Gibraltar, further enhances Morocco's strategic value. This prime location positions Morocco as an ideal hub for distribution and logistics operations, facilitating smoother and more cost-effective trade flows.

Not only is Morocco important as a trading partner, but by increasing trade, the EU can develop closer relations with the country. Due to its positioning, Morocco can act as a gateway to the entire African continent. Here, the EU can establish more trade deals over critical materials and rare earth metals found in Africa, essential components for the EU's transition to a sustainable future (Baskaran, 2022).

## 3.Challenges and Considerations

### 3.a. Legislative Challenges

Although nearshoring to Morocco presents various advantages for the EU, it is cru-

cial to address the inherent challenges that come with such a strategic decision. One of the biggest challenges is the regulatory differences between the EU and Morocco. European regulations are stricter in many ways, including labour laws, environmental standards, and product safety regulations. Such differences can result in two outcomes. Firstly, Moroccan exports to the EU could initially suffer from adjusting to the new regulations. This, however, will not be a large issue as the country already exports over 60% of its total production designated for exports to the EU (Trading Economics, n.d.). Thus, the majority of the products are already aligned with the existing laws.

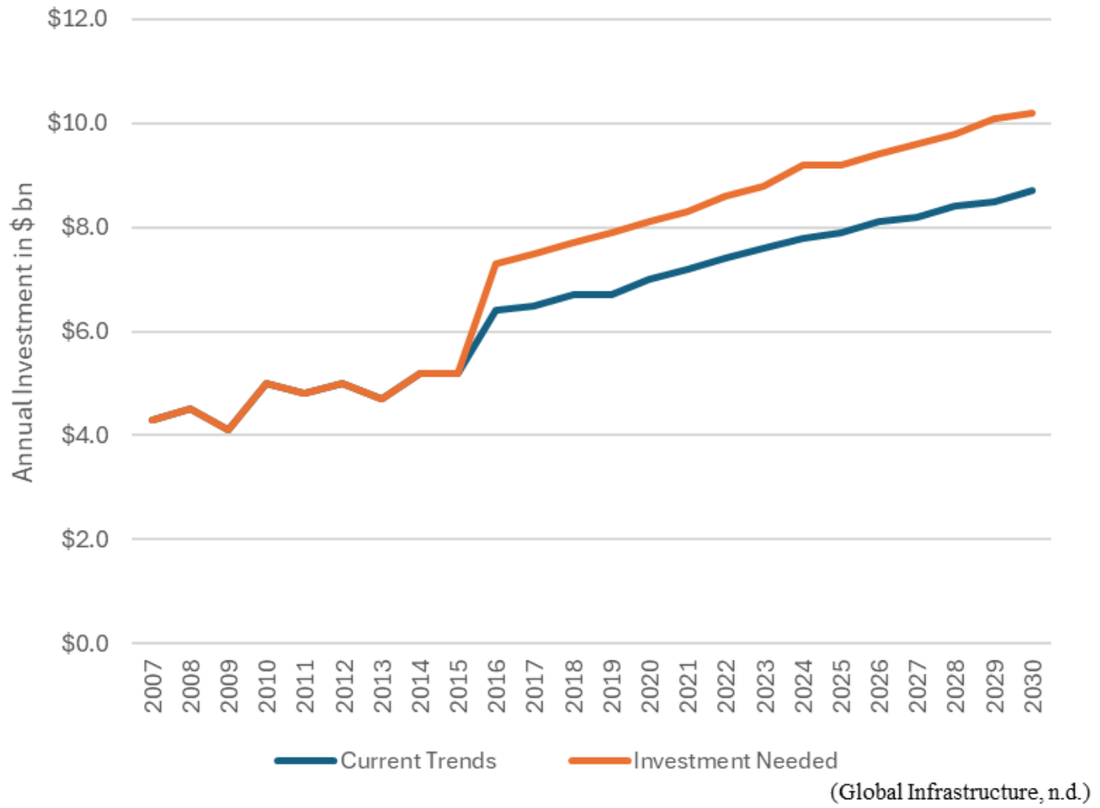
Secondly, the EU might impose its regulations on the kingdom, which may result in increasing tensions as Morocco perceives it as undermining its sovereignty. These disparities are especially significant for the country's working conditions. Here, again, there are two large points of disagreement. To begin with, two-thirds of Morocco's economy is estimated to consist of informal employment (Eljechtimi, 2023). Although the situation is improving, it is still highly insufficient in the eyes of the EU, which has been actively working on eliminating this aspect of the economy (Vermeylen, 2008). They argue that not only does the state lose revenue, but the workers do not gain legal protection from the state without a legal contract. The second point of contention is gender equality in the workplace. For historical and religious reasons, Morocco has a very poor record of ensuring such equality. With a difference of nearly 50%, the Moroccan economy is employing three men for every woman working (Kolovich & Ndoye, 2023). Compared, the EU has been pushing for equal participation of women in the economy both within and outside of the region for decades now (European Commission, n.d.-b). Having closer economic cooperation can result in the EU pushing more regulations onto Morocco, which could create room for disagreement.

To address these challenges, however, it is essential to harmonise the frameworks between the EU and Morocco while retaining space for cultural and religious differences. To do so, the parties should promote bilateral meetings and agreements that cover the key regulatory areas, making it easier for companies to operate across borders. Furthermore, to ensure the implementation of these agreements, joint committees should be established. These committees would ensure compliance and consistency with the implemented regulations.

### 3.b. Infrastructure Shortcomings

Another challenge is logistics. Relocating economic activities into the country will put severe stress on the existing infrastructure. Even though Morocco has made some considerable advances in its transportation infrastructure, to fully support possible nearshoring activities, further investments are necessary. This is especially true for the railroad infrastructure (Statista, 2023). Although the existing network is able to support the current demands, the increased volume of traded goods can create bottlenecks that would hinder the production capacities of the industrial zones.

To overcome these logistical obstacles and adapt the country to the new volume of traded goods, Morocco will require significant investments (Global Infrastructure, n.d.). The Global Infrastructure Outlook (n.d.) group measured a wide array of infrastructure investment indicators, including energy, telecommunication, roads, rails, airports, and ports. The observed



(Global Infrastructure, n.d.)

Figure 2: Infrastructure Investment in Morocco

numbers, as portrayed in Figure 2, then suggest a growing gap between the measured and needed investments. Public-private projects could play a vital role in closing this gap as they can support building new infrastructure projects. On the other hand, the EU can provide financial support to Morocco via grants or loans, as successful execution will translate into both economic and political benefits for the Union. Furthermore, the EU can support such investments by transferring technology that would help streamline logistic operations, enhance the efficiency of the system, and reduce overall costs.

### 3.c. Energy Infrastructure

Connected to the logistical hurdles that are present is the issue of energy. Although it is true that Morocco has been developing capacities for renewable energy, many areas for improvement persist. Firstly, the country remains to be heavily dependent on oil and coal. Together, these two energy sources make up nearly 92% of its energy production (Ritchie et al., 2020). Due to its positioning, Morocco is an ideal country to source its energy from wind and solar, having access to year-round sunshine and vast open spaces to build the needed infrastructure. The issue, however, is the lack of resources that would make that possible. Secondly, also connected to limited funding available, the country lacks a proper electric grid that would be able to transport the produced energy. Similarly, regarding the lack of transportation infrastructure, the EU could step in and promote private investment

in Morocco's energy sector to address these challenges.

### 3.d. Complex Geopolitical Situation

Another issue that needs to be considered is the broader geopolitical context in which nearshoring activities would take place. As explained earlier, Morocco's strategic position offers advantages. This location, however, also places the country in a complex geopolitical environment. The most prominent issue is the high tensions between Algeria and Morocco, which resulted in diplomatic ties being cut in 2021 after the US recognised Morocco's claim over Western Sahara (Dworkin, 2022). The conflict itself goes back nearly half a century to 1963, when both countries fought over a contested piece of land located in Algeria. Due to the possible involvement of outside countries, these fights were suspended, but the relationship deteriorated even further. To this day, both countries view each other as rivals due to the land dispute and because of the different types of government (Dworkin, 2022). Although the tensions were recently reignited and intensified, the broader global community does not fear an outburst of an open conflict, as both countries depend on maintaining good relations with the EU in order to sustain their diplomatic position and economic growth. Nonetheless, as Algeria severed its diplomatic ties with Morocco and retained its closed borders ever since 1994, having restricted access through the Algerian territory limits the possible transportation routes (Reuters, 2023). As such, even greater stress would be put on the existing railroad and sea transportation infrastructure.

Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in Western Sahara remains an issue that affects international perception and investments. Even though the conflict has seen periods of relative peace, the ceasefire, established in 1991, was broken in 2020, and the conflict was renewed (Fabini, 2023). This factor negatively impacts the perceived political stability of Morocco. As neither of the conflicts shows room for improvement, companies must be prepared to navigate potential disruptions. They have to work with local and international entities to mitigate the risks and ensure sustainable operations.

> Morocco's strategic location and competitive labor market make it an ideal nearshoring destination for the EU, promising both economic benefits and improved geopolitical ties

In sum, while Morocco presents a compelling case for nearshoring, certain challenges must be addressed before its potential is fully realised. The country requires immense investment from the private sector and is currently hindered by geopolitical and legislative disparities. To address those, the EU and Morocco must harmonise their regulatory frameworks and jointly navigate the geopolitical complexities. By addressing these challenges, the EU and Morocco can equally benefit from economic growth, enhance geopolitical stability, and foster closer ties between Europe and Africa.

## 4.Strategic Implications for EU Foreign Policy

As illustrated earlier in this paper, the partnership between the EU and Morocco carries significant economic and political implications for both parties. One crucial aspect of this cooperation for the EU is the potential for economic diversification. Diversification is a necessary component of the EU's vision of economic resilience and strategic autonomy.

Economic diversification is crucial for the EU as it mitigates the risks associated with global fluctuations of markets. By relocating some of its production to Morocco, the EU will be able to better oversee and secure the supply chains of its economy. This shift would lead to a more stable economic environment, especially during global crises, such as the recent Covid-19 pandemic or the Russian invasion of Ukraine. By shifting its focus towards the northern part of Africa, the EU can further develop closer trade relations within the Euro-Mediterranean region. Through trade and spillovers associated with them, the EU could then further improve their relations with said countries and establish a more comprehensive response to coming crises. Thus, for example, managing any future refugee crises. Lastly, by establishing itself in the Maghreb region, the EU may become a more influential leader, which would enable it to promote the Union's labour laws and gender equality in Morocco. In sum, the relocation of manufacturing industries to Morocco can result in various outcomes that contribute to the regional stability the EU is seeking.

The cooperation between the EU and Morocco also provides an opportunity for the EU to access the broader African continent and improve its relationships with the countries located there. Morocco, being a member of the African Union (AU), can act as a gateway between European values and interests and those of the African nations.

By leveraging Morocco's strategic position, the EU can increase its presence in the region and establish deeper economic cooperation or joint development projects. To illustrate, the EU could cooperate with the countries of the AU on renewable energy and infrastructure. By doing so, the EU would not only enhance cooperation regarding global challenges such as climate change. Furthermore, it would also balance the scales of influence that China is currently skewing towards them. In terms of investments, China, having a negative reputation from the EU, only requires minimal conditions to lend. Thus, many countries or leaders are able to gain access to outside funds. Firstly, these funds can be easily misused, and without foreseeing the consequences, they may result in greater political and regional instability. Secondly, as the ability of the borrower to repay is not assessed, many are unable to pay back. This debt trap diplomacy consequently leads to countries having to cede infrastructure assets to China (Himmer & Rod, 2022). Thus, by developing better relationships with African countries, the EU may prevent these negative outcomes from taking place.

Nonetheless, such partnerships are also desirable for another reason. Currently, countries in Africa are experiencing economic growth. To retain its leading position, the EU must cooperate with the AU to maintain its global influence. Furthermore, some of the members of the AU boast significant deposits of rare earth metals. These materials

are a necessary component of many crucial products of the modern society. They can be found in electronics, electric cars, or wind turbines, making them essential for a successful "green transition" (Baskaran, 2022).

In conclusion, the strategic cooperation between the EU and Morocco, achieved through deeper economic cooperation, brings various benefits to both parties. By nearshoring to Morocco, the EU is able to diversify its trade, enhance its economic resilience and strengthen its geopolitical influence. Additionally, by promoting investments in Morocco, the EU gains access to a secondary source of renewable energy. Furthermore, the EU can improve its relations with the broader African continent, improve regional stability, and address global challenges in a more comprehensive manner. However, to reap the potential, it is essential to address regulatory, logistical, and geopolitical challenges that lay ahead. By proactively tackling these issues, the EU can create a mutually beneficial partnership with Morocco.

## 5.Conclusion and Future Perspectives

This paper has discussed the importance of nearshoring for the EU in order to secure its geopolitical and economic success in the near future. To do so, Morocco was identified as the ideal country in proximity to the European Union because of its geographical position and recent economic advancements. By nearshoring to Morocco, the EU can significantly reduce production costs for the companies and protect its supply chains. Furthermore, Morocco's strategic position provides logistical benefits that facilitate smoother and more cost-effective trade flows.

From a political perspective, this partnership holds a significant promise of reducing the EU's dependency on traditional trade partners and mitigating risks associated with global economic fluctuations. Furthermore, by fostering closer ties with Morocco, the EU indirectly enhances regional stability and development in the area. This is especially important in preventing future crises during the ongoing geopolitical shifts and the influence of other global powers in Africa.

Nonetheless, there are several challenges that must be addressed before fully realising Moroccan potential. Firstly, the two parties need to approach the topic of regulatory differences that lie between them. To do so this paper believes that the most efficient way to do so is by fostering dialogue, aligning regulatory frameworks, and creating joint committees to oversee the implementation of such frameworks.

Furthermore, the cooperation must resolve the ongoing geopolitical tensions in order to ensure the safety of the investments. To do so, Morocco will be required to promote dialogue with its geopolitical rivals in order to come to peaceful solutions. Additionally, in case the talks fall apart, as seen previously, it will have to provide security for the international businesses based in the kingdom. The EU can leverage its influence in the region and act as a mediator to increase the chances of success.

In conclusion, Morocco's strategic advantages make it an ideal nearshoring hub for the EU. The partnership promises significant economic and political benefits, including cost reductions, improved supply chain efficiency, and enhanced geopolitical influence. However, realising these benefits will require addressing regulatory, logistical, and geopolitical challenges. By proactively tackling these issues, the EU and Morocco can create a mutually beneficial partnership that supports economic growth, enhances regional stability, and positions the EU as a strong and influential player in the new power century.

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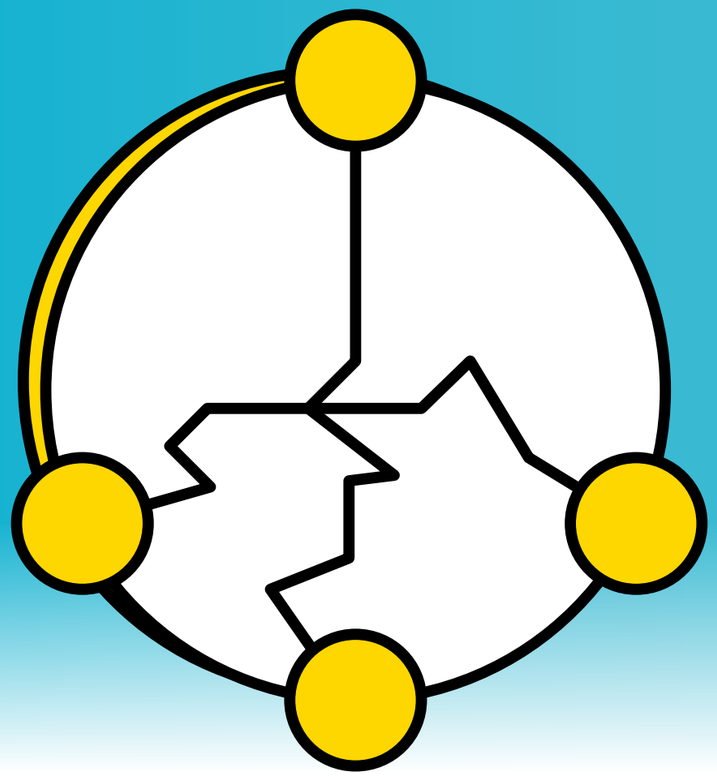
# Greetings from our contributors



# The Role of AI in Supporting the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda:

## Opportunities and Challenges

**Belen Bringas**

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The recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), marked by the release of ChatGPT by OpenAI in late 2022 (Marr, 2024), increased the societal debate around AI that has scholars from all disciplines questioning what societal change AI will bring. These discussions are notorious for their polarity, with some highlighting the opportunities to maximise AI for societal transformation and others pointing out the potentially catastrophic consequences that AI could bring to humanity.

Amidst the crises, such as the ongoing war in Ukraine and the Israel-Palestine conflict, have proved that "global violent conflict and fragility are at the highest level in decades" (Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2023, p.). Therefore, the field of peacebuilding has begun exploring the opportunities that artificial intelligence can provide and the risks it may bring. However, there is an existing gap in current research that excludes gender from the equation. Current AI technologies have the same issue, and their application to peacebuilding, therefore, excludes gender considerations. There are several reasons for artificial intelligence to produce biased results, such as the nature of skills required to be in the AI industry, which makes the population working with AI "neither diverse or inclusive" (Moon, 2023, p. 1498). This particular issue raises concerns regarding biased data interpretation and algorithmic development. The lack of inclusive data is also a source of concern, and data is extremely important to AI as data is gathered through machine learning, and these are crucial to the quality of AI systems (Moon, 2023, p. 1498).

After two years of war in Ukraine, there are 3.7 million internally displaced people, of which 56% are women and girls (UN Women, 2024). Understanding the gendered nature of conflict is imperative, specifically how women and girls experience conflict differently from men and boys (UNDP, 2019). The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda established by the United Nations Security Council is part of a resolution focused on the role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, humanitarian response, peacekeeping, and more. AI technologies, if integrated with gender perspectives, can be developed and implemented to support the WPS agenda by addressing these gender-specific impacts. For example, event maps powered by artificial intelligence could be helpful in providing data on displaced Ukrainian women, which could make humanitarian aid more effective. However, the current biases in the development of AI and its products need to be addressed by including gender perspectives in order for artificial intelligence to align with the WPS agenda.

This article aims to explore and introduce four AI technologies for peacebuilding and answer the following research question: How can the integration of AI technologies support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda? This paper is divided into five sections, starting from the introduction and followed by a section on definitions, which include artificial intelligence and the four pillars of the WPS agenda: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. In the discussion part of this article, it's proposed that automated behavioural analysis, AI consultation, predictive analytics, AI-generated event maps, and machine-learning disaster robots are tools that can assist the WPS agenda principles, which will be followed by a discussion of the challenges, limitations and ethical considerations

that the utilisation of these technologies could bring. The final part of this article is the conclusion in which the findings of this paper will be discussed and argued that the five technologies presented can support the implementation of the WPS agenda, but it is necessary to have the challenges of these particular technologies in mind as these can negatively affect the pillars of the agenda.

## 1. Definitions

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted by the United Nations in the year 2000, is the resolution that initiated the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. UNSCR 1325 was not designed to fit a specific country; instead, it was meant to be applied to any country with ongoing violent conflict that needs to address issues regarding protection and recovery. This resolution was also aimed at "stable" countries that were yet to address issues with violence against women or increased radicalisation (UNDP, 2019). The main objective of the resolution is to reaffirm the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, emphasising the importance of women's equal opportunity to participate and be involved in the promotion and maintenance of peace processes (UNDP, 2019). It was through this resolution that the WPS agenda originated and developed the four pillars of the framework: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery.

The first pillar of the WPS agenda is the principle of prevention, which is focused on preventing conflict and any kind of violence against women and girls, whether it is in a conflict or post-conflict circumstance. Participation is the second focus of the framework, which aims to assure equal participation for women in decision-making processes held at all levels for dealing with peace and security issues (UNDP, 2019). Protection is a key concept of the agenda, which has the goal of protecting women and girls from any form of sexual and gender-based violence. It is also crucial for their rights to be not only protected but promoted when in a situation of conflict. Relief and recovery are the final cornerstones of the WPS agenda, with a particular focus on the relief needs of women, which are expected to be met, as well as strengthening their capacity to be agents of relief and recovery in situations of conflict and post-conflict (UNDP, 2019).

| Pillar | Description |
|---|---|
| **Prevention** | Aims to prevent conflict and violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. |
| **Participation** | Focused on ensuring equal participation of women in decision-making peace processes. |
| **Protection** | Strives to protect women and girls from gender-based and sexual violence in conflict situations. |
| **Relief and Recovery** | Seeks to provide relief and recovery to women in conflict and post-conflict situations. As well as empower women to become agents of relief and recovery |



Artificial intelligence is a term used throughout this paper that requires a definition, as it can be confusing at times. It is also important to differentiate traditional artificial intelligence from generative artificial intelligence. To put it simply, traditional artificial intelligence (AI) responds to inputs, and it can be used for decision-making and predictions based on the data it has learned. The best example of these types of systems would be Siri or Alexa, which are traditional AI systems that follow a set of rules and do not create anything new (Marr, 2023). Generative AI, on the other hand, like ChatGPT and other large language models (LLM) by OpenAI, are trained to "create something new" from the information provided by the user. These systems not only create new texts but also images, music, and more based on the data they possess, but generative AI goes beyond learning new patterns and generating new data (Marr, 2023). It's also important to point out that generative AI can produce human-like text that can sometimes be hard to distinguish between human and machine.

**AI consultation:**
AI consultation is another powerful technology that could enhance the participation of women in decision-making processes when involved in peacemaking. AI consultation refers to the process of using artificial intelligence to analyse discussions and feedback from participants. Due to AI's nature in analysing large amounts of data, it is possible to enable it to conduct real-time systematic dialogue, which are structured interactions made to gather the views of many participants, while analysing the responses of the participants in the consultation and providing an overview of their opinions.

The constant technological advancement has shifted the communication environments in which conflict plays out. Narratives of misinformation and disinformation are being spread by state and non-state actors in their countries and even crossing borders through the use of social media. The spread of this information is intended to fuel political, ethnic, and even religious conflict (Pauwels, 2020). This threat is at an all-time high with the introduction of generative AI technologies that can synthesise massive amounts of data and create human-like texts and other media that can make emotional manipulation more powerful. Automated behavioural analysis can help identify these harmful narratives and give early warnings to mitigate the impact of misinformation and disinformation, contributing to conflict prevention efforts.

Due to the growing concern about the misuse of these tools, the UN conflict prevention actors are developing automated behavioural analysis. This technology combines natural language processing, emotion analysis, and speech and voice recognition, which can be used on social media and traditional media such as television and radio (Pauwels, 2020). The analysis of the content by this system can be helpful for authorities to identify attitudes toward conflict as well as examine growing tensions, divisions, and conflicts (Pauwels, 2020). The goal of automated behavioural analysis is to detect behaviours that can lead to violence as a meth-

## 2.Discussion

### 2.a. Automated behavioural analysis

This is an AI technology that could be useful in conflict prevention as it is a system that can offer immediate analysis of complex social behaviours in conflicts (Pauwels, 2020).

od of conflict prevention. This approach rests on the assumption that attitudes and expressions of emotion are precursors to action. For example, this technology could be helpful in identifying the rampant hate speech on social media, as well as identifying misogynistic attitudes, online harassment, discrimination, and other forms of gender-based aggression and effectively preventing violence against women and therefore supporting the prevention principle of the WPS agenda.

### 2.b. AI consultation

This technology is another tool that could increase women's role in decision-making processes when involved in peacemaking. AI consultation refers to the process of using artificial intelligence to analyse discussions and feedback from participants (Department for Transport of the United Kingdom, 2023).

AI consultation can make decision-making processes more inclusive by synthesising the inputs from participants and making sure that women's voices are being equally represented in these decision-making processes. Due to AI's nature in analysing large amounts of data, it is possible to enable it to conduct real-time systematic dialogue, which are structured interactions made to gather the views of many participants, while analysing the responses of the participants in the consultation and providing an overview of their opinions (OSESGY, 2020).

AI consultation has already been tested by the United Nations Innovation Cell in collaboration with the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSESGY). The consultation was held for the first time in 2020, where five hundred participants engaged in a large-scale AI-powered dialogue that allowed a single person to engage in live one-on-one conversations with multiple groups of up to one thousand people simultaneously (OSESGY, 2020). This dialogue was enabled by AI through real-time data processing during three hours of live and interactive online discussion in which the AI system processed the inputs of the individuals. The participants discussed their views on a nationwide ceasefire in Yemen, their thoughts on the political future and peace process, and what they considered necessary to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in their country. The result of the consultation, synthesised by AI, demonstrated that the participants felt concerned over the rapid spread of COVID-19 in Yemen and their disappointment over the government's failure to control the pandemic in the context of the ongoing war. Finally, the participants were supportive and open to the possibility of peace negotiations that would bring an end to the war (OSESGY, 2020). Through the example of Yemen and the implementation of an AI consultation, this technology could make a positive impact on participation, a fundamental part of the WPS agenda. This tool could be significant in involving women and assuring their participation in peace processes and other decision-making processes, as seen in the case of Yemen. Perhaps hosting a women-only AI consultation would provide a deeper insight into the gender-based nature of conflicts while actively engaging women in the discussion.

### 2.c. Predictive analytics

This is a machine-learning technology that uses diverse algorithms and historical data in order to identify patterns and make predictions (Shifidi et al., 2023). This technology is being developed to predict the occurrence of gender-based violence to support early prevention strategies and provide relevant insights to policymakers and other entities through the identification of patterns related to gender-based violence.

Predictive analytical tools proved effective in a preliminary case study conducted by the Namibia University of Science and Technology. In Namibia, significant issues include Gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence, and child marriage (Shifidi et al., 2023). Despite the efforts of the government, only a limited number of perpetrators are convicted for their crimes, and cases are often closed or withdrawn. The continued growth of incidents is a concern that needs to be addressed, which is why predictive analytics was implemented to predict and understand gender-based violence in Namibia, specifically targeting domestic violence.

> This article aims to explore and introduce four AI technologies for peacebuilding and answer the following research question: how can the integration of AI technologies support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda?

The objective of the study was to draw conclusions from the participants' responses to open-ended questions, which AI would later analyse. The study required the use of three popular machine-learning algorithms for classification and regression tasks, which helped analyse demographic factors, including age, gender, education, and residence, which was key to understanding the participants' attitudes towards domestic violence. Through the example of the study conducted in Namibia, which proved successful, this paper believes that predictive analytics could help implement the protection principle of the WPS agenda. This technology can support early prevention strategies and enforce the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence of any form, especially when in a situation of conflict where women's rights need protection.

### 2.d. AI-developed event maps

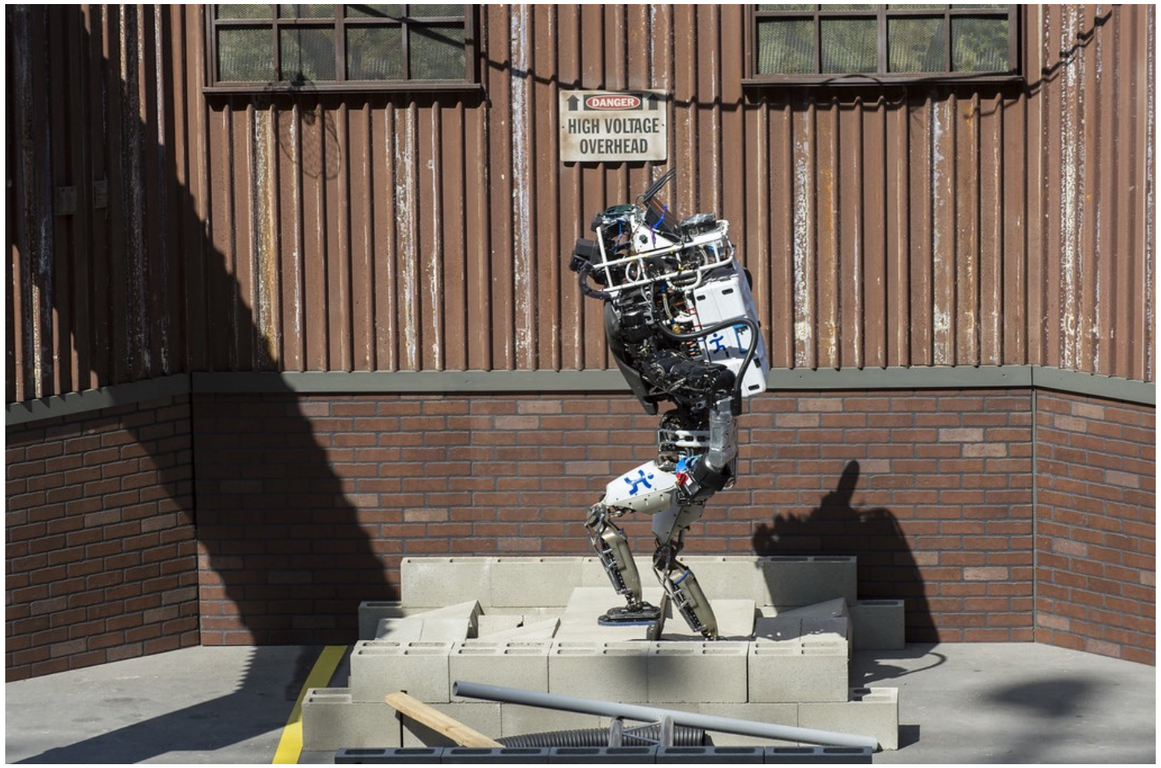
Relief and recovery are the final pillars of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Deep learning is a subset of artificial intelligence with the goal of imitating the human brain by learning from data and making decisions based on that learning. This technology has been applied to multiple fields, but if applied to disaster management, it could be beneficial in providing relief and assisting in recovery.

During a conflict, proper and timely response is a matter that determines the life or death of the affected. It is during these emergencies that decision-makers have to make efficient response efforts, and deep learning applied to disaster management could revo-

lutionise this process (Devitt et al., 2023). For example, AI-developed event maps could be essential for situation awareness and help with disaster response efforts. These maps can be generated by large amounts of disaster-related data from unmanned aerial vehicles, satellites, social media, and even robots. These sources can assist in the generation of infrastructure inventory model maps, which can show the damaged infrastructure, such as buildings and bridges, from disaster-impacted areas (Devitt et al., 2023). The AI-generated maps can be crucial when planning a search and rescue operation as well as the staging and deploying of resources and can even assist with short-term housing needs. These AI-developed maps produced by deep learning algorithms can effectively offer a level of accuracy that surpasses human capabilities, make disaster management more efficient, and further enhance the goals of the WPS agenda.

### 2.e. Machine-learning disaster robots

In the recovery aspect, machine-learning disaster robots can be an effective tool when navigating the aftermath of a disaster or conflict, which typically involves a harsh environment that humans can not easily access. These robots can assist with recovery, another key component of the WPS agenda. The robots can facilitate responders and stakeholders to act and sense while not being physically present in the affected areas (Devitt et al., 2023). The robots can map the destroyed environment and interact with it by fighting fires, searching and rescuing victims, and conduct damage inspections. Machine learning is key for these robots since it enables them to acquire new skills and adapt to the environment they are in. For example, visual detection has been employed on machine learning robots to assist with path planning and communicate with multiple robots for coordination (Devitt et al., 2023).




A Robot from the Institute of Human and Machine Cognition (William, 2015).

AI-generated event maps and machine-learning disaster robots are two technologies that can assist with relief and recovery efforts which are key to the Women, Peace and Security agenda and can help successfully implement the relief and recovery principles by specifically targeting women and meeting their needs in a conflict or post-conflict situation.

This is the image of a machine-learning disaster robot from the Institute of Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) in Pensacola, Florida. The robot is seen navigating through a simulated disaster course during the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Robotics Challenge (DRC). This particular challenge had twenty-four teams with their robots that had sixty minutes to finish eight tasks in the disaster course. This relates to the argument that machine-learning disaster robots can aid the relief and recovery principle of the WPS agenda.

## 3.Challenges

There are several challenges to be considered when applying artificial intelligence technologies to peacekeeping, specifically considering the biased nature of AI and ethical and human rights considerations. Automated behavioural analysis, on the one hand, can pose a threat to the right to privacy. This technology could be problematic for privacy as it can detect abnormal behaviour through the collection of bulk data collected from crowds (Pauwels, 2020). Image and voice recognition can successfully detect individuals from blurry photographs and distinguish voices even in a crowded environment, which raises issues regarding surveillance and can violate the human rights principle of privacy (Pauwels, 2020). Another potential violation could be against the right to freedom of expression. Automated behavioural analysis through emotional analysis can understand and detect hate speech or any form of incitement to violence. However, there are concerns about restricting free speech and the removal of content, which can be problematic when information can escalate conflicts and affect mediation efforts. Additionally, nondiscrimination and minority rights might suffer from automated behavioural analysis. Facial recognition, for example, struggles at times to differentiate features on dark-skinned faces in comparison to light-skinned faces. This is troubling as it enhances techno-racism, also understood as automated ethnic profiling. Equipment such as police bodycams and drones that work with facial recognition are being more commonly used to profile advocates in social and racial justice movements. This serves as an example of how minorities can be targeted and their rights infringed with the use of AI-powered technologies.

The challenges mentioned with behavioural analytics can impact the implementation of the prevention principle of the WPS. Since the technology aims to prevent conflicts through the identification of behaviours that instigate violence, it requires the AI system to collect and analyse vast amounts of data, which can increase surveillance. This effort might be undermined due to privacy concerns if the technology is used by malicious actors. Women, in particular, are often subjects of surveillance and online harassment. In Pakistan, for example, women who present themselves online in a way that goes against societal norms have led to direct and immediate consequences such as honour killings, violence, and further ostracisation (Khan, 2017). To

summarise, women's safety could be at risk due to privacy violations that can be facilitated by automated behavioural analytics and put women at risk instead of protecting them from gender-based violence. Similarly, it could also deter women from engaging in online or offline spaces for fear of heightened surveillance.

AI consultation can also present some challenges, specifically regarding biased data, which has been explained before in this paper. An example of AI consultation can be seen in the United States, where the justice system has begun to use machine-learning systems to assist judges in deciding sentences. The system estimates the chance of re-offence, which can affect the judge's sentencing, the type of punishment, and the length of incarceration. Scholars have found that these systems have a "significant bias against black and Latino men" (Bay, 2023, p.9). Meaning that they are more likely to receive harsher and longer sentences compared to white men who have committed similar crimes. Due to the recurring problem of biased data used by AI systems, which in turn produce biased results, algorithmic governance has been suggested as a potential solution to this issue. Algorithmic governance refers to the use of algorithms and data-driven techniques for decision-making to reduce bias and discrimination by AI systems in governance and the public sector (Esposito & Tse, 2024).

The challenge of biased data can create problems for AI consultation systems that would negatively impact the participation principle of the WPS agenda. If AI systems happen to be trained on data that is biased, such as in the case of the U.S. justice system which uses a flawed AI consultation mechanism that discriminates against certain felons, then it could affect women's participation and representation. Especially if the AI system with biased training could present inaccurate results that underrepresent women and impact the consultation with misleading results.

The main concern of predictive analytics is known as predictive privacy. This ethical consideration is not about the theft or spread of information in an individual's private sphere but about generating predictions about individuals or profiling groups using data gathered from many network users of digital services (Mühlhoff, 2021). The issue with this is many users consent to have their data collected and supplied to the pool of training data for machine-learning systems. However, most people are unaware of what their data is being used for. Cookies, for example, are becoming increasingly common when accessing websites. Unaware of the meaning, many accept the cookies but do not know that their consent and information are now being stored. Moreover, the website now tracks the user's movement and behaviour on the internet through the use of third-party cookies (Johansen, 2023; Stewart, 2019). Predictive privacy is violated when sensitive and personal information of an individual or group is "predicted against their will or without their knowledge on the basis of data of many other individuals, provided that these predictions lead to decisions that affect anyone's social, economic, psychological, physical, ... well-being or freedom" (Mühlhoff, 2021, p.679).

How does predictive analysis affect the protection principle of the WPS agenda that predictive analytics is supposed to enhance? In short, the misuse of predictive analytics in which the data for training these systems are collected unethically can result in women and girls feeling surveilled or targeted without their consent. These concerns may lead to a sense of insecurity and if the predictions made by this technology are used for decision making then it could have a negative impact which can reinforce inequalities.

As for AI-generated event maps, the primary challenge would be data accuracy. For instance, in a study on the ethical considerations of using large language models such as DALL·E 2 in cartography and the generation of maps, researchers have found several issues. Some of the inaccuracies include unclear borderlines between states and countries, inconsistent shape of places, and misinformation (Kang et al., 2023). These AI-generated maps can present misleading information, such as symbols, pseudo-words, and characters that attempt to resemble the name of a country or city but do so inaccurately, leading to misinformation. Beyond these problems, generative AI systems like DALL·E 2 can often create maps that have fake countries and cities and affect the accuracy of these maps. Similarly, due to AI's limited understanding of geographic processes, it is also common for maps to showcase repeated patterns in landscapes, which can be seen in jumbled linework or the distortion of polygons.

The implications of these challenges are that the AI-generated maps present can have adverse consequences in rescue missions and, therefore, affect the relief principle of the WPS agenda. While some event maps may be more accurate than others, the maps generated by DALL·E 2 are notably misleading. If the event maps are unable to accurately depict the affected disaster area, then it may result in a waste of valuable time and resources for the rescue team in attempting to locate the victims and realise the search and rescue operation. Therefore, it is necessary to have precise and functioning event maps to enhance the relief principle of the agenda.

In the case of machine-learning disaster robots facilitating humanitarian efforts, there are concerns associated with discrimination. A hypothetical case regarding ethical concerns in robotics was raised in a study. This case looks at an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), such as a drone, that is being deployed to a disaster zone to deliver medications and identify victims (Battistuzzi et al., 2021). However, the UAV needs to return to base after every mission to recharge its batteries and receive new supplies. The issue is that some cities may have an uneven distribution of demographic characteristics like age, ethnicity, and gender, which are all factors that can affect the planned route of the UAV. For instance, if the disaster area is a university city with a high population of young people who happen to be around the UAV's base, the UAV will mainly encounter these students and accidentally overlook older people, who will be at a higher risk than young people in the case of a disaster, and therefore distribution fairness will be unintentionally decreased (Battistuzzi et al., 2021).

Additionally, there are privacy concerns with robots leading to an increase in information gathering as the robots can gather images and physical descriptions, which can compromise the personal information of not only victims but also rescue workers. Finally, there are also safety concerns, specifically considering that robots can malfunction and cause harm. Even when the robots are not malfunctioning, there might be cases where they fail to identify a human and might collide with it. Similarly, there might be psychological harms

that require consideration. For instance, if a person is trapped under a building or is wounded, even lost, perhaps encountering a robot in a place where there are no other humans can be startling for the victims (Battistuzzi et al., 2021).

These challenges that may arise with the use of disaster robots can bring unintended consequences that affect the recovery principle of the WPS agenda. Prioritisation issues can lead to certain populations being discriminated against. For example, if a disaster occurs in an urban area, then the disaster robot will prioritise that zone and might overlook rural areas where women and girls are more vulnerable. Similarly, disaster robots may fail to identify the female population if the robots have biased data. Problematic issues such as the ones discussed can lead to a negative effect on the recovery aspect of the WPS agenda.

## 4.Conclusions

The research question of this paper is: How can the integration of AI technologies support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda? This article introduced five technologies powered by artificial intelligence: automated behavioural analysis, AI consultation, predictive analytics, AI-generated event maps, and machine-learning disaster robots. Each of these tools was introduced and applied to the five principles of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: prevention, participation, protection, relief, and recovery. This paper finds that while the integration of AI technologies has the potential to help enhance the WPS agenda, it is important to be aware of the challenges these may present, which would negatively impact the pillars of the agenda. The ethical implications and biased data are the drawbacks of artificial intelligence and need to be addressed before the implementation of the five tools into peacekeeping missions to support the WPS agenda. A robust framework, ideally established through a collaborative effort between the United Nations and individual states, is needed to tackle the challenges that these technologies may individually present in order for artificial intelligence to support the implementation of the agenda.

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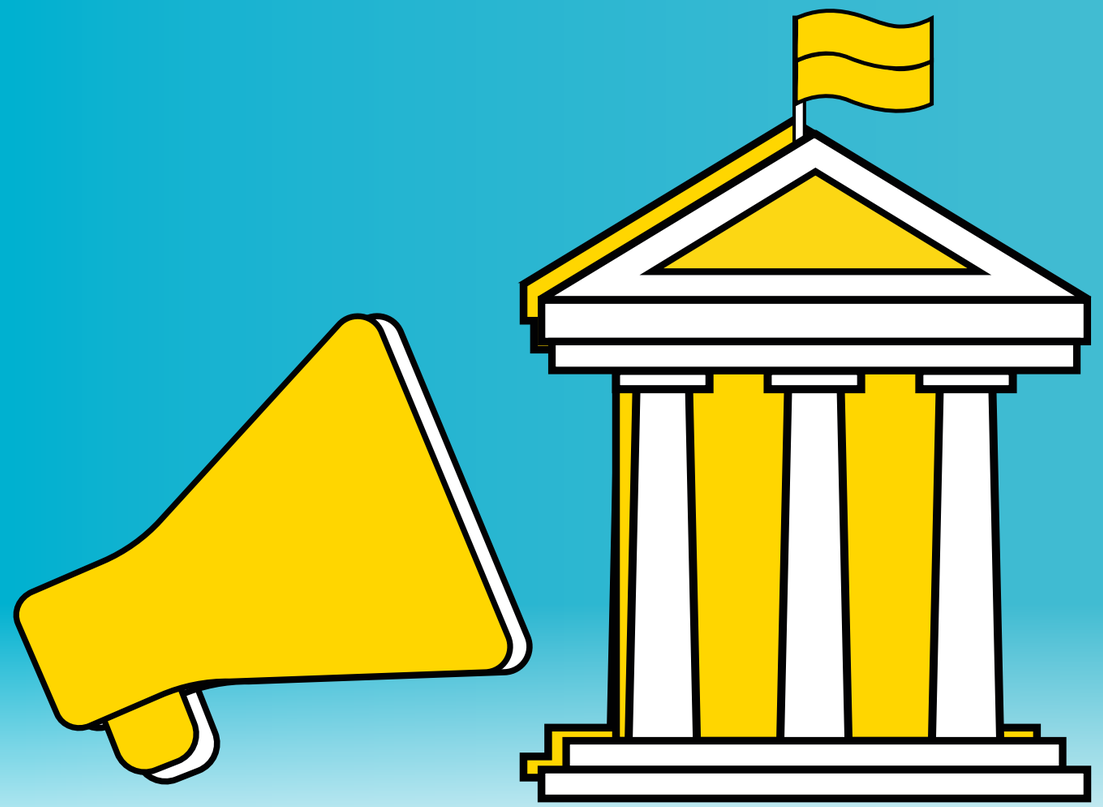

# Reverberations of Resistance:

## The Impact of Vietnam War Protests on Government-Civil Society Relations

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The Western presence in Asia and the Middle East has been a major motor in history. In Asia, French colonialism (among the precedence of other Imperial powers) led Southeast Asia to be the theatre of Western Imperial and (later on) superpower competition. Arguably, Western involvement in Asia became most controversial during the USA's entry into the Vietnam War (1964-1975), leading to widespread university protests echoing from the United States to Europe. By analysing the impact of Vietnam War protests on policing techniques and broader government-civil society relations, this paper seeks to provide the groundwork for future analyses. Specifically, this paper will help discern historical patterns that future research could test on the current Israel-Palestine protests.

This paper asks the research question: How were the governments' responses and policy changes shaped by the escalation in the intensity of protests during the Vietnam War? In answering the research question, this paper will first analyse and explore the historical background of the Vietnam War while accounting for the influence the conflict had on the greater political scale. Then, the paper will dive deeper into the topic by looking into the protests sparked by these events analysing their impact on government action and law enforcement tactics. Lastly, the paper concludes with a discussion section acknowledging the limitations and interpretations of the findings. This paper finds that Vietnam War protests had an impact on their respective governments' military and foreign policies in the case of the Vietnam War. Furthermore, this paper finds that the Vietnam War protests were integrated into larger social justice movements.

### 1. The Vietnam War and its Implications

The Vietnam War, widely regarded as a protracted conflict, took place between 1954 and 1975 (Flowers, 2005). It highlighted the fight between communism and capitalism but also deeply influenced global politics. The war's roots can be traced back to post-French colonialism. However, it was also heavily influenced by global Cold War dynamics. The Geneva Agreement of 1954 was intended to bring peace by dividing Vietnam at the 17th parallel but appeared to have failed. The reason behind this can be considered controversial. On one hand, some argue that it was due to the increasing commitment of the United States to a non-communist South Vietnam, whereas some argue it was due to multiple North Vietnamese insurgency operations conducted in South Vietnam. Tensions were further fueled by the strategic interests of major contemporary powers, such as China and the Soviet Union (Logevall, 2021). The United States' commitment, shaped by its containment policy, further aimed to prevent the spread of communism in Asia, an opposing political ideology that rivalled Western capitalism.

The precursors to the start of the US engagement in the Vietnam War can be pinned down to June 1st, 1954, when the United States launched the Saigon Military Mission, a clandestine project meant to carry out psychological warfare and paramilitary actions in South Vietnam (Wirtz, 1968). This was followed by the aforementioned Geneva Agreement of 1954, resulting in the creation of a demilitarised zone, publicly known as the "17th parallel".

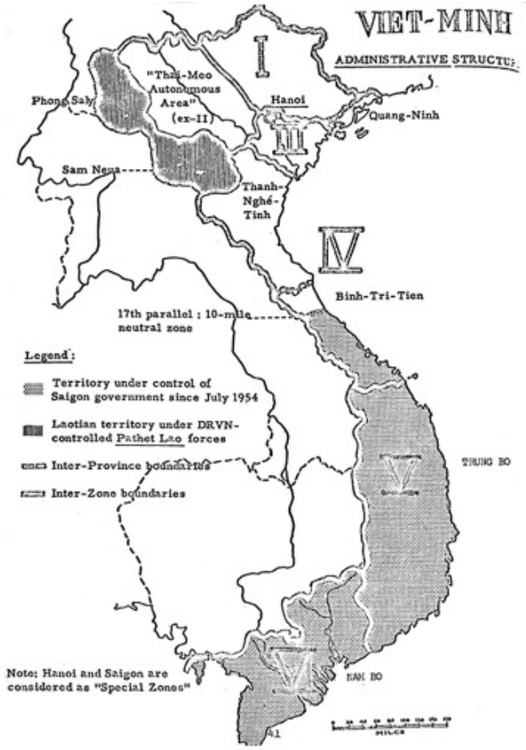


Figure 1. An administrative structure map of Vietnam showcasing the 17th parallel (Pentagon Papers-Part IV, 1954).

However, the major escalations of the war took place during the period of 1964-1968. The escalation entailed the United States officiating their participation in the War following the Gulf of Tonkin incident. This resulted in increased U.S. military involvement, which allowed for extensive military operations without a formal declaration of war (Hunt, 2010). The significant U.S. troop deployment, which involved more than 550,000 soldiers from 1960 to 1972, led to considerable military engagement, such as the Tet Offensive (Spector, 2024). This offensive was a significant turning point in the Vietnam War. It consisted of a series of coordinated attacks by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces on more than 100 cities and outposts in South Vietnam (Walton, 2004). Its purpose was to force the United States to significantly scale back its involvement in Vietnam. The Tet Offensive had a significant impact on U.S. public opinion due to the high number of casualties and the brutality of the fighting (Hunt, 2010).

The next relevant part of the War can be summed up under the Vietnamization and Withdrawal phase of the war, during the 1967-1973 period. Under President Nixon's administration, the United States pursued a policy of "Vietnamization", which aimed to reduce U.S. troops' involvement and shift combat roles to South Vietnamese Forces (Office of the Historian, 2023). The "Vietnamization" involved "the consolidation of the emerging politico-military system in South Vietnam to the degree necessary to absorb future inputs of American resources without direct American management but with enough efficiency to maintain a favourable balance of forces against the Communists" (White, 1972, p. 2). However, despite attempts at negotiations and military de-escalation, events like the Cambodian Campaign and the continued North Vietnamese offensives highlighted just how complicated withdrawing while seeking a stable region entailed (Office of the Historian, 2023).

Lastly, the war officially ended with the fall of Saigon in 1975. The Paris Peace Accords of 1973 had previously led to a ceasefire, which entailed U.S. troops' withdrawal. However, this left many political issues unaddressed and unresolved, which then contributed to the eventual North Vietnamese victory (Lawrence, 2014). The end of the war was a watershed moment in US military and foreign policy, demonstrating the limitations of military force and ushering in a time of political introspection and policy reconsideration.

The end of the War had a great influence on global geopolitics, especially on the dynamics between superpowers. The Vietnam War highlighted different limitations of military power, which further facilitated a shift towards detente between superpowers at the time: the United States, China, and the Soviet Union. However, the realignment was part of a larger attempt to stabilise international relations and decrease the direct conflicts that marked the Cold War period (Dumbrell, 1994; Hess, 2009). This shift was essential in moving away from the brinkmanship policies established in earlier decades. This meant a more balanced approach to international relations.

## 2. Vietnam War Protests

Besides the aforementioned impact on international relations, the Vietnam War had a decisive influence on government-civil society relations in Western democracies. The profound changes that the conclusion of the Vietnam War brought on the United States can be represented by reforms, such as the War Powers Act, which sought to rein in presidential powers and restore checks and balances in regard to rules and policies on direct military engagement. Another notable phenomenon is the widespread protesting against the war. They catalysed changes in public attitudes towards government authority. This marked a significant shift towards scepticism and highlighted the need and demand for transparency (The Collector, 2021). These changes were a direct response to the war's contentious administration and the dishonest techniques exposed by the Pentagon Papers, which undermined public faith in the federal government.

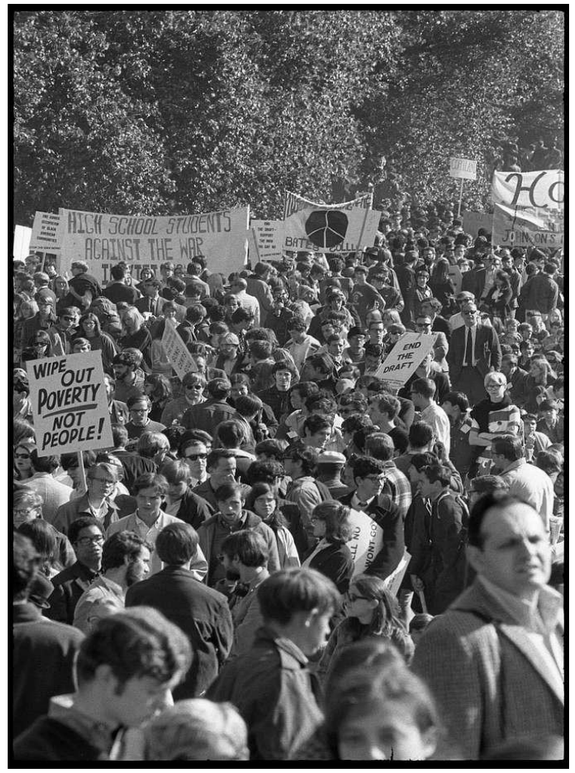


Figure 2. Large crowd at a National Mobilisation to End the War in Vietnam (Library of Congress, 1967)

Moreover, the Vietnam War had a significant impact on social movements, especially the U.S. Civil rights movements, which were notably the ones that were mainly influenced by the anti-war movement. One factor contributing to this is the involvement of influential civil rights leaders. Most notably, Martin Luther King Jr. began to openly criticise the war and link the struggle against racial injustice in the United States to the fight against what he considered imperialism beyond United States borders. King's political and ideological stance on the war was that it diverted attention and possible resources away from domestic social programs (Walton, 2004). This later helped exacerbate racial inequalities, which helped merge the antiwar sentiment with the civil rights movement at that time.

The anti-war demonstrations in the United States had a synergetic effect on other contemporary social movements, such as the ones happening in Western European countries in the same decade. Many critics highlighted how the effects of the Vietnam War shifted attention and resources away from critical domestic issues, such as social welfare and civil rights. The intertwining of anti-war and civil rights activism put the spotlight on broader societal issues. This mainly involved the allocation of government resources and social justice (JSTOR, 2021). The merging of these forces increased the cultural effect of the demonstrations, producing a larger counterculture that challenged established norms and advocated for social reform.

### 2.a. Anti-Vietnam War Protests and Their Political Impact

The following section analyses the political impact of Anti-War Demonstrations in the United States. Schreiber (1976) provides a thorough analysis that highlights the widespread visibility of the demonstrations. However, they did not have a significant impact on public opinion. Rather, public opinion and the resulting impact on governmental politics stemmed from major war events. The limited impact of demonstrations on public opinion suggests that, while they were important in expressing dissent, other factors, such as media coverage of the war and the release of information such as the Pentagon Papers, had a greater impact on shaping public attitudes and, as a result, influencing government action.

Perhaps one factor that further impacted the shaping of public attitudes is the discrepancy between official United States reports on the situation in Vietnam and the harsh realities of the war. The Tet Offensive and its aftermath are a prime example of that. Despite the military victory achieved by the United States and South Vietnamese forces, the extensive media coverage fueled widespread public scepticism regarding the United State's ability to win the war (Walton, 2004). This scepticism, among other factors such as the decline in public trust, led to influence political decisions. Some argue that it was one of the main factors that led President Lyndon B. Johnson to limit bombing in North Vietnam and initiated a broader policy shift towards Vietnamization (Walton, 2004).

### 2.b. The Media's Role in Protests in the United States

Moreover, another relevant aspect of the analysis is the role of media, as it played a crucial role as a mediator between public perception and the reality of the war, even more so than the demonstrations themselves. According to Schreiber (1976), the American public's opinion was considerably more influenced by media portrayal and reports on the war than by the protests. This suggests that the media played shaped the narrative surrounding events and public opinion. The reliance on media underlines the relevance of timely and credible information in forming and shaping public opinion. This is particularly relevant in contexts where direct observations and experiences are not only limited but rather difficult to come by.

Furthermore, public opinion towards demonstrators was generally negative. This may constitute one of the factors that affected the overall impact and efficiency of the protests. Schreiber's analysis indicated that the public's general dislike for Vietnam War protestors made it unlikely that demonstrations served as effective mediators (Schreiber, 1976). However, this does not mean that the protests were not widespread. Nor does this mean that protests were not popular amongst some demographic groups. In another article, Schreiber highlights an increase in protest popularity between 1964-1965 and 1967-1968 in correlation with the involvement of American Troops and their commitment to Southeast Asia. However, only 22% of American colleges and universities reported Vietnam Protests (Schreiber, 1973, p. 289).

Overall, while demonstrations were vital for expressing opposition, they may have been less effective in directly influencing larger public opinion and government action due to their unfavourable reception by the general public. One factor contributing to this was the fear of being drafted.

### 2.c. Protests in the United States. Long-Term Effects and The Reaction of The US Government

Additionally, the long-term effects of demonstrations have to be taken into account as well. The protests' immediate effects on public opinion were minimal. However, they may have had subtle long-term effects on both American politics and civil engagement. The widespread visibility and persistence of the anti-war demonstrations built the foundations for a culture of political activism. This may have created subtle shifts in political attitudes, which led to more scepticism in regard to government actions in foreign policy (Schreiber, 1976). This contributes to the democratic mechanism by further increasing scrutiny of government decisions and (later) influencing how future conflicts are handled in terms of foreign policy and public perception.

**Vietnamization:**
During the Vietnam War, the United States developed a policy known as Vietnamization, which attempted to terminate American participation. This programme, launched by President Richard Nixon, attempted to shift combat tasks and responsibilities from US forces to South Vietnamese troops, allowing them to lead the defence of their own nation. The objective was to progressively reduce the number of American soldiers in Vietnam while continuing to support the South Vietnamese government and preventing a North Vietnamese takeover.

The following section considers the US government's reaction to the protests. Government responses to the Vietnam War and the related protests were influenced by multiple factors. Declining public support, strategic failures, and international pressures played a key role. The combination of these factors influenced responses and policy adjustments rather than the protests by themselves. The intricate and multifaceted nature of these influences shows that protests may not singularly lead to policy changes. Rather, they were part of a broader context of declining support and strategic reassessment. This ultimately guided the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

Already in the 1960s, mass demonstrations by students occurred in the United States and Western European countries, having a significant impact on political structures. Ibrahim (2010) argues that student protests were vectors for political and social change in most Western European countries. Often, the genesis of the problem occurred out of educational and local issues, given that a significant number of the protests started at a local university level, either in university-related buildings

or at the local level, by students. However, soon, they turned out to be matters of national interest. In some instances, the situation resulted in political change. Such issues were noted in France, where the student-protest wave played a leading role in setting off political upheavals. The legacy of student protests extends into long-term political engagement and the formation of new political networks. Ibrahim (2010) showcases how, despite the transient nature of student populations, methodological approaches such as social network analysis reveal sustained political engagement across entire student generations. The networks formed during these protests remained active beyond the initial protests. Moreover, many individuals remained politically active after their university education.

> These protests were part of larger social justice movements and significantly affected U.S. military and foreign policies, leading to a reconsideration of how military engagements are handled.

### 2.d. The Vietnam War and the Protests in Western Europe

Western European governments differed in their responses to Vietnam War protests, reflecting national policies on public order and civil liberties. It might be true that Western European countries experienced the world's largest protests and repression of them (in the amount of police that were mobilised, that is). In West Germany, there was a reciprocal influence between protests against the Vietnam War and broader opposition movements against governmental policies. The interaction between student activism, local conditions and international influences promoted a robust protest culture. This, in turn, challenged national policies and global political dynamics.

The protests sometimes resulted in the police breaking up protests with force, subsequently being perceived as an act of state overreach by protestors. (Sedlmaier 2022). Hence, these police reactions incited public protest in response to perceived government authoritarianism and caused some governments to question their strategy when dealing with civil unrest. This involved arguing with an emphasis on public order and civil liberties with the government, whose debates sometimes led to nuanced changes in policy with regard to less forceful forms of policing. The local police enforcement units initially adopted a harsh response to the protests (Sedlmaier, 2022). Given the popularity and political nature of the demonstrations, law enforcement agents used more heavy-handed tactics, which ended up being counterproductive, as it paved the way for escalation (Sedlmaier, 2022).

During a protest in Western Berlin in October of 1967, the local law enforcement faced the demonstrators with aggressive tactics that included the use of crowd-disbursement facilities, such as water cannons and the use of batons, in an attempt to disperse the crowds (Klimke, 2010). Such heavy-handed police response to the antiwar protests can be considered part of a broader strategy of maintaining public order. Moreover, it can also be seen as an attempt to suppress disapproval against the Cold War alignment of Western European governments with the United States. However, it must also be stated that the police at the protest acted according to protocols, which do not appear to be swayed by greater political dynamics. In such situations, it is important to separate the people from the problem and analyse the situation as it is while taking greater circumstances into account.

The West German student movement's strong opposition to the American war in Vietnam makes it easy to overlook how much the United States meant to young West Germans in the 1960s (Guittett, 2016). Furthermore, it must be noted that this was not the only protest happening in West Berlin at the time, but it was rather part of a larger series of protests. This may have been one of the influential factors behind the demonstrator's passion in expressing their disapproval, which can act as a catalyst for possibly more aggressive behaviour during the demonstrations, which could have been part of the reason behind the police's more aggressive response. However, the harsh police intervention could also be seen as the state's willingness to enforce and accentuate its stance on the Vietnam War through rather coercive means.

Additionally, the evolution in policing tactics paralleled a broader shift towards greater respect for both civil rights and the implementation of measures, which aimed to ensure a decent safety level for the protesters. It further reflected a considerable re-evaluation of the role and purpose of public demonstrations in democratic societies. This helped shape more modern crowd control tactics that emphasised more on de-escalation. Moreover, the protests also aided in fostering a transnational network of dissent. This, in combination with more contributing factors, led to governmental pressures in Western Europe, perhaps leading to political reconsiderations and a closer alignment with global movements against the War.

## 3. Discussion

This article investigates the dynamics of police responses and the effects of the protests sparked by the Vietnam War in the United States and Western Europe. The interaction between the protesters and the police showed an evolution in terms of policing and law enforcement tactics for dealing with demonstrations. In the case of anti-Vietnam-War protests in the United States, demonstrations showed to have an impact on the government and local police units' reactions to these protests. This implies the protest's influence ranged from public security to civil rights policies. However, it must be stated that the protests were not the only contributing factors that influenced public security and civil rights policies. The involvement of influential figures, such as Martin Luther King Jr., in alignment with the student movement against the War also played a great role, as it not only helped promote the movement but also raised awareness of other social injustices, such as racial prejudice during the War.

Similarly, Western European countries experienced similar outcomes from these protests. With respect to the Vietnam War, the protests showed to have had a crucial role in influencing political structures and changes in policing tactics. From an initially aggressive response, the police reaction and involvement evolved into a more community-oriented engagement. This entails using less-harsher

policing tactics, such as the law enforcement units not using riot gear, as an example. Despite the different reasons behind the protests on each continent and time period, they share a key similarity, and that is the dissatisfaction with America's and the West's involvement in the Vietnam War. The mutual and trans-generational influence of the protests from the United States and Western Europe showed the interconnectedness of social movements of solidarity in democratic environments despite the catalysts of these protests being different. The trans-generational influence refers to the continued wave of protests that echoes throughout Western Europe in alignment with events that changed the course of history, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the protests in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain as well.

In addition, the intercontinental alignment and social movement that resembled the protests against the Vietnam War also brought social and political activists together. This, in turn, helped them reflect on the United State's foreign policy and encouraged students and youngsters from that era to align and unite themselves against something they did not believe in, nor support.

One notable aspect between the protests in the 60s in both the United States and Western Europe is the catalyst, which in both cases was public dissent with governmental and military actions across national borders. The escalation of the 1960s movement led to a re-assessment of governmental and political actions, especially in France and West Germany, with a great emphasis on the need for balance and proportionality in police responses. In conclusion, for what concerns present-day protests regarding the Israel-Palestine, their efforts are yet to be matched with outcomes, and potential further developments or policy changes are yet to be seen.

## 4. Limitations

However, this paper has several limitations as well. On the one hand, the content of this article is historically contextualised to specific political climates, more precisely, the 1960s and 1970s. On the other hand, there are geographical, political, and ideological limitations. Only protests in the United States of America and Western European Countries, such as West Germany and France, have been analysed and discussed. Future research can aim to take into consideration protests in countries that had a rival political ideology at that time, such as Eastern European countries like Yugoslavia or Hungary.

Additionally, the contemporary applicability of the results might prove to be difficult yet necessary. Further research into the topic could entail a comparison of protest evolution across different eras and regions. Subsequently, analysing the level of violence employed by law enforcement agents is difficult. This can be traced back to the multiplicity of factors involved. Protests, especially of a political nature, can create tense situations. In addition, factors such as racial profiling and personal circumstances of the deployed police officers must also be taken into account, alongside a multitude of biases involved, such as shared-information bias and confirmation bias.

Moreover, the aforementioned elements also need to be aligned with the political views, ideology and context of the era in which they took place. This alignment with the contemporary situation and circumstances might lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the evolution of policing in response to civil movements. Lastly, another aspect for further research can be the influence of the media on these protests. In the previous sections, we have seen how the media can act as an amplifier for such demonstrations and maybe have an even greater impact and influence on the political scene than the protests themselves.

Lastly, another aspect that must be mentioned is the police response to the demonstrations in Western Europe. When analysing such social phenomena, it is easy to get lost in perspectives and lose sight of the greater picture. At the time of the demonstrations, there were multiple geopolitical events and phenomena happening, such as political assassinations, civil rights and even countercultural movements. Each government had its own methods and procedures for handling large protests. This helps to put into perspective the different reactions by the law enforcement agents to the demonstrations and behaviour towards demonstrators. This can also be applied to the protests in the United States. There are multiple factors involved in this rather ambiguous equation, and the dissent towards the Vietnam War is only one of them.

## 5. Conclusion

This article discusses how Western involvement in Asia and the Middle East, stemming from imperialist policies and post-World War II power dynamics, has influenced current political activism and government policies in the West. We explored the effects of the Vietnam War on student protests and how governments responded. We looked at the main question: How were the governments' responses towards the protestors and Vietnam War policies shaped by the escalation in the intensity of protests during the Vietnam War? The findings show how governmental actions and political activism are connected in a relationship of reciprocal influence.

Additionally, they show how student-led demonstrations influenced governmental policies in terms of national policy, public safety and, in some instances, policing. For example, the French and other Western interventions led to the Vietnam War, which reshaped politics in the region and sparked anti-war protests in the U.S. and Europe. These protests were part of larger social justice movements and significantly affected U.S. military and foreign policies, leading to a reconsideration of how military engagements are handled.

Lastly, this article shows how deep and long-lasting the impact of Western actions abroad is on the Western countries' own domestic political scenes. It highlights how historical events shape today's responses to global conflicts. Understanding these dynamics is key to addressing future international relations and policy challenges. This article suggests that more research into how protest movements evolve and their effect on political systems would help us better understand and respond to these ongoing challenges.

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# Greetings from our contributors

# Migration is International, and so Should Response Efforts

**Alessandro Cercaci**

Alessandro Cercaci is always eager to enrich his set of know-how by exposing himself to new experiences. To craft his works, he draws on his diverse skill set, conferring them a unique interdisciplinary perspective. He produces works with the wish to stimulate new thoughts in the visitors.

Sweden was historically a country of emigration. In recent decades, Europeans have shown, through their vote, their worry about migration. In virtually all EU countries, far-right anti-migration parties are leading polls (Adler, 2023). This commentary will use Sweden as a reference point to represent EU perceptions. People who migrated and their children comprise 19.7% of the Swedish population, one of the highest in the EU (Holloway et al., 2021). While EU populations often feel that Europe is shouldering the world migration issues, this perspective ignores realities beyond the Schengen borders. Instead, Jordan has been facing structural security threats from migration for decades. Instead of looking inward, Europeans should begin to look outwards and help other countries manage their migratory fluxes.

## 1. History of Swedish migration

By the 1930s, more than one million Swedish citizens moved to the Americas. After WW2, the trend reversed, and Sweden welcomed migrants and refugees. Today, Sweden has become an established destination country. 20% of the Swedish population is born abroad, and the majority comes from Middle Eastern countries (Governance of migrant integration in Sweden, 2022). However, Sweden has faced challenges in integrating these individuals. As Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said, “Sweden has failed to integrate the vast numbers of immigrants it has taken in over the past two decades, leading to parallel societies and gang violence” (Reuters, 2022, para. 1).

## 2.Sweden Today

Nowadays, the Swedish democrats, sitting in the far-right section of the parliament, are gaining more votes by running a tough anti-immigration campaign (Duxbury, 2023). Migration is the top 1 issue for the Swedish public (Traub, 2021), and 85% of the population feels that the number of crimes has increased in the last three years (Swedish Crime Survey, 2023). Homicide rates have been growing since 2013, transforming Sweden from one of the safest to one of the most dangerous countries in Europe (BRA, 2021). Violence is found chiefly in socially disadvantaged areas, which are often populated by migrants (BRA, 2021), and violence is linked with criminal drug activities (Gerell et al., 2021). The Swedish prime minister explicitly linked the failure to integrate immigrants to the rise in violence from gang crimes (Reuters, 2022).

**Schengen borders:**
Schengen borders refer to the boundaries of the Schengen Area, a zone comprising 27 European countries that have abolished passport and other types of border control at their mutual borders. This allows for the free and unrestricted movement of people, goods, services, and capital across member countries.

## 3. Jordan

Meanwhile, Jordan sits between two active warzones and hosts millions of refugees. The first waves were Palestinian refugees in 1948 and 1967, then 1991, 2003, and 2015 (Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022). Today, people who immigrated account for 33% of the population, most of whom are refugees (Refugees and migrant health country profile: Jordan, 2023). The high number of refugees pressures Jordanian society. In terms of education, health, housing, water, municipal services, and electricity, the government is struggling to provide equal services for all (Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022). Despite economic difficulties, the Jordanian government has provided direct and indirect financial aid to the refugees, straining the country’s economy

(Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022). Furthermore, Jordan is a water-scarce country, and the influx of refugees led to freshwater shortages for refugees and inhabitants alike (Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022). Following suit, increased demand for food drove up food prices, led to inflation, and put more pressure on public services. Unemployment rose from 12.5% in 2010 to 18.5% in 2017, GDP growth fell by 70.5% since the 2011 Syrian civil war, and GDP to debt ratio grew from 65% in 2011 to 96% in 2017 (Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022).

## 4. Comparison

This article is not meant to give a detailed account of migrant's impact on Jordan and Sweden, but rather, a bird's eye view to glance upon the main effects. Comparing the two cases, it is apparent that Jordan suffers significantly more than Sweden. Already after WW2, when the Swedish were emigrating to the US, Jordan was receiving refugees. Today, Jordan has to manage a population of migrants per capita 10% higher than that of Sweden, while Jordan's GDP per capita is 1/15th of Sweden (World Bank Open Data, 2022). While the Scandinavian country faces substantive challenges related to crime and gang violence, Jordan's are far more serious. The kingdom faces shortages of vital supplies like water and volatile prices of food in an already impoverished country, along with deep resource strains on fundamental services like health and education.

> Today, Jordan has to manage a population of migrants per capita 10% higher than that of Sweden, while Jordan's GDP per capita is 1/15th of Sweden

## 5. Considerations

In light of what has been said so far, one must question whether Europe's and Sweden's security issues linked with migration justify the claustrophobic attention that European citizens have reserved them. Gang crime, homicides, and gun violence are serious issues that must be confronted by Sweden. Especially given Sweden's history of low crime rates. But while it does so, Swedish and EU citizens alike should rethink the extent of the issues we face. While migration in Sweden, but more generally in Europe, has caused issues, these seem relatively manageable phenomena compared to the challenges that countries such as Jordan have to face. Yet, Europeans completely lack this vision. To return to the Swedish case, the Swedish Democrats, a party running mostly on an anti-immigration campaign, recently became the most popular party in Sweden (Holloway et al., 2021). Framing Europe as the global victim of migration will only ostracise Europe in the international scene. To manage the ever-increasing migratory phenomena, the world needs to adopt cooperation. Considering the grave issues Jordan is facing with migration, Europe could fund programmes to integrate the migrants into Jordan's job market if Jordanians wish to. Targeted labour programmes would integrate the migrants into the kingdom, generating resources for themselves and embedding themselves in the country.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, Sweden does have major issues connected to migration and integration of immigrants, which have to be readily addressed. But in perspective, these seem relatively minor compared to what Jordan faces; structural security threats stemming from its refugee population have shaken the country for decades. Considering its resources and expertise in managing migration, Europe could help Jordan improve its living situation and avoid another outflow of people. However, to manage migration, the world needs cooperation. Europe cannot do this alone, and it needs partners. Yet, will partners want to collaborate with the EU if it portrays itself constantly as the only victim?

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# The European Army - The Future of European Defence?


**Jonas Pfeufer**

Jonas is interested in challenging environments where he can learn and expand his knowledge about global politics. His main academic interest lies in German and European Foreign and Security Policy. He is also very interested in the Politics of European Migration. He moreover worked on projects focussing on Germany's Role in the EU and Energy Security.


„Few ideas appear with such regularity in discourses about European defence as the "European army" (Franke, 2024, para. 1).

With the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, the question of how to ensure European Security remains largely unanswered. As it appears that Russia will not back down from its maximalist war aims in Ukraine, European Countries are still looking for an adequate response. Looking beyond this conflict, the Republican Nominee for the Election of 2024, Donald Trump, has already proven to be an unreliable ally, at one point even suggesting that Russia should attack NATO if Allies are not paying their share (Sullivan, 2024). Especially this position might throw the future of the Transatlantic Alliance out of balance, which would leave Europe to fend for itself. Therefore, Leaders in European Countries are looking for ways to ensure the safety of Europe. Acutely aware of this, President Macron of France recently argued that the rules of the game have changed and that „Europe is mortal" (Tidey, 2024).

This article aims to discuss whether or not a European Army would be able to meet the demands of Europe regarding its defence and security needs. Before that, the author talks about the current understanding of Europe as a Civilian Power and what a European Army would actually mean. Looking back at Macron`s comments regarding the mortality of Europe, this paper concludes with a short discussion if this idea has the potential to answer the security and defence needs of the EU.

## 1. The European Army – Definition and Obstacles

The European Army is an approach to European Security that has been going around since the 1950s. Then President of the European Council, Rene Pleven, proposed it for the first time (Pleven, 1950). In the past, the French-German Axis argued in favour of this proposition, with Macron saying in 2018 that „a real European Army" should established (Gros-Verheyde, 2018). Days later, the then Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, joined Macron and argued that a vision for a European Army should be established. Other leaders, like former European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, mentioned it as well (Euractiv, 2015).

The term „European Army" is in itself quite ambiguous. It means to inspire and can be interpreted as being close to Barack Obamas idea of the „United States of Europe" (Franke, 2018). In 2019, Germany and the Netherlands formed Tank Battalion 414, which was then described as an informal test case for a broader cooperation, since it was the first battalion that was consisted of soldiers from two European Nations (Bennhold, 2019).

**European Army:**
A contested concept. Two interpretations dominate the discourse. Member states could entirely give up their own armed forces and create a single military organization. However, member states of a European army could also only ceed control of parts of their respective militaries to a European military organization.

Regarding how a European Army would look like, two options are usually presented. One option is for each state to disband its forces in order to put its military strength into a larger, common super-force. The other option is that member states could offer up a chunk of resources to a common pool, similar to how NATO functions (Cook, 2024).

However, these two options still face obstacles that make a European Army unlikely to become a reality in the future. One of the obstacles for a potential European Army is political will. Political Will is defined as: „the extent of committed support among key decision makers for a particular policy solution to a particular problem" (Post et al., 2010, p. 659). Since defence is regulated nationally, Europe does not have single-headed leadership or a single commander-in-chief, something an Army would require. Language barriers would present another problem as well since European Countries do not communicate in the same language (Zandee, 2024).

Another obstacle is the domestic politics of the Member States. Four Members, Austria, Ireland, Malta, and Cyprus, are, according to their own domestic laws, not able to join military alliances and are supposed to remain neutral. Domestic politics presents another obstacle since different countries have different laws about troop employment. Germany has a „parliamentary army", which means that only a two-thirds majority of the Bundestag can decide about deployment, as paragraph § 115 defines. France, on the other hand, has a „presidential army" meaning that the president serves as commander-in-chief of the army, as defined in Article 15 of the French Constitution.

> Language barriers and domestic laws regarding neutrality and the differences in command structures … the idea [of a European army] unattractive.

An additional obstacle presents itself in the form of the current EU Decision-making Process. When another informal group wants the deployment of troops in one area, another group might simply veto it. As for now, unanimity is required for solutions at the EU level. This obstacle might can be resolved by changing the decision-making Process and a majority rule could be established (Franke, 2024). However, if something like that would occur, countries that do not wish to deploy troops would be forced to deploy them anyway, risking that they would be wounded or killed despite opposition towards a problem.

## 2. Conclusion

This article aimed to examine whether a European Army could meet the security needs of the European Union. After considering the obstacles a European Army would face, it seems unlikely that such an idea is ever going to gain any traction. Language barriers and especially domestic laws regarding neutrality and the differences in command structures, see parliamentary and presidential armies in Germany and France, make the idea unattractive. Another barrier mentioned is that a European Army would decide over the life and death of soldiers that belong to countries that might oppose that conflict. For those reasons, the author considers the actual establishment of a European Army unlikely. Despite that, the idea of the European Union as a civilian power can be described as outdated, considering the increasing multipolarity in world affairs.

In the Introduction, reasons for a higher investment in European defence were made clear. Might it be another Trump Term or continuing Russian Aggression, the necessity for a European Union that deter threats and defend its citizens becomes increasingly obvious. A European Army, however, is not going to be part of that. The Member States should concentrate on increasing defence cooperation between each other, defence programmes like the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), introduced in 2018, aim to do exactly that.

Even without a European Army, the Union must start to think about its security without relying on others. As Chancellor Merkel put it in 2018: „The times in which we could completely depend on others are, to a certain extent, over. I've experienced that in the last few days. We Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands" (Merkel, 2017, as cited in Henley, 2018, para. 3).

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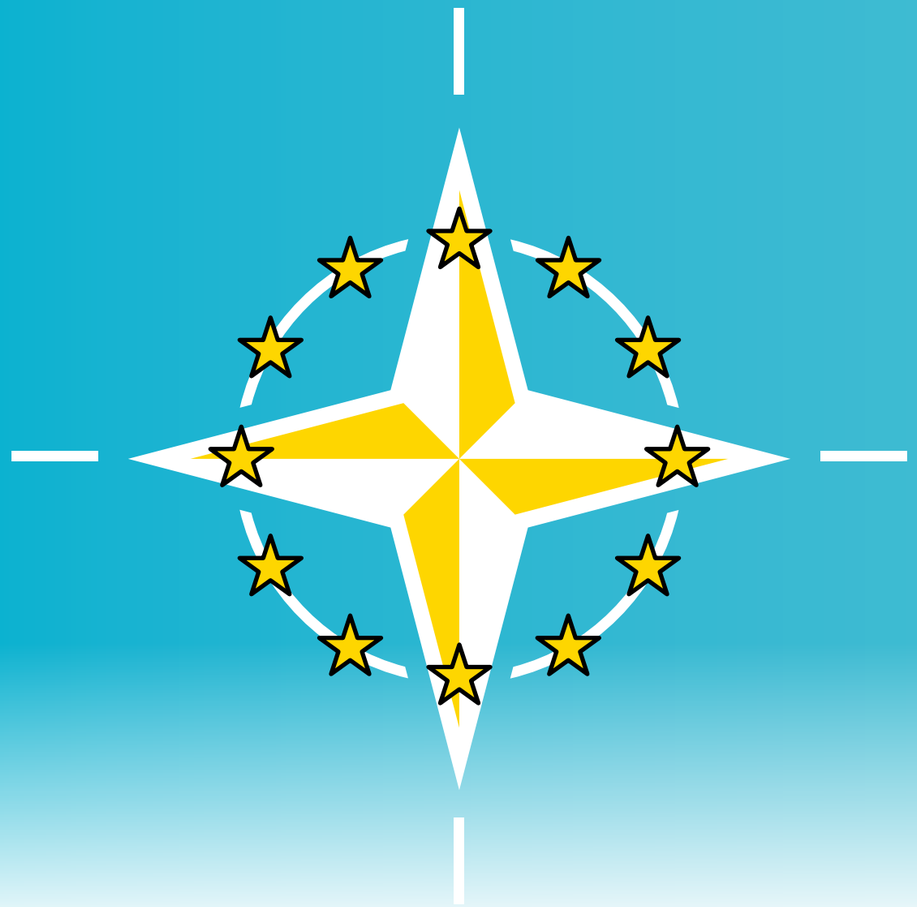


# The Time has come to "Europeanise" NATO


**Jean-Marc Vigilant**

French Air and Space Brigadier General Jean-Marc Vigilant (ret) is the Founder of BeVigilant, a consultancy for investment and innovation, and President of the EuroDéfense-France association. During his service, he has developed a deep understanding of the international politico-military culture and of the importance of innovation and transformation of NATO's and the EU's military capabilities.


Western presence in Asia and the Middle East has been a major motor in history. In Asia, French colonialism (among the precedence of other Imperial powers) led Southeast Asia to be the theatre of Western Imperial and (later on) superpower competition. Arguably, Western involvement in Asia became most controversial during the USA's entry into the Vietnam War (1964-1975), leading to widespread university protests echoing from the United States to Europe. By analysing the impact of Vietnam War protests on policing techniques and broader government-civil society relations, this paper seeks to provide the groundwork for future analyses. Specifically, this paper will help discern historical patterns that future research could test on the current Israel-Palestine protests.

The relationship between the United States (US) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is often fantasised about by Europeans, who are quick to confound US defence with NATO. First, Europeans have forgotten the exact context and circumstances of NATO's birth, and the ambiguities that ensued. Second, Europeans remain self-centred and have still not acknowledged the shift in the world's geostrategic centre from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region. Finally, they are not sufficiently familiar with the United States' global defence organisation.

By shedding new light on all these points, we shall see how Europeans need to rethink their relationship with NATO and imagine a more ambitious positioning within it. This will help reduce their dependence on external contingencies and best protect their interests.

## Origins of a Misunderstanding

After the Second World War, the countries of Western Europe, ruined by war, asked the Americans to remain militarily involved on the European continent, to ensure their protection in the face of the Communist threat. The Atlantic Alliance was established when the twelve founding countries signed the Washington Treaty on 4 April 1949. NATO's principal civilian and military institutions were initially located in France from 1951 onwards for a period of fifteen years.

From the outset, however, there seems to have been a misunderstanding about the terms of burden sharing – there was a significant difference in the contribution of military capabilities between the Americans and the Europeans. The United States thought that its most important contribution to NATO was the economic support provided by the Marshall Plan to help rebuild European countries. On the other side, though, Europeans gradually came to see the American military commitment as fair compensation for having renounced any ambition for leadership.

Furthermore, after General de Gaulle's decision to withdraw from NATO command structure in 1966 to develop its nuclear deterrent, France expressed its desire for autonomy vis-à-vis the American ally. Thereby, France promoted the principle of a European defence, while remaining a loyal but demanding ally within the Atlantic Alliance. Until France's full return to NATO's integrated military command in 2009, this positioning led to ambiguity regarding France's relationship vis-à-vis NATO.

## New Geostrategic Centre of Gravity

Throughout the Cold War, the Soviet Union was the United States' principal strategic competitor, and the battleground was the European continent. Today, the strategic com-

petitor in every field is China. Despite its war of aggression against Ukraine, it is not Russia. To understand this new American stance towards Europe, we need to think out of the European box and look at the world from an American perspective.

Europeans are often victims of "Mercator bias". In Europe, for practical reasons, the most commonly used representation of the world is the projection of the globe onto a flat map centred on Europe. This frame of reference keeps us under the illusion that we are at the centre of the world, and consequently, at the centre of our American allies' concerns. Nothing could be further from the truth.

### The United States' Defence Apparatus

The organization of the US military gives the United States the unique ability to project its military power anywhere in the world. With nearly three million people, the US Department of Defense has the largest defence budget in the world at $886 billion. Notably, the highest US military authority, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), is merely the military advisor to the President of the United States. This stands in contrast to most European countries, where the Chief of Defense Staff (CHODS) is the sole operational commander of all national military forces. In the US military, operational responsibility for the employment of forces is shared between eleven strategic commands (Combatant Commands), six of which are regional and five functional. It is as if the US had eleven CHODS with strategic responsibility for the conduct of joint military operations in their geographical or functional area.

This stands in contrast to most European countries, where the Chief of Defense Staff (CHODS) is the sole operational commander of all national military forces.

### NATO Today

NATO is a political and military organisation involving both civilian bodies and military commands. At the political level, the decision-making body is the North Atlantic Council (NAC), to which all allied nations (32 to date) send representatives. Chaired by NATO's Secretary General, the NAC is supported by an international staff that assist it in preparing and implementing its decisions. At the military level, the Military Command (MC) oversees the command structure with the help of its executive body, the International Military Staff (IMS). This structure consists of two strategic commands: one for operations in Europe, and another for the transformation of NATO's military capabilities and the preparation of future operations.

Allied Command Operations is under the responsibility of an American general, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and is based in Mons, Belgium. Allied Command Transformation has been headed by a French general, the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) since France's return to NATO command structure in 2009 and is based in Norfolk, United States.

NATO has no military forces of its own. Its real added-value is to offer its allies and partners a permanent command organisation (e.g. staff, command and communication systems). This ensures the immediate reactivity and interoperability of allied military forces provided by the nations. NATO's military strength is the sum of the armed forces of the allied nations operating together.

In Europe, the SACEUR function is assumed by the American general who also (and above all) commands the United States European Command (EUCOM), which is in Stuttgart, Germany. This general simultaneously exercises these two responsibilities on behalf of two different authorities. For the United States, as Commander EUCOM, he reports to the President of the United States. Within the NATO framework, as SACEUR, he is under the authority of the 32 allied nations within the NAC.

### The United States and NATO

In Europe, most countries associate NATO with the United States because of its military and political pre-eminence. As mentioned, this is a misunderstanding of the US-NATO relationship. Europeans see NATO as an overarching organisation which is larger than themselves, whereas the United States sees NATO as a regional organisation which is smaller than its own defense organisation. The vast majority of Americans are largely unaware of NATO, as they do not need it to defend their interests. Most American military personnel have not served in Europe, but in Asia, and only a few people in Washington deal with transatlantic and European issues.

By contrast, Europeans have a vital need for an alliance, because no single European country has the capabilities to defend itself or to conduct large-scale military operations entirely on their own. However, the famous "Article 5" of the Washington Treaty does not guarantee American involvement in the event of aggression against a member of NATO. First, a unanimous vote at the NAC is required for this article to come into force. And even then, the article leaves each country free to determine its individual contribution in support of the attacked member.

It is an illusion to believe that in case of a conflict in Europe, all American forces would come under the exclusive political control of the NAC. NATO's campaign in the Kosovo war was particularly characterised by a cumbersome process of political validation of targets by the NAC, often because of different opinions on the validity of certain air targets. Since then, the US has clearly indicated that its preferred mode of engagement is a "Coalition of the Willing". Therefore, there are likely to be two concurrent operations, one US caveat-free operation and one NATO operation involving a smaller number of US forces alongside European military forces.

What does the situation look like today? The strategic interests that connected Americans and Europeans during the Cold War are no longer so convergent. Since the Bush administration, American political authorities have regularly reminded Europeans that discrepancies in defence commitments are less and less acceptable to the American taxpayer.

Donald Trump's statement on a possible US withdrawal from NATO simply echoes this preexisting American reality. The Americans will elect their president to defend their own interests, not those of their allies. Keeping Joe Biden in office would not change the situation, as the US Congress would remain deeply divided on the issue of support for Europe, which we have observed with aid to Ukraine. Although the possible election of Donald Trump carries with it a greater risk for

the Atlantic Alliance, it can also be seen as an opportunity for Europeans to reclaim their security by assuming greater responsibility.

### European Defence or the Defence of Europe

NATO is Europe's life insurance policy for their collective defence. Therefore, Europe must no longer conceive it as an American organisation in which they participate, but as a European organisation in which the Americans participate. The Americans already have their own organisation (EUCOM) to use their military power on the European continent, and they will certainly not abandon it.

Given these circumstances, it is absolutely conceivable and legitimate to imagine a European SACEUR like Marshal Foch, who was the first Supreme Allied Commander during World War I. Such a European general would have to come from a militarily credible, nuclear-armed nation to have the necessary military and strategic skills to successfully command the allied armed forces in combat.

He could be assisted by an American general, who has the potential to facilitate coordination between NATO and American commands acting in coalition. Unlike his American counterpart today, a European SACEUR would have no other national function and would devote himself entirely to his responsibilities within NATO, just like the French SACT does today.

**A coalition of the willing:**
A coalition of the willing is an association of states to achieve a specific, narrow goal. This term has been used in several contexts and is most famously used by the US-led coalition in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

For European allies, claiming the supreme operational function in NATO command structure has to go hand in hand with a substantial financial and capability effort, to lend credibility to their attempt to strengthen Europe's defence. Ultimately, it is a question of political will. Debates can be calmly opened with the Americans, since this approach to strengthening European investment in their own defence respects the "3D" rule commonly accepted in NATO: 1) no decoupling from the United States, 2) no duplication of NATO capabilities, 3) no discrimination against non-European allies.

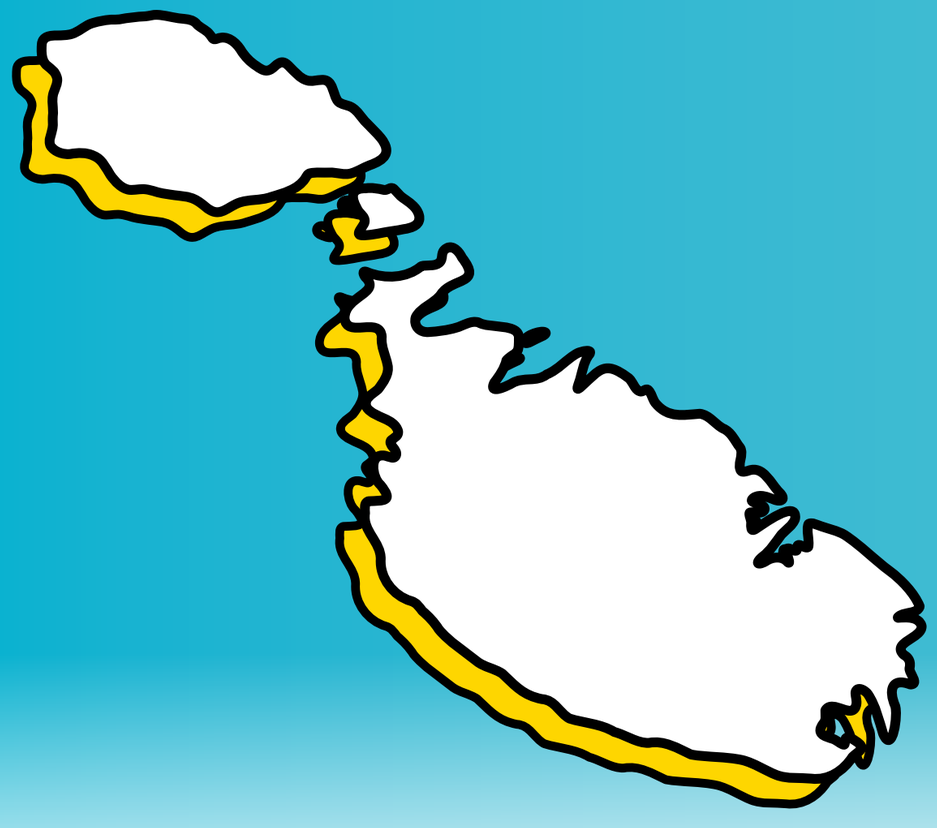
We must stop believing that showing weakness is an asset for receiving US military support. The truth is that countries are more ready to help strong and powerful allies that are in a position to return the favour.

Eventually, Europeans must look at the world as it is, not as they want it to be. The uncertainty surrounding the US presidential elections and the future of the United States' commitment to NATO is an opportunity to finally rebalance the transatlantic relationship and to avoid American blackmail.

### Conclusion

Greater investments by Europeans in their own defence, as required by the geopolitical situation and as called for by our American ally, will be more credible if accompanied by a pursuit for the highest operational responsibilities within NATO. In the hope of security at a lower cost, we currently let the American electorate decide our future and security. It is high time for Europeans to leave this excessive and deadly dependence behind.

We should consider NATO in the same way as the Americans – a European regional organisation in which the United States participates. One, that could well be led militarily by Europeans in coordination with the American military command in Europe. Whether within the framework of NATO or the European Union, Europeans must assume their responsibilities and organise themselves to defend their interests. Be it with the US, when there is a convergence of interests, but also independently of the US, when we do not share the same priorities. Openly considering such a possibility with our non-European allies would create a positive dynamic that would strengthen synergies between NATO and the EU for a more credible European defence.



# Multilateralism = Maltalateralism:

## Interview with His Excellency Ambassador Xuereb

**His Excellency Ambassador Vanni Xuereb**

Dr. Vanni Xuereb, an expert in EU affairs, led the reactivation of MEUSAC and served as Malta's Ambassador to Spain and Germany. He was honored with the Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite and is a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta.

**Himmel:** Mr Xuereb, thank you for inviting us to your embassy, located right next to the Tiergarten here in Berlin. But before getting to the diplomacy later, I would like to address your personal background of diplomacy. Why did you choose diplomacy?

**Xuereb:** First, let me also start by thanking you for this, also, invitation to me. I mean, we as the small countries don't get so many opportunities (laughter) because our opinion doesn't always make the headlines, unlike larger countries. Diplomacy was something that always interested me from my university days. I studied law at the University of Malta, I was very active in student politics. I was seeking to engage on the European and international level. Furthermore, I remember that we negotiated the accession of our student union Malta to what is today the European Students Union, what was then ESIB. I was one of the pioneers there.

**Himmel:** What time was that?

**Xuereb:** I'm talking here of the 1980s, so quite a while ago. The Berlin Wall was still up and Germany was still divided, we still had the Soviet Union around. Very different times. That was also reflected in international student politics at the time because there were two rival European student organisations. In fact, ESIB was initially WESIB, West European Students Information Bureau, countering what was then ISBUN, which was seen to be very much under the influence of the student organisations in the former communist countries.

**Himmel:** So, also a Cold War between the student organisations?

**Xuereb:** Yes. (laughter)

**Himmel:** Was that the beginning to mediate between certain political agendas between different positions - one could say, being in the diplomacy?

**Xuereb:** It's a lot of negotiation and a lot of give and take, compromise, and of course a lot of that happens not out in the open during the plenary, but sometimes in the bars and in the individual hotel rooms or hostel rooms. That's where you get an initiation.

**Himmel:** To give a measurement for our German students: Malta is as big compared to Bremen.

**Xuereb:** Exactly. Geographically and population wise.

**Himmel:** Coming back to your studies: Have you had a specialisation in law, which was also pursuing more into this world of diplomacy?

**Xuereb:** Yes. By the time I had to decide what to write my dissertation about, Malta had started contemplating joining the then European Communities, now European Union. I wrote my doctoral dissertation in Malta on the external relations of the European Union, taken from a Mediterranean perspective. Foreign policy in the EU was not yet developed so much. The way the European Communities handled the external relations was in terms of trade, which was already a very strong instrument. Trade was already one of the exclusive competencies of the European Community.

**Himmel:** Being a diplomat is to serve contacts, to serve communication between people and nations, and therefore also speaking these languages. You speak four languages?

**Xuereb:** I speak my mother tongue Maltese and English, which is also an official language in Malta. Then I speak Italian. I speak French, I can speak some Spanish.

**Himmel:** Did you have to actively learn

them, or was it just an ongoing way for the preparation?

**Xuereb:** In my case, it happened in a kind of natural way. My first four languages were taught at school. With Italian much easier for us. We have strong cultural ties with Italy. Plus, at the time when I was growing up, we had access to Italian TV.

**Himmel:** Could you still recommend an Italian sitcom from that time?

**Xuereb:** I remember a very good one with Raimondo Vianello and Sandra Mondaini. It's an incredible comedy between these two very good comedians in Italy.

In the Italian sitcom Casa Vianello, Riamondo Vianello and Sandra Mondaini played themselves. It was aired between 1988 till 2005. How this influenced world politics is another secret of diplomacy yet to discover.

**Himmel:** Coming to Malta and its diplomacy: Malta has a history of going as far back as the Phoenicians, Byzantines, Arabs, British. Did this influence Malta's diplomacy?

**Xuereb:** The island's geographical location in the centre of the Mediterranean. That made it a place of strategic importance. For many powers that were seeking to dominate the Mediterranean, Malta gave them access. Maybe the finest example of this was during the Second World War, where, surrounded to the north by Italy and to the south by the Axis powers in North Africa, Malta was the only allied location. Winston Churchill referred to Malta as the unsinkable aircraft carrier. Nowadays, we talk about it being a bridge between Africa and Europe.

**Himmel:** But an unsinkable bridge.

**Xuereb:** We only became responsible for our own foreign affairs in 1964. Malta became independent of the British Empire. On the 21st of September 1964. This was when we really had to start trying to exercise our newly gained status as an independent country bilaterally with other countries and also multilaterally, especially within multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

**Himmel:** What were the challenges and opportunities in regard to reaching out and starting foreign relations and foreign affairs as of then?

**Xuereb:** Our Foreign Office started with just a few people. I think it was only after 1981, that we actually had a person appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was not the Prime Minister – before that is was a personal union. We immediately started establishing bilateral relations, diplomatic relations. We applied to join the United Nations, we applied to join the Council of Europe, we immediately started negotiating an Association Agreement with the European Communities which was signed in 1970s, so just a few years after independence. Although we started small, things picked up. We started opening embassies in other countries, starting with the most obvious ones such as London and Rome, of course we opened in Bonn, we opened in Paris.

**Himmel:** I could sense this pioneer spirit starting from scratch, right?

**Xuereb:** Yes, but I think we also had a vision.

**Himmel:** What was that?

**Xuereb:** Our vision was to prove that, as small, independent country, we could also contribute on the international stage. That we were not insignificant, just to be ignored because we are so small. Immediately after independence, for instance, in the United Nations, we came up with an initiative that eventually led to UNCLOS, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Our then Permanent Representative to the United Nations made a famous speech at the General Assembly stating that the sea is the common heritage of mankind. That eventually led to UNCLOS, which was, I believe, signed in 1973.

**Himmel:** You talked now about a lot of opportunities which were set, but what were difficulties? I could sense that not everybody had heard of Malta by 1980.

**Xuereb:** Not even by today. (laughter) Today, more people know about Malta because we are part of the European Union. Additionally, we participated in all the other institutions and that is in fact a good example of how we exert quite diplomacy. Why? Because we also have a right of veto should we want to exercise it – but we don't. Because we believe in dialogue, and we believe in consensus building. We have to negotiate and find an agreement and compromise as necessary to find an agreement that is in the interest of all.

> When people speak to us, they know that they can speak to us in confidence

**Himmel:** What about the other neighbouring countries in the South, meaning Libya, Egypt and Tunesia?

**Xuereb:** Two countries where we concentrate most of our efforts are Libya and Tunisia, our closest neighbours. The others are of equal importance. After the independence we have always fostered very close ties with Libya. After the fall of Gadaffi we tried to deal with the situation in Libya as it was: Basically, no stable government, but rival governments in the different parts of the country. Our policy is as much as possible, we speak to everyone. Of course, there could be times where we will be very careful and prudent who to speak to and how to speak. But we would normally try to reach out or be ready to listen too. Sometimes we approach, other times we are approached. This is something what we are doing particularly this year, as we are chairing the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OCSE. Incidentally, we were asked to do so because there were objections to Estonia, which was the country that was intended to chair the OSCE. But there were objections, particularly by the Russian Federation, which refused Estonia's chair, however, agreed, as a compromise, on Malta. Why? Because we are part of the EU, but we are not a NATO country. We are a neutral country. That seemed acceptable to them. I could see how he was conscious of all the difficult situations and tensions in different parts of Europe. He met with leaders from Serbia and Kosovo, with leaders from Azerbaijan and Armenia. He was very keen and again, the message was: "Listen, we have no ulterior motives." And this is perhaps what makes us credible. We have no claims and no ambitions to dominate the world. (laughter)

**Himmel:** That would be a little bit too ambitious (laughter). But Britain's domination also started from an island.

**Xuereb:** And became Great Britain. (laughter)

**Himmel:** You spoke about three points which I want to consulate further. First, you mentioned the diplomatic ties between Libya. Could you draw an image of what is possible when exchanging diplomatic ties? What projects were you engaging in?

**Xuereb:** One concrete example is the question of the migration issue. We try to work with the Libyan Coast Guard to ensure that, as much as possible, vessels with migrants which are about to fall apart when they leave the coast, do not leave the coast not to endanger the people's lives.

**Himmel:** So, with your diplomacy, you were able to facilitate the hands-on administrative work.

**Xuereb:** And we try to be "a voice for Libya" within the European institutions. One of the things we try to do is to see that Libya is free of foreign interference. Other countries are present somehow in Libya trying to exert their influence. Maybe this is one area where Europe needs to be.

**Himmel:** Interesting, that brings me to the second point: Our EPIS Report is called "silent diplomacy", thus not meaning the diplomacy in the great halls of conferences, but rather in background talks or in communication which is not visible, which might be good or bad, or which has advantages or disadvantages. How positions Malta in that sense of silent diplomacy?

**Xuereb:** I think we are good at that, because we are not a country that likes to stump its feet. I think we can be most effective in bringing people together and trying to bridge distances between various positions and helping to discover or to reach some common ground that could serve as the basis of agreement in difficult situations. When people speak to us, they know that they can speak to us in confidence. We will not betray them. We will not backstab them.

**Himmel:** Would you therefore think that it would be more helpful if Malta speaks face to face to one party and then to the other, or brings two parties together on one table?

**Xuereb:** It could work both ways. Let me mention Azerbaijan. We did, in Munich, speak individually to the leaders present. Soon after, German Federal Foreign Minister Baerbock brought the two foreign ministers together. That's a good example of both approaches which are complementary.

**Himmel:** Getting on the last point: neutrality. Per constitution Malta is a neutral country thus not siding in conflicts. Is that an opportunity?

**Xuereb:** Our neutrality is a military neutrality, not a political one. The constitution states that Malta is a neutral state actively promoting peace and dialogue between peoples. It's an active neutrality, at the service of peace. It's not an ostrich putting its head in the sand kind of approach, let others fight their wars. For instance, we immediately condemned Russia's aggression in Ukraine. We hosted one of the conferences that President Zelensky hosted on his peace plan recently. Neutrality means that we do not form part of the military alliance, although I also have to say that we have a strong and close relationship with NATO, which is consistent with our constitutional neutrality. We know what happened in Sweden and Finland with their neutrality. Although I do not see Malta going that way, at least not in the next few years.

**Himmel:** That being said: What would you say is the diplomatic way of Malta in the next decade?

In 28. October 2023 Malta hosted the meeting of National Security Advisors and Foreign Policy Advisors on the Formula for Peace. Numerous nations and organizations discussed five key security aspects: nuclear and radiation, food, energy, release of prisoners and deportees, restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the world order.

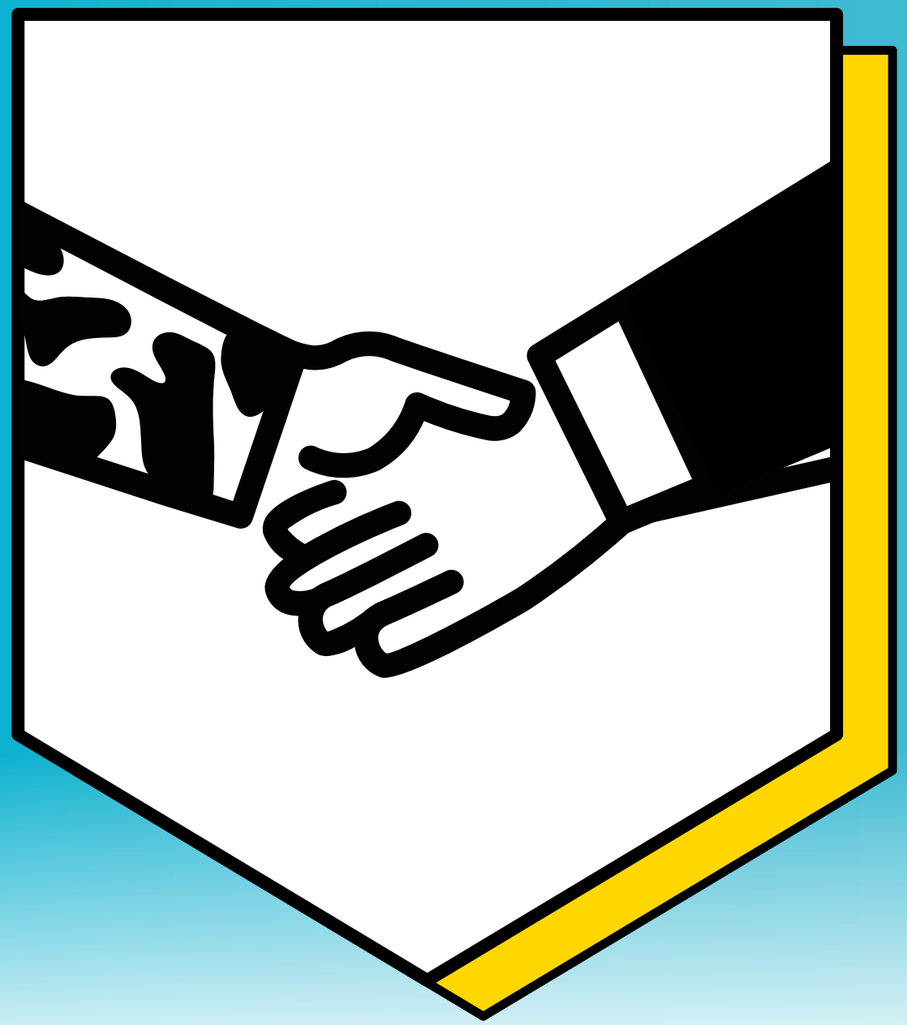
**Xuereb:** Definitely, Malta remains committed to pursue its objectives, its commitment to the European Union. We truly believe in multilateralism.

**Himmel:** Multilateralism or Maltalateralism?

**Xuereb:** Multilateralism. (laughter) In a rule-based order, we believe in the importance of international organisations, hence our commitment this year and last year, where we are serving as non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, for instance, at the first UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. For us, international fora are important fora where you can bring together different actors, even countries that don't see each other face-to-face.

**Himmel:** Thank you very much Mr. Xuereb for your time and your insights.

**Xuereb:** Thank you as well.



# Shifting Priorities:
## What is Civil-military cooperation?

**Patrick Weimert**

Patrick Weimert currently studies International Affairs at the Hertie School with a specialization in international security. He is particularly interested in security issues in the nexus between international security and development policy. He has also worked as an intern at the NATO CIMIC Centre of Excellence, as a Professional Year Student at the Stabilisation Platform of the German Federal Foreign Office / GIZ and as an intern at the German Federal Foreign Office. He is particularly interested in the topic of civil-military cooperation.

With the withdrawal of most Western intervention forces from Mali, another stabilisation mission ends unsuccessfully (Bundesregierung, 2023). Events like these raise questions about the future of Western peacekeeping and stabilisation. A central point of discussion is the so-called Civil-Military Cooperation, a military function where military forces collaborate with civilian organisations and the population to achieve mutually beneficial objectives, often in areas affected by conflict, disaster, or instability. This article describes civil-military cooperation and its importance in international peacekeeping. The paper draws on previous collaboration and personal communication with the Civil-military Cooperation Centre of Excellence (CCOE), one of 28 NATO-accredited Centers of Excellence (COEs). It provides an understanding of the definitions and debates surrounding civil-military cooperation, the CCOE's understanding and contribution to civil-military cooperation, and delivers the foundation for civil-military cooperation policy. The introduction introduces NATO-accredited Centres of Excellence and the CCOE. The second part provides an overview of the different academic discussions and defines civil-military cooperation. Finally, the last part explains NATO's understanding of civil-military cooperation beyond stabilisation missions.

### 1. Introduction: Civil-military cooperation and the Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence

NATO-accredited Centres of Excellence (COEs) are international military organisations dedicated to enhancing the capabilities of NATO members and partner countries (NATO, 2024). These COEs focus on a wide range of specialised areas such as cyber defence, counterintelligence, and energy security. They play a crucial role in training and educating military leaders and specialists, developing doctrines, and improving interoperability among NATO forces. Operating independently of direct NATO funding and command structures, COEs are funded nationally or multi-nationally. Their work includes education and training, analysis and lessons learned, doctrine development and standardisation, and concept development and experimentation (NATO, 2024). Currently, 28 NATO-accredited COEs support NATO's transformation efforts.

Within this framework, the CCOE in The Hague (Netherlands) is a NATO-accredited, multinational organisation that provides expertise in civil-military cooperation. It delivers innovative advice and specialised knowledge to both civilian and military clients (CCOE, 2024). The CCOE focuses on advanced training and education, developing concepts and doctrines, and leveraging lessons learned to enhance civil-military cooperation operations. By fostering cooperation and understanding between military and civilian entities, the CCOE aims to improve the effectiveness of NATO missions and support overall mission success through its specialised expertise (CCOE, 2024). It works with, and often for, NATO, but the CCOE does not represent or speak for NATO directly.

### 2. What is Civil-Military Cooperation?

Even though it is a broad idea that has existed for decades, scholars often disagree and debate over the definition of civil-military cooperation (Cusumano & Corbe, 2018). In an attempt to conceptualise the phenomenon, scholars Cusumano and Corbe have

identified a trichotomy of three related understandings of the intricate interplay between military institutions and civilian entities: civil-military relations, civil-military interaction, and civil-military cooperation. The three concepts are related, but all attempt to capture a different phenomenon. The following paragraphs will look at the different elements of the trichotomy.

First, Samuel Huntington's 'The Soldier and the State' has contributed significantly to modern academic debate on civil-military relations (1957). Huntington laid the foundation for conceptualising civil-military relations, defining it as civilian control over the military while recognising the expertise of armed forces in national security matters. In these early stages, civil-military relations have been characterised by a delicate balance between civilian oversight and military autonomy, reflecting broader societal dynamics and political imperatives.

Second, civil-military interaction is not an academic term but mainly refers to the NATO definition of "activities between military ... bodies and non-military actors to foster mutual understanding that enhance effectiveness and efficiency in crisis management and conflict prevention and resolution" (AJP-3.19, 2023, p. 16). This definition is widely regarded as a general approach for military organisations to recognise the importance of the civilian dimension for operations. Therefore, it is predominantly a military term and has received little academic attention (Cusumano & Corbe, 2018).

Third, Cusumano and Corbe have identified civil-military cooperation as the last concept in the trichotomy of understanding the interplay between military institutions and civilian entities. The authors define civil-military cooperation as a "wider set of interactions between civilian and military organisations in the theatre of military operations and peacetime alike" (Cusumano and Corbe, 2018, p. 9).

| Concept | Civil-military relations | Civil-military interaction | Civil-military cooperation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Explanation** | A purely domestic understanding of the relationship between a domestic population and its respective military. | A purely interventionist definition referring to the relationship between a foreign intervention force and the local civilian population. | A broad and adaptable definition that attempts applicability both in domestic civil-military relations and in relations between intervention forces and the local population. |
| **Applicability** | Domestic | Interventionist | Domestic and interventionist |
| **Term** | Academic | Military | Academic and military |
| **Origins** | 1960s | 2000s | 2000s |

Table 1: The Trichotomy between civil-military relations, civil-military interaction, and civil-military cooperation



The conceptualisation of civil-military cooperation has undergone significant paradigm shifts, adjusting to the geopolitical realities of the world (Zaalberg, 2007). While 1960s literature on civil-military relations is almost exclusively dedicated to domestic relations between a nation's military and its civilians, civil-military cooperation emerged out of a need for conceptualising the relationship between a foreign military in a foreign country (Franke, 2006). Until the end of the Cold War, interstate wars were considered the norm (Lee Ray, 2002). International interventionism and its different forms and shapes, like peacekeeping, insurgency, or stabilisation missions, remained unusual and, therefore, understudied. Hence, civil-military relations literature reflected this through a focus on domestic civil-military relations (Franke, 2006). However, with the end of the Cold War and the rise of terrorism and intrastate warfare, understanding relations between international military intervention forces and foreign non-military actors became more relevant (Rajan, 2000).

Following the events of 9/11 and the rise of international terrorism, conflicts have become increasingly complex, requiring a comprehensive understanding of state and non-state actors within economic, political, and social institutions (Kaldor, 2012). Mary Kaldor defined these complex conflicts as 'new wars,' where the lines between war, mass atrocities, and organised crime blur (2012). In these 'new wars,' civilians play a more important role. Aside from civilian casualties during combat, they can become pawns within modern warfare itself (Rothbart et al., 2012), either as victims of crimes against humanity or as perpetrators within terrorist organisations or other non-state armed groups (Moser & Clark, 2001). Within this complex network between civilians, non-state armed groups, national militaries, international alliances, and NGOs, every actor aims for their own personal goals (Rietjens, 2023). Hence, in this new war framework, coordination and alignment with other actors is crucial but also difficult to achieve. Out of this need for coordination, civil-military cooperation emerged as a concept (Rietjens & De Werd, 2023). Therefore, the concept recurs throughout several debates, and every debate has different definitions and understandings of civil-military cooperation (Cusumano & Corbe, 2018).

Like in the debate surrounding humanitarian aid literature, scholars define civil-military cooperation as the cooperation between militaries and civilian relief organisations to facilitate humanitarian aid, social reconstruction, and protection of civilians (Winslow, 2002). When looking at Western counterinsurgency missions, civil-military cooperation is defined as the counterinsurgency military force's role to 'winning hearts and minds' of the local civilian population (Rinelli & Duyvesteyn, 2018; Worrall, 2014) When it comes to the debate surrounding hybrid threats, civil-military cooperation can also be applied to a military's relationship with its own domestic population and how to protect the population from respective threats (Rinelli & Duyvesteyn, 2018). Furthermore, civil-military cooperation scholars Rinelli and Duyvesteyn have therefore described civil-military cooperation as a "discussion ... characterised by ambiguity, misinterpretations, and fundamentally differing definitions and conceptualisations" (2018, p. 24). Ultimately, civil-military cooperation scholars disagree with practitioners about the definition of the concept but also disagree amongst themselves about it.

## 3. NATO's Understanding of Civil-military cooperation

As mentioned before, the foundation of NATO's fundamental understanding of civil-military cooperation is laid out in the Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-military cooperation. The doctrine establishes NATO's definition of civil-military cooperation as: "A military joint function that integrates the understanding of the civil factors of the operating environment, and that enables, facilitates and conducts civil-military interaction to support the accomplishment of missions and military strategic objectives in peacetime, crisis, and conflict" (AJP-3.19, 2023, p. 17).

The abovementioned quote provides insights into NATO's understanding of civil-military cooperation. The definition includes two core activities. Civil factor integration is the first core activity, which refers to the activity of understanding all civil factors possibly influencing the mission's success. This shows strong similarity to NATO's Intelligence function and includes everything, from simple things like the status of civilian infrastructure to highly complex social dynamics like religion. On the other hand, civil-military interaction as a second core activity refers to any literal interaction between NATO military staff and civilian entities. The definition also makes clear that NATO civil-military cooperation is not a humanitarian actor or an NGO; the primary objective is the mission's success (CCOE, personal communication, April 9, 2023). Considering the interaction with the non-military part of the operating environment as a means and the accomplishment of missions as the goal underlines NATO's mission-oriented understanding of civil-military cooperation. The mission's success is the primary objective, with successful cooperation between military and civilian entities being the means rather than the goal itself.

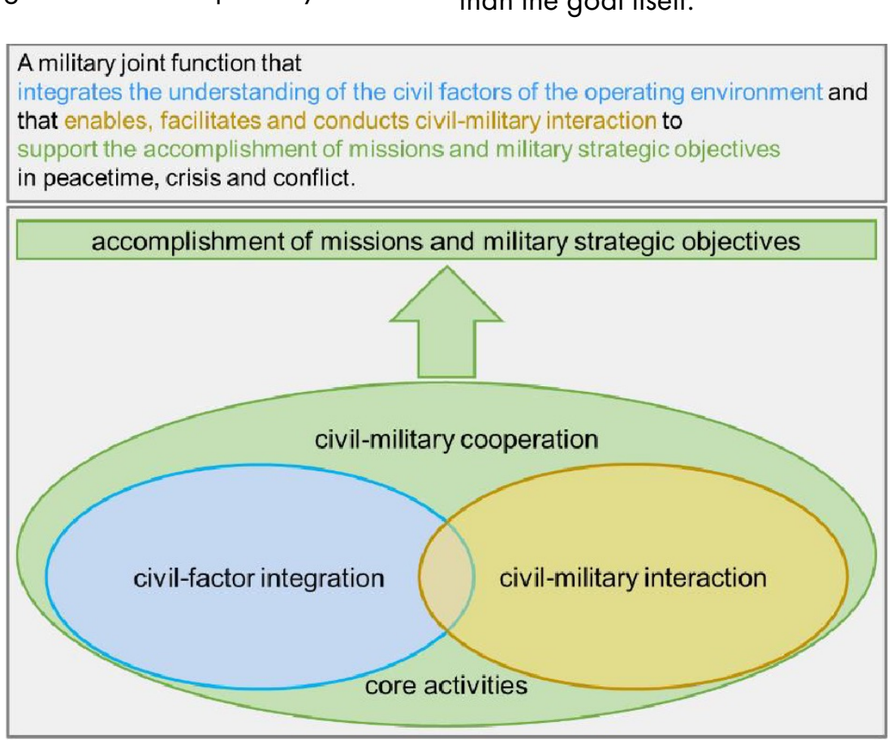



Figure 1: NATO Definition of Civil-Military Cooperation and Core Activities. From (AJP-3.19, 17 by NATO STANDARDIZATION OFFICE (NSO), 2023.

NATO's understanding of civil-military cooperation has a scope that goes beyond most scholars' understandings. As mentioned earlier, civil-military cooperation is a fragmented field, with Huntington's understanding as the relationship between a domestic military and its respective citizens and Worral's understanding as the relationship between a counterinsurgency force and a foreign population (Huntington, 2002; Worrall, 2014). Literature on humanitarian aid positions itself closer to Worral, while hybrid threats scholars are embracing the domestic component of Huntington. Namely, Cusumano and Corbe have attempted to capture all of these elements as "wider interaction [...] in the theatre of military operations and peacetime alike" (2018, p. 9). Showing strong similarities to Cusumano and Corbe, the alliance applies civil-military cooperation on all of the possible understandings by establishing its applicability "in peacetime, crisis, and conflict" (AJP-3.19, 2023, p. 2). Civil-military cooperation in peacetime refers to the resilience and civil preparedness of the domestic population against foreign threats, and civil-military cooperation in crisis includes winning the hearts and minds of the population outside of NATO territory for counterinsurgency efforts. When asked about why NATO defines civil-military cooperation in such a broad manner, one member of the CCOE responded:

"Because it makes sense. When we think about Civil Factor Integration and Civil-Military Interaction, in order to avoid having difficulties during wartime and crisis, then we have to start with the build-up of our liaison network before we start with wartime and before we start with crisis. That means in peacetime. So, you are doing civil-military cooperation the entire time, and it does not depend on crisis or conflict. You have to do civil-military cooperation in order to prepare for missions and in order to prepare for war. You have to start before the war starts, otherwise, you are too late" (CCOE, personal communication, April 10, 2023)

**Civil-Military Cooperation:**
A wider set of interactions between civilian and military organisations in the theatre of military operations and peacetime alike.

NATO's approach to civil-military cooperation acknowledges the different definitions and understandings surrounding civil-military cooperation. Instead of choosing one understanding, it attempts to incorporate all of them into a single definition, following the example of Cusumano and Corbe. However, this is a new development within NATO's understanding of civil-military cooperation, a concept traditionally concerned with counterinsurgency missions like Afghanistan. (CCOE, personal communication, April 23, 2023). Adapting to recent geopolitical developments, NATO civil-military cooperation attempts to cover traditional and contemporary aspects of civil-military cooperation with one definition. The recent geopolitical landscape, particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has necessitated a significant adaptation in NATO's understanding of civil-military cooperation. This adaptation addresses the rise of hybrid threats, including cyber-attacks, foreign election interference, and other non-traditional forms of warfare. These developments have highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach to civil-military cooperation, one that goes beyond crisis prevention and management to include deterrence and collective defence.

## 4. Conclusion

NATO's evolving definition of civil-military cooperation now reflects this broader scope. By emphasising continuous interaction between military and civilian entities, NATO aims to ensure preparedness across all phases of conflict—peacetime, crisis, and war. This approach is designed to build resilience and enhance the effectiveness of military operations through early and sustained engagement with civilian counterparts. The adaptability of civil-military cooperation to contemporary challenges underscores its enduring relevance. Facing hybrid threats, effective civil-military cooperation can provide a strategic advantage, enhancing situational awareness, fostering mutual understanding, and enabling coordinated responses to complex crises. By fostering strong civil-military relationships before conflicts arise, NATO can mitigate risks and enhance operational outcomes, ensuring that both military and civilian actors are better prepared to address the multifaceted nature of modern conflicts.

> The recent geopolitical landscape, particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has necessitated a significant adaptation in NATO's understanding of civil-military cooperation.

In conclusion, the importance of civil-military cooperation extends well beyond traditional stabilisation missions. As NATO continues to adapt to new threats and challenges, the principles of civil-military cooperation will remain central to its strategy, enabling the alliance to effectively navigate the complexities of contemporary and future conflicts. However, many member states struggle to create a solid connection between civilian entities and military structures. So, the success of the alliance in applying civil-military cooperation during peacetime remains to be demonstrated.

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# EPIS BASICS:
## THE US GRAND STRATEGY SPECTRUM

In EPIS Basics, our authors explain basic knowledge of international foreign affairs and security policies. This encompasses basic theories, organisations and events This series is presented in depth here in the magazine. You can also find other smaller contributions on our Instagram page

**Pablo Mathis**

Pablo Mathis holds a BSc. (Hons.) in Security Studies from Leiden University. In September, Pablo will commence the MA in War Studies programme at King's College London.

Separated by two Oceans from the tumultuous geopolitics of Europe and Asia, America enjoys unprecedented leeway in the choice of its foreign policy. For other states, foreign policy is a product of necessity born out of circumstance. In contrast, America has the luxury of choosing along a spectrum of four broad grand strategy choices: isolationism, offshore balancing, selective engagement, and hegemony. With the 2024 US presidential election constituting a watershed moment in US foreign policy, this instalment of EPIS basics is dedicated to charting the aforementioned US foreign policy postures.

### Isolationism

Strategies advocating for the US's disengagement from alliances in areas other than North (and South) America have been captured under the umbrella term of "isolationism". With Trump's "America First" dictum, US isolationism has resurged. However, readers should remain acute that isolationism is not entirely novel to the US foreign policy tradition. Indeed, the 1920s and 1930s saw the US refusal to join the League of Nations and enter the Second World War in 1939.

### Offshore Balancing

Offshore balancing differs from isolationism in recognising the importance of alliances for US power projection. In particular, this goes for the regions of Europe, the Persian Gulf, and East Asia. Nevertheless, proponents of offshore balancing, like the scholars John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, remain sceptical of US troop deployment overseas. Instead, regional allies should constitute the first line of defence. Only if the risk arises of a regional power disrupting the regional balance of power and challenging the US does offshore balancing advocate for direct US involvement overseas.

### Selective Engagement

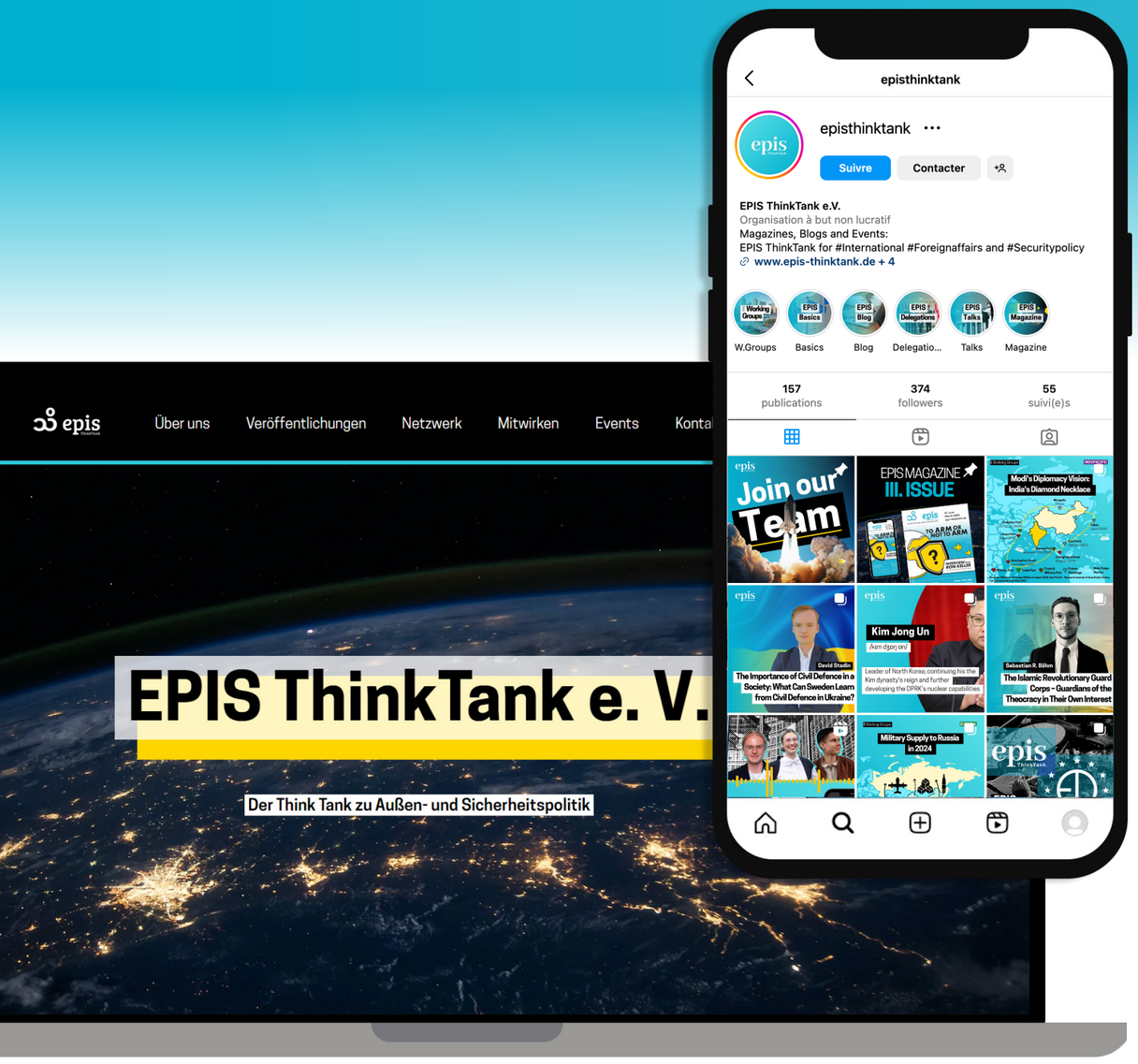
Selective engagement shares with offshore balancing the desire to maintain a balance of power favourable to the US. However, selective engagement advocates for a stronger overseas presence, most notably by strengthening US military bases overseas. Joseph Biden can likely be located in the selective engagement camp.

### Hegemony

Under this foreign policy, America strives to be the undisputed hegemon in a respective region, allowing no regional power to emerge. Since the advent of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, America has pursued a strategy of hegemony in North and South America. However, it has rarely projected this stance to other regions. An arguable exception came in the early 2000s when the George W. Bush administration invaded Afghanistan and Iraq. In doing so, the US departed from its previous strategy of maintaining a balance of power favourable to the US in the Middle East.

### Quo Vadis, America?

Naturally, the distinction between isolationism, offshore balancing, selective engagement, and hegemony represents a rudimentary breakdown of American foreign policy. Nuances in the means towards America's foreign policy ends remain. For example, differences can be found between American exceptionalism and internationalism. Both advocate for greater US involvement abroad but differ in the importance of international regimes in achieving greater US influence overseas. Nevertheless, the above-presented distinctions constitute a basic map for readers to make sense of US foreign policy and how it might change after November's presidential election.

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