HUZURSUZ BİR DÜNYA
A RESTLESS WORLD

içindekiler / contents

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editörden

Değerli Okurlar,

Her yıl *Avrasya Dünyası* dergimizin ilk sayısının çıkması bahar aylarına rastlar. Umudumuz yılın bu döneminin, ilkbahara has bir yenilenme eşliğinde, barış ve huzura kollarını açması ve insanlığı kucaklaması noktasında kristalleşir. Ne yazık ki beklentiler nadiren gerçekleşir. Hatta bazen Rusya-Ukrayna savaşının, bahar çiçeklerinin tomurcuklanmaya başladığı Şubat 2022 ayında patlaması gibi kötü sürprizler de yaşarız.

Peki, Avrasya İncelemeleri Merkezi (AVİM) olarak 2024 yılının baharında dünya siyasi manzarasını nasıl görmekteyiz? Cevabımız, çok uzaklarda değil, hemen bu sayının kapağında yer alıyor. Huzursuz bir dünya!

Neden bu tanımlama? Bunun için yaşlı küremizde olan bitene bir göz atmamız yeterli olacaktır. Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemi bitiren, bundan birkaç yıl öncesine kadar gerçekleşeceği fantastik bir ihtimal olarak değerlendirilen bir savaş, yani Rusya'nın Ukrayna'ya saldırması, hem de geçirdiği iki büyük dünya savaşından sonra huzura kavuştuğu sanılan eski kıta Avrupa'nın göbeğinde çıkıverdi ve bitmedi. Ne zaman bitebileceği de bilinmiyor. Üstelik bu savaşın taraflarından birinin elinde nükleer silahlar olması Soğuk Savaş günlerinin korkularını geri getirmiş görünüyor. Maalesef mevcut huzursuzluk bununla da kalmıyor. Rusya Federasyonu yetkililerinin Karadeniz'i hedeflerinin tamamlayıcı cüz'ü olarak görmeleri Rusya-Ukrayna savaşının daha da büyümesi olasılığını arttırıyor.

Bahar mevsimine yakışmayan endişe ve korku atmosferi başka coğrafyalarda da cari. Hamas'ın geçen 7 Ekim'de İsrail'e karşı başlattığı ani ve dehşet verici saldırı, İsrail'in buna orantısız cevabı, bir süre sonra İran'ın hamisi olduğu Hamas'ı desteklemek ve zevahiri kurtarmak amacıyla gerçekleştirdiği neyse ki kısa ömürlü hava saldırısı ve nihayet İsrail'in ağır baskılar neticesi iki hafta kadar durdurulabilmesinden sonra yine âdet yerini bulsun kabilinden İran'a gerçekleştirdiği hava saldırıları. Bölgede ateşkes umutları azalırken, savaşın insan hayatı üzerindeki zararlı etkileri çok tedirgin edicidir; 30.000'den fazla Filistinli ölmüş ve 75.000'i de yaralanmıştır.

Yemen'de Houti'lerin Bab-ül Mendep Boğazı'nın kontrolünü ele geçirmek için sivil ticaret gemilerine karşı bir süre önce başlatmış olduğu İHA ve roket saldırıları ise Filistin davasına destek gibi yeni bir gerekçe kazanarak devam ediyor.

Birbirlerine adeta eklemlenmiş görünen bu savaş ve çatışmalar Doğu Avrupa'dan Batı Asya'nın güneyine uzanan bir eksen üzerinde yer almakta. Dünya barışına yönelen tehditler ne yazık ki bundan ibaret değil. Pasifik'ten de iyi haberler gelmiyor. Bölgedeki en büyük güç, gerek Doğu Çin, gerek Güney Çin denizlerinde bazı takımadalar ve yetki alanları üzerinde hak iddia ediyor. Gerekli gördüğü yerlerde icabında yapay adalar üreterek, kuzeyden güneye inen bir hattı askerileştiriyor. Bu faaliyetler tabii yanıtsız kalmıyor. ABD öncülüğünde Japonya ve Güney Kore ile başlayan ve Doğu Asya ülkeleri ile devam eden bir ülkeler zinciri karşı önlemler için dayanışmayı arttırıyor. Söz konusu bölge esas itibarıyla Pasifik Okyanusu olduğu cihetle, savaş gemileri, denizaltılar ve uçaklar her an bir çatışmanın kıvılcımını oluşturacak kadar birbirine yakın ve iç içe. Özetle bu bölge de her an patlamaya aday.

Yukarıdaki karanlık tabloyu biraz daha koyulaştırmak pahasına, yine Pasifik coğrafyasında Kuzey Kore'nin nükleer silahlar ve balistik, süpersonik ve hipersonik füzeler alanlarında giderek artan bir hızla yürüttüğü çalışmaları ve bununla birlikte daha çok duyulmaya başlanan militarist söylemlerini de zikredebiliriz. Tabii, Myanmar'da Rohingyalara karşı sürdürülen harekatı da kaydetmek gerek.

Bu bağlamda son olarak, gelişmekte olan bir başka huzursuzluk kaynağı olarak Afrika kıtasına nüfuz konusunda, özellikle Fransa'nın bölgedeki mevcudiyetini azaltmasını takiben, ABD, Rusya ve Çin gibi önde gelen ülkeler ile İran ve bazı Arap ülkeleri gibi Küresel Güney ülkelerinin başlatmış göründükleri gayretleri de gözden uzak tutmamak gerekir.

Sonuç olarak, yine de iyimser olmaya çalışarak 2024 yılının hiç olmazsa bundan sonraki bölümünde savaşların durması, mevcut sorunların savaşa varmadan sonlanması ve tüm insanlığın çoktan hak ettiği barış ve huzur dolu günlere kavuşmasını diliyoruz.

Selam ve sevgilerle,

Yiğit Alpogan
Editör

from the editor

Dear Readers,

The first issue of the *Eurasian World* journal of every year coincides with the spring season. We firmly hope that this time of the year, accompanied by a spring-like rejuvenation will bring peace, tranquility, and, mutual empathy for humanity. Such expectations are unfortunately rarely fulfilled, and sometimes we are met with nasty surprises, such as the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022 when the spring flowers were just beginning to bud.

So, how does the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) see the world political landscape in the spring of 2024? Our answer is not far away; it is right on the cover of this issue. A restless world!

Why have we chosen this description? It is enough to take a look at what is happening in our storied world to find the answer to this question. In the context of the post-Cold War era, a war that until a few years ago was considered a far-fetched possibility, namely Russia's attack on Ukraine, broke out in the heart of Europe, the old continent that was supposed to be at peace after two major world wars and a long Cold War. This war between Russia and Ukraine continues and it is unknown when it will end. Moreover, the fact that one of the parties to this war has nuclear weapons seems to have brought back the fears of the Cold War days. Unfortunately, the current uneasiness does not stop there. The fact that the Russian Federation officials see the Black Sea as a complementary part of their goals increases the likelihood that the Russia-Ukraine war will spread around the Black Sea.

The atmosphere of anxiety and fear, which does not suit the spring season, is also present in other regions. The sudden and horrifying attack launched by Hamas against Israel on 7 October last year, Israel's highly disproportionate response, Iran's -thankfully- brief airstrikes in support of Hamas and to save face, and then Israel's airstrikes against Iran, which were stalled for about two weeks after Israel was placed under heavy pressure. As hopes for a ceasefire in the region fade, the human toll is alarming, with more than 30,000 Palestinians killed and 75,000 wounded.

In Yemen, the drone and rocket attacks launched by the Houthis against civilian merchant ships to seize the control of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait continue under the new justification of support for the Palestinian cause.

These wars and conflicts, which seem to be intertwined with each other, take place on an axis stretching from Eastern Europe to the south of Western Asia. Unfortunately, this is not the only threat to global peace. There is no good news from the Pacific either. The greatest power in the region claims some archipelagos and territorial jurisdictions in both the East China and South China Seas. It carries out a military show-off in a maritime region running from north to south, creating artificial islands where necessary. Of course, these activities do not remain without a repercussion. A chain of countries led by the United States, starting with Japan and South Korea, and extending to East Asian countries, is increasing in solidarity for countermeasures. Since the region is essentially the Pacific Ocean, warships, submarines and airplanes are close and intertwined enough to spark a conflict at any moment. In short, this region is also ready to explode at any moment.

At the risk of making the above dark picture a little darker, we can also mention North Korea's increasingly rapid development of nuclear weapons, and ballistic, supersonic, and hypersonic missiles accompanied by utterings of militaristic slogans in the Pacific. Certainly, one can neither ignore the bloody operation under taken by Myanmar government against the Rohingya population of the country.

Finally, one should not overlook the efforts that the leading countries such as the United States, Russia, and China, as well as the countries of the Global South such as Iran and some Arab countries, seem to have undertaken ititiatives, especially after France reduced its presence in the region, to penetrate the African continent as another emerging source of unrest.

In conclusion, one is nevertheless trying to be optimistic and hopeful that, at least for the remaining part of the year 2024, the wars will stop, the current problems will end without leading to a war, and humanity will reach the days of peace and tranquility that it has long deserved.

With greetings,

Yiğit Alpogan
Editor

EURASIA AND EURASIANISM IN THE CONTEXT OF AVİM'S 15th ANNIVERSARY

Eurasianism, as a socio-political movement, emerged as a considerate challenge to Eurocentric thought, particularly in the early 20th century. It represents a multifaceted intellectual quest that questions the conventional wisdom of geopolitical identities and offers an alternative perspective.

Dr. Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun

Analyst, Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM)

As the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) celebrates its 15th year, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the concepts of Eurasia and Eurasianism, pivotal elements in our institution's ethos. This commemoration is a celebration of the past and a recommitment to the intellectual discourse shaping our understanding of these concepts.

Eurasia: A Geopolitical and Cultural Mosaic

Eurasia, a term bridging the continents of Europe and Asia, represents more than a geographic entity; it symbolizes a rich tapestry of cultures, political ideologies, and histories. At AVİM, we have consistently engaged with the complexity and diversity of this vast region, understanding its critical role in global affairs[1].

Eurasianism: An Intellectual Journey and Standing Up Against Eurocentrism and Colonialism

Eurasianism, as a socio-political movement, emerged as a considerate challenge to Eurocentric thought, particularly in the early 20th century[2]. It represents a multifaceted intellectual quest that questions the conventional wisdom of geopolitical identities and offers an alternative perspective. A group of Russian intellectuals originally initiated this movement of thought. It has

developed around two main pillars. Its first pillar is that it takes an intellectual stance against Eurocentrism. It is possible to describe this stance as an intellectual revolt opposing haughty and oppressive Eurocentric dogma. The second main pillar is determining Russian identity and Russia's place in world politics, then opposing attempts to exclude it from Europe and creating a synthesis that prioritizes its connection with Asia while preserving its Europeanness. The most well-known of these pillars is the second pillar, which is accepted as the basis of this movement of thought. On the other hand, the first column became blurred over time, remained very pale compared to the political appeal of the second column, and was left to be forgotten as a philosophical thought exercise.

One of the most prominent figures in this intellectual pursuit is Nikolai Sergeyevich Trubetzkoi, who critiques Eurocentric biases and posits a unique synthesis of European and Asian influences[3]. He is considered to be the intellectual founder of Eurasianism. It is worth noting that Trubetzkoi is a politically liberal scholar and philosopher of his time.[4] He belongs to an aristocratic family and is known to be anti-Bolshevik.[5] As noted above, Trubetzkoy and other early Russian Eurasianists can be said to challenge the cultural hegemony of the West and Western political history. One of the most remarkable works on this subject is the essay titled Europe and Mankind, penned by Trubetzkoi in 1920. Although

Eurasianism is not referred to by name, this essay is generally considered a proto-Eurasianist work.

In his essay, Trubetzkoi first dwells on chauvinism and cosmopolitanism. He asserts that Europeans hold a fairly large variety of positions regarding the question of nationalism, but they are all on a spectrum between two extremes: chauvinism on one side and cosmopolitanism on the other. According to Trubetzkoi, cosmopolitanism is the chauvinism of Romano-Germanic values, and Romano-Germanic nations consider themselves representatives of civilization. In this context, European cosmopolitanism is pan-Romano-Germanic chauvinism, which is founded on unconscious prejudice and the egocentric mentality that their group is superior. In his essay, Trubetzkoi explains in a critical manner that the Romani-Germans belittled the peoples who were outside their value judgments by calling them "barbarians" and that they saw themselves as militarily quite powerful, but that these despised "barbarians" destroyed the Romani-Germans many times. He stated that this understanding of superiority does not reflect reality. Trubetzkoi also criticizes the colonialism of the Romano-Germanic nations. Trubetzkoi argues that Europe used evolutionary sciences as a means of deceiving people and legitimizing, in the eyes of the Romani-Germans and their followers, imperialist colonial policies and vandalistic exploitation

by the "great powers" of Europe and America. He explains the bitter legacy of colonization as follows:

> When Europeans encounter a non-Romano-Germanic nation, they bring their goods and guns. If the nation offered no resistance, the Europeans would conquer them, make them their colony, and Europeanize them by force. If the nation intends to resist, then in order to be able to fight the Europeans, they have to acquire cannons and all the improvements of European technology. But this requires, on the one hand, factories, and industrial plants, and on the other hand, the study of European applied sciences. But factories are inconceivable without the European socio-political way of life, and the applied sciences cannot exist without the 'pure' sciences. Thus, in order to fight against Europe, the nation in question has to adopt, step by step, all of modern Romano-Germanic civilization to Europeanise themselves voluntarily. So, in both cases, Europeanization seems inevitable.[6]

Nikolai Trubetzkoi argues that the concepts of progress and civilization in Europe are a mask that serves colonial and aggressive designs that despise others and serve their interests, that Romano-Germanic cultural

> **It should be underlined that Eurasianism is constantly developing and renewing itself as a very dynamic understanding and that there is not and cannot be a single Eurasianism. Equating a wide range of thought exercises on Eurasia with the Russian-specific neo-Eurasianism that emerged in Russia in the 1990s without scholarly inquiry and labeling them in this way is not an approach compatible with the rationale of scholarly studies and academic thought processes.**

superiority is based on an egocentric mentality, and that this egocentrism is irrational and harmful. He states that destructive Europeanization can be prevented if Europeanized nations reject Romano-Germanic self-centeredness and maintain a healthy sense of national pride. The aspect that Trubetzkoy criticizes most about the groups he describes as Romano-Germanic is that they look down on groups other than themselves and present themselves as the most intelligent and talented. He expresses his harsh criticism on this issue as follows:

The Romano-Germans were always so naively confident that they were the only people who could brand themselves as 'humanity', brand their culture as 'human civilization', and finally, brand their chauvinism as 'cosmopolitanism'. With this terminology, they were able to obscure the ethno-specific meaning of these concepts. In doing so, these concepts were made palatable to members of other ethnic groups. When Romano-Germans give foreign nations the more universal products of their material culture (military and transport technology), they also smuggle in ideas that are presented as 'universal,' diligently covering up the ethno-specific nature of these ideas.[7]

It is possible to say that Trubetzkoi's criticisms of Eurocentrism a century ago, although they had controversial aspects, were content, academically valuable, and quite brave criticisms. It would be a fair approach to accept that these criticisms are still valid to a considerable extent today, in terms of certain aspects.

One point arousing interest in Trubetzkoi's evaluations of Russian identity is his views that Russian culture has ethnographic ties with the Turani people. Trubetzkoi explains his noteworthy and striking ideas on this subject as follows.

From an ethnographic point of view, the Russian people are not purely Slavic. The Russians, Ugro-Finns, and the Volga Turks comprise a cultural zone that has connection with both Slavs and the 'the Turanian East,' and it is difficult to say which of these is more important. The connection

between the Russians and the Turanians has not only an ethnographic but anthropological basis: Turkish blood mingles in Russian veins with that of Ugro-Finns. And the Russian national character is unquestionably linked in certain ways with the 'Turanian East.'[8]

It is possible to describe the Eurasianism that emerged in the 1920s as classical Eurasianism. It is wrong to describe Eurasianism as a monolithic, single structure, whether in the classical sense of the 1920s or in the form of neo-Eurasianism specific to Russia in the 1990s. It should be underlined that Eurasianism is constantly developing and renewing itself as a very dynamic understanding and that there is not and cannot be a single Eurasianism. Equating a wide range of thought exercises on Eurasia with the Russian-specific neo-Eurasianism that emerged in Russia in the 1990s without scholarly inquiry and labeling them in this way is not an approach compatible with the rationale of scholarly studies and academic thought processes. It should be underlined that these approaches, which remind the bigoted Eurocentric views, have a stereotypical nature.

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Endnotes

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2 Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun and Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, "Turkey's Interests And Constructive Eurasianism," *Center For Eurasian Studies Analysis Series* 2022, no. 22 (May 5, 2022): 4, https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/72c8d.

3 Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun and Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, "A Constructive Approach: AVİM In A Polarized World," *Center For Eurasian Studies Comentary Series* 2021, no. 48 (May 26, 2021): 3.

4 Edwin Battistella, "Nikolai Trubetzkoy: Introduction," in *Linguistics* (Oxford Bibliographies, February 25, 2014), https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199772810/obo-9780199772810-0179.xml.

5 Bruno Maçães, *The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 182. Bruno

Maçaes explains Trubetzkoi's departure from Russia as follows: "Trubetzkoi the scion of an old aristocratic family had spent several summers studying Circassian tales and songs near Kislovodsk and heard of the Bolshevik revolution while receiving treatment at a spa there. Together with his wife and young daughter, he would spend the next three years moving between Tbilisi, Baku, and Rostov before being evacuated to Yalta and then, as the White armies started to lose ground, to Istanbul. He never returned to Russia, where his aristocratic name would have spelled certain death, taking up a prestigious teaching position in Vienna in 1922.

6 Nikolai Sergeyevich Trubetzkoy, *Europe and Mankind*, trans. Alexandr (Sasha) Trubetskoy (Sofia, 1920), https://sashamaps.net/docs/writings/europe-and-mankind/.

7 Trubetzkoy.

8 Nikolaĭ Sergeevich. Trubetskoĭ, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*. (Ann Arbor: Michigan: Slavic Publications, 1991), 96.

THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

Even though it is a common narrative that the Russian aggression revived the unity of Europe and filled the existence of NATO with a totally new meaning, it also brought to the surface those issues that were held under the carpet for decades and raised questions that needed to be addressed and, if not solved immediately, at least, should be discussed and kept on the agenda.

István Íjgyártó

Chief Advisor, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, Budapest, Hungary
Former Ambassador of Hungary to Bucharest (2000-2004), Moscow (2010-2014), and Kyiv (2018-2023)

The world order that was based on mutually recognized rules seems to came to an end. The Russo-Ukrainian war shocked the world but also raised the question of the effectiveness of international law and the European security architecture. Even though it is a common narrative that the Russian aggression revived the unity of Europe and filled the existence of NATO with a totally new meaning, it also brought to the surface those issues that were held under the carpet for decades and raised questions that needed to be addressed and, if not solved immediately, at least, should be discussed and kept on the agenda.

The following study aims to give a brief on the turbulent events of the last decades that have had a significant impact on the stability of the recognized order, with special regard to the relations between the West and Russia in terms of continental cooperation and global security matters. With this in regard, the paper addresses the questions of European policies on security, attitudes towards Ukraine and Russia, and the issue of different views on the extension of the European Union. Elaborating on the above, the study aims to formulate possible visions of the future of European security under the circumstances of turbulences in the global order.

The European Security and Its Fragile Nature

Due to the ongoing fighting, it is impossible yet to predict the consequences of the Russo-Ukrainian war - or "special military operation" in the Russian narrative and "full-fledged invasion of Ukraine" in the Western one. This confrontation, however, is a new milestone in the process of constant deterioration of relations between the West and Russia since 2014 Russian interference in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, accelerating the transformation of the perception of global and regional security worldwide. The two Armenian-Azerbaijani wars in 2020 and 2023 around the province of Karabakh and the Russian invasion in Ukraine also pointed out that war, as a possible tool of 'conflict resolution' has returned to Europe.

This ended an era characterized by a newly found optimism to set a new world order – or at least a new European one – after the collapse of Communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War. 34 heads of state and governments gathered in the French capital to declare their will to formulate new principles of international relations and their endeavor for the re-unification of the European continent. As the text of the Charter of Paris, adopted during the Summit, stated: "… In accordance with our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and commitments under the Helsinki Final Act, we renew our pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or from acting in any other manner inconsistent with the principles or purposes of those documents. We recall that non-compliance with obligations under the Charter of the United Nations constitutes a violation of international law…"[1]

The optimism aimed at establishing long-lasting peace and security on the European continent proved not to be sufficient enough to prevent such later conflicts, like the civil war in former Yugoslavia and the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation, but international instruments like the Organization of European Security and Cooperation (OSCE) still had the necessary power and authority to successfully de-escalate and end hostilities. The document adopted by the Astana Summit of the OSCE in 2010 stated: "…We are determined to work together to fully realize the vision of a comprehensive, cooperative, and indivisible security community throughout our shared OSCE area. This security community should be aimed at meeting the challenges of the 21st century and based on our full adherence to common OSCE norms, principles, and commitments across all three dimensions. It should unite all OSCE participating States across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region, free of dividing lines, conflicts, spheres of influence and zones with different levels of security…"[2]

It is worth noting that despite her interference in Georgia and the subsequent cooling down in Russian-Western relations, Moscow was among the signatory parties. The Russian attitude could be explained by the fact that at the NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008 neither Ukraine nor Georgia received a firm commitment or deadline for membership, only a rather obscure promise

for the future.[3] Later the Obama administration declared its willingness for 'reset' in the Russo-American relations and the EU – led by Germany – also started working hard to engage Russia and the post-Soviet space.

Events of the Ukrainian 'Euromaidan' in Kyiv and the separatist developments in Crimea and the Donbas region, followed by Russia's military actions triggered immediate and harsh reactions from the West, but the successful accomplishment of signing the Minsk Agreements and a more or less effective localization of armed clashes in Eastern Ukraine demonstrated that some life remained in international mediation.

The Russian offensive against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the subsequent and unprecedented unity of the Western countries behind Kyiv made it evident, that European unification and establishing a common economic and security space 'from Lisbon to Vladivostok' is out of the agenda for a foreseeable future. Moreover, the massive disregard for internationally adopted rules and principles by Moscow basically disabled international institutions from playing their traditional role as neutral mediators in such conflicts.[4] The West could convince only some 50 countries to join in sanctioning Russia and important large economies kept their distance from the conflict. Although non-violation of the basic principles of the UN Charter, like sovereignty and territorial integrity of states are cornerstone issues for most members

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of the international community, condemning Russia in the UN Council is not an automatism for member states anymore. Many countries regard the Russo-Ukrainian war rather as a regional conflict or part of a certain geopolitical rivalry between "the West and the rest" and prefer to focus on their own challenges and problems. A forming Global South with such influential players like India, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia or Saudi-Arabia would like to see more of its own influence over global developments as a consequence of the re-shaping international relations rather than risking mutually beneficial relations with one of the nuclear powers of the world.

Notwithstanding the fact that almost each and every leadership of the European Union has raised the necessity for the EU to be a more significant geopolitical player in world politics, Brussels is still struggling with how to manage the greatest challenge for European security so far: the Russo-Ukrainian war.

The Impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on the EU Policies

After the 'big bang' enlargement in 2004, followed by the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, the EU became a direct neighbor of the post-Soviet space, including Russia and Ukraine. While the EU has always had ambitious and attractive plans designed to bring its Eastern neighbors closer to European values and principles, one had an impression that from a geopolitical perspective, these countries were considered to be rather buffers than potential future candidates for European integration. Policies towards these countries were carefully tuned not to disturb EU-Russia relations. Even the 2014 Euromaidan and developments triggered by it did not really change this approach: the EU introduced sanctions, but in a limited scope, contributed to the conclusion of the Minsk Agreements and provided a wide range of

support for the reform process, but strictly within the framework of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.[5]

The full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine changed everything significantly. For most of the EU, it became something more, than simply a war. It symbolizes that

- The West was unable to incorporate Russia into the European architecture of peace;

- European Neighbourhood Policy became a failure not being able to gradually integrate its Eastern neighbors;[6]

- by providing an opportunity for Ukraine to sign the Association Agreement in 2014, the EU basically took responsibility for the fate of the country thus imposing itself in the middle of a game for conquest between the West and Russia in Eastern Europe.

In the eyes of Brussels, the Russian invasion turned Ukraine from a buffer state into a border state. Ukraine de facto has become 'the defender of the Union' – if the country falls, Eastern Member States might turn into direct targets for further Russian expansion. The war swept away traditional *Ostpolitik-thinking*, being a guiding principle of German foreign policy - and consequently EU's foreign relations - for so many chancellors from Willy Brant to Angela Merkel. Polish and Baltic fears concerning European security challenged from the East became dominant and as the war went on, European politicians tended to see developments more and more through 'Ukrainian glasses.'[7] Ukraine, not having the slightest chance to be considered as a candidate country before the war, was granted this status in 2022 and in December 2023, the Council of the European Union decided to launch official negotiations aiming at membership. Obviously, by this step the EU has not appreciated Ukraine's exceptional integration efforts but rather her heroic defense against Russian invasion, providing also a certain compensation for the – again - postponed invitation to NATO at the Vilnius Summit of 2023.

The euphoria around supporting Ukraine's accession should not cover the fact that membership of Ukraine in the EU puts enormous political, financial, and institutional stress on the Union:

- Ukraine should be assisted not only in the preparation for membership but the country needs to be rebuilt – war damage estimated to extend up to some 700 billion dollars and counting;

- Candidate countries from the Western Balkans have been waiting for accession for something like

twenty years – keeping them waiting further while Ukraine is given a chance for rapid, politically motivated integration might generate serious tensions and undermine the EU's credibility;

- Since such a large integration is not covered by the EU budget, the need for additional financial resources will turn many 'old' members and almost all Eastern European member states from supported country to net contributor – generating serious internal political tensions in the countries concerned;

- French and German plans aiming at institutional reforms within the EU have already generated serious opposition – suppressing this by referring to the need for a more flexible decision-making mechanism to accelerate Ukraine's accession might undermine unity within the Union;

- Membership of Ukraine will have a serious impact on everything: the size of the Commission and the European Parliament, the future of cohesion policies and common agriculture, etc.

These are the issues the member states should comprehensively discuss before any further enlargement decisions.[8]

What's Next? Enhancing the EU's Strategic Autonomy

Under the shock of witnessing the collapse of its neighborhood policy, the EU, while setting up a narrative of some 'positive' outcomes of the Russo-Ukrainian war, favors such arguments that the Russian aggression generated an unprecedented unity among members, or more widely, within the Western world; helped ironing contradictions between the EU and NATO; relaxed post-Brexit tensions with London. However, Brussels and European leaders would face soon another serious challenge: America stepping back from the support of Ukraine exponentially will increase Europe's burden and responsibility for the outcome of the war. In the meantime, a new US approach towards her role in European security would require renewed thinking on establishing European 'strategic autonomy.'

The issue of enhancing the EU's own defense capabilities surfaced sooner than the emergence of threats from Russia. The preface of the EU Strategic Compass adopted in 2022– a paper summarizing possible challenges and responses states: "We live in a world shaped by raw power politics, where everything is weaponized and where we face a fierce battle of narratives." The document also enumerates several

symptoms of a disintegrating order, including "the instrumentalization of migrants, the privatization of armies, the politicization of the control of sensitive technologies . . . the dynamics of state failure, the retreat of democratic freedoms as well as attacks on the 'global commons' of cyberspace, the high seas and outer space."[9]

A proper answer to these very much realistic and existing dangers and challenges would be establishing an international crisis-management facility within the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU, as a core of it. Through this, the Union would be able to tackle and settle an erupting conflict in an autonomous way (We should not forget i.e. that the conflict in Gaza is taking place in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, with hardly foreseeable endgame and outcomes yet).

The next step towards strategic autonomy is to create military independence of the EU. This would guarantee security within and beyond the borders of the EU by military capabilities, based on autonomous and competitive industrial and technological capacities for European defense – with significantly more independence from the US and NATO, than the existing one. This

> **Many countries regard the Russo-Ukrainian war rather as a regional conflict or part of a certain geopolitical rivalry between "the West and the rest" and prefer to focus on their own challenges and problems.**

could be developed in the widest possible sense towards a defense policy with full independence in areas of commerce, investment, and finance. The only problem with these ideas is that the EU has neither capacities nor institutions yet to meet these requirements.[10]

The birth of the EU Strategic Compass and ongoing discussion around the strategic autonomy of Europe, taking into consideration numerous lessons to be learned from the Russo-Ukrainian war are encouraging signs for the future. But we also should note, that:

- The continuous presence of the US defense umbrella over Europe generated a fake conviction of security: full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine made it evident that even a country with a well-equipped, well-trained, and numerically large army can face serious problems in performing durable resistance;

- US attention can turn away from Europe and Americans, challenged by their problems and guided by their own interests, have a legitimate expectation from their European allies to properly boost their defense capabilities – especially under such volatile and unpredictable conditions where conflicts can erupt almost everywhere and any time;

- Without arguing that US presence in Europe is indispensable, it is a legitimate endeavor from the EU to reject the role of a subordinate and seek its interests within the partnership with traditional allies;

- The EU should work further to develop a mechanism assessing individual member states' achievements on military reforms and developments for a future European armed force and to take the first steps towards creating operational command units, inter-operational and quick-response troop bases to properly reinforce its Common Security and Defense Policy.

> **The birth of the EU Strategic Compass and ongoing discussion around the strategic autonomy of Europe, taking into consideration numerous lessons to be learned from the Russo-Ukrainian war are encouraging signs for the future.**

Conclusions

The Russo-Ukrainian war caused significant changes in European and global security perceptions. The policymakers of the EU and the West in general aligned together in order to provide all the necessary support for Ukraine in terms of weaponry, finance, and policies. This indeed was enough to keep Ukraine standing so far, but not necessarily enough to save her. There is a clear hope that Ukraine will win, yet the way how to achieve it is still opaque. The question, however, of what kind of Ukraine Europe would inherit was hardly even raised.

As of today, neither of the parties in this tragic conflict show any intention to end hostilies in the foreseeable future. A freezing conflict is not an option for Ukraine and Russia would like to avoid even the slightest appearance of defeat. The West is ready to support Ukraine as long as it is requested by her. Meanwhile, sooner or later it will be necessary to introduce some moderation, recommendations for exit strategies, etc. to close the most disastrous armed conflict since World War II in Europe. If it is true that we are entering a new era of great power competition and our "traditional" challenges – illegal migration, climate change, terrorism – will constantly jeopardize our security, it is imperative to strengthen defense capacities on a national level. At the same time, it is also very important to further improve the EU's readiness to be one of the main factors of European security.

Endnotes

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2   Astana Commemorative Declaration. Towards a security Community. OSCE 2010.

3   Bucharest Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008.

4   Balázs Jarábik: Break Point. Scenarios and regional implications of the Russo-Ukrainian war. iwm.at/europes-futures/publication/break-point-scenarios-and-regional-implicati ons-of-the-russo-ukrainian

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7   Jarábik 2023. ibidem

8   Carlo Bastasin: Want Ukraine in the EU? You'll have to reform the EU, too. Brookings July 2023

9   Stefan Lehne: After Russia's war against Ukraine: What kind of World Order? Carnegie Europe 28.02.2023

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CENTRAL EUROPE AFTER THE WAR IN UKRAINE: CONCLUSIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The influence of the war in Ukraine on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is paradoxical and the final rating of how much 'positive' and how much 'negative' it brings highly depends on very subjective ideological or even emotional factors.

Dr. Jakub Korejba

Non-Resident Fellow, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)

The ongoing war is changing not only bilateral relations between Russia and Ukraine, but the whole architecture of relations in Central and Eastern Europe. The outcome of this conflict as well as conclusions drawn (or not) from it, are already changing the region as well as its role in the international system. The war is far from a formal military termination but the overall political outcome, its territorial and demographic framework already emerges. It is already quite evident what kind of country will Ukraine be after the war. A demolished, depopulated, internally unstable and externally vulnerable one. And therefore the question is how the existence and functioning of this new, post-war Ukraine will influence its neighbors and reshape its immediate Western neighborhood.

The influence of the war in Ukraine on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is paradoxical and the final rating of how much 'positive' and how much 'negative' it brings highly depends on very subjective ideological or even emotional factors. Every single change caused by the war both inside Ukraine and in its relations with external partners has two sides; both of them influence the situation parallelly and it often depends on the interests or a taste of the observer which of them shall be qualified as a progress or a regress in comparison to the *status quo ante bellum*. Ukraine changed a lot during last two years and the fact that Ukraine changed, changed the whole region around it. However, the essence of the paradox is

that all shifts that happen in the short term only confirm the existence of very traditional issues that the CEE countries face at least for last few centuries of modernity if not since the very beginning of their statehood. As the prince Fabrizio Salina, the hero of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's "The Leopard" famously said: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." For the CEE, this conflict revealed and confirmed several phenomena, which contain an internal dialectics: the long-term consequences are contradictory with short-term ones and vice-versa.

The Legal Aspect

From the point of view of international legal order, in the course of the war, the sovereignty of Ukraine was confirmed, but its territorial integrity was not. This is true not only for the aggressor but for the other major international actors, both states and organizations. Neither great powers nor the UN, EU or NATO were ready to defend the territorial order of Eastern Europe based on the principles they formally follow and protect. During the war, no Western power seen as a guarantor of stability was ready to put the question of Ukrainian territorial integrity in a principal way. This demonstration confirms a precarious position that was traditionally true for Central Europe. All the CEE nations hoped that this

vulnerability came to an end when they joined NATO and the EU. In fact, once again, Central Europe finds itself in the quality of "the second-category" Europe, where the law of force is still predominant on the force of law. Despite the declared principles, from the point of view of the West, if a conflict appears in practice, until American, German or French territory is not affected, the question of the legality of use of force in international relations remains open. What is more from the point of view of practical difference between the subject and the object of international relations is that Ukrainian territory is a price which major players pay Moscow for remaining a 'constructive' partner helpful in keeping global stability. The fact that the war did not destroy the Ukrainian statehood is good news for other CEE countries but the fact that international community is not ready to keep its borders where they legally are tells a sad story about double standards. If Ukrainian territorial integrity may be put into question today, the Polish or Lithuanian one may be tomorrow, when the global calculation changes in a way that the West will consider it a rational deal with another revisionist player. From the point of view of CEE countries, Vladimir Putin perceives them as Moscow's "zone of privileged interests" or simply a buffer zone between Russia and the West. This means that the international status of their territory is not absolutely guaranteed by the existing system and their sovereignty is not equal to other Western countries. Therefore, they remain (or at least feel that they remain) an object of a

game between great powers. As Yulia Tymoshenko famously said in another context, "if something is forbidden but you really want it – it's possible."

The war confirmed the fact that the CEE countries face the problem of uncertain status of their territorial integrity. This is nothing new for the states and nations living between Russia and Germany for more than a millennium. It is simply contradictory to what the CEE nations were told by the Western partners after the end of the Cold War. Ukraine's integrity was guaranteed by the Budapest Memorandum signed in 1994 by Russia, Great Britain and the USA. Putting aside the formal status of this document (which is not an international treaty), as well as its tactical utility for the signers, from the point of view of Ukraine and all other CEE countries, its political sense was clear: the West outstretched its

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standards of democracy, human rights, market economy and rule of law beyond the Iron Curtain into the zone that was previously given to Moscow in Yalta for its exclusive management. The civilizational attractiveness of the USA and EU, from the Central European perspective, is not based on the fact that they represent an ideal social and economic model -which they do not - but on the fact of cooptation to the political entity inside which the logics of force and domination is no more actual as an instrument of conflict solution between the states. And, this shall be true not only for internal relations among the member-states but also for an external threat: as all CEE countries naively thought in the CEE for last thirty years, EU and NATO countries do not fight each other and protect each other from others.

The Ukrainian war and Western reaction to it confront the CEE countries with two fundamental questions: Where the West ends and how much West is there in the East of Europe? Russia's response to those questions is as simple and straight as it was formulated in Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's ultimatum in December 2021; the former Soviet republics are not the West, but the Russian zone of influence and the former Warsaw Pact states are neither East nor the West, but a buffer zone. And, Moscow is serious about making this idea real and about institutionalizing it as a legitimate element of the global order. That is to say: formally accepted by other great powers as the element of the world order. The CEE countries also have a clear idea; they reject this postulate as a whole and the fierce determination of the Ukrainian nation to defend its state is the best proof of it. But the readiness of the West to accept the durable violation of territorial integrity of Ukraine - as well as Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan for over three decades - confirms the fact that in the CEE, the application of general rules and values of the West formally confirmed in NATO's and EU's documents is limited by the political interests of main powers and highly depends on the actual state of their relations with Moscow. If a rule universally accepted among Western states is not applicable to Ukraine, this may mean two things; either the principle is not a principle or Ukraine is not perceived as Europe. Without a firm and practical confirmation of those rules, none of the CEE countries is sure not to find itself one day in Kiev's skin.

The Strategic Aspect

From the point of view of strategic consciousness and security planning, the war in Ukraine confronted the CEE countries with a situation, which is new in the short perspective but very traditional in the long perspective. Central Europe has to accept the fact, that a danger of a real, kinetic - and not only a hybrid - war is not a hypothetical scenario, but a realistic possibility. This fact marks the end of the Fukuyama's "end of history" at least in this specific region; for the last three decades, the security was perceived as granted, as a common good that comes to the region together with the Western influence and is formally confirmed by the presence of NATO and EU as the institutional confirmation of belonging to the Western world. Logically, all the benefits coming from this civilizational affiliation and particularly, security from external threats were taken as assured by the fact of being a part of those institutions. In this sense, the Ukrainian war and the way that the West, who is a donor of security for the CEE, behaved marks the end of the utopia; the West did not use its power to prevent the war in this specific region, and after it failed to prevent the conflict, it did not show the political will and technical capabilities to win it in the sense of defending both the values it formally stands for and its geopolitical zone of influence: the territory of a country, that is Ukraine, that declares its eagerness to join the West and develop according to the Western model. The general conclusion coming from the stance of the West during this conflict is that either the Western values are not what they are declared to be or Ukraine is not perceived as the West in the sense of the place where those values shall be defended. As a result, the recipients of the Western-guaranteed security are thus confronted with the question to what extent they are perceived by the donors of security as the recipients. What will the 'older partners' do if a military threat to their territorial integrity and sovereignty materializes itself one day? The simple fact that this question arises marks the end of the post-soviet period of history where the fact that CEE belonged to NATO and EU was considered as sufficient to prevent them from military threat and it brings the region back to its traditional position of a buffer zone in between Russia and the West. Not a part of the West, but a space having a different strategic status than its 'real' elements. Because security is not only the lack of an objective danger but also a lack of a subjective feeling of being in danger.

The obvious response to the security dilemma of the CEE countries is that from the perspective of global players from among the NATO and EU member states, stability is more important than values and that there exist imaginable circumstances in which the leaders of NATO and EU will see a deal with Moscow on global issues more important than the defense of principles in Central and Eastern Europe. If the Ukrainian border and some pieces of the territory are accepted as an object of bargain to be

exchanged for peace and stability, this means, that borders and territorial sovereignty in this region are not any more a part of a 'package' that the West offers to the CEE. Nothing prevents Russia to use the same argument it uses to justify its violation of Ukrainian border and the annexation of Ukrainian territory again. The fact that the West decided not to engage in defending the territorial order in Ukraine reveals the reality that the CEE remains a Western object of the global power games with other major partners, in this case, Russia. Otherwise, if the territorial question in the CEE was definitely closed, the West would use its potential to keep the borders where they were before February 2022. To keep Russia constructive on a global stage, the West permits Moscow to be destructive on a regional stage and this brings the CEE countries back to the situation of pre-1991, a very traditional one, that its nations faced for at least last three centuries, since the moment when Peter the First declared Russia an empire and launched its march westwards.

The fatalistic nature of the security paradox that the CEE countries face consists of the fact that the West needs Russia to be weaker on the global level and to achieve it, it is ready to see Russia stronger - or at least bigger in a territorial sense - on a regional level, meanwhile, for the CEE, the calculation is reverse. The global power games between the US, China and Russia do not concern those countries unless they find reflection in a geopolitical bargaining that changes the strategic reality in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the paradoxical outcome of the war in Ukraine is that while Russia is losing its overall strategic, economic, financial and moral potential globally, it becomes stronger regionally; in terms of the size of its territory and the military capacities it mobilized in the proximity of the CEE, in terms of the war-time economy that produces more low-cost tactical warfare apt for a local war with one of the neighboring countries, and also in terms of the ideological mobilization of the Russian society persuaded that not only Ukraine, but Poland and the Baltic States are an aggressive expository of the "Washingtonian Politburo" and thus a legitimate target of Russian 'counterattack' measures. From the point of view of the CEE, the fact that Russia is at the same time losing its high-tech strategic potential designed to fight a global war does not change the balance.

The war in Ukraine demonstrated the fact that Russia not only has its own vision of international order in the CEE: post-Soviet states as its exclusive zone of strategic responsibility and former Warsaw Pact states as a demilitarized buffer zone. Additionally, it became clear that under certain circumstances, it is ready to make it real by military measures. None of the CEE countries by itself, as well as all of them theoretically blocked together do not dispose of a military potential sufficient to win a kinetic confrontation with Russia and thus, their sovereignty and territorial integrity depend on the Western guarantees. None of them wants to become an

on object of the bargain between the West and Russia in a way that Ukraine became one. The essence of the dissonance between the CEE and the rest of the West is that for the West, the cost of the conflict in Eastern Europe is negotiable, while for the concerned countries it is not. As the strategic 'social contract' between the CEE and the West was broken, there is rising awareness that the only way to securitize borders and sovereignty is not the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty but their own military potential large enough to make the cost of a potential war unacceptable for Moscow. Building such a potential will require to break the social contract inside concerned countries; to keep armies large and to buy new equipment will require a significant and long-term re-allocation of capital from the social-oriented sectors of economy towards the military. The economic miracle of certain CEE countries during last three decades was to a large extent sponsored by Western firmness and Russian weakness. None of them is true anymore and thus, the outsourcing of the security issues is not possible in the coming years. Building a strategic sufficiency in a regional dimension is possible but will have a price and there is no certitude that a social and political consensus in this domain will be reached, both inside the CEE countries and between them.

The Economic Aspect

The influence of the war on CEE economies once again shows a paradoxical outcome where the short-term effects contradict the long-term ones. On the one hand, the influx of a well-educated, skillful, motivated and easily integrable Ukrainian work force permits to fill the demographic gap that all the CEE societies struggle with and postpone the otherwise inevitable discussion on the mass immigration from non-European directions. On the other hand, the transformation of Ukraine into a quasi-failed state - and certainly into a one economically and socially incapable of delivering basic public goods to its own population - and the territorial advance of Russia westwards confront the CEE with long-term consequences. The non-questionable basic long-term objective of the CEE states is to fill the civilizational gap between the national economies and the rest of the West,

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which requires developing faster than the Western average. For the last three decades, that was possible due to the very low security risk. However, the war in Ukraine and its outcome raise the question of who will invest in the buffer zone that may any day transform into a frontline.

Keeping the economic attractiveness of the CEE requires a durable stability between the West and Russia but reaching such a stability requires a compromise with Russian demands. Making Russia weaker requires prolonging the war, but in the same time, the prolongation of the war undermines the stability and thus makes the Western investments into the region unlikely. This security trap implies an economic stalemate that will keep the CEE countries' development limited and thus not let to catch up the civilizational gap with the West. If Russia is not strategically defeated and, as a result of the war, it gains control over a part of Ukraine - which is already a fact materially and seems to be a politically accepted by the West - the post-war configuration will confront the CEE with a following dilemma: the cease-fire line will be perceived by Moscow as a temporary concession aimed as a measure to gain time and space to prepare a new phase of 'reintegration' of the rest of the post-Soviet space, and thus to a new conflict. The principle of inviolability of territorial status quo is already broken and therefore, if Ukraine is accepted by the West in borders other than the 1991 ones, any further changes may be accepted as well if the favorable circumstances happen to realize in future. This means that, from the

perspective of the CEE, any outcome other than the total restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over its territory will be perceived as a tactical pause before a new war starts. And the region endangered by a potential conflict is not the one where an economic boom takes place.

Even if the territorial compromise with Russia is accepted as a price for a tactical peace and the required military adjustments are made, economically speaking, after the war, the Russian question mutes into a Ukrainian question. The long-term economic perspectives of the CEE countries will depend less on the exact territorial outcome of this war: on how big Ukraine will be territorially. They will depend more on the functional one that is to say on what will be the role of Ukraine in the Western system if any. The post-war Ukraine will represent a number of economic challenges, not only caused by the war damage, but first of all, because the West formally took responsibility for its future, declaring Ukraine an EU candidate state. The principal difference to the pre-war situation is that, in the course of this war, the Ukrainian question has become an internal one of the West and therefore, the problems of Ukraine have become the problems of the West, with major and long-term consequences, starting with Ukraine's immediate neighbors among EU member states. If Ukraine in its new territorial shape after the ceasefire with Russia is to have any chance to remain an independent state, it has to keep and enlarge its self-defense potential, which is impossible without a demographic reserve, which, in turn, is unrealistic to

ach,eve without creating acceptable economic and social living conditions. The post-war Ukraine shall not only be a vitrine of a Western development model's superiority over the Russian one, but first and foremost, a country where Ukrainians will be willing to live and, if needed, a state and society they will be ready to defend.

Transforming Ukraine into a state close to European standards of governance and living was already a difficult task before the war, and now, as the hostilities are about to finish, the institutional and mental obstacles such as corruption, questionable property rights, selective rule of law and poor management will be multiplied by the demographic and infrastructural havoc. Ukraine, for a period still difficult to define in exact time frames will simply not be a country able to sustain itself. It will entirely depend on external funding and assistance. And this post-war reality will confront the CEE countries with a politically uneasy choice. The key question will be about how much means are they ready to divert from their own budgets as well as from the EU's funds to assist Ukraine. And this choice will have to be made in the situation where all of them are still underdeveloped and need assistance to catch up the gap between them and the rest of Europe. The other paradoxical aspect of the situation is the fact that the countries whose security is potentially the most endangered if Ukraine falls under the Russian dominance are at the same time the countries whose economy is the most endangered by Ukraine. Both in terms of the stability of their markets and the competition for the European financial redistribution. From the point of view of CEE countries, the aim of this war is not only to contain Russia without engaging into a direct kinetic conflict with Moscow, but to turn Ukraine into an economic asset. From this point of view, the convergence between Ukrainian economy and European standards shall happen before making the political decision of letting Ukraine into the common market, as it happened on their own long and difficult path of restructuration required by Brussels. On the other hand, Ukraine argues that it deserves the immediate access as a victim of Russian aggression and requires the integration without meeting common standards, as the reforms are impossible to carry out during the wartime. The tension between political and strategic objectives on one hand and the economic and social stability on the other creates a space of potential conflict between the CEE and the post-war Ukraine.

Up to now, the economic concessions such as opening the European market for Ukrainian agricultural production were seen and vastly accepted as a price for the victory over Moscow. However, since December 2022, Ukraine has not advance on the frontline, the CEE's societies feel less and less committed to support Ukraine; if the commodity - the military victory - is not delivered by Kiev, than the price - the access to the market - is not seen as a price worth to be paid. This modified attitude is very visible in the form of Polish farmers' protests against the presence of Ukrainian goods on the domestic market. In the CEE, and not only in Budapest, Ukraine is more and more seen as a European fare dodger, selling the Russian threat for European money. But, to keep this deal valid in the eyes of European taxpayers a military result shall be presented. The problem is that the result is not clear and it does not seem that it will be any time in a near future. The frontline stabilized itself and the actual territorial status quo will most probably be frozen and formalized by the ceasefire. From the European perspective, the service was delivered, the price was paid, and as there is no further production on the contractor's side, there would be no payment on the purchaser's side. Ukraine is definitely an important component of CEE's strategic depth, but at the end of the day, Ukrainians are first and foremost fighting for their own land and statehood, and if they cannot do more, no other nation will do that for them and instead of them.

The situation is very likely to get even more complicated when the cease-fire is reached and Ukraine has all its right to see the integration process accelerated, especially in terms of sharing the EU structural and development funds according to the currently existing criteria. This will provoke further tensions because even the richest region of Ukraine is poorer than the poorest Polish region, which means that from the CEE countries perspective, the European cake will shrink at their expense. As a result, if Ukraine is to keep its European prospect and be integrated into EU either the budget shall be dramatically expanded - and this immediately puts the question of the Ukrainian contribution on the table- or the criteria have to be modified. The former solution implies the discussion on which EU members shall pay more to the common budget – those who are economically sustainable will do that or those, who are politically and strategically most interested in supporting Ukraine. The former solution implies another question: shall the rules be modified for all or only for Ukraine treated as a separated special case.

Conclusions

The most obvious outcome of this war is that the CEE countries were confirmed in their international status of being the part of the West. During the whole conflict Vladimir Putin respected the redline of not attacking the EU and NATO members' territories. At the same time, Ukraine was not confirmed as a part of the West. This is relatively good news, but the bad one is that in the foreseeable future, the CEE will remain the periphery of the West and will not move to its core. The borderline between the Western and Russian zones of influence will stay where it is with all strategic, political

> **The territorial division of Ukraine, which results from this war, obviously violates the international law and simple human morality, but it possibly reflects the actual balance of power, not only from the point of view of military potential, but also from the one of values. Of the civilizational choice.**

and economic consequences for the frontline countries. In this sense, seen in the historical context, the Ukrainian war did not bring anything new. It was not an order-changing conflict resulting in a new regional architecture. The already existing division between Central and Eastern Europe was once again confirmed; the former belongs to the West as it has been since roughly the 10th century, the latter's status, however, is to be determined in future.

At least a few times, this war could potentially escalate from a bilateral local one into a multi-lateral regional one, but both the West with a conscious approval of the CEE states and Russia decided it not to happen. This fact reflects the fact, that the borders between two big 'geopolitical' entities – the Western and the Russian one – are not incidental and reflect an actually existing and most probably durable power ratio between the two. The Russian territorial expansionism and Moscow's readiness to act as a revisionist power are not unexpected, at least for the CEE nations, but at the same time, its failed attempt to suppress the Ukrainian statehood or at least take control over the half of its territory confirm the fact that the buffer zone between the two is relatively stable. The West has technically enough potential to defend territories of the EU and NATO member states but not to enlarge it. As a result of the war, still the 82% of Ukrainian territory is not controlled by Russia which gives the CEE countries time and space to feel relatively comfortable. Even if the pessimistic scenario is one day realized, there is still a lot to do for the Russian army before it may even dream of taking Vilnius or Warsaw.

The other fundamental outcome of this war is that during the active phase of the conflict, the direct deal between Russia and the West at the expense of CEE's territorial or political rights did not happen neither in the continental format nor in the global one. From the CEE countries' perspective, this is a major fact, because the historical experience of those countries shows that Russia alone is not an existential threat to their sovereignty and it may only expand to the Central Europe if it finds an active cooperation or passive acceptance of major Western actors as it happened during the partitions of Poland, during the Vienna Congress in 1815, in 1939 and in 1945. If such a deal was not concluded now in the form of the West accepting the Lavrov's proposals presented in December 2021, it means, that in the eyes of the West,

Russia has no bargaining potential to transform Central Europe into a currency in its power games with other major powers. If Russia could do or refrain from doing something really important to the West in other regions or domains, there would surely be no hesitation in Washington, Paris or Berlin, as there was none in Tehran and Yalta. Moreover, Russia is perceived as a weak enough player to be quickly and easily isolated from European political and economic concert. And making Russia a non-factor in Europe, excluded from any discussions about European order is exactly what CEE countries wish and intend to do. The CEE's purpose vis-à-vis Russia is to put it behind a new Iron Curtain, but this time, finding themselves on the right side of it.

The isolation of Russia from Europe has consequences broader than regional. If the demarcation of the zones of influence is confirmed and the two entities do not perceive each other as potential partners - which was a fact between 1991 and 2022 - the idea of ideological and political convergence between Russia and the West has to be abandoned on both sides. This implies the end of the liberal dreams of seeing Russia as a part of a common axiological space and marks the end of 'the end of history' as Francis Fukuyama would formulate it. Russia will politically remain what it is – a semi-totalitarian personalistic regime – and the war in Ukraine only accelerated the already ongoing trend of suppression of everything that looked like the expression of Western values. The most probable practical reflection of this polarization will be the following: no westernization or regime change in Russia and, at the same time no reforms in (still existing) Ukraine. A kind of balanced result.

At the expense of hundreds of thousands of human lives and devastated territories, the regional order was confirmed; CEE countries were not attacked, Belarus was not incorporated and Ukraine was not suppressed as an independent state. Yes, it was divided and diminished but those divisions already existed before the active phase of conflict. In a wider sense, the actual frontline between Ukraine and Russia may be a response to where the West really ends. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski's qualification, Ukraine was an internally divided state and, for decades of the independence, the internal conflicts did not find an internal solution. The territorial division of Ukraine, which results from this war, obviously violates the international law and simple human morality, but it possibly reflects the actual balance of power, not only from the point of view of military potential, but also from the one of values of the civilizational choice.

As a result, the West lost its illusion of convergence with Russia, the CEE countries lost their illusion of Ukraine and Belarus repeating their own path of democratization, modernization and westernization and Russia lost its illusion of the imperial restoration. The civilizational border stays where it was two years ago and, indeed, for the last millennium.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TURKISH-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Turkish-Hungarian relations have developed into a fruitful partnership characterized by friendship, cooperation, and mutual respect. The multi-faceted collaboration between the historical foundations and the diplomatic, economic, and cultural spheres underpins the continued strength of this important relationship and holds further opportunities for growth.

Meszár Tárik

Researcher, Eurasia Center of John von Neumann University, Budapest, Hungary
Mathias Corvinus Collegium, Migration Research Institute, Budapest, Hungary

Turkish-Hungarian relations are deep-rooted and date back several centuries, and currently, strong cooperation has developed between the two nations. Relations between the two countries are characterized by cultural exchanges, shared experiences, and historical interactions. Today, Türkiye and Hungary maintain a strong partnership in several areas. They visit each other regularly at the diplomatic level, demonstrating their commitment to maintaining bilateral relations. As far as the economy is concerned, trade and investment activities are booming, and the numerous joint ventures and cooperations are increasing mutual prosperity. Not to be forgotten are the cultural sphere, traditions, arts, and educational programs, whose lively exchanges foster deeper understanding between the two peoples. Moreover, Türkiye and Hungary frequently coordinate their positions on regional and global issues, emphasizing shared values and interests. This foreign policy convergence strengthens their diplomatic cooperation and paves the way for joint initiatives in various international forums. Overall, it can be said that Turkish-Hungarian relations have developed into a fruitful partnership characterized by friendship, cooperation, and mutual respect. The multi-faceted collaboration between the historical foundations and the diplomatic, economic, and cultural spheres underpins the continued strength of this important relationship and holds further

opportunities for growth. In the study, we present the evolution of the relationship between the two countries in different eras and also discuss the current common demands and the possible ways to develop bilateral relations.

The Beginnings: The Relationship of the Hungarians with the Turkic Peoples before the Conquest of the Carpathian Basin

Until the arrival of the ancient Hungarian people in the Carpathian Basin and the conquest (895-896), it was in constant contact with various Turkic peoples, and according to some theories it is also possible that it was formed from the union of Finno-Ugric and Oghur Turkic elements.[1] It is certain that the Turks exerted a linguistic and cultural influence on the Hungarians. This relationship brought linguistic, cultural, and population changes and still affects Hungarian identity today. The origins of the Hungarians and the exact details of their arrival in the Carpathian Basin remain controversial, but based on research and historical sources, it is clear that the Hungarian people were in contact with various Turkic peoples in the eastern region centuries before the Hungarian conquest (of the Carpathian Basin).[2] These relations provided the opportunity to exchange goods and information and to share various cultural elements. It is

important to know that, in general, trade routes and nomadic way of life contributed to the development and maintenance of relations between different peoples.

As mentioned above, the relationship with the Turkic peoples had a significant impact on the language of the Hungarians.[3] The Turkic languages are similar to Hungarian in many respects, and many common linguistic features can be identified. Thus, it can be said that the latter language was enriched with Turkic elements during the contact with Turkic peoples, on the one hand with the vocabulary and on the other hand with grammatical peculiarities. It can be observed that the adopted words and linguistic features can be found in the Hungarian language until today, which indicates the long-term effects of the contact with the Turkic peoples.[4] Cultural contact was also significant. The culture, art, and religion of the Turkic peoples influenced early Hungarians. For example, the traditional nomadic lifestyle and equestrian culture of the Turkic peoples had an inspiring effect on the Hungarians, who also maintained a nomadic lifestyle and fought on horseback for centuries.[5]

The population has undergone demographic changes over time. Interactions with Turkic peoples had an impact on the structure and cultural identity of the population. One of the most important of these changes was the transformation of the tribal organization of the Hungarians. Relations with Turkic peoples strengthened the tribal identity and unity. Following the model of the Turkic tribal organization, the Hungarians organized

> **Thus, the period of Ottoman-Turkish conquests was full of contradictions in Hungarian history. Although the Kingdom of Hungary suffered heavy losses, at the same time the culture was enriched by Turkish elements.**

themselves into various tribes, which formed the Hungarian tribal federation through alliances among themselves.[6] Moreover, the relations also opened economic and trade opportunities for the Hungarians, as they gave them access to eastern goods and various trade routes, thanks to which the Hungarians could participate in the trade and economic development of the region. It is important to mention that the religion of the Turkic tribes also influenced the Hungarian people. The polytheistic religion of Tengrism, in which the forces of nature, ancestors, and spirits were worshipped, influenced the religious beliefs and customs of the Hungarians. The traditional religion of the Hungarian people has many similarities with the religious practices of the Turkic tribes.[7]

The Ottoman-Turkish Conquests

The Ottoman Empire conquered and ruled the southern and central parts of what had been the Kingdom of Hungary from 1541 to 1699. The Ottoman rule covered almost the entire region of the Great Hungarian Plain and Southern Transdanubia. The north-western rim of the Hungarian Kingdom remained unconquered and recognized members of the House of Habsburg as Kings of Hungary, giving it the name "Royal Hungary."[8] However, the period of Ottoman Turkish conquests had many negative consequences. The Hungarian territories subjugated by the Turks suffered heavy human and material losses. The Turkish troops launched campaigns, carried out repeated attacks, and destroyed numerous settlements. This ongoing conflict caused severe economic and infrastructural damage in the region.[9] The country was in a constant state of war and the population suffered the consequences of the conflicts and Turkish oppression. The division of the Kingdom of Hungary into several parts had a long-term effect on the unity and identity of the Hungarian nation. In the areas ruled by the Turks, the population was forced to adapt to Turkish rule, and the practice of the Christian religion was also subject to

restrictions. It can be concluded that the period of Ottoman-Turkish conquests was a great challenge for the Hungarian people. However, it should be noted that the areas under Turkish rule came into contact with Turkish culture and way of life. The Turkish influence had a significant impact on the Hungarian culture, and despite the negative experiences, it was enriched with Turkish elements. This cultural interaction was especially felt in the fields of art, language, music, architecture, religion, and gastronomy.

During the Turkish occupation, some Hungarians converted to Islam, mainly because of taxes and privileges. The Turks, on the other hand, generally did not impose their religion on others and were mostly tolerant towards Christians and Jews.[10] This is also proven by the fact that there was no mass conversion among Hungarians. Moreover, many mosques were built on the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary during Turkish rule, some of which can still be seen today. As for linguistic influences, the Hungarian language adopted many Turkish words during the Turkish subjugation, especially in the fields of trade, warfare, architecture, and food. Examples of such words are "ostor" (whip), "bicska" (knife), "csizma" (boot), "mecset" (mosque), "kávé" (coffee), "dandár" (brigade), "papucs" (slipper), "korbács" (whip), "sátor" (tent), etc. The Turkish language has also adopted some Hungarian words, such as "çardaş" (small bar), "çigan" (gypsy), "gulaş" (goulache soup), "koçu" (carriage), soba (room), etc.[11] However, not only the language, but also Turkish music had an influence on the development of Hungarian folk music.[12] Ottoman musical styles and orchestration techniques were integrated into the Hungarian folk music tradition, and many Turkish-influenced melodies and rhythms have survived in Hungarian folk music. Significant Turkish influences can also be seen in the field of architecture, consider the Buda Castle or the Turkish baths. In addition, Turkish influences can also be felt in gastronomy. The flavors and preparation methods of Turkish cuisine have been incorporated into Hungarian gastronomy; just a few Turkish-influenced dishes such as "töltött káposzta" (cabbage roll) or "lángos" (fried flatbread) may be mentioned as examples.[13]

Thus, the period of Ottoman-Turkish conquests was full of contradictions in Hungarian history. Although the Kingdom of Hungary suffered heavy losses, at the same time the culture was enriched by Turkish elements. It is enough to mention the Hungarian clothing and fashion of that period. Turkish designs and patterns influenced the design and decoration of Hungarian clothing. Turkish influences could also be seen in the clothing of nobles and peasants, in which oriental motifs and colors appeared. Coexistence was also noticeable in the field of literature. During the Ottoman Turkish conquests, many Hungarian poets and writers translated Turkish works or were inspired by Turkish literary traditions.[14] Ottoman

> **Turkish-Hungarian political, economic, and cultural relations gained momentum especially in the second half of the 19th century and reached a new level at the beginning of the 20th century.**

Turkish literary traditions influenced Hungarian poetry and prose and enriched the works that were included in the Hungarian literary canon.

The 19th-20th Century Events

In the 19th century, both the Turks and the Hungarians were affected by the rising nationalism and the desire for independence from foreign powers. The Turks wanted to reform and modernize the declining Ottoman Empire, which was under pressure from European powers. The Hungarians wanted to gain autonomy or independence from the Habsburg Empire, which ruled most of Hungary after the Ottomans withdrew. In the 19th century, European powers vied for influence and territory in the Balkans, where the Ottoman Empire was losing ground. The European powers frequently interfered in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The Hungarians also faced interference from the Habsburg Empire, which tried to suppress their autonomy and culture. Both the Hungarians and the Turks found themselves in a similar situation during this period.

In 1914, the First World War broke out, in which the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) and the Entente Powers (British Empire, France, Russian Empire, Kingdom of Italy and later the United States) faced each other. The Turks and the Hungarians were on the same side in this war, fighting their common enemies. The war had devastating consequences for both nations as many people lost their lives and significant territories fell. The war led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkish-Hungarian political, economic, and cultural relations gained momentum especially in the second half of the 19th century and reached a new level at the beginning of the 20th century.[15] Particularly noteworthy is the Hungarian Institute for Science in Constantinople, which was founded in 1916 by the Ministry of Religion and National Education of the Kingdom of Hungary under the patronage of Archduke Ferenc József to promote relations between Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire and between Hungarians and Turks.[16] The Institute was of great importance to both Hungary and Türkiye and served as a center for Hungarian

scholars, intellectuals and researchers who wished to promote scientific and cultural exchange between the two nations. Its establishment was a mutual recognition of common interests and the importance of intellectual cooperation in times of conflict. It played a crucial role in promoting scientific research and cooperation between Hungary and Türkiye. It provided a space for Hungarian scholars to study Turkish culture, history, and language while facilitating Turkish scholars' access to Hungarian scientific achievements and knowledge. The goal of the Institute was to deepen mutual understanding and strengthen relations between the two nations through these exchanges.

The establishment of the Hungarian Institute for Science in Constantinople is a good example of the determination of Hungary and Türkiye to build strong ties even in times of political tension. It underscores the importance of intellectual exchange and cultural diplomacy as a means of promoting understanding and strengthening international relations. The Institute's legacy works not only in the academic and cultural spheres but also in the broader context of Turkish-Hungarian relations. The Institute's legacy is a reminder that intellectual and cultural diplomacy can build bridges and promote understanding, even in times of political turmoil.

The Period of the 20th Century Peace Treaties

After the end of World War I, both Hungary and Türkiye were dissatisfied with the postwar peace treaties. The Treaty of Trianon was a peace treaty between Hungary, which had lost World War I (as one of the successor states to the Austro-Hungarian Empire), and the victorious Entente powers that, among other things, established Hungary's new borders as a result of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and created many small multinational states in place of the monarchy.[17] The primary goal of the Allied victorious powers in World War I was to fundamentally weaken Germany and the countries allied with it. They also wanted to demand substantial war reparations and break the unity of multinational great powers such as Austria-Hungary or the Ottoman Empire. The decision-makers could not ignore the hostile attitude toward Hungarians that prevailed throughout Europe. What the Treaty of Trianon was for Hungary, the Treaty of Sèvres was for Türkiye, which dismembered the Ottoman Empire. On 10 August 1920, the envoys of Sultan Mehmed Vahideddin and the Allied powers signed the Peace Treaty of Sèvres, which deprived the Ottoman Empire of about 3/4 of its territories (this was even more serious than the peace with the Hungarians). The peace decree was rejected by the Turkish National Assembly led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which had been formed independently

of the Sultan's government (as early as 23 April 1920), and between 1920 and 1923 Türkiye waged a war to revise the decree, which was ratified by the Peace of Lausanne on 24 July 1923. During the war, on 1 November 1922, the previous form of government of the Ottoman Empire, the Sultanate, was abolished and the Republic of Türkiye was established on 29 October 1923.[18]

These peace treaties, signed after World War I, resulted in territorial losses, population shifts, and significant changes in the political and social situation in both countries. Although the specific details and circumstances of each treaty were different, they had in common that they caused significant disruption and difficulties for the Hungarian and Turkish populations. Both treaties not only changed the territorial boundaries of Hungary and Türkiye but also had significant demographic implications. Most Hungarians and Turks found themselves outside their own country, which significantly isolated the former citizens of the empires who were stuck abroad. The treaties also affected cultural and linguistic heritage. Although the specific effects and context of the Treaty of Trianon and the Treaty of Sèvres were different, Hungary and Türkiye suffered a similar fate in terms of the major changes brought about by the peace treaties. These had a lasting impact on the national consciousness and historical image of both countries and shaped their path and identity in the following decades.

From the Second Half of the 20th Century to the Beginning of the 21st Century

After World War II, Turkish-Hungarian relations cooled somewhat, largely due to the effects of the Cold War. Since the 1980s, however, relations between the two countries have improved significantly. The regime change in Hungary played a crucial role in reshaping the dynamics between the two nations and led to increased support for Türkiye's European integration efforts. Both Hungary (since 1999) and Türkiye (since 1952) are members of NATO, further strengthening their partnership.

In the 21st century, Hungary and Türkiye have become strategic partners, cooperating closely in various fields. At the political level, the two countries have forged close ties and promoted diplomatic dialog and cooperation on regional and international issues. Hungary has always supported Türkiye's integration into European structures and advocated its accession to the European Union.[19] This shared vision of European integration created common ground and strengthened bilateral cooperation between the two countries. On the economic level, trade relations between Hungary and Türkiye developed significantly. Both countries recognized the potential for mutually beneficial economic

cooperation and actively worked to expand trade and investment opportunities. Trade agreements and joint ventures have facilitated the exchange of goods and services, strengthened economic ties, and promoted prosperity in both countries. Military cooperation between Hungary and Türkiye has also increased.[20] As NATO allies, the two countries work closely together on defense and security issues. Joint military exercises, training programs, and information sharing have enhanced the military capabilities and interoperability of the two countries' armed forces. This cooperation serves to strengthen regional security and contributes to the collective defense efforts of NATO.

In the 21st century, cultural relations between Hungary and Türkiye have also deepened. Cultural festivals, exhibitions, and art projects presented the rich traditions and artistic expressions of both countries. These cultural interactions not only brought people closer together but also enabled a broader exchange of ideas and perspectives and fostered mutual understanding and respect.[21]

In addition, Hungary and Türkiye have sought closer cooperation in recent years in areas such as energy, tourism, and education. Collaboration in the energy sector includes joint projects and investments in natural gas, renewable energy, and infrastructure development. In the tourism sector, bilateral visits have increased, with both countries using their historical and cultural heritage to attract tourists. In addition, cooperation in education has expanded, facilitating student exchanges, academic partnerships, and research collaborations.[22] Moreover, the two countries have demonstrated their commitment to regional stability, cooperation in the fight against terrorism, and addressing global challenges. It fosters their joint positions on global issues in international organizations and platforms.[23]

In light of all this, it can be stated that Turkish-Hungarian relations in the 21st century have evolved into a strategic partnership characterized by close political, economic, military, and cultural cooperation. The improvement in relations is due to Hungary's support for Türkiye's European integration efforts and a shared vision of regional stability. The two nations view each other as valuable partners, working together to advance their mutual interests and contribute to peace and prosperity in their respective regions and beyond.

> **It is an important development that Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs, traveled to the Turkish capital on April 19, 2022, to visit the future three-thousand-square-meter construction site of a new embassy in the spirit of strengthening relations with Türkiye.**

Turkish-Hungarian Relations Today

As mentioned above, Turkish-Hungarian relations have recently developed dynamically, both economically and strategically. The two countries have significantly expanded their mutual trade, and Hungary has repeatedly stated that Türkiye is a partner of utmost importance for the country.[24] This is reflected in the investments and cooperation we have witnessed recently, but it is also a non-negligible fact that visits at the level of heads of state and ministers are becoming more frequent, where extremely important decisions and agreements are made. If we look only at the economy, we can see that Türkiye is one of the fastest-growing countries in the world and has a good chance to become one of the largest market economies within a few years.[25] Türkiye is also an indispensable factor for energy security and the fight against illegal immigration[26], so cooperation with the Turks can be of great benefit to Hungary.[27]

The Hungarian-Turkish economic relations began to develop extraordinarily well. Hungarian-Turkish trade turnover reached a record in 2021, and the trade turnover of $4 billion meant an increase of 15% compared to 2020. Hungarian exports to Türkiye amounted to $2.5 billion in 2021, which meant an increase of 21%.[28]

As far as cultural relations between the two countries are concerned, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2024 will be marked with a joint cultural year, but many other projects are also aimed at strengthening Hungarian-Turkish cultural relations.[29] For example, the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Istanbul has existed since 2014, while the Yunus Emre Institute in Budapest has a similar function. Both institutions are committed to presenting the culture of the other side.

It is an important development that Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs, traveled to the Turkish capital on April 19, 2022, to visit the future three-thousand-square-meter construction site of a new embassy in the spirit of strengthening relations with Türkiye. During his stay, Péter Szijjártó also held talks with former Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in the Turkish capital Ankara, after which a joint press conference was held.[30]

1. The foreign minister said that cooperation between Hungary and Türkiye has always been a priority of Hungarian foreign policy and should be further developed in the future. Szijjártó also said that, in his opinion, the big election victory of the ruling parties was a clear guarantee that Türkiye would continue to occupy an important place in Hungarian foreign policy in the future. Three extremely important points can be extracted from the Hungarian foreign minister's remarks[31]:

2. At a press conference with his former Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, he said that the economic and security challenges caused by the war in Ukraine underscore the importance of further expanding the strategic partnership. Hungary highly appreciates Türkiye's role in mediating between the parties and promoting peace negotiations. The minister warned that the Islamic State terrorist organization was planning further attacks in Europe, which is why border protection and the fight against illegal migration[32] were becoming increasingly important. "We will not allow illegal migrants to come to Hungary, and Türkiye plays a key role in this," he said, calling on the EU to pay the full amount it promised Ankara for detaining illegal immigrants instead of "haggling" with Türkiye.[33]

3. He also addressed the fact that Türkiye has become an important hub for natural gas transportation. He confirmed that energy deliveries to Russia to our country are proceeding according to the contractually agreed schedule and that Türkiye plays a key role in this, as ten million cubic meters of natural gas are delivered daily via the route in question.

And Çavuşoğlu spoke of the "deep friendship and strategic partnership" between Türkiye and Hungary, adding that bilateral relations are developing in all areas, and he appreciated Hungary's active support for Türkiye's EU accession process.

It is an important development that Çavuşoğlu and Szijjártó laid the foundation stone for the new Hungarian Embassy in Ankara. "The construction of the new 3,000-square-metre embassy building in Ankara begins," Péter Szijjártó announced on his Facebook page, where he also shared a photo of the construction.[34] He also said that the building was expected to be handed over in mid-2023. The Hungarian foreign minister also pointed out that Hungary has doubled the number of its diplomats in Türkiye since he took office and plans to increase it further.

The Hungarian foreign and trade minister also made other important announcements in Türkiye:[35]

- "Budapest and Ankara have established an operational working group to improve trade and economic cooperation for even closer cooperation.

- The war has now made truck freight traffic even more valuable. There are 50 Turkish customs officers at the Hungarian-Romanian and Hungarian-Serbian border crossings, which are mostly used by Turkish truckers.

- East-west railroad traffic has also become partly impossible due to the war-related situation and is partly facing extraordinary challenges, so the ministers responsible for transport have established a railroad working group within the framework of Turkish-Bulgarian-Serbian-Hungarian cooperation.

- In order to encourage Turkish investment, the government will provide 14 billion forints for the investment of the Turkish company Sisecam in Kaposvár, which will create 320 new jobs in Somogy County as part of a 100 billion forint project.

- In parallel, the Hungarian company Medicor is building a medical equipment factory in Turkey with government support.

- Finally, as part of a government program, we are helping Hungarian companies enter the Turkish market in the areas of power plant construction, water management, and the printing industry, and Hungary's Eximbank is ready to support further Hungarian-Turkish economic cooperation with a 105 million euro credit line."

As we have seen, we can report an increasingly intensive Hungarian-Turkish cooperation, which is guaranteed to increase in the near future. The cooperation concerns areas such as trade, investment, defense policy, and energy security, but cultural ties should not be ignored either. The nearly three thousand square meter embassy building in Ankara, which would be completed by mid-2023, is also an expression of the special relationship. Clearly, the challenges will only further strengthen the established close relationship. The security issues following the Russian-Ukrainian war have shown the Hungarian and Turkish sides the importance of developing a strategic partnership, and the leaders of both countries have stated that they are interested in a peaceful resolution of the conflict. To achieve this, Türkiye is playing an active role, which is also supported by the Hungarian government.

A Possible Way to Develop Cooperation

Turkish-Hungarian cooperation has already made significant progress in many areas, but this partnership can be further developed in various directions to deepen and promote relations between the two countries. Above all, the economy holds enormous potential. Both Türkiye and Hungary have diverse and complementary economies that are conducive to both trade and investment. Exploring new sectors and identifying areas of mutual benefit can lead to an increase in bilateral trade and joint ventures. Fostering business and investment ties through trade missions, business forums, and other events can help create new opportunities for companies from both countries.

Moreover, strengthening relations in the energy sector is a promising path for the Turkish-Hungarian partnership. Projects in the energy sector, such as joint investments in renewable energy, infrastructure development, and exploration and production of natural gas, can contribute to the energy security, diversification, and sustainability of both countries. Sharing expertise, technological know-how, and best practices in the energy sector can pave the way for a more sustainable and flexible energy future. In addition, it should be emphasized that cooperation in the field of innovation and technology can be further developed. Support for research and development projects, joint innovation programs, and knowledge sharing between universities, research institutes, and the private sector can foster innovation and drive technological development in both countries. This can lead to the development of innovative products, processes, and services, promoting economic growth, and competitiveness.

In addition, cultural and educational exchange programs provide another opportunity to deepen Turkish-Hungarian relations. Expanding student exchange programs, scholarships, and college partnerships can promote mutual understanding and knowledge sharing. Scientific projects between Turkish and Hungarian universities can be supported by funding joint research projects, scientific programs, and faculty exchange programs. There is also great potential for development in the field of tourism. Mutual promotion of touristic

> **As both countries strive to deepen their relations, the future holds great opportunities for further strengthening relations between Türkiye and Hungary, which would be to the benefit of not only the two nations but also the entire international community at large.**

activities, development of marketing campaigns, and facilitation of travel between the two countries can boost this segment and create new opportunities for the hospitality industry.

If we take a closer look at the defense and security sector, we can say that the deepening interaction between Türkiye and Hungary can contribute to regional stability and address common security challenges. Joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and peacekeeping operations can improve the capabilities and efficiency of both countries' defense forces. Strengthening defense ties can also create opportunities for defense industry development, including joint research and development projects and defense equipment and technology exchanges. It should also be remembered that by taking advantage of the strategic geographic locations of both Türkiye and Hungary, the development of both countries in the field of infrastructure development and logistics is possible. Cooperation in the development of transportation networks, including railroads, highways, and maritime links, can improve connectivity, facilitate trade, and promote regional integration. Joint initiatives in logistics and supply chain management can optimize trade flows and create more efficient supply routes.

In summary, Turkish-Hungarian relations have a promising future with many more opportunities for development. Expanding economic ties, promoting joint energy projects, innovation and technology partnerships, strengthening cultural and educational exchanges, promoting tourism, strengthening defense and security ties, and collaborating on infrastructure and logistics projects offer tremendous potential. By exploring these avenues, the two countries can develop a more comprehensive and robust partnership and promote common goals of peace, prosperity, and regional integration.

Conclusion

Turkish-Hungarian relations have a rich and varied history that has benefited both nations through the exchange of values and experiences. Fruitful cooperation in different fields between Türkiye and Hungary continue to this day and have the potential to deepen even further in the future. Throughout history, the two countries have interacted in different ways, sometimes with a positive tone, and sometimes with a negative tone. An excellent example of this is that during the Ottoman Empire's expansion into Central Europe, contact between the Ottoman Turks and the Hungarians, while often marked by conflict and fighting, was nevertheless characterized by cultural exchange, joint trade, and knowledge transfer. Recently, Türkiye and Hungary have further developed their relations in various fields. Diplomatic visits, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges played an important role in strengthening relations between the two countries. These interactions led to closer trade relations, investments, and joint cultural events that further fostered relations between the two parties. In addition, Türkiye and Hungary have also demonstrated their mutual support on international platforms. The two countries often share common

positions on important global issues and share common values such as sovereignty, regional stability, and cooperation. This balance of interests has contributed to a sense of unity and a common purpose, bringing Türkiye and Hungary closer together. The outlook for Turkish-Hungarian relations is promising. Both nations recognize the importance of drawing on their shared values and experiences. Both sides can continue to deepen their relations by further promoting cultural understanding, strengthening economic partnerships, and fostering people-to-people exchanges. As both countries strive to deepen their relations, the future holds great opportunities for further strengthening relations between Türkiye and Hungary, which would be to the benefit of not only the two nations but also the entire international community at large.

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32 For Europe, typical gatekeeper states are Türkiye, Morocco, Niger, Libya, or Serbia. See: Marsai, 2023.
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RELATIONS OF HUNGARY AND UKRAINE THROUGH THE LENS OF TRANSCARPATHIA

The common past of the Hungarian and Ukrainian people goes back more than a thousand years. The relationship was not always cloudless, but at the same time, the principles of cooperation and good neighborliness were always the guiding principles.

Dr. Sandor Seremet

Researcher, Eurasia Center at the John von Neumann University, Budapest, Hungary
Senior Research Fellow, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, Budapest, Hungary

The history of Hungary and Ukraine has been closely intertwined over the centuries. The common past of the Hungarian and Ukrainian people goes back more than a thousand years. The relationship was not always cloudless, but at the same time, the principles of cooperation and good neighborliness were always the guiding principles. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Hungary was one of the first to recognize Ukraine, and diplomatic relations between the two neighbors began from the first minute. The westernmost region of Ukraine - Transcarpathia (Zakarpattia oblast. In this study, the more traditional version - Transcarpathia - will be used) - has always played a very important role in the relationship between independent Ukraine and Hungary. In the relationship between the two countries, this peripheral area with a mixed population is a determining factor - sometimes a bridge between the two countries and other times a source of their conflicts.

This study is intended to present the Transcarpathian context of Hungarian-Ukrainian relations, its role, and the change in its significance from the declaration of Ukraine's independence to the present day. In this study, we will briefly examine the history of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Hungary and their development depending on the policies of the leadership of the two countries.

Relations until the Revolution of Dignity 2014

Ukrainian-Hungarian relations have a long history. During the past more than thirty years, they took place in the spirit of good neighborliness, mutual respect, and support. Hungary was one of the first to recognize the independence of Ukraine, and the delegation of the Hungarian State Assembly was the first parliamentary delegation to participate in the meeting of the Supreme Council of Ukraine. Leonid Kravchuk, the Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament at the time, made his first visit to Hungary. During the visit, the "Declaration on the Basis of Relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Hungary and the "Consular Convention, and the Declaration on the Principles of Cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and Ukraine" in the field of ensuring the rights of national minorities were approved. Hungary was the first country, which established diplomatic relations with Ukraine after the restoration of its independence. On 6 December 1991, during Prime Minister József Antal's visit to Ukraine, the "Treaty on the Basics of Good Neighbor and Cooperation" was signed between Ukraine and Hungary, which entered into force on 16 June 1993. This became the first basic document of the cooperation between the two countries.[1]

During the visit of the Hungarian prime minister, the Hungarian embassy was opened in the Ukrainian capital, and on 24 March 1992, the Embassy of Ukraine in Hungary was opened in a ceremonial setting, which became the first diplomatic mission of Ukraine. In 1993, the statutes of the "Carpathian Euroregion Interregional Association" were approved. This was the first Euroregion in which the border regions of Hungary and Ukraine also participated. In the same year, President Leonid Kravchuk (2004-2005) visited Hungary and during his visit, several agreements were signed, which defined the directions of

further cooperation between the two countries. It is worth mentioning that both states also joined several international conventions related to the protection of the rights of national minorities such as the "1995 Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe," and the "European Charter of Regional Languages and National Minority Languages of the Council of Europe in 1996."[2]

Inter-parliamentary relations have also become regular. In September 1994, during the stay in Hungary of the delegation of the Parliament of Ukraine (*Verkhovna Rada*) led by Oleksandr Moroz, an agreement was signed between Rada and the National Assembly of Hungary on the cooperation between the two bodies. The relations between the two countries only strengthened with the start of Hungary's NATO and EU integration processes. There were regular formal and informal meetings on the issue of Baltic-Black Sea cooperation. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán visited Ukraine in February 2000. During his visit, he held talks with Viktor Yushchenko, the then-prime minister. As a result of the negotiations, the work of the "Ukrainian-Hungarian Intergovernmental Economic Cooperation Joint Committee" was activated. It was then that the issue of national minorities began to take shape.[3]

The stable and positive dynamic of Ukrainian-Hungarian relations was maintained even during the time of President Yushchenko (2005-2010). Economic cooperation continued to grow and priority was given to the development and improvement of cross-border cooperation. The issue of the rights of the Hungarian community in Ukraine remained on the agenda. The

issue of diversification of the energy supply also arose, since the so-called Russian-Ukrainian gas war took place during the time of President Yushchenko. Hungary called Russia a reliable partner, which caused some displeasure in Kyiv. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian president and the Hungarian prime minister met in 2006 and 2007. During the meetings, in addition to European integration and environmental protection issues, the issue of meeting the needs of national minorities was also discussed. Despite the disagreements that arose, the relationship could be called well-functioning.[4]

Pursuant to the Constitution of Hungary adopted in 2011, Hungary assumes responsibility for Hungarian communities abroad, moreover, according to Hungary's 2010 law, Hungarians living abroad could become Hungarian citizens through a simplified naturalization procedure. On the part of the Ukrainian leadership, this caused some criticism due to the possibility of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community becoming dual citizens, but Budapest also made gestures towards its own nationalities that to some extent took the edge off the problem. Pursuant to the 2011 Election Act, representatives of the Ukrainian nationalities are entitled to represent their communities at the highest level as well.[5] Relations also developed well during Viktor Yanukovych's presidency (2010-2014). The Hungarian side, under Hungary's EU presidency, was ready to provide comprehensive support to Ukraine in the field of European integration and to step up efforts to meaningfully deepen relations between Ukraine and the EU. At the end of 2011, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary paid an official visit to Ukraine, during which negotiations were held on the speedy conclusion and

ratification of the EU Association Agreement and the acceleration of the liberalization of the visa system.[6]

In 2012 the "Law on State Language Policy" was adopted in Ukraine. The law, which was primarily a gesture towards Moscow, made it possible for the language of a community to become official in those settlements and regions where the proportion of a given language community reaches 10%. This also applied to the Hungarian language. The relevant provisions of the said law were repealed after the victory of the Revolution of Dignity. This measure, like the original law, was a message intended for Moscow, but just like in 2012 it also affected the Hungarian community, only now with negative consequences. This is to some extent: "Kyiv has rejected Russia's efforts to extend the cultural space of the Russian world to Ukraine, and its move had a ricochet effect limiting the demands and expectations of other parties."[7] Despite that, the relationship between the two countries was positive and dynamic. President Petro Poroshenko (2014-2019) met personally with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán five times and they spoke twice on the phone. In 2014, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó met with Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin. During the negotiations, bilateral cooperation was discussed, especially in the fields of trade, transport, energy, border and cross-border cooperation, cultural and humanitarian cooperation, and visa liberalization. The Hungarian side announced that it was ready to provide assistance in the implementation of reforms in Ukraine, especially in the case of administrative reform, decentralization of power, and bringing Ukrainian legislation into line with EU standards. Hungary was ready to send competent specialists to Ukraine.[8]

Hungary stood up for the territorial integrity of Ukraine fully and condemned the annexation of Crimea at all international forums and at the highest level. In the sanctions policy, Budapest indicated the importance of energy issues and continued to actively cooperate with Kyiv. Yet, with the changes in the language and minority rights, the relations became colder.

Ukrainian Language Policy and Hungarian National Policy

Avoiding or dealing with language conflicts is often considered one of the important goals of language policy. However, the conflicts dealt with by language policy are almost never of linguistic origin. Their background is social, political, and/or economic confrontation between groups speaking the language(s). Apparently, this is also the case in Ukraine. Since independence, the political camps that have apparently been at odds with each other over the language issue have actually faced each other over the control of political, social, economic, and cultural

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resources. On the surface, sharp debates about the status of languages are about the methods of nation-building, social status, political and economic power relations, and power. The political balance tactics used for two decades around the country's commitment to the East or the West, as well as the settlement of the language policy situation, have clearly failed, and the country's population has become fatally divided.[9]

In the beginning, the Ukrainian national and language policy had a tolerant attitude towards minorities. Normative documents adopted in the first years of Ukrainian independence guaranteed the right to use the mother tongue in all areas of social life. The 1996 Constitution established the Ukrainian language as the official state language, but at the same time, the de facto situation was different, as Russian dominated in most of the country and in many symbolic functions, for example in the press. A significant change in state language policy was brought about by the elite who came to power through the Orange Revolution in 2004. In the post-revolution era, the most important objective of Ukrainian language policy became the practical enforcement of the state language status of the Ukrainian language in order to resolve the discrepancy between the de jure and de facto situations and to create a homogeneous nation-state. According to the Orange revolutionary elite, all those who argue in favor of two state languages, or who believe that minority languages should be granted official status, take a stand against the idea of a Ukrainian state and a unified nation.[10]

The language policy of the Yushchenko era caused a certain resistance in the Russian-speaking population. The next president, his former opponent, Yanukovych also opposed that policy. One of the results of Yanukovych's pro-Russian policy was the previously mentioned Kolesnychenko-Kivalov law of 2012, which granted broad rights to the Russian language, but also to the languages of other Ukrainian communities in those

regions where their share reached 10%. The subsequent events have already been mentioned.

The much-discussed education law was adopted in 2017 and provoked fierce protests from Hungary and several countries neighboring Ukraine, which over time took their criticism back. Hungary stuck to its position in this regard. Article 7 of the new Ukrainian education framework law adopted in 2017[11], which regulates the language of education, determines the extent of learning in the mother tongue. According to the law, starting from the 5th grade, a part of the subjects (in an increasing proportion every year) must be taught in the state language (i.e. Ukrainian). This significantly reduces the rights to learn in the mother tongue and to choose the language of education. All of this goes against the Treaty concluded between Ukraine and Hungary on the foundations of good neighborliness and cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and Ukraine[12], which, according to Article 15, both Ukraine and Hungary "each provides its citizens with broad access to the culture, artistic and literary works and mass media of the other Party wide access and support state, social and individual initiatives aimed at this. They promote the expansion of exchanges between each other's creative communities, artists, professionals, cultural and educational institutions at interstate, regional and local levels, and encourage the learning of the other Party's language."

From then on, Ukrainian-Hungarian relations became stratified in certain respects: on the one hand, economic relations remained, and the more they continued to develop, Hungary stands up for Ukraine's territorial integrity, supports the EU's accession efforts, and provided countless humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but on the other hand, loudly and fiercely criticizes Kyiv's minority policy and measures against the Hungarian community. To validate Budapest's position, in 2017 it announced that it would block Ukraine's political cooperation with the EU and NATO at the highest level, as well as Ukrainian initiatives at the level of other international, universal, and regional organizations. However, it did not limit the technical cooperation between Ukraine and NATO in any way. During the 2019 presidential election campaign, Budapest openly expressed its hope that the election of Volodymyr Zelensky as president would bring a solution to the language issues. The first presidential meeting took place in May 2019, during the inauguration of President Zelensky. Although relations revived somewhat, they did not bring a breakthrough. Some of the interstate commissions met again and managed to establish a certain dialogue regarding the application of the education law, but the issue remained open.[13]

Despite the hopes under the presidency of Zelenskyi, who otherwise championed the unification of society, the law on "Ensuring the Functioning of Ukrainian as a State Language" came into force, according to which the use of the state language is mandatory in all areas except private and religious life. The law also stipulated that the bilingual education model should be introduced in Russian-language schools from 2020 and in Hungarian-language schools from 2023.[14] This measure was postponed in the case of the Hungarian schools to September 1. 2024[15] and later eliminated in the new law adopted in December 2023.

György Kerényi summarizes the situation of language policy in the columns of Free Europe as "According to representatives of the Kyiv government and experts with

Ukrainian national sentiments, the '7. Article' (as well as Article 21 of the Language Act and Article 5 of the legislation on general secondary education passed in 2020) complies with international and domestic standards. Moreover, it serves the interests of Ukrainian minorities because it helps non-Ukrainian speakers to master the state language at a high level. Learning the mother tongue is indeed still guaranteed (if only because of the language used at home) because the mother tongue of minorities can appear as a subject at all levels of public education. But inclusion as a subject is not the same as the language of education. The Venice Commission seriously criticized both laws."[16]

With the emergence of the possibility to start the joining negotiations between the EU and Ukraine, Kyiv had to take active measures in order to be compliant with the requirements. On 8 December, the Verkhovna Rada adopted as a basis the general draft law 10288-1 on amendments to some laws of Ukraine taking into account the expert assessment of the Council of Europe and its bodies regarding the rights of national minorities (communities) in certain areas. For example,

- Privately owned higher education institutions have the right to freely choose the language of instruction, which is an official language of the EU (teaching one, several, or all disciplines, performing individual tasks, and conducting control measures), while ensuring that persons studying in such institutions study, state languages as a separate academic discipline;

- In classes (groups) taught in the languages of national minorities (communities), which are official languages of the European Union, the right to use the language of the relevant national minority in the educational process alongside the state language is guaranteed;

- Persons who belong to national minorities of Ukraine, whose languages are official languages of the European Union, and who started general secondary education before September 1, 2018, in the language of the respective national minority until the completion of full general secondary education, have the right to continue obtaining such education in accordance with the rules that existed before entry into force of the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language."[17]

The Ukrainian language policy is therefore primarily a political issue, which, as a result of the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, has also received a security policy charge. And in the patriotic wing of Ukrainian society, it is the only and most important criterion of nationhood. Giving it up, or easing it was considered treason of the nation's interest. Yet the

perspective of joining the EU persuaded the lawmakers to reconsider the position since the stakes were high. Even with this, however, the changes in the language policies generated vast criticism from the patriotic groups.

To a certain extent, the situation is alleviated by the new law amendment adopted in December 2023, which provides broader rights for language communities to use their language. In order to discuss the issue, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Péter Szijjártó, visited Transcarpathia in January 2024, where he held talks with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Dmytro Kuleba, and the head of the presidential office, Andrij Jermak.[18] Regarding the issue, the Hungarian side handed over a list of comments consisting of 11 points to the Ukrainian side. Work on this is still ongoing at the time of writing. The Transcarpathian context of Hungarian-Ukrainian relations thus becomes truly relevant from the estrangement of 2017, precisely because of the layered nature of the previously mentioned Hungarian-Ukrainian relationship.

The Issue of Transcarpathia in Hungarian-Ukrainian Relations

The situation that developed in 2017 was complicated by the fact that the measure was primarily directed against the Russian language and, according to Kyiv, is also a matter of national security, since this way they are able to prevent the rise of the 'Russian world' (Russkii Mir), which has also shown its harmful effects in Crimea and Donbas. In this reading, the countries that condemned Kyiv's measures in the first round revised their position and the normative aspect, according to which Ukraine really violated the rights of minorities, subordinated it to the geopolitical aspect, which clearly resulted in identification with Kyiv's position or at least tacit acceptance.

The legal and geopolitical level can also be seen in the Hungarian-Ukrainian relationship. Take the strategic documents of the two countries as an example. Considering the areas of critical importance for Ukraine,

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the Central and Eastern European countries are indicated as the example of economic and social development to be followed. Above all, Ukraine's "National Security Strategy (2020)" emphasizes that for the sake of economic security, it is necessary to get closer to the social norms of the Central and Eastern European states. This includes the provision of the rule of law, including the language rights of nationalities, but this is at the same time contrary to another priority of Ukraine - nation-building. One of the elements of nation-building in Ukraine is language, as mentioned before, and a marked distance from Russian influence, both culturally and politically.

According to Hungary's "National Security Strategy," Hungary is interested in a strong, democratic, stable, economically developing Ukraine and in balanced bilateral relations, but at the same time, legitimate efforts to strengthen Ukrainian national consciousness must not lead to the impairment of the acquired rights of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community.[19] A similar duality can be observed: Hungary supports Ukrainian nation-building, but at the same time sees it as necessary to ensure the linguistic rights of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community.
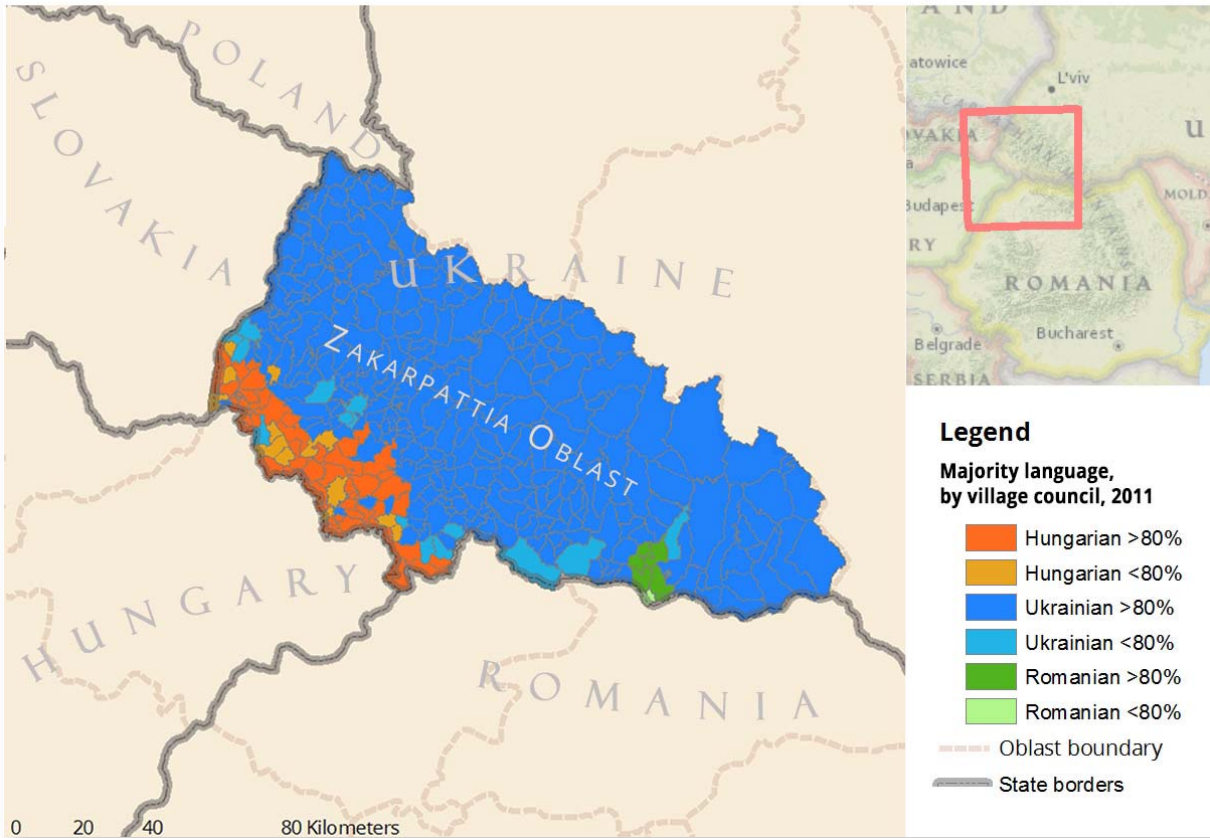
The context of Ukrainian-Hungarian relations is therefore framed by two opposing trajectories in terms of the geopolitical location of the two countries: European integration and Russian relations. It is worth emphasizing here that the support and protection of Hungarian minorities living in neighboring states, regardless of governments and political affiliations, has been a cornerstone of Hungarian foreign policy for decades. Speaking of the national security strategy, it is worth emphasizing that Hungary is committed to the Euro-Atlantic alliance. The Hungarian government stood up for all joint decisions and policies. This is also confirmed by relevant resolutions and votes. According to the National Security Strategy, Hungary strives for a balanced economic relationship with Russia within the framework of EU and NATO standards.[20]

Due to its commitment to NATO and the EU, Hungary supports Ukraine in all EU integration processes, high-level economic cooperation and does not deviate from the guidelines of the EU and NATO in strategic/geopolitical issues of great importance, and due to its constitutional obligation, it is obliged to stand up for the rights of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community, leading to conflict with Kyiv. Ukraine is a committed supporter of European values, but due to its situation with Russia, it finds it unacceptable to change the language issue, while it is definitely interested in maintaining good relations with Hungary. Thus, interactions between the two countries are often unpleasant. Kyiv's response to Budapest's sharp actions was press campaigns and official actions against Hungarian economic stimulus and other subsidies coming to Ukraine, as well as against the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority. As a result of the increase in press campaigns and reports increasingly highlighting the 'separatism of Transcarpathian Hungarians, who are dual citizens,' 'rural residents who do not speak a word of Ukrainian,' and 'Greater Hungary,' the patriotic active wing of Ukrainian society also joined the process. In 2017, according to the data of the Monitoring of Minorities, there were 89 anti-Hungarian incidents, of which 26 escalated into acts of violence. The most serious atrocity befell Transcarpathian Hungarians in February 2018, when the central office of the KMKSZ (Party of Hungarians of Ukraine) in Uzhhorod was blown up. Examining the period 2014-2018, the research recorded 182 anti-Hungarian expressions, most of which occurred in 2017. According to the official Ukrainian position, the Russian organization is behind the worst case. Although the number of atrocities fortunately decreased, the tension between the two countries remained. In 2020, the Ukrainian authorities declared two government actors undesirable because they encouraged the locals to support Hungarian candidates in the 2020 local elections.[21]

Kyiv considers Transcarpathian Hungarians as primarily Ukrainian citizens, so it finds it outrageous that Budapest elevates them to an exceptional group within Ukraine and assumes an intermediary role between them and the Ukrainian state. What Kyiv regards as promoting the integration of Hungarians, Budapest regards as a limitation of language rights, and what Budapest treats as support for the foreign community, Kyiv regards as interference in its own internal affairs, and the provocative press and marginalized patriotic activists as support for separatism. It is worth noting that Kyiv officially refrains from any statements that refer to the separatism of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community.

In the Ukrainian public opinion, a parallel can easily be drawn with the events of 2014 regarding the Hungarian question. There is a community that, referring to its language rights and the importance of preserving its community, hangs the flag of another country on the

LANGUAGES IN ZAKARPATTIA OBLAST, UKRAINE

Legend

Majority language, by village council, 2011

- Hungarian >80%
- Hungarian <80%
- Ukrainian >80%
- Ukrainian <80%
- Romanian >80%
- Romanian <80%
- Oblast boundary
- State borders

walls of its schools and public buildings, sings its national anthem, has a complete parallel education system from kindergarten to university, and has its own political structure that works closely with the leadership of the country (Hungary), which, with reference to the protection of this community, raised barriers in the way of cooperation with the EU and NATO.

At a higher political level, the evaluation of Hungary's activities in the Transcarpathians is more complex. Transcarpathia is a peripheral region, and many Ukrainian political analysts admit that Kyiv is further from Transcarpathia than Budapest. And it's not just about physical distance. The Ukrainian leadership took a few measures to ensure that the Hungarian community felt the protection and support of the state. This void is filled by Budapest instead of Kyiv.[22] Hungary provides health workers, pastors, and teachers with salary supplements, and supplies vaccines to Transcarpathia, but it happened that chlorine was also transported to Transcarpathia so that there would be no shortage of drinking water in the water pipes due to the lack of the chemicals. Huge sums of money flow into the region as part of economic stimulus programs. According to some estimates, support corresponding to 30% of

Transcarpathia's central budget support comes from Hungary. Simplified naturalization builds on all of this. In some ways, Kyiv sees this as a threat to its own prestige.[23]

From then on, the Transcarpathian context of Hungarian-Ukrainian relations becomes more of a domestic political issue and increasingly intractable. The Hungarian side can regularly report to its own internal political consumers about the support and protection of

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one of the most vulnerable foreign communities, and maintain pressure on the EU due to the neglected minority rights in Ukraine, while the Ukrainian side fights against the continuous Hungarian threat and support for separatism, which does not officially exist as per the statements of the government, and stands up for the state language. This is further aggravated by the lack of proper communication. Be it expert, civilian, or media level. If there is an information gap between two countries, societies, or communities, someone will definitely fill it. The opinion that the interests of the Kremlin lie behind the Ukrainian-Hungarian conflicts is gaining more and more ground in Ukrainian expert circles. Even behind significant anti-Hungarian manifestations, Russian organization is seen in serious

> **Hungary also supports immediate peace talks, diplomatic solution to the war, and a pragmatic national interest-based approach to the sanctions and the financial support of Ukraine. These in many cases generate criticism in Kyiv.**

cases such as the attack on the KMKSz headquarters, all the way to cases of such insignificant importance as the pasting of stickers with anti-Hungarian content in Berehove.[24] Even if we cannot completely prove the Russian organization behind the conflict between the Ukrainian and Hungarian communities, it is an obvious fact that the Kremlin can take full advantage of this.

The position of Kyiv and Budapest regarding language laws has almost reached the level of principle and was a serious point of debate between the two otherwise cooperating countries until the Russian invasion that started on 24 February 2022 and seems to get to a more moderate phase due to the adoption of the new law in December 2023. Hungary condemned the Russian aggression, took a stand for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and consistently supported the measures of NATO and the EU. After the invasion, the Hungarian criticism regarding language rights was put aside, and a major humanitarian campaign started in order to help Ukraine and Ukrainians. According to the available data, every third Hungarian citizen participated directly and indirectly in helping Ukrainian refugees. Despite this, it is difficult to call the relationship between the two countries good, or at least simple. It is characterized by a strange duality, supportive and

neighborly on the one hand, and tense and hostile in certain areas on the other. The tensions then arose due to the position of Budapest regarding the delivery of lethal weapons to Ukraine and the transport of military equipment through the Ukrainian-Hungarian border in order to avoid the attacks on Transcarpathia thus protecting the Hungarian community. Hungary also supports immediate peace talks, diplomatic solution to the war, and a pragmatic national interest-based approach to the sanctions and the financial support of Ukraine. These in many cases generate criticism in Kyiv.

Conclusions

The history of relations between Hungary and Ukraine has a rich history, and this history is mostly positive. The connective link of the two, Transcarpathia (Zakarpattia oblast) became one of the key elements of their relations, sometimes the source of the conflicts. Both Kyiv and Budapest are following their national and state interest but with time the issues became rather political than technical. These issues were being addressed but still, there is plenty of room for improvement. The relations of Kyiv and Budapest however have a certain duality in them. Despite the tensions that were described the economic relations are good and Hungary is very active in the humanitarian issues. The cross-border cooperation in the border regions is still active and demonstrates positive dynamics, and the question of the language issues gives hope for positive changes. One cannot choose his neighbors, so it is not only wise but practical and necessary to get along with them.

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GEORGIA'S GEOPOLITICAL CROSSROADS: ADAPTING TO NEW REALITIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

The impact of the protracted conflict in Ukraine deeply affected not only Ukraine but also the geopolitical and security environment of the whole Black Sea region. The Republic of Georgia, as a country that already has parts of its territory under the Russian military occupation, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, has handled the newly arisen security challenges with a new, unexpected approach, applying the 'Finlandisation policy.'

Tamara Urošević

International Security Manager

Non Resident Associate, Center for Geostrategic research and terrorism (CeGRT), Belgrade, Serbia

In the aftermath of the escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2022, the attention of the Great Powers shifted towards the South Caucasus Region. The newly created situation arising from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the European Union's economic sanctions on the Russian Federation gave geopolitical and strategical advantage to the Caucasian countries, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, but at the same time exposed them to further security threats and risks, both internal and external ones.

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Pro-Western Narrative or the Finlandisation Policy

Since the secession from the Soviet Union in 1991 and the Rose Revolution in 2003, the Republic of Georgia has been vocal and decisive in its pro-western foreign policy.[1] In its National Security Concept of 2011, Georgia defined itself "as a Black Sea and Southeast European country, Georgia is part of Europe geographically, politically, and culturally; yet it was cut off from its natural course of development by historical cataclysms."[2] From 1994, since it joined Partnership for Peace, Georgia has been one of the few North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) aspiring countries, and currently it remains in line with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine.

Tbilisi's foreign policy efforts, which were completely directed towards distancing this former Soviet Republic from the neighboring Russian Federation, led to rising tensions in the Black Sea region and interruption of air travel between the two countries, Finally, the tensions have escalated in the aftermath of the Bucharest NATO Summit, in April 2008, when the United States and Poland called for Georgia, and Ukraine, to be allowed to join the Membership Action Plan. As France and

Germany feared, Moscow perceived the allies' support for Georgia's membership as the existential threat of NATO's eastward expansion, and four months later, the Russian response followed.

Russian military invasion of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in August 2008, even though lasted only five days, reshaped the geopolitical environment of the Black Sea Region and South Caucasus. And it led to the drastic severance of the diplomatic relations between these two countries.

By occupying the strategically positioned Abkhazia, which represents the largest part of the coastal area of Georgia, Russia secured a significant foothold on the Black Sea. But, at the same time, recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which occupy about 20% of the entire Georgian territory, the Russian Federation, on the one hand, left its geostrategic footprint in the South Caucasus and Black Sea Region and, on the other hand, assured itself from the potential spill over conflicts and their potentially damaging effects in domestic and security affairs in the Northern Caucasus.[3]

Russian support to secessionism in Georgian territories and growing support for the secessionism in the Eastern Ukrainian territories - Luhansk and Donetsk - in the years following the Russo-Georgian War, made NATO and EU countries rethink their approach towards the South Caucasus and the possibility of Republic of Georgia's accession to the Alliance and membership to the European Union.

Russia's reaction to NATO's expansion into the South Caucasus posed a threat to Georgia's standing in the Western world. This led key supporters of Ukraine and Georgia within Western circles to withdraw their support, thereby impeding Georgia's progress towards NATO and EU membership due to concerns over further Russian encroachment.

Prior to the outbreak of the prolonged conflict in Ukraine, Georgia's diplomatic efforts with Western nations have seen no substantive progress, and Tbilisi was met with an ambivalent response from the NATO and EU member states. Even though they stayed close to Georgia, their reluctance to take decisive action toward Georgia's admittance was evident.

In the wake of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the tepid response from NATO and EU members, the Georgian government, amid domestic political considerations, began to re-engage with Russia to forestall potential invasion fears. Despite initial reservations, Georgia gradually adjusted to the shifting landscape, initiating more extensive economic cooperation with Russia.

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Since the outbreak of the protracted conflict in Ukraine in 2022, Georgia's economic dependence on Russia increased compared to the previous years. Considering the income received from the same trade sources, Tbilisi has received around 3,6 billion USD amounting to 14,6% of Georgia's GDP, which is almost 3 times more than in 2021 when it amounted to 6.3% of the GDP of the country.

In 2022, Georgia experienced a significant influx of Russian businesses, about 15,000 companies were registered, which represents 66% increase since the onset of the Ukraine Conflict. Additionally, in the same timeframe, the imports from Georgia surged by 79% to 1.8 billion USD, representing the highest percentage in the previous sixteen years. The increase in imports has also been noted in petroleum products, natural gas, primary food, carbon steel, and coal. Even though the imports of petroleum products and natural gas have taken a big share of the market, we cannot say the same for the import of energy resources. Even though the import of energy from the Russian Federation has seen an increase of 46% since before the war, it does not make a big difference in Georgia's energy market.

This increased economic dependence on Russia diverges from Georgia's foreign policy trajectory of the past three decades, and at the same time, it is the best indicator of Tbilisi's pertinence to the new policy of 'Finlandization'. The newly found path for Georgia might pose a threat to its independence and security, considering the well-known *modus operandi* of the Russian Federation: strengthening economic relations to gain political leverage on independent countries and threaten their macroeconomics, as was the case in Azerbaijan and Armenia, which have been under Russian dependence for many years through the import of Russian natural gas.

Additionally, Russia's ongoing war effort in the Black Sea Region and the plan to construct a new naval base in Abkhazia further endanger the security of Georgia, as well as, the interests of NATO and the European Union in the South Caucasus.

Table 3. Import of goods from Russia with the highest **increase** since the start of the war in Ukraine, USD million

Goods	Mar-Dec, 2021	Mar-Dec, 2022	increase
petroleum products (fuel)	118	600	482
groceries	305	442	138
bars and rods of iron or non-alloy steel	7	55	48
coal and coke	27	70	43
natural gases	59	93	34

Image 1, Georgia's Economic Dependence on Russia: Impact of the Russia-Ukraine war, February 22, 2023

South Caucasus: A New Geopolitical Hotspot

Russia's continuous interest in the geostrategic position of Abkhazia, even sixteen years after the Russo-Georgian war, once again poses a threat to Georgian security, but also to the security and trade interests of NATO and EU. In October 2023, the Russian Federation announced its plans to construct a new permanent "point of deployment" for Russia's Black Sea fleet. Even though Russian military forces have had a historical presence in Georgia's territory, the construction of a new base undermines its territorial integrity and reestablishes the power and influence of the Russian Federation in the South Caucasus Region.[4]

Tbilisi until now has not been as implicated in the war in Ukraine as with the construction of the naval base in Ochamchire, Abkhazia. The threat of the spillover of this prolonged conflict to its territories has not been as probable as it is now since the construction of the base started. President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky on 24 October 2023, responded to the news about the new military base, stating that Ukraine would not refrain from attacking Russian military ships in Abkhazia.

The definition of the base as permanent transmits to the international community the message that the Russian military forces intend to maintain a dominant presence in the Black Sea Region on the opposite coast of NATO's base in Romania. It projects the Russian power to all the NATO aspirant countries in the region, one of which is Georgia itself, or to the ones that are considering the application. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly on 9 October adopted a resolution that condemns Russia's declared intention for this base.[5]

According to the de facto president of Abkhazi, Aslan Bzhania, construction of the base at the Ochamchire port has been under consideration since the annexation of this Georgian territory. The plans to expand the capabilities of the port have started and the Russian forces have already begun to widen the entrance to the port and deepen the sea by dredging, so that the base can host ships with the displacement volume of up to 13,000 tones including cargo ships. The Russian naval base in Abkhazia not only plays into Georgian fears of the spillover of the conflict, but it also endangers Georgia's investment project of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port that distance only 35 km from Ochamchire, potential economic future and its role in the Middle Eastern Corridor.

The Middle Corridor: New Hope for Georgia and South Caucasus

Since the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war and imposition of economic sanctions on Russia, almost all viable transport routes through the Northern Corridor have been suspended. The European Union needed to

Image 2, Location of the Ochamchire Russian Base, BBC

look for alternative routes to maintain safe and continuous trade with China and Central Asia, and they found the best solution in the Middle Eastern Corridor, whose central point is the Republic of Georgia.

The multimodal land and sea transport route, also known as the Central Asia-Caucasus route, stretches from China to the Black Sea. From the Eastern-most point, the route starts from China, passes through Kazakhstan, partly Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, across the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, and ends in Georgian shore on the Black Sea connecting this route with the European continent. It consists of approximately 4,250 km of rail lines and about 500 km of maritime route.[6] Additionally Middle Corridor connects with the European mainland through two points, a landlocked route that goes through Türkiye and the Balkans, and a sea route that goes across the Black Sea and Romanian port Constanta.

In comparison with the maritime route that connects Europe with China through the Red Sea, the Middle Corridor is a time and cost-saving choice. The current sea route through the highly volatile Red Sea is long approximately 16,000 km and the time required to complete the passage can be from 35 to 45 days. On the other hand, the passage along the Middle Corridor lasts from 13 to 21 days.[7] This route is about 2,000 km shorter than Russia's Northern Corridor. It facilitates the application of sanctions on the Russian Federation and provides access to the new market for European countries.[8]

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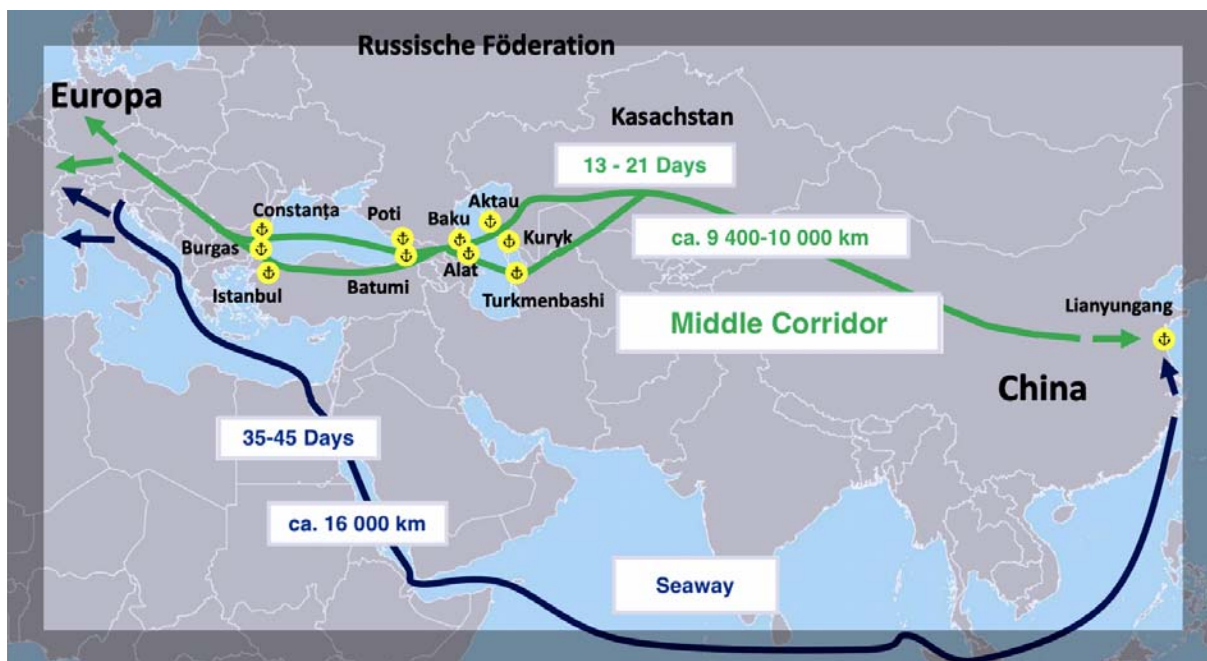
Image 3, Middle Corridor, source: Trains-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR)

International Interests in the Middle Corridor

Until the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, this transport route had not been in sufficient use due to the low transport capacities, infrastructures, and instability in the region, none of which presented a major problem compared to the Northern Route since 2022. In the past 2 years, the preference for the Middle Corridor could be seen in the increase in shipments. As per the German Economic Team, the volume of transportation increased by 3 times, to 970 400 tonnes, in the first eight months of the war, with the predicted rise, following this growth trend, to 15 and 18 million tones in 2030.[9]

Since the international shipping giants have introduced in their commerce the Central Asia Caucasus route, the new investments started to kick in and the infrastructure along the Route has been revamped.[10] Danish logistics and shipping company, Maersk, one of the global leaders in the logistics and supply chain management introduced the Middle Corridor solution to its customers, as early as two months after the beginning of the war in Ukraine. The eco-friendly rail route that became operative on April 13th, 2022 starts from China's Xi'an and ends at Georgia's seaport Poti, where the goods reach the European continent through the maritime connection with the Romanian port Constanta. Overall time estimate of the whole route, according to Maersk managers, is approximately 40 days.[11] Also, another major European logistics company, Nurmien Logistics from Finland., was among the first companies that started operating along the Middle Corridor route, in May 2022.

Investments from the European Union partners, correlated with the Middle Corridor transport route, can be seen through various development projects. In 2022, South Caucasian Countries, Georgia and Azerbaijan, along with Romania and Hungary, signed the Black Sea Submarine Electricity cable deal, that gave Georgia important advantage on Russia.

The construction of the military base in Abkhazia, in the near vicinity of its most valuable port, seaport Poti, and the future planned deep seaport Anaklia, along the Middle Corridor, represents a great risk for Georgia and the future of this transport route, and its European and international supporters. The need for the Middle Corridor has augmented for European companies, in the light of the recent Houthi attacks on merchant vessels in the Red Sea region. The dedication of the European Union to the protection of the trade connection with China remains undoubtable and could be seen in the deployment of the EUNAVFOR operation Aspides, earlier in February of this year.

Besides the EU, other regional powers used the opportunity of the revival of the Middle Corridor to invest and position themselves in the region. Türkiye used the opportunity to establish itself as a regional power and trade center along the route and in the South Caucasus Region. It did so by calling for diplomacy and inter-regional trade, and by establishing various initiatives in the previous two years, one of which is the Black Sea Grain Corridor Initiative, that facilitated the transport of Ukrainian grain to international markets. Türkiye remains among the most important importers for the South

Caucasian Countries, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Armenia, and thus maintaining the soft power over the region.[12]

Given that the Middle Corridor serves as a crucial link between the European continent and China, the South Caucasian Countries, especially Georgia, have become a point of interest for the Chinese government. The revival of Tbilisi's long-disputed deep seaport project in Anaklia in 2022, following the China-Georgia Business Forum in Beijing, underlines the importance of infrastructure development. The lack of a deep seaport poses a significant obstacle to the further development of the Middle Corridor, particularly as Georgia is the only country along the Black Sea without such infrastructure. China's interest in the partial investment of Anaklia deep seaport is not surprising, considering that it is crucial for the expansion of the capacities of the Middle Corridor.[13]

Even though the work on the expansion of the infrastructure has already been underway, its capacities are struggling to maintain supply chain resilience. According to the Middle Corridor Logistics official, the capacity of this route equals to "3 to 5 percent of the total capacity of Northern Route."[14] The question is raised whether the Central Asia Caucasus Route manages to meet all the demands and expectations, partly from the infrastructure point of view and partly from the point of view of security concerns that arise from the geopolitical uncertainties caused by the latest Russian involvement in the South Caucasus Region.

Conclusion

The geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus Region, particularly for Georgia, has undergone significant shifts in the aftermath of the prolonged Russo-Ukrainian conflict. With the rising importance of the Middle Corridor, the region became a geostrategic hotspot presenting both opportunities and challenges for the countries – Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

Georgia, with its strategic location and historical ties, has found itself at a crossroads, between competing geopolitical interests while striving to maintain its sovereignty and security. The adoption of a 'Finlandisation policy' in response to heightened security threats reflects Georgia's pragmatic approach to safeguard its interests amidst geopolitical turbulence and a deeply polarized society from within. Georgia has been struggling to profit from the newly found geostrategic situation.

Comparing its position to before 2022, Georgia is now more valuable to Russia than it was previously. It allows safe transit to its Türkiye and Armenia, with whom Moscow still has trade relations. Improvement of diplomatic and economic relations helps Georgia's accession to EU. Yet, that also poses a threat, due to its strategic position in the Middle Corridor. Tbilisi can balance between multiple powers to diversify its trade portfolios and open its country for foreign investments. The question remains whether Georgia will pursue its new Finlandization policy or become once again a great advocate for the European Union and NATO.

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STRENGTHENING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND THE EU THROUGH THE PRISM OF COOPERATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE SERBIAN ARMED FORCES

The Republic of Serbia officially started negotiations for membership in the European Union on 21 January 2014, at the first International Conference in Brussels. On that occasion, the decision of the Council of Europe to start the accession process made on 28 June 2013 came into force

Jelena Andjelkovic

Researcher and Project Coordinator, Center for geostrategic research and terrorism (CeGRT), Belgrade, Serbia

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) represent important factors in the accession process of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union (EU). In accordance with their missions and tasks, the MoD and the SAF make a great effort to support the strengthening of relations between official Belgrade and Brussels, according to the field within which they perform their duties. As part of the negotiation process, members of the MoD and the SAF participate in negotiations in twenty-two opened chapters, which best demonstrates the importance they have in this process. Additionally, the trust that the institutions in Brussels have gained in the Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Army is not only reflected in the fact that they are part of the Serbian negotiating team but also in the fact that they actively cooperate in the field of international military cooperation through several different levels. The most significant of these is certainly taking part in international peacekeeping missions under the EU flag. Such activities on this level have been possible since 2012, when the forces of the Republic of Serbia, in accordance with the advanced process of achieving the goals of the "Stabilization and Association Agreement," are engaged in missions on the African continent. However, special progress can be seen since 2013, when the EU made a decision to of-ficially grant Serbia the status of a candidate for membership in the European Union.

Negotiation Process and Legal Framework

The Republic of Serbia officially started negotiations for membership in the European Union on 21 January 2014, at the first International Conference in Brussels. On that occasion, the decision of the Council of Europe to start the accession process made on 28 June 2013 came into force, as a result of years of thorough work on achieving the goals of the previously mentioned "Stabilization and Association Agreement" from 2008.

As part of the negotiations, a total of thirty-five chapters with different topics such as financial supervision, public procurement, science and research, education and culture, entrepreneurship and industrial policy, intellectual property rights, economic relations with foreign countries, free movement of capital, etc., were presented to the official Belgrade. During the decade-long accession process, the negotiating teams of the Republic of Serbia managed to open various chapters within the framework of six clusters. Since March 2020, the admission process has used this system (which divides

chapters into classes) whereby chapters 34 (Institutions) and 35 (Other Issues) remain undivided and will be discussed in the final phase of this process.[1]

Members of the Ministry of Defense and the SAF are active participants in the negotiation process. The current role was preceded by a stable negotiating position within the activities related to the fulfillment of the objectives of the "Stabilization and Association Agreement," during which the MoD and the SAF participated in three of the seven subcommittees for stabilization and association, namely: the subcommittee for trade, industry, customs and taxes, the subcommittee for the internal market and protection of competition and the subcommittee for justice, freedom and security. Today, their contribution can be seen in two directions, the first of which is reflected in the fact that members of the MoD and the Serbian Armed Forces, as already mentioned, are active participants in the negotiations in twenty-two of the thirty-five chapters. This includes participation in meetings of negotiating groups and meetings of explanatory and bilateral screening, performing an analytical review and assessment of compliance of the regulations of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia with the legal acquis of the European Union.

In accordance with its strategic goals and negotiating chapters and tasks, the institutions of the Republic of Serbia, including the Ministry of Defense, have been given the task of harmonizing domestic legislation with EU laws. In accordance with that, the institutions participated in the implementation of the alignment of domestic legislative regulations with EU regulations through the "National Program for the Adoption of EU Acquis" - NPAA. The primary NPPA and the revisions of the plans for implementation of NPAA that have followed since 2013 foresee all obligations and planned deadlines that Serbia needs to realize in order to fulfill the criteria for EU membership. The last revised plan from October 2023 includes only one item under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense, and it implies the strengthening of administrative capacities. In accordance with that, it can be said that the Ministry of Defense has almost completely harmonized its legal regulations with the EU member states, with the fact that it pursues a policy of military neutrality.

In addition to the legislative agreement, the Republic of Serbia also shares the EU's goals in the field of common foreign and security policy. This strategic commitment of the official Belgrade significantly improved its foreign policy position, and this had a positive effect on the position of the Republic of Serbia in international organizations[2] and contributed to it being recognized as one of the crucial partners in the Balkans.[3] The legal framework for this cooperation was established by signing the "Agreement on Security Procedures for the Exchange and Protection of Secret Data," which became active on

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1 August 2012, as well as the Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Serbia on establishing a framework for the participation of the Republic of Serbia in EU crisis management operations. In addition, the legal basis was completed by the adopting of the "Law on the use of the Serbian Armed Forces and other defense forces in multinational operations outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia." This law defines the concept of multinational operations, which include missions and tasks for the preservation of national, regional, and global security, namely operations to preserve, maintain and build peace, operations to prevent conflicts and establish peace, joint defense operations in accordance with defense regulations, operations to provide help to eliminate the consequences of international terrorism and terrorist attacks on a larger scale, as well as participating in humanitarian operations in the event of natural, technical-technological and environmental accidents on a larger scale and providing assistance in crisis situations.

With the entry into force of the aforementioned law, along with the implementation of the previously mentioned agreements, a legal framework was created for the involvement of members of the armed forces of the Republic of Serbia in missions and operations under the EU flag. Activities of training, selection, equipping, preparation, and deployment of individuals and units from the Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia are the tasks of the Center for Peace Operations, as part of the Operational Directorate J-3 of the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces. The main goals of the Center, before the previously mentioned ones, are monitoring, coordination, and control of the work and activities of engaged members, realization of seminars, courses, and workshops in the field of multinational operations, participation in the evaluation of the competence of units for multinational operations, issuance of certificates of competence for engagement, participation in drafting memorandums of

understanding, technical and other agreements regarding the engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations, etc.

Multinational Peacekeeping Operations under the EU Flag

By passing basic checks, training, and preparations through the activities of the Center for Peace Operations, members of the MoD and the Serbian Army are directed to perform tasks within the assigned missions. Cooperation with the EU is realized within the framework of the second mission of the Serbian Armed Forces, which includes participation in international military cooperation and participation in international peacekeeping operations. In the context of participation in multinational peace operations, four EU missions in which members of the MoD and the SAF participate are implemented on the African continent, two in Somalia and one each in Egypt and the Central African Republic. The activities of members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Serbia in Somalia under the auspices of the EU are implemented through the peacekeeping operation EUTM Somalia (European Union Training Mission in Somalia) and the military operation EUNAVFOR Somalia (European Union Naval Force) - Operation ATALANTA.

The EUTM Somalia Peacekeeping Operation (EUTM-S) aims to strengthen the Somali Defense Forces by providing mentoring, training, and advice. This peacekeeping operation was established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1872 in 2009 and EU Council Decisions No. 96 and No. 197 in 2010. EUTM-S is focused on increasing the expertise, efficiency, and credibility of the Somali security forces, despite the fact that they were initially based in Uganda for security reasons. Since 2015, the EUTM-S mission has moved to Mogadishu, where its center is still today. Members of the Ministry of Defense and the Serbia Armed Forces have been engaged in this mission since April 2012, when an officer of the Armed Forces was appointed to the position of the head of the medical service. The number of members of the contingent of the Republic of Serbia were increased already the following year when an entire medical team composed of one doctor and three medical technicians was sent, while in 2016 another doctor became a part of the team. The Republic of Serbia is the only country outside the EU that is an active member of this mission.

Another EU mission in which members of the Serbian Armed Forces are engaged is the EUNAFOR Somalia mission - Operation Atalanta. This multinational naval military operation was established by the adoption of four Resolutions of the UN Security Council - 1814, 1816, 1838, and 1846. During its mandate, the mission

EUTM-S mission https://www.mnop.mod.gov.rs/

underwent changes in its primary tasks, so in 2022 it was decided that its executive tasks would be the protection of the World Program for the United Nations Food Program (WFP), identifying, preventing, and suppressing piracy and armed robbery at sea in the area of operation and disrupting the illegal trade in narcotics and arms. In addition to executive tasks, the mission is also required to implement non-executive tasks, such as contributing to the monitoring of drug and arms trafficking flows or providing support to other missions.[4] Members of the SAF have been active in EUNAFOR-Operation Atalanta since November 2011, when two river unit officers were sent for training on the French ship F 730 "Floreal."

Officially, the contingent of the Serbian Armed Forces joined the mission in 2013, consisting of two officers and one non-commissioned officer, reporting for duty at the Mission's Operational Command in Northwood, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The number of members of the Serbian contingent increased in 2017 when four additional officers joined the mission, but that number was reduced to three in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. During the decade of active contribution to the mission, members of the Serbia Armed Forces were engaged in the tasks of staff officers, in addition to the Operational Command in Northwood, UK, and as part of the Operational Command of the mission in Rota, Spain. In addition, the Serbian forces were engaged in the command of the forces of Operation

A contingent of the Republic of Serbia in the military mission EUNAFOR Somalia - operation ATALANTA
https://www.mnop.mod.gov.rs/

Atalanta on the Spanish ship "Castile" and the Italian ship "Carlo Margotini." Members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Serbia participate also in the mission with an autonomous team for the protection of ships. The mandate of the mission has been extended until December 2024, after which the extension of the mission will be considered again.

In addition to the activities in the missions and operations in Somalia, the Serbian Army also participates in the EU military mission for the training of the security forces of the Central African Republic - EUTM RCA. This EU mission was established by UN Security Council Resolution 2016/610/CFSP in April 2016. Representatives of the Serbian Army joined it only a few months later, in December 2016, consisting of a level 1 medical team and a two-member emergency medical team. The fact that since 2017 the medical service has been headed by an officer of the Serbian Armed Forces and the members of the Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Armed Forces act as advisors to the mission commander, speaks of the contribution that the Serbian forces make to this mission. The primary task of the contingent of the Republic of Serbia in the mission in the Central African Republic is to provide primary health care

to members of the mission and ambulatory treatment in accordance with standard operating procedures, and if necessary, to engage in emergency medical interventions and training of the security forces of the Central African Republic.

"International Forces and Observers" is the name of the fourth EU mission in which the Armed Forces of the Republic of Serbia participate and is implemented in the Arab Republic of Egypt, on the Sinai Peninsula. The Army of Serbia is proud to point out that it is the successor of the former Yugoslav People's Army, which had a tradition of activity in this region, from 1956 to

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> **The Republic of Serbia is equally engaged on the diplomatic level through the activities of its permanent mission to the European Union. As part of its tasks, this mission implements the foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia, which also includes maintaining contacts with EU bodies and other permanent representations of EU member states.**

1967 it provided the mission with about 14,000 members in twenty-two rotations. Today, after returning to this mission in July 2023, an engineering unit of ten members was engaged in Sinai, which was sent to the mission with the aim of providing engineering and infrastructural support to the camp in the South Sinai region. Members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Serbia are engaged under the operational control of the Commander of the forces, and according to operational tasks, in the contingent of the United States of America.

International Military Cooperation - European Defense Agency and the EU Military Committee

In addition to participating in multinational peacekeeping operations, the Serbian Armed Forces, as part of its second mission, maintains ties with the EU and in the field of international military cooperation. In addition to the previously mentioned concept of joint foreign and security policy, the connection is also realized through cooperation with the European Defense Agency, with which the "Administrative Agreement on Cooperation" was signed in 2013. This agreement established a framework for cooperation and possible participation in projects and programs that could support the further development and improvement of domestic industry, the capacities of domestic research and development institutes, as well as the modernization of the SAF.

The strong relations between the EU and the MoD and the SAF are realized through the activities of the EU Military Committee, which is open to NATO members who are non-EU member states, as well as to candidate countries for membership in the Union. It is of particular importance to point out that within the committee meeting held in 2016, it was agreed to sign the "Technical Agreement" for the accession of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Serbia to the HELBROC battle group. This EU battlegroup aims to support EU missions and operations in crisis situations. In this way, the Republic of Serbia additionally strengthened its position as a

trusted partner of the official Brussels outside the EU itself, which also helped develop bilateral relations with EU member states, both through the framework of military-to-military and within the framework of military-technical cooperation. In this context, it is important to note that the Republic of Serbia had significant purchases from EU member states, such as the Republic of France, during the previous years.

Military Diplomacy of Brussels and Belgrade

From the perspective of Serbia, as a country that has the status of a candidate for membership, taking into account all the above, significant progress has been made compared to the beginning of the negotiations. However, this does not mean that official Brussels did not take steps to strengthen relations with official Belgrade. On the contrary, by establishing the first military delegation in Belgrade, the EU showed that the Republic of Serbia is a willing collaborator in the field of preserving peace and stability in the Western Balkans region. In this way, the representative of the diplomatic department in charge of military affairs and cooperation joined the EU mission in Serbia. With that, official Brussels once again showed that the Western Balkans, and especially the Republic of Serbia as a key actor, is in its sphere of interest. Thus, in the diplomatic sense, the European Union has positioned itself as an important political entity in the Republic of Serbia, despite the fact that almost all its members have their military delegations in Belgrade. In addition, it was made clear that official Brussels strives to strengthen its position in the field of military cooperation, as well as its general imagein public opinion.

The Republic of Serbia is equally engaged on the diplomatic level through the activities of its permanent mission to the European Union. As part of its tasks, this mission implements the foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia, which also includes maintaining contacts with EU bodies and other permanent representations of EU member states. When it comes to contacts in the field of military representation, it is carried out through the Military Representation of the Republic of Serbia to NATO, which is entrusted with the task of achieving military cooperation with the European Union. Within the mentioned mission, the Office of the Serbian Army and the Office of Defense, both located in Brussels, are very active.

Potential Challenges – Multiple Perspectives

However, such multi-layered and multi-year cooperation between the institutions in Belgrade and Brussels was put to a special test by the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Serbia, as a candidate for

membership, was expected to impose sanctions against the Russian Federation, within the framework of harmonization with the standards of common foreign and security policy. However, political elites in Belgrade believed that the decision should be postponed, which was certainly not well received by Brussels. Additionally, the situation is complicated by the introduction of a moratorium on military exercises for more than two years now, as long as the conflict itself. Although such moves by Belgrade are in line with the policy of military neutrality pursued by the Republic of Serbia, it cannot be said that it is in line with the strategic goal of joining the EU. Although the official Belgrade insists on sovereign decisions, Brussels reacts negatively to them, which is supported by the frequent mention of possible sanctions against the Republic of Serbia.

In that case, it could potentially cause multiple negative consequences on both sides. In the military sense, the moratorium would certainly be continued, without the possibility of any changes, as was thecase during June 2023 with the "Platinum Wolf 2023" exercise. This would significantly affect the level of development of interoperability among international forces which during exercises similar to the one mentioned above are preparing for participation in multinational peace operations and missions around the world. In addition, it is clear that such decisions by Brussels would have a consequent impact on EU member states that have bilateral cooperation with the Republic of Serbia, especially in the field of military-technical cooperation. This, especially in this year - the year of elections for the European Parliament - would have a negative impact on the stability of the EU institutions.

The fact that such decisions would also call into question the cooperation achieved by other institutions of the security sector, namely in the field of the fight against organized crime, the fight against irregular migration, drug trafficking, and the fight against terrorism with institutions such as EUROPOL. Maintaining such cooperation outside the scope of

sanctions is equally important for the security of the citizens of the European Union and the security of the citizens of the Republic of Serbia.

From the point of view of the position of the EU in the public opinion in Serbia, the introduction of sanctions would significantly degrade its position, which, regardless of the progress made in the accession process during the previous years, is in decline. According to the available data from various public opinion polls, the Serbian Armed Forces is one of the three institutions most trusted by the citizens of Serbia. Therefore, it is clear that this would have an extremely negative impact on the position and atmosphere in which the accession process would take place.

From the perspective of official Belgrade, the situation is not much different. By disrupting relations, the economic situation would be significantly shaken, since the EU is the largest foreign trade partner of the Republic of Serbia.

However, for now, it seems that there will be no introduction of sanctions, and the cooperation that has been developing over the past decade could continue. This is supported by the possible joining of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Serbia in the EU mission in Mozambique. In addition, the implementation of bilateral cooperation with EU member states in all forms of military cooperation could certainly be further improved, which would further help strengthen the negotiating position of officials from Belgrade.

In the end, it can be concluded that the cooperation achieved by the Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Armed Forces with the institutions of the European Union is of essential importance for the development and progress of the negotiation process for admission to EU membership. In the previously mentioned connections and contacts of the two parties, it can be seen that they are strong and stable, regardless of political decisions, with a view to realizing further progress.

Endnotes

1   The Ministry of European Integration deals with general issues and division into clusters, coordination, monitoring, and reporting in connection with the process of accession and accession to the European Union; coordination of accession negotiations with the European Union and the work of bodies established for the purposes of negotiations; directing the work of the Negotiation Team for conducting negotiations on the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union and providing mandatory instructions and instructions, in

accordance with the Government's policy; analytical support to the work of the Negotiation Team, etc; more available at https://www.mei.gov.rs/

2   Primarily in the United Nations and its other institutions;

3   With special reference to the bilateral cooperation that the Republic of Serbia achieves with EU member states, especially in the field of military-military, military-technical, and military-police cooperation;

4   It especially refers to other civilian missions of the EU.

PAKISTAN - AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS: A TIMELINE OF TENSION AND TOLERANCE

Ever since the foundation of independent Pakistan in August 1947, the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have routinely been marred by disagreements and challenges emanating largely from the territorial disputes inherited from the era of British colonial rule.

Hossein Ebrahim Khani

Retired Ambassador
Associate Fellow, Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Tehran, Iran

Ever since the foundation of independent Pakistan in August 1947, the bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have routinely been marred by disagreements and challenges emanating largely from the territorial disputes inherited from the era of British colonial rule. In May 1879 at the end of the first phase of the second Anglo-Afghan War, Mohammad Yaqub Khan, the Emir of Afghanistan, in accordance with the Treaty of Gandamak, ceded large parts of his territory to British India. In 1893 Abdur Rahman Khan, another Afghan ruler overwhelmed by the pressure from Britain had to yield to an imposed treaty that defined the areas of influence of Afghanistan and British India. By that, he also recognized the so-called Durand Line that stretched 2,440 km from the Afghanistan-China border in the Wakhan region to the intersecting point of Afghanistan, Iran, and British India borderlines in the West. Subsequently, this divider of spheres of influence earned the legitimacy of an international boundary and practically divided the large Pashtun-inhabited region better known as Pashtunistan between Afghanistan and British India. The intermittent and sporadic attempts by Afghans to retake the lost territory were of no avail in the face of Britain's political and military superiority and the vitality that the British were attaching to the preservation of the status quo in Afghanistan as a buffer zone needed to block the spread of Tsarist Russia's influence in their treasured colonial territory.

With the independence, the Afghan government eager to avail the opportune moment of the absence of the British might, Pakistan vigorously raised the issue of what it described as unresolved border disputes carried over from the colonial era. Kabul branded the Durand Line as invalid and imposed-upon and called for negotiations with Pakistan on the demarcation of the new border. But the Pakistan-India dispute over the princely state of Kashmir right after the independence of both countries, the obvious inclination of Pashtun tribes towards Muslim Pakistan, and the subsequent mobilization and dispatch of tribal warriors to take back Kashmir from India, coupled with the desire of Pashtun tribal leaders to remain within the territory of Pakistan rather than accession to Afghanistan offered Pakistan a more superior position in the territorial dispute with Afghanistan.

Pakistan's outright rejection of Afghan demand and its reiteration of the legality of the Durand Line ushered in an era of relations characterized by mistrust and frequent tension between the two states. During the deliberations at the United Nations on Pakistan's application for membership in this organization, Afghanistan was the sole country to vote against Pakistan's admission. However, the delegate representing Afghanistan at the U.N. subsequently withdrew his country's objection and stated that he had voted against the resolution without receiving prior instruction from Kabul. In June 1949 in a major and historic development, the Afghan Loya Jirga (tribal assembly) unilaterally abrogated all those clauses of treaties concluded between the previous Afghan governments and British India that had lent credence to the Durand Line, pushing the strife with Pakistan to a new height.

The 1950-51 crackdown on some Pakistani Pashtun leaders opposed to the independence of Pakistan and the Durand Line left a number of Pashtun activists dead and their leaders jailed. The incident drew intensified verbal attacks from the Afghan government that accused Pakistan of mistreatment of ethnic Pashtuns. In response, the Pakistan government initiated its own official moves and media campaign against Kabul coupled with economic pressure by suspending the transit of gasoline and diesel imports from Afghanistan. This restrictive policy of Pakistan compelled Afghanistan to seek closer ties with the Soviet Union and to conclude agreements on the import/transit of fuel and export of goods that set the stage for greater Soviet influence in Afghanistan. Other retaliatory measures such as extending support and provision of a safe haven to the other side's opponents, sporadic border skirmishes together with diplomatic initiatives, and leveling charges became the routine agenda of the authorities of both nations that widened the extent of discontent and suspicion.

In 1952, the Afghan government aside from the usual calls for negotiations on the demarcation of the common border also laid the claim of sovereignty on the entire Baluchistan province of Pakistan. Referring to the North-Western Frontier and the Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan as the northern and southern Pashtunistan, Kabul practically demanded the secession of nearly 60 percent of the Pakistani territory and its annexation to Afghanistan.

The March 1955 decision of the Pakistani government to merge the four western provinces into the provincial exclave of "West Pakistan" drew sharp criticism of the Afghan government. Kabul denounced the move as a measure to amplify repression of the Pashtun minority and did little to prevent mob ransacking of Pakistan's embassy in Kabul and its consulate in Jalalabad. The event in turn prompted retaliation in Pakistan by storming the consulate of Afghanistan in Peshawar and announcement of a decision to scale down diplomatic relations with Kabul and closure of Afghan and Pakistani consulates in both countries.

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Although the two countries normalized diplomatic relations in 1957, the tense atmosphere in relations persisted. The policy pursued by the new Pakistan President Marshal Ayub Khan to further extend state influence and tighten control over tribal areas alongside Afghan Prime Minister Daoud Khan's attempts to follow suit in Pashtun-inhabited regions of Afghanistan added to the complexity of the issue. Failed January 1960 talks between Ayub Khan and the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan degraded the already deteriorated relations to the extent that the Afghan Foreign Minister explicitly slammed Pakistan as a colonial state. In the meantime, both countries beefed up their military capabilities along their shared border, and the ensuing severe armed clashes between the Pakistani and Afghan proxy forces in the Pashtun district of Bajaur cost the lives of hundreds of irregular fighters.

In August 1961, the government of Pakistan in response to what it called the harassment of Pakistani diplomats in Kabul and the restrictions imposed by the Afghan government, severed diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. Mediation efforts of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia and the initiative of the then U.S. President Kennedy aimed at the revival of diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan yielded no result. In 1962, the Shah of Iran visited Rawalpindi and Kabul, and succeeded in persuading the leaders at both capitals to narrow the gap of mistrust and to agree on mediated negotiations. In March 1963, Afghan and Pakistani delegations met in Tehran and agreed to restore diplomatic relations and to reopen their border crossings. Also during the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971, the Afghan King Mohammed Zahir Shah assured

Pakistani leaders that notwithstanding the unresolved territorial dispute, his country would not initiate military actions against Pakistan.

The 1973 return of Daoud Khan to power this time as the president of Afghanistan coincided with the dismissal of the elected provincial governments of North-West Frontier and Balochistan provinces by Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, followed by a crackdown on the Baloch insurgency that resurfaced the chronic issue of Pashtunistan once again. It led to more deteriorated relations between the two countries and marked the beginning of a three-year period of verbal attacks, limited frontier skirmishes, and closure of border crossings. The 1976 negotiations between Bhutto and Daoud Khan eased tension to a great extent and helped prevail a short period of relative calm in Pak-Afghan relations.

In April 1978, leftist groups toppled the government of Daoud Khan. Noor Mohammad Taraki, the new Afghan president and leader of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, in an apparent bid to divert public attention from the communist nature of his government, declared that the Pashtunistan issue is the top priority of his administration. The Afghan delegate participating in the 1979 Non-Aligned Movement conference in Havana also raised the subject of Pashtunistan and deplored what he referred to as the Pakistani repression of ethnic Pashtuns and Islamabad's provocations and military aggression. With the rise of popular discontent over the communist coup, the entry of Soviet troops to save and support the Kabul administration, and the mass exodus of Afghan refugees heading to the neighboring countries,

Pakistan acted as the main conduit of Western support and supply to the mainly Pashtun-dominated Jihadi groups. To this end, the North-West Frontier Province in general and the city of Peshawar in particular transformed as the center for the presence and activities of seven major Afghan Mujahideen parties.

Although Pakistan benefited from Western attention and assistance in line with its alignment and resolute cooperation with the global alliance against Soviet military intervention and the communist establishment in Kabul, it suffered immensely from the social and security fallouts of its undeclared deep involvement in the Afghan conflict. Problems and social disorder associated with the influx of millions of Afghan refugees, the upsurge in activities of powerful drug cartels, widespread use of illegal firearms, the introduction of a phenomenon better known as 'Kalashinkov culture,' and finally, the eruption of bloody ethnic clashes between Pashtuns, Sindhi and Muhajir communities may be enumerated as Pakistan's share of offshoots of Afghan crisis with long-lasting adverse effects.

The Afghan government emboldened by the all-out backing of the Soviet Union felt little obstacle to react to what it used to brand as Pakistani interference. Acts of sabotage by elements affiliated with Kabul, frontier incursions, and the almost daily air space violations and bombing raids carried out by Afghan and Soviet jet fighters on the North-Western Frontier Province which they recognized as occupied Afghan territory became almost normal daily events. It continued until the conclusion of the Geneva Agreement and the departure of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and finally, the total collapse of the communist government in April 1992.

Notwithstanding the initial euphoric climate and optimism generated by the fall of the Najibullah government and the general expectation of an era of smooth Pak-Afghan ties, the evolving situation emanating from Pakistan's strategic objective of installing a Pashtun-dominated establishment in Kabul did not contribute to tension-free bilateral relations. Pakistan's backing of Pashtun Jihadi groups in their armed rivalry with the government of Tajik president Burhanuddin Rabbani, and most notably the all-out support to the Islamic Party headed by Golbuddin Hekmatyar to destabilize the new Afghan Government ignited a fresh round of civil war this time among Afghan mujahidin groups.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the birth of newly independent republics set in motion the US-backed idea of the construction of oil and gas pipelines from Central Asian sources to open seas via Afghanistan and Pakistan. Frustrated by the failure of Hekmatyar and his affiliates to dislodge the government of President Rabbani and eager to avail itself of this golden economic

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opportunity, Pakistan embarked on the scheme of creating and supporting a more trusted armed group called Taliban capable of imposing central rule and a secured environment as the prerequisites for implementation of the ambitious project of Central Asia energy transit. Although Pakistan's well-planned venture progressed to a great extent and the Taliban ruled Kabul for almost five years until the events of September 11th, 2001, Pakistan's hope for a final settlement of the long-standing territorial dispute with Afghanistan and to earn an official recognition of the Durand Line by the Taliban government proved far from reality.

Pakistan's resolute support for the Taliban insurgency over the entire twenty-year period of the Afghan Republic is said to be responsible for the lingering instability and insecurity in large parts of Afghanistan in defiance of NATO's large-scale and costly military presence. Islamabad's policy and conduct during this period have always drawn strong protests from the Afghan government and elected Pashtun presidents, and have also caused severe discontent and outcry on the part of some notable Pashtun political figures and former warlords.

In 2017, the Pakistani government in a bid to further strengthen the legitimacy of the Durand Line initiated the costly project of setting up barbed wire fences and minefields along its shared border with Afghanistan in total disregard to official protests of the Kabul Administration. Facilitated by the prevailing unstable situation in Afghanistan and adhering to the justification of setting up barriers to prevent the infiltration of terrorist elements across the border, Pakistan succeeded in completing a major portion of the project by 2021.

The landlocked Afghanistan is mainly reliant on Pakistani transit routes for its import-exports and Pakistan's regulatory policies on this access in order to manage relations with Afghanistan have persisted as an irritant issue in its interactions with Kabul. Pakistan argues that a large portion of Afghan imports transited through its routes are smuggled and re-entered into Pakistan, thus dealing heavy blows to domestic

production and customs revenue. Persuaded in 2010 by the United States the Pakistan government entered into a new "Transit Trade Agreement" with Afghanistan that has eased the differences over transit issues to some extent. Some outstanding differences between the two countries, such as the presence of a large number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the fair distribution of waters flowing in frontier rivers have so far remained unattended.

The dramatic events of August 2021 leading to the collapse of the Ashraf Ghani government and the return of the Taliban to Kabul were at first glance seen as a historic triumph in the eyes of Pakistani leaders and generated a premature euphoria and optimism in Islamabad. Only days after the fall of the Afghan government, General Faiz Hamid the then-powerful head of the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) of the Pakistan Army and his entourage triumphantly visited Kabul signaling a great accomplishment for his country against all odds. Pakistan spearheaded a diplomatic campaign to persuade other states to officially recognize the Taliban government and its admission into the United Nations. However, as predicted by many independent observers and scholars, the Pakistani euphoria proved to be very short-lived and soon Pakistan found itself in a self-made difficult situation and at loggerheads with its own once-proxy. Open opposition of Taliban to border fence installation efforts of Pakistan and even the removal of the already installed barriers in some sensitive portions of the Durand Line accompanied with the ensuing limited armed clashes gradually turned into normal recurrence. The policies and domestic conduct of the Taliban against the civil liberties and rights of the population along with the deteriorated economic and humanitarian situation further alienated a major portion of Afghan society and multiplied the number of Afghan refugees leaving the country. These developments coupled with the refusal of the Taliban to abide by their previous consent with the tenet of the Doha Agreement and the formation of a broad-based government denied it of International diplomatic recognition even from their sole resolute backer.

The worst for Pakistan occurred in 2022 with the re-emergence of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistani (TTP), the

> **Notwithstanding all the deep-rooted and chronic differences between Pakistan and Afghanistan, leaders of the two nations have until recently always exercised restraint at critical junctures and through last-minute contacts and negotiations have averted full-blown conflicts with unpredictable consequences.**

Pakistani version of Afghan Taliban that for the large part has been forced to dormancy by the military crackdown of Pakistan Army as well as denial of safe haven in Afghanistan due to NATO presence and lack of support from Afghan governments. The terrorism waged by TTP has grown in strength, extent, and frequency and has turned into a major security concern of Pakistani leaders at a critical juncture of facing economic difficulties and domestic political crises. Though the Taliban has repeatedly refuted Islamabad's claims of the existence of TTP bases and sanctuaries on Afghan soil and of infiltration of TTP operatives from its shared border with Pakistan, there are fewer reasons to lend credit to the Taliban narrative given the realities on the ground. For Taliban leaders, having received support and shelter from TTP during the two decades of armed insurgency and in line with Pashtun tribal traditions and ideological considerations it is quite difficult to turn their back on the TTP and comply with the demands of Islamabad. Non-resolution of the TTP-related security issues with the Taliban administration and the ensuing exchange of threat and sharp criticisms has recently pushed the Pakistan government to resort to unprecedented restrictive measures against the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan highlighted by the decision to deport the large population of undocumented Afghan refugees and migrants.

Despite the changes in regional and international situation, Pakistan still regards Afghanistan as its political and security backyard and is constantly preoccupied with what it considers as the serious threat of Indian influence and presence in that backyard. As such, Pakistan shall spare no effort to undermine and oppose any Afghan government that forms a strong friendship and favor with New Delhi.

Pashtuns known as the largest ethnic group and the claimant of the lion's share of political power in Afghanistan have always, except for a brief period, retained control of the government in Kabul. For Pashtuns, the conviction to safeguard this self-projected right to rule remains well associated with upholding the cause of unification of the divided Pashtuns inhabited areas on both sides of the Durand Line, thus leaving less optimism for a future compromise and fair settlement of territorial dispute with Pakistan.

Notwithstanding all the deep-rooted and chronic differences between Pakistan and Afghanistan, leaders of the two nations have until recently always exercised restraint at critical junctures and through last-minute contacts and negotiations have averted full-blown conflicts with unpredictable consequences. In view of the apocalyptic mindset of top Taliban leaders and their unique approach to domestic governance and international relations, it is yet to be seen if the last trend of displaying wisdom and moderation in tackling the disputes with Pakistan sustains or else.

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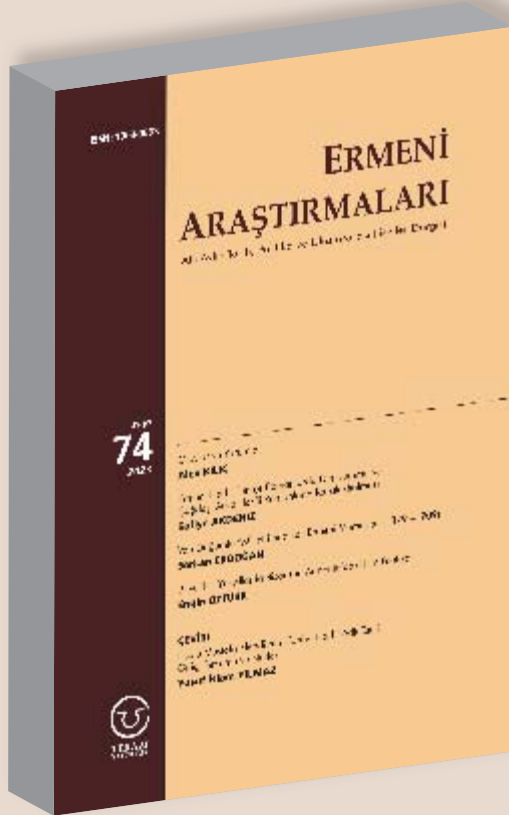
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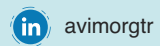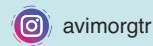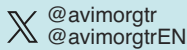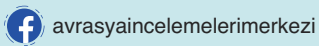Süleyman Nazif Sok. No. 12/B Daire 4 06550 Çankaya/ANKARA
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