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# MULTIDIMENSIONAL REGIONALISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: ACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Monograph

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The monograph examines the main challenges and actors determining the processes of development of regionalism in the Mediterranean. The war in Ukraine is one of the on-going parameters impacted the Mediterranean region, mainly as it hosts alternative sources of natural gas and oil to reduce European countries' dependence on Russian supplies; conflicts in Syria, Libya, and other parts of North Africa and the Middle East drive waves of migrants toward Europe's southern borders, as a result, the Mediterranean has become a frontier for the EU; the political, economic and military realities of the Mediterranean are increasingly shaped by the USA, Russia, the EU and such regional states as Turkey, Iran and the Persian Gulf countries; the stability and prosperity of this region will be determined for decades by the ability of regional and global powers to address these interrelated challenges.

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# БАГАТОВИМІРНИЙ РЕГІОНАЛІЗМ У СЕРЕДЗЕМНОМОР'Ї: АКТОРИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ

Монографія

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У монографії досліджено основні виклики та акторів, що визначають процеси розвитку регіоналізму у Середземномор'ї. Війна в Україні є одним із постійних параметрів, що формують Середземномор'я, особливо тому, що регіон має альтернативні джерела природного газу та нафти, щоб зменшити залежність європейських країн від російських поставок; конфлікти в Сирії, Лівії та інших частинах Північної Африки та Близького Сходу спрямовують хвилі мігрантів до південних кордонів Європи, а Середземне море стало кордоном ЄС; політичні, економічні та військові реалії Середземномор'я дедалі більше формуються США, Росією, ЄС і такими регіональними державами, як Туреччина, Іран та країни Перської затоки; стабільність і процвітання цього регіону на наступні десятиліття визначатимуться здатністю регіональних і глобальних держав долати ці взаємопов'язані виклики.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Olga Brusylovska*

This collective monograph is a result of the cooperation of the Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University's team and our partners from the universities of Italy, Malta, and Turkey during the realisation of the module "The Ring of Mediterranean: Regional Studies" — ERASMUS-JMO-2021-HEI-TCH-RSCH (101047919) (MEDITERreg).

The ONU-led MEDITERreg includes a set of diverse partners from EU Member states, their Mediterranean partners, and Ukrainian partners. The Module's framework emphasises coherently and synergically integrated innovative teaching methods, bi-directional interactivity, and blended learning. The combination of 4 new courses with other essential activities creates a complex and comprehensive approach toward the Mediterranean as a heterogeneous region, which includes a variety of countries, cultures, traditions, political evolution and experiences. The module also significantly strengthens the Regional and EU Studies in the Faculty's research with a specific and detailed understanding of the Mediterranean region and this dimension of The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The MEDITERreg focuses on its various online activities and resources. Online e-books, audio recordings and other digital materials are readily available to different groups of participants on the project's website, ONU domain. These activities and resources ensure the successful realisation of all project objectives in the time of Russian aggression in Ukraine when the physical movements of individuals are limited. The partnership with NGOs and think tanks within and outside Ukraine contributes to disseminating the results of the module and its related best practices beyond the context of the ONU. Moreover, the partnership with the Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (DAU) provides the chance to expand, in the Ukrainian context, societal awareness of the Europeanization process and its fluid connection to the

enlargement process and the dimension of the neighbourhood. Project goals and specific tasks are revised course “Country Studies through Language”; new courses “Regional Studies”, “EU policy towards Mediterranean region”, “Regional Politics and Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean”, and “Migration Process in the Mediterranean”; new MOOCs “Regional Studies”, “EU policy towards Mediterranean region”, “Regional Politics and Security in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean”, and “Migration Process in the Mediterranean”.

The monograph aims to identify the main trends in the prospects for the development of regionalism in Mediterranean. Among the tasks are to build the theoretical foundation of the development of modern regionalism, to reveal the best practices of regionalism in the Mediterranean, to demonstrate the role of external actors, first of all, the most active ones in the region, to understand the perception of Ukraine in Mediterranean countries and to find joint base for our future cooperation. The hypothesis is that such common ground may be that Europeanization is equally important to Ukraine and most Mediterranean countries.

The Mediterranean region is the most important for the EU, although the EU also has a strong presence in the Baltic and Black Seas. However, the Mediterranean is the cradle of European civilisation and is now the source of the most significant challenges for this organisation. Therefore, interest in EU policy in this region will only increase. As the North-South abyss grows, it will become increasingly relevant for the real politics of states and international organisations. For Ukraine, the experience of relations between the Mediterranean countries and the EU has become even more relevant today because we could not enter the EU quickly due to the conflict with Russia. It is crucial for scientists and the entire Ukrainian society to understand how to build relations without the hope of full EU membership. What can the EU give Ukraine? What dangers does the future hold for us? As the instability in Ukraine increases, these problems are becoming more and more critical for the EU. These factors determine the practical significance of the proposed study.



The theory of Europeanization, from which all the authors of the proposed monograph proceeded, helps to answer these questions. The abovementioned does not mean that the study's theoretical basis is limited to Europeanization, but no one today can afford to ignore it because of the following arguments.

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, researchers gradually moved away from viewing European integration exclusively as a process of EU expansion and deepening cooperation among member states within supranational structures. As European integration was reconsidered at the turn of the century, Europeanization gained increasing independence as a scientific term, gradually separating from traditional EU studies. The main focus gradually shifted from examining the effects of enlargement on the EU's nature – namely, the formation and functioning of its institutions (*uploading* of norms and rules or the *bottom-up approach*) – towards a greater emphasis on the direct downloading of EU norms and rules (*downloading* or the *top-down approach*) and their incorporation into the legislation of member states or potential member states. The consequences of such downloading for the domestic political, economic, and legislative systems in countries that, by becoming members (or candidates), have agreed to adopt EU norms and rules are the primary subject of study in Europeanization.

Topics of growing interest to scholars include the impact of EU integration on the political process in member states (such as changes in the distribution of power and party structure), institutional transformation, economic adaptation, cultural exchange, identity shifts, and more. However, the most central issue that remains at the core of all works on Europeanization is the exploration of situations in which convergence occurs between the EU's demands and the member states' ambitions to protect their national interests. In other words, the key questions are: What are the conditions for the successful adaptation of European norms in a general sense, and which specific domestic social, economic, and political factors exert a decisive positive or negative influence on a country's Europeanization?

The pioneers in Europeanization research who laid the theoretical groundwork for future academic studies include Johan Olsen, Tanja Börzel,

Andrew Moravcsik, Kevin Featherstone, Claudio Radaelli, and Simon Bulmer. Most of these scholars adhere to the new institutional approach in explaining the effects of Europeanization. For instance, Simon Bulmer and Claudio Radaelli note that the rational choice model is the most developed (Bulmer, & Radaelli, 2004, p. 50). This model pays attention to the behaviour of actors within national states. These actors – from national governments and political parties to civil society representatives – are viewed as pursuing their interests, with all decisions motivated by rational calculations. This model is not new, as American behaviourists developed it in the mid-20th century. However, in Europeanization studies, it was first applied to explain the political behaviour of European states in their relations with the European Union.

Thus, at the core of the rational choice model lays the assumption that, firstly, Europeanization – as a process of the dissemination and institutionalisation of European norms – is characterised by a high transformational potential, enabling the fundamental alteration of rules, procedures, and political paradigms at the level of individual countries. Secondly, suppose compliance with EU requirements brings a country benefits that align with its national interests and outweigh the losses incurred due to compliance. In that case, the transformational effect will be maximised. Thirdly, transformations will be most comprehensive and pronounced if a so-called misfit exists between EU requirements and the internal (institutional, political) realities within the country. These and other principles of the rationalist approach were presented in many early works dedicated to the theory of Europeanization (Börzel, & Risse, 2003; Freyburg, & Richter, 2010).

In Europeanization research, alongside rationalist institutionalism, the principles of sociological (or constructivist) institutionalism play a significant role in the academic discourse. Scholars in this area, guided by the “theory of social learning”, adapt the principles of this theory to the relations between the EU and its members. This theory, originally borrowed from psychology, was developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 and has since been applied across various scientific disciplines, from criminology to political science. Its central premise is that people,

as social beings, adapt to the social context and learn within it based on specific generally accepted models and norms of behaviour. In other words, by observing their surroundings and identifying specific patterns, individuals attempt to replicate them to achieve social approval.

As Tanya Börzel and Thomas Risse note, sociological institutionalism operates with a fundamentally different logic to explain actors' behaviour compared to the rational approach. Instead of the rationalist logic of consequences, it proposes interpreting actors' actions as motivated by the logic of appropriateness (Börzel, & Risse, 2000). As social collectives, political actors are guided not only by their self-serving interests but also by generally accepted norms of behaviour. Thus, decisions to adopt certain norms are made based on how well these norms align with the deeply ingrained societal understanding of what is considered "right" or "acceptable". In addressing the question of why motivation to comply with EU requirements arises at the national level, sociological institutionalism again appeals to the "acceptability" of European norms. Thus Europeanization often leads to identity changes (Börzel, & Risse, 2003).

So, the key is the socialisation of European norms as the pressure leading to compliance comes directly from society: civil associations and individual public figures. For the social learning model, as well as for the rational choice model, the existence of a misfit is an essential factor: the more significant the difference between the proposed rules and mechanisms and those existing in a given country, the more likely their adoption as a result of adaptive pressure from society. Thus, this monograph focuses on the political, economic and other consequences of *downloading* for the Mediterranean countries, which, to varying degrees, have agreed to adopt EU norms and rules and to pay a price for the creation of the Wider Region connecting the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

The monograph focuses on those directions of development of Mediterranean regionalism, which employees of the Department of International Relations of Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University have spent years investigating in their scientific searches. This book is structurally divided into three

blocks (internal development in the Mediterranean, external factors, and the relations of Ukraine with Mediterranean countries) and twelve chapters, each highlighting a separate direction of the regional development in the Mediterranean.

The work is designed for everyone who is interested in foreign policy and international relations – from students to experts.

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**PART 1**  
**MEDITERRANEAN REGIONALISM:**  
**THEORIES AND PRACTICES**

## ALTERNATIVE REGIONALISMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

*Muharrem Doğan & Hüsrev Tabak*

### **Introduction**

This study seeks to address regionalism in the Mediterranean region, with a particular focus on alternative approaches that have the potential to be established in the region. Regionalism refers to the process by which states situated within a specific geographical region collectively develop common policies with the objective of strengthening economic, political, social and cultural cooperation. The objective of such cooperation is to enhance regional peace and stability, accelerate economic development and safeguard shared interests. Since the 1990s, the Mediterranean region has constituted a principal topic of discussion in the context of regionalism. The Mediterranean region is an area of significant geographical and strategic importance, encompassing numerous countries and characterised by a rich tapestry of cultural diversity and historical richness. The concept of regionalism for the Mediterranean encompasses a multitude of initiatives that seek to enhance collaboration between countries in the region on matters pertaining to economics, politics, the environment and security.

The discussion of regionalism in the Mediterranean can be divided into two principal categories. The initial category encompasses regionalisms in the Mediterranean that are based on territorial considerations. In this context, three sub-regions (Europe, the Maghreb, and the Levant) with strong political, cultural, and historical ties can be easily identified. Mediterranean regionalism involves interactions between these sub-regions across historical, economic, and security dimensions. The common historical and cultural heritage, economic cooperation potential and security threats of these regions serve as the primary determinants of their dynamic relations. The second category of regionalism in the Mediterranean is constituted by sector-based initiatives, which are based on four fundamental pillars: economic development, security, environmental protection and cultural

cooperation. Initiatives such as the Barcelona Process, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly seek to establish a regional identity and to enhance solidarity by promoting joint projects across these sectors.

However, recent developments in the region have further complicated the prospects for peace and security. The recent Russian aggression in Georgia and its escalation in Ukraine, the Israeli military action in Palestine, the unresolved conflict in Cyprus, the Syrian war, the involvement of Yemen and even Iran in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and other factors contribute to an unstable environment that presents significant challenges to the formulation of effective regional policy. These factors create significant obstacles to the development of effective regional policies, making peaceful cooperation increasingly difficult to achieve.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the formation of regionalism and its historical development. The second section discusses the concept of micro-regionalisms in the Mediterranean. The final section analyses the prospects and challenges of greater Mediterranean integration.

### **Regionalism and its Discontent**

The formation of regions is contingent upon a multitude of factors, including geographical, political, economic, strategic and cultural associations. The regions are shaped by the influence of common norms, tendencies, values and practices (Fawcett, 2005). The term region can be applied to a variety of areas, including continental regions such as Europe or Latin America, subcontinental regions such as West Africa or Southeast Asia, and transcontinental regions such as the transatlantic area or Eurasia (Börzel, & Risse, 2016). Some of these groupings are designed to reinforce others, as in Europe and the Pacific, while in other cases, such as in the post-Soviet space, their coexistence may indicate discord and even conflict (Fawn, 2009). In regard to territories, a straightforward territorial definition may prove inadequate. It may be necessary to refine the concept of territory to encompass the potential for partnership, interaction, and consequently,

cooperation. One approach could be to view regions as units or areas based on groups, states, or regions, whose members exhibit shared salient characteristics. This would allow for the possibility that a single country could be a member of multiple regional organisations, some of which have overlapping but not identical mandates.

The term regionalism is defined as a primarily state-led process of establishing and maintaining formal regional institutions and organisations among mostly at least three states (Börzel, & Risse, 2016). The concept of regionalism is shaped by the understanding of the regions in question. The expectations of different actors help to determine the norms, rules and procedures that govern these regions. Regionalism is a process that aims to pursue and promote common goals in one or more subject areas – therefore it is more a state-led project in the making. Regionalisation, on the other hand, is used to describe processes of increasing economic, political, social, or cultural interactions among geographically or culturally contiguous states and societies. In other words, regionalisation emphasises transnational relations between non-state actors, such as firms, interest groups, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as their direct involvement in the process of region-building (Börzel, & Risse, 2016).

The concept of regionalism can be constructed upon four fundamental pillars: economic cooperation, security and stability, political cooperation, and cultural cooperation. Economic cooperation allows regions to achieve goals such as trade liberalisation, the creation of common markets, and increased economic integration. Regional cooperation presents a substantial opportunity to enhance trade, stimulate investment and accelerate economic growth (Mistry, 2003). Security and stability enable regions to provide collective defence against common security threats and to preserve peace. The collaborative mitigation of shared security concerns also serves to reinforce regional stability and peace (Buzan, 2000). Political cooperation allows regions to ensure political stability and to develop common policies. The formation of regional blocs allows for a greater collective influence on global politics (Pevehouse, 2016). Cultural cooperation can



be strengthened through regional cooperation. The existence of common cultural and historical ties serves to facilitate the establishment of regional cooperation (Checkel, 2016).

The objective of such cooperation is to enhance regional peace and stability, accelerate economic development and protect common interests. In accordance with definitions that place particular emphasis on international order, regionalism has the potential to reinforce state structures and the process of democratisation (Falk, 2003).

The increasing importance of regions can also be attributed to their role in establishing regional order. The governance structures established at the regional level provide a significant and complementary layer of governance, to the extent that regionalism may influence the shape of world order (Hettne, 2005). It can also serve to challenge the oppressive actions of powerful states and global institutions, facilitate the formation of shared norms and values, enhance transparency, and enhance the accountability of states and international organisations (Risse, 2011). Accordingly, similar to global governance and international regimes, regional governance mechanisms provide the basis for establishing a steering and control mechanism, by which the behaviour of the actors within the specific territorial, economic or security region may be moulded in a way garnering a feeling of belonging and socialization (Finkelstein 1995, Gheciu, 2005; Flockhart, 2004). As can be seen in Ruggie (1982)'s example of embedded liberalism, normative orders that emerge in international/regional politics result in the establishment of organizations, and organizations transmit the defended norms to actors through the norm regimes they produce. Thus, actors who interact with organizations acquire new social, cultural, and cognitive meanings. In this sense, it is necessary to state that there is a mutually constitutive relationship between organizations and actors (Morphet, 2005).

Nevertheless, regional governance mechanisms do not even need to be institutional and sometimes closed system like regimes – in fact, the functioning of regional governance takes place in the form of a network of relations in which an

actor in a region of nations or actors from all levels of the region of nations try to influence it. In other words, the governance system is a mechanism formed by non-governmental structures as well as governments beyond the official state-member centred image of regimes – a system in which the structures envisaged by the regimes (governments and intergovernmental organizations) as well as the relevant non-governmental structures participate and assume official roles when necessary. These joint roles include the production of knowledge on issues requiring expertise, the establishment and maintenance of regimes, the determination of rules and appropriate behaviour patterns (norms), the development of general principles for the maintenance of peace and order, efforts to resolve disputes with good faith and consensus, the allocation of resources to the programs of international organizations, the establishment of technical assistance and development programs, and humanitarian and emergency relief activities (Rosenau, & Czempiel, 1992; Rosenau, 1995). Therefore, a genuinely successful regionalist initiative in the present era is characterised by the existence of a network of regional governance structures, encompassing both inter-regional collaboration and connections between state and non-state actors.

Regional initiatives therefore assume a variety of roles, including the promotion of economic development, the advancement of democratic practice, the provision of human services in war and disaster zones, the combating of terrorism, and strengthening cultural and social cooperation. These roles could exert a daily impact on both civil society networks and formal state institutions, with the potential for significant and far-reaching consequences.

### ***Historical Development of Regional Perspectives***

The historical development of regionalism can be traced back to the age of empires. In this context, regions can be understood as empires, spheres of influence or simply powerful states and their allies, which dominated different international systems (Fawcett, 2005). However, the emergence of regions as a result of interstate cooperation is regarded as a phenomenon of a multi-numerical states system that originated after the First World War (Fawn, 2009). In the aftermath of

the War, the League of Nations encouraged states and peoples to adopt a novel perspective on peace, security, equality and development. This resulted in a revised definition of international relations and a transformed normative architecture. Consequently, the experiences of the 1930s informed the nature of cooperation within the nascent European institutions in the aftermath of the Second World War (Fawcett, 2005). The concept of regionalism gained significant traction after the Second World War, to the extent that it was formally recognised by the United Nations (UN). In particular, demands from Arab countries (the League of Arab States), which constituted the first institutionalised regional cooperation initiative of the period, prompted the UN to recognise the legitimacy of regional agencies (Barnett, & Solingen, 2007). Regional economic and social commissions also constituted an early and integral aspect of UN operations, attracting a diverse array of stakeholders and shaping new agendas. In summary, the principle of regional action and cooperation was firmly established.

In the context of the Cold War, the maintenance of peace and security was achieved through the establishment of the Warsaw Pact, NATO and related institutions, which operated on a unilateral or regional basis. During this period, there was a notable increase in the number of regional organisations, including the League of Arab States (LAS – 1945), the Organisation of American States (OAS – 1948), the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO – 1954), Central American Common Market (CACM 1960), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU – 1963), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN – 1967), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM – 1973), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS – 1975). At a further level, the European Community project, constructed around the concept of an economic community, has become a model in which security and democratic consolidation are the primary concerns. In order to align themselves with the new economic and security architecture, these new pan-regional or sub-regional organisations have modified both their agendas and their terms of reference. The growth of regional activities, evidenced by an increase in the number of activities, a shift in the nature of memberships (between ‘North’ and

‘South’), an expansion of sectorial activity and a qualitative enhancement in the goals of these activities, has resulted in the emergence of a new regionalism (Fawn, 2009).

The growth of regional cooperation in the post-Cold War era represents a significant development in international politics. This concept is an inevitable consequence of the ending of bipolarity. The absence of superpower rivalry in all regions allows local powers to operate with greater autonomy. In the decade following the conclusion of the Cold War, the remaining superpower and other major powers (China, the European Union, Japan, and Russia) exhibited diminished motivation and capacity for intervention in external security matters (Buzan, & Waever, 2003). The process of globalisation has been also accompanied by a parallel increase in regionalism. The number of regional organisations and their respective memberships has both grown exponentially, as has the relevance of what is called the new regionalism. In examining the phenomenon of new regionalism, an expression that emerged in the 1990s, it is evident that there has been a notable increase in the number of regional organisations, their capacity, the scope of their membership, and the range of their activities. The advent of non-national and transnational actors, multinational corporations and aid organisations has brought about a shift in the normative framework of regional operations, particularly impacting developing countries where regionalism has become an integral aspect of the southern movement, such as the G77 (Fawcett, 2005).

Consequently, the phenomenon of regional cooperation is becoming increasingly significant. This is characterised by the formulation and coordination of common strategies and policies by different regions. There is also a growing involvement of cross-border networks, civil society groups and NGO activists in regional spaces. The concept of regionalism is still evolving. It has been a prominent feature of African, American and Asian institutions, particularly in the context of democratisation and human rights protection. Additionally, the role of non-nation-state regionalism has gained significant prominence, particularly in population, environmental and trade forums.

### *Criticism of Regionalism*

In instances where the capacity of the state to address complex and diverse threats is limited, and where the agendas of existing multilateral organisations are primarily aligned with the interests of their parent states, regionalism emerges as a viable and desirable approach. The existence of regions is geographically, conceptually and functionally well suited to address regional governance issues and is therefore perceived as a useful aspiration by both state and non-state actors. Regionalism is therefore regarded as a goal that should be endorsed by regional and international societies.

Nevertheless, the notion of regionalism is not universally accepted. In some circles, there is still a conviction in the tenet of universality, the pre-eminence of the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral institutions, particularly in matters pertaining to peace, security, and development. The founders of the League of Nations and UN institutions, as well as those who advocate universal governance, continue to regard global objectives as the principal means of addressing international issues (Fawcett, 2005). It is therefore thought that regional and sub-regional structures act as a barrier to the process of international unity.

The capacity of states to engage in collaborative endeavours is contingent upon their proclivity to do so. In this regard, the constraints imposed by the principle of sovereignty assume a pivotal role. For some, the phenomenon of regionalism portends the diminution of the significance of the state. From a negative perspective, regionalism can be perceived as a strategy for asserting sovereign control, whereby sovereigns seek to avoid making significant commitments to institutions that could potentially limit their freedom.

Another issue pertains to the interrelationship between regional groups and dominant states or hegemony. The relationship between regionalism and hegemony presents an interesting challenge (Fawlett, 2005). While state sovereignty reduces the capacity of regionalism, powerful states are also prone to abuse. Critics argue that regional groups often serve the interests of different states, usually the powerful ones. In any regional organisation, one main actor often sets the agenda.

This actor may have been influential in creating and maintaining the organisation, or sometimes the dominant role may have passed to another state.

A final critique would be that despite the benefits of the involvement of non-governmental processes in the formation of regional mechanisms and equally in the increase of prospects for the democratisation of regional governance mechanisms upon their inclusion, states tend to either disvalue their role or consider them as untrustworthy agents working for the benefit of certain inwardly or outwardly state(s) (Willetts 2000; Betsill, & Corell 2008). The regional organizations, relatedly, rarely introduce monitoring or decision mechanisms for civil society access to state-led institutions. Relatedly, the pressures the civil society face in most countries, their access to regional governance mechanisms would be categorically blocked – thus the regions miss out the chance to benefit from the positive contributions of civil society organizations, academics, consultants, independent commissions, and active individuals who are in routine contact with the transnational sector within a region.

### **Micro-Regionalisms in the Mediterranean**

The term micro-regionalism is used to describe economic, social, cultural and political cooperation at the level of smaller geographic areas or local regions. This form of regionalism frequently encompasses collaboration and integration initiatives among local communities, cities or small regions (Pace, 2006). In contrast to cooperation at the larger regional or national level, micro-regionalism prioritises issues and opportunities at a more localised scale. The Mediterranean region is an area of significant geographical and strategic importance, cultural diversity and historical richness, comprising numerous countries. Regionalism for the Mediterranean encompasses various initiatives that aim to increase cooperation between the countries in this region on economic, political, and environmental and security issues. The question of regionalisation in the Mediterranean has been the subject of on-going debate since the 1990s. Consequently, regionalism has been employed as a valuable analytical instrument to elucidate the collaborative

framework proffered by the Barcelona Process since 1995 (Panebianco, 2003). The principal research inquiry concerning the Mediterranean region is whether it is feasible to envisage the establishment of a regional collective security system in this region. Pursuing this line of reasoning, the pervasive assumption in the mid-1990s was that a region-building process was underway in the Mediterranean region as well.

### ***Territory-based regionalisms in the Mediterranean***

In the Mediterranean area three sub-regions linked by strong political, cultural and historical ties can be easily singled out: Europe, the Maghreb and the Levant (Panebianco, 2010). The concept of Mediterranean regionalism encompasses interactions between Europe, the Maghreb and the Levant in historical, economic and security dimensions. The common historical and cultural heritage, economic cooperation potential and security threats of these regions serve as the primary determinants of their dynamic relations.

The countries situated on the Mediterranean coast of Europe have been economically and culturally enriched throughout history by the existence of trade routes and the exchange of ideas facilitated by these routes. The legacy of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations, the Renaissance and Baroque periods have all made significant contributions to Mediterranean culture. The European Union (EU) represents a significant economic integration platform for European countries situated along the Mediterranean coastline. The EU implements a range of projects and programmes with the objective of fostering enhanced economic collaboration with other countries in the Mediterranean region. In this context, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euro-Med) represents a particularly noteworthy initiative (EU, 2024).

The Maghreb is a region that covers Northwest Africa and includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. *The Union du Maghreb Arabe* (UMA) was established in 1989 with the objective of promoting regional economic integration. The UMA's stated goals include the promotion of free trade among member countries, the creation of a common market, and the acceleration of

economic development. However, the existence of political tensions and rivalries has made it challenging for the UMA to achieve these goals (UMA, 2024). In the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, Maghreb countries engage in collaborative initiatives across a range of sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, tourism and energy. The Maghreb occupies a pivotal position in the broader context of regional security and stability in the Mediterranean. Hence, the normative objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership include the fostering of economic and political development among the countries of the Southern Mediterranean, as well as the combating of transnational terrorism (Joffe, 2008). Cooperation is pursued with European and other Mediterranean countries on a range of issues, including migration, terrorism, and border security. The Mediterranean Dialogue represents a key platform through which NATO advances security cooperation in the region.

The Levant encompasses the countries along the eastern Mediterranean coast and generally includes Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. The region has a Mediterranean climate and has historically been at the crossroads of important trade routes. The Levant displays a multitude of geographical, social, cultural, linguistic, religious and political patterns and structures, reflecting the influence of numerous civilisations. The region's diverse ways of life have given rise to a vast spectrum of potential social identities (Schwara, 2003). The Levant countries occupy a significant position in the context of trade and energy projects in the Mediterranean region. In particular, the exploitation of natural gas resources and the construction of pipelines represent crucial elements of regional economic cooperation. Euro-Med has been established with the objective of fostering this cooperation (EU, 2024). In order to ensure the security of the Mediterranean, Europe has established collaborative initiatives with countries in the Levant on matters pertaining to migration, terrorism and regional stability.

Additionally, there are significant initiatives pertaining to Mediterranean regionalism. The aforementioned initiatives are the Barcelona Process, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Parliamentary



Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM). The Barcelona Process, initiated in 1995, represents an initiative that fosters collaboration between the European Union (EU) and Mediterranean countries. The process engages in joint endeavours pertaining to political dialogue, economic cooperation and socio-cultural change (UfM, 2024a). The Union for the Mediterranean, established in 2008, is a significant organisation that seeks to enhance collaboration between countries in the Mediterranean region. The UfM's objective is to facilitate enhanced regional cooperation, dialogue and the implementation of concrete projects developed in areas such as economic development, environmental protection, energy, education and security (UfM, 2024b). The Mediterranean Dialogue, initiated by NATO, aims to increase security cooperation and stability with countries in the southern Mediterranean and to promote good relations and understanding among participating countries and NATO Allies. This dialogue contributes to ensuring regional security and stability. Non-NATO countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia are engaged in the Dialogue (NATO, 2024). The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) is a forum that promotes political dialogue and economic cooperation between parliaments in the Mediterranean region. Cooperation takes place on democracy, human rights and sustainable development in the Euro-Mediterranean and Gulf Regions (PAM, 2024).

### ***Sectorial regionalisms in the Mediterranean***

The sectorial regionalism in the Mediterranean is based on economic cooperation, security and stability, environmental protection, and cultural cooperation. Economic cooperation is typically a central aspect of regionalism. The objective is to enhance trade, stimulate investment and accelerate economic growth among Mediterranean countries. Collaboration in sectors such as agriculture, tourism and maritime is crucial. The Mediterranean represents a strategic bridge between Europe, Africa and Asia. Consequently, regional cooperation is of great strategic and economic importance. The principal driver of regional economic integration in the Mediterranean area is the Agadir Process,

which in 2004 established a free trade area between Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan. In 2005, the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) was established, championed by the Arab League, with the objective of creating a free trade agreement between the majority of Arab Maghreb countries and the majority of Middle Eastern countries (Panebianco, 2010).

The security cooperation in the region constituted the foundation of the Barcelona Process. The EU has set itself the objective of constructing a Mediterranean 'region' of stability and peace via the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or Barcelona Process. In pursuing this goal, the EU has associated regional security with pluralistic regional integration and the development of regional identities and mutual trust (Adler, & Crawford, 2006). A joint strategy is devised to facilitate cooperation against common security threats, combat terrorism, illegal immigration and organised crime. The prevalence of security threats in the region, including political instability, terrorism, illegal immigration and organised crime, underscores the necessity for international cooperation (Attinà, 2006). The Mediterranean region is of critical importance for the maintenance of security and stability. Regional security cooperation is a significant factor in addressing shared challenges, including the fight against terrorism, human trafficking, and maritime security. In this context, platforms such as the Mediterranean Dialogue facilitate the promotion of security cooperation and political dialogue. Security cooperation in the region is a crucial dimension, particularly in light of the resurgence of the Israel-Palestine conflict following the Second Intifada in September 2000 and the subsequent stagnation of the Middle East Peace Process (Panebianco, 2010).

Another sectorial regionalism in the Mediterranean is based on the environmental protection. The necessity for environmental protection is emphasised, with particular reference to the protection of the ecological balance of the Mediterranean, the combating of marine pollution and the pursuit of sustainable development. Those engaged in the formulation of policy in the Mediterranean region have pledged to safeguard the marine and coastal

environment and to promote sustainable development in the region. For instance, the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), which was established in 1975, is a multilateral environmental agreement within the context of the Regional Seas Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It was approved by Mediterranean countries and the European Community as the institutional framework for cooperation in addressing common challenges of marine environmental degradation (UNEP, 2024). The Mediterranean ecosystem is confronted with a number of environmental challenges, including marine pollution, overfishing and climate change. In order to address these issues effectively, collaborative solutions such as MAP that transcend national borders have been developed.

The preservation and promotion of shared historical and cultural heritage, cultural exchange programmes, and educational cooperation are encouraged (EP, 2024) in the context of cultural cooperation. The objective of cultural regionalism in the Mediterranean is to safeguard and advance a specific cultural identity or heritage. These endeavours concentrate on cultural exchange, the maintenance of linguistic traditions, and the implementation of cultural heritage initiatives. The Mediterranean region is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and historical ties, which serve to foster cultural diplomacy and social interaction between the countries in the region. Organisations such as the UfM seek to strengthen regional identity and solidarity through the implementation of cultural exchange programmes and the undertaking of joint cultural projects (UfM, 2024). Nevertheless, the lack of consensus on common migration and refugee policies at the European Union level makes it challenging to devise solutions that are tailored to the social and cultural structures of the various member states.

### **Prospects for and Challenges of Greater Mediterranean Integration**

The common tendency in describing the geography called Greater Mediterranean is to think of it as a territorial region embodying the area spanning from the Red Sea shores of the Arabian Peninsula, the Black Sea area, the Aegean

Sea, and the entire Mediterranean Sea area. The idea of Greater Mediterranean thus leads us to take countries such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Georgia into account in discussing regionalism in the Mediterranean along with the European Union area, the North Africa, The Levant and Turkey (Aghazada, 2021). This broad definition presents both several opportunities and obstacles for regionalism and collaborative endeavours, as taking the huge geographical span and the political turmoil running throughout certain parts of this ‘greater’ region definition, the prospects for a peaceful regional order would be thought as a loose end (Panebianco, 2010).

The Russian aggressions in Georgia and recently in Ukraine, the Israeli war in Palestine, the frozen conflict in Cyprus, the Syrian war, the Yemeni and even Iranian involvement in the Israel’s war in Palestine contribute to an unstable environment that makes it difficult to formulate sensible regional policy thud leave the peaceful cooperation projections crippled. What is added to this is the territorial disputes in the western Mediterranean before and after the Arab Revolutions – the on-going friction that impedes diplomatic relations and regional collaboration is highlighted by the territorial conflicts including those involving Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Spain.

Furthermore, the regional peace prospects are further complicated by the involvement of outsider actors like Iran, Russia, and the United States. It is frequently more difficult to come to a compromise on regional issues since these countries have conflicting interests that might impact or intensify already-existing tensions. When it comes to the EU, albeit that the Union has long stood as the key agent for creating a peaceful order and a normative regime, apparently it has long failed to meet the expectations and hopes and impede mutual trust and the cultivation of a shared identity (Panebianco, 2010). Even worse, there have often been conflicting outcomes coming out of the EU’s attempts to resolve disputes and advance regional stability – as the Union is often considered as externalizing its Mediterranean identity and rather concentrates on *domestic* problems, including as political division and economic difficulties, which overshadows the EU’s

dedication to Mediterranean regionalism. Therefore, in discussing regionalism and peaceful order in the Mediterranean there are destructive subregional and country-based obstacles and the agents and structures of regionalism and regional cooperation in the Mediterranean have to deal with several deadlocks. (Gillespie 2009; Pierini, 2017)

Nevertheless, as described in the above section, there are salient mechanisms of sectorial cooperation that would serve keeping the region-building processes alive. However, as a final say apparently, the prospects for Mediterranean regionalism are often seized by the state-centric realities and the outlooks taking them as the sole mechanism for achieving a region. What is needed is extending the regional governance mechanisms, particularly the transnational ones, which would contribute to the materialization of processes and structures of a stable region.

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# EUROPEAN UNION'S REGIONALISM POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of migration has increased in visibility and impact with globalization. It has a multifaceted and complex structure involving many actors. In the contemporary era, relations between countries and economies are becoming increasingly intricate, with rapid changes occurring across numerous domains. Concurrently, the factors that drive international migration are evolving over time, and migration patterns vary according to the region of destination. The Mediterranean basin, particularly North Africa and the Middle East, is distinguished by its high migratory flows (Moretti, & Cela, 2014, p. 115). The Southern Mediterranean has traditionally been a region of emigration, whereas the Northern Mediterranean has become increasingly immigrant saturated.

Since the 2000s, the instability and conflict in the Middle East have contributed to a significant increase in the number of migrants in the region. The prevailing atmosphere of insecurity has transformed the phenomenon of international migration into a different dimension. Europe has become a focal point for those seeking employment, not only from the Middle East but also from Africa and Central Asia. The confluence of political and economic instability, climate change, natural disasters, and socio-economic instability between regions has rendered Europe a destination for asylum seekers and migrants. The intricate web of factors influencing migration in this region underscores the multifaceted nature of migration and highlights the necessity for international collaboration. In particular, the necessity for international collaboration to reach Europe has become increasingly apparent in recent times. The unprecedented surge in the number of migrants is regarded as a significant crisis that requires urgent resolution. In light of the aforementioned circumstances, it is imperative that individual countries

assume the responsibility of determining migration policies. It has thus become apparent to the EU that it is unable to address the adverse consequences of migration effectively in isolation. The EU has initiated measures to enhance collaboration with member states and countries in the Mediterranean region. It has adopted a series of agreements with these countries to regulate the inflow of migrants. The primary objective of the EU's migration policy is to externalize the migrant crisis, rather than addressing it from the perspective of internal political balance within European countries. Furthermore, the potential dangers faced by migrants are often overlooked. This study aims to analyse the EU's regionalism policy in response to the migration crisis.

## **Migration in the Mediterranean**

### ***Historical Perspective***

The phenomenon of migration has constituted an important dynamic affecting the demographic, economic, cultural, and political transformation of the Mediterranean coasts from history to the present. The phenomenon of migration in the Mediterranean has resulted in significant cultural transformation and shifts in the demographic profile of the region's population. Consequently, the Mediterranean has historically been a region where societies with disparate languages, religions, and racial compositions have interacted. It would be erroneous to assume that migration is a phenomenon exclusive to the Mediterranean region in the modern period. The issue of human movement has been a significant challenge for the Mediterranean region throughout history, from the ancient period to the Middle Ages, and from the colonial period to the post-colonial period. While this phenomenon has been identified as an aspect of immigration on occasion, it has also emerged as a key issue in the context of slave trade practices.

The principal factors underpinning migration movements in the Mediterranean from antiquity to the present can be enumerated as follows: migrations prompted by geographical and environmental factors, social and

political migrations, migrations driven by economic considerations, and migrations motivated by cultural or religious factors (Martin, 2021). In ancient times, environmental factors such as natural disasters and climate change prompted communities in the region to relocate. For example, there were instances of mass migration because of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and droughts. Such disasters resulted in significant population displacement, particularly in ancient times when agricultural communities were concentrated in specific regions. A further factor is the occurrence of wars and invasions. It can be reasonably asserted that the instabilities and conflicts observed in the Mediterranean today have a historical precedent, with similar events having caused significant population displacement in the past. Indeed, as evidenced by the Syrian civil war, which has precipitated the most significant refugee crisis in recent history, states have historically employed exile policies as a means of maintaining control over society and suppressing rebellions. Among these, the practices of the Assyrian Empire constitute an example of forced migration. As is the case today, merchants and craftsmen have been displaced by migrating to new regions for economic reasons. Finally, migration due to religious pressures has an important place in history as it does today. People migrated away from communities where they were oppressed due to their beliefs and migrated to see more tolerance (Martin, 2021).

The dispersal of the human species across the globe commenced in Africa and subsequently extended towards Asia and Europe. This migration theory posits that people migrated in groups approximately 100,000 years ago due to climate change, population density, and the search for new fertile land. The arrival of these migrations in Europe is dated to approximately 40 thousand years ago. This migration phenomenon has persisted throughout human history, giving rise to the rich diversity of human cultures observed in the Mediterranean region in both the past and the present (Gilbert, & Reynolds, 2008, p. 36). The political development of European history is inextricably linked to migration movements, particularly during the Roman Empire. These movements significantly influenced the political system, with some scholars even suggesting that the tribes migrating to this

geography played a pivotal role in the Empire's collapse (Heather, 2010). In this context, it is reasonable to draw parallels between the current migration crisis in Europe and past migration patterns in terms of threat perception.

The Trans-Saharan trade routes, which connected the Mediterranean world to Sub-Saharan Africa, constituted a frequently used route for the movement of not only goods but also people during the Middle Ages. As a result, they are of historical importance in understanding migration and mobility in the Mediterranean. These routes facilitated the trafficking of enslaved individuals from Africa to Asian countries during that period. However, it was in the sixteenth century that the slave trade began to represent a significant aspect of human migration, with forced migration from Africa to Europe becoming a prominent phenomenon (Gilbert, & Reynolds, 2008). This human mobility, which is characterized as the Atlantic slave trade, was not limited to Europe; it also extended to the Americas. It is estimated that 15 million people of African descent were transported to Europe and the Americas as slaves. The practice continued until the mid-19th century, resulting in long-term damage to the demographic, cultural and economic structures of the region, as well as creating instability. The slave trade had a significant impact on not only African societies but also European societies. The formation of a diaspora of Africans in Europe over time resulted in the emergence of a new community within the European socio-cultural landscape, characterized by a distinct linguistic, religious, racial, and cultural identity. Furthermore, the Atlantic slave trade contributed to the accumulation of capital by the European bourgeoisie, due to the human resources obtained from Africa. This, in turn, led to a transformation of Europe's traditional economic structure and constituted an important opening towards the Industrial Revolution (Gilbert & Reynolds, 2008).

The intensity of migration and mobility in the Mediterranean region was further exacerbated during the colonial period. The primary driving force behind migration to Europe during the colonial period was economic and military motivation (Heather, 2010). There was a significant increase in human mobility

towards Europe for the purpose of recruiting soldiers for the colonial armies of Europeans, obtaining manpower to work in the mines operated by European states, and securing inexpensive labour for agricultural plantations. Additionally, during this period, children of prominent families in colonized societies travelled to Europe to pursue education and subsequently assumed positions within colonial administrations.

The 20th century, which was characterized by two world wars and the decolonization process, saw a significant increase in migration towards Europe. During this period, the Mediterranean region served as a key transit point for migrants. Following the attainment of independence by colonized countries in the 1950s and 1960s, this migration flow persisted and even exhibited an increase. The political instability, economic uncertainty, internal conflicts, and other negative developments in the newly independent African countries resulted in a significant number of individuals seeking refuge in colonial countries (Sadiq & Tsourapas, 2021). To illustrate, Algeria experienced a considerable influx of migrants to France. Because of the movement of people from the southern shores of the Mediterranean to the north, minority populations have emerged in the major cities of European countries, and there have been significant changes in the labor force in Europe (Asgher, & Banhegyi, 2015). The migrations have resulted in the formation of migrant communities in major urban centres. While these migrations have contributed to an increase in cultural diversity within Europe, they have also given rise to several challenges, including xenophobia, racism, and the ascendance of populist movements and the issue of integration.

Following the 1960s, there was a notable increase in labour migration from Africa and other poor countries to Europe. This can be characterized as a modern migration movement. In this migration movement, European states benefited from immigrants to meet their labour force requirements. During this period, when transportation and communication facilities were more advanced, immigrants were able to maintain close ties with their societies of origin. Consequently, they also served as intermediaries for their relatives, facilitating their migration to Europe.

However, the principal migration movement to Europe via the Mediterranean commenced following the terrorist and military interventions in the Middle East and Africa in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001. The military interventions and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan have had a significant negative impact on the economic structure and have contributed to a reduction in security and stability. Consequently, a considerable number of individuals attempted to reach Europe via transit countries, including Türkiye, Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco.

The period following 2010 saw a notable increase in the number of migrants, with the migration flow becoming more widespread across the globe. The Arab Spring, a series of revolutions that began in 2010, has been identified as a significant factor contributing to the increase in migration from Middle Eastern countries to Europe. Millions of individuals fleeing the civil war in Syria and subjected to forced migration have sought asylum in Europe. In 2015, the considerable rise in the number of migrants reaching Europe from these regions gave rise to significant political debates within European countries. The tragic accidents and deaths of these migrants using the Mediterranean Sea as a transit point highlight the need to take the humanitarian dimension of the issue seriously (Pace, 2016). The confluence of challenges, including military intervention, civil war, political pressures, climate change and the search for economic opportunities, has rendered the prevention of migration from Africa and the Middle East to Europe impossibility. Consequently, the refugee crisis has emerged as a significant challenge for Europe. In response to this surge in migration, the EU has initiated a series of measures aimed at enhancing the efficacy of its border security and migration management policies. In summary, an analysis of the migration phenomenon in the Mediterranean reveals a striking resemblance between the historical and modern migration crises that have occurred in the region.

### ***Migration Routes to Europe via the Mediterranean***

The Mediterranean basin has become a significant migratory route for individuals seeking improved circumstances or escaping unfavourable conditions

in their countries of origin. Most of the migration flows in this region are organized through two principal sub-regions.

1. The Western Mediterranean Route, which originates in North and West Africa and culminates in Spain, represents a significant migratory corridor. The region encompasses countries such as Spain, Morocco, and Algeria. This region has developed a collaborative approach to migration management. Spain has entered into bilateral agreements with Morocco and other African countries with the objective of regulating migration flows. These agreements have been operationalized in areas including border security, the return of irregular migrants and the provision of development assistance aimed at addressing the underlying causes of migration (Cassarino, & Marin, 2022).

2. The Eastern Mediterranean route, which originates in the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa and culminates in Greece, the Republic of Turkey (Türkiye) and the Balkans, encompasses a number of countries, including Greece, Türkiye and the Balkans. The region has been confronted with more intricate migration issues because of its proximity to conflict zones in the Middle East and South Asia. The migration flows within this subregion have been characterized by the presence of considerable numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, who have been compelled to flee the consequences of conflict and instability. Regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean has been hindered by geopolitical tensions, particularly those between the EU and Türkiye. Greece has encountered significant challenges in managing the influx of migrants and refugees, resulting in overcrowded reception centres and inadequate living conditions (Spencer, & Triandafyllidou, 2020, p.9).

The Western Mediterranean has benefited from a greater degree of regional collaboration, particularly through the implementation of bilateral agreements and initiatives that have been supported by the EU. In contrast, the Eastern Mediterranean has encountered difficulties in establishing effective regional cooperation because of geopolitical tensions and the intricate nature of migration flows. Both subregions have implemented rigorous security measures, but the

Western Mediterranean's approach has been more effective in reducing irregular migration flows while maintaining regional stability. In contrast, the Eastern Mediterranean has encountered significant challenges in addressing the scale of migration, resulting in heightened human rights concerns and difficulties in managing migration flows.

### **Regional Cooperation Mechanisms in Migration Management in the Mediterranean**

The concept of regionalization emerged from the recognition that collective action could more effectively address common challenges between states (Söderbaum, 2015). In the context of migration management, regionalization involves the creation of cooperation mechanisms that address common migration challenges and draw on common resources, policies, and strategies. The concept of regionalism is particularly pertinent to the Mediterranean region, where the confluence of diverse migration flows, geopolitical dynamics and economic disparities gives rise to intricate challenges that necessitate a coordinated response. The theory of regionalization places significant emphasis on the importance of policy coherence, which is seen as a crucial factor in facilitating smooth cooperation between states. The endeavour to standardize migration and asylum policies in the Mediterranean region reflects a desire to manage migration flows in a more coherent manner and reduce discrepancies between countries' legal frameworks (Geddes, & Scholten 2016). In this regard, regionalization facilitates the harmonization of national policies with regional norms, thereby enhancing coherence and predictability in migration management.

The foundation for regional collaboration in the Mediterranean is rooted in shared security concerns and the notion that this can result in the securitization of migration policies within regional frameworks (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998). This is due to concerns about irregular migration and border security, which have resulted in the establishment of cooperation mechanisms that priorities the enhancement of border controls, surveillance, and security measures. However, it



is important to note that regional cooperation can extend beyond immediate concerns such as border management to encompass long-term strategies that address the underlying factors that drive migration (Söderbaum, 2015). This is due to the existence of significant humanitarian concerns in the Mediterranean, particularly regarding the safeguarding of vulnerable migrants and refugees. Consequently, one of the primary objectives of the regional frameworks established within the European Union is to guarantee the protection and well-being of migrants (Lavenex, & Uçarer, 2002).

### ***European Union Migration and Asylum Policies on Migration***

To manage migration flows, the EU has sought to promote cooperation with countries in the Mediterranean and beyond. This has involved the creation of a network of agreements and partnerships that serve to spread the EU's influence over migration management across multiple regions. A significant aspect of the EU's migration and asylum policies has been the externalization of border controls. This strategy entails the transfer of responsibility for managing migration away from the EU's external borders, particularly to countries in North Africa and the Sahel region. By means of agreements such as the Khartoum and Rabat Processes, the EU has established a novel regional governance framework that extends border management practices beyond its own territory (Lavenex, & Wichmann, 2009). In this manner, the EU has endeavoured to diminish the number of irregular migrants reaching its shores. However, this approach has also resulted in a redefinition of migration routes. As a result of heightened security measures, migrants have increasingly opted for more dangerous and less monitored routes (Frowd, 2014). This has resulted in the proliferation of smuggling networks and an increase in the number of migrants who have died at sea. This gives rise to ethical and humanitarian concerns regarding the EU's approach to regional migration management. In response to the migration challenges in the region, the EU has implemented a series of policies and initiatives with the objective of controlling and managing these movements.

Initiatives such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) have been implemented with the objective of strengthening relations with countries in the Mediterranean region, with a specific emphasis on migration management (Panebianco, 2020). These initiatives launched the process of developing common frameworks for addressing migration issues, including the establishment of coordinated asylum procedures and the provision of financial and technical assistance to non-EU countries. From the perspective of regionalism, this emphasis on cooperation reflects the EU's broader strategy of developing a coherent regional approach to migration management. In collaboration with countries in the Mediterranean region, the EU is striving to establish a comprehensive and integrated migration governance system that is aligned with its security and humanitarian objectives. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these initiatives is further hindered by the presence of additional challenges, including the unequal distribution of responsibilities, disparate levels of commitment among participating countries, and the intricate dynamics of regional power relations.

A further crucial element of the EU's migration and asylum policies is the way migration is portrayed as a security threat necessitating immediate and exceptional measures (Huysmans, 2006). This has resulted in the implementation of policies that priorities border security and control, frequently at the expense of humanitarian considerations and the protection of migrants' rights. The securitization of migration has resulted in the formation of security-oriented partnerships and the establishment of new regional institutions with a primary focuses on border control and surveillance (Bialasiewicz, 2012). Nevertheless, this approach has not only undermined regional collaboration but also intensified the difficulties encountered by migrants, particularly about asylum and protection.

#### ***Khartoum Process: Regionalism and Externalization***

The Khartoum Process, which was launched in 2014, is a regional initiative that brings together the EU and countries in the Horn of Africa, including Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The principal objectives of the

initiative are to combat human trafficking and smuggling, enhance border security and facilitate regional collaboration on migration management (European Commission, 2014). This initiative provides an illustrative example of the EU's regionalism policies, whereby migration management is externalized to countries of origin and transit.

From a regionalism perspective, the Khartoum Process has had a profound impact on migration patterns in the Mediterranean, with significant shifts in migration flows both within and beyond the region. The implementation of stringent border security and surveillance measures has resulted in the rerouting of migration routes. This has resulted in migrants resorting to more dangerous routes across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea (Frouws & Horwood, 2017). This reconfiguration of migration routes is indicative of the intricate interregional dynamics at play, whereby regional policies in Africa have a direct bearing on migration patterns in the Mediterranean.

The Khartoum Process represents a form of regionalism that is characterized by a prioritization of security and control. The EU's decision to devolve migration management to African countries has resulted in the creation of a new regional governance framework, which has in turn led to an expansion of the EU's influence over African migration policies. This approach has been the subject of criticism on the grounds that it undermines regional sovereignty and prioritizes the EU's security concerns over the rights and needs of migrants (Andersson, 2015). Nevertheless, this process has also resulted in the formation of new regional partnerships. However, these have often been asymmetric, with the EU exerting a considerable influence on the migration policies of African countries.

### ***The Rabat Process Regional Cooperation and Migration Governance***

The Rabat Process, initiated in 2006, emphasizes collaboration between European and African countries along the West African migration route. The objective is to facilitate legal migration channels, address irregular migration, and bolster development in countries of origin and transit (European Commission, 2006). In contrast to the Khartoum Process, the Rabat Process is more integrative

in nature and seeks to strike a balance between security concerns and development objectives. This represents a distinct approach to regionalism, which is oriented towards the establishment of comprehensive and cooperative frameworks for the management of migration.

The Rabat Process has had an impact on migration patterns, with the promotion of legal migration channels and development initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of migration. Nevertheless, the impact of these measures has been inconclusive, with opportunities for legal migration remaining constrained and irregular migration persisting (De Haas, 2011). From a regionalism perspective, the Rabat Process has contributed to the securitization of migration in the Mediterranean but has also encouraged greater cooperation between European and African countries, leading to the development of new regional migration governance structures.

The Rabat Process constituted a significant step forward in the establishment of a regional governance framework that integrates migration management with development objectives. This approach to regionalism emphasizes the importance of partnership and dialogue, with the objective of creating a more balanced and sustainable migration management system (Lavenex, & Kunz, 2008). Nevertheless, the process has encountered resistance, particularly from certain African countries, and has been subject to criticism on account of concerns pertaining to the protection of migrants' rights. Furthermore, the implementation of return and reintegration policies has encountered challenges.

The Khartoum and Rabat Processes have had a considerable impact on migration patterns and management in the Mediterranean, influencing regional dynamics and governance structures in significant ways. It is evident that these processes have both reinforced and confronted existing regional frameworks, with significant implications for migration governance. The Khartoum Process resulted in the externalization of EU border controls and a shift in focus towards security. In contrast, the Rabat Process aimed to establish more collaborative and comprehensive migration management frameworks.

*The major agreements, partnerships, and policy frameworks in the EU and in regional countries. EU-Türkiye Statement 2016*

In response to the 2015 migration crisis, the EU and Türkiye adopted a Statement in March 2016, the purpose of which was to address the growing influx of migrants and asylum seekers. This agreement, commonly referred to as the Statement, represents a significant development in the management of migration in the Mediterranean. Its aim is to reduce irregular migration, combat human trafficking and ensure safe and legal migration routes. While the Statement has been effective in reducing irregular migration, it has also given rise to significant challenges pertaining to regional cooperation, sovereignty, and the safeguarding of migrants' rights.

The objective of the Declaration is to regulate and control irregular migration through the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Türkiye and the return of migrants arriving in Greece to Türkiye. In return, the EU has pledged to revitalize Türkiye's EU accession process and provide financial assistance (European Commission, 2016). The Declaration can be characterized as a success in significantly reducing the number of migrants crossing the Aegean Sea and curbing the activities of human trafficking networks (Niemann, & Zaun, 2018). Nevertheless, it has been subject to criticism about its legal and ethical implications, particularly in relation to the protection of asylum seekers' rights and the externalization of migration management.

The term "regionalism" is used to describe the process by which regions become more integrated through the establishment of institutions and the implementation of policies that facilitate cooperation between states within a specific geographical area (Börzel, & Risse, 2016). In this context, the Statement provides an illustrative example of the application of regionalism to migration management in the Mediterranean. A salient feature of the Statement is the externalization of border controls, whereby the EU has delegated migration management responsibilities to Türkiye. It's acceptance of the return of migrants and asylum seekers from Greece has effectively established it as a buffer zone for

the EU. This strategy of externalization reflects a broader trend in the EU's migration policies, whereby regional cooperation is employed to extend the EU's influence on migration management beyond its own borders. While the EU has been successful in reducing irregular migration through the Declaration, it has also exerted considerable pressure on Türkiye, placing significant strain on the country's capacity to manage the large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers within its borders (İçduygu, & Aksel, 2018).

Furthermore, the Statement underscores the intricate nature of regional collaboration in the domain of migration management. The agreement was negotiated between the EU and Türkiye on a bilateral basis and reflects a top-down approach to regionalism, whereby decisions are taken at the intergovernmental level without wider regional consultations. This approach was detrimental to the principles of regional cooperation and multilateralism, as it circumvented the involvement of other Mediterranean countries that were similarly affected by migratory flows. By accepting the terms of the Declaration, Türkiye has assumed significant responsibilities regarding the management of migration flows on behalf of the EU. This has resulted in concerns regarding the sovereignty of Türkiye (Kirişci, 2016). This tension between regional cooperation and sovereignty represents a significant challenge for the implementation of the Statement.

The Declaration's emphasis on regulating and reducing migration patterns gives precedence to security concerns over those of a humanitarian nature. This approach has the consequence of overlooking the rights of migrants and the principles of international protection. The securitization of migration frequently results in the neglect of the protection of vulnerable populations. This model of managing the EU's migration problem has not been limited to Türkiye; similar partnerships have been sought with Libya and Tunisia. It could be argued that such agreements reflect the EU's efforts to transfer responsibility for this issue to border countries.

### ***The Schengen Border Code (SBC)***

SBC is a legal instrument that governs the movement of individuals across external borders. It encompasses provisions pertaining to border controls, surveillance, and the management of irregular migration (European Parliament, 2019). It constitutes a pivotal element of the Schengen Area, which permits the free movement of individuals between EU countries. The 2019 amendments to the SBC were introduced in response to the 2015 migration crisis and were designed to enhance border security, improve the efficacy of border controls, and address the challenges posed by irregular migration.

A significant element of the 2019 amendments is the reinforcement of border controls at the external borders of the European Union. These changes address the security threats posed by irregular migration, particularly in the Mediterranean Sea, where large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers attempt to enter the EU (Carrera, & Guild, 2019). From a regionalist perspective, the reinforcement of border controls signifies a transition towards a more security-oriented approach to migration management, reflecting the EU's concerns about the stability and security of the region. The intensified focus on border controls has placed significant strain on Mediterranean frontline states, including Greece, Italy, and Spain, which bear the responsibility of implementing the provisions of the SBC. This has resulted in the emergence of tensions between these states and other EU members, particularly regarding the apportionment of burdens and the distribution of responsibilities for the management of migration flows.

The 2019 amendments to the SBC mirror the European Union's sustained endeavours to externalize the management of migration. This is particularly evident in the Mediterranean, where the EU is seeking to enhance collaboration with countries in North Africa and the Middle East with the objective of regulating migration flows before they reach EU borders. The SBC's provisions on external border management have been employed to facilitate this externalization process and have served to reinforce the EU's influence on migration governance in the region.

While the EU has succeeded in reducing the number of irregular migrants entering the Schengen Area, this has resulted in an increased burden on non-EU countries, which are often inadequately equipped to manage large-scale migration flows (Ahad, & Bogdan, 2019). These developments have implications for the sustainability of regional cooperation as well as for the protection of migrants' rights, particularly in countries where legal and human rights standards may not be aligned with those of the EU.

### ***An Evaluation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020)***

The Pact on Migration and Asylum, launched by the European Commission in 2020, represents a significant initiative to reform the European Union's migration and asylum policies. The Pact establishes a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to migration management within the EU, emphasizing the necessity for solidarity and shared responsibility among Member States.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum has been devised with the intention of addressing the intricate and multifaceted nature of migration within the EU. It proposes a series of measures designed to enhance border management, asylum procedures and the repatriation of irregular migrants (European Commission, 2020). The Pact encompasses a few key components, including the reinforcement of EU institutions, such as the introduction of a mandatory solidarity mechanism and the externalization of migration management. The Pact reflects the EU's recognition of the necessity for a more coordinated and effective approach to migration, particularly in the Mediterranean, where migratory pressure is most acute.

The Mediterranean is of particular significance as it represents a principal point of entry for irregular migration to Europe. In consequence, the Frontex organization was established in 2004 with the objective of regulating migratory flows in the region through the management of external borders. The Frontex Risk Analysis Reports are of significant consequence in the formation of EU migration policies and strategies (Frontex, 2021). This emphasis on collaboration aligns with



the tenets of regionalism, which espouses cooperative strategies to confront shared challenges.

Frontex's dedication to regional collaboration is clearly demonstrated by its joint operations, which involve multiple EU Member States and, in certain instances, third countries. The objective of these operations is to enhance surveillance capabilities, optimize border management and facilitate the exchange of intelligence and best practices. The promotion of regional cooperation is a key objective of Frontex, with the aim of improving coherence in the management of migration in the Mediterranean (Frontex, 2022).

The concept of regionalism in the Mediterranean is defined by the interplay between EU policies and the migration dynamics of neighbouring regions, including North Africa and the Middle East (Börzel, & Risse, 2016). The Migration and Asylum Pact, a pivotal element of the EU's migration policy, exerts a significant influence on these dynamics. A fundamental tenet of the Pact is the principle of shared responsibility and solidarity among EU member states. The Pact introduces a novel solidarity mechanism that enables member states to select from a range of forms of assistance, including the relocation of asylum seekers, the sponsorship of returns, and the provision of operational aid (Carrera, 2020). The objective of this mechanism is to alleviate the burden borne by countries such as Greece, Italy, and Spain, which are experiencing the greatest pressure from migration.

Furthermore, the Pact on Migration and Asylum perpetuates the strategy of externalizing migration management, a pivotal aspect of the EU's regional approach to migration in the Mediterranean. The Pact underscores the significance of collaboration with third countries, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East, to deter irregular migration and facilitate the repatriation of migrants (Lavenex, 2021). This externalization strategy encompasses the utilization of agreements with third countries, exemplified by the EU-Türkiye Statement, and the establishment of partnerships with countries such as Libya and Tunisia, with the objective of regulating migration flows prior to their arrival at EU borders.

### *Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)*

The Mediterranean region has historically been a focal point for migration, due to a complex interplay of economic, political, and social factors. In response to these challenges, the AIIB has emerged as a pivotal platform for the advancement of regional cooperation on a multitude of issues, including migration. The Union was established in 2008 and is an intergovernmental organization that brings together 42 member states from Europe and the Mediterranean basin. The organization's objective is to facilitate regional collaboration, discourse, and growth in a variety of domains, including economic integration, environmental sustainability, and social advancement. The UfM's approach to migration is articulated in several policy documents and reports, which set out the organization's priorities, strategies, and initiatives for the management of migration in the region (UfM, 2008).

A principal theme of the Union policy documents is the promotion of enhanced regional cooperation as a means of effectively managing migration. The UfM acknowledges that migration represents a shared challenge that necessitates collective action on the part of all countries in the region (UfM, 2019). This emphasis on cooperation is consistent with the broader principles of regionalism, which advocate collaborative approaches to address common challenges. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these initiatives is frequently constrained by the disparate priorities and capabilities of member states, which can impede the attainment of meaningful collaboration.

Additionally, the UfM's approach to migration is distinguished by its reliance on multilateral frameworks to address migration challenges in the Mediterranean. These frameworks are designed to facilitate cooperation between Member States as well as external partners, including international organizations, civil society, and the private sector (UfM, 2021). The UfM's objective is to develop comprehensive and sustainable solutions to migration challenges by bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders. From the perspective of regionalism, the utilization of multilateral frameworks evinces the UfM's

dedication to the advancement of inclusive and participatory methodologies in the domain of migration management. Such frameworks provide a platform for member states to engage in dialogue, share information and coordinate their efforts to address migration challenges. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these frameworks is contingent upon the willingness of Member States to engage in constructive collaboration and to accord precedence to regional interests over national concerns.

The Mediterranean region is confronted with considerable migration-related security challenges, including the risk of human trafficking, smuggling and terrorism (Carrera, 2020). While acknowledging the necessity of addressing these security concerns, the UfM also emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights of migrants and promoting sustainable development in the region. This approach is aligned with the principles of regionalism, which advocate a comprehensive and integrated approach to the management of migration. The OAU's initiatives to enhance border management, improve migration governance and promote economic development in countries of origin and transit are designed to address the root causes of migration and reduce the pressures that trigger irregular migration (Pascouau, 2016). The UfM's approach to migration reflects both the potential and the challenges inherent in the management of migration in a complex region. The efficacy of the UfM's endeavours is contingent upon the capacity of member states to surmount these challenges and collaborate in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, with a view to addressing the root causes of migration and safeguarding the rights of migrants in the Mediterranean.

The UfM publishes an annual series of Regional Forum Declarations, which serve to convene member states for the purpose of discussing and adopting positions on a range of key issues affecting the region (Union for the Mediterranean, 2021). It is significant that these declarations reflect the collective will of the UfM member states, as they establish the agenda for regional cooperation on a range of issues, including migration. They provide a framework for action, delineating priorities, strategies, and commitments to address the challenges of migration in the Mediterranean. These declarations emphasize the

necessity for a coordinated response to migration challenges, recognizing that no single country is capable of effectively managing migration flows in isolation (UfM, 2018). This emphasis on cooperation is consistent with the principles of regionalism, which promote collaborative strategies for addressing shared challenges.

The UfM Regional Forum Declarations place significant emphasis on the necessity of promoting economic development and regional stability as fundamental elements of effective migration management strategies in the Mediterranean region. The UfM acknowledges that economic disparities and a dearth of prospects in countries of origin are the primary motivators of migration and that addressing these fundamental causes is imperative for the effective management of migration flows. The UfM approach to economic development is founded upon the principles of regionalism, which underscore the necessity for coordinated and sustainable development strategies that are mutually beneficial to all countries within the region. The UfM's initiatives to promote job creation, improve education and training, and increase access to markets are designed to reduce the economic pressures that cause migration and promote greater stability in the region. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these initiatives is frequently constrained by the disparate levels of economic advancement and capability among the member states, in addition to the pervasive geopolitical challenges confronting the region.

One of the most significant contributions of the governance of international migration is the Mediterranean Migration Framework, which was devised with the objective of promoting a comprehensive approach to migration management in the region. The document places significant emphasis on the necessity of addressing the underlying causes of migration, safeguarding the rights of migrants, and facilitating the development of legal migration pathways. By means of this framework, the UfM has exerted an influence on the formulation of national migration policies, encouraging Member States to incorporate the principles into their domestic legislation and practice. For instance, some Mediterranean

countries, such as Morocco, have adopted migration and asylum policies that align with the objectives of the UfM, namely, to promote legal migration and guarantee the rights of migrants. This reflects emphasis on legal migration and the protection of migrants (De Bel-Air, 2016). Furthermore, it facilitates capacity building through the provision of technical assistance and training to national authorities in areas such as border management, asylum systems and integration policies. These initiatives have facilitated the standardization of migration practices across the region and promoted greater coherence in national policies (UfM, 2020).

### *Asylum Procedures*

One of the principal areas of harmonization in regional cooperation mechanisms in the Mediterranean is the standardization of asylum procedures. A central initiative, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), has been established with the objective of establishing a uniform asylum process across EU Member States. The CEAS is designed to guarantee that asylum seekers are treated in a uniform manner irrespective of the Member State in which they submit their applications, and that their requests are assessed in accordance with common criteria (European Commission, 2020). In this context, the Dublin Regulation was introduced as part of the CEAS with the objective of determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application. Despite the Dublin Regulation's objective of deterring "asylum shopping" and facilitating prompt access to procedures, it has been subject to criticism for placing undue burden on Mediterranean countries such as Greece and Italy, which frequently serve as initial points of entry for migrants (Guild, Costello, & Garlick, 2015).

Moreover, a common document, the Reception Conditions Directive, has been established with the objective of defining minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, including provisions related to housing, food, health, and education. The objective of this directive is to harmonize the standards across the region, thereby reducing the inequalities in reception conditions that may affect secondary movements within the EU (European Commission, 2020).

To facilitate the successful integration of migrants and refugees into host societies, the EU has developed a series of integration strategies. Regional cooperation mechanisms in the Mediterranean are oriented towards the harmonization of national integration policies, with the objective of promoting social cohesion, economic inclusion, and respect for cultural diversity. A notable initiative in this regard is the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion, which delineates strategies to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees into European societies. The plan places particular emphasis on the importance of inclusive education, access to employment and social services. The objective of the action plan is to establish a harmonized approach to integration across the region, with a view to encouraging Member States to adopt similar strategies (European Commission, 2021).

Notwithstanding these endeavours, the harmonization of migration policies in the Mediterranean region is confronted with several challenges. The disparate political agendas and capabilities of Member States, the uneven distribution of the migration burden, and the intricate legal and institutional frameworks can impede effective collaboration (Geddes, & Scholten, 2016). Furthermore, external factors, such as conflicts in neighbouring regions and evolving migration patterns, can also present challenges to the harmonization of migration policies.

### **Conclusion**

Migration management approaches in the Western and Eastern Mediterranean subregions reflect the various migration-related challenges and opportunities in the region. The Western Mediterranean has benefited from stronger regional cooperation and more effective security measures, resulting in greater stability and reduced migration flows. In contrast, the Eastern Mediterranean has faced more complex challenges, leading to significant human rights concerns and difficulties in managing migration flows. A review of policy documents, agreements and reports revealed a strong emphasis on security in regional cooperation mechanisms in the Mediterranean. Key priorities include

enhancing border controls, combating human trafficking and smuggling, and utilizing technology and regional cooperation to address migration-related security challenges.

Although the UfM's approach provides a comprehensive framework for addressing migration challenges in the Mediterranean, its effectiveness is constrained by the disparate priorities and capacities of member states, in addition to the broader geopolitical context of the region. From the perspective of regionalism, the Frontex Risk Analysis Reports have illustrated the significance of regional collaboration, the necessity of striking a balance between security and human rights, and the function of multilateral frameworks in addressing migration challenges. Although Frontex's approach to migration management is comprehensive and aligned with the principles of regionalism, its effectiveness is constrained by the disparate priorities and capabilities of EU Member States. The success of Frontex's future endeavours will depend on its capacity to cultivate greater solidarity and collaboration among Member States and partners, while ensuring that its practices align with the principles of regionalism and human rights. The 2019 amendments to the SBC have had a considerable impact on migration management in the Mediterranean (Frontex, 2019), particularly in relation to regionalism. The SBC has had a significant impact on the regional governance framework for migration in the Mediterranean, with its strengthening of border controls, externalization of migration management and securitization of migration. While these changes have contributed to a reduction in irregular migration and an enhancement of border security, they have also brought about significant challenges in relation to regional cooperation, burden sharing and the protection of migrants' rights. The success of the SBC's regional migration management will depend on the ability of the EU and its partners to address these challenges in a way that strikes a balance between security concerns and the principles of regional cooperation and human rights protection.

The EU-Türkiye Statement of 2016 has had a considerable and far-reaching impact on migration management in the Mediterranean, particularly in terms of

regionalism. By externalizing border controls and negotiating a bilateral agreement with Türkiye, the EU has effectively restructured the regional governance framework for migration in the Mediterranean. While the Declaration has been successful in reducing irregular migration, it has also given rise to significant challenges pertaining to regional cooperation, sovereignty, and the protection of migrants' rights.

In general, when the EU's regional cooperation policy on migration is evaluated; two main aspects of these policies emerge as being of particular significance. The initial perspective is that of realism, which posits that the crisis precipitated by uncontrolled migration to EU countries is politically untenable and that migrants should be kept outside the EU borders based on practical necessities. Considering the recognition that the phenomenon of migration is inherently unavoidable, this perspective underscores the imperative for the establishment of collaborative mechanisms at both the EU and transit country levels for the effective management of migration.

From the perspective of those who view the EU's migration policies as failing to adequately address human rights concerns, these policies are seen as an extension of internal political rivalries and discourses. The inability of the new European leaders, who came to power largely based on their commitment to halt migration, has resulted in a decline in their popularity. Consequently, in lieu of long-term solutions, they espouse populist policies. This approach posits that the EU's externalization of migration through the provision of financial assistance to transit countries serves to exacerbate the victimization of migrants. This approach which perceives migrants as a political problem and disregards their status as human beings places significant emphasis on the protection of migrants' rights under international law.

In conclusion, as these different perspectives indicate, migration policies have multifaceted and complex dimensions in both political and humanitarian terms. In the context of a lack of solidarity among European countries regarding the migrant flows, it is implausible that regional cooperation initiatives seeking to



transfer responsibility to countries bordering the EU will provide a radical solution to the problem. It is imperative that the EU assume an active and strategic role in the development of long-term solutions aimed at eliminating the root causes of migration. Otherwise, the EU will be compelled to confront comparable challenges to those confronted by prominent states and empires throughout history.

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## MIGRATION IN MEDITERRANEAN: “HUMAN SECURITY”

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### **Theoretical Approach to the Concept of “Human Security”:**

#### **Introduction**

The concept of human security became of special importance at the end of the 20th century, when the more traditional concepts of security, oriented toward state interests and territorial integrity, began to lose their exclusive relevance. The world has changed, and new challenges – from environmental disasters and armed conflicts to terrorism, social inequality, and economic crises – have swept the international community into reconsidering its approach toward security. Human security is a concept that brings forth the protection of an individual's rights and well-being by centralizing the human personality as the driving philosophy within international relations.

The Commission on Human Security defines human security as “...to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity” (Sen, Ogata, & Ginwala, 2003, p. 4).

The main principle of a human security is respect for human rights. This is the key concept and most radically different, for the military, from the classic use of military force.

While human security differs from conventional national security concepts – the latter genuinely intend to provide protection to a state against the power of some other; former concerns men with issues such as economic, food,

environment, personal, political, and communal security. A very narrow definition of human security can be the vulnerability of individuals to injury, death, or the destruction of livelihood. It sees that an individual's vulnerability can be the cause of not only military conflict but also poverty, discrimination, lack of access to basic social services, or repression.

Migration processes are among the major challenges to human security. Very often, refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrant workers fall victims to a large number of threats to their personal safety, well-being, and rights. These threats include economic vulnerability, social isolation, legal and political challenges, and physical insecurity. This should, however, be taken into consideration: most of the people who move did not make a decision to relocate out of their own free will; they were forced to. This includes all those who have been forcibly displaced by war, violent conflict, exile, or discrimination.

Such challenges also serve as opportunities for the international community to play its part in human security through migrants by creating legal mechanisms of protecting rights, facilitating integration policies, and providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups. They also comprise international organizations, such as the UN and the International Organization for Migration, and nongovernmental organizations that are making attempts to better conditions for migrants and protect their rights (Human Security in Theory and Practice, 2009).

The very concept of human security enables new dimensions in interpretation and solving modern migration process challenges. It fixes the requirements for protecting the rights of each individual and providing a decent level of life to all without distinction by status or place of residence. Given the background of globalization and growing migration flows, ensuring human security becomes one of the key tasks the international community faces, which needs to be coordinated at the national, regional, and global levels.

The result of the complex transformation of the concept of “security” in the modern world was the addition of the concept of “human security” to the security discourse, which marks the shift of focus in international relations from the state to

individual individuals and communities. The state-centric concept of “national security” is being replaced by a more humanistic, micro-oriented concept of “human security”. The fact that this concept is successfully incorporated into the foreign policy strategies of many countries and becomes a common term in the security narrative of the UN and its agencies, the EU, other international organizations and states is an important indicator of its value and timeliness (Воротнюк, 2010).

The concept of “human security” was first conceptualized in the Report of the United Nations Development Program in 1994, which identified seven main elements of human security: 1) economic security, 2) food security, 3) medical security, 4) environmental security, 5) human security, 6) security of communities, 7) political security (Human Development Report, 1994).

In the countries of the European Union, human security comes to the forefront of the security discourse. The signing of the Maastricht Agreement, which established the European Union, marked a significant step toward a unified migration policy among European countries. This agreement introduced new approaches to the residence and employment of European citizens, allowing them to live and move freely within the EU. For external migrants, the agreement emphasized that immigration policy should consider the interests of all EU member states. This means that the employment, border crossing, movement, and residence conditions for foreigners should be determined and approved at an intergovernmental level. Additionally, the Maastricht Agreement allowed EU member states to implement their own independent migration policies.

In September 2004, a group of experts presented the report “The Doctrine of Human Security for Europe” to the EU High Commissioner for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. The report proposed the concept of human security as a strategic narrative, a security strategy for Europe. According to his definition, human security is “the freedom of individuals from the main dangers associated with serious violations of human rights” (*European Parliament*, 2004).



The main postulates of the EU security doctrine were the principles of conducting operations, such as the supremacy of human rights, strong political power, multilateralism, a bottom-up approach with the involvement of the public, a regional focus of operations, the use of legal instruments and the proper use of force; in addition, the creation of a 15,000-strong human security response force (Human Security Response Force) and the development of a new legal basis for the implementation of interventions and operations. Four years later, this strategy was supplemented by the Madrid Report, in which experts argued for the need for a “European way of security” based on the principles of human security. “Human security – the report noted – should provide a new operational framework for the European Union's foreign policy”.

It should be noted that in the European discourse, human security is often equated with the “duty to protect”, shifting the focus from human security within the Union to ensuring it externally (as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy/European Security and Defence Policy). Both concepts, according to the resolution of the European Parliament, have practical consequences and significant political motivation for the strategic orientation of European security policy. However, there is neither an automatic obligation nor the means at the disposal of the EU to deploy ESDP missions, civilian or military, in all crisis situations. This indicates the limited resources of the EU and the understanding of human security as something that the Union does outside its borders in crisis regions of the world, not inside. Obviously, the problems of human security in their critical form have been overcome within the EU (European Parliament Resolution, 2010).

### **Migration in the EU’s Foreign Policy**

Following the Barcelona Report, the Study Group on Security published the Madrid Report in 2007, further developing the human security approach for the EU and the envisaged methods of its institutionalization in the context of the ESDP. The Madrid Report emphasizes that human security concerns the basic needs of individuals and communities in times of danger. It's about feeling safe on the

street, as well as material survival and freedom of will (A European way of security, 2007).

The main guidelines of the Lisbon Treaty reflect a broader approach to security, which means that they clearly depart from more traditional understandings and thus increasingly turn their attention to the security of people. Although the Treaty does not explicitly mention human security, the importance of this concept is recognized in the text on the strategic objectives of CSDP and in the relevant general guidelines. The first test for such an EU policy was the crisis in Libya, which began in 2011. The European Union planned a military operation in 2011, but never conducted it. After that, there was strong criticism for the lack of decisiveness during the Libyan crisis and the reluctance to take the initiative to solve the Libyan issue. When France, as one of the EU states, took the initiative along with Great Britain, which was included in the process from the beginning, NATO intervention officially began. It includes fourteen NATO member states, ten of which are also EU members. Thus, despite the constant advocacy of a common foreign policy and the need to reconcile it with the doctrine of human security high military politics and the resolution of international problems by force as well as the neglect of basic principles of human rights prevailed (Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, 2018).

Two years after this failure, in 2013, a decision was made to deploy a civilian mission to support the Libyan authorities and build capacity to improve the security of the Libyan border in the short term, as well as to help develop broader strategic integration for long-term border management. This mission, known as EUBAM Libya, is still active and costs €26 million per year. This mission, along with the EUBAM mission in Moldova and Ukraine, is an example of how EU civilian missions adhere to the prescriptions of the Madrid Report (Human rights in Libya, 2023).

In 2016, the EU adopted the “European Framework for a Strategic Approach to Support Security Sector Reform”, which applies to all relevant EU tools and

instruments, including political dialogue, civil and military CSDP, development cooperation, technical assistance, training and provision of equipment.

When the EU takes or plans actions in support of the security sector, it can use the Security Sector Management Tool for analytical support. Since 2018, the SSG (security sector governance and reform) Facility has developed more than 30 assessments, including in Mali, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, The Gambia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Somalia and Haiti (Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, 2018).

The EU is one of the most important participants in supporting the Security Sector Reform in the world. In 2021, it provided €70.2 billion to support reform and good governance initiatives in partner countries. Most CSDP mission mandates directly mention or relate to security sector reform and/or governance (Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, 2018).

### **African States' Approaches to the Migration**

However, the situation is different in the countries of North Africa. Political instability remains a key factor affecting human security in the region. Libya, for example, after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, faces a constant struggle for power between competing factions, which has led to a significant deterioration in the living conditions of the population. The lack of a centralized government makes access to basic services difficult and increases the level of violence (Abbott, & Marsden, 2009).

Egypt, after the 2011 revolution and political changes, is also experiencing tensions, although the situation has stabilized under the rule of Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi. However, repression against the political opposition and restrictions on freedoms create a tense atmosphere that can negatively affect the personal and political security of citizens. Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria are relatively more stable, but Tunisia, as the only country that survived the Arab Spring with

democratic changes, faces economic challenges that undermine citizens' trust in government (Tazoacha, Antem, Rhianne, & Kinkoh, 2023).

Economic difficulties are a common problem for all five countries. High levels of unemployment, especially among young people, and limited access to quality education and health care create an environment where economic security is at risk. In Libya, in particular, the on-going conflict is destroying economic infrastructure, making economic recovery difficult.

Algeria and Egypt also face economic development challenges due to their dependence on the energy sector and the need to diversify their economies. At the same time, Morocco and Tunisia are working on reforms to stimulate economic growth, but the reforms will take time to achieve positive results.

The region is an important transit point for migrants from African countries on their way to Europe. This creates additional challenges for state institutions in the field of managing migration flows, ensuring the rights of migrants and preventing human trafficking. Libya, in particular, is known as a major route for illegal migrants, and the human rights situation in refugee camps often remains critical (Tazoacha, Antem, Rhianne, & Kinkoh, 2023).

Human security in African Mediterranean countries remains at risk due to a complex of political, economic, environmental and social factors. While some countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia, are taking steps to improve the situation, others, notably Libya, face deep structural problems that require international support to overcome them. Achieving sustainable human security requires a comprehensive approach that includes political stability, economic reforms, environmental protection and effective management of migration processes.

### **Legal Framework of “Human Security”**

After the Second World War, legal and regulatory frameworks for regulating international migration began to form. The main documents that regulate this process are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights

and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as several key international agreements that play an important role in protecting the rights of migrants and refugees:

1. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) defines the rights of refugees and the obligations of states to protect them. It establishes the basic principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the forced return of refugees to countries where they are in danger. It also defines the rights of refugees to work, education, housing and freedom of movement, thereby promoting their integration into the society of the host countries.

2. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) aims to eliminate racial discrimination in all its manifestations, including access to work, education, health care and other social services. For migrants, this means protection against discrimination on ethnic, racial or national grounds, which promotes their equal participation in the public life of the host countries.

3. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) prohibits torture and other forms of ill-treatment, regardless of the circumstances. For migrants and asylum seekers, the Convention is an important protection tool against ill-treatment in countries through which they travel or in countries to which they may be deported.

In turn, the Organization of African Unity adopted the Convention on Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa, which expanded the definition of a refugee and included additional important provisions on their protection. In addition to the protection of persons fleeing persecution, this regional treaty covers those who are forced to leave their place of permanent residence due to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in any part or throughout the country of origin or citizenship, seeking asylum outside their country (Convention on Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa, 1969).

At the international level, active measures are taken to combat human trafficking. Trafficking in persons is defined as the recruitment, transportation,

transfer, harbouring or obtaining of persons through threats, violence or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of vulnerability, as well as by giving or receiving payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person who controls another for the purpose of exploiting it. Several international documents were adopted to combat this phenomenon:

1. The Protocol on Preventing, Suppressing and Punishing Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which is part of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and defines the basic principles for protecting victims, punishing criminals and preventing trafficking in persons.

2. Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, which aims to combat the smuggling of migrants, which is often accompanied by exploitation and dangerous conditions, etc.

At the current stage, the division of states into countries of origin and countries of destination of migrants is becoming less and less clear. Modern migration is increasingly characterized by a phenomenon known as the “migration transition”, which involves the transformation of migrant-supplier countries into recipient countries. Previously, the country with one of the largest foreign diasporas due to long emigration has now become a destination for hundreds of thousands of foreign workers, mostly from Ukraine (Bojarczuk, 2023; Guarnizo, Chaudhary, & Sørensen, 2017).

The need for foreign labour is increasing due to the insufficient number of local workers. Also, Spain and Italy, which were previously the main destinations for migrants from Latin America and North Africa, are now becoming centres for the arrival of migrants from EU countries, in particular from Romania and Bulgaria, reflecting a change in migration flows on the European continent (European Parliament, 2022).

Migration processes in the Mediterranean and Europe remain one of the most urgent problems of international politics and security. In recent years, the flow of migrants to Europe has increased due to conflicts, economic difficulties, climate change and other factors. This led to a significant impact on the political,

social and economic landscape of the region. EU migration policy is built on a balance between the protection of human rights and border control. The main elements are protecting the external borders and working to strengthen the protection of our external borders through the joint efforts of agencies such as Frontex. Strengthening border control includes increased patrols, use of technology to monitor and cooperation with countries of origin and transit of migrants (Fotou, 2021).

Many European countries have tightened their migration laws, reducing opportunities for asylum and tightening the requirements for migrants. Some countries have also established fast-track procedures for refusing asylum and deporting people's ineligible for international protection (Fotou, 2021).

The strengthening of international migration movements and changes in their characteristics are the result of globalization. The elimination of trade barriers, the growth of political and economic interdependence between states, as well as the development of international business, science, education and communications contributed to this process. International migration is both a cause and a consequence of global change. In addition, the demographic imbalance also plays an important role – the shrinking and aging population in developed countries increases the demand for foreign workers, while the young population in developing countries provides this demand. Despite the rapid development in developing countries, the number of new jobs is not keeping up with the growth of the working age population – only 7 new jobs are created for every 10 people reaching working age.

### **Main Migration Routes to the Mediterranean**

Migrants arriving in the EU mostly use sea routes through the Mediterranean Sea. Approximately 97% of migrants reach Europe through these routes. Migration corridors can be conditionally divided into three main ones: the Western Mediterranean corridor (through Algeria and Morocco to Spain), the Central

Mediterranean corridor (from Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia, Libya to Italy), and the Eastern Mediterranean corridor (from Turkey to Greece).

The Western Mediterranean Corridor, which includes a sea route from North Africa to Spain and an overland route to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco, is less popular with migrants. This is because this route is often less safe due to difficult weather conditions and less assistance at sea compared to other corridors, leading to a high probability of death. Moreover, using this corridor requires traveling considerable distances overland through Morocco, as well as passing through border checks and checkpoints in Spanish enclaves, complicating the process. Spain, as the end point of this route, has a strict migration policy, which includes restrictions and controls at the borders, which can reduce the attractiveness of this corridor for migrants (Migration flows on the Western routes, 2024).

The Central Mediterranean Sea Route, which runs from North Africa to Italy, is much longer and more dangerous than other routes. This is the most popular route among migrants heading to the EU. The growth of illegal migration to Europe by sea began in the 1990s, when Spain and Italy tightened their visa regimes. Libya has become a key departure point for boats carrying migrants to Europe, as it is located on the coast of North Africa and has a shorter sea route to Europe. In addition, the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime, which led to further political and economic instability, made it difficult to control sea routes and facilitated the activities of smugglers (West and Central Mediterranean situation, 2024).

Because of this, Libya has become an important transit hub for migrants from other Arab and African countries who use it as a starting point to travel to Europe, thanks to its geographical location and Portuguese structure. And the tightening of visa regimes and border controls in other European countries, such as Spain, has pushed migrants to look for alternative routes.

The safest and easiest route is the Eastern Mediterranean corridor, which can be crossed by sea and land routes. It is used by Iraqis and Syrians fleeing armed



conflicts in their homeland. Most of those arriving via Greece go overland via the Western Balkans to Sweden and Germany. Their route runs through Hungary or Austria, Serbia or Croatia and Macedonia, passing Romania and Bulgaria (Migration flows on the Eastern Mediterranean route, 2024). All these corridors are dangerous and the state of region must protect human security.

In the context of the current migration crisis, Greece has a radically different experience compared to Germany and Hungary in managing the influx of migrants. As the largest gateway to Europe, Greece has experienced a huge influx of illegal immigrants in recent years. Like Italy, Greece is overwhelmed by the rapid influx of migrants. These countries (Greece and Italy) have come under intense criticism from other EU member states; firstly, because of the impossibility of controlling immigrants at their borders, and secondly, because of significant EU aid. Like other southern member states, Greece has called for a system of resettlement quotas to support asylum for migrants. Due to its geographical location and long coastline, Greece is an easy destination for illegal migrants. According to IOM statistics, in 2016, almost 90 per cent of illegal migrants entered the EU through Greece. Over time, Greece has been forced to manage illegal migrants on the Aegean Sea and the Turkish border (Governance of migrant integration in Greece, 2024; Guarnizo, Chaudhary, & Sørensen, 2017).

In March 2016, the leaders of the EU and Turkey agreed on joint actions in the fight against illegal migration, as a significant flow of migrants passes through the territory of Turkey. Two main principles of interaction were defined:

- 1) All new illegal migrants arriving on the Greek islands will be returned to Turkey if they do not apply for asylum or if their application is rejected;
- 2) For every illegal immigrant deported from Greece to Turkey, one of the Turkish refugee camps was resettled in the EU. The EU was supposed to provide funding to the Turkish side.

Thus, there is a significant difference between EU member states regarding the management of migration processes. Some member states, especially the northern ones (Germany, France and the Scandinavian countries) want to manage

the crisis by distributing immigrants across Europe, while some southern European states (Greece and Italy) are focusing on restrictive security measures for national interests. They were badly shaken by the huge influx of immigrants, which drained economic resources and caused financial instability. Along with these two groups, there is a third group consisting of Eastern European states (Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic), which have also suffered from a huge wave of internal displacement of migrants, have openly opposed resettlement and redistribution of migrants among EU states, and have declared that it is a personal responsibility states to protect national interests (Green, & Pécoud, 2023).

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum was adopted by EU in 2024. The Pact aims to “rebuild trust” inside of the EU and bring about “a change of paradigm” in cooperation with non-EU countries. The main priorities of the Pact are the following three areas: 1. the external dimension, in other words relations with countries of origin and transit; 2. the management of external borders; 3. fair internal rules and solidarity (Ahmetasevic, 2024, p. 6).

In 2023, millions of people have been forced to flee their homes by deteriorating security and conflict in countries stretching from West Africa to East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Climate change has further exacerbated forced displacement. The number of refugees in the region reached 6.9 million, a 15% increase compared to 2022, while the number of internally displaced persons increased by 41% to 27.4 million (Green, & Pécoud, 2023).

The main reason for the new displacements was the conflict in Sudan, which began in April 2023. This conflict led to large-scale hostilities, an increase in crime, and the destruction of the banking system, the health care system, telecommunications and other critical services. More than 6.5 million Sudanese have been internally displaced, while around 1.3 million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Chad, Egypt and South Sudan. In addition, 506,000 refugees from South Sudan were forced to return home under adverse conditions. This has greatly increased the already great humanitarian needs in the region,

forcing many to seek refuge in other countries within more complex migration flows.

In 2023, 234,000 refugees were registered in North African countries, an increase of 277% compared to 2022. Of these, 171,500 were Sudanese nationals, with 150,012 (87%) registered in Egypt. The total number of people in need of international protection in North Africa was likely much higher, with some 409,000 Sudanese arriving in Egypt and over 20,000 in Libya due to the conflict in Sudan alone (Green, & Pécoud, 2023).

In 2023, 281,924 people embarked on dangerous and unregulated sea journeys from North Africa to Europe, a 58% increase over 2022. More than a quarter (26.5%) was landed back in North African countries after being rescued or intercepted at sea. In total, 3,311 people died or went missing at sea, up from 2,674 in 2022 (Green, & Pécoud, 2023).

Italy, Malta and Spain registered 207,723 irregular arrivals by sea, a 77% increase on the previous year. Almost half of those who arrived were citizens of Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. UNHCR provided training and technical assistance to the governments of Italy, Malta and Spain to improve monitoring and reception conditions, as well as to improve refugee status determination procedures.

Arrivals to Italy increased by 73%, with migrants from Tunisia doubling compared to 2022, but arrivals from Libya falling by 12%. The largest numbers of arrivals were citizens of Guinea, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, and Egypt, but the number of persons from Burkina Faso increased twenty-fold, and the number of migrants from Mali and Sudan increased five-fold. UNHCR carried out 79 monitoring visits to migrant reception sites in Italy and conducted more than 1,000 advocacy activities aimed at protecting the rights of displaced persons (West and Central Mediterranean situation, 2024).

In addition, UNHCR collaborated with the municipalities of Bari, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome and Turin to implement the Integration Charter (Carta per l'integrazione), which provides for the promotion of integration measures. Among

these measures is the creation of local multifunctional integration centres (Spazi Comuni) that provide services to refugees.

In 2023, only 380 people arrived in Malta, while the Greek island of Crete received 817 migrants who travelled from eastern Libya. UNHCR carried out 63 visits to reception sites for displaced people in Malta to identify their needs, provide information and refer them to the necessary services, especially for the most vulnerable groups. In addition, UNHCR provided support for the recruitment and integration of refugees and asylum seekers, including assistance in obtaining transport cards, opening bank accounts, preparing resumes, finding jobs, obtaining employment licenses and enrolling in language courses (Green, & Pécoud, 2023).

In 2023, 74,371 people were landed in North African countries, including Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. In all these countries, the number of people landed has increased sharply, except for Libya, where the number of such cases has decreased by a third.

Numerous economic and other problems of migrants often lead to the fact that they are classified as “socially vulnerable” in the receiving countries. Against the general backdrop of increasing ethnic diversity, the strong politicization of migration, and the excessive vulnerability of mobile individuals to social risks, the access of migrants and their descendants to social security has become a key area of concern in all European democracies. Local residents fear that the influx of migrants will lower wages, increase unemployment among the country’s citizens, and increase the cost of housing and consumer goods. Migrants are often considered to be a burden on the welfare systems of receiving countries. The main reason for this approach is the belief that immigrants are not part of “Europe”, so they should not fully enjoy the benefits of the social security system (Alhash, & Pittel, 2019).

Economic security threats rank second in society’s perception, after socio-cultural threats. First of all, economic threats include:

- 1) The expansion of the shadow economy, which causes huge tax losses for EU member states;

- 2) The growth of uncontrolled markets for counterfeit goods and services in the EU;
- 3) Increasing the level of smuggling, primarily of resources and various values;
- 4) Entrenchment of negative shadow practices and stereotypes in the economy.

The next area threatened by migration is political. Stability in this area is undermined by the large number of migrants who create their own organizations, often radical, designed to defend their interests and fight for equal rights. Such a situation shakes the political system in European states, which also undermines the security of Europe. It follows from this that the territorial integrity of the EU states is under threat of rupture due to the inevitable change in the ethnic composition of the population with the help of migrants. The newly formed ethnic groups fight not only for equal rights, but also for the opportunity to live as a separate ethnic group, which provokes separatist sentiments and inter-ethnic conflicts that take place on their basis. The political activity of migrants gives rise to the growing popularity of far-right political parties, which act as active antagonists of the further migration process, defending the identity of their state (Dunne, 2024).

The political threats of migration bring acute social tension to the EU countries and cause them to want to rid the state of a huge flow of migrants who destabilize the internal situation in the country. In turn, political instability is another cause of social tension, as the local population of Europe, fearing such active political activity of migrants, opposes the further process of accepting migrants in Europe. Xenophobic attitudes and antagonism between the European population and migrants are growing, which in turn has its consequences in the form of fierce protests and even armed clashes (Alhash, & Pittel, 2019).

And of course, the main problem arising from the migration factor is the spread and growth of terrorism positions. Migrants are one of the main tools not only for transporting contraband, but even more frighteningly, for spreading the influence of terrorist organizations. Supporters and loyal followers of terrorist organizations infiltrate the territory of Europe together with migrants and carry out terrorist actions there, which certainly undermine all spheres of life in European

society. The events of recent years clearly demonstrate the connection with the huge migration flow that poured into European states and the significant increase in terrorist acts that took place on the territory of Europe and took the lives of a large number of civilians (Cusumano, & Riddervold, 2023).

The EU has developed mechanisms to distribute refugees among EU member states, although this approach faces resistance from some member states. The quota system, which was supposed to evenly distribute the burden of migration, turned out to be ambiguous due to the different interests and capabilities of countries. In addition, cooperation is developing with countries such as Turkey and Libya to stop the flow of migrants before they reach Europe. This includes financial assistance, training and support in strengthening border control of these countries. Nevertheless, the EU remains committed to the principles of human rights protection, providing humanitarian aid to refugees and supporting programs for the integration of migrants into European societies (Cusumano, & Riddervold, 2023).

At the same time, Europe is trying to prevent illegal immigration. Yes, in Spain it is proposed to involve even the army and the navy in order not to allow the boats of criminals to reach their shores. Here, the Canary Islands, where boats from West Africa arrive, and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa suffer the most (Dunne, 2024).

The representative of the opposition People's Party, Miguel Tegliado, in his address asked the Spanish government to do its job and put an end once and for all to this mass arrival of immigrants to our borders illegally and with the assistance of the mafia, who are endangering the lives of these people. Instead, Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles said it was impossible because the army did not have the power to do so under the Constitution.

The leader of the People's Party, Alberto Núñez Feijó, called on the European Union to get more involved in protecting Europe's southern borders. And he accused the Spanish government of incompetence in "solving the migration crisis that affects the Canary Islands, in particular, every summer." In his opinion,

the authorities are unable to cope with logistical challenges as well – they cannot accommodate new arrivals and satisfy their requests for asylum (The Mediterranean migrant crisis: a call for immediate action – World, 2023).

Germany, Sweden and other countries are actively investing in the integration of migrants through educational programs, language courses and employment opportunities. The goal is to ensure the social and economic integration of migrants, which allows reducing tensions in society. European countries conclude readmission agreements with countries of origin of migrants to simplify the process of returning persons who do not have the right to asylum. This approach aims to reduce the number of illegal migrants in the EU (Fotou, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

Migration processes will remain a key challenge for Europe in the near future. Instability in the regions of North Africa and the Middle East is expected to continue to stimulate migration flows. The EU and its member states will continue to work on strengthening border control, expanding cooperation with third countries and developing integration programs. However, to effectively solve the problem of migration, coordinated efforts at the global level are needed, as well as the strengthening of the international legal framework to protect the rights of migrants and refugees.

A significant prospect is the development of new technologies for managing migration processes, including the use of artificial intelligence to analyse migration trends and improve asylum procedures. Europe can also strengthen its efforts to tackle the root causes of migration through active involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in conflict regions. Migration processes in the Mediterranean and Europe remain a complex and multifaceted challenge. The EU's migrant policy includes both border protection and humanitarian assistance, but needs constant improvement and adaptation to new challenges. The future depends on Europe's ability to develop flexible and effective solutions that meet the needs of both European societies and migrants themselves.

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**THE ROLE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY  
IN EU- TÜRKİYE RELATIONS AND REGIONAL STABILITY  
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

*Nasuh Sofuoğlu & Rabia Kalfaoğlu*

**Introduction**

The renewable energy sector has emerged as a crucial element in shaping the future of EU – the Republic of Turkey (Türkiye) relations, particularly within the geopolitically sensitive region of the Eastern Mediterranean. As the EU aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 under the European Green Deal, renewable energy's role in mitigating climate change and fostering economic growth has become increasingly significant. For Türkiye, aligning its energy policies with the EU's ambitions not only supports global climate action but also strengthens its strategic partnership with the EU, particularly as a candidate country. This focus on renewable energy offers a pathway for enhancing bilateral relations, promoting regional stability, and reducing reliance on fossil fuels, historically a source of geopolitical tension in the region. As the EU and Türkiye face economic disparities, energy security concerns, and geopolitical rivalries, their collaboration on renewable energy initiatives presents an opportunity to address these issues collectively, ultimately contributing to regional stability and a sustainable energy future.

**Key Motivations for EU- Türkiye Renewable Energy Focus**

The EU and Türkiye possess the potential to prioritize renewable energy, motivated by common environmental and climate objectives. The EU's commitment to achieving climate neutrality by 2050, outlined in the European Green Deal, underscores the pivotal role of renewable energy in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the renewable energy target to 42.5% by 2030 (European Commission, n.d.a). Similarly, Türkiye, as a candidate country and

significant partner of the EU, is aligning its energy policies with these goals to support global climate action and transition to a low-carbon economy. Türkiye's ratification of the Paris Agreement and its target of net-zero emissions by 2053 further demonstrate this commitment (Net Sıfır Türkiye, 2021). Investing in renewable energy is essential for both regions to achieve the goals outlined in the Paris Agreement and to lessen their dependence on fossil fuels. Accordingly, collaboration between the EU and Türkiye in fossil fuel energy is anticipated to diminish in significance over the next two to three decades (Tastan, 2022).

In addition to their environmental and climate objectives, the EU and Türkiye have various economic and technological incentives to emphasize renewable energy. The EU offers funding for research and innovation in renewable energy technologies through initiatives such as Horizon Europe (European Commission, 2021), providing Türkiye with access to cutting-edge technologies and innovations that can accelerate its transition to renewable energy. Collaborative projects and partnerships, such as the EU-supported Geothermal Development Project in Türkiye, demonstrate the potential for technological advancements and the development of more efficient renewable energy solutions (AFRY, n.d.). The EU possesses valuable knowledge and expertise in renewable energy technologies that can be shared with Türkiye, further driving innovation. Cooperation in renewable energy projects also presents opportunities to modernize and expand energy infrastructure in the Eastern Mediterranean. A similar initiative to the EU4Energy Program (European Union, 2019), focused on enhancing Türkiye's energy infrastructure with smart grid technologies and energy efficiency measures, could support the integration of renewable energy and ensure a reliable energy supply. By investing in renewable energy, Türkiye can strengthen its competitiveness in the global clean energy market, aligning with the EU's objective of advancing technological leadership in the green economy.

Türkiye's renewable energy potential offers opportunities to create jobs and boost economic growth. Developing this sector, particularly in wind and solar energy, requires a skilled workforce and EU programs like the European Training

Foundation (ETF) can support vocational education and training to meet this demand (European Training Foundation, 2021). By investing in renewable energy and fostering a well-trained workforce, Türkiye can enhance its competitiveness in the global clean energy market, while also creating significant employment opportunities in this expanding industry (Shokri Kalehsar, 2019).

Given the current geopolitical challenges in the region, collaboration in the field of renewable energy can lay the groundwork for strengthening EU – Türkiye relations. Both parties can foster mutual trust and cooperation by jointly pursuing environmental and energy objectives. Türkiye’s strategic location between Europe and Asia positions it as a significant player in the regional energy landscape. Türkiye seeks to position itself as a pivotal energy hub by advancing its renewable energy agenda, promoting stability and cooperation in energy affairs (European Commission, 2023). These driving forces emphasize the significance of renewable energy in fostering the EU – Türkiye relationship, advancing economic and strategic interests, and contributing to global sustainability objectives.

### **Improving EU – Türkiye Relations through Renewable Energy Initiatives**

The Eastern Mediterranean region is rich in renewable energy resources, including solar, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal, and biomass, creating a significant opportunity for collaboration between the EU and Türkiye. Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, and Türkiye are leading in solar energy production, with Greece generating 19.02%, RoC 15.21%, and Türkiye 5.75% of their electricity from solar sources (Our World in Data, 2024). The region also boasts excellent wind resources, particularly in coastal and offshore areas, while Türkiye is exploring hydroelectric power from rivers such as the Munzur and Ikizdere, enhancing its renewable energy production (*Enerji Atlası*, n.d.). Furthermore, geothermal energy from Türkiye, Greece, Greek Cyprus, and Italy, along with biomass energy derived from agricultural waste in Türkiye and Greece, provides various pathways for sustainable energy. By integrating their energy infrastructure,

aligning policies, and promoting investments, the EU and Türkiye can improve energy security, lessen dependence on fossil fuels, and build a resilient regional energy system.

A robust and harmonized regulatory framework is necessary for advancing EU – Türkiye cooperation on renewable energy in the Eastern Mediterranean, fostering energy security through shared targets, standardized certification, and coordinated incentives. The EU’s Renewable Energy Directive (RED II), which mandates a 42.5% renewable energy target for member states by 2030, provides a valuable model (European Commission, n.d.b); Türkiye could align its renewable strategy by adopting similar goals and support mechanisms, such as feed-in tariffs and renewable energy auctions, to attract EU investment and encourage joint projects. Ensuring long-term policy stability is also crucial, as investors need consistent support throughout project lifespans. The EU’s 2030 Climate and Energy Framework, with its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% from 1990 levels (European Commission, n.d.c), offers a structured approach that Türkiye could emulate to secure investment and strengthen collaboration on renewable initiatives.

Investing in renewable energy projects offers significant economic and environmental benefits that bolster energy security. These projects create jobs, attract investments, and foster regional stability while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, which is essential for long-term sustainability. Collaborative EU – Türkiye research can also drive technological advancements, enhancing the efficiency and competitiveness of renewables against fossil fuels. EU – Türkiye projects, like the Black Sea Synergy, which focuses on wind, solar, and hydropower in the Black Sea, exemplify the regional benefits of such cooperation (Council of the European Union, 2024). Extending similar efforts to the Eastern Mediterranean could stimulate mutual economic growth and foster opportunities for SMEs in manufacturing, services, and research, promoting innovation and resilience. Additionally, both regions are exploring joint efforts in green hydrogen production to lower emissions in transportation and industry,

supporting a sustainable future (Anadolu Agency, 2021; CEENERGYNEWS, 2021).

Türkiye could strengthen this cooperation by harmonizing its electricity regulations with the EU's, facilitating renewable integration and cross-border trade. The EU's Electricity Market directive and platforms like RE-Source, which includes Turkish participants, provide models for expanding renewable access, allowing Turkish companies to directly source wind energy and support wind power growth (RE-Source Platform, n.d.). Türkiye's YEKDEM program, offering feed-in tariffs for solar projects with EU financial support, has similarly boosted solar energy development (Balkan Green Energy News, 2020). Also, given their reliance on fossil fuel imports, the EU and Türkiye face energy security challenges that renewable projects can help mitigate. Projects such as solar and wind farms reduce dependence on coal, oil, and gas, while EU investment, including the EIB's funding for hydropower projects like those developed by Enerjisa Enerji Üretim A.Ş and initiatives like the Crescent Clean Energy Fund, strengthens Türkiye's renewable infrastructure (European Investment Bank, 2008). Moreover, since efficient renewable integration into Türkiye's grid is essential, policy frameworks should prioritize grid modernization, such as smart grids, to manage renewable variability. The EU's Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E) (European Commission, n.d.d) regulation supports cross-border energy infrastructure, a model Türkiye could adopt to enhance grid efficiency and renewable distribution. Liberalizing the energy market, lowering entry barriers, ensuring grid access, and enabling cross-border electricity trade will further attract investment and innovation, advancing the renewable energy sector.

Facilitating technological innovation and knowledge exchange between the EU and Türkiye is vital for advancing renewable energy in the Eastern Mediterranean. Collaborative research and development initiatives have been effective, with Türkiye actively involved in EU research programs since 2003, receiving €743 million in assistance (European Commission, 2024). The Horizon Europe program, with a €95.5 billion budget (2021-2027) (European Commission,



n.d.e), supports renewable energy research, and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) has allocated over €700 million to boost Türkiye’s economic competitiveness and innovation. The first EU – Türkiye High-Level Dialogue on science and technology in Brussels on 15 November 2022 emphasized the European Green Deal’s goals, focusing on human capital, innovation, and technology transfer (European External Action Service, 2024). Joint research projects unite universities, research institutions, and private companies from both regions to improve solar panel efficiency, wind turbine technology, and energy storage, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean. Additionally, the 2nd Türkiye – European Union High-Level Dialogue on April 25, 2024, in Istanbul, themed “Sustainable Innovation Axis: Joining Forces for Innovation and Green Digital Transformation”, promoted partnerships for technology transfer, including patent sharing, licensing, and collaborative projects (TÜBİTAK, 2024). European incubators like InnoEnergy also collaborate with Turkish counterparts to support Turkish start-ups and companies in adopting advanced EU-developed renewable energy technologies, fostering innovation and market-ready solutions (Ufuk Avrupa, n.d.a).

Establishing centres of excellence in renewable energy research and innovation could significantly boost EU – Türkiye collaboration, with specialized centres in areas like solar, wind, and geothermal energy creating spaces for experts in research, engineering, and industry to pioneer new technologies. For example, a solar energy centre in Türkiye could unite EU and Turkish specialists to develop advanced photovoltaic solutions. Knowledge-sharing platforms and networks, such as the EU’s Covenant of Mayors – which includes Turkish cities like İstanbul and Ankara – are also essential for exchanging best practices in local renewable energy deployment (GIZ, 2024). Additionally, public-private partnerships (PPPs) are vital for combining government support with private sector innovation. Policy support, such as tax credits, grants, and subsidies, and financial incentives from initiatives like the European Innovation Council (EIC) within the Horizon Europe program, where Turkish companies already participate, are crucial to advance new

technologies (Ufuk Avrupa, n.d.b). Academic exchange programs, like Erasmus+, also play a role in cultivating a generation of renewable energy professionals; expanding these programs for Turkish students and researchers would build expertise and foster lasting collaboration. The Eastern Mediterranean's renewable energy projects have significant potential to enhance energy security for the EU and Türkiye by increasing energy diversity, reducing fossil fuel dependency, strengthening grid stability, and supporting economic and technological progress. Strategic development and regional teamwork, backed by robust policies, are essential to address energy security challenges and secure a reliable, sustainable energy landscape for the region (Raimondi, 2022).

### **Challenges and Conflicts Hindering the Pursuit of Renewable Energy Resources in the Eastern Mediterranean**

The Eastern Mediterranean region has significant potential for sustainable development, energy security, and economic growth by utilizing renewable energy resources. However, there are various obstacles to achieving these objectives, including geopolitical tensions, environmental concerns, financial interests, and social impacts. Disputes over maritime borders and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) involving Türkiye, Greece, and RoC have intensified due to conflicting claims over energy-rich areas suitable for offshore wind and solar energy projects. Renewable energy development in these disputed zones could exacerbate conflicts and potentially lead to diplomatic or military tensions. This competition for control over valuable energy resources could escalate regional rivalries, impeding efforts to promote regional cooperation and collaborative renewable energy initiatives. To overcome these challenges, it is crucial to engage in sustained diplomatic efforts to resolve territorial disputes and establish clear agreements on maritime boundaries. One effective solution could involve creating joint development zones, where countries agree to share the benefits and responsibilities of renewable energy projects. Such arrangements would not only ease tensions but also encourage regional cooperation, allowing the Eastern Mediterranean to harness its renewable

energy potential for the benefit of all involved parties (Rau, Seufert, & Westphal, 2022).

Large-scale renewable energy projects like offshore wind farms and solar parks can disrupt marine ecosystems, lead to habitat loss, and alter land use patterns, potentially threatening local livelihoods in fishing, agriculture, or tourism. Conducting thorough Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and involving local communities in the planning process can help mitigate these impacts and ensure the projects benefit both the environment and the population. While these initiatives offer economic advantages, they can also exacerbate existing economic disparities if benefits are unevenly distributed. Governments must implement policies for fair economic gain distribution, such as revenue-sharing and support for SMEs, and conduct Social Impact Assessments (SIAs) to ensure inclusive development. Additionally, integrating renewable energy into existing grids presents technical challenges, requiring advanced grid management, robust energy storage, and significant infrastructure investment, often through public-private partnerships (PPPs). Differences in regulations and energy policies between the EU and Türkiye further complicate collaboration on joint renewable energy ventures. Aligning these frameworks is crucial for reducing barriers, facilitating cross-border projects, and promoting sustainable energy development.

The Eastern Mediterranean region faces significant political instability and security challenges that impact renewable energy projects and complicate cooperation. Türkiye's involvement is crucial for achieving balance in the region, particularly given the on-going tensions with Greece over maritime boundaries and the situation in RoC. The EastMed Gas Forum, currently viewed by Ankara as a de-facto alliance against Türkiye, should evolve into a platform where all regional countries, including Türkiye, cooperate on energy policies, especially renewable energy. The dispute over maritime boundaries between Türkiye, Greece, and RoC is a major geopolitical challenge that complicates collaboration on offshore energy projects. Addressing these disputes requires diplomatic dialogue among the EU, Türkiye, Greece, and RoC, along with confidence-building measures such as joint

marine research and shared renewable energy projects. Focusing on less contentious areas for initial cooperation could help build trust over time (İşeri & Bartan, 2020; Melcangi, 2020).

Non-state actors, such as militant groups, further heighten security concerns, making it challenging to ensure the safety and stability necessary for successful renewable energy project implementation. Additionally, renewable energy infrastructure, especially offshore installations, could be at risk of security threats like sabotage, terrorism, or military conflict. These vulnerabilities could lead to disputes over the protection and security of these assets, potentially disrupting renewable energy projects. Türkiye has been taking responsibility against such unconventional security threats in different regions throughout the world. With Türkiye's increasing naval capacity and power projection capabilities, a thaw between Türkiye, Greece, and Greek Cyprus would lead to a formidable region-wide cooperation that would foster stability and certainty. To address these risks, comprehensive security plans and thorough risk assessments are crucial for renewable energy infrastructure. Furthermore, sustained diplomatic engagement and conflict prevention efforts are vital for creating a more stable environment conducive to renewable energy development in the region.

The strained political relationship between Türkiye and the EU, stemming from disagreements over human rights, migration policies, and Türkiye's EU accession process, complicates cooperation on renewable energy and other strategic issues. To rebuild trust and foster collaboration, strengthening structured dialogues like the EU – Türkiye High-Level Energy Dialogue is essential, with regular, focused meetings on energy cooperation serving to depoliticize the relationship. Small-scale, non-controversial renewable energy projects could gradually build trust while addressing broader political issues through separate diplomatic channels could prevent them from spilling over into energy cooperation. In the strategically important and unstable Eastern Mediterranean – marked by conflicts in Syria and Libya, the September 7 incident involving Israel, migration crises, and the presence of multiple military forces – enhancing security

cooperation between the EU and Türkiye is crucial for stabilizing the region and creating a more favourable environment for renewable energy projects. Joint efforts to address shared security concerns, such as combating terrorism and managing migration, alongside regional stabilization initiatives like peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, can reduce instability. Additionally, establishing conflict prevention mechanisms, such as early warning systems and crisis management frameworks, could minimize the risk of regional conflicts disrupting energy cooperation. Developing a joint strategic vision for the Eastern Mediterranean centred on renewable energy, involving regional actors and international organizations in a multilateral cooperation framework, such as expanding the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) to include renewable energy cooperation with Türkiye's involvement, could reduce competition and promote shared goals like reducing carbon emissions and enhancing regional energy security.

Economic sanctions imposed by the EU on Türkiye over political issues, such as actions in RoC or the Eastern Mediterranean, undermine cooperation on renewable energy projects. This conundrum can be addressed by (1) targeted sanction relief, i.e., sanctions structured to minimize their impact on strategic sectors like renewable energy or exemptions for renewable energy projects could be negotiated as part of broader diplomatic efforts; (2) negotiating new trade agreements or updating existing ones to include provisions that facilitate renewable energy cooperation could mitigate the impact of sanctions; and (3) third-party mediation by international organizations or neutral countries could offer a backdoor for keeping diplomatic channels open in cases where direct negotiations are challenging.

The current energy ties between Türkiye and Russia significantly impact the potential for renewable energy cooperation between Türkiye and the EU. Türkiye's reliance on Russian natural gas and oil, with Russia being its primary energy supplier – accounting for 24% of Russia's oil product exports and 18% of its total export earnings from top importers – significantly influences its energy security

and policy decisions and complicates its ability to commit to EU-aligned renewable projects fully (Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air, 2024). Despite Türkiye's efforts to explore alternative energy sources, including renewables, its energy policies are deeply influenced by strategic collaborations with Russia, such as the TurkStream pipeline and the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant. These projects highlight the substantial role of Russian investment in Türkiye's energy infrastructure, which could make EU – Türkiye cooperation in renewables appear as a challenge to Russia's regional influence. However, Türkiye could leverage EU collaboration to assert greater strategic independence and reduce its reliance on Russia, enhancing its energy security and regional autonomy (Zachmann, & Tagliapietra, 2017). The EU can support Türkiye's energy transition by offering technical assistance, funding, and policy guidance, aligning Türkiye's energy transition with EU standards and reducing Türkiye's carbon footprint. This approach would help Türkiye navigate its balancing act between maintaining its energy ties with Russia and aligning more closely with EU policies and standards, ultimately strengthening its position as a regional energy hub (Sözen, Goren, & Limon, 2023).

The Eastern Mediterranean region holds significant potential for renewable energy but faces challenges such as geopolitical tensions, environmental impacts, economic disparities, infrastructure difficulties, regulatory misalignment, and security risks. Overcoming these obstacles requires diplomatic efforts, inclusive policy-making, technical innovation, and strong regional cooperation. Geopolitical and diplomatic challenges, particularly between the EU and Türkiye, can be addressed through sustained diplomatic efforts, confidence-building measures, and cooperative frameworks that align both parties' interests. By focusing on shared goals like energy security, economic development, and environmental sustainability, the EU and Türkiye can unlock the full potential of renewable energy cooperation in the region. Although Türkiye's reliance on Russian energy complicates its policies, it also highlights the need to diversify energy sources through renewables. The EU has a crucial role in assisting Türkiye with this

diversification, reducing its dependence on Russian energy, and fostering regional stability and energy security. Addressing these challenges requires balancing geopolitical interests, economic factors, and strategic investments to build a robust and sustainable energy partnership between the EU and Türkiye.

### **Conclusion**

Renewable energy cooperation between the EU and Türkiye holds immense potential to redefine their relationship, offering a means to overcome historical tensions and work towards common goals of environmental sustainability, economic growth, and regional stability. Despite the myriad challenges, including geopolitical disputes, regulatory misalignment, and Türkiye's complex energy ties with Russia, the pursuit of renewable energy presents a unique opportunity for both parties to build a more integrated and resilient partnership.

By adopting successful strategies from other regions, the EU and Türkiye can further strengthen their collaboration in the Eastern Mediterranean. For instance, the Nordic countries' integrated energy market, Nord Pool, serves as an exemplary model for cross-border electricity exchange that optimizes renewable resources. Similarly, Germany's *Energiewende* policy illustrates the effectiveness of stable, long-term frameworks, such as feed-in tariffs and PPPs, in attracting significant private investment in renewables. Adopting decentralized strategies akin to California's Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) could empower local governments in Türkiye to set and achieve their renewable energy goals with EU support. Additionally, by drawing on China's experience in rapidly scaling wind and solar energy, Türkiye could focus on building domestic manufacturing capacity for renewable technologies, thereby reducing costs, creating jobs, and accelerating the transition to renewable energy.

By integrating these best practices, the EU and Türkiye can create a robust framework for renewable energy development, overcoming challenges, attracting investment, and advancing towards a sustainable energy future in the Eastern Mediterranean. By focusing on shared interests in energy security, technological

innovation, and climate action, the EU and Türkiye can transform their bilateral relations, foster regional cooperation, and contribute to a more secure and sustainable global energy landscape. Through sustained dialogue, strategic investments, and collaborative frameworks, they have the potential to lead the way in renewable energy development, setting an example for other regions facing similar challenges.

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**PART 2**  
**CONTRADICTIONARY ROLE OF EXTERNAL ACTORS**  
**IN MEDITERRANEAN**

# A TEMPORAL ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION BACKED REGIONALISATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

*Seven ERDOĞAN & Murat POYRAZ*

## **Introduction**

Regionalization has been a significant and enduring trend in world politics, particularly since the end of the Second World War. The phenomenon has undergone considerable evolution over the past decades, reflecting the evolving dynamics of international relations and the various factors affecting the formation of regional entities. At its core, regionalization can be understood as a multifaceted process arising from the complex interplay between internal regional factors - such as geography, shared social and cultural ties – and external influences, including the rise of new global powers or systemic changes in the international order (Song, 2007; Panke & Starkmann, 2021; Brusylovska, 2023). As a result of regionalization processes, regions are becoming entities, sometimes in the form of regional organisations, with the capacity to shape the flow of developments in global politics, including regionalization in other geographies (Rüland, 2022).

Understanding the complexities of regionalization is crucial to gaining a more comprehensive perspective on current global politics and their future trajectories. As regions become more prominent actors in the international system, their interactions, both within and beyond their borders, play a critical role in shaping the future dynamics of global politics. Despite the challenges associated with understanding these processes, such an understanding is essential for policymakers, scholars and practitioners alike, as it offers valuable insights into the evolving nature of global governance and the potential directions of international cooperation and conflict.

The phenomenon of global regionalization is clearly observable in the Mediterranean, where a certain degree of regionalization has taken place, thus allowing the region to be considered as an international entity in its own right. This

chapter deals with the influence of the European Union (EU) on regionalisation processes in the Mediterranean, by conducting a temporal analysis of the EU's engagement through diverse stages.

The chapter begins with an examination of the EU's early involvement in the Mediterranean, a period during which the Union had not yet established itself as a formal foreign policy actor. During this initial phase, the EU's engagement was more limited and less structured, reflecting the broader context of its evolving role in international relations. Next, the chapter examines the period when the EU's engagement in the Mediterranean intensified, coinciding with its emergence as a competent and influential foreign policy actor. This stage is characterised by the use of several strategic policy instruments aimed at promoting regional cooperation and integration. The EU's initiatives during this period were more robust and comprehensive, reflecting its growing ambitions and capabilities on the global stage. Finally, the chapter discusses recent regionalization dynamics in the Mediterranean, with a particular focus on the Arab Spring as a critical turning point. Overall, the chapter provides a nuanced analysis of the EU's evolving role in the Mediterranean, highlighting how its influence has shaped and continues to shape regionalization dynamics in this strategically important region.

### **Earlier Involvement of the European Union in the Mediterranean**

The Mediterranean has always been an area of interest to the countries of Europe over the centuries, due to its geographical proximity and strategic importance. As a result, there have always been close contacts between European and Mediterranean countries. Many of the founding members of the EU, notably France, were closely linked and had special ties and densed commercial relations to the south of Mediterranean thanks to the former colonial relations. While the non-member Mediterranean countries were exporting mostly agricultural and energy products to the EU, member states were heavily selling manufactured goods to the region (Gomez, 2023). This is why the promotion of relations and

cooperation with the Mediterranean countries was identified as a priority area by the EU in the late 1960s.

France led the EU to conclude association agreements with two Maghreb countries, Morocco and Tunisia, by the late 1960s (Edis, 1998). In the 1970s, the EU granted free access of the most industrial products to its market without asking for any reciprocity except Israel. Textile and agriculture sectors were not added (Montanari, 2007). When the Union's first enlargement was on the horizon in the early 1970s, the EU's ties with the Mediterranean countries widened with the official launch of Global Mediterranean Policy in 1972, including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Israel.

Global Mediterranean Policy aimed at creating an industrial free trade area and the EU expected to achieve an utmost level of trade liberalization with the Mediterranean countries to complement the unilateral opening of EU markets at the end of the 1970s. Besides, there was an urgent need to make adjustments in the existing association agreements with the Mediterranean partners in order to make them operational for the new members, namely Britain, Denmark and Ireland (Gomez, 2003). Through Global Mediterranean Policy, the Union started to handle the Mediterranean as a political area, even when there was no transfer of authority to the EU by the member states in matters of politics and diplomacy (Bicchi, 2014). That means, there was a heavy dose of regionalism in the EU's approach towards the region from the very beginning. Since, the Global Mediterranean Policy aimed to promote economic and political development in the region to achieve a zone of peaceful co-existence (Asderaki, 2021). The EU's Mediterranean dimension was further strengthened when it finalized the Mediterranean enlargement in the 1980s with the membership of Greece, Spain and Portugal (Şençelebi, 2015). However, following to this round of enlargement, the EU has become largely self-sufficient in terms of Mediterranean agricultural products, such as olive oil (Gomez, 2023).

The Conference of Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean was gathered on 10 December 1990, also known as 5+5 talks, at foreign ministry level.



Influenced by the persistent problems on the other side of the Mediterranean, such as high birth rates, poor economic performance, rising fundamentalism and increasing migratory pressures, which create huge economic and social disparities between the two sides of the Mediterranean, the EU developed its renewed Mediterranean policy in 1990, defining financial cooperation, trade, the protection of human rights and the environment as the main pillars of its new approach (Edis, 1998). For the first time in the Union's history, the European Commission has underlined the link between security in Europe and peace and prosperity in the wider Mediterranean region (European Commission, 1989; Matutes, 1989).

### **European Union in the Mediterranean as a Competent Foreign Policy Actor**

After the end of the Cold War, the issues of human rights, good governance and democracy were also seen as priorities in the Mediterranean, in contrast to the economic focus of previous EU policies towards the region. In other words, the impact of the change in the nature of the EU with the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 was also felt in the EU's attitude towards its Mediterranean partners. In addition to developing its own policies and instruments towards the region, the EU also supported the US-led Middle East Peace Process.

The Mediterranean region has a high degree of heterogeneity. The countries of the region differ significantly in terms of population size, income levels and political freedoms. As a result, the institutional framework of the EU's Mediterranean policy reflects a compromise between the changing interests across the Mediterranean (i.e. the different dynamics of the Western, Eastern or Maghreb Mediterranean) and those of the EU (Szilagyi, 2010). Moreover, the EU member states, that are also Mediterranean littoral states, have played the leading role in developing relations with the region. Under this subtitle, the various EU policies, namely Barcelona Process or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, European Neighbourhood Policy and Union for the Mediterranean, that form the general

framework of relations with the Mediterranean are presented in a chronology according to the date of their introduction.

### ***European Union's First Mediterranean Initiative: Barcelona Process***

The Barcelona Process, also known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or Euro-Med, was launched in 1995 as an EU initiative to build partnerships between the countries of the Mediterranean (the EU and 12 Mediterranean countries – Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey) through economic, cultural and political cooperation. By launching the Barcelona Process, the EU redesigned its relations with its Mediterranean partners following the Cold War.

The objectives of the process were defined as shared prosperity, in particular through the establishment of a free trade area, which implies economic regionalism, increased cultural exchanges between peoples and societies, and political stability, including dialogue on security issues (Barcelona Declaration, 1995). Because the problems related to these three areas are seen as the root causes of instability in the region, giving rise to mass migration, fundamentalist extremism, terrorism, drugs and organised crime (Hahn, 2009). For the first time, the Barcelona Process has given the EU's cooperation with its Mediterranean partners a normative character that is clearly more than the previous weak references to the issues of human rights and good governance (Szczepankiewicz-Rudzka, 2021). Thus, after the Barcelona Process, the EU's relations with the Mediterranean countries have broadened in a way that includes areas beyond the economic sphere (Molnár, 2019). The activities carried out within the framework of the Barcelona Process financed by the MEDA programme of the EU in two successive phases covering the periods 1995-1999 and 2000-2006 (Bhutto, 2013).

The Barcelona Process has had both bilateral and regional dimensions. The bilateral dimension, based on the Association Agreements signed between the EU and each of the Mediterranean countries, addresses the individual characteristics of each country, while the multilateral dimension tackles the common problems of the region (Ion, 2015). Moreover, in response to the demands of the non-EU

Mediterranean partners, the process has been designed as an equal relationship (Attinà, 2004).

***A Policy for All Including the Mediterranean: European Neighbourhood Policy***

After completing the largest enlargement in its history in 2004, the EU felt the need to restructure its relations with its new neighbours, both to the east and to the south, within a new regional framework envisaging a privileged partnership (Viceré, & Venneri, 2023; Costello, 2021; Tabur, 2013). Accordingly, the rationale behind the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has been to share the benefits of enlargement with neighbouring countries in order to strengthen stability, security and prosperity for all (European Commission, 2004a), as well as to form a 'ring of friends' around the EU's borders and hinder the drawing of new dividing lines between the Union and its neighbours (Viceré, & Venneri, 2023). In this context, the action plans signed bilaterally to define the reform path of each ENP country also contained sentences referring to regional cooperation (European Commission, 2004b). However, for Bicchi, with the development of the ENP, the EU's approach to the Mediterranean has significantly lost its region-building objective and become more bilateral (Bicchi, 2014).

This is not, yet, to mean that the ENP framework replaced those already in place for the EU's relations with the wider neighbourhood. As the Commission's March 2003 communication stated, the ENP "would supplement and build on existing policies and arrangements" (European Commission, 2003). Hence, for the countries in the southern neighbourhood, the ENP was designed not a substitute for, but a complement to the Barcelona Process, which was frequently criticized due to the absence of tangible outcomes (Calleya, 2000). The southern neighbours covered in the ENP include a total of ten Mediterranean states: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Tunisia.

By means of the ENP, the EU intended to transfer to its neighbours its know-how on the transformation of countries and regions acquired through consecutive

waves of enlargement (European Commission, 2004a). For that reason, the ENP was designed with substantial borrowings from the enlargement policy, i.e. conditionality, provision of financial and technical assistances, access to some EU programmes, progress reports, and it can also be asserted that the major difference between the two lies in the absence of a membership perspective in the former (Gebhard, 2010; Montanari, 2007).

In 2005, the implementation of the ENP with respect to the southern dimension started, with the enforcement of the first Action Plans as a way to promote regionalism (Comelli, 2005), founded on existing association agreements. In return for implementing action plans, the Union offers support and financial assistance (European Commission, 2004b). This has been executed first by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument by 2007 and then by the European Neighbourhood Instrument, later integrated into Global Europe (European Commission, 2021). The level of financial support available through various EU mechanisms has never been found sufficient by the Mediterranean partners (Adamczyk, 2015).

### ***A New Impetus in the Relations with the Mediterranean: The Union for the Mediterranean***

Despite warnings against creating parallel structures with the potential to undermine each other, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was launched in 2008 as part of the Barcelona Process (Szilagyi, 2010). The idea for the UfM stemmed from former French President Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign, in which he advocated the creation of a new initiative that would, on the one hand, be completely separate from the EU and its other previous regional initiatives and, on the other, include only the Mediterranean littoral states (Hierro, 2020; Del Sarto, 2011). During his election campaign speech in Toulon, Sarkozy took particular aim at the Barcelona Process, criticising it for not being a “partnership between peoples”. The EU embraced the idea, but warned that the initiative would build on existing policy frameworks such as the Barcelona Process

and the ENP Action Plans, and that it would keep the EU as a whole inside to avoid any internal divisions (Boer, 2011).

The Paris Declaration establishing the UfM states that, unlike the ENP, the new initiative was created as “a multilateral partnership with a view to enhancing the potential for regional integration and cohesion”. In this way, the Paris Summit anticipated that the UfM had the potential to make a significant contribution to addressing common challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The initiative has been built on a broader Mediterranean approach. It currently includes all 27 EU countries, all ENP countries (except Libya, which has observer status), the other Mediterranean countries and the European Commission (Union for the Mediterranean, 2024). It is worth noting that the UfM includes countries – such as North Macedonia, Montenegro – that did not participate in either the Barcelona Process or the ENP.

In the light of the goals set out in the Paris Declaration, it is safe to say that the UfM's main objective is to give a new impetus to EU-supported regionalism in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In particular, it also aims to complement bilateral relations in both the Barcelona Process and the ENP. As well as to revitalise the Barcelona Process in three ways: (a) by strengthening the EU's relations with the Mediterranean countries; (b) by further implementing the concept of co-ownership; and (c) by implementing regional projects (Paris Declaration, 2008). In this initiative, unlike the Barcelona Process and the ENP, regional projects are defined as a core area of focus. As Boer (2011) notes, the UfM, presented as a “union of projects”, adapts a “development first, politics later” or “low politics first, high politics later” approach. Six priority areas – water, environment & blue economy, energy & climate change, transport & urban development, higher education & research, social & civil affairs, and economic development & employment – have been identified for such an approach (Union for the Mediterranean, 2023).

Also novel for the UfM, notes Boer (2011), is the notion of co-ownership among the UfM Mediterranean partners. Previously, the Barcelona Process and the ENP were often criticised for failing to provide a true partnership and an equal

voice within them. In an effort to address these criticisms, the UfM introduced the concept of co-ownership, meaning that it is co-chaired by an EU Member State and a Mediterranean Partner with veto rights at all stages of its governance and cooperation, mainly through the UfM Co-Presidency. This has increased the influence of non-EU Mediterranean countries on agenda-setting and the final results of negotiations (Winter, 2020). However, despite the initial intention to have equal ownership by European and non-European partners, the UfM has also been primarily controlled by the European side, which has eroded regionalisation efforts (Aliboni & Ammor 2009).

### **European Union in the Mediterranean: Developments after the Arab Spring**

The EU has always reacted to developments in the Mediterranean. This is because the success of all European instruments for the region depends heavily on the dominance of a favourable political climate in the Mediterranean (Schumacher, 2001). The existing external pressure on authoritarian regimes in the Mediterranean region to undertake political reforms took on a new dimension when the populations of these countries began to challenge their regimes through widespread protests, including violent clashes (Aliboni, 2009). The process spread across the region and became known as the Arab Spring. Governments in many countries changed under the influence of internal unrest. As a consequence, the Arab Spring has become both a major challenge and a new window of opportunity for both the region and the EU. On the EU side, it has undeniably necessitated a policy reorientation (Asderaki, 2021). In fact, none of the policy tools in the hands of the EU has been sufficient to address the challenges in the neighbourhood beyond the 2010s (Delcour, & Petrova, 2023). However, deep divisions among member states and the prioritisation of the eurozone crisis forced the EU to remain passive and silent in the early days of the Arab Spring (Bisard, 2015).

The EU was supposed to achieve the goal of creating a ring of - peaceful, stable and prosperous – friends with extensive transformations on its borders, but

in the end it was surrounded by a ring of fire. For this reason, the ENP has been reviewed twice by EU leaders and partner countries since its launch in 2004 (Dekanozishvili, 2020). The overall aim was to improve its effectiveness and adaptability in the face of these developments facing the EU in the region (Costello, 2021). The first review, entitled “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood”, took place in 2011 in the aftermath of the Arap Spring uprisings. Building on this acceptance, the review had three core objectives: “building and consolidating healthy democracies, pursuing sustainable economic growth and managing cross-border relations” (European Commission, 2011), all more or less concerned with stabilising the region in general and the Mediterranean in particular. With regard to the southern Mediterranean in particular, the EU highlighted a number of priorities, such as comprehensive institution-building programmes, dialogue on migration and mobility, and industrial cooperation. The review also proposed the use of an incentive-based strategy, known as “more for more”, to encourage closer cooperation with neighbouring countries to the south that have made more progress in political and institutional change.

On-going criticism of the first ENP review, which is mostly seen as just a label that brings less noticeable change in the south (Costello, 2021; Revel, 2016), led to a new review in 2015. Lannon (2015) identified recent developments in the south of the Union – such as the escalation of the migration crisis, Russia's open military involvement in Syria, and the occurrence of terrorist attacks and conflicts in some ENP countries – as the impetus for the second revision. The review also aimed to improve the performance of the ENP through the mechanisms of increased focus, differentiation, flexibility and ownership (European Commission, 2015a). In addition, new instruments were developed, such as the Civil Society Facility and the Endowment for Democracy, the Spring Programme, and the EU increased its financial assistance and investment in the region to support the reform process. The benefits (money, market access and mobility) of these EU facilities have been made conditional on the pace of reform (Kirchherr, 2012).

The main motivation for the EU's involvement in the Mediterranean in recent decades has been to ensure its security in the face of various disputes and conflicts that destabilise Mediterranean politics by providing a perfect ground for extremisms such as fundamentalism and terrorism, and the emergence of migratory flows (Adamczyk, 2015). In its Global Strategy (2016), the EU put forth that "Our security at home depends on peace beyond our borders" and emphasised the importance it attaches to the formation of cooperative regional orders worldwide, which are also based on its own peace and development, and made clear its intention to support this process. In this context, the Mediterranean has been identified by the EU as an area of potential regionalisation and the dominance of co-operative regionalisation in the region has been approached as a treatment to end the turmoil. Despite the EU's attempts to reach this objective, the south continues to be unstable for the Union (Dekanozishvili, 2020, p. 289) because of many factors including primarily that the Mediterranean partners continued to show limited interest in complying with EU norms and standards and the Union always acted with a high level of pragmatism prioritising its security-oriented domestic and foreign agenda (Fontana, 2015; Oktay, 2015; Costello, 2021). Crisis in Ukraine affected severely the eastern dimension of the ENP, but it also produced implications for the southern one. Especially after the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2022, the EU's high level of reliance on Russian energy sources turned into an overwhelming problem. After this historical moment, the significance of the Mediterranean region as a provider of both traditional (with newly discovered ones) and greener energy sources (i.e. sun, hydrogen) enhanced (Sotiriou, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

The European Union faces a multitude of challenges stemming from the instability in its neighbouring regions, particularly in the Mediterranean. This instability has compelled the EU to prioritize regionalization in this area as a crucial foreign policy objective. The EU's strategy has been to guide the necessary



transformation processes of Mediterranean non-member states through a variety of policies that incorporate elements of regionalism, multilateralism, bilateralism, differentiation, convergence, and conditionality.

This shortfall in reaching the desired outcomes in the Mediterranean region highlights the Union's broader inability to effect significant transformation in countries where the prospect of EU membership is not on the table. In essence, the various incentives, or “carrots”, that the EU has employed to encourage its partners in the Mediterranean to emulate its model of regional integration have proven insufficient in delivering the anticipated results. Consequently, both the EU and its Mediterranean partners find themselves dissatisfied with the progress made thus far. These initiatives' slow pace and limited successes have led to frustration on both sides, as the intended goals for stability, cooperation, and integration remain elusive.

In the light of these challenges, the EU needs to rethink its approach to the Mediterranean. Instead of pursuing a fragmented set of policies that may unintentionally create further divisions, the EU would benefit from developing a comprehensive and unified policy framework that addresses all facets of cooperation in the region. Such an approach would not only optimise the EU's efforts, but also strengthen the effectiveness of its involvement with Mediterranean partners, ultimately encouraging a more cohesive and stable regional environment.

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# NATO AND THE EU: FRAGMENTED SECURITY ACTORS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

*Valentina Cassar & Isabelle Ragonesi*

## **Introduction**

The Mediterranean is an important region in international relations. It has three strategic entry points, and connects the world's major economic, political and energy hubs (Krimi, 2021). It therefore attracts a number of regional, and out of area hegemony, that have often been responsible for proxy wars in the vicinity. This work attempts to examine the roles of NATO and the EU as key security actors in the region, where its members have utilised both traditional material power, and structural, discursive and normative soft power approaches in an effort to contribute to peace and security in the Southern Mediterranean region. The chapter focuses on Libya and Syria as case studies to illustrate European security dynamics in the region.

Understanding the operation of these security frameworks in the Southern Mediterranean is mired in controversy. In the 1990s a more positive Braudelian vision (Pamluk, 2010) of a unified Mediterranean was uppermost, reflected in the EU Barcelona process that focused on regional building. Today, Panebianco (2021) argues, that the concept of a unified Mediterranean has gone out of fashion, in favour of two distinct regions, Europe and the Middle East, with a Mediterranean global South seen as a critical juncture between a universal global North and South. Indeed, the Mediterranean characterised by a long standing fault line dating back millennia reminiscent of the crusades, is presently in the literature, increasingly characterised as fragmented, as one of difference, variety and conflict (Bicchi, 2018).

Fenko (2015) posits, that rather than two, there are currently three prevailing interpretations of international relations in the Mediterranean region, as an inter-regional space based on diverse sub-regions, as an area of autonomous

regionalisation processes, and finally and often uppermost; the Mediterranean as an EU foreign policy object. In the literature and the theory, it is in this context that security in the Mediterranean is often understood. Literature in the English language which has universal traction on the security needs of South periphery is sparse and often contextualised within the needs and biases of the EU. Indeed most of the literature focuses on migration and terrorist activity considered as the primary security threats to Europe. Here the focus is of a power dynamic between different Mediterranean peripheries, divided by blue borders where the Northern and Southern regions coexist in an asymmetrical relationship. With the North sustaining advanced industrial economies supporting a powerful core dynamic, while in the more agrarian South power tends to be more diffuse and therefore weakened. The result is borders that are often fuzzy, contentious and hide inequalities, uppermost being the unequal balance of power between the North and the South (Celata, & Coletti, 2017).

### **NATO and the European Union: Regional Security Actors**

It is within the framework provided above, in conjunction with the changing demands emanating from adjacent regions and the global circuit, that one can understand European security in the Southern Mediterranean. In the current climate of security, Russia's war against Ukraine has led to a revived *raison d'être* for NATO and enhanced prospects for effective EU security and defence cooperation. This echoed the objectives for which these institutions were established over seven decades ago when the United States and its European allies aligned themselves economically and politically against the Soviet Union. The Washington Treaty formalised their collective security through Article 5, which declared that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" (NATO, 1947).

With the end of the Cold War, debate over the distribution of international order and the nature of security concerns in Europe once again emerged. NATO was retained and enlarged as a European collective security framework, leading to

ever-growing reservations on the part of Moscow (Goldgeier, & Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, 2023). During the 1990s, NATO's strategic concept also pursued non-traditional security concerns and approaches, crisis management and conflict prevention, and adjusting its force posture (NATO, 1991). After the 2001 September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks on the United States, NATO's Article 5 would for the first (and only) time be invoked (Apps, 2024). This increased NATO's focus on counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation, and out of area operations, most notably in Afghanistan. With increased antagonism on Russia's part towards NATO's enlargement, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its war against Ukraine in 2022, the focus of NATO's strategic concept inevitably again became collective defence against Russia's aggression toward the transatlantic community (NATO, 2022).

Therefore, though from its inception the EU envisaged a defence arm, its members became reliant on NATO (Koutrakos, 2013). This trend was facilitated by developments that ensured that security and defence remained under the aegis of the sovereign nation states. However, the end of the Cold War, fragmentation and instability in a number of European states, and the expansion of EU borders to the East and the South alerted the union to the need for an internal defence mechanism, and an increased external foreign policy voice (Puga, 2021). Since the 1990s the EU has established fledgling policies, organisations and security features including the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency FRONTEX, battle groups, EU Naval Force Operations (EUNAVFOR), and the European Defence Agency (EDA). There has been a push at creating a defence Commissioner, establishing an EU defence budget, a common defence industrial strategy, and a genuine EU defence union, incorporating land, sea, cyber and air defences Besch (2024). The Strategic Compass approved in 2022 envisages a force of 5000 with strategic autonomy that ensures the standardization of products and interoperability of military instruments across the union. However, to date defence remains under intergovernmental



institutions, and reliant on NATO and therefore policy outcomes in terms of defence in Europe are primarily aligned with the needs of NATO.

However, an EU perspective towards foreign policy, security and defence issues dictated by functionalist dynamics has long been developing. This is driven by, a civilian approach, normative views, and an eclectic methodology that weaves together different territorial and institutional needs. It is also influenced by geographic position, one located adjacent to previous colonies now sporting major global fault lines. The result is that the EU adopts both traditional security in terms of the nation states, and new soft security measures as a Union, including cooperative measure, democratisation and peace theory, economic frameworks, and humanitarian support (Rieker, & Riddervoid, 2021). Consequently, despite its heavy reliance on NATO, the EU is still seen as offering a more nuanced, variegated, multilateral approach to that of the USA based on unilateralism and military measures (Berenskoetter, 2005).

### **NATO and the EU: Mediterranean Security Actors?**

Whilst the geographical priority of NATO has been the transatlantic geopolitical space, the regions surrounding the alliance members have also been given fluctuating attention. The Mediterranean has always played an ever present, albeit at times peripheral and fragmented, role within NATO's evolving strategic agendas. In keeping with its broader strategic objectives during the Cold War, NATO's maritime presence within the Mediterranean during this time was to secure the southern periphery of the Alliance and to deter and counter any Soviet presence or aggression (Bergeron, 2024).

With the end of Cold War, NATO's maritime focus in the Mediterranean included countering cross border threats, maritime operations in support of the UN Security Council Resolutions, and missions and embargos in reaction to the war in Bosnia and later in Kosovo. The Alliance also pursued partnerships with other states on a collective and individual basis. The Mediterranean Dialogue was set up in 1994 and brought together a platform for cooperation between the allies and

Mediterranean countries. Other states within the Mediterranean and beyond were able to form individual partnerships, cooperation and capacity building with the alliance through the Partnership for Peace.

Following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the missions within the Mediterranean focused on counterterrorism, counter-proliferation, or ship inspections, reflecting the shifting focus and priorities of the alliance (Medcalf, 2024). In response to the attacks and the alliance's invocation of Article 5, Operation Active Endeavour oversaw the patrolling and monitoring of shipping within the Mediterranean with the objective of disrupting terrorist activity.

In 2011, the NATO members adopted a new Alliance Maritime Strategy (NATO, 2011). This reflected the new 2010 strategic concept (NATO, 2010) which placed a greater emphasis on alliance roles in deterrence and collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security between NATO and other partners. The role of maritime security in countering non-state actors was emphasised. Yet the onset of the Arab spring, and in particular, the escalation of tensions in both Libya and Syria, meant that NATO would play a more direct role in an attempt to bring stability within these countries, and in protection of their civilian populations (Apps, 2024).

Russia's presence in the Mediterranean increased after 2013, re-establishing a Mediterranean squadron and entrenching its support of the Assad regime. This, together with Russia's aggression against Ukraine, beginning in 2014 and escalating in 2022, meant that NATO's purpose more broadly, and also in the Mediterranean, would once again centre on countering and containing Russia: "Moscow's military build-up, including in the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Sea regions, along with its military integration with Belarus, challenge our security and interests" (NATO, 2022). This was reiterated during the 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius, where the allies noted: "Russia has increased its multi-domain military build-up and presence in the Baltic, Black, and Mediterranean Sea regions, and maintains significant military capabilities in the Arctic" (NATO, 2023).

In this respect, the Alliance has increasingly approached the Mediterranean within the broader context of its southern flank. A recent report by an Independent Expert Group (2024) commissioned during the 2023 Vilnius Summit sought to reflect on “existing and emerging threats and challenges, and opportunities for engagement” in its Southern Neighbourhood(s), specifically the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions. It therefore does not consider the Mediterranean in a singular approach or as a singular region, yet as a maritime body that brings together separate and overlapping regions, challenges, as well as interests. The report acknowledges that NATO must improve its situational awareness of dynamics in the region. Seeking synergies and cooperation with other organisations that are active within these regions is recommended, including “deeper cooperation, coordination and complementarity” of its partnership with the EU (Independent Expert Group, 2024). Thus, the Alliance’s perception of the Mediterranean evolves according to its threat perception, and the challenges or opportunities posed from a maritime or border perspective in this context.

In the context of EU security and defence needs, the importance of a cohesive policy towards the South and the Mediterranean had long been felt (Calleya, 1997). As early as 1975, this discussion took place at the crucial 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) (Casa, 2008). From 1992 to 2000 a security dialogue between the Western European Union (WEU) and seven South Mediterranean states was facilitated (Calleya, 2011). The Barcelona process included a security and defence dialogue, and established EuroMeSCo (1996) a network of research centres and think tanks based in the Euro-Mediterranean area, which was adopted by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and financed by the Commission. A key focus of ESDP was also to forge a common view of security in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean dialogue and the 5 + 5 incorporate EU states that all have blue borders on the Mediterranean (Vasconcelos, 2004). Indeed, a crucial element of defence in the region is shoring up these borders and a large percentage of their defence budget goes on their navies, with Mediterranean states having some of the most powerful

navies in the world: France 8<sup>th</sup>, Italy 11<sup>th</sup>, Egypt 13<sup>th</sup>, Algeria 15<sup>th</sup>, and Spain 17<sup>th</sup> (Global Naval Powers Ranking, 2024).

In the military sphere, NATO still has overwhelming supremacy in the Mediterranean, however the Mediterranean allies, including the European states, play a key role; France, Greece, Italy, UK, Spain and Turkey. In 1994, the Mediterranean Dialogue was launched to contribute to regional security and stability, and dispel any misconceptions about NATO. The initial members were Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. Jordan joined in 1995 and Algeria in 2000. The United Kingdom has bases in Gibraltar (Beckett, 2021) and Cyprus (RAF AKROTIRI). NATO's assets in the Mediterranean include two important headquarters: in Izmir, Turkey and Naples, Italy maintaining a number of multinational naval groups at the ready. The principal mandate of the latter is to plan and conduct NATO military operations in the Mediterranean and beyond (Missirole, 2019). Important elements of NATO's ballistic missile defence systems are in Turkey and Spain (BMD 2021). The AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) surveillance aircraft use forward operating bases in Greece (Aktion), Italy (Trapani) and Turkey (Konya) (NATO AWACS). NATO's unique Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system operates from the Sigonella base in Sicily where remotely-piloted RQ-4D aircraft are deployed (SHAPE AGS). NATO is currently carrying out Operation Sea Guardian (OSG) in the Mediterranean Sea. OSG maintains a safe and secure maritime environment through maritime security capacity-building, situational awareness and counter-terrorism (NATO OSG).

Despite the overwhelming presence of NATO, the EU continues to support the idea of developing its own security tools in the Mediterranean. Operation Sophia and operation Irini both naval military operations in the Mediterranean Sea are two such cases (EEAS, 2020). A new Commissioner for security and defence signals the new emphasis on hard security measures to enable better defence protocols for the Union. A new Commissioner for the Mediterranean as part of the EU Commission also signals the increasing importance being given to the Mediterranean region by the Union (PRIMA, 2024). However, although Security

and defence dialogue remains central, it is a failed objective. There is confusion over the terms security and defence and what exactly are the long term objectives of the Union. The South of the Mediterranean, unlike the North, is not a homogenous or uniform reality. The EU does attempt to assert its views in the region but uses it primarily to further its own end, for instance, with regard to migration. The key focus of ESDP was to forge a common view of security in the Mediterranean, but this view is still absent. We need to ask if there is a security culture specific to the Euro-Med. The EU attempts to create a distinct image here based on the concept of Security by rule of law, but it has failed and as the threat perception on both sides of the Mediterranean grows deeper, chances of success become less likely. Differences between the member states hamper their ability to develop a constant and clear strategy. Europe's southern flank is now open to all types of conflict and the EU has attempted to offer assistance in a number of areas where conflict persists: Israel and Palestine, (since 2000 more than 1.1 billion) the Sahel (2024: 201 M), Libya, Syria, and Tunisia (2021-24: 620 M) (European Council). However the EU's ineffective policies towards Israel and Gaza (Philippe, 2024), the funding of governments with poor human rights records in Libya, Syria and Tunisia, its migration pacts with the South Mediterranean states deemed inimical to furthering human rights, and its failed policy in the Sahel has resulted in the EU's reputation in the south Mediterranean being tarnished (Lynch, 2021; Tocci, 2023).

### **Libya and Syria: NATO & EU Attempts at Traditional and Soft Security**

Thus, despite the resources available to them, both the American and the European approach towards the entire South Mediterranean region tends to be indecisive, fragmented and piecemeal. US foreign policy in the area is regarded as ambiguous and incoherent, a result of naivety, inexperience and an inability to think outside Western constructs (Oualaalou, 2016). European foreign and security decisions are taken both at the EU and national level resulting in numerous and at

times conflicting outcomes (Lehne, 2022). Military decisions in the South Mediterranean are taken by the US or under the NATO umbrella, and the EU tends to follow suit, lacking both the military resources and gravitas to do otherwise. However the policy of NATO and the EU in the region is also influenced by foreign policy manoeuvres predicated on peace theory and democratisation utilising social economic and political tools to facilitate conflict resolution, security and stability in the region (Alcaro, 2024). The case studies on Libya and Syria attempt to illustrate this eclectic approach incorporating hard and soft security measures and to assess their effectiveness.

### *Libya*

2011 saw the spread of the Arab Spring across North African states, with popular uprisings against authoritarian governments and demands for reform and democratisation. When protests began in Libya in February 2011, the Gaddafi regime quickly turned against the protesters and unravelled any recent progress in relations with the West. On February 26, 2011, the Security Council adopted Resolution UNSC 1970 which condemned Libya's use of force against civilians, called for restraint, and imposed arms embargoes, asset freezes and travel bans (United Nations Security Council, 2011). On March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 which in effect applied the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) principle through the implementation of a no-fly zone (United Nations Security Council, 2011b). NATO assumed the command of the air and maritime operations that were required to implement these UN Security Council Resolutions under Operation Unified Protector (Bergeron, 2024).

During the first weeks, the campaign was welcomed by regional and international actors. While the UN Security Council resolution provided a mandate and international legitimacy, reservations and mixed positions remained amongst NATO members states. The intervention in Libya took place at a time when the alliance appeared to be adrift, particularly in the context of the intervention in Iraq, and the continued role that NATO was playing in Afghanistan (Apps, 2024). Nonetheless, the alliance members pursued compromise amongst

themselves (Michaels, 2011). Some member states, such as France, UK and US, together with Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Italy and Norway participated in all aspects of the operation, while others, namely Spain and the Netherlands, only contributed to the enforcement of the no-fly zone. Greece provided the use of its airbases, Turkey participated in the arms embargo, and others provided limited support (Gaub, 2024). Most notably, Germany abstained during the UN Security Council vote and did not participate in the operation (Westerwelle, 2011). NATO's mission formally ended on 31 October 2011, following the capture and killing of Gaddafi by rebels.

The EU attempted to adopt a soft power role in the aftermath of the Gaddafi regime's collapse, and the attempts to transition towards democracy. It has provided funding towards humanitarian assistance, Libya's response to Covid-19, migration, border assistance, as well as naval operations such as Sophia and Irini. Unfortunately, the efforts at stabilization and democratization in Libya failed over the years, while the influence of external players, such as Turkey and Russia, has increased at the expense of the EU's (Marcuzzi, 2022b). Mixed and diverging objectives, prioritization and positions within the EU, particularly on the part of Italy and France, in relation to Libya's domestic political blocs, would weaken and discredited the role and influence of individual member states and the Union as a whole.

As Florence Gaub (2024) points out in her assessment of NATO's operation in Libya, the conventional wisdom and assumptions are that this mission was a failure, that its impact was a negative one. Davis (2011) examines the various motivations and contradictions behind the intervention, such as, responsibility to protect, versus self-interest due to a variety of reasons, including proximity to the country and the impact of instability there for Europe, be it in the form of migration and political violence, or economic interests and the impact on oil prices and access to favourable oil contracts. It is therefore seen to have discredited the notion of R2P and contributed to the subsequent instability, civil conflict and divided governance in the country (Gaub, 2024). Moreover, NATO faced

increasing criticism as it was seen to have overstepped the R2P mandate that it was given and contributed to regime change. Marcuzzi (2022) notes the NATO and EU member states sought to contribute to and support stability and democratization, yet since 2011, Libya has been characterised by civil conflict, as well as the increasing influence of other competing regional powers.

Nonetheless, certain aspects of the mandate and operation are worth noting. The international community were able to mobilise on a position on Libya and NATO's operation in Libya was put into effect faster than previous operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. It should also be noted that the United States was not at the forefront or centre stage, but that the operation was primarily led by France and the United Kingdom. Gaub (2024) also notes that whilst NATO faced criticism due to civilians' casualties during NATO airstrikes, NATO did in fact succeed in protecting civilians. It was deemed to be a precise campaign that sought to minimise civilian deaths. Bergeron (2024) also notes that the operation was carried out "with extreme caution given concerns about injury to civilians and set a new standard for precision".

It appears that it was not the implementation and objectives of the mandate that were a failure or problematic, but the long-term results of the revolution, the collapse of the regime and the protracted civil conflict that ensued. In fact, Marcuzzi (2022) has argued that shortfalls on the part of NATO and the EU in Libya are essentially a result of what he describes as a strategy dilemma. In this respect, he argues that both the EU and NATO prioritised the legitimacy of the intervention, rather than the strategic dimensions and repercussions once the intervention took place. Gaub (2024) posits that perhaps the greater failure on NATO's part was that it did not pursue a post-conflict role in NATO that may have contributed to the maintenance of stability and state building in the country in the wake of Gaddafi's death.

### *Syria*

The Syrian case study illustrates a form of principled pragmatism in the conduct of foreign relations, defence and security. The US and the EU intervened



in the Syrian civil war for a number of reasons including a democratization agenda triggered by the Arab spring, and the need to reintroduce order in a territory now being viewed as a dangerous transit zone for terrorist militias.

In 2011 the authoritarian Syrian government was challenged by rebel opposition forces demanding democratic change, and the US and European states stepped in. The French government immediately felt obliged to provide support for the Syrian rebel forces (Chulov, 2012), though in reality the UK provided the largest contingent to the upcoming American initiative (Loft, 2023). The US administration placed sanctions on said government and the CIA became involved in training the free Syrian army (US Department of State Syria Sanctions). In 2012, the UK provided opposition forces with non-lethal military aid, including communications equipment and medical supplies, and provided intelligence from its Cyprus bases (Parikiaki, 2012). In August 2013, when the Assad government was accused of using chemical weapons, France called for military intervention but the US president, Barack Obama refused (Black, 2015). In 2014 the US officially supported the Syrian rebels, and the Kurdish led Syrian forces battling both Islamic State and Assad. In the same year, a US led coalition that included UK and France launched an air campaign, however direct missile strikes against the Syrian regime did not take place till 2017 (Laub, 2023; Britannica, 2024). In August 2014 French President François Hollande confirmed that France had delivered arms to Syrian rebels and in September 2015, France began airstrikes in Syria. In mid-November, France drafted a UN Security Council resolution urging UN members to “take all necessary measures” in the fight against ISIL and the al-Nusra Front (Caglayan, 2015). A German intervention was authorized on December 4, 2015. This initially was targeted at the Islamic state (codenamed Operation Counter Daesh) however it involved military operations in Syria (Tactics Institute, 2024). In August 2016 British Special Forces were guarding the perimeter of the New Syrian Army’s base at al-Tanf (Al Waleed).

However, measures taken by NATO members and European countries in the region triggered a counter offensive, as Russia facilitated military operations in

Syria at the request of the Syrian government. Russian forces provided air support and equipment, while ground assaults were led by the Syrian Arab Army, and Iranian-backed militia including the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, and North Korean Special Forces (Grajewski, 2021). With this support the Syrian government resisted military defeat and gained back much of its lost territory. In 2019 ISIS lost much of the territory it had taken from Syria, and Turkish troops moved into the region. Consequently Trump acquiesced to the withdrawal of the majority of US forces (over 2000) (Borger, 2019).

Though as recent as August 2024 ground and aerial attacks against the government with the support of US led coalition forces that include French and UK units continue to take place (France24, 2024), and the US continues to maintain a force of circa a thousand in Syria that cooperates with the Kurdish free forces (Secen, 2024), the Assad regime is likely to remain in power for the foreseeable future. As a result the US is rethinking its indefinite military presence in Syria (Secen, 2024), and European states following the US lead are also envisaging the removal of their troops (Sofuoglu, 2019).

The case study does illustrate that in defence initiatives in the Mediterranean South, European states do attempt to play a role. France has long considered Syria her sphere of influence, and was seen as the diplomatic leader, with a special relationship with Russia and with deep knowledge and ties with Syria and the region (Yircali, N.D). However, division among the EU member states was rampant. Denmark, Sweden, Germany and France supported the opposition; Cyprus, Greece and the Czech Republic however were reluctant to extend support because of historical links with Syria (Yircali, N.D). Support to the opposition in the final analysis remained primarily diplomatic and financial, serving organizational and training aims, rather than military, since the European states ultimately remain dependent on the US that calls the shots (McCullough, 2021).

However, the EU in the region remains a leading organisation in terms of facilitating peace making and peace building, and is expected to take on this role

between the parties in Syria (Tejero, 2022). Throughout the conflict this perspective was already evident. Germany prioritized the refugee crisis; France and the UK were concerned with countering terrorism. The UK focused on humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid to Syria and neighbouring countries, and coordinating policy alignments between the US, Europe and regional actors. The EU is also a leading donor and since 2011, they have contributed more than €33.3 billion (European Council, 2024). In this regard, the EU applies a tried and tested formula based on conditionality, consent, contagion used when shoring up security and stability within and outside of its borders (Whitehead, 2001). This is facilitated by the long term relations it has fostered in its adjacent regions, Syria being a case in point. The 1977 EU-Syria Co-operation agreement governed relations between the two and Syria was a full participant in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. An EU-Syria Association Agreement (never signed) was meant to lead eventually to Syria's full participation in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Syrian government used the agreement as a reference for developing its reform agenda. Although the EU remained very critical of the political system, it still concluded that genuine democratic participation remained a possibility, as a new multi-party law was announced in May 2011 (Qayum, 2016).

However, two months after the uprising the EU took actions against the Syrian government. Suspending the bilateral cooperation programmes under the ENP, freezing the draft EU-Syrian Association Agreement, suspending the participation of Syrian authorities in EU's regional programmes and loan operations and technical assistance by the European Investment Bank and imposing sanctions later expanded (European Commission Syria, n.d.). These actions culminated in the EU asking Assad to resign and assigning legitimacy to the opposition (Vogel, 2011). Most EU states cut diplomatic relations, and established diplomatic relations with the Opposition. The Syrian foreign minister responded in June 2011 by promising in a statement to the media that "We will forget that there is Europe on the map" (Rappaport, 2011). As a result the union was seen as having lost leverage in the region including Syria. It was argued

“sanctions worsened the condition of ordinary people and accelerated the development of the predatory war economy” (Turkmani, & Haid, 2016). The EU pact with Turkey in terms of; migration and shoring up security, some argue has sullied the EU’s human rights record and led to a political and defence vacuum, allowing regional security to deteriorate, and the Assad regime to recover once more.

The EU and the member states somewhat erratic approach towards Syria raises a number of questions; 1. Should the EU attempt to assist the Southern Mediterranean by using both hard and soft security measures, or would the latter be more propitious and suffice. 2. EU states are criticized for supporting authoritarian states with a poor human rights record. However it may be argued that more can be achieved by working with authoritarian states to nudge them in the right direction, rather than using unilateral measures which may result in encouraging the extremists in the regime and a loss of influence. 3. EU states are pushed to take a uniform view towards the region however different approaches such as those sponsored by the member states in Syria may leave greater room for manoeuvre, allowing the EU to work with NATO, support the opposition and yet retain some influence with Russia and the Syrian government. 4. The EU in hard security issues continues to act under the umbrella of NATO; this is seen as weakening the EU position. However, others may argue that it leaves the union free to adopt a more normative and civilian approach towards the South Mediterranean.

### **Conclusion**

While NATO has provided the overwhelming and overarching collective security role for Europe since its foundation in 1949, the EU has nonetheless sought, since its inception, to develop a security dimension that would both complement NATO, but also simultaneously contribute to burden sharing for its members with the United States and enhance its own strategic autonomy should the need arise (Cassar, 2020).

As a key region at the southern border of the European continent, the Mediterranean represents an interesting case study that demonstrates the challenges that these institutions face as overlapping security actors and the impact that they have in their immediate neighbourhoods. The broader approach towards the Mediterranean, as well as the experiences and operations in Libya and Syria, reflect a consistent problematic. The presence of NATO and the EU within the Mediterranean is not sufficiently prioritized or coordinated, resulting in their role being reactionary, piecemeal and fragmented. The region tends to be framed and approached within the context of the broader strategic objectives and evolving self-interests of their member states, rather than in its own right, in the current literature referred to as principled pragmatism (Rieker, & Riddervoid, 2021). Moreover, the EU and NATO – separately, collectively or as individual member states – have not played successful leadership roles in resolving or stabilizing regional conflicts that have greatly impacted the European continent. They have lacked the military power and political will to be decision makers in the region, while other actors have sought to fill the power vacuum in their stead.

NATO members have recognized the need to strengthen its presence and posture within the Mediterranean and at its broader southern flank. However, the increasing role played by Russia, and the concerns of reluctant role for the United States has meant that the European Union must continue to develop its own security tools, more broadly and more specifically within the Mediterranean. An EU Commissioner for Security and Defence signals the new emphasis on hard security measures to enable better defence protocols for the Union. A new Commissioner for the Mediterranean also signals the increasing importance being given to the Mediterranean region by the Union. However, there remains confusion over the terms of such security and defence and the long term objectives of the Union. Furthermore, the EU and NATO members must acknowledge the diverse realities and security concerns, develop a coherent view of the immediate and long-term security objectives, and must work in better coordination with other

Mediterranean states, and move beyond furthering their own ends and interests in the region. Only then will they be effective in contributing to security and stability.

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## UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

*Alla Zakharchenko*

### **Introduction**

Over the past decade, conflict and political unrest have remained on-going features in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (SEMED), which is part of the broader geopolitical space known as MENA (the Middle East and North Africa). The profound transformations that have swept through the region since 2011 have introduced new challenges that overlap with existing crises. State fragility, conflicts, security threats, and socio-economic inequalities have turned this area into one of the world's most volatile regions, with a geostrategic importance that extends far beyond its geographical borders.

The stabilization of this strategically important region remains one of the key priorities of American diplomacy. Washington has traditionally been invested in resolving conflicts in the region, eliminating the threats of weapons of mass destruction and Islamist extremism, and supporting democratization, human rights, and a rules-based international order.

However, there has been a significant reduction in U.S. involvement in the SEMED region. Washington's withdrawal from regional issues, particularly the wars in Syria and Libya, has paved the way for intense geopolitical competition between key regional powers and created an opportunity for more active engagement by alternative international actors, primarily China. Today, the SEMED region has become a space where Washington's geopolitical competitors have significantly strengthened their positions, and its traditional regional allies have begun pursuing increasingly independent policies. These trends further exacerbated by the global impact of Russia's war in Ukraine present new challenges for the United States.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the evolution of the policies of the Trump and Biden administrations regarding the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region as part of the broader American Middle East strategy. The section identifies the region's place within the foreign policy priorities of U.S. presidents, examines the degree of alignment between their declared principles and actual political actions, highlights the similarities and differences in Trump's and Biden's regional policies, and analyses the impact of new security challenges – primarily Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine and the war in Gaza – on the evolution of U.S. policy.

### **U.S. Policy in the SEMED under Trump and Biden Administrations**

Donald Trump demonstrated a clear vision for his regional strategy during the 2016 presidential campaign. Its central element was the “maximum pressure” policy on Iran, which was recognized as the number one threat to American interests in the region. Another key objective was to normalize relations between important American Middle Eastern partners – Israel and the Arab monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia – with the aim of creating a kind of “anti-Iran axis”.

As part of this approach, in May 2018, Trump unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal with Iran – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – and intensified sanctions against Tehran. Secondly, he pursued a policy of unconditional support for Israel: he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved the U.S. embassy there, recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, completely ceased political dialogue with the Palestinians, and suspended their funding (Kausch, 2018). Despite these controversial moves, which caused widespread resonance in the Arab-Muslim world, Trump achieved a significant breakthrough at the end of his presidency in normalizing relations between Israel and its neighbours: with U.S. mediation, Tel Aviv signed peace agreements with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan in 2020-2021, the so-called Abraham Accords. Guided by the principles of *realpolitik*, Trump also ceased pressuring Arab states on human rights and democratization issues and established strong

relations with authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, particularly with Saudi Arabia.

Under Trump, the U.S. trend of gradual disengagement from the region became more evident, a process that had already begun under his predecessor. For instance, Barack Obama completed the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq in December 2011, “led from behind” during the Libya crisis, and refrained from involving the U.S. in the civil war in Syria, which later became a significant source of regional instability. During Obama’s administration, the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan was significantly reduced, and informal contacts were established with the Taliban (Wechsler, 2019). Trump continued this policy. In December 2018, he announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria. He also initiated official negotiations with the Taliban, which culminated in the signing of an agreement in Doha on February 29, 2020. According to this agreement, the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces was to be completed by May 2021 in exchange for a series of guarantees from the Taliban (Joint Declaration, 2020).

Joe Biden built his 2020 presidential campaign on the need for a fundamental revision of his predecessor’s foreign policy course, particularly in the MENA region. Biden repeatedly emphasized the need to return to a more balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and promised to bring the U.S. back into the JCPOA and resume negotiations with Iran (Candidates Answer CFR’s Questions, 2019).

As a presidential candidate, he stated that he would place human rights at the centre of U.S. foreign policy. In particular, he promised to treat the Saudis “as the pariahs that they are” (Democratic Debate, 2019), accusing the Saudi regime of human rights violations (most notably the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian Consulate in Turkey on October 2, 2018), political repression, and barbaric methods of waging war in Yemen.

At the same time, Biden pointed to the need to end the “endless wars” in Afghanistan and the Middle East, for which the United States had “paid an extraordinary price in blood and loss” (Biden, 2020, p. 72). He planned to reduce



the number of American troops in the region and focus on specific military missions, primarily combating ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Overall, this approach indicated a continuation of the course of reducing U.S. presence in the region. As with his two predecessors, the MENA did not hold a priority position in Biden's foreign policy agenda. Instead, China took that place, which he referred to as America's primary competitor.

Immediately after taking office, President Biden reaffirmed his commitment to promoting human rights and announced a recalibration of relations with Saudi Arabia. He ended support for offensive operations in Yemen and suspended the implementation of large-scale arms deals to Saudi Arabia and the UAE that had been approved by Trump. In addition to this, Biden demonstratively distanced himself from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is considered the de facto ruler of the Kingdom. In July 2021, under the president's directive, a report by U.S. National Intelligence was released, which claimed that the operation leading to the killing of opposition journalist Jamal Khashoggi was personally approved by the Crown Prince. All of these significantly strained relations between Washington and Riyadh (Cook, & Indyk, 2022).

Biden's policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict did not undergo such drastic changes. Fulfilling his campaign promises, the new president quickly restored political dialogue with the Palestinians and provided them with \$235 million in financial aid, of which \$150 million was allocated to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The new administration reaffirmed its commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-state solution but refrained from proposing any specific peace initiatives.

At the same time, Biden did not reverse his predecessor's most controversial decisions: moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, thereby solidifying the new status quo. The president also failed to fulfil his promise to reopen the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem, which had provided diplomatic and humanitarian services to

Palestinians and, more importantly, symbolized America's recognition of Palestinian claims to East Jerusalem (Youssef, 2021). The Biden administration demonstrated a high level of strategic partnership with Israel and even increased economic assistance to Tel Aviv: in 2021, it provided an additional \$1 billion for the enhancement of the Iron Dome missile defense system.

Regarding Iran Trump's "maximum pressure" policy transformed into Biden's policy of "smart pressure". In April 2021, negotiations with Tehran over the JCPOA were resumed in Vienna, but they eventually reached a deadlock. In recent years, Iran has made significant technical progress in its nuclear program, causing considerable concern for Israel and Saudi Arabia, both of which have opposed the resumption of negotiations with Tehran from the outset. The White House also understands that the Iranian threat is not limited solely to nuclear issues. Therefore, amid the stagnation of the negotiations, the Biden administration began reassessing its approach to the Iranian issue.

In line with his campaign promise to end the "endless wars," on April 14, 2021, the Biden administration announced the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan by September 11 of that year. The hasty and poorly planned withdrawal led to the Taliban's return to power in the country and dealt a serious foreign policy defeat to Washington. The exit from Afghanistan, along with the renewed negotiations with Iran against the backdrop of a general reduction of the U.S. military presence in the region, caused clear disappointment among America's regional partners (Mazzucco, & Alexander, 2022). Washington's recalibration of its engagement with the region since the Obama administration has fuelled the perception in regional governments that the United States is reducing its commitment, especially as a security provider. A sense of abandonment has permeated Arab countries that rely on the U.S. security umbrella. Under these conditions, MENA leaders began to pursue more independent policies.

### **Evolution of U.S. Regional Policy after 2022**

Tensions in relations between the U.S. and its regional partners further intensified after Russia's aggression in Ukraine. With the start of the war, most MENA countries did not join the Western sanctions campaign against Russia and sought to distance themselves as much as possible from the confrontation between the West and Russia. On the other hand, the war in Ukraine once again highlighted the strategic importance of the Middle East for the global energy sector, as well as the growing significance of Arab oil-exporting countries for global players (Macaron, 2022). The interest in increasing oil production, the threat of deepening military cooperation between Russia and Iran, and the stagnation of negotiations on Iran's nuclear program have created the preconditions for a reset of U.S. policy in the region.

President Biden's first visit to the Middle East took place from July 13-16, 2022, and aimed to strengthen U.S. relations with its traditional partners in response to the growing influence of Russia and China in the region. The agenda included discussions on issues such as the resolution of the Yemeni conflict, Israeli-Arab normalization, the Iranian issue amid the lack of progress in JCPOA negotiations, the global consequences of the war in Ukraine, particularly energy matters, and food security.

During the tour, Biden visited Israel, the West Bank, Saudi Arabia, and participated in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) + 3 Summit Meeting: a format that includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, along with Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. The most successful part of the trip, both for Biden and the host country, was his visit to Israel. During the visit, the "Jerusalem U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Joint Declaration" was signed, in which both parties outlined the directions for further cooperation. A key focus of the Declaration was Washington's efforts to "build a robust regional architecture and deepen ties between Israel and all of its regional partners", demonstrating the Biden administration's commitment to furthering Arab-Israeli normalization. The Declaration also emphasized that Washington will never allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons and promises to "use all elements of its national power to ensure

this outcome” (The Jerusalem U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Joint Declaration, 2022).

The U.S. president’s visit to Palestinian territories, which took place immediately after the Israeli visit, was aimed at demonstrating a balanced and impartial approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Speaking alongside Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem, Biden reaffirmed his commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-state solution. At the same time, he stated that “the ground is not yet ripe” for the resumption of negotiations, and a settlement could not be achieved in the near future (Remarks by President Biden and President Abbas, 2022). Thus, the U.S. president made it clear that his administration did not plan to make significant efforts in this area.

The most high-profile stop of Biden’s tour was in Saudi Arabia. The U.S. president faced a difficult challenge: how to balance the strategic interests of cooperation with authoritarian regimes and American values, such as human rights. Some analysts convincingly argued that Biden’s meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman directly contradicted his promises to isolate the Saudi regime and seemed especially inappropriate against the backdrop of his administration’s efforts to unite the world around the act of Russian aggression in Ukraine and defend the rules-based international order (Callamard, 2022).

To appease critics, a few days before the visit, the U.S. president had to publish an article in *The Washington Post*, where Khashoggi had been a correspondent. In the article, Biden promised to open “a new and promising chapter of American engagement” in the Middle East and noted that the region’s energy resources are “vital to mitigating the impact of Russia’s war in Ukraine on global supplies” (Biden, 2022).

Following the U.S.-Saudi talks in Jeddah, a joint Communiqué was signed, in which both countries “emphasized the importance of further strengthening their strategic partnership,” and Biden firmly reaffirmed Washington’s unwavering support for Riyadh’s security (The Jeddah Communiqué, 2022). Regarding the

increase in oil production by Saudi Arabia, Saudi officials stated during the negotiations that further decisions on this matter would be based on market data and consultations with other OPEC+ members, including Russia.

The key message of Biden's Middle East tour was delivered during his speech at the GCC + 3 Summit Meeting. Biden assured that the United States "will not leave the region and will not create a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran," and that America "will remain an active and engaged partner in the Middle East." Additionally, Biden outlined five principles that Washington will adhere to in the MENA over the coming decades: partnership, deterrence, diplomacy, integration, and values (Remarks by President Biden at the GCC + 3 Summit Meeting, 2022). These principles markedly differed from those expressed by Donald Trump during his 2017 MENA tour.

The most ambitious project discussed between Biden and regional leaders was the possibility of creating an integrated regional air defence system involving Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf countries to protect against the threat of ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial systems launched by Iran and its proxies in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. This could serve as the foundation for forming a regional coalition of moderate U.S. partners (the so-called "Middle Eastern NATO"), who face common security threats and share similar social, economic, energy, and climate challenges (Shapiro, 2022). This security architecture is not new and is essentially a continuation of the process of normalizing relations between Israel and the Arab states under the Abraham Accords, brokered by the Trump administration in 2020. This coalition could take primary responsibility for addressing its own security needs, while the United States would play an active supporting role, protecting its interests and fulfilling commitments to its partners.

The results of Biden's visit to the MENA received mixed reviews in both the U.S. and the region. Critics argued that the president returned without any major achievements: Saudi Arabia made no promises to significantly increase oil production; no peace treaty was signed between Saudi Arabia (or any other Arab country) and Israel; and no new regional alliance was formed to support U.S.

interests. Moreover, to achieve such questionable outcomes, Biden had to step back from his course of supporting democracy (Hoffman, 2022; Kaye, 2022).

However, most analysts agree that Biden's visit, which confirmed the administration's shift toward a pragmatic policy, was not only appropriate but also necessary to strengthen both Washington's regional and international positions. The visit was an important step toward traditional U.S. partners, demonstrating America's commitment to allied obligations and the strength of American security guarantees (Ibish, 2022; Vakil, 2022).

### **U.S. Response to New Security Challenges**

The war in Gaza, which began on October 7, 2023, posed a number of new challenges for the Biden administration and led to a significant intensification of U.S. policy in the SEMED. As a result of the war and the escalation of Israeli-Iranian confrontation, a highly dangerous hotspot of instability emerged in the region, undermining the already fragile balance of power that had formed here after the Arab Spring.

President Biden swiftly responded to the Hamas attack on Israel in his emotional speech on October 10, in which he strongly condemned the actions of the Islamist group and reaffirmed unwavering support for Tel Aviv (Remarks by President Biden on the Terrorist Attacks in Israel, 2023). During his visit to Israel on October 18, he reiterated the U.S. commitment to ensuring the security of the Jewish state, along with providing the necessary military and financial assistance. At the same time, he emphasized that the ultimate resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on the principle of the two-state solution (Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu, 2023).

Overall, the Biden administration formulated five main objectives in the context of Israel's war in Gaza: to support Israel's self-defence and eliminate the threat posed by Hamas; to ensure the return of hostages; to prevent the crisis from escalating into a full-scale regional war; to protect the civilian population and halt the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza; and to develop a post-war reconstruction

plan that would lead to the implementation of the two-state solution and broader efforts toward regional normalization in coordination with regional and international partners (Katulis, Freedman, & Taylor, 2024).

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, CIA Director Bill Burns, and senior Middle East White House official Brett McGurk made multiple trips to the region and Europe to advance a ceasefire and secure the release of hostages, as well as to engage regional partners in efforts to enhance security coordination. In addition to increased arms transfers and enhanced security and intelligence cooperation with Israel, the United States deployed two aircraft carrier strike groups to the region in the early weeks of the conflict, as a deterrent message to Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and other actors threatening to escalate the war. The United States also remained a key leader in international and regional efforts to increase the flow of humanitarian aid to Palestinians living in Gaza.

In formulating his strategy in response to Israel's military operation in Gaza, Biden faced numerous complex challenges. First, there were clear differences between the positions of the U.S. president and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu regarding the post-war governance of Gaza and the future of the Palestinian state. According to Biden's vision, after the defeat of Hamas, Gaza and the West Bank should be unified under the administration of a reformed Palestinian National Authority (PNA) as a cornerstone of the two-state solution. However, Netanyahu has consistently opposed both the establishment of a Palestinian state and the expansion of PNA's power (Shavit, 2024). Second, due to significant civilian casualties among the Palestinian population, criticism of Israel has increased markedly in Arab and Muslim countries, in Europe, and even within the United States.

A particularly complex challenge has been the need to prevent broader regional escalation and the involvement of other radical groups, primarily Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthis. The Houthis in Yemen attacked international shipping in the Red Sea in response to Israel's military operation against Hamas in Gaza. They also targeted Israeli territory with ballistic missiles

and drones. In response, the Biden administration launched “Operation Prosperity Guardian,” a multinational military effort involving over 20 countries aimed at securing the safety of shipping across the Red Sea. In addition to this defensive coalition, the United States, in coordination with other partners, conducted a series of airstrikes against Houthi positions in Yemen (Statement from President Joe Biden on Coalition Strikes, 2024).

Hezbollah has also opened a war front on Israel’s northern border with Lebanon, raising concerns about a broader regional spillover. Previously sporadic fighting between Israel and Hezbollah escalated on October 8, 2023, the day after Hamas’ attack on Israel. Since then, Hezbollah has launched more than 8,000 rockets at northern Israel and the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. In response, the Israel Defense Forces have retaliated with airstrikes, as well as tank and artillery fire, targeting Hezbollah positions in Lebanon.

Both the Houthis and Hezbollah are key players in Iran’s “axis of resistance.” U.S. policy towards Iran remains one of the weakest links in Washington’s broader MENA strategy. Tehran consistently threatens regional stability by advancing its nuclear program, intervening in regional conflicts, supporting terrorism, and carrying out repression against its own people.

On April 13, 2024, Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israeli territory, using more than 300 drones and missiles. Tehran’s strike followed an Israeli air raid on April 1, which killed several high-ranking Iranian military officials at the Iranian consulate in Syria. These events marked an unprecedented escalation in the Iran-Israel confrontation. The United States played a key role in repelling Iran’s attack on its ally. With assistance from British, French, and Jordanian air forces, the U.S. shot down over 70 air targets using fighter jets and missile defence systems aboard guided-missile destroyers (Crowley, Schmitt, & Wong, 2024). The Biden administration also vowed to coordinate a global response to Tehran’s unprecedented assault.

Finally, on May 31, 2024, the Biden administration outlined a plan aimed at linking efforts to resolve the Israel-Hamas war with broader initiatives to foster



increased regional integration. The first phase of the proposed agreement would last for six weeks and include a “full and complete ceasefire,” the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all populated areas of Gaza, and the release of several hostages, including women, the elderly, and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. The second phase would involve the release of all remaining living hostages, including male soldiers, and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. The third phase calls for the commencement of major reconstruction efforts in Gaza, which faces decades of rebuilding from the devastation caused by the war (Remarks by President Biden on the Middle East, 2024).

### **Conclusion**

The Israel-Hamas war, which has undermined the security of the entire SEMED region, has become one of the main foreign policy priorities of the Biden administration during the final year of his presidency. As a result, the United States significantly increased its military presence in the region, combining this with extensive diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing a broader regional war.

The United States has a short-term goal of containing the escalation, but it seems to lack a coherent strategy for long-term countermeasures against Iran and its numerous proxies. For now, Washington has managed to avoid a wider regional war, but the overall security situation in the MENA continues to deteriorate, as various state and non-state actors persist in posing threats to the U.S. and its partners. America remains the most influential external actor in the Middle East, but it would be a mistake to overestimate its ability to shape the regional agenda. Initiatives for regional integration, including Saudi-Israeli normalization, are also likely to remain elusive as long as the conflict between Israel and Hamas persists.

In a broader context, Russia’s war in Ukraine and the war in Gaza have become markers of the transformation of the contemporary international order. Two clearly differentiated camps are emerging: the democratic camp (the U.S., EU countries, and their allies), which advocates for liberal democracy and the rule of

law, and the revisionist, or authoritarian camp (Russia, Iran and its proxies, North Korea, and others), which seeks to challenge and revise the existing international norms and rules. The SEMED countries, like most of the so-called Global South, act as a third force, showing no desire to align with either group and observing how events unfold. Thus, the key task of the U.S. strategy is to strengthen the unified front of democratic countries in the fight against the axis of revisionist actors.

During the U.S. presidential elections in 2024, candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump presented two fundamentally different visions of the role the United States should play in global affairs. The next U.S. president, whoever they may be, will have to confront serious foreign policy challenges, including the ongoing war in Ukraine and the escalation of conflict in the MENA.

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## RUSSIA'S POLICY TOWARD THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

*Iryna Maksymenko*

### **Introduction**

The history of Russia is about fighting to get access to the seas: from the Livonian and the Great Northern War, when Russia got under its control the Baltic Sea, to the Russo-Turkish Wars for the Black Sea basin. Traditionally, the Baltic and Black Sea regions were considered by the Kremlin key theaters of Russia's strategy to counter the European states' presence and influence through hybrid strategy, coercive diplomacy, and nuclear blackmailing. Thus, in the Baltic Sea region, Russia has strengthened its presence with the Baltic Fleet and land-based forces deployed in the Kaliningrad region, accompanied by the massive concentration of Russian troops in Belarus and the announcement of the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons at the Belarusian territory.

After Crimea's inclusion as a federal entity, the Black Sea region was officially defined as a vital zone for Russia's territorial integrity and nuclear deterrence. This approach was confirmed in the 2022 Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation that declares these two regions, including the Sea of Azov, as well as the Black Sea and Baltic Straits, to be essential zones for ensuring the national interests of Russia, its economic development and national security, as well as supporting strategic and regional security. It also contains a list of challenges and threats to Russia's national interests; among them are NATO's approach to its borders and armed conflicts in the proximity of particular geopolitical importance for Russia. Therefore, the Kremlin defined the "unconditional right" to deploy and use the Russian Navy forces in the "vital zones for ensuring the national interests of the Russian Federation" as a strategy for the "comprehensive strengthening of geopolitical positions" in the World Ocean.

The Mediterranean Sea, especially the eastern part of it, is one of these "vital zones" where Russia is considered to be a "pre-eminent naval power ... earned this

role on the field” (Rettman, 2020). The direct linkage of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean in the Russian discourse raises a question about the Kremlin’s interests and objectives in the basin. Scrutinizing the strategic documents on Russian national security and foreign policy, the Kremlin officials’ statements, as well as papers dedicated to the Russian policy towards the Mediterranean region, the paper aims to clarify whether the Kremlin strategy towards the Mediterranean is an instrument of Russia’s greatness assertion or one of the theaters of its counteraction with the EU and NATO. Starting from the brief overview of Russian policy in the Mediterranean in a historical retrospective, the study will look at the conceptual and practical acts of the Kremlin in modern days, aiming to answer the question of whether Russia is a threat to the EU posture in the Mediterranean region, one of the most essential hubs for the European security and stability.

### **Russia’s Policy in the Mediterranean Region: Historical Overview**

The attention of the researchers to the history of the Russian attempts to build a position of force in the Black Sea and control under the Bosphorus and Dardanelles for having free naval access to the Mediterranean demonstrates the significance of the latter for Russia’s strategic interests. An overview of Russia’s plans towards the Mediterranean shows that Russia viewed the possession of Mediterranean territories and control over sea routes as a part of a “great plan”. This plan was a comprehensive strategy to achieve world power status and project its power and influence in Europe and the Middle East, involving military expansion and diplomatic and economic initiatives.

However, with the beginning of the Cold War, the Kremlin perceived its presence in the Mediterranean from a security outlook. As Minister of the USSR, A. Gromyko noticed that being a Black Sea power, the Soviet Union was a Mediterranean Sea power as well; therefore, its permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean basin would be a guarantee of peace and security on the southern borders of the USSR and in the entire region in general (Celac et al., 2019).



The first Soviet base with submarines was set up in Albania, though the Soviet Navy could enter the Mediterranean Sea and call on certain ports in Egypt and Cyprus. Nevertheless, the USSR's ambitions and interests were unsatisfied with such a vulnerable situation while being dependent on the relations with these countries. Moreover, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war demonstrated the crucial need for Russia to have a permanent base as a means to reassure the southern borders of the Soviet Union and to protect its projects in some Mediterranean countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey. Therefore, the Kremlin decided to station the special Fifth Mediterranean Navy Squadron in July 1967. This squadron observed and reported on NATO and the United States' activities in the Mediterranean, provided crucial intelligence for Soviet strategic planning, and guaranteed investments in pro-Soviet Mediterranean countries (Gazimov, 2021, p. 466).

Scrupulously watching any deterioration among the regional countries or distraction of the NATO Allies, Russia has used every possibility to strengthen its position through different military, economic, infrastructure, or humanitarian projects. By writing-off of the multi-billion-dollar debt of a then-Syrian leader, the father of the current president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, Russia has got Tartus, one of its oldest military bases outside formerly Soviet territory (Gazimov, 2021, p. 467). Thus, the Tartus base became the only delivery and restoration center for the Soviet Mediterranean Navy Squadron, significantly changing the balance of power in the basin. D. C. Richardson, a commander of the USA Sixth Fleet based in the Mediterranean, noticed in a couple of years that the Soviet Squadron had become a challenge in a "NATO lake" area (Celac et al., 2019).

**Modern Russian Posture in the Mediterranean** With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow had to withdraw its ships and submarines from the Mediterranean and disappeared from the region for two decades. This absence was termed "an anomaly" by P. Ausseur and P. Razoux (2021) due to all previous references to the significance of the region for Moscow's interests. The "Greater Mediterranean" concept emerged in Russia's strategy in the 1995 Memorandum on

Russian Policy in the Mediterranean. As proposed by Y. Primakov, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, this concept suggested focusing on the Mediterranean as a region that provides direct access to the strategically important Middle East. It implied partnership relations between the countries of the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Thus, the 1995 Memorandum was Russia's first attempt to re-engage with the region (Erkan, 2022, p. 69). However, it was only under Putin's presidency that the Mediterranean region returned to Russia's foreign policy agenda. The 2001 Maritime Strategy identified the Mediterranean as an important area where the presence of the Russian Navy needs to be increased (Maksymenko, 2023, p. 91).

However, in the following years, the Kremlin's perception of the Mediterranean region was based on several factors rooted in the Russian worldview of the post-Cold War era. First, an inclusive and symmetrical political and security order was not created after the Cold War, which resulted in a strengthened sense of marginalization of Moscow, a feeling that Russia was seen as a regional state, excluded from a global dialogue of the centers of power, as well as on a tense perception of threats to the national and state interests (Maksymenko, 2015, p. 34-35). Secondly, Russian strategic culture is based upon two qualities: a deep feeling of insecurity and a major emphasis on power projection (Sinovets et al., 2015). The Mediterranean region plays a substantial role in both cases as a part of Russia's foreign policy towards the EU and NATO. With the deterioration of relations with the US and Europe, which was later accompanied by the perception of NATO and the EU as threats to its geopolitical influence, the Kremlin started to strengthen its security and strategic posture in the Mediterranean basin. In his speeches, Putin rejected the recognition of the unipolar post-Cold War order and declared his intention to resist US dominance. This demonstrates the security dilemma of Russia, which tends to assume the worst in others and respond accordingly, in some cases believing that the best, if not the only, approach to security is to attack and expand (Maksymenko, 2015, p. 35).

Such a strategy lies at the heart of the Kremlin's policy towards Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine since 2014. It demonstrates that Russia no longer sees itself as a part of the common space of security and stability but has turned into an isolated and unpredictable actor that will use all its resources to regain its hegemonic status. Analysts indicate the 2008 Russian intervention in Georgia as a major turning point in Moscow's foreign policy and strategy. Assessing the implications of the Russian-Georgian War of 2008, M. Kofman (2018) concludes the return of great-power politics, while the Kremlin demonstrated the 'will and ability to actively contest' the vision for a Europe "whole, free, and at peace", and challenge the EU and NATO "design for a normative international order". Such a position has also been reflected in the Mediterranean area, where Russia continues a standoff with the US and NATO security framework in Europe and neighbouring regions that led to the acceleration and modernisation of Russia's military capabilities, including the Tartus military base and intensification of Moscow's contacts with Turkey, Syria, and Libya.

Moreover, the further contradictions in the US-Russian relations fed the Kremlin's perception of NATO as an adversary aiming to block Russia. Therefore, the 2014 Crimean annexation and Russia's entry into the war in Syria in 2015 are considered the counterstrategy of the Kremlin. The lack of interest from the EU and the US in the Mediterranean issues was favourable ground for Russia to fill the vacuum (Cristiani, 2020). It started with the creation of the headquarters and operational command of the permanent operational unit of the Navy in the Mediterranean Sea in 2013 and Putin's visit to a Russian Navy frigate to "discuss the military's naval strategic road map" for the creation of "Russia's foothold in the Mediterranean", aiming to transform the region into a zone of military and political stability and good neighborhood (Ulgen, & Kasapoglu, 2021).

These events were the turning points in the Kremlin's policy toward the Mediterranean, officially confirmed in the 2015 Maritime Doctrine. The document stated the need for the changes to the previous one due to the changing international situation and "strengthening Russia's position as a sea power," aiming

to provide an integral, consistent, and effective naval policy to protect Russia's interests (Maritime doctrine, 2015). Analysts evaluate the new doctrine as an aspirational document that introduces new military thinking of Russia and is oriented on a paradigm of great power competition (Ulgen & Kasapoglu, 2021).

The 2017 Fundamentals of Russia's policy in the field of naval activities prescribes ensuring a permanent naval presence of the Russian Federation in the Mediterranean Sea through the development of an auxiliary fleet and logistics centers (The fundamentals, 2017). However, some analysts note that Russia started to restore its "lost positions" in the region at the beginning of the 2000s with President Putin's visits to several countries there and the assignment of the Black Sea vessels to patrol the eastern Mediterranean basin. In 2013, Shoigu, Russian Minister of Defense, pointed out the significant threats to Russian national interests emanating from the Mediterranean; therefore, the Russian Black Sea Fleet located in Sevastopol has been permanently assigned combat missions in the Mediterranean zone. Moreover, the plans to deploy the cruise missile "Kalibr" on the Russian naval ships and submarines operating in the Mediterranean and granting permanent status to the large-scale naval and aviation exercises "Ocean Shield" were announced (Rumer, & Sokolsky, 2021).

The Syrian war is considered the next and the central stage of Russian efforts to gain a permanent military presence in the Mediterranean. By supporting the Assad regime, the Kremlin gained a unique deal on air and naval bases with freedom of movement and a level of sovereignty that can help Russia, first, to evade, to some extent, some restrictions of the Montreux Convention and, second, to secure its stronghold in the area that is considered a "south key to the World Ocean" (Celac et al., 2019).

So, what are the objectives of Moscow in a gradual but persistent strengthening of its presence in the Mediterranean? First, Russia's general goal is twofold due to the US and EU disengagement from the region. First, it will increase the Russian Navy's combat capabilities and ensure national security and national interests of Russia, including the maintenance of strategic stability and

strategic deterrence of adversaries in the region. Considering the Mediterranean as an area of NATO's dominance, Russia sees the region as an important coercive element in its escalation strategy, an additional leverage of influence to deter potential challenges to Russia's territorial possessions in the Black and Mediterranean basins. Moscow modernised the Tartus naval base, deployed complex air- and missile-defense systems with strategic surface-to-air missile systems, Buk-M2E missiles, Pantsir batteries and the Aerospace Forces group in the Khmeimim also having access to the strategic port Larnaka. Deployments of Russian military capabilities in Syria, which are networked with the Syrian Air Defense Force's assets and warfare systems, have finalised the creation of an A2/AD bubble over the Levant by deploying Russian Mig-29 and Su-24 fighter aircraft in Libya; thus, establishing the logistical connection with North Africa and the Black Sea. In total, this provided Russia with the ground for projecting its power in the Mediterranean and beyond. Among other goals, it is worth mentioning the following: facilitation of Russian naval diplomacy, the collection of data and information about NATO forces in the region as well as the assistance of the political forces of several countries in the wider region and a testing ground for new weapons, methods of warfare conduct and military operations in the "warm waters", which can be used for further extension of the Kremlin's presence, or destabilization and provoking of conflict potential in the Mediterranean.

Accordingly, the provision of the 2022 Maritime Doctrine about the "unconditional right" to deploy and use the Russian Navy forces should be perceived as a strategy to intimidate strategic rivals with escalation, which includes, first of all, the USA and the Allies (Maritime doctrine, 2022). Meanwhile, the naval potential, which significantly exceeds the Russian one, is considered a reason for increasing the number of bases of the Russian Navy outside its borders. At the same time, Russia's strategy in the Mediterranean region consists of deliberately cultivating enmity and fear, constantly stressing that an extensive military confrontation is likely, almost inevitable, because of the United States and Europe solely. Therefore, the second objective is to assert the status of a great

power that can determine political and geo-economic trends in the region of the Kremlin's particular importance. Gazimov (2021) argues that the Arab Spring events and the insufficiency of Russian military and economic capabilities to the US-NATO military assets induced the Kremlin to restore its multifaceted military presence in the Mediterranean accompanied by a mixed strategy of hybrid combat.

### **Russian Hybrid Strategy in the Mediterranean**

This complex strategy combines conventional military tactics with non-military methods such as active diplomacy and agitation efforts. These efforts aim to deepen existing cleavages within NATO, thereby increasing Russia's influence in the region. The Concept of Russian Federation's foreign policy prioritises the following aims: full-scale and trustful cooperation, comprehensive support, and deepening the multifaceted partnership with the interested countries (Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia); establishing a sustainable, comprehensive regional security and cooperation architecture in the Middle East and North Africa, based on Russia's Collective Security Concept for the Persian Gulf Region and the principle "African problems – African solution" as well as through security assistance, inter alia food and energy security, as well as military and military-technical cooperation; promoting interfaith and intercultural dialog and understanding, consolidating efforts to protect traditional spiritual and moral values, and combating Islamophobia (The concept of the foreign policy, 2023).

Thus, this document mirrors the previous Kremlin's regional aims and actions per se. Russia attempted to enter the Libyan war to open "a Russian front in the Mediterranean" due to Libya's strategic position in front of the European shores because it might extend the A2/AD bubble and gain leverage in the migration and energy issues over Europe (Fasanotti, 2024; Chivvis, & Kadlec, 2017). The Kremlin openly supported General Khalifa Hiftar through the Wagner group, air forces based in Syria, and by printing money for the opposition block that secured their political survival (Cristiani, 2020). Other examples are related to Moscow's increasing presence in Egypt in 2017 when parties agreed on Russian

combat aircraft access to Egyptian bases and permission for Russia to carry out the largest air defense training (Clarke et al., 2020). Additionally, Moscow and Cairo shared the interests in Libya that has facilitated the military and energy extraction and supply projects and created the ground for Russia's engagement in the construction of Egypt's first nuclear power plant.

Similar Russian diplomacy can be tracked in other countries of North Africa and the Middle East, where the Kremlin has seized the opportunity to increase its influence and perception as an ally by winning the battle through "vaccine diplomacy" as well as arms, oil, and grain export. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has turned out to be an additional ground for deepening the Kremlin's influence in the region. The Mediterranean countries import up to 90% of consumed grain, and half of consumed wheat comes from Ukraine and Russia (Bertin, & Demurtas, 2023). Russia managed to keep Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and others in its sphere of influence by cutting off money debts and providing subsidized grain and fuel supplies. Another leverage of the Kremlin over the Mediterranean is Russian Arabic media projects widely represented across the region. Russia's mainstream narratives refer to "Europe that dehumanizes and undervalues" the southern Mediterranean countries instead of representing Russia as the only partner of the Arab states (Larramendi, & Piazza, 2024). Therefore, the leaders of these countries participated in different Moscow-initiated meetings and forums and did not join the EU's sanction policy against Russia.

Moreover, these tactics are part of Moscow's strategy towards Turkey, a NATO member state and a significant actor in the Mediterranean. Ankara is crucial for Russia's ongoing rivalry with the US, NATO, and energy policy. Therefore, analysts speculate that the Russian military presence in Syria is leverage over Turkey, which Russia has to balance due to some contradictions in the Syrian, Libyan, Cyprus, and also Ukrainian cases. However, Moscow and Ankara share too many interests that oblige them to reach a deal on "conflictual connivance" (Ausseur, & Razoux, 2021; Pierini, 2021). Here is a sample of the Kremlin's flexibility and success in order to generate, provoke, and use divergences inside

and among the regional actors. By supporting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the aftermath of the attempted coup in 2016, while the EU and the US demonstrated their skepticism, Russia provided itself with positive dynamics of further relations with Turkey. It determined the loyal position of Ankara and Erdogan personally in the Mediterranean and Ukrainian theatres. It can be considered a turning point in Turkish NATO and EU relations and a significant win for Russia in securing its influence and interests in the Mediterranean. Notably, playing with anti-European and anti-American sentiments, the Kremlin agreed with Turkey on conducting several Russian-Turkish joint military and police operations in Syria and deploying the Russian anti-missile defense system instead of NATO missiles. Additionally, Russia has become a partner of Turkey in constructing the latter's first nuclear power plant, the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, as well as in continuing several ongoing gas projects, despite the outbreak of Russian full-scale invasion in Ukraine and many attempts by sanctions groups to establish gas embargoes against Russia.

Hereof, the Kremlin's policy towards the Mediterranean region consists of the following principles. First, due to its limited geo-economic and military capabilities compared to the EU and NATO, Russia carefully calculates its projects' costs, benefits, risks, and returns to ensure its interests within the Mediterranean region. Second, Moscow seeks to maintain dialogue and assist any political actors whose policy might correlate with the Russian agenda. Third, Russia has no intention of solving economic troubles; however, it actively uses them to project its power and pursue interests. Finally, to undermine the influence of the EU and NATO in the Mediterranean, Russia uses a complex of all available means. The Kremlin's strategy advanced in exerting influence through successfully balancing and profiting from the cooperation with opposing states, including the EU and NATO traditional partners, in the Mediterranean simultaneously: with Iran and Israel, with Israel and rival Palestinian Fatah and Hamas, with Turkey as well as with the Syrian Kurds; and with opposing sides and their external sponsors in Libya and Yemen (Katz, 2023). Furthermore, this strategy enables the Kremlin to



incentivize the Mediterranean countries to cooperate while maintaining ties with the European ones, thus prospectively expanding Russian influence and presence in the sub-Saharan Africa and the waters surrounding the Arabian Peninsula.

### **Conclusions and Implications for the EU Policy in the Mediterranean**

While Russia views the Mediterranean as a strategically important key to guaranteeing its interests and access to the open ocean, it lacks a coherent and comprehensive strategic approach to the region. The Kremlin's policy is initially shaped by its interests, ambitions, and threat perception currently reflected in twofold intentions: to counteract the presence of the EU and NATO and to project its power and influence. However, its limited capabilities have been embodied in a policy of constantly balancing several divergent principles, goals, priorities, and ways of interacting with partners and opponents in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, even this approach has been successful due to the weakening of the US attention to regional issues and the decline in the effectiveness of EU policy.

Moreover, the EU's incorrect assessment of the threats from Russia and the demonstrated doubts and inaction, limited by economic sanctions and political statements in the aftermath of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, have allowed Russia to strengthen its position in the Mediterranean, seizing the initiative from the EU and unilaterally appointing itself a mediator on several conflicts in the region. Today, Russia is a military and politically influential actor in the Mediterranean, which has complicated the positions of the EU and NATO, strengthened its military presence in Syria, created positive relations with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, and Turkey, restored communication channels and strengthened its position as an ally and partner among many states in the region. In this way, Moscow becomes part of regional disputes, not to find solutions but to guarantee its interests, intending to use regional contradictions for its benefit. Mainly to maintain a balance of power in the region that is favorable to Russia.

Russia's war on Ukraine has shifted the focus of some southern Mediterranean countries toward China, which, being a newcomer, is already

perceived as an important regional player. Mutual interests and concerns on the EU and NATO threats to their standoff in the region facilitate Moscow and Beijing's collaboration on the fragmentation of the unity of Europe, thus posing additional risks and challenges to the EU interests and objectives in the region.

The main challenge to the EU's position in the Mediterranean, originating from Russia's "divide-and-conquer" strategy, is the necessity to develop a unified approach to the region. The only way for the EU to effectively counterbalance Russia is to change its role: to be an active political actor, not just a finance source. Moreover, it is necessary to develop tools that may help manage "the semblance of stability" that the Kremlin's approach creates in the region, prevent it from inspiring or maintaining low-intensity conflicts, and limit the opportunities for controlling key energy sources and manipulating the migration issue.

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**PART 3**  
**IS THERE A PLACE FOR UKRAINE IN THE**  
**MEDITERRANEAN?**

# RELATIONS OF POST-COMMUNIST MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES WITH UKRAINE IN THE CONDITIONS OF EUROPEANIZATION

*Olga Brusylovska*

## **Introduction**

The early 2000s brought the prospect of the EU's largest-ever enlargement and prompted authors to focus on Europeanization issues. Eastern enlargement raised many new questions and challenges for Europeanization researchers. For instance, it was necessary to determine how the processes of post-communist transformation and Europeanization were interconnected and which significant new political and socio-economic factors were present in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Given the considerable differences between post-communist countries and the older EU members, research shifted its focus from the effects of EU-level decisions on setting agendas in member states to the impact these decisions had on motivating membership-linked reforms in former socialist bloc countries. Thus, the focus turns to the mechanisms by which the EU motivates potential members to meet its requirements and the obstacles that arise in the path of these countries' integration.

The study of Europeanization in the post-communist world developed within the theoretical framework where the primary theoretical contradiction remained the divergence between rational and sociological institutionalism in explaining the effects of Europeanization. However, the similarity between the Europeanization of old EU members and the Europeanization of post-communist countries ends there. The main difference between Western and Eastern European countries was more than just their distinct histories or levels of socio-economic development. From the perspective of explaining EU influence, the central factor was that CEE countries were still candidates for membership.

In contrast, Western European countries had already become full EU members by the time political scientists studied them. Thus, enlargement marked a

new stage in Europeanization studies – examining the Europeanization of candidate countries. Among works on this topic, two chronologically linked types of research stand out: The Europeanization of candidate countries and the Europeanization of these same countries immediately after joining the EU. Although the second type we could technically classify as the Europeanization of member states, it is essentially a continuation of the studies on candidate Europeanization, as its primary focus remains on the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* norms in new member states and the implementation of previously adopted norms immediately after accession.

The Europeanization of candidate countries for EU membership significantly differs from the Europeanization of the EU's older members. Key distinguishing factors for CEE states admitted in 2004 include the following: 1) For the first time in EU enlargement history, candidate countries were at various stages of developing a market economy and liberal democracy at the time of applying for membership; 2) CEE countries were unable to implement and, mainly, ensure compliance with *acquis communautaire* provisions in practice, leading the EU to monitor candidates' progress continuously; 3) Candidate requirements were not confined to traditional boundaries (such as implementing the *acquis communautaire*) but encompassed a range of political and economic demands beyond the EU's jurisdiction over full members; 4) Compliance with EU requirements by candidates from the former Eastern Bloc facilitated the post-communist transformation of these countries. As a result, the entire process was quite painful, and the cost of adapting to European norms was such that only the prospect of full membership could justify it.

In addition to the factors above relevant to CEE countries, some factors distinguish the process of Europeanization for any candidate from that of a member of the EU. Firstly, since a candidate does not have formal obligations to the EU, the latter must manage without resorting to sanctions and operate according to the principle of "carrot without stick," using tools of normative pressure, positive initiatives, and persuasion of political elites – tools that



constructivists highly valued. Secondly, because the candidate country does not participate in developing the norms and rules it must adopt, the process of accepting these norms represents, unlike for full members, purely their imposition by the EU without any feedback (Subotic, 2010, p. 6).

Thus, studying the Europeanization of candidate countries is one of the newest directions in European studies. They possess several characteristic features that allow us to distinguish them from studies on the Europeanization of EU member states. Most works that have identified the Europeanization of candidate countries as a separate research direction appeared after 2004, and almost all of them have focused on the problems of Europeanization in CEE countries (Börzel, & Van Hüllen, 2011; Schimmelfennig, 2009; Sedelmeier, 2011).

The eastward expansion and the inclusion of CEE countries into the EU prompted scholars to highlight the Europeanization of candidate countries as a separate research direction. However, this focus on Eastern Europe has called into question the universality of the theoretical and practical conclusions researchers drew regarding the mechanisms and effects of Europeanization in non-EU member states. Although researchers have turned their attention to intermediate factors that influence the effectiveness of Europeanization mechanisms, identifying two main groups among them – external and internal – the variation of these factors within a single region has proven insufficient to generalize the conclusions drawn from their analysis. Thus, the primary (and, overall, rationalistic) internal factors identified include the cost of adapting norms for a specific state, resistance from conservative governmental institutions, and political elites.

The factors above are comprehensive and specific for each country and area. However, it has become apparent that for countries from regions with starting conditions different from those of CEE, one needs more than the general factors to explain the degree of effectiveness of Europeanization.

This is true for the post-communist countries of the Mediterranean. This region's historical and cultural-civilizational development characteristics significantly differentiate it from Western and Eastern Europe. In addition to these

characteristics, it is also important to note the heterogeneity of this region in terms of relations with the EU. Slovenia, the most prosperous country regarding Euro-integration in post-Yugoslav space, joined the EU in 2004 along with the CEE states. Croatia joined only in 2013, and Albania is still an official candidate with uncertain accession timelines.

Despite the region's peculiarities, the EU employed the same tools as the CEE countries. Europeanization, based on a strategy of incentivizing the target government with rewards from the EU, which has as its fundamental incentive the prospect of membership, proved itself well during the 2004 expansion. In this way, the central tenets of the rationalist approach were empirically demonstrated. However, contrary to researchers' expectations, the entire process of Europeanization in the post-communist Mediterranean countries turned out to be less predictable than that of CEE.

Many scholars have focused on the peculiarities of Europeanization in the post-communist Mediterranean countries. The authors of these works note that the combination of factors distinguishing the Western Balkans from other regions has resulted in the EU's Europeanization mechanism – reward-based stimulation for meeting requirements – functioning inadequately in the Western Balkan countries. Gergana Noutcheva describes any foreign policy action, in terms of its consequences, as “the definition of the difference between one's value system, which includes its costs and benefits, and the potential outcomes of this action for the recipient side” (Noutcheva, 2009, p. 1067). From this perspective, while the EU's value system has remained unchanged compared to the period of eastward expansion, the recipient actors of its foreign policy actions significantly differ in many respects from the CEE countries but look very similar to Ukraine.

This means, firstly, from the standpoint of the rationalist approach, that national elites influenced the rational calculations by additional factors not present in other regions. Secondly, within the constructivist framework, these states also have distinct priorities that question the attractiveness of liberal-democratic

European ideas for public opinion in these countries. According to most authors, the EU has proven unable to adapt its foreign policy tools to the new environment.

Researchers typically identify another group of countries where the EU has a minor influence due to a lack of effective instruments and the absence of a guaranteed prospect of membership. This group includes all of the EU's neighbours, but the most interest lies in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. The number of studies dedicated to the Europeanization of the EaP countries is small, as it is challenging to discuss Europeanization as such in this context (Boonstra, & Shapovalova, 2010; Lavenex, & Schimmelfennig, 2009; Schimmelfennig, & Sedelmeier, 2005).

The lack of external incentives and a whole series of external and internal factors prevent the EU from influencing the formation of institutions and political practices in these countries even to the extent it can do so in the Balkans. The most significant incentive the EU can offer the post-Soviet republics is a vague and undefined prospect of association, not membership. Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson highlight three main factors that define the ineffectiveness of the EaP: the existence of semi-authoritarian solid regimes that prefer to maintain the status quo, thereby securing their positions; the multipolarity of the political arena in the region, which forces the EU not only to stimulate countries to change by offering certain benefits but also to compete with other players, such as Russia and Turkey; and the insufficient commitment of the EU itself to developing relations with its eastern neighbours, which can be attributed to the region's capacity in terms of resource and effort expenditure and the EU's focus on more pressing external and internal issues over the last decade (Popescu, & Wilson, 2011, p. 6).

The situation with the Europeanization of post-communist Mediterranean countries could have been more straightforward and obvious. The previously developed models proved inadequate in explaining the lack of expected results. As a result, there were numerous attempts to refine these models, considering the region's unique characteristics. However, while scholars succeeded in this, politicians still needed to. The same arguments apply to other countries,

specifically those involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy, where the influence and motivation of the EU and local political elites to move towards each other remain low. Overall, the theory of Europeanization remains a young and dynamically developing field of research. Unfortunately, the results of these studies very rarely influence the formation of actual EU policy in specific regions and countries. The EU often finds itself unable to change its policies or quickly adapt to new political environments and emerging factors. The examples of the least successful post-communist Mediterranean countries and Ukraine illustrated it.

At the same time, one should accept that, despite all the shortcomings of Europeanization, it remains, if not the only, the most acceptable platform for dialogue between Ukraine and the Mediterranean post-communist countries. This chapter will show this using the example of cooperation between Mediterranean countries (Albania, Croatia, and Slovenia) and Ukraine in the face of full-scale Russian aggression.

### **Official Contacts of Ukraine with Post-Communist Mediterranean Countries**

Immediately after the beginning of the Russian invasion, on February 24, 2022, Albanian President Ilir Meta condemned Russia's actions, stating that Albania stands with Ukraine. On February 25, Albania closed its airspace to all Russian air operators or any aircraft registered in Russia. The authorities also decided to ban individuals on the EU list from travelling to Albania. They considered cancelling the policy of simplified movement for diplomats, other Russian officials, and business representatives. On February 27, Albania imposed restrictions on 654 individuals and legal entities concerning the freezing of assets associated with the President of Russia, the Russian Foreign Minister, and other Russian officials. Also, Albania halted the sale, supply, transfer, or export of certain goods and technologies for oil refining, aviation, and space industries, as well as other technologies, to Russia. On February 28, Albania, in collaboration with the

US, prepared a sanctions package aimed at Russia (The President of the Republic of Albania, 2022).

On the evening of March 6, 2022, Russians targeted and shelled the Honorary Consulate of Albania in Kharkiv. One missile hit the consulate and the office of Consul Shahin Omarov. The next day, the Russian ambassador to Albania was summoned for a discussion and handed a protest note (Russian strike in Ukraine, 2022). The Russian Foreign Ministry provided an official response, stating that they did not do the shelling of the consulate, as they do not conduct any military operations, especially in civilian areas. In response, the Republic of Albania declared Russia a hostile state. Soon after, the Russians fired at the private house of Consul Omarov, which was far from the front-line, with rocket launchers.

In addition to clearly expressing their position through actions and collecting humanitarian aid at demonstrations, Albania announced the possibility for anyone interested to join the foreign legion of Ukraine's territorial defence. Volunteers who decide to join the foreign legion of Ukraine's territorial defence can participate in defending Ukraine's territorial integrity, performing various functions, from defending checkpoints to providing medical services and humanitarian aid.

At the time of the invasion, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković stated that "this is the largest military campaign on European soil since World War II and the most serious blow to the security of all Europe," adding that "with a brutal and massive attack, Russia also trampled on the UN Charter and the Charter of European Security" (Kolarski, 2022). Plenković asserted that Croatia would betray all its principles if it did not stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Ukrainian people. "We experienced war. We know what our suffering was like" (Kolarski, 2022). Soon after, Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlić Radman declared that Russia's war crimes in Ukraine must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice (Kolarski, 2022).

At the first parliamentary summit of the International Crimea Platform in 2022, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania Lindita Nikolla stated:

“The Ukrainian war is our war. We see the synergistic actions of different aggressive authoritarian countries. Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine and cyber-attacks against free states are not just assaults on sovereignty; they threaten democracy and civilization in Europe and the entire planet” (Албанія підтримує Україну, 2022).

On April 20, 2023, the Albanian Embassy in the Russian Federation announced the cancellation of the visa-free regime for Russian citizens. That same year, Albania expressed its readiness to join the G7 declaration on security guarantees for Ukraine until it accedes to NATO (Брусилівська, & Майстренко, 2023).

In February 2024, Albanian Foreign Minister Igli Hasani described the visit of the Ukrainian leader to Tirana as a critical moment for strengthening bilateral ties. On February 28, 2024, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy aimed to secure Balkan support for his vision of peace in Ukraine and promoted the idea of joint arms production at the Southeast European countries’ summit. “There are about 500 defence enterprises operating in Ukraine, and each contributes to strength, but this is not enough to defeat Putin. We see problems with the supply of ammunition, which affects the situation on the battlefield” (Ukraine – South East Europe, 2024).

The summit in the Albanian capital, Tirana, took place when US support was weak. Prime Minister Edi Rama called specific calls to stop armed support to Ukraine, supposedly only prolonging the war, “cynical and absurd”: “You cannot stop a battle by depriving the victim of weapons. Albanians support Ukraine and want it not to lose, but to win” (Albanian Prime-Minister makes statement, 2024).

The Slovenian authorities have no significant disagreements regarding the war in Ukraine. Prime Minister Janez Janša and other members of the government have been steadfast in their support of the Ukrainian state in its fight against Russia since the beginning of the Russian invasion in late February 2022. This support became especially evident on March 15, 2022, when Prime Minister Janša met with President Zelenskyy, becoming the first head of state to visit Kyiv since the start of the invasion. Approximately a year after Janša's visit, Prime Minister

Robert Golob also visited Kyiv to assure President Zelenskyy that Slovenia views Ukraine as a victim of invasion needing support and assistance (Earlier today, the prime ministers, 2022).

In the past, Slovenia maintained active economic relations with Russia but cut many ties following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Slovenia was among the countries that openly condemned the Russian attack and pledged assistance to Ukraine. After the break in relations and condemnation, Russia included Slovenia on its "unfriendly countries list," Slovenia supported the sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU (Samorukov, 2023).

On the eve of Slovenia's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2024-2025, leading Slovenian politicians actively supported the Ukrainian cause, its leadership, and its integration into European organizations, particularly the European Union. Prime Minister Robert Golob repeatedly supported Ukraine's potential EU membership. So, due to the vote in June 2023, Slovenia became a member of the UN Security Council for the second time during a period of more significant uncertainty and rising global tension. In October 2023, Slovenian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon, responsible for representing Slovenia in the current cycle of the UN Security Council, visited Kyiv to participate in an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers. President Zelenskyy was also present at the conference, which was the first such meeting held outside the European Union. During the meeting, Minister Fajon stated that she conveyed a clear message of support for Ukraine and its people. She emphasized that Slovenia "firmly supports the expansion of the EU not only to Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova but also to the Western Balkan countries if we want to achieve peace and stability on our continent" (Брусилловська, & Майстренко, 2023).

The meeting occurred just one day after Slovenia became an observer in the UN Security Council. Slovenia became a full member on January 1, 2024, and given its positions, the Slovenian foreign ministry seeks to provide additional assistance to Ukraine whenever possible. The ministry completely supports the EU's overall view on the causes of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

## **Aid and Support of Ukraine**

The Albanian society was among the first to express its support, resulting in systematic peaceful demonstrations. A series of rallies supporting Ukraine took place outside the Russian embassy in Tirana. On February 25, a significant solidarity event titled “No to War” was held in the capital, continuing on February 27 and 28, with participation from both Ukrainians and Albanians (Брусилівська, 2022).

At the initiative of the Mayor of Tirana, the street with the Russian embassy was renamed Free Ukraine Street. After the renaming, it became popular among tourists in Tirana, who took photos in front of the new sign with the Russian flag in the background. Subsequently, Ukrainian flags appeared on the street, and people painted the sidewalk blue and yellow. In Slovenia, rallies in support of the Ukrainian cause and strong condemnation of Russia’s actions also frequently occur. One of the largest rallies occurred on February 24, 2024, marking the second anniversary of the war’s start.

High-level representatives’ visits to de-occupied territories drew significant international media attention (in March, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama visited Irpin and Borodyanka; in October, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković visited Bucha and Irpin; in November, Slovenian Defence Minister Marjan Šarec visited Irpin). They expressed their readiness to contribute to Ukraine's post-war reconstruction by providing equipment and funding. This moral support is crucial for Ukraine (Брусилівська, & Майстренко, 2023).

These countries created favourable conditions for Ukrainian refugees: accommodation for up to one year without the need for a permit (Albania); free housing (Montenegro); access to education, social security, and healthcare for Ukrainian women and children; and recovery for children of Ukrainian defenders (Croatia).

The most outstanding support for Ukraine came from Croatia: military-technical, financial, and humanitarian aid, including energy assistance, shelter for



over 27,000 Ukrainians, treatment for Ukrainian defenders, and recovery for children and their families.

All these countries expressed support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and voted for Russia's exclusion from the UN Human Rights Council. On June 28, 2023, the Croatian Parliament officially recognized the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as genocide of the Ukrainian people (The Effect of the War in Ukraine on the Western Balkans, 2022).

All countries provide humanitarian aid and financial and technical assistance for demining territories, rehabilitating military personnel, and implementing reforms according to NATO standards. Croatian experts advise the Department for Investigating War Crimes of the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office and assist through mobile judicial groups. There were also agreements on the rehabilitation of Ukrainian military personnel. Zagreb is considering two more options for aiding Ukraine: training Ukrainian military personnel on Croatian territory and sending Croatian instructors to a third country (Szczebra, 2022).

In the early days of the war, Croatia sent emergency humanitarian and technical aid worth €7.3 million (including donations of a wide range of equipment and materials – from medicines to fire-fighting equipment to mine detectors). It accepted over 20,000 refugees, providing them with education, access to the labour market, and social security services. On February 28, Croatia decided to send military equipment and weapons worth €16.5 million to Ukraine and close its airspace to Russian airlines (Брусилівська, 2022).

In 2022, Ukraine and Croatia agreed to use Croatian ports on the Danube and the Adriatic Sea to transport Ukrainian grain. Several thousand tons of grains have already been exported from Croatian ports, mainly to Italy and some to North Africa. Croatia is ready to receive about 40% of the grain that cannot be exported from Ukraine, mainly for transit to African markets (Vale, 2022).

As part of the Peace Formula, Croatia offered assistance in food security (safety corridors), energy security, implementation of the UN Charter, restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity and global order (peaceful reintegration, post-conflict

transition, care for veterans, a model for finding missing persons), and establishing justice (ensuring accountability for war crimes) (Wolczuk, 2022).

In 2023, Croatia provided Ukraine with military equipment, including all 14 of its Mi-8 helicopters and humanitarian aid. According to official data, military aid constitutes the most significant part of Croatia's overall assistance to Ukraine. Specifically, the government approved aid to Ukraine totalling €160 million from the state budget, with 76.87% of this sum being military aid. Media reports revealed that in the first round alone, Croatia sent to Ukraine automatic rifles with enough ammunition to equip four infantry brigades. In mid-August 2023, Ukrainian media published photos of 8,000 Croatian guns successfully used in battles against the Russian army. In 2023, a significant conference on humanitarian demining in Ukraine was held in Zagreb, attended by over 30 countries and international organizations. The event raised half a billion euros for the demining process in Ukraine. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Ukrainian Ministry of Energy and the largest gas production company in Ukraine, "Ukrigasvydobuvannya", recently completed an assessment of explosive ordnance risk over 17 square kilometres in the Kharkiv region, which Russia had previously occupied. This initiative, financially supported by the Croatian government, is crucial for resuming gas exploration in the region. Additionally, the Croatian government allocated 1 million euros to the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to assist farmers and food producers in Ukraine in resuming operations in war-affected areas. The Croatian Chamber of Commerce (HGK) organized a Croatian-Ukrainian forum dedicated to the reconstruction of Ukraine and prospects for future economic cooperation. The forum aimed to invite Ukrainian builders and ministry workers to collaborate with local experts on all reconstruction processes. Despite the war, overall economic relations are growing, with a 50 per cent increase in 2022 and a 75 per cent increase in 2023 (Брусилівська, & Майстренко, 2023).

Slovenia provides financial and military support to Ukraine and offers humanitarian aid to Ukrainian citizens. As of February 2024, over 10,000

Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Slovenia and applied for protection. Specialized refugee centres have been established, and humanitarian assistance in money and clothing has been provided. Since the war began, many Russians have migrated to European Union countries, including Slovenia. This migration was driven by dissent against state policies or avoidance of military mobilization. Many of these individuals openly opposed the Russian leadership and military aggression.

Albania has opened its dairy market to Ukraine. The Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development approved the form of an international veterinary certificate, prepared by Ukraine's State Service of Ukraine on Food Safety and Consumer Protection in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, for exporting thermally processed dairy products. Currently, it is possible to export three types of products to Albania: poultry, meat semi-finished products, and thermally processed dairy products. Albania has also transferred a batch of American-made M1224 MaxxPro armoured personnel carriers to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Ukraine has received a total of 22 MaxxPro units. This type of armoured vehicle is equipped with a mine protection system. Additionally, Albania has supplied 82-mm mortar shells. Previously, the country did not provide significant military aid to Ukraine. In 2022, it supplied ammunition for small arms and 60-mm and 82-mm calibre mines. Later, in March 2023, it sent two ambulances (Брусиловська, & Майстренко, 2023).

Three abovementioned countries provide severe financial and technical assistance for demining territories, rehabilitating military personnel, and implementing reforms according to NATO standards. Zagreb is considering two more options for aiding Ukraine: training Ukrainian military personnel on Croatian territory and sending Croatian instructors to a third country. All three countries act in full accordance with the general policy of the EU and can even be considered leaders in establishing stronger ties between Ukraine and the EU today.

### **Challenges from Inside and Ukraine's Reaction to Politics of Post-Communist Mediterranean Countries**

However, it is not all straightforward. As in other countries, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza are somehow compared in people's minds, although from our perspective, these are entirely different issues. Nonetheless, in practice, those who oppose Israel's policies often also unfavourably view Ukraine's attempts to defend its independence. Slovenia is more resolute in opposing any war atrocities than many of its partners. Slovenia was one of the few Western countries to openly question Israel's conduct in Gaza. Slovenian officials largely supported the prominent Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek during the opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2023. In his speech, Žižek emphasized the historical suffering of the Palestinians and called for dialogue. Similarly, among Slovenian scholars, there were attempts to relativize the causes of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and to restore diplomatic relations with Russia (Jovic, 2022). However, most Slovenian politicians remain steadfast in their support for Ukraine.

In 2022, Croatian lawmakers rejected a proposal to join the EU mission supporting the Ukrainian military (EUMAM Ukraine) after hours of heated debate, reflecting profound differences between the Prime Minister and the President of the country. Public statements by the current President of Croatia, Zoran Milanović, caused embarrassment in Zagreb, leading to a dispute with Prime Minister Andrej Plenković. Long before Russia's aggression in Ukraine, Milanović actively questioned the possible expansion of NATO to Ukraine and the satisfaction of Russia's security demands (Брусилівська, 2022).

Croatia, located in the Balkans, finds it difficult to formulate a policy on the war. The main reason for this is that the decision-making mechanism in Croatia is far from reaching a consensus on the war in Ukraine. Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and President Zoran Milanović have profound differences regarding the war. For Milanović, only Russia (which he never called an aggressor) can ensure the stability of Europe and the EU. Plenković has had to apologize for such descriptions from the President, who called him a "Ukrainian agent." Zagreb is considering two more options for aiding Ukraine: training Ukrainian military personnel on Croatian territory and sending Croatian instructors to a third country.

The rift between Prime Minister Plenković and President Milanović deepened after French President Emmanuel Macron suggested that the future deployment of Western troops in Ukraine could not be definitively “excluded.” Faced with the possibility of sending Croatian helicopters to Ukraine, Milanović said: “Not for free.” Moreover, Milanović stated that Croatia should not provide military aid to Ukraine and that sending Western tanks to Kyiv would only prolong the war. His reluctance to send weapons is due to his belief that the Russian aggression in Ukraine is a “Russian-American conflict.” He also stated that Crimea will never be part of Ukraine again, so it should not be mentioned. Milanović went further in his statement on August 8, 2022, claiming that Western sanctions against Russia are not working. He stated that the sanctions hurt Zagreb, not Moscow (Брусилівська, & Майстренко, 2023).

Croatia also needs help with inherent neutrality. Since Croatia has been an independent state for only 32 years (the independence referendum was in May 1991, and international recognition of independent Croatia in January 1992), foreign policy still has some issues in addressing national interests. There is a saying: “When the big ones fight, the small ones should be under the table” (hrv. *Kad se veliki tuku, malima je mjesto pod stolom*). This folk logic means that small countries (like Croatia) should remain silent in dangerous times (Брусилівська, & Майстренко, 2023).

The most recent problem is Ukrainian grain in Europe. In 2023, Plenković stated that Croatia is a “transit country” for Ukrainian agricultural products, nothing more. The country will not import Ukrainian grain. The President did not rule out a ban on such imports, following the examples of Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. |Croatia’s position and desire is that we are a transit country, not a country that receives large volumes of Ukrainian grain, which is cheaper than ours, meaning our farmers could be in trouble” (Брусилівська, & Майстренко, 2023).

Ukraine’s foreign policy activity regarding the Western Balkans was low before 2022 and traditionally focused on neutralizing the consequences of Russian aggression and promoting Ukraine’s European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Ukraine's priorities were Slovenia and Croatia, primarily as EU member states. Albania, which demonstrated excellent transformation results, also attracted more attention from Ukraine.

In 2022, Ukraine's foreign policy activity increased in seeking assistance to counter Russian aggression and promote Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Increased inter-parliamentary contacts and high-level meetings expanded the political dialogue. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke online in the parliaments of two Balkan countries: on May 3 in Albania's parliament and July 8 in Slovenia's parliament. Before the Croatian Parliament, Vice Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Olena Kondratiuk (May 26) and Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Ruslan Stefanchuk (October 26) spoke (Брусилівська, 2022).

In 2023, relations became less productive than the previous year. Several directions shaped Ukraine's regional policy: securing diplomatic support to counter Russian aggression, obtaining military-technical assistance to repel Russia's attack, and seeking support on the path to European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The result of the first Defence Industries Forum (September 30) was signing agreements aimed at joint production, technology exchange, and supply of components for the military industry. The most active public figures were Ukraine's Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia, Volodymyr Tolkach, and Ukraine's Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia, Vasyl Kyrylych.

However, Ukraine seriously lacks diplomats trained to solve such complex problems and a national strategy for rapprochement with EU candidate countries, which could strengthen the positions of all parties. At the same time, in the post-communist world, there is a positive experience that we must study and apply: the experience of negotiations with the EU of Slovakia and the assistance that other CEE countries provided to it. The experience of Croatia, which became an EU member in 2013, and Albania, which is currently in an active phase of negotiations, is especially valued by Ukraine and may, in the future, ease our path to stability and prosperity.

## **Conclusion**

One of the sub-regions most affected by the Russia-Ukraine war, which began on February 24, 2022, is the Western Balkans. At the same time, the war has increased the importance of Croatia, Slovenia, and Albania in European geopolitics. For instance, Croatia is one of the two Balkan countries, alongside Greece, with a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal. This situation has led to positive developments for Zagreb, particularly in ensuring Europe's energy security.

Croatia, Slovenia, and Albania openly share their experience with Ukraine, particularly in the areas of demining and prosecuting those responsible for war crimes. They also assist in the rehabilitation of wounded civilians and veterans.

However, even in Croatia, there are obstacles to more excellent support for Ukraine during the war. Croatia is a parliamentary republic, and it has informally developed a system in which the Prime Minister represents Croatia in relations with the EU. At the same time, the President handles relations with NATO. However, foreign policy is generally determined by the parliament and implemented by the government, currently led by a pro-Russian politician. Nevertheless, government officials understand the security processes in the region and do not consider the Russian aggression to be someone else's war. They are well aware that this conflict could resonate throughout the region. A Coordinating Council on Sanctions operates within the government, chaired by the State Secretary for Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Croatians adhere strictly to the EU's sanctions policy. They support and have supported all sanction packages and take initiatives themselves. From the eighth package, a proposal by Croatia and several other EU states removed an exception that would have allowed post-communist Mediterranean countries to continue supplying Russian oil.

Since Ukraine is interested in cooperation with all Mediterranean countries in the military, medical, pharmaceutical, and agricultural sectors, we need the increased activity of officials at all levels. These activities include official and

working visits to the abovementioned countries and the creation of a cooperation algorithm that would allow tracking: 1) how the implementation of signed agreements is progressing and 2) how appropriate analytical work is being carried out to identify obstacles and ways to overcome them. Ukraine needs to find arguments for why cooperation with us benefits Mediterranean countries, not just a gesture of charity. What worked well at the beginning of the war is not effective now, as the war has taken on a protracted nature.

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# PERCEPTION OF UKRAINE IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL AFTER 2022

*Kateryna Vakarchuk*

## **Introduction**

The relevance of the study stems from the onset of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Many countries have determined their role and position regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war. Spain and Portugal condemned Russian aggression in February 2022, expressed their support and solidarity with Ukraine, and supported all UN resolutions. The Kingdom of Spain and Portugal strongly supported granting Ukraine candidate status for EU membership. Portugal is one of the countries that recognized the Holodomor as genocide and voted for the North Atlantic Council to recognize Ukraine as a member of NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Program. These countries are important international actors in supporting Ukraine on the global stage and in combating Russian propaganda and efforts to discredit Ukraine internationally.

## **Spain's Position in the Russian-Ukrainian War**

The last decade has seen intensification and strengthening foreign policy of Spain. According to Spain's Foreign Action Strategy for 2021-2024, the Kingdom of Spain aims to actively participate in global politics to form a broad national consensus in shaping its foreign relations. This document is based on Spain's interest in maintaining international significance and strengthening its global presence. Spain's foreign policy orientation is shaped by its global aspirations and multi-dimensional identity, which, aside from its European essence and Mediterranean roots, includes deep and irreversible ties with Latin America, strong relations with Africa, and transatlantic connections with the United States. Spain's unique strategic position between Europe and Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean makes it an ideal interlocutor, capable of providing a

comprehensive vision and having the ability to engage in dialogue in many regional and global conflicts (Foreign Action Strategy 2021-2024).

Spain's modern foreign policy has changed significantly, shifting from a domestic focus to a more pronounced international one. Spain has become more active in its foreign policy within the EU framework, ranking among the top countries providing aid to Ukraine. Between 2021 and 2024, Spain has established a leadership role in building Europe, closely cooperating with EU institutions and reaching consensus with member states on specific programs.

There are also historical factors that contributed to Spain's increased involvement in modern political processes. The first is Spain's neutrality during World War II; the second is the Franco dictatorship, which left a mark of prolonged international isolation on Spain. The third is the exhausting Civil War, which for a long time made Spain focus on internal issues rather than external ones. Finally, a current and highly relevant factor is Spain's dissatisfaction regarding the issue of Gibraltar, which, according to international law, is a British overseas territory.

A major factor in the perception of the Russian-Ukrainian war has been the intensification of Spanish-Ukrainian relations prior to the full-scale invasion. In 2018, former President Petro Poroshenko visited Spain for the first time in 22 years at the level of heads of state. The visit marked the first such event since the appointment of Spain's new Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Spain became an important partner for Ukraine in its resistance to Russian aggression. For the first time in the history of relations between Spain and Ukraine, on February 23, 2023, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited Kyiv to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and also visited Bucha and Irpin. Spain joined the coalition of countries providing tanks to Ukraine to fight the aggressor (Vakarchuk, 2023).

Spain was included in the list of 18 countries that will help rebuild Ukraine in the future. The Kingdom of Spain consistently provides financial assistance for the restoration of infrastructure and Ukrainian heritage sites, and delivers military aid on an unprecedented scale: air defence systems, armoured vehicles, ammunition, equipment, humanitarian aid, and more. Spain also organized basic

training for soldiers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and was one of the first countries to provide humanitarian support to Ukraine's military in 2014. Throughout 2022, Spain provided Ukraine with more than 300 million euros in military aid. Ukrainian soldiers are undergoing rehabilitation and treatment in Spain (Militarnyi, 2022).

Spain was one of the first to join the European Peace Facility (EPF), which was established in March 2021 to enhance the European Union's security guarantees for its citizens and partners. This allowed the EU to provide all types of equipment and infrastructure to the armed forces of EU partners in accordance with international law, human rights, and international humanitarian law (Spain, 2022).

An important sign of Spain's support for Ukraine on the international stage was the March 31, 2023 visit of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to China, with the aim of persuading the country's leader Xi Jinping to support peace on Ukraine's terms. According to Pedro Sánchez, this visit might reorient China toward a pro-European stance on Russia's war against Ukraine. Spain views China's position as decisive in ending the war. Furthermore, Spain chaired the Council of Europe during the second half of 2023, placing the issue of aid to Ukraine on the agenda. Spain was the most recent state to join Ukraine's lawsuit against Russia under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which is being heard by the International Court of Justice (Smyshliaiev, 2023).

In March 2023, the 28th Ibero-American Summit took place, bringing together 22 countries (19 Latin American and Caribbean nations and 3 countries from the Iberian Peninsula – Spain, Andorra, and Portugal). The Ibero-American Summits are high-level meetings within the framework of the international dialogue forum known as the Ibero-American Conference (Shevchenko, 2023). Many issues concerning regional development were discussed, but it was significant that the condemnation of Russian aggression in Ukraine was on the agenda. It was noted that Ukraine is in the focus of attention for the Ibero-

American world, particularly with the idea that Latin American countries, Spain, and Portugal could play a more active role in resolving and ending the Russo-Ukrainian war. While there was no unanimity on many issues or a fully formed common position, it was emphasized that “the peace plan for Ukraine is a relevant issue” and we must make efforts and not allow the Russian narrative to penetrate decision-making processes (Shevchenko, 2023).

Pedro Sánchez began Spain’s presidency of the Council of Europe in the second half of 2023 with a trip to Kyiv to demonstrate the EU’s support for Ukraine in military, humanitarian, and economic spheres, and concluded it by opening negotiations on Ukraine’s accession to the European Union. Spain’s presidency aimed to address a complex international context, marked by the consequences of Russian aggression, geopolitical shifts, technological changes, and transformations driven by environmental challenges. These include the EU’s industrial restructuring and ensuring its open strategic autonomy, reducing dependency on third countries in areas such as energy, healthcare, digital technologies, and food security. The EU’s support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression was consolidated during Spain’s six-month presidency, as became clear with the signing of the Granada Declaration, adopted by heads of state and government, in which they reaffirmed their support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people for as long as necessary (Elcano Royal Institute, 2023).

The document notes that the future of “new members” lies within the EU, but “efforts to reform must be accelerated”. European leaders, who met on October 5-6 in Granada, Spain, signed a declaration outlining the EU’s strategic course and priorities. This declaration is one of the intermediate stages of negotiations before the adoption of a new Strategic Agenda. “The pandemic and Russia’s aggressive war against Ukraine have tested our resilience, highlighting the need for the Union to strengthen its sovereignty and prompting us to make important decisions to protect our people and our economies” (Elcano Royal Institute, 2023).

On May 27, 2024, Ukrainian President V. Zelenskyy arrived in Spain, where he signed a bilateral security agreement with Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Spain

became the tenth country with which Ukraine has signed a bilateral security agreement under the provisions of the Joint Declaration adopted by Ukraine and the members of the “Group of Seven” in Vilnius on July 12, 2023. A total of 32 countries have already joined the Joint Declaration. Spain is providing Ukraine with €1 billion in aid this year. Additionally, Spain plans to allocate €5 billion for Ukraine by 2027 (Official Internet Representation of the President of Ukraine, 2024). Upon arrival in Spain, the Ukrainian delegation was personally greeted by King Felipe VI, demonstrating the high level of trust and deep respect for Ukraine. Zelenskyy also met with Spanish parliamentarians, representatives of all parties in the Congress of Deputies and the Senate of the General Cortes during his visit to Spain.

### **Position of Portugal Concerning the Russian-Ukrainian War**

Since 2022, Portugal has expressed comprehensive support for Ukraine. Although relations between the two states were not systematic, in recent years Ukraine has significantly deepened its political dialogue with Portugal. Cooperation between the parliaments of both countries played a significant role in expanding intergovernmental relations. After the full-scale invasion, the Portuguese government, together with the Armed Forces, sent weapons and ammunition, personal protective and communication equipment, armoured personnel carriers, unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles, medical equipment, and combat first-aid kits to Ukraine. Portugal became part of the European Union’s new military assistance mission to Ukraine. On May 28, 2024, in Lisbon, the President of Ukraine and the Prime Minister of Portugal, Luís Montenegro, signed a bilateral security cooperation agreement. Specific sections of the agreement are dedicated to bilateral cooperation in the defence industry, intelligence, combating organized crime and propaganda, and addressing chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear risks (Official Internet Representation of the President of Ukraine, 2024).

In 2024, Portugal committed to providing Ukraine with €126 million in military support. During this year, Portugal has already allocated €100 million to a Czech initiative for the procurement of ammunition to support Ukraine. Portugal will contribute additional military support to Ukraine, particularly within the framework of the European Union, NATO, and other relevant international forums. Portugal provides both lethal and non-lethal military equipment, including Leopard 2A6 main battle tanks, UAV systems, M113 armoured personnel carriers, M113 and M577 armoured medical evacuation vehicles, and other military equipment. Portugal is also part of the F-16 coalition and the international maritime security capabilities coalition, as well as joint programs for the procurement of large-calibre ammunition, which are being carried out by the Czech Republic and the European Defence Agency (Official Internet Representation of the President of Ukraine, 2024).

A very important component of Ukraine's perception in Portugal is the active informational and explanatory work among government, parliamentary, expert circles, Portuguese public, and the Ukrainian diaspora, aimed at countering the disinformation spread by Russian media. In general, the problem of Russian propaganda in Spain and Portugal is quite significant. For many reasons, the discrediting of Ukraine's image by propaganda channels like Russia Today, Sputnik Mundo, and RTVi remains a challenge.

Since early 2014, there has been an active spread of anti-Ukrainian propaganda in Portugal, characterized by typical Russian messages and narratives. Signs of a targeted negative anti-Ukrainian information campaign were noticed by volunteers from the Ukrainian diaspora in Portugal, who are part of the InformNapalm initiative. Ukraine was labelled as “the cradle of modern global Nazism” and “a training ground for neo-Nazis from around the world”. Such publications have been periodically repeated and once even sparked a diplomatic scandal. These information attacks occur regularly, and at times, the so-called “Immortal Regiment” provokes clashes on the streets of Lisbon. Propaganda channels frequently spread disinformation accusing Ukrainians of fascism,



Nazism, and neo-Nazism. A prominent example is Mamadou Ba, a well-known figure in Portugal for his racist remarks, who leads the organization SOS Racismo (InformNapalm, 2020).

For instance, the leading Portuguese newspaper *Público* has published various articles, including those on the Crimea Platform, Ukraine's Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, and the recognition of the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as genocide of the Ukrainian people. These materials generated significant interest in Portuguese society, as evidenced by the feedback: 1,512 users shared these articles on social media, and 469 posted their comments (Ognivets, 2022).

The Ukrainian diaspora in Portugal has repeatedly appealed to the parliament, urging them to pay attention to the emergence of fake news and publications promoting the narratives of the aggressor country – Russia, which poses a threat not only to Ukraine but also to Portugal's political interests. Portugal has provided and continues to provide political support to Ukraine in its fight for sovereignty and independence.

In Portugal, the organization “Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in Portugal” is one of the most active. The head of this association claims that there are 50,000 “Russian-speaking people” in Portugal, although this is not the case. According to this association, all Ukrainians are potential carriers of the “Russian World”. The blog created on Facebook by the so-called “Compatriots’ Council” reflects a new infiltration of propagandist sources targeting the Ukrainian diaspora in Portugal, aiming to impose a discussion on “tolerance” of Russians toward Ukrainians and denying Russian aggression against an independent state (InformNapalm, 2020).

As Y. Brailian notes in his research on Russian propaganda in Spain, the kremlin has long been working on internal destabilization in Spain, an EU and NATO member state. Spain is essential for Russia because, through it, Russian propaganda pushes its narratives to other Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. A study by the Brookings Institution indicated that RT en Español has

more subscribers than the English-language account of the Russian propagandist resource (Brailian, 2024).

In Spain, Russian Spanish-language channels are also actively operating. For example, “Sur in Russian” is published as a paper supplement to the newspaper “Diario Sur”, which is distributed in southern Spain and is aimed at Russian-speaking immigrants. Unfortunately, articles concerning Ukraine are presented in a biased manner and often contain false information. Most Spanish-language media reports about Ukraine are produced by correspondents based in Russia. On a positive note, for the first time, the High Court of Barcelona handed down Spain’s first sentence for spreading fake news. The individual who disseminated false information received a suspended prison sentence and a fine for publishing a fake video about migrants. Each of these fakes is aimed at discrediting Ukraine, weakening it, and making people believe in an unreal, fabricated world pushed by Russian propagandists. In Ukraine, the Eastern Variant website was created to debunk fakes and expose the falsehoods of Russian propaganda (Moskvychova, 2019).

The respected publication “El Confidencial” publishes daily materials about Ukraine. Since 2014, a narrative has developed in Spanish society that aid to Ukraine is critically needed, but militarization should be avoided. Since February 24, 2022, public opinion has shifted, and Ukrainian refugees have played a significant role in this change. In Spain, they self-organize and provide significant assistance both to other refugees and directly to Ukraine’s needs. The Kingdom of Spain has taken in 160,000 Ukrainian refugees, who have been granted temporary protection (Majumdar, 2022).

Spain and Portugal are working to increase national unity among their populations and to prevent the fragmentation of their territories into separate, independent regions. Spain has been and remains an active player on the world stage, and Russian aggression has pushed the government to reassess Spanish-Ukrainian relations. After a prolonged pause, the Kingdom of Spain has reinvigorated its relations with Ukraine, providing massive financial support,

military equipment, and assistance in rebuilding critical infrastructure. From this perspective, Spain is a reliable partner for Ukraine.

## Conclusion

The support of Spain and Portugal is very important for Ukraine, as these geographically distant countries are powerful international actors in European security sphere. The spread of disinformation and the discrediting of Ukraine's image by Russia are actively promoted in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries. It is necessary to respond and take all possible measures to convey truthful information, both to Ukrainians living abroad and to the citizens of these countries. We can hope that the activity of Spain and Portugal in addressing global issues will become more visible and that their focus on internal problems will no longer affect their stance on important foreign policy matters. After 2022 for Ukraine Spain and Portugal have become closer in all aspects of aid, cooperation, and interaction, which could positively influence the development of bilateral relations in the future.

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## THE MODERN PERCEPTIONS OF UKRAINE IN THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

*Yuliia Tarasiuk & Kyryll Sturmak*

### **Introduction**

Ukraine and the Republic of Turkey (Türkiye) have a complex history of bilateral relations that has developed significantly since the post-Soviet era. Although both countries were historically separated by geography and political affiliations, their relationship has evolved due to shared trade, security, and regional stability interests. Official diplomatic relations were established in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with an Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1992, laying the foundation for political, economic, and cultural collaboration. Despite periods of stagnation, particularly due to Türkiye's strategic focus on Europe and its improving relations with Russia, the mutual connections have particularly strengthened only in the past ten years. Both countries have sought to enhance their cooperation, especially in the Black Sea region, with security and defence playing a crucial role. (Tarasiuk, 2017)

The Republic of Türkiye's role in the on-going Russian war against Ukraine has been pivotal. The Bayraktar drones supplied by Türkiye have become symbols of Ukrainian resistance, with Türkiye gaining an unprecedentedly positive image in Ukraine's society as a reliable partner. Türkiye also acted as a mediator in the grain deal during the war, while seeking to promote peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia in 2022.

The overall perception of Ukraine within Türkiye is shaped by a multifaceted set of geopolitical, economic, and cultural dynamics that have evolved significantly in the context of recent developments, particularly the on-going conflict between Russia and Ukraine. These perceptions are influenced by Türkiye's strategic positioning, historical ties, and foreign policy orientations, which together contribute to a nuanced and often contradictory view of Ukraine.

Türkiye perceives Ukraine through various lenses – namely as a strategic partner, geopolitical ally, cultural kin, and economic collaborator – each shaped by contemporary and historical factors.

This research, grounded in geopolitical theory and employing both multi-dimensional and content analysis, seeks to explore three key dimensions that form modern perceptions of Ukraine Turkish society. These dimensions not only potentially influence societal attitudes but also impact decision-making processes at both the state and international levels. The study conducted by the authors examines the perception of Ukraine within Turkey through three critical dimensions: academic and political environment, media discourse, practical overview of the bilateral relations, all of which together offer a comprehensive understanding of Turkey's evolving stance towards Ukraine.

### **Political and Academic Thought**

To start with, since prominent political science and international relations scholars belong to different socio-cultural backgrounds and the research areas they focus on are manifold, their professional views on the Russian invasion of Ukraine have a strong tendency to vary from country to country. The majority of Turkish scholars have been considering the impact of the war in Ukraine on the Republic of Türkiye, and investigating the power structures in both regional and international realms, in addition to the role of NATO and the European Union in this conflict (Devlen, 2014, p. 2). As a trend, they advocate for a more nuanced and balanced approach to the war, and their works also highlight the necessity of taking into account both Türkiye's long pragmatic relations and past historical experiences with Russia, as well as Moscow's regional interests that nowadays have a significant impact on Turkish foreign policy. To put it simply, most academic foreign policy experts from Türkiye support the so-called "Türkiye's interests first" approach in this conflict.

The other group of Turkish scholars has been focusing on the humanitarian, legal, and human rights aspects of the war, advocating for more vigorous

condemnation of the Russian Federation and greater support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Some of them openly criticize Ankara's pragmatic approach to the conflict and even raise doubts about the country's true commitment to the norms of human rights, humanitarianism, and democratic principles. Yet, these researchers are currently in the minority in Türkiye (Our Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Foreign Policy as We Enter 2023, 2022; Think Tanks Reports on the Invasion of Ukraine, 2023). Moreover, certain Turkish academics have devoted much energy toward the analysis of bilateral historical and cultural relations between Ukraine and Türkiye, including the common problematic areas of interaction that both nations have. They call for improving the level of cooperation and increasing interstate exchange, as well as for reference to joint history and cultural contexts that often led to misunderstandings and political crises in the past. Overall, the scientific community in Türkiye has engaged in a critical and meaningful discourse around the situation in Ukraine since 2014 (Dalay, 2022, p. 5), reflecting the rich diversity and depth of intellectual potential of Türkiye.

It should be noted though that the Russian war against Ukraine impacts on the current interstate relations between Ankara and Moscow remains a priority research topic for Turkish scholars. Underlining the significance of a Russian factor in Turkish foreign policy, many conclude that the Russian Federation still remains one of the 15 ex-Soviet republics Türkiye has the firmest ties of all. This claim is easily confirmed by the number of academic institutions within the country that specialize specifically in Russian studies rather than any other topic, along with the number of Turkish researchers on the history, politics, or culture of Russia who speak Russian as their second/third language. None of the neighbouring states or Turkish allies, including Ukraine, have established a similar network of scientific connections, which significantly affects the positive national image of these countries compared to the Russian Federation (Nikolko, 2024). Nevertheless, one of the largest fields of international study in Türkiye is global affairs with a special emphasis on NATO and the European Union. And while some



authors, mainly from the first category, centre their war research on historical and cultural connections between Ukraine and Russia, often appealing to Russian propagandistic narratives and worldview claims, others outline the conflict's origins in the rivalry between Russia and the West over the post-Soviet territory forming a unique Turkish idea in this regard (Hacıtahtiroğlu, 2014, p. 261-262). Several scholars interpret this crisis as an East-West confrontation, thus contributing to the narrative popular in the countries neutral to Russia's war in Ukraine. In this context, major scholars from the most prestigious universities and think tanks stress the importance of keeping the balance in Türkiye's geopolitical interaction with both the Western world and Russia. Supporting this idea, they suggest rationalizing geography, energy, and strategic interests, seeking a more pragmatic setting for the current crisis in international affairs.

Still, there are a number of distinguished researchers who disapprove of their government's close ties with Russia at this critical moment of war, as they see such cooperation as a lack of adherence toward NATO obligations and Western values on the whole. Eventually, the purely humanitarian and human rights dimensions of the conflict are another area to which the academia in Türkiye accustoms interest. Particularly starting from February 2022, many scientists at public foundations and NGO consultants like those at Kızılay [the name for Turkish Red Cross] have been raising concerns about civilian's fate, especially in the Donbas region of the East of Ukraine (Our Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Foreign Policy as We Enter 2023, 2022). Some of them have been offering the parties to promptly negotiate a resolution and find a way to delineate their conflict in favour of mitigation and life-saving, while others advocate condemnation and a stronger stance towards Russia's actions and larger international legal support for Ukraine's rights to defend its territory. Thus, the discussions in Türkiye initiated in the academic environment are highly polarized, which signifies the need for a very complex analysis of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, and the causes that resulted in its development, taking into consideration not only the home country's prospects

but also the geopolitical, cultural, and historical contexts of both Turkish allies and rivals.

As a result, Türkiye's official stance toward the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has underscored its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine – an approach the need for which is elaborated on by scholars. According to the mainstream political research line nowadays, this position aligns with Turkish broader foreign policy objectives in the Black Sea and Eastern European regions, wherein Ukraine, the second largest country in the former USSR and the current EU, serves as a counterweight to potential Russian hegemony. Notably, the political tradition founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk more than one hundred years ago should not be neglected. Following his view, at that time Ukraine had had an impressive political weight in the region possessing a positive image as a neighbour (Günay, 2022, p. 7 – *translated by the author*): “It is possible to say that Ukraine and Türkiye are two neighbouring countries. Look carefully to the north. There is the [Black] sea there. But if you imagine for a moment that there is no sea, you will see that Türkiye and Ukraine are much closer countries...” said by Mustafa Kemal on January 3, 1922, in the building with a Ukrainian delegation. Since the core of modern Turkish political thought is grounded in the principles of Kemalism, it is possible to state that certain visions of the founder of the Republic's first president, though to a lesser extent, still affect the construction of Türkiye's geopolitical reality today.

The Turkish government has emerged as one of the most outspoken supporters of Ukraine, in terms of backing its territorial integrity and sovereignty during the war with Russia. Political leaders and influences from all across the Turkish political spectrum have reacted to the Russian aggression by criticizing it and at the same time appealing for a political solution and peaceful resolution. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has made numerous public statements condemning the invasion of Ukraine and expressing solidarity with its people. In February 2022, he stressed that this country would support Kyiv, noting that “the aggression against Ukraine violates international law, human rights, and

democracy, and is unacceptable” (Dinçer, 2022). Erdoğan has also called for the fair exchange of hostilities and the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, which points to his desire to mediate the conflict.

Likewise, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a series of statements criticizing Russia’s invasion and recognizing Ukraine’s right to self-defence, though calling for problem-solving through negotiations. Moreover, other senior Turkish officials echoed worries about the humanitarian crisis in several Ukrainian regions and offered assistance to those affected by the war (Our Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Foreign Policy as We Enter 2023, 2022, p. 13; Devlen, 2014, p. 1). Yet, an issue has emerged as a subject of debate in Türkiye when it comes to the war of 2022 because Turkish politicians have different concerns due to their party affiliations and foreign policy priorities. Some of the political leaders had supported Ukraine in the past, in 2014 and earlier. On February 28, 2022, the leaders of six opposition parties gathered in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and released a joint statement against the Russian invasion and in support of Ukraine. This statement called on the global society to act to immediately stop the war and provide assistance to Ukraine fighting for its independence and territorial integrity (Statement by the Main Opposition Party, 2022). The ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has adopted a very pragmatic approach to the situation, avoiding overt condemnation of Russia and stressing the importance of diplomacy in resolving the conflict, while trying to balance both (Kusa, 2022; Explaining Turkish Foreign Policy Moves in the Context of Russia’s War against Ukraine, 2022, p. 3).

In contrast, the main opposition forces the Republican People’s Party (CHP) and the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) have chosen a more aggressive strategy in protesting against the Kremlin in this war. Moreover, not once have their representatives criticized the government for acting too friendly in relations with Moscow and reminded the adherence to NATO and European values. In sum, exactly like in academia and popular culture, the political Türkiye has no consensus for the Russian-Ukrainian war (Ермав, 2022). Some politicians

advocate the need for effective realistic diplomatic measures to bring both parties to the table and make them talk, whereas others advocate for the supremacy of human rights and international law to maintain the pre-war order (Our Entrepreneurial and Humanitarian Foreign Policy as We Enter 2023, 2022, p. 4-5; Devlen, 2014, p. 1-2).

Therefore, since then, based on Türkiye has been consistent in its recognition of the Kremlin's atrocities and deportations in Crimea back in the 1940s, a stance that not only reinforces its time-tested commitment to Ukraine but also highlights the broader geopolitical contest for dominance in the region. Türkiye's backing of Ukraine's territorial claims has now only fostered a sense of solidarity between the two nations, especially in light of their shared opposition to the expansive policies of Russia.

### **Media Narratives**

The Turkish media landscape plays a critical role in shaping public perception of Ukraine. Media coverage in Türkiye has largely portrayed Ukraine as a resilient and sovereign state defending itself against Russian aggression, a narrative bolstered by the successful use of Turkish-made military equipment. However, Turkish media also reflect the complexities of the nation's foreign policy, often depicting Türkiye's balancing act between supporting Ukraine and maintaining relations with Russia. This balancing act is evident in the mixed narratives presented to the Turkish public, with some outlets emphasizing Türkiye's strategic neutrality and others advocating for stronger support for Ukraine based on shared values and mutual interests.

It is important to notice that Turkey's media landscape has been increasingly vulnerable to Russian narratives, as shown in comprehensive analysis news items related to the war in Ukraine across Turkish media channels (Brusylvoska, 2022).

According to the research focused on popular outlets like CNN TÜRK, Hürriyet, Habertürk, Sözcü, and OdaTV, many of which have mirrored Russian propaganda lines in their coverage of Ukraine (Tarasiuk, 2024). The main media

narratives regarding Ukraine in Turkish media after 2022 do not directly reflect the perception of Ukraine as a strategic partner or geopolitical neighbour, but mostly consider Ukraine through the prism of the war of Russia against Ukraine. It should be noted that the portrayal of Ukraine in Turkish media in the first year of the war and now, at the end of 2024, differs primarily in the intensity of mentions and the polarization of themes. The main media narratives at the beginning of the war often echoed messages from Russian propaganda that were being broadcast by the Russian government at that time.

***“Ukraine as a Victim of American Geopolitical Ambitions”***

In the context of strained Turkish-American relations – exacerbated by issues such as the failed 2016 coup attempt, U.S. support for Kurdish groups in Syria, and Turkey’s stalled EU integration – Ukraine is portrayed in Turkish media as a victim of U.S. hegemonic ambitions. Russian propaganda exploits Turkey's historical scepticism toward the West, framing the war as a consequence of America's quest for a unipolar world order, with Ukraine caught in the crossfire (Kalin, 2022). President Erdoğan’s adviser, Ibrahim Kalin, has repeatedly emphasized that the war is the result of "mutual misunderstandings" between Russia and the West, a narrative that downplays Russia's responsibility and instead focuses on the broader geopolitical contest (Milliyet, 2022).

***“Russia is Fighting Nazis in Ukraine”***

The portrayal of Russia’s war as a fight against “Nazis” in Ukraine was another dominant narrative in Turkish media at the beginning of 2022, particularly among pro-Eurasians’ outlets like OdaTV and Aydınlık Daily. These media platforms have amplified Russia's claims of combating Ukrainian nationalist groups, often drawing comparisons to Turkey’s own battles against Kurdish militant groups. For instance, false reports of Ukrainian soldiers supporting Kurdish forces were circulated to stoke anti-Ukrainian sentiment (OdaTV 2022). These narratives were bolstered by Russian media outlets like Sputnik, which remains operational in Turkey despite being banned in many other countries (Öncan 2022).

### ***“Ukraine Cannot Win the War”***

Another historically rooted narrative in Turkey is the perception that Russia is militarily undefeatable, a belief stemming from the Ottoman Empire’s repeated defeats in Russo-Turkish wars. This sentiment, reflected in media commentary, perpetuates the idea that Ukraine stands no chance of defeating Russia in the long term. However, recent Turkish analyses of Ukraine's military successes – such as the liberation of Kherson and Kharkiv – have somewhat challenged this fatalistic view (Ozkan, 2023).

In general, Turkish media has been giving a relatively balanced overview of what is going on in Ukraine in 2023-2024. Although some authors revealed bias regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this can be fairly justified by the great diversity of views among the press. Some would immediately call for a non-violent and diplomatic solution to the conflict, while others kept utilizing the pro-Russian vision of the problem. Following the academic view, most sections of the media condemned Russia’s actions and demanded a higher degree of response toward the war, while others focused more on peaceful solutions. In 2023-2024, Ukrainian topics in Turkish media have undergone significant shifts, both in intensity and the framing of narratives. Early in the war, many Turkish outlets echoed Russian propaganda, often relaying Moscow’s talking points. However, by late 2024, the coverage became more diverse and polarized, with mentions of Ukraine decreasing in quantity but becoming more focused on specific themes like the grain deal and energy cooperation. Turkish media often portrays Turkey as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine, reflecting Turkey's unique geopolitical position, balancing its NATO commitments with its deep ties to Russia.

Public perception in Turkey of Ukraine is often filtered through this lens of mediation and realpolitik. Reports suggest that Turkish news channels have covered Ukraine less frequently than during the war's initial phase, but the framing has evolved to discuss larger geopolitical implications and Turkey's role as a potential intermediary.

## **Practical Overview of the Bilateral Relations After 2022**

Official Ankara practically views Ukraine as an important regional actor, especially within the spheres of security and defence, which has become increasingly prominent since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022. Türkiye's defence industry has played a crucial role in this bilateral relationship, most notably through the provision of Bayraktar TB2 drones, which have garnered international attention for their effective deployment by Ukrainian forces against Russian advances. The defence collaboration between the two nations extends beyond these drones and includes joint ventures in high-precision weaponry development, further cementing Ukraine's role as a key security partner in Türkiye's strategic calculus within the Black Sea region. This collaboration enhances Türkiye's influence in regional security affairs while helping to counterbalance Russian military dominance in the area.

In addition to the supply of drones, Türkiye and Ukraine have pursued broader defence industry collaboration, including joint production and technological exchanges. In 2021, before the full-scale invasion, the two countries signed agreements to co-produce high-precision weaponry, which included efforts to manufacture advanced drones and other military hardware. This collaboration has continued into the war, with Ukraine and Türkiye jointly developing the Akıncı drone, which incorporates Ukrainian engine technology. Such cooperation has not only strengthened Ukraine's military capabilities but also helped Türkiye diversify its defence industry partnerships, reducing dependency on traditional suppliers and fostering innovation (Bomprezzi, Kharitinov, & Trebesch, 2024). In a further deepening of their defence cooperation, Türkiye and Ukraine signed agreements to establish a joint production facility in Ukraine for Bayraktar TB2 drones. Construction of the plant began in 2023, and it is expected to be fully operational by 2025. This initiative not only strengthens Ukraine's military capabilities but also helps to secure the supply of critical defence technologies amid the on-going war (Bisht, 2023; Soylyu, 2022). Beyond drones, Ukraine and Türkiye have been implementing over 30 defence contracts since the war began. These contracts

cover various defence technologies, including armoured vehicles, missile systems, and joint engine production. Ukrainian companies, for example, have contributed to the engine development for Türkiye's KAAN fighter jet project, showcasing the mutual benefits of their defence industry collaboration (Yeşilada, 2024).

Economic relations between Türkiye and Ukraine have only deepened despite the on-going war, underpinned by robust bilateral trade and cooperation in critical sectors such as energy and infrastructure. Before the conflict, trade between the two nations was gradually but constantly growing, and the economic partnership has persisted despite the disruption. The grain export deal, brokered by Türkiye in 2022 under the auspices of the United Nations, exemplifies the economic interdependence between the two countries and highlights Türkiye's role as a key mediator in preserving global food security. This economic collaboration continues to shape Turkish perceptions of Ukraine as a valuable economic partner, particularly in agriculture, energy, and logistics. Since 2022, economic cooperation between Ukraine and Turkey has significantly expanded, driven by mutual strategic interests, particularly during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. One of the key milestones was the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries on February 3, 2022, which aimed to boost bilateral trade and remove tariffs on a wide range of products. (Урядовий портал, 2022) Despite the war, trade between Ukraine and Turkey reached \$7.4 billion in 2022 and \$10 billion in 2024, showing resilience in sectors like steel, agriculture, and energy. (Resmi Gazete, 2024). Turkey also has been actively investing in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, particularly in infrastructure and renewable energy sectors. In January 2024, an agreement was signed in Istanbul allowing Turkish firms to participate in rebuilding Ukraine's damaged infrastructure, including housing, roads, and water transport. This cooperation stems from a memorandum of understanding signed in 2022. Turkey is also engaging in long-term recovery efforts, aiming to boost bilateral trade and contribute to Ukraine's economic recovery.



Cultural and historical connections, particularly regarding the Crimean Tatar diaspora, play a significant role in shaping Türkiye's perception of Ukraine. Türkiye has long-standing cultural ties to Crimean Tatars, an ethnic Turkic group that maintains a significant presence in both Ukraine and Türkiye. These ties have strengthened Türkiye's humanitarian posture toward Ukraine, particularly after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, which led to the displacement of many Tatars. Particularly because of their large historical presence in Türkiye, the word "Ukraine" itself is now often associated with resilience and resistance having a very positive connotation. The local Crimean Tatar communities notably contribute to the view of Ukraine as a nation struggling for justice, freedom, and human rights. These narratives find fertile ground in Türkiye for which Crimea is a recurring theme regarding historical readings and discussions on its association with the Ottomans and the Russians. Way before the current crisis, Türkiye had been concerned with the fate of Crimean Tatars, given the fact of four massive waves of Tatar immigration from the peninsula due to the Russian aggression recorded in Turkish history.

Starting with the first such wave in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, after Crimea 90% inhabited by Turkic people was incorporated into the Russian Empire; then, similarly faced ethnic cleansings in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the date of which is still remembered in Türkiye as a national tragedy; going to the biggest flow of Crimean Tatar displacement by the Soviet Union in World War II; and also today with Tatars trying to escape the occupied territory where the Muslim population is limited to nearly 10-15%, the Turkish state has always been the place of shelter for this brotherly people (Nikolko, 2024). Nowadays, the city of Eskişehir in west-central Türkiye has become home to the largest Crimean Tatar diaspora in the world. Over the decades, it has been serving as a refuge to generations of Crimean Tatars, many of whom have assimilated and blended with the local population while still maintaining a strong connection to their historical homeland. These people openly advocate for Ukraine to achieve victory against Russia on the battlefield and ensure strong moral support, while mobilizing

Turkish resources at the same time. As an example, following the local Crimean Tatar diaspora's request, it was recently decided to open a centre in Eskişehir for assisting displaced Ukrainian mothers and children called "Kırım Ailesi" [*Crimean Family*]. Thus, the diaspora has played a key role in raising awareness about Ukraine among Turks and has been contributing to the formation of a cross-country agenda in favor of it (Aydın, 2024, p.13-14). Since 2021, Ukraine has received both political and humanitarian aid from Türkiye related to the Crimean Tatar needs. Turkish support for the Tatar community has reinforced the perception of Ukraine as an ally in protecting vulnerable populations and maintaining regional stability. Media coverage in Türkiye often highlights this humanitarian aspect of the conflict, framing Ukrainians as well as Crimeans as a direct victim of Russian aggression, thus further fostering public sympathy and support.

The topic of Crimea and Crimean Tatar migrants is particularly significant in Ukrainian-Turkish relations. Before being president, Abdullah Gül said that "Türkiye considers Crimean Tatars as loyal citizens of Ukraine and a community that will contribute to the friendship of the two countries" (Мхитарян, 2006, p. 16). Türkiye greatly supports Ukraine in integrating Tatars and other indigenous people of Turkic origin returning to the country from occupation or exile. On a broader scale, Ankara has always looked at Crimea as an important partnership point connecting Ukraine with Türkiye with Kyiv being a link between civilizations. Centred in Crimea, the key concept of regional cooperation is based on intercultural, humanitarian, and security interaction between Ukraine in Türkiye at times of the rising Russian threat in the Black Sea region. Given Ukraine's pivotal role in this security architecture system, its stability has always been crucial for Türkiye as well as for the people of Ukraine. Some even view Ukraine as a highly influential actor and stabilizing partner for Türkiye particularly in its traditional role of containing Russian entry into the Black Sea. As some political experts pointed out, an ideological, liberal, stable, and Western-oriented Ukraine may become a reliable strategic partner for Türkiye in countering the expansionist

ambitions of the Russian Federation and maintaining security in the Black Sea area (Dost, 2024).

Politically, the Crimean Tatars are one of the most active ethnic groups in Türkiye, advocating for greater cooperation and support for Ukraine. At first, there are about 30 non-governmental *Crimean Tatar Culture and Cooperation/Solidarity Associations* [Kırım Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma/Dayanışma Dernekleri] across the country, the largest of which are located in Ankara, Istanbul, Eskişehir, and Bursa. These organizations are constantly engaged in educational activities, publishing historical books and popular magazines in the Turkish, Ukrainian, and Tatar languages, at the same time cultivating awareness about Ukraine and fighting Russian disinformation (Aydın, 2024). It would not be an exaggeration to say the initiative to run the Crimean Platform – a Ukrainian state project that annually brings together dozens of country leaders to discuss the issue of Crimea de-occupation – belongs to the political leaders of Crimean Tatars. Obviously, the Republic of Türkiye and President Erdogan personally are regular participants in this network. For the Turkish President, the Crimean Tatar topic is both internal and foreign policy aspects. By addressing this issue, he reaffirms the list of Türkiye’s interests in the region and the solidarity of Türkiye with Ukraine’s non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea. Such a stance indicates concerns of Ankara about its own compatriots whose fate has long been drawing the attention of Turkish citizens. For many ordinary Turks, the Crimean peninsula is closely associated with the regional geopolitics, geostrategy, national and historical identity of the Turkish state.

### **Conclusion**

In the recent years, Ukraine has become an increasingly important factor in Turkish foreign policy, especially in the context of the Russian invasion of 2022. During the war, Türkiye provided increased multi-faceted assistance to Ukraine and was quite vocal in defending Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. Furthermore, Türkiye is the most prominent supporter of Ukraine’s control over

the Crimean Peninsula and an advocate of Crimean Tatars living in Ukraine and abroad. The Ukrainian-Turkish bilateral partnership is most noticeable in the sphere of economics and defence. The volume of interstate trade has been on the rise within these three years with Türkiye being the key market for Ukrainian exports. Türkiye also largely invests in projects in Ukraine to be fulfilled now and after the war ends. However, there is no clear consensus on the status of relations between Kyiv and Ankara in Turkish society and political circles. While several narratives are attempting to conceptualize Ukraine's role in Turkish foreign policy, in reality, this question has been raised recently to the on-going war. Despite the trend of sympathizing with and supporting Ukraine, the definition of its status as an emerging regional power or future strategic partner will take time to be elaborated on by academia, accepted by society, and adopted by the government,

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the Republic of Türkiye has consistently supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine. However, the Turkish geopolitical view of this war, defined by political and military obligations, as well as economic interests and bilateral cooperation with Russia, has always been rather unorthodox compared to other NATO countries. Unlike many of the EU states, in recent years Türkiye has been generally appealing to several Russian geopolitical and propaganda narratives, especially concerning blaming the United States for the conflict and heightening suspicion of the West. Nevertheless, in Turkish media and expert circles, Ukraine is normally portrayed as a friendly state and a relatively significant regional actor, though not the most critically important strategic partner.

Over the years it has become obvious that Russian propaganda and disinformation have considerably affected the Turkish media and society. Many media outlets have been accused of spreading fake news or even adopting a pro-Russian stance. Moreover, Russia-affiliated media channels like RT and Sputnik have also been actively involved in the promotion of their geopolitical version of history and current affairs, including the situation around Ukraine. The bigger problem is that the good majority of news authors and scholarly researchers writing about Ukraine in the Turkish language are both political scientists and

politicians residing in Russia or domestic propagandists sympathizing with the Kremlin. And since a very small percentage of Turks understand Ukrainian, the broader ex-Soviet geography is studied by Russian-speaking Turkish academicians relying predominantly on Russian materials.

In summary, the continuation of war between Russia and Ukraine poses a serious threat to the vital Turkish interests. In case of a limited armed conflict, it allows the Turkish authorities to enhance their reputation in the international arena through mediation and diplomatic activities; however, any large-scale war weakens Türkiye's position and undermines its ability to maintain neutrality. The modern perception of Ukraine in Türkiye is predominantly shaped by strategic, geopolitical, cultural, and economic factors. Despite the complexities arising from Türkiye's relations with Russia, Ukraine is largely viewed as a valuable partner, particularly in the areas of defence cooperation, regional security, and economic collaboration. The shared history and cultural ties, especially regarding the Crimean Tatars, further reinforce this partnership. As the conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues, Türkiye's diplomatic and strategic engagements will likely continue to shape its evolving perception of Ukraine, maintaining a balance between solidarity with Ukraine and pragmatism in its relationship with Russia.

Ukraine, for its part, has been trying to challenge Russia's messages in Türkiye and spread its messages through public diplomacy, cultural activities, and media campaigns. Thus, the comparatively low penetration of Ukrainian messaging in media consumption in Türkiye can be explained by the high levels of media consumption in Türkiye and the low level of interest of many Turks in Ukrainian issues. Therefore, distinguishing a Ukrainian narrative from a Russian one in the light of cultural dominance in today's Türkiye is not an easy task and can hardly reveal a direct impact of the abovementioned factors.

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# CONSEQUENCES OF THE RUSSIA INVASION OF UKRAINE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN THROUGH THE LENS OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

*Olga Brusylowska*

## **Introduction**

The world's reaction to Russian aggression is still inadequate. What consequences does it have, and what other challenges can it bring to Ukraine, Russia, other countries, and entire regions? Russian aggression against Ukraine has affected not only these two countries. Above all, it has influenced the further development of global problems such as famine, decline of agriculture, rising prices, economic instability and shortage of cheap energy. The war affects not only developing countries but also the most developed ones. Therefore, this chapter presents scenarios for the Mediterranean countries, the EU, and NATO (since the fate of these organisations is vital for the Mediterranean) as they appeared in Academia.

The research question is: How has the Russian-Ukrainian war affected the academic discourse on the scenarios for the future of Mediterranean countries? About 100 sources were collected, published during 2022-2024. Semi-structured interview and data from media and secondary sources were used to collect qualitative data; Discourse Analysis was implemented to analyse the qualitative data. The hypothesis is that the Russian-Ukrainian war influenced academic discourse, so we can talk about the return of Classical Realism as the main school of international relations theory.

Scientists choose scenario planning as a primary tool for constructing scenarios for the future development of the conflict and its consequences, which allows for managing the uncertainty of the future. The essence of this tool is to study the organisation's external environment for the presence of *predetermined elements* and *key uncertainties* and combine them to formulate alternative

scenarios for the future. In short, we must make a choice that, in our opinion, determines the future in a given context. Critical factors for planning are where uncertainty is high and impact is substantial. In our case, the context is Russia's war against Ukraine, and the subject of substantial impact is the Mediterranean. Scientists use the Russian-Ukrainian war to construct a scenario field/field of uncertainty; then they form scenarios, all the time thinking about their plausibility.

## **Global Problems and Their Regional Dimensions**

### ***Famine***

Many activities were not possible last years. Even if Ukrainian farmers could reach their fields during the 2022-2024 seasons, they were short of fertiliser, pesticides, herbicides, and fuel for farm machinery. Immediately after the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian War, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) predicted that between 20-30% of the areas under winter cereal, maize and sunflower seed production in Ukraine would either not be planted or remain unharvested, with the yields of these crops also likely to be adversely affected (Benton, Froggatt, & Wellesley, 2022).

Today, countries dependent on food imports are at particular risk of a prolonged crisis because Russia and Ukraine are among the world's largest exporters of wheat, sunflower oil, animal feed and fertilisers to the Middle East and Africa. For example, Egypt is the largest importer of wheat in the world, importing up to 23 million tonnes (2020). Over 80% of these imports come from Russia and Ukraine. Lebanon is a major wheat importer, with 68% (2020) of imports coming from Ukraine and Russia. 98% (2020) of Lebanon's sunflower oil comes from Russia and Ukraine. The World Bank has described the current crisis in Lebanon as one of the most severe of the past 100 years (Adibe, 2022).

The World Food Programme anticipated significant disruption to its shipments from Odesa destined for Africa, where from 2022 to 2023, up to 14.5 million people were food insecure. The blockade of Ukrainian ports left an estimated 22 million tonnes of wheat, corn and other grains stranded in silos, with

devastating effects on global food prices and poverty levels. Thus, the World Food Programme warned that the conflict would push an additional 47 million people globally into “acute hunger”, with Africa’s steepest increase in starvation rates (Temnycky, 2022).

Since staple crops and oilseeds are substitutable in many global markets, price rises for one food type can prompt similar price movements for other types (OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2021-2030, 2021). Price movement is currently evident in most staple grain and oilseed prices. In 2024, rice prices were 18 per cent higher yearly. Maize prices were 10 per cent higher, wheat prices 5 per cent lower, and rice prices 46 per cent higher than in January 2020. In 2024, production was 0.1 per cent lower than in 2023, with declines in the European Union, Turkey, and Ukraine. Maize production was 1.3 per cent lower than in 2023, driven by reductions in Ukraine, although the European Union had larger harvests than in 2023. Rice production for 2024/25 is tentatively projected to grow by 0.9 per cent yearly to achieve a new peak, bolstered by robust plantings and greater yield. Wheat export prices surged dramatically because of mounting concerns over production in the Northern Hemisphere, particularly in the Black Sea region, exacerbated by attacks on shipping infrastructure in Russia and Ukraine. Average Grains and Oilseeds Index wheat sub-index values spiked by 11 per cent to 8-month high, with Russia and Ukraine experiencing firmer market conditions amidst domestic price increases and supply constraints. In maize markets, prices rose for the third consecutive month, driven by production uncertainties and spill-over effects from wheat. Ukraine led the gains with tightened old crop supplies amid increased shipments (Food Security Update, 2024).

Conflict, leading to widespread displacement, destruction of food systems, and restricted humanitarian access, remains the primary cause of food insecurity in many hotspots. The conflict in Gaza worsens conditions there, potentially leading to famine by May 2024. In the Middle East and North Africa, Lebanon and Syria face increasing challenges due to regional conflict dynamics. So, in Syria, 12.9

million people are in “Acute Food Insecurity in Hunger Hotspots”, and in Lebanon – 1.2 million.

According to the IPC analysis, a high and sustained risk of “Famine” persists across the whole Gaza Strip as long as the conflict continues and humanitarian access is restricted. Approximately 96 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip (21.5 million people) face high levels of acute food insecurity. Although the whole territory is classified in “Emergency” condition, the latest IPC findings show that approximately 495,000 people (22 per cent of the population) face “Catastrophic” levels of acute food insecurity through September 2024. In this phase, households experience an extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaustion of coping capacities. Another 745,000 people (33 per cent) face “Emergency” conditions.

The conflict in southern Lebanon has heightened the risk of wildfires, mainly because of Israel’s use of incendiary munitions such as white phosphorus. It has resulted in extensive damage to agricultural lands, with significant losses of olive, banana, and citrus trees and severe impacts on soil fertility and local ecosystems.

In Jordan, WFP has been facing a funding shortfall since July 2023, resulting in a 30 per cent reduction in regular cash assistance levels for refugees.

During the national meeting in Algeria, “Naama: Perspectives for Investment in Strategic Crops and Development of Local Breeds”, officials emphasised government efforts to support agricultural investment and integrate production into processing operations, particularly in southern regions.

In Libya, climate change has severely decreased food security, turning once-fertile lands known for figs, olives, and almonds into barren fields, forcing villagers to abandon their lands and livestock.

In Morocco, forecast production of the main cereals (soft wheat, durum wheat, barley) for the 2023/24 crop year is estimated at approximately 31.2 million quintals, compared with 55.1 quintals in 2022/23 – a decrease of approximately 43 per cent. Moroccan wheat imports are set to increase by 19 per cent in 2024, reaching nearly 7.5 million tonnes.

In Syria, wheat production remains subsidised in areas under and out of the control of the Syrian government, and the Syrian government and autonomous administration in north-eastern Syria have set the price for purchasing above international benchmarks. Nevertheless, given the volatility of the Syrian pound, farmers prefer to use their production or sell it on the free market, given delays in payments from the government and authorities in control (Food Security Update, 2024).

The attempts to deal with this problem also failed because of the Russo-Ukrainian War. On July 22, 2022, Ukraine and Russia struck separate deals with the UN and Turkey to avoid a global food crisis, agreeing to a “de facto ceasefire” on cargo ships that would collect millions of tonnes of stranded grain from Ukrainian ports. The first grain ship bound for Lebanon left Odesa under the deal on August 1. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said the agreement would “bring relief for developing countries on the edge of bankruptcy and the most vulnerable people on the edge of famine” by helping to stabilise global food prices. However, with fighting continuing in Ukraine and deep mistrust between the two sides, especially after the missile attack on the Odesa port on the second day after the signing of the agreements, upholding the deal would be a considerable challenge (Zabrisky, 2022).

Assessing this situation, Timothy Snyder came to the conclusion: “To starve Africans and Asians, as Putin sees it, is a way to transfer the demographic stress to Europe by way of a wave of refugees fleeing hunger. The Russian bombing of Syrian civilians followed a similar logic. Russian propaganda today has an edge in the global South. Russia is a known quantity in much of Africa, whereas Ukraine is not. Few African leaders have publicly opposed Putin’s war; some might be persuaded to parrot his talking points. Across the global South, it is not widely known that Ukraine is a leading exporter of food – nor that it is a poor country with a GDP per capita comparable to that of the countries it feeds, such as Egypt and Algeria” (Snyder, 2022). But there is some reason for hope: “Ukrainians have been trying to communicate the reality of their position to people in the global South so

that they can speak the truth about Moscow's hunger plan and thereby make it impossible. If Ukraine wins, it will resume exporting foodstuffs to the global South. By removing a great risk of suffering and instability in the global South, a victorious Ukraine would preserve the possibility of global cooperation on shared problems such as climate change" (Snyder, 2022).

### ***Decline of Agriculture***

Immediately after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some countries imposed fertiliser export restrictions; Ukraine and Russia have banned fertiliser exports. Also, in mid-March, Russia banned the export of wheat, maize, and other cereals, while Egypt and Serbia imposed export bans on staple crops (Mariotti, 2022).

Economic sanctions have constrained the global supply of nitrogenous and phosphate-based fertilisers from Russia and potassic fertilisers from Belarus and Russia. These fertilisers are needed everywhere. Supply chain disruptions create economic challenges for the industry as input prices rise and sales decline. It can lead to business failures and job losses. All these impacts heighten the economic burden of the growing crisis on governments (Canuto, 2022).

The current high price of fertiliser is already changing farming practices through reductions in areas sown and amounts of fertiliser applied, which will further constrain the food supply. Not only that, impacts of the conflict on transportation costs are already becoming evident in the US: as demand for wheat pivots, the costs of exporting grain from the Gulf of Mexico coast have risen to a near eight-year high (Korn, & Stemmler, 2022).

So, food and supply chain disruptions will create economic challenges for the industry as input prices rise and sales decline, which can lead to business failures and job losses. All these impacts add to the economic burden and crisis many developing countries face.

### ***Shortage of Cheap Energy and Prices' Rising***

Goldman Sachs, a leading global financial institution that delivers a broad range of financial services, has stated after the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine that the world could now be facing one of the "largest energy supply



shocks ever". At the same time, Barclays and Rystad Energy suggest worst-case scenarios leading to prices of US\$ 200 per barrel of oil (Felbermayr, Mahlkow, & Sandkamp, 2022).

The European Commission introduced a proposal to reduce the use of Russian gas by 60% in 2022 through the diversification of pipeline gas, as well as the production of renewable gas; increased energy efficiency in homes, including through behavioural change; accelerating the rollout of heat pumps; and the accelerated deployment of renewables. The EU proposed that the bloc cut its natural gas consumption by 15% over the next eight months in a plan that would affect all households, power producers and industries (Hoop Scheffer, & Weber, 2022).

Developed countries are also affected by higher oil and gas prices. For instance, in the face of Russian aggression, the European Union (EU) plans to reduce its dependence on Russian oil and gas significantly. Moreover, the war in Ukraine could exacerbate the cost of living crisis as price pressures hit consumers hard. Unprecedented price rises for food, fuel and other essential goods spell trouble for populations worldwide, particularly when governments want to reduce spending on social safety nets (Brusylovska, The Russia-Ukraine war, 2022).

The world faces a risk of rising food and energy insecurity, and the current cost of living crisis may spark further conflicts.

### **The Adverse Scenario for the Mediterranean**

Cold War analogies will not be helpful in a world where Ukraine lost the war. The Cold War border in Europe had flashpoints, but the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 stabilised it. By contrast, Russian suzerainty over Ukraine would open a vast zone of destabilisation and insecurity from Estonia to Turkey. For as long as it lasts, Russia's presence in Ukraine will be perceived by Ukraine's neighbours as provocative and unacceptable and, for some, as a threat to their security. Amid this shifting dynamic, the order in Europe will have to be conceived of in primarily military terms – which, since Russia has a more substantial hand in the military

than in the economic realm, will be in the Kremlin's interest – side-lining non-military institutions such as the European Union.

Eastern member states would have NATO troops permanently on their soil. NATO will depend on US support, as will the anxious and imperilled countries of Europe's East, the frontline nations arrayed along a now huge, expanded, and uncertain line of contact with Russia, Belarus and the Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine. Eastern member states, including Albania, Croatia and Slovenia, will likely have substantial NATO troops permanently stationed on their soil (Uvalić, 2023).

Disappointment, a deficit of trust, and fear of being betrayed by the allies may eventually push Ukraine into searching for alternative formats of cooperation and relying on the other actors who may contribute to the security and stability of the region (be it the US, the UK or other actors powerful enough to deter Russia). A few formats of that type have already been sketched, such as the so-called European Commonwealth, the recent initiative allegedly voiced by the British leadership. The potential for such initiatives will be lower than the EU's or NATO's, and they will thirst for investments and lack European normative power. However, their existence will serve as a plan B in case of the inefficiency of the existing security and cooperation formats or the failure to provide adequate support to the region in the event of further Russian aggression (by applying Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union or Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU). Moreover, trust among the participating parties will compensate for other weaknesses of the abovementioned blocks and initiatives (Heusgen, 2022).

### **The Favourable Scenario for the Mediterranean**

However, in addition to the adverse, a favourable scenario is associated with new regional trends. First, post-communist countries, like Albania, Croatia and Slovenia, are at the centre of attention worldwide. The problems often voiced by the leaderships of these countries are now being discussed at the level of the G7, the

UN, and other international institutions and forums, and what is even more critical are being taken seriously. The narrative of blaming the region's leaders for unjustified Russophobia is fading away (Poliak-Grujić, & Domaradzki, 2022).

If earlier the EU and its leading countries blamed them for exaggerating the threat of Russia's weaponised gas supplies, now the EU is fully aware of the risks and is moving ahead with a green transition and seeking alternative supply routes. These states are the pioneers in this regard. Also, the new solidarity and the accelerated launching of the interconnectors played their role in assuring resilience in facing up to Russian pressure in the energy domain: the Bulgarian and Greek energy regulators took a joint decision to license the gas connection operator – ICGB. The news from Romania may also impact developments in the region's energy security domain. Romanian gas transmission systems operator Transgaz has signed a roadmap agreement with the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund (3SIIF) to develop green-field gas infrastructure projects in the country. Given Romania's extensive domestic oil and gas reserves, further investment in gas transmission infrastructure is anticipated to drive economic development in the region while also supporting European energy security and the energy transition in the Three Seas region (Brusylovská, Consequences of Russia's invasion, 2022).

Solidarity with Ukraine, with a high level of support, including military support, has not only resulted in closer relations with Kyiv but also made the voices of these countries stronger. While their support for Ukraine was often perceived as an unjustified sentiment, nowadays, for the EU, it is clear that such support is a necessary precondition for stabilising the region and a way to deter further Russian aggression. Moreover, the emerging security cooperation of the countries of the region creates a pretext for shaping a sort of defence alliance that has the potential to strengthen NATO in the region and beyond NATO borders. Moreover, Finland and Sweden's decision to ensure their security by joining NATO may also lead to their desire to join 3SI, strengthening the initiative economically and militarily.

The critical role of Ukraine as a contributor to security and as a country that may eventually be an essential participant in regional projects points out that it should gain the status of a partner, if not a full member, of the mentioned initiatives. An additional argument in this regard is that Ukraine will need lots of investment for reconstruction and adaptation to post-war reality. The EU-centred Three Seas Initiative (3SI: Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, launched in 2015) may serve as a hub for the reconstruction projects, to connect Ukraine to the security cooperation framework existing within this initiative and supported not only by the EU and NATO but also by the US and Japan, which are expressing a growing interest in the region (Брусилловська, 2022).

Ukraine's partners realised this need and advocated for Ukraine's membership in 3SI. For example, the Three Seas Initiative may give an additional impetus to the infrastructure projects, considering the changes in the security situation in the Mediterranean, Baltic, and the Black Sea.

So, if Ukraine receives strong Western support (be it weapons, ammunition, financial support, or the status of a candidate for EU accession), the chance given to Ukraine and Europe will be well-spent. To some extent, the emerging initiatives may help to preserve local cooperation and regional projects, but only the security gravity of NATO and the normative and economic power of the EU may drive other regions like the Mediterranean forward.

### **Consequences for the EU and NATO: Influence on the Mediterranean *Adverse Scenario***

If Russia gains control of Ukraine or manages to destabilise it on a significant scale, a new era for Europe will begin. European leaders would face the dual challenge of rethinking European security and not being drawn into a larger war with Russia. All sides would have to consider the potential of nuclear-armed adversaries in confrontation. These two responsibilities – robustly defending European peace and prudently avoiding military escalation with Russia – will not

necessarily be compatible. The EU countries could find themselves profoundly unprepared for the task of having to create a new European security order as a result of Russia's military actions in Ukraine. If Russia achieves its political aims in Ukraine by military means, Europe will not be what it was before the war. Any sense that the European Union or NATO can ensure peace on the continent will be the artefact of a lost age. Instead, security in Europe will have to be reduced to defending the core members of the EU and NATO. Everyone outside the clubs will stand alone. Reducing may not necessarily be a conscious decision to end enlargement or association policies, but it will be a *de facto* policy. Under a perceived siege by Russia, the EU and NATO will no longer have the capacity for ambitious policies beyond their borders (Брусилловська, 2022).

Europe will also be in a state of permanent economic war with Russia. Russia will retaliate in the cyber domain and the energy sector. Moscow will limit access to critical goods such as titanium, which Russia has been the world's second-largest exporter. This war of attrition will test both sides. Russia will be ruthless in trying to get one or several European states to back away from economic conflict by linking a relaxation in tension to these countries' self-interest, thus undermining consensus in the EU and NATO. Europe's strong suit is its economic leverage. Russia's asset will be any source of domestic division or disruption in Europe or Europe's transatlantic partners. Here, Russia will be proactive and opportunistic. If a pro-Russian movement or candidate shows up, that candidate can be encouraged directly or indirectly. Suppose an economic or political sore point diminishes the foreign policy efficacy of the United States and its allies. In that case, it will be a weapon for Russian propaganda and espionage. Through methods fair and foul, Russia will take whatever opportunity comes its way to influence public opinion and elections in European countries. Furthermore, the massive refugee flows arriving in Europe will exacerbate the EU's unresolved refugee policy and provide fertile ground for populists (Petsinis, 2023).

In the event of a Russian victory in Ukraine, Germany should wait to challenge its position in Europe; France and the United Kingdom will assume

leading roles in European affairs with their comparatively strong militaries and long tradition of military interventions. Russia has Europe's largest conventional military, ready to use. The EU's defence policy – in contrast to NATO's – is far from being able to provide security for its members. Responding to a revanchist Russia with sanctions and the rhetorical proclamation of a rules-based international order will not be sufficient (Maurer, Whitman, & Wright, 2023).

In Ukraine, EU and NATO countries will never recognise a new Russian-backed regime created by Moscow. Nevertheless, they will face the same challenge they do with Belarus: wielding sanctions without punishing the population and supporting those in need without having access to them. Some NATO members will bolster a Ukrainian insurgency, to which Russia will respond by threatening NATO members. Confrontation with Russia at the same time can, in the worst case, extend to proxy wars in the Middle East or Africa.

### ***Favourable Scenario***

A favourable scenario means we witness a new concept of the EU's foreign politics and transition from “the strategic partnership” to “strategic confrontation” with Russia. So, the worst principle of the previous policy – “business as usual” – must have been in the past. As Michal Baranowski stressed, “This is the start of an era of a long confrontation with Russia: Putin made it clear that his ambitions extend beyond Ukraine into Central Europe. It is critical that NATO frustrates his plans in Ukraine and secures the alliance's borders for the long run” (Baranowski, 2022).

James Nixey was the first scientist to make the following emphasis: “Only wide-ranging countermeasures can have any effect on Russia's war in the medium term. This means not ordinary sanctions but massive sanctions, “oligarch squeezing”, disinvestment especially in energy, cultural and sporting boycotts, supporting Ukrainian resilience with military, economic, and humanitarian assistance, and assurances of international criminal legal recourse in the long-term. There needs to be an understanding that, although all this comes at a heavy cost, it

is the price of finally facing down Putin and ensuring the future safety of Europe” (Nixey, 2022).

Paul Maddrell predicted that “Putin’s policy will fail, just like Stalin and his successors failed, only if the West proves too united and too strong to be defeated. To take their eastern and southern territories back, the Ukrainians will not only have to wage a long war, but they will also have to receive enormous military, financial and economic assistance from Europe. The US cannot be expected to provide the lion’s share of the assistance, as it has done up to now” (Maddrell, 2022). Full membership of the European Union for Ukraine must be on the cards to strengthen the country (Maddrell, Interview, 2022).

And finally, Maria Popova and Oxana Shevel resumed: “Only collective resolve to deter Putin could both prevent an even wider war in Ukraine and preserve the rules-based democratic order in Europe and beyond. Standing up to Putin as he seeks to destroy freedom for Ukraine defends not only Ukraine but also its people. It would defend a core value of Western democracies and thus their national interests” (Popova, & Shevel, 2022).

So, from the very beginning of the Russian invasion, we see a fairly stable expert opinion in favour of the possibility of supporting Ukraine, which has become a critical factor in the future security of Europe.

The unprovoked Russian aggression provided explicit evidence of the malign Russian influence on the EU member-states and its immediate neighbourhood and is now being deterred not only at the national level but also at the EU level. The efforts to tackle Russian hybrid warfare, which were previously undertaken separately by such countries as Croatia or Slovenia, are now coordinated at the EU level and supported by the EU’s tools. The European Union has already limited the inflow of Russian propaganda. European countries continue to shut down Russian propaganda channels and take other measures against them. The European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) coordinates information related to the measures taken by the European National Regulatory Authorities. The EU has imposed sanctions on state media RT/Russia Today and Sputnik in the EU. Sputnik and

RT/Russia Today have been suspended from broadcasting in the EU. Third, the agreement between the European Parliament and the member states on the Directive on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union (NIS 2 Directive) paves the way for enhanced cyber defence. On top of it all, hundreds of officials in Russia's diplomatic missions have been expelled by Western countries since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. That is one of the largest collective expulsions of Russian diplomats in modern history. The expulsion of Russian diplomats also limited their malign influence on the national governments. The investigations following the expulsion helped find out the sources of leaks of classified information (Giles, 2022).

NATO has also intensified efforts to counter disinformation, following clear direction from the Allied Heads of State and Government in the 2018 Brussels Summit Declaration and the 2019 London Declaration. Secondly, it is clear today that if NATO allows Russia to seize a country by force, fearing its threats, it will deal a fatal blow to the principle of Nuclear Non-Proliferation. Then, there will no longer be convincing arguments against nuclear weapons for states with nuclear ambitions. Because then they will conclude that they can, at their discretion, use the bomb as a means of capturing nuclear-free states simply by threatening to use it. If there may be little that the collective West can do to prevent a Russian military conquest, it will be able to influence what happens afterwards (NATO 2022 Strategic Concept).

The shock of an immense military move by Russia will raise questions in Ankara. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Turkey has been enjoying the venerable Cold War game of playing off the superpowers. Nevertheless, Turkey has a substantial relationship with Ukraine. As a NATO member, it will not benefit from militarising the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean (Kardaş, 2022). Russian actions destabilising the broader region might push Turkey back toward the United States, which could drive a wedge between Ankara and Moscow. Such a move would suit NATO and open up greater possibilities for a US-Turkish partnership in the Middle East. Rather than a nuisance, Turkey could turn into the



ally it is supposed to be. So, according to Frans Osinga, for example, Russia's war failed, and after this change, NATO will soon be even more influential (Rothman, Peperkamp, & Rietjens, 2024).

The question of democratic values is also at stake. As Timothy Snyder underlined, "Democracy and nationhood depend on the capacity of individuals to assess the world for themselves and take unexpected risks; their destruction depends on asserting grand falsehoods that are known to be such; the war in Ukraine is a test of whether a tyranny that claims to be a democracy can triumph," and vice-versa, a Ukrainian victory would give democracy a fresh wind (Snyder, 2022).

### **Conclusion**

Studying articles devoted to Russia's war against Ukraine, we can conclude that they are built within the framework of the "good news – bad news" dichotomy, that is, the story focuses on a contrasting description of the main characteristics of the scenario as it is being implemented. First, it's bad, and then it's good. Then everything changes places. In the end, things got bad but couldn't get any worse. So, there is hope for improvement in the future.

Our hypothesis that the Russian-Ukrainian war influenced academic discourse so that we can talk about the return of Classical Realism as the main school of International Relations Theory was not approved. Most academic work is based on international political theory, where morality, norms, values and human rights are central (for ex., Rothman, Peperkamp, & Rietjens, 2024). In our case, the interdependence between the Russian-Ukrainian war and developments in the Mediterranean is not the least important.

To conclude, the specificity of the Russian-Ukrainian war is that it is a regional crisis that lies outside the area of responsibility of the EU or NATO. However, a regional crisis with global consequences has already affected almost all countries and all levels of international relations. Concerning the world economy, price rises will be a great challenge, particularly for low-income households, who

spend large proportions of their incomes on food, and at a time when governments are looking to reduce spending on social safety nets and moving to increase spending on defence and national security. Higher energy prices in developing countries will also be particularly damaging, as much of the population already has to spend more of their income on fuel (often primarily needed for cooking or transport). Higher prices may lead to further supply shortages, as those who can afford to do so may start hoarding these supplies. The additional economic costs of responding to the war in Ukraine, on top of the enormous disruption caused by COVID-19, could push economies into recession. People unable to access enough food and energy can quickly become more militant in their efforts to reach better security.

In the current war, Putin's first order of business is to topple the pro-Western government of Ukraine and to make the country a vassal state like in neighbouring Belarus. It signals to the world that the Kremlin will not tolerate any further expansion of NATO to the East. Russia seeks to acquire an unofficial right of veto to prevent the expansion of NATO and the EU to the East. Why? Because of this, Russia sees the only way to regain its status as an empire, which is essential not only for the Kremlin elite but, as polls show, the majority of Russians are in favour of returning to the status of a great power.

A prolonged war that ravaged Europe's largest country radiates instability into all regions. Russia's attempts to undermine solidarity in the EU and NATO put in question the cohesion and sustainability of both blocks and, indeed, may create division lines between the countries that strive to deter Russia and those which are still influenced by Russian propaganda and *Putinverstehers* (which translates as «Putin understander» politicians, analysts and businessmen who try to understand Putin and to justify his policies).

For today granting Ukraine candidate status concerning the EU is decisive for ending the war. It will recognise Ukraine as part of the European community, open the way for investments to rebuild Ukraine, and encourage closer relations with the EU and its Neighbourhoods.

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## CONCLUSIONS

*Olga Brusylovska, Seven Erdoğan, and Daniela Irrera*

The Mediterranean region is an essential geopolitical crossroads, bridging some of the most critical regions of world politics, namely Europe, Africa and the Middle East. For this reason, the issues of regionalism and regionalisation in the Mediterranean have always been complex and have found appeal among a wide range of audiences. This monograph advances the idea of the need to consider the Mediterranean as a region that spans the Black Sea subsystem, including Ukraine and Russia.

Ukraine, which is engaged in a protracted war with Russia, needs every voice of support and every country that can help it hold out until the Russians understand that it is impossible to take over a country whose inhabitants are ready to resist. Given the weight of the Mediterranean in world politics, this region is a priority for Ukrainian foreign policy. In this context, established ties with former communist countries are invaluable and offer hope for mutual understanding with other states and their societies. Today, in Turkey and other non-EU countries, Ukraine is portrayed as a friendly state but not the leading crucial strategic partner. Ukraine must find arguments for why cooperation is for the benefit of the Mediterranean countries and not a gesture of charity. The most compelling argument is the total impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on all global and regional problems; their sharp exacerbation for two years speaks about it.

The war in Ukraine is one of the on-going parameters shaping global politics. It has also impacted the Mediterranean region, mainly as it hosts alternative sources of natural gas and oil to reduce European countries' dependence on Russian supplies. With the growing importance of the Mediterranean as an energy hub, there has been an intensification of disputes over maritime borders, contested gas fields and competition between regional actors for the control of energy resources. These tensions negatively influenced the volatile security

environment in the region, already characterised by a long history of conflict. In this context, cooperation in the field of renewable energy between the EU and the countries of the region, in particular Turkey, has enormous potential to redefine the relationship, offering a means to overcome historical tensions and work towards common goals of environmental sustainability, economic growth and progress towards a sustainable energy future in the Mediterranean.

The migration crisis is another pressing issue exacerbated by instability and insecurity in the Mediterranean. On-going conflicts in Syria, Libya, and other parts of North Africa and the Middle East drive waves of migrants toward Europe's southern borders. As a result, the Mediterranean has become a frontier for the EU. Member states have effectively restructured the regional arrangement to manage migration in the Mediterranean. The EU must take a more active role in developing long-term solutions that address the root causes of migration rather than just working to strengthen border controls and increase cooperation with third countries. The future depends on Europe's ability to develop practical solutions that meet the needs of European societies and migrants themselves. As this volume clearly shows, the EU has developed a set of principles and mechanisms that are supposed to underpin its capacity to manage social policies, such as migration and refugee management. Still, they fail under dominant state national interests.

The Greater Mediterranean concept helps expand the vision of regional peace by revealing the contradictory role of external players such as Russia, the United States, and even regional powers such as Turkey, Iran and the Gulf States that may exacerbate existing tensions. The EU and NATO have not played a successful leadership role in resolving or stabilising regional conflicts that have significantly impacted the European continent. They lacked the military power and political will to make decisions in the region, while other players tried to fill the power vacuum in their stead. As for the EU, it faces many problems arising from the instability in the Mediterranean, which has forced the EU to prioritise regionalisation. The EU strategy is to lead the necessary transformation processes in the Mediterranean non-member states through various policies that include



regionalism, multilateralism, bilateralism, differentiation, convergence and conditionality. The main problem is the Union's inability to implement significant changes in countries where the prospect of EU membership is not on the table. The EU needs to abandon its approach of principled pragmatism. EU countries should cooperate better with other Mediterranean states and go beyond promoting only their regional interests. Closer cooperation will allow the EU to rethink its approach to regionalism in line with developing a comprehensive and unified political framework covering all aspects of cooperation in each region.

The rejection of state-centric attitudes may influence the prospects for Mediterranean regionalism. Various non-state actors, whose ability to develop solidarity and cooperation between partners following regionalism and human rights principles, demand greater attention from the epistemic communities and political elites. Various civil society organisations have played a key role in assisting vulnerable groups, often replacing state services or filling gaps left by state agencies. It is necessary to expand regional governance mechanisms, especially transnational ones, which would contribute to the materialisation of processes and structures of a stable region. Securitisation theories have explained that building a security community is based on shared principles and objectives, as well as a convergence in security culture and a willingness to resolve crises by leaving war as a last resort. Although this is mostly likely to happen within a region, the role of external actors may be crucial.

In a paradigmatic case such as the Mediterranean, stability necessarily involves a complex interplay between regionalisation, security and the influence of external actors. As the war in Ukraine continues, the Mediterranean's importance to Europe's energy security, migration management, and broader geopolitical strategy will grow. The stability and prosperity of this critical region will be determined for decades by the ability of regional and global powers to address these interrelated challenges.

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M46      **Multidimensional** Regionalism in the Mediterranean: Actors and Challenges : monograph / Editors Olga Brusylovska, Seven Erdoğan, & Daniela Irrera ; author collective: Olga Brusylovska, Valentina Cassar, Muharrem Doğan et al. — Odesa : Astroprint, 2024. — 260 p. ISBN 978–617–8381–91–2

The monograph examines the main challenges and actors determining the processes of development of regionalism in the Mediterranean. The war in Ukraine is one of the on-going parameters impacted the Mediterranean region, mainly as it hosts alternative sources of natural gas and oil to reduce European countries' dependence on Russian supplies; conflicts in Syria, Libya, and other parts of North Africa and the Middle East drive waves of migrants toward Europe's southern borders, as a result, the Mediterranean has become a frontier for the EU; the political, economic and military realities of the Mediterranean are increasingly shaped by the USA, Russia, the EU and such regional states as Turkey, Iran and the Persian Gulf countries; the stability and prosperity of this region will be determined for decades by the ability of regional and global powers to address these interrelated challenges.

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У СЕРЕДЗЕМНОМОР'Ї:  
АКТОРИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ**

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