



GA! MAGAZINE

GESCHIEDENIS ACTUEEL THINK TANK

SECURITY AS LIVING HISTORY



ANALYSIS

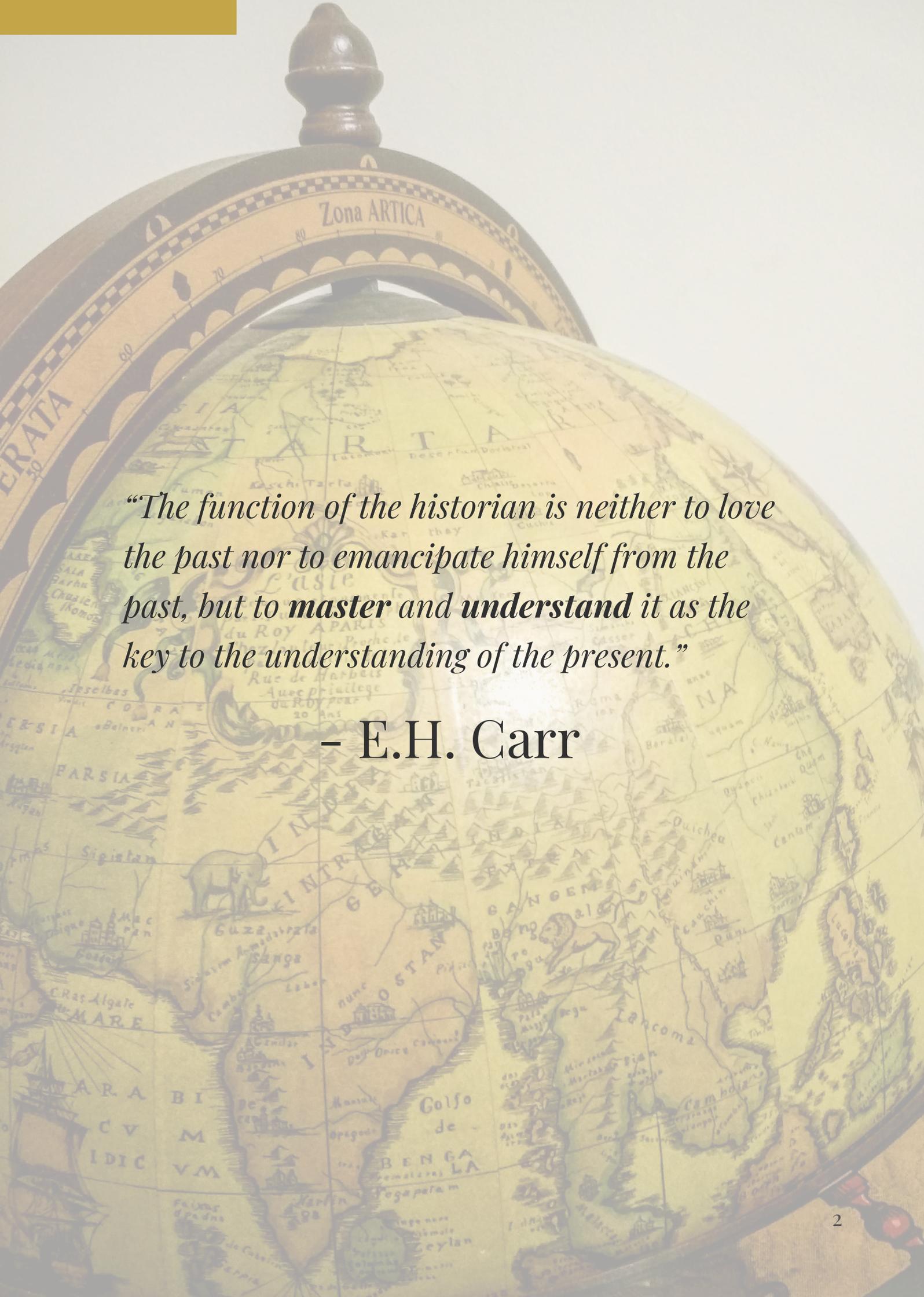
EFFECT OF THE SECURITIZATION OF THE ARCTIC ON RUSSIAN ARCTIC ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

INTERVIEW

THE COLLAPSE OF OSLO AND ISRAEL'S FAR-RIGHT SURGE

OPINION

WHAT THE NETHERLANDS CAN LEARN FROM LITHUANIA



*“The function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to **master** and **understand** it as the key to the understanding of the present.”*

– E.H. Carr

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

This magazine is the product of the GA! Think Tank, based in Utrecht. Through this platform, both in print and online, GA! serves as a space for students of the history of international relations to leverage the past in understanding the present and shaping the future. It offers a stage for students to explore IR-related topics with a historical lens, recognizing that today's complexities are best understood through yesterday's lessons. This initiative stems from the observation that history, at least publicly, is often sidelined or minimally acknowledged in political analysis and public debate.

GA! has a clear vision, mission, and ambition.

THE VISION

GA! embraces the emerging trend of applied history. History is more than a tool for legitimizing political discourse—it holds invaluable insights that can inform future policy and explain the behavior of actors on both national and international stages.

THE MISSION

GA! aims to provide a platform where students can critically engage with how history informs policy, allowing them to practice writing and contribute meaningfully to society. It is a space where students can debate, reflect, and develop their ideas on how historical perspectives can be applied to current international relations issues.

THE AMBITION

GA! aspires to become Utrecht's go-to think tank for international relations, transforming how history is perceived in political and public spheres. It aims to show that history is not just about the past—it offers practical insights that can shape contemporary policy.

CONCRETE GOALS

For now, GA! has two concrete goals:

1. **Producing Policy Papers:** By blending academic knowledge with practical solutions, GA! seeks to produce policy papers that contribute innovative perspectives to public debate. These papers aim to be timely, relevant, and impactful, providing fresh approaches to current issues.
2. **Building a Community:** GA! offers a space where like-minded students can come together, debate, and reflect on IR issues from a historical perspective. This not only fosters intellectual growth but allows students to contribute to society in a constructive and collaborative environment, honing the skills they will need after university.

ADDRESSING TWO KEY ISSUES

First, GA! helps bridge the gap between academic knowledge and its practical application. Many students struggle to see how their historical expertise can be translated into real-world skills. While universities are already addressing this, there is a growing demand for more hands-on opportunities. GA! provides a platform for students to practice writing articles and policy papers, giving them valuable experience in applying their knowledge outside the classroom.

Second, GA! aims to combat the image problem that history often suffers from. Every history student has heard it: "What can you do with a degree in history? Become a teacher?" This reflects a widespread misunderstanding of what historians can offer to society. History is not just about interesting stories and facts—it's a vital

tool for understanding why nations act the way they do and how policies can be shaped for the future. In the age of populism and political division, it's more important than ever to see history as more than a discourse tool, but as a lens through which we can understand and navigate the present.

With that in mind, GA! warmly welcomes all who wish to contribute to this cause. This is a young, dynamic project driven by enthusiastic students, and we invite any student of international relations history to join us. Whether through our debate evenings or by contributing articles, don't hesitate to embark on this intellectual adventure with us!



HUGO ABRIAL
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
Beatrice de Graaf	
CHANGING OF THE GUARD	9
Judith Buuts	
GLOBAL POLICEMAN NO MORE	13
Vali Jamal	
A WAKE-UP CALL FOR EUROPE'S DEFENCE INDUSTRY	17
Claire van Voorst tot Voorst	
TOTAL DEFENCE DONE RIGHT	19
Jasper Dietz, Policy Fellow with Young Voices,	
HEATING TENSIONS AND MELTING RESTRAINT	21
Midas van de Weetering	
ARMENIA'S STRATEGY AFTER NAGORNO-KARABAKH	28
William Piras	
BERLIN IN THE DESERT	34
Pepijn Lapidaire	
THE COLLAPSE OF OSLO AND ISRAEL'S FAR-RIGHT SURGE	39
Peter Malcontent, interviewed by Pepijn Lapidaire	
MISINTERPRETING A TYRANT	44
Pepijn Lapidaire	
THE COLD REVOLUTION	46
Midas Urlings	
PAKISTAN: PRESSURE FROM ALL SIDES	51
Christophe van der Kwast	
AFTERWORD	55
Tom Draaijer	
REFERENCES	57

INTRODUCTION

Security as Living History

We live in 'hard times', and are faced not just with looming threats, pending crises and real wars, but we also have to cope with 'selfish men, jealous men, fearful men', who proclaimed that our cause is 'hopeless', and that with respect for wars, we 'should ask for a negotiated peace.'

These are not my words, or of any current political leader, but spoken by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on 23 February 1942, more than 80 years ago. He shared these thoughts in a radio speech, a so-called 'fireside chat'. That was an instrument that he had introduced early in his presidency, to address the American people directly. Fearful that newspapers (in those times media moguls and entrepreneurial giants also tried to influence politics and waged politicized and polarized campaigns) that were biased against him would distort his words, Roosevelt decided to use the radio to circumvent 'mainstream media' and take the Americans by the hand and guide them through stormy weather himself. The chats became very popular and are still seen as an exemplary way of crisis communication: tell the people in accessible, easy language what the problem is, what has been done, and what we all can do about it. Interestingly, Roosevelt oftentimes resorted to history to make his case. In this particular speech in early 1942, he pauses to tell his listeners about the plights of general George Washington, who had to cope with 'odds and defeats' and indeed 'selfish men' who did not want to support him in his fight for independence and freedom, but tried to undermine his cause, his command of the continental army and demanded him to give in, settle for a compromise with the British oppressors in the late 1770s.

Just like Washington, Roosevelt wanted to mobilize his populace and raise (financial) support for the cause that he believed would serve both the US's security, freedom and that of Europe - by joining in and stepping up the fight against nazi Germany.

This magazine sees the light in hard times as well. While reading through the brilliant and highly original contributions to the special issue on 'security', several instances of threatening news came out. President-elect Trump's issued outrageous claims and near-warlike declarations regarding Greenland, Canada or Panama (countries he either wants to buy, invade or intimidate in caving in to his demands). Tech giant Elon Musk is going to provide Italy with an autonomous satellite system, supports the radical right candidate Alice Weidel in bid for power in Germany, and is on all accounts trying to undermine and assault Europe's social and liberal order (the satellite deal with Italy is a direct attack on the EU's Odin's Eye project). Other tech giants, such as Mark Zuckerberg, are following in his footsteps. And these are only the political and media related insecurities. The military developments are even more worrisome. News about increased Russian sabotage attempts in the Baltic and the Nord Sea came out as well - it appears that a suspected Russian spy ship carried out espionage activities and targeted an internet cable off the coast of the Dutch Wadden Island of Terschelling. And these are hybrid and covert threats - we have not even started to discuss the slaughter and the intense ground assaults that Russia is waging at the eastern front in Ukraine's Pokrovk's region around the publication date of this issue (early 2025). The conventional war that Russia

unleashed against Ukraine started in February 2022 and has left more than 40.000 Ukrainian soldiers and approximately 600.000 Russian soldiers dead by now – a state of insecurity Europe has not seen since the end of the WWII.

What is security? According to Jeremy Bentham, an Enlightenment and early 19th century philosopher of the social contract and public governance, it is the ‘anticipated state of being unharmed in the future’, and the key expectation and task that citizens demand from their centralized nation state and legitimate government to take care of. The interesting aspect of this definition is that it underscores the physical aspect of security (the state of being unharmed) as much as the psychological, intersubjective and temporal part of security: the anticipation and expectation that this state of being unharmed is not just a momentarily one, but is a stable situation that can be projected at least into the near future. In other words, it is the opposite of being in a state of insecurity. Security is a derogative of the Latin word ‘securitas’, which is a composite of ‘sine cura’, without worries. In the domain of security studies, the constructivist approach to security has enriched the field with the notion of security as a sentiment, as an emotional commodity, that can be used, manipulated, generated and of course also instrumentalized by actors to put their interests high on the agenda – a process that is sometimes called ‘securitization’.

This is not the place to dive deeper into the debates regarding this concept and its uses and abuses in studying security. It suffices to say that all articles in this special issue demonstrate that it can be put to good effect in applying this methodological approach to the realm of security issues: for example to understand how the process of securitization takes place and is shaping the way the ‘Arctic’ is put on the international security agenda (done in a highly illuminating contribution by Midas van de Weetering); or how securitization is not just a top down process, but can emerge within a society as whole, as demonstrated in an equally informative article by Jasper Dietz, on the ‘total defence’ approach adopted in and by the Lithuanian society. Or on how preparing for

security agenda’s, countries dive in deep, and develop long standing intelligence relations and positions in regions that they deem relevant to their national security interests, something Pepijn Lapidaire demonstrates by excavating the deep history of Soviet-Russian and American intelligence gathering and espionage operations in the Middle East (in particular in Bagdad). The point that I am addressing here in this foreword is threefold: if we study and read about security, we always have to bear in mind that 1) security is never just a physical state, a counting of missiles or an alleged neorealist ‘zero sum game’ played out, 2) it is always also a subjective or intersubjective process, where imaginations, cultural representations, identity related interests are key as well, 3) it is also always a temporal process that turns its eye to the future, but draws its projections from the past.

Let me finish this foreword to elaborate on this. First of all (1), if we just would count the numbers, the missiles and the budgets, Russia, North Korea, Hamas and the Sudanese RSF perhaps should have just ceased the fighting, since they were either outnumbered against their enemy in terms of manpower (initially, RSF, and Hamas), or their war was not sustainable economically and socially speaking (Russia, North Korea). Yet, that is not what we see. Zeal, dedication, sacrifice, manipulation, and psychological warfare (either against the own population or that of the enemy) can make up for what materially speaking would not have convinced people in safe, affluent societies to give up their welfare and start a war. Therefore (2), subjective, or at least intersubjective and temporal notions of security are always key – a point that Roosevelt also tried to drive home to his audience in 1942 as well by invoking the heroic history and courage of general Washington. Security is not just a state of being unharmed, it is an expectation, a desire and a collective-subjective (or intersubjective) ambition. A society needs to want to be secure, and needs to understand collectively what kind of security it is projecting into the future. Even if the society of the US seemed relatively peaceful

and aloof, a policy of isolationism (as addressed as well in the insightful piece by Vali Jamal), would only serve the immediate short term interests of the US, and not the longer term expectations, or meet with the underlying more transcendent goals of standing up for free and just institutions. There is of course a highly tricky, ambivalent and even contentious or contested aspect to this. Then, how do we know Roosevelt's vision was not biased? As Judith Buuts explains, this is also something that is being held against Kaja Kallas: is her anti-Russian stance not too much influenced and biased by the context of her family being deported and oppressed by the Soviet regime in the past? That is where the element of mobilizing hope and expectations factors in, based on the notion of 'value': what is it that drives a longing for security? Is it revenge, renown, or is it justice, peace even? And how can followers be convinced that they should share and pursue these values as well? This does of course require an open debate, and a transparent explanation and accountability by the leaders in charge. 3) That brings me to the last aspect of security: there is always an element of time related to it. With this I do not just mean that security takes time, that things may change, opportunities may be missed and new chances to make amends present itself (as Claire van Voorst tot Voorst very meticulously and convincing lays out for the way the EU is finally getting its military act together after some years of mishaps). What I mean is that the temporal aspect is crucial to the way security is indeed projected into the future. It does so, almost invariably, by invoking the histories of a country's past. As William Piras made clear: Armenia has had a lot to suffer from being dependent on Russia, and therefore may consider rewinding its security regime and project expectations towards the West. Peter Malcontent in an interview explains how the history or myth of Israel's existential fight for its survival, its history of Zionism and conquest of its land is being invoked, rekindled and kept aflame by subsequent Israeli governments, with the current right wing government and its leaders at the helm. What they try to convey is not just that Israel is facing a historical enemy (the Palestinian people), but that it is a

perennial and existential one, and that the future for an Israeli state and Israeli security depends on winning that fight. That is why whenever people from outside a conflict develop their thoughts, ideas, commentaries on the settlement of such a conflict, it is not just the current state of affairs, but those deep histories, emotions, and underlying values that matter and need to be dugged up and laid bare as well.

In sum, these points, and in particular the last one, makes us as historians especially well equipped to understand national and international security interests. I am therefore most happy to contribute to this magazine, that has collected such eminently relevant, inspiring and insightful papers on various elements of security.

It is of course a good tradition to offer some points of constructive feedback: with respect to the temporal notion of security, it is remarkable that the most historical paper only goes back as far as the Cold War, whereas such world leaders as Trump (Monroe doctrine), Macron (Napoleon) and Putin (Peter the Great, Nicholas I) have been busy the past years quoting 18th and 19th century leaders, and seem to want raise from the dead the 19th century 'balance of power' system and its unholy backbone, the 'sphere of influences'. History is not dead, but jumps back at us to haunt us, particular in the realm of security. Good security students therefore know their history – a history that can lurk deeper and live longer than we may think.

 BEATRICE DE GRAAF

CHANGING OF THE GUARD



An introduction to Kaja Kallas and the role of the high representative for the European Union.

Kaja Kallas during the confirmation hearing, where she was questioned by The Foreign Affairs Committee. Source: European Parliament News, 2024.

After five years, Josep Borrell's tenure as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) has concluded. In this role, Borrell served as the face of European foreign policy, representing the collective voice of the EU on the global stage.

Poised to succeed him is Estonia's Kaja Kallas. As a former Member of the European Parliament (MEP) with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Kallas is no stranger to the European institutions. However, she has truly cemented her presence in international politics as a fierce critic of Russia during her tenure as Estonia's Prime Minister, especially since the invasion of Ukraine. Over recent years, she has championed stricter sanctions and increased military spending across Europe.[1] While her assertive stance on Russia has garnered her recognition in global politics, it has also sparked concerns. Critics argue that her hawkish approach may overshadow other pressing foreign policy issues.[2]

But to what extent are these criticisms warranted? This article explores Kallas' vision for European foreign affairs and examines the scope and limitations of her role as HR/VP. While Kallas' reputation as a bold and decisive leader may alarm some, I will argue that the structural constraints of her position will make significant changes to EU foreign policy difficult to achieve. Although this article cannot predict the future of European affairs, it aims to shed light on the opportunities and challenges Kallas is likely to face as she steps into one of Europe's most pivotal roles.

INTRODUCING KAJA KALLAS

Who is Kaja Kallas, and what does she stand for as the EU's designated High Representative? Born in 1977 in Tallinn, Estonia—then under Soviet rule—Kallas' upbringing was shaped by her family's experiences under Soviet oppression. Her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother survived deportation to Siberia, a story Kallas frequently references in her political rhetoric. These experiences were central to her defense before the

European Parliament, where she stressed the importance of freedom and resistance against Russian aggression.[3]

Politics is a family affair for Kallas. Her father, Siim Kallas, is a former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia and served as a European Commissioner in three Commissions. Despite her political lineage, Kallas initially pursued a different path, studying law and beginning her career as a lawyer. In 2011, she joined the Estonian Reform Party, a liberal democratic party founded by her father in 1994 and focused on free-market principles. After serving in the Estonian Parliament (Riigikogu) for four years, Kallas transitioned to international politics, joining the European Parliament as part of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (now Renew Europe) from 2014 to 2018.

Returning to Estonian politics in 2018, she led the Reform Party and became Prime Minister in 2021, a position she held until July 2024.[4] Her centrist, liberal orientation marks a notable shift from the left-leaning, socialist stance of her predecessor, Josep Borrell.

As Prime Minister, Kallas was a staunch critic of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, advocating for harsher sanctions and increased military aid to Ukraine. Under her leadership, Estonia became, alongside Denmark, the largest donor to Ukraine as a percentage of GDP.[5] Her decision to remove Soviet-era monuments from Estonia's public spaces not only underscored her anti-Russian stance but also landed her on Russia's wanted list.[6]

During her European Parliament hearings on November 12, 2024, Kallas outlined her foreign policy priorities. Although she touched on a wide array of topics—such as the war in the Middle East, migration, accession policy, and relations with Africa, Asia, and Latin America—the Russian threat dominated her arguments. She emphasized the need for “victory” in Ukraine and justified her positions on accession, relations with the United States, and China through the lens of the ongoing war. While she rejected the idea of creating a defense force separate from NATO and sidestepped questions about the new Trump administration, she strongly advocated for increased EU defense spending to “outproduce” Russia.[7] Clearly, Ukraine remains central to her vision for European foreign policy.

A LIMITED ROLE

In her opening statement to the European Parliament, Kallas pledged to work as “an ally of this house,” ensuring its views are integrated into foreign policy decisions. However, the role of the HR/VP and the European Commission is not one of decision-making power.

The HR/VP position was introduced in the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon reforms to create a unified face for European foreign affairs and enhance coherence in EU external actions. According to the Treaty on European Union, the HR/VP is tasked with representing the EU in political dialogues with third parties, chairing the Foreign Affairs Council, proposing initiatives in collaboration with the Commission, and implementing decisions made by the Foreign Affairs Council and European Council, where true decision-making authority on European foreign policy resides.[8]

These decision-making bodies are inherently intergovernmental, requiring consensus among all 27 member states. While the HR/VP can influence negotiations by chairing the Foreign Affairs Council, their ability to steer outcomes is constrained by this consensus-based model. Scholars like Jonas Tallberg suggest that chairs can shape negotiations through strategic agenda-setting or guiding discussions toward favorable compromises.[9] Yet, the reality of EU decision-making often undermines this potential. Much of the policymaking occurs behind closed doors, within Working Groups and COREPER, chaired by rotating presidencies of member states. By the time proposals reach the Foreign Affairs Council, outcomes are often pre-determined through tit-for-tat compromises made over dinner.[10] This diminishes the power Kallas will have guiding the negotiation outcomes within the Council even more.

An area where she is granted more influence will be in her role of representing the Union in the political dialogue with the rest of the world. This role offers a significant amount of constructing her own dialogue and deciding which meetings she will prioritise over others, sending a clear message about the Union's position on foreign relations.[11] However, the extent of that freedom is also limited because foreign policy remains in the hands of the member states. The declaration concerning the common foreign and security policy within the Lisbon Treaty determines that the actions and words of the HR/VP "do not affect the responsibilities of the member states, as they currently exist, for the formulation and conduct

of their foreign policy nor of their national representation in third countries and international organizations".[12] Denza argues that, therefore, the member states continue to be in charge. And therefore, have the authority to distance themselves from any action or statement made by the HR/VP.[13] The HR/VP's freedom of conducting foreign policy will therefore be significantly limited, as he or she cannot go out and make any statements that the member states do not agree with.

Besides these limited formal powers provided by the Treaty of Lisbon, Lisbeth Aggestam and Elsa Hedling have argued that within our mediatised and digitalised society, the HR/VP gains the power to construct its own leadership and legitimacy of power through the personalisation and dramatization of politics. Assuming that we are living in a functioning democracy, where power and leadership is inherently related to the support of the people, social media has become an increasingly important tool to establish legitimacy as a leader.[14] However, that assumption cannot be that easily made when it comes to the EU and the HR/VP. The European Union is infamous for its democratic deficit.[15] The only directly chosen body, the European Parliament has a very limited role, especially within the field of foreign policy. Additionally, despite the rise in turn-out for the elections in the last editions, only fifty percent of the electorate actually casts their vote, which makes it questionable to what extent it can even be regarded as democratically elected.[16] The HR/VP is not even chosen by this body, only approved in the larger context of approving or disapproving the entire designated Commission. Therefore, Kallas' only represents the EU citizens by being approved by the Parliament and the indirectly representative Council, and thus has very little democratic legitimacy. It is therefore questionable to what extent Aggestam and Hedling's process of leaderisation can truly have an empowering impact on the HR/VP.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

If the European Parliament approves the designated European Commission, as expected by December 2024, Kaja Kallas will become the face of EU foreign policy for the coming years. Based on her parliamentary hearing, she is likely to prioritize Ukraine, advocating increased military investment to ensure victory—though what that entails remains unclear.

However, given the intergovernmental nature of EU foreign policy, it is improbable that Kallas will achieve radical change. The necessity of consensus among 27 member states and the EU's democratic deficit will significantly limit her ability to enact transformative policies.

That said, history shows that HR/VPs can achieve meaningful outcomes when their goals align with member states. Federica Mogherini advanced the EU Global Strategy, while Josep Borrell launched the Strategic Compass for Defense, REPowerEU for energy security, and unified the EU's foreign policy responses to numerous crises.[17] If Kallas can rally the member states behind her vision, she too could leave a lasting legacy. Whether she will succeed, only time will tell.

GLOBAL POLICEMAN NO MORE

The U.S. Turn Toward Isolationism

With the recent election of Donald Trump for a “The progress of liberty is a powerful trend. Yet, we also know that liberty, if not defended, can be lost. The success of freedom is not determined by some dialectic of history. By definition, the success of freedom rests upon the choices and the courage of free peoples, and upon their willingness to sacrifice. In the trenches of World War I, through a two-front war in the 1940s, the difficult battles of Korea and Vietnam, and in missions of rescue and liberation on nearly every continent, Americans have amply displayed our willingness to sacrifice for liberty.”[18]

This article takes a constructivist approach in examining the U.S’ shifting foreign policy and isolationist turn through examining trends in American culture, society, and identities. This article wants to focus on the domestic backlash against American interventionism socially. A poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research showed that only 22% and 21% of Americans want a more active role in the Russia-Ukrainian war and the Israel-Gaza war respectively. 36% want a less active role in both.[19] A separate poll by Pew Research showed that the percentage of Americans that believed supporting Ukraine helped national security was even with those saying it hurt national security, with both at 36%.[20]

Since the end of the second World War, the U.S built itself as a global power, with foreign intervention being seen as necessary to ensure American interests and national security. This was largely supported by the public through most of the Cold War and into the 2000s with the War on Terror. However this view has been challenged by an American public that is more divided and more cynical about American intervention abroad.

THE BUSH YEARS

“The progress of liberty is a powerful trend. Yet, we also know that liberty, if not defended, can be lost. The success of freedom is not determined by some dialectic of history. By definition, the success of freedom rests upon the choices and the courage of free peoples, and upon their willingness to sacrifice. In the trenches of World War I, through a two-front war in the 1940s, the difficult battles of Korea and Vietnam, and in missions of rescue and liberation on nearly every continent, Americans have amply displayed our willingness to sacrifice for liberty.”[21]

These words, spoken by President George W. Bush eight months into the Iraq War, epitomize the height of Neoconservative foreign policy when the U.S. embraced its role as a global

enforcer. Following the September 11 attacks by Al Qaeda, a surge of nationalism swept the country, bolstering public support for Bush’s actions. In March 2003, 72% of Americans supported sending troops to Iraq; six months later, 64% still believed the U.S. should remain involved.[22]

Date	Right Decision	Wrong Decision
March 2003	72%	22%
March 2004	55%	39%
February 2005	47%	47%
March 2006	45%	49%
March 2007	43%	49%
February 2008	38%	54%

Bush would go on to win re-election in 2004, after an election where his foreign policy was the key issue for many Americans.

During the campaign public opinion had begun shifting. While the war was still approved of by a majority of the population, a year into the war, those that said military force was the right decision had fallen to 55% with 39% saying it was wrong. As the table shows, by February 2008, less than a year before Bush left office, 54% of Americans said using force was not the right decision and 49% said the U.S should not keep troops in Iraq.[23] The U.S would end the war in Iraq, less than 3 years after Bush left office, however Iraq would remain unstable for years to come. While the U.S succeeded relatively early in toppling Saddam Hussein's government, the war became an insurgency war, between the U.S and Islamist terror groups. The rise of the Islamic State in 2014, caused Bush's successor, Barack Obama, to build up a military coalition to counter them.[24] Iraq is largely seen as a failure and by 2018, 53% of Americans said the U.S failed to achieve its goals in Iraq. [25]

“We should’ve never been in Iraq, we have destabilized the Middle East... they lie...they said there were weapons of mass destruction”

the Taliban takeover showed that a majority favored the decision to withdraw troops with a Morning Consult/Politico poll showing 53% of Americans supporting withdrawal and a CBS News poll showing 63% supporting withdrawal. [28] Afghanistan also saw quick victories for the Americans, ousting the Taliban government before the end of 2001. However much like Iraq, it became a protracted insurgency that would last two decades. Both major wars are largely seen as failures, discrediting in the mind of many Americans, the war on terror as a whole.

But Iraq was not Bush's only failure. His other major intervention was the U.S invasion of Afghanistan. When the war began, 89% of the U.S public supported military involvement in Afghanistan.[26] When the U.S withdrew in 2021, only 47% did while 46% did not.[27] Polling in the days following

“IT WAS OBVIOUSLY A MISTAKE”

“We should’ve never been in Iraq, we have destabilized the Middle East...they lie, they said there were weapons of mass destruction, there were none, and they knew there were none.”[29] This was what Donald Trump said during a Republican Primary debate in 2016. Such sentiment had been building up since the mid-2000s, but in 2016, for the first time, many Americans heard a major Presidential candidate bluntly say that the Bush administration was not only wrong but that they lied to the American people. This was part of Trump's original appeal to many. He was not seen as a normal politician but as some who spoke freely and honestly. Despite being a well-connected billionaire, who when fact-checked only had 11% of his statements rated as “true” or “mostly true,”[30] Trump developed an image as a truth teller. Key to this was tapping into the American public's anger over the previous decade's foreign policy failures.

CONSEQUENCES

The war on terror under Bush left Iraq and Afghanistan destabilized and ended in failure in the eyes of many Americans. Both wars left Bush's successors major disasters to deal with upon coming into office. Obama spent much of his second term fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria, while Trump oversaw the recapture of the last ISIS territories in his first year. Obama, Trump, and Biden all made some effort to get out of Afghanistan. Obama announced a drawdown of troops in 2011 which continued throughout his presidency.[31] Trump in his final year of his first term, signed a deal with Taliban militants in a summit in Qatar to withdraw the last US and Nato allied troops from Afghanistan if the Taliban met certain demands like not allowing other terror groups like Al Qaeda operate in their territory.[32] Joe Biden oversaw the official end of the war, including the collapse of the Afghan government and the chaos of the civilian evacuation. Top U.S generals argue that

the call for a civilian exit was “too slow and too late.”[33]

However there were other failures on the part of successive administrations. The U.S authorized airstrikes in Libya amidst the Arab Spring, with the aim of helping rebels against long-term U.S adversary, Muammar Gaddafi. The intervention did end up with Gaddafi being ousted (and killed) in a revolution yet the country fell to chaos afterwards. Obama himself privately called the situation in Libya a “shit show.”[34] A year after Gaddaafi was ousted, the U.S mission in Libya was attacked by militants[35] in the Benghazi affair. The disaster of Benghazi would haunt then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when she ran for President in 2016. In 2016, in the midst of the election campaign, House Republicans launched a \$7 million and 800 page report on the Benghazi attack.[36] Libya fell into another civil war in 2014 and remained chaotic for the next decade.

Another failure was Syria. In August 2013, after the Assad regime violated Obama’s own “redline” and used chemical weapons in Syria, he did not intervene, resting any doubts in how far the U.S would go.[37] Obama defended the decision, criticizing the Washington D.C foreign policy establishment of being wedded to the same American militarism that caused the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.[38] Trump would strike Syria twice, and withdraw U.S troops from the Kurdish held North. The decision to pull troops from Kurdish held areas left them vulnerable to attacks from Turkey while Trump’s decision was met with condemnation from Democrats, Republicans, and various European allies.[39]

The last failure is of course Ukraine. Obama pursued a “reset” of relations with Russia upon coming to power. He gave this task to Secretary of State Clinton.[40] This reset ultimately led to a weak response when Russia invaded Crimea in March 2014. Obama and Trump both oversaw a hybrid war in the Donbass while Biden has had to oversee the U.S response to a full scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russians.

NEW AMERICAN NATIONALISM

If you are an American born in the 21st century, you have largely seen the U.S fail in most of its geopolitical goals. This failure has led to a cynicism in the U.S public about America’s role in the world. Republicans, who traditionally favored strong American involvement and intervention in particular are skeptical of a global American hegemony. In 2023, the party of Bush showed for the first time, a majority wanting a less active U.S role in the world. 53% of Republicans wanted a less active role compared to 47% who wanted an active part.[41] In 2004 only 24% wanted a less active role while 74% wanted a more active one.[42]



The U.S. assuming the role of global policeman was most pronounced during the Bush Doctrine. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Additionally with the U.S interventions often turning into disasters, many Americans question why the money isn’t spent at home on the various issues plaguing Americans. Americans collectively owe more than \$1.6 trillion in student debt, which has delayed for many young Americans, marriage, homeownership, and child bearing.[43] Collectively Americans also owe \$220 million in medical debt.[44] 14 million owing more than \$1,000 and 3 million owing more than \$10,000.[45] The cost of healthcare and university remains enormous and unaffordable for many. University tuition has more than doubled over the last 20 years.[46] American infrastructure lags behind getting a grade of D for more than two decades until 2021 when it got a grade of C-.[47]

Another area of anger is trade. When Trump

was elected, the U.S had lost 5 million manufacturing jobs since the year 2000.[48] Both the left and right have criticized this trend. In 2016 Bernie Sanders spoke passionately about the need to bring back American jobs. Upon getting into office, Joe Biden continued Trump's protectionist line and pushed for the Inflation Reduction Act and CHIPS Act which spurred more domestic production.

The IRA by Biden was criticized by many in Europe, who said it violated international trade rules.[49] But it's not the only crack in the trans-atlantic alliance. Obama was critical of European commitment in Libya, blaming them largely for failure there.[50] Many Americans additionally see Europe as relying too much on the U.S for defense. Trump frequently threatened to withhold U.S support for allies that did not meet the requirement. As recently as this year, Trump said he would "encourage Russia to do whatever the hell they want" to a NATO member that isn't paying their fair share. [51]

The trans-atlantic alliance itself is in a fragile state. Many Americans no longer have faith in the post World War II order with the U.S as the global democratic leader. Additionally many Americans no longer view America's traditional alliances as worth defending. Donald Trump winning a second term only solidifies this change. Europe and the U.S' traditional allies must prepare for more isolationist, less active U.S presence in the world. This includes uniting behind a stronger stance as the continent faces new threats such as an expansionist Russia, and creeping economic dominance by China. American leaders have started taking more nationalistic stances because they are reflecting the sentiment that has won over the American public.

A WAKE-UP CALL FOR EUROPE'S DEFENCE INDUSTRY

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, coupled with the recent election of Donald Trump, has delivered a powerful wake-up call to Europe. Security and peace can no longer be taken for granted, and Europe's reliance on external support—particularly from the United States—has exposed a critical strategic vulnerability. To address this, Europe must urgently strengthen its own defence capabilities. This moment demands significant investment in Europe's defence industry—a call to action that cannot be ignored.

In my thesis, *Shadows of Conflict: Europe's Weapon Industry in the Wake of Ukraine's War*, I found that since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Europe has missed several crucial opportunities to fortify its defence sector. Despite initiatives by the European Union (EU), such as the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Peace Facility (EPF), the sector remains fragmented and inefficient. Several key challenges contribute to this stagnation. For instance, substantial investments continue to flow towards non-European suppliers, undermining Europe's strategic autonomy. Additionally, the European defence industry struggles with capacity constraints, including limited production capabilities and shortages of essential raw materials. Furthermore, the varied defence priorities of member states, combined with their tendencies to protect national industries, obstruct effective cross-border collaboration.

There are, however, encouraging developments. The European Defence Agency (EDA) has initiated projects such as the Capability Development Plan, designed to better align member states' defence capabilities. NATO countries have also advanced joint defence programmes, prompting several nations to increase defence spending and plan significant military procurements. For example, the Netherlands intends to acquire a total of 46 Leopard 2 tanks between 2027 and 2030. Additionally, Finland and Sweden's recent accession to NATO has strengthened Europe's collective security within the

Weapons Manufacturing and Military Services

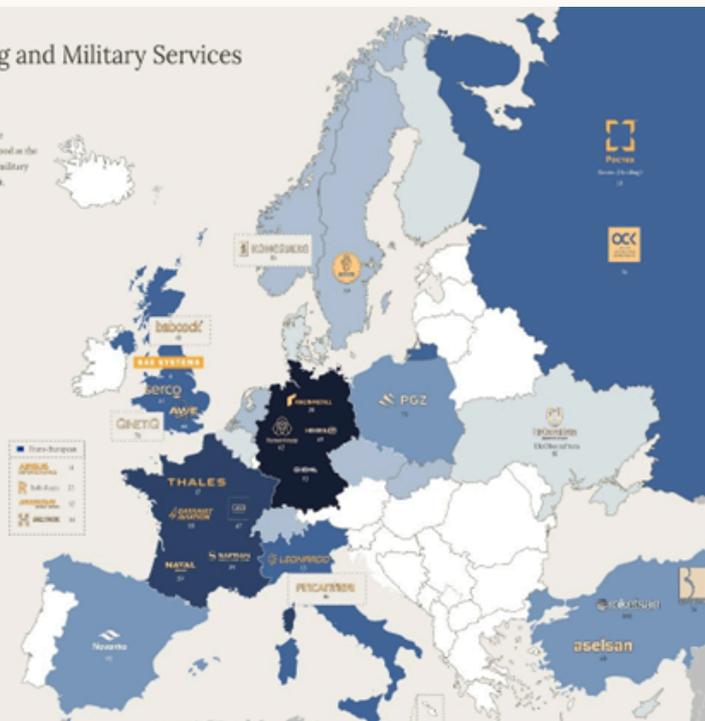
Data from 2023 and 2022

This map visualises two types of data: the country codes indicate the average SIPRI trend indicator values (TIV), which can be understood as the military capability exported by a country. The logos show arms and military service companies from the 30 largest globally, alongside their rank.

SIPRI trend indicator values (TIV)



SIPRI Company Rank



Source: SIPRI
*Iceland has been moved south-west to fit in the frame.
© ucivil-sand-1633

Weapons Manufacturing and Military Services Companies in Europe. Source: SIPRI, 2023.

alliance. These developments highlight a growing commitment among European nations to invest in their own security, while reinforcing the importance of ongoing collaboration with other NATO allies.

Yet, these efforts fall short of what is required. Europe's defence industry must evolve into a unified entity. Achieving this will demand not only increased spending but also far greater collaboration.

Coordinated investments are

essential for Europe to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging threats. By harmonising capabilities and technology, and by making joint investments in the European defence industry, the EU can project the strength needed to counter threats such as those posed by Russia.

The future of Europe depends on building a robust, integrated, and resilient defence industry. Safeguarding this future will require a collective commitment, and the time to act is now.



Figure 3: Share of total arms revenue of companies in the SIPRI Top 100 for 2022, by country. Source: SIPRI, 2023.

TOTAL DEFENCE DONE RIGHT

How Lithuania's Civil Resilience Model Can Inspire the Netherlands

When walking through the vibrant old town of Vilnius, Lithuania's capital, it is difficult to imagine that, just three decades ago, these same streets were under the grip of a ruthless regime. For half a century, Soviet occupation controlled every aspect of life. Before that, the Russian Empire ruled over Lithuania for more than a hundred years. Yet, through generations of oppression and hardship, the Lithuanian spirit of resistance and hunger for independence never faded. Today, every Lithuanian, from schoolchildren to grandparents, upholds an unwavering vow: never again.

This enduring spirit is not just a relic of the past.

“they teach children civil responsibility, survival skills, and leadership from an early age”

It stems from a deep understanding of what might lie ahead. Lithuanians know, from firsthand experience, the extent to which Russia can exert its power. This collective memory drives every citizen, young and old, to do whatever is necessary to protect their homeland. Like the roots of Lithuania's dense forests, anchored deep and binding the land together, the mentality of total defence is embedded in every layer of Lithuanian society.

TOTAL DEFENCE: A NATIONAL MINDSET

Total defence is a comprehensive strategy that mobilizes all segments of society. Beyond the armed forces, every national institution is prepared to defend the state in times of crisis. While this approach is not unique to Lithuania, its pronounced societal resilience and preventive measures set it apart. Lithuania's National

Security Strategy explicitly prioritizes strengthening cultural and national identity, preparing society for resistance, and fostering the will to defend the state.[52]

Even with strong governmental leadership in defence strategy, Lithuanians believe national security is too important to be entrusted to the government alone. For them, defence is a mindset. This perspective has given rise to numerous grassroots initiatives aimed at enhancing public readiness.

Take, for instance, the Civic Resilience Initiative, a non-profit organization that educates Lithuanians in areas such as security, media literacy, countering disinformation, and cyber awareness through workshops and training.[53] The Riflemen's Union, a paramilitary organization, takes a more hands-on approach, providing military training and teaching sabotage techniques to civilians as part of a broader strategy for resilience against occupation. Notably, this is not a male-dominated effort; women play an active role, stepping up to meet the demands of national defence.[54]

Youth organizations, like scouting clubs, are also an integral part of civil resilience. Through playful activities, they teach children civil responsibility, survival skills, and leadership from an early age. Even the Catholic Church, which holds a lot of influence in Lithuania, has taken its fair share of responsibility. Last year, it signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Interior, through which priests now guide congregations on civil protection, and certain churches are designated as emergency shelters, underscoring the Church's role as an

institution of support and solidarity in times of crisis.[55]

A STARK CONTRAST WITH THE DUTCH APPROACH

Unlike their Baltic counterparts, the Dutch have not experienced decades of Russian occupation or faced the constant shadow of threatening neighbours like Belarus and Russia. However, this relative security does not equate to living in a risk-free society. Hybrid attacks from Russia and China are on the rise.[56] What would happen in the Netherlands during a major cyberattack, a prolonged power outage, or disruptions to water supplies? Few households have an emergency stockpile of water, food, or supplies to last even three days.

While such preparations might seem excessive or “doomsday prepping” to some, having a plan or basic emergency resources could make the difference between chaos and survival. As the saying goes, it is better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.

Interestingly, the concept of civil preparedness is not entirely alien to the Netherlands. During the Cold War, the Dutch Bescherming Bevolking (Civil Defence Organization) was responsible for preparing citizens for potential disasters, from nuclear attacks to natural calamities. Civil drills, stockpiling, and public education were commonplace, fostering societal awareness and readiness. However, as the perceived threats of the Cold War faded, so too did the Dutch commitment to these practices.

RETHINKING CIVIL RESILIENCE

Today, the Netherlands relies heavily on the assumption that the government will step in to manage any crisis. While it is a privilege to live in a country with strong safety nets, it is dangerous to take this for granted. What happens when those systems falter or are overwhelmed? Lithuanians do not leave such questions to chance. They understand that

preparedness is not about living in fear; it is about living with foresight.

The Netherlands would do well to rediscover the civil resilience practices of its past. The realities of hybrid warfare, cyber threats, and the growing unpredictability of global risks underscore the urgent need for societal readiness. Civil resilience is not an outdated concept but a critical one in today’s interconnected world.

As Lithuania demonstrates, the foundation of a resilient society lies in collective effort and proactive measures. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. In an unpredictable world, being one step ahead can make all the difference.

JASPER DIETZ
POLICY FELLOW WITH YOUNG VOICES



HEATING TENSIONS AND MELTING RESTRAINT

An Analysis of the Effect of the Securitization of the Arctic on Russian Arctic Environmental Governance

Russia is often labeled as one of the most environmentally irresponsible nations globally. As a leading emitter of greenhouse gases, it has earned the reputation of a "climate rogue," with climate change far from a national priority.[57] Meanwhile, its domestic environmental governance is lacking, as environmental spending is low, and its institutional and legal framework is lackluster.[58]

This situation worsened following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which severed ties with the West and left the country isolated. Decarbonization policies were rolled back to stimulate the economy.[59] It has also more fully embraced climate skepticism, evidenced by the omission of fossil fuels in Russia's updated climate doctrine, which is an open divergence from international norms.[60]

Earlier post-communist Russian environmental governance can be viewed as a political tool, as Russia uses environmental rhetoric and framing to gain leverage on the international stage. This has been evident in Russia's efforts to frame itself as an "environmental donor"[61], while balancing national interests, benefiting from relations with the West, and adhering selectively to multilateral cooperation.[62]

This paper explores the relationship between Russia's environmental governance and its international relations, with a focus on the Arctic as a case study. Historically, the Arctic has been regarded as a unique zone of peace and multilateralism, particularly in terms of environmental cooperation between Russia and other Arctic nations.[63] However, the region's vast economic potential has also made it a focal point of Russian ambition. As relations with the West have deteriorated, Russia's perception of the Arctic has shifted, increasingly framing it as a security concern.[64] From the perspective of securitization theory, this reflects a transition from a desecuritized Arctic to a securitized one focused on strategic interests.[65]



A submarine breaking the ice in the Arctic allowing for merchant and naval vessels to travel between the Atlantic and Pacific. Source: Getty Images

This essay addresses the question: How has Russia's securitization of the Arctic affected its environmental governance between 1985 and 2023? It will first examine the process of securitization during this period, analyzing how Russia's evolving perception of the West has influenced its view of the Arctic. Second, it will assess how Arctic environmental governance evolved alongside this securitization. Finally, it will analyze the connection between these developments, revealing the relationship between securitization and environmental policy.

THE SECURITIZATION OF THE ARCTIC

In international relations literature, the Arctic is often viewed through the lens of "Arctic exceptionalism", a unique region removed from state competition and characterized by cooperation among Arctic nations, including Russia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States.[66] This paradigm is widely traced to Mikhail Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech, in which he called for the Arctic to become a zone of peace dedicated to scientific collaboration, peaceful resource development, and environmental protection.[67] In this speech, Gorbachev goes on at length about how peaceful rapprochement should be made between the USSR and the West and the potential for the Arctic to be a site of peace and progress for all mankind. As he goes on to say, modern technology could 'permit us to make the Arctic habitable for the benefit of the national economies and other human interests 'both for Europe and the entire international community'. As he summarizes, 'Let the North of the globe, the Arctic, become a zone of peace'.[68]

Following this 1987 speech, Finland and later other Arctic states such as Sweden and the US began to seek diplomatic rapprochement with the USSR concerning the Arctic.[69] This, for instance, took the form of increased coordination of scientific activities as well as military de-escalation, turning the Arctic into a unique region of peace and cooperation.[70] In other words, with the lessening of military tensions and the changing of the narrative of the Arctic to one of peace and cooperation, the region was desecuritized.[71]

This desecuritized status deepened after the fall of communism in 1991. Russia's shift toward liberal democratic governance, combined with its socio-economic crisis, left the Arctic largely neglected and dependent on Western aid. This period saw Russia align with Western international norms, culminating in the creation of the Arctic Council in 1996. This international forum united Arctic nations and indigenous populations to address regional issues, emphasizing environmental protection and sustainable development.[72]

The desecuritized status quo would hold into the 21st century. Starting around 2000, Russia again began to take an interest in its Arctic regions and their potential to be of use to the Russian state. From 2000 to 2007, under Putin, this meant pragmatic multilateral cooperation with the West to further the modernization of the region. This strategy was built upon by Medvedev between 2008 and 2012. He actively used the rhetoric of modernization and progress for the Arctic via integration into multilateral institutions and the world economy, and economic and security cooperation with Europe. Concerning the Arctic, this vision meant that Russia attempted to develop the region via international economic and political connections with the West. This also entailed fully embracing the rules-based multilateral governance of the Arctic. Though this period did see increased military buildup, Russian assertiveness, and tensions with NATO, the desecuritized status quo persisted. As Medvedev said in an interview, the Arctic "is the part of our common wealth that, strictly speaking, has nothing to do with military tasks. We can quite manage there with the help of those means of economic regulation, international documents that we sign... it is a zone of peaceful cooperation, economic cooperation." [73]

The status quo of desecuritization would begin to end, however, with the reelection of Putin in 2012. During this phase, renewed attention was given to security matters in an Arctic context. This can be seen in the updated version of the “Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security for the Period up to 2020”, which was published in 2013, replacing an earlier 2008 version.[74] This version lays out concrete plans concerning military security in the Arctic, such as maintaining combat readiness amongst troops to deal with ‘the existing and predicted nature of military dangers and military threats to the Russian Federation in the Arctic’. It also outlines the need for mobilization readiness, increasing the quality of military infrastructure, increased airspace control, and dual-use technologies.[75] These goals are new in the 2013 version. Also notable is that the 2013 version does not put multilateral cooperation on the forefront as much as the 2008 version did.[76]

The Arctic’s securitization accelerated in 2014 following Russia’s annexation of Crimea, part of a broader trend of deteriorating relations with the West and NATO. Internal Russian documents reveal a shift in rhetoric, portraying NATO as an antagonistic force and accusing the West of using international institutions to maintain dominance and suppress multipolarity. This framing cast the Western-led international order itself as a threat to Russia’s security.[77]

This securitization also affected the Arctic directly, as can be seen in the changed language used to describe it.[78] Military and economic cooperation between Russia and Western Arctic nations stalled, while military activity on both sides increased.[79] By 2014, the Arctic was fully securitized in Russian eyes. Cooperation with Arctic states became limited and pragmatic, as Russia increasingly prioritized the region’s strategic importance to its national security. A 2017 statement encapsulated this shift: “The Arctic is an extremely important region from the point of view of ensuring our country’s defense capability.”[80]

The Arctic’s securitization reached its peak following Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine. This severed almost all cooperation between Russia and Western Arctic states, transforming the region into a focal point of great power competition.[81] As Vladimir Putin summarized to his policymakers, “Virtually all aspects of this country’s national security, including the environmental, natural resources, military, political, and technological dimensions, are concentrated here.”[82]



*The renovated Russian Arctic base of Northern Clover.
Source: Ministry of Defence of Russia.*

SECURITIZATION’S EFFECT ON ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Post-communist Russia’s environmental governance can largely be classified as authoritarian environmentalism, where policies are shaped entirely by the central government, with little to no input from stakeholders.[83] As mentioned earlier, Russia’s environmental policies often serve the political interests of the regime, acting as tools to enhance its international status and maintain influence.[84] This approach combines advancing national interests with benefiting from Western relations and outwardly supporting multilateral cooperation and international law.[85]

This paradigm took root in the 1990s. Gorbachev’s 1987 Murmansk speech prominently featured environmental themes, emphasizing the USSR’s commitment to Arctic

environmental protection.[86] During this period of rapprochement with the West, environmental cooperation became a key focus. After the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Russia's liberalizing political and economic systems fostered collaborative environmental efforts, such as the cleanup of decommissioned nuclear submarines in the Arctic. Russia's alignment with Western norms was epitomized by its inclusion in the Arctic Council in 1996, which prioritized environmental protection and sustainable development.[87]

From 2000, as Russia rekindled interest in the Arctic's economic potential, it adopted a policy of "sustainable development." This strategy sought to exploit Arctic resources and develop infrastructure while adhering to Western environmental norms.[88] Between 2000 and 2007, Putin pushed for major environmental reforms to modernize Russia's weak 1992 legislation and implemented active environmental governance in the Arctic, focusing on maritime regions.[89]

“Putin's re-election in 2012 and the subsequent securitization of the Arctic marked a shift in rhetoric and policy.”

institutions, and that the world economy, as well as security cooperation with the West, were key components of Russia's approach. Concerning the Arctic, this meant Russia attempted to develop the region through economic and political connections with the West, embracing the multilateral governance of the Arctic. As Medvedev said at the Murmansk International Economic Forum in 2009, the goal of Russia was 'sustainable development of the Arctic based on cooperation and unconditional respect for international law'.[91]

Between 2008 and 2012, Medvedev expanded on these efforts, achieving more legislative and policy advancements in environmental governance than Putin. [90] He used rhetoric arguing that modernization and progress should be pursued via integration into multilateral

Medvedev's Arctic policy aimed for sustainable development grounded in cooperation and respect for international law. The 2008 Arctic policy exemplified this approach, emphasizing multilateral cooperation and environmentally conscious economic growth.[92] However, Putin's reelection in 2012 and the subsequent securitization of the Arctic marked a shift in rhetoric and policy. The 2013 Arctic policy maintained environmental objectives but no longer explicitly linked them to multilateral cooperation.[93] Following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the resulting deterioration of relations with NATO and the West, the Arctic's securitization intensified.[94]

The Arctic's securitization and the worsening of Russia's relations with the West significantly influenced its environmental governance. A discourse emerged portraying international environmental standards as tools to undermine Russia's economy and security. At a 2021 Security Council meeting, Medvedev stated that Western countries "politicize" Arctic issues, using environmental standards to restrict Russian economic activity and compromise national security.[95]

After 2014, Russia's aggressive rhetoric against the West aligned with its push for economic and military expansion in the Arctic. Military initiatives focused on securing ballistic missiles, maintaining operational capacity, and protecting Arctic economic projects. Simultaneously, ambitious infrastructure projects aimed to exploit fish stocks, hydrocarbons, and metals while preparing for the Northern Sea Route as Arctic ice receded. These efforts included developing ports, weather stations, and icebreaking capabilities, alongside significant tax incentives, such as a 300 billion ruble program in 2020 to attract private investment. [96] Despite this, Russia's open commitment to environmental governance remained. For instance, Russia's 2020 Arctic strategy still talks at some length about the environment.[97] As well as 'environmental protection and efficient development of natural

resources with compliance of high ecological standards'.[98]

However, with the securitization of the Arctic reaching its highpoint with the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, this commitment appears to have been undermined. This seems to be connected to a wider shift in Russian environmental governance as Russia, now internationally isolated, has broken with international environmental norms across the board.[99] Something also reflected in Russia's expulsion from the Arctic Council. Concerning the Arctic, this shift can be seen in Russia's newly amended Arctic Policy and Foreign Policy Concept, both published in 2023. In Russia's amended 2023 Arctic Policy, a clear vision is outlined that downplays international cooperation and makes it clear that Russia seeks to move ahead based purely on 'national interest.' Likewise, Russia's 2023 Foreign Policy Concept warns against the 'politicization' of climate change policies, claiming that international environmental efforts are 'dishonest competition and interfere in the internal affairs of other countries,' and that they 'limit the sovereignty of other countries with regard to their natural resources'.[100]

The two documents prescribe a very different view on how international environmental governance should be handled. The 2023 Foreign Policy Concept claims 'every country has the right to independently choose its preferred mechanisms and ways to protect the environment and adjust to climate change.' What this means for the Arctic is hinted at in the Arctic policy which never highlights the importance of environmental standards; instead, it claims that international cooperation there should be based not on institutions but on 'national interest.' If the main goals of the Arctic Policy are an indication, this 'national interest' mainly consists of 'efficient development of natural resources' in the interests of stable development in the Arctic.[101] In short, these two documents seemingly indicate that Russia, now having fully securitized the Arctic and broken with the Western international order, has given up its commitment to international norms of environmental governance in the

Arctic.

SECURITIZATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

The previous sections illustrated how the Arctic's securitization mirrored worsening Russia-West relations and how this influenced Russia's environmental governance. This section examines the mechanism connecting these trends, arguing that securitization indirectly reshaped environmental governance by altering Russia's foreign policy calculus. Environmental governance, once a tool for fostering cooperation with the West, increasingly served nationalistic and security-oriented objectives.

During the Arctic's desecuritization, from Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech until around 2012, Russia's interests aligned with multilateral cooperation and international norms. Gorbachev's speech framed the Arctic as a zone of peace and collaboration, emphasizing environmental cooperation.[102] This vision, while ideologically liberal, aligned with Soviet economic interests, offering opportunities for Arctic development and rapprochement with the West.[103]

In Russia's amended 2023 Arctic Policy ... Russia seeks to move ahead based purely on 'national interest.'

The diplomatic rapprochement caused by the Murmansk speech and the good relations with the West and increased multilateral cooperation that sprung from it did in many ways benefit the USSR and later Russia. After communism fell in 1991 and Russia gained a more Western democratic government and political system while also entering a deep socio-economic crisis. Russia's relationship with the West and the international community profited it immensely in this period as it could not effectively govern or develop the Arctic making this region dependent on Western foreign aid.[104] It is perhaps telling that during this period of vulnerability when Russia's interests were most

aligned with a good relationship with the West that Arctic multilateral cooperation. Russia surrendered to international norms and expanded its range of cooperation eventually leading to the formation of the Arctic Council in 1996.[105] This increase in multilateral cooperation and difference to international norms meant more focus on environmental protection and sustainable development as these were core goals of the Arctic Council.[106] By the early 2000s, as Russia stabilized under Putin, its Arctic policy reflected a paradigm of "green growth," balancing economic ambitions with environmental stewardship. Investments in infrastructure and resource extraction were mediated through multilateral cooperation, benefiting from Western expertise.[107] Medvedev's presidency (2008–2012) further institutionalized this approach, linking sustainable Arctic development with integration into global economic systems and multilateral governance. He explicitly called for the sustainable economic development of the Arctic via economic and political connections with the West, fully embracing rules-based multilateral cooperation and international law.[108] Russia's 2008 Arctic Policy explicitly prioritized environmental governance alongside economic progress.[109] The desecuritized status quo began eroding after Putin's 2012 reelection. The 2013 Arctic Policy marked a shift, emphasizing military readiness and infrastructure development while downplaying multilateral cooperation.[110] By 2014, following Russia's annexation of Crimea, relations with the West deteriorated sharply, fully securitizing the Arctic. [111]

The securitization of the West and by extension the Arctic disrupted the link between multilateral cooperation, environmental governance and economic benefit that had arguably guided Russian Arctic policy since cooperation became far more limited.[112] Meanwhile Russia's changing view of international institutions, laws and norms as being simply tools of power for the West influenced their view of environmental

2000. As Russia began to view the West as an active threat and the Arctic as a region of strategic importance Russia became far less willing to work together with other more Western Arctic states, meaning multilateral



Former Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and Russian President Putin at the International Arctic Forum, Arkhangelsk 2017. Source: The Russian Presidential Press and Information Office

governance. Much like other elements of the international order international environmental standards began to be portrayed as impositions by the West which undermined Russia's economic growth and posed a threat to its national security.[113] To put it in other words, in this new securitized context Russia no longer viewed cooperation with the West in accordance with international laws to be in its interest, instead it viewed it as an inherent danger.

That this shift influenced Russia's view on environmental governance can be explained by the fact that it is a tool Russia uses in its paradoxical foreign policy of seeking to maximize benefit from Western relations and seeming respect for the rules-based order while also pursuing its national interest.[114] As Russia began to view the West as a danger which it could not cooperate with to its benefit, there was less need to emphasize environmental governance to help this relationship. Instead, Russia embraced aggressive anti-Western rhetoric focused on Russia's desire to regain Great Power status. This was reflected in Russia's new Arctic policy which paid less attention to environmental governance.

Instead, it focused on aggressively pursuing economic development and military buildup, seemingly meaning for its increased economic growth to pay for its military expenditure while its military infrastructure would defend its economic projects.[115] Where Russia's economic ambitions had first been mediated by multilateral cooperation and law, they now became intertwined with its quest for security and international prestige.

Perhaps the best evidence for the strong connection between Russia's Western relations and its environmental governance is that with the end of Russia's beneficial relationship with the West after its 2022 Ukrainian invasion its open commitment to environmental governance essentially ended. Even while its rhetoric became increasingly hostile and its Arctic policy increasingly insular, Russia had maintained an open commitment to environmental governance.[116] This was during a period where Russia still maintained a tense but functional relationship with the West, for instance seen in its limited and pragmatic multilateral cooperation in the Arctic.[117] After the war in Ukraine this relationship was severed completely however as Russia found itself internationally isolated. This was almost immediately followed by Russia breaking with essentially all international environmental norms in its Climate Doctrine.[118] This shift also finalized the transformation of Russia's Arctic policy as its newest policy document show it is now intending to pursue a policy based fully on its interests of economic development, with no regard whatsoever for environmental governance.[119]

CONCLUSION

This essay explored how Russia's securitization of the Arctic impacted its environmental governance between 1985 and 2023, utilizing primary sources such as official policy documents like Russia's Arctic Policy.

First, the essay analyzed the process of securitization in the Arctic. Gorbachev's 1987 Murmansk speech marked the start of a desecuritized era,

where the Arctic became a region of peace and multilateral cooperation, including environmental governance. This status quo persisted throughout the 1990s and 2000s but began to erode after 2012 and, more dramatically, following the 2014 Ukraine crisis. By 2022, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Arctic was fully securitized, viewed as vital to Russia's security.

Second, the essay examined how this shift paralleled changes in Russia's Arctic environmental governance. During the desecuritized period, Russia adhered to international environmental norms and implemented effective policies. However, as securitization intensified, Russia began framing environmental standards as Western-imposed constraints on its economic and security goals. This culminated after 2022, when environmental governance was deprioritized in favor of nationalistic and exploitative policies, as reflected in Russia's 2023 Arctic Policy and Foreign Policy Concept.

Finally, the essay explored the mechanism linking securitization and environmental governance. During the desecuritized era, Russia benefited from Western cooperation, which incentivized adherence to international norms, including environmental ones. However, with the return of securitization in 2012/2014, Russia's interests shifted. Viewing the West as a threat, it abandoned multilateral cooperation and environmental governance, which no longer served its national interests. By 2022, international isolation led Russia to discard environmental governance entirely, reducing it to a tool no longer deemed useful in its foreign policy strategy. In short, as Russia securitized the Arctic and West this changed their (Russian?) interests away from environmental governance, which could no longer create international leverage. Cynical though it may be, if environmental governance was a tool in Russian foreign policy, then it is now a tool it has no more use for.

ARMENIA'S STRATEGY AFTER NAGORNO-KARABAKH



Nagorno Karabakh military equipment returning from the front. Source: Clay Gilliland.

In 2018 Armenia had its own Velvet Revolution which swept out old elites from power and brought in a more democratic-minded government under Nikol Pashinyan. Pashinyan, an Armenian parliamentarian, rose to power by leading a wave of demonstrations that forced the resignation of the Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan. Sargsyan, who had served as President of Armenia for 10 years, had tried to prolong his power but failed. Pashinyan was appointed prime minister in May 2018 and subsequently won an overwhelming majority in the December 2018 Parliamentary elections. This was a rare case of an Armenian election being recognised by international observers as free and fair. [120]

Interestingly, unlike other revolutions like the Ukrainian Euromaidan Revolution in 2014, the Velvet Revolution did not start out as anti-Russian. As indicated by Pashinyan's 5-year plan adopted in February 2019, the Armenian government was focused on domestic issues like corruption, overturning the market-share of the previous oligarchic system and establishing a levelplaying field for business.[121]

The current historiography on Armenia's foreign policy since Pashinyan's rise to power has focused on the idea that Armenia, wanting to increase its autonomy vis-a-vis Russia, ironically ended up being drawn closer to its traditional ally. As Pashinyan outlined in his third key point in a speech in 2018 before Armenia's parliament, Armenia' primary foreign policy goal had been focused on achieving internal and external security for Armenia and "Artsakh" (the term Armenian nationalists use for Nagorno-Karabakh).[122] Nagorno-Karabakh is under international law part of Azerbaijan.[123] However, historically at least 80% of the population has been ethnically Armenian.[124] In the First Nagorno-Karabakh War that ended with the ceasefire in 1994 Armenia gained controlled over Nagorno-Karabakh and large parts of adjacent Azerbaijani territories. Armenia continued to fully occupy all of these until the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020 when Azerbaijan recaptured parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and virtually all the adjacent occupied Azerbaijani territories.[125]

Unfortunately for Pashinyan's ambitions, his previous anti-Russian rhetoric during his time in the Armenian political opposition made him untrustworthy in Russian eyes. [126] Because Russia perceived him as pro-Western, it is likely that it let Azerbaijan know that it would tolerate an Azerbaijani attack (within limits) into Nagorno-Karabakh. Consequently, after a war in September-November 2020, Azerbaijan regained large parts of the territory while Russia gained the right to station peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh.[127]

Due to the South Caucasus being extremely dynamic in the past four years however, the historiography has not yet had time to incorporate the events leading up to Azerbaijan's offensive retaking the remainder of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023. This essay posits that taking into account events in 2022-2023 would show that Armenia's reliance on Russia to maintain its control over Nagorno-Karabakh has been an unequivocal failure. This is why Pashinyan declared in June 2024 that Armenia will formally withdraw from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).[128] In light of these changes in the South Caucasus, this paper seeks to reevaluate Armenia's foreign policy during Azerbaijan's retaking of Karabakh (September 2020-September 2023) as Armenia trying to increase its room for maneuver by leveraging derivative power gained from Russia through appealing to Russia itself and organizations it is part of like the CSTO.

Scholars from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung think tank have previously looked at how Armenia has tried to increase its room for maneuver by maintaining a balance between the EU and Russian-led institutions such as the Eurasian Economic Union, both under Pashinyan and previous Armenian governments.[129] However, one underexplored area of research is applying Tom Long's concept of derivative power to a situation where it has clearly failed. Using derivative power as a framework for Armenia's evolving margins for maneuver in the final stages of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (2020-2023) would bring further nuance to Armenia's changing use of derivative power.

To carry out this research, I will mainly use primary sources that contain statements from the Pashinyan administration (especially from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia archives) discussing the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia's position. As the main focus of this paper is Armenia's relationship with Russia, these sources are reliable as they are either official documents by key Armenian officials or newspapers reporting on these officials' statements. One limitation is that I do not speak Armenian. Because not all official Armenian sources have been translated the selection of Armenian sources is limited by what the Armenian government or Armenian and international news outlets have deemed important. Moreover, these sources being mainly pro Pashinyan will obviously be biased in presenting his actions in as positive a light as possible. The secondary literature will mitigate these problems.

This paper will cover the period September 2020 to September 2023, being split into four parts to explain the theoretical framework and analyse key parts of the final phases of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. First, explaining derivative power and applying it to Armenia's relationship with Russia.

Second, the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (September – November 2020) and the subsequent ceasefire. Third, the September 2022 border clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia's appeal for Russian support. And finally, Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor and subsequent offensive (December 2022– September 2023).

My research question is “What were Armenia's Strategies for Maneuver when it lost control over Nagorno-Karabakh: 2020-2023?” Sub-questions that will help answer this include: What means did Armenia use to leverage derivative power? What did Armenia's relationship with Russia achieve?

DERIVATIVE POWER: ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, AND RUSSIA

Tom Long has defined derivative power as “Lacking significant material capabilities of their own, small states may derive power by convincing larger states to take actions that boost their interests.” The base of this power constitutes the relationship between a small state and its great power ally. This can allow the smaller state to potentially extract resources, such as military aid.[130] In the twenty-first century Armenia has had to rely on power derived from Russia to dissuade Azerbaijan from attacking Armenian-occupied territory. This is because of particular-intrinsic power, which Long has identified as instrumentalizing inherent characteristics like population, territory, GDP and military as potential bases of power. Hydrocarbons, like oil and gas, are one famous form of particular-intrinsic power.[131] At a particular-intrinsic level Armenia has been at disadvantage visa-vis Azerbaijan. As Edward Erickson has noted, at the strategic level Azerbaijan “is more powerful in every meaningful way than” Armenia. In 2019, Azerbaijan had a population of 10.3 million, a real GDP of \$145.2 billion, 67,000 total active military personnel and a military budget of \$5.8 billion. This power is possible because of Azerbaijan's demographics and because it exported a lot of crude oil and produced large amounts of natural gas. In contrast, Armenia had a smaller population and was not blessed with hydrocarbons. In 2019, Armenia had a population of 3 million, a real GDP of \$40.4 billion, 45,000 total active military personnel and a military budget of \$1.6 billion.[132]

Because of this great particular-intrinsic power

divergence, Armenia has usually relied on derivative power. During Pashinyan's first five years in power, this has meant mainly relying on Russia specifically and institutions that Russia is part of such the OSCE Minsk Group to maintain the status quo of de facto Armenian control in Nagorno-Karabakh. For example, in a speech to the Council of Europe in April 2019, Pashinyan declared that “the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs are the only ones to deal with the Karabakh conflict.[133] Furthermore, legally through the CSTO treaty,

Armenia had the right to collective defence from Russia in case there was a “menace to safety, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty.”[134] Russia has helped Armenian defence several times, both directly and indirectly. In 1992, Russian troops helped Armenian separatists in carrying out the Khojaly massacre of Azerbaijanis. Russian mediation also directly contributed to the ceasefire in 1994 that permitted Armenia to occupy parts of Azerbaijan's territory. In 2016, Russia provided a \$200 million loan to Armenia for it to strengthen its military. Yerevan also purchased equipment from Russia, including laser reconnaissance devices and unmanned aerial vehicles, in preparation for war with Azerbaijan. Despite these precedents, things would begin to unravel unexpectedly in 2020.

THE SECOND NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR AND CEASEFIRE

On 27 September 2020, Azerbaijan began a full-scale war with Armenia which lasted forty-four days. Its result was a disaster for Armenia. The Armenian-aligned Nagorno-Karabakh

government lost about 75% of its territory that it had controlled for twenty-six years, 25% of which it lost during the war itself and the rest when it handed it over to Azerbaijan following the ceasefire. Azerbaijan in total regained more than 10,000 square kilometres of its territory because of this war. [135]

their “homeland.” Nevertheless, Armenia accused Azerbaijan of creating “artificial, groundless obstacles towards the immediate repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war and detained civilians.” He also stated that Armenia adhered to the Trilateral Agreement and was seeking to strengthen ties between Armenia and



Map of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh and the occupied territories borders: 1994-2020. Source: Civils Daily, 2024.

On 10 November, a ceasefire agreement exclusively brokered by Russia was signed between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. This included stationing Russian peacekeepers for an agreed upon and renewable period of five years in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin Corridor (the only road that connects Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia proper).[136] By agreeing to Russian peacekeepers and Russian mediation, Pashinyan was able to preserve Armenian control for the time being of 25% of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nonetheless, Armenia was unable to derive power from Russia to win this war. Pashinyan also failed in his earlier explicit goal of maintaining security for the other 75% of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In an interview with the Russian news agency RIA Novosti in February 2021, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian commended Russia for its successful effort at facilitating the return of Armenian captives, detained by Azerbaijan, to

Russia.[137]

On 7 September 2022, days prior to a short Armenia-Azerbaijan border clash, Pashinyan was attending the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, where Russia was present. Pashinyan used the forum as a means to laud Russian President Vladimir Putin’s personal efforts as the reason behind the November 2020 ceasefire. Additionally, he declared his “hope to settle relations with Turkey with the assistance of Russia.” However, he also expressed his worry that “the Ukrainian issue” (his euphemism for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine) could destabilise security in the South Caucasus. Nevertheless, overall Pashinyan sounded confident in his relationship with Russia, dismissing a journalist’s concern that Armenia might fall under Western sanctions for attending this event. He furthermore presented Russia’s close ties to Azerbaijan and Russia being a Co-Chair in the Minsk Group as advantageous to settling

the “Nagorno Karabakh problem.”[138]

SEPTEMBER 2022: BORDER CLASH AND ARMENIA'S APPEAL FOR HELP

Pashinyan's tone changed drastically a few days later. On 13 September an Armenian newspaper reported that Armenia and Azerbaijan had had another brief border clash. This time however, at an emergency meeting of Armenia's Security Council chaired by Pashinyan, Armenia appealed to Moscow to “put into action” its defence treaty with Armenia. Armenia also requested assistance from the CSTO and the UN Security Council. Just before, Pashinyan had had a phone call with Putin to discuss the incident. Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan had also spoken with his Russian counterpart Lavrov on the phone.[139]

Instead of intervening on Armenia's behalf however, Russia's foreign ministry stated that it had brokered a ceasefire agreement, calling “on the sides to refrain from further escalation of the situation, exercise restraint[t] and strictly observe the ceasefire.”[140] Yerevan expressed its disappointment soon afterwards. The head of the Armenian Security Council Grigorian stated that the goal of the appeal was “military and military-political assistance” to drive out Azerbaijani forces from Armenian territory. “Up until now it has not been fulfilled.” In other words, Armenia's derivative power failed as a strategy for it to obtain its goal.

THE BLOCKADE OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH AND THE FINAL OFFENSIVE

One of the key aspects of the 2020 Trilateral Agreement had been keeping the Lachin Corridor open, which connected Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, through Russian peacekeepers. This had been Pashinyan's condition for the withdrawal of the Armenian Armed Forces from Nagorno-Karabakh.[141] The whole purpose of these “peacekeepers”, in Armenia's view, was to preserve a modicum of

security for the local Armenian population by dissuading Azerbaijan from resorting to military means again over Nagorno-Karabakh. This goal did succeed for two years but began to unwind in December 2022.

That month, Azerbaijan began blockading the Lachin Corridor. Armenia predictably accused Azerbaijan of violating the Trilateral Agreement because it went against Azerbaijan's guarantee of safe movement of people along the Lachin Corridor.[142] In a statement on 23 April 2023, the Armenian Foreign Ministry called on Russia to fulfil its obligation under Provision 6 of the Trilateral Agreement by eliminating the blockade. This call went unheeded.

“Armenia's derivative power failed as a strategy for it to obtain its goal.”

In September 2023, the blockade had already brought a humanitarian crisis to Nagorno-Karabakh that was on the verge of famine. That month, Azerbaijan launched a quick military operation that took control of the rest of Nagorno-Karabakh. Consequently, the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh evacuated to Armenia. The local self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh formally dissolved. [143] By this point, Armenia had become disillusioned with its strategy of derivative power based on friendship with Russia. During 22-23 September, instead of calling on Russian obligations, Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan spoke before both the UN Security Council[144] and the UN General Assembly[145] to try to mitigate this disaster for Armenia's margins for manoeuvre. Which again failed.

Armenia's current future looks uncertain. Pashinyan's government in the past couple of years has taken a series of actions aspiring to be aligned with the West. This includes: (1) Armenia consenting to an ongoing fully-fledged EU civil mission that was deployed on its side of the border with Azerbaijan in January 2023 with the expressed goal to increase human security in Armenia and promote confidence building between Armenia and Azerbaijan; [146]

(2) Armenia formally becoming a member of the International Criminal Court this February which would make Azerbaijan subject to its jurisdiction if its military ever entered Armenian territory; (3) that same month Armenia froze its membership in the Russian-led CSTO. The CSTO Secretary General Tasmagambetov has emphasized that Armenia has not formally suspended its membership in the organisation. He nonetheless has acknowledged the fact that Yerevan no longer actively participates in the organisation.[147] This September, Armenian authorities announced the exposure of what it alleged to be a Russian-orchestrated attempted coup.[148] These recent events lead me to conclude that, at least as long as Nikol Pashinyan remains Armenia's prime minister, Armenia will continue the process of shedding its historical relationship with Russia as it shifts ever more towards Western-led institutions.

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided insights into how derivative power can fail in protecting small states national interests through the example of Armenia's reliance on Russian security failing to prevent Azerbaijan reconquering the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Additionally, it has also contributed to the literature on Armenia's reliance on Russian security by applying the concept of derivative power to the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, the 2022 Border Clash and the 2023 Azerbaijani Offensive. Furthermore, it has shown how a state's use of derivative power can become less reliable over time, as in the case of Armenia during the years 2020-2023.

It has also shown that Armenia tried to leverage its power with Russia through calling Russian officials directly and meeting with them. One such instance was the Trilateral Agreement that included a meeting between Azerbaijan's President Aliyev, Pashinyan and Putin. This agreement was what Pashinyan subsequently used as justification for requesting Russian military assistance in response to Azerbaijani actions in September and December 2022. Pashinyan had also used the Eastern Economic

Forum as an opportunity to emphasise how much Armenia valued Russia as an ally. This further contributes to the literature by showing that the means of derivative power are diverse.

This paper has been focused on Armenia's relationship with Russia. A related topic barely touched upon in this paper that could be further researched is how Armenia has been gradually replacing its relationship with Russia with Western countries (e.g., France and US) and Westernled international organisations such as the EU, the International Criminal Court and the UN. On a more positive note, the demise of Nagorno-Karabakh has removed the main source of tension between Armenia and international law. This has lessened Armenia's need to rely on Russia. Perhaps it could even lead to a more secure and prosperous Armenia.

 WILLIAM PIRAS

BERLIN IN THE DESERT

How the shadowy power struggle in the Middle East centres on Baghdad & Iraq

In September 2024, both Hamas and the Houthi's opened offices in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. Both of these groups are proxies of Iran's "Axis of Resistance." [149] Their presence in Bagdad points to the further intensification of the shadowy struggle for power in the Middle East between Israel, the United States and Iran. The man Hamas has sent to Iraq is a representative of the Hamas bureau for Arab and Islamic Relations, essentially Hamas' foreign ministry. Almost simultaneously, after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the autumn of 2024, leading figures of Hezbollah fled over land to Iraq, aided by Syrian dictator Bashar Assad and networks of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).[150]

Iraq and particularly Baghdad then, seem to be the new frontline in the Middle East shadow war where Iran's proxies are active in the form of Hamas, the Houthi's and Iraqi Shia militias such as Kata'ib Hezbollah (not to be confused with the Lebanese Hezbollah) and Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (Islamic Resistance in Iraq) on the one hand, while the United States still has a military presence in the country it invaded in 2003. In what way is the shadow war being waged in Iraq? What is its role in this struggle and how does this compare with the situation in surrounding countries?

Perhaps another centre for shadow power struggle from history can provide an example of the effect the presence of all parties above may have on Iraq. During the Cold War, one country and one city in particular were the epicentre for espionage between West and East: Berlin. During the Cold War, the divided capital of Germany, the Western part of which was ideally positioned as an island within East Germany, served as the perfect hub for NATO and the Warsaw Pact bloc to keep an eye on one

another. By drawing a comparison between Berlin as the centre of the Cold War power struggle and Iraq and Baghdad as the centre for the current Middle Eastern power struggle, a better understanding of these shadowy conflicts can be gained and what the Middle East may experience as a result could be determined.

BERLIN DURING THE COLD WAR

Immediately after the guns of the Second World War fell silent on the European continent, it was clear Berlin would become the centre of espionage. It was a geographically and politically logical location for the occupying powers of Germany to gather information on one another's nefarious activities. Divided into four occupation zones in the same manner as Germany itself, the Western powers now had a small island of territory under their control in the middle of the Soviet occupation zone that would become the German Democratic Republic; East Germany, the Stalinist frontline state of the Warsaw Pact where half a million Soviet troops were stationed.

Often forgotten is that Austria and Vienna were also both divided into four occupation zones in the same fashion as Germany and Berlin. Vienna then, alongside Berlin, became another centre for espionage. However, after the Austrian division was settled in 1955 and Austria became a neutral state in the Cold War, the significance of Austria as a state to influence diminished. The settlement of the Austrian occupation had the significant effect of increasing the importance of Berlin as the strategic location for the West to monitor military movements and gather information from the Warsaw Pact countries.

During the 1950's, this gathering of intelligence mostly happened the classic way: through people. Intelligence officers on both sides would recruit agents in different sectors of the adversary's government and society and would use them to gather documents and other information and use their observations of meetings and other important gatherings of government officials. Intelligence gathering occurred in this manner for two reasons: technology was not advanced enough to use on a large scale for spying and the intra German border between the now established states of the western Federal Republic Germany and eastern German Democratic Republic was still open. This allowed intelligence officers to cross from west to east within Germany and within Berlin relatively easily to conduct their shadowy activities.

Two developments in the early 1960's changed the playing field. Spy technology in the form of listening devices which could pick up communication in a radius of 500 kilometres would be developed and most significantly: the border closed. When the wall suddenly appeared on 13 August 1961 and the intra German border closed, intelligence officers were suddenly completely restricted in checking in with their sources. This sudden limitation on human intelligence forced both powers to develop technologies to intercept communications. These combined technologies were applied into pieces of infrastructure which became known as 'listening stations.'

These buildings, relatively easily recognizable by the amount of satellite dishes and other structures on their roofs, housed hundreds and sometimes even thousands of employees who worked for the CIA, NSA and military intelligence agencies and gathered and intercepted all sorts of communications from the other side of the Iron Curtain. The Americans has several of these listening stations during the Cold War in West Berlin.

The largest of these listening stations was on top of the Teufelsberg ("the Devil's mountain"). This 120-metre-high hill was the highest point in both West and East Berlin and perfectly

positioned within the Westen zone. Rather macabrely, this hill was an artificial one, composed of the rubble of the ruins of Berlin which has been piled up outside the city as reconstruction got underway after the war. 1500 People worked at the Teufelsberg listening station for the aforementioned different intelligence agencies. As stated the Americans had multiple of these stations. And that was just the Americans, their British and French equivalents in the intelligence business also had their own listening stations in their respective sectors of West Berlin. The western archives have provided us with these insights of the manner in which the western powers used Berlin as their primary platform for espionage on the east. The Soviet archives have not provided us with the same information, but one can imagine the Russians had similar technologies stationed on their side of the wall. All major players in the Cold War were thus present in Berlin to try to gain an edge on their adversary. However, because of the rigidity with which Europe was divided, there wasn't much activity in terms of sabotage or active use of violence to gain an edge. These indirect confrontations between the western and eastern bloc did of course occur by proxy throughout the Cold War all over the globe: From the Vietnam War to Nicaragua's contra's and Sandinista's, from Angola's MPLA to Afghanistan's Mujahedeen and from Operation Condor in Latin America to operation Ajax in Iran. But not in Europe.



The Teufelsberg 'listening station' in West Berlin during the Cold War.

As technology advanced further during the 1970's and 1980's, the introduction of spy satellites transmitting information to the spy agencies' headquarters and their listening stations allowed for intelligence officers to gather more information on their adversary than ever before. These technological advancements did not mean human forms of intelligence gathering ceased completely. Multiple examples exist of lower ranked officials in Berlin being recruited by both sides to copy documents in their stations and hand them over to the other side. However, the reliance on technology to gather intelligence became leading.[151]

Berlin during the Cold War thus provides a historical narrative on how modern intelligence gathering came about. However, some of the direct actions of shadow warfare did not take place on European soil. We must now look into the current state of affairs Middle East and see what parallels can be drawn.

THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE 21st CENTURY

Ever since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Israel and Iran have been at odds. Iran has consistently painted Israel as its main enemy alongside the USA who are the obstacles for the Islamic Revolution. During the 1980's and 1990's however, both had a different priority in terms of their security and ideological adversary: Saddam Hussein.

As a Sunni secular leader, Saddam was not compatible with Iran's worldview. This was dramatically displayed by the brutal war the two countries waged for eight years in which a million people perished. The Israeli's on the other hand feared Saddam would develop Weapons of Mass Destruction and use them against Israel. Saddam did launch Scud missiles against Israel during the Gulf War in an attempt to break up the coalition to liberate Kuwait. After the Americans toppled Saddam in 2003, the vacuum in which the current power struggle could take place was created.

Iran started constructing its now infamous 'Axis of Resistance' actively from 2006 onwards, as the insurgency in Iraq against the American presence was becoming bloodier by the day. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) coordinates the activities of the proxies, specifically through the Quds Force.[152] Despite the axis originating because of the US invasion of Iraq, Iran's strongest proxy were, and are still, not groups fighting in Iraq. Hezbollah in Lebanon is by far Iran's strongest proxy, because of its size and proximity to Israel. The importance of Hezbollah does immediately offer an explanation for the importance of Iraq: it forms the land bridge between Iran and Hezbollah. Without Iraq and the Iran friendly Assad regime in Syria, supplying Hezbollah would be considerably more difficult if even possible. Not only is Iraq the crossroad between Israel and Iran, but also between Saudi Arabia and Iran who are engaged in a power struggle of their own, since Iraq borders both.[153] This is the geographical asset of Iraq in the shadow war.

Politically, Iraq is also the logical frontline between Israel and Iran. Jordan is relatively western orientated but can be regarded as neutral in this contest. As stated, the Assad regime in Syria is an Iranian ally and Hezbollah has so much power in Lebanon that it practically aligns the country with Iran. Iraq on the other hand has significant Shia political parties and militias which cooperate with Iran, but it is also still involved with its former occupier: the United States.

The Americans officially ended their campaign in Iraq in 2011, but they never really left. Soon afterwards they were forced back into the region because of the threat of ISIS. Some 2000 American special forces are still in Iraq to fight any possibly resurgent cells of ISIS and some 900 are deployed in in Syria with the Syrian Democratic Forces for the same purpose. Increasingly however, the Iraqi government is demanding the complete withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. Several incidents have occurred where Americans have fired at Iraqi citizens.[154]

Even when the US military will someday definitively leave Iraq, the Americans will still retain an important diplomatic presence in Iraq. During the Iraq War, the Americans started constructing a new embassy in Baghdad. This complex spans 42.000 square meters (42 ha), only slightly smaller than Vatican City. This is the largest American embassy on the planet and contains watchtowers and helipads, alongside all sorts of luxuries for the embassy's employees. The Americans have built themselves a true fortress on the banks of the Tigris in the heart of Baghdad.[155] One can imagine that this complex houses technologies to monitor Iran's proxies in the region as well as a CIA station. Because of the size of the embassy, it is not unreasonable to suspect significant intelligence gathering operations being run from it. By extension, one can imagine the Americans sharing relevant intelligence gathered here with the Mossad, who have proven to have their own impressive infiltration capabilities, as shown by the walkie-talkie attack on Hezbollah.



The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad

IS BAGHDAD BERLIN In THE MIDDLE EAST?

Having described the role of Berlin in the Cold War and the activities of various parties in the Middle East and in Baghdad, we must now see to what extent this comparison holds up. Firstly, the activities used to wage this power struggle between Iran, Israel and the US are similar to the activities used by those in the Cold War. The

support of proxies in the form of state and non-state actors, the propping up or overthrowing of regimes deemed allied or hostile and the large scale gathering of intelligence and espionage are weapons which were and are being used.

While Berlin and Germany were just the site of espionage, Iraq is also one of the hotspots in the Middle East's power struggle. Iranian backed groups have repeatedly attacked American positions in Iraq as well as in Jordan, and IRGC commanders have claimed to have taken out Mossad 'spy nests' in Iraq.[156] However, these are relatively minor attacks compared to the true hotspots of this power struggle: the war in Lebanon, the war in Gaza and the Bab el-Mandeb straight being attacked by the Houthis. It is in those areas where fighting is happening directly between proxy and enemy on a much larger scale and where the bloodshed is most brutal. While in the Cold War there was a clear division between a relatively quiet Berlin where espionage occurred and the rest of the globe with hotspots in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Angola, the line between espionage hub and hotspot is more blurred in the Middle East.

The division made here between hotspots and espionage hub is also an explanation why this article chooses to identify Baghdad and Iraq as the centre for these shadowy activities. For example, Beirut has the second largest American embassy (17 ha) and is of course home to Hezbollah, Iran's most powerful proxy. However, Iraq is the only Middle Eastern country where all parties in this power struggle are so explicitly present. Iran through the Shia militias, the fled leadership of the Lebanese Hezbollah and the new Hamas and Houthi offices. The Americans with their special forces and through their enormous embassy and by extension the Israelis. The American embassy in Baghdad could perhaps be seen as the 21st century, Middle Eastern equivalent of the Teufelsberg listening station in Berlin, which was so vital during the Cold War for gathering intelligence.

The Cold War provides a simple narrative on power struggles and the activities powers undertake to undermine the other: gather

intelligence on the frontline and fight each other through proxies elsewhere. In Berlin, Germany, and Europe, the powers bordered one another which meant it was the ideal location to spy on each other. Their conflict through proxies was fought in Asia, Africa and South-America.

In the Middle East this division becomes muddled. Intelligence gathering and proxy warfare happen in the same location, but at different scales. Because Israel and Iran do not border each other, the states in between are their spheres of influence and their battleground. While some, Gaza and Lebanon, are clearly the hotspots where direct proxy conflict is taking place, others, Syria and Jordan, are allied to Iran or neutral. Iraq is not clearly in either camp and thus the centre for this regional power struggle, where both sides seek influence and intelligence on the other because there is ground to be won, while also sabotaging the other if presented with the opportunity. While the Berlin Wall to an extent kept the Americans and Russians apart, in the Middle East there is nothing separating the powers and their secret actions to undermine each other, mean violence and instability in Iraq.

THE COLLAPSE OF OSLO AND ISRAEL'S FAR-RIGHT SURGE

Peter Malcontent explores the interplay of security policy, religious nationalism, and demographics in Israeli politics

This interview, conducted by Pepijn Lapidaire in November 2024, features insights from Dr Peter Malcontent, a lecturer and researcher at Utrecht University. Dr Malcontent specializes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the history of human rights. His notable works include "Facing the Past: Amending Historical Injustices through Instruments of Transitional Justice" (2016) and "Een open zenuw. Nederland, Israël & Palestina" (2018). The views expressed are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the interviewer or Utrecht University.



Photo: Tara van den Broek

Could you describe the political turn in Israel from the collapse of the Oslo Accords in 2000 to this government with these extremist forces?

Yes, what is important to put first, the West easily makes the mistake of thinking that there was once an Israel in which a majority of Israelis had some degree of empathy towards the Palestinians. There wasn't. It has actually been 'us or them' from the beginning. The Labour Zionists, who founded the State of Israel in 1948, always had a hard time with that. They found that difficult, they were always a bit opaque about it too. But when push came to shove, for them too it was, 'us or them.' So even Labour prime ministers like Golda Meir have often enough said, 'What are Palestinians? they don't exist.'

On the right, people have always been clearer about this. There they have always said, 'We can only negotiate with the Palestinians when they

are defeated. We both want the same piece of land, so either they win or we win.' That is Vladimir Jabotinsky's Ironwall doctrine. He was a very right-wing Zionist in the 1930s, he separated himself from the normal Zionist movement and said, 'that's just the way it is, ['us or them'] let's not beat around the bush.' And that thinking underlies how the Likud party views the Palestinian issue.

So, Netanyahu is an heir to Jabotinsky. But, at different points in time, you see Israeli politicians making different choices about how they deal with the Palestinian issue. During the First Intifada in the second half of the 1980s, they saw: violence doesn't work now. Then the realisation slowly dawned, maybe we should try something else after all. Just violence doesn't work, we also have to negotiate.

In the West, we thought that eventually at the end of those Oslo Accords, Israel would also automatically agree to a Palestinian state. We in

the West started deluding ourselves because that was not the case. Now, I do think that certain Israeli governments in that period would have eventually accepted a Palestinian state, but that would always have been a Palestinian state whose independence would be such that you couldn't actually call it a truly independent state. In the case of an Israeli-style Palestinian state, the Palestinians would have very limited control over their own borders and their own territory and would be limited in collecting their own tax revenues.

That is the perspective with which many Israelis have always looked at a Palestinian state. They started negotiating because they saw: violence alone doesn't work. Well, they negotiated for ten years, that too came to nothing. Then those right-wing forces in Israeli society said, with Likud, Sharon and Netanyahu leading the way, then let's use violence. Netanyahu has actually always said: no two-state solution and if necessary, we will strike back. That sentiment has become increasingly extreme, and what Israel has been doing since 7 October is quite extreme even by Israeli standards. So, one has to conclude that, on the Palestinian issue, there has been a far-right shift in Israeli politics.

The right are the hawks and negotiations on anything resembling a Palestinian state is more on the left. But on the left, it is not the case that people always thought: ah, poor Palestinians, we should do something for them.

What has always been paramount for Israel, left and right, is: the Palestinians are a security issue. It's not a human rights issue, it's a security issue. And you can solve that in two ways: by force or by negotiation. The left wing often favoured negotiations; the right wing favoured violence. After Oslo, that hawkish thinking, foreign policy is security, security, security and more security, continued to grow.

At the same time, you see that Israel has become a more right-wing country not only on the security front, but also domestically. This has been going on in Israel for 20 years, particularly since the rise of Netanyahu, but it is a process that has been dormant for some time. This rise

of right-wing forces has been largely determined by demographic phenomena. The Jewish-Israeli part of Israeli society started to change in terms of its composition. For a long time, European Jews had the upper hand. Almost all of them voted Labour. A large group of new Jews joined them immediately after Israel's independence. These are the Arab Jews. They came to Israel after 1948. They did not initially have much of a say. In the 1970s, when Likud began to emerge in the Israeli political scene, these Arab Jews started voting Likud.

Not because they were necessarily right-wing, but out of frustration at not being taken seriously by the Labour party. They were seen as second-class Jews. That helped the advance of the right and in the 1980s Likud came to power more often. Then Labour returned one more time in the 1990s with the Oslo Accords and after that it was basically downhill. The all-powerful Labour party, who used to be able to govern on their own, they now have about three or four seats.

Then you also have many Russian Jews emigrating to Israel after the Cold War, then you also have a rise in the number of ultra-Orthodox Jews and then also a big rise in extreme nationalist or ultra-right-wing Jews. Sometimes with religious aspects like Smotrich. Sometimes just pure ultra-right, as you see with a figure such as Ben-Gvir. This is how Israel became more right-wing because of demographics.

Ben Gvir and Smotrich are often cited as examples of that far-right. In what ways are they more right-wing than Netanyahu, and what are ideas at play in that additional right-wing, ultra-Orthodox group?

First, you should not confuse those ultra-right-wing parties with those ultra-Orthodox parties. The influence of the ultra-Orthodox is rising

In the West, we thought that eventually at the end of those Oslo Accords, Israel would also automatically agree to a Palestinian state.

because the number of ultra-Orthodox Jews is rising. You can see this in current politics as well, for example by exempting Orthodox Jews from conscription. The non-Orthodox Jews want this gone because now only they have had to fight. But some of those ultra-Orthodox

"Smotrich and Ben-Gvir envision a 'Great Israel'—an ethnically pure Jewish state."

parties are in government and they don't want that and so they block that exemption from being scrapped. Those ultra-Orthodox parties demand that Netanyahu not extend the conscription. This causes tensions in the Knesset among the opposition, but there are also politicians within Likud who believe that this

exception is unacceptable. But Netanyahu is happy to accommodate those ultra-Orthodox parties. Because if he doesn't, his government could fall. And those ultra-orthodox parties are different parties from the ultra-right-wing parties.

Those two ultra right-wing parties of Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, they dream of a great Israel. A great Israel like the Biblical kingdom of ancient Israel. That means they want all of Palestine. So both Gaza and the West Bank and a bit of Lebanon. They also want Israel to be an ethnically pure state. A true Jewish nation-state with no room for Arabs or Palestinians.

There is of course a strong religious element in this, but faith is not the most important thing to them, but it does play a part. Because only by referring to faith can they also refer to the ancient Biblical Kingdom of Israel. So, the two things intertwine. They use faith to claim the West Bank and Gaza. The West Bank in particular is the most important. They also don't talk about the West Bank but about Judea and Samaria. And they want it at all costs. So that also means eventual deportation of Palestinians.

Are those ideas also the distinguishing element between Ben-Gvir, Smotrich and Netanyahu?

Those ultra-right-wing parties and Likud too,

they have been very successful in hammering home in Israeli society that it's all about security, security, security. So, Netanyahu too does not want to give up the occupied territories, but there is still mainly a security idea behind that and not necessarily a religious or ideological one. Likud is not a religious party; it is a secular party. But its allies want the same thing, but for a different reason. There is a mixture of nationalism and religion. Likud and those extremists can find each other. Together, these have sent a message to Israeli society: we must do everything to ensure Israel's security. That means that we can never leave the occupied territories and that by definition every Arab country should be seen as an enemy until proven otherwise. Until you conclude an Abraham Accord type of deal with it, for example.

Defence Minister Gallant was recently sacked. How fragile is the current coalition at the moment? When new elections are held, do you expect Israel to shift even further to the right? Or that something of a correction will happen?

This coalition has been fragile since it took office, as they do not have a large majority in the Knesset, only a few seats. Netanyahu can of course stay in office with that minimal majority and he is willing to go very far for this. The latest example of this is indeed Gallant's resignation. It is not just the result of shady coalition politics.

If elections were held at this time, Likud could win. That is remarkable because we did not think so six or seven months ago. So, what you see is that because of Israel's recent military successes, Likud and also Netanyahu are on the rise again. But if elections are held now and if Likud were to win, they will again have to rely on the same coalition partners. Because the other parties, in the opposition, Gantz's and Lapid's parties, they are not contemplating joining the government with Netanyahu for a second. So, then he will have to knock on the doors of those extremists again anyway.

It could go two ways. It could be that Netanyahu serves out the term and then there are new

elections and he wins them. But that he may not manage to find enough support among his current coalition colleagues. That means that the current opposition could start forming a coalition. Suppose that succeeds, one might ask: would that change course?

Then you come back to what I said earlier about domestic politics. The opposition parties are democratic parties. That is, democratic parties primarily for the Jewish-Israeli part of the population and within these parties there is also a certain respect for the Arab population within Israel. So internally, it would be good news for the democratic institutions in Israel.

Because they would not implement those constitutional reforms?

Yes, correct. In Israel, when you talk about the right, it's not just about security politics, it's also about internal politics. What those ultra-right-wing parties have in common, along with those ultra-Orthodox parties and a growing part of Likud, is that they actually want more leeway and don't want to be constantly called back by the Supreme Court or by the highest prosecutor in Israel. And the Supreme Court and the top prosecutor in Israel relatively have a lot of power because Israel doesn't have a proper constitution. So that's what Likud and the extremists want to get rid of. In a country that has no real constitution, that means an attack on democracy. So, with a coalition consisting of the current opposition, that will not happen.

With regard to the Palestinians, those parties will be slightly more inclined to lend an ear to the international community. Because they do tend to look a bit further ahead. But that doesn't mean that they are suddenly in favour of a Palestinian state or suddenly say, well, with Iran, all is forgotten and forgiven. They too are tough about it either way. So, the idea that if the opposition comes to power, then it will all be different: forget it. It will all be slightly less bad than in the case of a new ultra-right government with Netanyahu. But there won't be much difference on the Palestinian issue.

And if Netanyahu stays in power, then it will

stay this way. And will anything change? Well, I don't think so for now. A large part of the Israeli population has a lot of trouble with those internal reforms. But don't forget that there are also many Israelis, who don't take to the streets, who think it's all fine. And the polls show that too. So, it's really not the case that in the very short term the far-right in Israel will just lose momentum.

How do you expect that to affect Israel's international reputation? In what is called the Global South, they already have a negative reputation. But could that reputation with traditional allies break down too?

That reputation has already taken hits, of course. But certainly, those on the right and Israel in general don't care that much what the rest of the world thinks about them. As long as they know they can keep key strategic allies behind them. The Americans, that is, and if the European Union is behind them, that's a nice little bonus. As long as they are supported by the Americans, they don't much care what everybody else thinks.

What is also noteworthy, Israeli foreign policy and also security policy is never a long-term strategy. It's all short-term. This is not very surprising. From an Israeli perspective, they have been at war since the state's inception. Countries at war never have a long-term perspective.

This also explains the Israeli actions in Gaza and against Hezbollah. Shoot first and ask questions later. An idea about solving it structurally, should you not only fight but also want something else, that is not important right now. That's how they look at the rest of the world too. You have also heard Netanyahu say that often enough in the past year: 'whether our allies like it or not, we are just doing what is necessary for us.' For Netanyahu, the most important thing is, as long as he can keep the

Israeli foreign policy and also security policy is all short-term. Countries at war never have a long-term perspective.

Americans behind him, it's fine. More is always nice but is not necessary and he is also pragmatic enough to know when this war is over and we are another five years down the line nobody is talking about it anymore.

It is often forgotten that there is a substantial Arab minority within Israel. Could you elaborate on their role in this whole political violence?

Yes, it's a relatively small group which again is made up of different groups. So you have, for example, Bedouins, other groups, Palestinian Arabs. It is not a unity and it is a minority. They basically have the right to vote and can be part of the political order in Israel, but they are not allowed in the army. Mostly, one has to read between the lines. Especially socially economically, Palestinian Arabs in practice are simply less well off than their fellow Jewish citizens. At the same time, some of those Palestinian Arabs have established a degree of social security and prosperity which they would never achieved in the occupied territories. So it's not like all Palestinian Arabs are waiting for an independent Palestinian state that they would also have to go to.

So that does make them more cautious than Palestinians in the occupied territories. So, you cannot automatically lump Palestinians in Israel with Palestinians in the occupied territories. Palestinians in Israel, despite being second-class citizens, have something to lose. But they too, of course, are watching with suspicion the far-right movement taking place in Israel.

Two years ago, following the riots on the Haram al-Sharif, the Temple Mount, we also saw Palestinian Arabs in Israel taking to the streets. That had never happened before. Palestinian Arabs in Israel itself had always kept quiet but then did take to the streets for the first time. They too, of course, are worried. If Israeli Jews are worried about the democratic nature of the state of Israel, Palestinian Arabs have even more to worry about. Because if they will soon be at the mercy of ultra-right-wing governments that can no longer be called back by the judiciary when things get too crazy, they could of course fall victim to this.



PEPIJN LAPIDAIRE

INTERVIEWEE DR PETER MALCONTENT

MISINTERPRETING A TYRANT

Book review: The Achilles Trap: Saddam Hussein, the United States and the Middle East. (Steve Coll, 2024)

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 is perhaps one of the defining historical events of the post-Cold War era. Under false pretences, the armies of President George W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, rolled into Iraq in 2003 and deposed the country of its brutal dictator Saddam Hussein. The only problem was the coalition did not have any plans on how to govern Iraq after Saddam was removed. A brutal insurgency was the consequence as well as a power vacuum in which eventually terrorist organisation ISIS could flourish. Iraq has suffered tremendously as a result of the 2003 invasion and more than twenty years later, it has far from fully recovered.

So how was the decision made in Washington D.C. (and partially in London) to invade Iraq? Steve Coll is a former Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University who has written extensively on the origins of the American War on Terror. He has traced the family relations of the Bin Laden family and the CIA's role in Afghanistan in the decade before its post-9/11 invasion. Now, he has done the same extensive research on the origins of the Iraq War from the perspective of the intelligence and national security policymakers in both Washington and Baghdad.

The Achilles Trap provides a unique insight of more than twenty years of US policy vis-à-vis Iraq, in which five different presidents (Carter, Reagan, the elder Bush, Clinton and the younger Bush) came up with vastly different interpretations on how to either work with or work against the notorious Iraqi dictator. What becomes evident is that the chaotic and

secretive nature of the Iraqi regime was continuously misinterpreted by the CIA and other policymakers in Washington. By also providing the Iraqi perspective on events, Coll manages to portray how actions which were deemed as escalatory or deliberately hostile towards the US by the Americans, were mostly just the result of incompetence and chaos in Baghdad.

During the 1980's, the Americans were actually trying to establish some form of cooperation with the Iraqis who were fighting the newly Islamic Republic of Iran. In a bizarre moment of historical coincidence, the Americans sent Donald Rumsfeld to Baghdad in 1983 in secret to establish relations with Saddam. Twenty years later as Secretary of Defence, Rumsfeld would be one of the main hawks behind the invasion. When news of the Iran Contra Scandal broke and Saddam found out the Americans has also supplied the Iranians, partially with the help of Israel, a cooperation which had barely started broke down. From this moment onwards Coll describes, the Americans and Iraqis were never fully able to understand what the other was doing again. The Americans failed to understand Saddam's paranoia which meant he believed the CIA knew he did not have Weapons of Mass Destruction after the Gulf War in 1991, which in turn meant Saddam thought he could keep up the appearance of WMD's to the rest of the world because in his world the CIA was everywhere and knew he didn't actually have them.

In reality, the Iraqis had destroyed their WMD programme in 1990's in such a rush, they could

not produce evidence of its dismantling. Not because they did not want to, but because they did not know where their evidence had gone. So when inspectors tried to go into buildings to find evidence and the Iraqi's wouldn't let them, the Americans interpreted this by thinking that the Iraqi WMD must still exist, it was just being hidden from them. In reality as Coll writes: "Their actions made it look like they were hiding something – and they often were, but it was not stocks of WMD."

Coll's fantastically detailed account of the constant misinterpretations of Saddam Hussein provides a valuable lesson for the current analysts and policymakers in the field of international relations. When analysing the actions of authoritarian leaders like Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Kim Jung-Un or Ayatollah Khamenei, policymakers must keep in mind that actions which might seem to have hostile motives or malignant intent, may just be the result of incompetence, a chaotic bureaucracy or foolishness. Sometimes things are lost and nobody genuinely knows where they are or regimes try to hide something for their own sake and they are not actually hiding what one thinks they are hiding.

With this observation in mind, policymakers could do worse than read Coll's book in order to get a better grasp of some of these intricacies of the complicated regimes they have to deal with when drafting their policies. The Achilles Trap provides a great account of twenty years of history filled with brilliant and sometimes shocking anecdotes for anyone interested in the confusing nature and nuances of foreign politics.

THE COLD REVOLUTION

French Cultural Security in the 1950 and 1960s

In September 1950, the French weekly magazine *Juvenal* wrote an article about the growing popularity of Coca-Cola in France, concluding: 'If we are not careful, France will be Cocacolonised'. The article illustrates the widespread anxiety in France about the threat of Americanization and the demise of French culture. In the 1950s, Coca-Cola targeted France with a large marketing campaign which they called *Révolution du Froide: The Cold Revolution*. Big advertisements arose on the Champs Elysee and free bottles of Coca-Cola were distributed. The campaign sparked opposition towards what some Frenchmen saw as cultural imperialism. In 1950, the French parliament even considered banning the drink altogether. This article explains the French opposition towards Coca Cola and considers French cultural security in the face of rising American cultural power.

The concept of cultural security was coined by the Copenhagen School of international relations, most notably in *Security: A new framework for analysis* by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde. In their argue for a broader understanding beyond the traditional concept of security, they involve security in the cultural and societal area. The Canadian political scientist Louis Bélanger argues that cultural penetration poses a threat towards states' identity. This concept is clearly exemplified in the case of the *Révolution du Froide* discussed in this article.

AMERICA IN A BOTTLE: THE COCA COLA COMPANY

In order to explain French anxiety about the Coca Cola campaign, its useful to draw a picture of the Coca Cola company. The Coca-Cola Company was founded in the 1880s in Atlanta. At first, Coca-Cola was a medicinal drink but soon found its way as a soft drink. In his article, *Coca Cola and the Cold War* Richard Kuisel explains the relation between Coca Cola and mass commercialization. 'Since the soft drink satisfied no essential need, the Coca Cola Company used extensive advertising'.^[157] Coca-Cola soon took over the North American market, and by the 1930s it looked for new regions to conquer. Therefore, the Coca-Cola Export Corporation was founded in 1930 and began exporting Coca-Cola to Western Europe and South America. Meanwhile, the brand became more and more intertwined with the U.S. The story of Coca-Cola's success illustrated the American dream. It also embraced American capitalism. A company official allegedly said: 'Coca Cola is the essence of capitalism in every bottle'.^[158]

During the Second World War, the company became even more associated with the U.S. by promising every American soldier a bottle of Coca-Cola. After the Second World War, Coca-Cola resumed its overseas adventures, quickly conquering the markets of Western Europe.

Since it was a company, it is safe to assume that the main drive for Coca-Cola's expansion is commercial gains. The economies of Europe and the U.S. were connected for centuries and as a wealthy continent, Europe was a promising market. But it seems that there was also a political reason. As stated above, Coca-Cola became a big supplier for the American military in World War Two. Coca-Cola president Robert Woodruff famously promised: 'We will see that every man in uniform gets a bottle of Coca-Cola for five cents wherever he is and whatever it costs'.^[159] According to Kuisel, Coca-Cola was identified with the American war aims.^[160]

The Company continued this imaged during the Cold War. A magazine advertisement in France in 1950 still mentioned the 'Yankee soldier' inviting Parisians to 'have a Coke', displaying friendly American soldiers under the Eiffel Tower.^[161] Moreover, some high-level Coca-Cola officials carried fierce anti-communist

sentiments. For example, the chairman of the board of the Coca Cola Export Corporation James Farley stated: 'We find ourselves in danger from an enemy more subtle, more ruthless, more fanatic than any we have ever faced. The time has come for Americans to challenge the aggressive, godless, and treasonable practices of totalitarian communism'.^[162] Coca-Cola thus symbolized many values of the U.S. By 1945 the Coca-Cola Company was ready to push up the profits and wage Cold War.

DEFEATED, HUMILIATED AND TORN APART: POSTWAR FRANCE

In explaining French cultural security considerations regarding the Coca-Cola campaign, we must elaborate on French cultural anxiety and pessimism after World War II. 1950s France was a traumatized country. The Second World War proved disastrous for a country known for its pride. In 1940, the German Reich invaded through Belgium and the Netherlands. Despite the praised French defense line, the Maginot Line, the country surrendered after little more than a month. Even worse, the country was split in two. A defeatist government decided it would be better to collaborate with the Germans. Under the leadership of First World War hero Phillippe Petain, a collaborative state was set up in the South of France, known as the Vichy Government. The Vichy Government would help the German war effort with resources and volunteers. Meanwhile, the French fight against the German Reich was continued in the colonies of West Africa under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle raised a small army, The Free French Forces, and tried to stay in contact with the French resistance movements. After the liberation of France in 1944, the country was reunited but badly damaged.

After World War Two, France found itself in an i



The arrival of American troops in France brought with it a significant wave of American Influence. Source: Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (NLFDR)

identity crisis. According to France: The Dark Years, by Julian Jackson, France had an internal struggle of what its future should look like. The French resistance wanted to rebuilt French culture to destroy all fascist remnants. General de Gaulle on the other hand wanted to restore order and stability. Finally, the majority of the French population sought food and shelter.^[163] Apart from conflicting world views, the legacy of the Vichy Government haunted the French. The infamous act of collaboration with fascism added anxiety to uncertainty. Thus, by 1950 the French were only just rebuilding their image after a humiliating defeat and a shameful collaboration. Cultural anxiety reigned, which resulted in a vigorous backlash against foreign, cultural interference.

THE COLD REVOLUTION: COCA COLA'S CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE

Coca-Cola had already reached the French market before World War Two, but the consumption was mainly limited to American tourists in France. After World War Two, the Coca-Cola Company was eager to conquer the French domestic market. The Coca-Cola Export Corporation drew up a marketing plan for France. A manufacturing plant was to arise in Marseille, from which the soft drink would be distributed to local vendors. A grand marketing campaign, called the Cold Revolution, would increase Coca-Cola's popularity in France. France was divided into 'target zones', Paris and the Midi being the first regions to strike.[164] The campaign used the Companies affiliation with the U.S. military. A famous magazine advertisement from 1945 portrays American soldiers handing out bottles of Coca-Cola. The text below says 'Yank friendliness comes to the Eiffeltower.' [165] The text explains how Coca-Cola is the 'American way' to show kindness, calling Coca-Cola an 'International symbol of good will.' [166] The campaign references the French Libération of 1944 when American soldiers liberated France. The message gives the U.S. a sort of 'moral high ground' and expects the French to embrace the American example of

Une perm'a Paris... Have a Coca-Cola
(FRANCE LIBERÉE)

...Yank friendliness comes to the Eiffel Tower

It's a natural impulse for a Yank soldier to share his home ways and home things with friendly foreigners abroad. The invitation Here a Coke is a symbol of his feeling of friendliness toward folks in Paris. It says 'We're your allies — we wish you well in a way no American can be hostile to the enemy because it hasn't been. Whenever you hear Here a

Coke you hear the voice of America... inviting you to enjoy the peace that refreshes — a national custom now becoming an international symbol of good will to all.

Our fighting men meet up with Coca-Cola many places overseas, where it's bottled on the spot. Coca-Cola has been a gladstone "any way back what".

You naturally hear Coca-Cola called the "friendly alienation" (Coke) "Bottled on the spot" by our men of The Coca-Cola Company.

The Coca Cola advertisement 'Yank friendliness comes to the Eiffeltower.'

kindness by buying this American Symbol. The Coca-Cola salesmen even wore quasi-military uniforms to remind the French of the 1944 liberation. Apart from using the war experience, the marketing campaign also used a second message. The campaign demonstrated American modernity.

Using the American reputation of youth and modernity, Coca Cola company framed its drink as a drink for the future. The campaign involved, for example, several 'Coca Cola vans'. These vans acted as mobile Coca-Cola stores, selling bottles and giving away free samples. The vans showcased modern promotional methods. Furthermore, advertisements starred young men or, more often, women. Confidently drinking a bottle of Coca-Cola, these youngsters showed that Coca-Cola was young and fresh. Coca-Cola would lead France towards the American future.

In short, Coca-Cola embraced its affiliation with the United States. They used that affiliation during the campaign in France. They also stressed modernity and youth, which is also linked to the U.S.

THE COLD COUNTERREVOLUTION: FRENCH REACTIONS

The efforts of the Coca-Cola Company stumbled upon resistance as early as 1947. The French government was hesitant to allow Coca-Cola's production and distribution in France. According to Lauren Kuo in her article Another Perspective on the Coca-Cola Affair in Postwar France, this hesitation stemmed as much from economic reasons as from cultural reasons. She explains that the French government feared that the import of Coca-Cola would seriously drain the French dollar reserve and worsen the trade deficit between France and the U.S. [167] Although the soft drink was eventually allowed in France, French governmental branches kept attacking the Coca-Cola Company. Kuo notes that in 1949, the French Ministry of Finance's External Finance Division demanded a new import permit for Coca-Cola's secret formula, temporarily cutting the lifeline

of the French Coca-Cola manufacturing plants in Marseille.[168]

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Coca-Cola faced another enemy in France. The French leftist groups denounced Coca-Cola as a way of American imperialism. In 1949 the communist newspaper *L'Humanité* asked 'will we be cocacolonised?'. [169] The French left saw the distribution of Coca-Cola as part of a greater American colonization project. In newspapers and advertisements, the leftists called for the protection of French culture against Americanization. For example, around this time communist writer George Soria wrote *Will France Become an American Colony?* The book became an immediate success. In 1951, the cover of a communist magazine called *Democratie Nouvelle* portrayed an American soldier getting kicked out of a Europe full of American flags. Above the soldier's head, we read the message 'Yankee Go Home'. [170]

The anti-American campaign seemed to have some effect. A survey in the early fifties showed that around half of the French population saw the American presence stemming from the American need to export their products. The public campaign transformed into a political debate in 1950. The French communists, who held considerable power in the French parliament, called for a ban on Coca-Cola. During a debate of the French parliament, the *Assemblée Nationale*, a communist member of parliament by the name of Jean Liente warns parliament about the 'Cocacolonization'. 'If we are "coca-colonized", unemployment will increase in our country, because coca-cola will compete with the manufacture of French drinks', stated Liente. [171] He continues 'They [the U.S.] want to place their coca-cola with us as they have already placed planes, films, automobiles, chewing gum, Digests and as they would also like to place their "cannons and atomic bombs.' [172] The communist member of parliament fears an imperialist motive behind the Coca-Cola campaign. The communist tried to ban Coca-Cola in 1950s, claiming the drink was poisonous. The ban did not make it through parliament but gained heavy support from yet another group. French winemakers, intimidated

by the rise of Coca-Cola, supported the communists in their battle against Coca-Cola. Kuisel describes how the wine manufacturers untied in unions such as the *Confederation des fruits et legumes* or the *Syndicat national du commerce en gros des vins et spiritueux* and campaigned against Coca Cola by claiming it threatened the French wine culture. [173]

According to Laureen Kuo, they also claimed that Coca-Cola was highly addictive, and would create an 'All-American Europe' with consumerism and mass advertisement. [174]

Coca-Cola's campaign thus received backlash from the French

government, leftist groups, and wine manufacturers for economic, cultural, and political reasons.

“Will we be cocacolonised?” asked the communist newspaper L'Humanité in 1949”

CONCLUSION

Coca-Cola's French campaign did not go as planned. The anxious French rather saw those American soldiers under the Eiffel tower go home, instead of accepting a Coke.

War-torn and anxious France, was not easy to convince. Looking at the literature, various papers and magazines, and debates in the French parliament, the structure of resistance became clear. Resistance came from leftist groups, French governmental branches, and the wine industry. The leftist groups saw the rise of Coca-Cola as cultural imperialism from the U.S. and thus a threat towards French cultural security. Meanwhile, the wine manufacturers feared the competition of Coca-Cola and therefore supported the campaigns of the leftist groups. Finally, the French government was worried that the popularity of Coca-Cola would lead to more imports from the U.S. That would then lead to a draining dollar reserve and a worsening trade deficit. And thus, the reaction on Coca-Cola became suspicious and sometimes hostile. I would agree with the conclusion of Laureen Kuo, who writes 'All of the attacks on Coca-Cola stemmed from an accumulation of

grievances against the United States—particularly regarding its foreign policies—and against the American cultural invasion. In other words, Coca-Cola was, in fact, only one of the outlets for these grievances and acts of resistance.’[175] The reaction against Coca-Cola was a show of strength by the humiliated French. And therefore, it was Coca-Cola’s conscious emphasis on their ‘Americanness’ that almost got the drink ‘canned’ from France.

PAKISTAN:

PRESSURE FROM ALL SIDES

Pakistan is currently facing pressure from a variety of sources. Its relationship with its eastern neighbor India is notoriously hostile, but recent months have shown tensions arise in the country's relationship with Afghanistan and Iran as well. The only neighbor that Pakistan could theoretically call an ally is China, but even that relationship is one it should manage very carefully. These external pressures are compounded by political instability at home. The country is still dealing with the aftereffects of Imran Khan's falling out with the military and his subsequent arrests. A wave of terrorist attacks has added further fuel to the fire. If all of that was not enough, Pakistan is among the countries most heavily impacted by the effects of climate change. These pressures will be discussed below, but it is important to emphasize that they all interact. The internal pressures further weaken Pakistan's relationship with its neighbors and its bad relationships with its neighbors worsens its domestic political instability.

HATE THY NEIGHBOR

Pakistan's relationship with India is famously hostile, but the truism of that statement risks losing sight of how precarious the position between the two countries is. The two have fought several wars against one another, in 1947, 1965 and 1971. The most concerning outbreak of violence amongst them, however, may be the relatively limited Kargil War of 1999. This war was short, lasting only from May to July, but it was fought at a time when both countries had access to nuclear weapons.[176] This makes the war a precedent for fighting small scale, brief wars between the two nuclear powers. It is therefore a precedent that challenges the idea of Mutually Assured Destruction. The principle that two nuclear powers cannot go to war because both sides are aware that it risks nuclear annihilation, comes under pressure when both parties know that they've avoided such escalation before.[177] The problem with the Kargil precedent is that history is littered with conflicts that were assumed to be limited in scope and brief in duration before they were launched, but ended up escalating over time. The risk of incorrect assumptions is immense when nuclear weapons are involved. Recent

Russian threats have turned global attention on issues of nuclear safety to Europe, but it is important to remember that the Pakistan-India relationship is still one of the most dangerous ones when it comes to nuclear escalation. In periods when there was no fighting, the two have consistently remained at odds diplomatically. Be it over Kashmir or over Indian allegations of Pakistani support for terrorist organizations, neither side appears to be moving towards de-escalation. The recent allegations of Indian government-sponsored assassinations of Pakistani citizens in Pakistan simply serve as the most recent example of a particularly toxic relationship.[178]

The external situation is only slightly better on Pakistan's northwestern border with Afghanistan. The rapid return by the Taliban after the withdrawal of the United States led to large-scale emigration from Afghanistan, with many refugees ending up in Pakistan. The Pakistani government's figure sits at almost 4.5 million people, which placed significant pressure on Pakistan's refugee capacity.[179] Taliban rule of Afghanistan has proven to be a big problem for Pakistan, as the new rulers immediately released thousands of prisoners from jails around the country, including ones

linked to terrorist organizations such as the Pakistani Taliban, Islamic State and Al Qaeda. [180] This has become a major security concern for Pakistan. Taliban control over Afghanistan has contributed to a rise in terrorist activity in Pakistan, something that will be discussed in more depth below. For now it serves to say that the situation has seriously cooled Pakistan's attitude to its north-western neighbor, and has influenced the Pakistani decision to expel many of the Afghan refugees the country has taken in. In a first round beginning in November of 2023, the government expelled half a million Afghans, with a second round having been started in June of 2024.[181] The bad relationship between Islamabad and Kabul has been worsened by the gradual but notable increase in contact between India and the Taliban. By providing humanitarian assistance and engaging in meetings with the Afghan foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, India appears to be expanding its influence in the region. This is deeply concerning to Pakistan: it already has a bad relationship with two of its neighbors, the last thing it needs is for those two neighbors to team up.

Iran is a country that often makes the news for its influence in Iraq and Lebanon or its hostilities with Israel, but less often discussed is the country's eastern border. This is a shame, because Iran-Pakistan relations are complex and fascinating. Pakistan has a historically strong relationship with Iran's most powerful Arab enemy, Saudi Arabia. The Saudis were key to Pakistani support for the Taliban during the 1980s and have long been a source of investment for Pakistan.[182] That has not meant that relations between Iran and Pakistan have been uniformly hostile, as the 2023 agreement of a five-year plan to increase trade between them to \$5 billion shows.[183] That agreement, however, highlights how limited trade between the two currently is. More importantly, the limited positivity between the two is fragile. This was shown in January, when Iran directly attacked Pakistani territory which it claimed housed a terrorist organization, to which Pakistan replied with its own attacks on Iranian territory it claimed was used by other terrorists.[184] Consequently, the Pakistani

ambassador to Iran was recalled. The situation didn't improve after a visit of India's foreign minister to Tehran. Once again, India's positive relationship with another one of Pakistan's neighbors is of deep concern to Islamabad. The factor lowering tensions between Pakistan and Iran has been China. Shortly after both countries fired across the Iran-Pakistan border, Chinese officials made their willingness to constructively work with both parties clear.[185] This appears to have worked, with both countries agreeing to restore diplomatic ties. There have been no further attacks between Pakistan and Iran. One imagines that recent Israeli airstrikes have fixed Iranian attention firmly on its western flank, making a near-term escalation between it and Pakistan unlikely. This is not, however, a victory for Pakistan. It is a showcase of Pakistani dependence on China.



The port of Gwadar, a key component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and a vital link in China's Belt and Road Initiative.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

This brings us to the only country that one could conceivably call Pakistan's ally: China. Even this relationship is one that needs to be handled with extreme care, as there are no strong cultural or institutional ties between the two. The relationship is based primarily on shared interests against India and the Chinese search for alternatives to the easily-blocked Malacca straits. In this context, Chinese investment into the China Pakistan Economic Corridor has made sense and has led to significant

improvements to Pakistani infrastructure, with projects like the port of Gwadar being especially useful.[186] These improvements are useful to Pakistan, but it also needs to be extremely careful. The power imbalance between it, a vulnerable nation with a GDP per capita of just over \$1400, and China with a GDP per capita almost ten times as high and a significantly larger population than Pakistan, is immense. Furthermore, the benefits of Chinese investments have generally failed to trickle down to local civilians. This has caused frustrations, which in the most extreme cases have resulted in terrorist attacks targeting Chinese citizens.[187] This should be extremely concerning to Pakistan, as it puts its relationship with China at risk. Pakistan has grown immensely reliant on China for investment, for trade and for diplomatic support. It needs to take care not to be taken advantage of, but it also has to worry about what that relationship will look like now that Chinese economic growth is slowing and the country is looking more critically at international projects. The ease with which China funded massive infrastructure projects with little scrutiny is a thing of the past. If Pakistan becomes more trouble than it's worth in Chinese eyes, the Chinese might decide to pull out, which would be devastating to Pakistan.

INTERNAL CRACKS

Terrorist activity in Pakistan has escalated significantly in recent years. Most likely linked to the Taliban's decision to release militant prisoners described above, the impact just this year has been horrific. From an attack in April killing nine people, to one in August killing 51 more to the 25 killed in an attack in early November and another 38 in an attack at the end of that same month.[188] These are just the attacks since April of this year. This kind of militant activity heightens tensions within a society. While many were in the separatist region of Baluchistan, a region which has long had to deal with these kinds of attacks, some were in other parts of the country, with religious divides between Sunnis and Shia's being the cause. Regardless of whether it's about

separatism, religious conflict or another motivator, these kinds of terror attacks put pressure on the government to show itself taking decisive action to prevent their continuation. Hence the expulsion of Afghan migrants discussed above. What makes this pressure risky is the fact that it is in combination with a hostility towards neighboring states. Tensions are already running extremely high in Pakistan, which means that perceived foreign threats can become the scapegoat. This can lead to further hostility towards refugees, to increasing tensions with neighbors and in the worst case, to conflict.

What makes the reaction of the military government to these kinds of pressures even less predictable is that it is dealing with a domestic crisis of legitimacy as well. Former prime minister Imran Khan remains extremely popular among many Pakistanis even after he was removed from office in 2022 and has been imprisoned on corruption charges. He has continued to oppose the military government from prison and remains a thorn in their eye. His party, the PTI, was crippled by arrests and its members were not allowed to campaign in the country's elections last February under the party banner, instead needing to do so as independents.[189]

Despite these restrictions, they managed to win 86 seats, significantly more than the 61 seats won by the conservatives.[190]

"Pakistan's chronic instability is global concern."

The government ended up being predictably conservative, but the elections were a strong sign that support for Khan remains significant. An even stronger sign was the recent unrest at the end of November, when thousands of supporters for the former prime minister marched to Islamabad demanding his release from prison.[191] Many were arrested and some were even killed. It highlights how strongly the military-backed government is opposed by large sections of the Pakistani population, even if you ignore the militant groups in the country.

What makes these issues all the more dangerous is that they interact. Pakistan sees Indian influence wherever it faces problems and a fight against a common enemy is a common tactic for unpopular authoritarian governments looking to boost their support. Afghanistan has become a safe haven for militant groups, and the Taliban prisoner release has contributed to the terrorist attacks Pakistan has had to deal with throughout the year. The relationship with China is uniquely positive, but terrorism, a weak and unpopular Pakistani government and a slowing economy at home limit how deep the cooperation between the two countries can be. The government's crisis of legitimacy also risks exacerbating its terrorism problem and making it easier for hostile neighbors to threaten it. Above all, the situation is made worse by the fact that Pakistan is a nuclear armed nation. This makes the country's chronic instability a global problem. As the year draws to a close, it is therefore imperative to pay attention to Pakistan, as it is a country in an immensely precarious position.

 CHRISTOPHE VAN DER
KWAST

AFTERWORD

As this edition of the GA! Magazine draws to a close, it feels fitting to reflect on the significance of the theme we've explored: security. Few concepts are as fluid and ever evolving. Security, and its closely tied counterpart, war, have continually reshaped themselves alongside societal changes and technological advancements. Where humans once wielded crude weapons, we now contend with satellites, drones, and cyber capabilities. Today, security stretches far beyond the battlefield, embedding itself in economic systems, legal frameworks, cultural dynamics, and even the fragile balance of our environment. As the dimensions of conflict evolve, so too must our understanding and responses.

It is this adaptability, this remarkable versatility of security, that this issue seeks to illuminate. Within these pages, our contributors have grappled with a wide array of pressing questions and their work reflects a commitment to exploring security not as an isolated concept but as a deeply interconnected phenomenon. By applying historical perspectives, they remind us that history, far from being a static record, is an essential tool for navigating today's complexities. This is the cornerstone of what GA! aspires to achieve.

This issue stands as a testament to the dedication, creativity, and intellectual curiosity that define GA!. It has been an extraordinary privilege to collaborate with a team of contributors, editors, and thinkers so passionate about their work. As I prepare to step away from my role as Publication Director, I do so with both pride in what we've accomplished and excitement for what lies ahead.

I am thrilled to pass the torch to Midas van de Weetering, whose energy, creativity, and distinct perspective promise to elevate GA! even further.

Midas has already contributed several thought-provoking articles to GA! and brings a fresh lens that will open the door to new ideas and opportunities. While I will be pursuing new challenges in Brussels, I look forward to remaining a part of GA!'s community, contributing from a distance when I can, and witnessing the continued evolution of this think tank.

Of course, as proud as I am of what this magazine represents, it's essential to reflect on where we might grow. GA! has made significant progress in connecting historical analysis to modern challenges, but there is potential for even more. Future editions might benefit from amplifying diverse voices, reaching beyond Utrecht to invite collaboration with other think tanks, and engaging practitioners active in the political or diplomatic spheres. These are simply suggestions, ideas to pass along to Midas as he embarks on this journey.

To our readers and contributors: thank you. Your curiosity, engagement, and passion are what fuel this initiative. Let's continue to question, debate, and explore together. In a world of constant change, history remains our guide, and your contributions ensure that GA! remains a vital platform for understanding and shaping the world around us.

Warm regards,

 TOM DRAAIJER



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