

## SUMARIO/SUMMARY

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- *Presentation*

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### *Launch of issue 17 of the Journal*

We present a very interesting new issue of the **Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos**. It covers:

The physiognomy of conflict, in such a globalised and interconnected world, has incorporated new aspects and procedures. The traditional kinetic confrontation has now been joined by tensions of a commercial, economic, technological and also, inevitably, geopolitical nature. Several articles in this issue address tensions of various kinds that could lead, if they have not already done so, to armed confrontation. The struggle in the China Seas between China and its neighbours, as well as with the United States and other Western powers, is addressed in “**Past, Present and Future Geopolitics in the South China Sea**” and “**Potential US-China War: Rethinking the Thucydides Trap**”. The first analyses the actors involved, the evolution of the disputes and the possible consequences of China’s latest moves in the near future. In the second, we return to this space characterised by its high level of potential conflict. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is set to be Asia’s century, as three of the four major global economic powers are concentrated here: China, Japan and India.

“**Tactical Nuclear Weapons: History, State of Matter, Armaments, and Strategies of the Major Nuclear States**” provides insights into nuclear proliferation policy through a historical overview of the major powers in the system up to the present day. Two other articles delve into local conflicts with obvious global repercussions. Since the fall of the Shah of Persia, Saudi Arabia and Iran have maintained a clear rivalry whose origins may lie in their opposing visions of Islam, and this is the focus of “**The Struggle for Regional Hegemony: The Strategic Rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Last Decade**”. “**Russia and Turkey in Nagorno-Karabakh, between militarisation and diplomacy**” seeks to analyse the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as part of Russia’s foreign strategy and its relationship with Turkey. On the other hand, the high number of people who left Tunisia after the Arab Spring to join a jihadist organisation in Syria or Iraq is striking; “**Radical-**

isation processes in Tunisia after the Arab Spring” seeks an explanation for this phenomenon.

The subject matter of “**Security culture in Spain, a pending subject in education**” is very timely, as it lucidly expresses the need to respond to the lack of an education policy for our young people that imbues them with the necessary knowledge for their training in security and defence culture, an indispensable element for guaranteeing and defending our freedom. In this line of knowledge of the Armed Forces by Spanish society, “**Communicative risk management in the Military Emergency Unit. Strategy and structure**”, an article based on interviews conducted at the UME itself, and doctrinal documentation of the Unit, combined with a literature review on risk communication, proves that public communication is a valuable tool for managing crises. With “**Price audit of obtaining a weapons systems**” we will get to know the Cost Evaluation Group (CEG), a specialised technical service of the General State Administration, and specifically of the Ministry of Defence, for planning and deciding on investments, especially those related to armaments and material.

Finally, two regional integration initiatives as different as the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union are analysed. “**A Different and Distant Europe**” bases its analysis on the parameters of individual and collective awareness of and adherence to the European project, in order to draw conclusions about its appropriateness and feasibility. The research carried out in “**The Eurasian Economic Union: Institutional Structure, Competencies and External Relations**” adequately dissects and synthesises both the institutional structure of the EEU (not to be confused with the Eurasian Economic Community) and its international relevance, examining the problems faced by its most important organs.

We round off this issue with several book reviews of books that will undoubtedly be of interest to you. Without further ado, I invite you to enjoy this 17<sup>th</sup> issue of the **Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos**.

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## *The struggle for the regional hegemony: The strategic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Last Decade*

### **Abstract**

Saudi Arabia and Iran maintain since the Sha of Persia's fall a possible rivalry which origin may be in their two opposite positions about Islam. This rivalry has multiple focuses, and it has been evolving in the last decades, from a religious confrontation to politic and economic one. Its influence in the international sphere has also been affected, with changing allegiances with the regional and global actors. Both powers are important actors with a lot of regional influence in a key zone for the global politics and economy so the nature of their relation will be enormously affected by the global powers and will have repercussions in the regional dynamic.

### **Keywords**

Saudi Arabia, Iran, Hegemony, Middle East, strategic rivalry.

### **Cite this article:**

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## Introduction

Saudi Arabia and Iran are undoubtedly today's leading Muslim powers due to their great international projection and global influence, as well as for being the leading nations in the main branches of Islam: Shi'ism and Sunnism. The influence of both extends throughout the Middle East, affecting all countries in the region. Both are strong economically (18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> in global GDP rankings respectively<sup>1</sup>) as well as diplomatically and militarily (3<sup>rd</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> in world military spending rankings). Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, the two powers seem to be in an ongoing rivalry, which has been called by some experts "The Cold War of the Middle East"<sup>1</sup>.

The topography of the Middle East has three elements that stand out from the rest: The Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian Plateau and the Anatolian continental bridge<sup>2</sup>. Two of these geographical features are precisely the territories occupied by most of the powers we will study, which reveals their importance in the region.

Iran is in a privileged position in the Middle East geographically speaking. It has extensive borders with several countries from the Caucasus to the Indian subcontinent, with a western coastline overlooking the Persian Gulf and the vital Strait of Hormuz. Forty per cent of the world's oil passes through this strait<sup>3</sup>, which makes its control a very important asset for the Islamic Republic, in addition to the fact that Iran itself has the fourth largest crude oil reserves in the world and the second largest gas reserves<sup>4</sup>.

Saudi Arabia occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula and holds the world's largest oil reserves, second only to Venezuela. It is the cradle of Sunnism, and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located in its territory. In recent years it has been trying to increase its influence as head of the Arab League and OPEC.

This article aims to take a closer look at this rivalry, in particular at its development over the last decade. Both powers will be studied: whether this rivalry really exists and what are its characteristics, its origins, its effects and its possible evolution in the short medium term.

The first part of the article will explain the development of this rivalry since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, analysing the actions of both powers until this last decade, in order to understand the origins of their possible rivalry and how it has developed up to the

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1 GRUMET, Tali R. *New Middle East Cold War: Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry*, Bachelor's thesis. University of Denver, 2015.

2 KAPLAN, Robert D. *La venganza de la geografía*, Barcelona: Diagonal, 2012

3 CORDESMAN, Anthony H. *Iran, Oil and the Strait of Hormuz*, CSIS, 2007: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/iran-oil-and-strait-hormuz>

4 Data from the "Oil and Gas Journal", 2017.

moment when our time frame of study begins. In addition, the theories of international relations relevant to this study will be explained, in particular their foundations: Mearsheimer's offensive realism and Walt's balance of threat.

The development of the article will consist of an analysis of both nations in different ways that will give us a picture of the possible sides of their confrontation. The characteristics of both nations will be key to understanding their relative power and their relations with each other and with the rest of the world.

On the other hand, it will be necessary to describe the most important dynamics that have been developing in the region and globally over the last decade and their impact on both powers.

Finally, in the concluding section we will try to identify possible scenarios for the short to medium term.

To guide the article, we will establish the following hypothesis: "The strategic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran is strengthening, which will mean that one will gain regional hegemony over the other."

## History of a rivalry

The evolution of this area during the Cold War and the post-war years provides the keys to understanding regional dynamics and the position of international powers today.

That period was marked by the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. It served the US policy of containment and triggered conflicts in the region, which in the following decades have shaped the conflicting alliances around the two blocs of the world order. While the United States and Western European countries took a stand to protect Israel, the Arab countries, opposed to its existence, focused their policies on seeking Soviet backing. The Arab League pledged non-recognition of Israel and defence of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Other major milestones since World War II in the region have been the fall of the Shah of Persia and the Islamic Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf Wars and the Arab-Israeli conflict<sup>5</sup>.

The fall of the Shah and the theocratic Islamic revolution were the seeds of the rivalry between the two powers. Although it may be thought that the origin of their rivalry is centred on religious conflict, it does not seem to be the main factor that maintains the rivalry: "We do not deny that the Shia-Sunni struggle was, and indeed

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<sup>5</sup> ALGORA, María Dolores. "Las alianzas de Oriente Medio en el siglo XXI. Un laberinto geopolítico", in Castro Torres, Jose Ignacio (coord.), *Realineamientos estratégicos en Oriente Medio*, IIEE, 03/2019.

is, an additional factor, but not the only one: other elements, mainly of an economic and political nature, seem more decisive”<sup>6</sup>.

From that moment on, the current rivalry between the two powers began, as the possible spread of religious revolutions throughout the Islamic world was and still is a real threat to various dictatorial or monarchical countries, especially the absolute monarchies of the Persian Gulf, which also belong to the Sunni branch of Islam.

Tensions between these two heads of the Sunni and Shi’a branches of Islam continued to escalate over the following decades.

In the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf monarchies sided with the Iraqis, especially in economic matters on the side of Saudi Arabia, increasing tensions between the two powers<sup>7</sup>. In fact, Iraq came to count, if not with the support of the US, then with its approval, as stated by the US government at the time<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to this war with direct Iranian involvement, the two powers have clashed indirectly through their support for various supporters during the Lebanese Civil War and the Afghan Civil War. During the Lebanese Civil War, Iran’s support for Hezbollah was notorious, while Saudi Arabia, as part of the Arab League, supported the Lebanese government with a contingent of several tens of thousands of Arab soldiers, mostly Syrian. This contingent was called the “Arab Deterrence Force” and remained active in Lebanon until 1983<sup>9</sup>.

At the end of the Cold War, between 1989 and 1991, the bottom line was the triumph of Western influence<sup>10</sup>. The Gulf Wars and the consolidation of the state of Israel mark the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which, with the exception of Iran, Western influence is largely reinforced.

Since 11 September 2001, the situation has changed and alliances and friendships have become much more flexible. Public opinion in Arab League countries became suspicious of the West, with large demonstrations against the 2003 invasion of Iraq, although the dependence of the League’s governments on the US prevented Arab League condemnation.

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6 MORERA HERNÁNDEZ, Coral. “Los Primeros Momentos de la Revolución Islámica en el Discurso Periodístico Español”, *Revista Internacional de la Historia de la Comunicación*. 1979 No.2, pp. 97-125

7 CONVAL, Jose Ignacio. “La Guerra Irán-Irak (I) 40 años después”, *Descifrando la Guerra*, 2020: <https://www.descifrandolaguerra.es/la-guerra-iran-irak-i-40-anos-despues/>

8 <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/08/13/world/confrontation-gulf-us-aid-helped-hussein-s-climb-now-critics-say-bill-due.html> Accessed on 3 March 2020

9 SÁNCHEZ H, BARRIGÓN R., “El conflicto de Líbano”, *Conflictos Internacionales Contemporáneos*, Ministry of Defence, 2009.

10 Algora. Op. cit.

Tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia continue to be played out in the Afghan Civil War, where Saudi Arabia supported the Taliban in their struggle for power in the 1990s, while Iran maintained close ties with various Shia militias opposed to the Taliban regime.

Finally, the Arab uprisings of 2011 and the ensuing democratic momentum have led to a destabilisation of the region, in which the various discontents of the civilian masses are exploited by external actors to defend their interests. These revolts will serve as the beginning of our timeframe. Iran has been supporting certain revolts such as those in Bahrain between 2011 and 2012, where Saudi Arabia directly supported the government with troops<sup>11</sup>.

The main reason why Iran and Saudi Arabia had not been prominent as regional powers up to that point was mainly due to the existence of other powers such as Iraq, Egypt or Syria, which were strong regional powers with their spheres of influence and prevented the rise of others. The Gulf Wars and the Arab Springs eventually brought down the influence of these powers, leaving a power vacuum that Iran and Saudi Arabia have been able to exploit<sup>12</sup>.

As for the theories on which this article is based, in the field of geopolitics there are different theoretical frameworks that try to explain relations between countries. Since we are going to study a possible rivalry, the theoretical approach we will use as a basis will be realism. In it, the most widely held view of the international system among experts is that the international system is anarchic and driven by a selfish struggle for the survival of states. Realism understands that there are several spheres or images to study<sup>13</sup> which we could equate to three objects of study: leaders, state power itself, and the international sphere.

Kenneth N. Waltz's structural realism establishes a simplistic model in which only the third image (the international sphere) is studied, and which aims to establish a universal theory of international relations. However, "Waltz's systemic approach is unable to explain how changes in the international system occur"<sup>14</sup> as it does not address the internal factors that can explain countries' behaviour. Building on the importance of this image, neoclassical authors add the internal components of a country to study the foreign policy of a particular nation. The internal factors will come from Walt's balance of threat. It sets out the main characteristics that make one country perceive another as a threat: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive military capabilities and aggressive intentions.

11 <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/03/14/internacional/1300122963.html> Accessed on 10 September 2020.

12 KAPLAN. Op. cit.

13 WALTZ, Kenneth N., *El hombre, el Estado y la guerra*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1959.

14 JORDÁN, Javier, "Enfoques teóricos de los estudios estratégicos", in Jordán, Javier (Coord.), *Manual de Estudios Estratégicos y Seguridad Internacional*, Madrid: Plaza y Valdés, 2013, pp. 15-42

Having analysed the pre-existing relations between the two countries and the variables to be studied, it remains to establish the model that will allow us to study how they interact with each other, their allies and their regional sphere, and how this modifies their behaviour. In this context, we will establish Mearsheimer's offensive realism as a reference for the development of this rivalry. According to this theory, great powers always seek to increase their power in order to ensure their security, which will only come about when they become hegemonic<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, after establishing the variables that affect the rivalry, we will proceed to study them to see how the power of the two powers has evolved over the last decade. If these variables were to become stronger, according to Mearsheimer, this would lead to an intensification of rivalry until one of the powers had regional hegemony.

## Iran

For Iran, geography is one of its greatest assets. On the one hand, its position places it between the world's two most important hydrocarbon production areas, the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. Moreover, it is guaranteed the possibility of controlling passage through the Strait of Hormuz, which, as has already been mentioned, is one of the most important hydrocarbon passes on the planet and vital for supplying to countries such as China, India, South Korea and Japan<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, its topographical configuration coupled with its position gives it two fundamental advantages: a mountainous configuration that facilitates defence, and control of all land routes connecting the Middle East to Central Asia. The Zagros Mountains run through Iran from northwest to southeast along its western borders, so all passages between West and East in the area are under Iranian control<sup>17</sup>.

In terms of geographic disadvantages, it shares a land border with seven countries and a maritime border with all the countries of the Persian Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. This implies the need for active diplomacy with many different countries, as well as the risk of having too many enemies around.

The Iranian political system came into being with the Islamic revolution of 1979, calling itself the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Supreme Leader, currently Ali Khamenei, is the head of the Iranian state. He is elected by an Assembly of Experts, a body composed of clerics. These experts are chosen by popular vote from a list of clerics filtered by the government. The Supreme Leader signs the election of the President of the Government, elected by the people, and can dismiss him if necessary.

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<sup>15</sup> MEARSHEIMER, John J., "The False Promise of International Institutions", *Revista de Seguridad Internacional*. 1994-1995, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 5-49.

<sup>16</sup> KEMP & HARVAKY, *Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East*, map p. 113, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> KAPLAN. Op. cit.

It also elects six of the twelve members of the Guardian Council, a body of Islamic legal experts who monitor initiatives that reach parliament and screen all candidates standing for election and can veto anyone.

The main characteristic of its political system is the mixture of Islamic theocracy with elements of popular representation, where the religious plays a central role. This implies that the cleric-dominated Guardian Council and Assembly of Experts have real power and control over the legislative and executive branches. It is also worth noting the tensions that arise when the head of government is moderate or reformist, as Supreme Leaders have so far been eminently religious and conservative. Having part of the executive power and the approval of the Assembly of Experts, as well as the possibility of dismissing the head of the executive, the Supreme Leader is the head of the Iranian state and enjoys wide-ranging powers.

In terms of its economy, the most significant factor due to its heavy dependence on hydrocarbon exports is the economic sanctions imposed by the US in retaliation for Iran's nuclear programme. These sanctions prevent third countries from buying Iranian oil, notably affecting China and other Southeast Asian countries, which depend on energy imports for their economies.

On the other hand, regarding control of the Strait of Hormuz, it is complicated for the US to close it to try to stifle Iran, since the passage of hydrocarbons also depends to a large extent on the economy of Japan and South Korea, US allies. This, coupled with China's "New Silk Road" initiative, leads one to believe that China-Iran relations are likely to flow, since the Persians are necessary for the present (the purchase of hydrocarbons) and for the future (the Silk Road will pass through Iran, and its maritime variant needs Iranian ports) of the Chinese economy. It might even be possible to try to buy Iranian oil through third parties or other mechanisms to avoid sanctions<sup>18</sup>.

Iranian society is one of the most important in the Middle East. Iran had a population of 81 million in 2016, the largest in the Middle East and almost three times larger than Saudi Arabia's<sup>19</sup>. The percentage of young people is the same as in Saudi Arabia. However, the Iranian population does seem more prone to social protests in the streets. This was the case in 2019, when the government presented its measures to increase the price of oil<sup>20</sup>, which was covered by a multitude of international media; the repression, which resulted in up to 1,000 deaths, was criticised by the US and others<sup>21</sup>.

18 CASTRO TORRES, José Ignacio, "El dilema iraní, entre la proyección exterior y el control interno", in Castro Torres, Jose Ignacio (coord.), *Realineamientos estratégicos en Oriente Medio*, IIEE, 03/2019.

19 KAPLAN. Op. cit.

20 <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/140061/mass-protests-erupt-throughout-iran-burn-down-central-bank/>

21 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/world/middleeast/iran-protests-internet.html>

Iran's military is commensurate with the size of its population, with more than half a million active fighters. Its traditional tendency to intervene in the region, as well as its combat experience, make its army one of the most powerful in the Middle East. It is worth noting that Iran is a considerable technological powerhouse, with a level of university students reaching half a million graduates per year, especially in scientific fields<sup>22</sup>. This implies that Iran has the potential to develop its own weapons programmes such as the Zulfiqar tank. Moreover, as one of the most populous countries in the region, it has one of the largest armies in the region. Finally, although they are not part of the Iranian army itself, we should not fail to mention the various Iranian-sponsored militias. Hizbollah and the Houthi rebels have proven capable of taking on much more powerful armies (Israel and Saudi Arabia), achieving very good results with very limited numbers, antiquated weaponry and the use of guerrilla warfare. These organisations greatly enhance Iran's power projection.

Another of the most important and dangerous military capabilities is nuclear. The power that is closer to developing nuclear weapons of the two is Iran. Iran's nuclear programme has been a source of tension for years. Iran has, until now, always maintained that its nuclear research was for civilian purposes, but since the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and the reintroduction of sanctions, it has threatened to develop the military nuclear side. Iran is currently capable of enriching uranium to 20 per cent (used in nuclear reactors that power ships), far short of the 90 per cent needed for an atomic bomb.

To get an idea, the Iranian stockpile before the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) treaty with the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany) could have armed up to eight nuclear weapons<sup>23</sup>. Iran used its uranium to fuel Tehran's nuclear reactor and diluted some of it; however, after the US pulled out of the deal and the death of General Soleimani<sup>24</sup>, Iran has already declared that it will not comply with the terms of the agreement and has stated that it already enriches uranium to 20 per cent.

Despite the possibility of developing nuclear weapons, it is necessary to be aware that Iran's nuclear power plants are under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency so that their use for the development of nuclear weapons can be ruled out. If Iran wanted to develop them, it would have to do so in secret facilities, increasing the time needed to do so<sup>25</sup>. It is worth noting that one of Iran's main rivals, Israel, possesses nuclear weapons, although this fact is not

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22 <https://es.irancultura.it/Ir%C3%A9n/ciencia/>

23 KERR, Paul K. *Iran's Nuclear Program: Status*, RL 34544-Version 56, Congressional Research Service Report, Washington DC: Library of Congress, 20 December 2019.

24 <https://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20200105/472722183251/iran-pacto-nuclear-eeuu-soleimani.html>

25 Congressional Research Service. Op. cit.

confirmed by the Israeli government. Israeli nuclear capability is one of Iran's arguments for developing its nuclear programme. The EU did not welcome a return to the pre-JCPOA state, because of the threat of nuclear weapons development and because of the private European investment that had come to Iran with the lifting of sanctions<sup>26</sup>.

## Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula. A large percentage of its territory is occupied by desert, so a higher proportion of the population is concentrated in its cities. Its land borders on the Arabian Peninsula are totally permeable and not clearly defined,<sup>27</sup> especially with the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen. It is worth noting that on its western border it shares a coastline with Egypt, dominating the Red Sea between the two powers, while on its eastern coast it disputes sovereignty over the Persian Gulf, without having territories that serve as a basis for physical control of the Strait of Hormuz, which on its Arabian coast is controlled by the UAE and Oman. The main feature of its geography is its position, which provides it with large oil reserves.

The Saudi political system, like most Persian Gulf countries, is an absolute monarchy, currently headed by Salman bin Abdulaziz, although the country's main strongman, who has effectively ruled since his appointment as heir apparent, is Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The monarchy unites all powers, being the Guardian of the Holy Places. The Qur'an and Sunna form the national constitution.

On the economic side. Saudi Arabia has one of the largest oil reserves in the world, second only to Venezuela, according to the CIA's survey of oil reserves by country. It has a leading role within OPEC, and the oil sector accounts for 75% of its revenues<sup>28</sup>. In terms of future prospects, the Saudi heir's plan for the coming years, called "Saudi Vision 2030", is worth highlighting. This plan aims to diversify the Saudi economy, moderate the religious fundamentalist view of society, and increase foreign investment. It could be interpreted as an attempt to modernise and open up Saudi Arabia to the world. As a criticism of this project, some experts argue that the goals may be too ambitious and that the whole plan depends on the crown prince, his leadership and his political actions<sup>29</sup>.

26 <https://www.malaymail.com/news/world/2019/11/05/eu-concerned-by-iran-nuclear-enrichment-announcement/1807225>

27 SCHOFIELD, Ryan. *Arabian Boundary Disputes*, University of Cambridge, 1992.

28 CIA, *The World Factbook 2020*, Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2020.

29 KINNINMONT, Jane. "Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's Social Contract, Austerity and Transformation", *Chatham House*, 19 July 2017: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2017-07-20-vision-2030-saudi-kinninmont.pdf>

Another variable to take into account is the influence of society on state decisions. Saudi Arabia has a young, predominantly urban and modern population located in the heart of the Hijaz (the area where Medina and Mecca are located), as opposed to a Wahhabist population living in the deserts of Nejd.

The young population suffers from unemployment of close to 25 per cent in the latest data from 2016<sup>30</sup>, in a country where most of the indigenous workers are paid by the government and depend on oil for their salaries. The fluctuations in the price of oil and the resulting crisis mean that the 2030 vision aims to reduce dependence on oil and increase the private sector, which is currently dominated by foreigners<sup>31</sup>. In addition, it includes a series of social opening measures, strengthening women's rights in an attempt to alleviate the discontent of Saudi youth. Foreign employees have started to leave the country, but the problem of youth unemployment is persistent<sup>32</sup>. However, there is no evidence of mobilisation or major social unrest, and when there was in the midst of the Arab Spring in 2011, it was easily controlled by the royal family. It should be noted that, according to IndexMundi data, 40% of the Saudi population is under the age of 25, so it is plausible that discontent will spread in the coming years<sup>33</sup>.

The Saudi military is much smaller than Iran's and is undergoing accelerated modernisation and arms purchases. The Saudi monarchy is currently by far the world's largest arms importer, with the highest defence spending in the region. Unlike Iran, Saudi Arabia has never historically had a military tradition or experience in conventional warfare or direct intervention until the Yemen war, which explains the Saudi military's failure to intervene in Yemen, where, with far more advanced and substantial means<sup>34</sup>, it has so far been unable to suppress the uprisings or achieve decisive successes. Lack of experience against an enemy like the Houthis is proving to be a key factor in the final outcome<sup>35</sup>.

On the nuclear front, it has always perceived Iran's nuclear programme as a threat to its existence. The Obama administration's rapprochement with Iran was frowned upon by the Saudi monarchy. This changed with the arrival of Donald Trump as US president and the return of Iran's nuclear programme, in response to which the Saudis

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30 <https://datosmacro.expansion.com/paro-epa/arabia-saudita?dr=2015-12>

31 <https://www.icex.es/icex/es/navegacion-principal/todos-nuestros-servicios/informacion-de-mercados/paises/navegacion-principal/noticias/NEW2017714563.html?idPais=SA>

32 AL OMRAN, Ahmed, "Record numbers of foreign workers leave Saudi Arabia", *Financial Times*, 10 July 2018.

33 CIA. Op. Cit.

34 <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-03-25/los-huthi-siguen-avanzando-en-yemen-tras-cinco-anos-de-intervencion-saudi.html> Accessed in June 2020.

35 CUENCA, Arsenio, "The Houthi insurgency in the Yemen war", *The World Order*, 2018: <https://lordenmundial.com/la-insurgencia-huti-en-la-guerra-de-yemen/>

have threatened to acquire nuclear weapons if Iran gets them<sup>36</sup>. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's own nuclear capabilities are not advanced, although its close relations with Pakistan as well as its recent rapprochement with Israel seem likely to bear fruit in this regard.

### Rivalry in the last decade

Given the characteristics of the two powers, it is necessary to discern how they have been relating to each other over the last decade. As discussed above, their rivalry predates the temporal context of this article, so a study of each country's actions against the other over the last decade will serve to try to identify a trend.

The main confrontational actions between the two powers have been concentrated on three fronts: religion, oil prices and peripheral conflicts. These three fronts are part of their strategies in the struggle for regional hegemony.

Saudis and Iranians have been at loggerheads over religion since religion became a fundamental part of the Republic of Iran in 1979. As an example, in 2016, Saudi Arabia executed a Shia cleric who was an opponent of the Saudi royal family and a leading Shia figure in the Arabian Peninsula, leading to an attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and eventually the severance of diplomatic relations. Without ignoring the importance of religion, some authors argue that it is merely an eminently practical excuse for attacking the ruling power<sup>37</sup>. This defence of the faith by each of the powers gives them arguments for international intervention in places such as Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq. In the specific case of Yemen, Saudi Arabia supports the government, while Iran defends the Houthi rebels as Shiites who are oppressed by the Sunni majority because of their religion. In the case of Lebanon, the confrontation is political, with Iran siding with Hezbollah and Saudi Arabia supporting certain politicians who are sympathetic to its interests.

On hydrocarbons, Iran tends to be more concerned with the short term than the long term, unlike the Saudis. This is due to two main reasons: the reserves of each of them and their productive capacity<sup>38</sup>. Saudi Arabia has larger reserves and a lower cost of production, as well as greater weight in OPEC, which is why in recent years it has tended to lower its prices in an attempt to force the US not to continue developing *fracking*, which in its beginnings had a much higher production cost than traditional extraction. This drop in prices, coupled with international sanctions on Iran, is a

36 NOUR, Ismael. "El peligro de una carrera nuclear en Oriente Próximo", *El Orden Mundial*, 2019: <https://elordenmundial.com/peligro-de-una-carrera-nuclear-en-oriente-proximo/>

37 WEHREY, W. KARASIK, NADER, GHEZ, HANSELL, A. GUFFEY, *Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam*, Rand Corporation, 2009.

38 Ibid.

major setback for the Iranian economy, which has reduced its production and caused countries such as China to reduce their imports of Iranian hydrocarbons<sup>39</sup>. In the hydrocarbon economy, Saudi Arabia appears to be stronger vis-à-vis Iran due to economic sanctions.

The last front to be studied would be the peripheral conflicts that both powers use to increase their relative power or diminish that of their opponent. In this particular case, we will study the cases of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Bashar al-Assad has traditionally been an Iranian ally, the Alawite religion of the Syrian ruling class being an offshoot of Shiism. From the very beginning of the Syrian civil war, Iran and especially Hezbollah have supported the Syrian government. Thanks to its combat experience, Hizbollah has developed into a well-trained armed group with international projection. Iranian support, however, did not prevent the grave danger to the Syrian regime in the summer of 2015. Russia's timely and decisive intervention made it the undisputed arbiter of the situation<sup>40</sup>.

For Saudi Arabia, the overthrow of the Assad family could mean the birth of an allied state, since the Sunni religion is the religion of 80 per cent of the Syrian population. The Saudi-led Arab League funded and supported Syrian rebels against the Iranian ally. Moreover, there are indications, though no certainty, that Arab League member countries and even Turkey have been able to fund ISIS to continue fighting the Syrian government<sup>41</sup>.

Iraq is the opposite example, the ruling class has traditionally been Sunni while the vast majority of the population is Shia. After the overthrow of Saddam, who was a member of the Arab League and an ally of the Saudis, Iraq became a zone of influence for Iran. With the rise of the Islamic State, tensions increased, with Iraqi President Al-Maliki accusing Gulf states of funding and morally supporting ISIS, although these accusations were rejected by the US and lack evidence.

Following the collapse of the Iraqi army in the wake of the ISIS offensive, Iranian-backed militias contributed to the anti-terrorist war and still have a significant presence in the country. Iranian influence has been felt in recent years, with American troops even leaving the country due to numerous protests by the Iraqi government and its population after the death of General Soleimani, an important figure in the Iranian army, in an American attack on Iraqi soil. However, since 2018, Iraq has seen a different type of anti-Iranian protest, with mass demonstrations against government

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39 MORENO, Carmen. "China en Oriente Medio. La competición por la hegemonía global", in Castro Torres, Jose Ignacio (coord.), *Realineamientos estratégicos en Oriente Medio, IEEEE*, 03/2019.

40 MARTÍNEZ SÁNCHEZ, Eva. "Realineamientos Estratégicos en Oriente Medio", in Castro Torres, Jose Ignacio (coord.), *Realineamientos estratégicos en Oriente Medio, IEEEE*, 03/2019.

41 [https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/12/151202\\_rusia\\_putin\\_turquia\\_petroleo\\_ei\\_ep](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/12/151202_rusia_putin_turquia_petroleo_ei_ep)

corruption and Iran's influence over the government, with pro-Iranian militias firing on protesters<sup>42</sup>.

Yemen is a clear case of Sunni-Shia tensions. The country has been embroiled in a civil war since 2015, in which the government, largely supported by the US until the change of administration in 2021, and the Sunnis of the Arab League<sup>43</sup>, are facing the Shiite Houthi rebels, with numerous media outlets reporting Iranian support<sup>44</sup>. This conflict is escalating and stalling, with the League forces and the Yemeni government failing to achieve any results. On the contrary, the rebels, less well-equipped and using guerrilla tactics, have claimed responsibility for the attack on Saudi Arabia's largest refinery<sup>45</sup> even though there was no proof of it according to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo<sup>46</sup>. The Saudis blame Iran for the logistical support needed for this attack<sup>47</sup>, the first on this scale, as Saudi Arabia had to halve its crude oil production because of the damage<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, the UAE has disassociated itself from the coalition supporting the Yemeni government, dealing another blow to Saudi foreign policy.

As a result of this drone and cruise missile attack, world oil production fell and there was a sharp loss of confidence, exposing the Saudi monarchy, which, as the leading arms importing power today, is not capable of resolving a conflict that it entered thinking of a quick victory. Moreover, with Crown Prince Bin Salman being the main supporter of the intervention, his image has been badly shaken, with changes of heir being not uncommon in the Saudi royal family<sup>49</sup>. However, this incursion into the Yemeni conflict may respond to a real Saudi fear of a Yemen with a population equal to their own (around 30 million) but with a much higher population density, an easily defensible mountainous terrain riddled with oases, and an estimated number of weapons of almost 80 million, three per Yemeni inhabitant<sup>50</sup>.

Continuing with Lebanon, we find the world's leading Shia militia and one of the main instruments of Iranian influence in the Middle East: Hezbollah. The or-

42 DAVISON, ABOULENEIN, "Threats, arrests, targeted killings silence Iraqi dissidents", *Reuters*, 2019.

43 <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2015/03/30/55183072ca474188068b457d.html>

44 [https://web.archive.org/web/20070616045131/http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/tf\\_004\\_002.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20070616045131/http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/tf_004_002.pdf)

45 <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-49709721>

46 *Ibidem*.

47 [https://www.clarin.com/mundo/arabia-saudita-presento-evidencia-asegura-ataque-drones-petroleras-provino-iran\\_o\\_3cx1HGJh.html](https://www.clarin.com/mundo/arabia-saudita-presento-evidencia-asegura-ataque-drones-petroleras-provino-iran_o_3cx1HGJh.html)

48 <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-49690725>

49 PALOMINO, Carlos. "La guerra de Yemen, ¿el Vietnam de Arabia Saudí?", *El Orden Mundial*, 2019: <https://elordenmundial.com/yemen-el-vietnam-de-arabia-saudi/>

50 KAPLAN. *Op. cit.*

ganisation was created to fight against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and has always benefited from substantial financial and logistical support from Tehran. The difference between Hizbollah and other militias is its international outreach to other neighbouring countries, a fairly successful military record against Israel, and the ability to maintain a parallel state and services to the population that allow it to have its own 'public' safe haven in southern Lebanon. Moreover, the political branch of this organisation is active in Lebanese political life, allowing the influence of Shiism, and thus of Iran, to expand. As for Saudi practices, Lebanon's constitution stipulates that the prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim, so until the resignation of Prime Minister Hariri, who was accused of being a puppet of Saudi Arabia, the Saudis have been as supportive as possible of any attempt by Lebanese prime ministers that favoured them.

Finally, the Arab-Israeli conflict is a crossroads of strange alliances, demonstrating that the rivalry is not driven by fanatical religious hatred but by the interests of both powers. The clearest indicator is Iran's support for Hamas. The Iranians support the Hamas organisation despite the fact that it is a Sunni movement and a supporter of opposition groups in Syria that run counter to Iran's interests. The reason for this is that this group operates inside Israel with significant involvement inside the Palestinian territories, mainly in the Gaza Strip, an example of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend"<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand, the Saudi monarchy provides diplomatic support for the peace talks, but always on the side of the Palestinians, as can be seen from the Arab League's statements on the US government's MESA initiative<sup>52</sup>. With Saudi Arabia seeking American support and Israel being an important ally for the US, there is a certain moderation and even tolerance towards Israel, leaving a power vacuum in the more radical realm, which Qatar is trying to exploit in its support for the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>53</sup>.

As a conclusion to the external actions carried out by both powers, we can highlight certain aspects. Their rivalry transcends the religious to become a struggle for influence: religion internally has great influence on society and government, but does not prohibit external action in support of opposing religious groups. Their confrontation is also economic, since the hydrocarbon customers that one loses may be gained by the other.

Saudi Arabia has lost influence due to the failure of direct action, while in diplomatic channels it maintains a non-radical attitude towards Israel, seeking rapprochement with the US. Iran is willing to remain in a precarious economic situation in order to maintain its external influence, even threatening to move forward with a military nuclear programme, something the Iranian government has so far denied.

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<sup>51</sup> CASTRO TORRES. Op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2020/02/01/5e35c31221efa01coa8b4635.html>

<sup>53</sup> SHAHTAHMASEBI, Darius. "New Turkey-Iran-Qatar axis is rising in Middle East, and it has Saudi Arabia furious", *Russia Today*, 22 March 2019.

Despite the Yemeni quagmire, Saudi Arabia appears to be gaining strength under the US umbrella.

We could say that, while Saudi Arabia tries to lead a US-allied Arab League, Iran would be its counterweight, supported by China and Russia, though not directly.

### **Influence of Other Powers**

Given the actions that both countries have been taking against each other over the last decade, it is necessary to look at the effects of this confrontation in the international sphere and how the international sphere influences it.

As realism tells us, a country's power and international actions do not depend only on its mere capabilities, but the international sphere and the actions of other countries will be the basis and limits on which a country can act. The actions of other countries, international organisations and non-governmental organisations will be the main co-determinants of any state's external action.

### **Israel**

With Iraq weakened, Israel's foreign policy efforts have been geared towards countering Iranian influence, especially in its immediate neighbourhood. Iran and Israel see each other as enemies. The Israeli idea is primarily to limit the actions of guerrillas such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria and to prevent the development of Hezbollah's precision-guided missiles. Iran also continues to support Hamas against Israel<sup>54</sup>.

Both the Arab League countries, especially Saudi Arabia, and Israel see Iran as their greatest international threat, and an alliance between the two can be highly advantageous. Already in 2002, the Arab League offered Israel its recognition if it would recognise the Palestinian state<sup>55</sup>. Both Israel and Saudi Arabia positioned themselves against the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) treaty to curtail Iran's nuclear programme, the main triumph in their relationship being<sup>56</sup>. This climate has produced a series of diplomatic overtures, most notably statements by the Saudi crown prince recognising Israel's right to statehood<sup>57</sup>. This relationship could lead to criticism of the Saudi regime from the Muslim community, but other countries, such as Jordan and Egypt, express that their relations with Israel are good. The rapprochement will be

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54 MARTÍNEZ SÁNCHEZ. Op. cit.

55 <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5268406>

56 <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2018/05/10/5af34a4646163f80548b458d.html>

57 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/mohammed-bin-salman-iran-israel/557036/>

necessary for Saudi Arabia to reach its 2030 goals, due to the growing need to allocate resources to this plan. The resolution of the Arab-Palestinian conflict would be a boon to Saudi foreign policy and would save Saudi coffers<sup>58</sup>.

### Turkey

The Middle East is witnessing a rise of regional powers seeking to increase their influence in the region. Turkey is one of them. In Syria, it supported the rebels against the Syrian government from the outset, antagonising Iran. As part of this rise to power, Turkey is fearful of a Kurdish self-rule being established on its border and has sent troops into Syria to try to increase its border security zone, coming into direct conflict with Syrian government troops<sup>59</sup>.

Since the Qatari diplomatic crisis and the Khashoggi murder, relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia have been strained. Turkey supported Qatar in its dispute with the Saudis as well as supporting warring parties in places like Egypt and Sudan<sup>60</sup>.

### Egypt

The Egyptian government of Al Sisi, as a rival to the Muslim Brotherhood, is being supported by Saudi Arabia. The Muslim Brotherhood is a radical Sunni organisation, born in Egypt, which opposes the absolutist monarchies of the Persian Gulf, as it advocates the establishment of caliphates in Arab countries and the expulsion of non-Muslims from these countries. This radical organisation clashes with the Saudi image of moderate Islam<sup>61</sup>, which is why the Saudis supported the Egyptian military's Al Sisi to carry out the coup d'état that overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt.

Iran, on the other hand, supports the Muslim Brotherhood for three main reasons: first, because the organisation erodes Saudi Arabia's influence, which benefits Iran; second, because of Qatar's explicit support for the organisation; and finally, because Hamas is the Palestinian branch of the organisation. Any actor that hinders the in-

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58 LLOVO, Jacobo. "Israel y Arabia Saudí, una alianza por asumir en Oriente Próximo", *El Orden Mundial*, 2018: <https://elordenmundial.com/alianza-israel-arabia-saudi-oriente-proximo/>

59 <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-says-syrian-government-forces-attacked-its-observation-point-144148>

60 <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-erdogan-rey-arabia-saudi-abordan-lazos-bilaterales-acontecimientos-regionales-20190731230935.html>

61 <https://es.aleteia.org/2018/04/10/arabia-saudita-intenta-limitar-la-influencia-de-los-hermanos-musulmanes/>

terests of the Saudi monarchy is being supported by Iran, regardless of its religious or political status.

## *Qatar*

As Saudi Arabia embarked on the path of moderate Islam, a vacuum was created in the head of radical Sunnism. This gap is beginning to be filled by Qatar, which is trying to assert its leadership over Saudi Arabia. Tensions have been growing until countries allied with the Saudis<sup>62</sup> and the Saudis themselves have cut relations with Qatar. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the leading television network in the Islamic world, Al Jazeera, is Qatari and gave explicit media support to the Arab uprisings that sought to end the authoritarian regimes they were suffering. These revolts were seen by the absolutist Gulf monarchies as a serious threat<sup>63</sup>. Qatar is accused of funding terrorism, including that of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda.

Iran's good relations with Qatar are the best example of pragmatism in international relations. While in Syria groups backed by the Qatari monarchy are fighting the Iranian-backed Syrian government, in Yemen both countries support the Houthis. Thus, we can infer that, depending on the theatre of operations, allies and enemies are flexible.

As we can see, the Middle East is a convulsive region where allies and enemies are shifting and where a multitude of regional actors are trying to assert their influence and achieve different objectives. However, this analysis would be incomplete without looking at the influence of the major global players in the region, whose power and influence are capable of changing the state of relations between countries.

## *Global players*

Within geopolitics, the states that will most influence international relations will be the great powers, which, because of their capacity, will have the greatest effect on any region of the world.

Mearsheimer defines a great power as a state with sufficient military might to engage in open warfare with the world's most powerful power and to weaken it seriously, even if they are ultimately defeated<sup>64</sup>.

62 [https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/Arabia-Saudi-Egipto-relaciones-Qatar\\_o\\_651284908.html](https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/Arabia-Saudi-Egipto-relaciones-Qatar_o_651284908.html)

63 [https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-arabia-saudi-y-otros-paises-arabes-rompen-relaciones-diplomaticas-catar-201706051331\\_noticia.html](https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-arabia-saudi-y-otros-paises-arabes-rompen-relaciones-diplomaticas-catar-201706051331_noticia.html)

64 MEARSHEIMER, John J., *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. 2003, p.5.

### *United States*

Today, although no longer at its peak and without absolute hegemony, the United States remains the world's leading power and is able to influence every continent.

The United States has followed two different paths in the Middle East over the past decade, coinciding with the two different administrations that have governed them. Obama's outreach to Tehran caused misgivings in Saudi Arabia and Israel. Together with Germany, it signed the Security Council pact, which lifted sanctions on Iran in exchange for limitations on its nuclear programme, and which also began a withdrawal of troops from the different conflicts, while maintaining its capacity for influence. The JCPOA, signed by the five permanent members of the Security Council, Germany and the European Union, set limits on Iran's nuclear activity in exchange for a general lifting of the economic sanctions that were suffocating Iran. The treaty was signed in April 2015, and remained in force until the US unilaterally withdrew and reinstated sanctions on Iran and anyone sourcing hydrocarbons from the Iranian market, with few exceptions. Iran has since failed to live up to its side of the agreement, which severely limited its nuclear capabilities and allowed the International Atomic Energy Organisation access to Iranian plants and laboratories for inspections and to ensure their peaceful use.

The Trump administration has thus again moved closer to Saudi Arabia and Israel. There have been ongoing clashes between the US and Iran in Iraq, with missile launches following the death of General Soleimani and the establishment of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation by the US.

As a summary of US policy in this regard, we can state that it is today a stable ally of Saudi Arabia and a declared enemy of Iran. The newly inaugurated Biden administration has so far made no major moves towards a return to the treaty and relations with Iran remain tense. On the other side, the US has made statements against Saudi Arabia, retracting its support in Yemen and linking Khasoggi's death to Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman<sup>65</sup>. In this way, the US appears to be entering a period of greater equidistance between the two powers rather than the previous administration's staunch support for the Saudi monarchy.

### *China*

The People's Republic of China has two potential interests in the Middle East: the purchase of hydrocarbons to satisfy its domestic demand and the "New Silk Road" project, officially called the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI).

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65 <https://elpais.com/internacional/2021-02-25/la-administracion-biden-cambia-el-rumbo-en-la-relacion-con-arabia-saudi.html>, accessed on 28 February 2021

In the Middle East, China appears to be pursuing a strategy of being a purely economic actor.

Establishing the BRI is essential for China to further develop its trade by avoiding the Strait of Malacca, a route that, while it has so far had no problem using, is nonetheless a vulnerability for possible future scenarios. The BRI has three main axes: a rail axis, based on the Trans-Siberian; a maritime axis, which passes through the Gulf of Oman and very close to the Strait of Hormuz (so it needs stability in the area and the possibility of trade with Iran and the use of its ports); and a land axis, which passes through Iran. This initiative, coupled with the need to import hydrocarbons and sanctions on Iran, means that China cannot side with either power: it needs Saudi Arabia to continue to sell it hydrocarbons, but to complete the BRI, it needs a stable Iran. Economic interdependence is growing, with Chinese investments in Iran and Qatar and Saudi investments in China<sup>66</sup>.

At the global level, this Chinese initiative could be a real boost to the world's geopolitical balance. In its initial stretch from China westwards, China needs to gain full control over the China Sea, which will involve increasing tensions with Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan and other countries in the area with which it has territorial disputes and increasing its control over the rest of the Pacific Ocean to increase its influence and commercial capabilities in South America. To this end, China has spent years reinforcing and modernising its navy at great speed, with two aircraft carriers already in service, another that may be launched in 2021 and plans for another seven, although it is still far from the eleven that the United States has in service.

In the next stage, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is the Chinese government's tool for creating these land and sea routes, which will also greatly benefit the countries through which they pass. The main land route from eastern China passes through Iran and the main sea route through the Suez Canal, so China is obliged to reach out to both Saudi Arabia and Iran, which it is doing through heavy economic investment.

The ultimate goal of the BRI is to economically unite the known world with the exception of North America, becoming an alternative to the current world economic system based on the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and free competition.

### *Russia*

Just as China wants to be an economic actor, Russia is trying to become a diplomatic actor. Russia's strategy over the last decade has attempted to regain global clout as a counterweight to the US under President Vladimir Putin. Russia's intervention in Syria has had this effect. Countries such as Israel, which were initially 'on the side-

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66 MARTÍNEZ SÁNCHEZ. Op. cit.

lines', found themselves in need of dialogue with the Russians<sup>67</sup>, while other actors, such as Iran, were already traditional allies. In the specific case of the Syrian war, it has managed to mediate between all the actors, reaching agreements with countries such as Israel, Jordan, the US, Iran and Turkey, while continuing to defend the Assad government<sup>68</sup>. It is precisely in Syria that Russian influence has been strengthened the most, but other projects, such as the construction of nuclear power plants in Iran, should not be underestimated.

However, Russian relations with Saudi Arabia have never been good, especially over oil. Saudi Arabia has always controlled OPEC, while Russia used Venezuela to exert its influence. During 2020, the two fought an oil war after Saudi Arabia lowered the price of a barrel to 8 dollars, causing countries like Russia, with a higher extraction cost and lower production, to not get enough revenue from the sale of hydrocarbons<sup>69</sup>. During the coronavirus pandemic and the downturn in hydrocarbon demand, Russia and Saudi Arabia have worked closely together in the OPEC+ framework to reduce production in order to increase the oil price and stabilise the market.

In short, Russia does not seem likely to opt for either power, although it clearly has much better relations with Iran than with Saudi Arabia.

### *European Union*

The last actor with some global influence could be the European Union. If there is one thing the EU lacks, it is a common foreign policy. Each European country looks after its own interests abroad. However, the Union's heavyweights do agree on their misgivings about Donald Trump and current US foreign policy. Trump began his presidency by calling on European NATO allies to increase their defence spending, withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal spoiling European business that had been initiated in the Persian country after the lifting of sanctions by Obama and, finally, set tariffs on the European market<sup>70</sup>.

European countries have always been pragmatic when it comes to diplomacy and have sold arms to Saudi Arabia without qualms, while increasing their trade dealings with Iran when sanctions were lifted. In other words, no EU country is currently developing a clear influence in this rivalry.

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67 <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2015/09/21/55febd20ca474177558b4585.html>

68 CONDE, Álvaro, "Siria, un campo de batalla entre Israel e Irán", *El Orden Mundial*, 2018: <https://elordenmundial.com/siria-un-campo-de-batalla-entre-israel-e-iran/>

69 <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/08/813439501/saudi-arabia-stuns-world-with-massive-discount-in-oil-sold-to-asia-europe-and-u-?t=1592921453585>

70 ARANCÓN, Fernando, "Estados Unidos abre en Europa un nuevo frente en la guerra comercial", *El Orden Mundial*, 2019: <https://elordenmundial.com/estados-unidos-abre-en-europa-un-nuevo-frente-en-la-guerra-comercial/>

## Conclusions

Iran and Saudi Arabia have had an ongoing rivalry since the fall of the Shah in 1979 and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This revolution was seen by the Persian Gulf monarchies and the Sunni Muslim world as a threat to their interests and existence. We can determine that this was the origin of the rivalry, since, from the very beginning, the Iranian regime directly exhorted the rest of the world's Muslims to get rid of their Islamic monarchies. Since then, the confrontation between the two powers has been taking place in different spheres and scenarios from which we can subtract that Saudi Arabia has the lead in terms of economy, energy and international support, while Iran has a much more numerous and prepared armed forces and human capital with greater potential than Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Iran has already managed to project its influence into countries such as Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq and has a geography that is highly conducive to defence and increasing its influence.

We have identified throughout this article the different fronts on which the rivalry between the two powers is developing and we can conclude that this confrontation is not based on a local dispute, but transcends borders and falls within the game of economic warfare and indirect confrontations that are consistent with confrontations with global influence. This rivalry is heavily influenced and in practice "guided" by the international sphere, both by other regional actors and global actors, especially the United States.

The Saudi monarchy has a major advantage in this regard: strong US support and Israel's support of convenience, which are vital to the development of this rivalry. While Iran counts these two powers as enemies and an understanding with the current American or any Israeli government seems unlikely in the short term, Iran does not have the strong support of any global power. China is committed to a non-interventionist foreign policy based on economic interdependence in order to win allies, while Russia is committed to maintaining a strong diplomatic posture, trying to act as an intermediary in the different conflicts in order to strengthen its position, but taking calculated risks, as it knows it is not in a position to confront the US. Although Russia and Iran have agreed to support the Syrian regime, Russia has a more moderate stance, making concessions, for example, to Israel and not intervening to try to ease economic sanctions, which China may be able to circumvent through indirect means, but which it is not fighting against diplomatically either.

The other regional powers are either allied with one power or the other or have internal tensions that Iran and Saudi Arabia exploit for their own interests. In practice, all the scenarios and countries in the region are under Persian and Saudi influence, as is the case in Qatar, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, etc., which shows that both are bidding to be a stronger power vis-à-vis the other. As the two are currently the strongest countries in the region, their rivalry is nothing more than a struggle for regional hegemony. As it advocates offensive realism, they will only believe that their situation is secure and favourable when they are the hegemon and no one disputes that position.

The future of this rivalry will depend more on the international sphere than on the powers' own actions. The enormous influence that the US and economic sanctions have in the Iranian-Saudi confrontation has been observed, while Russia and China do not have that level of influence.

At present, it appears that Saudi Arabia could take over regional hegemony if a number of conditions are met, such as the Biden administration maintaining a similar stance on Iran; Russia, China or the EU not making strong and real diplomatic efforts to end sanctions; the completion of its military upgrade as a tool to increase its influence; Russia not taking control of OPEC altogether; and the end and non-extension of the Yemeni conflict. This last condition is important as Yemen shares a large and diffuse desert border with Saudi Arabia and has a population equal to Saudi Arabia's, a large percentage of it Shi'a, and a large number of weapons.

On the other hand, for Iran to establish itself as a hegemon in the short term, a lifting of sanctions would be necessary for its economy to flourish, avoiding the risk of social unrest or tensions. To achieve this uprising requires the intervention of a strong global actor, such as China or Russia; while they may consider Iran their ally, China has already diversified its hydrocarbon imports, and Russia has no interest in ceasing to be a reliable and credible mediator for all parties. Iran already possesses all other potential capabilities (demographic and military power), but it seems unlikely that China or Russia will take such a step in the short term unless there is a new US president inclined to negotiate.

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## ***Communicative Risk Management in the Military Emergencies Unit. Strategy and Structure.***

### **Abstract**

Risk communication plays a key role in the management of emergencies. Before they take place, it helps people to believe in the responsible for solving them, and to adopt the protection measures to minimise its impact. On the other hand, during its development, risk communication is part of the response that public administrations and emergency services offer to control such situations.

The Military Emergencies Unit (UME), as the spearhead of the military capacity of the Spanish Armed Forces in emergencies situations, knows the importance of risk communication. For that reason, since its creation in 2005, it has a structure and a public communication strategy not only to construct a corporate image consistent with its institutional mission, but also to informative management of the disasters.

Based on the bibliographic review about risk communication and conducting interviews, this research explores how the UME has carried out risk communication throughout its fifteen years of existence, mainly through its social media and close collaboration with the mass media, to protect the citizens and improve the quality of life of the victims.

### **Key words**

Risk communication, Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication, mass media, social media, Military Emergencies Unit.

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## Introduction

Fifteen years after its creation by agreement of the Council of Ministers on 7 October 2005, with the aim of supporting the State structure in responding to emergencies anywhere in Spain and abroad, and with 538 interventions carried out up to 1 July 2020<sup>1</sup> – equivalent to an average of 30 per year – the Military Emergency Unit (MEU) is now considered a successful project and a benchmark within and beyond our borders.

Perfectly integrated into the National Civil Protection System, according to the provisions of Organic Law 5/2005, of 17 November, on National Defence<sup>2</sup>, the Military Emergency Unit has not only become an element of national cohesion that transmits security, confidence and well-being to citizens, but also the main bastion, together with international military operations, of the prestige that the FAS enjoys among Spaniards<sup>3</sup>. Equally significant has been its work outside the national territory as a vector for the projection of the “Spain Brand”, to the point that the “MEU model” has attracted the interest of more than fifty countries, whose representatives have visited the unit to learn about its structure and operation with the aim of creating similar military units specialised in emergencies or adapting, with the same capabilities, some of those they already have.

While this national and international prestige is mainly attributable to its competent and professional performance, it is not only due to the excellent use of its operational and logistical capabilities; to the availability, commitment and military training of its almost 3,600 components, or to the possession of a robust command and control system, capable of accurately identifying priority needs for action and effectively delivering orders to the intervention teams; but also to the timely integration of so-called “risk communication” in all its interventions. This fact has served to manage them more effectively, since, as the recent Operation Balmis against COVID-19 has shown, Spanish society trusts the Armed Forces in general<sup>4</sup> and the Military Emergency Unit in particular, and this trust is, in the words of the head of the MEU’s Public Commu-

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<sup>1</sup> Data provided by the director of the Escuela Militar de Emergencias, Infantry Colonel Antonio Puerto Gómez, during the inaugural conference *La Unidad Militar de Emergencias. Para Servir!*, given at the Summer Course “La Unidad Militar de Emergencias. Al servicio de todos los españoles”, organised by the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia and held at the Instituto Universitario Gutiérrez Mellado and at the Torrejón de Ardoz Air Base, headquarters of the MEU Headquarters, from 13 to 15 July 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Article 15(3) of this law provides for the participation of the Armed Forces in situations of catastrophe, chaos or disaster, together with the rest of the State institutions and the services of the public administrations.

<sup>3</sup> ALCANIZ COMAS, M. “La Unidad Militar de Emergencias. Influencia del buen hacer de la milicia”. *Revista Ejército*, issue 934, 2019, pp. 68–69.

<sup>4</sup> HIDALGO GARCÍA, M. “El papel de las Fuerzas Armadas en la gestión de la COVID 19 como generador de confianza”, Analysis Paper 11/2021, *Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*, 10 March 2021.

nications Office (OCP), Lieutenant Commander Aurelio Soto Suárez, “what allows us to resolve an important part of the emergencies”.

In this context, the aim of these pages is to delve into the communicative management of risk in crisis situations through the case study of the Military Emergency Unit. To this end, this research examines the strategy that governs the unit’s risk communication in order to be useful in crisis management, and the communication structure it has in place to carry it out.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative methodology is used, combining a literature review of the literature on risk communication as an academic discipline, to establish a broad conceptual framework for the study, with the analysis of the doctrinal documentation of the MEU on public communication and semi-structured interviews with those responsible for its planning and implementation in both institutional and emergency contexts. The interviewees are Lieutenant Commander Aurelio Soto Suárez, head of the Public Communication Office and *community manager* of the MEU; Colonel Juan José Marí y Marín, head of the Relations and Evaluation Department, and Lieutenant Colonel Juan Saldaña García, head of the Personnel Section<sup>5</sup>.

### Risk communication: concept, type and actors involved

Social risk, i.e. that which, motivated by anthropogenic causes such as scientific and technological development, compromises the security of humanity and the continuity of the planet, is an inseparable part of post-modern and global society. As such, these risks must be managed, as they change economics, politics, education and even individual and collective behaviour.

According to Rodríguez Perea (2016), although the involvement of the Public Administration in risk management is a social requirement, in his opinion, “it is society as a whole that must develop the capacity to anticipate threats, to withstand new dangers and to face them”<sup>6</sup>. However, in order for citizens to participate in such management, they must first have an adequate social awareness or perception of risk, understood as the set of beliefs, attitudes, judgements, feelings, values and social and cultural dispositions that they adopt in relation to the sources of danger and its benefits<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise specified, quotations in the text about these authors are taken from these interviews.

<sup>6</sup> RODRÍGUEZ PEREA, E. *Comunicación de riesgo y estudio de caso. Los polígonos químicos españoles*. Barcelona: UOC Ediciones, 2016, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> PIDGEON, N.; HOOD, C.; JONES, D.; TURNER, B; GIBSON, R. *Risk perception*. In: THE ROYAL SOCIETY (eds.), *Risk Analysis, Perception and Management. Report of Royal Society Study Group*. London: The Royal Society, 1992, quoted in PUY RODRÍGUEZ, A. *Percepción social del riesgo. Dimensiones de evaluación y predicción*. PhD thesis. Complutense University of Madrid, 1994, p. 65.

Although among the multiple factors or attributes that people use to evaluate risks are some as decisive as their proximity in time and space, the voluntariness of their exposure, the catastrophic potential or the possibility of obtaining compensation<sup>8</sup> or even the effectiveness that public managers demonstrate in the face of certain emergencies, “risk communication” stands out above all others, since the quantity and quality of the information that the population possesses regarding the dangers that loom over them at any given moment contributes to a large extent to their perception being suitably adjusted to the reality of these, and determines an active involvement in their management or a reaction of rejection: “Risks arise in knowledge, and therefore in knowledge they can be reduced, magnified or simply eliminated from consciousness”<sup>9</sup>.

Consequently, and given that the degree of risk acceptability is a compromise between knowledge and understanding of risk and participation in risk management, risk communication is defined as “an interactive process of information and opinion exchange between individuals, groups and institutions about a potential risk to human health or the environment”<sup>10</sup>, and emerged as an academic discipline in the social sciences in the 1950s as a complementary area to research on the social perception of risk to study the features of effective risk communication in public or private risk management<sup>11</sup>.

### *Risk communication actors*

The people, groups and institutions involved in risk communication can be divided into three groups: the companies that generate or know about the risk, the media and scientists who disseminate the risk, and the administrations that manage the risk.

In the case of the former, such communication is integrated within the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, which implies not only identifying the impacts that their activity may have on the environment in which it takes place, and establishing a prevention system that guarantees the capacity to react to the activation of risk, but also, as Marín Calahorro (2008) points out, dialogue with their stakeholders to find out their concerns and opinions, and satisfy their demands “informing them of the preventive measures, and taking on board their proposals for improvement”<sup>12</sup>.

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8 LÓPEZ CERESO, J. A.; LUJÁN, J. L. *Ciencia y política de riesgo*. Madrid: Alianza, 2000.

9 BECK, U. *La sociedad del riesgo. Hacia una nueva modernidad*. Barcelona: Paidós, p. 84.

10 NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, *Improving risk communication*. Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989.

11 RENN, O. “Risk communication and the social amplification of risk”. In: KASPERSON, R. E.; STALLEN, P. J. M. (eds.), *Communicating risk to the public. International perspectives*. London: Kluwer, 1991, pp. 287–324.

12 MARÍN CALAHORRO, F. *Responsabilidad social corporativa y comunicación*. Madrid: Fragua, 2008, pp. 28-29.

As for the media, particularly the audiovisual media, their important role in shaping public opinion has made them not only an important source of information about the risks we take<sup>13</sup>, but also, in some cases, the only reference for viewers, as Gil Calvo (2003) points out: “The information conveyed by the media is decisive, since raising one or other expectations conditions the attitudes of the actors on whom the risk factors depend, altering both their evolution of the perceived danger and their capacity to overcome it”<sup>14</sup>. This circumstance, which has led experts to use them frequently to disseminate their messages, entails a great social responsibility on their part, which must be translated into overcoming both the internal conditioning factors that hinder their informative task –journalistic routines, the tyranny of the time factor, cost savings or job insecurity – and external ones – economic pressures from the sectors generating the risk, for example –<sup>15</sup> in favour of improving the preparation and scientific knowledge of society.

Finally, bearing in mind that, according to Fairman *et al.* (1998), “the degree of trust in administrations or regulatory bodies is inversely proportional to the degree of risk perception”<sup>16</sup>, it is necessary for them to work not only to regulate and plan prevention and action protocols to deal with emergency situations, but also to create a sufficient degree of trust in them among the population, so that they notice the commitment to contain and control them and accept the messages that affect their safety.

### *Types and functional lines of risk communication*

Lundgren and McMakin (2009) classify risk communication in the three aforementioned areas – environmental, safety and health – and within them they establish three functional lines of action: preventive communication, communication for consensus and risk communication in crisis situations or emergency communication<sup>17</sup>. Although these lines share common requirements, such as knowledge of the target audiences, the adaptation of techniques and channels to deliver the required message in

13 A clear example is the onset of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. According to the March 2020 barometer (Study No. 3277) conducted by the Sociological Research Centre on a sample of almost 4,000 people, 88.4% of those interviewed in Spain who were following news related to the health crisis with interest at that time said they did so through television news, compared to 20% and 21.7%, respectively, who used the written press and radio to get information, and 39.3% who turned to the Internet.

14 GIL CALVO, E. *El miedo es el mensaje*. Madrid: Alianza, 2003, p. 39.

15 RODRÍGUEZ PEREA, E. *Comunicación de riesgo y estudio de caso. Los polígonos químicos españoles*. Barcelona: UOC Ediciones, 2016, pp. 111-120.

16 FAIRMAN, R.; MEAD, C.D.; WILLIAMS, W. P. *Evaluación del riesgo medioambiental. Enfoques, experiencias y fuentes de información*. Madrid: European Environment Agency, 1998, p. 123.

17 LUNDGREN, R. E.; MCMAKIN, A. H. *Risk Communication. A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks*. New Jersey: Wiley-IEEE Press, 2009 (4th edition), p. 3.

each case, or the credibility of the broadcaster, each has its own purpose and demands a different degree of audience participation.

Preventive risk communication requires the least participatory effort, as it aims to disseminate, through classical communication techniques such as brochures, reports or publicity campaigns, measures or recommendations from experts that improve the quality of life of society and foster a culture of prevention.

On the contrary, risk communication for consensus inevitably requires feedback from the population, and implies organising mechanisms that allow the population to participate in the management of their own risk, through the identification of the problems it poses, in order to promote better decision-making. Such mechanisms, which, unlike those used by preventive communication, are part of a two-way communication model, can be voluntary and free of charge, such as surveys, or obligatory and remunerated, such as the so-called “participatory intervention nuclei”, which include, for example, joint legislative commissions with public participation.

Ultimately, risk communication in crisis situations encompasses the instructions that public administrations and emergency experts give to citizens in extreme conditions such as floods, fires, heavy snowfalls, traffic accidents or even terrorist attacks, in order to try to minimise their harmful effects.

### *Risk communication in crisis situations*

Since the state is obliged by law to inform citizens about public matters affecting their security even if they do not request it<sup>18</sup>, risk communication in crisis situations is a priority for the public administration. While such information work is of particular importance during the course of an emergency, according to Rodríguez Perea (2016), this type of risk communication:

“can never be considered a one-off or isolated process, but rather a prior effort to consolidate trust, either through preventive campaigns or by establishing mechanisms for social participation that make [...] the population accept the instructions and behaviour that are required in each situation of danger”<sup>19</sup>.

In this sense, risk communication in crisis situations encompasses preventive information, pre-emergency information and information during the emergency. While

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18 An interesting summary of the legislative framework regulating public information on civil protection, catastrophes and emergencies in Spain and Europe can be found in IBAÑEZ PEIRÓ, Á., *Comunicación, administraciones públicas y gestión de la crisis y emergencias*. PhD thesis. Complutense University of Madrid. 2014.

19 RODRÍGUEZ PEREA, E. *Comunicación de riesgo y estudio de caso. Los polígonos químicos españoles*. Barcelona: UOC Ediciones, 2016, p 141.

the first is mainly regulated by the Administration and operates in the field of the aforementioned preventive risk communication, in the second and third, which seek to respond to the information needs that may arise in the event of the possibility or occurrence of specific risks, both the communications offices of the State Security Forces and Corps and of the emergency services involved in crisis management and the media also play a fundamental role. In fact, the latter are obliged to collaborate free of charge with the authorities in the dissemination of preventive and operational information on risks “in the manner indicated by the authorities and under the terms established in the corresponding civil protection plans”<sup>20</sup>.

To increase the effectiveness of public communication in emergencies and prevent risks from turning into disasters, the UN advocates making public communication a tool for citizen education<sup>21,22</sup>. This challenge implies not only, as already mentioned, orienting messages towards preventive purposes, in order, as Aurelio Soto points out, “to promote a relationship of trust with citizens before the emergency materialises”, but also “to use their language, which is understandable and helps them to make their own decisions on how to deal with risks”<sup>23</sup>; to identify the information needs in communities according to the different risks – which implies first knowing the risk perception of those affected, since “the risks that kill people and those that alarm them may be different”<sup>24</sup> – and, of course, to take advantage of all available information opportunities and all existing resources, including new information and communication technologies and social networks, given their proven usefulness in crises caused by adverse weather conditions or in the collaboration and prosecution of crime<sup>25</sup>.

### Risk communication in the strategy of the Military Emergency Unit (MEU)

The Military Emergency Unit’s risk communication is mainly situated in the third functional line described by Lundgren and McMakin: emergency communication. In

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20 HEAD OF STATE, Law 17/2015, of 9 July, on the National Civil Protection System, Official State Gazette, no. 164, of 10 July 2015.

21 This philosophy indeed permeates the *Disaster Risk Management Handbook for Social Communicators: A Practical Guide for the Social Communicator Committed to Informing and Training to Save Lives* (UNESCO, 2011).

22 SIMON, T.; GOLDBERG, A.; ADINI, B. “Socializing in emergencies. A review of the use of social media in emergency situations”, *International Journal of Information*. vol. 35, issue 5, 2015, pp. 609–619.

23 FISCHHOFF, B. “Risk perception and communication unplugged. Twenty years of process”, *Risk Analysis*. vol.15, issue 2, 1995, pp. 137-145.

24 SANDMAN, P. “Risk Communication: Facing Public Outrage”. Article [<https://www.psandman.com/articles/facing.htm>] (Published in *EPA Journal*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1987: 21-22), 4 September 2020.

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disaster or crisis situations, it not only contributes to giving visibility and credibility to those institutions, such as the MEU, whose mission is to intervene in emergencies to guarantee the safety and well-being of citizens, but also forms part of the response they offer to such emergencies. In this sense, such communication allows, on the one hand, leaders to make timely decisions, properly assess damages and needs, mobilise relevant resources for solidarity and support actions, and elaborate lessons learned; and on the other hand, it allows affected people to take ownership of the real risk they are exposed to and to take appropriate protective measures to reduce its impact<sup>26</sup>.

### *Risk communication in MEU doctrine*

The public communication of the Military Emergency Unit has a dual focus: institutional and emergency management. According to the head of the OCP, Aurelio Soto, the first is aimed at “projecting in society an image of the institution that is coherent with its mission, which, in this case, means that citizens perceive us as guarantors of their security”<sup>27</sup>. With regard to the second, it consists of “exchanging, as experts, information, recommendations and opinions with people facing a threat or risk in order to promote their survival”.

The strategic nature of such communication in both contexts explains why, in addition to being part of its annual sectoral plans – which specify how it can contribute to achieving corporate objectives on a regular basis – it is also present in the unit’s own standing doctrine, which encompasses its main capabilities: forest fires, floods, severe winter storms, urban search and rescue, and technological and environmental hazards. In this way, Soto clarifies:

“when the doctrine of a new capability is established, it includes a chapter on public communication, in which the main lines of communication of the risk on which the capability is going to act are defined, because each risk must have specific nuances in public communication, so that people know how to act in the face of one or the other”.

The MEU therefore has a planned and flexible public communication strategy, which seeks to involve all its personnel so that their knowledge and specialisation contribute greater quality to the content disseminated, in order to avoid an information

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26 MURPHY, D. M. “The Role of Information and Communication in Disaster Response: An Overview”. In: TUSSING, B. B. (ed.), *Threats at Our Threshold. Homeland Defense and Homeland Security in the New Century*. Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, 2008, pp. 179-190.

27 Institutional communication took on special relevance in the early years of the MEU in order to achieve the desired corporate positioning among its internal and external stakeholders, since, in its first years, the creation of the unit was questioned from a political, economic and even operational point of view, and aroused great controversy among the members of the Armed Forces themselves, as they considered that the functions entrusted to it distorted the mission of the military institution.

vacuum before and during the management of crises<sup>28</sup>. In this sense, in all its interventions, and following the guidelines of the operational director of the emergency, its risk communication is based on an active/reactive information policy and focuses on three aspects: support in decision-making for the management of the disaster, optimal attention to the affected population and information to society through the media<sup>29</sup> and its social network profiles.

### *Working with the media in emergencies*

Information is the most precious commodity when an emergency situation occurs that directly affects a significant part of the civilian population, making the social responsibility of journalists even more evident in this type of coverage<sup>30</sup>.

In order to fulfil their social role in these special and difficult circumstances, communication professionals need information, so it is the duty of public administrations and emergency services to provide it. According to Aurelio Soto, their main demands are “data, figures, images, consequences, expert opinions and reports on the response of the authorities and emergency services”.

For this reason, the MEU’s public communication strategy expressly envisages close cooperation with the media not only as part of its institutional communication, but also, and above all, in emergency management. In the latter case, such collaboration is intensified with local journalists, because, as Commander Javier Marcos Ingelmo argues, “they are the true connoisseurs of their inhabitants, the ones who get close to their lives every day and tell them about the things that happen around them”, so they are the perfect people to “help us build trust, as they are part of their daily lives, and they generate security and credibility [...] and, after all, risk communication must be a dialogue with the public”<sup>31</sup>.

In the case of the Military Emergency Unit, this collaboration is first and foremost to position itself as a quality source of information, by making spokespersons available to the media, both communicators and specialists,

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28 Public Communication Plan of the Military Emergency Unit 2020.

29 GUERRERO JIMÉNEZ, J.L. “La Unidad Militar de Emergencias”. In: SPANISH INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES (ed.), *Strategy Paper 165. España ante las emergencias y catástrofes. Las Fuerzas Armadas en colaboración con las autoridades civiles*. Madrid: Ministry of Defence, 2014, pp. 170-171.

30 MAYO-CUBERO, M. “News sections, journalists and information sources in the journalistic coverage of crises and emergencies in Spain”, *El Profesional de la Información*, vol. 29, issue 2, 2020.

31 INGELMO, J. M. “La información en los medios de comunicación social en la gestión de catástrofes”. In: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (ed.), *Liderazgo y emergencias. Unidad Militar de Emergencias*. Madrid, 2018, pp. 277-282.

to provide “clear official statements, issued in a timely and transparent manner” and “to generate confidence in the emergency services provided by the Community and the State as the main element of action in the disaster and, at the same time, credibility in the face of an immediate improvement of the situation with positive results, visible in their quality of life”<sup>32</sup>. Secondly, the MEU also provides television stations with images captured by its own cameras, so that, as Soto points out, “journalists do not have to expose themselves to the dangers involved in emergencies, for which, moreover, they are totally unprepared”.

### *Risk communication in social networks*

The proven usefulness of social networks in disaster management mentioned above has led the Military Emergency Unit to use its profiles on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Instagram to exercise its leadership in each emergency, both operationally and in terms of the media, since, as the unit’s community manager, Aurelio Soto, points out, in addition to being a means of communication:

“social media is an opportunity to face the people we serve face to face and to take advantage of this two-way communication without intermediaries to manage many aspects of major disasters [...] such as giving instructions, disseminating self-protection measures or informing those affected of risks”<sup>33</sup>.

In order to position itself as an informative reference in collaborative channels which, in such situations, can be saturated in a matter of minutes with hundreds, thousands and even millions of messages, Soto recognises that “the first thing is to work so that users are aware of our capacity to react to a catastrophe and have the certainty that we will also act on social networks to help them”, maintaining a daily presence “with a useful, coherent and responsible information policy”<sup>34</sup>, which also means “fighting from them against fake news, setting ourselves up before and during emergencies as a useful tool for verification agencies, journalists and, above all, citizens”<sup>35</sup>.

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32 INGELMO, J. M. “La información en los medios de comunicación social en la gestión de catástrofes”. In: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (ed.), *Liderazgo y emergencias. Unidad Militar de Emergencias*. Madrid, 2018, pp. 277–282.

33 SOTO SUÁREZ, A. “Las redes sociales, un nuevo canal para la comunicación pública en emergencias”. In: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (ed.), *Liderazgo y emergencias. Unidad Militar de Emergencias*. Madrid, 2018, pp. 283–288.

34 SOTO SUÁREZ, A. “Las redes sociales, un nuevo canal para la comunicación pública en emergencias”. In: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (ed.), *Liderazgo y emergencias. Unidad Militar de Emergencias*. Madrid, 2018, pp. 283–288.

35 The MEU General Plan 2020 expressly includes among its general objectives the importance of preventing and combating fake news.

## The communicative structure of the Military Emergency Unit (MEU)

Although, as will be explained below, any component of the MEU is in itself a source of information about the unit, since, according to the first Strategic Defence Communication Directive (2013), “all members of the Armed Forces are potential communicators both by their actions and their omissions”<sup>36</sup>, strictly speaking, the public communication of the Military Emergency Unit is the responsibility of a structure formed by the Public Communication Office and section 9 of each of the five Emergency Intervention Battalions that make up the unit. In addition, the Department of Relations and Evaluation collaborates with the first in the communicative management of risks, since, according to its chief, Colonel Juan José Marí y Marín, “institutional relations are essential in this management, due to the fact that the MEU must interact in emergencies with multiple organisations and through this department we try to establish the necessary links to optimise its work”.

### *The Public Communications Office*

The Public Communications Office is located at the headquarters of the Military Emergency Unit at the Torrejón de Ardoz air base (Madrid), together with the rest of the bodies that provide the human and material resources necessary to assist the Commanding General of the MEU in the exercise of the unit’s command: the General Staff, the aforementioned Department of Relations and Evaluation, the Economic Affairs Section, the Technical Department and the Legal Department.

The office is currently headed by Lieutenant Commander Aurelio Soto and is staffed by nine other people, divided into three areas: 1) Press; 2) Audiovisual and 3) Design.

The first encompasses, apart from media relations and spokespersonship, the management of the corporate digital media, i.e. the website and social networks. In addition, its four members – a commander, a brigadier, a lance corporal and a corporal – together with the head of the OCP, are also responsible for writing the scripts for the institutional videos, the storylines, as well as the general sectoral public communication plan based on the guidelines of the unit’s annual general plan and the Ministry of Defence’s strategic communication instructions.

The Audiovisual area is made up of a second lieutenant and two lance corporals. The former is in charge of production and photography, while the latter, in addition to being camera operators, are in charge of editing, lettering and voice-over of the pieces. The main function of this team is the production of institutional videos and social

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<sup>36</sup> MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, *Directive of the Minister of Defence on Strategic Defence Communication*, March 2013.

media pills, although, as mentioned above, in major emergencies, they would be in charge of supplying images to television channels.

Finally, the Design area is headed by a second lieutenant and a lance corporal, both with their own names: Manuel Pizarro and Juan Martínez Rivas. In addition to preserving the coherence in the use of the corporate visual identity, since its creation they have been responsible for the graphic design of the MEU in all media: posters, leaflets, photocall, front, merchandising and GIFs. With their works they seek to promote in a creative way an unusual knowledge of the Military Emergency Unit and, by extension, of the Armed Forces, trying to combine the dreamlike with the real<sup>37</sup>.

## Section 9

Within its organisational structure, the Military Emergency Unit has five Emergency Intervention Battalions with bases in Madrid (BIEM I), Seville (BIEM II), Valencia (BIEM III), Zaragoza (BIEM IV), and León (BIEM V)<sup>38</sup>. Given that communication is part of their response to such situations, the General Staff of all of them includes a section, the so-called S-9, dedicated to public communication and institutional relations with the main organisations in the operational area. However, this confluence of functions does not take place at the head of the MEU, where the latter falls, as mentioned above, to the Department of Relations and Evaluation, since, as Colonel Marí y Marín explains again,

“the enormous workload that institutional relations with private and public bodies, not only national but also international, entail at the unit level, since it should not be forgotten that the MEU is also an instrument of the State’s external action, requiring a management and implementation body”.

Thus, the S-9s report organically to the battalions and functionally to the Public Communications Office. These sections are headed by a commander, who has three or four auxiliaries in the rank of officer or non-commissioned officer under his command. When the battalion is not deployed, this team is dedicated to responding to local and regional news requests from the area in which it operates, while in emergency situations, as Lieutenant Commander Aurelio Soto points out, it also manages relations with the national media, “acting as communicating spokespersons to give a general account of how the intervention is being carried out or selecting the specialist spokespersons who can best explain the technical issues involved”.

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37 MILITARY EMERGENCY UNIT. Website. [<https://www.defensa.gob.es/ume/>], 4 September 2020.

38 MILITARY EMERGENCY UNIT. Website. [<https://www.defensa.gob.es/ume/>], 4 September 2020.

### *Commanders and responders*

Given that, in the Military Emergency Unit, as in any organisation, everything and everyone communicates, within the programme designed to prepare its personnel to intervene in any type of emergency, the MEU includes at all levels –troops and sailors, NCOs and officers – the subject of Public Communication, whose teaching is the responsibility of the Department of Human Factor, Leadership and Social Sciences of the Military Emergency School (EMES), created by Order DEF/85/2017, of 1 February, as a military teaching centre, and which since then constitutes the pillar of the unit's continuous and specialised training<sup>39</sup>.

The development of the communicative competence of managers and participants is part of the cultivation of ethical leadership based on the values of the unit that is sought through internal communication. According to the head of the Personnel Section, Lieutenant-Colonel Juan Saldaña García, such leadership:

“is developed with a mission-oriented exercise of command, where the commander sets his purpose and empowers his subordinates to act, and where the agility, reach and penetration of the media and, in particular, of social networks, establish direct links between operations, citizens and all kinds of actors, which end up influencing decision-making”.

Communication training pursues different objectives depending on the level of responsibility of the MEU members. Thus, those who join the unit with the rank of troop and sailor up to captain must complete the Basic Emergency Course. As Aurelio Soto, who also serves as a full professor at EMES, explains, this course:

“includes general sessions on communication to familiarise new arrivals with the public function of the media, with the public's right to information and with their role as potential communicators of the institution, given that, with their attitude, the way they wear their uniform or their publications on social networks, they also speak of the unit”.

Meanwhile, in the Disaster Management Course, which trains MEU officers from commander to colonel and managers of the General State Administration, the Autonomous Administration and the Local Administration in operational management procedures for emergencies of national interest, the training is aimed, according to Soto, at making them aware that, due to their capacity to reach the public derived from the position they occupy, “they must be involved in risk communication both in terms of spokespersons and public communication planning”.

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39 MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, Order DEF/85/2017, of 1 February, approving the rules on the organisation and functions, internal regime and programming of military educational centres. Official State Gazette, no.33, 8 February 2017.

In addition to the specialisation courses, the Military Emergency School offers other informative courses and seminars in which communication also plays a key role. Among the former, it is worth mentioning the Basic Course on Technological and Environmental Emergencies, in which responders receive specialised training in the communication of chemical, radiological or nuclear risks. Among the latter, the Leadership and Communication Seminar and the spokesperson seminars for S-9 personnel stand out, to which on many occasions, as Soto points out, “section and/or unit chiefs of the MEU are also invited to practice their communication skills”.

## Conclusions

In light of the above, it can be concluded that risk communication in crisis situations constitutes, in addition to being a field of study of great interest and topicality, one of the most pressing institutional challenges that public administrations and specialised emergency services must face, since the safety, well-being and even the lives of many citizens depend on the quality, timeliness and effectiveness with which these entities manage such communication before and during the development of the emergency.

Specifically, this research has shown that for the Military Emergency Unit, public communication is not only a valuable instrument for projecting a corporate image in accordance with its mission, vision and values, but also a strategic tool for resolving crises in which its intervention is required. This fact explains not only why it has had, since its creation, a solid communications structure, consisting of the Public Communications Office and Section 9 of its five battalions, but also why risk communication is an intrinsic part of its doctrine, and why the unit strives to train and involve all its members in it in order to better achieve its objectives.

On the other hand, this study has also revealed that the MEU’s risk communication management is governed by the desire and commitment to keep society constantly and correctly informed about the threats that compromise its security. Therefore, in addition to working on preventive communication and collaborating extensively with the media, the Military Emergency Unit bases its strategy on establishing itself as a direct interlocutor with the public through publications on its social networks, with which, in addition to providing truthful and useful information, it tries to combat the misinformation that circulates on them, especially in critical situations.

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*Interviews*

Interview with the head of the Public Communications Office of the Military Emergency Unit, Lieutenant Commander Aurelio Soto Suárez, on 4 August 2020.

Interview with the Head of the Department of Relations and Evaluation of the Military Emergency Unit, Colonel Juan José Marí y Marín, on 26 August 2020.

Interview with the head of the Personnel Section of the Military Emergency Unit, Lieutenant Colonel Juan Saldaña García, on 3 September 2020.

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## *A distinct and distant Europe*

### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed once more the challenges facing the European Union (EU) with regard to its cohesion and to its capacity as an international actor.

The aim of the article is twofold. Firstly, to analyse whether the EU meets those European nation-states' attributes associated to a recognisable geography and to a common history that are able to generate strong enough consciousness and allegiance ties among their citizens for them to become an authentic "European people", and secondly, to assess whether the foundational objectives and subsequent efforts of the European institutions would be capable of converging towards a "national" identity pattern that integrates the different national sensibilities, around which to articulate a European political project.

### **Keywords**

Citizenship, consciousness, allegiance, European institutions, convergent efforts

### **Cite this article:**

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## A living voice for Europe

Following the failed attempt of the 2004 Treaty of Rome to enact a European Constitution, the Lisbon Treaty sought to advance the goal of giving the EU a single voice that would make it an influential actor in its interaction with international institutions. However, the experience of the decade since the entry into force of the Treaty has not been able to show the desired increase in the influence of European institutions in global governance fora.

Given this widely acknowledged situation of EU weakness in the international framework, one might legitimately wonder whether the EU is not suffering from the lack of some additional instrument that would give meaning, significance, content, firmness and, in short, vitality to this now hollow, languishing and tenuous voice that is failing to make itself heard and respected. In this line of thought, one might wonder whether the call made by its spiritual father, Robert Schuman, back in the 1950s, and which has been revived and brought back to the present day at various historic moments in the process of European integration, as has been done recently by the former President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, is not still fully valid: that Europe needs an extra soul which, we would add, is capable of giving meaning and content to this voice which is not yet unique, nor is it sufficiently firm and resolute.

Since it is their nationhood that provides the vital element and transcendent dimension to the Member States of the Union, a projection of this model to the European level would suggest that what is missing in the project of European construction is a “national” component of the Union capable of breathing that breath of life, that soul that is so longed for but currently absent in the European reality. Following this line of reasoning, the question then arises as to whether Europe has the conditions to be able to equip itself with a common nation, understood and shared as such, which would bring vitality to the European project, what this united Europe would be like in terms of the common denominator of the countries that make it up according to the parameters of the nation-state model, and to what extent is the EU, as a political unit, adopting this model and moving in this direction. These are the reflections we intend to address in this paper.

For our analysis we start from the premise that a single voice is not sufficient in itself to command international recognition and leadership if it is not accompanied by a single European spirit that breathes life into that voice. This vital breath would come from an awareness on the part of citizens of what Europe is and means, from an individual adherence to this idea of the European “nation”, and from a convergent performance on the part of the European institutions aimed at preserving and promoting these vital aspects of European identity<sup>1</sup>. The analysis of a hypothetical

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<sup>1</sup> In this sense, Professor Gómez Castro, when analysing the role of the EU as a global actor, states that “the Union will be able to consolidate its role in the world if it can count on [...] leadership at European level” (GÓMEZ CASTRO, María Elena. “¡A mí La Legión!” *En una sociedad posheroica: la*

behaviour of the EU as a nation and the corresponding behaviour of the “European state” towards that national reality will therefore be done from a domestic perspective, on the basis that:

“The actors’ self-understanding of – identity – serves to formulate the – international – demands for recognition, so that the international identity is constituted [...] complementing [...] the already existing and constituted domestic identity [...] Consequently, the constitutive aspect for external actors becomes only a “confirmation” *ad extram* of an already “constituted” identity *ad intram* that integrates the actors around the same notions of norms, aspirations, distinctive features or worldviews”<sup>2</sup>.

The aim is to approach this analysis by visualising the EU as a supranational entity, and consequently and applying the principle of “fractality”, extrapolating our model of nationhood to the superior entity that is the EU, based on parameters of individual and collective awareness and adherence, in order to draw conclusions on the suitability of the model and on the viability of its application to the European project.

In accordance with this approach, it is important to specify that the actors in this work are not the nation-states or member states – depending on the prism through which they are viewed<sup>3</sup> – and the European institutions, but rather the latter and the citizens, as the real protagonists and constituent subjects of the “European people” that are to be analysed.

## A possible evolution of the concept of nationhood

If in the 19<sup>th</sup> century “the nation believed it could achieve its plenitude with the state” and in the face of the challenges of the third millennium “humanity is confusedly experiencing the need to realise itself in works that are tailored to it”, passing “from the world of cities to the city of the world”<sup>4</sup>, the question to be asked about the progressive process of organisation of human groups that began in the clan and has culminated in the nation-state, is whether a human group with aspirations of plenitude exists or is likely to exist at the European level, and if so, whether Europe has the conditions to aspire to satisfy the need for fulfilment of the human group that would constitute it.

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*transformación del paradigma militar. CESEDEN Monographs 127. Madrid: Ministry of Defence, 2012, p. 131.*

2 BARBÉ (dir.) *et al., Cambio mundial y gobernanza global. La interacción entre la Unión Europea y las instituciones internacionales. Madrid: TECNOS 2012, p. 70.*

3 BICKERTON, Christopher. “De Estados nación a Estados miembros: La integración europea como transformación”, in *La búsqueda de Europa. Visiones en contraste*, 2016, pp. 202-215.

4 GALLOIS, Pierre M. *Geopolítica. Los Caminos Del Poder. Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones del EME, 1992, p. 100.*

Following this outline of the organisational process, we could assume that it would be the EU's goal to eventually replace nation-states in the medium to long term. But these do not have to be the EU's objectives. In this respect, Alan S. Milward's thesis is that the EU's regionalist system was not aimed at creating new cross-border organisations, but precisely at retaining the system of nation-states<sup>5</sup>.

Without wishing to enter into this debate, the fact is that the scenario, both in terms of legislation and in terms of the EU's actions in terms of its participation in the international arena, has not been, nor is it, and we understand that it does not intend to be, a substitute for the representation in its own right of the member states in those issues and forums that they consider appropriate, but it is true that the European project wants to move towards achieving a single voice that gives credibility and influence to the institution in international forums and in global governance as a whole.

## A nation for Europe

Understandably, Schuman's main concern in his founding speech was the survival of peace, at a historic moment when Europe was beginning to recover from the devastation wrought by the Second World War. What is most striking is that the founding father did not confine his ideal of preserving peace to the European level, but rather invested his inaugural declaration of principles with an aspiration for world peace, to which he also called on Europe to make a decisive contribution.

Schuman, however, seemed to be aware of what that historical moment demanded, and he sacrificed the ambitious aspiration that could have been the attempt to build, to reconstruct we might say, a European identity that seemed utopian in those circumstances, to opt for the more modest but practical and, above all, achievable option of integration through concrete achievements, which would begin its journey following the logic of rapprochement between the great European secular rivals, France and Germany<sup>6</sup>, by the most expeditious route, that of chaining them to the coal and steel galley, which would henceforth force them to row together in the same direction, thus making warlike confrontation between the two impossible.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> MILWARD, quoted in LAURENT, "Review: The European Rescue of the Nation-State by Alan S. Milward, George Brennan and Federico Romero", *Am. Hist. Rev.*, 2019, vol. 98, no. 4, pp. 1197-1199, p. 1197.

<sup>6</sup> Churchill had already suggested taking the first step in this direction in his speech at the University of Zurich on 19 September 1946 when he said that: "The first step towards the reconstruction of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany" (TRUYOL Y SERRA, Antonio. *La Integración Europea. Análisis Histórico-Institucional Con Textos y Documentos. I Génesis y Desarrollo de La Comunidad Europea (1951-1979)*. EDITORIAL TECNOS, S.A., 1999, p. 165.).

<sup>7</sup> This approach to the process of European integration disappointed the USA, which played such a decisive role in European reconstruction through the Marshall Plan, who advocated the creation of a system "[...] capable of going beyond mere intergovernmental cooperation" although at the same time

However, as we have mentioned, Schuman did not want to renounce in his speech the formulation of a more ambitious integration project, an integration with capital letters, which, going beyond Europe, would lead to the achievement of world peace, which is obviously distant and utopian in nature.

A first approach to the analysis of the possible parallels between Schuman's idea of pan-European integration and what we currently understand as a common nation leads us to appreciate the notable differences between the two approaches.

Indeed, the open, universalist and fusionist approach of the Paris Declaration contrasts sharply with the physiognomy of the Western, and therefore European, nation, characterised by its association with a defined and therefore essentially closed space, and by the crystallisation of a consciousness of a people and a sense of nationhood forged in a defined, common and singular geographical and historical framework, generating blood ties, beliefs, values, customs and ways of being, thinking and acting that are distinctive and differentiated from those of other nations.

Another substantial difference between the two conceptions refers to the question of the continuity of the project, which in the European case is oriented towards the achievement of peace, considered fundamentally as a means to avoid internal conflicts, while in the nation-state it is oriented towards the survival of the state, oriented towards the preservation of territorial integrity and national sovereignty, and which consequently places, or should place, in the first line of state action the promotion of the spirit, or if you like, the conscience, of national defence.

### *A land for Europe*

In every nation there is an awareness of the land on which it stands and a perception of that land as its own. Ideally, this land becomes, with varying degrees of coincidence, the territory of the state. This is not to say that the nation must necessarily precede the state, and there are many cases in European history where this has not been the case, but it does mean that there must be a convergence between the land of the nation and the territory of the state that allows us to speak of nation-states.

If the EU were to be likened to a nation-state, we could determine exactly what the territory of the European nation-state would be today: the 4.5 million km<sup>2</sup> that make up the territories of the 27 countries that make up the EU. The question then arises as to whether this EU area corresponds to a territorial awareness and feeling of Europeaness. This question should be asked again with each new entry or exit during the process of European integration.

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with “a no less firm conviction that this (integration) could not be imposed” (BECERRIL ATIENZA, Belén. “La apuesta de los Estados Unidos por la unidad europea en el marco del Plan Marshall. El apoyo norteamericano y la obstrucción británica en el umbral de la integración europea (1947-1951),” *Rev. Derecho Comunitario Eur.*, 2017, no. 56, pp. 159–198, p. 195.

It is well known that myths are not the best endorsement of science. In the European case, however, some argue, and we agree with this assessment, that “myths [...] are teaching aids because they help us to understand how the boundaries of Europe have gradually been determined”<sup>8</sup>. According to this assessment, the most precise boundary of Europe would probably be that defined geographically to the south by the Mediterranean Sea. Continuing with strictly geographical criteria, the other two European borders that could be considered precise would be the western one, defined by the Atlantic Ocean, and the northern one, delimited by the Arctic Ocean. The northern and eastern boundaries would no longer be so much the northern and eastern ones, although there does seem to be agreement that in no case would these boundaries go beyond the Urals and the Caspian and Black Seas respectively, with the Caucasus as the connecting element between the latter two. We would therefore be talking about an area of 10 million km<sup>2</sup>, of which less than half would correspond to the current EU.



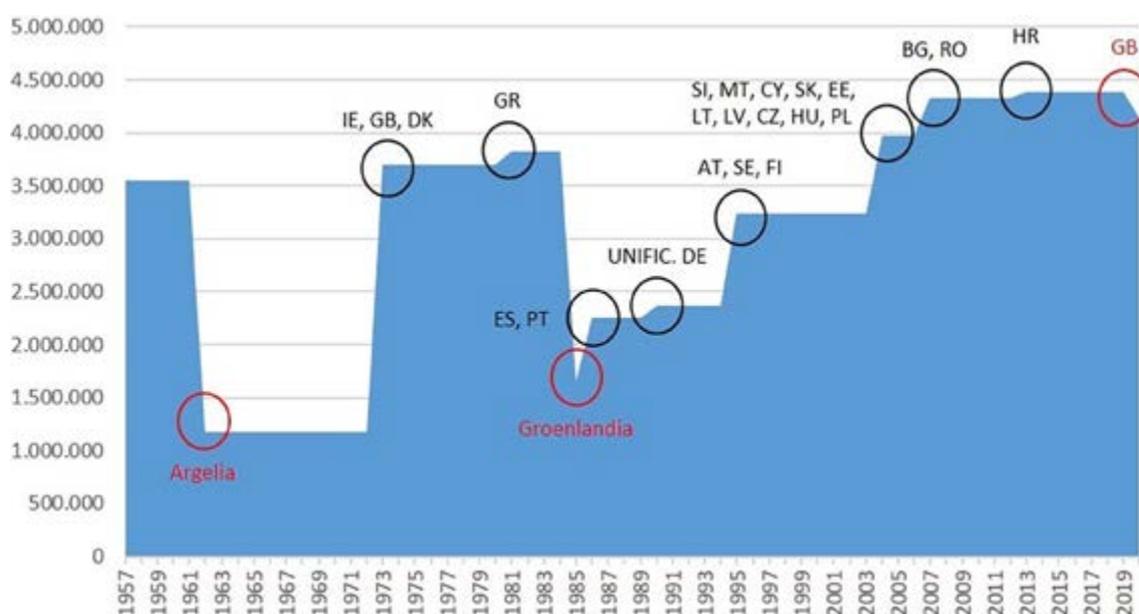
Illustration 15. Physical Map of Europe

This observation about the geographical limits of Europe may seem somewhat rhetorical, but it is nevertheless of capital importance, because it allows us to establish a first frame of reference when trying to determine whether there is a European aware-

8 J. CARPENTIER, Jean; LEBRUN, François. *Breve Historia de Europa*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995, p. 14.

ness and feeling of European identity in the sense that, if European identity were associated with a geographical delimitation recognisable by European society, to the extent that the European institutions were to dismiss this aspect, they would also be blurring this European identity, which is ultimately an essential factor of strength to give vitality to this voice that wants to make itself heard forcefully in the international sphere.

Another aspect of the territorial aspect that we would like to highlight is that of its life cycle, i.e. the evolution of the size of the EU, so that its “age”, and therefore its vitality and strength, can be determined in terms of its geographical development. In this respect, it can be seen that, with the exception of some historical peculiarities such as the departure of Algeria and Greenland, which in any case cannot be considered as strictly European, the EU has followed a process of constant territorial growth since it took its first steps with the creation of the European Union.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 16. Evolution of the EU in Km<sup>2</sup> (with Algeria and Greenland)

The ECSC until the present day, which has been suddenly interrupted by the UK's exit from the EU, popularly known as Brexit. In terms of surface area, this contraction has meant a reduction of around 6% of the Union's total surface area, which, although sufficiently relevant, is not as significant as the fact of its shrinking size, which, likening it to a life cycle, would mean the end of a long period of growth and the consequent loss, at least momentary, of territorial “vitality”.

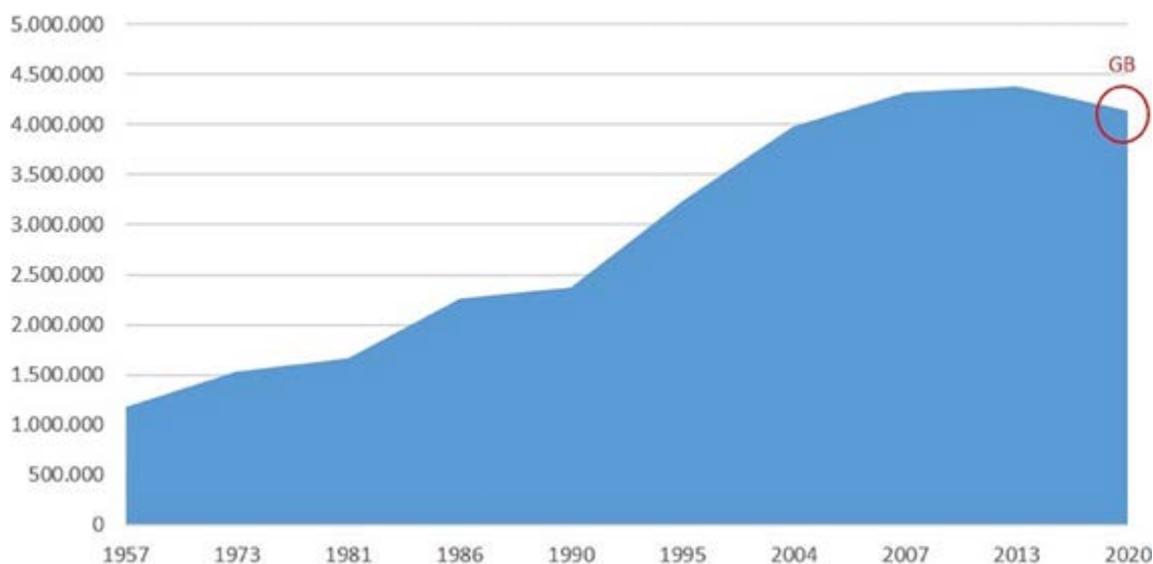
A more realistic graphic representation, without Algeria and Greenland, shows more clearly the continuous growth of the Union's surface area since its creation, which is accentuated in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the accession of large countries such as Sweden and Finland, and in the first decade of our century with the simultaneous incorporation of ten countries, eight of them from Central and Eastern Europe, to end up marking its first territorial turning point and the first setback in the process of European territorial expansion with the exit of the United Kingdom in 2020, as we have already mentioned.

In the same vein, perhaps the most revealing aspect of the EU's territorial evolution is precisely the absence of any reference to any limit or objective of maximum territorial extension, based on geographical or other considerations, that could be recognised as defining what is characteristically European.

The absence of declared territorial boundaries begs the question of what criteria should guide the EU's territorial expansion. Should the EU aspire to reach the confines of European geography with its traditional boundaries as we have defined them? Or would it perhaps be wiser to lower these expectations and confine the geographical framework of the Union to a reality more in keeping with the spirit of internal reconciliation that inspired its founding, and thus facilitate the cohesion of the main peoples concerned by this issue?

The lack of knowledge of the EU's geographical limit thus reveals a lack of definition in the project of European construction and raises the question of whether or not the EU is considering the advisability of establishing a limit to its process of territorial expansion.

On the basis of Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which lays down the conditions for accession<sup>9</sup>, there do not seem to be any a priori conditionality.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 17. Evolution of the EU in Km<sup>2</sup> (without Algeria and Greenland)

The enlargement of the Union could therefore be extended *ad infinitum* as far as the territorial issue is concerned, if we were to adhere strictly to the letter of the Treaty. However, this universalist aspiration of the European institutions is clashing in its expansive vocation with forces that oppose this ideal, even at the European regional level. Suffice it to mention the failed attempt to incorporate Ukraine into the European integration process, the consequences of which are still present today in terms of tension and instability in the region.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/enlargement/>.

No major surprises are to be expected in terms of the scope for EU enlargement beyond what is currently envisaged, but the recent experience of Ukraine creates uncertainty as to whether the EU might in the future consider a similar approach towards any other country, for example one of those included like Ukraine in the European Neighbourhood Policy<sup>10</sup>, which prevents the EU's territorial extension from being considered closed, even formally, as far as the accession chapter is concerned for the time being.

### *A people for Europe*

Returning to the analysis of the characteristics that European society should have in order to be comparable to a true European “people”, it would be necessary to start from the traditional factors of awareness and adherence that have shaped the solidity of the European nation-states throughout their history, in order to try to find, through these features, elements that could constitute factors of cohesion of the population that are relevant to the European project.

In a similar way to the fall from grace for a time of the science of geopolitics due to the disastrous consequences of its application by Nazi Germany, the unfortunate legacy of this recent European past in its paroxysmal exaltation of the purity of race has also compressibly condemned to ostracism any subsequent consideration of studying the positive aspects that shared blood – a notion different and even opposed to that of purity of blood – could contribute to the cohesion of the community, in this case the European community, and this has probably also contributed to the emergence of a certain cult of diversity as a counterpoint to the above. Be that as it may, the fact that blood ties exist is an undeniable reality and we therefore consider that they should be taken into account, even as one more indicator, when assessing the potential for social cohesion of a community or group of communities. This approach to the analysis of blood affinity as a factor of social cohesion automatically directs the object of our study towards the majorities. It should not be forgotten that in the end it is the majorities that decide the future of the people in general terms.

The eminent historian Domínguez Ortiz pointed out, referring to Spain that its personality derives from the heritage of Rome and the coexistence of its peoples in a well-defined geographical space. But what is relevant from a European point of view in Domínguez Ortiz's thinking is his assertion that “its case – that of Spain – is analogous to that of France, Italy and Germany, whose pieces have also been broken down and recomposed over centuries and millennia without prejudice to their

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<sup>10</sup> The European Neighbourhood Policy applies to Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Moldova, Syria, Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Ukraine.

fundamental unity”<sup>11</sup>. We therefore find here a common pattern of formation of the European peoples that has crystallised in the constitution of the current states, from which we propose to analyse the main features of affinity or community of blood that have been formed among the European peoples as a consequence of the millenary superimposition of the successive arrivals of civilisations in the different regions of the old continent.

In the formation of the peoples of Europe, we can distinguish a first stage marked by Greco-Roman civilisation, which spread mainly throughout the Mediterranean basin, and a second stage characterised by the arrival of the “barbarian” peoples, i.e. foreigners, among whom we will highlight two large families: the Germanic peoples, which mainly comprised the Angles, Saxons and Franks, and the Slavs. These peoples will end up shaping the European states, and will give rise to a new physiognomy of the continent in which “the traditional opposition between a southern Europe – Mediterranean and of Greco-Roman civilisation – and a northern Europe, given over to the “barbarians”, is slowly being replaced by the opposition between a western Europe of Latin culture and strong Germanic presence and an eastern Europe of Greek culture and strong Slavic presence”<sup>12</sup>. Among these great European families, the importance of the Frankish people must be highlighted, as they represent the common thread of what could be understood today as a blood brotherhood between present-day France and Germany through the inheritance received by these two countries after the decomposition first of the Frankish empire of the Carolingians, and later of the Holy Roman Empire. The Charlemagne Prize awarded by the German city of Aachen seems to be a response to this recognition of the Carolingian as a connecting link in Western Europe, which is even more important now that the other great family originating in Western Europe, that of the Anglo-Saxons, has just broken away from the common European destiny after Brexit.

However, this new East-West configuration will not spread evenly across Europe. In this respect, it is worth noting the uniqueness of the western Mediterranean, where the penetration of the Franks and Slavs was only partial, and which marked a clear southern limit to the new East-West European territorial physiognomy. Within this singularity, we must also highlight the particularity of Spain and Portugal, due to the presence of the Visigoth kingdoms for three centuries in our peninsula, and the long Muslim domination that lasted for the following eight centuries. Europe was also the scene in the first millennium of the passage and even the establishment of other peoples who were not to prevail in the end: Ostrogoths, Lombards, Vandals, Huns, Avars, etc.

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<sup>11</sup> ARIAS, Jesús; GARCÍA, Alejandro V. (22 January 2003) “Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, el gran historiador de la España moderna, muere a los 93 años”. *EL PAÍS*. Available on the website: [https://elpais.com/diario/2003/01/22/cultura/1043190007\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2003/01/22/cultura/1043190007_850215.html).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141.



Source: Prepared internally

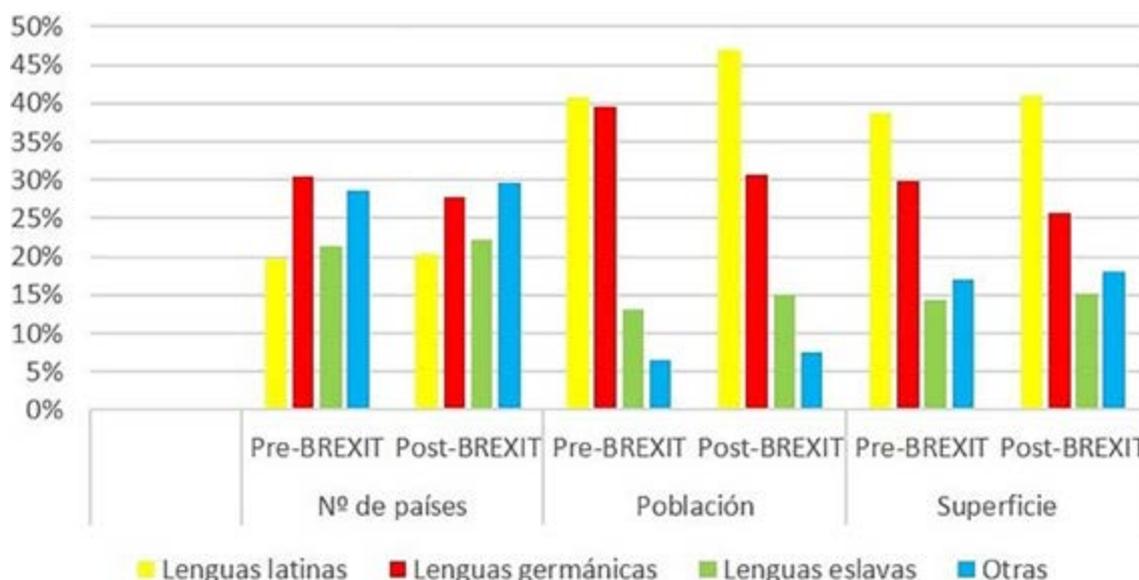
Illustration 18. European families, 1st-10th centuries

Another factor of cohesion of the population, also closely linked to coexistence as well as blood twinning, is the language community, which, like blood, is a tool for spatial delimitation and temporal continuity of peoples, and therefore one of the main factors of cohesion.

European history and current affairs do not yield satisfactory results from the language point of view that would encourage proposing a particular language as “the language of Europe”. If historically, as was to be expected, there is a general correspondence between the great European families to which we have attributed the formation of the European states, i.e. the Germanic and Slavic peoples, and the evolution of languages in Europe, to which should be added, in addition to the Germanic and Slavic languages, those derived from the legacies of Greco-Roman culture, i.e. Latin and Greek, to which should be added, in addition to the Germanic and Slavic languages, those derived from the legacies of Greco-Roman culture, i.e. Latin and Greek, it is not possible to speak of a predominance of one of them over the others, firstly because none of them reached a level of expansion that could be classified as hegemonic in the geographical framework we have defined for Europe, and secondly because of the diversity of the languages spoken in Europe, and secondly, because of the diversity of languages already existing at the end of the first millennium AD, either because of the splitting of the parent languages, particularly Latin after the fall of the Roman Empire, or because of the pre-existence and expansion of a considerable number of them

at the time of the great migrations of the Germanic peoples, who even at the time of the Roman Empire and the hegemony of Latin in their area of influence already had eight distinct languages from the three great families of Germanic languages: West, Norse and South Germanic<sup>13</sup>. The development of Slavic languages on our continent during the time of the great migrations followed a similar pattern.

This historical distribution of European languages among its three major language groups is reflected today in the balanced distribution that can be observed among EU countries on the basis of this ranking.



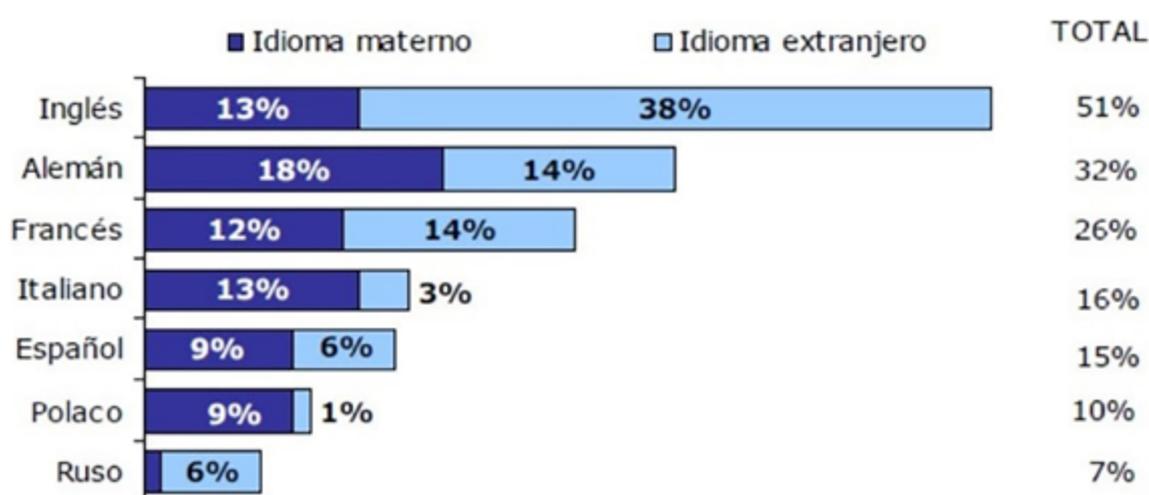
Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 19. Distribution of languages in the EU

However, in terms of population, it can be seen that since Brexit the balance between the Latin and German-speaking countries has shifted to the benefit of the former, and there has been a corresponding increase in the difference in surface area between the two. The eventual inclusion of the three candidate countries listed as belonging to the Slavic language group, i.e. Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Serbia, would in this respect represent an advance in the representation of this language group in all aspects of this distribution. Turkey, another of the five candidate countries, along with Albania and the three Slavic countries mentioned above, deserves a special mention. Turkey, with its 83 million inhabitants, would become the most populous country in the EU along with Germany, and with its 783,562 km<sup>2</sup>, the largest. Turkey would also have the peculiarity, which could be described as an anomaly, of being the only EU country with part of its territory, 97 per cent in fact, i.e. practically all of it including the capital, outside the geographical limits we have defined for Europe.

<sup>13</sup> These languages are East Germanic Gothic, Vandal and Burgundian (extinct); Old High German, Saxon, Frisian, English, and Old Frankish, belonging to West Germanic; and Old West and East Norse, belonging to Nordic Germanic.

There are currently 24 official languages in the EU. The latest EU studies<sup>14</sup> show that, if a candidate language were to be nominated as a common European language, it would be English, which before BREXIT was the most widely spoken language in the Union with 51 per cent of the population. Taking into account the small variation in the evolution of language use in Europe over the last decades, and disregarding those that could be represented by the countries that joined after the latest statistics were compiled, namely Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, an extrapolation of the data for the new post-BREXIT European reality would imply a significant decrease in the use of English as a mother tongue, from 13 to 2 per cent, and a small decrease in the use of English as a foreign language, from 38 to 35 per cent. Even so, English would still be the most widely used language in the Union, with a narrow lead over German, but more importantly, it would still double the next most shared languages, German and French.



Source: Special Eurobarometer 243  
Illustration 20.- Most used languages in the EU

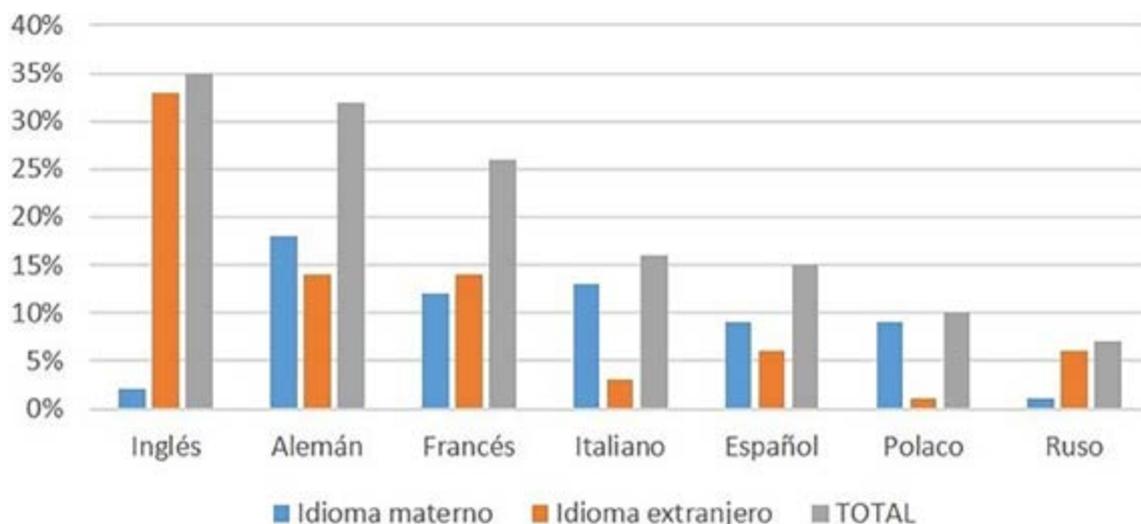
Ironically, the United Kingdom, the State that has contributed most to providing the EU with such a powerful tool for cohesion as the common language, in this case the English language, has been the first to abandon it, leaving the hegemonic language of the Union orphaned, and thereby generating the dysfunction that in our opinion is caused by the majority use in the EU of a language that is alien to the new political reality that has emerged after the BREXIT. It is to be expected that this now atypical circumstance will come to be seen over time as the legacy – probably just one of them – of the UK's passage from the EU.

To the above must be added other realities such as the Spanish language, and to a lesser extent the Portuguese language, which escape the physical geography of Europe due to their strong presence in the Ibero-American world and which, due to their weight in terms of the number of speakers and the geographical extension they cover,

<sup>14</sup> The EU has produced three special Eurobarometers on Europeans and their languages in recent years: 237 in 2005, 243 in 2006 and 386 in 2012.

are difficult for Europe to accept simply as another European language, generating a distortion in terms of their exclusively European nature. The same reasoning could have been applied to the English language, given the sheer scale of its geographical extension in English-speaking North America and the Commonwealth countries in general.

Given the difficulty of establishing and, more importantly, adopting a common language, due to the complex scenario existing in this field, it is not surprising that the EU has chosen to make a virtue out of necessity by promoting the learning of at least two languages other than the mother tongue among its citizens, and by enshrining the use of twenty-four official languages as we have pointed out. While this performance is understandable from an institutional point of view, but not from the point of view of cohesion. In this sense, the initiative to introduce a new, and therefore neutral, language, Esperanto, as a working language of the Union, could move in this direction, especially in view of its European origin and the fact that it integrates European languages by being structured on the basis of the languages of Western Europe and the Slavic languages.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 21. Most used languages in the EU (extrapolation post-BREXIT)

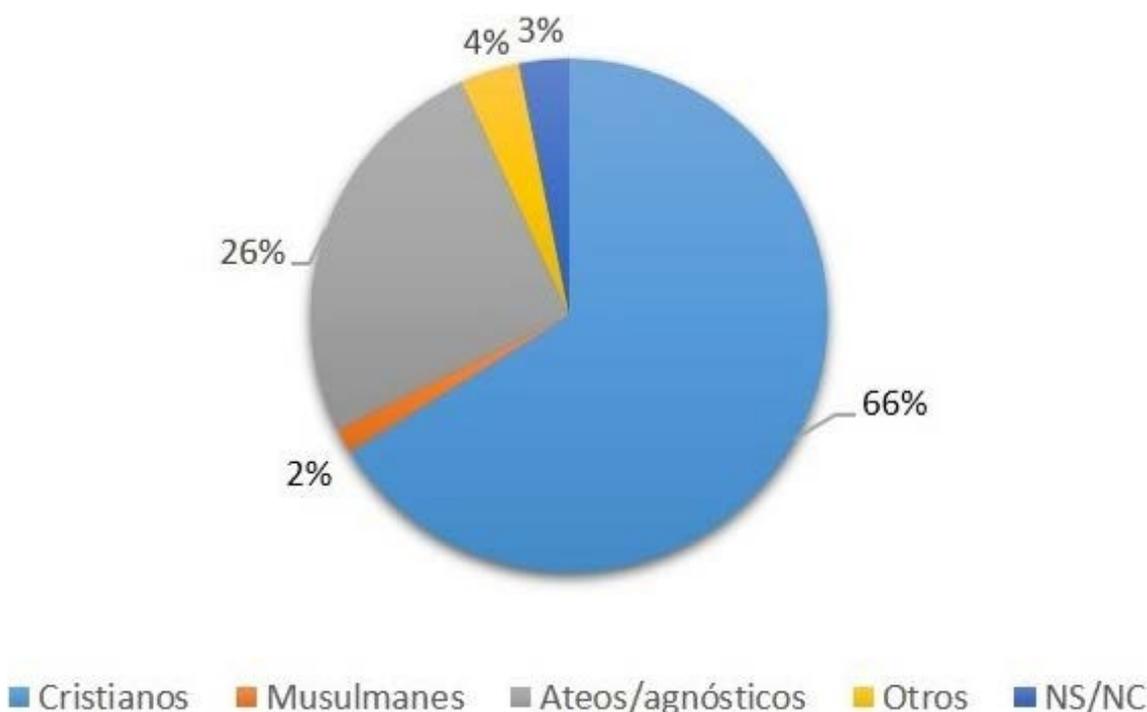
The history of Europe is fundamentally the history of Christianity. It is not in vain that Christianity, Catholicism in the strict sense of the word, has been the only unifying element capable of crossing European geographical, blood and language barriers since its establishment by the Roman Empire at the dawn of our era<sup>15</sup> until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, exercising its *auctoritas* for more than a millennium without interruption over three successive empires: the Roman, the Carolingian and the Holy Roman-Germanic Empires, and, from the Protestant movements to the present day, constituting the main spiritual substratum of the European peoples from different creeds.

<sup>15</sup> After the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312, Christianity was legalised in the Roman Empire with the Edict of Milan in 313, and became the exclusive religion of the Roman Empire by a decree of Emperor Theodosius on 27 February 380.

Christianity has also played a leading role in major European historical events, both those that made it possible to preserve the Christian character of our continent in the confrontations between Catholicism and Islam, and those that led to the definitive break-up of papal authority under the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* after the internecine wars between Catholics and Protestants, which opened the door to the new political configuration of modern Europe.

However, beyond and in spite of the episodes of confrontation, it is necessary to insist on the common thread that from Charlemagne until well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century Christianity has meant for the construction of Europe, which it endowed with a historical consciousness that “depended essentially on its religious sense”, which conceived progress as the ascent from original sin to the ultimate goal of becoming a child of God, and in which therefore “baptism was indispensable for citizenship”<sup>16</sup>, to the point that Europe, before becoming so, at least in its modern stage, was known as “Christendom”. Today, 66% of the population of the member states still claim to belong to one of the branches of Christianity<sup>17</sup>, and it can therefore be said that this would be a factor of cohesion that should be preserved as a sign of European identity.

In this respect it is interesting to note that if the majority of the population of the EU as a whole declares itself to be Christian, this also applies to the population of the 27 individual EU countries.

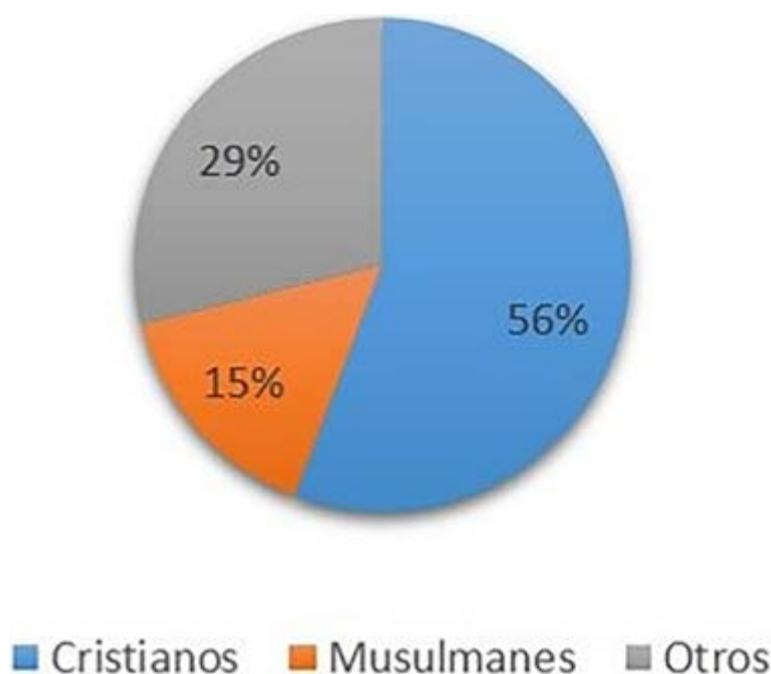


Source: Prepared internally  
 Illustration 22. Religious denominations EU population 2019 (extrapolation post-BREXIT)

<sup>16</sup> SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ, Luis. *Crisis y restauración en Europa*. Madrid: Homo Legens 2009, pp. 26-28.

<sup>17</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2251>, Report, SD3, T11

Once again, by carrying out a prospective exercise such as the one we have already carried out to analyse the linguistic aspects of the EU from the point of view of its enlargement process, in the case of faith it is noted that the accession to the EU of two of the five candidate countries, Albania and Turkey, both of which are Muslim-majority, in the case of Albania with 63 per cent of the population, and in the case of Turkey with 90 per cent of the population<sup>18</sup>, would mean a break in the continuity of this pattern of Christian tradition shared by the countries of the Union, as well as a notable and sudden increase in the Muslim population, which in the new configuration would increase from 7 to 81 million inhabitants and from 2 to 15 per cent of the total population of the EU, and would be accompanied by a corresponding proportional decrease in the population with Christian roots, which would go from 66 to 56 per cent of the total.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 23. Religious denominations population EU-27 + Turkey

Given that Christianity is thus the only historical European reality that has manifested itself throughout its geography, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, that has permeated the lives of all European peoples and that has been practised in all the languages of our continent, the EU, which is committed to overcoming barriers and to breaking down the barriers of religion, has nevertheless chosen to ignore its Christian roots as a sign of European identity<sup>19</sup>, much less to consider this aspect as a possible criterion for membership,

<sup>18</sup> These ages are estimates because results differ between surveys.

<sup>19</sup> During the drafting of the EU Constitutional Treaty signed in Rome in 2004 and finally not ratified, it was decided after intense debate not to include in its preamble any reference to Europe's Christian roots. Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta,

which in our opinion represents a disaffection towards its historical conscience in the area of faith and another element of weakness in terms of renouncing the recognition and affirmation of this common heritage and source of European principles and values<sup>20</sup>.

A measure of the cohesion of peoples is deduced from the shared experiences and the bonds of solidarity and trust built up around them and which have shaped the national character throughout the course of history. Of varying nature, these experiences, some adverse, others favourable, share the common denominator of awakening intense feelings capable of consolidating the vital development of peoples. Numerous examples can be found at the state level, from heroic responses to external threats, to periods of territorial expansion or periods of cultural, technological or other flourishing that have contributed to the emergence of feelings of national pride<sup>21</sup>.

However, if we extrapolate the analysis of this factor of national cohesion represented by common traditions of solidarity to the supranational European level, we can see that European forces have rarely united in the face of an external aggressor throughout European history, and when they have done so, it has been in the context of defending Christianity against Islam.

Indeed, if anything has characterised the history of Europe from the *Pax Romana* to the first half of the second millennium, it has been punctuated almost uninterruptedly by an endless string of internal conflicts, to the extent that this constant warfare has come to be regarded in some quarters as the main hallmark of European identity, which has been defined as *biocenosis*, a form of society common in nature “made up of organisms of different species [...] in such a degree of mutual interaction and interdependence that one can speak of a super-organic, habitat-based, ‘self-sustaining’ unity” so that “the harmony that enables a given biocenosis to be self-sustaining is not so much the harmony of love and peace [...] as the harmony of the struggle for life among its members”<sup>22</sup>.

In this sense, the absence of conflict in the heart of Europe since the end of the Second World War is certainly a remarkable achievement, and there is no reason to

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the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and Poland; and against Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom. PETSCHEN, Santiago “La religión en la Unión Europea”, *UNISCI Discuss. Pap.*, 2008, no. 16, pp. 49–60, pp. 50–51.).

<sup>20</sup> In this regard, John Paul II, in his 2008 Charlemagne Prize speech, noted that his predecessor, Pius XII, “expressed the Church’s keen interest in explicitly supporting the idea of the formation of a “European union”, leaving no doubt that for a valid and lasting affirmation of such a union it is necessary to refer to Christianity as a factor that creates identity and unity” (cf. Speech to the Union of European Federalists in Rome, 11 November 1948).

<sup>21</sup> MUIR, Richard. *Geografía política moderna*. Madrid: Army Staff Publication Service, 1982, p. 179.

<sup>22</sup> BUENO, Gustavo. *España frente a Europa*. Barcelona: Alba, 1999, pp. 405-406.

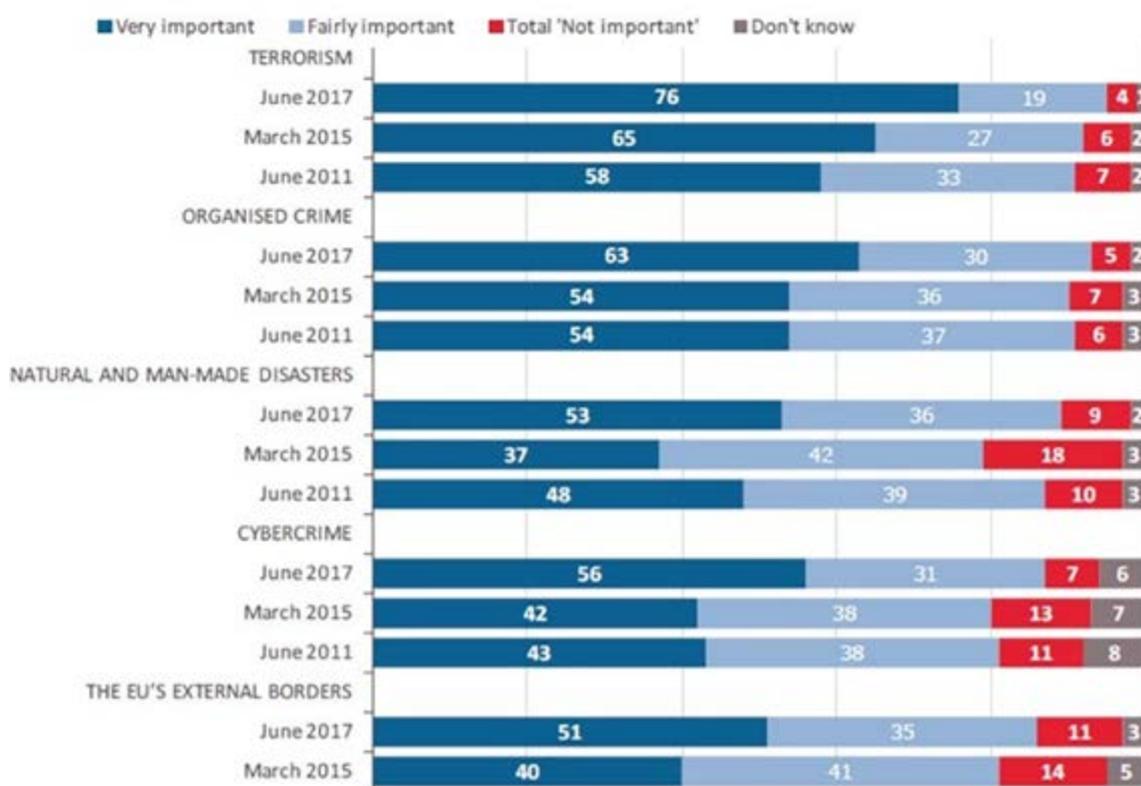
deny the process of European construction that began in 1950<sup>23</sup> any credit that may be due to it.

This journey, which is now sixty-five years since the beginning of the *Pax Europaea* we are enjoying, is perhaps not yet long enough to have allowed the emergence of those great events capable of testing the determination and capacity of peoples to overcome formidable adversities, or of stimulating them to undertake extraordinary undertakings, those which mark a before and after in the historical consciousness of nations.

If one phenomenon of external aggression towards today's Europe as a whole were to be singled out, it would be Islamist terrorism, which has caused more than 600 deaths on EU territory so far this century<sup>24</sup>, to which should be added those Europeans killed outside the Union, and which is in fact perceived year after year and with an upward trend as the main current threat to the security of European citizens.

It should be noted, however, that the target of Islamist terrorism is not confined to Europe or the West as a whole, but is not confined to the European area or the West as a whole.

**QB2** In your opinion, how important are the following challenges to the internal security of the EU? (% - EU)



Source: Special Eurobarometer 464b

Illustration 24. Attitude of European citizens towards security

<sup>23</sup> We take the date of Schuman's famous speech to pool the coal and steel resources of France and the Federal Republic of Germany as a reference, as the EU itself regards it as the birth of the integration process.

<sup>24</sup> According to own calculations, 653 fatalities have been counted from 1 January 2000 up to and including 2 November 2020, the date of the attack in Vienna that killed 3 people and wounded 15.

It has not yet made itself felt in all EU countries, not even in most of them, and could therefore be considered an “incomplete” threat to the EU, if we may say so, given its non-exclusive character, i.e. not directed exclusively at EU countries; partial, i.e. not focused on all EU countries but mainly on those that could be included in the framework of Western Europe; and limited, i.e. not aiming – at least for the time being and not by these methods<sup>25</sup> – at sovereignty in the territories under attack.

While the longed-for moment of affirmation of the new European people arrives, as the Spanish Second of May was in its day, or of exaltation of its pride at the culmination of great deeds such as those of the Twelfth of October or the first round-the-world trip, in its brief half-century of existence the EU has already had the opportunity to put its aspirations for solidarity to the test in the face of situations that could be classified as exceptional, as we understand the massive irregular migratory flows and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have not only exposed the different sensibilities of its peoples, with questionable results for the time being for the intended progress along the path of cohesion, but have also been able to fuel, as in the case of the aforementioned immigration, the emergence of centrifugal currents capable of provoking adverse outcomes such as Brexit. This leads us to wonder to what extent it is possible that the citizens of a given European country will be able to feel that a problem that is manifesting itself in other countries of the Union is their own, and whether it can be expected that at some point an unequivocal feeling of solidarity between the citizens of the different European countries will emerge. We believe that this is the direction in which the European institutions should in any case be heading.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 25. EU countries that have suffered Islamist attacks 2000-2019

25 In the context of fourth generation warfare, the preferred method for Islam's hegemonic purposes would be immigration invasion (Lind, William S. "Understanding Fourth Generation War". *Military Review*, 2004, vol. 84, no. 5, pp. 12-19, p. 13).

## The performance of the European institutions

Following the paradigm of awareness of and adherence to the nation and convergent performance of the state, which according to our model defines the degree of strength of the nation-state, and once the aspects of the first two have been extrapolated to the supranational European sphere, that is, national awareness and adherence, and the relevant actions that the peoples that have inhabited the European geography throughout its history have developed to these effects have been analysed, it is then necessary to analyse the degree of convergence in the performance of the EU, that is, to determine to what extent the current project of the Union is taking into account our postulates of convergence and to what extent it would be possible to base European construction on the assumptions of Europe as a nation-state. To this end, we will apply to the EU an analysis of the aspects of institutional performance that we have considered most relevant for the achievement of the convergence criterion: territoriality, representation, and the symbols of the Union.

### *Territoriality*

Externally, the notion of territoriality, that is, the awareness and meaning of territory, is inextricably linked to that of preserving the habitat of a given community and therefore to the very concept of security and defence against an external threat, and internally it constitutes an essential territorial reference to provide certainty about the definition of the human group that allows the necessary trust to be generated as a prelude to solidarity among its members.

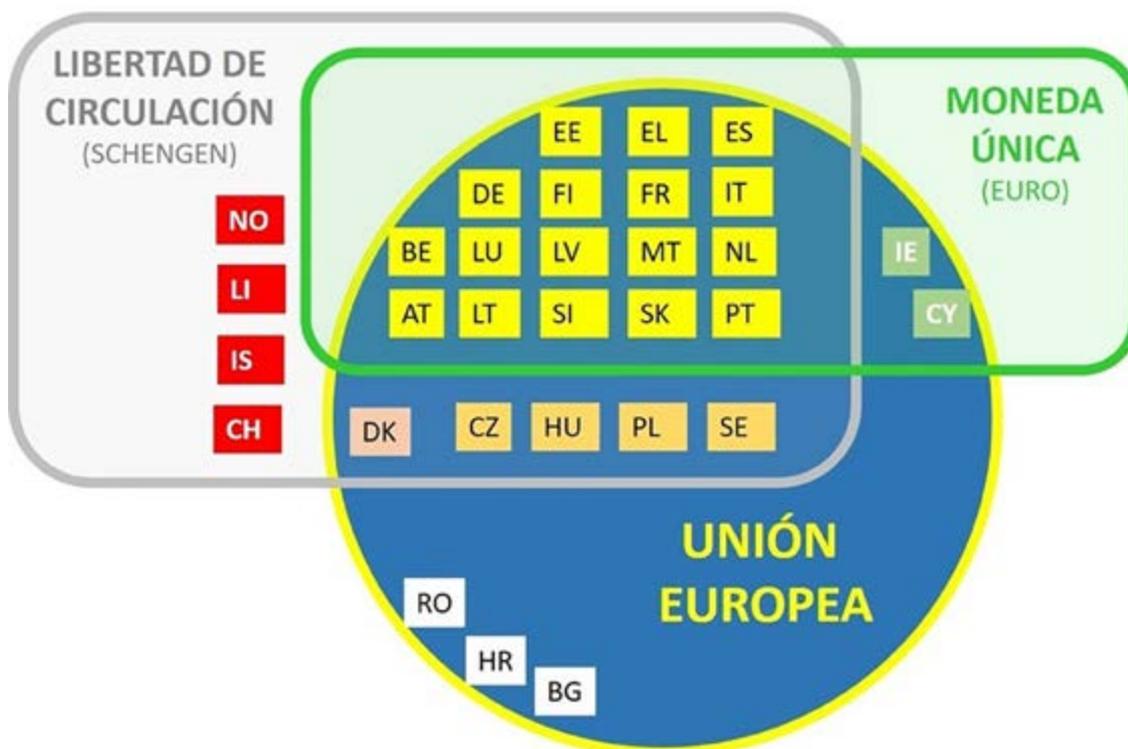
Borders are a characteristic element of territoriality. From the thesis of trans-territorialisation and cross-borderisation, it could be argued that the disappearance of borders would inexorably lead to the disappearance of intrusion.

However, we must understand borders not as the cause, but as the consequence of differences between spaces of coexistence. Reciprocally, an appropriate delineation of borders would be one that would allow for the proper delimitation of those frameworks of coexistence with their own identity around which to preserve and foster bonds of understanding, trust and solidarity. In a traditional state, this would mean that the state should strive to ensure that its territory, as a constituent factor of an emotional dimension and a catalyst for a people's sense of identity<sup>26</sup>, responds as closely as possible to what is expected of it from that perspective. If the EU is to aspire to the soul it has longed for, this should be one of its vectors of action.

The creation of areas of coexistence that make it possible to break down the borders separating EU countries is one of the strategies for the construction of the

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26 PAASI, Anssi. "The resurgence of the 'Region' and 'Regional Identity': theoretical perspectives and empirical observations on regional dynamics in Europe" *Rev. Int. Stud.*, 2009, vol. 35, no. S1, pp. 121-146, p. 124.



Source: Prepared internally  
Illustration 26. EU Coexistence Spaces

European project and can be considered in general terms as a positive factor of territoriality. The Schengen area, the single currency and the European area of justice are representative examples. However, issues such as the discrepancies regarding the principles and conditions that should inspire their creation, the discretionary nature of the scope of action of some areas with respect to others, or the disputed application in some cases of the rules that regulate them<sup>27</sup>, have produced results that are far removed from and sometimes even contrary to those sought, and have only led to an undesired heterogeneity of communities and a resentment of trust between member countries that undoubtedly constitute an obstacle to the consolidation of areas of coexistence. Illustrative of this is the division of the EU countries into five distinct groups, based solely on the different conditions of accession to two of the areas mentioned above: the Schengen area of free movement<sup>28</sup> and the single currency area<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> With regard to the European Arrest Warrant, the refusals of the German and Belgian judiciaries to grant the extradition of the former president of the Generalitat of Catalonia Puigdemont for the crime of rebellion illustrate the shortcomings of this system as an instrument of mutual trust between states on which the European area of justice is based.

<sup>28</sup> Five EU countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Ireland and Romania do not belong to the Schengen area, and there are four countries that do not belong to the EU but belong to the Schengen area: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

<sup>29</sup> The Eurozone is made up of the 27 EU countries, 19 of which have already adopted the Euro as their official currency. Denmark has an opt-out clause allowing it to keep its own currency.

Externally, the lack of definition that the European enlargement project itself implies from the point of view of citizens' perception of territoriality generates uncertainty that leads to distrust of the project, and represents an added factor of territorial weakness<sup>30</sup>. In this sense, cultural or any other type of event labelled as "European" but open to the participation of countries outside the European institutional and geographical reality<sup>31</sup>, can also contribute, even subliminally, to this perception of territorial indefiniteness.

### *Representation*

If we start from the premise that "citizens are (or should be) at the centre of the political system"<sup>32</sup>, then the performance of political power should be oriented towards achieving this centrality of citizen representation as a condition for guaranteeing the good health of the system.

The most ambitious attempt to date to raise citizen participation to the highest levels of representation in the European project probably took place on the occasion of the referendum ratification process of the 2004 Treaty of Rome, the "*non nata* European Constitution"<sup>33</sup>, which famously failed due to the rejection of the Treaty by France and the Netherlands.

The failed attempt to enact the Treaty of Rome highlighted the gap that existed at that time between the nature of a European construction project that had been designed from a supranational conception, and a citizenry that lacked the elements of judgement to assess, much less accept, the scope of that supranationality.

Far from understanding the message and addressing the problem that this deficit of citizen representation posed for progress in European construction, or perhaps pressured by the imperious need to continue advancing the project, the European insti-

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30 The Copenhagen accession criteria do not establish any condition of "Europeanness", and only Article 49 of the Maastricht Treaty establishes such a requirement, although it does not explain what is to be understood by a European state, and ultimately whether preconditions of eligibility based on geographical considerations exist and should be established, thus also contributing to the ambiguity in this regard.

31 As an example, the Eurovision Song Contest is open to all active member countries of the European Broadcasting Union, including countries bordering Europe, such as the Mediterranean basin of the Middle East and Africa (Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt), and the Caucasus (Georgia, Azerbaijan).

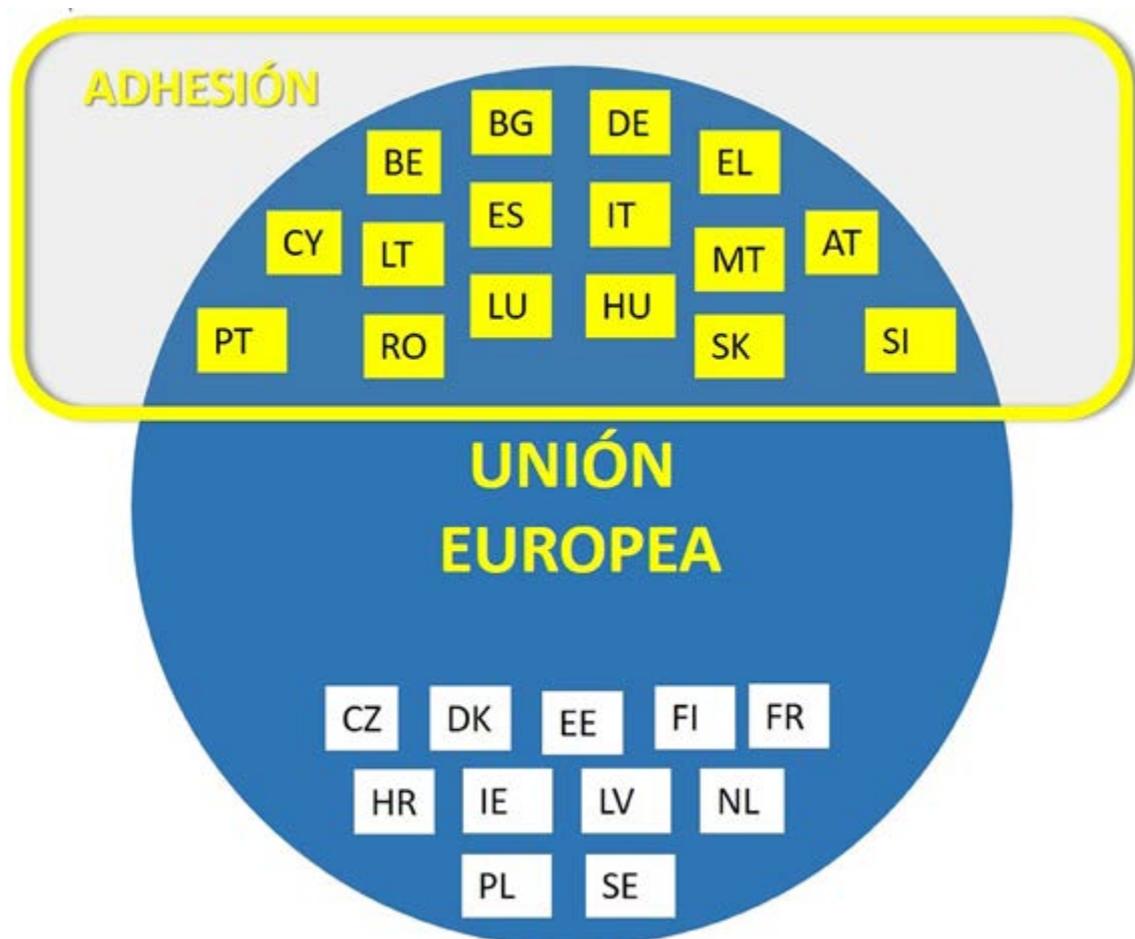
32 FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ, José Julio. "La hiperglobalización y su impacto" in *Gobernanza futura: hiperglobalización, mundo multipolar y Estados menguantes*, Madrid: Ministry of Defence 2018, pp. 83-118, p. 98.

33 MOLINA HERRERA, Jerónimo (dir.) et al. *Europa en la encrucijada*. El Ejido: FUNDACIÓN Cajamar 2007, p. 12.

tutions opted in any case to take a headlong rush forward by enacting a new Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, a successor to the previous one, only three years later, but with the substantial difference that it avoided the thorny pitfall of the referendum in the ratification procedure, thus deepening the inability of the European institutions to carry out a convergent performance of citizen adhesion to the idea of Europe.

Perhaps it was this reflection of the distancing of citizens from the rejection of the Treaty of Rome that led the Lisbon Treaty to incorporate the, in our opinion, successful European Citizens' Initiative<sup>34</sup> (ECI), not only to stimulate citizen participation in the European project, but also to gauge the reality of the citizenship in this respect.

The ECI is a tool that allows citizens to participate in shaping the EU by asking the European Commission to propose new laws.



Source: Prepared internally

Illustration 27. Accession to the symbols of the EU after the Lisbon Treaty

When an initiative reaches one million signatures, the Commission decides what action to take.

<sup>34</sup> [https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/home\\_es](https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/home_es).

Within the ECI we would like to highlight the initiative “VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS”<sup>35</sup>, which calls for the right of Europeans to vote where they live. This initiative, like all those promoted by citizens, maintains a bottom-up approach to the construction of the commons from below, which is characteristic of nation-building processes, and should therefore be interpreted as an indicator of a growing awareness of Europe as a nation. This and other initiatives of a similar nature are intended to give European citizens a greater degree of representation, and will undoubtedly also be an indicator of the degree of commitment that citizens are prepared to make to the process of European integration<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, a good reception of this initiative could reasonably be interpreted as a demonstration of citizens’ commitment to integration, while a poor reception would denote suspicion of it, and would be a sign of mistrust or disapproval of the European integration process.

### *The symbols*

“[...] symbols are important because they contribute to the mental construction of a community. They are not a question of sovereignty, but of identification”. It might seem that the person who expresses himself in this way is a recognised Eurosceptic representative and a staunch defender of the misnamed “nationalist countries”, those that are still anchored in concepts that are supposedly outdated and far removed from the benefits of diversity, such as the importance of identity for the construction of a strong community. However, the author of this statement is none other than the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Common Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Spain’s José Borrell. Identity is thus revealed, by someone not at all suspected of being anti-European, as a fundamental element in the construction of Europe as a community, in which symbols play a prominent role, to the extent that, also according to Borrell himself, “[...] the “de-symbolisation” of Europe, the refusal to symbolise it explicitly, reflects the weakness of its political dimension”.

The Spanish politician thus regretted the setback implied by the withdrawal in the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>37</sup> of any allusion to European symbols<sup>38</sup> in order to strip it of any sovereigntist connotation, and pointed out the following, referring to the said Treaty:

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35 <https://voterswithoutborders.eu/>.

36 The voting period for the “VOTERS WITHOUT BORDERS” initiative opened on 1 September 2020 and will end on 11 September 2021.

37 <https://www.boe.es/doue/2007/306/Z00001-00271.pdf>, C 306/267, Declaration 52.

38 Article 1-8 of the ill-fated Treaty of Rome was devoted to the symbols of the Union, and expressly designated as such the flag, the anthem, the motto or motto, the currency and Europe Day. However,

“[...] what is said or not said, or where and how it is said matters. As do the symbols, almost all of which disappear to appease those who fear that the EU resembles a state. There will be no reference to the flag, the anthem or Europe Day. Flag and anthem will continue to fly and be played, but without formal recognition. Thus, everyone will be able to give them the value they want, which today is very different from country to country. In some countries, the star-spangled blue flag is banned, in others it systematically accompanies the national flag or leads major military parades”<sup>39</sup>.

Paradoxically, the very symbols that should unite the different sensibilities around them are thus becoming yet another source of controversy within the Union, perhaps in logical coherence with its role of representation and synthesis of a European reality plagued by discrepancies and contradictions.

## Conclusions

If we were to identify original factors of European awareness and adherence that could be assimilated to those of a national nature, we would have to allude to a recognisable traditional geography and to the unquestionable factor of cohesion that Christianity represented for a millennium as a spiritual reference and a channel for the cultural structuring of the European peoples. Action by the European institutions aimed at emulating the solidity that characterises nation-states in order to give them an equal voice, not only unique but also firm, in the international concert, should converge towards preserving and stimulating these two original factors of cohesion that we have pointed out and that have been and continue to be present in Europe's spatial and temporal reality.

In the territorial sphere, the initial construction of the new European reality around the countries that in our opinion constitute the hard core of the project, France and Germany, together with the subsequent incorporation of areas of coexistence such as the Schengen area and the Eurozone, and the forecasts for the gradual incorporation of countries through the EU's enlargement policy, constitute valid approximations for a recomposition of the European geographical frame of reference.

The imperfect application of these European policies of geographical integration nevertheless causes undesired effects of fragmentation of the European community into different groups of member countries – and in the case of the Schengen area also of some non-member countries – depending on their belonging to one or another area

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after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the symbols of the EU ceased to be legally binding for the member states. Only in one annex (p. C 306/267, Declaration 52) the Conference noted the recognition of the European symbols by 16 of the then 28 member countries, which significantly did not include France and the Netherlands, two of the founding countries.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

of coexistence, a fragmentation that is all the greater the greater the number of areas of coexistence considered.

For its part, the accession policy in turn casts shadows of ambiguity due to its lack of definition in the establishment of the necessary geographical limits that are inherent to any political entity, with debilitating effects on the necessary territorial cohesion, which is all the more diminished the greater the increase in territorial extension. We are by no means trying to equate the strength of the ties of European nations with that of a so-called European national bond, but we do want to draw attention to the fact that extension generally works against cohesion, and in this sense an approach of unlimited enlargement of the EU in terms of territorial extension, or simply an absence of any approach to this question, is in our opinion an obstacle to the objective of having not just a strong voice, but even a single voice, within the Union.

It is true that the EU sets as one of the conditions for accession the European membership of the candidate countries, which would give the Union a definitively closed character. However, as long as the European institutions persist in wanting to emphasise an open and universalist character, which clearly contradicts the reality of their own conditions for enlargement, they will be contributing to spreading a sense of lack of definition as to its definitive scope, which is undoubtedly one of the main obstacles today to the emergence of a spirit of compromise and to the achievement of the necessary cohesion that the European project demands.

The lack of definition that afflicts the performance of the European institutions is not limited exclusively to the territorial, or if you like, geographical sphere, but also extends to the other major factor of cohesion that we have pointed out, that of the cultural heritage that Christianity has meant for Europe. Much emphasis has been placed on the importance of Europe recognising its Christian roots if it is to remain Europe; as much as there have been and continue to be silences on the European project in general, and on the issue of recognising its Christian roots in particular, as was certainly the case with the failed attempt at a Constitutional Treaty, in which, as we have already mentioned, no mention was made of this issue.

In this as in other matters, the intermediation of the member states in European achievements thus provokes a barrier effect that results in a deficit of citizen representation and in the design of a Europe that is different from what its historical and current cultural reality indicates, and too distant to stimulate bonds of awareness and support among its citizens.

The founding fathers set themselves an immediate goal, the avoidance of wars on European soil, and an ultimate goal, the achievement of world peace, perhaps too ambitious and therefore also far removed from citizenship. Since then, European institutions have struggled to move along the winding path that leads along the broad spectrum of varying degrees of strength that mark these extremes.

No one can doubt the great achievements in overcoming the model of coexistence based on competition and conflict that has characterised European life in recent

centuries, and those who think that, after the success of achieving its founding goal, Europe's capacity to promote and legitimise further progress towards ever closer political union has been exhausted, and even that the EU is increasingly moving along the intergovernmental path, are possibly right.

Whatever path it decides to take in the future, the fact is that the current EU seems to be far from the supranational path we have tried to explore in this article, which would indicate a limitation in the convergent performance that could be demanded of it in order to advance towards achieving the single, strong voice it so desperately needs in the international arena.

Given the identity weakness of a disbelieving and reformulated Europe, and the possibility of referring a hypothetical idea of a European "nation" to its community of origin, it seems necessary to turn to other ways of identity. One of these could be based on the perception of Europe as a unit from the outside. Applying this criterion would, for example, allow the European institutions to build a recognisable identity around a "community of destiny", a sort of "brand Europe", which would encourage the dissemination abroad of those outstanding aspects of the Europe à la carte that European institutional actors would be willing to promote.

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### *The Eurasian Economic Union: institutional structure, competences and relations with the exterior*

#### **Abstract**

The creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) five years ago introduced a new, albeit controversial, actor into the post-Soviet space. This essay aims to elaborate an analysis that contemplates in detail the current situation of the organisation and the nuances that govern it. To this end, it will examine the problems faced by two of its most important bodies, the Commission, and the Court, study the progress made in coordinating competences and harmonizing economic policy, and address the EAEU's external relations through its Free Trade Agreements, the lack of communication with the EU and its connection with the New Silk Road and China.

#### **Key words**

Eurasian Economic Union, New Silk Road, post-soviet space, economic integration, Russia, Kazakhstan

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## Introduction

Of the integration processes in the post-Soviet space, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is the most recent and the most successful. This union of autocracies and hybrid regimes has emerged in the 21st century as an alternative vision – both geopolitical and economic – to the European Union (EU). The peculiarities of its goals, Russia's leadership, the role of its other member states, its external relations with Europe and Asia, as well as the shadows and lights of its internal workings and economic developments, continue to attract the attention of researchers and shape the perspective with which the European public views the new organisation.

So far, much of the academic literature has focused on the geopolitical character of the partnership. Articles such as Krickovic & Bratersky<sup>1</sup> or Busygina & Filippov<sup>2</sup> reflect on the Russian role, while authors such as Libman<sup>3</sup> or Popescu<sup>4</sup> emphasise the imaginary and unreal constructions attributed to this Union. Other researchers have focused on the specific cases of certain countries, their entry into the EEU and the consequences this has had; examples include Vieira & Vasilyan<sup>5</sup> on Armenia and Belarus, and Kudaibergenova<sup>6</sup> on Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. There are also those who look at the dynamics of integration, such as Knobel et al.<sup>7</sup>. Another relevant topic is its relations with Asia, where authors such as Chris Miller<sup>8</sup>, Svetlicinii<sup>9</sup> and Libman<sup>10</sup>

1 KRICKOVIC, A., and BRATERSKY, M. Benevolent hegemon, neighbourhood bully, or regional security provider? Russia's efforts to promote regional integration after the 2013-2014 Ukraine crisis. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2016, 180-202.

2 BUSYGINA, I., and FILIPPOV, M. Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union: Conflicting incentives for an institutional compromise. *Higher School of Economics*, 2018

3 LIBMAN, A. Russian Power Politics and the Eurasian Economic Union: The Real and the Imagined. *Rising Powers Quarterly*, 2017, Volume 2, Issue 1, 81-103.

4 POPESCU, N. Eurasian Union: the real, the imaginary and the likely. *EU Institute for Security Studies*, 2014.

5 VIEIRA, A., and VASILYAN, S. Armenia and Belarus: caught between the EU's and Russia's conditionalities? *European Politics and Society*, 2018, 471-489.

6 KUDAIBERGENOVA, D. T. Eurasian Economic Union integration in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. *European Politics and Society*, 2016, 97-112.

7 KNOBEL, et al. Deep integration in the Eurasian Economic Union: what are the benefits of successful implementation or wider liberalization. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2019, 177-210.

8 MILLER, C. Will Russia's Pivot to Asia Last? *Orbis - A Journal of World Affairs*, 2020, 43-57.

9 SVETLICINII, A. China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union: "Integrating the Integrations". *Research and Educational Journal*, 2018, 7-20.

10 LIBMAN, A. Linking the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union: Mission Impossible? *Caucasus International Journal*, 2016, Vol. 6 No 1, 41-53.

stand out. Finally, Vinokurov<sup>11</sup> provides an extensive analysis of many of these discussions.

This article is situated midway between works that focus solely on the geopolitical role of the EEU and those that pay exclusive attention to the internal dynamics of the Union. It aims to produce an analysis that takes a detailed look at the current state of the organisation and the nuances that govern it. It is particularly interesting to carry out this approach in Spanish, where the literature on the subject is scarce, thus contributing to the development of a more complete perspective of the complexity of the Eurasian Economic Union from our country.

Using an analytical-descriptive methodology, it addresses the issues necessary to understand and make sense of the present state of the EEU: the consistency of the institutions with its objectives, progress in economic integration and its international relations. To this end, this article is divided into three parts. The first analyses the two most important institutions in the Union's day-to-day work – the Eurasian Economic Commission and the Court of the Eurasian Economic Union – their tasks and the difficulties they face. The second examines the main promises and progress in tariff harmonisation, the creation of common markets and economic policy coordination. Finally, the third part deals with the EU's external relations: Free Trade Agreements, the lack of communication with the EU and the new understanding with Asia.

By analysing the efficiency of the Union's institutions, the progress made in policy coordination and harmonisation of emerging markets and the development of its relations with other countries or economic blocs, this article condenses the strengths and weaknesses of the EEU, with the perspective of the Union's five years of integration. In this way, it identifies the obstacles and shortcomings it faces and will face and the possible trends it will follow.

### **The Union's institutions: limitations and lack of commitment**

The signing of the EEU Treaty is a milestone in post-Soviet integration processes, as it constitutes the first organisation with its own legal personality and supranational features. It includes the 2010 Customs Union, as well as the 2012 Single Economic Area, copying agreements already established and implemented in the past.

However, the signing of a treaty does not mean that a functional Union is achieved. This is why, in order to study the EEU, it is useful to analyse both the advantages and limitations of the institutional design provided in the document, as well as the actual dynamics of its organs. Knowing who holds the real power, who is in charge of the day-to-day work of the EEU and what problems it faces, gives us a deep insight into the governance of this Union and its effectiveness.

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<sup>11</sup> VINOKUROV, E. *Introduction to the Eurasian Economic Union*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018

The structure of the EEU – modelled on that of the EU – consists of two inter-governmental institutions, the Supreme Council and the Intergovernmental Council (composed of the heads of state and government of each country, respectively) and two institutions with supranational characteristics: the Eurasian Commission (EEC) and the EEU Court. The former have the actual decision-making and ultimate responsibility for the composition and functioning of the Union, while the latter are responsible for the day-to-day running and conflict resolution. It is the Commission and the Court where attention should be focused, both because of their status as innovative institutions in the Eurasian space and because of their potential role in the consolidation of the EEU.

The Commission is the executive and permanent body of the EEU. It is considered the first institution in the post-Soviet space with a supranational character as its acts are directly applicable. It is responsible for managing further integration, governing common customs, technical customs regulation, foreign trade policy and up to 140 other competencies<sup>12</sup>. It is composed of two bodies in which all members have equal representation, an improvement on its predecessor, the Customs Union Commission, in which Russia had 57 per cent of the votes. The Council of the Commission is the body which gives overall direction to the Commission's activities and is composed of the deputy *heads of government* of each country. In its work, the Council relies on the work of the Board of the Commission, the executive body of the EEC, composed of two representatives per country who must take their decisions independently of governments.

However, the Commission has numerous problems in acting effectively. Firstly, the supranationality of the Eurasian Economic Union is questionable, since the Board is the only body where decisions are taken by qualified majority, but it only discusses low-level issues, while important matters are taken by consensus in the Council, giving each country the right to veto, which reduces Russia's ability to assert itself, but also slows down the effectiveness of decision-making and thus of the Commission<sup>13</sup>. This leads Karliuk<sup>14</sup> to split the Commission into two different institutions of which only the Board is supranational. Second, the Belarusian lift mechanism allows any state to appeal a decision to higher, consensus-based, intergovernmental bodies, reducing the Commission's autonomy. Thirdly, the Commission has no power to enforce its acts, as it can neither implement them itself nor bring before the EU Court of Justice anyone who does not obey them. Finally, it encounters constitutional restrictions in the Member States; for exam-

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<sup>12</sup> VINOKUROV, E. Eurasian Economic Union: Current state and preliminary results. *Russian Journal of Economics*, 2017, 54-70.

<sup>13</sup> SVETLICINII, A. China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union: "Integrating the Integrations". *Research and Educational Journal*, 2018, 7-20.

<sup>14</sup> KARLIUK, M. The Eurasian Economic Union: an EU-Like Legal Order in the Post-Soviet Space? *Higher School of Economics*, 2015

ple, Russia challenged the concepts of “direct applicability” and “supremacy of decisions”<sup>15</sup>.

The Court of the Union is the judicial body of the Union. It was created to achieve the uniform application of EEU law and to resolve disputes concerning its interpretation and application. It is based on equal representation, is composed of two judges from each Member State and responds only to requests and consultations from Member States and commercial entities. It is also an institution of questionable efficiency, although Dragneva & Wolczuk<sup>16</sup> indicate that it is active and not reluctant to rule against the Union.

Like the Eurasian Commission, the EU Court faces many difficulties. First, it must look to the Supreme Council to ensure the implementation of its decisions, which means relying on the countries’ commitment to integration and their consensus on the issue. There are no effective mechanisms in place to enforce its rulings<sup>17</sup>. Secondly, the regulation puts judges in a more vulnerable and dependent position towards their respective countries. Thirdly, there is a duality in legal regulation as EU law has a debatable applicability in national legal systems, especially Russian and Belarusian, making the binding concept of EU law a symbolic element<sup>18 19</sup>. Fourthly, the hierarchy of EU law is unclear, with the place of the international agreements of the Member States prior to accession being unclear, as is the place of WTO law, to which Belarus does not belong, but whose GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) agreements are used to interpret the treaty<sup>20</sup>. Fifth, the Court’s decisions do not form part of EU law, something Kembayev recommended<sup>21</sup> to deepen integration.

These arguments show that in the institutional structure of the EEU, high-level policy sets the ultimate path of integration. It has been designed in such a way that the enforceability of decisions depends on the commitment of member states, straining

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15 DRAGNEVA, R., et al. *Assessing Legal and Political Compatibility between the European Union Engagement Strategies and Membership of the Eurasian Economic Union*. EU-STRAT, 2017

16 DRAGNEVA, R., Y WOLCZUK, K. *Eurasian Economic Integration: Institutions, Promises and Faultlines*. In D. Cadier, *The Geopolitics of Eurasian Economic Integration - Special Report* (pp. 8-15). *LSE Ideas*, 2014

17 DRAGNEVA, R., y WOLCZUK, K. *The Eurasian Economic Union: Deals, Rules and the Exercise of Power*. *Chatham House*, 2017

18 KARLIUK, M. *The Eurasian Economic Union: an EU-Like Legal Order in the Post-Soviet Space?* *Higher School of Economics*, 2015

19 KEMBAYEV, Z. *The Court of the Eurasian Economic Union: An Adequate Body for Facilitating Eurasian Integration?* *Review of Central and East European Law*, 2016, 342-367.

20 KARLIUK, M. *The Eurasian Economic Union an Emerging Autonomous Legal Order?* PhD thesis. *Ghent University, Faculty of Law and Criminology*, 2018

21 KEMBAYEV, Z. *The Court of the Eurasian Economic Union: An Adequate Body for Facilitating Eurasian Integration?* *Review of Central and East European Law*, 2016, 342-367.

the consensus of the Union with each decision, and jeopardising the effectiveness of the functioning of the EEU. Practice shows that what should be its most important institutions – the Commission and the Court – have many problems. On the one hand, the EEC has difficulties in taking and implementing its decisions. On the other hand, the Court is confronted with constraints that contribute to a lack of legal certainty. This means that while the design of the EEU is functional and its institutions perform their duties, the results of the Union, its “output”, are reduced to the sincerity of member countries’ commitment to integration.

### **Economic cooperation: the light and shadows of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Area**

The EEU Treaty integrates the pre-existing 2010 Customs Union and Single Economic Area agreements. Thus, it establishes a common external tariff, the elimination of internal tariffs, the creation of a common market with free movement of goods, services, capital and labour, and the coordination of public policies such as macroeconomic policy. While previous agreements had already liberalised trade in goods and in 2011 tariffs were abolished<sup>22</sup>, the new draft aims to reduce by 2025 the many exceptions: external tariffs, internal non-tariff barriers and sectors not included in the common market.

Examining the development of the EEU in its economic role of market harmonisation and trade facilitation serves – at least in part – to analyse the performance of the Union’s institutional structure. It is interesting to see whether the treaty’s promises are being kept, whether they are being delivered in a substantive way or whether they are just a dead letter, and what problems are being faced. Moreover, it also allows us to determine the role that consensus and the commitment of the States play in the Union.

The EEU has not limited itself to the symbolic signing of the Treaty, and continues to deepen integration. Ninety per cent of external tariffs were harmonised in 2016 – although Kazakhstan’s accession to the WTO in November 2015 meant a reconsideration of its obligations to the EEU and an increase in tariff exceptions. Common markets have been established and even improved for Medicines and medical products – in 2016, although the regulatory content was postponed – for Workers – working since 2010 and updated in 2017– for Services – in 2018 adding 9 sectors to the 43 already operational, 55% of the Union’s services – for Alcohol and Tobacco – with the approval of a special tax in 2018, to be implemented in 2022– and for Electricity – in 2019. Finally, progress has been made in the coordination and harmonisation of public policies: macroeconomic –necessary for the consolidation of integration through the synchronisation of the economic cycles of member countries– with the three mac-

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<sup>22</sup> DRAGNEVA, R., y WOLCZUK, K. *The Eurasian Economic Union: Deals, Rules and the Exercise of Power*. *Chatham House*, 2017

roeconomic indicators established by the EEU Treaty, agriculture –coordination of agricultural subsidies – transport – approved in 2016 and scheduled for implementation in 2025 – and industrial –creation in 2018 of the Eurasian Network for Industrial Cooperation and Subcontracting<sup>2324</sup>.

However, three problem areas can be identified in the processes described. First, with the establishment of the Customs Union, Russian tariffs were adopted, which were much more protectionist than those of the other member countries. Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan negotiated exceptions to reduce the impact on their economies of a sudden implementation of tariffs that are too high. While the transitional derogations – scheduled to be eliminated in the coming years – reduced the time and cost of negotiation, they undermine the efficiency of the Union<sup>25</sup>.

Secondly, the elimination of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) such as sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures – for food – technical barriers – for industry – and price control and competitiveness measures –such as restrictions on participation in public procurement and subsidies – has not been achieved. They are tools to control trade after the abolition of internal tariffs, which are difficult to identify and which reduce the efficiency of the Union significantly. In the EEU this phenomenon is manifested in GOST certificates – the obsolete Soviet certification system for industrial products, now in the process of being replaced by Customs Union Technical Regulations – and in the double phytosanitary control established between Belarus and Russia as a result of Russian sanctions on third countries. Since 2015 the Commission has sought to identify NTBs as a first step towards their elimination, taking measures such as the adoption of 30 framework regulations for industrial products – reducing GOST. These efforts are undermined by recurrent and unpredictable trade wars within the Union<sup>26</sup> and by the inertia of domestic interest groups and mistrust of countries, which create new barriers as identified barriers are removed<sup>27</sup>. In this respect, the Belarusian government gives three reasons for the problematic removal of NTBs: protectionism, lack of accountability for the violation of EU law and the existence of a too specific mechanism for the removal of barriers<sup>28</sup>.

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23 KNOBEL, et al. Deep integration in the Eurasian Economic Union: what are the benefits of successful implementation or wider liberalization. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2019, 177-210.

24 EURASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. Eurasian Economic Integration 2019, *Eurasian Development Bank*, 2019, Moscow.

25 ALIMBEKOV, A., MADUMAROV, E., and PECH, G. Sequencing in Customs Union Formation: Theory and Application to the Eurasian Economic Union. *Journal of Economic Integration*, 2017, 65-89.

26 DRAGNEVA, R., AND WOLCZUK, K. *The Eurasian Economic Union: Deals, Rules and the Exercise of Power*. Chatham House, 2017

27 LIBMAN, A. "Market Integration in the Eurasian Economic Union", *Russian Analytical Digest*, 2020 No. 247, 2-5.

28 Belarusian Ministry of Economy. (nd). Ликвидация барьеров, ограничений и изъятий во взаимной торговле в ЕАЭС, Accessed 06 05 2020: [https://www.economy.gov.by/ru/likv\\_izjatij-ru/](https://www.economy.gov.by/ru/likv_izjatij-ru/)

Thirdly, the Common Market suffers from a number of problems. Tight deadlines have led to the postponement of the implementation of many advances due to a lack of consensus. Agreements –such as the Common Market for Medicines in 2016 – are symbolic and their content is diluted in promises of technical documents yet to be created. Implementation of the agreements is problematic, and they are often breached<sup>29</sup>. The common energy markets are the most difficult to progress. The Electricity Programme, launched in 2019, was created by a simple protocol, which was not accompanied by any document developing its content<sup>30</sup>. The Oil and Gas common markets, despite constant pressure from Belarus and Armenia for their elaboration, generate the least consensus: the Framework Agreements for their creation were signed in 2015 and the Establishment Programmes in 2018, but there has been no significant progress. Finally, macroeconomic policy coordination is complicated. In the first two years since the signing of the Treaty, every macroeconomic indicator was violated by at least one party. A mechanism is needed to ensure compliance with the indicators<sup>31</sup>.

The implementation of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Area is therefore gradual and successful, but at the same time fraught with problems. The postponement of deadlines for meeting targets, the signing of token and empty agreements, exceptions to the common tariff, continuing trade disputes, the emergence of NTBs, the fragmented state of the common market – which hampers the freedoms of movement of goods and services – and poor coordination of policies such as macroeconomic policy, all attest to the work that still lies ahead for the EEU. The weak commitment of Member States undermines the progress made and makes the future of the Union even more difficult.

### **International relevance: ever further away from Europe and ever closer to Asia**

The EEU Treaty gives the Commission the possibility to establish international trade agreements. In practice this is a tool for the establishment of international relations beyond the post-Soviet space, with other countries or supranational organisations through the signing of economic agreements – Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) – and memoranda of cooperation. For this article, it is particularly relevant to analyse with which countries and how they have established these relationships, and how deep the cooperation is built. In addition, the specific situation of relations with the Euro-

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29 LIBMAN, A. (Mis)interpreting the Eurasian Economic Union? Images of the EAEU in Russia and the West. In E. Dal, and E. Erşen, *Russia in the Changing International System*. *Palgrave Macmillan*, 2020, p77-94

30 LIBMAN, A. “Market Integration in the Eurasian Economic Union”, *Russian Analytical Digest*, 2020 No. 247, 2-5.

31 VINOKUROV, E. “Eurasian Economic Union: Current state and preliminary results”. *Russian Journal of Economics*, 2017, 54-70.

pean Union and with Asia – in particular China – should be examined. This achieves three objectives: it shows the dynamics of the EEU's foreign trade, it assesses the Asian turn it is taking, and it looks at the reception it has received from the international community.

The competence of the EEU Commission to negotiate FTAs is limited to trade in goods, while member countries retain sovereignty over the areas of services and investment. In this context of dual dialogue – with the EEU and with member states – Russia stands out for its capacity and proactivity, monopolising the talks and announcing the EEU's foreign policy initiatives. After the Ukrainian crisis, the doors were closed to negotiations with part of the international community – e.g. with New Zealand in 2014 – and economic agreements have focused on developing countries. This is positive for smaller Member States, because agreements with developed economies could be detrimental to them<sup>32</sup>. The EEU received requests to start negotiations from 40 countries, which is beyond the Commission's bureaucratic capacity. It has signed four FTAs – Vietnam, 2016; Iran, 2018; Singapore and Serbia, 2019 – and several others are under negotiation – Israel, Egypt, India, Cambodia. It has also signed numerous memoranda of cooperation – South Korea, Mongolia and Chile, 2015; Cambodia, 2016; Greece, Jordan and the Andean Community, 2017; Mercosur and Thailand, 2018. While this is a first opening towards markets such as South Asia, the consequences – if they can be seen at all – are difficult to calculate. Moreover, the agreements are limited: before signing the FTA with Singapore, tariffs were already negligible<sup>33</sup>, and the agreement with Vietnam excluded Vietnamese goods that threatened the UEE market and state contracts, which constitute the majority of trade between Moscow and Hanoi<sup>34 35</sup>.

The European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union have not yet established formal relations, despite energy interdependence, trade ties, the need for European investment in Eurasia and the EU's potential modernising role in the EEU economy<sup>36</sup>. Collaboration is limited to technical elements and phytosanitary standards. Two questions can be analysed: the competitive or cooperative nature of the EEU vis-à-vis the EU, and the reasons for and solutions to the current situation.

On the first question, the EU and the EEU start from an inevitable competition for the same space, with different concepts of economic integration. In fact, the EEU has a mutually exclusive character with the EU's Eastern Partnership Association Agree-

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32 VINOKUROV, E. *Introduction to the Eurasian Economic Union*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018

33 Ibid.

34 LIKHACHEVA, A. "The Eurasian Economic Union and the Integration Process in the Asia Pacific". *Asian Politics and Policy*, 2018, 772–790.

35 MANURUNG, H. "Russia Interests and the Effect of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on Global Economic Integration, 2015-2016". *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2018

36 VINOKUROV, E. *Introduction to the Eurasian Economic Union*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2018

ments – it is, in part, the fruit of the EU's eastward expansion. Moreover, they are seen as economic rivals<sup>37</sup>, and even the EEU is understood as a Russian tool in its struggle with the West<sup>38</sup>. However, this does not contradict the potential for cooperation between the two organisations, nor does it conceal the EU's interest in establishing a dialogue with the EU. In his EEU proposal in 2011, Putin<sup>39</sup> referred to the creation of a Greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok and in 2016 Kazakh President Nazarbayev spoke of an integration of integrations between the EU and the EEU<sup>40</sup>. On the other hand, in 2013 José Manuel Barroso offered to share the EU's experience with the new Customs Union – albeit conditional on the rejection of protectionist practices<sup>41</sup>. The limits of coexistence between the two unions were established after the crisis in Ukraine<sup>42</sup>. Despite this, both unions have subsequently adapted their foreign policy to the new reality. The EU has promoted a growing bilateral relationship with EEU members – exemplified by the association agreements with Kazakhstan in 2015 and Armenia in 2017. In parallel, the Eastern Partnership country Moldova was granted observer status in the EEU in 2017 and Belarus abolished visas for EU citizens in the same year. This shows that, as Dragneva & Woczuk<sup>43</sup> point out, the relationship became zero-sum after being framed as a geopolitical struggle from the beginning, but it should not have been.

On the second question, it is necessary to identify the main problems that make relations between the EU and the EEU impossible. First, there is mistrust about the EEU's role in Russian foreign policy and how establishing a dialogue would legitimise Russian interests<sup>44, 45</sup>. Secondly, there is a shared belief that interdependence between

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37 KONOPELKO, A. "Eurasian Economic Union: a challenge for EU policy towards Kazakhstan". *Asia Europe Journal*, 2018, 1-17.

38 VAN DER TOGT, T, et al. *From Competition to Compatibility Striking a Eurasian balance in EU-Russia relations*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2015

39 PUTIN, V. Article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin "A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making" (*Izvestia*, 3 October 2011). Retrieved 2020 04/04/10, from Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union: <https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3->

40 SERGI, B. S. "Putin's and Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union: A hybrid half-economics and half-political 'Janus Bifrons'". *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2018, 52-60.

41 RUSSELL, M. "Eurasian Economic Union The rocky road to integration". *European Parliament*, 2017

42 DRAGNEVA, R., et al. *Assessing Legal and Political Compatibility between the European Union Engagement Strategies and Membership of the Eurasian Economic Union*. EU-STRAT, 2017.

43 DRAGNEVA, R., y WOLCZUK, K. *The Eurasian Economic Union: Deals, Rules and the Exercise of Power*. Chatham House, 2017

44 POPESCU, N. "Eurasian Union: the real, the imaginary and the likely". *EU Institute for Security Studies*, 2014

45 DOBBS, J. "The Eurasian Economic Union: A Bridge to Nowhere?" *European Leadership Network*, 2015

regions will diminish over the years and a rapprochement is not necessary<sup>46</sup>. Thirdly, the reality of the internal and institutional dynamics of the EEU and the continuing role of states in negotiating agreements make cooperation difficult. Fourth, Belarus' accession to the WTO is a technical requirement for starting formal talks. Fifthly, the implementation of the Minsk agreements is a requirement for the EU in order to start the dialogue<sup>47</sup>.

However, a solution can be found to every obstacle. The EU needs more effective responses to the challenges posed by the EEU<sup>48</sup>. Dialogue with the EEU offers a reasonable and non-confrontational interlocutor to re-establish dialogue with Russia on Ukraine<sup>49</sup><sup>50</sup>. Krastev<sup>51</sup> points out that the EEU is the kind of project that the EU would have initiated if it did not already exist. Relations with the EEU would not legitimise Moscow's plans, but rather highlight the tensions and contradictions of the project<sup>52</sup>, and put the EU in an advantageous position given its extensive bureaucratic experience. Finally, Belarus is making progress in WTO accession negotiations, which are expected to be concluded in 2020<sup>53</sup>.

This proposal is implausible, as the cost of the operation would be too expensive. It would mean a break with the EU's foreign policy so far, leaving Ukraine – which was forced to choose between the two unions – in a situation of abandonment, and would face opposition from many member states, starting with the east of the EU. In short: there are two red lines for cooperation: WTO membership for all EEU member states – technical – and respect for what was agreed in Minsk – political. Until these two conditions are met, it will be very difficult to see any progress.

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46 MANURUNG, H. "Russia Interests and the Effect of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on Global Economic Integration, 2015-2016". *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2018

47 RUSSELL, M. "Eurasian Economic Union The rocky road to integration". *European Parliament*, 2017.

48 VAN DER TOGT, T, et al. *From Competition to Compatibility Striking a Eurasian balance in EU-Russia relations*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2015

49 POPESCU, N. "Eurasian Union: the real, the imaginary and the likely". *EU Institute for Security Studies*, 2014

50 KRASTEVA, I., y LEONARD, M. "The New European Disorder". *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 2014

51 Ibid.

52 COOLEY, A. *Whose Rules, Whose Sphere? Russian Governance and Influence in Post-Soviet States*. 2017, Retrieved April 11, 2020, from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/30/whose-rules-whose-sphere-russian-governance-and-influence-in-post-soviet-states-pub-71403>

53 WTO. *Belarus reafirma su intención de concluir el proceso de adhesión a la OMC para la próxima Conferencia Ministerial*. 2019, Retrieved 05/07/2020, from World Trade Organization: [https://www.wto.org/spanish/news\\_s/news19\\_s/acc\\_blr\\_11jul19\\_s.htm](https://www.wto.org/spanish/news_s/news19_s/acc_blr_11jul19_s.htm)

The stalemate in Russia's relations with the EU has been synchronised with a shift in Russian and, consequently, EEU foreign policy: the pivot to the East. It has sought to replace European ties with a future closer to China and its South-east Asian neighbours. The new interest is accompanied by a new concept, that of Greater Eurasia, which no longer stretches from Lisbon to Vladivostok but from Murmansk to Hong Kong<sup>54</sup>. It draws on ideas such as South Korea's 2013 Eurasian Initiative, India's North-South corridor and bilateral agreements such as those with Vietnam and Singapore, but goes further, declaring itself an integration of integrations. This translates into the interest in linking the EEU with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), proposed by Putin in 2015 and materialised in the Sochi Declaration between ASEAN and Russia, in which they pledged to explore cooperation between ASEAN, EEU and SCO and an FTA between ASEAN and the EEU<sup>55</sup>.

The Greater Eurasia concept is of greatest interest in partnership with China and its New Silk Road project. China is the cornerstone of Eurasian access to Asia, due to its proactivity and the non-institutional nature of its vision of Eurasian integration, which avoids bureaucratic negotiation problems for the EEU – a result of its inexperience. China, the second largest economic partner of the EEU, has a large demand for hydrocarbons and the technology and investment resources to modernise Eurasian infrastructure, and is seen by small countries such as Belarus as a way to alleviate their dependence on Russia<sup>56</sup>. In addition, in talks between the EU and China, pledges have been made for loans, investment, cross-border industrial cooperation, transport route improvements and the creation of logistics hubs<sup>57,58</sup>. Finally, the New Silk Road project coincides with the narrative of alternative integration to the West that the EEU seeks after the failure of relations with Europe. In these terms, discussions between the two projects began in 2014 and were consolidated in 2015 with the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Conjunction of the Development of the EEU and the New Silk Road, followed in 2017 by the Joint Declaration on the Feasibility Status of the Eurasian Economic Agreement and in 2018 by the signing of the Economic Cooperation Agreement. The presidents of Belarus and Kazakhstan were enthusiastic

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54 SVETLICHINII, A. "China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union: 'Integrating the Integrations'". *Research and Educational Journal*, 2018, 7-20.

55 LI, Y. "The greater Eurasian partnership and the Belt and Road Initiative: Can the two be linked?". *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2018, 94-99.

56 WILSON, J. L. "The Eurasian Economic Union and China's silk road: implications for the Russian-Chinese relationship". *European Politics and Society*, 2016

57 LIBMAN, A. "Linking the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union: Mission Impossible?" *Caucasus International Journal*, 2016, Vol. 6 No 1, 41-53.

58 MAKAROV, I., and SOKOLOVA, A. (2016). "The Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt: Opportunities for Russia". *International Organisations Research Journal*, vol. 11, no 2, 40-57.

about the<sup>59</sup> project and in 2015 Putin highlighted the connections between the two initiatives at the UN<sup>60</sup>.

However, the outcome of these proposals has disappointed the EEU. Gabuev<sup>61</sup> notes that the perception of the New Silk Road is overly optimistic, based on the belief that Beijing has a long-term strategic plan and China's increased global presence, but points out that the promises do not materialise. In the EEU, this translates into a number of problems. Firstly, the economic threat of the influx of low-priced Chinese products and the destruction of the business fabric has turned into disappointment at the limited investment and how cooperation has only affected monopolies<sup>62</sup>. Secondly, China's presence in Central Asia has generated conflicts, corruption scandals and growing anti-Chinese sentiment, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan<sup>63,64</sup>. Thirdly, both projects are institutionally and interest incompatible. They have a different design and objectives, where the protectionist attitude of the EEU clashes with Chinese motivations and Russian-Chinese contradictions are constant<sup>65</sup>. As a result, the UEE-New Silk Road partnership is limited and frustrates the UEE. Promises are not fulfilled, benefits are not forthcoming and conflicts in Central Asia make him question the Asian turn he has taken.

All in all, it has been observed that the Union's capacity to sign international agreements is limited – both in terms of competences and bureaucratic capacity – and is due to Russian proactivity. The international projection of the Eurasian Economic Union can be divided into three strands. The signing of Free Trade Agreements and Cooperation Agreements shows that the project has aroused interest in the international community, but has not yet yielded analysable benefits. Relations with the EU are frozen, and can hardly begin until Belarusian accession to the WTO and respect for the Minsk agreements; however, the EEU itself could serve as a gateway to facilitate dialogue and move towards greater harmony in Europe. Finally, the EEU has turned its efforts to the East, where it has generated an alternative to its failed plans

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59 WILSON, J. L. "The Eurasian Economic Union and China's silk road: implications for the Russian-Chinese relationship". *European Politics and Society*, 2016

60 SERGI, B. S. "Putin's and Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union: A hybrid half-economics and half-political 'Janus Bifrons'". *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2018, 52–60.

61 GABUEV, A. Как Шелковый путь стал резиновым. 2018, Retrieved 05/04/2020, from Carnegie Moscow Center: <https://carnegie.ru/2018/09/04/ru-pub-77160>

62 MANURUNG, H. Russia Interests and the Effect of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on Global Economic Integration, 2015-2016. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2018

63 UMAROV, T. *What's Behind Protests Against China in Kazakhstan?* 2019, Retrieved 05/03/2020, from Carnegie Moscow Center: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/80229>

64 IMANALIEV, M. *Drawbacks of China-Kyrgyzstan relations*, 2020, Retrieved 06 05 2020, from CABAR: <https://cabar.asia/en/drawbacks-of-china-kyrgyzstan-relations/>

65 LIKHACHEVA, A. The Eurasian Economic Union and the Integration Process in the Asia Pacific. *Asian Politics and Policy*, 2018, 772–790.

with the West, proposing an integration of integrations with the SCO, ASEAN and, primarily, the New Silk Road; yet the conflicts and limitations of this path have disappointed the Union's member states.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to offer a detailed analysis of the EEU's institutional dynamics, the progress of its integration commitments and its international relations. The aim was to study the Union's current situation and to gain an in-depth understanding of its successes and problems.

The review of the organisation's institutions and competences has helped to illustrate the Union's internal processes. Both the Commission and the Court of the Union are inherently weak, and have been purposefully limited; while they function and do the work for which they are responsible, they do so with difficulty and are always dependent on the commitment of Member States. Similarly, the cooperation and common market competences are progressing, eliminating NTBs and unifying and coordinating the single economic space, but only slowly due to a lack of commitment.

With regard to external relations, the project has been well received by developing countries, with which it has reached various FTAs and Memorandums of Cooperation. The EEU looks to Asia, to ASEAN and the SCO, and mainly to China and its New Silk Road, although the trade ambitions with which negotiations began have progressively turned into palpable disappointment. However, with the EU it has only managed to establish technical contact, due to the situation in Ukraine caused by the Russian annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas, and the fact that not all EEU members belong to the WTO. It is argued that it would be beneficial to use the EEU as a tool to re-establish the EU's dialogue with Russia, but it is noted that this is not a possibility in the short term.

The lack of commitment from member states, which is necessary for successful integration, has been a constant problem in the history of post-Soviet organisations. It is currently the greatest threat facing the EEU. Its constant reliance on consensus in decision-making has limited the development of competences, and makes the Union susceptible to the slightest conflict between its member states, which identify different interests and objectives.

The analysis carried out throughout the article also allows us to identify future lines of research. On the one hand, it is worth examining what motivation countries had for creating or joining the EEU, what attraction it held for them, and to what extent they have realised this diversity of intentions. On the other hand, the question remains as to whether the commitment can be increased in the future. The Covid-19 crisis has allowed the SC to meet much more frequently than usual – telematically – and the expected major changes in global supply chains suggest a return to the protectionism that the EEU has championed. In fact, statements such as that of Kazakh

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to establish new self-sufficient production chains in the EEU<sup>66</sup>, or the introduction of a ban on the export of medical products outside the Union<sup>67</sup> point in this direction.

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66 BelTA. *Call for new regional production chains in EAEU*. 2020, Retrieved 05/17/2020, from BelTA, Belarusian Telegraph Agency: <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/call-for-new-regional-production-chains-in-eaeu-129778-2020/>

67 FALYAKHOV, R. Антикризисный план: Евразийский союз закрывается от мира, 2020, Retrieved 05/15/2020, from газета.ru: <https://www.gazeta.ru/business/2020/05/19/13088809.shtml>

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## *Russia and Turkey in Nagorno-Karabakh, between militarisation and diplomacy*

### **Abstract**

On 10 November, Russian president Vladimir Putin announced in a televised speech the ceasefire between Azerbaijan and Armenia, after weeks of fighting. With thousands of civilian and military casualties, the fight for control of the region of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space. Its significance extends beyond the region, both because of the geostrategic importance of the South Caucasus, and because of the two actors that are present in the region, Russia and Turkey. This article seeks to analyze the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as part of the foreign strategy of the Russian Federation, for which it is important to consider its relationship with Turkey in the Caucasus. But also in Syria, a scenario in which the two actors are currently fighting over the control of the territory.

### **Key words**

Russia, Turkey, Nagorno-Karabakh, Influence, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria

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## Introduction

Russia's goal of consolidating its position as a regional and global centre of influence faces a major challenge in the frozen conflicts that spread across the post-Soviet space. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the South Caucasus was the latest to flare up again on 27 September.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first hostilities, the number of civilian and military casualties is estimated in the thousands, in addition to displaced persons and refugees.

The South Caucasus is a region of great ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Surrounded by Russia, Turkey and Iran, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, three former Soviet republics are located there: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In addition to the geostrategic situation, which is relevant from the point of view of security and continental stability, there is also interest in the energy sector.

In this scenario, two countries with different capacities and situations face each other over Nagorno-Karabakh: Azerbaijan, on the Caspian coast, is autonomous in terms of security and has energy resources whose exploitation provides much of the country's wealth; Armenia, on the other hand, which is landlocked and "neither a producer nor a transit country", depends on its military cooperation with Russia to guarantee its security. Despite being a regional conflict, multiple internal and external factors are intertwined, giving it international significance, with consequences for the stability of the Caucasus region; and a potential for expansion beyond the Caucasus.

In this environment, Russia and Turkey, albeit indirectly, have become involved in the Azeri-Armenian confrontation with political, economic and military support. The two powers maintain trade, gas, nuclear and defence cooperation between them as partners; at the same time, in some scenarios and situations, such as Syria, the clash of interests and objectives adds a lot of tension to the diplomatic relationship between the two. In the complex environment created in Syria, with a diversity of actors and interests, the war has been dragging on for nine years. There, Turkey and Russia continue to jockey for control of the territory, seeking to advance their positions and thus gain influence in shaping the next strategic scenario in the Middle East.

This article seeks to analyse the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as part of Russia's foreign strategy. For this it is important to consider its relationship with Turkey in the South Caucasus, but also in Syria, the other scenario where the two actors are assuming a large part of the protagonism.

With this objective in mind, and considering Russia and its foreign policy as the central axis of this analysis, the article is structured as follows: the first section reviews the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan; the second section analyses the main actors in the regions under study, the Caucasus region around the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and Syria; the third section examines

the links between the two scenarios; and the third section concludes with some final considerations drawn from the analysis.

## The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the control of the mountainous enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh has its origins in the process of the decomposition of the Russian Empire and the independence of the two countries in 1918. In the Soviet period, the Nagorno-Karabakh region, with a majority Armenian population over an Azeri minority, acquired the status of an autonomous *Oblast* within the territory of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. The Kremlin was thus able to keep the conflict frozen until the last years of the Soviet Union. At that time, and in parallel to the weakening of Moscow's power in the region, tensions between the Azeri government and the Armenian population around the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave were steadily increasing.

In 1988 the local authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh declared their intention to secede from Azerbaijan and join the Armenian SSR. The proposal, which was rejected by Baku, ultimately precipitated the war between Armenians and Azeris. Three years later, in 1991 and after the final collapse of the Soviet state, Azerbaijan decided to withdraw the autonomous status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The response of the Stepanakert authorities was to declare the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic<sup>1</sup>. With the political confrontation thus aggravated, the military conflict would continue until 1994, when the parties signed the Bishkek Protocol<sup>2</sup> establishing a ceasefire.

The negotiation of the agreement took place within the mediation framework established by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) when it set up the Minsk Group<sup>3</sup>. Along with the cessation of hostilities, it was decided to demarcate a buffer strip between the two sides. The so-called Line of Contact extended 110 miles into Azerbaijani territory and served as a progressively militarised border

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1 ESCRIBANO, G. "El corredor energético del Cáucaso Sur y sus implicaciones para Europa." *El gran Cáucaso*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies. Strategy Papers. 156. 217-258. June 2012. Retrieved from: [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE\\_156\\_Gran\\_Caucaso.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE_156_Gran_Caucaso.pdf) (last accessed 29/01/2021), p. 219.

2 In December 1991, a referendum on independence was held in the region. In January 1992, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic declared its independence, which in 2017 was renamed the Republic of Artsakh.

3 The OSCE Minsk Group was established in 1994 with the aim of helping to create conditions for a negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, under the co-chairmanship of Russia, France and the United States. The Minsk Group also includes Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Turkey, as well as Azerbaijan and Armenia. This expanded format meets several times a year, but the weight of the mediation process is assumed by the tripartite presidency.

between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The demarcation left the territories that had fallen under Yerevan's control during the conflict to the west of the Line of Contact.

The situation resulting from the war was relatively comfortable and favourable for Armenia, which came to control not only the territory of the former Soviet *Oblast*, but also seven other Azerbaijani districts surrounding the original enclave<sup>4</sup> and extending southwards to the Iranian border. These territories constituted a security zone for Armenia, which felt victorious over the frustrated aspirations of the Baku government. After the war, the parties maintained the rhetorical and political confrontation, each side defending a vision of Nagorno-Karabakh's future in which the other community had no place<sup>5</sup>.

Since the end of the war in the 1990s, and as stipulated in the Bishkek Protocol, the parties continued, unsuccessfully, with attempts to find an agreed solution to the latent conflict in the region<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, sporadic clashes between Azeri and Armenian forces continued. Incidents, albeit of low intensity, have been constant since 1994. But it was not until 2016 that the clashes became serious enough to receive international attention and involvement.

In April 2016, Azerbaijani offensives on several points along the LoC led to what is known as the *four-day war*. Azerbaijan's strategy succeeded in regaining a small part of the territory. The 1994 Line of Control route was modified as a result of the Azeri territorial advance. What was relevant, however, was the reading that the parties were able to make of these changes. Since Baku, the forceful approach seemed more effective than the diplomatic one led by the Minsk Group. Armenia, for its part, saw its status as the victor of the 1994 conflict weakened and its chances in a future peace process limited<sup>7</sup>.

The resolution of the 2016 crisis was reached through diplomatic channels. The Kremlin took the lead in the negotiating process. It acted as chief mediator facilitating

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4 Armenia occupied the Shusha and Lachin districts between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992. Between July and October 1993, it occupied the districts of Kalbajar, Agdam, Jabrayil, Gubadli, Fuzuli, Zangilan, all adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh.

5 WAAL, T. DE. "No Compromise in Sight for Armenia and Azerbaijan." *Foreign Affairs*. 26/10/2020. Retrieved from: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2020/10/26/no-compromise-in-sight-for-armenia-and-azerbaijan-pub-83048> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

6 At the OSCE ministerial conference in Madrid in 2007, Armenia and Azerbaijan presented a peace agreement document revising the proposal made by the Minsk Group co-chairs in 2006. The Madrid Principles, as the 2007 agreement is known, provided for: the return of the seven districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan; the holding of a referendum on self-determination in the region; the conduct of an international peacekeeping operation; the establishment of an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh that would guarantee its security and self-government; the return of displaced persons and refugees; and the establishment of a communication corridor between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

7 SIMÃO, L. *The Nagorno-Karabakh redux*. issue 28. European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). 2016. DOI: 10.2815/58373, p. 3.

tripartite meetings between President Vladimir Putin and the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan<sup>8</sup>. These meetings were formally within the Minsk Group's mediation procedure, but in practice left out the other two co-chairs of the Group, the United States and France. The Russian mediation succeeded in getting the two sides to agree to stop hostilities, but without going into the resolution of the latent conflict in the region. This left the door open to further crises.

On 12 July, clashes broke out again in the vicinity of the Line of Contact. Armenia used heavy artillery against Azerbaijani positions in the northern border area between the Azerbaijani towns of Tovuz and Gazakh and the Armenian region of Tavush. The Yerevan offensive was met with a response from Azeri forces. These clashes heralded the crisis that would erupt a few weeks later.

In a climate of growing tension in the area, on 27 September 2020 there were new clashes, the most serious since 2016. Shelling and the deployment of heavy weapons along the Line of Contact followed amidst a flurry of accusations about responsibility for initiating the aggression and the targets of the aggression. While Armenia accused Azerbaijan of being responsible for the first air strike on Nagorno-Karabakh, the Azeri government called it a counter-offensive to an earlier aggression by Armenian forces. Clashes quickly intensified and, as the conflict escalated, the governments in Baku and Yerevan decreed martial law and the mobilisation of their troops. For their part, the authorities of the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh, which has not yet been recognised by any state, applied for international recognition.

Within the framework of the Minsk Group and at the initiative of Russian President Vladimir Putin, a meeting took place on 10 October in Moscow<sup>9</sup> between the foreign ministers of Armenia, Zohrab Mnatsakanián, and Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayrámov. After hours of negotiations, with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov as chief mediator, the parties agreed to a humanitarian ceasefire for the exchange of prisoners and the dead. The agreement also included the launch of a negotiation process aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict, mediated by the co-chairs of the Minsk Group (the United States, France and Russia).

However, it took only hours for the fighting to resume, and Baku accused Armenia of shelling the Azerbaijani town of Ganja. The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities in turn blamed Azerbaijan for the attack on their capital, Stepanakert. In the midst of this tense atmosphere, there were two further attempts to stop the conflict: a second ceasefire on 17 October, negotiated in Paris; and a third on 25 October, agreed in Washing-

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8 PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA. *Meeting with Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev*. 20/06/2016. Retrieved from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52189> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

9 OSCE. *Statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group*. 10/10/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/466737> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

ton<sup>10</sup>, both of which were short-lived. Azeri and Armenian offensives that broke each of the ceasefire agreements continued to fuel mutual accusations.

Russian-led talks under the auspices of the Minsk Group went ahead, and on 30 October the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers reached a new compromise<sup>11</sup> which, while not leading to a ceasefire, maintained the basis of the 10 October agreement.

Moscow's diplomatic efforts to establish more stable and durable conditions continued. Finally, on 9 November Vladimir Putin announced in a televised speech<sup>12</sup> the signing of a comprehensive ceasefire and termination of hostilities agreement. The date of entry into force would be 10 November, one month after the first of the failed attempts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The points resulting from the negotiation take up the principles established at the Madrid conference held in 2007<sup>13</sup>.

In the document signed by the parties<sup>14</sup> the following was agreed:

- the establishment of a complete cessation of hostilities from midnight on 10 November;
- the commitment of the parties not to advance the positions they held at the date of the agreement;
- Armenia undertook to return the districts of Kalbajar, Agdam, Lachin to Azerbaijan;
- the deployment along the Line of Contact and the Lachin corridor of a Russian peacekeeping force with, among other capabilities, 1,960 military personnel and 90 armoured vehicles;
- the Lachin corridor, which connects Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, would remain under the control of Russian peacekeepers;
- Russian peacekeepers would conduct a phased deployment parallel to the Armenian withdrawal;
- the presence of the Russian forces is guaranteed for an initial period of five years, which may be automatically extended for a further five years, unless

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10 OSCE. *Press Statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group*. 25/10/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/468204> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

11 OSCE. *Press Statement by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group*. 30/10/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.osce.org/minsk-group/468984> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

12 PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA. *Statement by the President of Russia*. 09/11/2020. Retrieved from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64381> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

13 OSCE. *Statement by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries*. 10/07/2009. Retrieved from: <https://www.osce.org/mg/51152> (last accessed 29/01/2021).

14 PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA. *Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation*. 10/10/2020. Retrieved from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

either party gives notice of its intention to abandon this clause six months before the end of the first five years;

- the establishment of a peacekeeping centre to monitor the ceasefire;
- surveillance of transport connections was transferred to the Russian Border Guard Service, a branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB)<sup>15</sup>, the heir to the Soviet State Security Committee, the KGB;
- the lifting of the economic and communications blockade;
- the construction, within three years of signature, of a new route through the Lachin corridor to ensure the connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. Russian peacekeepers would be responsible for ensuring security along this communication route. Azerbaijan undertook not to interfere with the movement of vehicles, goods and people between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh; and
- the exchange of prisoners and the dead; the return of refugees and displaced persons to Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Russia has assumed the role of mediator between Armenians and Azeris in the September conflict, as it had done in previous clashes, which gives it greater control over the final disposition of forces. From what is stipulated in the agreement, in which it is easy to recognise the Russian imprint, it is clear that, with the concession of partial demands, the Russian objective has been to guarantee a minimum level of stability in the area, as well as the Russian presence not only in the region, but also on the ground in the conflict through the deployment of troops. These two elements should either prevent the outbreak of new crises or, if not possible, limit their scope and possible consequences for the stability and security of the region and the region's energy resources.

In the Caucasian scenario, the interplay of forces and pressures between the actors is played out in very different positions and capacities. The weakest piece is Armenia. Even with the trump card of having the territory taken from Azerbaijan (its security belt) under its control, the lack of energy resources and economic potential closes the door to obtaining comparative advantages that would allow it an acceptable degree of autonomy in its strategic relations.

The Kremlin is aware of the post-conflict situation in Armenia and its limited resilience, as well as the potential for instability if public opinion is dissatisfied with the post-conflict situation and the losses incurred. At Putin's initiative, Moscow has sent a Russian delegation to Yerevan to discuss the context arising from the 9 November agreement and to study those factors aimed at the complete resolution of the

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<sup>15</sup> The FSB cooperates directly with the National Defence Management Centre of the Russian Federation. Since 2014, the Centre has been responsible for monitoring the global situation, channelling information and coordinating Defence.

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict<sup>16</sup>. It does not appear that Baku and Yerevan will facilitate stabilisation in the region. Mutual accusations of ceasefire violations have continued since the ceasefire was signed on 9 November. Russia, as the on-the-ground guarantor of regional stability, needs to contain isolated incidents and avoid widespread violence<sup>17</sup>.

Since the beginning of the negotiation process, Ankara has on several occasions reiterated its interest and intention to participate in monitoring compliance with the agreement. But it was not until 11 November, with the agreement already in force, that Turkey and Russia signed a memorandum<sup>18</sup> for the creation of a joint Russian-Turkish ceasefire monitoring centre. Following the signing of the Armenian-Azeri agreement on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, at the invitation of his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, attended the military parade in Baku to celebrate his victory over Armenia<sup>19</sup>. Without lowering the confrontational tone maintained to date, Erdogan took advantage of his visit to try to publicly assert his place in the region, in the conflict and in Azeri success.

### Actors in Nagorno-Karabakh

The South Caucasus is a region that has traditionally attracted strategic, military and energy interest, drawing diverse actors from the West, the Middle East and Eurasia into a competition for regional influence and dominance.

It is not possible to understand the regional scenario without considering the important role played by the resources in the unequal distribution of forces and the positioning of actors in the South Caucasus. The region's energy value determines its geo-economic role and the intense competition of mutually exclusive energy transport systems contributes to the climate of tension<sup>20</sup> in a region with deep fault lines that place it in a state of near permanent instability.

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16 On 7 December 2020, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held a press conference with his Armenian counterpart Ara Aivazian. The full transcript is available at: [https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJEo2Bw/content/id/4469797](https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJEo2Bw/content/id/4469797) (last accessed 12/12/2020).

17 "Aliyev blames Armenia for ceasefire violation in Nagorno-Karabakh." *Tass Russian News Agency*. 12/12/2020. Retrieved from: <https://tass.com/world/1234379> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

18 "Russia, Turkey agree creation of Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire monitoring center". *Tass Russian News Agency*. 11/11/2020. Retrieved from: <https://tass.com/world/1222765> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

19 "Azerbaijan celebrates Nagorno-Karabakh victory, Erdogan attends." *Aljazeera*. 10/12/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/10/azerbaijan-celebrates-nagorno-karabakh-victory-erdogan-attends> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

20 RUSSETSKY, A. "Una aproximación geopolítica al Cáucaso." *El gran Cáucaso*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies. Strategy Paper 156. 23-72. June 2012. Retrieved from: [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE\\_156\\_Gran\\_Caucaso.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE_156_Gran_Caucaso.pdf) (last accessed 29/01/2021), pp. 55-56.

In recent years, however, interest in this complex region has waned, especially from the West, where there seems to be no clear regional strategy. Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), stated that NATO was not a party to the Armenian-Azeri conflict. On the other hand, the role played by powers such as France and the United States, co-chairs of the Minsk Group, has been limited to the mediation procedure, with neither having achieved significant progress.

Since 2016, Iran, Russia and Azerbaijan have regularly held tripartite summits that have focused on cooperation in the Caspian Sea region, economic, security, energy and communications issues. In the field of communications infrastructure, the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)<sup>21</sup> would connect Russia with Iran and the Middle East via Azerbaijan. This project opens the door for Azerbaijan to be an important player because of the opportunities it provides for Russia to exert political and economic influence over Iran<sup>22</sup>.

In the Armenian-Azeri conflict, Iran supports Baku's claim to respect its territorial integrity<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, Armenia, which has developed closer trade ties with Iran, has turned to the Islamic republic as an alternative energy supplier to Russian gas<sup>24</sup>. This is without prejudice to the mistrust that Iran may generate in Yerevan. Iran's position in the region is the result of a combination of ethnic and strategic issues, the presence of actors such as Israel, and Tehran's commercial and energy objectives, among others. With the risk of an escalation of tension in Nagorno-Karabakh exporting insecurity and instability to its territory, in the 2016 and 2020 conflicts Tehran has urged the parties to seek an agreed solution and on both occasions has offered to mediate the process.

Both in the run-up to the September 2020 conflict and in its development, the main external actors have been Russia and Turkey.

As a result of an overview of its foreign policy, Russia maintains a web of objectives and interests across different scenarios that inevitably end up overlapping and, not infrequently, clashing with the interests and objectives of other actors such as Turkey, in the Caucasus, in Syria or in Libya. Exports in the energy sector and the exploitation of oil and gas pipelines and resources located in former Soviet territories are two of

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21 The states participating in this multimodal transport corridor project are: Iran, Russia, India, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman and Syria.

22 MURADOV, M. "Russia and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War." *Geopolitical Monitor*. 08/11/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/backgrounder-russia-and-second-nagorno-karabakh-war/> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

23 Iran shares a Shia identity with Azerbaijan.

24 GIRAGOSIAN, R. "Paradox of power: Russia, Armenia and Europe after the Velvet Revolution." European Council on Foreign Relations. Policy Brief. 07/08/2019. Retrieved from: [https://ecfr.eu/publication/russia\\_armenia\\_and\\_europe\\_after\\_the\\_velvet\\_revolution/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/russia_armenia_and_europe_after_the_velvet_revolution/) (last accessed 29/01/2021).

the Kremlin's strengths in the Federation's external projection<sup>25</sup>. In the South Caucasus both elements converge, overlap and reinforce each other with defence, security and influence of vital importance to Russia in any scenario where its presence is already established or sought.

Russia's historical ties with the former Soviet territories make them indispensable in the Kremlin's strategic planning. In the South Caucasus, Russia has political, historical, security and economic interests and ties that have been translated into *ad hoc* strategic lines. Thus, in line with Russia's eminently pragmatic approach to foreign policy, its strategies shift from confrontation with Georgia, to cooperation with Armenia and confusion with Azerbaijan<sup>26</sup>.

Three decades after the demise of the Soviet Union and two decades since the arrival of Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin, Russia maintains a cordial relationship with the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, considering the two states as partners<sup>27</sup>. Maintaining stability in the post-Soviet area and in the South Caucasus under Russian control is a priority objective. Defence plays a prominent role in the Kremlin's strategies with the two former Soviet republics. In practice, however, there are notable differences between Moscow's links with Baku and with Yerevan.

Russia's presence in Armenia has been consolidated through agreements such as the "friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance" agreement signed on 29 August 1997, which implied joint defence in the event of aggression; the creation of a joint air defence system in December 2015, which extended the joint protection of Armenian airspace in force since the 1990s; the membership of both countries in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), within whose statutory framework Russia, at Yerevan's request, would be obliged to intervene in the event of aggression on its Armenian borders; and the creation in December 2016 of a joint force group. In each of these agreements, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, whose independence has not been recognised by Russia, has always been kept out of any possible Russian intervention for the territorial defence of the enclave.

Russia has had a military presence in Armenia since 1996. It currently has more than 3,000 troops at the 102nd military base in Gyumri and an air squadron estab-

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25 BUGAYOVA, N. "Putin's offset. The Kremlin's geopolitical adaptations since 2014. Military learning and the future of war series." *Institute for the Study of War*. September 2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/putins-offset-kremlin's-geopolitical-adaptations-2014> (last accessed 29/01/2021), p. 19.

26 MINASSIAN, G. "South Caucasus." In *Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership Countries*. Belgium: European Parliament. 2016, 24-30. ISBN: 978-92-823-9902-6, p. 24.

27 On 22 October Vladimir Putin participated together with several experts in the final plenary session of the Valdai International Discussion Club. The full statements can be found at <https://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/vladimir-putin-meets-with-members-of-the-valdai-club-transcript-17th-annual-meeting/> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

lished at Yerevan airfield<sup>28</sup>. Both locations are close to the border with Turkey, which has always been considered by Moscow as a very sensitive area<sup>29</sup>. Russia, while being Armenia's main defensive guarantor, is also its main arms supplier. It is also noteworthy that the Russian military influence even extends to Armenian Military Doctrine, which takes on some elements of Russian military thought. However, Russian projection has not excluded Armenia's political decision to establish relations with the Atlantic Alliance<sup>30</sup>. Yerevan contributes troops to UN and NATO missions and cooperates with the Atlantic Alliance through an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP)<sup>31</sup>.

In 2018, the so-called Velvet Revolution in Armenia brought the leader of the protests, Nikol Pashinyan, to power, ousting the Kremlin-friendly Prime Minister Serge Sargsyan, who until 2018 had held the country's presidency. Although Armenia's relations with the European Union<sup>32</sup> and NATO began with the previous leaders, Pashinyan, from his very first moments in office, publicly showed his attempts at rapprochement with the Atlantic Alliance, the European Union and the United States<sup>33</sup>. This stance and Pashinyan's early decisions put the Kremlin on alert for the possibility of a change in Yerevan's relationship with Russia<sup>34</sup>. Pashinyan reportedly even stated his intention to revoke the extension of the treaty on Russian military deployment at

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28 INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES. "Russia and Eurasia." *The Military Balance 2020*. 120:I, 166-219, DOI: 10.1080/04597222.2020.1707966, p.170.

29 MINASSIAN, G., op. cit, p. 27.

30 In 1992, the Republic of Armenia became a member of NATO's North Atlantic Cooperation Council.

31 Cooperation between Armenia and NATO, within the framework of the biennially renewed IPAP, extends to the fields of defence, politics, security, democracy and the rule of law. On NATO's relations with Armenia: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_48893.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48893.htm) (last accessed 12/12/2020).

32 Armenia has been a member of the Eastern Partnership since 2009. On the occasion of Armenia's accession to the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union in 2014, negotiations for an Association Agreement with the European Union were suspended. They were resumed in 2015 and the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the European Union was signed in 2017.

33 In July 2018 Pashinyan attended the NATO summit in Brussels where he met with several European leaders, provoking backlash in the Russian media. See KUCERA, J. "Russian press portrays Armenia's Pashinyan as "carbon copy" of Poroshenko." *Eurasianet*. 23/07/2018. Retrieved from: <https://eurasianet.org/russian-press-portrays-armenias-pashinyan-as-carbon-copy-of-poroshenko> (last accessed 29/01/2021).

34 Among the decisions taken with Pashinyan at the head of the government were the opening of a criminal case against a subsidiary of the Russian gas company Gazprom for tax evasion; and the filing of criminal charges against Yuri Khachaturov, in 2018 secretary general of the CSTO. MEJLUMYAN, A. "In Moscow Pashinyan gets along with Putin, clashes with Russian-Armenian philanthropist." *Eurasianet*. 10/09/2018. Retrieved from: <https://eurasianet.org/in-moscow-pashinyan-gets-along-with-putin-clashes-with-russian-armenian-philanthropist> (last accessed 29/01/2021).

military bases in Armenia agreed between Russia and former Armenian Prime Minister Sargsyan<sup>35</sup>.

However, for the government in Yerevan and for Armenia's stability, understanding with Moscow is almost imperative. The Armenian dependency link is strong enough that the Kremlin has the capacity to strain the relationship and make it possible for Yerevan to accept concessions not favourable to Armenia's interests<sup>36</sup>. The strategic relationship between Russia and Armenia is marked by asymmetric dependence and lacks the parity of a true Russian-Armenian partnership<sup>37</sup>. "Armenia aspired to develop good relations with the EU in order to alleviate its asymmetric dependence on Russia"<sup>38</sup>.

The Azerbaijani government has implemented a multi-directional diplomacy, establishing bilateral relations not only with Russia, but also with Iran, Turkey and the United States, as well as with organisations such as the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance. Like Armenia, Azerbaijan is linked to NATO with an IPAP<sup>39</sup>. This strategy is seen by Moscow as not favourable to its interests<sup>40</sup>, but far from distancing the Kremlin from Baku, it fuels Russia's need for closer ties with the Caucasus.

Russia has not had a military presence in Azerbaijan since 2009. Until then, the Russian military had been in control of the Gabala radar station with about 900 troops<sup>41</sup>.

In the context of the defence reform process, the Russian Federation has developed a system of strategic military exercises that allows it to implement its combat readiness, as well as providing an opportunity to showcase the capabilities of its military force and its alliances against potential adversaries. In September 2020, it conducted the Kavkaz-2020 exercise, aimed at assessing the Southern Military District's ability

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35 MUKHANOV, V. "The Kremlin's message to Yerevan: Have your power shift, but remain our loyal vassals." Interviewed by Jaanus Piirsalu. *Diplomaatia* n.o. 178/179. International Centre for Defence and Security. June 2018. Retrieved from: <https://icds.ee/en/the-kremlins-message-to-yerevan-have-your-power-shift-but-remain-our-loyal-vassals/> (last accessed 29/01/2021).

36 In addition to arms supplies, military support, energy supplies and being Russia's main trading partner, Armenia's dependence also takes the form of remittances from the Armenian diaspora in Russia. GIRAGOSIAN, R., op. cit.

37 Ibid.

38 SHAPOVALOVA, N. "La Unión Europea en el Cáucaso Sur." *El gran Cáucaso*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies. Strategy Paper 156. 73-110. June 2012. Retrieved from: [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE\\_156\\_Gran\\_Caucaso.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE_156_Gran_Caucaso.pdf) (last accessed 29/01/2021), p. 76.

39 In 2015 Azerbaijan and NATO agreed on the first IPAP covering economic, scientific, political, defence and security issues. The fifth cycle of this Action Plan ended in 2019. On NATO's relations with Azerbaijan: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49111.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49111.htm) (last accessed 12/12/2020).

40 MINASSIAN, G., op. cit, p.27.

41 Ibid.

to ensure the security of Russia's south-east. Alongside the 8,000 military personnel and the Russian Black Sea and Caspian Sea fleets, Iranian naval units and military formations from Armenia, among other guests, also took part in the manoeuvres. The government in Baku decided not to send troops to the exercises due to the increased tension in Nagorno-Karabakh; it finally came as an observer<sup>42</sup>.

Moscow has always avoided direct involvement in the confrontations between the two former Soviet republics, choosing instead to defend its decisive role as chief mediator, facilitating contact between the two under the umbrella of the Minsk Group. Armenia's stability is not a minor issue for Russia<sup>43</sup>, but the stability of Armenia and the rest of the region does not necessarily depend, from Russia's point of view, on resolving the roots of the Armenian-Azeri conflict. Russia's chosen position involves maintaining a difficult balance between the mutually exclusive Armenian and Azeri positions. But even as Russia was the most relevant external actor, its ability to control the conflict had been limited<sup>44</sup>, at least until the September 2020 crisis. The 10 November agreement opens the door to Russian control of any possible outbreaks of violence in both the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and the South Caucasus region.

Turkey has been the main external supporter of Azeri interests in Nagorno-Karabakh both at the beginning and during the development of the 27 September crisis, backing Azerbaijan with political, military and economic support<sup>45</sup>. As in 2016, Ankara has defended Baku's claim to recover the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and all districts in Azerbaijani territory under Armenian control. The Turkish president, who is maintaining a very tough discourse in his public speeches, has even accused the co-chairs of the Minsk Group (Russia, the United States and France) of supplying weapons to Armenia and of acting in their interests, thus fuelling the escalation of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The dispute between Turkey and Armenia over the massacre of the Armenian population by the forces of the Ottoman Empire in 1915<sup>46</sup> is an obstacle that is difficult to overcome and does not contribute to reducing tension in the area. The attempt to normalise diplomatic relations between the two countries with the agreement signed

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42 DALY, J. "Russia's Kavkaz 2020: International Participation and Regional Security Implications." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.17, no. 126. 14/09/2020. Retrieved from: <https://jamestown.org/program/russias-kavkaz-2020-international-participation-and-regional-security-implications/> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

43 MUKHANOV, V., op. cit.

44 MANKOFF, J. "Why Armenia and Azerbaijan Are on the Brink of War." *Foreign Affairs*. 01/10/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2020-10-01/why-armenia-and-azerbaijan-are-brink-war> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

45 The Azeri population is mainly ethnic Turkic, but mostly Shia Muslims, while the Turks are Sunni.

46 The Turkish government has not recognised as genocide the massacre of Armenians carried out between 1915 and 1917 by the forces of the Ottoman Empire.

in 2009 was broken off by Armenia in 2018, citing disagreements with Ankara precisely in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh situation.

The strategic partnership between Turkey and Azerbaijan is defined by the slogan “two states, one nation” used by Baku and Ankara. Both countries share historical, linguistic, religious, cultural and even political factors and similarities. “There is also an asymmetric model, according to which Azerbaijan could be integrated into the Turkish political space”<sup>47</sup>.

Turkish political and military support for Azerbaijan has been constant and growing. However, Turkey is not currently the main Azeri arms supplier. In the period 2015 to 2019 it was behind Israel and Russia, the first and second largest arms suppliers respectively<sup>48</sup>. In line with its diplomatic strategy, Baku has expanded its range of suppliers in recent years (Israel, Ukraine, Belarus and the Czech Republic)<sup>49</sup>. In this way it continues to increase and improve its military capabilities, while diversifying its acquisitions and thus reducing its dependence on other powers.

In the months leading up to the September conflict, Turkish arms purchases and military cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan reportedly intensified. In this sense, new acquisitions such as combat drones; the mobilisation of forces; or the growing military cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan since 2019<sup>50</sup> are indicators that the latest escalation of tension over Nagorno-Karabakh may have been prepared in advance<sup>51</sup>.

Two weeks after the Line of Contact clashes last July and within the scope of the 2010 Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement between Turkey and Azerbaijan, they conducted joint military exercises involving the ground and air forces of the two countries<sup>52</sup>. In addition to equipment and assistance from Turkey, drones and other weaponry of Israeli origin acquired by Azerbaijan in recent years have been instrumen-

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47 RUSSETSKY, A., op. cit, p. 35.

48 WEZEMAN, P., FLEURANT, A., KUIMOVA, A., et al. “Trends in international arms transfers, 2019.” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. March 2020. Retrieved from: [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/fs\\_2003\\_at\\_2019.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/fs_2003_at_2019.pdf) (last accessed 12/12/2020).

49 ALIYEV, N. “Russia’s Arms Sales: A Foreign Policy Tool in Relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia”. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 15, no. 47. 28/03/2018. Retrieved from: <https://jamestown.org/program/russias-arms-sales-foreign-policy-tool-relations-azerbaijan-armenia/> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

50 GURBANOV, I. “Azerbaijan’s Military Exercises Send Defiant Message to Armenia”. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.16, no. 99.11/07/2019. Retrieved from: <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijans-military-exercises-send-defiant-message-to-armenia/> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

51 CLARK, M. AND YAZICI, E. “Erdogan seeks to upend Kremlin-backed status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh”. *Institute for the Study of War*. 12/10/2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/background/erdogan-seeks-upend-kremlin-backed-status-quo-nagorno-karabakh> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

52 HUSEYNOV, V. “Azerbaijan, Turkey Hold Large-Scale Military Drills Amidst Escalation of Tensions with Armenia”. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.17, no. 121. 14/08/2020. Retrieved from: <https://>

tal in Azerbaijan's recent victory, as they were in the tactical and operational successes around the Line of Contact in 2016<sup>53</sup>.

A conflict in the region, extended in time and intensity, has the potential to jeopardise European energy supplies and is not in the interests of either Russia or Turkey. Crude oil and liquefied natural gas flows from the Caspian Sea and Russia to Turkey, Georgia and Europe via pipelines through Azerbaijan. The Caspian Sea has oil and gas fields under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction.

In addition to the region's known natural resources, Erdogan announced on 21 August the discovery of a 320 billion cubic metre natural gas field in the Black Sea, which could be exploitable from 2023<sup>54</sup>. This discovery would allow Turkey to reduce its heavy dependence on energy resources from Iraq, Iran and Russia. But it would also allow Ankara to limit Turkey's growing dependence on Azeri energy<sup>55</sup>. The Black and Caspian Seas are vital for Moscow in defensive, strategic and energy terms. In fact, Russian fleets in both seas have seen their surveillance capabilities increase since 2007<sup>56</sup>.

Moscow and Ankara coincide in their desire to seek and secure maximum influence and control over a region on the doorstep of the Middle East whose destabilisation could provoke the outbreak of a major conflict with international intervention. Turkey's aspirations in the region are also framed in a period in which Ankara, under Erdogan and nationalism, is straining relations with Western powers and NATO, of which it is a member, bringing Turkey closer to international isolation.

While the channel of communication between the Kremlin and Ankara has been open throughout the Caucasus crisis, Russia has protected its central role in the negotiation process and the establishment of post-conflict conditions, relegating Turkey's involvement to the background.

Despite existing rivalries, Moscow has incentives that encourage it to keep its relationship with Turkey within the bounds of cordiality and pragmatism. The connection between the two capitals is ensured on the basis of the agreements established in

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[jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-turkey-hold-large-scale-military-drills-amidst-escalation-of-tensions-with-armenia/](https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-turkey-hold-large-scale-military-drills-amidst-escalation-of-tensions-with-armenia/) (last accessed 12/12/2020).

53 GURBANOV, I. "Azerbaijan Deepens and Expands Its Partnerships with International Arms Suppliers." *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol.16, no. 5. 21/01/2019. Retrieved from: <https://jamestown.org/program/azerbaijan-deepens-and-expands-its-partnerships-with-international-arms-suppliers/> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

54 "Erdogan announces the discovery of Turkey's largest natural gas reserve". *Europapress*. 21/08/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.europapress.es/inernacional/noticia-erdogan-anuncia-descubrimiento-mayor-reserva-gas-natural-turquia-20200821153304.html> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

55 CLARK, M. and YAZICI, E., op. cit.

56 INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES. *Russia's military modernization: An Assessment*. London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2020, p.93.

different areas. Using contractual ties, for example in the energy sector, as an instrument to establish medium- and long-term ties is a procedure repeated by Moscow in its bilateral relations with various states, such as Egypt in the Mediterranean. However, Turkey's geostrategic position at the exit from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean seems to be a relevant motive that justifies Moscow's efforts to maintain a bilateral relationship with more than a few edges, as can be seen on the ground in Syria.

### Implications for the Syrian scenario

The system of interests and strategic objectives created by Russia and Turkey extends across several scenarios. At the same time as the ambitions of the two powers meet and clash in the Caucasus, they also do so in other arenas such as Syria and Libya. The relationship between Moscow and Ankara balances between partnership and confrontation in the diplomatic arena; and in the military, between collaboration and preparation for potential confrontation.

In the present circumstances, the events in Nagorno-Karabakh appear to have been linked to developments in Russian and Turkish positions in Syria. The most descriptive connection between Syria and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has come from Turkey. There are indications that around 1,500 Syrian National Army troops<sup>57</sup> have been sent to fight alongside Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the border area with Iran<sup>58</sup>.

Iran's political and economic leverage in the Caucasus and Syria is of no small interest to Moscow. In both scenarios, considering its regional and international interests, Iran is in a position to strengthen positions and be a relevant counterweight.

In Syria, where it has bases of operations, Iran has been instrumental in sustaining Assad since the beginning of the conflict. Moscow and Tehran, with different objectives, are directing their efforts towards the survival of the Damascus government. In doing so, however, they have established a competition of forces rather than cooperation between the two<sup>59</sup>. Not to mention the fact that Russia needs Iran to secure its bases in Syria, essential for the pursuit of its plans on Europe's and NATO's southern border<sup>60</sup>. The Kremlin has announced military cooperation with Iran as the inter-

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57 The Syrian National Army (SNA), created in 2017 with Turkish backing, is a coalition of armed groups opposed to the Assad regime. In October 2019 the National Liberation Front (NLF) joined the SNA under the control of the so-called Syrian Interim Government.

58 CLARK, M. and YAZICI, E., *op. cit.*

59 CAFARELLA, J. and ZHOU, J. "Russia's Dead-End Diplomacy in Syria". *Institute for the Study of War*. November 2019. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/russias-dead-end-diplomacy-syria> (last accessed 12/12/2020), p.15.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

national arms embargo and economic and political sanctions on the Iranian regime expire on 18 October 2020.

In September 2017 Russia, Turkey and Iran signed the Astana Agreement, which established a de-escalation zone in the north-western Syrian region. The signatories' aim was to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and reduce fighting. But in February 2020, the Damascus government launched an offensive on the Idlib region, which provoked a Turkish reaction.

President Erdogan, in a speech on 4 February, issued an ultimatum for the withdrawal of the Syrian army to the so-called "Sochi Line", under threat of a Turkish military offensive. Meetings between Ankara and Moscow continued without reaching an understanding, and on 27 February, some 30 Turkish soldiers were killed in an airstrike and Ankara began its operation in Idlib, Operation Spring Shield. Finally, Russia and Turkey agreed on a cessation of hostilities in the Idlib de-escalation zone effective from 6 March 2020. Despite the agreement, Turkey continued to send troops to the region between April and October<sup>61</sup>.

At the time of writing, Russia and Turkey are vying for control of Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in Syria. Tension continues there, and while Russia is consolidating its control and influence in the south of the country, Turkey is trying, for its part, not to lose positions in the northern region<sup>62</sup>. In recent months, manoeuvres in the Caucasus and Syria have been aimed at gaining advantages for Moscow and Ankara at the negotiating table. Both continue to struggle for territorial control and influence, while the Islamic State threatens Turkish-controlled areas in the north and central Syria<sup>63</sup>.

As seen on the ground in Syria, Russia's conventional deployment has the potential to change the scenario and open up new options for Moscow, both in its negotiations with Turkey and in the possibilities for Syrian forces to advance<sup>64</sup>. Turkey thus seemed poised to exert pressure on Russia in the Caucasus. In principle, in such a scenario Moscow would be more constrained than in Syria to act and respond to

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61 GRECO, A. "Turkey reinforces positions in greater Idlib to pressure Russia into negotiations." *Institute for the Study of War*. 07/10/2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/turkey-reinforces-positions-greater-idlib-pressure-russia-negotiations> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

62 GRECO, A. and CHRISTOU, W. "Syria situation report: October 28 - November 10, 2020". *Institute for the Study of War*. 13/11/2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/syria-situation-report-october-28-november-10-2020> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

63 GRECO, A. "Syria Situation Report: November 11- December 1, 2020". *Institute for the Study of War*. 03/12/2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/syria-situation-report-november-11-december-1-2020> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

64 IVANESCU, I. "Russia may deploy conventional forces to Syria". *Institute for the Study of War*. 17/10/2020. Retrieved from: <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russia-may-deploy-conventional-forces-syria> (last accessed 12/12/2020).

Turkish pressure. Ankara reportedly sought an optimal position in Nagorno-Karabakh to contest Moscow's regional influence, while at the same time gaining advantages in Syria.

For Russia, an open conflict in the Caucasus is neither desirable nor convenient in the current domestic and international context of health and economic crisis, public discontent, uncertainty over the future of nuclear agreements or its growing tension with the West; but neither is it desirable in the future. The costs of disrupting stability with a confrontation do not outweigh the potential gains that Moscow could reap from a regional crisis.

## Conclusions and Final Considerations

After the agreement ending the armed clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the control of Nagorno-Karabakh, the underlying territorial and ethnic conflict has not been resolved and seems to be in a state of latency once again.

It is difficult to dissociate the tension in the South Caucasus from the energy component, as it gives Azerbaijan a comparative advantage over Armenia, but also as a pull factor in the region, as well as an element of pressure among the actors in the region.

In the aftermath of the September crisis, Moscow's relationship with Baku and Moscow's with Yerevan has redefined its balances, at least in the medium term. The distance between the Armenian prime minister and the Kremlin, despite public signs of collaboration and diplomatic connection, and Yerevan's difficult-to-save dependence on Russia have worked in favour of the Kremlin's ability to manoeuvre in negotiating the ceasefire necessary for regional stability and, therefore, for Moscow's interests in the region. At the same time, Russia has been able to move closer to Baku without breaking its ties with Armenia.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have different capacities to recover from weeks of fighting. Azerbaijan's energy potential provides it with economic development opportunities that Armenia lacks. The latter, the main loser, needs Russian support to guarantee the *status quo* established since 10 November and thus avoid further territorial and political losses.

Baku, for its part, has won a double victory: the moral victory of making Armenia the official loser in the conflict; and the victory of regaining control of part of its territory. Armenia's territorial renunciation brings the governments in Moscow and Baku closer together, to the detriment of Yerevan and also Ankara, especially if the new situation manages to reduce military tension. In this case Turkey would lose its ability to exert pressure on Russia in the region. If the Kremlin consolidates its role as an indispensable actor for stability and, therefore, its ability to break it should it deem it necessary, the space for other players in the region would be significantly reduced, allowing them little room for manoeuvre and limited influence over Moscow.

Whether territorial, ethnic or religious, keeping conflicts in a perpetual state of stalemate has become a way of ensuring tense regional stability – a more feasible alternative to addressing the fractures that give rise to them. Thus, the option of Russia or Turkey getting involved in the definitive resolution of the conflict seems distant and would have consequences for the stability of the region that would not compensate Russia, due to the economic, military and political cost; nor Turkey, which would lose negotiating capacity with Russia, both involved in a relationship of balances that are sometimes very complicated to maintain, but which neither would want to break.

Russia cannot afford to lose positions and influence in Syria or the Middle East, let alone the Caucasus. The Kremlin has advanced its control of the region and has managed to push its role as mediator to the end of the conflict, leaving Erdogan on the sidelines of the agreed solution.

With the November agreement Russia has secured its hitherto absent military presence on Azerbaijani territory as a peacekeeping force along the Line of Contact. Moreover, by deploying FSB members, the Kremlin gains a new capacity to monitor Armenian and Azeri movements likely to break the ceasefire; but it also allows it to monitor Turkish influence and presence in Azerbaijan, with implications for Russian decisions on other scenarios such as in Syria or Libya.

Turkey appears to have been no stranger to the escalation of military tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the months leading up to the outbreak of the September conflict. However, it is less clear that Ankara has emerged victorious in Nagorno-Karabakh, nor that it has been in a position to make a positive reading for Turkish interests of the success achieved by Azerbaijan. In the post-conflict scenario, it will depend on the Kremlin's interest and need to assert its presence in the area. It remains to be seen whether Russia will open the door to effective shared control of compliance with the agreement beyond collaboration at the joint monitoring centre; and how it will react if it does.

If Russia manages to maintain security control in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, while allowing for Turkey's controlled participation in monitoring compliance with the agreement, the Kremlin could be in a position to defuse this area and this conflict as a sensitive area of pressure on Moscow. By having the evolution of the new *status quo* under its control, it takes the room for manoeuvre away from interference by other actors such as Turkey. Moreover, Russia might have it in its hands that the direction this scenario might take does not depend on the state of the relationship between Moscow and Ankara.

In Syria, meanwhile, the competition continues, with Russia strengthened in the wake of Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia's role as mediator in the Caucasus can be adapted to the Syrian context and exploited as a complement to conventional military avenues. The nature of the Syrian conflict, more diverse than Nagorno-Karabakh in both the number and diversity of actors and interests involved, widens the options in the Syrian balancing game between Ankara and Moscow.

Russia's decision not to intervene directly in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and to focus its attention (and that of international public opinion) on its involvement as chief mediator has proved to be in Moscow's interests. The Kremlin's diplomatic approach, which has recently gained prominence on several stages, seems to indicate that the first stage of Russian expansion has come to an end and another of consolidation of the positions and advantages achieved, especially since 2014, has taken hold. This is partly coincidental and partly motivated by the combination of the uncertain international context and the current Russian moment. The difficult economic conditions in the Federation and growing social unrest favour the implementation of a more restrained foreign policy, at least in the short term. This repose does not rule out a new expansionary cycle in the Russian Federation in the medium term. Perhaps it rather announces it.

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## *Safety culture in Spain a pending issue in education*

### **Abstract**

The origin and use of the term “culture of defence” in Spain can be traced back to the nineties and the definition of “culture of security” as set out in the National Defense Directive, 2004. The main method for increasing public awareness of this concept was identified in, the National Defence Directive (1996), National Security Strategies and an agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education (2015, 2018). Despite this there were factors which prevented the full inclusion of the subject within none-University education programmes such as the lack of a national unity pact in the field of education, the decision to include the topic in the curriculum of the subject “Ethical Values”, the lack of teachers trained in the area, decentralisation and the adoption of an education curriculum by educational publishers all of which gave rise to a general low level of understanding of the concept of “security and Defence culture” in the classroom.

### **Key words**

Education, culture of defence and security, consensus, ethical values, faculty, decentralisation, editorials, risks and threats.

### **Cite this article:**

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## Introduction

Félix Arteaga places the origin of the safety and defence culture at<sup>1</sup> in 1992, in an article entitled “National Defence Directive 1/2004” (2005) in the Real Instituto Elcano, according to the author: “Spanish directives, since their appearance in 1980, have had more of a formal, planning effect than a material, results-oriented effect on government action. However, they have served the culture of citizen defence since 1992, when they ceased to be reserved”. Pedro Bernal Gutiérrez places it in the 1996 National Defence Directive: “the preamble to the National Defence Directive 1/1996(8) contains what could serve as the basis or antecedent of what has come to be called “defence culture”, as indicated in Strategy Paper No. 155 published in 2011 by the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (hereinafter IIEEE) entitled “safety and defence culture. An ongoing project”. For his part, Alfredo Sanz y Calabria in “safety and defence Documents” no. 63, 2014, of the School of Advanced Defence Studies, under the heading “Messages: a culture of defence – a response?”<sup>2</sup> points to the end of compulsory military service.

Although there is no unanimity on the origin of the “safety and defence culture”, the proposed years are 1992, 1996, 2001, which would imply – depending on the date taken – that between 20 and 29 years have passed. Since then, more and more articles, book chapters and analyses have been published on this subject, as well as conferences, seminars, cycles and training courses, promoted by the IIEEE, the Association of Graduates in Advanced National Defence Studies (hereinafter ADALEDE), the International Security Studies Group (GESI) and even a radio programme<sup>3</sup> entitled “Nuestros soldados”. Along these lines, Javier Casas points out:

“In many universities in Spain, it has been common for years to hold seminars or workshops for reflection and debate on different aspects related to defence, risks and threats to peace, and shared security with our partners and allies (Casas, 2015, p.236)”.

However, the proposed vehicle for the transmission of the “safety and defence culture” is education, as it appears in the strategic texts. Indeed, as early as the 1996 National Defence Directive, the “general education system” was proposed in order to achieve “greater social support for the defence system”. An aspect we find again in the 2017 National Security Strategy:

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1 DOÑATE SANZ, M<sup>a</sup> Pilar. “La « cultura de seguridad » en la « Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional »”. Aproximación y estudio comparativo con nuestro entorno, UNED, 2016, p.7.

2 The specific text referred to: The solution proposed at the time was to promote something whose germ had long been beating in the bowels of Castellana 109, the Ministry’s headquarters: the “Culture of Defence” had been born (Sanz and Calabria, 2014, p.124).

3 Radio programme “ Para difundir la cultura de defensa”, directed and presented by Colonel Ángel Gómez de Agreda, <https://acami.es/nuestros-soldados/>.

“Spain must foster a culture of Homeland Security, fundamentally supported by an inclusive education system, which strengthens awareness of the main current threats and challenges, and their potential impact on the way of life and prosperity of Spaniards (ESN, 2017, p.26)”.

Along these lines, Rafael Calduch says:

“No less important is the gap that exists in the role of the education system at all levels in the knowledge of defence and the development of social awareness in this field. In this regard, it is worth remembering that, although education is a competence transferred to the regional administrations, the determination of the minimum contents of the curricula corresponds to the central State Administration (Calduch, 2018, p.144)”.

However, despite the fact that almost thirty years have passed since the publication of the first directive that explicitly referred to the field of education as a transmitter of security knowledge, there is hardly any evidence of its inclusion in the Spanish education system.

Thus, the hypothesis of this paper focuses on the existence of elements that could be slowing down the inclusion of safety culture in education and, therefore, there is currently a low level of “safety culture” and an almost non-existent “defence culture” in the Spanish education system. Some of these elements would be the lack of a state pact on education, the choice of the subject “Ethical Values” to mainly integrate these contents, the lack of teacher training in this field, educational decentralisation and the different curricular adaptations by publishers.

The argumentation of this hypothesis leads to the structuring of the article into two parts, a first theoretical part in which a brief approach is made to the terms “safety culture” and “defence culture”, to subsequently address the five elements mentioned, and a second practical part in which an analysis is carried out of the contents of the textbooks of the “Ethical Values” subject for the 4<sup>th</sup> year of ESO in 2016, with the Organic Law for the Improvement of Education (hereinafter, LOMCE) in force, focusing on the existence and/or non-existence of the risks and threats mentioned in the Spanish National Security Strategies, these being: armed conflicts, terrorism, organised crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, espionage, cyberspace, maritime, air and land vulnerability, critical infrastructure, economic and financial instability, energy vulnerability, migratory flows, emergencies and catastrophes, epidemics and pandemics, the effects of climate change, risk enhancers, as well as aspects related to the culture of defence. The publishers analysed in alphabetical order, Anaya, Diálogo, Edelvives, Proyecto Educativo, Santillana, S.M, Tabarca, Teide, Tria.

### “Safety culture” and “defence culture”

Security studies have been expanding their object of analysis in recent decades. The classical military approach is broadened by *Critical Studies Security*, coming from

schools (Paris, Copenhagen, Aberystwyth) as well as currents, extending to aspects such as political, economic, social, environmental or human (human security) - horizontally, as well as from nations to groups and individuals, to the international system, to international, regional, local institutions, non-governmental organisations, etc. (Rothschild, 1995, p.55).

The United Nations Assembly in the 2000 document “We the peoples, the role of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” would summarise it as follows:

“194. Following the end of these conflicts, a new understanding of the concept of security has emerged. It was once synonymous with the defence of territory against external attack, but the demands of security have meant that today it also encompasses the protection of communities and individuals from various internal acts of violence” (United Nations Assembly, 2000, p. 39).

It is therefore difficult to establish a universal and, above all, adjective-free definition of the concepts of ‘safety’ and ‘defence’” (Garrido, 2007, p.7).

This difficulty would extend to the definition of “safety culture” and “defence culture”<sup>4</sup>, which would lead to a confused perception on the part of the population, as demonstrated by the report published in 2019 by the “Sociological observatory on citizens’ perception of the activities, plans and programmes of the defence culture and awareness plan”. In this respect, Miguel Ángel Ballesteros states,

“Today we must speak of a culture of safety and defence or simply of Security, which necessarily includes the concept of defence. Most of the activities that are carried out today in our military units are framed in the field of security and not only defence, because while defence is the way to oppose a danger or threat, security is much more demanding and more difficult to achieve, it has a more preventive and utopian character when trying to keep out of any risk, danger or threat to people and goods that are the object of security (Ballesteros, 2011, p.53)”

Thus, the approach used in this article for the terms “safety culture” and “defence culture” would be the one proposed in the Defence Culture Portal<sup>5</sup>, based on Law

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<sup>4</sup> The “Sociological observatory on citizens’ perception of the activities, plans and programmes of the defence culture and awareness plan” published in 2019 dedicated a section to the question “What is defence culture for you?” Among the proposed answers: Set of knowledge that enables citizens to be aware of the need to defend their interests, their society and their values /Customs, traditions and way of life of the armed forces/Scientific and technological development applied to the defence and security industry/Artistic and intellectual activities related to the armed forces/ Knowledge of military history and heritage/Knowledge of the State’s resources for dealing with risks and threats. Although with different percentages, all were chosen. [https://www.defensa.gob.es/portaldecultura/Galerias/docencia/ficheros/2020/Julio/Informe\\_Defensa\\_def\\_12dic.pdf](https://www.defensa.gob.es/portaldecultura/Galerias/docencia/ficheros/2020/Julio/Informe_Defensa_def_12dic.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, Defence Culture Portal, <https://www.defensa.gob.es/portaldecultura/comun/culturaDefensa.html>.

36/2015 on National Security, where the following answer is proposed to the question What is defence culture?

“The government will promote a culture of national security (...). To this end, the Government will implement actions and plans aimed at increasing society’s knowledge and awareness of the requirements of national security and of the risks and threats that could compromise it (...). The Ministry of Defence contributes to the culture of National Security with the ‘culture of defence’, understood as the body of knowledge that allows people to develop judgements or opinions about the instruments with which the State protects citizens from certain dangers, the Armed Forces being one of the important instruments” (*author’s emphasis*).

### Factors that would slow down and/or hinder the inclusion of safety and defence culture in the school curriculum

The 21<sup>st</sup> century society has to face new risks and threats, which education is gradually taking on board. In this regard, education specialist Jean-Marie De Ketele states:

“If, between 2005 and 2014, education systems have seen the growing importance of globalisation, international evaluations and Asian education systems, they have since witnessed an acceleration in the development of numerous phenomena (technological, mobility, climatic, economic or political exoduses, pressures exerted by supranational organisations, by NGOs, by the market or by philosophical or religious bodies, the growing importance of the “shadow school”<sup>6</sup>) and consequently, tensions between tradition and modernity, between community withdrawal and openness to diversity, between the educational functions of schools and those required by the evolution of society, between favoured and disadvantaged areas (supranational regions, country, region of the country, districts), between the private good and the common good. To cope, political and educational authorities try to reform the established systems, whose educational system aims to train the actors of tomorrow’s world (De Ketele, 2020, p.13)”.

The document published after the XIV International Congress on Theory of Education held in Murcia from 21 to 23 November 2017, organised by the Department of Theory and History of Education of the University of Murcia and the academic network Seminario Interuniversitario de Teoría de la Educación (SITE) under the title “Education in the face of the challenges of the new citizenship”, was pronounced along the same lines,

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<sup>6</sup> The “*école de l’ombre*” (shadow school) is the name given to private, supplementary courses given by teachers or companies.

“Since the first decades of the 21st century, we have experienced unimaginable changes that have reached all sectors of society. Although there have been great advances in the conditions of communal living, brought about by the emergence of new global social realities, there is still much suffering in the world. War conflicts and the exodus of millions of people, the growing inequality between rich and poor, environmental problems or the continuous discrimination based on sex, culture or religion, have turned civic life into a matter of special attention because it affects the different sectors of society (family, school, media, culture and religion) (University of Murcia, 2017, p.4)” (University of Murcia, 2017, p.4).

In this regard, as mentioned in the Introduction, for decades Spanish strategy documents have proposed formal education as a way to raise public awareness of armed conflicts, terrorism, cybersecurity, organised crime, etc. without much success. Some of the elements that might be slowing down their inclusion are discussed below.

### *The lack of a state pact in education*

In “Papeles para un pacto educativo” (Marina, J.A, Pellicer, C., Manso, J., 2016, p.1) it is stated, referring to the educational reforms, that: “Immobility is as dangerous as permanent change”. Thus, eight education laws have been passed in Spain since the transition to democracy, always coinciding with changes of government<sup>7</sup>. Following the chronological order, the Organic Law 5/1980 appears, which regulates the Statute of Schools (LOECE), in 1985 the Organic Law on the Right to Education (LODE) is approved, in 1990 the Organic Law on the General Organisation of the Spanish Education System (LOGSE), in 1995 the Organic Law on Participation, Evaluation and Governance of Educational Centres (LOPEG), in 2002 the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE), in 2006 the Organic Law on Education (LOE), in 2013 the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) and on 25 November 2020 the Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Education (LOMLOE) entered the Senate, reflecting the “basic consensus” reached in the approval of Article 27 of the Constitution.

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<sup>7</sup> “In the field of education, the PSOE and the PP have always voted against their respective education laws, appearing in the media as the bearers of an all-out struggle, with permanently opposing and irreconcilable positions; however, the LOCE (2002) of the PP did not completely repeal the previous regulations of the PSOE, on the contrary, it maintained substantial chapters such as the aims and principles, participation in education, vocational training, compensatory education, quality, etc.; and, if we compare it with the LOE (2006), there are texts that coincide in the objectives”. ESTEBAN FRADES, Santiago. *Condicionantes y antecedentes del pacto educativo y social en España*, *Revista de la Asociación de Inspectores de Educación de España*, nº12, 2010, p. 5.

However, several attempts have been made over the years<sup>8</sup> to achieve a state education policy, so far without success. The first one took place in 1997 at the initiative of the Encuentro Foundation, the second one in 2004 with María Jesús San Segundo Gómez (Minister of Education), in 2009 another approach was promoted at the initiative of Ángel Gabilondo (Minister of Education) and finally at the end of 2016 a Subcommittee for the elaboration of a Social and Political State Pact – broken 15 months later – was approved. In this regard, Goodson states:

“The school has always been a “terrain of confrontation” where the forces and influence of various social groups have struggled to get their purposes prioritised. Extensive work has been carried out on the policy implications and outcomes of this continuing struggle. One of the underdeveloped areas, however, has been the confrontation over the school curriculum.” (Goodson, 1995, p.53).

The result is the constant change in curricula, subjects, purposes, etc. that would have influenced and could continue to influence the inclusion of “safety and defence culture” in the education system. An example of this situation is explained by Javier Casas<sup>9</sup>,

“When in 2006 the Organic Law 2/2006 on Education created the subject ‘Education for Citizenship and Human Rights’ (...) it made it possible to introduce in the curriculum of this subject, in primary, secondary and high school, such basic substantive aspects as the concept of defence as an essential service for the community, civic and supportive in the service of peace (...) Subsequently, the new Organic Law 8/2013, for the improvement of educational quality, of 9 December 2013, has

8 For each attempt at a rapprochement of positions, a document has been produced to provide an overview of the educational situation. “Declaración conjunta a favor de la educación” (1997): [https://www.fund-encuentro.org/fundacion\\_php/cuadernos/varios/Declaracion%20conjunta.pdf](https://www.fund-encuentro.org/fundacion_php/cuadernos/varios/Declaracion%20conjunta.pdf), “Una educación de calidad para todos y entre todos” (2004) [https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publivena/descarga.action?f\\_codigo\\_agc=18944](https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publivena/descarga.action?f_codigo_agc=18944), “Bases para un pacto social y político por la Educación” (2009) <https://intersindical.org/stepv/acsin/pacte2010/7-pactofinal220410.pdf>, “Papeles para un pacto educativo” (2016).

9 One aspect that would slow down or disagree with the inclusion, in this case, of the “culture of defence” – the presence of the Armed Forces in education – according to Javier Casas would be a part of the population “At the end of the 1990s there was already an approach from the Ministry of Defence towards the educational community, to introduce some reflection on defence in the school environment, but with negative results after the accusation of some parents’ and teachers’ associations that they were trying to “militarise education” (Casas, 2015, p. 236). In this line is the complaint by the CGT Aragón and La Rioja, for a teacher training course given by the army (2019) under the title “The culture of peace, safety and defence: a shared responsibility”, <http://www.cgtfedens.com/cgt-denuncia-un-curso-de-formacion>. While another article states: “However, the progressive appreciation that Spanish society has subsequently shown towards its military has meant that in 2007 the new subject was incorporated as a matter of course, with the understanding that they are part of the public services that the State provides to citizens”, (Casas, 2012, pp.20-21).

introduced a new subject in Primary Education called Social and Civic Values, and in Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) ‘Ethical Values’ (...). At the proposal of SEGENPOL, the Ethical Values curriculum incorporated two relevant elements to enable young people to reflect on the value of defence for the protection of peace and the well-being of all. We trust that this trajectory will be maintained at the time of writing the textbooks for the new ‘Values’ subjects (Casas, 2015, pp.236-238) (author’s emphasis)”.

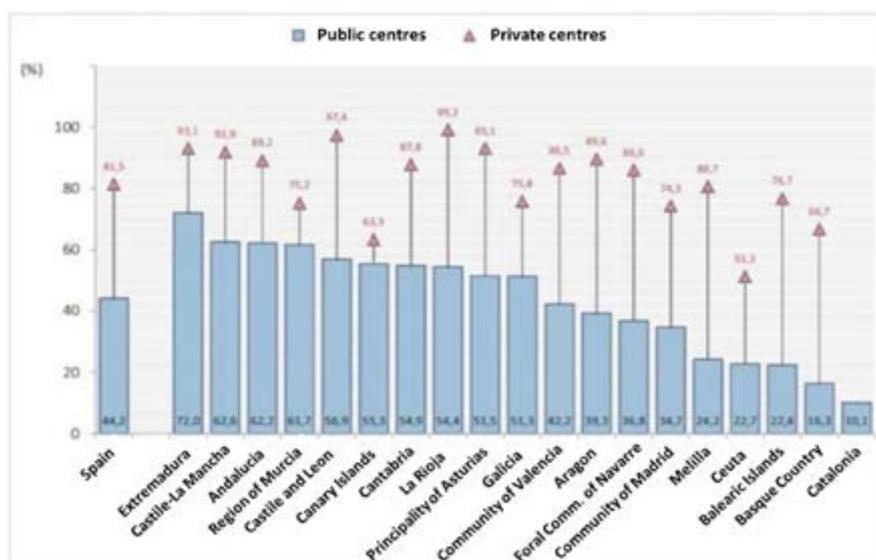
Therefore, as the ANELE association points out in its report “El libro educativo en España 2017-18”:

“There is unanimous recognition of the need, opportunity and convenience of reaching an education pact. Without a basic agreement on the principles that should govern education, assumed by science, contrasted by experience and shared by the vast majority of experts, effective education that makes free citizens is impossible.” (ANELE, 2018, p.4).

### *The subject “Ethical Values”*

The subject “Ethical Values” in secondary education in general and in the fourth year of ESO in particular, is classified as a specific subject, i.e. it is partially regulated by the autonomous communities and they allow students the freedom to choose between “Ethical Values” or “Religion”. In the time frame proposed for this work,

**Figure D1.35**  
Percentage of students studying religion in Compulsory Secondary Education, by Autonomous Communities and Cities. Academic year 2016-2017



Source: Europa Laica

2016-2017, the association “Europa Laica”<sup>10</sup> published the article “Data on the number of students who teach religion classes in the 2016-2017 academic year according to the Ministry of Education”. The graph shows a very marked difference in the choice of the subject by region and between the public and private sectors for this period.

The existence of the subject of religion in compulsory education responds to the treaties that the Spanish state signed in 1979 with the Holy See and in 1992 with the Evangelical, Jewish and Muslim churches, in compliance with Article 27.3 of the Constitution “The public authorities guarantee the right of parents to ensure that their children receive the religious and moral education that is in accordance with their own convictions”.

Thus, despite not being a compulsory subject, the inter-administrative framework agreement signed on 4 December 2015 between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education, in the second clause dedicated to the “Purpose”, proposes it for the development of this culture:

“The purpose of this agreement is to promote the knowledge and awareness of young schoolchildren on issues related to peace, safety and defence, in particular through the development of the curricular content of the subjects ‘Social and Civic Values’ and ‘Ethical Values’ in order to disseminate, in primary and secondary schools, the culture of defence and the values associated with it, as an instrument at the service of peace and freedom.” (Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2015, p.3).

In view of this information, it can be concluded that if “safety and defence culture” is included in the subject “Ethical Values” “ as proposed in the inter-administrative framework agreement - the content would not be available to pupils choosing “Religion”.

### *Teacher training*

In the inter-ministerial framework agreement signed in 2015 for the improvement of knowledge in safety and defence culture education (Izquierdo, 2016, p.2), in the second clause (Purpose) point 3, teacher training is proposed as an action (Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, 2015, p.4).

In fact, since 2014, courses aimed at training teachers in “safety and defence culture” have been offered , generally face-to-face, although in 2018 “Defence, a public good” was offered through the INTEF platform. The titles agreed for the face-to-face courses

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<sup>10</sup> Europa Laica, “Datos de alumnado que da clases de religión curso 2016-2017 según el Ministerio de Educación”, <https://laicismo.org/datos-de-alumnado-que-da-clase-de-religion-curso-2016-2017-segun-el-ministerio-de-educacion/212831>.

have been diverse: “Conscious citizens in a world in conflict”, “Strategies for security and peace: new scenarios”, “Culture of peace, safety and defence: a shared responsibility”, “Education for peace and security”. The places where they have been held include Zaragoza, Valladolid, Murcia<sup>11</sup>, Madrid<sup>12</sup>, Oviedo<sup>13</sup>, etc. In addition, among the characteristics of the course is that the number of places is around twenty-five to thirty, with a timetable of between twelve and forty hours, taught once a year.

The contents include the culture of peace, safety and defence, security strategies: risks and threats in a globalised world, cyberspace as a criminal, terrorist and war scenario, Spain’s contribution to peace and security: participation of our armed forces in peace missions, the UME, the role of women in the armed forces, cybersecurity, recruitment and orientation in the Ministry of Defence, and the international dimension of security: UN, EU, NATO, conflict, public opinion and media, etc.

Thus, the number of participants per course, the frequency, the few locations within the communities where it has been implemented, would indicate that teacher training is slow. Therefore, without trained teachers, it would be difficult to transmit the “culture of safety and defence”, which would make it possible to include it as one of the elements that would slow down the inclusion of the aforementioned knowledge.

### *Decentralisation of education*

The centralisation or decentralisation of a country is not a matter of chance but is influenced by historical and political factors (Puelles, p.355, 1992), although in addition to “history – tradition, inertia, mentalities, previous experiences – and political organisation”, “ideological, geopolitical, demographic, linguistic, cultural, economic, financial, socio-professional factors” (Viñao, 1994, p. 32) are added (Viñao, 1994, p. 32). Thus, during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Spain was a centralised country, although, to limit the situation to the present day, since the 1978 Constitution, decentralisation has begun at various levels, including education.

UNESCO defines decentralisation as “the transfer, at different levels, of decision-making powers from central government to intermediate administrations, local administrations and schools” (UNESCO, 2005, p.13). In this respect, and applying it to the Spanish education system, the distribution of competences is as follows,

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<sup>11</sup> Teacher’s Online Classroom, The Culture of Peace, safety and defence IV: A Shared Responsibility, [https://teleformacion.murciaeduca.es/course/info.php?id=5388&lang=es\\_es](https://teleformacion.murciaeduca.es/course/info.php?id=5388&lang=es_es).

<sup>12</sup> CESEDEN, Inauguration of the course for teachers in Madrid “Ciudadanos conscientes en un mundo en conflicto” 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2018, [https://www.defensa.gob.es/ceseden/ceseden/actividades/noticias/noticias/2018/2018\\_04\\_Inauguracion\\_Curso\\_para\\_profesores\\_CAM.html](https://www.defensa.gob.es/ceseden/ceseden/actividades/noticias/noticias/2018/2018_04_Inauguracion_Curso_para_profesores_CAM.html).

<sup>13</sup> CPD Oviedo, Strategies for security and peace: new scenarios <https://cproviedo.es/estrategias-para-la-seguridad-y-la-paz-nuevos-escenarios>.

“The autonomous system of territorial organisation of the State has a direct influence in the field of education and curriculum, and implies, in general terms, that the State assumes the competence to approve basic educational regulations – among which are the minimum and common teachings – in addition to other exclusive competences, while the Autonomous Communities are responsible for developing and completing these basic regulations and managing the system in their territorial area. This distribution of powers is the reflection, in the educational world, of the decentralising process of the territorial organisation of the State that originated with the regulation of Title VIII of the Constitutional Text (Frías, 2007, p.203)”.

Thus, the distribution of educational competences in the design of the basic curriculum for Compulsory Secondary Education would be divided between the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, the Regional Ministries or Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities and the Education Centres. Some of them are highlighted below following the content developed by Eurydice<sup>14</sup>:

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training,

- determine the common contents and assessable learning standards of the core subjects.
- determine the standards of assessable learning in the specific subjects.

Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities,

- complement the contents of the core subjects.
- establish the contents of the specific and free configuration subjects.

Educational establishments,

- complement the contents of all subjects according to the educational offer.

Therefore, in order for the “culture of safety and defence” to reach all students, it should be part of the Ministry of Education’s competences (common content). However, as has already been pointed out, the subject “Ethical Values” forms part of the specific subjects, which would imply, according to the information obtained by Eurydice, that the Ministry of Education determines the learning standards but it would be the Regional Ministries or Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities which would establish the contents.

### *Publishers and textbooks*

The 1970s brought changes in the field of school pedagogy, an educational law that made schooling compulsory and an increase in the birth rate, (Beas, 1999, p.10),

14 Eurydice, *General Organisation and Administration of the Education System*, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-and-governance-79\\_es](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-and-governance-79_es).

“which led to some publishing houses languishing” (Miñon, Magisterio, Dalmau Carles, Hijos de Santiago Rodríguez, etc.) and others to emerge strongly on the book market (Anaya, Santillana, Vicens Vives, etc.) (Beas, 1999, p.145) (Beas, 1999, p.145). Among the changes, it should also be noted that the encyclopaedia would be replaced by the textbook, specialising by subject, the book becomes – together with the role of publishers – a fundamental axis for the adaptation of the school curriculum, whose incidence is “relevant both qualitatively and quantitatively, as it is, in practice, a didactic element that strongly influences and conditions what is done in most classes”. (Cintas, 2000, p.97).

In this context, and focusing its role on one of the aspects that would hinder the inclusion of the “culture of safety and defence” in the educational framework, one could highlight the curricular adaptation<sup>15</sup>. Indeed, textbooks<sup>16</sup>, although they should be mediators of learning, have historically become “the most important curricular proposal that interprets and concretises the official curriculum for teachers” (Braga, 2016, p.202). In this respect, Rosa Cintas Serrano states:

The studies carried out have provided interesting reflections on what the curriculum developed by publishers for teachers is like and what effects it has on educational practice, showing quite a consensus in their points of view: the educational administration is allowing publishers to design the curriculum that is put into practice in most schools: the publishers, driven by market interests and without clear criteria or demands from the administration, generally produce books that are comfortable for teachers and not innovative proposals that could contribute to a renewal of teaching (Cintas, 2000, p.98).

However, the “offer is sufficiently rich and varied for teachers to be able to choose and discard those books that do not fit the students and the regulations” (Beas, 1999, p.150). In the analysis of the textbooks for the subject “Ethical Values” for the 4<sup>th</sup> year of ESO, the diversity of editorial proposals<sup>17</sup> and the diversity in the curricular adaptation of each one of them can be seen.

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<sup>15</sup> The importance of proper curriculum monitoring should also be stressed. In Spain. Since Curriculum monitoring. The LOCE (2002) and later the LOE (2006) state that “the publishing and adoption of textbooks does not require any type of prior authorisation from the education administration” (Braga, 2016, p.201).

<sup>16</sup> There are supporters and opponents of the use of textbooks. The former consider it, among others, as a guarantor of equality, and the latter consider that it chooses content by eliminating others, undermines the critical spirit or replaces the teacher (Fernández, 2017, pp.201-217).

<sup>17</sup> However, reference could be made in this respect to publications by the IEEE or ADALEDE on “safety and defence culture” for teacher support: IEEE, *Las Fuerzas Armadas en defensa de la paz y la seguridad*, Ministry of Defence, 2011, Casas Álvarez, Francisco Javier, *De la Esperanza y Martín-Pinillos, José Manuel. Educación para la ciudadanía. La defensa, compromiso cívico y solidario al servicio de la paz*, Ministry of Defence, 2010, etc. Also from publications specialising in risks and

## Analysis

The practical part focuses on the study of the appearance – approximate, not exhaustive – in the “Ethical Values” textbooks for the 2016-2017 academic year of 4<sup>th</sup> ESO of the risks and threats listed in the National Security Strategies: armed conflicts, terrorism, organised crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, espionage, cyberspace, maritime, air and land vulnerability, critical infrastructure, economic and financial instability, energy vulnerability, migratory flows, emergencies and catastrophes, epidemics and pandemics, the effects of climate change, risk enhancers, as well as aspects related to the culture of defence.

There are nine publishers analysed, in alphabetical order: Anaya, Diálogo, Edelvives, Proyecto Educativo, Santillana, S.M, Tabarca, Teide, Tria.

It also takes into account the aspects related to the “culture of safety and defence” that appear in the LOMCE programme, these being two: the cross-cutting elements and the contents of the curriculum in the subject of “Ethical Values” in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of ESO.

Thus, the cross-cutting elements that would appear in the programme would be the following,

- Educational administrations shall promote learning about the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts (...), peace, democracy, respect for human rights, respect for men and women equally, respect for people with disabilities and the rejection of terrorist violence, plurality, respect for the rule of law, respect and consideration for the victims of terrorism and the prevention of terrorism and any kind of violence.
- The teaching programme should cover (...) terrorist violence and any form of violence, racism or xenophobia, including the study of the Jewish Holocaust as a historical fact. (...)The curricula of Compulsory Secondary Education and Baccalaureate will incorporate curricular elements related to sustainable development and the environment, the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, abuse and mistreatment of people with disabilities, risk situations derived from the inappropriate use of Information and Communication Technologies, as well as protection in the event of emergencies and catastrophes” (LOMCE, article 6) (author’s emphasis).

And, the contents of the curriculum of the subject “Ethical Values” for 4<sup>th</sup> ESO would appear in the following box,

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threats, such as for example: Tucker, Laura, *Entender el cambio climático: información y recursos para el profesorado*, Madrid, ed. Narcea, 2020.

**BLOCK 5. ETHICAL VALUES, LAW, UDHR AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES**

Evaluation criteria	Learning standards
5. To understand the mission attributed to the armed forces in the Spanish Constitution and its relationship with Spain's commitments to international organisations in favour of security and peace, reflecting on the importance of international law in regulating and limiting the use and application of force and power.	5.1 Know, analyse and assume as a citizen, the international commitments made by Spain in defence of peace and the protection of human rights <sup>18</sup> , as a member of international organisations such as the UN, NATO, the EU, etc. 5.2 Explain the importance of the mission of the armed forces, (in art. 15 of the National Defence Law) in terms of defence and national security, human rights, the promotion of peace and their contribution in emergency situations and humanitarian aid, both national and international. 5.3 Analyse the consequences of armed conflicts at the international level, appreciating the importance of international organisations that promote and monitor compliance with international law, based on the UDHR.

BOE no. 3 of 3 January 2015, p. 543<sup>19</sup>

ETHICAL VALUES 4 <sup>TH</sup> ESO	1. ANAYA
	2. DIÁLOGO
	3. EDELVIVES <sup>20</sup>
	4. PROYECTO EDUCATIVO
	5. SANTILLANA
	6. S.M <sup>21</sup>
	7. TABARCA
	8. TEIDE
	9. TRIA <sup>22</sup>

18 See, [https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publivena/descarga.action?f\\_codigo\\_agc=21199](https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publivena/descarga.action?f_codigo_agc=21199) The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has had a Publications Centre since 1940, which is responsible for publishing and disseminating publications on the Department's areas of competence: educational innovation, vocational training, teacher training, educational technologies, educational cooperation, academic organisation, education abroad, grants and study aids, organisation, evaluation and innovation of teaching, issuing and validation of official Spanish qualifications, preparation of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, design and development of actions in technical and vocational lifelong learning.

19 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT (2015). BOE no. 3, 3 January 2015, pp.169-546, <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rd/2014/12/26/1105/dof/spa/pdf>

20 The Edelvives project "focuses on the dignity of the person, respect for interpersonal relationships, critical and reflective thinking, justice, rights and the achievement of an ethical system of values", <https://www.edelvives.com/es/proyectos-educativos/p/valores-eticos-eso>. Thus, there are no aspects related to "safety culture" as discussed in this article.

21 According to the introduction to the book, the aim of the subject is the construction of one's own personality.

22 On page 44 of the 4<sup>th</sup> ESO Ethical Values book, the question is the international calendar of historical events sufficient to raise awareness of ethical issues in today's world? Numerous days are listed on this page, some of which are relevant to the subject of the article.

<b>ARMED CONFLICTS</b>	<b>1.</b>	Fratricidal wars in Africa (p.18), during the Second World War many African-American soldiers from the USA fought in Europe (p.26), Vietnam War, First Gulf War (p.38), International War Crimes Tribunal (p.51), clashes between groups are solved by wars and persecutions (p.69), etc.
	<b>2.</b>	Aerial bombing Kunduz northern Afghanistan victims three children (p.7), fleeing war in Syria (p.9), war crimes, crimes against humanity, Nuremberg, extermination camps (p.19), armed conflicts, ethnic genocides (p.38), 25 August Serbian army targeted (p.39), bombing, snipers, genocides (p.39), from World War II (p.44), Rwandan genocide 1994 (p.46), report yourself Gulf war 2003 compare Syria against DAESH in 2015 (p.47), International Criminal Court, Balkan war, Rwandan genocide (p.53), war is a massacre between peoples (p.67), etc.
	<b>3.</b>	
	<b>4.</b>	Civil war 1990s Sierra Leone (p.10), World War II (p.21), failed state (p.37), war (p.53), International Criminal Court (p.105), major wars throughout history (p.106), etc.
	<b>5.</b>	We are an inherently violent species: war, genocide, murder (p.9), after World War II (p.13), when Tarim was 15 years old war broke out in his country (p.16), Jacob, Jewish Holocaust survivor (p.16), Rebecca Holocaust survivor, gas chamber (p.17), Afghan girl who, when a bomb fell on her house, died in the war (p.17), globalisation tensions and risks (p.37), Alfred Nobel armaments factory, military armaments (p.40), ( <i>The War of the Two Worlds</i> ) US army, poisonous gases (p.52), child soldiers, war-weary, children living in armed conflicts (p.56), war is a fact of life in many parts of the world, situations of poverty, marginalisation, violence, recruiting child soldiers (p.56), what is a child soldier? (p.58), Andouarin (Rwanda), Niara (Colombia), Zida (Darfur), refugee camps (p.58), Joaquin Gonzalez (ex-combatant), John Costner (military advisor), Lucien Badjoko (former child soldier and writer), Omar Centelles (guerrilla recruitment chief) (p.59), international agreements: minors in conflict (p.60), the Hague Court, the International Court of Justice (the wall between Israel and Palestine, the borders of Namibia, the Sahara) (p.61), “We, the peoples of the United Nations, determined to preserve the scourge of war” (p.61), in the war child soldiers (p.63), Joshu’s diary, “hunger is eating away at me, I don’t know if we will survive” (p.63), Vietnam war (p.66), reintegration of child soldiers (p.66), aid for former child soldiers in Uganda (p.67), etc.
	<b>6.</b>	There will be no peace between nations without peace between religions (p.13), how should conflicts be resolved? (p.15), wars (p.26), rules for resolving conflicts (p.26), 20th century the bloodiest in history, victims of political, religious and social conflicts (p.29), huge amounts of money spent on weapons that would be used to destroy the planet (p.37), heinous crimes during the Second World War (p.39), South Africa (apartheid) (p.45), the Nazi regime murdered more than five million people (p.46), 20th century genocides, massacres, persecutions (p.46), tortured or killed (p.48), clashes between Hindus and Muslims (p.50), the case of coltan: manufacturing technological devices such as mobile phones, video consoles, reserves Democratic Republic of Congo fight control mines have produced victims, guerrillas, children forced to work in the mines (p.98), etc.
	<b>7.</b>	The two world wars convulsed the world, wars have caused atrocities (p.14), monitoring truce between Israel and neighbouring Arab countries, cessation of armed conflicts (p.59), Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia, Cambodia, Mozambique, Tajikistan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, civil wars Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Kosovo (p.60), horrors of World War II, enforced disappearances, “failed state” (p.99), Rwandan genocide (p.104), etc.

<b>ARMED CONFLICTS</b>	<b>8.</b>	Wars, destruction, murder, torture, genocide (p.12), holocaust, genocide (p.79), militarisation of conflicts (p.87), wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria (p.93), poor countries more prone to armed conflicts (p.95), deaths in civil wars (p.85), acts of genocide (p.97), etc.
	<b>9.</b>	Holocaust victims (p.44), International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (p.44), Disarmament Week (p.44), International Day for the Prevention of Environment in War and Armed Conflict (p.44), Jews address Auschwitz, concentration camp, World War II (p.66), inventions, gunpowder (p.68), in what sense can gunpowder be used constructively? (p.72), etc.
<b>TERRORISM</b>	<b>1.</b>	Terrorism (p.40), attacks by violent groups (p.46), terrorist groups carrying out one-off actions (p.48), international terrorism (p.84), etc.
	<b>2.</b>	September 2005 Danish newspaper terrorism (p.19), Charly Hebdo Muslim radicals (p.24), Terrorist attacks in France 2015 (p.40), DAESH developed in Iraqi prisons after Gulf War (p.40), What is the best policy to end terrorism? (p.41), DAESH (Islamic State) occupied areas in Syria and Iraq, targeted bombings, civilian casualties (p.47), do you think by chance terrorist groups strengthened in areas of poverty? (p.81), etc.
	<b>3.</b>	
	<b>4.</b>	Terrorism (p. 53), threats to security terrorism Twin Towers attack New York (11 September 2001), 11 March 2004 in Madrid, attacks in Paris 13 November 2015, Brussels (22 March 2016), (p.108), etc.
	<b>5.</b>	
	<b>6.</b>	Terrorist attacks (p.26), etc.
	<b>7.</b>	
	<b>8.</b>	The terrorism of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century has evolved, they have similar armament nations, nuclear armament, chemical, control of cybernetic networks, global character, indiscriminate violence, etc. (p.34), search and comment terrorist acts (p.35), terrorism is nourished by the climate of violence of war, inequality, (p.39), GAL, ETA (p.77), choose a conflict describe its causes (p.89), after the attacks of the Twin Towers – they meant a turn in the international terrorism -- (p.92), attacks of Moscow, London, Brussels (p.94), attacks of September 11, 2001, terrorism especially jihadist (p.98), etc.
	<b>9.</b>	
<b>ORGANISED CRIME</b>	<b>1.</b>	
	<b>2.</b>	Eight million children forced into bonded labour: prostitution, pornography, soldiers in armed conflicts, illicit activities (p.37), mafias exploiting women sexually or migrants, arms traffickers (p.40), cutting off funding sources, preventing arms trade (p.48), exploiting women through prostitution (p.52), trafficking in human beings (p.56), research on mafias smuggling migrants (p.92), etc.
	<b>3.</b>	
	<b>4.</b>	Trafficking in women and girls (p.26), mafias and organised crime, trafficking, trafficking in drugs, arms, human organs or money laundering (p.108), etc.
	<b>5.</b>	Child labour and labour exploitation (p.39), Iqbal Masih worked as a slave (p.70), one in ten transplants in the world comes from illegal trafficking (p.75), etc.
	<b>6.</b>	Human trafficking (p.47), sexual exploitation (p.48), no one shall be held in slavery (p.51), etc.

<b>ORGANISED CRIME</b>	7.	
	8.	In the labour field exploited children (p.34), money laundered from drug trafficking (p.40), international crime (p.58), organised crime (p.94), money laundering (p.96), drug trafficking, organised crime (p.96), drug trafficking, organised crime, drug traffickers (p.97), organised crime (p.99), internet fraud (p.99), what is jihad? (p.99), etc.
	9.	Indian children working in a brick factory (p.8), child exploitation (p.11), non-exploitation of children (p.18), etc.
<b>PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION</b>	1.	
	2.	North Korea conducts nuclear tests, Iran nuclear programme (p.41), 30,000 nuclear weapons (p.41), investigate which countries have nuclear weapons (p.42), Hiroshima atomic bomb (p.62), etc.
	3.	
	4.	Science and technology problems face humanity whether they are nuclear (nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants), chemical (environmental pollution), biological (loss of biodiversity) or informational (privacy, virtual reality), (p.60), etc.
	5.	Nuclear weapons proliferation (p.61), Hiroshima (p.66), boycott nuclear testing (p.78), etc.
	6.	
	7.	International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), nuclear safety and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (p.55), etc.
	8.	
	9.	The atomic bomb virtually unlimited power of technology (p.58), nuclear power (p.58), etc.
<b>ESPIONAGE</b>	1.	Dangers of the information society: espionage (p.40), etc.
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	SHIELD (Homologated System of Intelligence, Espionage, Logistics and Defence), secret intelligence super-organisation (p.40), in 1985 the French secret services sank it (p.78), etc.
	6.	
	7.	
	8.	
	9.	
<b>CYBERSPACE</b>	1.	The Sentinel 1 satellite (p.34), etc.
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	Uruguayan fields spacecraft take-off runways (p.52), etc.
	6.	
	7.	Cyberbullying (p.21), satellite telecommunications, satellites (p.35), NASA, illustrations landing spacecraft on the Moon, missions to the Moon (p.58), New Horizons planetary mission, space probe (p.106), etc.
	8.	
	9.	Man on the Moon (p.60), construction of sophisticated technological devices to transport man to the Moon (p.61), etc.

<b>MARITIME, AIRSPACE AND LAND VULNERABILITY</b>	1.	Piracy (p.40), space race (p.130), etc.
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	Depletion of natural resources (p. 85), our planet cannot supply resources indefinitely (p.117), etc.
	5.	
	6.	Conserve and use oceans and seas and marine resources for sustainable development, protect, promote sustainable uses of terrestrial ecosystems (p.51) etc.
	7.	
	8.	
	9.	
<b>CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURES</b>	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
	6.	Building infrastructure (p.51), etc.
	7.	
	8.	
	9.	
<b>ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL INSTABILITY</b>	1.	The economy (p.34), year 2008 economic crisis affected Spain (p.84), etc.
	2.	Economic crisis of 2008 (p.78), etc.
	3.	
	4.	Economic crisis (p.85), etc.
	5.	Fundamental concepts of economics (p.84), etc.
	6.	If there is an economic crisis in China, it can cause factory closures in Mexico (p.10), etc.
	7.	Greek crisis (p.24), global economic crisis (p.86), etc.
	8.	Financial crises (p.58), etc.
	9.	
<b>ENERGY VULNERABILITY</b>	1.	Shortage of resources (p.46), etc.
	2.	Progressive depletion of energy sources (p.97), etc.
	3.	
	4.	Loss of biodiversity, accelerated deforestation, etc. endanger the sustainability of the planet, (p.53) etc.
	5.	
	6.	Goals by 2030 to ensure availability of water, affordable, secure, safe and sustainable energy for all (p.51), etc.
	7.	Sustainable use of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate (p.54), etc.
	8.	
	9.	
<b>IRREGULAR MIGRATION FLOWS</b>	1.	War conflicts and humanitarian crises provoke migratory flows (p.84), they are forced to move, becoming refugees (p.113), etc.
	2.	Migrant, refugees, forced to leave their country because of war (p.9), forced displacement (p.38), exodus of Syrian citizens in 2015 and 2016 due to conflict (p.81), hunger and poverty main reasons for most migratory exoduses (p.86), migration and xenophobia (p.88), migration and human rights (p.89), migration flows (p.96), etc.

<b>IRREGULAR MIGRATION FLOWS</b>	3.	
	4.	Migratory movements (p.40, p. 85), etc.
	5.	Displaced populations (p.72), etc.
	6.	Refugee camps, migrants who risk death for a more dignified life (p.26), denial of asylum rights to refugees (p.47), etc.
	7.	Infringements of migrants' rights (p.16), migratory flows of the population in search of life opportunities, exoduses from war situations (p.34), etc.
	8.	Refugee camp (p.81), mass exodus of refugees (p.87), large movements of people forced to migrate (p.97), etc.
<b>EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS</b>	9.	Country sending migrants, receiving migrants (p.14), World Refugee Day (p.44), etc.
	1.	Humanitarian disasters (p.46), etc.
	2.	Chernobyl accident 26 April 1986 (p.62), natural disasters sometimes resulting from environmental pollution (p.81), Haiti earthquake 2010 (p.84), etc.
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	Natural disasters (p.72), emergency relief (p.72), etc.
	6.	
	7.	Code of Conduct for Disaster Relief 1994 (p.22), natural disasters (p.93), etc.
	8.	Disaster situations (p.94), etc.
9.	International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction (p. 44), etc.	
<b>EPIDEMICS AND PANDEMICS</b>	1.	World ravaged by an epidemic (p.33), etc.
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	Victims of epidemics (p.72), stopping an epidemic, such as the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus (p.73), etc.
	6.	Preservation from diseases and catastrophes (p.99), etc.
	7.	Epidemics (p.93), etc.
	8.	Epidemics (p.58), etc.
	9.	
<b>EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	1.	Ecological damage: the materials we use up, what we pollute, the species we make extinct (p.36), sustainable development (p.48), Climate Change Conference in Paris (p.82), overexploitation of natural resources (p.82), etc.
	2.	Increasing environmental pollution and climate change, Kyoto and Paris 2015 summits (p.64), Ghana graveyard of discarded electronic devices (p.96), ozone layer, environmental pollution, disappearance of animal and plant species, temperature increase, water wars, unsustainable world (p.97), air pollution, acid rain, disappearance of ozone layer, water pollution, toxic waste, soil erosion and desertification (p.98), nuclear power plant waste, pesticide use, GM crops (p.99), deforestation, melting ice, migratory flows, droughts, lack of drinking water (p.100), global temperature increase, sea level rise, melting ice, radicalisation of tropical storms (p.101), biodiversity extinction, fish disappearance (p.101), etc.
	3.	
	4.	Ecological crisis (p.85), "global warming" (p.85), environmental degradation, disappearance of forests, loss of biodiversity, atmospheric pollution, scarcity of drinking water, (p.108), deforestation, climate change, acid and radioactive rains, ozone holes, (p.120), smartphones, tablets, environmental threats, no control over recycling of batteries and electronic waste, (p.121), pollution (p.125), waste generation (p.126), etc.

	5.	Rainbow Warrior dumping toxic barrels into the sea or whaling and dolphin hunting (p.78), etc.
	6.	Summit for Sustainable Development, preserving our planet (p.50), combating desertification (p.51), common problems: environment (p.80), environmental problems, warming atmosphere, greenhouse gases, cars, heating, global warming, technological waste (p.98), deforestation, destruction of natural resources, habitats, animal species, intensive fishing and agriculture, water problem (p.98), etc.
	7.	Climate change, biodiversity, genetically modified food, forest protection, the planet's natural landscapes (p.55), etc.
	8.	Kyoto Protocol (p.21), global warming (p.58), etc.
	9.	Respect for the environment (p.18), World Environment Day, World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, International Ozone Layer Day (p.44), environmental pollution and degradation linked to technological development (p.59), environmental degradation, pollution without limit (p.59), etc.
<b>RISK ENHANCERS</b>	1.	UN challenges to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, etc.
	2.	Poverty (p.15), famine (p.38), etc.
	3.	
	4.	Poverty, inequality (p.53), etc.
	5.	Countries with low economic development, widespread poverty, high mortality, hunger, illiteracy, lack of political stability (p.37) etc.
	6.	Extreme poverty, ignorance, dogmatism (p.13), feminisation of poverty (p.48), poverty and hunger, economic inequalities (p.85), etc.
	7.	Fight against poverty (p.35), exclusion (p.36), eradication of hunger, food insecurity (p.54), poverty situation, lack of employment (p.93), etc.
	8.	Poverty (p.21, 71), chronic hunger (Mozambique, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, etc.) (p.85), inequality (p.86), injustice (p.87), etc.
	9.	Marginality and discrimination, shanty towns, marginality generates crime and violence (p.9), poverty (p.10), World Social Forum, poverty in the world, AIDS, foreign debt (p.17), marginality, marginalised (p.19), etc.
<b>DEFENCE</b>	1.	Practically all countries belong to the UN (p.10), what we in the European Union have in common, the risks we face have unsuspected dimensions (p.44), our societies have security forces, army and police in charge of protecting the citizens (p.47), UN or European Union examples of a dangerous common front (p.49), UN blue helmets (p.49), the moral autonomy of every citizen would be a brake on warlike conflicts (p.63), Security. Another scourge violence, wars, terrorist and military combat (p. 113), UN peace and security blue helmets (p.113), Theme 10: Peace and Security, <b>Armed Forces</b> (p.116), consequences of armed conflicts, violent deaths, wounded (p.118), refugees (p.119), <b>UN, NATO, European Union</b> (122-123), Mission of the Armed Forces, armies (p.124), EMU (p.125), etc.
	2.	UN has international army, Blue Helmets keep peace in conflict zones (p.46), etc.
	3.	
	4.	Spain's international commitments in defence of peace. Spain is committed to international peace and security. Contributing with its troops to the support of United Nations missions, threats to peace: terrorism, piracy, international organised crime, Spanish soldiers in Afghanistan, Spain agreements prohibit anti-personnel mines, production of nuclear, biological, chemical weapons of mass destruction, since 1989 130000 soldiers of the <b>Armed Forces...</b> (p.109), etc.

<b>DEFENCE</b>	5.	19 <sup>th</sup> century French military, Charles Babier, developed a cipher system for the military (p.54), reflecting on the role of the Spanish Armed Forces in the defence of peace and human rights within and beyond our borders (p.56), The role of the Armed Forces, two points of view, defenders intervention of our <b>Armed Forces</b> (Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq), “I am no longer the sniper who killed that Taliban with one shot” (p.64), memories of a blue helmet in Bosnia 20 years later, José Luis Gutiérrez brigade of the Spanish Army (p.65), international agreements exert pressure on governments and armies of the world (p.66), etc.
	6.	Some human rights in the Universal Declaration refer to security (p.47), etc.
	7.	The State (Security Forces and Corps) (p.28), consequently rule of law is security (p.47), democratic society distrusts, political parties, its <b>Armed Forces</b> (p.52), Peace and security, United Nations guarantor of peace, Security Council, guaranteeing international security and peace, collective military actions (p.59), etc.
	8.	Security of citizens (p.21), bombing of NATO planes in Iraq by the Islamic State (DAESH) (p.39), transnational institutions <b>UN, NATO, WTO, EU</b> (p.58), conscientious objection to military service (p.73), the right to security and peace as an ethical principle and civic duty (p.91), security and peace as human rights (p.92), UN Charter to preserve future generations from the scourge of war, to unite international peace and security forces (p.92), Security Council (p.92), today the Security Council describes as a threat international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, acts of piracy against ships off the coast of Somalia, mass murder, genocide practices in former Yugoslavia, violation of human rights, attempts to destroy ethnic groups such as Haiti and Rwanda 1990 (p.93), Blue Helmets (p.93), new threats have made it necessary to reorient the functions of the Armed Forces (FFAA), intelligence services, police (p.96), modify international defence and security strategies (p.96), new threats do not attack traditional targets but the civilian population and the integrity of institutions (p.96), the mission of the <b>Armed Forces</b> in Spain, what role do the SAF play? (p.100), Constitution art. 8 three corps the Army, Navy and Air Force (p.100), membership in international organisations (EU or NATO), UME (p.100), Spanish soldiers in training (p.101), <b>Spain in the UN, Spain in NATO (p.102), Spain in the European Union (p.102,103)</b> , etc.
	9.	International UN Peacekeepers’ Day (p.44), it is the military industry that invests the most in technological research (p.59), behind biotech research, certain defence policies, deadly viruses (p.59), decades of research and heavy investment by Canadian and US private industry and military (p.70), etc.

Analysis of the “culture of safety and defence” in the “Ethical Values” textbooks for 4<sup>th</sup> year of ESO, academic year 2016-2017.

The purpose of this analysis is to assess whether there is a “culture of safety and defence” within the subject of “Ethical Values”, so far from attempting to carry out an in-depth study of each word, the broad themes that appear – mentioned or developed – and which in some way indicate that the student has been able to become aware of them, are taken in broad outline.

Thus, for “Armed Conflicts”, it can be seen that in general all<sup>23</sup> publishers deal – to a greater or lesser extent – with this topic, generally focusing on African conflicts, genocides, etc.

23 In the case of Edelvives, reference has already been made to its project dedicated to the dignity of the person, etc.

“Terrorism”: Most, but not all, publishers mention it, although it is listed as cross-cutting knowledge.

“Organised crime” is briefly mentioned, especially trafficking/exploitation of children.

“Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction”: also mentioned. Alluding in general to the atomic bomb (Hiroshima).

“Cyberspace”, “Maritime, airspace and land vulnerability” are hardly addressed.

“Critical infrastructure” is not mentioned at all, although the word “infrastructure” may be quoted occasionally.

“Economic and financial instability” generally refers to the crisis that took place in 2008.

“Irregular Migratory Flows” addresses the issue, linking it to conflicts.

“Emergency and disasters” is briefly mentioned in general.

“Effects of climate change” is mentioned with a special focus on the Kyoto and Paris protocols.

“Poverty” is mentioned in almost every editorial, along with hunger.

The approach of each publishing house is different, with Anaya and Teide being the best adapted to the curriculum.

The analysis therefore shows that, depending on the content of each publisher, a distinction can be made between three types of textbooks: those that do not make any reference to “safety culture” or “defence culture”: Edelvives, those referring to “safety culture” (risks and threats): Diálogo, S.M, Tabarca, Tria would be included here although at a low level and those that include both cultures (safety and defence) Anaya, Proyecto Educativo, Santillana, Teide.

## Conclusions

The origin of the safety and defence culture dates back some twenty-nine years. Although there is a diversity of criteria on the exact date, there is – and has been from the beginning – unanimity among researchers, experts, etc. that one of the means of transmission would be formal education, as stated in the strategic documents. However, despite the time that has elapsed, it can be seen that the level within compulsory education is very low.

This article has analysed the subject “Ethical Values” in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of ESO in 2016-2017 and the context in which it was taught, exposing the elements that could have hindered, in this specific case, the inclusion of the “culture of safety and defence”. Without being an exhaustive list, some of them – the most relevant ones – are pro-

posed, such as the lack of consensus in education, the choice of a subject that is not compulsory to teach such knowledge (Ethical Values), the lack of teacher training, the decentralisation of education, the adaptation of the curriculum in textbooks.

Indeed, since the transition, eight educational reforms – including the current LOMLOE – have been carried out in Spain. In the face of this constant change, several attempts have been made to reach a state pact on education without success so far. This entails changes at various levels, especially in the subjects and their content. Therefore, if there is no consensus in this area, the inclusion of “safety and defence culture” related subjects would depend on the political and educational changes that continue to take place.

In the case of “Ethical Values” – whose name/content has changed with each law – one of the aspects to underline is that it is a specific subject, i.e. it is not compulsory. Not all students take it, and it is partially regulated by the autonomous communities. However, in the inter-administrative framework agreement signed between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education, it would be proposed to disseminate “the culture of defence and the values associated with it, as an instrument in the service of peace and freedom”. This would mean that pupils who took religion (Catholic, Evangelical, Muslim or Jewish), a subject that must be offered by schools after the 1979 and 1992 pacts, would not have had access to this knowledge.

On the other hand, although it is true that teacher training in the field of safety and defence took its first steps around 2014, it could be said that it has reached few territories (Murcia, Aragón, Castilla la Mancha, Castilla León, Asturias, etc.). In addition, the courses would be held on an annual basis, the number of participants would be small and the hours could vary between twelve and forty. Therefore, a minority of the teachers who had to teach the subject “Ethical Values” would have been trained in “safety and defence culture”.

Moreover, one of the characteristics of the Spanish state is its educational decentralisation, which began with the transition to democracy. This would mean that curriculum development would take place between the Ministries or Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities and the schools. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training would determine the evaluable learning standards for specific subjects, as is the case of “Ethical Values”, and the Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities would have established the contents within the framework of the LOMCE.

Finally, textbooks, used as the main support by teachers for the development of the curriculum in class, are produced by multiple publishers. Although, as Miguel Beas points out, “the offer is sufficiently rich and varied for teachers to be able to choose and discard those books that do not suit the students and the regulations”, Rosa Cintas states that “the educational administration is allowing the publishers to design the curriculum”.

After analysing the “Ethical Values” textbooks for the 4<sup>th</sup> year of ESO, it was found that (regardless of the reasons: the establishment of the curriculum by the Auton-

omous Communities, the adaptation of the curriculum by each publishing house, commercial interests, etc.), the content may be similar, different or very different. Therefore, in the analysis carried out, it was concluded that there were three types of editorials for the period analysed: those that do not contain any knowledge related to “safety and defence culture”, those that contain – to a greater or lesser extent – “safety culture” and, finally, those that contain “safety and defence culture”.

Thus, with a subject that would depend on constant reforms, of a specific nature, which would mean that not all students would have taken it, with a teaching staff that would not have been – in general – aware of the subject, with an adaptation by each autonomous community and each publisher, it would lead to the conclusion that the students of 4th ESO who took it in 2016-2017, would have had hardly any access to the “culture of safety and defence”, leaving it as a pending subject.

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*“Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership”<sup>1</sup>.*

## *Past, Present and Future of Geopolitics in the South China Sea*

### **Abstract**

In a globalised world where 90% of trade is carried out by sea, coastal states are aware of the importance and economic value that the exploitation of maritime resources has on a country's GDP. Tensions to acquire exclusive exploitation rights in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Continental Shelf generate continuous disagreements. The South China Sea, is one of the most open maritime uptight spaces in the world, where tensions continue to increase due to the richness of the seabed and the enormous density of maritime traffic that navigates through these waters. The economic importance of these routes and the existing natural resources have made the South China Sea basin one of the tensest geopolitical scenarios these days. The clashes between countries reach the point of colliding in the name of this geographical area. The People's Republic of China calls it the South Sea, Vietnam the East Sea and the Philippines the West Philippine Sea. These etymolo-

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<sup>1</sup> Famous quote from the translation of Deng Xiaoping's 24 character statement in 1990. DENG X. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1993, p.321.

gical differences reflect the different legal claims that each country faces. This space is a maritime border that marks sovereignty, guarantees transit through its waters and grants the right to exploit underground resources. This study tries to illustrate the geopolitical tensions in the area, analysing the actors involved, the evolution of litigation and the possible consequences that the latest movements in China will have in the near future.

### Key words

China, South China Sea, Sea, Litigation, Geopolitics, EEZ, Expansionism, maritime limit, sovereignty, A2/AD.

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## Introduction

The People's Republic of China, as a coastal nation, is heavily dependent on maritime transport, as well as on the exploitation of its natural resources and on its foreign trade – through which it exports a huge amount of manufactured goods. For this reason, the race for the right to exploit subsoil natural resources has become one of the priorities on which its geopolitical strategy in the Asia-Pacific is focused.

The great opportunities that the exploitable resources on the seabed would provide make the region one of the sea basins with the greatest tensions between states, especially accentuated since the end of 2016, when China began to move away from Deng Xiaoping's discreet policy to “Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership”.

The exploitation of these resources is one of the cornerstones around which all conflicts revolve and, given the geographic immensity of the South China Sea, the existence of millions of islands and reefs of emerged land and the coexistence of numerous littoral states, the region is a difficult area to control, favouring threats and illegal exploitation of resources, as well as territorial disputes.

Before addressing the diplomatic conflict in the South China Sea, it is worth clarifying a series of maritime law concepts that will allow us to approach the adjoining claims in this maritime region from a theoretical point of view. In Classical Maritime Law,<sup>2</sup> maritime spaces were divided into internal waters and territorial sea, under the virtually full sovereignty of the coastal state. On the high seas, the principle of freedom of use applied to all states. But the increase in commercial activities and the growing exploitation of the natural resources of this environment made it necessary to develop a new legislative framework to ensure the exploitation of resources over a wider area. Thus, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS),<sup>3</sup> ratified by China on 7 June 1996,<sup>4</sup> creates and regulates archipelagic waters, recognises the exclusive right to exploit, conserve and administer the natural resources of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) up to 200 nautical miles, which may be extended to 350 miles (Continental Shelf) in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 76, which requires “the submission of charts and relevant information, including geodetic data, permanently describing the outer limit of its continental shelf” to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

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<sup>2</sup> The Treaties governing the law of the sea prior to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea are referred to as Classical Maritime Law.

<sup>3</sup> UNITED NATIONS, *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*. 10 December 1982. Montego Bay (Jamaica).

<sup>4</sup> UNITED NATIONS, *Law of the Sea Bulletin No. 83*. 2014. New York.

The boundaries of the maritime spaces shown in Illustration 1 mark the geographical border on which the legal and legal differences in each of these spaces are established. The delimitation of maritime (and air) spaces is of vital importance for naval activities, as it determines the degree of control exercised by the coastal state over resources, merchant traffic and foreign warships and aircraft operating in those areas.

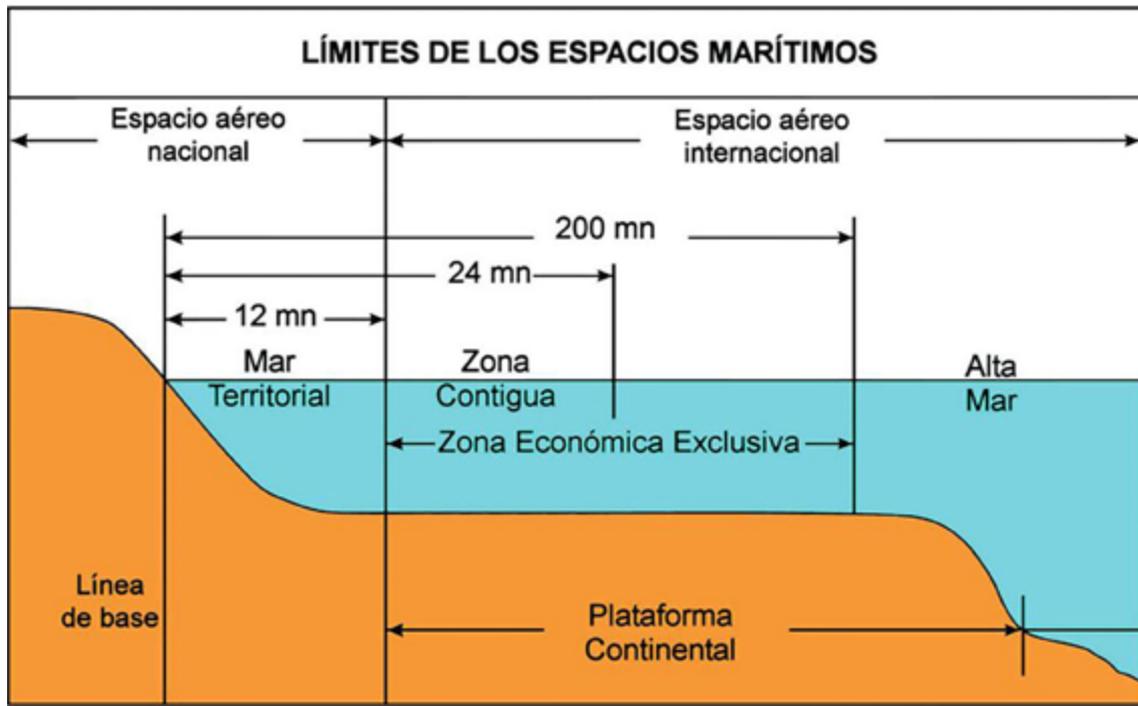


Illustration 28 Maritime Spaces Division. Source: Ministry of Defence, "Manual on the Law of the Sea".

Given the many islands in the South China Sea, it should be noted that the Archipelagic States have a special legal regime, as set out in the Articles of Part IV of the Convention. These States may draw their archipelagic straight baselines joining the outermost points of the islands as well as the outermost emerging reefs, provided that within these lines the islands are included, and the inner area of the straight baselines is between 1:1 and 1:9 of the proportional ratio of land area to sea area. In addition, the length of these lines must not exceed 100 nautical miles (NM), with an exemption of up to 3%. As in the case of bays, these lines should be drawn in such a way as not to exclude another State from exiting. Once these lines have been drawn, they should be recorded on nautical charts and deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations for ratification.

The waters contained within the straight baselines shall be the sovereignty of the Archipelagic State. But unlike in inland waters, all vessels will have the right of innocent passage<sup>5</sup>. However, "Archipelagic States may, without discrimination

<sup>5</sup> According to Article 17 of the Convention, "ships of all States, whether coastal or landlocked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea". Right of passage means navigation through the territorial sea for the purpose of passing through the territorial sea without entering internal waters or calling at a port, or for the purpose of proceeding to internal waters or port facilities, provided that passage is uninterrupted.

in law or in fact between foreign vessels, temporarily suspend the innocent passage of foreign vessels in certain areas of their archipelagic waters, if such suspension is indispensable for the protection of their security. Such suspension shall only take effect after being published in due form". During passage through the archipelagic waterways, the right of navigation and overflight is granted exclusively for the purpose of uninterrupted and rapid transit. And coastal states may designate traffic separation schemes (TDS) to delimit navigable channels and ensure safe navigation in their waters.

The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) may extend over a maximum area of 200 nautical miles from the baselines. Sovereign rights are granted in this zone for the purposes of exploration and exploitation, conservation and management of the natural resources, both living and non-living, of the waters overlying the seabed and of the seabed and subsoil. The State has the right to establish and place artificial islands, naval installations and structures, conduct marine research or natural resource exploration<sup>6</sup>. The EEZ is governed by international law and all naval air units have freedom of navigation and overflight in the EEZ.

In accordance with Article 60, where artificial islands or infrastructures are established, the State may establish a security perimeter (less than 500 metres) to ensure the safety of navigation, which shall be duly notified. However, these may never be built when they affect the use of sea lanes.

## Disputes in the China Sea

The South China Sea is located in East and Southeast Asia, extending over 4 million square kilometres, and has a long history of diplomatic conflicts, legal claims and international disagreements.

These conflicts have been caused by three determining factors. Firstly, the presence of China, which has coastlines in both Seas, a destabilising and expansionist country, given its aggressive behaviour, including arming numerous islands in the region, claiming sovereignty beyond the Continental Shelf and pursuing a predatory economic policy that wears down neighbouring countries. Secondly, the peculiar legal status of the island of Taiwan – not recognised as a sovereign state by any Asian country. And finally, the multitude of islands, islets, reefs, sandbanks – and the recently constructed artificial islands in the region – where hydrocarbon deposits could be located. Due to these factors, and the lack of agreement on the delimitation of the waters, there have been numerous incidents and escalating tensions between the riparian states. Open litigation claims sovereignty and the right to exploit underwater resources, exposing unilateral claims from multiple perspectives and justifications.

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<sup>6</sup> UNITED NATIONS. *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*. Part V Exclusive Economic Zone. Article 55 Specific legal regime of the EEZ.



Illustration 29 South China Sea. Source: U.S Energy Information Administration (EIA)

Numerous smaller islands are located in the waters of the South China Sea where critical natural resources such as raw materials, gas and oil are believed to exist. None of these countries recognises the sovereignty of Taiwan, which is considered an *international ghost*,<sup>7</sup> adds another difficulty to the claims. Despite the Republic of China's maritime claims to the South China Sea under the rights granted by the 1982 Convention, these are unfounded because, despite its practical independence, Taiwan is legally a province of the People's Republic of China and therefore has no recognised water rights, with the People's Republic of China having sovereignty over

<sup>7</sup> Daniel L. BYMAN and Charles KING, *The Phantom Menace*, The New York Times, 15/08/2011.

its waters. If it were allowed to define its maritime boundaries, it would implicitly recognise its sovereignty and thus its independence and legitimacy (which has never happened).

### *Disputes in the East China Sea*

At the height of the tensions in the East Sea are disagreements over the Senkaku Islands, a small archipelago administered by Japan but claimed by Taiwan, while China makes its own (and thus Taiwan's) historical claims. Fossil fuels are suspected in the waters surrounding the archipelago<sup>8</sup>. And according to maritime law, the sovereign state shall have the exclusive right to exploit its natural resources<sup>9</sup>. This is the purpose of the litigation on the three states<sup>10</sup>. Since 2008, the naval presence of military vessels from China, Taiwan and the US has intensified,<sup>11</sup> and in recent years Australia, France and the UK have participated in exercises and operations in the region.

Japan and South Korea are engaged in a similar dispute over the Liancourt Rocks (*Dodko* Islands in Korean and *Takeshima* Islands in Japanese) in the Sea of Japan, halfway between the two countries, which are among the disputed islands<sup>12</sup>. The uninhabitable rocks can only be visited in summer. Although the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs declares on its website the undisputed sovereignty of Takeshima “indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based on international law”,<sup>13</sup> there is a permanent South Korean military detachment on the eastern island<sup>14</sup>.

Again, Taiwan's legal status is a key issue in the region. After the Chinese civil war in 1949, the defeated side fled and established a settlement on the island of Taiwan, instituting a military government of the Republic of China (ROC) under Chiang Kai-shek, who declared that his administration represented the whole of China and

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8 PALAZUELOS, Enrique, *El petróleo y el gas en la geoestrategia mundial*, Akal, p. 168, Madrid, 2008.

9 CONVEMAR. Anexo III. Disposiciones básicas relativas a la prospección, la exploración y explotación.

10 AKAL, *Anuario económico geopolítico mundial, El estado del Mundo 2005*. La decouverte, p. 275.

11 Robert S. ROSS & Oystein Tunsjo, *Strategic Adjustment and the Rise of China. Power and Politics in the East Asia*, Oslo 2014. Publisher: Norwegian Defence University College.

12 CONVEMAR. PART VIII. Article 121: *Rocks are those geological formations that are not suitable for sustaining human habitation or economic life of their own. For this reason, they will not have an exclusive economic zone or continental shelf, but they will have a territorial sea and a contiguous zone.*

13 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Japan's Consistent Position on the Territorial Sovereignty over Takeshima. Available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/index.html>

14 GENOVA, Alexandra, *Two nations disputed these small islands for 300 years*, National Geographic, 14/11/2018.

that he intended to retake the whole territory again<sup>15</sup>. Since then, China has never recognised its legitimacy, but claims sovereignty by exerting strong international pressure on those countries that recognise the island regime (such as Belize) or have bilateral trade relations with Taiwan, such as the recent threats to France over the sale of military ships to renew the Republic of China's fleet<sup>16</sup>. While it is true that until the 1970s, the US recognised the Republic of China as a legitimate government, in 1971, during the presidency of Richard Nixon, US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger made a secret visit to Beijing, marking a change of course in international relations with the People's Republic of China. Faced with the problem of the existence of "one China with two governments, two Chinas with two governments and the independence of Taiwan", the latter was ruled out, declaring the People's Republic of China as an ally and potential economic partner of the United States,<sup>17</sup> to which it recognised its sovereignty, acknowledging that the conflict over the island of Taiwan was a matter of national integrity<sup>18</sup>.

Since the 1970s, China has exerted economic pressures against those states that recognised Taiwan's independence – since Beijing claims that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China – and because of these coercions, Taiwan is a de facto government and a country that is virtually unrecognised internationally, as today only 15 states (none of them Asian) recognise its sovereignty. Furthermore, according to UN resolution 275 Taiwan was expelled from the General Council,<sup>19</sup> recognising the People's Republic of China as the only legitimate representative of China in the UN – and one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council with veto power. Thus, despite its practical independence, the island of Taiwan is not legally recognised as a nation and is internationally vetoed by China.

To put pressure on states in the region, the PRC has imposed a red line in all its trade agreements on the recognition of Taiwan's sovereignty, so that those that recognise the island's sovereignty will see their relations with Beijing severed. For this reason, only 15 countries – mainly in the Caribbean – recognise Taiwan as a sovereign

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15 LATORRE PARADA, Juan Guillermo, *La actuación de la república de china (Taiwán) como estado de facto en el sistema internacional, periodo 1971 – 2011*, Bogotá, 2013.

16 REUTERS, *Focus on COVID-19 battle, France tells China after Taiwan warning*. 13/05/2020. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-france-taiwan/focus-on-covid-19-battle-france-tells-china-after-taiwan-warning-idUSKBN22PtET>

17 KISSINGER, Henry, *White House Years: The First Volume of His Classic Memoir*, 1971. 1979, New York. Publisher: Little Brown & Company.

18 KISSINGER, Henry, *White House Years: "The U.S side declare: The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves"*

19 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS, *Resolution 2758: Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations*, 1971. Session No. 26.

subject<sup>20</sup>. In the words of Taiwan's Foreign Minister, "China is trying to reduce Taiwan's presence in the international sphere and thus destroy its sovereignty"<sup>21</sup>.

### *Disputes in the South China Sea*

The greatest tensions are centred on conflicts in the South China Sea, not only because it is the largest, and encompasses the most coastal countries, but also because of the enormous amount of maritime traffic that transits these waters, the presence of numerous islands and rocks, the insecurity related to the increase in piracy incidents and inter-island conflicts.

The South China Sea is a tongue of water in the Pacific Ocean that stretches along the southeast coast of Asia from the Taiwan Strait south to the Malay Peninsula, occupied by Singapore<sup>22</sup>. At its southern end are the largest islands of the Sound. Borneo at its eastern end, separating it from the Pacific Ocean (to which it is connected by the Luzon Strait) and the southern tip of Taiwan (the Hengchun Peninsula), marks its northern boundary. This sea is characterised by a large number of islands, islets and rocks that are the subject of numerous sovereignty disputes.

Prominent among the disputes are claims over the sovereignty of the Spratly Islands, which are unilaterally claimed by Brunei, Taiwan, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam. While the UN has failed to come up with a firm response to the claims affecting these islands located between China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam, many of these islands have been occupied and militarised<sup>23</sup>. Again, the existence of hydrocarbons gives rise to claims over their exploitation interests, most notably the conflicts between the PRC and Vietnam over the exploitation of resources in the Paracelsus Islands, which have led to incidents at sea. Being midway between these countries, they are a key point for maritime routes<sup>24</sup>.

Complaints arise for a variety of reasons. The People's Republic of China (PRC), Republic of China (Taiwan) and Vietnam claim the integrity of the archipelago on historical grounds. Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei claim part of the islands because of their geographical proximity to their territories. In addition, the Philippines

20 ALDAMA, Zigor, *Taiwán pierde el reconocimiento de dos países en una semana*. Diario Hoy, 21/09/2019.

21 JOSEPH WU, Minister for Foreign Affairs. 20/09/2019.

22 MACKINLAY, Alejandro, *Mar de China Meridional. Panorama Geopolítico de los Conflictos*, IIEE, 2012, p.p. 390-412.

23 LALINDE, Luis M., *Las islas Spratly: El conflicto que separa a China de los países del Sudeste Asiático*, 2019.

24 KANG BYEONG-TAAO, *Increasing Possibilities of Maritime Disputes in Northeast Asia*, Korea Focus, 2012.

and Malaysia emphasise their claim to those islands already under their effective control, with the Philippines exercising control over the Kalayaan Islands and Malaysia claiming part of the archipelago, under the name Kepulauan Spratly<sup>25</sup>. Finally, Brunei prioritises legal arguments given its limited military projection capacity. In November 2002, these states signed the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea*<sup>26</sup> de-escalating tensions and agreeing to respect the Laws of the Sea and establish a policy of cooperation and understanding.

In order of importance, the second conflict concerns the Paracelsus Islands, known by the Chinese as Xisha and by the Vietnamese as Hoang Sa and located north of the Spratlys. Oil and natural gas are also suspected to be present there<sup>27</sup>. They are currently occupied by the PRC, but Taiwan and Vietnam have begun the reclamation process. In the case of Vietnam, historical issues are raised since during the French occupation of Indochina and when there was an independent pre-colonial government, these islands were Vietnamese and not Chinese. This dispute has historical roots in the military conflict between China and Vietnam in 1974. In this war the Vietnamese fleet was defeated by Chinese naval forces. But, prior to the conflict, Vietnam exercised control over some islands in the Paracelsus archipelago<sup>28</sup>.

The next conflict revolves around MacClesfield Bank, a large region of reefs (about 80 MN) located east of the Paracelsus Islands. This bank is claimed in its entirety by China (as part of what it calls the “Zhongsha Islands”) and Taiwan and a small part by the Philippines, which controls the Scarborough bank, where there have been numerous disputes with China over the tendering of oil exploration to foreign oil companies, such as the dispute with the Indian firm ONGC<sup>29</sup>.

### *The South China Sea: A Geostrategic Board*

Although the conflicts have been listed very briefly, this introduction allows us to identify a common component to the tensions over the delimitation of waters in

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25 Ministry Of National Defence, Secretariat to the Cabinet Committee on the Law of the Sea Treaty, *The Kalayaan Islands*, 1982.

26 The Governments of the Member States of ASEAN and the Government of the People’s Republic of China, *DECLARATION ON THE CONDUCT OF PARTIES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA*. Cambodia, 2002.

27 GLOBAL INVESTMENT CENTER, *South China Sea Oil and Natural Gas, Vietnam Mineral and Mining Sector. Investment and Business Guide*, 2010, p.p 40-49.

28 TOSHI, Yoshihara, *The 1974 Paracels Sea Battle: A Campaign Appraisal*, Naval War College Review: Vol. 69: No. 2, Article 6., 2016.

29 Jennifer D.P MORONEY, Angel RABASA, Bonny Lin JANAH BLANCK, *How Might India Respond in Southeast Asia to Provocations Elsewhere, Look East, Cross Black Waters. India’s Interest in Southeast Asia*, Santa Monica, 2015, p.p 166-170. Publisher: Rand.

the South China Sea: national sovereignty over the waters and the exclusive exploitation of hydrocarbons, should China's proposed maritime boundaries be granted. This would give it a clear independence and reinforce its hegemony to the detriment of the other riparian countries.

The islands in the South China Sea offer great opportunities for the future and a high level of geostrategic projection for the state that acquires sovereign rights. In this line, the exploitation of natural resources would allow it to increase its independence from the Asian giant. In addition, the influx of merchant traffic and the international importance of the ports located in this region make it necessary to guarantee maritime routes. The high density of maritime traffic, the *choke points* or sea straits (very narrow navigable channels) such as the Straits of Malacca or Singapore, dotted with islands and islets, add a political factor to the claims.

In the last decade, the area has achieved enormous global relevance and 15 of the world's top 20 ports with the largest container capacity and throughput are located in the region<sup>30</sup>. Eight Chinese, two in Malaysia, one in Singapore, one in Taiwan and one in South Korea. From a trade perspective, the blue economy is the engine of the region and represents the fuel that has facilitated the dynamism of emerging nations. Territorial claims therefore conceal strong geo-economic interests.

The growing rise of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam as emerging countries and the enormous density of maritime traffic passing through these waters, together with the problem of piracy in the Strait of Malacca (Philippine and Indonesian waters), have increased tensions in recent years. If we look at the map of world maritime routes, we can see that the trade route through East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal accounts for a very high share of total maritime trade.

We find in this section a threat to global maritime trade. China's claims to the so-called *nine-dash line* demand sovereignty over 90% of the waters of the South China Sea, citing historical or geographical issues to gain sovereign rights and control over islets, reefs and rocks (some of which lie beyond 2,000 km of its coastline). According to UNCLOS, all ships have the right of innocent passage through archipelagic waters. However, according to Article 52, "Archipelagic States may, without discrimination in law or in fact between foreign ships, temporarily suspend the innocent passage of foreign ships in specified areas of their archipelagic waters, if such suspension is indispensable for the protection of their security. Such suspension shall only take effect after publication in due form"<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, the claims on the *nine-dash line* can be an-

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30 ICONTAINERS, *20 puertos más importantes del Mundo*, Accessed on 10/01/2021. Available at: <https://www.icontainers.com/es/puertos-mas-importantes-del-mundo/>

31 CONVEMAR. Article 52. Innocent Right of Way, p. 45.

alysed as a clear strategy of denial of the sea in what is known as A2/AD (*Anti-Access/Area Denial*) tactics on the part of China.



Illustration 30 South Sea crude oil routes. Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)

## Open Disputes and Diplomatic Conflicts in the South China Sea

It is worth noting that the regional disputes began in 1969, when the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East issued a report indicating the likelihood of energy resources on the seabed<sup>32</sup>. In February of that year, the International Court of Justice enunciated the principle of the natural prolongation of the North Sea Continental Shelf<sup>33</sup>. The publication of the report marks the beginning of a diplomatic struggle over the management of subsoil resources across the globe.

From this moment on, the riparian countries began to issue reports and letters claiming their sovereignty intentions. In addition, since the 1970s, there have been numerous military disputes over territorial control.

In November 2002, the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including some of those that have disputed full or partial control over the Spratly Islands archipelago in the South China Sea, reached an agreement called the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea*<sup>34</sup>. An international

32 UNITED NATIONS, *Economic commission for Asia*, 26/06/1969, Bangkok, Thailand.

33 INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE, *North Sea Continental Shelf Cases (Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark)*, 1969.

34 ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea*, October 2012. Available at: [https://asean.org/?static\\_post=declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea-2](https://asean.org/?static_post=declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea-2)

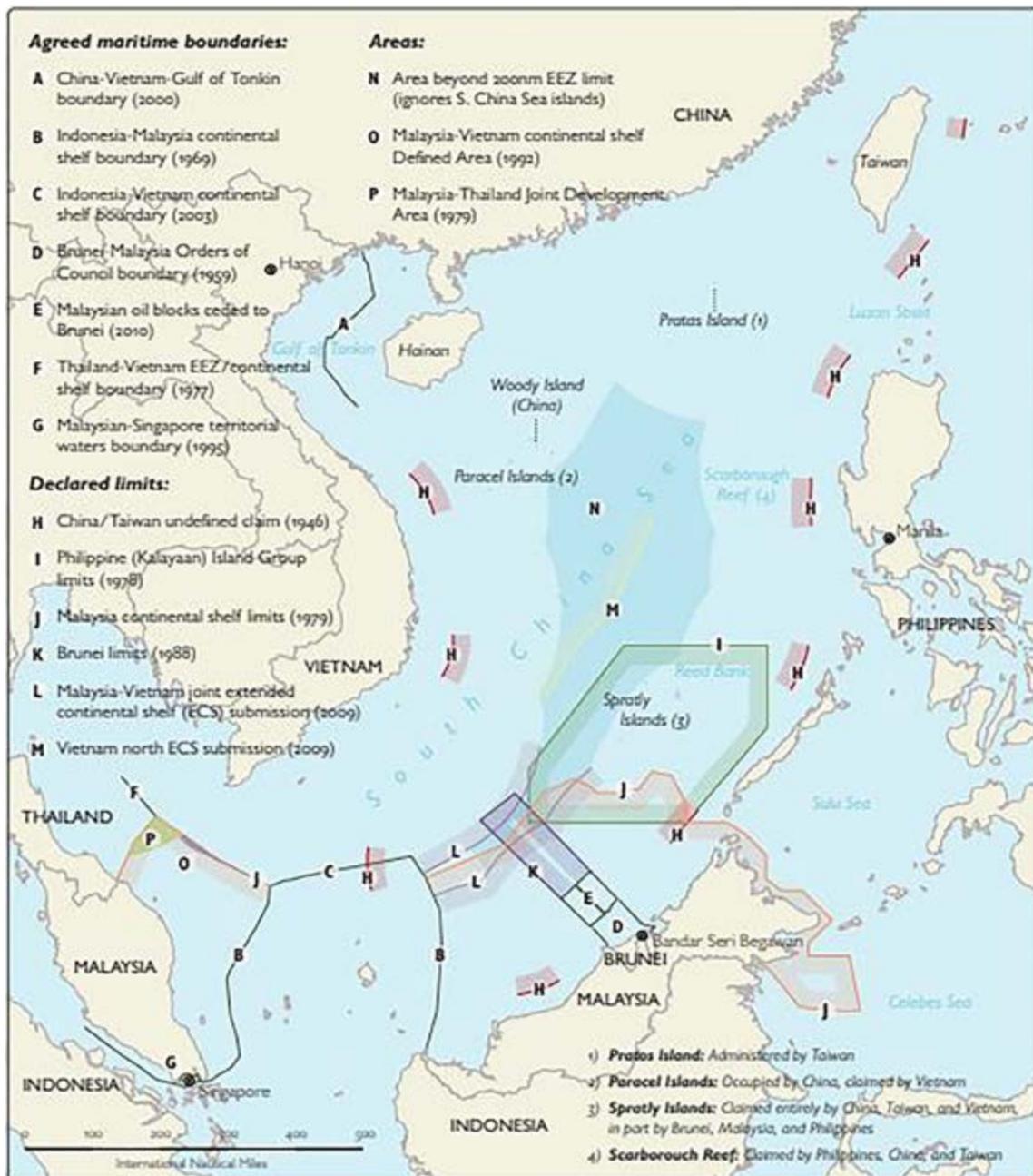


Illustration 31 Delimitation of Maritime Spaces. Source: DoD, Annual Report to Congress, May 2015

agreement that can be likened to a code of conduct signed jointly with China and that regulates the situation in the South China Sea in an attempt to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

This code of conduct has meant a relative advance in security matters as well as progress in regional negotiations, providing some geopolitical stability after several decades of open conflict and even armed confrontation. However, in recent years, tensions in the South China Sea have continued to grow, showing a reversal of the progress that has been made.

Table 1 shows the maritime boundary disputes in the region.

Disputed areas	Brunei	China	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Taiwan Island	Vietnam
Nine Dot Line	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vietnamese coast		✓				✓	✓
Maritime area north of Borneo	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
South China Sea Islands		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Marine area north of the Natuna Islands		✓	✓			✓	
Sea Area West of Palawan and Luzon		✓			✓	✓	
Luzon Strait		✓			✓	✓	

Table 2 Areas in dispute

The PRC claims the entire area contained within what is known as the *nine-dash line* which encompasses 90% of the waters of the South China Sea. As an argument, Beijing maintains historical sovereignty rights going back more than 2000 years. For its part, the government of the island of Taiwan is of the same opinion. Philippines claims the Spratly Islands and the Masinloc (or Scarborough) sandbar. Vietnam disputes with China over the Spratly and Paracelsus archipelagos, claiming to have ruled them since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Malaysia and Brunei claim the Spratly Islands as being within their EEZ.

### *History of the People's Republic of China's claims on the nine-dash line.*

The People's Republic of China has focused its maritime strategy on the struggle for hegemony and control of the sea, engaging in disputes with all nations bordering the South China Sea. The conflict over control of these waters began after the end of the World War and, in the absence of an international agreement establishing a division of the archipelagos, each nation has taken a unilateral stance based on historical justifications and principles of sovereignty or territorial control to defend its claim to its waters. While the PRC, Taiwan and Vietnam claim the whole of the archipelagos, the rest of the countries defend a partial and equidistant division.

The numerous claims in which the PRC finds itself are a reflection of the importance of the blue economy, given that its geo-economic interests are centred on maritime trade as the primary and fundamental means of exporting its products and due to the existence of raw materials necessary to sustain a power with an ever-increasing energy demand. In August 2017, Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan emphasised the importance of maritime security, and foreshadowed a possible *people's war at*

sea to safeguard Chinese sovereignty, following the Hague Tribunal's ruling on China's historic claims in the region<sup>35</sup>.

The *nine-dash line* encompasses a series of conflict complexes around the Spratly Islands, the Paracelsus Islands, the Senkaku Islands, Macclesfield Bank and the lower Masiloc (or Scarborough). The countries involved are China, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, plus the island of Formosa. The area under the *line* encompasses 90% of the waters of the South China Sea and covers the PRC's (and the RC's) claim to the waters in the South Sea. The *line* was first published in 1947, after Japan's defeat in World War II, and delineates the sea basin in an unbalanced proportion towards China. It was initially composed of 11 points, but was reduced to nine following the bilateral agreement with Vietnam on the delimitation of the maritime boundary in the Gulf of Tonkin<sup>36</sup>.

Illustration-5 reflects China's claim to the maritime boundaries proposed by each of the littoral states.

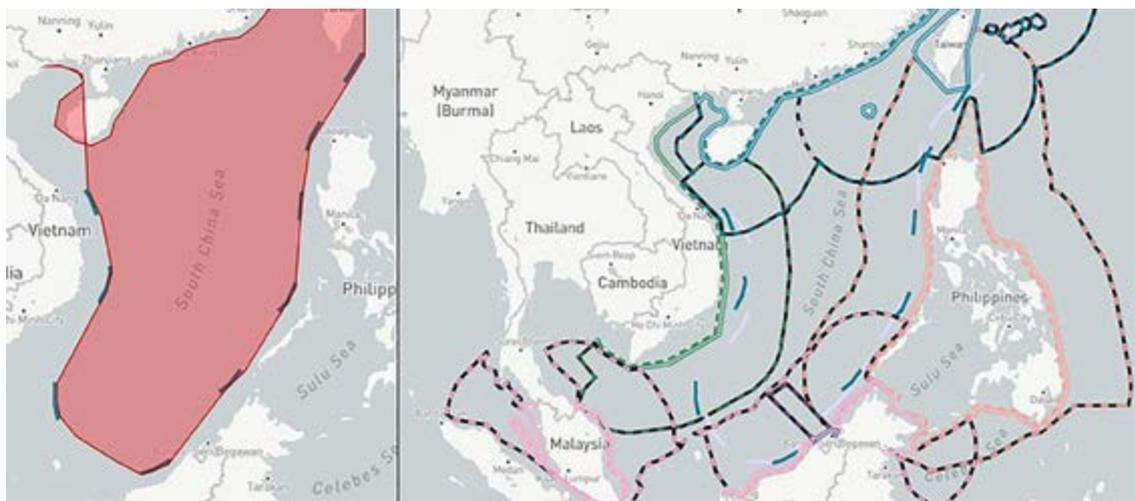


Illustration 32 Comparison of nine-dash line and disputed waters. Illustration adapted by the author. Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (<https://amti.csis.org/maritime-claims-map/>)

The President of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, Dr Wu Shicun, argues that the *nine-dash line* claim is based on China's historical sovereignty over resources and fishing grounds since the time of the Three Kingdoms (220-265)<sup>37</sup> and expeditions in the Han (110 AD) and Ming (1400 AD) dynasties. However, in the

35 JOHNSON, Jesse, *China must prepare for 'people's war at sea,' defence chief says*, Japan Times, 03/08/2016, Available at: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/08/03/asia-pacific/china-must-prepare-peoples-war-sea-defense-chief-says/XtVljDpKjIV>

36 ZHENG Ziyue & FU Chiao-chin, *Geography and Brief History of the Islands in the South China Sea*, Commercial Press, 1947.

37 Shicun WU and Keyuan ZOUR, *Arbitration Concerning the South China Sea*, Routledge 2017.

official reports submitted, China has failed to make the necessary case for sovereignty under Article 298 of the Convention.

This division claimed by China has been the source of numerous diplomatic conflicts, even leading to incidents at sea between (mainly Chinese and Vietnamese) state vessels. In the face of China's stance, ASEAN members<sup>38</sup> involved in the cause have joined forces to counter China's expansionist policy, citing the principles of the UN Charter and the conditions for establishing maritime boundaries in the 1982 Conventions.

In 1996, China ratified the Convention and submitted the geographical points of the baselines and maritime limits of the territorial sea (12 miles) and the continuous zone in the Paracelsus (Xisha Islands) and Senkaku Islands to the Secretary-General<sup>39</sup>. These maritime boundaries were published in the Bulletin of the Sea No. 32 and include the waters of China, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia<sup>40</sup>. As a result, there has been a rapid succession of diplomatic notes from the littoral states.

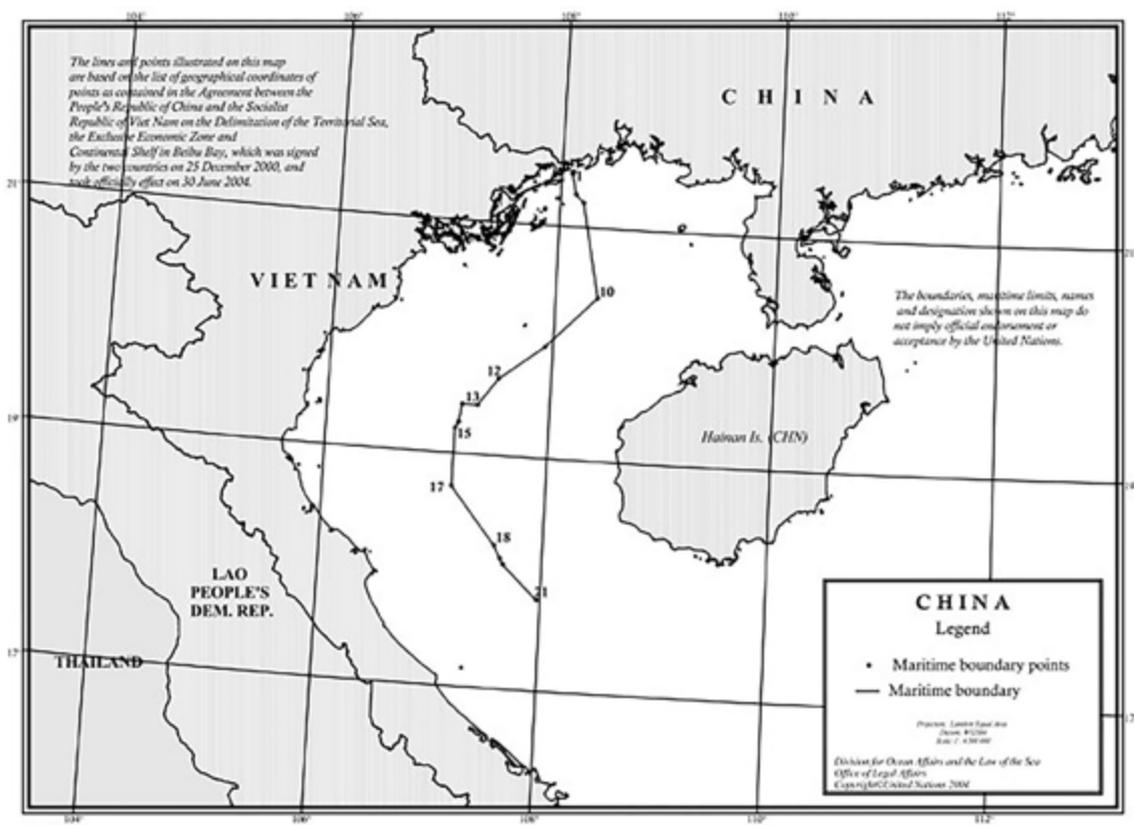


Illustration 33 Maritime boundary between China and Vietnam. Source: Law of the Sea Information Circular (LOSIC), 2004. p. 48.

38 ASEAN Members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma/Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

39 PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, UNITED NATIONS, *Declaration of the Government of the People's Republic of China on the baselines of the territorial sea*, 15/05/1996. Available at: [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/CHN\\_1996\\_Declaration.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/CHN_1996_Declaration.pdf)

40 DIVISION OF OCEANOGRAPHIC AND LAW OF THE SEA AFFAIRS, *Law of the Sea Bulletin Number 32*, 1996 p.p 38-40.

In September 2004, the PRC deposited the geographical coordinates of the delimitation of the territorial waters, the EEZ and the CP, following a bilateral agreement with the Republic of Vietnam<sup>41</sup> establishing the EEZ boundary by mutual agreement (Figure-6).

In 2012, China submitted a report on geomorphological and sub-seabed geological features for the extension of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 MN<sup>42</sup>. With this report, it sought to demonstrate that the South Sea basin is an extension of the Chinese mainland and would therefore be entitled to extend its EEZ to 350 miles. The document includes a geomorphological map and the geographical delimitation points of the extended EEZ.



graphic by Lindsey Burrotes

Illustration 34 China Claim Vs Convention Maritime Boundary. Source: Peace Palace Library. Available at: <https://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/south-china-sea-territorial-disputes-continued/>

Japan quickly submitted to the Secretary General a *note verbale* SC/12/372 in which it stated that the distance separating China and Japan is 400 MN and therefore the

41 UNITED NATIONS, *Convention on the Law of the Sea*, 27/09/2004, Available at: [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/mzn\\_s/mzn51.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/mzn_s/mzn51.pdf)

42 PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, Submission by the People's Republic of China Concerning the Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 Nautical Miles in Part of the East China Sea, 2012. Available at: [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/chn63\\_12/executive%20summary\\_EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/chn63_12/executive%20summary_EN.pdf)

delimitation of the CP proposed by China after the report on geomorphological and geological characteristics should be referred to by mutual agreement according to Art. 83 of the Convention. It also presented that the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands, under Japanese hegemony, was out of any debate because “there is no debate on the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands” (under Japanese control)<sup>43</sup>.

On 10 September 2012, the government of China deposited nautical chart 03085 entitled “Chart of Straight Baselines of the Territorial Waters of the Diayu Dao Sea and Islands Affiliated to the Chinese government”<sup>44</sup>. The sending of this letter meant the establishment and dissemination of maritime boundaries in the Senkaku Archipelago, unilaterally.

In response to the deposition of nautical chart 03085, Japan submitted a diplomatic note (PM/12/303)<sup>45</sup> expressing its opposition to the delimitation of the territorial sea of the Senkaku Islands presented by the PRC, citing the lack of basis for this unilateral decision and Japan’s sovereignty over the islands.

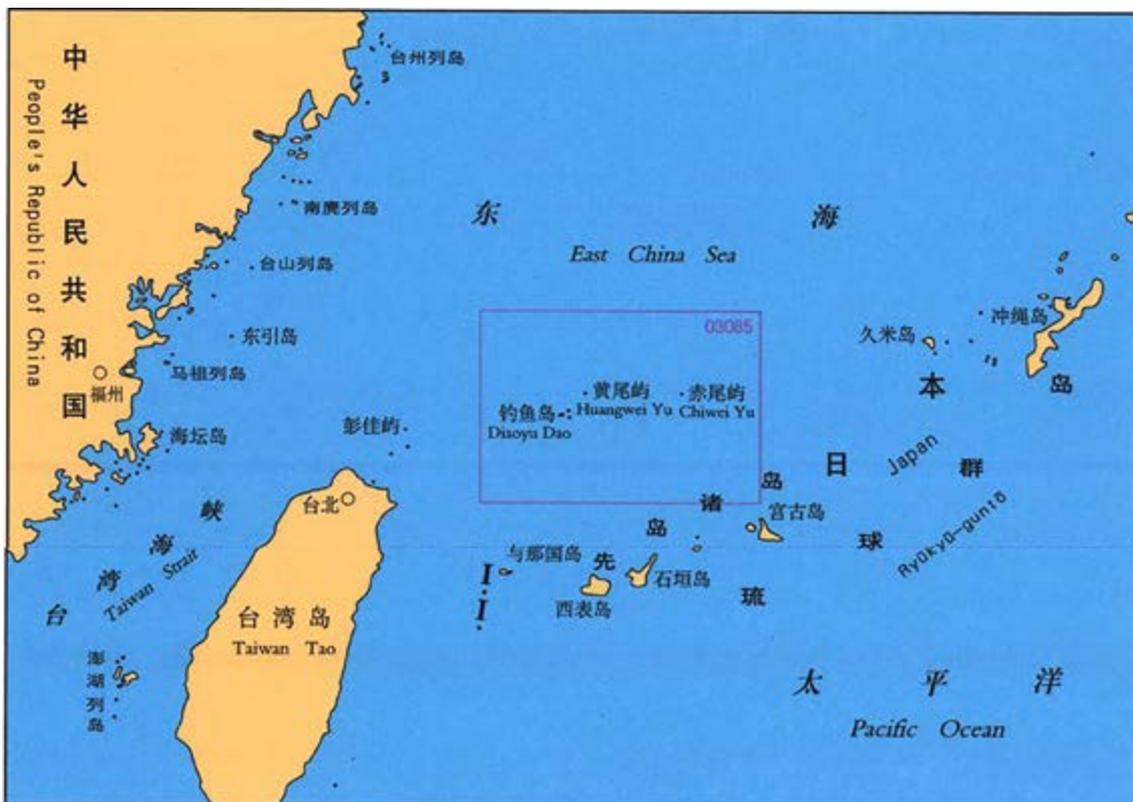


Illustration 8 Nautical Chart 03085. Available at: [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDF-FILES/MAPS/chn\\_mzn89\\_2012\\_00220.jpg](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDF-FILES/MAPS/chn_mzn89_2012_00220.jpg)

43 JAPAN, Marine Regions SC/12/372. 28/12/2012. Available at: [http://www.marineregions.org/documents/jpn\\_re\\_chn\\_28\\_12\\_2012.pdf](http://www.marineregions.org/documents/jpn_re_chn_28_12_2012.pdf)

44 UNITED NATIONS, *Circular communications from the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea Office of legal affairs*, 21/12/2012. New York

45 PERMANENT MISSION OF JAPAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS (PM/12/303). New York, 2012.

In 2013, the PRC submitted Note Verbale CML 001/2013 in which it argued that the Senkaku Islands have been Chinese territory since ancient times and that the Japanese occupation lacks legal grounds, so they belong to China. With this note, Beijing expressed its diplomatic opposition to Nippon's *note verbale*<sup>46</sup>.

The Paracelsus Islands are another hotspot in the South China Sea. Since 2014, Vietnam and China have engaged in numerous diplomatic clashes that have led to incidents at sea and sabotage operations on land<sup>47</sup>. These conflicts revolve around sovereignty over the Paracelsus Islands and the exploitation of subsoil natural resources.

On 07 May 2014, the government of Vietnam sent a *note verbale* to the Secretary General denouncing the illegal operations of the deep-water oil rig *HYSY981* in oil field 143 in Vietnam's EEZ and CP. The annex to the diplomatic note details the chronology of the detection and movements followed by the platform during its operations in the Vietnamese sovereign Paracelsus Islands, accompanied by auxiliary vessels and up to "27 protection vessels"<sup>48</sup>. The note verbale marked the beginning of an escalation of tensions with numerous collisions at sea between Chinese and Vietnamese state vessels.

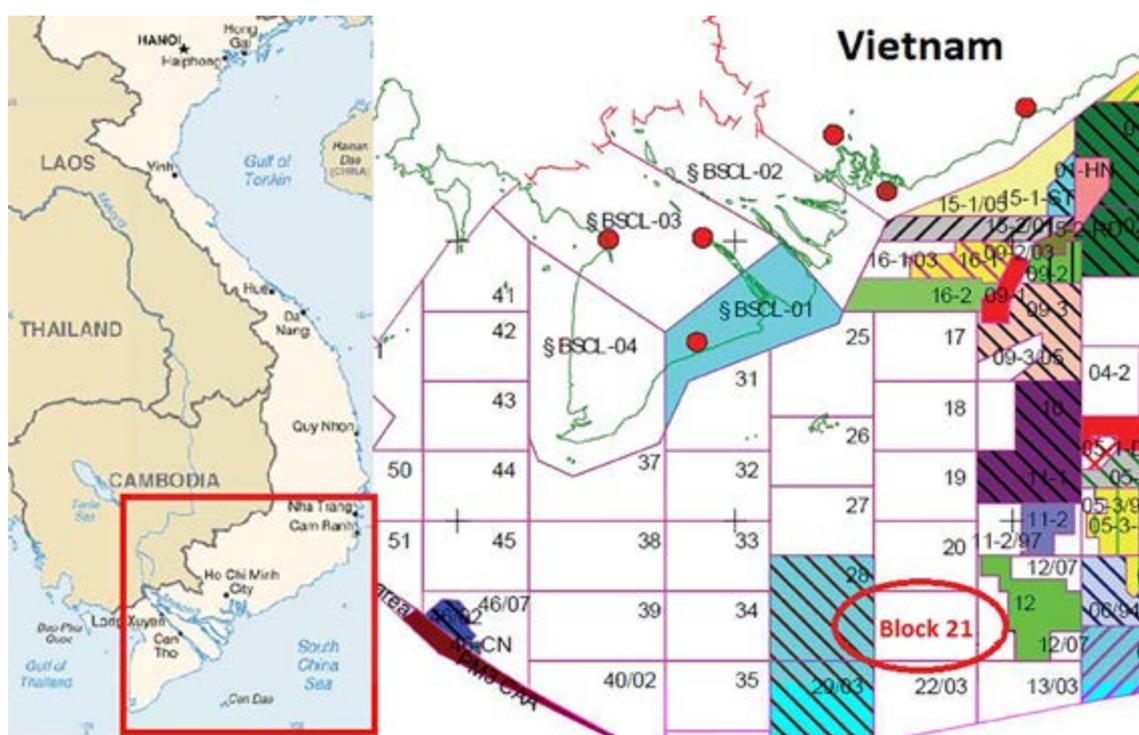


Illustration 35 - Oil and gas field blocks. Source: OffShore Engineering. <https://www.offshoreengineering.com/oil-and-gas/offshore-gas-field-development/project-block-21>

46 PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, United Nations CML/001/2013, 07/01/2013, Available at: [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/chn63\\_12/chn\\_re\\_jpn07\\_01\\_2013e.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/chn63_12/chn_re_jpn07_01_2013e.pdf)

47 HAYTON, Bill, *The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia*, New Heaven and London, 2017. p.p 121-150.

48 TRUNG, Le Hoai, *Letter dated 7 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Vietnam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General*, A/68/870. Available at: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2F68%2F870&Language=E&DeviceType=Tablet>

At a press conference on 16 May 2014, China's Foreign Minister stated that Vietnam had designated 57 oil and gas fields in disputed waters between the two states,<sup>49</sup> and that the PRC was therefore obliged to defend its interests.

On 22 May 2014, in a letter to the Secretary-General<sup>50</sup>, Beijing alleged that Vietnam attempted to disrupt the survey operation by sending up to 63 vessels that deliberately rammed Chinese Coast Guard vessels performing security duties around the platform. The letter alleges as many as 745 ship collisions and sabotage actions on land against Chinese government enterprises: "Some outlaws in Vietnam took the opportunity to attack Chinese companies in the country and committed serious violent crimes, looted and burned property, causing many casualties and economic loss". In its account of events, China blamed Vietnam for the incidents, alleging interference in national operations in the Paracel Islands, when the HYSY 981 was operating 17 NM off Zhong-jian Island and 150 miles off the Vietnamese coast (and thus in its EEZ).

On 6 June of the same year, Vietnam informed the Secretary-General that the oil rig *Haiyang Shiyou 981* had been transferred to the Vietnamese EEZ and CP. It thus expressed the "grave violation of Vietnam's sovereign rights and jurisdiction over its exclusive economic zone and continental shelf as defined in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea"<sup>51</sup>. Hanoi also denounces the sinking of the Vietnamese fishing boat 90Na 90152 TS, with 10 fishermen on board, after being rammed by Chinese boats.

On 9 June the PRC issued a formal letter in which it defended that the *HYSY 981* platform was 133 miles off Paracelsus Island (Chinese sovereignty) and 156 miles off the Vietnamese coast, denouncing the continuous provocations by Vietnamese ships, which "cordoned off and rammed Chinese state vessels a total of 1,146 times"<sup>52</sup>. It also stated the historical sovereignty of the Paracelsus Islands (Xisha Islands for China) according to their discovery and the fact that, prior to 1974, no Vietnamese government had challenged China's sovereignty over the Xisha Islands, officially recognising the Paracelsus as part of China's territory since ancient times.

On 3 July, the Republic of Vietnam expressed its rejection of China's historical sovereignty over the Paracelsus Islands (Note Verbale A/68/942), pointing out the lack of substance in its proposition and stating that in the late 19th century when the ships

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49 CHUNYING, Hua, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, *Regular Press Conference 16/05/2014*. Available at: [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/t1156893.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1156893.shtml)

50 WANG Min, *Letter dated 22 May 2014 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/68/887)*. Available at: <https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>

51 TRUNG, Le Hoai, *Letter dated 6 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, A/68/906*. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/68/906>

52 WANG Min, *Letter dated 9 June 2014 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, A/68/907*. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/68/907>

Bellona and Umeji Maru sank in the archipelago, they were plundered by Chinese fishermen. In the Note, Vietnam interprets China as trying to play down the issue by claiming that these were abandoned islands<sup>53</sup>. It argues that since Vietnam signed the protectorate treaty with France in 1874, the islands have been its sovereignty and its inhabitants have been its nationals, claiming that the PRC illegally seized the Paracel archipelago in 1946.

Moreover, Vietnam argues that prior to World War II, at the Cairo Conference in 1943, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek issued a joint communiqué aimed at eliminating Japanese administration over the Asia-Pacific seized islands since World War I. The communiqué was signed by the US President in 1943 and the Chinese President in 1943. But this communiqué did not mention the Spratly Islands or Paracelsus.

Hanoi claims that the 1954 Geneva Conference for the Restoration of Peace in Indochina declared that “the parties concerned would respect the independence and territorial integrity of Vietnam, which included Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Archipelagos under the administration of French and Vietnamese forces”. Furthermore, it argues that Article I of the 1973 Paris Agreements clearly states that all countries must respect the independence and territorial integrity of Vietnam and that both archipelagos are under the control of the Vietnamese administration. Finally, he denounces that in January 1974, China used military force to occupy the Paracelsus Archipelago and the Vietnamese government asked the UN General Council for an urgent meeting on China’s use of force because “according to international law of territorial acquisition, the use of force and occupation of a territory cannot create a territorial title”.

On the same date, Vietnam’s Note Verbale A/68/943 expresses its concern over the escalation of tensions and denounces the prospecting of the Haiyang Shiyou 981 platform operating in the EEZ and Vietnamese CP. With these operations the Chinese government “infringes the principle of sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Convention and violates the bilateral agreement on non-aggravation and non-complication of the situation in the East Sea”<sup>54</sup>.

On 28 July 2014, China sent *Note Verbale A/68/956* in response to letters A/68/942 and A/68/943<sup>55</sup>. This note argues that the Xisha Islands (Paracel Islands) were *terra nullis*<sup>56</sup> until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with China being their discoverer and first exploiter dur-

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53 TRUNG, Le Hoai, *Letter dated 3 July 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, A/68/942*. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/68/942>

54 TRUNG, Le Hoai *Letter dated 3 July 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General*. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/68/943>

55 LIU, Jieyi, *Letter dated 24 July 2014 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General*. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/68/956>

56 *Terra nullius* is a Latin expression meaning “no man’s land” and has historically been used to claim territory.

ing the Northern Song dynasty (960-1126), that although Vietnam began its colonial period at the end of the 19th century, on 22 August 1921 the French Minister of Foreign Affairs declared that “the impossibility of raising a claim to these islands is due to the fact that since 1909 the Chinese government has exercised its right of sovereignty”. In the same note China argues that according to the Cairo Declaration and the “Potsdam Proclamation and the Japanese Instrument of Surrender” issued during World War II, the Paracelsus Islands, occupied by Japan in 1939, were returned to China. In November 1946 China sent a fleet of ships to commemorate its reconquest and erected a monument, stationing troops ever since.

As can be seen, China objects to Hanoi’s demands on the grounds that the platform operates 17 miles from the baselines (thus in the territorial sea) and, despite continuous diplomatic notes, China repeatedly refuses to withdraw the platform and respect Vietnam’s waters.

The *nine-dashed line* also encompasses the sea area north of the island of Borneo, where Malaysia and Brunei dispute a portion of the sea beyond their shores and up to 200 MN.

Among the coordinates claimed by China are James Bank and Luconia Reef. These enclaves constitute the southernmost point of the line, some 50 miles from the island of Borneo. Both territories constitute one of the most contested claims, as the James Bank and Luconia Reef are submerged between 10 and 40 metres deep, and therefore do not generate sovereignty rights<sup>57</sup>. However, the Beijing government includes these sites in the southern boundary of the line and argues that in the 1930s the Land and Water Map Survey Committee enumerated and mapped Chinese territory, asserting Chinese sovereignty over the sites and defending its rights over James Bank and Luconia Reef based on their discovery.

On these submerged banks, China wants to gain exclusive exploitation rights because of the rich fishing grounds and the possible existence of hydrocarbons.

Between the Malaysian peninsula and the island of Borneo lie the Natuna Islands, an archipelago under Indonesian sovereignty. This region is known as the Marine Area north of the Natuna Islands.

Although the *nine-dashed line* does not include the Natuna Islands, the waters claimed by China enter the archipelago’s EEZ. As a result, the PRC’s claims have opened a dispute with Indonesia.

While the Chinese government recognises Indonesian sovereignty over the archipelago, its claims are that the area is a traditional fishing ground used by Chinese ships since ancient times.

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<sup>57</sup> HAYTON Bill, *How a non-existent island became China’s southernmost territory*, South China Morning Post, 09/02/2013. Available at: <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1146151/how-non-existent-island-became-chinas-southernmost-territory?page=all>

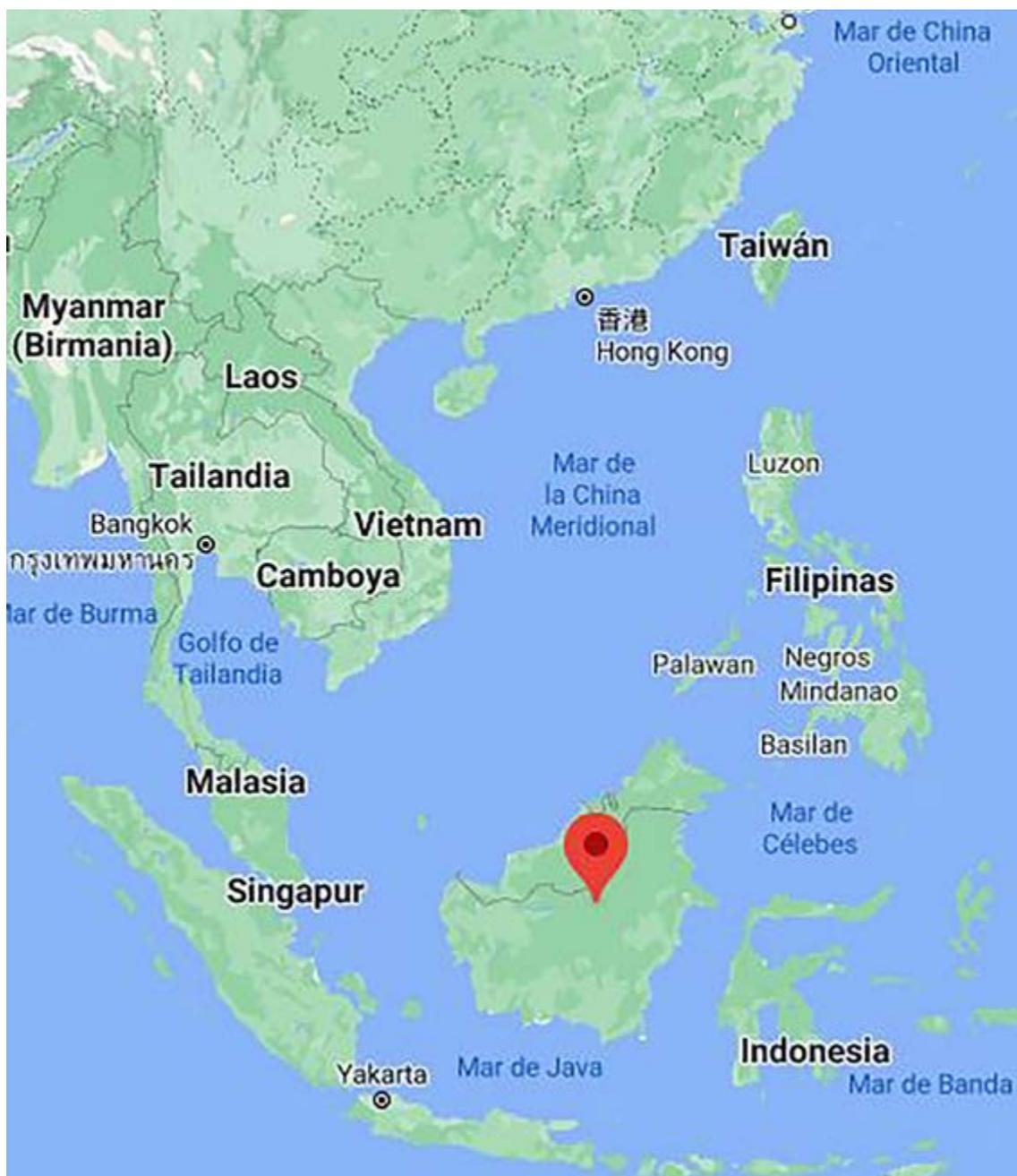


Illustration 36 - Marine Area north of Borneo. Source: Google Maps

In a statement, Evan Kasmana, a researcher at the Centre for Strategy and International Studies in Jakarta, said that “*China is taking advantage of Indonesia’s weak maritime security policy*” to fish in its waters.

The main confrontation between China and the Philippines is governed by the Masinloc Shoal (Scarborough Shoal/Reef). The PRC calls it Huangyan Island while the Philippine government calls it Panatag Shoal. This reef is located 500 kilometres off Hong Kong and 230 kilometres off the Philippine coast.

According to the definition and rights granted by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the lower Masinloc is a rock, as it is not habitable. Although the rocks under sovereignty do not confer Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) or Continental Shelf (CS) rights, China includes it in the *nine-dash line* as part of its extended EEZ.

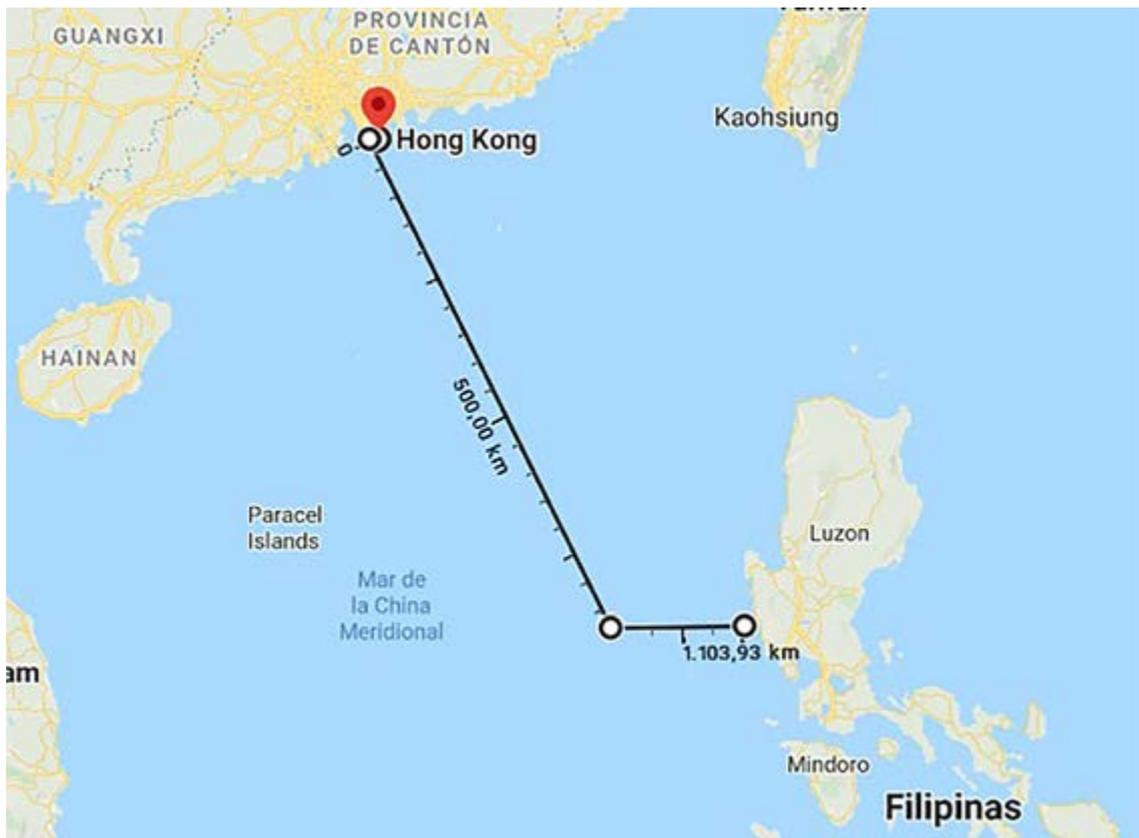


Illustration 37 - Masinloc's position vis-à-vis China and the Philippines. Source: Google Maps

China's claims focus on historical rights on the grounds that in 1922 China held sovereignty over the Zhongsha Islands, including the lower Masinloc. But in reality China has never exercised effective control or occupation of the reef.

On 22 January 2013, following the takeover of Masinloc Bank by Chinese vessels, the Philippine government submitted a complaint 013-0211 to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague objecting to the *nine-dash line* claimed by Beijing, on the grounds that it violated the principles of equity and equidistance (of the Convention) and that it included waters 50 miles off the Philippine coast and entered the Philippine EEZ<sup>58</sup>.

On 12 July 2016, the International Tribunal issued its judgement in the case challenged by the Philippines and concerning historical claims and the *nine-dash line*. In the report it found that the historical rights claimed by China were invalidated upon ratification of the Convention, and that there was no legal basis under the Law of the Sea for the claim to the area below the *nine-dashed line*<sup>59</sup>. In the Philippines Maritime Arbitration Award, the PCA ruled that China's historical claims were invalid because this area was the high seas (outside the territorial sea) where any vessel could

58 JARDELEZA, Francis H., *Notification and Statement of Claim on West Philippine Sea*, No. 013-0211. Republic of the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs, 22/01/2013.

59 PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION, *PCA Case No. 2013-19 IN THE MATTER OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ARBITRATION*, 12/07/2016.

fish freely. Accordingly, the Tribunal concluded that, as between the Philippines and China, there was no basis for China to claim historical resource rights beyond the rights provided by the Convention (EEZ and CP up to 350MN).

The PCA's findings indicate that China failed to show due regard for the sovereign rights of the Philippines with respect to fisheries in its exclusive economic zone and is therefore in breach of its obligations under Article 58 (3) of the Convention<sup>60</sup>. However, the ruling has not calmed the waters, as China refuses to accept the PCA resolution. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China announced that the Chinese government rejected the PCA ruling on the grounds that the Philippines' claim had not followed the Convention's procedure regarding dispute settlement by the International Tribunal is applicable "only when two states fail to reach an agreement"<sup>61</sup>. And according to the Chinese Minister "the two states have not had any negotiations regarding arbitration".

Finally, the Philippines' arbitration appeal to the PCA also includes the sea area west of Palawan and the Luzon Strait, where China, the Philippines and the island of Taiwan have open disputes over the sovereignty of the waters that the PRC includes in the *nine-dash line*.

These waters are home to a large number of reefs and rocks among which rich fishing grounds are located. The PCA concluded that the land locations in these areas are rocks and reefs and therefore China's EEZ and CP claims are unfounded, as EEZs cannot be claimed on sovereign rocks.

## Why the South China Sea? Geopolitical and geo-economic interests in the region

Disputes over the sovereignty of the South China Sea are based on control of the sea and the natural resources in these waters. The claim containing the waters below the *nine-dash line* would give China the right to subsoil exploitation, island building and fishing beyond 200 MN and up to 1,600 MN south of the Chinese coast.

While the creation of the EEZ (up to a maximum of 200 miles) was agreed as a compromise solution to be established deliberately to strike a balance between littoral states

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<sup>60</sup> Article 58. Rights and duties of other States in the EEZ: "In exercising their rights and discharging their duties in the exclusive economic zone under this Convention, States shall have due regard to the rights and duties of the coastal State and shall comply with the laws and regulations issued by the coastal State in accordance with the provisions of this Convention and other rules of international law to the extent that they are not inconsistent with this Part".

<sup>61</sup> MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS of the People's Republic of China, *Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on Settling Disputes Between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea Through Bilateral Negotiation*. 08/06/2016. Available at: [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/t1370476.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1370476.shtml)

while ensuring the protection of the sea and freedom of navigation and overflight for military purposes, from a geopolitical point of view, sovereignty over the waters of the *nine-dash line* would grant China military and economic supremacy in the South Sea, leaving other nations at a clear tactical disadvantage, relegating them to a lifelong energy dependence on the Asian giant, without respecting these fundamental principles. With this in mind, the PRC has been involved in numerous incidents of trying to gain control over islands and islets as well as establishing military bases along the Southern Basin.

Chinese expansionism in this part of the globe falls within the so-called “grey zone”<sup>62</sup> given the ambiguity of the foundations on which the PRC bases its claims and due to the combination of irregular actions that harmonise the use of conventional weapons, criminal behaviour and terrorist and sabotage operations. In this way, China is pursuing a hybrid approach to increase its power projection and resource exploitation, with financial and military aspirations.

### *Geopolitical interests*

Given its concern about foreign encroachment and the occupation of islands in the South Sea, the Committee for the Survey of Land and Water Maps was set up in the 1930s<sup>63</sup>. With the publication of the *nine-dash line*, it claims any jurisdiction that UNCLOS recognises the sovereign state over territories within its zone of responsibility.

The justification of the need to defend its sovereignty in these spaces has translated into the creation of a large defensive perimeter on which to establish military coastal installations for the defence of its territory throughout the China Sea. With this in mind, China has built numerous military facilities and coastal radars in various locations. These include the militarisation of the Spratly Islands, on which anti-ship and anti-aircraft cruise missile batteries have been built, equipped with the YJ-12B surface-to-ship missile (with a range of 295 NM) and long-range HQ-9B surface-to-air missiles<sup>64</sup>. With the establishment of these bases, China boasts a greater ability to locate, identify and monitor contacts, extending its influence throughout the Southern Basin under the deterrent power of a layered defensive shield that gives it a defence-in-depth capability.

It currently maintains seven military installations in the archipelago located on *Cuarteron, Fiery Cross, Gaven, Hughes, Johnson, Mischief* and *Subi* reefs<sup>65</sup>. On the Par-

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62 BAQUÉS, José, *Hacia una definición del concepto “Gray Zone”*, 04/04/2017. Research Paper 02/2017. IEEE. Available at: <http://www.ieee.es/contenido/noticias/2017/04/DIEEEINV02-2017.html>

63 Do THANH HAI, Leszek BUSZYNSKI, *The South China Sea: From a Regional Maritime Dispute to Geo-Strategic Competition*, 16/12/2019. Routledge.

64 REUTERS, *China installs cruise missiles on South China Sea outposts-CNBC report*. 03/05/2018.

65 ASIA MARITIME TRANSPARENCY, *China Island Tracker*. Available at: <https://amti.csis.org/island-tracker/china/>

acelsus Islands, it operates some 20 forward lookout posts and, since 2012, also controls the Masinloc Shoal (Scarborough Shoal), although it has not yet built military settlements<sup>66</sup>. In response to the PRC's militarisation, the other coastal nations (except Brunei) have placed their own detachments on islands or rocks under their effective control.

Since 2013, China's grey zone strategy has gone a step further, with major efforts to create artificial islands in the Spratlys and Paracelsus, under the expansionist strategy known as the "Great Sand Wall". With them, China has been able to increase its sovereignty and control over the disputed waters. This has aroused the misgivings of the other riparian nations, mainly Vietnam and the Philippines. Among the latest moves, in 2019, Manila announced that it intended to proceed with the construction

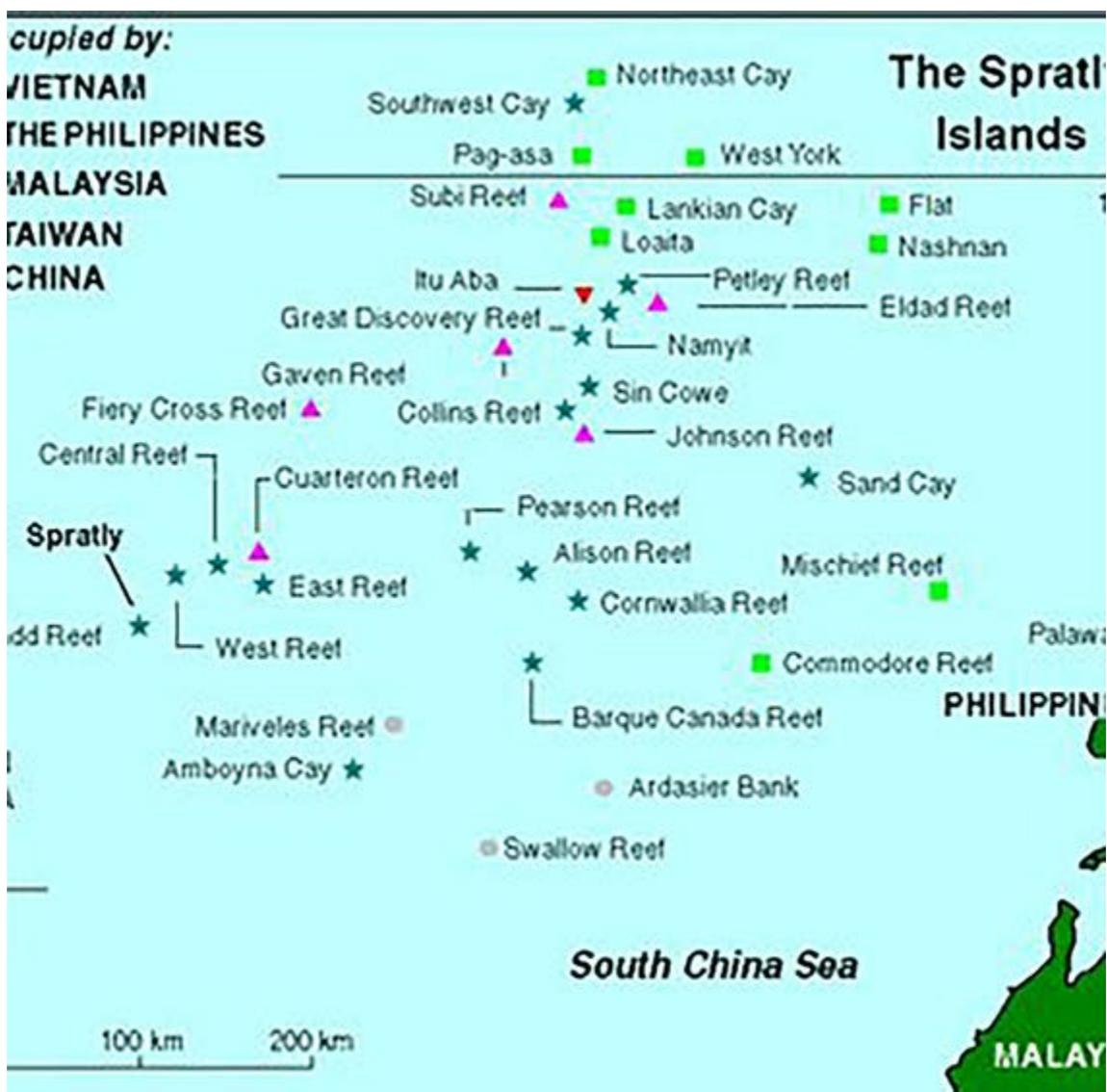


Illustration 38 Militarily occupied islands. Source: Víctor M. Mijares, "Posiciones militares de los beligerantes en las islas Spratly". 2006

66 JENNINGS, Ralph, *How China Could Gradually Assume Control Of Scarborough Shoal In The South China Sea*. Forbes, 29/12/2017.

of an airstrip on Thitu Island, the largest of the nine Philippine-controlled islands in the Spratly archipelago, where its main attraction is located<sup>67</sup>. But in response to these developments, the PRC has mobilised the so-called “maritime militia”,<sup>68</sup> in an attempt to abort new construction by other nations. And given its military capabilities – far superior to those of other coastal nations – and the strong commercial and hybrid strategies it imposes on those who criticise its moves, China’s island-building has not met with as strong an opposition as Beijing’s against its opponents. The following image shows the occupied islands and military establishments in the Spratly Islands.

This militarisation strategy can be approached from different geopolitical perspectives. On the one hand, the goal of elevating the PRC to the position of the world’s leading power. Secondly, the need to maintain its hegemony in Indo-Asia, ensuring economic growth and access to marine resources. And finally, the defence of its waters and the creation of a defensive bubble can be associated with the attempt to impose an A2/AD strategy effectively, based on defences in depth with long-range missiles located in military installations along the islands and the imposition of restricted zones in its waters.

With this A2/AD bubble China aims to gain control of the South China Sea in the coming years and make any external (mainly American) action in the region impossible. The progressive dominance of the archipelagos has allowed it to lead the esca-

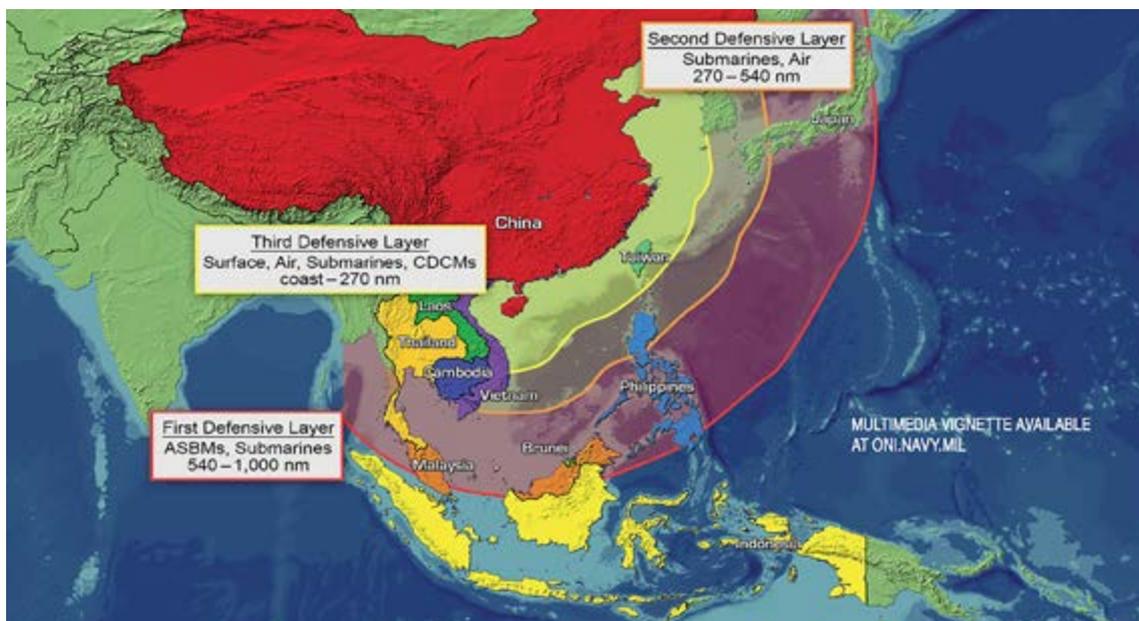


Illustration 39 China’s A2/AD bubble in the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean. Source: Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance (<https://missiledefenseadvocacy.org/missile-threat-and-proliferation/todays-missile-threat/china/china-anti-access-area-denial/>)

67 ASIA MARITIME TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE, *Philippine constructions provokes a paramilitary response*. 06/02/2019. Available at: <https://amti.csis.org/under-pressure-philippine-construction-paramilitary-response/>

68 Term used by Andrew S. ERICKSON, in his report *China’s Third Sea Force, The People’s Armed Forces Maritime Militia: Tethered to the PLA*, referring to the employment of civilian vessels on military missions by the PLA in disputed areas.

lation of tensions in the Asia-Pacific without escalating into a military confrontation between conventional forces. In doing so, however, the PRC has jeopardised international freedom of navigation.

### *Geo-economic interests*

The control of the sea and the defence of national territory are at the heart of the struggle for regional resources associated with sovereignty rights. From an economic point of view, the South China Sea is one of the main routes for merchant traffic worldwide. Almost half of the world's oil tankers pass through the Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Malacca, with a throughput of 11 million barrels per day (4.3 million barrels less than in the Strait of Hormuz and 7.2 million barrels more than in the Suez Canal), making it the second busiest strait in the world<sup>69</sup>. Maritime trade has been growing steadily and, as a result, freedom of navigation has become of vital importance to ASEAN members and the international community.

But in addition to trade routes, the presence of hydrocarbons and minerals are at the heart of the geo-economic struggle. The U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates that the South China Sea holds “approximately 11 million barrels and 190 trillion cubic metres of gas” between known fields and areas identified as potential hydrocarbon sites<sup>70</sup>. Because we are in a zone of emerging powers, the struggle for these resources is a priority for the littoral states. The development and industrialisation of this region is leading to an increased demand for fossil fuels. States with domestic exploration will be much more competitive and independent than those without domestic exploration, which are doomed to import. This is where the tensions are most acute and difficult to resolve. Now that natural reserves are in decline, competition for imported supplies is already having an impact on the region<sup>71</sup>.

China's resource extraction and exploration operations are carried out by three national companies: *China National Offshore Oil Corporation* (CNOOC), *China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation* (SINOPEC) and *China National Petroleum Corporation* (CNPC). CNOOC is currently the leading company in offshore oil production, investing heavily in the development of new ocean techniques. According to its 2019 year-end annual report, following the discovery of 23 new fields and the installation of

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69 EIA, U.S. Energy Information Administration. 25/07/2017. Available at: [https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/special-topics/World\\_Oil\\_Transit\\_Chokepoints](https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/special-topics/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints)

70 U.S Energy Information Administration. 07/02/2013. Available at: [https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/regions\\_of\\_interest/South\\_China\\_Sea/south\\_china\\_sea.pdf](https://www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/regions_of_interest/South_China_Sea/south_china_sea.pdf)

71 KLARE, Michael T., *Guerras por los recursos. El futuro escenario del conflicto global*, 2003. Editorial Urano. pp 155-158.

30 structures for exploration,<sup>72</sup> the company achieved a 7 per cent increase in crude oil and a 5.2 per cent increase in natural gas over the 2018 period.

And finally, in the absence of consensus over the delimitation of maritime spaces, fishing and the management of fishing grounds has become another point of friction between the powers. The Jamaica Convention grants the coastal state exclusive exploitation rights to the resources in the EEZ and CP. It also includes the responsibility of the sovereign state to establish relevant fisheries legislation in order to ensure the sustainable exploitation of resources.

Through the *Joint Maritime Seismic Undertaking* (JMSU) initiative,<sup>73</sup> efforts have been made to improve cooperation and understanding between nations. In 2005, the leaders of the major oil companies of China, the Philippines, and Vietnam agreed to survey the seabed for hydrocarbons under a joint strategy that would unite efforts



Illustration 40 JMSU operating agreement. Source: International Crisis Group, “Stirring up the South China Sea (IV): Oil in Troubled Waters”, 2016.

72 CNOOC LIMITED. <https://www.cnoocld.com/attach/o/aa2dd9ad2oda47bc9ad119383e49d805.pdf>

73 SLINGG, Dalij, *Southeast Asian Affairs 2009*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2009, p.p 46-52.

and promote peace in the region. However, the agreement was not renewed in 2008, following the Philippines' accusation of covert – and secret – actions led by Beijing. Since then, the situation has only worsened and there have been ongoing disputes over resources, resulting in the illegal occupation of numerous islands and a race to militarise them. Lack of understanding, militarisation of the area, oil exploration and illegal fishing have jeopardised the sustainability of the resources.

### *Merchant traffic route analysis*

The South China Sea is an enclosed sea with numerous islands and rocks. It is therefore advisable to analyse the peculiarities that maritime law grants to archipelagic states and the repercussions that the application of these rules may have on merchant traffic routes.

The delimitation of waters in Archipelagic States is governed by the particular rules of Part IV of the Convention. Its straight baselines are formed by joining the furthest points of the islands. The waters contained within the straight baselines are State sovereignty (internal waters) but with the difference that all vessels will have the right of innocent passage (uninterrupted transit). In addition, the sovereign state may designate DSTs to delimit navigable channels and ensure safe navigation in its waters.

Through the imposition of DST, the sovereign state could divert traffic of all vessels not flying its flag by limiting routes through navigable channels duly published<sup>74</sup> (A2/AD strategy?). And as a consequence, distances between ports could be increased, which would mean more money and expense in transport, prioritising exclusive routes for Chinese ships.

### **Internationalisation of Conflict**

The littoral states of China, Taiwan, Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam are locked in diplomatic conflict over tensions and disputes over the exploitation of waters in this sea basin. China, as part of its expansionist strategy defined in the *white paper*,<sup>75</sup> has increased its naval presence in the spaces it considers under its sovereignty, building numerous artificial islands with the aim of extending its territorial waters, even going so far as to deny freedom of navigation in a large part of the South China Sea.

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74 CONVEMAR, Article 52 “Archipelagic States may, without discrimination in law or in fact among foreign ships, temporarily suspend the innocent passage of foreign ships in certain areas of their archipelagic waters, if such suspension is indispensable for the protection of their security. Such suspension shall only take effect after publication in due form”.

75 STATE COUNCIL of the People's Republic of China, *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces*, 16/04/2013. Available at: Govt. White Papers -china.org.cn

China's rise and this "grey zone" strategy break with the strategic balance previously achieved. This has not gone unnoticed by the international community, prompting countries to engage in cooperative partnerships or freedom of navigation operations.

## Japan

Concerned by the PRC's expansionist policy, Japan has since 2013 shifted its foreign policy to seek regional support to curb Beijing's rise.

Through "defence cooperation and exchange" agreements, it maintains bilateral defence relations with the US, Australia, the Republic of Korea, India, the South China Sea countries (including China), the UK and France, among others. These pacts reinforce its security policy under a pro-active contribution to peace, averting the possibility of military confrontation through deterrence as the main strategy vis-à-vis the PRC.

However, bilateral relations to curb China's regional rise have shown limited effectiveness. The US presence in the Indo-Pacific region appears to be a necessity for Tokyo, as demonstrated in the 2004-2006 Defence Policy Review. The review of the agreement identified shared regional strategic objectives between the two powers. These include the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan situation and a series of global strategic objectives to strengthen the international standing of both countries.

The review also established a roadmap for improved cooperation and unit integration and agreed on the projection of US forces from bases in Japan and the development of a Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system to counter the threat from North Korea while curbing hostilities from China<sup>76</sup>. Japan's military progress has shifted towards acquiring offensive capabilities, moving away from the premise of a military for self-defence purposes only<sup>77</sup>.

## USA

In 2019 the US Department of Defence published the first Indo-Pacific Strategy<sup>78</sup> in which it defined the region as the priority theatre for the Department of Defence:

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76 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*, 27/04/2015.

77 Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution: "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international dispute".

78 US Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*. 01/06/2019. Available at: <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>

“The Indo-Pacific is the Department of Defense’s priority theatre”. As objectives, the Strategy lists the preparation of forces to counter regional adversaries, the promotion of bilateral engagements, the development of a regional force for regional peacekeeping and the development of a security architecture that respects international law.

Thus, the US Navy has reinforced its presence in the South China Sea with numerous FONOPS (*Freedom of Navigation Operations*) operations in the disputed areas and since July 2020 has conducted two exercises involving battle groups under the command of the aircraft carriers *USS Theodore Roosevelt* and *USS Nimitz Carrier*. The aim of these exercises and patrols is to curb the rise of the Asian giant while promoting future military agreements and guaranteeing the right of innocent passage. In this way, international exercises or manoeuvres with Japan, Australia, the UK, the Philippines, Vietnam and/or Malaysia have been encouraged. In this way, the US tries to counter PRC expansionism and its tactics in the “grey zone”.

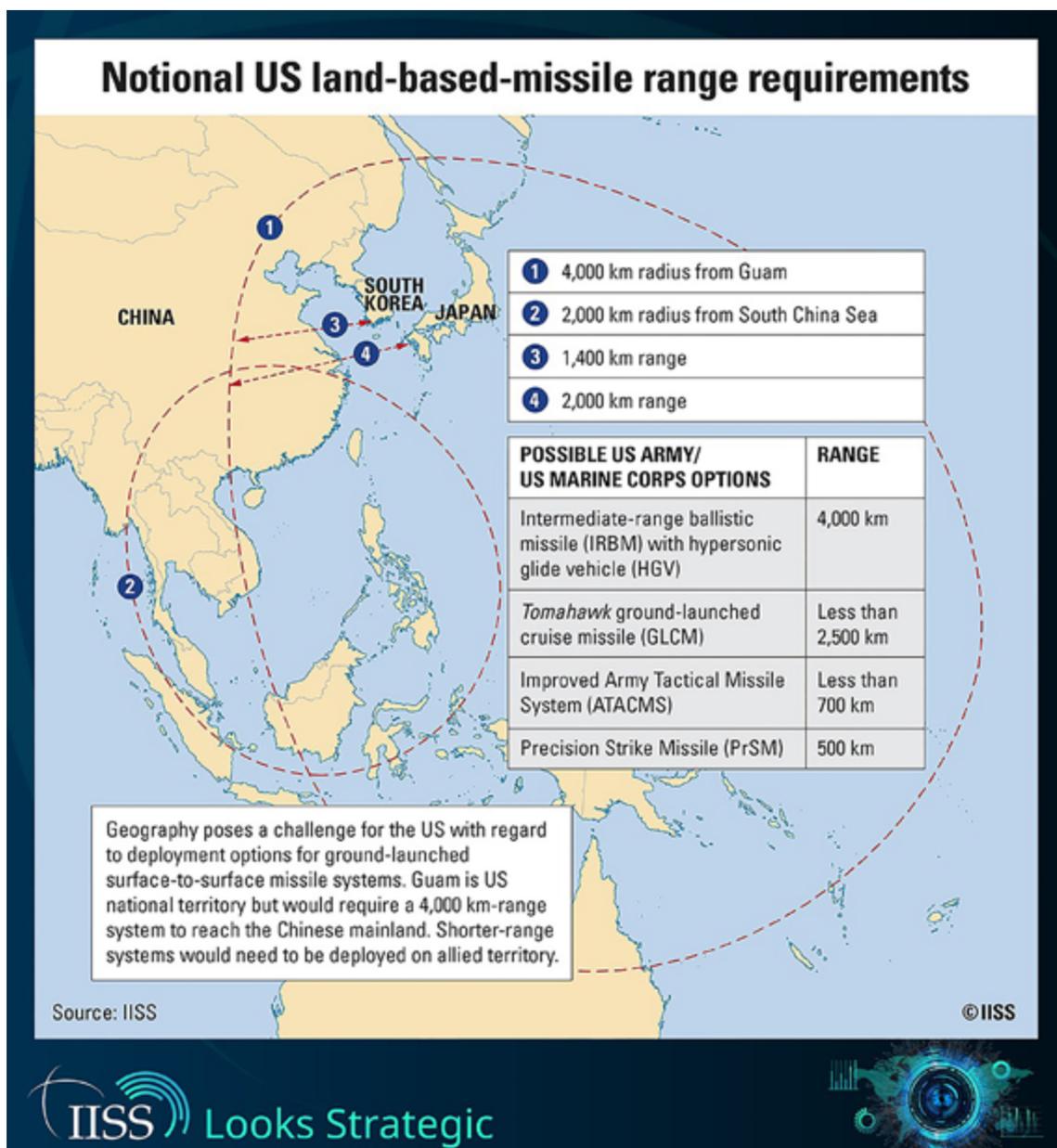


Illustration 41 Requirements for defence in depth. Source: IISS, *Asia-Pacific Security*, 2019

The strategy also includes investment and development targets for 2020-2024, including the development of anti-surface, anti-submarine and BMD capabilities with the acquisition of ten new destroyers.

The US is thus signalling its intention to increase its presence in the Pacific and to increase military power and integration between regional forces in the disputed waters of the South China Sea. This policy shift has been welcomed by regional countries and external Allies such as Japan, Australia, India, the UK and France, which have decided to participate in operations to ensure freedom of navigation.

## France

France has toughened its stance against Xi Jinping's government's expansion in the South China Sea, bringing its position closer to that of the US.

Since 2019, it has participated in freedom of navigation operations with the deployment of the frigate *Vendémiaire*,<sup>79</sup> in a geostrategic move that reflects its concern about China's hybrid approach in the region. French Defence Minister Florence Parly described France's participation in FONOPS operations as a "step towards ensuring the prosperity of European trade routes that are vital to the world"<sup>80</sup>.

The latest episode in the escalation of tensions between France and China took place in March 2020, when Paris agreed to sell arms to Taiwan for the renewal of ships acquired in 1991. Beijing quickly issued a statement criticising the deal and urging France to cancel the arms sale because it had not been authorised by Beijing:

Zhao Lijian: "Our position is consistent and clear: we firmly oppose other countries selling arms to the Taiwan region or conducting military exchange with it. We have expressed grave concerns to the French side. Once again we urge the French side to earnestly abide by the one-China principle and withdraw its arms sales plan to avoid more damage to China-France relations".

## United Kingdom

The UK has been concerned about the situation in the South China Sea, conducting FONOPS operations since 2018 with the deployment of the amphibious assault ship HMS *Albion*.

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79 Phil STEWART, Idrees ALI, *In rare move, French warship passes through Taiwan Strait*. Reuters, 25/04/2019. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-france-warship-china-exclusive-idUSKCNrSroQ7>

80 PARLY, Florence, French Defence Minister, Third Plenary Session: *Asia's evolving security order and its challenges*, 2019. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjNIBuZwwcw>

While its naval priorities focus on the Atlantic and recently the Arctic, London has expressed its commitment to ensuring freedom of navigation and respect for the Convention's sovereignty rights in the South China Sea.

Gavin Williamson, Minister of Defence: "We have to make it clear that nations need to play by the rules, and there are consequences for not doing so".

It has recently moved to strengthen economic partnerships in Asia, including applying for ASEAN dialogue membership. And according to the Foreign Secretary's statement,<sup>81</sup> the UK is expected to increase its presence in the South China Sea.

## India

To preserve its state interests, India's navy has experienced exponential growth in technological development and in the number of units, positioning itself as a regional power in the Indian Ocean.

The increase in military spending and the development of a competent navy is related to its economic progress, China's rise and its concern over the deployment of PLA units in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the development of the "Silk Road" and the growth of Chinese port facilities along its major shipping lanes has raised concerns for the world power, leading it to actively participate in regional operations and engage in exercises with the US, Japan and Australia in the disputed areas of the South China Sea. India has thus taken a strategic step to curb the PRC's aspirations to defend its own geo-economic interests in the Indian Ocean.

## Russia

In the face of NATO's exclusion of China and Russia, the two nations have developed a harmonious stance, cooperating and working together to balance US-Japanese dominance in the Far East. However, the good relations between Russia and China have not calmed Beijing's reaction, which has expressed its rejection of prospecting operations carried out by Russian companies in the region.

The potential of South China Sea resources is also an opportunity for Russian energy companies. In October 2019, the President of the Philippines met with Rosneft to finalise a deal to exploit natural gas in Philippine waters (in dispute with China)<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> RAAB, Dominic, UK Foreign Secretary: "*the move was part of the UK's "tilt" towards the Indo-Pacific region post-Brexit*".

<sup>82</sup> RANADA, Pia, *Duterte meets with CEO of Russian oil firm Rosneft*, Rappler, 03/10/2019. Available at: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/duterte-meets-ceo-russian-oil-firm-rosneft>

The company is also active in Vietnam's EEZ exploration blocks, to which it has had access thanks to the close cooperation between Russia and Vietnam since the end of the Cold War<sup>83</sup>. To date, however, Russia has been unwilling to meddle in the South China Sea disputes, seeking to maintain the *status quo* in its cooperative relations with China and defending its neutrality in the face of regional disputes. In addition, President Putin publicly expressed his solidarity with China in the wake of the Philippines Judgement: "We are solidarizing with and supporting China's stance on the problem – the non-recognition of the court ruling (the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague)"<sup>84</sup>.

Despite the fact that Russia is profiting handsomely from its national companies' – mainly *Rosneft* – exploration in Vietnamese waters, the meagre support for the PRC's cause in the South China Sea can be approached from two different perspectives: economic and political. From an economic point of view, China is the largest importer of Russian natural gas. In 2019 the two countries agreed to export 30 billion cubic metres of gas per year for three decades,<sup>85</sup> after the construction of new pipelines, making it a preferred partner for the Kremlin. In addition, following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the EU and the US have imposed numerous economic sanctions on Moscow's exports. For this reason, the Kremlin has found it necessary to pivot eastwards and strengthen diplomatic ties with China. On the other hand, the improvement of relations between Russia and China is understood as a need to match forces with the Western bloc, so that both countries join forces as the best deterrence strategy.

## Conclusions. Past, Present and Future of Geopolitics in the South China Sea

In a globalised world, the political, economic and environmental importance of the maritime domain has acquired a fundamental status for the development and sustainability of coastal nations. In geographical areas where the waters of several countries converge, maritime boundary disputes are the order of the day, especially because of the economic impact that exploitation rights have on the GDP of coastal states.

### *Geopolitical Developments in the South China Sea*

The analysis revolved around the *nine-dash line* that frames the largest and most complex of the sovereignty disputes and includes the waters off the Spratly Islands,

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83 MURRAY, Bennett, *Russia's Awkard Dance with Vietnam*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2019.

84 PUTIN, *Russia is staying out of South China Sea Dispute*, Russia News Agent 2016.

85 KANTCHEV, Georgi, *China and Russia Are Partners-and Now Have a \$55 Billion Pipeline to Prove It*, The Wall Street Journal, 2019.

the Paracelsus Islands, the Senkaku Islands, Macclesfield Bank and the lower Masiloc (or Scarborough). These marine spaces are disputed by China, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, as well as the island of Formosa. The objective was to determine the PRC's justifications for its claim and to analyse its diplomacy in the face of the geopolitical weaknesses of nations with adjoining maritime spaces in the region.

The conclusion reached is that as the People's Republic of China has grown as a global actor and gained ascendancy on the geopolitical chessboard, it has demonstrated aggressive diplomacy. A clear example of this is the bellicose assertion of sovereignty in the South China Sea in order to increase the country's political and economic clout in South Asia, involving numerous incidents at sea, some of which have resulted in the sinking of ships and the death of people at sea. If we add to this the fact that the South China Sea is an area of emerging powers, the struggle for these resources is a priority for the coastal states, given that the development and industrialisation of this region will lead to an increase in the demand for fossil fuels.

On the other hand, the PRC's nationalist drift, which prioritises its own interests over those of its partners, has not only broken with Deng Xiaoping's discreet diplomacy abroad, but has also demonstrated a lack of transparency and respect for international laws and regional agreements – most notably the *Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea* – resulting in increased tensions and regional militarisation.

The South China Sea is a good example of the PRC's expansionist aspirations and its attempt to acquire regional hegemony without respect for international law. Despite China's ratification of the Jamaica Convention in 1996, the claim to the *nine-dash line* –which encompasses 90 per cent of the waters of the South China Sea – demonstrates the Beijing government's double standards on international agreements. Moreover, the South China Sea case has called into question the ability of these agreements to curb regional tensions and abuses by the most powerful state. Sovereignty of the claimed waters and territories below the line are justified on the basis of historical rights that are very difficult to sustain and overlap with the EEZ of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Japan and Indonesia. While it is true that the PCA ruling demonstrated the invalidity of these arguments, China's refusal to accept this ruling demonstrates the weakness of international law in dealing with violators and shows the unreliability of Beijing, which only seems to accept the Convention's rules in one sense.

In short, given the lack of consensus on maritime boundary delimitation and the inability to reach agreement among nations given the PRC's excessive demands, the geopolitical situation in the region is not expected to improve substantially in the short or medium term, forcing an international response to the increased threats to maritime trade and global maritime security posed by regional incidents and the PRC's A2/AD strategies.

### *Regional Militarisation and Internalisation of the Conflict*

Behind the militarisation of the archipelagos lie commercial and sovereignty defence interests that could ensure China's hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, in a strategy aimed at slowing down the regional advance of other countries while strengthening China's international rise as a global economic and military power.

The progressive increase in China's defence budget and the development of its navy (*PLA Navy*), both in terms of number of units and military capabilities, is on the verge of making it the leading military power, overtaking the US for the first time in the last century. While it is true that the *PLA Navy* has already outnumbered the *US Navy* (300 to 287), the US destroyers still have far superior weapons power and warfare capabilities. But Chinese technology is beginning to overshadow American technology, and in the 2030s up to forty 7,000-tonne Type 052C/D/E destroyers and some twenty 12,000-tonne Type 055/A destroyers are expected to enter service, closing the gap on the *US Navy's Arleigh Burke* destroyers.

The militarisation of islands and archipelagos and the development of long-range defence systems appear to be associated with a deterrence and A2/AD strategy to progressively eradicate the *US Navy's* presence in the region. This, in turn, reinforces China's hegemony and its ability to control the sea throughout the region. Similarly, the granting of sovereignty in the area below the *nine-dash line* would allow it to temporarily suspend the right of innocent passage of foreign vessels or to establish exclusion zones as a way of prohibiting navigation in certain areas. But undoubtedly, archipelagic militarisation and the creation of a defensive bubble with defence-in-depth systems with long-range missiles has allowed it to erect a large deterrent perimeter across the region, on which the greatest concerns hinge.

The US has expressed concern about the construction of the defensive bubble erected over the islands, basing its arguments for the justification of its involvement in a regional conflict on the US-Japan Security Treaty, which would require the US to provide assistance to Japan in the event of a Chinese attack on the islands. Similarly, Washington has expressed growing concern over China's regional rise, focusing its efforts in the Pacific to curb its expansion and ensure regional peace and stability.

And finally, China's hegemony in the area below the line can be associated with its expansionist policy and the dark intention behind the camouflaged claim to certain geographical areas, which affect the main trade routes supplying Europe. This encompasses a number of maritime security threats with a major impact on trade routes, as control of the South Sea would give the PRC the rights to impose Traffic Separation Schemes as a strategy to divert maritime trade away from vessels not flying its flag by limiting routes through navigable channels (duly published), which would extend the courses of vessels not flying its flag. All these risks have led to the involvement of various nations in the region, mainly in FONOPS operations, as a way of showing their concern about the conflict and their willingness to guarantee freedom of navigation and trade routes.

Some of the biggest obstacles to conflict resolution are the difficulty of reaching diplomatic agreements with the PRC, the unilateral drift of its foreign strategy and increased trade pressures on anyone who questions its policies. If one assesses the regional agreements reached over the last decade and the inability to resolve the conflict between riparian countries –or after the PCA ruling– one can conclude that in the coming years the involvement of international organisations such as the EU or NATO cannot be ruled out in defence of global interests and as the only way to channel the conflict in the search for a solution that respects the terms of the Jamaica Convention and global interests.

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## *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: History, State of Matter, Armaments, and Strategies of the Major Nuclear States*

### **Abstract**

From the early days of the US-Soviet nuclear arms race to the present day, Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW) have been a source of concern and analysis by academics and experts. However, the unquestionable opacity from the possessor States and theoretical doubts about their very existence as ‘tactics’ make this a particularly complicated and obscure pomological subject. This article traces the history of TNW during its three nuclear eras (1950s-1980s, 1990s-mid-2010s, and the present), establishes its theoretical state of art, the amount and type of tactical nuclear armaments of various countries (some of them *de facto* nuclear states), and finally, sets out the challenges and possible trends in the near future.

### **Key words**

Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW), United States, Russia, Pakistan, India, Israel, China, North Korea, deterrence, TPNW.

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## Introduction

Since the first and only use of the atomic bomb in a military conflict at the end of World War II, the strategic concepts of the major and middle powers have had to adapt to a new era in military strategy and warfare. In this, weapons of mass destruction were both a threat and a deterrent to the adversary, with nuclear weapons playing a key role in both.

Atomic weapons are known for their deterrent and highly destructive capabilities, but they have evolved in two ways over the past seventy-six years. The first of these refers to (i) their destructive capacity (21 kilotons of the Fat Man versus 50 megatons of the Tsar Bomba, the most destructive bomb ever created), (ii) the origin of the explosion (fission or “A” bombs versus fusion or “H” bombs), as well as (iii) the mechanisms for firing the device (such as cruise missiles launched from land vehicles, submarines, or aircraft bombs) – delivery vectors.

All these advances have developed the strategic capabilities of nuclear weapons, and therefore the capabilities of nuclear states, and have been the subject of various treaties such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, or the START nuclear arms reduction treaties, especially during the Cold War and between the two major nuclear powers: the United States and the Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation).

However, this has not been the only dimension in which military nuclear technology has developed. For decades now, the possibility of creating weapons closer to conventional weapons, but of a nuclear type, has also been envisaged, which would be the second evolutionary dimension. Such weaponry would be described as “tactical” by experts, defence departments and the press, although from the beginning (even in the 1950s) there was a still-developing debate about the concept itself. The problem is that the use of nuclear weapons, even assuming that low-yield<sup>1</sup> (as opposed to high-yield) operational nuclear weapons could be developed in a “tactical” manner, is considered by some to be impossible due to the very nature of the weapon, both in terms of its destructive capacity in relation to the delivery device and the radiological dimension of the weapon<sup>2</sup>.

The classical division in strategic studies between the tactical and the strategic, already well defined by von Clausewitz: “[T]actics, the theory of the employment of troops in combat; and strategy, the theory of the employment of combatants for the

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<sup>1</sup> Scale measuring the size of the nuclear explosion with its equivalent in tonnes of TNT [or terajoules (TJ)], although this is approximate, due to the Fermi problem. There is also a yield-weight scale that compares the explosion with the weight of the nuclear weapon.

<sup>2</sup> Nuclear weapons have an impact that can be divided into four parts: the blast wave from the explosion; the heat pulse; the ionising radiation; and the electromagnetic pulse (EMP).

purpose of war<sup>3</sup>.” Clearly, these concepts have evolved, adding the operational level, and adapting to new technological realities and different theatres of operations. Even so, we can understand for this article that a “tactical” nuclear weapon would have a potential to be used as a means to achieve objectives in low to medium scale operations, i.e. “battles”, properly speaking.

Thus, these weapons would not, *sensu contrario*, be “strategic” in nature, or in other words, their mere existence would not affect the outlines of the strategic plans of both the holder and the adversary. This evident and aforementioned clash between the nature of a nuclear device and the definitions that are usually used as “tactical”, generate today problems such as its inclusion or omission from the “official” arsenals of the States, among many other problems.

In any case, the nuclear devices that are usually described as tactical nuclear weapons refer mainly to short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) or intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs or MRBMs), although other types of weaponry have even been developed. The problem is that due to technological difficulties, the limits of international law on “strategic” weaponry, as well as the interest of states in keeping their non-strategic capabilities secret, tactical nuclear weapons suffer from a major difficulty in their study, due to a lack of transparency and universally accepted definitions.

Indeed, this is the case, as established above, to the extent that some consider that such weapons do not really exist, as the possession, stationing, and use of nuclear weapons are always of strategic importance<sup>4</sup>. The Russian academy itself also discusses the extent to which nuclear weapons can be merely tactical, specifying, for example, that the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (16 kilotons from Little Boy, 23 from Fat Man), although not particularly destructive compared to later war-heads, had a strategic result: to take the Japanese Empire out of the war<sup>5</sup>. For its part, the 2020 Nuclear Matters report notes that:

“At the beginning of the nuclear age, the US nuclear weapons programme focused on producing enough nuclear material to build enough weapons for a second-strike – the ability to strike after absorbing a total first strike – as well as deploying weapons on nearly every type of military delivery system available, including nuclear depth charges and nuclear artillery shells. By 1967, the United States had more than 30,000 nuclear weapons in its arsenal. Many of them were “tactical”: non-strategic nuclear weapons of lower range and low-yield. The United States relied on nuclear

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3 VON CLAUSEWITZ, Carl. *De la Guerra*. Barcelona: Ediciones Obelisco, 2015, p. 93.

4 SCHOGOL, Jeff. “Why there’s no such thing as ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons”. *Task & Purpose*, 19/09/2020. <https://taskandpurpose.com/analysis/no-tactical-nuclear-weapons/> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

5 BELOUS, Vladimir. “Las armas nucleares tácticas en las nuevas condiciones geopolíticas”. In *Centro de investigación político-militar del MGIMO*, 2000. <http://eurasian-defence.ru/?q=node/23371> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

weapons as the only means available to counter the dominance of Soviet conventional forces, particularly in Europe”<sup>6</sup>.

According to this report, which has been quoted in many editions, from the beginning there was a need for TNWs as mass weaponry in order to be able to respond to a Soviet offensive in Western Europe. Massive, because the conquest or destruction of the European nerve centres would not be sufficient to neutralise Soviet second-strike capability.

Thus, the subject of this article is the study of tactical nuclear weapons, a concept that we intend to approach using various definitions used by authors and reference websites in studies on the control and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

According to the *Nuclear Threat Initiative's* glossary, tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) are “short-range nuclear weapons, such as artillery shells, bombs and short-range missiles, deployed for use in battlefield operations”. Whereas a strategic warhead would be “A high-yield nuclear warhead placed on a long-range delivery system, such as a land-based intercontinental ballistic missile [hereafter ICBM], a submarine-launched ballistic missile [SLBM] or a strategic bomber”<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, in a more explicit definition, Millar described TNWs for the *Arms Control Association* as follows:

“The definition of ‘tactical’ or ‘sub-strategic’ nuclear weapons is somewhat tenuous and can include many criteria, such as range, yield, target, national ownership, delivery vehicle and capability. For the most part, tactical nuclear weapons have a lower explosive power than strategic nuclear weapons and are generally intended for use on the ‘battlefield’ against enemy forces, not against enemy cities or strategic nuclear forces. Tactical nuclear weapons include a wide range of devices, from so-called nuclear landmines and nuclear artillery shells to air- and missile-launched nuclear warheads. Its yield can be relatively low (0.1 kilotonne), equal to that of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (15-20 kilotonne), or very large (1 megaton)”<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, Tulliu and Schmalberger, in their dictionary on arms control, disarmament and confidence-building for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research,

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6 U.S. OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR NUCLEAR MATTERS. *Nuclear Matters Handbook 2020*, p. 4. <https://fas.org/man/eprint/nmhb2020.pdf> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

7 JAMES MARTIN CENTER FOR NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES. Glossary. In *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, 2021. <https://www.nti.org/learn/glossary/#tactical-nuclear-weapons> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

8 MILLAR, Alistair. The Pressing Need for Tactical Nuclear Weapons Control. *Arms Control Today*, June 2002. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002-05/features/pressing-need-tactical-nuclear-weapons-control> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

distinguish between the two types of armaments. Strategic nuclear weapons (SNW), on the one hand, would be:

“Nuclear weapons designed to strike major enemy targets at very long ranges, usually intercontinental. They are usually designed to threaten the enemy’s strategic nuclear forces and related infrastructure, as well as the population and industrial centres. Strategic nuclear weapons are generally carried by long-range ballistic missiles. See also intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)”<sup>9</sup>.

For their part, the TNWs would be:

“Nuclear weapons designed to engage enemy targets on the battlefield at close ranges. They are typically used to attack enemy conventional forces on the front line and their related structure. For this reason, tactical nuclear weapons are sometimes called battlefield weapons. TNWs are delivered by short-range ballistic and cruise missiles, fighter-bomber aircraft and/or long-range artillery”<sup>10</sup>.

## Objectives, hypotheses and methodology

The objectives of this article are to establish the status of the issue of TNW after a historical review, to analyse which states may have them and what weapons they possess, the disarmament measures that have been taken (and whether these have been agreed), to determine their importance in the national security strategies of states, and to infer why these weapons are systematically left out of negotiations, as well as the weight of the two most important nuclear states in relation to this legal absence.

The hypotheses to be tested are:

- I. The existence of conventional (delivery systems capable of carrying low-yield nuclear payloads) and/or purely nuclear weapons both during the Cold War and today, which can be used in conflict situations as “tactical” nuclear weapons. Their dimensions will be the state of play, typology and current armaments.
- II. Tactical nuclear weapons have been systematically left out of the major non-proliferation and arms reduction treaties and have been excluded from the negotiations, and there is manifest ambiguity among the nuclear powers about this weaponry, especially on the part of Russia and NATO.

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<sup>9</sup> Tulliu, Steve and Schmalberger, Thomas. *En buenos términos con la seguridad: diccionario sobre control de armamentos, desarme y fomento de la confianza*. Instituto de las Naciones Unidas para la Investigación sobre el Desarme, 2003, p. 121. [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/92883/Full-text\\_ES.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/92883/Full-text_ES.pdf) Accessed: 24/03/2021.

<sup>10</sup> Tulliu, Steve and Schmalberger, Thomas. *Ibid.*

- III. The only significant period of tactical nuclear arms reductions has involved unilateral reductions, never linked to the NPT, START, or the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (hereafter, TPNW).
- IV. We are at the dawn of a third era for tactical nuclear weapons, following the interregnum of US global hegemony, which will be characterised by vertical and horizontal proliferation, hybrid threats and the ambiguity of state-of-the-art delivery systems.

The method is *eclectic* (both classical, study of legal documents – international treaties – and specialised reports and articles relating to the types of weapons under study), and experimental, comparative analysis of the actions of *de jure* and *de facto* nuclear states in terms of their arms race.

In terms of methodology, the starting point will be the Systemic Approach of (i) Richard Brody, based on Guetzskow, in his study of the effect on systems of the dispersion of nuclear technologies; and (ii) John Herz, in his conception of nuclear deterrence as a long-term destabilising factor, as well as Patrik Morgan, Daniel Rajmil and Guillem Colom, in relation to nuclear deterrence on a historical and contemporary level.

Variables to be considered: (1) Conventional (or nuclear-only) armaments that can be used as support devices for using nuclear weapons of relatively low destructive (hence “tactical”) power; (2) definition of which nuclear-weapon states have such armaments; (3) attempts to include them in international treaties; (4) factors preventing their entry.

### The State of Play of Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Background and News

The history of tactical nuclear weapons (also called non-strategic or sub-strategic nuclear weapons) can be traced back to the very beginning of the Cold War.

In the early 1950s, the Americans developed the first nuclear-capable weapons considered tactical: the M-65 *Atomic Cannon* (the only artillery piece to have fired an officially known nuclear warhead projectile) and the M-31 Honest John rocket, to counter the Soviet advantage due to their proximity to the heart of the European continent, and the need to ensure the protection of their allies in the event of a possible conflict with the USSR<sup>11</sup>.

In other words, the Americans began to deploy these weapons as measures to defend their allies against a possible invasion, although their position on the old continent has an undeniable component of reinforcing their *First Strike Capabilities*. This

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<sup>11</sup> FRÍAS SÁNCHEZ, C. J. Perspectivas de la proliferación nuclear en Estados Unidos, Rusia y China. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 35.

means the power to eliminate an adversary's retaliatory capabilities through a massive attack on its nuclear assets<sup>12</sup>.

“TNWs have a shorter range than SNWs, but the most important difference is that their purposes are different from those of SNWs, as they are intended to be used on the front and back lines for the purpose of winning local battles. SNWs are by far the largest component of the nuclear arsenal of countries officially possessing nuclear weapons. However, they are difficult and expensive to manufacture and maintain and, since the end of the Cold War, their numbers have been dramatically reduced”<sup>13</sup>.

Russia, for its part, realising that, in the event of conflict, NATO would use tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield (which it had in the first place) rather than risk a global thermonuclear war, also equipped its military with such weapons. This logic applies to both the Soviet and later periods<sup>14</sup>. Thus, one can speak of a first era of NPT emergence and proliferation, from the 1950s to the end of the Cold War in the mid to late 1980s, and, although this period covers the *Détente* (1969-1979), none of the political outcomes related to this détente between the two superpowers (such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, hereafter NPT) implied a change in the proliferation or maintenance of tactical nuclear weapons, as a fundamental element of *First Strike's* capability.

Several types of devices were developed during the First Cold War (1945-1969), and not only projectiles intended to be fired as medium- and long-range missiles (B-57, B-61, or Red Beard). In fact, it is known that NATO, mainly by the United States and the United Kingdom, has developed several projects in this direction. From the late 1950s to the 1980s, the Americans developed six types of nuclear mines (or tactical explosives) (a group of weapons known as *Atomic Demolition Munition*), including the last two models, the MADM (*Medium Atomic Demolition Munition*), with a yield of between 1 and 15 kilotons, and the SADM (*Special Atomic Demolition Munition*), with a yield of less than one kiloton thanks to the use of the W-54 warhead. This same type of warhead would be used by another tactical nuclear weapon, the David Crockett nuclear rocket launcher, which had a yield of around 0.02 kilotons. Other devices were the W-7/ADM-B (1954-1967), the T-4 (1957-1963), the W-30/TADM (1961-1966), and the W-31/ADM (1960-1965)<sup>15</sup>.

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12 Tulliu, Steve and Schmalberger, Thomas. *En buenos términos con la seguridad: diccionario sobre control de armamentos, desarme y fomento de la confianza*. Instituto de las Naciones Unidas para la Investigación sobre el Desarme, 2003. [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/92883/Full-text\\_ES.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/92883/Full-text_ES.pdf) Accessed: 24/03/2021.

13 Tulliu, Steve and Schmalberger, Thomas. *Op. Cit.*, pg. 85.

14 FRÍAS SÁNCHEZ, C. J. Perspectivas de la proliferación nuclear en Estados Unidos, Rusia y China. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 46.

15 BIRD, Matthew. “Nuclear History Note US Atomic Demolition Munitions 1954-1989”. In *The RUSI Journal*, No. 153:2, 2008, p. 64. DOI: 10.1080/03071840802103306.

For their part, the British began to develop (but did not implement) the *Blue Peacock* project, which would involve laying atomic mines in northern Germany, which would not only destroy “the infrastructure and facilities of a large area, but would deny an enemy occupation of the area for an appreciable time because of contamination”<sup>16</sup>.

During the Korean War, which followed the end of the US nuclear monopoly, the Truman administration considered the “tactical” use of nuclear weapons, which were as yet unsophisticated. However, for both political reasons, such as a likely loss of UN support, and technical reasons, given the widespread doubt about the use of such weapons in tactical environments without causing extensive indirect human and material damage, the possibility was ruled out. Even so, this conflict and the end of the nuclear monopoly would lead to a race to develop nuclear weapons that could be used in tactical operational environments, thus more sophisticated than strategic bombs<sup>17</sup>.

During another of the tensest periods of the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States deployed tactical B-61 nuclear bombs to the Republic of Turkey and other NATO countries, bombs that were not part of the agreements to resolve the crisis. That is, the agreements that channelled it included the Soviets withdrawing the R-12 [SS-4 *Sandal*] and R-14 [SS-5 *Skean*] medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) (the NATO designation of the equipment mentioned has been added to the quotation in square brackets), while the Americans did not withdraw their tactical nuclear weapons from Turkey, a country bordering the USSR. These 50 B-61 tactical bombs have remained at the Incirlik air base in Incirlik<sup>18</sup>.

Within this period, until the late 1970s and early 1980s, the USSR lagged behind the Atlantic Alliance in terms of tactical nuclear arsenal, something that was to change further from that time onwards<sup>19</sup>.

The quantity and, above all, the composition of the Soviet and Russian non-strategic nuclear arsenal is much more difficult to analyse than that of NATO due to the lack of transparency on the part of its administrations, although it has been demon-

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16 WILSON, Jamie. “Nuclear mines ‘to stop Soviets’. Cold war plan to bury atomic bombs in Germany”. In *The Guardian*, 17/07/2003. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/jul/17/world.jamiewilson> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

17 CALINGAERT, Daniel. “Nuclear weapons and the Korean War”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, No. 11:2, 1988, pp. 181,182, 186-188, 200. DOI: 10.1080/01402398808437337

18 SANGER, David E. “Trump Followed His Gut on Syria. Calamity Came Fast”. *The New York Times*, 14/10/2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/world/middleeast/trump-turkey-syria.html> Accessed: 24/03/2021. KRISTENSEN, Hans M. “Urgent: Move US Nuclear Weapons Out Of Turkey”. On *FAS.org*, 16/10/2019 <https://fas.org/blogs/security/2019/10/nukes-out-of-turkey/> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

19 GRIGORIEV, Alexei Iu. “Evolution of the status of the US tactical nuclear arsenal in Europe”. In *Almanac of Modern Science and Education*, 2014, No. 5-6, 2014, p. 61.

strated that the USSR developed such weapons and deployed them in virtually all Warsaw Pact satellite states<sup>20</sup>.

According to Belous, as a result of the deployment of both tactical and strategic nuclear warheads in Europe and the concentration of US troops on the continent:

“Strong measures were taken to create and deploy numerous types of [TNWs]. This led to the arrival of the Scud [SS-1c *Scud B*], Frog, Moon [*Frog* and *Frog-M*] tactical missiles and the first nuclear-capable Su-7 fighter-bomber [*Fitter-A*] in the early 1960s. Later, the nuclear arsenal included RSD-10 [SS-20 *Saber*], R-12 [SS-4 *Sandal*], R-14 [SS-5 *Skean*] medium-range missiles, Tu-22 [*Blinder*], Tu-16 [*Badger*] medium-range bombers, OTR-22 [SS-12/SS-22 *Scaleboard*], OTR-23 [SS-23 *Spider*] operational tactical missiles, R-17 tactical missiles, Tochka [SS-21 *Scarab*], 152,203 and 240 mm nuclear artillery, Su-17 [*Fitter*], Su-24 [*Fencer*], MiG-21 [*Fishbed*], MiG-23 [*Flogger*] tactical aircraft and sea-based equipment”<sup>\*21</sup>.

At the height of the Second Cold War (1979-1980), in 1980, the Soviet Union had between 13,000 and 22,000 tactical nuclear weapons, while its counterpart, the United States, had 7,000 to 9,000<sup>22</sup>.

The first period analysed in this article cannot, however, be considered to have been homogeneous in its tendency towards proliferation. In fact, by the end of the 1970s, NATO itself changed its nuclear arsenal strategy to one of downsizing and modernisation due to three factors: (i) the need to remove nuclear weapons from Europe without practical applications; (ii) to respond to new Soviet tactical nuclear weapons; (iii) and to the need to take an advantageous position vis-à-vis the USSR before signing an arms reduction treaty<sup>23</sup>. This shows an internal NATO trend towards what will be the next period, with a view to a possible reduction of tactical armaments through international treaties along the lines of START.

After the end of the conflict between the two superpowers, given the demise of the Soviet Empire, there has been a drastic reduction in the number of tactical nuclear

20 BELOUS, Vladimir. “Las armas nucleares tácticas en las nuevas condiciones geopolíticas”. In *Centro de investigación político-militar del MGIMO*, 2000. <http://eurasian-defence.ru/?q=node/23371> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

21 BELOUS, Vladimir. *Ibid.* The NATO designation has been added to the quotation in square brackets.

22 BELOUS, Vladimir. “Las armas nucleares tácticas en las nuevas condiciones geopolíticas”. In *Centro de investigación político-militar del MGIMO*, 2000. <http://eurasian-defence.ru/?q=node/23371> Accessed: 24/03/2021. DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG. *Zu Fragen der Stationierung von taktischen Atomwaffen in Deutschland im Rahmen der nuklearen Teilhabe*, 2020. <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/702320/8ca6fb8cdd46ae43ae9fci6f14054e2e/WD-2-041-20-pdf-data.pdf> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

23 GRIGORIEV, Alexei Iu. “Evolution of the status of the US tactical nuclear arsenal in Europe”. In *Almanac of Modern Science and Education*, 2014, No. 5-6, 2014, p. 61.

weapons by the two nuclear superpowers. However, this reduction was not due to the START treaties, but were unilateral reductions parallel to these agreements. Specifically, Russia has reportedly reduced its capabilities by 75 per cent from 2000 to 2012, with 2,000 weapons that it considers nuclear and tactical, and maintaining that figure until 2018<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, during this period the US withdrew its B-61 tactical bombs from the military bases at Araxos in Greece, Ramstein in Germany and Lakenheath in the UK<sup>25</sup>. *Atomic Demolition Munitions* were to be withdrawn from Europe in 1986 (and similarly from the Korean peninsula, according to official sources), while SADM devices (which were never deployed) were withdrawn from service in 1989<sup>26</sup>.

The end of the Cold War thus ushered in a second era for the TNW, consisting of tactical nuclear arms reductions, which would last from the 1990s (or even from the 1980s, with the signing of START I) until around the mid-2010s or the present day.

This second period would accompany American hegemony in the world, an apparently growing role for public international law, and states' reliance on each other's international obligations. Even if the treaties concluded during this period did not end up including concrete measures relating to TNWs, a general tendency (implicit and more informal than legal) to promote the reduction of nuclear armaments as a whole can be observed. Even so, this trend never went beyond statements, telephone conversations, or press releases.

Despite the NPT being a first-rate legal tool to limit the proliferation (especially horizontal) of nuclear weapons,<sup>27</sup> the clear international disaffection with the Treaty after decades of no progress on TNWs (and the increase in horizontal proliferation), despite the relatively successful 2012 conference to establish a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East<sup>28</sup> may have been one of the factors behind the creation and approval of the TPNW, which, unlike the former, does aim to prohibit, with the goal of their disappearance, all types of nuclear weapons, although, again, there is no explicit reference in the Treaty or its protocols to tactical nuclear weapons.

As Galán points out, while the adoption of the TPNW is not meaningless, it can hardly produce legal effects, particularly in relation to the major nuclear powers, on

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24 DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG. *Zu Fragen der Stationierung von taktischen Atomwaffen in Deutschland im Rahmen der nuklearen Teilhabe*, 2020, p. 14.

25 GOUYEZ BEN ALLAL, Anass. "La política nuclear de la OTAN: la amenaza de las armas nucleares tácticas para la seguridad internacional y el régimen de no proliferación nuclear". In *Paix et Sécurité Internationales-Journal of International Law and International Relations*, No. 02, 2014, p. 70. [https://doi.org/10.25267/Paix\\_secur\\_int.2014.i2.04](https://doi.org/10.25267/Paix_secur_int.2014.i2.04).

26 BIRD, Matthew. "Nuclear History Note US Atomic Demolition Munitions 1954-1989". In *The RUSI Journal*, No. 153:2, 2008, p. 67. DOI: 10.1080/03071840802103306.

27 ORTEGA GARCÍA, Julia. "Proliferación Nuclear en el siglo XXI". In Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Framework Document, April 2016, p. 5.

28 ORTEGA GARCÍA, Julia. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 11, 12.

the one hand, to various international organisations such as the Atlantic Alliance, which considers nuclear weapons as “indispensable to maintain peace”, and finally, to the evident intention of several states to acquire nuclear weapons for their own regional deterrence policies<sup>29</sup>. It is especially clear that if NATO does not review its nuclear deterrence posture, the future of the TPNW could easily go the way of the NTP.

The Nuclear Matters 2020 report divides the history of nuclear weapons into three eras: the first is from 1945 to 1992, as the Cold War Era; the second, from 1992 to 2018, as an Era of legacy management and disarmament in the *Pax Americana*; and a third, incipient phase from 2018 to the present, as the Era of rearmament, modernisation, the introduction of cyberspace as a military domain, and multipolar competition<sup>30</sup>.

The question arises as to whether there is a paradigm shift in terms of TNW, and thus a third stage, or whether, due to ambiguity or omission regarding these weapons since the beginning of the nuclear era, we are still in a second stage, albeit an evolved one, with new elements such as cyberspace and new delivery systems or more advanced missiles (aircraft such as Mig-29 [*Fulcrum*] or Su-27 [*Flanker*] or battleships).

Thus, we could have launch systems and missiles that in principle would be “neutral” (they may or may not carry nuclear warheads), such as the super and hypersonic missiles<sup>31</sup> X-90 [AS-X-21], 3M22 Zircon [SS-N-33], 3M-54 Kalibr [SS-N-27 *Sizzler*] or some of the famous Iskander [SS-26 *Stone*]. Many, if not all, of these could be defended by their respective administrations as conventional short-, medium- or long-range missiles, but they are nonetheless capable of carrying low-yield nuclear devices. This will be dealt with later.

In any case, despite the enormous non-proliferation importance of multilateral treaties such as the NPT and TPNW, the trail of TNWs must be traced more through *omissions* in US-Russian bilateral treaties, unilateral reductions, and the (usually ambiguous in this respect) security strategies of the de facto nuclear powers.

## TNWs and the theory of deterrence

Deterrence is one of the fundamental elements in strategic studies of nuclear weaponry, and while its full history and theoretical development could well occupy an en-

29 GALÁN, Elena C. Díaz. Tratado sobre la Prohibición de las Armas Nucleares (TPAN): un paso más en la ilicitud del empleo del arma nuclear. *RESI: Revista de estudios en seguridad internacional*, 2019, vol. 5, issue 2, p. 52-53.

30 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, pp. 3-7. <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

31 The former exceed the speed of sound, while the latter are new generation missiles that exceed the speed of sound by at least 5, i.e. reach a speed of Mach 5.

tire article, this concept should be mentioned as it is one of the keys to the behaviour of nuclear states.

Morgan points out that deterrence is both a tactical element of national security strategy and a component of international system security<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, as Colom points out, deterrence would rest fundamentally on capacity (nuclear), credibility (of use) and communication (assumptions of deterrence)<sup>33</sup>, and while there are:

“(...) multiple ways of defining deterrence, there is broad consensus in recognising that its main purpose is to discourage a potential aggressor from disrupting the *status quo* by demonstrating one’s capabilities and the determination to use them. As opposed to *compellence*, where one actor forces another to act in accordance with his or her claims, this persuasion is achieved by (...). Both strategies –indistinguishable in the Chinese conception (*weishe*), which combines deterrence, persuasion and coercion, and complementary in the Russian vision of prevention (*sderzhivanie*) and intimidation (*ustrashenie*) – can be combined to exercise coercive diplomacy”<sup>34</sup>.

According to Colom, the evolution of strategic security concepts and hybrid threats, including those from cyberspace, but also terrorist groups such as DAESH or Hezbollah, as well as the actions of states such as Iran or North Korea, has led to the evolution from an initial first and second wave (classic between the two great superpowers) to a fourth wave in deterrence theory, proposing a conjunction of classic deterrence theories between great powers with the inclusion of elements of “strategic culture – especially the role of national identity, historical tradition and military culture in deterrence and debates on the psychology of deterrence to elaborate specific models *for each actor, circumstance or scenario*”<sup>35</sup>.

However, TNWs have not been considered as an object of study *per se* in the field of nuclear deterrence studies, although this does not imply that they were not present at the height of Cold War tensions, as Morgan reports on the Cuban missile crisis:

“The US leaders did not fully understand Khrushchev’s motives. They were very concerned that actions that killed even a few Russians could provoke an escalation. The Russians, for their part, worried about Castro, who had no qualms about starting a nuclear war and pushed for actions that would have made war more likely. The initial instructions to Soviet

32 MORGAN, Patrick M. *Deterrence now*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 4.

33 COLOM PIELLA, Guillem. “Haciendo posible lo impensable: opciones selectivas, disuasión a medida y fallos en la disuasión nuclear (1974-1994)”. *Revista española de ciencia política*, 2020, no 54, p. 126.

34 PIELLA COLOM, Guillem. *Ibid.*

35 PIELLA COLOM, Guillem. *Op. Cit.* p. 130. [italics added].

forces in Cuba were to use their *tactical nuclear weapons* to resist a US invasion without prior approval. Eventually, Moscow realised that this was terribly dangerous and the instructions were withdrawn. The Americans, for their part, did not know of the existence of these weapons until well into the crisis, yet once they were discovered, the invasion plans went ahead”<sup>36</sup>.

Later, in the most sensitive moments of Cold War II, there were strong internal pressures within the United States, as well as externally, both for and against “Extended Deterrence” (defined as “an attack against a second state that could be detrimental to the country’s own sovereignty”)<sup>37</sup>, which implied proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Europe. Thatcher’s Britain supported strengthening the arsenal in Europe and maintaining an eventual conflict with the USSR on European territory, while Europe (especially Germany) was in favour of negotiating the reduction of conventional forces in Europe as well as the TNWs on the continent, in order to facilitate the end of Soviet power in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>38</sup>.

However, the START treaties, together with the INF and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, as well as unilateral reductions in Russian and US tactical nuclear weapons, led to the end of the Cold War. Thus, returning to the fourth wave of deterrence studies, as Palomares and García point out:

“Today, considering the rise of nuclear tensions in the Middle East and the proliferation of WMD, it seems obligatory to discuss deterrence theory and policies based on deterrence principles. This process appears subject to basic questions such as whether deterrence works or whether it has become an irrelevant guide to defence strategies, especially in some regional contexts, as in the case of the Middle East”<sup>39</sup>.

### Current TNW stockpiles and their role in security strategies

The analysis of Tactical Nuclear Weapons capabilities and stockpiles by actor will be structured. First, the big nuclear states, the US and Russia, then other relevant nuclear states, China, Pakistan and India, and, finally, two difficult-to-approach cases, Israel and North Korea.

36 MORGAN, Patrick M. Op. cit., p. 205. [italics added].

37 RAJMIL, Daniel. “NEAR EAST; NUCLEAR DISUASION AND DISUASION”, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, No. 6 / 2015, p. 6.

38 PALOMARES LERMA, Gustavo and GARCÍA CANTALAPIEDRA, David. *Imperium. La Política Exterior de los Estados Unidos del Siglo XX al XXI*, Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2019, pp. 161, 162.

39 RAJMIL, Daniel. “NEAR EAST; NUCLEAR DISUASION AND DISUASION”, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Issue 6 / 2015, pp. 4, 5.

## *United States of America*

The United States has an arsenal of TNW, which it calls *Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons* that, while considerable during the Cold War, has been greatly reduced in recent decades<sup>40</sup>.

The US tactical nuclear arsenal currently consists of 230 B61-3 and B61-4 bombs, 150 of which are located at six overseas military bases, namely Aviano and Ghedi in Italy, Büchel in Germany, Incirlik in Turkey, Kleine Brogel in Belgium and Volkel in the Netherlands. The remaining 80 are reportedly located at US bases. These bombs are designed to be dropped from the F-15E, F-16C/D, F-16MLU, and PA-200 fighters<sup>41</sup>, although development of a new model of this bomb (B61-12) is apparently being finalised to replace the B61-3 and -4. This new version of the weapon would be equipped “with a guided tail kit that allows it to hit targets more accurately, meaning it could be used with a lower yield and potentially produce less radioactive fallout”<sup>42</sup>. In addition, work is underway to enable them to be used by fighters such as the *Eurofighter Typhoon*.

In terms of US nuclear security strategy, 2017 and 2018 are seen as a shift in direction towards rearmament and modernisation in the face of new threats, the major powers, including China and Russia, due to the loss of “the conventional arms superiority it enjoyed since the end of the Soviet Union”<sup>43</sup>. In fact, since the early 2010s there has been debate about the US intention to renew its *first-strike capabilities*<sup>44</sup>, which would clearly coincide with this renewal of its tactical nuclear weapons.

The United States is at a clear disadvantage vis-à-vis Russia in the field of NPT, which it considers to be in flagrant breach of the INF Treaty (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty), both in terms of the number of such bombs and in terms of delivery systems. The 2018 *Nuclear Posture Review* includes a comparison according to which the United States has only one type of TNW, gravity weapons, compared to

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40 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, p. 48.

41 KRISTENSEN, Hans M. I. US nuclear forces. In “World nuclear forces”, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019a, p. 334. KRISTENSEN, Hans M. and NORRIS, Robert. S. United States nuclear forces, 2018. In *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 2018b, vol. 74, Issue 2, pp. 120-131.

42 KRISTENSEN, Hans M. I. US nuclear forces, p. 334.

43 FRÍAS SÁNCHEZ, C. J. Perspectivas de la proliferación nuclear en Estados Unidos, Rusia y China. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 40.

44 MORGAN, Patrick M. The state of deterrence in international politics today. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2012, vol. 33, no. 1, pg. 91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2012.659589>

Russia, which has 11 types, including torpedoes, SRBMs and air-to-surface missiles, among others<sup>45</sup>.

It is striking, in any case, that the US sees itself as a reactive actor in the face of the Russian threat, without establishing a special role for TNWs in its security strategy.

“Russia possesses significant advantages in its nuclear weapons production capabilities and non-strategic nuclear forces over the United States and its allies. It is also building a large, diverse and modern set of non-strategic systems that have a dual capability (they can be armed with nuclear or conventional weapons). These theatre and tactical systems are not eligible for the New START Treaty and Russia’s modernisation of its non-strategic nuclear weapons is increasing the total number of these weapons in its arsenal, while significantly improving its delivery capabilities”<sup>46</sup>.

With respect to NATO, taking into account the deployment of TNWs at US bases on the continent and the fact that there are two other *de jure* nuclear countries (France and Great Britain) in the Alliance, it is particularly striking that no doubt or formal opposition has been raised about the permanence of the current B61 and the future B61-12. The EU seems to be satisfied with this fact while seeking to advance its common defence policy, but neither in one area nor in the other has there been any reference to TNWs as a problem in their own right.

### *Russian Federation*

Russia has an estimated 1875 operational non-strategic nuclear weapons, including nuclear warheads on submarines, various types of aircraft, ships, conventional missiles and air defence systems<sup>47</sup>.

These would be distributed as follows: more than 900 TNWs would be in the possession of the navy (cruise, anti-ship, or anti-submarine missiles); some 500 warheads would be in the air force, to be used by Tu-22M3[*Backfire-C*], Su-24M[*Fencer-D*], Su-34[*Fullback*], MiG-31K[*Foxhound*], or the new Su-57[*Felon*]; about 400

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45 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, 53. <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

46 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, 9. <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

47 KRISTENSEN, Hans M. II. Russian nuclear forces. in “World nuclear forces”, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019b, p. 343.

would belong to the air, coastal and missile defence armies; and about 90 to the land army<sup>48</sup>.

To a connoisseur of Russian history and strategic doctrine, this will be striking, as it appears to be a revolution in that Russia has always projected itself as a land power. Today, emulating the United States, the structure (at least quantitatively) of what are considered operational TNWs appears to be more that of a modern thalassocracy, with the navy and air force predominating.

There would also be some 2,000 TNWs in the process of decommissioning<sup>49</sup>. In fact, in the future, due to the modernisation process of Russian nuclear weaponry, the number will be reduced in favour of more sophisticated systems. As Podvig says:

“The number of operational warheads deployed on strategic and non-strategic systems is unlikely to change significantly, as the deployment of new systems in the course of strategic modernisation will be balanced by the retirement of old warheads. The total number of warheads is likely to decrease in the coming years as Russia continues to dismantle its warheads. The current dismantlement rate is believed to be around 400-500 warheads per year (this number includes warheads that are being remanufactured)”<sup>50</sup>.

Russia has been undergoing a decade-long process of military ‘revolution’, focused on modernisation and the abandonment of certain parts of the heavy Soviet legacy (in pomological terms: troop numbers, inefficiency, among others).

A central area of development has been new delivery vehicles based on new technologies, such as the *Avangard* [SS-19 M4] and Kh-47M2 *Kinzhal* [Dagger - probably a version of the *Iskander*] hypersonic missiles, Poseidon [*Kanyon*], an unmanned underwater vehicle powered by a nuclear reactor, and the *Burevestnik* [SSC-X-9 *Skyfall*] cruise missile. Russia is developing in the fields of air, ground and submarine-launched missiles.

The big issue is not what weapons the Russian Federation has that can be considered TNWs, but that, due to advances in delivery systems (delivery vehicles) and different devices, both conventional and nuclear, many weapons can be considered,

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48 KRISTENSEN, Hans M. II. Russian nuclear forces. in “World nuclear forces”, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019b, pp. 343, 344. KRISTENSEN, Hans M. and NORRIS, Robert. S. Russian nuclear forces, 2018. In *Bulletin of the atomic scientists*, 2018a, vol. 74, Issue 3, p. 186.

49 PODVIG, Pavel. “Russia”. In PYLAK, Allison. & ACHESON, Ray. (2020). *Assuring Destruction Forever: 2020 edition*. Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, June 2020, p. 87.

50 PODVIG, Pavel. *Ibid.*

or not, as virtually Russian TNW arsenal. These include missiles (ballistic and cruise), torpedoes, or anti-aircraft missiles<sup>51</sup>.

Several of Russia's missiles that can be considered as potential tactical nuclear weapons include, notably, the 9K79 *Tochka* [NATO: SS-21 *Scarab*]; 9K720 *Iskander-M* [SS-26 *Stone*]; 9M728 [SSC-7]; 9M729 [SSC-8]; 3M14 *Kalibr* [SS-N-30A]; 3M-22 *Tsirkon* [SS-NX-33]; *Tochka* [SS-21]; 3M-14 [SS-N-30a]; or the 3M-55 [SSC-5 *Stooge*]<sup>52</sup>.

Regarding the INF, Russia accuses the US of breaking the treaty by pulling out of it, although this legal wrangling is more of a kind of “smokescreen”, so that both countries can be free of the treaty they signed in the Cold War, when China and other de facto nuclear powers did not exist as such. Russia states in its nuclear strategy that it will use its force in the event of nuclear aggression against the country or its allies, or if the existence of the Federation is threatened in a confrontation with conventional weapons<sup>53</sup>.

The US perceives this military renewal as an almost existential threat, considering that Russia is far ahead of NATO in TNW due to its dual-capability systems and the ineffectiveness of the START agreements:

“Moscow believes that these systems can provide useful options for gaining an escalation advantage. Finally, despite Moscow's frequent criticism of US missile defence, Russia is also modernising its nuclear-armed ballistic missile defence system and designing a new ballistic missile defence interceptor”<sup>54</sup>.

### *People's Republic of China*

China maintains a relatively modest role in the contemporary nuclear race, although it has a clear roadmap to modernise and improve its defensive capabilities, including in the field of nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles, with the aim of being a major military power by 2050<sup>55</sup>.

51 FRÍAS SÁNCHEZ, C. J. Perspectivas de la proliferación nuclear en Estados Unidos, Rusia y China. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, pp. 50, 52.

52 FRÍAS SÁNCHEZ, C. J. Ibid., pp. 50-51. KRISTENSEN, Hans M. II. Russian nuclear forces. in “World nuclear forces”, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019b, pp. 343-345.

53 FRÍAS SÁNCHEZ, C. J. *Op. cit.*, pp. 46, 47.

54 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, p. 9.

55 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

By January 2020, China had around 320 nuclear warheads, up from 260 in 2015, evidence of their growing importance, as the People's Republic "is modernising and diversifying its nuclear forces as part of a long-term programme to develop a more robust and survivable deterrence posture, consistent with its nuclear strategy of assured retaliation"<sup>56</sup>.

With regard to TNW, the problem is that, while there are known Chinese missiles capable of carrying a nuclear device, including land-based ballistic missiles such as the DF-4 [CSS-3] or DF-5B [CSS-4 *Mod 2*], or sea-based missiles such as the JL-2 [CSS-NX-14] or the H-20 [B-20], and even airborne means such as the H-6N, there is no evidence of Chinese tactical nuclear devices (or low-yield bombs)<sup>57</sup>. This is consistent with China's nuclear policy, which is reactive, renouncing the first strike. There has been speculation and doubt, however, based on the existence of bombs and bombers in Chinese military museums with "both strategic and tactical" capabilities, although these would be several decades old<sup>58</sup>. Likewise, China is known to have collaborated with Pakistan in the development of its nuclear programme<sup>59</sup>, which also facilitates the emergence of reasonable doubt about China's inability to deploy non-strategic nuclear weapons.

In any case, it is clear that China has developed (and continues to develop) new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), as well as:

"A new multi-warhead version of its DF-5 silo-based ICBM, and its most advanced ballistic missile submarine armed with new submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). It has also announced the development of a new nuclear-capable strategic bomber, giving China a nuclear triad"<sup>60</sup>.

The Chinese scenario in relation to TNWs shows, as we have seen, ambiguity. However, we can virtually classify China as a nuclear power with TNWs. Evidence shows that China has among its capabilities the development or purchase of low-yield nuclear weapons, as well as delivery vehicles of various types (including medium- and long-range missiles). On the other hand, the People's Republic does not seem to be particularly interested, for now, in standing out in an area such as TNWs, its main ri-

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<sup>56</sup> KILE, Shannon. N. and Kristensen, H. S. V. Chinese nuclear forces. In "World nuclear forces", *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019a, p. 354.

<sup>57</sup> ZHANG, Hui. "China", in PYLAK, Allison. & ACHESON, Ray. *Assuring Destruction Forever: 2020 edition*. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, June 2020, p. 31.

<sup>58</sup> KRISTENSEN, Hans M. and NORRIS, Robert. S. Chinese nuclear forces, 2018. In *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 2018c, vol. 74, Issue 4, p. 293. DOI: 10.1080/00963402.2018.1486620

<sup>59</sup> Torres Vidal, C. India y Pakistán, potencias nucleares de facto. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 135.

<sup>60</sup> OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, p. 11.

vals being India (for whose containment it collaborates with Pakistan), and the United States, with which, militarily, it competes for high technology in areas exogenous to nuclear weapons, for which there is already Russia.

In short, China is a state with a virtual tactical nuclear weapon, which it will develop if necessary, with likely efficiency and speed, due to the following factors:

- I. While it does not appear to have TNWs at present, its acquisition and/or development is well within its technological and commercial capabilities;
- II. Its geo-strategic partnership with Russia allows it to outsource the field of TNW in that country in competition with NATO;
- III. Cooperation with Pakistan, a *de facto* nuclear power with TNWs (and a focus of horizontal proliferation), is evidence that China has had access to this type of weaponry, as its involvement in the Pakistani programme was crucial;
- IV. Finally, China has not been a party to any of the nuclear capability limitation treaties (SALT, START, INF), and is recognised by the NPT as a legitimate nuclear weapons holder, so a reduction in its arsenal cannot be expected as a consequence of signing a multilateral treaty.

This coincides with its policy of bilateral trade and security agreements, ergo, only a bilateral agreement could force China to reduce its armaments, assuming they are made public.

### *Islamic Republic of Pakistan*

Pakistan, a *de facto* nuclear power, possesses between 150 and 160 nuclear warheads and 3.5 tonnes of highly enriched uranium, and is expected to have between 220 and 250 warheads by 2025<sup>61</sup>.

Pakistan's nuclear programme, and thus its nuclear capabilities, are developed *vis-a-vis* India, although it is India that tends to be more advanced, both because it tests earlier and because it has greater nuclear power. This may be a factor in Pakistan's development of nuclear missiles, with less technological capability than India, but with international support from countries such as China and North Korea, but also the US. Its position in the international technology (and nuclear) market is also relevant. Thus, Pakistan has focused on forcing nuclear deterrence on its neighbour by investing heavily in Tactical Nuclear Weapons, these being short-range tactical missiles armed with low-yield nuclear warheads (low-yield SRBMs).

61 Torres Vidal, C. India y Pakistán, potencias nucleares de facto. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 135. KRISTENSEN, Hans M. and KILE, Shannon. N. VII. Pakistani nuclear forces. In "World nuclear forces", *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019b, p. 368.

As can be easily deduced from the type of missiles in question, the purpose of these weapons would be defence in a military conflict with India, and it can be deduced that the mission of these weapons would be a second-strike response to an Indian aggression, given the operability and small size of the nuclear warheads, apparently of a tactical nature<sup>62</sup>. Clearly, first-strike use at strategic points in India cannot be ruled out either. In this regard, Barry also points out that:

“Over the past decade or so, Pakistan has focused considerable energy and resources on the development of tactical nuclear weapons, in particular the short-range ballistic missile *Nasr*. This has been driven by the belief that India has a doctrine for rapid ground attacks on Pakistan, known as “Cold Start”<sup>63</sup>, and that India’s capacity to carry out such an operation is increasing”<sup>64</sup>.

On the other hand, Pakistan has no formal nuclear doctrine, so it is unclear in which cases it will decide to use its weaponry, and whether it is of a first or second-strike nature. While it is true that the Islamic Republic has expressed the threat of using nuclear weapons if the existence of the Pakistani state “were at stake”<sup>65</sup>.

Moreover, the great concern for the US administration (and much of the international community) from 2007 until the Trump era has been the possible theft (or simple trespassing) of the TNWs by terrorist groups, although Pakistan has reiterated that penetration of its “sophisticated facilities” is impossible<sup>66</sup>.

Among the missiles available to Pakistan that could be considered low-yield weapons if the nuclear device were sufficiently low-yield (between 5 and 10 kilotons, in these cases) are the *Hatf-2* [US: *Abdali*]; *Hatf-3* [*Ghaznavi*]; *Hatf-4* [*Shaheen-I et seq*]; especially *Hatf-9* [*Nasr*]; and *Hatf-7* [*Babur GLCM*]<sup>67</sup>.

As no TNWs have yet been deployed in combat or training operations, this remains somewhat speculative, although it is clear that Pakistan has developed nuclear weapons faster than any other country in the world, tactically, operationally and strategically<sup>68</sup>.

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62 Torres Vidal, C. *Op. Cit.*, p. 135.

63 Indian military doctrine in the event of conflict with Pakistan based on an “integrated” battle group offensive that avoids the use of nuclear weapons by the opponent.

64 BARRY, Ben. “Pakistan’s Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Practical Drawbacks and Opportunity Costs”. In *Survival*, Issue 60:1, 2018, p. 75. DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2018.1427365.

65 Torres Vidal, C. *Op. Cit.*, p. 136.

66 Torres Vidal, C. *Op. Cit.*, p. 137.

67 KRISTENSEN, Hans M. and KILE, Shannon. N. VII. Pakistani nuclear forces. In “World nuclear forces”, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019b, p. 372.

68 KRISTENSEN, Hans M., NORRIS, Robert. S. and DIAMOND, Julia. Pakistani nuclear forces, 2018. In *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 2018, vol. 74, No. 5, pp. 349-352, DOI:10.1080/00963402.2018.1507796.

## Republic of India

India, because it is not a *de jure* but a *de facto* nuclear state like its neighbour (and strategic rival) Pakistan, has not announced the number of nuclear warheads it possesses, although it is estimated to have at least 130-140 warheads, plus 600 kilograms of ready-to-use plutonium, which is apparently the basis for its warheads<sup>69</sup>.

India's nuclear weapons (which Kristensen and Kile count at 150, based on their own calculation) are mainly spread over airborne systems, such as the *Mirage 2000H* and *Jaguar IS* (48 between them) as well as land and sea-based ballistic missiles, including the *Prithvi-II* (with a yield of 12 kilotons), or the *Agni I to V* series, with yields from 10 to 40 kilotons, among others<sup>70</sup>.

The very nature of these weapons, whose estimated minimum yield is 10 kilotons, as well as the *raison d'être* of the Indian nuclear programme, makes it difficult to speak of Indian tactical nuclear weapons *stricto sensu*, as is the case with the United States (*motu proprio* and objectively), Russia (objectively) and Pakistan (as announced by the Muslim country itself).

However, India's ambiguity in dealing with its nuclear policy contrasts with its superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan, in that its missiles are more powerful and its nuclear programme more advanced.

“India's nuclear doctrine is evolving to accommodate new regional and global strategic scenarios, and to respond to immediate national security priorities: Pakistan's growing nuclear arsenal and tactical nuclear capabilities, as well as China's evolving nuclear doctrine and capabilities. Despite the fact that all India maintains a deliberate ambiguity about the actual use of its nuclear weapons, it has neither reviewed nor modified its nuclear doctrine since 2003”<sup>71</sup>.

The case of India indicates that, at least for the moment, and according to the information available through OSINT sources, it is not a state with a relevant TNW capability, although there could be a premeditated concealment of capabilities thanks to the collaboration of an external actor (Russia or the United States). However, the

69 Torres Vidal, C. India y Pakistán, potencias nucleares de facto. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 126.

70 KRISTENSEN, Hans M. and KILE, Shannon. N. VI. Indian nuclear forces. In “World nuclear forces”, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019a, pp. 362-365. KRISTENSEN, Hans M. and KORDA, Matt. Indian nuclear forces, 2018. In *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, No. 74(6), 2018, p. 362.

71 Torres Vidal, C. India y Pakistán, potencias nucleares de facto. In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 127.

complicated geopolitical relations in the region do not help to foresee India's nuclear *iter* in the short to medium term, except for the need to counter Pakistan's tactical capabilities, and strategically, China's.

## *Other actors*

### *Israel*

Israel's nuclear programme and weaponry are a *necessary* element of Israel's security concept, given its geopolitical situation, so it is not surprising that from the outset, Israel has made every effort to develop a powerful nuclear arsenal to deter rival states and reduce the possibility of new Arab-Israeli wars.

Israel has also intervened abroad to prevent the development of nuclear programmes in rival states, such as Iraq, Syria (Deir al-Zour nuclear reactor, 2007), and Iran (Stuxnet, Flare). This is because Israel has for decades maintained the so-called "Begin Doctrine", which implies that Israel will not allow any hostile regional actor to acquire a nuclear capability that can be used against the Hebrew state<sup>72</sup>.

It should be noted that there is indeed a regional consensus to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone as a result of the TPNW, as Rajmil points out:

"The Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, like the proposed NWFZ, has gained general regional consensus, albeit disturbed by opposition from Israel and Turkey. In this regard, the Arab Group has used its majority to impose diplomatic pressure on Israel's policy of nuclear opacity and to establish the TPNW as a complement to existing legal instruments"<sup>73</sup>.

Israel is among the *de facto* nuclear states, having signed neither the NPT nor the TPNW, since giving up nuclear capability could be seen as suicide for the state, given that adversaries such as Iran aim to eliminate it.

The Hebrew state went from ambiguity about its nuclear *capabilities* to outright opacity, neither denying nor affirming the size and potential of its arsenal, as a form of psychological deterrence for its adversaries. This is the well-known "amimut" doctrine<sup>74</sup>.

All this makes it very difficult to deal with Israel's nuclear arsenal through OSINT sources, as very little is confirmed, and, as the doctrine claims, much is speculation,

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72 CASTRO, José Ignacio. "Israel y la postura «amimut». In Garrido, Vicente". (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 176.

73 RAJMIL, Daniel, et al. "The Middle East challenge to the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty". *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos*, 2020, no 28, p. 117. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15366/reim2020.28.006>

74 CASTRO, José Ignacio. *Op. Cit.*, p. 172.

especially after the damage of the “Obama Doctrine” regarding the recognition of Iran as a regional actor – promoting multilateralism in the Middle East<sup>75</sup> – against which a “pre-emptive” attack along Begin’s lines may not succeed:

“The Israelis face a new dilemma with Iran, since in addition to the fact that any action under the “Begin Doctrine” is not guaranteed to succeed, Iranian retaliatory capabilities should be taken into account. While Iran has a significant missile programme, this would not be the only option to consider, as the Iranians could act against Israel through their proxies or allies of convenience, such as Hizbullah or Hamas”<sup>76</sup>.

In any case, Israel has been able to develop or purchase tactical nuclear weapons and equipment since the 1970s. Subsequent to the 1973 war, Israel reportedly deployed “at least three 175 mm self-propelled atomic-capable gun batteries, equipped with a total of no less than 108 warheads”<sup>77</sup>, and “laid atomic landmines in the Golan Heights in the early 1980s”<sup>78</sup>.

If true, “these low-yield tactical nuclear artillery rounds could reach at least 25 miles (40 km), while according to some sources it is possible that the range was extended to 45 miles (72 km) during the 1990s”<sup>79</sup>. There has also been speculation about miniaturised nuclear bombs developed in 1973, which could fit in a suitcase<sup>80</sup>.

Israel benefited from the cooperation of several countries during the development of its nuclear programme, such as Norway (which provided heavy water) and France, which provided engineers for weapons development. Israel’s nuclear breakthrough, however, has always been under the scrutiny of both the Soviets and the Americans.

On 22 September 1979, the Vela 6911 satellite detected an apparent nuclear explosion between the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic, which would have been approximately 3 kilotons. Although it remains controversial so far, Israeli-South African nuclear cooperation is often pointed to as the origin of this cooperation<sup>81</sup>. In relation to the incident, US intelligence produced a report stating:

75 CASTRO, José Ignacio. *Op. Cit*, p, 181.

76 CASTRO, José Ignacio. *Op. Cit*, p, 180.

77 Global Security. “Strategic Doctrine”. In *fas.org*, 2021. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/israel/doctrine.htm> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

78 FEDERATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS. “Strategic Doctrine”. At *Fas.org*, 2021. <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/doctrine/> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

79 FARR, Warner D. “The third temple’s holy of holies: Israel’s nuclear weapons”. In *The counter proliferation papers -Future Warfare Series-*, Issue 2, 1999. Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: USAF. <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/nuke/farr.htm> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

80 HERSH, Seymour. *The Samson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*, New York City: Random House, 1991, p. 220.

81 SUBLETTE, Carey. “Report on the 1979 Vela Incident”, in *Nuclear weapons archive*, 2001, p. 220. <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Safrica/Vela.html> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

“The Israelis could have foreseen needs for more advanced weapons, such as low-yield nuclear weapons that could be used on the battlefield. Or they could have considered deriving a small tactical nuclear warhead for Israel’s short-range *Lance* surface-to-surface missiles. Israeli strategists might even have been interested in developing the fission trigger for a thermonuclear weapon. Moreover, if they had developed reliable nuclear devices for any of these weapons without access to proven designs, Israeli nuclear weapons designers would probably have wanted to test the prototypes. A low-yield nuclear test conducted clandestinely at sea could have allowed them to make basic measurements of the device’s performance”<sup>82</sup>.

In 1986 it became definitively clear that Israel had a nuclear reactor and weapons capability, thanks to the revelations of Israeli engineer Mordecai Vanunu<sup>83</sup>.

Before going into the actual weaponry, the “Samson Doctrine” (in reference to the Biblical episode of Samson, recounted in Judges 16) should be cited: 28-31, where Samson tears down the pillars of the temple to kill all the Philistines with him in revenge for their capture and enslavement), whereby Israel, if populations or the state were threatened, would launch an all-out attack against regional rivals or the attacker, including its nuclear weaponry<sup>84</sup>. This doctrine, however, apparently contradicts the Israeli state’s implicit insistence on a renunciation of first strike capabilities.

Israel has two developments in its proliferation race; on the one hand, pre-emptive strikes to prevent a nuclear attack on Israeli territory; and on the other, the development of powerful second-strike capabilities, without clearly stating the strength and number of its weapons. This, in turn, has two objectives: (1) to serve as a deterrent to the adversary and; (2) as an *ultima ratio*, to ensure the destruction of the enemy if Israel is to disappear.

Based on international relations theories, from an offensive realist point of view, Israel would gain advantage as a relative power by destroying rival nuclear capabilities, without the need to significantly expand its absolute power<sup>85</sup>, which, however, it also does to secure its existence in the event of an attack.

By 2020, Israel is estimated to have approximately 90 operational nuclear weapons: 30 gravity bombs for F-16I or even F-15 fighters; and up to 50 which would be nuclear

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82 DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE. *The 22 September 1979 Event*, 1980, p. 9. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//NSAEBB/NSAEBB190/03.pdf> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

83 CASTRO, José Ignacio. Israel y la postura «amimut». In Garrido, Vicente. (Ed). *La no proliferación y el control de armamentos nucleares en la encrucijada*. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategy Papers, Issue 205, 2020, p. 176.

84 Global Security, *Ibid*.

85 LAMY, Steven L. Contemporary mainstream approaches: neo-realism and neoliberalism, BAYLIS, John, SMITH, Steve, and OWENS, Patricia. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 130.

warheads to be launched from Jericho I (SRBM) II (IRBM) and III (ICBM) ballistic missile systems<sup>86</sup>. Again, it should be noted that there is a common problem in several countries with regard to TNWs. In this case, Jericho missiles were developed by French engineers to carry both conventional and nuclear warheads<sup>87</sup>, and were therefore conceived as dual-capability systems.

In addition to this, it is estimated that the remaining 10 weapons could be SLCM (submarine-launched cruise missile) warheads from five *Dolphin* and *Dolphin-2* type submarines, particularly suitable for the second-strike capabilities apparently sought by Israel<sup>88</sup>.

It is therefore quite likely that Israel has, or may soon develop, significant tactical nuclear weapons *capabilities* for such a tactical nuclear triad: (i) short-range (SRBM) and medium-range (MRBM) dual-capable ballistic missiles (*Jericho* I and II), capable of carrying payloads like the one detonated in the Vela incident or less; (ii) nuclear warheads for F-16 and F-15 fighters; and (iii) *Dolphin* submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

## North Korea

North Korea, officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, is the newest *de facto* nuclear power, having begun nuclear testing in 2006. It is perceived by the US as a serious threat both to the region and to its own national security.

The country's nuclear programme, which has conducted up to six nuclear tests, has tended to increase the power and range of its ICBM missiles high-yield type when it comes to nuclear munitions). Although they are still different things, the power of the munition, and the delivery system, in general it would not seem optimal to use low-yield nuclear munitions in an ICBM.

The concern in the US is due to the continued increase in the nuclear programme, the production and export of enriched uranium and plutonium, as well as the development of intercontinental ballistic missile capabilities<sup>89</sup>.

By January 2020, the DPRK was estimated to have 30 to 40 nuclear weapons, numbers inferred from the amount of fissile material – plutonium and highly enriched

86 KILE, Shannon. N. and Kristensen, H. S. VIII. Israeli nuclear forces. In "World nuclear forces", *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019, pp. 375-376.

87 DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE. *Special National Intelligence Estimate: Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, 1974, p. 24. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB240/snief.pdf> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

88 KILE, Shannon. N. and Kristensen, H. S. *Op. cit.*, p. 377.

89 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, p. 11.

uranium – North Korea is believed to have produced for use in nuclear weapons, as well as assumptions about its weapons design and manufacturing abilities<sup>90</sup>.

North Korea is thus identified as a major player in “horizontal proliferation” (increasing the number of states with access to nuclear arsenals or material), as it can deliver nuclear materials (the aforementioned Plutonium and enriched uranium), as well as nuclear weapons themselves, to strategic rivals of the United States, such as Syria or Iran<sup>91</sup>. This does not detract from its role in “vertical proliferation”, since:

“North Korea is expanding and modernising its ballistic missile force, which consists of home-produced short-, medium- and long-range missile systems that are deployed or under development. In recent years it has serially developed several missile systems with progressively longer ranges and increasingly sophisticated launch capabilities”<sup>92</sup>.

With regard to ICBMs, which remain North Korea’s top priority as they could potentially hit the US mainland, new developments include the *Hwasong-10* (known as *Musudan* or BM-25), the *Hwasong-12* [*KN-17* for the US], and the *Bukkeukseong-2* missile under development [*KN-15*]<sup>93</sup>. However, these missiles are not usually considered as possible delivery vehicles for TNWs.

It might therefore appear that North Korea is not a relevant actor in terms of TNWs, but the recent development of three types of SRBM missiles, and a first North Korean model of SLBM, serve as a warning in this regard. These short-range missiles (sometimes referred to as tactical missiles) would be (in DOD designations – U.S. Department of Defense): the KN-23, similar to the Russian *Iskander-M* missile; the KN-24, which is apparently based on the US *MGM-140 ATACMS* launch system; and the KN-25<sup>94</sup>, a type of MLRS (*Multiple launch rocket system*). The problem, especially with regard to the KN-23 and KN-24, is that they may be dual-capable systems, again, as in other cases, they could be the delivery vector for both conventional and nuclear warheads<sup>95</sup>.

As in the case of Russia, we are faced with the ambiguity of dual-capability systems in short-range (SRBM) and medium-range (MRBM) missiles. Add to this North Korea’s relationship with China and Russia, and one is warned of the possibility of North Korea becoming a player with a certain capacity in terms of TNW, even greater than that of China, given their different conceptions of security and development of nuclear programmes.

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90 KILE, Shannon. N. and KRISTENSEN, Hans M. IX. North Korea’s military nuclear capabilities. In “World nuclear forces”, *SIPRI Yearbook 2020, Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security*, 2019c, p. 378.

91 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, p. 12.

92 KILE, Shannon. N. and KRISTENSEN, Hans M. IX. North Korea’s military nuclear capabilities p. 379.

93 KILE, Shannon. N. and KRISTENSEN, Hans M. *op. cit.*, p. 383.

94 KILE, Shannon. N. and KRISTENSEN, Hans M. *op. cit.*, p. 381.

95 KILE, Shannon. N. and KRISTENSEN, Hans M. *op. cit.*, p. 382.

In addition, we believe that the same doubt that has been raised about SRBMs can be raised about the North Korean SLBM system, called *Bukkeukseong* (or Bukgeukseong-1) [*DOD KN-11*]<sup>96</sup>, given that North Korea has several strategic adversaries against which it could use this weapon with a low-yield nuclear payload, such as South Korea, Japan, or even the United States. The recent development of these weapons indicates the need for particularly close international monitoring of new North Korean delivery systems that will undoubtedly continue to be developed in the coming years.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF CURRENT TACTICAL NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS

Country	Availability of TNWs	Number and type of TNWs	Launch vectors
United States	Yes	230 gravity pumps B61-3 and B61-4 B61-12 (under development)	<b>Hunters:</b> F-15E, F-16C/D, F-16MLU, and PA-200. Eurofighter Typhoon (under development as a launch system)
Russian Federation	Yes	-1875 operational to be launched from multiple systems -2000 in decommissioning	<b>Hunters and bombers:</b> Backfire-C, Fencer-D, Fullback, Foxhound and Felon [NATO designation]. <b>Advanced vectors:</b> SS-19 M4 [Avangard], Dagger [Kh-47M2 Kinzhal], Kanyon [Poseidon], SSC-X-9 Skyfall [Burevestnik]. <b>Dual-capable missiles:</b> SS-21 Scarab, SS-26 Stone, SSC-7, SSC-8, SS-N-30th, SS-NX-33, SS-21, SS-N-30th, and SSC-5 Stooze. <b>-Others:</b> torpedoes for submarines and anti-aircraft missiles.
People's Republic of China	No (but do have the ability to procure and launch dual-capability launch systems)	o (tactics)	<b>Various possible vectors:</b> CSS-3, CSS-4 Mod 2, CSS-NX-14, B-20 and H-6N, as well as new developments.
Islamic Republic of Pakistan	Yes	Between 150 and 160 nuclear warheads (up to 250 by 2025) - 3.5 tonnes of highly enriched uranium	-Missiles: Abdal, Ghaznavi i, Shaheen-I et seq., Nasr and Babur GLCM.
Republic of India	No (there may be concealment of TNW capabilities)	o (tactical, ambiguity due to the power of their strategic heads)	<b>Airborne systems:</b> Mirage 2000H and Jaguar IS. <b>Ballistic missiles:</b> Prithvi-II and Agni series I to V.
State of Israel	Yes	90 (30 gravity bombs, 50 nuclear warheads, and possibly 10 warheads for SLCM)	<b>-Hunters:</b> F-16I and F-15 <b>Ballistic missiles:</b> Jericho I (SRBM) II (IRBM) and III (ICBM) <b>Submarines:</b> Dolphin and Dolphin-2.
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	No (but there are launch vectors that may indicate an arming trend).	o (apparently)	- SRBM missiles -23, KN-24, KN-25 - SLBM system: KN-11 [Bukkeukseong]

Source: Prepared internally.

96 KILE, Shannon. N. and KRISTENSEN, Hans M. *op. cit.*, p. 385.

## Key variables for the present and future of TNWs

We could be at the dawn of the third nuclear era in tactical nuclear weapons, one that has moved beyond the phase of institutionalism, reliance on global anti-nuclear treaties and the reduction (*motu proprio*) of TNWs by Russia and the United States. Disaffection with the NPT, the US exit from the INF and Open Skies Treaty, accusing Russia of its violation, and the Nuclear Matters reports, signal this change of era from the US point of view.

During the final period of D. Trump's term in office, the US has tried to create a new tier of treaties to three, including China, which has not been possible. On the other hand, the US administration tried to force the inclusion of TNW in treaties such as New START, without success. Under the Biden administration, the effects of the New START Treaty have been extended for 5 years, although this has not implied any new conditions, as the former president tried to introduce<sup>97</sup>, but maintains its targets on ICBMs, SLBMs and strategic bombers. The Biden administration has thus "securitised" the legal situation with respect to the classic Cold War nuclear triad, ignoring new delivery vehicles, including short- and medium-range missiles, as well as other modern weaponry that did not exist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One might wonder whether Trump's accusations against Russia in relation to the INF were well-founded. However, given the technological advances in the military field of the major powers, and the significant increase in *de facto* nuclear powers, some with low-yield capabilities, it does not seem reasonable to continue measuring nuclear proliferation with the armaments of two powers, while the rest have been developing the same type of weapons for years, as is apparently the case with the Israeli *Jericho* I and II systems. To demand the dispossession of dual-capable weaponry is to demand, in the final analysis, no conventional weaponry, and that will always be the defence of any state with such delivery systems. This does not preclude Russia (or other actors) from exploiting the ambiguity of dual-capability systems as a reinforcement of their deterrent capability.

However, the current Secretary of State in the Biden administration, A. Blinken, has demonstrated the apparent US interest, once the danger of START's demise is removed, in creating a new treaty to regulate "all of Russia's weapons", which may include its TNW and dual-capability systems<sup>98</sup>.

Russia, for its part, is unlikely to sign agreements that bind only these two parties, as it has been advocating multilateralism and an end to Cold War logic for decades. Moreover, a US-proposed Treaty whose subject matter is delimited by reference to Russian armaments will be rejected on obvious grounds as an attempt at US imposition, while NATO continues to fail to address the issue of TNWs.

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97 SONNE, Paul. "United States extends nuclear treaty with Russia for five years", in *The New York Times*, 03/02/2021. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/us-russia-new-start-nuclear-treaty/2021/02/03/4293dofa-6638-11eb-bf81-c618c88ed605\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/us-russia-new-start-nuclear-treaty/2021/02/03/4293dofa-6638-11eb-bf81-c618c88ed605_story.html) Accessed: 24/03/2021.

98 SONNE, Paul. *Ibid.*

Moreover, depending on how such a hypothetical treaty is established, if one starts from the Trump-era accusations that Russia violates the non-proliferation and arms control treaties with dual-capable MRBM and SRBM systems, Russia may simply deny that it has violated any part of the INF, and that disarming dual-capable systems would be suicidal given that there would be 29 states in NATO that would not sign a “tactical START” that included dual-capable systems.

To complicate matters further, it should be pointed out, as Republican Senator Tom Cotton did, the sterility of Biden’s early moves, after years of pointing to an alleged Putin-Trump alliance:

“This agreement does not include tactical nuclear weapons, of which Russia has a vast arsenal, or the latest Russian delivery vehicles (such as submarine systems). It does not include nuclear-powered missiles or hypersonic weapons, which is why Vladimir Putin was so eager to expand it”<sup>99</sup>.

The end of the INF and the extension of New START only seem to indicate a certain continuity with the Cold War mentality in the US administration, and, above all, a return to some of the dynamics of the “Obama Doctrine” (as the appointment of General Lloyd Austin as Secretary of Defence may indicate), including dialogue with Iran and special attention to Russia’s borders (Ukraine, Georgia, Baltic States...), could leave the United States behind in the new era of tactical nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, proliferation, both vertical and horizontal, continues to increase thanks to the actions of countries such as China, North Korea, Israel and Pakistan.

No nuclear states, including the United States, and no other NATO states have joined the TPNW, which is likely to be ineffective in real terms. As for the NPT, it continues to generate tension in Germany, a signatory to the treaty and a country with US tactical nuclear weapons on its territory, as well as in Belgium, Italy, Turkey and the Netherlands<sup>100</sup>.

At NATO the issue of NPT remains unaddressed, and given the apparent continuity of the US nuclear ‘umbrella’ mindset, this is unlikely to change, unless the European states involved in NATO’s nuclear policy (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands) push for this (unlike the UK, which is strategically aligned with the US), in which case NATO’s resilience as an alliance of equals would be tested. In fact, on 14 April 2021, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands and Norway issued the

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99 MIRZARYAN, Gevorg. “La prolongación del Tratado START será una excepción en las relaciones entre Rusia y Estados Unidos”. In *Vzgliad*, 27/01/2021. <https://vz.ru/politics/2021/1/27/1082171.html> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

100 KÜTT, Moritz, HOEKEMA, Jan, and SAUER, Tom. (22 January 2021). “Atomwaffen sind jetzt verboten. Halten wir uns daran”. In *Der Spiegel*, 22/01/2021. <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/atomwaffen-sind-jetzt-verboten-halten-wir-uns-daran-a-d00a0906-bcc3-44b0-8ac8-edaebbe2e3be> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

so-called non-paper on TNW (supported by six other Alliance members) to demand more transparency on these weapons from both the US and Russia<sup>101</sup>. In the case of the United States, this is obviously a “taboo” subject, since the withdrawal of its TNWs from Europe would weaken its power on the continent, while Russia would remain, with more or less armaments, on its borders, and therefore much closer to the heart of the continent.

On the European side, there are three main factors that explain this *status quo*: (i) Atlanticist immobility, that is, the comfort that the current situation generates in countries such as Poland, Estonia and Belgium; (ii) Germany’s reluctance to promote (and lead) a bloc – even within NATO – with military and strategic objectives (with nuclear means), a legacy of its result in the last world war, and; (iii) France’s indecision, where Atlanticism has for years imposed itself on the strategic lines that have traditionally conditioned its foreign policy, through rapprochement with Russia, and the distrust of the Anglo-Americans, as in the paradigmatic case of General De Gaulle. The latter, in fact, was warned by Brzezinski as a threat to US hegemony in the world<sup>102</sup>.

One possible risk of TNW proliferation is the re-deployment of US launch systems on European territory, which would generate significant anxiety in the Russian Federation. In any case, this threat of reconversion is and will be a constant in the years to come, for all nuclear actors and their strategic adversaries.

On the other hand, the possible return to the “Obama Doctrine”, with the subsequent development of Iran’s nuclear programme, will give Israel more reasons to accumulate nuclear weapons, including possible (almost probable) TNWs. In addition, Saudi Arabia, another strategic rival of Iran, could also be tempted to develop its own programme, although it is not currently considered a possible future nuclear power.

Russia will continue to develop its programme as it has been doing for years, modernising its systems, and challenging US hegemony, if the Biden administration reverts to a policy of ‘containment’ interventions in the post-Soviet space or other states, such as Syria, that are allies of Russia.

As for China, it is inevitable that it will accumulate tactical nuclear weapons over time, although this depends on multiple factors, such as its relationship with Russia, its collaboration with Pakistan and North Korea, and internal threats to its territorial integrity (Tibet and Sinkiang). However, it is not a TNW powerhouse today, because it does not need to be. We believe that when China begins to develop such weaponry

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101 KRISTENSEN, Hans M. “10 NATO Countries Want More Transparency for Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons”. In *Fas.org*, 24/04/2011. <https://fas.org/blogs/security/2011/04/natoproposal/> Accessed: 24/03/2021.

102 BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew. (1998). *El gran tablero mundial: la supremacía estadounidense y sus imperativos geoestratégicos*, Grupo Planeta, 1998, p. 50.

it will be with SRBMs, MRBMs, and especially dual-capable SLBMs, as soon as it detects significant risks on its southern and south-eastern sea front.

The Cold War “method” of bilateral treaties for the whole world has no place in the new era of tactical nuclear weapons. While a comprehensive multilateral treaty such as the TPNW on a type of tactical nuclear weapon, which would also have to entail a precise definition of what it would be, is theoretically possible, we do not consider it likely.

Once again, the definition of TNW is one of the major sticking points (as is the case with other types of armaments), and the advances in launch systems, particularly dual-capability SRBMs and MRBMs, which are no longer limited by any treaty, mean that the only way to reduce this type of armament is through bilateralism at the regional level: India and Pakistan, Iran (in the not too distant future) and Israel, China-North Korea and the United States, and Russia and NATO (ultimately the United States). Another possibility is a post-Merkel Franco-German axis agreement, forcing NATO to take a position on the TNW.

On the other hand, there could be a case for a multilateral treaty at the global level with regard to horizontal proliferation, especially with regard to possible major strategic imbalances in a region through the spontaneous emergence of a new *de facto* nuclear power (such as Iraq, Syria or Saudi Arabia), but also with regard to terrorist groups such as Daesh in a region such as Central Asia or North Africa.

TABLE II. STRATEGIC POSITIONS VIS-À-VIS TNWS

Country	Positioning
United States	- Enhancing capabilities to reduce the gap in equipment and launch systems with Russia, within the NATO framework. - First and Second-Strike capabilities
Russian Federation	Quantitative reduction and improvement of systems to maintain superiority over NATO. - First and Second-Strike capabilities
People's Republic of China	- Modernisation and increase of the strategic arsenal, but renunciation of first-strike and consequently of TNWs.
Islamic Republic of Pakistan	- Lack of specific nuclear doctrine, but focus on TNW as a means of second-strike in particular, without renouncing first-strike.
Republic of India	- Ambiguity in its nuclear doctrine. Maintaining superiority over Pakistan, although this does not appear to include TNW.
State of Israel	- Opacity and ambiguity, - “Amimuth” and “Samson” doctrines, involving first and second-strike capabilities. - The entire nuclear arsenal serves as a last resort if Israel's existence is threatened.
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Focus on strategic capacity building and horizontal proliferation. - New possible launch systems indicate a future development of TNWs.
NATO allies	- There is no debate on TNWs in Europe, status quo in spite of various specific complaints in some states.

Source: Prepared internally.

## Conclusions

Parallel to the development of strategic nuclear weaponry, with ever more powerful payloads and more sophisticated delivery systems, especially during the Cold War, a nuclear weaponry closer to the conventional one, the so-called “tactical” nuclear weaponry, has been developed in parallel. This has included mines, MADM, SADM, and warheads of less than 5 to 10 kilotons.

On the other hand, international concern succeeded in securing the adoption of the NPT, and more recently the TPNW, as well as various agreements between the two nuclear superpowers in the START and INF treaties. However, in none of these cases has there been any question of reducing or limiting TNWs, the concept of which remains elusive to this day, not helped by state secrets and ambiguity on the part of some powers. In fact, the most significant reductions took place between the end of the Cold War and the late 2000s on a unilateral basis by Russia and the US.

In addition, the issues of dual-capable delivery systems, horizontal proliferation, the end of the INF and the non-adherence of the nuclear powers to the TPNW indicate that the taboo on dealing with them at the international level will remain a constant.

Russia currently has a significant lead over its strategic rival in terms of TNWs, modernising its delivery systems and including types that fall far short of US gravity bombs, although the US has made timid attempts in recent years to bring TNWs within the scope of treaties with Russia.

China, for its part, explicitly renounces first strike and TNW, although this can be seen simply as a concealment of its capabilities (which in any case provide for easy and rapid acquisition if necessary). Pakistan does not define its deterrence policy, but is fully confident of its capabilities in terms of TNWs, while India, with a clearly superior programme (in terms of strategic armaments), can be considered in limbo due to the type of weaponry at its disposal.

Israel maintains potent TNW capabilities that will increase, particularly if its strategic rival, Iran, gains access to an internationally legitimised nuclear programme. North Korea finally seems to be focusing on its strategic capabilities, although a reinforcement of these is feasible with the development of TNWs.

We asked at the beginning of this article whether we were in a new era of TNWs, or whether we were still in the post-Cold War period, with some new elements, albeit not substantially different from the decades of the *Pax Americana*.

From this analysis, one can only conclude that we are in the third era of tactical nuclear weapons, arising from the technological development of the last two decades, in a new phase of both vertical and horizontal proliferation. Its key features would be:

*Multilateralism*: the end of the exclusive protagonism of the United States and Russia, the relevant role of the *de facto* nuclear powers, and China as a «virtual» TNW power.

Arms *reductions* – as a possibility – following regional logics, through bi- or tri-lateral treaties to «securitise» peace in the region: Middle East; Indian Subcontinent; Europe; Asia-Pacific; Arctic.

*Ambiguity* in terms: the problem of defining *tactical* nuclear weapons, their types, delivery systems and payloads remains.

*Uncertainty* in the analysis: new delivery systems are often considered *de jure* by the State possessing them to be conventional weapons, but they can in turn deliver low-yield nuclear warheads. Therefore, as long as the exact number of nuclear devices in a country is not known, uncertainty about their number will prevail due to dual-capability systems.

*A new arms race* between Russia and the United States, especially in the SRBMs, MRBMs, and SLBMs, although the United States will experience quantitative proliferation, while Russia will continue to upgrade its weaponry, destroying or converting outdated nuclear weapons. Moreover, a political earthquake is conceivable in NATO if the Franco-German axis were to start making demands on US TNWs in Europe.

*Increased proliferation* by *Israel* due to the possibility of a strategic shift in the region with the development of Iran's nuclear programme, as well as by *Pakistan* and *India* due to their mutual dislike of each other, and North *Korea*.

TNWs will undoubtedly be a vital element in global security for decades to come, and although it may try to remain a “taboo” subject for some years, technology will eventually create the need for strong international action against this new threat of nuclear proliferation. We must not resign ourselves to a future without international control of tactical nuclear weapons, whether by relying on global deterrence in a multipolar context that puts the entire planet at risk, or on strategies to create Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, as the case of the Middle East demonstrates, progress is possible.

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## *Price audit of obtaining a weapons systems*

### **Abstract**

The Spanish Ministry of Defence has achieved a saving of €429 million, as recorded in the last year's report presented by the Cost Evaluation Group (GEC). This amount has been obtained by auditing contracts whose economic volume amounts to €6,209 million. In the last 13 years, the total savings achieved by the GEC amounts to more than €1,300 million. This remarkable progression has been achieved thanks to the increase in its means, the professionalisation of his members and to the fact that the GEC has equipped itself with its own internationally recognized methodology, for which it has been congratulated, especially during 2020, by various entities.

The GEC was born in 1988 with the name of Cost Evaluation Working Group (GTEC), it is framed within the General Directorate of Economic Affairs of the Secretary of State for Defence and has carried out cost audits for international organisations such as NETMA (Nato Eurofighter and Tornado Management Agency) and OCCAR (Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation, European intergovernmental organisation to facilitate and manage cooperative European Armament Programmes between France, German, Italy, United Kingdom and Spain) by having standards comparable to those of the most advanced countries of the European Union and NATO.

### **Key words**

Cost Evaluation Group, GEC, Life Cycle Cost, CCV, Savings, Audit, Market Price, Offer, Cost Analysis, Procurement Process, Weapon Systems, Cost Estimation, Company Rate, Price investigation.

**Cite this article:**

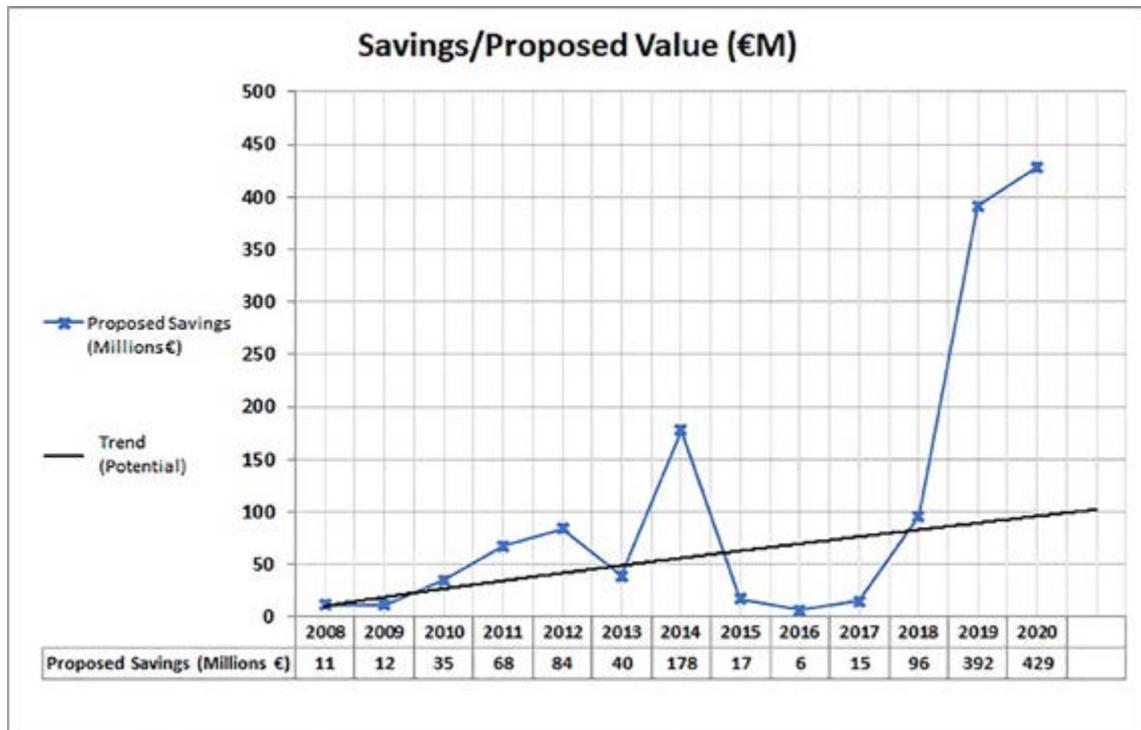
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**The audits of the cost evaluation group (CEG), Ministry of Defence (MINISDEF), have achieved savings of €429 million in 2020.**

The Ministry of Defence has proposed a saving of €429 million, as stated in the CEG’s report for the year 2020. This amount was obtained by auditing contracts with a financial volume of €6.21 billion.

As the unit responsible for cost and price analysis within MINISDEF, the CEG has managed to propose savings of €149 for every euro of direct cost invested in this unit, doubling its productivity, which has earned it several commendations. This high activity/savings multiplier indicates that it is still far from the optimum level of utilisation in its work and potential, and its methodology and results can even be extrapolated to other ministries that require it.

Over the last 13 years, the total savings achieved by this group amount to at least 1.38 billion euros. This remarkable progress has been achieved thanks to the growth, professionalism, dedication of its members and the fact that the CEG has developed its own internationally recognised methodology. It should be noted that there are other notable unquantified savings from price analyses and estimates in the procurement process and adjustments resulting from tariff audits that cannot be quantified at this stage.



Graph 1. Proposed savings in millions of euros

The responsibility for the estimation of the Life Cycle Cost (LCC) of material resources is assigned in MINISDEF to the Director General of Economic Affairs (DI-GENECO) who exercises it through the Sub-Directorate of Procurement, CEG. This group was created in 1988 under the name of the Working Group on Cost Evaluation

(WCEG) as a temporary group for a specific task. Later, after observing the results obtained, it became the permanent CEG<sup>1</sup>, and was initially assigned the following functions:

1. Cost evaluation and price analysis of the Ministry of Defence's supplier companies or those participating in international programmes financed from the Department's budgets.
2. The analysis and evaluation of the costs of the Armed Forces Centres, Units and Organisations.
3. Carrying out of economic-financial analyses of MINISDEF supply companies; and participating in the design of methods and procedures for estimating, planning and controlling costs within MINISDEF.

The functions of DIGENECO, MINISDEF have evolved since its creation and its mission is to provide the cost and price analysis services defined in Annex I of Instruction 128/2007 of the SEDEF, which include:

1. Estimation of prices and costs of investment projects and programmes. To assess the procurement alternatives and the solution chosen as viable. Also necessary for programming the Material Resource Objectives (MROs)<sup>2</sup> and for drawing up the budgeting proposals that are produced in the material resource planning process.
2. Direct support to Programme Offices. During the preparation stage for implementation, updating the life-cycle cost estimate that was made when the feasible solution was decided upon, to bring it closer to the market price.
3. Evaluation of the prices submitted by the companies. Review the economic aspects of proposals made by the companies prior to the bid, with special attention to the prices quoted and their correspondence with the deliverables and other services of the contract.
4. Audit of the Bids submitted by the companies.  
Its objective is to review the economic aspects of the bid, checking the correspondence of the prices offered with the deliverables, the criteria for calculating the profit, the valuation of the risks and contingencies that try to cover them in order to issue an opinion on the adequacy to NODECOS.<sup>3</sup>
5. Auditing of the prices and unit costs of the companies (Tariffs).  
Hourly labour costs (hourly rates), the costs of using machinery per unit of time or product and the coefficients or surcharges calculated to allocate the in-

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<sup>1</sup> SPAIN. Ministry of Defence. 1992. SEDEF Instruction 8/1992 of 22 January 1992. *BOD* no. 23/92 of 30 January 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Basic instrument for the programming and subsequent procurement of the material resources required to meet the needs arising from the Military Capability Objectives and other objectives of the Department.

<sup>3</sup> SPAIN. Ministry of Defence. 1998. Ministerial Order 283/1998 of 28 October 1998. *BOD* no. 258

direct costs inherent to the production activity. The purpose of these audits is for MINISDEF to agree with the company the values that the company must use in general to calculate the prices of its bids for contracts awarded through the negotiated procedure.

6. Audit of the costs incurred in the execution of the contract. Review of the incurred costs declared by the contractor and, where applicable, those declared by subcontractors, in order to provide a professional opinion on the adequacy of their calculation to the NODECOS standards.
7. Analysis of contract execution costs and profit margins. Typification, analysis, parameterisation and statistical processing of the data corresponding to the estimated costs and the profit proposed by the companies in their prices and bids.
8. Analysis of the Cost of Public Services. Calculation and analysis of the costs assignable to the services provided to third parties by the units, centres and bodies of the Ministry of Defence and the public bodies attached to it, applying public prices and fees.
9. Analysis of the Cost of the Activities of the units, centres and bodies. Calculation and analysis of the costs assignable to the activities carried out by the units, centres and bodies of the MINISDEF and the public bodies attached to it.
10. Reports prior to the Orders to Proceed approved by the SEDEF. Reports issued by the CEG at the request of the Deputy Director General for Contracting in the process prior to the approval by the SSEDEF of the orders to proceed that initiate the files.

Although the estimation of prices and costs of investment projects and programmes has been formally introduced in 2012, the CEG started to perform cost estimates in 2005 with the estimation of the series of four Maritime Action Ships (first BAM series) for the Navy and it is from then on and observing the results obtained, when comparing the cost estimate with the company's budget and the audit of the bid, when the CEG started to prepare a specific methodology and an adequate training of its staff, so that at the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012, when the task of life cycle cost (LCC) estimation was assigned to DIGENECO, the CEG was already prepared to perform this type of work.

SEDEF Instruction 67/2011 has made this function essential in the Material Resources Procurement Process, especially in the phases and stages prior to the implementation of the Programmes, since the procurement process has been defined from the point of view of the complete life cycle of the alternatives that are proposed before deciding on their viability and the solution that is finally chosen. On the other hand, updated information on the life cycle costs of the systems, according to the most recent estimate of such costs, is a much-needed input to the financial and material resources planning process set out in SEDEF Instruction 2/2011, as the cost of ORMs and their components can be an essential factor for their programming.

As of today, the CEG continues to perform the aforementioned functions, except for the analysis and evaluation of the costs of the Armed Forces' Centres, Units and Organisations and the analysis of the cost of public services, which in 2012 was taken over by the Sub-Directorate General for Accounting. The CEG, which is part of the Directorate General for Economic Affairs –Subdirectorato General for Procurement–, is the unit responsible for carrying out cost and price analyses within the Ministry of Defence with standards comparable to those of the most advanced countries in the European Union and NATO.

These analyses are very necessary when there is a single plaintiff and an absence of bidders as this leads to contracts not going through an open tender, the Public Sector Contracts Law (LCSP) calls this a negotiated procurement procedure and it happens very often in the procurement of weapons systems in Spain. With the estimate made by the Ministry of Defence and the comparison with the estimate presented by the future contractor, which will be based on the costs of this company, costs that can be evaluated by defence before (estimate, analysis of prices) during (audit of bids, rates) and after the execution of the contract (audit of costs incurred), we will try to replace this lack of references that occurs in the negotiation, a negotiation that takes place at a disadvantage, as the information available to the Administration is incomplete and asymmetrical. This asymmetry is corrected by investing the Administration in means of control, such as price capping, cost-based pricing, profit-based pricing and its standards (NODECOS order 283/1998)<sup>4</sup>, investment in parametric software tools, incorporation of estimation experts, etc.

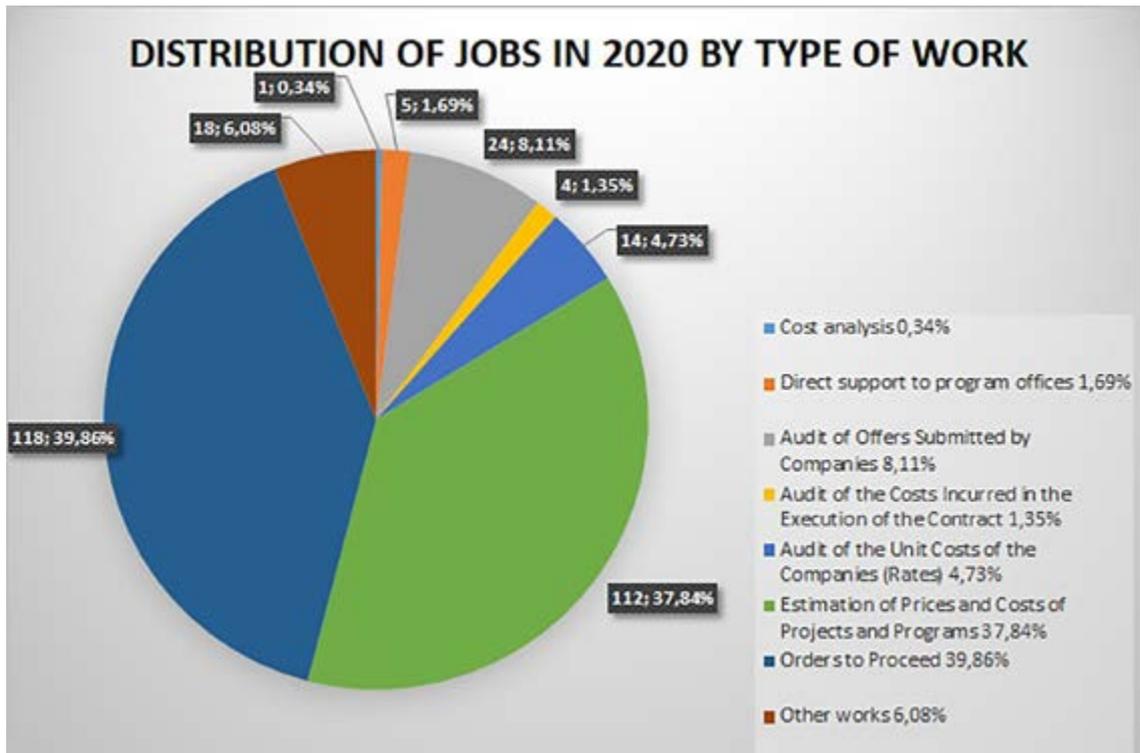
The CEG, as the body responsible for carrying out the aforementioned audits, in accordance with Instruction 128/2007, has developed a methodology based on the best international practices in the field of contract auditing, the effectiveness of which is proven by the experience and results achieved over the years of its application.

### *Summary of CEG 2020 results*

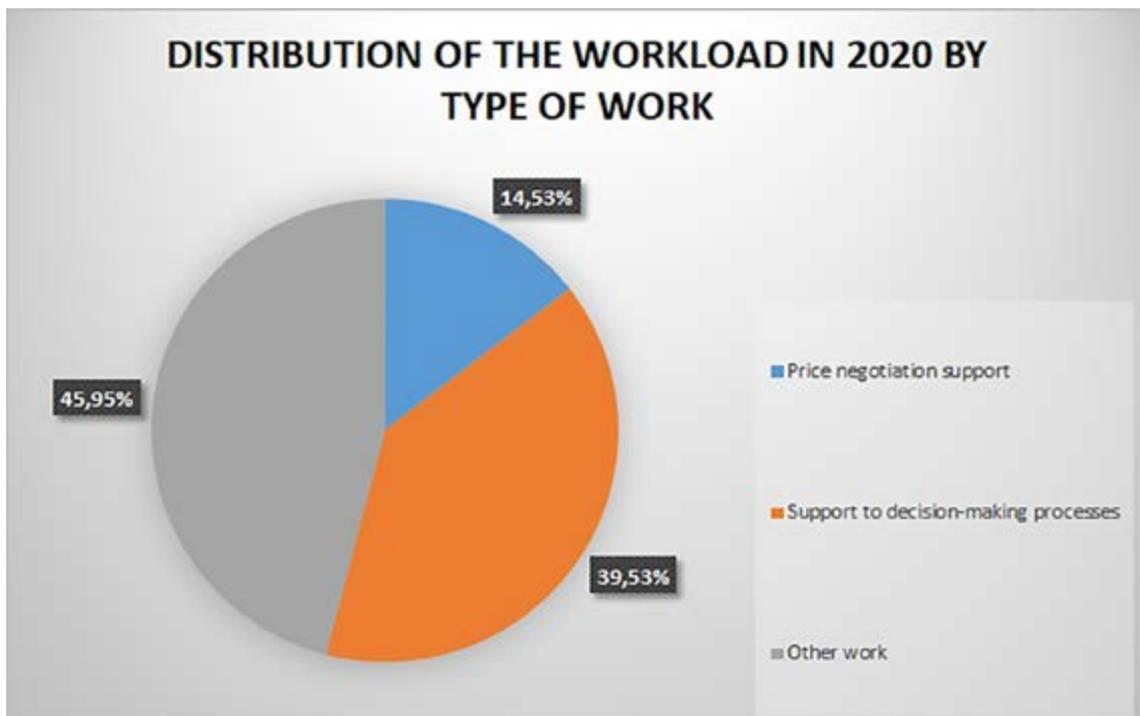
The total workload of the CEG in 2020, as the sum of the work included in the CEG's annual work plan (PATCEG) 2020 plus the work that has been added during the year, not including orders to proceed, has meant the completion of a total of **296 jobs**, with the following distribution by type of work:

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<sup>4</sup> The above-mentioned Order has established a procedure for the bid specifications to include clauses obliging companies to break down prices in bids, making costs and profit visible, and to apply specific rules on cost eligibility criteria (NODECOS). In addition, the bid documents include a clause determining MINISDEF's right to audit both the bids and the costs incurred in the execution of the contract.



Graph 2. Distribution of jobs by type of work.



Graph 3. Workload distribution by type.

### *Savings or value generated by audits*

The results of the Bid audits and the Incurred Cost audits lead to adjustments in the contract prices by calculating lower costs when applying the rules on the criteria to be used in the calculation of costs in certain supply, consultancy and assistance

and service contracts (NODECOS), either in the costs incurred declared by the companies or those estimated in their bids, although most of the incurred cost audits do not lead to adjustments, they do provide very useful information for the CEG as they complete the CEG's historical databases. Such price adjustments usually result in budgetary savings or in obtaining more value for money from material resources for the price paid. In 2020, the results of expenditure savings have been as follows.

TYPE OF AUDIT	NUMBER OF JOBS	AUDITED VOLUME (millions €)	PROPOSED SAVINGS (millions €)	% SAVINGS
Audit of the Bids Submitted by the Companies	24	5,458.3	428.6	7.8%
Audit of the Costs Incurred in the Execution of the Contract	4	751.2	0.0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6,209.5</b>	<b>428.6</b>	<b>6.9%</b>

Table 1. Percentage of savings per bid audit and incurred.

The other types of CEG work do not produce easily identifiable budget savings, however the cost estimates made in the resource mobilisation process, during the feasibility stage, feasibility document (DDV), where the procurement strategy is already aimed at a negotiated contract without advertising (single company), the CEG provides an alternative estimate to the one obtained in the market research (single company) which is normally used by the Secretary of State to determine the budget ceiling of that future programme (so initially and in the absence of the procurement file the positive difference between the company's price/estimate and the estimate made by the CEG should be analysed to verify if the price delta offered is reasonable and if not it would produce an adjustment which would result in a budget saving).

In the same way, the audits of tariffs that are carried out to the companies that have the highest annual contracting volume with the MINISDEF and those that the contracting body requests, yield results in tariff amounts that are included in an annual tariff agreement that is signed by DIGENECO and the COMPANY. In those tariff agreements where lower tariffs than those proposed by the companies are agreed due to the identification of non-allowable costs (NODECOS), these adjusted annual tariffs, when applied to the negotiated contracts signed with MINISDEF, produce annual savings that have not yet been quantified. The CEG is studying how to calculate them and incorporate them into the savings achieved.

### Estimation of programme prices and costs

Cost obtained during 2020 in the estimates made in the DDV phase			
Procurement	Support	Leave	Total
€1,396.92 M	€1,332.16 M	€1.32 M	€2,650.40 M

Table 2. Estimation of life cycle costs at the DDV stage. Miscellaneous sources (Not CANOA)

- The reliability of the results obtained in the estimation of carrying costs is lower than in the case of acquisition costs, due to the following shortcomings:
- The lack of an information system that, in addition to supporting the management of the life cycle of the systems, is capable of adequately recording the costs that arise during their operational life. MINISDEF's analytical accounting system (CANOA) is currently unable to provide life-cycle costs for weapons systems.

Moreover, this information is scattered, not easily accessible and has not been stored on a single criterion. Deficiencies in information on the actual costs of sustaining the systems make it impossible to calculate parameters that can be extrapolated to future systems, based on data from industry and organic maintenance.

Therefore, in order to improve the reliability of future estimates, improvements in information systems and contract requirements are needed to provide consistent and relevant data on the actual costs of sustaining, using and decommissioning weapons systems. In addition, while the information systems are being implemented, it is very complicated and time-consuming for the CEG to obtain and calculate them.

### CEG activity indicators

With the information on the financial results of the CEG's work during 2020 expressed and together with the data on equivalent staff on an annual basis below, the following indicators of the CEG's performance in 2020 are derived:

STAFF	CEG workforce	Covered	Equivalent staff*.	Audited volume year 2020 CEG	Proposed savings CEG	Volume reviewed per team (average 3.96 persons)	Proposed average savings per team (average 3.96 persons)	Revised volume per equivalent person	Proposed average savings per equivalent person*
Military staff	12	8	5.39	€6,209 M	€429 M	€896.3 M	€61.9 M	€230.2 M	€15.9 M
Civilian Staff	2	1	1.54						
Staff in charge of management	X	X	20.5						
Total	14	9	<b>26.98</b>						

Table 3. Indicators of CEG activity in 2020.

\*Equivalent staff is that which results from taking into account the dates of incorporation and termination of staff, in addition to certain concepts such as dedication to courses or other military duties that are not specific to the functions assigned to the unit, etc.

CEG: MANAGEMENT INDICATORS				
DATA				
		2020	2019	
Total nominal CEG staff	A	13,0	14,0	troops
Equivalent CEG staff on an annual basis	B	6,93	8,14	troops
CEG* costs	C	2,88	3,03	millions €
Total number of jobs completed	d	178	97	jobs
Number of audits with potential savings	E	28	17	audits
Audited volume (with potential savings)	F	6.210	5.632	millions €
Savings generated	G	429	392	millions €
INDICATORS				
Completed works per team	D/B	25,7	11,9	jobs/person
Volume audited per team	F/B	896,3	691,9	millions €/person
Savings generated per team	G/B	61,9	48,1	millions €/person
Average audited volume per audit	F/E	221,8	331,3	millions €/audit
Average savings per audit	G/E	15,3	23,0	millions €/audit
% € saved per € audited	G/F	6,9%	7,0%	% € savings/€ audited
Net CEG Savings (Generated Savings - CEG Cost)	G-C	425,8	388,5	millions €
Net savings per equivalent team	(G-C) / B	61,5	47,7	millions €
€ saved per CEG for each € CEG cost	G/C	149,0	129,1	€ savings per € cost

The CEG costs are taken from the CANOA, with the exception of the 2020 data, which is an estimate made by the CEG on the basis of the data provided by the CANOA.

Table 4. Indicators of CEG management in 2020.

## Evolution of CEG activity 2008-2020

Prior to 2008, the available data on CEG activity comprised different factors that prevent comparisons based on unified criteria.

Since 2008, the reporting structure on the CEG's activity and results has been homogeneous and allows the development of indicators based on comparable data, which is a valuable tool for setting targets, for assessing activity, results and continuous improvement in productivity and efficiency.

The data recorded for the period 2008-2020 are shown in the table below:

Cost Evaluation Group - ACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT-2008-2020															
Years	Global Activity						Savings or Value Generated					Activity and Performance Ratios			
	Human Resources (A)		Number of Jobs (B)				MILLIONS € (C)					Ratios per Job (D)		Ratios per Person (C) and (E)	
	Nominal Staff	Equivalent Troops	Planned	Survivors	Total Defendants	Carried out	With Potential Savings	Revised Volume	Savings/Value Generated	%	Reviewed per Job	Savings per Job	Jobs per Team	Reviewed per Team*	Savings per Team*
2008	13	10,75	10	23	33	23	15	141,36	11,45	8,1%	9,42	0,76	2,14	13,15	1,07
2009	15	9,65	10	36	46	36	18	445,53	11,93	2,7%	24,75	0,66	3,73	46,17	1,24
2010	15	9,86	11	36	47	36	18	289,70	35,25	12,2%	16,09	1,96	3,65	29,38	3,58
2011	16	10,48	15	37	52	37	19	1.502,69	67,89	4,5%	79,09	3,57	3,53	143,39	6,48
2012	16	7,71	50	45	95	55	18	1.318,74	83,77	6,4%	73,26	4,65	7,13	171,04	10,87
2013	16	9,99	85	54	139	63	25	964,24	39,69	4,1%	38,57	1,59	6,31	96,52	3,97
2014	15	9,73	97	51	148	67	14	2.511,76	177,91	7,1%	179,41	12,71	6,89	258,15	18,29
2015	14	10,20	154	60	214	115	28	249,35	17,04	6,8%	8,91	0,61	11,27	24,45	1,67
2016	13	9,78	90	86	176	111	14	210,47	6,38	3,0%	15,03	0,46	11,35	21,52	0,65
2017	13	9,02	75	70	145	95	10	1.557,96	14,92	1,0%	155,80	1,49	10,53	172,72	1,65
2018	13	9,43	84	85	169	96	17	1.442,65	95,80	6,6%	84,86	5,64	9,86	152,91	10,15
2019	14	8,14	97	111	208	97	17	5.631,76	391,52	7,0%	331,28	23,03	11,92	692,18	48,12
2020	13	6,93	238	147	385	178	28	6.209,54	428,64	6,9%	221,77	15,31	25,69	896,34	61,87
<b>Total 2008-2019</b>			<b>1.016</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>1.857</b>	<b>1.009</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>22.475,75</b>	<b>1.382,21</b>	<b>6,1%</b>					

<b>NOTES:</b>	* A Team consists on average of a Team Leader and 2.95 ISDEFE staff.
(A)	The number of posts has increased by only 1 post during the period under review (13-14 posts).
(B)	The number of equivalent staff has been calculated on the basis of the filled posts and taking into account the strict dedication to work.
(C)	Since 2012, work planning has become more rigorous. Since 2020 planning is consulted and negotiated with applicant bodies.
	Revised Volume and Savings/Value Generated are only for Potential Savings Work (Bid and Incurred Cost Audits).
	The Savings Generated is the decrease in budgeted expenditure. The Value Generated is the greater benefits achieved with the same expenditure.
(D)	The Ratios per Job have been calculated considering only the jobs with potential savings (Bid and Incurred Cost Audits).
(E)	The Revised Volume per Person and Savings per Person Ratios refer to jobs with savings potential.
	The Jobs per Person have been calculated considering all completed jobs with or without saving potential.

n.d: Not available until the end of the year

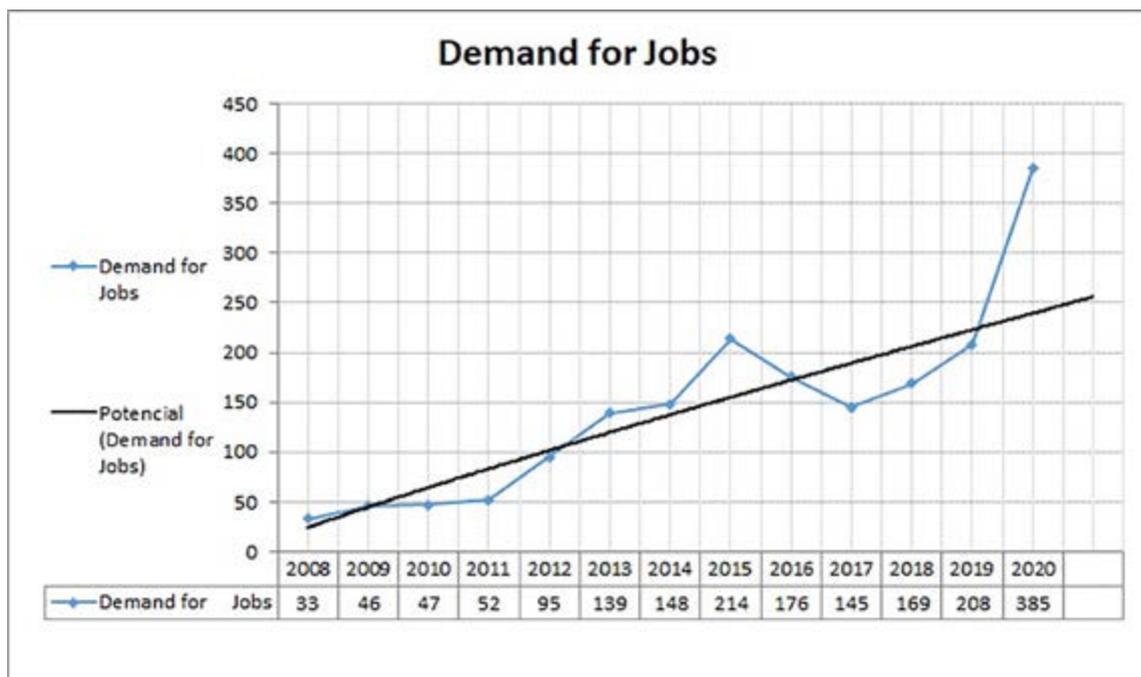
Table 5. Indicators of CEG management in 2020. Evolution of activity 2008 to 2020.

The work completed per team in 2020 was more than double the amount completed in 2019, with a significantly lower number of staff and without considering the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic which has not been reflected in the staffing data (equivalent staff), indicating the high commitment and dedication of the CEG members, as well as a change in the CEG leadership that has implemented the use of more efficient tools, which has led to these good results.

In order for the service requesters to appreciate the work and effort that each job originates in the CEG’s activity, from 2020 the cost invested by the CEG in each job has been incorporated in the issuance of reports.

The following sections present in graphical format an overview of the evolution of the main data in the table above.

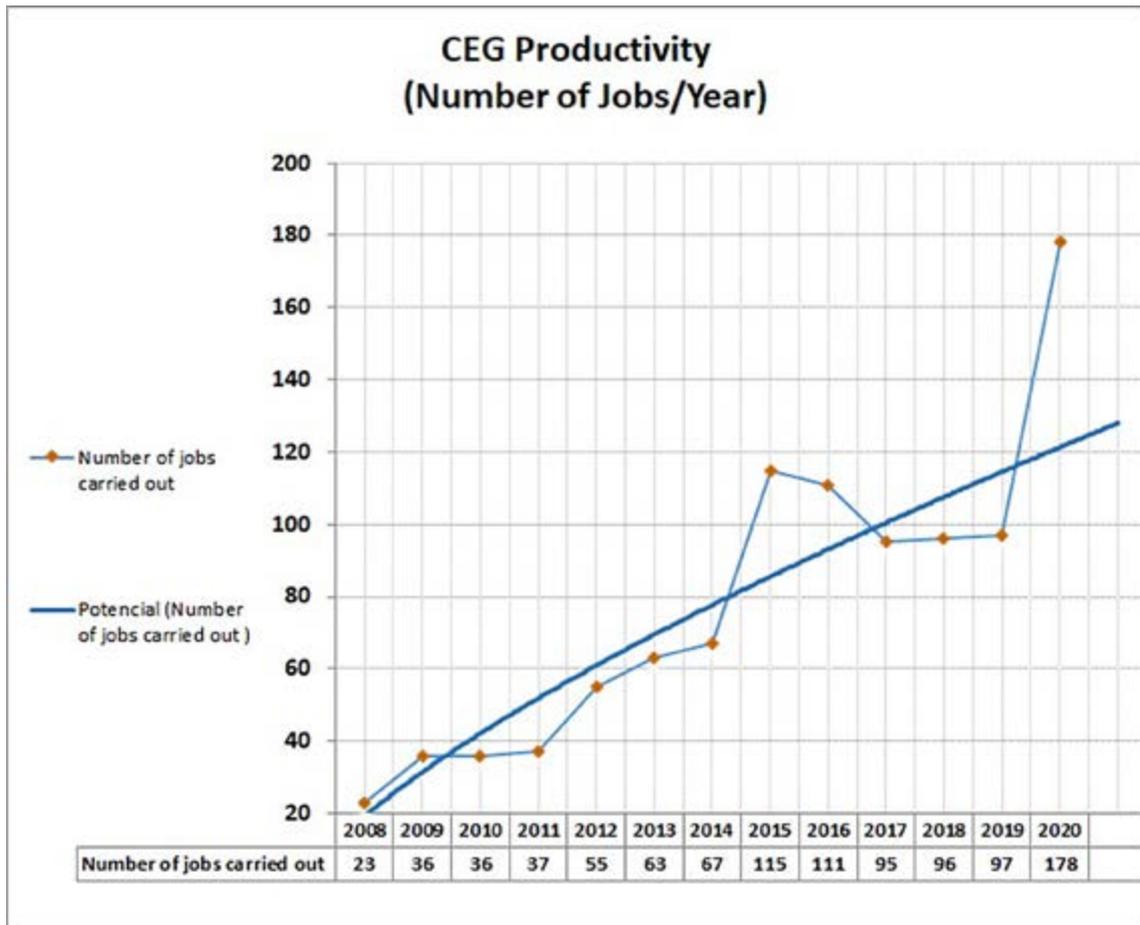
*Evolution of the demand for jobs.*



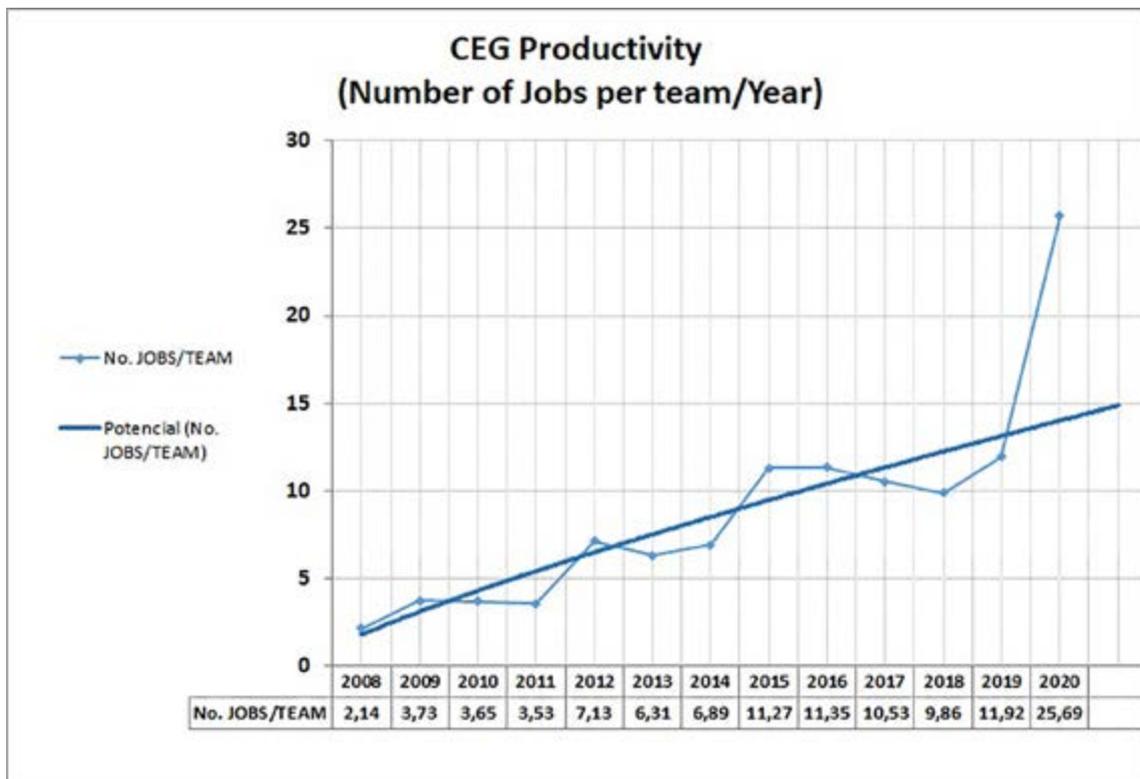
Graph 4. Demand for jobs 2008 to 2020

*Evolution of the number of works carried out*

As can be seen in the graph below, the CEG has increased its productivity every year, a relevant aspect considering that human resources have remained stable, and their occupation has decreased.



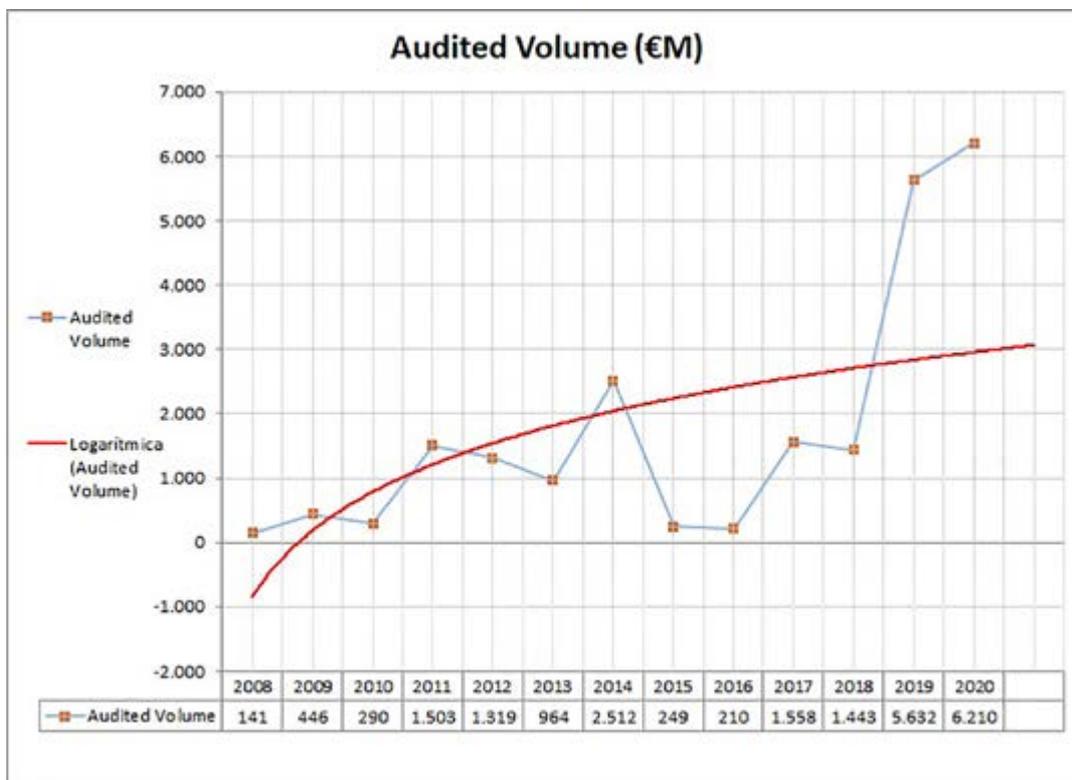
Graph 5. Productivity of the CEG from 2008 to 2020.



Graph 6. Productivity of the CEG teams in the period 2008 – 2020

*Amount of audited contracts.*

Over the last 13 years as a whole, the total audited volume amounts to €22.48 billion.



Graph 7. Volume audited by the CEG from 2008 to 2020

*Savings achieved/value generated.*

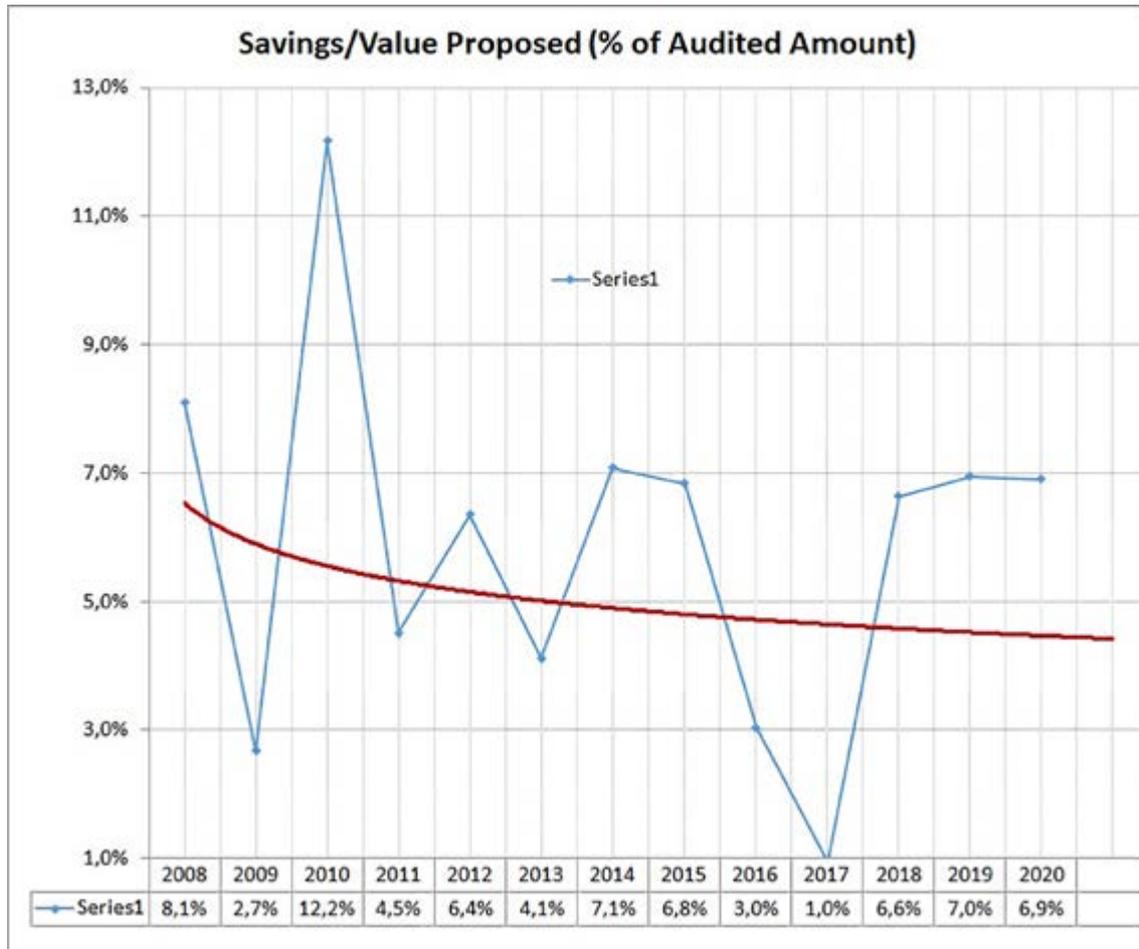
Years	Amount of Audited Contracts (Millions €)	Savings Achieved (Millions €)	Savings/Audited Amount Ratio
2008	141,4	11,5	8,1%
2009	445,5	11,9	2,7%
2010	289,7	35,3	12,2%
2011	1.502,7	67,9	4,5%
2012	1.318,7	83,8	6,4%
2013	964,2	39,7	4,1%
2014	2.511,8	177,9	7,1%
2015	249,4	17,0	6,8%
2016	210,5	6,4	3,0%
2017	1.558,0	14,9	1,0%
2018	1.442,6	95,8	6,6%
2019	5.631,8	391,5	7,0%
2020	6.209,5	428,6	6,9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22.475,8</b>	<b>1.382,2</b>	<b>6,1%</b>

Table 6. Ratio savings / audited amount period 2008 / 2020

Over the last 13 years as a whole, the total savings achieved amount to 1.38 billion euros.

### *Savings/audited amount ratio*

The table below details the historical data on audited contract amounts and savings achieved. The potential savings (ratio of savings to audited amount) **is very stable at 6.1 per cent** of the budget of the contracts reviewed by the CEG.



Graph 8. Savings as a percentage of the audited amount from 2008 to 2020

### **Summary of work carried out by the CEG for the OCCAR agency in the last ten years**

For the past ten years, the CEG has been working closely with the OCCAR armaments agency on price investigations for programmes in which Spain is involved, stressing the importance of these investigations and price audits in order to achieve a fair economic valuation for these joint defence programmes. Specifically, the audits carried out in this period pertain to the A400M programme with the number of price investigations per year as follows:

Year	SP NPA Completed audits
2011	2
2012	2
2013	3
2014	2
2015	7
2016	3
2017	2
2018	11
2019	7
2020*	3*

Table 7. Number of audits carried out for the OCCAR agency in the period 2011 to 2020.

These audits commissioned by OCCAR to each national pricing authority (in our case DIGENECO) respond to Spain’s participation in a multinational programme under the auspices of the OCCAR agency, where each nation is assigned a workshare<sup>5</sup> that usually coincides with its economic contribution to the programme. The problem with these audits is that each country audits its part of the programme without having visibility over the rest, which is audited individually by the other participating countries. As there are common parts of the programme and the relations between the companies of the participating countries are complicated, as there is no management and control of the audit as a whole and each country has no visibility of what the others have done, this generates a lack of confidence that makes one wonder whether any of the countries is being very rigorous with its industry in comparison with the rest. This is the case of Spain, which in the execution of the audits entrusted by OCCAR follows the same procedure and dedication of resources as in the national audits, producing important adjustments in each of the bids analysed.

The workload that OCCAR has entrusted to the Cost Assessment Group in the last ten years has been on average ten per cent of its total workload, consuming in addition ten per cent of the assignment with ISDEFE, however, as suggested by the OCCAR Management Procedure number six (OMP6) they are carried out at no cost to OCCAR and are paid by each of the pricing authorities of the country concerned.

<sup>5</sup> In programmes developed within a business consortium, usually multinational, it is necessary to distribute the projects or parts of them among the partners. Worksharing is a way of ensuring that the investment made by the governments involved in these multinational programmes is allocated in the form of work to industries in their country.

The CEG is considering that these audits commissioned by OCCAR be paid by OCCAR, as the OMP6 gives this possibility as long as it is justified and reported before the work is carried out. Furthermore, the CEG is of the opinion that the savings derived from the audits carried out on the participating Spanish industry should revert in an increase of workshare to this industry that balances the final participations in the programme.

In the CEG's opinion, the fact that each country audits a part of the programme (its industry) without visibility of the rest is a practice that should be avoided as the audit will always be limited and without visibility of the common parts, this problem should be solved by OCCAR having the capacity to carry out price investigations as it has enough staff to develop such a unit or if it could not do so in the short term, in the meantime, it should appoint in each price investigation one of the countries participating in the programme as coordinator/director, so the rest of the countries could observe the results of their counterparts, the means and methodology used and the common guidelines to be applied.

### Study of the need for the CEG.

From all of the above it can be deduced that the CEG is a highly specialised and unique technical service, not only in MINISDEF, but also in the General State Administration as a whole and in the private sector, and that it is necessary for the following reasons:

- Spain's Ministry of Defence can be homologated with the most advanced states of the European Union and NATO, which have bodies or agencies with functions, characteristics and working methodology similar to those of the CEG. This facilitates the negotiation of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) for international programmes and the achievement of satisfactory agreements on the economic, financial and contractual aspects of these programmes.
- The CEG's thirty years of activity results in significant savings in the department's investment expenditure and contributes to the continuous improvement of management procedures and practices, especially in the area of defence procurement and sustainment programmes, whose complexity and long duration require effective instruments for efficient spending and contracting.
- The methodology applied by the CEG contributes effectively to the MINISDEF acting as a single client for the companies that participate in defence programmes, as well as to improving their collaboration and transparency, enabling the MINISDEF to have the information it needs for the proper management of these programmes and the corresponding contracts.
- The numerous lessons learned from the performance of the CEG as a technical service position it as a suitable body to actively participate in the design of methods and procedures for the estimation, planning and control of the costs

generated by MINISDEF investments, which are necessary for DIGENECO to exercise its competence to control this type of expenditure, which usually goes beyond the short term and frequently compromises the financial capacity of MINISDEF in the medium and long term. The CEG is developing its own computerised management tool that will significantly speed up its work and provide very useful information for data analysis (two of the three/four modules that the tool will have in the future are already in operation).

The need to maintain and strengthen the CEG has been expressed on several occasions over the last ten years, with initiatives aimed at improving efficiency and economy of expenditure and streamlining recruitment, but so far they have not had a direct effect on the increase in staffing levels / commissioning so necessary to cover the annual work plan of the CEG (PATCEG).

## Conclusions

- The functions assigned to the CEG make it a unique specialised technical service, necessary to support key decision-making in MINISDEF's investment planning and decision-making processes, especially those related to armaments and materiel, as well as to support contract management in the same context. This service is not exclusive to one army, but is common to the whole of MINISDEF.
- Of the functions assigned to the CEG, the one with the greatest methodological development and accumulated experience is that related to audits and analysis of contractors' costs and prices, which achieves substantial savings in expenditure by applying NODECOS.
- Since 2012, the estimation of the life-cycle costs of weapon systems during the procurement process has become very important<sup>6</sup>, where sufficient experience has been gained to establish a robust methodology<sup>7</sup> and which produces and will produce very significant savings that are quantifiable at pre-procurement points in time. Both instructions are currently under review as the aim is to amend the existing ones in the light of the experience gained during the nine years of implementation.
- The experience accumulated by the CEG in the development of the above-mentioned functions is very useful for it to effectively develop the function of participating in the design of the methods and procedures for the planning and control of the costs derived from the investments, thus providing support to

6 Instruction 67/2011, of 15 September, of the Secretary of State for Defence, which regulates the Process of Obtaining Material Resources. BOD number 189 of 27 September 2011.

7 Instruction 72/2012, of 2 October, of the Secretary of State for Defence, which regulates the process of obtaining armaments and materiel and the management of its programmes. BOD number 202 of 16 October 2012.

the DIGENECO management body that in the future will be assigned this responsibility.

- Despite the fact that the staff has been understaffed since its creation, the number of jobs the CEG is able to carry out has been increasing every year. Due to the continuous improvement of its working methodology, the number of jobs has increased tenfold in the last twelve years. However, its coverage hampers the supervision tasks, which cannot be renounced because of the need for adequate quality in the work of the CEG, which is why it is very necessary to increase its resources, as without them the number of works will tend to decrease and only partial results will be achieved. The work carried out in the CEG is very complex and requires training for which the military staff are not prepared, neither the training nor the advanced training prepares them for it, which means that the military staff assigned to the CEG are required to make a considerable extra effort, and they also need at least two years of specific training to begin to perform in their job, a matter that must be taken into account if there is to be stability in the job. There is a strong need to strengthen the military part of the CEG's staff, as the commissioning part, although the resources allocated need to remain stable, could be more easily covered with more budget and training. In order to encourage military staff to stay in the service, consideration should be given to improving their career paths, for example by giving them higher posting points, rewards for work performed and higher productivity bonuses. The current job descriptions of the CEG, both for military and civil servant staff, are insufficient to cover its normal workload and need to be expanded as soon as possible to cover these human resources. Until this is done, it will not be possible to generalise the services of the CEG and achieve the highest levels of efficiency in the expenditure of the MINISDEF as a whole. Moreover, if we do not do so soon, these services will be left in the hands of external companies (currently ISDEFE) which, under their own criteria, will show results that the MINISDEF will not be able to question or to settle differences of criteria between the Industry and the company that audits the service. Currently, and due to a lack of resources, the CEG only covers 60% of the services it is requested to provide, and this considering that it has not carried out an extensive dissemination of the services it provides. If this were done, we estimate that the request for these services would increase by at least 50%, which would lead to an even more notable decrease in its coverage. In this case we estimate that a maximum coverage of 40% of the requests for cost and price analysis could be provided and progressively decreasing. In addition, as I have already mentioned, since 2006 the CEG has had a commission, currently covered by the company ISDEFE, which provides support for the determination, control and verification of the technical part of each job and its impact on the economic part. ISDEFE staff are integrated into military-led teams that are well structured, sized and trained. It is intended that the commissioned staff stay as long as possible in the CEG, as they have to undergo training prior to providing services in the CEG, and this training

requires a long period of time, the cost of which the CEG has to assume, as these services are not offered by any private company and are specific to the Ministries of Defence of the most advanced countries.

In order to achieve the incorporation and retention of the staff of the current contractor (ISDEFE) in the CEG, this company must use incentives to recruit specific staff to be incorporated in the provision of services in the CEG, promote motivation and retention policies for this staff and develop specific procedures, outside its rigid structure, so that this staff has sufficient motivation to remain in this assignment and in the company itself.

- Spain, the Ministry of Defence, the armies and the navy should give more importance to this specialised group, which is providing such good results in its annual reports. These results are mainly due to the dedication and personal challenge of its components, as the military staff are not compensated for it, being most often penalised for their lengthy time in this unit, and the commissioning staff are not incentivised by their company either, resulting in casualties that significantly impair the work.
- In order for the unit not to be left in the hands of external companies in the future, where MINISDEF does not have its own criteria, it is necessary to undertake the aforementioned incentives for its military staff.
- This action should become an institutional challenge as one of the most valuable units of MINISDEF and therefore one of the most highly valued, and SEDEF should consider addressing these shortcomings.

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*“Si tu veux la paix, connais la guerre”*  
Gaston Bouthoul

*The possible war conflict between the United States and China: reconsidering the “Thucydides Trap”.*

**Abstract**

The balance of power theory seems more adequate than the “Thucydides Trap” to interpret the present tension between China and the United States. Criticisms of its ethnocentrism seem to forget Westernisation factors still present in East Asia that limit Chinese emancipation. Nevertheless, a global balance of power would not prevent regional conflict, so factors that could trigger a spiral of belligerence should also be considered. The post-pandemic scenario could initiate an illiberal stage of re-globalisation, where neo-protectionism could be a weapon of containment.

**Key words**

China, United States, Thucydides trap, self-colonisation, dollarisation, demographic peace

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## Introduction

China's rise as the world's second economic and military power and its potential challenge to the dominant liberal order have recently been analysed through the prism of the "Thucydides Trap", according to which structural tension between an emerging power (China) and the pre-existing hegemon (the United States) often ends in conflict<sup>1</sup>. This is a reformulation of the "realist" theory of power transition, which considers a confrontation between two states in a situation of equal power highly probable. This conclusion contrasts, however, with other theories that consider the balance of power, international rules or trade between countries as the guarantors of international order<sup>2</sup>.

According to the literature, international relations would be based on power (Realism), trade (Liberalism) or norms (Constructivism). On these theoretical bases, the Asian future could be either similar to the European warlike past (Realism) or peaceful, either through trade relations (Liberalism) or the Sino-centric model, emulating the pre-colonial Asian past, in which China would once again be the regional hegemon (Constructivism).

### MAIN THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THEIR ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

	Actors	Relational basis	Main objective	Guarantor of the Asian order	Future of Asia
<b>Realism</b>	States	Power	National interest	US military presence	Past European war
<b>Liberalism</b>	Countries and multinationals	Trade	Benefit	Economic growth	Peaceful community
<b>Constructivism</b>	States	Standards	Regulatory community	Standards (ASEAN or similar)	Pre-colonial sinocentric past

Source: Prepared internally

"The Thucydides Trap" departs from these scenarios by retrieving the transition of power theory (through an inaccurate historical analogy<sup>3</sup>) that was already challenged for having predicted a second Korean war and not decades of stability on the peninsula, as the balance of power theory did, by correctly gauging the capabilities of the con-

1 ALLISON, G. (2017). *Destined for War: can China and the US escape Thucydides Trap?* Scribe Publications. In IEEE, for example, SUPERVIELLE, F. (2018) *Will China and the United States go to War?* 40/2018.

2 ACHARYA, A. (2017): 'Theorising the international relations of Asia: necessity or indulgence?' Some reflections, *The Pacific Review*, DOI: 10.1080/09512748.2017.1318163

3 KOUSKOUVELIS, I. (2017). *The Thucydides Trap: A Distorted Compass*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/11/05/the-thucydides-trap-a-distorted-compass/> (accessed 30-4-2021).

tenders<sup>4</sup>. Applying the same scheme to the current scenario of strategic rivalry between the United States and China could therefore lead to a similar mistake. To avoid this, it is necessary to have analytical tools that allow for a better understanding of the Asian reality. For this, it is important first of all to assume that the balance of power theory, despite its limitations, is the one that could best explain recent continental history, perhaps by self-fulfilling prophecy, since most politicians, including those in Asia, have followed its postulates<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, power, especially military power, has been the backbone of Confucian societies, with their hierarchical mentality<sup>6</sup>. Trade and rules, on the other hand, do not seem to have been the main backbone of Asian diplomatic relations, partly because companies need stable legal frameworks in order to operate, and the rules that would shape them need an authority to enforce them. Thus, despite common Confucian roots and significant trade flows between China, Japan and Korea, the three nations have failed to complete a supranational trade zone, partly due to historical scars<sup>7</sup>. Korea and Vietnam, despite geographical proximity, have never been assimilated by China. And the current Chinese rise, far from pacifying, has unleashed a continental arms race<sup>8</sup>.

However, the realist theory of the balance of power has also been subject to important criticisms: The main one is its ethnocentrism, its supposed universalism masking an underlying westernisation. Its critics often defend Asian exceptionalism, according to which Western theoretical concepts would not be applicable to Asian history, whose particularities would prevent their generalisation<sup>9</sup>. Such criticism, however, seems to forget the mental, political and economic ties that still link East Asia to the West to-

4 KANG, D.C. (2003). International Relations Theory and the Second Korean War. *International Studies Quarterly*, 47. “Corea del Norte nunca tuvo la capacidad material para ser un competidor serio de la alianza entre Estados Unidos y la República de Corea”

5 ACHARYA, A. (2014). Thinking Theoretically about Asian IR. In SHAMBAUGH, D. and ZAHUDA, M. *International relations of Asia*. Rowman & Littlefield.

For example, in his memoirs Kim Dae-Jung, former South Korean president, states: “If powerful neighbouring countries were to fight for hegemony, they would cause pain to our nation, but the presence of the US armed forces in Korea maintains the balance of power and ensures the security of our nation.” KIM, D-J. (2019). *Conscience in Action*. Palgrave Macmillan.

6 NISLEY, T. (2014). China’s Rise in a Changing Regional Hierarchy: A Comparison of 21<sup>st</sup>-Century China to 20th-Century Germany. *The Journal of the Georgia Political Science Association*.

7 Condoleeza Rice states in her memoirs “East Asia was a tangle of bad bilateral relations. The United States was struggling to maintain good relations with each of the powers and was often caught up in the hostility of a region that had not yet put World War II behind it.” RICE, C. (2011). *No higher honor. A memoir of my years in Washington*. Crown Publishers, New York

8 LIU, T. (2020). China rising and Northeast Asia: paradoxes amidst the new cold war. *Social Transformations in Chinese Societies*. DOI 10.1108/STICS-04-2020-0011

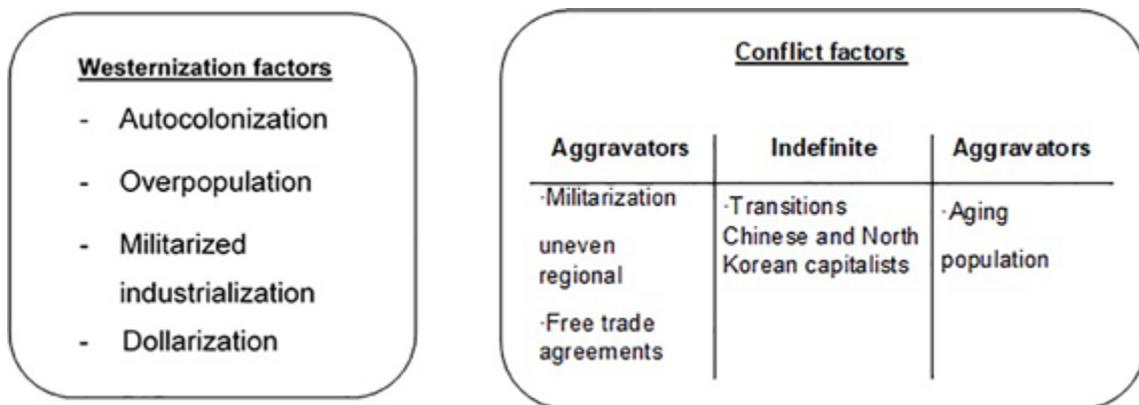
9 CHEN, C-C. (2010). The Absence of Non-Western IR Theory in Asia Reconsidered. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 11-1.

ALLISON (2017) himself, author of the “Thucydides Trap” has been criticised for not speaking Chinese and not knowing the Asian reality. WALDRON, A. (2017). There is no Thucydides Trap. [www.supchina.com](http://www.supchina.com). (Accessed 3-2-2021).

day, be they values (communism in China, Christianity in Korea), colonial heritage (Chinese overpopulation), military ties with the United States (Japan and Korea) or economic dollarisation (China). They would be “Westernisation factors”, not in the sociological sense of “Modernity”, but elements that would hinder Asian emancipation.

A second criticism would be of the underlying “realist” postulates themselves. Asian history would show that a global balance of power can coexist with regional conventional conflicts, as happened during the Cold War in Korea and Vietnam. It is therefore important to analyse “conflict factors” in East Asia such as regional militarisation, capitalist transitions in rural China and North Korea, free trade and population ageing.

The proposed all-encompassing analysis would provide a more comprehensive view of the Asian reality that would allow contextualising the current scenario of tension between the US and China.



Finally, because of its potentially disruptive nature, it is considered necessary to complement the above analysis with the impact of COVID on the Asian liberal order, in particular, the possible competitive advantage of its industrial model and the rise of neo-protectionism in a re-globalised world.

The methodology used will be descriptive-theoretical with a qualitative approach based on a review of specialised literature, with special emphasis on Asian sources and authors to reduce ethnocentric bias. The geographical scope of the study will be East Asia (China, Japan and the Korean peninsula).

## Westernisation factors

Westernisation factors are links to the West that would condition ethnocentrism and an eventual return of Asia to the sinocentric model postulated by constructivist theory. There are also factors that would make it difficult to speak of a historical Asian exceptionalism, such as “self-colonisation” and overpopulation, already identified by the Truman administration in 1949 as the causes of the Chinese revolution<sup>10</sup>; the im-

<sup>10</sup>ACHESON, D. (1949). *The China White Paper. United States relations with China*. State Department.

pact of the Korean and Vietnam wars on the modernisation of Japan and Korea (militarised industrialisation), and economic dollarisation. Each of these will be discussed in the following sections.

### *“Self-colonialisation” in East Asia*

According to the Truman administration, one of the factors that conditioned the fate of modern China was the impact of Western ideas. With the adoption of Marxism by its elite, China displaced a millennia-old Asian culture based on Confucianism and Buddhism, creating an intellectual and philosophical rupture almost unprecedented historically. Traditionally, mentality, rather than geography, has been the main distinction between East and West. The linear conception of time, characteristic of Judeo-Christianity, differed from the circular one, characteristic of Buddhism and Confucianism. With the conversion of the world’s largest population to Marxism, the “now” was replaced by the “future” as a referent, allowing a better adoption of the idea of “progress” which, in Chairman Mao’s vision, amounted to industrialisation. Subsequently, Deng Xiaoping would deepen Westernisation with the introduction of capitalism in an officially communist country, a trend that continued until the rise of Xi Jinping, who has advocated a return to reinterpreted traditional Confucian values and a strong ethnic nationalism<sup>11</sup>.

This assimilation of Western values has not been unique to East Asia. A similar case has been experienced in South Korea with Christianity, especially Protestant Christianity, becoming the main modernising axis of society. In a country traumatised by World War II, civil war and dictatorship, Christianity offered a psychological outlet for the population, and its elite, a model of values on which to rebuild the nation<sup>12</sup>. Protestantism in particular, the foundation of modern capitalism, also provided a sense of vitality and reinforced Korean nationalism in the face of the Buddhism and Confucianism of colonial Japan<sup>13</sup>. In a historically Confucian country, several of its recent presidents have been Christians<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> “Recent statements by the Chinese Communist Party in favour of Confucian values show by antithesis that these have given way to a rampant westernisation of customs, based on a consumerist ethos. The Chinese and Americans no longer live in sealed mental universes, and the shaping of their strategic interactions must take this into account”. ZAJEC, O. (2017). Le piège de Thucydide. *Le Monde diplomatique*. October.

<sup>12</sup> “Seobuk Protestantism shaped post-war Korean society along the ideological lines of American anti-communism and liberalism.” KIM, K. W. (2020). Protestantisms and the Design of South Korea. *Korea Journal*. doi: 10.25024/kj.2020.60.4.30

<sup>13</sup> It should be remembered that Meiji Japan adopted Western techniques but none of its religions, enshrining Buddhist-based Shinto as the official religion on the principle of “Eastern ethics, Western science”. Confucian ethics were key to instilling reverence for the emperor and absolute loyalty to the state, which partly explains the prevalence of royalist theses in Japan as well.

<sup>14</sup> Officially, Korea has had 6 Christian presidents: Syngman Rhee (Methodist), Yun Posun (Presbyterian), Kim Young-Sam (Presbyterian), Kim Dae-Jung (Catholic), Lee Myung-bak (Presbyterian) and Moon Jae-in (Catholic).

Both cases of “self-colonisation” illustrate a process of significant cultural divergence that would move East Asia away from the sinocentric constructivist scenario: China, Korea and Japan, Confucian-minded countries at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, have lost their common Asian substratum to become a heterogeneous set of nation-states that have historically demonstrated high bellicosity<sup>15</sup>. The Asian model seems, at this point, to move away from the recent European pacifist experience, which is centred on supranational structures and common continental values.

### *Overpopulation and socio-economic imbalance*

The second factor of Westernisation, also identified by the Truman administration, is overpopulation. The introduction of Western technology and medicine into agricultural economies and traditional values led to an unprecedented population explosion and pressure on land, which has limited indigenous wealth and welfare creation capacity for more than a century<sup>16</sup>. And although recent biotechnological advances have made it possible to overcome the Malthusian cycle, this does not mean that population does not continue to condition economic growth<sup>17</sup>. In fact, China’s population (1.44 billion) exceeds that of the whole of Africa (1.36) and its GDP per capita (China: US\$ 10,262) is significantly lower than that of the United States (65,297), Japan (40,247), and South Korea (31,846)<sup>18</sup>. This is a key issue because China, without structural change, and with the world’s largest population, would need to permanently invest 55 per cent of its GDP to maintain its current growth as overpopulation acts as a drag that can lock the country into semi-development, the “middle income trap”<sup>19</sup>. This is because the larger an economy is, the more investment it needs to maintain the same rate of expansion, hence the level of total indebtedness is equivalent to that of advanced economies (335 per cent of GDP, similar to the US)<sup>20</sup>. Moreover,

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15 LACHMANN, R. (2015). Nation-State and War. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.96041-0>

16 “The first problem that every Chinese government has faced is feeding this population. So far, none has succeeded.” ACHESON, D. (1949). *The China White Paper. United States relations with China*. State Department.

17 PETERSON, E.W.F. (2017) *The Role of Population in Economic Growth*. SAGE Open. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017736094>

18 YAO, KINUGASA and HAMORI found a negative correlation between population and GDP per capita growth in China. YAO, W., KINUGASA, T., HAMORI, S. (2013). An empirical analysis of the relationship between economic development and population growth in China. *Applied Economics*, 45.

19 HIGGINS, M. (2020). China’s Growth Outlook: Is High-Income Status in Reach? *Economic Policy Review* 26, 4, October. Federal Reserve, New York.

20 “China’s combination of advanced economy debt levels and emerging market income levels is a unique handicap. (...) By maximising debt at a medium level of development, China has made it more

the Chinese mismatch seems structural: the world's most populous country has specialised in the export of capital- and energy-intensive goods, leading to underemployment and social polarisation<sup>21</sup>. To overcome the “middle-income trap”, China seeks to leverage its population: if inland provinces were to follow the growth trajectory of coastal provinces, they could grow at an average rate of 7.6% over the next 15 years, even if exports did not play a major role<sup>22</sup>. If successful, this introspective expansion would be an important step towards “*de-Westernisation*”.

### *Militarised industrialisation: beyond economic “miracles”*

How did Japan and Korea manage to overcome the middle-income trap and modernise? Largely because of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Vietnam War (1954-1975), which laid the foundations for a capital-intensive economy. *Post-bellum* Japan faced the challenge of reconstruction and industrialisation in a context of strong international competition as a “semi-developed” country. However, the UN forces' direct procurement programme during the Korean War boosted industrial production by 70 per cent and doubled trade with the US in two years<sup>23</sup>. With massive imports of capital goods, an officially demilitarised Japan was able to build a world-leading production structure which, together with the signing of the 1952 Security Pact with the United States, laid the foundations that would consolidate it, decades later, as the second economic power<sup>24</sup>.

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difficult to close the gap with high-income countries”. ORLIK, T. (2020). *China: the bubble that never pops*. Oxford University Press. Apple Books.

21 BERGER, B. and MARTIN, R. (2011). The Growth of Chinese Exports: An Examination of the Detailed Trade Data. *International Finance Discussion Papers*. Federal Reserve.

On the underestimation of social inequality in official Chinese statistics, see PIKETTY, T.; YANG, L.; ZUCMAN, G. (2017). *Capital Accumulation, Private Property and Rising Inequality in China, 1978-2015*. WID.world.

22 YAO, Y. (2018). Will the People's Republic of China Be Able to Avoid the Japan Syndrome? in Yifu Lin, J.; Morgan, P.J.; Wan, G. *Slowdown in the People's Republic of China: Structural Factors and the Implications for Asia*. Asian Development Bank Institute, Tokyo.

23 OKITA, S. (1951) Japan's Economy and the Korean War. *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 14 (Jul. 25). Institute of Pacific Relations.

24 “The Korean War brought about a sudden change in Japan's economic situation. As orders were concentrated on special procurement and ammunition, exports grew rapidly along with the global demand that accompanied the military build-up.” HAMADA, K. and KASUYA, M. (1992). *The Reconstruction and Stabilization of the Postwar Japanese Economy: Possible Lessons for Eastern Europe?* Yale University. <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/160594>.

The apparent contradiction of a pacifist but industrialised Japan through the Korean War is explained by the US military presence in the archipelago at the time.

## PRE- AND POST-KOREAN WAR JAPANESE MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS

Fiscal year	Transferbalance	Special military supplies	Central government deficit
1946	3.12	0.00	13.9
1947	5.29	0.00	7.3
1948	4.99	0.21	6.1
1949	5.48	0.52	3.3
1950*	3.91	0.57	-2.1
1951*	1.13	4.13	1.7
1952*	0.20	4.64	3.0
1953*	0.11	4.08	0.3
1954	0.14	2.90	1.1
1955	0.10	2.21	1.5

Source: Bank of Japan (1966). % of GDP. \*Korean War (1950-1953)

The Korean case was even more spectacular. A nation with a GDP per capita in 1960 of US\$ 290, similar to that of Kenya (210), and much lower than that of Argentina (1,159) or Chile (779), is currently the eleventh largest economy on the planet, with a GDP per capita of US\$ 31,846 (Spain: 29,600). Two exogenous factors, in addition to the drive of the Korean people, explain this impressive rise: the normalisation of diplomatic relations with Japan and the Vietnam War. The latter was particularly instrumental in the modernisation of the country as South Korean companies benefited from contracts with the US administration and exports to Southeast Asia, where troops, some of them South Korean, were stationed<sup>25</sup>.

## IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON THE SOUTH KOREAN ECONOMY

Category	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	Total	-
Ordinary income	17.7	23.8	23.2	38	47.1	70.1	35.7	27.5	283	28
Exports	14.8	13.9	7.3	5.6	12.9	12.8	14.5	12.5	94.3	9.2
Military goods	2.8	9.9	15.9	32.4	34.2	57.3	21.2	15	189	19
Rent of intangibles	1.8	37.3	128	131	153	135	97.6	55.7	739	72
Military services		8.3	35.5	46.1	55.3	52.3	26.5	9.2	233	23
Military construction		3.3	14.5	10.3	6.4	7.4	8.3	3.1	53.3	5.2
Soldiers' remittances	1.8	15.5	31.4	31.4	33.9	30.6	32.3	26.8	202	20
Engineer remittances		9.1	33.6	33.6	43.1	26.9	15.3	3.9	166	16
Special compensations			4.6	4.6	10.8	15.2	13.9	12	65.3	6.4
Insurance		1.1	4.6	4.6	3.8	2.1	1.3	0.7	19.4	1.9
Total	19.5	61.1	151	169	200	205	133	83.2	1,002	100

Source: Cho (2011)

25 US President Lyndon B. Johnson and Korean President Park Chung-hee agreed in May 1965 to send South Korean troops to Vietnam. Until March 1973, an estimated 320,000 South Korean troops were stationed in South Korea. The Hanjin conglomerate, parent of Korean Air and Hanjin Shipping, was founded and consolidated at this time.

The Japanese and South Korean experiences would therefore confirm the crucial role of the US and the war in Asian industrialisation<sup>26</sup>. This causal link between industrialisation and war in Asia constitutes a dangerous precedent because it means that the cases of Japan and Korea would be particular experiences, not easily replicable by other nations in a different historical context that does not require a massive mobilisation of resources<sup>27</sup>.

### *Economic dollarisation*

The fourth factor of Westernisation is the strong influence of the dollar on Asian economies, as they are export-oriented<sup>28</sup>. In fact, China, the world's largest exporter and supposed US strategic rival, is the economy that proportionally uses the dollar more in its international transactions (95% of the total) when Japan, formally a US ally, settles only 50 per cent, almost half that of China<sup>29</sup>.

The dollar is the most widely accepted currency on the planet because the current international system is heir to the Bretton Woods *postbellum*, in which it was the only currency convertible into gold. It is now used even in international transactions not involving the United States<sup>30</sup>. In practice this gives its authorities the power to influence global mercantile traffic because only the Federal Reserve (Fed) can print legal tender dollars<sup>31</sup>. This was the case in South Korea in 2008, when its economy fell by 5.1 per cent due to the crisis; thanks to the injection of dollars, it grew by 6.2 per cent

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26 STUBBS, R. (2018). *Rethinking Asia's Economic Miracle: The Political Economy of War, Prosperity and Crisis*. Macmillan Education UK.

27 The case of Taiwan is similar. Its modern development began with a large influx of human resources from mainland China. Some two million Kuomintang soldiers, landowners, businessmen and political elites arrived in the island nation after its defeat by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, equivalent to a quarter of the Taiwanese population at the time; their wealth and knowledge laid the foundations for today's Taiwan.

28 There are several reasons for this: Developing nations initially rely on the dollar as a stable currency; subsequently, as exporting economies, even though they can internationalise their currency, they prefer not to do so in order not to subject it to speculative cycles that could damage their main engine of growth. This is one of the lessons learned by the South Korean authorities from the 1997 crisis. RHEE, G.J. (2011). *The recent experience of the Korean economy with currency internationalisation*. BIS papers 61. [www.bis.org](http://www.bis.org) (accessed 10/1/2021)

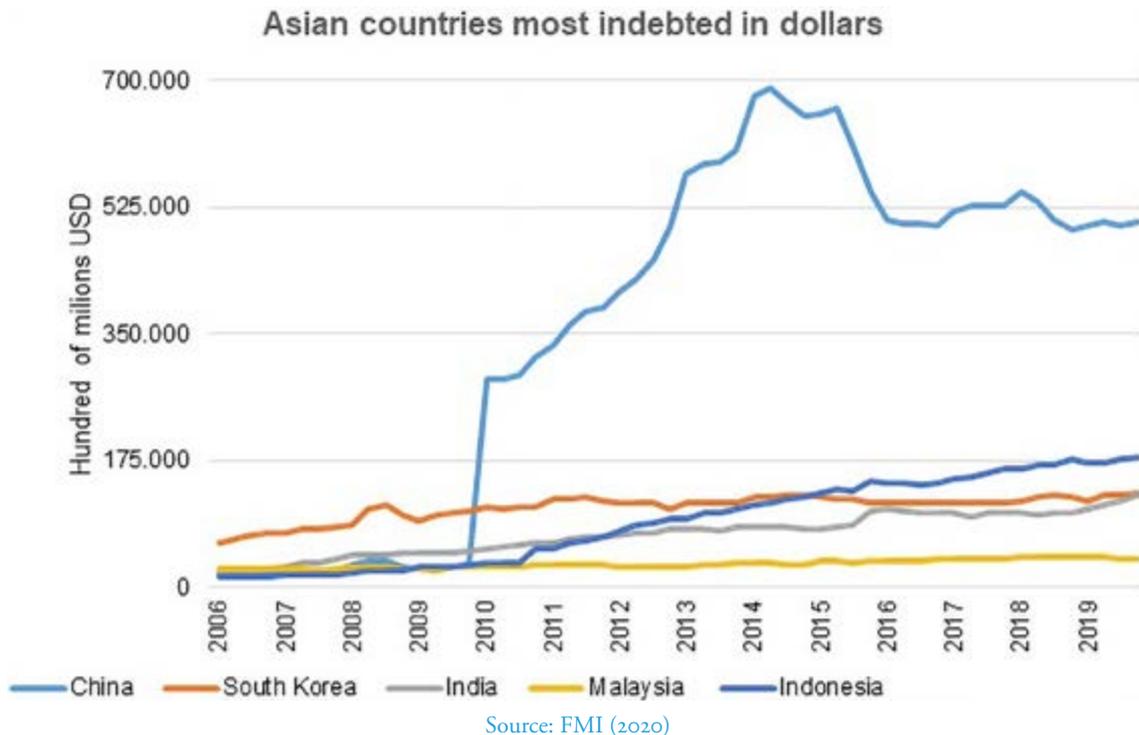
29 The source of China's massive dollar borrowing was the government stimulus package to deal with the 2008 crisis, which revived several Asian economies and propelled China to become the world's largest exporter in 2010.

30 Although the US economy accounts for about 20 per cent of the world economy, foreign exchange reserves in dollars make up more than 60 per cent of the total. FMI (2019). *World Economic Outlook*.

31 BERNANKE, B.S. (2016). *The dollar's international role: An "exorbitant privilege"?* [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu) (accessed 10/1/2021) "Dollar lending allows emerging market banks and companies to access larger and more liquid global credit markets, while protecting lenders from unexpected fluctuations

in 2009, allowing a strategic ally to chair the 2010 G20 with international credibility<sup>32</sup>. Even today, in the midst of the pandemic crisis, the massive issuance of dollars has ensured the normality of world trade, which has globally strengthened US influence<sup>33</sup>.

The dollarisation of Asia's largest economies is a neglected factor in military analyses. This dependence will not change as long as their economies are export-oriented<sup>34</sup>. Not only that, global dollar-demand is a free loan to the United States, which can obtain extra financing in the midst of the crisis from other countries, including its supposed strategic rivals such as China, which is the most dollar-indebted Asian country<sup>35</sup>.



in local currency exchange rates. That so much debt is dollarised certainly makes the Fed's policy more powerful internationally than it would otherwise be".

32 BABA, N. and SHIM, I. (2011). *Dislocations in the won-dollar swap markets during the crisis of 2007-09*. BIS Working Papers.

33 Non-US banks' on-balance sheet dollar liabilities reached record levels during the first three quarters of 2020 (US\$ 12.4 trillion, +800 billion above their pre-pandemic level at the end of 2019). Chinese banks remained the largest issuers of dollar-denominated debt securities (232 billion in 2020). ALDASORO, I.; EREN, E.; HUANG, W. (2021). Dollar funding of non-US banks through Covid-19. *BIS Quarterly Review*, March.

34 ITO, H. and CHINN, M. (2015). The Rise of the Redback: Evaluating the Prospects for Renminbi Use in Invoicing in EICHENGREEN, B. and KAWAI, M. *Renminbi Internationalization: Achievements, Prospects, and Challenges*. Asian Development Bank Institute and The Bookings Institution.

35 China, a supposed strategic rival, is financing the United States in two ways: explicitly through the purchase of US public debt, and implicitly through its foreign borrowing in dollars. The latter, moreover, is free of charge for the United States, confirming the complexity of the post-pandemic bipolar world.

## Potential conflict factors

The Korean and Vietnam wars demonstrated that a global balance of power could coexist with regional conventional conflicts. Moreover, Asia's economic rise could be accompanied by increased belligerence because "war is a luxury of rich nations"<sup>36</sup>. For the time being, Asia-Pacific is the world region with the highest growth in military spending in the decade 2010-2019, 51 per cent<sup>37</sup>. Although it could be justified on deterrence grounds, the pandemic does not seem to have substantially reduced defence spending<sup>38</sup>, which seems to point to the concurrence of structural rather than conjunctural explanatory factors. Four will be analysed below for their potential impact on the balance of power in East Asia: Uneven regional militarisation, possible economic transitions in rural China and North Korea, free trade agreements and population ageing.

### *Uneven regional militarisation*

China's consolidation as the world's second largest economic power has been accompanied by increased military spending. It is already the world's second largest defence investor, behind only the United States. However, its annual expenditure in 2019 (1.9% of GDP) was lower than the world average (2.2%) and that of the United States (3.4%), Russia (3.6%) or India (2.4%), but higher than that of Japan (0.9%). This policy would be in line with its official objective of never seeking hegemony or spheres of influence<sup>39</sup>.

Nevertheless, China has emerged as the leading military force in the Asia-Pacific, accounting for 50 per cent of regional military spending in 2019, up from 36 per cent in 2010. In 2019 it spent US\$ 261 billion, an exorbitant figure compared to India (71.1 billion), Japan (47.6 billion), South Korea (43.9 billion) or Australia (25.9 billion).

This trend of increased defence spending should in turn be contextualised with the willingness of the respective citizens to fight for their country, as then the circumstance would be ripe for the Abraham complex, which leads to the immolation by

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36 BOUTHOU, G. (1967) *Sociologie de la politique*. PUF. Paris

37 Unless otherwise indicated, all military expenditure figures are from SIPRI (2020). *Trends in world military expenditure, 2019*. April.

38 "Chinese military spending in 2020 (USD 12 billion) was even higher than the combined defence budget increases in all other Asian states." "Increases in US and Chinese defence budgets accounted for almost two-thirds of the total increase in global defence spending in 2020." These figures come from the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) and not from SIPRI. RAJAGOPALAN, R.P. (2021). Asian Military Spending: A Sign of Worsening Security Environment. *The Diplomat*, 4 March.

39 INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE. *China's National Defence White Paper in a New Era*. 24 July 2019.

the “Father of the People” of some of his “sons”<sup>40</sup>. According to a survey<sup>41</sup>, 71 per cent of Chinese would be willing to fight for their country. The Americans, on the other hand, despite being the nation that invests the most in defence, would be less likely to make such a sacrifice (44 per cent), almost as much as the South Koreans (42 per cent), although far behind the Japanese (11 per cent).

	Military expenditure (US\$)	% GDP military expenditure	% Population willing to fight for their country
United States	732	3.4	44%
China	261	1.9	71%
India	71.1	2.4	75%
Russia	65.1	3.8	59%
Japan	47.6	0.9	11%
South Korea	43.9	2.7	42%
Australia	25.9	1.9	29%

Sources: SIPRI (2020), Gallup (2015)

Consequently, what should be of concern in East Asia for stability purposes, should the survey data be confirmed in further editions, would be the coexistence in China of the highest military spending in the region together with a possible high predisposition of the population to fight for their homeland<sup>42</sup>.

### *Chinese and North Korean capitalist transitions*

The transitions to capitalism of rural China and a reunified Korea would be a factor of undefined conflict because of the variability of outcomes. On the one hand, there would be the scenario similar to the US pre-Civil War situation, with an industrialised and educated region (the US North, coastal China or South Korea), an agricultural and human capital-less one (the US South, rural China and North Korea) and a superior state power unable to prevent a fratricidal war. On the other hand, the more recent experiences of peaceful transitions in Germany and the coastal Chinese provinces.

The conflict scenario could occur if the authorities fail to achieve a territorial balance with the economic integration of the regions concerned. In the case of China, the non-capitalist inland provinces are home to no less than 40 per cent of its population<sup>43</sup>.

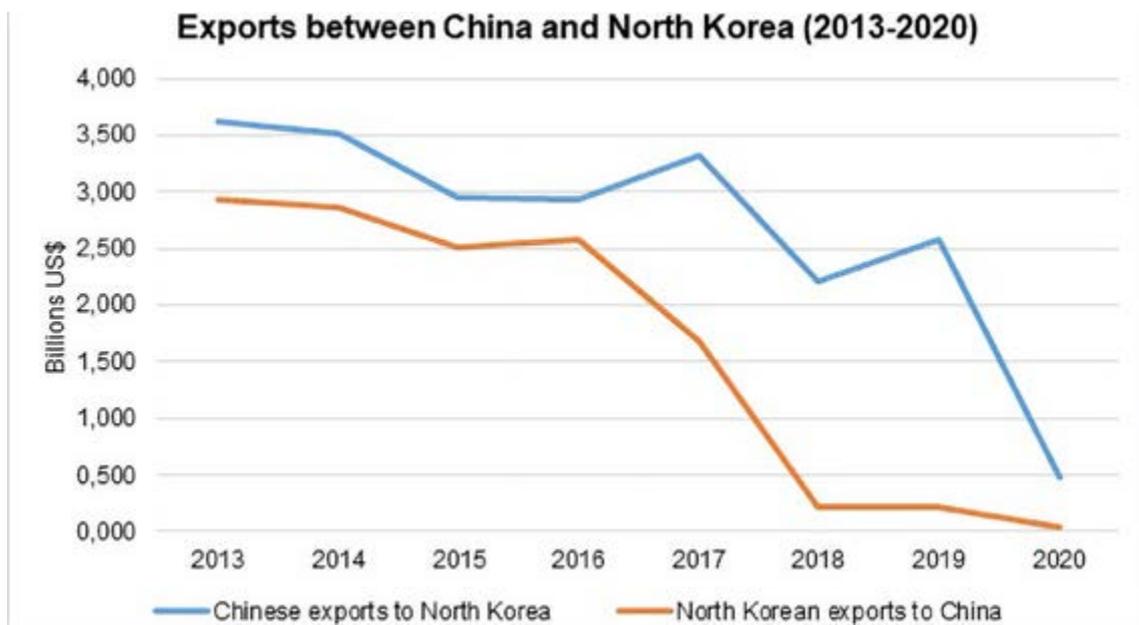
40 BOUTHOU, G. (1967). *Avoir la paix*. Grasset, Paris

41 GALLUP (2015). *International's Global Survey Shows Three in Five Willing to Fight for Their Country*. <https://www.gallup-international.bg/en/33483/win-gallup-internationals-global-survey-shows-three-in-five-willing-to-fight-for-their-country/>

42 For this reason, it would be desirable to have annual international statistics on citizens' willingness to fight for their country. The Gallup survey is, unfortunately, rather old, but it is mentioned as one of the few that allows for international comparability.

43 China has the largest primary sector in the world, accounting for 7.8 per cent of its GDP, and employs 27 per cent of the population.

Moreover, China's rural-urban duality does not seem to be the result of market-led industrialisation, according to the neoclassical model<sup>44</sup>, but of an industrialisation strategy based on the exploitation of rural regions, where the population suffers the double plunder of the state and the market<sup>45</sup>. In the North Korean case, there is the complexity of its dual economic dependence. Although China is its main trading partner, the most successful foreign investments have been South Korean as China sees many North Korean Special Economic Zones as potential rivals to its own<sup>46</sup>. Therefore, a conflictive outcome could occur if there is a lack of coordination between the two transitions, given the complementarity/rivalry relationship between the Chinese and North Korean border regions. It should also be remembered that globalisation is spreading through territories with cheap, trained labour, many of them under communist influence<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, if both transitions were based on this competitive advantage, they could generate a spiral of wage declines across the continent that would alter the productive structures of their trading partners, especially those specialising in textiles and mining<sup>48</sup>.



Source: International Trade Centre

44 LEWIS, W. A. (1954). *Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour*. The Manchester School, May, pp. 139-191.

45 QI, H., and LI, Z. (2019). Giovanni Arrighi in Beijing: Rethinking the Transformation of the Labor Supply in Rural China during the Reform Era. *Science & Society*, 83 (3): 327-354.

46 CLÉMENT, T. (2019). *Failed attempts at Cross-Border Economic Cooperation*. <https://www.38north.org/2019/10/tclement1102819/> (Accessed 21-4-2021).

47 "Paradoxically, the communist passion for education left behind (...) these well-educated and active populations willing to accept very low wages. A globalisation fairy couldn't have done better". TODD, E. (2020). *Les Luttes de classes en France au XXIe siècle*. Seuil.

48 KIM, B. and JUNG, S. (2015). *China's trade and investment with North Korea: Firm surveys in Dandong*. Seoul: Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University.

The peaceful scenario, on the other hand, would involve emulating the successful transition of China's coastal provinces in both inland provinces and North Korea, with comprehensive reforms from the outset, including liberalisations, privatisations, introduction of competition and capitalist institutions in specific regions<sup>49</sup>. This model has even overtaken the *Wiedervereinigung* as the benchmark in Korea<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, if the transition were successful in North Korea, it could even perpetuate the current regime in Pyongyang by being able to create foreign investment competition for its Special Economic Zones in exchange for denuclearisation<sup>51</sup>. In this scenario, Sino-US rivalry might not alter the peninsular balance of power<sup>52</sup>.

### *Free trade and conflict*

According to liberal theories, globalisation and free trade would be the guarantor of peace between states<sup>53</sup>. However, Sino-Japanese relations do not seem to confirm this; the number of air military incidents (*scrambles*) between the two countries has increased in parallel to their commercial traffic. Currently Japan already has more than twice as many incidents with China as with Russia, its closest neighbour<sup>54</sup>.

It is in this “realistic” perspective that the recent creation of the world's largest free trade area, the RCEP (*Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement*), which brings together 30 per cent of the world's exports, could be interpreted<sup>55</sup>. The agreement, although formally the world's largest trading bloc, is not accompanied by

49 STIGLITZ, J. (2018). *Reform: How Did China Succeed*. China Development Forum, Beijing

50 KIM, B. (2017). *Unveiling the North Korean Economy: Collapse and Transition*. Cambridge University Press.

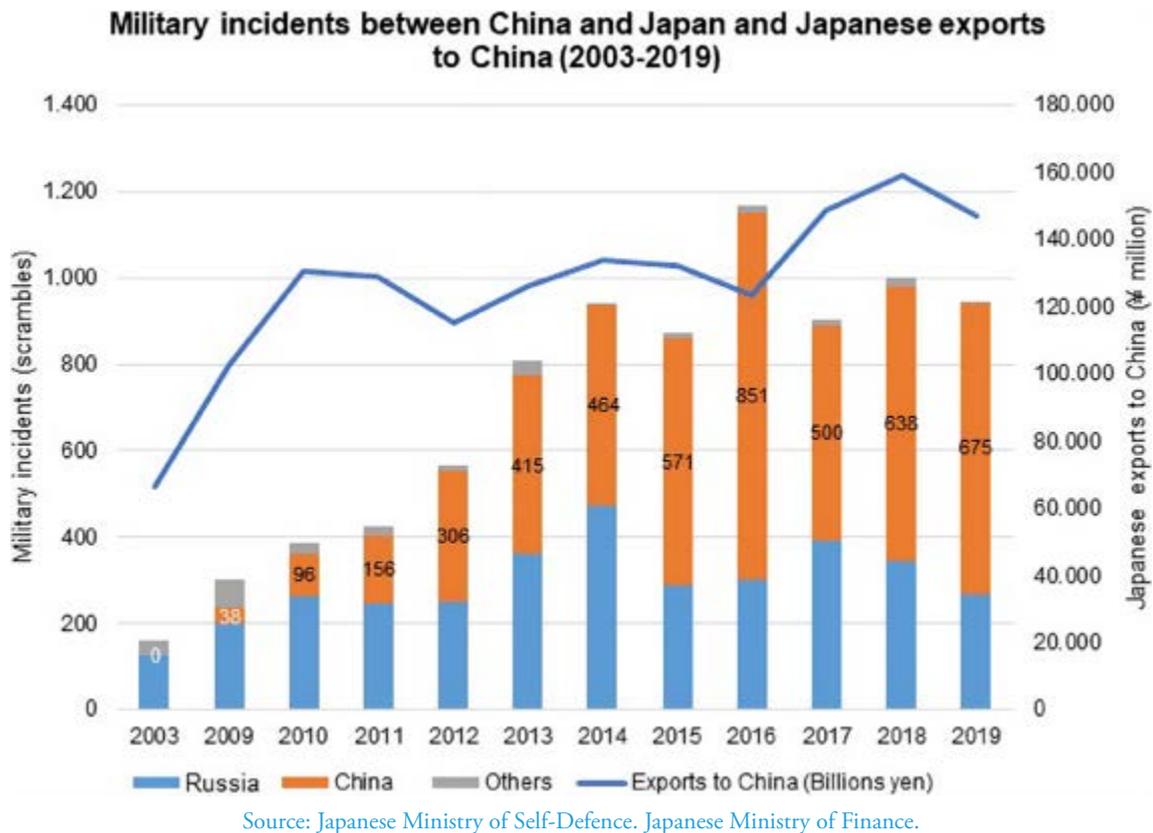
51 CLÉMENT, T. (2019). From failed economic interfaces to political levers: Assessing China-South Korean competition and cooperation scenarios on North Korean Special Economic Zones, *Korea Academic Paper Series*, Korea Economic Institute.

52 PRANTL, J.; KIM, H-W., C. (2016). Germany's Lessons for Korea: The Strategic Diplomacy of Unification. *Global Asia*, 11-4.

53 Friedman has most popularised this view by asserting that countries with McDonald's are not in conflict with each other. FRIEDMAN, T. L. (2005). *The World is Flat. A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

54 It seems that this is not an isolated case but a Chinese policy for similar cases such as the Philippines, Vietnam or Taiwan. “As long as China's territorial disputes remain unresolved, economic interdependence will not reduce the frequency with which China uses military force, although it will limit the intensity of such conflicts”. ZHANG, J.J. (2018). *Is China an Exception to the Commercial Peace?* <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/ow35v1v9> (Accessed 6/3/2021)

55 The signatory states are Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.



an integration process, similar to that of the EU, providing for a solidarity network of support between beneficiary and disadvantaged regions<sup>56</sup>. Nor for NATO-like military integration. Both omissions perpetuate the so-called Asian “organisational gap”<sup>57</sup>, the absence of supranational institutions with the capacity to enforce international rules, which could confirm that trade is not a guarantor of stability, for two main reasons:

1. Recent studies suggest that Japan and Vietnam would be the main beneficiaries of the RCEP, the former by being able to access the Chinese market on equal terms with Korea, and the latter because of its low labour costs<sup>58</sup>.
2. China appears to be an unbalancing trading partner: In 2018, 124 countries (66.0 per cent of the global total) had trade deficits with China of more than 1% of their GDP, up from 36 (20.3 per cent) in 2001. With the US, by contrast,

<sup>56</sup> DIETER, H. (2021). RCEP-Countries Create Asia-Pacific Free Trade Zone. *SWP Comment 3*. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik.

<sup>57</sup> “This organisational gap prevails despite rapid and dynamic market-driven integration and persistent security dangers that are extreme and require clear collective action”. CALDER, K., and YE, M. (2004). Regionalism and Critical Junctures: Explaining the “Organisation Gap” in Northeast Asia. *Journal of East Asian Studies*.

<sup>58</sup> MASUKAWA, C. (2020). *Ajia ni totte RCEP wa nani o imi suru ka*. (What does RCEP mean for Asia?) Daiwa Institute Research. Tokyo.

[https://www.dir.co.jp/report/research/economics/emg/20201209\\_021952.html](https://www.dir.co.jp/report/research/economics/emg/20201209_021952.html) (Accessed 20-1-2021).

countries with trade deficits of 1 per cent or more of GDP have remained stable at around 30 per cent<sup>59</sup>.

Both trends, over time, could lead to strong regional imbalances between supposed trading partners, be they democracies or autocracies, which could generate social tensions and rekindle old animosities<sup>60</sup>. Indeed, there seems to be some consensus that the Asian “organisational gap” will not be closed by trade but by directly addressing the underlying historical disputes<sup>61</sup>. As long as they remain pending, a nationalist interpretation of international trade could prevail, aiming to create domestic employment by “conquering markets” abroad, which may eventually trigger international conflicts<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, it should be remembered that the RCEP would maximise collective gains in a Sino-US trade war scenario if it forced a sinocentric integration of East Asian economies<sup>63</sup>. Therefore, the RCEP may not be a guarantor of peace in Asia, but rather an accelerator of historic conflicts<sup>64</sup>.

59 MIURA, Y. (2020). *Asia Monthly Report*, January. The Japan Research Institute.

60 Several analysts such as Krugman have already acknowledged that the effects of hyperglobalisation on employment and equity have been underestimated. KRUGMAN, P. (2019). What Economists (Including Me) Got Wrong About Globalization. *Bloomberg opinion*.

El comercio internacional podría también causar guerras civiles. MARTIN, P., MAYER, T.; THOENIG, M. (2008b). Civil wars and international trade. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, vol. 6.

61 “Economic engagement, while capable of creating new areas of cooperation, is not effective in resolving the underlying causes of military conflicts, such as territorial disputes or limiting the use of military force during crisis negotiation”. ZHANG, J.J. (2018). Is China an Exception to the Commercial Peace? <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/ow35v1v9> (Accessed 6/3/2021)

See also: WANG, D.; STEVENS, F.M.S (2020). Why is there no Northeast Asian security architecture? – Assessing the strategic impediments to a stable East Asia. *The Pacific Review*, 1-28.

HE, Y. (2013). *Sino-Japanese Relations in the Past and Present: Revisiting the Role of the US Factor and the Legacy of History* at <https://www.researchgate.net> (accessed 21-3-2021).

62 KEYNES, J.M. (1936). *General Theory of Interest, Employment and Money*. Palgrave Macmillan. Before World War II he stated:

”If nations could learn to provide full employment for themselves by their domestic policy (and, we should add, if they could also achieve equilibrium in their population trend), there would be no need for major economic forces calculated to set the interest of one country against that of its neighbours.”

Moreover, commodity trade, the Asian speciality, would appear to be more prone to international conflict than agricultural trade according to some studies:

LI, Q.; REUVENY, R. (2011). Trading for Peace? Disaggregated Bilateral Trade and Interstate Military Conflict Initiation. *Journal of Peace Research*. DOI:10.1177/0022343311406306

MARLIN-BENNETT, R.; ROSENBLATT, A. WANG, J. (1992) The visible hand: The United States, Japan, and the management of trade disputes. *International Interactions* 17(2): 191-213.

63 PETRI, A. and PLUMMER, M.G. (2020). *East Asia Decouples from the United States: Trade War, COVID-19, and East Asia's New Trade Blocs*. Peterson Institute for International Economics.

64 NOGUCHI puts forward a strategy for Japan, which could reduce the strain on international trade competitiveness. ”Instead of trying to increase exports and expand the trade surplus by leaving

	ASEAN		CHINA		UNITED STATES	
	Its regional economic influence is of concern	Its growing regional economic influence is welcome	Its regional economic influence is of concern	Its growing regional economic influence is welcome	Its regional economic influence is of concern	Its growing regional economic influence is welcome
<b>ASEAN</b>	15.70%	84.30%	71.90%	28.10%	29.80%	70.20%
<b>Brunei</b>	11.10%	88.90%	62.70%	37.30%	50.00%	50.00%
<b>Cambodia</b>	50.00%	50.00%	56.50%	43.50%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Indonesia</b>	0.00%	100.00%	61.40%	38.60%	36.40%	63.60%
<b>Laos</b>	75.00%	25.00%	66.70%	33.30%	100.00%	0.00%
<b>Malaysia</b>	5.30%	94.70%	67.20%	32.80%	27.30%	72.70%
<b>Myanmar</b>	41.70%	58.30%	73.90%	26.10%	30.00%	70.00%
<b>Philippines</b>	16.70%	83.30%	82.10%	17.90%	36.40%	63.60%
<b>Singapore</b>	0.00%	100.00%	74.40%	25.60%	20.80%	79.20%
<b>Thailand</b>	0.00%	100.00%	75.90%	24.10%	40.00%	60.00%
<b>Vietnam</b>	23.10%	76.90%	80.20%	19.80%	22.20%	77.80%

Source: Tang, S.M. et al. (2020).

### *Population ageing and conflict*

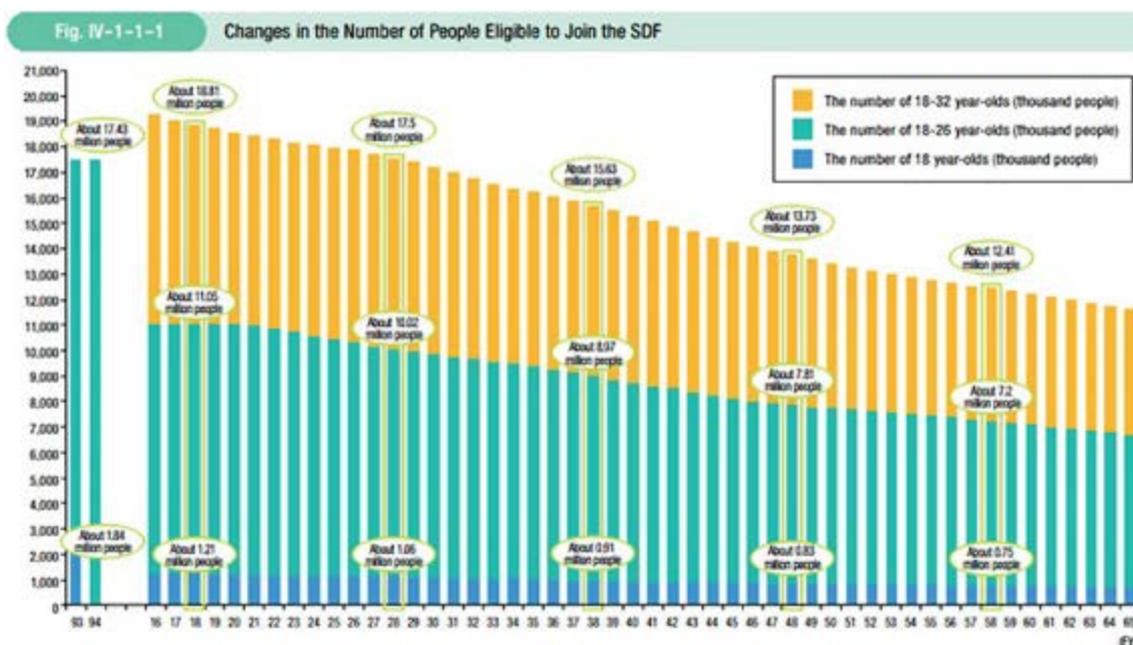
Population ageing, unlike other factors above, could help mitigate potential regional conflict generated by excessive economic dynamism or uneven regional militarisation. This is the so-called “demographic peace” phenomenon, as societies with ageing populations tend to be less prone to conflict<sup>65</sup>. On the one hand, because with older populations and low fertility levels, military contingents are smaller. On the other, because high spending on pensions and health services necessarily takes resources away from defence.

In the case of East Asia, all countries will experience accelerated ageing. While the Japanese case is the best known, Korea and China will follow the same transition but at an even faster pace. With a fertility rate of 0.9 in 2020, one of the lowest in the world, South Korea has already entered the era of continued population decline, when the forecast was for 2023<sup>66</sup>. South Korea’s working-age population (aged 15-64) declined for the first time in 2017 and by 2065 is projected to become the oldest developed nation,

production bases at home, Japan should strive to produce abroad and repatriate its profits to maintain a current account surplus”. Currently Japan already repatriates the equivalent of 104 per cent of its GDP in interest and dividends from its foreign investments. In other words, the income generated abroad is already equivalent to domestic production. NOGUCHI, Y. (2017). *Introduction to the Japanese economy*. (In Japanese) Ed. Diamond

65 BROOKS, D., BROOKS, S.G., GREENHILL, B.D., HAAS, M.L. (2019). “The Demographic Transition Theory of War: Why Young Societies Are Conflict Prone and Old Societies Are the Most Peaceful”. *International Security*, 43-3,53-95

66 HIROSHI, M. (2021). Korea’s natural population decline begins. *The Korea Times*, 9 January



Material sources: The numbers for FY1993 and FY1994 are based on "Population Estimates of Japan 1920 - 2000" and "Current Population Estimates," Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Data from FY2016 onward are based on "Population Projection for Japan" (medium estimates in April 2017), National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.

Source: Japan Defence White Paper 2020, p.404

surpassing Japan. In China, although the one-child policy was abolished in 2016, births have continued to decline, and an estimated 225 million young workers and consumers aged 20–49 (-36% of its current total) will be lost. Between 2020 and 2060, the working-age population (15–74 years) is projected to shrink by 30 per cent in Japan, 26 per cent in South Korea and 19 per cent in China. However, the impact will be different: Japan, unlike Korea and China, has aged richly. When the elderly population reached 7 per cent of the total, their GDP per capita was US\$ 10,000, while in China it was 3,400<sup>67</sup>. Although in Korea it was US\$ 14,000, the poverty rate for South Koreans aged 66–75 is currently 39 per cent, while in Japan it is 17 per cent<sup>68</sup>. The absence of private savings will increase pressure on public pensions and health care, which will impact on the ability to finance military spending. Thus, Asia's rapidly ageing population could give rise to "demographic pacifism", as neither the population would have the motivation nor governments the resources for costly military adventures.

## Post-COVID East Asia and the "Thucydides Trap".

Having analysed the factors of Westernisation and conflict in East Asia, one can better contextualise the "Thucydides Trap" debate, the main hypothesis of which is

67 TERADA-HAGIWARA, A.; PARK, D.; VAN RIJN, H. (2018). *Three Features of Aging in the People's Republic of China and Implications for Development Agenda*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22617/BRF18965>

68 This difference is due to the fiscal policies adopted by the respective governments in the face of the high social burden: while Japan has opted for indebtedness, Korea has chosen austerity, with deep cuts in pensions.

that China would be an emerging hegemon challenging the existing hegemon, the United States. As we have seen, the rise of Asia and China in particular, although numerically solid, has serious weaknesses that would make its leadership in the existing international order difficult. To complement the above analysis, however, it is important to determine the impact of the pandemic in a scenario of “reglobalisation”, which could alter power balances.

### *Covid-19 and the Asian socio-economic model*

Until the emergence of COVID, the Asian model of progress seemed to be the Western one, more based on advanced services than on industry<sup>69</sup>. However, the pandemic has forced social distancing measures that have accelerated digitalisation and re-industrialisation. Both trends have stimulated Asian exports and revived their economies, which could accelerate continental take-off, supported by good management of the pandemic. China, for example, recorded 3 deaths per million population and 2% growth in 2020, while the US recorded 1,365 deaths and a 3.5 per cent drop in GDP. South Korea, with a similar population to Spain, 28 deaths per million and a 1 per cent fall in GDP, while in Spain there were 1,263 deaths per million and -11 per cent fall in GDP. This apparent superiority of the Asian model could lead, if the trend continues, to a concentration of trade activity around China that could disrupt traditional US strategic alliances on the continent<sup>70</sup>.

However, these prognoses may be somewhat premature. Demand for durable goods is not infinite, but will shrink once consumers and businesses reach the maximum they can store, so Asian exports in these segments will eventually decline<sup>71</sup>. In fact, East Asian industrial production fell by 5.9 per cent in the third quarter of 2020, the same figure as in Europe, so one could not really speak of an Asian industrial competitive advantage in the COVID era<sup>72</sup>. The only exception appears to be China, which surpassed its pre-crisis level of manufacturing output in the third quarter of 2020. However, its role as a re-export platform should not be forgotten,

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69 PARK, D. and SHIN, K. (2012). *The Service Sector in Asia: Is It an Engine of Growth?* ADB. Also *Asian Development Outlook 2012 Update: Services and Asia's Future Growth*. ADB.

70 KISSINGER, H. (2020). The coronavirus pandemic will forever alter the world order. *Wall Street Journal*. 3 April.

71 This is one of the doubts raised by ALADANGADY, A. and GARCÍA, D. (2021). The Unusual Composition of Demand during the Pandemic. *FEDS Notes*. <https://doi.org/10.17016/2380-7172.2831>.

72 Nor is digitisation progressing at the same pace in all countries. In Japan, for example, where payments are usually made in cash, internet consumption has not increased substantially despite the pandemic. In South Korea, however, where the cashless economy is more widespread. NOGUCHI, Y. (2020). *Inexperienced economic crisis –Can Japan turn this test into a turning point for growth?* (In Japanese). Ed. Diamond

which skews the statistics as they count as wholly Chinese production what is simply final assembly of components made in other countries<sup>73</sup>. This circumstance would explain, for example, why the American trade deficit with China has increased in the last two decades while the total with Asia as a whole has remained stable, since Japan, Korea and Taiwan, among others, export to the United States using China as an operational base. Moreover, even disregarding the statistical effect, as UNIDO (2021) recalls, “it remains uncertain whether an export-oriented economy like China will manage to maintain this high level of production, given the subdued demand worldwide”<sup>74</sup>. Therefore, one could not properly speak of a superiority of the Asian industrial model in a post-pandemic context, which would weaken the scenario of a “Thucydides Trap”.

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN US TRADE DEFICITS

	Deficit with Asia (excluding China)	Deficit with China
2000-2020	+47%	+271%
2000-2018	+11%	+400%
2018-2020	+33%	-26%

Source: prepared internally from census.gov

#### *“Reglobalisation” and the “Thucydides Trap”: closed empire vs enclosed empire*

A second factor that could alter the “Thucydides Trap” scenario would be a “reglobalisation”, the profound reconfiguration of business and state relations, in which a military logic of containment would be reinforced by the confluence with other trends such as health neo-protectionism, the reconfiguration of commercial distribution networks<sup>75</sup> and zero interest rates. The first would legitimise the selective closure of borders to people and goods; the second would reinforce the dollarisation of global transactions; the third could lead to a limitation of the free movement of capital<sup>76</sup>. The confluence of these trends could give rise to two scenarios, depending on the impact of zero interest rates, which would legitimise a strategy of containment with China on non-military grounds:

73 HAFT, J.R. (2015). *Unmade in China: The Hidden Truth about China's Economic Miracle*. Polity Press.

74 UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION. *World Manufacturing Production Statistics for Quarter III 2020*. P.6.

75 CASTELLTORT, M. (2020). Industria automovilística japonesa y la electrovehiculación como transformación social. *Industrial Economics*, 417.

76 Monetary stimulus policies, based on zero interest rates, could paradoxically lead to a Japanese-style secular stagnation on a global scale. To prevent domestic capital flight, some states may restrict their free movement.

- a) systemic regression: The most extreme and pessimistic scenario would mean a retreat to a non-capitalist market economy, with global deflation, lower consumption, low wages and zero interest rates that would make it impossible to make investments profitable in the absence of sufficient demand. In such a scenario, a “supra-nation” would re-emerge as a protector of citizenship in the face of disorganised globalisation, forming self-sufficient regional integration blocs or “closed empires”<sup>77</sup>.
- b) protectionist capitalism: less radically, the West would limit trade with China and countries where there is an abundance of low-wage, literate labour<sup>78</sup>. It would entail a renunciation of current global free trade in order to protect economies and workers by creating exclusive economic zones between states with a similar legal framework. This vision, initiated in France<sup>79</sup>, has moved to the United States and seems to have the most popular support<sup>80</sup>.

In both scenarios, the United States has the upper hand. Their energy self-sufficiency, low population ageing, global dollarisation and artificial intelligence will make them less dependent on the rest of the world<sup>81</sup>. It would be a model of a closed empire, an illiberal power. From this position of strength, its strategy of containment with China, as a possible ascendant hegemon, could be commercial and geographic, without direct military conflict, as envisaged by balance of power theory:

- a) economic containment: in a post-pandemic world, neo-protectionism would have a health and socio-economic legitimacy that would allow it to be used as a strategic weapon. Evidence of this has been the recent Sino-American trade war, which has been partially successful in containing the deficit with China

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77 MIZUNO, K. (2017). *Tojite yuku teikoku to gyakusetsu no 21 seiki keizai (The paradoxical economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and closed empires)*. Shueisha, Tokyo.

78 China is also adopting its own particular protectionism with the “dual circulation”, the double circuit of imported progress via trade globalisation and internal circuit of endogenous progress of its own technology, which could result in a decoupling of China from the West. CRABTREE, J. (2021). *China's Radical New Vision Of Globalization*. <https://www.noemamag.com>. It is thus significant that during the crisis the three major Chinese airlines have cancelled or postponed all their orders to Boeing and Airbus but not to COMAC, the domestic manufacturer.

79 TODD, E. (2002). *Après l'empire*. Gallimard, Paris. “China now weighs negatively on our welfare. We will have to have the courage to set up protectionist barriers against it and force it to adopt a more balanced mode of development”.

80 This US retreat will require the Biden administration to legitimise its liberal foreign policy on the basis of domestic benefits, a so-called ‘foreign policy for the middle class’. BRANDS, H. (2021). *The Last Chance for American Internationalism: Confronting Trump's Illiberal Legacy*. *Foreign Affairs*.

81 In particular, artificial intelligence could generate a major disruption in global supply chains, even greater than Covid19, as the use of advanced automation would allow the creation of vertically integrated manufacturing centres in the US, which would not be forced to outsource tasks to low-wage countries.

and bolstering the exports of traditional Asian American allies<sup>82</sup>. If the realignment of the high-tech supply chain were to accelerate, for example, Taiwan and South Korea would be the main beneficiaries<sup>83</sup>. It should therefore not be ruled out that the trade war with China was ultimately aimed at reducing its economic and thus military strength<sup>84</sup>.

- b) geographical containment: China, unlike the US, has serious territorial conflicts with its neighbours; some of them, such as India, are nuclear powers. By maintaining military alliances with several of them, the US could adopt a strategy of systemic collapse by forcing the Chinese military to consider multiple conflict scenarios<sup>85</sup>. In the specific case of Taiwan, China's natural outlet to the Pacific, the United States could forge an alliance with strategic partners such as Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and Japan. Geographically well placed, all but Japan will also have young active populations in the coming decades and thus retain economic and military power that would allow them to block Chinese (or Russian) regional expansion in the long term<sup>86</sup>.

Both containment strategies could limit Chinese regional power and prevent gains that could create a real "Thucydides Trap" scenario, in which China would consider itself in a position to truly challenge US hegemony. Paradoxically, the greatest risk of conflict could arise from the Chinese authorities' realisation of their inability to significantly alter the international order in their favour. While victories consolidate regimes, defeats breed revolutions and coups d'état<sup>87</sup>. Therefore, to secure peace, it would be crucial to avoid staging a "Thucydides Trap" in which China supposedly has a real chance of overtaking the United States. To reduce this tension, it would be advisable for China to tone down its assertive

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82 The impact on manufacturing jobs was also positive, with an acceleration in job creation since 2017, albeit from an upward trend since 2011.

83 JAPAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE (2021). *Asia Monthly Report*. January. P.4.

84 FRÍAS SÁNCHEZ, C.J. *China, ¿un gigante con los pies de barro?* IEEE Opinion Paper 108/2019.

85 WUTHNOW, J. (2020). *System Overload: Can China's Military Be Distracted in a War over Taiwan?* National Defense University Press.

86 Already being considered, for example, is the deployment by the US of armed drones and missile launchers in potential conflict zones (Taiwan, Baltic states) that would act as high-tech minefields and hinder the consolidation of Russian and Chinese regional hegemony. BECKLEY, M. (2020) Rogue Superpower. Why This Could Be an Illiberal American Century. *Foreign Affairs*.

Nor should it be forgotten that the United States was a colony, so international military interventions do not always enjoy public support. Taiwan's defence would only be accepted by 41% of the population (although in 2014 it was 26%). KAFURA, C.; SMELTZ, D.; BUSBY, J.; KERTZER, J.; MONTEN, J. TAMA, J. (2021). *Divisions on US-China Policy: Opinion Leaders and the Public*. Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

87 BOUTHOU, G. (1967) *Sociologie de la politique*. PUF. Paris.

nationalist discourse, for the US to treat China with respect<sup>88</sup> and for both to seek areas of collaboration such as avoiding nuclear proliferation in Korea or genocides in Africa<sup>89</sup>.

## Conclusions

China's economic and military rise has been interpreted as a situation of aggressive power transition, the so-called "Thucydides Trap", in which China, as a rising power, would be in a position to challenge the United States, the established power. However, as the balance of power theory on the Korean peninsula foresaw, it is important to correctly calibrate the capabilities of the contenders.

Despite its strong ethnocentric bias, the realist thesis that war is a luxury of rich nations seems to be confirmed in East Asia. Contrary to liberal theories, intra-regional trade has not generated stability but increased military tension; the Asia-Pacific is already the world's largest defence spender.

Asian history shows that a global balance of power can coexist with regional conventional conflicts, as was the case during the Cold War in Korea and Vietnam. Far from the peaceful sinocentrism postulated by Constructivism, Asia seems to be heading towards a structural arms race in a balance of power. The RCEP, in the absence of a supranational coordinating entity, could reignite historical conflicts.

Moreover, the "Thucydides Trap" scenario seems to forget that:

- US influence in East Asia survives because of the strong dollarisation of its major economies, especially China's, and partly still because of the legitimisation of successful Japanese and South Korean industrialisation.
- The United States will be an autonomous hegemon because of its energy self-sufficiency, low population ageing, robotisation and global dollarisation.
- China is commercially and financially dependent on the United States; it is its main export market, the most indebted Asian nation in dollars (in absolute terms) and the largest investor in US Treasury bonds. Paradoxically, a supposed strategic rival would be financing its opponent.
- China must take up the challenge of modernising its rural provinces in a context of an ageing population, which will reduce its financial and military capacity.

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88 When Bill Clinton was hesitating whether to give his speech at Tiananmen, Kim Dae-Jung, the South Korean president, commented to him: "In China, pride is very important. For pride, they will sacrifice anything. (...) While seeking a strategic relationship, you can cooperate and criticise at the same time. If you respect their pride while demanding what is necessary, you can make human rights gains." KIM, D-J. (2019). *Conscience in Action*. Palgrave Macmillan.

89 SHIRK, S. (2007). *China: Fragile Superpower*. Oxford University Press.

Under these conditions, it is difficult for a war outcome such as the “Thucydides Trap” to actually take place. Therefore, in order to reduce the tension generated by the misinterpretation of realist postulates, it would be advisable for China and the United States to seek global areas of collaboration on the basis of mutual recognition and respect.

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## *Radicalisation processes in Tunisia after the Arab Spring and the Foreign Terrorist Fighters issue*

### **Abstract**

This article analyses the high number of individuals who left Tunisia after the Arab Spring to join a jihadi organisation in Syria or in Iraq and it attempts to provide some explanations for this phenomenon. The analysis begins with an overview of countries in North Africa and, afterwards, it focuses on the Tunisian case. Relative deprivation theory is used to explain the radicalisation of a part of the Tunisian population. But no single explanation can depict the real situation of the Tunisian foreign terrorist fighters. For this reason, we investigated multiple motivations that anyone who left Tunisia to join the jihad was driven by. The increasing presence of a certain number of Salafi organisations, and its different strategy inside or outside the country, has also been analysed and considered as one of the possible causes of the worsening of the situation. Lately, one of the biggest threats in Tunisia is the return of foreign terrorist fighters.

### **Key words**

Terrorism, Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Salafism, Tunisia, Jihadism

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This article is an update of a plenary lecture delivered at the Africa Conference 2019 organized by the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre in Malesworth-Cambridge, UK. In these pages the situation of Tunisia after the Arab Spring will be analysed in order to understand why so many Tunisians left their countries soon after Ben Ali's resignation. To do so, we first provide a quick overview of North African situation after the anti-government protests of 2011, so as to highlight differences or similarities. This first step will take us to the issue of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters in this area. Then, we will focus on Tunisia, analysing the Salafi organisations expansion in 2011 as a result of the release of their leaders and their legalisation in 2012, after the Tunisian Constituent Assembly was elected in October 2011. We will then provide some justification for the high number of Tunisian Foreign Terrorist Fighters who joined the ranks of jihadi organisations in Syria or Iraq in comparison to the rest of the Northern African countries. Some of them experienced only few protests during the Arab Spring whereas others suffered a spread of violence. Finally, in the last part of the article some points are given for future studies about the problem produced by the returning Foreign Fighters from Syria and Iraq.

### North Africa overview

In December 2010, the death of the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi triggered a mass protest in a small town of Tunisia. He had set himself on fire as an extreme way of voicing complaint regarding the confiscation of his merchandise. Demonstrations spread all over the country and many people, fed up with Ben Ali's administration, joined. The president, in charge since 1987, ended up leaving Tunisia in January 2011. In the next months, after some attempts of power conservation by the regime, a "particular model of power resignation was accepted"<sup>1</sup>.

That was the first act of the so-called Arab Spring. What initially seemed to be a revolutionary movement, able to change the current social and political situation, turned out to be what the Italian writer Tomasi di Lampedusa expressed in the following terms in his book *The Leopard (Il Gattopardo)*: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change" that is the same as saying "let's change everything so that nothing changes". In any case, if in Tunisia the social conditions seemed not to have undergone much change, democracy improved (even though it is "not totally consistent with a developed democracy"<sup>2</sup>). According to the annual report on political rights and civil liberties released by *Freedom*

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<sup>1</sup> MARTÍNEZ FUENTES, Guadalupe, "La transición democrática post-benalista: procedimiento y alcance del cambio político en Túnez", *RJUAM*, 23, 2011, pp. 119-134.

<sup>2</sup> PÉREZ BELTRÁN, Carmelo and GARCÍA MARÍN, Javier, "Las libertades públicas en Túnez tras las revueltas de 2011", *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, no. 109, 2015, pp. 69-90.

*House*, since 2015 Tunisia is the only MENA country, along with Israel, considered to be free<sup>3</sup>.

Before focusing on the Tunisian case, a quick overview of North African countries is necessary in order to map the different reactions to the Arab Spring. Morocco has been slightly touched by the uprisings, even though the country became one of the main exporters of foreign terrorist fighters (about 1,600 people). The number of Moroccans that joined jihadi ranks in Syria and Iraq increased in the second half of 2013<sup>4</sup>, which means before the official creation of the Caliphate. Those who left the country were mostly the marginalized urban youth. The majority were under 24 and lived on the outskirts of large and medium-sized cities, especially in the North. Their radicalisation can either be explained by the chaotic urbanisation process or due to the high rate of youth unemployment (youth unemployment is 10 per cent all over Morocco, but rises to 40 per cent in the cities)<sup>5</sup>.

The country has not experienced any form of internal jihadism lately. One explanation for the lack of this phenomenon might be provided, first, by the effort and the efficacy of the Moroccan Security Forces. After the Madrid bombings in 2004 several terrorists belonging to the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group were arrested and, notably, its leader, Saad Houssaini, was jailed in 2007<sup>6</sup>. In September 2014, new measures were introduced in order to tighten the anti-terrorism laws. Those upgrades seem to be efficient. Another important element that explains the lack of jihadi groups in Morocco is related to the presence of King Mohamed VI and his politics of social progress. The monarch, on 17 June 2011, quickly announced in a TV speech that a referendum on constitutional reforms would take place on 1 July 2011 in response to the protests across the country. In general, the population is not likely to turn to violence if it perceives that some social improvements are being introduced. But there is another important reason why in Morocco no jihadi organisations emerge. It is due mostly to the religious legitimacy of the Moroccan government. Mohamed VI is not only a monarch but also a religious leader (*Amir al-Mu'minin*). Therefore, movements like Al Qaeda or IS, which are inspired by religion, must receive religious legitimacy to attack the regime in the power. In Morocco, this legitimacy is not possible because of its religious identity.

3 Tunisia was considered a not free country until 2012. Between 2012 and 2014 it was considered a partly free country. Freedom in the world, 2015 map: [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/01152015\\_FIW\\_2015\\_final.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/01152015_FIW_2015_final.pdf).

4 MASBAH, Mohammed, "Transnational security challenges in North Africa: Moroccan foreign fighters in Syria 2012-2016", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 55:2, p. 184.

5 LEFEBURE, Anaïs, "Chiffres du HCP: Le chômage en baisse, mais les jeunes toujours touchés", *HuffPost Maroc*, 6-V- 2015.

6 ALONSO, Rogelio and GARCÍA REY, Marcos, "The Evolution of Jihadist Terrorism in Morocco", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 19 (4), 2007; BOTHA, Anneli, *Terrorism in the Maghreb*, IS Monograph Series, 2008, pp. 91-93.

In Algeria, the multiple social protests had not been able to organize themselves into a solid political protest movement<sup>7</sup>. Some demonstrations were held only for a few days across the country but by the 11 January 2011 the situation had quietened down. We can theorize that there were not many violent protests because the 1990's civil war memories were still present. Algerians were fearful of the possibility of a return to violence. At the beginning of 2019 Algeria faced a great challenge with an internal uprising, which was maintained even after president Bouteflika left power.

Libya, a non-unitary State, was created artificially through Italian colonisation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it ensued from the connection of three big areas: Fezzan, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Among these there are significant differences regarding economic development, Islamic solidity and tribal presence<sup>8</sup>. Gaddafi ruled the country with a strong hand from 1969 to 2011 and, after his death, and, consequently, the end of the Jamahiriyya<sup>9</sup>, the whole political system broke down<sup>10</sup>. The lengthy 42 years of dictatorship had created a society with no democratic aspiration, essentially based on tribal identity. Thus, Islam has become one of the main unification elements. To sum up, after the Gaddafi regime: i) the state lost the monopoly of the use of strength; ii) militias appeared in some areas; iii) an anarchy period began; iv) two different governments were formed.

On the one hand, Haftar heads the Tobruk (Cyrenaica) authority; on the other hand, in Tripoli, Sarraj imposed his own authority. Haftar and his troops have fought jihadi groups who tried to enter Libya taking advantage of the instability of the post-Gaddafi environment. Even though, he acknowledged in an interview for *France 24* in May 10 this year (2019) that he often “released Tunisian ISIS fighters after his forces captured them”.

Radicalisation was intense in Cyrenaica<sup>11</sup>, the region more severely hit by the Gaddafi regime and where most militias have been created. Unlike the rest of the Maghreb countries, Libya has become a foreign terrorist fighter recipient and not only an exporter<sup>12</sup>. Today, the danger for Libya is posed also by the porosity of its southern border. Their southern neighbours and non-state actors are often on the verge of a

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7 THIEUX, Laurence, “El papel de la Sociedad civil argelina en las perspectivas de cambio político en Argelia”, *Revista General de Derecho Público Comparado*, 11, 2012.

8 VARVELLI, Arturo, “The Libyan Trilemma: Islam, democracy and rentier state”, *Caucasus International*, vol. 3, n.1, Spring-Summer, 2013.

9 RÓZSA, Erzsébet, “The Libyan Revolution: Outcome and Perspectives-The Social Context”, *Observatory of Euro-Mediterranean Policies*, 68 (11), 2011.

10 OMAR, Manal, “Libya: Rebuilding from Scratch”, *The Islamist*, Winston Center, 2015.

11 RODRÍGUEZ MAYORGA, Bernardo, “La caída de Sirte y la verdadera naturaleza del Daesh”, *Revista Ensayos Militares*, 3 (1), 2017, pp. 61-76.

12 FUENTE COBO, Ignacio, “Libia, la Guerra de todos contra todos”, *IEEE*, 46, 2014.

resurgence of insurrectionary activity. Tubu forces of the north tribes between Chad, Niger in Libya are a clear example of this slippery stability<sup>13</sup>.

In Egypt, on 11 February 2011, the Mubarak regime fell. One of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood Party, Mohamed Morsi, was named as his successor once the first elections after the Arab Spring in Egypt had been won. Presidents Naguib, Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak, Al Sisi were all military officers. Mohamed Morsi was the only one not considered linked to the army. In 2013 he was ousted from power by a coup led by his Defence Minister, Al Sisi. Once in power, the new government outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood based on the accusation that they were a terrorist organisation.

The Tahrir square revolution is just a distant memory, as well as the demand for more democracy. In 2019, Egyptian Parliament approved measures that allow the president to stay in power until 2030<sup>14</sup>. As reported by the NYT: “stability has come at a high price in terms of civil liberties and human rights. The country has jailed tens of thousands of opponents, banned hundreds of websites and exerted tight control over the courts. The news media is almost entirely under government control and torture is common in Egyptian prisons, rights groups say”<sup>15</sup>.

Nevertheless, international actors support Al Sisi, welcoming his policies against Islamist radicalisation. Thus, Egypt Military Forces and intelligence are carrying out a hard task fighting insurgency in Sinai close to the border with Israel<sup>16</sup>.

Hence regional instability in North Africa has increased i) terrorist attacks throughout this area, ii) individual radicalisation iii) growth in foreign terrorist fighters.

A brief analysis of the tendency of regional terrorist attacks in North Africa, reveals that the vast majority of deaths occurs in the MENA region<sup>17</sup>. Between 2002 and 2017 almost 90,000 persons have been killed there. Focusing on North Africa, between 2003 and 2007, the majority of terrorist attacks were carried out in the north of Algeria and southeast of Chad. Then, between 2008 and 2012 the number of terrorist attacks decreased (from 1,020 to 789) and the weakness of Libya increased terrorist

13 TUBIANA, Jérôme and GRAMIZZI, Claudio, *Lost in Trans-Nation. Tubu and other Armed Groups and Smugglers along Libya's Southern Border, Small Army Survey*, Geneva, Report 2018, p. 43

14 “Egypt constitutional referendum approved, cementing Sisi's power to 2030”, *Middle East Eye*, 23-IV-2019.

15 WALSH, Declan, “El-Sisi May Rule Egypt Until 2034 Under Parliamentary Plan”, *The New York Times*, 14-II-2014; SZMOLKA VIDA, Inmaculada, *Political changes in the Middle East and North Africa*, Edinburgh University, 2017; ÁLVAREZ-OSSORIO, Ignacio (ed.), *La primavera árabe revisitada*, Cizur Menor, Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, 2015; ÁLVAREZ-OSSORIO, Ignacio (ed.), “Sociedad civil y contestación en Oriente Medio y Norte de África”, *CIDOB*, 2013.

16 DENTICE, Giuseppe, *The Geopolitics of Violent Extremism: The Case of Sinai*, European Institute of the Mediterranean, 2018, pp. 30-35.

17 INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMICS & PEACE, *Global Terrorism Index 2018*, p. 53.

presence inside the country. Between 2013 and 2018 violence grew (3,159 attacks according to the Global Terrorism Index of 2018). More recently, according to the analysis made by Marta Summers for the Observatorio Internacional de Estudios sobre Terrorismo, the jihadi violence in Maghreb decreased and soared in the Sahel. In any case, in Tunisia, in March and April 2021 Tunisia was the only Maghreb country hit by terrorist attacks<sup>18</sup>.

### Foreign terrorist fighters overview

The presence of foreign terrorist fighters in battlefields is not new, especially in civil wars. Many examples could be cited and some of them are likely to be considered, broadly speaking, as negative armed interventions. In the past, and just to remain within jihadism, we should highlight the presence of foreign fighters in Afghanistan during the Soviet Union invasion since 1979. From 1984-1985 the presence of foreign Salafi jihadists increased. They were called freedom fighters and their shelter was in Peshawar (Pakistan), a border area close to Afghanistan<sup>19</sup>. Once the war was over, the freedom fighters went back to their hometowns or other places to continue with the jihad; others preferred to remain in Peshawar or Afghanistan<sup>20</sup>. Those who returned to their countries, often, faced a long period of imprisonment. In jail, they took advantage of their reputation as freedom fighters and radicalized other inmates.

Now, the former freedom fighters are called foreign fighters, but their identity is quite similar. The vast majority are Salafi jihadists who left their countries in order to fight the jihad especially in Syria and Iraq.

As indicated in a 2017 analysis by Richard Barret for the *Soufan Center*, it is rather difficult to calculate the exact number of the foreign terrorist fighters<sup>21</sup>. According to the United Nation more than 40,000 foreign fighters travelled to Syria and Iraq to join IS from more than 100 countries<sup>22</sup>.

North Africa is one of the major exporters of foreign terrorist fighters to Syria and Iraq:

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<sup>18</sup> See Marta Summers reports on Maghreb and Sahel for OIET: <https://observatorioterrorismo.com/yihadismo-en-el-magreb-y-el-sahel/>

<sup>19</sup> KEPEL, Gilles, *Jihad, ascensa e declino*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 2016, p. 156 y ss.

<sup>20</sup> MARRERO ROCHA, Inmaculada, "Foreign Fighters and Jihadist: Challenges for International and European Security," *Paix et sécurité internationale*, n. 3, 2015, pp. 83-108.

<sup>21</sup> BARRET, Richard, "Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees", *The Soufan Center*, October 2017, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> "Greater Cooperation Needed to Tackle Danger Posed by Returning Foreign Fighters, Head of Counter-Terrorism Office Tells Security Council", *Security Council*, 28 November 2017: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc13097.doc.htm>.

FTF to Syria and Iraq	Tunisia	Morocco	Algeria	Libya	Egypt
	3,000	1,600	260	600	600
Number of inhabitants	11 million	34 million	42 million	6 million	98 million

Sources: Soufan Group and Renard<sup>23</sup>.

As can be seen in the table above, the vast majority of Northern African foreign terrorist fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq originate from the two more stable countries, Morocco and Tunisia. The former experienced few Arab Spring troubles; the latter, carried out a quick and successful transition process. To provide an explanation for this, we cite scholar Tore Bjorgo. According to him, strong democracies and strong authoritarian regimes are less susceptible to terrorism than weak regimes<sup>24</sup> (whether they be democratic or authoritarian). He states that: “Lack of democracy, civil liberties and the rule of law is a precondition to many forms of domestic terrorism. The relationship between government coercion and political violence is shaped like an inverted U; the most democratic and the most totalitarian societies have the lowest levels of oppositional violence”<sup>25</sup>. Of course, it is not possible to explain radicalisation in Tunisia and Morocco only through Bjorgo’s theory, but we think it is crucial to understand that some kinds of radicalisation are more common in the weak regimes<sup>26</sup>.

## Tunisia overview

After the Arab Spring, Tunisia led a transition that is considered an example of how to recover stability after a time of troubles. As we saw above, the Arab Spring was triggered off in Tunisia. Despite originating from the lower classes, the middle class there were crucial to the process of political change. A high level of corruption and increasing inequality in a country where young educated individuals could not find a job suited to their qualifications, were just some of the reasons that sparked the anger all over Tunisia. To this, the repression carried out by the government must be added as a grievance.

23 WATANABE, Lisa, “The Next Steps of North Africa’s Foreign Fighters”, *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, n. 222, March 2018, p. 3; RENARD, Thomas, “Returnees in the Maghreb: comparing policies on returning foreign terrorist fighters in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia”, *Egmont Paper*, 107, 2019.

24 WEINBERG, Leonard, *Democracy and Terrorism. Friend or Foe?*, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 7.

25 BJORGO, Tore, *Root Causes of Terrorism*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo, 2003, p. 234.

26 LINZ, Juan, “Transiciones a la democracia”, *REIS*, 51, 1990, pp. 7-33; LEVITSKY, Steven and WAY, Lucan, “The rise of competitive authoritarianism”, *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (2), 2002, pp. 51-65; HONIG, Or, Arthur, “Coercing Weak Regimes to Stop Supporting Terrorism: How and When it can be Done”, *Comparative Strategy*, 32 (3), 2013; STORM, Lise, “The Persistence of Authoritarianism as a Source of Radicalization in North Africa”, *International Affairs*, 85 (5), 2009.

Even if Tunisia attained unimaginable political achievements (it ended up, for example, being ruled by a coalition of secular and Islamist parties), the economic and social situations have not improved. The unemployment rate is higher than under Ben Ali's regime (16 per cent in 2019, after the COVID-19, 13 per cent before the ouster of Ben Ali, but reached 18 per cent in 2011), and youth unemployment is even worse. The unemployment rate for university graduates was about 30 per cent after the Arab Spring<sup>27</sup>. The conclusion we may reach is that the Tunisian system is not prepared to absorb highly specialised workers, especially in a country that underwent a fast urbanisation process<sup>28</sup>.

In order to understand the radicalisation process and the high number of foreign fighters within the middle class who left Tunisia to reach Syria and Iraq, we can briefly discuss the so-called relative deprivation<sup>29</sup>. It is important to reject the predominant idea that jihadism is only a poverty issue<sup>30</sup>. Of course, impoverishment can heighten the radicalisation of some individuals, but there is no evidence to link poverty to jihadism. In order to understand the radicalisation process, it is essential to highlight the importance of frustrated expectations.

Ted Gurr explains relative deprivation as the feeling experienced when one perceives a lack of something. According to Gurr, an individual could feel disappointed when he attains less than he was expecting<sup>31</sup>.

Probably, we could say that rebellions ensued from the frustrations of expectations of more educated young students<sup>32</sup>. Hertog and Gambetta applied relative deprivation to jihadists who studied engineering but cannot find a job suited to their high educational level<sup>33</sup>. When the expectation is high, particularly after a social improvement period, the frustration of this great expectation may trigger a rebellion hot-

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27 THE WORLD BANK DATA (2013),

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.ADVN.ZS?locations=TN>.

28 "Youth unemployment in Egypt is concentrated among those with a university education: 34% of graduates are now without work and many more are stuck in insecure, low-status and low-paid work", Harry Pettit, "Selling hope without reward: youth unemployment in Egypt", The Forum ERF Policy Portal, 29-V-2018.

29 BRENNAN, Daniel and DE CORRAL, Miguel, "The Fight Against Terror Needs Better Data", *Foreign Policy*, 2-X-2018.

30 BHATIA, Kartika and GHANEM, Hafez, "How do education and unemployment affect support for violent extremism?", *Brookings*, 22-III-2017.

31 GURR, Ted, *Why men rebel*, London, Routledge, 1970.

32 See the relatively high number of educated foreign fighters in DODWELL, Brian, MILTON, Daniel and RASSLER, Don, *The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Paper Trail*, USMA, 2016.

33 GAMBETTA, Diego and HERTOOG, Steffan, *Ingegneri della jihad*, Milano, Università Bocconi Editore, 2016.

bed<sup>34</sup>. Runciman added that if the deprivation is not individual but collective, the political radicalisation is usually quicker<sup>35</sup>. They provide a description of what they call a “fraternalistic deprivation”, which appears when members of the same social group consider that their own group is suffering from a collective deprivation. It is important to underline that, in general, in the North of Africa the perception of an unfair inequality condition does not create a conflict between different groups. Instead, the local Government and the West are often considered to be responsible for this unjust situation<sup>36</sup>.

In the case we are analysing here, the relative deprivation increased when young people who participated actively in the Arab Spring realized that nothing had changed and their expectations regarding a better life were frustrated.

The presence of needy areas in Tunisia is also important to understand radicalisation. The country seems to be divided into two different parts: an urban part (more modern), in the eastern regions, and a rural part, more disadvantaged, in the west and south. Here, more than poverty it is social inequality that is perceived as a real grievance. Close to the borders (both Algerian and Libyan) the situation is even worse. Some large areas developed informal economy based on smuggling and every kind of illegal trafficking back and forth<sup>37</sup>. However, when Libya closed its border, in 2015, fed up with Tunisians entering its territory to join militias, the population of that area ended up losing their only means of livelihood. For that reason, the spread of Salafi civil organisations after Ben Ali’s regime fall was welcomed throughout those needy areas. Salafi groups filled the vacuum generated by a weak political presence. Hence, they have taken over some government tasks, and are consequently being perceived as charitable organisations helping the needy sector of the population<sup>38</sup>.

Salafism has also grown among young people<sup>39</sup>. Some university students have radicalized their interpretation of the Quran. Under Ben Ali’s regime, universities were considered to be free places where it was possible to express disagreement against the power, but after the Arab Spring they experienced confrontation between reli-

34 *Ibidem*, p. 41 and on.

35 RUNCIMAN, Walter Garrison, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice*, London, Routledge, 1966.

36 SAYYID, Salman, *A Fundamental Fear. Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, Zed Books, 2004; LEÓN, Cristobal et al. “El radicalismo islamista en las sociedades occidentales: prejuicio, identidad social y legitimación del terrorismo”, *Psicología conductual*, n. 2, 2005, pp. 311-330; MUELAS LOBATO, Roberto, *El camino de la radicalización: rutas psicosociales hacia el prejuicio y el extremismo violento en conflictos religiosos y culturales*, doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Granada, 2019.

37 TORELLI, Stefano, “Mainstream Institutionalization vs Disenfranchised Radicalization in Tunisia”, in *The arc of Crisis in the Mena Region*, Milano, ISPI, 2018, p. 121.

38 FAHMI, Georges and MADDEB, Hamza, *Market for Jihad. Radicalization in Tunisia*, Carnegie Middle East Center, 2015, p. 5.

39 MARKS, Monica, “Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 18:1, pp. 104-111.

gious and secularist students. Some of them requested separate classrooms (some for women, others for men), sought the liberty to wear hijab and applied for a space for prayer<sup>40</sup>.

A Spanish teacher at Manouba University I interviewed <sup>41</sup> said that, after the 2011 uprisings, some of her students changed their behaviour, dressing in an Islamist way and expressing rage against the West. What happened could be understood as a generational crisis based on an ideological contrast and, also, as a confrontation against politics. Indeed, despite the supposed enthusiasm for the democratic process, there was a very low turnout in the 2011 elections when only 17 per cent of young people between 18 and 35 voted.

In 2011 the Islamist party Ennahda obtained the majority. Since then, it has shared power with the secular party Nidaa Tounes. The support for Ennahda has been described more as a protest vote than a real and conscious Islamist vote<sup>42</sup>. Political Islam was harshly repressed during Ben Ali's regime, which pushed it out from the social-economic system. Now, once legalised (as we will analyse soon), it has become a symbol of political freedom. Anyway, Ennahda is not an anti-system party and its founder, Rashid Gannushi, kept the party in a moderate position and its ideology, if compared to other Islamist forces all over North Africa, is quite liberal, even if has a small Salafi core too<sup>43</sup>.

On 6 October 2019, Tunisia faced new elections. Ennahda Party won again, but it lost 17 seats. For Nidaa Tounes the collapse was even worse, losing up to 83 seats. Heart of Tunisia, a new political party defined as a centre-left group, secularist and populist, obtained 38 seats and it consolidated as the second most voted party.

One week later, on 13 October, the second round of voting of presidential elections was held. Kaïs Saïed (Independent party) was elected president, after winning against Nabil Karoui (Heart of Tunisia). In this election campaign, terrorism issue has not been mentioned as a major problem of Tunisia. Karoui and Saïed preferred not to name a problem that would have been a thorn in the flesh for Ennahda Party, accused of permissiveness towards jihadi movements, but not for their own parties. Terrorism appeared as a sensitive issue to deal with and nothing useful to use against each other. Instead, social matters like low salaries, unemployment (above all among young people) and the deterioration of public services had been the es-

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<sup>40</sup> DALEY, Suzanne, "Tensions on a Campus Mirror Turbulence in a New Tunisia", *The New York Times*, 11-VI-2012.

<sup>41</sup> The interviews took place in March 2019. The interviewees prefer not to reveal their identity.

<sup>42</sup> McCARTY, Rory, "When Islamists Lose: The Politicization of Tunisia's Ennahda", *The Middle East Journal*, 72 (3), 2018, pp. 365-384.

<sup>43</sup> PRIEGO, Alberto, "El populismo islámico: una respuesta no occidental a la globalización", *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, n. 119, 2018, pp. 161-184.

sence of this campaign<sup>44</sup>. Tackling the social and constitutional issue that emerged during the revolution, Karoui received massive support from the young people. About 90 per cent of 18 to 25 year olds voted for him, according to the Sigma Polling Institute<sup>45</sup>.

The general social disappointment in Tunisia is high. According to Afrobarometer 2018<sup>46</sup>, 79 per cent of Tunisians says the country is heading in the wrong direction; about 72 per cent of the population perceive the economic situation as “fairly bad” or “very bad”; almost six in ten Tunisian think that Tunisia is “not a democracy” or is a “democracy with major problems”; only 46 per cent of Tunisians believe that democracy is the most preferable form of government, down from 70 per cent in 2013<sup>47</sup>. The current situation of the COVID-19 increased the population’s concern about the economic woes and has activated some protests against the new Prime Minister, Hichem Mechichi, since 2020. Protests, once again, were ignited by a small event: a shepherd was beaten by the police in the town of Siliana. This was what triggered clashes in cities and towns across Tunisia from mid-January 2021 which were heavily repressed by the security forces. Therefore, ten years after the Jasmine Revolution, tension is rising in Tunisia due, mostly, to the pandemic crisis, which has had a heavy impact on the economy, creating long-term economic grievances, worsening the unemployment rate and contracting GDP<sup>48</sup>. This “difficult economic situation has been further complicated by severe political infighting”, as Yasmina Abouzzohour underlines<sup>49</sup>.

## Salafi organisations in Tunisia

The Arab Spring was led by a multi-faceted group of people that did not belong to any clear organisation, nor were they of a specific political orientation. At the time, the Islamists were not yet to be found in the streets. Nevertheless, after the revolutionary process, Salafi groups emerged. They took advantage of their social reinsertion,

44 “Presidentielle Tunisienne: le thème du terrorisme relégué au second plan”, *Le Monde*, 12-IX-2019.

45 SAFI, Michael, “Tunisia election: Robocop Kais Saied wins presidential runoff”, *The Guardian*, 14-X-2019.

46 MEDDEB, Youssef, “Support for democracy dwindles in Tunisia amid negative perceptions of economic conditions”, *Afrobarometer*, dispatch n. 232, 3-IX-2018.

47 EDROOS, Faisal, “Four things to know about Tunisia’s parliamentary election”, *Middle East Eye*, 5-X-2019.

48 MANSOUR, Nadia, “Socio-Economic Impacts of Covid-19 on the Tunisian Economy”, *Journal of the International Academy for Case Studies*, 26 (4), 2020: <https://www.abacademies.org/articles/socioeconomic-impacts-of-covid19-on-the-tunisian-economy-9481.html>.

49 ABOUZZOHOOR, Yasmina, “Caught in transition: Tunisia’s protests and the threat of repression”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*: <https://ecfr.eu/article/caught-in-transition-tunisias-protests-and-the-threat-of-repression/>.

because they were illegal under the Ben Ali administration. Most of their members were put in jail as a result of the application of the new antiterrorism law number 75 of 2003, which led to about 2,000 detentions within the Salafi community of individuals suspected of being terrorists<sup>50</sup>.

According to Ennahda policy of pluralism and respect for minority rights, many jailed individuals accused of jihadism were amnestied and released from jail. At the same time, a large number of clandestine mosques appeared. They were not under government control. Many were closed after Sousse attacks, in June 2015, accused of spreading a radicalisation message.

Salafi organisations sought the implementation of sharia law and led protests (frequently violent) against, for example, a television channel in October 2011, which broadcasted the movie *Persepolis* in which the prophet was represented as a human being, or against bars and restaurants open during the Ramadan.

Ennahda's double ramification, one more liberal and the other close to Salafism, brought both sides together to avoid marginalisation. Four Salafi political parties (Jabath al-Islah, al-Rahma, Al-Asala and Hizb ut-Tahrir) were legalized in 2012.

Anyway, Salafi groups were not a new presence in Tunisia. In actual fact, this phenomenon surfaced in the early 1980s. Tunisian Islamic Front, for instance, emerged in 1986. But its influence was very short-lived because of government repression. Some of their militants joined the jihad in Bosnia or Afghanistan. After Ben Ali was ousted, many of those individuals who had left Tunisia to fight abroad and never returned because they were afraid to be arrested, went back home and joined other jihadists released from prison to form Jabath al-Islah. This Salafi political party was eventually legalized in 2012 and its president was a former leader of the Tunisian Islamic Front.

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Ettahrir) is another Salafi organisation that has been active since 1980s but only clandestinely. Ettahrir was legalised after Ben Ali's regime fell. During the 1990s many of its members were put in jail charged with recruitment of people to send abroad to fight for the jihad. In order to depict the real feature of Ettahrir it is interesting to quote what its leader said on October 24, 2011, the day after the constituent assembly election: "It is well-known and obvious that Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects democracy, considers the system *kufri*, and it contradicts Islam altogether, but it [Ettahrir] works to rid the Muslims of evil and falsehood"<sup>51</sup>. Currently, Ettahrir is a very challenging Salafi movement for the Tunisian Government. It is a transnational Salafi organisation made up of young people who admire the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamism.

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<sup>50</sup> MAGRO CHECA, Paula, "Evolución del fenómeno salafista en Túnez", *IEEE*, 9-VII-2018, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Hizb ut-Tahrir Tunisia, "In Response to the News in the Palestinian Ma'an News Agency," 24 October 2011, [http://www.ht-tunisie.info/info/index.php/contents/entry\\_72](http://www.ht-tunisie.info/info/index.php/contents/entry_72).

The biggest Salafi organisation so far is Ansar al Sharia in Tunisia (AST)<sup>52</sup>. Its leader, Abu Ayyad, was released from prison in March 2011 and, one month later, he created Ansar al Sharia. He and other founding members of this organisation were sentenced to prison in the 1980s because they had created the terrorist group Tunisian Combatant Group, which used to send fighters to Afghanistan for the jihad. Once in prison, Abu Ayyad fraternized with other inmates who were in jail because of their hostility towards Ben Ali. As can be seen, all of them were Tunisians who had rejected Tunisian conditions<sup>53</sup>. Ansar al Sharia has a double core. It is carrying out a policy of promoting missionary activities within Tunisia (especially in the needier areas where the lack of the State is evident and where it is trying to be likened to Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Palestine by promoting social aid), whereas it is calling for the jihad abroad<sup>54</sup>.

In Tunisia, what Mohamed Masbah depicted for Morocco might be happening. He stated that “authorities in Rabat overlooked the phenomenon of volunteers heading toward Syria, which explains why so many Moroccans were able to join radical groups in Syria in 2013. This policy was based on a desire to get them out of the country, by allowing the domestic Salafi jihadis to have a space to fight outside the country’s boundaries”<sup>55</sup>. Obviously, there is no evidence regarding this, so we must be careful before affirming that Ennahda, or more in general the government, reached an agreement with Salafi groups, but this option cannot be rejected a priori. Over time, AST behaviour became more and more aggressive and some of their members were accused of terrorism. As a matter of fact, the Tunisian government illegalized it in August 2013 after two political assassinations and after finding links with Al Qaeda<sup>56</sup>. Ennahda, in order to send a message of an attempt to bring Tunisia to complete democratisation had to distance itself from radical Islam.

Anyway, the strategy of pushing Salafi organisations out of the political system might pose some problems. Often, marginalisation is a direct cause of radicalisation,

52 GARTENSTEIN-ROSS, Daveed, “Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia’s Long Game: Dawa, Hisba and Jihad”, *ICCT Research Paper*, May 2013, p. 8.

53 TORELLI, Stefano, MERONE, Fabio and CAVATORTA, Francesco, “Salafism in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities for Democratization”, *Middle East Policy Council*, vol. XIX, n. 4, 2017.

54 ZELIN, Aaron, “Hizb ut-Tahrir and Ansar al-Shari’ah: New Forms of Islamist Activism in Tunisia”, *Middle East History and Theory Conference*; TORELLI, Stefano, *La Tunisia contemporanea*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2015, pp. 164-165.

55 MASBAH, Mohamed, “Transnational security challenges in North, Africa: Moroccan foreign fighters in Syria 2012-2016”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 55:2, p. 184.

56 JONES, Seths et al., “The Evolution of the Salafi-Jihadist...”, p. 24; CLARKE, Colin and MOGHADAM, Assaf, “Mapping Today’s Jihadi Landscape and Threat”, *FPRI*, 2018, p. 350; MARTÍNEZ FUENTES, Guadalupe, “Ennahda ante el cambio político en Túnez: 2011-2013”, *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos*, n. 15, 2013, pp. 31-53.

and it is known that it is complicated to monitor a clandestine group<sup>57</sup>. Outlawing, especially if it is followed by repression (between 2013 and 2014 more than 1,000 people have been put in jail under terrorist law) is unlikely to succeed<sup>58</sup>. For this reason, the ruling party Ennahda has been working very hard to include Salafist parties in the Tunisian political environment. By doing this, it not only aims at achieving long-lasting social stability, but also wants to express a sort of political Islam far from the Salafi galaxy. Right now, in Tunisia, the vast majority of Salafi groups do not call for jihad, they do not agree with the current government, but neither consider it a foe<sup>59</sup>. Ennahda leaders know that any type of illegalisation could bring most radical Salafi groups not disappearing but simply going underground.

To sum up, indicated below are the mainly Salafi organisations in Tunisia:

Name	Created in	Legalized in	Political Salafism
Jabhat al Islah	2011	2012	Yes
Hizb ut Tahrir (Ettahrir)	Early 1980s	2012 (banned in 2016)	Yes
Al Asala	2011	2012	Yes
Al Rahma		2012	Yes
Al Jamiyya al-Wasatiyya li-l-Tawfiyyawa wa-l-islah	2011	2011	No
Ansar al Sharia	2011	2011 (banned in 2013)	No
Katibat Uqbah ibn Nafi		Salafi jihadist group member of AQIM	No
Jund al-Khilafah		Salafi Jihadist group member of IS	No

#### Tunisian foreign terrorist fighters

According to a 2015 Soufan Group research, about 6,000 Tunisian left their country to reach the IS ranks<sup>60</sup>. The same Soufan Group, two years later, lowered that number to 2,921. The scholar Aaron Zelin reduced it even further to 2,900 individuals<sup>61</sup>. Zelin also declares that, on the one hand, the Tunisian Security Services prevented another 27,000 from going; on the other hand, foreign terrorist fighters were recruited from all over Tunisia and not only in some specific areas, such as those near Algeria and Libya borders, as some scholars stated<sup>62</sup>. Indeed, even if there

57 SADIKI, Larbi, "Regional development in Tunisia: the consequences of multiple marginalization", *Brookings*, 14-1-2019.

58 TORELLI, Stefano, *La Tunisia contemporanea...*, p. 169.

59 TORELLI, Stefano, MERONE, Fabio and CAVATORTA, Francesco, "Salafism in Tunisia...

60 *Foreign Fighters. An updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, The Soufan Groups, December 2015, p. 5; BUENO FERNÁNDEZ, Alberto, "De El Bardo a Ben Gardane, un año de terror", *Revista UNISCI*, n. 41, 2016, pp. 163-180.

61 ZELIN, Aaron, "Tunisian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria", *Policy Notes*, 2018, p. 5.

62 *Foreign Fighters. An updated Assessment of the Flow...*, p. 11; TSG IntelBrief, "The International Hotbeds of the Islamic State", The Soufan Group, 22 July 2015, <http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief->

are examples of slums or areas which are more radicalized than others, it is also important to highlight that not everybody who lives in the same place ends up acting the same way.

The recruitments for the Syrian Civil War began in 2012, but it intensified between spring 2013 and summer 2014. It must be borne in mind that the Tunisian government crackdown on Ansar al Sharia (AST) started in early 2013 and, as we analysed above, the organisation was declared a terrorist group in August of that year<sup>63</sup>. Since the creation of another jihadi front in 2014 in Libya<sup>64</sup>, many Tunisian individuals have crossed the border to start their militancy there.

Anyone who left Tunisia and joined the jihad was driven by multiple motivations: mostly local grievances and individual problems. Therefore, no sole cause serves to explain radicalisation<sup>65</sup>. We should divide the ecosystem into three levels (macro, meso and micro), providing explanations for the radicalisation of an apparently normal person who chooses to become a foreign terrorist fighter.

Even if scholars are more strongly convinced that the *macro* system is not crucial to explain the radicalisation, Cavatorta and Merone stated that “although the theory of radicalisation for social and economic reasons cannot be verified in all cases, there is often a correlation between these two factors”<sup>66</sup>. The community or institutions represent the meso system, which, in our opinion, is not crucial to define a process of radicalisation. Nevertheless, the *micro* level depicts the environment some people grew up in: their family or their group of friends. Sageman explains the importance of friends and family networks<sup>67</sup>. The small group of comrades is usually very attractive for young people who have grown up in the same neighbourhood. Scott Atran underlines the importance of playing in the same football team, studying in the same school or living in the same milieu. He found out that nearly two-thirds of those samples he studied joined the Jihad through friends and about a quarter through family links<sup>68</sup>. Family is another favourable environment for radicalisation. But, the link between

the-international-hot- beds-of-the-islamic-state/. The town is best known as a major Tunisian smuggling hub for weapons and other contraband.

63 DURÁN CENIT, Marién y BADOS NIETO, Víctor Mario, “The Political and Security Repercussions of the Islamic State in the MENA Region”, in SZMOLKA VIDA, Inmaculada, *Political changes in the Middle East and North Africa*, Edinburgh University, 2017, pp. 281-300.

64 SOTO REYES, Javiera et al., “La distribución del poder en la Libia post Gadafi: un análisis desde la Sociología del poder”, *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos*, 23, 2017, pp. 47-75.

65 About jihadi radicalization and terrorist profile see DE LA CORTE IBÁÑEZ, LUIS and JORDÁN, Javier, *La yihad terrorista*, Madrid, Síntesis, 2007.

66 CAVATORTA Francesco and MERONE, Fabio, *Salafism after the Arab Awakening*, London, Hurst & Company, 2016, p. 159.

67 SAGEMAN, Marc, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania, 2004.

68 ATRAN, Scott, “Who becomes a terrorist today?”, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2:(5), 2008, p. 6.

brothers or cousins is closer than the link between fathers and sons. Actually, this generally happens in every sort of radicalisation group. Young people are more likely to be critical of their parents (especially of their father) than of their brothers. There is a huge generational gap between father and son<sup>69</sup>.

To this, we should add all those events that have marked the individual's life such as violence, sexual abuse, divorce, imprisonment, etc. But, even if all we have discussed so far can obviously provide an important explanation in order to understand the radicalisation of people who become foreign fighters, one of the most important radicalisation factors is the individual's will to belong to a terrorist group and the free will to attack people. Individuals who join a terrorist organisation create a narration based on violence legitimisation<sup>70</sup>.

According to a survey published by the Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies<sup>71</sup> in which 82 convicted because of terrorism were interviewed (50 of them foreign fighters returned from Syria) Tunisian jihadists are aged mostly between 25 and 29. So, they are not as young as terrorists in the past. For instance, the Red Brigades or ETA militants were much younger. Almost 85 per cent of them had a job. Actually, the rate of unemployment among jihadists is lower than the national one. Namely: the percentage of national unemployment is 15%, but just 9.8 per cent of the respondents was unemployed. Their financial situation is superficially decent. Either they are working or are supported by their families. About half of the interviewed stated that they had taken drugs in the past or usually drunk alcohol.

To briefly summarise the explanations for the high number of Tunisian foreign fighters, we can underline these principal driving forces: i) altruism. Some Tunisians joined the opposition to Al Assad to fight against a dictator considered a leader of a brutal regime<sup>72</sup>, which was killing Sunni Muslims (Tunisia is nearly 99 per cent Sunni). They feel part of a transnational *umma* (Muslim community) and feel that their Muslim brothers have been slaughtered. Muslims are victims either of an oppressive regime (the Al Assad regime) or of the western imperialism. The sense of victimisation is very important to understand the process of legitimisation of fighting for the jihad. ii) disappointment in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. After the riots, which heightened the feeling of better life opportunities, nothing seemed to have

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69 VÁZQUEZ, Alexandra, "Why die for my sibling? The positive association between identity fusion and imagines loss with endorsement of self-sacrifice", *International Journal of Social Psychology*, 3 (34), 2019, pp. 413-438. About the contrasts between fathers and sons it is very interesting this autobiographical book: HUSAIN, Ed, *The Islamist*, Penguin, 2009, pp. 36-47.

70 TORRES SORIANO, Manuel, "La tiranía de los pequeños números: el factor individual en la propaganda yihadista", *UNISCI*, n. 44, 2017.

71 *Assessing the Threat posed by Foreign Fighters*, Institut Tunisien des études Stratégiques ITES, January 2018.

72 ALTUNA, Sergio, "El terrorismo yihadista en la encrucijada", *Cuadernos del Centro Memorial de las Víctimas del Terrorismo*, n. 8, July 2019, p. 32.

changed. Despite some improvement in the political environment, economic progress was far from being attained. Even the first Tunisian president elected after the Arab Spring was a bit pessimistic about the situation. On one occasion, in reference to young people, he stated that: “We had a dream – our dream was called the Arab Spring –and our dream is now turning into a nightmare. But the young people need a dream, and the only dream available to them now is the caliphate”<sup>73</sup>. iii) Economic motivations. Even if economic improvement drove just a few individuals to the radicalisation, seldom was it the main stimulus for some of them. iv) Sense of impunity. Tunisia, after Arab Spring, became a country where – as seen above –many parties were legalised. The sensation of freedom was intense and the perception that, when one joined the IS, it was possible to come back –at least at the beginning –was wide-spread. There was also an extended sense of impunity. v) Prison radicalisation. People who were detained during Ben Ali’s regime might harbour great anger that became an important stimulus to fight on behalf of Islam, upon release from prison. vi) Generational conflict. After the Arab Spring, a certain sense of general radicalisation spread throughout Tunisia. This radicalisation did not just come from the impoverished areas, but was particularly intense among young people, especially among students. vii) Offline radicalisation. Individuals are also motivated to travel to Iraq and Syria by friends, family or influential members of their communities or by the imam of the mosque. After Arab Spring, especially in the South of Tunisia, a new imam arrived from the Gulf and claimed a more radical interpretation of the Quran. viii) Online radicalisation. It happened mostly to younger people who use internet and social media. Digital migration in Tunisia was driven by the high proportion of young demographic. According to Arab Media Outlook, the broadband penetration in 2011 “was estimated at 5 per cent, significantly higher than many of the North African and Levant markets” and the mobile penetration on population was 114 per cent. In that country there also was “a large number of active users of *Twitter* and *Facebook*”, actually, *Facebook* penetration in Tunisia was 12 per cent<sup>74</sup>. It is known that jihadi groups often use the web “as a battle field, where they encourage, justify, glorify, direct [...] terrorists and terrorism”<sup>75</sup>. Nevertheless, a single online radicalisation is quite unlikely. There is more often a mix of online and offline radicalisation<sup>76</sup>.

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73 TROFIMOV, Yaroslav, “How Tunisia Became a Top Source of ISIS Recruits,” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 25, 2016.

74 *Arab Media Outlook 2011-2015*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, p. 213.

75 NAVARRETE PANIAGUA, Manuel, “La actuación policial”, in JORDÁN, Javier (ed.), *Estrategias para derrotar al Dáesh y la reestabilización regional*, Cuadernos de Estrategia 180, IEEE, 2016, pp. 106-108.

76 VON BEHR, Ines et al., *Radicalisation in the digital era*, RAND Europe, 2013; SZMANIA, Susan and FINCHER, Phelix, “Countering Violent Extremism Online and Offline”, *Criminology and Public Policy*, 2017, doi: 10.1111/1745-9133.12267; VALENTINI, Daniele, LORUSSO Anna Maria and STEPHAN, Achim, “Online Extremism: Dynamic Integration of Digital and Physical Spaces”, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11:524, 2020, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00524.

To sum up, Tunisians joined jihadi organisations abroad mainly because of “secular” reasons<sup>77</sup>, motivated by a sense of group belonging or in search of adventures, rather than their being driven by a deep religious impulse<sup>78</sup>. Of course, the religious factor is important, otherwise liberal Tunisians would also join those organisations against Al Assad, but maybe, as underlined by Marc Sageman<sup>79</sup>, “religion has a role, but it is a role of justification”. Actually, he says: “jihadists use Islam as their justification. It is not about religion, it is about identity”. Olivier Roy adds that the current situation is not showing us a process of a radicalisation of Islam, as many people are likely to think, but an Islamisation of the radicalisation<sup>80</sup>. Gilles Kepel, in contrast to Olivier Roy, states that it is Islamism that is radicalizing and not vice versa<sup>81</sup>.

### The returnees issue

At least 7,000 foreign terrorist fighters have travelled back to their countries and many of them are trying to escape from Syria in a desperate effort to avoid death or jail. According to data, by June 2018, almost 4,000 had returned to the MENA countries<sup>82</sup>.

Before IS was defeated, reasons for returning included having completed their specified missions, feelings of disillusionment with ISIS, desire to espouse extremism elsewhere or simply feeling they have been defeated. Once the Caliphate has collapsed foreign terrorist fighters are trying to get back to their own countries or to reach other places to hide and, maybe, to start their jihadi activity again. Returning home could be difficult, and they could face a long imprisonment. Going somewhere else could provide them with an aim to their lives and avoid the feeling of being defeated. Now that Syria is no longer a land of jihad for the ex IS members, jihadists must find other places to go. Yemen, Libya or Sahel are likely to be appealing destinations. Or maybe some areas of Asia.

Between 2013 and 2018, 18 per cent of terror attacks staged in Europe were carried out by foreign terrorist fighter returnees. The vast majority of returnees come from Europe and MENA countries<sup>83</sup>.

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77 SAGEMAN, Marc, *Understanding Terror Network...*

78 SHADI Hamid, “Radicalization after the Arab Spring: Lessons from Tunisia and Egypt”, *Brookings*, 1-dec. 2015; VARVELLI, Arturo, *Jihadist Hotbeds. Understanding Local Radicalization Processes*, Milano, ISPI, 2016, p. 20.

79 QUILLEN, Stephen, ““What drives Tunisian foreign fighters?””, *The Arab Weekly*, 27-V-2018.

80 ROY, Olivier, *Le Djihad et la Mort*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2016.

81 KEPEL, Gilles, *Terreur dans l'Hexagone, Genèse du djihad français*, Paris, Gallimard, 2015.

82 “How many IS foreign fighters are left in Iraq and Syria?”, *BBC*, 20-II-2019.

83 GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX 2018, p. 62.

North Africa's countries have adopted the 2014 UN Resolution 2178 in order to prosecute people who joined jihad and now want to return. There are variations in the way countries manage the foreign terrorist fighter issue<sup>84</sup>. In some places prison is adopted as the sole solution, somewhere else reintegration is preferred. In many cases, foreign terrorist fighters will face arrest. Nevertheless, once in jail, they are not likely to be brought to trial due to the difficulty in proving their crimes. In Tunisia, for example, only 35 per cent of returnees are sentenced to prison and "those returning foreign terrorist fighters not being tried judicially are being held under house arrest and monitored"<sup>85</sup>. Even though, the new 2015 counterterrorism law reintroduced the death penalty for certain terrorist acts and criminalized planning and carrying out terror activities<sup>86</sup>, but it is not about activities abroad.

The number of Tunisian returnees is nearly 800 individuals who could pose a severe threat to the authorities and to the population. Evidence of what we are talking about is the double terrorist attack at Bardo National Museum and on a beach in Sousse in 2015. Both attacks were led by individuals trained in Libyan camps. Moreover, returned foreign fighters can become recruiters or simply incite radicalisation. They take advantage of the prestige bestowed upon them within their community, after having fought for the Caliphate, to recruit possible future fighters. This process seems to be very similar to the Afghan freedom fighters, who came back from fighting against the Soviet Union in the 80s.

There are also associations of foreign terrorist fighter families that request reinsertion of their relatives who regret what they had done. Authorities must deal with this issue in an extremely delicate way because focusing exclusively on detention could create more problems. Prisons, packed with inmates in Tunisia, often provide the perfect environment for more radicalisation<sup>87</sup>. Besides, after being released, former foreign terrorist fighters might never reintegrate themselves into a normal group life and they will probably suffer marginalisation, so that would increase the possibility of a second radicalisation. In a country like Tunisia, where the youth unemployment rate is high, foreign fighters will be considered a non-priority concern for the government. According to Emna Ben Mustapha Ben Arab's analysis "the preparation for post-prison life, which is to start in prisons, is not taking place"<sup>88</sup>.

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84 GEORGEAULT, Léna, "Perspectiva comparada de las políticas sobre combatientes terroristas extranjeros. Retos y modalidades", *RIED*, n. 2, 2021, pp. 43-57.

85 WATANABE, Lisa, "The Next Steps of North Africa's...", p. 3.

86 MERSCH, Sarah, "Tunisia's Ineffective Counterterrorism Law", *Carnegie*, 6-VIII-2015: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/60958>.

87 ALTUNA, Sergio, "Evolución reciente del yihadismo en Túnez, una larga condena por los errores del pasado", *Real Instituto Elcano*, 28-III-2018.

88 BEN MUSTAPHA BEN ARAB, Emna, "Returning Foreign Fighters: Understanding the new threat landscape in Tunisia", in *Returnees in the Maghreb: Comparing policies on returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia*, RENARD, Thomas (Ed.), Egmont, April 2019, p. 45.

A community approach seems to be the most viable solution of returnee foreign fighters. So, not only prosecution, nor government intervention, but also civil society participation could contribute to the assimilation of foreign terrorist fighters. Tunisians returnees are a threat not only for their own country, but also for Europe. This is a matter which has already been studied by scholars though still deserves to be thoroughly investigated in the future<sup>89</sup>.

## Conclusions

After having analysed the situation in Tunisia after the Arab Spring and having focused on the high number of foreign fighters who left Tunisia and reached Syria or Iraq, we should provide some conclusion. In all Northern Africa countries Islamist organisations were harshly repressed under totalitarian regimes. In Tunisia, it occurred under Ben Ali's regime but, after the Arab Spring, many Salafi organisations were legalized and a large portion of Salafi individuals, who were in jail, were released. Only few Salafi organisations call for jihad abroad, but within Tunisia they are replacing the government in those needy areas where institutions are absent. This presence is rather well accepted by the population who feel abandoned by the State.

Even if the Arab Spring just succeeded in Tunisia, the great expectation of a better life has been frustrated. Disappointment in the aftermath of the Arab Spring was decidedly high, above all, among those people who were more active in the uprising. Once Ben Ali's regime collapsed, they realised that nothing had changed, that their lives were the same as before. And this frustration of expectations was evident in the entire society, not only within the needier population. In the rest of the countries which experienced uprising in 2011 the situation now is worse than before. Some states are facing civil wars and others were subjected to putsches. Whilst in Tunisia, an Islamist party reached power and shared it with a secular party, which is not usual in the Arab world.

To understand radicalisation and the motivations that drove individuals to join the jihad in Syria and Iraq we must analyse the three different social levels (Macro, Meso and Micro), but we emphasise mainly the last one. Family (above all brothers and cousins) and small groups of friends could generate radical connections between individuals who want to follow the same steps towards the jihad. Individual will is also crucial to understand motivations regarding why a person and not the other decides to join a jihadi organisation. Radicalisation of people who become foreign fighters is also

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89 POKALOVA, Elena, *Returning Islamist Foreign Fighters: Threats and Challenges to the West*, Palgrave, 2020; MALET, David and HAYES, Rachel, "Foreign Fighters Returnees: An Indefinite Threat?", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32 (8), 2020; BURES, Oldrich, "EU's Response to Foreign Fighters: New Threat, Old Challenges?", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32 (4), 2020; CRAGIN, Kim, "Preventing the Next Wave of Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Lessons Learned from the Experiences of Algeria and Tunisia", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 44 (7), 2021.

a matter of generational conflict within the Salafi environment. Thus, often, the more radical fraction is also the youngest one, and young people are frequently in contrast against elder people.

The Tunisian government was adopting the strategy of pushing Salafi organisations out of the political system, but this behaviour might pose some problems. Often, marginalisation generates more conflict and push individuals to create clandestine organisations. In this environment, the presence of foreigner Imams and the creations of private mosques spread throughout the countries.

The Ennahda party has a crucial position to face Islamist radicalisation. On the one hand, a likely “unspoken pact” between the ruling party and some Salafi organisation might boost the binomial “in Tunisia the prayer, abroad the jihad”. But Ennahda has also shown a strong hand against radical Islam, outlawing those Salafi organisations that head toward the path of violence. This crackdown, weather carried out by a secular party, could have had more traumatic consequences, while Tunisia experienced little violence in comparison with countries where the presence of Salafi jihadists is higher. To make jihadism less appealing, not only the Tunisian government, but also the rest of the ruling parties of the region, should draw up a long-term strategy. The adoption of only security measures is likely to be ineffective and create more social instability and breakups. There is a need for a comprehensive and long-term approach that mixes soft and hard-line measures. Having said this, now, probably the biggest issue governments all around the world must face is how to act with returnees. In Tunisia, the solution is far from easy. This Northern Africa country has experienced one of the biggest phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. Prosecution and imprisonment might not seem to be the right solution or, at least, the only possible solution. Tunisian prisons are so crowded that it could be difficult to host many inmates. Inside prisons, radicalisation could spread throughout quickly and, after serving their sentence, it appears social reinsertion might be really difficult in a country with a strong presence of needy areas and with an unemployment rate on the rise.

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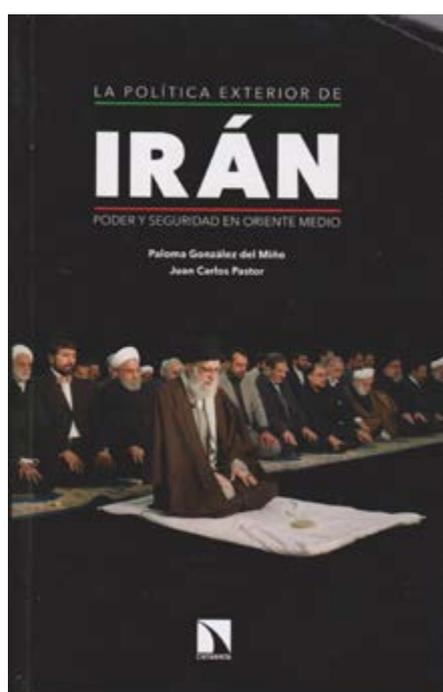
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## Book review

*LA POLÍTICA EXTERIOR DE IRÁN: PODER Y SEGURIDAD EN ORIENTE MEDIO [IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY: POWER AND SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST] AND EL REINO DE ARABIA SAUDÍ Y LA HEGEMONÍA DE ORIENTE MEDIO [THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND THE HEGEMONY OF THE MIDDLE EAST]. Paloma González del Miño, Juan Carlos Pastor Gómez, Publisher: Catarata, 2020.*

*ISBN 978-84-1352-020-9 (pages).*



These are two complementary and highly topical works, both of which emerge from the discipline of international relations and the analysis of foreign policy as the main tool used by the two states to position themselves hegemonically in the region. Two crucial analyses for understanding one of the most exciting, and at the same time most tense, dynamics of international society in our time. *La política exterior de Irán: Poder y seguridad en Oriente Medio* by Paloma González del Miño y Juan Carlos Pastor and *El reino de Arabia Saudí y la hegemonía de Oriente Medio* by David Hernández Martínez. Published by the publisher La Catarata in 2020, these books are based on the study of a well-defined historical period from a chronological point of view. In the case of Iran, the Islamic Revolution of 1978 marks the turning point that initiated a change in the country's positioning in the region, while in Saudi Arabia, although there has been no disruptive event, its role as a regional power is the result of a policy designed and implemented by the authoritarianism of the House of Saud, suffering the ups and downs typical of the region since the creation of the modern state in 1932.

A reading of these two works reveals common elements in both countries, but at the same time reinforces the elements that differentiate them in a notable way. Iran and Saudi Arabia are fighting for hegemony in the region politically, economically and religiously, and their actions in recent decades have been aimed at positioning themselves as the Middle East's reference point, actions that make them irreconcilable enemies. In a way, both states act on the principles of the *mirror theory* where any movement by one has a reflexive, albeit rational, effect on the other.

Iran's history and its cultural and economic relevance position it as a relevant, key player in the region, making it an essential player in the future developments. Iran is the result of a historical and identity construction based on the contrast between the "Persian" and the "Arab", with a tradition and vocation as a regional power.

In these works, the author's knowledge of the object of study is demonstrated by the quantity and quality of the bibliographical sources he uses. *La política exterior de Irán: Poder y seguridad en Oriente Medio* begins with a historical analysis necessary to understand the evolution of the Persian country and its hegemonic position in the region. It leads us to understand the steps taken to achieve political change. In a well-argued way, it shows how the collectives that led the Islamic Revolution against the monarchy of Reza Pahlavi, the *Shah*, were forged as one of the most important events of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the region. The consolidation of the Shia clergy as the elite of the new political system, appropriating an eminently popular revolution against the monarchy, represents a Copernican shift in state policy, especially in its external action. From this moment on, Iran began to promote the presence of Shia cells in states in the region, which Saudi Arabia and its allies saw as an act of destabilisation, and it also became immersed in a war against its neighbour Iraq that lasted a decade without any clear victory or defeat for either side, only attrition in economic and human terms.

*El reino de Arabia Saudí y la hegemonía de Oriente Medio* perfectly describes the pillars of the state: the patrimonialisation of the state by the House of Saud; the im-

portance of hydrocarbons in the functioning of the state; and its unbreakable alliance with Wahhabism, although with some tense episodes such as the siege of the Great Mosque of Máyid al Haram in 1979, its alliances with the United States and other Western powers, and its position in the Palestinian cause. These are the three inescapable elements that must be known in order to understand the idiosyncrasies of contemporary Saudi Arabia. Wahhabi precepts have had a very limited territorial dimension, but thanks to the Saudi monarchy's incorporation of these precepts as part of its foreign policy, these ideological principles have continued to grow in recent decades in different parts of the world<sup>1</sup>. The first manifestation of the instrumentalisation of Wahhabism in Saudi foreign policy can be found in the 1980s with the support, together with the United States and Pakistan, for the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviet invader, which later led to the birth of the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda and different Salafist factions.

In the case of Iran, the authors describe perfectly the different ideological tendencies that have directed the state's external action, how its actions have been modified, but always with the central element of making Iran the hegemonic power. Thus, a major analysis is made of the foreign policy of each of the different administrations since the Islamic Revolution, switching between progressive and conservative governments, and how this alternation has affected their position on the regional and international chessboard. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's external action has been more sustained over time, albeit with some modifications in recent years.

In this vein, the Arab Spring represents another turning point for both states to become the regional actor of reference. In the case of Saudi Arabia, concerns focus on four areas that affect both the internal and external spheres. The difficulty of the Saud House in imposing its political criteria and establishing its superiority over other actors; a growing hegemonic rivalry with Iran; problems of stability with traditional alliances, especially with the US, especially during the Obama administration; and the crisis with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. For Iran, the Arab revolts were an opportunity to improve its position in the region and even expand its sphere of influence. Whereas before 2011 the country started from a position of exclusion from the international scene as a result of its nuclear programme, a new phase has begun, characterised by multilateralism and a framework of new relations with the world powers. We can say that the Arab Spring had a different impact on the two countries' external action: for Iran it was an opportunity, while for Saudi Arabia it meant internal destabilisation and external weakening.

In this context of internal and external crisis, Mohammed bin Salman is designing a new foreign policy for Saudi Arabia. The so-called *Salman Doctrine* will attempt to redress post-Arab Spring external action and put the kingdom back at the centre of the Middle East by revitalising the Saudi hegemonic role in the region. This

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<sup>1</sup> Hernández Martínez, David (2020). *El reino de Arabia Saudí y la hegemonía de Oriente Medio*, Publisher: La Catarata, Madrid, p. 66.

doctrine is a reaction to the rising power of its main rival-enemy: Iran. To this end, they will focus their efforts on those areas where Iran has become a regional *hegemon*. David Hernández, in a succinct but enlightening way, cites some examples such as: the leadership of a military coalition in Yemen seeking to restore Abd Rabbuh Mansur al Hadi to power, countering the advance of the Iranian-backed Houthi militias; the harbouring of Lebanese president Saad Hariri who argued he would be in serious danger if he returned to Lebanon due to threats from Shia factions; the rapprochement with the Al-Sisi regimes in Egypt and the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan; the attempt to increase its economic and religious presence in those places where Sunni movements are weakened by the Shia presence such as Syria and Iraq; the new relationship with Israel, promoted by the Trump Administration, whereby the Saudi House abandons its traditional support for the Palestinian cause. In short, a new doctrine of external action marked by a reaction to the growing prominence that Iran has acquired in recent years in the region, and which introduces novelties such as direct military action.

Both states, with an almost exclusive economic dependence on hydrocarbons, shape their actions through a network of allies that reinforce their position as a regional power. While Iran invests a great deal of resources in the consolidation of a post-Saddam Hussein triangle of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, as is perfectly developed in chapter 4 of *La política exterior de Irán: Poder y seguridad en Oriente Medio*; Saudi Arabia focuses its efforts on its area of influence in the Gulf Cooperation Council, with the exception of Qatar, trying to establish itself as the reference point in the Arab and Muslim world, among other reasons for hosting and protecting the Holy Places; Yemen, as a matter of proximity; revolutionary Syria to overthrow or weaken the government of Bashar Al-Asad, Iran's main ally; and its relationship with world powers such as the United States, as well as a rapprochement with Israel, as shown in the third part of *El reino de Arabia Saudí y la hegemonía de Oriente Medio*.

Both readings conclude that the Middle East has a multipolar distribution of power due to the multitude of international actors of all kinds, with both Iran and Saudi Arabia seeking to influence the defence of their own interests. Both states have been committing political, economic and cultural resources to consolidate their power in the Middle East. This competitive relationship results in a zero-sum game, which increases and conditions the conflict dynamics in the region.

Iran's security policy responds to a scheme of opposition to US power and its main ally in the region, Israel. It therefore bases this policy on the maxim that, rather than waiting for its enemies, Iran fights them at the regional level. On the other hand, the Saudi regime has made containment of Iran a major focus of its foreign and security policy, as stated in the current Salman Doctrine, countering Iran's expansionism in the region.

Iran and Saudi Arabia are at a crossroads where the stability of the region is in their hands. Both works are essential for understanding the idiosyncrasies of the Middle East through the positioning of its two hegemonic powers, as well as for illuminating the future path of the region. The scientific rigour with which its pages are written

makes it a must-read for scholars of the Middle East, international security, foreign policy and international relations.

*La política exterior de Irán: Poder y seguridad en Oriente Medio.* Authors: Paloma González del Miño and Juan Carlos Pastor. Publisher: La Catarata. ISBN.978-84-1352-020-9. Number of pages: 283.

*El reino de Arabia Saudí y la hegemonía de Oriente Medio* by David Hernández Martínez. Publisher: La Catarata. ISBN. 978-84-1352-013-1. Number of pages: 174.

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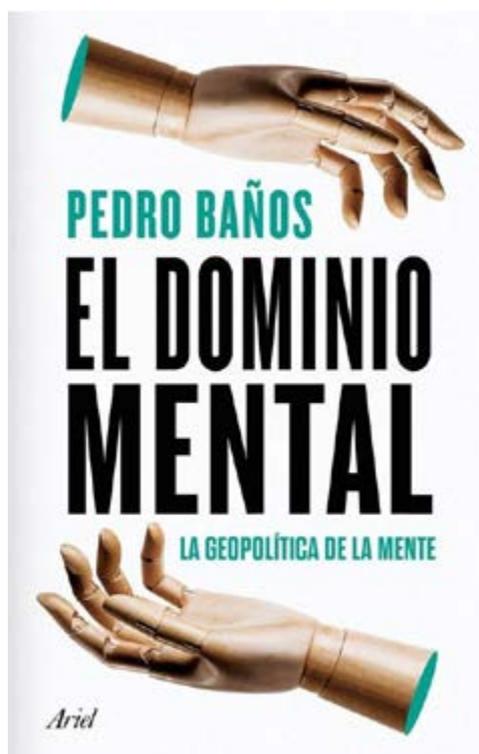
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## Recension

*EL DOMINIO MENTAL. LA GEOPOLÍTICA DE LA MENTE*  
*[MENTAL MASTERY. GEOPOLITICS OF THE MIND]. Pedro Baños*  
*Bajo, Publisher: Ariel, 2020*

*ISBN 9788434433090 (400 pages)*



André Glucksmann said that man does not think but informs himself. He is thus a consumer of a canned product selected by others; this saves him the effort and time to think for himself and even to think simply. In practice a brave new world in Huxley's ethology and combining effort and entertainment (the famous *soma*), but not in the reality of the facts, hidden by the combination of both factors.

We live in a society that defines itself as an "information society" when all the information in history today doubles every two years. With the knowledge available, the key lies in the criteria and tools for correct selection.

But this is also not easy in a complex and interconnected world built on weak and accommodating concepts, where the emotional takes precedence over the rational and a good speech is better than a true speech. The key is the management of the irrational aspects, of feelings, because feeling precedes thought as music precedes words. It is also more manageable than reason.

This is exacerbated by a globalisation that encourages the crossing of agendas and facilitates interference in internal affairs by third parties; the terms inside and outside have ceased to exist with globalisation. Influence policies are, within what is known as *Soft Power*, discreet and effective. And they supplant confrontation, which is very practical, particularly in this scenario of turmoil.

The dangers to democracy are obvious. Every model is based on a single truth from which, from a Cartesian perspective, the rest can be deduced. However, this is not the case in democracy, where there is no one truth that can be asserted over others, but rather, what really exists are basic agreements on different truths that make the existence of a political community possible and make it necessary to maintain a lively and constant dialogue for its maintenance and updating. This cannot be a completely fractured truth because a fractured truth gives rise to a fractured society. Moreover, truth and power go hand in hand, meaning that struggles for truth are at heart a struggle for power.

The manipulation of information brings democracies face to face with their own contradictions: control of information can lead to control of ideas, when it is the capacity for the inclusion of ideas that indicates the quality and solidity of democracy.

Moreover, the power that is attributed to the people actually resides in their vanguards, be they economic or otherwise, internal or external. And there are informal powers that very effectively promote acts in their own interest. Equality for all is a necessary fiction for the construction of a democracy.

The greatest risk to truth lies in what is taken for granted, unquestionable and transparent. The book *El dominio mental*, written by an old acquaintance of this house, Colonel Pedro Baños Bajo, former professor of the Strategy Department of the Higher School of the Armed Forces and a person of reference when talking about strategic thinking, offers us the opportunity to place ourselves outside the framework in order to evaluate its certainties and risks from a new, foreign and different perspective.

The book, written in careful prose, is a challenge to conventional schemes but also a call for reflection on the hidden threats and opportunities that scientific advances offer for social control. This is a logical extension of his two previous works: *Así se domina el mundo* and *El dominio mundial*, also published by *Ariel*. In these works, he already showed his concern for manipulation, in fact it is a consistent theme from the very first page of his first book in the context of an amoral and unrestricted use of power.

In this way, he insistently, and sometimes even crudely, exposes the existence of cross-interests and hidden agendas that are not known and even contrary to those that are made explicit by unclear informal groups. For the Colonel, many of the important decisions are made by individuals or groups belonging to the so-called powers that be. At the same time, he acts almost like a technological evangelist by spreading these advances in response to the power he holds dear. His work thus serves strategic oversight.

We are faced with a trilogy of domination which, as could not be otherwise, remains in the spirit – which is the place of the great battles – which makes this last work the necessary summary of the two previous ones, the basis. The chapters of the book are an expression of this: "social mind", "mind surveillance", "mind politics", "mind warfare", "COVID-19 elections", "the new mental society", "thought control techniques", "hacking into other people's brains", "neurotechnology, mind control and human rights" and "mind control".

"Hard" considerations such as military or economic power that were the *leitmotif* of earlier works can be supplemented if not replaced by "soft" operations that go beyond mere influence. In this sense, his new work is a reconsideration of his previous work. Genuine power is more inconcrete and undefined than it was then, but at the same time equally effective. What is hard can be broken. The inconcrete and hidden, as Lao Tse reminds us, cannot, and that is why power is installed there. As De Gaulle said, silence is the language of power: it puts an end in practice to any possible dissident formulation.

We are not in the realm of the delusional, conspiratorial or imaginary, but in the realm of stark reality. The *Snowden case* brought the possibilities of espionage, surveillance and the massive accumulation of data at all levels and in all areas to the public's attention. In 2016, the *Cambridge Analytica* case showed the possibilities offered by data mining and demonstrated the effectiveness of these techniques in elucidating an issue as important as *Brexit*. This is not a conspiracy theory but practices that are as real as they are hidden and carried out by pragmatic actors.

Moreover, Colonel Baños delves into social psychology and informatively points out different methodologies of control of society by the forces operating in "the corridors of power", as Carl Schmitt put it. Techniques and technologies that enable hypervigilance.

The great richness of the book is its compilation, which makes it almost like a manual. All in all, this is a necessary and different work, a breath of fresh air with an alternative point of view. It is not a vulgar importation of Anglo-Saxon ideas that dominate the market as a single way of thinking and are presented almost as if they

were a doctrine. Rather, it is a dialectic of defiance to precisely that. Rather, his work could be described as alternative and placed in the wake of American authors such as Chomsky, although his approach is different.

Criticism is an essential element for the survival of our societies, which rarely question their foundations, when doubt is part of the West's heritage and explains the keys to its success: progress and technology. So it is good to doubt, to submit one's own principles to this crucible, as Descartes proclaimed in his method, in order to at least be able to affirm with certainty that we exist, no matter how much we are deceived by evil geniuses.

A subject of great sensitivity and value is being touched upon, one that has its precursors in classics such as Gustave Le Bon, Goebbels and Bernays. The latter – the originator of the concept of *Public Relations* and author of *Propaganda* – with the ruse that cigarettes were “torches of freedom” contributed to the spread of smoking among mid-century women.

In the end, our societies are formally defined as democratic, but there is no democracy without informed citizens with the capacity to make the right choices. In this way, and although it may seem the opposite, we are not free because the control is stronger than is apparent at first glance; we are not presented with all the possible options and, furthermore, we are conditioned when it comes to doing so, seeking a false consent from the governed.

The key is not in the control of information but in the control of the information agenda. Some options are overexposed, others are not even considered, while the individual can be manipulated emotionally through powerful tools that are used continuously. The fact is that information can be selected, processed and biased in multiple ways, conditioning responses through the control not only of the frame, but also of the mind itself.

The different biases that can be induced on individuals with sophisticated techniques affect the foundations of democracy by altering its basis, since it is based on the supposedly free and unconditional decisions of citizens, which are thus affected in the criteria for their adoption, and are pedagogically oriented.

This is why, in the words of Alain de Benoist, “the political and media elites hold the same discourse”; it cannot be otherwise. There is a remarkable degree of covariation between the position of the media and public opinion. The media, as a business, can be manipulated and public opinion can be manipulated; indeed, it can work to condition individuals. Public opinion cannot be contradicted – at least not systematically – but it can be educated; let us not forget that the name of Goebbels' Ministry was *Propaganda* but also *Public Enlightenment*. Power is thus transformed into education, in such a way that it is exercised as if it were not really exercised at all, as if it were natural.

The “new” technologies will thus lead to the development of two social trends that are not necessarily opposed to each other. The first is oriented towards greater direct

democracy, which gives the polls more political weight. At the same time, however, greater control of the citizen by the state apparatus and consequently greater dirigisme is also possible. In this way, the previous tendency, which is concealed and disguised by the first one and which, moreover, legitimises the system, is annulled. The different forms of “social control” practised in China are here to stay and even to be expanded.

The main critique of the work is obvious: not everything is conspiracy, however much conspiracy there is. And such an unconventional approach, which additionally incorporates approaches that are not common, is risky and debatable. This gimmicky oversimplification distorts the work and loses objectivity, but by no means invalidates it. It does, however, require recourse to traditional and solid sources in order to establish the composition of the situation.

The author’s vision is realist in the strictest sense, no longer “Bismarckian”, but along the path of the purest Machiavellianism; that which confuses force with power, when what characterises power is capacity to build and not the other way round. To the perversity in his use to which the Colonel constantly alludes, the “so that” characteristic of any villainy is always missing.

In any case, this is not an academic work, but an informative and exploratory one, which is why it makes use of unorthodox resources. The aforementioned cases of Snowden and Brexit suggest that such approaches have not been sufficiently considered in the past. There are already many established sources for a more conventional view.

Watching the watcher, doubting, is the cornerstone not of democracy but of the West.

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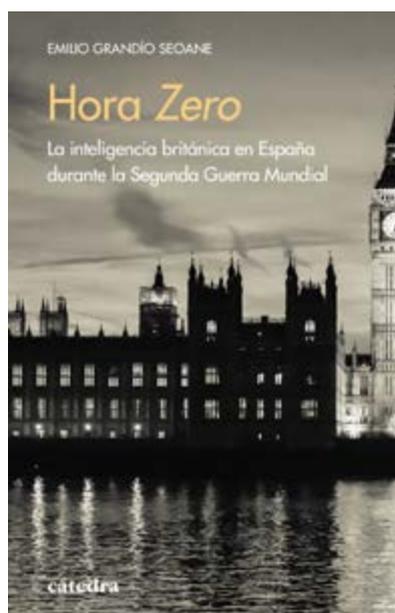
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## Book Review

*HORA ZERO. LA INTELIGENCIA BRITÁNICA EN ESPAÑA DURANTE LA SEGUNDA GUERRA MUNDIAL. [ZERO HOUR. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE IN SPAIN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR.]. Emilio Grandío Seoane, Publisher: Cátedra, 2021.*

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There has been no shortage of works analysing Spain's role as a theatre of espionage for decades. Among them, the prolific work of Diego Navarro Bonilla is worth mentioning, although his production has touched on such a multitude of aspects and chronologies that it would be impossible to summarise it briefly<sup>2</sup>. With regards to espionage during the Spanish Civil War, until recently it has been pointed out that historiography has been somewhat forgetful about it;<sup>3</sup> something similar could have been said about the Iberian Peninsula as the scene of the belligerents' intelligence actions during the world conflict that broke out in 1939. However, since then, many notable contributions have been made to the subject thanks, to a large extent, to the work of Emilio Grandío Seoane, professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela, who started by coordinating *War zone: la Segunda Guerra Mundial en el noroeste de la península Ibérica*. In this collective volume, Professor Grandío examined the role of British intelligence in Spain during the world conflict, and pointed out that the information networks available to British intelligence in Spain – despite their shortcomings – had their roots in a period prior to the invasion of Poland by German and Soviet troops. He continued along these lines in the monographic dossier he edited in the *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*: “Guerra de silencios: Redes de Inteligencia en España durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial.” In this interesting compendium of articles, Grandío himself,<sup>4</sup> as well as Julio Ponce,<sup>5</sup> Susana Sueiro,<sup>6</sup> Javier Rodríguez<sup>7</sup> and Diego Navarro,<sup>8</sup> approached many of the faces of the game of mirrors that defined the actions of the Allied and Axis intelligence services during those years. Grandío focused his research on the British field, as he demonstrated in his next work:

2 We could make two recommendations: Navarro Bonilla, Diego: *Orígenes de la inteligencia en el estado moderno: tratadística militar, diplomática y política en Europa (siglos XVI-XVIII)*. Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch, 2017; Navarro Bonilla, Diego: *Inteligencia y análisis retrospectivo: lecciones de historia y lecturas recomendadas*. Valencia, Tirant lo Blanch, 2014.

3 Ros Agudo, Manuel, “El espionaje en España en la guerra civil y la segunda guerra mundial: una visión general”, *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea: La voce del silenzio: intelligence, spionaggio e conflitto nel XX secolo*, 28: 4, 2016, 29/12/2016,

URL:< [http://www.studistorici.com/2016/12/29/ros-agudo\\_numero\\_28/](http://www.studistorici.com/2016/12/29/ros-agudo_numero_28/) >

4 GRANDÍO SEOANE, Emilio: “No solo wolframio. Galicia, campo de juego de las redes de inteligencia durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial.” *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*, 4:8. 2015, pp.101-117.

5 POMCE ALBERCA, Julio: “Espionaje en Gibraltar y su campo (1936-1945).” *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*, 4:8. 2015, pp.35-54.

6 SUEIRO SEOANE, Susana: “La ciudad de los espías (1940-1945): Tánger español y la política británica.” *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*, 4:8. 2015, pp.55-74.

7 RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ, Javier: “Los servicios secretos en el Norte de España durante la II Guerra Mundial: el Abwehr alemán y el SOE inglés.” *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*, 4:8. 2015, pp.75-100.

8 NAVARRO BONILLA, Diego: “Intelligence in theory: manuals, regulations and instructions on doctrine and procedure (France, United Kingdom and United States, 1870-1945).” *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*, 4:8. 2015, pp.15-34.

*A Balancing Act: British Intelligence in Spain during the Second World War*,<sup>9</sup> a corrected and expanded volume that now sees the light of day in Spanish under the Crítica imprint.

*Hora Zero* is first and foremost a product of the analysis of documentation held in the British National Archives relating to the Iberian peninsula throughout the decade 1936-1946; although the book focuses on events linked to the world war, it also deals with events immediately prior to it. Among the archives consulted, those relating to the Foreign Office and the British intelligence structure in Spain have proved to be the most decisive for the publication of this book, as the author rightly points out throughout it. At times, this analysis of British diplomatic sources is not compared with other available sources, opening windows for new contributions or future nuances. The author himself points out that much work remains to be done and that further research and confrontation of the British account with others is needed. The centrality that the author gives to British documentation of the 1936 conflict at the beginning of the book orders most of the narrative and allows us to understand the extent to which British political interests were at the centre of its external action during the Spanish conflict and its subsequent relationship with the Franco regime. Defending British interests meant assuming that neither side would be a “permanent friend or foe”, and this was the foundation stone on which all British action in Spain during World War II was subsequently built.

The large number of individuals who identify themselves as members or collaborators of the British intelligence network is evidence of the interest and effort undertaken by the United Kingdom. This network, which stretched from Vigo to Barcelona and from Bilbao to Gran Canaria, covered the entire Iberian peninsula and the African territories under Spanish sovereignty. It was, therefore, an enormous effort that required a complicated structure of control, financing and maintenance, which highlighted, as the author rightly points out, the major interest in the events south of the Pyrenees in Whitehall during the most difficult years of the world conflagration. A structure so lacking in transparency and complexity that, on some occasions, the idea was sown that the actions of some operatives could be hindering those of others without knowing it<sup>10</sup>. The relationship between the French and British intelligence services is still pending, as well as what happened to the information structure that France had in Spain before 1940 and whether it remained under the orders of Vichy or whether its assets continued the game on the side of the Allies by being integrated into the new British networks<sup>11</sup>.

The book provides interesting perspectives that offer us a new vision of other conflicts and allow us to trace the genealogy of some ideas that might seem later. The *real-*

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<sup>9</sup> GRANDÍO SEOANE, Emilio: *British Intelligence in Spain during the Second World War*. Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> P.30.

<sup>11</sup> p.49.

*politik* mandate and the conversion of the Franco regime into an ecosystem in which British diplomacy moved with a certain ease, as it knew its internal rules and codes, and the fact that it had managed to develop a certain capacity for direct and indirect influence meant that, during and after the world conflict, the best safeguard for its interests was the maintenance of the regime. In terms of this dimension, British *soft power* in Spain had important vectors in British businessmen with interests in Iberian countries, but it also resorted to some novel tools such as the use of the BBC, the dissemination of translated press in selected circles, or the use of the means made available by private capital, such as the International Banking Corporation; however, all these instruments were also available to other forms of direct interference<sup>12</sup>. Naval intelligence – it seems to us more appropriate to use this expression – was an indispensable tool for the British to obtain sources of a certain quality from the crews of the German ships that frequented some peninsular ports and regularly supplied the Kriegsmarine's submarine fleet. Within the *human factor* referred to above, the role of the naval attaché at the embassy in Madrid from 1939 onwards, the mysterious Alan Hillgarth – Hugh Evans' alter ego – became an indispensable element in the coordination of the naval intelligence service with MI6 and, from 1940 onwards, with SOE. His intuition led British intelligence to focus its interest on coordinating approaches to the Spanish generalship and admiralty, seeking strategic or circumstantial allies that would hinder an irreversible Germanophile drift on the part of the state leadership. Such subtle actions did not prevent the initiation of more aggressive ones, such as zero-sum strategies that increased internal reluctance to further Spanish commitment to the Axis, some as surprising as facilitating the structuring of the anti-Francoist guerrilla movement in the Asturian mountains<sup>13</sup>.

In 1940 Samuel Hoare, a leading Tory militant who had been a cabinet member and a member of his country's intelligence community since World War I, was appointed ambassador to Spain; he pushed for the conversion of the British diplomatic structure in Spain into an effective tool in the service of the Allied war effort in complete symbiosis with its intelligence services. Professor Grandío's analysis of the Hillgart and Hoare correspondence is very interesting. Undoubtedly, one of the great contributions of this book is the understanding that the regime was useful to British interests insofar as it was predictable. In this sense, British *soft power* in Spain and Portugal from 1940 onwards sought a pragmatic position vis-à-vis the Iberian dictatorships.

The study of the most fascistic sectors of Spanish society and its political elite with the Third Reich, as well as its information networks during the Second World War, are also present in Grandío's work. Not surprisingly, it analyses the anti-British sentiment exacerbated by Falangist groups and instigated by the German Reich embassy. The former was as keen to exploit Spanish nationalist sentiment around the claim to sovereignty over Gibraltar as the British were to conceal any contact with anti-Franco

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<sup>12</sup> p.42.

<sup>13</sup> p.47.

forces. The aim of the latter was to try to ensure that their own actions were not seen as a threat to the survival of the regime by the generals and admirals they were trying to win over; something they did not always achieve, according to the military cases consulted by Grandío, which show that the relations between members of British intelligence in Spain and the opposition forces to the regime were pursued and known. A game in which counter-intelligence networks played a key role. Thus, the British intelligence community in Spain and Portugal had to devote enormous resources to checking rumours of all kinds, which undoubtedly responded to Spanish or German disinformation strategies. The scarcity of in-house assets capable of pre-discarding information increased the impact and usefulness of these strategies. One evidence of this lack of human resources, Grandío points out, was exemplified by the poor structure of the SOE's special operations section – SO2 – in Spain, which was unable to obtain small arms on the black market in 1940.

The author rightly points out that the Americas, and especially the Spanish emigrant colony, became a focus of interest for British intelligence activities aimed at controlling the Axis. Hoare was aware that German intelligence was especially active in Spain, but also in some parts of the Americas thanks to the collaboration of Falangist organisations abroad and the regime's own cultural activity in Latin America<sup>14</sup>.

Despite the thoroughness of the author's documentary review, we are convinced that there is still much to be said on this subject.

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<sup>14</sup> We have also made some observations on this in our recent report: Velasco Martínez, Luis: *Fascistas de ultramar. La organización de Falange en el Río de la Plata, 1936-1942*. Buenos Aires, Biblós, 2021.



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## Book Review

*SALIR DEL CAOS. LA CRISIS EN EL MEDITERRÁNEO Y EN ORIENTE MEDIO [GETTING OUT OF THE CHAOS. THE CRISIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST]. Translation by Elena M. Cano and Íñigo Sánchez-Paños. Gilles Kepel, Publisher: Alianza, 2021*

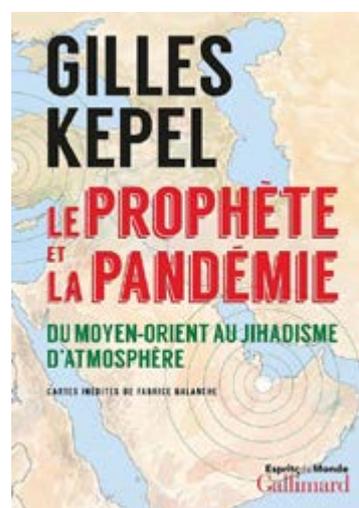
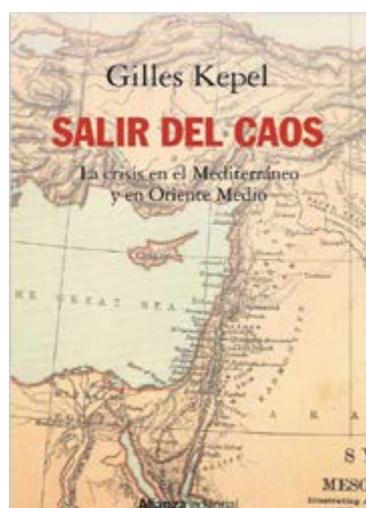
*ISBN 978-84-9181-885-4 (456 pages)*

*(Original edition). SORTIR DU CHAOS. LES CRISES EN MÉDITERRANÉE ET AU MOYEN ORIENT.*

*Gilles Kepel, Publisher: Gallimard, 2018 (528 pages)*

*LE PROPHÈTE ET LA PANDEMIE. DU MOYEN-ORIENT AU JIHADISME D'ATMOSPHERE. Gilles Kepel, Publisher: Gallimard, 2021*

*ISBN 978-20-7292-312-8 (324 pages)*



Gilles Kepel, one of the world's leading experts on the MENA region and political Islam, writes in *Salir del Caos*, a work that is both an expression of a desire and a compendium of his long history of study on these issues. The book starts in the 1970s and concludes in 2018, in the post-Daesh time and the beginning of the end of the war in Syria. Unlike many studies on this area that tend to rely on univocal interpretations, whether focused on the religious-cultural or on a strictly socio-economic and geopolitical analysis in which culture and religion would be seen as sort of malleable epiphenomena, Kepel's study shows the interconnectedness of all these factors. It does so in a clear and easy-to-read presentation, despite the multiplicity of data from a large number of direct and indirect sources, including the many interviews with different actors in the field. By combining chronological tracking and detailed thematic study, with a special emphasis on Syria and Iraq, Kepel succeeds in bringing an explanatory coherence to the great complexity of the area. His analysis revolves around two major axes, oil and Islam, which, interconnected, mark the development of a period that reaches its real turning point in 2020, a time he analyses in *Le prophète et la pandémie*.

*Salir del Caos* is organised into three parts. The first begins with a brief account of his personal trajectory of half a century of research on the area until "he was absorbed in his own object of study by the death sentence passed against him by Daesh" (:18), and continues with an extensive introduction to the period that follows the line of all his previous work<sup>1</sup>. The starting point is the crucial date of 1973, the year of the Arab-Israeli war in October (Yom Kippur/Ramadan), after which OPEC turns to oil prices and achieves an almost complete control of the market that dramatically increases the rents of the oil monarchies. From this time onwards, Kepel explains, the oil-Islam relationship will progressively displace Arab nationalism as a driving force in the region.

It was in 1979 that "the Pandora's box of international Islamic terrorism" (:17) was opened. In this pivotal year, which began with the Iranian revolution and ended with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt was ratified in Washington (26 March), in which the Palestinian question ceased to be central. It is also the year of the hostage-taking at the US embassy in Tehran (November) and the storming of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by the *al Jamaa al Salafiya al Muhtasiba* (JSM) group with similar ideas to the later Daesh, which ended in a massacre and marked a turning point in Saudi policy<sup>2</sup> (Kepel 2020: 42-43).

In the development of this part, Kepel analyses the process of continued political Islamisation that manifests itself in the three successive phases of jihadism. The initial

1 Gilles Kepel (1984) *Faraón y profeta*. El Aleph, Barcelona; (2002) *La yihad, expansión y declive del islamismo* Península, Barcelona; (2004) *Fitna. Guerra en el corazón del islam*, Paidós, Barcelona; (2008) *Terreur et martyre. Relever le défi de la civilisation* Flammarion, Paris.

2 "The mosque siege that changed the course of Saudi history» (BBC, 27/12/2019) <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-50852379> (last accessed on 29/3/2021)

one focuses on the struggle against the ‘near enemy’ (Afghanistan, Egypt, Algeria) in which a key year is 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan, with the help of Saudi petrodollars and the CIA, which trained and financed the mujahideen<sup>3</sup> in an “alliance with the devil”, the price of which proved incalculable (:48). The second phase, centred on the fight ‘against the distant enemy’, is dominated by al-Qaeda, which breaks with the “jihadist Salafism” loyal to Saudi Arabia and initiates a “jihadist Salafism” that reaches its zenith with the attacks of 11 September 2001, to which it responds with the “war on terror” with the consequences that this, in turn, unleashes. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, which was supposed to topple Saddam Hussein’s regime and reshape the Middle East, ended in failure and encouraged the jihadist drift into a new phase (:109-113).

The central part of the book analyses this new jihadist phase which, unlike the pyramidal and centralised al-Qaeda model conceptualised by Zawahiri, is characterised by territorial expansion and the dominance of networks and manifests itself in a “reticular” terrorism which, like a rhizome, spreads from below around the world and connects radicalised young European Salafists with those from the slums of the Maghreb and the Middle East, creating “a jihadist ubiquity around the Mediterranean basin” (:340). A drift that manifested itself over a period that began with the Arab rebellions of 2011, continued with the proclamation of Daesh’s Islamic State in 2014 and the spread of Islamist terrorism, also on European soil, and ended with the fall of Raqqa to the Kurdish YPG militias and Mosul in autumn 2017. Kepel studies the different evolution of the six ‘spring’ countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria) which, except in the case of Tunisia, end in a failure of the hopes for democratisation, either with the restoration of an authoritarian regime, as in Egypt after the coup against Morsi in 2013, or in prolonged civil wars as in Yemen, Libya and, especially, Syria. The political processes correspond to a shift in authoritarian Arab regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, away from their previous support for the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood movement and towards its repression in the context of a Turkish-Saudi struggle for hegemony within the Sunni world, reminiscent of the last period of the Ottoman Empire. This struggle is intertwined with the Sunni-Shi’a confrontation that Kepel believes is becoming the main fault line in the Middle East. Although with nuances, as noted in the last part of the book, which focuses on the time after Daesh and the challenge of the “battle of the Levant”, when new lines of fracture are opening up, with renewed political actors, especially Turkey and Russia, which is taking advantage of the vacuum left by American withdrawal in the area, explained in part by the new oil and natural gas extraction techniques that have made the US the world’s leading producer. Not to mention China, with its diverse and shifting alliances and interests in the region.

Two years after the publication of this first book, which presented a broad overview of the region and its multiple intertwined processes rather than solutions, the chaos

3 Kepel starts calling the 40,000 or so foreigners who join their ranks *jihadists*, to differentiate them from the indigenous guerrillas.

continues and is growing with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is disrupting the world economy and increasing inequalities and tensions, and whose medium-term effects are still uncertain. Some of the questions raised by *Salir del Caos* are addressed in *Le prophète et la pandémie*, which, without forgetting the historical background that marked the former, is a chronicle made in the rhythm of the succession of events. For Kepel, the fourth jihadist phase is already clear in 2020, dominated by what he describes as an “atmosphere jihadism” or “contagion jihadism”, in which networks and organisation no longer prevail, but rather it spreads like a virus among the most vulnerable individuals and social sectors. A jihadism promoted by “anger-mongers”<sup>4</sup> whose main representative would be, according to Kepel, Turkish President Erdogan, leader of the “Shiite-Hermanist” axis (Turkey, Iran and its broad framework of influence) with its neo-Ottoman and re-Islamising programme. Opposing it is the Abraham Agreement (Washington, 15.09.2020) between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), joined by Bahrain and Morocco and implicitly by Saudi Arabia, supported by the United States and, despite Palestinian protests, approved by the Arab League. One of the common threads in these agreements is the rejection of political Islam, although it should not be forgotten that the fall in oil revenues requires the petro-monarchies to reformulate their economies, in which Israeli high technology plays an important role. The confrontation between the two axes now crosses the entire area (from Central Asia to the Mediterranean and the Gulf, with Syria and Iraq at its core), where the Palestinian question is no longer the structuring factor in the Middle East.

For Kepel, the present moment is as crucial as the one in 1914 and requires urgent measures for a way out of the chaos, which he says is possible. This requires, and not least, better training in Arab history, language and civilisation, the shortcomings of which in Western countries have led many so-called experts to conclude analyses that are inconsistent with the reality on the ground and to propose erroneous formulas that have left the way open for the intervention of other, better-trained actors, Russia among them. Not only has this been the case with the interpretation of the Arab Spring, but, Kepel argues, it has also had consequences for the failures of the fight against terrorism within Europe, as shown by the attacks in France, or on 11 March 2004 in Madrid or in 2005 in London (:116-117) and the more recent attacks of that atmosphere jihadism, such as the one that led to the assassination of Professor Samuel Paty (16.10.2020). Europe, Kepel argues, must take independent and common security and defence and development measures throughout the Mediterranean area.

Both books include a detailed chronology and a series of original explanatory maps (ten in the first, sixteen in the second) that facilitate and illustrate this journey through the history of the area and its multiple interconnections over the last half century. *Le prophète et la pandémie* partially completes the first book, although its immediate chronicle nature leaves important questions open, such as the possible impact of the new Biden administration’s policy or that of Qatar’s reconciliation with Saudi Arabia. *Salir del Caos* is a far-reaching work. Even those who do not agree with some of his

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4 Expression taken from Bernard Rougier, ed. (2020) *Les Territoires conquis de l’islamisme*, PUF:Paris.

interpretations, such as the excessive emphasis he places on the development of radical Islamism as a determining factor and who understand, like Olivier Roy among others, that this is not the origin, but rather the instrument, of a large part of radicalisation<sup>5</sup>, should read it if they wish to have a panoramic and critical vision of the issue, a vision that is an essential element in the search for solutions.

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<sup>5</sup> The controversy between the two authors, with great academic and media repercussions, intensified in 2015-2016, when the aforementioned study by Kepel on Islamist terrorism in France was published. A summary of the controversy can be found in O. Gutiérrez (2017) *¿El islam se radicaliza o los radicales se islamizan?* [http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2017/02/15/actualidad/1487154199\\_174004.html](http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2017/02/15/actualidad/1487154199_174004.html) (last accessed on 29/02/2021)

