

## **The New Little Entente and other Eurasian security alternatives after NATO**

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**Abstract:** This paper considers possible options for the future of Europe after the collapse of NATO, formally or informally, which is the likely result of the Alliance's continued atrophy and the unwinnable proxy war in Ukraine. This paper focuses on what will happen to European security in the aftermath of such a collapse. Caught in the middle of NATO's collapse, Europe has been put in a very difficult position. In this essay, I will discuss the division of the continent into "Old Europe" and "New Europe", as defined in 2003 by then-Secretary of Defence of the United States, Donald Rumsfeld. In addition, I will consider other factors breeding division within Europe, such as the formation of what I term the "New Little Entente" of Serbs and Hungarians, which is disrupting the use of the Intermarium as a cordon against Russia, or the sub-military alliance within NATO comprised of France and Greece, which is designed to counter Turkey. One disturbing unknown factor is the future of Turkey and its special position vis-à-vis the US and its other nominal allies within NATO due to their complex and opposing interests. In the concluding portion of this paper, some possible outcomes will be presented with regard to the highly unpredictable future of Europe in a multipolar world, none of which take the form of a monolithic element like the European Union, despite the hopes of today's European leadership.

**Keywords:** New Little Entente, Security, Europe, NATO, Russia, Intermarium, United States, Ukraine, Middle East, China, Eurasia, war, de-dollarization.

### **In search of a purpose**

"Pax Romana was an empire; Pax Britannica was based on an empire. It is natural to assume that Pax Americana must be one too" (Cooper 2004, 173).

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Since the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the bipolar world order, and the beginning of *Pax Americana*, many have questioned NATO's purpose. Since the decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO has had a very difficult time justifying its own existence. Instead of dissipating, it soon began to expand eastward, ignoring a non-proliferation pledge by Western leaders to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev.

According to declassified US, Soviet, German, British, and French documents posted on December 12, 2017, by the National Security Archive at George Washington University, US Secretary of State James Baker's famous "not one inch eastward" assurance regarding NATO expansion in his meeting with Soviet leader Gorbachev on February 9, 1990, was a part of a cascade of assurances about Soviet security given by Western leaders to Gorbachev and other Soviet officials throughout the process of German unification in 1990 and on into 1991. A total of 30 declassified documents show that multiple national leaders were considering and rejecting Central and Eastern European membership in NATO. Promises and guarantees against NATO expansion were not only given behind closed doors, but leading politicians in the West also did so publicly. The first concrete assurances by Western leaders about NATO began on January 31, 1990, when West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher made clear in a major public speech at Tutzing, Bavaria, "that the changes in Eastern Europe and the German unification process must not lead to an 'impairment of Soviet security interests'. Therefore, NATO should rule out an 'expansion of its territory towards the east, i.e., moving it closer to the Soviet borders". Genscher also proposed to leave the East German territory out of NATO military structures, even in a unified Germany within NATO. The notion of moving "closer to the Soviet borders" is written down not in treaties but in multiple memoranda of conversation between the Soviets and the highest-level Western interlocutors (Genscher, Helmut Kohl, Baker, Robert Gates, George H. W. Bush, Francois Mitterrand, Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Manfred Woerner, and others) offering assurances about protecting Soviet security interests and including the USSR in new European security structures. The "Tutzing formula" immediately became the centre of a flurry of important diplomatic discussions, leading to the crucial February 10, 1990, meeting in Moscow between Kohl and Gorbachev, when the West German leader achieved Soviet assent in principle to German unification in NATO,

as long as NATO did not expand to the east. In his meeting with Gorbachev on February 9, 1990, not once but three times, Baker confirmed the “not one inch eastward” formula. He agreed with Gorbachev’s statement in response to the assurance that “NATO expansion is unacceptable”. Baker assured Gorbachev that “neither the President nor I intend to extract any unilateral advantages from the processes that are taking place”. At the same time, the unacceptability of NATO’s expansion towards the east of Europe was explicitly pointed out. For example, on February 6, 1990, when Genscher met with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, British records show that Genscher said: “The Russians must have some confidence that if, for example, the Polish government one day leaves the Warsaw Pact, they would not join NATO next” (National Security Archive, 2017).

The reason for NATO’s existence soon became the Yugoslav crisis and the first bombing of Serbian positions in the Republic of Srpska and the Republic of Srpska Krajina on the territory of the former Yugoslav socialist republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, where NATO intervened militarily in 1994 and 1995. In 1999, on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Western military alliance, NATO launched, to use the vocabulary of the Resolution on Ukraine of the European Parliament of March 1, 2022, an “illegal, unprovoked, and unjustified military aggression against and invasion” of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On that occasion, as stated in the aforementioned resolution, NATO troops “committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate shelling of living areas, hospitals, and kindergartens (while their allies on the ground from the so-called Kosovo liberation army were engaged in), the plundering of public and private property, and wanton destruction of civilian infrastructure”.

The illegal bombing of the Serbs solidified the reason for the existence of this military alliance in the eyes of the political West, but, on the other hand, it inevitably caused chain reactions that irreversibly disrupted the decades-long international order. One of them was putting an end to the vision for a geopolitical order that had been established at the conferences of the victorious powers of the Second World War in 1943 in Tehran and in 1945 at Yalta and Potsdam. The second but equally significant consequence is that the US’s flagrant violation of international law, such as military aggression without a decision of the United Nations Security Council,

caused alarm in Russia, which had a decisive effect on the end of the era of Boris Yeltsin and the coming to power of Vladimir Putin. Among the Russian elites and throughout Russian society, a turning point occurred, at which point Russia's "honeymoon" with the West was understood to have been a deception, and awareness arose that the expansion of NATO to the east was ultimately directed against Russia. "The only vision NATO seems to have for the Balkans is full integration, and for the Serbs, absolute capitulation is the only compromise they could and should hope for. NATO-orchestrated changes in Kosovo, Republika Srpska, Montenegro, and Macedonia, and relations with Russia are the most glaring examples of such a calculated policy. The new cold war with Russia is what is driving the rapid NATO-ization of the Balkans, as are the general insecurity and dissonant tones coming from different centres of the political West. Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General, once famously said that the role of NATO is to "keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down". From the early 1990s, the goal of NATO in the Balkans has been to keep the Russians out, NATO in, and the Serbs down" (Gajić, Ponomareva 2020, 83).

The next major crisis occurred in 2003 with the Western invasion of Iraq, led by the United States. That crisis divided Europe into old and new, as defined by then-US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld (Hooper, Black, 2003). In France, especially, but also in other Western European countries, the idea surfaced that Europe should create its own security framework outside of NATO. On the other hand, Eastern European countries, former members of the Warsaw Pact, became increasingly aggressive and enthusiastic members of the Western military alliance. They saw NATO as a ticket to the European Union and the EU as heaven on Earth. At that time, not only did the political elites believe this, but so did many nations among the candidate countries for NATO and the EU.

All this changed in 2007 with Putin's historic speech at the 43rd Security Conference in Munich. With an unprecedented openness and ferocity that stunned the West and shook its previously unquestionable self-confidence, the Russian president, in a speech on February 10, 2007, attacked the policy of the US, then the only superpower, as well as the militarization of international relations and the increasingly frequent unilateral and illegitimate use of force, arguing that it only creates new tragedies and

tensions. Putin said that the unipolar world is incompatible with modern times and that the use of force is legitimate only with the blessing of the UN, which cannot be replaced by either NATO or the EU, warning that no pressing problem can be solved without Russia: from the Middle East, through Iran, to Kosovo and Metohija. He also fiercely criticised NATO's expansion to Russia's borders despite earlier firm assurances that the Western military alliance would not expand beyond the eastern borders of a united Germany (Putin, 2007). Then it became clear to the West that Moscow would not stand idly by NATO's eastward expansion, and in 2008, the five-day war in Georgia demonstrated this in practice.

This led to a new moment of loss of confidence among the members regarding the purpose of the Alliance. France, especially with the coming to power of President Emmanuel Macron in 2017, has been at the forefront of rhetoric about European security forces outside of NATO. After Donald Trump's statement during the 2016 presidential campaign that the Alliance was obsolete, Macron stated that NATO had experienced "brain death" (The Economist 2019).

Things are also changing following the escalation of the eight-year war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, which has brought upon a new revival of NATO, whose purpose is now to openly confront Russia. NATO is growing more and more involved in the war, and practically all members of the Alliance, with the exception of Hungary, are sending huge amounts of military aid, including "volunteers" to fight against Russia. As time passes, it is increasingly clear that this proxy war, in which the Ukrainian army is little more than cannon fodder, is not developing in NATO's favour.

In response to the situation, Macron has revived the narrative of European security and the strategic autonomous defence of Europe in relation to the US (Rasquet 2023). It seems, however, that it is a bit too late for such an initiative now that the US has utterly humiliated and subdued the whole of Europe. This goes especially for the leading duo of the EU, France and, perhaps even more so, Germany; the US has essentially made them vassals once again, albeit more obviously.

Despite everything, NATO continues to grow: for now, to Finland, and most probably soon to Sweden as well, though the process is currently handicapped by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey, but that may change as was promised by Erdoğan at the Vilnius NATO Summit in July 2023.

All in all, against the background of the war in Ukraine, NATO continues to expand, but it is very possible that it will soon suffer the fate of an overinflated balloon. Here we will consider possible security options for countries of the Alliance after the collapse of its proxy in Ukraine, i.e., after Kiev's military defeat. The question is what security alternatives European countries will seek for themselves, both those that are members of NATO and those that are under the political influence of the Western military alliance, particularly in Southeast Europe.

In essence, the true dominance of the West lasted from 1991 until it was symbolically shattered by the terrorist attack on New York's twin towers on September 11, 2001. The 1990s were a period of invincibility and belief in the global moral superiority of the West. In addition to the collapse of the Soviet Union, 1991 also marked the first CNN war, i.e., the highly televised Gulf War, which created the perception of the complete invincibility of the American army and the United States. Television observers around the world could watch targets marked with a cross that then exploded, which sent a powerful message of American omnipotence. American weapons seemed absolutely supreme and precise, in accordance with the perception of American moral superiority.

Robert Cooper writes in the book *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* that Western superiority is fundamentally based on a monopoly over superior weapons: "The doctrine of prevention therefore needs to be complemented by a doctrine of enduring strategic superiority – and this is, in fact, the main theme of the US National Security Strategy" (Cooper 2004, 65). It is interesting that this book was published in 2002, a year after the first serious blow against the US and the first crack in the monolithic facade of the West, the first hint of the coming collapse of Western dominance.

Regardless of the circumstances behind the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, what we know for sure are the consequences. The results have been fantastically described by Naomi Klein in her book *The Shock Doctrine*, which shows how American society is drifting towards systemic totalitarianism via the creation of a series of intelligence agencies that monitor not only foreigners but also their own citizens, limiting domestic freedoms and the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. "First, the White House used the

omnipresent sense of peril in the aftermath of 9/11 to dramatically increase the policing, surveillance, detention, and war-waging powers of the executive branch – a power grab that the military historian Andrew Bacevich has termed ‘a rolling coup’. Then those newly enhanced and richly funded functions of security, invasion, occupation and reconstruction were immediately outsourced, handed over to the private sector to perform at a profit” (Klein 2007, 576–577). She compares these policies to those employed by the Nazis.

The bottom line here is that the images of the 9/11 attacks that were aired in real time around the world had the effect of shattering the Western myth of invincibility. The staggering shock of the events in New York and Washington and the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre were etched into the collective memory of all of humanity. These attacks represented the beginning of the end for the Pax Americana. Even if we were to accept the conspiracy theories arguing that US elites organised the attacks themselves behind the scenes in order to justify a series of wars, starting with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and the subsequent occupation of those two countries with the larger aim of preventing the political consolidation of the Eurasian continent that could rival American power, 9/11 and these occupations ultimately had the exact opposite effect.

The process of consolidation on the Eurasian continent was largely initiated for two reasons. One was the global recognition that America is not invincible and that it is in fact vulnerable, which sent a signal to the countries whose security depended on the US to start searching for potential alternatives. The second was the doctrine of the so-called preemptive attack that was put forward by the Bush administration as a response to the 9/11 attacks.

The official narrative of Bush’s propaganda was that the aggression against Afghanistan and later Iraq that followed 9/11 was actually part of America’s self-defence in the so-called war on terror. The direct consequence of this, especially the doctrine of preventive attack, was nuclear proliferation, as countries realised that only possession of nuclear weapons (this primarily applies to North Korea but also to Iran and eventually others as well) would allow them to defend themselves against inevitable American aggression.

The consolidation of the Eurasian continent culminated years after 2001, with China brokering the reconciliation of long-time arch-enemies Saudi Arabia and Iran on March 10, 2023. Photos of China’s diplomatic triumph

at a ceremony in Beijing instantly went viral. It was immediately clear that this was an unprecedented event, and the epithet of tectonic changes in the Middle East was attributed to it on all meridians, especially due to the fact that America had not played a role in this extremely important process (Baker 2023), with many believing that the reconciliation succeeded precisely because of America's absence. The processes of consolidation in greater Eurasia are happening as an effect of the collapse of the image of the invincibility of the United States and the West as a whole. This image has become a hard reality on the ground, whether we are talking about the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, or the Pacific region. This has been followed by changes in the global economy, such as the process of de-dollarization and the breakdown of the global economic system in which the US played a leading role.

These processes are beginning to bolster one another, and the almost panicked expansion of NATO to the east seems to be a consequence of the fear of Eurasian consolidation.

The next milestone after the September 11 terrorist attacks was the agreement at a NATO summit in Bucharest in early April 2008 that Ukraine and Georgia would become members of the Alliance. This represented the transgression of a point of no return. Four months later, the emboldened regime in Georgia militarily attacked South Ossetia, which ended disastrously for Tbilisi in the short war between Russia and Georgia.

## **Old Europe**

The escalation of the war in Ukraine, or, should we say, the war in Eastern Europe, led to the exacerbation of internal contradictions across the European continent. These contradictions were pointed out by Rumsfeld back in early 2003, when he divided Europe into old and new. According to that division, the new Europe is made up of the countries that Polish dictator Marshal Jozef Pilsudski called the "Intermarium", that is, the countries of Eastern Europe, which belonged to the Warsaw Pact and were quite enthusiastic about both NATO and the EU, as evidenced by the large military contingents that these countries have been sending to various American and NATO missions around the world. Intermarium, or Międzymorze in the Polish language, is a concept put forward by Pilsudski



at the very beginning of the third decade of the 20th century about the creation of a federation consisting of Poland, the three Baltic states, Belarus, Finland, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and the then Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia). The goal of creating a predominantly Roman Catholic geopolitical formation (an idea that was not realised at the time but has recently been fueled by Russophobic elements, especially in Poland, Ukraine, and Croatia) was to suppress Russian influence, which included the appropriation of the territories of the "Russian world" (Belarus and Ukraine).

Rumsfeld's division was based on the attitude of certain European countries towards the American military invasion of Iraq in March 2003, which Washington wanted to present at all costs as a "joint allied action". The backbone of old Europe is Germany and France. At first glance, it seems that the escalation of the war in the former Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine has rapidly revived the internal integrity of NATO but has also essentially resulted in the American reoccupation of Western Europe, which especially applies to Germany. Let us recall that the original mission of NATO in Europe, as defined by the first Secretary General of the Alliance, Lord Lionel Ismay, was to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down. What the escalation of war in Ukraine did in effect was reestablish the American occupation of Germany, as many have pointed out. However, it has now become undeniable, even to those who refused to see it before.

At the end of the Second World War, Germany was divided into four occupation zones, of which three were western: British, French, and American, with the Soviet zone in the east. The occupation zones of Western countries were united into West Germany, while East Germany was part of the Soviet zone. West Germany was unquestionably dominated from the very beginning by the United States, whose hegemony was extended to the entire territory of the country as soon as its creation was announced on May 23, 1949. These are all known facts; however, what is more controversial is the unpleasant truth that the unification of the two German states on October 3, 1990, also meant a new expansion of the American occupation zone.

This unpleasant truth has been fully illuminated by the puppet-like behaviour of the current German political leadership, including Chancellor

Olaf Scholz and especially Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock of the “Greens”, a party that was led by Joschka Fischer at the time of NATO’s illegal military aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. Baerbock even declared that she was more interested in the defence of the regime in Kiev than the opinions of German citizens. In Prague on September 1, 2022, she literally said: “If I give the promise to people in Ukraine ‘we stand with you as long as you need us’ then I want to deliver, no matter what my German voters think, I want to deliver to the people of Ukraine” (Ruptly 2022). The logical consequence of this model of political championing is more than mild resistance to Germany’s involvement in the NATO war and the constant shifting of the Overton window towards war against Russia on the territory of Ukraine. (Note: “Overton window” is the framework within which the range of ideas considered acceptable to the public is placed. The name is derived from the surname of the concept’s creator, the American political scientist Joseph Overton. By “inserting” new ideas into that “space of acceptability”, the “Overton window” is also moved in one direction or another, depending on the intentions of those who guide the public).

In a series of lectures, including one in Belgrade in 2014, the founder and former chairman of the American strategic intelligence publishing company Stratfor, George Friedman, essentially a spokesman for the CIA, repeated that the main issue in Europe today is the problem of Germany. Germany has enjoyed its hegemony in Europe for decades, but this hegemony has not come from the physical or military occupation of other countries. Instead, it is a result of economic dominance, as the entirety of the EU’s economy has been working in Germany’s favour. Germany wanted this to last as long as possible, and that was the main goal of Chancellor Angela Merkel, but Ukraine changed everything. According to Friedman, the Germans themselves bear a part of the blame for this because they promised the Ukrainians entry into the EU, thinking that they would not take it seriously (Friedman 2015). In any case, it is clear that the irrevocably broken arrangement in Europe was created after the Soviet withdrawal, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, and the unification of Germany.

The miserable current position of Germany, yesterday’s European hegemon, was completely exposed by its behavior after the destruction of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines at the bottom of the Baltic Sea on

September 26, 2022. As American journalist Seymour Hersh claims in a detailed report (Hersh 2023), the explosive used to carry out this terrorist attack was placed on the orders of President Joe Biden himself; the charge was placed by the US Navy with the help of Norway, another German “ally”. This destroyed one of the most important pillars of Germany’s economic power, and yet Germany did not say a word despite the fact that both Biden and Victoria Nuland had openly announced they would end the Nord Stream in one way or another (Yoo & Delahunty 2023).

As a result of the war on the territory of Ukraine, it turned out that Western Europe, part of so-called “Old Europe”, was to be dragged onto the same page with “New Europe” via NATO’s Russian policy. France, essentially, turned out to be a vassal state, sending the regime in Kiev even more weapons than Germany had. Official Paris is stumbling on the world geopolitical stage: after everything he said in the past, Macron is trying to revive his idea of a European army, that is, of the “strategic autonomy of Europe” in relation to the United States. Of course, there is nothing to be gained from that for now, especially since he cannot do much of anything after being compromised in the eyes of other international actors, particularly Russia, China, and Turkey.

Macron, who in 2018 spoke about a strategic partnership with Russia and Turkey, actually managed to do what Turkey had already done during the time of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, when it declared a policy of “zero problems with its neighbours” (Khan 2015, 38), but in effect created “zero neighbours” with its aggressive policy towards Syria. France has done something similar: instead of a meaningful partnership with Russia and Turkey, it let itself get pulled into a proxy war with Russia, actively sending weapons to the Ukraine regime and loudly declaring that Russia must not be allowed to win. On the other hand, it has created its own military alliance with Greece (Wichmann 2021) within NATO, which is essentially intended to counter Turkey. According to that agreement, if a third party were to attack Greece, and this third party could only be Turkey, France would be obligated to defend it. The conflicting interests of France and Russia in several African countries and conflicts between French and Turkish interests in Libya are also at play.

The United States has practically reoccupied the countries Rumsfeld grouped into the “Old Europe” category. The only thing that could save Old

Europe from American occupation would be the collapse of NATO and/or some sort of political collapse, or some other highly unlikely turn of events that would bring about excessive turmoil in the United States, forcing it to divert its attention and resources away from Europe. While unlikely, such an outcome is not completely inconceivable given the history of the US and the domestic turbulence we have seen since 2016, including a series of political scandals that are shaking the country, as well as the decline of the influence of the United States on the world stage caused by the incompetence of Biden's administration.

At the same time, NATO, while it might appear solid on the surface, has serious cracks, and not only because of Turkey, which has been leading an autonomous policy for a long time and has proven quite unpredictable. NATO succeeded in making the war in Ukraine a war of survival for Russia, as John Mearsheimer had warned, but it has also become a war of survival for NATO. "Contrary to the conventional wisdom in the West, Moscow did not invade Ukraine to conquer it and make it part of Greater Russia. It was principally concerned with preventing Ukraine from becoming a Western bulwark on the Russian border. Putin and his advisers were especially concerned about Ukraine eventually joining NATO... For Russian leaders, the prospect of Ukrainian membership in NATO is, as Putin himself put it before the invasion, 'a direct threat to Russian security' – one that could be eliminated only by going to war and turning Ukraine into a neutral or failed state" (Mearsheimer 2022). If the complete military collapse of Ukraine happens, which is the most likely outcome, the divisions that already exist would be too great to ignore, and this would inevitably cause the dissolution of the Alliance.

The crisis in the European Union, which has essentially functioned as the political wing of NATO, is also likely to deepen. The process of the EU's dissolution had already begun in 2016 with the departure of Great Britain, after which the UK immediately started to strengthen its security ties with the US and Australia separately from the rest of the European NATO partners. It is only a matter of time before other countries start looking for their own alternative security options.

Unless major cracks occur, however, Germany and France will very likely continue to be "covered" by American military dominance. However, the possibility of serious ruptures that alter this relationship should not be ruled

out. In such a case, it is a question of whether the United States would have enough energy and resources to devote to Europe, especially because the position of the dollar as the world's reserve currency is not nearly as strong as it once was due to the acceleration of de-dollarization and the rapid decline of US economic influence. The dissipation of US influence is particularly noticeable in the Middle East, but it is also occurring in Africa, Latin America, and countries throughout Asia, including in some countries of Southeast Asia, which were, until recently, considered to be US vassals. A significant meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors of ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) at the end of March 2023 in Indonesia went somewhat under the radar. It was dedicated to the necessity of leaving the US dollar, the Japanese yen, and the euro. Local media reported that Indonesian President Joko Widodo, in mid-March, urged regional administrations to be less dependent on foreign payment networks and start using credit cards issued by domestic banks to shield any transactions from possible geopolitical fallout. ASEAN countries are determined to conduct trade with countries outside their ten-member bloc in local currencies. So, immediately after the ASEAN ministerial meeting, Indian media reported that India and Malaysia were starting to settle their trade in the Indian rupee. As a result, the United States is desperate to maintain a dominant position within the Western bloc, where Europe is the key.

The problem in Europe, a peninsula of the great Eurasian continent, consists of the fact that Anglo-Saxon politics, the politics the English geopolitician Halford Mackinder called "thalassocracy", are beginning to lose their influence. The principle of "divide and rule" no longer works as reliably as it once did because Eurasian countries have started to form strategic partnerships. The rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is one clear example of something that Israel perceives as a security threat, and above all, in the strategic pact between the Eurasian giants Russia and China. Changes in the Middle East had a very significant impact on the politics in the Balkans: "It seems that Serbia, especially during the reign of Aleksandar Vučić, has begun to resemble a kind of joint-stock company. I have already written that, roughly estimated, it can be said that the West and the East have approximately equal influence, with Russia and China on the one hand and the Anglo-American coalition and the European Union on the other, which, for the sake of argument, we could say amounts to 40%

each. The third pole, the Arab factor, and the Emirates above all (the good relationship between Vučić and the President of the Emirates Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan), but also Saudi Arabia, holds around 20% of the 'shares'... It is an interesting coincidence that Serbian foreign policy changed radically during the summer of 2022, at the moment when Saudi Arabia and the Emirates that support it rejected the American request to increase oil production in order to bring down its price and punish Russia" (Gajić 2022, 83–84). The recent trips of Macron and Ursula Von Der Leyen to Beijing, as well as Scholz's earlier visit, hint at the development of a new policy wherein the Europeans try to find a place in the emerging non-Washington-dominated international order, though we shall have to see to what degree these efforts prove successful.

### **New Europe & The New Middle East**

Given these developments in Old Europe, the question naturally arises as to what all of this means for "New Europe". As things stand now, it seems that not only the governments but also the populations of the countries that were either part of the Soviet Union, such as the Baltic countries, or those that were in the Warsaw Pact, such as Poland or Romania, are by and large quite enthusiastic about the war in Ukraine. That is, they are supportive of NATO's assistance to the Kiev regime, including sending weapons and covertly sending military personnel for NATO's proxy war.

All of this would seem like nothing out of the ordinary, save for two problems that have arisen for NATO: Turkey and Hungary. Erdoğan's Turkey is extremely problematic for the West, given that it is an unreliable ally. It is clear that there are mounting problems between Ankara and Washington, especially since the attempted military coup in July 2016, after which Turkey practically accused the United States of organising the failed attempt not only to oust Erdoğan but also to assassinate him. Since then, Turkey has been trying to rebalance its position. After the escalation of the Ukrainian war in February 2022, Turkey sold arms to Ukraine and traded with Russia, cooperating with everyone, but its position was abruptly disrupted by the catastrophic earthquake on February 6, 2023, which killed at least 50,000 people, including about 6,000 in neighbouring Syria.

To make things even more complicated, the disaster struck Turkey just three months before a crucial presidential election. It is reasonable to presume that now that Erdoğan has barely succeeded in maintaining his position, he will try to continue to engage in this geopolitical balancing act, but there is now a question as to how long such a policy will remain possible, considering that only a month after the earthquake, the political circumstances in the neighbourhood have changed drastically. Under the auspices of China and with Russia undoubtedly in the background, while the Americans were completely excluded, a second earthquake occurred, this time geopolitical: the two arch-enemies, Saudi Arabia and Iran, reconciled, concluding an agreement that practically ended the alliance between the Gulf monarchies and the United States. Indirectly, the agreement also disrupted allied relations between the Gulf countries and Israel. An alliance that was never publicly announced, for understandable reasons.

The US-Saudi alliance, however, was already on shaky legs, as was clearly seen in July 2022 during Biden's visit to the kingdom (House 2022), when he tried to convince the hosts to increase oil production in order to lower its price. The American calculation was clear: increasing oil production would reduce Russia's income and significantly reduce inflation in the US, and yet the Saudis did the opposite: they further cut oil production. This fundamentally destroyed the American-Saudi agreement of 1945, that is, the policy of Anglo-Saxon domination, which obliged Riyadh to sell oil exclusively in dollars, with Washington in return guaranteeing the security of the desert kingdom, which for decades then bought American weapons with those same dollars.

Russian policy is the exact opposite of Henry Kissinger's doctrine that the United States should rule by balancing roughly equal opponents in the Middle East, all of whom have partnered relations with the United States but are mutually locked in a prisoner's dilemma, that is, in constant fear of one another. The approach of Russia and China is based on mutual trust. These events have created a huge problem for Israel, which remains alone, confronted with Iran, and unable to count on local alliances, i.e., the Gulf Sunni monarchies. We have yet to see how this situation will play out both for Israel and for its neighbours in the long run.

Turkey, in the region where immensely important events are rapidly unfolding, seemed for a while to be frozen by the drama of the tragedy

caused by the earthquake. An illustration of this transformation is the fact that defence ministers of Syria, Iran, Turkey, and Russia met in Moscow, which suggests that changes in the security architecture of the Middle East are already underway. But then again, how do we get around Erdoğan's Vilnius summit *Eastern promises*? In any case, Erdoğan won the tight presidential election and will have to change something in his conduct. Or perhaps not? But at what possible price? In the worst-case scenario, the internal contradictions and tensions in the country should not be ruled out.

Thus, while Turkey remains an enigma, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán presents another problem for NATO in central Europe. What has changed? In the centre of the Intermarium is Poland, a country that, on the wings of the war in Ukraine, took on a role of massive self-importance, igniting its huge ambitions and fantasies about creating its own empire with implied territorial expansion. Those ambitions are based on historical memory and a sense of the greatness of the Polish state and its mission to oppose Russia, which also has a strong religious component, given that Poles are Roman Catholics and Russians are Orthodox Christians.

The bottom line is that the concept of "New Europe" worked, and one of its integrative manifestations was represented by the so-called Visegrad Group, or V4, which included Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. The Atlanticist idea, the idea of NATO for the V4, was obviously to be one of the security keys preventing the merger of Russia and Germany. When the war escalated in February 2022, Seymour Hersh proved that the United States had mined gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea, although this was already obvious to everyone. Well, to everyone except the Germans, who were and still are too scared to even notice, let alone say anything about a terrorist attack against their most vital economic interests, despite the open gloating of the US and direct allusions to the attack by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland and Biden himself before it occurred.

The Intermarium concept, i.e., the strengthening of the most warlike and Russophobic part of NATO, is further served by the rapid admission of Sweden and Finland into the Alliance. In effect, the US is practically pushing them into the Alliance by force, without a referendum of their populations, according to a recipe already successfully tested in Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and a number of other countries. By joining NATO, Finland has entered into a very dangerous game,



destroying an arrangement that suited it fantastically, especially when it comes to its economy. Needless to say, the country was far more secure before it made itself a legitimate target for neighbouring Russia. It will be more difficult for Sweden to join NATO, however. That is another reason why NATO will likely do everything it can to help Erdoğan make the “right” decision. Thanks to Turkey’s blockade, Sweden remains formally outside the Alliance for now, although its actions, including sending military aid to Ukraine, show that it has been a *de facto* member of NATO for some time now.

NATO’s attempt to recreate the Intermarium was disrupted by Hungary, which actually withdrew from the formation and began to follow its own independent policy. Although it is close in values to the conservative governments of Eastern Europe, especially Poland, Hungary has begun to play its own game in a spectacular fashion. Orbán has essentially changed the paradigm of Hungarian nationalism. He is perhaps the first Hungarian nationalist to realise that confrontation with Russia will only lead to defeat and national tragedy. In changing the paradigm, Orbán was not hindered by his own anti-communist past nor by the fact that, as soon as he came to power, he erected a statue of the American President Ronald Reagan on Liberty Square (Szabadság tér) in Budapest, just opposite the monument to the Soviet Red Army. Reagan’s statue defiantly walks towards the Soviet monument, sandwiching the Soviet monument between himself and the American embassy. Yet, the very next year, Orbán met with Putin, and since then things have gone in the direction of rapprochement between the countries.

Orbán’s geopolitical choice became even more interesting when Hungary, which had problems with essentially all of its neighbours, created an unexpected strategic partnership with Serbia. It would actually be more accurate to say with the Serbs, given that Hungary has excellent relations with the Republic of Srpska, which it financially assisted to the tune of 100 million euros at the end of 2021. Orbán, together with Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, both warned that Budapest would block any attempt by the EU to impose sanctions against the President of the Republic of Srpska, Milorad Dodik (Radosavljevic 2023).

On a symbolic level, the creation of this coalition, which I am calling the New Little Entente, was evident at the military exposition “Granit 2023” held at the Belgrade military airport on April 22, 2023, where Orbán, Serbian

President Aleksandar Vučić, and Dodik together observed a parade of the newest equipment of the Serbian army. Only two days after that, Hungary, although it still formally recognises the independence of Kosovo, voted against the admission of this illegal entity to the Council of Europe.

Therefore, in Eastern Europe, we are yet to see how the concepts of the Intermarium and the New Little Entente, alongside the uncertain future of Turkey, will develop in relation to one another.

### **What does tomorrow bring?**

It can be concluded that post-NATO Europe, even if NATO formally continues to exist, will suffer from compromised security. It is very difficult to accurately predict the future, but the contours of the several blocks that will fill the gap left after NATO formally or informally dissolves are clearly visible. On the one hand, we are looking at Rumsfeld's "Old Europe", above all France and Germany, each of which has its own separate path, and the question remains as to which countries will stand by them or whether some kind of new joint alliance might be considered. What would Italy's position be, for instance, given that its interests in Libya are opposed by France and held in common with Turkey? Turkey and Italy support the government in Tripoli, while France and Russia, which have opposing interests in other parts of Africa, provide support to the Benghazi government led by General Khalifa Haftar.

In any case, NATO-dominated Europe is at a turning point: it will either remain firmly under American domination or the US will lose its grip as it has in other regions. There are two potential scenarios that could provoke dramatic change, though both could occur simultaneously: severe turmoil between European countries and/or a deep crisis in the United States. In any case, these societies should brace themselves, given the alarming signs of a coming crisis that are increasingly visible throughout the West.

On the other hand, "New Europe", i.e., the countries of the imagined Intermarium, along with classic NATO member Norway and the freshmen countries Finland and Sweden, will not escape these changes. There remains only the question of Turkey's future, which is extremely uncertain. Turkey is faced with a security dilemma in light of major changes in the Middle East, and it is also uncertain what will happen in Turkey itself. The Middle

East, on the other hand, is marked by tectonic changes triggered by Saudi Arabia's detachment from the petrodollar and the normalisation of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The rapprochement of the Sunni monarchies and Shiite Iran, as well as the so-called "Shiite rainbow" (Syria, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Shiite-dominated Iraq), opens up the chilling question of what Israel will do if it feels cornered by its neighbours.

Nevertheless, one should bear in mind the increased aggression and self-confidence of Poland, which has grown bold enough to begin demanding payment of astronomical war reparations from Germany. Polish imperial aspirations – Warsaw's apparent belief that it enjoys the greatest possible protection and encouragement from Washington and London – have grown to such an extent that, against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, it has begun to openly bully Berlin. After all, the regime in Kiev has been doing the same, so why not? Certain Polish ambitions have a historical dimension; that is, they stem from the Polish-Lithuanian union known as *Rzeczpospolita* and the messianic self-perception of Poland as a bulwark of the "civilized" West towards the "barbarous" East.

Perhaps the most interesting process is the birth of the New Little Entente, that is, the alliance of the Serbs and Hungarians, which is undoubtedly a disruptive factor for the Euro-Atlantic Intermarium project. Hungary effectively, although not formally, behaves as if it has withdrawn recognition of the illegal secession of Kosovo and Metohija. On April 24, 2023, Hungary voted against Kosovo's membership in the Council of Europe. At the same time, economic and infrastructural ties, among other connections, between Serbia and Hungary are only getting stronger. Orbán's and Dodik's visit to a military parade at the Belgrade military airport is very significant in this regard. This event provided an excellent opportunity for Serbia to display its newly acquired Russian, Chinese, and French military equipment, as well as the latest weapons and equipment produced by the Serbian military industrial complex. American military equipment was also on display, but on a much more modest scale. The New Little Entente could become a kind of intermediary between the emerging Greater Eurasia and the Western bloc, but on the other hand, it could also serve as the western outpost of Greater Eurasia.

NATO is already so fragmented that it is all but certain that it will not continue to exist in the form we see today, especially after the expected

military collapse of Ukraine, which is actually NATO's avatar in its proxy war against Russia. However, the future of Europe and the architecture of Europe's feudal-style security remain uncertain.

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