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DEBAT

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Hello everyone and best wishes for the start of 2025. The second issue of DEBAT 2024-2025 is here and once again I must thank the team for all their hard work in meeting deadlines both around the end of semester exams and during the January holidays. We have greatly enjoyed putting this issue together and hope that you take as much pleasure reading it.

This issue's theme is Security a concept that resonates universally yet varies deeply in its meaning and significance across different contexts. From the digital safeguards protecting our online identities to the policies ensuring public safety, security shapes the very fabric of our daily lives. The articles in this edition reflect the wide-reaching impact of security from online safety in schools to states' relationship with NATO as well as other articles that deal with nuclear weapons and how individuals find themselves as security providers.

We hope that you find something here that piques your interest and prompts you to think about what security means to you and how it touches your life either with your consent or without. Most of all we hope that you learn something new!

Happy reading and until next time!

Jess, Co-Editor in Chief

Hallo allemaal en de beste wensen voor het begin van 2025. De tweede editie van DEBAT 2024-2025 is hier en ik wil het team nogmaals bedanken voor al hun harde werk om de deadlines te halen, zowel rond de eindexamens van het semester als tijdens de vakantie in januari. We hebben veel plezier beleefd aan het samenstellen van deze editie en hopen dat jullie het met evenveel plezier zullen lezen.

Het thema van deze editie is Veiligheid, een concept dat universeel weerklinkt, maar waarvan de betekenis en het belang sterk varieert in verschillende contexten. Van de digitale beveiligingen die onze online identiteiten beschermen tot het beleid dat de openbare veiligheid waarborgt, veiligheid vormt de kern van ons dagelijks leven. De artikelen in deze editie weerspiegelen de verstrekkende gevolgen van veiligheid, van online veiligheid op scholen tot de relatie van staten met de NAVO, evenals andere artikelen die gaan over kernwapens en hoe individuen zichzelf zien als aanbieders van veiligheid.

We hopen dat u hier iets vindt dat uw interesse wekt en u aanzet om na te denken over wat veiligheid voor u betekent en hoe het uw leven beïnvloedt, met of zonder uw toestemming. Bovenal hopen we dat je iets nieuws leert!

Veel leesplezier en tot de volgende keer!

Jess, Co-hoofdredacteur

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Colofon | Colophon

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Is Democracy Safe in Romania?

By Celia Hiver

It is 9 PM in Romania on the 24 of November. The exit polls of the first round of the presidential elections are released. The current Prime Minister, a social democrat, and a mayor of a small city, a liberal, are predicted to go to the second round. As the votes are being counted, an independent candidate gets increasingly more votes, finally ending the night with the most votes. This candidate is Calin Georgescu, and he crashed the Romanian elections like a meteorite.

With most of his campaign for TikTok, Georgescu managed to stay under the radar for most of the electoral period, having no important presence in the mainstream media in Romania. As a far-right socially conservative politician, he appealed to mostly an electorate that is disappointed in the political situation in Romania since the 1989



revolution, claiming that Romanians need to get their dignity back. Most importantly, he expressed his appreciation for Russia, declaring that Putin is a “true patriot” to his country. Why is this so controversial?

Let's take a step back. Due to Romania's geographical position, Romania has been invaded multiple times, notably by the Russian Empire in the 19th century. In 1947, Romania became communist, largely due to Soviet interference in the election. While still being allied to the USSR, Romania still enjoyed a bit of independence. In 1989, communism fell. Ion Iliescu became president. He is known to be Gorbachev's choice of successor. Iliescu's party, today called the Social Democrat Party (PSD), governed for most of the time since its appearance.

As Romania's position in world politics took a turn towards a pro-west stance, joining NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007, the country went further away from the Russian sphere of influence. Nevertheless, it is rumored that the Kremlin still holds a certain form of authority in certain Romanian institutions, especially in secret services.

Today, Euroscepticism is growing in Romania, fueling a growing disdain for the West and sympathy for Russia. Multiple figures have emerged in Romanian

politics, including George Simion, Persona Non-Grata in Moldova and Ukraine, advocating for the unification of the Republic of Moldova to Romania, but also Diana Sococoa, who called Christian Orthodox priests to Brussels to sanctify the European Parliament building, And finally, Calin Georgescu, the candidate who led the first round of the presidential elections.

In multiple TikTok videos, Georgescu claimed that the EU neutralised the Romanian economy and that the Romanians would be better off without the EU. Just as a reminder, Romania's GDP has more than tripled since 2007 when the country joined the EU. He also claims that NATO is a failure, and they would just lead the Romanian people into war, even though NATO is probably one of the strongest protections that Romania has against a Russian invasion.

And, of course, all of this discourse is supported by the Kremlin. How would they profit from the imbalance caused in Romanian politics? As the system becomes more unstable, people would have the tendency to be against the establishment, it being integrated into the EU and NATO. As Russia wants to weaken the West, imbalances in Europe would make Russian power stronger. Having Russian influence in Romania puts the country at risk, as we have seen with Ukraine and Georgia.



It is now the 6th of December. The presidential elections are cancelled by the Constitutional Court, after the current president Iohannis revealed documents revealing foreign involvement causing vote manipulation and influencing the presidential elections results. Investigations are being conducted, as Georgescu's campaign is suspected of receiving illegal financing from Russia. We are starting

Persoonlijke beveiliging als ondergang van democratie

Door Marie Spruit

Op 2 november 2004 vermoordde Mohammed Bouyeri Theo van Gogh. Op het lichaam van Van Gogh werd echter een brief gevonden die niet aan hem geadresseerd was. De brief was voor Ayaan Hirsi Ali, toentertijd Tweede Kamerlid namens de VVD. In de brief beschrijft Bouyeri uitgebreid waarom hij haar had willen vermoorden die dag. Omdat Hirsi Ali goed beveiligd was, is dit niet gelukt en heeft hij Van Gogh gedood, die beveiliging weigerde. Persoonlijke beveiliging was hier dus de redding van een politica, maar de ondergang van iemand anders. Beveiliging heeft dus wel effect, maar dat het nodig is, is erg zorgelijk.

Maar liefst 41 Tweede Kamerleden kregen in 2023 een vorm van beveiliging. Dit in de vorm van 24-uursbewaking door een persoon, zoals Wilders heeft, maar ook door middel van een noodknop in huis. Het aantal bedreigingen op politici neemt namelijk sterk toe, het aantal vervolgte mensen is in 2023 verdubbeld ten opzichte van het jaar ervoor. In juli 2023 werd het voormalig D66-leider Sigrid Kaag te veel. Ze verliet de Tweede Kamer vanwege de bedreigingen waar ze mee te maken had. Alle stress en beveiliging die daarop volgden, hadden een negatieve impact op haar gezin.



Journalist John van den Heuvel, die zelf ook beveiligd wordt, brengt aan het licht dat we de mentale gezondheid van deze beveiligde personen goed in de gaten moeten houden. Hij zegt dat hij geen spontane dingen meer kan doen en zijn privacy enorm ingeperkt wordt. Dit heeft natuurlijk ook een negatief effect op het uitvoeren van zijn baan. Dit is erg problematisch. Als journalisten en politici hun werk niet meer goed kunnen doen door bedreigingen,

is dit niet goed voor de samenleving en zelfs democratie. Politici worden door hun beveiliging niet altijd meer als ‘gewone burger’ gezien en dat speelt met het idee dat Kamerleden vertegenwoordigers zijn van de gewone burger. Dit gaat ook nog in combinatie met het feit dat deze situatie niet goed is voor de mentale gezondheid en het gezin van de politicus. Dan zouden we toch moeten nadenken of we beveiligde politici als ‘normaal’ moeten beschouwen.



Naast de bedreigde politicus, is de bedreigde journalist ook zorgelijk voor onze samenleving. De media zijn namelijk belangrijk voor het vullen en sturen van de politieke agenda. In Nederland hebben we grondwettelijke persvrijheid, en het bedreigen van mensen die slechts hun werk doen kan dit inperken. Journalisten worden door bedreigingen afgeschrikt van het schrijven over de dingen die zij belangrijk vinden. Ook controleren media de macht, dus zijn ze een fundamenteel onderdeel van onze democratie. Helaas worden journalisten steeds meer gekweld door bedreigingen. Deze toename zou ontstaan kunnen zijn doordat rechts-populistische partijen, zoals FvD en PVV, de media als onbetrouwbaar portretteren.

Bedreigingen zijn dus nergens goed voor. Niet voor onze samenleving, niet voor onze democratie, maar natuurlijk ook niet voor mensen die simpelweg hun werk doen. Het is daarom belangrijk dat we aan het licht brengen dat het belachelijk is dat zo veel mensen bedreigd worden, en vooral dat we stoppen met mensen bedreigen.



From Aspiration to Reality: Children's Rights Under Fire in Conflict and Crisis

By Noa-Lynn Gilliaert

On November 20, 2024, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) marked its 35th anniversary. This landmark treaty, ratified by all 197 United Nations member states but the United States, enshrines every child's civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, regardless of race, religion, or abilities. Its four guiding principles emphasize the rights to life, survival and development, non-discrimination, the right to be heard, and the best interests of the child.

Despite its successes, many of the CRC's articles remain under strain due to global conflicts, instability, and inequality. From Ukraine and Sudan to Palestine, Syria, Congo, and Myanmar, children are disproportionately impacted by violence, malnutrition, exploitation, and lack of education. This article explores the challenges faced by children

globally, despite the protections guaranteed under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Children in conflict

With 59 conflicts, 2023 witnessed the highest number of state-based conflicts since 1946. Over 449 million children live in a conflict zone. That is one in six children. According to KidsRights Index, the year 2024 saw a 21% increase in serious violations of children's rights in conflict zones. Children in conflict face direct threats daily, such as killings, recruitment by armed groups, sexual violence, abduction, and attacks on their schools and hospitals. Indirectly, war deprives them of access to education, with a high number of school drop-outs. Conflicts also deprive them of food, access to clean water and medical care. This leaves them vulnerable to malnutrition, disease, and severe

psychological trauma.

The Center on the Developing Child from Harvard University identifies many of these children to be in a state of 'toxic stress', possibly leading to lifelong consequences on their physical and psychological well-being. A violent and unsafe environment brings about severe consequences for a child's mental health, including anxiety, loneliness, and insecurity. There are high rates of depression and anxiety, which will be intensified if the child is separated from a parent. Children may internalize violence as normal and exhibit aggressive behaviors, as observed by Save the Children psychologists in southern Syria. Without safe spaces or opportunities to play, many children struggle to process their emotions, further compounding the impact of war.



Child Nutrition and Health

Globally, 13,6 million children under the age of 5 are currently suffering from life-threatening severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF reports that one in four children globally lives in severe food poverty, driven by inequality, conflict, and climate crisis. These children are 50% more likely to suffer from life-threatening malnutrition, which harms a child's physical and cognitive development, leaving life-long damage. Of the 181 million children facing severe food poverty, 65% live in just 20 countries. South Asia accounts for 64 million affected children, while Sub-Saharan Africa has 59 million. Addressing this crisis requires urgent investment in nutrition programs, such as Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF), and broader efforts to tackle inequality and climate-related food insecurity.

Education

While the global proportion of children attending school has increased to 70% since 2010, hundreds of millions of children remain out of school or do not receive quality education. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, less than half of all children meet the minimum standard in reading and maths. Barriers to good education include poverty, armed violence, family violence, child labor, hidden costs of education, inadequate education facilities, and discrimination, particularly against girls and people with disabilities. In Afghanistan, for instance, 1.4 million girls are currently banned from attending school under Taliban rule. Afghanistan remains the only country in the world where secondary and higher education is forbidden to girls and women. Globally, an estimated 130 million girls are denied their right to education, as many of them are forced to stay home and help with domestic workload, or are married at a very young age.

This contradicts Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees free compulsory primary education, progressive secondary education that should be accessible and available for all, and access to higher education based on capacity. Furthermore, this shows a clear failure with Sustainable Development Goal nr. 4 of the United Nations, striving for quality education. The failure to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4—ensuring inclusive, quality education—underscores the need for increased international investment and policy reform.

Child Labour

Per Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children shall be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous. The biggest challenge domestic and international actors continue facing is the rising trend in child labor. As stated by the International Labour Organisation, a total of 160 million children are involved in child labor globally. This is almost one in every 10 children. Of those 160 million, some 79 million children work in hazardous environments, directly endangering their health and safety. International organizations have not just seen an increasing trend in the employment of children. Still, maybe even more concerning, there has been a rising trend in the employment of children between the ages of 5 and 11 years old. The highest concentrations of employed children can be found in Africa, accounting for one-fifth of the total. About 70% of children working globally are allocated to the agricultural sector. Possible explanations for this rise can be found in the Covid-19 pandemic, a rising population, extreme poverty, and inadequate social protection.



As the Convention on the Rights of the Child enters its 36th year, its principles remain as relevant as ever. Yet, the challenges outlined here highlight the urgent need for action. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must work together to uphold children's rights, address systemic inequalities, and create a safer, healthier, and more equitable future for the world's youngest citizens.

By prioritizing global awareness, grassroots initiatives, and targeted interventions, we can honor the legacy of the CRC and make a meaningful difference in the lives of millions of children worldwide.

Carbines and Bobby Pins: Women in the Defence Forces

By Anna Idziak

Women only got access to all positions within the Polish army in 2003. Right now, there are more than 17,300 women serving in the Polish army in all corps and types of armed forces. They prove themselves in medical, educational but also technical and command positions. Still, they represent only about 13% of the personnel. Joining the army can seem daunting to women and being a woman in a male-dominated field brings numerous challenges. To discover more about the experience of women in the army, I turned to a female soldier in the Polish military. Sandra (name has been changed for confidentiality purposes) comes from a military family and has always thought about becoming a soldier. Finally, a few years ago a loved one helped her find courage to fight for herself and start doing something she believes in and is important to her - serving her country.



War in Ukraine

After the events of 2022, Poland has increased its defence expenditure and as a consequence, the Polish military has been recruiting more and more soldiers each year. Joining the army has become an attractive career choice for many Poles because of the social benefits and wage boosts, but with a war

creeping on the eastern border, the risks of being a soldier are ever greater. Sandra reflected: “I think that the war in Ukraine has given us Poles a lot to think about what we will do when war hits our country. Are we prepared to abandon everything we have, or just the opposite?”. Even though the Polish government is bending over backwards to advertise military careers, the prospect of being on the frontline can deter potential recruits, especially those with family.

“We constantly have to prove that we are just as good as men”.

Obstacles for women in the military

Between 2016 and 2022, the number of women in the defence forces worldwide grew by 27%. Still, women are a minority and there are a few factors that contribute to them having concerns about joining the military. “First of all, it is a predominantly male environment and it can be quite.... specific. It takes a lot of confidence and courage to show that you can handle it”. Sandra recollects having heard from male soldiers that “women have it easier in the army”, but “I have found out repeatedly that the opposite is true”, she adds. “We constantly have to prove that we are just as good as men. Besides, there is no fooling ourselves, we are generally physically weaker than men and we have to work more on our condition”.

Furthermore, the constant stress a soldier has to cope with and the frequent tours of duty can be hurdles for joining the army. “You often don’t know when, where and for how long you



will be sent away and I don’t think I need to explain that having a family makes this very difficult to reconcile”. To sum up, the physical (and mental) exertion, working mostly among men and an ever-changing workplace can deter women from joining.

The myth that “women have it easier in the army” came up frequently during the interview, because there is a false notion that if women flutter their eyelashes at a male superior, they will get what they want. “Due to these stereotypes, we have to prove ourselves even more. Unfortunately, there are a few instances where women have used their personal relationships to get an upper hand, but men manipulate their superiors as well”. Sandra reminds us that “the army is a cluster of many different people, so of course there will be a few bad apples, no matter the gender”. When asked about feelings of injustice due to this type of manipulation by certain women, Sandra responded: “the army is not the place to seek justice”. On account of the hierarchical nature of the military, you sometimes just have to put up with decisions you disagree with.

The merit of women in the army “Women are present and successful in many different sectors and levels in the army”. However, they are more prevalent in certain sectors than others. “There are relatively more women in the medical, educational, organisational and logistical sectors. I think this is because women are more organised and are better at multitasking”. These are jobs on the “second line of defense, if you will”. However, Sandra underscored that “you shouldn’t generalize, because women perform well at various functions and levels”.

Moreover, women change the atmosphere in the unit. Sandra explained that male superiors often change their behaviour towards their subordinates when there is a woman in the midst. “Generals often change their language when there’s a woman, they become less vulgar and refrain from using certain more derogatory phrases”. This is also partly because the male superiors are afraid of mobbing accusations by women. “Nevertheless, it doesn’t mean the superiors aren’t aggressive, they are, but there is a difference in the way superiors handle male and female subordinates”. Thus women bring more culture and respect into a unit.

“Women are present and successful in many different sectors and levels in the army”

How do you define a “good soldier”? The military, war and weaponry are things that are commonly associated with masculinity. The stereotype of a “good soldier” is associated

with “masculine” qualities such as strength, endurance, courage, rationality and strategic thinking. Sandra refuted such stereotypes: “Women in the army can possess those qualities as well, it all depends on the individual and not on the gender”. A “good soldier”, according to Sandra, should be willing to abandon a part of themselves. “You leave a part of your old life behind, sometimes literally, if you have to move because of the job”. Sandra also rebutted the cliché that “soldiers have to blindly follow orders”. “A soldier has to make a lot of decisions on the frontline and on the spur of the moment. You have to study a great deal to be able to make these decisions skillfully, of course you have to obey your superior so the strategy is cohesive, but a lot is contingent on your own decision-making capabilities”.



Further, a soldier should be open to teamwork and working united as a group. The idea of brotherhood and camaraderie within units can foster teamwork. Sandra reminisces about her unit: “I hit the jackpot, you could really feel the brotherhood and we

supported each other during the hard times. We even tutored each other when somebody didn’t understand a topic”. The progress of the unit as a whole is important: “It doesn’t matter if one person did well on a test, we have to do well as a group”. Unfortunately, there can be some rivalry as well, “women compete with each other because they are in the minority and want to prove they got their position because of hard work”.

“Women in the army can possess those qualities as well, it all depends on the individual and not on the gender”

When asked if she recommends a military career, Sandra replied: “You should do what you believe in, because then you’re willing to go above and beyond for your beliefs, like taking responsibility for your country. It’s never too late to step out of your comfort zone and fight for something. Only then can we find out who we really are”. Albeit women are a minority in the army, they proudly pin back their hair, put on their helmets and fight for their countries.

90 seconden voor twaalf:

Het naderen van middernacht en de penibele toekomst

Door Lisa Harmeling

Kunnen mensen de mensheid vernietigen? In 1945 hield de wereld haar adem in voor de tot dan toe krachtigste bom ooit. Little Boy telde 78.000 slachtoffers. Deze bom had de kracht om direct alles te vernietigen wat op zijn pad kwam. Hierop volgde de Koude Oorlog, die in het teken zou staan van kernkoppen. De angst voor nucleaire escalatie bevroor de twee hoofdrolspelers die het toneel domineerden in een ongemakkelijk evenwicht. Rusland en de Verenigde Staten creëerden een equilibrium doordat deze staten wisten dat een conventionele aanval kon uitmonden in een nucleaire vernietigingsstrijd. Echter, werd afschrikking geïnstitutionaliseerd door bi- en multilaterale verdragen. Een nieuw tijdperk brak aan dat enorm optimisme met zich meebracht, toch lijkt in de eenentwintigste eeuw middernacht in een rap tempo te naderen. Desalniettemin is het mogelijk om seconden en zelfs minuten op te tellen bij de negentig seconden.

Gouden tijdperk van verdragen

Regeringshoofden Reagan en Gorbatsjov verklaarden in een top in Genève (1985) dat een nucleaire oorlog niet kan worden gewonnen en nooit moet worden uitgevochten. Met de Cubacrisis van 1962 nog in het achterhoofd, werden in de decennia die volgden multilaterale en bilaterale afspraken gemaakt tussen internationale actoren. Het doel was om de proliferatie van massavernietigingswapens te beperken of helemaal te termineren. Washington en Moskou werkten innig samen gedurende de Koude Oorlog om nucleaire escalatie te voorkomen. De leiders van de VS en de Sovjet-Unie tekenden in 1963 de Partial Test-Ban Treaty, de SALT-akkoorden (strategic arms limitation talks) van 1969 tot 1979, het Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces verdrag (INF) in 1987 en in de jaren 90 werden de START-verdragen (strategic arms reduction treaties) getekend door Bush en Gorbatsjov en later onder het toezicht van Bush en Jeltsin geratificeerd.

Naast bilaterale verdragen werden ook verschillende multilaterale verdragen gesloten, het belangrijkste hiervan is het Non-Proliferatie van Nucleaire Wapens Verdrag (NPT), door 190 landen getekend. De belangrijkste kanttekening hierbij is dat India, Pakistan en Israël deze verbintenis niet hebben ondertekend en dat het zeer aanneembaar is dat deze drie landen zelf over kernkoppen beschikken. Dit verdrag bevestigt de status quo van de jaren 70. De vijf atoommachten mogen hun arsenaal houden, maar niet uitbouwen. Het is voor andere landen verboden om kernenergie om te zetten in kernwapens. Op deze manier wordt horizontale (het aantal landen dat kernwapens bezit) en verticale (de hoeveelheid kernkoppen die een land in zijn arsenaal heeft) proliferatie tegengegaan.

Het oerwoud van verdragen zorgde tijdens en in de nasleep van de Koude Oorlog voor stabiliteit en voorzichtig optimisme. De Verenigde Staten en de voormalige Sovjet-Unie hadden relatief vaak gesprekken over wetenschappelijke samenwerking met betrekking tot kernenergie en wapenproductie. De communicatiekanalen tussen de twee grootmachten bleven open, zelfs gedurende de meest netelige perioden van hun relatie. Daarnaast leidde het non-proliferatie regime tot meer controle en veiligheid betreffende kernwapens. Conform met het internationaal recht is het zo dat de staten die een verdrag tekenen zich daaraan moeten houden. Vaak gaat het goed, omdat staten graag als een 'brave burger' van de internationale gemeenschap willen worden beschouwd. Helaas kan het ook misgaan en het is niet ongevoel dat staten die het NPT respecteren genoodzaakt zijn om te dreigen met sancties of conventionele aanvallen tegen staten die het verdrag schenden.



Optimistische 90s, onzekere toekomst

Het rooskleurige beeld van de jaren 90 dat heerste over het aan banden leggen van het gebruik van kernwapens, werd in de eenentwintigste eeuw verstoord door hernieuwde spanningen tussen Rusland en de Verenigde Staten en de opkomst van nieuwe potentiële kernmachten. In 2003 zegde Noord-Korea het Non-Proliferatieverdrag op; India is een schoolvoorbeeld van verticale proliferatie door gestaag hun kernarsenaal te vergroten; er is veel onzekerheid over de nucleaire status van Israël; en het voortdurend sneuvelen van verdragen die tijdens de Koude Oorlog waren ondertekend, zorgen ervoor dat de internationale security afneemt.

De situatie werd verder verergerd in 2019 toen President Trump de stekker trok uit het INF verdrag met als oorzaak dat de Verenigde Staten en de NAVO het Kremlin beschuldigden van het schenden van het INF. Als reactie op het optreden van de VS had het Russische ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken gezworen dat het ministerie maatregelen zou nemen om de veiligheid van Rusland te waarborgen, daarmee suggererend dat proliferatie aan de horizon gloorde. In 2023 lanceerde Poetin een wet waarin staat dat Rusland zich terugtrekt uit een multilateraal verdrag dat het testen van nucleaire wapens verbodt. Daarnaast stuurde Rusland in 2022 en 2023 laaggeplaatste diplomaten naar NPT vergaderingen, hieruit kan worden afgeleid dat Rusland non-proliferatie van nucleaire wapens minder belangrijk acht dan het vroeger had gedaan.

Het NPT lijkt ook minder robuust dan in het verleden. Het verdrag kan staten niet overtuigen om zich aan de spelregels te houden als de straffen voor het schenden van de reglementen alleen een belerende tik op de vingers is. De consequenties hiervan zien we in 2004, toen kwam een reeks van nucleaire experimenten uit de jaren 80 aan het licht die Zuid-Korea had verzwegen. Het incident was niet serieus genoeg om besproken te worden door de Veiligheidsraad van de Verenigde Naties. De drempel om de voorschriften te negeren wordt door het gebrek aan afschrikking significant verlaagd. Het is ook veelzeggend dat een nieuw multilateraal verdrag om het testen van nucleaire wapens te verbieden niet van de grond komt. Dit alomvattende kernstopverdrag (CTBT) is nog niet in werking getreden doordat te weinig landen het verdrag hebben geratificeerd. De meeste landen die weigeren het verdrag te ratificeren, zijn in het bezit van een kernarsenaal. De trends storten de hele wereld in een nieuwe veiligheidsdepressie.

En nu verder?

Het NPT en CTBT zijn verdragen die bij willen dragen aan een veiligere wereld. Het issue waar deze verdragen tegenaan lopen is dat ze niet universeel gelden en de facto niet bindend zijn, vanwege het gebrek aan credible straffen bij overtredingen. Een staat hoeft zich niet aan te sluiten en mag zich later ook weer terugtrekken als een verdrag niet overeenkomt met diens belangen. Daarnaast is in de afgelopen jaren voor de originele vijf kernlanden wel sprake geweest van een bevestiging van het kernarsenaal, maar er wordt te weinig druk uitgeoefend om arsenaalkrimp te forceren. Zo blijft de gedachte dat staten elkaar kunnen aanvallen met een massavernietigingswapen springlevend. In een multipolaire en globaliserende wereld lijkt het een rationele keuze om kernwapens te ontwikkelen en produceren om meer individuele vrijheid te creëren. Het gevolg is dat de collectieve veiligheid daalt, waardoor staten nog meer noodzaak zien om zich te bewapenen. Staten zijn gevangenen van hun eigen rationaliteit.



Ondanks alles hebben actoren in het verleden laten zien dat het ook anders kan. In het beroemde Ottawa proces stonden Oostenrijk, België, Zwitserland, Duitsland, Ierland, Mexico, Noorwegen, De Filipijnen en Zuid-Afrika samen met de NGO's het internationale rode kruis en de international campaign to ban landmines op om na het falen van de CCW (een verbod op het gebruik van conventionele wapens) een nieuw verdrag op te stellen. In 2008 werkten middelgrote machten en NGO's wederom samen om clustermunition te verbieden. Deze coöperatie van NGO's en staten laat de wereld zien dat ook andere actoren een grote en beslissende rol kunnen spelen op het gebied van veiligheid.

Security Challenges in a Non-EU Country, Moldova

By Cosmin Tanasă



Moldova, a small but strategically significant Eastern European country, has faced numerous challenges that have tested its endurance and sovereignty. Moldova, bordered by Romania to the west and Ukraine to the east, is at a crossroads of competing influences—European aspirations on one side and Russian interests on the other. This delicate balance generates a unique security dilemma that reflects both the weight of history and the urgency of contemporary dangers. Moldova’s security difficulties stem from its unresolved connection with the breakaway territory of Transnistria. Since the early 1990s, the area of land along the Dniester River has operated as a de facto independent state, complete with its own government, currency, and military forces.

Transnistria has become a symbol of Moldova’s fractured sovereignty, with Russian influence casting a long shadow over the region. While it remains officially part of Moldova, Transnistria’s separate institutions, its military alignment with Moscow, and a distinct cultural identity underline its estrangement. The presence of Russian troops stationed in Transnistria, labelled “peacekeepers,” impedes Moldova’s efforts to take control. Transnistria serves as both a pressure point and a potential frontline in Moscow’s geopolitical goals, as outlined by Harvard International Review.

Making Moldova’s problems worse is exposure to manipulation from abroad, as brought to light by investigations by the independent publication “Ziarul de Gardă”. These show how networks associated with fugitive businessman Ilan Șor and Moscow have been manipulating Moldova’s divisions for years to influence elections. According to this police investigation, Șor’s network would have allegedly used money incentives of up to €50 per person to buy votes and impact the outcome in favour of pro-Russian parties. This type of overt interference damages democratic processes in Moldova and raises tensions in an already divided society.

For Moldova, energy dependence presents another big challenge. The country exposes itself to supply

interruptions and price manipulation as a result of dependence on Russian gas within the framework of the 2022 energy crisis brought on by the Ukraine conflict. Energy insecurity is not merely economic but also a very existential concern for citizens of Moldova throughout harsh winter months. While some successful steps in diversifying energy sources have already been taken, including agreements with the EU and Romania, there are still budgetary and logistical limitations.

The war in neighbouring Ukraine has further highlighted Moldova’s precarious position. Though officially neutral, Moldova has faced spillover effects—hosting thousands of Ukrainian refugees and contending with heightened fears of Russian aggression. Moldova’s military preparedness

is limited, relying heavily on international support to address security vulnerabilities. Its proximity to active conflict zones only serves to highlight the urgent need for investment in defence and resilience.

With these challenges notwithstanding, Moldova is determined to secure its future. A symbol of this commitment from the government is its pursuit of EU membership. Some serious steps have been taken to cut vulnerabilities:

strengthening democratic institutions, fighting corruption, and diversifying energy resources. In this regard, international partners—first and foremost, the EU and NATO—have been very instrumental in offering support not only financially but also strategically.

The Republic of Moldova has been a very consistent country in the pursuit of political stability, energy diversification, and European integration amid the toughest of geographies. Strongly developed, this sense of cultural identity and committed reforms allow just how resilient its citizens can be. The story of Moldova is that of hope and determination in the struggles of securing a better future for itself and one in which its people shall become more united. In its course, Moldova has to take challenges to its geopolitical position, offering the needed lesson of courage and pursuing determinants in seeking peace.



Protest Power

By Hanna van Stekelenborg

People marching down huge streets, gathering in front of government buildings, and most importantly creating one big voice out of any number between hundreds to millions of people. I am sure you have seen a picture of it, a sea of people, holding signs, chanting or staying silent on purpose. You could have found it anywhere, the news, a schoolbook or by now social media.

Many believe the right to protest props a democratic society up. The nature of a democratic society certainly makes it possible, often included in the constitution is some kind of line akin to “The right to assembly” and “The right to freedom of speech”. It is important to know your rights, as a democratic citizen. This is not to say that there have been no protests or demonstrations in non-democratic countries, there are countless examples. However, they are typically met with more resistance. The challenge of power is intimidating to the ones in said power.

Have you ever been intimidated by a sea of people? I know I have. Just look up a protest, demonstration, or a march. Use keywords like “biggest”, “effective” and “impressive”. They happen all around the world, and they may differ in size or goal, but in the end they intend to do one thing: send a message. More recent objectives seem to center around (the stopping of) wars, climate change and policies. The last one obviously differs per country, here in the Netherlands the farmers have been blocking the highway for years now. If I think of a demonstration I think of those tractors or something important historically, while all around the world people are assembling to make their voices heard.

While the right to demonstrate or protest doesn't exist on paper, governments shouldn't be able to deny the citizens a peaceful assembly. Yet they try, time and time again. Recent examples are for us studying in the Netherlands the protest against higher education



budget cuts in Utrecht and the protest in Georgia against the governmental decision to postpone EU talks. It is logical to demonstrate against the government, but they are often not quite happy with it. These differences of opinion are okay, eventually it works out in favor of either party. It is unfortunate when the government has weaponry, and they aren't afraid to use it. Historically speaking, you can say that the mass wins over weaponry, which is largely true, but we cannot ignore the fallen.

If you are controversial, you will meet resistance, either by a government, a company, or even other civilians. These civilians may decide to form a counter-demonstration. It is the government's job to make sure that this obviously tense situation does not get violent. Well, at least in some parts of the world. The chance of violence is always there when you are actively protesting. Often the feeling of being wronged and then not heard may lead a section of the protesters to do something, anything to get attention. It doesn't have to be violent, I'll point out that people have thrown soup over artwork just to get in the news. You do not know until you are either a part of the planning beforehand or in the middle of it.

Personally I believe protesting, individually or as a group, will always be a part of the human race. There are many different circumstances for many different people. However I think that there is one thing that unites us. We have a voice. We can share it.

Social Media Bans Won't Keep Your Kids Safe – But Changing the School Curriculum Might

By Anouk Laurian



It is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid cybersecurity threats online. Thankfully, I have never encountered any serious cybersecurity threats, at least none I couldn't manage and I believe this is largely thanks to the online safety courses that were mandatory in my school. Recently, the topic of cybersecurity threats for children has resurfaced, since Australia passed a social media ban for children under 16. The government has considered this to be necessary in order to ensure children's safety and well-being. Personally, I doubt that monitoring such a ban would be possible and I think online security threats could be addressed more effectively by teaching online safety in school - especially since I know from firsthand experience how effective they are.

Some believe the social media ban to be an overreaction and dismiss online safety concerns as outdated fears of older generations, but online danger is real and more prevalent than ever. Today, 93% of children worldwide are online by the age of 12. Unfortunately, this omnipresence of digital technology has also exposed children to various cybersecurity threats including but not limited to privacy threats, phishing, identity theft, and unwanted sexual advances. This means that the Australian government's belief that changes are necessary to ensure that young people use the internet in a "safer and more positive" way is not unfounded.

However, I don't think completely banning social

media was the best solution. By banning social media, you are also depriving children of a lot of great opportunities: when used in a safe way, the internet offers immense opportunities. It can inspire creativity, sustain old friendships, and foster new connections.

That's why I think online safety courses are a better solution than a total ban on social media.

Many governments, such as those of the United States and Great Britain, have been advocating for online safety courses in school, arguing they could play a key role in helping young people navigate the web more safely. Cybersecurity threats are not inevitable. I truly believe that by teaching children to identify trustworthy sources, use privacy settings effectively to avoid unwanted interactions, and understand the potential dangers of the internet, we could promote safer online habits that would allow children to benefit from the great opportunities the internet can offer, without the risk of cybersecurity threats. And we shouldn't disregard the power of simply talking about these issues in school. Normalising conversations about online dangers could make it easier for children to open up to parents or trusted adults – a challenge that is often underestimated.

As we have seen, online safety is often overlooked, leaving adolescents exposed to its risks. However, I think this can be addressed effectively through online safety courses. It's a practical solution and logistically feasible: there are a lot of resources available about online safety, it's just a question of actually making use of them. And school is a great place to do so. It's a place of learning, and since lessons are increasingly digitalised, it seems like the ideal opportunity.

So, while I do think governments should take action against the cybersecurity threats children face on a daily basis, I think changing the school curriculum to integrate online safety courses would be a much more effective way of making cyberspace a safer and more positive environment than banning social media altogether.



Singapore's Unified Front Against Terrorism

Esmée Widdershoven

In 2023, Singapore ranked fifth on the Global Safety Index. But even as one of the safest countries in the world, the government is worried about the safety and security of the country and its citizens. As a measure to prevent radicalisation and terrorism within its borders, the government launched the SGSecure initiative in March 2016. The movement calls for all Singaporeans to come together in the fight against security threats.

Sgsecure is a huge part of Singapore's enhanced counter-terrorism strategy. Its purpose is to "sensitise, train, and mobilise Singaporeans to play a part in preventing and dealing with a terrorist attack". Former Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in his speech during the launch in 2016 that "It is about what each of us can do as an individual, it is about how each of us can play our part, to protect ourselves, and to protect those around us". The movement SGSecure focuses on three core actions: vigilance, "to prevent a terrorist attack and to keep your family, friends and yourself safe in the event of a terror attack", cohesion, through building strong ties in the community; cherishing and safeguarding Singapore's racial and religious diversity and harmony so that we can stand together in peacetime and crisis, and finally through resilience, "by being ready to deal with a crisis, being resilient as individuals and as a community, to help each other bounce back quickly after a terror attack".



Even though Singapore is considered one of the safest countries in the world it still struggles with security issues. The self-radicalisation of Singaporean youth remains a big problem, according to the Internal Security Department's annual terrorism threat report in 2023, but the government still struggles to persuade people that the terror threat is real. That is why the next phase of SGSecure "will continue its focus on mobilising the community, as well as engaging youth and strengthening community".

With a new tagline, "what's your role?", the government wants to inspire their citizens to participate in actively countering terrorism. This can include actions like "a person who shows care for a friend who is potentially radicalised, or a person who calls out fake news to stop it from spreading, among others". The renewed app of SGSecure allows people to report suspicious activities by uploading photos and videos in real time.



Many other countries also have counter terrorism campaigns, like the UK's 'actions counter terrorism'. A network where the counter terrorism police works with the Counter Terrorism Advisory Network (CTAN). It consists of survivors of terrorism, academics and researchers, a variety of faith leaders, and members who reach others through community organisations and groups. Another example is the VIGIPIRATE Plan in France, a national security alert system, designed to prevent and respond to terrorism-related threats. Its purpose is to mobilise government agencies, private entities, and the public to ensure vigilance and preparedness against terrorist activities. Other countries with anti terrorism campaigns include the U.S., Australia, Canada, Germany, and New Zealand. However, SGSecure is distinctive in its whole-of-society approach, actively integrating citizens, communities, businesses, and digital tools (e.g., the SGSecure app) into its framework.

Even with Singapore being one of the safest countries in the world, the Singaporean government is aware that terrorism poses a real threat. They are one step ahead of other countries by actively engaging the public in the fight against terrorism. Other countries can take an example from Singapore and involve citizens more in counter-terrorism measures.



Technology and maritime security in Africa: Opportunities and challenges in Gulf of Guinea.

Firstly, maritime security is one of the dimensions of security related to governance at sea including the areas of critical infrastructure, environmental protection, trade and shipping, or energy. Research into the improvement of this domain under maritime law is crucial, as up to 99% of global dataflows are transmitted through undersea cables. The article explores how technology has improved maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) by enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness and facilitating better monitoring, communication, and collaboration among enforcement agencies. African coastal states, particularly in the GoG, face significant threats like illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, piracy, armed robbery, toxic waste dumping, and oil bunkering. Key technologies such as the Automatic Identification System, Vessel Monitoring System, Synthetic Aperture Radar, and Vessel Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite have helped track vessels and detect illegal activities, with platforms like the Yaoundé Architecture Regional Information System (YARIS) enabling information sharing and coordination. Successes include the interception of illegal vessels, such as a Guinean case where YARIS helped authorities seize a fishing vessel that was then fined a total of €800 000. However, challenges remain due to a lack of patrol assets, technological gaps (such as vessels turning off tracking systems), and heavy dependence on external funding, which threatens sustainability. Proposed solutions include: boosting regional capacity through investment in local resources, fostering international partnerships, and improving regional collaboration and data integration. Despite technological advancements, ensuring long-term sustainability is essential for improving maritime security in the GoG and above all, for adopting maritime law. **Okafor-Yarwood, I., Eastwood, O., Chikowore, N., & de Oliveira Paes, L. (2024). *Marine Policy*, 160, 105976.**

Effective land ownership, female empowerment, and food security: Evidence from Peru.

Furthermore, food security is another aspect of security, characterised by the physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs for a healthy life. In the wake of the 2007–2008 food price crisis, the G20 launched the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, a financing instrument for agricultural development. Since its launch, it has reached not only 13 million smallholder farmers, but also their families which also play roles in cultivation that comprise agrarian value chains. This article investigates how informal land ownership by women in rural Peru enhances household food security by empowering them to make key agricultural decisions. In many areas, smallholder farmers lack formal land titles, leading to tenure insecurity. However, women's informal land ownership increases their bargaining power within households, giving them greater influence over decisions related to crop production, resource allocation, and food security. The authors find that households where women own at least one plot of land are 20% more likely to be food secure. Additionally, women's land ownership is linked to greater crop diversity, as they prioritise family welfare and nutrition in their agricultural choices. Moreover, women who own land are better at accessing resources for agricultural production, further boosting their decision-making power. The authors also theorise that female landowners tend to spend less time on agricultural tasks because they can better manage these activities and allocate time to other activities. The study's findings underscore the importance of strengthening property rights for women to empower them, improve food security, and enhance crop diversity, under property law.

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Political Science Worldwide

By Aleksander Leon Chmiel

The trans-national cybercrime court: Towards a new harmonisation of cyber law regime in ASEAN.

Moreover, cyber security is an area of security associated with the broad protection of devices and services; they include smartphones, computers, and the internet, which are essential entities used daily. The field also encompasses the protection of personal data stored on them. This article highlights the need to harmonise cyber laws in ASEAN to enhance security and address transnational cybercrime, which has escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in human trafficking. The challenges to legal harmonisation include the lack of territorial boundaries in cyberspace, making it difficult to apply traditional laws, as well as conflicting cybercrime laws across ASEAN countries, which hinder regional cooperation. Additionally, cybercrime evolves faster than legislation, making legal frameworks quickly outdated. The Budapest Convention, a global cybercrime treaty, has limited adoption in ASEAN, as only the Philippines ratified it, due to concerns over state sovereignty and extraterritorial data access. The authors propose establishing an ASEAN Cybercrime Court, based on international common law, to address these challenges by enabling ASEAN members to agree on broad rules. The court would have jurisdiction over transnational cybercrimes, bypassing the complexities of state sovereignty. It would also feature an independent prosecutor's office to handle investigations and prosecutions, improving the collection of evidence across borders. The court's legal interpretation would evolve to keep pace with technological advancements, promoting better legal harmonisation and strengthening ASEAN's ability to insure against cybercrime, by operation of cyber law.

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Contesting the heavens: US antipreneurship and the regulation of space weapons.

Finally, space security is a security branch affiliated with the usage of outer space. Due to the rapid advancement of space technology, and an increasing number of actors entering the celestial sphere, it is crucial to coordinate knowledge on the use of technologies in a security context. Concerning conflict in space, a common goal should be its deterrence at all costs, as it could have disastrous consequences for humankind. This article analyses US resistance to global efforts to regulate space weapons, focusing on the coined concept of "antipreneurship," where the US works to maintain a liberal legal framework for space activities. Although the 1967 Outer Space Treaty reserves space for peaceful purposes, it left gaps regarding the use of conventional weapons. The US has opposed initiatives, mainly led by Russia and China, that aim to establish legally binding bans on space weapons, such as the 2008 Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space. These proposals, supported by nations of the Global South, clash with US concerns about protecting its ballistic missile defence systems and military space capabilities. The US argues that existing international laws are sufficient and that no arms race in space is taking place. Through diplomatic strategies at forums like the UN Conference on Disarmament, the US has blocked new treaties, emphasising the need to preserve its technological dominance and unrestricted access to space. All in all, the article shows how the US strategically resists new space arms control measures to maintain flexibility in its space operations and protect national security priorities, delaying the impact of space law.

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Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO: Why did Hungary and Turkey Ratify so Late?

By Barbara Bolyós

Finland and Sweden have historically maintained a neutral stance in international politics. During the Cold War, Finland recognized the Soviet Union's dominance in the region, which caused it to adopt a pro-Soviet neutrality aimed at safeguarding its political, economic, and social systems. This strategy enabled Finland to preserve much of its sovereignty. After the Cold War, Finland continued to uphold its neutral policies. Sweden also remained neutral, having not participated in either World War, and this military neutrality became a significant part of Swedish culture and identity. However, the situation has changed for both countries in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine served as a stark warning for Finland and Sweden, highlighting Russia's willingness to extend its influence through military force. This is particularly crucial for Finland, as it shares a border with Russia that extends over 1,340 kilometers and has historically been under Russian influence. While Sweden does not share a land border with Russia, both countries are situated along the Baltic Sea, posing a substantial threat in the event of conflict. As a result, Finland applied to join NATO just two weeks after, and Sweden three months after the invasion started. NATO benefits significantly from the inclusion of the two nations, as both possess modern and well-equipped militaries. Finland, for instance, is recognized for its outstanding reserve system, while Sweden boasts a highly advanced air force and navy. Additionally, both Sweden and Finland are democratic and stable countries that align with NATO's core principles, such as collective defence and the promotion of democratic values. Their robust economies not only position them to make substantial contributions to NATO's defence budget but also allow them to bolster the alliance's overall military readiness and resource capabilities. This financial capacity is not merely theoretical; both countries have already demonstrated their commitment through increased defence spending and modernization of their armed forces, aligning with NATO's goal of 2% GDP defence expenditure.

The reaction from the majority of NATO member states to Finland and Sweden's application for membership was overwhelmingly positive. The United States emerged as one of the most vocal advocates for their accession, recognizing the significant contributions both nations could provide to NATO's security, particularly in the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions. The Biden Administration strongly pushed for a swift ratification process to reinforce NATO's unity and enhance its deterrence against Russia. Most European Union countries also expressed strong support for the accession, viewing it as an opportunity to foster a closer partnership between the EU and NATO. Nations such as Germany, France, and the Baltic states as regional powers or frontline states, were particularly supportive of their joining.

Finland's accession request was quickly accepted by the member states, but Hungary and Turkey were the ones that waited the longest to act. The Hungarian government only submitted the ratification proposal in July 2022, while countries like Canada and Germany had already completed their parliamentary votes on the matter. Hungary did not articulate specific criticisms targeting Finland and eventually ratified the accession on 27 March 2023. Turkey, on the other hand, presented requests to Finland, urging them to take stronger action against Kurdish groups that Turkey classified as terrorist organizations. After Finland cooperated with Turkey by tightening its anti-terrorism laws, promising closer collaboration with Interpol, and strengthening ties with Turkey, Erdoğan ultimately ratified the accession on 30 March 2023.

The process surrounding Sweden's accession to NATO was lengthy and complex. Turkey and Hungary raised significant criticisms regarding Sweden's membership, influenced in part by domestic political issues and the current state of bilateral relations.

Consequently, Sweden officially joined NATO only on 7 March 2024. Turkey delayed its ratification for over twenty months, citing Sweden's inadequate actions against Kurdish separatist and terrorist groups, as well as its perceived neglect of anti-Islamic demonstrations. These concerns prompted amendments to Swedish anti-terror laws and enhanced cooperation in intelligence-sharing between Stockholm and Ankara. Furthermore, Sweden approved the extradition of several individuals linked to terrorist organizations, as identified by Turkey. The Swedish government reiterated its commitment to fulfilling the requirements for NATO membership and aimed to improve relations with Turkey. In October 2023, Turkish President Erdoğan began the process for a ratification vote. However, it was ultimately postponed due to the introduction of a new condition for approval: Erdoğan requested F-16 fighter jets from the United States in exchange for consenting to Sweden's accession. This added a complicated geopolitical layer to the negotiations, intertwining Turkey's NATO cooperation with its defence procurement needs. Once an agreement was reached between the Turkish government and Sweden, ratification was granted, with the Turkish Prime Minister highlighting that Stockholm's firmer stance against Kurdish extremists residing in Sweden was pivotal in this decision. Following the ratification, the Turkish government was also granted access to the aforementioned resources.

Hungary was the last country to ratify Sweden's NATO accession, and several reasons were offered for the delayed voting process. Initially, it was stated that social consultations were underway. Once these consultations concluded, discussions arose within the FIDESZ-KDNP party regarding the matter. Subsequently, it was

claimed that Parliament was too busy, as it was simultaneously negotiating agreements with the European Union. The emphasis then shifted to Swedish-Hungarian relations, with the Hungarian government arguing for the need to improve this relationship. To facilitate this, a delegation was sent to Stockholm for discussions. Later, the Hungarian government threatened that Members of Parliament would not ratify the accession, citing insults from Swedish politicians who questioned the democratic nature of Hungary's political system in parliamentary statements. Although the ruling party introduced the ratification proposal, they cautioned Sweden that as long as Swedish politicians approached Hungary with disrespect, the NATO accession would not be prioritized on the agenda of the Hungarian Parliament. Ultimately, they insisted on a visit from the Swedish Prime Minister to Hungary. Following Ulf Kristersson's visit, Hungarian lawmakers approved the accession in February 2024, underscoring the visit's positive effect on Swedish-Hungarian relations.



The challenges faced by Turkey and Hungary in ratifying Finland's and Sweden's NATO memberships illustrate both shared and distinct domestic and geopolitical considerations. Although both countries delayed the process, their motivations and conditions were

notably different. Turkey's hesitance was primarily rooted in national security concerns, with its negotiations interwoven with broader geopolitical interests. However, Turkey's approval of Finland came more swiftly, as Finland addressed Turkish requests with fewer controversies. In contrast, Hungary's delay was politically nuanced. The Hungarian government used the accession process to voice grievances over Swedish politicians' criticisms of Hungary's domestic policies, particularly regarding rule-of-law issues. Unlike Turkey, Hungary did not condition its approval on security-related concessions; instead, it focused on improving bilateral relations and securing diplomatic gestures, such as high-level visits.

Despite these differences, both nations demonstrated their ability to influence NATO's expansion through extended negotiations, highlighting the political complexity of achieving consensus within the alliance in an evolving security landscape. Ultimately, both countries ratified the memberships. By joining NATO, Finland, and Sweden reaffirm the alliance's importance in ensuring stability and security in the Baltic and Arctic regions and embark on a significant shift from neutrality. This move strengthens NATO and reflects a broader reevaluation of security priorities in Europe, bridging historical policies with the modern imperatives of collective defence.



Alqaeda's Quest for Nuclear Terror

By Casijn de Haas

Since the end of the Cold War, the risk of interstate nuclear attacks has diminished. An essential element of the dominant doctrine of mutually assured destruction is the second-strike capability. However, if the aggressor was not a state actor, trouble arises. Because, where will the retaliatory strike be aimed at when the attack was launched by terrorists? They are not confined to a territory. In 2009, United States president Barack Obama declared nuclear terrorism “the most immediate and extreme threat to global security”.

Terrorists have multiple options when arranging a nuclear attack. They can design and manufacture nuclear weapons themselves. Terrorists can obtain nuclear weapons as well, either through stealing or by buying. Finally, they can target nuclear facilities, such as nuclear power plants. In this article, the focus will be on Alqaeda.

Making

Alqaeda has been determined to launch nuclear attacks since at least 1993. In 1998 Osama bin Laden claimed that using weapons of mass destruction to defend Muslims is a religious duty. Public Jihad manuals on how to build nuclear weapons are nevertheless often fault-ridden. One author claimed radiation was good for humans. However, Alqaeda and Osama bin Laden himself have contacted former nuclear scientists from Pakistan's clandestine nuclear programme. And, Alqaeda has had a nuclear weapons subcommittee within its organisational structure for the majority of its existence. Their inability to produce a nuclear weapon within give or take thirty years is remarkable, because twenty-nine years before Alqaeda started this venture, three Americans did it in a couple of years.

Eight years and five months after the bombardment on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two recently graduated postdocs started their attempt of replicating the Manhattan Project. Two and a half years later, the team successfully designed a nuclear bomb likely capable of eradicating an entire

city. They did not have access to classified government information, and they did not receive billions of dollars in government funds. The only advantage they had over the Manhattan physicists was that they knew it was possible, one of the participant-researchers of the ‘Nth country experiment’ recalled. The aforementioned operation was dubbed the Nth country experiment because the United States government wanted to know how difficult it would be for non-nuclear nations with limited resources to design a nuclear weapon. Which countries could possibly become an Nth country after the Big Five? Turns out, a couple of guys in their twenties could do it themselves. So, the day terrorist organisations will be able to procure nuclear weapons will come, and we have to be ready for it.

Obtaining

Designing a nuclear weapon is one, being able to build and use it is another. The biggest obstacle is acquiring enough nuclear material. In the 2001 case United States of America v. Osama bin Laden, Sudanese militant and former accomplice to Osama bin Laden, Jamal Alfadl, testified that he had taken



part in a deal to buy a cylinder of South African uranium for Al Qaeda. Al Fadl was removed from the mission before the deal was struck, so it is uncertain if it actually went through. This story is the most remarkable, but there have been more cases of alleged attempts to buy uranium by bin Laden's Al Qaeda.

Another way of obtaining nuclear weapons or nuclear material is through the help of other countries or organisations. Iran has often aided Al Qaeda's operations, most notably the 9/11 attacks. However, the chances of Iran selling nuclear weapons, if and when they acquire them themselves, to Al Qaeda or assisting them are small, primarily because the United States and other countries can trace the origins of nuclear weapons through nuclear forensics. For similar reasons, Russia is unlikely to sell nuclear weapons to Al Qaeda, despite their shared contempt for the United States. But, former Chechen leader Shamil Basayev has claimed to have acquired a nuclear payload from the Russian stockpile. Al Qaeda was supposedly eager to buy it. It should be noted that Al Qaeda is a major funder of the Chechen rebels, so they might have been a contender for it, if Basayev's statement was truthful. There have also been reports of bin Laden possessing "suitcase nuclear bombs" from the Chechens. Needless to say, these accounts cannot be verified, and claims of possession from terrorists such as Basayev and bin Laden are often bluffs.

Stealing

Moments after midnight on the 8th of November 2007, about thirty kilometres west of Pretoria, South Africa, four well-prepared intruders broke into the Pelindaba nuclear complex that hosts hundreds of kilogrammes of enriched uranium. After forty-five minutes inside the premises, the nosy parkers fled the scene, never being caught. They left empty-handed, but this incident did raise questions about the security of uranium storage. It is improbable that Al Qaeda will be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium (HEU) on its own. Al Qaeda has tried to buy uranium, but they could steal nuclear material too. For example, HEU could be stolen from poorly secured civilian research reactors at universities. The IAEA reported in 2024 that there have been thirteen cases of trafficking of HEU between 1993 and 2023. This only accounts for instances that were detected. More might have gone under the radar. Another risk is formed by Al Qaeda potentially gaining a foothold in Pakistan and seizing their nuclear weapons.

Using

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, "the principal architect of the

9/11 attacks", told American interrogators that part of earlier plans for the 9/11 attacks included a strike on a nuclear facility. Mohamed Atta, one of the 9/11 hijackers, also considered crashing a plane into a nuclear facility. His idea was rejected by the other would-be hijacker-pilots. Arguments against Atta's idea included that a nuclear facility did not have any symbolic value, and that the airspace around nuclear facilities was tightly secured. On Earth there are around 410 active nuclear power plants, 23 known uranium enrichment facilities, 227 operational research reactors, and at least 66 sites that store nuclear weapons. There are probably many more we do not know of. The possible nature of an attack on one of these facilities varies. It includes dropping a regular bomb on a facility releasing radioactive material, as well as cyberattacks that could cause nuclear meltdowns. Fortunately, the IAEA requires automatic shutdown systems of nuclear reactors in case of emergency. Some Al Qaeda members consider nuclear power plants in the United States to be unbreachable, but we have to keep the relative ease with which intruders entered the Pelindaba facility in mind. It may inspire Al Qaeda for future terrorist operations. Additionally, Al Qaeda could be aided through the use of insiders.



Conclusion

The possibility of Al Qaeda executing a nuclear terrorist attack has existed since at least 1993. The 9/11 attacks showed that Al Qaeda can be inventive, and that they do not shun enormous damages and death tolls. The procurement of nuclear weapons by Al Qaeda is still, as far as we know, a hurdle they have not been able to clear. But, once they manage to "build the bomb", or find a way to target nuclear facilities, the impact cannot be overseen. Regardless, awareness of the risks should not mean succumbing to the threat of terror. Being fearful plays into the hands of terrorists.

Veiligheid van de rechten van Maori in Nieuw-Zeeland

Door Evy Verbrugge

Op 14 november 2024 ging over de hele wereld een video viraal van een lid van het Nieuw-Zeelandse parlement die een haka uitvoerde. Toen aan de partij, The Mauri Party, van Hana Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke werd gevraagd of ze voor of tegen het wetsvoorstel stemde, beantwoordde ze die vraag met het uitvoeren van een haka. De haka is een dans oorspronkelijk uitgevoerd door mannen als oorlogskreet. echter wordt tegenwoordig de haka op onder andere verjaardagen, begrafenissen, bruiloften en uitdrukking van stam identiteit gedanst. Deze traditionele dans werd in het parlement uitgevoerd als protest tegen het wetsvoorstel. Het wetsvoorstel verscheurde ze, wat suggereert dat ze tegen de wet is. De partij representeert dan ook de belangen van het inheemse volk van Nieuw-Zeeland, namelijk de Maori.

Het wetsvoorstel van de coalitiepartij ACT, Association of Consumers and Taxpayers, heeft als doel om in het recht vast te leggen wat de principes van het Verdrag van Waitangi zijn. ACT is een conservatieve rechts-liberale politieke partij. Door deze wet zou de inhoud van het Verdrag worden geherinterpreteerd, deze (uitstaande) beslissing is controversieel. ACT geeft als reden dat de herintegratie van het verdrag ervoor zou zorgen dat alle Nieuw-Zeelanders gelijke rechten hebben. Hierachter schuilt de wrijving die ontstaan is tussen de Maori (de inheemse bevolking van Nieuw-Zeeland) en de Pakeha (Nieuw-Zeelanders van Britse en Europese afkomst) door hulpprogramma's en andere campagnes om de Maori te helpen. Volgens veel Pakeha worden de Maori hierdoor voorgetrokken en is er geen sprake meer van gelijke rechten voor alle Nieuw-Zeelanders. Is dit gevoel vanuit de Pakeha gerechtvaardigd? Of is er een reden dat de extra hulp voor Mauri juist wel tot gelijke rechten leidde?

Ontstaan Verdrag van Waitangi

De ophef om deze wet komt door het belang van het Verdrag van Waitangi voor de rechten van de Maori. Het verdrag van Waitangi is een overeenkomst tussen de kroon van Groot-Brittannië en de meer dan 500 Maori stamhoofden. De Maori kregen het volledige, exclusieve, ongestoord bezit van hun land en de kroon kreeg het

gouverneurschap. In de praktijk hield dat in dat de overheid het land bestuurde, maar hierbij niet altijd de principes van het verdrag naleefde. Zo zorgde de Public Works Acts van 1864 en 1876 ervoor dat samen met latere wetgeving het land van de Maori alsnog door overheid gebruikt mocht worden voor publieke netwerken, zoals wegen en spoorwegen. Door het verdrag konden de Pakeha wettelijk gezien land opkopen van de Maori. Veel van de deals gebeurde onder een vorm van dwang.

Kolonisatie heeft een belangrijke rol gespeeld in de geschiedenis van conflicten tussen Pakeha en Maori. Toen de Europese kolonisten naar het eiland kwamen, verergerde de oorlogsvoering tussen verschillende Maori stammen. Een deel van de stammen weigerde ook om in 1840 het verdrag te ondertekenen. Ondertussen ging het opkopen van land voor veel stammen te snel, maar juist voor de Pakeha weer te sloom. Ondertussen kreeg Nieuw-Zeeland in 1852 zijn eerste constitutie. Hierbij waren de Maori buitengesloten van vertegenwoordiging, omdat ze geen individuele landeigenaren waren. Als tegenbeweging werd in 1858 een eigen overheid opgericht met een Maori koning. Het doel was om ervoor te zorgen dat het opkopen van land afnam, omdat het landeigendom onder de Mauri koning viel en daardoor niet verkocht kon worden. Daarnaast voorzag het de Maori van een administratief orgaan voor de gebieden die de plaatselijke Britse overheid negeerde. Nog geen twee jaar later zorgde dit voor de Nieuw-Zeelandse oorlog, die 12 jaar duurde. Hierbij was het doel van de Nieuw-Zeelandse overheid, dat nog onder het Britse rijk viel, om deze stammen te straffen door hun landgebied in te nemen.

Positie Maori in de moderne tijd

De Treaty of the Waitangi Act zorgde in 1975 voor de oprichting van een tribunaal om landclaims te onderzoeken. Het bestaan van dit instituut had als gevolg dat in de jurisprudentie Nieuw-Zeeland weliswaar één land is, maar uit twee volken bestaat. Zo ontstond een bestuur voor biculturelisme. Daarentegen was er ook veel kritiek op het tribunaal. Zo voelde de Pakeha zich door de toenemende erkende claims bedreigd en vonden de Maori de vooruitgang traag gaan in het tegemoetkomen van hun

eisen. Onder dit nieuwe bestuur waren beide partijen verliezers.

Desalniettemin was er wel sociale vooruitgang voor de inheemse culturen, zoals het leren van de taal van Maori en taha Māori – de Maori manier. Er bestaan inmiddels scholen die tweetalige klassen aanbieden voor iedereen en scholen waar allen in de Maori taal wordt lesgegeven.

De rechten van Maori zijn in de afgelopen jaren dus substantieel vooruitgegaan, maar op een aantal gebieden hebben ze nog een weg te bewandelen. Bij milieurampen worden stammen relatief harder geraakt dan de rest van de bevolking, omdat ze afhankelijk zijn van hun leefomgeving. Daarnaast leeft 80% van de Maori sinds 1990 in steden. Deze toenemende urbanisatie leidde tot een daling van het aantal Maori in stammen en clans. De laatste jaren zijn er wel nieuwe ontwikkelingen die zorgen voor betere omstandigheden. Door de urbanisatie zijn veel sociale en politieke problemen aan het licht gekomen, omdat de Maori minder afgesloten waren. Zo kwamen

verschillen in inkomen of conflicten tussen Maori en Pakeha duidelijk naar voren. Daarnaast betekent de inzet van actiegroepen en protesten, zoals die in 1995 tegen het vermeend illegaal innemen van Maori-land door de Britse kroon, voor verdere agendering van politieke en culturele issues. Zo is sinds de invoering van de Drivers of Crime Initiative, met het doel om het aantal Maori dat misdaden plegen en het aantal recidivisten te laten dalen, effectief gebleken. Na twee jaar is het aantal dagvaardingen voor de rechtbank met 30 procent afgenomen. Het aantal scholen dat zich specialiseert in de Maori-taal is ook toegenomen.

Terechte ophef?

Veel Pakeha hebben hierdoor het gevoel dat de Maori worden voorgetrokken in de maatschappij. Uit dit sentiment komt ook het huidige wetsvoorstel, waar nu tegen geprotesteerd wordt. Dit alles veroorzaakte ophef onder de Maori, met als resultaat dus de uitvoering van de haka in het parlement. Tevens was er ook een lange protestmars door



verschillende steden heen. De ontstane controverse heeft duidelijke wortels en de onvrede is te begrijpen. Maori vechten al tientallen jaren voor hun rechten en hun land en het invoeren van dit wetsvoorstel bedreigt een deel van deze opgebouwde rechten. De angst onder de Maori-bevolking voor de gevolgen van het invoeren van het wetsvoorstel is met hun geschiedenis meer dan logisch.



The Connection Revolution: The Hidden Threats of Our Modernized World

By Chloé Orr

How can something so useful turn out to be so harmful? How can modern tools, used by all daily, become something that will end up a threat to each and every one of us?

Most people associate modernization threats with security camera abuse or cyber-insecurity, but even small details of our daily lives shared online can be dangerous. But why? Many of us are aware that data is constantly being collected—whether through TikTok curating your feed or targeted ads tailored to you. The online world is learning more about us than we realize. While many, myself included, often ignore this reality and enjoy a quick video of someone sharing their breakup over soup, it's time to confront the real danger: becoming the product of the media we consume.

This conversation is no longer just about the threat of Artificial Intelligence, but the threat of being stripped away of a basic human right: privacy.

The Internet

The development of the internet in the late 20th and early 21st century was a revolution, not only in the way we connect, but in the ways we talk and think. While offering immense benefits, the internet also presents various dangers and risks that can affect society as a whole.

Many websites and apps collect personal data, often used for targeted ads or sold to third parties (Altman et. Al, 2018). This surveillance leads to a loss of privacy and possibly even manipulation. There is a growing lack of anonymity. With widespread tracking technologies (like cookies), it is harder to stay anonymous online (Altman et. Al, 2018). Personal habits, preferences, and behaviors are constantly being monitored. What we believe to be our personal information no longer belongs to us. Although this is partly our fault by giving our information to websites

without verifying their security, one should wonder why we must question our every move. The world is becoming increasingly insecure, and our daily actions present a risk to ourselves.

On a larger scale, the internet can even present significant national security risks through cybersecurity threats. Cyberattacks can lead to the theft of classified information, such as defense plans, intelligence operations, and diplomatic communications. For example, in 2015, the United States (U.S.) Office of Personnel Management breach by the Chinese Advanced Persistent Threat resulted in the theft of personal data for over 21 million U.S. federal employees (Congressional Research Service, 2015). The stolen data provided detailed information about government employees, their family members, and ongoing intelligence operations, which could be exploited for blackmail or intelligence gathering. This threat compromised the U.S. government's ability to protect sensitive personnel information and has many unquantifiable long-term consequences for the U.S. by giving China a strategic advantage (Knake, 2015). The concept of stolen data does not only provide a risk to government officials and their ongoing operations but to the general public as well. One can think of the Cambridge Analytica scandal involving the misuse of data harvested from up to 87 million Facebook users without proper consent (Isaak & Hanna, 2018). The firm used this data to build psychological profiles and sway voter behavior, notably during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Brexit referendum, exposing voters to significant risks from external manipulation.





Voter's choice is also largely influenced by the spread of false information through the internet, particularly through social media. The rapid spread of rumors and misinformation can largely shape public opinion, disrupt elections, and fuel social unrest. During the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), the Plandemic video by Mikki Willis spread false claims about the virus and vaccines (Lee et. Al, 2023). Despite being debunked, the video contributed to vaccine hesitancy and mistrust in public health measures, leading to lower vaccination rates and prolonged outbreaks (Lee et. Al, 2023). While the internet offers many benefits, these risks underscore the importance of caution, digital literacy, and stronger regulations to protect users.

Global Positioning System (GPS)

I assume almost everyone has used a GPS at some point. This tool, initially developed to track satellites and provide navigation to the military, is now being used commercially. Like most technological advancements, GPS offers incredible convenience and efficiency. However, it also brings several potential risks that deserve closer attention..

GPS can track an individual's movements in real-time, posing a serious threat to privacy. Without users being fully aware, many apps and devices (smartphones, fitness trackers, etc.) collect location data, potentially exposing their whereabouts to others, such as advertisers, hackers, or even malicious entities (Burbank et. Al, 2024). If this data is hacked, it could reveal sensitive patterns, such as frequent locations or home addresses. This data can be exploited by stalkers or criminals to track someone's location and follow their movements, leading to possible safety risks. The issue has worsened with the rise of social media, where many apps (Instagram, Facebook, etc.) automatically share users' locations, often without their full awareness. For example, geotagging photos can reveal where someone lives, works, or vacations—information that can easily be exploited. This creates an unintended risk for many, highlighting the dangers the internet poses to our privacy and security.

While location tracking via GPS poses significant privacy risks, the widespread use of GPS technology also contributes to environmental concerns, from its

creation to its disposal. Manufacturing GPS devices and satellites involves mining rare earth materials, often leading to habitat destruction, water pollution, and deforestation (Kumaran et. Al, 2024). Additionally, decommissioned GPS satellites contribute to the growing problem of space debris (Kumaran et. Al, 2024).

GPS, similar to data collecting, presents significant cybersecurity risks. GPS jammers can block or interfere with signals, causing navigation devices to fail. These systems are particularly vulnerable to cyberattacks, such as GPS spoofing (Burbank et. Al, 2024). This involves creating fake GPS signals that trick devices into thinking they are in a different location. For instance, during a military exercise in the Black Sea in 2021, NATO warships experienced GPS spoofing, causing their locations to appear off the coast of Russian-occupied Crimea (Zorri & Kessler, 2024). While this incident did not escalate to direct confrontation, the event created strong tensions and highlighted the vulnerabilities of relying solely on GPS for navigation in contentious and sensitive zones.

While GPS is an invaluable tool, its implications for privacy, security, and the environment call for greater awareness and responsibility in how we use and share location data.

The technological advancements we rely on today are, in reality, quite new. As these innovations are advancing so rapidly, many of us may not fully grasp the risks they pose or understand how to use them responsibly. We are living in an age of constant surveillance, where our right to privacy is slowly eroding, often without our awareness. Humanity is increasingly becoming a product of the media and those with malicious intentions. While changing our habits may be difficult, it is essential. As technology outpaces our ability to comprehend and manage it, we must also be cautious of the dangers it poses to creativity and free thought. Awareness of these dangers must grow if we are to avoid living in a world where, as George Orwell warned in 1984, Big Brother is watching us all.

Internal Security of Women in Afghanistan

By Sabina Katsaeva

“Women in Afghanistan are surviving, not living” is the sad reality of approximately 14.2 million Afghan women. What appeared to be the light at the end of the tunnel with progress made towards women’s rights nationally in the early 2000s, turned into a state of despair after the Taliban’s intervention. This led to inconsistencies in the freedoms that Afghan women fought so tirelessly to secure. Despite the recurring physical, educational, legal or economic insecurity that the political group perpetuates onto women, no effective action has been taken to resolve it. This article aims to break down the issue by understanding who the Taliban are, their influence in Afghanistan, and the specific implications that it has on Afghan women.

How did the Taliban become so powerful in Afghanistan?

The Taliban are an Islamic fundamentalist military and political group that emerged in the early 1990s in Afghanistan due to the country’s instability at the time. Their aim has always been to establish strict interpretations of Sharia law¹. The rise of the Taliban happened post- Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, as the collapse of the communist government in 1992 caused tensions between rival Mujahideen factions². These factions and chaos led to the emergence of the Taliban in southern Afghanistan, gaining influence by promising stability and greater security nationwide. Ultimately, their increasing influence led to the killing of the Afghan President at the time, Mohammad Najibullah in 1996 in Kabul³, allowing the Taliban to gain control over most of the country and establish the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. This change in the political trajectory allowed the

Taliban to impose their orders and laws, including those that ban education for girls and harsh physical punishments to those who don’t oblige to their principles.

However, the post-9/11 events that changed the state of Afghanistan in 2001 were a key turning point. The terrorist attack on the twin towers was followed by a U.S.-led invasion in Afghanistan after the Taliban refused to hand over the string-puller behind the attack, Osama Bin Laden. After the invasion, the Taliban regime was overthrown and fled to hide out in southern Afghanistan. It seemed as though national peace had been restored when an interim government was formed and a NATO-led International Security Assistance Force was established to maintain security.

Unfortunately, this peace was not long-lasting. From 2006 onward, the Taliban launched guerrilla attacks on NATO forces and the U.S.-implemented Afghan government in what is known as the insurgency period. Fights between U.S. troops and the terrorist group continued until 2020 due to the national government’s inability to maintain territory control. This ended when the U.S. and Taliban signed a peace agreement in February 2020 which involved the U.S. withdrawing its troops from Afghan soil in exchange for the Taliban promising commitments to anti-terrorist acts. This was later officially announced by Joe Biden who said that all remaining U.S. troops would be withdrawn by September 11, 2021.



1 Sharia law = Islam’s legal system
2 Mujahideen factions = groups of Islamic fighters in Afghanistan divided by ethnic or ideological lines
3 Kabul = Capital city of Afghanistan

However, the end of this war meant the start of another battle - a battle for the rights of Afghan women. After the official withdrawal of U.S. troops, the Taliban quickly recaptured key provinces of the nation, leading to the President Ashraf Ghani fleeing the country and the government ultimately collapsing as the capital came into the hands of the military group in August 2021.

Unfortunately, the fact that the Taliban's commitment to establish an inclusive government in Afghanistan that guarantees women's rights was nothing but an empty promise is abundantly clear today.

What's the current situation for Afghan women? A Gender Apartheid

Ever since the withdrawal of Western powers and development aid, the country crippled into an economic and humanitarian crisis. With that said, the Taliban regime has been considered "the most discriminatory in the world." At present, the Taliban have implemented laws and provisions that violate almost every human right and freedom that a woman should be entitled to.

This starts from the early stages of a woman's life, as policy doesn't permit them to go to school past sixth grade. Furthermore, the regime doesn't allow for women to obtain a higher education. This directly threatens their human and economic security as without education, the women are more vulnerable to poverty and exploitation. Moreover, the suspension of women in education not only has implications for them, but also for the Afghan economy which is predicted to miss out on \$9.6 billion if those restrictions continue.

Additionally, Afghan women have been suspended almost entirely from the working sector. Previously, the nation had some female representation, with 27% of Parliament Members, 265 judges and 21% of all defense counsel all being women in Afghanistan. Today, they have been excluded from public administration roles completely, with no women in both the political and legal national system. Their

work in the private sector has been significantly reduced, the biggest loss being the order to close down beauty salons, a key source of income for many women and one of the last public spaces which women had access to. Even though Afghan women are allowed to work some teaching and healthcare positions, this comes with severe restrictions imposed by the Taliban.

Unfortunately, the laws put forth don't only dictate what women can do, but also where they can go. The Taliban have continuously banned women from all public places, claiming that they need a mahram to travel more than 72 km. However, many claim that a mahram has also been demanded for shorter trips. To add on, when they do travel in public spaces, the women need to be wearing full veils as those who disobey the dress code risk severe punishment or imprisonment for themselves or their male relative.



All of these laws combined make it difficult to access basic services such as healthcare due to travel complications and sociocultural norms. Some provinces don't allow female patients to be treated without a mahram accompanied, making it inconvenient for women to receive any medical care.

However, perhaps the most dehumanizing law recently implemented is one that restricts women to speak aloud in public. The reasoning being that a woman's voice is considered 'intimate', making singing, reciting or reading aloud in public is strictly prohibited.

In conclusion, security can be seen as more than just the absence of war it is also the presence of opportunity and freedom. Sadly, stripped of their legal, educational and economical security, Afghan women are left exposed to vulnerability and exploitation. However, it's key to identify that these restrictions don't just have implications on them, but also on the nation's stability itself. A society cannot succeed when half of the population is silenced.

An Insight From The Field

Dr. Moritz Brake

Guardians of the Rules-Based Order: A Call to Action

The rules-based international order is under threat. Geopolitical tensions are being escalated to a point where the survival of European stability and security demands immediate, collective action. Russia, with overt and covert support from China, Iran, and North Korea, is not only waging war in Ukraine but preparing for a broader confrontation with NATO and the European Union. The proto-alliance of systemic rivals is targeting the stability of our democratic societies: through disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks, and physical sabotage against our economic foundation and critical infrastructures. These less and less covert actions across the maritime, cyber, and even space domains expose Europe's vulnerabilities and test the limits of our resilience.

The Maritime Dimension: A Strategic



Battleground

After years of increasing cyber threats, a further battleground of geopolitical competition has come to require urgent attention: the maritime domain—the global lifeline for trade, energy supply, and strategic mobility. More than 80% of global trade by volume traverses the seas, and the European economy depends on secure shipping routes and undersea infrastructures like data cables and pipelines. In the past years, these critical arteries have become primary targets. Attacks on maritime supply chains, hybrid operations against

offshore installations, and the exploitation of legal grey zones in international waters are not hypothetical risks but unfolding realities: Maritime security and resilience are as essential close to home, in the North and Baltic Sea, as much as further afield in the Red Sea or the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.

These maritime threats are not isolated. They are part of a broader strategy that spans cyber and space domains, forming a triad of vulnerability that adversaries exploit to destabilize democratic states. Physical, maritime dependencies intersect with digital and space-based ones. Accordingly, resilience and defence needs to address the entire spectrum of the economic and social foundation of our societies.

The Urgent Need for Resilience and Deterrence

Russia's shift to a wartime economy signals the seriousness of its intentions to become ready to directly confront NATO and EU – a point it will likely reach within the next five years. Its actions are not the provocations of a desperate regime but calculated steps toward a prolonged confrontation. To deter such aggression, Europe must urgently bolster its resilience and defense posture. We are no longer just discussing the lagging NATO ambition to spend 2% of GDP for defence: Confronted by a rapidly arming Russia, the 3% and more spent by countries like Estonia, Latvia, and Poland are a much more realistic target.



Resilience is not merely a military imperative—it is a societal challenge. Deterrence requires more than weapons and strategies; it demands a unified, prepared society capable of withstanding shocks and maintaining critical functions under stress. Equally, neither Russia nor China manifests their challenge only in military terms. Their strategies encompass industrial capacities to manufacture military equipment in vast quantities, control key technologies, raw materials, and intermediary products, attain immunity from sanctions, and build leverage to exploit the dependencies and vulnerabilities of others.

The Role of Academia: From Theory to Action

Herein lies the responsibility—and opportunity—for academia. Political science has long excelled at diagnosing crises and proposing solutions, yet too often these insights remain confined to journals and conferences. In this moment of unprecedented need and urgency, the academic community must step out of its ivory towers and engage directly with policymakers, industry leaders, and the public.

The value of academic expertise lies not only in its



depth but in its ability to bridge disciplines, anticipate complex interactions, and propose innovative solutions. Political scientists must translate their analyses into actionable strategies, focusing on the

immediate task of strengthening Europe's societal resilience. This involves pragmatism, adaptability, and a willingness to collaborate across sectors.

A Call to Action

Europe faces a decisive decade. The rules-based order will not defend itself, nor will resilience emerge by accident. As academics, we have a moral obligation to contribute to the societal effort. This is a call to action for my peers: apply your knowledge, hone your methods, and engage where your expertise is needed most. Whether through advising on policies, enhancing public understanding of strategic risks, or working with industry and technological innovators to increase their resilience and refine their solutions, your contributions are essential.



There is little time for theoretical reflection. What we need now is bold, pragmatic action. Only through a united effort can we hope to deter aggression, defend our values, and secure a future where Europe thrives as a guardian of our humanitarian values and the rules-based international order.



About the Author

Dr. Moritz Brake is a senior fellow at the Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS) at the University of Bonn. Furthermore, after over twenty years of active service, he is now an officer in the reserve of the German Navy.

Eyes in the Sky

The Role of Space Evidence in Humanitarian Action

By Bartosz Bilski

Space technology is no longer a futuristic vision. With various private and public companies expanding in this area, it has become a tool many use every day. For example, space evidence, created by satellite-based Earth Observation (EO) technologies, is revolutionising how we address global challenges.

What is Space Evidence?

Space evidence refers to data and images collected by satellites orbiting Earth. They capture high-resolution photos and geospatial data documenting changes in land, structures, or the environment. The information, often derived from initiatives like the EU's Copernicus program, is crucial for monitoring events in remote or inaccessible areas.

Currently, we have three main satellites in the Copernicus Program which can create images and data. This is a series of sentinel satellites operated by the European Union as part of the Copernicus Earth Observation program. Their names are Sentinel-2, Sentinel-3, and Sentinel-5P.

Space evidence offers objectivity, consistency, and global reach. For instance, satellite imagery has documented the destruction of villages in conflict zones, illegal deforestation, and the impact of natural disasters. Its ability to provide a bird's-eye view of large areas makes it invaluable for both investigative and humanitarian purposes.

How Space Evidence Supports Justice

Satellite images may help prosecutors and international courts and tribunals as a piece of evidence. The Sentinel satellite series offers diverse capabilities: Sentinel-2 captures high-resolution imagery to monitor vegetation health, land use, and agricultural changes;

Sentinel-3 measures atmospheric and terrestrial parameters, including crop development and water quality; and Sentinel-5P focuses on atmospheric data, tracking pollution levels such as nitrogen dioxide concentrations.



Photo: ©ESA

Satellite data's objectivity and reliability make it a valuable tool for justice. It can help with documenting war crimes and environmental destruction. In the past, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) used satellite imagery to prove the relocation of mass burial sites during the Srebrenica massacre. This was later used as evidence against the offenders. Earth Observation data from satellites like Sentinel-2 also supports investigations into the destruction of civilian infrastructure, for example, bombed buildings or razed villages, by providing "before-and-after" imagery. Sentinel-3 and Sentinel-5P contribute to identifying the environmental and health impacts of warfare, such as polluted air or degraded farmland, which may form part of reparative justice claims. Space evidence can gather data which is valid proof of various kinds of destruction.

Problems with Space Evidence and Next Steps

There are some main issues regarding the usage of space data in current proceedings. As this technology is new, frameworks for its use are not created yet. Some international legal bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC) have yet to establish consistent rules for admitting satellite imagery as evidence. Another problem is that satellite data, being digital, is vulnerable to tampering or misrepresentation. Space evidence is also expensive, and not all organisations can afford it. While initiatives like Copernicus provide free data, there's a need for broader democratisation to support smaller NGOs and actors. The last problem is that satellites are constantly moving around the Earth. Even when looking at the same region we will have a few hours gaps between photos. It is hard to capture events as they occur.

Using space evidence in humanitarian action needs some improvement, but can give the International Tribunals and Courts a reliable source of information. It can give valuable insights with images and data. Space evidence also enhances the ability to monitor inaccessible regions in real time and provide impartial documentation of events, making it a great resource for achieving justice.



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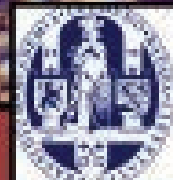
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SAVE THE DATE

Upcoming SPIL Activities

February 12th

Excursion Mexican Embassy

Valentine's Party

Leiden

February 13th

Masters SPIL the drinks

Leiden

February 18th

Long Trip Destination

Reveal Borrel

The Hague

February 21st

Family Day

February 27th

Interim GA

Leiden

March 3rd

InFaFe Party

Leiden

March 6th

Monthly Borrel

Leiden

March 7th

Friends Day

March 10th

Efteling

March 12th

PiP Congress

The Hague

March 17th

Study Groups

Leiden & The Hague

March 18th

DEBAT Reveal Borrel

The Hague

