

THE WARSAW INSTITUTE REVIEW

qr. 2. 2020

no. 13

ISSN 2543-9839



The Third Crisis
of the European
Union

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Dear Readers,



I cordially invite you to explore the next issue of the quarterly in which you will find: analyses of the international situation at this exceptional time when the world is facing an economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, general analyses of the political situation in selected countries as well as articles about Polish history.

I particularly encourage you to read texts devoted the European Union – a commentary by Professor Tomasz Grzegorz Grosse on the EU summit in July 2020, during which the fate of the EU budget for the following years was decided, in addition to the analysis of the economic situation caused by the reaction of Member States and the Community itself to the pandemic, written by Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski. Also noteworthy is the article by Jakub Wiech on the so-called Energiewende, i.e. German energy transition strategy for the coming years.

Furthermore, in the quarterly you can find two interviews with sitting Polish Members of the European Parliament. Anna Fotyga – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, spoke about the current geopolitical situation and the importance of cultural diplomacy in building soft power. Kosma Złotowski, MEP, answered questions about the new European Mobility Package, which governs EU transport regulations.

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THE WARSAW INSTITUTE REVIEW
WARSAW, POLAND

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THE WARSAW INSTITUTE REVIEW

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ŚWIEŹOKRZYSKA 18/410,
00-052 WARSAW, POLAND

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The opinions given and the positions held in the materials published in the Warsaw Institute Review solely reflect the views of the authors and cannot be equated with the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland.

ISSN 2543-9839

This issue ends with two historical texts. The first of them is about the fate of the population of Augustów, i.e. a city in north-eastern part of Poland. There, after the German capitulation, the Red Army and communist security forces committed the greatest post-war crime in Europe, as Sławomir Moćkun writes. The latter article, by Karol Wołek, deals with the historical liberation of the German concentration camp by Poles.

Wishing you a good read!

IZABELA WOJTYCZKA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
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Public purpose co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland in the competition "Cooperation in the Field of Public Diplomacy 2020".

Co-financed by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage from the Promotion of Culture Fund.

Partners:

Foundation based in Warsaw, Poland



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of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland

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INTERFERENCE OF CHINESE AUTHORITIES IN HONG KONG

IZABELA WOJTYCZKA'S INTERVIEW
WITH ANNA FOTYGA

A few days ago, together with a group of 787 other politicians, Member and former Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defense (SEDE) Minister Anna Fotyga condemned the unilateral introduction of national security regulations in Hong Kong. In the interview with The Warsaw Institute Review, she talks about the expected further interference of Chinese authorities in Hong Kong and her activities in Poland and abroad.



ANNA FOTYGA HAS BEEN APPOINTED BY NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG TO THE NATO REFLECTION GROUP. PHOTO: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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YOUR INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES ARE VERY IMPRESSIVE AND VISIBLE ON ALMOST EVERY CONTINENT. COULD YOU PLEASE TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THESE ACTIONS REACHING FROM AFRICA TO THE ARCTIC?

The European Parliament is indeed a place concentrated on many global issues. Unfortunately, when it comes to matters of security, one of the areas of my work, we are confronted with an accumulation of problems. For some time now, an expression *arc of instability* has been commonly used to describe the area stretching from the Sahel to Afghanistan. After 2014, a similar arc has been formed, this time covering the territory from the Arctic to the Black Sea – where the main vulnerability factor can be identified much more easily. That is why we remain engaged. I have visited the frontline in Donbas three times, chairing the first EU mission to the contact line. Shortly before the blockade of the Azov Sea I led a mission to Mariupol, which has

contributed to a determined response of the institutions of the European Union. Every few months I visit Georgia, trying to engage representatives of various political groups through different formats. They often come to the Caucasus for the first time and have the opportunity to watch the ‘borderization’ process. Such actions translate into tangible effects. Our reports or joint resolutions are expressive – they force corrections of certain policies and changes in their financing. One of the examples is the renowned resolution on the tenth anniversary of the August 2008 War in Georgia. Of course, I am in constant contact with civil society in Belarus.

Speaking of territories located far away from Poland, yet important for my country, I was also an author of a comprehensive report on Afghanistan and the *EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (CAPD)*. As the ECR foreign affairs coordinator, I have been involved



RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION ON UKRAINE REMAINS THE TOP PRIORITY IN FOTYGA'S ACTIVITIES IN THE EP. ANNA FOTYGA HOSTED NUMEROUS CONFERENCES AND HAS LAUNCHED MANY INITIATIVES DEDICATED TO THE SITUATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND HOSTAGES OF THE KREMLIN. PHOTO: OFFICE OF MEP ANNA FOTYGA

in a comprehensive range of issues, also during the ongoing term. Frankly speaking, I find negotiations of common positions very rewarding. We are currently working on the text of a resolution regarding the reduction of Hong Kong's autonomy, recommendations on the future of the Eastern Partnership, and relations with the Western Balkan countries. During this term of office, I was appointed standing rapporteur of the European Parliament for the Arctic, an area facing important processes.

Naturally, we address many problems with a comprehensive approach, which is why I have been active in domains related to freedom of navigation and maritime safety, for example concerning the blockade of the Azov Sea, threats in the Strait of Hormuz, and anti-piracy activities in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea.

For several years now, I have been following the Chinese expansion in South China and East China Seas and initiating



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the European Parliament's activities on this matter. In Brussels, this topic allows me to raise the issue of Russian blockades of the Vistula Lagoon. Clearly, there are more such horizontal challenges, such as terrorism, proliferation, or CBRN. On top of that, there are issues of human rights violations, so my attention is also focused on such countries as Nicaragua, Myanmar, or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

COULD YOU PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA?

As Chair of the Security and Defense Subcommittee (SEDE) in my previous term of office in the European Parliament, I tried to exhibit the dangers both in our

eastern neighborhood, in the Middle and the Far East, and Africa. Therefore, our missions were directed not only to Ukraine or Georgia but also to countries in Africa. We had the opportunity to assess the security situation and the performance of EUCAP missions in Mali, Niger, CAR, and the eastern DRC. We support G5 Sahel, evaluate the functioning of aid instruments, and are about to complete our report on **EU-African security cooperation**. I am also the rapporteur of recommendations for the EU-Africa strategy. We would like to adopt them this autumn before the EU-African Union Summit. We devote much attention to the fight against terrorism, radicalization, smuggling of cultural goods, and the pillage of natural resources.

When visiting Africa, I always do my best to meet the Polish communities; I also talk to the missionaries who probably have the best perspective on the situation. In Uganda, I had the opportunity to thank the local community for taking care of the cemetery where Polish World War II refugees are buried. A tangible acknowledgment from the Republic of Poland for the warm welcome of Polish refugees was the construction of the health center named after *Sybiraks* (Polish people resettled to Siberia), in Kojja, Uganda.

The *Africa Summit* organized on my initiative in the European Parliament by European Conservatives and Reformists is widely appreciated. There are many such activities: we talk how to improve FDI, strengthen trade, fight organized crime, strengthen interreligious dialogue, institutions, and the electoral processes. This is what I do as a member of *The Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG)*. I also cooperate with the *European Endowment for Democracy*, *International Republican Institute*, and *International Democratic Union*.



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AS THE CHAIR OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE, ANNA FOTYGA LED MANY MISSIONS OF THE EP TO THE CONFLICT ZONES, INCLUDING THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

LET'S TALK ABOUT POLAND. YOU ARE CURRENTLY ALSO INVOLVED IN POPULARIZING POLISH CULTURE THROUGH THE USE OF PROMOTIONAL POTENTIAL OF CONCERTS AND EXHIBITIONS. COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THIS KIND OF ACTIVITIES AND THE POLISH CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN GENERAL WHEN IT COMES TO BUILDING POLAND'S SO-CALLED SOFT POWER?

Poland is a country with a fascinating history, and in every corner of the Earth, we all can discover wonderful Polish traces. A few weeks ago, during an epidemiological conference organized in Taiwan, I recalled the contribution of an outstanding Polish epidemiologist of Jewish origin, Ludwik Rajchman, who supported Taiwan very actively. In Pakistan, in turn, we remember Władysław Turowicz, a pilot who was the father of Pakistan Air Force. While visiting Baku at a difficult time in Azerbaijan's relations with the EU, in addition to the usual appreciation of the contribution of Polish architects and engineers to the development of the country's capital, I asked for the

opportunity to lay flowers on the grave of General Maciej Sulkiewicz, First Chief of Staff of the Azerbaijani army, killed by the Bolsheviks. I was very moved when, assisted by the highest Azerbaijani commanders and the Azerbaijani fleet, I could throw a white-red bouquet on the Bay of Baku's surface, in a place where the Bolsheviks probably sank the body of our common hero. It seems that although a hundred years have passed since his death, it was the first time that the outstanding Polish Tartar was honored in this way. The monument to General Maciej Sulkiewicz was later also unveiled in Warsaw.

I promote Polish history in Brussels in various ways – by organizing exhibitions, film screenings, and conferences followed by two English-language volumes. These books reach diplomats and officials who come to visit my office – many of whom have family ties or professional relations with Poland. I even had to prepare a big reprint of the book “Return of the Executed Army.” Still in the European Parliament many people recall that I managed to organize a concert of the rock band “Forteca” during the conference

devoted to the Cursed Soldiers in the hall where the committees typically meet. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of regaining independence, alongside the Polish-American conference on history, with the participation of, among others, a hero of the Solidarity movement Andrzej Gwiazda, I organized an exhibition of contemporary Polish art, accompanied by a concert of classical music and delicious Polish wine. The last big event in the EP before the pandemic had a similar format, and the title “I Thee Wed ...” referred to the hundredth anniversary of Poland’s ‘Marriage to the Sea’ (when Poland regained its access to the Baltic). Also in this case, records with Polish classical music and post-war catalogs with excellent Polish maritime art have reached all MEPs, as well as many diplomats and officials. Such events subsequently help in our daily work. This was the case, for example, in September last year, when the European Parliament in an important resolution strongly supported Poland against Russian attempts to revise the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.

LET’S TALK ABOUT THE RECENT EVENT BY THE WARSAW INSTITUTE REVIEW CALLED: “HONG KONG – THE PEOPLE’S REVOLUTION AGAINST THE PARTY,” WHERE WE HAD THE PLEASURE OF HOSTING YOU AS AN EXPERT. A FEW DAYS AGO, WITH A GROUP OF 787 OTHER MEPS, YOU CONDEMNED THE “UNILATERAL ENACTMENT OF NATIONAL SECURITY LEGISLATION IN HONG KONG.” WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE NEXT STAGE OF INTERFERENCE BY THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES IN HONG KONG?

The current restrictions are being introduced with a view to the upcoming *Hong Kong Legislative Council* elections in September. This will be a crucial moment. The CPC is equipping its own forces with tools to suppress protests and take control

of the election process. Beijing already has experience in dismantling autonomy. We talk too rarely about the fate of Tibet or the situation of the Uighurs. I remember the pressures related to the visit of the Dalai Lama to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. I still recall the meeting with the daughter of Ilham Tohti, a Uighur scientist and journalist sentenced to life in prison by the Chinese authorities. Beijing managed to suppress Tibet some time ago and is systematically reaching for new targets. We must support democratic Taiwan, ensure that international law is respected, and not let the prospect of short-term economic gains cover our declared values. We cannot allow the falsely positive image of communist China to dominate in the media and public space.

WHAT DEFENSE MECHANISMS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE?

We are having this interview one day before the vote on the resolution concerning Hong Kong that I am also preparing and negotiating. We have managed to gather a number of demands in an expressive document. First of all, we need to review our strategy towards an assertive China. We, therefore, call on the EU to raise human rights issues at the planned EU-China Summit. We insist that human rights should be a critical element in the negotiations on the EU-China bilateral investment agreement while warning that the EP may block the approval of the Comprehensive Investment Agreement or future trade agreements with China should Beijing continue this policy. The international community must work closely together to put pressure on Beijing to ensure that its actions are consistent with the country’s international obligations. We call for the appointment of a UN Special Envoy or Special Rapporteur on the situation in Hong Kong, the establishment of an International Contact Group on Hong Kong, and coordination with international



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**ANNA FOTYGA AFTER VISITING POLITICAL PRISONERS IN ONE OF THE JAILS IN TBILISI.
PHOTO: OFFICE OF MEP ANNA FOTYGA**

partners, mainly the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan. As a further step, the Council should adopt targeted sanctions and asset freezing against Chinese officials responsible for developing and implementing policies which violate human rights and freedoms. The EU, Member States, and in a broader sense, a democratic West, should carefully examine how to avoid economic – in particular technological – dependence on China, especially when deciding on the development of the 5G network. We cannot accept the imposition of self-censorship. Despite pressure from Beijing, we should, among other things, pay a big tribute to the courage of the Chinese people who gathered in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in June 1989 to demand the elimination of corruption, the introduction of political reforms, and

civil liberties. For a long time now, I have pointed out that the relevant services should examine the activities of the Confucius Institutes. We can also learn a lot from Taiwan, a country that is exposed to daily attacks and pressure from China.

AT THE END OF MARCH, NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG SET UP A SMALL GROUP OF EXPERTS TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE UNITY OF THE ALLIANCE. YOU ARE THE ONLY REPRESENTATIVE OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THIS GROUP. WHAT ARE YOUR OBJECTIVES AND PLANS FOR THIS PROJECT?

The reflection process has an internal character, which is why I will refrain from answering this question. At least

until December, which is when we are to present the results of our work. All I can say is that we are conducting extensive consultations and that the NATO, with its 30 members, one billion inhabitants, and half of the world's GDP, remains the strongest political-military Alliance in world history.

HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION? WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS THE WORLD IS FACING – OR WILL FACE – THESE DAYS?

This is a difficult question to answer because the range of challenges is extensive. Yet, I am glad that most of them are spoken about in an increasingly open way I don't know if the breach of international law – namely the annexation of Crimea – might be fixed in the nearest future. We should still exert more pressure on the Kremlin and increase costs of illegal occupation. It is clear that Russia wants to lead to a new “concert of powers.” However, history clearly shows that a lack of decisive reaction to such moves leads to the collapse of the international order. And while I am glad that the Western world remains united in not recognizing the occupation of Crimea, I observe the willingness of some countries to re-establish their relationship with Russia.

WAR CANNOT BE OVERLOOKED.

Undemocratic governments want to use this moment to strengthen their positions by promoting their style of governing and undermining the Western model of democracy. We must pay more attention to Africa, where Russia and China have long been expanding. Their aim is not only the economy but also winning African votes in the UN or other international organizations.

In this way, China has gained enormous influence not only in the recently criticized WHO, but also in Interpol, FAO, ITU or

ICAO. As we know, this does not translate into the quality of work and independence of these organizations. This is one of the reasons why the United States decides to withdraw from China-controlled and inefficient international institutions. Both trends are unfavorable to us, and we must reverse them. We must make a greater commitment in Africa, the demographic boom of which must be complemented by an appropriate rate of economic development.

I also observe many unfavorable trends in our eastern neighborhood. They must be continuously followed and responded to. Many processes are taking place within the EU itself, and in discussions on its future, there are plans to deepen integration further. We regularly point out that the slogan “more EU” is not the solution to all problems. Federalism may work well in Germany, but this must not mean automatic acceptance of this model at the European level. We must also reinvent the relationship with the United Kingdom. London will not be a member of the EU, but its impact on the security of the continent cannot be overestimated, and we count on greater involvement of Westminster in other international forums.

IN THE RECENT MONTHS WE HAVE SEEN AN INCREASED AMOUNT OF DEBATES REGARDING THE CHANGE OF BALANCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL GEOPOLITICAL ARENA. IN THIS CONTEXT, IT IS MAINLY ABOUT CHINA'S GROWING ROLE IN THE WORLD AND THE CHINESE-AMERICAN COMPETITION. THERE ARE ALSO MANY VOICES ABOUT RUSSIA'S ASPIRATIONS TO REBUILD ITS POWER IN THE WORLD. WHAT STRATEGY FOR THE “NEW TIMES” SHOULD POLAND ADOPT?

I remember President Obama's pivot to Asia, the consequences of which were probably most acute in our region.



ANNA FOTYGA LAYS A WREATH AT THE GRAVE OF JAN KARSKI AT MOUNT OLIVET CEMETERY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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However, I still have the impression that it is the United States that thinks more strategically than Europe, as the latter has been using the American security umbrella for over 70 years. However, the situation in our neighborhood calls for a wake-up call from this blissful slumber. It sometimes requires a strong push. We also need to build social resilience to threats instead of limiting our activity to the fight against disinformation. The EU's non-treaty interference in Poland's issues also encourages Russia to choose our country as a target for attacks in an information war. For many years I have advocated in the European Parliament for closer cooperation with like-minded partners: The United States, Canada, Australia or Japan. The strategic relationship must also be reflected in the economy, trade, and mutual investment.

I am glad that in the previous term of the European Parliament, we managed to sign the groundbreaking, modern agreements such as the *EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)* or *EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)*. I have supported these initiatives from the beginning. Poland has excellent relations with these countries and is gradually deepening them to the strategic level. I think that we have a common perception of threats that the Free World will have to face. As a politician dealing with security, I always consider even the gloomiest scenarios. But I know it well that Poland and Europe have gone through many painful periods in their long history, always coming out stronger, I believe it will be so this time, too.

Thank you very much for your time and our very fruitful cooperation!

THE MOBILITY PACKAGE AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN TRANSPORT

BERENIKA GRABOWSKA'S INTERVIEW WITH KOSMA ZŁOTOWSKI

The EU institutions have been working on the Mobility Package for over three years. They started on May 31, 2017, when the European Commission presented proposals to amend several legal acts of road transport, and ended on July 8, 2020, when the European Parliament (EP) voted on reports pertaining to the Mobility Package whilst rejecting amendments proposed by many countries. The COVID-19 pandemic did not stop work on the European Mobility Package, which was officially approved by the Council of the European Union this April. The draft was voted through by the Council at first reading, with the opposition of nine EU countries, including Poland. Ultimately, on July 8, the European Parliament decided to reject all amendments to the draft. Thus, the whole legislative process was completed.



KOSMA ZŁOTOWSKI, MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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BERENIKA GRABOWSKA: THE MOBILITY PACKAGE IS A SET OF REGULATIONS GOVERNING TRANSPORT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, WHICH STANDARDIZES THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF DRIVERS, POSTING OF WORKERS, ROAD CONTROLS AS WELL AS ACCESS TO THE PROFESSION AND ROAD HAULAGE MARKET. IN YOUR OPINION – WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES THAT THE MOBILITY PACKAGE INTRODUCES?

Kosma Złotowski: The most important change is the extension of the provisions of the Posted Workers Directive to drivers carrying out part of their operations in international transport. Additionally, there are new obligations for carriers in terms of providing the drivers with appropriate rest areas or installing intelligent tachographs in light commercial vehicles (LCVs) with a gross vehicle weight under 3.5 tons. Furthermore, the Package includes a number of bureaucratic

barriers for performing cabotage, which are supposed to practically exclude transport companies from Poland and other Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) from operating on Western markets. However, the most important change introduced by the Mobility Package is to halt, or perhaps even reverse, the process of economic integration in the European Union. For the first time, instead of removing barriers to free competition in the area of transport services, such a drastic attempt is being made to reduce it and damage the dynamically developing economies of the CEECs.

ON JULY 8, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOBILITY PACKAGE WHILST REJECTING 70 AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT PUT FORWARD BY NINE EU COUNTRIES. WHO VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE PACKAGE AND WHY WAS IT IMPLEMENTED IF 1/3 OF THE COMMUNITY' MEMBER STATES

WERE AGAINST IT?

The solutions proposed first by the European Commission and then adopted by the Parliament were inspired by several Member States, including France and Germany, which wanted to protect their labor market from competition from Poland, Bulgaria or the Baltic States. And this division into the rich center of the EU and the peripheral countries was in fact visible until the very end and in every vote. Unfortunately, despite the proactive attitude of the Polish government in Brussels and the efforts of Polish MEPs from basically all political parties, a blocking minority could not be established. Diverging interests among individual countries were too broad. There was a moment during the work on the Package when a balanced compromise was reached in the Committee on Transport, but unfortunately, it was rejected by the EP. At subsequent stages it was problematic to find solutions that were equally balanced.

WHAT WERE THE ARGUMENTS OF THE COUNTRIES THAT SUPPORTED THE MOBILITY PACKAGE AND DO YOU CONSIDER THEM LEGITIMATE?

In the realm of declarations, the supporters of the Package, i.e. the restriction of competition among transport companies in the EU, explained the need to change the regulations through the necessity to protect drivers' rights, especially with regard to salaries and conditions of rest on the road. This is, of course, just a smokescreen which was supposed to hide the real intentions of the supporters of economic protectionism. No one doubts that the job of a long-distance driver is hard and responsible, but at the same time the lack of proper infrastructure in France, Germany or Italy makes it virtually impossible to rest safely outside the vehicle. The Package, however, introduces such an obligation. The same applies to the accusation of

However, the most important change introduced by the Mobility Package is to halt, or perhaps even reverse, the process of economic integration in the European Union.

using the so-called social dumping by Polish companies. This is patently absurd, because our carriers' services have never been provided below cost. We compete in terms of salaries, it is a fact, but a similar mechanism is used by German retail chains operating in Poland. If any country from Central and Eastern Europe took the initiative to close solely western supermarkets for two days a week, it would be an object of ridicule. On the other hand, the Package provides for a cooling-off period after cabotage, e.g. in Germany, in order to limit competition for German carriers. This is patently absurd.

IN THAT CASE – CAN WE ALSO LOOK AT IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE EUROPEAN UNION INTRODUCES REGULATIONS WHICH WILL LIKELY BE BENEFICIAL FOR SOME COUNTRIES AND UNLIKELY FOR OTHERS?

Yes, of course. Although it was rather some Member States having used their influence in the European institutions to prepare and enact legislation that imposes a disproportionate burden on carriers from the CEE region. The European Union does not have its own interests

In Poland, so heavily affected by real socialism, we know that this is the way to nowhere. Prosperity and economic growth could be built only through free competition.

and objectives. The Package was prepared with the intention of limiting the share of transport companies from Poland or Hungary in the European market. Entrepreneurs from these countries are to vanish, so that companies from France, Germany or Italy have more room for maneuver. For many small- and medium-sized companies this means the closure of their activities, because the costs of implementing the Package will be too high for them.

DID THE ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN MAY 2019 CHANGE ANYTHING IN TERMS OF THE POSITION OF EU COUNTRIES TO ADOPT THE PACKAGE? IF WE ASSUME THAT THE “OLD PARLIAMENT” VOTED, WOULD THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING THE MOBILITY PACKAGE BE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT?

Indeed, in the previous parliamentary term there was more understanding for finding a compromise on this significant issue. The road transport sector is vital for the smooth functioning of the whole EU economy. Thanks to it we have a highly efficient supply system and goods can be transported freely in the area between Portugal and Latvia. The European Parliament elected last

year is, unfortunately, dominated by socialists and supporters of protectionism hence closing economic borders. For the countries of the so-called “old Union”, which have been in continuous crisis for years, this is the way to save their own labor market. In Poland, so heavily affected by real socialism, we know that this is the way to nowhere. Prosperity and economic growth could be built only through free competition.

CAN AN ORDINARY CONSUMER – EXPERIENCE THE CHANGES THAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT? DOES THIS MEAN THAT SOME PRODUCTS COULD BECOME MORE EXPENSIVE?

Certainly, because the cost of transport has a significant impact on the price of all products. This is one of the consequences of the Package, which is completely ignored by its authors and supporters. Consumers in Western Europe will be particularly affected by its consequences, because that is where, after the withdrawal of many companies from the market, including Polish ones, the supply of transport services will decrease thus their cost will increase. In my opinion, this will lead to a deepening of the crisis which is affecting the EU in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. It will be difficult to rebuild the European economy after many months of economic freeze if the transport sector does not function properly and on market principles.

HOW CAN POLISH COMPANIES PREPARE FOR THIS NEW REALITY AND THESE NEW REGULATIONS?

The discussion on the Mobility Package lasted over three years thus companies have been aware that the legal reality is changing for many months. An essential role is played by professional organizations that bring together transport companies and represent their interests in Poland and abroad.



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Thanks to their activity in Brussels and expert support, Polish entrepreneurs received detailed analyses of the adopted solutions right after the final vote. Of course, this does not change the fact that the new requirements imply new costs, and this is a huge problem for all carriers in times of the pandemic and decreasing number of orders. Fortunately, not all new obligations or regulations enter into force immediately; some of them will take effect in a few or more months. This gives time to analyze the market situation and take appropriate actions. I am certain that the Polish transport industry, which has become the most significant player on the European market in a few years' time, will cope with these difficult circumstances.

DOES THE VOTE ON JULY 8, 2020, IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DEFINITELY CLOSE THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING THE REGULATIONS OF THE MOBILITY PACKAGE THAT ARE UNFAVORABLE FOR MANY COUNTRIES? ARE THERE ANY MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR

THESE COUNTRIES TO MODIFY THE REGULATIONS?

The legislative process has been completed, but it is, of course, possible to amend the Package. The European Commission itself has announced that it will present an updated impact assessment of the adopted regulations, which may be the basis for formulating new legislative proposals. Several solutions adopted in the Package are clearly contradictory to the assumptions of the EU climate policy, e.g. the obligation to return truck to the country of establishment every eight weeks. Here, changes are expected or at least attempted changes can be anticipated. Of course, the adoption of the Mobility Package opens the way for Member States to file a complaint against the adopted legislation with the Court of Justice of the European Union. Several governments, including the Polish one, have already announced such submissions. The chance for a positive outcome for Polish carriers is quite high, because even the procedure used in the European Parliament is questionable.

A HAMILTONIAN MOMENT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

TOMASZ GRZEGORZ GROSSE, PROFESSOR

July 2020 failed to offer a breakthrough towards an EU-wide federation. Instead, France and Germany consolidated their grip on power within the bloc. A set of optimum conditions significantly stirred up both resentments and wariness between EU nations in a move that might aggravate anti-EU moods and foster disintegration trends.

INTRODUCTION

A joint Franco-German proposal to establish a European recovery fund — known under its pompous name as ‘Next Generation EU’ — sparked off a discussion over what is referred to as “a Hamiltonian moment” in the European Union while en route towards federal-like structures. Yet what was the outcome of the EU summit, held between July 17 and 21, 2020, pinpoints these federalism-tainted tendencies being

strongly mitigated by a recurrent wave of intergovernmentalism.¹ The bloc’s system has yet again appeared to be a hybrid of a plethora of elements. Meetings of the heads of state or government of EU nations, or just EU summits, have repeatedly been an occasion to emphasize an intergovernmental factor in a united

¹ *Conclusions*, Special meeting of the European Council (17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 July 2020), General Secretariat of the Council, Brussels, 21 July 2020.



EMMANUEL MACRON (L), URSULA VON DER LEYEN (C), AND SECRETARY-GENERAL JEPPE TRANHOLM MIKKELSEN (R) DURING THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 21 JULY 2020.

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Europe. At the July meeting, European Union leaders stepped up to adopt an anti-crisis stimulus in a move that boosted the role of states in managing brand-new tools whilst somewhat downplaying those of EU-wide bodies — like the European Commission or the European Parliament. This gives rise to certain systematic trends that weigh heavily on the EU's future. Besides, they further entrench the dominance of Germany and France whilst widening gaps between different groups of states.

NEXT GENERATION EU

What comes as a federal factor are debt-issuing efforts made by all EU member states. Admittedly, within the EU's 2014–2020 budget, the European Commission

ran up debts on financial markets — and on behalf of EU nations. It was not just until recently that EU leaders have agreed to borrow a sweeping €750 billion. Just to recall that a recovery fund is a one-off event — and EU nations will in the future need to agree unanimously on new borrowings. Furthermore, with the idea of a time- and scale-limited fund, EU leaders sought to block Eurobonds to sustain less advantageous countries in the Euro area whilst moving towards the transfer union, a solution that neither Germany nor other northern countries could accept.

Spanish diplomats suggested large-scale perpetual bonds, with EU governments being obliged to repay debt interests. In yet another effort to help public



PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL CHARLES MICHEL DURING THE EU SUMMIT IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 21 JULY 2020

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investments in the Euro area, the European Commission has for the past few years canvassed what it has named as Eurobonds. Nonetheless, these proposals came under fire from deep-pocketed countries in Europe's north, fearful that they would need to repay loans if a crisis hit the whole bloc. Besides that, northern states felt concern that Eurobonds would pool borrowing power of Europe's south and spread the burden of additional debt, eventually preventing the EU from passing a set of fiscal reforms to ease public finances in Europe's most indebted nations. Thus, to oust the most radical ideas on Europe's mutual bonds makes Europe unable to deepen fiscal federalism.

Also, with a new recovery fund in force, the EU-wide bloc can be stretched to the whole bloc, thus also countries that are not part of the monetary union. As EU nations agreed to repay all the new debts by 2058, Poland might in the future morph into a net payer, and no longer a net beneficiary of the EU funding.

EU-wide taxation is yet another factor en route toward federalism. Not incidentally,

those who are in favor of new tax levies are liberal left-wing members of the European Parliament, a faction that is keen to see the European Union as a federation. Likewise, not only do the bloc's parliamentary elites make efforts to strengthen the European Union, but they also notice an opportunity to extend powers of the European Parliament, mostly by limiting these of national governments. As the latter are donors to the EU budget, they are eligible to decide how their money should be spent. The EU's efforts to boost its new own resources would thus curb the role of EU nations whilst boosting that of EU bodies — like the European Commission or the European Parliament.

At the July summit, EU nations agreed that there should be a non-recycled plastic waste levy. In the summit conclusions, the European Commission gave a glimpse into new tax levies that might come into effect sometime in the future. But before this happens, all EU nations must give their go-ahead for this move. Thus, if a tax levy is disadvantageous for a country, or raises severe concerns over federalism, a state can bring the whole tendency to a halt.

A LESS AMBITIOUS EUROPEAN UNION

At the latest EU summit, the EU said its next budget would total a record-high €1.8 trillion. Yet this included €750 billion worth of one-off recovery fund whilst the multiannual financial framework, or what is known as the EU's budget, has seen some cuts. It is challenging to talk about federalism in Europe, as the EU's core fiscal tool, or the multiannual financial framework, is far more modest than the past "seven-year" plans. This is tantamount to less money for the EU's cohesion and agricultural policies within the budget as measured in constant prices. Though the recovery fund will cover these spending in a not-too-distant budgetary perspective, it is nothing but a one-off tool, distributed from 2021 to 2023. In any further talks, a reduced financial framework — as agreed upon at the latest EU summit — will serve as a basis for discussion. Besides, these may see yet another curb, with the necessity to repay the recovery fund by 2058. Thus, in short, the strategic time framework might bring a "collapse" of the EU's multiannual budget in what might halt further integration.

What is worth adding is that the pressure to trim the EU's financial appetite was amongst the UK's demands before Brexit. Those that now share these demands are the "frugal" states of northern Europe, whilst Germany acclaimed this tendency at the July EU summit. As it seems, this might pose a challenge to France's aspirations in what the French leader Emmanuel Macron reiterated oftentimes — but even more to what the European Parliament expects. The latter mirrored this stance in a resolution it had adopted shortly after the end of EU talks.² In the paper, EU

lawmakers moaned about spending cuts in healthcare, scientific research, education, and digital transformation. According to what they said, this stands in stark contrast to the goals of the European Union whilst triggering a peril to new generations of Europeans, or impeding the implementation of the European Green Deal. Likewise, EU lawmakers stood against efforts to reduce the bloc's ambitions in what was rather an act of their helplessness — as they have a far less powerful voice than EU's national governments. And the decisions above shape the bloc's real — not the declared — capacity to follow an active policy.

There are some other examples of how national governments can prevent European integration processes from developing any further. Unlike was the case of the previous crisis, no permanent tools were ever adopted in the Euro area to safeguard the monetary union. Instead, a temporary and one-off recovery fund was brought to life — as a mechanism highly controlled by EU nations. The European Commission no longer oversees how its allocation fund is disbursed whilst intergovernmental bodies now bear the brunt of supervising schemes introduced by beneficiary nations of the EU funding. An economic conditionality mechanism would allow a qualified majority in the Council of the European Union to unblock the flow of funds to member states and should any doubts arise, the European Council — a body that comprises the heads of state and government of the EU nations — makes the decision by consensus.

A WAVE OF NEW RESTRICTIONS AND ACRIMONIES

EU countries will decide on yet another matter being of crucial importance to receive the EU funding. At the July EU summit, member states agreed to condition European funds in respect

² European Parliament resolution of 23 July 2020 on the conclusions of the extraordinary European Council meeting of 17-21 July 2020 (2020/2732(RSP)).

for the rule of law and a set of other EU values under Article 2 of the EU Treaty. Member states initially agreed to dismiss the Commission's proposal to proceed accordingly to the Reverse Qualified Majority method for voting that means that a minority of votes would be sufficient to approve the Commission's proposal to punish the state. It was assumed at the summit that such a proposal would be processed by a qualified majority in the EU Council to go ahead. This ended successfully for Poland and Hungary, as both are accused of violating the rule of law. Despite that, this might all be tantamount to a Pyrrhic victory if EU nations went to proceed the issue as both Poland and Hungary will find it difficult to spot a "blocking majority". It would be a huge challenge even if other Central European states — including Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania, often said to erode the rule of law - joined the club.

Tying the EU funding with the rule-of-law benchmarks might deprive mainly Central European nations of fresh money flows. Thus, these are the biggest losers of the July meeting, with their place at the bottom of Brussels's pyramid of power.

In the light of the July summit conclusions, both types of conditionality — economy- and value-motivated — will only boost the role of intergovernmentalism while both the European Commission and the European Parliament are likely to decline in importance. This poses a hurdle to federalism and brings a mounting risk of new spats between EU nations alongside the North-South and East-west axes. Voting in the Council usually bears a strong political hallmark — besides what is already on the table, there often emerge other negotiating issues that could turn into a political tender spot. Also, this will put any government seeking to unlock the EU funding in a somewhat awkward position. As for other nations, these will

meddle in internal reforms that might be beyond the EU's competence whilst lobbying for other Brussels-negotiating themes to make them align with their interests.

HIERARCHY OF POWER

The European Council summit in July 2020 corroborated one: Germany and France have taken the reins in the European Union and now enjoy a strategic advantage over other countries. Both were behind the idea of a recovery fund, a new tool to be linked to the EU's multiannual financial framework. At the summit, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel took the lead as the architects of the deal and chief negotiators, sometimes even overshadowing the president of the European Council.³ They tempted those nations chiding the EU proposals with an array of concessions — like large increases to the rebates that so-called the "frugal" EU countries could receive. Others got specifically dedicated handouts — like the Brexit Adjustment Reserve, or the funding to countries and sectors worst-hit by the UK departure — with Ireland being on top of the list to avail it.

It is hard to deny that Paris and Berlin snatched an outstanding victory. Germany had seen its first notable success shortly before it took over the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU. Furthermore, Berlin and Paris have reaped a basket of financial benefits — in the form of grants from the recovery fund. What surfaced most at the summit was the need to take into account the effects of the pandemic, which was to curb the fund's earlier distribution criteria (also known as "historical") referring to the country's population, its GDP per capita,

³ D.M. Herszenhorn, F. Eder, Charles Michel, *the budget deal and the art of the terrace tête-à-tête*, „Politico”, 24.07.2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/charles-michel-the-mff-budget-deal-and-the-art-of-the-terrace-tete-a-tete/> [27.07.2020].



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POLISH PRIME MINISTER MATEUSZ MORAWIECKI DURING THE EU SUMMIT IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, JULY 2020.

and the unemployment rate. With this, EU nations sought to help Europe's south whose economies have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Under the Commission's before-the-summit proposals, these were notably Spain and Italy to grab most of the grands whilst Poland would have been, too, as long as the "historical" criteria would apply. According to a Bruegel think-tank analysis, Italy and Spain stood to receive most during the summit, albeit this was far less than what earlier forecasts had indicated. Just for the sake of comparison with what was suggested before the summit, Spain will receive over €9 billion less in grants, while Italy will see its grant values drop by roughly €1 billion.⁴ Almost all EU nations observed the same tendency — with Poland marking the largest slump, as the country got €11.4 billion less. By contrast, France and Germany received more grants under the European Recovery and Resilience Facility — €20.4 billion and €12.4 billion, respectively.

The July summit unveiled what could be named as a hierarchy of different groups of EU nations. At the top of the list are

⁴ Z. Darvas, *Having the cake, but slicing it differently: how is the grand EU recovery fund allocated?* Bruegel, July

France and Germany — both of them being chief negotiators that earlier had reaped an array of major political and financial benefits. Those ranked next were countries in Europe's north, or the so-called Frugal (or Stingy) Five: the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, and Finland. The Frugal Five were all resistant to handing out too much of the recovery fund, and add more loans (then grands) that countries would need to repay. The frugal states got rebates used to cap their overall contributions to the EU budget in a move that forces other, economically weaker countries, also Central European ones, to put money from their own pocket to sustain the allowance for Europe's richest. Furthermore, financial revenues have increased from collecting European duties. This brings most benefits to the Netherlands whose maritime ports occupy a pivotal role for imports of goods into the European Union. Countries of Europe's south came third; they had surfaced as chief beneficiaries of the EU recovery fund. Just to say that those that grabbed most of the grants were Italy (some €84 billion), Spain (€71 billion), with France (over €50 billion) and Germany (more than €47 billion) that followed. Poland came fifth, with €27

EUROPEAN UNION

billion worth of funding yet this was far less than what other states had received.⁵

Central European nations remained last in the EU hierarchy. The recovery fund was designed to deflect the EU funding flows away from Central Europe, to pump money into south of the monetary union, or the bloc's hardest-hit provinces. This was to be achieved by cutting down on the EU's multiannual financial framework and "historical" criteria for disbursing cash under the recovery fund. During negotiations the grants allocations for the Visegrad Group nations were chopped to an average of 30 percent.

WHAT GRAPPLES THE EURO AREA

At the summit southern countries saw a cut in grant allocations, albeit far less drastic. What gave them a big headache was that many of them failed to fully return to their pre-crisis balance sheets and the path of development they had embarked on before the 2010 Euro area crisis. With these, perhaps a new economic recession will weigh heavily on the monetary union and its stability — the more so as no adequate reforms had been in place to get the Euro zone ready for any fresh crises. The recovery fund is not a full guarantee to shield these nations against a new wave of trouble. It is unlikely to ensure adequate structural reforms in these countries, nor will it be an effective step to restore the competitiveness of their economies. As was the case of the previous crisis, it was particularly painful to restore their competitiveness as it involved what is known as internal devaluation mainly by reducing wages, and not investments to improve the technical quality of production. The ensuing years are unlikely to offer an answer on how to tackle high debt levels — perhaps the biggest threat for the monetary union and its stability. With its structure, the recovery fund

⁵ Z. Darvas, *op. cit.*



**THE STATE TRIBUTE TO COVID-19 VICTIMS
IN MADRID, SPAIN, 16 JULY 2020**

will aggravate the debt much further. The monetary union is neither a political federation nor a unitary state — thus investors tend to voice concerns over crisis-induced high indebtedness across Europe's south. The Euro area remains a source of political and economic disintegration.

CONCLUSION

Constant efforts toward a federal-style Europe are not the way to manage new EU-wide crises, and notably, it is tough to distinguish any democratic-related progress. Scholars have long pointed to what they referred to as the EU democratic deficit.⁶ Giving more power to EU bodies

⁶ F.W. Scharpf, *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999; V.A. Schmidt, *The European Union: Democratic Legitimacy in a Regional State?*, "Journal of Common Market Studies", 2004, Vol. 42, No. 5, pp. 975–997; V.A. Schmidt, *Democracy in Europe. The EU and National Politics*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 2006; T. Risse, M. Kleine,



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does not entail bigger competences being handed to electoral institutions, notably the European Parliament. Even if steps are taken to boost the federalization of EU law, and there is some slight progress in the bloc's fiscal federalism, that of democratic federalism does not follow suit.

In lieu of that, the European Union is keen to step up any measures to restrain a repertoire of competencies that the EU nations have, notably smaller or less powerful ones. Those who come under fire are conservative cabinets in Central Europe that face alleged rule of law breaches. State officials in both Poland and Hungary often prove this conditionality applies arbitrarily, a proof of double standards within the bloc. As a political tool, it is used to stigmatize any governments that Western Europe does not like — those that have Christian democratic perceptions of European values

and are brave enough to stand against German and French ideas. If right-wing voters throughout Central Europe believe the EU institutions — alongside some Western European states — unfairly judge their state authorities, this might spark off a wave of reluctance toward European integration, and potentially even encourage demands to leave the bloc.

Since at least the first Euro area crisis, Berlin and Paris have consolidated their grip on power, with the bloc's financial and legal tools to influence other EU nations and the July summit being the best example. The talks unveiled a lack of trust between the EU member states as well as to the bloc's institutions. This brings a tendency of intergovernmental bodies to “manually control” anti-crisis measures, a move that limits the EU's effectiveness that might ignite new conflicts between its countries.

Assessing the Legitimacy of the EU's Treaty Revision Methods, “Journal of Common Market Studies”, 2007, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 69–80.

Tomasz Grzegorz Grosse ■
July 2020

CYBERSPACE – A NEW DIMENSION OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS

MIROŚŁAW MAJ

Cyber-attacks more and more often grab the headlines or feature in major news bulletins across the globe. They are all being discussed as a grave threat to state interests and ties worldwide. No matter how alluring this topic might be — and until now it surfaced just science-fiction movies — cyberspace activities have become a common tool in a repertoire of both secret services and armed forces in an increasingly considerable number of states around the world.



ANDRUS ANSIP – PRIME MINISTER OF ESTONIA FROM 2005 TO 2014 AND FORMER EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR THE DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET. BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 10 MAY 2017

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THE ORIGIN OF CYBER CONFLICTS

Back in April and May 2007, cyberspace pundits took a closer look at a series of hack attacks that had crippled Estonia. A world's role model for the digital economy, Estonia came under fierce attacks that left its crucial services basically frozen. It all began when Estonian authorities decided to ship off a memorial to the Soviet Red Army from the capital's downtown to the edge of Tallinn. The decision sparked outrage amongst the Russians, including those living in Estonia. Certainly in a Kremlin-inspired move, Russian Internet users kick-started a wave of what is known as a Distributed Denial of Service, or DDoS, attacks. What came as most dangerous was when online services of Estonian banks were taken down, cutting many Estonians off their money. Websites of media outlets and government bodies were also targeted.

The whole Estonian Internet received a hammer blow yet the country managed to mitigate the crisis quite rapidly with a set of well-coordinated measures from both outside and those at home, including a string of Estonia's defense capabilities. Then, however, no one had ever thought this would have been the first known case of one state targeting another by cyber warfare. Many reckoned that the Russian Federation had been behind the cyber heist. Estonia has taken a lesson, too; it took the hack as a reminder for both Estonians and the whole world, proving to them how dangerous Estonia's eastern neighbor might be whilst signaling the need to create a new expert hub. IT experts undertook a slew of actions both at home and abroad that gave the 2007 cyber-attacks a somewhat historical dimension, and placed Estonia amongst the world's biggest cybersecurity hotshots. The most

From the historical perspective, investing in cyberspace capabilities might turn out to be somewhat asymmetric — with potential benefits outweighing the expected costs. For this reason, some countries start competing with the world's biggest power — and notch up successes.

significant result of the cyberattacks was the creation of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, a multidisciplinary cyber defense hub with a mission to carry out research projects, training, and drills that touch upon technical, strategic, and legal issues.

The crucial breakthrough seems to have come with the 2007 cyber attacks. Nonetheless, this does not mean, however, that no similar cases had been reported before. In 2002, the network worm Slammer attacked thousands of servers worldwide. In just a couple of minutes, the virus made out of action several thousands of ATMs across the United States, causing airport delays and impairing Finland's mobile network. Still in the same year, Blaster, a malicious Internet worm, plunged in chaos northeastern U.S. states and a few Canadian provinces, triggered mass outages in a move that — according to experts — severely disrupted local utility services to handle the blackouts.

To go even further than that — back in 1988, Robert Tappan Morris, an MIT student and son of the chief scientist at the National Computer Security Center, a division of the National Security Agency (NSA), carried out a calamitous computer experiment, releasing a bug that disrupted roughly 6,000 servers in what was then the global web. Nonetheless, at that time, the world wide web was not even part of critical infrastructure that is essential for the functioning of contemporary economies across the globe.

CYBER POWERS

So what does the whole situation look like roughly thirteen years past the Estonia hack? In a nutshell, cyber conflicts have become a constant feature of international ties. In an extreme case scenario, these could even align with military activities, like was the case of the U.S. steps targeting Iran in the Middle East. On June 20, 2019, United States Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM), or the U.S. trained cyberspace forces, wiped out a system used by Iran to plot attacks against oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. On the flip side are espionage activities that allied states carry out one against another — as U.S. intelligence leaker Edward Snowden revealed details of alleged U.S. surveillance in Germany.

Over the past several years, there have been a few actors that dominated the cyberspace with their activities. Unsurprisingly, these are the world's biggest powers — the United States, China, and the Russian Federation — in what could stem from their zeal to engage in activities on brand-new battlefronts. In countries like Iran, North Korea, Vietnam, and Estonia — whose case was described above — cyberspace does no longer mirror old-fashioned conventional armed forces, at least as far as new IT centers are concerned. Historically, investing in cyberspace capabilities might turn out to

be somewhat asymmetric — with potential costs and gains being involved. For this reason, some countries start competing with the world's biggest power — and notch up successes.

STRATEGIES

Individual states have embarked on various cyberspace strategies developed as part of the country's key strategic goals. Having miraculously built its economic power, China also mobilized a set of tools in cyberspace to boost the whole process. The Chinese activity has for years been orbital around cyber economic espionage, notably against the United States. U.S. intellectual property is being copied by the Chinese commerce and military, with a couple of new Chinese jets bearing a strong resemblance to U.S.-made aircraft. On the list was the Chinese-made J-20 fighter, a structural copy of the U.S.-developed F-22 and F-35 fighters. Expert opinion reckons that Chinese theft of U.S. intellectual property currently costs between an exorbitant \$225 billion and \$600 billion annually.¹ In addition to these are China's denial, its handing of new information to an exclusive club of Chinese businesses, and controlled access to the Chinese market for foreign businesses, especially U.S.-based ones. Importantly, two major bodies are employed to implement the strategy; these are U.S.-based Chinese companies and recruiters who lure foreign students and scholars to get knowledge and hire potential informants.

What is essential for the U.S. strategy is the need to shield state interests against emerging threats from the outside, especially Russia and China, but also Iran, notably over the past few years. Interestingly enough, these were Americans who stirred up the danger; in

2010, the U.S. and Israel sabotaged Iran's nuclear development program with the malicious computer virus Stuxnet that had attacked the nuclear facility at Natanz.² An operation eventually known by the code name Olympic Games was most likely to delay the Iranian nuclear program by a couple of years in what might have helped avoid an all-out war in the Middle East, according to security experts. For Israel, this had emerged as an alternative if the project would have been given a green light to develop further.

Once compared to what other countries have done, the U.S. strategy bears most of the hallmarks of a military strategy, based on both deterrence and efforts to secure the country's geostrategic interests. Thus the U.S. now has a group of 6,000 well-trained troops fitted into the U.S. Army, especially its land and navy components. U.S. Cyber Command has morphed into a brand-new type of military; it has arrived where it is now in an intriguing way and unlocked its capabilities whilst in close correlation with other branches of the nation's armed forces. What might seem is that the United States grasped the issue that cyberspace is a brand-new dimension of space despite the slogans saying that it is nothing but another domain of operations — as formally recognized at the 2016 Warsaw Summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Cyberspace cannot anyhow align with land, water, air, or even outer space; instead, it forms a never-before-seen dimension, albeit strongly linked to all the previous ones.

The Russian Federation has embarked upon a different strategy that of China and the United States. Yet long before state bodies developed sufficient capabilities

¹ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/16/china-intellectual-property-theft-progress/>

² https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?_r=2&pagewanted=2&seid=auto&smid=tw-nytimespolitics&pagewanted=all

Cyberspace lays outside of the traditional dimensions of defence being water, air, land and now also the outer space; instead, it forms a never-before-seen dimension, albeit strongly linked to all the previous ones.

on their own, it relied upon some help from outside. Specialists or groups of them took part in cyberspace missions. There is a whole story about ties between the state on the one hand and the “private businesspeople” on the other, where the latter leveraged interests of the former whilst the state turns a blind eye to any of criminal feats committed by private businesses. Just to quote here a criminal group known as the Russian Business Network, or RBN, that had been involved in phishing, distributing malware, or selling child pornography. RBN’s principals had close ties to the Russian government in a move that helped them escape any liability. Furthermore, in 2008, Russia aimed a cyber attack at Georgia as a weapon in the Russo-Georgian war.³ Moscow has still the cyberspace option on the table. It featured Moscow’s reputed involvement in the 2016 U.S. presidential runoff. Russia’s meddling in the U.S. election captures the very quintessence of the nation’s *spécialité de la maison*, or the fusing of cyberspace operations — as purely technical missions



A COMPUTER SCREEN DISPLAYING BINARY CODE

— with disinformation campaigns. Russia has no equal in running disinformation campaigns: it has shifted its decades-long conventional activities into the online world. In particular, the Russians were the first to notch up successes in fighting what is known as information warfare, a concept pushed forward by Aleksandr Dugin.⁴

The Russian Federation was the first country to combine kinetic and cyber attacks. This is exactly what happened at the Russo-Georgian war. They emerged at its apex in August 2008 yet the evidence was

³ <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/how-to-understand-russia-today/>

⁴ <https://www.abw.gov.pl/download/1/2224/PBW16Wojnowski.pdf>



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that the whole operation had been cooked up in early 2008. What took place covered mainly any propaganda-related stories.

This brief review of the use of cyberspace strategies and the rivalry between the powers shows that cyberspace primarily extend beyond core strategic objectives of some states. Thus any reasoning should not restrain to just one pattern of action. Vietnam focuses on cyber operations for domestic purposes, India and Pakistan are at odds one with another also in cyberspace whilst North Korea has come under harsh criticism amidst its using of cyberattacks to repair its slim budget: in 2016, its attackers pilfered over \$100 million from the Bangladesh central bank by hacking

into software from the SWIFT financial platform.

ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

It is interesting to take a look into how structures involved in cyber missions are structured. They are pretty dynamic — as the mere outcome of these missions that are subject to rapid shifts. Oftentimes their origins trace back to informal cases of the state-business cooperation — as was with the Russian Business Network — or like in China — the use of patriotically motivated hackers to jump the bandwagon and carry out cyber heists.

But as time went by, states began to create their regular units tasked with cyber

missions. Just to quote here the United States Cyber Command that achieved full operational capability in 2018 whilst China's secretive and elite Unit 61398 of the People's Liberation Army has links to the country's Ministry of State Security. The Iranian military operates cyber operations through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps whilst Russia's escalation in cyber campaigns comes as the outcome of cooperation or competition between the country's Federal Security Service, or FSB, the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (GRU), the Federal Protective Service (FSO), and the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, in short SVR.

A short glimpse into their names is enough to state that it is unclear where bodies tasked with cyber missions are in fact located. It is difficult to answer whether it is a military body or just an armed branch of intelligence services. This is the result of the complications that cyberspace activities face in terms of national and international law. The 800-page *Tallinn Manual 2.0* is by far the most complex study into the topic yet it has not offered clear-cut answers to an array of important questions. "Cyber warfare," a term often used in media outlets, does not overlap with the formal approach to the phenomenon. For years, and even now, these are solely secret services whose officers are entitled to perform some missions. Most state bodies have their roots in services or adhere to them after some time — like was the case of the United States Cyber Command before it split from the National Security Agency. Certainly cybersecurity is the topic that is flourishing within military structures, with new special units, branches, and types of armed forces being brought to life.

In Poland, this all happens in a nutshell. Poland's governmental Computer Emergency Response Team, or CERT,

has for years conducted its mission as an affiliate of the Internal Security Agency. An officer of the country's Military Counterintelligence Service was appointed head of the National Centre for Cyberspace Security (NCBC), Poland's most important cybersecurity structure in the Polish Armed Forces whilst the head of the Military Counterintelligence Service now serves as the plenipotentiary for cybersecurity in the Ministry of National Defense.

FUTURE

Cyberspace has undoubtedly become an arena of constant international skirmishes, and possibly also the most intense amongst the world's biggest powers. As countries have easiness to deny their feats under what is known as attribution effect, or the tendency to take formal responsibility for one's deeds, they are likely to push boundaries much further. Yet as time went by, many no longer worry that in practice, it is more likely to identify attackers yet with no legal evidence involved. They can still deny any feats. Yet the question of whether activities should incessantly escalate any further should have a negative answer. The risk of retaliatory steps is higher than ever before. In 2016, shortly before the presidential runoff, the U.S. made the whole thing clear: Washington will reply to any cyber attack against the country's polling process with a tit-for-tat measure against critical infrastructure, with these words being addressed directly to the Kremlin. Efforts to link critical infrastructure to core spheres like finance, media outlets, or transportation to the risk of them being targeted diminish the appetite for careless cyberspace activities. How the risk will balance is not yet clear. Yet the destructive power throughout cyberspace will only grow bigger, and so will its role while considering feasible outcomes of conflicts worldwide.

Mirosław Maj ■
July, 2020

THE BATTLE OVER ENERGIEWENDE. WILL BERLIN DEFEND ITS ENERGY INFLUENCE IN EUROPE?

JAKUB WIECH

Black clouds are hanging over the Energiewende, Germany's planned energy transformation, and also a vehicle for achieving Germany's political goals in Europe. Will Berlin protect its great project from failure?

The Energiewende, a comprehensive energy policy implemented by Germany, is seen as a modern way of saving the climate and a responsible method of implementing pro-ecological economic changes. This is the official version, which has been developed over the years by the successive government teams in Berlin. However, a closer

analysis of the Energiewende reveals that this image is just the effect of sophisticated propaganda machinery. The real picture of the German's planned transition is far different from the common opinion – in fact, it has little to do with saving the climate. However, it is directly related to the strengthening and expansion of German influence in Europe.



THE PROTESTS IN FAVOR OF A RADICAL CLIMATE CHANGE, AGAINST COAL-BASED ENERGY POLICY AND THE FAILURE OF OLDER GENERATIONS TO ADDRESS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PLANET.

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Contrary to popular propaganda, the Energiewende does not consider climate protection a goal.

First and foremost, contrary to propaganda, the Energiewende does not consider climate protection a goal. The German model of transformation assumes the shift from the coal-based energy (which is understandable considering the climate) and nuclear energy, which is the only large, scalable, and practically emission-free energy source. These demands contradict the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change, which stated in its report that nuclear power is needed to halt global average temperature increases.

Meanwhile, Germany aims to get rid of nuclear power much faster than from coal. The nuclear technology is to be phased out in this country as early as 2022 and coal-fired power stations as late as 2038. Moreover, Berlin wants to shut down its own nuclear units and oppose the financing of such plants from EU funds. For Germany, reducing nuclear energy potential in the EU is so important that the parties in power – the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats – have included anti-nuclear demands in their coalition agreement.

“We will demand in the European Union that the Euratom Treaty’s objectives

regarding the use of nuclear energy be adapted to the challenges of the future. We do not want EU support for new nuclear power plants. We want to end all state fund stakes in nuclear power plants abroad. (...) the energy transition in a European context opens up the opportunity to reduce costs and use synergies. Our goals are additional growth and employment opportunities in Germany and international export opportunities for German companies.” With these words, the coalition members from the CDU/CSU and the SPD have made it clear that they intended to go beyond Germany’s borders with their anti-nuclear crusade.

Germany’s fight against European nuclear power is very noticeable today. A striking example of these actions is the dispute over the so-called taxonomy, the EU’s investment agenda from which Berlin seeks to remove nuclear energy. Moreover, at the end of November 2019, German MEPs from SPD tried to include an excerpt containing the announcement of the phasing out of European nuclear power plants in the EU resolution prepared for the COP25 summit. The most recent example of similar actions is the planned ban on the export of nuclear fuel to power plants over 30 years old, located less than 150 kilometerskilometres from the German border.

Why is Germany fighting nuclear power so actively? The answer to this question is also a real objective of the Energiewende: to strengthen Berlin’s economic and political influence in Europe by selling Russian gas pumped into Germany via the Nord Stream pipeline.

The functioning of every nuclear power plant in Europe translates into a reduction in the market for natural gas. This is the only (non-nuclear) way to stabilize the EU energy model advocated by Germany – a model

primarily based on renewable energy sources. Meanwhile, Germany, which is already one of the largest gas sellers in the EU, with an annual volume of around 30^{bcm}, will soon have at its disposal a powerful pipeline consisting of the Nord Stream (already in operation) and Nord Stream 2 (under construction) with a maximum annual capacity of 110^{bcm}. This ‘route’ is to be used to transmit gas, which currently passes through Ukraine, among other countries. The “blue fuel,” which will be delivered to Germany through the pipes on the Baltic Sea seabed, and will be sold to those neighboring neighbouringcountries that will follow the Energiewende’s energy transformation path. This is precisely what the German government wants when writing in the coalition agreement about the “*embedding of the Energiewende in the European context.*”

In other words: thanks to its infrastructure and position on the map of Europe, Germany can make use of Russian gas to build its own political and economic position. The raw material goes to Germany in large quantities and without any intermediaries. In addition, good relations with Russia make Berlin pay a very attractive price for gas fuel (lower than, for example, Poland, which is geographically closer to Russia). That is why Germans keep their hands on gas taps, and thus, they influence their prices and earn money as a result.

TURBULENCE IN THE PLANS OF BERLIN

The outlined plan, consistently implemented by successive German governments, has now encountered a number of unexpected and severe problems.

The first is the issue of US sanctions against the Nord Stream 2. American instruments effectively discouraged the



THE BROWN COAL POWER PLANTS IN GERMANY.

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Swiss company Allseas, which had been laying the pipes on the bottom of the Baltic Sea, from this project, thereby increasing the (already significant, due to Denmark's conduct) delay in the work. The merger was to be completed by the end of 2019. It is now known that it will be completed perhaps even two years later, in 2021. Perhaps because the US is threatening to impose further sanctions that, if introduced according to media leaks, will make trading in Russian gas through Nord Stream 2 practically impossible. Such declarations were recently made by Senator Ted Cruz, who announced that laying the missing section of this connection by the Russians would entail "paralyzing sanctions."

The failure to build the Baltic Sea gas pipeline on time was of great importance not only for Berlin but also for Moscow's talks with Kyiv on a new agreement on the transit of 'blue fuel' through Ukrainian territory to the West. In the absence of an alternative route (and Nord Stream 2 was supposed to be such an alternative), the Russians had to come to an agreement

with Ukraine. All this generated additional cost for the parties involved in Nord Stream 2.

Another problem for the German transformation is the stagnation in the renewables industry, the development of which is necessary to sustain the pace of transition. Meanwhile, in Germany, both the sectors of windmills and photovoltaic panels have fallen into crisis. In the first three quarters of 2019, the number of new wind turbines in Germany fell to the lowest levels in almost two decades. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote about the problematic situation in early September: "In the first half of 2019, only 86 turbines were connected to the grid in Germany. When not taking into account the equipment out of service, it turns out that only 35 turbines have appeared in the system. Hundreds of the windmills are stuck at the bureaucracy level, and legal proceedings are underway against them. The boom is not only over – it is threatening a recession." On the other hand, the photovoltaic industry is demanding the removal of restrictions on

subsidies, which are proving necessary to continue the growth of solar installations in Germany.

The slow development of RES in Germany may not only disturb the pace of transformation but also put the German energy system at risk. Andreas Schierenbeck, the head of Uniper, a German company, talked about these threats in his interview with *Die Welt*, a daily newspaper. He stated that Germany, which is simultaneously leaving coal and the atom, faces the risk of blackouts (power failure). As he said, the closure of coal and nuclear units “*means that we will have a decrease in installed capacity equal to at least seven large power plants in the next three years.*”

As early as 2019, Germany was dangerously close to a serious blackout. According to *Handelsblatt*, a newspaper, it faced the threat of large-scale blackouts three times in June 2019. This all took place on 6, 12, and 25 of June. The situation was difficult – it involved a power shortage in the system. The European network frequency decreased as a result, and Germany had to import power from abroad.

Another problem for the Energiewende, much less expected, is the coronavirus pandemic. The economic shock caused by the global crisis may slow down the pace of implementing the European energy and industrial transformation (the so-called Green Deal), extending the time of transition. This situation has caused not only the financial crisis but also serious disturbances in the natural resources market. According to the Clean Energy Wire service, the drop in demand for gas in Europe caused by Covid-19 combined with a mild winter of 2019-2020, has translated into overfilling of “blue fuel” storage facilities. This has affected its price – currently at a record low. Cited by

CLEW, Jörn Higgen, analyst of Uniper, an energy company, says that the storage space will be exhausted in August. Gas suppliers to Germany, primarily Russian Gazprom, will then have to cut their output.

SUMMARY

Will current problems thwart Berlin's plans for the Energiewende? There is a chance of that, but not a very high one. The United States – for which Germany is still a key ally in Europe – is unlikely to introduce sanctions that would permanently stop the use of Nord Stream 2. This means that the pipeline will eventually be built. Germany is also on the right track to sort out the problems with its own renewable energy sources. There are already signals coming from Berlin that the authorities there have decided to increase the capacity of wind turbines and remove investment restrictions for photovoltaics. In turn, although serious in its consequences, the coronavirus pandemic will, at best, slow down the work on individual departments, and thus the implementation of the Energiewende strategy.

However, the EU's increased enthusiasm for reshaping its economy towards climate neutrality is unlikely to cool down. The Green Deal, which sets the pace of the energy transformation in the European Union, is, for this organization, a question of identity, acting as a binder, a foundation for building European unity. This means that it will be the main driver for the EU's agenda in the coming decades. This gives Germany the tools the country needs to continue to develop and extend its energy influence in Europe. This, however, does not go hand in hand with the interests of Eastern Europe.

Jakub Wiech ■
July 2020

*Part of this text is also in the MENA Monitor
program of Warsaw Institute, and a similar
version of it is featured as a Warsaw Institute
Special Report.*

The Warsaw Institute Review nr. 13

IRAQ'S TWO RIVERS

ALEXANDER WIELGOS

To those with tenacity to remain hopeful of a peaceful and stable political-operational situation in Iraq, taking seriously the cold and brutal geopolitical realities could benefit from some creative thinking. Incomplete information is a given in policymaking decisions. Fortunately, the solutions need not be perfect – just good enough. There are few places where local conflict reflects changing tendencies so acutely not just in the MENA region, but dynamics on the world stage. It is up to us to do our part where we can to ensure these dynamics see that the worst in humanity can be overcome with the best in humanity.



**RAISING FLAG OF IRAQ AND POPULAR MOBILIZATION FORCES
AFTER DEFEATING DAESH**

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Albeit noticeable in most conflict or post-conflict areas, the operational developments “in the field” that influence the political situation and vice versa seem to be persistently acute in Iraq. In some ways this link would seem highly sensitive and responsive, particularly where it directly affects both the US and Iran, and in others, there seems to be a time delay or even detachment, obscuring the picture.

The degrees to which the various paramilitary groups, namely from the Popular Mobilization Forces, or ‘*Hashd ash-Shaabi*’, have been merged with or maintain autonomy within the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) has a direct relation to the de facto political situation in the Iraqi parliament, known as the ‘Council of Representatives’, or ‘*Majlis an-Nuwab*’. Hashd has never been a monolithic structure¹. Dynamics between the Hashd

subgroups have changed over time, as have their links to political factions in the Majlis. This is pertinent particularly to the question of the extent of US and NATO forces remaining stationed in Iraq in the backdrop of rhetoric from the Majlis, as it does regarding the ties of political blocs and Hashd groups with Iran.

Most recently, increasing proportions of Hashd’s operationality had been centralised in the Kata’ib Hezbollah unit² by late 2019. Now in the absence of then-IRGC Quds Force General Qassim Soleimani and the Hashd’s Deputy Commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, Hashd is likely undergoing an internal power struggle to fill in the spot. Anticipating how will be key in figuring out potential security-sector reform (SSR), for which the timing is

¹ Renad Mansour, *The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq’s Future*, Carnegie Middle East Center, 28.04.2017

² Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page vii



**RETAKING FALLUJAH FROM ISIS BY IRAQI
ARMED FORCES AND PATRIOT MILITIAS**

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advantageous, including by restructuring and making power-sharing agreements. For disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, however, the timing is not yet advantageous³, and, as an extraordinary primer from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy elaborates, it might be wise for Hashd to be “*honored and contained*” in this context⁴.

The situation in Iraq is ready for these kinds outside the box but realistic approaches. Not least because as recently as on May 07, 2020 that the newest PM of Iraq, Mustafa al-Khadimi, was sworn in⁵, but as a hopeful piece in Foreign Affairs suggests, because the situations within Iran and the US are also more convenient now⁶ than they have been in a while. Iraq is increasingly tired of being the central

chessboard of confrontation, exploitation, and espionage between the US and Iran, which the eye-opening, anonymously provided trove of intelligence reports published by the Intercept and NYT shed some light onto their unscrupulous extent⁷.

What is different now is that it seems to be clearer that Iraq will not put up with it indefinitely⁸. Such a notion gives hope that other international partners, such as Poland, or the EU, can play a more savvy and precision-orientated role, but most importantly, a positive and constructive role.

RECAP

For those which could use a little recap; Iraq’s grappling with de facto independence of a sovereign state is entangled with its political instability, and

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rudaw, *Mustafa al-Kadhimi sworn in as prime minister of Iraq*, Rudaw, 07.05.2020

⁶ Hamdi Malik, *Iraq Can Now Wrest Its Sovereignty From Iran*, Foreign Affairs, 25.05.2020

⁷ James Risen et al., *The Iran Cables, 1. A Spy Complex Revealed*, The Intercept, NYT, 18.11.2019

⁸ Hadi Fathallah, *Iraq’s Governance Crisis and Food Insecurity*, Carnegie Endowment, Sada, 04.06.2020

this is unfortunately the norm rather than the exception.

There could be one pivotal political-operational moment from which it is worth revisiting in particular. On June 04, 2014, with the momentum its abhorrent brutality that shocked the world, ISIL launched an offensive onto Mosul. Despite the ISF being in a defending position, better equipped, and with larger numbers, the terror and misinformation from ISIL's onslaught caused the ISF to infamously withdraw, leaving behind a considerable civilian population in Iraq's second largest city and US military equipment. By June 10, 2014, Mosul had fallen to ISIL, and as ISIL was also seizing Tikrit, and attacking other cities, then-Iraqi PM Nuri al-Maliki, or Abu Isra as he is known by those close to him⁹, announced the already obvious emergency status with Cabinet Decree 301 on June 11, 2014, the next day¹⁰. It enabled him to *"organize the volunteers and to provide them with necessary logistic and financial support"*¹¹, building from the pre-existing ideas, such as the *'Sons of Iraq'* and *'Saraya ad-Difa ash-Shaabi'*, based on existing sectarian orientated militia.

On June 13, 2014, as al-Khadimi wrote in Al Monitor, the *'righteous jihad fatwa'* was issued¹² by Grand Ayatollah Ali as-Sistani, Iraq's leading Shia cleric. It encouraged physically capable Iraqis to volunteer and to join the ISF to defend *"their country and their people and their holy places"*¹³. The fatwa addressed all Iraqis in a refreshingly non-sectarian but national voice for Sunnis, Shias, and Christians alike,

⁹ Ali Khedery, *Why we stuck with Maliki — and lost Iraq*, Washington Post, 03.07.2014

¹⁰ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 3

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mustafa Al-Khadimi, *Will Sistani be able to control popular mobilization forces?*, Al-Monitor, 12.03.2015

¹³ Ibid.

though more Shia Iraqis responded. Not coincidentally, Soleimani was in Baghdad at this time.

On June 15, 2014, Obama authorized US forces in the MENA region to remobilize to Iraq in the fight against ISIL, as well as in a train and advise capacity. That same day, however, the al-Hashd ash-Shaabi were also formally announced by National Security Advisor Falih al-Fayyad¹⁴, at the direction of al-Maliki. Its formation's administrative body would be the Popular Mobilization Committee, which the National Security Advisor would head.

To uphold this non-sectarian angle, as-Sistani deliberately maintained some distance between himself and Hashd, and referred to their members as *"volunteers"* in his dialogue. Upon its formation, in addition to the tens of thousands of volunteers, Hashd constituted of some already existing militia groups, many of which had been *'Special Groups'*, directly established by the IRGC Quds Force. Soleimani's supporting or instructing generally modelled after the IRGC's own Basij forces, and basing from Hezbollah and pro-Assad militia in Syria hitherto.

The largest subgroup of Hashd in numbers was and remains the *'Badr Organization'*, or Munathama Badr, which is both a political party as well as an armed militia. It was established back in 1982 as the armed wing of Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), based in Iran during the Iran-Iraq War and fought against Saddam's forces. Though Badr and SCIRI separated in 2003, or more effectually in 2009, they maintain some links by remaining in the same coalition in the Majlis. Many Badr members joined Iraq's Ministry of Interior's more brutal units controlled by SCIRI, such as the Wolf

¹⁴ ياكمل الما: ين طولال نام ال راشيتسم بزوين تيرموسل قفدت ميظن تل يب عشلل دش حال تيري دم ليكشيتب رم ني عوطم تل، Al Sumaria TV, 15.06.2014

Brigades. Badr's Secretary General, Hadi al-Amiri, serves as a Majlis MP and was Minister for Transport at the time. Badr always maintained a special interest in the Diyala and Salah ad-Din regions¹⁵.

The most lethal subgroup, however, is the 'League of the Righteous', or Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq. It was founded by its Secretary General, Qais Khazali, with the help of the IRGC Quds Force¹⁶. After he was removed from the Mahdi Army in 2004, Khazali's partial goal in setting up Asa'ib was also to undermine the movement led by Muqtada as-Sadr¹⁷. Asa'ib orchestrated relentless attacks during the sectarian violence, including the coordinated attack on October 03, 2007 that injured Poland's then-Ambassador to Iraq, General broni Edward Pietrzyk. However, upon being part of Hashd's formation in 2014, Asa'ib set up a political wing, the as-Sadiqoun Bloc, intending to run in the Parliamentary Elections.

Furthermore, the 'Party of God Brigades', or Kata'ib Hezbollah, seemed to have a role that resembled other branches of Hezbollah elsewhere, particularly in Lebanon, but adjusted for Iraq's situation. Kata'ib Hezbollah is a designated terrorist organization by Japan, the UAE, and the US. With the onset of the US invasion in 2003, Kata'ib Hezbollah was founded and led by Jamal al-Ibrahimi, also referred to as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. A dual national of Iraq and Iran, al-Muhandis was not coincidentally the Deputy Chair of the entire Hashd structure that also closely cooperated with Soleimani. During Hashd's formation, Kata'ib Hezbollah's numbers reached about half of those of

Badr, but Kata'ib Hezbollah's leading figures had disproportionately more influence in decision-making in Hashd.

The Mahdi Army's successor was remobilized as the 'Peace Brigades' or Saraya as-Salam, which was an interesting choice by as-Sadr. Notably, Saraya as-Salam retains a Sadrist-orientated mindset of Iraqi nationalism. Having amiable relations with Iran was okay, but it came with assertion of Iraq's sovereignty always maintained priority, even though as-Sadr himself spent years in Iran. From the get-go, as-Sadr found himself at odds with many of the other subgroup leaders, noting that as-Sadr fell out with namely Khazali as he criticized Iran's excessive influence in Iraq. However, as-Sadr's popularity increased in the chaotic immediate post-2003 aftermath, providing public services to the poor, as well as the Mahdi Army's ferocity in fighting against US forces.

Other founding subgroups – the 'Martyr Brigades' or Kata'ib Sayyid ash-Shuhada, the 'Hezbollah Movement Nobles' or Harakat Hezbollah an-Nujaba, the 'Brigades of Imam Ali' or Kata'ib al-Imam Ali, and 'Army of Imam Brigades' or Kata'ib Jund al-Imam – each had their varying degrees of autonomy, mixes in the composition of its members, operational intensity across the border in Syria, if at all, reliance on Iran, and relationships with one another.

As the war intensified, prospects of ISIL marching on Ramadi and eventually Baghdad became more worrying. Northwards, the Peshmerga in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) were mobilizing alongside with smaller Assyrian or Christian groups. Other already existing militia groups, however, namely Sunni extremist groups that fought against the Shia groups that became part of Hashd, were threatened, as many Sunnis also joined Hashd, namely from Salah ad-Din,

¹⁵ CEDOCA, *Country of Origin Information Report Iraq Targeting of Individuals*, EAOS, March 2019, page 189

¹⁶ Mapping Militant Organizations. "Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq." Stanford University. Last modified July 2018.

¹⁷ Ian Black, *Qassem Suleimani: commander of Quds force, puppeteer of the Middle East*, Guardian, 16.06.2014

including the al-Jabour tribe members. Around this time, about 150 000 fighters were included in Hashd, although clear distinction of a Hashd member has been difficult to pinpoint. Nevertheless, there was a noticeably larger portion of Shia members, but moreover, a reluctance to arm and fund its Sunni members, allowing the distrust to persist.

HAVING CONTEMPLATED WHAT COMES AFTER BEFORE EVEN STARTING

On June 26, 2014, the ISF finally began its first counterattacks. Albeit unsuccessfully, these started with Tikrit, hoping to reclaim territory lost from ISIL for the first time¹⁸, namely Tikrit University and surrounding areas. Besides organizational assistance, the IRGC directly intervened in Iraq as well, and by the end of June 2014, had already assumed their presence in some bases in Baghdad. To be sure, it is in Iran's interest to eliminate ISIL, most of all in Iraq, as well as to ensure sectarian clashes do not rip Iraq apart. But it is no exaggeration to say it was always a higher priority to ensure factions loyal to Iran remain in leading or at least influential positions in Iraq.

In contrast to the more brutal application of violence the IRGC Quds Force resorted to, Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) was more pragmatic and calculative¹⁹. It kept in mind the end of the war against ISIL from its onset²⁰, though is often overruled by the IRGC Intelligence Organization (IO), as it is more ideologically aligned to the core in Tehran. Nevertheless, MOIS and IRGC IO operated in parallel. As the US withdrew in 2011, many CIA informants were cast aside, and they feared what

A local Iraqi asset that was known as “Donnie Brasco” to the US swiftly became “Source 134992” to Iran.

would become of them. A described example includes a local Iraqi asset that was known as “Donnie Brasco” to the US swiftly became “Source 134992” to Iran²¹. Like him, many switched sides and began informing MOIS or the IRGC IO, and with them, know-how and experience of what it is being like an informant for the CIA in Iraq, sensitive documents, information regarding safehouses, designated meeting places and hotels, other informants, and training manuals²².

Meanwhile, President Fuad Masum made appeals for the US to return and increase operationality in Iraq against ISIL. However, the Obama Administration did not see al-Maliki's policies favorably, creating a rift between a considerable part of the Iraqi government. In essence, US support without replacing al-Maliki, who is closer to Iran, was unlikely.

Anticipating the change of PM to likely be to Hadi al-Abadi, the then-Ambassador of Iran to Iraq Hassan Danaiefar called a meeting with his staff. Although, Abadi would be more favorable to the US, the meeting brought comfort to the staff as they went over which Iraqi Ministers were still much closer to Iran²³ or than to Sadrists, including Ibrahim al-Jafari

¹⁸ Sherlock Ruth, *Hague urges unity as Iraq launches first counter-attack*, The Telegraph, 26.06.2014

¹⁹ Murtaza Hussain, *The Iran Cables, 2. Iran's Shadow War on ISIS*, The Intercept, NYT, 18.11.2019

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ James Risen et al., *The Iran Cables, 1. A Spy Complex Revealed*, The Intercept, NYT, 18.11.2019

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

or Adil Abdul Mahdi, as well as Bayan Jabr Solagh, also referred to as Baqir Jabr az-Zubeidi, who would soon take on the Ministry of Transport after al-Amiri.

Elsewhere, Iran saw themselves as being able to count on the support of various lower level and some Sunni Iraqi officials, or alternatively, those who are close to Iraqi officials that meet with US officials. As then-US Ambassador to Iraq Stuart Jones met frequently with Salim al-Jabouri, the Sunni Majlis Speaker's top political advisor, likely unbeknownst to him, was also 'Source 134832', and alongside his reporting he also encouraged Iran to foster closer relations with Jabouri to prevent him from getting closer to the US, as at times he would make hasty decisions²⁴.

The pressure both the US and Iran placed on Iraqi officials, through the various direct and indirect methods, was often irreconcilable with one another, causing difficult situations. With hindsight, it would seem that several decisions taken at the start of the counter-offensives against ISIL in some way foreshadow what come after, because that is what they were based on. As ISIL seized Makhmour²⁵ by 07.08.2014, support from MOIS in the form of intelligence support and ammunition had already been present²⁶. The next day, on August 08, 2014, the US began airstrikes on ISIL targets in Iraq, initially to halt the ISIL advance towards Erbil from the west. With these, Peshmerga's first victory against ISIL started on 10.08.2014, led by Kurdish commander Staff Colonel Srud Salih, at the Black Tiger military base by Makhmour, and supported by PKK

fighters²⁷; the first instance in which both the US and Iran helped in different ways, making huge differences on the battlefield.

Masum finally appointed Abadi to become Iraqi PM on 11.08.2014, and the Majlis approved it a month later. Nevertheless, a cable dated 25.09.2014 indicates that Soleimani went to az-Zubeidi's office²⁸, asking a favor to allow Iran to use Iraqi airspace to access Syria, to which he agreed, even though the US pressured Iraqi officials repeatedly to halt this. Nevertheless, on 17.10.2014, establishing the Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) formalized "ongoing military actions" against ISIL. Later, on 03.12.2014, Global Coalition to Counter ISIL was styled in Brussels. Abadi inherited a challenging situation of overcoming sectarianism in the war, whilst balancing the militaries of both Iran and the US in Iraq. The increased presence and surveillance activity of the US and Iran were seen by each other as threatening.

HASHD'S CHANGING PLACE AMONG AGENCIES

First and foremost for Iraq, the need to figure out Hashd's place both in legal and political terms became evident. Early attempts include the proposal for a National Guard Law was being drafted, and it on January 27, 2015 it was submitted to cabinet. On February 03, 2015, it was approved as a legislative proposal, and a month later, on March 02, 2015, it was presented to the Majlis²⁹, the same day that the second offensive into Tikrit began³⁰. It put forward ideas on how

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Zmnako Ismael, *In Pictures: The Kurdish frontline in Iraq*, Al Jazeera, 13.08.2014

²⁶ Murtaza Hussain, *The Iran Cables, 2. Iran's Shadow War on ISIS*, The Intercept, NYT, 18.11.2019

²⁷ Zmnako Ismael, *In Pictures: The Kurdish frontline in Iraq*, Al Jazeera, 13.08.2014

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 5

³⁰ Al Jazeera, *Iraq launches offensive to take back Tikrit from ISIS*, Al Jazeera, 02.03.2015



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ABU MAHDI AL-MUHANDES AND QASEM SOLEIMANI

the Hashd might fit as an entity outside the pre-existing security ministries, as the ISF and Hashd were fighting in Tikrit and elsewhere, but still were reliant on CJTF-OIR airstrikes before advancing. The ideas included guides on provincial-level recruitment, directorates, and limiting the force capabilities to that of a light infantry brigade, the National Guard Law was not passed. Whilst Sunni groups favored the structure being more local, namely on the provincial level, Shia groups favored increased centralization and direct command of the Iraqi PM. This, as well as other unpassed legislation pieces or unfulfilled reform attempts, are worth highlighting for hints of what some of the thinking or attitudes look like and evolve over time.

Meanwhile, on April 07, 2015, Abadi publicly asserted that the Hashd units are to be formally placed under the direct command of the PM of Iraq³¹.

³¹ Rod Nordland, *After Victory Over ISIS in Tikrit*,

A noticeable effect was that this indicated intent for those units to be legitimized³². It put into question their exact status in relation to the ISF, though it was likely already assumed for it not to be on the same level. Another effect was that Abadi would transfer the command to him and the position of PM over al-Amiri and the position of National Security Advisor and the Ministry of Interior of Iraq. Implementation, attaining sufficient agreement, or actual restructuring of the chain of command, however, was another matter.

Moreover, as with any multifaced organizations, the underlying internal disputes in Hashd that existed from its inception were a can that was kicked down the road if there was little sense in resolving them immediately. Indeed, one of the earlier factors that affected all of

Next Battle Requires a New Template, New York Times, 07.04.2015

³² Ibid.

Article 6 of Executive Order 91 of 2016 noted that Hashd and its subgroups ought to be depoliticised.

these groups were signs that Fayyad, still as the Chair and thus overarching leader of Hashd, was at times at odds with al-Muhandis³³. Furthermore, signs that al-Muhandis began impeding efforts that would give decision-making abilities to others began to show, where, for instance, on February 17, 2016, Abadi appointed a second Deputy Chair of Hashd, retired Lieutenant General Mohsen Kaabi, who withdrew a few weeks later in dubious circumstances, primarily from intimidation³⁴.

As the siege of Fallujah was underway, it was soon to be followed by preparations to retake Hit and other cities, building from experiences in Tikrit. However, operations in Tikrit, Salah ad-Din, and others included Hashd members as the local population was mixed Sunni and Shia. Even then, accounts of human rights abuses and looting by Shia members against Sunni communities was noted, with the regions around Jurf ash-Sakhar being a notorious example³⁵. This turned the sweetness of advances against ISIL into bitterness. MOIS was angered by

Soleimani's social media promotion of the IRGC Quds Force violent activities that caused resentment among Sunni communities³⁶, fearing it would squander progress made and drive them to look to the US or even Israel for support.

Abadi decided to not let this slide unnoticed. On February 24, 2016, Abadi issued Executive Order 91 of 2016, formally strove "*to restructure and reorganize the Popular Mobilization Commission and the forces subordinate to it*", as an attempt to make Hashd compatible with Iraq's Constitution, where Article 9 prohibits militias outside of the ISF. Hence, Article 1 of Executive Order 91 explicitly states that Hashd is an element of the IAF, Articles 4 and 5 reassure that accordingly Hashd would be subject to the same regulations and obligations, for the first time³⁷. In this, Article 6 of Executive Order 91 of 2016 noted that Hashd and its subgroups ought to be depoliticised, and that links to political groups or parties are to be cut³⁸.

Sensing the general public was still dissatisfied with the lacking progress on this and other reforms, including on employment, public services, replacing corrupt politicians, on 30.04.2016, as-Sadr organized mass peaceful demonstrations, making it the subsequent time in a couple months. Meanwhile, as Abadi grappled with the reforms, on June 07, 2016, al-Khadimi became Director of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (NIS), as part of Abadi making attempts at reigning in control over operationality. The move was timely for planning, as on October 16, 2016, the operation to retake Mosul

³³ Mustafa Saadoun, *Disagreements among PMU leaders stir up conflict between factions*, Al Monitor, 23.12.2019

³⁴ [YouTube], Haider al-Abadi, مجاهدي دياب علي، مهتم بأشغال دة عتيوي ب عشل ا دشحلا يف نيسا فل، interview, 03.05.2018, link: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=XbhR87J47m8>

³⁵ Amnesty International, *Iraq: Turning a Blind Eye – The Arming of the Popular Mobilization Units*, Amnesty International, 2017

³⁶ James Risen et al., *The Iran Cables, 1. A Spy Complex Revealed*, The Intercept, NYT, 18.11.2019

³⁷ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 7

³⁸ Ibid., page 8

began dubbed 'We are coming, Nineveh', or 'Qadimun Ya Naynawa'³⁹, led by Staff Lieutenant General Abdul Amir Yarallah. The Peshmerga moved in from a north-eastern angle, and the ISF from elsewhere.

Hashd's military presence⁴⁰ in such an important Sunni city in a fight against Sunni extremists was a headache for everyone. Hashd maintains a local Hashd Commission Office for each governorate of Iraq, except Anbar and Nineveh⁴¹. This made the approach of Hashd Operations Command in these governorates towards local militias that were mobilized, motivated to take back their lost homeland or protect their rights, a bit different. Some groups joined Hashd, whilst others operated in tandem with Hashd units, the ISF, or Peshmerga, or the coalition in general, which made it less clear exactly which was which.

Some Assyrian groups, namely the Nineveh Plain Protection Units⁴², joined Hashd directly, not to be confused with the more Syriac Nineveh Plain Forces that formed separately, as did some Christian groups, such as Dwekh Nawsha. Interestingly, the phenomenon of 'Tribal Mobilization Militia', or Hashd al-Asha'iri, began emerging separately from Hashd ash-Shaabi, which was supported by the US via the Ministry of Defense of Iraq. These included local Sunni militias from the Sunni Shammar Tribe⁴³. Elsewhere, some Yazidi groups, such as Sinjar

Resistance Units and Êzîdxan Women's Units, coordinated with the Peshmerga and wider coalition⁴⁴. Local Shia groups, however, had the closest ties to Hashd, and some underwent immediate integration, such as the Shabak Militia, known better as Quwwat Sahl Ninawa, which emerged with the help of Badr.

A month in and noting the dynamics between these groups and who they listen to, on November 26, 2016, the Popular Mobilization Commission Law, as no. 40 of 2016, was put forward in the Majlis. Masum signed it, colloquially referred to as the 'Hashd Law', on December 18, 2016 making it a swift follow up⁴⁵ on Executive Order 91, and it entered into force on December 26, 2016. It has an interesting feature that backdates to Decree 301 of June 11, 2014, making it legally-binding from that date⁴⁶. However, overall, the Popular Mobilization Commission Law carrying pretty much the same elements as Executive Order 91 makes it a reinforcement, also mentioning the need of standardization of pay among Hashd members to match those in the ISF. Inter alia, standardizing pay in the 'Hashd Law' soon became a contention point between al-Muhandis and al-Fayyadh as it would impede preferential treatment of certain Hashd subunits over others, namely financially, and this began to noticeably further increase tensions.

It is worth noting that the presence of the militaries of Turkey, which has and continues to conduct air raids against PKK fighters in the KRI, as well as the militaries

³⁹ Al Sumaria, "ريدرحت تايلىم عىل ع قىلطي يدابىل", Al Sumaria, "يىونين اي نوومداق" قىمىست يىونين, 17.10.2016

⁴⁰ L'Observer, *Bataille de Mossoul : qui participe à la reconquête ?*, L'Observer, 17.10.2016

⁴¹ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 39

⁴² Syriac International News Agency, *NPF declaring their participation to Mosul offensive*, Syriac International News Agency, 18.10.2016

⁴³ Erica Gaston, *Sunni Tribal Forces*, Global Public Policy Institute, 30.08.2017

⁴⁴ The Independent, *All-female Yazidi militia launches operation for revenge on Isis in northern Iraq*, The Independent, 14.11.2016

⁴⁵ Paul Antonopoulos, *Law passes making the PMU a part of Iraq's national forces*, Al Masdar News, 19.12.2016

⁴⁶ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 8



PRIME MINISTER OF IRAQ, MUSTAFA AL-KADHIMI

of Iran and the US are all in overlapping proximity to one another⁴⁷. Even so, as the fighting in the Battle of Mosul continued, on June 07, 2017, Barzani met with PUK and KDP leaders as well as with other KRI parties. The meeting confirmed an upcoming independence referendum for KRI, which was met with worry from Abadi and other Cabinet members.

On July 10, 2017, ISF forces captured Mosul, although some smaller level fighting continued in the outskirts. Still, at this point, it would seem that although Hashd is recognized by the state, although coordination was possible, its subgroups decision to operate are with autonomy. Their ideological affiliations seemed to be, at their simplest, describable as either more aligned towards either the IRGC, Sadrists, or as-Sistani.

What was changing was that the additional groups that began forming in the meantime even during the battle, joining Hashd or co-opting on a more local level amidst the restructuring. Abadi made official strides, namely on 15.07.2017, to bring the new additions to Hashd local

to the Nineveh Plains, and namely the Quwwat Sahl Ninawa, under control of Iraqi Government, would supposedly extend to the Tribal Mobilization Militia as well. Given that this was after the fight, supposedly as not to interfere in operational swiftness, the thoughts of the leaders of these groups on this could vary, and there were no drastic immediate changes. Each was figuring out the hierarchy, their relations and where they fit with the other groups, where they do not, as well as tightness with the centralized command.

VOTING AMIDST NOT-DEPOLITICIZED ARMED FACTIONS

The KRI hoped for greater appreciation for sacrifices in the campaign against ISIL in the form of increased autonomy and recognition, which in their view was not fulfilled. Not long after the ISF and Peshmerga shared victories, tensions began mounting. Despite Abadi's urges to refrain, the Independence Referendum was held on September 25, 2017, with an overwhelming 92.7% of those voting being in favor. Whilst its characterization was non-binding, the tone was that intent was to make it binding.

As tensions mounted, and having ignored a deadline to withdraw, on October 15,

⁴⁷ Nabil Mohammed Salim, *Foreign Military Presence in Iraq*, Making Policies, 11.07.2018

2017, the ISF and Hashd together attacked the Peshmerga in the Kirkuk region. Makhmour had been lost again, but this time, to the ISF, which was supported by Iran that had previously helped the Peshmerga to reclaim their first victory from ISIL. The ISF with Hashd continued to seize about 30% of territory from the KRI. To resolve the brief Iraqi-Kurdish conflict, the KRI reluctantly accepted the decision of annulling the referendum's binding claim.

The international approach via the EU had been planning and finally ensued a new angle. The EU Advisory Mission in support of security sector reform in Iraq, or as referred to its shorthand, the EUAM Iraq. It was established on October 17, 2017, and formally began on November 22, 2017 its operationality in Baghdad⁴⁸, seemingly in a timely manner. Being orbital around SSR initiatives, it is characteristic of a more post-conflict mission, recognizing that the war against ISIL draws down, the need for reforms to help ease tensions in the aftermath of the post-referendum clashes is imperative.

Having observed with worry the post-ISIL tensions, as-Sistani made an appeal to disarm and join political process that was positively received. Coming into the new year, the 2018 Parliamentary Elections were already widely anticipated by this time. It was clear the opportunities for realignments to reflect shifting moods also underlined what is at stake with the political decisions.

Having previously led the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), a rebrand of the SICRI, the departure of Ammar al-Hakim due to it being too pro-Iranian sent signals to others still on the fence on this. The remaining ISCI members however

sought to get closer to the newly formed 'Conquest Alliance' instead, or Tahlaf al-Fatah, led by al-Amiri. With the old guard of the ISCI, Tahlaf al-Fatah also includes Asa'ib's As-Sadiqoun Bloc, Badr, and 2 smaller parties. It is no exaggeration to say that Tahlaf al-Fatah is therefore in essence the political wing of the more pro-Iranian Hashd Brigades, including Kata'ib Hezbollah and Kata'ib al-Imam Ali.

The first main split occurred on January 15, 2018 with Tahlaf al-Fatah separating from the 'Victory Coalition' or Tahlaf an-Nasr, due to incompatibility of approaches, about a day after attempting to run together⁴⁹. It may have been a means to dip the toe into the water and check its temperature, which as-Sadr and others criticized immediately⁵⁰. Tahlaf an-Nasr interestingly includes Abadi's Islamic Dawa Party, which of course is also al-Maliki's party, who ran against his successor, but also the newly established Ataa Movement led by al-Fayyadh, as both Chairman of the Hashd and National Security Advisor.

As-Sadr sought to mobilize his following, and on January 25, 2018, the Sairoon bloc was formed⁵¹, which set up an alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party⁵². This was based largely on their pre-existing ties in organizing mass demonstrations against insufficient addresses regarding socio-economic problems. Iran criticized as-Sadr's choice as a shift towards secularism. As-Sadr himself would not be eligible to

⁴⁹ The New Arab, *Iraqi militias and PM Abadi to contest general election separately*, The New Arab, 15.01.2018

⁵⁰ Institute for the Study of War, *2018 Iraqi Election Updates*, Institute for the Study of War, 12.02.2018

⁵¹ تاباختن الاضوخل "نورئاس" فلأحت نال عإ
تأبأحتن الاضوخل "نورئاس" فلأحت نال عإ
تأبأحتن الاضوخل "نورئاس" فلأحت نال عإ
Iraqi Communist Party, 26.01.2018

⁵² It might be worth noting that the word "communist" there may not have the exact same connotations as it does elsewhere, especially here in Poland

⁴⁸ EUAM Iraq, *EUAM starts work in Baghdad*, EEAS, 23.11.2017

run for office, and as such, his role would be that of kingmaker.

In the second main split, on January 29, 2018, al-Hakim announces National Wisdom Trend, or Tayar al-Hikma al-Watani, separated from Tahlaf an-Nasr. More so than the first split, al-Hakim establishing Hikma more suggests Abadi was increasingly struggling to favorably balance the various groupings. The 6 other parties soon followed and joined Hikma also wished to appeal to the younger generation over the older, and importantly, towards a more secular and nationalist approach for Iraq.

The way different factions approached the KRI with regard to reconciliation was key, as the PUK and KDP traditionally have had enough votes to sway the direction, but not enough of course to choose it. Most of the volatile shifts was done between Shia parties and groups, where Kurdish and Sunni groups remained rather stable and observant, hoping to read the Shia group dynamics before making a stance into the coalition forming.

Meanwhile, ISF operations to clean up ISIL resurgent 'White Flags' presence often used Hashd factions to secure interests. With this, Hashd factions with political wings sought to promote their successes against ISIL as a means of legitimization, and Hashd's political counterparts sought to exploit their fight against ISIL to garner support. For instance, on 24.02.2018, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated outside Asa'ib headquarters. Camera footage shows him as the only casualty, but Asa'ib claimed 3 of their members had been killed⁵³, suggesting claims of their sacrifices could be exaggerated to this end.

On March 01, 2018, considerable parts of the Majlis reiterated demands for withdrawal of foreign troops, and requested a timeline⁵⁴. However, other MPs, namely from Kurdish and Sunni governorates, indicated they would like US and UN protection during the ballot casting for vulnerable regions. On March 03, 2018, the Majlis was debating the annual budget whilst considering the debt, but refuted to give the KRI's traditional allocation. The same day, however, the Majlis passed a provincial election reform to include the Kirkuk region⁵⁵.

In this backdrop, on March 08, 2018, Abadi issued Executive Order 85 of 2018, which was probably the most comprehensive Hashd reform undertaking since, though it too is only 3 pages in length⁵⁶. Most notably, it brings back the notion of having a second Deputy Chair. Moreover, it reiterates in Article 1 the need for a unique rank system that can be somewhat comparable to the remainder of ISF units, namely that a "fighter" would be the equivalent of a lieutenant or above, and that a "volunteer" refers to the more starting ranks⁵⁷. Yet, in this way, Hashd also remains a unit unique from the others. However, Article 2 seems to be key. Besides mentioning insignia and uniform, it adds a detailed definition of Hashd's structure, as well as obligatory criteria for Hashd members, that makes it consistent with those for other ISF members, including an exemption detail to not exclude those who contributed prior to this order being passed⁵⁸. Moreover, as a reaffirmation that Hashd's Commission,

⁵⁴ Reuters, *Iraqi parliament demands timeline for foreign troop withdrawal*, Reuters, 01.03.2018

⁵⁵ Musings on Iraq [Blog], *Iraq's Provincial Elections Set For Dec 2018, Includes Kirkuk*, 06.03.2018

⁵⁶ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 9

⁵⁷ Ibid., page 10

⁵⁸ Ibid., page 11

⁵³ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, *Spotlight on Global Jihad (February 22-28, 2018)*, 01.03.2018

led by a Chair, only has those given to him by the PM, is asserted in Article 5.

Notwithstanding, the campaigning for the Parliamentary Elections continued. The White Flags saw opportunities to increase frequency of attacks against Majlis MPs, intensifying their targeting not coincidentally in the Kirkuk region. They were not the only ones to mobilize their armed fighters to intimidate or silence others. Around April 30, 2018, Hashd's finance director Qassim Dahif az-Zubaidi was assassinated in Baghdad⁵⁹, who was doing a Hashd audit on Abadi's behalf. Abadi had not enforced equal pay and conditions for Hashd fighters as those in the ISF, and the context makes suspicions grow all around. Also, just before heading to the polls, something impossible to ignore, was that on May 08, 2018, the US announced its withdrawal from the JCPOA. The need for special waivers and impending sanction re-imposition and intensification, would surely be discussed among constituents and political groups alike, fearing in what newer ways Iraq would get caught up in this spat.

Finally, as on May 12, 2018 the Parliamentary Elections were held. Sairoon led with 54 seats, Tahlaf al-Fatah with 48 seats, and Tahlaf an-Nasr with 42 seats. Al-Maliki's State of Law got 25, as did the KDP, Iraq's Vice President Ayad Allawi's coalition, al-Wataniya, got 21 seats. Unfortunately, in general there was a lower turnout percentage than in 2014. However, this also meant that as-Sadr's bloc, having mobilized his base, made his wins proportionally increase into many more seats.

Immediate demands for recounting and court cases regarding electoral fraud highlighted the structural problems of the

system. On July 15, 2018 mass protests erupted in central and southern Iraq, targeting the pro-Iranian political faction buildings. The areas surrounding Basra and southern Iraq were a bit different, where a porous border and affiliations of families are even more directly to the tribe. Iran has built madrasas, and supports some of the major political parties, but paradoxically, southern Iraq is one of the key places where Iran has struggled to win popular support.

On August 02, 2018, Abadi signed Executive Order 1388, which was a direct order for Hashd units to exit Mosul and Nineveh Plains. It was also another follow up of the previous orders, that new additions into the Hashd are not exempt, and need to conform to ISF control operationally and administratively, in this case, namely the ISF Nineveh Operations Command.

The formation of Government was delayed as well as exceptionally messy. Although initially leaning towards Tahlaf al-Fatah, as-Sadr began to shift after meetings with Abadi. Sairoon, Wataniya, and Hikma sought to stick together with Tahlaf an-Nasr, where Tahlaf al-Fatah had been trying with State of Law to claim majority unsuccessfully. Eventually, on August 09, 2018, one was formed with a shift towards more non-party affiliated or independent Ministers. Then Barham Salih became new President of Iraq on October 02, 2018, and Mahdi, having left ISCI and become independent, was tapped for the premiership by Salih the same day, assuming the new position on October 25, 2018.

SETTING UP INCREMENTAL STEPS

On April 01, 2019, Mahdi reiterated Executive Order 1388 and demanded that Hashd militias in the Nineveh Plains finally leave Mosul, eying Quwat Sahl Nineveh and Kata'ib Babiliyoun,

⁵⁹ Integrity UK, *Iraq Intelligence Report 3rd May 2018*, Integrity UK, 03.05.2018,

The PM's direct orders to exit Mosul were indeed ignored again by Quwat Sahl Nineveh and Kata'ib Babiliyoun at the instruction of al-Muhandis and Masjedi.

run by Rayan al-Kaldani, a Chaldean Christian. Promptly, Kata'ib Babiliyoun's leaders reached out to Iraj Masjedi, the Ambassador of Iran to Iraq, who is an IRGC officer, not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. Masjedi told Kata'ib Babiliyoun's leaders to disregard Mahdi's order, and al-Muhandis sent additional tanks to add to their arsenal. The PM's direct orders to exit Mosul were indeed ignored again by Quwat Sahl Nineveh and Kata'ib Babiliyoun at the instruction of al-Muhandis and Masjedi.

In this backdrop, Mahdi explored new ways of communicating. On June 18, 2019, Mahdi made a written statement⁶⁰, where he asserted that any non-Iraqi force can only act with permission from the Iraqi government. This is something that is already a given under international law⁶¹, but the need to reiterate it is a signal of displeasure to Iran, the US, as well as others. In the context of Hashd, it also suggests that there is still lack of control over it, citing units operating within

and beyond framework of ISF, and this was another means to rein it in to the Commander-in-Chief. Around this time, Iran had to intervene also to prevent an internal Hashd conflict⁶², namely between al-Muhandis and al-Fayyadh again. The dispute was not so much over who ran Hashd officially, but rather whose voice effectually represents it⁶³.

In swift follow-up to cement the written statement, on July 01, 2019, Mahdi issued Executive Order 237 of 2019, which also added elements which expanded the means for reform⁶⁴ of Hashd to new extents. As core to immersion into the ISF, the names of units were to be removed, replacing them with already existing military terms, namely 'Brigades'. Next, unauthorized organizational infrastructure, including checkpoints, military bases, or others, are to be disbanded, explicitly stating that running these outside of Iraqi Government consent and knowledge is prohibited⁶⁵.

Notably, on July 10, 2019, Alaa al-Musawi, as head of the Shia Waqf appointed by as-Sistani, saw his home invaded by Asa'ib members, and had to be evacuated to a safehouse. That the more aggressive Hashd subunits, now Brigades, used intimidation and harassment to get their way was nothing new. However, targeting highly regarded religious figures was.

Executive Order 237 specified that July 31, 2019, about a month after its issuing, was the deadline for the full implementation of its instruction⁶⁶.

⁶⁰ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 12

⁶¹ Laura Visser, *May the Force Be with You: The Legal Classification of Intervention by Invitation*, Netherlands International Law Review, 04.04.2019

⁶² Mustafa Saadoun, *Disagreements among PMU leaders stir up conflict between factions*, Al Monitor, 23.12.2019

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 13

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., page 14



ATTACK ON THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN IRAQ IN 2019

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It also may have been an expression to address the subtly growing disapproval from the Iraqi public regarding the not so inconspicuous illicit Hashd activities. Yet, on July 29, 2019, just 2 days before the deadline, al-Fayyadh dispatched a letter asking for an extension to implement Executive Order 237 by another 2 months, arguing that steps taken to fulfil its requirements are already well under way, including restructuring plans and addressing lacking representation from Sunni provinces.

The disagreements spilling onto the public sphere were also uncommon. Instances as on August 21, 2019, where al-Muhandis accused the US of using access to Iraqi airspace to invite the Israeli air strikes against Hashd positions in Iraq⁶⁷, to which al-Fayyadh insisted the statement does not reflect the entirety or official position of Hashd, may have been unprecedented.

⁶⁷ Rudaw, قريسم تارئاطل اخداب الكيرم أمهتي سيدنملا، 21.08.2019
 يب عشل دش حلا تارقم فصقل قار علا إلالا ئيليئاسا
 Rudaw, 21.08.2019

On September 12, 2019, the Statement on Behalf of Grand Ayatollah Ali as-Sistani was issued by Hamid al-Khafaf, director of as-Sistani's office in Lebanon, which criticized the Iraqi Government for lacking follow-through on the reforms regarding Hashd. In response, on September 14, 2019, Executive Order 328 of 2019 was put into force by Mahdi, which made Iraq's Joint Operations Command (JOC) directly reporting to the PM, and made the Hashd a direct part of the JOC, as 1 of the 11 total security agencies within it. Only the PM or alternative, in this case Yarallah, could exercise authority over the JOC.

However, just 3 days after Executive Order 328 was enacted, on September 17, 2019, Executive Order 331 of 2019 entered force, which was the first from all preceding reforms that in a more complex manner rigorously addresses hierarchy in Hashd⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy,

This includes changing the Committee's head from Chair to President, and with it, a Secretary General accountable to the President, and a Chief of Staff⁶⁹, that had been empty since 2017, which would oversee 8 operation commands, and 23 brigades. Considering that there are some 60 or more brigades⁷⁰, and de facto up to 100 or so⁷¹, this may suggest an intent to restructure or fuse these in some way. The Chief of Staff would require approval from both the Majlis as well as the JOC. Its implementation is likely a long road ahead, but much is said about its intent.

As a Century Foundation account underlines, al-Muhandis had paradoxically also been a unifying figure, at least for some in Iraq, in his pursuit to dominate Hashd⁷². Despite being staunchly pro-Iranian, he had indeed made cross-sectarian outreach to individual Sunni Tribe members as well as Sunni paramilitary and militia groups. From more local foundations, al-Muhandis shrewdly used the diversity of Hashd as "good optics and good politics" to attain loyalty that transcends sectarianism⁷³, especially in the more sensitive Anbar Governorate, supplemented by simple transactional motivations as well.

Hence, the need to repeatedly reassert in new ways the control of Hashd lay with the PM, and now changing the Chair,

03.03.2020, page 15

⁶⁹ Michael Knights, *Helping Iraq Take Charge of Its Command-and-Control Structure*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 30.09.2019

⁷⁰ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 16

⁷¹ Seth Frantzman, *Iraq's New Prime Minister Needs to Take Control of His Security Forces*, Foreign Policy, 16.06.2020

⁷² Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 16

⁷³ Ibid.

may have been because the then-Deputy Chair, al-Muhandis, had been increasingly accumulating de facto decision-making abilities. Hashd's independence from the PM's instructions stemming from this specifically has also been reflected in the field in the form of acting without instruction, refusing or disregarding instruction from the PM, or even more audaciously, persuading other groups to ignore instruction from the PM.

FALLOUT

Amid the swelling tensions between the US and Iran and the protests that broke out on October 01, 2019, dynamics between Sadrists and pro-Iranian Hashd Brigades underwent a dramatic shift. On October 25, 2019, in the midst of nationwide protests, fighting broke out between Saraya as-Salam and Asa'ib members in the Maysan Governorate⁷⁴, and angry protesters killed some Asa'ib members close to Khazali. The protesters went on to burn the Consulate of Iran in Karbala. Mahdi announced his intention to resign on November 29, 2019, and the Majlis approved it December 01, 2019 without too much hesitation, though he would temporarily continue as caretaker. Even so, clashes between Saraya as-Salam and Kata'ib Hezbollah were reported⁷⁵ on 06.12.2019, despite attempts to retract the message some days later to preserve idea of unity between Hashd Brigades.

On December 24, 2019, the Majlis approved a series of new reformative legislations on Iraq's election processes⁷⁶, with 3 key changes, namely: firstly, enabling independent politicians to win a seat in the Majlis; secondly, restructuring the divisions of Iraq's governorates into several

⁷⁴ Al Hurra, *تأيش يليم نيب فيل تالكابتشا دعب*, Al Hurra, *قار عالا بون جل عي ندم تازي عت لسرت دادغب*, 26.10.2019

⁷⁵ Nas News, *يب عشل دش حل العبرت لنسل اقرز جم*, Nas News, *! فارت عالا نايب دعب براضتو يوضوف*, 09.12.2019

⁷⁶ Ahmed Rasheed, *Iraq passes electoral reforms but deadlock remains*, Reuters, 24.12.2019

electoral districts, where one MP is elected per 100 000 people; and thirdly, no longer allowing parties from running on unified lists. These changes are considerable because the proportional representation system, and specifically the Webster / Sainte-Laguë method, has been replaced by the district-based system, and the next elections will be the first to test out if this works better.

Whilst the inner circles were furthering reform attempts to address the protests, in the field, tensions between the US and Iran were being played out in Iraq unscrupulously. The world took notice of the escalation and was led to worry of its consequences. On December 27, 2019, the K1 Air Base, which hosts Iraqi and US personnel, was attacked, killing a US contractor. This appeared to be a red-line for the Trump Administration, and on December 29, 2019, the US retaliated. On December 31, 2019, the US Embassy in Baghdad was confronted with protests and attacks, which interestingly had a mark reading “*the uncle was here*” left on it. The same day, Pompeo named individuals and Hashd leaders who he believed responsible for inciting or helping organize the attack on the US Embassy or were there personally, which included al-Muhandis, Khazali, and al-Amiri, but also al-Fayyadh.

As is well known, on January 03, 2020, Soleimani arrived in Baghdad to meet Mahdi. As he was just leaving the airport, the US launched a drone strike that struck the vehicle carrying both Soleimani and al-Muhandis. Just hours later, the Ambassador of Switzerland to Iran Markus Leitner personally delivered an encrypted fax message from the White House reading “*do not escalate*” to Zarif in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran⁷⁷. The Swiss Embassy in Tehran shuttled several follow

up messages, which were more concrete and well-tempered, contrasting to public inflammatory remarks⁷⁸.

The thought that struck observers was that it meant someone passed the information to the US on Soleimani's exact planned whereabouts. One wonders to what degree, if at all, this is related to the leak of intelligence documents to The Intercept earlier, or whether it was done separately but perhaps inspired by the audacity of the previous action.

Regardless of whether some Cabinet members or Majlis MPs were opposed to those individuals, bilateral US-Iraq relations *were* strained as a result of the escalation⁷⁹, namely due to the unilateral manner of the action. In the de-escalation phases, some were trying to figure out what to make of it, but others sought to capitalize on it. On January 05, 2020, a Resolution was sent from the PM to the Majlis, which then passed⁸⁰ by 170 MPs that sought to expel US forces. However, a Resolution from the Majlis is non-binding. It does not have the authority to revoke such a treaty, even though the language was “obligatory” in tone⁸¹, and thence the Resolution returns to the PM, who at this time, is in a caretaker government that enjoys less authority in enacting drastic changes. Further, the decision is vague enough not to specifically address the US and NATO forces⁸², but foreign forces. Finally, the Constitution of Iraq does not have a mechanism to rebuke or formally

⁷⁸ Alexander Wielgos, *Iran Nuclear Deal: the JCPOA on Geopolitical Chessboards*, New Direction, 13.03.2020

⁷⁹ Emma Sky, *The Death of the U.S.-Iraqi Relationship*, Foreign Affairs, 03.01.2020

⁸⁰ France 24, *Iraq parliament passes resolution to expel US-led coalition troops from country*, France 24, 06.01.2020

⁸¹ EPC, *Impact of Soleimani killing on US-Iran conflict in Iraq*, EPC, 26.01.2020

⁸² Ibid.

⁷⁷ Drew Hinshaw, *Swiss Back Channel Helped Defuse U.S.-Iran Crisis*, Wall Street Journal, 12.01.2020

end international treaties⁸³, which would require agreement of both the US and Iraq before such a thing could be considered.

The voting was mainly by Tahlaf al-Fatah affiliated MPs, as well as those affiliated with Hikma, State of Law, and Sairoon, sharing anger expressed by as-Sadr at the breach of sovereignty, who also backed the notion. However, KDP and PUK leaders decided it would be best for *all* Kurdish MPs to remain decidedly neutral on this and not vote, and most Wataniya and Sunni MPs and more secular Shia MPs also abstained⁸⁴. Furthermore, cases of threats and intimidation against MPs who may have reservations about an anti-US stance increased⁸⁵. Nevertheless, the US noted it would have to suspend operations due to the intensity of attacks on its bases by some Brigades from Hashd. Then, Trump noted potential sanctioning if follow up on the vote was expected, and those Hashd Brigades made threats if it was not⁸⁶. Worth noting, subtly the next day, on January 06, 2020, Mahdi received the Chinese Ambassador to Iraq, during which, the Ambassador expressed readiness for military support⁸⁷.

TURNING POINTS SLOWLY, AND THEN QUICKLY

In seeking to select the next Deputy Chair of Hashd, the most inner circles from within Hashd convened: Abu Ali al-Basri and Abu Muntadher al-Husseini from Badr, Abu Iman al-Bahali from Kata'ib

Hezbollah, Abu Ala al-Walai from Kat'aib Sayyid ash-Shuhada, Laith al-Khazali from Asa'ib, as well as Ahmed al-Asadi from Kata'ib Jund al-Imam⁸⁸. These Hashd groups, at times colloquially referred to as 'the Muhandis core', put forward Abdulaziz al-Muhammadawi, or 'Abu Fadak' and 'al-Khal', or 'the uncle', as is also known, who is a Kata'ib Hezbollah commander⁸⁹ to the Popular Mobilization Commission, announcing it unilaterally. Al-Muhammadawi, previously in Badr and then involved in internal disagreements within Kata'ib Hezbollah, eventually returned to Kata'ib Hezbollah from Soleimani's direct instruction upon the onset of the protests⁹⁰. Furthermore, with this pronouncement, Kata'ib Hezbollah asserted their view was that Hashd should remain separate from the ISF⁹¹.

To their surprise, on February 20, 2020, his nomination was refuted by Firqat al-Imam Ali al-Qitaliyah, or Brigade 2, Liwa Ali al-Akbar, or Brigade 11, the al-Abbas Combat Division that became Brigade 26, as well as Liwa Ansar al-Marjaiya, or Brigade 44,⁹². These 4 Hashd groups constitute the 'shrine foundation', and are referred to as the Atabat⁹³, who are aligned with as-Sistani and ideologically favor Najaf in Iraq over Qoms in Iran. The

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Rend Ar-Rahim, *Consequences of Iraq's vote to end Coalition troop presence*, Atlantic Council, 16.01.2020

⁸⁵ Bobby Allyn, *In A Day Of Turmoil, Repercussions Of Soleimani Killing Grow More Widespread*, NPR, 05.01.2020

⁸⁶ Al Hurra, "قنايخو يزخو ردغ", داركالاو ناملربلا ددهي Al Hurra, 05.01.2020

⁸⁷ [Twitter], @RudawEnglish, #BREAKING: Iraq's Prime Minister Adil Abdul al-Mahdi receives China's ambassador to Iraq, Zhang Tao conveyed Beijing's readiness to provide military assistance., Rudaw English, 06.01.2020

⁸⁸ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 23

⁸⁹ Nazli Tarzi, *Hierarchical rifts split Iraq's PMF*, Arab Weekly, 01.03.2020

⁹⁰ Ismael Naar, *Meet 'the uncle' Abu Fadak, the new head of Iran-backed PMU militias in Iraq*, Al Arabiya, 22.02.2020

⁹¹ Crispin Smith, *Iraqi Militias Split Over New Iran-Backed Head, Reflecting Wider Divisions*, Just Security, 04.03.2020

⁹² MECRA, *Who is Abu Fadak, Abdul-Aziz al-Muhammadawi, the man who will replace Muhandis?*, MECRA, 22.02.2020

⁹³ Michael Knights, *Honored, Not Contained: The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 03.03.2020, page 23

Atabat asserted they were not consulted prior to this decision, and made their stance known directly to the President and PM⁹⁴. It would seem that Atabat's outright rejection of a nominee from the 'Muhandis core' reflects in different ways some 'attitudes in the ongoing protests to considerable degrees. Also noticeable, Badr seems to be less vocal or distancing itself from these kinds of incidents or disagreements, and even al-Khazali has limited his social media presence gradually.

At some point in mid-March 2020, newer armed groups were formed, namely Asbat as-Saerin, which claimed attacks on US bases on Camp Taji⁹⁵, as well as Ashab al-Kahf, boasting weaponry. Both are clearly more radical and willing to be aggressive. It is likely Asbat as-Saerin was established by Kata'ib Hezbollah, and gives a new dynamic to the choice of actions by those Hashd groups. On March 30, 2020, the new IRGC Quds Force Commander, Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani, visited Baghdad unannounced. He met with some Hashd subunit leaders. However, to his dismay, as-Sadr reportedly refused to meet him. Shortly after, on April 04, 2020, a Joint Communiqué was released that condemned US forces being stationed in Iraq, and demanded their withdrawal. The Communiqué by 8 Hashd subunits, including namely most from the 'Muhandis Core', as well as a Hashd founding subunit, Harakat Jund al-Imam, but interestingly without Badr. It also was signed by some others around since the earliest days, including Saraya al-Khorasani, Saraya Ashura and Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, All of these are the most aligned to IRGC in the Hashd architecture.

⁹⁴ Nazli Tarzi, *Hierarchical rifts split Iraq's PMF*, Arab Weekly, 01.03.2020

⁹⁵ ISW News, *Video: The operator of the rocket attacks to Americans in Iraq was identified!*, ISW News, 16.03.2020

(*Unrelated note*: on April 07, 2020, the EU Council extended the mandate of EUTM Iraq until at least April 30, 2022, subject to further renewals.)

On April 22, 2020, before his departure, Mahdi conveyed a formal decision in a short, less than one page letter for the Atabat, naming Brigades 2, 11, 26, and 44 specifically, to be “*operationally and administratively linked*” to the PM⁹⁶. It mentioned that to this end details would be later established⁹⁷. In effect, with this, the Atabat separated from the Hashd command, but the letter is likely purposely ambiguous in whether the Atabat are to remain as Hashd Brigades. By making them directly accountable to the PM, it is a move directly in line with the aforementioned reforms and passed legislation. One would wonder then what this together the more assertive attempts of Atabat to take decision-making capabilities away from the 'Muhandis Core' signals to the ISF and the Cabinet, to the Majlis MPs, as well as to other Brigades within Hashd who are wondering how they fit into the political and security apparatuses; especially considering that the Atabat are prohibited from liaising with the IRGC.

Options pertaining to Hashd seem to be becoming, at their vaguest, choosing clever combinations of integration, containment, or suppression, where the wrong choices unfortunately have disproportionately negative effects. As the incremental reforms hitherto have gone in the direction of transferring authority to the Commander-in-Chief, the importance of choosing the next PM is difficult to overstate. First, Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi unsuccessfully made a bid to succeed Mahdi, and then Adnan az-Zurfi

⁹⁶ Shafaq News, *Abdul-Mahdi Disengages Shrines Forces From the PMF*, Shafaq News, 22.04.2020

⁹⁷ Ibid.

also could not manage to garner enough support, but Iran's preferred choices, Abdul Hussein Abtan and Qasim al-Araji, hardly had a chance.

It was a relief for some, therefore, on May 06, 2020, when al-Khadimi was confirmed, and sworn in on May 07, 2020 the next day. Others, namely leaders of Kata'ib Hezbollah, had made threatening remarks if al-Khadimi was selected. As a piece on Foreign Policy suggests, it has been noticed by Western observers and analysts, again like his predecessors, that al-Khadimi, is capable of balancing between the US and Iran, as well as finding some understanding between most political factions – but it is mainly the political system's dysfunctionality which prevented his predecessors from making sufficiently recognizable progress⁹⁸. Absent enough change, this scenario may likely therefore risk to befall the new incumbent. It had been a pattern.

However, al-Khadimi thus far seems to not be oblivious to this, and may be even giving those same observers some hope. From the 22 ministerial candidates initially put forward for the Cabinet, 15 were accepted by the Majlis⁹⁹. Key rhetoric addressing the ongoing demonstrations included accountability for those who unjustly applied violence and lethal force against demonstrators, as well as holding early Parliamentary Elections.

On May 09, 2020, al-Khadimi convened a Cabinet meeting, made clear intent to release unjustly detained protesters, unless of course they were linked to violence, and look into also who was doing the detaining. Separately, meetings with the relatively newer US Ambassador to Iraq Matthew Tueller as well as Masjedi were

also held. Next, on May 10, 2020, al-Khadimi reinstated Lieutenant General Abdul-Wahab as-Saadi as Commander of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), whose arrest was a factor in widespread anger, and the Supreme Judiciary Council confirmed the release of those unjustly detained protesters¹⁰⁰. A later piece on Foreign Policy drew attention to these first reforms suggest the intentions of al-Khadimi in mending the complex divides that still hold Iraqi politics hostage are more than just cosmetic¹⁰¹. In this, it may be wise to approach it at least to some extents from a Governorate level¹⁰², but that bringing Hashd under control is as necessary as it is complicated.

On May 16, 2020, as al-Khadimi was visiting the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the CTS, and other ISF buildings, he stopped by the Hashd headquarters for what may not have been the easiest meeting from the lot¹⁰³. He arrived with Atabat members, and was greeted by al-Fayyadh, who was accompanied by Kata'ib Hezbollah leaders Al-Muhammadawi and Hussein Falah al-Lami, or Abu Zainab, who are critical of his premiership¹⁰⁴. In the meeting, al-Khadimi praised Hashd's role specifically in the fight against ISIL, but his view on subunits exceeding their mandate is well-known. As such, it is not entirely clear if the Atabat's earlier reaction did indeed impede al-Muhammadawi's appointment as Deputy Chair. Nevertheless, on May 19, 2020, some rockets hit close to Embassies in the Green Zone, which, if related to

¹⁰⁰ Al Jazeera, *New Iraq PM releases protesters; promotes respected general*, Al Jazeera, 10.05.2020

¹⁰¹ Seth Frantzman, *Iraq's New Prime Minister Needs to Take Control of His Security Forces*, Foreign Policy, 16.06.2020

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Michael Knights, *Kadhimi as Commander-in-Chief: First Steps in Iraqi Security Sector Reform*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 19.05.2020

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Steven Cook, *Nobody Can Help Iraq Anymore*, Foreign Policy, 24.04.2020

⁹⁹ Khrush Najari, *Mustafa al-Kadhimi voted in as Iraq's prime minister*, Kurdistan 24, 07.07.2020

this meeting, could have been done in an another display of reach.

A regular blog, *Musings on Iraq*, elaborates that ISIL attacks and security incidents in Iraq have in the meantime been resurging¹⁰⁵, but after a re-intensification of ISF operations since 21.05.2020 they had decreased again¹⁰⁶. It may or may not be correlated with the CTS Commander's reinstatement, meaning that the cleaning up operations against White Flags cannot be ignored in the meantime.

On June 03, 2020, while Ghaani made another visit to Baghdad, al-Fayyadh announced in a new SSR-related Memorandum for Hashd¹⁰⁷ in a short, page-long document. It makes reference to both the Popular Mobilization Commission Law of 2016 as well as Executive Order 237 of 2019. Besides reiterating the need for depoliticization and using 'Brigades' terms and structure, Hashd Administrative Decree 2155, which is not publicly accessible, would allegedly have overseen the Tribal Mobilization Militia formally integrated into Hashd by July 03, 2020, with two other such documents pertain to legal status of Hashd members, their pay, as well as shutting down some Hashd offices or bases outside their mandate¹⁰⁸. Al-Fayyadh may wish to better his relations with al-Khadimi, or make changes before al-Khadimi does¹⁰⁹. Unlike the previous Memos, it was not instructed by the PM, and inaccessibility of the texts it refers to raises arguments that these may potentially be more obscuring than clarifying in character.

On June 09, 2020, further arrest warrants were issued, including Lieutenant General Jamil ash-Shammari, who was responsible for the deaths of around 20 protesters. In this time, Kata'ib Hezbollah began an intensification of attacks against US bases or bases with US personnel. Meanwhile, one of the more recent situation reports from the Institute of the Study of War has noted that the Majlis MPs of Tahlaf al-Fatah closer to the 'Muhandis Core', namely MP Saad as-Saadi, are seeking to solidify the Regulation to expel US forces into binding legislation¹¹⁰, including by means of attempting to garner support for a motion of no-confidence against al-Khadimi if it is not implemented. One could therefore unfortunately expect increasing acts of intimidation or threats against certain MPs or Government officials or other individuals. Meanwhile, on June 11, 2020, the Strategic Dialogue between Iraq and the US began, the first session. It would even seem that in this backdrop, US presence in Iraq enjoys more support than Iran, for the first time, perhaps ever.

On June 25, 2020, al-Khadimi authorized a Iraqi CTS Special Operations Forces operation into a Kata'ib Hezbollah building in the Dora area of southern Baghdad¹¹¹, arresting 14 members and seizing rockets planned for subsequent attacks on US personnel in Iraq. Iraq's JOC affirms that it was a CTS operation only, and was consulted with the US prior¹¹². This was the first raid the Iraqi Government conducted successfully

¹⁰⁵ Joel Wing, *Islamic State Offensive In Iraq Takes Off In May*, *Musings on Iraq*, 03.06.2020

¹⁰⁶ Joel Wing, *Security In Iraq Jun 15-21, 2020*, *Musings on Iraq*, 23.06.2020

¹⁰⁷ Katherine Lawlor, *Iraq Situation Report: June 3-9, 2020*, Institute for the Study of War, 12.06.2020

¹⁰⁸ Michael Knights, *Hashd Reforms in Iraq Conceal More Than They Reveal*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 09.06.2020

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Katherine Lawlor, *Iraq Situation Report: June 3-9, 2020*, Institute for the Study of War, 12.06.2020

¹¹¹ Ali Mamouri, *Iraqi security forces raid militia headquarters*, Al Monitor, 26.06.2020

¹¹² [Twitter] @arwaib, *Bold move appears to hv been agreed btw @MAKadimi pro-US administration & Washington after 33 attacks targeted US interests in Iraq over past 8 months - six which took place during past 2 weeks alone. Move also coincides with launch of #US-Iraq strategic dialogue on June 11.*, Arwa Ibrahim, 26.06.2020

The situation does remain tense; it would be a disservice to misidentify its relative quiet as inconsequential.

on the basis of pre-emptive intelligence gathering.

In response, coming in from various bases in southern Iraq, Kata'ib Hezbollah swiftly mobilised dozens of armed vehicles and though the figures vary among different sources, perhaps around 600 members¹¹³ towards the PM's residence in Baghdad, with demands of the release of those detained, and threatened legal action¹¹⁴ against the PM. Those arrested had been handed over to the Hashd Security Directorate that is run by Hussein Falah al-Lami, as would be supposedly in line with the procedure of ISF military discipline protocol, but likely to be also politically calculated gesture.

The tense standoff between the CTS and Kata'ib has not seemed to escalate uncontrollably since then, and it is more than likely that discussions, not necessarily calm ones, are or have been taking place. However, there are worrying flashpoints that signal a trend that are continuing since then. Shortly after, on July 04, 2020, Ashab al-Khalf responded to reports that the US is testing C-RAM air defence systems for

the US Embassy in Baghdad with rather threatening rhetoric¹¹⁵. Some more rocket attacks followed suit on July 05, 2020, one being blocked by those same air defence systems, and another detonating close to the airport.

Then, on July 06, 2020, a revered security strategist, Hashim al-Hashimi, was assassinated outside his home in Baghdad, condemned by the Embassies of both Iran and the US. The culprit is unconfirmed, though al-Hashimi sought advice from colleagues on how to deal with death threats specifically from Kata'ib Hezbollah. The assertion of presence on the Baghdad streets would seem to be a continuation from the intimidation tactics employed previously.

On July 19, 2020 putting the air defence systems to the test again was Asbat as-Saerin, which claimed responsibility for firing rockets at the US Embassy in Baghdad and boasted the intent prior. It is not explicitly clear if these were successfully intercepted, or whether they were launched outside of their range but within the Green Zone. It may be unrelated to Zarif's visit to Baghdad the same day that discussed the al-Munthiriya border crossing¹¹⁶ that is now under CTS jurisdiction, not Hashd. Although Hashd is in the IRGC portfolio, not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, the planned visit of al-Kadhimi to Riyadh the following day was not a coincidental message on relations with Gulf states¹¹⁷, even though it was cancelled from Salman's health concerns. Also quite recently, on July 26, 2020, as-Saqr base by Baghdad

¹¹³ [Twitter] @thestevennabil, *Military sources confirmed to me that nearly 600 Armed group members (Militias) arrived in Baghdad coming from the southern provinces.*, Steven Nabil, 26.06.2020

¹¹⁴ [Twitter] @AliBakeer, *#Iraq's #Hezbollah wants to sue the Prime Minister for arresting 14 of its members as suspects of planning for attacks in the green area. Iraqis going the Lebanese model when it comes to its #IRGC-created militias and this is very bad for Iraq as a state. Check #lebanon*, Dr. Ali Bakeer, 29.06.2020

¹¹⁵ [Twitter] @IntelTweet, *In response to reports that an air defense system is being tested to protect the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, armed Iraqi Shiite faction Ashab al-Kahf has threatened, "if it did not help them at Ain Al-Assad [Air Base], then it won't protect them at the embassy either."*, Evan Kohlmann, 04.07.2020

¹¹⁶ Linah Alsaafin, *Zarif's Baghdad visit won't address PMF-Iraq gov't power dynamic*, Al Jazeera, 19.07.2020

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

saw a huge explosion in its Federal Police warehouse, which may have been from an Israeli or US air strike, as Hashd and nearby witnesses suggest, or high temperatures as claimed otherwise, likely intended to prevent a moral obligation to escalate or rebuke diplomatically. Such practises, after all, are not unheard of, and indeed may be comparable to the series of Israeli airstrikes a year earlier. Similar incidents seem to be occurring with increasing frequency with likewise mismatching reports, including on July 26, 2020 with rocket landing spots edging closer to Speicher camp by Tikrit, on July 27, 2020 Taji base, and on July 28, 2020 with unclear information of whether or not rockets landed close to Baghdad International Airport.

Nevertheless, in the wider context, the signals are of a worrying trend. The situation does remain tense; it would be a disservice to misidentify its relative quiet as inconsequential. These events do rather indicate it is potentially volatile enough for additional flashpoints, and the cause-and-effect developments of these incidents give a lot to think about for policy-makers and observers.

IRAQ'S TWO RIVERS

'The country between the two rivers'¹¹⁸, or '*al-balad bayna an-nahrayin*', seems to have a constant duality across several of its complex and multifaceted political-operational conundrums, at least from an outside perspective. As much as Iraq is subject to dynamics between US and Iran, it would seem that Iraq's ability to leverage its position as middle ground between both of them has been thus far limited¹¹⁹.

However, considering the long turn of events, the dramatic shifts within Hashd

itself since its inception, this seems to be changing, and the change has had a long build-up with changing dynamics, as well as to some considerable degree those dynamics being authentically powered by the public protests.

Ahead of the next round of US-Iraq Strategic Dialogue expected to take place at some point in the coming weeks in Washington DC, it is worth attempting to anticipate the plausible calculus of each of these states, Hashd subunits, Cabinet members, Majlis groups or MPs, and others, as well as their susceptibility to react. It is also worth taking into consideration the recent increased tensions between the governments of Iraq and Turkey regarding infringements of sovereignty in the KRI, as well as implications of the most recent August 13, 2020 announcement of normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel, and their shared interests in Iraq. Yet, reviewing the sequence of developments in its entirety but also in-depth quickly reveals that figuring out how best to go about this, in the pursuit of peace and stability, is anything but simple.

If anything, however, this is the time for creative approaches¹²⁰, simply because not changing anything leaves no chance of any positive developments. Of course, creative is not and should not be synonymous with detached from reality, and the Warsaw Institute cordially invites you to share your thoughts in its MENA Monitor program.

So what might such ideas look like? What do you think should be done, by whom, and in what way?

Alexander Wielgos ■
July 2020

¹¹⁸ Joshua Mark, *Mesopotamia*, Ancient History Encyclopedia, 14.03.2018

¹¹⁹ WIR Events, *Poland in the Geopolitics of the Middle East and North Africa*, The Warsaw Institute Review, 09.03.2020

¹²⁰ Kathlee McInnis, *Strategists Have Forgotten the Power of Stories*, Foreign Policy, 19.05.2020

TURKEY: IN SEARCH OF ENERGY TO FULFIL GEOPOLITICAL AMBITIONS

JAN WÓJCIK

In its foreign policy, Turkey has set an ambitious goal to become a regional power and even a top actor in a multilateral world. However, this might be imperiled if Turkey has no safe access to hydrocarbon deposits.

Turkish foreign policy could be seen through a whole array of perspectives. Firstly, it is through the prism of the Turkish-declared neo-Ottoman policy of setting up a regional power where the Ottoman Empire had stretched to in the past; in the Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Caucasus. Secondly, after the Arab Spring swept across many states there, Turkey showed an avid interest in backing both officials and institutions that advocated what is known as political Islam ideology, with Muslim values being widely brought into public life. By writing so, I mean

the Mohammed Morsi cabinet in Egypt — before it was ousted in 2013 — Libya's Government of National Accord, or GNA, the federal government of Somalia, or groups like Hamas. Turkey's policies are also described as the country's weaving between the East and the West. Another key issue for Turkey's energy sector is how it can secure access to fossil energy sources, without which Turkey will be unable to serve a pivotal role in a multilateral world. But will Turkey's efforts to accomplish energy security goals not imperil the country's attempts to achieve its geopolitical pursuits?



TURKISH SOLDIERS PATROL THE ROAD IN ŞIRNAK PROVINCE IN THE SOUTHEAST OF THE COUNTRY.

© STR (PAP/EPA)

As Turkey has no raw material deposits at home, at the heart of its energy security policy are efforts to diversify its energy flows.

Turkey's energy industry is 75 percent reliant on fossil fuels. The country imports 40 percent of its coal whilst roughly 100 percent of natural gas and crude oil flow into Turkey from elsewhere.¹ In this, Russia meets 53 percent of Turkey's gas needs, with Iran coming second (17 percent). Turkey reoriented its crude oil deliveries from 2015 onwards, thus after Iran and Saudi Arabia decreased in relative importance in this context, with Iraq taking the lead and covering 29 percent of Turkey's energy demand, followed by Russia (18 percent).²

As Turkey has no raw material deposits at home, at the heart of its energy security policy are efforts to diversify its energy flows — a move that countries like Poland understand well, once or currently also compelled to search for various energy suppliers. Far ampler than elsewhere in Europe, Turkey's club of energy exporters could indeed deem impressive if this were not for ardent international policy goals that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's incumbent president and former prime minister, has pursued over the past two decades. Under these, Turkey has the appetite to occupy the role of regional power, or even morph into a key actor in a post-Cold War multipolar universe. Also,

Erdogan pushes for the neo-Ottoman policy and a tilt toward any states or institutions that share his party's (the Justice and Development Party, or AKP) view on the role of Islam in public life.³ No matter what the Turkish foreign policy perspective is on the table, these factors might prompt a plethora of either real or plausible spats with current hydrocarbon suppliers.

POTENTIAL FEUDS WITH HYDROCARBON SUPPLIERS

Russia, which now stands as a top energy supplier to Turkey, must be aware of Ankara's pivotal role whilst pursuing its policies in the Middle East, as well as in its feud with both the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance.⁴ But this does not exclude potential conflicts between Ankara and Moscow. This is what happened in Syria and its rebel-held Idlib province, with both Turkey and Russia being on the opposite sides of the barricade. As one of Russia's strategies there are efforts to back the Kurds, Moscow has won an indirect influence on Ankara. Another plausible skirmish between these two might arise from the influence on the Russia-controlled areas — as former Soviet republics — yet inhabited by the Turkic peoples. With this in mind, Moscow keeps on developing its network of gas pipelines into Europe so as not to become reliant on any transit state. Just to quote here the TurkStream gas link, opened earlier this year, that got the second line running to the Balkans yet while bypassing Turkey.

Once the Justice and Development Party rose to power in Turkey, Iran came closer to Ankara amidst their comparable — albeit more moderate in Turkey — stance on the role of the region in the state,

¹ Furuncu Y., *ANALYSIS - COVID-19's blow to energy markets*, „Andalou Agency”, June 24, 2020.

² Demir F., *Petroleum Sector in Turkey*, International Conference on Petroleum Engineering, 2017.

³ Wójcik J., *Jak Turcja postawiła na islamizm*, „Układ Sił „No. 16, February 2020, p. 70.

⁴ Benedyczak J., *The Importance of Turkey in Russian Policy*, PISM, April 16, 2020.

a similar approach toward Kurdish separatism, and a closer rapprochement over policy towards Israel. Nonetheless, Turkey's policy on Iran mixes elements of both cooperation and competition in a somewhat dual combination.⁵ Although the U.S. sanctions against Tehran were major cause of a massive decline in Iran's export quotas, yet both regional players are now battling for influence in Central Asia or Transcaucasia, and most recently also in Syria and Iraq. Also, Turkey might see the latter country as a somewhat shaky source of energy deliveries. A Shia-dominated country under the profound influence of Iran, Iraq is the only country where the Kurdish minority boasts its autonomy. The Kurdistan Region stretches along the fuel supply route from Kirkuk and other Iraqi regions. Though Iraqi Kurds' policy towards Turkey, can be described as self-limitation in order to maintain independence and ensure fuel sales, Ankara is aware that a more acute conflict with the Kurds could eventually break out. Added to that are efforts that Turkey's ruling party makes to push the mostly-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, or HDP, out of the country's political scene.

With these perils to continuous energy flow into Turkey, Ankara may be keen to take action to ensure energy diversification or guarantee energy deliveries from more Turkey-reliant sources, thus being far more stable than others. This need is thus key for Turkey's involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean, Libya, and Somalia.

NEW SOURCES FOR ENERGY DIVERSIFICATION

With its newfound gas riches, the Eastern Mediterranean is now the top area where Turkey looks to secure its natural gas needs. But apart from Turkey, the contest over these deposits involves also Cyprus,

Israel, Greece, and Egypt, all of which hope to benefit from the new finds. The first three states enjoy support from the United States, and recently also from France. More than 900 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas have been discovered offshore Israel, making it by far the vastest amount of natural gas discovered there. Besides, Egypt has its deposits estimated at 850 bcm of natural gas whilst another 700 bcm were confirmed offshore Cyprus. According to geologists, the Levantine Basin might hold far more natural gas than that.⁶ Newfound gas deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean have yet triggered a string of claims, pushing Cyprus, Lebanon, Egypt, or Israel, towards more hefty efforts to delimitate their maritime borders.⁷ In consequence, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel have agreed to advance a project of a \$6 billion pipeline that would transport Israeli natural gas from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe. In January 2019, Eastern Mediterranean countries — Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus, Greece, and the Palestinian Authority — agreed to set up a forum to create a regional gas market, known as the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum. The forum will assist the countries by creating a regional gas market, aligning their policies, as well as by developing and using necessary infrastructure options.

Turkey found itself outside these arrangements. For Ankara, this was tantamount to Turkey's being unable to benefit from newfound gas riches. Also, Turkish senior officials became fearful of the country's drop in revenues — as an energy corridor supplying oil and gas

⁵ Wasilewski K., *Rywalizacja i współpraca: Dualizm w polityce Turcji wobec Iranu*, PISM, July 16, 2018.

⁶ Kozma T., *Turkey and the geopolitics of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Trends Research and Advisory, April 13, 2020, <http://trendsresearch.org/insight/turkey-and-the-geopolitics-of-natural-gas-in-the-eastern-mediterranean/>

⁷ Osiewicz P., *Złoża gazu ziemnego we wschodniej części Morza Śródziemnego: implikacje dla Cypru*, in: *Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej*, No. 8, Adam Mickiewicz University, 2014.

to Europe from oil-rich Middle Eastern countries. Whilst zealous to hedge its energy interests, Turkey also pushes forwards maritime claims of the self-styled Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus that it alone recognizes. Thus Turkey dispatched its oil-and-gas research vessels into the exclusive economic zones of both Greece and the Republic of Cyprus in a move that irked EU member states as they called for sanctions.

In an effort to shield its interests in the Levantine Basin, Turkey and Libya signed a much-contested maritime boundaries deal that vexed Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt, with all claiming that the Turkish-Libyan agreement violates their economic zones. In theory, the accord would prevent any state from operating in the Eastern Mediterranean without prior consent from Ankara. Yet in practice, with the deal in force, Turkey will matter in sharing out respective spheres of influence in the Mediterranean, and could invalidate the projected Israeli-Cypriot-Greek-Italian gas link⁸. There, Turkey's and Russia's convergent goals materialize as Moscow is eager to impede gas output and its transit into Europe in a move to eliminate competition.⁹

Once Turkey signed the maritime boundary deal with Libya, Ankara sided with Fayeaz as-Sarraj and his Government of National Accord, in short GNA, against the Libyan National Army led by military strongman Khalifa Haftar. Thus far Turkey has spurred a new alliance with Qatar in the proxy war, standing against the rival United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Russia, and France. So far Turkey has not sent its troops to Libya;

⁸ Wasilewski K., *Turcja wobec Libii*, PISM, January 30, 2020.

⁹ Legucka A., *Polityka Rosji w obszarze wschodniego Morza Śródziemnego*, PISM, May 15, 2020. Osiewicz P., *Złoża gazu ziemnego we wschodniej części Morza Śródziemnego: implikacje dla Cypru*, in: *Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej*, No. 8, Adam Mickiewicz University, 2014.



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in lieu of them, it dispatched both military hardware and mercenaries who had earlier fought in Syria. It deployed roughly 80 Turkish military advisers into the country yet dispatched an extra 2,000 — or 7,500, according to Syrian observers — Turkey-backed Syrian National Army contractors.¹⁰ In July, there were reports suggesting that

¹⁰ SOHR reveals: Turkey recruits nearly 10,000 Syrian mercenaries, 223 of whom killed in battles in Libyan territory so far, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, April 25, 2020.



SOLDIERS OF THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES ON PATROL BEFORE THE CEREMONIAL OPENING OF THE BAKU-TBILISI-CEYHAN (BTC) OIL PIPELINE IN ANKARA.

Tunisian and Libyan fighters swarmed into Libya after they had left their countries to engage militarily in Syria just a couple of years before. These are either more or less Islamic fundamentalist militants, among whom were fighters from Hay'at Tahrir ash-Sham, an al-Qaeda affiliate.

Exclusive economic zones in the Mediterranean are not the sole excuse for Turkish intervention. Before the demise

of Gaddafi's regime, Turkey had been heavily involved in the Libyan energy industry. Before 2009, Libya had met 13.6 percent of Turkey's crude needs.¹¹ Besides the energy game, Turkey's footprint in Libya is part of its neo-Ottoman policy, and Turkish officials offer aid to Islamist

¹¹ Ediger V., Berg I., *Crude oil import policy of Turkey: Historical analysis of determinants and implications since 1968*, Energy Policy, Izmir University of Economics, April 2011.

It would seem that it is not an exaggeration to suggest that Egypt and Turkey are now on the brink of direct armed conflict in the discussed zones.

groups and states whose ideologies overlap with those of Ankara.¹²

What Turkey has done both in Libya and the Mediterranean has elicited something more than just a diplomatic response. Over recent months, the Mediterranean has seen Ankara's powerful demonstration of force. Turkish-flagged survey vessels got a military escort whilst the country's military conducted an exercise in the waters of the Mediterranean. An uncomfortable naval incident between NATO member states had occurred there when a French frigate tried to inspect a Tanzanian-flagged cargo ship suspected of smuggling arms to Libya, whilst a Turkish ship had carried out radar targeting on the French vessel three times. NATO said it had launched an official probe into the case. Cyprus, Greece, France, and Italy carried out an aerial military exercise in the maritime area whilst Egypt conducted naval drills right off the Libyan border. Furthermore, the United States and Greece are expected to hold joint military drills. In Libya, Egypt drew a red line, saying if Turkish-backed mercenaries or the military loyal to the Government of National Accord dared to cross it, Egyptian forces would intervene in the country. With this, the Libyan conflict

might escalate further beyond proxy war between Egypt and Turkey.

Turkey's footprint in the Federal Republic of Somalia goes far beyond the area of the former Ottoman Empire. Unlike in Libya, what started out as a humanitarian policy began to grow increasingly complex. Turkey emboldened its military and business cooperation, with these state building efforts to bring statehood back to a failed state. Turkey helped famine-wrecked Somalia whilst Recep Tayyip Erdogan was the first non-African leader to visit the country in two decades. What followed was Turkey's military training for the Somali army as well as aid to purchase military hardware. In Somalia, Turkey set up its biggest overseas military base, too. Turkey-made goods flooded the Somali market whilst Turkish firms made their way to a number of the country's business sectors, including construction, road building, or the pharmaceutical market. On top of that, Turkey opened its universities for Somali students. Yet — like in Libya — Ankara has the very same adversaries, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, that support the self-declared state of Somaliland whilst doing their utmost to prevent Turkey from dispatching its military in the key sea lanes running to the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. In the eyes of Ankara, this has yet another extra factor that materialized back in January 2020 when as it accepted a Somali invitation to explore for oil in its seas.¹³ Possibly oil-rich areas could be spotted both in Puntland, an autonomous province of the Federal Government of Somalia, where U.S. and Canadian energy firms already operate, as well as on the shelf and also in a quarrelsome area between Somalia and Kenya — with no boundaries set so far. This could put Turkish interests in a dispute with Kenya.

¹² Op. cit. Wójcik J. *Jak Turcja...* s. 70.

¹³ Wójcik J., *Turcja w Somalii*, „Układ Sił”, No. 18, April 2020, p. 84.



A FLAG OF TURKEY

© JIM PATON (FLICKR)

What could sustain its policy toward Somalia is a civilian and military naval facility on Sudan's Suakin island, a ruined Ottoman port. Ankara is likely to go ahead with this despite a revolutionary tilt in Sudan's domestic policy. It is worth saying that Turkey's presence in Sudan — like in Somalia and Libya — has raised the ire of the Gulf countries.¹⁴ With the military facility in Sudan, Turkey could boost the security of crude oil transit from Somalia in the face of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both being geographically present in the Red Sea while simultaneously at odds with Turkey. Yet it is Egypt that seems to pose a bigger threat to Ankara. After Turkey pledged support to the Muslim Brotherhood, its ties with Egypt are at their worst since the 1960s when Ankara took a firm stance against the pan-Arab Nasserism political ideology. It would seem that it is not an exaggeration to suggest that Egypt and Turkey in effect are now on the brink of more direct armed conflict in these conflict zones. The role of Sudan and Somalia in Turkey's Africa-oriented policy needs to be discussed in a separate

paper yet with its political involvement and cultural closeness, Ankara seeks to be competitive towards the West and China, seen as both neocolonial and imperialist.

CONCLUSION

What Turkey is doing depicts how avid it is to get fossil fuels and uncertain whether its current sources are stable enough, thus Ankara is making efforts to diversify energy flows beyond its already-rich portfolio. Turkey is so determined to win new energy suppliers that it is not hesitant to come into new international feuds and ignite existing ones. This, in turn, has sparked an opposing reaction from other actors regionwide as these are aware of Turkey's ardent policy and thus seek to thwart its outcomes. Turkey has been at loggerheads with not only with Arab states, but also some NATO and EU nations. Since Ankara is less and less certain of support from the military bloc, its stance on Middle East rivals is at risk. With the way Turkey develops its energy base to pursue its ambitions in a multilateral world, this might be a threat to how the whole strategy is being implemented.

Jan Wójcik ■
July 2020

¹⁴ *Turkey's pact with Sudan over Suakin not cancelled* - Foreign Ministry, „Ahval”, April 27, 2019<https://ahvalnews.com/sudan-turkey/turkeys-pact-sudan-over-suakin-not-cancelled-foreign-ministry#>

HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM A KNOCKOUT?

TOMASZ GRZEGORZ GROSSE, PROFESSOR

The European Union resembles a severely beaten boxer standing up to the next round with a dangerous opponent. At the beginning of 2020, this organization faced two consecutive blows: the immigration crisis and the coronavirus pandemic. The third blow – economic – is yet to come.

MIGRATION CRISIS

In 2015, the European Union opened up its borders to a million refugees and economic immigrants. In early 2020, when the migration crisis returned on the Greek-Turkish border, the EU's response was quite different. The Greek government closed its borders and periodically suspended the reception of asylum seekers – which was tacitly welcomed by EU representatives. To support the Greek authorities in the immigration crisis, the presidents of

the three largest EU institutions – the European Council, the Commission, and the Parliament, flew to Greece in solidarity with Greece's political agenda. Meanwhile, they criticized the Turkish authorities for opening their borders and using immigrants as political pressure in relation to the Syrian conflict. At the time, President Recep Erdoğan needed EU support to stop the offensive of Russian-backed Syrian government forces in areas near the border with Turkey. Another aim of Erdoğan was to



FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON (L) GREETES HUNGARIAN PRIME MINISTER VIKTOR ORBAN (R) AS HE ARRIVES AT THE ELYSEE PALACE IN PARIS, FRANCE, 11 OCTOBER 2019.

© IAN LANGSDON (PAP/EPA)

receive increased EU financial assistance for the refugees in his country.

The sealing off of the EU's external borders by the European Commission in March 2020 as part of special measures against COVID-19 had a positive impact on stopping the immigration crisis through blocking the inflow routes of immigrants from outside the European Union. Most Member States and European institutions have also supported this strategy since the beginning of the dispute that broke out in early 2020 between Turkey and Greece. The support was expressed even more willingly because Erdoğan used immigrants and refugees as instruments of geopolitical blackmailing of the

European Union. The reluctance of EU's national politicians towards illegal immigrants was understandable – most societies were not ready for such a massive influx of culturally foreign people. In turn, at least part of the Brussels elite understood that stopping the wave of immigration was necessary to stop the erosion of the “European project”.

CORONAVIRUS

The coronavirus crisis seems much more dangerous for integration. In the first months of the epidemic, the European Union took a number of measures to support its Member States in this crisis: additional funds were allocated to medical research, the use of cohesion

At a time of reviving national sentiments, the tendency to infringe European law in the name of national interests may continue.

policy funds was facilitated, and fiscal criteria, as well as state aid rules, were relaxed. What is more, as part of the European Stability Mechanism, it was decided that the EU loans would be provided to cover COVID-19-related expenditure in the countries of the euro area.

In addition, the European Commission also launched tenders for medical equipment which could be used by all EU Member States. The crisis also has been an opportunity to show solidarity between countries, for example, through providing medical assistance or hospitalizing infected patients from other countries.

Nevertheless, there have been more negative tendencies, harmful to the current integration processes. Above all, politicians of EU Member States have become accustomed to the fact that Brussels took decisions on key issues, or the initiative belonged to Berlin and Paris, particularly with regard to extraordinary situations involving non-standard measures. This resulted in the delayed response to the crisis in some capitals. In addition, governments feared the negative economic impact of overly radical measures introduced to tackle the spread of the virus. The reason is the very weak economic recovery in the euro

area after the 2010 crisis and persistent dysfunction of this system.

The coronavirus epidemic led very quickly to quarrels and animosities between the Member States. An example of this was the decision of some countries, including Germany, France, and the Czech Republic, to limit the export of medical supplies to other EU members. More importantly, however, the crisis forced the countries to act out of the ordinary, sometimes against European law and the current political practice in the EU. The internal borders were being closed, one by one. Governments were forced to rebuild their own infrastructure and restore border controls. This is how they regained their former powers, self-confidence, and even the courage to disobey, i.e., acting regardless of the EU law in an emergency situation. An example of this was the Italian government, which announced the nationalization of Alitalia, and the French government, which allowed the nationalization of the largest national companies at a time in danger of the economic collapse. It was only later that the European Commission had to adapt to these measures and approve, post factum, the decisions of individual governments regarding state aid in the EU internal market. At a time of reviving national sentiments, the tendency to infringe European law in the name of national interests may continue.

The epidemiological crisis has also increasingly changed the approach to the internal market. Recurrences of coronavirus or other security threats may increase the frequency of periodic closures of external and internal EU borders. Bruno Le Maire, French Minister of the Economy and Finance, announced that dependence on the supply of certain strategic products from

China should be reduced¹. Following the experience of the coronavirus crisis, the economy of the European Union will increase its productive autonomy, especially regarding medical and other crisis-relevant products. Moreover, each Member State will need to be able to have its own industry in areas of strategic importance for national security. This means either supporting national production and research capacities or even setting up state-owned corporations in certain sectors. Greater diversification or decentralization of supply chains in the internal market, i.e., on a regional or even national scale, will also be necessary. The pandemic opens up an opportunity to rethink the integration model and change it towards more flexible governance, thus leaving more room for Member States.

Another consequence of the pandemic may be the loss of faith in integration, even among its greatest supporters. During the crisis, it turned out that EU institutions are passive and look to the national authorities. This was due to the division of competences in healthcare between the EU and its Member States. However, for many of the integration enthusiasts, usually driven by a rather ambitious vision of the EU, Brussels' passivity or ineffectiveness was a disappointment, especially because this scenario is repeated in successive crises. In a survey conducted for the newspaper „Il Giornale”, only 30% of Italians expressed confidence in European integration². Around 70% felt that integration was damaging to them.

¹ D.M. Herszenhorn, S. Wheaton, *How Europe failed the coronavirus test*, “Politico”, 8.04.2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-europe-failed-the-test/> [27.04.2020].

² R. Vivaldelli, *Coronavirus, italiani sempre più delusi dall' Unione europea*, “il Giornale”, <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/coronavirus-italiani-sempre-pi-delusi-dallunione-europea-1850578.html> [27.05.2020].

During the crisis, it turned out that EU institutions are passive and look to the national authorities.

Only 20% of French people considered that the EU's response to the epidemiological crisis was sufficient³.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE GREAT RECESSION

The return of the recession in the monetary union will be yet another blow that will probably hinder European integration. Speculation about the disintegration of the euro area, the introduction of alternative currencies, or the temporary restoration of national currencies in the countries most affected by the crisis, may return. Will these sort of problems lead to reforms towards a transfer union and open the way for federalism to progress in the EU? This is doubtful.

A political signal of this was the May 2020 ruling of the Constitutional Court in Germany. It challenged one of the European Central Bank's (ECB) anti-crisis programs (the so-called *Public Sector Purchase Programme*), launched in 2015 – during the previous euro area crisis⁴. The German court held that the

³ R. Honoré, *SONDAGE EXCLUSIF - La défiance des Français vis-à-vis de l'Europe s'accroît avec la crise du coronavirus*, “Les Echos”, 6.05.2020, <https://www.lesechos.fr/politique-societe/gouvernement/sondage-exclusif-la-defiance-des-francais-vis-a-vis-de-leurope-s'accroît-avec-la-crise-du-coronavirus-1201025> [27.05.2020].

⁴ M. Karnitschnig, *German court lays down EU law. Court rules that European Central Bank's 2015 bond-buying program could be illegal*, “Politico”, 5.05.2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/german-court-lays-down-eu-law/> [27.05.2020].

ECB's purchases of sovereign bonds were too large, unjustified in the light of the principle of proportionality laid down in the Treaty; and they did not give assurance to the German authorities that there was a rational strategy for exiting the excessively high ECB-funded sovereign debt. This was a clear signal that the German authorities would be looking for a legal possibility to limit excessive or permanent fiscal transfers within the monetary union, including those issued on an unlimited period or on a large scale of the joint debt. In this context, maintaining monetary union in its current form may turn out to be extremely difficult.

Already at the beginning of the pandemic, the split between the northern and southern parts of the euro area, known from the crisis that started in 2010, has reappeared. The dispute concerned mainly common debt securities called 'coronabonds'. The more affluent countries, mainly Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and Finland, strongly rejected this form of solidarity with the indebted South. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in an interview with a German news agency that the proposal under discussion was a slogan that the Commission would not pursue⁵. The Dutch Finance Minister was even blunter when he demanded a report explaining why the countries of the South had not prepared a financial cushion for the crisis⁶. This caused bitterness and protests in the South. Voices were heard reminding Germany that they had their debts canceled after the Second World War, and the Italian

Prime Minister suggested that if the EU is useless, then one should think about leaving it⁷. Moreover, the divisions between the countries have spread to the Commission itself, as demonstrated by the public support for coronabonds by the French and Italian Commissioners against the official position of their German leader⁸.

Under these circumstances, Angela Merkel proposed to use ESM loans, which are known for the restrictive conditions imposed on the lender in terms of budgetary savings and structural reforms. The loans for health care spending were supposed to be exempt from these restrictions. Experts considered that the funds from this mechanism (around EUR 500 billion) are still insufficient to save Italy. The support from the monetary policy may also be insufficient, despite the expansion of a project of ECB to purchase bonds from, among others, Southern European countries. In response to the crisis, the ECB announced a new quantitative easing program of 750 billion euros. The biggest challenge, however, was that as early as in the autumn of 2020, the possibility of buying the bonds covered by this policy was expected to be exhausted.

Ursula von der Leyen also announced other measures to reassure politicians in the southern parts of the euro area. It seems that their aim was primarily to put aside the discussion on coronabonds. The President of the Commission announced, among other things, transfers of unused funds from cohesion and agricultural policy and the creation of an instrument providing loans to

⁵ D.M. Herszenhorn, H. von der Burchard, *Von der Leyen brands corona bonds a 'slogan,' setting off firestorm in Italy*, "Politico", 29.03.2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/von-der-leyen-corona-bonds-slogan-firestorm-in-italy/> [27.05.2020].

⁶ D.M. Herszenhorn, S. Wheaton, *How Europe failed the coronavirus test*, op. cit.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ H. von der Burchard, *Breton and Gentiloni's EU bonds proposal receives cool reception*, "Politico", 6.04.2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/breton-vdl-piece-to-update-pro-alert/> [27.04.2020].



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EU members to combat unemployment (SURE). This was to be based on voluntary government guarantees, preferably of EUR 25 billion in total, to generate loans worth around 100 billion. Besides, the European Investment Bank was to provide loans worth around €200 billion. The EU budget was to provide €3 billion to support health systems in EU countries, of which €300 million for the procurement of medical equipment.

This idea started a very emotional discussion in the European Union about the new Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. It was linked to a new instrument called the 'recovery fund', the proposed idea of which was issuing bonds by the European Commission (guaranteed by the Member States or the EU Multiannual Budget). It was a form of communitarization of debt in line with the expectations of

Southern European countries. However, the wealthiest countries in the northern part of the EU tried to limit the scale of financing of this program and its length. Consequently, it allowed for granting such loans from this fund that will sooner or later have to be repaid by the Member States. In this way, they tried to protect themselves from the possibility of introducing solutions similar to the so-called transfer union.

At the EU summit in July 2020, decisions were finally taken on the recovery fund (also known as Next Generation EU). It has been split roughly in half between grants (EUR 390 billion) and loans (EUR 360 billion) to stricken countries. At the same time, strict economic conditionality, i.e. preparation of national recovery and resilience plans were demanded from the countries receiving financial aid. They will be the

basis for introducing the fiscal reforms that the northern states were demanding from the southern states. A mechanism for controlling the implementation of reforms by other countries was also introduced, which may refuse financial transfers if the recipient state does not meet expectations of other members of the EU. This could lead to an escalation of political tension between the rich north and the indebted south. The recovery fund is not dedicated to the euro area, but to all EU countries, but Italy, Spain and France were among its largest beneficiaries. It is a one-off instrument and therefore not a permanent redistribution mechanism to the south of the EU (and the monetary union). The fund will probably not solve the biggest problems of the euro area, which are the huge debt of the southern part of the monetary union, as well as their low economic competitiveness. It certainly does not fulfill the dreams of the politicians of the South of introducing Eurobonds or a transfer union.

EAST-WEST DIVISION

A symptom of Western Europe's observed new approach towards Eastern Europe was the criticism of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. In 2020, he introduced the possibility for his government to issue decrees to react faster to the pandemic. Other governments have also restricted civil liberties, business activities, closed their borders, and entire social activity areas on an unprecedented scale. Experts considered the Orban's decision necessary to defeat the virus and thus the lives of Hungarian citizens. However, thirteen EU countries have warned the Hungarian Prime Minister that the country is restricting democracy, the rule of law, and human rights⁹.

⁹ L. Bayer, *13 countries' deeply concerned' over rule*

The same countries did not react when, even before the emergence of the health crisis, French President Emmanuel Macron introduced socially controversial reforms through decrees and avoided debate in parliament. Not a single country from the eastern part of the EU was among those concerned about Hungary's situation. The only politician from this region who expressed criticism of the government in Budapest was the former Prime Minister of Poland and former President of the European Council Donald Tusk. In a German weekly, he compared Victor Orban to Nazi activists¹⁰. His remarks caused outrage both in Hungary and Poland.

Meanwhile, the EU Court of Justice ruled that Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary violated EU law by refusing to participate in the relocation of refugees between 2015 and 2017¹¹. The ruling was received with satisfaction by most Western European countries, although it treated the Member States unequally as almost all EU members had not fulfilled their obligations in this case. The most interesting example is Germany. In 2015 Angela Merkel allowed the inflow of about one million immigrants to the Schengen area without the consent of other countries, and in violation of EU law. Furthermore, Germany not only failed to fulfill its obligation to relocate refugees from Greece and Italy but also sent many of

of law, "Politico", 1.04.2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-hungary-13-countries-deeply-concerned-over-rule-of-law/> [27.05.2020].

¹⁰ P. Müller, J. Puhl, „Was die Wirtschaft angeht, brauchen wir einen Blitzkrieg“, "Der Spiegel", 16.04.2020, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/donald-tusk-was-die-wirtschaft-angeht-brauchen-wir-einen-blitzkrieg-a-e46f8eb9-426f-4f83-bbfe-6600c18391c5> [27.05.2020].

¹¹ *Judgment in Joined Cases C-715/17, C-718/17 and C-719/17 Commission v Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic*, Court of Justice of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2 April 2020.

those who did not meet the conditions for asylum back to both countries.

Despite all this, only three Central European countries have been placed on the accused stand by the European Commission. Moreover, the relocation mechanism in question is long over, so the issued ruling concerned a non-existent law. Therefore, it was primarily of political significance and was about stigmatizing the countries that blocked one of the proposals of dealing with the immigration crisis. While the countries of Western Europe vetoed other mechanisms, EU institutions were more tolerant. For example, Italy (with the support of Austria) prevented Operation Sophia in 2019 from being carried out in its main scope, namely patrols of European ships in the Mediterranean Sea. The intention was to fight criminal organizations involved in human trafficking but was better known for facilitating the transport of immigrants to Italian ports. That is why Matteo Salvini called the ships participating in this mission “sea-taxis for illegal immigrants”¹².

Both examples show a clear political trend. The West still has not stopped its patronizing treatment of the „new states” from the East. When the countries of Central Europe tried to manifest their distinct positions, they were subjected to various types of warnings and threats – especially financial ones. They were under verbal attack – accused on the EU forum that they did not respect EU values, violated solidarity, and the rule of law. This took place even when the EU changed its policy, for example, concerning

immigrants. Unfortunately, with the intensification of the crisis in Europe, it is expected that similar actions resembling the search for a „scapegoat” guilty of integration problems will be multiplied. These events will only deepen the gap between the western and eastern parts of the EU.

In the first phase of the 2020 crisis, Southern Europe was treated differently from the eastern part of the EU. This dissimilarity was mainly due to rhetoric. The unfortunate statements of politicians from Western Europe were followed by a real cascade of apologies and declarations aimed at alleviating the reactions of the South’s politicians. However, in reality, the South of the euro area could not feel safe. Italy, with its debt forecasted at 180% of GDP at the end of the year, was a threat to the monetary union¹³. Italy was also the target of a geopolitical offensive from Russia and China: countries providing aid to combat the epidemic. The stakes for Western Europe were therefore high. The aim was to preserve the euro area and geopolitical influences in Southern Europe.

The proponent of the region’s interests was Paris, which sought a number of financial concessions from Berlin. However, Germany and other countries described in EU jargon as „frugal” wanted to maintain the cohesion of the euro area – and at the lowest possible cost. All the more so because they organized substantial financial resources for their own use. Compared to the previous economic crisis, however, the countries of southern Europe were more assertive and solidary in showing their expectations.

¹² J. Horowitz, *Salvini’s Standoff at Sea Highlights Italy’s War on Rescue Ships*, “The New York Times”, 16.08.2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/16/world/europe/salvini-italy-migrants-open-arms.html> [27.05.2020].

¹³ W. Münchau, *Italy is in more danger than the eurozone will acknowledge*, “Financial Times”, 19.04.2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8e03cf2e-80bd-11ea-8fdb-7ec06edeef84> [27.05.2020].

They did not allow the wealthy North to suppress their demands on a rhetorical level, by accusing them of a lack of financial discipline or „living beyond their means”. However, there was no indication that the geopolitical and economic crack between North and South in the EU would quickly be overcome.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many conflicts have arisen in the EU, which are hard to conceal behind official calls for European solidarity. The two cracks seem to be particularly pronounced with regard to the EU: the first between the rich North and the indebted South, and the second between the western part of the EU and the new Member States. These conflicts had already existed before, but they re-emerged forcefully and with a high disintegration potential in the first half of 2020.

Jean Monnet believed that the crises were an opportunity to develop integration¹⁴. However, the experience of previous crises at the beginning of the 21st century proves that the transfer of competences to the EU or the formation of new EU institutions has only progressed to a limited extent. Member States blocked a number of postulated reforms both in the euro area and in the case of the immigration crisis. Therefore, the EU turned out to be ineffective, causing frustration among societies. In addition, the unresolved crises accelerated the disintegration process. The belief that during the period of Europeanization, the worry that EU countries would lose their importance was rendered untrue. Societies very quickly began to assemble around their own governments during the crises, or at least require

them to be effective, while at the same time rejecting politicians unable to cope with extraordinary situations. Simultaneously, the willingness to show solidarity with other nations diminished so that there were attempts to improve individual welfare at the expense of politically weaker Member States.

Two answers to the question of the future of integration have emerged on equal footing. The first one calls for a more ambitious type of integration – preferably federal. This is a demand that probably cannot be met, although much depends on what changes are made to the monetary union. Nevertheless, the ambition to build the European state has raised hopes, potentially leading to bitter disappointment and a shift away from European ideas. The second answer is more realistic. It is based on the cooperation of states, as part of which the EU institutions would not force their own policies, but rather support actions taken by EU countries. It is a vision of a European Union supporting national communities and their structures. This vision is an antithesis of centralizing power in Brussels in the hands of technocrats, judges, or the most influential countries. Brussels may limit the powers and potential of individual Member States, but as the crises show, they are the last line of defense in emergencies. Taking into account the possible successive blows potentially falling on the continent, the vision of a subsidiary and flexibly managed Europe appears much more secure in the long-term prospects of integration.

Tomasz Grzegorz Grosse ■
July 2020

¹⁴ J. Monnet, *Memoirs*, London 1978.

A TEENAGE COUNTRY

ROBERT RAJCZYK, PhD

Twelve years ago, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence. The declaration was read in the Parliament by Hashim Thaçi, then Prime Minister, and the Republic's current President. Since the events of 2008, much has changed in Kosovo – not only regarding its head of state but also its citizens. The parliamentary elections of October 2019 marked the first victory for a party whose leaders do not have a background in the Kosovo Liberation Army or in the party of the world's most famous Kosovar leader Ibrahim Rugova.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), founded thirty years ago, and Adem Jashari, considered its first commander, are for Kosovars the essence of a national myth. T-shirts with the image of a bearded man and

the slogan: “*Bac, u krye*” (Uncle, it is done) have become a symbol of an independent state. Jashari himself has a national hero's status in Kosovo – almost as much as Ernesto “Che” Guevara in Cuba. Half of the six KLA brigades came from the Drenica region, home



“KOSOVO JE SRBIJA” – A SLOGAN USED IN SERBIA SINCE 2004

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to the family of Jashari, who lived in Prekaz. His house became something of a museum and enriched the educational excursion itinerary of Kosovar students. The building was reconstructed after the Serbian army had used mortars to fire on the Kosovo Liberation Army's soldiers who were defending themselves for four days in March 1998. In the three-day clashes, Adem, his older brother, and his 13-year-old son were killed. The only survivor from Jashari's closest family was his youngest son, 11-year-old Besart. An examination of Adem Jashieri's body suggested that he committed suicide, and legend has it that he died singing the Albanian anthem. Therefore, in Kosovo, he is treated with the same respect as the fifteenth-century leader Skanderbeg, who proclaimed an independent Albania and united the Albanians. Meanwhile, in 1997 in Serbia, Jashari was sentenced *in absentia* to 20 years in prison on charges of terrorism and the murder of a police officer.

As of today, Adem Jashari is the patron of the international airport in the capital of Kosovo, Pristina, the National Theatre of Kosovo, and the stadium in Mitrovica. There are monuments to him being erected throughout the country, and even beyond its borders – in Tirana (Albania), for example.

It is possible that the new football stadium in Kosovo will also be named after Jashari. The new building will replace the current modernized facility for thirteen thousand seats where Kosovo's national football team plays its matches. This is likely to happen if the leading politicians manage to reach an agreement on the stadium's location. From 2016 to 2018, after Kosovo had been admitted to UEFA and FIFA, qualification matches were played in the Albanian city of Shkodër, being the only stadium in the area meeting the Federation's requirements for this type of sporting event.

The divisions related to the new stadium's location are in line with the political divide in the country. The President of Kosovo is in favor of building it in Pristina. At the same time, the leaders of the opposition party Vetëvendosje (Self-determination) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (the party of the legendary Kosovar leader, who died in 2006, Ibrahim Rugova) want it to be located in Bernica, north of Pristina. This suggestion has also been rejected due to the high cost of the investment. Therefore, it seems that the new facility will likely be built in Drenas/Glogovac, 30 km west of the capital city, conforming to the vision of the former prime minister Ramush Haradinaj. The reasons for such a choice are its convenient location by the highway and easy access from Pristina airport.

The dispute over the new stadium's location is only a small part of Kosovo's political discourse. The main axes of conflict in the country are the influence of international organizations and the USA on political processes in Kosovo and the issue of relations with Serbia. The local political scene has been dominated by political groups originating from the Kosovo Liberation Army (the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, the political leader of which was the current president Hashim Thaçi, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, and the Social Democratic Initiative, NISMA), as well as the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, founded by the most famous Kosovar in the world – Ibrahim Rugova. Interestingly, this politician who is considered the real founding father of sovereign Kosovo did not believe in the KLA's existence until 1997, when its commanders disclosed their identities, and the army started regular guerrilla warfare against the Serbian army. The conflict ended with NATO intervention in 1999, and, as a result, Kosovo was

placed under UN's supervision. However, the authorities in Belgrade never recognized Kosovo's independence, and still officially include it in the Republic of Serbia's administrative territory.

In addition to the block of parties originating from the ULK and the Democratic League of Kosovo, the *Vetëvendosje* (Self-determination) party is also an important actor on the political scene. It is a typical protest party, with its agenda opposing the missions of international organizations of the UN (UNMIK) and the European Union (EULEX). The party also accused the West of supporting politicians blamed for corruption and war crimes. One of them was, among others, the former two-time Kosovar head of government and leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, who twice stood before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and was acquitted both times of his alleged involvement in the murder of a few dozen people in 1998. During the second trial, several dozen potential witnesses to the prosecution lost their lives in difficult circumstances.

Self-determination, also known in the past for its support for the concept of "Greater Albania" – the reunification of all lands inhabited by Albanians – was against negotiations with Serbia under the auspices of the EU. However, in 2013 and 2015 technical agreements were signed to regulate the mutual relations between the two countries regarding the functioning of the Serbian government in the north of Kosovo, electricity supply, the telephone prefix for Kosovo +383 (the country previously used the Monaco prefix and some other prefixes), or traffic across the famous bridge over the Ibar River in Mitrovica (Kosovo), which divides the town into two parts – Serbian and Albanian.

Serbia still does not formally recognize the independence of its neighbor. Kosovo is for the Serbs the cornerstone of their statehood and its symbol, with a similar importance to the one of Gniezno and Jasna Góra in Poland. In 1389, Serbia's knights confronted Turkish troops in Kosovo Field. According to some historians, the Polish knights also fought on the Serbian side, and the course of the battle was, in fact, unresolved, although some sources indicate a Turkish victory. Prince Lazar, who was in command of the Serbian army, died and was almost immediately recognized as a saint by the Orthodox Church. At the same time, Milos Obilić became a symbol of sacrifice in the name of the nation. He was supposed to trick the Sultan Murad I and deprive him of his life while losing his own¹. After his death, this legendary figure – because to this day, there is no evidence of its existence – became a cult object, known even on Mount Athos in Greece, one of the most sacred places of the Orthodox Church in the world.

Kosovo once again took on significance in Serbian politics in 1989, when the then little-known Serbian communist Slobodan Milosevic, just like Prince Lazar (who, according to legend, ascended just after his death), arrived by helicopter to meet local Serbs on the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. The locals complained about the

way the ethnic majority of the province, the Kosovo Albanians, was treating them. During this meeting under Gazimestan, a monument in the shape of a medieval tower commemorating the Battle of Kosovo, the Serbian leader said the famous words of encouragement – that no one would be allowed to beat Kosovar Serbs again. These words gave rise to a serious escalation of the ethnic conflict in the province, which soon lost its autonomous status under an amendment to the constitution, and Kosovo Albanians created an underground parallel state structure led by Ibrahim Rugova.

This resulted in the coexistence of two administrations in Kosovo: the official Serbian administration and the underground Albanian one, the latter of which had practically all the attributes of an independent state – including the armed forces of the KLA. After the UN took over the province, Kosovo's structures came under the authority of UNMIK (United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo), which led to the creation of the Provisional Combined Administrative Structures and then the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, the subsequent nucleus of the state authorities of the Republic of Kosovo. Power was then shared or exercised alternately by the Democratic League of Kosovo and the Democratic Party of Kosovo.

In foreign policy, the previous governments had primarily focused on extending the formal and legal recognition of Kosovo's internationally contested independence, and in domestic policy, mainly on the distribution of international financial aid. However, the young state of Kosovo, with its consolidating administrative structures and political system, has become a playing field for organized crime groups, mainly involved

Serbia still does not formally recognize the independence of its neighbor.

¹ The mausoleum dedicated to Murad I is located near Gazimestan. It is visible from the tower, which now serves as a tourist attraction and a historic site.



THE LARGEST POWER PLANT IN PLEMETINA

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in smuggling, which has also been fostered by the high level of unemployment and the unfavorable structure of the local economy dominated by external subsidies – including financial transfers from the Kosovar diaspora around the world, representing over 10% of the country's GDP. The latter forms of subsidies to the economy of Kosovo have been in place since the time of the underground state. They have served, among other things, as a voluntary tax for the Kosovo Liberation Army. As part of the international aid, non-governmental organizations began to arrive in Kosovo on a massive scale. For some of them, the main purpose of their activities was only to raise money through grants and spend it.

The functioning of the political class, some of which originated from the Kosovo Liberation Army, also leaves

much to be desired. For this reason, some politicians, including even the current president himself, have been accused of war crimes and involvement in arms smuggling, trafficking in stolen cars, oil, and cigarettes, as well as human trafficking and procurement. Another serious problem lies in widespread corruption. The Kosovo political and economic elite's clearance has not been a priority for the parties in power so far. In addition, they have not particularly sought to consolidate the state at institutional and functional levels. Striving to maintain peace and the Balkans' *status quo*, the Western world has focused on supporting efforts to stabilize Serbia-Kosovo relations. Politicians who were willing to compromise with Serbia could count on the positive response of the West. And it was precisely the attitude to

agreements with the Republic of Serbia that was one of the most important topics on the political agenda in Kosovo. Protests against attempts to reach an agreement with a neighbor with the European Union's "patronage" took various forms, ranging from street demonstrations to blocking parliamentary proceedings and spraying tear gas on the parliamentary floor. The protests were mainly conducted by the left-wing nationalist party Self-determination, which also opposed the demarcation of the state border with Montenegro, a condition for obtaining visa-free travel with the Schengen area for Kosovo (in the same way as in the case of the neighboring neighbouring Balkan states). The agreement with Montenegro was negotiated by Hashim Thaçi himself, who was still Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time. Recently, however, as President of the Republic of Kosovo, Thaçi proposed that he and his Serbian counterpart Alexander Vučić should participate in the mutual correction of the two countries' borders. This would consist of exchanging areas in the north of Kosovo inhabited by Serbs for areas in the Preševo Valley in the south of Serbia inhabited by Albanians and incorporating them into Kosovo. The initiative provoked strong controversy both among the people of Kosovo and the international community, which split between supporters of border correction at the price of stability in this region of the Balkans and opponents of demarcation opting to negotiate technical agreements on the matter.

Another problem of the "teenage state" is also the division with its neighbors, Serbia and Montenegro, of national wealth from the times of the federation of the latter two states. The claims mainly concern the ownership of the Trepča mining complex, the Gazivode water reservoir supplying

the hydroelectric power plant and Kosovo Power Station in Obilić, providing nearly 90% of the electricity supply in Kosovo. The World Bank estimates that mineral resources in the region are worth more than €13 billion. In addition, reserves in local mines are likely to last up to 1600 years of exploitation.

The multi-ethnic structure of Kosovo does not facilitate the functioning of the young state either. The country's constitution guarantees all national minorities, especially the Serb minority (the largest of all minorities), seats in parliament and positions within the government, but this does not solve the economic problems of the republic's population of two million citizens. The Serbs and their compatriots – the Gorani people, who are Muslims by faith – make up seven percent of the population, while the Roma, who, in turn, cannot count on the support of the home state, make up one percent, which is almost 20 thousand people. Moreover, they are the ones who, together with the Ashkali (the "Albanized" Roma), most often live in the most challenging social conditions and are therefore assisted by non-governmental organizations. An example of one of the NGO's activities is that in the town of Plementin in the municipality of Obilić, sometimes considered to be the most ecologically degraded place in Europe, after a stay in which some Western NGOs discourage their volunteers from becoming pregnant for a year after returning.

The unstable economic situation is also reflected in the political scene. The average age of the population in Kosovo is 29 years, with every third person in the country unemployed, which strongly affects voter preferences. Slogans for a radical improvement of the social situation gain even more support than demands to combat widespread corruption.

In such an atmosphere, the parliamentary elections in 2019, once again held before the end of the term, were won by the Vetëvendosje (Self-determination) party. Its leader Albin Kurti won the highest number of votes. The party has given up organizing violent street protests and disrupting parliament's proceedings by spraying tear gas. It adopted a social-democratic economic agenda and started to represent the political left². The Self-determination Party also became an advocate for the normalization of relations with its neighbor neighbour Serbia, something the party had previously opposed since it considered the prior attempts to reach an agreement with Serbia as unfavorableunfavourable and concluded under the dictates of international organizations.

Following the October 2019 elections, the process of establishing the cabinet took several months, making it an infamous tradition of Kosovo's politics. The winning Self-determination and the Democratic League of Kosovo could not reach an agreement in particular regarding the appointment of ministers and support for a common candidate in the 2021 presidential elections. Eventually, the number of ministries was reduced to fifteen, and the cabinet's agenda focused on accelerating economic development (economic growth amounts to several percent per year), support for local entrepreneurship, reform of education, health, and the judiciary. The new PM Albin Kurti, however, took vigorous action just after his appointment in early February 2020. The nearly 100%

increase in ministerial salaries adopted by the previous cabinet was withdrawn. A partial lifting of the import tariffs on products from Serbia, also established by the predecessors, was announced. Such high tariffs were introduced after Kosovo's application to join Interpol was rejected. This refusal also resulted in the adoption in mid-December 2018 of amendments to the three laws aimed at transforming the Kosovo Security Force into the army within ten years³.

Nearly two-thirds of people surveyed positively assessed the actions of Prime Minister Kurti's government. However, at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) filed a vote of no confidence against the head of government. The Prime Minister's declarations concerning the fight against corruption in the form of the vetting of the assets of judges and staff members of military forces turned out to be a problem. The bone of contention was also the issue of negotiations with neighboringneighbouring Serbia. Prime Minister Kurti wanted to discuss the situation with Belgrade on an equal footing. The Democratic League of Kosovo, on the other hand, in line with American plans, wanted to reach an agreement with Serbia at the price of territorial exchange in favorfavour of Belgrade. This stance is also supported by the president of Kosovo, who intends to be seen as the main player in Kosovo-Serbian relations in the eyes of the US. Thaçi was supposed to talk to the Serbian president Vučić about the agreement in Washington at the end of June 2020. However, his plane turned back after

² The party was founded in 2004 as a protest movement against the involvement of international organizations in Kosovo. A year before the 2008 Kosovo declaration of independence, a demonstration organized by Self-determination gathered 60,000 participants and was concluded with the police intervention. A 45-year-old Albin Kurti, a former student activist, became the leader of the party.

³ The Kosovo Security Force comprises 2.5 thousand officers holding light weapons who are responsible for, among other things, civil protection tasks. The Kosovo Security Force is multi-ethnic, with 6% of all local Serbs. After its planned transformation into an armed force, its size is to be doubled.



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FALLEN SOLDIERS OF THE UÇK

the prosecutor of the Hague Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office filed an indictment against him. The current President of Kosovo has been accused of being responsible for the crimes committed by soldiers of the Kosovo Liberation Army while he was commander of the KLA in 1999.

Nevertheless, it would seem that the US President's ambition is to bring the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia to an end, which includes border revisions and mutual recognition of the parties. That is why on June 3, 2020, exactly four months after the appointment of Mr. Kurti as Prime Minister, with considerable political support from the USA, the Kosovar Parliament approved the establishment of the government of Avdullah Hoti from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)

in coalition with the previously opposing Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). The government, which has a low reputation in Kosovo's people due to the way its predecessors were removed from power, was endorsed by 61 out of 120 parliamentarians. The *Vetëvendosje* (of the former Prime Minister Kurti) boycotted the vote. Although the current government supports national minorities, Kosovo's most pressing social problem is still the settlement of relations with the Serbian minority. After all, social studies show that one in four Serbs living in the north of the country does not want to visit the Albanian part of Kosovo.

Robert Rajczyk ■
July 2020

GEORGIA IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

MATEUSZ KUBIAK

So far, Georgians are effectively stopping the development of the COVID-19 epidemic, but this does not mean that the situation in the country is under control. The economic impact of the pandemic may prove particularly dangerous for Georgia over time. Especially as the political situation in the country also remains far from stable.

The Georgians have been successful in the fight against COVID-19 – as of August 5, only 1197 infections and 17 deaths were recorded in this country of four million. These results may, of course, be underestimated to some extent by the small number of tests carried out in Georgia, but the fact is that the strategy chosen by the authorities in Tbilisi has also brought the expected effect.

During the first wave of the disease, a state of emergency and a curfew were introduced in the country, borders were closed, selected epidemic outbreaks were isolated (later, the four largest cities were also locked down as a precautionary measure) and for the duration of the Orthodox Easter holidays, the authorities did not hesitate to ban the movement of passenger cars. To this day, despite a stable epidemic situation, most of the flight connections with foreign



**A POLISH PLANE AT THE AIRPORT IN WROCLAW,
WHICH WILL DEPART WITH A LOAD OF
PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR HOSPITALS,
DOCTORS AND NURSES IN ARMENIA AND
GEORGIA, 19 JUNE 2020.**

countries remain suspended. All of this allowed the Georgians to quickly and effectively minimize the direct effects of the pandemic outbreak on their own society, despite the limited laboratory and hospitalization capabilities.

The example of Georgia is presented by selected global media as proof of the possibility of an effective fight against COVID-19, but this is only half the battle. The fact is that the authorities in Tbilisi are already facing further challenges. Therefore, the question is – to what extent will Georgians be affected by the economic and political consequences of the pandemic and to what extent it may destabilize the situation in the country?

THE SPECTER OF RECESSION

Georgia is no exception to the current economic development prospects and a recession is expected there too. Prolonged limitations and restrictions have had a tangible impact on the Georgian economy: numerous service outlets did not open until July, the GDP in the first half of 2020 contracted by 5.8% y/y, whilst a significant increase in the budget deficit and external debt is projected for the whole year. However, there appear to be several factors that will have a particular impact on the scale of economic problems in Georgia. These include, above all, the tremendous importance of the tourism sector, the high degree of dollarization within Georgian society and the widespread issue of excessive debt among the country's citizens.

For many years, Georgia has been consistently developing its tourism sector, seeing visitors as an opportunity for the national economy. The dynamic development of the industry can be best described by numbers. Only between 2016 and 2018 the number of foreign tourists increased by as much as one-third (from about 5.4 to 7.2 million

Despite the limited laboratory and hospitalization capabilities, the Georgians managed to quickly and effectively minimize the direct effects of the pandemic outbreak on their own society.

people). Immediately before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it could be estimated that the broadly understood sector brought Georgians the equivalent of up to 8% of the country's GDP. In this context, it is not difficult to understand how much damage will be caused by the current lack of tourist traffic in Georgia (the drop in July reached 95.8% y/y). These are both huge losses for hotels, restaurateurs, resort owners, but also a whole host of "ordinary" Georgians, who are dependent on what they can earn during the peak summer season for most of the year.

The seriousness of the economic impact on Georgian citizens is further demonstrated by a number of other indicators and data. First of all, a very strong dependence of the Georgian economy on the exchange rate of the national currency – the lari – against the US dollar remains an issue. This year, Georgian currency is the weakest in history, which results in, for example, increased prices of food products (the government has launched a special program for subsidizing food imports) or



GEORGIAN OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS TAKE PART IN ANTI-GOVERNMENT RALLY IN FRONT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA IN TBILISI, GEORGIA, 20 SEPTEMBER 2019.

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difficulties for citizens in paying off their loans (over 50% of the population is in debt, of which just over half of the loans are denominated in dollars). What is more, an overwhelming majority of Georgians declare a lack of savings, which, especially nowadays – in the face of limitations and restrictions in business operations – is of great importance. For the sake of completeness, it is worth adding that as early as in the spring, the Georgian government estimated that at least 350,000 citizens (almost 10% of the country's population) would lose their jobs or take unpaid leave due to COVID-19.

POLITICAL CRISIS

Such a fragile stability of the Georgian economy provides fertile ground for a possible outbreak of protests in the country. Especially when considering that, according to the latest opinion polls before the COVID-19 pandemic (conducted by the National Democratic Institute), the level of social discontent in Georgia was already at a record high. The whole

situation seems to be even more dangerous as Georgia has been in a serious political crisis between the opposition and the government for many months. Moreover, parliamentary election is to be held this fall which could encourage external provocations and attempts to destabilize the country.

Georgian politics plunged into crisis in June 2019, when massive street protests took place in relation to the visit of a Russian delegation to Tbilisi (the Russians took part in the so-called Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy). The wave of social discontent (the demonstrations were not only anti-Russian, but also anti-government in nature) was so widespread that the authorities decided to make concessions to the protesters and the opposition, promising to change the electoral law (the mixed system in force so far, clearly rewarding the ruling party, was to be replaced by a proportional model). Following this decision, the situation in the country calmed down, although as it turned out – only for a few months.

Already in the fall, the ruling party – Georgian Dream, twistedly withdrew from its earlier promise, leading to the rejection of the draft amendments to the electoral law. This triggered a new wave of protests, but also a boycott of parliamentary sittings by the opposition. The political stalemate was overcome only after several months of mediation by American and EU diplomacy. As part of the arrangements made in March 2020, it was agreed to keep the electoral system mixed, but with a significant reduction in the number of single-member constituencies (from 73 to just 30). Moreover, in order to minimize the risk of a disproportionate conversion of votes into parliamentary seats, it was decided to introduce a rule stating that only parties that obtain more than 40 percent of the total votes cast will be able to obtain a parliamentary majority.

Ultimately, the amendments to the electoral law were adopted by the Georgian parliament at the end of June 2020, although it was not clear until the last minute whether it would be possible to secure the 3/4 majority required in the

Georgia has been in a serious political crisis between the opposition and the government for many months.

event of a constitutional amendment. The uncertainty in this respect resulted from a different perception of the provisions of the March agreement by the opposition and the current authorities.

Already in the second half of April 2020, more than 20 opposition parties sent an open letter to Georgia's foreign partners, indicating the need for the authorities to release the "political prisoners": Giorgi Ugulava (former Mayor of Tbilisi under Saakashvili; sentenced by Supreme Court's February verdict to 38 months in jail on charges of financial malversations between 2005 and 2013); Irakli Okruashvili



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GEORGIAN OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS PROTEST IN FRONT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA IN TBILISI, GEORGIA, 27 JUNE 2019.



GEORGIAN OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS PROTEST IN FRONT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA IN TBILISI, GEORGIA, 27 JUNE 2019.

(sentenced in April 2020, to five years' imprisonment for inciting demonstrators to storm the parliament building in June 2019); and Giorgi Rurua (anti-government journalist, arrested in fall 2019 on charges of illegal arms possession). The case received considerable publicity in the US and the European Union, which ultimately led the Georgian President – Salome Zourabichvili, to pardon Ugulava and Okruashvili, although not Rurua, as he was not yet legally convicted. This was still not satisfactory for the majority of the Georgian opposition (the largest opposition parties – European Georgia and the United National Movement – boycotted the final vote on the bill), but it was enough to build the required majority of 113 votes in the parliament. Perhaps the mediation and pressure from

Georgia's western partners were decisive in this respect.

CRUCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE WEST?

The above-mentioned example of the commitment of the USA and the European Union to stabilize the internal political situation in Georgia best shows today how important the support from the West is for the Georgian state. It is not only of an ad hoc, short-term nature (as in the aforementioned case of electoral mediation), but above all it remains calculated for a longer time period. There is no doubt that the prospect of Georgia's further integration into Euro-Atlantic and EU structures is of particular value in terms of the country's stability, being a subject of cross-party consensus. However, will it



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GEORGIA IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

any guarantees on future membership in the North Atlantic Alliance. Right now, in some western capitals, it is not a secret that further enlargement of NATO to the East should not necessarily be seen as desirable.

Secondly, an additional issue for Georgia may be the state in which the European Union will emerge after the current COVID-19 crisis, which is a key point of reference for Tbilisi in terms of development and modernization of the country. A possible further erosion of the European project will also hit Tbilisi's integration with the EU, undermining the image of the West in the eyes of Georgian citizens. It seems that the Georgians are looking for stability, security and prosperity above all in the European Union and the upcoming crisis may contribute to a completely different picture of the situation in Europe. Especially since any crisis within the EU will certainly be actively publicized by Russian propaganda that has been operating in Georgia for many years, both through the media and NGOs, which primarily aims at discrediting the West in the eyes of Georgian citizens.

also remain the same after the COVID-19 pandemic and the looming major economic crisis?

First of all, from Tbilisi's point of view, the main concern should remain the issue of a possible "reset" between the West and Russia, which the leaders in Moscow, but also in selected European countries, may additionally seek. It seems that the impending recession will be used to lobby for lifting sectoral sanctions against Russia and to try unfreezing the mutual relations (such tendencies were becoming more and more visible also shortly prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). If an actual "soft", informal "reset" with Russia were to take place, in practice it would be another significant obstacle for Georgia to obtain

SUMMARY

Overcoming the first wave of COVID-19 by Georgia is a considerable success, but the stability of the country is still under question. The accumulation of challenges – both economic and political – makes the involvement of the West particularly relevant today. The stability of the region and Georgia itself, but also the perception of the European Union among the Georgians in the coming years are at stake here. Paradoxically, the current crisis can also be seen as an opportunity for the EU to strengthen its own position within the Transcaucasia and to significantly increase the scale of its impact at the level of soft power.

Mateusz Kubiak ■
July 2020

THE THIRD CRISIS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

PRZEMYSŁAW ŻURAWSKI VEL GRAJEWSKI, PROFESSOR

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its spread to Europe is the third crisis since 2008, after the Eurozone debt crisis and the migration crisis, which has had a significant impact on the economic, social, and political situation in the European Union, and has posed a challenge to its stability. The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic as a political test to the European Union's cohesion will be presented in this article.

The WHO report of January 25, 2020, informed of the first three cases of COVID-19 disease on our continent. On March 13, the same organization recognized Europe as the “epicenter” of the global pandemic. The scale and terror of the spread of infection varied from country to country.

However, the pandemic affected all EU Member States, what makes this crisis different from the two previous ones.

At different scales and points of time, each country took steps to prevent the pandemic's spread – the side effect of which was freezing their economies.



SWEDISH PM STEFAN LOFVEN (L), AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR SEBASTIAN KURZ (C), AND DANISH PM METTE FREDERIKSEN (R) DURING THE SPECIAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL LEADERS' SUMMIT IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 20 JULY 2020

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Consequently, COVID-19 caused not only human casualties but serious economic problems. What will be analyzed in this article is the response of the European Union to this challenge and the consequential political overload. The sanitary and medical dimension of the EU response to the coronavirus epidemic will not be addressed because the European Union does not have the capacity to respond to public security emergencies per se, not including programs such as the 'RescEU' initiative. This organization was simply not inherently designed for this purpose and, therefore, expecting the effectiveness of its actions in this area is wishful thinking and proof of being attracted to the almost-perfect image of this organization shaped by mainstream EU propaganda.

The area in which the EU really takes functional and tangible action is dealing with the economic consequences of the pandemic. Such actions are likely to be effective, and, what is equally important, no other organization will intervene more efficiently in this matter. This is why this topic is addressed in this article.

We would be interested in answering the following questions about the challenges of the crisis:

What are the proposed ways of facing these challenges? How are the axes of political division between EU member states shaped considering these proposals? What are the interests behind the positions of the opposing parties? Are there any chances of getting out of this situation; what are these chances, and what will be their effect?

The pandemic in Europe started with France, and culminated in Italy, Spain, and the UK – a country that is no longer an EU Member State but is in the transitional period for Brexit.

The text is written in the midst of a dynamically changing negotiating situation involving discussions on the financial support system from the EU budget for the member states' economies. The general subject of debate is the problem of the so-called „coronabonds,” and source of disagreements is their consolidation (whether they should be in the form of easy-access non-reimbursable loans, or loans that are difficult to access, with political control over the recovery programs of borrowers' economies). For this reason, the article presents the state of affairs in the last ten days of May 2020.

STARTING POINT

When the European Union got surprised by the outbreak of the pandemic, the situation of this organization was determined by three fundamental factors: the finalization of the debate on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, the scale of indebtedness of the countries of the South, and the experience of the immigration crisis. The first of them was characterized by the pressure of the so-called “frugal camp” (Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden) aiming at a profound reduction in the scale of the EU budget and cuts in transfers of

funds to poorer countries. This demand resulted from electorate pressure inspired by the rhetoric of anti-system parties – in Germany: Alternative for Germany (AfD), in Finland: The Finns Party, in the Netherlands: The Party for Freedom – PVV, etc.), which criticized the EU as a “transfer union spending the hard-earned money of hard-working Germans (Finns, Dutch, and so on) onto lazy Southerners or the backward, ungrateful, and unreliable poor people of the East”. This stereotype was formed in 2008-2012 in relation to the sovereign debt crisis in the South of the Eurozone, and in Ireland. This created tension between the South (according to this point of view ‘exploited and despised’ or ‘lazy and wasting subsidies’) and the North (‘arrogant and striving for dominance’ or ‘treated like an ATM’).

The atmosphere worsened during the immigration crisis, mostly suffered by the South (like in the previous case). It should be reminded in this context that immigration from Ukraine to Poland – indeed of a different type (legal, easily integrated) but not less numerous, is not taken into account in this narrative. The elections to the European Parliament in 2019 convinced the establishment parties – which, despite their final victory, suffered very serious losses – that ignoring the pressure of the anti-system parties in a situation of economic downturn may lead to the further reduction of their popularity. The marginalization of the French political scene's traditional parties in 2017 and the Italian ones a year later was a dangerous memento.

The postulate to limit financial transfers within the EU has, therefore, a strong political foundation, and every government in the North seeking to renew its electoral mandate in the future must take it into account, whatever the economic sense or nonsense of such a step might be.



ACTIVISTS CALLING FOR A GREEN AND JUST RECOVERY IN FRONT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 17 JULY 2020

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC OUTBREAK AND NATIONAL RESPONSES

The pandemic in Europe started with France, and it culminated in Italy, Spain, and the UK – a country that is no longer an EU Member State but is in the transitional period for Brexit, and, therefore, is still covered by a number of EU policies. The national responses varied over time in their intensity, scale, nature, and results. It should be said, however, is that the number of infected and deceased people does not translate into the scale of the economic impact of a pandemic. On the contrary, a superficial, and let us add straight away, a false logic could lead to the opposite conclusion that those governments that have frozen the economy faster, deeper, and for longer have saved their citizens from an epidemic and deepened its economic impact. It turned out that the sanitary and economic

The EU was late with the political response – it did not warn the Member States.

situation of individual countries is not such a case. The real picture is presented in the chart below, prepared by Prof. Luis Huete, a IESE Business School lecturer. Although it illustrates the situation on a global scale, it can also be interpreted from the European perspective.

FIRST EU REACTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The EU was late with the political response – it did not warn the Member States. Its specialized agency, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), ignored the threat, following the WHO, and



SOLDIERS OF THE ITALIAN 7TH CBRN DEFENSE REGIMENT DEPLOYED TO HEALTH FACILITIES IN LADISPOLI, ITALY, 17 MAY 2020

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did not raise the alarm in time. Therefore, in this initial stage of the pandemic, the countries reacted individually. This resulted in uncoordinated border closures and, in the cases of France and Germany, the requisitioning of equipment and medical supplies necessary to combat the pandemic, and the ban on their export abroad. The latter was quickly withdrawn, but the damage done to mutual relations between the EU member states decreased mutual trust. In fact, the EU single market was actually suspended for medical equipment from 4-15 March by decisions of Paris and Berlin.

Consequently, Italy had the impression of being cut off and abandoned by the other EU member states. For Italy, which experienced frequent and, according to the Italians, hasty border closures by its

neighbors already during the immigration crisis, and whose crucial economic branch is tourism, it was particularly painful.

It was only at the beginning of April that the EU took several key actions to respond to the economic impact of the pandemic. It set up the CRII (Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative) and CRII+ (Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus) programs, basically suspended the EU's ban on state aid, and launched a discussion on how to use the EU budget to finance economic recovery programs following the damage caused by COVID-19. Each of these steps turned out to be a source of further tension between the member states.

THE DIVISION LINES: NORTH – THE FRUGAL CAMP, SOUTH – THE

VICTIMS OF THE PANDEMIC, EAST – THE CAMP OF THE FRIENDS OF COHESION POLICY

The funds used in the CRII and CRII+ programs did not consist of new money from the EU budget, but of redirected money from cohesion funds already allocated between the Member States. Therefore, the rationale behind their distribution was the logic of cohesion policy, not of a response to the coronavirus epidemic. The countries that were allocated the money were allowed to spend it on fighting the economic consequences of the pandemic, and not on objectives defined by regional policy rules. Various restrictions on obtaining these funds have also been removed, such as the need to make a certain percentage of one's own contribution. The decision was taken, and the plan was launched quickly. However, its arrangements caused political tensions, which was most visible in the Dutch Parliament.

With the Netherlands as its most active member, the frugal club managed to achieve its political goal, which was to avoid allocating new sums to both programs. It also introduced a rivalry for EU funds between the “unjustly endowed” and the “disadvantaged” South. Under CRII, the largest amounts were received by Poland, Hungary, and Romania – in absolute terms, and Hungary, Lithuania, and ex aequo Latvia and Slovakia – as a percentage of GDP; and not Italy, Spain, and France, which recorded the highest number of infections and fatalities. The deliberate situation has attracted Italy and Spain to the “frugal club” to such an extent that its objective remains to reduce EU transfers to Central Europe's member states. However, neither Italy nor Spain seems to be interested in cutting cohesion policy budgets, while France, due to its strong farmers' lobby, cannot agree to a reduction in the Common Agricultural Policy budget. The two policies are the

biggest fund transfers of EU funds to the East. Emotions are not a good basis for making economic calculations, but they are part of a natural electoral game. As indicated above, the number of coronavirus victims is not the unit of measurement of economic losses resulting from the pandemic. In attracting the electorate of both the North and the South to support the idea of reducing “excessive” transfers of funds to the East, the slogan of “unfair” distribution of funds to fight the effects of COVID-19 is very useful.

THE PROBLEM OF LIBERALIZATION OF STATE AID RULES TO COMBAT THE EFFECTS OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC – A THREAT TO THE EU SINGLE MARKET

On March 20, the European Commission radically relaxed the restrictions on the rules for granting state aid from member states' budgets to private companies. This was a commonly expected step, making it possible to start any serious fight against the pandemic's economic consequences. The isolation measures introduced by the governments froze the economy and deprived many companies of the opportunity to operate, and thus of income. Leaving them alone would translate into a threat of mass bankruptcies, unemployment, and social rebellion.

However, the rules limiting state aid in the EU that had been in force up to that point were not a whim but had their cause – maintaining fair competition within the European single market. The four European freedoms (free movement of people, goods, services, and money) would not have been possible if the governments of individual member states had been left free to decide on subsidizing with public funds companies owned by their indigenous capital. Strong countries with large budgets, in the absence of customs barriers, import quotas, etc.

within the single market, would, without these bans, always be able to outbid the poorer countries in their subsidies and destroy their businesses to guarantee their monopoly position. The pandemic has not eliminated this problem. The deep liberalization of bans and the simplification of procedures for applying for public funds, which the European Commission agreed to, resulted in both the desired, necessary positive effects, i.e., enabling governments to rescue national economies ruined by the effects of the epidemic, and negative consequences. It placed the wealthiest EU countries in a privileged position, drastically increasing the differences between members of the EU. As long as there were strict restrictions on state aid, at least in theory, Polish, Portuguese, Greek, or Romanian companies competed within the single market with German, French, Dutch, or Scandinavian companies. Once these restrictions have been lifted, this is not even theoretically possible.

There are two ways to solve this problem. The first is to provide more generous support from the recovery fund for poorer countries, and the second is to revise the rules on state aid, taking into account the different financial capacities of Member States. This problem is confirmed by the data on state aid approved by the EC at the end of April 2020 in the EU's individual countries. It amounted to a total of €1.95 trillion. Central European countries outside the Eurozone allocated considerable funds (according to their resources) to fight the pandemic's economic consequences. However, since no one can compete with Germany and France in terms of their budgetary power, the German package represented at the end of April as much as 56% of all EU state aid approved by the EC; the French one accounted for 18%, the Italian one for 11%, and the Belgian one for 3%. Among the other packages of individual

member states, none exceeded 1% of the total EU state aid. The EC's acceptance of this situation entails the risk of creating a tremendous competitive advantage for companies from the richest EU countries over those from poorer countries, the budgets of which do not allow for competition for subsidies with the EU giants, and the destruction of the single market.

THE PROBLEM OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUND AND 'CORONABONDS'

Euroland ministers, who met in an inclusive formula (i.e., with the participation of ministers from EU member states outside the Eurozone), agreed on 7-9 April on initial financial support programmes for member states in the context of the pandemic. However, they only cover financing health care and the fight against unemployment. They did not decide to set up an economic recovery fund, but they promised to do so. One of the subjects of the dispute was the question of the loans provided as part of the fund.

The "frugal camp" demands that the funds made available to those in need be "difficult money." This means that they would be subject to political control by the EU institutions especially in terms of borrowers' economic recovery programs and their implementation. It is also about avoiding the accumulation of expenditure over time, meaning guaranteeing that the money will be paid back. Southern countries (including France), already heavily indebted¹, are calling for the communitarization of "coronavirus debts" – non-reimbursable loans (grants) with easy eligibility conditions.

¹ In the fourth quarter of 2019, just before the outbreak of the epidemic, the debt of Italy amounted to 134.8% of the GDP, the one of France to 98.4% of the GDP, and of Spain to 95.5% of the GDP. *General government gross debt – quarterly*, Eurostat, 23/04/2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/teina230/default/table?lang=en>.



ANGELA MERKEL (R) AND EMMANUEL MACRON (L) DURING THE EU SUMMIT IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 18 JULY 2020.

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On May 19, Germany and France announced a joint project to establish a €500 billion recovery fund. It is politically and economically beneficial for the North and the South, but entirely unacceptable for the East. It is not yet clear what will be the basis for calculating the support provided – the number of COVID-19 victims, economic losses, or a combination of the two. However, the general wealth of a given country (GDP per capita) is not mentioned in this context, and the problem resulting from the liberalization of public aid rules, i.e., the ability of individual national budgets to finance recovery is completely ignored. The loan repayment system is based on the proportionality of a country's contributions to the EU budget. As a result, the poorer countries in the East of

the EU would finance the recovery of the wealthier South, the governments of which reacted less effectively to the challenge of the pandemic, and which suffered greater damage as a result. However, this would satisfy the North's political goals – to reduce or even reverse transfers to the East, reduce their own contributions by partially replacing them with funds from the countries of the East, and gaining support from the South for such a scheme.

CONCLUSIONS

The European chessboard of pandemic and its economic and political consequences continues. Satisfying demands of the North requires discrediting the countries of the East so that they can be “punished” for failing to “comply with EU rules.” Attacks on

Poland and Hungary are, therefore, a logical strategy. That said, the EU budget is decided by the European Council unanimously and the EU Council also unanimously, unless the former also unanimously allows the latter for a majority procedure. Either way, no legally binding decision on the subject can be made without the consent of the East. Politics, however, is not a fair trial. The powers can do much to bend the law.

Aside from the ideological dispute between the progressivist EU mainstream and the conservative governments of Poland and Hungary, but also from the fundamental conflict of financial interests, the problem for the entire EU is even more profound and probably unsolvable. It lies in a rhetorical question: are the first EU economy (German) and the relatively small Dutch, Austrian and Scandinavian economies able to credit the second EU economy (France), the third (Italy) and the fourth (Spain), not knowing whether, when and on what scale the next wave of the pandemic will occur, what will be the consequences, who will be most affected – and if it will be the last one. To be effective, financial aid must be substantial. Using resources on a strategic scale requires the consent of their ‘makers’, i.e., the voters. Germany already knows this, and the ruling of its Constitutional Court has given a clear signal that Berlin will retain control over the spending of money coming from its taxpayers regardless of the decisions of EU institutions. Will this consent be obtained, and in which countries? What political actions will it trigger? Which parties in the North will gather political capital from the disputes surrounding this, and will governments not give in to this pressure? In other words, is the North going to rebel? If the aid is ineffective, the South will fall into a deep economic crisis, which will ultimately also lead to social turmoil and strike at the interests of the North, the voters-taxpayers

of which are forgetting that financial transfers within the EU serve to maintain the European single market. They are compensation for the removal of customs barriers and import quotas and expose weaker economies to the competition with the stronger – and not charity. Their liquidation will eliminate the market for goods and services produced in the North and quickly make the taxpayers from these countries “sacrificing” themselves unemployed. This is not a good scenario for anyone. The same reasoning can also be repeated for the East. The attempt to exploit it by reversing the direction of fund transfers is, in the short term, attractive for the whole Western (both Northern and Southern) political class. However, it will eventually push the East of the EU out of the common market and generate unemployment in the West. This is certainly not a good scenario for anybody either.

The EU is now facing a tremendous challenge. It is fighting its third crisis, while the effects of the two previous ones – both financial and mental (growing mutual mistrust and reluctance to show and not just to declare solidarity) – still overlap, creating negative synergies. Governments are now going through a minefield because electoral politics is not an academic seminar, nor an area for weighing the coldly calculated arguments. The chance that no one will step on a mine and detonate the neighboring mines is low. Nevertheless, this is only part of our reality. The world outside the EU still exists and will continue to show itself – and, most of the times, not in a friendly way. Our life, however, is not the state of nirvana, and the time granted to us to solve our problems is not unlimited.

Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski ■
July 2020

THE AUGUSTÓW ROUNDUP: GENOCIDE IN THE SHADOW OF POTSDAM

SŁAWOMIR MOĆKUN

While Europe had already enjoyed peace for a hundred days after the capitulation of Germany, out in the north-eastern corner of Poland, Soviet soldiers and communist security forces were perpetrating what was to remain Europe's greatest post-war crime right up to Srebrenica in 1995. This systematically planned genocide ran simultaneously to the Big Three conference in the Cecilienhof Palace in Potsdam which was convened to regulate problems connected with the end of the war and organising the post-war world. The fate of people being "reorganised" Stalin-style in north-eastern Poland was not on the Potsdam agenda, and some 2000 victims remain unaccounted for even today. Indeed, there are families of Polish and Lithuanian nationality who continue searching for the graves of their relatives who fell victim in this deliberate act of genocide. Their executioners, however, managed to evade earthly justice.

HISTORY

SOIL DRENCHED IN BLOOD

The residents of the Suwałki, Augustów, Sejny, and Sokółka districts of north-eastern Poland, a densely forested area reaching the river Niemen in the Grodno region forming the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian borderlands of today, had already experienced Soviet occupation in September 1939. At that time, the Red Army had invaded and occupied eastern Poland as Germany's ally, in the implementation of the terms of the Ribbentrop- Molotov Pact of August 1939. Following some fierce clashes in the eastern areas of the Augustów district, (the battles of Sopoćkinie and Kodziowce), the Soviets entered Augustów on 23 September and into Suwałki a day later. The first war crimes in this context were committed then, and they left no illusions as to the way the occupants intended to rule. In the vicinity of Sopoćkinie, Brig. Gen. Józef Konstanty Olszyna-Wilczyński, the commander of Region no. III in Grodno was arrested and murdered. Behind the Soviet soldiers came operational-chekha groupings. Soviet forces remained in the Suwałki region and the northern part of the Augustów district for two weeks before the new German-Soviet frontier was finally agreed on the strength of their treaty of friendship – signed in Moscow on 28 September. Further to that treaty, the course of the frontier was rectified, and these territories were incorporated into the Third Reich. Augustów, together with the remaining part of the district, was added to the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. The meetings of the Soviet-German frontier demarcation commissioners, as indeed the ceremony itself of handing over Suwałki to the Germans, left no doubt that there were two occupants acting in concert.

Mass deportations of residents to Siberia had already begun in Soviet-held territories in the winter of 1940/41. The last – fourth great wave of deportations



MONUMENT TO THE VICTIMS OF THE 1945 AUGUSTÓW ROUNDUP, COMMEMORATING OVER 530 VICTIMS OF THE NKVD. GIBY, PODLASKIE PROVINCE, POLAND, JULY 2017.

– occurred in April 1941, just before the Third Reich decided to attack its ally. Whole families were deported – professional soldiers, police officers, middle and lower-ranking civil servants, forestry and railway officials, teachers, and social activists – that is, people regarded as capable of running a state. The German occupation was no less severe; from the start, it was also characterized by terror and arrests, with executions and mass-scale evictions being the day's sombre order. In spite of any counter-measures that may have been taken, the pro-independence partisan resistance movement survived, standing in defence of the local population terrorized by both



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Germans and Russians. In mid-1944, about 5000 people were engaged in the Home Army's underground resistance activities in the Augustów and Suwałki regions.

SUCCESSIVE OCCUPATION

The Soviet army that re-entered these territories towards the end of 1944 was no liberator. One occupant was replaced by another, familiar to the residents of these areas not just from September 1939, but from the time of the partitions and the January Uprising of 1863. The installation of the communist authorities was accompanied by arrests, plunder, and rape. A particular slackening in discipline in

the Red Army moving across Poland was noticeable after Berlin's capitulation.

Cooperation with Soviet partisans and the Red Army was tantamount to blowing the cover of Home Army partisans. This lesson was already learnt in the Wilno region where, under the guise of talks on collaboration, the Soviets disarmed the detachment of 2nd Lt. Antoni Burzyński ("Kmicic") in August 1943, and executed nearly a hundred Home Army soldiers. Upon the liberation of the city of Wilno itself from the Germans, an operation in which Soviet and Polish forces cooperated, the commander of the Wilno District Home Army, Lt. Col.

Aleksander Krzyżanowski (“Wilk”) was trapped similarly, and this was followed by the arrest of about 8,000 Home Army soldiers. Several thousand members of the Polish underground resistance were killed. Similar acts of Soviet duplicity occurred in all regions of Soviet-occupied Poland. It was no different in the districts of Augustów and Suwałki, where, in late 1944 / early 1945, about a thousand people were arrested. The scale of restraints made the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army decide to dissolve the organisation in January 1945. That did not put an end to the repressions – in February 1945, under the pretence of negotiations, sixteen leaders of the Polish Underground State were abducted to Moscow. Thousands of Home Army soldiers found themselves held in NKVD camps.

A new organisation – the Citizens’ Home Army (AKO), based on new command structures, arose in the province of Białystok. Counting nearly 30,000 members, this organisation conducted active combat operations, successfully clashing with Polish communist and Soviet security operational groups, which remained on these territories after the Berlin-bound Soviet forces passed through. The AKO effectively hemmed in communist power in the biggest district towns. In spring 1945, the communists knew perfectly well that it was not they who controlled the territories surrounding the sprawling Augustów Forest areas. Reports on the helplessness of the Public Safety Offices were reaching high ranking Soviet military leaders, in this the members of the War Council of the 3rd Belarusian Front. The activities and successes of the partisans were so great that reports of 8,000 partisans, equipped in artillery and ten tanks operating in the area, landed on the desk of the People’s Commissar of Defence, Gen. Nicolai Bulganin. Indeed, in the Suwałki District, about 1,500 people were engaged

in underground resistance activities, and in the Augustów District, the figure was over five hundred. Similar figures were quoted in the reports of district Public Safety (UB) offices in Augustów and Suwałki. Exaggerated data on AKO numbers and armaments influenced the most important Soviet decision-makers on the scale of the roundup, and possibly on what to do with the partisans arrested in its course. Talks on how to smash the partisan movement were held on 16 May during a conference of representatives of the Białystok provincial authorities and the Soviet security forces. Decisions on the pacification of the Augustów Forest areas and contiguous areas by Soviet forces, however, must have been taken at an even higher level. Indeed, publicly known documents show that what was to be called the Augustów Roundup, was ordered by Joseph Stalin himself.

The Soviets also had control over the lowest rungs of the public safety authorities. The district UB office leaders in Augustów – ensign Aleksander Kuczyński and his deputy Ryszard Caban – and in Suwałki – sergeant Zygmunt Mossakowski could always depend on Soviet backing. As elsewhere throughout the country, Soviet advisors watched over the workings of the security apparatus. In Augustów there was Maj. Vasilenko and Corporal Poltoratsky, who were effective of higher rank than their Polish comrades.

SAFE JOURNEY FOR STALIN

Being hyper-sensitive on the question of his safety, Joseph Stalin avoided air travel. Hence, his route to the Potsdam conference (17 July – 2 August 1945) was to take the safest course – bypassing Warsaw, and via East Prussia. The biggest threat to the armoured train by which Stalin usually travelled was the Augustów Forest. In the end, the route finally chosen was 200 kilometres away from the forests under partisan control. According to

numerous historians, Stalin's safety was precisely the safety of his way to the Big Three conference, which was the main factor determining the scale and course of the Roundup. Unprecedented security measures were adopted on the occasion with over ten thousand NKVD men delegated to protect Stalin's railway route. What is significant is that an important route from Germany and former East Prussia ran across the Suwałki region; this route was used not only by Soviet soldiers returning from the West, but also to transport the property they plundered. One of the documented theories is that there was an idea to link the new Russian acquisition, nowadays known as the Kaliningrad Region with Belarus, which required the annexation of part of the Suwałki region. A less radical hypothesis is that in the event of the need to pacify the anti-Soviet insurgency in Poland, the line would provide an obstruction-free corridor for transporting troops from Minsk to Kaliningrad (Königsberg).

ROUNDUP

In mid-May, the Soviets already commenced concentrating their forces in the vicinity of the Curzon Line. Towards the end of the month, they began operations to establish full control of the municipalities in the border region. They reconnoitred the partisan organisational structures. On 27 June, Soviet forces, with the support of Polish communist militia and public safety officers, cleared the forests in the border regions, notably in Giby, Sejny, and Sztabin of the partisans. Subsequently, this operation was to be called "the small roundup." Over a hundred people were apprehended, scores of whom were arrested as members of the underground resistance movement.

That, however, was merely a prelude to the main operation a fortnight later. About 45,000 soldiers were to take part in it. The actual operations in clearing the Augustów

Forest and its contiguous territories from anti-communist partisans was carried out by detachments of the 50th Army of the 3rd Belarussian Front, two rifle divisions of the 48th Army, units of the 62nd Division of the Interior Troops of the NKVD, and two companies (160 soldiers) of the 1st Praski Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lt. Maximilian Sznepf. The local Public Safety Offices and their networks of agents were also engaged in this operation. The whole operation was commanded by Maj. Gen. Nicolai Garnich. The "Polish" units were also subordinated to him.

Combing the forests and villages in search of pro-independence partisans and their supporters commenced on 12 July, and continued for over a week. In the Augustów district, a curfew prohibiting travel between 21.00 and 8.00 was imposed. Roadblocks and checkpoints were set up, and a number of field fortifications were built to thwart any attempts to break out of the forests, chiefly in the south-easterly direction.

Soviet detachments surrounded villages, searching them house by house. Forests were combed by lines of soldiers spread out no more than a couple of metres apart. In strategic points, permanent blockades were set up so that no one, including anyone who managed to hide and evade immediate capture, could not leave the roundup area. Certain places were combed repeatedly. Those arrested were handed over to a separate formation, which verified their identity and did personal searches. The Soviets also allocated support units composed of armoured and artillery detachments. Apart from "the catch" in the Roundup proper, separate arrests were made in Suwałki and the municipality of Wiżajny. Children and elderly people, men in their prime, and even pregnant women, were arrested. In the absence of a father hiding, they would take his teenage son or some other



COMMEMORATION OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AUGUSTÓW ROUNDUP – THE BIGGEST CRIME IN POST-WAR POLAND AT THE CROSS IN GIBY, WHICH IS A SYMBOLIC GRAVE OF THE VICTIMS.

© MICHAŁ KOŚC/REPORTER

unfortunate hostage. Those arrested were placed in about fifty temporary filtering camps, usually in private buildings selected as best suited to keep and interrogate prisoners.

Over a hundred places in an area of about 35,000 square kilometres were searched. In houses, during field work, in the forests or on the roads, 7,049 people were held over the week, who were handed over to Smersh officers. They separated 1,685 Lithuanians from this total, which included Polish partisans who, after the pacification of the Wilno region, found shelter in the Augustów Forest. Some Lithuanians were handed over to the NKVD forces of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic with 252 designated for liquidation, and 262 remanded for further investigation.

News of this large-scale operation quickly spread throughout the forest. In all probability, people could be accused of belonging to or collaborating with the

anti-communist resistance movement, insofar as was possible, trying to hide. Some of the surrounded partisans, knowing the fate of their comrades from the Wilno region, preferred to die with arms in hand in the unequal struggle against hundreds of well-armed soldiers. Already on the first day of the roundup, about 7,000 NKVD soldiers managed to surround the AKO detachments of the Augustów District of Sergeant Władysław Stefanowski (“Grom”) which were encamped by lake Brożane, and of 2nd Lieutenant Józef Sulżyński (“Brzoza”) of the Suwałki District. About 170 partisans fought for five days, and upon running out of ammunition and food, tried to break through the tightening Soviet noose. Being under relentless machine-gun fire and mortar bombardment, about seventy partisans died in this fight. Fifty-seven soldiers were taken prisoner. The Soviets took them by trucks on the Belarusian frontier direction where all further trace of them disappeared.

Pigsties, barns, dugouts, and all manner of outbuildings served as temporary prisons. Soviet-style interrogations with beatings and torture were held most often in the cellars of private houses requisitioned earlier. Local villagers could easily imagine the suffering these victims were put to – based on both the terrifying sounds coming from these places, and the traces of blood left there. Floors and walls were red with blood. A large proportion of those arrested, who were accused of collaborating with the anti-communist underground, subsequently found themselves in the cells of the district Public Safety Office in Augustów. Others were held at the District Public Safety Office in Suwałki, likewise guarded by Soviet soldiers for the time of the roundup.

A similar pacification operation was carried out by the Red Army with the support of the NKVD in the Mariampol district in Lithuania in August 1945. For several consecutive months, Red Army soldiers were responsible for protecting the border with the right of entering Polish territory up to a depth of 30 kilometres in hot pursuit.

Similar operations, but on a smaller scale, were also conducted in the forthcoming weeks, with the arrest, among others, of Ludwik Wysocki and his two daughters – Kazimiera and Aniela – in Biała Woda on 28 July. The Roundup was also carried out in the municipality of Filipów, in the vicinity of Suwałki, Jeleniew, Sejny, Giby and Kopciew, as well as in forests on the Belarusian side of the border. The Soviet command controlled the roundup from start to finish denying the Polish authorities information on the results of the whole campaign.

LIQUIDATION

On 20 July 1945, a special group of officers led by Maj. Gen. Ivan Gorgonov, the deputy Commander-in-Chief of Smersh

(the Military Counterintelligence High Command of the Peoples' Commissariat, of Defence of the USSR), arrived in Olecko from Moscow. This group was supported by Gen. Pavel Zielenin, Smersh counterintelligence chief of the 3rd Belarusian Front. Olecko, about 30 kilometres north of Suwałki in what was East Prussia, thus in an area still controlled by the USSR, that constituted an excellent base for sorties into the Suwałki region which was held by the AKO.

We know that 7,049 people were arrested from the document published in 2011 by the Russian historian Nikita Pietrov. We are speaking here of the telegram dated 24 July from Victor Abakunov, the Smersh commander to Lavrentiy Beria, the Peoples' Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR. In this document, Gen. Abakumov requested permission to "liquidate the bandits arrested in the Augustów Forest", giving the number of 592 people. He also informed that a further 828 people were being vetted. In turn the report of the 50th Army command quotes the total figure of 5,169 people under arrest. For the second time, the number of 592 "bandits" was quoted as earmarked for extermination in five days.

Thus, at least 592 people were selected for extermination, which should be added over 800 people "still being vetted", and all those arrested after 24 July. The final figures for the Roundup victims should be increased by the soldiers who fell in battle at Lake Brożane and those who died in individual skirmishes not wanting to lay down their arms and fall into enemy hands. Members of the anti-communist resistance movement in the Lithuanian and Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republics constituted further victims. The number of victims of the Roundup thus reaches about 2000. Stefan Chęłmiński of the Polish Red Cross managed to establish over 1130

names of missing people in the 1950s. This figure is incomplete because, after the intervention of the Public Safety Services, he was forced to cut short his inquiries into the issue.

Both Gen. Abakumov in his telegram mentioned above, and the 50th Army command in its report to the War Council of the 3 Belarusian Front, denied the exaggerated figures regarding AKO strength in terms of numbers and possession of artillery. Both sources estimated that “*there were about seven detachments jointly counting 300–400 active bandits*” operating in the Augustów Forest region.

Neither those arrested nor their nearest ones, expected their release from communist hands. They expected that the same fate awaited them as those who were deported to Siberia during the war. Those earlier deportees were frequently able to correspond with their people back home, and some of them even managed to return home. What happened in places like Katyń and Kuropaty, or the murder of those kept in prisons in western Belarus in 1941, was not common knowledge at the time.

Those arrested were taken away in trucks. According to witnesses, the prisoners kept at the Public Safety Office in Augustów were taken in Grodno’s direction. After several hours those same trucks would return for fresh consignments of prisoners. Those arrested in the Giby region were also taken in the course of the Belarusian frontier. It seems that, to the very end, those prisoners were convinced that, like in the first years of the war, they were being taken to mass assembly points from which they would be taken to Siberia or Central Asia. They most probably found themselves tightly surrounded by Smersh soldiers in forest clearings on the Belarusian side of the border, where they were executed with a Katyn-style

shot to the back of the head. Their bodies were thrown into mass graves. This operation was carried out professionally, as can be seen from the fact that despite interminable searches and investigations, we can still merely guess at the details of their fate. The above-mentioned Soviet report reassured: “*The Smersh battalion already tried and tested by us in numerous counter-intelligence operations, will carry out the executions.*”

Despite further pacification operations, the anti-communist resistance movement in the Suwałki region continued, albeit on a restricted scale, right up to 1952.

“BANDIT” FAMILIES

Families were never officially informed about the arrests of their nearest and dearest, and no proof of their guilt was ever produced. The arrest of a family member was only the beginning of the suffering of the whole family. The initial ability to supply food and personal effects to those arrested and exchange secret correspondence with them, was soon replaced by complete isolation and silence. Parents waited for news of their children, wives for news of their husbands, fiancées watched out for their sweethearts. Successive months passed by without communication, and this did not bode well. Soon it became clear that searching for children, parents, husbands would become a lifelong mission. “*It would have been better if he had died from German hands. Death at the hands of the Russians was something unspeakable*” – the families of victims would say to each other.

The victims of the Roundup were murdered without court sentences, even without theatrical show trials. The missing individuals were husbands, children, frequently the only family bread-winners. This caused legal problems – were widows indeed widows and were the children orphans? Especially in

post-war conditions, it was difficult to survive without a family, a man running a household, without social benefit or family supplement. After all, no death certificates were issued. The authorities sought to cover up the Roundup and all surrounding facts with a veil of silence, which had insuperable legal repercussions.

The memory of those missing individuals became a liability. The families of the victims were subjected to invigilation by the communist authorities. Careers were impeded; children had restricted opportunities for gaining a good education. The communist regime could not afford to let the truth come out. As the fate of the officers murdered in Katyn, the Augustów Roundup was not a subject that could be aired in public. The authorities let it be clearly understood that any activity in establishing the fate of those who disappeared was not just fruitless. Still, it would also rebound to the detriment of entire families making ill-advised inquiries. The memory of the victims was, therefore preserved in the privacy of homes. Indeed, the youngest household members were often brought up ignorant of the facts so as not to burden them with problems. But the pain, though hidden, remained no less excruciating.

The situation was all the more galling as secret informers and infamous interrogators were climbing high in their careers. Polish communists and agents, and ordinary local villagers, were engaged in selecting suspects for arrest and investigation. The identities of these collaborators were known to the families of those arrested. One such traitor was Mirosław Milewski who, during the Roundup, was a dedicated worker of the District Public Safety Office in Augustów. He subsequently held supervisory posts in the Polish Peoples' Republic's public security organs, climbing to the post of secretary of the Central Committee of the

Polish United Workers' Party during the martial law period in the 1980s. In turn, Jan Szostak, identifying the persons to be arrested during the Augustów Roundup for the NKVD, continued his career in the security apparatus and, in the process, acquired the nickname "the Augustów executioner" among the local inhabitants. He also presided over the Urban National Council. Still, although he adopted the guise of a mild peasant sculptor in the final years of his life, he was unable to shake off his bloody reputation right down to the end of his days.

CONDEMNED TO OBLIVION?

The residents of Giby made their first appeals to the authorities on behalf of over a hundred people taken from their community way back in November 1945. A municipal delegation went to the then head of state Bolesław Bierut, appealing for their release or the acceleration of court procedures. Of course, such appeals could meet with nothing other than a stonewalling response from the powers that be. Likewise, with other interventions were addressed to all rungs of authority, from district and provincial levels, to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and the Polish Embassy in Moscow. Appeals were also made to the Red Cross section in Warsaw and its international office in Geneva. Many families also undertook searches on their initiatives.

In communist Poland, the fact of the Roundup having ever occurred was never officially admitted. Only towards the end of the 1980s, together with the slow collapse of communism, could the families loudly demand the truth to be told. In 1987, a *Citizens Committee of Search for Residents of Suwalki Who Disappeared in July 1945* was called into being. The *Association of Remembrance of Victims of the Augustów Roundup of 1945* is also active. In 1992, an investigation was undertaken by the prosecutors

in Suwałki. However, it was quickly suspended due to the lack of materials. They managed to gain confirmation from the Main Military Prosecutors Office of the Russian Federation as to the “*arrest during the roundup by Smersh units of the 3rd Belarusian Front of a group of 592 people who supported the anti-Soviet Home Army.*” The Russians also informed that no charges were laid against those detained and that their cases had not been tried in courts. According to the Russians, the subsequent fate of those arrested was unknown. In 2003, the Russians announced that they have no documents that would confirm the execution of partisans in the Augustów Forest in 1945. All that was confirmed in the correspondence was that the 62nd Division of the Internal Forces of the NKVD had operated in the Suwałki region, but without its combat logbooks being appended. Consecutive further requests of the Polish prosecutors and the Institute of National Remembrance in 2006, 2009, and 2011 remained without response. The Russian side hid behind the argument that the case was time-barred and could not be prosecuted, or that no new documents pertaining to this case were available. This was an obvious lie since simultaneously they refused to issue to the Polish side the already mentioned documents published by prof. Nikita Pietrov, in 2011. In parallel, the Memorial Association published deciphered reports concerning arrested “bandits” addressed to Lavretiy Beria. The FSB’s responses to the requests of the families of victims giving dates and places of arrest were some breakthrough. However, its letters state curtly that “*the documentary archival materials do not speak of the charges brought, the sentences handed down, their rehabilitation or their further fate*”.

Despite the efforts that have been undertaken, the graves of the Roundup victims have still not been found. Some

hopes sprang up with the discovery of mass graves in the vicinity of Giby. However, the exhumations that were carried out showed that they were German soldiers buried there during the war.

Contemporary researchers tend to subscribe to one of three theories. According to one of them, the mass-murder was carried out in the Romincka Forest, which, today, lies within the boundaries of the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. In turn, the Russian historian prof. Natalia Lebedieva believes that the Poles could have been taken to a secret camp where they were subjected to chemical or biological weapons experiments.

However, the most probable theory seems to be that they were killed immediately upon crossing the Curzon Line. On the basis of witness accounts regarding the direction and frequency of the expedited transports and satellite photographs, historians and prosecutors have managed to identify probable mass grave sites of the Roundup victims in Kalety near Grodno the edge of the Augustów Forest. Unfortunately, the Polish prosecutors’ requests in 2014 and 2016 for legal assistance addressed to the Belarusian authorities were turned down by Minsk.

Every year, on the second Sunday of July, in Giby, the families of those rounded up in 1945 meet at a symbolic grave. These occasions are accompanied by prayers and even words of forgiveness, as well as tears of helplessness. Despite decades of concentrated effort, it is still impossible to say a prayer and light a candle on the grave of a husband, daughter, or grandfather. “*How many more such Sundays must pass?*” they ask.

Sławomir Moćkun ■
July 2020

THE LIBERATION OF THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMP IN HOLÝŠOV, CZECH REPUBLIC, BY THE POLISH ARMED FORCES

KAROL WOŁEK

The Holy Cross Brigade, a tactical unit of the Polish National Armed Forces, was the sole partisan formation during World War II to have liberated a German concentration camp and then to have merged with General George Patton's U.S. Army. Polish troops rescued 1,000 women imprisoned in a German concentration camp and liberated roughly 6,000 other enslaved persons.



PROSECUTOR OF THE HOLY CROSS BRIGADE (BRYGADA ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKA) OF THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES (NSZ) – LIEUTENANT MIECZYŚLAW NOWACKI, PSEUDONYM “JÓZEF” AND AN OFFICER FOR SPECIAL ORDERS – LIEUTENANT JERZY SKĄPSKI (ON HIS UNIFORM HE HAS A STRIPE OF THE 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION “INDIANHEAD” OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY). CZECH REPUBLIC, MAY 1945.

Each year since 2015, on May 5, the Association of National Armed Forces and the Casimir the Great Foundation jointly hold an international event to commemorate the liberation of the German concentration camp by the Polish Armed Forces. In 2018, a memorial plaque was officially presented to the public on the wall of the former German concentration camp in Holýšov. Its inscription reads: *“Here, on May 5, 1945, Polish troops of the Holy Cross Brigade of the National Armed Forces liberated 1,000 female prisoners in the German concentration camp in Holýšov. Polish soldiers saved 280 Jewish women from being burned alive by SS forces”.*

As World War II ended throughout Europe, Poland did not win freedom nor did it stop fighting. In the aftermath of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact that greenlighted the Soviet Union to invade Poland, the Red Army attacked Poland. The Soviets did not shift their attitude towards Poles and their independence aspirations. NKVD units searched for Poles who fought for independence, and once they found anyone, they had them arrested, interrogated, murdered, and sent to camps throughout Siberia. As Soviets sought to permanently occupy Polish territory, they executed Poles in mass genocides whilst after the end of World War II, they set up nearly 200 concentration camps to incarcerate

those who struggled for liberty. The Holy Cross Brigade, as a unit of the Polish Underground State, retreated westwards as the Red Army marched from the East to save its soldiers; otherwise, they would have surely fallen victim to the Soviets. Thus Colonel Antoni Szacki, the commander of the unit, ordered his troops to temporarily cease any combat against the Germans whilst the Holy Cross Brigade moved through Silesia, the Sudetes, and the Czech Republic before arriving near the town of Plzeň.

LIBERATION OF THE GERMAN CAMP

The Holy Cross Brigade sent a patrol through the U.S.-German front line and established a radio contact with the U.S. Army that stayed back then at the rear of the German front line. Right after getting in contact with the Third United States Army, commanded by General George Patton, Polish troops reopened a military offensive against the Germans.

On May 5, 1945, the Holy Cross Brigade freed the Holleischen concentration camp, a subcamp of the KL Flossenbürg, in Holýšov outside Pilsen. Back then, the camp hosted female inmates from a

As World War II ended throughout Europe, Poland did not win freedom nor did it stop fighting.

number of European countries. Polish soldiers freed a group of 1,000 women, among whom were 400 French, 280 Jewish, 167 Poles, as well as female prisoners from Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Romania, Yugoslavia, Italy, Ukraine, and Russia.

The SS camp staff intended to kill 280 female inmates of Jewish origin before the U.S. Army would access the camp. In this, they were to execute an order from Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler to murder all Jews before the Allies would free Nazi concentration camps. The Germans detached the Jewish women from other female inmates; they locked



FEMALE PRISONERS LIBERATED BY THE HOLY CROSS MOUNTAINS BRIGADE (BRYGADA ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKA) OF THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES (NSZ) FROM THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMP IN HOLÝŠOV IN FRONT OF THE GATE TO THIS CAMP. HOLÝŠOV, CZECH REPUBLIC, 5 MAY 1945.



SOLDIERS OF THE HOLY CROSS MOUNTAINS BRIGADE (BRYGADA ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKA) OF THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES (NSZ) IN GUARD COMPANIES ATTACHED TO THE AMERICAN ARMY. CIRCA 1946.

them in a separate barrack with both the doors and windows boarded up. The Nazi camp staff put highly flammable materials by the barracks whilst waiting for an order to set it on fire to burn these women alive. With its precise attack, the Holy Cross Brigade of the National Armed Forces freed all inmates yet two of its soldiers were left wounded.

In addition to its thriving endeavor to liberate the Nazi concentration camp in Holýšov, the Brigade freed roughly 6,000 foreign forced laborers whom the Germans forced into slave labor in their industrial plants outside Holýšov.

Poland's National Armed Forces troops defeated German military units in the Czech Republic, too — they once seized the staff of a German corps containing a group of Wehrmacht senior officers before handing them over to the U.S. Army. Also, they pulled off ambushes that the Germans would lay against U.S. Army patrols. The U.S. Army fused the Holy Cross Brigade into the 2nd Infantry Division; the

Americans allowed Polish soldiers to wear the distinctive Indian Head patch on their uniforms. Right after World War II, as a token of their gratitude toward the Holy Cross Brigade, the Americans ignored Stalin's request to return Polish troops in a move that saved their lives.

The Soviets accused the Holy Cross Brigade commander, Colonel Antoni Szacki ('Bohun') of allegedly being in cahoots with the Germans, and they brought him to the international court for crimes against humanity in Paris, France. Yet as shown at the trial, the Soviets had submitted a raft of bogus papers. Former Jewish inmates released by the Holy Cross Brigade voluntarily testified in favor of Colonel Szacki and his brigade. The court eventually dropped the communist accusations as ungrounded.

POLISH GUARD COMPANIES AND THE OGNI/WO SOCIAL GROUP

Long after the end of World War II, Holy Cross Brigade troops were still keen to serve Poland and fight for its independence.

THE LIBERATION OF THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMP IN HOLÝŠOV,
CZECH REPUBLIC, BY THE POLISH ARMED FORCES



A MEETING OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS FROM GENERAL GEORGE PATTON'S 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION OF THE US ARMY AND SOLDIERS OF THE HOLY CROSS MOUNTAINS BRIGADE (BRYGADA ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKA) OF THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES (NSZ). NEAR PILSEN, CZECH REPUBLIC, MAY 1945.

Once disbanded in the U.S. zone of occupation in Germany, former Brigade troops became part of the Polish Guard Companies of the United States Army. Back then, they numbered a total of 5,000 Polish soldiers, with both their officers and non-commissioned officers having in the past served in the Holy Cross Brigade. The U.S. Army was in search of trustworthy people to hedge strategic facilities against both diversionary and sabotage missions in occupied Germany.

Shortly after the dissolution of the Polish Guard Companies of the United States Army, former Holy Cross Brigade troops moved to France under the deal between the French government and General Władysław Anders, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces. They settled near Lyon where French officials offered both shelter and employment to 5,000 Polish soldiers. During the week, Poles earned for living whilst at weekends, they took part in military drills on French proving grounds. Polish troops wanted to

be fit for any possible outbreak of World War III to free Poland from the Soviet occupation.

Officers of the Holy Cross Brigade brought to life *Ogniwo* ("Link"), a social group whose mission was to bring together former soldiers of the Holy Cross Brigade and those of the Polish Guard Companies. Its core aim was to sustain ties abroad, hold joint meetings, celebrate Polish holidays, and undertake cultural initiatives. Furthermore, it printed a Polish-language newspaper *Ogniwo*. With its tasks, the group sought to maintain bonds and promote zeal to serve Poland.

By the 1970s, National Armed Forces troops practiced regularly to keep their military efficiency and took parachute courses to get ready in case of the outbreak of World War III. Had only this occurred, Holy Cross Brigade troops would have led Polish partisan units in the fight against the Soviet occupier. All in all, the Cold War did not morph into an all-out conflict whilst



A MILITARY PARADE OF SOLDIERS FROM THE HOLY CROSS MOUNTAINS BRIGADE (BRYGADA ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKA) OF THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES (NSZ) AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II. THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN BY THE CHAPLAIN OF THE BRIGADE – FATHER FRANCISZEK BŁAŻ, PSEUDONYM “WIKTOR MRÓZ.” VŠEKARY, CZECH REPUBLIC, 14 MAY 1945.

The liberation of the German concentration camp in Holýšov by Polish soldiers was an exceptional event in the World War II's timeline. It was the only time in history that Poles — and a partisan formation — liberated a Nazi concentration camp.

many died in exile before Poland eventually reclaimed independence.

The liberation of the German concentration camp in Holýšov by Polish soldiers was an exceptional history in the World War II timeline. It was the only time in history that Poles — and a partisan formation — freed a Nazi concentration camp. This embodies the stance of Polish society and the Polish Underground State to the Holocaust and German concentration camps. The Brigade's heroic feat upholds the good name of both ancestors of Polish citizens and still-living Poles against and erroneous accusations of Poland's presumed complicity in the Holocaust. The mere fact that, despite an overwhelmingly difficult situation, Poles freed a Nazi concentration camp thus shows the egregious inaccuracy of the term “Polish concentration camps” that sometimes features in media outlets worldwide, and what should not be forgotten is that these were the Poles that liberated a German camp.

Karol Wołek ■
July 2020

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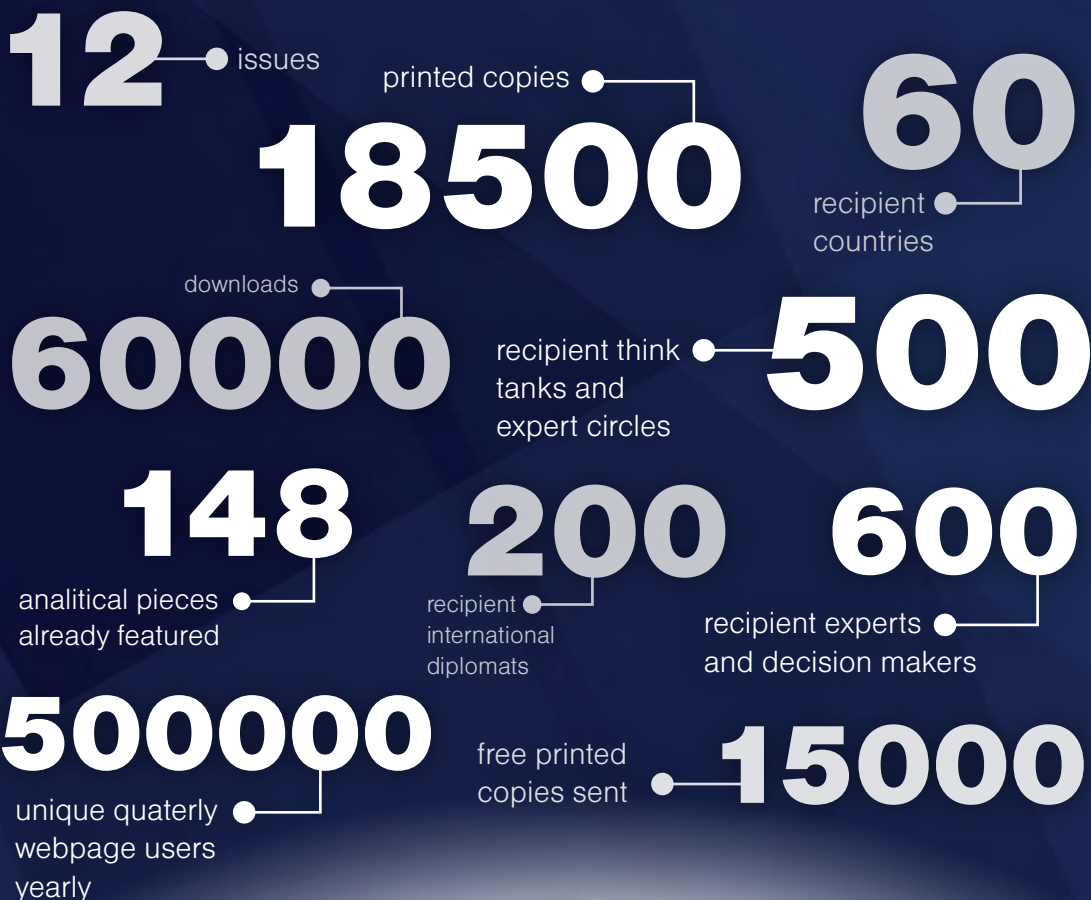
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