



# VOLATILITY AND FRICTION IN THE AGE OF DISINTERMEDIATION

HCSS StratMon 2016-2017 Annual Report

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## **Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation**

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# Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation

HCSS STRATMON ANNUAL REPORT 2016/2017

*The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*

This report is from the HCSS theme SECURITY. Our other themes are GLOBAL TRENDS and GEO-ECONOMICS



HCSS identifies and analyzes the developments that shape our security environment. We show the intricate and dynamic relations between political, military, economic, social, environmental, and technological drivers that shape policy space. Our strengths are a unique methodological base, deep domain knowledge and an extensive international network of partners.

HCSS assists in formulating and evaluating policy options on the basis of an integrated approach to security challenges and security solutions.







*We could be in instant contact with each other, wherever we may be, where we can contact our friends anywhere on earth, even if we don't know their actual physical location. It will be possible in that age, perhaps only 50 years from now, for a man to conduct his business from Tahiti or Bali just as well as he could from London....Almost any executive skill, any administrative skill, even any physical skill, could be made independent of distance. I am perfectly serious when I suggest that one day we may have brain surgeons in Edinburgh operating on patients in New Zealand.*

*Arthur C. Clarke, 1964*



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Events unfolded once again at a swirling pace in 2016. Terrorists hit Europe's capital in March. The British population voted for Brexit in June. Turkish armed forces failed to topple Erdoğan in July. A resurgent Russia flexed its military muscles again in the Middle East and actively interfered in American elections, in which the American population elected Trump, in November. We are worried but certainly not surprised by the volatility of contemporary international relations. In previous editions of our contribution to the Dutch government's Strategic Monitor, we already observed a surge in assertive behavior, and noted a dangerous uptick in crises and warned of the contagiousness of political violence.<sup>1</sup>

The current volatility is not a coincidence, but rather the result of fundamental disturbances of the global order that are greatly amplified by rapid technological developments. Most mainstream explanations of recent turbulence focus on power transitions (the decline of the West and the rise of the rest), the concomitant return to more aggressive forms of power politics, and a backlash against globalization. What strikes us is that many of the explanations ignore what we consider one of the most striking mega-trends that is reshaping the dynamics of power: the ongoing process of disintermediation.

Disintermediation refers to the phenomenon in which 'middle men' are being increasingly cut out of a range of social interactions due to a new generation of social technologies that allow for far more direct forms of connecting groups and individuals. In this process, many of the layered, hierarchical structures that emerged during the Industrial Age are at risk of being eliminated. This transition is creating much uncertainty and friction, especially when and where people, and institutions – and even whole professions – are made redundant. Many of the trends we describe in this StratMon report are in one way or another related to this fundamental transition.

This annual report is part of the contribution of HCSS to help Dutch defense and security organizations prepare for these challenges. This is what we have set out to do in our annual contributions to the Dutch government's Strategic Monitor since 2011. The principal purpose of this report is to get a better grip on many important aspects of international interactions that much of the public debate tends to gloss over. Our overall objective is to provide a better evidentiary base to help the Dutch government improve its strategic anticipatory ability. In doing so, HCSS's approach to the Strategic Monitor has always been twofold – in line with the two meanings of the word 'monitor'. On the one hand, we keep our finger on the pulse of the constant 'heart-beat' of the international system. This aspect of our monitoring is primarily (even clinically) empirical. In this edition, our readers will once again find a richly empirically-based tracking effort of some of the key trends (and outliers) in the world's geodynamic fluctuations, in cooperation and conflict between states and non-states, in political violence, and also in some of the areas of what we have called 'the other side of the security coin' – i.e. the realm of resilience. At the same time, however, we do not shy away from the second aspect of our monitoring effort: the more cautionary, contrarian attempt to provide a different perspective on what is happening in the world.

Here we list the main take-aways of the trends observed in this year's monitoring effort, elaborate on our interpretation of disintermediation as the key driver of these trends, and formulate a set of recommendations for Dutch defense and security organizations.

1. Stephan De Spiegeleire, Tim Sweijs and Frank Bekkers, *The Wheel of Fortune: Up and Down, Round and Round, Faster and Faster. Annual Report 2015-2016* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2016), [http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/Strategic\\_Monitor\\_The\\_Wheel\\_of\\_Fortune\\_%28NL%29.pdf](http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/Strategic_Monitor_The_Wheel_of_Fortune_%28NL%29.pdf); Tim Sweijs et al., *Strategic Monitor 2015: The Return of Ghosts Hoped Past? Global Trends in Conflict and Cooperation* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), [http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_StratMon\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_StratMon_Annual_Report.pdf).

## Main Take-Aways

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Our international system has entered a period of volatility and friction. It is volatile because high impact events follow one another in rapid succession. It is frictionous because many of these events tend to be conflictual rather than cooperative in nature. At the highest level, the HCSS StratMon, relying on different measurements, reports a clear overall **downward trend in cooperation** that is mirrored by a **similarly upward trend in conflict** for all state and non-state actor behavior worldwide since the early 2000s. This trend is particularly prevalent in state-state interaction and is the sum of a range of non-cooperative and often outright hostile behaviors in different theaters worldwide.

The world's overall **behavior towards the Netherlands** remains **positive**. Especially in terms of **material cooperation** this **fundamentally positive attitude** has only **improved** since 2010. Already **one of the more cooperative countries** in the world, **the Netherlands** itself became overall even more so since 2010 and that **positive trend** continued over the past two years.

Alongside that general trend, our **great power assertiveness monitor** flags two major trends in the behavior of great powers (China, 'Europe', India, Russia and the United States). First, the **persistence of growing negative military assertiveness** with the continuing stand-off between Europe and the US and Russia, substantial military involvement of Russia, the US and various European states in the conflicts in the Middle East, and dangerous episodes of brinkmanship in the Pacific involving China and the US. Second, an overall **decrease in great powers' economic positive assertiveness** targeted at cooperation and a diminished inclination to cooperate economically.

One of the most striking findings of our analysis of trends in global influence, using **the Global Influence Index**, is Europe's unmatched influence potential and the **enormous gap between Europe's potential and actual influence**. Unsurprisingly, the Global Influence Index confirms **China's economic ascendance**, and identify Japan and India as the 'odd men out', with both great powers punching far below their potential great power weight.

Disentangling the global web of influence, we also look at the economic, military and diplomatic relations **between great powers** and a selection of 30+ small or medium sized powers in possession of important economic, military or ideological assets (pivot states). Here we find that these states seem to increasingly **vacillate** between the great powers. In addition, the enormous (potential) **attraction of Europe** vis-à-vis these pivot states stands out once again, while the **high recent influence scores** of especially **China** but also **Russia** give pause.

In our HCSS political violence monitor, we report on the **many faces of violence** worldwide. Here we point out that the hybrid character of contemporary conflict obfuscates an assortment of hostile, but non-lethal actions. This requires a broader and finer measurement that tracks hybrid conflict activities. In terms of the **state of global violence**, current **trends** in global levels of violence continue to be on an **upward trajectory**. Total conflict fatalities are slightly lower than last year but still exceed the one hundred thousand mark. Globally, an increasing number of societies are affected by one or multiple forms of violence. **Conflict contagion and conflict diffusion is rife**. Violence spills over national borders and clusters regionally, while different forms of violence have an inclination to either morph or co-occur. The number of **internationalized intrastate conflict** as a percentage of all intrastate conflicts has **quadrupled** since the beginning of this century.

**State based** and **non-state conflict** suffused with recurring episodes of **one sided violence** are particularly **virulent** in the **MENA** and **Sub-Saharan African region**, while numerous intractable conflicts persist in Africa and Asia. Our **conflict models** project the majority of countries at risk

of new conflict onsets to be also concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa in addition to identifying a number of other at risk countries in the Middle East and Asia for both the long- and the short-term. These countries include Chad, Angola, Guinea, Cameroon, Burundi and Ivory Coast in Africa and in Asia, Iran, Tajikistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Also notable is [the fragile situation in Venezuela](#), which poses a [potential security risk to the Dutch countries and territories in the Caribbean](#). Europe, meanwhile is at risk [of the continuing spillover of violence](#) from its immediate neighborhood, at the same time as it finds itself in [a Second Cold War](#) with [Russia](#). Our outlook on global violence for the coming period is therefore far from positive.

Our assessment of the other side of the security coin, in which we look at the sources of security, yields a cautious note of optimism. [Access](#) remains one of the key components of [individual empowerment](#) and [societal resilience to conflict](#). Greater financial, economic, energy, clean water and political access has boosted the [individual empowerment of hundreds of millions of people](#) around the world. Much of the progress is related to the trend of disintermediation and the disappearance of the middleman. These developments are projected to [further drive positive change in the future](#).

## [An Interpretation: Disintermediation and Epochal Change](#)

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Many observers attribute some of the more worrisome trends that our monitor has revealed to some – in their eyes – troublesome, yet familiar developments at the systemic, national-level and/or individual levels of analysis.<sup>2</sup> At the [systemic](#) level, *realists* see the evanescence of the unipolar post-Cold War moment in which new and recurrent contenders are itching to take down the single remaining and (by some measurements) weakening superpower. *Liberals* deplore the crumbling of the foundational institutional framework that the West cobbled together and imposed on the rest of the world and which – in their view – has greatly enhanced human dignity and prosperity. Especially this past year, these gladiators of global gloom have been joined by the dons of domestic doom, who assert that governance at the [national](#) level is now also being undermined by what they identify as dangerous populist and nationalist sentiments and movements. They draw ominous parallels to the dark thirties of the previous century, when economic protectionism (and revanchism) went hand in hand with populist and fascist regimes coming to power – a development that played an important role in the genesis of World War II. Finally, many commentators remain perplexed by the individual [personalities](#) of some of the strongmen, from Vladimir Putin to Xi Jinping to Donald Trump, that are taking center stage on the world scene. For them, the rise of these often erratic leaders with an appetite (or at least tolerance) for extreme levels of brinkmanship and braggadocio are reminiscent of some of the darkest days of the previous century when other strongmen (Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Mao, etc.) pushed the world into massive bloodshed.

### Remembering the Future

Like most of our colleagues, the authors of this edition of the HCSS StratMon find many of these more traditional explications of what we see unfolding before our eyes intuitively plausible and sobering. It is hard to deny these historical comparisons – even though we all realize that the actual database of historical precedents is far richer than the handful of historical analogies that are currently being

2. David J. Singer, “The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations,” 1961, <http://n.ereserve.fiu.edu/bb088141.pdf>; Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (Columbia University Press, 1959); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Waveland Press, 1979).

bandied around. And yet we wonder whether the historical references ('scripts') that recent events have retriggered so vividly in all of our minds – however salutary they are – do sufficient justice to some more deeper and more novel changes that may start to engulf our societies, economies and polities.

Our doubts are partially triggered by new neuropsychological and neuroimaging insights that offer us a new view on how humans process time. It turns out that our brains do not so much 'foresee' the future (an assumption on which most of the foresight literature and practice is premised) as 'remember' it.<sup>3</sup> In other words, whenever we try to anticipate the future, our brains find it easier to fall back on, and recombine historical antecedents that are still relatively fresh in our minds than to really creatively think through the various permutations of some of the potentially truly new trends we are observing. We tend to lump events such as Crimea 2014, the massacre of civilians in Ukraine and Syria these past few years, Brexit 2016 or Trump 2016 in the same category as other seminal events that many of us have witnessed in our own lives, such as the end of the Cold War, the Rwandan genocide, the Balkan Wars, 9/11, etc. Our historical frame of reference is also still reasonably familiar with memories of the (First) Cold War ("we're living through the Second Cold War"), more distant historical recollections further back of the two World Wars ("the Third World War is imminent"), or for some of the more historically-inclined among us possibly even of the virulent new nationalisms, revolutions and clashes of imperial ambitions of the 19th century.

But what if those historical frames of reference are too short-sighted? What if the events that we scroll through in our newspapers or Facebook feeds are but superficial symptoms of a far more fundamental *epochal* change? A transformation that is putting increasing pressure not just on political elites in Brussels or Washington or London or Beijing or elsewhere, but on (our current modes of) government? Not just on the EU or the UN but on global governance? Not just on Wall Street or corporate titans in Europe or America but on the corporation? Not just on democracy, but on the way we aggregate diverse political (and other) preference? As an element of the HCSS approach to monitoring we therefore offer our readers an alternative hypothesis to explain what we are witnessing around us and what we are reporting on in the more empirical part of our monitor.

### **The Impact of New (Social) Technologies**

In our own (*longue durée*) historical analysis of the essence of 'defense', 'armed force' and 'military', we have been struck by the powerful impact that the Industrial Age has had on the ways in which we think of our world. In our inability to truly think in (and across) time(s) we forget that all of the key agents in our world – governments, organizations, companies, etc. – are social inventions that really only emerged in the industrial age. There were no governments, no factories, no companies, no organizations, no political parties – in the way we currently understand those – prior to the Industrial Age. We all tend to associate the industrial revolution with the *physical* technologies that transformed almost everything in our daily lives, such as the steam engine that made it possible to transform boiling water into mechanical motion, the industrial printing presses that replaced their hand-operated predecessors and enabled the printing of books and newspapers on a previously impossible scale, or the coal-fueled iron melting machines that fueled so many further innovations. The Industrial Revolution, however (and indeed any other epochal revolution that preceded it), was not just about these *physical* technologies. It was just as important in the ways in which we humans organized ourselves to leverage those new physical technologies towards purposive strategic

3. Donna Rose Addis, Alana T. Wong and Daniel L. Schacter, "Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future: Common and Distinct Neural Substrates during Event Construction and Elaboration," *Neuropsychologia* 45, no. 7 (January 2007): 1363–77, doi:10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2006.10.016.



action. These ways themselves were also ‘technologies’ in the original etymological sense of “a system or method of making or doing”, ‘crafted’ to increase productivity and efficiency.

As we move from an Industrial to a post-Industrial Age we are again crafting new *social* technologies that are different from – but potentially more effective, productive and equitable than – those of the Industrial Age.<sup>4</sup> We are indeed seeing the emergence of various new *social* technologies that seem as promising as they can be frightening. Industrial Age social technologies shared certain attributes. They were based on existing physical technologies; they favored economies of scale and scope; and they gravitated towards linear, (geographically) proximate, formalized and top-down forms of organization. Similar commonalities in the new social technologies that emerge today are that they are all based more on digital than on physical technologies, tend to be far less linear and more informal, and are far more loosely coupled and distributed.

The explanatory hypothesis we would like to offer is that the volatility and friction we are seeing in the international system may be more than just a new twist on familiar memes of power transition, nationalism, populism or strongmen. They may instead reflect epochal gales that are triggered by the transformational fusion of radically new physical (think of the fourth industrial revolution), but especially digital and social technologies. We see one of the most striking manifestations of this dynamic in the ongoing process of *disintermediation* in which the *middlemen* – in a literal as well as in an organizational and procedural sense – are being cut out and replaced by a new generation of social technologies that allow for more direct forms of interaction between groups and individuals. In this process that takes place in and across different domains, many of the hierarchically layered structures and strict organizational boundaries established during the Industrial Age are eliminated. Disintermediation is shaking the bedrock of our economies, societies and polities. It heralds great opportunities as well great challenges and – especially – uncertainties. Winners next to losers. It is fueling a backlash against different forms of globalization and foments polarization both nationally and internationally between different actors whose interests do not align. It also empowers new and alternative ways of distributed collective action that can be put both to benign and malign purposes.

Partly in response to this mega trend of disintermediation, political leaders, prompted by popular movements, seek to take back national control. The protection of national interests through national rather than inter- or transnational means has once again become a prominent theme in many of the world’s national political discourses. The unravelling of the elite consensus in the West about the benefits of globalization is putting pressure on mechanisms of global and regional governance that non-Western powers were already skeptical about for quite some time. These developments affect not only the international environment that our ministries of foreign affairs and defense operate in, but also the degrees of freedom granted to them by their home populations. The Dutch ‘No’ to the Ukraine Association Agreement, Brexit and the election of Trump are not isolated events, but part of a distinct trend that is not expected to disappear any time soon. The results of this year’s monitoring effort corroborate this overall picture of volatility and friction – both in a negative and a positive sense.

### **Disintermediation in the Security Realm**

Disintermediation has profound ramifications in the security realm too. It gives birth not just to new security risks but also to new manifestations of old ones, and it necessitates the development

4. And note that in most developed countries a majority of employment-age people have already for quite some time been employed in post-industrial forms of employment as service-workers.

of new strategies to address both. In the traditional Westphalian order of things, the responsibility for security provision was transferred from individual citizens or societal groups to professional state security institutions. The state defined security, set security policies and was responsible for enforcing security both internally and externally. Society at large was not necessarily involved in security provision – and certainly not in the international arena. This is now changing, and in directions that some authors already presciently predicted some years ago.<sup>5</sup> Disintermediation, and the unprecedentedly dynamic fusion of physical, digital and social technologies that drives it, is currently puncturing many of the traditional divides between the national and the international, between state and non-state, between acts of war and of crime, between physical and virtual domains and between the various instruments of ('hard' and 'soft') power.

### Agents of Disintermediation

In this new era, this fusion of physical, digital and social technologies provides both states and (groups of) individuals with unprecedented destructive power that no longer hinges on *intermediate* large military formations. Non-state actors and super empowered individuals who want to be agents of conflict have direct access to weapons of mass destruction and disruption without any need for *intermediate* government-controlled weapon development and production facilities. They can wage attacks on polities, societies and economies through channels not controlled by governments but by private sector actors (e.g. cyber critical infrastructures) or through targeting populations directly (e.g. a bio-attack). Using social media, small groups can now rapidly mobilize mass movements, sometimes literally overnight, without being in possession of a large *intermediate* media network.

This is not something safely tucked away in an abstract far-away future. It is happening right here before our very eyes. The Russian government can – according to the US intelligence community – directly hack into the computers of the Democratic Party and interfere in the American political process. If China seizes a US underwater drone, president-elect Trump can respond directly through Twitter, bypassing regular channels of diplomacy. The Islamic State can recruit tens of thousands of foreign fighters and raise funds on a scale that was previously reserved by state organizations. It can also plan and coordinate attacks using modern peer-to-peer communication technology that intelligence services have a hard time hacking. An as of yet unidentified actor can hack millions and millions of Internet-connected home devices and use them to shut down Internet access to a large parts of the population, as it did in October 2016 on the American East coast.<sup>6</sup> Subtle – or less subtle – influencing activities can be used to manipulate the public discourse, as is happening in Finland and Sweden about these countries' relations with NATO.<sup>7</sup> Attacks on soft targets, if not coordinated then certainly inspired from the Middle East, can be used to sow terror, as has happened most recently with the Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016.<sup>8</sup>

5. P. Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* (Anchor, 2003). And more recently, Benjamin Wittes and Gabriella Blum, *The Future of Violence: Robots and Germs, Hackers and Drones—Confronting A New Age of Threat* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

6. Eli Blumenthal and Elizabeth Weise, "Hacked Home Devices Caused Massive Internet Outage," *USA TODAY*, October 22, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2016/10/21/cyber-attack-takes-down-east-coast-netflix-spotify-twitter/92507806/>.

7. Neil Macfarquhar, "A Powerful Russian Weapon: The Spread of False Stories," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/29/world/europe/russia-sweden-disinformation.html>.

8. BILD, "Terror-Anschlag Mit LKW Auf Berliner Weihnachtsmarkt - Gauck Besucht Verletzte Opfer Im Krankenhaus," *BILD*, 2016, <http://www.bild.de/news/inland/polizei/das-lief-bei-der-fahndung-schief-49419522.bild.html>.

## Challenges

But the agents of resilience now have new options to keep these disintermediated agents of conflict in check, because the forces that are changing the nature and origin of offensive security acts are also leading to the redistribution of defensive capabilities and responsibilities. One principal challenge that stems from disintermediation is the fact that states have become dependent on private parties to provide capabilities for defense and resilience, whether it concerns the protection of critical infrastructure, the prevention of radicalization, or defense against the manipulation of public discourse.<sup>9</sup> This implies a fundamental change for the role of the state vis-à-vis both its own citizens and non-state actors. It results in the transformation of the division-of-labor between public and private actors in the provision of security. This brave new world, in short, is one of many-to-many threats and many-to-many defenses.<sup>10</sup> As a result, societal resilience will have to become an integral part of a state's defense and security strategy and policy.

The distribution of capabilities to address security risks raises another challenge, namely the mismatch between capabilities, responsibilities and task allocation among the various security actors, within the government proper and within society as a whole. In this context, actors often possess (some of) the required capabilities to deal with a particular risk, but lack a proper mandate for action and vice versa. The inability of Western governments to effectively address Russian propaganda activities serves as a case in point. But this applies equally to the protection of cyberspace, where capabilities and mandates are divided over multiple government departments, which is out of sync with the security risks that our societies currently face.<sup>11</sup>

Another challenge associated with the current institutional set up is the absence of an appropriate legal framework: even when there is a clear rationale for action, legal considerations often pose an impediment. Sticking to the example of propaganda by adversaries, our armed forces are not tasked to do Info-ops outside a theater of operations and are in fact explicitly outlawed to do so. This is not meant to imply that they should be assigned this role. It simply underscores the existence of a gap between strategic realities and conventional (Industrial Age) legal constraints that will need to be bridged one way or another. Similarly, the reality of conflict in the cyber domain requires the adaptation of our mental and legal framework to deal with the blurring of the offensive and the defensive.<sup>12</sup> The pace of traditional procedures for decision making is in some cases simply not in tune with the speed of operations in a digital age.<sup>13</sup>

Finally a more general challenge is the absence of a broader strategic framework, which relates actions to appropriate counteractions, ties together means to ends and links outputs to outcomes to effects (including potential side effects). This absence can lead to inertia and inaction, both because it is unclear whether an action in one domain merits a response in another, but also because it may lead cautious decision makers to refrain from responding simply because they do not sufficiently understand the potential effects of such a response.<sup>14</sup>

9. For google's involvement in counter-radicalization efforts, see Andy Greenberg, "Google's Clever Plan to Stop Aspiring ISIS Recruits," *WIRED*, September 7, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/09/googles-clever-plan-stop-aspiring-isis-recruits/>.

10. Wittes and Blum, *The Future of Violence*.

11. See Isabelle Duyvesteyn, "Cyberaanvallen: Organisatie, Besluitvorming En Strategie," *Internationale Spectator* 2016, no. 6 (December 6, 2016), [http://www.internationalespecator.nl/pub/2016/6/weerbaarheid\\_tegen\\_cyberaanvallen/](http://www.internationalespecator.nl/pub/2016/6/weerbaarheid_tegen_cyberaanvallen/).

12. Computer network defense (CND) is hardly effective without offensive cyber capacities – computer network exploitation (CNE) and computer network attack (CNA).

13. See Duyvesteyn, "Cyberaanvallen."

14. US president Obama's inaction faced with Russian interference may be an example thereof, see Eric Lipton Sanger David E. and Scott Shane, "The Perfect Weapon: How Russian Cyberpower Invaded the U.S.," *The New York Times*, December 13, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/us/politics/russia-hack-election-dnc.html>.

### Building Better Interfaces

How can these challenges be addressed? In the short run, this entails the building of more and more versatile interfaces: between means and ends; between outputs, outcomes and effects; between political decision making procedures and strategic realities; between government departments and agencies in an integrated approach that aligns capabilities, responsibilities and tasks; between public and private actors to organize defense and societal resilience; in quadruple helix alliances of government agencies, knowledge institutes, industry *and* individuals to constantly innovate defense and security capability portfolios; between IT-professionals and white-hat hackers to improve cybersecurity; between intelligence services and think tanks and citizens to improve crisis early warning systems; and so on and so forth. Many of these new or strengthened interfaces may initially require new ‘middlemen’, such as liaison personnel or interface tools and procedures to connect proprietary information systems, as an intermediate solution. In the longer run, these interfaces will likely be no longer necessary: once disintermediation becomes more entrenched, defense and security actors on the response side will start organizing and coordinating through shared platforms using service-oriented architecture rather than through layered swivel-chair-type interfaces.

### What Does This Mean for Dutch Defense and Security Policies?

The volatility and friction and upward trend in conflict is salient within Europe and in particular in its immediate neighborhood. Europe is confronted with a cocktail of crises that develop quickly and succeed each other rapidly, a situation that will persist in the coming years. They are characterized by a high propensity for vertical and horizontal escalation.<sup>15</sup> On the one hand we are confronted with traditional forms of military assertiveness with the distinct danger of vertical escalation. On the other hand we face a multitude of hybrid threats that by their nature harness a high horizontal escalation potential. Furthermore, the two overlap and mix, both in Russia’s strategy power plays and in the complex conflicts in the MENA-region. In a recent study on European crisis management capabilities, HCSS flagged the following capabilities that require more attention and greater resources so that the Netherlands and its fellow European states can deal with these various forms of escalation:<sup>16</sup>

- » The further integration of political and military-strategic activities and the utilization of all instruments from the DIMEFIL toolbox<sup>17</sup> in a comprehensive manner. This continues to be one of the most salient gaps in Europe’s strategic capabilities.
- » The strengthening and renewal of robust military and civil-military instruments of influence in order to deter and contain a resurgent Russia which has rapidly modernized its military forces in recent years.<sup>18</sup>

15. Vertical escalation refers to an increase in the level of violence or the explicit threat thereof. Horizontal escalation concerns the (additional) use of other power instruments. In the latter case, for example, threatening military exercises are answered by the freezing of bank deposits; and economic sanctions with cyber attacks.

16. We refer to an in-depth study conducted in the context of the HCSS StratMon in which we examined the requirements for (new or to be renewed) military crisis management capabilities in a European and Dutch context. The analysis was based on six fictitious but realistic crisis scenarios on the eastern and southern flanks of Europe. See Frank Bekkers, Ton van Osch en Rob de Rave, *Op, Neer en Zijwaarts. De Militaire Dimensie van Crisis Management*, Militaire Spectator, forthcoming.

17. DIMEFIL = Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence and Law Enforcement. This acronym is used to denote the broad range of (state) instruments of power and influence that can be deployed to defend national interests.

18. See Stephan De Spiegeleire, *From Assertiveness to Aggression: 2014 as a Watershed Year for Russian Foreign and Security Policy* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), [http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_StratMon\\_web\\_](http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_StratMon_web_)

- » The strengthening and renewal of capabilities in order to contain violence and contribute to the stabilization of Europe's southern flank once conflict(s) are sufficiently ripe and/or levels of violence dwindle.
- » The building and strengthening of defensive and offensive cyber capabilities as a whole-of-government and whole-of-society responsibility. Additional regulations and policy in this area are required in for being able to adequately deploy these capabilities.
- » The establishment of a government-wide Strategic Communication capability.
- » The reinforcement and stimulation of societal resilience.

How can the Netherlands contribute to these requirements – and current deficits – at the European level? Which (additional) defense and security investments render the most added value from both a national and a European perspective? Based on our analysis that ‘middlemen’ are fading out – or, to put it differently, that the cost and effort of establishing and maintaining viable interfaces between (sometimes radically) different agents is rapidly decreasing – our suggestion is twofold. First, we recommend that much more effort is dedicated to the design and implementation of more and more versatile interfaces within the government's own span of control. This includes interfaces within the Dutch government itself, with international governmental partners, but also with public and private organizations around the government that can be brought together by responsible defense and security planners. Much work is already ongoing in this realm, but, as we argued in our 2015 *Better Together* study,<sup>19</sup> more could be done in this field through essentially ‘industrial-age’ types of social technologies: treaties, MoUs, contracts, agreements, partnerships, commercial arrangements, etc.

The greatest challenge and potential value added lies, in our view, in our second recommendation that the Dutch governmental defense and security entities put substantial effort in actively stimulating and leveraging the contributions to our national security objectives of external actors in the broader ‘Dutch’ defense and security ecosystem. Many elements of this ecosystem may as of yet even be unknown – just like Apple or Google had no idea which app developers would end up using their platforms to create apps that they themselves may never have thought of. But the profitability of these companies comes for a large extent from these unknown app developers and users who use the platform to generate value for themselves and for Apple or Google. Such a defense and security ecosystem thrives through effective and efficient interfaces in which as few middlemen as possible distort the message and induce transaction costs that put a penalty on communicating and collaborating with other parties in the ecosystem. Disintermediation is not a technology-induced external force that we must, reluctantly and as little as possible, heed. It is an opportunity that should be actively embraced to create more comprehensive answers to security challenges that are – whether we like it or not – intricate, multilevel and multidimensional.

These two high level recommendations lead to the following tangible action points for security and defense policies:

#### **Better interfaces between NATO and the EU; within the EU and with others:**

- » The Netherlands should actively support better **coordination mechanisms** between NATO with its military power and the EU with its combined soft and hard power options.

Russia.pdf

19. Sijbren de Jong et al., *Better Together: Towards a New Cooperation Portfolio for Defense* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), [http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_Better%20Together\\_II.compressed.pdf](http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_Better%20Together_II.compressed.pdf).

- » The Netherlands should actively support the further development of options to quickly form **European coalitions of the willing** using joint EU and / or NATO structures and resources. The mechanism of Permanent Structured Cooperation already provides a viable framework for this. Common funding of missions and a more modular approach to the EU Battle Group concept are also instrumental.

#### **Better interfaces within the Dutch government:**

- » The establishment of a **National Security Council**, which will institutionalize a horizontal, government-wide integration of security measures and countermeasures. This will enhance coordination and unity of effort as well as contribute to long-term security strategy and policy planning. Such a NSC should be chaired by the Prime Minister, supported by a Directorate General at the Cabinet level with active participation from, inter alia, the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, the Interior, Security and Justice, Economic Affairs and Infrastructure and Environment; as well as private actors in the defense and security ecosystem.
- » The development of a vision on the future of the cyberspace and concomitant policies, laws and regulations and enhanced capabilities to realize this vision, both nationally and internationally, in line with the role of The Netherlands as a **major cyber hub** and a firm supporter of the **free and safe cyberspace** and its ambition to play a leading role in international cyber governance. An integrated national, but firmly internationally embedded, approach is required. This might call for a **National Cyber Authority** that guides and combines the efforts of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the Defense Cyber Command (DSC), as well as of private actors.
- » An integrated approach requires powerful narratives to create a common sense of meaning and purpose, to motivate and unify a host of actors in coordinated action and to counter propaganda spread by adversaries. The Dutch government must establish a policy for **Strategic Communication** and employ society-wide capabilities to execute this policy.

#### **Better interfaces between government, the private sector and citizens:**

- » Actively improve the **cooperation between public and private partners** in, among others, **critical infrastructure protection** (with the sector itself); **cyber security** (with industry, white hat hackers, knowledge institutes); crisis **early warning** and strategic alerting (with NGOs, multinationals, think tanks).
- » Actively support initiatives aimed at increasing **societal resilience** against threats such as terrorism, (state-sponsored) cyber espionage and attacks and public advocacy. Google's Abdullah-X project, an animated YouTube series that explores themes of young Muslim identity in society and aims to steer young minds away from extremism is one example of very many.<sup>20</sup> Defense and security organizations could and should play a guiding, stimulating and facilitating role.

#### **Better interfaces between means and ends and inputs, outputs, effects and outcomes:**

- » Improve the **strategic literacy** of (senior) government officials by paying more attention to concept development, strategy development and education and training; including a better understanding of the relationship between inputs, outputs, effects and outcomes.
- » Establish a crisis **gaming center of excellence** where national and international policy makers

20. Google, "Abdullah-X," *Jigsaw*, 2016, <http://jigsaw.google.com/vision/>.



participate in crisis simulation and hone their crisis management skills.

We would like to conclude this year's report with a reflection on the very reason why HCSS has been building its strategic evidence, knowledge and insights base – StratBase – and end with a final exhortation. Year after year after we build up our StratBase to 'monitor' the 'demand' environment within which our defense and security organizations are expected to 'supply' defense and security value. The 2010 Future Policy Survey thought through several quite different plausible security environments on the demand side and it also identified a number of key 'strategic functions' that the Dutch government should be able to supply to meet that demand.<sup>21</sup> The two strategic functions that were highlighted as being truly foundational across any conceivable Dutch contribution towards any future security environment were prevention and anticipation. If we want to do justice to 'fundamental uncertainty' – a key theme in the Future Policy Survey, which our various reports these past years have only highlighted the importance of – so it was argued, we have to put a much higher premium on our ability to anticipate. This insight led to the Strategic Monitor – a major effort by the Dutch government and some of its knowledge institutes to generate better strategic situational awareness across government and beyond. At that time, HCSS pointed out that this anticipation effort consists of two major components: improving our ability to 'read' our current and expected security environment; and – at least equally importantly – changing the way in which we organize ourselves to exploit this enhanced insight.<sup>22</sup>

The monitoring contributions that Clingendael and HCSS (and others) have produced over these past few years – and the discussions they have triggered – have certainly contributed to the first ambition: to enhance strategic literacy and situational awareness. In our own appreciation, these explorations can be exploited to greater effect. The way we have now set up our real-time databases allows for more regular interactions with desk officers in various ministries that are responsible for certain geographical areas or functional domains. Some of the data, tools and findings can be integrated to a greater extent, not just in various educational efforts throughout the government, but also in the development of policies, including those aimed at bridging the gap between early warning and early action. We see ample opportunity to start realizing the full promise of the Future Policy Survey and to put anticipation and prevention more center-stage in the overall portfolio of policies, capabilities, concepts and ecosystem choices. In our last contribution to the Strategic Monitor we pleaded for a renewed, less technocratic and more ecosystem-wide strategic thinking exercise along the lines of the Future Policy Survey. We continue to think that the worrying as well as the encouraging trends that we describe in this year's report make such an effort more imperative than ever. There are some new fundamental choices to be made that go beyond the small incremental changes that are currently being debated. Our still predominantly Industrial-Age mindsets, structures and procedures are unlikely to produce the more creative and forward-leaning sustainable security solutions that our changing world is likely to require. We still believe that the Netherlands remains in a unique position to play a leadership role in this rethink of our defense and security value for money efforts. To invent novel ways to better buttress ourselves and our security environment against the pernicious effects of some these disintermediation trends, but also – and maybe even more importantly – to be able to fully harness their potential for positive change.

We framed our interpretation for some of the trends of 2016 described in this edition as a contrarian one. We do anticipate volatility and friction to increase over the next few years – both for the

21. Ministerie van Defensie, "Eindrapport Verkenningen 2010 Houvast voor de krijgsmacht van de toekomst - Rapport - Defensie.nl," rapport, (March 29, 2010), <https://www.defensie.nl/downloads/rapporten/2010/03/29/eindrapport-verkenningen-2010>.

22. Frank Bekkers et al., *Anticipatie* (The Hague: HCSS, 2011), <http://www.hcss.nl/reports/download/2/496/>.

reasons that are often mentioned in our current political discourse (geodynamic shifts, political changes in the West and in the East, strongmen, etc.), but also because of much less mentioned, but in our view more fundamental, epochal changes that are speeding up all around us. We do not automatically equate this growing volatility and friction with negative outcomes, however. On balance, we also see plenty of opportunities in this transitional period of disintermediation. Remaining at least partially inspirational in an age that abounds in gloom and doom may seem like an inglorious task. We fear, however, that our collective minds are becoming so captured by the prevailing doom scenarios, that we risk throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. To stay balanced in our strategic net assessments of the security environment around us, is in fact an essential prerequisite for navigating the turbulences to come. This increases the chances for our societies to come out in better shape, also and especially in security terms. We look forward to further contributing towards that goal in close collaboration with the Dutch defense and security organization and the broader ecosystem around it.









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# Introduction



*Events unfolded once again at a swirling pace in 2016. Terrorists hit Europe's capital in March. The British population voted for Brexit in June. Turkish armed forces failed to topple Erdoğan in July. A resurgent Russia flexed its military muscles again in the Middle East and actively interfered in American elections, in which the American population elected Trump in November. We are worried but certainly not surprised by the volatility of contemporary international relations. In previous editions of our contribution to the Dutch government's Strategic Monitor, we already observed a surge in assertive behavior, and noted a dangerous uptick in crises and warned of the contagiousness of political violence.<sup>1</sup> The current volatility is not a coincidence, but is rather the result of fundamental disturbances of the global order that are greatly amplified by rapid technological developments.*

## 1.1 What's Behind the Volatility?

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Most mainstream explanations of recent turbulence focus on power transitions (the decline of the West and the rise of the rest), the concomitant return to more aggressive forms of power politics, and a backlash against globalization. What strikes us is that many of the explanations ignore what we consider one of the most striking mega-trends that is reshaping the dynamics of power: the ongoing process of disintermediation. Disintermediation refers to the phenomenon in which 'middle men' are being increasingly cut out of a range of social interactions due to a new generation of social technologies that allow for far more direct forms of connecting groups and individuals. In this process, many of the layered, hierarchical structures that emerged during the Industrial Age are at risk of being eliminated. This transition is creating much uncertainty and friction, especially when and where people, and institutions – and even whole professions – are made redundant. Many of the trends we describe in this StratMon report are in one way or another related to this fundamental transition.

### 1.1.1 The Effects of Disintermediation

From the 1990 onwards, the growth of the Internet was predicted to have profound societal effects on a scale similar to those of the printing press in late fifteenth century Europe, albeit in ways that were at that point still hard to envisage. The impact was first keenly felt in the movie, music and media sectors. Traditional business models were uprooted in a relatively short period of time as physical, digital and social technologies combined to produce massive disruption. The enormous increases in computer power and bandwidth were by themselves not sufficient. It was only when millions of people began downloading material through applications such as Napster and BitTorrent that the old structures started to fall apart. This fusion of physical, digital and social technologies is now starting to gain steam in other domains too, which is affecting the position of the men (corporations, organizations, governments etc.) in the middle.

We see this in the business world, where many of the Fortune 500 companies are transforming themselves into ecosystem platforms often based upon 'open' technologies. Many of those are relative newcomers such as Facebook and Google, but their ranks also include traditional 'closed' companies that are now adapting themselves. We see this in education, where open online courses are providing mass education and where scientific communities find new collaboration forms that allow for far quicker development and roll-out of ideas and results than was possible even only a few years ago. We see this in medicine where right-to-try and access-to-medicine movements are undercutting the traditional role of the medical profession as men in the middle. We see this in

1. De Spiegeleire, Sweijts and Bekkers, *The Wheel of Fortune*.; Sweijts et al., *Strategic Monitor 2015*.

the financial world, where fintech companies are starting to disrupt the marketplace of traditional financial institutions and intermediaries in the delivery of financial services.<sup>2</sup> But we also see this in the field of security and defense, where the sudden rise of ISIS, including its success in attracting dozens of thousands of followers, in raising funds and in committing attacks ‘out of area’, would not have been possible without the proliferation of smartphones and the mushrooming of social media networks.

The process of disintermediation is also making an indelible mark on our politics at large. In this day and Information Age, traditional political, knowledge and media establishments clearly no longer hold the keys to the castle. Existing hierarchies are upended by the rise of political outsiders who can now appeal directly to the masses. Across the Western world, adroit political entrepreneurs are riding waves of popular support to positions of power, amidst a backlash against various forms of economic, ideational and political globalization.<sup>3</sup> For the first time since the 1930s, the consensus about the benefits of globalization among the political elites in the West is unravelling. The America First rhetoric that got Trump elected clearly resonates on this side of the Atlantic too. Ruling parties cannot ignore these sentiments but clearly struggle to properly address them. Greater popular participation infuses greater volatility in international cooperation and confrontation with real implications for political, security and economic orders. The fragilization of the European Union epitomized by the looming Brexit is only symptomatic in these regards.

### 1.1.2 Taking Back Control

In this context, political leaders are trying to re-impose constraints on globalization and to reassert national control. It remains to be seen how effective these attempts will prove. But they are quite visible. One clear sign is the record number of trade barriers that have been re-instituted in recent years. For the first time since the Second World War, the growth in economic globalization as measured by capital and commodities flows has stagnated – but not reversed. Another sign is that states, both authoritarian and democratic and companies alike, are seeking to turn the Internet into a domain they can control. The US PRISM program, China’s Great Firewall, Russia’s recent blockade of LinkedIn, as well as Facebook’s failed attempt to provide free Internet to hundreds of millions of Indians through its interface, justify the fears of a future splinternet. While these developments cause a fair amount of friction, they do not reflect the end of globalization. A growing number of people continue to have access to the global world wide web, to discover new opportunities there and societies worldwide continue to be connected more than ever. Unhinging these global arteries will not be easy nor will it come cheaply. It will be even harder to accomplish now that the second

2. We expect this broader disintermediation trend to be accelerated by the appearance of blockchain technology which may even end up uprooting many late-industrial-age ‘companies’ like Uber or Airbnb (or maybe even Google, Facebook or Snapchat), who claim to be peer-to-peer, but are actually still intermediaries who try to monopolize information in ways that may no longer be required (or accepted) in the post-industrial age. Why hand off 6-12% as a guest or 3% as a host to Airbnb if the combination of blockchain technologies and digital reputation tools might allow a household to reliably let others stay in their homes? Why let media companies accrue enormous benefits off the backs of content producers if consumers could pay less and producers could earn more without having to go through middle-men? Why have lawyers or notaries collect high fees for transactions that can reliably be managed in a distributed way by blockchain miners?

3. The backlash, which is not central to our story, but whose origins are nonetheless important, is caused not by one but by a variety of factors. These certainly include the transfer of formal or actual power from central governments to local, transnational as well as non-governmental actors leading to a democratic deficit; the stagnating income levels of the middle classes in many developed economies; and the coming-of-age of second and third generation immigrants, who are starting to participate both more visibly and more vocally in the governance of their adopted polities which is fueling fear among the original population about its effects on traditional national ways of life. In Europe, the backlash against globalization is further augmented by the re-appearance of large scale violent conflict on the continent and along its borders, with considerable spillover effects in terms of refugee flows, terrorist attacks and Russia’s hybrid interference. Finally, the fragmentation of public discourses facilitates the formation of views that are seldom exposed to opposing perspectives. This breeds polarization both in the United States and in Western Europe along various societal cleavages (e.g. high-low education, high-low income, urban-provincial (rather than rural), ‘native’-newcomer, secular-religious, christian-muslim) that do not always neatly cross cut.

stage of globalization is transitioning to its third stage whereby digital flows, that only a few decades ago were literally unheard of, now already have a greater impact on global GDP than the ‘physical’ flows alone.<sup>4</sup> The shift from physical to digital globalization is a quintessential feature of the mega trend of disintermediation.

This time around, however and contrary to the 1990s, it is likely that our national governments will not actively facilitate it. Instead, political leaders are trying to re-assert themselves as the man-in-the-middle to cushion any unpleasant side effects of globalization and perhaps even to reverse it. The nation-state becomes once again the primary vehicle to protect ‘national interests’ that feature very explicitly in our political discourses. National identity politics are rife both in the domestic and the international arena. Spheres-of-influence thinking is *en vogue* again. Political leaders openly speak about the need to use all instruments of national power, including the military one, to protect and increase their influence.<sup>5</sup> Even the European Union has started to think along these lines, formulating a vision of Europe as a military power in its own right. Above all, these developments are feeding friction – between state and non-state actors, both nationally and internationally and across social, political, economic and military spheres – for reasons that we do not expect to disappear in the near future.

### 1.1.3 The Netherlands

It is clear that these developments will not leave the Netherlands unaffected. While the ongoing crises to the East and to the South of Europe may be at a distance in geographical terms, our society is certainly not immune to cyber attacks, terrorist attacks, foreign powers meddling in our political process, propaganda probes, migration flows, tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade and other (first or second order) effects of crises, including those farther away from our borders. These developments harness a variety of challenges – both old and new ones – to Dutch security and defense organizations and to how they can effectively protect Dutch security and prosperity.

## 1.2 The Strategic Monitor and This Report

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This annual report is part of the contribution of HCSS to help Dutch defense and security organizations prepare for these challenges. This is what we have set out to do in our annual contributions to the Dutch government’s Strategic Monitor since 2011. The principal purpose of this report is to get a better grip on many important aspects of international interactions that much of the public debate tends to gloss over. Our overall objective is to provide a better evidentiary base to help the Dutch government improve its strategic anticipatory ability. In so doing, HCSS’s approach to the Strategic Monitor has always been twofold – in line with the two meanings of the

4. Manyika, James, Susan Lund, Jacques Bughin, Jonathan Woetzel, Kalin Stamenov, and Dhruv Dhingra. “Digital Globalization: The New Era of Global Flows,” February 2016. <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/digital-mckinsey/our-insights/digital-globalization-the-new-era-of-global-flows>.

5. At the same time as domestic developments are shaping the international policy pursued by states, rapid changes in the economic, financial, political and military spheres are transforming the terms of international politics. Centers of gravity are moving eastwards, but are also getting more diffuse and geographically scattered around the globe. This is about geodynamics rather than geopolitics, both because states interact across many different domains, but even more so because local and transnational actors, multinational corporations (MNCs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and super empowered individuals are actively and independently meddling influence too. City agglomerations, with and without the support of national governments, are purposively positioning themselves higher up in the value chain, becoming both production and innovation hubs in their own right. Central and regional banks set policies that member states have only a partial say in. Horizontally integrated global supply chain networks of MNCs are undercutting the ability of states to legislate, forcing them to engage in inter- and transnational cooperation to hold on to some (economic, environmental, etc.) regulatory influence. Rapid military modernization of both new and old powers is certainly tilting regional balances, but the proliferation of advanced technology is also leveling the playing field between state and non-state actors.

word ‘monitor’. On the one hand, we keep our finger on the pulse of the constant ‘heart-beat’ of the international system. This aspect of our monitoring is primarily (even clinically) empirical. In this edition, our readers will once again find a richly empirically-based tracking effort of some of the key trends (and outliers) in the world’s geodynamic fluctuations, in cooperation and conflict between states *and* non-states, in political violence, and also in some of the areas of what we have called ‘the other side of the security coin’ – i.e. the realm of resilience. At the same time, however, we do not shy away from the second aspect of our monitoring effort: the more cautionary, contrarian attempt to provide a different perspective on what is happening in the world.

This report therefore provides an overview of a number of key global developments that we have unearthed in this year’s monitoring effort in addition to offering a tentative interpretation of what drives these developments. The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides an examination of cooperation and conflict, first at the global and regional level followed by an assessment of Dutch relations with other countries. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the geodynamics in the international system. It considers trends in great power assertiveness and great power influence both globally and in relation to a set of approximately thirty important strategic states in the international system. It then zooms in and examines the position of the Netherlands in these global geodynamics. The findings of Chapter 3 are further elaborated in two cases of Turkey and Moldova, two states that are of great strategic importance for regional security. Chapter 4 analyzes political violence worldwide, describes the many faces of violence worldwide, and offers an outlook on global political violence for the coming year. Chapter 5 then looks at the other side of the security coin and describes trends in the driving forces of societal resilience. Chapter 6 recapitulates our main findings, synthesizes the conclusions from the perspective of the trend of disintermediation, and assesses the broader security and defense implications thereof.





2





# Conflict and Cooperation



## Key Take-Aways

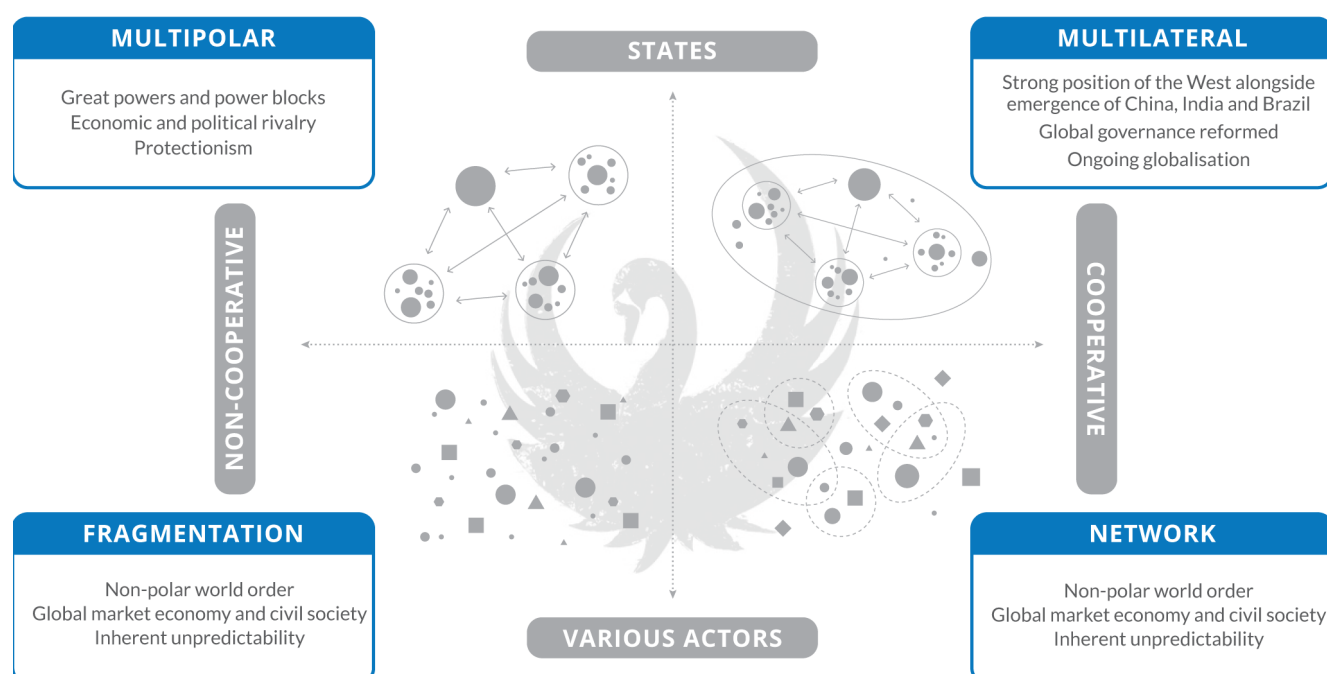
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- » There are many more cooperative events reported, compared to conflictual ones, yet there has been a downward trend in cooperation and an upward trend in conflict since the early 2000s. The observed share of conflict events in the world increased from 15% in 2000 to 20% on in 2016.
- » The average Goldstein score (AVG), a scale ranking every recorded event from the most negative (-10) to the most positive ones (+10), since 2000 remains positive for all GDELT events, but has been trending downwards in the past 15 years.
- » Verbal cooperation represents the lion's share of all interstate events, but its level has decreased in 2015-2016. This means that states talk a lot more than they act and they do so overwhelmingly in a cooperative mode, even though negative *verbal* exchanges are on the rise.
- » Global volatility has increased significantly in the past two years, yet it is still not even close to Cold War levels.
- » While states still talk the talk of international cooperation (albeit somewhat less so than in previous years), they seem increasingly unwilling and/or unable to walk the walk.
- » Events related to conflict can be found most frequently in the *security*, *military* and *legal* domains, whereas cooperative events are more dominant in the *economic*, *diplomatic* and *informational* domains.
- » Like their governmental counterparts, non-state actors initiate significantly more cooperative international events than conflictual ones; but contrary to states, cooperation between non-state actors is trending upward and conflict downward.
- » The world's most cooperative countries tend to be micro-states in various parts of the world.
- » We find a surprising amount of Western 'Allies' amongst the world's least cooperative countries (e.g. Iraq, Israel and Turkey).
- » The most striking geographical findings are the improvements in AGS in various African regions (except for the *military* domain) and rising tensions in the Middle East.
- » Our findings on how other countries are treating the Netherlands and on how the Netherlands behaves towards other countries confirm its internationally relatively enviable position. The Netherlands' attitude toward several great powers has cooled somewhat over the past year, however, its position in the ebb and flow of international interaction remains healthily positive.

## 2.1 Introduction

As part of our contribution to the inter-agency Strategic Monitor of the Dutch government, HCSS continues to track overall trends in global cooperation and conflict. This effort dates back to the last major forward-looking governmental strategic defense reflection that took place in the Netherlands in 2010: the Future Policy Survey<sup>1</sup>, which spawned the Dutch government's efforts to create and sustain a 'Strategic Monitoring' effort. In its strategic foresight section, this interdepartmental study highlighted what the survey argued (and we still feel) to be two quintessential parameters of any future security environment: whether states or non-state actors would be dominant in the future; and whether – whoever would prove dominant – these actors would tend to be more cooperative or conflictual.

Figure 2.1 Future policy survey's 2×2 scenario matrix



Over the past years, we – and others – have added many caveats to this 'scenario framework'. There are many important attributes of the global security environment other than the two highlighted here that should be taken into account and monitored. Moreover, the two axes represented in Figure 2.1 are not nearly as neatly orthogonal in reality, as changes that simultaneously point in different directions can and do occur. Finally, the 'fundamental uncertainty' that the Future Policy Survey devoted an entire chapter to has to be taken to heart, which is why we portray it against the background of the 2×2 matrix. Nonetheless, HCSS maintains that the axes running from 'cooperative' to 'non-cooperative' and from 'states' to 'various actors' still represent two quite fundamental attributes of the international system.

1. The Netherlands Ministry of Defence, "Future Policy Survey: A New Foundation for Netherlands Armed Forces," 2010, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/157125/Netherlands%202008%20Future%20policy%20survey.pdf>.

Several readers might be unfamiliar with or even surprised by our approach to the way in which we monitor this scenario framework. Our approach to this ‘monitoring’ effort aspires to collate and curate a systematic empirical evidence base that allows all relevant stakeholders – analysts, military planners, policy-makers, but also interested companies, NGOs, citizens, etc. – to get a better grip on these fundamental international trends. Economists have already for quite some time had access to a number of ‘big picture’ indicators that allow interested parties to keep their fingers on the pulse of analogous trends in the international economy: data on trends in global GDP,<sup>2</sup> global trade,<sup>3</sup> global amounts of protectionism,<sup>4</sup> etc. Analysts of international political and/or security trends were – until recently – unable to operationalize the two comparatively more ‘comprehensive’ axes of the scenario framework of the Future Policy Survey in a systematic way. With the advent of (open-source) event datasets, that has changed.

Accordingly, this year again, we update the findings from our three datasets on these two fundamental aspects of the international system. This chapter starts by presenting some general global trends in cooperation and conflict over time. It then zooms in on how these trends differ geographically. We finally take a closer look at the role that the Netherlands plays in all of this – both as an actor and as a target.

## 2.2 Trends Over Time

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### 2.2.1 Number of Events

Figure 2.2 breaks down all recorded inter-state events initiated by state- and non-state actors into cooperative and conflictual categories since 2000. As in previous years, our event datasets show that there is more cooperation than conflict in the international system. At the same time, however, we also observe an overall downward trend in cooperation and an upward trend in conflict since the early 2000s. The observed number of conflict events in the world rose from 15% in 2000 to 20% on November 15, 2016. A drill-down into the underlying news articles shows that this increase reflects various strong disagreements between Russia and the USA, continuing instability in the MENA region as well as Islamic State activity.

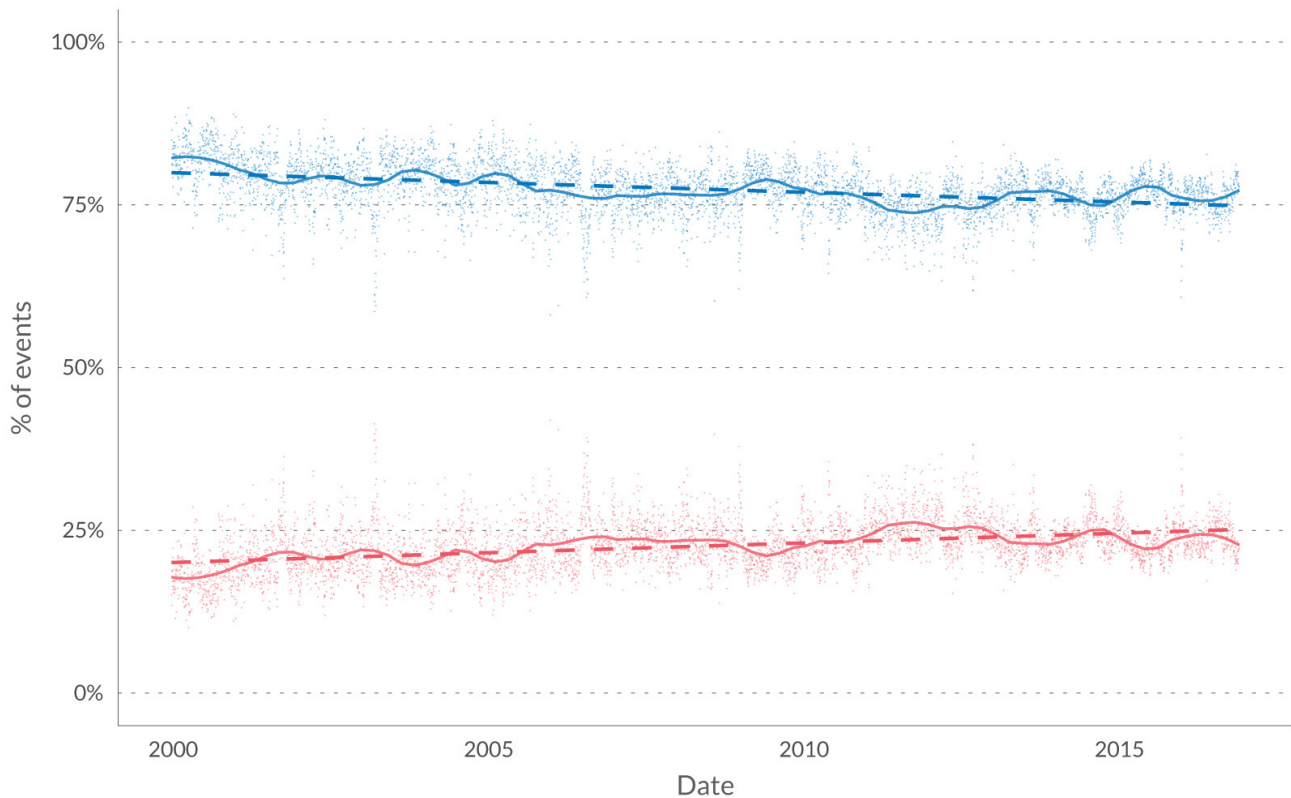
Looking at the trend in conflict events over the past one and a half years in more detail, for the period from July 2015 until the end of 2015 the share of conflict events fluctuated between 18%-28% on the daily basis, averaging at 21%. 2016 started with a high level of conflicts worldwide, including a chain of days with 30% of conflict events. From February until mid-2016, the share of conflict events decreased again to 21-25% on average. July and August were among the most conflict-ridden months in 2016, with average percentages of inter-state conflict events of 25% and 26% respectively. Stabilizing at 23% in October, the percentage of conflict events has been steadily decreasing to 21% in November.

Over the last two years, the leading countries reported to initiate these conflictual events are: the USA, E28, Russia, Israel, Iran, China and Syria.

2. The World Bank, “GDP (Current US\$),” *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>.

3. The World Trade Organization, “International Trade and Tariff Data,” *The World Trade Organization*, 2016, [https://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/statis\\_e/statis\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/statis_e.htm).

4. The World Trade Organization, “‘Persistent’ Economic Challenges Continued to Weigh on Trade in 2016,” *The World Trade Organization*, December 9, 2016, [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/news16\\_e/trdev\\_09dec16\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news16_e/trdev_09dec16_e.htm).

**Figure 2.2 Global trends in overall cooperation and conflict (GDELT, 2000-2016)**

### 2.2.2 Volatility

There has been much discussion about whether or not international relations have become more volatile in recent years. To shed some light on this debate, this year we developed a way to measure volatility over time in our event datasets. We named this metric the HCSS 'VIM'-indicator: a reference to the VIX index that is used to measure volatility in the stock market,<sup>5</sup> but also with a wink to the accusative case of the Latin noun 'vis' (power), that is sometimes used in English to connote energy, dynamism, or *schwung*. For this first iteration of our HCSS-'VIM' index, we calculated the standard deviation of overall daily average Goldstein scores (explained below) within a 60-day time window. Since we are operating with changes in averages of extremely large numbers of events, the actual volatility we observe is quite a bit lower than, for instance, in the VIX index. To address this issue, we are in the process of developing a new, more fine-grained version of the HCSS VIM-indicator for the 2017 edition of the Strategic Monitor. Nevertheless, even in this first iteration of the VIM-indicator we do detect some interesting trends.

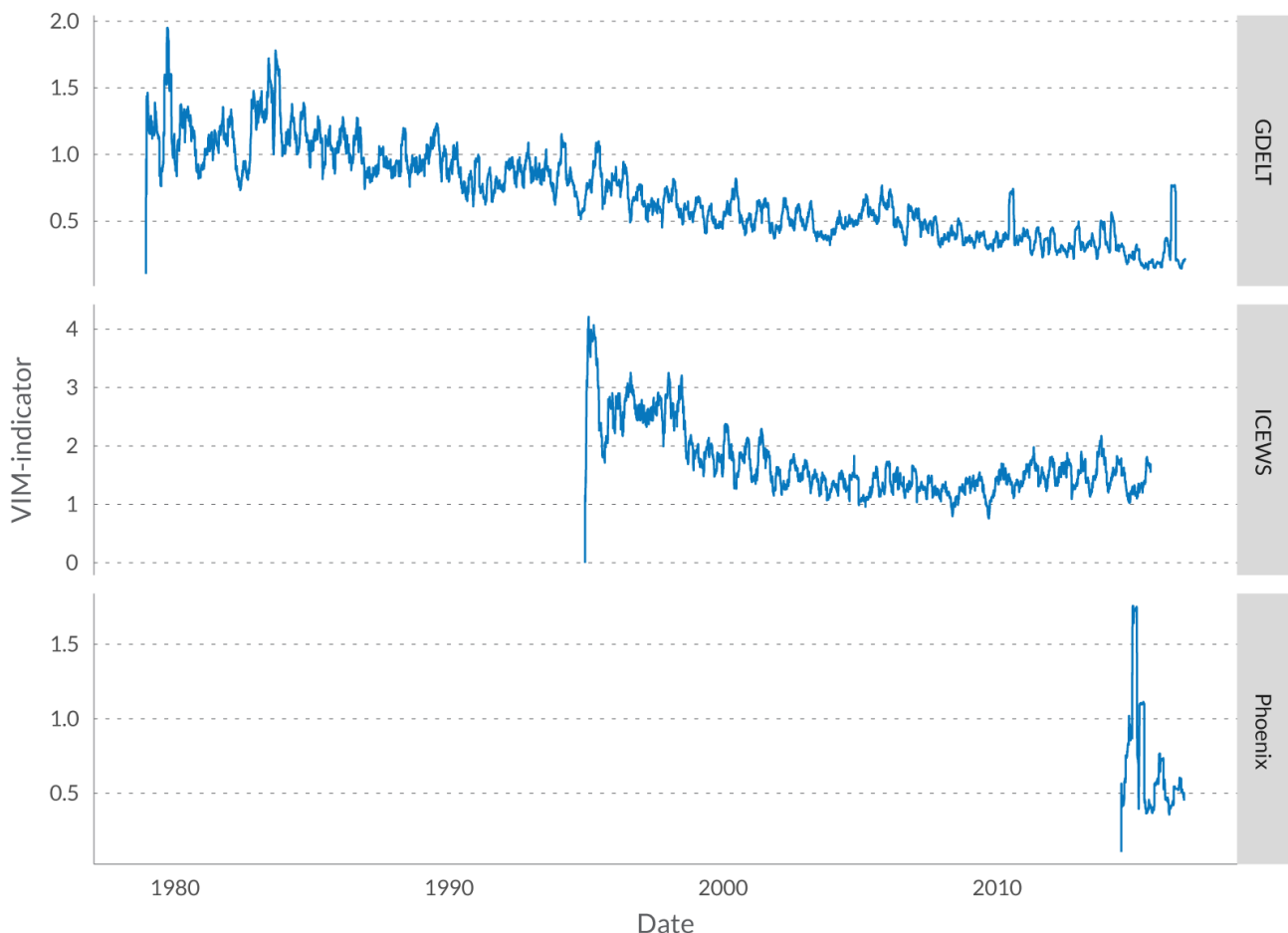
5. The Chicago Board Options Exchange, "The CBOE Volatility Index - VIX," 2003; Robert E. Whaley, "Understanding VIX," Available at SSRN 1296743, 2008, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1296743](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Papers.cfm?abstract_id=1296743).

Figure 2.3 shows that over the entire period from 1979 to November 2016, global volatility in material inter-state events (i.e. excluding *verbal* ones) has gone down in all three datasets. GDELT shows that oscillations in volatility were quite a bit more dramatic during the Cold War than in recent years.

When we zoom in on the past two years, it can be seen that global volatility has increased significantly in both our GDELT and Phoenix datasets. We emphasize that these are all past levels of volatility and may change in the (even near) future. We are inclined to agree with the claim by the risk consultancy Eurasia Group that in 2017 risks will be “most volatile year since World War II”<sup>6</sup>. Looking slightly beyond that, we anticipate some more fundamental changes ahead (see the conclusion of this report).

When we zoom in on the past two years, it can be seen that global volatility has increased significantly.

**Figure 2.3** The HCSS VIM-indicator of global *material* event volatility (GDELT, ICEWS and Phoenix, 1979-2016)



6. Rainer Buergin, “It’s the ‘Most Volatile’ Year for Political Risk Since WWII, Eurasia Group Says,” *Bloomberg Press*, January 3, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-03/political-risk-spike-from-trump-to-china-seen-in-2017-by-eurasia>.

**Figure 2.4 The HCSS VIM-indicator of global *material* event volatility (GDELT, ICEWS and Phoenix, 2015-2016)**



### 2.2.3 Goldstein Scores

The numbers we reported on above represent the overall *quantity* of events in our datasets. If we were to compare this to (European) football statistics, this would be akin to the overall number of wins vs. ties vs. defeats of a team. But losing two ‘tight’ games is qualitatively quite different from two overwhelming losses (e.g. with a 5 goal difference). This is why standard football statistics<sup>7</sup> now increasingly include these cumulative goal differences; and why we are also witnessing a trend towards automatically generated statistics such as the percentage of ball possession or the percentage of successfully completed passes.<sup>8</sup> An example of an equivalent of these more in-depth qualitative soccer statistics for event datasets, which we have also used in previous editions, is the *Goldstein score* – an indicator for the more *qualitative* fluctuations of international conflict and cooperation.

7. And we note that – contrary to US sports like baseball or basketball – soccer has been solely relying upon using even just these ‘coarse’ statistics for approximately 40 years and these new, more fine-tuned statistics for a few years. To this date (and to the best of our knowledge), HCSS is still the only organization to systematically compute and publish these statistics for international relations.

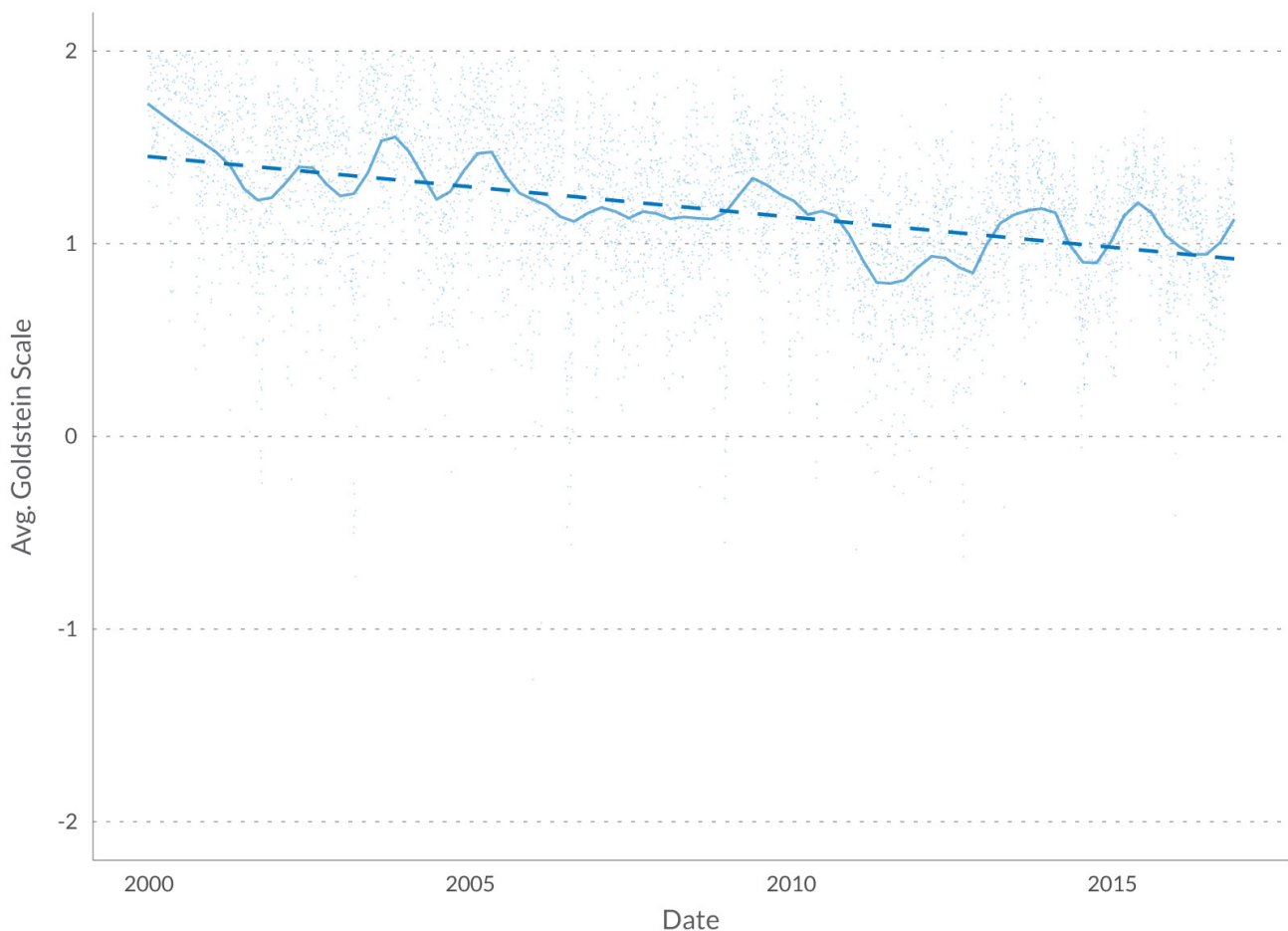
8. Michael C. Rumpf, “Performance Analysis,” *Footballscience.net*, 2015, <http://www.footballscience.net/special-topics/performance-analysis/>.

The Goldstein score is an interval-level scale that ranks every recorded event from the most negative ones (-10 – e.g. a military attack) to the most positive (+10 – e.g. retreating militarily). That is, we still operate with the overall number of (daily/weekly/etc.) events, but rather than summing up the number of cooperative and conflictual events and presenting them as a percentage of all events (“there were far more conflictual events between country A and B yesterday”), we calculate the (daily/weekly/etc.) average Goldstein scores (AGS) in the respective time period (“not only were there more conflictual events yesterday, but their average value was extremely low”). For more information on the Goldstein scales, see the method textbox on p. X).

### **Overall**

Figure 2.5 shows the trends in daily average Goldstein scores (AGS) for all GDELT events since 2000. We note that the overall AGS – encouragingly – remains positive (i.e. on the more cooperative side of the scale), but has – unfortunately – been trending downwards over the past 15 years.

**Figure 2.5 Daily average Goldstein scores for all GDELT events since 2000**



When looking at the past 5 years, as opposed to the past 15 years, we note that the daily Goldstein scores zigzag around a relatively more stable base, but with a number of attention-catching highs and lows. We did not investigate these in greater depth in previous editions because they typically consist of various unrelated events that occur in different parts of the world. At the request of some



of our readers, for this edition we decided to illustrate a number of these peaks and troughs with at least some of the events observed on the respective dates. We would once again like to draw a comparison with analogous economic datasets that are used for monitoring various markets like, for instance, stock markets and national accounts. Some analysts of economic trends may have a gut feeling about underlying market macro-trends based on their knowledge of certain subsets of the data, historical analogues, leading indicators or other sources of information. Most responsible economic decision-makers would, however, prefer to wait to make judgment calls until the aggregated trends for various national, firm- and intra-firm level data is published.

Similar to their economic counterparts, so too are pundits in the broader realm of international interactions (this company included) often quick to offer high-level judgment calls about 'increased levels of conflict' or 'increased volatility in the world' based on their own observations and/or hunches. What we have been trying to do in our contributions to the Strategic Monitor in the past few years is to start assembling millions of underlying data points, including event data, which we aggregate in order to obtain a more comprehensive sense of what is going on in international relations. The event datasets – like their economic counterparts – will undoubtedly still improve in depth, breadth and reliability in the future. However, they are at least starting to give us an inkling of deeper currents in international relations that the Future Policy Survey admonished us all to track more consistently. This year's decision to drill-down into some highlights is intended to give our readers a better feel for what lies behind the statistics that we present.

Towards the end of September 2012, the global Goldstein score significantly decreased to a level of 0.6 (compared to, for instance, 1.2 in May 2012, see Figure 2.5). This is mostly due to the low on September 29, 2012 – a date on which our event data reveals several highly negative events. These include a Boko Haram attack on dormitories of an agricultural college in Nigeria, resulting in numerous fatalities and injuries. Other less extreme, but still negative events that contributed to the low score were unsuccessful negotiations between Australian and Indonesian dignitaries regarding asylum-seeker specifics and Iran's military parade with slogans such as: "Death to America".<sup>9</sup> After this low, we see an improvement in the Goldstein score with peaks on July 1, 2013 (1.3) and November 20, 2013 (1.3), which were mostly due to the increase in collaborative events that took place on those dates. For July 1, 2013, this includes a wide range of high-level foreign visits (e.g. former UK Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to Kazakhstan) and a number of signed cooperative agreements (e.g. agreement on transferring convicted individuals between the UAE and Pakistan). Among the events contributing to the peak value on November 20, 2013, the most positive ones were the discussions between the USA and Pakistan on long-term defense ties, as well as the achievement of an agreement between the USA and Afghanistan on a crucial security pact concerning US troops' presence in Afghanistan after 2014.

Another major AGS slump occurred on July 21, 2014, when it dropped to 0.6. Among the events with the highest negative scores on that day, we found: the suicide of a Melbourne teenager who killed five people in Iraq through suicide bombing, the aggravation of Israel-Palestine relations portrayed by the media as a holocaust against Palestinian families, a Chinese vessel spying on RIMPAC naval exercises and MH17 disputes between Russia and the USA.

The final drop (to 0.7) in Goldstein scores during the time period we are reporting on here occurred on July 30, 2016 and was mostly due to great power activity and instability in the Middle East and South Asia. The majority of conflict events on that date were initiated by great powers, 42%

9. Vic Rosenthal, "A Nuclear Iran: Get Used to It," *The Jewish Press*, *FresnoZionism.org*, (September 29, 2013), <http://www.jewishpress.com/blogs/fresno-zionism/a-nuclear-iran-get-used-to-it/2013/09/29/>.

compared to 32% of those initiated by the countries from the Middle East and South Asia. It is important to keep in mind that India is both a great power and a country in South Asia, as the amount of events with the highest negative Goldstein scores of -10 was quite close in both of the regions: 11% and 9% respectively. For example, among such events was a major ISIS attack killing 80 people and injuring over 200 people in Kabul. That day was also marked by a renewed debate on the results of the US invasion of Afghanistan 15 years ago and the actual outcomes of the 'War on Terror' in light of the 2016 US presidential election<sup>10</sup>. Other major concerns that contributed to the low Goldstein scores were a shooting at the police station in Yerevan and continuing political violence in Burundi.

We note that many observed AGS drops tend to coincide with terrorist attacks. The significantly increased number of terrorist attacks (and deaths) over the past 15 years<sup>11</sup> is therefore likely to be one of the primary causes behind the aggravation of global Goldstein scores.

**Many observed AGS drops tend to coincide with terrorist attacks.**

### ***Verbal Vs. Material***

The figures we have reported on above relate to *overall* global interstate events— i.e. they include both *verbal* and *material* events. In contrast, Figure 2.6 differentiates – along the lines of the Future Policy Survey's 2×2 scenario framework – between the different types of conflict and cooperation, namely *verbal* and *factual*, for the period from January 2015 until October 2016. We note, as we did in previous editions, that *verbal* cooperation represents the lion's share of all inter-state events, however its share has decreased in 2015-2016. Over the analyzed time period, *verbal* cooperation events on average constituted nearly 63% of all events. The highest and lowest points are clearly visible on the graph, with the biggest increase in the sphere of *verbal* cooperation taking place between January and October 2015. The major drop in the share of *verbal* cooperation events began in the end of October 2015, eventually leveling off at 67% in February 2016.

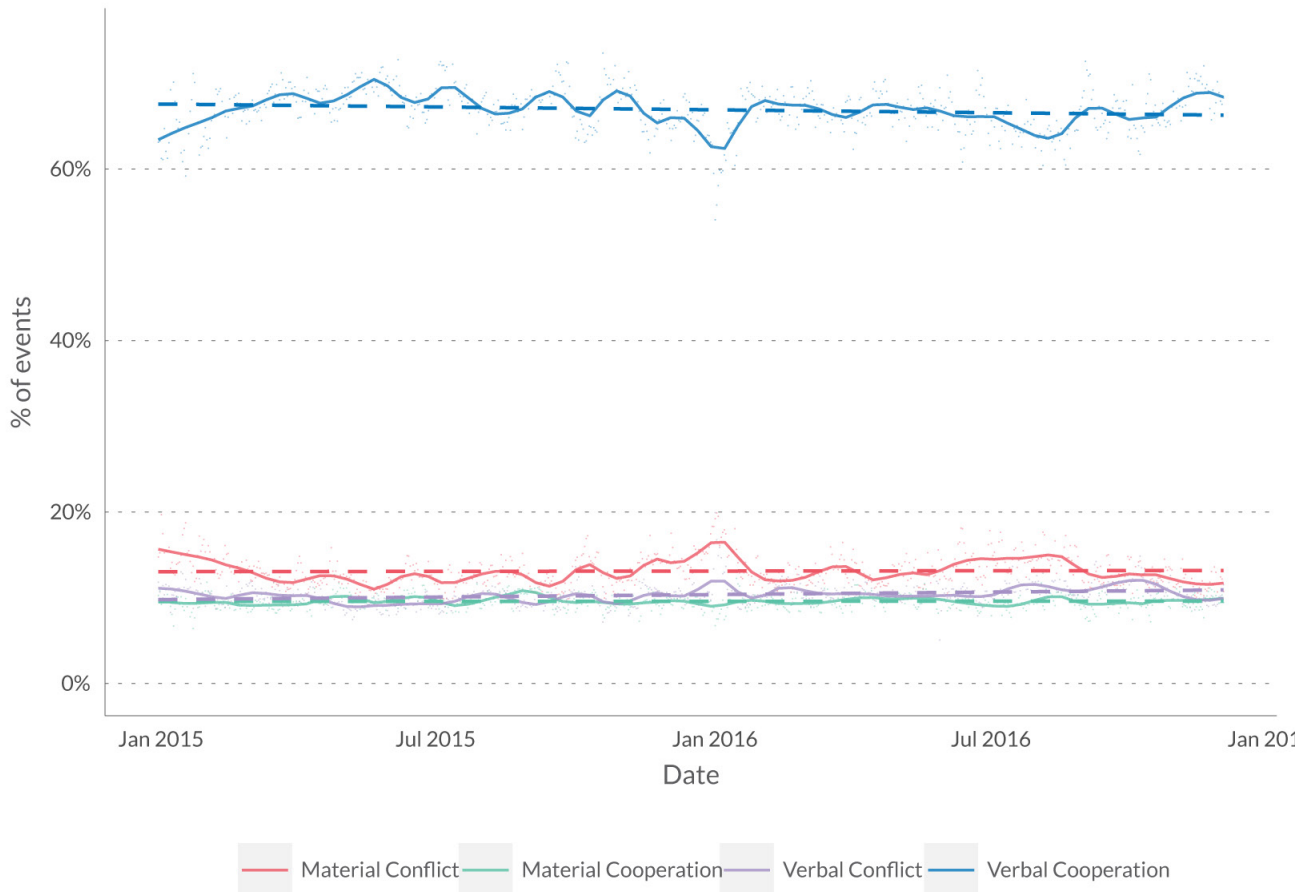
We see a peak (73%) of *verbal* cooperative events on October 21, 2015, when the highest Goldstein scores were 8 and the lowest ranged around 0 and -1. On October 21, 2015, the countries that initiated the most *verbal* cooperation were great powers, such as the USA (20%), EU28 (13%), Russia (9%), and China (7%). The lowest amount of *verbal* cooperation (54%) occurred on January 3, 2016. The data reveals that the leading countries involved in *verbal* interaction on that date were the USA (16%), EU28 (10%), Saudi Arabia (7%), Iran (7%), Russia (3%), China (3%), Pakistan (3%) and Israel (3%). Among the types of events with negative Goldstein scores that day, some related to pessimistic comments regarding other actors or declining comments, denying responsibility and reducing the relations. Another slight decrease in terms of *verbal* cooperation took place between June and mid-August 2016, with a low point occurring on July 31. Once again, the leading source countries on that day were the USA (20%), EU28 (13%), Russia (7%) and China (6%). Since then and until the end of the reported period, the percentage of *verbal* cooperation has been increasing again. However, despite the fact that by the ending date of the observed period the percentage of *verbal* cooperative events has grown to 67% on average, the overall trend line from January 1, 2015 to November 15, 2016 points downwards, having a negative slope coefficient of -0.0000246097.

**Verbal cooperation represents the lion's share of all inter-state events, however its share has decreased in 2015-2016.**

10. MWC News, "SIGAR Report: Taliban Gained Territory in Afghanistan," MWC News, July 29, 2016, <http://mwcnews.net/news/centrals-asia/60120-taliban-gained-territory.html>.

11. The Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2016: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism*, November 2016, <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>.

**Figure 2.6 Breakdown between *verbal* and *material* forms of conflict and cooperation (GDELT, 2015-2016)**



*Verbal* negative, i.e. conflictual, events between inter-state actors are much less prominent in our datasets than their positive, i.e. cooperative, counterparts. *Verbal* conflictual events represent around 10% towards the end of 2016. Over the entire time period, the line illustrating the total moving average of *verbal* conflict events has been fluctuating between 8% and 11%. The share of *verbal* conflict events dropped from 10% to 9% from April to July 2015, but a tangible rise from 10% to 11% occurred from December until February 2016. The scores were fluctuating around 11% again from August to November. The overall trend coefficient over the whole period is 0.0000186929, meaning that the level of *verbal* conflict has slightly gone up. The trend line since June 1, 2016 shows an even bigger increase with the slope coefficient of 0.0000357253. We can therefore conclude that states still talk a lot more than they act, that they still do so overwhelmingly in a cooperative mode, but that negative *verbal* exchanges are on the rise.

**We can therefore conclude that states still talk a lot more than they act, that they still do so overwhelmingly in a cooperative mode, but that negative verbal exchanges are on the rise.**

When we turn from talk to action by comparing the amount of purely *material* cooperation and conflict between states, we see a slight dominance of *material* conflict over *material* cooperative events. Although visually barely – if at all – detectable, the mathematically calculated slope coefficient of the *material* cooperation trend line is slightly positive (0.000000135474) and it has

been improving since June, 2016 with the slope coefficient of 0.0000202427. With the value of 0.0000578137, the slope coefficient for *material* conflict events is significantly larger. Yet, contrary to *material* cooperation events, the trend line for *material* conflict events has recently (from June, 2016 onwards) been trending downwards with the slope coefficient -0.000177131. Although states still talk the talk of international cooperation (although less so than in previous years), they seem increasingly unwilling and/or unable to walk that walk.

Although states still talk the talk of international cooperation (although less so than in previous years), they seem increasingly unwilling and/or unable to walk that walk.

We observe a pattern whereby the share of *material* conflict increases in January in both 2015 and 2016. For instance, our *material* conflict event indicator rose to 20% and our *verbal* conflict event indicator to 11% on January 3, 2016 – due to a higher than average number of *factual* negative events. These include a suicide bomber attack near Kabul airport in Afghanistan, multiple cases of ISIS teenage recruitment worldwide, aggravation of Saudi Arabia's clashes with Iran and the subsequent rupture of diplomatic relations with other countries supporting Saudi Arabia, for example Bahrain. In general, various tensions in the Middle East region have significantly contributed to the increase in conflictual events over the past two years.

### By Functional (DISMEL) Category

A more detailed picture of changes in the interaction of countries during 2000-2016 is provided in Figure 2.7. This figure breaks down the event data along the DISMEL domains.<sup>12</sup> We see that conflict events consist mostly of *security*, *military* and *legal* ones; whereas cooperative events are more dominant in the *economic*, *diplomatic* and *informational* domains.

Contrary to the widespread belief that conflicts, especially *material* ones, typically consist of military activity, the largest amount of conflict in our dataset took place in the *security* domain.<sup>13</sup> A thought-provoking fact here is that out of all events in the *security* domain during the observed 16 years, 99% were conflictual. The highest drop in AGS occurred from -7 in February 2003 to -8 in October 2004. This is due to the aggravation of scores of several countries including Australia, E28, China, India, Iran, Japan, North Korea, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Thailand and the USA in that period. The day with the highest negative AGS (-9.7) was July 17, 2005. Among the source countries triggering conflicts in the *security* domain on that date were the USA, Iraq and Israel because of the use of unconventional violence and the perpetration of suicide bombings. During 2015-2016, the daily AGS for *security* events was around -7.6. An outlying negative score of -8.9 was observed on August 28, 2016. The drill-down to the underlying URLs shows that it is due to the large number of reports about Turkey's Diyarbakir airport attacked by suspected Kurdish militants and more terrorist attacks worldwide.

Conflict events consist mostly of security, military and legal ones; whereas cooperative events are more dominant in the economic, diplomatic and informational domains.

Goldstein scale indicators are less negative for the *military* domain, mostly due to the fact that in the early 2000s, there was a pleiad of only weakly negative peaks ranging from -1.7 to -4. However, toward the end of the analyzed period (2000-2016), the Goldstein scores fluctuated around -6

12. See footnote 36 in De Spiegeleire, Sweijts and Bekkers, *The Wheel of Fortune*.

13. We note that the overall amount of events in the military domain in that period is three times higher than that of security ones, accounting for 4,209,762 and 1,249,569 respectively.

and -7, which explains why the trend line has been going downwards in the *military* domain. At the same time, as the slope coefficients from Figure 2.9 show, the downwards trend was stronger in the beginning and has decreased toward the end of the period. The lowest Goldstein score was recorded on May 30, 2016 at -9.5. This low score was due to the attack launched to dislodge ISIS from the city of Manbij, its last foothold along the Syrian-Turkish frontier. 56 ISIS members and 19 Syrian fighters were reported killed as a result of the attack.<sup>14</sup> Among other extremely negative events with the score of -10 in that period was a rocket attack on the market in Taiz, Yemen, killing 12 and wounding over 122 people. In addition, China's refusal to abide by any ruling of the U.N. arbitration panel over its claims to the disputed South China Sea also contributed to a high negative score.

**Figure 2.7 Average daily Goldstein scores for all *diplomatic, economic, informational, legal, military* and *security* types of events (GDEL, 2000-2016)**



The least negative scores, out of all domains, is the *legal* sphere, in which conflict is, however, the prevailing type of interaction. The share of conflicts in all *legal* events during 2000-2016 is very high – 85%. The AGS were fluctuating between -2.2 and -3.5 in 2000-2010 and between -2.8 and -3.5 during the last six years of the analyzed time period. There has been an improvement in the conflict trend over the past six years, yet the overall trend line is going downwards.

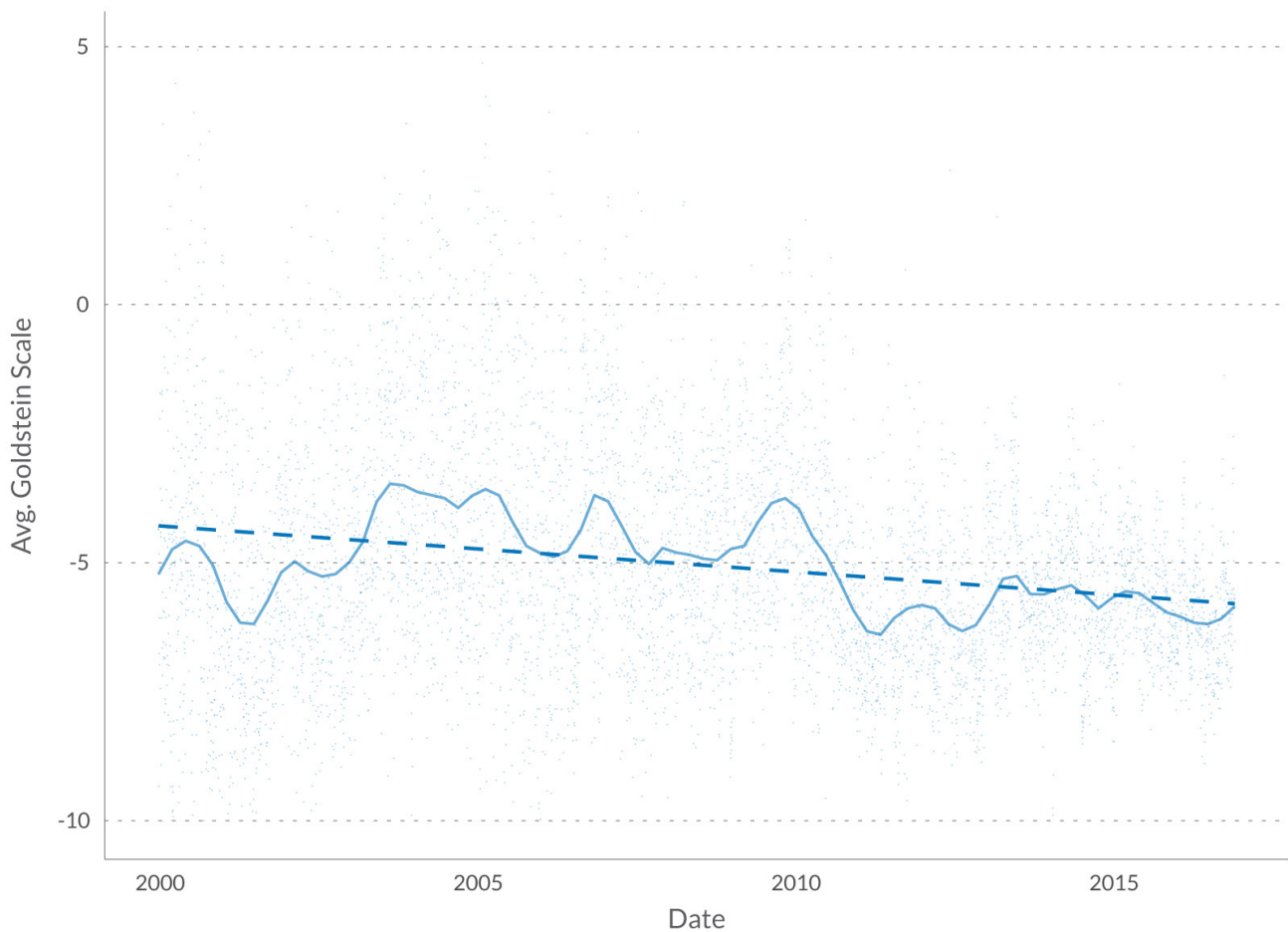
14. Tom Perry, "ISIS-Held City Nearly Surrounded by U.S-Backed Syrian Fighters," *Haaretz*, June 6, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.723428>.



Regarding cooperative events, the majority of these can be traced to the *economic* domain, accounting for 88% of all *economic* events. Overall, this is the domain with the most stable AGS: around 4.8 for the analyzed time frame. As well, the trend for 2015-2016 seems more positive in this area, as the ‘troughs’ were less intense. The biggest ‘trough’ – on January 31, 2016 – had the score of 4.6 and came as a result of the U.S. and China agreeing to impose new sanctions on North Korea in reaction to the country’s recent nuclear weapon tests. That same day, Saudi Arabia also imposed a ban on importing goods from Iran. Nevertheless, the AGS for *economic* events in 2015-2016 is 5, close to the overall average of 4.8 for the whole period observed. However, for the slope coefficients, we observe a slightly negative development in 2015-2016, as well as over the entire period from 2000 until 2016.

It is worthy to note that the majority of events analyzed, approximately 71%, have been in the *diplomatic* domain. Out of all events, CAMEO codes<sup>15</sup> of 37 events were negative *diplomatic* and their total average Goldstein score was -4.4. The AGS was 2.3. By mid-May, 2012, the scores averaged around 2.2 and decreased slowly until reaching a low point of 2 on August 11, 2016. The highlight among the events with the most negative score on that day was the ultimatum of Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan leveled against the USA, calling on the latter to choose between Turkey and the US-based Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen. Since then, the AGS have been increasing until the end of the observed period in November 2016. The overall trend line is slightly going downwards.

**Figure 2.8 Average daily Goldstein scores for *factual military* events (GDELT, 2000-2016)**



15. Philip A. Schrodt, “Conflict and Mediation Event Observations (CAMEO): Event and Actor Codebook” (Pennsylvania State University, 2012), <http://data.gdeltproject.org/documentation/CAMEO.Manual.1.1b3.pdf>. See also the [Methodology section](#)

When assessing the *informational* domain, it seems to be an amalgam of both negative Goldstein scores from -5, as well as positive scores up to 7. The average level fluctuates around 2 during 2000-2016. The highest peak of 3.5 is on December 25, 2010. However, a decrease of the trend to -1 can be seen for the entire time period from 2000 until 2016. Particularly, the deterioration of Goldstein scores is seen in April 2001 (-0.1), March 2005 (-0.5), February 2006 (-0.8), October 2013 (-1.1), October 2015 (-0.3) and October 2016 (0.1). The target countries with the highest positive Goldstein scores during 2000-2016 in the *informational* sphere are Saint Lucia, Suriname and Swaziland, whereas the ones with highest negative scores are Sao Tome and Principe, Malawi and Saint Kitts-Nevis. Figure 2.9 shows the slight deterioration of the trend line during the last six years, however, the overall slope coefficient is a positive number.

**Figure 2.9 Slope coefficients for DISMEL categories domains for 2000-2016, 2010-2016 and 2015-2016 periods**

Sphere/Period	2000-2016	2010-2016	2015-2016
Security	Slightly downwards (-0.0000597955)	Almost flat (-0.0000282752)	Almost flat (0.000105964)
Military	Strongly downwards (-0.000377298)	Slightly downwards (-0.00016684)	Almost flat (0.000105964)
Legal	Quite downwards (-0.000091656)	Almost flat (-0.0000338209)	Almost flat (0.000105964)
Economic	Almost flat (-0.00000317934)	Slightly upwards (0.0000696498)	Almost flat (-0.0000251548)
Diplomatic	Slightly downwards (-0.0000405167)	Almost flat (0.0000111831)	Slightly downwards (-0.000248516)
Informational	Almost flat (0.0000379345)	Slightly downwards (-0.000173555)	Slightly downwards (-0.000594613)

### **States Vs. Non-States**

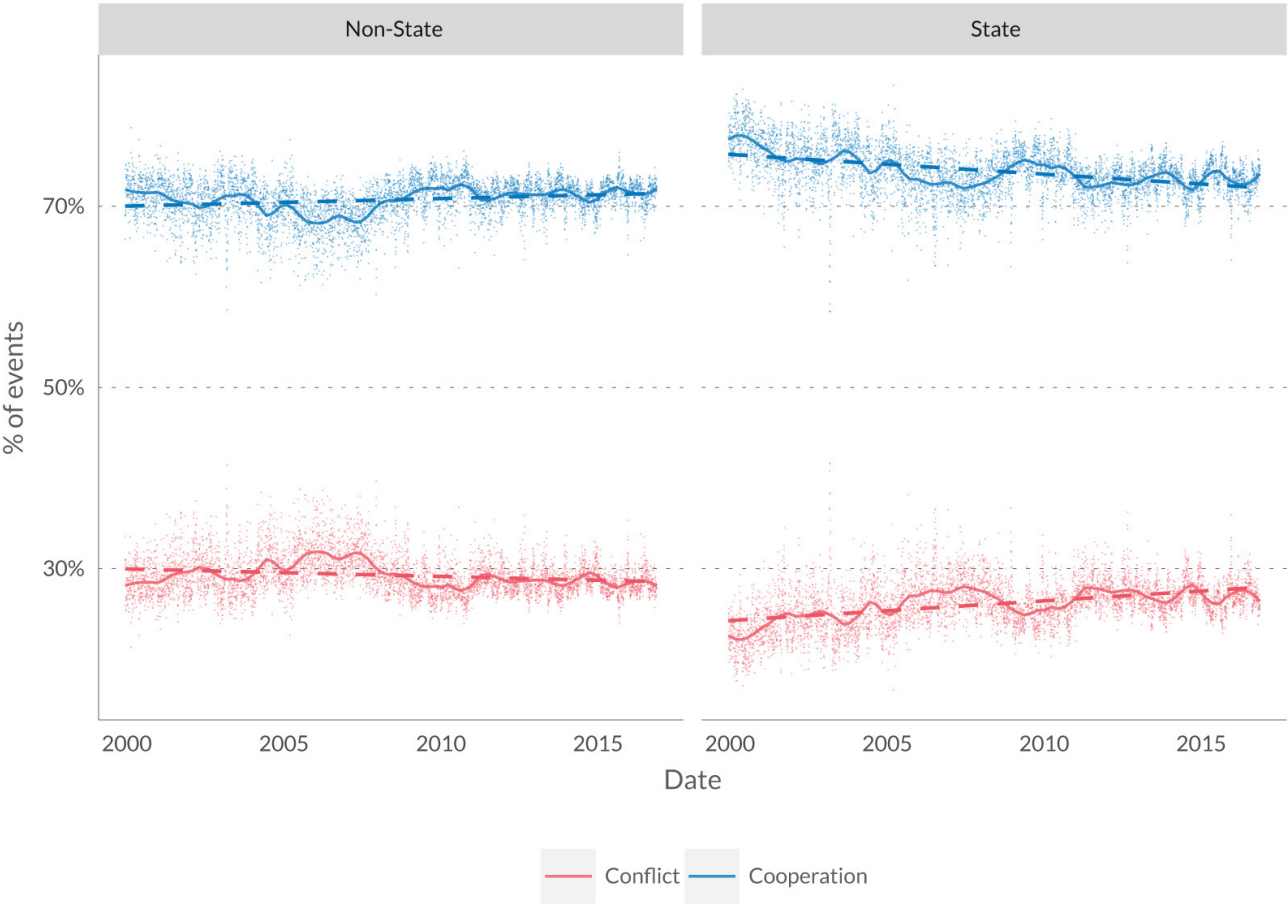
As we saw in the scenario framework of the Future Policy Survey (see page 10), the second selected axis reflected whether states or non-states will be dominant actors in the international arena. Our event datasets are providing us with some evidence on this question. Figure 2.10 shows the percentage of both conflict and cooperative inter-state events for state and non-state actors as a percentage of all inter-state events.

By unpacking the data presented in Figure 2.10 we now find that the relative amount of cooperation between state actors has declined by a few percentage points between 2001 and 2012 and that it has since remained at that lower level. But that smaller relative proportion still represents more

than twice the absolute amount of conflictual events – and we remind our readers that this pertains not just to *factual* but also to *rhetorical* events; and not just *military* or *economic*, but also *legal*, *diplomatic*, etc. – initiated by states.

Like their governmental counterparts, non-states also initiate significantly more cooperative international events than conflictual ones. Contrary to state actors, however, the trend line for cooperative events between non-state actors has been going upwards with a slope coefficient of 0.00000227738.

**Figure 2.10 Percentage of conflict and cooperative events by state and non state actors, (GDELT, 2000-2016)**





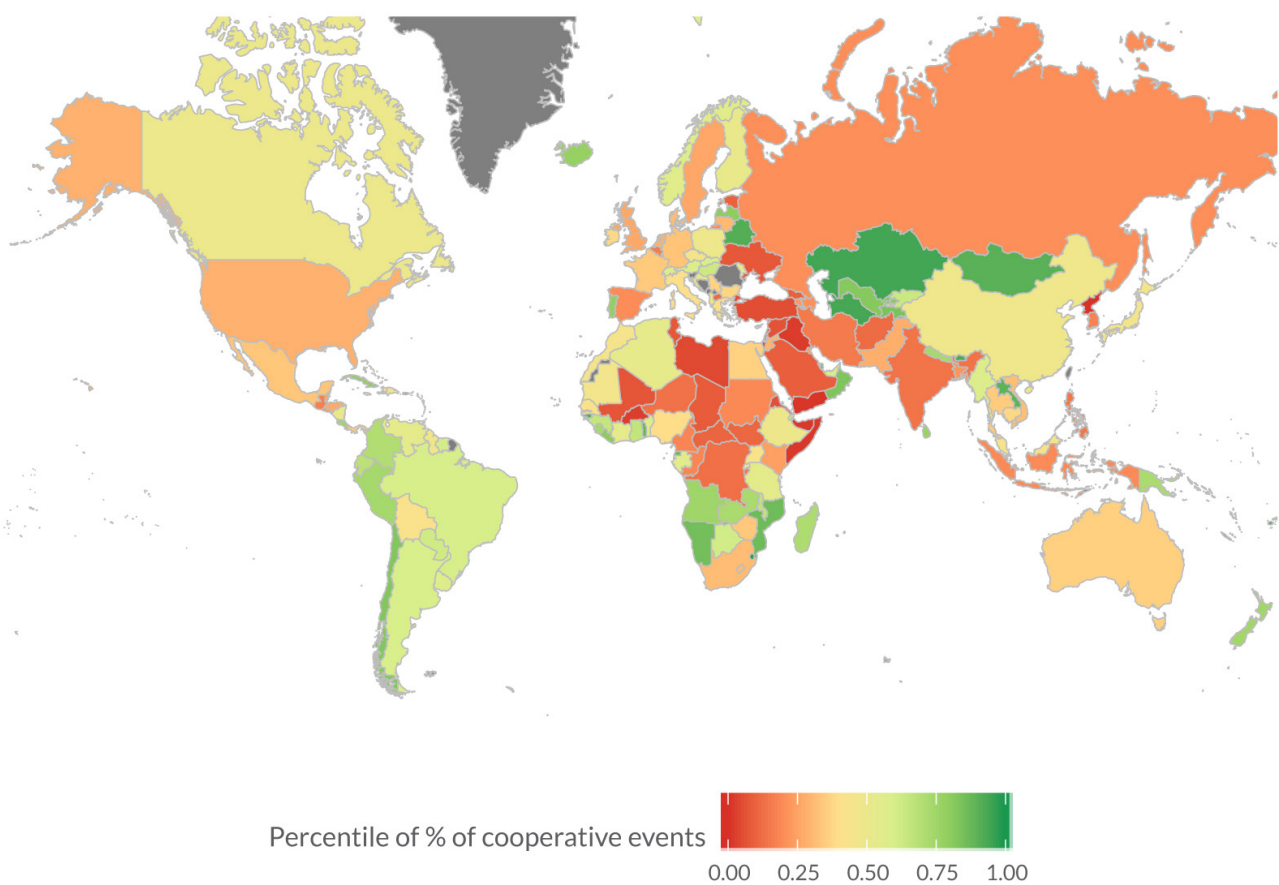
2.3 Trends Over Space

In this section, we take a closer look at how ratios of cooperative versus conflictual events play out geographically, rather than over time, with the visual support of world maps.

Average Goldstein Scores in 2016

Figure 2.11 shows the countries that have the highest percentage of conflictual events in dark red and those with the highest percentage of cooperative events in dark green.

Figure 2.11 Percentile of cooperative events by countries as a source actor (GDELT, 2016)



The following table summarizes this information, showing the top-20 most and least cooperative countries as measured by proportions of cooperative versus conflictual events.

We see that the most cooperative countries tend to be micro-states in various parts of the world,<sup>16</sup> whereas we find a surprising amount of Western ‘Allies’ in the left column of

**The most cooperative countries tend to be micro-states in various parts of the world.**

16. This might be an unexpected corollary of Peter Katzenstein’s thesis that small states have to be more flexible to be successful in world politics. Peter Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

the least cooperative countries (such as Palestine, Iraq and Israel). In Europe, the most cooperative states are Belarus (92%), Latvia (80.5%), Portugal (79.6%) and Iceland (78.5%). The least least cooperative ones are Ukraine (7.5%), Estonia (10%) and Belgium (16%).

**Figure 2.12 Top-20 most and least cooperative countries in the world in 2016**

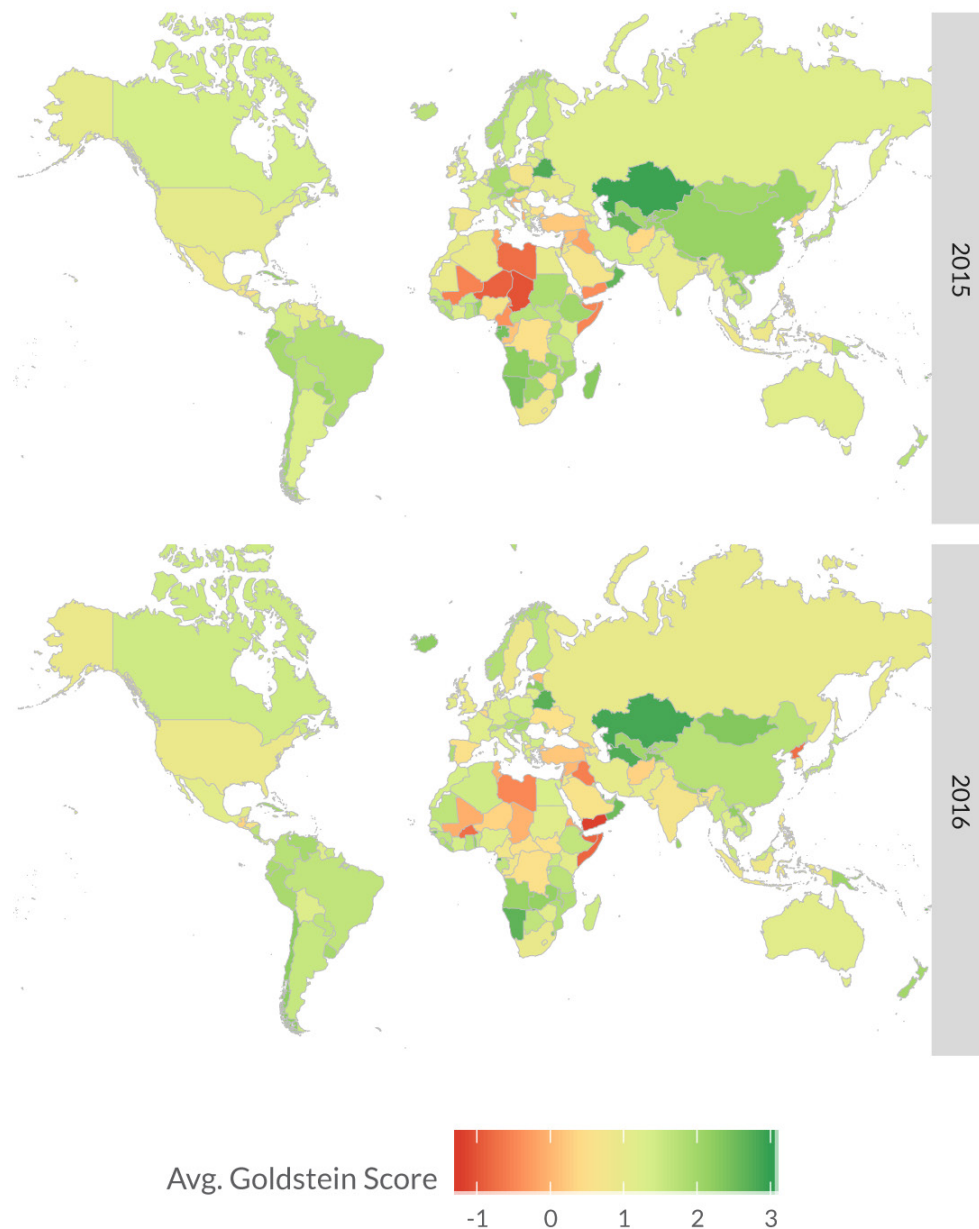
Country	% of Cooperative Events per country	Country	% of Cooperative Events per country
Occupied Palestinian Territory	0%	Wallis and Futuna Islands	100%
North Korea	0.50%	Tuvalu	99.50%
Yemen	1%	Saint Helena	99%
Somalia	1.50%	Swaziland	98.50%
Iraq	2%	Palau	98%
Burkina Faso	2.50%	Cook Islands	97.50%
Lebanon	3%	Samoa	97%
Israel	3.50%	Dominica	96.50%
Maldives	4%	Andorra	96%
Libya	4.50%	Sao Tome and Principe	95.50%
Bahrain	5%	Kazakhstan	95%
Turkey	5.50%	Turkmenistan	94.50%
Eritrea	6%	Fiji	94%
Syria	6.50%	Guinea-Bissau	93.50%
Mali	7%	Bhutan	93%
Ukraine	7,50%	Anguilla	92.50%
Tunisia	8%	Belarus	92%
Chad	8,50%	Saint Kitts-Nevis	91,50%
Saudi Arabia	9%	Mongolia	91%
Georgia	9,50%	Vanuatu	90,50%

**2015 Vs. 2016**

When we compare the geographical spread of conflict and cooperation in the world between the years 2015 and 2016, we find little change. The global AGS declined by a very small amount,<sup>17</sup> while the number of overall more cooperative states increased by one. The most striking findings are the improvements of the situation in various African regions and rising tensions in the Middle East. We note an overall improvement of Goldstein scores in Northern, Western and Central Africa, especially in Niger, Mali and Libya. Cameroon and Chad have also improved their scores. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in negative Goldstein scores in Somalia. A startling example of this trend from the Middle East area is Yemen.

**The most striking findings are the improvements of the situation in various African regions and rising tensions in the Middle East.**

**Figure 2.13 Average Goldstein scores in the entire world (GDELT, 2015 and 2016)**

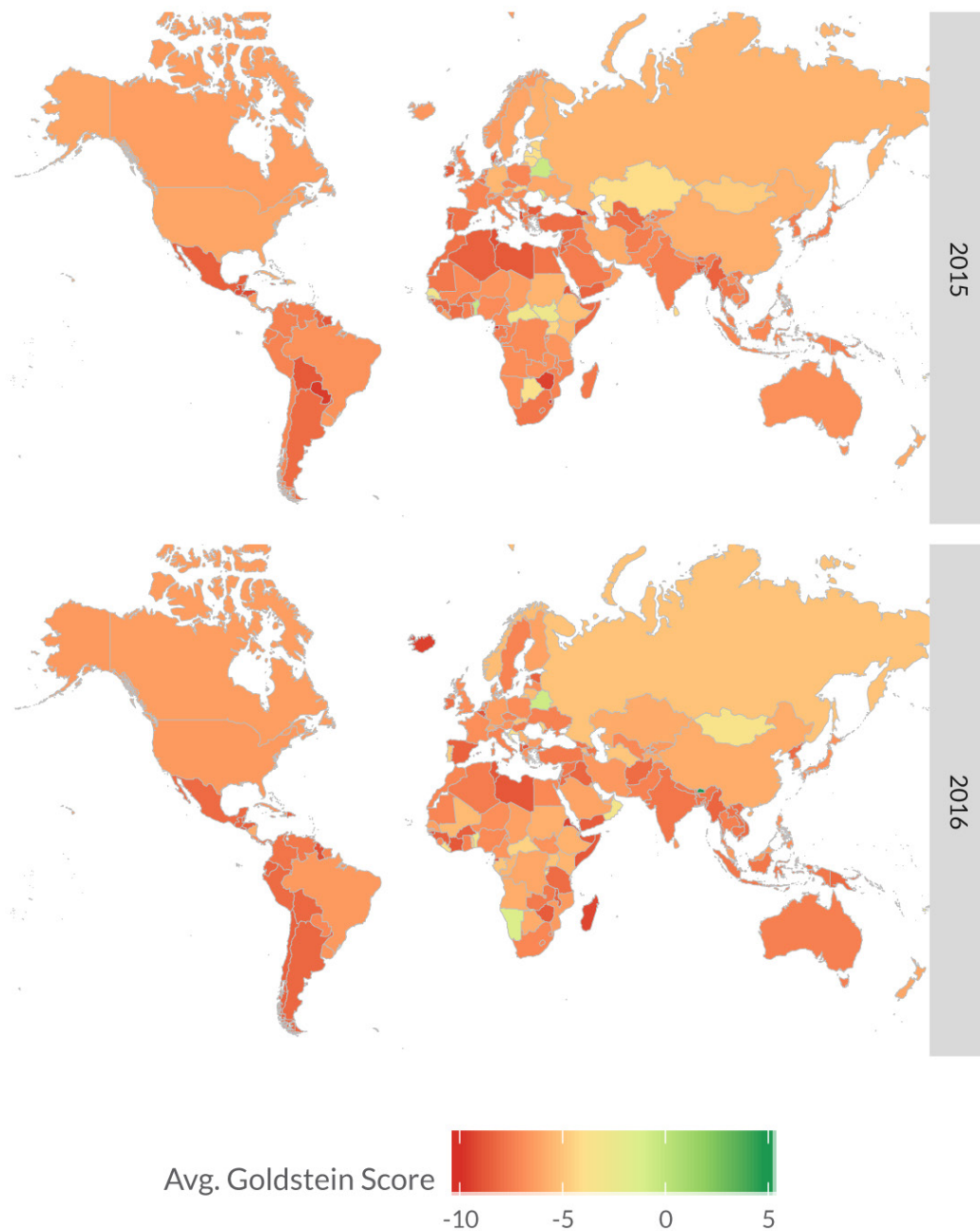


17. Only in terms of hundredths: the score of 1.43 in 2015 decreased to 1.42 in 2016.

### Average Military Goldstein Scores by Region

Taking a closer look at AGS in the *military* domain only (Figure 2.14), we see a slight decrease in the overall level of tension. The *military* AGS in 2015 was -7 and -6.8 in 2016. It is worth mentioning that during both years, the countries with higher negative Goldstein scores between -5 to -10 prevailed compared to the number of countries ranging in the segment from -0 to -5.

**Figure 2.14** Average *military* Goldstein scores in the entire world (GDELT, 2015 and 2016)



The average *military* Goldstein scores have been changing differently across world regions. In Central and South America, the majority of countries experienced an increase in negativity in frames of up to 1 additional Goldstein score, specifically Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia,

Venezuela, Costa Rica, Guyana, Uruguay, Panama. A few countries in the region had higher scores in 2016, particularly Brazil, Bolivia and Suriname. The most significant increase occurred in Paraguay, from -9.6 to -7.1 over the past year.

The *military* AGS are quite high in North America and the Caribbean: during both years they range from -5 to -10. The most negative score of -10 was reached by Anguilla in 2015 and by Saint Kitts-Nevis in 2016. Both Canada (-6.4) and the USA (-6.5) experienced a slight decimal increase in 2016. In countries such as Mexico (-8.2), Guatemala (-9.2) and Honduras (-8.6), which happened to be among the ones with the most negative scores in 2015, a similar decimal decrease took place in 2016.

Regarding Europe, a rise in negative *military* Goldstein scores can be observed, especially in its central part. The negative scores have grown exceptionally in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Also Iceland's score has risen radically, from -6.6 in 2015 up to -9.5 in 2016. The slight decrease is observed in the area of the "Foggy Albion"; the scores in Ireland have changed from -8.5 to -7.1 and from -7.2 to -6.9 in Great Britain.

Throughout Africa, the *military* Goldstein scores worsened almost ubiquitously in 2016. The scores have reached -9 in Eritrea and Madagascar. The situation did, however, improve in Gambia (from -6.4 to -2.4) and Namibia (from -6.9 to -1.2).

In the Middle East area, the indexes of negativity tend to fluctuate. They decreased by 1 point in such Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The biggest decrease took place in Oman, from -6.4 to -3.1.

Improvement in *military* Goldstein scores can be seen in the Asian region, especially in such states as Mongolia (from -4.8 to -3.4), Tajikistan (from -6.7 to -5.9), Malaysia (from -7.2 to -6.5) and Bangladesh (from -8.7 to -7.9).

In the Oceania region the biggest progress is observed in Tuvalu, which reached the score of 0.4 in 2016, significantly moving up from -6.3 in 2015. Goldstein scores have undergone a slight deterioration from -6.8 to -7.5 in Australia and from -5.9 to -6.1 in New Zealand.

### ***Overall Average Goldstein Scores by Region***

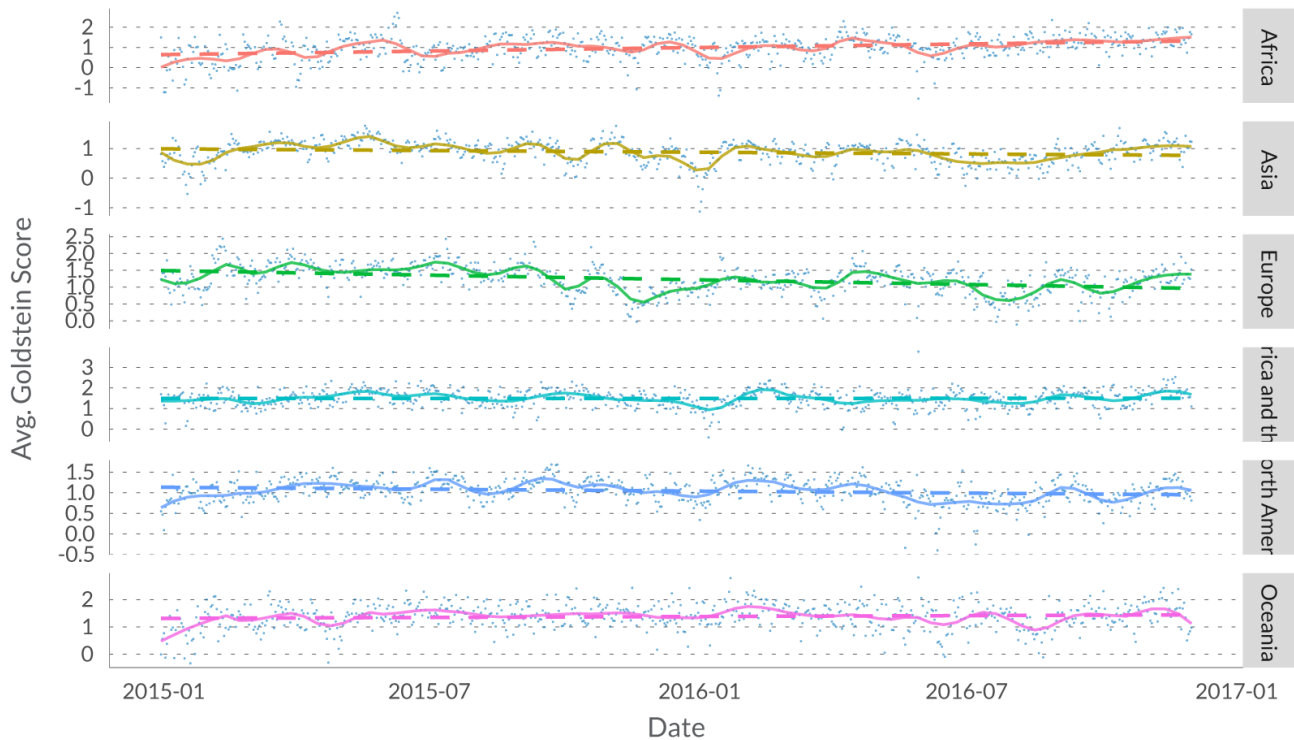
In 2015-2016, the overall Goldstein scores for all the world regions have been positive. AGS have been oscillating between 0.7 and 1.8. Of the 6 regions represented in Fig 2.15, the number of trend lines going downwards and upwards is equal: the ones for North America, Asia and Europe show a negative trend, while those for Latin America and Caribbean, Africa and Oceania have a positive slope. However, examined closer, some of these trend lines move in the opposite direction in 2016, which will be addressed further below.

The AGS for the presented regions in 2015-2016 have been the following: Latin America and the Caribbean (1.5), Oceania (1.3), Europe (1.2), North America (1), Africa (0.97), Asia (0.87).

The highest average score is demonstrated by Latin America and the Caribbean region (1.5). One of the reasons for this could be the fact that during the observed period, the number of events with negative scores amounted to a mere 51 out of 5058. Accordingly, the slope coefficient is 0.0000141539. The Latin America and the Caribbean region has also and similar to Africa as described below, demonstrated a continuous trend upwards throughout 2016, with the slope coefficient of 0.000775056. The average Goldstein scores have been fluctuating without strong

spikes, thus providing a basis for a steady trend line. The most significant decrease in AGS occurred from October 2015 to January 2016, decreasing from 1.8 to 0.9, respectively. However, in February 2016, the scores improved again, reaching the value of 1.7. Since August 2016, the AGS have been increasing to 1.8.

**Figure 2.15 Average Goldstein scores broken down by region (GDEL, 2015-2016)**



**Figure 2.16 Slope coefficients for world regions for 2015-2016 and 2016 periods**

Region/Period	2000-2016	2010-2016
Africa	Strongly upwards (0.00095875)	Strongly upwards (0.00199334)
Asia	Slightly downwards (-0.000313992)	Slightly upwards (0.000500776)
Europe	Strongly downwards (-0.000754674)	Slightly downwards (-0.000336239)
Latin America and the Caribbean	Almost flat (0.0000141539)	Slightly upwards (0.000775056)
North America	Slightly downwards (-0.000259926)	Slightly downwards (-0.000706387)
Oceania	Slightly downwards (0.0000811065)	Slightly downwards (-0.000173555)



Oceania's scores jumped from 0.8 in January 2015 to 1.3 in March 2015 and – after a brief period of decline – rose to 1.6 in June 2015. Since then the scores have been oscillating between 1.6 and 1.3 until February 2016. After a slow decrease to an average value of 1 in August 2016, the scores moved upwards until December. The slope coefficient for 2015-2016 is 0.0000811065, which deteriorated to -0.000401521 in 2016.

Even though Oceania and Europe are close in scores, the European region has been exposed to a more drastic change in Goldstein scores over the last two years. Despite the fact that the difference in average scores in the beginning and the end of the observed period is rather insignificant (from 1 to 1.3), over the entire period, events have been obtaining scores ranging from -0.1 to 2.4. The decline in AGS from 1.6 to 0.7 in the second half of 2015 was the most drastic decrease occurring in Europe in the analyzed time period. After regaining a score of 1.3 in April 2016, a similar decrease in average scores to 0.7 occurred in August 2016. However, the scores have been increasing since then and the value of slope coefficient improved during 2016, as illustrated in Figure 2.16.

In North America, a pattern similar to the regions described above occurred in the beginning of 2015, when its AGS increased from 0.8 to 1.1. Another similarity are the fluctuations of scores and their major decrease to 0.9 in December 2015. Subsequently, the graph again repeats the changes in scores of the analogue period in the European region: Scores start to drop from 1 in May to 0.7 in August and then rise again to 1.1 in the end of November.

The African region shows improving scores. In January 2015, it started out with the negative Goldstein score of -1.2, with the average indicator for the beginning of January being 0.4. There was then notable growth to 1.1 in May 2015. Between May 2015 and April 2016, the Goldstein scores were oscillating between 0.7 and 1.2. Following a significant drop in June 2016, the score increased to 1.4 on average in the end of November. The slope coefficient for Africa is 0.00095875.

Asia also seems to have similar fluctuations in AGS as Africa, however with more pronounced ups and downs, which might explain why this region has the lowest average Goldstein scores for the two-year period of 2015 and 2016. Starting with 0.5 in January, the score reached a value of 1.1 in April, then declined to 0.5 in December 2015, swung back upwards to 0.9 in May 2016 and finally moved downwards again to 0.4 in the beginning of August. As for the rest of the regions, the AGS in Asia increased in the end of the observed period. This might have contributed to the improvement of the slope coefficient's value in 2016. The slope coefficient is -0.000313992 and shows a downward sloping trend line.

All of the regions seem to have similar fluctuation patterns for 2015-2016. In 2015 there is an upward trend in the first quarter, followed by a decrease in AGS towards the end of the year. Despite the oscillations of scores in the first half of 2016, one of the trends shared across all of the regions is that the AGS have been increasing steadily in the second half of the year. The biggest differences between the regions were in number of events and the duration of rises and falls.

## 2.4 Role of the Netherlands

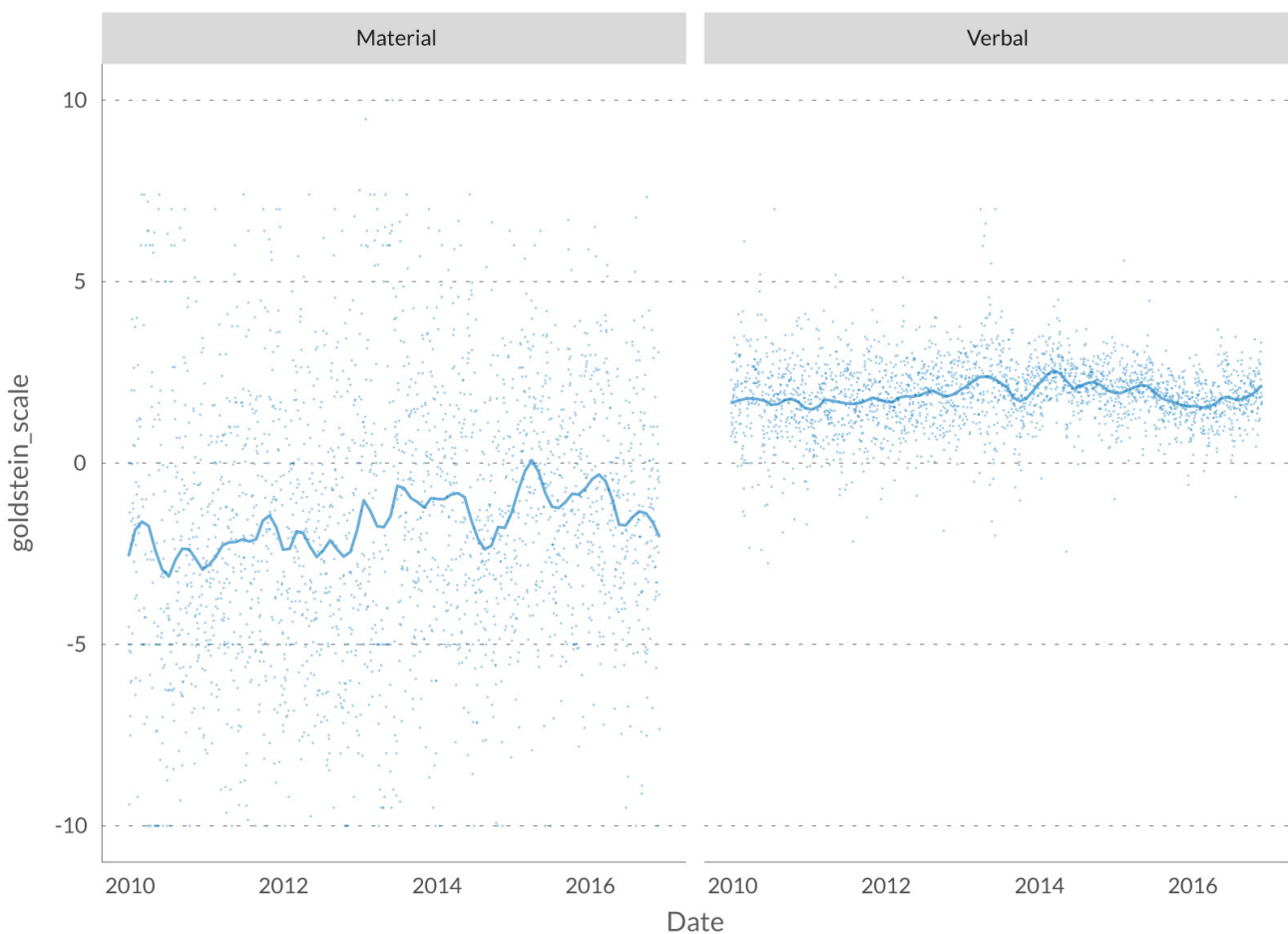
In the final section of this chapter, we take a closer look at how the Netherlands fits in the global cooperation and conflict trends that we described. We first look at how the various countries in the world behaved towards the Netherlands in 2016 and subsequently at how the Netherlands itself treated the 'rest of the world'.

### 2.4.1 World → Netherlands

#### *Average Goldstein Scores Over Time*

From Figure 2.17 we note that other countries talked more to the Netherlands (5014) than they materially engaged with it (4872). During the observed period, the AGS for *verbal* events averaged between 1.2 to 2.7 and the trend line reveals a slightly upward tendency. The slope coefficient for *verbal* events was 0.0000817387 and the AGS for the whole period in the *verbal* sphere was 1.9. When looking specifically at the 2015-2016 time frame, we observe a slightly downward trend: the slope coefficient was -0.000295536 and the AGS was 1.8. The highest daily Goldstein score was 7 and occurred once in 2010 and twice in 2013.

**Figure 2.17 Average Goldstein scores with the Netherlands as target country (GDEL, 2010-2016)**



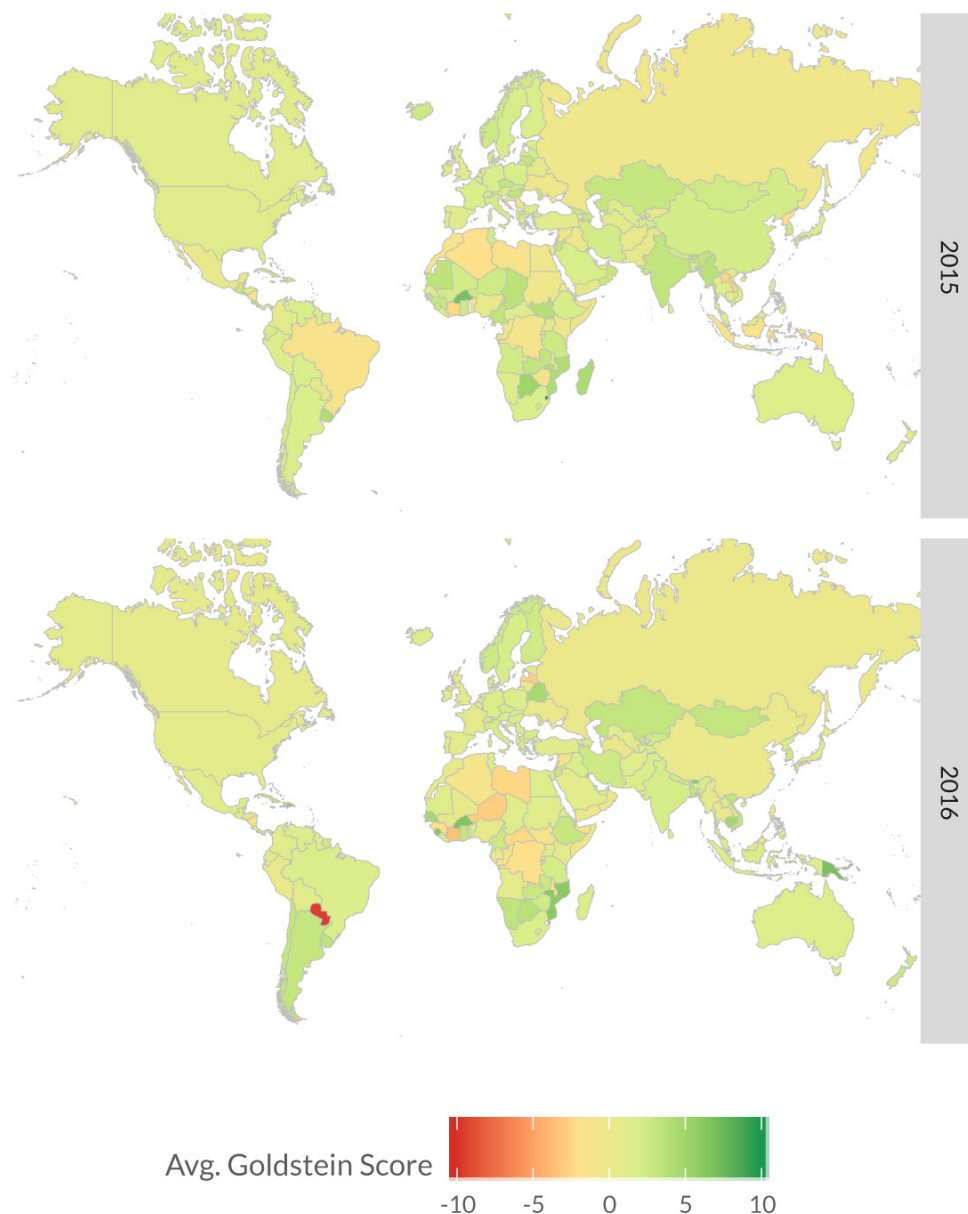


In contrast to *verbal* events, events in the *material* sphere varied more along the Goldstein scale during the analyzed period. On average, the Goldstein scores have been oscillating in between -1.6 and 0.4. The number of events with negative Goldstein scores was significantly exceeding those in the *verbal* sphere, constituting 67% of all *material* events. The AGS in 2010-2016 was -1.6, however, the slope coefficient was 0.000696491, showing a fairly strong upwards trend. Even though the AGS during 2015-2016 improved to the value of -0.9, the trend line for just these two showed a slight decline (and the slope coefficient was -0.00158983). We can therefore confirm observations in our previous editions that the Netherlands continues to enjoy a relatively propitious position in international interactions.

**The Netherlands continues to enjoy a relatively propitious position in international interactions.**

### ***Geographical Representation for 2015-2016***

**Figure 2.18 Average Goldstein scores with the Netherlands as target country (GDELT, 2015 and 2016)**



Over the past two years, the geographical details behind these trends have slightly changed. The most conflictual countries in 2015, such as Burkina Faso (from -10 in 2015 to 0 in 2016), Swaziland (from -5 to 1), Belize (from -3 to 1) and Morocco (from -2 to -0.5) saw a significant improvement in their AGS towards the Netherlands. The new most conflictual countries towards the Netherlands in 2016 proved to be were the Marshall Islands (-10), Sao Tome and Principe (-10) and Guatemala (-7). The notable increase in the number of conflictual countries towards the Netherlands – from 10 in 2015 to 24 in 2016 – might cause some concern, although we would like to reiterate that these are averages based on sometimes extremely low numbers of events. We report them for the sake of consistency, but urge our readers not to draw excessive conclusions from these.

The most conspicuous finding in Figure 2.18 is the improvement in the scores for two great powers for which we had been reporting negative *material* scores in recent editions. Russia remains in the realm of negative AGS, but after a few particularly negative years with an absolute low (since 1979) in March 2016 (at -5.6), its score towards the Netherlands shot up to almost -0.1 and stabilized at around -0.2 in the end of 2016. The second great power with an improved *factual* behavior towards the Netherlands is Brazil. After a decline between 2011 and an absolute (again since 1979) low in February 2015, Brazil is now back in positive territory with an AGS above 1.8.

Other visually striking observation from Figure 2.18 is that we see Africa coloring redder on the map in 2016 than in 2015. A number of African countries started behaving more negatively towards the Netherlands last year. They, first of all, includes some the countries whose scores are radically negative, e.g. Sao Tome and Principe (-10), Libya (from -0.2 to -5), Cape Verde (from 0.33 to -5) and Ivory Coast (from -1.4 to -4). Second, there is a range of countries which were neutral during 2015, but became more negative during 2016. These include, for instance, Guinea (from 0.3 to -3.3), Mali (from 0.8 to -3.2), Central African Republic (from 1.3 to -1.6) and Lebanon (from 0.9 to -1.8). Another type of countries with deteriorating Goldstein scores are those that had a fall in positive scores between 2015 and 2016, such as Botswana (from 3.2 to 0.3), Liberia (from 2.2 to 0.3) and People's Republic of the Congo (from 1.1 to 0.2). The countries that had the highest positive scores in 2015 have also faced a significant drop, e.g. Madagascar (from 8.5 to 1.7) and Namibia (from 6.9 to 3.9).

When looking closer at the event codes, there were 31640 events with the Netherlands as the target country during 2015, only 18% of which were assertive. The majority of assertive events were represented by the event codes 36 'Express intent to meet or negotiate' (31%), 61 'Cooperate economically' (10%), 111 'Criticize or denounce' (8.5%), 112 'Accuse, not specified below' (7%).

Great powers – which, in this year's report, include China, Europe, India, Japan, Russia and the USA – produced 39% of all the events with the Netherlands as the target country in 2015. 19% of these events were assertive. Therefore, only 7% of all events targeted at Netherlands were assertive events initiated by great powers. The two most assertive great powers towards Netherlands in 2015 were the USA (72%) and Russia (16%). The greatest amount of assertive events generated by great powers was categorized under event code 36 'Express intent to meet or negotiate', constituting 31%.

In 2016, the number of assertive events with the Netherlands as the target country has slightly increased with respect to 2015, constituting 19% of the 30731 events reported. The majority of assertive events were represented by the event codes 36 'Express intent to meet or negotiate' (27%), 61 'Cooperate economically' (11%), 112 'Accuse, not specified below' (10%), 111 'Criticize or denounce' (7%).

As for the great powers, the number of events targeted at the Netherlands that they initiated has increased to 40% in 2016. The number of great power assertive events towards the Netherlands has not changed in terms of percentage (7%), although quantitatively it has decreased by 151 events. Once again, the biggest number of assertive events generated by great powers was reflected by event code 36 'Express intent to meet or negotiate', constituting 31%.

#### 2.4.2 The Netherlands → World

##### *Average Goldstein Scores Over Time*

Figure 2.19 Average Goldstein scores with the Netherlands as source country (GDEL, 2010-2016)

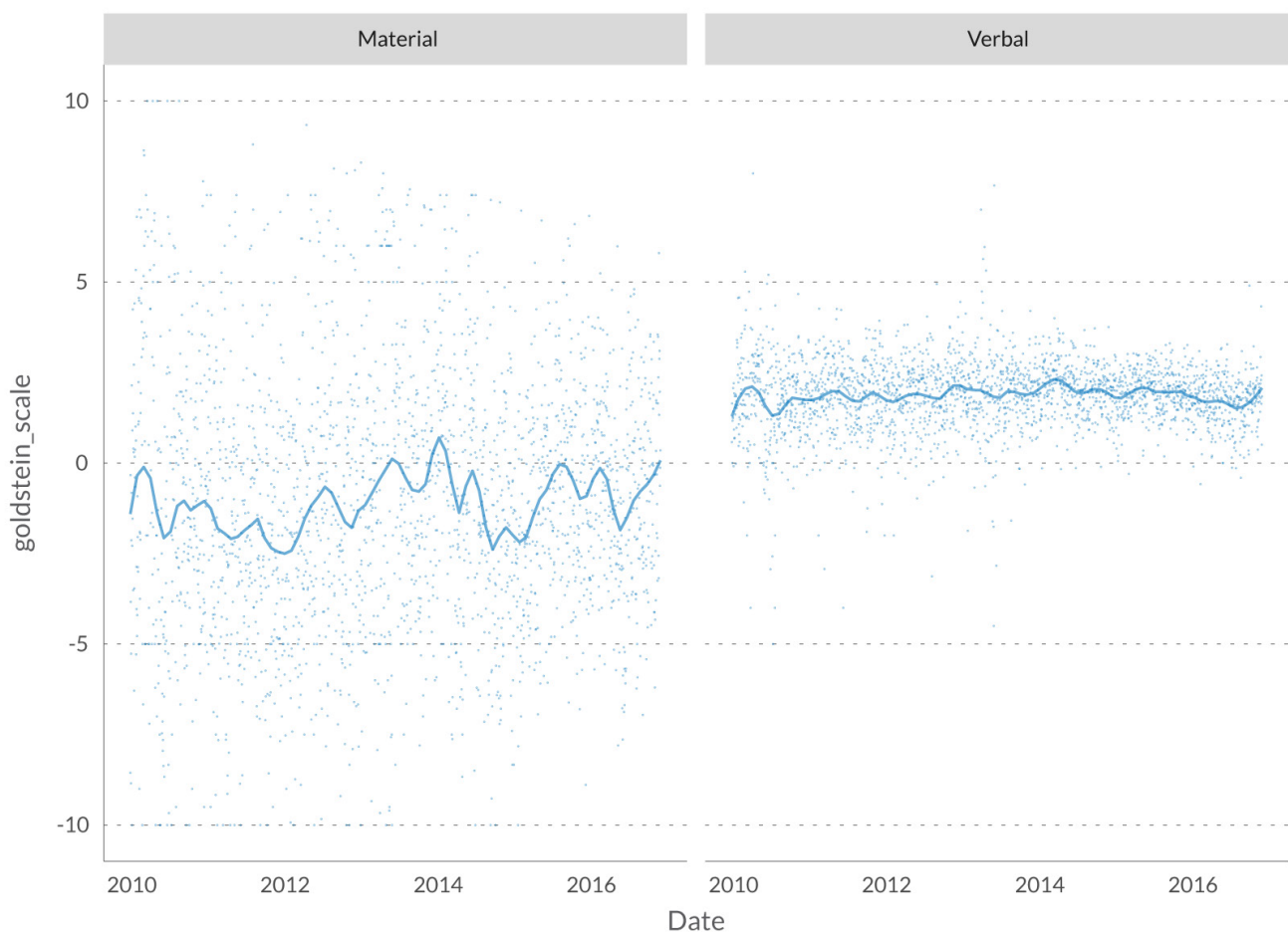


Figure 2.19 reveals that the AGS of *verbal* events vacillates between 0 and 5, whereas the *material* events are more scattered along the entire Goldstein scale. The data shows that during 2010-2016 the AGS for *verbal* events with the Netherlands as the source country was 1.8, whereas for the *material* ones it was -1.3. The AGS for only assertive events in *verbal* and *material* spheres were the same: 1.8 and -1.3 respectively.

The main finding here is that the Netherlands, already one of the more cooperative countries in the world, became even more cooperative in 2010-2016. The overall trend line for the entire 2010-2016 period trends slightly upwards, with a slope coefficient of 0.000205706. The upwards tendency continued in 2015-2016 when the slope coefficient equaled 0.00111124.

**The Netherlands, already one of the more cooperative countries in the world, became even more cooperative in 2010-2016.**

The AGS of *material* events for the whole period was -1.3, with events with negative Goldstein scores constituting 60% of *material* events. The aAGS lied between -3 and 2.1 on the Goldstein scale. The highest peak value of AGS (2.1) was observed on March 17, 2010. It was due to cooperation with Afghanistan in the *military* domain, with code 62 'Cooperate militarily'. The lowest point in the AGS (-2.8) was on January 23, 2015, due to the 161 CAMEO code event 'Reduce or break diplomatic relations' as the Netherlands recalled its ambassador from Indonesia in connection with the execution of a Dutch citizen. Despite a large number of events with negative Goldstein scores, events in the *material* sphere were averaging between -2.7 and 0.3.

As for the *verbal* events, they were fluctuating between 0.9 to 2.5 during the observed period. The events with negative Goldstein scores constituted 3% of all *verbal* events for the whole period. This is a positive indicator considering the fact that, as our previous graphs show, the majority of interaction between states is in the *verbal* sphere. The highest and the lowest daily Goldstein scores of 8 and -5 both occurred in 2010: on April 12, 2010 and July 16, 2010, respectively. However, in terms of daily negative Goldstein scores, after 2013 they did not exceed -1. Furthermore, the trend line for *verbal* events demonstrated a slight upwards tendency with a slope coefficient of 0.0000362738. However, as we also note in the earlier graphs, during 2015-2016 there was a decrease in the *verbal* sphere, therefore the direction of the trend line of AGS with the Netherlands as the source country also changed downwards, while the slope coefficient deteriorated to -0.000475356. When we examine events in *verbal* sphere during the last two years, we note that they averaged around 1.3 and 2.1.

### **Geographical Representation for 2015-2016**

Also geographically the Netherlands became even more cooperative in 2016 than in 2015, as it obtained positive AGS for 86% of the world's countries compared to 82% in 2015. Paraguay was the country with the lowest AGS (-9.5), followed by the Marshall Islands (-4.7) and Ivory Coast (-3.4). Among the countries with the highest positive scores were Papua New Guinea (7), Sierra Leone (6.4) and – the country which demonstrated a significant increase – Burkina Faso (6.6). We again stress that these are averages of extremely low numbers of events.

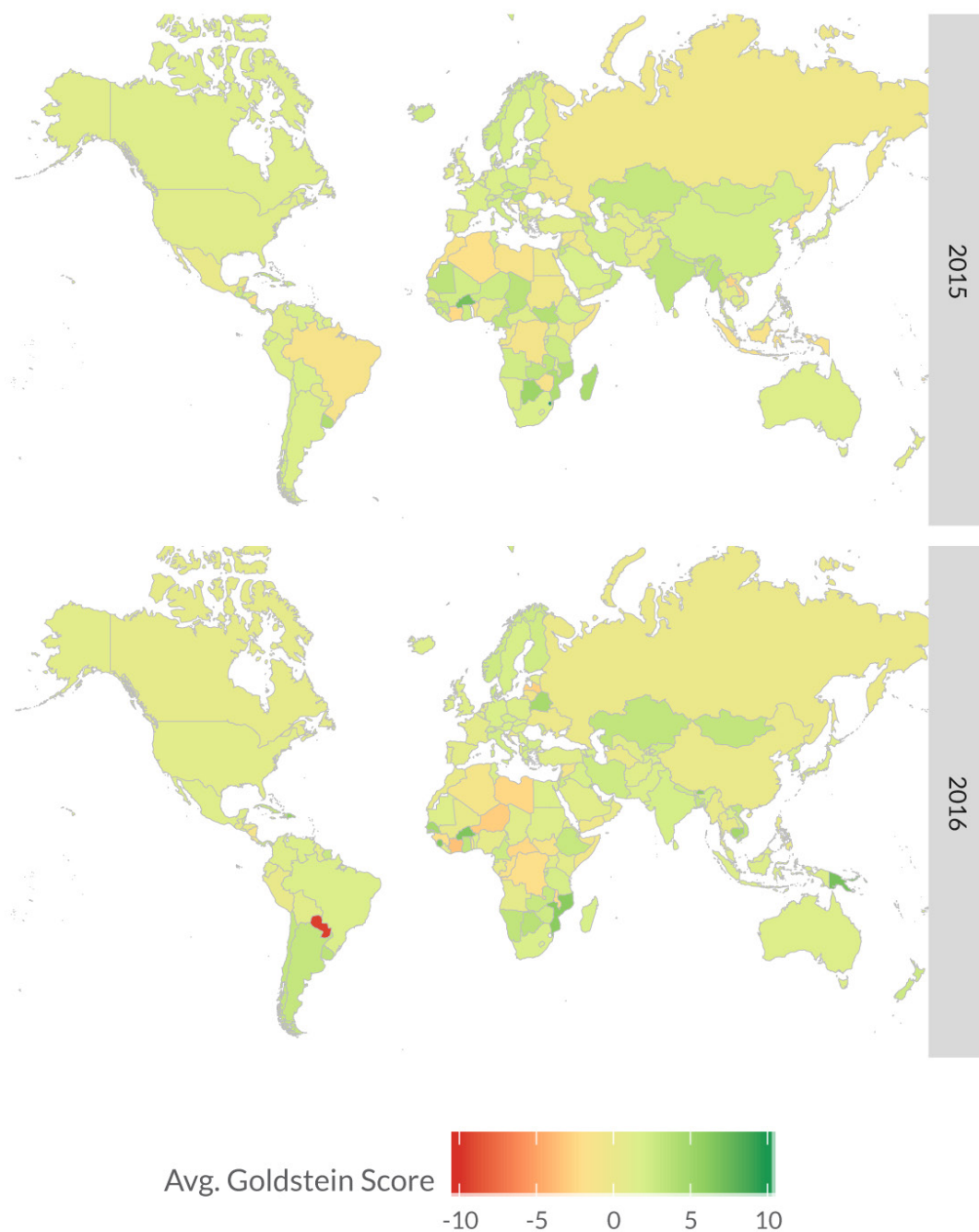
What is of more interest, however, are a number of noticeable improvements in the scores for the following target countries with the Netherlands as source country from 2015 to 2016: Brazil (from -1.13 to 1.80), Mexico (from 0.34 to 1.43), Morocco (from -1.20 to 0.37), Sudan (from -0.33 to 1.03), Belarus (from 0.87 to 4.67), Russia (from -0.26 to 0.11), Indonesia (from -1.35 to 1.55), Laos (from -2.50 to 1.80) and, interestingly, North Korea (from -1.68 to 1.83).

Visually striking are a number of deteriorations in AGS on the African continent: Libya (from -1.13 to -2.40), Niger (from 2.55 to -2.9), Central African Republic (from 1.38 to -2.34), Democratic Republic of the Congo (from -0.86 to -1.93), Guinea (from 2.99 to -1.84), Ivory Coast (from -2.32 to -3.48) and Malawi (from 1.77 to -2). Scores experienced a slight drop in a few other countries as well, for

instance in Syria (from -0.35 to -0.60), Yemen (from 1.01 to -0.29) and Peru (from 1.62 to 0.32).

The Netherlands continues to maintain positive relations with all of the great powers with the exception of Russia. While relations with Russia are improving in both directions (RUS → NLD and NLD → RUS), we note that this relationship still shows negative scores in our data. Also, the Netherlands has a much more positive *factual* attitude towards Russia than vice-versa. For all other great powers, Dutch attitudes have chilled somewhat: China (from 2.25 to 0.24), Japan (from 1.54 to 1.24), India (from 3.32 to 2.16) and the USA (from 1.24 to 1.02). All of these still remain in the positive AGS 'zone', however.

**Figure 2.20 Average Goldstein scores with the Netherlands as source country (GDEL, 2015 and 2016)**





When looking closer at the event codes, there were 34453 events with the Netherlands as the source country during 2015, of which 19% were assertive. The majority of the assertive events were represented by the event codes 36 'Express intent to meet or negotiate' (28%), 71 'Provide economic aid' (11%), 112 'Accuse, not specified below' (9%) and 111 'Criticize or denounce' (7%). In 2015, out of all events with the Netherlands as source country, 8% were targeted at great powers and 43% of assertive events as well.

In 2016, the number of assertive events with the Netherlands as the source country has slightly decreased in absolute terms, but remained at 19% out of the total 33681 events reported. The majority of the assertive events were represented by the event codes 36 'Express intent to meet or negotiate' (27%), 112 'Accuse, not specified below' (11%), 111 'Criticize or denounce' (10%), 61 'Cooperate economically' (7%). The highest number of assertive events targeting great powers were represented by the event codes 36 'Express intent to meet or negotiate' both in 2015 (31%) and 2016 (24%).

## 2.5 Conclusion

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This chapter analyzed current global trends in conflict and cooperation as part of the HCSS contribution to the inter-agency Strategic Monitor of the Dutch government and with a particular focus on the role of the Netherlands.

We find that overall, cooperative events significantly prevail over conflictual incidences in the world today. At the same time, the share of conflict events has risen over the past fifteen years – from 15% of total observed events in 2000 to 20% in 2016. This drastic increase is striking and is especially disconcerting when viewed in conjunction with other conflict-driving factors and trends mentioned in other chapters of this year's report.

The majority of conflictual events occurring today are found in the *security*, *military* and *legal* domains, as opposed to *economic*, *diplomatic* and *informational* domains, in which more cooperative events occur. Moreover, we find that the majority of *verbal* – as opposed to *material* – events are cooperative, yet *verbal* conflict events show an upward trend. Conversely, in the *material* sphere, there are slightly more conflictual events. Looking at the relative proportions of *verbal* and *material* events, we find that, while states still talk the talk of international cooperation, they seem increasingly unwilling or, perhaps, unable to to walk the walk.

Furthermore, it isn't the smaller political players whose behaviors have become increasingly conflictual over recent years. Great powers are frequently responsible for initiating conflict events. Numerous disagreements between Russia and the United States and its allies, continuing instability in the MENA region and activity by terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State are the most notable driving influences of the downward trend in cooperation and upward trend in conflict witnessed since the early 2000s. Furthermore, several important Western 'allies' – such as Iraq, Israel, Turkey and Saudi Arabia – are among the world's least cooperative states and run greater risk of pulling its allies into escalating events today as a result. In contrast, the states most resilient to this trend and continuing to behave overwhelmingly cooperatively are largely micro-states – such as the Wallis and Futuna Islands, Tuvalu, or Saint Helena.

Almost as though it were insulated from these choppy currents, overall behavior towards the Netherlands remains positive. Especially in terms of *material* events this fundamentally positive



attitude has improved since 2010 and it shows an upward trend over the past two years. When we look at individual countries, we note the improvement in the Netherlands' relations with Russia and Brazil, with which – for different reasons – its relationship had witnessed a slump before. However, despite this improvement Russia remains in negative AGS territory. Brazil now again shows positive figures. The main damper on this positive story is that as of last year, we witness more African countries displaying conflictual behavior towards the Netherlands, with especially Madagascar and Namibia jumping out.

The reverse picture – i.e. Dutch behavior directed at the rest of world – remains equally buoyant overall. Already one of the more cooperative countries in the world, the Netherlands became overall even more cooperative since 2010 and that positive trend continued over the past two years. We find the Netherlands with positive AGS vis-à-vis 86% of countries in 2016, a percentage even higher than that of 82% in 2015. This is driven by some noticeable improvements in 2016 for countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Morocco, Belarus, Russia, Indonesia, Laos and even North Korea. But also here, we see Africa standing out in a negative sense, especially Libya, Niger, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Malawi. We also note that Dutch behavior towards four of the five great powers – excluding Europe, of which the Netherlands forms part – have chilled: towards China fairly significantly (from 2.25 to 0.24), only slightly so towards Japan (from 1.54 to 1.24), India (from 3.32 to 2.16) and the USA (from 1.24 to 1.02). The one exception here is Russia, with whom *factual* relations are improving even though they remain negative overall, with the Netherlands having a much more positive *factual* attitude towards Russia than vice-versa.

Summing up, we are happy to report this year again that the Netherlands' position in the ebb and flow of international interactions remains a healthily positive one. It remains to be seen whether this positive attitude will prove sustainable in the years to come.



3





# **Nowcasting Geodynamics – Great Powers and Pivoting**

## Key Take-Aways

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- » As a group, great powers are neither more active nor more assertive than non-great powers. Their share in global assertiveness is lower than their share in global population, GDP and trade. Yet great power assertiveness does trend upwards – especially in recent years. And this is – worryingly – especially the case with its most dangerous type: *factual* negative *military* assertiveness.
- » The USA remains the single most assertive great power in the world, although its assertiveness has been more subdued during the Obama administration.
- » Our new approach to 'Europe' shows it to be the second most assertive great power. This is due to fact that we measure 'Europe' differently this year – as the cumulative external assertiveness of all 28 member states (E28) towards the rest of the world.
- » We this year, for the first time, include a new dataset that attempts to measure countries' international influence potential – the Global Influence Index (GII). The most striking finding here is Europe's unmatched influence potential. Our reading of this outcome is that it highlights the enormous gap between Europe's potential and actual influence.
- » Our datasets highlight China's economic ascendance, as it surpassed the USA's economic influence in 2015, and Russia's continued military power. Japan and India remain the 'odd men out', lagging behind the other great powers in terms of both influence and assertiveness.
- » Alongside our focus on great powers, we continue to track the geodynamics of a number of selected pivot states. The part of our analysis capturing these dynamics from the vantage point of great powers again confirms the enormous (potential) 'attraction' of Europe, conceptualized as E28, vis-à-vis pivot states. The USA scores significantly lower and it is especially the increasing influence scores of China as well as Russia that capture our attention.
- » We also looked at geodynamics from the point of view of pivot states, which we assigned to five categories – aligning, distancing, pivoting, stable and triangulating – based on changes in their positioning vis-à-vis great powers. Almost a third – 14 out of 35 pivot states – can be categorized as 'distancing' with respect to E28. Among these, for Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan and Venezuela, a movement towards China can be observed. The second largest group are 'stable' pivot states, including for instance Turkey and Afghanistan, which do not display any shifts out of the E28 sphere of influence.

- » The Netherlands continues to punch above its weight in the global web of influence: in the GII dataset it scores higher than great powers like Japan or India (mostly due to Japan and India's low scores on *security*). The Dutch influence is the by far the strongest in the *economic* realm.
- » We find that the Netherlands experienced the biggest increases in its global influence in the heydays of European integration. We submit this is a yet another important new data point in the debate about the relative merits of European integration for the Netherlands.
- » The Netherlands has the greatest influence on Belgium, Germany, the UK, Portugal and Greece. Outside of Europe – and with less than half of the amount of influence – we find Chile, Turkey and Indonesia. The country with the largest influence on the Netherlands is Germany, followed by France, the UK, the USA, Belgium and Italy.



### 3.1 Introduction

HCSS introduced the two terms ‘nowcasting’ and ‘geodynamics’ in the last version of our contribution to the Dutch government’s Strategic Monitor.<sup>1</sup> By ‘nowcasting’ – as opposed to forecasting – we mean the process of monitoring, depicting and analyzing ongoing developments in international relations as they occur. It is our attempt to move beyond the anecdotal towards the systematic by starting to produce richly granular evidence-based time series for what is happening in the fields of international politics and security. This effort mirrors the rich – even if imperfect – datasets<sup>2</sup> that economists have been using for decades to analyze ongoing economic dynamics. By ‘geodynamics’ we mean the complex dynamics of international interactions in different fields – diplomatic, economics, legal, military, etc. By using this more ‘neutral’ term, we endeavor to stay away from often more value-laden terms like geopolitics or geoeconomics. Our primary ambition here is not ideological or theoretical but empirical, yet we hope to increasingly be able to infuse these debates with more empirical riches. In this chapter we take these two terms ‘nowcasting’ and ‘geodynamics’ in unison as we present data-based analyses of global geodynamics with a special focus on the world’s great powers and a number of smaller, yet strategically important, pivot states that (re-)align themselves towards or away from the greater powers.<sup>3</sup> The case studies on Turkey and Moldova following after this chapter zoom in on details of recent and ongoing domestic and foreign policy changes in these two crucial pivot states. Turkey’s importance stems not only from its pivotal role in the Syrian conflict and in the fight against ISIS, but also from its domestic changes and its historical position as the bridge between the West and the Middle East. The case of Moldova is highly interesting given that both EU and Russian (competing) interests are heavily invested there and because of the observable (and quite dramatic) pivoting back-and-forth that we observe there directly along a terrestrial border with the EU.

We qualify the following states as great powers: China, ‘Europe’, India, Japan, Russia, the United States. After we explain our methodological approach (section 3.2), section 3.3 presents an analysis of great power assertiveness, defined as an increase in a country’s either projected (*factual*) or professed (*rhetorical*) power.<sup>4</sup> Our analysis towards great power assertiveness in this year’s report closely mirrors the approach that was taken in analogous previous studies<sup>5</sup> – even though our evidentiary base has widened with the inclusion of a new measure of ‘influence’ that we developed in close cooperation with the Pardee Center for International Futures.

Section 3.4 moves on towards analyzing the influence of great powers on the pivot states that we have selected based on their strategic importance. Section 3.5 flips this around by looking at the pivot states’ behavior towards our six great powers. The analytical approach towards pivoting behavior in this report differs from our previous work. In that work, HCSS identified a set of states disposing of a range of strategic military, economic or ideational assets that might be coveted by other countries.<sup>6</sup> Based on a composite measure of these strategic goods and on expert judgment,<sup>7</sup>

1. Stephan De Spiegeleire, Sweijs and Bekkers, *The Wheel of Fortune*.

2. Diane Coyle, *GDP: A Brief but Affectionate History* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

3. De Spiegeleire, Sweijs and Bekkers, *The Wheel of Fortune*.

4. Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness: The Chinese and Russian Cases*. (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014), 11–14, [http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/Great\\_Powers\\_Assertiveness.pdf](http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/Great_Powers_Assertiveness.pdf).

5. De Spiegeleire et al., *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness*; Sweijs et al., *Strategic Monitor 2015*; De Spiegeleire, Sweijs and Bekkers, *The Wheel of Fortune*; Stephan De Spiegeleire, *Strategic Monitor 2016: Great Power Assertivitis* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2016), [http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_Great%20Power%20Assertivitis.pdf](http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_Great%20Power%20Assertivitis.pdf).

6. Tim Sweijs et al., *Why Are Pivot States so Pivotal?: The Role of Pivot States in Regional and Global Security*, vol. 4 (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014), [http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/Why\\_are\\_Pivot\\_States\\_so\\_Pivotal\\_The\\_Role\\_of\\_Pivot\\_States\\_in\\_Regional\\_and\\_Global\\_Security\\_C.pdf](http://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/Why_are_Pivot_States_so_Pivotal_The_Role_of_Pivot_States_in_Regional_and_Global_Security_C.pdf).

7. Web-based readers can make their own selection of pivot states based on their selection of these and other criteria of

our analysis this year includes 35 pivot states scattered all around the world. Finally, section 3.6 is devoted to the position of the Netherlands within current global geodynamics.

## 3.2 Methodology

As in previous editions our approach is highly evidence-based. We this year continue (and expand) our use of event datasets, but we also use a new dataset, the Global Influence Index, that attempts to capture the dyadic influence between countries.

### 3.2.1 Event Datasets

In previous versions of our contribution to the Strategic Monitor HCSS started using three large event databases: GDELT<sup>8</sup>, Lockheed Martin's ICEWS (Integrated Crisis Early Warning System)<sup>9</sup> and the Open Event Data Alliance's Phoenix database<sup>10</sup>. All three datasets automatically extract events from various online news sources across the globe. An event consists of a 'triplet': a source actor, an event code and a target actor. To give an idea of the scope of the datasets: just in the year 2015, GDELT contained 11 million events for the USA and 15,000 events with the Netherlands as source actor. All datasets use natural language processing (NLP) techniques to parse relevant triplets out of a sentence. Next is the usage of rich dictionaries to associate the terms encountered in the relevant part of a sentence with the appropriate actor or event code from hierarchical multi-tier lists. The term 'Indian National Congress', for instance, is recognized and recorded into the database as first-tier actor code 'IND' (i.e. India) and as third tier actor code 'INDGOVOPPTY' (i.e. Indian Government Opposition Party).

All three datasets are open-source and use the same coding scheme (CAMEO). They differ, however, in the sources they scan, the dictionaries, coding engine, deduplication method, time-span coverage, release frequency, etc.<sup>11</sup> Based on a number of audits that HCSS has performed on these datasets (one again this year), we generally<sup>12</sup> only report findings that we can corroborate with data from at least 2 of the three datasets. For reasons of economy of space, we include the data of only one of those two datasets – typically GDELT, as that remains by far the richest one of the three.

All recorded events in the CAMEO coding scheme contain certain standard elements that we can use directly in our analyses. For instance, every single one of the 200+ event codes is also identified as being *verbal* or *material*; and as conflictual, neutral or cooperative. Another important standard coding element is the Goldstein-score, which attributes to every event a score along a scale from -10 for the most conflictive events (e.g. a military attack) to +10 for the most co-operative (e.g. retreating militarily).

On top of these standard CAMEO event classes, HCSS has developed a number of additional coding classes on its own. In our work on assertiveness, we have identified the subset of all CAMEO events that we consider to be assertive. We have also categorized every event code along functional lines

strategic goods.

8. The GDELT Project, "The GDELT Project," 2016, <http://www.gdeltproject.org/>.

9. Lockheed Martin, "World-Wide Integrated Crisis Early Warning System Lockheed Martin," *Lockheed Martin*, December 2013, <http://www.lockheedmartin.com/us/products/W-ICEWS.html>.

10. Philip A. Schrodt, "Phoenix Event Data Set Documentation" February 2014, <http://openeventdata.org/datasets/phoenix/Phoenix.documentation.pdf>.

11. Refer to our stratbase comparison

12. Because of some continued anomalies with ICEWS, we felt uncomfortable applying this rule consistently, so in some occasions, we did apply to our judgment and decided to only use GDELT data.

into a coding scheme we call ‘DISMEL’, allowing us to zoom in on *diplomatic, informational, security, military, economic* and *legal* types of events. All of these coding schemes are implemented as filters in the Business Intelligence software tool we use (Tableau Software).

As a result of all of this, we can now analyze and compare the behavior and the rhetoric of every single state (and many non-state) actor(s) in the world since 1979 on a daily basis. In order to avoid statistical artifacts due to the growing number of online news outlets that are being covered in GDELT, we also apply various normalization techniques to make our findings comparable across time and across countries. In most cases, we look at the number of events that our selected filters generate (e.g. *factual* military negatively assertive events initiated by Russia as a state towards other states in a certain time period) and then represent that number as a percentage of all inter-state events in that same time period. Given the enormous amount of events in the dataset, these percentages typically are extremely low – but we caution our readers that they can still represent 100s or 1000s of singular events and so changes over time can be quite significant.

### 3.2.2 The Global Influence Index

Since we attempt to provide a yearly ‘monitoring’ report that deals with the most important trends and developments over the past year, event datasets remain our only counterweight against the oftendep and rich, but still essentially anecdotal analyses and opinions of subject matter experts. We remain keenly interested, however, in the more traditional datasets that typically aggregate national official statistics. These are more widely used in the analytical world but only become available one or two years after the reported year. This year, we are delighted to be able to draw upon a unique new data collecting and curating effort by the University of Denver’s Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures: *the Global Influence Index* (GII).

#### Influence Index Domains and Indicators

##### Economic Domain

*Bandwidth Indicators:* Total Trade, Trade Agreements

*Dependence Indicators:* Trade % Country B Trade, Trade % Country B GDP, Aid % Country B GDP, Aid % GDP

##### Security Domain

*Bandwidth Indicators:* Total Arms Transfers, Military Alliances

*Dependence Indicators:* Arms Imports Stock % Total Arms Imports, Arms Imports Stock % Country B Military Spending Stock, Military Spending Ratio

##### Political Domain

*Political Bandwidth:* Level of Representation, Intergovernmental Membership

GII tracks the levels of influence that states have on other states over time. The dataset includes 119 different *economic, political* and *security*<sup>13</sup> indicators with over 200 million individual observations between 1962-2015. Because *actual* influence is context dependent and it is extremely hard to ascertain when it occurs, the influence index does not directly measure incidences of influence. Instead, GII measures influence capacity or the *potential* influence across dyadic (i.e. country A -> country B) *economic, security* and *political* interactions.

Influence is exercised between two actors. Therefore, in order to assess the level

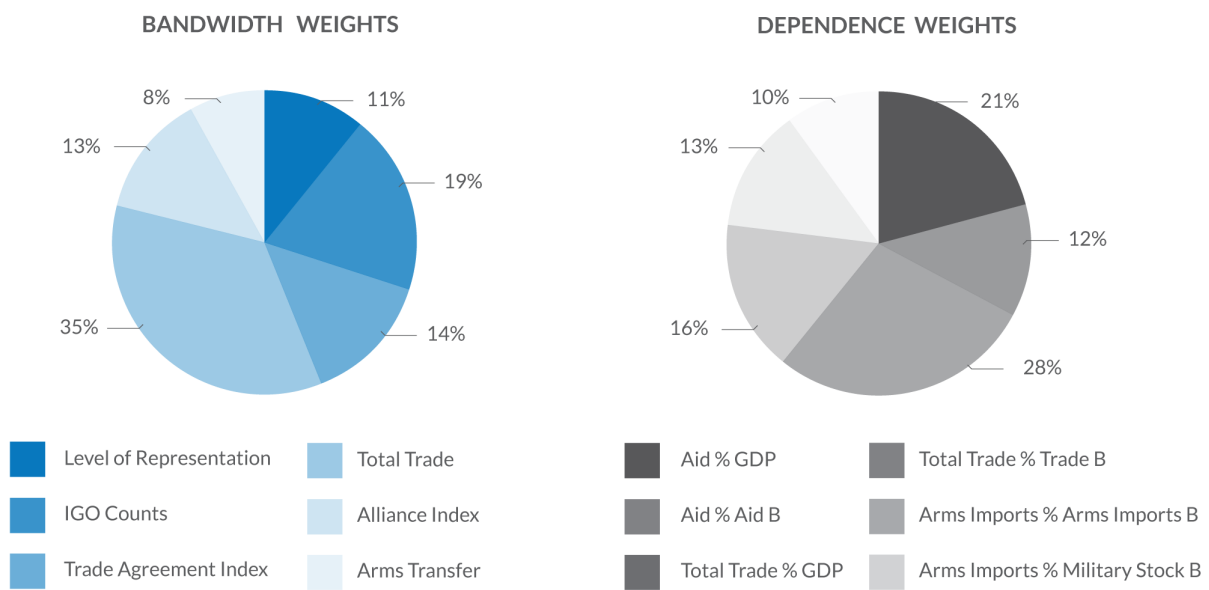
of influence of a particular state it is necessary to assess the degree of influence exerted by the *influencer* (country A, e.g. a great powers) over the *influencee* (country B, e.g. a pivot state) within a dyadic relationship. This is an asymmetrical relationship: the overall influence of country A over country B is calculated based on how dependent country A is on country B in relation to how

13. We would like to point out that in order to remain consistent, we use the label ‘security’ for the security-related indicator in the GII dataset in this chapter – even though it is primarily military in nature. Note that in our event datasets, we only focused on the military (and not also security) DISMEL-code.

dependent country B is on country A. The final influence score quantifies the overall ability of a great power to influence other states. The higher the score, the higher the degree of influence.

The overall influence index is computed by using various indicators that measure cross-border flows such as international aid and trade and shared political and institutional alignment. The GII is comprised of two subindices: Bandwidth and Dependence. Each of these subindices attempts to capture a separate aspect of influence in the *economic*, *political* and *security* domains.

**Figure 3.1 Bandwidth and dependence weights**



The *Bandwidth* sub-index is comprised of six variables which measure the magnitude of the relationship between country A and country B as reflected in the volume of the shared interactions within that dyad each year, for both bidirectional flows of e.g. trade and bidirectional ties, such as in diplomacy. These variables, which are weighted as shown in Figure 3.1, represent three important domains in which international influence is exercised: *political*, *security* and *economic*. An alternative way of looking at this sub-index is as the magnitude of potential influence.

The *Dependence* sub-index, on the other hand, measures the “direction of the flow” or the degree to which the *influencee* is dependent on the *influencer* for crucial *political*, *economic* and *security* flows. It is intended to measure the share each *influencer* has of the *influencee*’s aid, arms transfers and trade flows. This can be interpreted as the degree of dependence inherent in a dyad based on its asymmetrical attributes, in short – who has more say in the relationship.

The combination of both the bandwidth and dependence invites comparisons across the *economic*, *security* and *political* domains. By adding the bandwidth and dependence scores for each of these domains, an assessment can be made of the total leverage held per domain. With the final influence score being a sum of the bandwidth and dependence sub-indices, in an ideal case, these should have equal weighting. Still, if some great powers have higher dependence scores than bandwidth and vice versa, either of the sub-indices could have more weight than the other.

We note that economic indicators are weighted disproportionately heavily in both the bandwidth and dependence, making the global influence index econ-centric. This means that the weighting of

the different indicators results in greater influence for great powers with high economic bandwidth and dependence scores. Moreover, there is a lack of data on Political Dependence, as this is difficult to capture quantitatively given that there is no accurate proxy to measure such a variable.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.2.3 How Do You Solve a Problem Like Europa? Measuring Europe

The inclusion of ‘Europe’ as a great power in our analysis has, over the last years, presented us with an intriguing methodological puzzle: What is the best way to quantitatively – and conceptually – capture its international position? Is it best reflected in the data on the European Union (EU) as an actor *sui generis*? Or does looking at the aggregate of the EU member states better mirror ‘Europe’s’ standing on the global arena? And what about the European countries that are non-EU members yet maintain close cooperation with it?

In response to these questions, HCSS has begun exploring the use of multiple ‘Europes’ in order to allow for a more differentiated comparison in the datasets between ‘Europe’ in its different incarnations and other states for future iterations. The original Pardee Global Influence Index is a nation-state based index and was not intended by its authors to be used to measure a supra-national entity like Europe. We suggest that a quadruple approach to conceptualizing, operationalizing and measuring ‘Europe’ may offer the best way forward, even if we are not yet in a position to present all the four ‘Europes’ in this year’s report.

The first option, which we label ‘national Europe 28’ (**E28**), consists of aggregating the individual national scores of the different EU member states into one measure, excluding independent international agency by the European Union itself. This is the approach followed in this report, which is made possible by the fact that we have data for all variables that we present **and** for all EU member states in the GII. Therein lies an advantage of using E28. But there are also two – quite different – disadvantages. On the one hand, E28 underestimates Europe’s presence, activity and influence in the world by excluding the international presence of the European Union itself. At the same time, however, it also substantially exaggerates Europe’s *net* influence in global affairs, where we all cannot help but observe how the sum of 28 times 1 plus 1 ends up being significantly smaller than 28. Below, it is explained why we nevertheless think that E28 is a useful way of at least conveying Europe’s potential, if not its reality.

The second option is ‘national Europe 32’ (**E32**). It includes the previously mentioned E28 but also adds the European Economic Area (EEA) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway plus Switzerland. Whereas some might still quibble about which countries do or not belong to ‘Europe’, in our experience there is little or no debate about at least this subset. It would not make a big difference with respect to **E28** in the overall scheme of things, but would at least be more inclusive of some universally recognized European states. Hence, on this criterion, E32 scores better than E28, even though it is still subject to the same strengths and weaknesses as E28.

Our third – even more maximalist – metric, **EU+** would include E32 but would also add the external interactions of the European Union in its own right, i.e. in areas of ‘undisputed’ competences of the European Union in economic (e.g. trade and EU aid) and political areas (EEAS diplomatic representation, treaties to which the EU is a party, EU military presence, etc.). It is clear that this metric would inflate Europe’s role in the world even more. But it would still be a usefully aspirational metric, that – even more than E28 and E32 – would show how today’s Europe fails to live up to

14. There is a forthcoming HCSS methodology note with a more elaborate explanation of the operationalization of the data, the conceptualization of influence and the method used to construct the Global Influence Index.



its potential. The main reason we decided against this option was not so much its inflated nature, but the fact that we did not (yet) have data for the purely EU events (and some of the influence indicators). Accordingly, we opted for E28 for reasons of internal consistency of the data.

Finally, we are planning to do more work on developing a fourth **EU-** metric that more accurately captures the ‘tous azimuts’ influence of the European Union as an independent actor in the international system – including in cultural and ideational fields.

Moving from these conceptual considerations to our actual research work with event datasets, in the last year’s report, we based our analysis on the ‘EUR’ actor code in GDELT.<sup>15</sup> Since the actual actor dictionary for the GDELT event coder is not publicly available, we have however been unable to ascertain exactly which terms are coded as ‘EUR’. Based on the URLs of the events that are coded as having ‘EUR’ as either a source or a target actor, we infer that it is probably based on generic terms such as ‘Europe’ or ‘European’. That includes ‘European Union’ (for which there is no separate GDELT code), but does not include the individual European states.

Therefore, in this iteration, we decided to work with the E28 metric presented above for the aggregated events, assertiveness and influence of EU member states. Accordingly, the E28 metric was adopted for both our event and our ‘official’ datasets. Applying this new operationalization of ‘Europe’ significantly alters the findings from our last reports. In particular, E28’s influence across different domains now appears significantly larger compared to that of the other great powers. These findings must be interpreted with care. Our suggested reading of this is not so much that ‘Europe’ is the most influential actor in the world. Instead, we are inclined to see them as a healthy reminder of Europe’s continued *potential* weight in the world and the big gap between *potentiality* and *actual reality*.<sup>16</sup> We believe this new approach better captures – for better *and* for worse – Europe’s real footprint in the international web of interaction and influence.

### 3.3 Great Power Assertiveness and Influence

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

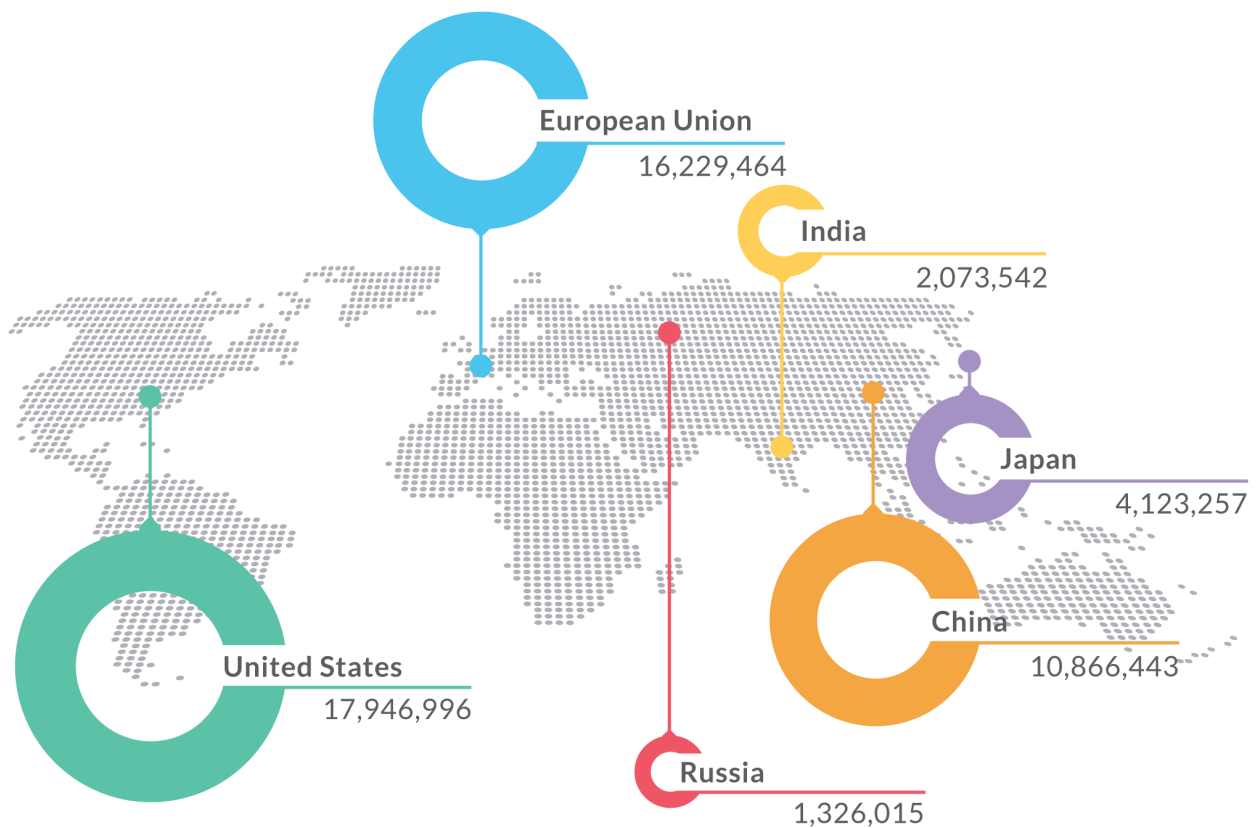
China’s actions in the South China Sea, escalating rhetoric (and strains) between Russia and the West in Central Europe and the Middle East, geoeconomic tensions between great powers around TTP and TTIP: re-emerging geocultural and -legal divergences between some of the different values proposed by different great powers: all around the world the global dynamics – even clashes – of great power assertiveness<sup>17</sup> once again dominated the headlines of the world’s media last year. As in previous years, we focus our reporting on a few selected great powers: China, ‘Europe’, India, (for the first time) Japan, Russia and the USA. These include the world’s currently 5 largest economies<sup>18</sup> (in nominal terms) plus Russia – in light of its continued (and resurgent) military weight, brinkmanship and crucial importance to European security.

15. De Spiegeleire, *Strategic Monitor* 2016.

16. In some sense, this gap could be seen as another twist on Christopher Hill’s well known formulation of a ‘capabilities-expectations gap’, Christopher Hill, “The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 31, no. 3 (September 1993): 305–28, doi:10.1111/j.1468-5965.1993.tb00466.x’ in the European Union’s international presence – the gap between what it has been talked up to do and what it was able to deliver. The gap we are referring to here is one between latent and manifest influence.

17. For our definition of assertiveness, see De Spiegeleire, *Strategic Monitor* 2016, p.17-18.

18. Zach Vega, *World Share of Nominal GDP IMF WEO 2015*, May 28, 2016, Own work, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World\\_share\\_of\\_nominal\\_GDP\\_IMF\\_WEO\\_2015.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World_share_of_nominal_GDP_IMF_WEO_2015.png).



**Figure 3.2 Nominal GDP (in US\$ million) of great powers**

As in previous years, we have also this year updated the datasets we use for our great power assertiveness (GPA) monitoring effort. As elaborated in section 3.2, these include the event datasets GDELT, ICEWS and Phoenix. For reasons of economy of space, in this report we only visually present GDELT data. Nevertheless, interested readers are cordially invited to explore the three datasets on our interactive StratBase platform. We also draw on the Global Influence Index (GII) that allows us to track long-term dyadic (i.e. between country A and country B) dynamics of great powers. Finally, we make use of ‘Military Balance’ data from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), which enables us to complement our picture on the great powers’ military assertiveness.<sup>19</sup>

So what, then, do our different datasets tell us this year about the geodynamics of the world’s great powers – and especially on how assertive and influential they are? We will address these two aspects in turn.

### 3.3.2 Great Powers as a Group

#### *Great Power Assertiveness*<sup>20</sup>

How assertive are great powers and how does their assertiveness compare to that of non-great

19. For further details on the three event datasets, the GII and the IISS military balance see section 3.2.

20. “Overall” assertiveness refers to the assertiveness of great powers in all domains, i.e. diplomatic, economic and military, taken together. We refer to “aggregate” assertiveness when we speak of the cumulative assertiveness of all great powers as a group. “Global” assertiveness describes the assertiveness of all countries, i.e. not only great powers.

powers? As we start answering these questions, we will first present evidence on how many inter-state events in our datasets are initiated by great powers (as opposed to non-state powers – Figure 3.3). We will then compare how many of all of these inter-state events prove to be assertive – and will again compare the share of great powers vs that of the others (Figure 3.4).

**Figure 3.3 Share of great power events in total global events**

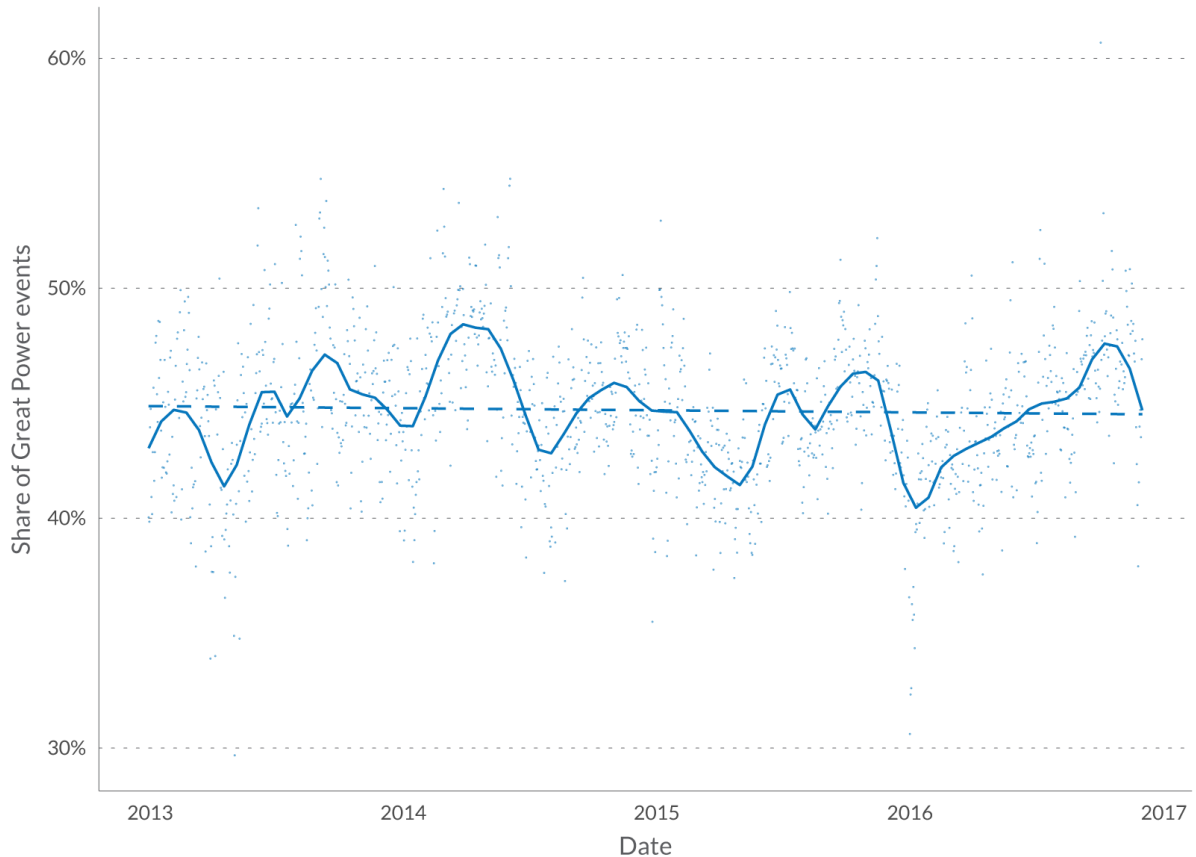
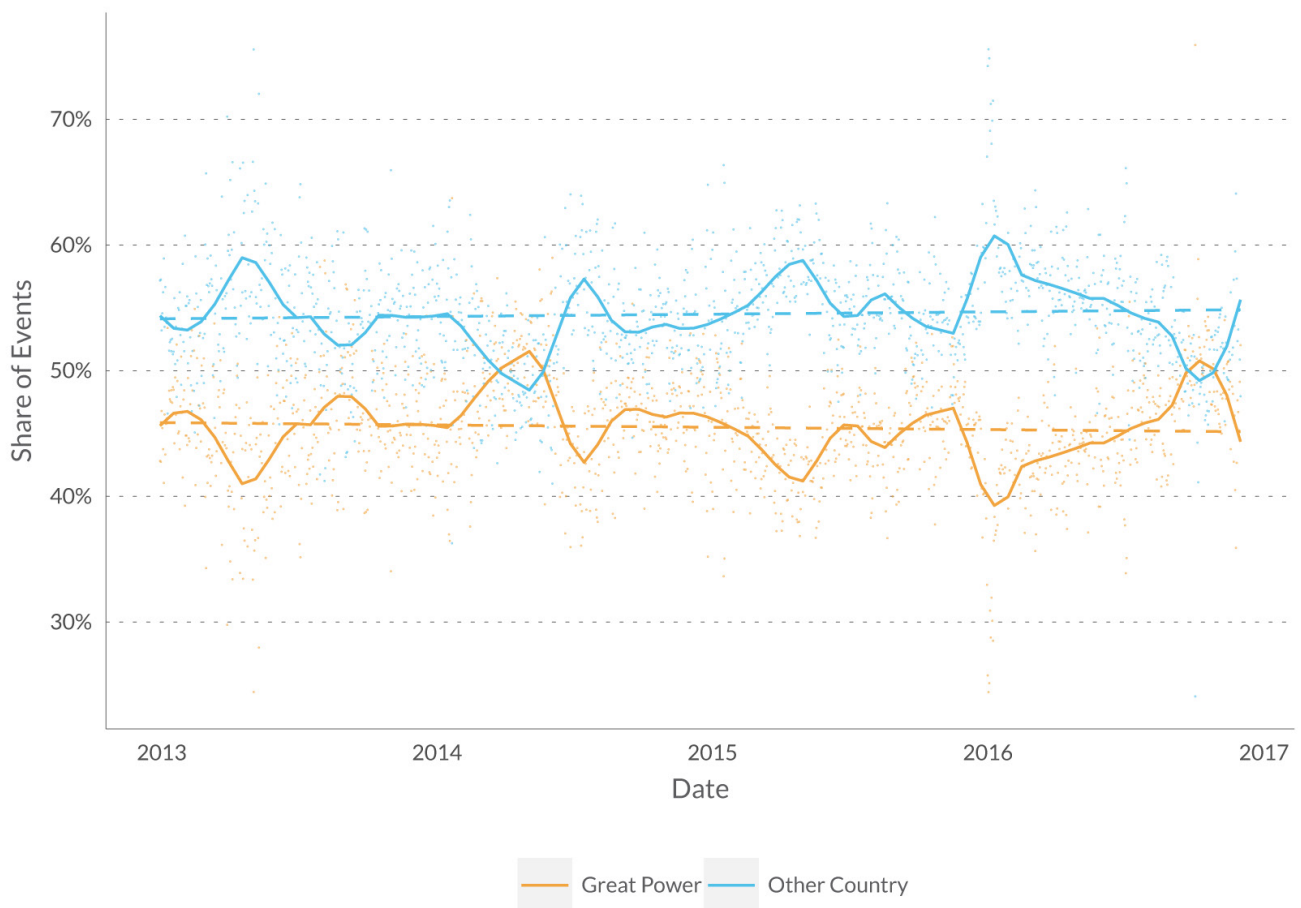


Figure 3.3 shows that over the past three years the number of international events initiated by great powers as a percentage of the total number of recorded global inter-state events has oscillated between 37% and 53%. The trend line shows a slightly negative slope, indicating that over this entire time period their ‘dominance’ (as a group,) in reported events is slightly declining. The lowest number of cumulative great power events was recorded in early 2015, but since then we can see a fairly steady increase.

As with some other visuals we will present in this section, It is not easy – also for us – to fully make sense of these findings. We encourage our readers to think of this as an analogous measure to the ‘volume’ index that is a standard reporting measure for stock markets: the amount of interactions that take place between buyers and sellers in any given time period. This measure says nothing about the *quality* of interactions. A very small number of extremely large interactions can easily wash out a much larger number of very small ones. It does, however, say something about the actual ongoing activity. And just like in the case of stock markets, for which the financial analytical community finds it meaningful to report on the ‘volume’ of interactions, so too, we submit, will we – once the policy analytical community becomes more accustomed to these types of heretofore unavailable high level aggregations of massive lower-level data points.

The previous visual illustrated the share great powers represent in *all* inter-state events. But what does their share look like if we only look at *assertive* events? Figure 3.4 reveals that in 2013-2016, the share of assertive great power events in total assertive events has been in the range of 38% to 51% – with a single peak reached in May 2014. During the period from March until May 2014, the share of great power events in all assertive events exceeded that of non-great powers. Yet, throughout the rest of the analyzed time period, non-great powers accounted for a significantly higher number of global assertive events compared to other countries. Considering that the 6 great powers currently represent approximately 52% of global population (and that share is declining)<sup>21</sup> and account for 71.51% (\$52.26 trillion) of world (nominal) GDP (\$73.502 trillion) (also declining)<sup>22</sup> and 61.66% of global exports of goods and services (declining as well)<sup>23</sup>, we find that, as a group, they are actually less ‘assertive’ than more ‘normal’ nations.

**Figure 3.4 Breakdown of assertive events in great power and non-great power assertive events**



21. The World Bank, "Population, Total," *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POPTOTL>.

22. The World Bank, "GDP (Current US\$) | Data," *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2015&locations=RU-US-IN-CN-EU-1W&start=2015&view=bar>.

23. The World Bank, "Exports of Goods and Services (Current US\$)," *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.CD?locations=US-CN-RU-IN-EU>.

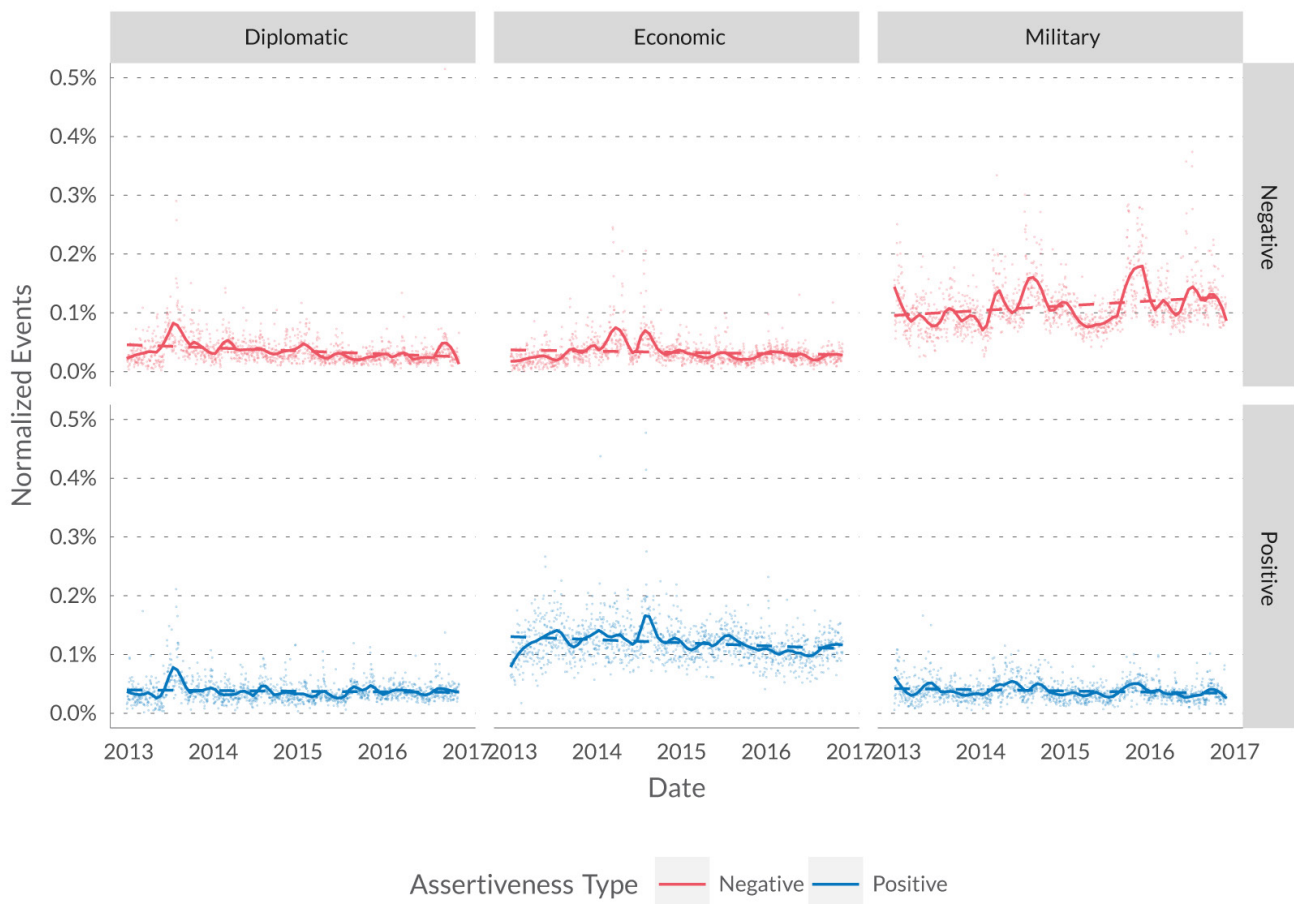
We thus find that the cumulative assertiveness of great powers is lower than many might have suspected. But is it growing or declining? Contrary to what we saw previously with respect to their share in total global events, the relative share of great power assertive events over the entire time frame from 1979 until 2016 trends upwards. Our data also shows that the peak of 51% recorded on several days in May 2014 represents the highest percentage of assertive great power events throughout the entire time period from 1979 to 2016. At the same time, to put this in perspective, we still would like to note that when we compare the Cold War period with the observations in the last three years, great power assertiveness relative to the assertiveness of other states was, on average, slightly higher in the 1980s than it has been for the past few years. So we are not quite back to Cold War levels, but the upward trend is still visible.

**Non-great powers as a group actually initiate more assertive events globally compared to great powers.**

Summing up, the above analysis allows us to conclude, somewhat counterintuitively, that non-great powers as a group actually initiate more assertive events globally compared to great powers.

Figure 3.5 displays the breakdown of aggregate *factual* (i.e. excluding purely *rhetorical* events) assertive great power events across the *diplomatic*, *economic* and *military* domains. The row labelled “Negative” indicates negative assertiveness (assertive in negative ways); “positive” illustrates positive assertiveness (assertive in positive ways).

**Figure 3.5 Aggregate *factual* great power assertiveness (GDELT, 2013-2016)**

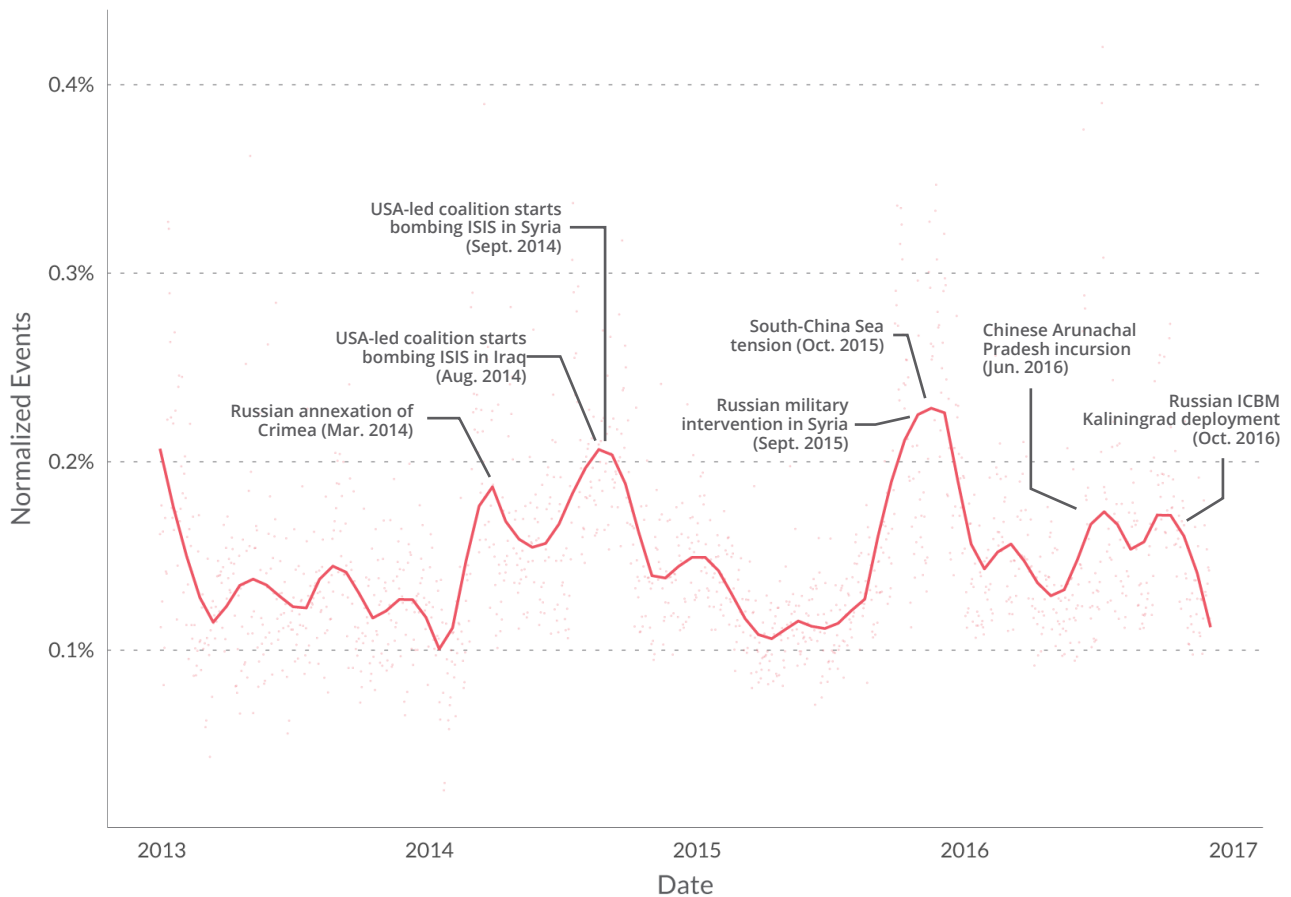




In different domains, we observe diverging trends in aggregate great power assertiveness. Both of our GDELT and ICEWS datasets robustly indicate that both negative and positive *diplomatic* assertiveness for the group of great powers has been decreasing *factually*. In the *economic* realm, we observe a fairly strong decline in positive assertiveness. Against the backdrop of growing evidence that economic ties tend to decrease the likelihood of conflict among states,<sup>24</sup> we see this as a worrisome development.

In the economic realm, we observe a fairly strong decline in positive assertiveness. Against the backdrop of growing evidence that economic ties tend to decrease the likelihood of conflict among states, we see this as a worrisome development.

**Figure 3.6 Factual military assertiveness for all great powers (GDELT and ICEWS, 2013-2016)**



24. See, for instance, John R. O Neal Håvard Hegre and Bruce Russett, "Trade Does Promote Peace: New Simultaneous Estimates of the Reciprocal Effects of Trade and Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (August 4, 2011): 763–74. The view that economic interdependence promotes peace is, however, not undisputed in the academic literature. For an overview see Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins, eds., *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate*, Michigan Studies in International Political Economy (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).

Even more discomfortingly, the most salient trend for the overall group of great powers has been the increase in negative *factual military* assertiveness. This trend figures prominently in both our GDELT and ICEWS data, as can be seen in the upper right section of Figure 3.6. This observation jibes with observations we made in previous edition of the HCSS Strategic Monitor and therefore appears to represent a robustly worrisome longer-term trend.<sup>25</sup> Correspondingly (and also discomfortingly) a slightly decreasing trend has occurred in positive *military* assertiveness.

**The most salient trend for the overall group of great powers has been the increase in negative *factual military* assertiveness.**

The upward trend in negative *military* assertiveness can be illustrated by the fact that over the past three years several major conflicts involving many of our six great powers in one way or another have taken place. This is depicted in more detail in Figure 3.6 which shows our GDELT data on aggregate *factual military* assertiveness. We observe that peaks in assertiveness levels as recorded by GDELT coincide with the major conflicts of the last years. The most prominent of these have been the conflict in Ukraine, the Syrian Civil War and the Iraqi Civil War. Other arenas of tension have been the territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the Baltic region and Kashmir.

We just found that as a group, great powers do not appear more assertive than other states. Their overall levels of assertiveness also does not seem to have undergone any major shifts over the past three years. But what happens when we compare the six of them with each other? Even if they are not ‘big bullies’ as a group, could some of them still be bigger ‘bullies’ than others?

Figure 3.7 clearly visualizes that – even under the Obama administration – the USA *factually* remains the single most assertive great power across all categories. This corresponds to its standing as the world’s only remaining superpower. Its lead is most pronounced in the categories negative *military* and positive *economic* assertiveness.

In most domains, our newly defined ‘E28’ proves to be the second most assertive power after the USA. This goes against the grain of some of our findings in previous HCSS work on assertiveness. This is due to the way in which we are treating ‘Europe’ as an actor this year (see section 3.2.3).<sup>26</sup> Instead of using the more ambiguous ‘Europe’ actor code, we this year aggregated the individual data points for the respective EU member states. This is also why we use the code ‘E28’. Not surprisingly, this leads to dramatically different and – we would suggest – more realistic findings. With respect to negative *military* assertiveness, we find E28 to be the second most assertive actor for most of this period after the USA, until it was surpassed by Russia at the end of 2015 (Syria). Given EU member states’ (including the Netherlands) military activities in Northern Africa and in the Levant, this should not come as a total surprise. Throughout the different kinds of GP assertiveness, our current operationalization still shows India and Japan as much more low-key compared to the rest of the group. We therefore still – and here we are in line with the main observation we made in our *Assertivitis* study earlier this year<sup>27</sup> – do not find ‘assertivitis’ to be congenitally ‘encoded’ in the DNA of every single great power.

**The USA factually remains the single most assertive great power across all categories. This corresponds to its standing as the world’s only remaining superpower.**

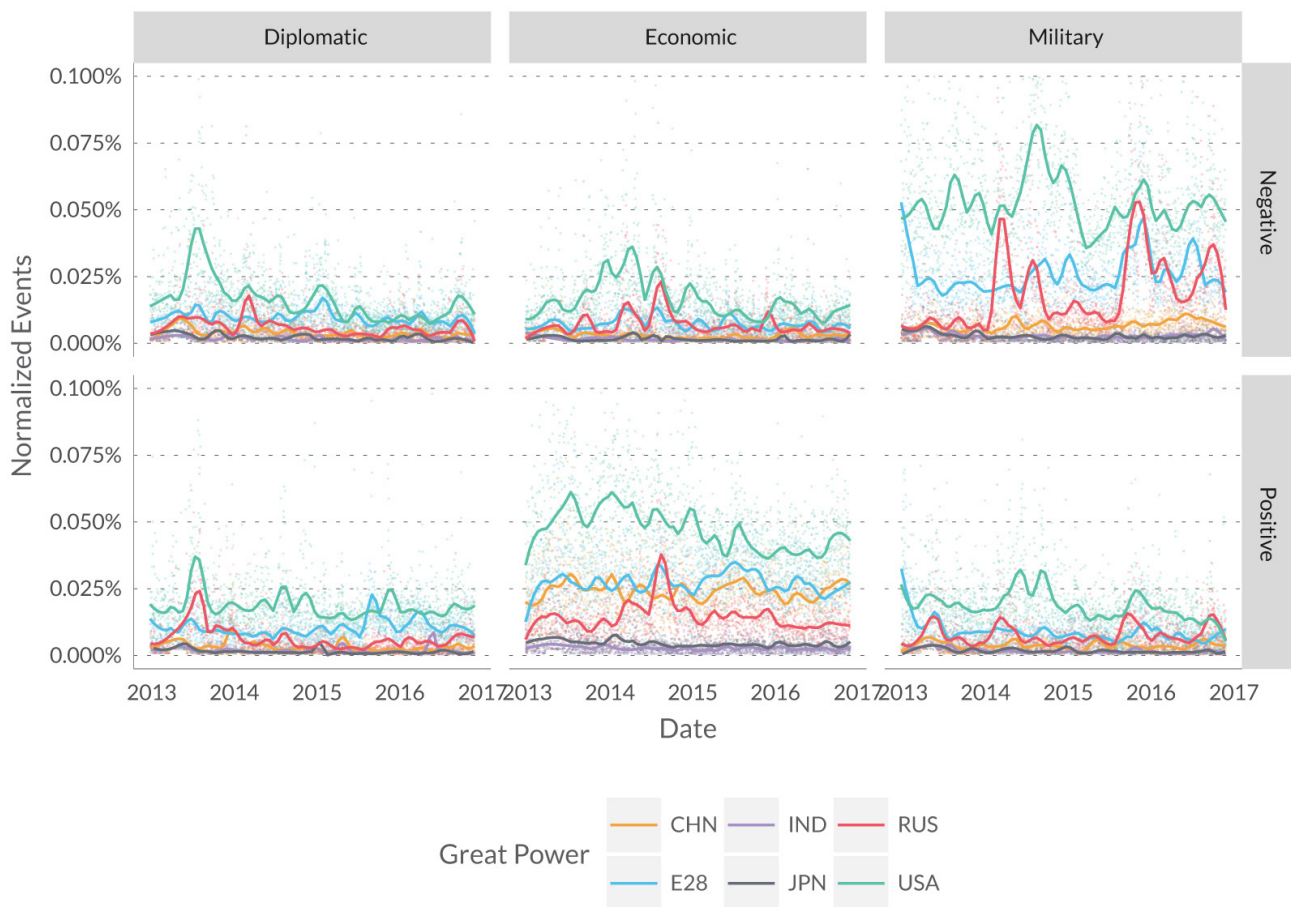
25. De Spiegeleire, *Strategic Monitor* 2016.

26. In previous editions, we use the CAMEO code ‘Europe’. An additional micro-audit we conducted into GDELT this year suggests that the GDELT 1.0 coding engine (TABARI) only picks up words like “Europe” or “European” when it codes an actor as ‘EUR’.

27. De Spiegeleire, *Strategic Monitor* 2016.

With regard to positive *economic* assertiveness, we see that the world's largest economies, i.e. China, E28 and the USA are leading, while India, Japan and Russia lag behind in this domain.<sup>28</sup> Noteworthy is that the positive *economic* assertiveness of the USA can be seen to have been declining quite steeply. E28 show a stable increase in positive *economic* assertiveness whereas China seems to have declined slightly. Taken together, these trends can be viewed as an indication of an indeed increasingly polycentric world – at least in economic terms.

**Figure 3.7 Diplomatic, economic and military assertiveness of great powers (GDELT, 2013-2016)**



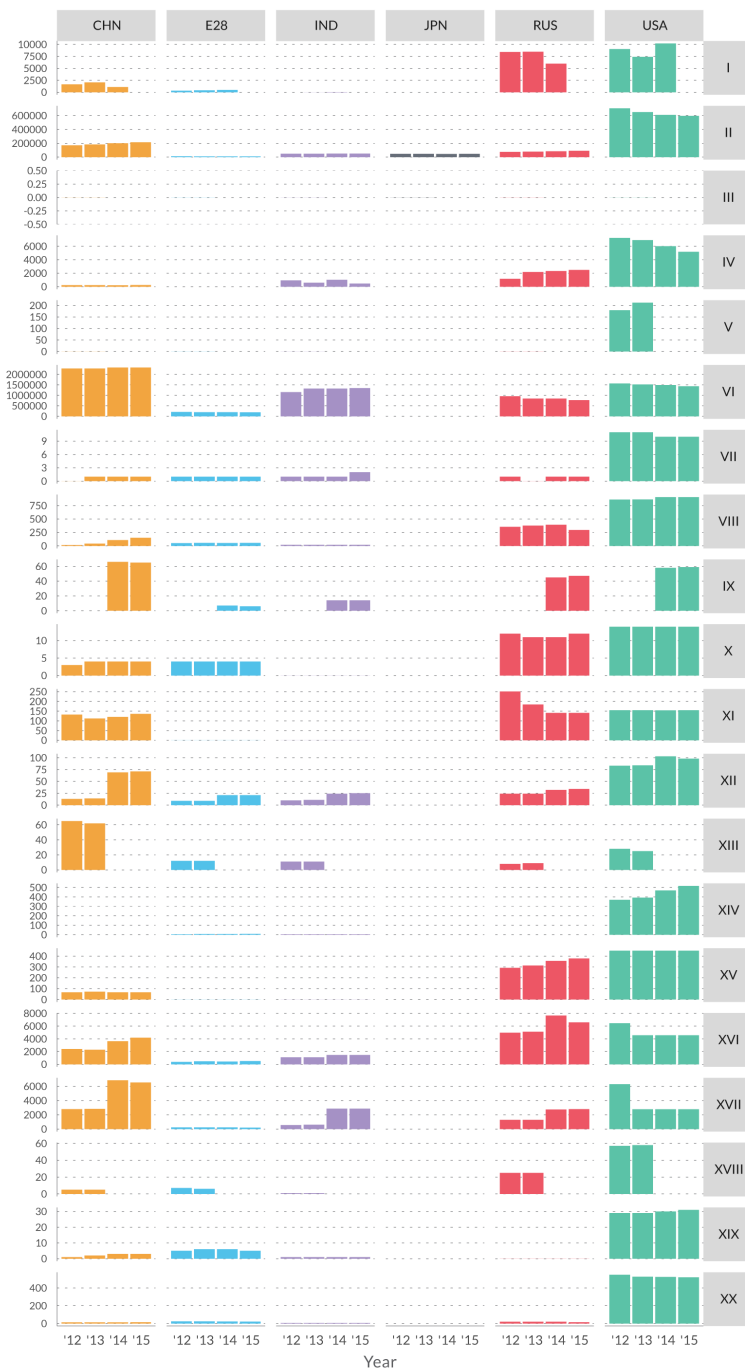
Offering us further insights into the *military* assertiveness of the six great powers in comparison, Figure 3.8 provides an overview of their military assets that we have coded as potentially 'assertive' based on the IISS Military Balance data.<sup>29</sup> We can see that the Chinese and Russian military expenditure shows an upward trend, while the USA has been cutting its defense budget. Simultaneously, arms transfers have been decreasing for the two former countries, while the USA shows an increasing trend. This is an important indication that the upward trend in military assertiveness is not demonstrated by our great powers to an equal extent. Section 3.3.2 will provide more detailed analyses of individual great power assertiveness trends.

28. The World Bank, "GDP (Current US\$) | Data."

29. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2016* (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, February 9, 2016), <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/military%20balance/issues/the-military-balance-2016-d6c9>.

Figure 3.8 Overview military assets for the great powers, IISS (2015)

- |      |  |       |  |
|------|--|-------|--|
| I    | Arms Transfers - by exporter (SIPRI)                         | XI    | Weapon Systems - Bomber aircraft                                 |
| II   | Military Expenditures (SIPRI)                                | XII   | Weapon Systems - Cruisers/destroyers                             |
| III  | Military Personnel, as % of population                       | XIII  | Weapon Systems - Frigates  |
| IV   | Troops Deployed - by Source                                  | XIV   | Weapon Systems - Heavy unmanned aerial vehicles                  |
| V    | Weapon Systems - 5th gen TA                                  | XV    | Weapon Systems - ICBM  |
| VI   | Weapon Systems - Active Manpower                             | XVI   | Weapon Systems - Modern AIFVs                                    |
| VII  | Weapon Systems - Aircraft carriers                           | XVII  | Weapon Systems - Modern MBTs                                     |
| VIII | Weapon Systems - Attack Helicopters                          | XVIII | Weapon Systems - Nuclear-powered submarines                      |
| IX   | Weapon Systems - Attack/Guided missile submarines            | XIX   | Weapon Systems - Principal amphibious ships                      |
| X    | Weapon Systems - Ballistic-missile nuclear-powered submarine | XX    | Weapon Systems - Tanker and multi-role tanker/transport aircraft |



### **Great Power Influence**

So much for great power assertiveness. But what do our datasets tell us about how (potentially) *influential* the different great powers are?

The GII data presented in Figure 3.9 shows that the E28 and the USA – which we also just labelled the world’s two most assertive powers – have the largest overall global influence in the *security*, *economic* and *political* domains.

The E28’s influence is – by far – the greatest across all these categories. As we pointed out before, this finding must be interpreted with care. First of all, our actor code ‘E28’ aggregates the influence of all 28 EU member states into a single metric. Secondly, it is important to reemphasize that our index does not try to capture *actuated* influence, but *potential* influence (see section 3.2.3). Our own reading of this finding is therefore not so much that ‘Europe’ is the most influential actor in the world. Instead, we are inclined to see E28’s high influence scores as a healthy reminder of Europe’s continued potential weight in the world (which many Europeans might find encouraging) but also of the enormous gap between that potentiality and actual reality.<sup>30</sup>

**We are inclined to see E28’s high influence scores as a healthy reminder of Europe’s continued potential weight in the world (which many Europeans might find encouraging) but also of the enormous gap between that potentiality and actual reality.**

With regards to Russia, we observe that it wields the least influence in the *economic* domain, while being the third most influential – after the USA and E28 – in the realm of *security*. China has over the last years occupied the “midfield” in terms of *economic* and *security* influence, yet according to the GII data in 2015 it has caught up with the USA in terms of *economic* influence. This is in line with the familiar narrative of the Chinese challenge to US unipolar dominance in world affairs – thus far, however, only in economic terms.

Japan and India appear as the great powers with the least influence in the *security* domain. This is fully in line with the trends in assertiveness based on our event databases.<sup>31</sup> In the *economic* domain, Japan’s influence is higher than that of India, yet their trends point in different directions: while India’s economic clout is growing, Japan’s influence is on a downward trajectory.

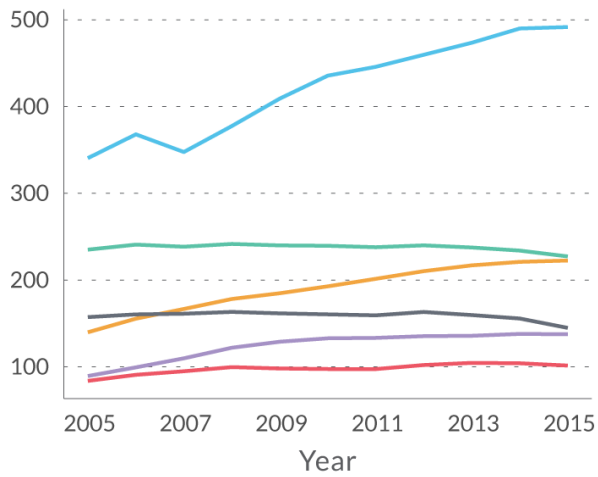
30. In some sense, this gap could be seen as another twist on Christopher Hill’s well known formulation of a ‘capabilities-expectations gap’ Hill, “The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role,” in the European Union’s international presence – the gap between what it has been talked up to do and what it was able to deliver. The gap we are referring to here is one between latent and manifest influence.

31. For an in-depth GII-based analysis of the influence of individual great powers on selected pivot states see section 3.4.

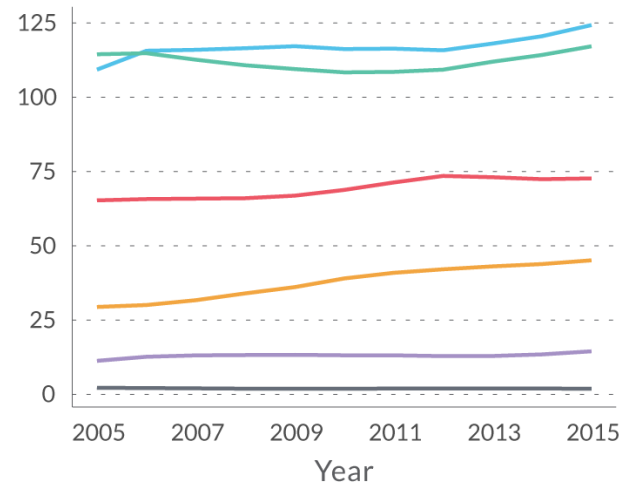


Figure 3.9 GP influence in the *economic, political, security* domain (2005-2015), Global Influence Index

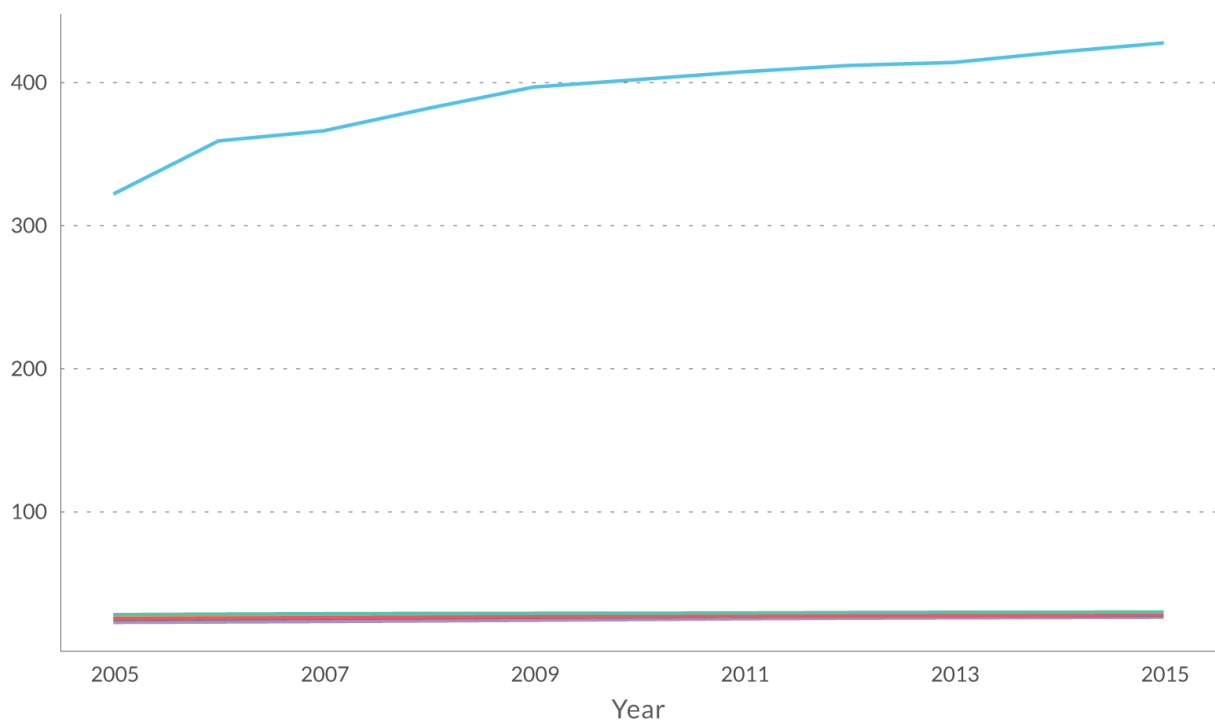
## Economic Influence



## Security Influence



## Political Influence



### 3.3.2 Individual Great Powers

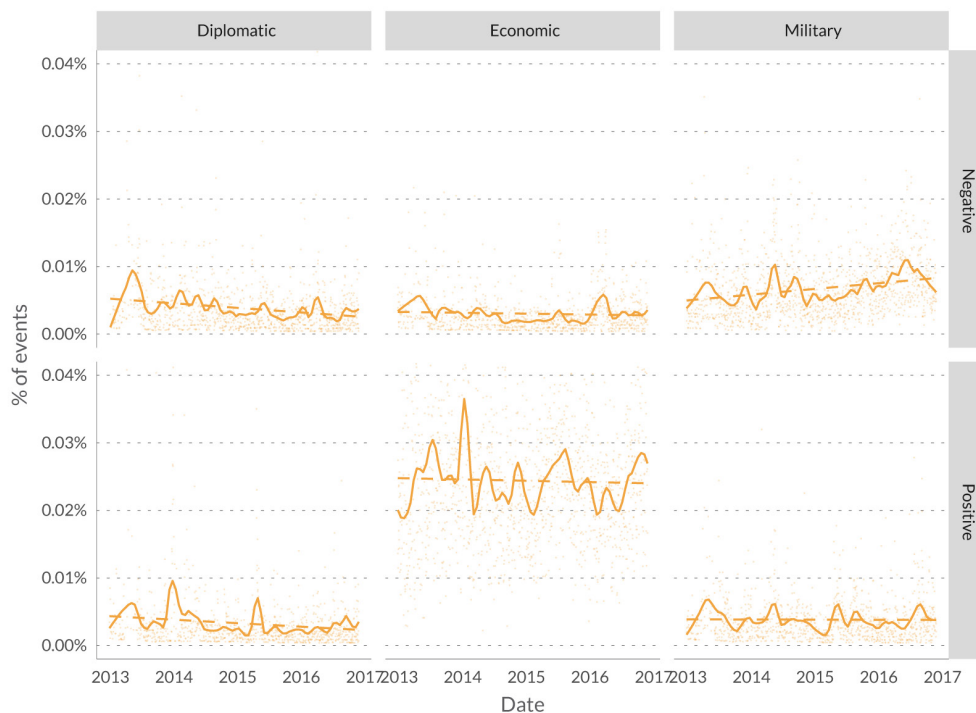
#### China

In line with our finding for the entire group of great powers, the most salient trend with respect to China has been its increasing negative *military* assertiveness. GDELT shows peaks in China's assertiveness in events where China has been firmly defending its stance in the South China Sea conflict against the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. China claims the 9-dash line, which conflicts with UNCLOS-defined maritime borders of adjacent states, including, amongst others, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam. In these disputed South China Sea territories, it has been increasing its military presence by deploying anti-ship cruise and surface-to-air missile systems, amongst others on the Paracel island group in early 2016. Moreover, China conducted military exercises near the Japanese island of Okinawa, to which it lays territorial claims. Another example of China's increasing negative *military* assertiveness are extensive joint Chinese-Russian military exercises in the South China Sea.

**GDELT shows peaks in China's assertiveness in events where China has been firmly defending its stance in the South China Sea conflict against the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.**

Next to the upward trend in China's negative assertiveness in *military* terms, the GDELT and Phoenix data points to a decrease in its negative *diplomatic* assertiveness – although it is somewhat less pronounced. A recent example of China's positive *diplomatic* assertiveness is the Chinese-Turkish pledge to increase collaboration in counter-terrorism in a side meeting of the G20 Summit in Beijing despite disagreements over China's treatment of its Muslim Uighur minority.

**Figure 3.10 China – Factual diplomatic, economic and military assertiveness**



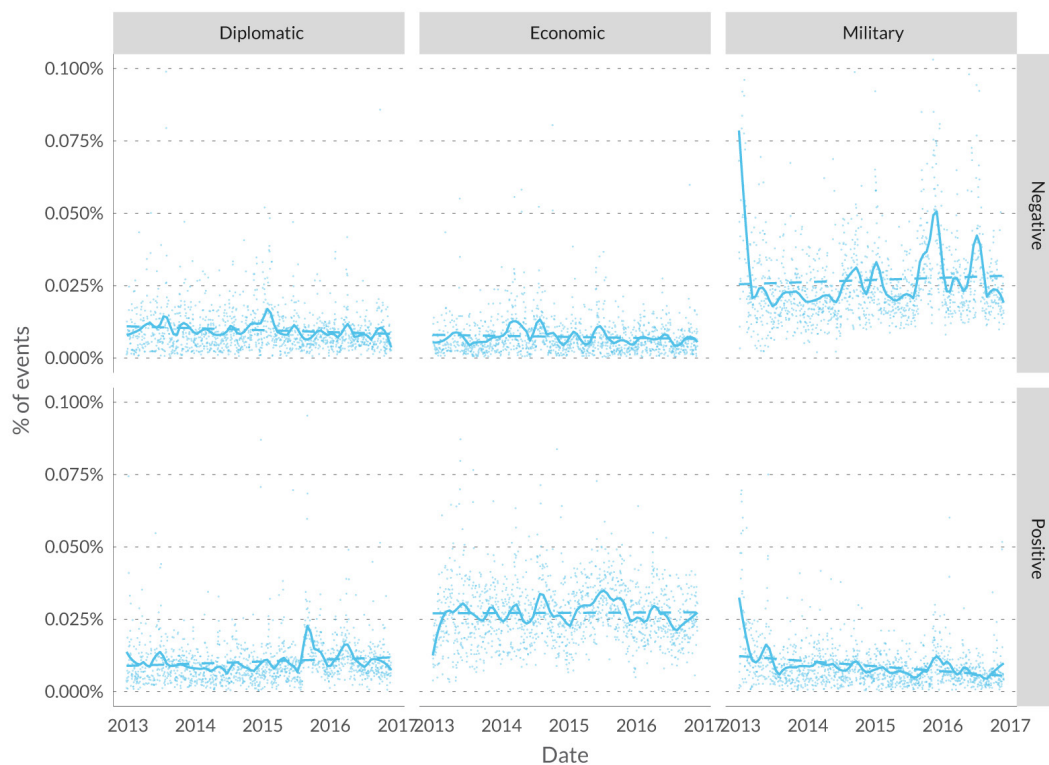
**E28**

Our event data shows a slight upward trend in E28's negative *military* assertiveness. Regarding the magnitude of this trend, a comparison of trend line coefficients shows that it is smaller than the Russian trend (see below), but larger than China's. We re-emphasize that our finding of E28's increased negative *military* assertiveness differs from our previous findings, as published in our *Great Power Assertivitis* report earlier in 2016,<sup>32</sup> which pointed to decreased EU military assertiveness. We attribute this difference to our altered – in our view more accurate – operationalization of 'Europe' in this report (see above). In this case, for instance, this upward trend is based on the significant military involvement of a number of E28 states, e.g. Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in coalitions against ISIS and to the participation in Russia-detering troops in the Baltics.

Regarding *economic* assertiveness, we can see upward trends in E28's positive as well as negative *economic* assertiveness. As an example of the former, recently – despite a delay caused by a veto of Belgium's regional parliament of Wallonia – the EU succeeded in getting unequivocal support for Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the free-trade agreement between Canada and the European Union, among its member states.

In the *diplomatic* realm, GDELT and ICEWS show a slight downward trend in the E28's negative assertiveness. This can be illustrated by the fact that the EU was resolute in introducing sanctions against Russia over the annexation of Crimea and Russia's role in Eastern Ukraine, but did not do so following the Aleppo bombings in Syria.

**Figure 3.11 E28 – Factual diplomatic, economic and military assertiveness**



32. De Spiegeleire, *Strategic Monitor* 2016.

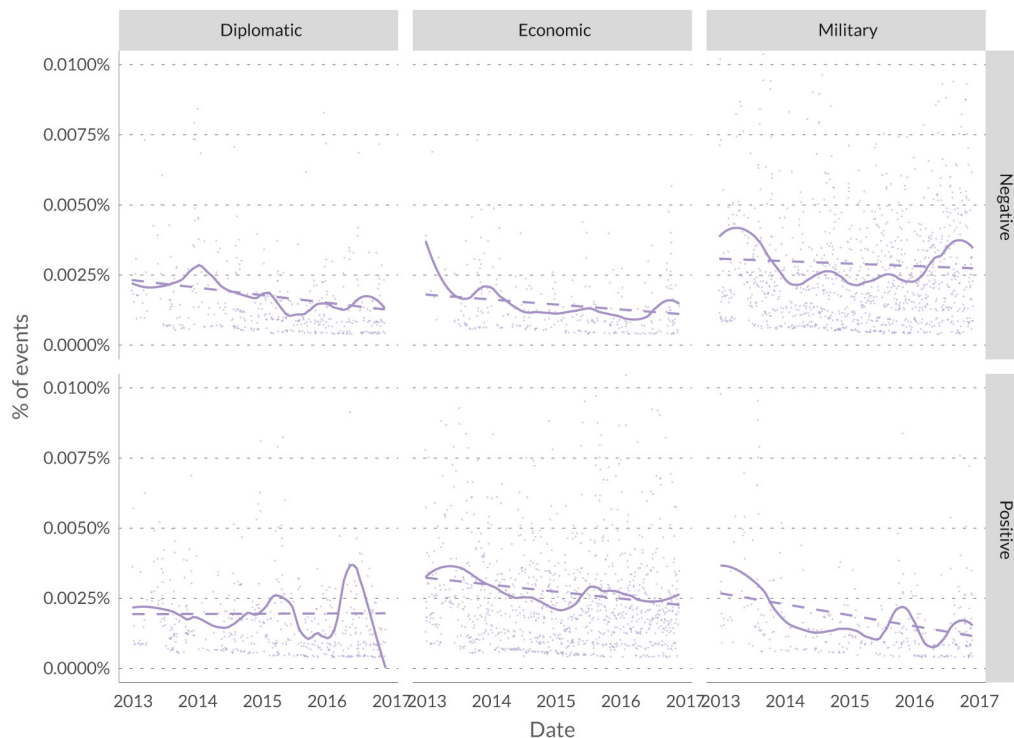
## India

In contrast to the overall trend for the group of great powers, our data suggests that India's negative *military* assertiveness has been on a declining trend over the past three years. To be sure, recently, rising tensions and ceasefire violations at the highly militarized Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir in September and October 2016 have driven up the level of Indian assertiveness in our data. However, our analysis suggests that these incidents are not yet reflective of a broader trend in India's negative *military* assertiveness.

Similar to the trend in its *military* assertiveness, India's negative *diplomatic* assertiveness is on a slightly declining trajectory. Simultaneously, India's positive *diplomatic* assertiveness is also decreasing, as is its *economic* assertiveness. Against this backdrop, India is best regarded as a – *factually* – comparatively low-profile great power in our group that does not currently strive to expand its international influence in as assertive a manner as its great power peers. Since Modi's ascent to power in 2014, in its foreign policy India has strived to maintain and deepen relations with numerous countries across the globe and to strengthen its position in global governance fora, e.g. by successfully lobbying for full membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO) and ongoing attempts to acquire a seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).<sup>33</sup>

On the contrary, when turning from *factual* to *rhetorical* assertiveness, the GDELT data for India shows a slightly increasing trend. In fact, some analysts have found that the country has entered a new era of assertiveness when Modi and his nationalist party BJP came to power in 2014.<sup>34</sup> According to our data, this statement could only – and with much caution – be related to Modi's rhetorical pronouncements, while *factual* developments do not support it.

**Figure 3.12 India – *Factual* diplomatic, economic and military assertiveness**



33. IANS, "India's UN Security Council Permanent Seat Hope Receives Setback - Times of India," *The Times of India*, July 28, 2016, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Indias-UN-Security-Council-permanent-seat-hope-receives-setback/articleshow/53432239.cms>.

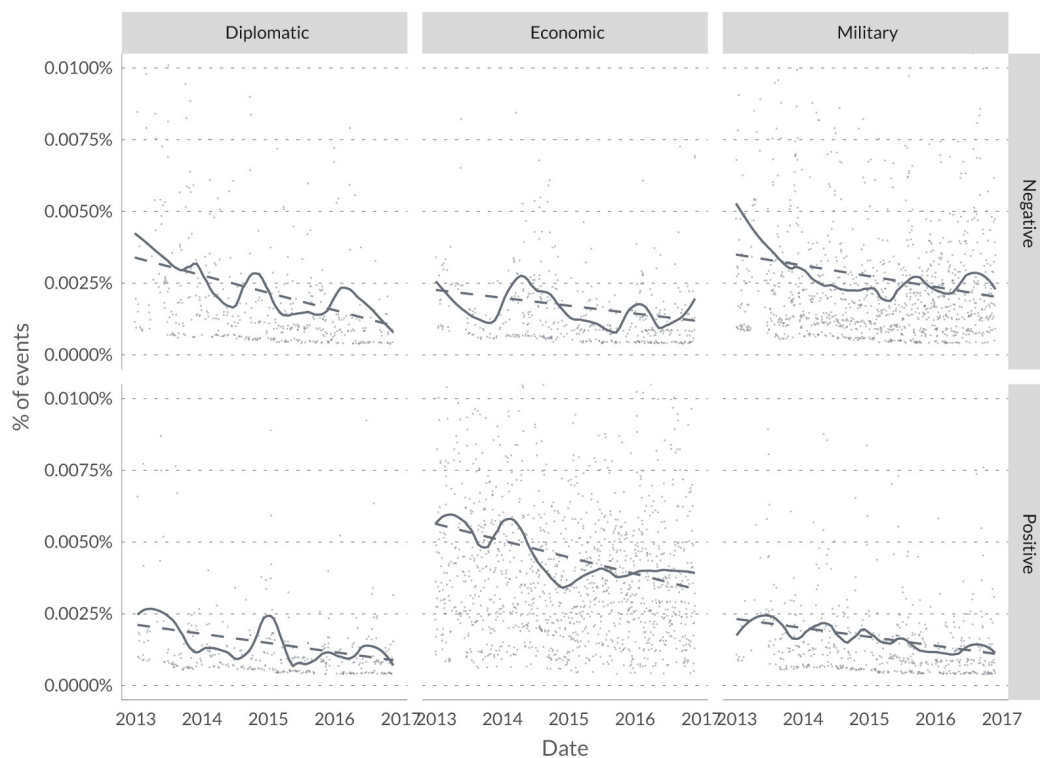
34. See, for instance, Hailin Ye, "India's Policy Towards China Under the Mindset of 'Assertive Government,'" in *Annual Report on the Development of the Indian Ocean Region* (2015), 2016, 33–46. See also De Spiegeleire, *Strategic Monitor* 2016, p.39.

### Japan

Turning to Japan, our data surprisingly suggests that its assertiveness has been on a downward slope in all our categories. This is true both for *factual* and *rhetorical* assertiveness. Despite this overall downward trend, we still detect some peaks that confirm the widely cited coverage of the ongoing Japanese debate on the need to strengthen its security position. Part of this debate – appearing as an instance of negative *rhetorical military* assertiveness in GDELT – has been the discussion on the revision of Article 9 of Japan's constitution prohibiting the maintenance of armed forces able to wage war.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, to strengthen the Japanese defense industry, in April 2014, on Prime Minister Abe's initiative the Three Principles covering Japan's arms exports and defense cooperation were relaxed. Japan has since then been able to sign defense deals with a number of countries including Britain, India and the Philippines.<sup>36</sup>

**While perceiving China's rise as a potential security threat, Japan has thus far primarily relied on the strategy of strengthening its international partnerships rather than on systematic displays of assertiveness.**

**Figure 3.13 Japan – Factual diplomatic, economic and military assertiveness**



35. Justin McCurry, "Japan Could Change Pacifist Constitution after Shinzo Abe Victory," *The Guardian*, July 11, 2016, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/11/japan-could-change-pacifist-constitution-after-shinzo-abe-victory>.

36. Yuki Tatsumi, "Why Japan's Defense Deal With the Philippines Is Unique," *The Diplomat*, March 10, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/why-japans-defense-deal-with-the-philippines-is-unique/>.



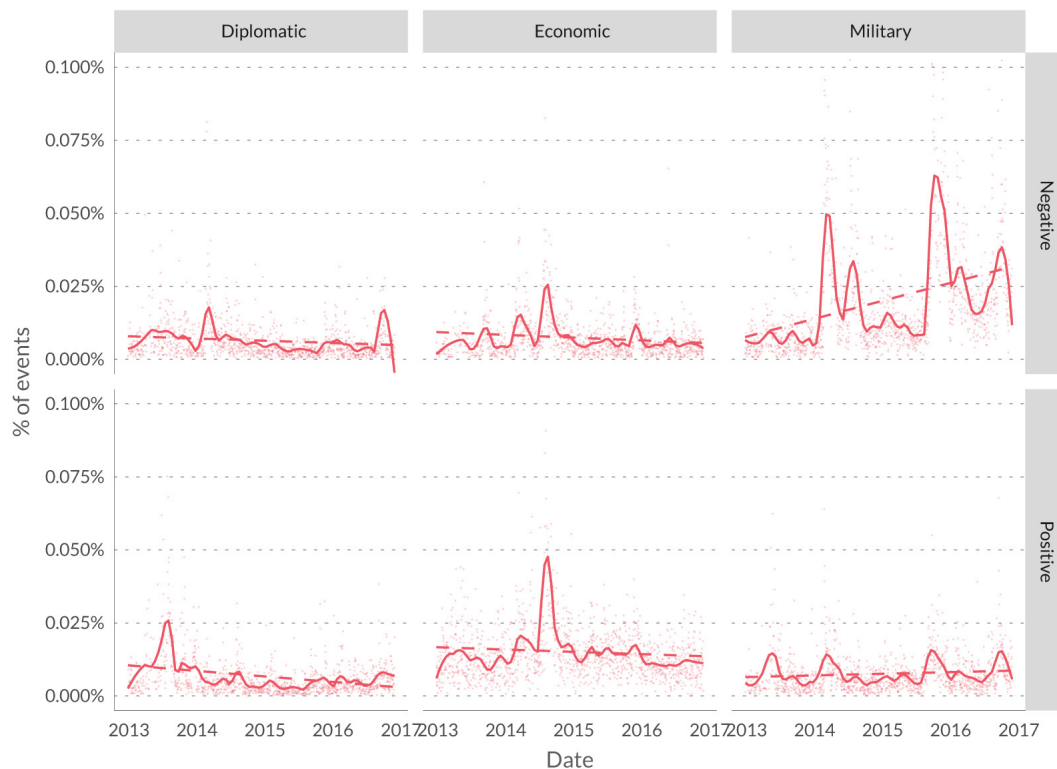
Yet, overall, our data shows that, while perceiving China's rise as a potential security threat, Japan has thus far primarily relied on the strategy of strengthening its international partnerships rather than on systematic displays of assertiveness. This may be a good example of how some widely known and debated 'peak-events' might still mask a broader and more balanced assessment of the full record. A recent landmark in the Indo-Japanese relationship, for instance, has been the signature of a civil nuclear deal. Japan is also currently aspiring to improve relations with Russia, nevertheless the negotiations over the Kuril islands past December did not lead to a salient solution solving the territorial dispute dating back to WWII.<sup>37</sup>

### Russia

Out of the five great powers, Russia is the country with the most pronounced upward trend in negative *military* assertiveness. Over the last two years, it has been operating militarily in Ukraine and in Syria as well as increasing its military presence at the borders with the Baltic region. The phase of Russia's increased negative *military* assertiveness began with the annexation of the Crimea in March 2014 and its support for the pro-Russian separatist territories in the Ukrainian civil war.

Out of the five great powers, Russia is the country with the most pronounced upward trend in negative military assertiveness.

**Figure 3.14 Russia – Factual diplomatic, economic and military assertiveness**



37. Ankit Panda, "What Will a Kuril Islands Deal Between Russia and Japan Take?," *The Diplomat*, November 7, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/11/what-will-a-kuril-islands-deal-between-russia-and-japan-take/>.

In September 2015, Russia militarily intervened in Syria, where it has been engaged in an air campaign supporting Bashar al-Assad. In autumn 2016, Russia's bombings of Aleppo have drawn vast international attention and have led to calls for war crimes investigations. As well, Russia increased the presence of combat aircraft to fly missions and sent its only aircraft carrier the Admiral Kuznetsov to the Eastern Mediterranean in October 2016. In that same month, in the Baltic region, Russia stationed nuclear-capable "Iskander" intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) in the enclave of Kaliningrad, directly bordering NATO. Since the eruption of the conflict in Ukraine, Russia-NATO tensions in the Baltic region have been continuously increasing.

Next to the trend of increased negative *military* assertiveness, based on GDELT and ICEWS Russia shows a slight but robust negative trend in positive *diplomatic* assertiveness. Examples of this have included Russia's strained diplomatic relations with Turkey following the shooting down of a Russian warplane by Turkey in autumn 2015 and, as recently as in October 2016, President Putin's cancellation of an official visit to France after President Hollande had requested a war crimes investigation into Russia's actions in Syria.

In regards to *economic* assertiveness, a minor decrease in both positive and negative economic assertiveness can be observed, despite several individual events pointing to the contrary, e.g. when Russia demonstrated economic assertiveness banning agricultural and food imports from Turkey following the shooting down of a Russian warplane by the Turkish military in November 2015.

In the realm of rhetorics, we also can observe that Russia's negative *rhetorical military* assertiveness is increasing. Yet, at the same time – and contrary to what much of the current commentary on foreign affairs suggests – Russia's *rhetorical* assertiveness in the *diplomatic* domain shows a downward trend.

## USA

While remaining at a higher level compared to the other great powers, the USA's negative and positive *military* assertiveness have actually decreased over the past few years, with the downward trend being more pronounced for positive *military* assertiveness. This resonates with the familiar – albeit controversial – narrative of a declining superpower or of a more 'reserved' Obama administration. These narratives are supported by the dramatically decreasing trends in the USA's positive and negative *rhetorical* assertiveness shown by our data.

Our data also suggests slight decreases in U.S. positive and negative *diplomatic* and *economic* assertiveness. These can be explained by President Obama's focus on multilateralism and strengthening of international institutions, rather than unilateral assertive action.

**Figure 3.15 USA – Factual diplomatic, economic and military assertiveness**

### 3.4 Great Powers → Pivot States

We have so far given the great powers their due. They remain, as we have emphasized on many occasions,<sup>38</sup> disproportionately important to many of the key geodynamics at work in the international system. Yet they are not the only drivers of international dynamics. In this section, we add pivotal non-great powers to our picture and explore how the influence of the six great powers radiates out towards them – both over time and disaggregated in *economic*, *security* and *political* domains.

HCSS has identified 35 pivot states that we consider to be of crucial strategic importance to the international system. In previous work, we brought forth a set of countries' military, economic and ideational strategic assets – presented in Figure 3.16 – that are likely to be coveted by other states.<sup>39</sup>

38. De Spiegeleire et al., *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness*, 7–11.

39. Sweijs et al., *Why Are Pivot States so Pivotal?*

Figure 3.16 Identification criteria for pivot states

Military Goods	Economic Goods	Ideational Goods
Adjacent to Great Power	Adjacent to SLOCs/LLOCs	Secular Sites of Importance
Adjacent to Theater of Conflict	Governs a Key (Air) Port	Religious Sites of Importance
Military Expenditures	Foreign Direct Investment	Religious battleground
	Foreign Direct Investment as % of GDP	Political Background
	Resource Rents	Secular Leadership
	Resource Rents as % of GDP	Religious Leadership

Based on a composite measure of these strategic goods as well as on expert judgment,<sup>40</sup> our analysis this year includes the following pivot states: Afghanistan, Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Georgia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Moldova, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Vietnam. Figure 3.17 illustrates their geographic location.

Our analysis rests on the triple meaning of the term ‘pivot’ as a noun, a verb and an adjective. As a noun, pivot states are critical points around which great powers revolve. As a verb, ‘pivoting’ implies shifting allegiance from one great power to another. As an adjective, ‘pivotal’ illustrates the importance of a pivot state to the international system.

The empirical analysis of great power influence on pivot states enables us to get a nuanced picture of key movements in global geodynamics, the strategies of great powers and the pivot states’ behavior on the international arena. Changes in a pivot state’s geodynamic alignment may have important repercussions for both regional and global security.<sup>41</sup>

Rather than projecting their *economic*, *security* and *political* influence onto one great power, pivot states tend to interact with multiple great powers at various levels and pursuing different ends. This may be related to the much debated end of the ‘unipolar moment’.<sup>42</sup> From an essentially binary choice in the Cold War era (“are we with ‘the West’ or with ‘the Soviet Union?’”) and the post-Cold War unipolar moment (“do we (want to) become part of the West or not?”), ‘pivot states’ now tend to make portfolio choices of relationships that they think are likely to enhance their chances to prosper. The dynamic nature of the interconnections that ensue from these new dynamics arguably make today’s international system more fluid.

40. Web-based readers can make their own selection of pivot states based on their selection of these and other criteria of strategic goods.

41. Sweijts et al., *Why Are Pivot States so Pivotal?*, 4:8–9.

42. Michael Mastanduno, “Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War,” *International Security* 21, no. 4 (1997): 49–88, doi:10.2307/2539283; Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” *The National Interest*, no. 70 (2002): 5–18; Mark Sheetz and Michael Mastanduno, “Debating the Unipolar Moment,” *International Security* 22, no. 3 (January 1, 1998): 168–74, doi:10.1162/isec.22.3.168.

Figure 3.17 Geographic location of pivot states



### 3.4.1 Overall Trends Over Time

The influence score quantifies the overall potential of a great power to influence other states. The higher the score, the higher the degree of potential<sup>43</sup> influence a great power possesses. In Figure 3.18, we can see that the influence on pivot states of E28<sup>44</sup> (with a 2015 influence score of 8.171) is several times higher than that of the US (with a 2015 score of 1.405), China (0.886), Russia (0.858), India (0.302) and Japan (0.393). As noted in section 3.2, this is due to our methodology operating with the aggregate 'E28' metric and emphasizing the extent of *potential* rather than *actual* weight of the EU in the world. Especially against the background of current discussions about Europe's declining position in the world, this serves both as a salubrious reminder of how much power Europe can still potentially wield and as an indication of what we have called the potential vs actual influence gap.<sup>45</sup>

Turning to the trends in influence over time, we can see that, while the influence of the US and Japan on pivot states seems to be declining recently, E28, Russian, Chinese and Indian influence scores have increased significantly over the past ten years.

**While the influence of the US and Japan on pivot states seems to be declining recently, E28, Russian, Chinese and Indian influence scores have increased significantly over the past ten years.**

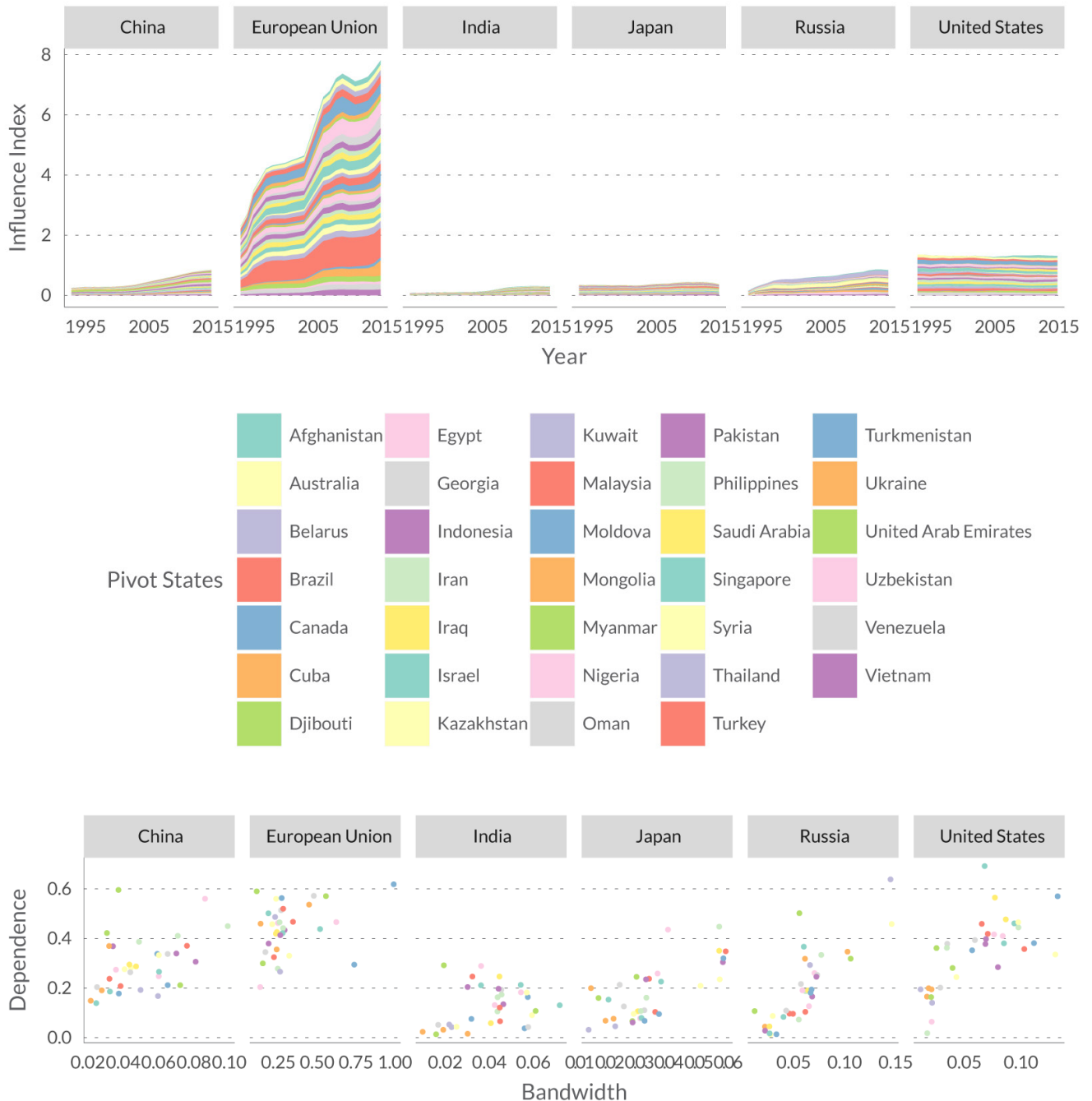
43. We urge our readers to bear in mind that whenever we use the word 'influence' in this chapter, we are referring to the 'potential' influence and not to the actual actuated influence. See the [Methodology](#)

44. Note that label "European Union" in the graphs represents the data for E28, as defined in the introduction to this chapter.

45. In some sense, this gap could be seen as another twist on Christopher Hill's well known formulation of a 'capabilities-expectations gap' Hill, "The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role," in the European Union's international presence – the gap between what it has been talked up to do and what it was able to deliver. The gap we are referring to here is one between latent and manifest influence.



**Figure 3.18 Influence on pivot states overtime and scatter plot of bandwidth and dependence sub-indices**



As described in detail in section 3.2.1, the bandwidth subindex – related to the dependence subindex in Figure 3.1 for the year 2015 – measures the magnitude of the relationship between great powers and pivot states reflected in the volume of shared *economic*, *security* and *political* interactions within each dyad. From our data, we can see that the most variance across countries emerges in the dependence of pivot states on great powers. On the contrary, the bandwidth across all great powers – except E28 – tends to be limited to <0.15. For E28, the bandwidth occupies the full range of the variable. This indicates that, while the dependence of pivot states on the different

great powers tends to be of a similar magnitude, the influence bandwidth of E28 on pivot states is greater than that of the other great powers.

### 3.4.2 Individual Great Powers → Pivots

#### *China*

China's ascendance in the international political arena since the early 2000s has been remarkable, with a significant increase in its influence on pivot states from a score of 0.327 to 0.886 in 2003-2015. In fact, between 2005 and 2015, China has increased its influence on all but three pivot states (Oman, Kuwait and Egypt). Its largest influence increases were in Venezuela (+1167%), Turkmenistan (+593%) and Nigeria (+557%).

This surge in influence can above all be attributed to the expansion of the Chinese economy. Over the entire time period we investigate (1992-2015), Chinese influence in the *economic* domain increased from 20.48 to 54.91. According to our data, China's influence is pulled by increases both in the magnitude of *economic* influence and in *economic* dependence on China. Accordingly, between 2005 and 2015, China increased its *economic* influence in all pivot states with the exception of Syria, most notably in those in its close proximity such as Iraq, Georgia, Turkmenistan and Moldova, as well as in Venezuela. Much of this growth in economic influence can be attributed to China's pragmatic approach to foreign economic relations under the guise of Hu Jintao's – supposedly marxist – 'scientific concept of development', which prioritized economic growth over geopolitical muscle-flexing.

**In fact, between 2005 and 2015, China has increased its influence on all but three pivot states.**

China has consolidated (and aspires to further consolidate) its position as a key trading partner of many pivot states. As such, between 2003 and 2008 China concluded several free trade agreements (FTAs), notably with Singapore (2008), South Korea (2006), Pakistan (2005) and Australia (2005), improving relationships with these pivot states.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, China is currently negotiating or considering FTAs with the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states such as Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Saudi Arabia, as well as Moldova, Japan (vis-à-vis South Korea) and Georgia.<sup>47</sup>

There has also been an increase in Chinese influence in the *security* domain, which has increased from 10.16 to 13.86 between 1992 and 2015 respectively. This can be broken down into three phases, where China's influence first decreased in between 1992 (10.16) and 1999 (8.55), then incrementally rose until 2008 and, finally, increased more quickly in between 2008 (10.3) and 2015 (13.86). China has attempted to assert itself as an international arms exporter with an 88% increase of arms exports between 2006 and 2015, during which China's share of global arms rose from 3.6% to 5.6%.<sup>48</sup> Pakistan and Myanmar account for 35% and 16% of China's total export of arms respectively, both of which are neighbors of India, the leading importer of arms in the region.<sup>49</sup> In line with the expansion of its *security* influence, in June this year China set up its first military base in the Horn of Africa.<sup>50</sup>

46. China Free Trade Agreements Network, "China FTA Network," 2016, [http://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/english/fta\\_qianshu.shtml](http://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/english/fta_qianshu.shtml).

47. Ibid.

48. Aude Fleurant et al., "Trends in International Arms Transfers 2015" (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, February 2016), <http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1602.pdf>.

49. Ibid.

50. Katrina Manson, "China Military to Set up First Overseas Base in Horn of Africa," *The Financial Times*, March 31, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/59ad20d6-f74b-11e5-803c-d27c7117d132>.

## E28

Over the past fifteen years, the most significant change in E28 influence scores occurred between 2003 and 2008, when E28 influence increased from 4.776 to 7.40. Between 2009 and 2011, its influence declined slightly, which was followed by a renewed recovery between 2011 and 2015, with the influence score of E28 ultimately peaking at 8.172. Against this backdrop, the influence of E28 on pivot states over the last fifteen years can be characterized as fairly volatile.

The dramatic rise in E28 influence between 2003 and 2008 is partially due to the expansion of the EU, with 12 states acquiring EU membership during this period.<sup>51</sup> This resulted in greater aggregate influence of what are today 28 member states. As a single aggregate entity, the expansion of the EU greatly increased Europe's international economic influence, with trade as percentage of GDP growing from 65% in 2003 to a 2008 peak of 77.7%.<sup>52</sup>

The decline in E28's influence in 2009-2011 is related to the adverse economic effects of the global financial crisis. In fact, this resonates with the forecast in one of our previous analyses that the financial crisis would contribute to a global shift of power from West to East.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, we note that most of the overall decline in 2009-2011 is pulled by decreases in the *economic* dependence on the E28, while the magnitude of economic exchanges increased – despite the economic crisis.

Economic factors also are the main driver behind the increase in E28's influence on pivot states in 2011-2015. In particular, in between 2013 and 2015, E28's *economic* bandwidth score experienced its steepest rise over the entire fifteen-year period we look at. Therefore, to sum up, while the E28's good economic standing is what elevates its status as a great power, its influence is vulnerable to economic downturns.

Much of the E28's influence in the *economic* domain is concentrated on pivot states within its immediate proximity, such as Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, as well as Afghanistan, Djibouti and South Korea. We find no indication that the *security* and *political* domains had any major impact on the volatility of E28's influence over time, with both *security* dependence on the E28 and *security* and *political* bandwidth of E28 increasing steadily in 2000-2015. In the *security* domain, E28 influence on pivot states increased from a 1993 score of 21.75 to a 2015 score of 49.52. We note that between 2005 and 2015, E28 influence increased in Southeast Asia, notably in Indonesia (by 29%), Malaysia (34%), the Philippines (19%), Vietnam (40%) and Thailand (30%), mostly due to increases in arms exports to this region. Another interesting development is the expansion of the E28 arms trade in former Soviet states. For instance, the UK began trading arms with Ukraine in 2014, Spain with Uzbekistan in 2009, Germany with Kazakhstan in 2009 and Italy with Turkmenistan in 2010. The shift of these pivot states to European markets demonstrates the changing nature of the international arms market, as it is increasingly becoming a buyer's market. While they previously imported arms mostly from Russia, new avenues are now open for arms exchange with the E28.

Finally, regarding the relations of E28 with pivot states, Turkey is an important outlier, with E28 influence over Turkey being much higher compared to its influence over other pivot states. This

51. With Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia ascending in 2004 and Bulgaria and Romania ascending in 2007.

52. The World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Trade (% of GDP)," *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS?locations=EU>.

53. Michael Glod et al., *Future Issue: Economic Crises - Examining the Security Implications* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2009), [http://hcass.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/01.10\\_2009\\_-\\_Future\\_Issue\\_-\\_Economic\\_Crises\\_.pdf](http://hcass.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/01.10_2009_-_Future_Issue_-_Economic_Crises_.pdf).

stems from Turkey's high *economic* and *security* dependence on the E28. This finding is not entirely unexpected, as Turkey has flirted with the idea of joining the European Union since 1997, when it was first deemed eligible.<sup>54</sup> We present a detailed analysis of Turkey's pivoting behavior in relation to the EU as well as to other international actors in the case study "A Farewell to the West? Turkey's Possible Pivot in the Aftermath of the July 2016 Coup Attempt".

Regarding the relations of E28 with pivot states, Turkey is an important outlier, with E28 influence over Turkey being much higher compared to its influence over other pivot states.

### India

India's influence on pivot states increased over time from a score of 0.080 in 1992 to 0.302 in 2015. Nonetheless, it remains dwarfed compared to that of the other great powers. India's increases in influence can be divided into two stages, with incremental increases (from 0.080 to 0.132) between 1992 and 2004 and a substantially steeper increase between 2004 (0.132) and 2008 (0.261). The latter was driven by the rise in India's *economic* influence and, in regional terms, by the expansion of India's influence in Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria and Singapore. In the last few years (2013-2015), India's influence on pivot states experienced a slight decline from 0.314 in 2012 to 0.302 in 2015.

Moreover, we find that from 2005 to 2015, India's influence increased on all pivot states except Syria. In 2015, the largest recipients of Indian influence were Afghanistan, Iraq, UAE, Singapore and in Myanmar. Yet, the magnitude of India's influence in these countries is still comparatively low in relation to the influence exercised upon them by other great powers. Dependence on India is also generally low as India, itself, is relatively dependent on other great powers. For instance, India is the largest arms importer in the world.

Movements in India's overall influence on pivot states are closely aligned with the shifts in its *economic* influence. Contrariwise, India's *security* influence – which is low in relation to its *economic* influence as well as in international comparison – increased between 1996 and 2005 as well as more recently from 2012 onwards. India's *security* influence is traceable in only a few pivot states, including Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Israel and Myanmar.

Many experts attribute India's overall lack of international influence to disorientation and volatility in Indian foreign and strategic policy (or even its absence), especially considering its shifting stances in relation to regional adversaries.<sup>55</sup> Yet, we do not find that India's influence has been more volatile (with volatility being measured as the standard deviation of influence scores for each pivot state) compared to the other great powers.

### Japan

Japan's moniker as a stagnant power is reflected in the plateau-like behavior of Japanese influence over pivot states. Overall, its influence score rose only very slightly from 0.362 in 1992 to 0.393 in 2015. In fact, the period between 1990 and 2000 is often cited as the Lost Decade in Japanese history, with this time frame recently being expanded to 2000-2010 by some analysts.

When dissecting the data further, it does however become more evident that Japan's influence has experienced some fluctuation over the time period we look at. There have been three different

54. The European Commission, "European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations," *European Commission*, October 27, 2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/turkey/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/turkey/index_en.htm).

55. Sreeram Chaulia, *Modi Doctrine: The Foreign Policy of India's Prime Minister* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

trends. First, between 1992 and 2002 (the Lost Decade), Japanese influence declined incrementally to a 2002 score of 0.343. Second, this decline was followed by a significant and steady increase, reaching the peak score (0.464) in 2012. Third, in 2012-2015, Japan's influence has again been on a declining trajectory. During this latest time period, the continuing decrease in Japan's influence in the economic domain is particularly conspicuous.

Nonetheless, we can see that, in recent years Japan has begun to forge stronger ties with Southeast and Eastern Asian pivot states. The largest recipients of Japanese influence include many Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Myanmar (mainly from 2011 onwards), Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. Moreover, in the post 2005 period Japanese influence rose significantly in Georgia and Moldova, where its influence increased respectively by 416% and 298%. In contrast, Japan experienced substantial decreases in influence in Syria (-92%), Pakistan (-58%) and Turkey (-58%) during the same period. Generally, we find that there is a strong positive correlation between the magnitude of Japan's influence on pivot states and the latter's dependence on Japan, with dependence on Japan increasing as the magnitude of its influence increases.

**Japan's history of institutionalized pacifism and, relatedly, a relatively modest military industry make Japan quite dependent on international security actors such as the US and the EU (and lately Russia).**

Finally, it can be noted that Japan's history of institutionalized pacifism and, relatedly, a relatively modest military industry make Japan quite dependent on international security actors such as the US and the EU (and lately Russia) for its arm imports.

### **Russia**

According to our data, Russian influence has increased over time from 0.121 in 1992 to a 2015 score of 0.851. This is mostly due to increases in the magnitude of its *economic* (mostly energy-related) and *security* exchanges with pivot states. Moreover, worthy of note is a steep surge in its influence between 2007 (0.675) and peaks in 2013 and 2014 (0.872).

Delving a bit deeper into Russia's relationships with pivot states, we note that, compared to other great powers, Russia's influence is most unevenly spread across the 35 pivot states that we analyze. While it exerts a very large influence on some of them, it barely affects others. Belarus and Kazakhstan stand out as being – by far – the two most important pivot states for Russia. This holds in both the *security* and the *economic* domain. The economic importance of Belarus and Kazakhstan for Russia is based on the Eurasian Economic Union, which over the last years has gradually developed from a trading bloc into a single market.<sup>56</sup> If we remove Kazakhstan and Belarus from the pivot state list, Russian international influence drops from its current score of 0.851 to 0.597 – additional illustration of how strongly its influence is founded upon them.

**Belarus and Kazakhstan stand out as being – by far – the two most important pivot states for Russia.**

Next to Kazakhstan and Belarus, Russia is economically quite influential in Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Moldova, i.e. states within Russia's immediate vicinity. Russia's *economic* influence witnessed its most important increase in between 2001 and 2008 (from 24.18 to 29.35). It is during these years that the Russian economy began to recover from the economic shocks of the 1990s, which culminated in a government default in 1998. This economic boom was largely driven by increases in

56. The International Crisis Group, "The Eurasian Economic Union: Power, Politics and Trade," *The International Crisis Group*, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/eurasian-economic-union-power-politics-and-trade>.



oil prices from under \$30/barrel in 2001 to just under \$150/barrel in 2008.<sup>57</sup> Following the global economic crisis, increases in Russia's *economic* influence largely stalled, before starting to decrease in 2014. We can, overall, see that Russia's influence in the *economic* domain does not stem from the quality of its economic interactions with pivot states per se, but rather from external events such as oil price movements, the recession in 2008 and sanctions placed on Russia after the Crimea Crisis.

In the *security* domain, Russian influence is more evenly spread across different pivot states. Next to Belarus and Kazakhstan, Russia's *security* influence is strong in Afghanistan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Vietnam and Syria – a reflection of continued strong Russian arms sales. Contrary to Russia's *economic* influence, its *security* influence has swiftly, steadily and dramatically grown over the time period we look at – from 3.32 in 1992 to 30.04 in 2015.

**We can, overall, see that Russia's influence in the economic domain does not stem from the quality of its economic interactions with pivot states per se, but rather from external events such as oil price movements, the recession in 2008 and sanctions placed on Russia after the Crimea Crisis.**

## USA

Despite often being proclaimed a global hegemon, the USA looks decidedly less preponderant in our influence index when compared to (the potential weight of) the E28. Its influence on pivot states still remains substantially higher than that of Russia, China, Japan and India. Regarding the trend in US influence over time, our data shows that it has been on a slight decline. The USA's influence score peaked in 1993 (1.449), reached a nadir in 2005 (1.357), yet then rose again to 1.405 in 2015. There have been two significant periods of decline in US influence. The first occurred in 1993-1998, when its score dropped from 1.449 to 1.399 and the second in between 2002 and 2005 (from 1.411 to 1.357).

The causes behind the overall decline in US influence include, firstly, the diminishing dependence of pivot states on US trade. While the magnitude of US *economic* influence, as reflected in bandwidth scores, has slightly increased in 1992-2015, in between 2004 and 2007 a significant decline in USA's *economic* influence took place. In 2008, the US *economic* influence score rose one last time to 54.89, before a renewed decline enduring until today set in. Still, the US' declining *economic* influence from 2009 onwards was not enough to prevent Korea (2012) and Oman (2009) from signing a free trade agreement with the US.<sup>58</sup> In addition to these, the US has free trade agreements with Australia (2005), Canada (as part of NAFTA 1994), Israel (through a series of extensions from 1996 onwards) and Singapore (2005).

Secondly, the decrease in the USA's influence is driven by declines in its influence across the majority – 20 out of 35 – pivot states. Yet, it needs to be added that from 2003 onwards the USA has markedly increasing its influence on Iraq and Afghanistan. If these two pivot states were removed from the pivot state list, the USA's overall influence score would drop drastically 1.405 to 1.260, illustrating how pivotal these states are to the USA.

At the start of the 21st century, the US accounted for a quarter of the world's economic output.<sup>59</sup> Yet, with the *security* domain pulling up overall US influence since 2003 we see the US transitioning from relying on both *economic* and *security* domains as instruments to exert influence to mostly relying

57. The U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Europe Brent Spot Price FOB," January 5, 2017, <http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=RBRT&f=D>.

58. The Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Free Trade Agreements," 2016, <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>.

59. Joseph Nye, "The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (December 2010).

on the *security* domain. Between 1992 and 2015, there is an overall increase in US influence in the security domain. While it first significantly decreased between 1992 (31.46) and 2003 (28.17), from 2004 until 2015 it rose to the score of 30.28, the highest across the US dataset. US influence is largely untested in the *security* domain mostly due to it being the largest exporter of arms, accounting for nearly a third of global arms exports.<sup>60</sup> The largest recipients of the USA's *security* influence in 2015 were Canada, Australia, South Korea and Turkey. The table shows the change in influence of each great power per sector (*politics*, *economy* and *security*) on the pivot states.

**Figure 3.19 The change in influence of each great power per domain (2005-2015)**

	Economic Influence						Political Influence						Security Influence					
	CHN	E28	IND	JPN	RUS	US	CHN	E28	IND	JPN	RUS	US	CHN	E28	IND	JPN	RUS	US
Afghanistan	118%	-25%	34%	-46%	94%	-4%	8%	1570%	5%	8%	7%	19%	0%				29%	605%
Australia	102%	-12%	20%	16%	29%	2%	3%	581%	6%	6%	6%	4%		-17%	36%			33%
Belarus	109%	6%	35%	34%	0%	-30%	5%	100%	7%	6%	5%	-13%		-45%			28%	
Brazil	98%	12%	25%	-46%	7%	-1%	4%	580%	5%	5%	6%	3%		-7%			1783%	4%
Canada	51%	7%	18%	-8%	5%	-4%	2%	54%	2%	2%	3%	2%		-22%			0%	21%
Cuba	41%	-13%	18%	-48%	-32%	-26%	2%	608%	1%	2%	5%	9%						
Djibouti	185%	-31%	-3%	-60%	4778%	-17%	3%	1384%	141%	9%	12%	4%		1433%			-100%	
Egypt	111%	-25%	46%	-42%	54%	-37%	3%	86%	20%	3%	7%	2%	-27%	24%			45%	-18%
Georgia	350%	11%	27%	194%	2%	11%	39%	1590%	136%	226%	-55%	4%		-28%			-4%	-20%
Indonesia	61%	1%	37%	-15%	32%	20%	2%	500%	2%	0%	10%	2%		6%			17%	58%
Iran	111%	-47%	87%	-54%	-13%	-18%	3%	1102%	4%	3%	7%	31%	-8%	-100%			-20%	
Iraq	492%	-15%	278%	-45%	49%	-48%	10%	1143%	13%	20%	10%	98%	-54%	120%				353%
Israel	73%	-25%	27%	-15%	2%	-47%	3%	11%	5%	4%	6%	4%	-100%	6%	5%			-13%
Kazakhstan	56%	32%	52%	-39%	3%	-3%	2%	1780%	7%	5%	5%	0%	0%		-100%		-8%	3%
Korea, Republic of	29%	11%	53%	-20%	46%	6%	4%	274%	12%	4%	6%	7%		-3%	-100%		-35%	-3%
Kuwait	151%	-48%	288%	-38%	125%	10%	1%	22%	0%	1%	-1%	-3%	-100%	-39%			16%	33%
Malaysia	46%	8%	63%	-30%	21%	-13%	2%	3%	3%	-1%	5%	-5%		13%			53%	-46%
Moldova	158%	14%	35%	361%	12%	-37%	3%	376%	16%	15%	5%	5%		259%			0%	-100%
Mongolia	66%	-21%	175%	-11%	8%	-64%	3%	2093%	3%	6%	8%	5%					5167%	
Myanmar	117%	-37%	9%	239%	87%	-32%	3%	669%	-1%	2%	7%	16%	-2%	-10%	46%		-8%	
Nigeria	96%	-9%	102%	2%	17%	-38%	2%	88%	2%	3%	6%	9%		5%			-34%	49%
Oman	78%	-5%	168%	-51%	76%	31%	3%	1570%	4%	5%	8%	5%	-100%	15%				54%
Pakistan	140%	-13%	33%	-66%	10%	-18%	3%	92%	7%	2%	7%	1%	33%	-17%	0%		-10%	49%
Philippines	41%	-18%	15%	-4%	24%	-27%	6%	84%	7%	4%	9%	5%		20%				18%
Saudi Arabia	76%	-40%	188%	-52%	24%	-25%	6%	128%	7%	7%	10%	7%		14%				-9%
Singapore	35%	-46%	29%	-45%	72%	-17%	1%	44%	4%	2%	8%	3%		29%			-100%	4%
Syria	-8%	-63%	-16%	-84%	-14%	34%	2%	36%	-4%	-43%	9%	-35%					92%	
Thailand	59%	3%	37%	-20%	27%	21%	3%	80%	3%	1%	7%	2%	-7%	5%				-42%
Turkey	79%	6%	48%	-48%	26%	-12%	3%	91%	7%	6%	8%	6%	37%	-4%			2%	-4%
Turkmenistan	765%	-3%	33%	19%	12%	-44%	2%	0%	5%	140%	3%	2%	0%				202%	
Ukraine	79%	28%	56%	-34%	1%	-4%	-1%	96%	4%	3%	4%	3%	28%	21%	-1%		158%	-33%
United Arab Emirates	87%	-42%	84%	-32%	23%	-1%	4%	1670%	7%	2%	9%	6%	-100%	-15%			24%	67%
Uzbekistan	97%	-39%	31%	6%	-2%	-68%	3%	4052%	2%	13%	4%	2%	100%	259%	3%		-61%	
Venezuela	248%	-5%	225%	-40%	69%	-19%	1%	87%	1%	0%	4%	-12%		-3%			378%	-42%
Vietnam	95%	5%	83%	24%	31%	44%	6%	65%	7%	5%	9%	7%		5%			27%	

60. Office of the United States Trade Representative, "Free Trade Agreements."

### Textbox 3.1 A Pivot Example: the Philippines

The Philippines' pivoting behavior—allegedly away from the United States and towards China—has made a lot of headlines in the international press. We therefore decided to take a closer look at what our datasets say about this. Much to the international community's surprise, the Philippines, under newly appointed President Rodrigo Duterte, seem to be in the process of pivoting towards China over recent months. This reflects a broader sense of unease throughout the entire Indo-Pacific region over the directions in which the geodynamic winds are blowing. Even the West's closest (Anglo-Saxon) ally in this region—Australia—is balancing its economic relations with China with its military relations with the US. Nevertheless, what remains so intriguing about the Filipino seeming volte-face is the timing of this pivot, considering it was only in July earlier this year that the ICJ ruled in favor of the Philippines over China's claims in the South China Sea.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, Duterte, heavily courted by China's economic bounty, has persisted with the Philippine's pivot toward China. Duterte's objectives of increasing economic growth has helped propagate this pivot.<sup>2</sup>

Based on our event datasets, we do indeed find (see Figure 3.20) that the Philippines experienced a post-July 2016 increase in *verbal* cooperation with China, peaking towards the end of October when Duterte went to China on a state visit with a group of 400 Filipino businessmen.<sup>3</sup> The slight spike in *material* conflict on July 12-13 is partly due to the ICJ case over disputed islands in the South China Sea, where Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam were also included in the ruling. During this same period, China responded with threats of military action in the South China Sea, accounting for the increase in *verbal* conflict. Still, there is an overall post July increase in *verbal* cooperation between China and the Philippines, with *verbal* communication having the highest number of records and peaks. Duterte often refers to the ability of China and the Philippines to reach a compromise prior to his visit in October. This finding is compounded by Duterte's talk of a new alliance with China (and to a lesser extent Russia). During his October trip to Beijing, Duterte announced a "separation" from the US, feeding speculation of his pivoting towards China.<sup>4</sup> The decline in *verbal* cooperation with the USA as a proportion of overall records decreases overtime, while *verbal* conflict increases.

The significance of the October peak should not be underestimated. Indeed, the proportion of overall events occupied by verbal cooperation is indicative of the rise in positive Sino-Philippine relations. From June onwards the proportion of verbal cooperation is often the highest out of all the data, with an exception between August 21st and September 18th, due to an increase in neutral records. At the time, there were reports of Chinese boats approaching the disputed Scarborough shoal islands. If we compare this to the E28, the increase in verbal cooperation between China and the Philippines is matched by volatility in the E28's relationship with the Philippines, with the data fluctuating slightly between the beginning of September and November 6th. We also find the Sino-Philippine rapprochement back in the Goldstein scores from May onwards and their upward increase overtime suggests that this pivoting is increasing, with the variation plateauing from mid-October to November. In contrast to this, the US and E28 experience downward trends in average Goldstein scores. This immediate post-election pivot suggests that this pivot is planned and intentional. There are, however, many reports indicating that the Philippine's relationship with the US has remained the same.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, with the Philippines getting closer to China and with other regional pivot states forming closer bonds with other great powers, the international political climate is changing where pivot states are beginning to adaptively redefine their relations with particular great powers.

1. Jane Perlez, "Tribunal Rejects Beijing's Claims in South China Sea," *The New York Times*, July 12, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/world/asia/south-china-sea-hague-ruling-philippines.html>.

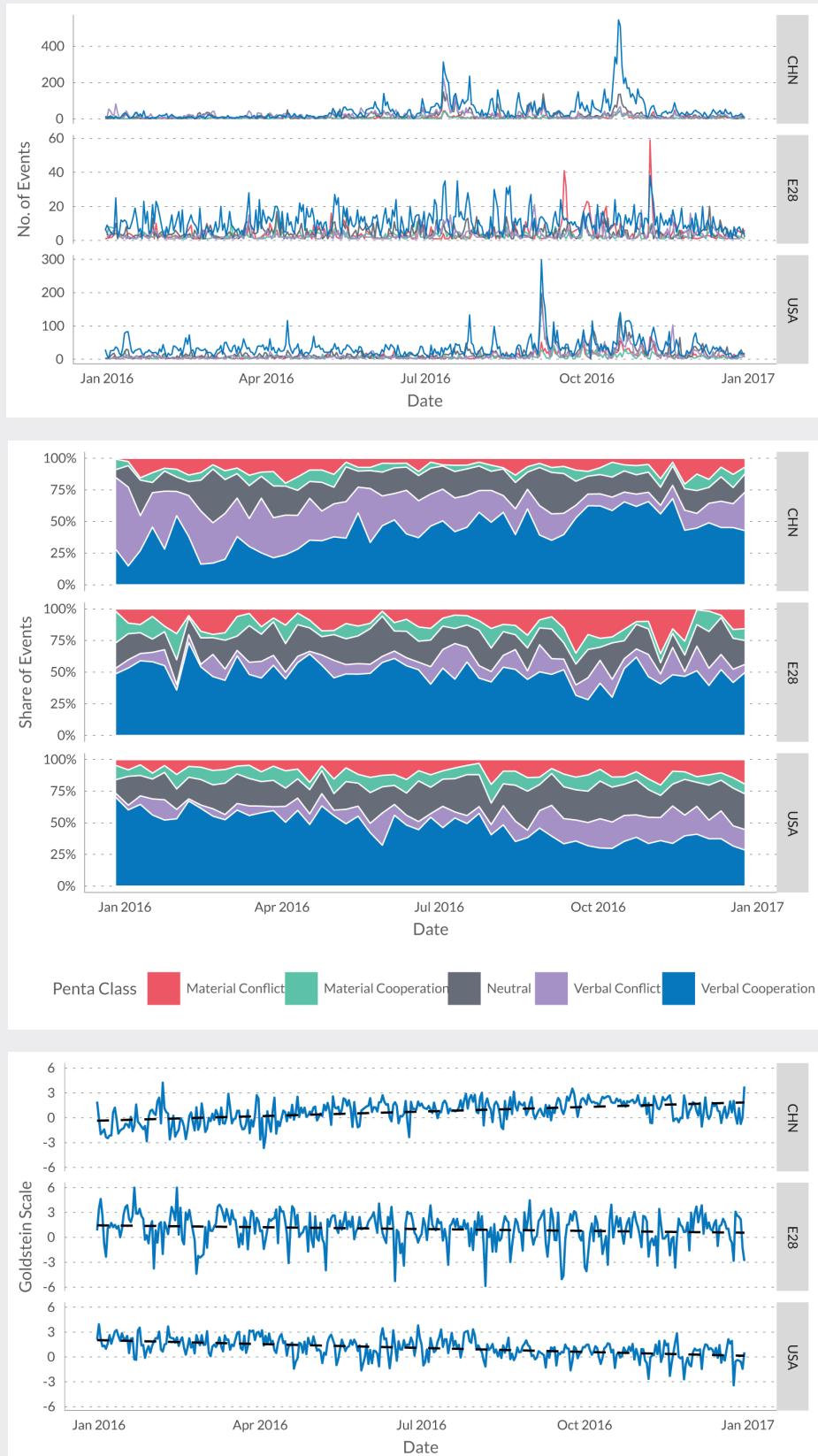
2. The Economist, "Duterte's Pivot," *The Economist*, October 22, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21708984-philippines-until-now-staunch-american-ally-falling-chinese-camp-dutertes-pivot>.

3. Ibid.

4. ABS-CBN, "Duterte: It's Russia, China, PH 'against the World,'" *ABS-CBN News*, October 20, 2016, <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/20/16/duterte-its-russia-china-ph-against-the-world>.

5. The Economist, "Duterte's Pivot."

Figure 3.20 The Philippines' pivoting behavior



### 3.4.3 In Geographic Perspective

Figure 3.21 puts the data that we presented in the previous section in a geographical perspective.

	Change in Influence per Sector					
	CHN	E28	IND	JPN	RUS	US
Afghanistan	135%	120%	85%	-37%	78%	220%
Australia	100%	4%	50%	38%	203%	34%
Belarus	383%	47%	89%	64%	16%	-28%
Brazil	113%	37%	153%	-46%	345%	4%
Canada	61%	-3%	277%	-13%	21%	11%
Cuba	40%	26%	144%	-49%	-51%	-21%
Djibouti	342%	68%	31%	-43%	-40%	62%
Egypt	28%	19%	104%	-47%	87%	-25%
Georgia	454%	173%	70%	416%	-7%	2%
Indonesia	268%	29%	76%	32%	44%	47%
Iran	38%	-17%	196%	-46%	-27%	-67%
Iraq	146%	56%	1112%	-35%	1484%	76%
Israel	-9%	5%	33%	-23%	41%	-30%
Kazakhstan	46%	138%	91%	-36%	-2%	-2%
Korea, Republic of	32%	128%	34%	-14%	7%	6%
Kuwait	-22%	-24%	333%	-25%	82%	25%
Malaysia	77%	34%	93%	9%	88%	-34%
Moldova	173%	263%	69%	298%	27%	-68%
Mongolia	59%	23%	261%	20%	312%	-48%
Myanmar	56%	2%	22%	224%	10%	-33%
Nigeria	557%	18%	182%	3%	-31%	-3%
Oman	-14%	29%	184%	-33%	370%	68%
Pakistan	98%	12%	86%	-58%	-22%	26%
Philippines	47%	19%	70%	48%	101%	-2%
Saudi Arabia	182%	4%	276%	-35%	109%	-15%
Singapore	61%	0%	39%	-29%	53%	-4%
Syria	152%	-45%	-29%	-92%	62%	-24%
Thailand	35%	30%	96%	30%	341%	-17%
Turkey	133%	16%	174%	-58%	24%	-8%
Turkmenistan	593%	117%	40%	69%	220%	-31%
Ukraine	88%	183%	94%	-45%	56%	-2%
United Arab Emirates	68%	3%	72%	-20%	62%	45%
Uzbekistan	114%	43%	30%	12%	-52%	10%
Venezuela	1167%	11%	4355%	-53%	836%	-42%
Vietnam	91%	40%	180%	91%	41%	40%

The overview on the left shows changes in the overall influence (across the *economic*, *security* and *political* domains) of the six great powers over the pivot states in the past 10 years. We see here that biggest increase in influence in this period was between India and Venezuela (+4355%); and the biggest decline between Japan and Syria (-92%). The pie charts in the right pane of the figure show the relative proportions of great power influence experienced by the pivot states. For instance, when we look at Ukraine, we see that the (brown) E28 piece of the pie is more than three times bigger than the (red) Russian piece. This section will highlight a few interesting observations that jump out of these data.

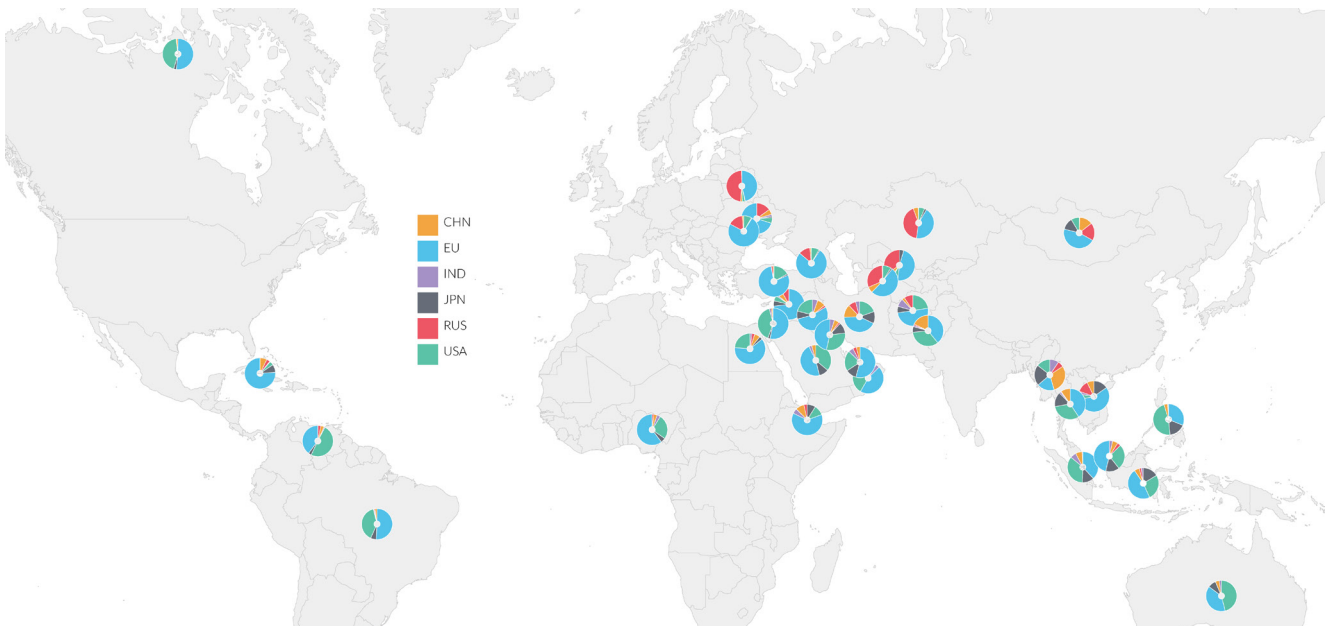
In 2005-2015, E28 experienced a decline in influence in 4 pivot states (Syria, Kuwait, Iran and Canada), with the greatest decrease in Syria (-45%). Simultaneously, the influence of E28 grew considerably in Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan), Eastern Europe (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) as well as Djibouti. While the E28 retains a high level of influence in the Middle East, it has been partly declining between 2005 and 2015. As such, the influence of E28 on Kuwait declined by 24% and on Iran by 17%.

The influence of the USA decreased in 20 of our pivot states – mostly in post-Soviet states, Latin America, Malaysia, Mongolia and in some (though not all) areas of the Middle East – while stagnating in many others. At the same time, the USA's influence remains high in the Pacific, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan and in the Middle East.

The USA's influence is also still strong in Venezuela (despite the huge increases in Indian, Russian and Chinese influence). The USA does not seem to place a strong regional emphasis regarding the states it strives to influence, with the clusters in Figure 3.22 not revealing a pronounced geographical focus. Still, pivot states in the upper left cluster (Europe/Middle East) have particular regional importance to the USA, as they include Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel, that is, pivot states with strong – though not always friendly – historical relations with the USA. Also, the South-East Asia (and Pacific) cluster includes states, notably Australia and Singapore, where the USA has a high share of influence.



Figure 3.21 The influence of great powers on pivot states



Overall, in 2005-2015, Russia's influence declined in eight pivot states. Simultaneously, its influence has grown in South America (in Venezuela by 836% and in Brazil by 345%), Iraq (+1484%) and Turkmenistan (+220%). Simultaneously, Russia's influence declined in a range of countries that experienced high levels of Russian influence in the past, including Cuba, Georgia and Iran.

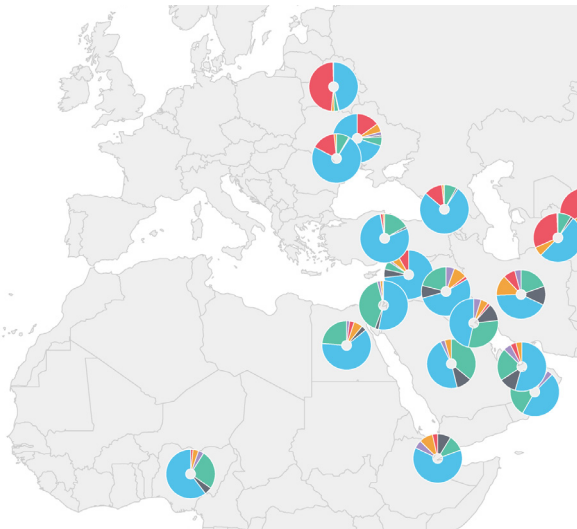
India's regional stake in Western Asia is evidenced by its significant proportions of influence in Afghanistan, Iran, UAE and Iraq. India's level of influence pales in comparison to the other great powers. Nonetheless, as elaborated in section 3.4.2, in terms of trend India's influence rose in all pivot states except Syria. The largest increases took place in Iraq (+1,112%), Kuwait (+333%) and Saudi Arabia (+276%) in the Middle East and in Venezuela (+4,335%) in the Americas.

In regards to Japan, the largest recipients of its influence include many Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Myanmar (mainly from 2011 onwards), Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. As for the Europe/Middle East cluster, Japanese influence rose significantly in the post 2005 period in Georgia and Moldova (by 416% and 298% respectively). At the same time, it experienced substantial decreases in influence in Syria (-92%), Pakistan (-58%) and Turkey (-58%). While Japan's influence is small compared to that of other great powers across the globe, its low influence is especially conspicuous in the Americas.

**Figure 3.22 Influence of great powers on pivot states in regional perspective**

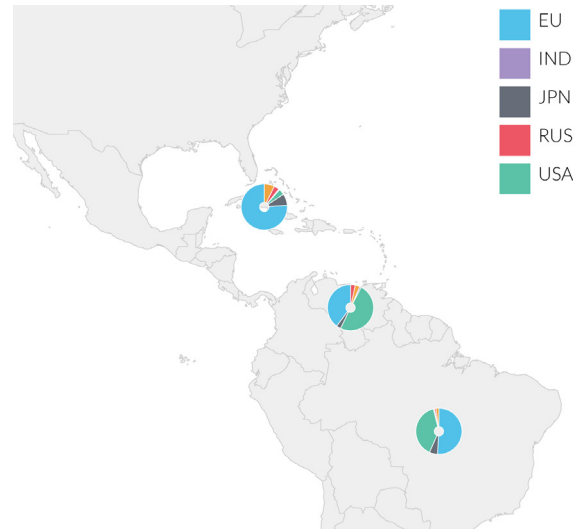


**GP Influence: Europe/Middle East**



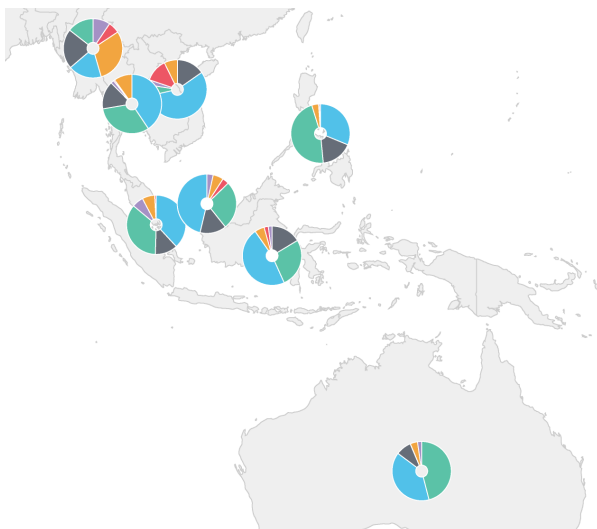
China increase  
India increase  
EU stable (Up: Ukraine, Moldova; Down: Syria, Kuwait)  
Russia increase (Iraq + Egypt, down Georgia)  
US decrease

**GP Influence: Americas**



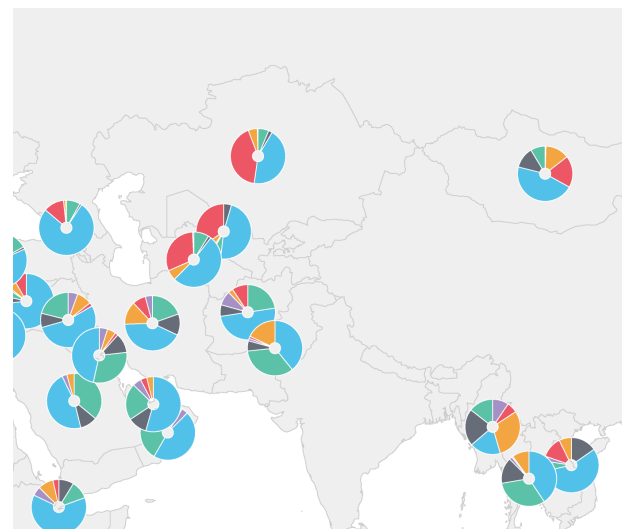
US influence down (Venez. + Cuba)  
Russia increase (except Cuba)  
Europe stagnant  
China increase  
India increase

**GP Influence: South-East Asia**



US decline (except Aus + Indo)  
Russia increase  
China increase  
India increase  
Europe stable

**GP Influence: Asia**



China increase  
India increase  
Europe increase (except Iran + PAK + UAE + India)  
Russia increase (except UZB + India + PAK + Iran)  
United States stable (strong increase Afghanistan)

### 3.5 Pivot States → Great Powers

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In this section of ‘Nowcasting Geodynamics’, we turn our attention to pivot states themselves. Conflict around overlapping great power spheres of interest is more likely to occur in times of changing influence configurations than in times of political stagnation. In light of the growing volatility of the international system due to changes in conflict and cooperation, in great power assertiveness, in non-state actor violence and in allegiance between states, pivot states are more prone to shifting between different great power alliances. Being able to reliably capture the degree and direction of this pivoting behavior may therefore be of great benefit to analysts of international relations.

Using the Global Influence Index (GII), we have computed the share of influence that each great power holds over the specified pivot states and tracked it over time. Strong shifts in the distribution of influence among the great powers indicate shifts in allegiance. Heavy fluctuations or, conversely, extreme stability, inform us where competition for influence is occurring and where dominance is clearly established. The GDELT data, specifically the events capturing the interactions of the great powers vis-à-vis pivot states (and vice versa) and the Goldstein scores, reflect current dynamic day-to-day interactions. These dynamics are much more volatile compared to those captured by the GII, as they comprise “actions” rather than flows of goods or memberships in councils. Thus, event data gives a more complete picture of the “intent” of countries towards each other (e.g. is it a positive or negative interaction?) as well as the frequency of such “actions” occurring per year. As the GII is comprised of more static factors and has a three-year average applied to it, it lags behind the reality of the GDELT scores. Hence, GDELT can help us identify the pulling and pushing forces of great powers, before – if these forces are successful – seeing the respective movements in the Influence Index can be seen.

Based on the (change in) the number of events and (change in) Goldstein scores from GDELT, as well as (change in) the share of influence held by the great powers, HCSS presents the following categorization of identified pivot states in five categories of pivoting behavior:

- » ‘Aligning’: moving to become more firmly embedded within a great power’s ‘sphere of influence’ (>40% of total influence);
- » ‘Distancing’: moving away from a great power without leaving its ‘sphere of influence’;
- » ‘Pivoting’: moving out of the sphere of influence of a particular great power and being drawn towards the ‘sphere of influence’ of another great power;
- » ‘Stable’: being stably in the ‘sphere of influence’ of a particular great power, showing no significant sign of change;
- » ‘Triangulating’: adaptively adjusting their portfolio without clear signs of direction.

Figure 3.23 Trends in pivot states' behavior

Aligning	Distancing	Pivoting	Stable	Triangulating
Cuba (E28)	Syria (E28)	Myanmar (EU decrease, increase)	Brazil (E28)	Belarus – (E28 + Russia, relatively stable)
Ukraine – (E28)	Kuwait – (E28)		Djibouti (E28)	
Israel (E28)	Iraq – (E28)		Malaysia (E28)	
Moldova – (E28)	Australia (E28)		Turkey (E28)	
South Korea – (E28)	Canada – (E28)		Egypt (E28)	
Georgia (E28)	Mongolia (E28)		Oman (E28)	
Kazakhstan (E28 increase, Russia decrease)	Nigeria (E28)		Philippines (E28)	
Uzbekistan (E28)	Pakistan (E28)		Saudi Arabia (E28)	
	Indonesia (E28)		Singapore (E28)	
	Turkmenistan (E28)		Thailand (E28)	
	UAE (E28)		Afghanistan – (E28 stable, moving slightly towards US)	
	Venezuela (E28)			
	Vietnam (E28)			
	Iran (E28)			

**Aligning<sup>61</sup>**

Cuba has been strongly under E28 influence since the latter's establishment. Starting at 77% in 1993, E28 rose steadily to an 88.5% influence share in 2015, without noteworthy fluctuations. US influence has been steadily climbing since the early 2000s, whereas Russian influence has declined continually since the early 1990s. Despite the fact that Chinese influence over Cuba has decreased slightly between 2008 and 2015, there has been an overall increase of Cuba-related events, namely

61. The pivot states that are categorized as aligning show some similar characteristics. First, the great power they are aligning to is the dominant originator of events and events are showing either proportional increase compared to the other great powers. This number of events signifies a (strong) focus of the great power on these pivot states. Notable exceptions are Ukraine, where the civil war caused a spike of US + Russian events. Only in 2015 did the E28 managed to match the events of these countries again. Kuwait is an exception in another fashion, as the US only reaches about 50% of the E28's events (albeit none of the great powers has more than a handful of annual events in Kuwait). Syria also shows a higher n of events from the US than from Russia, which might be due to the civil conflict. Most great powers that see pivot signs align to them do not have the highest Goldstein scores, except for those aligned to the E28. Furthermore they are all either a) directly bordering the great power they align to, or b) engaged in a conflict that the respective great power has strongly engaged in. The exception to this categorization would be Kuwait, that neither is in conflict nor borders the US. The share of influence over time is quite different between the countries in this category.

with China. In 2014 Cuba and China have begun negotiations to formalize both defense and economic agreements.<sup>62</sup>

*Georgia* was in the Russian sphere of influence until 1997, after which the Russian influence continually declined (to 4% in 2015). E28 influence has risen gradually, taking Georgia into its sphere of influence in 1996 (leaving Georgia triangulating between Russia and E28 for two years) and continuing to rise to 89% in 2015. Georgia experiences low numbers of events overall, with the E28, US and Russia the only great powers recording events. E28 events remain positive while Russian and US events remain volatile. The E28 has drawn Georgia closer into its sphere of influence by granting it access to the Single Market, especially by means of the recent ratification of the Association Agreement, coming along with a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Simultaneously, Georgia is currently negotiating a free trade agreement with China, who has of late also increased its influence over the Eurasian country.

*Israel* has – based on our dataset – pivoted away from the USA towards the E28. US influence accounted for 53% of total influence in 1993, but has declined gradually and dipped below 20% in 2007. The E28 accounts for 78% of total influence, a rise from 42% in 1993. Israel's pivoting towards the E28 has been spurred by the strengthening of economic ties between the two entities, building on the trade agreement adopted in 2007. Since 2000, E28-Israel events have increased, while post 2000 US influence in Israel dropped by 80%. Israel has strongly embedded itself in the E28 sphere of influence to increase their economic activity whilst maintaining strong security ties with the US.

*Kazakhstan* was in the Russian sphere of influence until 2006 and has since lost influence to E28, dipping below 30% in 2014 for the first time. The E28, on the other hand, has brought Kazakhstan into its sphere of influence in 2006 and since gained influence consistently to nearly reach 60% in 2015.

*Moldova*, triangulated between Russia and E28 until 1997, until the E28 overtook the Russian influence in 1998 and gradually increased its own to a share of 89%. Russia, on the other hand, shows a steady decline from 1998 onwards, reaching 7% in 2015.

*South Korea* shows a strong increase of E28 influence throughout the index, as it overtook the USA as dominant influencee in 1998 to signal US decline (17% in 2015) and E28 gain (70%) of influence.

*Ukraine* and *Uzbekistan* switched from the Russian sphere of influence (dominant until 1993 and 2004 respectively) to the E28 sphere of influence (from 1994 and 2005 onwards). Russia made a 'play' to capture influence over Ukraine (peaking in 2012-2013), but its influence has decreased (strongly) again in 2015. E28 influence has shown an upward trend in influence, from 51% in 1994 to 82% in 2015. In Uzbekistan, Russian influence has declined gradually, to 18% in 2015, whereas Chinese influence in Uzbekistan has been rising steadily to 11% in 2015.

### ***Distancing***

Pivot states that show distancing but have not left the sphere of influence of their affiliated great power permanently seem to show some similarities too. First, these countries are all connected to western great powers. Second, these states all have great military importance in their respective region.

62. Shannon Tiezzi, "China, Cuba Seek Economic and Defense Cooperation," *The Diplomat*, June 27, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/china-cuba-seek-economic-and-defense-cooperation/>.



*Australia* and *Canada* were part of the US sphere of influence until 1996 and 1994 respectively, after which the E28 became the dominant player and gradually increased its influence until its peak in 2006 and 2008. The US remained near 20%, even at its lowest point and has shown a gradual increase since these years (up to 25% in 2015 in both countries) as the E28 shows decline (59% and 71% respectively in 2015).

*Indonesia* has been in the E28 sphere of influence since 1993 and showed continual aligning until 2000, when E28 influence started to shrink in favor of Chinese influence (growth from 3% in 2000 to 11.5% in 2015). The US' influence exceeded 10% (with the exception of 2008-2013), but remains the second greatest influencer (12%) after the E28 (60%) in 2015.

*Iran* shows a relatively stable position in the sphere of influence of the E28. Since 2006, however, it has decreased from 64% to 56% in favor of Chinese influence (rise from 15% to 23.5%).

*Iraq* shows strong decline of E28 dominance (85% in 1996 to 56% in 2015), largely in favor of US influence, which has seared to 20% in 2003 and centered around 25% since. This surge coincides with the invasion in Iraq by the US military. The US has shown a consistently elevated number of events since the invasion in Iraq, yet the number of events seems to have increased over time, whereas its influence share decreased. The Goldstein scores for all great powers show high volatility over time in Iraq and seems to have little connection to shifts in influence.

*Mongolia* has been part of the E28 sphere of influence since 1996, following various years of triangulating and grew to 61% influence in 2007. Since, the E28 influence has gradually decreased to 47% in 2015, whereas Russian influence has grown to 29%. Despite the low number of events in general, Russian positive events since 2014 have increased, while China's, the E28's and US' have declined. This supports the observations from the Influence Index, perhaps signaling a gradual pivot towards Russia.

*Nigeria* has been captured by E28 influence since 1993 and shown an increase to 79% in 1998, a decline to 68% in 2002, followed by another increase to 76% in 2006 and a gradual decline to 69% in 2015. During the first decline, the US climbed up from its initial decline (17%) and Russia established itself (5%) before fading away again. The second E28 decline coincides with an increase in Chinese influence, from 2% in 2006 to 11% in 2015. Since 2010, China has had more positive events and has increased its interaction with Nigeria during this period. Nigeria and China have developed strong ties in recent years, as illustrated by China endorsing Nigeria's bid to become a permanent member of the Security Council in 2015 and with Nigeria's reciprocation of supporting China's position in the South China Sea territorial disputes.

*Pakistan* and *Venezuela* show E28 alignment until 2006 and 2005 respectively, after which a slight decline from 61% to 56% and 64% to 58% in 2015 manifests itself. This decline is simultaneous with an increase of Chinese influence, from 12% and 1% in 2006 to 20% and 13% in 2015. The US has remained stable around 20% influence since 1995 in Pakistan, whereas in Venezuela its influence has decreased from 52% in 1993 (dipping below 40% in 1997) to 15% in 2015. Venezuela triangulates with the US in terms of political movements, mainly due to Venezuela being one of the key oil suppliers to the US, while China has begun formalizing trade agreements with Venezuela. Despite this, the US maintains the most events in Venezuela, while Russian and Chinese events have increased since 2015. China's close economic affinity with Venezuela suggests that Venezuela is cultivating relationships with the US and the E28 for economic reasons, with Russia for military reasons and with China for both economic and military reasons. Geopolitically, the recent Chinese interest in Latin America shows that China is slowly gaining a foothold in the historical sphere of

influence of the US. Lately, Pakistan has moved towards the Chinese sphere of influence, which accounts for the high post 2012 Goldstein score events. India, however, has the highest number of positive Goldstein score events. Pakistan's close affinity to China is partially due to the challenge they are posed by India.

*Syria*, despite E28 hegemony, shows a strong increase of Russian influence since the early 2000's (6% to 19%), simultaneous with E28 decline from 87% to 68%. The decline of E28 influence has accelerated since 2011, as it dropped from 77% and Russian influence went up from 10% and Chinese influence from 5% to nearly 10%.

*Turkmenistan* was a battleground for E28 and Russian competition, until the E28 established itself as the dominant power. E28 influence rose to 63% in 2008 and Russian influence fell to 19% in the same year. From 2009 onwards, however, Russia has once again challenged E28 dominance and rose to 37% in 2011. The E28 seems to have retained its position for now, as Russian influence fell to 30% in 2015, with E28 at 55%, but the E28 has lost influence to Russia nonetheless.

*UAE* has shown consistent E28 dominance, yet decline from 2005 (68%) onwards to 61.5% in 2015. Largely, this decline has given rise to gradual increases for the other great powers, most noteworthy the US, which has increased its influence from 14% in 2005 to 18% in 2015. Since 2009, US events have greatly increased, with 2014 and 2016 being the only two years where the US is not dominant due to increases in E28 events. With the US having the most events since 2009 and India, Japan, Russia and China having higher averages than the E28, the UAE is pivoting towards the US. This is unsurprising when considering that the UAE is the one of the highest importer of US arms.

*Vietnam* is part of the E28 sphere of influence too, rising to 66% share of influence in 2007 and declining to 57% in 2015 after. This decline coincided with an increase in Chinese influence (9% in 2015, 7% in 2007), Japanese influence (8% in 2007, 12% in 2015) and Russian influence (10.5% in 2007 to 12% in 2015).

### ***Pivoting***

Pivoting states move out of the sphere of influence of a particular great power and are being drawn towards the sphere of influence of another great power. A pivot state might transition into being part of overlapping spheres of influence or might gradually exit one sphere of influence in favor of another.

*Myanmar* has mostly shown a strong relation with China, which has been dominant until 2000. From 2001 to 2013, the E28 and China have been competing to secure Myanmar as influencee. For a short time, India was competing for influence in Myanmar as well (up to 18% influence in 2010), but it has since lost a significant amount of influence again (8% in 2015). In 2014, China seems to have recaptured most influence (41% vs E28 25%), but as Japan's influence has grown strongly as well (15% in 2015) and Russian influence is still at 10% in 2015, we do not categorize Myanmar as aligning yet. Hence, Myanmar seems to be in a pivoting phase, seemingly back to China, out of it's former state of triangulating. It is important to note, however, that the recent years have been very volatile and thus a definitive conclusion cannot be drawn. This may be the result of Myanmar reaching out to other great powers, as after years of political isolation from the world (resulting in high dependence on China), Myanmar began pivoting toward other great powers – namely the US and the E28 – through the liberalization of their economy.<sup>63</sup>

63. Sara Perria, "Myanmar's Parliament Awash with Colour as Aung San Suu Kyi Ushers in a New Era," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/01/myanmars-parliament-awash-with-colour-as-aung-san-suu-kyi>

***Stable***

A stable pivot state has not aligned or distanced itself from the sphere of influence it is currently in and they do not demonstrate any convincing signs of pivoting in a particular direction.

*Afghanistan* has been in the sphere of influence of the E28 since the early years of the EU (1993). These same years are marked by a strong decrease of Russian influence (26% in 1993 to 5% in 1996). An resurgence of Russian influence occurs from 2002-2007, where it once again peaks above 10%. American influence increases dramatically from 2005 onwards (up to 28%), both of which seem to coincide with the “war on terror” efforts the United States started after 9/11. E28 influence, however, remained dominant in Afghanistan, as stayed comfortably over 50%.

*Brazil and Egypt* have been part of a dominant E28 sphere of influence, rising to >70% in 2005 and nearly 80% in 2006 respectively and since fluctuating around 73% and 80%. Since the E28 influence rose above 70%, the US influence has dipped below 20% and has been hovering at around 15% thereafter in the case of Brazil and at around 10% for Egypt.

*Djibouti* shows strong ties with the E28, fluctuating between 60% and 70% since 2002, yet not showing any trend of decline or growth over time. The relative volatility in the E28 influence is accompanied by a growth in Chinese influence (7% in 2002, 20% in 2015) and a general decline of US influence. The decline of the US and the idleness of the E28 can be attributed to declining trade flows. In the event data, Chinese events have slightly increased, with strongly positive Goldstein scores since 2002.

*Malaysia* has shown a similar trend to Egypt, with a steadily increasing E28 influence until 2007 (reaching 64%) and then remaining stable at that level. Simultaneously, a drop in US influence is observed, dipping below 20% and stabilizing around 10%.

*Oman* shows somewhat more fluctuation than the above-mentioned countries, with E28 influence generally around 60%, but dropping to 50% from 2007-2010 and climbing back up thereafter. During the dip, US influence rose to 25%, following by a drop back to 15%.

*Singapore and the Philippines* have been part of the E28 sphere of influence since 1993 and since 1994 (Singapore) and 1999 (Philippines) it has been around 52% consistently. The US has fluctuated around 25% mostly since 1994 in Singapore, with a slight peak between 1998-2001 (around 30%). China has gradually increased in influence from 5% in 1994 to 10% in 2015. In the Philippines, US influence has continually dropped since 1993, dropping to 23% in 2015. At the same time, Japanese influence has been above 10%, but seemingly not making any movements to a higher share of influence. Prior to 2015, China experiences a low number of events with Singapore, this then is followed with an increase in 2015. China is Singapore’s largest export market, while Singapore is one of China’s biggest foreign investors since concluding a free trade agreement in 2008. However, over the past year Singapore has sought to bolster its military ties with the US, considering China’s military assertiveness in the region.<sup>64</sup>

*Saudi Arabia* has centered around 65% E28 influence since 2004, after a general increase from 1993 onwards. A dip is observed between 1998 and 2003, marking an increase of US influence to >30%, but since this has dropped to 17%, whereas E28 influence has stabilized again around the 65% mark.

kyi-ushers-in-a-new-era.

64. Jeevan Vasagar and Christian Shepherd, “South China Sea Spat Exposes Singapore-Beijing Strains,” *The Financial Times*, September 28, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/07345320-852f-11e6-8897-2359a58ac7a5>.

*Thailand* has maintained its position in the E28 sphere of influence, growing to 60% in 2005 and remaining at that level since. US influence has gradually declined since 2000, dropping from 25% to 12.5% in 2015. Chinese influence is stable around 11% and Japanese influence has been stable around 10%. According to our event dataset, there is little change in Thailand, with some increases in positive scores between the US and E28 since 2012. However, after 2015, Chinese events increase and remain generally positive.

*Turkey* has manifested itself as one of the closest pivot states to the E28, centering around 90% influence since 2005, up from about 85% since 1996. Turkey remains closely wedded to the E28 due to dependence on the E28 economically and militarily and this is indicated by Turkey being the largest recipient of E28 influence. Turkey's strong relationship with the E28 was firmly established in the mid to end 1990s where the E28 signed a trade agreement with Turkey and deemed it eligible to join the E28 after it fulfilled E28 membership criteria.

### ***Triangulating***

With China rising as a great power and Russia often challenging US hegemony, pivot states are increasingly triangulating their relations with various great powers as the ascent of China and Russia provide new trade options. As pivot states become increasingly less dependent on one great power, they seek to diversify their attention to reap the benefits of each individual great power.

*Belarus* has been strongly centered in Russian influence since 1993 and shows an increase first (until 67% in 2000, declining gradually to a stable 40% afterwards (in 2008). E28 influence increases gradually in the same timespan, to >40% in 2005 and gradually sustains a >50% influence share. Both countries maintain Belarus in their sphere of influence and hence Belarus is triangulating between those powers since 2005 already, with little signs of change.

## **3.6 The Netherlands in Global Geodynamics**

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How does the Netherlands fit into these turbulent global geodynamics? We now have a new dataset that tries to capture the changes in the global web(s) of influence. This allows us to take a look at the magnitude of the influence of the Netherlands in the world – on all countries together and broken down in individual countries – as well as how that global influence breaks down into the *economic*, *security* and *political* domains.

### **3.6.1 The Netherlands → World**

Looking first at the overall influence score of the Netherlands on all countries, we see in Figure 3.24 that its 2015 value is 1.902. Comparing this value with those of our great powers,<sup>65</sup> it is striking that the global influence of the Netherlands is higher than that of India and Japan – their scores being, respectively, 1.133 and 1.148. This is mostly due to Japan's and India's low scores for *security* bandwidth and *security* dependence. More in line with expectations, overall influence scores of China, Russia and the US are substantially higher – 3.014, 2.205 and 5.661 respectively.

65. Note that the influence scores presented here were computed in reference to all countries, while those presented in sections 3.4 and 3.5 refer only to pivot states.

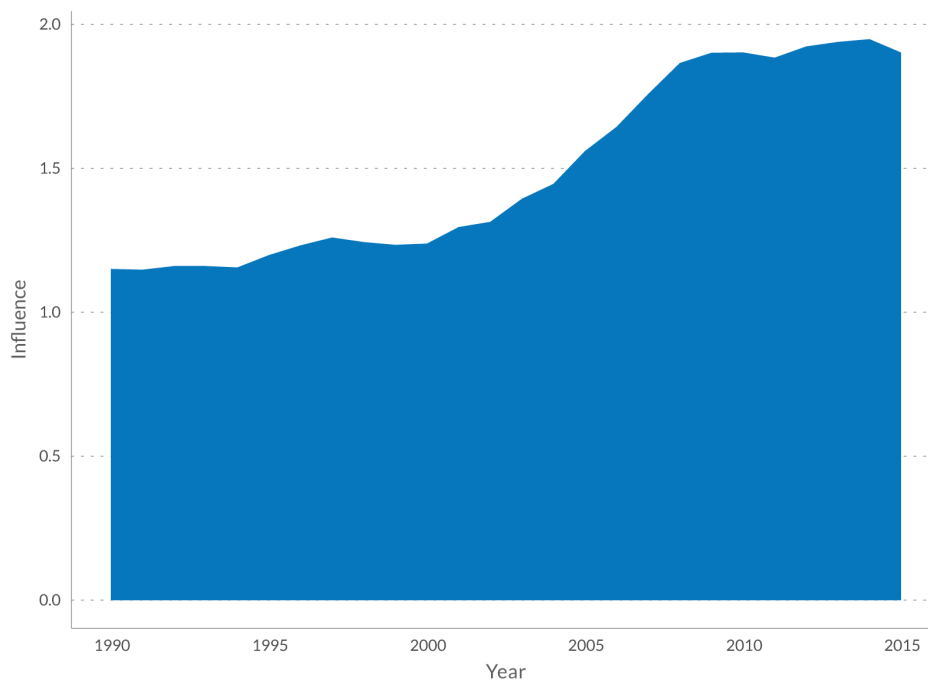
### Over Time

Turning our attention to the trends in the international influence of the Netherlands over time, we can see that it has experienced its steepest increase in the period from 2000 until 2008. During this time, its overall influence score jumped from 1.24 to 1.87. While remaining stable in 2009-2010 and decreasing slightly in 2011, the influence of the Netherlands has again experienced a somewhat faster rise from 2011 (1.88) until 2014 (1.95), before slightly decreasing in 2015 to 1.90. As described in more detail below, the influence of the Netherlands is by far the strongest in the *economic* domain. Key components making up the increases in influence were the following:<sup>66</sup>

i) For the period from 2000-2008:

- » Two largest increases in influence on Belgium (from 0.06 in 2000 to 0.1 in 2008) and on Latvia (from 0.01 to 0.05). Latvia is perhaps a surprising case here. According to the GII data, this increase is driven above by increases in the *security* bandwidth (from 0.00 in 2002 to 0.421 in 2008); *security* dependence (from 0.00 to 0.657); and, even more strongly, by the *economic* bandwidth (from 0.37 to 1.15).
- » Increases in influence on Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, UK and Portugal by 0.03 (rounded)

**Figure 3.24 Influence of the Netherlands on the world**



ii) For the period from 2011-2014:

- » Increase in influence on Denmark from 0.047 to 0.063. Note that this increase constitutes part of a longer and continuing trend: From 2006 to 2015, the Dutch influence on Denmark increased from 0.0320 to 0.066.

66. These were calculated taking simple differences in influence scores in i) 2000 and 2008 and ii) 2011 and 2014.



- » Increase in influence on Cabo Verde by 0.016, i.e. from 0.007 to 0.023. This is driven by the increases in *security* bandwidth and *security* dependence. From 0.00 in 2011 the *security* bandwidth score increased to 0.295 in 2014. In the same time frame, *security* dependence increased from 0.00 to 0.836.

Increase in influence on Morocco by 0.015, i.e. from 0.013 to 0.027

The steep spike in Dutch influence in 2000-2008 coincided with the intensification of the process of European integration: the introduction of the euro, EU enlargements and the Nice and Lisbon treaties. The GII data thus corroborates the well-documented (though lately sometimes forgotten) fact that the Netherlands has greatly benefited from the European integration – also in terms of its own national influence.

### **Geographically**

As regards the influence of the Netherlands on individual countries (Fig 3.25), we can observe that over the past years, it has, on average, exerted the most influence on Belgium (0.089), Germany (0.076), the UK (0.053), Portugal (0.050) and Greece (0.047).<sup>67</sup> This “ranking” of top-five influencees is followed by a number of other European countries. We see that the influence of the Netherlands is strong in Europe – particularly (though not exclusively) on its direct neighbors – but is relatively weak in other regions. The non-European countries over which it has the highest influence are Chile (0.026), Turkey (0.021), Indonesia (0.018) and Suriname (0.017).

### **By Domain**

Figure 3.26 visualizes the breakdown of Dutch international influence into *economic*, *security* and *political* influence. We can see that the influence of the Netherlands stems primarily from its economic strength. Figure 3.26, importantly, allows us to see that the steep increase in the Dutch overall influence in 2000-2008 was driven by its expanding *economic* influence. *Economic* influence of the Netherlands peaked in 2008 and has since then been on a slow but fairly steady decline. This is likely to be due to the detrimental effects of the impact of the financial-economic crisis on European economies and, therefore, on intra-EU trade.

On the other hand, we also note that the influence of the Netherlands in the *security* domain has experienced an (almost) continuous increase since 2004 until today. Therefore, the recent (2011-2014) increase in the overall influence of the Netherlands (see above) can also partially be traced back to the *security* domain.

With respect to the influence of the Netherlands in the *political* domain, we see few changes since 2011. Over the entire time period presented in Figure 3.26 (1990-2015), we observe a (very) slight, yet steady increase in political influence.

Below, Figure 3.25 visualizes the discussed findings for a better overview. Note that it presents the maximum values of the overall influence scores over the past 15 years rather than the data for the latest year.

67. Note that the presented scores are the maximum overall influence scores over the last years and not the most recent scores for 2015.

Figure 3.25 Influence of the Netherlands on the world (Average over 2000-2015)

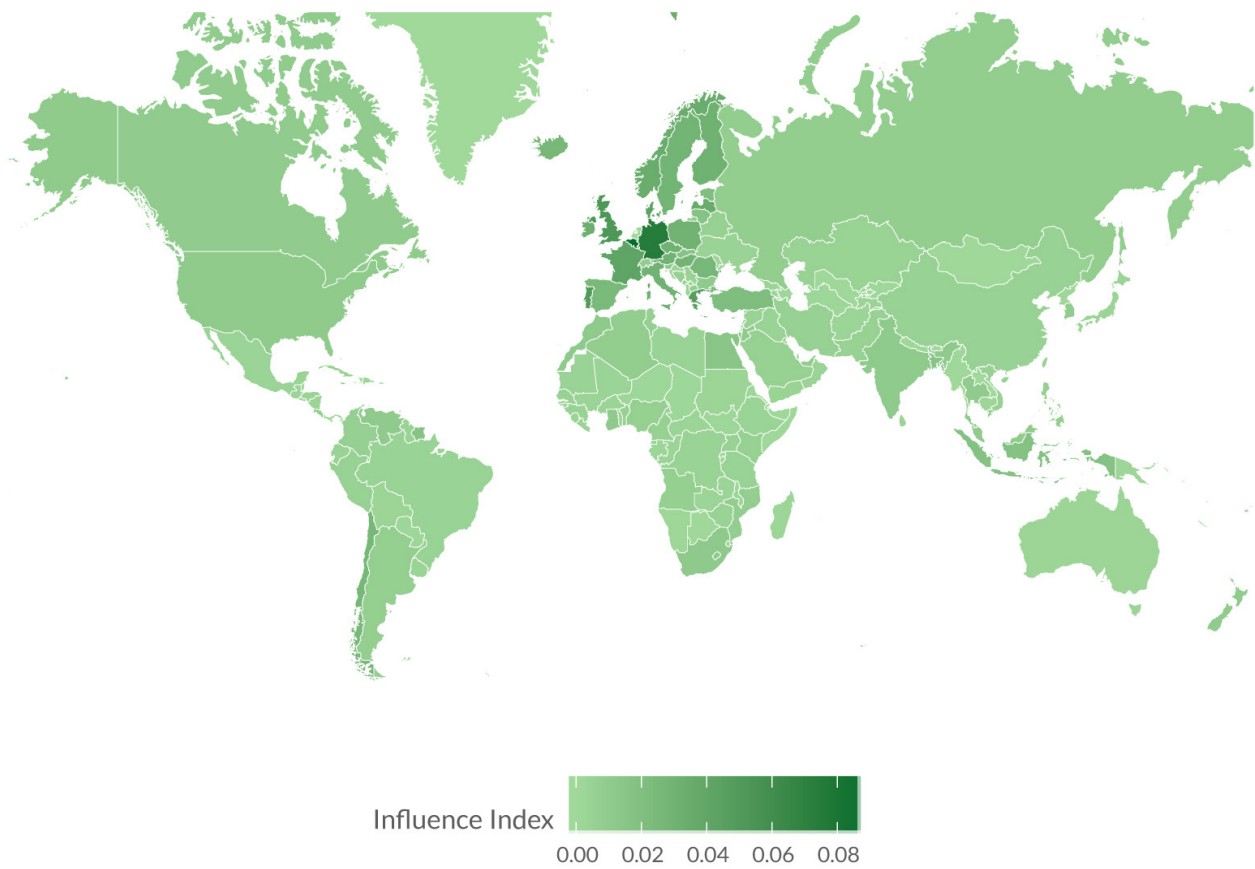
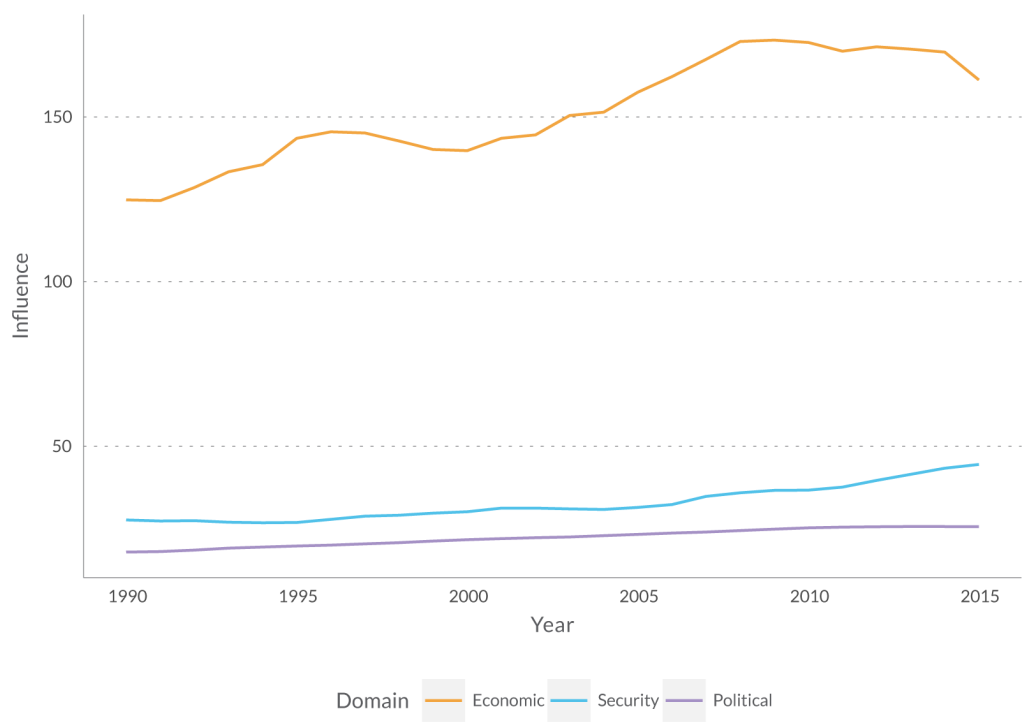


Figure 3.26 Aggregate influence of the Netherlands in the *economic*, *security* and *political* domain

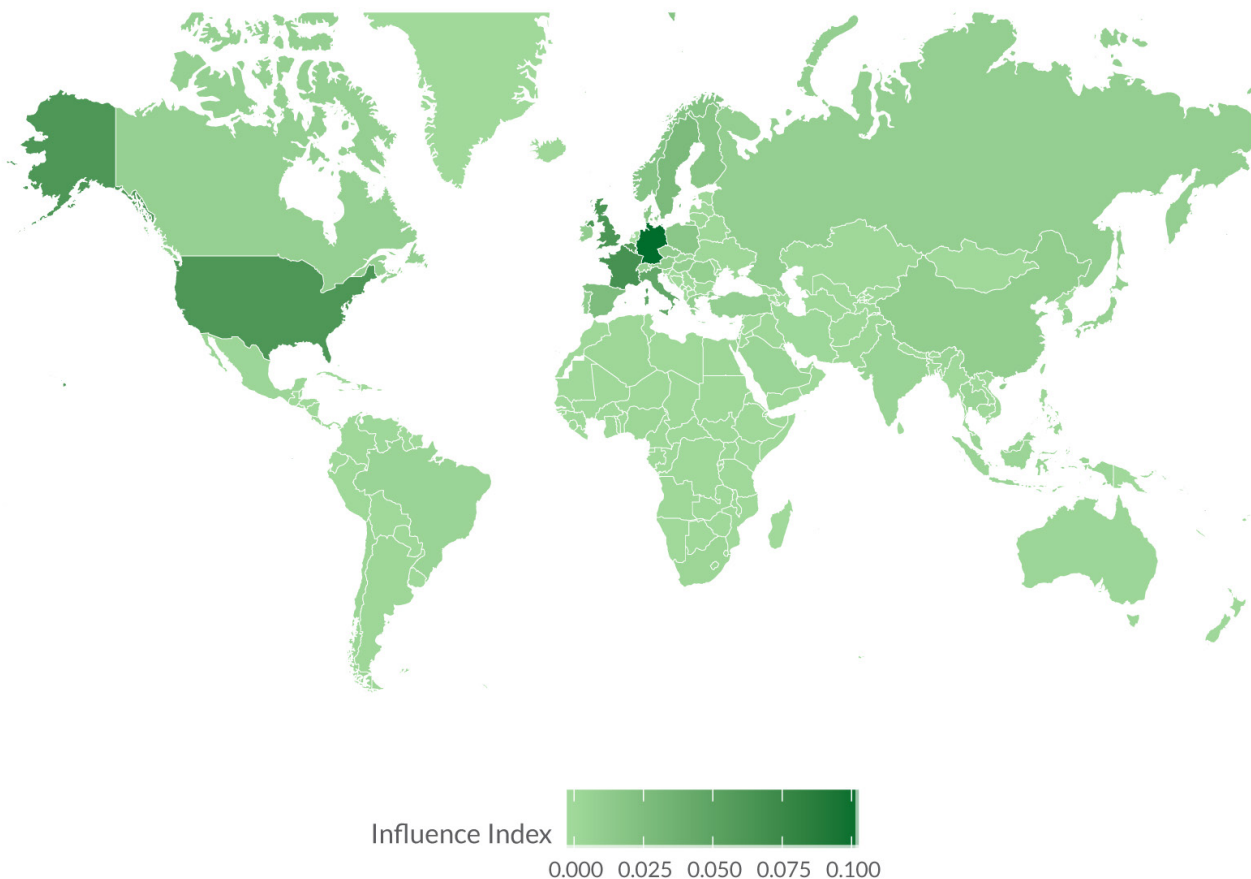


### 3.6.2 World → The Netherlands

Next to how much influence the Netherlands has in the world, our data also allows us to look at the countries that exert the most influence on the Netherlands (see Figure 3.27 below). According to the GII data, Germany exerts the strongest influence on the Netherlands. Its average influence score in the time period in between 2000-2015 has been 0.1, followed by France (0.07), the UK (0.06), the US (0.06), Belgium (0.06) and Italy (0.05).

The influence of Germany on the Netherlands peaked in 2010 with a score of 0.1186. There was a substantial increase in between 2002 and 2010, with the score in 2002 being 0.082. In fact, for several European countries – including, above all, Belgium and the UK, but also Norway – we can see that their influence on the Netherlands experienced a steep rise since 2002 and has been either stagnating or declining since 2008/09. This mirrors the trend described above in regards to the influence of the Netherlands. Given that key determinants of these countries' influence on the Netherlands are *economic* bandwidth and *economic* dependence (next to *security* bandwidth), we can, again, relate this to the introduction of the euro and, starting from 2008, the negative impact of the financial and, subsequently, the eurozone crisis.

**Figure 3.27 Influence of the world on the Netherlands (Average over 2000-2015)**



Somewhat differently, over the past 15 years the influence of France – the second strongest influencer of the Netherlands in terms of average over 2000-2015 – was highest in 2000 (0.0718), before it experienced a continuous decline until 2006 and subsequently a fairly steep rise until 2013. A relevant factor behind French overall influence on the Netherlands appears to be *security bandwidth*. For France, it is a relatively more important driver (second most important) compared to Germany and Belgium, where it is the third most important determinant after *economic bandwidth* and *economic dependence*.

The extent of Italy's influence on the Netherlands, which has been the fifth highest over the past 15 years and steeply rising since 2009 (contrary to the above described trends for Belgium and Germany) is also somewhat surprising. From our data, we can see that this increase is driven by the influence in the *security bandwidth*, while *economic bandwidth* has stagnated over the last years and *economic dependence* of the Netherlands has even slightly declined.

Turning now to the transatlantic relations, we can see that the influence of the US was stagnant in 2000-2008, before declining from 0.0647 in 2008 to 0.0579 in 2013 and then remaining stable again for the past two years. Contrary to European countries, the main driver of the overall influence score for the US is by far the *security bandwidth*, followed by *economic dependence* of the Netherlands.

### 3.7 Conclusion

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This chapter presented the most recent from our 'nowcasting' efforts of ongoing global geodynamic shifts. These include current trends in great power assertiveness and influence and in the interaction between great powers – that is, China, E28, India, Japan, Russia and the USA – with the 35 pivot states, which we selected applying a range of criteria on countries' strategic importance. To get a comprehensive picture of these complex and fast-changing international dynamics, our analysis drew on both daily event data (from GDELT, ICEWS and Phoenix databases) and on annual datasets, notably the Global Influence Index (GII), which measures countries' international influence potential.

In regards to the assertiveness of great powers as a group, we find that their behavior on the international arena is neither more active nor more assertive than that of non-great powers. However, great power assertiveness has been on the rise in recent years. This trend is particularly conspicuous for the arguably most dangerous type of assertiveness – factual negative military assertiveness.

Concerning recent developments for individual great powers, our analysis shows that the USA remains the single most assertive great power in the world. Yet, we note that during the years of the Obama presidency, the USA's assertiveness declined across all domains, i.e. positive and negative *diplomatic*, *economic* and *military* assertiveness. Over the last years 'Europe', conceptualized in this year's report as the aggregate of 28 member states (E28), has been the second most assertive actor among the great powers. The most startling finding on E28, based on the GII data, is its unmatched influence potential relative to other great powers. It is important to emphasize that this finding illustrates the vast gap between Europe's actual and potential international influence and does not represent a measure for its current 'actual' influence.

Our event datasets and the GII also highlight China's economic ascendance. In particular, we find that it surpassed the USA's economic influence in 2015. Regarding China's assertiveness, the most

pronounced trend has been the rise in its *factual* negative *military* assertiveness, reflected in, for example, its actions in the South China Sea. A strong increase in *military* assertiveness can also be seen in Russia, as evidenced by its actions in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine and Syria. Among the great powers, Russia's international economic influence is the lowest, while it occupies the middle ground in terms of *security* influence. Japan and India lag behind the E28, USA, China and Russia in terms of both influence and assertiveness.

Our analysis of the interactions between great powers and pivot states confirms the enormous (potential) 'attraction' of E28 vis-à-vis the latter. Europe's international influence has mostly been driven by economic factors, while also being vulnerable to global economic downturns such as the global financial crisis. Of the 35 pivot states, E28 has the greatest influence on Turkey. Over the past ten years, the USA's influence has been on the decline in more than half of the pivot states. At the same time, we would like to draw our readers' attention to the increasing influence scores of China and Russia.

This chapter also looked at geodynamics from the point of view of pivot states, which we assigned to five categories – aligning, distancing, pivoting, stable and triangulating – based on changes in their positioning with respect to great powers. Almost a third of the pivot states can be categorized as 'distancing' themselves from E28. Among these, a substantial number, including for instance Iran and Nigeria, are moving towards China. The second largest group are 'stable' pivot states, which do not display any shifts out of the E28 sphere of influence.

Finally, our analysis was concerned with the position of the Netherlands in global 'geodynamics'. It continues to punch above its weight: In the GII dataset, it scores higher than the great powers Japan and India. Dutch influence is by far the strongest in the *economic* realm, while geographically, the Netherlands had the greatest influence on Belgium, Germany, the UK and, outside of Europe, on Chile, Turkey and Indonesia. Moreover, the Netherlands experienced the steepest rise in its international influence in the heydays of European integration. We submit that this is a yet another important data point in the debate about the relative merits and demerits of the European Union for this country.

In this chapter we have drawn on several innovative event and annual datasets to infer ongoing trends in the interactions of key states on the international arena. We contend that in the 21st century, it is no longer feasible to rely on individual analysts' 'intuitions' on global trends in countries' assertiveness and influence. Instead, the vast data resources and analytical tools available today allow us to achieve greater objectivity – and, in consequence, produce better evidence-based analyses. Like every single other dataset that we use daily in economic, public opinion, or sociological areas, they remain far from perfect. We contend that they are now at a level of fidelity, where ignoring them becomes inexcusable.







# A Farewell to the West?

Turkey's Possible Pivot in the Aftermath of the July 2016 Coup Attempt

## Introduction

Could Turkey really bid “adieu” to the West in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt of 15-16 July 2016? This was one of the questions on the minds of policymakers and pundits around the world as the government in Ankara started consolidating power and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan felt abandoned by his Western allies.

For decades, Turkey has been among the most important strategic partners for the West and also one of the most difficult ones. Sitting at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the strategic sea lanes of the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean and straddling a vast area from the Balkans to the Caucasus to the Middle East, Turkey is one of the most crucial pivot states<sup>1</sup> of the modern age. In a previous work, HCSS placed Turkey among the top four countries in the world in terms of its strategic importance to the great powers.<sup>2</sup> Its support is needed in the fight against ISIS, to solve Europe’s refugee crisis and to end the longstanding Cyprus dispute.

The critical role Turkey plays in international affairs adds to its pivotal status. Whether it is tackling the problem of ISIS, ending the atrocious civil war in Syria, curbing the flow of refugees into Europe, or serving as a conduit for meeting Europe’s energy needs, Turkey is simply too important to ignore for NATO, the United States – and above all: the EU. The traumatic coup attempt has turned the question of Turkey’s pivot from a thought exercise into a potential existential game-changer that could alter its foreign policy, as well as those of its Western partners. At the same time, even if Turkey sticks with the West, the question of its reliability and cooperation will continue to dominate discussions.

**The traumatic coup attempt has turned the question of Turkey’s pivot from a thought exercise into a potential existential game-changer.**

Western countries, then, have little interest in pushing Turkey away, but they are also not inclined to accept Erdogan’s apparent lurch towards autocracy without protest. At the same time, Turkey feels it is not wedded to its Western partners. It at times seems to be courting Vladimir Putin’s Russia and also seeks to expand ties with Iran, China and Saudi Arabia, among others. But if Turkey pivots away from the West, which way will it go? Will it re-align with another great power? Will it chart a more independent course? And beyond these possible ‘external’ choices, how will domestic dynamics affect the foreign policy choices of the Turkish political elite?

This study examines the conditions that could lead Turkey to pivot away from the West and change its foreign policy direction in the near future. In discussing Turkey’s potential pivot, the study explores four possibilities:

- » Turkey will move toward the “Silk Road” alternative—Russia, Iran, China.
- » Turkey will pivot to the Middle East and assume a stronger leadership position in the Arab and Muslim world.

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1. A 2014 study by HCSS described a “pivot state” as follows: “Pivot states possess military, economic or ideational strategic assets that are coveted by great powers. They are caught in the middle of overlapping spheres of influence of these great powers as measured by associations that consist of ties that bind (military and economic agreements and cultural affinities) and relationships that flow (arms and commodities trade and discourse). A change in a pivot state’s association has important repercussions for regional and global security. See Sweijts et al., *Why Are Pivot States so Pivotal?*, 4:8.

2. Ibid., 4:2. The great powers were defined as the US, Russia, China and the EU.

- » Despite Turkish complaints about the lack of tangible solidarity from the West after the coup, along with the erosion of democracy and the rule of law in Turkey, Ankara will stick with the West.<sup>3</sup>
- » Turkey will chart a middle course broadly equidistant to all of the above alternatives—nominally remaining in NATO, yet substantially decreasing cooperation with the Atlantic Alliance and slightly pivoting to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Muslim world—while assuming a much more independent posture in its foreign relations.

## Turkey as a Pivot State

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### Foundations of Turkish Foreign Policy

Throughout the modern era, Turkey has been of crucial interest to the great powers. For Russia, Turkey matters because of access to the waters of the Mediterranean; for Britain, it was about access to India and protecting its empire against Russia and Germany. This is why the survival of the Ottoman Empire, “the sick man of Europe,” preoccupied European powers in the 19th century. During this period, the Ottoman political elite tried to balance European powers against each other while cracking down on domestic opponents.<sup>4</sup>

World War I was the definitive turning point. The Ottoman Empire’s decision to join the Great War on Germany’s side resulted in massive territorial losses and the Allied occupation of the capital Istanbul and other Turkish lands. Geopolitically, the most important consequence was that predominantly Arab lands were severed from the former empire and falling under the sway of Western outsiders. Under Mustafa Kemal (later known as Atatürk), the Turks took back Anatolia and Eastern Thrace from the Allies, moved their capital to Ankara and founded the Republic of Turkey in 1923.<sup>5</sup>

Atatürk’s single-party government under the Republican People’s Party (CHP) engaged in a rapprochement with Greece and improved relations with its former adversaries—France, Britain and Soviet Russia. In 1932, Ankara joined the League of Nations and, with the rise of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, signed non-aggression pacts with its Balkan and Middle Eastern neighbors. Except for using coercive diplomacy against French Syria to secure the sanjak of Alexandretta (present-day Hatay province) in 1936-1939, Turkish diplomacy in the interwar period was multilateral and neutralist, adhering to Atatürk’s maxim, “peace at home, peace in the world.”<sup>6</sup> Under AKP rule, this maxim would find an echo in its policy of “zero problems with neighbors.”<sup>7</sup>

World War II and the Cold War changed all that. Faced with Joseph Stalin’s territorial demands in 1945-1946, Turkey pivoted to the West and transitioned to democracy. After beating the CHP in the 1950 elections, the Democrat Party (DP) boosted Turkey’s Western pivot by joining NATO as a full

3. Eric Lob, “Realists Should Expect America and Turkey to Stick Together,” Text, *The National Interest*, (August 24, 2016), <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/realists-should-expect-america-turkey-stick-together-17461>.

4. Leon Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game* (I.B.Tauris, 1984), 21-81.; M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London; Melbourne; New York: Macmillan; St. Martin’s P., 1966).; William M Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 45-56.

5. Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).; Andrew Mango, *Ataturk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1999), 361-466.

6. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*, 44-78.; Sarah D Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

7. See *The Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, “Policy of Zero Problems with Our Neighbors,” Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>.

member in 1952. In 1963, Turkey signed an association agreement with the European Community (EC).<sup>8</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, much like other U.S. and Soviet allies during the Cold War, Ankara exercised greater autonomy in its foreign affairs and improved its political and economic ties with communist and non-aligned countries. Successive crises in Cyprus from 1963 until 1974 pitted Turkey against NATO ally Greece.<sup>9</sup>

Despite its autonomous leanings, Turkey did not ignore the Occident. During and after the Gulf War in 1991, Ankara supported the U.S.-led coalition against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ankara tried to act as a "big brother" to the newly independent Turkic republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Following its application for full membership to the EC in 1987, Turkey entered into a customs union with the EU in 1995 and became a candidate for full EU membership in 1999. Relations with Israel improved. Turkey also joined international peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s.<sup>10</sup>

Turkey's pro-Western autonomy continued at the turn of the 21st century. In 2003, while Turkish troops took part in the U.S.-led international mission in Afghanistan, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM, the parliament) did not allow U.S. troops to invade Iraq from Turkish territory. Ankara carried out comprehensive reforms and initiated accession negotiations with the EU in 2005. Meanwhile, Moscow became one of Ankara's main commercial partners through expanding trade, tourism and energy ties with Russia. Turkey also began establishing closer political and economic ties with Middle Eastern and North African countries.<sup>11</sup>

### How Turkey's Domestic Dynamics Impact Foreign Policy

Turkey's domestic developments and foreign policy have reinforced each other for a long time. Military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997 turned the armed forces into the guardian of Atatürk's secular legacy and Turkey's Western-aligned foreign, defense and security policy. As a result, the gap between Turkey's political system and democratic culture and those of its Western allies widened. Today, Turkish democracy lacks a system of checks and balances, focusing solely on electoral legitimacy. The electoral system itself is unfair: Turkey retains the world's highest national threshold of 10 percent in general elections, barring minor parties from entering the TBMM.<sup>12</sup>

For much of the 1980s and 1990s, the secular establishment failed to reform Turkey's sclerotic economy while Istanbul's secular industrial-commercial class began to lose ground to the dynamic and socially conservative business conglomerates (the so-called "Anatolian tigers") from the Turkish heartland. The "Anatolian tigers" helped to catapult Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) into power in November 2002.<sup>13</sup>

These developments took Turkey's foreign relations into uncharted directions. In March 2002,

8. Onur İşçi, *Russophobic Neutrality: Turkish Diplomacy, 1936-1945*, 2014, <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/709778>; V. M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 36–40; Barın Kayaoğlu, "Strategic Imperatives, Democratic Rhetoric: The United States and Turkey, 1945-52," *Cold War History* 9, no. 3 (2009): 321–45; Melvyn P. Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey and NATO, 1945-1952," *Jmericanhistory The Journal of American History* 71, no. 4 (1985): 807–25; Mehmet Döşemeci, *Debating Turkish Modernity: Civilization, Nationalism and the EEC* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25–55.

9. Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Claude Nicolet, *United States Policy towards Cyprus, 1954-1974: Removing the Greek-Turkish Bone of Contention* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2001).

10. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*, 135–206.

11. *Ibid.*, 207–248.

12. Ergun Özbudun, "Turkey's Search for a New Constitution," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 1 (2012): 39–50.

13. Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 201–13; Nesecan Balkan, Erol M. Balkan and Ahmet F. Öncü, *The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey* (New York: Bergahn Books, 2015).



General Tuncer Kılınç, secretary-general of Turkey's then-powerful National Security Council (MGK) and a prominent player in the ouster of the Islamist-led coalition in 1997, argued that Turkey should abandon the EU and "search for new initiatives to include Russia and Iran." Kılınç's views showed that a strong anti-EU and possibly anti-Western streak had taken hold among Turkey's formerly pro-Western military.<sup>14</sup>

As Turkey's secular cadres turned against one of their main Occidental partners, formerly anti-Western Islamists embraced the long march West in part because they saw the EU's emphasis on democracy and human rights as the best way to undermine their secular opponents. When the AKP came to power, the Erdoğan government passed a series of reforms, such as increasing the representation of civilian leaders in the MGK, relaxing restrictions on freedom of speech (including the usage of Kurdish in mass media) and abolishing the death penalty.<sup>15</sup>

Turkey under the AKP rose to global prominence because (at least then) it showed that political parties with Islamist roots could embrace liberal democracy, rule of law and a free market economy. Turkey's "soft power"—its status as an attractive tourist destination and the popularity of its soap operas and other cultural icons—increased. The AKP's "zero problems with neighbors" slogan improved Ankara's diplomatic clout. As a result, for the first time since the early 1960s, Turkey became a non-permanent member to the UN Security Council in 2009. Adding to Turkish "soft power," the UN's "Alliance of Civilizations" (UNAOC) initiative that Erdoğan co-sponsored with Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero became one of the main forums for fostering global dialogue and combatting xenophobia.

Closer to home, Ankara mediated indirect talks and came very close to forging a peace accord between Israel and Syria on the eve of the Gaza war of 2008-2009. In the Caucasus, the AKP government took bold steps to overcome its troublesome past with Armenia. In the Balkans, it oversaw the reconciliation among Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. In 2010, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu facilitated Serbian President Boris Tadić's attendance to the commemoration for the victims of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica. In this context, Turkish and foreign observers wondered whether Turkey could be a "model" country for its fellow Muslim countries in the MENA region—an idea that people from MENA countries liked.<sup>16</sup>

From 2011 onwards, however, Erdoğan began to fill the AKP's list with his own loyalists and expanded his role in the party and the Turkish state. As Erdoğan consolidated his position, he assumed greater say over foreign affairs through Davutoğlu, his former advisor who served as foreign minister from 2009 until 2014 and replaced Erdoğan as prime minister when the latter became president. Davutoğlu, who had coined "zero problems with neighbors" to explain the AKP's regional and global vision, also bore pan-Islamist and neo-Ottomanist dreams of turning Turkey into a regional hegemon.<sup>17</sup>

14. Murat Gürgen, "Orgeneral Kılınç: Avrupa bize uymaz [Europe is unsuitable for us]," *Radikal*, August 3, 2002, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=31291>; Yusuf Demir and Nuri Sefa Erdem, "Türkiye, Rusya ve İran'la ittifak arayışında olmalı [Turkey must search for an alliance with Russia and Iran]," *Sabah*, March 8, 2002, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2002/03/08/p01.html>.

15. There are two basic narratives about the AKP and democratization: While some argue that its first term witnessed considerable reforms that improved Turkish democracy, Erdoğan's subsequent rise as an autocrat opened trapdoors of authoritarianism. See M. Hakan Yavuz, *The Emergence of a New Turkey*, Utah Series Turkish Islamic Studies (University of Utah Press, 2006), <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.library.uu.nl/book/41442>. The alternative viewpoint is that the AKP slowly but steadily eroded Turkey's hard-earned democratic gains from 1950 onward. See Erik Meyersson, "The Reversal of (What Little) Liberal Democracy (There Ever Was) in Turkey," *Erik Meyersson*, October 4, 2016, <https://erikmeyersson.com/2016/10/04/the-reversal-of-what-little-liberal-democracy-there-ever-was-in-turkey/>.

16. Mustafa Akyol, "Turkey Vs. Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, March 21, 2012, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2012-03-21/turkey-vs-iran>. In 2011, a majority of Egyptians stated that they wanted their country to resemble Turkey: Shibley Telhami, "2011 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey" (Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, October 2011), [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1121\\_arab\\_public\\_opinion.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1121_arab_public_opinion.pdf).

17. Özkan Behlül, "Turkey, Davutoğlu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism," *Survival* 56, no. 4 (2014): 119–40.; Behlül Özkan,

Once the Arab Spring broke out in 2010-2011, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu's biases worked against them. At home, Erdoğan played on his supporters' religious sentiments by emphasizing the Alevi faith<sup>18</sup> of CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Abroad, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu underlined the Nusayri-Alawite identity of Syrian President Bashaar al-Assad, whom they had called a "brother" before the Arab Spring. Anti-Shia biases also soured the AKP government's relations with Iraq and Iran. A reconciliation attempt with Armenia foundered on the hard realities of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict with Azerbaijan, a Turkic cousin and close energy partner of Turkey.

Whereas a juggernaut of reforms had led to Turkey's rise on the international front between 2002 until 2010, after 2011, a feedback loop of diplomatic missteps, crackdowns against domestic opponents, a restive population (as evidenced by the mass protests of June 2013) and the relative slowdown of the economy became the salient features of AKP rule. In the general elections of June 2015, the electorate punished Erdoğan and his party by denying them a majority in the TBMM. But when subsequent PKK and ISIS attacks against civilians and security forces escalated, a fearful public brought the AKP back to power in the "repeat" elections of November 2015.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, from late 2013 onward, tensions between Erdoğan and his former ally Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish cleric based in Pennsylvania who controls a global network of schools, business and NGOs (as well as a sizable coterie of secret followers within the Turkish state), came out into the open. Many Turks from across the political spectrum believe Gülen and his followers to be the masterminds of the coup attempt of 15-16 July 2016 that resulted in the deaths of more than 300 people.<sup>20</sup>

At a time when Turkey's state institutions and political culture lurch to authoritarianism and the West seemingly lacks sympathy for the victims of the failed putsch, Turks weigh their foreign policy options. The surge of nationalism, economic and security risks and Erdoğan's insistence that only a new constitution giving him an executive presidency could protect the country, make a Turkish pivot away from the West more probable. Still, while opportunities for new partnerships elsewhere emerge, a variety of factors mean a hard pivot away from the West is not predetermined.

## Four Pivoting Perspectives

Turkish foreign policy today carries multiple objectives. EU membership is still one of them and so is ensuring that "an ever enlarging NATO has much more to do in serving global peace" and that the G-20 gives "new impulse to the quest for [a] more representative and democratic global system." Despite the row over Gülen's residency in Pennsylvania and the rise of anti-American sentiments among Turkish people, Ankara maintains dialogue with Washington to address regional and global issues.<sup>21</sup>

"Turkey's Imperial Fantasy," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/29/opinion/ahmet-davutoglu-and-turkeys-imperial-fantasy.html>.

18. The Alevis, whose adherents constitute between a quarter to one-third of Turkey's population, hold heterodox beliefs springing from Shia Islam.

19. Barın Kayaoğlu, "What's the Greatest Risk to Turkey's Economy?," *Al-Monitor*, August 27, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/turkey-economy-political-uncertainties-greatest-risk.html>; Daron Acemoğlu and James Robinson, "The Political Economy of Turkey," February 27, 2013, <http://whynationsfail.com/blog/2013/2/27/the-political-economy-of-turkey.html>.

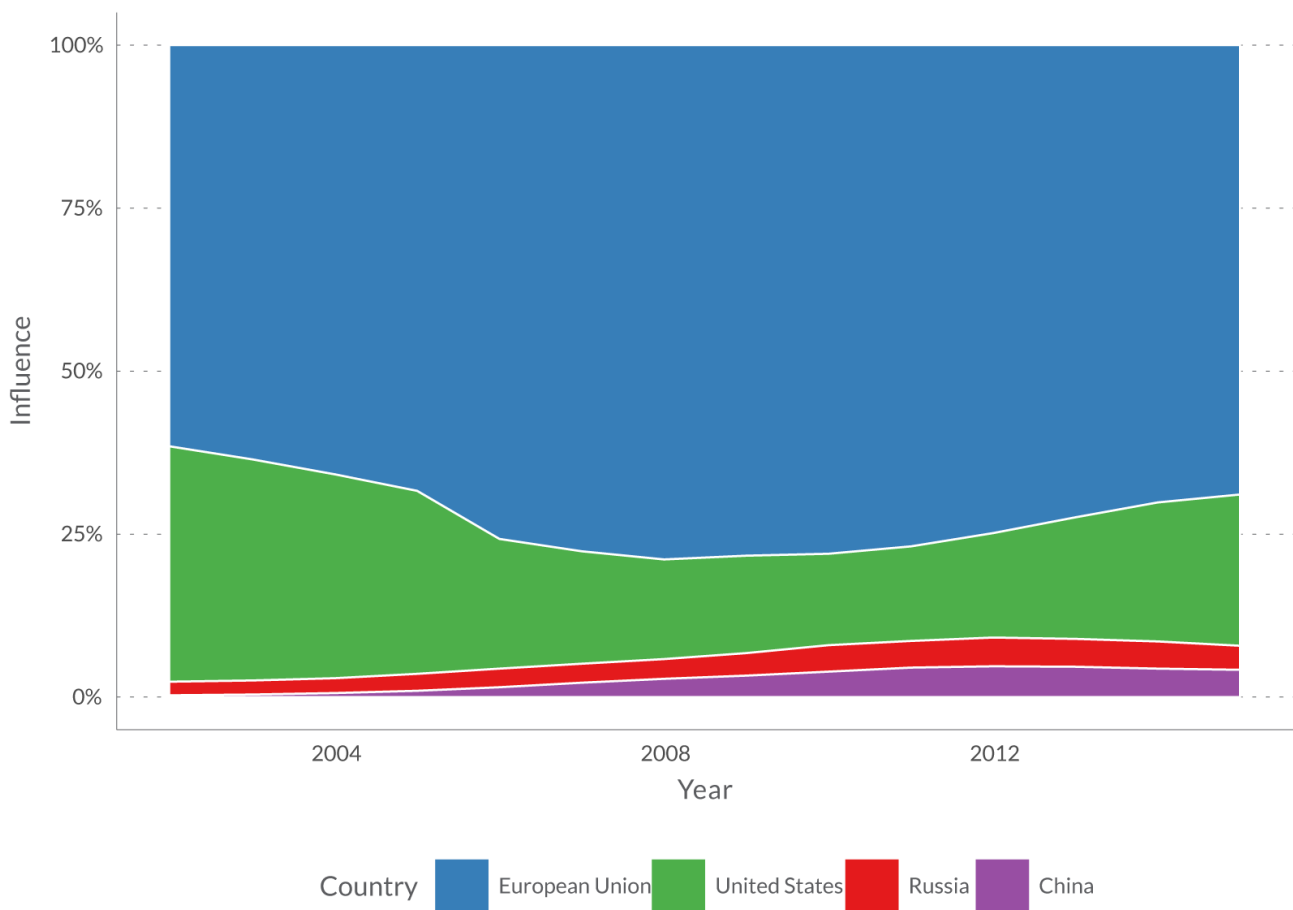
20. Dexter Filkins, "Turkey's Thirty-Year Coup," *The New Yorker*, October 17, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/17/turkeys-thirty-year-coup>.

21. The Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Synopsis of the Turkish Foreign Policy," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa>.

Turkey is also determined to revitalize historical and cultural ties with countries in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, while diversifying its global options by strengthening its connections to the Caribbean, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia. Closer to home, continuing rapprochement with Russia, as well as ending the civil wars and refugee crises in Iraq and Syria are meant to cement the geostrategic importance of Turkey.<sup>22</sup> Despite occasional verbal spats with leaders of the Greek Cypriot-dominated Republic of Cyprus, Ankara still carries hope that “the Cyprus issue would be sorted out.”<sup>23</sup>

The graph below depicts the influence of global powers over Turkey. It shows that, while U.S. and EU influence over Turkey has decreased in the past 15 years, suggesting that a Turkish pivot away from the West is probable, Ankara’s ties with its Western partners are unlikely to break completely, given the total size of the influence of Western powers.

**Figure 3.28 E28, U.S., Chinese and Russian influence exerted vis-à-vis Turkey, 2002-2015**



22. Ibid.

23. İHA, “Eski Rum Vekil: Darbe Gecesi Biz de KKTC’ye Saldırabilirdik [Former Greek Cypriot Deputy: We Could Have Attacked TRNC on the Night of the Coup],” *Milliyet*, July 19, 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/eski-rum-vekil-darbe-gecesi-biz-gundem-2280403/>; Emine Kart, “Ankara: Greek Cyprus Trying to Score Political Points over Fire,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, June 22, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nID=100802&NewsCatID=510>.

### Pivot to the 'Silk Road': Russia, Iran and China

The apparent lack of U.S. and European support in Ankara's fight against Fethullah Gülen is one of the most important factors that could push Turkey toward Russia, Iran and China. Many Turks believe that U.S. and European leaders did not condemn the coup attempt on 15-16 July 2016 until it became clear that it would fail. Likewise, while Turks across the political spectrum see Gülen and his followers as the main culprits of the failed coup—and the AKP government has promised not to stop until they are punished—Western governments point out that the best way to fight such a network is through strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law. EU leaders also warn President Erdoğan that his idea of bringing back the death penalty would destroy Ankara's membership prospects in the European club. Meanwhile, the AKP's insistence on an expansive definition of "terrorism" threatens the March 2016 deal between Brussels and Ankara that would grant visa-free travel to Turkish citizens in the EU in return for Turkey's tougher control over the flow of Syrian refugees into Europe.<sup>24</sup> Compare all that with the allegedly unqualified support that Turkey received from Russia and Iran during and after the failed coup and it is easy to see why Ankara could pivot away from the United States, the EU and NATO.<sup>25</sup>

**The apparent lack of U.S. and European support in Ankara's fight against Fethullah Gülen is one of the most important factors that could push Turkey toward Russia, Iran and China.**

Middle Eastern events, too, could trigger a Turkish pivot to the "Silk Road." The American connection is especially salient here. Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Obama administration has rebuffed Turkish calls to create a "safe zone" in northern Syria. In September 2013, when President Barack Obama walked back from his "red line" against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—that his regime's use of chemical weapons would result in U.S. attacks—and seemed content with Damascus's chemical disarmament, he disappointed Erdoğan. Washington, for its part, became upset over Ankara's apparent negligence of the ISIS threat in Iraq and Syria.<sup>26</sup> Despite relative improvements in U.S.-Turkish differences over Syria, Ankara seems to be happier with the cooperation it receives from Moscow than the U.S. backing it gets for the anti-ISIS and anti-PKK military campaign it initiated in Syria on 24 August 2016. The Turks are so satisfied with Russia that, for the first time in history, they are considering cooperation in joint defense industry projects.<sup>27</sup>

Beyond frustrations with the West, Ankara has further good reasons to "go East." Since Ankara and

24. Hürriyet Daily News, "EU Visa Deal 'naturally Dead' If Not Implemented by Year's End: Turkish EU Minister," *Hürriyet Daily News*, October 19, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?PageID=238&NID=105134&NewsCatID=510>. Onur Ant, "Here's Why Turkey Could Walk Away From Its EU Deal," *Bloomberg.com*, August 18, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-18/eu-s-troubled-ties-with-turkey-hamper-crunch-call-on-refugees>; Duncan Robinson and Mehul Srivastava, "US and EU Leaders Warn Turkey's Erdogan over Post-Coup Crackdown," *The Financial Times*, July 18, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/b82ef35a-4cc3-11e6-88c5-db83e98a590a>.

25. Hürriyet Daily News, "Turkey Thanks Putin for Unconditional Support over Coup Attempt," *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 25, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?PageID=238&NID=102062&NewsCatID=510>; Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "Putin May Be Turkey's New Buddy after the Failed Coup," *The National Interest*, July 19, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/putin-may-be-turkeys-new-buddy-after-the-failed-coup-17037>.

26. Jamie Dettmer, "How Long Can US Mask Disagreements With Turkey?," VOA, June 2, 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/a/united-states-turkey-islamic-state/3359235.html>; Zeina Khodr, "US and Turkey Differ over Post-ISIL Strategy in Syria," August 1, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/middleeast/2015/07/turkey-usa-differ-post-isil-strategy-syria-150731191010466.html>.

27. Al-Monitor, "Did Putin Give Green Light to Turkish Attack on US-Backed Syrian Kurds?," *Al-Monitor*, October 23, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/russia-putin-green-light-attack-turkey-kurds-syria.html>; Frida Ghitis, "Biden's Tacit Support for Turkey's Syria Incursion Sent an Ominous Signal," *World Politics Review*, September 1, 2016, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/19784/biden-s-tacit-support-for-turkey-s-syria-incursion-sent-an-ominous-signal>; Paul Iddon, "A Complicated Triangle: Russia, Turkey and the Syrian Kurds," *Rudaw*, August 29, 2016, <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/29082016>; Güntay Şimşek, "Rusya'yla Savunma Sanayii İşbirliği Nasıl Olacak? [How Will Defense Industry Cooperation with Russia Work?]," *HaberTürk*, August 11, 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/guntay-simsek-1019/1280147-rusyayla-savunma-sanayii-isbirligi-nasil-olacak>.

Moscow initiated their rapprochement in summer 2016 after the Turkish air force's downing of a Russian jet in November 2015, energy and tourism ties between the two sides are on the rise again. Ankara and Moscow intend to increase bilateral trade from the 2012 high of \$33 billion to \$100 billion by 2020.<sup>28</sup> With respect to neighboring Iran, Ankara and Tehran have a vested interest in containing the advance of Kurdish groups amidst the civil war in Syria. Beyond security concerns, Turkey's private sector hopes to enter the Iranian market with the end of international sanctions against Iran.<sup>29</sup>

The links between Turkey's present domestic conditions and foreign affairs also make a "Silk Road pivot" possible. At the onset of the Cold War, Ankara had allied with the West because of the Soviet threat, Turkish leaders' dislike of Communist ideology and their desire to establish a democratic regime.<sup>30</sup> Today, the opposite is the case: not only do Turks worry less about Russian designs against their country, they perceive the EU and especially the United States as a threat.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Erdoğan's dreams of creating an executive presidency are strikingly similar to Putin's dominant role in Russia. Even Turkey's once pro-Western military is jumping on the anti-Occident bandwagon.<sup>32</sup>

Turkey actually has been assessing the "Silk Road" alternative for some time. In early 2013, before his relations with the West had begun to sour, Erdoğan was mulling whether Turkey should abandon the EU and opt for the Russian and Chinese-led SCO, given Brussels's perceived lack interest in Turkey and the Shanghai group's growing economic and political might. Later that year, Ankara awarded its high-altitude missile defense contract to a Chinese company, although that plan has since been scrapped.<sup>33</sup>

But a *hard* Turkish pivot toward the "Silk Road" faces considerable limits. Russian leaders have expressed skepticism how an EU candidate and NATO ally could join the SCO. Likewise, amidst all the talk of Turkish-Russian relations turning a new page, General Valery Gerasimov, chief of general staff of the Russian armed forces, made statements in September 2016 that could be interpreted as a rebuff against Ankara.<sup>34</sup>

28. Luke Baker, "NATO's Second Largest Military Has Reached a 'Critical Juncture' between East and West," *Business Insider*, October 11, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/after-coup-turkey-is-at-a-critical-juncture-2016-10>; Mehmet Çetingüleç, "Can Turkey-Russia Trade Reach \$100 Billion Target?," *Al-Monitor*, August 22, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-russia-trade-reach-100-billion-target.html>; Zülfikar Doğan, "Putin Gets Big Kiss-and-Make-up Gift from Erdogan," *Al-Monitor*, August 16, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-russia-nuclear-plant-special-status.html>.

29. Semih İdiz, "Turkey, Iran Rekindle Courtship but Take Things Slow," *Al-Monitor*, August 16, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-iran-ties-take-turn-for-better.html>; Hamidreza Azizi, "Why Iran Should Focus on Turkey, Not Russia, for Syria Cooperation," *Al-Monitor*, May 18, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/iran-russia-syria-disconnect-turkey-cooperation.html>; Barın Kayaoğlu, "How Turkish Energy Giant's Plans to Light up Iran Could Boost Rouhani," *Al-Monitor*, June 21, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/turkey-iran-energy-project-rouhani-election.html>; Zülfikar Doğan, "Turkish Private Sector Gears up for Iran Push," *Al-Monitor*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/turkey-iran-nuclear-deal-private-sector-gears-up.html>.

30. Kayaoğlu, "Strategic Imperatives, Democratic Rhetoric."

31. Interestingly, a public opinion survey from May 2016 shows that Russia was perceived as the second largest "threat" to Turkey after the United States. But the Turkish-Russian rapprochement in summer 2016 is likely to have mellowed Turkish popular views toward Moscow. See Kadir Has University, "Kadir Has Üniversitesi Dış Politika Kamuoyu Algıları Araştırması Sonuçları Açıklandı [Results of Kadir Has Üniversitesi Foreign Policy Public Opinion Perceptions Survey Announced]," Kadir Has Üniversitesi, May 2016, <http://www.khas.edu.tr/news/1367>.

32. Metin Gürçan, "Why US-Educated Turkish Officers Could Soon Be out of Their Jobs," *Al-Monitor*, October 18, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-coup-attempt-purges-intellectual-assets.html>; Metin Gürçan, "Power Struggle Erupts in Turkey's Security Structure," *Al-Monitor*, October 12, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-power-struggle-between-islamists-and-secularists.html>.

33. Murat Yetkin, "Tired of Brussels, Erdoğan Asks for Shanghai," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 23, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=449&nID=58407&NewsCatID=409>.

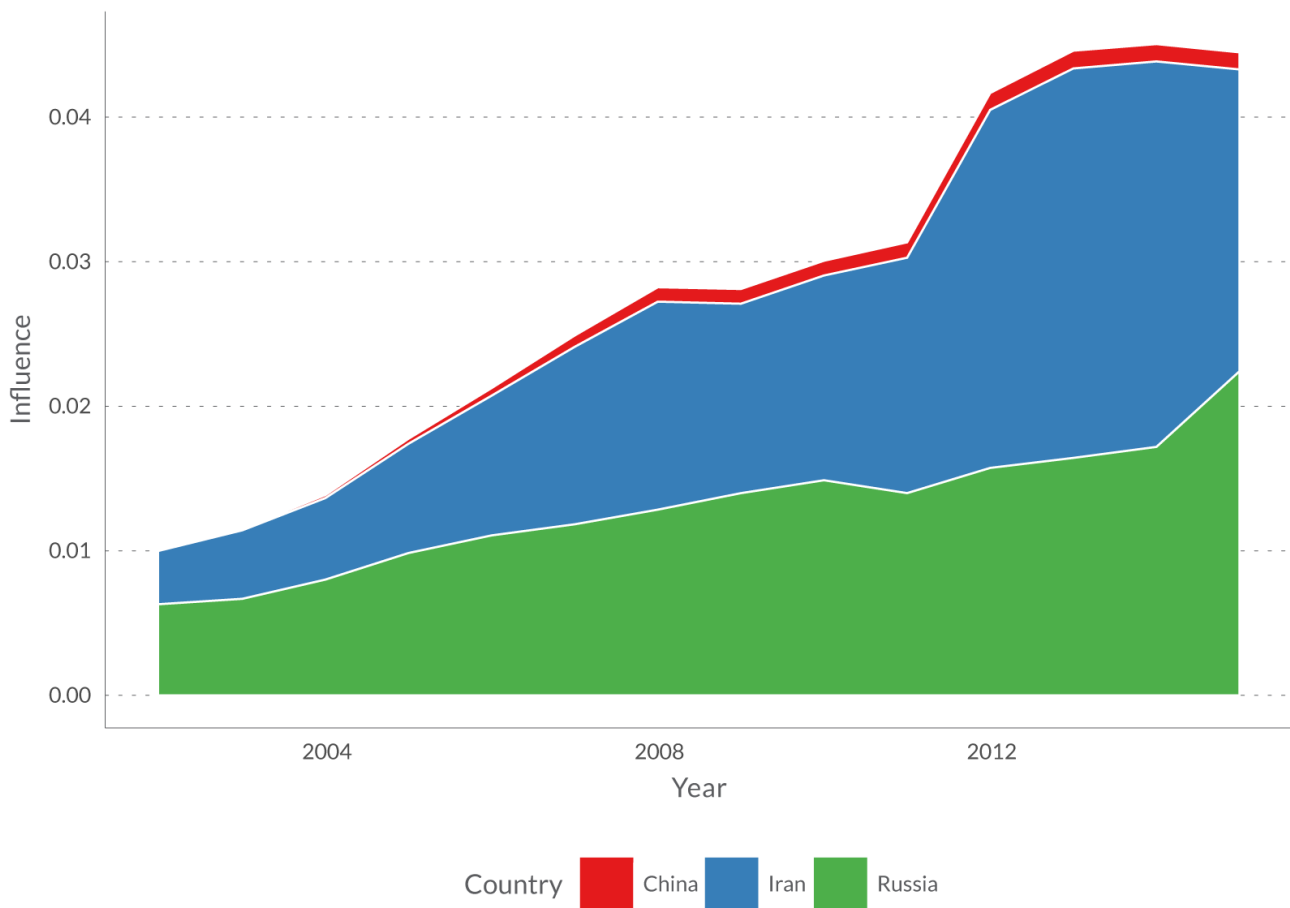
34. Semih İdiz, "Can Turkey Really Turn to Russia?," *Al-Monitor*, August 2, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-russia-coup-attempt-strategic-ties-not-realistic.html>; Deniz Berktaş, "Rusya Şanghay Çıkışını Nasıl Yorumluyor?" [How Does Russia Interpret Shanghai Statement?], *Deutsche Welle*, February 23, 2013, <http://www.dw.com/tr/rusya-%C5%9Fanghay-%C3%A7%C4%B1k%C4%B1%C5%9F%C4%B1n%C4%B1-nas%C4%B1-yorumluyor/a-16624248>; Joshua Kucera, "Russia Claims 'Mastery' Over Turkey in Black Sea," *EurasiaNet*, September 25, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/80636>.



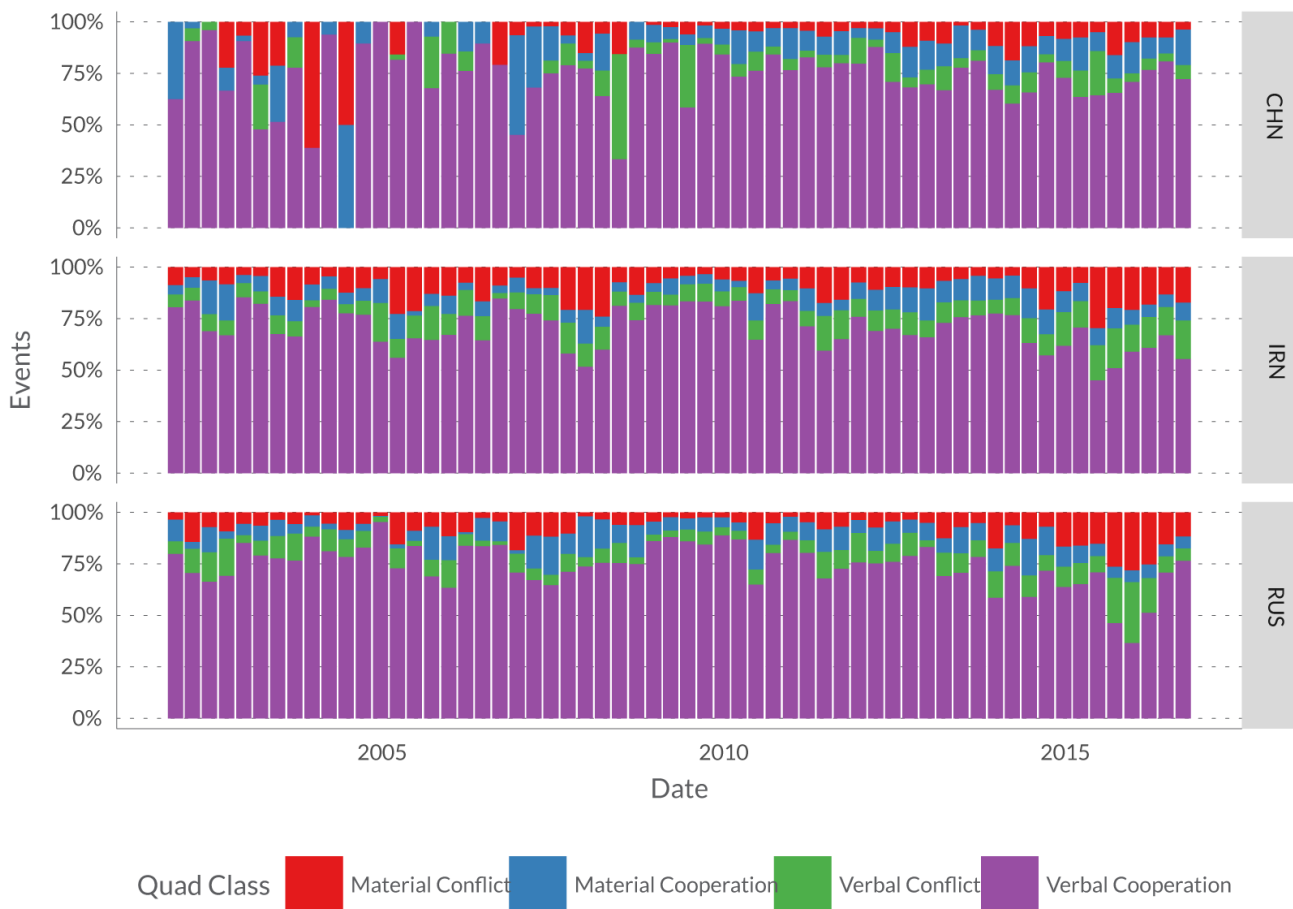
Broader strategic matters, too, are likely to prevent Turkey's long march to Russia, Iran and China. Putin continues to support Syria's Assad, whom Erdoğan hates viscerally. Iran's Shia outlook in the region clashes with Turkey's Sunni proclivities. China, for its part, is too distant and Turks view the Central Kingdom as too anti-Turkic and anti-Muslim. During Beijing's brutal crackdown on protests in Xinjiang (which Turks usually refer to as "East Turkestan") in the summer of 2009, Erdoğan had accused Chinese authorities of committing "genocide."<sup>35</sup>

Broader strategic matters, too, are likely to prevent Turkey's long march to Russia, Iran and China. Putin continues to support Syria's Assad, whom Erdoğan hates viscerally. Iran's Shia outlook in the region clashes with Turkey's Sunni proclivities.

Figure 3.29 Turkey influence exerted, 2002-2015



35. France 24, "Turkish PM Erdogan Likens Xinjiang Violence to 'Genocide,'" *France 24*, July 10, 2009, <http://www.france24.com/en/20090710-turkish-pm-erdogan-xinjiang-violence-genocide-turkey-ughurs-han-trade-beijing-china>. For a more detailed study on why Ankara and Beijing are unlikely to deepen their relationship, see Karen Kaya, "Turkey and China: Unlikely Strategic Partners," *Foreign Military Studies Office*, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2013, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-and-China.pdf>.

**Figure 3.30 A visual account of Turkish interactions with China, Iran, and Russia, 2002-2017**

### Pivot to the Arab/Muslim World (Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf)

As the graph below shows, Turkey's overall influence in the MENA region expanded after 2001, even though relations with Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel and Syria declined in the 2010s. A Turkish pivot to the south and east appears more likely than ever.

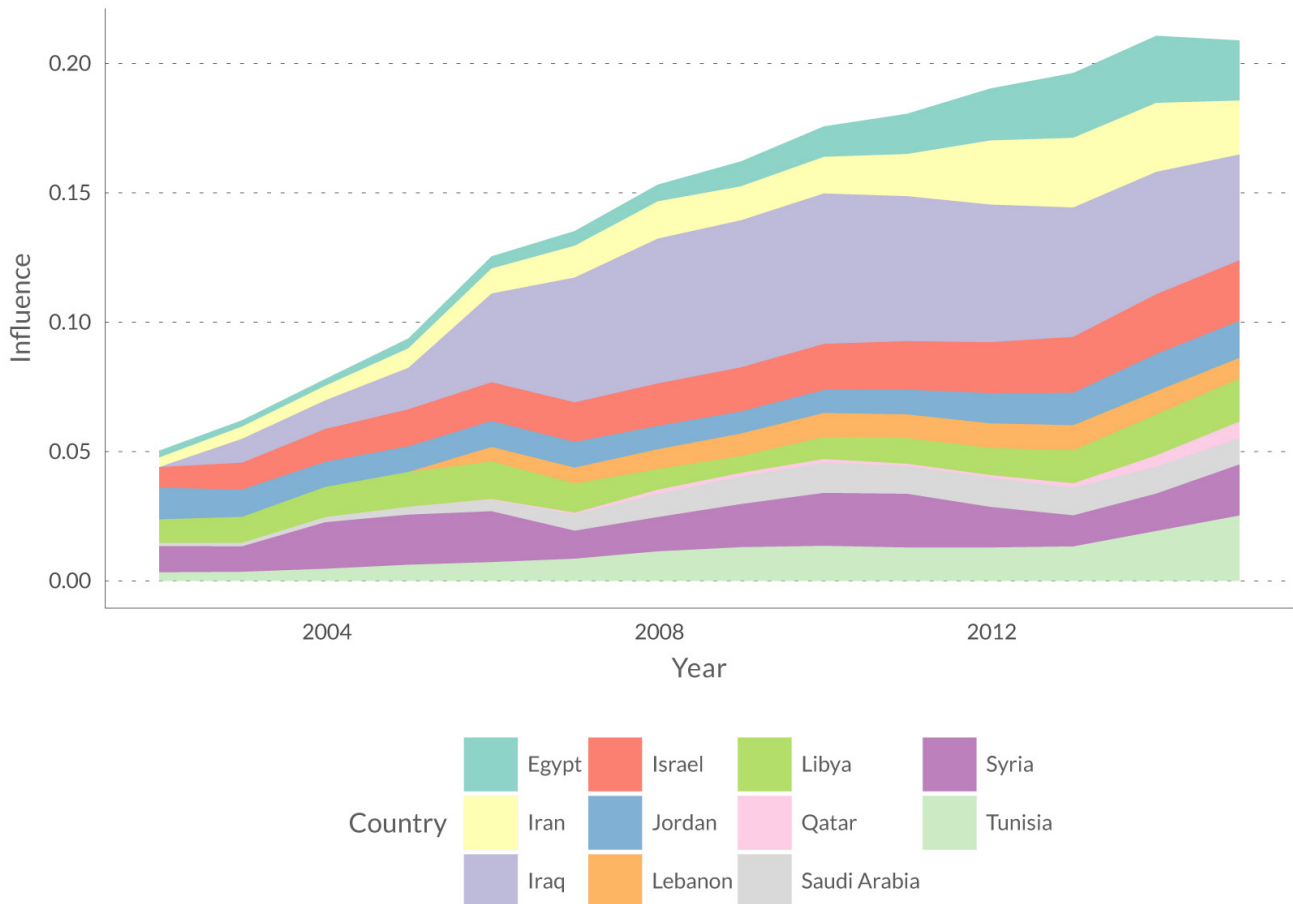
Interestingly, Turkey was actually pivoting toward the MENA region even before the AKP assumed power. After peacefully resolving their 1998 standoff over PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's presence in Syria, Ankara and Damascus began to cooperate in the fields of defense/security, investment, trade and tourism—a dynamic that accelerated under the AKP. As Turkey's relations with one of the most important Arab countries improved, its trade with the MENA region surpassed \$30 billion—a sevenfold increase from 2002 until 2009. In the first decade of the 21st century, Turkey reciprocally lifted travel visas with Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya and Qatar. In the summer of 2010, Ankara began discussions on a free trade zone with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.<sup>36</sup>

The popular protests and mass revolutions that toppled the likes of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Muammar Qadhafi in Libya in 2011 seemed like an historic opportunity for Turkey. Expecting the

36. The Economist, "Looking East and South," *The Economist*, October 29, 2009, [http://www.economist.com/node/14753776?Story\\_ID=E1\\_TQSVPSG](http://www.economist.com/node/14753776?Story_ID=E1_TQSVPSG); BBC News, "Turkey Agrees to Plans for Arab 'Free Trade Zone,'" *BBC News*, June 10, 2010, sec. Middle East, <http://www.bbc.com/news/10290025>.

rapid downfall of their former partner Assad, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu began providing the Syrian opposition with political and material assistance in early 2012. But not only did the Erdoğan-Davutoğlu duo's hopes for Assad's quick demise not materialize, their Islamist ally in Egypt, President Mohammed Morsi, was overthrown in General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's coup in July 2013.

**Figure 3.31 Turkish influence exerted vis-à-vis selected Middle Eastern countries and the great powers (U.S., China, E28 and Russia)**



As the Arab Spring descended into chaos, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu consistently bet on the wrong horse. They demanded Morsi be reinstated in Egypt, called for Assad to step down, lashed out at Iraqi and Iranian leaders for their support of the Syrian dictator and exploited their differences with Israel for domestic gains (such as in the Mavi Marmara crisis of 2010). They also berated the Israeli government for its excesses against Palestinian civilians while remaining conspicuously silent on Hamas attacks against Israel. Worse, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu backed unpopular Sunni groups throughout the region.

Although Ankara's open door policy to shelter more than three million refugees fleeing the fighting in Syria and Iraq was admirable (not to mention its spending billions of dollars to that end), its initial indifference to extremist groups in those conflicts damaged Turkish credibility around the world. Worse, as the MENA region turned into a battleground pitting the "Sunni axis" of Saudi Arabia and Qatar against the "Shia axis" of Iran, Iraq and Syria, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu, who had embraced

fellow Muslim countries in a non-sectarian fashion under “zero problems with neighbors” in the 2000s, now saw that slogan turn into “zero neighbors without problems.”<sup>37</sup>

But Turkey is yet to give up its quest for regional leadership, as it expands energy and defense ties with Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Riyadh is considering purchasing billions of dollars in arms from Ankara. Meanwhile, a Turkish military base commenced operations in Qatar in April 2016—the first of its kind in the region. Two months later, around the time of the rapprochement with Russia, Turkey ended its diplomatic row with Israel.<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 3.32 A visual account of Turkish interactions with Egypt and Syria, 2002-2017**



But these developments do not mean a pivot to the MENA region is a foregone conclusion. For one thing, Turkey’s south and east pivot would work only if it maintains its Western connections. Without serving as a meeting point between east and west, Ankara is not much use to either side. Even the leaders of MENA countries think so. Before Turkey’s relations deteriorated with Iran and

37. Piotr Zalewski, “How Turkey Went From ‘Zero Problems’ to Zero Friends,” *Foreign Policy*, August 22, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/22/how-turkey-went-from-zero-problems-to-zero-friends/>.

38. Ufuk Şanlı, “Erdogan’s Secret Economic Weapon,” *Al-Monitor*, May 4, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/turkey-erdogan-secret-economic-weapon.html>; Tom Finn, “Seeing Shared Threats, Turkey Sets up Military Base in Qatar,” *Reuters*, April 28, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-qatar-turkey-military-idUSKCN0XP2IT>; Metin Gürçan, “What Are Turkish Troops Going to Do in Qatar?” *Al-Monitor*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/06/turkey-qatar-what-are-turkish-troops-going-to-do.html>; Zülfikar Doğan, “Amid Financial Hardship, Erdogan Looks to Qatar as ‘Rich Daddy,’” *Al-Monitor*, December 29, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/turkey-israel-russia-qatari-money-props-up-erdogan.html>.

Syria in 2011, both Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Assad would emphasize how Ankara's EU membership would benefit both Europe and its southern and eastern neighbors.<sup>39</sup>

The Turks also need to exercise subtlety and humility when dealing with their fellow Middle Easterners, as Erdoğan's October 2016 spat with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi demonstrated. On the eve of the operation to expel ISIS from Mosul, the Turkish president got into a public row with Abadi and made remarks suggesting that Ankara may have irredentist aims toward the oil-rich areas of northern Iraq.<sup>40</sup> Tone deafness and hubris are the most important factors that prevent Turkey from "pivoting" toward the east and playing a useful role in its neighborhood.

**Turkey's south and east pivot would work only if it maintains its Western connections. Without serving as a meeting point between east and west, Ankara is not much use to either side.**

### **Hold, Raise, or Fold: Pivot Away from the West or Stay the Course?**

Since the early Cold War, Western countries -especially the United States- have remained consistent in their approach toward Turkey: to deny the Soviet Union -and later Russia- a strong foothold in the eastern Mediterranean and MENA; to that end, to maintain Turkey's economic growth and social development; and in order to prevent domestic disorder from reversing socioeconomic gains, to support Turkey's democratic institutions. That security-development-democracy template has remained steady since Turkey's *hard* pivot to the West in the late 1940s. Despite crises such as the Cyprus war in 1974, the subsequent U.S. and European arms embargo on Ankara and the TBMM's refusal to permit U.S. forces passage to invade Iraq through Turkish territory in 2003, the West preferred and managed to keep Ankara on its side.<sup>41</sup>

But the nearly-seventy-year-old irony is that neither the EU nor the United States have figured out a way to anchor Turkey to the West permanently. In fact, several dynamics today make it probable for Turkey to pivot away from the West. As discussed earlier, these include "pull factors" toward the "Silk Road" axis or the MENA region and "push factors" such as the lack of European and American support for Ankara in its struggle against the Gülen network, limited Western burden-sharing with Ankara to assist Syrian and Iraqi refugees, European and U.S. refusal to consider decisive military options to oust Assad in Syria and Ankara's stalled accessions negotiations with the EU.

Western countries, too, have legitimate grievances against their Turkish ally. Ankara's continuous attempts to drive a "hard bargain" with NATO allies to conduct operations in Syria and Iraq through Turkish bases, coupled with Ankara's threats to derail the West's complicated alliances with local (especially Kurdish) groups against ISIS frustrate Western partners. As a result, even retired U.S. generals who served in Turkey in the past and have positive memories of the country, are calling for finding alternatives to Turkish bases and downgrading cooperation with Ankara.<sup>42</sup>

Disagreements between Ankara and NATO over strategic and operational matters could have been manageable (after all, the Alliance's history is nothing if not a history of disagreements and bickering among members) were it not for Turkey's troubling internal situation. Erdoğan's

39. Barin Kayaoğlu, "Is Turkey Giving Up on EU Membership?," *Al-Monitor*, September 23, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/turkey-giving-up-eu-membership.html>.

40. Nick Danforth, "Turkey's New Maps Are Reclaiming the Ottoman Empire," *Foreign Policy*, October 23, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/23/turkeys-religious-nationalists-want-ottoman-borders-iraq-erdogan/>.

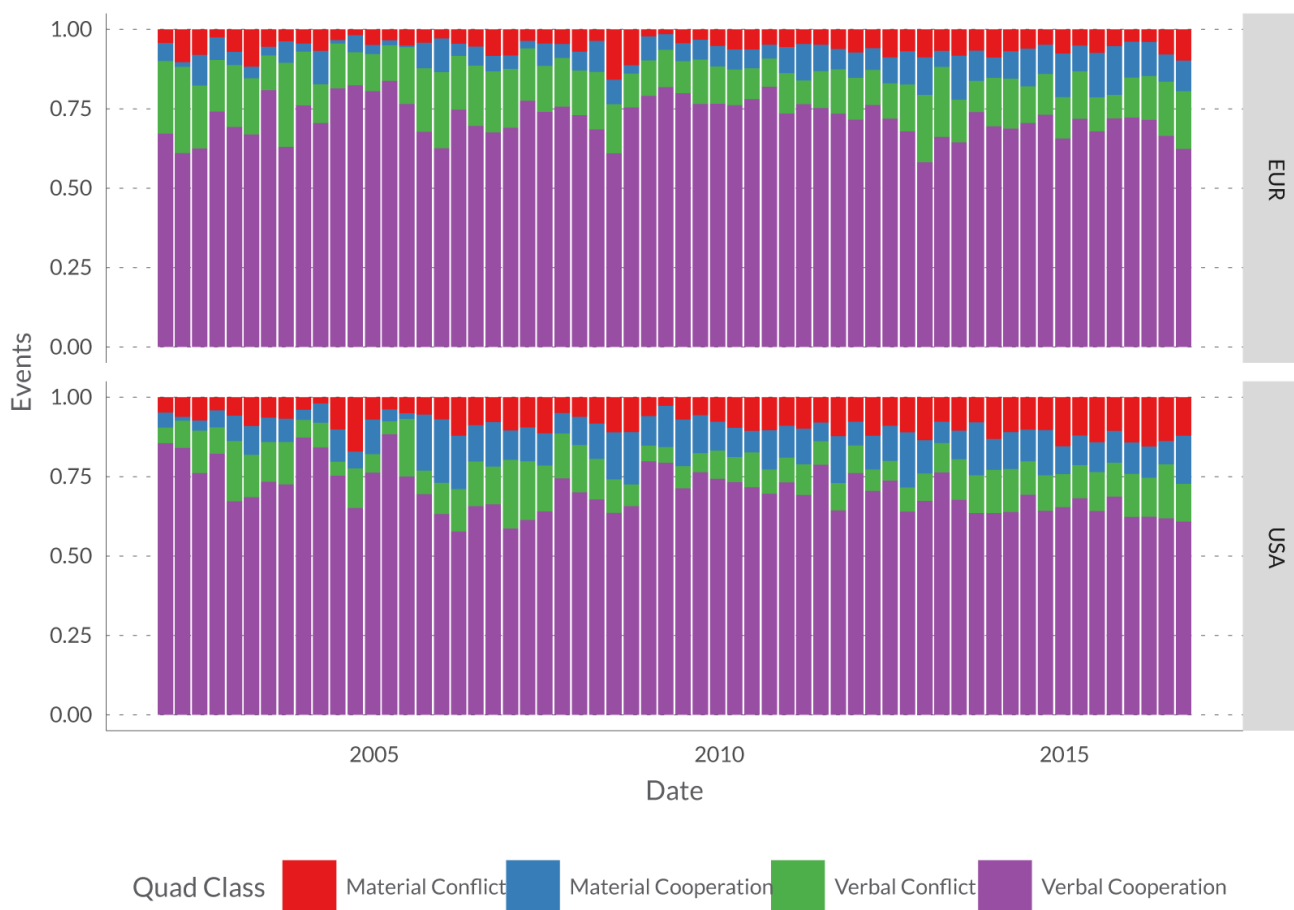
41. A version of this paragraph previously appeared on Barin Kayaoğlu, "H-Diplo Article Review: 'Malleable Modernity: Rethinking the Role of Ideology in American Policy, Aid Programs and Propaganda in Fifties' Turkey," *H-Diplo Article Review* 601 (March 24, 2016), <http://tiny.cc/AR601>.

42. Charles F. Wald, "Get Ready to Walk Away from Incirlik," *Defense One*, October 24, 2016, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/10/get-ready-walk-away-incirlik/132585/>.



increasing authoritarianism has caused consternation in Western capitals since the Gezi protests rocked Turkey in June 2013. In the aftermath of the failed coup of July 2016, instead of reversing course and improving democratic standards and the rule of law, Erdoğan and the AKP seem bent on crushing their remaining opponents. In October-November 2016, the Turkish government jailed the editor-in-chief and several columnists of the secular/liberal leftist *Cumhuriyet* newspaper along with nine deputies from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), including the party's co-chair, the charismatic Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş. Given the fact that the three-month state of emergency that the TBMM had passed after the failed coup was extended for another three months in October 2016, it is fair to wonder whether Erdoğan is trying to marginalize any serious opposition before he attempts to amend the Turkish constitution to finally attain his dreams for a super-presidency.<sup>43</sup>

Figure 3.33 A visual account of EU and US interactions with Turkey, 2002-2017



None of this bodes well for the future of Turkish relations with the West. Whereas U.S. and European leaders used to wax lyrical about Turkey's accomplishments in the 2000s, verbal spats and tugs-of-

43. Cengiz Çandar, "Is Turkey on the Fast Track to Fascism?" *Al-Monitor*, November 4, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/11/turkey-might-be-heading-to-fascism.html>; Amberin Zaman, "Turkey Detains Editor, Staff of Leading Opposition Paper," *Al-Monitor*, October 31, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-opposition-paper-cumhuriyet-detained-crackdown-coup.html>; Ayla Jean Yackley, "'Kurdish Obama' Challenges Perceptions with Turkish Presidential Bid," *Reuters*, August 9, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-election-kurds-idUSKBN0G90CI20140809>.

war between Ankara and its Western partners have come to grab headlines. As the graphs below show, Turkey has experienced a slow but steady rise in its verbal and material “conflict” with both the EU and the United States since 2011, peaking at around the time of the July 2016 coup attempt. All of this makes it more likely that Turkey may “pivot away” from the West.

Yet several factors make it unlikely for Turkey to engage in a *hard* pivot away from the West. Beyond its reliance on the United States, NATO and the EU for its defense and security needs, Ankara also needs its Western partners to grow its economy through trade, investment, tourism and innovation. Turkey receives close to 80 percent of its foreign direct investment (FDI) from the West. On a country-by-country basis, companies from the United States remain Turkey’s top foreign job creator and source of FDI.<sup>44</sup> It is not realistic to expect that Russia, even when combined with China and the greater MENA region, could invest that sort of FDI in Turkey.

Thus, although Ankara’s pivot away from the West may seem more likely than ever, the Turkish side has not given up on global institutions where Western countries are heavily represented, such as NATO and G-20. Despite years of complaining about the slow pace of the membership talks with the EU, Erdoğan and the AKP have not abandoned their country’s Western outlook; Turkey’s broader foreign policy objectives still tilt toward its Occidental options. Given issues

such as ISIS, postwar reconstruction in Syria and Iraq and the status of millions of refugees in Turkey, whether they like it or not, Turkey and the West still need each other more than ever.

Given issues such as ISIS, postwar reconstruction in Syria and Iraq and the status of millions of refugees in Turkey, whether they like it or not, Turkey and the West still need each other more than ever.

### “Self-Pivot”: Turkey as a New Pole in a Multipolar World?

Turkey’s fourth and final alternative in its foreign relations would be to assume a more independent bearing. Under this scenario, Ankara would chart a course that maintains some elements of all the options discussed above: it would nominally remain in NATO and go through the motions of the accession negotiations with Brussels, but it also would downgrade its participation in Western defense and security arrangements while pivoting to the “Silk Road” and Middle East/North Africa/Gulf alternatives.

This “self-pivot” could play out in several ways: Ankara could fuse the Silk Road, MENA and Western alternatives to pursue a sophisticated, balanced and multilateral foreign policy reminiscent of the AKP’s first two terms from 2002 until 2011. Such a diplomatic recalibration would involve a revival of the “peace at home, peace in the world” and “zero problems with neighbors” approaches, as well as dialing down the confrontational rhetoric against other actors. Instead of worsening regional and global conflicts, Ankara could act as an honest broker between conflicting parties or reach out to its adversaries—as it did when it mediated indirect talks between Israel and Syria in 2007-2008 and signed the Zurich Protocols with Armenia in 2009.

But for the prickly Erdoğan to walk back from his personal ambitions and build consensus at home and rebuild bridges abroad (especially with Syria and Iraq) would be something of an earthly miracle. Given Turkey’s relative marginalization by regional and international actors, a “self-pivot,” instead of a genuine attempt at reconciliation with Turkey’s adversaries, would look more like the “precious

44. Ernst & Young Global Limited, “Ernst & Young’s Attractiveness Survey, Turkey 2013: The Shift, the Growth and the Promise,” Attractiveness Surveys (Ernst & Young, 2013), 24, [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Turkey\\_attractiveness\\_survey\\_2013/\\$FILE/turkey\\_attractiveness\\_2013.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Turkey_attractiveness_survey_2013/$FILE/turkey_attractiveness_2013.pdf). Also see The World Bank, *Trading up to High Income: Turkey Country Economic Memorandum* (The World Bank, 2014), <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/turkey/tr-cem-trade-eng.pdf>.

loneliness” idea that Erdoğan’s press secretary and national security advisor İbrahim Kalın had coined to justify the AKP’s diplomatic missteps after 2011.<sup>45</sup> And even if Erdogan and the AKP make all the right moves in the domestic and international scene, it is far from certain whether Turkey’s neighbors would respond as positively to Turkish overtures today as they did in the 2000s, after holding the Turks responsible for the troubles and turmoil that gripped the MENA region since 2011.

At any rate, if Ankara assumes a more flexible and independent posture abroad, it may not even look like a “self-pivot.” Instead, it could act with autonomy within the Western alliance the way it did in later Cold War years and the 1990s and get the best of all worlds. Because Turkey is unlikely to leave NATO or abandon its membership talks with the EU in the foreseeable future, distinguishing a “self-pivot” from “stay the course with the West” option may be a serious practical challenge.

## Conclusion: Whither Turkey?

This report maintains that Turkey’s foreign policy in the next 5 to 10 years will walk a fine line between the third and fourth options discussed above—staying the course with the West and pursuing an independent foreign policy.

This assumption is based on a realistic assessment of Turkish behavior: by maintaining its main Western links —NATO membership and EU candidacy—Turkey would be in a much better position to pursue its regional and global interests. Without political and economic connections to the West, Ankara would not be as alluring to its non-Western partners, nor would it assume as many risks in its international affairs as it could as a NATO ally and EU candidate.

But what would the revival of “autonomy within the West” imply? Assuming President Erdoğan keeps his authoritarianism in check and Turkish domestic turmoil does not spin out of control, this scenario would mean a continuation of the transactional relationship between Turkey and the West since 2011. The two sides would haggle over issues such as NATO access to Turkish airspace and Incirlik airbase, U.S. support for Kurdish groups and Turkish support for armed religious groups in Syria, or how much the EU would have to pay for Ankara to keep Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Meanwhile, both the United States and the EU would tone down their objections to Erdoğan’s excesses.

Of course, Turkey’s autonomy within the Western alliance would be neither easy nor pleasant. Ankara will probably not be as stable and reliable a partner as it was in the 1990s and 2000s. There will be shocking incidents such as the downing of the Russian plane in November 2015, the July 2016 coup attempt, or worrisome developments such as the Turkish intervention in Syria. The United States and EU countries would need to brace themselves for unpleasant surprises in dealing with their Turkish partner.

And if Turkey were to engage in a *hard* pivot away from the West, its reliability also would be a concern for its new partners in the “Silk Road” group and/or the MENA region. For one, those countries would be within their right to question the potential headaches that could come from aligning with Turkey, or whether Ankara could pivot back to the West again. As the graph below shows, Turkey’s influence relationships have gone up and down in the past few years; one can only assume that a similar dynamic will be at play for the next 5-10 years. One thing, however is certain: future events will not be easy for the people of Turkey, the West, or the rest of the world.

45. Kadri Gürsel, “Turkey Finds out One Is the Loneliest Number,” *Al-Monitor*, October 29, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/turkey-perilous-loneliness-turkey-middle-east.html>.; Hürriyet Daily News, “Turkey Not ‘lonely’ but Dares to Do so for Its Values and Principles, Says PM Adviser,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, August 26, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nID=53244&NewsCatID=338>.





# A National Identity Crisis?

Moldova in Flux Between East and West



## Introduction

"Wake up Moldova, you have had enough!" has become the slogan of what were the largest demonstrations since the former Soviet republic gained independence in 1992. Europe's poorest country has been in economic and political turmoil since public anger erupted over the biggest corruption scandal in Moldovan history. An estimated 1 billion dollars – or approximately 15% of Moldova's gross domestic product (GDP) – vanished from three major banks in 2014.<sup>1</sup> This led to a bailout by the National Bank, resulting in the depreciation of the national currency, a rise in prices and tariffs and a further decline in living standards.<sup>2</sup> The IMF shortly thereafter evaluated Moldova's near term outlook as "difficult".<sup>3</sup> Besides imposing a heavy toll on the already troubled economy, the banking fraud has also revealed the wider deficiencies of Moldova's domestic politics.

**Corruption and the perceived partiality of the justice system and state administration have been deep-rooted problems since Moldova became independent.**

Corruption and the perceived partiality of the justice system and state administration have been deep-rooted problems since Moldova became independent (see Figure 3.34).

**Figure 3.34 Control of corruption (100= maximum control; 0= minimal control). Source: World Bank Governance Indicators.**

Control of Corruption	1996	2000	2005	2010	2015
Country/Territory					
Netherlands	97,56	97,56	95,61	97,62	94,71
Estonia	57,56	74,63	80,49	79,05	87,02
Poland	72,68	71,71	60,98	70,00	70,67
Romania	49,27	39,51	49,76	51,90	57,69
Moldova	50,73	32,68	31,22	28,57	17,31
Russian Federation	15,61	16,59	23,90	14,29	19,23
Ukraine	13,17	7,80	29,76	17,14	14,90

Figure 3.34 shows that the governing coalition, the Alliance for European Integration – despite coming to power over seven years ago – has failed to effectively address these issues. Corruption has actually deteriorated in the 2000s and 2010s. Former prime minister Vlad Filat himself was

1. Lydia Tomkiw, "Moldova Economic Crisis: How Banking Scandal, Political Corruption Led To Protests In Europe's Poorest Country," *The International Business Times*, June 2, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/moldova-economic-crisis-how-banking-scandal-political-corruption-led-protests-europes-2295822>.

2. Vasile Ernu, Vitalie Sprinceanu and Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, "Moldova's Movement From Below," *Jacobin*, March 17, 2016, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/03/moldova-chisinau-protests-russia-eu-ukraine/>.

3. The International Monetary Fund, "Press Release: IMF Executive Board Concludes 2015 Article IV Consultation and Third Post-Program Monitoring with Moldova," *The International Monetary Fund*, January 20, 2016, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2016/pr1616.htm>.

involved in the banking fraud alongside a close circle of oligarchs.<sup>4</sup> Following Filat's dismissal, Moldova sank into political instability; the cabinet was reshuffled several times, leading to four new prime ministers in just two years. The current pro-European government headed by Pavel Filip enjoys low domestic support. To many Moldovans, the coalition he belonged to is pro-EU in name only.<sup>5</sup> This public attitude stems not only from the fact that Filip is allegedly influenced by Vladimir Plahotniuc, the most powerful businessman in Moldova, but also from the years-long inability of the pro-EU coalition "to initiate the most needed (and painful, for both society as well as the oligarchs in power) structural reforms".<sup>6</sup>

The current cabinet's disputed legitimacy has led to an increase in societal support for pro-Kremlin opposition parties. As was already observable in opinion polls over the past few years, the so-called Our Party, the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova, as well as the Socialist Party came to be considerably favored among Moldovans over the governing coalition cabinet.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the general perception of Moscow has become more favorable; in the very same survey, 59% of respondents regarded the Russian Federation as an appropriate political ally, whereas 64% stated that Russia should be Moldova's primary economic partner, slightly outnumbering the EU in both respects.<sup>8</sup> Even though Moldova was once perceived as the "star performer in the EU's Partnership Program", "[t]he turmoil in Chisinau raises fears that ordinary Moldovans are losing confidence in the reform process."<sup>9</sup> The outcome of Moldova's recent presidential election in October 2016 has captured the way in which these fears have dramatically altered Moldova's political landscape and set the nation on an all but certain path into the future.

However, despite these ongoing dynamics it would be a step too far to conclude that Moldova's European integration process has failed. Since the Association Agreement came into force, Brussels has offered Moldova considerable access to the EU market, visa-free travel as well as substantial funding.<sup>10</sup> Although support for Moldova's Eastward orientation has undeniably risen among the population, the EU project itself has not been completely abandoned. This has also been well reflected in the symbolism of various demonstrations where the EU flag was a regular sight. In response to the political situation at the time, the EU suspended its financial support and urged the Filip government to implement much needed structural reforms in order to soothe the growing distrust in the governing political class strongly associated with the European road map.<sup>11</sup> Brussels, however, also pledged to support Moldova in carrying out reforms. In turn, it has stated it wants to see real results, especially in the

Although support for Moldova's Eastward orientation has undeniably risen among the population, the EU project itself has not been completely abandoned.

4. BBC News, "Moldova Ex-PM Vlad Filat Held over \$1bn Bank Scam," *BBC News*, June 29, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34569887>.

5. Max Seddon, "Outrage over Moldova Bank Scandal Threatens Reforms," *The Financial Times*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b582ad2c-c424-11e5-b3b1-7b2481276e45.html>.

6. BBC News, "Moldova Political Crisis: Protesters Break into Parliament," *BBC News*, January 21, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35366194>; Michal Skala, "Is Moldova Turning Away from the West?," *Globsec Policy Institute*, May 28, 2015, <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/moldova-turning-away-west>.

7. Center for Insights in Survey Research, *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Moldova*. (International Republican Institute, March 2016), [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_poll\\_presentation-moldova-march\\_2016.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_poll_presentation-moldova-march_2016.pdf).

8. Ibid.

9. Tony Barber, "Why Delinquent Moldova Matters," *The Financial Times*, October 29, 2015, <http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2015/10/why-delinquent-moldova-matters/>; Charles Recknagel, "Explainer: What Can Moldova's Crisis Teach The EU?," *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, November 22, 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/moldova-crisis-eu-lessons-explainer/27380231.html>.

10. Recknagel, "Explainer: What Can Moldova's Crisis Teach The EU?"

11. Rayhan Demytrie, "Moldova Anger Grows over Banking Scandal," *BBC News*, September 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34244341>.

fight against corruption.<sup>12</sup> Indeed as a result of the Moldovan government achieving some results on this front, on December 21, 2016 the European Union resumed its budgetary support for the Moldovan government.<sup>13</sup>

Based on a detailed empirical analysis of the economic, diplomatic and military ties between Moldova, the EU, US and Russia we take a closer look at Moldova's geodynamic positioning between these great powers over time. States other than the above-mentioned great powers are grouped together in a category called 'other countries'. In addition, we are particularly interested in notable events that have affected Moldova's positioning – both in the distant, as well as more recent past – and what this spells for Moldova's future alignment, regional stability and existing European foreign and security policy.

On the basis of the new Pardee Center for International Futures' Global Influence Index<sup>14</sup> we first take a look at the 'big picture' by assessing which of the great powers under investigation in this case-study have exerted the most influence on Moldova in economic, diplomatic, military and cultural terms between the early 1990s and 2016. Second, we zoom in on a more recent period (2008-2016) based on our event data series. The reason for choosing this particular period is that during these eight years numerous major events took place within the region: wars erupted in Georgia and Ukraine and the EU signed Association Agreements with a number of former Soviet states, including Moldova. Towards the end of the observed period the bank fraud scandal comes to light, which has had a damaging effect on the reputation of the ruling elite. We are keen to see what effects these events have had on Moldova's geodynamic adjustments and what this may tell us about future security challenges involving Moldova.

## Trends in Geo-Strategic Alignment

### Big Picture Trends: 1990-2016

Figure 3.35 depicts the influence – in economic, military, diplomatic and cultural terms – that especially the EU, Russia and US have exerted on Moldova from the early 1990s until 2016.

As is observable in Figure 3.35, Europe's influence in Moldova picked up steam after the latter gained independence and has increased significantly throughout the observed period. Europe's growing influence in Moldova amplified significantly in the period 2013-2014, which can be attributed to the signing of the Association Agreement, marking a strong impetus for Moldova's deeper political cooperation with and gradual economic integration into the EU. After the corruption scandal broke out in 2014, however, it can be seen that the rate of the EU's increasing influence slightly slowed down in lock-step with the reputation of the ruling coalition. In light of the resulting political troubles the EU has moved towards a more pragmatic approach vis-à-vis Chisinau, emphasizing the urge for implementing the proposed reforms as a condition for its support.<sup>15</sup>

12. The European Union External Action Service, "EU and Moldova Meet to Discuss Relationship and Reforms," *European Union External Action*, March 15, 2016, [http://eeas.europa.eu/top\\_stories/2016/150316\\_eu\\_moldova\\_meeting\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2016/150316_eu_moldova_meeting_en.htm).

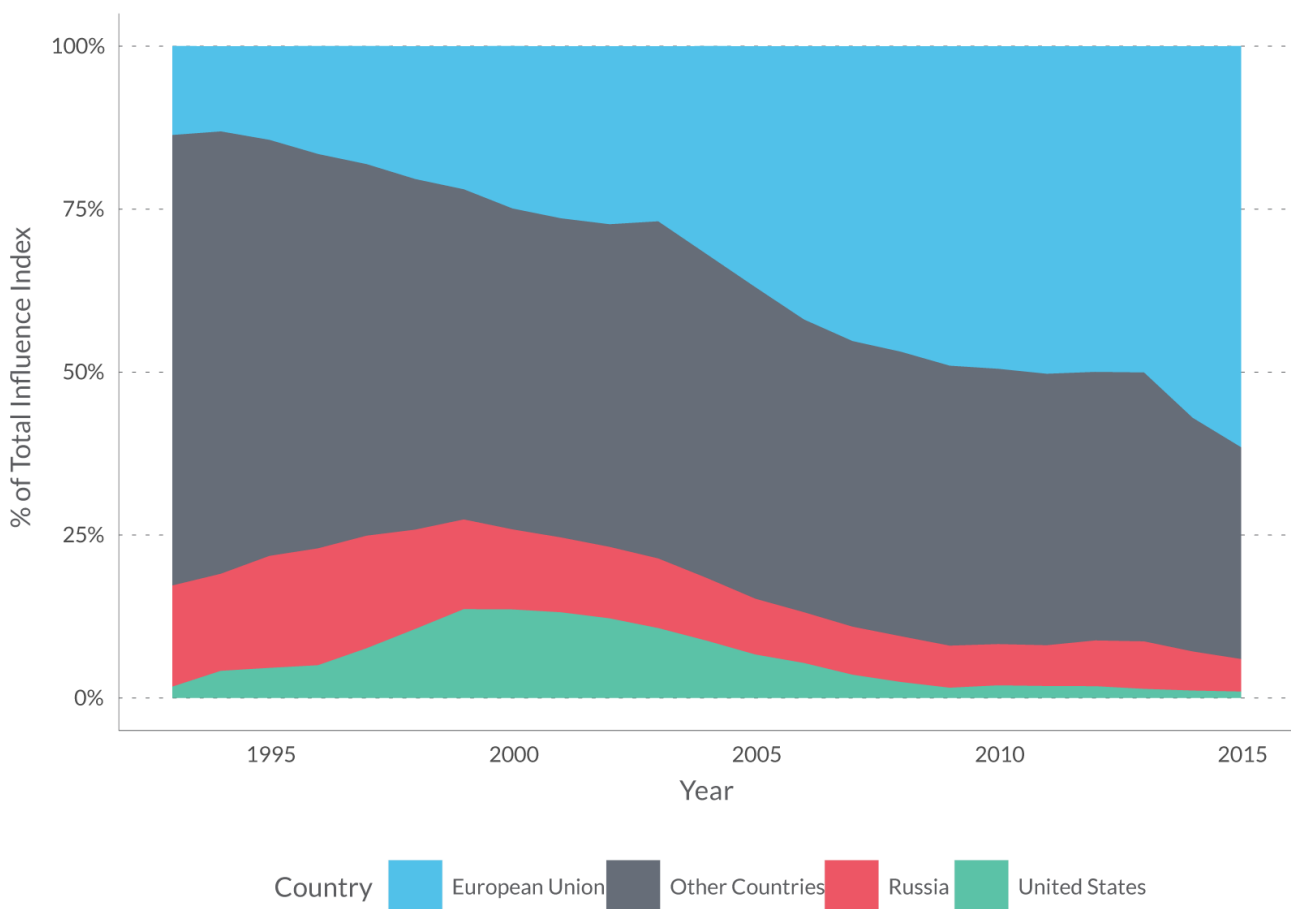
13. The European Union External Action Service, "The EU Is Resuming Budget Support Assistance to the Republic of Moldova," *European Union External Action*, December 23, 2016, [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/moldova\\_en/18141/The\\_EU\\_is\\_resuming\\_budget\\_support\\_assistance\\_to\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_Moldova](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/moldova_en/18141/The_EU_is_resuming_budget_support_assistance_to_the_Republic_of_Moldova).

14. Pardee Center for International Futures, "Global Influence Index (V11-E28)" (Denver: The Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures, 2016).

15. Francesco S. Montesano, Tony van der Togt and Wouter Zweers, "The Europeanisation of Moldova: Is the EU on the Right Track?" (The Hague: Clingendael, July 2016).

Russia's influence in Moldova has remained consistent throughout the observed period, despite lagging significantly behind that of the EU. During the early 1990s, Russia's influence increased when the former Soviet 14<sup>th</sup> Guards Army entered the Transnistrian conflict and forced it to a standstill. In the face of their decreasing influence in Moldova over the past several years, Pro-Russian sentiment in Moldovan society has grown as a result of the banking fraud tainting the public perception of the ruling pro-European coalition.<sup>16</sup> Considering the trends observable in Figure 3.35, the extent in which Russia stands to profit from this change in public perception is clear, most notably in how changing public perceptions of Russia and the European Union came to affect the 2016 Moldovan Presidential elections held in October last year.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3.35 Global Influence Index with Moldova as a target country 1990-2015**



US influence in Moldova since independence consisted mainly of economic and military assistance. Since 1992 the US has provided Moldova with approximately \$1.4 billion in financial assistance. A notable peak can be observed in 1999; the year when a special partnership was established between Moldova and the state of North Carolina, working closely in areas of civil emergency, expansion of markets and cultural, scientific and academic exchanges.<sup>18</sup> Figure 3.35 furthermore

16. The Economist, "Moldova on the Edge: Small Enough to Fail," *The Economist*, November 21, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21678831-year-after-colossal-bank-fraud-country-imploding-small-enough-fail>.

17. Reid Standish, "Moscow Looks to Gain in Moldova's Election Amid Anger Over Corruption," *Foreign Policy*, September 26, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/26/moscow-looks-to-gain-in-moldovas-election-amid-anger-over-corruption/>.

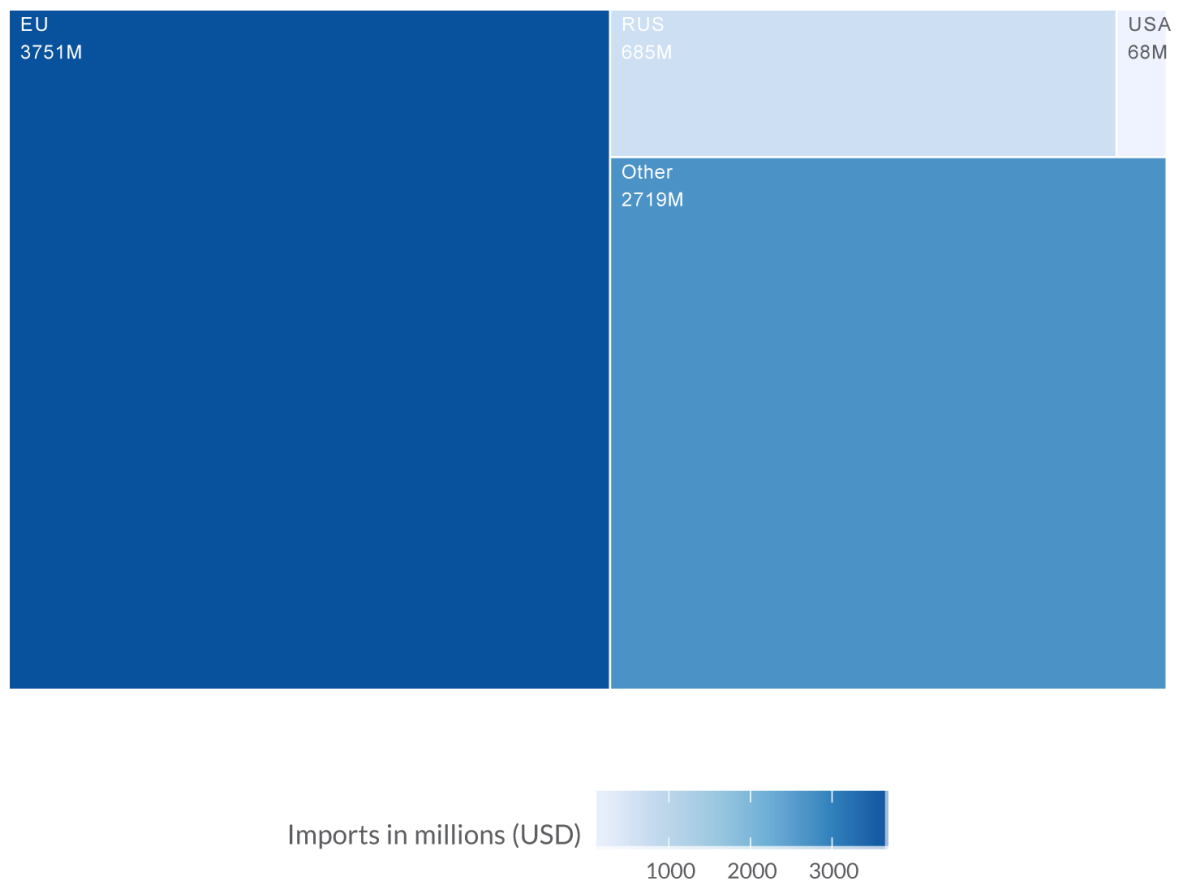
18. Steven Woehrel, "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy" (Congressional Research Service, April 23, 2014), <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21981.pdf>.

reveals a gradual decrease in US influence between 2001 and 2009, the period when the Moldovan Communist party was in power. This downward trend was halted – but not reversed – after the April 2009 parliamentary elections. Opposition parties claimed the elections – which were won by the then ruling Communist Party – were rigged. Young people took to the streets demanding a better future, oriented toward Europe. In the process, the parliament building was stormed and set on fire.<sup>19</sup> In the period that followed the unrest, the Moldovan parliament failed to elect a new president, causing parliament to be dissolved and snap elections to be called. The July 2009 parliamentary elections saw the Communist Party win 48 out of the 101 seats with the remaining 53 going to the opposition. The four opposition parties then subsequently created the ‘Alliance for European Integration’, thus forcing the Communist party into opposition.

### Trade Relations

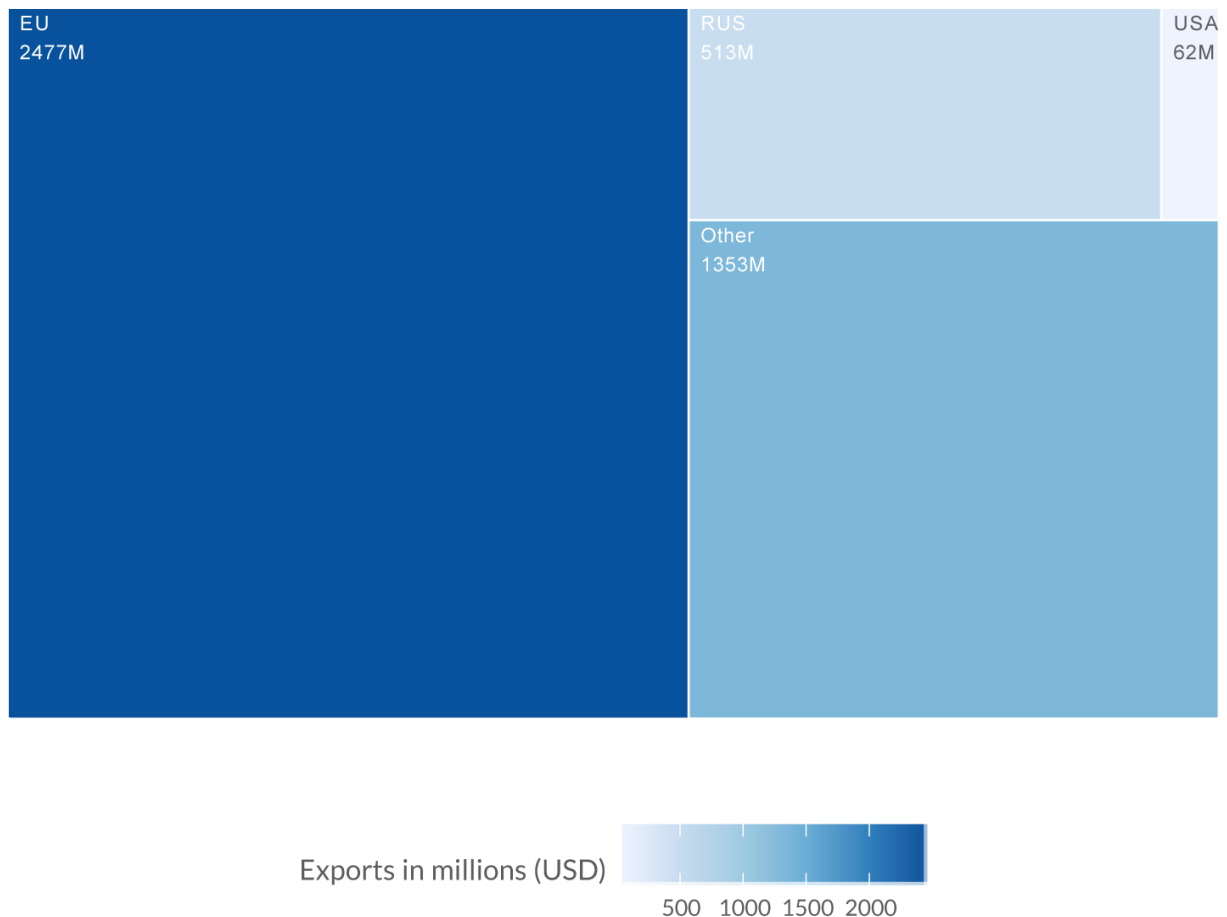
Trade relations serve as an important factor in shaping a country’s geostrategic orientation. In the case of Moldova, the occasional trade rows involving Russia have acted as a check on the country’s political integration with the EU. In this section, we take a closer look at the development of Moldova’s trade relations over time.

**Figure 3.36 Trade relations of Moldova with selected countries in 2015 (US\$)**



19. Luke Harding, “Moldova Forces Regain Control of Parliament after ‘Twitter Revolution,’” *The Guardian*, April 8, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/08/moldova-protest-election-chisinau>; Ellen Barry, “Protests in Moldova Explode, With Help of Twitter,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/08/world/europe/08moldova.html>.





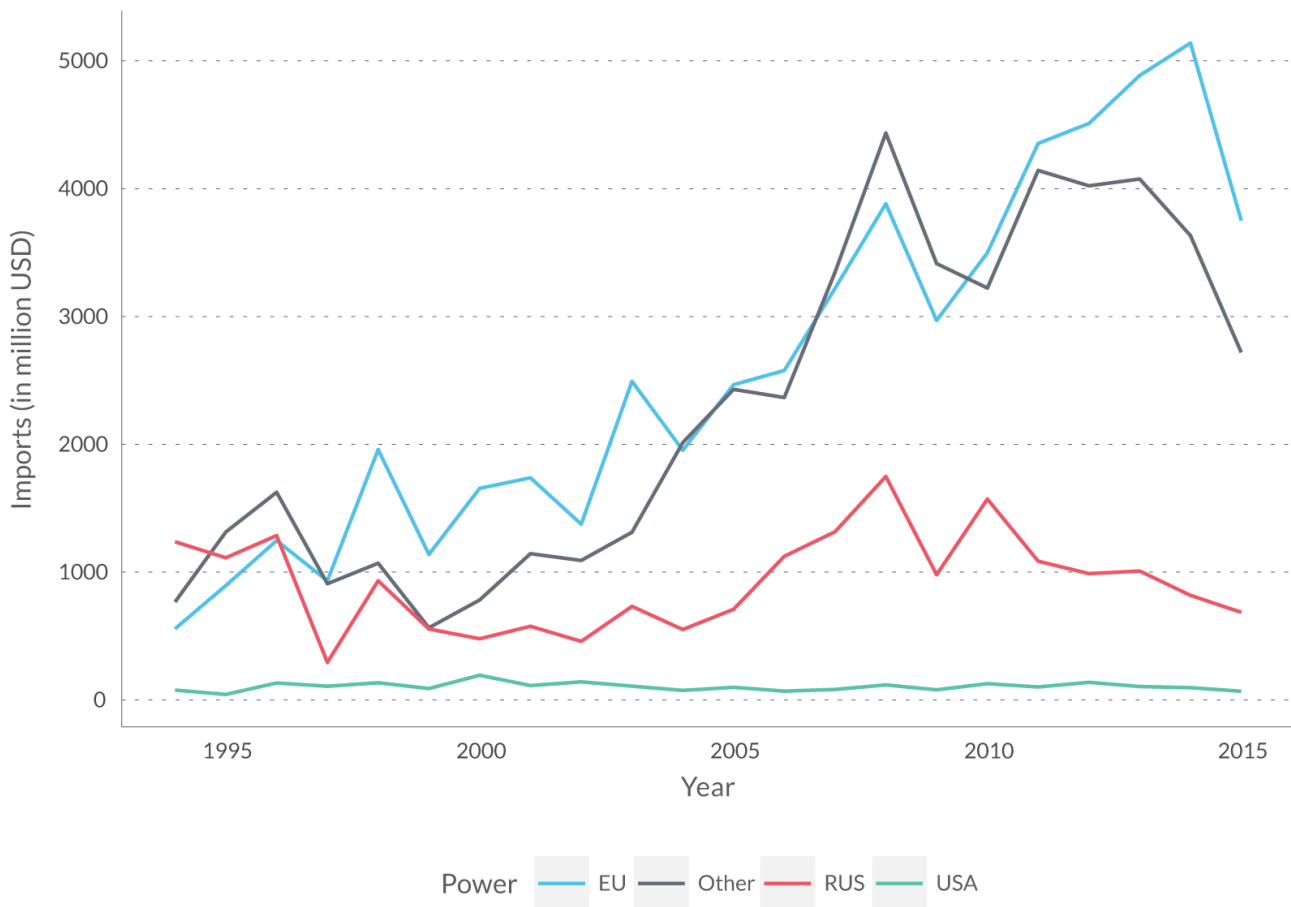
In 2015, the Moldovan economy measured a modest \$6.4 billion in GDP. This means the country ranked as Europe's poorest nation, with a per capita income of just over \$1800 (measured in current US dollars). By comparison, neighboring Romania had a GDP per capita in 2015 that was approximately five times higher at just under \$9000.<sup>20</sup>

When looking at trade, Europe serves as Moldova's main import and export partner. In 2015, around 52% of total imports came from the EU, against only 9.5% from Russia and less than 1% from the US. Exports show a similar pattern with 56% of Moldovan exports going to the EU and only 11.5% of total exports destined for Russia. A mere 1.3% of total exports were shipped to the US (see Figure 3.36).

In economic terms, Moldova is far more integrated today with the EU than it is with Russia or the US. The only period when this was not the case was in the first half of the 1990s in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse (see Figure 3.37). Today, major imports from Russia are mineral oils, mineral fuels and other by-products of their distillation. Other notable products coming from Russia are fertilizers, various edible preparations and nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances.

**In economic terms, Moldova is far more integrated today with the EU than it is with Russia or the US.**

20. The World Bank, "GDP per Capita (Current US\$)," *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>.

**Figure 3.37 Moldovan imports from selected countries 1994-2015 (US\$)**

The EU overtook Russia as Moldova's dominant import partner in 1995 and this has remained so ever since. Primary goods that Moldova imports from the EU are machinery and appliances, mineral products, transport equipment and chemical products.<sup>21</sup> Imports from the US have been at a much lower level compared to the EU or Russia throughout the entire period. In 2014, after the emergence of the banking fraud (see the introduction to this chapter), the Moldovan economy shrank considerably, which caused imports to drop across the board.

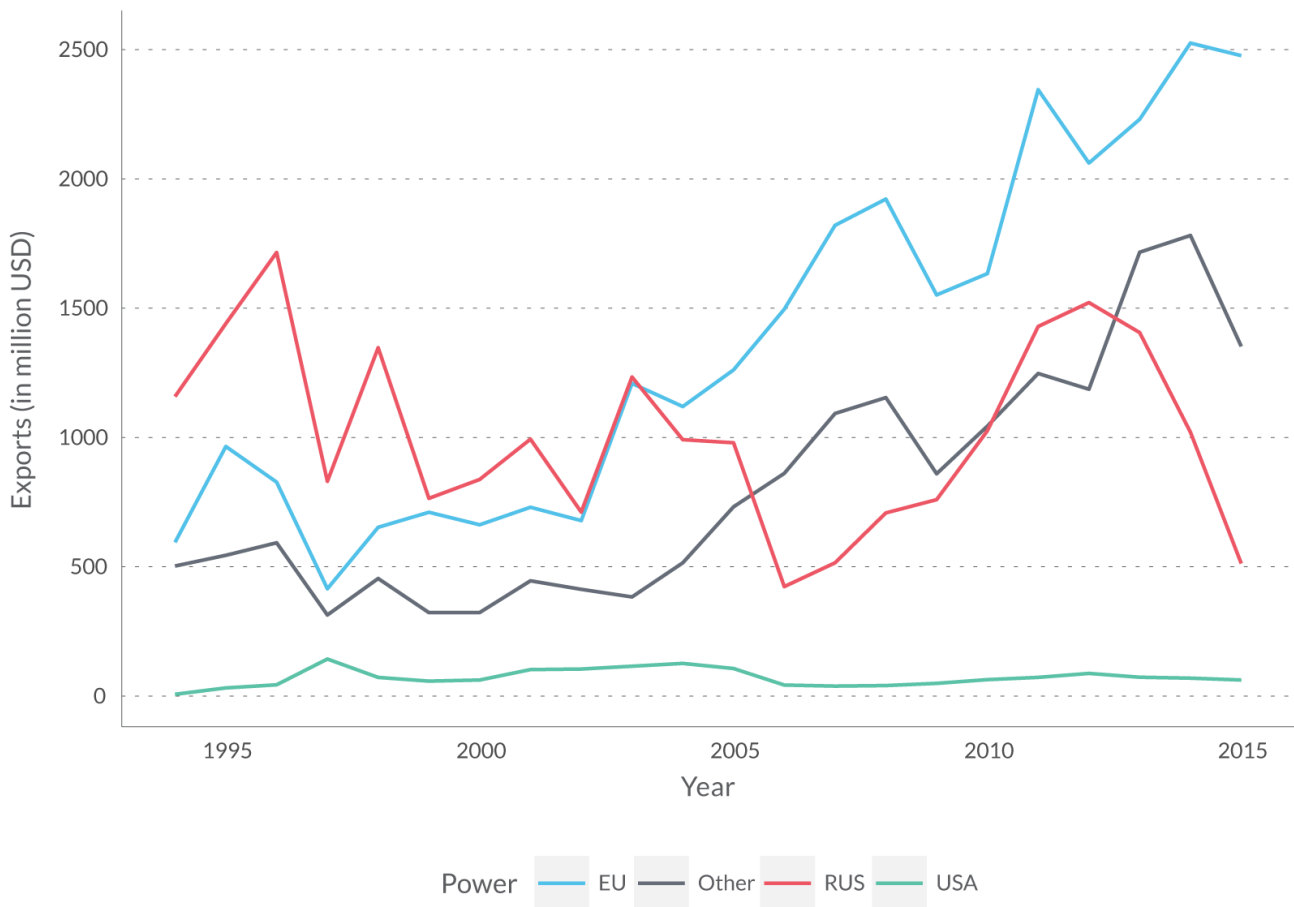
Exports show a slightly different picture; with the Russian market serving as the prime destination for Moldovan products well up until 2003 (see Figure 3.38). However, the share of Moldovan exports to Russia decreased significantly over the past few years due to the introduction of duties and import bans on Moldovan agriculture and alcoholic products, ostensibly justified by the alleged violation of Russian safety regulations and consumer protection laws.

That said, the Russian market still remains among the most important destinations for Moldovan goods. Meat and dairy products as well as turbo propellers, jets and turbines are currently the key goods exported to Russia.<sup>22</sup> The most significant export destinations in the EU for Moldovan products (textiles and textile articles, machinery and appliances, agricultural products and wine) are Romania, Italy and Germany.<sup>23</sup>

21. The European Commission, "Trade" *European Commission*, September 26, 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/moldova/>.

22. Ana Popa, "Moldova and Russia: Between Trade Relations and Economic Dependence" (Chisinau: Expert-Grup, April 2015), [http://www.expert-grup.org/en/biblioteca/item/download/1348\\_10771108a3d22488655de8186bfb918](http://www.expert-grup.org/en/biblioteca/item/download/1348_10771108a3d22488655de8186bfb918).

23. The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), "OEC - Moldova (MDA) Exports, Imports and Trade Partners," OEC,

**Figure 3.38** Moldovan exports to selected countries 1994-2015 (US\$)

A notable deterioration in Moldovan-Russian relations that is reflected in the trade data came in the period 2003-2006. It was in this year that Russia presented its vision for settling the Transnistrian conflict. The 'Kozak Memorandum' as it became known did not include specific provisions on military guarantees, yet Russia intended to deploy 2000 'peacekeeping forces' in Transnistria.<sup>24</sup>

The Memorandum proposed a new constitution for what would in the end become the Federal Republic of Moldova, consisting of a federal territory and two 'subjects' of the Federation – the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (Transnistria) and Gagauzia.<sup>25</sup> The proposed constitutional reforms would have led to a strong overrepresentation of the Transnistrian republic and Gagauzia in Moldova's upper house, prompting Transnistrian senators to require cooperation from only a few Gagauz and/or Transnistrian colleagues to veto federal laws.<sup>26</sup> This plan proved unfavorable to Moldova and was ultimately rejected. What followed was a sharp decline in relations between Russia and Moldova with Moscow placing the blame on the EU for

**A notable deterioration in Moldovan-Russian relations that is reflected in the trade data came in the period 2003-2006.**

2016, <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/mda/#Destinations>.

24. Igor Botan, "'Kozak plan' Implications," *E-Democracy*, November 30, 2003, <http://www.e-democracy.md/en/monitoring/politics/comments/200312031/>.

25. Ionas Aurelian Rus, *Russian Draft Memorandum on the Basic Principles of the State Structure of a United State in Moldova*, 2003, <http://www.stefanwolff.com/files/Kozak-Memorandum.pdf>.

26. Ibid.

having ‘thwarted’ the Kozak Memorandum.<sup>27</sup> The parallels between the Kozak Memorandum and what Russia is currently trying to do in eastern Ukraine through similar calls for “federalization” are striking.<sup>28</sup>

### 2008-2016: Conflict Erupts On Europe’s Eastern Flank

Figure 3.39 represents Moldova as a target country based – in this case – on our event datasets. What we see here are all inter-state events whereby Moldova was the object of actions that were initiated by either the EU, US, or Russia between 2008 and 2016. Events are classified according to five categories; material conflict, material cooperation, verbal conflict, verbal cooperation and events that are considered neutral.

**Figure 3.39** Event data analysis with Moldova as a target country 2008-2016



27. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “Transcript of Remarks and Response to Media Questions by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference after Meeting of Weimar Triangle Foreign Ministers, Paris,” *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, June 23, 2010, [http://archive.mid.ru//brp\\_4.nsf/0/F4A74167A7284734C325774D00304330](http://archive.mid.ru//brp_4.nsf/0/F4A74167A7284734C325774D00304330).

28. Kathy Lally, “Kiev Sees Russian Federalization Plans as Attempt to Destroy Ukraine,” *The Washington Post*, April 5, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kyev-sees-russian-federalization-plans-as-attempt-to-destroy-ukraine/2014/04/05/a5ed291c-fd65-4a3b-bf4f-5c83f2574944\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/kyev-sees-russian-federalization-plans-as-attempt-to-destroy-ukraine/2014/04/05/a5ed291c-fd65-4a3b-bf4f-5c83f2574944_story.html).

Concerning Russia's position towards Moldova, a sharp dip can be noted in the third quarter of 2008 with verbal cooperation decreasing significantly and verbal conflict on the rise. This can be explained by the onset of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, after which the Kremlin warned Moldovan authorities of a similar response in case the Moldovan government were to resort to military power to reintegrate the separatist region of Transnistria.<sup>29</sup> The second quarter of 2009 also shows a clear deterioration in bilateral relations. After protests broke out over the April 2009 parliamentary elections the Russian foreign ministry claimed the riots in Moldova were a plot aimed at undermining the sovereignty of the former Soviet state, hinting forces that favor a reunification with Romania were behind the unrest.<sup>30</sup> After the Alliance for European Integration came to power in July 2009, forcing the Communist party into opposition, verbal conflict between Moscow and Chisinau notably increased.<sup>31</sup>

Interesting is the increase in verbal cooperation after 2011. It was in 2011 that negotiations on settling the Transnistrian case restarted after a 5-year long halt. In 2013 however, this upward trend was reversed. Cooperation decreased and there was a sharp increase in material conflict as well; Russia increased its military presence in Transnistria and introduced import bans on certain Moldovan goods, arguably due to its discontent with Moldova's initiation of the Association Agreement with the EU earlier that year.<sup>32</sup> The graph demonstrates how verbal cooperation between the two countries has declined further since then.

A notable increase in material conflict can also be observed in the third quarter of 2016. In August 2016 Russia claimed it had foiled a Ukrainian terrorist plot in Crimea.<sup>33</sup> Kyiv was quick to deny such events took place and also the EU found no evidence to support Russia's claims.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, amid the increase in tensions, Russia engaged in joint military drills in Transnistria with the separatist power structures and built up its forces around Ukraine. The Moldovan authorities condemned the military drills as illegal.<sup>35</sup> Shortly after, in September 2016, the president of Transnistria issued a presidential decree endorsing a 2006 referendum in which 97% of the population opted for independence and unification with Russia. The decree stipulated that the legal system in Transnistria should be synchronized in accordance with Russian law. The move came ahead of Transnistria's presidential elections held on December 2016. Moldova condemned the announcement as stemming from an illegal referendum and called on its international partners to state their positions on the decree and avoid further deteriorations in the negotiation process on Transnistria.<sup>36</sup>

29. Denis Dyomkin, "Russia Warns Moldova against 'Georgian Mistake,'" *Reuters*, August 25, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-moldova-transnistria-idUSLP59197620080825>.

30. Oleg Shchedrov, "Russia Says Moldova Riots Undermine Sovereignty," *Reuters*, April 8, 2009, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-moldova-election-russia-sb-idUKTRE5371NP20090408>.

31. Tammy Lynch, "Moldova's Alliance for European Integration Meets the CIS," *The Jamestown Foundation*, October 8, 2009, <https://jamestown.org/moldovas-alliance-for-european-integration-meets-the-cis/>.

32. Kevin Liffey and Richard Balmforth, "Russia, Unhappy with Moldova's EU Drive, Bans Its Wine and Spirits," *Reuters*, September 10, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-moldova-russia-wine-idUSBRE98916M20130910>.

33. Shaun Walker, "Putin Raises Stakes over Alleged Ukrainian Terror Plot in Crimea," *The Guardian*, August 10, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/10/russia-accuses-ukraine-of-armed-crimea-incursion>.

34. Cynthia Kroet, "Donald Tusk: Russia Is 'unreliable' on Crimea," *POLITICO*, August 18, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/donald-tusk-russia-is-unreliable-on-crimea/>.

35. UNIAN Information Agency, "Moldovan Authorities: Russia's Military Exercises in Transnistria Illegal, Inadmissible," *UNIAN*, August 18, 2016, <http://www.unian.info/world/1475786-moldovan-authorities-russias-military-exercises-in-transnistria-illegal-inadmissible.html>.

36. Iulian Ernst, "Transnistria's President Issues Decree on Unification with Russia," September 9, 2016, <http://www.intellinews.com/transnistria-s-president-issues-decree-on-unification-with-russia-105737/>; Cristi Vlas, "Transnistria Leader Signs Decree to Synchronize the Legislation with Russia," *Moldova.org*, September 12, 2016, <http://www.moldova.org/en/transnistria-leader-signs-decree-synchronize-legislation-russia/>.



### ***Russian Military Posturing***

Although Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and some commentators were quick to point to the possibility that the buildup of Russian forces around Ukraine could be a pretext for a large-scale invasion, the reality looks different.<sup>37</sup> Rather, the buildup of forces and the associated military drills in Transnistria at the time appeared like they were aimed at pressurizing Ukraine in the run-up to talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Merkel and French President Hollande on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in September 2016.<sup>38</sup> The most likely logic behind such a move is to create a conflict – either real or imagined – and offer to resolve it on terms favorable to Moscow.

Although Putin did not succeed in securing concessions on the situation in Ukraine during the G20 Summit, the latest Crimean crisis is illustrative of the Kremlin's strategy. Militarily, it appears that Russia is playing a 'long game' whereby it is positioning its forces in such a way that it can dominate Ukraine for years to come. Already for a few years has Russia been moving brigades and divisions from other regions in Russia closer to Ukraine, in part with the aim of restoring the Russian military presence on its western frontiers to what it was before 2009.<sup>39</sup> The tension with Ukraine in August 2016 over the alleged terror plot in Crimea enabled Russia to create an Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) zone that extends north into a large part of Ukraine and across much of the Black Sea.<sup>40</sup> Under the cover of 'heightened tensions' and 'countering Ukrainian aggression' Russia has moved tens of thousands of soldiers to newly built installations within easy striking distance of Ukraine.<sup>41</sup> What is more, the desire on the part of EU leaders to de-escalate made sure that these moves could be made without immediate consequences.<sup>42</sup>

This structural repositioning of forces fits within a longer term trend. After the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, it became clear that the Kremlin's priority lay with preventing the further integration of former Soviet states with western institutional structures, NATO in particular. Integration with the EU, however, was not by and large considered to be viewed as threatening by Moscow. The annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine have since put a dent in that belief.<sup>43</sup> When Moldova signed the Association Agreement, Moscow imposed trade sanctions. This goes to show that Russia is keen to keep its ability to keep the region's western ambitions 'in check' and that it is not afraid to resort to punitive measures in order to prove its point.

In the case of Moldova, it needed not to resort to military action given that the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria already allows Russia to have this kind of leverage over Moldova's westward

**Russia is keen to keep its ability to keep the region's western ambitions 'in check' and [...] it is not afraid to resort to punitive measures in order to prove its point.**

37. Reid Standish, "Putin Visits Crimea After Ukraine Warns of 'Full-Scale Russian Invasion,'" August 19, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/19/putin-visits-crimea-as-ukraine-warns-of-full-scale-russian-invasion-kiev-caucasus-2016/>; Andrew Hammond, "Russia Is Teetering on the Brink of War with Ukraine," *The Independent*, August 24, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/russia-is-teetering-on-the-brink-of-all-out-war-with-ukraine-a7207411.html>.

38. Neil Buckley, "Putin's Bare-Knuckle Diplomacy ahead of G20," *The Financial Times*, September 1, 2016, <http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2016/09/putins-bare-knuckle-diplomacy-ahead-of-g20/>.

39. Michael Kofman, "Putin's Military Is Playing the Long Game in Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, August 31, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/31/dont-look-now-but-russias-got-ukraine-surrounded-crimea/>.

40. Kathleen Weinberger, "ISW Blog: Putin's Gambit in Ukraine: Strategic Implications," September 3, 2016, <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/09/putins-gambit-in-ukraine-strategic.html>.

41. James Marson and Thomas Grove, "Russia Builds Up Army Near Ukraine Border," *Wall Street Journal*, August 19, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-builds-up-army-near-ukraine-border-1471537008>.

42. Weinberger, "ISW Blog: Putin's Gambit in Ukraine: Strategic Implications."

43. Rob de Wijk and Sijbren de Jong, "The European Union as a Geopolitical Player," in *Fit for the Future? Reflections from Leiden on the Functioning of the EU*, ed. Bernard Steunenberg, Wim Voermans and Stefaan Van den Bogaert (Leiden: Eleven, 2016), 243–64.

ambitions. At the same time, the presence of the Russian military in this region enables Moscow to exert pressure on Ukraine's southwest. By using the break-away republics in Moldova and Ukraine, Putin aims to pressure Europe into lifting the sanctions against Russia in the medium term without actually making any concessions on the Minsk II cease-fire agreement. Seen from this perspective, Moscow has no incentives to ever relinquish its foothold in Transnistria and the Donbas.

### ***Moldova and the West: Hesitant Integration***

In contrast to Russian-Moldovan interaction around 2013, cooperation between the EU and Moldova increased around this time (see Figure 3.39). Talks on the Association Agreement intensified, leading to the agreement's provisional entry into force in 2014. Since then however the eruption of the corruption scandal has caused the EU's stance towards Moldova to change leading to a decrease in verbal cooperation. In July 2015, after more details about the banking fraud emerged, the EU moved to suspend budget support to Moldova.<sup>44</sup> Moldovan authorities then subsequently threatened to reconsider Moldova's pro-EU orientation in favor of one more focused on Moscow.<sup>45</sup> Worse for Europe, the scandal has caused the Moldovan population to lose faith in the pro-EU credentials of the ruling coalition and it has tainted the image of Europe in Moldova.<sup>46</sup> According to the latest public opinion poll, popular support for the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union is higher than it is for integration with the EU, which is a worrisome development for Brussels.<sup>47</sup>

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As far as US-Moldovan relations are concerned, Figure 3.39 shows noticeable peaks in verbal cooperation between 2009 and 2012. After the rise to power of pro-Western parties in September 2009, diplomatic cooperation intensified between the two countries, also complemented by the provision of bilateral financial and military assistance. The former primarily concerned additional economic aid on top of foreign aid the US provides. Moldova has been receiving aid from the Millennium Challenge Corporation since 2010 with the aim of upgrading its infrastructure and to facilitate the export of agricultural products.<sup>48</sup> US military support increased in 2009 in the wake of the Georgian-Russian war. US support in practice boils down to supplying basic military equipment and the provision of training to Moldovan servicemen. The peak in material cooperation following 2011 can be attributed to joint investigative efforts undertaken in order to interdict the sale of nuclear materials in Moldova as well as the counter-proliferation training provided by US experts to Moldovan police officers.<sup>49</sup>

**US support in practice boils down to supplying basic military equipment and the provision of training to Moldovan servicemen.**

44. Kinga Jaromin, "EU Freezes Funding for Moldova," *EurActiv.com*, July 10, 2015, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/eu-freezes-funding-for-moldova/>.

45. Montesano, van der Togt and Zweers, "The Europeanisation of Moldova: Is the EU on the Right Track?"

46. Seddon, "Outrage over Moldova Bank Scandal Threatens Reforms."

47. Institutul de Politici Publice (IPP), "Barometer of Public Opinion - Republic of Moldova" (Institutul de Politici Publice, November 2015), [http://ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura\\_BOP\\_11.2015\\_first\\_part\\_ENGLISH\\_V1.pdf](http://ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura_BOP_11.2015_first_part_ENGLISH_V1.pdf).

48. Woehrel, "Moldova: Background and U.S. Policy."

49. Ibid.

### ***Nuclear Trafficking***

Also worth noting is the increase in material conflict between the US and Moldova and the EU and Moldova in the third quarter of 2015. That year, during a sting operation, Moldovan police working with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation were offered a large amount of radioactive cesium. The resultant bust was the fourth attempt in five years to smuggle nuclear material to extremists in the Middle East using Moldova as a transit corridor. Earlier cases in 2010, 2011 and 2014 saw smugglers attempting to sell uranium in various grades.<sup>50</sup> In an investigative report by the Associated Press, Moldova has been described as a 'thriving black market in nuclear materials'.<sup>51</sup>

Illicit nuclear trafficking through Moldova flourishes given that Transnistria, as an internationally unrecognized entity, serves as a choke point for law enforcement; the Moldovan police holds no jurisdiction and criminal records are not shared with international law enforcement agencies. The biggest problem, however, is that the 411 km-long border separating Moldova from Transnistria is not formally administered. This leaves more than a quarter of Moldova's borders virtually unattended.<sup>52</sup> It thus should not come as a shock if more of these cases present themselves in the future.<sup>53</sup> A factor seen as complicating the threat of nuclear smuggling is the breakdown of intelligence sharing between the US and Russia following the events in Ukraine.<sup>54</sup>

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This is not to say that the threat posed by the unadministered borders has not been recognized by the Moldovan authorities. On the contrary, measures have been taken in order to strengthen border management in the east of the country. The European Commission established the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine in 2005 with the aim of enhancing effective border control through the provision of training, operational advice and monitoring.<sup>55</sup> At the same time the OSCE established a 'project office' in Chisinau. Although its mission to Moldova is primarily responsible for facilitating the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, its mandate also extends to arms control activities.<sup>56</sup> In 2011, the Moldovan government requested the support of the OSCE in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention, as well as the 1925 Geneva Protocol, whereby the Mission provided assistance to combat illicit trafficking of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material.<sup>57</sup> The February 2015 incident, however, shows that supporting the Moldovan authorities on this matter remains a persistent priority.

50. BBC News, "Nuclear Smuggling Deals 'Thwarted' in Moldova," *BBC News*, October 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34461732>.

51. Kathy Gilsinan, "Why Moldova May Be the Scariest Country on Earth," *The Atlantic*, October 8, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/moldova-nuclear-weapons-isis/409456/>.

52. Eliza Gheorghe, "After Crimea: Disarmament, Frozen Conflicts, And Illicit Trafficking Through Eastern Europe," Working Paper (Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, July 2015).

53. Desmond Butler and Vadim Ghirda, "AP INVESTIGATION: Nuclear Black Market Seeks IS Extremists," October 7, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/urn:publicid:ap.org:6fd1d202f40c4bb4939bd99c3f80ac2b>.

54. Roland Oliphant, "Russian Gangs Trying to Sell Radioactive Material to Isil Terrorists in Moldova," *The Telegraph*, October 7, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11916040/Criminal-gangs-attempting-to-sell-nuclear-material-to-Islamic-State.html>.

55. The European Union External Action Service, "Integrated Border Management," *European Union External Action*, (2016), <http://eubam.org/what-we-do/integrated-border-management/>.

56. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Arms Control," OSCE, 2012, <http://www.osce.org/moldova/104945>.

57. The Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Moldova 1540 Reporting," *The Nuclear Threat Initiative*, November 24, 2015, <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/moldova-1540-reporting/>.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The analysis conducted in this chapter shows that the influence of the European Union on Moldova remains significant – higher than that of Russia and the US. That said, of late, also due to the banking fraud scandal, Moldovans have started to lose faith in the pro-EU credentials of their current government – and perhaps in the EU itself, as we witness signs of increasing Russian influence in Moldova. With support for EU integration estimated to be shaky at best, the stage was all but set for the 2016 presidential election to act as a critical litmus test for Moldova's future geostrategic orientation.

Indeed, the growing public distrust of European values contributed directly to Igor Dodon's eventual victory in Moldova's 2016 presidential elections. The former leader of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova defeated the pro-European candidate Maia Sandu for the presidency and – in great contrast to the previous president – holds a cold attitude towards cooperation with western allies. In this new context, the constitutional neutrality of the Moldovan Republic might be significantly adjusted to favor pro-Russian interests. Despite rejecting his label as a pro-Russian politician, Dodon's politics – supported by his first acts enacted as president – present him as a proponent of normalizing Moldovan cooperation with Russia and renewing full-scale trade relations and strategic cooperation between the two countries. In particular Dodon's shift in economic and trade policy to favor the Eurasian Economic Union over the European Union Association Agreement is certain to have significant implications for Moldova in the near future. Perhaps in a further demonstration of what is yet to come, only shortly after his presidential inauguration on December 23, Dodon dismissed Moldovan Defense Minister Anatoly Salaru – who had shown support for Moldovan accession to NATO in the past – and settled on a trip to Moscow as his first formal international visit as president. Although time will surely tell exactly how Moldova's orientation will change as a result of the elections, President Dodon's most recent policy changes foretell great transformations in the Moldovan Republic's political landscape.

Overall, several things should be borne in mind when assessing Moldova's geostrategic positioning. Moldova is constitutionally neutral and has – as of yet – no formal ambition to join NATO. If it were to do so, or if it were to resort to military action to reclaim Transnistria at any point in the future, Russia will immediately turn up the heat in the separatist republic. In that respect, Russia's security interests in Moldova are clear. Moscow uses the separatist republics to keep the westward ambitions of Moldova and Ukraine in check by intermittently stoking conflict or holding military drills.

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Thus, given that Russia is bent on keeping a presence in the region, a sustainable resolution of the Transnistrian conflict is unlikely. It is more expedient to focus valuable resources on those threats that are a clear danger to both the West and Russia and for which a mutual interest to tackle them ought to exist. In light of Moldova's porous border with Ukraine and the numerous incidents involving the trafficking of nuclear materials that have occurred in recent years, it is recommended to focus on countering the threat of nuclear proliferation instead. Given that both the US and Russia are members of the OSCE and the threat of proliferation affects both countries, cooperation on this issue could potentially act as a bridge in enabling (limited) progress in intelligence sharing in the area of arms control.





4





# The Many Faces of Political Violence

## Key Take-Aways

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- » Across all three types of conflict – state-based conflict, non-state conflict and one-sided violence – the frequency of violent episodes increased in 2015, continuing its upward trend of recent years. Total conflict deaths are down from last year (from 137,333 to 116,907) but continue to be at historically high levels since 2004.
- » Europe began to experience more political violence due to continuing conflict in Eastern Europe and with instability in the MENA region spilling over across European borders (including terrorist attacks in Paris and Nice). The MENA region remains the hub of instability, with state-based conflicts ongoing in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Episodes of political violence also take place in Turkey, targeted by the ISIS and Kurdish insurgent attacks and Egypt.
- » In 2015, terrorism caused fewer deaths, but expanded geographically. There has been a trend towards a further transnationalization of terrorism, with ISIS and affiliated organizations expanding their operations from 13 to 28 countries.
- » A small majority of ongoing conflicts today remains confined within specific states (59%). Proportionally, the number of internationalized intrastate conflicts has quadrupled since the beginning of this century.
- » According to our long-term forecasting country risk of violent conflict model, the 5 countries with the highest risk in 2017-2018 are Chad, Bangladesh, Angola, Guinea and Cameroon. More generally, the highest political violence risk is concentrated in the Sub-Saharan region. Our short-term forecasting country risk of violent conflict model, additionally drawing on real-time event datasets, identifies Bangladesh, Cameroon, Iran, Lebanon and Angola as five countries with the highest risk of conflict.
- » Important for Dutch national security interests due to proximity to the overseas territories and countries that are part of our Kingdom in the Caribbean, Venezuela has featured repeatedly as a highest risk country for the eruption of large scale political violence. Food crisis, corruption and violent abuse of power by security and police forces are among the key issues.
- » Preventing new conflicts and addressing conflict spillover through effective containment of ongoing conflicts, alongside conflict resolution and subsequent stabilization efforts, is instrumental in preventing the further proliferation and regionalization of political violence in at-risk countries throughout the world.



## 4.1 Introduction: The Many Faces of Political Violence

The modern era's Great Power Peace has come under severe strain in recent years. In Asia, China is increasingly flexing its military muscle in the Pacific region—much to the dismay of many of its smaller neighboring states. Close encounters on sea and in the air between the armed forces of regional states are by no means an exception. Japan's leadership has called for a revision of its pacifist constitution and has begun strengthening its military forces. Meanwhile, the US is bolstering its military presence in the region to contain China and to deter it from regional expansion. Closer to home, in Europe, a series of confrontations between Russia and the West has heralded the resurgence of an old rivalry that increasingly looks like the beginning of the Second Cold War. In this polarized environment, many states are engaging in the (re-)buildup and modernization of their armed forces. Fortunately, the increase in international crises has not yet been accompanied by an uptick in interstate wars. Yet the hybrid character of contemporary conflict certainly obfuscates the assortment of hostile, but non-lethal actions that aggressively intrude on the sovereignty of nations.

**The hybrid character of contemporary conflict certainly obfuscates the assortment of hostile, but non-lethal actions that aggressively intrude on the sovereignty of nations.**

While the number of fatalities of traditional state-on-state conflict remains low, the same cannot be said for other forms of political violence.<sup>1</sup> Intrastate conflict has metastasized in the Middle East and North Africa, disrupting the lives of tens of millions of people in the region. The lawless vacuum that emerged after the Arab Spring continues to be a hotbed of violent atrocities often targeted at citizens, both in the region and beyond. Syria has not only become *the* theater of a wider regional conflagration (Sunni-Shiite, Saudi-Iranian), but has also seen aggressive meddling by Russia and Western states in pursuit of their own strategic objectives. Other forms of state and non-state violence in other places of the world are rife too. Amorphous, decentralized terror networks strike at targets both within and beyond their regions of origin, turning the traditional distinction between core and periphery on its head. Low-level conflicts that feature sporadic violent outbursts continue to simmer on. Also relatively mature democracies are not free from the vagaries of violence, although here the violence does not always threaten the power of sitting governments.

Not all news is bad, however, even if it often goes underreported. According to the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), 81 countries have improved their levels of peace from 2014 to 2015.<sup>2</sup> Shifting the focus from causes of conflict to the pillars of peace highlights that the presence of peace amounts to more than merely the absence of war. This is the subject of our 2016 study *Si Vis Pacem Utique Para Pacem* and is further examined in the following chapter *The Other Side of the Security Coin*.<sup>3</sup>

The current chapter, however, squarely looks at the *conflict* side of the security coin. It provides a brief overview of trends in the dominant forms of political violence over the past quarter century, which include state-based and non-state conflict as well as one-sided violence. It does so by leveraging the information offered by three authoritative datasets: the *State Failure Problem Set*

1. Political violence refers to acts of violence committed by both state and non-state actors for political purposes. See the textbox on the following page for more information.

2. The Institute for Economics and Peace, *Positive Peace Report 2016: A Compilation of the Leading Research on Positive Peace and Resilience*, 2016, 6, <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Positive%20Peace%20Report%202016.pdf>. The IEP's Global Peace Index is composed of 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators along three different themes: the level of safety and security in society, the extent of domestic and international conflict and the degree of militarization.

3. See Willem Theo Oosterveld et al., *Si Vis Pacem, Para Utique Pacem: Individual Empowerment, Societal Resilience and the Armed Forces* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), [http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_StratMon\\_TINA\\_%5BFINAL\\_VERSION%5D.pdf](http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_StratMon_TINA_%5BFINAL_VERSION%5D.pdf).

of the *Project Instability Task Force* (PITF), the *Georeferenced Event Dataset* of the *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* (UCDP) and the *Global Terrorism Database* by the *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism* (GTD). More information about the different ways in which the PITF and the UCDP measure violence can be consulted in Textbox 4.1. Following this overview, the chapter offers a global political violence risk outlook based on a number of political forecasting models that we have developed for this purpose. It concludes with an assessment of the state of political violence worldwide.

#### Textbox 4.1 Different Ways to Measure Political Violence: PITF and UCDP

The differences between the PITF's State Failure Problem Set and UCDP's Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) lie in their different conceptualizations of political violence. The UCDP's classification is broader, whereas the PITF uses more stringent criteria for instances of political violence to be included. Furthermore the UCDP changes the status of countries more regularly, whereas the PITF's designations are typically not changed until a given conflict between parties has been resolved. Both sources offer data for global political violence for the entire period of 1989-2015.<sup>1</sup> The PITF dataset distinguishes between **ethnic wars** ("episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which challengers seek major changes in their status"); **revolutionary wars** ("episodes of violent conflict between governments and politically organized groups that seek to overthrow the central government, to replace its leaders, or to seize power in one region"); and **genocides and politicides** ("events which involve the promotion, execution and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents that result in the deaths of substantial portion of communal group or politicized non-communal group").<sup>2</sup> The PITF dataset includes conflicts if the number of conflict-related deaths over the course of conflict exceeds 1000, while in at least one of the years the death toll must exceed 100, while each conflict actor has to mobilize more than 1000 people. The UCDP dataset distinguishes between **state-based conflict** ("a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory involving the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state"); **non-state conflict** ("the use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state"); and **one-sided violence** ("the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians"). We adapted the UCDP GED data by imposing an annual fatality threshold requirement: dyadic conflicts in a given year had to result in a minimum of 25 total battle-related fatalities.<sup>3</sup> We use UCDP data to analyze past and present trends in conflict and fatalities and PITF data for forecasting purposes. Please refer to our methodological annex for more information on our models' usage of PITF data.

1. The UCDP as of yet excludes Syrian Civil War from their dataset due to many conflicting reports about fatality figures. We complement our trend analyses with conflict fatality figures from the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights.

2. All definitions are from the PITF Problem Set codebook. Ethnic wars and revolutionary wars are considered to be mutually exclusive in the dataset while genocides and politicides can occur simultaneously alongside civil wars. This dataset also included information about adverse regime changes, which is currently not included in the analysis.

3. The Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) is the most disaggregated dataset that the UCDP publishes online. All separate instances are recorded by their start and end dates and are georeferenced. It also hosts annual data that has been aggregated to country level. For original definitions, see The Uppsala Conflict Data Program, "Definitions," *Uppsala Universitet*, 2016, <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/>.

## 4.2 Trends in Political Violence: the Metastasis of Violence

Across all three of the types of conflict we discern – i.e. state-based conflict, non-state conflict and one-sided violence – the overall frequency of violent episodes climbed further in 2015, continuing its upward trend of recent years. The UCDP Dataset identifies 76 instances of political violence in 45 countries in 1989, 91 instances in 36 countries in 2005 and 110 instances in 38 countries in 2015 (as countries can suffer from different types of political violence simultaneously). There has also been a major increase in the lethality of conflicts in the past decade. Since its lowest point in 2005, the total number of deaths due to political violence has surged from 18,490 in 2005, to 61,688 last year according to the UCDP and if we include Syrian death data from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the total reaches a staggering 116,907.<sup>4</sup> This is a decrease from 2014, when total deaths due to political violence including Syrian death data from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights was 137,133. In 2015 there were 45 instances of state-based conflict causing 48,955 deaths, 21 instances of one-sided violence causing 7,811 deaths and 44 instances of non-state conflict causing 4,922 deaths (see Figure 4.1). The fatality data from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is not aggregated by conflict type and is spread across all three types of violence.

**Across all three of the types of conflict we discern – i.e. state-based conflict, non-state conflict and one-sided violence – the overall frequency of violent episodes climbed further in 2015, continuing its upward trend of recent years.**

Throughout this time period, state-based conflict largely remained the most frequent type of violence and certainly the deadliest.<sup>5</sup> It also persisted as the most prominent type of political violence compared to acts of violence committed by militant groups against a civilian population or to violent clashes between non-state actors.

In contrast to years prior, Europe has begun to experience a larger share of political violence as conflict continued in Eastern Europe and the instability of the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region spilled over across European borders. Both Ukraine and France suffered from political violence in 2015. While total human deaths as a result of the civil war in Ukraine declined from 4,392 in 2014 to 1,303 in 2015, attempts to negotiate a ceasefire between Ukrainian and Russian forces have thus far failed to stem armed hostilities. France fell victim to a series of terrorist attacks including those in Paris of November 2015 and in Nice of July 2016, featuring spillover effects from the conflagration in the MENA region. The radicalization of isolated individuals and the return of radical foreign fighters from conflict zones fuel the formation of dormant terror networks and greatly increases the risk of one-sided violence on the European continent.

**In contrast to years prior, Europe has begun to experience a larger share of political violence as conflict continued in Eastern Europe and the instability of the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region spilled over across European borders.**

Within the MENA region, state-based conflicts are currently ongoing in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, are responsible for a high number of battle-related fatalities. The extensive internationalization of the intrastate conflict in Yemen, pulling in many regional actors, has led to increased conflict lethality – with violent conflict causing over 7,000 total fatalities in 2015. It has also provided

4. These death toll figures are best estimates of battle-related fatalities and are provided within the UCDP dataset.

5. With the exception of 1994, when the Rwandan Genocide led to a drastic spike of deaths due to the one-sided violence committed against the Tutsi population in Rwanda. The UCDP records 516,710 deaths coming as a result of one-sided violence in Rwanda in 1994.



terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS with ample opportunity to exploit the political turmoil and escalate terrorist violence in the country. In Syria, the fighting is particularly intense, with a UN humanitarian chief likening Aleppo to “one giant graveyard”.<sup>6</sup> The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) records 55,219 confirmed deaths in 2015, decreasing from the 2014 value of 76,021, but notes the challenge of accounting for large proportions of missing peoples and other undocumented deaths.<sup>7</sup> Our spotlight *The Rise and Fall of ISIS* (see pp. 155-172) takes a closer look at the dynamics of the Syrian conflict in an analysis of the rise and fall of ISIS. Other high-magnitude episodes of political violence take place in Turkey, which has been targeted by ISIS and Kurdish insurgent attacks; in Egypt, as a result of post-coup domestic unrest and the Egyptian military’s ongoing campaign in the Sinai Peninsula; in Palestine, due to their continued armed conflict with Israel (which didn’t meet the fatality threshold in 2015); and in Algeria, largely as a result of ongoing efforts to combat Islamic extremist insurgency groups in the country.

The conflicts in the MENA region have uprooted millions of people. The UNCHR registered a total of 13,933,650 people as internally displaced persons who remain within the borders of their home countries, while 2,739,554 refugees have fled the violence but remain within the region.<sup>8</sup> Others have fled the region entirely. The European Union estimates that 1,080,841 illegal migrants have been smuggled into Europe from the MENA region in 2015 alone.<sup>9</sup> The large-scale movement of people fleeing the horrors of war is placing a high burden on receiving countries and has undermined support for the core principle at the heart of the Schengen Agreement stipulating the free flow of capital, goods, services and people.

**The large-scale movement of people fleeing the horrors of war is placing a high burden on receiving countries and has undermined support for the core principle at the heart of the Schengen Agreement stipulating the free flow of capital, goods, services and people.**

The number of conflicts in Africa and Asia across the different types either increased, or remained largely similar in number. In Africa, however, the total number of all conflict cases increased from a total of 44 to 61 from 2014 to 2015. The surge of state-based violence as a result of mounting governmental efforts to combat efforts of ISIS and its affiliated groups in Libya, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Sudan and Nigeria is especially prominent here, with number of state-based conflicts increasing considerably from 11 recognized instances in 2014 to 19 in 2015. Other instances of state-based conflict in Africa include the conflict in Mali between the Malinese government and the Ansar Dine, the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) and various other Islamic extremist insurgency groups within the country;<sup>10</sup> armed confrontations in Niger where anti-Boko Haram operations led by their neighbors have spilled over its borders; Sudan, where government forces continue to clash with Sudan Revolutionary Front militants; and in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where efforts to combat the Allied Democratic Forces faction and the Lord’s Resistance Army are still ongoing.

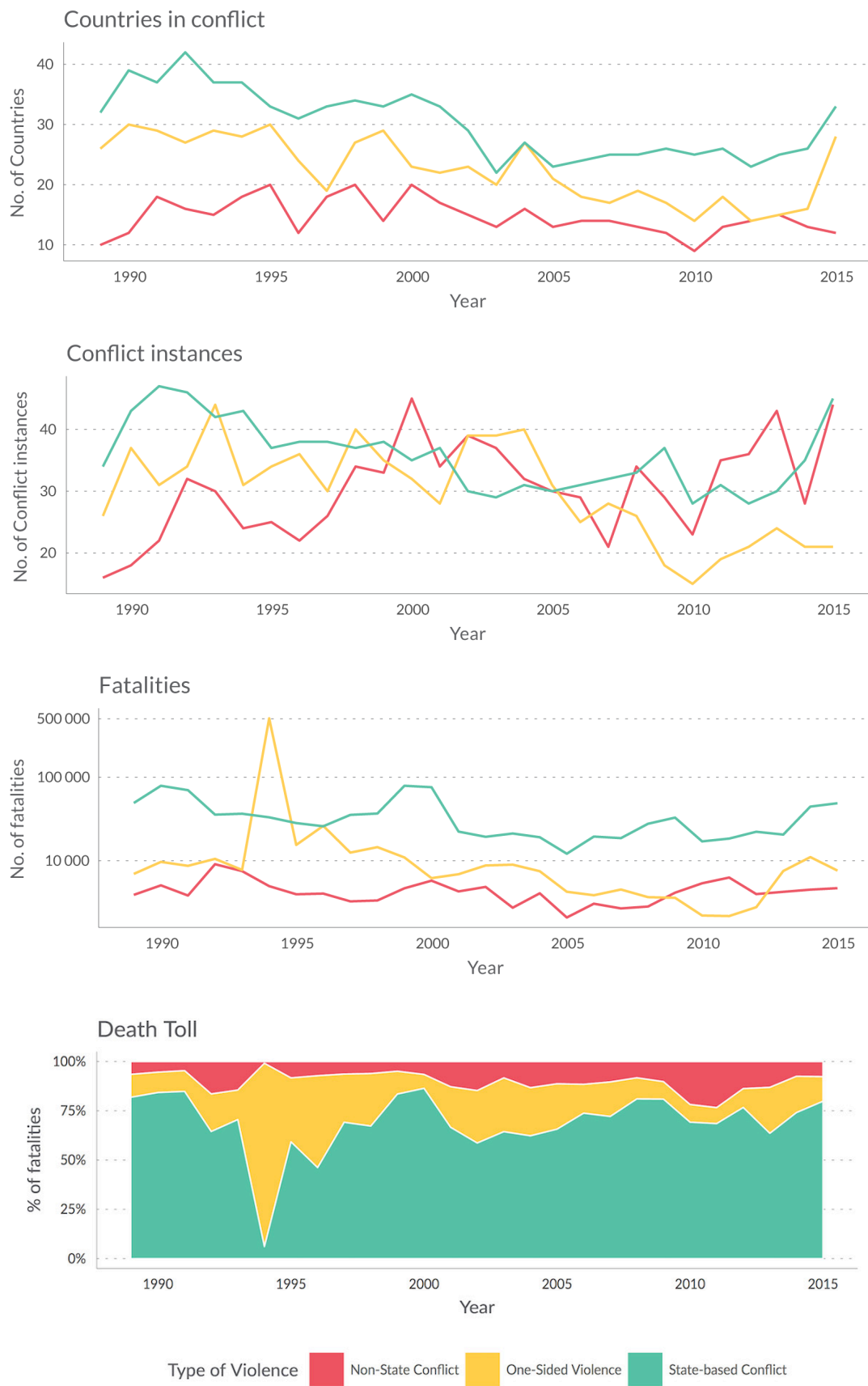
6. Julian Borger, “Eastern Aleppo Becoming ‘One Giant Graveyard’ Says UN Humanitarian Chief,” *The Guardian*, November 30, 2016, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/30/syria-aleppo-death-toll-united-nations-statistics>.

7. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, “76021 People Killed in Syria in 2014,” *Syrian Observatory For Human Rights*, January 1, 2015, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=8636>., The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, “Syria Is Still Bleeding ... 55219 Persons Were Killed during the Year of 2015,” *Syrian Observatory For Human Rights*, December 31, 2015, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=41779>. See also Mihai Croicu and Ralph Sundberg, “UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook Version 5.0” (Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2016), 9, <http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/ged/ucdp-ged-50-codebook.pdf>.

8. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015,” June 20, 2016, 60, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unhcrsharedmedia/2016/2016-06-20-global-trends/2016-06-14-Global-Trends-2015.pdf>

9. The Migration Policy Centre, “Migrant Crisis,” 2015, <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/migrant-crisis/>.

10. Dutch armed forces support the Malinese government as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

**Figure 4.1 Trends in conflict type frequencies and death tolls as a result of political violence, 1989-2015**

In terms of overall frequency, state-based conflict (19) and non-state violence (28) are the two most prominent types of conflict found on the African continent in 2015. Many countries experiencing state-based conflict were also suffering from one-sided violence in 2015, signifying an ongoing effort by African countries to suppress non-state actors. Ongoing civil wars in Africa, including those in Libya, Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia, are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, insurgency activities are rarely confined within formal state borders, with groups such as the Boko Haram often operating outside Nigeria's borders in neighboring countries such as Niger and Cameroon. This makes it especially challenging for state actors dealing with terrorist groups.

The majority of the 28 instances of non-state violence in Africa are fought between various factions that often coalesce around ethnic and religious lines.<sup>11</sup> The Central African Republic is experiencing instances of conflict fought along religious lines, with groups such as the Christian Anti-Balaka targeting Islamic insurgent groups assembled in the Séléka armed coalition. In Kenya, conflicts between the Pokot, Turkana and Samburu peoples feature ethnic dimensions too. Fighting between the Ansar Dine and the CMA in Mali, clashes between cultist groups such as the Black Axe Confraternity and various other ethnic groups in Nigeria, confrontations in South Sudan between the Dinka and Nuer peoples and infighting amongst various tribes within Sudan are other cases in point.

**The majority of the 28 instances of non-state violence in Africa are fought between various factions that often coalesce around ethnic and religious lines.**

There are currently 14 instances of one-sided violence ongoing in Africa, increasing from the 12 recognized instances in 2014. As stated before, the Islamic State and the Boko Haram are key terrorist actors whose operations in Africa have frustrated peace efforts. Other examples of armed groups targeting non-combatants can be found in Burundi, where state-led violence targeting Burundi civilians has continued after President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his intention to run for a contested third term; in Libya, Tunisia, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad, as a result of terrorist attacks by ISIS or Boko Haram; and in Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, due to violence committed by anti-governmental organizations such as the Democratic Front of the Central African People or the Lord's Resistance Army. The latter remains also active in South Sudan, whose government has recurrently targeted militants and citizens alike in its attempts to purge the country of conflict in recent months. The Sudanese government has also targeted civilians in the Darfur region. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab remains active in Somalia and Kenya and has targeted civilians in these countries. For further analysis of global trends in violent terrorism see Textbox on page 136.

In Asia, overall instances of political violence across the three types increased from 21 in 2014, to 27 in 2015. Here too, there was an upward trend in state-based violence climbing from 12 to 16 recorded cases in 2014 and 2015, respectively. Examples of state-based conflict are the ongoing violence between government and terrorist forces in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, terrorist and state-led violence in the Philippines and domestic clashes between the state and ethnic minority groups in Myanmar. Between 2014 and 2015 non-state violence cases increased from

**Examples of state-based conflict are the ongoing violence between government and terrorist forces in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, terrorist and state-led violence in the Philippines and domestic clashes between the state and ethnic minority groups in Myanmar.**

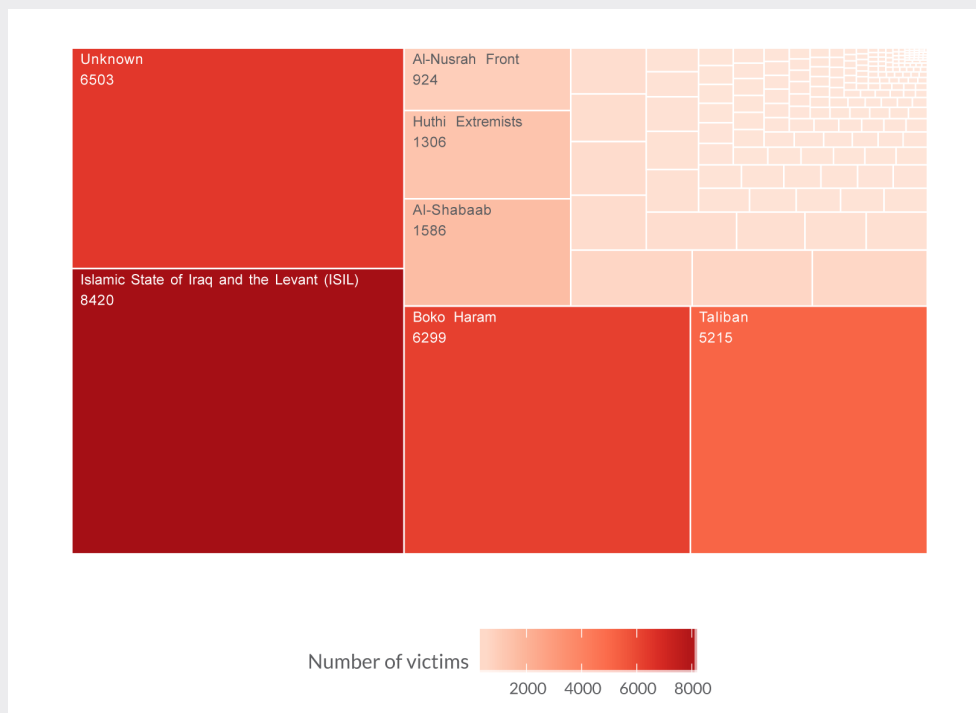
11. For the complexities of ethnic and religious violence, see Tim Sweijs, Jasper Ginn and Stephan De Spiegeleire, *Barbarism and Religion: The Resurgence of Holy Violence* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), [http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_StratMon\\_web\\_Religious\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_StratMon_web_Religious_Violence.pdf).

1 to 4, with new instances of conflict breaking out between ISIS and various Taliban factions in Afghanistan, while instances of non-state violence declined from 8 to 7, due to the curtailing of radical Buddhist violence targeting Islamic civilians in Myanmar. A number of conflicts have been sustained over long periods of time but did not exceed the fatality threshold of 25 this year. In India for instance, violent activities from organizations such as the Maoist Communist Party of India and other insurgent groups in north-east such as the People's Liberation Army in Manipur continued, but they fall outside the scope of our study.

#### Textbox 4.2 Violent Terrorism in 2015

Terrorism caused fewer deaths in 2015 but expanded geographically. Fatalities as a direct consequence of violent acts of terror decreased by ten percent from 32,765 to 29,376. This downward trend is mirrored by the number of deaths caused by the Islamic State – which went down from 9,348 in 2014 to 8,420 in 2015.<sup>1</sup> The decrease can be partially explained by the intensification of military operations which have successfully targeted terrorist organizations. At the same time there has been a trend towards the further transnationalization of terrorism. ISIS and affiliated organizations expanded their area of operations from 13 to 28 countries. Next to ISIS, Boko Haram the Taliban and Al-Shabaab were each responsible for more than 1,000 fatalities. The four organizations together account for 74 percent of all deaths. The number of countries experiencing more than 25 deaths increased to 34. Five countries accounted for 72 percent of all terrorist fatalities: Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria. There was a 650% increase of terror fatalities in OECD countries – from 77 deaths to 577. Overall, the Global Terrorism Index shows 76 countries performing better and 53 countries worse. The Global Terrorism Index overall score slightly decreased because of the large number of countries being hit by acts of terror that previously were free or largely free from terror, combining into an overall nuanced picture.<sup>2</sup>

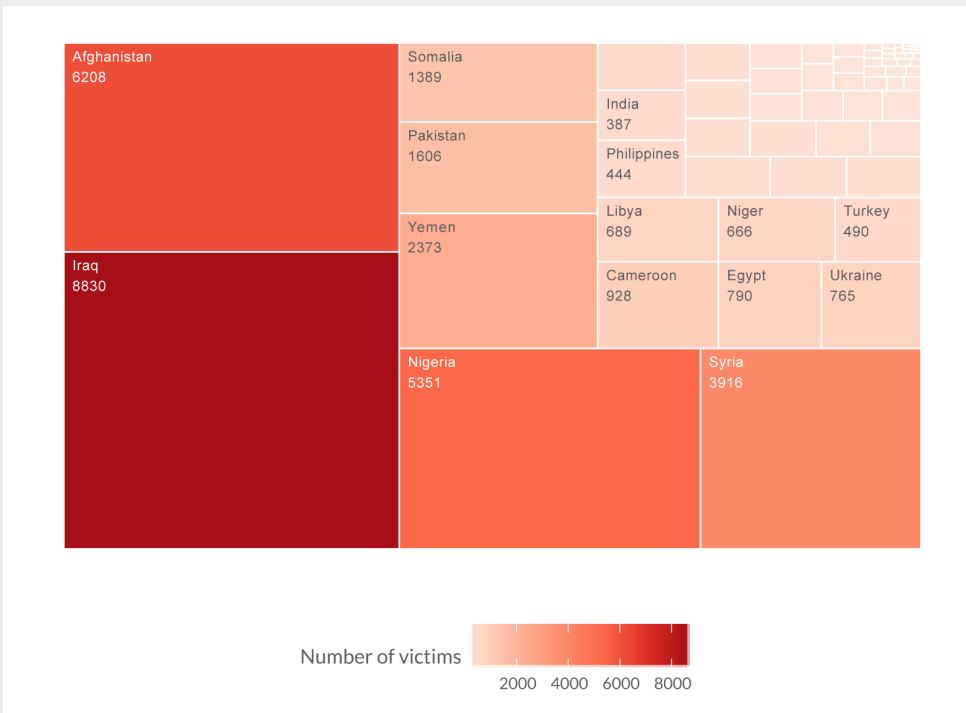
**Figure 4.2 Total number of fatalities as a result of terrorist violence in 2015, by organization**



1. GTD Data

2. The Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016 *Global Terrorism Index Report*.

Figure 4.3 Total number of fatalities as a result of terrorist violence in 2015, by country



The risk of inter-state violence is high in this region, given border disputes between India and Pakistan and Chinese maritime claims in the East and South China Sea, even if such inter-state tensions are not captured by the data. The India-Pakistan dispute, for instance, features intermittent episodes of lethal violence that again do not always meet the fatality threshold.<sup>12</sup>

The state of political violence in the Americas contrasts greatly to Asia and Africa as well as Europe. The risk of violent conflict spillover from Africa and Asia to the Americas is low because of its relative insulation. This risk is not non-existent however, as the 9/11 attacks vividly reminded us. Nevertheless, due to the bodies of water that separate the Americas from their continental peers, episodes of political violence there are more likely to be driven by particular dynamics native to the Americas, unlike in Europe where current episodes of political violence are catalyzed by civil wars occurring in the MENA region.

**The risk of violent conflict spillover from Africa and Asia to the Americas is low because of its relative insulation. This risk is not non-existent however, as the 9/11 attacks vividly reminded us.**

Drug-related violence in Mexico and the civil war in Colombia between the Colombian government and non-state militant groups are the principal episodes of political violence recorded in the Americas. In Mexico, ongoing clashes between competing drug cartels will likely continue to be a driver of non-state and one-sided violence against the civilian population, with the combination of the two causing 1,603 deaths in 2014 and 1,639 in 2015. The Colombian peace process culminated in a peace agreement with

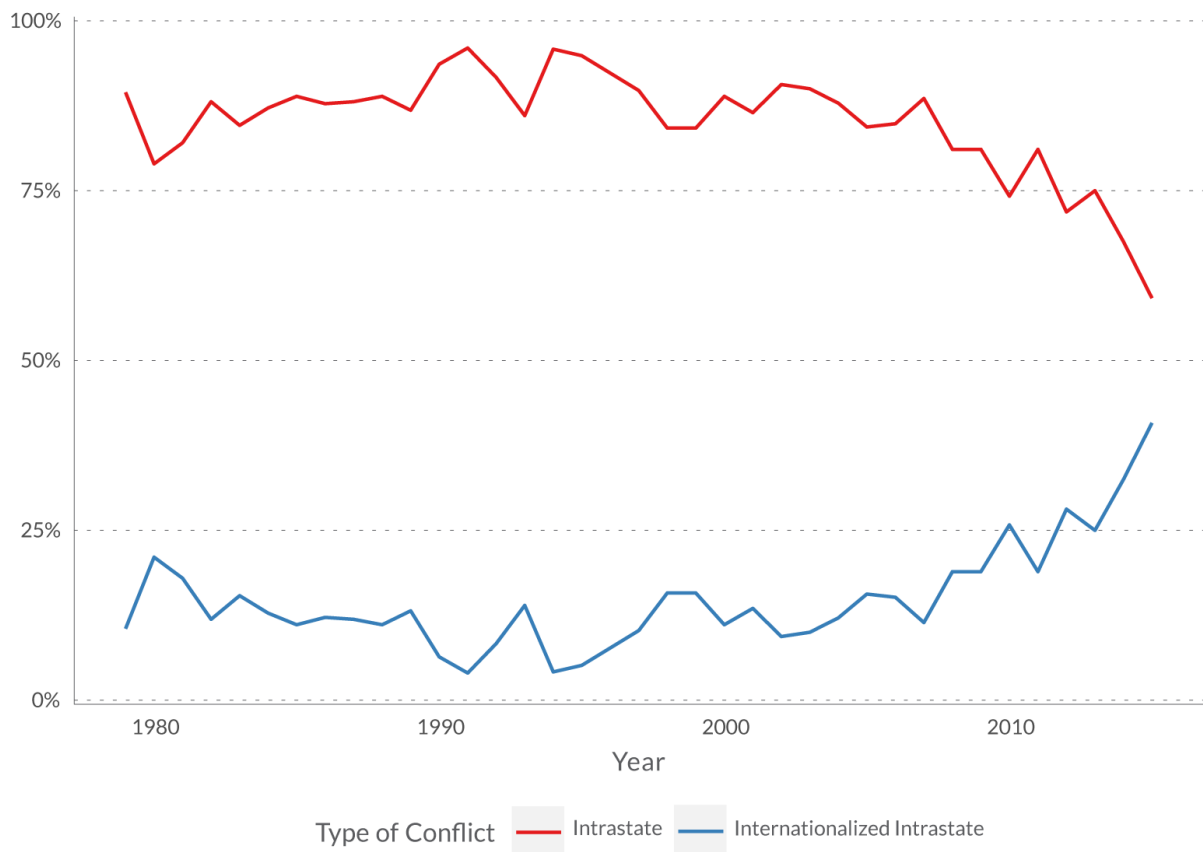
12. Haider Mateen and Imran Sadiq, "At Least 11 Killed as Indo-Pak Border Troops Exchange Fire," *Dawn News*, August 28, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1203398>., Diane Nongrum, "LoC Shelling: Indian, Pakistani Field Commanders to Meet on Monday," *India Today*, September 20, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/loc-shelling-indian-pakistani-field-commanders-to-meet-on-monday/1/478400.html>.



the FARC organization which was rejected by the population in October 2016, upsetting expectations of an imminent peaceful resolution to the decades-old conflict. This has resulted in a revised peace agreement which was approved by Colombia's Congress and passed on November 30th.<sup>13</sup>

Other kinds of violence that are not considered by political violence datasets such as the UCDP and PITF include domestic violence and gang violence. As a result countries in the region suffer from extreme rates of homicidal violence. The 2015 violent death per capita rates of Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador and Honduras were 16, 28, 64 and 75 per 100,000 population respectively.<sup>14</sup> The 2012 homicidal death rate for Venezuela was 72.2 per 100,000 population.<sup>15</sup> To put this in perspective, the world average homicidal death per capita rate was 5 per 100,000 population in 2015.<sup>16</sup> While the scale of violence in the most active conflict theaters is still considerably higher, it is clear that this is a real societal problem for the affected countries.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 4.4 Total instances of intrastate and internationalized intrastate conflict instances per year, displayed as proportion of total**



13. Al Jazeera News and Agencies, "Colombia's Congress Approves Revised Deal with FARC," *Al Jazeera*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/colombia-congress-approves-revised-deal-farc-161201040038062.html>.

14. The World Bank, "Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)," *The World Bank*, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5>. see also David Gagne, "InSight Crime's 2015 Latin America Homicide Round-Up," January 14, 2016, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/insight-crime-homicide-round-up-2015-latin-america-caribbean>.

15. The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, "Press Release: Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts," May 8, 2015, [http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/GBAV3/GBAV-III-Press-Release-English\\_01.pdf](http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/GBAV3/GBAV-III-Press-Release-English_01.pdf).

16. The World Bank, "Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)."

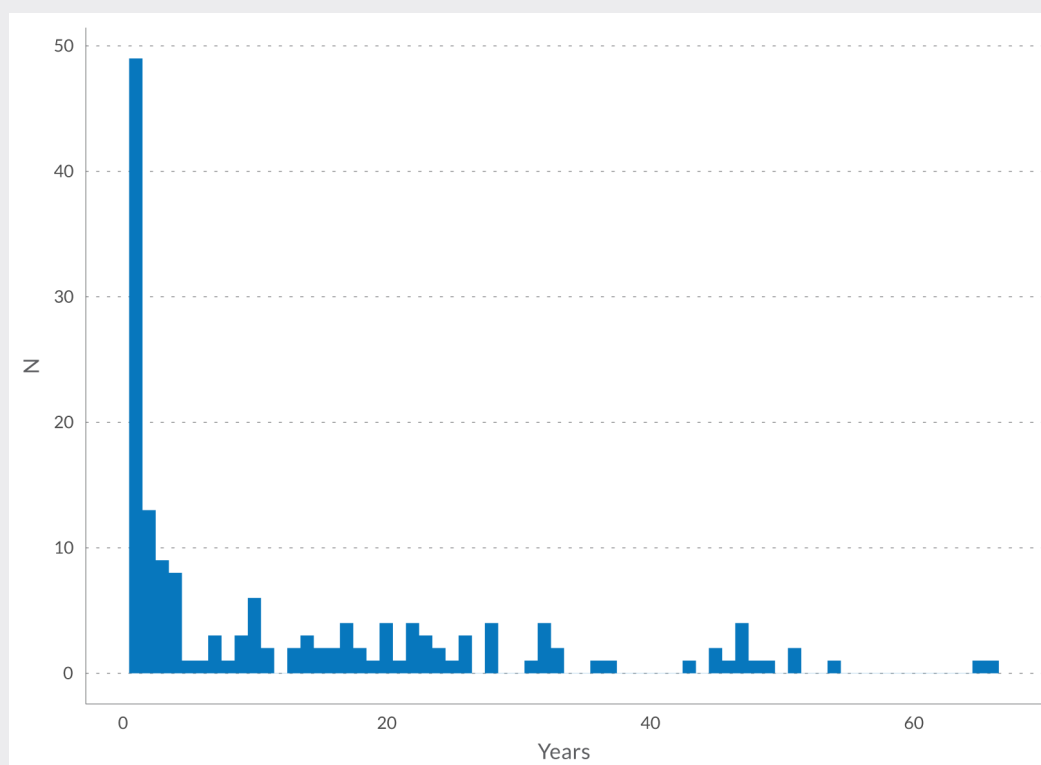
17. Fatality figures from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights would put the per capita death rate in Syria at 298 per 100,000 in 2015. Assuming a 2015 Syrian population value of 18,502,413, as estimated by the World Bank. See The World Bank, "Syria: Population, Total," *The World Bank*, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=SY>.

### Textbox 4.3: When does the Violence Stop? The Duration of Civil Wars in Perspective

The world looked on anxiously this year as the Yemeni Civil War dragged into its second year and the Syrian Civil War into its sixth, wreaking ever greater destruction on their host societies. The complexity of these conflicts that feature a plethora of actors with diametrically opposed interests is daunting. For these and many other civil wars, the dynamics on the ground are constantly evolving, making it difficult to predict how long these civil wars will last and when the violence is finally likely to stop. We know that a civil war typically ends either as a result of one party being able to impose its will on the other(s), or once it has reached a certain state of *ripeness*.<sup>1</sup> This state is reached when none of the parties expect a satisfactory battlefield solution to come about and all are therefore ready to sit down and find a political solution. Conflict *ripeness* varies from case to case and from moment to moment. It goes beyond the scope of this report to analyze which of the ongoing conflicts are near that state and which may therefore potentially conclude soon. But we can learn something about the duration of civil wars by looking at the historical record and how long they have typically lasted in recent history.

Between 1946 and 2015, excluding ongoing wars, the UCDP/PRIO dataset records 158 cases of internal or internationalized internal conflicts.<sup>2</sup> The average civil war duration is approximately 13 years. 49 (31%) wars are concluded within one year. 31 (20%) instances of civil wars last 1-5 years. 14 (9%) instances of civil war last 6-10 years and 64 (40%) instances last over 11 years.

Figure 4.5 Number of UCDP/PRIO-recorded civil wars by duration

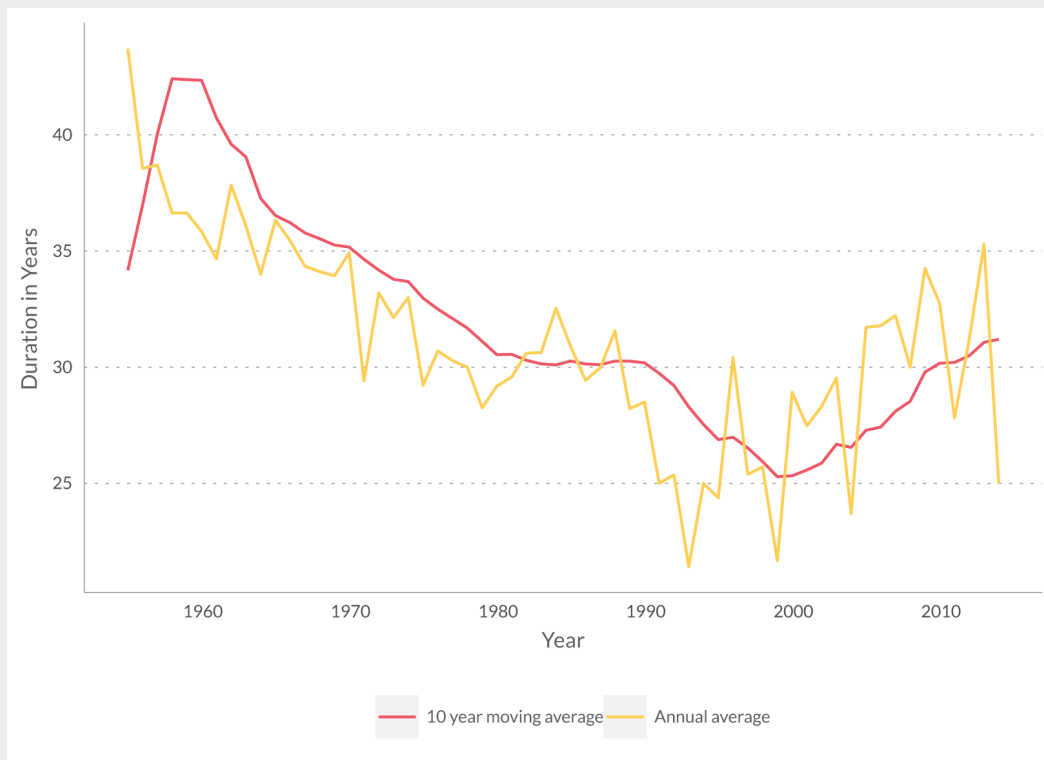


1. I. William Zartman, "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and beyond," *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War*, 2000, 225–50.

2. We excluded ongoing instances of civil wars as recorded within the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset. Two types of conflict suit the definition of "civil war" in this dataset, namely: *internal armed conflict*, which occurs between the government of a state and one or more internal opposition group(s) without intervention from other states and *internationalized internal armed conflict*, which occurs between the government of a state and one or more internal opposition group(s) with intervention from other states on one or both sides. See Lotta Themnér, "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook: Version 4-2015" (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2015), [http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/124/124920\\_1codebook\\_ucdp\\_prio-armed-conflict-dataset-v4\\_2015.pdf](http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/124/124920_1codebook_ucdp_prio-armed-conflict-dataset-v4_2015.pdf). An analysis of civil war duration based upon the Correlates of War Project dataset was also carried out and can be provided upon request.

Once a civil war lasts longer than 2 years, the average duration is 21 years. Once a civil war lasts longer than 5 years, the average duration is 25 years. The average civil war duration fell from its peak of roughly 45 years in the 1960s to a low of 25 in the late 1990s, but has since again begun to rise. The decline in the average duration in the 1990s can be attributed to the gradual emergence of the post-Cold War world order, making the waging of proxy wars and covert support of local insurgency groups less common.<sup>3</sup> This trend has since reversed.

**Figure 4.6 Changes in UCDP-recorded civil war durations over time**



Greater foreign involvement in civil wars tends to prolong their duration although the relationship is not unequivocal. In 12 civil war cases involving two countries, 8 cases involving three countries and 5 involving four or more, the average duration of civil war instances increases to 12.5, 22.5 and to 25 years respectively. This effect can be attributed to a number of factors. As more countries become involved in a civil war, strategic objectives become more challenging to achieve due to differences across their respective war aims or strategic interests. The risk of conflict prolongation is especially high in instances in which foreign support is given to opposing military actors involved in a given state-based conflict.<sup>4</sup> If anything, this does not bode well for the ongoing civil wars in the MENA and Sahel regions.

3. See Ann Hironaka, *Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States and the Perpetuation of Civil War* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

4. Hironaka reports that "conflicts in states such as Angola, for instance, which receive intervention on both sides and by the superpowers (actually, in the case of Angola, superpowers intervened on both sides) will be 538 percent longer on average than a civil war without any intervention." See *Ibid.*, 51. See also Frederic S. Pearson, "Foreign Military Interventions and Domestic Disputes," *International Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (September 1974): 259, doi:10.2307/2600156, and Patrick M. Regan, "Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002): 55–73.

Despite growing risks of conflict contagion and spillover, ongoing conflicts today remain largely confined within specific states, with the majority of conflicts being fought between local state and non-state actors. Based on calculations using UCDP data, 59% of current conflicts are intrastate, while 41% have already been internationalized as a result of foreign intervention, a quadrupling since the beginning of this century (see Figure 4.6<sup>18</sup>). The effects of contagion are very visible in the MENA region as well as in Africa, where porous borders have complicated efforts to combat insurgency groups and have contributed to the political instability of states at the receiving end. For Europe, spillover effects today most prominently manifest themselves in the forms of isolated instances of one-sided violence and seismic migratory flows moving towards its borders. Further conflict contagion is a real risk though, as the spread of violence in recent years shows. Addressing conflict contagion and spillover through the effective containment of ongoing conflicts, alongside conflict resolution and subsequent stabilization efforts, will prove to be instrumental in preventing the further proliferation and regionalization of political violence in at-risk countries throughout the world.

**Addressing conflict contagion and spillover through the effective containment of ongoing conflicts, alongside conflict resolution and subsequent stabilization efforts, will prove to be instrumental in preventing the further proliferation and regionalization of political violence in at-risk countries throughout the world.**

### 4.3 Hotspots of Violence: from this Year to Next Year

Given the human cost of political violence and the mounting risk of conflict spillover into neighboring countries and regions, it is crucial not only to contain and stabilize ongoing conflicts, but also to prevent the onset of new conflicts. Strategic early warning of countries at risk can inform strategic early action. Here we present our short- and long-term violence risk outlooks on the basis of forecasting models we have developed in-house.

#### 4.3.1 Forecasting Country Risk of Violent Conflict Onset in 2017-2018: a Long-Term Approach

We distinguish between a long-term and a short-term political violence risk outlook. For the long-term outlook, we replicated a number of state-of-the-art political violence risk assessment models that each rely on different forecasting methods.<sup>19</sup> These models consider various structural characteristics of countries, including, but not limited to, levels of socio-economic development, the demographic make-up and the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system. The typically slowly changing factors that they consider are measured on an annual level, while recent events – sometimes referred to as dynamic data – are not taken into account. Therefore, while such political violence risk models identify countries that are at heightened risk of conflict, they are not designed to predict the timing of conflict onset. Using this approach, we identify a top 20 of countries with

18. Figure 4.6 uses UCDP/PRIO data as the definitions of conflict type used by the UCDP GED dataset do not recognize internationalized intrastate conflicts. For a complete definition of the UCDP/PRIO conflict types see Footnote 21. See also Themnér, "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook: Version 4-2015."

19. In our work we have found that leveraging a combination of different forecasts often yields more accurate and more consistent predictions than single forecasts. This is in line with a large body of evidence in the forecasting literature, both in the economic and the political realm. The notion of multiperspectivism lies at the heart of our foresight approach which we use in our analyses for the StratMon as well as other Strategic Futures' work. Details regarding the varying conceptual and methodological approaches of the models used can be found in Usanov, A. and Sweijts T., *Models versus rankings: forecasting political violence* (forthcoming) and Röö, H., Sweijts T., Usanov, A., and Farnham, N., *Improving the early warning function of civil war onset models using automated event data* (forthcoming).

the highest risk of violent conflict onset in the coming year. Please note that countries currently in conflict are excluded (see Figure 4.7).

**Figure 4.7 Top 20 countries at risk of violent conflict onset in 2017 (countries in the top 10 are colored)**

Country	Bleaney & Dimico	Rost	JRC	PITF	Average Rank
Chad	4	NA	8	1	1
Bangladesh	3	2	4	20	2
Angola	10	16	12	3	3
Guinea	6	5	26	5	4
Cameroon	2	9	24	8	5
Burundi	15	1	18	11	6
Ivory Coast	9	11	31	4	7
Tanzania	1	18	21	16	8
Niger	8	4	7	39	9
Zimbabwe	14	7	37	7	10
Tajikistan	11	10	25	22	11
Togo	13	6	40	12	12
Eritrea	NA	NA	10	27	13
Haiti	32	29	19	2	14
Nepal	17	23	20	24	15
Congo Brazzaville	28	3	27	28	16
Mauritania	NA	NA	35	9	17
Mozambique	5	12	32	40	18
Iran	NA	NA	22	25	19
Kenya	16	24	1	55	20

The countries in the top 20 are largely located in continental Africa, with the exception of Bangladesh, Haiti, Iran, Nepal and Tajikistan. In contrast, our model finds no European country to be at high risk of violent conflict.<sup>20</sup> Other regions that contain medium-to-high risk countries are South

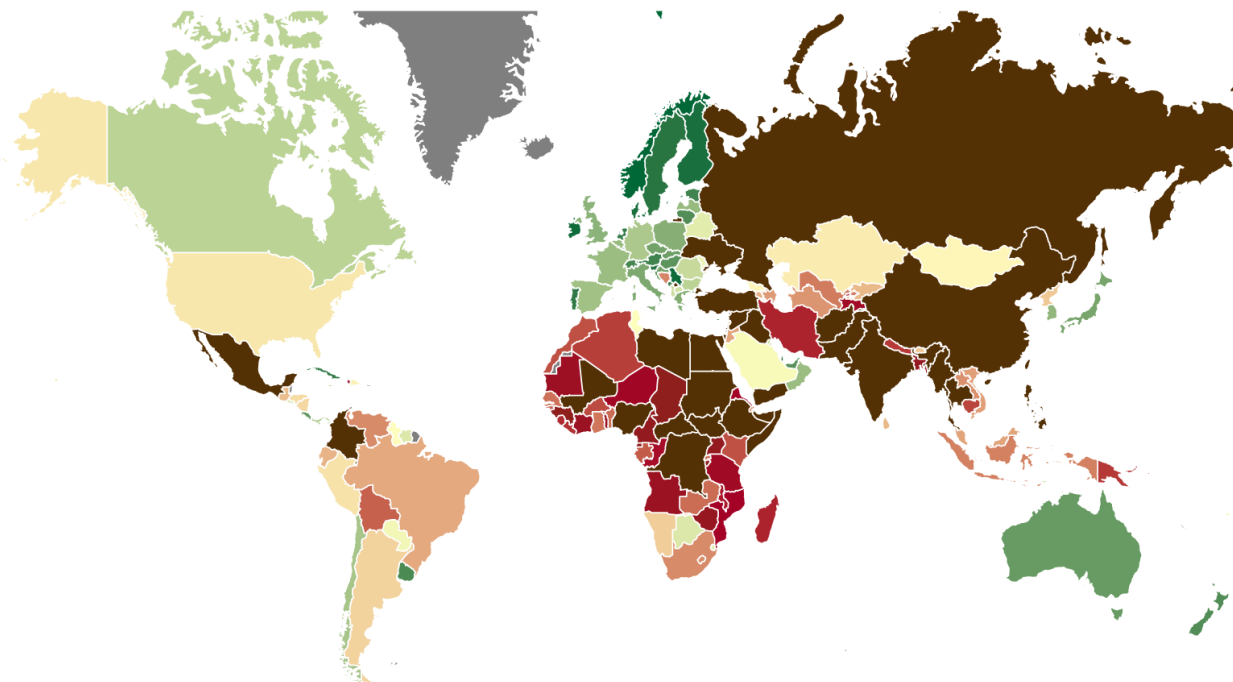
20. It is important to note that such models typically have troubles picking up low level violence in developed democracies. See also Douglas M. Gibler, "Combining Behavioral and Structural Predictors of Violent Civil Conflict: Getting Scholars and Policymakers to Talk to Each Other," *International Studies Quarterly*, September 30, 2016, sqw030, doi:10.1093/isq/sqw030.



and Southeast Asia and South America. The highest political violence risk is concentrated in Africa, more specifically in the Sub-Saharan region, with 14 out of the 20 total countries on the list situated there. Sub-Saharan countries are even more dominant among the top 10, with Bangladesh being the only non-African country in this bracket (see Figure 4.7).

In addition to geography, another feature shared by the high-risk countries is that a majority of them have experienced some form of state-based, or non-state violence in the last two decades. Another similarity is socio-economic underdevelopment, with 11 out of the 20 countries classified by the World Bank as low income countries (gross national income (GNI) per capita less than US\$1,000).<sup>21</sup> In addition, 6 other countries in this table only narrowly escape the low-income classification and have a GNI per capita below \$2,000. Out of the identified countries, only Angola and Iran can be considered solidly middle-level income (upper middle income group according to the World Bank).

**Figure 4.8 Average risk of violent conflict onset in 2017-2018 displayed by country**



The following factors were determined to be major drivers of risk of violent conflict onset in countries at the highest risk of violent conflict onset in 2017-2018: the level of economic development (GDP per capita, or infant mortality), political regime type, ethnic fractionalization and levels of state repression or discrimination. Other factors that were found to be important in some models are the history of conflict in a given country, conflict status in neighboring states and the abundance of natural resources (in particular oil). What is clear though, is that while many of these countries share a general vulnerability to the onset of conflict, there are

The following factors were determined to be major drivers of risk of violent conflict onset in countries at the highest risk of violent conflict onset in 2017-2018: the level of economic development (GDP per capita, or infant mortality), political regime type, ethnic fractionalization and levels of state repression or discrimination.

21. The World Bank, "World Bank Country and Lending Groups," *The World Bank*, 2016, <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>.

different pathways that lead to conflict based on a given country's specific national characteristics. The following country text boxes explore underlying drivers of various countries' political violence onset risks with regard to domestic factors and how these increase their vulnerability to state- and non-state based conflict onset and one-sided violence in 2017-2018.

#### **Textbox 4.4 The Mechanisms of Forecasting: Improving Forecasting Model Accuracy Using Automated Event Data**

Assessing the risk of new onsets of political violence is difficult for a variety of reasons. One of them is the fact the path to conflict differs from state to state. Another is that these are relatively rare events. Since 2000, there have been 24 onsets of civil war in countries that at the time did not suffer from political violence. The two years with the most onsets were 2004 (Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and Yemen) and 2011 (Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Libya, Syria). The conflict and political violence risk assessment literature focuses mostly on building annual models that assess the risk of conflict onset using structural factors such as the level of socio-economic development, regime type or size of the country. While these long-term models are useful for policymakers because they inform early preventive action, they have two considerable caveats: 1) they don't take into consideration current events and their implications to risks of political violence and 2) much of the data used to feed these models feature significant time lags before they become available.

To overcome those issues, we changed the timeframe of our related structural indicators from annual to monthly and complemented the models with two types of data available with minimum lags and high relevance. These included automated event data of the number of cooperative or conflictual events occurring in countries, the level of rebel and separatist activity, state coercion, as well as food prices. Also important is that countries are susceptible to a contagion effect of violence in neighboring countries, which our short-term model takes into account. We estimated a statistical model which used structural data from two years prior, in combination with event and food price data from the previous month. We used this model to assess the risk of civil war onset for the next month for countries not currently involved in civil war. We trained our model on data from 1979 to 1999 (*in sample*) and then tested their predictive accuracy on the period 2000 to 2015 (*out of sample*). We found that adding these indicators substantially increased the predictive power of our models by allowing us to better differentiate between countries at high and low risk of civil war onset. For example, we found that 18 of the 21 (85%) onsets since 2000 occurred in the top quartile of our risk assessment and 12/21 (57%) onsets occurred in the top 10%. All civil war onsets occurred in the top two quartiles of our risk assessment.



## CHAD

Having long suffered from issues regarding political corruption, and episodes of political violence, **Chad**'s internal stability has become increasingly perilous in the face of rising insurgency groups and risk of conflict spillover from its neighbors, namely Sudan and Libya. Further instabilities in neighboring states, such as the Central African Republic, Mali, and Nigeria, have also adversely affected Chad's political and economic state. While it is a key state actor in ongoing counter-terrorism operations in Africa, its history of political violence, geographical proximity to various conflict zones, and political instability limit its ability to lessen tensions within its own borders, and all contribute to its overall risk of civil war onset in 2017. Its current, fragile political situation and vulnerability to nearby insurgency groups leaves them vulnerable to onset of one-sided violence and state-based conflict.



## HAITI

**Haiti**'s ability to solve its humanitarian crises has been hamstrung by political stalemates and legislative inefficiencies. Lingering effects of the 2010 earthquake, the subsequent widespread cholera outbreak and the recent destruction caused by Hurricane Matthew in October 2016 has left Haitian people devastated and with no tools on hand to sufficiently address them. Political inaction, economic stagnation and disproportionate levels of poverty have also led to growing internal unrest and contribute to Haiti's high risk of state-based conflict onset in 2017.

## NEPAL



**Nepal** remains in the process of recovering from a series of earthquakes that rocked the nation during April and May 2015, yet the country has still not found stable footing as its government struggles to address the widespread domestic discord. Despite having experienced frequent episodes of political violence and an instance of civil war in recent years, various ethnic minority groups still remain politically and constitutionally marginalized and have virtually no representation on a state level. The repression of minorities and instability of the political climate in Nepal leaves it at risk of state-based conflict onset in 2017.

## BANGLADESH



The state of democracy in **Bangladesh** has come under intense international criticism since the Bangladesh Nationalist Party boycotted the national elections in 2014. Since then, the incumbent Awami League government has repressed public assemblies and other oppositional political and media actors. Abuses of power by national security and police forces, suppression of religious and ethnic minorities and a growing Rohingya refugee population along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border also contribute to internal tensions that in turn lead to a higher risk of non-state and state-based conflict onset in 2017.

## IRAN



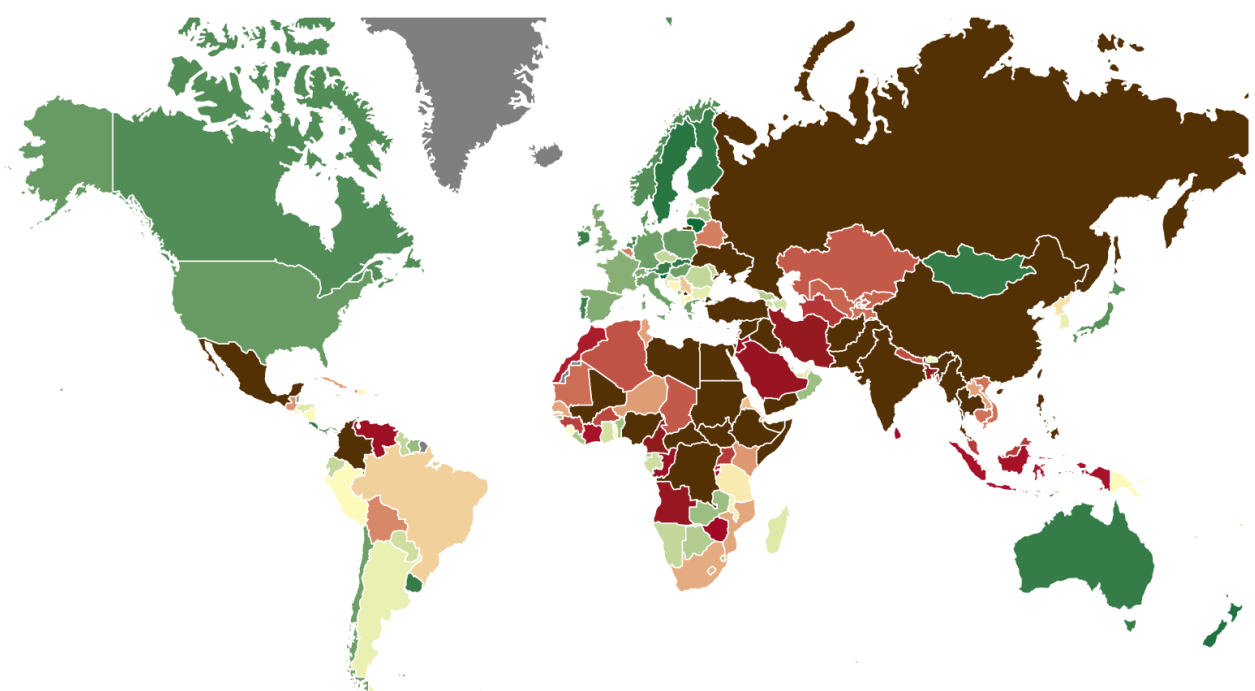
**Iran** is subject to international criticism concerning its authoritarian political structure, and state repression of oppositional actors. A Shi'a majority nation, Iran's position of relative stability is also challenged by its bordering conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and the rise of Sunni extremism. Iran's authoritarian mode of governance, continued repression of political dissidents, and geographical proximity to conflict areas all lead to a heightened risk of state-based conflict and one-sided violence episode onset in 2017.

#### 4.4 Forecasting Country Risk of Violent Conflict Onset: Short-Term Models

The probability of civil war onset can be predicted using various structural factors. However, these alone do not sufficiently rationalize most instances of political violence. For those violent risks to materialize, a ‘spark’ or a ‘trigger’ is needed, which can come in the form of a sudden rise in food prices, a violent government crackdown on a peaceful demonstration or the assassination of a leading political figure. The demonstrations that marked the beginning of the Arab Spring were initially triggered by the December 2010 self-immolation of a street vendor in Tunisia. While the underlying drivers of conflict were present in this case, it was the triggering event that put things in motion. In order to increase our ability to gauge the probability of conflict onset, we need to consider both structural factors and triggering events in their combination. We have done that by feeding our ‘structural’ models with automated event data. This allows us to detect such events and accurately adjust the political violence onset risk of a given country accordingly. It also considerably boosts the accuracy of risk assessments with shorter term horizons. Textbox 4.4 provides more information on the mechanisms of forecasting. Textbox 4.5 explains how the incorporation of automated event data in risk forecasting models can increase accuracy using the Arab Spring as a case study.

Similar to the findings of our long-term risk forecasting model, Figures 4.9 and 4.10 demonstrate that most identified nations at short-term risk of violent conflict onset are located within Africa and Asia. However our incorporation of event data into our short-term model places several European countries, such as Belgium and Belarus, at medium short-term risk of violent conflict onset. The inclusion of event data allows our short-term model to account not only for factionalist tensions within a given country, but also for the activity of radical groups, which places Belgium as the only Western European nation at medium risk of experiencing some form of violence.

**Figure 4.9 Short-term risk of violent conflict onset displayed by country (as of January 2017). Risk scale is from green (low) to red (high), with countries in conflict displayed in brown. Countries with a population less than 500,000 are displayed in gray.**

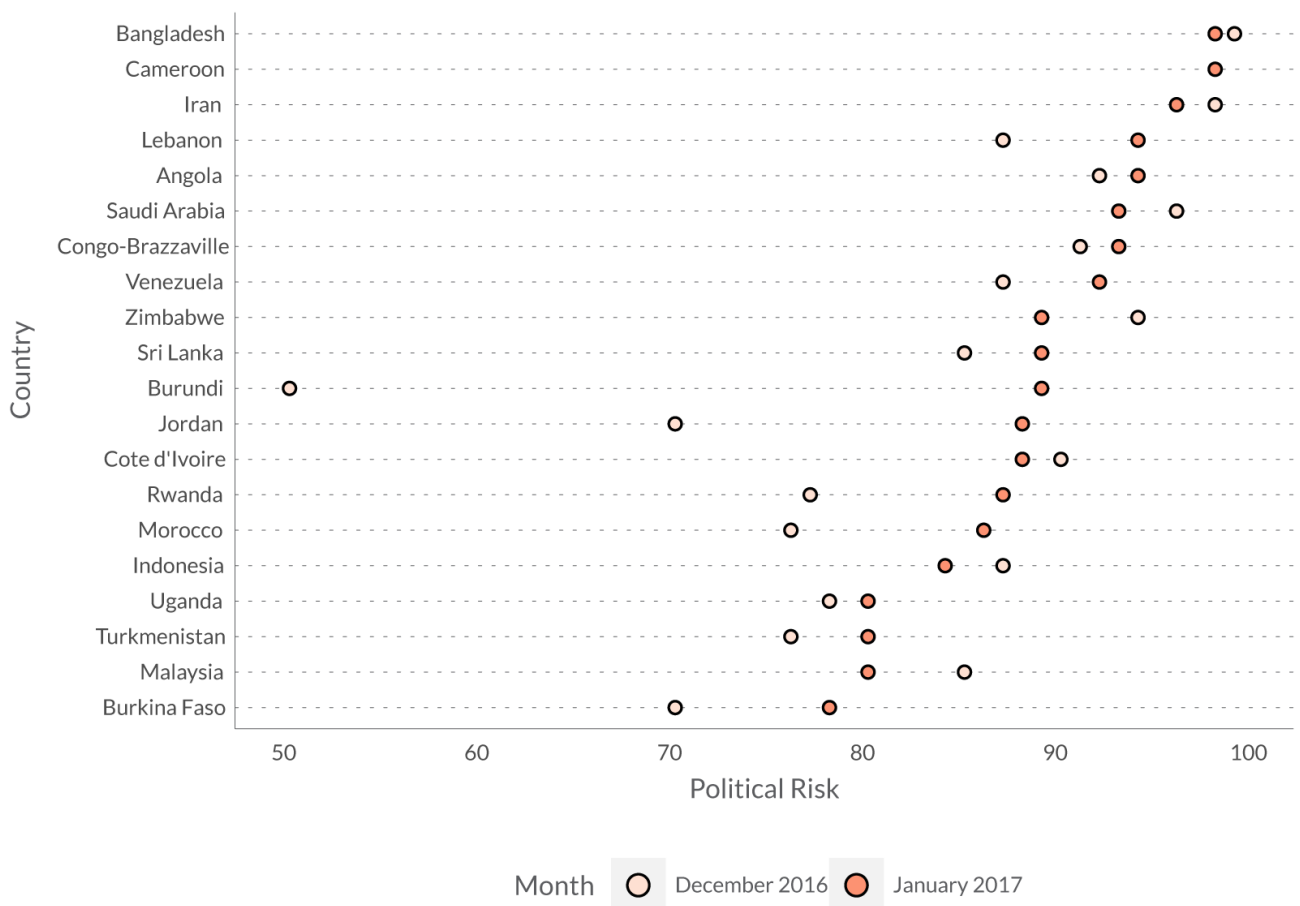




As our short-term model incorporates short-term indicator data on a monthly basis in addition to the yearly values yielded by our long-term model, we can not only judge a given country's general risk state, but can also quantify how sudden changes or 'sparks' (measured through event data) can amplify country risk on a short-term horizon. The geographical distribution of violent conflict onset risk as determined by our short-term model are displayed in Figure 4.9.

The high concentrations of violent conflict onset risk in the MENA region, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia are indicative of the political instability presently found in these regions. Overall, the security forces of countries that suffer the greatest risk of violent conflict onset are typically engaged in activities aimed to minimize their risks of political violence. Many of these countries suffer from (potential) political infighting, either between the state and insurgency or oppositional actors. Also, the incorporation of state coercion or force posture indicators demonstrate how violent conflict onset risk of countries within, or in close proximity to conflict zones are affected. For example, as police or military alert statuses are raised in response to a nearby threat, risk of political violence episode onset rises accordingly. This indicator sensitivity is useful for countries such as Iran, Indonesia and Algeria, who all face public security threats due to terrorism, conflict spillover, or public demonstration risks.

**Figure 4.10 Top 20 Countries at short-term risk of violent conflict onset (as of January 2017)**

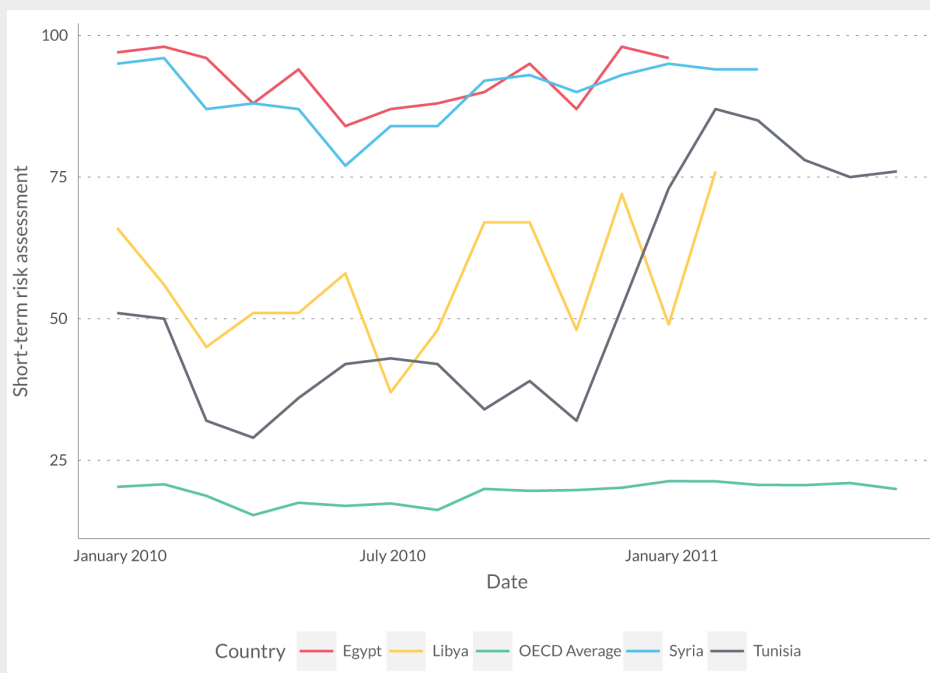


#### Textbox 4.5 The Arab Spring: Increasing Short-Term Forecast Accuracy Using Automated Event Data

Our long-term forecasting model – which does not include automated event data among its indicators – was not particularly effective at forecasting the Arab Spring. However our short-term models accurately assessed significantly higher risks in the involved regions in the months leading to political violence instance onsets.

Our short-term model constantly put Syria and Egypt in the top quartile of risk in the years of 2010 and 2011 (see Figure 4.11). In Egypt, the risk peaked at the 98th percentile in December 2010 and it remained at a very high level (96th percentile) in January 2011 when the Egyptian Revolution began. Syria was in the top 10% of risk assessment in the months leading up to the start of Syrian Civil War. The models also showed increased risk in countries like Tunisia, which came close to a political violence onset but ultimately managed to avoid it. Adding the OECD average risk assessment shows that OECD member states were on average in the 20th percentile for the observed period of 18 months (start of 2010 until mid-2011).

**Figure 4.11 Short-term risks of civil war onset in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Tunisia in months prior to their Arab Spring revolutions**



In contrast to the findings of the long-term forecasting model, here Mongolia and some African countries such as Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania have improved risk levels of violent conflict onset. While their yearly structural data puts them at medium-to-high risk of violent conflict onset in 2017 (see Figure 4.8), short-term fluctuations in their country risk status (as measured by event data) are less severe and skew their risk downwards as a result. Overall, concentrations of violent conflict onset

**Overall, concentrations of violent conflict onset risk cluster in Central and Southeast Asia, while the greatest concentration remains in Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region.**

risk cluster in Central and Southeast Asia, while the greatest concentration remains in Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region.

Bangladesh stands out in both our short-term and long-term models as a country at risk of civil war onset. Bangladesh scores consistently high on its level of activity of rebel or separatist groups, activity of radical groups and state coercion levels. Radical political polarization, oppressive governmental measures, the restriction of social and civil freedoms, episodes of violence at the hands of national police and security forces and the intimidation and oppression of ethnic and religious minorities all leave Bangladesh prone to civil war onset in the short term. This is further compounded by the factionalist nature of Bangladesh's political system, as the risk of internal conflict is greatly heightened when two political actors of roughly equal size and popular support are subjected to increasing political polarization and violence across political schisms.

Several countries in South and West Africa (Congo, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Mauritania, Angola and Chad) also stand out as countries with high risk of violent conflict onset. Many of these countries were also identified by our long-term model and largely share similar structural issues that result in their inclusion in our risk of violent conflict forecasting model. Each of these countries are either factionalist partial democracies, or partial autocracies. Furthermore their sharing borders with countries currently involved in episodes of political violence heightens their risk of conflict spillover, consequently heightening their risk of violent conflict onset in the short term.

Similar to previous cases, Iran and Lebanon are – respectively – cases of partial autocratic or factionalist partial democratic states that are at high risk of civil war onset in the short term. Their susceptibility to political violence is further aggravated by ongoing regional conflicts. Wars in Afghanistan and Syria are at risk of spilling over borders and have already resulted in an influx of refugees seeking asylum after being displaced from their homes in conflict areas. Issues regarding political representation, inadequate observation of human and civil rights and freedoms, legacies of recent instances of military conflict and war and the persecution of social and religious minorities within these countries also heighten their risk of internal political conflict and risk of violent conflict onset in the short term.

**Wars in Afghanistan and Syria are at risk of spilling over borders and have already resulted in an influx of refugees seeking asylum after being displaced from their homes in conflict areas.**

#### **Textbox 4.6 The Netherlands' Stake in a Crisis-Stricken Venezuela**

Venezuela is an important at-risk country for Dutch national security interests because of its proximity to the 'overseas' Dutch countries and territories in the Caribbean. The situation in Venezuela is dire. High food prices, considerable corruption, the violent abuse of power by security and police forces and repressive actions taken towards public assemblies and media actors are sowing societal tension and fueling further popular dissatisfaction with the sitting government. Political tensions have remained high in Venezuela since the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013. In recent years, as a result of a poor economic performance and a rapidly devaluing Venezuelan bolivar, Venezuela, despite its oil riches, is facing a severe foodstuff crisis – bread and meat imports have decreased by 94% and 63% from last year, respectively. The IMF has predicted its economy to shrink by 10% by the end of 2016.<sup>1</sup> Venezuela's violent conflict risk has fluctuated over the past decade often putting it in the highest risk category. (see Figure 4.12 below)

1. Patrick Gillespie, "Venezuela Food Crisis Deepens as Shipments Plummet," *CNNMoney*, August 11, 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/08/11/news/economy/venezuela-food-shortages/index.html>.

**Figure 4.12** Changes in Venezuela's short-term and long-term risk of civil war onset between 2000 and 2016



Various events and dynamics have strained Dutch-Venezuelan relations in the past two decades. The Dutch government's political alignment with the United States – a longtime adversary to the Chavez and Maduro governments – has also further problematized its relationship with Venezuela. The poor state of bilateral relations reached a low in the summer of 2014 when Venezuelan official Hugo Carvajal was detained by Dutch authorities in Aruba over US accusations of drug-trafficking activities.<sup>2</sup> He was arrested on an American warrant after his appointment as consul to Aruba and subsequent arrival to the island country. After some debate regarding the validity of his diplomatic immunity, he was released from detainment by the Aruban government and returned to Venezuela. This decision was met with some degree of controversy, as the Venezuelan navy had deployed at least one war frigate near Aruba and Curaçao during Carvajal's detainment. It was later revealed that the Venezuelan government had also threatened to halt all flight connections between Venezuela and Aruba and Curaçao and withdraw a key oil contract signed between the government of Curaçao and its state-sponsored oil company, Petroleum of Venezuela.<sup>3</sup> While no event of similar magnitude involving the Netherlands and Venezuela has occurred since the Carvajal extradition affair, it remains a prime case demonstrating the influence of the Venezuelan government on economic and political affairs in the Caribbean and Dutch overseas countries and territories in particular. Due to its geographical proximity and subsequent risk to Dutch national security, the deteriorating domestic situation within Venezuela must be closely monitored in order to mitigate any adverse effects of a potential outbreak of violent conflict in Venezuela.

2. MercoPress, "Dutch Government Releases Former Venezuelan General Retained on DEA Request," *MercoPress*, July 28, 2014, <http://en.mercoPress.com/2014/07/28/dutch-government-releases-former-venezuelan-general-retained-on-dea-request>.

3. Kejal Vyas and José de Córdoba, "Aruba Says Venezuela Raised Military Pressure on It," *Wall Street Journal*, July 29, 2014, sec. World, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/aruba-says-venezuela-raised-military-pressure-on-it-1406594604>. Similarly controversial is Venezuela's Law of Control for Integral Air Space Defense that was approved in June 2012. Identified as "one of the preferred illegal drug trafficking routes, mostly for cocaine, from South America to the Caribbean region, Central America and the United States," Chavez moved to limit drug flows through Venezuela by legalizing the forcible disablement (i.e. shooting down) of unidentified aircrafts on suspicious flight paths moving through Venezuelan airspace. The measure has resulted in the downing or disabling of seven suspicious aircrafts in 2015 alone. U.S. Department of State, "Country Report: Venezuela," Report, 2015 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report INCSR (Department Of State. The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs., March 19, 2015), <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2015/vol1/239028.htm>. Javier Ignacio Mayorca, "Venezuela's Shoot-Down Policy Produces Mixed Results," *InSight Crime: Investigation and Analysis of Organized Crime*, July 7, 2016, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/venezuela-s-shoot-down-policy-produces-mixed-results>.

Saudi Arabia also has a very high risk of political violence due to proximity of civil wars in Syria and Yemen, very high discrimination levels, high state coercion and lively activity of radical Islamist groups. In fact, in the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset, which employs a broader definition of political violence, Saudi Arabia is already considered to be in conflict due to spillover from Yemen's Civil War.

The Central Asian nations of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are all either partial factional democracies, or partial autocracies with high levels of state-led discrimination. As former Soviet republics still remaining largely within Russia's sphere of influence, matters of political representation, coercive state actions and radical domestic activity continue to be considerable issues hindering their transition towards democratic rule. As a result, internal tensions, political and civil suppression of their respective populations and their proximity to conflict zones in Russia and South Asia exposes them to a higher violent conflict onset risk in the short-term.

While Burundi did not place high on our list of countries at greatest short-term risk of violent conflict onset immediately prior to January 2017, recent developments have dramatically elevated its position in our ranking. This change is in large part due to the heightened national security alert issued in response to the attempted assassination of presidential advisor Willy Nyamitwe on November 28.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Burundi President Nkurunziza hinted at the possibility of him running for a further fourth presidential term in 2020, sparking fears of a resurgence of severe political violence on the level of that which had been witnessed last year after Nkurunziza's pursuit of a third presidential term despite controversies regarding its constitutionality.<sup>23</sup> The Burundi government is also embroiled in ongoing political disagreements with both the African Union and the European Union on the grounds of military wage payment and aid-related issues. As a result of resurging political factionalism, its military involvement in neighboring, conflict-stricken Somalia, as well as the ongoing political and civil suppression of local political opposition actors, Burundi is at high short-term risk of violent conflict onset.

## 4.5 In Conclusion: the State of Violence

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Current trends in global violence are a cause for concern. Violence levels have continued their upward trajectory. An increasing number of societies is affected by one or multiple forms of violence. Total conflict deaths are down from last year but continue to be at historically high levels since 2004 and still exceed the one hundred thousand mark. Political violence is not equally spread out over the globe. Current violence clusters in MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa. Many of the ongoing conflicts are not constrained by national borders. A clear trend is the internationalization of intrastate conflict: the number of internationalized intrastate conflict as a percentage of all intrastate conflicts, has quadrupled since the beginning of this century. The majority of countries at risk of new conflict both in the long and the short term is also concentrated throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, a variety of intractable conflicts persist in Africa and Asia. Countries at risk include Chad, Angola, Guinea, Cameroon, Burundi and Ivory Coast in Africa and Iran, Tajikistan, Nepal and Bangladesh in Asia. The risk of inter-state conflict is particularly high in Asia due to the risk of escalation of territorial disputes between India and Pakistan and China and its neighbors. The fragile situation in Venezuela, meanwhile,

22. Pierre Emmanuel Ngendakumana, "Burundi: Willy Nyamitwe Assassination Attempt Worsens the Situation," *AllAfrica*, December 6, 2016, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201612060074.html>.

23. Isaac Mugabi, "Burundi: Mixed Reactions to Possible Fourth Term for Burundian President," *Deutsche Welle*, January 3, 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201701040075.html>.



poses a potential security risk to the Dutch countries and territories in the Caribbean.

The prognosis is especially troubling for Europe. At the same as it is increasingly embroiled in a Second Cold War with Russia, the majority of large-scale episodes of ongoing violence reside both within (Ukraine) and immediately outside its borders (MENA). The risk of further violence metastasizing into European countries in the form of lone wolf, or coordinated terrorist attacks in major cities, is real. This spillover effect has already begun as European capitals have been rocked by terrorist activity in recent times. Given the risks associated with further conflict contagion and the challenges posed by the massive influx of refugees fleeing from the MENA region, the need to contain the violence and address the larger risk drivers within the peripheral regions of Europe is paramount. Overall, for these reasons our outlook on global violence for the coming year is far from positive.







# The Rise and Fall of ISIS: from Evitability to Inevitability

## Introduction

No other development over the past 15 years better epitomizes the clash between and the merger of, modernity and tradition than the rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) or Daesh.<sup>1</sup> Appearing seemingly out of nowhere over the course of 2013-14, the organization captured the attention of international audiences through widely broadcast acts of barbarity, followed by the proclamation of its own state and upending state borders in the process. A longtime observer of Middle Eastern affairs, Patrick Cockburn, wrote that “[t]he birth of the new state is the most radical change to the political geography of the Middle East since the Sykes-Picot Agreement was implemented in the aftermath of the First World War.”<sup>2</sup> The rise of ISIS has prompted many questions: where did it originate from? How has it been able to establish itself so quickly? Can it actually persist? Can it be defeated? The aim of this study is to understand the organization, its motivations, its inherent weaknesses, as well as its ability to endure. A broader aim is to set out how it could develop as it comes under ever more pressure by regional powers and, in the case of its defeat, how to prevent the arrival of the next ISIS.

This chapter is structured in three sections. In the first section, we look at the origins of ISIS and how and why it came about, centering on the question: what were the circumstances that led to its rise? In the second section, we look at how ISIS sustains itself, how it governs itself, where it derives support from and what its long-term strategy is. In the final section, we look at its inherent weaknesses with regard to how they may provide clues for defeating the organization and how the rise of a successor can be prevented. A key message of this chapter is that ISIS is a ‘child of its time’ and is not destined to persist. Its professed millenarian or eschatological bent is meant to cast the conflict between the Caliphate and the rest of the world as a cosmic battle, but in reality is largely of instrumental value. Also, while its rise could have been prevented, its fall looks all but inevitable, even if it remains unclear what will replace it.

## The Origins of ISIS

To some observers, ISIS seemed to appear suddenly and out of nothing.<sup>3</sup> Granted, while the organization did not emerge in a linear fashion, it is clear that ISIS is a distinct product of its time, geography and circumstances: it grew out of the convulsions of the war in Iraq (2003-2011), the Arab revolutions (2010-present) and the civil war in Syria (2011-present). More broadly speaking, ISIS is the outgrowth of broader global trends of Islamization that stress the tensions between religiosity and modernity, compounded by an increase in Islamic militancy.

**ISIS is the outgrowth of broader global trends of Islamization that stress the tensions between religiosity and modernity, compounded by an increase in Islamic militancy.**

Understanding the rise of ISIS means needing to understand the historical context of the region. It is no accident that the movement’s ideology is based on seemingly obscure doctrines that find their

The authors gratefully acknowledge the contribution made by Nicola Khoury for providing input and quotations from publications in Arabic.

1. Upon proclamation of their own ‘state’, the organization has referred itself as ‘Islamic State.’ Daesh is the Arabic acronymic equivalent of ISIL: “*Ad-Dawlat Islamiyat fi Iraq wa al-Sham*”.

2. Patrick Cockburn, “Isis Consolidates,” *London Review of Books* 36, no. 16 (August 21, 2014): 3–5. See also Jason Burke, *The New Threat* (London: Penguin, 2015), 91.

3. Anonymous, *The Mystery of Isis* (New York, New York: The New York Review of Books, 2015).



origins in the early days of Islam itself, whose contemporary resonance is the result of the last 200 years of coming to terms with the modern world. Since the time of the invasion of Napoleon in Egypt up to World War I, thinkers and rulers in the Middle East had sought to bring Islam in tune with the modern age. Rather than rejecting Western notions of progress, there had been a genuine belief that Islam could be preserved as a cornerstone of society even in an age of secularism. This thinking was called the Nahda, or Arab renaissance.<sup>4</sup> However, the dealings of Western countries during and immediately following World War I proved to be a huge disappointment for Arab leaders, since promises of self-determination were never honored.<sup>5</sup> In various ways, the reputation of Western countries still suffer from the consequences of this monumental betrayal of the Arab cause. Many Muslims concluded that the West and its attendant values could not be trusted and that the solution was to seek renewal in the re-assertion of Islamic norms to guide Arab societies.

This created the backdrop for decades of tugs-of-war between nominally secular and nationalist regimes and Islamist movements across the Middle East. Three developments had a major impact on this dynamic and contributed to the contemporary rise of Islamic militancy. The first was the oil boom in the 1970s, allowing once poor desert states to adopt ways of life that Islamists found reprehensible and further involving western countries in Middle Eastern affairs.<sup>6</sup> Another key impetus came with the Iranian revolution in 1979, which showed that it was possible to found a state grounded in Islamic precepts.<sup>7</sup> Another seminal event came ten years later with the Soviet occupation and subsequent withdrawal from Afghanistan, which became the birthplace of Islamic militancy.<sup>8</sup>

Following the attacks of 9/11, the American government decided to launch military campaigns against al-Qaeda, the presumed author of the attacks, in Afghanistan and Iraq. While al-Qaeda was not on the ground in Iraq at the time of the U.S. invasion in 2003, the ensuing years of chaos provided it with an ideal breeding ground to metastasize and to increase its sway in Iraq and beyond.<sup>9</sup> The subsequent rise of ISIS has been precipitated by two fateful decisions on the part of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA): the de-Baathification of Iraq's government and dissolving the Iraqi army. These decisions sowed the seeds for Iraq's sectarian conflicts (2006-07) that pitted Sunnis against the Shia. The CPA's decision almost exclusively affected Iraq's Sunni population. The emerging standoff between Sunnis and Shia clearly played into the hands of al-Qaeda in Iraq which later became Islamic State of Iraq, or ISI. After 2010, various Sunni tribes in Iraq also began to support al-Qaeda affiliated Islamic State in Iraq (ISI, predecessor of ISIS) due to "systematic discrimination, marginalization and a series of broken promises" on the part of the government in Baghdad.<sup>10</sup>

It cannot be said that Western powers were not aware of the dangers of escalating instability in Iraq and Syria. A 2012 Pentagon report foresaw the possible rise of an organization such as ISIS: "If the situation unravels (...) this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime." And so, one observer concluded, "American intelligence saw ISIS coming

4. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1962).

5. James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle That Shaped the Middle East* (Simon and Schuster, 2011); Robin Wright, "How the Curse of Sykes-Picot Still Haunts the Middle East," April 30, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-the-curse-of-sykes-picot-still-haunts-the-middle-east>.

6. Burke, *The New Threat*.

7. Ben Smith, "ISIS and the Sectarian Conflict in the Middle East" (London: House of Commons, March 19, 2015).

8. Matthieu Rey and Loulouwa Al Rachid, *Les Racines de l'État Islamique*, interview by Marieke Louis, February 9, 2016, <http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Les-racines-de-l-Etat-islamique.html>.

9. However there are claims that meetings have taken place between senior officers from both Saddam his forces and AQ. See "Section 3.5 Development of UK Strategy and Options, September to November 2002 – The Negotiation of Resolution 1441," Chilcot Report, (n.d.), [http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/248176/the-report-of-the-iraq-inquiry\\_section-35.pdf](http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/248176/the-report-of-the-iraq-inquiry_section-35.pdf).

10. Burke, *The New Threat*, 74, 78.

and was not only relaxed about the prospect but, it appears, positively interested in it.”<sup>11</sup> However, in spite of the possibility that Western powers were at least inadvertently involved in the creation of what eventually became ISIS, “there is no need to prove malign intent on the part of the Western powers.”<sup>12</sup>

Still, there is general consensus that without the Iraq invasion in 2003 and what followed after, ISIS would not have existed today.

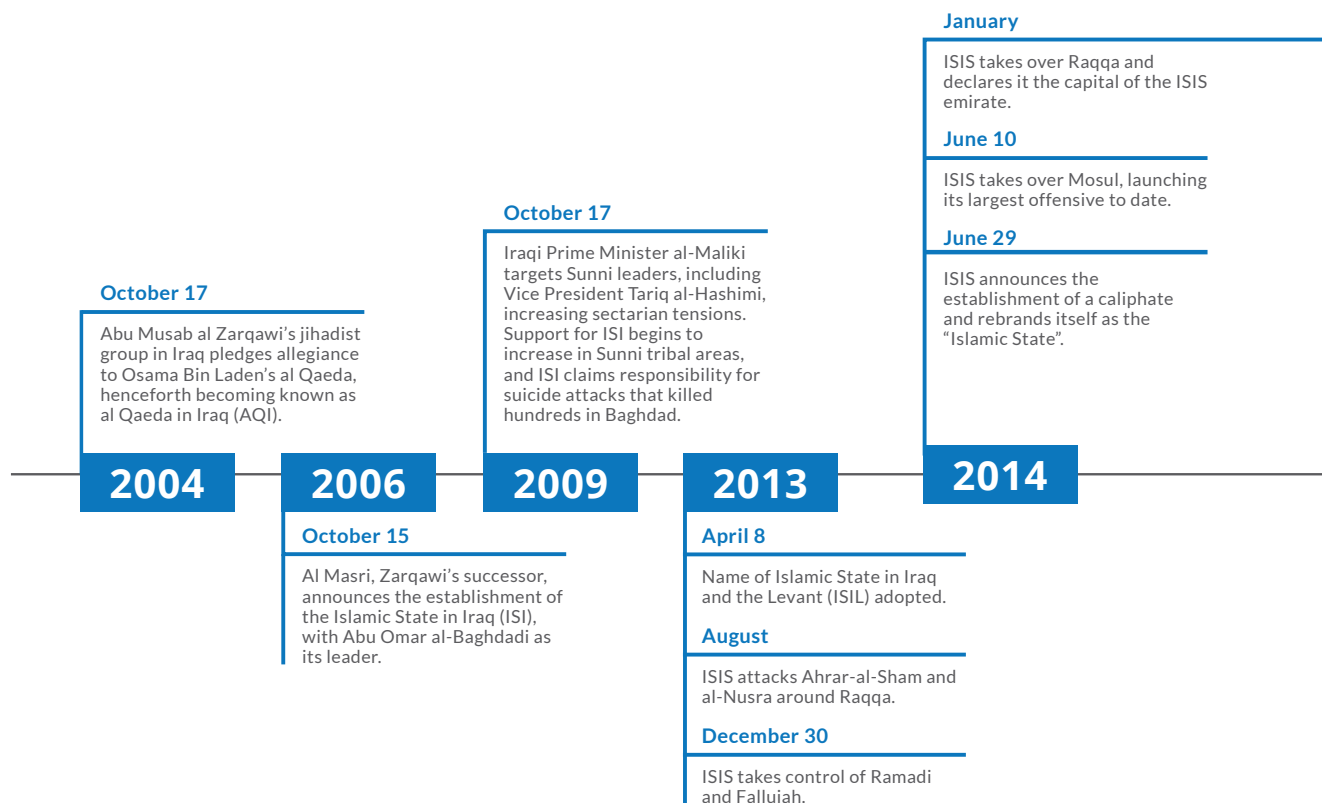
**Still, there is general consensus that without the Iraq invasion in 2003 and what followed after, ISIS would not have existed today.**

The revolutions that swept the Arab world in 2010 provided ISI an opportunity to spread into Syria where it could exploit a natural cleavage that existed between Syria’s Sunni majority and the Shia Alawite-led minorities that had ruled the country since the 1970s under the al-Assad family. The rise of ISIS in Syria was partly the result of a deliberate strategy by President Bashar al-Assad to sow division among his opponents. Al-Assad wanted to make sure that the incipient conflict in his country would be between himself and Islamic extremists. This would provide him with the best odds of survival and legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> Another important factor in the rise of ISIS was support for Syrian rebels that ended up

11. Roberts Hugh, “The Hijackers,” *London Review of Books* 37, no. 14 (July 16, 2015): 5–10.

12. Ibid.

13. Christoph Reuter, “The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State,” *Spiegel Online*, April 18, 2015,



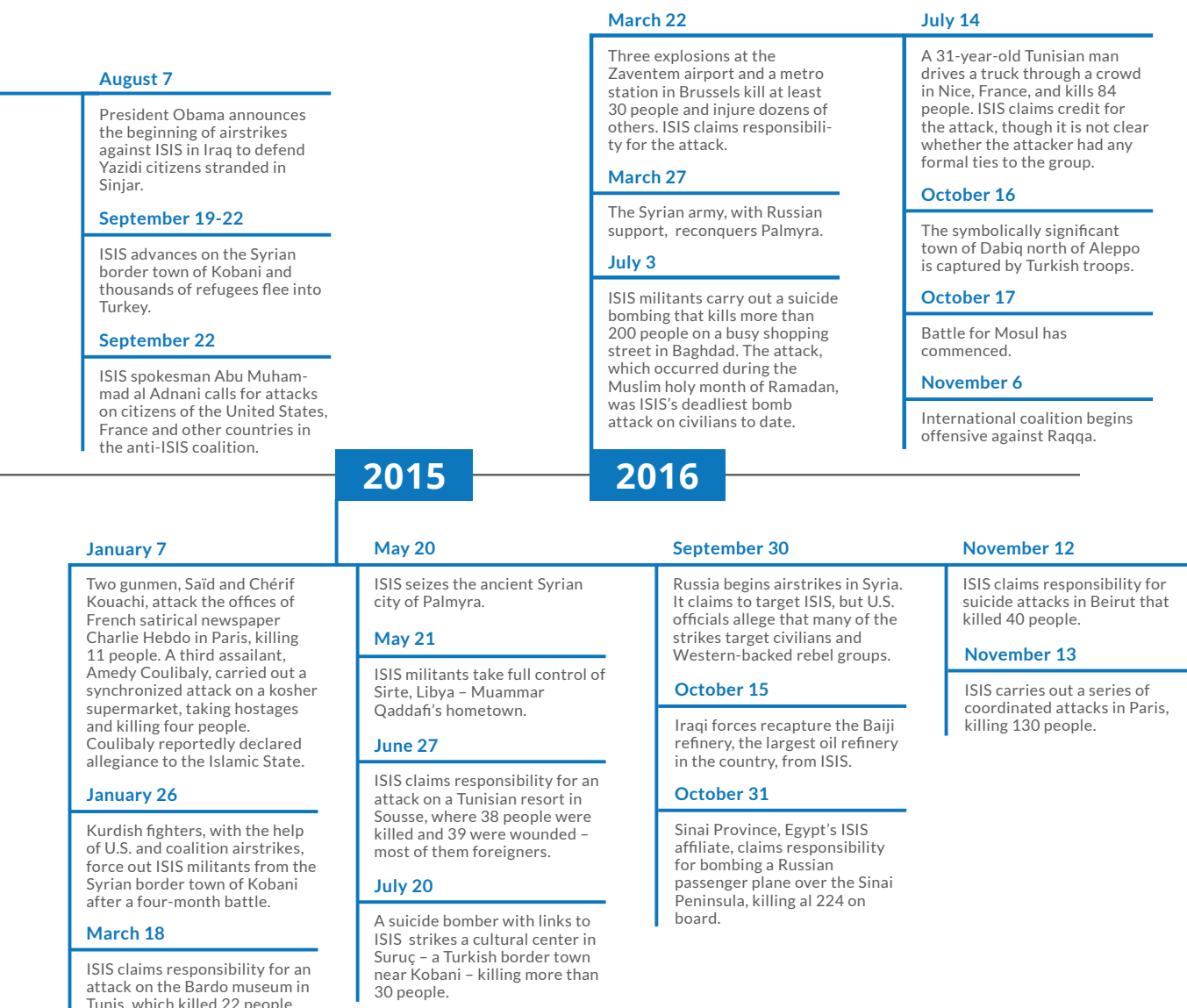
in the wrong hands. At the outset of the Syrian civil war, Western countries swiftly imposed sanctions on the al-Assad regime and together with allies in the Middle East (in particular Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar) helped create regional opposition. The perverse effects of some of the actions taken, such as the lifting of an oil embargo by the EU in April 2013, effectively led to Europe providing support to groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra and al-Qaeda.<sup>14</sup>

All of these developments opened up the way for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS since April 2013, to consolidate his control over swathes of territory on both sides of the Syrian-Iraqi border. On June 29, 2014, he proclaimed the Islamic State as a worldwide 'Caliphate', reinstating an institution that had not formally existed since its abolishment by Turkey's Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1924. The initial sweep of ISIS across the region was swift. On June 10, 2014, Mosul was taken hardly without a fight. Less than a year and a half later, The UN Security Council declared ISIS "a global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security."<sup>15</sup>

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html>.

14. Julian Borger and Mona Mahmood, "EU Decision to Lift Syrian Oil Sanctions Boosts Jihadist Groups," *The Guardian*, May 19, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/19/eu-syria-oil-jihadist-al-qaida>.

15. The United Nations Security Council, "Security Council 'Unequivocally' Condemns ISIL Terrorist Attacks, Unanimously Adopting Text That Determines Extremist Group Poses 'Unprecedented' Threat | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," *United Nations*, November 20, 2015, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12132.doc.htm>.



## How ISIS Seeks to “Remain and Expand”

“It is no coincidence”, one academic wrote, “that ISIS and its extreme jihadi message took root in a region that was experiencing socio-political upheavals arguably of a ‘one in a century’ kind.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, its survival strategy also contains inherent weaknesses if not the seeds of its own eventual demise.

ISIS’ entire strategy is built around a millenarian vision executed with an uncompromising and merciless ideological approach, aimed at the establishment of an enduring caliphate. The key to its expected success was initially grounded in a focus on the ‘near enemy’, but later evolved towards targeting the ‘far enemy’ as well. It is for obvious reasons that terrorist organizations generally refrain from controlling territory. Al-Baghdadi, however, believed that a caliphate “would be a magnet”<sup>17</sup> and thus persisted in his quest to upend the existing state system in the region. The paradox of ISIS’ attempt to create a ‘state’ is that while it rejects the Westphalian order, it has adopted many of the trappings of Westphalian statehood.

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### Interpretations and Uses of Islam

Due to its symbolic significance, the proclamation of the Caliphate and the establishment of a ‘state’ are highly significant. The revival of the office of the caliphate itself is far from uncontested in the Islamic world.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, many Muslims reject the idea that someone can appoint themselves into the office. Secondly, al-Baghdadi’s lineage is also contested—his claim to descend from the Prophet Muhammad’s Quraysh tribe being seriously questioned.<sup>19</sup>

Also, while ISIS’ assertion to represent Islam is often challenged, it is clear that ISIS’ claims to be Islamic and to implement Sharia to the letter (in their view) serve their instrumental purposes very well. The narrow interpretation of Islam and Islamic law espoused by ISIS has a long genealogy. One important strand is Wahhabism, an 18th century fringe sect within Salafism founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), which explicitly stresses the need for Islam to be purified from any kind of religious innovation by returning back to the origin of Salafism – the first three generations of Muslims.<sup>20</sup> While there is no single ‘ISIS ideology’ as such, some of its first principles were laid down in its key manual called *The Management of Savagery*, written by Abu Bakr Naji. First issued in 2003, it argues that “acts of daring sacrificial violence—whether by individuals or small groups—can be used to undermine faith in the ability of governments in the West and the Middle East to provide security for their peoples and to polarize Muslim and non-Muslims (...).”<sup>21</sup>

Given the pedigree of ISIS’ extremist views, it is only logical to conclude that “[u]nderstanding [its

16. Gareth Stansfield, “Book Reviews: Explaining the Aims, Rise and Impact of the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham,” *The Middle East Journal* 70, no. 1 (2016): 146–151.

17. Harald Doornbos and Jenan Moussa, “Present at the Creation,” *Foreign Policy*, August 16, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/16/present-at-the-creation/>. See also Ben Fishman, “Defining ISIS,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 58, no. 1 (January 19, 2016): 179–88.

18. Molly Jackson, “70,000 Indian Clerics Issue Fatwa against Terrorists,” *Christian Science Monitor: Global News Blog*, December 10, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-News/2015/1210/70-000-Indian-clerics-issue-fatwa-against-terrorists>.

19. Burke, *The New Threat*, 86–87.

20. Alastair Crooke, *Resistance: The Essence of Islamic Revolution* (Pluto Press, 2009).

21. Scott Atran, “ISIS: The Durability of Chaos,” *The New York Review of Books*, July 16, 2016, <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2016/07/16/nice-attack-isis-durability-of-chaos/>.

ideology] is crucial to defeating the group.”<sup>22</sup> However, in practical terms, it is more important to know how its ideology is instrumentalized rather than to understand the substantive content. After all, as Middle East expert Lina Khatib wrote, “ideology is not the group’s primary purpose; it is a tool to acquire power and money. The group (...) continuously interprets sharia in ways that justify its actions.”<sup>23</sup> As so often when it comes to politics, what people do is more indicative of their intentions than what people say. ISIS is no different in this respect.

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### ***Rule Through Conflict***

ISIS was born out of chaos. And it is continuing chaos that provides it with the best chances to persist and expand. Its main goal is to expand its caliphate to all current Muslim countries in the world and fight and win the apocalyptic war against the West. Its grand strategy consists of a strategy within its core terrain; one for the regional power centers; one for the Muslim world and one for the non-Muslim world.<sup>24</sup> For these purposes ISIS stokes local conflicts hoping to turn them into a broader sectarian war, polarizes the world and breaks existing opposing alliances. The conditions on the ground in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen and some other states in which ISIS is operating are in a state of disorder, which enhances ISIS’s longevity, even if the group is losing ground in Syria and Iraq.<sup>25</sup>

ISIS also combats ideological rivals, challenging the Muslim Brotherhood, fighting Al-Qaeda and undercutting the Taliban.<sup>26</sup> Part of this strategy is not to permit cooperation with groups that have a different agenda, but still to accept pledges of bay’a, even from tribal leaders who previously had opposed ISI in Iraq.<sup>27</sup> ISIS’ strategy in the non-Muslim world is first to polarize European communities and to create opportunities to implant itself in their core. Secondly, ISIS seeks to weaken both the West and Russia by forcing them to increase defensive measures. Finally, it seeks to encourage the return of nationalism in Western countries to foster discord and conflict among them.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Recruitment***

Key to sustaining its strategy is the recruitment of soldiers. Economic motives are an important factor here, for instance through offering much higher salaries than other jihadist outfits.<sup>29</sup> ISIS also promises “access to women for young, single, economically marginalized men.”<sup>30</sup> Also, ISIS uses cult-like methods of indoctrination to attract foreign fighters to its territory and to keep them there by

22. Hassan Hassan, “The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 13, 2016), <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/13/sectarianism-of-islamic-state-ideological-roots-and-political-context/j1iy>.

23. Lina Khatib, “The Islamic State’s Strategy: Lasting and Expanding” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 29, 2015), <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/06/29/islamic-state-s-strategy-lasting-and-expanding-pub-60511>.

24. Charles Lister, “Profiling the Islamic State” (Brookings Institution, January 12, 2014), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/profiling-the-islamic-state/>.

25. Jessica McFate Lewis et al., “ISIS Forecast: Ramadan 2016,” Middle East Security Report (Institute of War, May 2016), <http://www.rightsidenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ISW-ISIS-RAMADAN-FORECAST-2016.pdf>.

26. Ibid.

27. James Fromson and Steven Simon, “ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 57, no. 3 (May 11, 2015): 7–56.

28. McFate Lewis et al., “ISIS Forecast: Ramadan 2016.”

29. Khatib, “The Islamic State’s Strategy: Lasting and Expanding.”

30. The United Nations Security Council, “Security Council ‘Unequivocally’ Condemns ISIL Terrorist Attacks, Unanimously Adopting Text That Determines Extremist Group Poses ‘Unprecedented’ Threat | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.”



separating them from their social networks and suppressing their individuality.<sup>31</sup> While estimates about the total size of ISIS forces vary, “most agree that the core force is at least 30,000-strong, with 50,000-70,000 more split between local members and auxiliary and part-time forces.”<sup>32</sup> The number of foreign fighters among this group was estimated to be 27,000 (December 2015).<sup>33</sup> Of these 27,000, the Hague-based International Centre for Counter Terrorism (ICCT) estimates that some 6000 hail from Europe (April 2015).<sup>34</sup> Of the 260 Dutch jihadists who went to Syria, some 180 are still there.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Expanding Through Affiliates***

Part of ISIS’ strategy is not just to last, but also to expand. The idea behind this is that in rejecting the international state system, the only logical alternative in the view of ISIS is to strive for establishing a global ummah, or community of Muslims. The way to do this, according to the *Management of Savagery*, is to create discord: “When savagery happens in several regions— (...) a spontaneous kind of polarization begins to happen among the people who live in the region of chaos.”<sup>36</sup> The only limits that could exist are thus not state borders, but the extent of the area Muslims inhabit—which could expand as the influence of Muslims increases, say in Europe. To date, the UN reported that ISIS managed to gain 34 affiliates, among them in Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria and Indonesia.<sup>37</sup> ISIS’ drive to accept pledges of allegiance from elsewhere can be part of a strategy that could help to make the fall of strategic strongholds appear not as much of a catastrophe than they might otherwise do. The recent setbacks have also prompted rethinking within ISIS ranks: “In many ways IS is becoming more like a conventional, stateless, terrorist organization.”<sup>38</sup>

### ***Governance***

ISIS has found that in creating a ‘state’, it still has to implement practical governance systems and structures. It was helped by the fact that a significant part of ISIS’ leadership was made up of former Iraqi Baathist officials.<sup>39</sup> As a consequence, there is a strategy of sorts focused on winning the hearts and minds of the local population with the provision of social services and public goods including power and water services, law enforcement, health care, public control, employment, education

31. Florence Gaub, “The Cult of ISIS” (Brussels: EUISS, January 19, 2016), <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/survival/sections/2016-5e13/survival--global-politics-and-strategy-february-march-2016-44d5/58-1-08-gaub-752b>.

32. Sam Jones and Erika Solomon, “Isis Inc: Jihadis Fund War Machine but Squeeze Citizens,” *The Financial Times*, December 15, 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/2ef519a6-a23d-11e5-bc70-7ff6d4fd203a#axzz4HTeB63Jg>.

The United Nations Security Council, “Security Council ‘Unequivocally’ Condemns ISIL Terrorist Attacks, Unanimously Adopting Text That Determines Extremist Group Poses ‘Unprecedented’ Threat | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.”

34. Alex P. Schmid and Judith Tinnes, “Foreign (Terrorist) Fighters with IS: A European Perspective” (ICCT The Hague, December 2015), <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ICCT-Schmid-Foreign-Terrorist-Fighters-with-IS-A-European-Perspective-December2015.pdf>.

35. Eric Schmitt, “Caliphate in Peril, More ISIS Fighters May Take Mayhem to Europe,” *The New York Times*, September 17, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/us/politics/caliphate-in-peril-more-isis-fighters-may-take-mayhem-to-europe.html>.

36. Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery*, trans. William McCants, 2006, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf>.

37. The Economist, “Islamic Stateless?,” *The Economist*, July 9, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21701721-jihadists-are-losing-their-caliphate-they-remain-deadly-islamic-stateless>. See United Nations, “Report of the Secretary - General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to International Peace and Security and the Range of United Nations Efforts in Support of Member States in Countering the Threat,” January 29, 2016, [http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2016/N1602353\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2016/N1602353_EN.pdf).

38. IHS, “Islamic State Caliphate Shrinks a Further 12 Percent in 2016, IHS Says,” *IHS Online Newsroom*, July 10, 2016, <http://news.ihsmarkit.com/press-release/aerospace-defense-security/islamic-state-caliphate-shrinks-further-12-percent-2016-ihs>.

39. Smith, “ISIS and the Sectarian Conflict in the Middle East.” See also discussed in Fromson and Simon, “ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now.”

and tools to reach out to the public such as radio.<sup>40</sup> But there is also a system marked by violence and repression against its own people. This system is supported by a network of informants, which even mobilizes children to report their parents to the authorities. Concerning ISIS' legitimacy, the very violent landscape in which it operates that also includes even less palatable parties in the eyes of many Sunnis in effect makes it "the most legitimate player."<sup>41</sup>

### **Finances**

In its first report on the movement, the UN wrote that "ISIL is the world's wealthiest terrorist organization."<sup>42</sup> A very visible source of income for ISIS has come from lootings and kidnappings. The UN and partners "estimate that around 25 per cent of archaeological sites in the Syrian Arab Republic (including over 21 per cent in ISIL-controlled territories) have been affected by the looting."<sup>43</sup> ISIS also earns money from "antiquities smuggled by criminal gangs who buy a 'license' to excavate and traffic from IS (sic) authorities."<sup>44</sup> Estimated income from this activity is in the range of \$150-200 million a year.<sup>45</sup> On ransoms for hostages, UNAMI estimated that "payments by families of hostages, particularly from the Yazidi community (...) amounted to between \$35 million to \$45 million in 2014."<sup>46</sup>

Another key source of money is the illegal sale of oil. Estimates of how much ISIS earns as a result vary. UNAMI concluded "the income generated by ISIL from oil and oil products in 2015 to have been between \$400 million and \$500 million."<sup>47</sup> An FT report said that in October 2015, "local traders and engineers put crude production in Isis-held territory at about 34,000-40,000 bpd. The oil is sold at the wellhead for between \$20 and \$45 a barrel, earning the militants an average of \$1.5m a day."<sup>48</sup> It is significant that "[t]he Syrian regime has been a key economic partner for the group, which has been selling oil from its wells in Syria at discounted prices to the regime."<sup>49</sup>

While the focus of ISIS' finances is on the oil trade, its main source of income is actually taxation.<sup>50</sup> The UN reported on this that "[ISIS] taxes economic activity by extorting the estimated 8 million people living in territories under its control. It attempts to legitimize this system by calling the "tax" a "religious tax" or "zakat". The tax amounts to at least 2.5 per cent of the capital earned from businesses, goods and agricultural products."<sup>51</sup> Also, for a time, ISIS took a slice of continuing salary and pension payments to Iraqi state officials who resided in ISIS-occupied territory.

Given the state-like sources of income of ISIS, attacks on ISIS-controlled infrastructure do have an impact on their revenue stream. As one analyst noted, "[i]n mid-2015, the Islamic State's overall

40. Faysal Itani, "We Must Treat ISIS Like a State to Defeat It," *TIME*, August 14, 2014, <http://time.com/3111276/isis-terror-iraq-treat-it-like-a-state/>.

41. Fromson and Simon, "ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now."

42. The United Nations, "Report of the Secretary - General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to International Peace and Security and the Range of United Nations Efforts in Support of Member States in Countering the Threat."

43. Ibid.

44. Burke, *The New Threat*, 95.

45. Based on a letter written by the Russian ambassador to the UN. See Louis Charbonneau, "Islamic State Nets Millions from Antiquities: Russia," *Reuters*, April 6, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-antiquities-russia-idUSKCN0X32HK>.

46. The United Nations, "Report of the Secretary - General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to International Peace and Security and the Range of United Nations Efforts in Support of Member States in Countering the Threat."

47. Ibid.

48. Jones and Solomon, "Isis Inc: Jihadis Fund War Machine but Squeeze Citizens."

49. Khatib, "The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding."

50. Jones and Solomon, "Isis Inc: Jihadis Fund War Machine but Squeeze Citizens."

51. The United Nations, "Report of the Secretary - General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to International Peace and Security and the Range of United Nations Efforts in Support of Member States in Countering the Threat."

monthly revenue was around \$80 million. As of March 2016, the Islamic State's monthly revenue dropped to \$56 million. The UN reported in June 2016 that "[f]or the first time since the declaration of its so-called 'caliphate' in June 2014, the ISIL core is under financial pressure. This was notably exemplified by the official announcement of ISIL, in late 2015, of a 50 per cent reduction in the salaries of fighters in Raqqa, Syrian Arab Republic."<sup>52</sup>

Although the financial and human resources that ISIS relies on at home are critical to its survival, it is likely that without regional financial support, it could not have persisted in the way it has up to now. Although fiercely debated, the journalist Patrick Cockburn stated unequivocally that "[t]he foster parents of ISIS and the other Sunni jihadi movements in Iraq and Syria are Saudi Arabia, the Gulf monarchies and Turkey."<sup>53</sup> Still, one RAND scholar's assessment reflects the general belief that "Gulf-based finances have played little role in the recent rise of ISIS."<sup>54</sup>

**Although the financial and human resources that ISIS relies on at home are critical to its survival, it is likely that without regional financial support, it could not have persisted in the way it has up to now.**

### **Popular Support**

In spite of the widespread revulsion that the atrocities committed by ISIS have provoked and the ways it shackles its 'citizens', it has been able to garner significant public support in various corners of the world and found different ways to sustain the support of people living in ISIS-controlled territory. The principal means by which ISIS has managed to gain local support is by playing into the fears of the local Sunni population. In fact, "many Sunnis preferred ISIS rule to accommodation with the chauvinist Shia state-building project that (...) has systematically excluded Sunnis (...)."<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, it has also benefited from the unspoken non-aggression pact with the Syrian government army: "The absence of front lines with the Islamic State gave the regime an excuse not to fight it (...). [This] lack of fighting also encouraged many Syrians to move to areas controlled by the Islamic State in the pursuit of security rather than ideology."<sup>56</sup>

**The principal means by which ISIS has managed to gain local support is by playing into the fears of the local Sunni population.**

A similar strategy is applied in the non-Muslim world. Again, violence is used to sow division. As James Miller wrote, "[t]he formula is simple yet deadly effective: The more homegrown jihadists appear in France, Belgium and the U.K., the more their respective governments must monitor their Muslim communities. And the more they monitor them, the more it fuels resentment among them. And the more resentment that is fueled, the more jihadists are produced. It's the definition of a vicious circle."<sup>57</sup> In other words, ISIS-orchestrated or inspired attacks polarize Europeans who are driven by fear. This polarization creates further ground for recruitment.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, a recent

52. Ibid.

53. Cockburn, "Isis Consolidates."

54. Howard J. Shatz, "How ISIS Funds Its Reign of Terror," *New York Daily News*, September 8, 2014, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2014/09/how-isis-funds-its-reign-of-terror.html>.

55. Fromson and Simon, "ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now." See also Khatib, "The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding."

56. Khatib, "The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding."

57. James Miller, "This Week Under The Black Flag," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, April 15, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/a/islamic-state-under-black-flag/27677349.html>.

58. Jason Burke, "The Tyranny of Isis Terrorism Will Not Always Be with Us. But History Shows That a New Militant Threat Will Emerge," *The Guardian*, March 27, 2016, sec. Opinion, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/27/terrorism-isis-brussels-al-qaida-ever-present-threat-what-next>. Harleen Gambhir, "ISIS's Campaign in Europe: March 2016" (Institute of War, March 25, 2016), <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isiss-campaign-europe-march-2016>.

Pew survey showed that large majorities in countries such as Lebanon (98-100%), Israel (91-98%) and Palestine (79-92%) reject its divisive tactics.<sup>59</sup>

### **Communication Strategy**

Even if ISIS purports to aim at re-establishing a 7th century Caliphate, its means and modes of communication are in many respects very modern. With no objective reporting taking place from inside the self-styled caliphate,<sup>60</sup> propaganda is used for multiple purposes: to espouse its divisive and apocalyptic narrative; to recruit combatants and inhabitants for ISIS inside and outside of the 'state'; and for military and strategic reasons. The ideological bent of its media content strongly emphasizes the degree of humiliation that the Muslim world has suffered, for which revenge should and will be sought, as well as the hypocrisy of the West and the crimes it has committed. In general, however, ISIS' media strategy, in particular its use of gory videos, is mostly for local consumption. In areas where ISIS is already firmly in control, for example, they show how it succeeds in governance. In areas that are contested, they show graphic executions.<sup>61</sup> The chief means for spreading its propaganda is through social media, in particular Facebook and Twitter. These are also used for recruitment purposes.<sup>62</sup> ISIS also issues its own online magazine, previously called Dabiq and now christened Rumiya (Rome), which seeks to be a more sanitized version of the reality of living in ISIS-occupied territory while not compromising on ISIS' central message.<sup>63</sup>

**The ideological bent of its media content strongly emphasizes the degree of humiliation that the Muslim world has suffered, for which revenge should and will be sought, as well as the hypocrisy of the West and the crimes it has committed.**

### **Enduring Through Geopolitics**

If regional chaos has allowed ISIS to emerge, it is geopolitics that has enabled the group to persist for so long. In essence, geopolitics reflect the biggest paradox of all, which is that while almost all parties involved in the conflict in Syria and Iraq are formally there to fight ISIS, in practice few have expended their resources towards attacking the largest terrorist actor in the region. This happens for a number of reasons. Firstly, rather than defeating ISIS, the powers involved are more preoccupied with safeguarding their own strategic interests, which for the most part are not threatened by ISIS—or so the calculations are made today. For instance, it can be said that although much weaker, the FSA and other Syrian rebel movements are considered a much more significant threat to the al-Assad regime than ISIS is. Secondly, some countries fear the actual consequences once ISIS is defeated. Thirdly, states are afraid of provoking ISIS attacks on their own soil.

For Russia, its chief reasons for only nominally attacking ISIS is because it is not in the interest of al-Assad. Iran finds itself in a perverse entanglement with ISIS in Iraq, where the presence of the latter has given Tehran a pretext to become militarily active and thus to be directly involved in Iraqi

59. Pew Research Center, "Views of ISIS by Religion, Ethnicity and Region," *Pew Research Center*, November 17, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/>. The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, "The Military Campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant: Arab Public Opinion," *Insider Online*, accessed November 9, 2016, <http://www.insideronline.org/2014/11/the-military-campaign-against-the-islamic-state-in-iraq-and-the-levant-arab-public-opinion/>.

60. Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

61. Burke, *The New Threat*, 101.

62. IHS, "Syria and Iraq Insurgency" (IHS, June 2015), [https://www.ihs.com/pdf/Syria-and-Iraq-Insurgency-Monitor-Extracts-June2015\\_233159110913052132.pdf](https://www.ihs.com/pdf/Syria-and-Iraq-Insurgency-Monitor-Extracts-June2015_233159110913052132.pdf).

63. The group also issues its magazine in other languages including Turkish, in which it is called "Konstantiniyye."

politics. The position of Turkey is mostly shaped by its domestic conflict with Kurdish forces, aimed at preventing the Kurds from gaining too much territory when driving out ISIS.<sup>64</sup> Saudi Arabia and other states in the Gulf also do not have overriding reasons to commit to defeating ISIS. In the context of a Shia-Sunni conflict, they are still more inclined to let ISIS linger if not to clandestinely support it if this means frustrating Iranian designs in the Levant and Mesopotamia.

This leaves the United States and its Western counterparts as the only countries that see ISIS as the principal threat to the long-term stability of the region. They are primarily motivated in taking on ISIS because of the danger that its territory might develop into a terrorist haven on the border of NATO territory and much closer to Europe and because defeating ISIS could prove to be a major setback for the popularity of its ideology worldwide. Even so, Western countries too are not sufficiently committed to fighting ISIS because there is little clarity about what might come next and because a defeat of ISIS might mean further strengthening the hand of Russia and Iran in the region.

## The Inevitable Fall of ISIS

The most likely causes of the eventual demise of the caliphate will be the fact that the nation-state as an organizing principle will continue to prevail—and that, as a result, there will be no space for ISIS in Syria and Iraq—and because opportunistic behavior will lead to defections both inside and outside the caliphate. The number of foreign fighters moving to Syria has already significantly dwindled today, with only about 50 jihadists crossing the Turkish border down from a peak of 2,000 per month.<sup>65</sup> As a result, The ISIS state will at best remain a small lawless pocket in the way the Taliban persists in Pakistan, or remnants will revert back to being ‘classic’ jihadist terrorist groups and choose a different country from which to operate, possibly Libya or elsewhere in North Africa.

In terms of military strategy, “ISIS’s distinctive approach to insurgency [is not] an obvious advantage. Lawrence of Arabia advised that insurgents must be like a mist—everywhere and nowhere—never trying to hold ground or wasting lives in battles with regular armies.”<sup>66</sup> And it seems that the setbacks could lead to splits or fragmentation within ISIS.<sup>67</sup> In addition, ISIS needs a military leadership that is able to replace losses fast and educated people are needed in order to provide medical and technical services. Infighting between jihadists can also be a source of weakness for the jihadist movement in general. These problems also trickle into the caliphate’s governance. One is that the degree of violence has been such that “it cannot de-escalate without losing credibility.”<sup>68</sup> Also, given how loosely wedded the tribes are to ISIS and the extent to which their allegiance is a temporary marriage of convenience, it is likely that these tribes will break away from ISIS once “they feel there is more economic opportunity” as a result and the costs of sticking with ISIS outweighs severing ties.<sup>69</sup> Finally, in light of the experience of al-Qaeda, the strategy of expansion may prove that “affiliates may be more trouble than they are worth.”<sup>70</sup>

64. Christopher Kozak, “Turkey Expands Campaign against ISIS and the PKK,” *Institute for the Study of War*, June 15, 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/turkey-expands-campaign-against-isis-and-pkk>.

65. Griffe Witte, Sudarsan Raghavan and James McAuley, “Flow of Foreign Fighters Plummets as Islamic State Loses Its Edge,” *Washington Post*, September 9, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/flow-of-foreign-fighters-plummets-as-isis-loses-its-edge/2016/09/09/ed3e0dda-751b-11e6-9781-49e591781754\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/flow-of-foreign-fighters-plummets-as-isis-loses-its-edge/2016/09/09/ed3e0dda-751b-11e6-9781-49e591781754_story.html).

66. Anonymous, *The Mystery of Isis*.

67. Perry Cammack, “The Conundrum of the Coming Islamic State Collapse,” *Carnegie Middle East Center*, August 1, 2016, <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/64213?lang=en>.

68. Khatib, “The Islamic State’s Strategy: Lasting and Expanding.”

69. Fromson and Simon, “ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now.”

70. Ibid.



The American strategy towards ISIS is more focused on 'degrading' rather than 'destroying' the group. In practical terms, this means that ISIS is being contained—something which, incidentally, Iranian forces in Iraq and al-Assad in Syria are not unhappy about. An important side-effect of 'mere containment' is that it helps to break down the movement's luster. Ultimately, however, it might be that only when all sides are exhausted that fighting might end. This could create room for "an agreement among major regional and international powers on a formula to curtail the fighting and rebuild some governance."<sup>71</sup> The protracted fighting over Aleppo, Mosul and Raqqa and the importance that is attached by outside powers to a specific outcome of this conflict show that at this time, it is not exhaustion but rather outright victory by one side or another that will decide the outcome of this conflict, and, most likely, determine the parameters for the future of ISIS.

The fall of ISIS could have serious ramifications for Europe and it is likely that the effects of the decline of ISIS are already with us. One, an organization finding itself in its last throes is more likely to lash out and to activate cells outside its own territory. Former ISIS spokesman al-Adnani made just such a call back in July 2016.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, the fact that ISIS is prepared to adopt a 'scorched earth policy' at home has already been demonstrated and if it collapses it will want its enemies to take as many casualties as possible.<sup>73</sup> Thirdly, the demise of ISIS could prompt foreign and local jihadists to move elsewhere, for instance to Europe, albeit the numbers in this case would likely be small.<sup>74</sup> Even more than a security threat, returning and local jihadists could pose a socio-political threat if they manage to exploit societal tensions, researchers at the ICCT concluded.<sup>75</sup>

The power and success of ISIS depend on its spellbinding quality. Breaking that spell is the key to defeating ISIS. A starting point would be to expose ISIS for what it is and to show that like any other polity, it is also inclined to make worldly compromises and to dishonor its own principles. What is more, "[i]f the caliphate can be rolled back and picked apart, the ideological edifice of apocalyptic anticipation that supports the ISIS project will be crushed."<sup>76</sup> Another important aspect is to show that there is a real alternative and where possible to help create this. It also means supporting Syria and Iraq as countries rather than as mere artifacts in which people of different stripes cannot live together. In this respect, "[t]he power of nationalism, Iraqi and Syrian, is a dynamic that many works on ISIS and other jihadi movements in the region often now overlook, or consider to be a historical feature of countries (...) that it is now no longer relevant to today's analyses."<sup>77</sup> While discussion remains rife about the possible breakups of Iraq and Syria, continuing statehood is likely the most viable option, albeit that a strong degree of autonomy for certain regions along the lines of Iraqi Kurdistan are the price to be paid for these countries to persist. The creation of a multi-ethnic state along the lines of the Ottoman Empire is infeasible, still less that of a universal ummah.

71. David Ignatius, "How ISIS Spread in the Middle East," *The Atlantic*, October 29, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/how-isis-started-syria-iraq/412042/>.

72. Kalin Stephen and Ahmed Tolba, "As 'Caliphate' Shrinks, Islamic State Looks to Global Attacks," *Reuters*, July 31, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-attacks-is-propaganda-idUSKCN10B0IP>.

73. Peter Schwartzstein, "The Islamic State's Scorched-Earth Strategy | Foreign Policy," April 6, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/06/the-islamic-states-scorched-earth-strategy/>.

74. "Mosul Battle: EU 'Should Prepare for Returning Jihadists,'" *BBC News*, October 18, 2016, sec. Middle East, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-37689210>.

75. Edwin Bakker and Jeanine Roy de Zuijdewijn, "Jihadist Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in Western Europe: A Low - Probability, High - Impact Threat," ICCT Research Paper (ICCT The Hague, October 2015).

76. Fromson and Simon, "ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now."

77. Stansfield, "Book Reviews: Explaining the Aims, Rise and Impact of the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham."

## Conclusion

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Given the specific conditions that brought ISIS into being, there are several lessons to learn about how it came about, how it managed to survive and how it might dissolve again. These include:

### Origins

- » ISIS would not have arisen had the invasion of Iraq in 2003 not occurred, or, more precisely, if there had been a clear post-war strategy in place that would have kept the country together while avoiding sectarian strife.
- » The history of Western involvement in the region going back to the days of the fall of the Ottoman Empire provided ISIS with ammunition to paint itself as the savior of Islam.
- » Related to the previous point is that ISIS sought and received support by presenting itself as a sincere alternative espousing authentic Islamic views in the face of corrupt secular (!) governments, whilst blaming the West for having introduced this un-Islamic notion in the Muslim world.
- » Simmering sectarianism which erupted in Iraq and later in Syria directly contributed to the rise of multiple terrorist outfits including the organizations that would later become ISIS. Without such sectarianism, it is very unlikely ISIS would have emerged.
- » Specifically, the unwillingness of the Syrian government to directly take on ISIS also helped it to emerge and persist in Syria. In fact, there has been a degree of tacit collusion between the two sides.
- » Ideology has not been a primary driver for why local people chose to side with ISIS. Years of suppression and discrimination both in Syria and in Iraq led many Sunnis to decide that living under ISIS is better, in spite of the systemic violence that was used to impose its nihilist ideology.
- » The choice to occupy territory and to create a caliphate was deliberate and in fact part of an ideological framework. While Baghdadi was aware of the drawbacks of such a strategy, he persisted because it was seen as a religious obligation.

### Endurance

- » ISIS has chiefly been able to persist because no country, whether in the region or outside, had a compelling interest to using all means to comprehensively root out the movement. And since ISIS did not occupy truly vital land or resources, it was able to remain where it was.
- » Even in taking on ISIS, regional and outside powers have been unable to agree on a single military policy to defeat the movement. In spite of its military strength, a concerted international effort will likely be able to break up the ISIS caliphate.
- » The role of support from the Gulf appears to have been exaggerated. Although it can be said that ISIS drew inspiration from ideologies that are popular in the Gulf region, there is little evidence that extensive financial support from that part of the world has been instrumental in keeping ISIS afloat.
- » Sheer financial resources and applying harsh justice are not enough to keep the caliphate together. It had to create a social contract on the basis of taxation. Even so, not even ISIS could

impose excessive taxation and had to compromise and be pragmatic at times.

- » The pledges to the caliphate can be seen as a sign of strength and legitimacy, but should also be viewed in the light of opportunistic behavior on the part of other terrorist organizations, Boko Haram being an example. Pledges can also be withdrawn easily.
- » Related to this is that the expansion of ISIS offshoots is not necessarily a sign of strength. At one point, ISIS' presence in Libya was seen as a fallback strategy in case the Caliphate in the Middle East would fold.
- » ISIS was able to build on the expertise of many Baathists in terms of organizing itself militarily and for governing the caliphate. Without this input, it is highly unlikely that ISIS as a geographical entity could have persisted.

### The Future

- » The military defeat of the ISIS Caliphate looks to be very likely and could already occur in the coming months. This is not the same as defeating ISIS as a movement though, which could persist in many locations, including underground. Even less so would this mean the defeat of the ISIS ideology, which will continue to hold sway in many parts of the Middle East.
- » Apart from using military means, closing off economic and financial channels is also effective in cutting down ISIS. Only because a neighbor such as Turkey has permitted illegal oil shipments to be transported over its territory, or because the Syrian government has been complicit in allowing artifacts to be smuggled out has ISIS been able to maintain its economic lifelines.
- » If defeat comes about, it will be as much the result of the military effort made by the international and regional coalition as of the fact that the ranks can easily crumble because of opportunistic motivations. Jihadists are known for switching allegiance easily and there are several reported instances of discord within ISIS ranks when the organization came under pressure. Still, small pockets are likely to persist and could possibly re-emerge in a new guise at a later time.
- » Long-term eradication of movements such as ISIS and their ideology takes more than military action. It requires positive engagement with the region on the basis of trust, respect, commitment and credibility. The key here is to address and root out the sources for longstanding grievances and to give people a perspective for building up a prosperous future.
- » The state system will prove to be more resilient than previously considered. While in theory not compatible with how the Muslim community is supposed to co-exist, nationalism is now too entrenched for states to wither away, also in the Middle East. Also, only states have proven to be able to deliver to their citizens, making it highly unlikely for other types of commonwealths to successfully emerge.
- » The decline of ISIS could lead to an increase of attacks on European soil. To date however, the number of actual attacks has been minimal, although data on how many such attacks have been foiled is unknown. The gradual folding of ISIS could also lead to more jihadists returning to Europe, although the numbers are likely to be small.
- » In rebuilding Syria and Iraq, the creation of sustainable governance structures is a sine qua non. For these countries to persist, autonomy for various regions is the most viable option, but maintaining central government will be important to protect minority rights throughout these countries and for the sake of the larger geopolitical balance in the region.

## VOLATILITY AND FRICTION IN THE AGE OF DISINTERMEDIATION

Criteria to measure ISIS development	Territory size (Iraq & Syria)	Territory won/lost (Iraq & Syria)	Major towns won/lost (Iraq & Syria)	Outside provinces won/lost (actual control)	
Januar 2014	2,010 km <sup>2</sup> + (33)	2,010 km <sup>2</sup> +	Raqqa (2013) Fallujah (Jan 2013)		
Juli 2014	12,000 km <sup>2</sup> - 35,000 km <sup>2</sup> (3)	10,000 km <sup>2</sup> - 33,000 km <sup>2</sup>	Mosul, Tikrit, Tal Afar (June) +		
Januar 2015	90,800 km <sup>2</sup> (2)	55,8000 - 78,800 km <sup>2</sup>	Ramadi - (Nov. 2014 - May 2105)	Islamic State in Ly- bia+: Derna, Oct '14, Sirte, Jan '15 (34)	
Juli 2015	82,940 km <sup>2</sup> (4)	-7860 km <sup>2</sup>	Tikrit (March 2015)	ISL-: Derna, July; Parts of Nangarhar, afghani- stan+, June (35)	
Januar 2016	78,000 km <sup>2</sup> (5)	-4940 km <sup>2</sup>	Ramadi - (Nov. 2015 - Jan. 2106)		
Juli 2016	68,300 km <sup>2</sup> (1)	-9700 km <sup>2</sup>	Manbij - (May-Aug. 2016)	ISL-: Sirte, August	

## 7. THE RISE AND FALL OF ISIS

	Income per month/financial resources (Iraq & Syria)	Number of fighters	Increase/decrease of number of pledges of affiliation	popular support for ISIS in Middle East
	Before summer '14, ISIS was present in oil smuggling (30); \$875 million in cash and assets before June (28)	7,000+? (14)	0	
	Possibly \$420m raided from Mosul banks in June (26)(27), total of bank and military. Supplies raided in Mosul possibly added \$1.5bn in cash and assets (28). \$8m in monthly txes from businesses Mosul alone (31)	100,000 (11); 20,000-31,000 (13)	12 (16)	
	Over the whole of 2014, \$500m to \$1bn in bank assets gained through banks. \$500m from oil revenue a year (29)	9,000-31,000 (8); 70,000 (9); 200,000 (10)	19 (17) (19)	
	\$80m total monthly revenue (24), other report says \$50m monthly oil revenue (32)	40,000 (12)	6 (15)	
	\$56 million USD (25)	20,000-25,000 (7)	2 (20)	0-5% (22)
		15,000-20,000 (6)	1 (18)	0-9% (21), 7% (23)









## The Other Side of the Security Coin



## Key Take-Aways

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- » Societal resilience to conflict is the foundational pillar of peace. On the *other side of the security coin*, there are many positive trends related to socioeconomic development that underpin growing levels of individual empowerment and increased citizen participation. Many of these trends are in one way or another related to the trend of disintermediation and the disappearance of the middle man. Greater individual empowerment across many different domains boost societal resilience to conflict. *Access* remains one of the key components of individual empowerment and resilience to conflict.
- » The Internet and emerging mobile technologies act in a facilitatory role to provide services that enhance the livelihoods of citizens – particularly those in developing countries. Over the next few years, access to the Internet is projected to further boost economic, societal and political participation of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.
- » Access to finance is improving citizens' abilities to participate in society and fulfill their social and economic potential. Mobile technologies and services have allowed for financial services to be extended to new remote, rural areas in developing countries and improve access to economic opportunity, thereby increasing individual empowerment.
- » *Access to electricity from renewable sources* is widening and becoming more common in developing countries. In 2015 developing countries invested more in renewable technologies than developed countries. Related trends have allowed for citizens to act as energy producers rather than solely as energy consumers. Trends in micro-electricity generation are likely to enhance greater access to energy for many people around the world.
- » *Access to political and social participation* by advancing gender equality initiatives is empowering women across the world. It is ensuring women's' greater access and inclusion in the labor force and political institutions results in greater societal levels of empowerment and enhanced resilience to conflict.
- » *Access to clean water and sanitation facilities* is rising due to worldwide initiatives to provide citizens with basic, but crucial resources for their livelihoods. Developments related to improving water and sanitation facilities in developing countries have high financial value, reduces squalor and enables citizens to explore new social and economic opportunities by reducing the time needed to collect and clean water.

- » *Access to opportunities through greater social inclusion* has improved as a result of the global war on poverty, which has empowered citizens across the world who have long been deprived access to key services and resources and left on the margins of society as a result. Poverty acts as a blanket inhibitor and can prevent extremely poor people from benefitting from the effects of positive developments ongoing in the world today.
- » These drivers of change are likely to improve individuals' access to crucial resources and opportunities, greatly enhance levels of individual empowerment and increase societal resilience, even more through innovative technological developments that will arise in the future.

## 5.1 Towards Sustainable Security

The presence of peace is more than the absence of conflict. Analyses and evaluations of the state of the international security environment often focus solely on the most concerning developments and tend to fall back on various conflict-centric metrics when providing assessments of the security landscape, as we have done in the previous chapter. In these cases, statistics pertaining to battle-related fatalities, insurgency activities, or displaced peoples forced out of their homes often take center stage. Such an approach has merit when attempting to explore the causes and effects of violent conflict, or when evaluating country-level risk of violence episode onset. Yet it ignores the “other side of the security coin”, one that recognizes societal resilience as a counterweight to conflict and a driver of peace, as we explained in more detail in our broader 2016 study *Si Vis Pacem, Para Utique Pacem*, which can be accessed on our website.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the strengthening state of peace in the world today, as documented by the Institute of Economics and Peace as part of the Global Peace Index project,<sup>2</sup> there are also many less-apparent, but nevertheless positive socioeconomic trends occurring today that continue to increase levels of individual empowerment among citizens world-wide. As drivers of peace climb upward, citizens – most notably in developing countries – gain access to various new economic and social opportunities and develop critical civic attitudes, with their livelihoods improving in consequence. Gradually, on the level of society, these processes foster confidence and enhanced capabilities, increasing the potential of citizens to gain an interest in maintaining emerging stability, rather than acting as challengers to the state of peace.<sup>3</sup> A more effective approach to building societal resilience to conflict in fragile regions must recognize citizens as stakeholders contributing positively to the state of peace in their own countries, as peace will serve their social and economic interests. These trends also forward the development of human capital in developing countries and increase the overall power of a society to accomplish its goals.

**A more effective approach to building societal resilience to conflict in fragile regions must recognize citizens as stakeholders contributing positively to the state of peace in their own countries.**

This chapter will investigate a number of developments that each have the capacity to positively underpin sustainable security in the world through their unique influences and effects. We specifically examine positive trends related to poverty reduction, access to the Internet, financial inclusion, access to improved water and sanitation facilities, access to electricity produced by renewable energy sources and female inclusion in the labor force. These developments all have the capacity to foster improvements in levels of individual empowerment and social inclusion within a given population and thereby increase a society’s resilience against conflict.

1. See Oosterveld et al., *Si Vis Pacem, Para Utique Pacem*.

2. The Institute for Economics and Peace, *Positive Peace Report 2016: A Compilation of the Leading Research on Positive Peace and Resilience*.

3. Matthew Hoddie and Caroline A Hartzell, *Strengthening Peace in Post Civil War States: Transforming Spoilers into Stakeholders* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2.

### Textbox 5.1 How Does It Work? Socioeconomic Development, Empowerment and Societal Conflict Resilience

Socioeconomic development is a key driver of social change and the coming into being of civil society.<sup>1</sup> A functioning, strong civil society is both a fundamental requirement for a democratic state to govern effectively and also a driver for political transformation in states that have not yet achieved a state of democracy as it sets “society and polity on new courses toward unprecedented objectives.”<sup>2</sup> A developing society generally undergoes gradual normative transformation as a result of the improvement of socioeconomic conditions and, consequently, citizen empowerment. This is due to a societal shift away from ‘survival values’ and towards those prioritizing self-expression.<sup>3</sup> Survival values are common in developing and recovering nations, where there exists greater public demand for physical and economic security over self-expression and quality-of life and high levels of public and interpersonal distrust are therefore common. In contrast, self-expression values place higher importance on democratic representation and transparency and are characteristic of postindustrial societies.<sup>4</sup> These values are highly complementary with a process of empowerment, as once individuals’ livelihoods are secured, they can mobilize to participate fully within society.

Thus socioeconomic development – if it both improves individual levels of empowerment and promotes social and economic inclusion – not only has the effect of creating greater desire for civic involvement, but also tempers public sentiments of hostility and distrust towards a functioning and democratic state. As a consequence, civic pressures are directed towards governments and institutions to strengthen and uphold democracy and fair governance practices on the basis of newfound critical and liberal desires for democratic representation. While democracy itself does not guarantee peace, the organic development of citizen support for democratic representation and further expansion of livelihood-enhancing services and facilities ensures that citizens identify as stakeholders in the state of peace in their state, reducing risk of violent opposition or revolution and internal violence.

The process of socioeconomic development is the first step in a lengthy process of drastic social transformation, first encompassing greater levels of personal empowerment through improved socioeconomic conditions, which allows people to move away from ‘survival values’ and towards ‘self-expression values’. These democratic attitudes accelerate the formation of civic culture and greater political engagement and ideally results in a more stable state of democracy with increased societal resilience to conflict. As levels of economic opportunity and individual empowerment rise across the world, so too will citizens’ stakes in peace. Global progress and innovations in the fields of sustainable technologies, systems of governance and rule and the development of human capital should all thus be tracked with great interest, as they may all drive progress towards political and social development promoting societal resilience to conflict.

1. Among many others see Daniel Chirot and Robert King Merton, *Social Change in the Modern Era* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986). and Amartya Sen, *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny* (Manila, Philippines: The Asian Development Bank, 2000).

2. Harry Eckstein, “A Culturalist Theory of Political Change,” *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 3 (September 1988): 798.

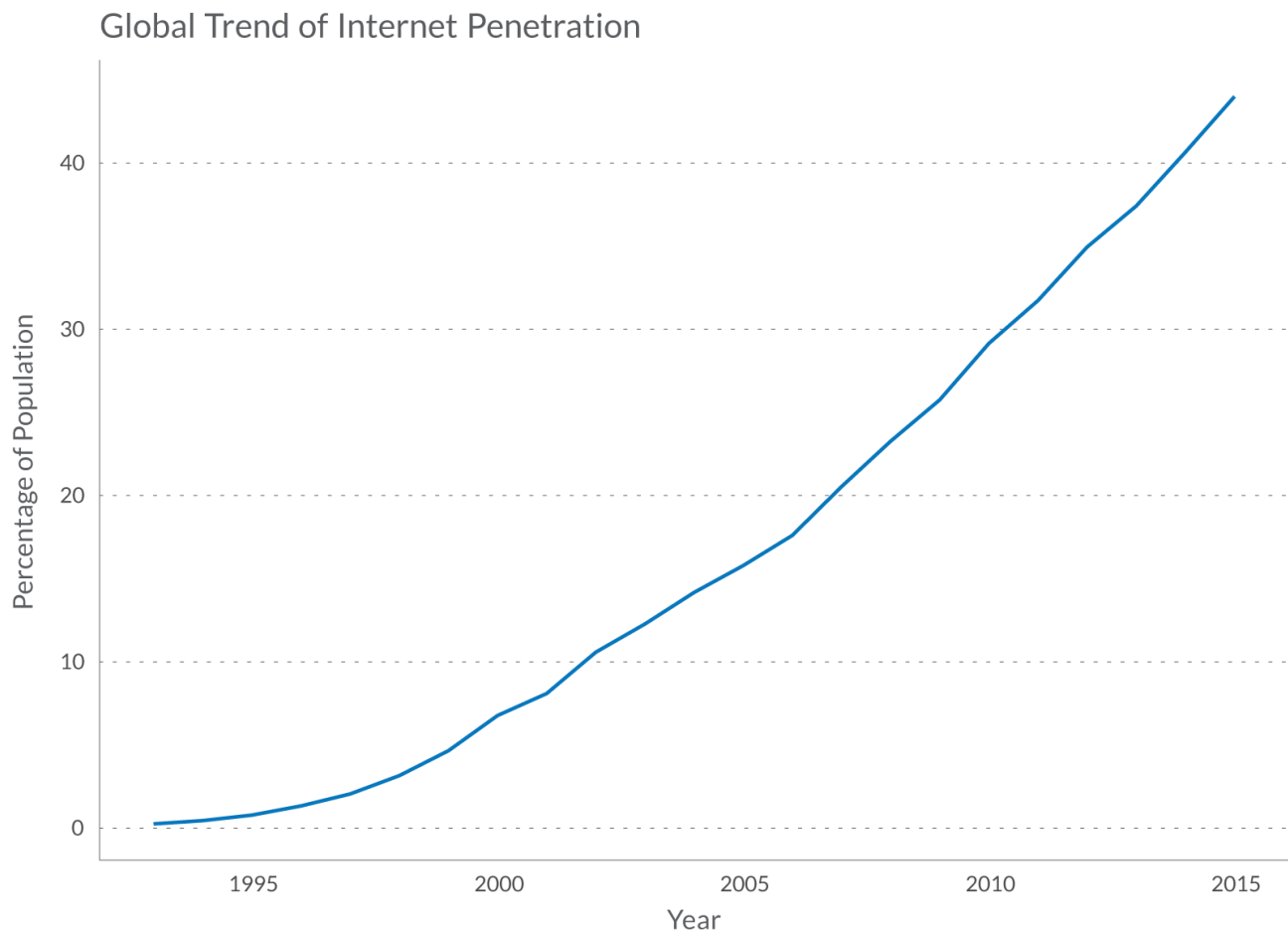
3. Chris Welzel, Ronald Inglehart and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, “Human Development as a Theory of Social Change: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,” *Euro J of Pol Sci* 42 (2003): 17.

4. Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).



## 5.2 The Power of Network Technologies: the Internet and Civil Empowerment and Mobilization

Figure 5.1 Global trend of internet penetration, 1993-2015<sup>4</sup>



The world's average number of Internet users per 100 people has grown from approximately one, to approximately 44 between 1995 and 2015 – meaning that virtually half the world's population today has regular access to the Internet.<sup>5</sup> In the European Union and the United States this number is higher, with approximately 80 and 75 percent of their respective total populations having access to the Internet in 2015. Access to the Internet is not nearly as widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East & North Africa region, but even there approximately 22 and 44 percent of the respective countries' populations had access to the Internet in 2015.<sup>6</sup> The disparity is particularly apparent in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, even though numerous stakeholders on the continent and elsewhere have recently shown greater interest in improving its Internet capabilities to match those of its peers – and for good reason.<sup>7</sup> A number of major private international companies like

4. The World Bank, "Internet Users (per 100 People)," *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Macharia, "Internet Access Is No Longer a Luxury | Africa Renewal Online," *AfricaRenewal*, April 2014, <http://www.un.org/>

Alphabet and Facebook are also laying the groundwork for new technologies and business models that offer even greater prospects for affordable universal internet access.

From a cultural perspective, the modern-day Internet offers innumerable opportunities for civil transnationalist perspectives to emerge at a grassroots level. It is also a key driving factor in the process of disintermediation and the disappearance of middle men, allowing the user to enjoy greater transparency and to buy products or services directly from providers. The Internet today has repositioned the user at the center of the polity and the economy and empowers them to act as both a consumer and a creator by breaking down traditional barriers to accessing tools and markets.

**The Internet today has repositioned the user at the center of the polity and the economy and empowers them to act as both a consumer and a creator by breaking down traditional barriers to accessing tools and markets.**

This process of disintermediation that has been facilitated by the rise of the Internet and mobile personal communication devices has numerous implications for individual empowerment and societal conflict resilience in the world today. Increased Internet usage provides greater access to education and participation in the global economy through improved English skills.<sup>8</sup> Online education resources and massive online open course (MOOC) platforms such as Khan Academy or Coursera offer high quality educational material at very little cost or for free. These resources have the benefit of empowering “especially women, children and youths all over the world” and can “address poverty, illiteracy, ill health, ignorance, unemployment, marginalization, [and] social segregation,” which typically limit access to educational resources.<sup>9</sup> The Internet also facilitates the extension of public and private services into areas that would often lack the necessary physical infrastructure for such services to be delivered efficiently.<sup>10</sup> An example of this is the M-Pesa mobile banking and financial transaction service that has become widely used in African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, which is further elaborated upon later in the chapter.

Digital technologies can act as accelerants to enhance the state of social inclusion in developing countries. Some initiatives have proposed using online mobile technology to identify and report counterfeit prescription drugs,<sup>11</sup> or report irregularities or criminal misbehavior during public elections.<sup>12</sup> By increasing investment in emerging technologies in developing countries, various financial, political and physical barriers that have long challenged socioeconomic development can be overcome. On top of the cases already mentioned, digital crowdsourcing platforms can create a virtual sense of community and connection through its participatory power,<sup>13</sup> improve government

africarenewal/magazine/april-2014/internet-access-no-longer-luxury. For a more critical perspective, see Maeve Shearlaw, “Facebook Lures Africa with Free Internet - but What Is the Hidden Cost?,” *The Guardian*, August 1, 2016, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/01/facebook-free-basics-internet-africa-mark-zuckerberg>.

8. Robert Pinon and Jon Haydon, “English Language Quantitative Indicators: Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan,” *A Custom Report Compiled by Euromonitor International for the British Council*, 2010, <http://teachingenglish.britishcouncil.org/cn/sites/teacheng/files/Euromonitor%20Report%20A4.pdf>.

9. Olu Jugede, “Open Learning for Development: Towards Empowerment and Transformation,” December 3, 2013, 4, <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/1156>.

10. The World Bank, *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends* (The World Bank, 2016), <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/978-1-4648-0671-1>.

11. Margaret Maringa, “A Mobile Application for Reporting Aggregate HIV Data: Case Study of HIV Clinics in Kajiado Kenya” (Strathmore University, 2016), <https://su-plus.strathmore.edu/handle/11071/4894>.

12. D.M.C.T.K. Dissanayake, “Election Complaint Tracking System” (University of Colombo School of Computing, 2016), <http://documents.ucsc.lk/jspui/handle/123456789/3784>.

13. Yuxiang Zhao and Qinghua Zhu, “Evaluation on Crowdsourcing Research: Current Status and Future Direction,” *Information Systems Frontiers* 16, no. 3 (July 1, 2014): 425, doi:10.1007/s10796-012-9350-4.

accountability and governance standards,<sup>14</sup> improve disaster management effectiveness,<sup>15</sup> and foster the growth of positive civic advocacy and activist attitudes.<sup>16</sup> The popularization and proliferation of digital mobile technologies and its subsequent incorporation into various public processes has strengthened the state of social inclusion in many ways and fosters the growth of a healthy and connected society that is more resilient to conflict.

The Internet's capacity to initiate change and provide new services that encourage public involvement is a key driver for improved governance in developing and developed countries alike. As the usage of the Internet becomes more common in developing countries, the delivery of these empowering services will become more regular and overcome key limiting factors that have prevented the delivery of comparable services in the physical world. The Internet holds incredible potential to level the global social and economic landscape and improve various social issues of privilege and circumstance. As the standard of goods and services provided to citizens in countries at risk of conflict increases and social and economic grievances decline as a result, citizens will hold greater stake in the state of peace within their communities, increasing overall conflict resilience while also narrowing socioeconomic inequalities across the world.

### 5.3 Financial Inclusion and Mobile Banking Systems

Although on average there is only one bank branch per 10,000 people in emerging economies, there are nearly 5,100 mobile phones for the same number of people.<sup>17</sup> As a result, many individuals have turned to decentralized mobile banking systems to gain access to crucial financial services. In 2014, nearly a third of all account holders in Sub-Saharan Africa reported having a mobile money account. In Kenya, this figure was as high as 58 percent and in Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda the figure was at a similarly high 35 percent.<sup>18</sup> The high mobile money account penetration in these countries paints a positive picture of consumer-driven changes to the financial landscape in developing countries that have traditionally lacked adequate financial infrastructure. Increasing citizen access to microfinance opportunities to match public demand can include demographics from across the entire social spectrum in the peacemaking and stabilization process and increase societal resilience to conflict through a direct mechanism of financial empowerment.

Many citizens and investors have turned towards disintermediated mobile banking models as a means to overcome some of the barriers that developing countries face in expanding their financial services to its population in remote and typically rural areas. In Kenya, the Vodafone-backed mobile banking and money transfer initiative M-Pesa is used by over 21.8 million people – nearly half of the Kenya's entire population. Over 2.8 trillion KES (equivalent to 25,843,631,551.99 EUR as of December

**In Kenya, the Vodafone-backed mobile banking and money transfer initiative M-Pesa is used by over 21.8 million people – nearly half of the Kenya's entire population.**

14. Maja Bott and Gregor Young, "The Role of Crowdsourcing for Better Governance in International Development," *Praxis: The Fletcher Journal of Human Security* 27, no. 1 (2012): 47–70.

15. Billy Haworth and Eleanor Bruce, "A Review of Volunteered Geographic Information for Disaster Management," *Geography Compass* 9, no. 5 (May 1, 2015): 237–50, doi:10.1111/gec3.12213.

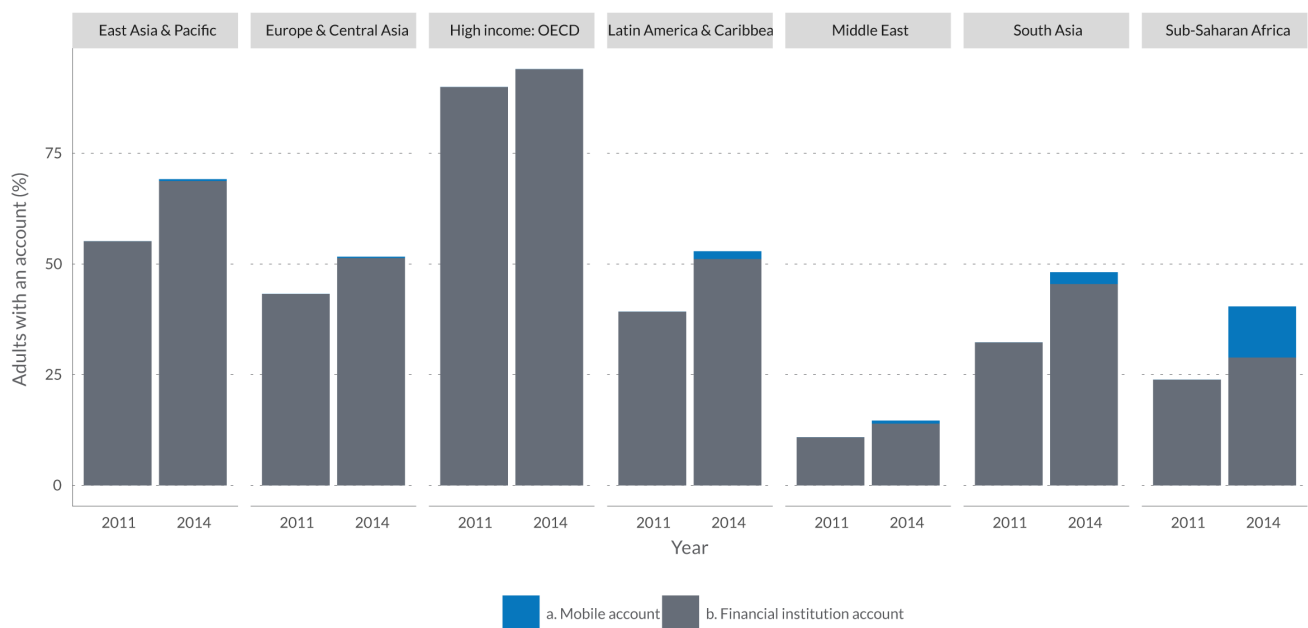
16. Chelsea Young, "HarassMap: Using Crowdsourced Data to Map Sexual Harassment in Egypt," *Technology Innovation Management Review* 4, no. 3 (2014): 7.

17. Felix Huefner and Arpitha Bykere, "Financial Inclusion: A Financial Industry Perspective" (The Institute of International Finance, March 11, 2015), 3.

18. Asli Demirgüç-Kunt et al., "The Global Findex Database 2014: Measuring Financial Inclusion around the World," *Policy Research Working Paper* 7255 (2015): 12, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2594973](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2594973).

2016) were transacted through mobile banking in Kenya in the past year.<sup>19</sup> With a ten percent excise duty levied on all mobile money transfer services, mobile banking has not only improved the state of financial inclusion in Kenya, but has also become an important source of revenue for the Kenyan government. M-Pesa's enabled benefits such as increased velocity of financial transactions, increased public safety due to the availability of more secure payment methods and an improved capacity to manage household funds have a straightforward effect on improving the quality of life of its users. Researchers have also noted its applicative value towards curtailing national and international money laundering and terrorist financing efforts.<sup>20</sup> More information related to mobile banking trends can be found in Figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2 Regional trends in bank account penetration, 2011 and 2014<sup>21</sup>**



This trend of using mobile technologies to address infrastructural deficiencies has also been embraced and transposed to augment other e-governance systems in Kenya. An example of this is the Kenyan national police's Public Complaint Rapid Response Unit (PCRRU) initiative,<sup>22</sup> which allows citizens to engage in dialogues with police officials and formally lodge complaints via social media platforms, email and SMS in order to improve police accountability values through greater public involvement.

Improving national microfinance capacities among disadvantaged populations in developing countries accelerates economic recovery in countries recovering from

**Improving national microfinance capacities among disadvantaged populations in developing countries accelerates economic recovery in countries recovering from conflict.**

19. Kiarie Njoroge, "REPORT: This Is What Would Happen to Kenya's Economy If M-Pesa Was to Collapse," *Nairobi News*, November 30, 2016, <http://nairobibusiness.nation.co.ke/news/treasury-report-reveals-fears-m-pesas-critical-role-economy/>.

20. Mercy W. Buku and Michael W. Meredith, "Safaricom and M-Pesa in Kenya: Financial Inclusion and Financial Integrity," *Wash. J. Tech. & Arts* 8 (2012): 375.

21. Demircuc-Kunt, Asli, Leora F. Klapper, Dorothe Singer, and Peter Van Oudheusden. "The Global Findex Database 2014: Measuring Financial Inclusion around the World." *Policy Research Working Paper* 7255 (2015): 13, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2594973](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2594973)

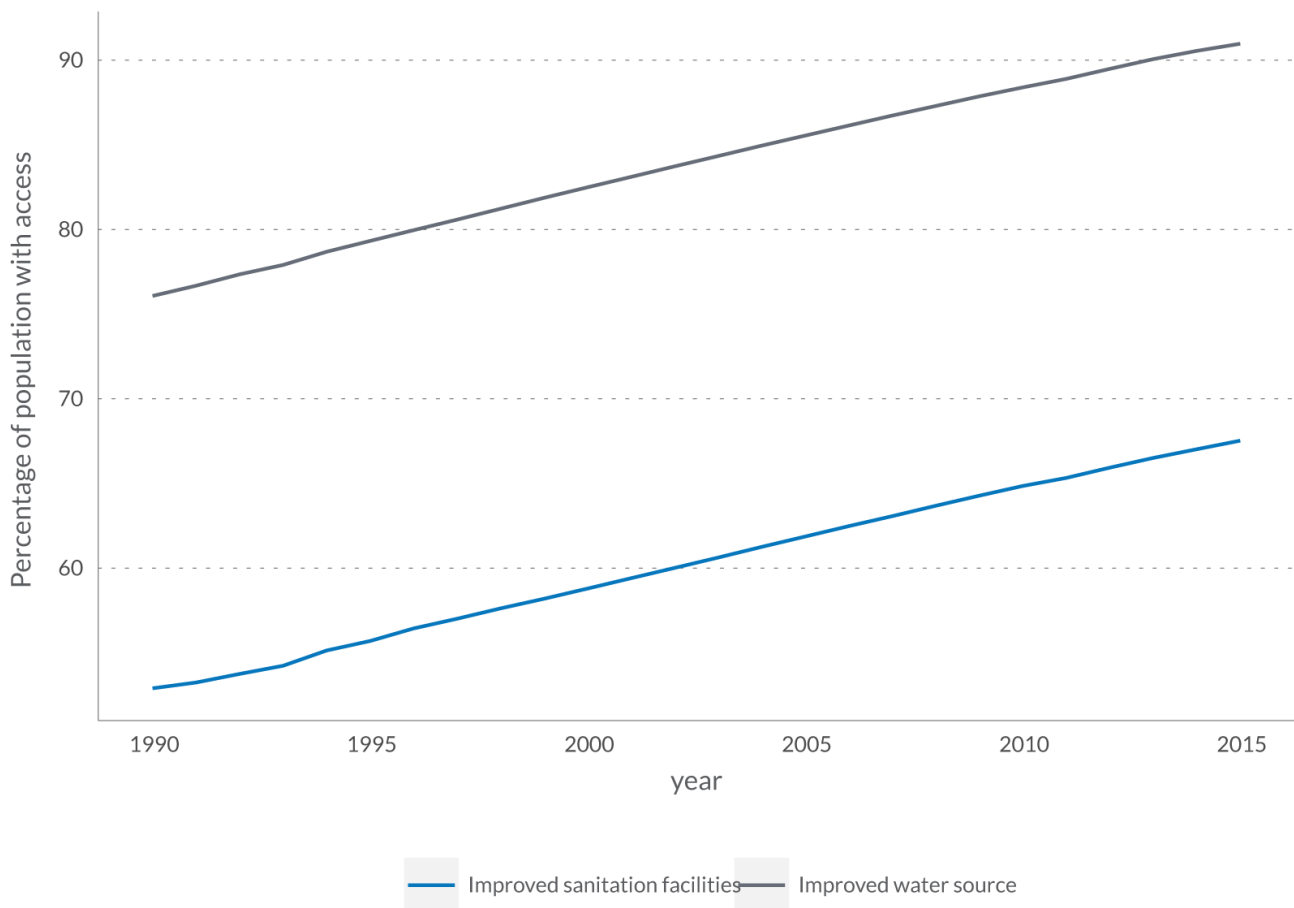
22. Nigeria Police Force, "Public Complaint Rapid Response Unit (PCRRU)," 2016, <http://npf.gov.ng/complaint/>.

conflict,<sup>23</sup> and can provide a means of exchange in regions and areas in which currency circulation is low or is in otherwise short supply.<sup>24</sup> Overall, the improvement of financial inclusive services and policies – most notably through disintermediated mobile finance technologies – empowers citizens by facilitating greater citizen access to critical economic opportunities, lessens social and economic inequalities between rural and urban areas and provides livelihood-enhancing measures that can drive a society's improved resilience to conflict.

## 5.4 Access to Improved Water and Sanitary Facilities

**Figure 5.3 Global trend of access to improved drinking water sources, 1990-2015<sup>25</sup>**

**Global trend of access to improved sanitation facilities, 1990-2015<sup>26</sup>**



23. responsAbility, "Microfinance and Post-Conflict Development" (Zurich, 2013), <http://www.responsability.com/funding/data/docs/en/1562/Discussion-Papaer-2013-Microfinance-and-Post-Conflict-Development.pdf>.

24. Tilman Ehrbeck, "The Potential of Electronic Money for Social Good," *CGAP Blog*, October 5, 2012, <https://www.cgap.org/blog/potential-electronic-money-social-good>.

25. United Nations Statistics Division, and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Proportion of the Population Using Improved Drinking Water Sources, Total." Millennium Development Goals Indicators, 2015. <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx?IndicatorId=0&SeriesId=665>.

26. United Nations Statistics Division, and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "Proportion of the Population Using Improved Sanitation Facilities, Total." Millennium Development Goals Indicators, 2015. <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx?IndicatorId=0&SeriesId=668>.



Nearly ten percent of the world population have gained access to improved drinking water sources in the past fifteen years. Access to improved sanitation facilities have also risen during this time, increasing by nearly eight percent between 1990 and 2015. The improvement of critical water-reliant services and facilities such as these reduces the risk of disease transmission and greatly enhances the livelihoods of citizens in water-poor areas.

The economic value of water and other natural resources are abundantly clear to corporations and investors, however the financial and social benefits of investment in its personal uses – such as drinking and sanitation – are often left unsaid by all but humanitarian and sustainable development groups. The World Health Organization estimates that for every \$1 invested in safe drinking water and sanitation, there is a return of approximately \$3-34 depending on the region and technology.<sup>27</sup> For example, in 2011 the United Nations Environment Programme's investments in improved water and sanitation facilities in Africa had an economic return potential of nearly \$28.4 billion a year.<sup>28</sup>

Improving private access to safe and sanitary sources of water also has numerous benefits on both the societal and the individual level. Like most vital, or otherwise valuable resources, water deficits and shortages can be a powerful driver of conflict. In 2000 for example, the Yemeni government sent 700 soldiers to subdue fighting that had killed six and injured sixty and had erupted due to ownership and access rights to a nearby freshwater spring.<sup>29</sup> In 2001 in Pakistan, civil unrests erupted over water shortages caused by long period of drought, lasting from March until the summer. Other modern instances of conflict stemming from water access have occurred in Bolivia,<sup>30</sup> China,<sup>31</sup> Ethiopia,<sup>32</sup> Kenya,<sup>33</sup> Tajikistan,<sup>34</sup> and various other water-poor countries in the world. As global demand for water is projected to rise drastically in the next few decades in the face of greater industrial and personal usage, innovative solutions are needed to manage what is a finite, but very valuable resource.

Climate change-induced effects may have greater impact upon the poor, who are typically more dependent on agriculture and have more perilous access to water.<sup>35</sup> The disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of access to improved water and sanitary facilities remains especially striking in the face of these risks (See Figure 5.4) and demonstrates how much ground still must be

27. World Water Assessment Programme, *The United Nations World Water Development Report 3: Water in a Changing World* (Paris: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009).

28. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), "In the Transition to a Green Economy," *Unep.org*, August 25, 2011, <http://www.unep.org/research4policy/policybriefs/KNOSSOSPOLICYPAPERASTANA/astrefer/tabid/78512/Default.aspx>.

29. M.H. Al-Qadhi, "Thirst for Water and Development Leads to Conflict in Yemen," 2003.

30. Rocio Bustamante et al., "Livelihoods in Conflict: Disputes over Water for Household-Level Productive Uses in Tarata, Bolivia," January 1, 2004, <https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research-outputs/livelihoods-in-conflict-disputes-over-water-for-household-level-productive-uses-in-tarata-bolivia>. P. Moriarty, J. Butterworth and B. van Koppen, "In Beyond Domestic: Case Studies on Poverty and Productive Uses of Water at the Household Level," *IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre*, 2004, 137–152.

31. Louisa Lim, "China Tries to Calm Dam Protests," *BBC News*, November 18, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4021901.stm>; Ibid.; Luis Ramirez, "China's Sichuan Province Tense in Aftermath of Violent Anti-Dam Protests," *VOA*, October 29, 2009, <http://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-china-sichuan-province-tense-in-aftermath-of-violent-anti-dam-protests-67484397/386462.html>.

32. *BBC News*, "Dozens Dead in Somalia Clashes," June 12, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4073063.stm>; E Wax, "At Least 16 Killed in Somalia over Water, Pasture Battles," August 6, 2006; Emily Wax, "Dying for Water in Somalia's Drought," *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2006, sec. World, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/13/AR2006041302116.html>.

33. *BBC News*, "Thousands Flee Kenyan Water Clash," January 24, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4201483.stm>; A. Ryu, "Water Rights Dispute Sparks Ethnic Clashes in Kenya's Rift Valley," *VOA*, 2005, <http://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2005-03-21-voa28/301973.html>; M. Lane, "Personal Communication to P. Gleick Regarding Conflicts in Northern Kenya," *Sunday Nation Newspaper*, July 17, 2005.

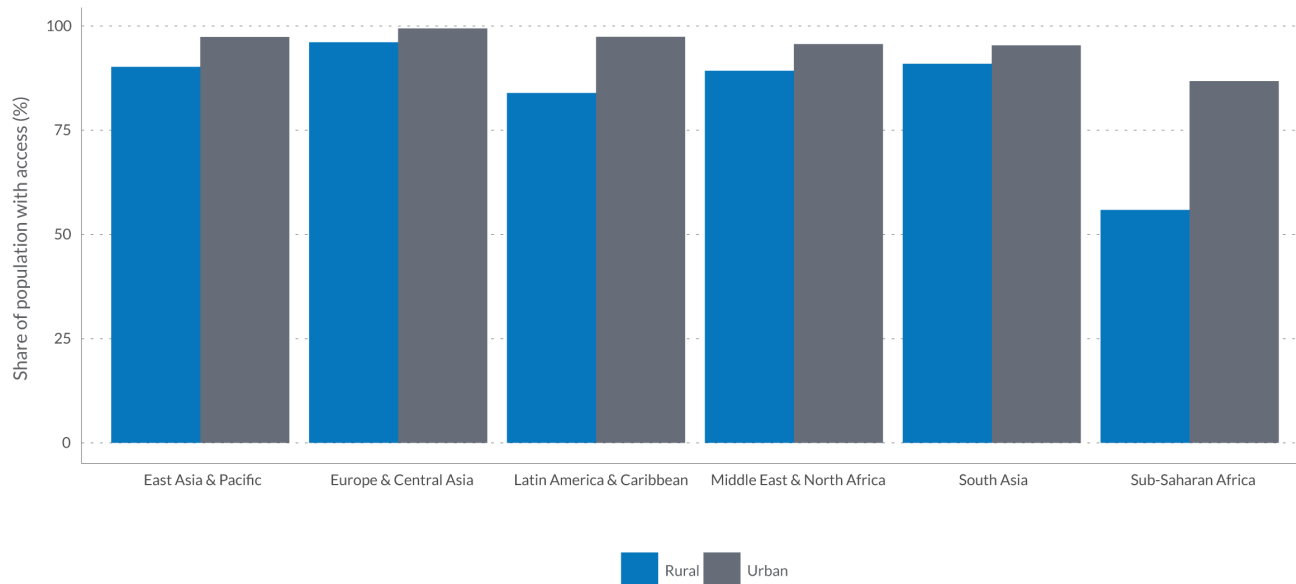
34. R. Kozhevnikov, "Uzbekistan Resumes Gas Supplies to Tajikistan," *Reuters*, April 16, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/tajikistan-gas-idUSL6E8FG3YL20120416>.

35. The World Bank, *Inclusive Green Growth: The Pathway to Sustainable Development* (The World Bank, 2012), <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/978-0-8213-9551-6>.

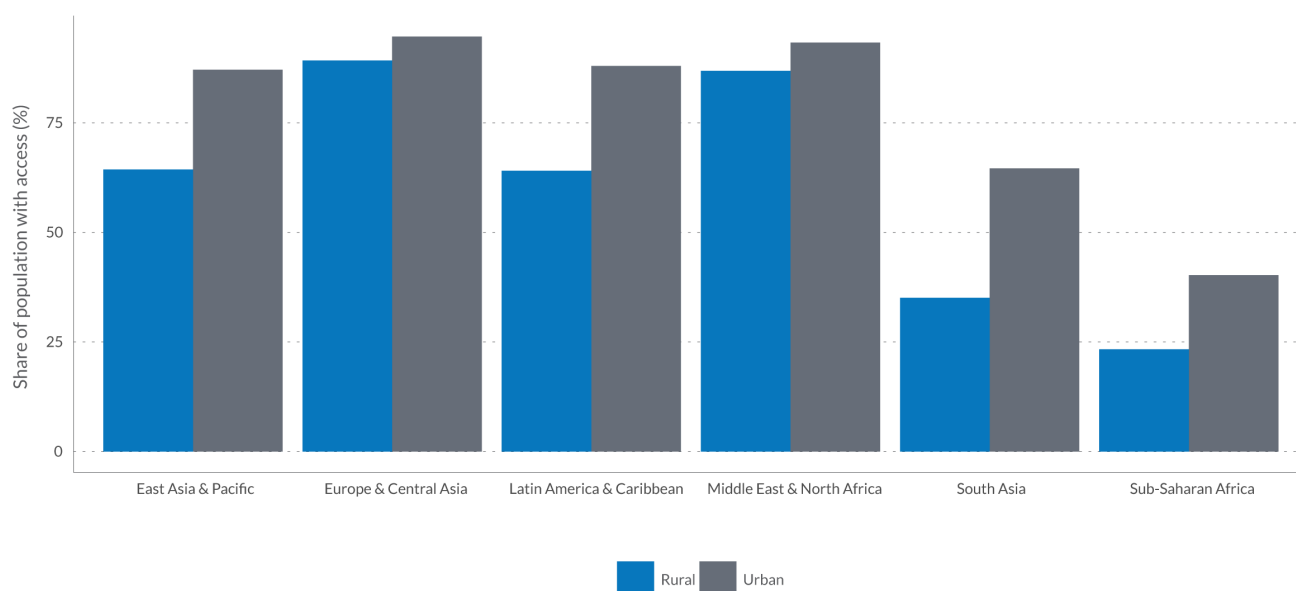
covered by future development projects and initiatives.

**Figure 5.4 Regional urban-rural disparities in access to improved water sources and sanitation facilities**<sup>36</sup>

a. Access to an improved water source (higher in urban areas)



b. Access to an improved sanitation (higher in urban areas)



The improvement of social services and facilities to ensure equitable and safe access to water directly contributes to the improvement of human capital in developing countries. Vital social, educational and economic opportunities are often too costly for individuals who must attend to

36. The World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2015/2016: Development Goals in an Era of Demographic Change* (The World Bank, 2015), <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/978-1-4648-0669-8>.

household chores such as collecting and cleaning water. With greater access to safe drinking water sources and improved sanitary facilities and thereby breaking down common barriers to full empowerment, individuals can devote themselves more fully to achieving their social and economic potential. Furthermore, lack of access to clean water sources increases susceptibility to infectious disease in both rural areas and urban slums both on an individual and community level. Better access to safe water sources is also associated with lower infant mortality,<sup>37</sup> and increased productivity and household income levels.<sup>38</sup> As water-related issues are projected to increase in the face of growing global demand and climate change-induced effects, it is also important to eliminate water shortage concerns as a potential source of popular grievance.

**Vital social, educational and economic opportunities are often too costly for individuals who must attend to household chores such as collecting and cleaning water.**

New trends related to water purification technologies, such as micro-cleaners and personal water purifying systems, once again follow the growing norm of disintermediation and empower citizens to strengthen their own livelihood-enhancing capacities. Ceramic water filters produced by the United Nations and Water and Sanitation Program have increased access to clean drinking water in Cambodian households at extremely low costs. Using ceramic water filters, the cost of providing safe drinking water per family is approximately \$0.0011-\$0.00027 USD per liter, making it accessible to all but the very poorest of families.<sup>39</sup> Products such as these will allow for citizens to make individual strides to improve their livelihoods in the future.

Overall, the improvement of access to safe water sources and improved sanitation facilities and services can pervasively influence social inclusion and accelerate the development of human capital in developing countries while improving levels of economic prosperity. This process will heighten the stake that citizens have in maintaining peace at both a local and national scale and thereby increase overall resilience to conflict.

## 5.5 Pro-People Power: Electricity Generation from Renewable Sources

As uncertainty continues to distress the hydrocarbon industry as a result of the plummeting of fossil fuel commodities in 2015, renewable energy technologies have continued to increase their market share. Global investment in renewable energy sources rose 5% to a total of \$285.9 billion last year. This figure is well above the previous annual record of \$278.5 billion in 2011, during the peak of the 'green stimulus' programs.<sup>40</sup> As can be seen above, total electricity generation from renewable energy sources has more than doubled in the past 35 years. Today, investment in renewable energy sources is no longer a luxury and developing countries now invest more in renewable technologies than developed nations.

**Today, investment in renewable energy sources is no longer a luxury and developing countries now invest more in renewable technologies than developed nations.**

37. Annette Prüss et al., "Estimating the Burden of Disease from Water, Sanitation and Hygiene at a Global Level," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110, no. 5 (May 2002): 537–542. See also Marianne Fay et al., "Achieving Child-Health-Related Millennium Development Goals: The Role of Infrastructure," *World Development* 33, no. 8 (August 2005): 1267–84, doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2005.03.001.

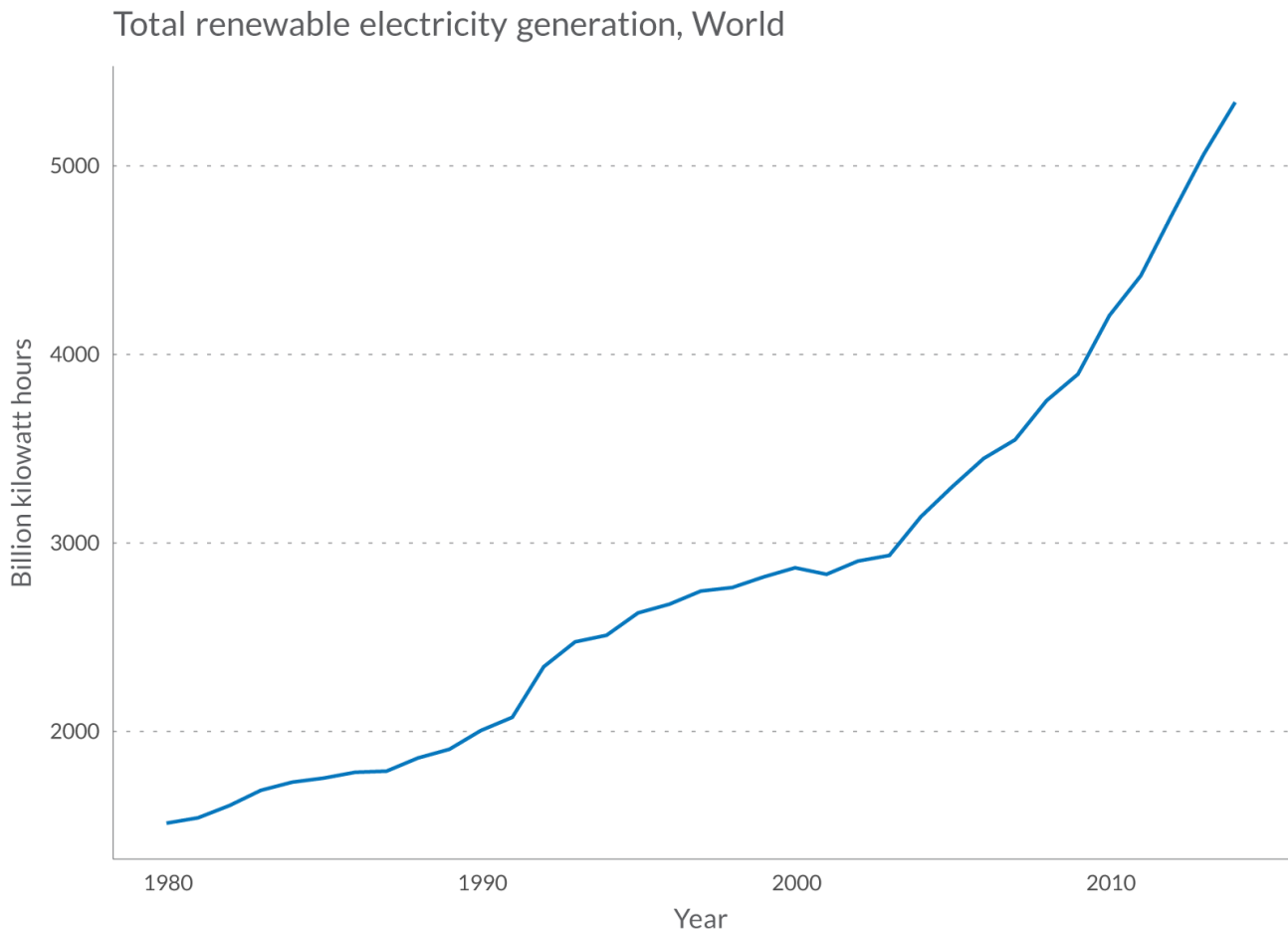
38. The World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2015/2016*.

39. Joe Brown, Mark Sobsey and Sorya Proum, "Use of Ceramic Water Filters in Cambodia," WSP Field Notes, August 2007, 14, [http://www.potterswithoutborders.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/926200724252\\_eap\\_cambodia\\_filter.pdf](http://www.potterswithoutborders.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/926200724252_eap_cambodia_filter.pdf).

40. Frankfurt School-UNEP Centre/BNEF, "Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2016" (UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economic (DTIE), 2016), 12, [http://fs-unep-centre.org/sites/default/files/publications/globaltrendsrenewableenergyinvestment2016lowres\\_0.pdf](http://fs-unep-centre.org/sites/default/files/publications/globaltrendsrenewableenergyinvestment2016lowres_0.pdf).

In 2015 the developing world invested almost \$156 billion last year, while developed countries invested around \$130 billion.<sup>41</sup> For more trends in renewable energy investment see Figure 5.6.

**Figure 5.5 Global Trend of Access to Electricity from Renewable Energy Sources, 1980-2015.**<sup>42</sup>



Developing energy infrastructure outside of established frameworks and institutions can circumvent barriers to progress related to corruption, rent seeking or inefficiency. As some renewable energy sources have followed a largely decentralized model of development as a result of grassroots or foreign investment initiatives,<sup>43</sup> off-grid electricity sources such as solar photovoltaics have become one of the best investment opportunities for sustainable development initiatives today. Deutsche Bank predicts that 80 percent of global renewable energy market could achieve grid parity in the next couple of years at the current rate of growth,<sup>44</sup> meaning that costs associated with renewable energy production and consumption will be less than or level with those associated with traditional hydrocarbon sources.

41. Ibid., 15.

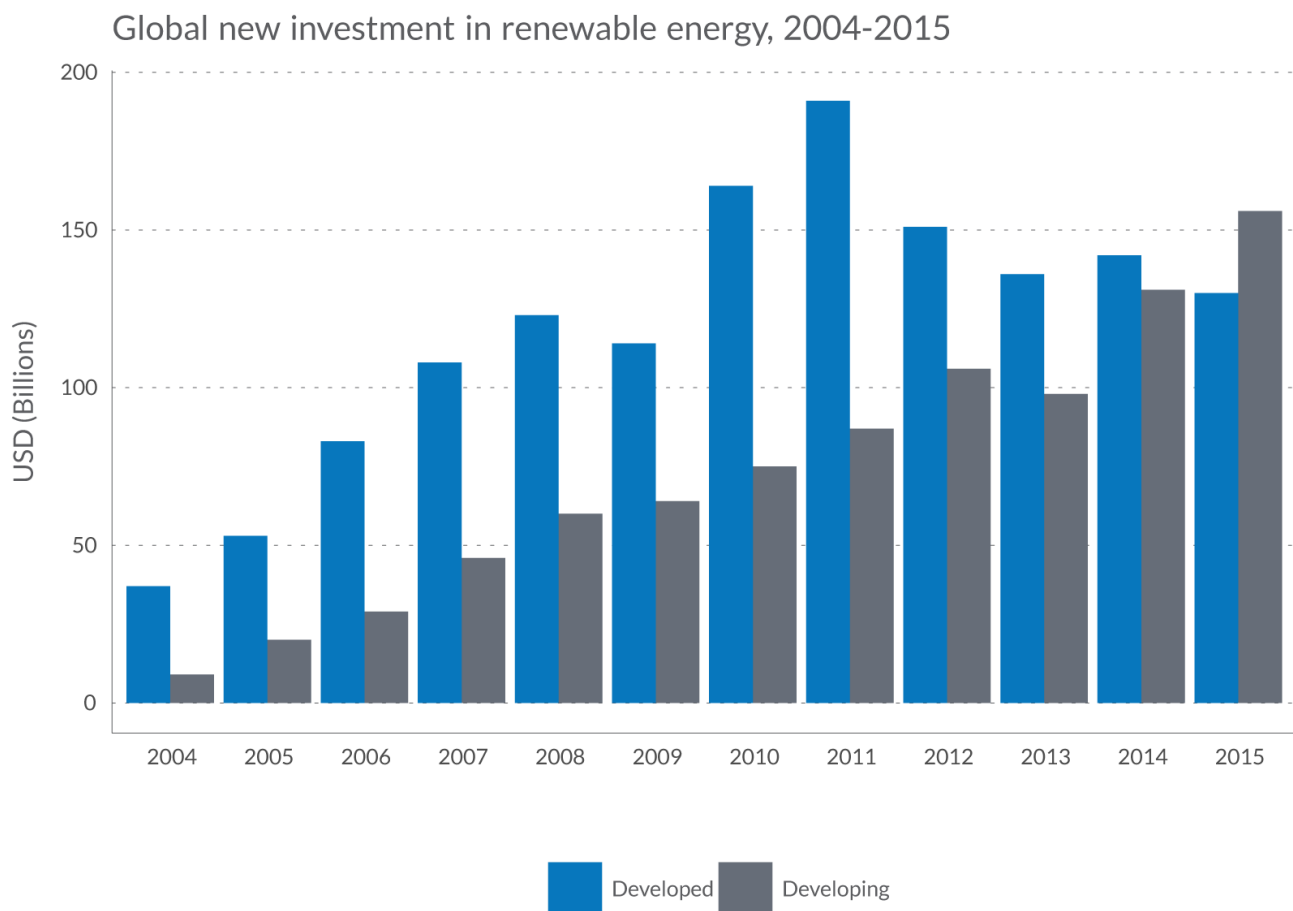
42. The U.S. Energy Information Administration. "Net Generation from Renewable Sources: Total (All Sectors), 2005 - 2015," 2015. [http://www.eia.gov/electricity/annual/html/epa\\_03\\_01\\_b.html](http://www.eia.gov/electricity/annual/html/epa_03_01_b.html).

43. Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland, "Renewable Energy Report: Part 1 - Implementation 2003-2013," 2014, 28, <http://english.rvo.nl/sites/default/files/2014/09/Renewable%20energy%20report.pdf>. See also Frankfurt School-UNEP Centre/BNEF, "Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2016," 36.

44. Bleich Katherine and Rafael Dantas Guimaraes, "Renewable Infrastructure Investment Handbook: A Guide for Institutional Investors," Industry Agenda, December 2016, 6, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Renewable\\_Infrastructure\\_Investment\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Renewable_Infrastructure_Investment_Handbook.pdf).

Increasing reliance upon renewable energy resources as a means for electricity production and subsequent consumption not only curtails growing risks associated with carbon emissions and climate change, but also can expand job markets,<sup>45</sup> improve public health,<sup>46</sup> safety and education,<sup>47</sup> improve living standards,<sup>48</sup> and strengthen infrastructural resilience against external shocks and natural disasters.<sup>49</sup> The development of national energy industries also boosts technical expertise among workers in developing nations, providing them with the skills and opportunities to better fulfill their social and economic potential.<sup>50</sup>

**Figure 5.6 Renewable Energy Investment Trends in Developing and Developed Countries, 2004-2015.**<sup>51</sup>



45. The International Renewable Energy Agency, *Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2016*, (The International Renewable Energy Agency, 2016), [http://www.se4all.org/sites/default/files/IRENA\\_RE\\_Jobs\\_Annual\\_Review\\_2016.pdf](http://www.se4all.org/sites/default/files/IRENA_RE_Jobs_Annual_Review_2016.pdf).

46. The World Health Organization, "Health Indicators of Sustainable Energy," 2012, [http://www.who.int/hia/green\\_economy/indicators\\_energy1.pdf](http://www.who.int/hia/green_economy/indicators_energy1.pdf).

47. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Electricity and Education: The Benefits, Barriers and Recommendations for Achieving the Electrification of Primary and Secondary Schools," December 2014, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1608Electricity%20and%20Education.pdf>.

48. P. J. Turyareeba, "Renewable Energy: Its Contribution to Improved Standards of Living and Modernisation of Agriculture in Uganda," *Renewable Energy* 24, no. 3 (2001): 453–457.

49. Eliza Hotchkiss, "How Solar PV Can Support Disaster Resiliency," *National Renewable Energy Laboratory Blog*, February 3, 2015, [https://www.nrel.gov/tech\\_deployment/state\\_local\\_governments/blog/how-solar-pv-can-support-disaster-resiliency](https://www.nrel.gov/tech_deployment/state_local_governments/blog/how-solar-pv-can-support-disaster-resiliency).

50. The International Renewable Energy Agency, *Renewable Energy Benefits: Measuring the Economics* (The International Renewable Energy Agency, Abu Dhabi, 2016), 11, [http://www.irena.org/DocumentDownloads/Publications/IRENA\\_Measuring-the-Economics\\_2016.pdf](http://www.irena.org/DocumentDownloads/Publications/IRENA_Measuring-the-Economics_2016.pdf).

51. Ibid.



The prospect of foreign investment in developing countries' renewable energy capabilities also provides economic partnership and development opportunities for corporations, skilled workers and aspiring young professionals in partner countries. However the introduction of renewable energy sources into energy economies nonetheless requires high amounts of capital to fund new projects found at local to national levels. To counter this, technological miniaturization and off-grid, decentralized electricity generation trends have gradually enabled energy consumers to also act as energy producers and have also taken advantage of the disintermediation process to foster greater individual empowerment in developing countries.

Micro- or nano-grids can increase resilience to external shocks that could potentially damage energy grids and deprive regions of electricity. This is particularly important in the face of growing resource scarcity and climate change-related issues. The implementation of a decentralized energy and water management system featuring a 2,500 cubic meter water tower in northern Cameroon that uses energy from solar PV panels to pump water from an underground reservoir has provided almost 80 percent of the inhabitants of six nearby villages with clean drinking water.<sup>52</sup> Initiatives such as these that transform citizens into energy producers, reduce reliance on large corporations and greatly accelerate improvements in individual empowerment as a result.

Renewable energy provides investors, future workers and its stakeholders with new development opportunities that are less exposed to the volatility of the hydrocarbon energy market today. In developing countries where agriculture remains a major source of income for the majority of the population, decentralized renewable energy systems raise levels of empowerment, improve quality of life and modernize agricultural processes to increase efficiency. Along with increases in the quality of life and economic prosperity, citizens gain greater stake in fair governance practices and the state of peace, which raises societal levels of conflict resilience and enables further expansion of other livelihood-enhancing services and opportunities into new communities.

**Renewable energy provides investors, future workers and its stakeholders with new development opportunities that are less exposed to the volatility of the hydrocarbon energy market today.**

## 5.6 Breaking Barriers to Build Them: Gender Equality and Societal Conflict Resilience

Global levels of gender inequality are slowly declining. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Index, considerable progress has been made in closing the gender gap. The index distinguishes four core domains – economic, education, health and political – to measure gender inequality. Over the past ten years, while the domain of health has slightly decreased, the remaining three domains have trended upward. The development of inclusive employment practices with specific regard to the employment and fair treatment of women in the labor force has been furthered by numerous supranational and intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation and the European Union. However, this institutional attention paid towards women's rights is a privilege that today remains disproportionately concentrated in the West and even there has not led to full gender equality. In developed and developing countries alike, women today continue to be excluded from positions often due to social or cultural acceptance

52. Elias Ntungwe Ngalame, "Decentralized Energy Management Brings Changes in Power and Poverty Struggle in Africa," *Discourse Media*, August 29, 2016, <http://powerstruggle.discoursemedia.org/the-long-tail/decentralized-energy-management-africa/>.

factors. Today it is estimated that women contribute to 52 percent of global work and men to 48 percent.<sup>53</sup> Despite this, gender discrimination continues to persist in even the most developed societies – in the United States, the salaries of female financial specialists are only 66 percent of their male counterparts.<sup>54</sup> To make things worse, as of 2015, only 71 countries currently have legislative measures in place ensuring nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring practices.<sup>55</sup>

Female participation in the labor force has been linked to increased productivity and innovation and improved levels of domestic spending on children and youth.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, women's collective agency, when improved, can drive institutional change to encompass a wider representation of inclusive and positive values and norms. Greater rates of female representation in the labor force, high levels of socioeconomic development and improved cultural attitudes towards women in developed countries have resulted in greater political representation of women in national legislatures.<sup>57</sup> Increasing female representation in legislative bodies in turn gives rise to developments promoting a healthier family and work time balance,<sup>58</sup> and prevents the development of an 'inequality gap', which can restrict future generations of women from accessing a fair education or equal economic opportunities and in turn inhibits their ability to make informed decisions and fulfill their social and economic potential.

Increasing female participation in security, governance, sustainable development and peace negotiations ensures a more diverse set of perspectives and facilitates greater innovation in the policymaking process. It has even been argued that due to their "greater experience with nurturing and human relations," women are better in conflict resolution and group decision-making and have the potential to transform world politics through their greater capacity to create and maintain peace.<sup>59</sup> We all stand to benefit from increased levels of female empowerment as more women gain greater access to social, political and economic opportunities and attitudes towards greater female participation in key societal processes gradually become more positive. As women become more empowered members of society, civic demands for fair democratic representation will also rise alongside their improved socioeconomic conditions.

## 5.7 Ensuring Social Inclusion in the Global War Against Poverty

In 1990, approximately 37.1% of the world population was living below the poverty threshold. In 2015, this proportion fell to approximately 9.6%.<sup>60</sup> This remarkable progress is a result of a unified global effort to curb inequality – which is inherently tied to poverty – and increase quality of life for citizens across the world. The elimination of poverty is the first of the United Nation's Sustainable

53. The United Nations Development Programme, "Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development" (New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme, 2015), 11, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_human\\_development\\_report.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf).

54. Ibid., 5.

55. The World Bank, "Law Mandates Nondiscrimination Based on Gender in Hiring (1=yes; 0=no)," *The World Bank*, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.LAW.NODC.HR>.

56. The World Bank, *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (The World Bank, 2011), <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/978-0-8213-8810-5>.

57. Richard E. Matland, "Women's Representation in National Legislatures: Developed and Developing Countries," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (February 1998): 109, doi:10.2307/440217.

58. The World Bank, *World Development Report 2012*, 35.

59. Joshua S Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 41–43.

60. The World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2015/2016*.

Development Goals and aims to end global poverty by 2030.<sup>61</sup> The World Bank has also announced a similar initiative and also has outlined 2030 as a target date.<sup>62</sup>

On a societal level, poverty and social inequality are detrimental to economic growth, weaken social cohesion and can potentially drive conflicts due to increased political and social tensions. Enhanced livelihoods provide citizens with a sense of purpose and an incentive to avoid crime and violence.<sup>63</sup> Food scarcity in impoverished communities can also be a source of conflict and projects providing better and more stable supplies of food have been shown to contribute positively to peace and security.<sup>64</sup> Impoverished communities are also less likely to be affected by the aforementioned peace drivers. Women and youth are more likely to be excluded from various economic opportunities, the Internet and its related services become more challenging to access and financial inclusion measures are less likely to be effective. In many cases, poverty acts as a blanket inhibitor of the effects of positive drivers of peace by excluding individuals from the benefits of socioeconomic development.

The considerable attention given to ending extreme poverty today is due to its diverse and destructive manifestations that drastically impact the livelihood and quality of life of extremely poor people. As a result of poverty, over 700 million people in the world cannot fulfill their most basic needs and are prevented from participating fully within society. Furthermore, despite recent gains, average within-country inequality is greater now than 25 years ago and the income shares of top income groups expand at rates faster than those of lower income groups.<sup>65</sup>

**As a result of poverty, over 700 million people in the world cannot fulfill their most basic needs and are prevented from participating fully within society.**

Several instances of using economic growth to expand economic opportunities and enhance prosperity across all social groups demonstrate how lingering symptoms of poverty can be avoided. The Malaysian government for example has made various micro-entrepreneurial schemes and microfinancing opportunities available to Malaysian women through financial institutions such as Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia and TEKUN Nasional, which, next to economic prosperity, promotes social inclusion and gender inequality. Furthermore, the involvement of international experts with specialized knowledge can power environmentally-friendly development. For example, environmental rehabilitation and promotion of sustainable food production have been shown to reduce poverty and food scarcity and present a possibility for greater individual empowerment and enhanced peace-building opportunities.<sup>66</sup> Sustainable projects and initiatives such as these can be paired with poverty alleviating measures to create an environmentally-aware mindset among communities in developing countries and increase demand for skilled labor.

61. The United Nations, "No Poverty: Why It Matters," August 2016, 1, [http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1\\_Why-it-Matters\\_Poverty\\_2p.pdf](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1_Why-it-Matters_Poverty_2p.pdf).

62. The World Bank, "World Bank President Outlines Strategy to End Poverty, Welcomes New Development Partners," *The World Bank*, April 7, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/04/07/world-bank-president-strategy-end-poverty-new-development-partners>.

63. Andreas Wenger and Daniel Mockli, "The Untapped Potential of the Business Sector," January 3, 2004, [https://www.riener.com/title/Conflict\\_Prevention\\_The\\_Untapped\\_Potential\\_of\\_the\\_Business\\_Sector](https://www.riener.com/title/Conflict_Prevention_The_Untapped_Potential_of_the_Business_Sector).

64. See Emmy Simmons, Emmy Simmons, "Harvesting Peace: Food Security, Conflict and Cooperation," *Wilson Center*, September 10, 2013, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/harvesting-peace-food-security-conflict-and-cooperation>. But also think of Amartya Sen's famous finding that no famine has ever occurred in a democracy. Amartya Sen, "Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation - Oxford Scholarship," January 20, 1983, <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/0198284632.001.0001/acprof-9780198284635>.

65. The World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity Flagship 2016* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2016), [https://works.bepress.com/aparajita\\_goyal/33/](https://works.bepress.com/aparajita_goyal/33/).

66. Petter Gleditsch and Indra De Soysa, "To Cultivate Peace: Agriculture in a World of Conflict," *Wilson Center*, July 7, 2011, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/to-cultivate-peace-agriculture-world-conflict>.

Overall, reducing global poverty levels through development efforts can greatly enhance the livelihoods of disadvantaged citizens in both developing and developed countries. Further measures to enhance social inclusion will thereby enable citizens to participate fully within society and fulfill their potential. As poverty reduces the possibility of the above mentioned positive developments from reaching citizens through a process of social exclusion, its reduction will improve access to livelihood enhancing services, boost citizen empowerment and quality of life and thereby strengthen conflict resilience at a societal level.

## 5.8 Change Acceleration in the Modern Era

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The road ahead might seem long, especially in the face of pressures related to a growing world population and climate change. When gauging our range of possibility in the long-term and the means through which we must seek to attain them in the short-term, we must take into consideration the rate of change that humankind has seen throughout history. Ray Kurzweil's 'Law of Accelerating Returns'<sup>67</sup> postulates that diverse technological developmental processes have progressed at an exponential rate, with the overall rate of progress doubling per decade. This means that our potential to drive change in the long-term will reach levels unfathomable to us today.

This novel understanding of our rapidly-evolving technological capabilities presents an exciting possibility for the current state of socio-economic development. Technologies driving social and financial inclusion, access to vital resources such as water or electricity, improved governance mechanisms and civil empowerment may improve drastically and greatly accelerate the rate of change achievable in the coming years. While factors such as the Internet, or technological miniaturization and nanotechnology are contemporary examples of accelerants enabling rapid change, new technologies can emerge in the short-term that can in turn further propel even faster rates of global developments. The prospect of rapid improvement of livelihood-enhancing functions and economic prosperity lend themselves to an equally improving prospect of sustainable peace through enhanced levels of societal conflict resilience.

## 5.9 Conclusion

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Greater security policy focus on increasing societal resilience is unlikely to radically transform the geopolitical landscape in the short-term. It can, however, drive significant changes in global approaches to development and security. Security approaches focusing on the gradual and sustainable development of human capital may entail a shift towards more realistic policy goals, increased third party (private companies, NGOs, global solution networks, etc.) involvement and more comprehensive international engagement strategies. As livelihood-enhancing services in developing countries expand, as citizens gain a greater stake in the security of their societies and as individuals come to embrace values of self-actualization rather than mere survival, there is a lower risk of conflict emerging from the bottom-up as a result of economic or social grievances.

A resilient society should not only attempt to respond to disruptive forces threatening to incite violent conflict by attempting to restore balance. Rather, in order to make societies sustainably resilient, new systems should be designed within them that are capable of dealing with both

67. Ray Kurzweil, "The Law of Accelerating Returns," March 7, 2001, <http://www.kurzweilai.net/the-law-of-accelerating-returns>.

present and future conflict threats. Positive development trends focused on citizen empowerment have improved livelihood-enhancing services in developing countries and greatly increased the quality of life for citizens that have historically struggled to gain access to crucial resources and opportunities.

**In order to make societies sustainably resilient, new systems should be designed within them that are capable of dealing with both present and future conflict threats.**

These trends bode well for global security and as crucial services and processes become more inclusive in terms of their scope and degree of accessibility, more citizens will gain a greater stake in the security of their families, communities, countries and regions. We therefore still expect global societal resilience – also to conflict – to increase in the future with further private and public engagement in developmental processes.

All of this serves as a reminder that the obtainment of our societies' defense and security objectives does not depend solely – or even primarily – on our defense and security organizations. We have also argued on many occasions that they may increasingly play an even more important role as 'smart nudgers' of a much broader – and potentially more powerful and effective – defense and security ecosystem. But it is important to acknowledge that there are many other powerful forces at work that appear to be pushing in the same direction of more sustainably 'secure' societies.

The developmental forces we have described in this chapter are profoundly disruptive in nature. As they gather steam, they will require careful transition strategies— especially targeting the resilience of most affected groups. Investments in that resilience – both at home and abroad – is, we argue, a worthwhile part of our societies' defense and security investment portfolios. As we will suggest in the concluding chapter of this report, this will require truly transformational thinking on the part of our defense and security organizations (and ecosystems). Yet it would be foolhardy to underestimate the independent security-relevant impact of those deeper resilience-enhancing forces.

Many of the new resilience-enhancing powerful forces appear – for the most part – blissfully impervious to what is happening at the official 'policy' level. Whether or not Western governments will push for renewable energies (and they may not), the cost curves for existing technologies (mostly solar and wind) continue to drop precipitously and there are many more new technologies waiting in the wings to complement them. These technologies are likely to dramatically weaken the power of both 'traditional' hydrocarbon companies and the governments that so addictively depend on them. Whether or not governments will be able to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, market forces – in many cases boosted by the heft of governments like the Chinese – are now likely to push that agenda much more swiftly and sustainably than any intergovernmental agreement ever could. Whether or not increasingly nationalist, populist, anti-globalization forces come into power in a number of key Western countries, it remains to be seen whether they will prove a match for the powerful global supply chains that even their own 'champions' are now also inextricably interconnected with – especially as a bigger and bigger piece of the global pie is generated by bits and not atoms. Whatever our aid development agencies do, the net impact of some of various new social technologies may ultimately prove far more powerful in uplifting the remaining bottom billion. The jury is still very much out on the ways in which some at first glance relatively strong but illiberal states – whether democratic, authoritarian or in-between – are leveraging new digital and social technologies to exert more control over their own citizens. Will their increasingly educated, tech-savvy and well-traveled populations allow their efforts to come to fruition? Or may the fact that these governments seem so paranoid about their own security and their need to 'control' their



citizens be the best indication of a deeper (and self-acknowledged) weakness?

The disruptive gales of “schöpferische Zerstörung” (creative destruction) are starting to have a massive impact on what we have called ‘the (underappreciated but increasingly powerful) flip side of the security coin’: security resilience. Our defense and security organizations would be well advised to position themselves on the ‘right’ side of these gales.



6





# Conclusion



*This concluding chapter offers the main take-aways based on the trends we have identified in this year's monitoring effort, suggests an interpretation of what drives these trends, and formulates a set of recommendations for Dutch defense and security organizations.*

## 6.1 Main Take-Aways

Our international system has entered a period of volatility and friction. It is volatile because high impact events follow one another in rapid succession. It is frictionous because many of these events tend to be conflictual rather than cooperative in nature. At the highest level, the HCSS StratMon, relying on different measurements, reports a clear overall **downward trend in cooperation** that is mirrored by a **similarly upward trend in conflict** for all state and non-state actor behavior worldwide since the early 2000s. This trend is particularly prevalent in state-state interaction and is the sum of a range of non-cooperative and often outright hostile behaviors in different theaters worldwide.

The world's overall **behavior towards the Netherlands** remains **positive**. Especially in terms of **material cooperation** this **fundamentally positive attitude** has only **improved** since 2010. Already **one of the more cooperative countries** in the world, **the Netherlands** itself became overall even more so since 2010 and that **positive trend** continued over the past two years.

Alongside that general trend, our **great power assertiveness monitor** flags two major trends in the behavior of great powers (China, 'Europe', India, Russia and the United States). First, the **persistence of growing negative military assertiveness** with the continuing stand-off between Europe and the US and Russia, substantial military involvement of Russia, the US and various European states in the conflicts in the Middle East, and dangerous episodes of brinkmanship in the Pacific involving China and the US. Second, an overall **decrease in great powers' economic positive assertiveness** targeted at cooperation and a diminished inclination to cooperate economically.

One of the most striking findings of our analysis of trends in global influence, using the **Global Influence Index**, is Europe's unmatched influence potential and the **enormous gap between Europe's potential and actual influence**. Unsurprisingly, the Global Influence Index confirms **China's economic ascendance**, and identify Japan and India as the 'odd men out', with both great powers punching far below their potential great power weight.

Disentangling the global web of influence, we also look at the economic, military and diplomatic relations **between great powers** and a selection of 30+ small or medium sized powers in possession of important economic, military or ideological assets (pivot states). Here we find that these states seem to increasingly **vacillate** between the great powers. In addition, the enormous (potential) **attraction of Europe** vis-à-vis these pivot states stands out once again, while the **high recent influence scores** of especially **China** but also **Russia** give pause.

In our **HCSS political violence monitor**, we report on the **many faces of violence** worldwide. Here we point out that the hybrid character of contemporary conflict obfuscates an assortment of hostile, but non-lethal actions. This requires a broader and finer measurement that tracks hybrid conflict activities. In terms of the **state of global violence**, current **trends** in global levels of violence continue to be on an **upward trajectory**. Total conflict fatalities are slightly lower than last year but still exceed the one hundred thousand mark. Globally, an increasing number of societies are affected by one or multiple forms of violence. **Conflict contagion and conflict diffusion is rife**. Violence spills over national borders and clusters regionally, while different forms of violence have an inclination

to either morph or co-occur. The number of **internationalized intrastate conflict** as a percentage of all intrastate conflicts has **quadrupled** since the beginning of this century. **State based** and **non-state conflict** suffused with recurring episodes of **one sided violence** are particularly **virulent** in the **MENA** and **Sub-Saharan African region**, while numerous intractable conflicts persist in Africa and Asia. Our **conflict models** project the majority of countries at risk of new conflict onsets to be also concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa in addition to identifying a number of other at risk countries in the Middle East and Asia for both the long- and the short-term. These countries include Chad, Angola, Guinea, Cameroon, Burundi and Ivory Coast in Africa and in Asia, Iran, Tajikistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Also notable is **the fragile situation in Venezuela**, which poses a **potential security risk to the Dutch countries and territories in the Caribbean**. Europe, meanwhile is at risk of **the continuing spillover of violence** from its immediate neighborhood, at the same time as it finds itself in **a Second Cold War** with **Russia**. For these reasons, our outlook on global violence for the coming period is far from positive.

Our assessment of the **other side of the security coin**, in which we look at the sources of security, yields a cautious note of optimism. **Access** remains one of the key components of **individual empowerment** and **societal resilience to conflict**. Greater financial, economic, energy, clean water and political access has boosted the **individual empowerment** of **hundreds of millions of people** around the world. Much of the progress is related to the trend of disintermediation and the disappearance of the middleman. These developments are projected to **further drive positive change in the future**.

## 6.2 An Interpretation: Disintermediation and Epochal Change

Many observers attribute some of the more worrisome trends that our monitor has revealed to some – in their eyes – troublesome, yet familiar developments at the systemic, national-level and/or individual levels of analysis.<sup>1</sup> At the **systemic** level, *realists* see the evanescence of the unipolar post-Cold War moment in which new and recurrent contenders are itching to take down the single remaining and (by some measurements) weakening superpower. *Liberals* deplore the crumbling of the foundational institutional framework that the West cobbled together and imposed on the rest of the world and which – in their view – has greatly enhanced human dignity and prosperity. Especially this past year, these gladiators of global gloom have been joined by the dons of domestic doom, who assert that governance at the **national** level is now also being undermined by what they identify as dangerous populist and nationalist sentiments and movements. They draw ominous parallels to the dark thirties of the previous century, when economic protectionism (and revanchism) went hand in hand with populist and fascist regimes coming to power – a development that played an important role in the genesis of World War II. Finally, many commentators remain perplexed by the individual **personalities** of some of the strongmen, from Vladimir Putin to Xi Jinping to Donald Trump, that are taking center stage on the world scene. For them, the rise of these often erratic leaders with an appetite (or at least tolerance) for extreme levels of brinkmanship and braggadocio are reminiscent of some of the darkest days of the previous century when other strongmen (Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Mao, etc.) pushed the world into massive bloodshed.

### 6.2.1 Remembering the Future

1. Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations"; Waltz, *Man, the State and War*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.



Like most of our colleagues, the authors of this edition of the HCSS StratMon find many of these more traditional explications of what we see unfolding before our eyes intuitively plausible and sobering. It is hard to deny these historical comparisons – even though we all realize that the actual database of historical precedents is far richer than the handful of historical analogies that are currently being bandied around. And yet we wonder whether the historical references ('scripts') that recent events have retriggered so vividly in all of our minds – however salutary they are – do sufficient justice to some more deeper and more novel changes that may start to engulf our societies, economies and politics.

Our doubts are partially triggered by new neuropsychological and neuroimaging insights that offer us a new view on how humans process time. It turns out that our brains do not so much 'foresee' the future (an assumption on which most of the foresight literature and practice is premised) as 'remember' it.<sup>2</sup> In other words, whenever we try to anticipate the future, our brains find it easier to fall back on, and recombine historical antecedents that are still relatively fresh in our minds than to really creatively think through the various permutations of some of the potentially truly new trends we are observing. We tend to lump events such as Crimea 2014, the massacre of civilians in Ukraine and Syria these past few years, Brexit 2016 or Trump 2016 in the same category as other seminal events that many of us have witnessed in our own lives, such as the end of the Cold War, the Rwandan genocide, the Balkan Wars, 9/11, etc. Our historical frame of reference is also still reasonably familiar with memories of the (First) Cold War ("we're living through the Second Cold War"), more distant historical recollections further back of the two World Wars ("the Third World War is imminent"), or for some of the more historically-inclined among us possibly even of the virulent new nationalisms, revolutions and clashes of imperial ambitions of the 19th century.

But what if those historical frames of reference are too short-sighted? What if the events that we scroll through in our newspapers or Facebook feeds are but superficial symptoms of a far more fundamental *epochal* change? A transformation that is putting increasing pressure not just on political elites in Brussels or Washington or London or Beijing or elsewhere, but on (our current modes of) government? Not just on the EU or the UN but on global governance? Not just on Wall Street or corporate titans in Europe or America but on the corporation? Not just on democracy, but on the way we aggregate diverse political (and other) preferences? As an element of the HCSS approach to monitoring we therefore offer our readers an alternative hypothesis to explain what we are witnessing around us and what we are reporting on in the more empirical part of our monitor.

## 6.2.2 The Impact of New (Social) Technologies

In our own (longue durée) historical analysis of the essence of 'defense', 'armed force', 'military', etc., we have been struck by the powerful impact that the Industrial Age has had on the ways in which we think of our world. In our inability to truly think in (and across) time(s) we forget that all of the key agents in our world – governments, organizations, companies, etc. – are social inventions that really only emerged in the industrial age. There were no governments, no factories, no companies, no organizations, no political parties – in the way we currently understand those – prior to the Industrial Age. We all tend to associate the industrial revolution with the *physical* technologies that transformed almost everything in our daily lives, such as the steam engine that made it possible to transform boiling water into mechanical motion, the industrial printing presses that replaced their hand-operated predecessors and enabled the printing of books and newspapers on a previously impossible scale, or the coal-fueled iron melting machines that fueled so many further innovations.

2. Addis, Wong and Schacter, "Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future."

The Industrial Revolution, however (and indeed any other epochal revolution that preceded it), was not just about these *physical* technologies. It was just as important in the ways in which we humans organized ourselves to leverage those new physical technologies towards purposive strategic action. These ways themselves were also ‘technologies’ in the original etymological sense of “a system or method of making or doing”, ‘crafted’ to increase productivity and efficiency.

As we move from an Industrial to a post-Industrial Age we are again crafting new *social* technologies that are different from – but potentially more effective, productive and equitable than – those of the Industrial Age.<sup>3</sup> We *are* indeed seeing the emergence of various new *social* technologies that seem as promising as they can be frightening. Industrial Age social technologies shared certain attributes. They were based on existing physical technologies; they favored economies of scale and scope; and they gravitated towards linear, (geographically) proximate, formalized and top-down forms of organization. Similar commonalities in the new social technologies that emerge today are that they are all based more on digital than on physical technologies, tend to be far less linear and more informal, and are far more loosely coupled and distributed.

The explanatory hypothesis we would like to offer in this concluding chapter is that the volatility and friction we are seeing in the international system may be more than just a new twist on familiar memes of power transition, nationalism, populism or strongmen. They may instead reflect epochal gales that are triggered by the transformational fusion of radically new physical (think of the fourth industrial revolution), but especially digital and social technologies. We see one of the most striking manifestations of this dynamic in the ongoing process of *disintermediation*, the phenomenon whereby *middlemen* – in a literal as well as in an organizational and procedural sense – are being cut out and replaced by a new generation of social technologies that allow for more direct forms of interaction between groups and individuals. In this process that takes place in and across different domains, many of the hierarchically layered structures and strict organizational boundaries established during the Industrial Age are eliminated. Disintermediation is shaking the bedrock of our economies, societies and polities. It heralds great opportunities as well great challenges and – especially – uncertainties. Winners next to losers. It is fueling a backlash against different forms of globalization and foments polarization both nationally and internationally between different actors whose interests do not align. It also empowers new and alternative ways of distributed collective action that can be put both to benign and malign purposes.

Partly in response to this mega trend of disintermediation, political leaders, prompted by popular movements, seek to take back national control. The protection of national interests through national rather than inter- or transnational means has once again become a prominent theme in many of the world’s national political discourses. The unravelling of the elite consensus in the West about the benefits of globalization is putting pressure on mechanisms of global and regional governance that non-Western powers were already skeptical about for quite some time. These developments affect not only the international environment that our ministries of foreign affairs and defense operate in, but also the degrees of freedom granted to them by their home populations. The Dutch ‘No’ to the Ukraine Association Agreement, Brexit and the election of Trump are not isolated events, but part of a distinct trend that is not expected to disappear any time soon. The results of this year’s monitoring effort corroborate this overall picture of volatility and friction – both in a negative and a positive sense.

### 6.2.3 Disintermediation in the Security Realm

3. And note that in most of our countries a majority of employment-age people have already for quite some time been employed in post-industrial forms of employment as service-workers.

Disintermediation has profound ramifications in the security realm too. It gives birth not just to new security risks but also to new manifestations of old ones, and it necessitates the development of new strategies to address both. In the traditional Westphalian order of things, the responsibility for security provision was transferred from individual citizens or societal groups to professional state security institutions. The state defined security, set security policies and was responsible for enforcing security both internally and externally. Society at large was not necessarily involved in security provision – and certainly not in the international arena. This is now changing, and in directions that some authors already presciently predicted some years ago.<sup>4</sup> Disintermediation, and the unprecedentedly dynamic fusion of physical, digital and social technologies that drives it, is currently puncturing many of the traditional divides between the national and the international, between state and non-state, between acts of war and of crime, between physical and virtual domains and between the various instruments of ('hard' and 'soft') power.

#### 6.2.4 Agents of Disintermediation

In this new era, this fusion of physical, digital and social technologies provides both states and (groups of) individuals with unprecedented destructive power that no longer hinges on *intermediate* large military formations. Non-state actors and super empowered individuals who want to be agents of conflict have direct access to weapons of mass destruction and disruption without any need for *intermediate* government-controlled weapon development and production facilities. They can wage attacks on polities, societies and economies through channels not controlled by governments but by private sector actors (e.g. cyber critical infrastructures) or through targeting populations directly (e.g. a bio-attack). Using social media, small groups can now rapidly mobilize mass movements, sometimes literally overnight, without being in possession of a large *intermediate* media network.

This is not something safely tucked away in an abstract far-away future. It is happening right here before our very eyes. The Russian government can – according to the US intelligence community – directly hack into the computers of the Democratic Party and interfere in the American political process. If China seizes a US underwater drone, president-elect Trump can respond directly through Twitter, bypassing regular channels of diplomacy. The Islamic State can recruit tens of thousands of foreign fighters and raise funds on a scale that was previously reserved by state organizations. It can also plan and coordinate attacks using modern peer-to-peer communication technology that intelligence services have a hard time hacking. An as of yet unidentified actor can hack millions and millions of Internet connected home devices and use them to shut down Internet access to a large parts of the population, as it did in October 2016 on the American East coast.<sup>5</sup> Subtle – or less subtle – influencing activities can be used to manipulate the public discourse, as is happening in Finland and Sweden about these countries' relations with NATO.<sup>6</sup> Attacks on soft targets, if not coordinated then certainly inspired from the Middle East, can be used to sow terror, as has happened most recently with the Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016.<sup>7</sup>

#### 6.2.5 Challenges

But the agents of resilience now have new options to keep these disintermediated agents of conflict in check, because the forces that are changing the nature and origin of offensive security acts are also

4. Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*. and more recently, Wittes and Blum, *The Future of Violence*.

5. Blumenthal and Weise, "Hacked Home Devices Caused Massive Internet Outage."

6. Macfarquhar, "A Powerful Russian Weapon."

7. BILD, "Terror-Anschlag Mit LKW Auf Berliner Weihnachtsmarkt - Gauck Besucht Verletzte Opfer Im Krankenhaus."

leading to the redistribution of defensive capabilities and responsibilities. One principal challenge that stems from disintermediation is the fact that states have become dependent on private parties to provide capabilities for defense and resilience, whether it concerns the protection of critical infrastructure, the prevention of radicalization, or defense against the manipulation of public discourse.<sup>8</sup> This implies a fundamental change for the role of the state vis-à-vis both its own citizens and non-state actors. It results in the transformation of the division-of-labor between public and private actors in the provision of security. This brave new world, in short, is one of many-to-many threats and many-to-many defenses.<sup>9</sup> As a result, societal resilience will have to become an integral part of a state's defense and security strategy and policy.

The distribution of capabilities to address security risks raises another challenge, namely the mismatch between capabilities, responsibilities and task allocation among the various security actors, within the government proper and within society as a whole. In this context, actors often possess (some of) the required capabilities to deal with a particular risk, but lack a proper mandate for action and vice versa. The inability of Western governments to effectively address Russian propaganda activities serves as a case in point. But this applies equally to the protection of cyberspace, where capabilities and mandates are divided over multiple government departments, which is out of sync with the security risks that our societies currently face.<sup>10</sup>

Another challenge associated with the current institutional set up is the absence of an appropriate legal framework: even when there is a clear rationale for action, legal considerations often pose an impediment. Sticking to the example of propaganda by adversaries, our armed forces are not tasked to do *Info-ops* outside a theater of operations and are in fact explicitly outlawed to do so. This is not meant to imply that they should be assigned this role. It simply underscores the existence of a gap between strategic realities and conventional (Industrial Age) legal constraints that will need to be bridged one way or another. Similarly, the reality of conflict in the cyber domain requires the adaptation of our mental and legal framework to deal with the blurring of the offensive and the defensive.<sup>11</sup> The pace of traditional procedures for decision making is in some cases simply not in tune with the speed of operations in a digital age.<sup>12</sup>

Finally a more general challenge is the absence of a broader strategic framework, which relates actions to appropriate counteractions, ties together means to ends and links outputs to outcomes to effects (including potential side effects). This absence can lead to inertia and inaction, both because it is unclear whether an action in one domain merits a response in another, but also because it may lead cautious decision makers to refrain from responding simply because they do not sufficiently understand the potential effects of such a response.<sup>13</sup>

### 6.2.6 Building Better Interfaces

How can these challenges be addressed? In the short run, this entails the building of more and more versatile interfaces: between means and ends; between outputs, outcomes and effects; between political decision making procedures and strategic realities; between government departments

8. For google's involvement in counter-radicalization efforts, see Greenberg, "Google's Clever Plan to Stop Aspiring ISIS Recruits."

9. Wittes and Blum, *The Future of Violence*.

10. See Duyvesteyn, "Cyberaanvallen."

11. Computer network defense (CND) is hardly effective without offensive cyber capacities – computer network exploitation (CNE) and computer network attack (CNA).

12. See Duyvesteyn, "Cyberaanvallen."

13. US president Obama's inaction faced with Russian interference may be an example thereof, see Sanger and Shane, "The Perfect Weapon."

and agencies in an integrated approach that aligns capabilities, responsibilities and tasks; between public and private actors to organize defense and societal resilience; in quadruple helix alliances of government agencies, knowledge institutes, industry *and* individuals to constantly innovate defense and security capability portfolios; between IT-professionals and white-hat hackers to improve cybersecurity; between intelligence services and think tanks and citizens to improve crisis early warning systems; and so on and so forth. Many of these new or strengthened interfaces may initially require new ‘middlemen’, such as liaison personnel or interface tools and procedures to connect proprietary information systems, as an intermediate solution. In the longer run, these interfaces will likely be no longer necessary: once disintermediation becomes more entrenched, defense and security actors on the response side will start organizing and coordinating through shared platforms using service-oriented architecture rather than through layered swivel-chair-type interfaces.

### 6.3 What Does this Mean for Dutch Defense and Security Policies?

The volatility and friction and upward trend in conflict is salient within Europe and in particular in its immediate neighborhood. Europe is confronted with a cocktail of crises that develop quickly and succeed each other rapidly, a situation that will persist in the coming years. They are characterized by a high propensity for vertical and horizontal escalation.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand we are confronted with traditional forms of military assertiveness with the distinct danger of vertical escalation. On the other hand we face a multitude of hybrid threats that by their nature harness a high horizontal escalation potential. Furthermore, the two overlap and mix, both in Russia’s strategy power plays and in the complex conflicts in the MENA-region. In a recent study on European crisis management capabilities, HCSS flagged the following capabilities that require more attention and greater resources so that the Netherlands and its fellow European states can deal with these various forms of escalation:<sup>15</sup>

- » The further integration of political and military-strategic activities and the utilization of all instruments from the DIMEFIL toolbox<sup>16</sup> in a comprehensive manner. This continues to be one of the most salient gaps in Europe’s strategic capabilities.
- » The strengthening and renewal of robust military and civil-military instruments of influence in order to deter and contain a resurgent Russia which has rapidly modernized its military forces in recent years.<sup>17</sup>
- » The strengthening and renewal of capabilities in order to contain violence and contribute to the stabilization of Europe’s southern flank once conflict(s) are sufficiently ripe and/or levels of violence dwindle.
- » The building and strengthening of defensive and offensive cyber capabilities as a whole-of-

14. Vertical escalation refers to an increase in the level of violence or the explicit threat thereof. Horizontal escalation concerns the (additional) use of other power instruments. In the latter case, for example, threatening military exercises are answered by the freezing of bank deposits; and economic sanctions with cyber attacks.

15. We refer to an in-depth study conducted in the context of the HCSS StratMon in which we examined the requirements for (new or to be renewed) military crisis management capabilities in a European and Dutch context. The analysis was based on six fictitious but realistic crisis scenarios on the eastern and southern flanks of Europe. See Frank Bekkers, Ton van Osch en Rob de Rave, *Op, Neer en Zijwaarts. De Militaire Dimensie van Crisis Management*, Militaire Spectator, forthcoming.

16. DIMEFIL = Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence and Law Enforcement. This acronym is used to denote the broad range of (state) instruments of power and influence that can be deployed to defend national interests.

17. See De Spiegeleire, *From Assertiveness to Aggression*.



government and whole-of-society responsibility. Additional regulations and policy in this area are required in for being able to adequately deploy these capabilities.

- » The establishment of a government-wide Strategic Communication capability.
- » The reinforcement and stimulation of societal resilience.

How can the Netherlands contribute to these requirements – and current deficits – at the European level? Which (additional) defense and security investments render the most added value from both a national and a European perspective? Based on our analysis that ‘middlemen’ are fading out – or, to put it differently, that the cost and effort of establishing and maintaining viable interfaces between (sometimes radically) different agents is rapidly decreasing – our suggestion is twofold. First, we recommend that much more effort is dedicated to the design and implementation of more and more versatile interfaces within the government’s own span of control. This includes interfaces within the Dutch government itself, with international governmental partners, but also with public and private organizations around the government that can be brought together by responsible defense and security planners. Much work is already ongoing in this realm, but, as we argued in our 2015 *Better Together* study,<sup>18</sup> more could be done in this field through essentially ‘industrial-age’ types of social technologies: treaties, MoUs, contracts, agreements, partnerships, commercial arrangements, etc.

The greatest challenge *and* potential value added lies, in our view, in our second recommendation that the Dutch governmental defense and security entities put substantial effort in actively stimulating and leveraging the contributions to our national security objectives of external actors in the broader ‘Dutch’ defense and security ecosystem. Many elements of this ecosystem may as of yet even be unknown – just like Apple or Google had no idea which app developers would end up using their platforms to create apps that they themselves may never have thought of. But the profitability of these companies comes for a large extent from these unknown app developers and users who use the platform to generate value for themselves *and* for Apple or Google. Such a defense and security ecosystem thrives through effective and efficient interfaces in which as few middlemen as possible distort the message and induce transaction costs that put a penalty on communicating and collaborating with other parties in the ecosystem. Disintermediation is not a technology-induced external force that we must, reluctantly and as little as possible, heed. It is an opportunity that should be actively embraced to create more comprehensive answers to security challenges that are – whether we like it or not – intricate, multilevel and multidimensional.

These two high level recommendations lead to the following tangible action points for security and defense policies:

#### **Better interfaces between NATO and the EU; within the EU and with others:**

- » The Netherlands should actively support better **coordination mechanisms** between NATO with its military power and the EU with its combined soft and hard power options.
- » The Netherlands should actively support the further development of options to quickly form **European coalitions of the willing** using joint EU and / or NATO structures and resources. The mechanism of Permanent Structured Cooperation already provides a viable framework for this. Common funding of missions and a more modular approach to the EU Battle Group concept are also instrumental.

18. Jong et al., *Better Together*.

**Better interfaces within the Dutch government:**

- » The establishment of a **National Security Council**, which will institutionalize a horizontal, government-wide integration of security measures and countermeasures. This will enhance coordination and unity of effort as well as contribute to long-term security strategy and policy planning. Such a NSC should be chaired by the Prime Minister, supported by a Directorate General at the Cabinet level with active participation from, inter alia, the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, the Interior, Security and Justice, Economic Affairs and Infrastructure and Environment; as well as private actors in the defense and security ecosystem.
- » The development of a vision on the future of the cyberspace and concomitant policies, laws and regulations and enhanced capabilities to realize this vision, both nationally and internationally, in line with the role of The Netherlands as a **major cyber hub** and a firm supporter of the **free and safe cyberspace** and its ambition to play a leading role in international cyber governance. An integrated national, but firmly internationally embedded, approach is required. This might call for a **National Cyber Authority** that guides and combines the efforts of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the Defense Cyber Command (DSC), as well as of private actors.
- » An integrated approach requires powerful narratives to create a common sense of meaning and purpose, to motivate and unify a host of actors in coordinated action and to counter propaganda spread by adversaries. The Dutch government must establish a policy for **Strategic Communication** and employ society-wide capabilities to execute this policy.

**Better interfaces between government, the private sector and citizens:**

- » Actively improve the **cooperation between public and private partners** in, among others, **critical infrastructure protection** (with the sector itself); **cyber security** (with industry, white hat hackers, knowledge institutes); crisis **early warning** and strategic alerting (with NGOs, multinationals, think tanks).
- » Actively support initiatives aimed at increasing **societal resilience** against threats such as terrorism, (state-sponsored) cyber espionage and attacks and public advocacy. Google's Abdullah-X project, an animated YouTube series that explores themes of young Muslim identity in society and aims to steer young minds away from extremism is one example of very many.<sup>19</sup> Defense and security organizations could and should play a guiding, stimulating and facilitating role.

**Better interfaces between means and ends and inputs, outputs, effects and outcomes:**

- » Improve the **strategic literacy** of (senior) government officials by paying more attention to concept development, strategy development and education and training; including a better understanding of the relationship between inputs, outputs, effects and outcomes.
- » Establish a **crisis gaming center of excellence** where national and international policy makers participate in crisis simulation and hone their crisis management skills.

We would like to conclude this year's report with a reflection on the very reason why HCSS has been building its strategic evidence, knowledge and insights base – StratBase – and end with a final exhortation. Year after year after we build up our StratBase to 'monitor' the 'demand' environment within which our defense and security organizations are expected to 'supply' defense and security

19. Google, "Abdullah-X."

value. The 2010 Future Policy Survey thought through several quite different plausible security environments on the demand side and it also identified a number of key 'strategic functions' that the Dutch government should be able to supply to meet that demand.<sup>20</sup> The two strategic functions that were highlighted as being truly foundational across any conceivable Dutch contribution towards any future security environment were prevention and anticipation. If we want to do justice to 'fundamental uncertainty' – a key theme in the Future Policy Survey, which our various reports these past years have only highlighted the importance of – so it was argued, we have to put a much higher premium on our ability to anticipate. This insight led to the Strategic Monitor – a major effort by the Dutch government and some of its knowledge institutes to generate better strategic situational awareness across government and beyond. At that time, HCSS pointed out that this anticipation effort consists of two major components: improving our ability to 'read' our current and expected security environment; and – at least equally importantly – changing the way in which we organize ourselves to exploit this enhanced insight.<sup>21</sup>

The monitoring contributions that Clingendael and HCSS (and others) have produced over these past few years – and the discussions they have triggered – have certainly contributed to the first ambition: to enhance strategic literacy and situational awareness. In our own appreciation, these explorations can be exploited to greater effect. The way we have now set up our real-time databases allows for more regular interactions with desk officers in various ministries that are responsible for certain geographical areas or functional domains. Some of the data, tools and findings can be integrated to a greater extent, not just in various educational efforts throughout the government, but also in the development of policies, including those aimed at bridging the gap between early warning and early action. We see ample opportunity to start realizing the full promise of the Future Policy Survey and to put anticipation and prevention more center-stage in the overall portfolio of policies, capabilities, concepts and ecosystem choices. In our last contribution to the Strategic Monitor we pleaded for a renewed, less technocratic and more ecosystem-wide strategic thinking exercise along the lines of the Future Policy Survey. We continue to think that the worrying as well as the encouraging trends that we describe in this year's report make such an effort more imperative than ever. There are some new fundamental choices to be made that go beyond the small incremental changes that are currently being debated. Our still predominantly Industrial-Age mindsets, structures and procedures are unlikely to produce the more creative and forward-leaning sustainable security solutions that our changing world is likely to require. We still believe that the Netherlands remains in a unique position to play a leadership role in this rethink of our defense and security value for money efforts. To invent novel ways to better buttress ourselves and our security environment against the pernicious effects of some these disintermediation trends, but also – and maybe even more importantly – to be able to fully harness their potential for positive change.

We framed our interpretation for some of the trends of 2016 described in this edition as a contrarian one. We do anticipate volatility and friction to increase over the next few years – both for the reasons that are often mentioned in our current political discourse (geodynamic shifts, political changes in the West and in the East, strongmen, etc.), but also because of much less mentioned, but in our view more fundamental, epochal changes that are speeding up all around us. We do not automatically equate this growing volatility and friction with negative outcomes, however. On balance, we also see plenty of opportunities in this transitional period of disintermediation. Remaining at least partially inspirational in an age that abounds in gloom and doom may seem like an inglorious task. We fear, however, that our collective minds are becoming so captured by the

20. Defensie, "Eindrapport Verkenningen 2010 Houvast voor de krijgsmacht van de toekomst - Rapport - Defensie.nl."

21. Bekkers et al., *Anticipatie*.

prevailing doom scenarios, that we risk throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. To stay balanced in our strategic net assessments of the security environment around us, is in fact an essential prerequisite for navigating the turbulences to come. This increases the chances for our societies to come out in better shape, also and especially in security terms. We look forward to further contributing towards that goal in close collaboration with the Dutch defense and security organization and the broader ecosystem around it.







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#### **Pictures:**

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