

THE CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

GEODYNAMICS IN 2017

MONTHLY ALERT, SEPTEMBER 2017

To many, the world seems to be on fire. A small, newly nuclear-armed authoritarian country is incessantly taunting the world's sole remaining superpower. That superpower itself is now increasingly viewed, by even some of its staunchest allies, as a "threat to world peace". Many Europeans are on the edge of their seats as they watch an increasingly revanchist Russia embark upon its largest military exercise along its Western borders since the end of the Cold War. China and the US seem to be outbidding one another in brinkmanship in the China Seas, with major potential economic and military consequences also for Europe. Less mediated – but nevertheless not any less impactful for the world and for Europe – the two nuclear-armed Asian great powers were engaged in a two-month tense military standoff high up in the Himalayas.

The increased geopolitical grandstanding of these great powers is occurring against a background of renewed global terrorist attacks (also in Europe), as ISIS and its affiliates move their theater of operation from their dwindling 'caliphate' in the Middle East to places in the world where they see an opportunity to sow terror and advance their agenda. All of this is happening in a period of unprecedented technological change; of resurgent populism¹; of [climate-related cataclysms](#) (as seen this month alone in the US and the Caribbean countries in the Kingdom of The Netherlands but even more so in India, Bangladesh and Nepal); of growing concerns about various medical or zoonotic challenges; of massive cyberattacks; of possibly even [bigger changes](#) in the ways in which we humans identify, organize, and create value and meaning for ourselves. Are all of these widely shared fears the tip that is representative for the entire underlying iceberg? Or are they essentially statistical artifacts from humans' fascination with extreme events? And how would we even know?

These questions are not purely of academic interest – also not limited to The Netherlands. On January 1, 2018, the Kingdom of The Netherlands, including Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten, will take a seat at the most prominent and prestigious international table – the United Nations Security Council – for a period of one year. It will even chair the Security Council during the month of March 2018. As it prepares for this weighty responsibility, obtaining a better evidence-based understanding of the actual geodynamics behind the current international order is of utmost importance.

HCSS has been developing (and continues to develop) various automated data-sets and -tools to enable policy- and decision-makers to better monitor geodynamics in the international system - we have used the term 'nowcasting'. The scope of this effort is temporally narrow and retrospective in character (in this case the first 6 months of 2017); geographically global and substantively comprehensive. Reporting on these uniquely rich (and still imperfect) datasets remains a daunting challenge. We have always strived to strike a balance between reporting on what the data tell us and filtering only what we think is relevant. This alert presents a few selected highlights from our datasets that in our opinion check these two boxes. We report on what our [automated event datasets](#) – one of the very few near-real-time datasets allowing us to track geodynamic currents as they occur – tell us about three important topics: the assertiveness of (selected) great powers; the emergent geodynamic realignments of selected pivot states that find themselves on the dividing lines between

different great powers; and the position of The Netherlands itself in this global geodynamic maelstrom².

The main metric we use throughout this report is one that we have started thinking of as the geodynamic equivalent of widely used metrics like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or inflation rate in the economic domain: the *Average Goldstein Score* – AGS for short. This score attributes to every single event between two international actors a numerical value between +10 (the most ‘positive’ value for an event) and -10 (the most ‘negative’ one) on a cooperation-conflict spectrum, while these events are automatically extracted from the world’s news sources. By tracking AGS scores for the often 100s or 1000s events for any dyadic relationship between two countries for any given time period, we can start painting a picture of recent and ongoing geodynamic ebbs and flows in international interactions. When interpreting the various visuals through this document, our readers have to bear in mind that negative (i.e. lower) AGS scores mean higher assertiveness. HCSS has also categorized all events in 6 functional domains: diplomatic, informational, security, military, economic and legal - a categorization scheme we call DISMEL. Our timeframe in this particular ‘geodynamics alert’ is the period between January 1, 2017 and July 1, 2017 – but we also compare our findings for this period with the findings for the entire previous year of 2016.

[||Would you like to access the interactive and real-time version of the alert, click here||](#)

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GREAT POWER ASSERTIVENESS

GREAT POWER ASSERTIVENESS SLIGHTLY DOWN IN 2017

HCSS has reported in past publications³ that the five great powers monitored (China, the 28 European Union member states as a group, India, Russia, and the United States), have started behaving more assertively as a group. Our findings for the first 6 months show a very small improvement (+2.3%) in their 'collective' negative factual assertiveness when compared to the 2016 data. This small improvement is relative to an absolute level that remains extremely negative, however (-8.41 with -10 being the worst possible). We remind our readers that this is a very high-level 'helicopter' view of global geodynamics which aggregates over 200'000 events.

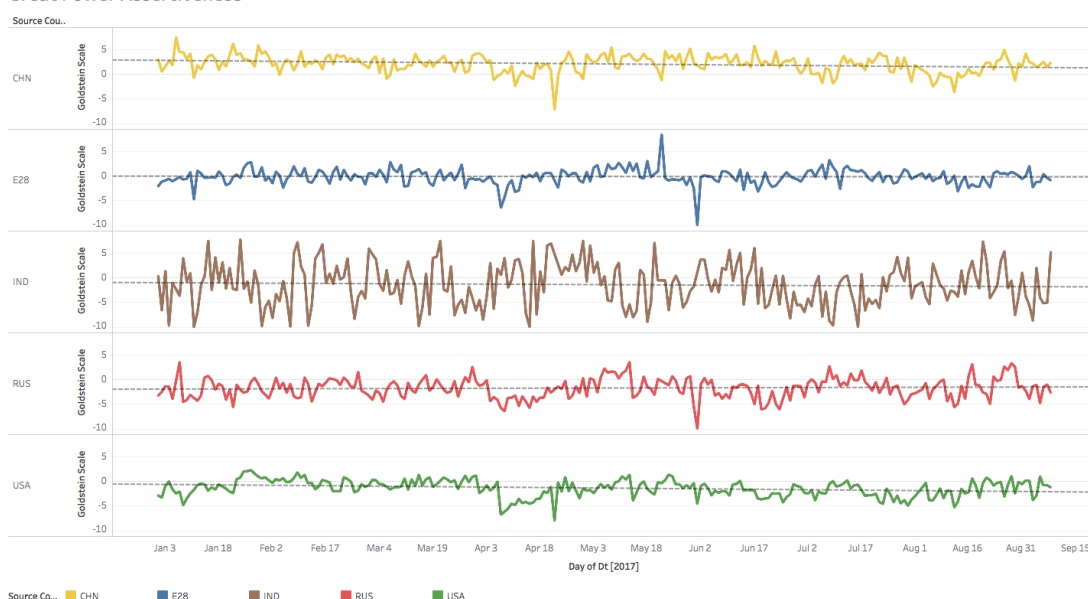
Great Powers Negative Assertiveness

DISMEL	2016	2017	Differen..
Diplomatic	-5.44	-5.24	3.6%
Economic	-8.00	-8.00	0.0%
Legal	-5.46	-5.32	2.6%
Military	-9.58	-9.52	0.6%
Security	-8.81	-8.77	0.4%



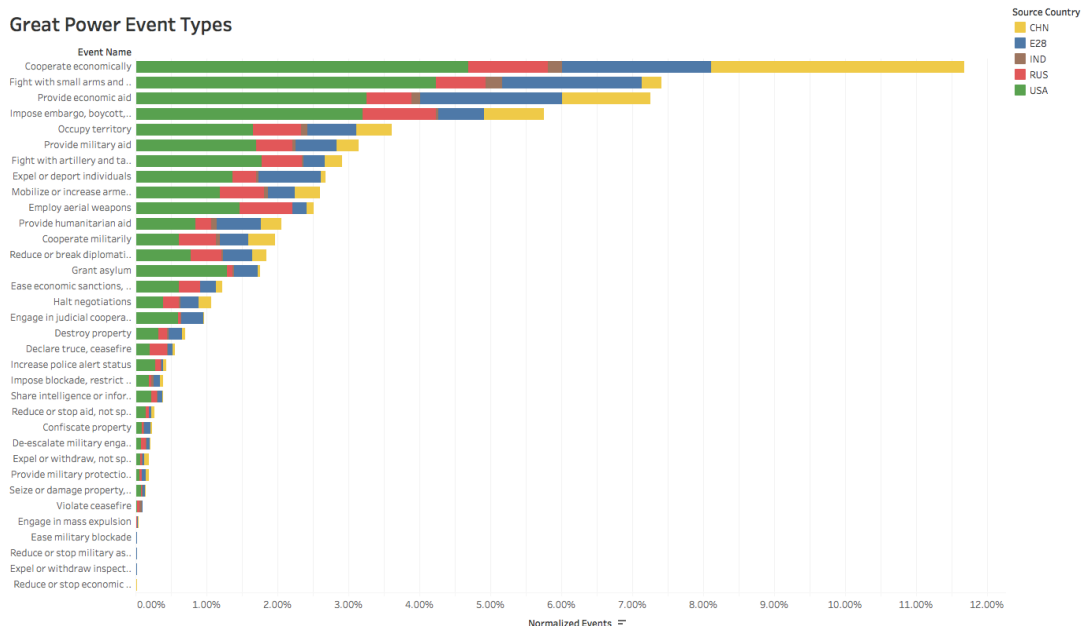
When we break down that top-level [Great Power Assertiveness](#) (GPA) finding in the different functional categories we use, we detect only minute (between 0% to 0.6%) improvements in most categories and slightly larger ones (2.6% and 3.6%) in the legal and diplomatic ones. Overall, it is still fair to state that GPA continues to hover around worrisomely negative levels.

Great Power Assertiveness



The GPA trend lines for the individual great powers for the first 6 months of 2017 alone show a negative trend for all great powers – another discomfoting finding. In the first six months of the Trump administration, the US shows the biggest decline in AGS of all great powers.

To get a sense of the types of events that are covered, as well as their relative importance in our dataset you can review the different interactive datasets on display.



IS INDIA NOW ALSO CATCHING 'GREAT POWER ASSERTIVITIS'?

One of the most striking GPA findings in our data for this year to date is the changing Indian storyline⁴. We had positioned India in previous strategic monitors as the main 'pacific' (substantively and not geographically speaking) exception to what we have dubbed great power 'assertivitis': a quasi-pathological (from a Western European point of view) affliction in which great powers seem predisposed to assert their power, especially in negative ways. In our last edition, we were surprised that the advent to power in India of the nationalist BJP had not (yet) led to an observably more assertive stance in world politics. For 2017, however, some of the indicators we use to track GPA, show India to be the most assertive of all GPs.

Great Power Change

DISMEL	Source ..	2016	2017	Difference	Rank 2016	Rank 2017	Difference
Diplomatic	CHN	-5.52	-5.63	-2.1%	2	1	-4.9% 8.8%
	E28	-5.29	-5.24	0.9%	5	2	
	IND	-5.44	-5.19	4.6%	3	3	
	RUS	-5.66	-5.16	8.8%	1	4	
	USA	-5.38	-5.15	4.1%	4	5	
Economic	CHN	-8.00	-7.99	0.1%	1	5	
	E28	-8.00	-8.00	0.0%	3	3	
	IND	-8.00	-8.00	0.0%	1	1	
	RUS	-8.00	-8.00	0.0%	2	4	
	USA	-7.99	-8.00	-0.1%	4	2	
Legal	CHN	-5.66	-5.88	-3.9%	2	2	
	E28	-5.30	-5.35	-0.9%	5	3	
	IND	-6.51	-6.55	-0.7%	1	1	
	RUS	-5.53	-5.22	5.6%	3	5	
	USA	-5.50	-5.25	4.5%	4	4	
Military	CHN	-9.47	-9.18	3.1%	4	5	
	E28	-9.60	-9.60	0.0%	3	1	
	IND	-9.75	-9.52	2.3%	1	3	
	RUS	-9.43	-9.37	0.6%	5	4	
	USA	-9.64	-9.59	0.5%	2	2	
Security	CHN	-8.29	-8.70	-4.9%	5	3	
	E28	-9.17	-9.13	0.5%	2	1	
	IND	-9.24	-9.08	1.7%	1	2	
	RUS	-8.38	-8.64	-3.0%	4	5	
	USA	-8.86	-8.66	2.2%	3	4	

One of the most vivid illustrations of this was India's deployment of military troops in response to Chinese border guards moving railroad-making equipment onto the Dolam plateau in Bhutan. The ensuing military standoff saw a few hundred troops from both sides confront each other for over two months. Many observers drew analogies to the bloody 1962 Sino-Indian border war, with the added drama that both powers are now militarily far more powerful than in 1962 and are also both nuclear powers. Even though all of this received far less attention in the Western press, possible renewed Sino-Indian clashes probably rank up there with a possible Sino-American military conflict in the South or East China seas (possibly triggered by yet another North Korean nuclear missile test) and a Russia-NATO one in Central Europe with respect to the global risk of a major military conflagration.

Later this month, HCSS will publish a more detailed analysis of the changing Indian assertiveness story.

PIVOT STATES

In previous years, HCSS has identified a number of [pivot states](#) based on a set of criteria that suggested these states found themselves at the intersection of some geo-tectonic influence ‘plates’. We have reported on those in our yearly Strategic Monitors⁵. For this shorter Geodynamics Alert, a handful of those events are further examined. These pivot states possess military, economic and political strategic goods, and are located in overlapping spheres of influence, where great power interests collide and potentially clash. Four pivot states were selected; three in our own backyard at the shatter belt between Russia and Europe, the other in the Pacific hot zone, where rising China is meeting the US. The Philippines, probably one of the most high-visibility global ‘pivots’ that, under its new President Duterte, has declared its determination to pivot away from the United States and towards China and Russia. The other pivot states are Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus in Europe’s direct Eastern neighborhood, the latter of which is receiving more attention these days because of Russia’s large-scale *Zapad* military exercise. Ukraine, as a country that after the second ‘revolution of dignity’ is still struggling to distance itself from Russia’s ambit; Moldova and Belarus, as two other former Soviet republics that – in very different ways – have shown signs of possible realignment.

THE PHILIPPINES: PIVOTING TOWARDS CHINA, BUT IT’S MORE COMPLICATED THAN YOU THINK

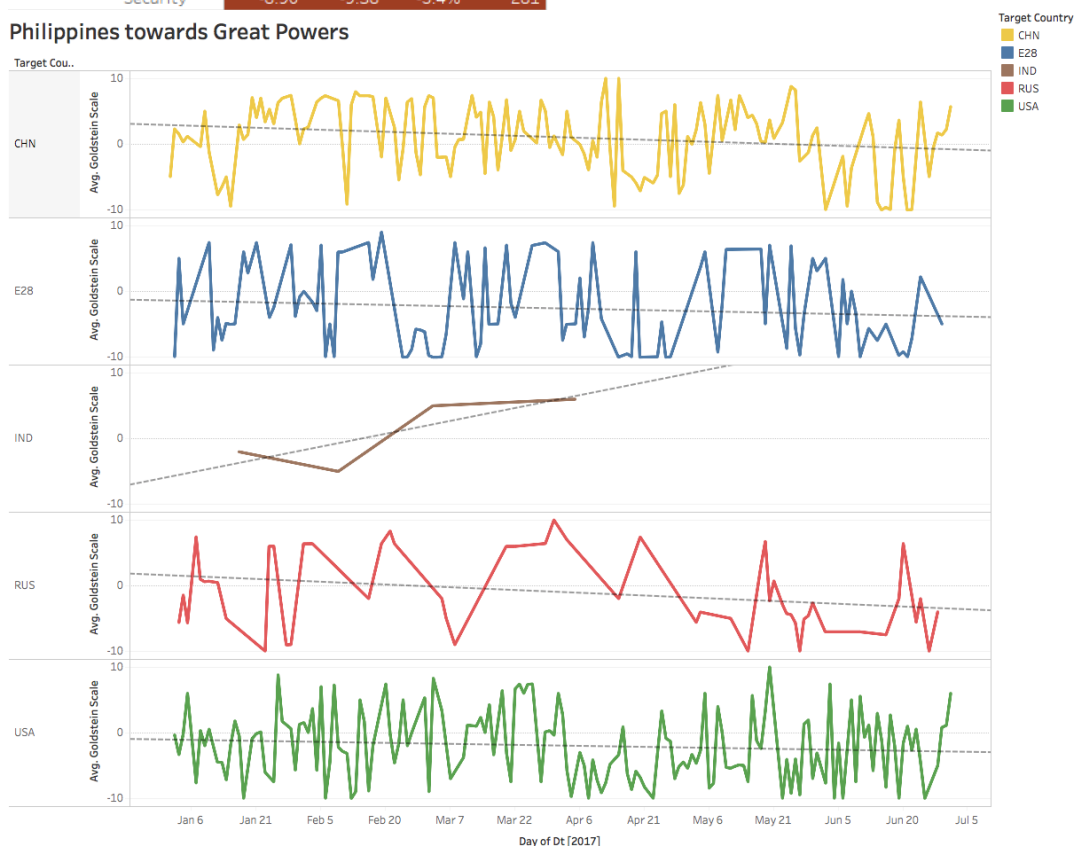
The Philippines continue to be one of the most dramatically pivoting states. When comparing the findings for 2016 with those for Jan-Jul 2017, the picture revealed is slightly more differentiated than generally recounted although the basic elements of the widely accepted pivoting story are very much confirmed. The Philippines’ factual military AGS towards the US deteriorated by 50%, whereas the same indicator towards China improved by 87%. The actual events behind these findings include Duterte seeking to normalize relations with China; welcoming a joint naval exercise with China; distancing himself militarily from the US; making various official visits; asking for help in patrolling the sea to prevent piracy; and buying weapons from China. At the same time, however, the Filipino leader ordered his troops in April to “occupy all islands, put up structures and the Philippine flag” signaling his readiness to also challenge China in South China sea (even though he backed down afterwards).

We also see an increase of 22% in the Philippines’ economic AGS towards China – but the same is more or less the case for the US and E28. What is more surprising is the more-than-twofold improvement in factual (i.e. not rhetorical) diplomatic AGS towards the US. This is to a large extent driven by the – shared – counter-terrorist fight in Marawi; Duterte’s approving of US plans for a military base expansion; joint military drills; and gratitude to the US for handing over weapons for fighting counter-terrorism. We can see an equal-sized deterioration in the same domain towards Russia – possibly for similar reasons. We also note that E28 is benefiting from a more positive AGS almost across the board so far this year – with only a slight deterioration in its security AGS. But the main finding may even be that in 2017 itself, the country’s AGS towards all great powers is actually worsening, possibly suggesting a country that may as much be turning inwards as it is pivoting towards China.

Filipino Change towards Great Powers

Target Cou..	Dismel	AGS 2016	AGS 2017	Differen..	Number ..	Avg. Goldstein Scale
CHN	Diplomatic	2.91	2.64	-9.4%	1,033	
	Economic	5.65	6.88	21.8%	390	
	Legal	-4.01	-4.33	-7.9%	786	
	Military	-7.59	-0.95	87.5%	874	
	Security	-8.38	-8.40	-0.2%	107	
E28	Diplomatic	3.83	4.27	11.7%	290	
	Economic	6.15	7.10	15.4%	103	
	Legal	-2.85	-2.64	7.5%	177	
	Military	-9.29	-7.04	24.2%	298	
	Security	-9.15	-9.50	-3.9%	168	
IND	Diplomatic	1.20	1.00	-16.7%	10	
RUS	Diplomatic	1.74	-1.83	-205.2%	116	
	Economic	6.45	6.40	-0.8%	45	
	Legal	-3.09	-5.00	-61.7%	32	
	Military	-7.02	-3.94	43.9%	88	
	Security	-8.56	-8.61	-0.6%	37	
USA	Diplomatic	1.35	4.25	215.6%	1,207	
	Economic	5.92	6.96	17.5%	161	
	Legal	-3.73	-4.52	-21.4%	543	
	Military	-4.37	-6.51	-49.1%	1,106	
	Security	-8.90	-9.38	-5.4%	281	

Philippines towards Great Powers





UKRAINE: STRUGGLING TO BREAK LOOSE

Despite two major revolutions for change and dignity, part of its territory being occupied and a war with Russia in its Eastern regions – the data about Ukraine (UKR) illustrate how the country still continues to struggle to break out of the Russian ‘influence zone’.

Ukrainian Change towards Great Powers

Avg. Goldstein Scale
-10.00 10.00

Dismel	Target Country	AGS 2016	AGS 2017	Difference	Number of Records
Diplomatic	CHN	4.53	4	-1.8%	52
	E28	3.42	2	-49.4%	497
	RUS	2.82	2	-29.7%	2,525
	USA	3.07	3	-11.4%	627
Economic	CHN	5.52	7	19.2%	77
	E28	5.94	6	6.7%	266
	RUS	-1.51	-3	-83.1%	2,052
	USA	5.21	2	-58.1%	205
Legal	CHN	-0.64	-5	-685.7%	15
	E28	-2.82	-4	-44.6%	291
	RUS	-3.92	-4	-6.2%	2,437
	USA	-4.36	-5	-6.1%	603
Military	CHN	-3.45	-10	-190.1%	20
	E28	-7.83	-9	-10.4%	714
	RUS	-7.84	-9	-12.2%	3,425
	USA	-8.38	-9	-7.9%	651
Security	E28	-9.48	-9	4.3%	116
	IND	-9.67	-10	1.7%	18
	RUS	-9.07	-9	-1.4%	573
	USA	-9.34	-9	1.1%	156

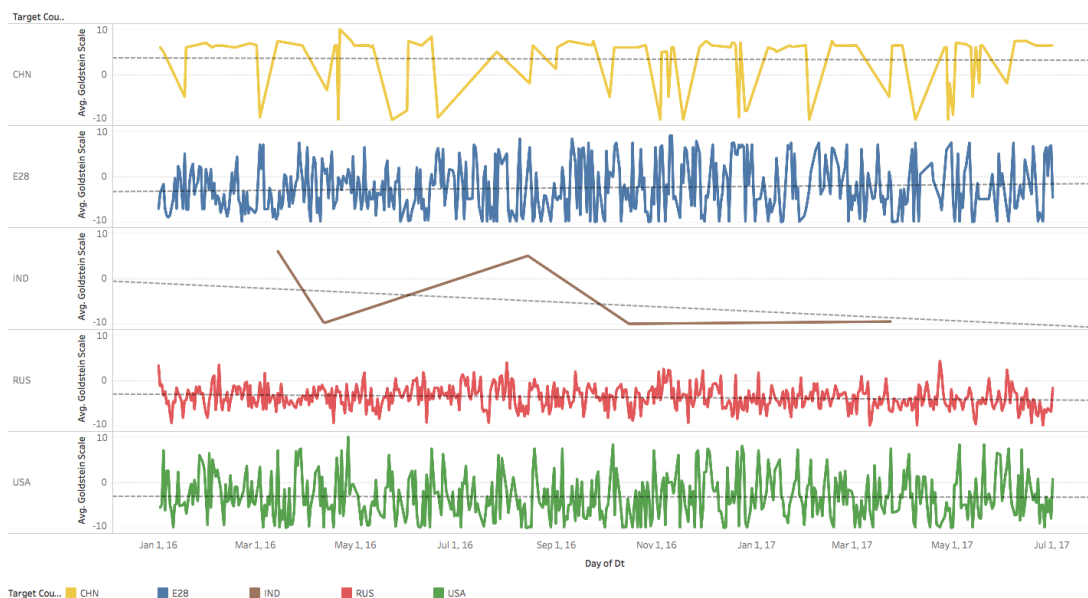
When comparing data for Ukraine in 2017 with 2016, the already dismal relationship with Russia continues to deteriorate across the diplomatic, information, military, economic and legal domains. Its factual economic AGS towards Russia went down by 83%, triggered by Russian sanctions on Ukraine; the closure of a Ukrainian-owned chocolate factory in Russia; the discontinuation of an agreement on a nuclear power plant; Ukraine banning book imports from Russia; and by Ukrainian sanctions against the major Russian internet-company Yandex. The relationship also saw its diplomatic AGS decline by 30% this year over last year (mostly due to the sanctions) and its military one by 12% (including the murder in Kyiv of Voronenko, an emigrated Russian politician who had been critical of Russian president Putin; and also Ukrainian accusations of Russian support to terrorism).

At the same time, however, the country's relationships with Europe and the USA are going downhill. For Europe, this is especially the case in the diplomatic (-49% – mostly related to Ukrainian frustrations with Western support) and legal (-45% – with Ukraine threatening to ban Marine Le Pen for remarks on Crimea; Austria releasing suspects of war crimes in Crimea; Ukraine extraditing an Italian suspected of money laundering, etc.) categories. It is notable that Ukraine's outward AGS scores towards the great powers show negative trends in most categories (only 4 out of 17 categories improved). This may suggest, as in the case of the Philippines, that the country may also be turning more inward than it is pivoting westward.

Examining Ukraine's respective attitudes towards the five great powers during the first six months of 2017, Europe remains Ukraine's preferred 'go-to'-great power, having the highest AGS in absolute terms in most categories. The US is a relatively distant second, with Russia still much further behind the US. Even though the Chinese and (especially) Indian number of events that are being averaged is

significantly smaller than those of the other three (and therefore more error-prone), the very positive diplomatic but also economic relationship with China may be worth mentioning.

Ukraine towards Great Powers



Ukraine's factual AGS trends towards the great powers for just 2017 (see line-graphs above), shows no dramatic changes except for an overall continued warming trend towards Europe. We observe that Ukraine's attitude towards Russia shows far fewer oscillations than its attitude towards E28 or the US. A closer look at the different categories underneath these overall trends reveals that in Europe's case this is mostly the case in the diplomatic, legal and – especially – military realms. The analogous US data for 2017 show a fairly strong positive trend line in the economic and legal realms, which is counterbalanced by more negative findings in the other categories. Russia shows a minute positive trend in the diplomatic domain, but stronger negative trends in all other categories.

MOLDOVA: STILL VACILLATING, BUT NUDGING TOWARDS EUROPE

HCSS produced a [report on Moldova's](#) pivoting behavior earlier in 2017 based on data until 2016. Updated event data for 2017 show a country that continues to vacillate internationally against a domestic background in which a pro-Moscow Moldovan president is struggling with a pro-EU government (the prospect of a EU political and trade agreement with the EU) and in which Transnistria remains a disputed territory. Some of the key events for Moldova (MDA) covered in event datasets in 2017 included: various official visits; the major money-laundering scandal and (claims of) Russian interference with the investigation; legal disputes regarding Transnistria's borders and visa regime; the expulsion of Russian diplomats from Moldova; and the banning of Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin's plane from entering EU airspace on its way to Moldova. These events underlie the main changes in Moldova's behavior across the board.

Moldovan Change towards Great Powers

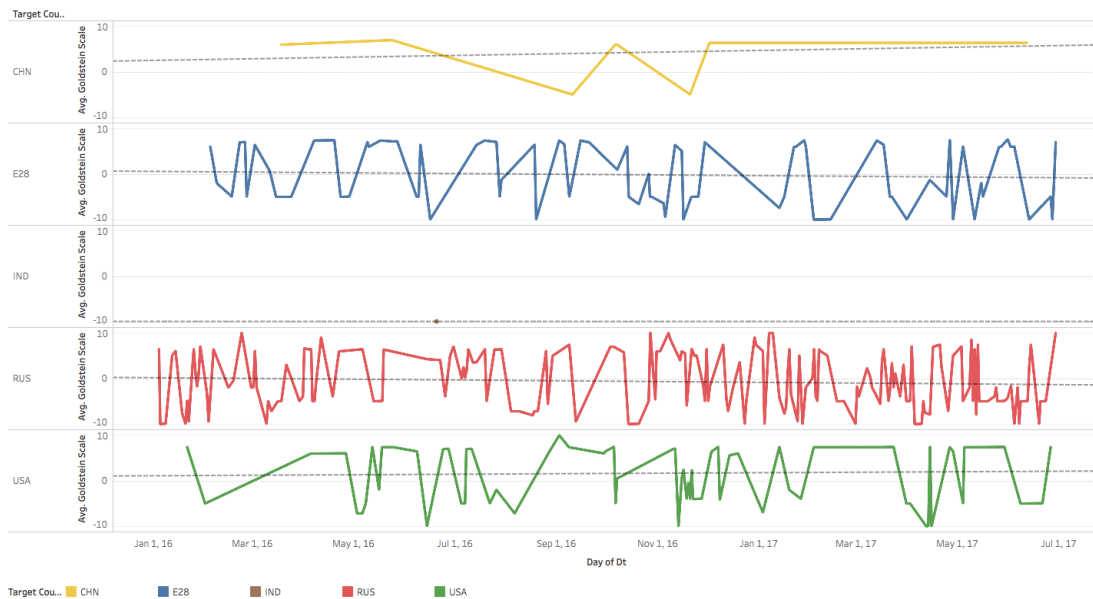
Target Country	Dismel	AGS 2016	AGS 2017	Difference	Number of Records	Avg. Goldstein Scale
CHN	Diplomatic	6.18			11	
	Economic	6.40	6.40	0.0%	14	
E28	Diplomatic	6.30	5.63	-10.7%	52	
	Economic	7.02	7.13	1.5%	40	
	Legal	-4.31	-5.00	-16.1%	67	
	Military	-3.23	-9.20	-184.8%	38	
RUS	Diplomatic	3.56	-0.50	-113.9%	183	
	Economic	5.87	5.80	-1.2%	107	
	Legal	-3.01	-4.69	-55.6%	284	
	Military	-5.10	-2.83	44.6%	166	
	Security	-5.60	-8.67	-54.8%	14	
USA	Diplomatic	2.73	-3.50	-228.2%	104	
	Economic	6.85	7.33	6.9%	49	
	Legal	-3.42	-5.00	-46.2%	31	

The aggregate picture that emerges when comparing events from 2017 to 2016 is depicted in the figure above⁶. Europe still receives high AGS scores from Moldova (higher than from Ukraine). Economically, both the US and E28 obtain more positive and improving AGS scores than Russia, suggesting that the country's Western orientation certainly remains in play. From a European point of view, however, some declines in 2017 are noticeable—nowhere more so than in the military realm. India is absent from the data⁷, and China has one score in the economic realm (based on 13 events) that is quite positive. A look at the underlying articles shows that these events include the opening of a Moldova-Chinese Business forum in Chisinau and discussions about China's potential for helping GUAM diversify away from Russia. The major differences between 2017 and 2016 are overwhelmingly negative, suggesting a further distancing from the great powers.

Finally, when considering the trends in the first half of this year, an overall drop in AGS towards both E28 and Russia is visible; but also an overall improvement in Moldova's behavior towards the US. Further examination of the categories underneath these figures reveal quite marked decreases in the economic category for Russia, but also improvements in the military and economic ones – suggesting that the 'Russian option' may remain a lower-ranked one, but is very much still in play.

With E28, the peaks in the diplomatic domain correspond to the decision to establish a NATO liaison office in Chisinau and various official visits to Brussels (Dodon's visit to Brussels; Moldovan PM meeting European Council president Tusk in Brussels). With Russia, the majority of the diplomatic events are related to the struggle between the pro-Moscow Moldovan president and the pro-EU government. Some of the issues which correspond to the peaks in the data are the issue of the Moldovan citizenship of the former Romanian President Basescu; the accusation that Russia attempts to derail a Moldovan investigation into money-laundering operations through Moldova; the dispute regarding the Transnistrian travel document; the expulsion of five Russian diplomats from Moldova; the incident with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin's plane; and discussions about the visa regime with Russia. In the legal sphere, the peak are related to the expulsion of Russian diplomats. In the security domain, the peak reflects the Moldovan parliament's demand that Russia withdraw its troops from Transnistria.

Moldova towards Great Powers



BELARUS: STILL IN RUSSIA'S AMBIT, BUT INCREASINGLY HEDGING

Belarus (BLR) is receiving more attention than usual these days because of Russia's large-scale military exercise *Zapad 2017*, scheduled for 14–20 September 2017, that will be partially (or potentially even mostly) be held in Belarus. The events detected in our datasets for Belarus are slightly more numerous than for Moldova, allowing us to draw firmer conclusions from them.

Belarusian Change towards Great Powers

Target Cou..	Dismel	AGS 2016	AGS 2017	Differen..	Number ..	Avg. Goldstein Scale
CHN	Diplomatic	5.60	2.94	-47.5%	56	-10.00 10.00
	Economic	6.55	6.42	-2.0%	163	
	Military	-10.00	-5.83	41.7%	27	
E28	Diplomatic	4.98	4.07	-18.2%	273	
	Economic	6.34	6.70	5.6%	187	
	Legal	-2.51	-5.22	-108.2%	225	
	Military	-3.90	-3.78	3.2%	165	
	Security	-9.58	-9.14	4.6%	29	
RUS	Diplomatic	2.97	2.81	-5.3%	482	-10.00 10.00
	Economic	4.28	4.48	4.7%	565	
	Legal	-4.67	-4.01	14.1%	465	
	Military	-0.08	-0.18	-119.7%	439	
	Security	-9.59	-9.32	2.9%	29	
USA	Diplomatic	2.38	4.14	74.2%	95	
	Economic	5.33	5.89	10.4%	45	
	Legal	-3.80	-5.00	-31.6%	39	
	Military	-7.78	-7.48	3.9%	34	
	Security	-9.12	-9.00	1.3%	11	

The single biggest change between 2017 and 2016 lies in the military realm where Belarus' (overall still unusually positive) attitude towards Russia did see a major dip of more than 100%. Most other aspects of Belarus' attitude towards Russia remained fairly stable at a very positive level. The country's behavior towards Europe and the US is at a significantly lower AGS level than towards Russia; and in both cases, the evidence is mixed. With respect to E28, which generally remains the second most positive 'target' of Belarus' activity, 2017 shows mostly quite small but still positive trends. In the case of the US, we notice a quite strong (74%) improvement in the diplomatic AGS, and also quite small improvements in most other categories.

The one exception to this very slight 'warming' towards the West is in the legal realm. This is related to discussions about Poland granting residence permits to Belarusians and about Belarus intending to ease visa requirements, where Belarus appears to be far more 'anti-Western' (and especially anti-European). One difference between Belarus on the one hand, and Moldova and Ukraine on the other, is that the country has fewer negative AGS trends in 2017 than in 2016, suggesting that while it is still mostly on the side of Russia, it is still gingerly trying to curry favor with other great powers as well.

When examining the factual AGS trends for the first months of this year alone, a downwards trend is visible for all great powers (with the exception of India, for which there far too few events to draw any conclusions). What is very visible in these line-graphs, however, is how many more events Belarus initiates towards Russia than towards Europe, or – a fortiori – towards the US. So in this sense Belarus is still very much focused on Russia. Events that stand out in the diplomatic domain are connected to the lead up to the military exercise *Zapad* 2017 (also in the military domain); the St. Petersburg metro terrorist attack; a settlement negotiated to oil and gas disputes between Belarus and Russia and complaints of a Russian violation of a border agreement.

The quality and not the quantity of these events in 2017, however, paint a mostly slightly negative picture towards Europe, slightly less negative trends towards the US (with even a small economic improvement), and also a fairly stable attitude towards Russia, with an interesting improvement in the diplomatic category, mostly related to Belarus' declared readiness to resume cooperation with Russia in the potash industry; settlement of oil and gas disputes; and Lukashenko's proposal to help with the Petersburg metro attacks investigation. There are also quite a few articles⁸ speculating about whether Belarus may become the 'next Ukraine'⁹ because Russia might decide to use the pretext of an exercise for a Crimea- or Donbass-like adventure. In the economic realm events include economic cooperation plans between Russia and Belarus; a meeting about the Belarusian-Russian investment fund to select investment projects; Belarus' intention to boost equipment exports to Russia (Stavropol Krai); and pensions in Belarus awarded under social security agreement with Russia.

Overall, no real evidence for a diversification of Belarus' external 'cooperation portfolio' is found in the event datasets¹⁰. The country remains firmly in Russia's influence sphere.



THE NETHERLANDS IN GLOBAL GEODYNAMICS

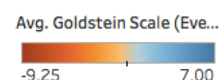
In recent years HCSS has been looking at what our event datasets tell us about the role that The Netherlands (NLD) play in these changing global geodynamics. Our main finding was that The Netherlands finds itself in the internationally propitious position of having highly cooperative relations with most countries – including most great powers. This section will look at how the world has been treating The Netherlands and how The Netherlands itself has interacted with the rest of the world from Jan-Jul 2017.

THE WORLD VIS-A-VIS THE NETHERLANDS: A PROPITIOUS AND IMPROVING SITUATION

The world's overall behavior towards The Netherlands, as evidenced in our event datasets, remains comparatively positive. The world's global AGS towards The Netherlands – i.e. the average AGS score of all 22,948 factual events that all other countries directed towards The Netherlands in the first six months of 2017 in comparison to the whole of 2016 – improved by almost 63%.

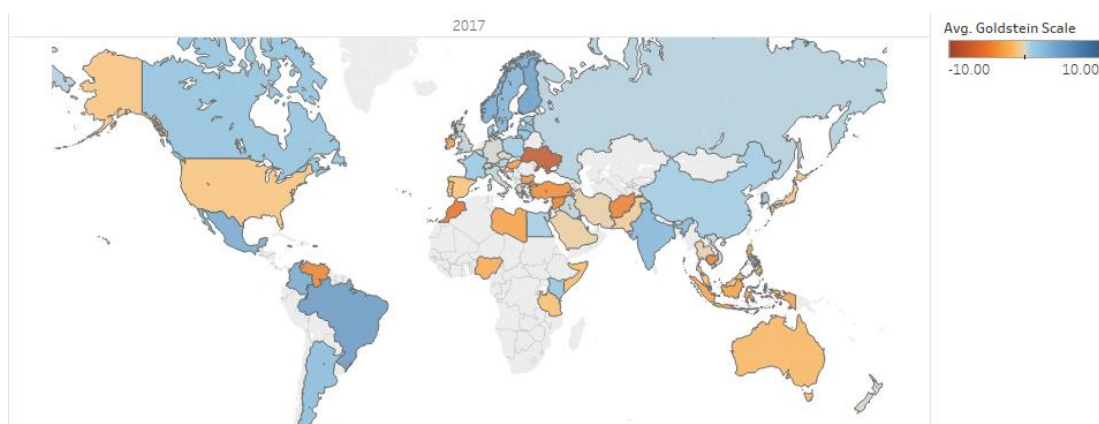
Difference Table Inward

Dismel	Difference Direction	AGS 2016	AGS 2017	Difference	Number of Records
Diplomatic	Up	3.407	3.741	9.8%	6,821
Economic	Down	6.172	6.162	-0.2%	3,877
Informational	=	7.000	7.000	0.0%	14
Legal	Down	-2.109	-3.731	-76.9%	6,232
Military	Up	-8.019	-7.833	2.3%	4,851
Security	Up	-9.287	-9.197	1.0%	1,153
Grand Total		-1.017	-0.379	62.7%	22,948



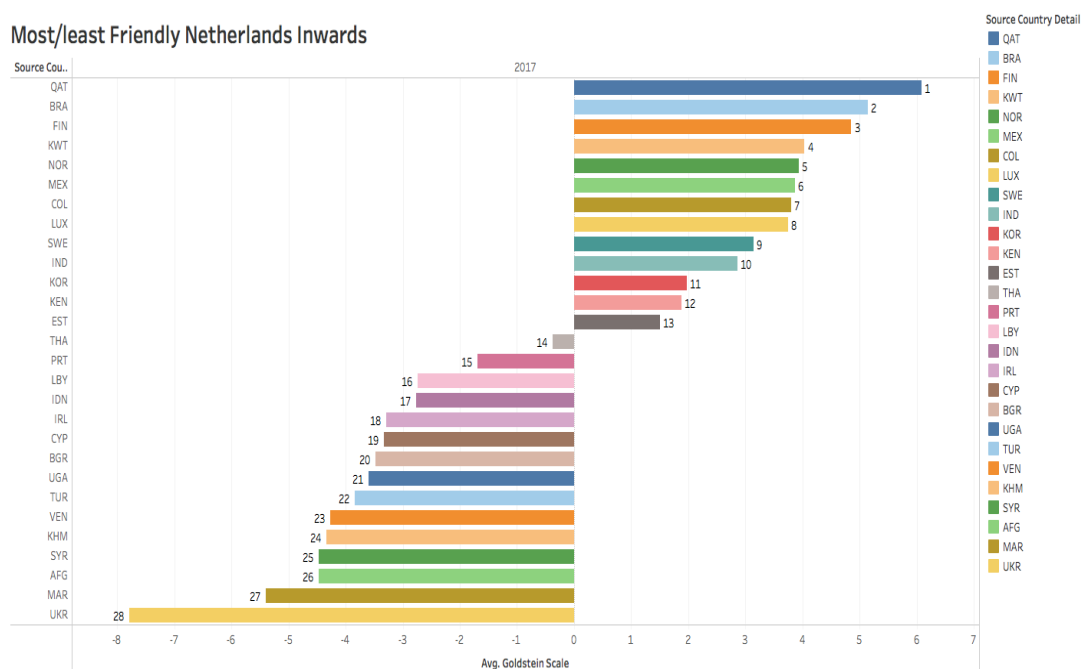
When we look at the individual DISMEL (Diplomatic, Information, Security, Military, Economic and Legal) categories, we see that The Netherlands' position improved in the diplomatic, military and security spheres. One noteworthy point of concern, however, is the legal sphere (-77%), which is important to the country that houses the world's capital of peace, justice and security. This category saw a decrease by almost half in 2017 (from a comparatively high baseline in 2016). A drill-down into the data reveals that this finding is partly related to various internationally reported actions or statements by Geert Wilders; to the row between Turkey and The Netherlands in the run-up to the Dutch March 2017 election and beyond; as well as to various international court proceedings in The Hague.

Global Attitude towards The Netherlands



When we examine the geographical breakdown of these data, we once again see that most parts of the world color a comforting blue. This includes most great powers, including – surprisingly (but maybe encouragingly) – Russia; but also China and India. Donald Trump’s United States interestingly – and for the first time in our analyses – scores (slightly) negative¹¹. The actual events behind this deterioration include the appointment of a controversial US ambassador to The Netherlands; comments on the Dutch elections and populism in The Netherlands; other reactions to various comments by Geert Wilders; advice on how to avoid taxes through The Netherlands; stories about the Dutch water management system; and others.

Most/least Friendly Netherlands Inwards



The bar chart shows the countries that were the most ‘friendly’ and ‘unfriendly’ towards The Netherlands based on their AGS scores. On the negative side, we see Ukraine atypically leading the list, which is mostly attributable to the fallout from the Dutch referendum on Ukraine’s Association Agreement with the European Union. Second in line is Morocco based on events such as recalling its Dutch ambassador over Dutch refusal to take action against Said Chaaou, an alleged organizer of the

protest movement in the Rif region; Wilders' reactions to Trump's travel ban; and the Moroccan minority in The Netherlands fearing the rise of the far right. Afghanistan, a country where The Netherlands has been militarily active since 2002 is next on the list, followed by Syria based on events connected with autopsy reports from Syria that were to be examined in the Hague; a Dutch ISIS fighter killed in Raqqa; and a Dutch public prosecutor wanting to prosecute jihadists in Syria prior to their return to The Netherlands.

The negative score for Cambodia is mostly due to the events around the conviction of a Dutch pedophile priest there. Cambodia is followed by Venezuela, a direct geographical neighbor of The Netherlands in the Caribbean that has become increasingly authoritarian, leading to many disputes between the two countries. As we reported in our Monthly Alert April, we have seen a negative spike in relations between The Netherlands and Turkey (based on significantly more automatically extracted events than the previous observations). Besides the uptick in March that related to the incident with the Turkish minister trying to campaign in Rotterdam, relations have remained relatively stable (albeit on the negative side). Relations with Turkey remain strenuous after the elections in The Netherlands and the referendum in Turkey. This is visible in, for example, the fact that the Dutch Ambassador is still denied entry to Turkey.

On the friendly side, we find Qatar in the top position¹² – mostly due to the close economic ties between the two countries. Dutch companies like Shell, Arcadis and Van Oord are involved in large oil and gas, as well as infrastructure, projects. At the same time, some Qatari companies, like Katara Hospitality, are also active in The Netherlands. Qatar is followed by Brazil, again mostly based on economic ties: e.g. Van Oord winning a big dredging contract; Heineken expanding its presence by buying Kirin. Finland scores high because of shared initiatives in areas like 'She Decides' on family planning; and the sale by Finnish media concern SANOMA of its stake in SBS to Dutch Talpa. Norway's spot is mostly due to cooperation in cyber defense; in joint space scientific research; in picking up the slack from President Trump's defunding of family planning, an initiative by Dutch Minister Lilianne Ploumen; in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battlegroup, etc. For Mexico, some of the key events include how important The Netherlands is to Mexico as an export country; an important contract from the Mexican Navy for Dutch shipbuilder Damen; and cooperation in damage-control against the US Trump administration on funding abortion, on trade and migration.

THE NETHERLANDS->THE WORLD: NICE, BUT NOT AT ANY PRICE

As in previous years, in 2017 The Netherlands again proves to be a highly cooperative country towards the rest of the world.

Difference Table Outward

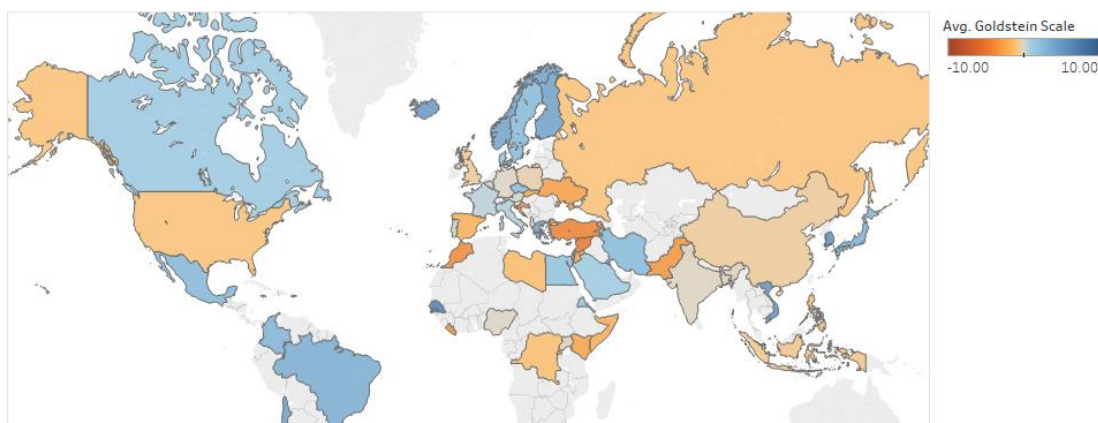
Dissem	Difference Direction	AGS 2016	AGS 2017	Difference	Number of Records
Diplomatic	Down	3.519	3.104	-11.8%	7,288
Economic	Up	6.145	6.461	5.1%	3,258
Informational	=	7.000	7.000	0.0%	70
Legal	Down	-3.497	-3.690	-5.5%	6,309
Military	Up	-7.542	-7.035	6.7%	5,077
Security	Down	-8.884	-8.938	-0.6%	1,265
Grand Total		-1.213	-0.953	21.4%	23,267

Avg. Goldstein Scale (Eve...
-8.91 7.00

A comparison of the findings for the first half of 2017 with those for 2016 shows that the country's already comparatively high factual AGS towards third countries appears to have increased (by 21%). A breakdown by DISMEL categories reveals that Dutch 'friendliness' has increased in the economic and military categories, but it has also declined in the legal (-5.5%) and especially diplomatic (-12%). Key legal events here include the ongoing MH17 investigation; Dutch reactions to Trump's foreign

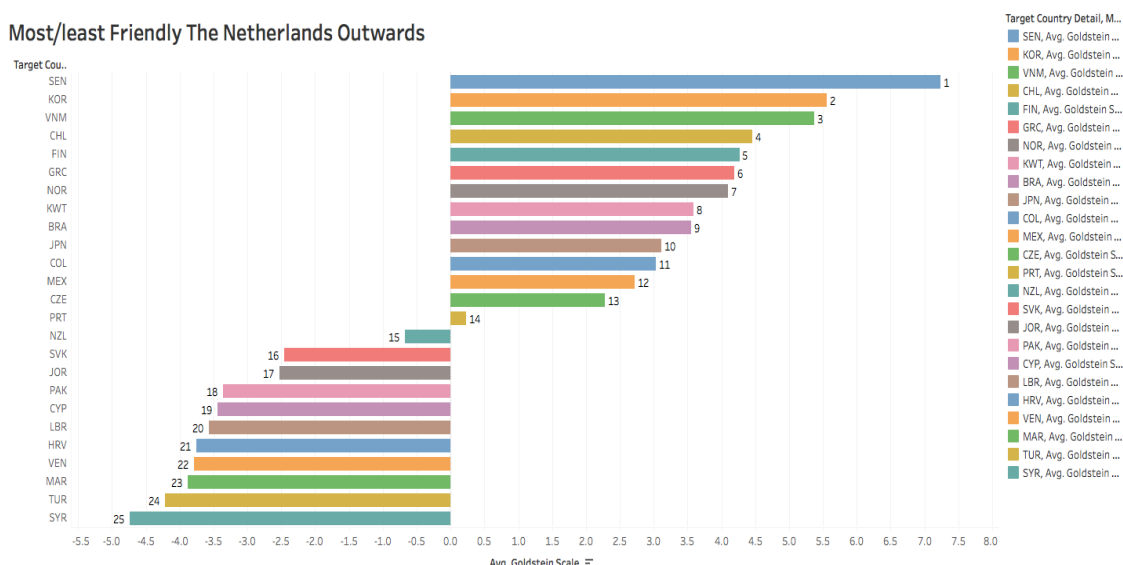
policy both officially and in the media; and a highly publicized row with Turkey. At the same time, a more positive outward attitude in the economic, military and security realms is observed. Diplomatic events include reactions on the Dutch elections; Geert Wilders; refugee policy; and the EU presenting a united front in the Brexit negotiations.

Dutch Attitude towards the World



Projecting these figures onto a world map immediately shows more red than the previous one, meaning that there are quite a few countries with which The Netherlands has a relatively chilly relationship. A broader observation is that this is the case towards all great powers, for the first time also including the United States. Events contributing to this declining AGS score include the Dutch government ending talks with the United States over passenger pre-clearance at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport; the implication for Dutch energy interests of the US punitive sanctions on Russia; the appointment of a controversial new US ambassador; US National Security Advisor McMaster allegedly blocking Ayaan Hirsi Ali from speaking to NSC and meeting Trump; and some legal battles Royal Dutch Shell is fighting in US courts.

Most/least Friendly The Netherlands Outwards



The bar chart shows the countries towards which The Netherlands has the highest and the lowest factual AGS scores. On the positive side we find Senegal on top due to Dutch and US military training activities with the Senegalese military in counter-terrorism; as well as developments in Gambia in relation to the ICC. South Korea is next on the basis of plans by Shell and a South Korean company plan to partner in a liquefied gas plant. Vietnam's high score is again mainly economy-driven (a M€9.5 contract between Dutch and Vietnamese companies for a comprehensive waste water treatment in the Phu My urban area). Climate change plays a role here – as the Dutch ambassador to Vietnam stressed the two countries' partnership in climate change adaptation and water resources management; as did the expressed wish of The Netherlands to have stronger ties with Vietnam and the official visit of the Vietnamese PM to The Netherlands. The high score of Chile is mostly connected to the sale of decommissioned military hardware and also to a new MASCARA-facility for space observation in which Leiden University participates.

The country The Netherlands has been the least friendly to (based on this dataset) is Syria. The main events behind this finding include the killing of a Dutch ISIS fighter in Raqqa, trials of Dutch ISIS fighters in absentia, the Dutch cabinet's comprehension for a US attack on Syrian airbase; the addition of more Dutch Syria-goers to the Dutch terror list; and the banning of a Syrian preacher (Fawaz Jneid) from some parts of the Hague. The other countries on the bottom of the list (TUR, MAR, VEN) are very similar to the ones we had on the list of countries that were unfriendly towards The Netherlands – often also based on very similar events.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the available event-data for the first six months of 2017 shows a still comparatively well-positioned Netherlands in a world bedeviled by geodynamics.

The negative assertiveness of all great powers have worsened in the first half of this year, with by far the biggest deterioration taking place in the US under the new Trump administration. Even India, which had come out of our previous analyses as the more ‘pacific’ exception to what we have called great power *assertivitis*, now appears to be leading in certain GPA categories. HCSS will produce a separate strategic alert about this changing Indian storyline later this month. The main ‘great power’ story here, however, remains the brinkmanship that is now increasingly being displayed by all great powers (Europe not entirely excluded) which is shaking the very foundations of the international order.

A look at a few selected pivot states revealed that the (often opportunistic) re-alignment of some pivotal pawns in the international system continues unabated. The actual story here often proves to be more complicated than the media headlines suggest. However, there is no denying that these geodynamic zigzags continue and, as shown, states are increasingly more assertive. An interesting finding is that many of the pivots we looked at seem to be turning inward at least as much as they are pivoting.

Analysis of The Netherlands continues to reveal a country in an unusually propitious position amidst this geodynamic maelstrom. Probably far more propitious than most of its citizens – or even policy-makers and/or politicians – realize. It is not bereft of countries that behave negatively towards it. Overall, however, it has been able to sustain positive relations with all of its neighbors, with most great powers (the United States this year for the first time being the exception), and with many other key actors (such as Brazil). One of the most telling overview of the country’s good fortune (and/or adroit diplomatic positioning) is the new *friendliness balance* indicators presented for the first time in this alert. It shows that The Netherlands has been able to maintain positive relations even with countries towards which it was more critical.

MOVING BEYOND NARRATIVES, DATA DRIVEN GEODYNAMICS

As done in our previous monitoring efforts, we want to emphasize that the state-centric datasets that we use in our analyses do not reflect the full gamut of geodynamic developments that are taking place in this world. They merely capture a part of geopolitical geodynamics that remains – for better and/or for worse – an important part of our security environment. At the same time, however, there are also myriad other – both positive (!) and negative – geo-economic, geo-technological, geo-resource, geo-institutional, geo-cultural, geo-identity, etc. developments that profoundly affect the international system at all levels. HCSS continues to explore a variety of different datasets and -tools to get a better handle on all of these geodynamics.

We submit that the more evidence-based approach towards tracking geodynamics that undergirds this alert (as well as our other aforementioned efforts) presents unique promise to start moving beyond the (all too often ideology-based) narratives that dominate today’s discussions about world politics. We may be better aware than most of the many problems that haunt the specific dataset that we used in this alert. Like many other contemporary datasets, it remains extremely noisy. In this alert, which we publish in a totally new – fully interactive – way, we give our readers the opportunity to drill down to every single article from which the statistics we use were extracted. The open-source nature of this dataset allows us to do that. Readers who are willing to dig deeper into the data will see that we essentially merely used the automatically extracted event data as the (noisy) ‘baseline’ from which

we then tried to extract interesting ‘signals’.

We remain confident that the quality of these – currently exclusively US-funded – datasets will continue to improve exponentially. Recent advancements in natural language processing and in machine learning offer unprecedented promise to improve their quality by multiple orders of magnitude. We hope that Europe will be willing (as it is able) to contribute to this effort. But we equally hope to have demonstrated in this report that even at the current state of play, it is already possible to extract uniquely useful and systematic policy-relevant insights from these rich datasets.

METHODOLOGY

A more expansive (and updated) annual analysis of the changing geodynamics in the international order will be provided in the StratMon 2018 annual report that is expected in January 2018. Are you interested in the methodology used for this alert, please have a look at our previous StratMon reports, which you can find [here](#)¹³.

MUST READS FOR THE CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

Must Watch [The Changing International Order and the Risk of Conflict](#) - Conversation with Dr. Bruce Jones, Vice President of the United Nations University

Must Read [The Beginning\(s\) and End\(s\) of the International Order](#) - E-International Relations (E-IR)

Must Read [Russian Views of the International Order](#) - RAND Corporation

Must read [What Happens When War is Outlawed](#) - The New Yorker

Must Read [Innovations in Global Governance](#) - Council for Foreign Relations

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ABOUT

In order to remain on top of the rapid changes ongoing in the international environment, the Strategic Monitor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence provides analysis of global trends and risks. The Monthly Alerts offer an integrated perspective on key challenges in the future security environment of The Netherlands along the following four themes:

- 1 *Vital European and Dutch Security Interests*
- 2 *New Security Threats and Opportunities*
- 3 *Political Violence*
- 4 *The Changing International Order*

The Monthly Alerts reflect the monitoring framework of the Annual Strategic Monitor report, which is due for publication in January 2018. Each Monthly Alert offers a selection of discussions of emerging developments by key stakeholders in publications from governments, international institutions, think tanks, academic outlets and expert blogs, supported by previews of ongoing monitoring efforts of HCSS and Clingendael. The Monthly Alerts run on a four-month cycle alternating between the four themes.

DISCLAIMER

This Report has been commissioned by the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence within the PROGRESS framework agreement, lot 5, 2017. Responsibility for the contents and for the opinions expressed rests solely with the authors; publication does not constitute an endorsement by the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence.

NOTES

¹ See HCSS new forthcoming study on Populist Sovereignism.

² see more on methodology: De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Tim Sweijs, Sijbren de Jong, Willem Th. Oosterveld, Hannes Rööfs, Frank Bekkers, Artur Usanov, Robert de Rave, and Karlijn Jans. "Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation." The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, February 20, 2017. <http://hcss.nl/report/volatility-and-friction-age-disintermediation>. pp.44-92.

³ See: De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Eline Chivot, João Silveira, Michelle Yuemin Yang, and Olga Zelinska. "Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness: The Chinese and Russian Cases." The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, June 3, 2014. http://hcss.nl/report/assessing_assertions_of_assertiveness_the_chinese_and_russian_cases_1 De Spiegeleire, Stephan. Great Power Assertivitis. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2016. http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_Great%20Power%20Assertivitis.pdf Sweijs, Tim, Stephan de Spiegeleire, Kelsey Shantz, and Frank Bekkers. 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 ; De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Tim Sweijs, Sijbren de Jong, Willem Th. Oosterveld, Hannes Rööfs, Frank Bekkers, Artur Usanov, Robert de Rave, and Karlijn Jans. "Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation." The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, February 20, 2017. <http://hcss.nl/report/volatility-and-friction-age-disintermediation>.

⁴ We have to caveat this observation with the remark that the overall number of events on which this finding is based is in the low 100s; whereas the equivalent counts for GPs run in the 1000s. This count of events does, however, fall above the threshold of 10 events for any country for any time period for any event category, which HCSS has decided to use as the lowest number of events we report on.

⁵ See, Sweijs, Tim, Willem Th. Oosterveld, Emily Knowles, and Menno Schellekens. "Why Are Pivot States so Pivotal? The Role of Pivot States in Regional and Global Security." The Hague: The Hague Centre For Strategic Studies, July 9, 2014. and De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Tim Sweijs, Sijbren de Jong, Willem Th. Oosterveld, Hannes Rööfs, Frank Bekkers, Artur Usanov, Robert de Rave, and Karlijn Jans. "Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation." The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, February 20, 2017. <http://hcss.nl/report/volatility-and-friction-age-disintermediation> pp. 40-91 and 94-112.

⁶ We add this caveat, because the number of events covered here is relatively low: depending on the category anywhere between 20 and 200.

⁷ The number of events is less than our threshold for consideration (at least 10 events).

⁸ Yekaterina Sinelschikova, "Will Belarus Leave Russia to Join EU," February 16, 2017, https://www.rbth.com/international/2017/02/16/will-belarus-leave-russia-to-join-europe_703553.

⁹ Nikolay Pakhmov, "Why Belarus Can't Afford to Be the next Ukraine," February 22, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-belarus-cant-afford-be-the-new-ukraine-19535?page=2>.

¹⁰ For more in this, see our forthcoming PopSov report, pp. 131-132.

¹¹ We have to reemphasize that the AGS scores for the US are often pulled down incorrectly by miscoded events like shootings in the Holland Tunnel in New York or people named Holland. See Spiegeleire, Stephan. Great Power Assertivitis. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2016, p. 39. http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_Great%20Power%20Assertivitis.pdf Since we are talking about 1271 events in this finding, and since we find no reason to assume that the miscodings would vary dramatically from year to year, we still decided to report the finding with the present caveat attached. Correcting these errors – especially for the Netherlands – would certainly be possible (and we do maintain lists of such coding errors), but not within the confines of currently available resources.

¹² We excluded Singapore, which showed up first but only due to statistical artifacts.

¹³ See more on methodology: De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Tim Sweijs, Sijbren de Jong, Willem Th. Oosterveld, Hannes Rööfs, Frank Bekkers, Artur Usanov, Robert de Rave, and Karlijn Jans. "Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation." The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, February 20, 2017. <http://hcss.nl/report/volatility-and-friction-age-disintermediation>. pp.44-92.