



# Europe-Asia Review II

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# United Arab Emirates

## UKRAINE FIGHTS FOR THE WEST



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**In December 1971, Emir of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan – founding father of the UAE – brought together the ruling families of Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ajman, and Om Al-Qaiwain to form a political union. A federal state was created, to which the seventh emirate, Ras al-Khaimah, joined in February 1972. Within 50 years, a federation of tribal states with a population of 300,000 has developed into a nation of 10 million, which has impressed the world with its economic development, innovation and standard of living. It is also one of the most open countries in the world, where almost 90% of the inhabitants are foreigners – both highly qualified professionals and ordinary workers attracted by the dynamics of growth and professional opportunities. The UAE also won the bid to host the World Expo 2020 that for the first time in history took place in the Middle East. Millions of tourists and investors from around the globe flocked to Dubai to see the prestigious exhibition that was open to visitors from October 2021 to the end of March 2022.**

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Regional integration did not stop with the emergence of the UAE. The next geopolitical step in which Abu Dhabi participated was the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in May 1981. It ensured closer cooperation between the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. However, the grouping faced difficulties after the outbreak of the “Arab Spring” as tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia worsened. Accusations towards Doha that it had allegedly provided “support” for terrorism as well as its ties with Iran led that time to a conflict between Qatar on the one hand and UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain on the other. They had imposed economic measures on Qatar and severed diplomatic relations with Doha. The rapprochement started at the 41st Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in January 2021, when a “[solidarity and stability](#)” agreement was signed in al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, aimed at reconciliation and normalization of relations within the GCC.

## Economic development and relations with the European Union

The dynamic growth and development of the United Arab Emirates has been possible mainly thanks to its vast natural resources and their smart management. The country sits on the seventh largest reserves of crude oil and natural gas in the world with [30% of its GDP](#) directly based on them. However, diversification efforts and the progress have been made in shifting away from a reliance on oil. Achievements are impressive: in 1999, the Emirates opened the Burj Al Arab – the world’s first seven-star hotel. In 2001, the construction of an artificial island – Palm Jumeirah began, and in 2006, the first luxury residential units were opened. In 2005, the world’s largest shopping mall, the Mall of the Emirates, opened in Dubai with that record being broken in 2008 by the Dubai Mall. In 2009, the metro was launched in Dubai, and in 2010, the world’s tallest skyscraper – Burj Khalifa was opened. In July 2020, the

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Emirati “Hope” probe was launched to the orbit of Mars. This was the first inter-planetary mission launched by an Arab country. In 2013, the Gulf nation won the bid to host the World Expo 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, its opening was postponed to October 2021, and it welcomed tourists until March 31, 2022. The Expo has recorded about [24 million visits](#).

The World Expo was held in an Arab country for the first time and as many as 192 out of 193 member states of the United Nations – including Poland – have participated in it. This was a unique opportunity for the UAE to showcase the development and transformation it has undergone over the 50 years. The World Expo is, above all, an [investment in the future](#): this is a powerful impulse for the economy of the nation which wants to be a massive hub for business, education and innovation. After the exhibition, the infrastructure and know-how will be used in another project: District 2020 – an area for innovation and ecological initiatives.

[The European Union is an official participant of Expo 2020 Dubai](#). The increasing regional and global importance of the UAE has significantly increased the European push for engagement in the Gulf. The EU opened its representation in Abu Dhabi in 2013, and also 26 EU Member States have their embassies there. Both sides cooperate in the field of security – in particular in the fight against terrorism – and in the economic area, especially energy, as well as climate change and environmental protection. [Trade between the EU and the UAE](#) amounts to 55 billion euros, and takes place within the broader framework of Europe’s relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

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## United Arab Emirates between the USA, Russia and China

Its economic power has helped the United Arab Emirates to build a strong position in the region, and at times it has had to rely on military means to defend its national security. This was the case when the Gulf nation was threatened by the aggressive policy of the Iranian regime and its support for the Houthi militias in Yemen. General James Mattis – the former head of the US Central Command – coined for the UAE the name: “Little Sparta“, referring to the level of professionalism and effectiveness of the country’s armed forces.

Over decades, the UAE has developed a strategic partnership with the United States which has intensified since the “Desert Storm” operation in 1991, and then strengthened by missions in Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Libya. So no wonder that Jebel Ali near Dubai is for the US Navy the most visited deep-sea port outside America. The US has worked with the UAE to protect its security and enhance its defenses using for this purpose the Al-Dhafra air base in Abu Dhabi, where some 2,000 US troops and Patriot missile defense systems are stationed. The latest example of that cooperation was intercepting Houthi missile attacks in January, 2022.

However, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan has made the Emiratis to reevaluate somehow that relationship. Criticism by the Joe Biden administration of some aspects of the military operation in Yemen had a similar effect. The UAE’s foreign policy has become more complex when its representative abstained from voting at the UN Security Council (as did China and India) on a motion for a resolution condemning Moscow’s aggression when the Russian invasion of Ukraine was launched. However, the UAE then voted at United Nations General Assembly to condemn Russia’s military assault on Ukraine and call upon Russia to withdraw its forces from the country.



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Abu Dhabi, driven by geopolitical calculations, also decided to gradually normalize its relations with the president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, supported by Moscow and Tehran. To some extent an alignment with Russia was also visible in Libya, where Abu Dhabi was reportedly supporting Marshall Haftar who fought against the UN-recognized government in Tripoli. He had also an unofficial backing from Moscow and Russian mercenaries from the so-called Wagner group fought on his side. In general, however, Emirati ties with Russia focus more on economy than security. Both countries coordinated their oil trade policy under OPEC + framework, and Russian tourists make up the third largest group in tourist traffic in the UAE, and the first one in the Ras al-Khaimah emirate.

Russia is not the only non-Western power with which the UAE is playing its geopolitical game. Abu Dhabi has been cooperating with Beijing for many years. In 2018, President Xi Jinping visited the Gulf nation, marking the first visit by a Chinese leader to the country in 29 years and sealing the UAE's participation in the Belt and Road (BRI) initiative. That visit was all the more significant for both sides as Abu Dhabi is a kind of gateway for exports from China to the Middle East. Some 60% of China's regional exports pass through the UAE. Already in 2015, both countries created a joint strategic investment fund worth 10 billion USD as part of the BRI.

The Covid-19 pandemic became the next step in strengthening the UAE-China partnership. During the visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in March 2021, cooperation in the production of Covid-19 vaccines was announced, with direct involvement by the Emirate of Ras-Khaimah. Beijing's ties with the UAE are not restricted to economy as they include also security cooperation. In February 2022, shortly after the rocket and drone attacks on Abu Dhabi by Yemeni rebels Houthi, the UAE announced its intention to purchase 12 L15 combat and training aircraft from China. On the other hand, negotiations with the USA over 23 billion USD arms

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sales including up to 50 F-35 fighter aircraft were suspended in December 2021 over “[sovereignty operational restrictions](#)”. Despite those developments Washington has recently signaled that it is “[still committed](#)” to continue with the talks.

## Abraham Accords

The biggest strategic shift in Abu Dhabi’s foreign and security policy, however, was the [Abraham Accords](#) of September 15, 2020, which led to the normalization of diplomatic relations and extensive cooperation between the UAE on the one side and Israel on the other. For Abu Dhabi – apart of critical tourist exchange and broad economic and technological cooperation – what matters is security cooperation with Israel. This also applies to Saudi Arabia, who, while remaining without any formal ties with Tel Aviv cooperates with the Israelis in that area. One of the reasons why they do that seems to be the regional challenge put by Tehran, which has been successfully expanding its influence from Iraq to Yemen since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the subsequent civil war in Syria.

## Iran’s issue

However, the UAE is also trying to neutralize the threats coming from Iran through diplomacy. In early December 2021, Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, National Security Advisor and brother of the de facto ruler of UAE, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, [visited Tehran](#). [UAE diplomatic sources described the visit](#) as



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“a continuation of the UAE’s efforts to strengthen bridges of communication and cooperation in the region that would serve the country’s national interests”.

Abu Dhabi is aware of Tehran’s continued involvement in the region and that the possible conclusion of a new nuclear deal by Iran with the US and other powers may only strengthen the geostrategic position of Tehran. All the more so now, due to increased global security challenges the UAE will try – while maintaining a strategic partnership with Washington – to simultaneously “diversify” its alliances.

# Japan's 'awakening'

## THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND A SINO- RUSSIAN ALLIANCE



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**Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the return of brutal aggression as a means of border changing means rejecting of the global order based on international law. As a consequence, the security architecture is changing not only in Europe but also in the Indo-Pacific. For Japan, the war in Ukraine – and above all an alliance between Russia and China – necessitates a redefinition of its attitude to security and defense, which are limited by the framework of the pacifist constitution of 1947. In the face of growing challenges, Tokyo will dynamically increase its defense budget and strengthen its partnership with Washington with which it has a defensive alliance as well as with regional pacts such as AUKUS – the Australia-UK-US partnership.**

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#### The end of a delusion: “revolution” in Tokyo-Moscow relations

In 2014, when the West imposed sanctions on Russia due to its illegal annexation of Crimea, Japan joined them carefully. It was the time of Shinzo Abe's second term in office and Tokyo was hoping for a real solution to the problem of Northern Territories, i.e. the Kuril Islands, captured by the USSR in the last days of World War II. The case of the disputed islands prevents the signing of a peace treaty between the two parties. Prime Minister Abe sought to settle these difficult issues, so the Japanese security strategy announced in 2013 did not treat Moscow as a threat but as a partner with whom Tokyo can work together for peace and stability on the international arena. China was considered a real challenge. After Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, Beijing began its expansion in the South China Sea and in 2013 announced an ADIZ – [air defense identification zone](#), including the Japanese Senkaku islands. In addition, the security strategy listed North Korea as a threat with its nuclear and ballistic missile development program.

Shinzo Abe met with Putin 27 times and those summits brought Japanese investments in energy projects in Russia, including Sakhalin, where companies such as [Mitsubishi and Mitsui & Co.](#) and in the [Arctic LNG 2](#). However, efforts by the Abe administration did not bring Japan any closer to Russian concessions over the Kuril Islands. [It is significant](#) that while Shinzo Abe visited Moscow 11 times, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Tokyo only twice. Meanwhile, Russia benefited from Japanese investments, which demonstrated more and more a one-sided nature of the rapprochement between the two countries.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused a “political upheaval” in relations between Tokyo and Moscow. In a gesture of solidarity with Ukraine and with its Western allies, the government of Fumio Kishida not only did not hesitate to impose sanctions

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on Russian and Belarusian banks – including the Russian central bank, and on over 100 oligarchs and officials associated with the Kremlin and the government in Minsk, but he also made an unprecedented decision to supply Ukraine with “non-lethal” military equipment. Japanese constitution does not allow it to send weapons to armed conflict zones. In addition, the President of Ukraine – Volodymyr Zelensky was invited to speak (via video-link) in the Japanese Diet. What was remarkable, Japan – traditionally skeptical towards migrants – expressed its readiness to accept refugees from Ukraine and assist them in settling and finding jobs in the country. The authorities in Tokyo did not stop there: they banned exports to Russia of luxury goods, semiconductors, communication equipment, sensors and radars, as well as 26 types of other technologies. In terms of trade, it has also been announced that Russia would lose its Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, which may lead to higher import duties. On the other hand, however, the Japanese government has shown restraint when it comes to possible withdrawal from gas and oil projects in Sakhalin and the Arctic, because they secure affordable energy supplies and, moreover, it would probably make China to replace Japanese companies. A similar situation had occurred in the past with Japan's energy investments in Iran. However, both Tokyo and Paris decided to suspend further investments in the Russian Arctic LNG 2 project.

Japan's sanctions against Russia met an immediate reaction from Moscow. On March 7, Japan, along with the European Union member states, as well as South Korea and Australia, among others, was entered on a list of “unfriendly countries“. For the Japanese, the conflict in Europe also means an end to its delusion regarding possible “joint administration” of the Kuril Islands by Moscow and Tokyo or getting them back. A clear signal in this respect is the return of traditional Japanese rhetoric. After the war in Ukraine began, Prime Minister Kishida called the Kuril Islands “indispensable territories of Japan” that are “under illegal occupation” of Russia. This is a decisive departure from the policy of Shinzo Abe, who avoided taking a harsher

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stance, hoping for a peace treaty with Russia. That tactic seemed justified because in 2018, during a meeting with President Putin in Singapore, both sides agreed to accelerate peace negotiations and base a possible treaty on the joint declaration of October 19, 1956. The document ended the state of war and restored diplomatic and consular relations between both countries. It also stated that, following the conclusion of the peace treaty, two of the four disputed islands, Habomai and Shikotan, would be handed over back to Japan.

However, the decisive stance of the Fumio Kishida administration on the Russian invasion of Ukraine radically changed Moscow's position regarding the prospect of signing a peace treaty. On March 21, 2021, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement reading that "in view of the manifestly unfriendly nature of Japan's unilateral restrictions on Russia regarding the situation in Ukraine, the Russian side has no intention of continuing peace talks with Japan, as signing a fundamental treaty on bilateral relations cannot be discussed with a country that is openly unfriendly and is trying to harm our country's interests." At the same time, Moscow has canceled visa-free travel for Japanese citizens who would like to visit their former places of residence in the Kuril Islands, and has also abandoned dialogue with Japan regarding joint economic activities on those islands. The Japanese government strongly opposed the decision of the Russian authorities, arguing that the two issues cannot be linked: sanctions and the peace treaty. However, even if peace negotiations between the two countries are reactivated in the future, the prospect of Tokyo regaining the two smaller islands of the Kuril archipelago mentioned in the 1956 declaration is unlikely. In July 2020, an amendment to the Russian constitution entered into force, which prohibits the transfer of any part of Russia's territory to any other country (Article 67, p. 2.1).

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#### The security of Japan in the face of a Sino-Russian alliance

The Ukraine war has had a decisive impact on the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific. On February 4, just before the Winter Olympics started in Beijing, the leaders of China and Russia issued a joint declaration in which they announced that the “friendship between the two nations has no limits” and there are no “forbidden” areas of cooperation. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Chinese media mimicked Moscow’s official propaganda, presenting the war in Ukraine as the US “fault”, pointing out, however, that Beijing respects “the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries”. China condemned the “unilateral sanctions” against Russia, but on the other hand it abstained from voting in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly on draft resolutions condemning Russian aggression.

So far, the war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed by the West on Russia have not weakened – at least in the official declarations of both sides – the Sino-Russian alliance, which was evident on March 30 during a meeting of Russian and Chinese foreign ministers – Sergey Lavrov and Wang Yi in Tunxi in the eastern Chinese Anhui province. On the contrary, Wang Yi expressed his conviction that “Sino-Russian relations have passed the test in the changing international situation” and that both countries were even more determined to develop bilateral relations and that China wanted to raise them to a higher level.”

Almost simultaneously with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces reported increased activity by the Russian navy in the Sea of Japan. Most likely, Russian ships transported military equipment, including tanks and missiles, towards Europe in order to strengthen Russian forces in Ukraine. Their presence, however, is directly related to the large military exercises that took place in February

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in the Sea of Okhotsk off the coast of Hokkaido and in the Sea of Japan in which Russian and Chinese naval vessels took part.

The increasingly visible Moscow-Beijing “Axis”, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and more frequent, bolder and more provocative military exercises by both powers near Japan have sparked a lively debate in that country and, apparently, the National Security Strategy is also to be modified. According to Japanese sources, the [new version of the strategy](#), to be announced at the end of 2022, is to define Russia as a “challenge” to the country’s security. Above all, the document is intended to indicate the need to strengthen Japan’s defense “in areas and seas closer to China and Taiwan” and the need to deal with the missile and nuclear threat posed by North Korea. [Defense spending](#) will also increase. The issue of increasing defense capabilities for many decades was a kind of taboo in Japan – as well as in Germany – due to the aggressive past of those countries. However, the war in Ukraine has radically changed Berlin’s defense policy, and there are indications that this will also be the case in Japan. The latter country, however, is restricted by its [pacifist constitution](#) imposed on Japan by the United States in 1947.

There have been also debates in Japan – previously unimaginable in a country that had suffered two nuclear explosions in August 1945 – about a need for nuclear deterrence as one of the elements of security architecture. Former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe raised that issue on Fuji Television Network on February 27, shortly after Russia’s attack on Ukraine, referring to the possibility of US nuclear weapons being stationed on Japanese territory, as is the case in Europe ([nuclear sharing](#)). This option was immediately rejected by the current prime minister, Fumio Kishida (elected to the Japanese parliament from the Hiroshima constituency), but it shows how much the perception of security and defense issues in Japan is changing under the influence of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and growing fears of simi-



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lar [actions by China towards Taiwan](#). Such concerns were expressed by as many as 77% of respondents in a [public opinion survey](#) conducted by Nikkei Inc. and TV Tokyo at the end of February 2022.

Japan's response to the radically deteriorating global security, including in the Indo-Pacific, will not only bring an increase in the defense budget above 1% of GDP, but also strengthening alliances – not just with the United States, with which Tokyo concluded a [defense treaty in 1960](#) but also with [AUKUS](#), whose members are – apart from the USA – also the UK and Australia.

# Beijing's position on the war in Ukraine

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**Beijing responded to the war in Ukraine by calling for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, blaming Washington and celebrating its alliance with the Kremlin. China's position, however, is more complex and is a result of various political, economic and internal factors that the Chinese authorities must take into account. Among the key ones is social stability necessary to maintain the power of the Communist Party, stable growth and Beijing's interests both in the Indo-Pacific and on the global scale. The whole matter is complicated by a strategic competition with the United States and the economic partnership with the European Union which is not that smooth as it used to be a decade ago.**

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#### The internal context: social stability and growth

The 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is set to convene in the fall of 2022 and bring a new generation of leaders. What is crucial, however, that will be the time when the second term of Xi Jinping as the CCP leader comes to an end. Tradition established in the last thirty years has it that a new leader should assume power. Most likely, however, Xi will retain his post, thus attaining a position comparable only to that of Deng Xiao-ping. Stabilization is therefore vital more than ever in the face of an economic slowdown, in part an effect of the pandemic and the zero-Covid policy.

Government's strong response to the coronavirus pandemic and in particular the lockdown of such business hubs as Shanghai carries social and economic costs. Chinese authorities are not in mood to adjust their foreign policy course, as in such a tough time what counts is continuation and showing to the public that the government is not yielding to the pressure from the West, especially from Washington. Anti-Western sentiments, traditionally present in the Chinese society, are also fueled by the official media narrative. It is difficult to assess to what extent pro-Russian and anti-Western publications and posts in social media are the result of official propaganda or they reflect real moods. There is no credible research to verify this. Polls carried out by official news portals (eg huangniu.com, April 12, 2022) indicate that 90% of the surveyed Internet users believe that "the US is not on the side of justice and equity about Ukraine, but instead practices hegemony and intimidation." It is worth noting, however, that there are also opinions inconsistent with the official Party line – mainly expressed by some intellectuals and artists. However, they are quickly removed from social networks.

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#### Sino-Russian alliance

Just before the opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing on February 4, the leaders of China and Russia issued a joint declaration announcing that the “friendship between the two countries had no limits and there were no “forbidden” areas of cooperation. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began, Chinese media repeated Moscow’s official propaganda narrative that there was no war in Ukraine but that Moscow was carrying out a “special military operation” there. However, Beijing has emphasized its respect for “the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries”. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs also stressed that it “understands Russia’s legitimate security concerns.” Authorities in Beijing have put blame on the United States for the Russia-Ukraine conflict claiming that Washington “sent arms to Ukraine, exacerbated tensions and even increased the likelihood of war.” China also joined the Kremlin propaganda accusing America of running “biological weapons labs” in Ukraine. On the other hand, on March 2, 2022, the New York Times published an article claiming that “senior Chinese officials had demanded from Russia not to start the invasion of Ukraine before the Winter Olympics end.” That would mean Beijing had some knowledge of the coming war. The Chinese authorities, however, strongly denied those claims.

China abstained from voting in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly on draft resolutions condemning Russian aggression. However, on April 7, 2022, the Chinese representative voted against Russia’s suspension from the UN Human Rights Council in connection with the Bucha massacre in Ukraine. Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Xi Jinping has spoken to Vladimir Putin several times by phone, and the Chinese media commented on the talks as an expression of trust between both sides as well as “China’s responsibility as a superpower” that “is actively working towards a peaceful solution to the conflict

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through negotiations”. It is, however, new for the Chinese foreign policy and for the statements of President Xi Jinping himself that he called for “the achievement of a balanced, effective and sustainable security mechanism in Europe”. Before the conflict in Ukraine escalated, both Chinese diplomacy and, even more so, Chinese leaders avoided statements that could be interpreted as interfering with European security issues. However, the brutality of the hostilities in Ukraine led to a certain modification. On March 8, during a virtual summit of the leaders of China, France and Germany, Xi Jinping used the term “war” for the first time in relation to the conflict in Ukraine. The crimes committed against civilians in Bucha and Kramatorsk were also condemned by Beijing, but the Chinese authorities decided not to blame either side. Thus, neither the intensification of the war nor the sanctions imposed by the West on Russia weakened – at least in the political sphere – the Sino-Russian alliance. It was visible on March 30. during a meeting of the foreign ministers of Russia – Sergey Lavrov and China – Wang Yi in Tunxi in the eastern province of China – Anhui. Wang Yi expressed his view that “Sino-Russian relations have passed the test in the changing international situation”, and that “both countries are even more determined to develop bilateral relations and that China wants to raise them to a higher level”.

Xi Jinping has yet to talk with President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, but the foreign ministers of both countries, Wang Yi and Dmytro Kuleba, spoke twice. The issue that the Ukrainian authorities raise in their conversations with Beijing is the effects of the war on the future of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially what regards the China-Europe rail connection, but also on investments in that country. Some Chinese experts share these concerns. Kyiv is also trying to ensure that the permanent members of the UN Security Council, including China, are the guarantors of a future peace deal with Russia and Ukraine’s security. However, in Beijing’s view, any “security guarantees have clear content restrictions.” It therefore seems

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doubtful that China will agree to Ukraine's suggestions. Chinese diplomacy, on the other hand, calls for a ceasefire in order to create a "[green access](#)" necessary for Kiev to export its grain overseas. That country and Russia are the main grain suppliers, among others, to the countries of the Middle East and Africa.

## Strategic competition with the West

China has used the international crisis caused by the war in Ukraine to propose a "Global Security Initiative". It was announced by Xi Jinping on April 21, 2022 at the annual [Boao Forum for Asia](#). His proposal is based on the "principle of indivisible security", respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states, non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for their socio-political systems. The initiative, while referring to the traditional position represented by the Chinese diplomacy, also refers to the Russian position ("indivisible security"). It may also be read as an indication that Beijing would react to a possible wider US involvement on the side of Taiwan. A few days earlier, on May 14, a [high-ranking delegation of the US Congress visited Taipei](#). It was chaired by Senator Lindsey Graham, a senior member of the US Senate Budget Committee, and also included Robert Menendez, chairman of the US Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. The visit was aimed at "[demonstrating the high regard and firm support US lawmakers from both parties have for Taiwan](#)" in connection with fears caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On the other hand, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the Chinese government has repeatedly emphasized that these two issues cannot be compared: Ukraine and Taiwan, because, [according to Beijing](#), "Taiwan has always been an inalienable part of Chinese territory." However, the course of war in Ukraine – contrary to the initial predictions of the Kremlin, but also of other countries, including the US – is a kind of

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lesson for Beijing demonstrating how the defense of Taiwan might look like. The Taiwanese authorities themselves are convinced that this currently means relative security for Taipei.

Undoubtedly, China's position on the war in Ukraine results to a large extent from its relations with the United States. Since 2017, China has been described by Washington as a "strategic competitor using predatory economy to intimidate its neighbors and to militarize parts of the South China Sea." [1] Tensions between the two powers deepened under Donald Trump's presidency, taking the form of a trade war. President Joe Biden has not changed the US policy towards China, and their competition is becoming a key factor defining politics and economy on a global scale. This is the background that influences Chinese reactions to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. US diplomatic efforts to modify the Chinese position, including talks between President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping, have not brought tangible results. Meanwhile, some US officials suggested that the Kremlin turned to Beijing for assistance in the supply of military equipment, which both sides denied. Nevertheless, during Biden's talks with Xi on March 18, 2022, the US president warned the Chinese leader of the "implications and consequences" of possible China's military support for Russia.

NATO has also been alarmed about China's stance on the war in Ukraine and Beijing's relationship with Moscow. NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg described it as a "systematic challenge" to the security of NATO countries. Stoltenberg further stated that the North Atlantic Alliance "must take into account China's growing influence and coercive policies on the world stage."

On December 30, 2020, China and the European Union completed negotiations on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), which was to be the most ambitious agreement that China has ever concluded with a third country.



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However, political factors, including mutual sanctions related to the dispute over Chinese policy towards the Uyghur ethnic minority in Xinjiang province led to the suspension of CAI in May 2021. Sanctions imposed by Beijing on Lithuania, a member state of the European Union additionally ignited the situation. China 'punished' Vilnius for allowing the opening of Taiwan's representative office in Lithuania. As a result, in January 2022, Brussels launched a case against the People's Republic of China with the World Trade Organization (WTO) "for its discriminatory trade practices against Lithuania". After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, both sides also differ as regards their respective positions on the war in that country. The European Union-China summit did not change the situation, and during a videoconference on April 1, 2022, President Xi Jinping called on European leaders to adopt an "independent" policy towards China. The following visit of Huo Yuzhen – a special representative of the Chinese government to eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland has not also brought anything new. The visit was made on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the 17 + 1 Cooperation Mechanism and was aimed, among others, at "clarifying misunderstandings regarding the Chinese position on Ukrainian crisis".

### Beijing's economic response

In terms of economic activities, the Chinese customs administration eased restrictions on the import of Russian wheat on the eve of Russian aggression against Ukraine, allowing the import of that grain from all regions of the country. While China has condemned the West's "unilateral sanctions" on Russia, the actual conduct of individual state-owned and private companies is pragmatic. China seems to be using Russia's problems to pursue its own interests. Beijing uses the partial exclusion of

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Russian banks from the Swift system to promote trade settlements, including trade in hydrocarbons in its own currency. The effects of the war, however – the global increase in food prices and the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic have weakened the yuan, despite its greater internationalization.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine began, two major state-owned banks, ICBC and Bank of China, stopped financing the purchase of goods from Russia due to US sanctions on Moscow. Despite this, the Chinese authorities have assured that they would continue “normal trade” with Moscow. The Russian and Chinese media suggested that the restrictions related to the cut-off from the Swift system could be relaxed through the use of the Chinese CIPS system. Beijing has not officially commented on that possibility. Some Chinese companies, such as DIDI (the Chinese equivalent of Uber), reacted to the sanctions imposed on Russia by withdrawing from the country, but then were forced to return under the pressure of the state or public opinion, including social media. Furthermore, such telecommunications companies as Huawei, Xiaomi and Oppo have reduced by 50% export of their products to Russia. Meanwhile, the China-founded Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – AIIB suspended operations related to Russia and Belarus. New Development Bank, founded by the BRICS countries, which also includes China and Russia, followed the suit. In mid-April, UnionPay, the Chinese state-owned payment system, refused to cooperate in issuing payment cards with Sberbank and other Russian banks subject to US and European sanctions. Similarly, the drone manufacturer DJI Technology Co has suspended its operations in Russia and Ukraine.

Beijing sees the crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine also as an opportunity for Chinese companies, especially in terms of investments in the energy sector, but also in food exports – in those sectors where Western companies are withdrawing. Chinese refineries owned by non-state companies have been placing

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new orders for crude oil in Russia without interruption, while at the same time receiving discount prices. Nevertheless, it is not that easy to draw a real picture of the trade between the two countries. According to the [Chinese customs office](#), exports of Chinese goods to Russia in March 2022 decreased by 7.7 percent compared to the previous year, while the import of Russian crude oil and coal decreased by 14.4 percent and 30.7 percent respectively. Meanwhile, according to [the data](#) provided on May 16, 2022 by Gina Raimondo – the US Secretary of Trade – exports of laptops from China to Russia also fell by as much as 40% in March. The trade in other products subject to sanctions has also decreased. The United States also “does not see China’s systematic efforts to go around the US export controls.” Therefore, contrary to Moscow’s expectations, Beijing generally complies with the sanctions imposed on Russia by Washington and Brussels.

# War in Ukraine

## TURKEY'S „STRATEGIC AUTONOMY”



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**Turkey, which is one of the key member states of the North Atlantic Alliance, chose a “strategic autonomy” when confronted with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Turkish authorities condemned the war but also opposed the sanctions imposed by Europe and the United States on Russia. Turkish companies sell very effective military drones to Ukraine but at the same time Ankara is arranging negotiations between Kiev and Moscow on its territory. Turkey says it cannot give up its ties with any of the parties to the conflict.**

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Turkey depends on supplies of gas, oil and grain from Russia, but also on the millions of tourists from that country who spend their holidays on Turkish beaches every year. At the same time, Ankara maintains “friendly” relations with Ukraine, it has not recognized the illegal annexation of Crimea, and has restricted access to its straits for the Russian navy. Turkish authorities are using a kind of “realpolitik” tactics: they are bargaining with the West when it comes to Finland and Sweden’s membership in NATO, and simultaneously Ankara has said it is planning a new military operation in Syria. All this takes place in an atmosphere of a political campaign, because in 2023 both parliamentary and presidential elections will be held in Turkey. Meanwhile, the country’s economic situation is very difficult, inflation is skyrocketing and investment revenues are falling.

## Economic crisis and ties with Russia

Turkey has been going through the worst economic crisis in two decades so since President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been in power. The paradox of the situation is that President Erdogan led Turkey out of the economic collapse inherited from his predecessors and set it on a path of impressive growth and development in the first decade of the 21st century. Currently, however, the economic policy of the Turkish government is not necessarily helpful to deal with the economic downturn.

Economic indicators are alarming. Inflation hit over 70 percent in May 2022, the highest spike since 1998 and is likely to rise to 100 percent by July. To make matters worse, the value of the Turkish lira has decreased by 44 percent against the US dollar over the last year and now the US currency is worth over 17 lira. This has led to a huge increase of the cost of living, with a minimum wage in the private sector of

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around 4,200 lira and in the public sector on average below 7,000 lira. For many years, the engine of economic growth in Turkey has been its construction industry but galloping inflation and a [huge increase in prices of building materials](#) (124 percent) – has stopped new investments and is hindering the completion of already started. It appears that President Erdogan's [unorthodox beliefs](#) concerning finances also have contributed to the spike in inflation and the fall of the Turkish lira. In Erdogan's narrative, the higher the interest rates the higher inflation – which is not in line with what conventional economics says. For years, the Turkish President [insisted](#) that the heads of the central bank must cut interest rates which led to several resignations. The [Turkish authorities](#), however, hope now that low interest rates can help Turkish exports and thus fuel the country's industrial production and thus increase investment. This is to contribute to the creation of new jobs, the inflow of hard currency, and so to curb inflation and accelerate economic growth. So far, these hopes have not been materialised.

The challenges the Turkish economy has been facing were aggravated by the sharp rise in gas and oil prices in the fall of 2021, followed by the war in Ukraine. [Turkey imports](#) 99 percent of its gas and 93 percent of its oil supplies from overseas, of which 45 percent of natural gas, 17 percent of oil and 40 percent of gasoline come from Russia. In grain imports, 70 percent of wheat bought by Turkey comes from Russia, and 15 percent from Ukraine. Russia is also an important [source of tourists for Turkey](#). 4.7 million Russians visited Turkey in 2021 and 7 million in 2019 – before the pandemic. Agri-food trade with both Russia and Ukraine is also vital for Turkey. Apart of that, Russia and Turkey also cooperate in nuclear energy. Russian state-owned nuclear energy giant Rosatom is building the [Akkuyu nuclear power plant](#) on the southern coast of Turkey in the Mersin province.

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#### Turkey's reaction to the war in Ukraine

Shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that Turkey would not give up its interests in the region nor its ties with any of the parties to the conflict. He stressed, however, that the Russian invasion was “unacceptable”. The Turkish authorities have opposed the sanctions against Moscow and abstained from voting on the suspension of Moscow's membership of the Council of Europe. However, Ankara backed the UN General Assembly resolution calling for Russia to immediately end its military operation in Ukraine.

Importantly for Kiev, Ankara recognized the conflict as a war which allowed it to restrict the movement of Russia's navy through the Turkish Straits, referring to the Montreux Convention of 1936. When it comes to defence issues, before the war Ukraine purchased Bayraktar TB2 drones from the Baykar – a private Turkish company. The Kremlin protested, the more so as the next deliveries took place already after the outbreak of hostilities. However, the Turkish government argued that it was not a military aid but a contract between a private Turkish company and the government in Kiev.

Turkey has also seen an influx of over 100,000 Russians who left their country due to the war in Ukraine and the economic woes that it brought. More than 85,000 refugees from Ukraine have also found temporary shelter in Turkey.

The Turkish government justifies its stance on the war in Ukraine not just with its national interests. Its declared “balanced” approach allows it supposedly to conduct talks with both opposing parties and to create a platform for direct negotiations. Turkey's diplomatic efforts include talks between President Erdogan and the leaders of Russia and Ukraine, as well as talks at the level of foreign ministers – including,



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for the first time since the war started, [negotiations](#) between ministers Sergey Lavrov and Dmytro Kuleba as part of the Diplomatic Forum in Antalya on March 10, 2022. [Bilateral talks](#) then continued in Istanbul. So far they have not brought any visible results in terms of stopping the war itself but Ankara has proved that it is an acceptable partner for both Kiev and Moscow for talks on resolving the economic issues arising from the ongoing war. This is Ankara's great asset.

The Turkish government has also engaged with the United Nations in [diplomatic efforts](#) to unblock 23 million tons of grain in the port of Odessa to be safely exported through the Black Sea. This was the purpose of the talks of the foreign ministers of Turkey and Russia on 8 June in Ankara, which, however, did not bring any breakthrough. The war, and above all the Russian blockade and the mines of the neighboring sea strips, “trapped” the grain in the port's silos. The [grain exports](#) from Ukraine and Russia is of key importance not just for the food stability in the Middle East and Africa but also for the political stability of both regions. Some countries import the bulk of the grain they need precisely from Russia or Ukraine. Egypt imports 82 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine, and Somalia in the Horn of Africa as well as Benin in West Africa 100 percent. Also Sudan, Senegal and Tanzania import more than 60 percent of their wheat from that region. The problem goes beyond the Middle East or Africa, as Laos, for example, also buys over 90 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine. In total – as the President of the European Commission [Ursula von der Leyen said](#) in the European Parliament on June 8, 2022 – the danger of starvation resulting from the Ukrainian war affects as many as 275 million people.

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#### Turkey-USA relations

In 2017, Ankara concluded an agreement with Moscow worth approximately USD 2.5 billion for the purchase of S-400 air defense systems. The first delivery took place in July 2019, and the deal itself led to serious tensions with the US administration of President Donald Trump. As a result, Turkey was removed from the prestigious project to build state-of-the-art F-35 fighter jets, and the Turkish defense industry was placed under US sanctions. The Turks participated in it since 2007 and planned to buy over a hundred of F-35 fighters. Washington argued that the S-400 were incompatible with NATO systems, and that Moscow could use them to obtain sensitive data on the F-35.

The war in Ukraine has added a new dimension to Ankara-Washington relations. The US authorities described the Turkish backing of Ukraine as “an important deterrent against harmful influences in the region.” According to the US Department of State, “appropriate US trade ties with Turkey in the field of defense serve the US national security as well as economic and trade interests” of the country. However, this does not change anything as regards the issue of S-400 air defense systems. In April 2022, the Turkish government announced that it could buy more S-400 units. Considering the geopolitical context, and above all the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, this can be interpreted as a signal to the Kremlin that the Turks intend to continue the existing relations with Russia.

However, this is also a kind of an attempt to put pressure on Washington. Back in October 2021, the Turkish government asked the Joe Biden administration for permission to purchase 40 F-16 fighters, which would to some extent offset the removal of Ankara from the F-35 project. It was only in March 2022 that the US government responded vaguely to this request in a letter to Congress, stating that a

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possible sale would be in line with Washington's interests and would support NATO unity. In April, however, both countries launched a [strategic mechanism of cooperation](#) in the field of defence and economy, which indicates a step forward in the rapprochement between Washington and Ankara.

## Turkey's NATO game

The war in Ukraine has also become an opportune moment for Turkey to 'remind' NATO of its strategic importance for the Alliance. The Scandinavian countries Finland and Sweden, concerned about the Russian aggression against Ukraine, [applied for NATO membership](#) on May 18, 2022. However, already on May 13, Turkish President Erdogan [announced](#) that his country could not positively evaluate these candidacies due to their "support for terrorist organizations". He meant people who live in both countries and are allegedly associated with the PKK – Kurdistan Workers' Party – an organization recognized as terrorist also by the European Union and the United States.

Turkey also does not accept that Sweden and Finland have sheltered people with links to the Hizmet – a movement initiated by Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish thinker and religious activist who has lived in Pennsylvania, USA since 1999. The Hizmet is an educational and religious movement that has founded thousands of schools in various parts of the world. However, Gulen's supporters are accused by the Turkish authorities of orchestrating the failed coup in July 2016. Turkey recognizes Gulen's movement as a terrorist organization but neither the United States nor the European Union countries share that view. Another bone of contention is the [embargo](#) imposed by Sweden and Finland on arms exports to Turkey in 2019, when the country carried out a military operation in northern Syria against the Kurdish People's Protection

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Units – YPG. These forces are in control of the northeastern Syria (the so-called Rojava) and played a significant role in the fight against the Daesh. Importantly, the YPG are backed by Washington. Ankara, however, accuses them of having ties with the PKK, which, by the way, is not far from the facts.

At the end of May 2022, the Turkish authorities sent their demands to Finland and Sweden in writing, which include the cessation of “support” to the PKK and Hizmet, banning these groups from organizing events, extraditing people with links to PKK and Hizmet who are wanted by the Turkish authorities, backing Turkish anti-terrorist measures as well as lifting the embargo on arms exports to Turkey. Ankara's demands are difficult to meet due to the rule of law and judicial independence in Sweden and Finland. However, for the enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance, the unanimity of the member states is required, and therefore the consent of Ankara is necessary. It is hard to expect that this issue could be resolved before the NATO summit which is to be held in Madrid on June 29-30, 2022. Part of the solution would be perhaps larger Swedish and Finnish investment in Turkey. Both Stockholm and Helsinki seem to be moving in this direction.

Turkey's game with the possible veto of Finland and Sweden's NATO membership was a kind of prelude to the announcement of a new military intervention in northern Syria near the towns of Tal Rifaat and Manbij. This operation – the fifth one since 2016 – will probably focus on the Kurdish YPG grouping but is also aimed at “preparing” a place – a buffer zone – for the transfer of some Syrian refugees currently living on Turkish territory. The intervention in Syria itself, and above all the case of the four million Syrians who found refuge in Turkey, is of great political importance for President Erdogan due to the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in 2023. This is a populist move to calm public sentiment in Turkey which is in the midst of an economic crisis with a galloping inflation. President Erdogan

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must also take into account the electorate of his coalition partner – MHP – the Nationalist Movement Party.

## Ankara's policies in the Middle East

The Turkish stance on Russia's invasion of Ukraine – refusal to back Western sanctions, maintaining ties and trade with Moscow, resulted in the Russian authorities expressing their “understanding” for Turkey's concerns about security along the border with Syria. This contrasts with the disapproval of this military operation expressed by the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and places the North Atlantic Alliance to which Finland and Sweden are aspiring in an even more difficult position.

On the other hand, however, “understanding” on the part of the Kremlin does not mean that the Russians are in favor of another Turkish operation in Syria. There has been an increase in the size of Russian and Syrian forces next to the territories that are to be covered by the Turkish offensive. Ankara is undoubtedly taking advantage of Moscow's diplomatic isolation and its military operations in Ukraine – and on the other hand, efforts by Western partners to dissuade Ankara from vetoing Stockholm and Helsinki's membership in NATO. In the case of Russia, the hope for a possible Turkish veto inhibits the Kremlin's negative reactions to Ankara's actions in Syria. Without Moscow's ‘neutrality’, it would be difficult for Turkey to conduct a military operation in that country. Russia saved the dictatorial power of Bashar al-Assad with its intervention in 2015 and turned the tide of the war in his side. Although President Erdogan and Putin are on opposite sides of the barricade in Syria, they have managed to agree on the spheres of influence in that country. Therefore, now is the best time for Turkey to pursue its interests across the southern border in areas controlled by Kurdish groups who boast Washington as an ally.

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#### Turkey-Greece tensions

For Europe and the United States, a potentially more serious problem may be Ankara's questioning of Greek sovereignty over islands in the Aegean Sea. A hundred years have passed since the Treaty of Lausanne which confirmed the borders between the two countries and, according to Turkey, also made Greece's sovereignty over them dependent on their "demilitarization". Ankara claims that Greece has systematically breached the treaty provisions, including the Paris Treaty of 1947, which confirmed the status of these islands, including Lesbos, Chios, Rhodes, Samos and Lemnos.

Allegations of "militarization" of the islands are rejected by Athens. Both sides submitted letters to the United Nations stating their positions on the islands and allegations of mutual airspace violations. Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced that "Greece should disarm these islands. If this does not happen, the sovereignty of them will be open for discussion." It's worth noting, however, that tensions between Athens and Ankara are a constant element in their mutual relations.

The upcoming 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey that will be celebrated in 2023, and the precedent of a revisionist Russia's invasion of Ukraine, make us seriously consider both the role of Turkey in NATO and what policy the European Union should pursue towards Ankara. Turkey is going through a pre-election year but for Europe and NATO of which that country is a key member state, it is primarily the time of Russia's war with Ukraine. Neither the North Atlantic Alliance nor Europe need new sources of instability.

# War in Ukraine

## MIDDLE EAST'S RESPONSES



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**The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused confusion in Israel and in the larger Middle East. Israel's sympathies are clearly with Ukrainians and Israelis have rallied for them – sometimes in big numbers – and privately donated aid. Moreover, the Israeli government too has provided Ukraine with various form of humanitarian assistance, including field hospitals. However, there are still voices criticizing Israel for maintaining ties with Moscow, not supplying weapons and not sending the Iron Dome air defence system to Ukraine. The Israeli approach is multifaceted and is based on many serious considerations related to its external security as well as internal political factors. Other Middle East nations – taken by surprise – have chosen realpolitik, carefully balancing their strategic and energy interests.**



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### MIDDLE EAST'S RESPONSES

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On 2 March, 2022 [Israel voted](#) in favor of the UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russian invasion on Ukraine, and [on 7 April](#) it also backed the UN decision to suspend Moscow from the Human Rights Council. As regards the internal situation, there are about one million citizens who migrated from the former Soviet Union and settled in Israel. However, the Israeli public opinion as a whole seems to overwhelmingly support the Ukrainians. A recent [Pew Research Centre survey](#) has demonstrated that 79 percent of Israeli population supports Ukraine and 19 percent Russia. So it seems that the factor of Israelis with Russian origins happens to be low when it comes to the Israeli political debate. There are other, more critical issues shaping the Israeli approach to the Ukrainian war.

### Internal context: political chaos

In political terms, by the time the Ukrainian war started, the Israeli political system [had already entered another political crisis](#). Finally, after months of intense internal wrangling, the [coalition government led by Prime Minister Naftali Bennet collapsed and brought about the dissolution of the Knesset on 30 June](#). Foreign Minister Yair Lapid will serve as an interim Prime Minister till the new coalition government is formed. New elections – to be held on 1 November this year – will be the fifth in less than four years. This very fact illustrates the political circumstances in which the Israeli foreign policy has been made over the last six months. In such situations of internal political struggle, even those Israeli politicians who deal with foreign policy start to be inward-looking. It's worth noting, that Israel as such in an inward-looking country as also its elites are. As a matter of fact, in a pre-election or election time foreign policy issues are not being discussed.

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#### External security concerns

On the other hand, Israel has not adopted an official policy on Ukraine for other reasons too. The key one appears to be expected implications for arrangements it has made with Moscow on Syria. Russia intervened in Syria in September 2015 to rescue its embattled dictator – President Bashar al-Assad. Back then, the Israelis had developed some kind of coordination and deconfliction mechanism there in order to avoid clashes with the Russians. In particular, what matters for Israel is activities of the powerful Lebanese militia Hezbollah which are backed by Iran and have been engaging strongly in providing military assistance, especially the fighting force for Assad in Syria. Moreover, what concerns Tel Aviv is a large stock of missiles that are in Hezbollah's disposal. The arsenal is estimated to be over 130,000 units and all of them may be used against Israel. The problem is that even the famous Iron Dome might not be sufficient as a protecting shield against them. Therefore, the Israeli policy of systematically destroying Iranian weapon shipments and factories on Syrian territory is crucial for its strategic interests and for Israel's survival. In Israel's view, however, this can be hardly done without Moscow's neutrality in that particular issue. This seems to be an overriding factor and because it looms so big, the Israeli leadership has sidelined other elements that need to be considered to determine its policies toward the Kremlin. Russia is likely to remain an important player in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries so for Israel it has become a strategic partner in addition to Washington, though of much lesser weight than the USA. In reality, however, Russia does not seem to have given Tel Aviv any assurances as for what is happening in Syria. Moscow is pursuing what it considers its own interests. Therefore, Tel Aviv may need probably to rethink its strategies, if the price of maintain ties with the Kremlin would mean alienating the USA.

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#### Gulf countries: 'sitting on the fence'

The war in Ukraine has put the Middle Eastern countries in a very unpleasant position. Some of the Arab nations grouped in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in particular Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates seem to be sitting on the fence between the USA and Russia. They do not want to be seen as backing either side. Instead, they have been trying to maintain as much neutrality as possible. [President Biden has defined the conflict](#) as a battle between Western democracies that are protecting their liberal values and the autocratic regimes. It is not easy for the Middle Eastern countries to place themselves in that sort of framework. Their political systems are based on their traditional and cultural circumstances and are different from Western democracies. But politically it is hardly tenable to stay aside in the Ukrainian conflict for a longer time. [In July, President Biden visits the region](#) and both sides wish to improve their relations that suffered from the consequences of the killing of a Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the war in Yemen.

It is likely that the Saudis will to some extent modify their narrative concerning the war in Ukraine. The prospect, however, that they align with the West is rather slim. There are two main obstacles, one concerning Iran and another one relating to energy issues. Politically, the main strategic problem from the GCC's perspective is Syria. Washington has largely disengaged from the conflict there during Donald Trump's term as the US President. Russia, meanwhile, has been building its position in Syria with military and naval bases. Even if Moscow and Tehran cooperate there, their long-term interests in the region are divergent. The realpolitik says that if Russia left Syria now, the country might become an open space for Iran which is the main adversary for UAE and Saudi Arabia. One of the solutions to deter Tehran is to forge new alliances – an idea which a decade ago was completely out of discussion. Now that the overall strategic situation has changed, the USA has been successful in

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persuading the Gulf countries to do so. This is probably why the UAE and Bahrain decided to normalize their ties with Israel and conclude the [Abraham Accords on 15 September, 2020](#). In that context, there is also encouragement from the US government for a diplomatic rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Tel Aviv.

When it comes to the crucial issue of energy, there have been two opposite reactions to the situation on the global markets created by the Ukrainian war. Qatar as a big producer and global LNG exporter is ready to enlarge the output of gas and delivering it to the European markets to stabilize them as much as possible. However, there are some pre-conditions to be met in this respect. The Qataris [had signed many long-term contracts with Asian nations](#). What can be supplied to Europe is the spare gas. Moreover, the Qataris have demanded [long term commitments](#) on the part of the European Union. It complicates the EU's Green Deal plans to cut emissions and transit to renewable energy sources.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates – the key actors in the OPEC bloc do not want to alienate Russia with which they have been working within the OPEC+ framework, launched in 2016. However, it seems that Saudi Arabia has recently struck a [deal with Moscow](#) to speed up production spikes, as agreed during the talks on 2 June. Close ties with Russia are a key for the Saudis to control the global oil output and keep high prices.

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#### Turkey's 'balanced' approach

Turkey is a NATO member state but it is following its own strategic interests as it sees them. Ankara backed the UN General Assembly resolution calling for Russia to immediately end its military operation in Ukraine. It also has recognized the conflict as a war which allowed it to restrict the movement of Russia's navy through the Turkish Straits, referring to the Montreux Convention of 1936. When it comes to defence issues, the Baykar – a private Turkish company has struck a deal with Kiev for delivery of Bayraktar TB2 drones to Ukraine.

On the other hand, Turkey has not joined the Western sanctions against Moscow. Instead, Ankara is openly raising a possibility to question the sovereignty of its NATO ally Greece over Aegean islands. The Turks have also voiced their plans to launch another military operation in Syria, despite reservations from both Washington and Moscow. The Kremlin is ready to tolerate Turkey being on the opposite side of the conflict in Syria because it hopes Ankara might switch its alliances in the future. President Erdogan may be using it as a bargaining chip to get concessions from Russia. He has already played similarly with the issue of NATO membership of Sweden and Finland. After threatening to veto their NATO aspirations, Ankara received some concessions from those Nordic nations concerning anti-terrorism cooperation and investments. In return, Turkey dropped its objections but subject to the full implementation of the deal. It may be also argued that the concessions Turkey has achieved are of lesser value than the damage Ankara has inflicted on itself as regards trust within the bloc. It puts a question mark on the rationality of Turkish policy in this respect.



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### **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung**

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. In Germany, 16 regional offices offer a wide variety of civic education conferences and events. Its offices abroad are in charge of over 200 projects in more than 120 countries. The foundation's headquarters are situated in Sankt Augustin near Bonn, and also in Berlin. There, an additional conference center, named "The Academy", was opened in 1998. As a think-tank and consulting agency, its soundly researched scientific fundamental concepts and current analyses are meant to offer a basis for possible political action. The Berlin Academy is the national forum of dialogue between the spheres of politics, economy, science, and society.

### **Centre for International Relations (CIR)**

is an independent, non-government analytical centre established in 1996 which deals with Polish foreign policy and the most important issues of international politics. CIR is active in research, education and publishing, organises conferences and meetings, and participates in international projects in collaboration with similar institutions in many countries. CIR creates a forum for debate and exchange of ideas in matters of international politics, relations between states and challenges in the global world. CIR's activities are addressed above all to local-government officials and to entrepreneurs, as well as to officials of the central administration, politicians, diplomats, political scientists and the media.