

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN 2020



A new year always brings hopes for a better future. For international politics better future means political stability and lasting peace; goals that are not taken for granted in a world full of instability and conflict. Although international organizations such as the UN, OSCE etc have a role in global challenges, it is widely accepted that “hard” power continues to play critical role in world’s affairs. Geostrategic and geopolitical interests will continue to guide state’s actions seeking for security, stability and growth. Energy security, terrorism, organized crime, cyber security, emerging nationalisms, and democratic deficit will be sources of rivalries, alliances and conflicts. Is the new decade going to be a decade of power redistribution? China, Russia, India are emerging powers asserting new spheres of influence and seeking a new balance of global power. One should take into consideration that redistribution of power is not always a peaceful process; on the contrary, it is a reason of constant local and regional conflicts which are linked with the global struggle for power. The “HERMES” Institute is honored to present the view of distinguished scholars regarding 2020 international politics. Enjoy it!

Ioannis C. Karampelas

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A glut of energy supplies: Renewables penetration will continue globally at a rapid pace. As a result, the world will continue to experience an energy supply glut, with global energy markets remaining highly competitive and prices persistently low. **COP26:** After the failure of COP25 to arrive to a consensus on new, more ambitious, climate targets, COP26 is not expected to fare any better. US resistance and unwillingness by China and India to curb energy demand and increase their commitments will limit achievements. Global energy consumption and carbon emissions will continue to increase, with more extreme climatic events feeding increasingly polarized environmental activism. **European Green Deal (EGD):** Europe will put this in place during the first half of 2020. The EGD will set an ambitious framework that will shape energy developments within Europe during the next 30 years, with the goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Its impact will be to steer Europe away from fossil fuels to cleaner forms of energy. **East Med politics:** Turkey will continue its intimidation and aggressive actions in the region, not heeding widespread condemnation, but a hot incident will be narrowly avoided. The EU will intensify its efforts to normalize relations with Turkey through negotiation. **East Med energy:** Drilling off Cyprus and Lebanon will lead to more gas discoveries, but the global glut of energy supplies and EGD will prove to be major challenges to the export of East Med gas to international markets. Egypt, though, will continue with the successful development of its energy sector.

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By the end of 2018, **138 countries have declared a 200-mile EEZ.** The countries benefiting the most from the EEZ concept are – in order to the size of their EEZ – the United States, France, Australia, Russia and Indonesia. If this concept were to be applied by all coastal Mediterranean states, the entire sea would be covered by EEZs of the littoral countries. The countries of the Mediterranean that would benefit most from an EEZ are Greece, Cyprus, Italy, and Malta. One of the most important events in the 50-year history of the Republic of Cyprus took place of 2004 when the President of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos proclaimed an Exclusive Economic Zone with Law 64/2004. The government of Greece immediately welcomed this Cypriot initiative without giving an explanation why Greece did not do the same thing. Furthermore, on the same day, the headlines of the Greek press heralded this important event without explaining to their readers what an EEZ is, since no one had explained to the Greek people this concept. The only thing the Greeks knew was that the Greek-Turkish dispute is related to that of the continental shelf and nothing else. Fifteen year have passed from the day that Cyprus had declared its EEZ and all the Greek governments have refused to declare and delimit the Greek EEZ with that of Cyprus. **It is time for this mistake to be corrected.**

Prof. Theodore C. Kariotis

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The Indo-Pacific will continue to be at the centre of geo-political and geo-economic concern and major power contestation. Individual and collective state response will determine whether peace and stability prevail in 2020. **Vietnam** will assume the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2020; it will also mark its 25th anniversary of its admission to ASEAN. Vietnam will also join as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in the 2020-2021 period. Vietnam will have to carve out its priorities during this year which will have implications for ASEAN and the larger Indo-Pacific region. A preview of this could be seen in the recent Vietnam's Defense White Paper, with its 4 'No's'. (no military alliance, no affiliation with one country to counteract the other, no foreign military base in the Vietnamese territory). **Malaysia** too brought out its first Defence White Paper (early December) highlighting the growing threat from tension in the South China Sea and terrorism, but it fails to map out a detailed strategy for 2020. **Myanmar** elections will be held in 2020 where the fate of National League for Democracy will be decided whose position on the Rohingya issue has met with international criticism. **New Zealand** will also hold parliamentary elections in late 2020 as its 52nd Parliament completes its term and pollsters predict it is going to be a close call. **China** and ASEAN will continue to engage on the Code of Conduct (CoC) negotiations in 2020. According to one view, 2020 could see a mellowed China in 2020 preoccupied with domestic problems but the 2021 CoC deadline (which has progressed to an SDNT (Single Draft Negotiating Text) could get extended further. The US is expected to continue its freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS) in the SCS to ensure international access to their waterway. President Trump has proposed ASEAN-US Summit in 2020. His poor track record of attending ASEAN-led meetings is not a good augury for the Vietnam meetings scheduled for 2020. From India's perspective its proactive Act East Policy will get a boost with two recent announcements. India will now have a Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) which will help consolidate its security policy between its three wings of armed forces. Also with Harsh Vardhan Shringla (current ambassador to the US) taking over as the new Foreign Secretary, the new year could see greater attention to its eastern neighborhood and organizations like ASEAN and BIMSTEC. India, criticized for opting out of the RCEP negotiations among the 16 countries (10 ASEAN plus Australia, Canada, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea) could possibly join in 2020 (according to some reports) if its concerns on Rules of Origin, and market access (especially in services) were met.

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The noblest vocation and heritage of the Western Hemisphere is the aspiration for all its citizens to live under the rule of law and democracy. That being said, my desire for 2020 is that we move away from the immobilized culture, remembering that the principle under which we founded our nations is that every time an individual anywhere in the world is struck down the society as a whole suffers. The new decade has to be the one where we shift away from the global illiberal alliance that seeks control and servitude from the individuals they govern. An example is my home town of Venezuela, once the richest economy and strongest democracy in Latin America, is today immersed in misery and serfdom provoked by a tyrannical and criminal regime. Venezuela needs to be able to recover its independence, rebuild its institutions and through justice restore its social fabric. It has never been clearer, the challenges we face are regional but common in its global picture. The strength of the West comes from its founding values of democracy and justice, but also in its ability to be truly linked in actionable solidarity. My aspiration is that the believers in freedom and fraternity strengthen their bonds of solidarity and are able to act anywhere they see injustice. That those ideas inherited from Athens and Jerusalem empower individuals to give themselves governments of law and not of men.

Eduardo F. Massieu Paredes, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Official Representative of (i.e.) of President Juan Guaidó to the Hellenic Republic



The most important event of 2020 for the region of Western Balkans will be the Zagreb EU Summit in May that will shed light on the European future of North Macedonia and Albania. The decisions of the Summit will send a strong signal to the entire region. If the EU decides for another postponement in the enlargement process it risks to contribute to the loss of domestic influence and positions for European-minded politicians that would continue reforms. This might have long-term repercussions for the region in terms of internal stability, rule of law, functioning democracies, fight against organized crime and corruption, as well as inter-state issues. It will be particularly debilitating if public opinion in favor of EU accession in North Macedonia shifts to disappointment and withdraws support from pro-European voices in the April 2020 elections before the Summit. Another trend we should watch out in 2020 is the map of energy projects, especially the ones that involve Russia. The Russian Federation has long used pipelines and investments in the energy sector as instruments for geopolitical impact. The future of Turk Stream will determine the level of energy dependency and political entanglement of the region with Russia. The gas interconnector Greece-Bulgaria is of increasing importance for the energy diversification and security of the region. Against this background, the EU must put efforts in preserving its relations with the region and making sure that it does not allow for political vacuum that would easily be filled by other players on the geopolitical chessboard. Continued US involvement in the region will contribute to its staunch Euro-Atlantic orientation.

Tsvetan Tsvetanov

President of the Management Board

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In 2019, the region of Southeast Europe did not miss the opportunity to miss the chance. It is certain that the international community and conflicting interests of powerful countries bear part of the blame for destabilization of the region. In 2020, we can hope that the “geopolitical” European Commission will respond to the significant impact of third parties in the Western Balkans, instead of just noticing it. If the EU agrees to further communitarisation of the EU's foreign and security policy, then the positive effects will have been experienced in the region by the end of 2020. The year 2020 will be characterized by an intensification of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in order to find a sustainable solution, both acceptable and unacceptable, for any of the parties. The paradox is that negotiations will succeed if the final agreement is bad for both, that is, if neither party is politically imposing itself as a winner in the dialogue. Unfortunately, the success of dialogue and stabilization of the region depends only partly on the countries in the region. We are witnessing the conflicts of interest of global powers in the SEE region and the use of various impact projection methods along with the full spectrum of hybrid activity. This is especially evident in the mainstream media, activities of NGOs, certain parts of political elites and tabloidization of security. However, despite conflicting interests in the Balkans, to some actors, the region clearly serves only to increase the bargaining potential of strategic crisis areas. Therefore, the final agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, reduction of tensions and improvement of economic relations should be expected. It is already likely that by 2020, politicians with incidental rhetoric should be retired. Despite the moderate optimism, economic and political crises in the countries of the region and occasional security challenges should also be expected in 2020. Most important for the Western Balkans is a sustainable EU perspective on future accession, which should have no alternative neither in the region nor in EU countries.

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TEN SECURITY CHALLENGES TO WATCH IN 2020

- **Libyan civil war**
- **Iran – USA relations**
- **Ukraine conflict**
- **East Mediterranean geopolitics**
- **China – USA trade war**
- **Venezuela political and humanitarian crisis**
- **Uighur minority in China**
- **Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan**
- **Global migration flows**
- **Burkina Faso political instability and insecurity**

The “HERMES” team



The current trends in Russia–EU relations carry a number of risks that should be mentioned when predicting possible scenarios for the further deterioration of these relations. The general deterioration of European security due to the expiration of the INF Treaty, the degradation of confidence-building measures, and the start of an arms race, including hi-tech weapons (understanding that the military-political situation in Europe cannot change drastically in 2020, and military spending in European countries is not expected to rise sharply). The continued competition for influence in the post-Soviet space, including Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia (the collapse of the political coalition in Moldova in the autumn of 2019 is a negative sign), and the further divergence of stances on the Donbass settlement will have a particularly negative effect on relations. The intensification of sub-regional competition between Russia and the European Union (this competition appears to be particularly dangerous in the Western Balkans, given the possibility of an acute political crisis in one or more of the countries in the region). The intensification of the information war in Europe (in particular, the European Union may approve a “blacklist” of Russian media outlets, while Russia may significantly expand its own list of “undesirable” European organizations); we cannot rule out the possibility that investigations may be launched in some EU states in connection with accusations of Russia interfering in their elections and supporting separatists and political extremists. The harsh confrontation between Russia and some EU member countries in pan-European organizations (PACE, OSCE); 2020 will be a challenging year in the history of these organizations, which will be put under immense political pressure. The further politicization of energy cooperation between Russia and the European Union (for instance, the emergence of new issues in completing work on Nord Stream 2; and the blatant refusal of some EU states to prolong gas contracts with Russia). The clash between Russian and European interests in some regions of the world, including Africa and Latin America, and competition between Russia and Europe for preferential relations with Turkey might posit a particular issue. Unfortunately, “black swans” may very well throw a spanner in the works – the unfortunate incident in Salisbury in March 2018 and the events in the Kerch Strait in November of the same year are prime examples. Such events may again lead to a deterioration of relations between Moscow and Brussels, regardless of who is to blame. A distinctive feature of Russia–EU relations today is that significant progress should be visible along the entire line of interaction between the parties, while a single negative event in any of these areas is enough to provoke a new crisis. This makes the process of restoring even limited cooperation extraordinarily fragile and unstable. This situation will continue throughout 2020. At the same time, we can identify several most promising areas of Russia–EU cooperation where, under favorable circumstances, certain practical results may be achieved as early as 2020. Progress in settling the conflict in the east of Ukraine, expanding interaction in the “shared neighborhood,” deepening interaction on Iran-related issues, launching full-fledged dialogue between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union, developing a new “energy/environmental plan” for Europe, preserving pan-European areas, and developing a new “road map” for the development of the OSCE are the main fields of possible cooperation.

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Today, Lebanon is witnessing an escalating Socio-economic crisis and financial collapse, in the light of ongoing protests for a third month calling for a government of technocrats to fight corruption and force the corrupts to return the money have stolen. In these political, security and economic circumstances, there is warning of a major monetary collapse. However, the international community and the Arab states do not care of assisting Lebanon in economic aids or political support, despite the fact that Lebanon is hosting about a million and a half Syrian refugees, about 400 thousand Palestinian refugees and about 300 thousand foreign workers. While, Turkey, that hosts 3.7 million Syrian refugees, is trying to resettle a million Syrian refugees in a “peace zone” in northern Syria within a very short period, the Lebanese government is unable to return the Syrian refugees it hosts amid a Lebanese division over that, between those who want to use these refugees to push the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad, especially in the upcoming presidential elections, and link their return to a political settlement, and between those who fear the resettlement of these refugees in Lebanon which would change the sectarian demographic nature. Despite Lebanese efforts that returned tens of thousands of refugees to Syria within two years, but they did not reach ten percent of them who have been putting pressure on the Lebanese economy, and costing Lebanon about 40 billion dollars, while international aid is limited and much of it goes to NGOs and some Lebanese ministries. Hence, in the light of Lebanon’s socio-economic crisis, the new government which will be formed soon must intensify the return of the Syrian refugees, rejecting the safety pretexts of some opponent refugees. The establishment of Turkey as a “safe area” in northern Syria allows the Lebanon to return the opponent refugee to the areas of the Turkish or opposition control in North and East Syria.

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