

Editorial Note by the Editor-in-Chief: Win or Perish – Perish you Will Despite Winning

The war against Iran has set the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and the Middle Eastern regions (MER) on fire, causing extensive damages. The continuing, joint assault by the USA and Israel on Iran was launched on 28 February 2026, amidst negotiations, in stark violation of International Law. This has groundly shaken and already impacted severely on the international order and on the provisions of international law. Consequently, global trade has been drastically curtailed while orderly international life and every sense of rules-based co-existence, including conflict resolution, are threatened with collapse. By its geopolitical location and nature, the broader Middle Eastern Region is a global energy hub. It hosts not only crucial global energy production and sources of other vital products such as fertilizers, but also vital trade paths and essential world navigation passages. The perils involved in the escalated military assaults in this region and the danger they pose to the global economy are evident.

Conjunctural Specificities

Several unprecedented characteristic traits stand out for observation and evaluation of this war against a sovereign state: First, it is not officially approved by the US Congress, while war objectives and agendas remain vague and seem to be ‘rolling’ from day to day. Secondly, most if not all, middle eastern states are, this time, entangled or affected, albeit with various degrees of severity. Included are even neighbouring NATO members, such as Turkey and EU member-states such as Cyprus. Thirdly, the atrocious war tactic of decapitating enemy leaders has intensified and appears to be being generalized in an unprecedented way. Fourthly, diplomatic initiatives are routinely invoked as holding by the American president but are consistently denied by his adversaries. More unforeseen processes have emerged, like the rolling ‘fake statements and fake news’ which occupy massive amounts of space in the public domain. Fifthly, oil and financial markets’ prices are thrown into stressful spirals of unease or into panics; a novel condition emerges that is of the shaky market price-pendulum motion. Sixthly, underhand stock market dealings appear to be in play,

including financial market manipulations by holders of exclusive inside information.

This twin military attack brought about all kinds of turbulence and has been deemed both illegal and illegitimate, violating bilateral and multilateral norms at domestic, regional, international, and UN levels. The German president Frank Walter Steinmaier, Italian premier Georgia Meloni, Spanish prime minister Pedro Sanchez, and the Polish foreign minister Radoslaw Sikorski are among those EU leaders who either expressly or implicitly have denounced the Iran war as illegal. Members of both the Israeli and the American governments are facing litigation cases in domestic and international courts. However, even before the war began, aggressors had demonstrated contempt for the principles of international law, as applied in the entire post-Second World War period. Moreover, they repeatedly challenged law-bound governance, by violating UN Charter provisions and failing to heed the verdicts of the International Criminal Court, such as in respect of the genocide in Gaza.

Causes and Effects

These sets of facts along with their inherent consequences highlight globally unprecedented havoc, a unique global quagmire. Given such calamity, urgent global initiatives are imperative. Unless radical, responsible measures are initiated to advance solutions towards peace and global reconstitution of multilateralism, the world risks the demolition of reciprocity and rules-based co-existence. *Bona fide* governance initiatives or mutually beneficial common *modi operandi* in International Relations risk being eclipsed. The world is faced with a specter of irrationality. Indeed, the currently dominating irrationalism risks becoming entrenched. Indeed, celebration over instances of absurdity have surfaced, as individual whims are elevated to the status of policy. In the wake of such trends, at severe risk come vital 'public goods', especially global public goods.¹ Since January 2025 the new US administration has started deploying mainly strategies of blackmail and ultimatums. Indicative and disturbing are the cases of claims to Canada, Greenland, Venezuela and Iran, but also NATO-splitting utterances. Expressly or implicitly, these aim at subjugating everyone indiscriminately, whether adversaries or allies.

¹ That is, goods without which economies and societies of the entire planet cannot operate or sustain a normal life.

This is an astounding manifestation of the implosion of the 50-year-old neoliberal onslaught and, a key to deciphering current turbulent disturbances. Over this period, leaders' actions, inactions or decisions have caused a slide towards excesses of deregulation, impunity, and corruption. They have violated rules and norms, and abolished regulations to benefit own dominant industries in global competition. This has caused a boomerang effect, inevitably, as they have corroded and squandered trust, the importance of which is paramount, indeed vital. Nothing can be obtained without trust. The impropriety of blatantly trampling on rules became a frequent aberrant practice, especially whenever their own narrow profit and interests were at risk. Consequently, states violated their own doctrines of competitiveness and fair competition. Whenever such precepts endangered their expectations of profit, they were circumvented and rejected, with reckless opportunism. In this way, the trampled norm of 'Free trade' was simply weaponized for partisan profiteering. But crushed rules, undermine fair competition, multilateralism and mutual respect for the rules, in all types of transactions.

Inevitably grave market dysfunctions, trade stoppages and huge losses have arisen. As a systemic part of this war news media and outlets in their own 'games' tend to focus on news contents preferentially, by framing them emphasizing, for instance, only short-term losses and damages. Extensive corruption incidents, witnessed among government associates, suggest that various types of profiteering ploys operate, yet these are omitted. Thus, both the launching of the war on Iran and its operational management, over the first five weeks, suggest covert exploitations. Surely, the lack of clearly stated plans of exiting from it intensifies these scenarios.

Unsurprisingly, the USA, as the leading global power, has already managed: first, to isolate itself even from long term, trusting allies. Secondly, to render itself a broadly unaccountable and untrustworthy actor, both domestically² and globally³. Thirdly, perhaps the most severe American strategic-tactical failure concerns its disregard or defiance of the now irreversible condition of globalization. Intrinsic to this is the insurmountable condition of *international and transnational interdependence*

² See for example regular public post statements by professors: John Mearsheimer, Paul Krugman and Jeffrey Sacks over the period since the beginning of the war on Iran.

³ No countries other than Argentina have uttered public support for the belligerence of the USA and Israel. The leaders of several countries, including the German president F.W. Steinmayer, have expressly stated their opposition.

between nations economically, trade-wise, politically, diplomatically and socially. Such ‘negligence’ betrays shortsightedness, which translates into governmental failure but also to frustration for concerned peoples including the Americans.

Acute Endangering of Environment, Climate and Planetary risks

The massive shelling and use of weaponry in the war have brought irreparable damage to the environment. Damage calculations vary but are surely heavy and irreversible. The specificities of contemporary digital time make high demands on governance and require novel and resilient approaches that are far more intricate than in the age of single-standing nation states or of national economies. Governmental perspicacity, versatility and judiciousness are crucial. So, even if the US administration were actually to have had a plan, or perhaps a hidden agenda such as an ‘imperial strategy against China’, followed up handlings, decisions and results combine to frustrate or entrap it. Indicatively, a series of US army heads have recently been removed, at the height of the campaign. Most perplexing is the *sui generis* ‘political autism’ of presidential briefings, quasi-official stances, which reveal the short-termism of the endless, crude blackmails and ultimatums addressed to both allies and enemies, during the second term of the Trump administration. The incessant, violent attacks, also verbal, including against civilians, give further evidence of such unjustifiable, unaccountable actions. So, it is unsafe to deduce any overt or covert strategies by such actors and aggressors in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern war zones. Contradictory, or intentionally vague statements confuse matters further, rendering logical explanations impossible or futile.

In the current conjuncture, this war theatre unfolds while people, societies and states suffer from a historically unprecedented ‘crisis of truth’, the lies and fake news that affect us all, collateral damage of an extremely unprincipled neoliberal regime. Media outlets prone to systematic propaganda follow the demands of the richest bidder, rather than providing factual descriptions of reality and truth. Cumulatively, all these factors render political leadership debilitated and less accountable. They certainly also leave citizens weaker and undermine the trust essential to the functioning of political institutions, already exacerbated by AI. Double standards are the *constant* in the framing of realities. Yet, in globalization people can potentially watch war news

originating from any country, which provides for cross-checking. In every case, war reality does not differ just because people watch news about it from another country's media.

Global Chaos or Global Governance?

Organized societies normally follow certain kinds of rational management, planning and enforcing rules-based community structures and institutions. Since the mid-20th century, the USA has been broadly viewed in the West as a model liberal state, in this respect. But the adoption of extreme unilateralist practices by its government has caused splits, fears, animosity, and conflicts while promoting global chaos. For any democracy there is no worse calamity than sliding into violating its own principles and its very constitution. Yet, the idea that 'anything goes' that has ruled for so long, has wrecked key values and has now reached rock-bottom, with the USA following a 'law of the jungle' as if this nation were the sole inhabitants on earth and its government the sole actor.

In view of this dire state of affairs, statesmanship and leadership are urgently required from the nations of the UN to address the aberrations and to prevent and contain the damages which are being caused. The need for globally responsible leadership is now more urgent than ever. And so is the need for multilateralism.

In this fourth issue of BSEMR editors are pleased to host three interesting and very topical articles and one book review.

First Article: Cybersecurity and International Law: Charting Stability in the Black Sea–Eastern Mediterranean Region. This article by **Dr Gijo George** focuses on the intersection of internet technology applications such as cyber-attacks, international law, state power capacities and policy options. Regarding the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean regions in particular, the author holds that these applications are in full operation. Aggressive cyber and electronic operations such as the satellite navigation jamming commercial vessels are used systematically to exploit partisan strategic aims and gain advantages. He explains how such critical infrastructure intrusions and disinformation campaigns remain hidden in war conflicts by implicated state authorities. This is why they test the boundaries of existing international law while concurrently undermining it. Such threats evade identification and concrete attribution

as they fall below observation thresholds in cases of traditional armed conflict. So, they challenge the ability of states to preempt predators or respond intelligently. The author elaborates on the limits of the law and the corresponding liabilities for governance defense possibilities of concerned states. Since many cyber-tech assaults move below the threshold of state's capacity to avert dangers, damages impact on state powers. This results in non-state actors gaining undue and superior power. Such gaps challenge even the ability of states to avert attacks but also to uphold trust in their institutions and norms.

Second Article: Unequal Partners? Rethinking Burden Sharing in a Future European Defence Union. In his article **Dr Georgios Papagiannis** compares differences and key discrepancies in the defense capacity of states. Notably, he examines percentages of expenditures, as a quota of the respective gross domestic product (GDP) and the corresponding national income, among EU member states. Considerable or significant, occasionally extreme discrepancies occur. Countries, like Greece, for instance, invest a higher percentage on defense and military expenditures, while for instance more cosy Central European countries, thus far, used to spend minimal sums of their GDP. Other significant differences or discrepancies concern the defense industries and corresponding productive capacity allocation between member-states. The EU is currently proceeding towards restructuring its general defense agendas, aiming to construct viable, autonomous, self-reliant and effective defense systems. For this to succeed it is crucial that member obligations are judiciously designed and costs are allocated and shared in a balanced way. In the current rapidly reshuffling phase of NATO these preconditions are paramount. It is crucial that defense priorities and balanced tasks are set out judiciously and fairly.

Third Article: Narratives of Maritime Sovereignty: The *Mavi Vatan* Doctrine.

In his article **Mr Theodore Skarvelis** examines the recent 2019 project of *Mavi Vatan* (Blue Homeland) by Türkiye, as part of its recently adopted doctrine. In this context, the study investigates identity-driven geopolitics, where the evolving nature of *regional security* is characterized by multipolarity, but notably also by contested legality. The author notes that this strategy was developed by Turkish admirals as *Mavi Vatan* projects involve maritime geostrategic visions that challenge accepted international law

statutes and prevailing international practice norms, such as UNCLOS. Rather, these tie in with the growing narrative about Türkiye's regional encirclement and its subsequent advancing a new conception or ideology. Based on the theoretical framework of critical geopolitics, the author draws on ten interviews with Turkish Professors. He conducts a content and discourse analysis of this material, according to Critical Discourse Analysis principles, to cross-explore the narratives underpinning *Mavi Vatan*. So, the doctrine's key narrative strands are explained as involving: the reconstruction of Turkish national identity and image, the portrayal of Türkiye as a maritime nation, and narratives of historical legacy. Thus, it is noteworthy that the Blue Homeland discourse / ideology is having a remarkable influence on Turkish Foreign Policy, as is witnessed in the 2019 Türkiye-Libyan Memorandum of Understanding.

Book Review

Dr Panagiota Manoli has reviewed the book entitled: **Dynamics of the Ukraine War: Diplomatic Challenges and Geopolitical Uncertainties**, authored by Viktor Jakupec, (Springer, 2024, ISBN 978-3-031-52444-8 (eBook, 120 pages.)

This recently published book, only two years since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is a monograph in the form of an *eBook*, forming part of the Springer's series: *Contributions to International Relations*. According to the reviewer, the book provides a realistic account of the first twenty months of the war. In its nine chapters it charts the political complexities of the Russo-Ukrainian war, especially those which are considered key for a potential resolution of this prolonged conflict. The uncertainties along with the specificities of the Russo-Ukrainian war are identified in military strategies, political decision-making, but also in the multifaceted, complex and unpredictable nature of the conflict per se. Notwithstanding the repeated diplomatic efforts, these failed, due also to 'bloc' competing political perspectives, to 'threat' perceptions which seem to constitute the essential political hurdles that result in perpetuating this Russo-Ukrainian war. The reviewer notes that for the analysis of the broad-based discussions, several interconnected themes have been considered, including the western strategies of military support to Ukraine, the sustained sanctions against Russia, the notion of *Zeitenwende* and emerging alliances, as well as the role of propaganda and the reconstruction dynamics of Ukraine.

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