

In this Issue

The current geopolitical standoff between Russia and the West is characterized by unique features, including the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and hybrid and proxy conflicts waged by authoritarian regimes against Western democracies—all unfolding against the backdrop of modern advancements in artificial intelligence and information-communication technologies. These processes are driven by the ambition of Russia and China to establish global dominance within a new world order—a transition that has been underway for several decades. Amidst this new geopolitical landscape, many nations across various regions are reorienting their foreign and trade-economic policies.

Polarization is intensifying not only between nations but also among individuals; social polarization has emerged as a top global risk in both the short and long term. Defined as a loss of social capital and the fracturing of communities—leading to diminished social stability, reduced individual and collective well-being, and lower economic productivity—social polarization is further fueled by a host of other risks, ranging from debt crises, inflation, and prolonged recession to climate-induced migration. Rising inequality and a widening values gap pose an existential challenge to both authoritarian and democratic systems, as economic and social disparities translate into political divisions. Growing public discontent with government inaction manifested last year in frequent and unmanageable civil protests.

The modern world is undergoing transformative crises; the trajectory of these profound changes amounts to a political, economic, social, and military earthquake. A crucial component of this contemporary mega-crisis is the internationalization of the Russia-Ukraine war, which has laid bare the essence of the geopolitical standoff between Russia and the West—a confrontation that has brought the world perilously close to the risk of nuclear war. The interplay of internal contradictions and conflicts, combined with the aspirations of the ruling elites in the Newly Independent States, has turned these nations into targets of Russian antagonism. In its bid to curtail the independence of these states, Russia justifies its aggressive actions as essential measures for bolstering its own national security. Clearly, Russia is employing a strictly confrontational model in its dealings with the Newly Independent States to tilt the strategic security balance in its own favor, thereby creating a zone of geopolitical alienation and marginalization for these nations.

The West's earlier sanctions pressure on Russia has evolved into a systemic strategic course; its implementation—particularly regarding technology—impacts not only post-Soviet states but also China, India, Iran, African nations, and others. These are no longer merely isolated crisis-related trends or manifestations, but a comprehensive array of crises whose internationalization has become a defining feature of regional, sub-regional, national, transnational, and international affairs.

In their article *'Fragile Independence in a World of Empires: Armenia and the Unfulfilled Promise of Sovereignty'*, Vardan Atoyan, Lonce Bailey, Nushik Petrosyan, Maria Ohanyan, and Diana Matevosyan analyze the geopolitical and economic challenges and risks facing post-war Armenia's independence—factors that significantly impact the country's sovereignty and resilience. The article analyzes the

acute confrontational nature of the crisis in the South Caucasus and its internationalization—driven by the West, led by the U.S., through highly effective hybrid methods—which has sharply destabilized the relatively established balance of power not only in the post-Soviet region but across the global arena. The escalating confrontation has effectively transformed into a hybrid war against Armenia. The once-distinct boundaries between soft and hard power are increasingly blurring, while the hybrid interplay of their fundamental components is becoming progressively more complex. A qualitatively new development is that the hybridization of the war against Armenia is unfolding not only within the context of European integration but also within Armenian-Russian relations, the EAEU, and the CSTO.

In the article '*Beyond the Checklist: Advancing Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs for a New Generation through the Lens of the Gendered Reintegration Experiences of Former PKK Guerrillas*', Kardo Rached, Ahang Habib Hawrami, and Bunyad O. Mohmmmed examine the key stages and mechanisms for improving next-generation disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs for former PKK guerrillas. The authors analyze the political and legal mechanisms approved by the Turkish Parliament and government that pave the way for PKK militants to return to a peaceful life in Türkiye. This article analyzes reintegration strategies for a new generation—using the gender aspects of former PKK guerrilla reintegration as a case study—alongside mechanisms for resolving the conflict between military and civilian identities and factors contributing to the successful resocialization of former guerrillas. The article presents the results of a narrative analysis regarding reintegration strategies for former PKK guerrillas. It substantiates the author's position that, alongside the Turkish state, Turkish society must act as a key agent of reintegration: its readiness for dialogue, the creation of an accepting environment, and the recognition of military experience as a socially significant resource all influence the success of the return to civilian life. The article also outlines the resource-based mechanisms involved in the reintegration of former PKK guerrillas. Based on an analysis of personal narratives, the study outlines various reintegration strategies for former PKK guerrillas, identifies a personal disconnect resulting from the conflict between military and civilian identities—as well as a mechanism of maladaptation—and highlights recurring themes in the guerrillas' narratives. It further substantiates the role of Turkish state and societal support not merely as a material resource but also as a symbolic one that differentiates adaptation trajectories.

In the article '*Prerequisites for the formation of socio-political and ideological foundations for Armenia's transition to democracy*', Ashot Yengoyan and Paylak Yengoyan examine the possibilities and challenges associated with establishing the social, political, and ideological foundations of Armenia's transition to democracy. To analyze the democratization of Armenia's political regime, the authors examine the institutions through which the state conducts its political—including international—activities, aiming to determine whether the choice of institutional design (specifically, the choice between presidential and parliamentary forms of government) influences democratic consolidation. In this context, the authors investigate the degree and level of interdependence between socio-economic and ideological factors and the likelihood of establishing and sustaining a democratic regime in Armenia. The article analyzes the

actions of political parties during this transformation, seeking to explain how competing elites—through political bargaining—select the organizational forms and institutions of the new political order, thereby influencing Armenia's democratization and foreign policy.

In the article '*Bridging Sustainable Development and Good Governance Issues in Armenia: Observations on the Interrelationship of Domestic and International Measurements*,' Narine Asryan analyzes issues of sustainable development and good governance in Armenia through the lens of competitiveness and qualitative change. In this context, sustainable development and good governance are linked to globalization, disparities in development levels among countries and regions, the global shift from a unipolar to a multipolar model, and intensifying competition among nations for markets. A fundamental understanding of competitiveness, sustainable development, and good governance in Armenia rests on the capacity of public authorities and the effectiveness of their policies regarding economic transparency, the presence of innovation hubs, the degree of external independence and national security, economic and social stability, and a robust education system. Also essential are a strategy for socio-economic development and a strategy for Armenia's transition to innovation-driven development.

In the article '*Determinants of Legislative Longevity and Survival in the United States Congress: Evidence from Cox Proportional Hazards and Weibull Survival Models*,' Oloruntoba Oyedele examines the key determinants of the tenure and survival of legislators in the U.S. Congress. Understanding U.S. foreign policy decisions is complicated by the specific nature of the American political system, characterized by the competing roles of the President and Congress. In this context, analyzing the contribution of legislators to shaping the dynamics of power relations holds significant practical relevance. Alongside discussions regarding the nature of American interests and the strategic domestic and foreign policy priorities of the U.S. Congress, it is also valid to argue that the clash between the President and Congress drives the dynamics of power in divergent directions, while the meaning of American national interests remains subject to constant reinterpretation.

In his article '*"Big Brother" or "False Ally": Perception of anti-Russian sentiment in the context of the results of the 2026 parliamentary elections in Armenia*,' Artur Mkrtichyan examines the perception of Russia's strategic role in ensuring Armenia's security in the South Caucasus, drawing on the results of the June 7, 2026, parliamentary elections. The geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus has shifted since 2020, leading to a weakening of Russia's policy position. The author analyzes Russia's actions before and after the 2026 parliamentary elections, noting that these efforts were primarily aimed at fulfilling its role as an ally regarding Armenia's security and economic development. Russian mediation failed to reduce human casualties during the Second Karabakh War, and even the presence of a military base in Armenia and a peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh did not serve as a guarantee of security. The geopolitical isolation of post-war Armenia is a factor necessitating the strengthening of Armenian cooperation with the EU. Armenia's participation in European integration serves as a mechanism for building resilience and expanding EU-Armenia engagement in the political and economic spheres.

In the article '*Polycrisis and the Transformation of International Order: A Systemic Complexity Framework*,' Mohamed Ibrahim Hassan Farag analyzes new and distinct challenges, including emerging risks such as inflation, a crisis in the quality of life, regional and trade wars, large-scale social unrest, geopolitical confrontation, and the threat of nuclear war. The article argues that the polycrisis is a phenomenon of international order transformation, manifesting in the stalling of human development after decades of progress, the rapid and unchecked development of dual-use technologies, and the mounting pressure of climate change impacts—all occurring against a rapidly narrowing window of opportunity for mitigation. In this sense, these risks converge in the coming decade, rendering it unique in its level of uncertainty and turbulence—a decade defined by polycrisis. Many of these risks are already materializing, driving the world toward geopolitical, geoeconomic, and technological fragmentation that hinders global cooperation and limits collective protection against global risks.

In the article '*Geopolitical Rivalry and Economic Vulnerability in Africa: Assessing the Impact of U.S.-Iran Tensions on Trade, Energy Markets, and Macroeconomic Stability*,' Yinka Ibrahim Agbeyinka analyzes the impact of the escalating confrontation and military conflict between the U.S. and Iran on economic stability in Africa. The author focuses particularly on Iran's military and geostrategic position; in its bid to maintain its status as a future regional power, the country is prepared to face renewed tensions and even military confrontation with the U.S. in the Middle East. It is evident that the geopolitical rivalry between the U.S. and Iran can have a negative and catastrophic impact not only on Africa's economic vulnerability but also on the global economy. The nuclear dossier and Western sanctions play a pivotal role in current U.S.-Iran relations, acting as factors that influence Iran's domestic and foreign policy as well as its economic situation.

In the article '*Multiculturalism and the BRICS+: Exploring Emerging Issues and Prospects*,' Esther Oluwaseun Idowu and Oladele Daniel Idowu analyze the BRICS+ partnership, which is grounded in principles of equality and mutual respect and aims to foster intensive multilateral cooperation across economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. According to the authors, the BRICS+ partnership offers a pathway toward the gradual formation of an alternative to the global governance system currently prevailing in the international community. In the political realm, this entails reforming the UN Security Council, jointly countering the threat of international terrorism, and resolving local and regional conflicts exclusively through peaceful means. Economically, the BRICS+ community supports infrastructure projects in developing member states of the trans-regional partnership and advocates for the redistribution of IMF quotas. The article argues that the synergistic effect is a systemic phenomenon arising from the fact that the BRICS+ political system, acting as a unified whole, invariably exhibits characteristics that surpass the sum of the attributes of its member countries. This effect is synonymous with the effect of cooperation and can be observed in the trans-regional partnership of BRICS+.

In the article '*Assessing the Effectiveness of United Nations Humanitarian Interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1999-2024*,' Halidu Agaba, Aaron Ayeta Mulyanyuma, Charles Akinsola, and Yusuf Abdulganiyu Adegbite analyze the

effectiveness of UN humanitarian interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1999 to 2024. During the implementation of this significant international mission, UN humanitarian interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo encountered a host of intractable challenges. The authors argue that the effectiveness of UN humanitarian efforts—as the primary international institution for conflict resolution—has notably declined in recent times. The article notes that the UN faces serious challenges in fulfilling its mandate; UN leadership openly acknowledges that the organization suffers repeated setbacks in its peacekeeping missions and proves unable to protect civilians from genocide and suffering. UN humanitarian missions encounter a lack of understanding and support from local governments, which often view these activities as hostile to national interests. Local authorities do not always grant permission for peacekeepers to move across the country, violate ceasefire agreements, and sometimes even orchestrate attacks on UN humanitarian missions. Unfortunately, these missions are forced to operate amidst not only growing mistrust among the local population but also hostility from the country's authorities.

In the article *'Digital Colonialism and the Reproduction of Hegemony in Africa: A Postcolonial Approach'*, Asma Hemaïdia and Khadidja Bouamer analyze the multifaceted issues of digital colonialism in Africa—a phenomenon that transforms colonization into neocolonialism through digital technologies. China's emergence as a major player—viewed in Africa during the 1960s as a “socialist ally,” yet transformed by the early 21st century into a “social imperialist.” At the time, its aid was deemed essential for Africa's digitalization and for creating a market capable of competing with the West. However, the authors argue that this ultimately leads to a “debt trap”—particularly for resource-rich nations—through the provision of loans and grants that the recipients cannot repay. The digital transformation of the African region is proceeding at a rapid pace, while American, Chinese, Indian, and even Russian IT corporations are actively capturing markets across the continent. On one hand, the adoption of digital solutions improves the quality of life for the African population; on the other, however, the real economy is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign digital companies. Consequently, tech giants first gain the opportunity, then the desire, and ultimately the need to exploit this dependency—this lever of control—to steer the economic and political course of African nations.

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