COLLABORATIVE CLUSTERS AS A PART OF NEW SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The article discusses the potential creation of a new transnational platform in the context of rethinking security architecture. The researcher proposes a theoretical-methodological basis for a collaborative platform in military and defense aspects, using a cluster approach and the planomenon definition by G. Deleuze and F. Guattari. The author presents a collaborative cluster structure based on the smart specialization principle as an interactive platform for making joint decisions. Using a case study, the researcher conducts a comparative analysis of the budgets and security policies of international organizations (UN, NATO, EU) and countries from 2014-2022 to demonstrate the feasibility of revitalizing existing security institutions or creating new ones.

Key words: *collaborative platform, security, cluster, military.*

1. INTRODUCTION

One central aspect of recent political studies involves modelling the future consequences of political actions. Some scientists [8; 16; 20] acknowledge that the social world is non-deterministic and/or must be considered with epistemological limitations in mind. This significantly complicates forecasting. However, it is assumed that policy effects can be distributed probabilistically to obtain reliable estimates of expected utility and other significant criteria. The cluster approach, which focuses on assessing stakeholders' potential for political action, is an interesting methodological tool in this context.

Over the last decade, intercluster cooperation has become a significant aspect of international organizations' political dimension. The European Community (ESCP-4i) holds the dominant position in strategic cluster partnerships, with the goal of enabling domestic producers to access third-country markets. The initial phase of the relevant policy, referred to as the 'First Generation', was formulated between 2016 and 2017 with the involvement of 150 cluster organizations from 23 European countries. These organizations created 25 voluntary consortia [Paton 2018: 10]. This achievement led to the introduction of the 'Second Generation' for 2018–2019. The initiative comprised of 23 alliances that united 123 cluster organizations across 25 European countries. The primary target markets for these associations were the USA, Canada, Japan, China, and Singapore.

The ESCP-4i program is cross-industry and covers a range of areas including healthcare, aerospace, logistics, agro-food, energy, marine and environmental, materials and photonics, construction, and sports. The second generation of the program is divided into eight areas of activity, including agriculture, energy, and the environment, as well as the creation of a smart city, logistics, and transport [1].

The 'EU-CELAC INNOV-AL Platform' [21] is a cluster initiative that aims to support the exchange of experience and best practices of EU regional policy between national and regional authorities, as well as specialized agencies, in Latin American countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Peru. This interaction is achieved through knowledge exchange in the framework of regional innovation systems, smart specialization strategies, and programs for small and medium-sized businesses. The European Commission previously developed the European Cluster Cooperation Platform (ECCP) through the European Observatory on Clusters and Industrial Change (EOCIC).

The implementation of cluster policy into trans-sectoral innovation strategies is a key trend in political development at local and intergovernmental levels. Creating unique clusters in specialized territories can generate a synergistic effect for further extrapolation at a global level. We propose applying a cluster approach to the emergence of new global actors in the international security architecture, amidst collaboration.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS: SYNTHESIS OF COLLABORATIVE CLUSTER AND PLANOMENON BY J. DELEUZE AND F. GUATTARI

According to the Smart Guide to Cluster Policy, a cluster is defined as "an organizational platform to increase the competitiveness of the actors involved, facilitating collective action and deploying administrative policy tools for cluster companies and agents" [24]. We understand *a cluster as a potential tool for creating a transnational platform for joint actions, focused on the specialization of key stakeholders in terms of resources, the level of influence on the relevant industry, the consequences for the stakeholders' current state, and some other parameters, depending on the situative specifics, time-space conditions and dimensions of the predicted changes (economic, political, military, etc.).*

The synthesis of the cluster approach with the definition of collaboration aligns with the principle of rhizome multiplicity by G. Deleuze and F. Guattari. This allows for the intersection of unified interactive platforms into a plan of consistency (planomenon). The rhizome space comprises 'regions of intensities' [Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 18], with each element constantly modifying its distance to other elements based on content articulation and the form of connections. Content articulation refers to the substance of the ideas, values, and beliefs of the participants, which are connected through a flexible network of sequences. Form articulation, on the other hand, creates functional, compact, and sustainable structures that embody cause-and-effect relationships for the current moment, thus establishing cooperation principles.

Drawing on the ideas of G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, it can be argued that a variety of rhizomes could be incorporated into an agreed structured geopolitical framework, or planomenon, that facilitates the development of collaborative relationships between stakeholders, which in turn enables the sustainable progression of different forms and substances. The author discusses the importance of both transparency in political decision-making and the availability of reserve meta-capital for stakeholders.

The principle of smart specialization is considered a key criterion for geopolitical rhizome stratification. In the context of supporting global stability and defence, strategic goals unification can be achieved through collaboration among platform participants. This includes easing tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthening transnational capabilities to deter hybrid threats, creating a joint command centre for countering cognitive attacks, increasing military production of specific types of weaponry such as drones, and improving the security situation at the borders of European countries while reducing the number of states with nuclear arsenals. The proportionality of goals, products, and results forms the basis for future participants to identify the collaborative platform.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that transnational platforms can establish cause-and-effect relationships through a special dimension of deterritorialization known as the 'transversal' [Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 237]. This can modify both the external and internal environment of the collaborative cluster. For instance, ensuring an equal distribution of the financial burden among participants in the common political space to improve military capabilities and better deter external aggression, such as the decision made by NATO members to increase the share of GDP in the military dimension, or granting the right to vote at meetings in proportion to the participant's contribution to the platform's joint capabilities, could cause asymmetric effects. This could result in the nominal presence of some stakeholders during decision-making, as some NATO member countries do not fulfill the condition of 2 % of GDP for military needs but still retain the right to vote when solving topical issues.

The rhizome's multiple linear dimensions enable any actor within the cluster to join another interactive platform through various means, such as reputational capital, monetary resources, and network connections. However, it is important to note that involvement in an interactive collaborative cluster requires a relationship with the corresponding specialized touch points of cross-border platforms, in line with the smart specialization principle. In the case of a collaborative cluster in the military and defense industry, an actor seeking to join must consider their own level of importance and reasonability from the perspective of national and geopolitical contexts. This will determine whether or not they should become part of such a collaboration.

The rhizome forms along the segmentation line when the agreed parameters of geopolitical player involvement in the collaborative cluster allow for rhizome plateau stratification according to the domain principle. For instance, the military sector encompasses the interplay among national defence structures such as ministries of defence and digital transformation, non-state actors like transnational arms production companies and NGOs, regional security coalitions, and international associations. This is contingent on the level of threat escalation and its potential cascading effects on the global security environment.

It is important to note that the initial engagement parameters can serve as 'escape channels' for sub-sets (clusters) in case of imbalanced resource provision by partners or opacity in some participants' behavior regarding the agreed issue. The absence of an agreed position among NATO member countries on the types and terms of military aid delivery to Ukraine for countering Russian aggression caused some fluctuations in the shared security space.

Thus, the transversal vector enables sub-sets (clusters) to modify the pre-existing collaboration structure, by expanding or narrowing the inputs of the cluster, and thereby influencing the overall geopolitical plan for security consistency. If we consider NATO as a collective defense alliance against armed aggression towards any of its members, some experts argue that it has transformed into a political-economic entity, prioritizing other input parameters. The current state of NATO, with its lack of coherence and inconsistency regarding its goals, not only impedes the development of a new military doctrine but also raises doubts about its continued role as a military actor in the international security arena.

According to G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, the consistency plan allows to save cluster subsets as variables, even "in the form of an undifferentiated collection of unformed substances" [Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 43]. In the author's opinion, the systematic support of collaboration space stability between subjects, specifically in the military-defense domain, has not yet been formed in a specific partnership format. Planomenon captures potential continuums of intensity as outbreaks of partnership to resolve a specific dangerous situation by the conjunction of interactive flows. This involves shuffling and shifting of actors based on their influence level to resolve the corresponding crisis issue.

Clusters know only "discrete, captured in certain forms, segmented intensities in time and space" [Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 55]. Involved subjects will only be aware of the platforms they were invited to during their intensive activity. The consistency plan is characterised by the continuum of intensities, which creates an environment of hybrid cooperation, and the conjunction of flows, which are priority factors for the key players' involvement.

When maintaining a continuum of intensities, it is important to consider the speed of relations between interactive elements, such as changes in situational context or transformations of relations between internal and external platform participants. Additionally, it is important to consider the corresponding cascading effects, including the 'longitude' and 'width' of the plan. By using these categories, we can understand the spatial dimension of the transnational cluster and the potential for it to expand or contract due to synergistic effects. If we consider longitude, the intensity of responses to threats and the strategy of attracting/creating specialized clusters, the plan's scope involves developing a heterogeneous action algorithm simultaneously in several domains (economic, political, military, informational, etc.) to ensure the integrity of multiple types of rhizome. Therefore, it is important to consider the factor of geographical proximity between stakeholders on the interactive platform, particularly in relation to the mobilisation and deployment of defence forces.

The structure of the plan is determined by the functions and roles of the sub-substances. The consistency plan, which is the way of combining segments, enables us to identify and eliminate 'empty' or 'malignant bodies' [Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 131], those that lack a meaningful element. If an actor's activity creates a 'gap' within the collaborative cluster, nullifying the decisions of other participants on the platform, they should be replaced by a more 'meaningful element' of the space. This element should create rational cause-and-effect links between the agreed daily order and the political vector of actions.

In our opinion, the transnational collaborative cluster based on the smart specialization principle involves the following steps:

1. The joint management process is being made more fundamental, with key agents being integrated into relevant interactive platforms. This involves identifying powerful and active players in the global security environment. Capacity criteria for evaluating a country's military industry may include the percentage of GDP spent on defence, participation in war-industry forums and conferences, development of the military and defence industry within the country, volume of arms exports, and assistance provided to other countries in resolving military conflicts.
2. This stage involves analysing the capability of the actor and the reasonability of their involvement in the collaborative platform. The aim of this stage is to develop a diagnostic panel that will enable us to determine the future model of the platform's industry specialization, compare its potential impact in the global context with similar structures, and recommend priority algorithms of actions and measures required to achieve the agreed objectives.
3. Resource base analysis should be used to determine priorities, and additional reserves should be created in case of force majeure, both at the national and transnational levels. For example, if a military conflict is prolonged or shifted to the territory of another state. It is also important to integrate agreed-upon steps.
4. Determination of funding sources for the plan implementation. At least three investment categories can be distinguished:

- Basic support is provided through the formation of the collaborative platform's general budget from the funds of the participants, as well as from similar programs at the regional or national levels.
- External funding is provided by partners or observers of the platform through fixed or variable payments (usually annual), depending on the type of service received (for example, training, work of instructors, etc.).
- Strategic financing is projected directly by the participants during the collaboration for certain types of activities fixed at the joint space.

Over time, the proportion of funding from each source should change to ensure the platform's stability and flexibility. The gradual shift in financing sources is expected to move towards a better balance between self-sufficiency and private investment, with the former being more dominant.

5. Monitoring the current activity of platform participants (from 2 weeks to 2 months), adjusting and updating measures (if necessary).
6. Criteria determination and duration of post-effects monitoring, prescription of scenarios for returning to a collaborative format.

Table 1* presents possible indicators of a transnational cluster collaborative platform. The list is not exhaustive and can be supplemented if necessary.

Table 1

Overview of indicators for the collaborative platform based on the cluster principle

	CLUSTER STRUCTURE
	Management form
	Drivers
	Specialization
	Involved participants
	External partners
	Relationships between platform participants
	CLUSTER STRATEGY
	Appointment of the coordinator of joint actions (person/secretariat) / clear identifying the involved participants roles and places / Inclusiveness degree among the participants in the decision-making process
	Strategic objectives, cooperation products, and results
	The number of participants from each of the key stakeholders
	Competencies of cluster staff
	Thematic and geographical priorities of the cluster
	CLUSTER FINANCING
	The balance between funding sources (mandatory/voluntary contributions, self-sufficiency, sponsorship) to the total budget of the cluster depending on the period of its existence
	The degree of financial stability of the cluster
	SPECTRUM OF ACTIONS AND DYNAMICS OF THE CLUSTER
	Exchange of information and experience between participants
	Prospects for expanding the meta-capitals of involved stakeholders
	Relations with external partners
	Attractive cluster effect
	CLUSTER PERFORMANCE
	Number of resolved issues/implemented solutions/projects
	The degree of cluster expansion (geographically, subjectively)
	Indicators of the involved participants' state improvement
	Coverage of the cluster's activities in the media space (content analysis, number of messages in the press, social networks, etc.)
	Impact of cluster activities on the relevant industry (improvement, deterioration)
	Influence on international activities in the relevant field (international institutions, regulatory bodies, review of documentation, etc.)

**Proposed by the author based on [25].*

The phenomenon of space can be created in various formations by combining specialized subsets, such as scientific, ideological, and political. It is constructed gradually, step by step, through locations, circumstances, and approaches to the combination of interactive components. The consistency plan aims to create a specialized and cohesive formation by combining various types of collaborative clusters. Each segment has its place and functions according to its interests, but within the limits of a common plan, abstracting from national factors. The plan presents a space of continuous variation that is consistent with its collaborative nature by constantly placing and moving content and form variables.

Adapting the policy, structure, and governance of the cluster collaboration space to the specific domain features requires avoiding the general methodology, which assumes that each military situation is unique. It is important to consider the elements of meta-capital, the player's position (including their influence level and type), the availability of resources (including financing), and the needs and problems of the participants, as well as previous experience of joint activities. According to the principle of different vectors specialization [2], the spread of cluster-type transnational collaborative platforms in the future may lead to the emergence of what C. Ansell and A. Gash refer to as 'network politics'.

3. CASE STUDIES: MILITARY AND DEFENSE CLUSTERS OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS VERSUS NATIONAL ACTORS

In the context of transnational cluster creation as part of a geopolitical security plan, we will examine the policies and budgets of international organizations, specifically the UN, NATO, and the EU, regarding military and defense industry financing. We will compare these budgets with investments in the national budgets of key players for similar expenditure items.

3.1. UN

UN peacekeeping operation budgets are based on Security Council mission mandates, approved by the General Assembly (GA). Each operation has its own budget, which includes operational costs such as transport and logistics, as well as personnel costs such as salaries. The peacekeeping budget cycle runs from July 1 to June 30, but it rarely aligns with the Security Council's mandate.

The budget for UN peacekeeping is allocated to support and conduct peacekeeping operations, with the exception of basic management activities. The following outlines the budget's objectives:

- Special political missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Colombia, Yemen, and other countries in a conflict situation or that have a transitory period. UN representatives work on the preparation of peace negotiations, investigation of human rights violations, free and fair elections.
- Ensuring international implementation and compliance with sanctions adopted by the Security Council against terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, as well as rogue states such as North Korea.
- International monitoring of human rights and advocacy campaigns (about 40% of funding comes from the regular budget).

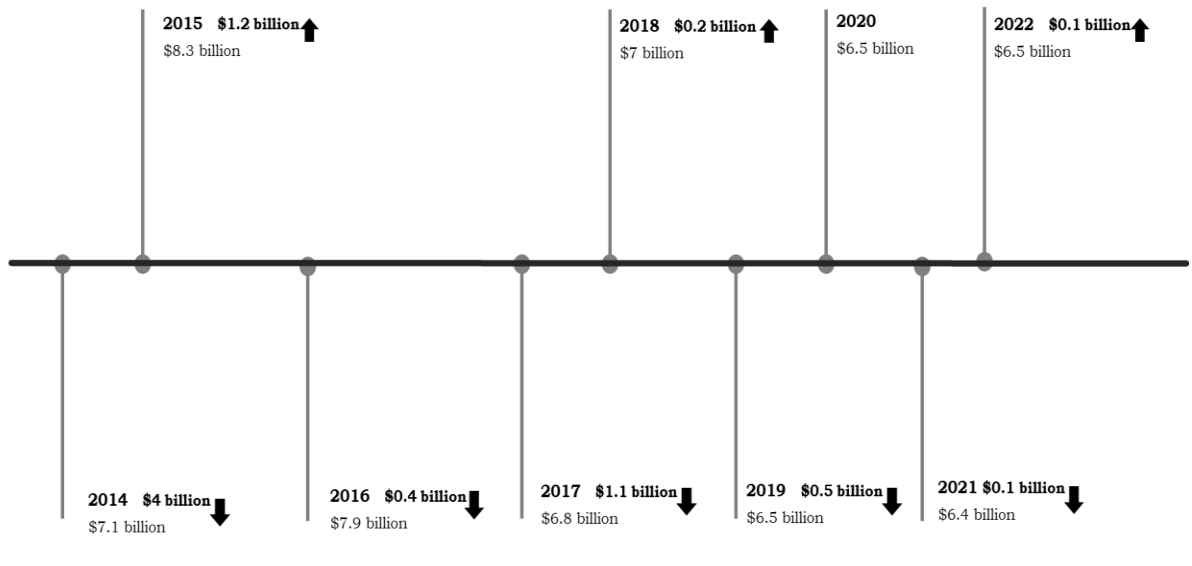
In 2022, the peacekeeping budget amounted to $6.45 billion [26], which is only 0.3 % of the world's annual military expenditures. The budget for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 covers ten missions, 85,000 personnel, one support operation, three logistics bases, and a support account that funds headquarters staff. The multidimensional missions of the Big Four – MINUSMA, UNMISS, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO – consume a significant portion of the annual peacekeeping budget, accounting for almost 70 % of this year's allocation.

The rates of Member States are determined by the GA and revised every three years. The current assessment structure sets a maximum rate of 22 % and a minimum rate of 0.001 %, depending on the country's solvency. For instance, due to the high rates of economic development in the United States, it pays the maximum rate. The country has negotiated a reduction in its share several times, particularly in 2000, when an agreement limited the US contribution to 22 %. Prior to 2020–2021, the United States contributed 25 % of the regular budget of the UN, making it the largest financial contributor since the organization's inception. Currently, the top contributors are the USA (27.89 %), China (18.68 %), Japan (8.56 %), Germany (6.09 %), the UK (5.79 %), France (5.61 %), Italy (3.30 %), Russian Federation (3.04 %), Canada (2.73 %), and the Republic of Korea (2.26 %). It is important to note that the US rate has decreased from 31.7 % in 1994 to 27.89 % in 2021 [18]. However, in comparison to other countries, there has been an increase in rates. For instance, in China, the share increased from 3.14 % in 2009 to 18.68 % in 2022, indicating the country's economic improvement and growing role on the world stage.

Estimates of member state contributions for peacekeeping are calculated using the same criteria as the regular budget, with one additional factor: the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council – the United States, the United Kingdom, China, France, and Russia – pay an additional contribution. Therefore, the 'peacekeeping' share is calculated at a slightly higher estimate than for the regular budget. It is important to note that the P5 has veto power over UN Security Council decisions. No peacekeeping mission can be deployed without the support of the P5. Therefore, the P5 should bear greater financial responsibility, reflecting their unique role in authorizing peacekeeping operations.

The United Nations does not possess its own military forces, therefore, member states provide the necessary military and police personnel for each peacekeeping operation on a voluntary basis. Peacekeepers are compensated by their respective governments according to their national rank and pay scale. Member states that voluntarily contribute military personnel to peacekeeping operations receive compensation from the United Nations at a standard rate approved by the General Assembly. Similar to the standard budget, peacekeeper rates are reviewed every three years. The new rates for 2022–2024 were approved in December 2021 at $1,448 per trooper per month, which is an increase of $20 from the 2019 rate [26]. Police and other civilian personnel also receive compensation from each operation's peacekeeping budget. Contingent personnel reimbursement is a crucial financial incentive for many troop and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. However, some member states argue that providing military contingents from certain countries creates a disproportionate advantage, as military force could be perceived as a means for a country to avoid fulfilling certain obligations.

The budget for UN peacekeeping in 2022 has increased by approximately $74 million (1.16 %) compared to the 2021 budget of 6.37 billion dollars. Refer to Graph 1* for further details on the budget changes.



Graph 1. Dynamics of the UN peacekeeping budget, 2014-2022

**Created by the author based on [18; 26].*

Increasing the budget indicates financial support and the ability to fulfill mandates. However, the key reasons for the increase are operational (70 %) and the growing salary of civilian personnel (23 %). UN peacekeeping activities are associated with significant fuel consumption, logistics, and transport issues. Given the disruptions in the global supply chain and Russia's war against Ukraine, the rising cost of energy sources is adding to the inflationary pressure on the UN budget.

Mission budget proposals are typically revised downwards, and in 2022, only UNMISS received full allocations while MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO had to cut their spending by more than 1 % [26]. However, after months of thorough and coordinated negotiations, a cross-cutting political resolution was reached in 2022. Diplomats have been attempting to reach a consensus on such documents since the last successful one in 2016. Reaching a consensus among the 193 member states on general UN policy documents in the field of peacekeeping is a significant challenge. The 157-member GA Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) failed to adopt consensus core reports in 2013, 2019, and 2022.

Although the UN's peacekeeping budget has increased for the first time in seven years, and there are some positive aspects to their activity, it must be acknowledged that the consensus reached during the session of the Fifth Committee-2022 is likely to be a fleeting moment rather than a signal of a new era in the UN. Negotiations between key power blocs in the General Assembly have secured a consensus solution. However, tensions between Security Council members are likely to rise over the coming months, which could significantly hamper the organization's political efforts.

The issue of imposing sanctions on countries that fail to meet their obligations remains unresolved. It is important to note that the majority of funding for the UN comes from voluntary contributions. In the 2020 fiscal year, the US Congress allocated approximately $2.8 billion to pay for contributions to UN peacekeeping missions [18]. In the same year, the USA contributed over 8 billion dollars to the UN, with approximately 80 % of the funds allocated to WFP, UNHCR, and UNICEF. It is important for large organizations to have budget stability and predictability to plan peacekeeping operations, which requires significant time and preparation. This can only be achieved with guaranteed funding streams.

In recent years, there has been an increase in appeals to replace regular contributions with voluntary ones. However, transitioning to a completely voluntary funding system could result in significant budget deficits for crucial programs and activities. The requirement for all member states, including the least developed, to contribute to the organization at certain levels prevents the financial burden from falling solely on a few states.

Voluntary financing of the UN's regular, peacekeeping, and specialized budgets may lead to underfunding by other countries. For instance, the UN's voluntary funding of global health activities, which are less controversial than peacekeeping and human rights, often suffers from chronic underfunding. In 2021, UN humanitarian agencies and partner organizations required $37.7 billion to assist 174 million people in 60 countries. However, at the end of the year, they received only $17.2 billion [18], which is 46 % of the total amount requested. Requiring all member states to contribute can help avoid this kind of shortcoming, but not all countries are willing to spend part of their national GDP on resolving military conflicts. This jeopardises the feasibility of the UN's existence as a global peacekeeping platform.

The UN's inability to propose a meaningful response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 is confirmed. This is mainly due to the paralyzing effect of Russia's veto as a member of the Security Council and the lack of solidarity among UN members regarding the military situation in Ukraine. The United Nations primarily issued declarative resolutions expressing concern about sexual violence and torture against Ukrainian citizens, as well as reporting the number of deaths in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Currently, the creation of commissions to investigate war crimes and the grain agreement of July 22, 2022, are considered as achievements of the UN. However, in the context of the UN Charter and its key goals, it is difficult to deem these steps as having a significant impact on ending the war.

Therefore, the United Nations, as a potential collaborative cluster in the field of global security, has a weak position due to inconsistent financial leverage, the absence of its own military contingent, and, most importantly, a lack of political will to deter global threats. In most cases, the UN chooses to play the role of an observer, documenting the number of victims and the destruction caused by military actions. The United Nations (UN) risks facing the same fate as the League of Nations, which was unable to prevent the Second World War due to its symbolic approach to global security and the power imbalance among its members.

3.2. NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) appears more cohesive in the military-defense context. One of its key pillars is collective defense, where an act of aggression against one or more member states is considered an act of aggression against all. NATO's goals and operations are centered around cooperative security and joint crisis management. Managing the transcontinental political alliance costs approximately $3 billion per year, which includes expenses for defense, civilian personnel salaries, strategic command management, joint operations, early warning and radar systems, training, defense communication systems, airfields, and fuel reserves.

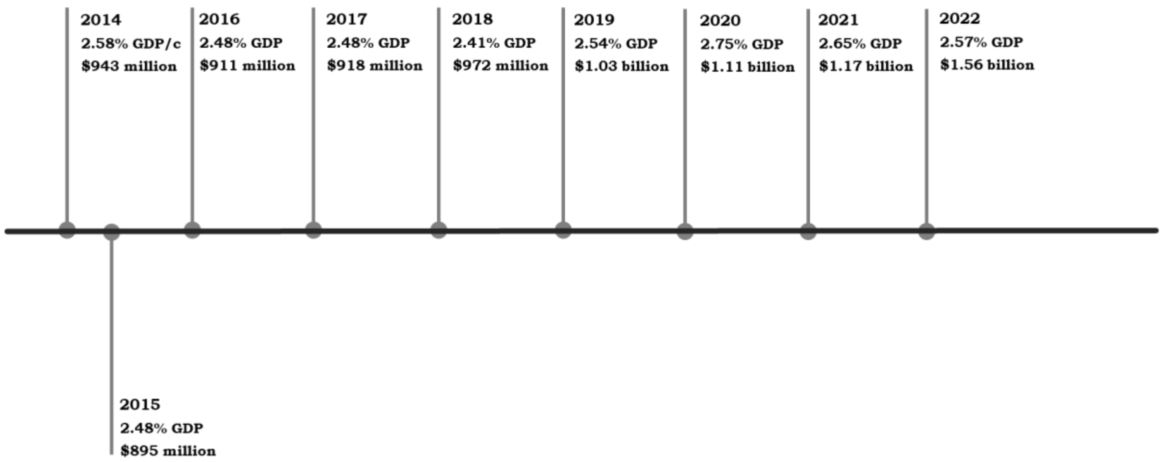
The NATO budget is comprised of direct and indirect contributions. Direct contributions fund joint budgets and programs that benefit all members and cannot be justified by any individual country, such as NATO air defense or command systems. These contributions represent only 0.3 % of the Alliance's total defense spending, which is equivalent to approximately €2.5 billion for the organization's command and military infrastructure.

All members of the Alliance contribute to the NATO budget based on an agreed formula for cost distribution, which is determined by gross national income. This is done in accordance with the "principle of joint financing and sharing of the military burden" [19]. The funding mechanisms used include the civilian budget (which covers recurring headquarters costs), the military budget (which covers integrated command structure costs), and the NATO Security Investment Program (which covers military infrastructure and capabilities). Projects can also be co-financed, with participating countries determining investment priorities and mechanisms. NATO provides political oversight, while alliance members jointly decide which programs to finance, the volume of investments, and performance indicators for the medium term.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) aims to establish a political and military alliance between 30 countries. However, it is important to note that some member states possess stronger armies and defense systems than others. The use of NATO data allows for the analysis of the Alliance's general budget and the percentage of GDP spent on military and defense industries by each member country within the limits of contributions (refer to Graph 2*).

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO Allies committed to investing at least 2 % of their GDP in military needs and 20 % for arms procurement and military research and development (R&D) [19]. According to the SIPRI database, only 8 out of 26 countries spent 2 % or more of their GDP on military needs in 2021 [23]. Therefore, France, the eighth largest military consumer in the world, broke the 2 % threshold for the first time since 2009. Spain is the latest country to announce a doubling of its defense spending by 2024. Currently, it is only 1 % below the agreed GDP target.

In 2021, NATO member states allocated an average of 24 % of their military budget to armaments and research, up from 22 % in 2020 and 12 % in 2014 [6]. Among the 26 European members of the Alliance, only Albania and Estonia did not increase their budget allocation for weapons procurement and scientific research activities between 2014 and 2021. The trend of replacing outdated Soviet equipment to reduce dependence on the Russian Federation for spare parts and maintenance was particularly noticeable among the Central European NATO member states. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, several European NATO member states, including Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Romania, announced plans to increase military spending to meet or exceed NATO's 2 % of GDP target.



Graph 2. Dynamics of NATO spending on the military and defence industry, 2014–2022

**Created by the author based on [6; 19]*

Note: Montenegro joined NATO in 2017, while North Macedonia in 2020. Finland and Sweden were in the process of joining NATO at the time of writing, so they are not marked.

On December 14, 2021, Alliance members agreed on NATO's civil and military budgets for 2022, which amounted to 289.1 million euros and 1.56 billion euros [19], respectively. However, the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 has raised concerns about NATO's ability to respond collectively to military aggression. The weaknesses of the Alliance include:

- Unbalanced positions and statuses of players due to uneven financial contributions. For instance, the US spends more on defence than any other NATO country, with 2021 estimates putting US defence spending at about $811 billion [23]. This exceeds the defence spending of the other participants by $448 billion, which could potentially undermine the bloc's political line.
- There is no unified agreed position regarding the war in Ukraine. For instance, Poland and other frontline states, when assessing the situation and the possible

threat of a Russian invasion, emphasized a tougher approach to the Alliance. This included the permanent deployment of additional troops, heavy weapons, and aircraft near the borders of the Russian Federation. However, more geographically distant partners limited themselves to promises of 'historic' decisions. The issue of differing interpretations of sanctions related to the transportation of prohibited goods to Kaliningrad should be addressed. To mitigate this, it may be advisable to consider expanding NATO's partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries are unlikely to support the formation of a Sino-Russian alliance aimed at global dominance.

- There is a lack of operational interoperability of weapons systems among participating countries, as well as joint training and intelligence sharing. NATO has three joint command headquarters (Italy, the Netherlands, and the USA), although the headquarters of the joint forces is located in Belgium. Such dispersion of command along with military resources “can negatively affect the operational response in the case of aggression” [Rudischhauser 2019]. Furthermore, the current stock of military equipment is significantly inadequate, necessitating prompt adaptation of the defence industry to military requirements.
- The dominance of national interests over the subregional security architecture. The June 2022 summit in Madrid saw NATO acknowledge the existing problems and offer an updated package of support to Ukraine. However, the provision of such assistance became a matter of personal responsibility and interest for individual members of the Alliance. While Lithuania has successfully demonstrated the practice of crowdfunding military equipment for Ukraine, Hungary has taken a more hesitant approach, delaying the transfer of weapons to the Ukrainian military.

In response to criticism, the new NATO Strategic Concept [Aronsson & Swaney 2022: 21], adopted on June 29, 2022, aims to strengthen the permanent military presence by reinforcing it with appropriate equipment. Currently, there are already 1,000 combat armed units located in the three Baltic states, and the number of US military contingent in Poland has increased. However, the credibility of the collective defence platform will depend on the prompt implementation of the already announced commitments to increase defence spending and establish priorities in the event of large-scale military actions in Europe.

The coming months are crucial for NATO as it needs to develop its capabilities in various domains, including air, sea, land, cyberspace, space, and cognitive. By 2030, at the latest, the Alliance must enhance its capacity to conduct military operations simultaneously in multiple vectors. However, NATO countries are currently unable to process the data required to accomplish the mission successfully.

As previously stated, the number of players on the collaborative platform has a significant impact on the decision-making process. In this case, NATO may be perceived as a cumbersome and inflexible instrument. On the military side, a small number of members, primarily the USA, dictate patterns of behavior. However, in the political context, even countries without an army, such as Luxembourg and Iceland, have the right to vote, thereby influencing the Alliance as a whole. Currently, there are significant differences between the participating states. For instance, Hungary, led by Prime Minister V. Orban, is attempting to balance between external pressures from the USA and Europe to put pressure on the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, President E. Macron of France and Chancellor O. Scholz of Germany are creating obstacles by prioritising their national interests and focusing on a peaceful resolution at the expense of Ukrainian territories.

The new global resilience strategy should aim to achieve a synergistic effect in the context of security by systematically addressing vulnerabilities to hybrid threats and open aggression through cooperation among Alliance members. Key challenges include protecting communication and energy hubs, critical infrastructure, ensuring national policy stability, enhancing cyber defense, improving military logistics, and countering disinformation and propaganda.

Considering the aforementioned characteristics, it can be stated that NATO, as a collaborative security platform, has thus far limited itself to making strong declarative statements against the use of nuclear weapons. Additionally, NATO has prepared a joint declaration with the EU [10] calling on the Russian Federation to end the war in Ukraine. In terms of specific actions, there is a focus on increasing military resources in the event of an escalation of Russian aggression against NATO members. However, there is still uncertainty regarding an agreed military-political line of behavior, as well as a shared vision of the future global security narrative.

3.3. EUROPEAN UNION

In February 2022, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine, violating the European security order. This event has transformed the relations between the EU and Russia, which were previously based on economic and energy interdependence. The member states of the EU are now systematically severing the established economic ties through complex packages of sanctions. For instance, in the first half of 2022, Germany, Russia's most significant trading partner in the EU, experienced a 34 % decrease in exports [Besch 2022].

Since 2015, relations with the Russian Federation have deteriorated, following the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of hostilities in Eastern Ukraine. The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy from 2016 [14] highlights the need for the Russian Federation to respect international law and the principles upon which the European security order is built, as outlined in the Paris Charter of 1990 and the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. However, it should be noted that the EU, like NATO, includes members who support a peaceful policy towards the Russian Federation, such as France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Hungary. Therefore, it is expected that some participants may have ambivalent positions, which may influence the Union's overall policy.

In March 2016, the EU Foreign Affairs Council called for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. However, they also emphasised the principle of selective interaction with the Russian Federation, meaning cooperation in areas of mutual interest. For instance, Germany, which is increasingly dependent on Russian natural resources (65 % of German gas came from Russia in 2020) and supports the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, followed this policy. Despite the events in Ukraine in 2014, the German government agreed to sell several gas storage facilities, including one of the largest in Europe, to the Russian gas giant Gazprom in 2015 [Cavendish 2022].

The EU's attempt to formulate a new strategy towards Russia in light of the Crimea annexation and the war in eastern Ukraine was hindered by disagreements among member states over an agreed line, which limited Brussels' ability to take clear and concrete action. The EU has maintained the sanctions imposed in 2014, but has avoided making decisions that could harm major energy projects or economic cooperation, which are seen as valuable to both sides.

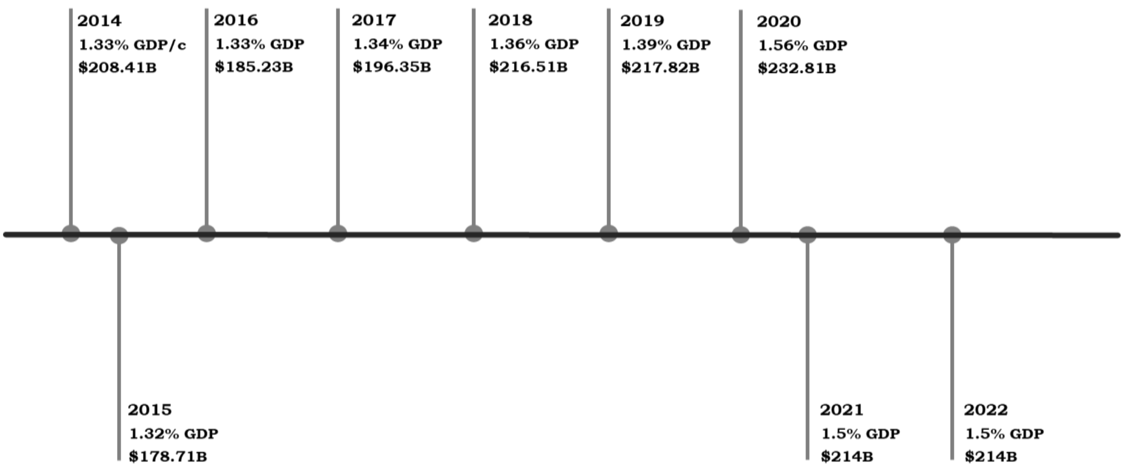
Following the Russian war against Ukraine in 2022, the EU implemented a series of sanctions packages. Additionally, the European Peace Facility (EPF) allocated 3.1 billion euros [12] to provide military aid to Ukraine and 19.7 billion euros in financial, humanitarian, and emergency aid. The EU also offered up to 18 billion euros in financial assistance for 2023 in the form of favorable loans. Despite the European Union's unity on sanctions and support for Ukraine, there is still no unified approach to future relations with Russia, with some exceptions, such as Hungary.

The EU has already made efforts to establish a collaborative regional security platform through joint institutions and policies, such as the annual defense review (CARD), military cooperation (PESCO), and military planning and training capacity building (MPCC). In this context, it is important to mention the European Peace Facility (EPF) 2021. The EPF aims to strengthen the EU's capacity to prevent conflicts, build peace, and enhance international security. It provides the opportunity to finance operational actions within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The EPF has a budget of 5.69 billion euros for 2021–2027 [12], which is less than the military budget of some countries.

For comparison, the European Defense Fund (EDF) for 2021–2027 is €8 billion [11]. This fund will allocate €2.7 billion for joint defense research and €5.3 billion for collaborative development projects in the military sector. Since 2003, the EU has launched over 30 CFSP missions in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. On October 17, 2022, the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) was established to support Ukraine. However, reporting on the use of funds and the effectiveness of missions at the UN is still in the agreement stage.

The European Commission's report on defense investment, published in May 2022 in coordination with the European Defense Agency, highlights the insufficiency of existing military resources for full-fledged hostilities and the need for replenishment. However, defense procurement continues to occur primarily at the national level. In 2020, joint purchases accounted for only 11 % of the total volume of arms of the EU member states. To improve the situation, the Commission announced the European Defense Industry Strengthening through the Common Procurement Act (EDIPRA) in July 2022. A fund of EUR 500 million for 2022–2024 can be used for technical and administrative costs to encourage cooperation between at least three Member States in the military and defense sector.

Following President E. Macron's remarks on European sovereignty, we examine EU military expenditure for the period 2014–2022 (refer to Figure 3*).



Graph 3. Dynamics of military expenditures of the EU, 2014–2022

**Created by the author based on [13; 17]*

As we can see, since 2014, the share of defence expenditure in total government expenditure has slightly increased, while the share in GDP has remained stable at 1.2 % of GDP. In 2019, the ratio of national defence spending to GDP in the EU Member States ranges from 0.2 % in Ireland and 0.4 % in Luxembourg to 2.0 % in Greece and 2.1 % in Estonia. In 2020, we see the highest level of spending on the military and defence industry at $232.8 billion, equivalent to 1.56 % of GDP. Due to the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine and growing concerns about national security, we should expect an increase in such spending in the coming years.

As a cooperative security forum, the EU has become more fragmented, less interested in expeditionary operations and more preoccupied with improving internal stability due to the migration crisis, the rise of right-wing populism and the lingering effects of the euro crisis. European states are currently more focused on integrating their own border security mechanisms in the face of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and instability in North Africa, which is seen as an alternative source of energy resources and a potential driver of large-scale migration. The EU has no desire to project military capabilities beyond the Petersberg tasks, so the common focus is on coordinating military and economic resources. NATO is likely to remain the main guarantor of European security, even as the US focuses less on Europe.

The war against Ukraine is accelerating the disintegration of the post-Soviet space, which is both a challenge and an opportunity for the EU. Russia can no longer guarantee authoritarian stability in the region, as the situation in the South Caucasus after the Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2000 shows. Azerbaijan used its military advantage, backed by NATO member Turkey, to force Armenia into a so-called authoritarian peace. This means that if the EU does not become proactive beyond its economic and political transformations by becoming more involved in the regional conflicts of its eastern neighbourhood, other actors with non-democratic models of governance (such as the PRC, Iran and Turkey) could challenge Russia's role in the region.

Accordingly, the EU needs new short, medium and long-term strategies to shape a different security reality. We need a balanced approach between the interests of large and smaller member states, as well as the energy and economic separation of Europe from the Russian Federation, for example through the declared concept of mutual strategic dependence. The EU should present itself as a strong geopolitical actor through a proactive policy for the involvement of Eastern Partnership countries, as opposed to other blocs such as Russia, China, Iran and North Korea.

3.4. STATES AS INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS

To gain a comprehensive understanding, let us compare the budgets of the aforementioned international institutions, whose primary tasks include supporting peaceful coexistence and peacemaking, with national defence expenditures. According to data published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2022, global military spending increased by 0.7 %, reaching an all-time high of 2.1 trillion dollars [23]. The systematic growth of defence spending over the past seven years is evident. Table 2* displays the military and defence industry expenditures of national budgets per country for 2017–2022.

The indicators in the table were determined using open online sources, particularly the SIPRI[1] military expenditure database, as follows:

- Indicators should come from traceable and credible sources, such as international institutes, think tanks, or reputable scientists. In particular, military expenditure data from SIPRI includes current and capital expenditure on the armed forces, including peacekeeping; ministries of defence and other state institutions engaged in defence projects; paramilitary forces, if they are considered trained and equipped for military operations; and military space activities. Such expenses also include the provision of military and civilian personnel, i.e. pensions of military personnel and social services; operation and maintenance; purchases; military research and development; military aid.
- It is necessary to consider the global perspective.
- Be freely available to the general public.
- To be calculated on an annual basis.

Authors examine national military and defence expenditures, focusing on the results and peculiarities, as follows.

The results indicate that the USA and the PRC remain leaders among the countries with the largest military budgets, accounting for 38 % and 14 % of global military spending in 2021, respectively. In 2021, US military spending decreased by 1.4 % compared to the previous year, amounting to $801 billion. The military burden also decreased slightly from 3.7 % of GDP in 2020 to 3.5 % in 2021. Additionally,

[1] Data on military spending are usually available in three forms: the initial budget, the revised budget, and actual spending. The initial budget is passed before the new fiscal year starts and indicates the resources the government plans to allocate to each public sector. The revised budget is published during the financial year. Actual expenditure reports are published after the end of the financial year, showing how much money was spent. In the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, data are most often available in the form of an initial or revised budget. Only a small number of countries publish actual spending data for the previous year by mid-February each year (when the SIPRI database is closed, meaning no further changes can be made).

funding for military research and development (R&D) increased significantly by 24 % between 2012 and 2021. Continuing to invest in scientific policies demonstrates that the American government prioritises quality over the accumulation of outdated US defence systems. In 2021, the largest increase in spending was related to nuclear modernisation. Additionally, the year marked the end of almost two decades of military presence in Afghanistan. Between 2001 and 2021, the USA invested approximately 85 billion dollars [23] in supporting the Afghan National Security Forces. The removal of the military personnel helped to reduce US military spending by nearly 21 %.

Table 2

Dynamics of spending by countries in the military and defence industry, 2017–2022

Country	Military expenditures (2017)	Military expenditures (2018)	Military expenditures (2019)	Military expenditures (2020)	Military expenditures (2021)	Military expenditures (2022)
USA	$646.8 billion	$682.5billion	$734.3billion	$778.4billion	$800.7billion	$770.0billion
China	$210.4billion	$232.5billion	$240.3billion	$258.0billion	$293.4billion	$230.0billion
India	$64.6billion	$66.3billion	$71.5billion	$72.9billion	$76.6billion	$49.6billion
Great Britain	$51.6billion	$55.7billion	$56.9billion	$60.7billion	$68.4billion	$68.0billion
Russian Federation	$66.9billion	$61.6billion	$65.2billion	$61.7billion	$65.9billion	$154.0billion
Germany	$42.2billion	$46.4billion	$49.0billion	$52.8billion	$56.0billion	$50.3billion
France	$49.2billion	$51.4billion	$50.1billion	$52.7billion	$56.6billion	$40.9billion
Japan	$45.4billion	$46.6billion	$47.6billion	$49.2billion	$54.1billion	$47.5billion
South Korea	$39.6billion	$43.1billion	$43.9billion	$45.7billion	$50.2billion	$46.3billion
Saudi Arabia	$70.4billion	$74.5billion	$61.6billion	$57.5billion	$47.2billion	$46.0billion
Australia	$27.7billion	$26.8billion	$26.1billion	$27.5billion	$31.8billion	$44.6billion
Italy	$26.5billion	$28.4billion	$26.4billion	$28.9billion	$31.3billion	$29.2billion
UAE	-	-	-	-	-	$25.3billion
Canada	$22.6billion	$22.7billion	$22.2billion	$22.6billion	$26.5billion	$23.5billion
Brazil	$29.3billion	$28.2billion	$25.9billion	$19.7billion	$18.7billion	$18.8billion
Israel	$19.4billion	$19.8billion	$20.5billion	$21.7billion	$24.3billion	$17.8billion
Taiwan	$9.6billion	$10.4billion	$10.9billion	$11.9billion	$12.6billion	$16.8billion
Poland	$9.9billion	$12.0billion	$11.8billion	$13.0billion	$13.7billion	$14.5billion
Netherlands	$9.6billion	$11.1billion	$12.0billion	$12.6billion	$13.6billion	$14.3billion
Ukraine	$3.6billion	$4.2billion	$5.4billion	$5.9billion	$5.9billion	$11.9billion

**Created by the author based on [6; 23].*

In 2021, South American military spending decreased slightly by 0.6 % to $45.3 billion. Brazil's spending fell to $19.2 billion, but it remains the largest military spender in the subregion and was able to make scheduled payments on strategic arms programs for the purchase of 36 Gripen fighter jets from Sweden. Colombia's military spending increased by 4.7 % in 2021 to $10.2 billion, placing it in second place in South America. Colombia's military spending has increased annually since the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP). This can be attributed to ongoing conflicts between pro-government institutions and other armed groups.

In Central America, military spending trends are influenced by high levels of violent organized crime, as paramilitary forces become increasingly involved in the fight against drug cartels. For instance, Mexico's military spending has increased significantly since 2015, reaching $7.7 billion, which is a 92 % increase compared to 2006. It is worth noting that Honduras, which has the second-highest number of murders in the world, has experienced a growth of 186 % in military spending between 2006 and 2015, the highest in the subregion. Additional information regarding the distribution by world subregions can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Dynamics of expenditures by subregions in the military and defence industry, 2017–2021

Subregion	Military expenditures (2017)	Military expenditures (2018)	Military expenditures (2019)	Military expenditures (2020)	Military expenditures (2021)
America	$695 billion	$735 billion	$815 billion	$853 billion	$883 billion
North America (USA, Canada)	$630 billion	$670 billion	$754 billion	$801 billion	$827 billion (94%)
South America	$57 billion	$55.6 billion	$52.8 billion	$43.5 billion	$45.3 billion (5,1%)
Europe	$342 billion	$364 billion	$356 billion	$378 billion	$418 billion
Western Europe	$245 billion	$266 billion	$251 billion	$273 billion	$342 billion(incl. Central Europe)
Eastern Europe	$72.9 billion	$69.5 billion	$74.0 billion	$71.7 billion	$76.3 billion
Central Europe	$24.1 billion	$28.3 billion	$31.5 billion	$33.6 billion	
Africa	$42.6 billion	$40.6 billion	$41.2 billion	$43.2 billion	$39.7 billion
Middle East	-	$145 billion	$147 billion	$143 billion	$186 billion
Asia and Oceania	$477 billion	$507 billion	$523 billion	$528 billion	$586 billion

**Created by the author based on [6; 23].*

In 2021, military spending in Asia and Oceania totalled $586 billion, with the primary contributors being China and India. China, the world's second-largest spender, allocated approximately $293 billion to its military, representing a 4.7 % increase from 2020. Notably, China's military budget has grown for 27 consecutive years, which is the longest continuous trend among countries according to the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.

India's military expenditure in 2021 was $76.6 billion, making it the third-highest in the world. This represents a 0.9 % increase from 2020 and a 33 % increase from 2012. The country has prioritised the modernisation of its armed forces by strengthening its own arms industry, with 64% of the military budget being used for domestically produced weapons purchases. This is likely due to ongoing tensions and border disputes with Pakistan and the PRC.

The Japanese government has increased its 2021 military budget by $7 billion, resulting in a total spending of $54.1 billion, which is the highest annual increase since 1972. Meanwhile, South Korea's military expenditures reached $50.2 billion, with a simultaneous reduction in the planned percentage due to the need to restore the domestic economy affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the three largest countries in Southeast Asia also increased their military spending: Singapore spent $10.9 billion, Indonesia spent $9.4 billion, and Thailand spent $7.3 billion on military expenditure. The potential threat from PRC and territorial disputes in the South China Sea were among the drivers of this growth.

Europe's total military expenditure in 2021 was $418 billion, which is a 3 % increase from 2020 and a 19 % increase from 2012. Specifically, the UK spent $68.4 billion in 2021, which is 3 % more than in 2020 and exceeds the NATO target of 2 %. The UK government has recently released a new strategy that includes a 33 billion dollars increase in the Ministry of Defence's budget over the next four years. The additional funding aims to support defence and space research, enhance nuclear deterrence, and modernise the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

In 2021, France's military expenses reached 56.6 billion dollars, which is a 1.5 % increase from 2020. This increase is due to the Law on Military Planning for 2019–2025, which aims to align the country's military budget with NATO's target of 2 % of GDP by 2025. Germany spent 56 billion dollars on military needs in the same year and has pledged to invest over 3 % of its GDP in defense and diplomacy in the future.

The Russian Federation has increased its military spending by 2.9 % in 2021, amounting to $65.9 billion and 4.1 % of GDP [23], respectively, due to high oil and gas revenues. The country has also been building up forces along the Ukrainian border. It is worth noting that Russia's military budget had decreased between 2016 and 2019 due to low energy prices combined with sanctions in response to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Ukraine increased its military spending by 72 % to strengthen its defenses against the Russian Federation. However, in 2021, the spending decreased to $5.9 billion, which still accounted for 3.2 % of the country's GDP. Overall, Ukraine's military budget has grown by 61 % since 2006, including a 34 % increase since 2013.

In 2020, Poland's military expenditures accounted for 39 % of the total in Central Europe, amounting to $13.0 billion. According to the National Security Strategy, Poland has pledged to increase its military budget to 2.5 % of GDP by 2024. Hungary, on the other hand, spent $2.4 billion in 2020, following its chosen growth trend for the past six years. As a result, Hungary's military budget has increased by 133 % since 2014 to expand its military potential and replace outdated Soviet equipment. Between 2010 and 2019, military spending in four Central European countries increased by more than 150 %: Lithuania (232 %), Latvia (176 %), Bulgaria (165 %), and Romania (154 %).

In 2021, Australia's military spending also increased by 4 % to $31.8 billion. According to Nan Tian, an expert at SIPRI, China's presence in the South and East China Seas has become a major driver of military policy in countries such as Australia and Japan. The trilateral AUKUS security agreement between Australia, the UK, and the USA is an example. It provides for the supply of eight nuclear submarines to Australia at a cost of up to $128 billion.

In 2021, military spending in Africa reached $39.7 billion, with the North and South regions accounting for 49 % and 51 %, respectively. The subregion's military budget has been consistently increasing since 2011, with seven years of growth (2011–2015 and 2019–2020) and only three years of slight decline (2016–2018), resulting in an overall increase of 42 % over the past decade. The country's prolonged economic stagnation has significantly impacted its military capabilities. In 2021, Kenya, Uganda, and Angola ranked as the third, fourth, and fifth largest military spenders in sub-Saharan Africa, respectively. Uganda's military spending increased by 203 % from 2012 to 2021, while Angola's military spending decreased by 66% over the same period. Angola's economy has been declining since 2015, mainly due to low oil prices and a drop in oil production. A similar situation is evident in Algeria, where military spending decreased by 3.4 % in 2020, amounting to $9.7 billion compared to 2019, due to the decline in oil prices.

Sudan has faced an economic crisis, an ongoing violent conflict in the Darfur region, and a surge in anti-government protests, leading to instability in the country's military spending over the past five years. Specifically, military spending declined in 2014, 2015, and 2018, while it increased in 2016 and 2017. In contrast, Nigeria increased its military spending by 56 % to $4.5 billion in response to attacks by Islamist extremists (Boko Haram) and separatist rebels.

Armed conflict is a significant contributor to instability in military spending in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, in the war-torn Sahel and Lake Chad region, spending increased in 2019 in Burkina Faso (22 %), Cameroon (1.4 %), and Mali (3.6 %), but decreased in Chad (–5.1 %), Niger (–20 %), and Nigeria (–8.2 %). Military spending increased in the Central African Republic (8.7 %), the DRC (16 %), and Uganda (52 %), but decreased in Burundi (-4.5 %), among Central African countries involved in armed conflicts.

In 2021, military spending in the Middle East totalled approximately $186 billion, which is a 3.3 % decrease from 2020. It is important to note that SIPRI has not estimated the total military spending in the Middle East since 2015 due to a lack of data for Qatar, Syria, the UAE, and Yemen. Additionally, six out of the ten countries with the highest military burden are located in this subregion. Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, and Qatar are among the countries with the highest military spending. In 2021, Saudi Arabia's military expenditures were estimated at $55.6 billion, which is a 17 % decrease from 2020. This decrease is reportedly due to a withdrawal of military forces from Yemen, although the Saudi Arabian government has announced a redeployment of troops. Since 2015, Saudi Arabia's military spending has been decreasing due to a sharp drop in oil prices. This trend is not unique to Saudi Arabia, as many other exporting countries, including Angola, Ecuador, Iraq, Mexico, South Sudan, and Venezuela, have also been forced to cut their budgets, including military spending, as a result of the decline in oil revenues.

In 2021, Iran increased its military budget to $24.6 billion for the first time in four years, despite ongoing economic problems resulting from sanctions. The rise occurred amidst Iran's tense relations with Israel and the USA. As a result, the budget of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps accounted for 34 % of the country's total military spending. Prior to 2014, Iran's military expenditure had been consistently decreasing (by 31 %) since its peak in 2006. The primary decrease occurred in 2012–2013 following the imposition of economic and financial sanctions against Iran by the EU in January 2012. However, the Iranian economy has since begun to recover due to the gradual lifting of EU and UN sanctions. This recovery has contributed to a 37 % increase in military spending from 2014–2017, reaching $14.5 billion in 2017.

In 2021, Israel's military spending increased by 3.1 % to $24.3 billion [23] due to the government's military operations against Hamas and concerns about Iran's nuclear potential. However, it is worth noting that Israeli military spending fell by 13 % after a peak in 2015, which was associated with military operations in the Gaza Strip in 2014.

In 2021, Turkey's military spending decreased by 4.4 % to $15.5 billion [23]. However, between 2012 and 2021, the country's military budget increased by 63 %. This increase in spending coincided with Turkey's expanded military involvement in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as an increase in the production of its weapons.

Qatar spent $11.6 billion on military expenses, making it the fifth largest spender in the Middle East. This represents a 434 % increase from 2010, the last time the country released military spending figures. The increase in spending coincided with Qatar's involvement in the conflicts in Libya and Syria, as well as its investment in updating its military equipment.

Therefore, a country's military spending can be influenced by various factors, such as armed conflict, security perceptions, GDP, and fluctuations in oil prices. The latter poses a significant challenge to national budgets, as military expenditure patterns over the past decade have generally mirrored the rise and fall of oil prices. The decrease in oil revenues compelled exporting governments to reduce their budgets, including military spending, which impacted regional and subregional trends in Africa and South America. This pattern highlights the severity of the shock and underscores the necessity for sectoral reforms to diversify the economies of oil-exporting nations. Out of the 15 countries that have experienced the most significant budget cuts since 2015, only two (Guinea and Zambia) were not oil exporters.

Another important factor to consider is the presence of armed conflict in the country, as well as its proximity to nations where active hostilities are taking place. In particular, countries bordering the Russian Federation or Ukraine demonstrated escalating fear of a potential threat of invasion by increasing their total military spending in 2015. For instance, Poland increased its spending by 22 % to $10.5 billion under its $40 billion ten-year military modernization plan, which resulted in its military spending reaching 2.2 % of GDP in 2015 [23]. Romania increased its military spending by 11 % to $2.5 billion and announced its intention to increase the military budget up to 1.4 % of GDP. Slovakia followed suit with a 17 % increase, while Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania increased their military spending by 6.6 %, 14 %, and 33 %, respectively. In 2022, there was an increase in national military budgets and readiness to join military blocs to protect the territorial integrity of countries due to Russian aggression against Ukraine. This behaviour pattern was observed in the UK, France, Germany, Finland, and Sweden.

4. CONCLUSION

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has caused concern among citizens of many countries, who fear the possibility of a new global conflict. According to the Halifax International Security Forum, 73 % of respondents anticipate a future global confrontation on the scale of the First and Second World Wars by 2047. In addition to these concerns, there is a growing call for the strengthening of national armies. On average, 64 % of respondents [9] in the 30 countries agree that their government should spend more on national military power. Meanwhile, 85 % of respondents believe that new international agreements and institutions should be established and run by strong democratic countries.

The citizens' desire to establish new international institutions in the context of transforming security architecture aligns with the need to reassess the structure and policies of existing security players. The UN-based collaborative platform can serve as a space for round negotiations, limited to declarative statements due to the absence of its own armed formations, weapons systems, and stable ideas about the future vector of actions against aggressors. The EU and NATO are in the process of restructuring their security missions, both regionally and globally. This will necessitate the development of new cooperation principles with partners, as well as additional time and resources.

The key to the sustainability of international security agencies lies in their ability to adapt to changing parameters. Institutions can disintegrate because they no longer have any functional added value, such as the Western European Union (WEU), or exist formally due to the loss of political support of their members. In the case of the EU, for example, the genesis of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and, in particular, the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) should be seen as a process “when an organization that was not explicitly established to externalize security gradually built up its institutional potential for this particular function” [Rudischhauser 2019]. By analogy with the EU, NATO has also begun work on adapting partnership programs to the changing global environment, abandoning the grouping of countries based on the experience of cooperation with NATO or the geographical principle. Instead, it is more appropriate to implement two or three new “matrix-type framework” [Aronsson & Swaney 2022: 43] programs to ensure maximum flexibility of the Alliance to the context.

When considering the creation of a new transnational entity for alternative security collaboration, it is important to take into account the experiences of other multilateral platforms. For instance, rather than emulating NATO's approach of evaluating partnership programmes by category, a fundamental tenet of this collaborative cluster could be to conduct a comprehensive appraisal of a country's capabilities and level of influence based on pre-established guidelines. This is particularly relevant in our case, given our status as a major security player in contemporary geopolitics. Such parameters must enable the measurement of progress in the country's defence and security sector, as well as reforms in this area, and the country's compliance with the goals of the transnational platform. If the state is willing and able to participate in peacekeeping, is it reasonable to refuse its assistance based on ideological differences in other areas of joint initiatives? This question requires further research and answers.

In relation to the EU experience, progress reports for candidate countries could be used as a tool to identify, measure, and evaluate stakeholders and their potential for further involvement. These reports may include mechanisms for financial reporting, analysis of funds, expert evaluation, and verification of results using quantitative and qualitative indicators. The effectiveness of the collaborative cluster can be improved by using a combination of tools that are adapted to the specific situation, including the prescription of sanctioning measures in case of agreement violation.

To evaluate the success of the cluster, it is important to use general benchmarks and determine what worked and what did not. Additionally, it is important to assess the extent to which the country utilized the platform's assistance for its own interests and security needs. The platform's argument for 'functional continuity' enables the creation of a 'hybrid' security institution, with a variety of partnership formats of varying intensity, rather than a one-dimensional system of collective defence.

Therefore, for an international security institution to be successful, it must solve the specific security problem for which it was created, or at least transform it to the extent that it no longer poses an acute threat to the participating states. Failure to do so risks 'institutional embedding', where specific formats of cooperation, although still available, are no longer used.

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