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# Instead of an ending... Tempus crisium, tempus mutationis

The analyses assembled in this volume clearly indicate that Europe is entering a period of qualitatively new security challenges, in which the longstanding paradigms of stability, predictability, and the dominance of the liberal order are losing their explanatory power. As emphasised in the introduction, contemporary crises - military, energy, economic, informational, and migratory - overlap and mutually reinforce one another, producing an environment of multidimensional uncertainty. Security is thus increasingly understood as a category encompassing hard and soft dimensions simultaneously, as well as domains that only a decade ago were rarely framed in terms of systemic threats. This volume reflects that transformation, both in its diagnosis of geopolitical processes and in its analysis of the mechanisms through which states and institutions respond.

The authors of Part I demonstrate that Europe's "new" security environment is not merely an accumulation of separate crises, but rather a system of interdependencies linking geopolitical pressure, infrastructural vulnerabilities, and constraints on institutional agency; consequently, an adequate response must be strategic, operational, and resilience-oriented at the same time. Marco Marsili traces the European Union's adaptation to hybrid conflicts, treating Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine as a catalyst accelerating reforms in crisis management, cybersecurity, energy resilience, and counter-disinformation measures. In his account, hybrid pressure operates in a distinctly "networked" manner: it targets institutional and societal nodes, tests decision-making cohesion, and compels rapid coordination - particularly at the EU–NATO interface - while remaining shaped by the interests and actions of external actors such as Russia, the United States, and China. This "top-down" diagnosis is further developed by Radoslava Brhlíková and Radoslav Ivančík, who frame the post-2022 challenges facing the Common Security and Defence Policy as a tension between rising ambition

and limited implementation capacity. They argue that instruments such as the Strategic Compass and efforts to strengthen defence capabilities and technological-industrial sovereignty are necessary responses to a deteriorating security environment, yet their effectiveness continues to be constrained by political fragmentation, divergent member-state preferences, coordination barriers, and persistent gaps between declaratory objectives and financing, timelines, and measurable implementation benchmarks. At this juncture, the volume makes a significant "operational turn": António Gonçalves Alexandre shifts attention to the EU's south-western flank and demonstrates that European security is increasingly shaped by seemingly peripheral processes at the intersection of maritime security, economic stability, and human mobility. He shows that piracy, smuggling, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Gulf of Guinea generate a chain of indirect effects - undermining coastal livelihoods, fuelling criminality, and, over time, intensifying migratory pressures along Atlantic routes, including those leading towards the Canary Islands. Crucially, Alexandre links this mechanism to the need for sustained development of EU frameworks and instruments for protecting maritime infrastructure and maintaining maritime presence, arguing that failure to address upstream drivers of instability ultimately produces security costs at the Union's "frontiers."

Against this backdrop, it becomes clearer that Europe's threats are simultaneously peripheral and "core": alongside pressures emerging from the south-western maritime approaches, a hard military–hybrid problem persists on the eastern flank. Zdzisław Śliwa analyses the Kaliningrad Oblast as a space that, in peacetime, may function as an instrument of pressure and asymmetric action, and, in crisis, as a potential vector of escalation and a forward hub for military operations. He draws attention to the implications of the oblast's militarisation – including the significance of A2/AD capabilities and air-defence and strike components – while at the same time emphasising the practical logic of deterrence: risk reduction requires continuous monitoring of indicators of preparation, the strengthening of national capabilities, the building of societal resilience, and the maintenance of a credible, coordinated allied presence. These conclusions align with a logic of "deterrence-enabled resilience": modernisation alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by political cohesion and the capacity to act through shared procedures.

The infrastructural and economic dimension of security is developed by Anna Zaccaro, who presents the Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – as a "laboratory" of solutions aimed at enhancing the EU's energy resilience.

She argues that supply diversification, the expansion of LNG terminals, the synchronisation of electricity grids with the European system, and accelerated investment in renewables and energy storage carry not only economic and climate significance but also a strictly strategic one: they reduce the scope for energy to be used as an instrument of coercion and strengthen the stability of the EU's market and critical infrastructure. At the same time, she stresses that successful diversification should translate into a broader portfolio of dependencies – rather than a simple shift from one supplier to another – if the objective is genuine autonomy and systemic resilience.

A synthetic perspective is offered by Albin Skwarek, who frames the transformation of the international order as a process of erosion of multilateral mechanisms and intensifying great-power rivalry, reinforced by the war in Ukraine and hybrid instruments of pressure. In his argument, this entails the need to recalibrate the assumptions underpinning security policy, shifting emphasis towards resilience (energy, economic, infrastructural, and informational) and towards developing the capacity to act under conditions of potential weakening of transatlantic ties, while preserving the continuing relevance of alliances and formats of collective defence.

Part I concludes with Radoslava Brhlikova's contribution which – drawing on the thought of Milan Hodža – introduces the theme of regional agency in Central and Eastern Europe as a potential complement to the existing security architecture. The author treats regional integration not as a straightforward alternative to current structures, but as a prospective "pillar" capable of strengthening interest coordination, reducing vulnerability to a sphere-of-influence logic, and enhancing the region's stabilising resources in times of crisis. In this way, Part I arrives at a coherent overarching conclusion: in an era of overlapping crises, European security requires the simultaneous reinforcement of resilience (across infrastructure, energy, and society), operational capabilities (including maritime and defence capacities), and coordination mechanisms – both at the level of the EU and alliances and through regional initiatives that can increase the agency of states most exposed to strategic pressure.

In Part II, entitled New Forms of Confrontation, the contributors trace a contemporary "shift" of the battlespace towards modes of confrontation that blur the classical boundaries between war and peace, coercion and persuasion, and between the author of an operation and its "ostensible" executor. In the opening study, Sanshiro Hosaka identifies as the central analytical problem the fiction of agency attributed to alleged non-state actors under conditions of plausible

deniability and disinformation operations. He demonstrates that established conflict typologies – including reclassification criteria based on identifying the "main combatant" and assessing operational dominance – break down where an intervening state deliberately obscures its involvement and presents local structures as autonomous separatists. In response, Hosaka proposes shifting the evidentiary emphasis from purely quantitative measures of intensity to an analysis of political agency: who constitutes the actor, how it is organised, how deeply it is embedded in local elites, and whether it is in fact subordinate to an external decision-making centre. Practically, this entails treating "quasi-non-state actors" as instruments of state policy rather than as co-equal parties to a conflict – a move that carries implications both for interpreting the Russian–Ukrainian war prior to 2022 and for broader debates on attribution and responsibility in conflicts conducted "below the threshold" of conventional war.

The perspective of external interstate confrontation is complemented by an analysis of internal security threats which – although less spectacular than in the late twentieth century – continue to shape the stability of democratic systems. Arkadiusz Machniak reconstructs the origins and evolution of left-wing terrorism in Europe, situating it within a historical framework (including references to successive "waves" of terrorism) and highlighting the continuity of its core components: an anti-system ideological nucleus, the selective choice of targets, and the instrumentalisation of violence as a form of "political communication." At the same time, he emphasises changes in organisational forms and tactics – an evolution from the classic structures of the "neo-left" wave (e.g., the RAF, the Red Brigades, Action Directe) towards looser anarchist and autonomist configurations, which more frequently operate through low-cost modalities (sabotage, arson, IEDs, and acts of vandalism) directed against state institutions and infrastructure or actors associated with the "system." The contemporary dimension is linked to empirical data and observations regarding both extremist activity and EU member-state responses, leading Machniak to argue that, even if left-wing terrorism does not dominate today's security agenda, it remains an erosive factor whose salience may be amplified by processes of radicalisation and crisis-driven socio-political dynamics.

The next two contributions focus on confrontation in the informational and cognitive domains, treating them as arenas in which "soft" means can generate hard political effects. Marco Marsili examines the European Union's democratic resilience to disinformation through two case studies: the COVID-19 "infodemic" and interference in electoral processes. At the core of his analysis lies an assessment of

the EU's institutional and regulatory toolbox – among others, the Code of Practice on Disinformation, the Digital Services Act, the development of analytical capacity through the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), and coordination and early-warning mechanisms – alongside the question of their effectiveness in a digital environment characterised by fragmentation, platform logics, and the rapid "learning" capacity of hostile actors. Marsili highlights both the EU's achievements (building accountability frameworks for platforms, expanding fact-checking cooperation networks, and strengthening procedures for protecting electoral integrity) and persistent weaknesses: uneven implementation, the limitations of voluntary instruments, and the accelerating pressure of new technologies (including automation and AI) that increase the scale, speed, and apparent credibility of manipulation. His conclusion is explicitly systemic: democratic resilience requires combining regulation with adaptive governance, media literacy, and sustained cooperation among public authorities, academia, civil society, and the platform sector.

Juliusz Sikorski, in turn, closes Part II with an analysis of the influence architecture characteristic of cognitive warfare, in which proxy sources function as indirect, ostensibly independent nodes for transmitting and legitimising influence content. He reconstructs the mechanics of information laundering as a sequence (placement → layering → integration), demonstrating that intermediaries are not merely channels of content replication but structures that enable the "normalisation" of narratives in the public sphere through amplification, local "anchoring," and the lowering of audiences' thresholds of scepticism. Drawing on case studies (including Ghostwriter and NewsFront), Sikorski proposes a set of diagnostic indicators – recurrent "link bridges" to distribution hubs, short-window temporal convergence of publication, multilingual narrative calques, and legitimisation loops – as well as institutional recommendations that combine cognitive prevention (prebunking) with audits of distribution networks and intermediary accountability. These measures include proportionate interventions at the level of distribution infrastructure, provided they are embedded in transparent procedures and subject to meaningful avenues of appeal.

In Part III, the contributors demonstrate that the capacity of states and the European Union to respond to crises increasingly depends not only on "hard" resources, but also on the quality of legal frameworks, administrative procedures, and the effectiveness of the institutions responsible for applying them. The study by Roman Martyniuk, Oleksii Datsiuk, and Mykola Romanov provides an important reference point in this regard: the authors examine Ukraine's 2018 Law On

National Security of Ukraine as a foundational instrument of the regulatory order governing the security and defence sector, while simultaneously identifying its "bottlenecks" – above all terminological inconsistencies, an imprecise delineation of competences, and tensions between functions of command and coordination within the architecture of power (including the role of the presidential centre and coordinating bodies). In their view, the problem lies not in the very idea of comprehensive regulation, but in the risk that definitional ambiguity and overlapping competences reduce the predictability of state action under crisis pressure.

Maria Hapunik then shifts the focus to the EU's internal dimension, arguing that cross-border police cooperation has become one of the key "resilience instruments" in response to networked security threats: organised crime, cybercrime, migration crises, and hybrid interference. She points to the growing importance of institutional tools (such as Europol and EMPACT), the interoperability of information systems, and the deployment of new technologies (including AI and biometrics), while stressing a crucial condition of effectiveness: the expansion of operational capacity cannot occur at the expense of fundamental-rights protection and privacy standards, which in practice necessitates a continuous balancing of security imperatives and individual freedoms.

The institutional and procedural strand is further deepened by Robert Siuciński, who examines EU Regulation 2024/3015 prohibiting the placing on the Union market of products made with forced labour. He shows that, in response to human-rights violations, the EU increasingly relies on administrative instruments of a public-policy character, built on a risk-based approach and multi-stage procedures (a preliminary assessment phase, investigations, decisions, and enforcement), with a meaningful division of competences between the European Commission and the authorities of the Member States. As a result, the regulation is not merely a "ban" but a procedural architecture designed to enable the identification of risks in supply chains and the enforcement of market standards while safeguarding due-process guarantees for economic operators.

The subsequent contribution by Zbigniew Czachór addresses the EU's most fundamental institutional layer: the rule-of-law crisis and the conditionality mechanism for protecting the EU budget. He situates the issue within the post-2020 political and legal dynamics (including the framework of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and NextGenerationEU) and demonstrates that the rule of law is not solely an axiological category but a prerequisite for sound public financial management. Judicial independence, the effectiveness of oversight and prosecution of abuses, and the practical enforceability of judicial decisions

directly determine the EU's capacity to protect its financial interests. In this sense, the conditionality mechanism functions as an "institutional safety valve" in times of crisis, when normative coherence becomes an element of systemic security.

The notion of security is subsequently "brought down" to the level of everyday market relations by Mira Malczyńska-Biały, who argues that information constitutes one of the key components of consumer safety. Information asymmetries between professional market actors and consumers create vulnerabilities to unfair practices; consequently, effective protection requires both legal instruments (information duties, labelling standards, and prohibitions of misleading conduct) and organisational and educational measures that enable consumers to make rational choices and pursue claims effectively. The author traces the continuity of this logic in consumer policy programmes from the European Economic Community to the contemporary EU, thereby embedding "information security" within a broader architecture of socio-economic resilience.

Part III is concluded by Martyna Kaczmarczyk's contribution, which links security to technological transformation. She discusses ethical, moral, and security risks associated with AI systems in light of emerging European regulations, emphasising that the pace of technological development may generate tensions around human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. This, in turn, requires legal frameworks capable of being updated in step with technological progress – particularly with regard to liability for harm and the effective enforcement of standards. Taken together, Part III yields a coherent conclusion: in an era of crises, the security of states and the EU increasingly depends on the quality of law (definitions, competences, and procedures), the interoperability of institutions and information systems, and regulatory capacity to address new sources of risk – from war and crime, through supply chains, to algorithms and market information.

Part IV of the volume convincingly brings the issue's overall narrative to a close by demonstrating that, in times of crisis, security is increasingly "experienced socially" – as an intersection of risks to health and livelihoods, the stability of local communities, and the EU's political and normative cohesion. Tomasz Marcinkowski examines health security in the European Union during the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination strategy, emphasising that the effectiveness of crisis-response measures had two inseparable dimensions: a "hard" one (ensuring vaccine quality, efficacy, and safety, alongside the adaptation of regulatory procedures) and a "soft" one (social trust built through transparent communication and countering disinformation). He shows how technocratic and institutional solutions – such as accelerated assessment and authorisation

mechanisms for medicinal products and strengthened post-marketing safety monitoring – played a crucial role in this architecture, while also arguing that the pandemic exposed prior limitations of supranational competences in the area of public health. The conclusion is distinctly systemic: even the most "medical" security policy fails without social legitimacy, and that legitimacy depends on institutional credibility and the quality of communication in an environment marked by informational polarisation.

This line of argument is deepened in Oliwia Radkiewicz's study, which – using the September 2024 flood in Poland as a case – reveals how an infrastructural crisis can evolve into a social crisis. She demonstrates that natural disasters produce multidimensional consequences, ranging from material losses to long-term psychological effects and the erosion of social ties, and that the ultimate security balance depends on the quality of the "interface" between institutions and citizens. Her qualitative research suggests that initial mobilisation and neighbourhood solidarity may, over time, give way to tensions – particularly when public assistance is perceived as inconsistent, burdened by excessive bureaucracy, and unequal in access. Especially salient is her observation of "procedural barriers" that disproportionately affect residents of smaller localities and individuals with lower educational capital, directly shaping subjective perceptions of security and trust in the state. Radkiewicz therefore argues for combining bottom-up resilience (self-organisation and mutual aid) with improved crisis management (early warning, coordinated evacuation, streamlined procedures, and psychological support), since only such synergy can reduce the long-term social costs of disasters.

Wiktoria Trybuł-Klein, in turn, frames irregular migration as a challenge that in the twenty-first century destabilises security not only in terms of borders and public order, but also with regard to political cohesion and intra-EU solidarity. She shows that rising migratory pressure – particularly after 2015 and, subsequently, amid hybrid threats on the eastern flank – has exposed the limitations of existing migration and asylum governance mechanisms, while also revealing a tendency within the EU to shift priorities towards border control, return procedures, and cooperation with third countries. At the same time, she stresses that this turn generates enduring tensions: between security and human-rights protection standards, between operational effectiveness and the principle of solidarity, and between national policy logics and the need for coherence within the Schengen regime. In consequence, Part IV culminates in a conclusion about the "social sensitivity" of security systems: health crises, natural disasters, and migratory pressures demonstrate that the resilience of states and the EU is a function not

only of institutions and resources, but also of trust, equality of access to support, and the capacity to sustain collective legitimacy under conditions of axiological disputes and political polarisation.

The analyses brought together in this volume demonstrate that European security has reached a critical juncture at which established response models no longer match the scale and complexity of contemporary threats. A common thread running through all the studies presented here is the conviction that Europe's resilience will depend not only on military capabilities, but also on the quality of its institutions, social cohesion, transparent regulatory frameworks, and the capacity to cooperate across national borders and sectoral divides. The volume shows that security must be approached as a multidimensional category – encompassing geopolitics, law, technology, the economy, and the social sphere – and that an effective response to emerging challenges requires continuous learning, adaptive governance, and strategic imagination. The future of Europe's security architecture will therefore be shaped as much by political will as by a shared responsibility for the character of the common order.