

## SUMARIO/SUMMARY

*Francisco José Dacoba Cerviño*

Presentación de la Revista del IEEE n.º 22

*Presentation of the IEEE Journal issue 22*

*Pablo Cañete Blanco*

Uso de estrategias de zona gris en entornos urbanos. Uso de tácticas no convencionales en la lucha por el relato

*Use of grey zone strategies in urban settings. The use of unconventional tactics in the struggle for narrative*

*Sara Yildiz Bravo*

La autonomía estratégica de la Unión Europea: ¿realidad o utopía? Un análisis crítico de sus principales dimensiones y obstáculos.

*Strategic autonomy of the European Union: reality or utopia? A critical analysis of its main dimensions and obstacles*

*Mónica Lupiáñez Lupiáñez*

Cómo hacer frente a un ataque cognitivo: Prototipo de detección de la propaganda y manipulación en operaciones psicológicas dirigidas a civiles durante un conflicto

*How to cope with a cognitive attack: Prototype for detecting propaganda and manipulation in psychological operations targeting civilians during a conflict*

*Roberto Vizcardo Benavides*

El Valor estratégico del Hub Perú en América del Sur

*The strategic value of Hub Peru in South America*

*Manuel Luna Alcoba*

Caja morfológica del concepto de «guerra híbrida

*Morphological box for the concept of "hybrid warfare"*

*Adrian Lopez Fleming*

Las Fuerzas de Operaciones Especiales en la era del retorno de la competición entre grandes potencias. Un análisis del caso ruso y chino

*Special Operations Forces in an era of returning great power competition. An analysis of the Russian and Chinese case*

*Gonzalo Vázquez Orbaiceta y Augusto Conte de los Ríos*

España mira al Norte: El Ártico, Operaciones Navales y Cambio Climático

*Spain looks North: The Arctic, Naval Operations and Climate Change*

*Ramón Alarcón Sánchez*

Desinformación, noticias falsas y posverdad: estudio comparativo entre tendencias generales, artículos de investigación en revistas académicas sobre seguridad y titulares periodísticos

*Disinformation, fake news and post-truth: a comparative study of general trends, research papers in academic security journals and newspaper headlines*

*Juan Carlos Fernández Cella*

Análisis geopolítico en escenarios de contagio financiero: la reconstrucción de cadenas espaciales por medio de su Identificador de Entidad Jurídica (LEI)

*Geopolitical analysis in financial contagion scenarios: reconstructing spatial chains using their Legal Entity Identifier (LEI)*

*Celia Fernández Calvo*

La ampliación de la plataforma continental española

*The extension of the Spanish continental shelf*

*Angel Llorente Fernández de la Reguera*

*Canary Islands' waters and the Law of the Sea*

*Recensión/Recension*

*Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos*

Historia naval de la Guerra Civil, 1936-1939

*Javier Fernández Aparicio*

Modi's India: Hindu nationalism and the rise of ethnic democracy



## Index

<i>Brigadier General Francisco José Dacoba Cerviño</i> Presentation of the IEEE Journal issue 22 .....	373
<i>Pablo Cañete Blanco</i> Use of grey zone strategies in urban settings. The use of unconventional tactics in the struggle for narrative .....	375
<i>Sara Yildiz Bravo</i> Strategic autonomy of the European Union: reality or utopia? A critical analysis of its main dimensions and obstacles .....	399
<i>Mónica Lupiañez Lupiañez</i> How to cope with a cognitive attack: Prototype for detecting propaganda and manipulation in psychological operations targeting civilians during a conflict .....	423
<i>Roberto Vizcardo Benavides</i> The strategic value of Hub Peru in South America.....	457
<i>Manuel Luna Alcoba</i> Morphological box for the concept of “hybrid warfare” .....	491
<i>Adrian Lopez Fleming</i> Special Operations Forces in an era of returning great power competition. An analysis of the Russian and Chinese case .....	527
<i>Gonzalo Vázquez Orbaiceta &amp; Augusto Conte de los Ríos</i> Spain looks North: The Arctic, Naval Operations and Climate Change.....	551
<i>Ramón Alarcón Sánchez</i> Disinformation, fake news and post-truth: a comparative study of general trends, research papers in academic security journals and newspaper headlines	575

<i>Juan Carlos Fernández Cela</i> Geopolitical analysis in financial contagion scenarios: reconstructing spatial chains using their Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) .....	619
<i>Celia Fernández Calvo</i> The extension of the Spanish continental shelf.....	635
<i>Ángel Llorente Fernández de la Reguera</i> Canary Islands' waters and the Law of the Sea .....	671
 <b>Recension</b>	
<i>Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos</i> Historia naval de la guerra civil, 1936-1939 .....	700
<i>Javier Fernández Aparicio</i> Modi's India: hindu nationalism and the rise of ethnic democracy.....	707

*Brigadier General Francisco José Dacoba Cerviño*  
*Director of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*

### ***Presentation of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE) Magazine No. 22***

This 22nd issue of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies Magazine presents eleven articles. These works deal with a wide variety of subjects and, in any case, are of obvious transcendence in a global scenario clearly characterised by uncertainty and competition between the two great powers. A collision course that drags all other actors, State and non-State, into increasing conflict. In this regard, Sara Yildiz Bravo has provided a critical analysis of the challenge facing the EU as it seeks to define a credible and viable model of global presence, beyond its acknowledged role as a trading power. With the focus on the “Strategic Compass” document, the article entitled: “The strategic autonomy of the European Union: reality or utopia?”

Without abandoning the global approach, in “Special Operations Forces in the Era of the Return of Great Power Competition” Adrián López Fleming describes a very specific case of States resorting to the use of forces of this nature to promote their interests in such a tense environment, in line with the realist theory of International Relations.

The incorporation of cyberspace into the possible domains of geopolitical confrontation, without excluding the recourse to the use of force, exponentially increases the options for interaction between the various actors, especially in the so-called grey zone. For this reason, we include in this issue the article by Pablo Cañete Blanco entitled “Use of grey zone strategies in urban environments”, with the emphasis on urban scenarios, which are becoming so significant with the high number of megacities in all continents. The cognitive sphere also finds in cyberspace the best way of approaching the manipulation of societies, which are particularly vulnerable to the avalanche of information and disinformation that circulates in this virtual space. This issue is addressed by Mónica Lupiáñez Lupiáñez in “How to deal with a cognitive attack: Prototype for detecting propaganda and manipulation in psychological operations targeting civilians during a conflict”. Ramón Alarcón

Sánchez, for his part, presents a valuable study, “Disinformation, fake news and post-truth: a comparative study of general trends, research articles in academic journals on security and journalistic headlines”, in which he delves into the meaning of three terms that are not always well-defined, such as disinformation, fake news and post-truth.

We do not abandon the grey zone and new areas of conflict to study the concept of hybrid warfare. This is a relatively new concept, which causes confusion and is not always understood in the same way, depending on who is using it. This is a good reason for Manuel Luna Alcoba to delve into the various interpretations of the concept in his article “Morphological box of the concept of “hybrid warfare””.

The maritime field, more traditional than the aforementioned cyberspace and cognitive fields, is also covered extensively in this issue of the Magazine. In “Spain looks to the North: The Arctic, Naval Operations and Climate Change”, Gonzalo Vázquez Orbaiceta and Augusto Conte de los Ríos discuss the consequences that the progressive melting of this Ocean, in turn a consequence of climate change, has for the region. Most notably, the end of the exceptionality that kept these waters out of major international tensions. Spain, for its part, joins the general tendency of coastal States to demand the extension of their maritime areas of interest, as Celia Fernández Calvo studies in “The extension of the Spanish continental shelf”. In the same vein, Ángel Llorente Fernández de la Reguera looks in depth at “Canary Islands waters and the Law of the Sea”, with an eminently legal approach and a special focus on greater environmental protection. And from the sister country of Peru, Roberto Vizcardo Benavides discusses the major investments in infrastructures that aim to make the country the most important hub in the subcontinent, with the object of facilitating trade between Asia and South America in the best possible way. His article: “The strategic value of hub Peru in South America”.

Finally, Juan Carlos Fernández Cela presents a “Geopolitical analysis in scenarios of financial contagion: the reconstruction of spatial chains through their Legal Entity Identifier (LEI)”, in which he explores the potential of spatial data in the international financial network from a geopolitical perspective. This issue of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies Magazine also includes reviews of the books “Historia naval de la Guerra Civil, 1936-1939” and “Modi’s India: Hindu nationalism and the rise of ethnic democracy”.

We hope that this magazine will be of interest to all those who, in one way or another, pay attention to the Security and Defence of Spain in a global environment as turbulent as the one we find ourselves to have to live with.

*Pablo CAÑETE BLANCO*

*Degree in Journalism. Master's Degree in International and European Union Studies.*

*E-mail: pablo.canetebianco@gmail.com*

*Use of grey zone strategies in urban settings*

*The use of unconventional tactics in the struggle for narrative*

**Abstract**

This article seeks to analyse the intersection between *grey zone* strategies and how urban environments are vulnerable to these strategies by analysing the characteristics and, primarily, the processes that affect conflict and unconventional tactics and urban environments. In this process, the city is redefined as an agent of transformation with its own entity and dynamics, with the emphasis on global cities. The importance of public opinion in our society as a fundamental objective of these non-conventional strategies is also studied, pointing out the specific vulnerabilities they present due to the challenges they pose, from the structuring of the territory to social cohesion. Finally, the aim is to provide possible answers and to highlight shortcomings in this area. Four actors are identified as having a leading role: the armed forces, the private sector, public institutions and citizens.

**Keywords**

Grey zone strategies, urban warfare, global cities, public opinion, influence operations, unconventional strategies, globalisation.

**Cite this article:**

CAÑETE BLANCO, Pablo (2023). "Use of grey zone strategies in urban settings.

The use of unconventional tactics in the struggle for the narrative". Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, no. 22, pp. 375-398.

## I. Introduction: the grey zone and cities

“To fight and conquer in all our battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting”. [...] “The skillful leader subdues the enemy’s troops without any fighting; he captures their cities without laying siege to them; he overthrows their kingdom without lengthy operations in the field. (Tzu, 1910, pág. 8)”.

Recent events in Ukraine show that, far from dying out, conventional armed conflicts are still of central importance, especially for certain actors<sup>1</sup>. Even so, we cannot ignore the proliferation of a previously narrow space between war and peace, a range of activities aimed at achieving military objectives by non-military means: the grey-zone.

Usually aimed at undermining and damaging State defences, these actions employ a variety of actors to violate peace to the limits of what is permissible –especially in terms of international legality– without actually breaching the peace. The impossibility of attributing these actions due to their deliberate ambiguity, transversality and opacity is compounded by the fact that it is difficult to carry out a risk analysis that allows for a response: inaction is often imposed because no other more effective mechanism is available.

One of the most terrifying elements of the grey zone is that it highlights influence as a far more damaging weapon than we would like to acknowledge. In other words, a communicative action, a political/public communication process contaminated by an external actor, can determine the outcome of an electoral process, creating a favourable *status quo* for the instigator for several years. If the actor is detected, the state can disassociate itself from this action and no retaliation could be taken (at least legally). The damage is done and the action goes unpunished.

This strategy is not new, but it does seem clear that its use and effects have increased, especially in recent years. It is not an isolated development and is part of a wider process of outsourcing and privatisation undertaken by many states. (Rondeaux & Sterman, 2019). This makes it easier to disengage from actions and alleviates the negative cost-efficiency balance of traditional conflict, especially since the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and makes the use of “traditional direct belligerence” unprofitable in some cases. (Martín Renedo, 2022).

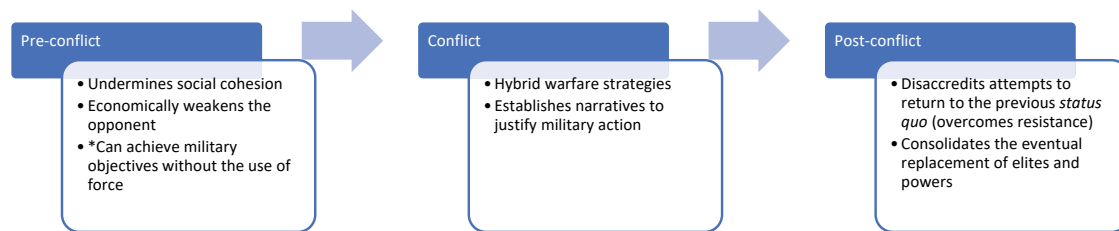
Although the grey zone is not considered to be specific to armed conflict (black zone), it is of key importance in the military domain (Hernández-García, 2022). Military supremacy and defeating rival forces are not enough; the enemy’s will, as Clausewitz pointed out, (1976) must be broken. Otherwise, victory could be evanescent. This is why I believe that, while a cross-cutting analysis of this phenomenon is necessary, it

---

<sup>1</sup> See literature on revisionist actors (Mazarr, 2015; Baqués, 2017; Trump, 2017; Martínez Valera, 2018; Monaghan, 2019; Fernández López, 2021).

should be included in the study of polemology and considered as a military strategy in its own right.

The grey zone is ambivalent and also serves as a post-war tool to cover political objectives not covered by conventional or hybrid warfare and to avoid a return to pre-conflict (Baqués, 2017, pág. 16). Similarly, an effective grey zone manoeuvre could prevent the escalation of a conflict or achieve its objective without the need for it, achieving the perfect victory that Sun Tzu spoke of in *The Art of War*.



In such an interconnected world, a small armed conflict can have an economic/political impact elsewhere on the map (Martín Renedo, 2022, págs. 3-4). This makes its effects potentially incalculable and therefore is preferably avoided in an environment where economic sanctions or access to certain scarce resources, such as rare earths, (Algora Weber, 2021), are vital for economic development. The grey zone allows for small, low-risk investments compared to conventional armed conflict, aiming for surgical results that do not entail unwanted side-effects.

In this context, the grey zone is neither hybrid warfare nor conventional warfare, but neither is it peace. It has military objectives, but no conventional means: It includes new “weapons” and therefore requires new perspectives. It is a tool aimed primarily at attacking what Clausewitz defined as the passionate part of the state, i.e. the people. Armed force, the volitional element of the state, while not falling within grey zone tactics directly, is included in the equation. The availability of conventional means or the threat of their use can serve as a disincentive for a competitor to try to escalate the conflict into the black zone (Baqués, 2017, págs. 12-13,16-17 y 26). But military force is not the only variable, nor is it the most important.

A paradigm shift in terms of the actors in the conflict is worth noting. The hegemony of the state and its regular army is in question. There are currently more than 110 armed conflicts around the world. Most take place in an intra-state scenario, which does not mean that states are no longer involved in the conflict, but that they are directly involved; the increasingly frequent use of proxies or private law subjects (companies) has led to a decrease in inter-state conflicts in recent years.

With this tool, states can deny their direct involvement in war, suffer less political attrition, as well as economic, material, human and diplomatic. So much so that

private military companies have flourished<sup>2</sup> and those that, without being military, obey these purposes indirectly (especially in the “cyber” sphere). The digital space has become especially critical for major cities, their surrounding metropolitan areas and critical infrastructures, all of which are highly dependent on technology and hyper-connected to the internet (Kotila, y otros, 2022).

This virtualisation and privatisation of warfare, often paid for out of reserved funds and carried out by companies and diffuse entities, has given it an opaque logic. Acts of soft warfare aimed at indirectly attacking/defending interests do not usually have a direct consequence on the side of the targets (Pontijas Calderón, 2020; Sánchez Díaz, 2022). In our democratic countries, this means that citizens have no mechanisms to demand accountability: Rulers operate in the shadows.

The Kingdom of Spain has been and is a victim of such attacks, both directly and indirectly. As regards the former, we can cite the case of the Kingdom of Morocco, from its actions on the islet of Perejil to its territorial claims over Ceuta and Melilla (Baqués, Torres, Jordán, & Colom, 2021; Fernández López, 2021; Baqués, Marruecos y la Zona Gris, 2020; Jordán, 2018) or Russia’s interference in the Catalan elections (Díez & Mateo, 2017). As for the indirect attacks, for example, *Catargate* (Tisdall, 2022), also partly the work of the Alaouite kingdom (Público, 2022).

While guidelines on how to deal with hybrid warfare are available (Monaghan, 2019) and there is literature, repositories or military doctrine on the subject, the same is not true of the grey zone and several experts point to the weakness of Western states in dealing with these attacks. Many international institutions are built on the basis of Cold War conflicts and are not prepared for this kind of low-intensity, ambiguous and long-running conflict (Carment & Belo, 2020). Difficulties have also been observed in their definition, which affect their ability to stop them (Green, Hicks, Cooper, Schaus, & Douglas, 2017) and make it impossible to “operationalise” responses. (Hernández-García, 2022).

Thus, with a literature review, this article will attempt to provide guidance in these areas, not only by detecting vulnerabilities, but also their causes. It will also identify the main actors involved and propose avenues to be explored in order to ensure that public authorities and operators concerned respond to these actions.

## 2. The city as a critical element

The territory—a necessary element of the State—is that space where the “encounters” of which Clausewitz spoke are fought out (1976). It is essential to the war effort (it is the theatre of operations) and an undisputed polemological factor (Aznar Fernández-

---

2 In this regard, the Montreux Document is noteworthy, drawn up by the International Committee of the Red Cross (2011) to alert states to the rules of international law applicable to these actors and which is relatively well supported by several states (but not Russia).

Montesinos, 2013). The city, as part of that territory, is today in a critical process of reformulation: it reflects a global paradigm shift in response to the new needs of human settlements (UN-Habitat, 2020), but not only, as we will see below.

Cities currently occupy about 0.5% of the earth's surface, but account for more than 50% of the world's population and, if the London School of Economics study is correct, they will reach 66% by 2050 (Floater & Rode, 2014). The digital era, the era of shorter times and distances, will also be the era of greater concentration of population and knowledge.

This is precisely because activities that require a higher degree of knowledge and technology tend to be agglomerated in large cities, while less specialised activities have been dispersed (Balland, y otros, 2020). On the other hand, we must acknowledge that city growth is not a homogeneous process worldwide. While in some regions the development process is planned by states, in others developing agents are mainly private actors, NGOs and international organisations (Büscher, 2018; UN-Habitat, 2022).

How the urban setting affects the rural environment varies between regions. In Spain, larger provincial capitals have the capacity to attract people to rural areas, avoiding the risk of depopulation in small municipalities, while large parts of the country are uninhabited (Banco de España, 2020). Elsewhere, populations move towards urban areas because of the various attractions that cities offer and with different effects on the territory (Keith, 2013; Selod & Shilpi, 2021; Arconada Ledesma, 2022).

In terms of armed conflict, the urban environment has not become predominant (Elfverson & Höglund, 2021) precisely because the city has always been a strategically important enclave. Urbanity is not a homogeneous phenomenon and therefore cannot be treated uniformly, and risk analyses of the urban environment vary according to the context. What we can establish is that the increasing concentration of people, wealth and knowledge in cities makes them a target of growing strategic value. Throughout this paper we will focus on the implications of grey zone strategies in urban environments, which makes it necessary to first detect vulnerabilities.

### 3. (Re)defining the city and centrality

Not all cities are the same. A small group has generated their own space of supra/alter state interrelation and interdependence: the *global city* (Sassen, 1995; 2019). Saskia Sassen's contributes that we live at a time when the geographical dispersion of economic activities emphasises the growing complexity of management tasks (financial, legal, accounting, etc.). In this scenario, the need arises to outsource companies to take care of these non-productive aspects, which also leads subsidiarily to the concentration of offshored companies, talents and technology clusters.

These specialised service companies operate globally, with networks of subsidiaries and partners around the world, generating transnational urban networks with less

dependence on the surrounding territory and national economies, which would “denationalise” the urban space and isolate it from its context. Collaterally, wage inequality between workers in these specialities and other sectors of activity is increasing. These “marginalised” sectors would partially or totally take on an informal character as a means of subsistence.

This strategic settlement alters to a certain extent the rules of the urban setting, in that it has more important global than local connections<sup>3</sup>; it is a logical consequence of the expansion of capitalism and its needs, and that is also why, from a critical point of view, some argue that it “usurps” the collective space of the logic of the city, privatising it (Álvarez Mora, 2020).

“Cities in global circuits, whether few or many, become part of distinct and often highly specialised inter-city geographies” [...] “This is the new challenge in coordinating, managing and maintaining these increasingly complex, specialised and vast economic circuits, which have made cities strategic. This is perhaps one of the great ironies of our global digital age, which has produced not only massive dispersion but also extreme concentrations of high-level resources in a limited number of places”. (Sassen, 2011, pág. 32)

As noted in the introduction, the relationship between centrality and knowledge is also important in determining relations between space and power. On most occasions, power has the capacity to attract and legitimise knowledge, a fact that has been the case for thousands of years. It is able to define centrality and peripherality, with the understanding that the former externalises values such as reputation, competence and trustworthiness (Gregory, y otros, 2015). Conversely, there are and have been centres of power incapable of or disinterested in attracting knowledge, just as there have been experts isolated and detached from power, either by their own choice, for contradicting the demands of the powerful, for not having the specific attraction or for competing for a place already occupied.

It is worth remembering that, although large metropolises are usually linked to centrality, this centrality is not always found in a single city: there are spaces such as large metropolitan areas –for example, Zurich or Frankfurt– whose cities, while not global, do generate a comparable centrality. These centralities are also trans-territorial and are based on interconnections and transactions, mainly with other global cities (Tapia, 2020). In addition, they establish a geographical influence with adjacent territories. Chica Mejía and Marmolejo Duarte point out that (2014): “*It is fundamentally the distance to the metropolitan centre that is the determining factor in the growth of these economic sectors due to the benefits that agglomeration and geographical proximity have for their performance*”.

3 The Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network of the University of Loughborough (UK) studies precisely this intense interrelation between large cities, including an index every two years in which they are categorised according to their degree of internationalisation (GaWC, 2020).

#### 4. War in the urban environment

Warfare in the city is not comparable to warfare elsewhere, just as hybrid warfare strategies are not comparable. Their peculiarities have been studied not only by regular armies<sup>4</sup> but also by other actors, such as insurgent groups<sup>5</sup> and terrorist organisations<sup>6</sup>. On the one hand are those related to the physical peculiarities of the environment, such as the vertical logic of fighting in towns or the proximity of combatants to civilians, among many aspects<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, the enemy is delocalised, making the traditional centre-of-gravity approach impossible (Martín Renedo, 2022, pág. 6).

Overlapping these two concepts –city and war– armed conflicts have played a major role, especially since 2020, in preventing sustainable urban development in various parts of the world. Parameters such as the health of a city's inhabitants or the homogeneity of neighbourhoods are clearly conditioned by armed conflicts and the population movements they cause (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Likewise, the city has created a series of new vulnerabilities that influence the development of conflict and viable actions in the grey zone. Smart cities thus emerge as a massive implementation of technology in city management in the interests of efficiency, sustainability and governance. The problem posed by the smart city is twofold: information and communication service providers (telephone and power companies) are private corporations whose data management (use of big data) can have dangerous consequences for a citizenry that voluntarily gives up its privacy in favour of greater connectivity (Royall, 2021; UN-Habitat, 2022, p. 268). On the other hand, governments, under the pretext of enabling real time policy and decision-making, will have access to citizens' private data and will be more willing to carry out top-down projects.

In contrast to this centralist model of public-private hybridisation, collaborative approaches to the construction of the city are also emerging. They promote decentralisation in decision-making, the creation of spaces for debate or community production/consumption sites, a kind of opposition in favour of a bottom-up model. Valérie Peugeot (2014) states that, in any case, strengthening local democracy consists

---

4 See, for example, the Urban Warfare Study: City Case Studies Compilation (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 1999) or Reimagining the Characters of Urban Operations for the U.S. Army (Gentile, *et al.*, 2017).

5 As an example, even though more than 50 years have passed, Ernesto "Ché" Guevara's notes (1960) in which he pointed out not only the peculiarities of the environment, but also of the subjects involved in his "Guerrilla War".

6 See Mustafa Setmarián's publication on the Call for Global Islamic Resistance, a work that according to Pérez Ventura (2014) was imitated by a terrorist of a different ideology: Anders Behring Breivik. This can also be seen in publications by the Islamic State at the time (Al-Muhajir, 2015). See also reports of the existence of jihadist training camps (Roggio & Weiss, 2015; Weiss, 2016).

7 There are many lessons learned from various studies and from the doctrine of armies such as the US, for example, in a number of detailed studies (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 1999; Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2013; Gentile, *et al.*, 2017; Government, 2022).

of making sure that there is no 'data master', public or private, but that this wealth of information circulates among all the actors that weave the city.

However, whether we are talking about the *wise city* focused on people (Coll, 2016; Molpeceres Arnáliz, 2017), the *data city* focused on the production, management and control of data (Peugeot, 2014) or the *smart city* (data collection to make a city efficient, with consumption logic), there are two common denominators: the internet of things (IoT) and big data. Both pose a huge vulnerability.

Firstly, the IoT connects everything and therefore everything hackable, from pacemakers to environmental measurement systems. In other words, you can hack into some people's lives, you can close a communication channel and anything else in between. Add to this the recent hyper-extension of artificial intelligences, especially through large language models (LLM), and hacking takes on a new depth: hackers are no longer programming, but chatting with machines (Alonso Cebrián, 2023).

Meanwhile, security breaches that allow the theft of hundreds of thousands of private personal data open up the possibility not only of causing financial losses by obtaining banking credentials, they also allow you to create profiles, locate individuals or follow trends. In capable hands, this would even make it possible to detect vulnerable individuals to indoctrinate or train to commit violent or destabilising acts.

Governments, social networks, apps, or supermarkets (to name a few) are now responsible for an enormous amount of information whose value and scope we are not yet able to imagine. These data are regulated not only at national level, (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 2018) but also in supranational bodies such as the European Union (Diario Oficial de la Unión Europea, 2016).

Most cyber-attacks (56%) find their window of opportunity in the negligence of an agent of the hacked entity (Proofpoint, Inc., 2022). In other words, the figure of the citizen who, in the digital age, does not have sufficient expertise to carry out his or her duties in the information age exists and persists. Cybersecurity training is therefore a critical element. However, there is still no curriculum that integrates such knowledge management in school classrooms, although Spain has made timid attempts to do so (Rodríguez, 2021).

Crime has long shown an upward trend in cybercrime<sup>8</sup>. This could be justified by how easy it is to perpetrate<sup>9</sup> and how difficult to investigate these crimes. Nowadays everything can be done from a mobile terminal and passwords are therefore new locks that protect our assets (including our data) and our very digital identity.

---

<sup>8</sup> In recent years, this type of crime has gone from 5.7% of total recorded crime in Spain in 2017 to 16.1% in 2022 (López Gutiérrez, *et al.*, 2021; Muniesa Tomás, *et al.*, 2022). The clear-up rate is 14.6%.

<sup>9</sup> With just a handful of data, it is possible to open a bank account, obtain a telephone line, create multiple identities on digital platforms such as shopping and sales or social networks, etc. This explains the constant increase in identity theft crimes, which already affect 7% of Spanish internet users in the last 12 months and 4% of Europeans in the same period. Some point out that it is even the fastest growing crime in the world (Portaltic/EP, 2018).

## 5. The battle for the narrative: fighting public opinion

“Another characteristic is the banality of debates where firm positions are taken on non-substantial issues in order to distract people’s attention and push the political arena towards inconsistency. Power groups now have the tools to deal with the great disparities and differences that they themselves helped to generate, creating tension and competition as a confusing struggle to form majorities” (Kaufman, 2018, pág. 69).

We cannot speak of public opinion generally, nor can we understand that the implications and transformations in different societies work in a comparable way. The form of the state, its government, its history, its culture, religion or customs are as important as the media, level of freedom of information or the extent of social network use.

For example, democratic systems tend to have alternations of power at specific moments: elections. This makes the use of influence operations particularly attractive in specific periods and for partisan purposes<sup>10</sup>. In contrast, countries with democratic deficits are subject to other parameters and present different vulnerabilities, including, for example, the phenomenon of youth bulges.

Henrik Urdal (2004) does an interesting job of analysing youth bulge, economic growth and regime type to determine the risk of domestic armed conflict. His study shows how the increase in this mass of young people and economic decline, coupled with regimes in a “grey zone” (neither democratic nor authoritarian), statistically means an increase in the risk of armed conflict. Authoritarian regimes may thus be functioning as a check on violent revolts in a way that is diametrically opposed to how a democracy functions. UN-Habitat points in the same direction (2022, pág. 16) in its annual report for 2022.

We know that Cambridge Analytica created a campaign in Trinidad and Tobago that succeeded in reducing youth participation in elections, as well as using a variety of tactics to influence politics in several dozen states (Escribano, 2019). It was a campaign of negative persuasion, a demobilisation that is now also spreading pandemically through Western democracies, and which is surrendering citizens to myth-telling and banality (Kaufman, 2018, pág. 76).

We should not confuse public opinion with demoscopia or with the opinion of a human group: public opinion does not necessarily have to express the opinion of the majority, as rightly pointed out by Noelle-Neumann, among others (1995). Politicians, media and influencers contribute, to a certain extent, to establishing not only current affairs, but also the mainstream issues. They are all driven by the most diverse interests (electoral, economic, ideological, partisan, etc.) and both their words

---

<sup>10</sup> Insofar as most liberal democratic systems are based around the figure of political parties as the privileged actors of representation.

and their silences influence public debate, the political climate and public opinion. Grey zone operations are a common recourse for some states to achieve their political and influence objectives, including by altering public opinion (Torres Soriano, 2017; Sánchez de Rojas Díaz, 2018; Carlini, 2018; Cohen, *et al.*, 2021).

The role of social networks such as Twitter, Facebook or TikTok in manipulating public opinion is as contested as the role of the media was (and is). We are still not entirely clear about the role of technologies in terms of their persuasiveness, as studies are often small, do not use standardised measures, lack control groups, etc. (Hamari, Koivisto, & Pakkanen, 2014).

This is why opinions on the relationship between the use of social media and political polarisation are divided. Pablo Barberá (2015) argues that they are an element to attenuate polarisation precisely because of their extensive nature. This author differentiates “political polarisation” from “affective polarisation” –how we value those who think differently– to explain the various effects of social media on individuals (Barberá, 2020). Luis Miller, for example, uses this same idea and differentiation (2020) when he points out that the process of polarisation (affective and political in our country) has increased considerably in recent decades and that political identities polarise more than specific public policies.

In any case, we must bear in mind that academic knowledge is one thing, but business, political and corporate knowledge is quite another. In other words, there is undoubtedly a range of information, protocols, projects and intelligence that is not accessible, restricted for use (and abuse). Trade secrecy or that some inventions, incapable of being reverse engineered, are not patented: they are hidden and presupposed.

In some ways much of the digital age know-how is largely to be found in grey literature, which is of limited dissemination and on the fringes of the system. This is similar to what has been happening, not surprisingly, with the operational techniques used by the armed forces, police forces and intelligence services. Means in the grey zone develop, expand and evolve. This is quantitatively measurable through crime rates when looking at cybercrime or citizen information surveys. Qualitatively, we see this in the new objectives they achieve.

## 6. Cities facing grey zone strategies

Cities have specific vulnerabilities, especially global cities and those that are particularly digitally dependent. Potential security breach analyses should not refer exclusively to technological aspects. The social fragmentation of the city and its lack of cohesion have a destabilising capacity of great magnitude. For example, Madrid, capital of the Kingdom of Spain, has a deep divide between the more privileged neighbourhoods and regions and those with fewer economic resources (Uceda Navas & Domínguez Pérez, 2023). This is also reflected in the degree of digitisation of

neighbourhoods, with the most disadvantaged being left out of network integration and isolated from the smart city (Arroyo Menéndez, Barañano Cid, & Uceda Navas, 2022),

making them highly vulnerable to grey zone strategies, which could take advantage of social fragmentation to build reactive identities. In this sense, and although almost a century has passed, Robert Merton's analytical model (1938) is still useful, especially for finding processes of change in social anomie<sup>11</sup>: the lack of synchrony between culturally desired ends and the social means to achieve them. At that time, Merton already argued that the extreme emphasis on the accumulation of wealth as a symbol of fortune –a cultural end– “militated” against the exhaustive control of the means to obtain that good. In a way, the incentivised and induced mechanisms of achievement collide with those signalled by institutions, which invited exaggerated anxieties, hostilities, neuroses and anti-social behaviour in part of society.

This is why vulnerability derived from lack of social cohesion and structuring, added to the growing privatisation to which the city is being subjected, can create –to a certain extent has created– a feeling of dispossession of the city in more or less broad sectors of the population. The possibility of articulating populist narratives that integrate discontent and articulate a disruptive story or narrative could represent decisive instability and serious damage to the city as a whole.

Social networks, the capacity of influence and persuasion of influencers, youtubers, streamers, etc., are a growing vulnerability, especially among young bulges, essentially the most dynamic population masses. It is worth bearing in mind that a certain sense of democratic disconnection is being created precisely in this process of production, use, consumption and distribution of the city and its resources.

Reducing cohesion or even undermining social peace may be a strategic objective of the grey zone in order to lessen the capacities of the main production poles of high-value services. Instability scares the markets, whose investors instantly and automatically take flight only to deposit their funds elsewhere at the speed of light.

## 7. Conclusions

There are currently three main approaches to analysing warfare: the fifth generation theory (5GW), hybrid warfare and grey zone conflict<sup>12</sup>. They all have many

---

11 To what extent are institutionalised media able to deliver the cultural goals? How do individuals perceive and act in these scenarios? Merton proposes 5 models: conformity (accepts both), innovation (accepts the goals but not the means), ritualism (rejects the goals but follows the institutional path), retreatism (accepts neither) and the rebellion (aspires to change and subvert both). The majority of society must adapt, i.e. conform to social goals and the cultural means to achieve them, for its permanence.

12 Nor is there a single understanding of grey zone actions, just as there is no unanimous consensus on the qualitative leap that 5GW brings compared to the previous model.

common elements and their discrepancies stem from the different, sometimes even complementary, approaches they employ. Those advocating the grey zone approach place particular emphasis on the means and ways of waging war and consider new military objectives. This is precisely one of the main limitations of conflict analysis from this perspective.

Although attempts have been made and there are some notions of how to counteract these strategies, there is no viable standardised remedy or protocol. This is because actions and objectives are diverse and respond to logics that are often even contradictory, so the key is to identify and understand the nature of each conflict. This makes it possible to analyse both actions and possible countermeasures. Moreover, as it is a controversial concept in the academic and military world, we do not yet have enough practical studies in this area (Azad, Haider, & Sadiq, 2023, págs. 99-100).

In any case, behind these new models of “traditional Western” war analysis what we find is an overcoming of Clausewitz’s frameworks<sup>13</sup> (Krishnan, 2022). In today’s scenarios, psychological and social issues overflow, traditional military objectives are altered, or a new concept of subtle warfare (one that can be lost without ever having had the sensation of having fought) is included. It is paroxysmal that we do not even know how to identify what, when and to what extent an action is “warlike” (Azad, Haider, & Sadiq, 2023, pág. 84).

The dynamics of conflict, like any human process, are not unrelated to its history, nor do they change overnight. Our ways of reading conflicts and fighting the adversary must also evolve. For example, the video produced by the US Army’s 4th PSYOP Group<sup>14</sup> shows that the ability to influence, but also to persuade, inspire, etc. are weapons in a world that is itself the theatre of operations and in which it is important to be prepared. Action must be taken even in the shadows when necessary.

Grey zone actions are not a possible future, but a present certainty. Cities, especially global ones, but also those that aspire to be global, concentrate knowledge and wealth, but are also vulnerable subjects given their great interconnectedness and interdependence. They are also a prime target from a polemological point of view. A coordinated cyber-attack on one can unleash devastating effects both on its dependent physical periphery and on the other cities with which it has strong connections. Similarly, social and political destabilisation actions can also weaken them.

Although many vulnerable operators and entities are of a private nature, it is also the state that would be damaged in such an attack. This is why it is necessary for cybersecurity and specifically cyberdefence to be programmed, audited and regulated

---

<sup>13</sup> “War is [...] a continuation of political intercourse [...] by other means” (Clausewitz, 1976) and therefore we cannot understand it as separate from its implications and evolution. This is why great military strategists such as Sun Tzu or Clausewitz cannot be transposed mechanically (De Pablo, 2019). Frameworks need constant revision as the explanations they give are not satisfactory.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA4e0NqyYMw>

by states in order to ensure that at least certain standards are met. The role of the armed forces and the security forces and corps in these functions should be reformulated, especially with the aim of providing operational intelligence, with the corresponding protocols and mechanisms for action, to both state institutions and private companies.

It is not a question of militarising the civilian sphere, but of establishing mechanisms to ensure as far as possible that the pillars of state functioning can operate normally. The military logic of some of these actions also conflicts with a criminal character, falling somewhere between Defence and Home Affairs, between the civilian and the military. For, while it is not strictly about defending the national border, it is about safeguarding the integrity and legitimate interests of the state against interference by third parties.

Spain already has a police force that hybridises military and civilian scopes: the Guardia Civil. Several examples can be found in Europe. The proposal that this body should be given new tasks and serve as a connection on this blurred border seems a timely and congruent option. It is also true that the different areas of the state related to information and intelligence must work in a harmonious, coordinated and complementary manner. This includes the National Intelligence Centre, police forces with intelligence functions and universities with intelligence studies.

In contrast to the idea that the armed forces should be primarily a deterrent and secondarily a support to civil society, (Hernández-García, 2022) I believe that the approach should be more proactive. This would naturalise and build a further bridge connecting the military with the rest of the society it serves and protects. It is not merely a question of providing support, rather working hand in hand to have the best security we can give each other.

At this point, one might ask whether the armed forces in democratic countries should be able to orchestrate actions in the grey zone. In any case, Juanjo Crespo argues (2019; 2019b), what we cannot do is be oblivious to the fact that certain changes and movements are taking place. We must adapt. Evidence shows that a battlefield that is abandoned or only defended does not prepare us for present and future conflicts. In other words, the battle must be fought as this is, in a way, the rules of the game.

Special operations forces have emerged as a decisive tool that can integrate and complete the scenarios where grey zone actions take place. By successfully disabling these attacks with these units, the threat can be stopped. Being able to defend oneself in conventional warfare, but not in the grey zone, incentivises the use of these strategies and perpetuates insecurity (Foxx, 2023).

We have also seen that some strategies find their battleground in the minds of civilian individuals. Disinformation campaigns, media intoxication, sectarian use of social networks, affective polarisation in politics, etc., mean they can inoculate social diseases with known effects. Despite the feeling that citizens are immune, accumulated experience shows that defence strategies are not adequate: we are more manipulable than we can admit.

To what extent should citizens be involved in this war? Society cannot externalise its responsibility for the defence of the nation; paying for an army with taxes should not allow us to disconnect from the war; it is the country and not the army that is at war. This is why it is essential to thoroughly review all actors involved in influence in order to minimise the impact of attacks on public opinion: from the instigator to the individual who consumes and assimilates the message.

Creating a critical citizenry is as ambitious a long-term goal as making them aware of their susceptibility to deception, especially when it confirms their way of thinking. Analysing a message, studying the effects of stories or understanding the implications and interests behind any communicative act. These are all pending subjects in our citizenship curriculum.

Bold measures based on consensus and involving affected sectors need to be taken to address the challenge. If there is one thing we have seen about influence operations, it is that you cannot operate without knowing the needs, interests and characteristics of the actors involved. The adversary cannot know us better than we know ourselves. Balancing issues of national security and information with democratic values and transparency will be a tough challenge in our democratic systems.

The ultimate goal is not to create a 3.0 citizenship (because it is not just a technological problem), nor should training be confused with technology. Technology varies and evolves. Nor is it a challenge of cyberspace or a problem of crime or social cohesion. It is all of these at the same time. A multidisciplinary problem that does not allow for partial solutions or sectoral approaches. This is why the solution cannot be based on a top-down approach, nor should it be imposed by public institutions.

The various members of the institutions, who often take advantage of any window of opportunity to profit, should have control and accountability mechanisms to prevent the abuse of these strategies: fake news and hoaxes proliferate because they are effective even when they are crude. However, the risk of interference and censorship is also high when attempting to undertake legislative reforms in this direction<sup>15</sup>. Journalism and political opinion must be free, certainly, but not irresponsible.

We have seen how cities, particularly global cities, present a number of specific vulnerabilities to grey zone strategies and therefore require a specific approach that should be international. Cities attract people and knowledge; they are also increasingly homogenous and accumulate dangerous social problems.

In cities, new social movements have shown a tendency towards violent outbursts without a path, without construction, in the negative (Romero González, 2019). These are movements without ideology, without cohesion, destined for their own destruction

---

<sup>15</sup> The public has shown a more or less unanimous and uncritical acceptance of certain forms of censorship, such as the banning of Russian media (Russia Today and Sputnik) on EU soil. Some journalists have already shown how dangerous the mechanisms of prior censorship are and how it speaks about us, our political elites and our Manichaeic narratives (Soto Ivars, 2022).

(Ramírez Nárdiz, 2013, págs. 291-292). They are like an isolated match that burns violently and is inevitably extinguished without permeating change. See the riots in Paris with the death of a young man in the suburbs as an example.

As can be seen, the changes needed are profound and the time to make them has already passed. Democracy, bureaucracy and constitutional guarantees cannot mean paralysis, nor should they be an excuse for slowness. We are all falling victim to grey zone strategies and must therefore adapt to this new reality:

1. the armed forces must be able to fight in this terrain, and these capabilities are not acquired overnight. As far as operationally possible, this process and adaptation must be subject to public scrutiny. Society cannot ignore the actions of its army, nor should it operate behind its back in tyrannical opacity. Psychological operations and cyber-warfare groups must be operational to match the threat.
2. Citizens must take on their role and also equip themselves with tools against operations that attack public opinion. This mainly involves associations, the tertiary sector and the education sector. But it also holds the individual responsible. The current generation is already digital natives, but this does not mean that they are aware of the scope and risks of this technology. Adapting the educational curriculum and adjusting training to the needs of the workplace should be a priority objective<sup>16</sup>.
3. Businesses, especially those involved in new technologies, must not only use data responsibly, but also in an audited way. They must also guarantee certain standards to protect individuals' information. Collection and processing this data, and the purposes of processing, should also be monitored and scrutinised.
4. Institutions have a lot to do, but they must be the guarantors that the process of digital inclusion does not threaten the status of citizenship. Cities must be competitive and efficient, but they cannot neglect issues such as territorial structuring. Responsible urban development does not mean winning prizes and internationalisation, it must first build citizenship.

## Bibliography

Algora Weber, M. D. (2021). El impacto geopolítico de las tierras raras en el orden mundial. *Economía industrial*(420), 47-58.

Al-Muhajir, A. H. (2015). Advice for the leaders of the Islamic State. *Dabiq*(7), 9-16.

---

<sup>16</sup> We have food handling courses required to work in certain industries; there are also compulsory occupational risk prevention courses. But no training is required to work with a computer, nor is there a curriculum for the degree of social digitalisation.

- Alonso Cebrián, J. M. (2023, Octubre 06). *Los 10 fallos de seguridad más graves de ChatGPT, Bard, Llama y LLM Apps: OWASP Top 10 para LLM Apps*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImUZUCOyKYk&t=1762s>
- Álvarez Mora, A. (2020). Áreas de centralidad y desigualdad socio-espacial en los 'espacios metropolitanos'. *Crítica Urbana*, 4-8.
- Arconada Ledesma, P. (2022, May 29). *Entre el pueblo y la ciudad. Nuevos modos de migrar en África*. Retrieved February 01, 2023, from Atalayar: <https://atalayar.com/content/entre-el-pueblo-y-la-ciudad>
- Arroyo Menéndez, M., Barañano Cid, M., & Uceda Navas, P. (2022). ¿Desigualdades en la smart city? *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 19-46.
- Azad, T. M., Haider, M. W., & Sadiq, M. (2023). Understanding gray zone warfare from multiple perspectives. *World Affairs*, 186(1), 81-104.
- Aznar Fernández-Montesinos, F. (2013, January 02). *Causas polemológicas relacionadas con el territorio*. Retrieved December 12, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2014/DIEEEA01\\_2014\\_CausasPolemologicasTerritorio\\_FAFM.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2014/DIEEEA01_2014_CausasPolemologicasTerritorio_FAFM.pdf)
- Balland, P.-A., Jara-Figueroa, C., Petralia, S. G., Steijn, M. P., Rigby, D. L., & Hidalgo, C. A. (2020). Complex Economic Activities Concentrate in Large Cities. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 248-254.
- Banco de España. (2020). *Informe anual*. Madrid (Spain): Banco de España.
- Baqués, J. (2017, April 04). *Hacia una definición del concepto «Gray Zone» (GZ)*. Retrieved December 19, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_investig/2017/DIEEEINV02-2017\\_Concepto\\_GaryZone\\_JosepBaques.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_investig/2017/DIEEEINV02-2017_Concepto_GaryZone_JosepBaques.pdf)
- Baqués, J. (2020, November 01). *Marruecos y la Zona Gris*. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from Revista Ejércitos: <https://www.revistaejercitos.com/2020/11/01/marruecos-y-la-zona-gris/>
- Baqués, J., Torres, M. R., Jordán, J., & Colom, G. (2021). *Las pretensiones de Marruecos sobre Ceuta y Melilla desde la perspectiva de la zona gris*. Observatorio de Ceuta y Melilla. Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura.
- Barberá, P. (2015, August). *How Social Media Reduces Mass Political Polarization. Evidence from Germany, Spain, and the U.S.* Retrieved from Pablo Barberá Webpage: [http://www.pablobarbera.com/static/barbera\\_polarization\\_APSA.pdf](http://www.pablobarbera.com/static/barbera_polarization_APSA.pdf)
- Barberá, P. (2020). Social Media, Echo Chambers, and Political Polarization. In N. Persily, & J. Tucker, *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field* (pp. 34-55). Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

- Boletín Oficial del Estado. (2018, Diciembre 07). *Ley Orgánica 3/2018, de 5 de diciembre, de Protección de Datos Personales y garantía de los derechos digitales*. Retrieved from sitio web del BOE: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2018-16673>
- Büscher, K. (2018). Urbanisation and the Political Geographies of Violent Struggle for Power and Control: Mining Boomtowns in Eastern Congo. In C. Ammann, & T. (. Förster, *African Cities and the Development Conundrum* (pp. 302-324). Geneva (Switzerland): Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.
- Carlini, A. (2018, July 02). *Las redes sociales como factor de desestabilización* . Retrieved December 13, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2018/DIEEEE079-2018\\_RRSS\\_FactorDesestabilizacion\\_ACarlini.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2018/DIEEEE079-2018_RRSS_FactorDesestabilizacion_ACarlini.pdf)
- Carment, D., & Belo, D. (2020, June 09). *Gray-zone Conflict Management: Theory, Evidence, and Challenges*. Retrieved December 19, 2022, from The Air Force Journal of European, Middle Eastern, and African Affairs: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JEMEEAA/Display/Article/2213954/gray-zone-conflict-management-theory-evidence-and-challenges/>
- Chica Mejía, J. E., & Marmolejo Duarte, C. (2014). El valor de las ciudades como espacios de concentración de la nueva economía basada en el conocimiento: un análisis para la región metropolitana de Barcelona. *Ciudades*(1), 41-63.
- Clausewitz, C. v. (1976). *On War*. Princeton, New Jersey (USA): Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, R. S., Beauchamp-Mustafaga, N., Cheravitch, J., Demus, A., Harold, S. W., Hornung, J. W., . . . Vest, N. (2021). *Combating Foreign Disinformation on Social Media. Study overview and conclusions*. Santa Mónica, California (USA): RAND Corporation.
- Coll, J. M. (2016). *Wise Cities. A new paradigm for urban resilience, sustainability and well-being*. Barcelona (Spain): CIDOB.
- Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja. (2011). *Documento de Montreux*. Brena (Switzerland): Confederación Suiza.
- Crespo, J. (2019, April 10). *Pintando emociones en el mapa de la guerra*. Retrieved February 02, 2023, from EsDiario: <https://www.esdiario.com/valencia/306956195/Pintando-emociones-en-el-mapa-de-la-guerra.html>
- Crespo, J. (2019b, May 07). *Mirando a la guerra del futuro*. Retrieved February 02, 2023, from EsDiario: <https://www.esdiario.com/valencia/75404826/Mirando-a-la-guerra-del-futuro.html>
- De Pablo, M. (2019, May 02). *Guerra de Vietnam: la 'trinidad de Clausewitz' y el pensamiento revolucionario en el conflicto*. Retrieved January 24, 2022 , from GESI: <http://www.seguridadinternacional.es/?q=es/content/guerra-de>

- vietnam-la-%E2%80%98trinidad-de-clausewitz%E2%80%99-y-el-pensamiento-revolucionario-en-el#\_ftn5
- Diario Oficial de la Unión Europea. (2016, Abril 27). *Reglamento (UE) 679/2016*. Retrieved from sitio web del BOE: <https://www.boe.es/doue/2016/119/L00001-00088.pdf>
- Díez, A., & Mateo, J. J. (2017, November 10). *Government confirms intervention of Russian hackers in Catalan crisis*. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from El País: [https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2017/11/10/inenglish/1510329788\\_994258.html](https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2017/11/10/inenglish/1510329788_994258.html)
- Elfverson, E., & Höglund, K. (2021, December). *Are armed conflicts becoming more urban?* Retrieved December 22, 2022, from Cities: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103356>
- Escribano, M. (2019, November 02). *Todo empezó en Trinidad y Tobago: la estrategia para “aumentar la apatía” que ahora usa el PP se probó en ese país en 2010*. Retrieved February 02, 2023, from ElDiario.es: [https://www.eldiario.es/tecnologia/aumentar-casado-cambridge-analytica-trinidad\\_1\\_1279632.html](https://www.eldiario.es/tecnologia/aumentar-casado-cambridge-analytica-trinidad_1_1279632.html)
- Fernández López, C. (2021, February 15). *Zona gris en la frontera sur*. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from Global Strategy: <https://global-strategy.org/zona-gris-en-la-frontera-sur/>
- Floater, G., & Rode, P. (2014). *Cities and the new climate economy: The transformative role of global urban growth*. London: LSECities & London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Foxx, G. R. (2023). Irregular Warfare: Increasing Gray-Zone Deterrence. In G. L. Cantwell, & J. M. Magula, *The Future Role of Strategic Landpower* (pp. 1-16). Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. Retrieved November 29, 2023, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep53249.5>
- GaWC. (2020, August 21). *The World According to GaWC 2020*. Retrieved from Globalization and World Cities: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/geography/gawc/world2020t.html>
- Gentile, G., Johnson, D. E., Saum-Manning, L., Cohen, R. S., Williams, S., Lee, C., . . . Doty III, J. L. (2017). *Reimagining the Character of Urban Operations for the U.S. Army. How the Past Can Inform the Present and Future*. Santa Mónica, California (USA): RAND.
- Government), D. o. (2022). *Urban Opeartions*. Washington, D.C. (USA): Department of the Army (US Government).
- Green, M., Hicks, K., Cooper, Z., Schaus, J., & Douglas, J. (2017). Deterrence Theory and Gray Zone Strategies. In M. Green, K. Hicks, Z. Cooper, J. Schaus, & J. Douglas, *Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia* (pp. 21-50). London (UK): Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

- Gregory, D., Meusburger, P., & Suars, L. (2015). Power, Knowledge, and Space: A Geographical Introduction. In D. Gregory, P. Meusburger, & L. (. Suarsana, *Geographies of Knowledge and Power, Knowledge and Space* (Vol. 7, pp. 1-18). Springer.
- Guevara, E. C. (1960). *La Guerra de Guerrillas*. Tus Buenos Libros.
- Hamari, J., Koivisto, J., & Pakkanen, T. (2014). Do Persuasive Technologies Persuade? - A Review of Empirical Studies. In A. Spagnolli, L. Chittaro, & L. Gamberini (Ed.), *ersuasive Technology. PERSUASIVE 2014. Lecture Notes in Computer Science. 8462*, pp. 118-136. Springer.
- Hernández-García, L. A. (2022, April 07). *The grey zone: a conceptual approach from the Armed Forces*. Retrieved from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2022/DIEEEE034\\_2022\\_LUISHER\\_Zona\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2022/DIEEEE034_2022_LUISHER_Zona_ENG.pdf)
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2013). *Joint Urban Operations*. Washington D.C. (USA): Joint Publication.
- Jordán, J. (2018). Una reinterpretación de la crisis del islote Perejil desde la perspectiva de la amenaza híbrida. *Revista general de marina*, 941-952.
- Kaufman, E. (2018). Redes, medios, violencia y democracia. Escenarios de debilitamiento institucional y desconfianza ciudadana. *Derecom*(25), 59-85.
- Keith, M. (2013, November). *The Great Migration: Urban Aspirations*. Retrieved February 01, 2023, from World Bank: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/17602/842300WPOKeithoBoxo382136BooPUBLICo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Kotila, B., Hodgson, Q. E., Boudreaux, B., Mitch, I., Clark-Ginsberg, A., Lilly, S., . . . Wingfield, T. (2022). *Planning for Significant Cyber Incidents. An Introduction for Decisionmakers*. Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center operated by the RAND Corporation.
- Krishnan, A. (2022). Fifth Generation Warfare, Hybrid Warfare, and Gray Zone Conflict: A Comparison. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 15(4), 14-31.
- López Gutiérrez, J., Sánchez Jiménez, F., Herrera Sánchez, D., Martínez Moreno, F., Rubio García, M., Gil Pérez, M. V., . . . Gómez Martín, M. A. (2021). *Informe sobre la cibercriminalidad en España* . Retrieved from sitio web del Ministerio del Interior del Gobierno de España: [https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/pdf/prensa/balances-e-informes/2021/Informe\\_Cibercriminalidad\\_2021\\_.pdf](https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/pdf/prensa/balances-e-informes/2021/Informe_Cibercriminalidad_2021_.pdf)
- Marine Corps Intelligence Activity. (1999). *Urban Warfare Study: City Case Studies Compilation*. Quantico, Virginia (USA): Urban Warfare Study: City Case Studies Compilation.

- Martín Renedo, S. (2022, October 25). *Las zonas grises sobre el terreno: ¿el fin de las guerras convencionales?* Retrieved December 16, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2022/DIEEEO93\\_2022\\_SAUMAR\\_Zonas.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2022/DIEEEO93_2022_SAUMAR_Zonas.pdf)
- Martínez Valera, G. (2018, November 05). *Actores no estatales en Zona Gris. Las organizaciones de carácter violento y crimen organizado transnacional.* Retrieved December 19, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_investig/2018/DIEEINV25-2018ZonaGris.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_investig/2018/DIEEINV25-2018ZonaGris.pdf)
- Mazarr, M. J. (2015, December 22). *Struggle in the gray zone and world order.* Retrieved December 19, 2022, from War on the Rocks: <https://warontherocks.com/2015/12/struggle-in-the-gray-zone-and-world-order/>
- Mela, A. (2014, December 14). *Urban public space between fragmentation, control and conflict.* Retrieved December 21, 2022, from City, Territory and Architecture: <https://cityterritoryarchitecture.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40410-014-0015-0>
- Merton, R. K. (1938, Oct. ). Social Structure and Anomie. (A. S. Association, Ed.) *American Sociological Review*, 3(5), 672-682.
- Miller, L. (2020, October 15). *Polarización en España: más divididos por ideología e identidad que por políticas públicas.* Retrieved from Web of Do Better, by Esade: <https://dobetter.esade.edu/es/polarizacion-espana>
- Molpeceres Arnáiz, S. (2017). Smart City vs. Wise City. En torno a la ciudad y las nuevas tecnologías: el caso de Barcelona. *Cultura, lenguaje y representación*, XVII, 139-155.
- Monaghan, S. (. (2019). *Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Countering Hybrid Warfare.* Multinational Capability Development Campaign.
- Morales, A. J., Dong, X., Bar-Yam, Y., & Pentland, A. ' . (2019, October 23). *Segregation and polarization in urban areas.* Retrieved December 21, 2022, from Royal Society Open Science: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.190573>
- Muniesa Tomás, P., Herrera Sánchez, D., Guerrero Olmos, J., Martínez Moreno, F., Rubio García, M., Fil Pérez, V., . . . Gómez Martín, M. Á. (2022). *Informe sobre la cibercriminalidad en España.* Retrieved from sitio web del Ministerio del Interior del Gobierno de España: <https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/.galleries/galeria-de-prensa/documentos-y-multimedia/balances-e-informes/2022/Informe-Cibercriminalidad-2022.pdf>
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1995). *La espiral del silencio. Opinión pública: nuestra piel social.* (J. Ruiz Calderón, Trans.) Barcelona (Spain): Ediciones Paidós Ibérica S.A.
- Pérez Ventura, Ó. (2014, March 24). *Mustafá Setmarián, El ideólogo de la yihad moderna.* Retrieved December 12, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos:

- [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_marco/2014/DIEEEM05-2014\\_Mustafa\\_Setmarian\\_IdeologoYihadModerna\\_OPVentura.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2014/DIEEEM05-2014_Mustafa_Setmarian_IdeologoYihadModerna_OPVentura.pdf)
- Peugeot, V. (2014). ¿Colaborativa o inteligente? La ciudad entre dos imaginarios. *Revista de Estudios Urbanos y Ciencias Sociales*, 6(2), 63-81.
- Pontijas Calderón, J. L. (2020, March 30). *Tendencias en la guerra por delegación (proxy warfare)*. Retrieved December 14, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2020/DIEEEA09\\_2020JOSPOON\\_proxy.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2020/DIEEEA09_2020JOSPOON_proxy.pdf)
- Portaltic/EP. (2018, Enero 02). *España es el país de la Unión Europea con más víctimas de robo de identidad en el último año, según el Eurostat*. Retrieved from sitio web de EuropaPress: <https://www.europapress.es/portaltic/ciberseguridad/noticia-espana-pais-union-europea-mas-victimas-robo-identidad-ultimo-ano-eurostat-20180102092136.html>
- Proofpoint, Inc. (2022, Enero 25). *Global Cybersecurity Study: Insider Threats Cost Organizations \$15.4 Million Annually, up 34 Percent from 2020*. Retrieved from sitio web de Globe News Wire: <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2022/01/25/2372208/35374/en/Global-Cybersecurity-Study-Insider-Threats-Cost-Organizations-15-4-Million-Annually-up-34-Percent-from-2020.html#:~:text=Organizations%20impacted%20by%20insider%20threats,percent%20in%>
- Público. (2022, December 14). *Marruecos, implicado en el ‘Catargate’, la trama de corrupción que sacude el Parlamento Europeo*. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from Público: <https://www.publico.es/internacional/marruecos-implicado-catargate-trama-corrupcion-sacude-parlamento-europeo.html>
- Ramírez Nárdiz, A. (2013). Los retos de la democracia participativa como complemento de la democracia representativa. *Estudios de Deusto*, 271-294.
- Rodríguez, P. (2021, Abril 27). *Una asignatura de ciberseguridad en colegios e institutos: Congreso y Senado lo piden al Gobierno y varios expertos nos explican cómo debería ser*. Retrieved from sitio web de Xataka: <https://www.xataka.com/pro/asignatura-ciberseguridad-colegios-e-institutos-congreso-senado-piden-al-gobierno-varios-expertos-nos-explican-como-deberia-ser>
- Roggio, B., & Weiss, C. (2015, October 29). *Jihadists in Syria train for urban warfare*. Retrieved December 14, 2022, from Long War Journal: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/10/jihadists-in-syria-train-for-urban-warfare.php>
- Romero González, J. (2019). Sobre las geografías del malestar en Europa. *Papeles de relaciones ecosociales y cambio global*, 63-74.

- Rondeaux, C., & Sterman, D. (2019). *Twenty-first Century Proxy Warfare. Confronting Strategic Innovation in a Multipolar World Since the 2011 NATO Intervention*. Washington D.C. (USA): New America.
- Royall, E. (2021). *Assessing the Digital Divide. Understanding internet connectivity and digital literacy in cities and communities*. Retrieved February 01, 2023, from UN-HABITAT: [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/11/assessing\\_the\\_digital\\_divide.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/11/assessing_the_digital_divide.pdf)
- Sánchez de Rojas Díaz, E. (2018, May 16). *El “soft power” en las guerras de información: I. Las operaciones de influencia de grandes potencias*. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2018/DIEEEA18-2018\\_SoftWare\\_GuerraInformacion\\_ESRD.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2018/DIEEEA18-2018_SoftWare_GuerraInformacion_ESRD.pdf)
- Sánchez Díaz, A. (2022, Juny 27). *La guerra privatizada: ¿futuro de la competición entre grandes potencias?* Retrieved December 14, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2022/DIEEEO63\\_2022\\_ALESAN\\_Guerra.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2022/DIEEEO63_2022_ALESAN_Guerra.pdf)
- Sassen, S. (1995). La ciudad global: Una introducción al concepto y su historia. *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 11(2), 27-43.
- Sassen, S. (2011). *Ciudad y globalización*. Quito (Ecuador): Olacchi.
- Sassen, S. (2019, May 12). Así ha transformado el capitalismo el perfil de las ciudades. *El País*. Retrieved December 06, 2022, from [https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/05/06/eps/1557164243\\_220436.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/05/06/eps/1557164243_220436.html)
- Selod, H., & Shilpi, F. (2021, May). *Rural-Urban Migration in Developing Countries. Lessons from the Literature*. Retrieved February 01, 2023, from World Bank: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/35610/Rural-Urban-Migration-in-Developing-Countries-Lessons-from-the-Literature.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Soto Ivars, J. (2022, March 01). *Censurar RT y Sputnik nos desacredita*. Retrieved February 02, 2023, from El Confidencial: [https://www.elconfidencial.com/cultura/2022-03-01/censura-russia-today-rt-sputnik-democracia\\_3383260/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/cultura/2022-03-01/censura-russia-today-rt-sputnik-democracia_3383260/)
- Tapia, M. (2020). Metrópolis, ¿un único modelo de habitar? *Crítica Urbana*, 3.
- Tisdall, S. (2022, December 18). *Good news for the world’s autocrats – EU sleaze is a huge own goal for democracy*. Retrieved January 09, 2022, from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/18/good-news-for-the-worlds-autocrats-eu-sleaze-is-a-huge-own-goal-for-democracy>
- Torres Soriano, M. R. (2017, Juny 19). *Hackeando la democracia: operaciones de influencia en el ciberespacio*. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2017/DIEEEO66-2017\\_Hackeando\\_democracia\\_MRTorres.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2017/DIEEEO66-2017_Hackeando_democracia_MRTorres.pdf)

- Trump, D. J. (2017, December). *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Retrieved December 19, 2022, from National Security Strategy Archive: <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017.pdf>
- Tzu, S. (1910). *The Art of War*. (M. Lionel Giles, Trans.) Leicester (UK): Allandale Online Publishing. Retrieved January 09, 2022, from [https://sites.ualberta.ca/~enoch/Readings/The\\_Art\\_Of\\_War.pdf](https://sites.ualberta.ca/~enoch/Readings/The_Art_Of_War.pdf)
- Uceda Navas, P., & Domínguez Pérez, M. (2023). Rebalancing Urban Spaces. The Right to the City and Citizen Participation in Vulnerable Neighbourhoods in Madrid. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 117-134.
- UN-Habitat. (2020). *What is a city?* Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).
- UN-Habitat. (2022). *Envisaging the Future of Cities*. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).
- UN-Habitat. (2022). *Responding to Displacement in Urban Recovery Approaches*. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).
- Urdal, H. (2004). The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950-2000. *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Series*(14).
- Weiss, C. (2016, April 20). *Uzbek al Qaeda battalion trains 'commandos' in Aleppo*. Retrieved December 14, 2022, from Long War Journal: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/04/uzbek-al-qaeda-battalion-trains-commandos-in-aleppo.php>

---

*Article received: 11 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---

*Sara YILDIZ BRAVO*

*Pre-doctoral researcher at the Department of International Public Law and International Relations (UNED). Doctoral candidate in the UNED EU Doctoral Programme.*

*E-mail: syildizi@alumno.uned.es*

*Strategic autonomy of the European Union: reality or utopia? A critical analysis of its main dimensions and obstacles<sup>I</sup>*

**Abstract**

The European Union is facing an unstable geopolitical context marked by new global challenges and threats that underline the need to provide it with strategic autonomy. To this end, an action plan called “Strategic Compass” has been adopted, which aims to increase Europe’s strategic autonomy in the field of security and defence. However, this work is being hampered politically, industrially and operationally, mainly due to the lack of a strong concept of strategic autonomy, the difficulty of joint strategic planning, the impossibility of aligning strategic cultures in the short to medium term, and the existence of different needs and asymmetric resources. The result is a gap between expectations and reality that may undermine the EU’s ability to emerge as a strong geopolitical actor on the international stage.

---

<sup>I</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who have contributed significantly to the quality of this article.

**Keywords**

Strategic compass, European security and defence, political dimension, operational dimension, industrial dimension.

**Cite this article:**

YILDIZ BRAVO, Sara (2023). “Strategic autonomy of the European Union: reality or utopia? A critical analysis of its main dimensions and obstacles”. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. 399-421.

## 1. Introduction

One of the big questions facing the EU is how it intends to deal with the current geopolitical scenario and whether the new strategy it adopts will position it favourably on the international stage. Existing literature on the subject tends to focus on what it should be rather than what it actually is. This creates a large gap between expectations and reality that poses a serious danger to Europe's geopolitical positioning. There is a risk of failure that could have serious consequences for the EU's capacity development, making it appear less useful as a partner on the international stage.

Strategic autonomy is currently in the midst of a great debate marked by a confused use of the term at the political, diplomatic and civic level. The most recurrent slogan is: the European Union needs greater strategic autonomy, but it doesn't ask, what does strategic autonomy really mean? Is it possible in the current European framework, does it limit or complement state sovereignty, what is the appropriate level of strategic autonomy and how much leeway are individual member states willing to give?

To provide clarity, a solid concept must be formulated in line with the current geopolitical context. This arduous task is hampered by a number of structural drawbacks that occur in various strategic autonomy dimensions and that are difficult to overcome in the medium to long term. This study therefore aims to clarify and simplify the concept by analysing its different domains: the political, operational and industrial dimensions. The aim is to detect the origin of each obstacle that impedes true strategic autonomy and to understand the interrelationships implicit in each of them.

## 2. Strategic autonomy as an abstract and undefined concept

In the current unstable geopolitical context where the law is losing effectiveness due to violations of the structural principles of international law (De Castro, 2023), and power dynamics are a rising global trend, adopting a strategy in favour of achieving strategic autonomy is becoming key to European survival on the current international stage. To achieve it, a solid concept of European strategic autonomy must be defined as a fundamental basis for gaining greater relative power on the international stage. Its great breadth, lack of definition, diversity of interpretations and the existence of evasive policies make this task difficult. The lack of a definition of the concept is mainly due to the different visions of the different member states regarding strategic autonomy; this has resulted in escalating tensions within the organisation itself, leading to suspicions that it is impossible to conceptualise unanimously. This idea is expressed in the Issue Paper of 5 February 2021 of the Council of the European Union entitled "*Strategic Autonomy, Strategic Choices*" (Council of the European Union, 2021), where, after analysing it as an impossibility, it proposes reaching a "common understanding tied to the *international* context" as an alternative to defining a concept.

Another factor that is an obstacle to obtaining a concept of strategic autonomy is the difficulty of carrying out joint planning between the Member States, which leads to the appearance of a “strategic cacophony” (Fojón, 2021). This occurs due to a lack of shared needs and asymmetrical resources. Accordingly, the concept of strategic autonomy will depend on the interests and threats faced by each state, and on the different relationships between Member States and other geostrategic actors (Bartels et al., 2017), without forgetting that the concept of strategic autonomy would force the concept of sovereignty of each country to be redefined. This is a major obstacle to overcome because sovereignty is not a sliding scale: either you have it or you don't (Rudolf, 2022).

To find a solution to this problem, the European Council document of 21 March 2022, entitled “[A] Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, defends its values and interests and contributes to international peace and security”, was adopted at a European level. However, it should be stressed that strategic autonomy is not strictly a creation of the European Union (Suárez et al., 2017), and originally dates back to the drafting of the 1994 French Defence White Paper (Mauro, 2018). In line with this, France is currently the Member State most committed to developing European strategic autonomy. This raises the suspicion that this initiative has a multiplier effect and added value for the French nation and could be the reason why the Germans are reticent<sup>2</sup> about the initiative.

### 3. Capacity for action as an indispensable feature

The capacity to act plays an essential role in confirming the existence of true strategic autonomy. This quality is what makes international subjects relevant actors in the international sphere, defined as those who act and possess the effective capacities to influence international relations in a significant way (Calduch, 1991: 2-7). Furthermore, the status of international actor is not static, an actor may lose or acquire it, given that it is subject to how international events evolve (Marrero, 2012). It must not be a one-off capacity, but one that lasts over time, demonstrating a certain continuity<sup>3</sup>, as García expresses, “no actor is eternal” (1992: 29). The idea of dynamism around actor status has been and is present in the historical evolution of Europe. It should be recalled that, after the Balkans and the resurgence of the Kosovo conflict, the credibility of European action was in decline. In response to this, and due to a lack of political will, the Franco-British Summit in Saint Malo was adopted in 1998, and what was agreed was transferred to the Cologne European Council in 1999. This brought about greater

---

2 Germany has been reluctant to conceptualise the notion of strategic autonomy; this is borne out by a lack of definition in its Defence Books, with the exception of its 2016 Defence Book, where it only covers some of its dimensions. This issue was already addressed by France in its 1994 Defence White Paper.

3 Initially, the international players in the nuclear arms race were the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. But, as international relations progressed, other actors such as Israel, Iraq and Pakistan also joined (Marrero, 2012).

proximity between positions, and began the process of building the ESDP (Corio, 2003), led to the emergence of new institutional structures and started the process of capacity building outside treaties (García, 2019a: 63). This led to the declaration of operability (2003) and the deployment of European missions, within a short period of time (Martín, 2014). As a result, in a short period of time, the EU became an actor with a certain but modest capacity to act (Díez and Puig, 2019). On the international stage, the great dissociation between the political, military and economic spheres is visible in the existence of two strands: the intergovernmental strand, where common foreign and security policy and foreign security and defence policy are integrated, and the communitarised strand. As a result, foreign, security and defence policy is dominated by institutions that represent the direct interests of the Member States: the Council of the Union and the European Council, which must be unanimous, except in exceptional cases, to adopt decisions.

The European Union is establishing itself as an international actor in the civil sphere, seeking to play an important role in the protection of democracy and the welfare state. However, there is a different picture in the field of security and defence, because the CSDP is integrated into the intergovernmental side, becoming a fundamental element of each country's sovereignty (Mangas, 2004). To this effect, Felix Artega states: "The definition of European strategic autonomy forces us to redefine the concept of the sovereignty of each country". Sovereignty is made up of several fundamental elements: borders, currency, foreign policy and defence (Mangas, 2004: 142-143). These elements, with the exception of defence, have been gradually communitised, leading to greater reluctance to cede competences in this area. This is visible at the European institutional level, given that, in security and defence matters, there is a quasi-absolute predominance of the Council of the European Union and the European Council through a system of unanimous decision-making, although constructive abstention is allowed. Preventing the transfer of competences has been present throughout the evolution of Europe.

This affection for sovereignty and state interests means that the task of promoting true strategic autonomy must fall to the Member States themselves (Pontijas, 2019: 10-15). As a result, the European Union is made up of distinct and equidistant security ecosystems. This raises the question of how the EU is to be configured as a "strong and coherent political actor", while recognising the specific character of security and defence policies in specific EU Member States, especially in the absence of a centralised authority that can regulate asymmetry between the priorities and threats of different Member States. For all of the above reasons, in the field of security and defence, the European Union is often described as a political subject that is difficult to classify (Suárez et al., 2017).

In order to confirm that it really has the capacity to act in the field of security and defence, this status should first be recognised by Europeans themselves. In other words, the EU must be identified as a global actor, thereby developing what the Strategic Compass calls a "common security and defence culture". And the other strategic actors must also recognise its status. Internal and external recognition is therefore

necessary, especially when projecting force abroad is the key to achieving European and international security.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine shows how the lack of a real European deterrent undermines Europe's ability to act on the international stage. The EU has never shown a strong response, appearing to be a weak security and defence organisation in the international sphere. Vladimir Putin's disquiet over Sweden and Finland's possible NATO membership exemplifies the Russian leader's concerns, threatening "serious military and political repercussions". Russia is not perturbed by Sweden's and Finland's membership of the European Union. This is a matter of concern given that both the Washington Treaty, which established NATO, and the Treaty on European Union, articulate a mutual defence clause whereby if one member of the former organisations suffers armed aggression on its territory the others must assist it. The difference between the two clauses lies in the intensity of the aid, with the aid referred to in the EU Treaty being more forceful. The fifth article of the Washington Treaty states that, in the event of an armed attack, the parties shall assist the party that has been subject to an armed attack "by such measures as it deems necessary", while Article 72 (paragraph 7) of the TUE states that they shall assist "by all the means in their power". This suggests the lack of a deterrent in the mutual protection clause in the TEU, given that Sweden and Finland were already under the umbrella of EMU protection. It is important to point out that NATO and the EU are different organisations in nature, objectives, commitments and evolution (Rodríguez, 2019: 224). NATO is a partnership based on military cooperation between European and North American countries with the aim of ensuring collective security and mutual defence. Meanwhile, the EU is an economic and political association composed of Member States with the aim of achieving a greater degree of economic, social and political integration and cooperation (Macorra, 2014).

#### **4. Dimensions of strategic autonomy in the field of security and defence.**

Strategic autonomy in the field of security and defence, as described above, is divided into three fundamental dimensions: political, operational and industrial. This division, agreed in the academic world and first set out in the 2013 *French White Paper on Defence and National Security* (Arteaga, 2016), aims to shed light on the lack of a definition of the concept. Relationships are established between the dimensions that may in practice make it impossible to achieve strategic autonomy. The absence of any one of them would be tantamount to asserting a lack of strategic autonomy.

There should be no hierarchy or supremacy between the three dimensions; they must be coordinated, concurrent and proportional. This is a practical problem faced by the European Union because, depending on the actor and the moment, some dimensions take precedence over others, making it difficult to reach a common concept of strategic autonomy (Arteaga et al., 2007). The 2003 Headline Goal (Battlegroups), for example, prioritised operational autonomy over political and industrial autonomy.

#### 4.1. Political dimension

The political dimension encompasses strategic planning, defined as “the logical framework in which the actions of states related to the use of all means of national potential or that of a coalition of states are integrated” (Arteaga et al., 2007: 20). It is a path that ensures the availability of resources and establishes clear policy instructions. This means that through planning, objectives and capacities are established (Quesada, 2022).

Strategy is therefore part of strategic planning and is therefore integrated into the political dimension of strategic autonomy in terms of defence. Strategy could simply be defined as “the art of planning and directing with the aim of achieving a specific end” (Real Academia Española, 2021). However, this element must necessarily be accompanied by a strategic culture, otherwise the overarching goal set out in the Strategic Compass - to achieve a common security and defence culture - would be unattainable. Achieving this objective is held back by the different visions within the EU: Atlanticist and Europeanist, multilateralist and sovereigntist, pro-force and pro-prevention (Iglesias et al., 2020) and by the differences between the strategies of the Member States. For example, a comparison between the French Defence and National Security White Paper and the German Defence White Paper shows how their strategies diverge. While France is committed to a strategy based on nuclear deterrence and external projection (Arteaga et al., 2007), the German strategy proposes closer relations with multilateral structures. Similarly, it should be recalled that European strategic autonomy before Russian aggression was geared towards greater independence in terms of security and defence with the transatlantic link. At this point it is important to recall the impact of the Trump administration’s position in multilateral fora on defence matters, in which the transatlantic link was challenged, mainly on the basis of the MS’s failure to meet their commitments to defence funding (Rodríguez, 2022). At the same time, the US’s shift in strategic focus to the Indo-Pacific has resulted in different responses and positions from the MS, generating the image of an “*uncoordinated Western world*” (238). The political dimension is therefore affected by the effects of cohesion and the EU’s capacity to articulate unified planning and its projection at an international level.

In this vein, Alan Macmillan argues that “security and defence decisions are not an abstract construct but are influenced by identity and cultural elements” (Macmillan, 1995: 34). This argument highlights the difficulty of arriving at a common concept of strategic autonomy, at least in the short term, as there needs to be an alignment between the strategic cultures of the different Member States. Rodney argues that strategic culture is influenced by several elements: geographical, historical-cultural and social (2006), which are difficult to align in a short period of time. For example, there is a different approach to the use of military coercive power (Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional, 2004). This largely conditions the participation of MS in crisis management operations where there is suspicion about the need to use force.

To this effect, the Strategic Compass expresses this concern by referring to “the need to get closer to a common strategic culture” and can be considered a step forward in achieving the future convergence of the Member States, but it does not have the elements needed to be classified as a true strategy in the field of security and defence. Firstly, as an organisation made up of different security ecosystems, it should present an analysis of the risks, interests and objectives of the 27 MS. Secondly, it sets out a series of values, but does not define or rank them, and this has implications for capacity building. Thirdly, it does not mention how to deal with the specific threats it lists, nor does it explicitly state when the use of military means would be lawful, nor does it define which threats are intolerable and what are the limits to the use of force, among other aspects.

It is therefore a strategic reflection but not a strategy in itself. This, together with a security and defence policy that does not coordinate the common action of the MS and lacks military doctrine, undermines their effective capacity for action. Added to this is the risk of trying to make progress through capabilities without having a clear strategy and, as a result, subordinating strategic actions to the existence of available capabilities and not vice versa.

An additional problem is the question of who would take the lead. All indications are that leadership should be by the more powerful Member States, considering their public expenditure on defence: France and Germany. However, a shared leadership between the two powers would cause a great deal of friction and tension, and could cause further internal fracture.

The elements that currently hinder European strategic planning in the field of security and defence are mainly a lack of: strategic anticipation, reactivity, political leadership, political willingness to act (Habermas, 1970), and the absence of a European military doctrine (Fatjó et al., 2005: 46-48), plus strategic shortcomings due to the lack of a permanent European headquarters. These final shortcomings lead to two possible scenarios: either the Berlin+ mechanism, with General Tod D. Wolters of the United States Air Force, in his capacity as Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) exercising strategic and operational planning, or the EU could adopt a “framework nation” solution (Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, 2010), i.e. a MS could provide its national headquarters for operations adopted at the European level. Seeds of hope for a future permanent headquarters are currently pinned on the Operations Centre (OPCEN), dubbed the “embryo of European defence integration”. However, it differs from a strategic headquarters because it is being created with a supranational vocation and not inter-state cooperation (Regalado, 2013). Once again there is disagreement over its creation. For example, France favours its rapid implementation, while Germany has pointed out that it duplicates NATO assets, a line followed by non-EU states such as the United Kingdom (Meiker and Brooks, 2021: 29-30).

The lack of strategic foresight is primarily due to the fact that the European Union is an organisation based on the voluntary association of Member States. As a result, and in the absence of centralisation in the field of security and defence, strategic planning is difficult because of the differences between Member States in this area and a lack of

planning continuity. Both modalities have been used in a number of EU operations. For example, the EUFOR Althea 2004 mission used the Berlin+ mechanism, while Operation Artemis was largely conducted under French strategic planning with French troops. The lack of a permanent European operational headquarters subordinates EU action to the will of the Member States, as occurred with the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1999, where Germany's unwillingness to participate delayed the planning and launching of the mission. Twenty-two years have passed since then and the European Union has still not been provided with this resource.

Furthermore, the lack of reactivity is due to the need for unanimity in security and defence decision-making, as stipulated in the European treaties. The case is that most of the objectives set out in the CSDP are current needs and cannot be subordinated to results over the course of a few years.

#### *4.2. Industrial dimension*

The industrial dimension is a strategically important sector focused on the supply of goods and services for defence. Therefore, it is the equipment side. The goal is to acquire strategic industrial autonomy, defined as the ability of Member States to produce necessary defence systems and not be dependent on other international actors. The EU shows greater concern over areas related to foreign technologies and imports (Martí, 2018), particularly in the area of armaments. This dimension, as Javier Solana states, is fundamental, as capabilities are subordinate to the very existence of resources (Esteban et al., 2021).

To ensure the industrial dimension develops, it is necessary to strengthen investment and cooperation between the Member States, reinforced by the possibility of joint procurement of equipment. This is because the gaps in the industrial field need to be filled jointly by the different MS. To guarantee the supply of goods and services, innovation and research must be able to adapt equipment in line with developments.

The European defence market is cross-cutting and oversized, and there is frequent duplication due to a lack of cooperation, especially in the area of armaments. MS prefer to rely on domestic supply (González and Fonfría, 2019) or from foreign companies or international suppliers rather than supplying through another MS.

Another obstacle to achieving industrial autonomy in security and defence can be seen by analysing the equipment acquisitions of the main European military powers, which follow two recurrent patterns of behaviour: either the Member States opt for domestic supply or they mostly acquire equipment through the United States, excluding infantry equipment.

Current examples of this include France and Germany's acquisition of US-made C-130J aircraft instead of the European-made A400M, or the acquisition of the US-produced ESSM missile by several Member States (Martí, 2018), or Germany's procurement of US F-35 fighter jets instead of acquiring the Eurofighter in March

2022 (Valero, 2022). The possible sale of the electromagnetic spacecraft launch system (EMALS) to France is currently under discussion (Navarro, 2022).

Another difficulty is the lack of investment. In this regard, the European Defence Agency, in the paper *Defence Data 2019-2020*, argues: “defence investment and defence equipment procurement, spending on collaborative projects does not seem to be a priority for most MS”, given that only 11% of equipment procurement was achieved within the European framework” (European Defence Agency, 2021).

To solve this problem, as expressed in the Strategic Compass, the EU must strengthen its industrial and technological base to achieve greater efficiency and cooperation so that “European industry becomes the norm” while innovating to gain greater resilience in this area (Council of the European Union, 2022). Achieving these goals requires boosting defence innovation, as stated at the annual conference of the European Defence Agency (Gomes et al., 2021). There are a number of problems:

1. According to defence data provided by the EDA, Member States spend almost 83% of defence expenditure on equipment procurement, compared to approximately 17% on research and development.
2. Another problem highlighted by Csernatonni is the lack of public debate on this issue (2021), and the lack of technology and industrial integration (Oliveira and Küsters, 2019). This concern was expressed by the European Parliament which stated: “security and defence research was being conducted in the service of industry and not citizens”<sup>4</sup> (2012). In other words, problems related to democratic governance could arise. This would result in a failure to acquire a common security and defence culture (Marsal, 2016), in the absence of public debate.
3. Problems related to democracy and citizen transparency could arise from the lack of public supervision of European security and defence research (Csernatonni, 2021).
4. Controversy over which areas to invest in and research, based on the disparate security and defence needs of each MS. For example, different battle tank requirements: France needs lighter tanks for intervening in North Africa as this favours mobility while, in contrast, Germany advocates the production of heavy tanks because its forces are destined for continental warfare in Europe (Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 2020). In the air sector, the same pattern was repeated between the major powers when producing the Tiger attack helicopter; production had to be adapted to the different needs of the French and Germans, producing two very equidistant versions (Pulido, 2020).

To achieve strategic autonomy, industrial capacities must be developed and, to this end, industrial collaboration and cooperation is essential to overcome current

---

<sup>4</sup> Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (FP7). (2012, 28 November). Available at: <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/FP7/es>. [Accessed: 12/05/2023].

protectionism. These areas include the A400M and Eurofighter projects. However, “this cooperation is a double-edged sword, given that it generates a long-term monopoly” (González and Fonfría, 2019) through the use of consortia where each MS, depending on its contribution, will hold a certain percentage and power.

Although there are serious problems in the European defence market, the European Union has implemented initiatives to alleviate them. First, the Organisation for Joint Armaments Cooperation (OCCAR) was created at the European level, the European Defence Agency was created in 2004, the possibility of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was introduced (García, 2019b), the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP) in 2017, the European Defence Fund and the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DEFIS) were created in 2021 (Arteaga and Fojón, 2007), as well as numerous European Union research and technological development framework programmes (FP1 to FP9).

### 4.3. Operational dimension

The operational dimension refers to the capacity for autonomous action closely linked to military strategic planning and capability development procedures in order to achieve operational autonomy (Pachucki, 2020). It is important to point out that the idea of defence associated with capabilities is not a new idea, but was already present in the Helsinki objectives in 1999, before the European Union articulated a foreign policy (González, 2003), through the provision of civilian and political instruments aimed at generating and evaluating capabilities (Arteaga, 2010). This need was made visible even earlier, for example, in the Gulf Crisis in 1991 (Attinà, 1991) and the African Great Lakes Crisis in 1998 (Guerrero, 2007). Specifically, following the Franco-British Saint Malo Declaration in 1998, endorsed by the Cologne European Council in 1999 (Arteaga, 2010), the process of building the European Security and Defence Policy began and, for the first time, a process of generating new capabilities for international crisis management at the service of the European Union was set in motion (García, 2019a). Subsequently, and in response to the capabilities objective defined at the 1999 Helsinki European Council (Casajuana, 2004), this need was reflected in the 2003 Security and Defence Strategy<sup>5</sup> (ESS) and in the 2016 Security Strategy<sup>6</sup> (Alaminos, 2018). In the same year, the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP)<sup>7</sup> was adopted with the aim of boosting capability development and increasing the efficiency of defence spending (Álvarez, 2018). Along these lines, the Capability Development

5 European Security Strategy. A secure Europe in a better world. 2003. Available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30808/qc7809568esc.pdf>. [Accessed: 20 November 2023].

6 A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy. 2016. Available at [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_o.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_o.pdf). [Accessed: 20/11/2023].

7 European Defence Action Plan: towards a European Defence Fund. 2016. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/IP\\_16\\_4088](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/IP_16_4088) on 20 November 2023).

Plan<sup>8</sup> (European Defence Agency, 2018) was adopted in 2018, highlighting the importance of planning for generating new capabilities. Finally, the 2022 Strategic Compass document<sup>9</sup> took place, with the background of the Versailles Declaration<sup>10</sup> on reinforcing European defence capabilities.

This confirms the creation of capacity building as a key issue for the European Union, which is aware of the need for a new impetus in the field of capacity building and further strategic planning. It is important to qualify that the EU's geostrategic concern arises not from its lack of capacity to act, but from the way in which the EU chooses to use the capabilities it possesses (Youngs, 2021).

There needs to be a synergy between both elements, given that “the important thing is not to have capacities but to know what they are needed for” (Arteaga, et al., 2017). This means that the first step is to define strategic needs and then generate capabilities, bearing in mind that there are no European or shared ownership capabilities (Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional, 2004), but rather, on the basis of a voluntary partnership, the capabilities and means are owned by the Member States, which will voluntarily place them at the disposal of the European Union (Institut Francais des relations internationales, 2020). In this area, and in view of the different defence spending percentages, it is logical that in the operational sphere, those who can contribute the most have the greatest decision-making weight. Therefore, defence spending percentages can be seen as a proportion of total public spending: France spends 3.24%<sup>11</sup>, Germany 3% and to a lesser extent Italy spends 2.42%.<sup>12</sup> This faces the fact that “the mere suspicion of instrumentalising the European Defence Policy to support its own defence industry considerably weakens long-term cooperation and casts doubt on the sincerity of the official discourse” (Institut Francais des Relations Internationales, 2020: 27).

In this regard, at the operational level, the Strategic Compass focuses European needs on the acquisition of next generation capabilities, cutting-edge military capabilities and interpretive defence capabilities.

---

8 Capability Development Plan. European Defence Agency. Available at [https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-factsheets/2018-06-28-factsheet\\_cdpbo20bo3fa4d264cfa776ff00087efof](https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-factsheets/2018-06-28-factsheet_cdpbo20bo3fa4d264cfa776ff00087efof). [Accessed: 20/11/2023].

9 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence: for a European Union that protects its citizens, defends its values and interests, and contributes to international peace and security. 19 April 2022. Available at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-COR-1/es/pdf>. [Accessed: 20/11/2023].

10 Versailles Declaration: Informal meeting on 10-11 March 2022 on Russian aggression against Ukraine as well as on strengthening defence capabilities, reducing energy dependencies and developing a stronger economic base.

11 Data have been extracted through Macro Data. Available at <https://datosmacro.expansion.com/estado/gasto/defensa/francia>. [Accessed on 28/03/2023].

12 Data have been extracted through Macro Data. Available at <https://datosmacro.expansion.com/estado/gasto/defensa/italia>. [Accessed on 28/03/2023].

## 5. Notes on the Strategic Compass

The Strategic Compass is an ambitious action plan in the shape of an essentially geopolitical document that is intended to be a guide to enhancing the EU's strategic autonomy in the field of security and defence. In other words, to establish the European Union as a provider of security in the international sphere in the next ten years. It is a document that had been in preparation for approximately two years and was finally approved on 21 March 2022. It took two years to carry out a study of the European situation prior to the Russian invasion. The invasion took place on 24 February 2022. Consequently, barely a month was available to include and adapt the Strategic Compass to the impact of the Russian invasion on European security and defence, although regular reviews are planned. This could explain, as several authors argue (Rupert, 2022), the French interest in giving momentum and speed to the initiative, with the aim of having the Strategic Compass adopted before the first round of the French elections (10 April 2022) and within the French presidency of the Council (which ended in June 2022). Rotation plays an important role, given that the presidency brings negotiating advantages and facilitates the assertion and defence of national interests. This argument could explain Germany's reluctance.

The content is divided into four strands: performance, security, investment and partnership. In each, the Strategic Compass indicates the threats faced, outlines current mechanisms and, to a lesser extent, presents new proposals. For example: in the field of action it intends to create a rapid deployment capability of around 5,000 military personnel or in the field of security it proposes the creation of a cyber diplomacy policy. The most important part of the paper is its explanation of geopolitical threats and mutations, emphasising the multidimensional and hybrid nature of threats. In addition, it lists a number of principles that are present in the new strategic environment. The most relevant principles expressed throughout the document are resilience, solidarity and multilateralism.

Given its extensive content and proposals that are difficult to achieve in a short period of time, a suspicion arises that the Strategic Compass follows the pattern used by the European Union in its treaties of setting broad objectives and then giving them substance, as was the case with the Common Security Policy. These proposals or recommendations face a kind of "Rubick's cube" in which, in order to solve the problem, the ecosystems of all the Member States must coincide, which is why some define the Strategic Compass as a kind of European white paper for defence (Ruiz, 2022).

The Strategic Compass sets goals but does not indicate how to achieve them. This means that it is more of a strategic alert than a strategic compass, because the document itself notes Europe's lack of geostrategic orientation, which is intensified by the emergence of geopolitical mutations, new threats and challenges surrounding Europe.

Below is an analysis of the geostrategic actors identified in the Strategic Compass.

Geostrategic actors			
Partners			Actors causing insecurity
Main	Secondary		10. Russia 11. Belarus 12. China 13. Democratic People's Republic of Korea 14. Arctic Region 15. Southern Neighbourhood (Libya and Syria) 16. Türkiye 17. Iran 18. Eastern Neighbourhood (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, South Caucasus countries).
5. NATO <sup>13</sup> 6. G7 <sup>14</sup> 7. UN <sup>15</sup> 8. U S <sup>16</sup>	Regional	Bilateral	
	4. OSCE <sup>17</sup> 5. ASEAN <sup>18</sup> 6. Future partners: 6.I. League of Arab States 6.I. Gulf Cooperation Council	10. Norway 11. Canada 10. The UK 11. Japan 12. Türkiye 13. Eastern Partners 14. Southern Neighbourhood 15. Africa 16. Latin America	

Table 1. Geostrategic actors from the perspective of the Strategic Compass

Compared to previous European security and defence strategies: the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) and the Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS), the Strategic Compass has an element that sets it apart with regard to the treatment of geostrategic actors. It is the first document in the field of European defence to differentiate between strategic partners; specifically, it divides them into multilateral, regional and bilateral, and within these categories into essential and secondary partners (Antonozzi, 2022). There are some striking aspects to this picture:

1. The inclusion of the UK alongside Norway and Canada, even though the former has a stronger institutional relationship with the EU than Norway and Canada.
2. No reference to the UK as a partner, when this could increase Europe's strategic autonomy. It is an essential partner with defence expenditure of 4.23% of total public spending and growing importance after joining the AUKUS military strategic alliance. This alliance is a trilateral agreement announced on 15 September 2021 between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States with the aim of ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific (Martin, 2022). Its main objective is to promote security cooperation, mainly through providing nuclear-powered submarines to the Australian navy (Perot, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

<sup>14</sup> Group of Seven.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations.

<sup>16</sup> United States.

<sup>17</sup> Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

<sup>18</sup> Association of South East Asian Nations.

Several scholars such as Perot (2021) and Mouritzen (2023) claim that it is an attempt to curb China's influence in this region through integrating science, technology, industry and supply chains between these three countries (Cheng, 2022), although no express reference is made to this objective in the AUKUS (Rodríguez, 2019).

3. No differentiation between the status of candidate country and mere partner. This issue has produced rising tensions between Türkiye and the EU that were expressed in the Ankara Foreign Ministry's March 2022 communiqué<sup>19</sup>, when it alleged that the rights of Türkiye and Turkish Cypriots in the Eastern Mediterranean were being undermined, even going so far as to declare: "in the absence of a direction, the document cannot be called strategic or a compass, and the EU is part of the problem rather than the solution in the Eastern Mediterranean", adding that "it will not guide the union towards the right strategies".
4. The Strategic Compass emphasises on numerous occasions the importance of the transatlantic link, referring to the need to strengthen this partnership and strategic cooperation, to adopt a more structured political dialogue, with greater coherence, to develop common responses to threats and challenges, to establish close and mutually beneficial cooperation, etc.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, another important aspect is to analyse NATO's role in this new framework, and how European strategic autonomy would affect the transatlantic link. In other words, whether the EU will actually defend its own interests or align them at the same time with those of the United States. It is important to analyse whether it is more useful to strengthen European capabilities within NATO or in a new autonomous European defence strategy.

## 6. Conclusions

Today's post-modern naivety makes it impossible to understand the current geopolitical scene and makes it hard to achieve true strategic autonomy that can be a tool for both prevention and self-defence. One of the most complex aspects is adapting these tools to the current unstable climate of geopolitical mutations, and it will only be possible through solid planning and strategy, elements that are difficult to achieve in the current framework. Each international actor designs its own strategy according to its own interests and needs. The result is different concepts of strategic autonomy and different speeds at which it can be constructed, adapted and implemented.

<sup>19</sup> Turkey slams EU for non-visionary "Strategic Compass". (2022, 23 March). *Hürriyet Daily News*.

<sup>20</sup> References taken from the Strategic Compass document.

In today's European security and defence framework, the European Union's Security and Defence Policy is not a military alliance, nor is it set up as an instrument of common or collective defence. This is because the Member States want to remain intergovernmental in security and defence matters. In this regard, it is necessary to reflect on whether the Strategic Compass is really proposing a military alliance and, if so, how it intends to carry out this project within a supranational international organisation, based on the allocation of responsibilities.

The European Union was created with the aim of achieving peaceful cooperation between European states through economic integration. To this end, the Member States agreed that their international relations would be governed by a common legal system and institutional structure, renouncing the rule of force. The European Union is an organisation with a series of distinctive signs and shared values; defence is not among them, and this aspect of its identity could be difficult to relinquish.

Strategic autonomy is an open and undefined concept due to the existence of diverse security ecosystems influenced by different strategic defence cultures that make it difficult to conceptualise in a unanimous and homogeneous way by the different Member States. This obstacle is present in several aspects of its main dimensions, areas that need to be coordinated, concurrent and proportional. In the industrial dimension, key elements for achieving strategic autonomy are strategic planning leading to a common strategy through clear leadership accepted by the different Member States. In the industrial dimension, joint procurement of equipment and investment and cooperation are key aspects of strengthening the European Defence Market and the EU's industrial and technological base. Finally, in the operational dimension, strengthening and boosting the development of new capacities is of paramount importance.

Strategic autonomy is a two-way rather than a one-way street. Therefore, greater European autonomy could lead to greater autonomy of the EU vis-à-vis other powers. The Strategic Compass attempts to alleviate this reality through the concept of "open strategic autonomy", which runs the risk of each player in the same game playing by different rules.

The reality is that adopting strategic autonomy does not guarantee a "*pareto-efficient*" solution for all Member States, and therefore a study of how far Member States are prepared to give up their own benefits and interests is needed. In other words, what the acceptable and unacceptable level of strategic autonomy is for the different Member States.

The line between dependence/interdependence and independence is very blurred, especially when strategic autonomy is viewed as gradual. The EU must pay close attention to ensure that, while strengthening its own strategic autonomy, it does not undermine Europe's position in global value chains. The European Union must achieve a balanced distribution of dependencies, bearing in mind that, in some areas, reducing or diversifying dependencies between different actors is not possible, and it must therefore focus its efforts on those areas where it is possible.

It is important to delve deeper into what is, and not what should be; only then can progress be made towards achieving ambitious strategic autonomy.

## Bibliography

- Alaminos Hervás, M.A. Las estrategias de seguridad de la Unión Europea (2003, 2016): contexto político, cambios esenciales y evolución de las prioridades políticas europeas relativas a África en materia de seguridad. *Comillas Journal of International Relations*. 2018, issue 13, pp. 11-27.
- Álvarez Jesús, G. El Plan de Acción Europeo de Defensa, un impulso a la industria de defensa y un medio de integración de la Unión Europea. *Boletín del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2018, issue 9, pp. 385-402.
- Antonozzi, I. Grand illusions: Partnerships in the EU's Strategic Compass. *European Council on foreign relations*. 2022. Available at: <https://ecfr.eu/article/grand-illusions-partnerships-in-the-eus-strategic-compass/>. [Accessed: 20/05/2022].
- Arteaga, F. *et al.* Appropriate level of European strategic autonomy. *Armament Industry European Research Group*. 2016, issue 8, pp. 14-25. Available at: <https://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ARES-Group-Report-Strategic-autonomy-November-2016.pdf>. [Accessed: 14/10/2022].
- Arteaga, F. La autonomía estratégica y la defensa europea. *Publicaciones Real Instituto el Cano*. 2017. Available at: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/la-autonomia-estrategica-y-la-defensa-europea/>. [Accessed: 15/07/2022].
- Arteaga, F. La política europea de seguridad y defensa. *Cuadernos de estrategia*. 2010, issue 145, pp. 31-67.
- Arteaga, F. y Fojón, E. El planeamiento de la política de defensa y seguridad en España. *Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado*. 2007. Available at: [https://iugm.es/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LIBRO\\_\\_planeamiento.pdf](https://iugm.es/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LIBRO__planeamiento.pdf). [Accessed: 19/08/2022].
- Attinà, F. La Comunidad Europea como actor internacional. *Afers Internacionals*. 1991, issue 21, pp. 55-61.
- Bartels, H.P. and Kellner, A.M. Strategic Autonomy and the Defence of Europe: On the road to a European Army? *Dietz Verlag J.H.W. Nachf.* 2017. ISBN 9783801204983. [Accessed: 17/02/2023].
- Bolaños Martínez, J. Manual de estudios estratégicos y seguridad. nuevas estrategias en un mundo cambiante. *Revista Del Instituto Español De Estudios Estratégicos*. 2013. Available at: <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/723/1324>. [Accessed: 22/04/2023].

- Calduch Cervera, R. Relaciones Internacionales. Ediciones Complutense.1991. Available at: <https://www.ucm.es/rrii-e-historia-global/libro-relaciones-internacionales>. [Accessed: 24/11/2023].
- Casajuana Palet, C. La política europea de seguridad y defensa. *Política exterior*. 2004, vol. 18, issue 97, pp.127-137.
- Castilla Barea, J.C. Caperucita pregunta sobre el planeamiento de la defensa. Algunas respuestas y el caso OTAN. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2021, issue 18, pp. 209-242. Available at: <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/4021>. [Accessed: 21/09/2022].
- Centre for National Defence Studies. *Un concepto estratégico para la Unión Europea*. Monographs by the Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional, 2004.
- Cheng, M. Aukus: The Changing Dynamic and Its Regional Implications. *European Journal of Development Studies*. 2022, vol 2, no.1.
- European Commission. Defence and space industry. *European Commission Publications*. 2022.
- Council of the European Union. Strategic autonomy, strategic choices. Analysis and research team. *European Union Council Publications*. 2021. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49404/strategic-autonomy-issues-paper-5-february-2021-web.pdf>. [Accessed: 12/08/2022].
- Corio, M. Aspectos militares de la gestión de crisis en el marco de la PESD. *Revista de Estudios Políticos*. 2003, issue 119, pp. 351-380.
- Csernaton, R. The EU's defence Ambitions: Understanding the Emergence of a European Defence Technological and Industrial Complex. *Carnegie Europe*. 2021. Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/12/06/eu-s-defense-ambitions-understanding-emergence-of-european-defense-technological-and-industrial-complex-pub-85884>. [Accessed: 15/12/2022].
- Dacoba Cerviño, F. Autonomía Estratégica Europea: ni contigo, ni sin ti... *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2021, no. 13. Available at: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2021/DIEEEA13\\_2021\\_FRANDAC\\_Autonomia\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2021/DIEEEA13_2021_FRANDAC_Autonomia_ENG.pdf). [Accessed: 30/05/2022].
- De Castro García, A. "El debate desde la perspectiva realista", in Palomares Lerma, G., De Castro García, A. y Tomé Alonso, B, Las relaciones internacionales en la sociedad global: introducción a las relaciones internacionales, Tecnos, 2023.
- De Castro Sánchez, C. *et al.* Strategy Notebook 215-b: The European Union towards Strategic Autonomy. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2022. Available at: [https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/t/h/the\\_european\\_union\\_towards\\_strategic\\_autonomy\\_ce215-b.pdf](https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/t/h/the_european_union_towards_strategic_autonomy_ce215-b.pdf). [Accessed: 24 May 2022].

- Díez Alcalde, J. and Puig Soler, S. "Operaciones y misiones de la Unión Europea: proyección de paz más allá de nuestras fronteras", in García Rico, E.M. and Torres Cazorla, M.I. (dirs), *Hacia una identidad europea en materia de seguridad y defensa: ¿realidad o utopía?*, Tirant lo Blanch, 2019, in *Revista de estudios políticos*.
- Doñete Sanz, M.P. La cultura de seguridad y defensa en el ámbito universitario en España y Francia. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2023, no. 33. Available at: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2023/DIEEEO33\\_2023\\_MARDON\\_Seguridad.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2023/DIEEEO33_2023_MARDON_Seguridad.pdf). [Accessed: 16/02/2023].
- Dostri, O and Michael, K. The Role of Human Terrain and Cultural Intelligence in Contemporary Hybrid and Urban Warfare. *The international journal of intelligence, security, and public affairs*, 2019, vol. 21, issue 1, pp. 84-102.
- Droff, J and Julien M. 50 shades of procurement: the European defence trilemma in defence procurement strategies. *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*. 2023, vol 18, No.1.
- Esteban, P *et al.* Seventh session of the XXXIII International Seminar on Security and Defence "America's return to NATO: stimulus or anaesthetic?" *Association of European Journalists*. 2021.
- EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY. Capability Development Plan. *European Defence Agency*. 2018.
- European Defence Agency. Defence data 2019-2020. Key findings and analysis. *European Defence Agency*. 2021. Available at: <https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/brochures/eda---defence-data-report-2019-2020.pdf>. [Accessed: 10 March 2023]
- Fatjó, P. and Colom, G. La defensa de la Unión Europea. Voluntades políticas y capacidades militares básicas. *Documentos CIDOB Seguridad y Defensa*. 2005, no. 5.
- Fattori, S. EU strategic autonomy and the current framework of the transatlantic partnership. 2022.
- Félix, A. *et al.* "La autonomía estratégica de la UE: ¿Podemos ser autónomos?" 2017. Conference of the Royal Academy of Doctors of Spain. Available at: <https://www.radoctores.es/pagina.php?item=517>. [Accessed: 17/07/2022].
- Fojón, E. ¿Una Gran ilusión? La Unión Europea y la geopolítica. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2021, no. 129. Available at: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2021/DIEEEO129\\_2021\\_ENRFOJ\\_UE.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2021/DIEEEO129_2021_ENRFOJ_UE.pdf). [Accessed: 17/04/2023].
- Fonfría Mesa, A. y Calvo González, C. Cooperación Europea en defensa: retos y oportunidades. *Revista Economía Industrial*. 2019, issue 412, pp. 121-129. Available at: <https://www.mincotur.gob.es/Publicaciones/Publicacionesperiodicas/EconomiaIndustrial/RevistaEconomiaIndustrial/412/FONFRÍA%20y%20CALVO.pdf>. [Accessed: 20/11/2022].

- Frunzeti, T., Cosereanu, L. and Tomoiaga, T. The impact of disruptive technologies on defence. *Land Forces Academy Review*. 2021, vol. 26, no. 4 (104).
- Corio, M., “Aspectos militares de la gestión de crisis en el marco de la PESD”. *Revista de Estudios Políticos*. 2003, issue 119, pp. 351-380.
- García Rico, E.M., “La política común de seguridad y defensa de la UE: el despertar de una propuesta ambiciosa”, in García Rico, E.M. and Torres Cazorla, M.I. (dirs), *Hacia una identidad europea en materia de seguridad y defensa: ¿realidad o utopía?*, Tirant lo Blanch, 2019a.
- García Rico, E.M., La cooperación estructurada permanente. ¿hacia una integración diferenciada en materia de seguridad y defensa?. Cornago, N. et al, *Repensar la Unión Europea: Gobernanza, seguridad, mercado interior y ciudadanía*. 27th AEPDIRI Conference, Tirant lo Blanch, 2019b.
- García Segura, C. La evolución del concepto de actor en la teoría de las relaciones internacionales. *Publicaciones Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona*. 1992, no. 40. Available at: <https://papers.uab.cat/article/view/v41-garcia>. [Accessed: 02/07/2022].
- Gerrero Cabrera, F. La política de prevención y gestión de conflictos de la Unión Europea en África Subsahariana: el caso del conflicto de los Grandes Lagos. *Working Papers OBS*, 2007, no. 73.
- Gomes, J et al. Impact of disruptive technologies on defence. *European Defence Agency*. 2021.
- González Alonso, L.N. De las declaraciones a los hechos: las primeras operaciones de gestión de crisis en la Unión Europea. *Revista de Derecho Comunitario Europeo*. 2003, no. 15.
- Habermas, Jürgen. Theory of communicative action. *Tamrus*. 1970.
- Hans, M. Europe: Divided Ove AUKUS and China. *International Journal*. 2023, vol. 78, issue 3, pp.454-462.
- Iglesias Velasco, A. and Ricart, R.J. El principio de coherencia en la política industrial de defensa de la Unión Europea. *Revista Del Instituto Español De Estudios Estratégicos*. 2021, issue 16, pp. 157-220. Available at: <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/2061>. [Accessed: 12/01/2023].
- Institut Francais des Relations Internationales. La coopération en matière d'armement entre la France et l'Allemagne. *Notes de l'Ifri. Visions Franco-allemandes*. 2020. Available at: [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/puhl\\_cooperation\\_militaire\\_armement\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/puhl_cooperation_militaire_armement_2020.pdf). [Accessed: 25/01/2023].
- Lavery, S., Mcdaniel, S. and Schmid, D. European Strategic Autonomy: new agenda, old constraints. En *The Political Economy of Geoeconomics: Europe in a Changing World*. 2022, pp. 57-80.

- León, G. y Da Ponte, A. Soberanía tecnológica y poder inteligente de la Unión Europea en un contexto geopolítico inestable: el escenario de África como ejemplo de aplicación. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2021, issue 18, pp. 365-394. Available at: <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/4035> [Consultation: 24/11/2023].
- Lippert, B., Von Ondarza, N. and Perthes, V. strategische Autonomie Europas. Akteure, Handlungsfelder, Zielkonflikte. *SWP-studie*. 2019.
- Macmillan, A. Strategic culture and national ways in warfare: The British case. *Royal United Services Institution Journal*. 2008, vol. 140, no. 5.
- Mangas Martí, A. Integración, soberanía y globalización: Reflexiones. *Anuario argentino de derecho internacional*. 2004. Available at: <https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/R21641.pdf>. [Accessed: 13/07/2022].
- Marrero Rocha, I. Los actores internacionales en el ámbito de la no proliferación y el desarme nuclear: características e impacto. *Revista Española de Derecho Internacional*. 2012, vol. 14, pp. 73-102.
- Marroca García, A. OTAN-Unión Europea ¿qué relación existen realmente? Análisis del enfoque de fuerzas de reacción rápida. *Boletín de Información del Ministerio de Defensa*. 2011, issue 320, pp. 33-50.
- Marsal, J. Conference transcript: Security and Defence Culture. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2016. Available at: [https://www.defensa.gob.es/portaldcultura/Galerias/noticias/home/2016/fichero/Marzo/2016\\_ConfCultSegDefAdjCivilDirCESEDEN.pdf](https://www.defensa.gob.es/portaldcultura/Galerias/noticias/home/2016/fichero/Marzo/2016_ConfCultSegDefAdjCivilDirCESEDEN.pdf). [Accessed: 17/08/2022].
- Marti, C. La industria europea de defensa. Un análisis prospectivo. *Fundación Alternativas*. 2018, no. 93.
- Martín Serrano, L. Aukus. Trasfondo de un tratado. *Boletín Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2022, 25, pp. 451-466.
- Mattlin, M. and Poutala, T. EU Strategic Autonomy and the Perceived Challenge of China: Can Critical Hubs Be De-weaponized?. *European Foreign Affairs Review*. 2022, vol. 27.
- Mauro, F. Strategic Autonomy under the spotlight: The new Holy grail of European Defence. *Group for Research and Information on Peace and Security*. 2018.
- Meijer, H. and Brooks, S. Illusion of autonomy. Why Europe Provide for its security if the United States Pulls Back. *MIT Press Direct*. 2021, vol. 4, issue 45, pp. 7-43.
- Navarro, J.M. Sistema de catapulta electromagnética estadounidense para el nuevo portaviones francés. *Defensa.com*. 2022. Available at: <https://www.defensa.com/defensa-naval/sistema-catapulta-electromagnetica-estadounidense-para-nuevo>. [Accessed: 22/2/ 2023].

- Oliviera, B. and Küsters, C. Hidden Security: EU Public Research Funds and the Development of European Drones. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. 2018, issue 57, pp. 278-297.
- Pachucki, N. The context between "strategic Autonomy" and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). *CSDP Olympiad*. 2020
- Perot, E. The Aukus agreement, what repercussions for the European Union? *The Robert Schuman Foundation - European Issue*. 2021, Issue 608.
- Pontijas Calderón, J.L. El ejército europeo y la autonomía estratégica de la Unión Europea. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2019, no. 8. Available at: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2019/DIEEEA08\\_2019JOSPOE-EjercitoEuropeo.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2019/DIEEEA08_2019JOSPOE-EjercitoEuropeo.pdf). [Accessed: 20/05/2022].
- Pulido, G. ¿Autonomía estratégica europea? El renqueante eje franco-alemán. *The Political Room*. 2020. Available at: <https://thepoliticalroom.com/autonomia-estrategica-europea-el-renqueante-eje-franco-aleman/>. [Accessed: 31/03/2023].
- Quesada Alcalá, C. Las misiones civiles y militares de la UE. Una visión desde la autonomía, la agilidad y el robustecimiento. *Cuadernos de estrategia*. 2022, issue 215, pp. 161-184.
- Quirico, O. The European Green Deal: a gateway to strategic energy autonomy? *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto*. 2023.
- Ramirez, D. Reseña la arquitectura de seguridad europea: un sistema imperfecto e inacabado. *Revista Del Instituto Español De Estudios Estratégicos*. 2018, no. 7. Available at: <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/239>. [Accessed: 23/02/2023].
- Regalado, G. El Centro de Operaciones de la Unión Europea. ¿Un brote verde de una futura defensa integrada de la UE?. *El proceso hacia unas fuerzas armadas europeas: realizaciones y desafíos*. Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, 2013. pp. 29-45. Available at: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/libro/518188.pdf>. [Accessed: 17/08/2022].
- Rey Arroyo, L.F. Una Europa geopolítica inconclusa en un futuro incierto. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2023. Available at: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2023/DIEEEEO32\\_2023\\_LUIREY\\_Europa.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2023/DIEEEEO32_2023_LUIREY_Europa.pdf). [Accessed: 19/01/2023].
- Rodney, J. India's strategic culture. *Science Applications International corporation*. 2006. Available at: <https://irp.fas.org/agency/dod/dtra/india.pdf>. [Accessed: 19/07/2022].
- Rodríguez, J. M. Relaciones estratégicas entre la Unión Europea y la OTAN: en el camino de la defensa en Europa. *Anuario De La Facultad De Derecho. University of Extremadura*. 2023, issue 38, pp. 207-248.

- Rudolf, A. A sovereign Europe necessity or day dream? *Geopolitical Intelligence Services AG*. 2022. Available at: <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/europe-sovereignty/>. [Accessed: 16/03/2023].
- Ruiz González, F. Documento de análisis: La necesidad de un Cuartel General Operacional permanente para la UE. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. 2010. Available at: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2010/DIEEEAI4-2010\\_NecesidadOHQpermanenteParaUE.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2010/DIEEEAI4-2010_NecesidadOHQpermanenteParaUE.pdf). [Accessed: 22/12/2022].
- Ruiz, R. Últimos retoques del Libro blanco de la defensa europea. *Revista Española de Defensa*. 2022. [Accessed: 17/02/2023].
- Ruppert, A. A strategic compass leading where? *Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung*. 2022. [Accessed: 20/10/2022].
- Samovich, Y.V. and Marukhno, E.Y. Concept of strategic autonomy of the EU in the neighbourhood policy. *Juridical Journal of Samara University*. 2023.
- Sinkkonen, V. and Helwig, N. Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor: The evolution, debate and theory of a contested term. *European Foreign Affairs Review*. 2022, vol. 27.
- “Turkey slams EU for non-visionary Strategic Compass” *Hürriyet Daily News*. 23 March 2022. Available at: <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-slams-eu-for-non-visionary-strategic-compass-172426>. [Accessed: 27/04/2023].
- Valero, C. Alemania sustituirá su flota de aviones Tornado con los F-35 estadounidenses. *El Mundo*. 2022. Available at: <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2022/03/14/622fa106fdddf298b8b4586.html>. [Accessed: 20/05/2022].
- Youngs, R. The EU’s strategic autonomy trap. *Carnegie Europe*. 2021. Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/03/08/eu-s-strategic-autonomy-trap-pub-83955>. [Accessed: 12/09/2022].

---

*Article received: 11 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---



*Mónica LUPIÁÑEZ LUPIÁÑEZ*

*Graduate in Psychology. MA in Advanced Studies in Terrorism. MA in Strategic Thinking and Global Security*

*E-mail: monica.lupianez.ml@gmail.com*

***How to cope with a cognitive attack:  
Prototype for detecting propaganda and  
manipulation in psychological operations  
targeting civilians during a conflict***

**Abstract**

While it is true that psychological operations are difficult to predict, and that measuring their real impact remains a challenge, it is important to study the origin and course of this type of operation in order to outline harmful actions. This is even more challenging in conflict situations, mainly because of the emotional baggage involved, and because of the high self-interest of both parties. This study proposes a propaganda detection prototype with the following two aims; first, to identify language patterns that may influence an individual's perception (increasing the polarisation of those involved), and second, to uphold the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms (avoiding extreme censorship). Future research lines propose training an AI language system, to obtain an objective and reliable detection tool, and subsequently be able to analyse information in a conscious and active way.

**Keywords**

Psy-ops, defence, bias, Russia, Ukraine.

**Cite this article:**

LUPIÁÑEZ LUPIÁÑEZ, Mónica (2023). “How to cope with a cognitive attack: Prototype for detecting propaganda and manipulation in psychological operations targeting civilians during a conflict”. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. 423-455.

## I. Introduction

This work is framed within multi-domain operations, specifically the cognitive domain, whose importance throughout history within the operational environment has led to its prominent use in cross-disciplinary operations through unconventional warfare strategies. Although it is a very important component, it does not have a scientific theoretical framework. This underscores the lack of protection against it, because uncertainty about the actual impact of its potential effects is a vulnerability indicator.

Unconventional strategies are particularly relevant when directly involving the population, and they predominate in asymmetrical conflicts, elements of which have been progressively incorporated into conflicts, leading to hybrid threats<sup>1</sup>. This shift in focus comes in the aftermath of the envisaged breakdown of the Westphalian system, leaving global actors such as Al Qaeda or ISIS capable of challenging states. The difference between military and civilians in the theatre could disappear, substantially changing the paradigm of warfare to one where resources, and intended objectives and interests, would encompass both public and private interests. The main idea is that the state has lost its monopoly on warfare and, at the tactical level, this includes everything from armaments to psychology<sup>2</sup>. The Gerasimov Doctrine sets out an interesting approach to the use of these unconventional strategies, reflecting non-military measures whose value in achieving political and strategic ends is even greater than the effectiveness of weapons in some cases<sup>3</sup>.

This project aims to identify the keys to a cognitive attack, while taking into account the complications for defence that this entails at an individual and social level. The main objectives are to:

- Understand how we process external information, how important this is in conflict situations, how these processes can be disrupted, and what defensive responses can be adopted.
- Contrast the positions of two conflicting parties, and identify common factors used by both that may be manipulating civilians' beliefs and attitudes towards the situation.

---

1 “One that simultaneously and adaptively employs all kinds of instruments of power; conventional procedures alongside irregular tactics and terrorist activities; organised crime; new technologies; cyberspace attacks; political pressure; and multiple types of information and disinformation tools, including fake news and lies themselves.” PDC-00 (2021) Glossary of commonly used terminology. Ministry of Defence: [https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/PDC-00\\_Glosario\\_de\\_Terminologia\\_de\\_uso\\_Conjunto\\_xJUL21x.pdf](https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/PDC-00_Glosario_de_Terminologia_de_uso_Conjunto_xJUL21x.pdf).

2 URRRA, Francisco Javier (2021). Las operaciones militares de decepción: un enfoque desde psicología. *Revista Ensayos militares*: <https://revistaensayosmilitares.cl/index.php/acague/article/view/351/232>.

3 Colom, Guillem (2019). La doctrina Gerasimov y el pensamiento estratégico ruso contemporáneo. *Revista Ejército* no. 933: <https://www.ugr.es/~gesi/Doctrina-Gerasimov.pdf>.

- Obtain a well-reasoned propaganda detection prototype that determines the quality of the information presented in terms of deceptive intent (i.e. whether or not it contains manipulative elements). And, highlight the possible psychological processes that this produces.

Propaganda is taken to mean “the systematic application of set of techniques to spread partial or biased opinions or ideas among the masses, with their own, often political, intent.”<sup>4</sup> It was the predecessor of current procedures for acting in the cognitive field of operations, and this study is specifically interested in analysing its manipulative significance.

In terms of the applied part, a comparative analysis of two opposing positions in the same conflict will be carried out. For the study, we have chosen the Russia-Ukraine war, and have analysed it using a prototype for detecting war propaganda.

A bilateral conflict analysis is used to: 1) avoid a biased position, and 2) draw out common principles of influence that are independent from the message content. However, a prior analysis of the conflict and its chronology will be included, as it is necessary to take into account the background and characteristics of the scenario under analysis.

## 2. Key factors in psychological operations and their role in armed conflict.

### 2.1. Cognitive warfare and psychological operations

Cognitive warfare is part of the information environment, specifically the cognitive domain, which is “the non-physical space of operations that encompasses actions, processes and effects that affect the perceptions of human beings, individually or as a group, and is inherent to their capacity for judgement, group awareness and decision-making”<sup>5</sup>. Cognitive warfare therefore aims to change what people think and how they act. It aims to sow dissonance, instigate conflicting narratives, polarise opinions and radicalise groups. It draws on technological advances and focuses on the human environment as the target of cognitive manipulation.

According to Ottewell<sup>6</sup> the information environment is composed of three dimensions: the physical (infrastructure and systems), the informational (data and algorithms), and

---

4 IEEE (2020). Implicaciones del ámbito cognitivo en las Operaciones Militares. Revista IEEE, 01/2020: [https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/IMPLICACIONES\\_DEL\\_AMBITO\\_COGNITIVO\\_EN\\_LAS\\_OPERACIONES\\_MILITARES.pdf](https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/IMPLICACIONES_DEL_AMBITO_COGNITIVO_EN_LAS_OPERACIONES_MILITARES.pdf).

5 PDC-00 (2021). Glossary of commonly used terminology. Ministry of Defence: [https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/PDC-00\\_Glosario\\_de\\_Terminologia\\_de\\_uso\\_Conjunto\\_xJUL21x.pdf](https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/PDC-00_Glosario_de_Terminologia_de_uso_Conjunto_xJUL21x.pdf).

6 OTTEWELL, Paul (2020). Defining the Cognitive Domain. Over the Horizon: <https://othjournal.com/2020/12/07/defining-the-cognitive-domain/>.

the human (mental faculties that influence the perception of information). It is therefore important to understand the socio-political, economic and cultural context of the area where it will be applied to be successful in the third dimension.

This confluence between dimensions leads authors such as Cluzel to propose the *human domain* (instead of the cognitive domain)<sup>7</sup>. It aims to understand the phenomenon by encompassing not only cognition, but the individual and their relationship with their social environment - based on as many disciplines as human beings act in - which are what ultimately define our specific centres of gravity<sup>8</sup> (which is what our adversaries will fixate on when preparing an offensive).

Influence Operations (IO) are used to carry out this form of warfare, and of these, this study focuses on Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), disregarding the remaining components of Information Operations (INFOOPS). According to the definition proposed by NATO in *Military Committee 402*, PSYOPS are: “planned psychological activities using communication methods and other means directed at specific audiences to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives”<sup>9</sup>.

## 2.2. Main tools used in PSYOPS

The main tools used in PSYOPS are still either material or virtual, because cognition is a product of perception and therefore cannot be reached directly, it is subject to interpreting projections on other planes.

The means employed have always been at the forefront of the technology of the time, adapting to the need to explore new ways of mass influence: the use of the press in the First World War, radio in the Second World War, audio-visual media during the Cold War and, finally - in the present day - the incorporation of the digital era and the use of the Internet; allowing the real time transmission of information that can be accessed by anyone with a connection<sup>10</sup>.

However, this constant and currently innovative use of the virtual plane must not make us forget that we are still subject to the material plane, which is the only guaranteed

7 Note that the Anglo-Saxon term *domain* has been adapted into Spanish as “ámbito” and not as “dominio” (CCDC, 2020. Concept note “multi-domain operations”. Joint Concept Development Centre. CESEDEN: [https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/OPERACIONES\\_MULTI-DOMINIO.PDF](https://emad.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/CCDC/files/OPERACIONES_MULTI-DOMINIO.PDF)). Cluzel’s original proposal was “human domain”.

8 “The main source of power that gives an actor his or her strength, freedom of action or will to fight.” Own translation based on NATO AJP-5 (2019). Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations. North Atlantic Treaty Organization: [https://www.coemed.org/files/stanags/01\\_AJP/AJP-5\\_EDA\\_V2\\_E\\_2526.pdf](https://www.coemed.org/files/stanags/01_AJP/AJP-5_EDA_V2_E_2526.pdf).

9 NATO (2013). AAP-06. NATO glossary of terms and definitions: [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/Other\\_Pubs/aap6.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/Other_Pubs/aap6.pdf). Own translation.

10 Álvarez, Pablo (2019). Propaganda y manipulación de masas en el siglo XX. Revista IEEE: Documento Opinión, no. 40: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7264337>.

to be stable in the future. The point here is that old tactics such as “propaganda of the deed”<sup>11</sup> or the effects of a terrorist attack - whose psychological impact is intrinsic to its definition<sup>12</sup>- remind us that a cognitive impact is produced by perceptions, and that these can be generated by the reality with which we come into contact. In this particular case, reality will be mainly projected by both planes: material and virtual.

It is important to stress that, as individuals, we should not overestimate what we perceive through the virtual world because, if it is already complex to perceive cause-consequence relationships in the material plane, handling perceptions in the virtual plane involves an infinite combination of possibilities that are used to create a scenario that is adapted to the target subject of influence.

### 3. The coexistence of three interrelated planes: physical, cognitive, and virtual.

There is a complex relationship between the three planes, and ultimately between decision-making and behaviour in these planes (see Figure 1).

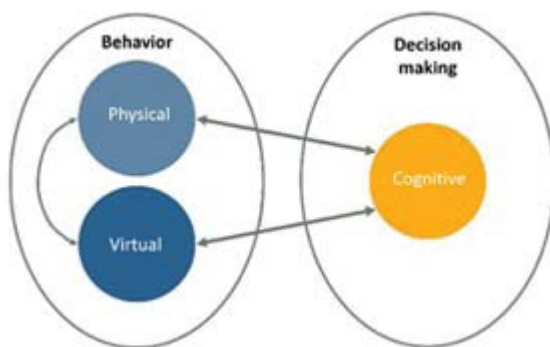


Image 1. Interrelation of the three levels of defence .

It is extremely important to emphasise that today our external stimuli come almost equally from both physical and virtual planes, and they are so integrated that we do not consciously make a distinction. However, it should not be forgotten that the virtual is determined by the physical, and not the other way around, as it may seem in certain situations (see Figure 2). After all, the

virtual plane is physically created by material objects and without them it would cease to exist (such as before it had been developed). This perceptual overlap can often lead us to feel that what happens in the virtual plane has direct/immediate effects in the physical plane; in reality, this is not the case, because the cognitive plane will always mediate between the virtual and physical planes.

11 Strategy that seeks to generate impact and convey a message through actions rather than through speeches or verbal messages. It is typical to anarchist terrorism; one of the earliest examples is the 1892 Ravachol bombing in Paris. AVILÉS, Juan (2009). El terrorismo anarquista como propaganda por el hecho. *Historia y Política*, Jan-June, pp. 169-190: <https://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/Hyp/article/download/44489/26066/0>.

12 “An act of violence is a terrorist act if the psychological impact it has on a society or some segment of it, in terms of anxiety and fear, far exceeds its material consequences, i.e. intentional physical damage to persons or things.” REINARES, Fernando (2006). *Conceptualizando el terrorismo internacional*. Cuadernos de estrategia IEEA 133: [https://www.ieea.es/en/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE\\_133\\_LuchaContraTerrorismoXDchoInternacional.pdf](https://www.ieea.es/en/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE_133_LuchaContraTerrorismoXDchoInternacional.pdf).

13 The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (2021). *Behaviour-Oriented Operations in the Military Context*: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29549.8>.

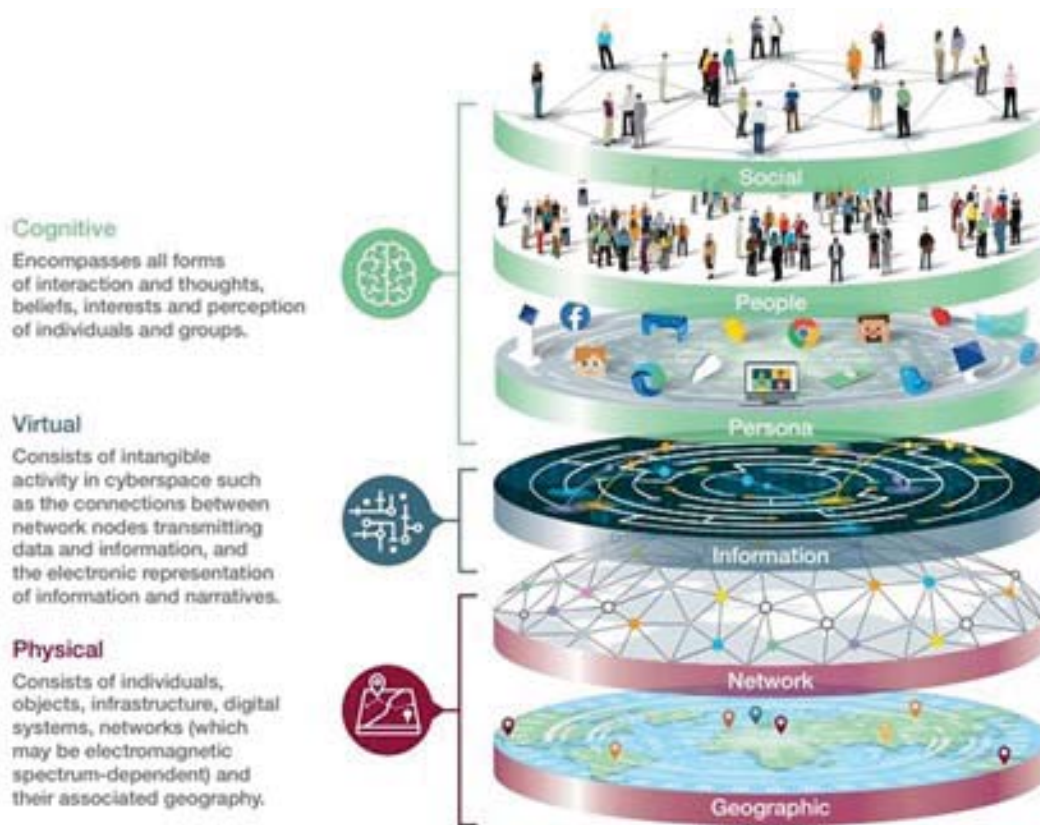


Image 2. The six layers of cyberspace<sup>14</sup>.

This is why it is of utmost importance to understand that the cognitive plane: 1) is created based on the combination of both, through perception, and 2) in turn triggers decision-making that may lead to actions (behaviour in the physical and virtual plane). “May” is used here because intention without action does not involve an impact, given that it is not performed, i.e. it is not translated into its final state: materialisation, and therefore will not be accessible, measurable or controllable.

### 3.1. Strategic offence and defence at the cognitive level

The previous point demonstrates that accessing the cognitive plane is difficult because it is simultaneously a channel of inputs and outputs of what happens on the other two planes: the material and virtual.

As in all warfare, the established dynamic is based on two fundamental pillars: tactical and strategic offence and defence<sup>15</sup>. This is where an anomaly in the cognitive plane is observed: following the logic of the physical and virtual planes, both defence

<sup>14</sup> UK DCDC (2018). UK Cyber Primer. Defence Academy of the United Kingdom: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1115061/Cyber\\_Primer\\_Edition\\_3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1115061/Cyber_Primer_Edition_3.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Von Clausewitz, Carl (2005). On War. La esfera de los libros.

and offence have a theatre of operations that is more or less delimited, or at least has an action-reaction dynamic (see Image 3).

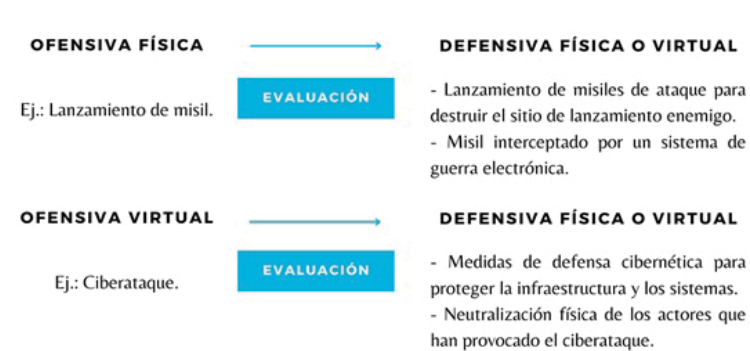


Image 3. Offensive-defensive dynamics with examples on the physical and virtual level. Source: Author's own work.

However, on the cognitive level, access is not direct, it is determined by: 1) the two previous levels, and 2) the perception and processing of information; cognition is the product of a representation of what is perceived. This means that both input and output in the cognitive plane have to

be represented a priori and a posteriori in the material or virtual planes. There is no direct way to achieve cognition. Therefore, the tools used to reach the cognitive plane must first be modified on the physical and/or virtual planes (Figure 4), as the exchange of information and processing is bidirectional (cause-consequence of what is perceived and how it is acted upon).

It should be remembered that the offensive has been launched after a prior analysis of the situation/context by the aggressor, based on their own perceptions drawn from the physical and virtual planes (which in turn may differ to some extent from the perceptions generated a posteriori by the affected person).

It is also important to note that today a dissociation has been observed between the will to fight, and victory or defeat in conflicts, with the will persisting despite physical defeat<sup>16</sup>. Although this dissociation is not exclusive to modern conflicts, it must be taken into account as these subjective elements (susceptible to influence) take on a more relevant role on the stage.



Image 4. Offensive-defensive dynamics in the cognitive plane. Non-direct relationship: 1) subject to the physical and/or virtual plane, and 2) subject to perceptions of impact. Source: Author's own work.

<sup>16</sup> This was the case in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict (despite the Azeri defeat of Armenia in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1988-1994), or the reactivation of terrorist cells and organisations, often resulting in frozen conflicts. Bárcenas, Luis Andrés and López, José Ángel (2011). Los conflictos congelados de la antigua Unión Soviética. UC3M: [https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/c/o/conflictos\\_congelados\\_union\\_soviética.pdf](https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/c/o/conflictos_congelados_union_soviética.pdf).

## 4. The contribution of psychology as a discipline for the study of human behaviour

### 4.1 External information processing

In order to understand the applications of PSYOPS, as well as to situate the cognitive plane in the interrelationship between the physical and virtual plane, it is necessary to have an overview of how humans process information. This explanation will refer to two major theories of information processing by Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck, both widely established in psychology, which can be very useful when adapted to a non-clinical context. I believe that both theories can be combined in a way that gives a broad overview of the issue, so I have tried to put them together in a single diagram (see Figure 5).



Image 5. Information processing flow. Own work based on the information processing models of Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck.

Albert Ellis argued that our negative emotions are not caused directly by external events, but by our interpretations and beliefs about those events. He proposed that by replacing irrational thoughts with more rational and realistic thoughts, we can improve our perception of the real world in a less distorted and more controllable way<sup>17</sup>.

In turn, Aaron Beck's theory is based on the idea that our emotions and behaviours are influenced by our automatic thought patterns (biases and heuristics). It suggests

<sup>17</sup> Ellis, Albert (2003). Rational Emotive Therapy Manual. Editorial Desclee.

that certain cognitive biases, such as negative interpretation of events or polarised thinking (extremisms), may contribute to dysfunctional thinking and generate adaptive problems<sup>18</sup>.

Both approaches have elements in common, such as an emphasis on identifying and modifying dysfunctional thoughts and promoting a more realistic and adaptive perspective. Therefore, they propose using techniques and strategies to improve rational thinking and encourage focusing on the controllable aspects of events.

A breakdown of the above model is better explained when adapted to conflict (see figure 6).



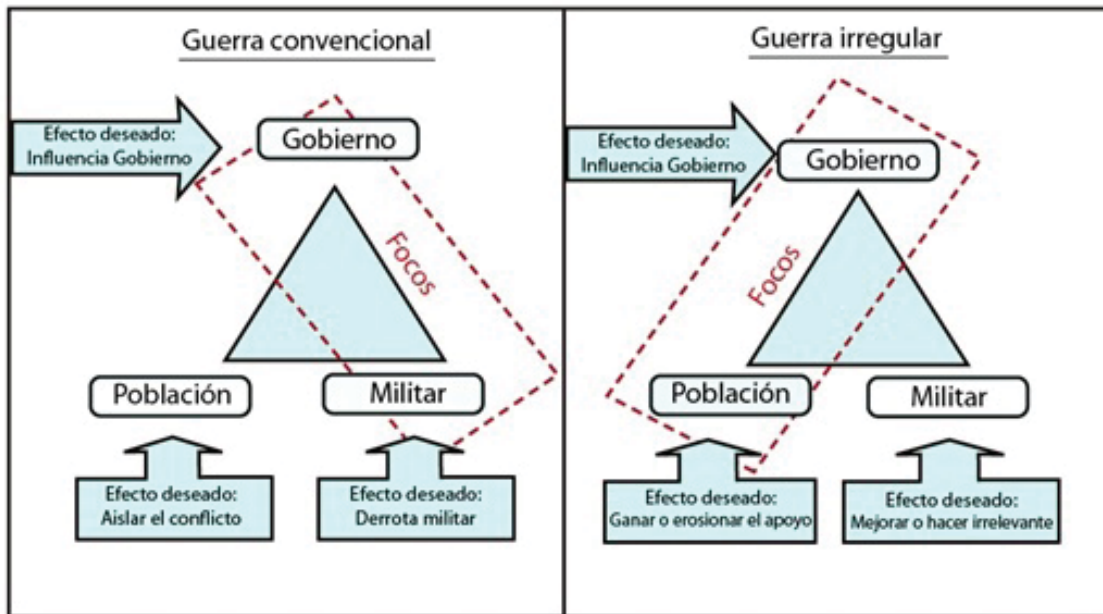
Image 6. Flow of information processing adapted to conflict. Source: Author's own work.

Therefore, the way we communicate: how we receive, process and explain information (both through verbal and non-verbal language) is key to influencing this processing, as the nature of the stimuli will, to some extent, determine the prism through which inputs are processed. The outputs will be determined according to the characteristics of the target to which the information is addressed.

#### 4.2. The power of communication and attentional control

At this point, it is important to remember why so much emphasis is placed on the individual, when the scale of a conflict far outweighs the individual dimension. This can be explained by Clausewitz's Trinity and the notable way he shifted the target in irregular warfare, moving the focus of impact to the population instead of linking it only to military power (Figure 7):

<sup>18</sup> Beck, Aaron and Haigh, Emily (2014). Advances in Cognitive Theory and Therapy: The Generic Cognitive Model. Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, vol. 10, pp. 1-24. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-032813-153734>.

Image 7. Clausewitz' Trinity<sup>19</sup>.

The paradigm of conventional warfare has changed at both a population and individual level by incorporating the virtual space. This not only makes the target (individuals) more accessible, but also makes it easier for perpetrators to operate in this space, due to accessibility, high profitability and impunity, and the fact the legal system has not adapted to the virtual environment<sup>20</sup>.

While attempts to communicate with and influence the population is not new, the way in which it is done is: the Internet and social networks are the perfect medium to generate confusion, misinformation, saturation and mistrust. It is true that it has not yet been possible to demonstrate a cause-consequence relationship between these influence campaigns and their impact on reality. However, as seen in the previous point in relation to the information processing flow, there is a certain framework of perception and attention through which information is processed; this can be more influential when people's vulnerabilities are known, and therefore the published information could be adapted to the processing framework of the target population.

By referring to Plato's classical work "The Allegory of the Cave", it can be demonstrated that showing information captures our attention, but rather than telling us what we should think about, it tells us where to focus our thought (see Figure 8):

19 US Defence Department (2007). Irregular Warfare. JOC 1.0: [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joc\\_iw\\_vi.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joc_iw_vi.pdf).

20 Robles, Margarita (2016). Amenaza y uso de la fuerza a través del ciberespacio: un cambio de paradigma. LADI: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340581460\\_Amenaza\\_y\\_uso\\_de\\_la\\_fuerza\\_a\\_traves\\_del\\_ciberespacio\\_un\\_cambio\\_de\\_paradigma\\_por\\_Margarita\\_Robles\\_Carrillo\\_AMENAZA\\_Y\\_USO\\_DE\\_LA\\_FUERZA\\_A\\_TRAVES\\_DEL](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340581460_Amenaza_y_uso_de_la_fuerza_a_traves_del_ciberespacio_un_cambio_de_paradigma_por_Margarita_Robles_Carrillo_AMENAZA_Y_USO_DE_LA_FUERZA_A_TRAVES_DEL).



Image 8. Representation of Plato's Allegory of the Cave.

While the chained men are distracted by what the shadows are doing, they have little interest in knowing if there is information beyond what they are presented with (e.g. if there are other individuals who are not chained). Their dialogue focuses on the differences they each perceive about the shadows that are cast, but not about what there is beyond that (what being chained implies for them). Each person's interpretation of the shadow guides their mental framework and perception of reality, which in turn determines their behaviour.

A similar situation occurs with the women who hold the figures that cast the shadows, the difference is that their actions have an impact on the men in chains (whether intentional or not), but their function is still limited to what they have to do (hold the figures), making this their reality.

Only those outside the cave can perceive the world, its observable characteristics and how it affects them (basing their perceptions on a complete vision of what they see, feel, observe and do). Note that a person in chains cannot have any effect on the outside world, even if they want to. This is important, because often our perception of reality, together with our desire for "how we think reality should be" generates a distorted picture that makes us responsible for complex situations that we simply cannot handle for physical or hierarchical reasons. Therefore, we feel responsible for things that are beyond our control.

### 4.3. *Cognitive biases and emotions*

According to Kahneman<sup>21</sup>, to influence an individual it is necessary to appeal to their emotions, because emotional shocks are processed by what he calls System 1, which is fast, intuitive and automatic processing, so the event is not deliberately analysed. However, once an individual has been convinced of something, it is very

21 Kahneman, Daniel (2011). *Think fast, think slow*. Debate.

difficult to change their mind, because other elements of the human psyche come into play, related to the two systems: System 1, described above, and System 2, which is slow, deliberative and conscious processing.

System 1 helps us to economise on the large amount of information we receive throughout the day, as using System 2 to process absolutely all the stimuli we are exposed to would be unmanageable; this is why we require tools such as functional biases. However, these biases can end up distorting our thinking by making us unaware of the automatic inferences we make based on the information we obtain.

Cluzel<sup>22</sup> suggests that understanding cognitive biases can help counter persuasion and manipulation, because they pose certain risks such as: the brain's difficulty in discerning the veracity of information, taking short cuts in evaluating messages, believing previously heard statements, and accepting statements supported by evidence without questioning their authenticity. He also notes that confirmation bias is perhaps the most common and damaging bias, as it leads people to look for evidence that confirms their beliefs and ignore evidence to the contrary.

Although we like to see ourselves as emotional beings that are governed by reason, neuropsychologists have shown that, in general, we make decisions emotionally and then justify them rationally<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, reason is subordinate to emotion and not the other way around. Emotions drive us to act, but not always in the right way. Emotion often makes it difficult for individuals to reflect logically on their situation<sup>24</sup>.

Another basic principle that can affect human judgement is the need for cognitive closure<sup>25</sup>, which is behind the search for definitive and simplistic answers to reduce uncertainty. A simple (albeit uncertain) answer to a complex problem is preferred to no answer at all.

#### 4.4. *The art of manipulation*

In its original sense, the word “manipulate” was used to describe the action of handling, and only objects per se can be handled. However, the term came to be used figuratively to refer to the cunning influence or control over people, situations or

---

22 Du Cluzel, François (2020). Cognitive Warfare. Innovation Hub: [https://www.innovationhub-act.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/20210113\\_CW%20Final%20v2%20.pdf](https://www.innovationhub-act.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/20210113_CW%20Final%20v2%20.pdf).

23 Damasio, Antonio (2022). *Descartes' Error*. Ed. Destino: Barcelona.

24 Astorga, Luis (2020). Manipulación cognitiva en el S.XXI. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos* 16, pp. 15-45: [https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/r/e/revista\\_ieee\\_16.pdf](https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/r/e/revista_ieee_16.pdf).

25 Kruglanski, Arie (1990). Lay Epistemic Theory in Social-Cognitive Psychology. *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 1(3), pp. 181-197: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1449747>.

information for personal gain or to exercise power and control. In this context, manipulation involves the use of deceptive, persuasive or coercive tactics to influence someone's perception, behaviour or decisions<sup>26</sup>.

When people are treated as mere objects, as philosopher Alfonso López Quintás<sup>24</sup> points out, some end up considering others as abject and repellent beings. This view prevents them from connecting with each other and forming solid structures that could generate an attitude of resistance. For example, putting hundreds of prisoners into train carriages as if they were parcels and making them travel vast distances. The aim was not so much to make them suffer, but to debase them. The same is true of information saturation and distraction by irrelevant topics.

When in this state, people are not aware that their thoughts are unfounded, but repeat (consciously or unconsciously) what they see and believe to be the result of their own thought process<sup>27</sup>. The invisible nature of manipulation makes it dangerous, because the manipulated subject thinks that his or her actions are not subordinate to any other person or power. Lack of awareness of these tactics, cognitive biases, the perpetrator's good manipulation skills and knowledge of the target's vulnerabilities, as well as the ease with which some people trust, believe or allow themselves to be influenced, play a crucial role.

Logically, we should not be sceptical about our entire environment, as this would not be remotely adaptive. This leads us to assume that what we experience is real and immutable, and therefore manipulation is often not even considered a possibility. It would mean assuming that we do not have full control over our actions, or even that we are being betrayed by someone we trust. As social beings, we may be sceptical in this area, but if we always governed our perceptions in this way, it would result in a state of constant distrust or uncertainty that would make it difficult for us to functionally adapt to our environment, as we need to rely on certain universal truths, structures and people in order to develop.

## 5. Methodology for analysing propaganda and manipulation in PSYOPS

### 5.1. Propaganda detection prototype

More than a few authors have looked into the study of propaganda and its effects on mass manipulation. Among others, highlights include the works of Edward Bernays:

---

26 López, Alfonso (1987). La manipulación del hombre a través del lenguaje. Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas: <https://www.mercaba.org/Enciclopedia/M/manipulacion.pdf>.

27 Chomsky, Noam (2016). Ten strategies of media manipulation. Archipiélago, 19(73): <https://www.revistas.unam.mx/index.php/archipelago/article/view/55996>.

“Propaganda”<sup>28</sup>, Walter Lippmann in his work “*Public Opinion*”<sup>29</sup> and Jacques Ellul in his book “*La propagande: ses techniques, ses métiers*”<sup>30</sup>. They all investigated how these techniques can shape opinions and behaviour, including Lippmann on the role of the media in the construction of perceived reality, and Ellul on the impact of technology and how propaganda takes advantage of it.

It is difficult to ignore the Nazi era in this area, and authors such as Victor Klemperer with his work “*LTI: The Language of the Third Reich*”<sup>31</sup>, in which he collected numerous examples showing that the Nazi leaders deliberately used certain words and phrases that they constantly repeated in order to manipulate the minds of German citizens. This is reminiscent of “Orwellian neo-language” in George Orwell’s *1984*<sup>32</sup>. It is also important to appreciate the valuable contributions of linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky<sup>33</sup> who, together with Edward Herman, argued that the media act as propaganda tools to maintain established power.

This study mainly uses the work of Arthur Ponsonby (1871-1946), a British politician known for his contribution to the field of diplomacy and his critique of war propaganda: “*Falsehood in Wartime: Propaganda Lies of the First World War*”<sup>34</sup>. His work debunks the most defamatory propaganda lies of the First World War. It explains how creating propaganda worked in wartime and how it affected the population, who received it, absorbed it, recreated it, and who also created new hoaxes, with the encouragement of governments. He used a large number of specific cases in his work, which should be viewed and reflected on. These include the “corpse factory”, where oils were extracted from the bodies of dead soldiers, the Belgian girl whose hands were cut off by German “beasts”, the crucified Canadian soldier, and the sinking of the passenger liner Lusitania.

Specifically, the study will use the decalogue that determined war propaganda slogans as a guide:

- I. We do not want war. To deflect our responsibility for the conflict, we have tried to avoid it by all means.

---

28 Bernays, Edward (1928). *Propaganda* 2008 edition in Spanish. Ed. Melusina.

29 Lippmann, Walter (1922). *Public Opinion*. Transaction Publishers. USA and London: [https://monoskop.org/images/b/bf/Lippman\\_Walter\\_Public\\_Opinion.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/b/bf/Lippman_Walter_Public_Opinion.pdf).

30 Ellul, Jacques (1962). *Propagandes. Les cobayes lettrés*: [https://monoskop.org/images/8/84/ELLUL\\_Jacques\\_-\\_1962\\_-\\_Propagandes.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/8/84/ELLUL_Jacques_-_1962_-_Propagandes.pdf).

31 Klemperer, Victor (1957). *LTI: The Language of the Third Reich*. Editorial Minúscula, Barcelona, 2001.

32 Orwell, George (1949). *1984*. Spanish edition: Debolsillo, 2013.

33 Herman, Edward and CHOMSKY, Noam (1988). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon.

34 Ponsonby, Arthur (1928). *Falsehood in Wartime: Propaganda Lies of the First World War*.

2. The enemy is solely responsible for the war. The antagonist's paranoia, madness or thirst for power are solely responsible for the outbreak of hostilities. The psychological profile of the enemy leader is often analysed, looking for signs of mental imbalance or psychopathy.
3. The enemy is an execrable being. Dehumanise the antagonist in order to nullify any possibility of forbearance, understanding or empathy towards his side. Any hint of pity for them must be eliminated.
4. We pursue noble aims. Our violence must be disguised as heroism and altruism, in contrast to the brutality of the enemy. Restoring peace, defending international law or overthrowing a dictator are the most commonly used arguments.
5. The enemy commits atrocities wilfully, ours are unintentional mistakes. Atrocities are committed in every war, which is why it is essential to always attribute them to the enemy, even if we have committed them ourselves.
6. The enemy uses unauthorised weapons. It is useful, to be persuasive, to constantly denounce the enemy for using illegal and immoral weapons (whether this is true or not).
7. We suffer few losses, the enemy's losses are enormous. Psychological warfare is used to show that we are winning, to keep our side's morale high and, conversely, demoralise the enemy.
8. Artists and intellectuals support our cause. Opinion leaders are generally liked and respected by our population, so it is useful to get them to support our cause.
9. Our cause is sacred, divine or sublime in nature. Our cause is based on idealistic arguments (religious, ideological or cultural). Recognising geostrategic interests does not often appeal to citizens, especially when their rulers demand great sacrifices.
10. Those who question war propaganda are traitors. Internal dissension must be avoided; in wartime, not only the views of the enemy must be censored, but also neutral and even-handed analyses.

Taking the considerations above into account, the following prototype analysis is proposed (continues with the following factors):

Factor I	<i>We do not want war</i>
1.	<p><b>Fragment of the message implying this factor [link+location].</b></p> <p><i>(insert the fragment containing the selected factor)</i></p> <p><b>Justification applied to the context</b></p> <p><i>(explain why this factor is considered to be present in relation to the case studied)</i></p>
2.	“ “

This is how we will compile the linguistic structures that are used that refer to each factor of in the decalogue, in order to build a possible subsequent methodology so they can be correctly identified and justified.

### *5.2. PSYOPS strategic analysis proposal*

**Brief historical introduction to the conflict.** The origins and evolution of the conflict will be outlined in such a way as to form a suitable framework for the subsequent analysis of the relevant cases.

**Structure of the strategy of both parties.** The strategy proposed by both sides will be outlined on the basis of the literature consulted; this is inevitably open to failure but will give us a rough idea of each path.

**Joint strategic landscape analysis: regional and international stakeholder mapping.** The conflict will be located geographically and the map of regional and international actors that play a relevant role in the conflict will be included.

**Application of the propaganda detection prototype.** Given how complex it is to comprehensively evaluate a single text concerning a specific event, and the fact that it is not manually and individually possible to make a sufficiently broad comparison by contrasting different texts and media, the following is proposed:

- Perform a search of popular local news sites, filtering by date close to the start of the last declared conflict between the two sides.
- Select and analyse at least one speech by the main representative of each side of the conflict.
- Use the articles obtained from the search, and the analysed speeches, to identify which structures correspond to Ponsonby's indicators described above.
- Justify why this is true, also taking into account the context, if necessary.

## **6. Strategic analysis applied to the Russia-Ukraine conflict**

### *6.1. Brief historical introduction to the conflict*

The war in Ukraine is taking place in a strategic context of growing rivalry between the great powers: the United States on one hand, and Russia and China on the other. Therefore, what is at stake goes beyond the Ukrainian and European space and has a worldwide impact.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), Secretary of State James Baker proposed a deal to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, agreeing not to extend NATO "one inch"

eastwards in exchange for Russian troops leaving Germany. Gorbachev agreed, but after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the pact seemed to take on a different meaning given the implications of the loss of Russian power. This turning point triggered a very different reality: “Not an inch of territory was to be off-limits to NATO”<sup>35</sup>. Russia’s post-Cold War loss of geopolitical power, while still wanting to be a great power, together with NATO’s progressive expansion, generated a deep sense of betrayal by the West.

Two key developments emerged during this period. Firstly, 2004-2005 saw the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and this, followed by Yushchenko’s victory, made Ukrainian hopes for NATO and EU membership appear more realistic. Putin interpreted this revolution as a covert method employed by the West to destabilise Russia, and declared that closer relations between the Atlantic Alliance, Ukraine and Georgia was a threat. This was openly stated at the Munich security conference (2007), where he accused the US and NATO of wanting to surround Russia<sup>36</sup>. Secondly, in 2013 another revolution broke out again in Ukraine, known as the Euromaidan Revolution. It was partly triggered by disagreement among the population over whether or not Ukraine should be economically linked to the EU, along with the rise of the far right in the country. This plunged Ukraine into crisis in 2014, culminating in Russia’s annexing Crimea<sup>37</sup>. On 24 February 2022, Russia launched its “special military operation”: start of the war.

---

35 Sarotte, Mary (2022). *Not one inch: America, Russia, and the making of post-cold war stalemate*. Yale University Press.

36 Ibasate, Francisco Javier (2007). Security Conference, Munich 2007: ¿Cuál es la inseguridad? *Revista Realidad* 112: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/4028622.pdf>.

37 Pardo, P. (2022). La guerra de Ucrania. *Panorama geopolítico de los conflictos*, IIEE, pp. 17-46: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/panoramas/PGC2022/PGC2022\\_Capitulo01.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/panoramas/PGC2022/PGC2022_Capitulo01.pdf).

## 6.2. Structure of Russian and Ukrainian strategy



Image 9. Own structure of both strategies based on the work of Mearsheimer<sup>38</sup>, Pardo<sup>39</sup> and the Bureau of Diplomatic Information<sup>40</sup>.

## 6.3. Joint strategic overview: map of regional and international stakeholders



Image 10. Strategic overview of stakeholders in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Source: Author's own work.

China's role in the conflict is based on the work of Connelly<sup>41</sup> and the official statement by the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*<sup>42</sup> regarding its

38 Mearsheimer, John (2014). Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault. University of Chicago: <https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Why-the-Ukraine-Crisis-Is.pdf>.

39 Pardo, José (2021). ¿Por qué a Rusia le interesa tanto Ucrania? Documento análisis, IEEEE, 25: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2021/DIEEEA25\\_2021\\_JOSPAR\\_Rusia.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2021/DIEEEA25_2021_JOSPAR_Rusia.pdf).

40 OID. "Country fact sheet: Russia." Diplomatic Information Office, April 2021. Available at: [https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Documents/FichasPais/RUSIA\\_FICHA%20PAIS.pdf](https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Documents/FichasPais/RUSIA_FICHA%20PAIS.pdf).

OID. "Country fact sheet: Ukraine." Diplomatic Information Office, October 2022. Available at: [https://www.exteriores.gob.es/documents/fichaspais/ucrania\\_ficha%20pais.pdf](https://www.exteriores.gob.es/documents/fichaspais/ucrania_ficha%20pais.pdf).

41 Connelly, Marisela (2023). Papel de China ante la guerra entre Rusia y Ucrania. México y la Cuenca del Pacífico, 12 (34), pp. 9-21: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/8723920.pdf>.

42 China's Position on the Political Solution to the Ukraine Crisis. Diplomatic Update, 24 February 2023: [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/esp/wjdt/gongbao/202302/t20230224\\_11030757.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/esp/wjdt/gongbao/202302/t20230224_11030757.html).

position on the Political Solution to the Ukraine Crisis. For Middle Eastern countries, the study focused on the analysis by the Centre for Research in International Politics and Economics<sup>43</sup>, and Soler<sup>44</sup> and Villena<sup>45</sup> to complete the African perspective. The role of the European Union has mainly been determined by the work of Busso and Barreto in the State and Public Policy Review<sup>46</sup>.

## 6.4. Applying the propaganda detection prototype

### 6.4.1. Criteria for selecting information

The selection criteria were mainly determined after performing a search using *Similarweb*<sup>47</sup>, a London-based BigData comparison company, filtering “News and media publishers”, by country and category to obtain a ranking of the most consumed platforms. The following platforms were chosen for their format, population, cultural influence and language:

For the Russia analysis, we used Sputnik’s Spanish-language version: <https://sputniknews.lat/> applying “military” as a search filter, adding the tags “Russia” and “Ukraine”; and filtering the date to 28 February 2022, four days after the start of the war, or the launch of the “special military operation”.

This site was chosen precisely because of its high level of consumption, its international reach and its controversial role as a news outlet - it is not an official media outlet. It was evaluated from the Latin American version (with the limitations that this entails), because its Russian version is temporarily inaccessible, because of the ease of language when written in Spanish, and because the agency is based in Moscow (and although it modifies certain aspects depending on its different versions, it was understood that the content and the ideas expressed may be similar). Other sites usually consumed by the Russian population have not been chosen due to their own difficulty of access and search structure, and the global version of Sputnik has not been used because it did not exist on the dates selected.

---

43 CIPEI (2022). La guerra ruso-ucraniana: intereses y oportunidades para los países de Oriente Medio. Análisis CIPEI, no. 22, 4: <https://rephip.unr.edu.ar/bitstreams/47c8fc7d-d81f-452d-8e65-e40badd2aaa4/download>.

44 Soler, Eduard (2022). Oriente Medio y el Norte de África ante la guerra en Ucrania. CIDOB, 706: [https://www.cidob.org/es/publicaciones/serie\\_de\\_publicacion/opinion\\_cidob/2022/oriente\\_medio\\_y\\_el\\_norte\\_de\\_africa\\_ante\\_la\\_guerra\\_en\\_ucrania\\_vasos\\_comunicantes](https://www.cidob.org/es/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/opinion_cidob/2022/oriente_medio_y_el_norte_de_africa_ante_la_guerra_en_ucrania_vasos_comunicantes).

45 Villena, Fernando (2023). La presencia rusa en África. RED: <https://www.defensa.gob.es/Galerias/gabinete/red/2023/02/p-52-55-red-402-rusia-africa.pdf>.

46 Busso, Anabella and BARRETO, Maximiliano (2022). Revisitando las visiones occidentales sobre la guerra en Ucrania. Revista Estado y Políticas Públicas, 19, pp. 53-75: <https://repositorio.uca.edu.ar/bitstream/123456789/15469/1/revisitando-visiones-occidentales%20.pdf>

47 Available at: <https://www.similarweb.com/corp/ourdata/>. Last visit: 29 May 2023.

For the speech analysis, we chose a speech given by Vladimir Putin on 24 February 2022 announcing the military operation in Ukraine<sup>48</sup>.

For Ukraine, we selected the Obozrevatel website, number 2 in the ranking of the most popular news sites in the country: <https://www.obozrevatel.com/>. The date filter used was 28 February 2022, as for Russia. For the speech analysis, we chose the speech Volodimir Zelensky addressed to the Russian people on 25 February 2022<sup>49</sup>, and the speech given after 16 days of war<sup>50</sup>.

A date close to the outbreak of the recent overt conflict was chosen for both sides, with a certain margin from the beginning (in this case 4 days), because this is when each side tries to establish its narrative based on the actions that take place, also taking advantage of the high emotional aspect of the event. The speeches were chosen because they are considered to be the most comprehensive at the time the war began.

It should be noted that analysing these sources is governed by the criteria of their reach into the population and not necessarily by their reliability and validity, because the study is interested in the effect they may have and not necessarily their truthfulness. Therefore, the most widely consumed sources rather than the official ones have been analysed.

#### 6.4.2. Ukraine Analysis

Website: Obozrebatel (<https://www.obozrevatel.com/>)

Search filter by date 28/02/2022 and war-related content: 48 articles.

Speech: Volodymyr Zelensky address to the Russian people - Speech Zelenski 25Feb

Volodymyr Zelensky after 16 days of war - Speech Zelenski 11 Mar

Factor 1	<i>We do not want war.</i>
I.	<p><b>[Speech Zelenski 25feb // 0:07-0:16min]</b></p> <p><i>“Today I initiated a phone call with the President of Russia. The result? Silence. Although the silence should be in Donbas.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>1. Intention to communicate with the other side. 2. Lack of response from Russia. 3. Request and reason for his message: to stop the war.</i></p>

48 EFE (24 February 2022). Putin’s full speech announcing the military operation in Ukraine. Heraldo Internacional: <https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/internacional/2022/02/24/discurso-putin-guerra-ucrania-rusia-1555435.html>.

49 Sánchez, Rafael (25 February 2022). Guerra de Ucrania: El emotivo discurso del Presidente Volodímir Zelenski pidiendo empatía al pueblo ruso. Esquire: <https://www.esquire.com/es/actualidad/a39218782/ucrania-guerra-discurso-presidente-zelenski-espanol-castellano/>.

50 The Huffpost (11 March 2022). Zelenski’s full speech after 16 days of war against Russia. YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmassXs5Flo&ab\\_channel=ElHuffPost](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmassXs5Flo&ab_channel=ElHuffPost).

2.	<p><b>[Zelenski speech 25feb // 4:18-4:21/5:10-5:18min]</b></p> <p><i>“The Ukrainian people want peace.”</i></p> <p><i>“We know for sure that we do not want war, neither cold, hot, nor a hybrid.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Explicit manifestation of not wanting war, but being drawn into it.</i></p>
Factor 2	<i>The enemy is solely responsible for the war.</i>
1.	<p><b>[Speech Zelenski 25feb // 0:41-0:46min]</b></p> <p><i>“Your leader has approved their [the army’s] move against us. Against the territory of another country.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Full responsibility for the attack is attributed to Putin.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Speech Zelenski 25feb // 5:30-5:35min]</b></p> <p><i>“If we are threatened, if someone tries to take away our country, our freedom, our lives... For the lives of our children, we will defend ourselves.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>It attributes all blame to the enemy and argues for a self-defence response.</i></p>
Factor 3	<i>The enemy is an execrable being.</i>
1.	<p><b>[Zelenski speech 25feb // 1:22-1:41min]</b></p> <p><i>“[...] as they say every day on television. Ukraine in your news and Ukraine in reality are two completely different countries. The most important difference is that ours is real.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>He accuses the Russian (government-controlled) media of lying to its people.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Obozrevatel speech Z // 3rd and 6th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“The evil armed with missiles, bombs and artillery must be stopped immediately. Be destroyed economically. Demonstrate that humanity knows how to defend itself” [...].</i></p> <p><i>“Today, Russian forces brutally shelled Kharkiv with artillery.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>He describes the enemy as “evil”, armed with missiles, bombs and artillery, shelling Kharkiv.</i></p>
Factor 4	<i>We pursue noble aims.</i>
1.	<p><b>[Speech Zelenski 25feb // 2:35-2:39min]</b></p> <p><i>“We want to build our own history. Peacefully. Quietly. Sincerely [...]”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Justification of their involvement in the war for noble purposes: to build their own history.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Speech Zelenski 25feb // 4:21-4:26min]</b></p> <p><i>“The Ukrainian authorities want peace. We want it and we will get it. We will do everything in our power.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>They will do what they can to “achieve peace”.</i></p>
Factor 5	<i>The enemy commits atrocities wilfully.</i>
1.	<p><b>[War Crimes // 3rd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“Since the beginning of the open invasion, Russia has fired 113 Iskander and Kalibr tactical operational land and sea-based missiles at peaceful Ukrainian towns and villages. This bloody crime by Putin’s regime is a flagrant violation of IHL, and requires an investigation by the Hague Tribunal.”</i></p>

	<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Reflecting on the atrocities consciously and willingly committed by Putin's regime, as its targets are peaceful towns and villages.</i></p>
Factor 6	<i>The enemy uses unauthorised weapons.</i>
1.	<p><b>[Immoral practice IHL // 3rd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"The Russian occupiers use Ukrainian flags to fool everyone and then open fire [...]. Sometimes the enemy also hangs a white flag, pretending that the Armed Forces of Ukraine have surrendered, but when they approach our soldiers' positions, they launch a vicious bombardment. Such actions by the enemy are another vile violation of the rules of international law. Humanitarian law."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>The weapon used is criticised as immoral under IHL.</i></p>
Factor 7	<i>We suffered few losses. Those of the enemy are enormous.</i>
1.	<p><b>[Kabanenko to the occupiers // 5th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"Your irreversible losses are enormous, the military hospitals and the civilian hospitals in Sevastopol temporarily occupied by you are full of three hundred injured, many of whom will not survive, and those who survive will be crippled."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>The aim is to demoralise the enemy and make them retreat by referring to their heavy losses.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Enemy losses // 1st, 3rd and 7th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"The Armed Forces destroyed more than 100 pieces of enemy equipment, including 20 "BM-21s"[...], 96 enemy tanks, 20 BM-21s were destroyed, 8 fuel tankers near Lebedyn were set on fire by artillery and accurate attacks by Bayraktars. [...] The surviving occupiers are also being captured and shot in the vicinity of the destroyed base. [...] The occupiers lost 5,300 dead in five days."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Enemy loss tally after 5 days of war, highlighting notable victories of own forces.</i></p>
Factor 8	<i>Artists, celebrities or intellectuals support our cause.</i>
1.	<p><b>[Elon Musk Obozrevatel // 3rd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"The first batch of Starlink satellite internet stations has arrived in Ukraine! Thanks to Elon Musk and all partners of Free Ukraine! We continue the struggle on all fronts!" - Fedorov wrote.</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>It uses Elon Musk's image to defend the Ukrainian cause and shows his support for carrying on their struggle.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Yuriy Dud Obozrevatel // 1st and 2nd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"Russian blogger and journalist Yuriy Dud spoke out against Russia's war against Ukraine. He described what the occupiers did in our country as a catastrophe. [...] He spoke about what was happening, openly declaring that it was the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, who had invaded the territory of a sovereign state and was waging a war there."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>They use the statements of a famous Russian blogger and journalist to defend the defence of Ukraine, blaming it on Russia.</i></p>
3.	<b>[Stephen King Obozrevatel // 1st and 4th paragraph]</b>

	<p><i>“The famous writer Stephen King publicly supported Ukraine. [...] In addition to Stephen King, many world celebrities have publicly expressed their support for Ukraine in the war against the Russian occupier. They include Angelina Jolie, Jim Carrey, Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively, David Lynch, Ashton Kutcher, Jared Leto, Sarah Jessica Parker and many others.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>The image of various celebrities and artists who have expressed support for the Ukrainian cause is used as a symbol of significant influence on public opinion.</i></p>
Factor 9	<i>Our cause is sacred, divine or sublime in nature.</i>
I.	<p><b>[Zelenski speech 25feb // 4:39-5:09min]</b></p> <p><i>“We talk about peace, principles, justice. The right of all to define their future, their security, the right of all not to live under threat. All of this is important to us. All of this is important for peace, and I know it is important for you as well.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>It appeals to universal principles that underline the undeniable importance of their cause. Something that does not just affect them, but is generally in the name of the common good.</i></p>
Factor 10	<i>Those who question war propaganda are traitors.</i>
—	<b>No messages found for this factor</b>

### 6.4.3. Russia

Website: Sputnik (<https://sputniknews.lat/>)

Search filter by date 28/02/2022 and war-related content (“military”, “Ukraine”, “Russia”): 41 articles

Speech: Vladimir Putin addresses Ukraine, US and its allies - Putin’s speech

Factor 1	<i>We do not want war.</i>
I.	<p><b>[Negotiations // 7th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“In fact, Russia has said that if Ukraine declares neutrality and pledges not to join NATO, the conflict is over.</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Russia does not want war, it has explicitly stated it, in exchange for winning its objectives.</i></p>
Factor 2	<i>The enemy is solely responsible for the war.</i>
I.	<p><b>[Ukraine and NATO responsible // 1st paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“Kiev’s claims are out of touch with reality. [...] NATO, which is largely responsible for the collapse of security in Europe.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Ukraine and NATO are primarily responsible for the consequences on Europe of the war.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Triggering events // 10th and 11th paragraphs]</b></p> <p><i>“These are the latest events that forced Russia to put its nuclear arsenal on alert, but it is also impossible to understand Moscow’s decision without taking into account the events of the last few years, where Western military activity on European soil constituted a serious provocation against the country.”</i></p>

	<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>NATO's actions are responsible for forcing Russia to act.</i></p>
3.	<p><b>[Hostile and unlawful actions // 5th and 16th paragraphs]</b></p> <p><i>“Also high-ranking officials of the leading NATO countries allow aggressive statements against our country, therefore I order the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff to put the Russian Army's deterrent weapons in special combat duty mode [...]. The US currently has missiles deployed in the Polish town of Redzikowo, about 180 kilometres from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, and in the Romanian village of Deveselu, about 600 kilometres from the Crimean peninsula.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>It is the enemy's actions that lead us to defend ourselves.</i></p>
4.	<p><b>[Putin's speech // 1st paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“This is the clear red line that has been talked about many times. They have crossed it.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Expansionist ambitions and constant defiance by the US and its allies has led to this scenario, where there is no choice but to fight back.</i></p>
5.	<p><b>[Putin's speech // 22nd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“Once again, I strongly emphasise: all responsibility for possible bloodshed will rest entirely on the conscience of the regime ruling on the territory of Ukraine.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Unilateral responsibility for the conflict is explicitly stated.</i></p>
Factor 3	<p><i>The enemy is an execrable being.</i></p>
I.	<p><b>[Criminals and rapists // 4th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“The West puts weapons in the hands of all kinds of criminals and rapists in Ukraine.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>The enemy commits crimes and violations.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Ukrainian Nazi torture // 2nd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“We know what Ukrainian Nazis do with the few Russian servicemen they manage to capture and we see that they repeat the same methods as the German Nazis and their henchmen during the Great Patriotic War. [...] We capture and identify all the Ukrainian Nazis involved in the torture of our comrades.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>He denounces acts of torture and draws parallels knowing that Nazism is rejected worldwide.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Civilians as a shield // 2nd and 4th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“Ukrainian nationalists use the civilian population as a human shield. And our military is doing everything it can to prevent that from happening.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>They dehumanise the antagonist, the enemy deserves no compassion or pity for what it does.</i></p>
3.	<p><b>[Putin's speech // 4th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“As I said in my previous message, you cannot look at what is happening there without compassion. It was simply impossible to bear. This nightmare had to be stopped immediately: the genocide against the millions of people who live there, who only rely on Russia, who pin their hopes on us alone. These hopes, feelings, the pain of the people, were for us the main reason behind the decision to recognise the Donbas people's republics.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p>

	<i>An attempt is made to eliminate any hint of pity for the enemy for committing these acts, as well as to justify one's own actions.</i>
4.	<p><b>[Putin's speech // 6th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"They will, of course, go against Crimea, just as in the Donbas, with a war, to kill, as the gangs of Ukrainian nationalists, Hitler's accomplices, killed defenceless people during the Great Patriotic War."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>The enemy goes to war to kill defenceless people.</i></p>
Factor 4	<i>We pursue noble aims.</i>
1.	<p><b>[Aid to Lugansk and Donetsk // 8th and 9th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"Moscow states that the operation was in response to a request for help from the Lugansk and Donetsk republics, recognised by Russia as independent republics in the Donbas region, to deal with aggression by Ukrainian troops."</i></p> <p><i>"Russia points out that military action is also aimed at de-Nazifying the region."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Moscow claims that its intervention has noble goals, helping to counter Ukrainian aggression and to "de-Nazify" the region.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>[Peacemaking mission // 3rd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"... [Ukrainian] claims that are at odds with the objectives of Moscow's peacekeeping mission, which include demilitarising and de-Nazifying Ukraine, and bringing to justice Ukrainians responsible for numerous war crimes against the population of Donetsk and Luhansk."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Moscow's mission seeks peace and justice.</i></p>
3.	<p><b>[Objective to protect // 7th paragraph and Putin's speech // 12th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"Putin insisted that the aim is to protect people who for eight years have been suffering harassment and genocide by the regime in Kiev."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Its purpose is based on protection.</i></p>
4.	<p><b>[Put an end to Kiev's threats // 1st, 2nd and 3rd paragraphs]</b></p> <p><i>"Russia did not initiate military operations in Ukraine, Russia completes them, the Russian Defence Ministry said."</i></p> <p><i>"The regime's military actions in Kiev and the systematic destruction of the residents of Donbas lasted 8 years. During this war, more than 14,000 people died, hundreds of them children," said the institution's spokesman, Igor Konashenkov.</i></p> <p><i>"It was necessary to put an end to this. It was necessary to put an end to the Kiev regime's endless threats against Russia. And Russia will do it," he added.</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>A heroic end to the long conflict and its fatal consequences.</i></p>
5.	<p><b>[Protect nuclear power plant // 5th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>"On 24 February, Russian forces took control of the damaged Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the north to prevent Ukrainian ultra-nationalist groups or terrorist organisations from carrying out acts that could compromise safety."</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Taking control of this plant was to prevent other groups from carrying out acts that would compromise safety, a preventive justification.</i></p>
Factor 5	<i>The enemy commits atrocities wilfully.</i>
1.	<b>[War crimes // 12th and 13th paragraph]</b>

	<p><i>“In a televised message, Russian President Vladimir Putin called on Ukrainian soldiers not to carry out the criminal orders of the authorities, to lay down their arms and return to their homes.”</i></p> <p><i>“Putin promised that those responsible for the numerous war crimes against the civilian population of Donetsk and Luhansk will be brought to justice.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>It describes Zelenski’s leadership as being guided by criminal orders, wilfully committing war crimes and atrocities.</i></p>
Factor 6	<i>The enemy uses unauthorised weapons.</i>
—	<b>No messages relating to this factor have been found.</b>
Factor 7	<i>We suffered few losses. Those of the enemy are enormous.</i>
I.	<p><b>[Ukraine’s major losses // 1st, 3rd and 4th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“The Russian Armed Forces destroyed 1,146 targets in Ukraine’s military infrastructure [...]. 31 Ukrainian troop command centres, 81 anti-aircraft systems and 75 radar stations were destroyed. The spokesman added that 42 aircraft and helicopters were shot down, 51 multiple rocket launchers, 263 special military vehicles and 147 pieces of artillery and mortars were destroyed.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>The enemy’s heavy losses are described in detail, without even mentioning their own losses.</i></p>
Factor 8	<i>Artists, celebrities or intellectuals support our cause.</i>
I.	<p><b>[Western censorship of RT // 8th paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“The head of RT and Rossiya Segodnya media group Margarita Simonian said that Western countries have always wanted to get rid of Russian media because they provide balanced reporting and are using Moscow’s special operation in Ukraine as an excuse to do so.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>Well-known public figure supports Russia and blames the West for censorship.</i></p>
Factor 9	<i>Our cause is sacred, divine or sublime in nature.</i>
I.	<p><b>[Putin’s speech // 2nd paragraph]</b></p> <p><i>“For our country, this is ultimately a matter of life and death, a matter of our historic future as a people. And this is not an exaggeration, it is true. It is not only a very real threat to our interests, but also to the very existence of our state and its sovereignty.”</i></p> <p><b>Justification</b></p> <p><i>The case for its defence is justified by larger idealistic issues that outweigh geostrategic interests.</i></p>
Factor 10	<i>Those who question war propaganda are traitors.</i>
—	<b>No messages relating to this factor have been found.</b>

## 7. Overall results and impressions from the analysis.

### 7.1. Conclusions

It can be confirmed that both sides have resorted to multiple and varied propaganda strategies. Ukraine has made a balanced use of several of these strategies, perhaps most notably external support from artists, celebrities and intellectuals (factor 8). Russia’s

content has been more specific, predominantly focusing on: holding the enemy accountable (factor 2), dehumanising the enemy (factor 3), and justifying their noble ends (factor 4).

At the same time, some factors were absent (factor 10) or rare (factor 6). It should be noted that the analysis time frame was restricted to two specific days, 24 and 28 February 2022, and the fact that these factors are not present in this study does not mean that they were not used. Monitoring in the months following the conflict, or applying the model to other conflicts, could provide a more solid basis for this.

The fact that both positions have used several factors of the same nature to their advantage reveals the result of two parallel realities regarding the same conflict, which will undoubtedly be a relevant factor in terms of potential polarisation and maintaining diametrically opposing positions.

It is noteworthy that no propaganda factors were found in the narrative of the second video analysed for Ukraine, from Volodymyr Zelensky after 16 days of war. This has led us to the conclusion that it is necessary to draw a fine line between strategic communication and the use of propaganda strategies that contain manipulative elements.

### *7.2. Possible additional factors observed*

Bearing in mind that the model used was designed in 1928, and having checked its current application, we believe it should be updated in the light of the nuances observed during the analysis. On these grounds, we would like to add two further factors that we consider play a relevant role in propaganda:

- **Discredit some kind of link with the enemy.** Generalise in such a way that everything that comes from the enemy is to be rejected physically or morally. This eliminates any link (of any kind) with the enemy and its associated spheres, blaming any third party or actor who does maintain links, in turn generating ingroup rejection of this third party. Example: “Buying Russian products now means paying money to kill people.” This generates, firstly, feelings of guilt for buying, and secondly, the rejection of anyone who does buy.
- **Using victims as an instrument.** Using the pain of victims as a means to pursue political ends. A certain degree of emotion is intentionally stirred up either to gain support, to repel the enemy, or both.

All the proposed factors are included in Annex I, together with a possible inference about the mental schema they project (associated feelings and explanatory cognitive biases).

### 7.3. How can propaganda detection help reduce the cognitive impact of PSYOPS?

As has been seen, the same information can be presented in one way or another to generate comprehensive perceptions from a one-sided perspective. Therefore, we believe that the cognitive impact can be diminished as long as the subject deliberately detects and analyses the manipulative information presented by the propaganda, and is aware of the specific cognitive biases to which it appeals (Annex I). Even if after such deliberate and conscious processing, the subject may still hold an extremist position; at least they will have been warned of the attempt to manipulate the content. The availability and use of future detection tools is intended to make people learn from typical propaganda strategies, making them more alert and prepared for attempts by others to instil ideas.

This does not protect the citizen from possible attack, but it can help them to freely decide their thoughts, ideas or opinions (through reflection), meaning that these are less likely to be induced, implanted or imposed directly or indirectly. This “free” aspect with regard to receiving information is mainly based on the idea expressed in Art. 20 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978<sup>51</sup>, which states that the citizen has the right to receive information: “to freely communicate or receive truthful information by any means of dissemination.”

Having said that, the following action model when faced with a cognitive attack by an enemy is proposed (Figure 11):



Image 11. Action proposal for defence against a cognitive attack. Source: Author's own work.

<sup>51</sup> Spanish Constitution of 1978. Heading 1. Chapter Two. Section 1a. Fundamental rights and public liberties: <https://app.congreso.es/consti/constitucion/indice/titulos/articulos.jsp?ini=20&tipo=2#:~:text=Art%C3%ADculo%2020,A%20la%20libertad%20de%20C3%AAttedra.>

Given that some studies highlight the use of PSYOPS as a preamble to other INFOOPS attacks (hoaxes, *Fake News*, etc.), detecting them early on is extremely important to help reduce the potential subsequent impact. This sequential order is key, as studies show the use of these non-military means in both conflict and peacetime by actors such as China and Russia, who adopt a more integrated and approach that can prove advantageous<sup>52</sup>.

## 8. Conclusions

The overall findings of the study show that using the described propaganda factors could lead to polarisation among recipients who end up holding diametrically opposed positions on the same conflict. This suggests the use of manipulation through propaganda, exploiting cognitive biases that appeal to and are often processed unconsciously. Therefore, it is considered useful to implement protocols for detecting and analysing these factors, providing civilians with information processing structures that highlight any manipulative intent and how it affects their information processing. This avoids the excessive use of censorship, making them responsible and aware of what they consume, preserving their right to freely receive information, and consequently supporting and respecting freedom of thought and, therefore, being less susceptible to unconsciously accepting external interference. Similarly, it would avoid countering the enemy's information with more information (which could lead to over-saturation). It would also increase trust and legitimacy in the government by presenting objective, quality information, without having to forgo stating its objectives, achievements, motivation and hopes to its population.

Manipulation will clearly be negative, regardless of who spreads it, what they spread or how they spread it. Therefore, leaving aside questions of truthfulness or credibility, and focusing on the quality of information in terms of manipulative intent, this system can help us to consciously process what appears imperceptible to the naked eye.

In short, the aim is to provide civilians with a prototype for detecting propaganda that leads to an internal dialogue on the factors that modulate our perception. By being aware of what we need to pay attention to, and why and how this influences us, we can have a more complete and free view of what we think about and what can ultimately guide our behaviour.

An analysis of the legal implications of IOs is also necessary: possible limitations in operations directed at civilians, permitting certain aspects in military confrontations (e.g. deception operations), etc. It is necessary to establish certain defining lines in terms of permitted acts, as well as in the physical sphere.

---

52 VEJVODOVÁ, Petra (2019). Information and Psychological Operations as a Challenge to Security and Defence. *Vojenské rozhledy* č. 3: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Psyops-vs-Info-ops-modified-according-to-Brangetto-and-Veenendal\\_fig1\\_335947264](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Psyops-vs-Info-ops-modified-according-to-Brangetto-and-Veenendal_fig1_335947264).

Looking forwards, the aim is to lay the foundations for a possible research line, starting with propaganda detection and its importance (this study), followed by testing whether the stated factors evoke the associated explanatory biases outlined in Annex I (bearing in mind that different biases may be influential, depending on the target population: civilians, analysts or combatants), and finally, training an AI system to mechanically detect the language patterns underlying propaganda, and therefore biases, thereby generating an objective, fast and efficient tool.

## ANNEX I

FACTOR	ASSOCIATED FEELING / POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION	COGNITIVE BIAS
1. <i>We do not want war</i>	We are peaceful (good). Under the idea of self-defence.	<i>Selective perception. Halo effect positive impressions.</i>
2. <i>The enemy is solely responsible for the war</i>	Exemption from liability. External locus of control.	<i>Non-conformity bias. Attribution bias.</i>
3. <i>The enemy is an execrable being</i>	Depersonalisation/dehumanisation. Elimination of any level of understanding, empathy or compassion.	<i>Halo effect negative impressions. Stereotype.</i>
4. <i>We pursue noble aims</i>	A kind of “the end justifies the means”.	<i>Spotlight effect.</i>
5. <i>The enemy willingly commits atrocities</i>	Generalising wilful conduct: unlawful, culpable and punishable.	<i>Attribution bias.</i>
6. <i>Enemy uses unauthorised weapons</i>	Discredit and delegitimise the enemy: they do not play fair, cannot be trusted, do not follow the rules of war.	<i>Spotlight effect. Moral luck.</i>
7. <i>We suffer few losses</i>	The enemy is not as strong as they say they are, we can take him.	<i>Framing effect.</i>
8. <i>Artists, celebrities and intellectuals support our cause</i>	“Seal of guarantee or quality”.	<i>False consensus effect.</i>
9. <i>Our cause has a sacred, divine or sublime character.</i>	The importance of our struggle transcends physical barriers. The lesser evil (war) justifies a greater good (sacred, divine or sublime).	<i>Spotlight effect.</i>
10. <i>Those who question the war propaganda are traitors</i>	It overrides any deviation from the norm. Direct attack on freedom of thought. Prohibits a tenth man rule.	<i>Bandwagon effect. Groupthink.</i>
11. <i>Discredit any links with the enemy</i>	Blaming and refusing any kind of contact with the ex-group.	<i>Ingroup bias.</i>
12. <i>Using victims as an instrument</i>	Make an emotional impact in order to gain support for oneself, repel the enemy, or both, at victims’ expense.	<i>Illusion of control</i>

## ANNEX II

Explanation and application of the cognitive biases in Annex I to each case:

### **Selective perception**

Depending on their expectations, the subject selects a subject of their attention and neglects the remaining part of the information. This means that, if the subject is convinced of the good/bad dichotomy, they will be more likely to focus only on those cues that prove their beliefs, and not on other information related to the conflict.

### **Halo effect - positive impressions**

If you associate a person with a positive trait, that positive impression will spread to their other traits. This means that if you see this peaceful (good) trait in them, you will generalise this idea and interpret their other traits as good or positive.

### **Non-conformation bias**

This is the tendency to critically scrutinise information when it contradicts our core beliefs and to accept without judgement information that agrees with them.

### **Halo effect - negative traits**

If we associate a person with a negative trait, that negative impression will spread to their other traits. Therefore, if you associate the enemy with negative characteristics, this idea will be generalised and will contribute to dehumanisation or depersonalisation.

### **Stereotype**

You have a widespread belief that members of a group will have certain characteristics, despite having no information about individuals. You not only attribute negative characteristics to the criticised subject (president, soldier), but also to the group to which he or she belongs (nationality, culture, etc.)

### **Moral luck**

The tendency to attribute a higher or lower moral standing is based on the outcome of an event. If unauthorised weapons have been used, it is likely to be exposed in a way that creates a worse moral position for the enemy, emphasising their harmful consequences. However, these may also have been used by allies, but their perceived moral impact may be lessened if their catastrophic results are not shown.

### **Spotlight effect**

This occurs when people place much more importance on a particular point or aspect of an event. For example, focusing more on the end than on the means, more on the enemy's failures, or whether your motivation to seek a greater cause causes you to overlook lesser evils.

### **Attribution bias**

This is the tendency to attribute the actions of others to their character or personality (in this case, "they wilfully commit atrocities" because of their intrinsic evil), while attributing your behaviour to circumstantial factors beyond your control ("the enemy is solely responsible for the war").

### **Framing effect**

People often draw different conclusions from the same information depending on how it is presented. For example, you could say that your side has suffered few losses and that the enemy's losses are enormous (to keep fighting motivation high), but you could also use your casualty numbers to blame the enemy for their atrocities.

### **False consensus effect**

It has been proven that most people think that their own habits, values and beliefs are widely shared and more prevalent than they really are. Therefore, the fact that celebrities support the cause will be "evidence" that backs up your beliefs as being correct.

**Bandwagon effect**

This is the tendency to do or believe in something because many people do or believe it. Supporting war propaganda is often simply following the opinion of the majority around you.

**Groupthink**

People make irrational decisions, often to minimise conflict, out of a desire for conformity and harmony in the group. Even if there is someone who disagrees with war propaganda, he or she will often not oppose it merely because of social pressure.

**Ingroup favouritism**

This is the tendency to value behaviours, attitudes or preferences of ingroup members more positively than those of people in the outgroup.

**Illusion of control**

Tendency to overestimate the degree of one's influence on external events. Emotions often lead to a need for action; if this illusion of control makes you think that you can stop the enemy and therefore decrease the number of victims (or bring about justice), you will adopt a confrontational stance.

---

*Article received: 04 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---



*Roberto VIZCARDÓ BENAVIDES*

*Qualification: Colonel (R) Army of Peru. PhD in Political Science and International Relations.*

*E-mail: instituto.marin@caen.edu.pe*

## *The strategic value of Hub Peru in South America*

### **Abstract**

Global geopolitical dynamics are undergoing fundamental changes in the configuration of international relations and geo-economics. Since the *New Silk Road* strategy was presented with its maritime extension to the South American subcontinent to link Asia with South America, Peru will become the most important centre for trade and navigation in South America thanks to the construction of the mega port of Chancay, new infrastructure at Lima International Airport and complementation of the National Road Network, which includes railway construction projects and the IIRSA (Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America) highways linking Peru with Brazil. This integral node, known as Hub Peru because of its geostrategic location in South America, represents a historic opportunity for the country to definitively take-off towards the longed-for sustainable development.

### **Keywords**

Geopolitics; Silk Road; Mega Port Chancay; Geo-strategic Location of Peru.

### **Cite this article:**

VIZCARDÓ BENAVIDES, Roberto (2023). "The strategic value of the Hub Peru in South America". *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. 457-489.

## I. Introduction

To understand 21st century geopolitics, we must revisit the classics such as Mackinder, Spykman, Mahan and Sun Tzu<sup>1</sup>. Alfred Thayer Mahan postulated that achieving maritime power was the key to gaining supremacy, while Mackinder argued that control of the heartland meant control of the world. A global geopolitical game seems to be on the horizon, from which Peru could benefit. And that geopolitical game appears to be based on RMB: Resources, Market, Bases, according to Mohan Malik (NATO, 2016).

The geopolitical centre of gravity in Asia has evolved rapidly, especially in the last two decades. Eurasian countries (China, Russia, India, etc.), leaving aside their old maritime rivalries, have undertaken a series of actions aimed at creating extra-continental spheres of influence, such as: the creation of economic hubs, organisations (ASEAN-Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Eurasian Union although without China and India as yet), transport corridors, highways, high-speed trains or gas pipeline networks (NATO, 2016). Now in the present day, all of this has meant a major change in the geopolitics of this world region, with global repercussions. However, a major disruptive element has been introduced, Russia's still unfolding attack on Ukraine, which may deepen this change.

Peru is one of the countries that combine a series of geographical, social, cultural and economic characteristics that set it apart in the world. With a geographical extension of 1,285,215.9 km<sup>2</sup> (which, until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was 30% larger than the current territory) and 200 miles of sea over the Pacific Ocean (Grau Sea), the country is one of the planet's megadiverse territories. Natural resources available in terms of flora, fauna, minerals, hydrocarbons, gas, phosphates, water (8th largest reserve in the world)<sup>3</sup>, hydrobiological resources (a unique ecosystem considered the richest sea in the world), make Peru a privileged country. The morphology of the Peruvian territory, with its varied ecological levels and climates determined by the coast, the Andes and the Peruvian Amazon, reinforces this privileged status.

This natural layout of the territory also describes incredible scenic resources, with tourist potential and attractions for national and foreign visitors (Zegarra, 2022).

Geostrategically located, the Peruvian territory occupies the central and western part of South America. The Pacific coastline stretches for 3,080 km. The great Amazon River, with its source on Peruvian soil, shares Lake Titicaca with Bolivia. This geographical characterisation gives Peru a very particular value and strategic stature in the region.

---

1 Mohan Malik. *Geopolitics: Asia out of balance?* In NATO Forum Papers No. 25. 2016. ISBN 978-88-96898-13-0.

2 Peru is the 19th largest country in the world in terms of geographical size. Source: INEI Peru. Press Release No. 127. 11 July 2016.

3 FAO (2003), cited by the National Water Authority - ANA. Informe *El agua en cifras*.

Peru also has an ancient culture. Ancient civilisations such as Caral dating back to 2,500 BC (Shady, 2015) and later the Incas, developed centres of power that, as in the case of the Inca culture, came to form a veritable empire from its capital Cusco. There is evidence that the tenth ruler of the Inca Empire, Túpac Yupanqui, El Navegante (1441-1493), explored the Pacific Ocean, bringing the presence and knowledge of Andean man to great distances such as Rapa Nui and Mangareva in Oceania (Del Busto, 2019).

Peru's long tradition of foreign trade dates back to ancient times, as far back as the trade relationship with China and Mexico developed between 1595 and 1800. The Port of Callao is to date one of the most important in the South Pacific, the nerve centre of Peru's trade with the world; it is also relevant to mention that more than 80% of Peruvian foreign trade is carried out by sea. The regional ports of Paita and Salaverry in the north and San Martín, San Juan, Matarani and Ilo in the south contribute to this purpose and by the end of 2024, the mega port of Chancay located 70 km north of Lima will come into operation, thus reconfiguring maritime transport in the region and its connection with the Asia-Pacific countries.

In terms of national road systems, Peru has the Longitudinal Coastal Highway (Pan-American Highway North and South), the Longitudinal Highland Highway and the Longitudinal Jungle Highway, as well as 20 transversal roads and their respective variants, the main one being the Southern Interoceanic Highway that links the Peruvian coast with the Atlantic coast in Brazil.

With the advent of aviation in the last century, Peru also undertook the construction of a series of air terminals throughout the country. Limatambo International Airport was inaugurated in 1935, located in the district of San Isidro, Lima. Terminals were subsequently developed in Cusco, Arequipa, Juliaca, Iquitos and Tacna, among others.

The urban growth of the Peruvian capital and the increased flow of passengers led to the construction of a new air terminal in the Constitutional Province of Callao. Jorge Chávez International Airport was inaugurated in October 1960; five years later it was reopened after modernisation work in December 1965. Since 2001, it has been operated by European consortium Lima Airport Partners (LAP).

Due to its strategic location in the western centre of the South American coast, Jorge Chávez International Airport quickly became an international connection node for the subcontinent, considered a regional air hub, handling up to 10 million passengers per year.

In the early 2010s, the leadership of Lima airport began to give way to the constant increase in air traffic and entry into operation of other terminals such as the new international airport in Santiago de Chile, Bogotá (El Dorado) and Quito (Mariscal Sucre). Finally, Jorge Chávez Airport would lose its status as a regional hub. Faced with this scenario, since 2015, LAP has undertaken the construction of the new terminal, including a second runway and new control tower which, together with complementary construction work, will allow it to regain its status as a regional hub by 2025 and serve up to 37 million passengers per year.

## 2. The geo-strategic and geo-economic environment

The Peruvian state orients its development strategy in a social market economy regime guaranteeing private initiative, freedom of enterprise, labour and trade<sup>4</sup>. A series of actions have been established under these premises, such as the signing of free trade agreements, which currently total 22 with 55 countries on four continents. In terms of population it equates to international trade relations with more than half of the world's population.

In the geo-economic field it means that goods and services produced in Peru can be placed in very competitive conditions in the markets of America, Europe, Asia and Oceania. The advantages for Peru are obvious, as entering goods and services into the US market tax free is not the same for another country to do the same with taxed operations without a free trade agreement.

In 1974, General Edgardo Mercado Jarrín, a renowned Peruvian geopolitical expert, recommended Peru's adhesion to the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) Economic Forum as soon as the moratorium on adding new members to the 18 existing ones was lifted (Mercado, 1974).

General Mercado's strategic vision is today a state policy. Peru's trade and cooperation partnership with the world thus includes APEC, the European Union, China, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the United States of America, Canada, the Pacific Alliance (PA), the Andean Community (CAN), and others.

APEC, an Australian initiative formed in 1989, is the world's most stable and powerful forum for economic cooperation, grouping 21 countries from the Americas, Asia and Oceania, namely: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China,



Map 1. APEC. Source: Chilean Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>4</sup> Political Constitution of the Peruvian State of 1993. Articles 58, 59 and 60

Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore; Taipei-China, Thailand, United States and Vietnam.

As can be seen, APEC (map 1) includes the world's most powerful economies, as well as only three Latin American countries (Chile, Peru and Mexico). Chile joined in 1994 and Peru in 1998. A new moratorium has since been agreed for the inclusion of new members.

In socio-economic terms, APEC accounts for 60% of the world's GDP, as well as about 40% of the world's population (2.9 billion), and 48% of world trade is generated in the area. By 2022, Peru will reach almost 65 billion in trade with APEC. Each year, the leaders of member economies meet in one venue; in 2024 the meeting will be held in Lima, Peru.

The potential generated by the PA, made up of Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Peru (recently joined officially by Singapore), is of great importance due to the fact that its mechanisms are highly dynamic, one might even say surprising. In economic terms, the PA would be the 8th largest economy in the world<sup>5</sup>.

Despite recent political disagreements, the PA has proven to be a powerful economic and trade integration mechanism that has achieved great goals in its relatively short period of existence (it was created in April 2011 and its trade protocol dates from 2016) towards the objective of guaranteeing the free transit of goods, services, capital and people. The steady development of its aims has attracted worldwide attention. The alliance currently has 14 observer countries<sup>6</sup> from the Americas, 32 from Europe, 13 from Asia, 2 from Africa and 2 from Oceania.

A particularly important milestone (because of its geopolitical implications) occurred in September 2013. During an official visit to the Republic of Kazakhstan, Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, announced to the world one of the largest and most ambitious infrastructure projects for passenger, freight and hydrocarbon transport, as well as high technology to connect Asia with the world, the New Silk Road or BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) project. Shortly afterwards, in October of the same year, at the APEC Leaders' Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia, President Xi Jinping announced the maritime component of this project, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

Initially conceived to link the port of Tianjin in China with the port of Ilo in Peru, today the transpacific maritime connection of the BRI strategy that will link the South American coast with Asia and Oceania has been redesigned considering the mega port of Chancay as the Hub of South America and is presented as an emerging route to consolidate intercontinental trade, complementary to traditional regular maritime routes.

---

<sup>5</sup> Published on the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

<sup>6</sup> [Alianzapacifico.net/estados-observadores/paises-observadores-4/](http://Alianzapacifico.net/estados-observadores/paises-observadores-4/)



Map 2. Belt and Road Initiative. Source: *Belt and road research platform*

The port of Chancay combines the natural characteristics of a bay (depths, tides, waves and current conditions) suitable to develop a port and logistics complex and has access to the Pan-American Highway and other inland communication routes, as well as being located in a central position within the Peruvian territory and the subcontinent. Unique characteristics that fit precisely with the maritime strategy of the BRI initiative.

All the geographical, social, political and economic integrity described in summary forms a geostrategic and geoeconomic node of extraordinary importance for the development of Peru's international economic relations with the world, and to promote its development, what is known as the Economic hub-and-spokes system. (NATO, 2016).

The synergy of the mega port of Chancay (maritime component) together with the new Jorge Chávez International Airport (air component), the national road network that includes the road linking Peru with Brazil (IIRSA South), IIRSA Centre, IIRSA North and the short- to medium-term construction of the railway network (land component), inexorably determine that Peru will become the Hub of the South Pacific.

The question is whether this strategic opportunity can represent a qualitative leap in the country's growth and become a sustainable source of Peruvian development.

As part of this line of action, the State of Peru approved the National Competitiveness and Productivity Policy, whose priority objective is:

“To provide the country with quality economic and social infrastructure through efforts aimed at efficient planning and prioritisation of infrastructure, ensuring the sustainability and functioning of economic, social and natural infrastructure, with a focus on territorial development and resilience to natural disasters” (Ministry of Economy, 2018).

Subsequently, in 2022, the plan was updated and renamed the National Plan for Sustainable Infrastructure for Competitiveness 2022-2025 (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2022), a planning instrument that will drive economic growth, close gaps and unlock long-term infrastructure. In good time.

### 3. The maritime component

#### 3.1. Key considerations

International trade to and from the South American Pacific coast involving Colombia, Ecuador, Chile and Peru is now regularly served by the main shipping routes (north-south and south-south) operating in the region, also referred to as liner shipping<sup>7</sup>. However, South America has no container transshipment ports. These services are located in Mexico, Panama and the United States (Los Angeles).

However, regular maritime routes are not the only ones serving the external trade of the South American west coast. Other routes are used by charter vessels providing direct service using the shortest route. Here are some comparisons (CAF, 2003, page 43):

“From any Brazilian port or from Buenos Aires in Argentina, you can get to Singapore faster than from any port on the west coast of South America.

Rio de Janeiro is the same distance from Hong Kong as it is from Antofagasta, which is at the same latitude.

To get from Buenos Aires to Los Angeles it is shorter to go through the Strait of Magellan than to use the Panama Canal.

Valparaíso seems to be closer to Singapore than Callao. However, this direct distance passes very close to Antarctica and is probably not feasible for most journeys.

New York is closer to Callao and Valparaíso than Los Angeles. However, the economic distance is greater than the miles indicate because to get to New York, you have to go through the Panama Canal.

Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and even Chile are closer to Europe than to Asia.

Transferring in Los Angeles during a transport service between Asia and the west coast of South America does not practically increase the total distance at all”.

---

<sup>7</sup> Maritime transport is divided into two main groups: “tramp shipping” (bulk) and “liner shipping”. The latter is a containerised freight transport service, mainly a regular service; it can be compared to the metro passenger service: the lines offer different fixed itineraries in relation to a timetable and stops. (A. Gomez & Sanchez R., 2021)

Jan Hoffmann, in a study published in 2000, details the requirements necessary for a port to be considered as a hub port<sup>8</sup>, which is equivalent to a mega port with intermodal connections, warehousing and container distribution centre capabilities. According to the study, these requirements are as follows:

a) Land connections

The port terminal must have connections to a road and rail network in order to be able to receive cargo and concentrate it for distribution in foreign trade and cabotage operations.

The world's major port terminals have also developed adjacent industrial zones and free trade zones, as well as all kinds of international logistics services (cargo handling and storage, maintenance and repairs, etc.) that serve international trade operations as a whole.

b) Maritime connections

Ability to operate as a major transshipment hub (cargo arrives and departs by sea). It is essential to offer quality maritime services that make it possible to move cargo from smaller ports to concentrate at the mega port and connect to international maritime traffic.

This capacity is closely linked to the geostrategic location in the region. Recognition of a port terminal as a transshipment centre by international trade operators has a correlate: substantial growth in land services linked to international trade, the confluence of international maritime routes and an increased presence of shipping lines serving international trade, due to the large volume of cargo concentrated at the terminal.

On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account that the latest generation of container ships used to transport goods, particularly intercontinental transport, have the following characteristics:

- Load capacity: 15,000-18,000 TEUs
- Length: 400 metres
- Draught: 16-20 metres
- Speed: 25 knots
- Deadweight: 200,000 to 250,000 tonnes.

There is currently no port on the South American Pacific coast with capacity to receive ships of these dimensions.

---

<sup>8</sup> *CEPAL Review N° 71*, Article El potencial de puertos pivotes en la costa del Pacífico sudamericano, p. 129. August 2000.

### 3.2. Economic and geographical distance

Since the turn of the century, the idea of *bioceanic corridors*<sup>9</sup> has dominated the development agenda of countries bordering both the South Pacific and Atlantic sides of the region. Associativity has been presented as an unavoidable strategy to achieve infrastructure integration in South America, as a way to interconnect countries in terms of trade and exchanges of all kinds.

If we stick to the definition of a *bioceanic corridor*, it is essential to clearly establish the relationship between *economic distance* and *geographical distance*.

This is because the usefulness of creating *bioceanic corridors* with a drop-off point at Pacific Ocean ports (Callao, Paita, Ilo, etc.) –in the case of Peru– has been widely, and perhaps exaggeratedly, considered as the solution to export production from countries with views of the Atlantic –Brazil, for example– to the large markets of Asia.

In the case of the Southern Inter-Oceanic Highway (IIRSA South), or Peru-Brazil Bioceanic Corridor, which links the Ports of Santos (Brazil) and Matarani, Ilo, and Marcona (Peru), an analysis of the geographical distance in terms of sea crossing yields the following results:

MARITIME DISTANCE (miles)	Singapore	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Yokohama
Callao	11,700	11,424	10,672	9,643
Santos	9,912	11,205	11,550	11,579

Table I. Comparative distances from Puerto Callao and Puerto Santos to Asia. Prepared by: RVB

As can be seen at first glance, in terms of maritime distance, placing goods in the large port of Singapore or Hong Kong from the port of Santos means a marked difference over Callao; on the other hand, exporting to the ports of Shanghai (China) or Yokohama (Japan) is evidently more favourable from Callao.

In this aspect other variables such as the location of export production centres, logistics costs (including the cost of land transport, rights of way, port fees, services and time), competitiveness, price levels, etc., thus become absolutely relevant in order to really carry out a cost-benefit and economy of scale analysis that unquestionably justifies the use of a bioceanic corridor. These aspects should be subject to supranational analysis and definitions.

### 3.3. The South American Pacific Coast Ports

Four coastal countries are located on the South American Pacific coast: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Over the last two decades, as the region's world trade has

9 A bioceanic corridor is defined as a route that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean, opening up new external markets, while at the same time providing greater and better physical and real connectivity within the countries along its route, in other words "integrating" regions, peoples and countries (Mercado Jarrín, 2000).

grown, a series of port terminals have begun to develop, clearly competing to attract the greatest volume of cargo to their shores. Chile, Ecuador and Colombia planned the construction of so-called *mega ports* with capacity to handle large container ships. Private capital and world-class operators were brought in to this end. Let us look at them.

### 3.3.1. Colombia: Port of Buenaventura

Colombia modernised infrastructure at the Port of Buenaventura, whose greatest strengths are its proximity to the Panama Canal and its land connection with the Port of Cartagena on the Caribbean Sea, its equidistance between the north and south of the American continent and its proximity to more than 300 maritime transport routes.

However, access to the port is via a natural channel 31.5 km long, 200 metres wide on average and ranging in depth from 13.5 to 12.5 metres. Its annual container throughput is lower than other South Pacific coast terminals and does not qualify for a position in the top 100 largest ports in the world. (see ranking in table II)

In a report dated January 2022, the Superintendency of Transport of Colombia (Supertransporte) recorded that container movement at the Port of Buenaventura between 2019-2021 reached the figure of 1,051,772 TEUs<sup>10</sup>, equivalent to 9,331,783 tonnes mobilised. The terminal is operated by Colombian company Sociedad Portuaria Regional de Buenaventura S.A.

### 3.3.2. Ecuador: Port of Manta

In early 2006, Ecuador planned the construction of a mega port at Manta by the company Hutchinson Ports Holdings (HPH) one of the largest port operators in the world; a corporation based in Hong Kong which currently operates 8 ports in Latin America (4 in Mexico, 2 in Panama, 1 in Argentina and 1 in the Bahamas).

As a result of insurmountable differences with the Ecuadorian government at the time, in 2009 the operator abandoned the concession initially agreed for the development of a 30-year plan. One of the reasons given by Ecuador for terminating the contract with HPH was failure to meet projected maritime traffic targets.

As it is located in the open sea with a draught of 12 to 13 metres, the port of Manta does not generate or attract more maritime traffic despite efforts by the current operator, Chilean group Agencias Universales (AGUNSA), in charge of the operation since 2017 and whose concession is for 40 years. In 2021, according to the terminal operator, Manta moved 1,168,534 tonnes of cargo. It can handle container ships of 2 to 3 thousand TEUs.

---

<sup>10</sup> TEU, Twenty foot Equivalent Unit = 20 cubic foot container.

However, the port of Guayaquil is still the busiest port in Ecuador and ranks second in the region (after the port of Callao) with 2,163,151 TEUs mobilised.



Figure 1. Port of Manta, Ecuador. Source: Manta Port Terminal (TPM)

### 3.3.3. Chile: Port of Mejillones

Chile, a country with an extensive coastline, could not escape the trend of building mega ports in the Pacific. Located 65 km north of Antofagasta is the old port of Mejillones, once a minor port dating back to the 19th century when it was under Bolivian jurisdiction. Mejillones was always linked to the nitrate and coal trade.

The project to build a mega port in Mejillones started at the end of the last century. The Mejillones Port Complex (CPM) was finally put into operation in late 2003, with the goal of becoming the main port terminal in the southern cone of South America. Mejillones certainly has a unique strength: it has a connection with the Antofagasta Railway to Bolivia and also sufficient draught to handle large tonnage vessels.

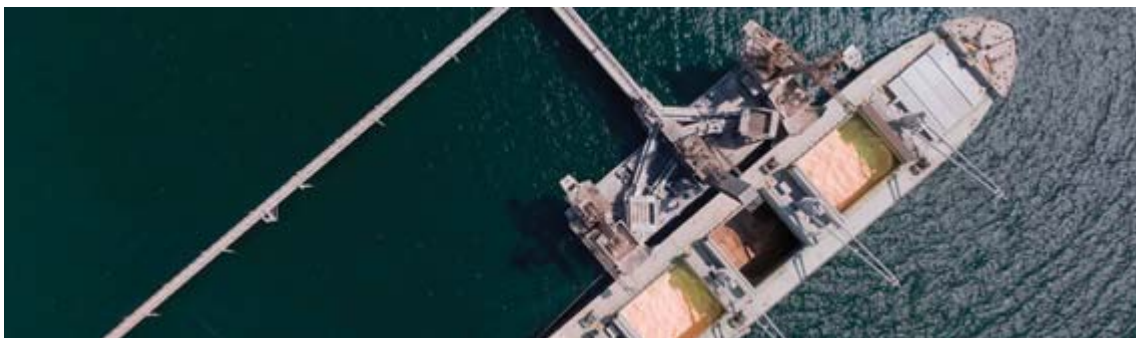


Figure 2. Port of Mejillones. Antofagasta. Chile. Source: Puerto Mejillones website.

Mejillones port is currently operated by Belfi and Neltume Ports Consortium (a subsidiary of Ultramar Ltda.), both companies with Chilean capital, which has specialised in handling solid and liquid bulk cargo. It is the largest sulphuric acid terminal in the region with a storage capacity of up to 220,000 tonnes. It is the exit

point for Chile's global mineral exports. However, very little container traffic can be verified at this terminal.

Thus, the Port of San Antonio, a former minor terminal located south of Valparaíso and specialised in general cargo, went from being a bulk port to a container port and has been the main Chilean port on the Pacific for two decades.

The Chilean state is planning to expand this terminal in what it has called the outer harbour, building two new docks to receive ships of up to 400 metres in length. Work is scheduled for completion within 10 to 12 years.

Chile's maritime trade operations are concentrated in the terminals of San Antonio (third in the region after Callao and Guayaquil) and Valparaíso, as the main ports of that country.

No.	PORT	COUNTRY	REGION	TEU
01	Shanghai	China	Asia	47,030,300
02	Singapore	Singapore	Asia	37,470,000
03	Ningbo-Zhoushan	China	Asia	31,070,000
04	Shenzhen	China	Asia	28,767,600
05	Guangzhou	China	Asia	24,180,000
06	Qingdao	China	Asia	23,710,000
07	Busan	South Korea	Asia	22,710,130
08	Tianjin	China	Asia	20,269,400
09	Hong Kong	China	Asia	17,798,000
10	Rotterdam	Netherlands	Europe	15,300,000
39	Colon	Panama	Central America	4,915,795
41	Santos	Brazil	South America	4,831,972
53	Balboa	Panama	Central America	3,561,432
59	Manzanillo	Mexico	North America	3,371,400
61	Cartagena	Colombia	South America	3,343,810
<b>79</b>	<b>Callao</b>	<b>Peru</b>	<b>South America (*)</b>	<b>2,486,425</b>
<b>84</b>	<b>Guayaquil</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>South America (*)</b>	<b>2,163,151</b>
93	Kingston	Jamaica	Caribbean	2,004,302
<b>99</b>	<b>San Antonio</b>	<b>Chile</b>	<b>South America (*)</b>	<b>1,840,158</b>
100	Jinzhou	China	Asia	1,830,000

Table II. Ranking of the 100 largest ports in the world. (\*) Ports on the South Pacific. Source: The Lloyd's List 2022. Prepared by: RVB

#### 3.3.4. Peru: Port of Callao and Port Chancay

Peru's main maritime terminal is the Port of Callao, ranked 79th among the world's largest ports. It is the most important port on the South American Pacific coast, surpassing the port of Guayaquil in Ecuador (84th) and San Antonio in Chile (99th), according to the ranking of the 100 largest ports in the world (Table II). Operation is currently under concession since 2006 to the company Dubai Ports World from the

United Arab Emirates (DP World Callao - DPW) and mobilises around 60% of the containers handled by the south dock terminal. Similarly, the north (multipurpose) dock is operated by APM<sup>II</sup> Terminals, a subsidiary of the world's largest shipping company MAERSK of Denmark. Both DPW and APM are world-class maritime operators.

The Port of Callao is a multipurpose and container terminal. It currently serves Peruvian foreign trade with great efficiency as both APM and DPW are among the most important global operators in the world. In 2023, infrastructure works were initiated to expand operating capacity with the aim of doubling the current installed capacity.

However, it is clear that there is an infrastructure and maritime services gap in the region and in Peru in particular. Port movement on South America's west coast has increased exponentially, opening a window of opportunity to develop emerging routes, primarily for traffic between Asia and South America, and to significantly expand logistics capabilities to handle larger capacity vessels than those currently serving the region.

The imminent start-up of the new infrastructure (November 2024) at the port of Chancay, located 70 km north of Lima, capital of Peru, is part of this context.

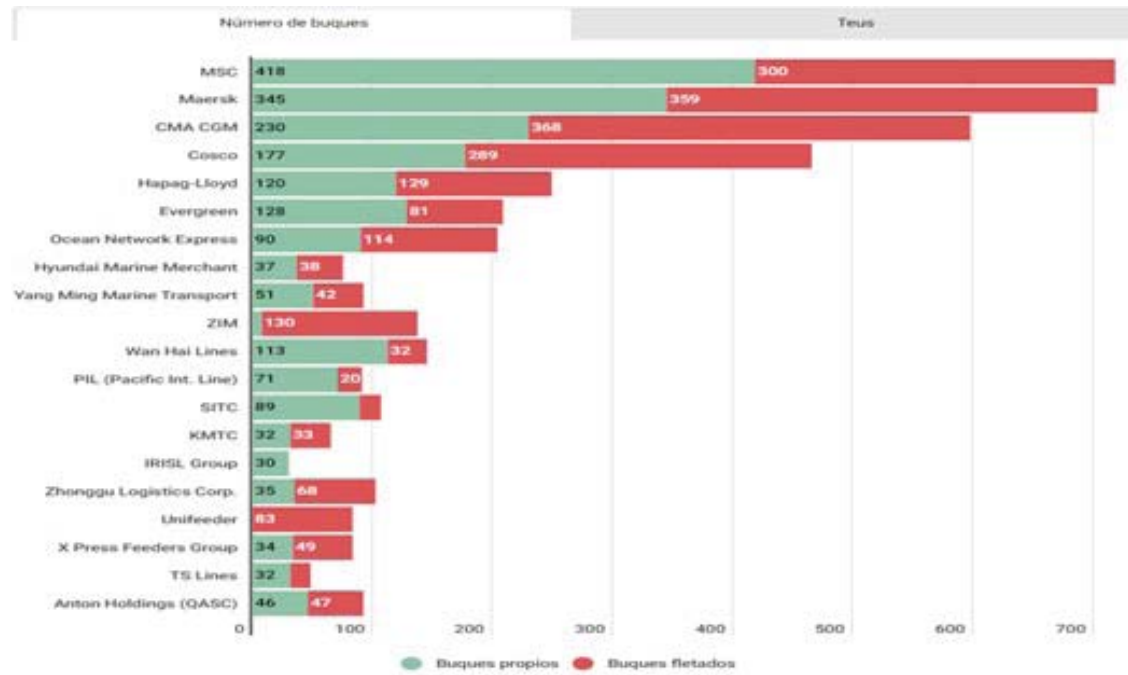
As mentioned, the natural characteristics (depths, waves, tides and current conditions) of Chancay Bay, in the province of Huaral, Lima Region, and with access to the Pan-American Highway and inland communication routes in the hinterland, including railway projects in pre-feasibility or technical studies stage, set up the mega port of Chancay as the future port and logistics complex of Peru and the South American region, the maritime hub of South America.

Terminal construction and management is entirely private and will be operated by Cosco Shipping Corporation Limited, a Chinese state-owned company based in Shanghai, and its Peruvian subsidiary Cosco Shipping Chancay Ports Peru, which owns 60% of the shares (the other 40% belongs to Compañía Minera Volcan) and operates 40 terminals and 427 docks in the world, registering a movement of over 129 million TEUs (Cosco, 2023), making it the fourth operator in the world in terms of container transport capacity; its fleet has a total of 466 vessels.

The mega port of Chancay will have a high level of automation and renewable energy sources (Cosco is a world leader in this field), an area for a railway station and capacity to handle ships of up to 18,000 containers, thus becoming a centre of cargo concentration and distribution to Colombia, Ecuador and Chile and, with existing and planned connectivity (National Road Network and railways), to other countries in the region.

---

II Meaning of the acronym APM: Arnold Peter Möller-Maersk Gruppen.

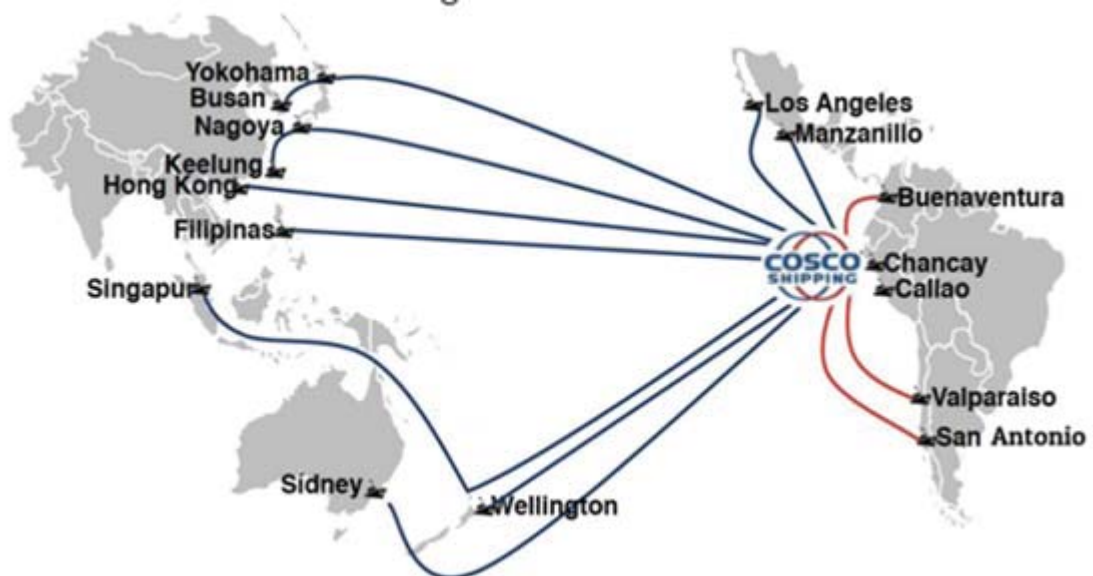


Fuente: Alphaliner a día 11 de enero de 2023

Table III. Shipping lines with the largest container capacity in the world

In addition, in a second phase of the maritime hub development, the infrastructure of the Port of Callao should be linked to that of the Port of Chancay by a highway, which could be an elevated construction for the exclusive use of cargo transport.

Thus, the 21st century maritime silk route, an emerging route on its way to becoming a regular route, would be configured in the Pacific basin as shown in the map (map 3).



Map 3. Sea routes considered by COSCO Shipping Ports. Source: COSCO Shipping Ports

## 4. The Air component

### 4.1. Key considerations

In a highly dynamic and technology-driven world, air connectivity is of vital importance. While virtuality has to some extent replaced the need for face-to-face contact primarily in the field of education, this is not necessarily the case in other areas of human activity, such as the tourism industry and international economic relations, to name just two.

In the case of Peru, air connectivity with countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania is limited by a series of factors, including the lack of airport capacity to support large passenger flows and to provide top quality services to air operators. This apparent shortcoming does not allow airlines from South Africa, China, South Korea, Dubai, Qatar, Türkiye or Germany, for example, to schedule direct flights with Lima International Airport.

Direct connections (on routes to Europe and vice versa) are currently only available with Madrid (Spain), Paris (France) and Amsterdam (Netherlands) and a direct Lima-London route will be opened soon. Other destinations involve often complicated and expensive interconnections and transfers. This aspect makes Peru's current leading air terminal less competitive.

### 4.2. South America's west coast airports

#### 4.2.1 Colombia: El Dorado Airport

Although it changed its name to Luis Carlos Galán Sarmiento in 2012, Colombia's main airport has maintained its traditional name of El Dorado since 1959.

It is the most important in the South American region in terms of passenger movement. In February 2007, it was handed over in concession to the OPAIN consortium (a subsidiary of ODINSA -Organización de Ingeniería Internacional S.A. of Grupo Argos- Colombia), which began a modernisation and expansion plan for the air terminal that culminated in December 2017.

El Dorado Airport is equipped with a modern and functional infrastructure that has earned it several international awards. There are now plans for further expansion and renovation of the terminal and it has gained further international recognition as the best airport in the region.

Located 12 kilometres from the centre of Bogotá, from 16 million passengers in 2007, by the end of 2022 it had reached 34,317,789, serving 52 domestic and 57 international destinations with 36 airlines, for which it has two runways.

El Dorado has a privileged strategic position as it is located in the north-central part of the subcontinent, in Bogotá, an intra-Andean city at 2,548 metres above sea level (masl).

#### *4.2.2. Ecuador: Mariscal Sucre (Quito) and José Joaquín Olmedo (Guayaquil) Airports*

Ecuador's various administrations have been planning to relocate Quito's old airport since the 1970s as it was cloistered within the city. Finally, in 2002, the Ecuadorian government commissioned a Canadian consortium to build the new air infrastructure in the town of Tababela, located 25 kilometres from Quito.

Nine years later, the new Quito airport operated by QUIPORT (majority owned by ODINSA of Colombia), was inaugurated in 2015; projected to handle a flow of 5 million passengers, by 2021 it had reached a little over 1 million (QUIPORT, 2022)<sup>12</sup>.

The Quito terminal has a runway of 4.1 kilometres and serves 12 international destinations with 12 airlines and 11 domestic destinations; it has been recognised for its efficiency in the services it provides. It stands at an altitude of 2,411 metres above sea level.

Ecuador's other major airport is José Joaquín Olmedo (formerly Simón Bolívar Airport), whose new facilities were inaugurated in 2006. Projected to serve up to 7 million passengers, a new airport is already planned for 2030 with 3 runways.

Located 5 kilometres from the city of Guayaquil, it is currently the hub of the Latam-Ecuador airline. It serves 14 international destinations with 11 airlines and four domestic destinations with the same number of operators and is concessioned to the Argentinean-Panamanian-Ecuadorian consortium TAGSA (Terminal Aéreo de Guayaquil S.A).

#### *4.2.3. Chile: Santiago International Airport*

Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport or Santiago International Airport or Nuevo Pudahuel Airport, ranks as the fifth best airport on the South American coast according to the parameters of Skytrax London (see Table IV).

Inaugurated in 1967, it currently has two runways and with the commissioning of the new international terminal in February 2022 (in 2010 a strong earthquake almost completely destroyed its facilities leaving it inoperative), it has consolidated itself as an important hub in the region, the gateway to South America from Oceania and Polynesia.

---

<sup>12</sup> Information from Quito Airport operator (QUIPORT) at the end of 2021.

It currently serves 30 airlines for international service and 4 for domestic flights. In 2022 it received 18.5 million passengers and with the current new international terminal it is expected to reach 30 million, according to the terminal's management body.

#### 4.2.4. Peru: Jorge Chávez International Airport

From its inauguration in the 1960s until the end of the 20th century, due to its strategic location in the western centre of the South American coast, Jorge Chávez International Airport became an international hub for the subcontinent with well-known airlines operating routes to the north, east and south of the region.

After state administration of the airport was transferred to a European consortium in 2001 (Lima Airport Partners-LAP), a series of works were undertaken to modernise its facilities, allowing it to maintain its status as a regional air hub, handling up to 10 million passengers per year.

The constant increase in air traffic and the commissioning of other regional terminals such as the new airport in Santiago de Chile, Bogotá and Quito, ultimately impacted its status as a regional hub.

Since 2015, LAP undertook the remodelling of the current facility and the construction of the terminal's new airport infrastructure, including a second runway and new control tower (already inaugurated in the first stage) which, together with the construction of complementary works, will allow it to regain its status as a regional air hub by 2025 and serve 37 million passengers per year.

Jorge Chávez Airport currently serves 22 domestic and 37 international destinations. Five airlines cover the domestic service and 30 cover the international service. It is located at 5 m above sea level.

Ranking	Airport/city/country	Number of airlines	Passenger flow
1st	El Dorado/Bogota/Colombia	36	35
2nd	Mariscal Sucre/Quito/Ecuador	12	4.3
3rd	Jorge Chávez/Lima/Peru	20	18
4th	José J. Olmedo/Guayaquil/Ecuador	14	2 to 5
5th	Arturo Merino B./Santiago/Chile	30	18.5

Table IV. Ranking of South America's West Coast airports Source: SKYTRAX-OPAIN-QUIPORT-LAP-TAGSA-VINCI AIRPORTS. Prepared by RVB

## 5. The land component

According to a Chinese proverb: "if you want to create wealth, build roads first".

### *5.1. National Road Network*

With regard to land road systems (longitudinal, transversal or penetration) within Peruvian territory, it is worth recalling a historical precedent. One of the most important state policies of the Inca Empire, which in this sense has nothing to envy of the most developed countries in the world today, was the conception, construction, maintenance and operation of the Great Road or Inca Trail<sup>13</sup>, built on the Andean axis of the Inca domain as the vital backbone to develop the vast Inca territory.

Conceived as a strategic integration axis, this extensive network links the ancient Inca domains of southern Colombia to the north and north-western Argentina and central Chile to the south. This admirable feat of engineering aimed to unite and connect the various peoples of the empire for an efficient administration of the great historical, natural, cultural and resource diversity existing throughout the length and breadth of the territory.

This axis is linked to a series of transversal roads along its route, which, according to technical measurements, range from 4,000 to 6,000 kilometres. The track is between 2.5 and 10 metres wide, paved with cobblestones, with walls on the sides, suspension bridges or bridges carved into the rock, stairways and with posts suitably placed every few kilometres to provide food and other provisions.

Its impact on the administration, control and integration of the vast Inca Empire territory is admirable. It took only 5 days to get from Cusco to Quito. The itinerary is as follows:

- Colombia: El Angel National Reserve
- Ecuador: Lake Mojanda – Quito – Cuenca
- Peru: Cajamarca – Cordillera Blanca – Cusco – Lake Titicaca
- Chile: Atacama Desert
- Bolivia: Tiahuanaco – Salar de Uyuni – Cañón de Tupiza
- Argentina: Altiplano – Calchaquis Valley – Talampaya National Park – Mount Aconcagua.

An impressive work of engineering that has survived to the present day.

Peru's road network is currently made up of a set of longitudinal roads, penetration roads and link roads. In total there are 78,000 km of highways, asphalt roads and surfaced roads. In the case of the longitudinal coastal road, the project to convert it into a 4-lane highway is being built in sections, north and south. The National Road

---

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO World Heritage List. Declared and registered as a World Heritage Site, category Cultural Itinerary, on 21 June 2014 at the 38th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Doha, Qatar.



Map 4. Inca Trail. Source: peruconoceloo/photos

Network (RVN) has 22,623 km of asphalt roads<sup>14</sup>. The final technical phase for the construction of the new road linking the capital Lima with the centre of the country in the Junín region has begun as the current central road is saturated. The new highway will be in operation by 2028.

This set of roads in turn comprises three longitudinal axes and twenty transverse axes. The longitudinal coastal road (PE 01) runs from the border with Ecuador in the north to the border with Chile in the south. The longitudinal highland road (PE 03) starts in the province of Ayabaca in Piura and goes to the town of Desaguadero in Puno. The longitudinal jungle road (PE 05) or marginal jungle road, begins in the town of Puente La Balsa, province of San Ignacio, Cajamarca Region and runs to the Junín Region jungle (province of Chanchamayo), projected to reach the Madre de Dios Region and the north of the Puno Region.

As for the transversal axes (PE 02 to PE 40) that connect the coast, mountains and jungle, the most important axis is the Central Road (PE 22). Also noteworthy are the

14 MTC (Ministry of Transport and Communications). Provias Nacional 2022. Datosabiertos.gob.pe

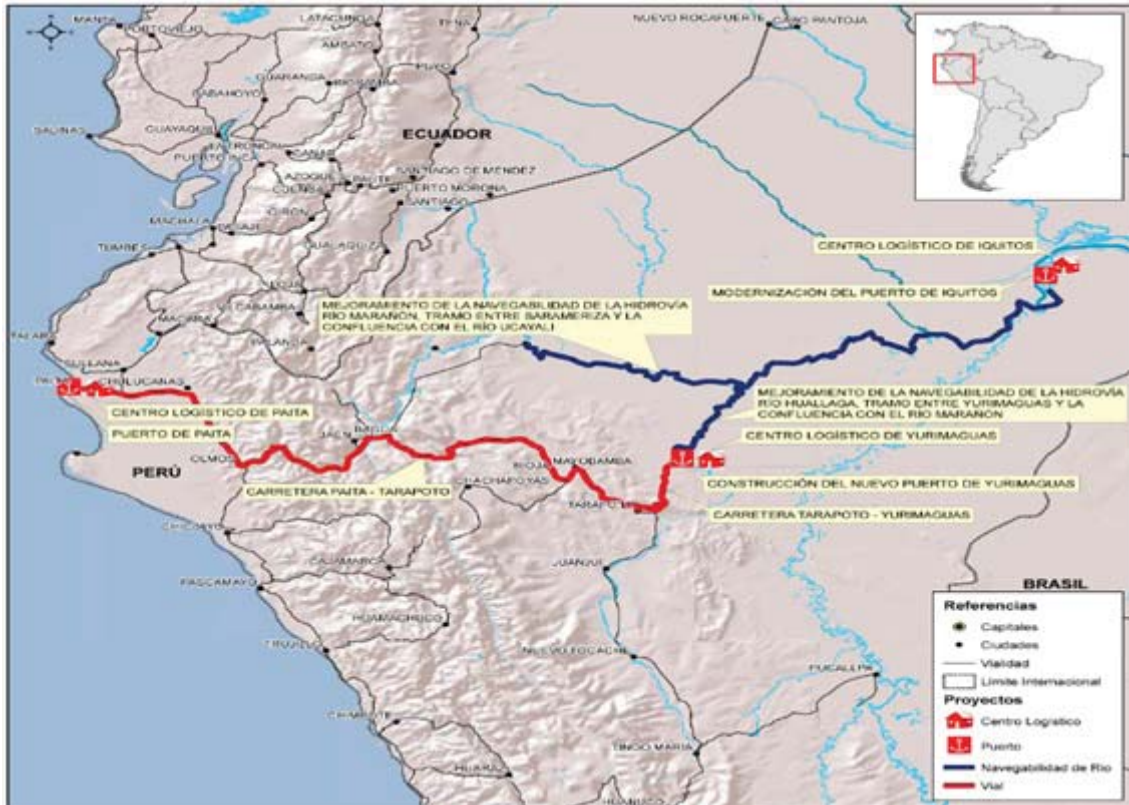


Map 5. National road network. Source: MTC

IIRSA (Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America) highways, designed to interconnect South America's road networks.

### 5.1.1. IIRSA-North Highway

The IIRSA North road is 955 kilometres long. It starts in the port of Paita, in the northern Piura region and connects the Lambayeque, Cajamarca, Amazonas, San Martín and Loreto regions (river port of Yurimaguas), then, by river (Huallaga river) it connects with the port of Iquitos on the Amazon river and continues by that route to the Atlantic Ocean in Brazil.



Map 6. IRSA North Road Source: COSIPLAN-Unasur

The overland route (modern 2-lane highway) from Paita to Yurimaguas can be completed in 14 hours and has been operated by Concesionaria IIRSA NORTE S.A. since 2006 (Peruvian company).

The new river terminal in Yurimaguas (town of Nueva Reforma), on the banks of the Huallaga River, has a modern infrastructure to meet the demand for passengers, cargo and storage.



Map 7. Layout of the IIRSA North road. Source: IIRSA North

The project called: Amazonian Waterway, Marañón and Amazon Rivers, Saramiriza – Iquitos – Santa Rosa section; Huallaga River, Yurimaguas – Confluence with the Marañón River; Ucayali River, Pucallpa – Confluence with the Marañón River section, aims to establish a system capable of developing and maintaining navigation in safe conditions 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in the area of the rivers that make up this system.

### 5.1.2. IIRSA-Centre Road

The IIRSA Centre road connects the Port of Callao (5 m above sea level) with the town of La Oroya (3,745 m above sea level, turn off to the city of Huancayo), heads to Cerro de Pasco-Tingo María until reaching the port of Pucallpa to continue along the Ucayali River waterway (confluence with the Marañón River) and reach the Port of Iquitos on the Amazon River. The extension of the IIRSA Centre is 856 km of road; the Pucallpa (Ucayali River)-Confluence with the Marañón River waterway has a length of 1,247 km and the section to Iquitos a little more than 200 km, all of which means 4-6 days to navigate to the Port of Iquitos. The section from Lima to



Map 8. IIRSA Centre Road. Source: COSIPLAN-UNASUR

the Cerro de Pasco turn off has been under concession to Consorcio Vial de los Andes (DEVIANDES SAC) since 2010.

The Pucallpa river terminal, operated by Logística Peruana del Oriente (LPO), is a modern port infrastructure to attend to the intense commercial movement of the Ucayali River, especially the dynamic commercial movement with the Port of Iquitos.

Construction of a road linking Pucallpa (Ucayali Region) with the road system of Cruzeiro Do Sul (Acre State) in Brazil is planned for the future. It is worth mentioning that both cities are only a 35-minute flight away. The overland route is 240 km long, including two 1000-metre bridges.

### 5.1.3. IIRSA-South Road

The IIRSA South road links the town of Iñapari (Madre de Dios Region - Puerto Maldonado) on the Peru-Brazil border with the district of Inambari (point from which a branch road heads to the Port of San Juan de Marcona, passing through Cusco, Abancay, Puquio, Nazca and Marcona). Another branch goes to the port of Matarani, passing through Macusani, Azángaro, Juliaca and Arequipa. In Juliaca, the road turns off towards Puno and then continues in the direction of Moquegua and the Port of Ilo (map 9). This entire route covers a total of 2,592.46 km of paved roads.



Fuente: Ministerio de Transporte y Comunicaciones

Map 9. Layout of the IIRSA South road

Besides being a tourist destination for the city of Madre de Dios, the President Guillermo Billinghurst Bridge (over the Madre de Dios River), also known as the Continental Bridge and, before that, the Brazil Bridge, is also the second longest bridge in Peru after the Nanay Bridge in the city of Iquitos, as well as the most complex bridge built by Peru. Its importance is significant because it links the Peruvian road network with the Brazilian and Bolivian networks, allowing inter-oceanic transit, as an alternative to transit through the Panama Canal or Cape Horn.



Figure 3. Billinghurst or Continental Bridge in the Madre de Dios Region. Source: IIRSA South website



Map 10. Peru-Brazil roads. Source: COSIPLAN-Unasur.iirsa.org

All these national roads are integrated into the National Road System (SINAC), which groups together Peru's national, regional and rural roads.

### 5.2. *The railway network*

It is a reality in Peru that geographical relief has been one of the great obstacles that the people of these lands have had to face in order to communicate with the territory, maintain cohesion and safeguard sovereignty.

From the Pacific Ocean, a narrow stretch of coast (11.7% of the national territory) gives way almost immediately to the Andes Mountains massif, with peaks reaching 6,000 metres above sea level, the highland region (28%); on the eastern slope is the jungle region (60.3% of the jungle or high jungle and the Amazon plain). Peruvian territory is evidently varied and rugged, especially due to the verticality of the Andean peaks and snow-capped mountains.

This peculiar national territory is perhaps the cause of the scarce development of railways in Peru, although it should not be taken as a justification, since, when compared with other countries of similar orography (although much smaller) such as Switzerland and Italy, they have developed magnificent road and railway networks in their respective territories, despite the Alpine orography.

The Central Railway is a historical precedent with its marvellous engineering of tunnels and mountain bridges, the work of the engineer Henry Meiggs and completed in the first decade of the 20th century by Ernesto Malinowski, which links the coast and the highlands of Peru.

Railway infrastructure development has in practice remained unchanged for decades. Only the Tren Eléctrico de Lima (Lima Metro, 33.1 km) should be added to the stock of railway lines from the last century.

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2021 assigns Peru a low score on the rail infrastructure indicator<sup>15</sup>.

In times of absolute globalisation and technological explosion, today there are no barriers to building the railway network that Peru needs to boost its development. In this direction, the Peruvian State has been conducting the studies needed to complement the national road network by implementing ambitious projects to take shape in the medium and short term.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications has four major projects in its portfolio to be developed in the medium and long term that would increase Peru's railway network by more than 100%. These projects are:

The Coastal Train, renamed Tren Grau. As its name indicates, it is projected to cover the entire coast from Tumbes to Tacna (north border to south border) with a total extension of 2,445 km. It is expected to serve some 30 million passengers and 60 million tonnes of cargo per year; the Lima-Ica section is in the pre-investment study stage, as is the Lima-Barranca section.

---

<sup>15</sup> Source: WEF Global Report 2021. Pillar 2: Enabling Environment Infrastructure.

The Peru-Brazil Train<sup>16</sup>, initially planned to link the Port of Bayóvar with Santos in Brazil. However, in 2016 China Railway Limited presented the construction project modifying the route to join the mega port of Chancay and connect with the Port of Pucallpa and follow the link to Brazil.

The Inca Train, which starts in Cajamarca and follows the route of the longitudinal highland road to Puno. Pre-investment studies for the Marcona-Andahuaylas train (577 km) are also underway.

### 5.3. Logistics corridors

In addition to the RVN and the railway network (existing and planned), both the Peruvian State and the private sector are implementing the so-called Logistics Corridors with different levels of progress in their execution. Twenty-two are planned for operation (2 structural axes and 20 corridors) organised radially from the main ports, land borders and national consumption centres. This is established in the Medium and Long Term Transport Logistics Services Development Plan (MTC-BID,



Map 11. Logistics corridors. Source: MTC

<sup>16</sup> Established in the 2014 and 2015 China-Peru-Brazil Memorandum of Understanding and tripartite agreement to define the best connection route, signed by Presidents Xi Jinping, Lula and Humala, in Brazil.

2014), formulated by the Advanced Logistics Group consultancy firm of Barcelona, Spain, on behalf of the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which points out the existence of:

“four logistics basins: the Central Logistics Macrosphere, which includes the activity of the Lima-Callao node and the activity of the Sierra-Centro with the former; the Southern Peru Logistics Macroscopic, centred on the Arequipa node and with complementary nodes in Juliaca, Puno, Cuzco and Tacna, which include links with Brazil, Bolivia and Chile through the border centres of Iñapari, Desaguadero and Santa Pink; the North-West Logistics Macroscopic contemplates the Paita-Piura logistics axis and the border relationship with Ecuador; and finally, the North-East Logistics Macroscopic, with its centre of gravity in the Chiclayo node as the main articulator, and which includes relations with Trujillo and towards the East with Yurimaguas and Iquitos, from where the river relationship with Brazil is organised” (MTC-BID, 2014, p. 8).

## 6. Strategic impact

### 6.1. *At national level*

The development of port, air, road and rail infrastructure (already implemented and projected in the short and medium term) means for Peru the opportunity for the longed-for national integration that had been absent for decades. What in the past apparently divided the country was the absence of road communication due to the complicated geography that nature imposes on Peru. However, our Inca ancestors more than proved that it was possible to develop the territory and built the great backbone that is the much-admired Inca Trail to link the entire domain.

Although unfortunately Peruvians have not developed an adequate level of political coexistence, public policies on infrastructure have essentially been maintained through public-private partnerships that have enabled works in the maritime, air and road sectors. In the maritime sector, the construction of the mega port of Chancay stands out; a purely private investment project (national and international). In a relatively short period of time, these superstructures will boost national economic activity to superlative levels in all areas: transport, trade, industry, services, employment, taxes, etc., generating sustainable opportunities and wealth.

In the coming years, the port of Chancay will become a magnificent centre for development with substantial improvements in the quality of life of its population, becoming a city for receiving migrants.

It should be noted that this mega-structure foresees the development (in addition to the port, road and logistics infrastructure) of an Industrial Technology Park

(Chancay Park), in an area adjacent to the port entrance complex on an extension of 870 hectares, including a railway station, applicable to the Special Economic Zone.

Taking the mega port of Chancay as a reference in the social field, the direct consequence is job creation. In the first stage of construction, 7,500 direct and indirect jobs are estimated. This gives us an idea of the economic potential that the thousands of kilometres of railways, highways, bridges and logistics centres that will make up Hub Peru will mean at national level, as well as the increased production of steel, cement, energy and services of all kinds involving national industry and suppliers.

## *6.2. At the level of South America*

Undoubtedly, the positioning of the Port of Chancay as a regional maritime node will mean the reconfiguration of the goods transport system to and from the South American subcontinent. Traditional regular maritime routes will see the emergence of the Asia-Chancay route (Peru), a drop port on the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, of which Peru is a part.

It is important to highlight the considerable savings in terms of distance, costs and time it will mean for South America as a whole to finally have a transshipment port in the South Pacific (transshipment currently takes place in North America) to consolidate and deconsolidate cargo from Shanghai, Singapore, Shenzhen, Busan and Hong Kong. Concentrating cargo in Chancay represents a significant saving for any country in the region; for example, in the case of Chile, moving cargo to Asia from Valparaiso means travelling 8,900 km to Long Beach (California, USA) and transshipment. Naturally, with the commissioning of the Port of Chancay, this route would be substantially shorter, allowing a reduction of up to 10 days.

On this matter, Miguel Vergara, president of the Chilean Maritime League, expressed himself in the following terms:

“All our foreign trade with Asia-Pacific could be concentrated in the mega port complex of Chancay, which is being developed in Peru with Chinese capital. This complex would become what is technically known as a “hub” port, which would limit Chile’s foreign trade to a sort of cabotage to and from Chancay-Callao<sup>17</sup>”.

Operating a terminal of the characteristics of Chancay will not affect any country in the region, but rather will represent benefits for all. From a national security point of view, it is a challenge for Peru to secure such an important critical asset.

The economic hub-and-spokes system strategy will take shape almost naturally and logically, given Peru’s excellent geostrategic location in the regional context. In this

---

<sup>17</sup> Letter published in the *El Mercurio de Santiago de Chile* newspaper, 14 September 2022.

sense, the *hummingbird* of the Nazca culture<sup>18</sup>, embodied in the architecture of the new Jorge Chávez International Airport, implemented with cutting-edge technology on a par with the most important airports in the world, will offer the best alternative for passenger distribution in the region.

Additionally, the National Road Network interconnected with routes to Brazil by means of three roads, two of which are bimodal, facilitates access to the Atlantic and vice versa to the Pacific. The Ports of Paita (IIRSA North), Callao (IIRSA Centre), San Juan de Marcona, Matarani and Ilo (IIRSA South), meet land connection requirements and provide storage, distribution and cargo cabotage services; the Port of Chancay also has the advantage of being a pivotal terminal for the region due to its capacity to handle the largest cargo ships in the world, generating regular Asia-Peru traffic, and concentrating containerised cargo for transshipment, all within an automated, functional and world-class superstructure, a global hallmark of the operator COSCO Shipping Ports.

By way of reference, the main Asian economies are the origin of imports for the four countries bordering the South Pacific (table V); a similar situation can be seen in the case of exports, for example, China is the main trading partner for both Peru and Chile.

Country of origin	Peru	Chile	Colombia	Ecuador
PR China	1st	1st	1st	1st
Republic of Korea	2nd	3rd	3rd	2nd
Japan	3rd	2nd	2nd	3rd
Australia	8th	6th	10th	10th
Indonesia	5th	8th	6th	6th
Thailand	4th	4th	5th	4th
Vietnam	6th	5th	4th	5th
Malaysia	7th	7th	7th	7th
Singapore	9th	9th	8th	8th
Hong Kong	10th	10th	9th	9th

Table V. South American West Coast countries trading with Asia Pacific (imports) Source: UN COMTRADE 2019. Prepared by RVB

Undoubtedly, Cosco Shipping Chancay Ports Peru and the new Lima International Airport will soon, in 2025, be the pride of Peru at the service of all South American countries. On the other hand, land interconnection with Brazil is of absolute importance.

## 7. Conclusions

Geographical determinism (a sort of updated *Lebensraum*), a theory at its height in the 19th century, is once again relevant in the geopolitics of our times (Domínguez,

<sup>18</sup> Seventh figure in the shape of a bird, part of the Nazca Lines conglomerate, an ancestral culture of Peru from 550 AD.

2010). The strategic game of global powers such as the United States and China demonstrates this. The global capture of resources, the expansion of markets and the establishment of routes and seaports, the race for superpowers, is part of the national interests of the protagonists.

This same geographical determinism is now present in Latin America and, by a sort of lottery of nature (of geography), gives Peru a leading role because geostrategically the country is where it is and it was only a matter of time before it was included in the global geopolitical and geoeconomic game.

The design of the New Silk Road maritime component by the Chinese State and the decision to extend it to the Ibero-American coast of the South Pacific, specifically to the Port of Chancay, marks a turning point: the revolution of regional trade between Latin America and Asia has arrived.

Significantly, in addition to traditional regular maritime routes serving the region's trade, the new emerging Asia-Peru route with 18,000 TEU container ships is added, boosting maritime cabotage service to and from the south and north of the South Pacific coast.

This is aided by the intermodal connections of the Peruvian national road network and its logistic corridors, including inter-oceanic links that connect with the road networks of Brazil and Bolivia.

Railway infrastructure construction (Grau train, Inca train, bioceanic train, etc.), represents an enormous potential not only because of its mega-project scope (and its economic correlate in terms of employment and wealth generation) but also because it will add greater strategic value to the mega port of Chancay.

It is necessary to emphasise that for this type of mega-construction involving major investments, in view of the absence of Western capital (USA, EU and Japan), we have become accustomed to counting, so to speak, on a single bidder (capital from the People's Republic of China<sup>19</sup>), a situation apparent not only in Peru but also in Latin America, a region that is crying out for a way out of its underdeveloped conditions. However, for the time being there is no alternative to investments from the People's Republic of China, as evidenced by the mega-projects currently underway in Peru.

Although it is true that the airports of Bogotá, Quito and Santiago de Chile are relatively more important than Lima airport for the moment, in the short term and due to the geographical determinism that gives Peru natural conditions of unbeatable location, we will see the emergence of the air hub it has always been. This means that the new airport will be equipped with state-of-the-art technology for all services to both the airline operator and passengers; also the increase in airlines that will boost Peru's connectivity with the world, global positioning as a first class terminal and, of course, a valuable contribution to the country's competitiveness.

---

<sup>19</sup> By 2023 China has invested more than US\$ 30 billion in Peru. Source ComexPeru.

According to economic theory (applying the investment multiplier factor), the economic boom of Hub Peru infrastructure represents the generation of a significant increase in aggregate demand and, therefore, in production (and income), all of which will have a powerful impact on Peru's economic growth.

In connection with this, another advantageous consequence will be the necessary infrastructure for maintenance, repair, construction and logistics services by sea, air and land.

The direct Asia-Peru maritime connection will almost immediately benefit the Peruvian agro-export sector, which as we know is one of the most thriving and powerful forces for national development, having positioned the country among the leading producers of fruit and vegetables at global level; the agro-export sector of Chile, Colombia and Ecuador will also benefit. Brazil has expressed particular interest in using the port of Chancay for trade with Asia.

Peru had to experience the bicentennial of its republican foundation and periods of temporary bonanza at different times of its history (the fleeting wealth of guano, saltpetre and rubber in the 19th and 20th centuries) to reach this point and discover a very unique alignment thanks to its territorial heritage and also with characteristics of sustainability that can catapult it to higher levels of development.

In January 2012, the HSBC Bank (a British bank founded in Hong Kong) global research library, in a prospective economic analysis entitled *The World in 2050* written by Karen Ward<sup>20</sup>, (HSBC, 2016), highlights emerging economies such as the Philippines, Peru, Vietnam and others on 5 continents, with the capacity and potential to reach developed country levels by 2050. This analysis ranks Peru 26th out of the 100 largest global economies. China, the US and India occupy the top three places in the report.

If the people of Peru make the necessary effort, the same effort showed to overcome all the adversities they have had to face (very few people on Earth are as resilient), and the State provides the political will, determination and dynamism required, Ms Ward will be proven right in her prospective analysis of 2016.

## References and bibliographical sources

National Water Authority. ANA. (2023). Informe El agua en Cifras. Lima. Peru.  
Available at <https://www.ana.gob.pe/contenido/el-agua-en-cifras>

Alphaliner. (2022). Accessed 08 July 2022. Available at: <https://public.alphaliner.com>

Belt and Road Research Platform. Leiden Asia Centre. Accessed 20 July 2022. Available at: <https://leidenasiacentre.nl/belt-and-road-research-platform-2/>.

---

<sup>20</sup> Karen Ward has been Managing Director and Chief Market Strategist for the UK and Europe at **JP Morgan Asset Management** since 2017. Shee previously worked at the Bank of England, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer and HSBC Bank.

- CAF and Polytechnic University of Valencia-IIRSA. (2003). Evaluación de los principales puertos de América del Sur. CAF, Caracas. Venezuela.
- COMEXPERU. Foreign Trade Society of Peru. (2018). Publications. *20 años de Perú en APEC*. ISBN 978-612-47607-0-9. Lima. Peru.
- COMTRADE. (2022). The International Trade Statistics Yearbook. United Nations.
- South American Infrastructure and Planning Council. COSIPLAN. Sistema de Información de Proyectos IIRSA-COSIPLAN. (2016). Accessed August 2023. Available at: <https://www.iirsa.org/proyectos/>
- Del Busto, J. (2019). *Tupac Yupanqui, Descubridor de Oceanía*. Editorial Lux. Lima, Peru. ISBN 978-612-47958-0-0
- Domínguez, A. & Noble, A. (2010). Los aportes de Friedrich Ratzel (1844- 1904) a la Geografía. Open Access Institutional Repository of the Council for Education Training. RIIdAA-CFE. Uruguay
- Gómez Paz A. & Sánchez, R.J. (2021). Conexiones de carga marítima entre Asia y el Pacífico y América Latina: análisis de fletes de transporte, sus determinantes y restricciones, *Documentos de Proyectos (LC/TS.2021/17)*. Ediciones CEPAL. Santiago. Chile.
- Hoffmann, Jan. (2000). *CEPAL Review* No. 71, August 2000. Santiago. Chile. ISSN 02510257.
- Lewthwaite, G. (1966). Environmentalism and Determinism: A Search for Clarification, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol 56 No. 1, March 1966, pp 1-23. Washington DC. United States of America.
- Lloyd's List. (2023). One hundred Ports 2022. London. United Kingdom.
- Mahan, A. (2010). *Sea Power*. Kessinger Publishing. London. United Kingdom.
- Mercado Jarrin, E. (2001). *La Revolución Geoestratégica*. CEPEI. IPEGE. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Lima. Peru.
- Mercado Jarrín, E. (1995). *La geopolítica en el tercer milenio*. A6B publishers. Lima. Peru.
- Mercado Jarrin, E. (1974). *Seguridad, Política, Estrategia*. Ministry of War. Lima. Peru.
- Ministry of Economy and Finance. MEF. (2018). Política Nacional de Competitividad y Productividad. Diario Oficial *El Peruano*. 21 December 2018. Lima. Peru.
- Ministry of Economy and Finance. MEF. (2022). Plan Nacional de Infraestructura Sostenible para la Competitividad 2022-2025. Diario Oficial *El Peruano*. 22 October 2022. Lima. Peru

- MTC-BID. Ministry of Transport and Communications. Inter-American Development Bank. (2014). Plan de Desarrollo de los Servicios Logísticos de Transporte de mediano y largo plazo. Lima. Peru
- NATO Defense College. (2016). NDC Forum Papers Series. Editors: Alexander Moems & Brooke A. Smith-Windsor. DeBooks Italia SRL. Rome. Italy
- Plan Impulso Peru. Ministry of Economy and Finance. MEF. (2023). 36 medidas de Reactivación Económica. Lima. Peru.
- Shady, R. Kehege, C. (2015). *Caral. La Primera Civilización de América*. Editorial Universidad San Martín de Porres. Lima. Peru.
- Skytrax. (2023). World's top 100 airports. Accessed 07 August 2022. Available at: <https://www.worldairportawards.com/worlds-top-100-airports-2023/>
- Zegarra, G. & Bahamonde, M. (2022). *Atlas del Perú*. Ediciones Pichoncito. Lima. Peru.
- Ward, Karen. (2012). The World in 2050. HSBC Global Research. London. United Kingdom, pp. 1-3
- 

*Article received: 04 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 22 January 2024*

---



*Manuel LUNA ALCOBA*

*PhD in Philosophy from the University of Seville. Diploma in “Analysis of jihadist terrorism, insurgencies and radical movements” from Pablo de Olavide University.*

*E-mail: malual@telefonica.net*

## *Morphological box for the concept of “hybrid warfare”*

### **Abstract**

To date, there is no tool for systematically identifying, categorising and comparing different definitions of “hybrid warfare”. Building on previous work by Tom Ritchey, this article presents a method for creating a framework using a morphological box. It briefly reviews the work of Fritz Zwicky and the state of play, constructs a sample list with 76 definitions of “hybrid” and creates the morphological box, the contradiction matrix and the corresponding solution space, pointing out the difficulties encountered at each stage. Despite the highly critical nature of the conclusions that are reached, the study also suggests guidelines for circumventing the problems encountered in the concept of “the hybrid” and is a practical demonstration of the usefulness of Zwicky’s boxes for analysing concepts and definitions.

### **Keywords**

Hybrid warfare, hybrid threat, hybrid operations, morphological analysis, Zwicky.

### **Cite this article:**

LUNA ALCOBA, Manuel (2023). “Morphological box for the concept of hybrid warfare”. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. 491-526.

There are thousands of works that explain what “hybrid wars” *are* and what they are *not* through the interpretation of facts or texts. This study takes another approach: constructing a metatheoretical framework, using a morphological box, to explain why this exact situation and not any other must be addressed. First, it is important to discuss Fritz Zwicky’s findings and the state of play. Throughout this analysis continuous references will be made to the complex “operations/strategies/threats/warfare/modes of hybrid warfare”. In order not to use such a cumbersome expression, it will be referred to using the generic “hybrid” and sometimes, to avoid repetition, with the far less appropriate but more common expression “hybrid warfare”. This is with the hope that, by incorrectly using the whole and the part interchangeably, the text is a little lighter to read. No claim is made that any one of these expressions captures reality better than any other.

## I. Background

### I.1. Fritz Zwicky’s morphological boxes

Fritz Zwicky was born on 14 February 1898 in Varna (Bulgaria) and died on 8 February 1974 in Pasadena (USA). Famous for describing the nature of supernovae, explaining the origin of cosmic rays, anticipating the existence of neutron stars decades before they were observed and introducing the concept of “dark matter”, Zwicky eventually attributed his ideas and discoveries to what he called “morphological analysis”. His work at the Aerojet Engineering Corporation between 1943 and 1961 in the search for new fuels to propel missiles was based almost exclusively on it. Morphological analysis attempts to explore the space of all possible solutions to multi-dimensional problems by identifying their relationships (Zwicky, 1966: 114 and Stach, 2010: 32). The full picture of these “configurations” provides an accurate mapping of the answers given so far and answers that no one had thought of.

Morphological analysis has a long history of success, beyond the successes already achieved by Zwicky in, for example, the field of defence, social mediation, new product creation and development (Vartak and Mankar, 2013: 162; for a literature review of more than 70 applications of morphological analysis to as many fields, see Alvarez and Ritchey: 2015). In 2014, Tom Ritchey, an expert morphologist and former director of research at the Swedish National Defence Research Agency’s Institution for Prospective and Technology Assessment, published “On a Morphology of Theories of Emergence”. This article shows how to use a Zwicky box to clarify the concept of “emergent property”, which is widely used in certain philosophical fields, despite being as confusing in nature as the very notion of “the hybrid”.

#### I.2. “The hybrid” in the discourse of military analysis

As “*hybrid warfare*”, the concept of “the hybrid” first appeared in R. Walker’s doctoral thesis in 1998 and in the title of W. Nemeth’s doctoral thesis in 2002. For

years it languished in the documentary archives of the Monterrey Postgraduate School until Frank Hoffman retrieved it in the form of “*war*” to label a new type of reality that emerged at the beginning of this century and would characterise future warfare. The push given by Hoffman, McCuen and others attracted the attention of the US Congressional Subcommittee on Terrorism, Threats and Emerging Capabilities, which asked the House of Representatives to open an investigation into whether, officially, a “new type of warfare” called “hybrid warfare” existed. After extensive investigation, the GAO found that the DoD had no definition of “hybrid warfare”, had no intention of formulating such a definition in the future, did not consider that there was anything new that could be designated by such a term and did not use it in any relevant official documents (Sánchez García, 2012: 17 and Pershin, 2016: 79-80). However, after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, and particularly since 2016, the term has become so popular that a Google Scholar search for “hybrid war” returns 18,100 articles or books that mention it. However, this popularisation has been accompanied by increasingly sharp criticism from some notable specialists. While there is an eloquent asymmetry in the use of the term “hybrid” when used by Russian and NATO analysts, there are three strands of opinion on the term that cut across this divide. Firstly, there are its full-throated advocates, who use it in an unrestricted way, providing different definitions of “hybrid” or none at all. As was mentioned above, since 2016 this camp has been swelling with journalists, politicians and institutions of all kinds. Secondly, a large number of analysts, while not being particularly enthusiastic about it, especially in private, use the term to get along with the former group and because, ultimately, “there isn’t anything else”. Finally, there are those who call “the hybrid” a “catch-all” concept (Jordan, 2017), a “wildcard concept” (Colom, 2018) or, more dramatically, an “intellectual virus” (Pershin, 2016: 63). Their criticisms, so far, have had little resonance, perhaps because members of the first group can always point out that the problem lies not in the concept itself, but in the reality to which it refers. The “hybrid” would be inherently elusive by nature, meaning it could not be covered by the rigorous definitions of traditional military thinking.

## 2. Objectives of this study

The present study has the following objectives:

### 2.1. Primary objectives:

*2.1.1. Identity the conceptual framework of “the hybrid” by drawing up a list of definitions.*

*2.1.2. Illustrate the usefulness of morphological boxes for the clarification of obscure concepts by:*

- Constructing a “hybrid warfare” morphological box.
- Constructing a “hybrid warfare” contradiction matrix.
- Constructing the “hybrid warfare” solution space.

Related objectives.

- Detect elements that could make the concept of “hybrid warfare” problematic.
- Explain the state of play
- Propose ways to reformulate the concept.
- Exclusion clause: the objectives of this study does not include defining what “hybrid warfare” is or is not.

### **3. Procedure**

#### *3.1. Constructing a sample of definitions*

In his study on emergent properties, Ritchey started from a pre-existing typology (Ritchey, 2014: 4-6). However, for this study the preference was to construct our own sample of definitions of “the hybrid”. The purpose of this sample was to establish the conceptual framework in which the definitions given so far are embedded. It therefore seemed logical to build it using diversity criteria. Firstly, diversity of collection methods. Part of it comes from a systematic search in Google Scholar in various languages on the terms “hybrid war”, “hybrid warfare”, “hybrid threat”, “hybrid operations”, etc. Another part appeared incidentally from reading for studies on related topics. The resulting sample includes 37 definitions from 35 sources, plus a further 39 definitions referenced in 16 sources, totalling 76 definitions. They include definitions generated over more than two decades by institutional, academic, military and other sources. Although results were only obtained in English, Portuguese, French, Spanish, Russian and French, documents in other languages were consulted. Due to the criteria that guided the construction process, the sample of definitions is not suitable for a true meta-analysis. The aim was not to be totally comprehensive. Instead, it was intended to be representative, making it possible to perform the kind of study that was wanted.

Contrary to expectations, constructing the sample meant profound decisions had to be made. To start, following a classic handbook on science methodology

(Hempel, 1973: 128) the criterion of considering only explicit “definitions” was applied, i.e. statements containing a *definiendum* (what is to be defined) and a *definiens* (the way in which it is defined). Such a basic criterion has drastic consequences, as it implies that neither Gerasimov’s famous text, “The Value of Science is in the Foresight” (2013), nor the 2005 *National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, contains a definition of “hybrid”. For a discussion of this point, see section 4.

Nor have did the study consider to be “definitions” those that “define” “hybrid” as a type/mode of warfare that mixes “different” forms of “various” procedures, unless they contain an enumeration of some of these “different” forms or “various” procedures.

In accordance with these two criteria, during its construction, our sample already clearly pointed out a number of problems linked not to the elusive reality of “the hybrid”, but to the way in which its definitions have been made. To begin with, their multiplicity cannot be considered the result of necessity. A clear case in point is Bartosh. Alexander A. Bartosh, a regular contributor to the Russian Defence Ministry’s *Military Thought* magazine, whose tireless work to popularise the concept of “hybrid warfare” might well earn him the title of the “Russian Hoffman”, gives *three* definitions of hybrid warfare in the pages of his 2021 paper on the subject (pp. 25, 42 and 125). The original Hoffman was no slouch either. Two articles by him appeared in 2009. One (“Hybrid vs. compound war”) contains a definition of hybrid *threat*. In the other, (“Hybrid warfare and challenges”), he moves without further explanation from *war* to *warfare*, as is characteristic of him, and provides another different definition. As a result of these practices, there is often confusion among scholars who cite the second article when trying to define hybrid “threats” and the first when trying to define hybrid “wars”. In the long run, such academic inaccuracy seems to have become normal, to the extent that Colom drew up a list of actions with which “hybrid warfare” is equated to demonstrate the ambiguity of the concept (Colom, 2018: 14); this list has been cited as “Colom’s definition”. At this point, constructing the sample required making multiple decisions that would otherwise be completely superfluous. There was a whole series of studies that, while they proceeded to quote the relevant definition (e.g. of “hybrid warfare”), they did so in order to underpin the definition of a different term (e.g. “hybrid threat”), giving a new version of the original definition. All these versions are included as cases of “new” definitions in our sample. However, having made this decision, it was also necessary to include correct citations that only had one version as “definitions”, otherwise the sample would have been biased towards misleading citations.

If, according to Sadowski and Becker (2010: 5), a distinction is made between “material definitions” and “cognitive definitions” of “hybrid”, the definitions contained in our sample would all fall under “material definitions”. Only one should be labelled as “cognitive”, Braspenning’s proposal of “bogged-down hybrid warfare” (“guerre hybride enlisée”):

“Armed opposition between more or less homogeneous political groups, driven by symbols (assumptions, languages, identities, interests, etc.) that help to establish enduring strategic preferences by constructing concepts of the role and effectiveness of material force in political relations between heterogeneous actors, while giving an objectivity to these same concepts to the extent that these strategic preferences appear to be the only realistic and effective ones”<sup>1</sup> (Braspenning, 2001: 5).

	Psychological domain	Social domain	Political domain	Legal domain	Technological domain
<b>With violence</b>	Terrorism	Indiscriminate violence	Coercion	Crime	Cyber-attacks
<b>Non-violent</b>	Psychological methods	Social mobilisation	Political influence	Legal action	Use of networks

Table I Typology of hybrid attacks

This “cognitive definition” differs in its constituent elements from those in the “material definitions” in our sample. Therefore, although it was considered extremely fruitful, it had to be left out of considerations in order to carry out a minimal grouping of these common elements. To make this group, features such as “continuity”, “complementarity”, “non-linearity” and others were omitted, which are present in only a couple of definitions. Others were reinterpreted as simply as possible. For example, several definitions refer to the “cognitive domain”, “culture”, the “symbolic universe”, etc. These have all been included within the “psychology” of the population affected by a “hybrid war”. “Political influence” included “political outreach” or diplomacy, mentioned in some definitions. Finally, “financial threats”, “sanctions” and trade blockades were grouped under the label of “financial” factors (as it appears in the sample, and “economic pressure” as it appears in later steps of the procedure followed here). This grouping highlights the existence of a typology, which is present in most of the definitions listed, as the core of what characterises “the hybrid”. Indeed, if six domains are identified (psychological, social, political, legal, technological and economic-information), it can be seen that five of them can be acted upon in two ways, either using it or violating it. Therefore, this leads to the typology shown in Table I.

In accordance with the above, “psychological means” is understood to mean all non-violent means that allow you to intervene in the “cognitive domain” of the population on which you wish to have an impact. “Social mobilisation” (“society” in the sample) is used to mean ensuring that the target population engages in activities that prevent, block or show how unacceptable it is for the government in question to act in order to repel the aggression it has suffered.

<sup>1</sup> «Une opposition armée entre ensembles politiques plus ou moins homogènes, mus par des symboles (hypothèses, langages, identités, intérêts, etc.) qui concourent à l'établissement de préférences stratégiques durables en construisant des conceptions de rôle et d'efficacité de la force matérielle dans les relations politiques entre acteurs hétérogènes tout en revêtant ces mêmes conceptions d'une valeur d'objectivité à un point tel que ces préférences stratégiques semblent les seules réalistes et efficaces»

A whole series of questions arise from this point, but addressing them in detail would distract from the proposed objectives. For example, several elements of this typology can easily be reduced, as the use of networks, political influence, social mobilisation and psychological means depend, ultimately, on the key element of 21st century wars: the control of screens (television, computers, mobile phones, monitors, etc.) The territory of new wars is no longer shaped by the orography of the land to be conquered, but by pixels. However, as was explained above, these aspects would take the study too far away from its objectives, so they must left here as a proposal. What is far more relevant to the case is examining the fact that the study already has an initial explanation of the unnecessary multiplication of definitions referred to above. Hoffman’s 2007 article unveiled some of the boxes of this typology and, since then, scholars have been intuitively going through it without making it explicit and therefore without exploring it systematically. As a result, it has been unevenly reflected in successive texts. While, for example, there are definitions that list indiscriminate violence as a key factor in “hybrid warfare”, and while there are definitions that mention social mobilisation, none mention *both*. Scholars seem to have assumed that a government that exercises indiscriminate violence against a population cannot, at the same time, generate social mobilisation against the government charged with protecting it - an implausible assumption, especially if you remember that one or both of these actions can be carried out covertly. Similarly, there is clear ambiguity regarding the technological domain. “Technology” appears repeatedly in many of the definitions included here. However, a distinction is rarely made between its *use* (for example, to segment a target population in order to deliver disinformation messages or to stress defence forces through the massive use of drones against communication routes) and technological *aggression* (typically in the form of cyber-attacks). If contingency plans were really to be drawn up using these definitions, no attention would be given to the possibility of indiscriminate violence *and* social mobilisation, or we would try to use the same means to prevent cyber-attacks, the non-violent use of new technologies and cyber-attacks combined with the non-violent use of new technologies. In all likelihood, the resulting measures would be unevenly effective in each situation. However, this study is not concerned here with the development of contingency plans but with the clarification of a theoretical concept.

*Six* areas have been mentioned but there are only *five* in the typology. Although financial and information elements were in Walker’s original definition of hybrid warfare, until 2009 only Hoffman’s definition of “Hybrid warfare and challenges” included them. However, from 2014 onwards, a flurry of institutional and analyst definitions realised *both* were defining elements of “hybrid warfare”. It can be concluded that the economic-information domain is a strange addition to the typology used up to 2014, and this will be returned to in section 3.4 below.

Having made these clarifications, the sample can now be shown in Table 2.

### *3.2. Construction of the morphological box*

Once the sample was created, making the Zwicky box was easy. The study will now examine the different defining features or elements seen so far, as the parameters of the morphological box and give them an identifying label, what morphological analysis calls “dimensions”. Here is the list of dimensions: name, actor, tactics/training, psychological domain, social domain, political domain, legal domain, technological domain, economic/informational domain, relationship between actors, role model and type of conflict. Table 3 shows the Zwicky box with the corresponding dimensions and parameters.

It is important to remember that the intention is to build a morphological box of definitions of “hybrid” and not an operational contingency plan. Therefore, the morphological box does not include the parameter corresponding to indiscriminate violence

	Operation-strategy	Threat	War	Warfare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Technological	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
<b>Table 2 Sample of definitions 1998-2008</b>																										
Walker, 1998: 5			X	X			X	X		X							X									
Nemeth, 2002: 29				X			X	X			X															
Hoffman 2007, 14					X		X	X			X															
Hoffman 2007 according to Colom, 2012: 85			X				X	X											X							
McCuen, 2008: 108			X				X	X		X										X						
McCuen 2008 according to Sánchez García, 2012: 20			X				X	X												X						
McCuen 2008 according to Sandor, 2019: 310																										
Strategic Vision Group 2008 according to Lasica, 2009: 3			X	X			X	X			X															
Casey, 2008: 23		X					X	X																		
Casey, 2008 according to Sandor, 2019: 310				X			X	X																		

Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Warfare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence.	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Tech.	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchrony	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
Freier 2009 according to Dodonov, et al. 2017: 99	X					X	X	X								X									
Hoffman, 2009a: 15	X					X	X	X													X				
Hoffman, 2009a according to, Sandor 2019: 310		X				X	X	X						X								X			
Hoffman, 2009a according to Dickey, 2015: 7	X					X	X	X		X		X				X									
Hoffman, 2009a according to Colom, 2012: 85	X					X	X	X													X				
Hoffman, 2009b: 36	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X										X			
Hoffman, 2009b according to Danyk, et al. 2017: 6			X			X	X		X				X			X	X	X							
Lasica, 2009: 3 and II.	X	X							X																
Calvo, 2009: II	X	X				X	X	X						X		X					X				
Calvo 2009 according to Sánchez Herráez, 2014: 12	X					X	X	X						X							X				
Calvo, 2009 according to Palacios: 2016 according to Miguel-Gil, 2019: 115	X					X	X	X						X											
US Capstone 2009: 47	X					X	X	X						X											

Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) 2009

	Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Warfare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Technological	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) 2010 - c. 2011	X						X	X														X				
Bi-Strategic Command 2010, 2 according to Espinel 2021: 13							X	X														X				
NATO Capstone according to Aaronson, et al. 2011: 115		X					X	X														X				
NATO 2011 according to Miklauci 2011 according to Banasik, 2015: 26		X					X	X														X				
NATO 2011 according to Miklaucic 2011 according to Sandor, 2019: 310				X			X	X															X			
US FM 3-0, 2011 Foreword: 1-22 and glossary		X				X	X	X	X		X															
US FM 3-0 2011 according to Sandor 2019: 310		X					X	X																		
British doctrine according to MacCulloch and Johnson, 2013: 10				X				X									X									
British doctrine according to Banasik, 2015: 26			X					X									X									

	Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Warfare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Technological	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
<b>Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) 2010 - c. 2011</b>																										
<b>Bi-Strategic Command 2010, 2 according to Espinel 2021: 13</b>	X						X	X													X	X				
<b>NATO Capstone according to Aaronson, et al. 2011: 115</b>		X					X	X														X	X			
<b>NATO 2011 according to Miklauci 2011 according to Banasik, 2015: 26</b>		X					X	X														X	X			
<b>NATO 2011 according to Miklaucic 2011 according to Sandor, 2019: 310</b>				X			X	X														X	X			
<b>US FM 3-0, 2011 Foreword: 1-22 and glossary</b>		X				X	X	X	X		X															
<b>US FM 3-0 2011 according to Sandor 2019: 310</b>		X					X	X																		
<b>British doctrine according to MacCulloch and Johnson, 2013: 10</b>				X			X	X									X				X					
<b>British doctrine according to Banasik, 2015: 26</b>			X				X	X									X									

	Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Warfare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Technological	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) c. 2011 - 2014?																										
British doctrine according to Sandor, 2019: 310			X	X			X	X									X									
Israeli doctrine according to McCulloh and Johnson, 2013: 10		X		X			X	X		X		X					X									
Israeli doctrine according to Banasik, 2015: 26		X					X	X		X		X					X									
Israeli doctrine according to Sandor, 2019: 310				X			X	X		X		X					X									
McCulloh and Johnson, 2013: 16			X	X			X	X		X																
McCulloh and Johnson, 2013 according to Banasik, 2015: 25			X	X			X	X		X														X		
McCulloh and Johnson, 2013 according to Sandor, 2019: 310				X			X	X		X														X		
A. F. Rasmussen according to Landler and Gordon, 2014, according to DeBenedictis, 2022: 1				X																						

	Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Warfare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence.	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Tech.	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) 2014 - 2015																										
Schroeff and Kaufman, 2014: 862 and 863 and 867.		X	X			X						X														
NATO 166 DSC 15 E bis, 2015, para. 12			X	X			X							X							X					
NATO 166 DSC 15 E bis, 2015 according to Sánchez Herráez, 2021: 3		X					X	X						X							X					
Newson 2014 according to Dodonov et al. 2017: 101		X					X	X						X							X					
EEAS, 2015:731			X				X					X		X											X	
EEAS 2015 according to Fernandes, 2016: 22		X					X																		X	
Lasconjarias and Larsen, 2015: 3		X	X	X		X	X	X																		
Lasconjarias and Larsen, 2015 according to Banasik, 2015: 25		X	X	X		X	X	X																		
Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 2015: 28	X						X	X						X												
Kiselyov and Vorobyov, 2015 according to DeBenedictis, 2022: 31				X			X							X												

	Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Wartare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Technological	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) 2015 (cont.) – 2017			X							X				X			X	X	X							
Manoilo, 2015: 918			X										X	X	X		X	X	X							
EU JoiN/2016/018 final		X			X	X	X	X					X	X	X		X	X	X				X			
Anton, 2016: 509		X		X			X	X	X		X		X	X												
NATO Warsaw Summit Final Declaration 9 July 2016: 72		X			X	X	X	X				X													X	X
Cefasi7c2: 14		X					X	X	X	X						X	X									
Cefasi7c2 according to Espinel, 2021: 12	X				X	X	X	X											X							
Dodonov et al. 2017: 98 and 105.			X				X	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X		X					
ESNr7: 18 and 60.	X				X	X						X					X	X	X							
ESNr7 according to Espinel, 2021: 12	X				X	X	X	X				X					X	X	X							
MADOC 02/17 according to Espinel, 2021: 12	X						X	X																		

	Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Wartare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Technological	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) 2017 (cont.) – 2018				X																		X				
Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud, 2017: 3				X			X			X		X				X	X	X	X					X		
Sokolova, 2017: 39				X																						
Andrievskii and Skovorody, 2017: 165			X		X				X						X		X	X	X							X
Zolotukhin and Loginova, 2017: 100			X				X										X	X	X							
Hybrid CoE 2017?		X			X							X										X	X			
Hybrid CoE 2017? according to Espinel, 2021: 12		X												X								X	X			
Galán, 2018: 3		X						X				X					X	X	X			X	X			
Galán, 2018 according to Espinel 2021: 13		X					X					X					X	X	X							
Konopleva et al. 2018: 89			X							X		X														
Colom 2018: 14 according to Espinel, 2021: 10		X					X	X		X		X														

	Operation/strategy	Threat	War	Warfare	State	Non-State	Tactics, conventional	Tactics, unconventional	Terrorism	Psychological	Indiscriminate violence	Society	Coercion	Political influence	Criminal lawlessness	Legal	Technological	Financial	Information	Symmetry	Asymmetry	Synchronised	Coordinated	Synergy	Open	Covert
Table 2 Sample of definitions (cont.) 2019 – 2021																										
Monaghan et al. 2019: 3 and 13.			X	X						X		X		X				X	X			X		X		
Petrescu, 2019: 280				X	X	X	X	X				X		X					X	X						
Cubeiro, 2020: 62			X					X		X			X									X	X			
Defence Staff according to Santamaría 2020: 13		X					X	X	X					X			X		X							
European Union according to Santamaría, 2020: 13			X						X			X					X		X							
Bartosh, 2021: 25			X		X		X	X				X														
Bartosh, 2021: 42			X				X	X				X					X		X							
Bartosh, 2021: 125			X		X		X	X									X		X							

linked to social mobilisation, nor cyber use or attack. Nor has coercion without political influence been included as it would be inconsistent.

Sets formed by one parameter of each dimension are referred to in morphological analysis as “configurations”. Examples of configurations can be found in tables 5 and 6. A second level of problems emerges here in definitions of “the hybrid”. Indeed, it is now possible to quantify exactly what is meant by the authors who call it “too broad”. Using the morphological box presented by Ritchey to account for the concept of “emergent property”, it can be deduced that it has 4,096 possible configurations (Ritchey, 2014: 12). The morphological field that the definitions of “hybrid warfare” present covers  $4 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 3 \times 3 \times 4 \times 2 \times 4 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2 = 331,776$  configurations. Therefore, this provides a second explanation for the unnecessary multiplication of definitions noted above. Different authors have intuitively grasped the immensity of the morphological field that enumerating the features of “hybrid warfare” leads to and have not been able to resist the temptation to explore it. This is the “attractiveness and expressive force” that Colom attributes to our concept (Colom, 2018: 85). However, once again, by not making it explicit, they have not been able to explore it systematically. Consequently, some definitions have functioned as attractors, receiving successive nuances and recreations. Many other possible definitions, however, have not yet been articulated.

Regardless of whether the facts to which “hybrid warfare” alludes are elusive or not, the definitions of hybrid warfare actually consist of combiner boxes of inordinate breadth. Therefore, the situation does not improve by decreasing the number of traits, because the number is not the problem. The problem is whether they are linked by an “or”, a simple comma, an “and” or a clear hierarchy, i.e. whether or not the essential is separated from the accidental and superfluous. Here is an example. Suppose the traits are restricted to five and given an “abbreviated definition”.

Table 3 Morphological box for “the hybrid”.

Name	Actors	Tactics -formations	Psychological domain	Social domain	Political domain	Legal domain	Technological domain	Economic - informative domain	Relationship between the actors	Action model	Type of conflict
<b>Operation - strategy</b>	State	Conventional	With terrorism - Without using psychological methods	With indiscriminate violence - Without social mobilisation	Without coercion - With influence	With criminality - Without legal action	With new technologies - Without attack on computer networks	With economic pressure - Without disinformation	Symmetry	Synchronised	Open
<b>Threat</b>	Non-State	Unconventional	Without terrorism - With psychological methods	Without indiscriminate violence - With social mobilisation	With coercion - Without influence	Without criminality - With legal action	Without use of new technologies - Without attack on computer networks	Without economic pressure - With disinformation	Asymmetry	Coordinated	Covert
<b>War</b>		Conventional and unconventional	With terrorism - Without the use of psychological methods	Without indiscriminate violence - Without social mobilisation	Without coercion - Without influence	With criminality - Without legal action		With economic pressure - Without disinformation		Synergistic	
<b>Method of waging war</b>			Without terrorism - Without the use of psychological methods			Without criminality - Without legal action		Without economic pressure - Without disinformation			

Defabr: “Hybrid warfare consists of the type of activities carried out by a state or non-state actor using conventional or unconventional tactics and formations, with the use of psychological methods, in pursuit of political objectives.”

Morphological analysis shows that this single definition of “hybrid warfare” corresponds to *six* different configurations. It can be debated whether each configuration should be considered a definition, but it cannot be argued that each of them corresponds to *a different reality*:

1. Activities carried out by a state actor using conventional tactics and formations, with the use of psychological methods, in pursuit of political objectives.
2. Activities carried out by a state actor through the use of unconventional tactics and formations, with the use of psychological methods, in pursuit of political objectives.
3. Activities carried out by a state actor through the use of conventional and unconventional tactics and formations, with the use of psychological methods, in pursuit of political objectives.
4. Activities carried out by a non-state actor using conventional tactics and formations, with the use of psychological methods, in pursuit of political objectives.
5. Activities carried out by a non-state actor through the use of unconventional tactics and formations, with the use of psychological methods, in pursuit of political objectives.
6. Activities carried out by a non-state actor through the use of conventional and unconventional tactics and formations, with the use of psychological methods, in pursuit of political objectives.

¡Again, if this “shorthand definition” were used to develop measures to prevent “hybrid warfare”, we would be forced to take measures of varying effectiveness in each real-life situation. *It now be seen why “hybrid warfare” has often been described as “unpredictable”: the immensity enclosed in each of its definitions means it is not possible to foresee, in any way, what is going to be faced.* There will be more on this issue in the next section.

### 3.3. Contradiction matrix

In general, the systematic exploration of any morphological field requires the elimination of configurations that are impossible, improbable or whose implementation would meet with material, economic or legal problems. To this end, a contradiction matrix is drawn up, indicating which pairs of parameters in each dimension have already been implemented, which pairs of these states have not yet been taken into account and which involve some kind of impossibility. Table 4 shows the contradiction matrix. In this study, the following pairs of traits, which are also present in some definitions of “hybrid” were considered to be impossible, improbable or difficult to implement:

- Despite the common use of the term “covert war” and even if there is no declaration of war, a war implies a majority of overt and overt actions. The parameters “war” and “covert” were therefore considered to be mutually incompatible.
- If “conventional tactics and/or formations” is taken to mean those carried out by units that follow a hierarchy of command and a mode of enlistment set by law, then non-state actors cannot field “conventional units” and it is therefore debatable to what extent they use “conventional tactics”.
- Terrorism cannot be considered compatible with the exclusive use of conventional forces. Whatever is meant by “terrorism”, it falls within the scope of special forces tactics.
- “Economic and/or financial” measures usually means imposing tariffs, blocking goods, sanctions and breaking trade agreements, etc. Non-state actors often appropriate sources of wealth, but they do so for their own financing. On the other hand, implementing, for example, attacks on the tourism sector cannot be compared to these economic measures either. However much they may wish or try, non-state actors rarely have at their disposal what is understood here as “economic pressure”.
- Terrorism is clearly a form of political coercion, so it is impossible for terrorism to exist without political coercion.
- Finally, the existence of economic pressure in a “covert” form, with the meaning just given to “economic pressure”, seems highly improbable.

The above list includes everything the study considered impossible, improbable or difficult to achieve. Of course, these arguments are open to criticism and, on the basis of these criticisms, items will have to be added to or subtracted from the above list. This would alter the structure of the solution space that is obtained, but the essence, the very core of the conclusions that are reached, will remain unchanged. Indeed, as was said in the previous section, what has come to be understood as *a* definition of hybrid warfare always describes *a multiplicity of real situations*. Unless it is accepted that any trait attributed to “hybrid warfare” is compatible with any other trait, it is necessary to conclude that *some of the actual situations contained in each definition refer to something impossible, improbable or difficult to realise*. Specifically, in our “short definition”, situations 4 and 6 cannot ever occur. And this “never” does not mean “under no conceivable circumstances”, it means that they are as likely to exist as low-speed hypersonic missiles or harmless thermonuclear weapons. Again, even if it were possible to discard the impossible, improbable or difficult-to-achieve criteria set out here, any other criterion would lead to exactly the same conclusion: a significant number of definitions of “hybrid warfare” imply the existence of situations that entail a contradiction in terms.

Although discussing everything on Table 4 leads away from the objectives of the study, it is impossible to resist commenting on the surprising fact that none of the definitions that include economic pressure *and* disinformation contain the term “synergistic”. “Synergy” consistently appears in definitions that do not mention either economic pressure or disinformation campaigns. Furthermore, “synergy” does not even appear in the sample along with “technology”,







Tac/form: Tactics - formations.	Withoutterr/Wpsy: Without terrorism - With psychological means.	Withoutcrim/Wlegal: Without criminality - With legal action.
Psy domain: Psychological domain	Wterr/Wpsy: With terrorism - With psychological means.	Wcrim/Wlegal: With criminality - With legal action.
Social Domain: Social domain.	Withoutterr/Withoutpsy: Without terrorism - Without psychological means.	Withoutcrim/Withoutlegal: Without criminality - Without legal action.
Pol domain: Political domain.	Wviol/Withoutmov: With indiscriminate violence - Without social mobilisation.	With: Using new technologies and attacks on computer networks.
Tech. domain: Technological domain.	Withoutviol/Wmov: Without indiscriminate violence - With social mobilisation.	Without: No use of new technologies or attacks on computer networks.
Econ-inf. domain: Economic and information domain.	Withoutviol/Withoutmov: Without discriminate violence - Without social mobilisation.	Wecon/Withoutinf: With economic pressure - Without disinformation.
R actors: Relationship between the actors.	Withoutcoer/Winflu: Without coercion - With political influence.	Withoutecon/Winf: Without economic pressure - With disinformation.
Action Mod: Action model.	Wcoer/Winflu: With coercion - With political influence.	Wecon/Winf: With economic pressure - With disinformation.
Op. / est.; Operations - strategies.	Withoutcoer/Withoutinflu: Without coercion - Without political influence.	Withoutecon/Withoutinf: Without economic pressure - Without disinformation.
St: State		
Nst: Non-state.		
Conv: Conventional.		
Nconv: Non-conventional.		
ConvaN: Conventional and non-conventional.		
Wterr/Withoutpsy: With terrorism - Without psychological means.		
		Synchron.: Synchronised.
		Coord.: Coordinated.
		Covert: Covert.

although it is hard to imagine a more perfect storm against a country than a combination of cyber attacks, and the use of social media, economic and information measures.

The contradiction matrix also accurately highlights the common element in the definitions of “hybrid warfare” listed in Table 2. In other words, it *offers a short and precise definition of “hybrid warfare” that summarises all those listed and could well be considered a definition by “consensus”*. Here it is: “hybrid warfare” is a type of conflict in which the existing legal framework is used against one actor (state or non-state), but indiscriminate violence is also used against the target society. Indeed, the definitions that have been cited all coincide in using the term “war” when no legal action is taken or when it is accompanied by indiscriminate violence. By the same token, *a general definition of “the hybrid” has been obtained*, regardless of whether it is considered a “war”, a “method of waging war”, a threat, a type of “operations” or “strategies”. In view of what the contradiction matrix shows, *a conflict can be called “hybrid” if, and only if, it is an asymmetric conflict in which both conventional and unconventional tactics and formations are used*. These definitions are undoubtedly debatable, nominal or peremptory, but they *clearly indicate a limit*. If someone were to formulate a definition of “hybrid warfare” that included legal actions without the use of indiscriminate violence, it would empty the term “war” of its meaning because, by correlating it with *all* the other elements used in the definition of “hybrid”, it would be rendered unnecessary, as it would not add any distinguishing feature to them. The same would be true if someone were to formulate a definition of “hybrid” that includes the use of conventional and unconventional methods in a symmetrical conflict.

### **3.4. Creation of the solution space**

The final stage of a Zwicky box is constructing and analysing the “solution space”, i.e. listing all the configurations that do not have any contradictions. Generally speaking, this task requires the use of IT tools. This study used the tool

Table 5 Policy configuration

Name	Actors	Tactics - formations	Psychological domain	Social domain	Political domain	Legal domain	Technological domain	Economic - informative domain	Relationship between the actors	Action model	Type of conflict
<b>Operation - strategy</b>	State	Conventional	With terrorism - Without using psychological methods	With indiscriminate violence - Without social mobilisation	Without coercion - With influence	With criminality - Without legal action	With new technologies - Without attack on computer networks	With economic pressure - Without disinformation	Symmetry	Synchronised	Open
<b>Threat</b>	Non-State	Unconventional	Without terrorism - With psychological methods	Without indiscriminate violence - With social mobilisation	With coercion - Without influence	Without criminality - With legal action	Without use of new technologies - Without attack on computer networks	Without economic pressure - With disinformation	Asymmetry	Coordinated	Covert
<b>War</b>		Conventional and unconventional	With terrorism - With the use of psychological methods	Without indiscriminate violence - Without social mobilisation	Without coercion - Without influence	With criminality - With legal action		With economic pressure - With disinformation		Synergistic	
<b>Method of waging war</b>			Without terrorism - Without the use of psychological methods			Without criminality - Without legal action		Without economic pressure - Without disinformation			

created by Johannes Buchner, astrophysicist at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, <https://johannesbuchner.github.io/zwicky-morphological-analysis/>.

Our solution space is a set of 85,824 configurations. Therefore, no matter how many definitions of “hybrid” have appeared so far, there are still tens of thousands of possible definitions that have not yet been articulated (counting only the dimensions and parameters that have been brought into play so far). So as not to prolong the multiplication of definitions, the study will not explore this huge field of possibilities. It will focus on a couple of specific regions in this space. They will be illustrated by two prototypical configurations. Table 5 shows a configuration with states marked in grey. It has been called “political configuration” because the definition that corresponds to it coincides with a standard definition of *political warfare* (FRUS, 1945-50: 1 and Gershaneck, 2020: 65). It is “prototypical” in nature because there are many possible variants of it. The variants on the “Economic and Information Sphere” dimension are of particular interest. No matter which parameter is chosen in it, if the parameters chosen in the other dimensions are kept, variants of a definition of *political warfare* are still obtained. Now it is possible to understand why the economic-information domain appeared to be a strange addition to the typology (see section 3.1). Of course, 2014 will be remembered as the year Russia annexed Crimea, but, in the same year, the concept of “hybrid warfare” annexed a strategic region of *political warfare*.

Table 6 shows a configuration at the other end of the “hybrid warfare” spectrum. It has been called a “war configuration” because it corresponds to the way in which insurgencies, guerrillas, asymmetrical conflicts, etc., are traditionally defined. Once again, variants on it can be introduced that will not significantly alter the fact that what is referred to here is a type of armed conflict that does not need new concepts to understand its reality.

Controversy over whether “hybrid warfare” describes a new type of warfare, and debates about the historical origin of “the hybrid”, now seem sterile. Certainly, there are regions of the “hybrid warfare” solution space that deserve the label “new”, to the extent that they contain configurations that still

**Table 6** *War configuration*

Name	Actors	Tactics - formations	Psychological domain	Social domain	Political domain	Legal domain	Technological domain	Economic - informative domain	Relationship between the actors	Action model	Type of conflict
<b>Operation - strategy</b>	State	Conventional	With terrorism - Without using psychological methods	With indiscriminate violence - Without social mobilisation	Without coercion - With influence	With criminality - Without legal action	With new technologies - Without attack on computer networks	With economic pressure - Without disinformation	Symmetry	Synchronised	Open
<b>Threat</b>	Non-State	Unconventional	Without terrorism - With psychological methods	Without indiscriminate violence - With social mobilisation	With coercion - Without influence	Without criminality - With legal action	Without use of new technologies - Without attack on computer networks	Without economic pressure - With disinformation	Asymmetry	Coordinated	Covert
<b>War</b>		Conventional and unconventional	With terrorism - Without the use of psychological methods	Without indiscriminate violence - Without social mobilisation	Without coercion - Without influence	With criminality - Without legal action		With economic pressure - With disinformation		Synergistic	
<b>Method of waging war</b>			Without terrorism - Without the use of psychological methods			Without criminality - Without legal action		Without economic pressure - Without disinformation			

have not taken the form of definitions. On the contrary, there are regions of this space that do not deserve such a label at all, as they have been exhaustively explored. If you look at the facts, you find the same result. In all human history, there have probably never been events such as those described in some configurations. Others can be clearly dated and the rest have occurred repeatedly.

At this point, with such a large and multiform solution space, the general advice of morphological analysis is to consider it as a new problem, add constraints to it and go through the process again. In one way or another, this path leads to a reduction and systematisation of the number of dimensions by establishing a clear hierarchy from the indispensable to the additional ones. Of course, a definition does not necessarily capture the essence of reality, but it should at least serve as a map to it, and, as everyone knows, maps are never 1:1 scale. Otherwise, they would be confused with the territory.

#### 4. Discussion

The concept of “hybrid warfare” has been shaped by the peculiar interpretation that some texts have made of others. Although it would be of enormous interest to follow this evolutionary web, morphological boxes do not make this possible and there is not enough space to develop it here, so it will have to remain a pending task.

The construction of the sample involved a series of decisions that may have had a bearing on the final result. It is undeniable that definitions of “the hybrid”, appear “between the lines”, and are hinted at or appear when texts are interpreted in the right way. This study does not confirm it either. It has simply taken the option of creating an *explicit* definition sample. Interested readers are encouraged to follow the procedure used here by using non-explicit definitions. You are sure to draw significant conclusions. Most likely, however, they will include that the results do not differ much from those presented here. In any event, it is important to note that the question of why and how definitions have come to be extracted from texts in which there is no *definiendum* at all is of great interest. If the reason lies in the fact that these texts contain the parameters and dimensions listed here, this would be a confirmation of the relevance of those that were chosen.

The dimensions used here were made according to a systematic typology set out in Table I; another approach could have been chosen based on the frequency with which the different parameters are paired. In this case, the correlation between economic pressure and disinformation, for example, would force them to be placed in different dimensions. A morphological box would then be obtained that is much closer to the definitions actually stated so far. However, it would not be possible to explain why these definitions have appeared and not others. The very attribution of names to such dimensions would be contrived. Key results such as the size of the morphological box and solution space, whether definitions involve impossible situations, etc. would remain unchanged.

The construction process of a morphological box is particularly valuable because it allows for an enlightening dialogue on the topic to be held. It should preferably be carried out by a group of experts and not by an isolated individual. Although this study has tried to account for every step, much of what was obtainable in the process has inevitably been lost. Another key question of morphological analysis also remains to be answered: the procedure for obtaining the parameters and dimensions that make up the Zwicky box; no significant progress has been made on this matter since his time. Although in the case of definitions, the parameters are given by those provided by different authors, we still have no guidelines on how to go beyond them. In exchange for these unresolved questions, it is clear how morphological boxes contribute to the clarification of obscure and difficult concepts.

## 5. Conclusions

Creating “the hybrid” morphological box, its matrix of contradictions and its space of solutions satisfy the primary objectives of this study. With regard to the derived objectives, we have noted an unnecessary multiplication of definitions of “the hybrid” linked to the immense morphological field opened up by Hoffman in 2007, the combinatorial structure of the apparently simplest definitions, the description by these definitions of impossible or hardly feasible realities, the enormous space of definitions not yet stated, and the way in which “the hybrid” has invaded areas traditionally assigned to other terms, which is the source of its appeal. In fairness, there would seem to be more than enough reasons to consider “hybrid warfare” an “all-encompassing” concept, a “catch-all” concept or, even more, an “intellectual virus”, as Jordan, Colom and Pershin, respectively, have asserted. However, we have also indicated the way to avoid such judgements. All in all, and always bearing in mind the caveats introduced in the discussion, we consider that the potential of morphological boxes for analysing and constructing definitions has been made clear.

## References

- Aaronson, M. *et al.* (2011). NATO countering the hybrid threat. *Prism*, 2(4):111-124.
- Álvarez, A. and Ritchey, T. (2015). Applications of General Morphological Analysis. From Engineering Design to Policy Analysis. *Acta Morphologica Generalis*, 4(1):6-28.
- Andrievskii, T. and Skovorody, G. S. (2017). Гибридная война: сущность и базовые стратегии (Hybrid warfare: essence and basic strategies). *De Securitate*, 1(3):158-166.

- Anton, M. (2016). Hybrid pedagogies for hybrid war. *Proceedings of Scientific Research and Education in the Air Force*, 18:509-516. <https://doi.org/10.19062/2247-3173.2016.18.2.3>.
- Banasik, M. (2015). How to understand the hybrid war. *Securitologia* 21:19-34.
- Bartosh, A. A. (2021). Гибридная война, (*Hybrid warfare*). Moscow, KnoRus.
- DeBenedictis, K. (2022). *Russian "Hybrid Warfare" and the Annexation of Crimea. The Modern Application of Soviet Political Warfare*. London, Taurus.
- Braspenning, T. (2001). Theorie sociale-constructiviste de l'enlissement des guerres hybrides. Grenoble, Joint Sessions for Workshop No. 25: Théories de la Guerre.
- Calvo Albero, J. L. (2009). La Evolución de las Insurgencias y el Concepto de Guerra Híbrida. *Revista del Ejército*, 822:6-13
- Casey, G. C. (2008). America's Army in an Era of Persistent Conflict. *Army Magazine*, 58(10):19-28.
- Chekinov, S. G. and Bogdanov, S. A. (2015). Прогнозирование характера и содержания войн будущего: проблемы и суждения (Predicting the nature and content of future wars: problems and assessments), *Military Thought*, 10:41-49.
- Colom Piella, G. (2012). Vigencia y limitaciones de la guerra híbrida. *Revista científica General José María Córdova*, 10(10):77-90, <https://doi.org/10.21830/19006586.228>.
- Colom Piella, G. (2018). La doctrina Gerasimov y el pensamiento estratégico ruso contemporáneo. *Revista del Ejército*, 933:30-37.
- Comunicación conjunta sobre la lucha contra las amenazas híbridas, una respuesta de la Unión Europea (2016), JOIN/2016/018, final.
- Concepto de Empleo de las Fuerzas Armadas (2017), Cambio 2 (Cefasi7c2).
- Cubeiro Cabello, E. (2019). Guerra híbrida y ciberespacio. In *27th International Defence Course*. Madrid, Ministry of Defence, pp. 59-74.
- Cullen, P. J. and Reichborn-Kjennerud, E. (2017). *Understanding hybrid warfare*. MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project.
- Dickey, J. V. et al. (2015). *Russian Political Warfare: origin, evolution and application*, Monterrey, Naval Postgraduate School.
- Dodonov, R. et al. (2017). Polemological Paradigm of Hybrid War Research. *Philosophy and Cosmology*, 19:97-109.
- Espinel, B. (2021). La amenaza híbrida en la zona gris: aproximación conceptual. *Cuadernos de la Guardia Civil: Revista de seguridad pública*, 64:7-25.
- European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (2017?) <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats-as-a-phenomenon/> accessed 22 July 2023.

- Freier, N. (2009) The Defence Identity Crisis: It's a Hybrid World. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, 39(3):81-94.
- Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional (2017). Madrid, Presidency of the Government.
- European External Action Service (2015). Countering hybrid threats, food-for-thought paper, 731.
- Fernandes, H. (2016). As Novas Guerras: O Desafio da Guerra Híbrida. *Revista de Ciências Militares*, 4(2):13-40.
- Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*, Washington, Government Printing Office, Document 269, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d269> accessed 13 July 2023.
- Galán, C. (2018). Amenazas híbridas: nuevas herramientas para viejas aspiraciones. Real Instituto Elcano, Work document 20.
- Gerasimov, V. (2013). Ценность науки в предвидении (The value of science in forward planning). *Correo Militar-Industrial*, 8(476), <https://vpk.name/print/i85159.html>, accessed 11 July 2022.
- Gershaneck, K. K. (2020). Political Warfare. Quantico, Marine Corps University Press.
- Gil, J. M. (2019). El tratamiento informativo de la guerra híbrida de Rusia. *Urvio. Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de Seguridad*, 25:108-121, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.17141/urvio.25.2019.4006>, accessed 8 March 2023.
- Hempel C. G. (1973). *Filosofía de la ciencia natural*. Madrid, Alianza.
- Hoffman, F. (2007). *Conflicts in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Arlington, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.
- Hoffman, F. G. (2009a). Hybrid vs. compound war. *Armed Forces Journal*, 1:15
- Hoffman, F. G. (2009b). Hybrid warfare and challenges. *Joint force quarterly*, 52(1):34-39.
- Jordán, J. (2017). Guerra híbrida, un concepto atrápalo-todo. *Blog of the Grupo de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, 16. <https://global-strategy.org/guerra-hibrida-concepto-atrapalo-todo/> accessed 16 April 2023.
- Kiselyov, V. A. and Vorobyov, I. N. (2015). Гибридные операции как новый вид военного противоборства (Hybrid operations as a new type of military confrontation), *Military Thought*, 5:28-36.
- Landler, M. and Gordon, M. (2014). NATO Chief Warns of Duplicity by Putin on Ukraine, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/09/world/europe/NATO-chief-warns-of-duplicity-by-putin-on-ukraine.html> accessed 8 July 2023.

- Lasconjarias, G. y Larsen, J. A. (2015). A New Way of Warfare. In Lasconjarias, G., and Larsen, J. A. (Eds.). *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats*. NATO Defense College, Research Division, pp. 1-14.
- Конорлева, А. А. *et al.* (2018). Гибридная война как современный социокультурный феномен (Hybrid warfare as a modern socio-cultural phenomenon). *Gramota*, 7(93):86-89.
- Lasica, D. T. (2009). *Strategic Implications of Hybrid War: A Theory of Victory*, Fort Leavenworth, School of Advanced Military Studies.
- Manoilo, A. V. (2015). Гибридные войны и цветные революции в мировой политике, (Hybrid wars and colour revolutions in world politics). *Law and Politics*, 7(187):918-929, <https://doi.org/10.7256/1811-9018.2015.7.15832>.
- Miklaucic, M. *et al.* (2011). NATO countering the hybrid threat. *Prism*, 2(4), III-124.
- McCuen, J. (2008). Hybrid Wars. *Military Review*, 88(2):107-113.
- McCulloh, T. and Johnson, R. *Hybrid Warfare*, Tampa, JSOU Press.
- Monaghan, S. *et al.* (2019). *Countering Hybrid Warfare*. MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project.
- NATO (2015). Parliamentary Assembly, Defence and Security Committee “Hybrid warfare”: NATO’s new strategic Challenge? General Report, Document 166 DSC 15 E bis, extracted from <https://www.NATO-pa.int/document/2015-166-dsc-15-e-bis-hybrid-warfare-calha-report>, accessed 13 July 2023.
- NATO (2016). Final Declaration of the Warsaw Summit, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/official_texts_133169.htm) accessed 24 July 2023.
- Nemeth, W. (2002). *Future war and Chechnya: a case for hybrid warfare*. Monterrey, Naval Postgraduate School.
- Palacios, J. M. (2016). Rusia: guerra híbrida y conflictos asimétricos. *Revista del Ejército*, 904:22-27.
- Pershin, Y. Y. (2016). Записки о “гибридной войне” (Notes on “hybrid warfare”). *Security issues*. 4:63-85, <https://doi.org/10.7256/2409-7543.2016.4.19510> accessed 11 July 2023
- Petrescu, D.-L. (2019). On strategy in hybrid warfare. In *Strategies XXI International Scientific Conference: The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment*. Bucharest, Carol I National Defence University Publishing House, pp. 279-290.
- Rácz, A. (2015). *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine. Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*. Helsinki, Ulkopoliittinen Instituutti.
- Radin, A. (2017). *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics. Threats and Potential Responses*. Santa Monica, Rand Corporation.

- Ritchey, T. (2014). “On a Morphology of Theories of Emergence”, *Acta Morphologica Generalis*, 3/3:1-16.
- Sadowski, D. y Becker, J. M. (2010). Beyond the “Hybrid” Threat: Asserting the Essential Unity of Warfare. *Small Wars Journal*, 7:1-13.
- Sandor, F. (2019). The Russian hybrid warfare strategy - neither Russian nor strategy. *Defense & Security Analysis*, 35(3):308-325, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2019.1640424>.
- Sánchez García, F. (2012). El conflicto híbrido, ¿una nueva forma de guerra? In *El enfoque multidisciplinar en los conflictos híbridos*, Madrid, Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional, Security and Defence Documents, 51, pp. 11-23.
- Sánchez Herráez, P. (2014). La nueva guerra híbrida: un somero análisis estratégico. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Analysis Paper 54.
- Sánchez Herráez, P. (2021). Comprender la guerra híbrida... ¿el retorno a los clásicos? (reprint). Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Analysis Paper 42
- Schroefl, J. and Kaufman, S. J. Hybrid Actors, Tactical Variety: Rethinking Asymmetric and Hybrid War. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 37(10):862-880, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.941435>.
- Sokolova, S. N. (2017). Риски и угрозы гибридных войн в современном обществе: парадоксы реальности (Risks and threats of hybrid wars in modern society: paradoxes of reality). *Bulletin of Polesky State University. Social Sciences and Humanities Series*, 2:35-40.
- Santamaría Villascuerna, M. A. (2020). Introduction. In *27th International Defence Course*. Madrid, Ministry of Defence, pp. 11-14.
- Stach, E. (2010). Structural morphology and self-organisation. *Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, 138:29-40, <https://doi.org/10.2495/DN100041>.
- Tsygankov, P. A. (2015). “Гибридные в XXI веке: социальные и политические аспекты” (“Hybrid wars” in the 21st century: social and political aspects). *Moscow University Bulletin, Series 18, Sociology and Political Science*, 4:253-258.
- US Army (2009) *Capstone Concept*. TRADOC Pam. 525-3-0.
- US Army (2011) *Field Manual FM 3-0, CI*, 22. Washington, GPO:
- Vartak, A. P. and Mankar, V. (2013). Morphological Image Segmentation Analysis, *International Journal of Computer Science And Applications*, 6/2:161-165.
- Walker, R. G. (1998). *Spec Fi: The United States Marine Corps and Special Operations*. Monterrey, Naval Postgraduate School.
- Yuriy, D. et al. (2017). Hybrid War: High-tech, Information and Cyber Conflicts, Connections. *The Quarterly Journal*, 16(2):5-24, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.16.2.01> accessed 24 July 2023.

Zolotukhin, V. M. and Loginova, G. E. (2017). К вопросу о природе и сущности гибридной войны в современном мире: философско-культурологический аспект (On the nature and essence of hybrid warfare in the modern world: philosophical and cultural aspects). *Bulletin of the Kemerovo State University of Culture and Arts*, 41(1):99-104.

Zwicky, F. (1957). *Morphological Astronomy*, Berlin, Springer Verlag.

Zwicky, F. (1966). *Entdecken, Erfinden, Forschen im morphologischen Weltbild*, Munich, D. Knauer.

---

*Article received: 04 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---

*Adrian LOPEZ FLEMING*

*Associate Professor at the University of Barcelona, PhD Candidate in Political Science*

*E-mail: [adrianlopezfleming@gmail.com](mailto:adrianlopezfleming@gmail.com)*

## *Special Operations Forces in an era of returning great power competition*

### *An analysis of the Russian and Chinese case*

#### **Abstract**

Special Operations Forces (SOF) play a crucial role in geopolitical competition in a context of re-emerging multipolarity. This article analyses how states' global ambitions drive them to develop SOFs in line with their foreign and defence policy, following neoclassical realist theory. As great power rivalry intensifies, it is expected that global players such as China will seek to strengthen their SOFs to compete with their adversaries. This paper argues that economic capacity is not the only determining factor in SOF development, using Iran as an example, a country that has established a globally competent SOF programme despite limited resources. In fact, China, despite its considerable resources, has not yet developed a globally competent SOF programme, and this could be attributed to endogenous and exogenous factors. Through case studies of Iran, Russia and China, this article examines the factors that influence state decision-making regarding the development and use of SOFs, highlighting the discrepancy between available resources and the actual development of these forces.

#### **Keywords**

Special Operations Forces, Great Power Competition, Global Players, China, Russia.

**Cite this article:**

LOPEZ FLEMING, Adrian (2023). "Special Operations Forces in an era of returning great power competition". *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. 527-550.

## I. Introduction

Special Operations Forces (SOF) play a critical role in the foreign and security policies of many states, especially with the return of Great Power competition in the context of a re-emerging multi-polar world political system. These elite military units, which include Iran's *Quds Force*, Russia's *Sily Spetsial'nykh Operatsiy* (SSO, literally "Special Operations Forces"), and the US Army Special Forces Groups and Navy SEALs, have become one of the leading instruments in some states' foreign and state defence policies. In today's emerging geopolitical landscape, the neoclassical realist approach, as represented by Zbigniew Brzezinski, provides valuable insights into how states use SOFs as a means to project ambition and global power.

With the re-emergence of a multipolar world political system, and with an increasingly assertive China and Russia, where Great Power competition and geopolitical confrontation are increasingly common (Sahakyan, 2023), it is to be expected that Global Players such as China (Brzezinski, 1998)<sup>1</sup> will also seek to develop globally competitive special operations forces that are capable of operating in a variety of escalation environments and missions. Globally competitive is used to mean, firstly, SOFs that are capable of operating across the entire spectrum of conflict escalation. This can include Hybrid Warfare scenarios and conflicts in the Grey Zone where Special Operations Forces are key to securing advantages in future escalations or de-escalations. And secondly, globally competitive SOFs also means forces that are capable of successfully carrying out the missions usually attributed to special forces. These include: Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Anti-Terrorism (AT), Non-Conventional Warfare (NCW), and Foreign Internal Defence (FID). Finally, globally capable SOFs must be able to operate in different geographical environments, ideally globally, but at the very least in areas where the country of reference has relevant geopolitical interests. This article argues that economic capacity, or even the prospect of a near conflict, are not the only determinants of whether states develop and employ SOFs, as the paradigmatic case of Iran demonstrates. On the other hand, China, with significant economic and organisational capacity, has not yet developed a globally competent SOF programme; this could be attributed to historical experiences, its geopolitical position or other factors, as will be discussed later. As we will see throughout this paper, Chinese SOFs are used to support conventional forces in a local or regional high-intensity conflict, and their range of missions is limited compared to US, Russian, or Iranian SOFs.

SOFs represent a significant concentration of military power that can be used more precisely than other similar assets to achieve foreign policy and defence objectives.

---

<sup>1</sup> Brzezinski, a leading author of neoclassical realism, identifies China as a Global Player, among others. For further information see Brzezinski, Z. (1998). *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostategic Imperatives*. New York City: Basic Books.

In addition, evolving doctrine and technology make SOFs increasingly effective and usable in a wide range of situations. This paper provides a comparative analysis of the factors that influence states to develop and use SOFs, including case studies from China and Russia. It focuses on states that have not yet developed globally capable SOFs despite having the resources to do so, such as China, using Russia's use of SOFs as a counterexample.

The development of SOFs by states is an important indicator of their global ambitions and their willingness to use military power to advance their foreign policy objectives. This is particularly true in the context of re-emerging multipolarity, where great power competition and geopolitical confrontation are increasingly common. The trend towards increased competition among the major emerging powers has also been exacerbated by globally relevant events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts with a global impact such as the war in Ukraine. SOFs, as elite military units, are designed to operate with greater flexibility, agility and precision than conventional military forces, making them an attractive option for states seeking to project power and influence on the world stage, especially when those states are threatened by other major powers that may be developing or employing SOFs themselves.

The case of Russia's use of SOFs in the Caucasus, Syria and Ukraine serves as a powerful example of how SOFs can be used to project power and influence, even in the face of significant military and geopolitical challenges. Russia's ability to use SOFs to achieve its foreign policy goals has been instrumental in re-establishing itself as a major player on the world stage, despite economic, geographic, demographic and conventional military constraints. This has been made possible through a combination of advanced organisational capabilities, sophisticated military doctrine and a willingness to use force when necessary, even in environments where other states would be reluctant to do so. Despite having limited capabilities in many areas, Russia has managed to project power beyond its borders without, until recently, provoking an overt military response from its main geopolitical opponents. Indeed, by leveraging the Grey Zone<sup>2</sup> (Baqués, 2017) and what the West would consider 'Hybrid Warfare'<sup>3</sup>, largely through its SOFs, Russia has been remarkably successful in paralysing a coordinated military response from NATO and other opponents, allowing it to consolidate its position and deter threats in the Caucasus and the Middle East, especially in Syria. The "constant deployment" of SOFs through the

---

2 The Grey Zone refers to the space between war and peace, where the actions of states or non-state actors fall outside the traditional boundaries of conflict. This concept is explored in more depth later in the paper. More information in Baqués, J. (2015). El papel de Rusia en el conflicto de Ucrania: ¿La guerra híbrida de las grandes potencias?. *Revista de estudios en seguridad internacional*, 1(1), pp.41-60. and Baqués, J. (2017). Hacia una definición del concepto Gray Zone (GZ). *Documento de Investigación*, 2(2017), p.26.

3 Hybrid Warfare is a conflict characterised by the use of a mix of conventional and unconventional military capabilities and tactics, as well as non-military means such as diplomacy, propaganda and economic leverage. More information in Bilal, A. (2021). Hybrid Warfare-New Threats, Complexity, and 'Trust' as the Antidote. *NATO Review*, 30.

use of state and para-state tools, such as the Wagner Company<sup>4</sup>, has also provided Russia with a wealth of practical experience that can only be matched by US SOFs. This shows that Global Players often seek to engage their SOFs in ongoing operations to develop their capabilities and expertise. This can often be achieved covertly, or at least by maintaining plausible deniability, as in the case of Russia with regard to mercenary companies; this is desirable in order to maintain a low level of escalation ideal for Special Forces Operations (Votel et. al., 2016).

In the case of Iran, the development of a SOF programme with global capabilities is evidence of the importance of SOFs in states' foreign and security policies. It has been possible despite Iran's limited economic resources, and has been fundamental to its ability to project power and influence in the region<sup>5</sup>. According to the World Bank's open data, if measured by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Iran's GDP in 2021 would be roughly equivalent to that of Saudi Arabia, or seventeen times lower than that of the United States, or almost nineteen times lower than that of China. If PPP is not used, Iran's GDP is less than half that of Saudi Arabia, almost fifty times less than that of China and more than sixty-four times less than that of the United States<sup>6</sup>. Despite this, it is a Global Player in every sense, competing for power and influence on the world stage<sup>7</sup> (Brzezinski, 1998).

Iran's development of an SOF programme is also testament to the importance of ideological considerations in the development and employment of SOFs, as Iran's religious and political ideology has been a driving force behind its foreign and security policy<sup>8</sup>. Iran's SOFs, in particular its *Quds* Force or *Al-Quds* (literally "Jerusalem Force"), are a key element in its *defa-e-mosaik*, or mosaic defence, which seeks to entangle geopolitical opponents such as Saudi Arabia or Israel in protracted conflicts with *proxy forces* far from Iran's borders<sup>9</sup>. Iran has been remarkably successful in this regard, albeit at the cost of creating or sustaining a series of protracted conflicts in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq with unpredictable

4 Sukhankin, S. (2019). Russian PMCs in the Syrian civil war: From Slavonic Corps to Wagner group and beyond', in Sukhankin, S., ed. *War by other means*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation.

5 Cordesman, A. H. (2006). *Iran's Support of Hezbollah in Lebanon*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies. and Johnston, T., Lane, M., Casey, A., Williams, H.J., Rhoades, A.L., Sladden, J., Vest, N., Reimer, J.R. and Haberman, R. (2021). Could the Houthis Be the Next Hizballah. *Iranian Proxy Development in Yemen and the Future of the Houthi Movement*. Santa Clara: RAND Corporation.

6 World Bank. (2021). *World Bank Open Data*. [Online] Available at: < <https://data.worldbank.org/> >

7 Brzezinski already identifies Iran in his book "The Grand Chessboard" as a geo-strategically active actor, albeit in a limited way. The further development of its assets in countries such as Lebanon and Yemen, and the regional dimension of its conflict with Saudi Arabia, as well as its recent accession to the BRICS group, indicate a desire to be a Global Player. For further information see Brzezinski, Z. (1998). *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York City: Basic Books.

8 Connell, M. (2010). Iran's Military Doctrine. *The Iran Primer*, II. and Piotrowski, M. A. (2017). "Mosaic Defence:" Iran's Hybrid Warfare in Syria 2011-2016. *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, 26(3), 18-67.

9 Tabatabai, A.M., Martini, J. and Wasser, B. (2021). *The Iran Threat Network (ITN)*. Washington, DC: RAND Corporation.

outcomes<sup>10</sup>. However, the cost in terms of manpower has been small for the Iranian state, while opponents such as Israel or Saudi Arabia have had to expend considerable energy to deal with threats created or augmented mainly by Iran's main Special Operations Forces, such as Hezbollah and the Houthi Movement<sup>11</sup>.

However, as a counterexample, China has yet to develop a globally competent SOF programme beyond elite infantry support for conventional forces, despite its vast economic and organisational resources. This could be attributed to a variety of factors, including historical experience, its geopolitical position or other endogenous dynamics such as military doctrine. In particular, this research postulates that this is mainly due to the Chinese political leadership's notion of a possible upcoming conflict in the Taiwan Strait and the 'First Island Chain' as a 'Local War under High-Tech Conditions' (Liao, 2020), an idea that in turn derives from endogenous and exogenous factors. However, the US and its allies are likely to seek to engage China in conflicts within and beyond its borders, destabilising key allies, infiltrating and mobilising disaffected groups, and preventing further consolidation of China's geopolitical position in the 'First Island Chain' (Yoshihara 2012) by employing SOFs and other strategies across the spectrum of escalation and Hybrid Warfare. Regardless of the reasons for the lack of a SOF programme capable of operating under various escalation conditions, China's lack of a globally competent SOF programme highlights the importance of examining the factors that influence states to develop and employ them, as China is likely to engage in conflict, whether overt or covert, with states that have developed such globally competent SOFs, such as Russia or the United States<sup>12</sup>. Even if China imagines that future conflicts will occur mainly in "high-tech conditions"<sup>13</sup> (Zhang, 2006), neglecting the development and prolonged deployment of SOFs will deprive the Chinese military of a vital tool in the re-emerging geopolitical competition. As opponents increasingly seek to disrupt China's meteoric rise, for example, by encouraging separatism within its territory or enlisting key allies such as Pakistan through Unconventional Warfare and Hybrid Warfare in the Grey Zone, China will have to meet "fire with fire" and develop its own globally competent "Hybrid Warriors" or SOFs to counter its opponents.

---

10 Litvak, M. (2017). Iran and Saudi Arabia: Religious and Strategic Rivalry. *National Security Studies Center, Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, 133.

11 Inbar, E. (2007). How Israel bungled the second Lebanon war. *Middle East Quarterly*, 14(3), pp. 57-65. and Ottaway, D.B. (2015). *Saudi Arabia's Yemeni Quagmire*. Washington, DC: Wilson Center.

12 Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). Can China rise peacefully? *The National Interest*, 25(1), pp. 1-40.

13 In this sense, the term "high-tech" refers to a high-intensity war with a heavy emphasis on the cyber and electronic spectrum. For more information see Zhang, Y. [张玉良]. (2006). *The science of campaigns [战役学]*. Beijing: National Defense University Press [国防大学出版社]. It is translated as Zhang, Y. (2006). *The science of campaigns*. Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Fundamental concepts of SOFs and their relationship to geopolitical competition

It is useful to establish the definitions that will be used to characterise the relationship between SOFs and geopolitics. This is due to the fact that terms related to military theory and strategy are not always translatable or used in the same way around the world. For example, the concept of “Hybrid Warfare”, although relatively new in Western academic and military debate<sup>14</sup>, has only become common in the last decade. However, it is central to Russian military thought, and more or less equivalent (though not exactly) to the concept developed by the Bolsheviks as “Political Warfare”, “Active Measures” or more broadly *maskirovka* or deception<sup>15</sup> (Heickerö, 2010 and Bērziņš, 2014). Modern “Political Warfare” in Russian military doctrine can be seen in documents such as Russian Chief of General Staff Gerasimov’s “The Value of Science is in the Foresight” (Gerasimov, 2016: 23), which postulates that “there is no clear separation between war and peace” and that a “permanent front” composed of subversive elements in the society of the opposing state, assisted by Russian forces, must be established throughout its territory to achieve Russian strategic and political objectives.

As stated above, SOFs are primarily trained for operations such as Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Anti-Terrorism (AT), Unconventional Warfare (UCW) and Foreign Internal Defence (FID). The following section provides common definitions of these types of missions. Direct Action (DA), defined in JP 3-05, refers to short-duration attacks and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments. DA operations are characterised by speed, surprise and violence of action, and their purpose is to seize, destroy or disrupt enemy capabilities. Special Reconnaissance (SR), defined in JP 3-05, refers to intelligence gathering operations conducted in enemy-controlled or politically sensitive environments. SR operations rely on unconventional tactics and techniques,

14 One of the first references to this term in its modern sense is in Hoffman, F. G. (2009). Hybrid vs. compound war. *Armed Forces Journal*, 1. It has gained prominence over the years, becoming a concept used in the United States to explain Russia’s combination of economic, political, legal, and military means to achieve geopolitical goals such as the annexation of Crimea. For more information see Chivvis, C.S. (2017). *Understanding Russian “Hybrid Warfare” And What Can Be Done About It, Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee*. Santa Clara: Rand Corporation.

15 The Soviets even went so far as to produce a manual on insurrectionist warfare for use by the Allied parties in Europe. It shows the thought process on Political Warfare or the use of subversion, propaganda, and political mobilisation in pursuit of a military-political objective. For more information see Neuberger, A. and Wollenberg, E. (1970). *Armed Insurrection*. London: NLB. Modern Russian thought draws on this legacy, albeit with a modernised and in some ways more limited perspective, as reflected in the preoccupation of nearby countries with this combination of means, in particular subversion and the use of disinformation. For more information see Heickerö, R. (2010). *Emerging cyber threats and Russian views on Information warfare and Information operations*. Stockholm: Defence Analysis, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI). and Bērziņš, J. (2014). Russia’s new generation warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defence Policy. *Policy Paper*, 2, pp.2002-2014.

such as the use of small teams of highly trained soldiers to gather information and provide decision-makers<sup>16</sup> and other military units with actionable information (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2020)<sup>17</sup>.

Unconventional Warfare (UCW), defined by the US Army in its Field Manual (FM) 3-18, refers to military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-controlled territory, using indirect, covert or clandestine means to exploit, disrupt and neutralise the enemy. A reliance on indigenous forces and resources, rather than conventional military forces, distinguishes UCW operations from other types of missions. Foreign Internal Defence, as defined in FM 3-18, refers to activities undertaken by one state to help another state resist subversion and insurgency. The objective of FID is to help the host state maintain stability and security within its borders, and generally involves building the capacity of partners, supporting local defence forces and providing military assistance. In other words, while UCW is typically offensive, seeking to undermine or overthrow opposing regimes, FID is typically defensive, seeking instead to stabilise allies, often against the threat of enemy UCW (Army HQ, 2014).

Alongside these types of missions, SOFs are often used as the main military factor in Hybrid Warfare (HW). HW, as defined by the Centre for Peace Studies (CPS), is characterised by the use of a mix of conventional and unconventional military capabilities and tactics, as well as non-military means such as diplomacy, propaganda and economic leverage. The flexible and adaptable nature of HW allows it to exploit the enemy's weaknesses and surprise them with different combined and synchronised types of attacks<sup>18</sup>. The key concept that differentiates Hybrid Warfare from simply combining different means to achieve an objective is the relatively novel ability to synchronise these various means. The use, for example, of diplomacy, *astroturfing* and direct military action are synchronised to achieve a single political-military effect, as Russia achieved with the annexation of Crimea. As mentioned above, Hybrid Warfare does not have a one-to-one equivalent in Russian military doctrine, although it has some connections to concepts such as the Permanent Front<sup>19</sup> (Gerasimov, 2016: 23).

The field of military operations has significantly evolved and adapted in recent years, especially with the increasing relevance of medium- to high-intensity, long-term conflicts that pit a diverse range of different types of international forces and actors against each

---

<sup>16</sup> Referring generically to whoever is in command of the mission, theatre of operations, or government.

<sup>17</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff definitions were used. (2020). *Joint Publication 3-05 Special Operations*. Washington, DC: Army Publications. It appears that the document, for unknown reasons, is no longer available on the Joint Chiefs of Staff website. Alternatively, the document can be found at <https://jdeis.js.mil/my.policy> although most browsers do not support the encryption system used by the US defence department. As these are fundamental concepts, an alternative for the definitions used is the publication Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2014). *Joint Publication 3-05 Special Operations*. Washington, DC: Army Publications. This edition is available at [https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3\\_05.pdf](https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3_05.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Bilal, A. (2021). Hybrid Warfare-New Threats, Complexity, and 'Trust' as the Antidote. *NATO Review*, 30.

<sup>19</sup> Here Gerasimov uses the term Front to refer to a coalition of political interests supported by an external actor, in this case, Russia. The confusion between "Combat Front" and "Political Front" also occurs in Russian, both concepts using the same term *фронт*.

other, such as the Syrian Civil War or the Conflict in the Donbass (Regan, 2002). Unconventional Warfare (UCW), Foreign Internal Defence (FID), Hybrid Warfare (HW) and other forms of military operations have become increasingly important in shaping the geopolitical landscape and advancing the interests of the Global Players.

## *2.2. The Permanent Front and its relationship with SOFs*

The Permanent Front, as theorised by Gerasimov, refers to the non-linear, multi-sphere battlefield in which SOFs operate. The Permanent Front is characterised by the absence of clear front lines, the use of unconventional tactics and weapons, and a blurred distinction between combat and non-combat activities, or between war and peace. In this sense, it resembles the space in which the Western concept of Hybrid Warfare predominantly takes place, i.e. the Grey Zone (GZ). The GZ refers to the space between war and peace, where the actions of states or non-state actors fall outside the traditional boundaries of conflict. The Grey Zone is, by definition, characterised by ambiguity, where it is difficult to attribute hostile actions to a specific actor or actors. Furthermore, Hybrid Warfare in the Grey Zone can induce a proverbial “frog in boiling water” effect, where the target does not realise that hostile actions are being directed against them or does not understand the underlying objectives of these actions until it is too late to prevent the objectives from being achieved (Baqués, 2017 and Baqués, 2015). Examples of activities that may fall into the Grey Zone include cyber-attacks, economic coercion, disinformation campaigns and support for proxy forces, all of which can be difficult to conclusively attribute to a hostile actor. Hybrid Warfare in the Grey Zone can be a prelude to full-scale armed conflict, as a state prepares the future battle space for more favourable armed action, or an attempt to achieve the underlying political objective without resorting to war.

In the case of Russia, the Permanent Front emphasises the use of unconventional warfare techniques, such as political subversion, propaganda and cyber operations, to achieve military and political objectives. The concept of the Permanent Front is based on the idea that modern warfare is not limited to military operations, but encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at shaping the environment to achieve Russian objectives. In fact, the Permanent Front goes far beyond Unconventional Warfare, using subversive elements within the geopolitical opponent’s society in coordination with Russian state capabilities, such as economic or diplomatic pressure, social media bot campaigns or cyber-attacks, to achieve synchronised effects (Cullen and Reichborn-Kiennerud, 2017) that weaken the target’s ability to withstand the pressure. In this context, SOFs play a crucial role in supporting Russian geopolitical interests by conducting covert operations and being the main military factor in this Permanent Front. For example, these principles were achieved on 27 February 2014, when members of the 45th *Spetsnaz* Regiment helped to establish what the Russian media termed a “popular uprising” in Crimea, which, in coordination with economic and political pressure, cyber-attacks and the mobilisation of allied elements in Ukrainian society, paved the way for further Russian military intervention that

successfully annexed Crimea without a significant immediate response from Ukraine or other geopolitical opponents<sup>20</sup>.

### *2.3. SOFs in geopolitical competition: Global Players and Geopolitical Pivots*

According to Brzezinski, Global Players are states, or rarely non-state actors with “state-like” properties<sup>21</sup>, such as Hezbollah, that have the national capacity and will to project their power and influence globally and affect international affairs in significant ways. Geopolitical Pivots are states or regions that, due to their geographical location, play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of power in a given part of the world and serve as a link between different geopolitical entities. A Global Player’s control of these pivots provides it with significant advantages in terms of geopolitical influence and power projection (Brzezinski, 1998).

The use of SOFs in Geopolitical Pivots is a crucial component of the Global Players’ overall strategy to shape the conflict space in their favour. This is achieved through a combination of military and non-military means that blur the lines between war and peace, and are used to influence the balance of power in a given region and create an environment conducive to a Player projecting its power and influence. The ability to operate effectively in the ‘Grey Zones’ (GZs) between peace and conflict is critical for Global Players, as these GZs are often characterised by uncertainty, unpredictability and ambiguity (Baqués, 2017), making them ideal spaces for using SOFs, who have the training and ability to operate where political acumen and adaptability are paramount. In particular, Global Players increasingly rely on specifically trained SOFs to develop and support Hybrid Warfare in the Grey Zone, as opposed to SOFs that are trained and deployed in more traditional missions and in support of conventional military forces. In the context of Hybrid Warfare, SOFs play a vital role in providing Global Players with the ability to conduct covert, indirect and unconventional operations, while maintaining the capacity to respond with conventional military force if necessary, by shaping the conflict space in their favour.

States have increasingly differentiated between two groups of SOFs due to geopolitical and military needs. On the one hand, they have SOFs that are adapted to perform mainly Direct Action (DA) or Special Reconnaissance (SR) missions. Notable historical and current examples include the US *Army Rangers*, the British *Special Air Service* (SAS) and the Iranian *Saberin* (Army HQ, 2017; King, 2009; and Pukhov, 2014). These SOFs are sometimes subordinate to conventional forces and are designed primarily to support conventional military operations through DA or SR.

---

20 Lanoszka, A. (2016). Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe. *International affairs*, 92(1), pp.175-195.

21 Abdul-Hussain, H. (2009). Hezbollah: A state within a state. *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 8, pp.68-83.

Therefore, they can be considered an Elite Infantry. On the other hand, some states have developed SOFs that focus on other types of missions, primarily Unconventional Warfare, Foreign Internal Defence and Hybrid Warfare support. Notable current examples include the US *Army Special Forces Groups*, the Russian *Sily Spetsial'nykh Operatsiy* (SSO) and the Iranian *Al-Quds Force* (Army HQ, 2014; Marsh and Spencer, 2017; Seliktar and Rezaei, 2020). These forces are generally under the direct command of senior political or military leadership and are the main military element of Hybrid Warfare strategies<sup>22</sup>. This developing typology of SOFs can therefore be called “Hybrid Warriors”. Some SOFs combine aspects of both Elite Infantry and Hybrid Warriors, so it is useful to think of SOFs as existing on a continuum between these two types. A relevant example is that Russian SOFs tend to exhibit traits of both, for example, the *Spetsnaz GU* or *Spetsnaz VDV*, sometimes supports or participates in conventional operations, as in the war in Ukraine<sup>23</sup>, and sometimes acts as the main thrust in hybrid operations, as in the annexation of Crimea<sup>24</sup>.

### 3. Case Study Analysis

#### 3.1. Russia's Special Operations Forces

Russia's SOFs play a crucial role in the country's military and geopolitical strategy. The main SOF units include the *Spetsnaz* of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GU), the 45th *Spetsnaz* Brigade of the VDV Guard and the *Sily Spetsial'nykh Operatsiy* (SSO). These units have been involved in a number of high-profile military operations both at home and abroad, including the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the protracted war in the Donbass, the conflict in Syria and, most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These forces have been particularly outstanding in achieving Russian strategic objectives with minimal loss of personnel, especially in covert and hybrid operations such as the annexation of Crimea. The exception to this has been the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, where a shortage of trained personnel has forced the Russian state to sometimes employ SOFs in conventional operations for which they are not ideally suited, representing huge amounts of wasted training and scarce resources.

These SOFs have a complex relationship with the Wagner Group, a mercenary group widely believed to operate under Moscow's command and to conduct covert

22 A paradigmatic example is found in Donovan, M., Carl, N., & Kagan, F. W. (2020). Iran's Reserve of Last Resort: Uncovering the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Ground Forces Order of Battle. *AEI Paper & Studies*, 1.

23 Atlamazoglou, S. (2022). *As Ukrainian forces recaptured a key town, another elite Russian unit appeared to go through 'the meat grinder'*. [Online] Available at: < <https://www.businessinsider.com/russian-spetsnaz-special-forces-unit-heavy-losses-in-lyman-ukraine-2022-11> > [Accessed 7 Mar. 2023].

24 Galeotti, M. (2015). “Hybrid war” and “little green men”: How it works, and how it doesn't. *Ukraine and Russia: People, politics, propaganda and perspectives*, 156.

operations in support of Russian interests (Sukhankin, 2019). The Wagner Group has been involved in several conflicts, including in Ukraine and Syria, where it has reportedly provided military support to Russian-backed separatists or Syrian government forces. The Wagner Group offers many benefits to the Russian military, but especially to its SOFs. They benefit from being able to engage in a variety of operations that would be politically infeasible for the Russian state to carry out on its own, and as a result, they gain invaluable combat and operational experience that they can then use to their advantage against less experienced opponents. This means that the Wagner Group, by being permanently involved in low to medium intensity conflicts around the world, offers the Russian state an ideal avenue for the development of its SOFs and their training and integration with its “Permanent Front” or what the West would call “Hybrid Warfare” strategy. Russia is unlikely to give up this valuable resource despite the coup attempt and the suspicious death of its leader Yevgeny Prigozhin (Pokalova, 2023)<sup>25</sup>. The Russian SOF experience includes the full spectrum of escalation and is not limited exclusively to “kinetic” actions (such as Direct Action), but encompasses actions that could be considered both Unconventional Warfare and Foreign Internal Defence in coordination with actions by the Russian state and its allies, designed to create synchronous effects on opponents.

### 3.2. SOFs in the Russian “Hybrid War”

The Russian government also uses a variety of tools to advance its policy goals, including the Internet Research Agency (IRA), various contractors, voluntary associations, companies, hacker groups and others. According to the Permanent Front concept, these institutions and groups act in different combinations at different times to achieve Russian objectives. For example, in Slovakia, retired Russian *Spetsnaz* soldiers are reported to have trained young men from a right-wing paramilitary group to create unrest (Harris, 2020). The Permanent Front strategy is, by necessity, a long-term effort that seeks to mobilise subversive elements in the target society. Special Operations Forces, especially Russian SOFs that are well integrated into Russia’s Hybrid Warfare/ Permanent Front strategy and therefore receive specialised training and deployment in this regard, are ideally suited to mobilise these elements due to their combination of military, political and ideological training (Marsh and Spencer, 2017). This means that Russian (and other countries’) SOFs can transform the subversive elements of marginalised actors not only into military threats, but also into political-ideological threats to opponents by providing specialised training, resources and direct support.

The Russian government’s use of SOF and proxy forces is part of a broader geopolitical strategy aimed at preserving and advancing Russian interests in an increasingly precarious geopolitical situation. Russia’s geopolitical position has generally worsened since the fall of the USSR, and the country lacks natural defences against potential

---

25 Parens, R., 2023. Wagner Mutiny Ex Post Facto: What’s Next in Russia and Africa? *Foreign Policy Research Institute*.

threats<sup>26</sup>. The use of SOFs and other unconventional warfare techniques can therefore be seen as a way to ensure that Russia remains a Global Player according to Brzezinski's definition, and that it can defend its interests despite possessing significantly fewer resources than its opponents or potential rivals. Russia leverages its rich experience and advanced integration between military and political leadership to achieve far greater effects than would be expected of it strictly on the basis of its economic resources.

### 3.3. China's Special Operations Forces

The development of Chinese SOFs has been an important component of the long-term comprehensive military modernisation programme of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA)<sup>27</sup>. This programme has aimed to improve the military's ability to fight and win short, information-intensive local wars. Therefore, Chinese SOFs do not seek to operate or train across the full spectrum of escalation, but instead expect to operate exclusively under what might be called a "high-intensity conventional war" rather than a protracted low- to medium-intensity conflict or insurgency scenario. This is a kind of 'narrow vision', where the only scenario envisaged by the Chinese military-political leadership in the short to medium term is one in which the Chinese PLA would be involved in a local war against Taiwan and the US, or a more generalised regional war to oust the US and allies from the first island chain. In both cases, Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance in support of conventional military operations, such as amphibious landings or area denial at sea, are the main focuses of Chinese SOF training<sup>28</sup>. As a result, Chinese SOFs are not the focus of Chinese strategy; they are seen as important but secondary to the main thrust and fire-power provided by PLA Marines and the PLA Navy to seize key terrain and deny freedom of movement to a potentially hostile US and allied navy.

Chinese SOFs are assigned to Theatre Commands, which has replaced the outdated Military Regions system. Chinese SOFs have a particular emphasis on security near the Taiwan Strait, with a numerically superior deployment in Theatre Commands that is expected to contribute to a direct assault on Taiwan, such as the Eastern and Southern Theatre Commands (Lavender, 2013 and Kennedy, 2021). This demonstrates the importance the Chinese government attaches to maintaining control over the Taiwan Strait and to quickly overwhelming Taiwan's defences in the event of war. Originally, there was one SOF unit for each of the seven PLA military regions, each consisting of between 1,000 and 2,000 men, which have since been subordinated to

26 Friedman, G. (2020). Russia's search for strategic depth. *Geopolitical Futures*, 17.

27 Office of the Secretary of Defense. (2012). *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, Annual Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense.

28 Kania, E., & Wood, P. (2021). Sharp Swords of the Future Battlefield: The Chinese Military's Special Forces and Psychological Operations', in Davis, Z., Gac, F., Rager, C., Reiner, P., and Snow, J., ed. Livermore: Center for Global Security Research.

the Theatre Commands. These units are assigned independently to each of the Theatre Commands, in contrast to the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) or Russian Special Forces, which are often directly subordinate to the General Staff (Lamb and Tucker, 2019; Putin, 2017). Moreover, these SOFs are relatively small compared to the large size of the PLA. This is slowly changing and they are expected to increase in size following the trend of recent decades, although not necessarily to diversify in terms of the missions expected to be performed in the coming years and decades as China completes this phase of its military modernisation.

The main roles of Chinese SOFs include Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance and Counter-Terrorism. However, unlike their counterparts in other countries such as the United States or Russia, they do not focus on Counterinsurgency, Unconventional Warfare (UCW) or Foreign Internal Defence (FID). Instead, their role is primarily to provide high-intensity support to conventional forces, with a regional or even local focus rather than global deployment. To date, Chinese SOFs have not been engaged in significant combat operations, which has limited their operational experience. This is due to China's overall strategy of a "peaceful rise" and to potentially avoid the "Thucydides Trap", as well as other factors that will be examined in the next section. In any case, it is clear that Chinese SOFs are not necessarily outdated, but have a more limited understanding of the possible range of missions and strategic objectives that SOF deployment can pursue, limiting themselves to a support role for conventional forces rather than putting them at the centre of operations as Russia does.

### *3.4. Development of Chinese SOFs: endogenous and exogenous factors*

The People's Republic of China has been pursuing a comprehensive military modernisation programme with the aim of improving its ability to fight and conduct successful regional high-intensity, short-duration "information-focused" military operations. This quest for modernisation came about as a result of a wake-up call in the form of a 1979 incursion into Vietnam that revealed the limitations of China's large military formations and their vulnerability to highly trained militias and professional special forces. This led to a move away from a Maoist-inspired model based on the defensive mobilisation of the whole people against foreign threats towards a more professional and technically advanced armed forces (Lavender, 2013). In the 1980s, the diminishing threat of nuclear war between the two superpowers and the involvement of both the United States and the Soviet Union in limited wars around the world changed China's security situation. In particular, the USSR's failure to sustain its occupation of Afghanistan reduced fears of a possible ground war with the USSR. This increased China's sense of security and led to the creation of its first Special Operations Forces Organisation (SOFO) in 1988, as part of the general move to reduce the size

of the armed forces and raise their technical competence and level of training to the standards of potential opponents<sup>29</sup>.

### 3.4.1. *Historical factors in the development of Chinese SOFs*

In terms of determining foreign and defence policy, historical experience should not be dismissed as a decisive factor in shaping a country's grand strategy, military doctrine and SOF doctrine. This does not just mean the wars or conflicts in general that the country has experienced in recent history, in China's case particularly during and after the Civil War, but to the lessons learned from those conflicts. Moreover, this experience in turn determines how a country interprets the conflicts it observes and, as a result, the lessons that are then applied to its own armed forces. In China, it is significant that Mao's towering legacy imbued the state and the entire military with a doctrine and mentality that emphasised the preponderance of defensive, guerilla, mass, low-tech warfare against potential "imperialists" and "revisionists"<sup>30</sup>. This mentality was progressively challenged and eventually overthrown, both through the experiences of the Korean War and Vietnam, and the transition from Maoism to post-Maoism. On the one hand, China's military system, which had proved enormously successful against Japanese imperial ambition and the Kuomintang (both with Soviet assistance), proved inadequate against the Americans in Korea and disastrous against the experienced Vietnamese. In Korea, despite a strategic victory or a *status quo ante bellum*, the war revealed the huge capability gap between Chinese and US forces, especially in terms of naval and air support as well as the use of modern weapons (Zhang, 1995). On the other hand, the demystification of Mao, exemplified by Deng Xiaoping's quote "In China we will inherit many good things from Chairman Mao's thinking while clearly explaining the mistakes he made"<sup>31</sup>, opened up the possibility of a radical restructuring of the PLA. As a result, the revolutionary conservatism that had existed in all areas of the state before Mao's death, but particularly in the PLA, dissipated, and the lessons learned in Korea and Vietnam came to the fore. However, as Deng Xiaoping and subsequent prime ministers focused on economic development, exemplified by his speech at the UN where he stated that China would "never seek hegemony"<sup>32</sup>, military modernisation was relegated to the background, especially considering the radical nature of the transformation the PLA would undergo. It was only in the 1990s that

29 Office of the Secretary of Defense. (2012). *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, Annual Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense.

30 Tse-Tung, M. (1977). 'Directives Regarding Cultural Revolution' in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 9*. Secunderabad: Karanti Publications.

31 Xiaoping, D. (1980). Answers to the Italian Journalist Oriana Fallaci' in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

32 Xiaoping, D. (1974). *Speech at the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly*. Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

the Chinese state began to invest seriously in a long-term transformation of the PLA and its SOF programme, as it began to consider the possible implications of its rise in East Asia and its future confrontation with the US for regional hegemony.

The US use of SOFs in the Gulf War in Iraq and the use of advanced equipment to guide precision-guided bombs to targets was a reminder of the many shortcomings in the Chinese military. After observing how SOFs could be used to multiply the capabilities of conventional forces, the PLA devoted considerable resources throughout the 1990s to developing and expanding its SOFs, making them an integral part of the ground forces modernisation effort (Fisher, 2008). The number of *Dadui* (brigades) of SOFs was increased from a single unit across the PLA to one in each of the seven PLA military regions, which have since been subsumed by the new Theatre Commands, with additional increases focusing on the Theatre Commands that could be expected to participate in a future confrontation with Taiwan and the first island chain (Lavender, 2013).

#### *3.4.2. Geostrategic factors in the development of Chinese SOFs*

China's military modernisation focuses on a 'peaceful rise' within a rules-based multipolar order and, as such, it does not envisage deploying its SOFs in low- to medium-intensity conflicts around the world, only against Taiwan or the US in a possible high-tech local war in the first island chain and the South China Sea (Yoshihara, 2012). China wants to avoid the Thucydides Trap, which has historically led a declining power to seek war against a rising power so that it does not lose its hegemonic position (Brzezinski, 2014). To achieve this, China is increasingly applying economic and political power over US allies or neutral states in East Asia in an attempt to transform balancing behaviour by a China perceived as a threat, into aligning behaviour by a regionally hegemonic China. As a result, the deployment or even training of SOFs capable of engaging in protracted Unconventional Warfare or in support of Hybrid Operations would increase East and South East Asian countries' threat perception of China, which could contradict the goal of achieving regional hegemony without provoking an overt US military response.

The primary focus of PLA SOFs is Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance and Counter-terrorism. Its doctrine consists mainly of specialising in Special Reconnaissance, strikes and sabotage, integrated ground-sea-air-space-electronic combat, asymmetric combat, large-scale night combat and surgical strikes<sup>33</sup>. However, while the roles and missions of Chinese SOFs could be employed in an expeditionary manner or in conjunction with the capability to have global scope, there is currently no indication that China intends to use its SOFs in this way. Chinese SOFs' lack of combat and other expertise, combined with their focus on a possible open military

---

33 Blasko, D.J. (2015). PLA Special Operations Forces: Organisations, Missions and Training. *China Brief*, 15(9), p.8.

confrontation with the United States over Taiwan, suggests that the development of these forces is driven primarily by geopolitical and geostrategic determinants. The Chinese leadership is trying to use economic policy, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, to avoid or at least delay the emergence of the Thucydides trap until it is in a better position, and its SOFs are part of a conventional military strategy in line with this goal.

Despite these efforts, the continued focus on Taiwan as a potential hotspot for military confrontation underlines the importance the role SOFs will play in any future conflict on the island or in the region. Potential conflict with Taiwan is a major concern for China and has been a significant driver in the development of its SOFs (Lanteigne, 2019 and Lavender, 2013). In the event of a conflict with Taiwan, Chinese SOFs are likely to play an important role in executing and supporting an amphibious assault on the island. This would involve inserting SOF personnel through naval and marine units for the purpose of conducting Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance missions. In particular, the continued organic subordination of Chinese SOF *dadui* to Theatre Command underscores the PLA's overall SOF doctrine, which is using SOFs to support conventional military operations. In the case of Taiwan, SOFs would set the stage for an amphibious assault by sabotaging key infrastructure, providing up-to-date intelligence on enemy force distribution and preventing an immediate Taiwanese response to the main advance of Chinese forces (Chen and Wuthnow, 2022).

#### *3.4.3. Geographical and military factors in the development of Chinese SOFs*

A final reason for the lack of a globally capable Chinese SOF programme is China's emphasis on the naval aspect of its future confrontation with the United States in East Asia. China, which relies heavily on global trade and global supply chains to sustain its growing economy, understands that controlling sea lanes and breaking US control over the first island chain, including geographical spaces such as the Taiwan Strait, the Moluccan Strait or the South China Sea, is absolutely essential to securing regional hegemony, as these are key geopolitical pivots (Brzezinski, 1998). Therefore, the emphasis for both PLA land forces and the PLA Navy has been on area denial, power projection and contested amphibious assaults (Biddle and Oelrich, 2016). This means that the roles played by SOFs in this type of targeting are generally limited to Direct Action or Special Reconnaissance in support of conventional naval or ground forces.

#### *3.4.4. Conclusion and summary of the development of Chinese SOFs*

To conclude, the lack of a globally capable Chinese SOF programme, i.e. a SOF programme capable of conducting Unconventional Warfare, Foreign Internal Defence and hybrid operations support, as well as its use in the escalation spectrum, is mainly due to the following reasons: (1) Historical factors that saw the PLA move away from

the Maoist model of popular mobilisation and a protracted people's defensive war towards more professionalised and technically competent forces, partly emulating the US success in the Gulf War. (2) China's policy of trying to avoid the Thucydides Trap means minimising regional threat perceptions and encouraging the defection of US allies in an attempt to gain regional hegemony without resorting to full-scale war. In tandem with this "peaceful rise", the aim is to limit a potential conflict with Taiwan to a local or regional war rather than a global one. In this case, SOFs would play a role in rapidly occupying Taiwan, assaulting enemy bases in the South China Sea or holding key points in the first island chain, but would not be used to destabilise US allies, as this would more likely lead them to balance their position against China rather than ally with it. (3) Finally, an envisaged confrontation with the United States in East Asia would be decided primarily by naval forces rather than land forces or SOFs, as defeat in the naval domain would greatly hamper the continuation of both US and Chinese operations in the region.

#### 4. Comparing and assessing Russian and Chinese Special Forces in the context of re-emerging multipolarity

In today's global political landscape, one notable development has been the re-emergence of great power competition, as it becomes increasingly evident that the world is moving away from the "Unipolar Moment" characteristic of the 1990s and early 2000s. Competition has developed in a number of areas, including the military sphere, where the development and deployment of SOFs has become a key indicator of a state's military capability. In this context, it is important to compare and assess Russia's and China's military capabilities in terms of their SOFs, especially in light of their growing military cooperation. It has previously been established how and why SOFs are key elements of emerging Global Players' strategies to challenge hegemonic powers or maintain their spheres of influence despite limited resources, and why Russian and Chinese SOFs have diverged in terms of their organisation, training and position within their respective countries' strategies.

Russian SOFs have a long history dating back to the Soviet era. They have been involved in various conflicts around the world, including the Soviet-Afghan War, the First and Second Chechen Wars. In more recent times, Russian SOFs have been used to great effect as part of what Russian General Gerasimov has called the "Permanent Front" in Syria and Ukraine. Russian SOFs have been integrated into an overall strategy of Hybrid Warfare by the Russian state, often becoming the main forces in hybrid operations, as opposed to serving as support for conventional forces in military operations, which is their role in the armed forces of other countries. Examples of units used in this way include the *Sily Spetsial'nykh Operatsiy* (SSO) under the direct command of the Russian General Staff (Marsh and Spencer, 2017).

In contrast, China has developed its SOFs relatively recently, as part of its military modernisation programme. Despite considerable emphasis on training and equipment,

they have not yet been tested in combat. Developing a doctrine and acquiring the level of training needed to perform adequately in the high-pressure environments demanded of SOFs is often difficult to obtain without combat experience. This, coupled with China's policy of trying to avoid raising its threat perception in East and South East Asia, could hinder its SOFs' ability to meet or respond to geopolitical challenges abroad, particularly if countries such as the US or Russia begin to employ their own SOFs to destabilise China's key allies or its geopolitical position in general. Due to its geostrategic perspective, China's SOFs are primarily focused on Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance and Counter-terrorism, rather than Unconventional Warfare, Foreign Internal Defence or Hybrid Warfare.

In recent years, Russia and China have been working closely on a number of military initiatives, including the development of their SOFs (Murayiev, 2021). This cooperation has taken the form of joint training exercises, exchanging technology and expertise and, to a lesser degree, developing a common doctrine. A fully consolidated military alliance between China and Russia has not emerged due to fundamentally different geostrategic perspectives and conflicting geopolitical needs, such as their competition in Central Asia<sup>34</sup>. As a result, military cooperation has, in practice, taken the form of senior Chinese military officers and officials studying at Russian military academies and universities. This does not seem to be equally true in the opposite direction, i.e. there is no information about senior Russian military officers and officials studying at Chinese military academies (Korolev, 2019). This is due to Russia's extensive experience and China's lack of recent military experience, which in turn creates a large gap in terms of actually developing a doctrine and adapting to different conditions. It is likely that some efforts have been made by China to learn from Russia's confrontations in Georgia, Syria and Ukraine, but it is unclear what exactly has been learned in China from these conflicts, and whether the military leadership considers the strategic situation in these regions to be similar or at least comparable to the strategic situation facing China. In fact, it is likely that the Chinese leadership understands that the strategic issues facing the two countries are fundamentally different, with Russia as an (essentially) landlocked state seeking to maintain a declining sphere of influence to secure strategic depth, and China as a sea-oriented power seeking to wrest regional hegemony from a declining superpower. Therefore, according to the Chinese leadership, their responses to these challenges must also necessarily be different: while Russia has developed an SOF programme capable of engaging opponents in protracted conflicts spanning the full spectrum of escalation, combining capabilities to create synchronous effects to offset diminishing power, China hopes to harness superior resources to win a short-duration, high-intensity local war under high-tech conditions, or ideally (though with little prospect of success at the moment) to win over key US allies. Both of these Chinese objectives have had a markedly negative impact on developing globally capable SOFs, which could, in the long term,

---

34 Stronski, P. and Ng, N. (2018). *Cooperation and Competition. Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

negatively affect China's ability to compete with the US in conflict scenarios that are less than outright war.

## References

- Abdul-Hussain, H. (2009). Hezbollah: A state within a state. *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 8, pp.68-83.
- Army HQ. (2014). *FM 3-18, Special Forces Operations*. Fort Bragg: Headquarters, Department of the Army.
- Army HQ. (2017). *TC 3-21.76 Ranger Handbook*. Fort Belvoir: Army Publishing Directorate.
- Atlamazoglou, S. (2022). *As Ukrainian forces recaptured a key town, another elite Russian unit appeared to go through 'the meat grinder'*. Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/russian-spetsnaz-special-forces-unit-heavy-losses-in-lyman-ukraine-2022-11>
- Baqués, J. (2015). El papel de Rusia en el conflicto de Ucrania: ¿ La guerra híbrida de las grandes potencias?. *Revista de estudios en seguridad internacional*, 1(1), pp.41-60.
- Baqués, J. (2017). Hacia una definición del concepto Gray Zone (GZ). *Documento de Investigación*, 2(2017), p.26.
- Bērziņš, J. (2014). Russia's new generation warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defence Policy. *Policy Paper*, 2, pp.2002-2014.
- Biddle, S. and Oelrich, I. (2016). Future warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese anti-access/area denial, US air sea battle, and command of the commons in East Asia. *International Security*, 41(1), pp.7-48.
- Bilal, A. (2021). Hybrid Warfare-New Threats, Complexity, and 'Trust' as the Antidote. *NATO Review*, 30.
- Blasko, D.J. (2015). PLA Special Operations Forces: Organisations, Missions and Training. *China Brief*, 15(9), p.8.
- Brzezinski, Z. (1998). *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York City: Basic Books.
- Brzezinski, Z. (2014). Can China avoid the Thucydides trap? *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 31(2), pp.31-33.
- Chen, J. and Wuthnow, J. (2022). *China Maritime Report No. 18: Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing*. Newport: China Maritime Studies Institute, U.S. Naval War College.

- Chivvis, C.S. (2017). *Understanding Russian “Hybrid Warfare” And What Can Be Done About It, Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee*. Santa Clara: Rand Corporation.
- Connell, M. (2010). Iran’s Military Doctrine. *The Iran Primer*, II.
- Cordesman, A. H. (2006). *Iran’s Support of Hezbollah in Lebanon*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- Cullen, P.J. and Reichborn-Kjennerud, E. (2017). Understanding hybrid warfare. *MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project*, I.
- Donovan, M., Carl, N. and Kagan, F. W. (2020). Iran’s Reserve of Last Resort: Uncovering the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Ground Forces Order of Battle. *AEI Paper & Studies*, I.
- Fisher, R.D. (2008). *China’s military modernization: building for regional and global reach*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Friedman, G. (2020). Russia’s search for strategic depth. *Geopolitical Futures*, 17.
- Galeotti, M. (2015). Hybrid war” and “little green men”: How it works, and how it doesn’t. *Ukraine and Russia: People, politics, propaganda and perspectives*, 156.
- Gerasimov, V. (2016). The value of science is in the foresight: New challenges demand rethinking the forms and methods of carrying out combat operations. *Military Review*, 96(1), p.23.
- Götz, E. and Staun, J. (2022). Why Russia attacked Ukraine: Strategic culture and radicalised narratives. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43(3), pp.482-497.
- Harris, K. (2020). Russia’s Fifth Column: The Influence of the Night Wolves Motorcycle Club. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43(4), pp.1-29.
- Heickerö, R. (2010). *Emerging cyber threats and Russian views on Information warfare and Information operations*. Stockholm: Defence Analysis, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI).
- Hoffman, F. G. (2009). Hybrid vs. compound war. *Armed Forces Journal*, I.
- Inbar, E. (2007). How Israel bungled the second Lebanon war. *Middle East Quarterly*, 14(3), pp. 57-65.
- Johnston, T., Lane, M., Casey, A., Williams, H.J., Rhoades, A.L., Sladden, J., Vest, N., Reimer, J.R. and Haberman, R. (2021). Could the Houthis Be the Next Hizballah. *Iranian Proxy Development in Yemen and the Future of the Houthi Movement*. Santa Clara: RAND Corporation.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2020). *Joint Publication 3-05 Special Operations*. Washington, DC: Army Publications.

- Kania, E., and Wood, P. (2021). Sharp Swords of the Future Battlefield: The Chinese Military's Special Forces and Psychological Operations', in Davis, Z., Gac, F., Rager, C., Reiner, P., and Snow, J., ed. Livermore: Center for Global Security Research.
- Kennedy, C. (2021). The New Chinese Marine Corps: A "Strategic Dagger" in a Cross-Strait Invasion. *CMSI China Maritime Reports*. Newport, Rhode Island: US Naval War College.
- King, A. (2009). The special air service and the concentration of military power. *Armed Forces & Society*, 35(4), pp.646-666.
- Korolev, A. (2019). On the verge of an alliance: Contemporary China-Russia military cooperation. *Asian Security*, 15(3), pp.233-252.
- Lamb, C.J. and Tucker, D. (2019). *United States special operations forces*. Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.
- Lanoszka, A. (2016). Russian hybrid warfare and extended deterrence in eastern Europe. *International affairs*, 92(1), pp.175-195.
- Lanteigne, M. (2019). *Chinese foreign policy: an introduction*. New York City: Routledge.
- Lavender, D.J. (2013). *China's Special Operations Forces Modernization, Professionalization and Regional Implications*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College.
- Liao, K. (2020). The future war studies community and the Chinese revolution in military affairs. *International Affairs*, 96(5), 1327-1346.
- Litvak, M. (2017). Iran and Saudi Arabia: Religious and Strategic Rivalry. *National Security Studies Center, Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, 133.
- Marsh, C. and Spencer, E. J. (2017). *Developments in Russian Special Operations: Russia's Spetsnaz, SOF and Special Operations Forces Command*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). Can China rise peacefully? *The National Interest*, 25(1), pp. 1-40.
- Muraviev, A. (2021). Strategic reality check: the current state of Russia-China defence cooperation and the prospects of a deepening 'near alliance'. *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies*, 3(1), pp.27-48.
- Neuberg, A. and Wollenberg, E. (1970). *Armed Insurrection*. London: NLB.
- Office of the Secretary of Defense. (2012). *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, Annual Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense.
- Ottaway, D.B. (2015). *Saudi Arabia's Yemeni Quagmire*. Washington, DC: Wilson Center.

- Parens, R. (2023). Wagner Mutiny Ex Post Facto: What's Next in Russia and Africa? *Foreign Policy Research Institute*.
- Piotrowski, M. A. (2017). "Mosaic Defence:" Iran's Hybrid Warfare in Syria 2011-2016. *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, 26(3), pp.18-67.
- Pokalova, E. (2023). The Wagner group in Africa: Russia's quasi-state agent of influence. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, pp.1-23.
- Pukhov, R. (2014). *Iranian Special Forces*. Moscow: Centre for the Analysis of Strategies and Technologies.
- Putin, V. (2017). *Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 19.04.2017, No. 177*. Office of the President of the Russian Federation.
- Regan, P.M. (2002). Third-party interventions and the duration of intrastate conflicts. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46(1), pp.55-73.
- Sahakyan, M. ed. (2023). *China and Eurasian Powers in a Multipolar World Order 2.0: Security, Diplomacy, Economy and Cyberspace*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.
- Seliktar, O., and Rezaei, F. (2020). *Iran, Revolution, and Proxy Wars*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Stronski, P. and Ng, N. (2018). *Cooperation and Competition. Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Sukhankin, S. (2019). Russian PMCs in the Syrian civil war: From Slavonic Corps to Wagner group and beyond', in Sukhankin, S., ed. *War by other means*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation.
- Tabatabai, A.M., Martini, J. and Wasser, B. (2021). *The Iran Threat Network (ITN)*. Washington, DC: RAND Corporation.
- Tse-Tung, M. (1977). 'Directives Regarding Cultural Revolution' in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 9*. Secunderabad: Karanti Publications.
- US Army Asymmetric Warfare Group. (2017). *Iran Quick Reference Guide, Version 1.1*. Fort Meade: Asymmetric Warfare Group.
- United States Army. (2014). *Special Forces Operations*. Washington DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army.
- Votel, J.L., Cleveland, C.T., Connett, C.T. and Irwin, W. (2016). Unconventional warfare in the gray zone. *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 80(1), pp.101-109.
- World Bank. (2021). *World Bank Open Data*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/>
- Xiaoping, D. (1974). *Speech at the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly*. Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

- Xiaoping, D. (1980). Answers to the Italian Journalist Oriana Fallaci' in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Yoshihara, T. (2012). China's vision of its seascape: the first island chain and Chinese seapower. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 4(3), pp.293-314.
- Zhang, S.G. (1995). *Mao's military romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Zhang, Y. (2006). *The science of campaigns*. Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

---

*Article received: 04 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---

*Gonzalo VÁZQUEZ ORBAICETA*

*Graduate in International Relations from the University of Navarra. Analyst of the Center of Naval Thought.*

*E-mail: gvazquezorb@gmail.com*

*Augusto CONTE DE LOS RÍOS*

*Frigate Captain of the Navy. Doctor of History by the University of Murcia. Analyst of the Center of Naval Thought*

*E-mail: agosto.conte@um.es*

## *Spain looks North: The Arctic, Naval Operations and Climate Change*

### **Abstract**

The Arctic is increasingly seen as an arena to project power. Over the past decades, climate change and its effects have been a major driver of change for a region of the globe once isolated from international tensions between great powers. With the progressive melting of ice in the area, the “exceptionalism” characteristic of the region has almost completely disappeared. Aware that its northern flank becomes vulnerable with a navigable Arctic, Russia has re-militarised its Soviet-era bases, and has a fleet of icebreakers that overshadows those of all its neighbours. A navigable Arctic will bring with it the possibility of establishing a shorter and cheaper trade route than the current route through Suez. This possibility, which is bound to become a reality sooner or later, means that Arctic states and others further afield are investing in their capabilities in order to be part of the region’s promising future. Also aware of this, Spain must consider its maritime predisposition and position itself appropriately to be able to benefit from the advantages that a navigable Arctic will bring.

### Keywords

Arctic, Spain, Climate Change, Naval Operations, Undersea Warfare.

### Cite this article:

VAZQUEZ ORBAICETA, Gonzalo & CONTE DE LOS RIOS, Augusto (2023).

Spain looks to the North: “The Arctic, Naval Operations and Climate Change”. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. 551-573.

## I. Introduction

The effects of climate change are becoming increasingly visible in a region that is eminently white for most of the year, or was. For several years now, the accelerating rate at which polar ice disappears has brought us closer to a world where the “frozen sea” will be free of ice for long periods of the year. This is an opportunity for all the states with coasts on it (Canada Denmark, the United States, Norway and Russia), but also for those who do not. For the former, it opens up the once inconceivable possibility of exploiting the mineral and energy resources that lie beneath the seabed in this region. For all those outside the region, it means the chance to open up new trade routes that would drastically reduce logistical costs and time on existing routes.

Russia’s Arctic strategy aims to take advantage of rich natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals and to assert its dominance in the region, both as a global power and as a leading Arctic nation; these goals are also stated in its latest Maritime Doctrine published in July 2022 (Conte de los Ríos, 2022; Vázquez, 2022). This strategy involves multiple dimensions, including economic development, military presence, scientific research and environmental protection. It also seeks to develop its northern sea routes and modernise its Arctic military infrastructure, as well as participate in international Arctic-related discussions and negotiations.

Canada and the United States took steps to deepen their cooperation on Arctic defence in 2022, and they increasingly agree and share common interests. Last year saw the release of important strategic documents by the United States. On 7 October 2022, Washington published its latest National Strategy for the Arctic Region, bringing new or at least renewed impetus to US presence in the Arctic.<sup>1</sup> This new Arctic strategy is based on four mutually reinforcing pillars: security, climate change and environmental protection, sustainable economic development, and international cooperation and governance. White papers and unclassified versions of strategic documents from both nations delve into the strategic importance of the Arctic. The two governments have strengthened their cooperation and increased their presence with annual exercises and manoeuvres. For example, the new US 11th Airborne Division, created from units in Alaska, maintains a permanent structure adapted to operations in extreme cold climates. Finally, Moscow’s assertiveness in the Arctic has also increased security concerns in the area and may help stimulate a renewed focus on the defence and security aspects of both nations’ interests in the Arctic (The Military Balance, 2023a: 18-22, 28).

In addition to this phenomenon, the war in Ukraine seems to have accelerated the geopolitical processes that have been brewing in the region for several years, so that all the uncertainties surrounding the dynamics between the different actors (Russia, China and the West) have only become more vivid since then. Furthermore, the Arctic

1 See THE WHITE HOUSE (2022) “National Strategy for the Arctic Region”, October 2022. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>

Council,<sup>2</sup> the traditional forum for discussing Arctic issues since it was founded in 1996, has seen its activity completely disrupted and attempts to temporarily expel Russia. Any cooperation that was previously ongoing between all these countries, which also served as a buffer to geopolitical differences between them, has therefore been suspended indefinitely. Spain has participated as an observer in the Council since 2006 and can thus contribute through its presence at meetings, by providing scientific knowledge in the different working groups, or by submitting proposals for projects (Arctic Council, 2020).

Thus, the juxtaposition of the two factors opens the door to increasingly serious consideration of the possibility of a naval conflict, to a greater or lesser extent, in the Arctic. The possibility of exploiting its seabed resources has been known for more than two decades. Despite the fact that the equipment and instruments needed to extract them are not yet in place, during this time there has been much debate about the sharing of its surface. In response, Russia has developed an increasingly hostile attitude towards its Western neighbours, re-extending the military presence that the Soviet Union maintained in the region during the Cold War and re-equipping its coasts and important enclaves with modern defence systems.

This article first reviews the effects of climate change on the geopolitics of the region, as well as the struggle for energy resources and new trade routes. Secondly, it analyses the possibility of naval conflict in the Arctic as a result of current tensions, with the different positions and capabilities of states in the region, and the characteristics of undersea warfare in the High North. And, lastly, Spain's current role in the region as a maritime-minded nation and Arctic Council observer member; as well as the need to renew its assets to deploy in the region so as to be able to participate more actively and also strengthen its naval capabilities for the times to come.

## 2. Climate Change and the Implications of a Changing Arctic

Three phenomena in particular are currently responsible for the changes the Arctic is witnessing in the international sphere: climate change, globalisation and power transition (Kauppila & Kopra, 2022; 150). The first of these, which is the main focus of this article, has been apparent for years, but only in the last 15 years has it begun to receive increasing attention from the international community. According to predictions by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), by the year 2100, surface temperatures will increase by 3.7° to 4.8° Celsius, which is the same as an increase of 2.5° to 7.8° Celsius over the average recorded during the period 1850-1900 (IPCC, 2014; 20).

---

2 The Arctic Council is composed of eight permanent members: Canada, Denmark (with Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Six organisations on behalf of indigenous communities also have participant status; and 13 other external states, 13 intergovernmental organisations and 12 NGOs participate as observers (CRS, 2022; 11).

This rapid rise in temperatures that the Arctic is experiencing not only has devastating effects on its ecosystems and the populations living around the region, but also on the rest of the world's regions. The Arctic Institute published an article in 2022 pointing out how, despite the ignorance of many, countries such as Greece will suffer seriously from the consequences of Arctic melting and would therefore do well to adopt a relevant Arctic strategy (Tsiouvalas, 2022). Accordingly, Greece, an eminently coastal nation, will see its coastal infrastructure seriously affected by marine erosion with particularly visible environmental, economic and social effects (Tsiouvalas, 2022).



Figure 1: Map of the Arctic region (Source: Geographic Guide, Retrieved from [https://www.geographicguide.com/arctic-map.htm#google\\_vignette](https://www.geographicguide.com/arctic-map.htm#google_vignette))

Moreover, as Gómez de Ágreda points out, “the opening up of northern ocean shipping routes forces a redrawing of world maps. Not only in navigational charts, but in our own perception of the earth’s sphericity.” (Gómez de Ágreda, 2014; 16). Spain therefore faces the same challenge as its neighbours on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. The same is true for many other nations, which, while they will enjoy significant economic benefits from the Arctic meltdown, are also exposed to similar risks as Greece and other Mediterranean nations.

Arctic shipping has increased by 25% between 2013 and 2019, but it is shipping to and from the Arctic. Arctic routes are very marginal transit routes: in 2018, five transits through the Northwest Passage via Canada and 27 through the Northeast Passage via Russia compared to 84,456 through the Strait of Malacca, 17,550 through Suez and 13,795 through Panama. Resource exploitation is the main reason for shipping in the Arctic, not transit (Bertolino *et al.*, 2022: 283-289).

### *2.1. Strategic Value of the Arctic: Climate Change and Natural Resources*

The energy reserves that lie beneath the seabed and around this region are large in size and therefore of great value. Russia is undoubtedly the country that is most interested in the developments in the region, and is well aware that its position gives it an advantage over the rest in the race for its resources. Evidence of this can be found in the Russian Government’s Strategy to 2030, published in 2009, which details how “the objective of Russia’s policy is to maximise the effective use of natural energy resources and the potential of the energy sector to maintain stable economic growth, improve the quality of life of the population, and promote the strengthening of the country’s economic position globally” (Government of the Russian Federation, 2009; 10). And precisely, as Conley and Rohloff point out, Russia is an Arctic superpower that perceives the region as a key development vehicle for the country. Its interests in the Arctic have thus been largely driven by the promise of lucrative quantities of hydrocarbons under the ocean, a perception promoted by Russian state-owned energy giants, as well as the development of a new Arctic trade route. (Conley & Rohloff, 2015; VIII)

Unlike Antarctica and its single treaty regime, the Arctic’s constitutive process comprises multiple legal instruments and transnational institutions. However, prospecting under Arctic climatic conditions requires the latest technology, but also ice-ready platforms, an adequate safety system with rapid response equipment in case of leaks and, above all, long-term financing, which Russian companies are forced to seek from foreign partners (Conley & Rohloff, 2015; 2). At least this was feasible before the war in Ukraine completely paralysed cooperation between Moscow and other countries on these issues.

Moreover, both hydrocarbon production and demand for hydrocarbons are currently surrounded by uncertainty (Solski, 2022; 2). Despite having such extensive oil and gas reserves on and near its coasts, Moscow is unable to exploit them due to sanctions imposed for the war in Ukraine, as well as technological and equipment

shortcomings blamed on the public companies involved –Rosneft and Gazprom– and the refusal at the highest levels to turn to more experienced private companies –such as Russneft or Lukoil– (Pritchins, 2018).

## *2.2. Effects of Climate Change*

The effects of climate change are impacting the region's accessibility in contradictory ways. Thawing permafrost makes the ground impassable so infrastructure construction is more difficult, complex and costly. On the other hand, access by sea is less difficult, allowing for the possible opening of maritime routes. Less difficult does not mean easy: Arctic shipping remains risky and often requires vessels with reinforced hulls and experienced crews, as required by the Polar Code, in force since 2017 (IMO, 2017). This shipping remains seasonal: 65% of voyages using the Northern Sea Route (Russia) and 85% in the Arctic waters of Canada and Greenland take place between June and October. Year-round sailing is only possible for powerful boats with a heavily reinforced hull, which are therefore much more expensive.

The main objective of Russia's foreign policy under Vladimir Putin's leadership is to gain international recognition as a major influential power. In its desire to become a great power, Russia has looked to the Arctic for resources. The Arctic is rich in natural resources, including natural gas and oil, and Russia has a strong interest in exploiting these resources to maintain its ability to fund public expenditures, including defence. Russia also has an interest in having the Northern Route recognised as internal waters in order to exert greater control over the region. This aspiration is not only limited to rhetoric, but is also reflected in numerous foreign and security policy documents published in recent decades (Staun, 2020).

According to some experts, recent trends in the regulation of the Northern Route by the Russian authorities have undergone a remarkable evolution over the last decade. According to Jan Solski, researcher at the Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea, in the period between 2012 and 2018, efforts to "liberalise access" and "maximise transparency of the legal regime of navigation on the NSR" stand out; but recent years have experienced an opposite effect (Solski, 2022; 2). With this, there is concern that this trend, coupled with the apparent strengthening of cooperation between Moscow and Beijing, will increase violations and ambiguous attitudes by both states towards the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), as it would add to tensions between the two blocs and increase the prospects of military confrontation in the region.

China has become a visible player in the affairs of this region over the last decade as a result of its new-found status as a world power, especially with regard to its clear ambitions to develop a Polar Silk Road across the High North from the Pacific to the Atlantic. As if on a double-sided coin, Beijing, which is in the habit of actively ignoring the dictates of UNCLOS in its activities along the South China Sea (systematically

harassing navies such as the Philippines), uses the same legal regime to ensure that no regional actor prevents it from enjoying its freedom of navigation in the High North.

Thus, with the diverse interests of all states focused on the same region, as we wait to see how it evolves with the ice melting, climate change will not only affect the region's geopolitics in geographic and energy terms. The possibility of armed conflict will also depend on the struggle over these resources, as well as disagreements over whether or not to establish a free navigation regime. For this reason, and with the addition that the war in Ukraine has brought, highlighting the real possibility that a conflict on the periphery of the region could eventually involve it as well, it is worth considering the Arctic as a theatre of operations. A different theatre of operations from what most militaries are used to, and one that would require additional preparedness efforts vis-à-vis actors that already have military assets there (such as Russia).

### 3. The Arctic as a Theatre of Operations: Naval Perspectives and Capabilities

As mentioned, like with trade routes, the Arctic is also undergoing significant change in terms of military and naval operations. The three most powerful states in the region (Russia, the United States and Canada) are already fully aware that the possibility of military conflict –on a larger or smaller scale– is becoming increasingly serious. Russia has militarised its Arctic coasts by taking advantage of enclaves once occupied by Soviet troops, modernising many and bringing them back into operation more than two decades later. Although it is nothing new –this process has been going on for more than a decade– the war in Ukraine has accelerated the dynamics prevailing until now in the region.

Increased tensions, coupled with the prospects of climate change previously reviewed, opens up the real possibility of armed conflict in the High North. But these prospects, which already seem imminent to some, still face the stark and inhospitable reality: the Arctic is still a very hostile region, with a long list of operational challenges for anyone wishing to launch a military operation there. Challenges range from inhuman temperatures to long months of total darkness. But most importantly, it “precludes most of the usual support militaries take for granted in more moderate or overland climes, such as navigation aids, communications, logistics and maintenance infrastructure” (Patch, 2009).

The centre of the Arctic is occupied by the deep North Polar Basin, more than 7 million square kilometres, a gigantic oval with depths typically greater than 3,000 metres that stretches between the GIUK Gap between Greenland, Iceland and Great Britain<sup>3</sup> and the Bering Strait, an abysmal, rhomboid-shaped domain composed of

---

<sup>3</sup> The term GIUK, also known as GIUK gap, is a military acronym for Greenland, Iceland and United Kingdom. This region has been of significant importance over the past century, as it forms the line between the Atlantic and the Arctic, and

two main trenches of 3,630 and 3,667 metres crossed by the Lomonosov Ridge. It is worth noting that the Bering Strait is very shallow with depths ranging from 15 to 50 metres, and a width of between 64 and 84 kilometres. It is therefore very risky for submarines to dive in this area.

The US, Norwegian and British navies have P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft at bases in their territory, Greenland and Iceland, which provide the Atlantic Alliance with enhanced surveillance capabilities and strategic awareness throughout the region. Among the most important today, the base at Keflavik (Iceland) is strategically very valuable. Located in the centre of the GIUK Gap, it allows patrols to be deployed on both sides, favouring command over the region for those who control it (the United States). Abandoned in 2007 due to the low level of activity and the government's lack of interest in the region, the resurgence of Russian military activity and hostilities a few years later prompted the re-establishment of this permanent presence in 2017. Likewise, the British also have a number of new units based at Lossiemouth in Scotland. From there, the RAF is also an important element of the Atlantic Alliance's maritime surveillance, with the base's vantage point overlooking the North Atlantic and the Barents and Norwegian Seas. From them, these aircraft provide both surface and anti-submarine surveillance along the strategic sea passages to the North Atlantic, closing the passage of the GIUK Gap. This anti-submarine surveillance by maritime patrol aircraft is extended in coordination with the Sonar Surveillance System (SOSUS) acoustic detection systems installed in the area. Norway also has its own acoustic detection network Lofoten-Vesterolen (LoVe).<sup>4</sup>

If a submarine were to be located, the search would begin as close as possible to its bases on the Kola Peninsula in the Norwegian Sea, using bases in Norway, Scotland, Iceland, Greenland or any of the four or five aircraft carrier groups assigned by NATO to defend the North Atlantic. Spitsbergen would certainly be another interesting spot for a base, but the Svalbard Treaty signed in 1920 also obliges the demilitarisation of the territory and prohibits the construction of any fortifications.

Thus, in the context of a high-intensity conflict between Russia and NATO in this region, some have pointed out how “a combination of offensive and defensive considerations, including Russia's and NATO's mutual weakness in antisubmarine warfare capabilities, incentivise –but not necessarily determine– a competitive security dilemma in a hitherto tension-free region” (Whitehall Papers, 2022a: 6). In such a case, it is suggested that Russia “would try to send some of its submarines in the region to threaten the Alliance's maritime trade in the Atlantic, and perhaps other critical infrastructure” (Whitehall Papers, 2022a; 7).

---

is also the gateway for the Russian Northern Fleet to the Atlantic. This situation has prompted NATO to devote significant resources to keeping the region guarded against Russian incursions.

4 Norway also has its own SOSUS network called LoVe. (Comte de los Ríos, 2022)

#### 4. Russia in the Arctic

In recent years, the Russian Federation has invested substantially in military infrastructure within the Arctic. Russia has reactivated or built 13 air bases within the region. Moscow has fielded anti-aircraft capabilities such as the S-400 SAM and Bastion-P anti-ship missile systems (Paul & Swistek, 2022). Additionally, the Northern Fleet based in Murmansk has been elevated to a Military District, on a par with the other four military districts spread across Russia, with control over a variety of land, air and sea assets, as well as responsibility for Russia's Arctic islands, such as Alexandra Land, part of the Franz Josef Land archipelago at a latitude of 80° north.

The new Russian Maritime Doctrine, published in July 2022, describes the priorities for the development of maritime activities. The document distinguishes between vital and relevant areas, with vital areas being inland waters, all exclusive economic zones, the Arctic, the Sea of Okhotsk (in Russian, *Охотское море*) and the Caspian Sea. This distinction leads us to think of two fundamental points for the Northeast Passage Route, the Bering Strait and the GIUK gap bottleneck, the only passage to reach the Atlantic. Moscow must maintain control of one of its main strategic strongholds, covering the Russian Arctic region from the Kola Peninsula to Kaliningrad, across the eight Arctic Support Zones where funds and projects are concentrated, in order to promote the economic potential of the North-East Route (Kola, Archangel, Nenets, Vorkuta, Yamalo-Nenets, Taimyr-Turukhan, Yakutia and Chukotka). In fact, this region is home to two-thirds of all Russia's nuclear weapons, which is why the Northern Fleet has become an exclusive Military District (*Sputnik International*, 2017).

In a specific mention of priorities in the Arctic region, the Doctrine calls for controlling the naval activities of foreign states along the Northern Sea Route and increasing the combat potential and facilities of the Northern Fleet. The document:

“Reiterates Russia's position on the advancement of NATO's military infrastructure near its borders, not just Ukraine, especially in the Baltic states and as it affects what is known as the Northern Sea Route [or North-West Route] with an ever-increasing build-up of foreign naval forces.” (Conte de los Ríos, 2022).

It is therefore important to consider the potential of its submarine weapon with more than fifty conventional, nuclear and ballistic submarines (Whitehall Papers, 2022). Few countries have the ability to navigate safely in the Arctic, which requires adequate icebreaking vessel capacity. Russia dominates in this respect as well. Its icebreaker fleet –the only one that also has nuclear-powered icebreakers– totals nearly 50 units, which are also larger and more sea worthy than the (limited) assets of the United States (with only three) or Canada. Although the melting continues, large regions are still covered by ice for most of the year. An adequate fleet of such vessels is therefore a prerequisite for securing access to the vast energy, mineral, fisheries and other commercial resources of the Arctic, which is growing at precisely the same time as global interests in these assets are intensifying.

The Northern Fleet has five headquarters, each with several units under its command. Most are located on the Kola Peninsula, which includes three naval commands, the 45th Air and Air-Defense Forces Army (AADA) and the 14th Corps. Naval commands include the Northern Fleet Submarine Command and fleet, as well as the Kola Flotilla, where most of the Arctic-bound units are located. They also have the 61st Marine Corps Brigade, which includes reconnaissance forces, as well as special naval warfare units at Polyarny. The 45th AADA was formed in December 2015, its tactical composition is not publicly known, although from reports it is known to be in charge of major anti-missile systems units and in the central Russian Arctic. The two main units of the 14th Corps are the 200th and 80th Arctic Motorised Rifle Brigades, in addition to smaller subordinate units that work in command and control, among other functions. Many Soviet-era infrastructures have also been recovered; east of the Kola Peninsula, 3 main bases, 13 airfields, 10 radar stations, 20 border posts and 10 emergency rescue stations (Wall & Wegge, 2023).

In territorial terms, Russia is the largest Arctic state and is one of the founding members of the Arctic Council, which it currently chairs until 2024 (Arctic Council, 2021). In June all but one Arctic Council member announced that it would resume meetings without the eighth, Russia. The accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO, a direct consequence of the military aggression in Ukraine, will mean that seven of the eight Arctic Council members will be in the Alliance. Russia will have to live with this if the Council is to continue in its current form. In this way, the Alliance gains more weight in the region, but Russia still has the largest share of the coastline.

Specifically, Russia has some 24,000 km of Arctic coastline, more than 53%, and most of the North-East Route. This makes Moscow favourably disposed to control the region more effectively than the rest of its neighbours. While the ice and harsh Arctic climate used to act as a defence, the melting ice makes it more vulnerable, but also offers a number of economic and strategic opportunities. Under normal circumstances, Russia enjoys a number of advantages due to its civilian assets in the Arctic. The combination of civilian capabilities needed to support shipping along the North-East Route and the military capacity to hinder it gives Moscow control over the Arctic. This would allow it to exert a level of peacetime control over what could become an important maritime artery and reinforce its strategic position over a rich region in competition with NATO (Whitehall Papers, 2022a).

The current meltdown in the Arctic is giving way to greater maritime openness, especially on the Russian Northeast Route, which is less intricate than the Canadian Northwest Route and more accessible than the impossible Transpolar Route. In this respect, the theory of authors such as Alfred T. Mahan gains prominence; the nation that manages to dominate the Arctic, in peace and in war, will control shipping, dominate trade and achieve Arctic hegemony. Projections show that plausible open water routes through international waters may become accessible by mid-century, although the route along the Russian coast remains the most favourable despite its lack of infrastructure to support maritime trade. (Lynch et al., 2022). This, however, is beginning to provoke discussions as to the legal regime to which these trade routes

should be subject, with Russia claiming sovereignty over much of these waters in order to maximise future economic benefits.

## 5. Submarine Operations in the Arctic

Limited submarine access to the Arctic from the Pacific, due to its shallow depth, and the close surveillance of the GIUK Gap make it very difficult for the Russians to leave this sanctuary. Strategic interest in the Arctic came from the US side, when the Pentagon ordered a study of polar operations by US submarines seeking the likelihood of finding temporarily ice-free or thin water spaces due to the formation of lanes or polynies of unfrozen seawater, the size and duration of which vary with weather conditions and the capricious movements of the ice.

The reports of Norwegian scientist Nansen, who voluntarily spent three years studying the ice between 1893 and 1896, served as a fundamental basis to prepare the historic subglacial expeditions carried out by the nuclear submarines *Nautilus* and *Skate* between 1957 and 1959 (Lyon, 2009). The first real attempt was made by British Sir Hubert Wilkins in 1931, aboard former US Navy submarine O-12, renamed *Nautilus*, a World War I submarine with which he tried to sail under the Pole. This attempt failed because of the poor condition of the submarine, which had cost one dollar and was repaired through public subscription (Walsh, 2005). Later, in World War II, German U-boats lay in wait to escape detection and counter-attacks by Allied escorts protecting Murmansk-bound convoys, which *tangoed* the ice field in order to get as far away as possible from German bases in Norway.

Worldwide publicity surrounding the successful subglacial navigation of the Pole by the *Nautilus* in August 1958 made people forget that this feat had been preceded by technical trials carried out secretly by the same submarine the previous year as well as the failure, also secretly concealed, of its first attempt to pass under the Pole by accessing the Arctic through the Bering Strait in June 1958. In 1957, the *Nautilus* had proceeded, in the utmost secrecy, to carry out a series of methodical penetration tests under the glacier in the Greenland Sea, precisely in the same place where Wilkins' submarine had preceded it 26 years earlier.

Date	Submarine/s	Reached the Pole	Comments
August 1958	<i>Nautilus</i> (SSN-571)	Yes	First to reach the Pole
August 1958	<i>Skate</i> (SSN-578)	Yes	
March 1959	<i>Skate</i>	Yes	First to surface, a total of nine times
February 1960	<i>Sargo</i> (SSN-583)	Yes	
August 1960	<i>Seadragon</i> (SSN-584)	Yes	Across the Northwest Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific
June 1962	<i>Leninskiy Komsomolets</i> (Soviet)	Yes	First Soviet submarine to reach the Pole
July-August 1962	<i>Skate</i> and <i>Seadragon</i>	Yes	First multi-submarine operation

<b>February 1967</b>	<i>Queenfish</i> (SSN-651)	No	First single propeller submarine to operate under ice in Baffin Bay
<b>March-April 1969</b>	<i>Skate</i>	No	
<b>April 1969</b>	<i>Whale</i> (SSN-638) and <i>Pargo</i> (SSN-650)	Yes	First SSN-637 class submarine to reach the Pole, surfacing 20 times
<b>July-August 1970</b>	<i>Queenfish</i>	Yes	Operations on the Siberian shelf
<b>November-December 1970</b>	<i>Skate</i> & <i>Hammershead</i> (SSN-663)	Yes	
<b>February 1971</b>	<i>Skate</i>	No	
<b>February-March 1971</b>	<i>Trepang</i> (SSN-674)	No	Operations in the Denmark Strait and the Greenland Sea
<b>March 1971</b>	<i>Dreadnought</i> (British)	Yes	First British submarine to reach the Pole
<b>March-April 1973</b>	<i>Seadragon</i> & <i>Hawkbill</i> (SSN-666)	No	Bering Sea operations
<b>March-May 1975</b>	<i>Bluefish</i> (SSN-675)	Yes	Operations in the Greenland Sea
<b>April-May 1976</b>	<i>Gurnard</i> (SSN-662)	Yes	Shallow water operations in the Beaufort Sea
<b>September-October 1976</b>	<i>Sovereign</i> (British)	Yes	
<b>March-April 1977</b>	<i>Flying Fish</i> (SSN-673)	Yes	
<b>October 1978</b>	<i>Pintado</i> (SSN-672)	Yes	
<b>April-May 1979</b>	<i>Archerfish</i> (SSN-678)	Yes	Operations in the Nares Strait and Baffin Bay
<b>October 1981</b>	<i>Silversides</i> (SSN-679)	Yes	
<b>December-January 1983</b>	<i>Tautog</i> (SSN-639) and <i>Aspro</i> (SSN-648)	Yes	
<b>August 1983</b>	<i>L. Mendell Rivers</i> (SSN-686)	No	

Figure 1: Table with the first submarine incursions into the Arctic (1958-1984). Source: Prepared by the authors with information from POLMAR, 1984.

Descending to about a hundred metres below sea level, the *Nautilus* was bearing north at 15 knots, slipping under the polar ice for the first time. It was 20:00 on 19 September 1957. They were soon able to get an idea of the lower configuration of the ice, thanks to special equipment from the US Navy's Undersea and Polar Studies Laboratory in San Diego. It was an upward-facing sonar capable of directly detecting the lower part of the glacier. One pen, receiving a signal from a sounder, drew a continuous line on a recorder, and indicated the sea surface level; while a second pen, connected directly to the inverted sounder, drew the lower profile of the ice sheet (Anderson, 1959: 61-71).

The combination of the two readings indicated the exact profile and thickness of the ice. These first attempts suffered from detector interpretation errors due to the fact that the reading was slower than the speed of the submarine. Thus, when attempting to "puncture" a "polynie" and surface, the periscope hit the undetected ice, suffering serious damage that forced Commander Anderson to retire after having sailed 150 miles on his first dive under the glaciers. In a second attempt, once the periscope had been repaired, the *Nautilus* dove again with the intention of reaching the Pole, but at the "87° N parallel, due to a small fault affecting the gyroscope, it had to abandon

its intentions and withdrew under the glaciers. On this occasion he had sailed 1,000 miles at 20 knots under the ice, having been only 180 miles from the North Pole. The *Nautilus* had just opened a new chapter in the history of naval warfare. From a military point of view, it was clear that nuclear submarines could operate in these locations with relative ease and safety (Anderson, 1959: 91-101).

It was in the summer of 1958 that the *Nautilus* achieved its true success, its first subglacial crossing exactly under the North Pole, sailing for five and a half days in the black depths beneath the Arctic ice cap. Months earlier, the Americans had been surprised by the launch of the first Soviet artificial satellite; in response, they tried to save the prestige of the United States and undertook this risky and extraordinary attempt at submarine navigation under the Pole, this time from the Pacific Ocean. After a first unsuccessful attempt, the *Nautilus* entered the Bering Strait on 29 July 1958 and sailed eastwards to clear the shallow water. On 1 August, it reached the valley of the Barrow Sea, the threshold of the great Arctic depression, and set off north in search of the top of the world, only a thousand miles away. At 23:15 hours on 3 August, the *Nautilus* reached a latitude of 90° north, continuing its route towards the Atlantic in absolute safety (McWethy, 1958).

After the feat of the *Nautilus*, which went on to demonstrate that the nuclear submarine would undoubtedly be a deterrent weapon platform, the Americans needed to ensure that a submarine could launch its missiles from these ice-covered waters. Not satisfied with having ensured that nuclear submarines could safely navigate under the Arctic's vast ice fields, the US Navy also needed to know whether these vessels could safely penetrate the ice sheet and surface. The Arctic would then undoubtedly be of great strategic importance.

This eminently strategic mission consisting of studying the possibilities of surfacing in the "pack" was entrusted to the submarine *Skate* a month after the *Nautilus* had completed its subpolar feat. The *Skate* entered through the "big gate", i.e. between Spitsbergen and Greenland, making up to nine surface sorties at various points in the Arctic, thus proving definitively that normal submarine operations in this "Mediterranean Sea" were feasible. It was the world's first ship to emerge from the imposing and silent vastness of the North Pole.

However, all these experiments were carried out during the hottest period of the year, which did not ensure a real deterrence strategy. That these submarine operations could be conducted year-round had to be proven to the world. Once again *Skate* travelled to the Arctic to attempt its second momentous adventure, in March 1959, the coldest month in that region. Once again, the operation achieved the long-awaited and desired success, confirming the possibility of conducting nuclear submarine missile-launching operations at any time of the year.

It was later confirmed again by the cruise carried out by the submarine *Sargo* in January 1960. The important activities of the American submarines had significantly wounded Soviet pride. Its press went so far as to deny that American nuclear submarines had been the first to sail under the bleak ice of the Arctic basin, stating flatly that the

honour of opening such routes belonged to Soviet sailors, claiming that Northern Fleet submarines had already acted bravely and confidently under the ice in the early 1930s, not shying away from saying that their nuclear submarines had remained at the high latitudes much earlier than the Americans had.

In contrast to these sensationalist press reports, what seems to be more certain is that the construction of the first Soviet nuclear-powered submarine began in 1957; these were the November class submarines, which initially encountered serious difficulties. It was not until 1962, four years after the *Nautilus* had made its historic polar crossing, that the Soviets carried out their first penetration under the ice with the November class submarine *Leninsky Komsomol*. This event was of great significance for the USSR, as evidenced by the fact that three of the embarked officers were subsequently designated as “Heroes of the Soviet Union”.

It was during the next decade that the real Soviet naval potential took off with a remarkable increase. From then on, greater importance was attached to transforming the Kola Peninsula into the great naval and submarine facility complex that it is today. Today, the Northern Fleet is the largest of all the Russian navies, accounting for 40% of the major surface units, more than 50% of the tactical submarines and 60% of the strategic submarines (The Military Balance, 2023b: 150-207, 159 and 193). The main area of operation for Russia’s modern strategic missile submarines is around the Svalbard archipelago, although in the last exercise –involving three submarines and which took place in the Franz Josef Land archipelago– they surfaced within a circle of 300 metres radius and a metre and a half thick ice. In Putin’s words, referring to the Umka-2021 exercise: “The Arctic expedition [...] has no analogues in the Soviet and the modern history of Russia” (Reuters, 2021). The same exercise was repeated the following year in the Chukchi Sea (far eastern Arctic), with two submarines launching several exercise missiles.

The Russian Federation currently has eight SSBN (Submarine Ship Ballistic Nuclear) Delta IV and Borei class ballistic missile submarines in its Northern Fleet. Their mission is to maintain Russia’s retaliatory nuclear strike or deterrence capability. Each Delta IV is capable of carrying 16 Sineva missiles (SS-N-23) and the Borei can carry up to a maximum of 16 Bulava missiles (SS-N-32).

In addition, the Northern Fleet is believed to have 16 other combat submarines, including six Akula, Victor III and Sierra II class nuclear-powered SSNs (Submarine Ship Nuclear); five Severodvinsk and Oscar I/II class SSGN (Submarine Ship Guided Nuclear) nuclear missile submarines; and five Kilo (Submarine Ship Conventional) class diesel submarines. All are capable of carrying some variant of the Kalibr ground-attack missile (SS-N-30) or the anti-ship missile (SS-N-27), among others. Some are in disuse while others are relatively new, such as the Zirkon hypersonic missile (SS-N-33).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Kalibr 3M-14 (SS-N-30) is a subsonic precision-guided ground-attack missile capable of striking targets at between 1500 and 2500 kilometres. The Kalibr 3M-54 (SS-N-27 “Sizzler”) is a short-range anti-ship variant capable of being

The Northern Fleet also has a number of other submarines for special functions that are ostensibly non-combat, but which may be used for combat purposes, such as manipulating submarine cables, officially under the Soviet Ministry of Defence's Main Directorate for Deep Sea Research (GUGI). Not all submarines are operational today, but in general, anti-undersea warfare experts consider Russia's Northern Fleet to be of paramount importance and require particular vigilance.

## 6. Spain and the Arctic.

Despite being many miles away, Spain, an eminently naval nation, also has interests in the High North. As Real Instituto Elcano researcher Luís Simón pointed out back in 2014, "in a dynamic and changing context, Spain must rethink its defence policy, giving greater relevance to maritime and global issues, rediscovering its historical legacy and its own strategic culture". (Simon, 2014). Published almost 10 years ago, the National Maritime Security Strategy places special emphasis on this maritime predisposition that characterises our country as follows:

"Spain, as a maritime nation, is well aware of the implications that the security of the sea has for the normal development of national social and economic life, hence the need to have its own vision of maritime space security [...] The above considerations relating to the global sphere apply entirely to a maritime nation such as Spain, a character determined by its geographical situation, its dependence on maritime communications and the importance of the maritime sector in the national economy. All of this without forgetting that maritime connectivity between the peninsula and the archipelagos, and the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, is one of the axes of Spanish geopolitical vertebration (Ministry of Defence, 2013; 12-13)".

Despite this recognition, however, the last decade has shown that our country seems to have forgotten to some extent about this nature and the opportunities it provides. With the changing environment in which we live and the profound evolution of the international system, the importance of maritime security and the ability to have the right assets in place for protection and to have an accurate awareness of our maritime environment is again paramount. Therefore, and considering that in 2023 the document in question marks a decade since its initial publication, and that its update is scheduled to be published in 2024, it remains to be seen whether it will contain references to the Arctic and its importance for our country.

With this in mind, Spain's main interest in the Arctic region is to exploit fishing resources. However, access to its energy resources and the exploitation of the Arctic

---

launched from ships and submarines. The Zirkon 3M-22 (SS-N-33) is a vertical-launched hypersonic anti-ship missile. The Severodvinsk or Yasen class submarine (Project 885M) is planned to be able to launch either of them, although no Zirkon missile launches from submarines have been reported so far.

route should not be underestimated in the future. The 1920 Svalbard Treaty, to which Spain is a party along with 20 other European Union (EU) states, recognises Norwegian sovereignty over the archipelago, and grants all parties equal and non-discriminatory access to the resources of the waters surrounding Svalbard with regard to fishing for all commercially exploited species.

With no Arctic strategy either, Spain has remained passive. The reason for this is the lack of immediate prospects for exploitation and the idea that Spain is expected to follow the path set by the EU. This despite the fact that the Arctic is a region of global importance. As a permanent observer member of the Arctic Council, Spain must also be vigilant and present in order to act in line with changes in the area. Therefore, when creating a strategy, the first thing to establish is the aims or objectives sought.

In this context, processes of defining maritime spaces by coastal countries have given the impression of a race towards appropriate maritime spaces, exclusive economic zone in the first 200 nautical miles, and an extended continental shelf, if the physical continental shelf extends beyond this limit. Arctic states enacted their EEZs with few unresolved disputes and if there is a race on continental shelf claims, it is against time, because states have ten years after their ratification of the Convention of the Law of the Sea to submit an application to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

Several disputes have been resolved, including between Russia and Norway in the Barents Sea in 2010 and between Norway, Iceland and Denmark in the Norwegian Sea in 2018. The driving force behind these disputes was hardly resources, as 95% of overseas deposits are likely to be in EEZs, which have already been allocated. The processes of defining maritime space are orderly, sometimes with disputes, but not with high tensions, and many disputes are resolved.

Considering that Spain has no sovereignty to claim, a legal regime that translates into internationalisation and free, albeit controlled, access to its resources would be in the best interest of its waters. With this manoeuvre, national flag vessels would be able to fish and use the routes with freedom of navigation. This option is the one that Spain should undoubtedly support on the international stage, since without this option, access to the High North will become even more complicated. On the other hand, in the current scenario of disputes over control of the Arctic, Spain's naval presence is necessary. However, the navy's ships are not built to navigate in these waters and therefore there is no national capability to conduct naval operations in the Arctic. All this added to the lack of any reference to the Arctic or Spain's interests in it in the national Maritime Security Strategy is reason enough to understand why there is a need for updating and a Spanish presence in the frozen waters.

This absence, however, is understandable given the age of the document and the profound changes undergone by the international landscape and the Arctic region since then. However, awareness also serves as an incentive to motivate a strategy renewal to reflect the changes our national strategic landscape has undergone over the years, as well as the interests our nation may have in the Arctic and other regions

of importance to our allies. There is currently only one Navy unit, the *Hespérides*, dedicated to oceanographic research and it needs to be replaced, its design only allows it to sail in waters with shallow ice.

On the other hand, the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) has a vessel, the *Sarmiento de Gamboa*, which is also unsuitable for sailing in the presence of ice of a certain thickness, as found in the Arctic. Despite Spain's capacity to do the job properly, one unit alone is not enough. It is estimated that if the demand for scientific research in the northern region is to be met, an additional unit would be desirable. This would also make a progressive replacement of the current *Hespérides* possible in the short to medium term. Another, initially cheaper, option would be to share a platform with another country and form joint research teams. Although probably enriching for scientific groups, this solution presents clear limitations when deciding on research efforts and closes, to a certain extent, the possibility of dedicating the ship to other activities.

Therefore, in the short and medium term, Spain should look for a new oceanographic research vessel to begin efforts in the North and to take over from the *Hespérides*. The predicted changes will shape a new geopolitical scenario in the Arctic region, bringing with it great opportunities and, associated with this increased activity, more risks of an unprecedented nature. Spain must be a player in these dynamics if it is to maintain its international position and reap the benefits that will secure its economy and welfare. Yet, how the political situation evolves following the conflict in Ukraine in the Arctic Council, to which Spain is an observer as already mentioned, remains to be seen. The conflict has significantly altered relations between its members in terms of cooperation in the region, which, according to López Morales, was due to a combination of four factors:

1. Interests shared by all Arctic states;
2. The need to elucidate scientific uncertainty and the creation of public assets;
3. A flexible institutional body capable of adapting to the needs of the actors;
4. And finally, an international legal framework favourable to all states that guarantees the peaceful resolution of possible disputes (López Morales, 2018; 85).

The degradation of this system of cooperation has reached the point where seven of the eight permanent members have decided to turn their backs on Russia. This dynamic will have profound political implications for a region that until recently was marked by a distinctive and unique exceptionalism; an exceptionalism that seems to be coming to an end.

## 7. Conclusions

Spain must look to and leverage this new space to occupy an advantageous position that will allow it to share in the energy and fishing resources offered by the Arctic

region, as well as orienting its shipbuilding to benefit from the boost that development and the need for infrastructures and ships to exploit these resources may bring.

It is clear that climate change is shaping a new reality in this vital region of the planet. Despite the remaining uncertainties –mainly in terms of magnitude and timing– various prediction models confirm the trend towards melting, although the process will be more gentle than initially predicted. The major opportunities offered by this new scenario can be grouped along two lines: Access to energy, mining or fishing resource exploitation and opening new shipping routes.

The Arctic is still an area of relatively low political tension, where actors cooperate on global issues without media excesses and in a climate with a high degree of accountability and balance in decision-making. The Arctic Council and all the dimensions of regional collaboration, based on scientific cooperation, represent a model of governance that deserves to be studied in depth. If melting were to continue at the rate of recent years, which currently seems unlikely, the Arctic would become a major trade route and would have major geostrategic implications, posing serious new problems for Moscow. It would ultimately cease to be a natural defence for them, leaving it exposed to Mackinder's Heartland, thus rendering it inaccessible and exposing it to the possible influence of Western naval power.

For the future of the Arctic, it is highly unlikely that a demilitarised and denuclearised zone will be established on the model of what was occurred in Antarctica. In the coming years, the United States and Alliance countries will strengthen their military presence along their northern shores and increase joint exercises in order to balance Russian presence and growing Chinese influence. However, this is not a Cold War-style arms race as the objectives are different; there is, however, a greater increase in anti-submarine assets.

While Alaska and Canada form the protective shield or first line of defence for the American continent, the islands of Greenland, Iceland and Svalbard, due to their undeniable strategic position, are the advanced links of protection against the new Russian bases in the Arctic. The demilitarised island of Spitsbergen –the largest of the islands in the Svalbard archipelago– represents a target for Russia, a favourable position suitable for controlling the North Atlantic and defending the Arctic, as well as the Kola Peninsula. This archipelago is an exceptional strategic location for anti-undersea warfare in the Arctic, in itself reason enough for the Russians to be inclined to use these islands in the event of a conflict. This strategic importance may be diminished in the longer term by integrating new aircraft carriers into the Northern Fleet,<sup>6</sup> while reducing the Fleet's dependence on land-based naval air forces.

---

<sup>6</sup> Russia currently has only one aircraft carrier, which has been in dry dock for almost six years and is in very poor condition. It has had numerous incidents since it was decommissioned, the latest being a fire in late 2022. Given its poor state, there are plans to build more.

US and Russian strategic interest in the Arctic appear to be oriented in different directions. While the former give it a defensive character, trying to stop attacks by bombers and strategic missiles in and on this sea, the Russians have to look to the Arctic as the only avenue open for an eminently offensive strategy directed towards the United States. The Bering Strait, the only access to the Arctic via the Pacific, is not only a narrow passage, but also shallow. It is therefore very risky for submarines to sail in this area. The ice may extend considerably below the surface, and water depth may not be sufficient to allow safe navigation for long periods throughout the year.

Within this vast and complex theatre that is the new Arctic, following the guidelines set out in other strategies, we must act in partnership and if possible in cooperation with other nations or within organisations. Having identified the goal, we must resolve the question of the means to support Spain's participation in polar organisations and ensure our presence in the fields of interest. When speaking of means, the first thing a naval officer thinks of is the necessary platforms, the ships.

## Bibliography

Anderson, William R. (1959) *Nautilus 90 degrees north*. Barcelona, Ed. Juventud.

Arctic Council (2020), "Interview with Arctic Council observer Spain". [online] [Accessed 20 August 2023] Available at: <https://arctic-council.org/news/interview-with-arctic-council-observer-spain/>

Arctic Council (2021), "Russian Chairmanship 2021-2023". [online] [Accessed 15 August 2023] Available at: <https://arctic-council.org/about/previous-chairmanships/russian-chairmanship-2/>

Bertolino, Romain, Negrus, Alexandre & TARDIEU, Nato. (2022), *Atlas géopolitique du monde contemporain*. Paris, Ellipses.

Congressional Research Service (CRS) (2022), "Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress", US Congress. 24 March. Available at: <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R41153.pdf>

Conley, Heather A. & ROHLOFF, Caroline (2015), "The New Ice Curtain: Russia's Strategic Reach to the Arctic", *CSIS Europe Program*. 27 August. [online] [Accessed 18 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-ice-curtain>.

Conte de los Ríos, Augusto (2022), "La Nueva Doctrina Marítima de la Federación rusa", *Revista Ejército*, 1 September. [online] [Accessed 16 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.revistaejercitos.com/2022>.

Conte de los Ríos, Augusto (2022) "Sensores Acústicos e Inteligencia Artificial", *Revista Ejército*. [online] [Accessed 20 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.revistaejercitos.com/2022/02/07/sensores-acusticos-e-inteligencia-artificial/>.

- Government of the Russian Federation (2009), “Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030”, *Energeticheskaya Politika*, [http://www.energystrategy.ru/projects/docs/ES-2030\\_\(Eng\).pdf](http://www.energystrategy.ru/projects/docs/ES-2030_(Eng).pdf).
- Gómez de Ágreda, Ángel. (2018). “El Cambio Climático en el Ártico: Más Allá del Círculo Polar”. *Revista Del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, (3). Retrieved from <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/317>.
- Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (2014), “The Synthesis Report for the Fifth Assessment Report”. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/ar6-syr/>.
- Kauppila, Lisa & Kopra, Sanna (2022), “China’s rise and the Arctic region up to 2049 – three scenarios for regional futures in an era of climate change and power transition”, *The Polar Journal*, 12:1, 148-171, DOI: 10.1080/2154896X.2022.2058216
- López Morales, David. (2018). “Terrae Ultima Thule: Cooperación en la Región Ártica”. *Revista Del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, (10). Retrieved from <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/191>.
- Lynch, Amanda H. Norchi, Charles H. & LI, Xueke (2022), “The interaction of ice and law in Arctic marine accessibility”, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*; <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2202720119>
- Lyon, Waldo. (1963), “The submarine and the Arctic Ocean”. *Polar Record*, 11(75), 699-705. DOI:10.1017/S0032247400055959.
- Mcwethy, Robert D. (1958), “Significance of the Nautilus Polar Cruise”, *US Naval Institute*, Proceedings, Vol. 84/5/663. May. [online] [Accessed 13 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1958/may/significance-nautilus-polar-cruise>
- Patch, John (2009), “Cold Horizons: Arctic Maritime Security Challenges”, *United States Naval Institute*, Proceedings, Vol. 135/5/1275. May. [online] [Accessed 13 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2009/may/cold-horizons-arctic-maritime-security-challenges>.
- Paul, Michael & Swistek, Göran (2022), “Russia in the Arctic: Development Plans, Military Potential & Conflict Prevention”, *SWP Research Paper* 3. February. Available at: [https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research\\_papers/2022RP03\\_Russia\\_Arctic.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2022RP03_Russia_Arctic.pdf)
- Polmar, Norman (1984), “Sailing under the Ice”, *US Naval Institute* Proceedings, Vol. 110/6/976. June. [online] [Accessed 18 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1984/june/sailing-under-ice>.
- Pritchins, Stanislav (2022), “Russia’s Untapped Arctic Potential”, *Chatham House*. 29 January. [online] [Accessed 10 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2018/01/russias-untapped-arctic-potential>

- Simón, Luís (2014), “España después de Europa: la proyección marítima como elemento de la renovación estratégica española”, *Real Instituto Elcano*, Análisis. [online] [Accessed 15 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/espana-despues-de-europa-la-proyeccion-maritima-como-elemento-de-la-renovacion-estrategica-espanola/>
- Solski, Jan Jakub (2022), “The Northern Sea Route at the crossroads: what lies ahead after the war in Ukraine?”, *The Polar Journal*, DOI: 10.1080/2154896X.2022.2133389.
- Staun, Jørgen (2020). “A Two-Faced Russia? Civilian Interests and Great Power Politics in the High North” In: Weber, J. (eds) *Handbook on Geopolitics and Security in the Arctic. Frontiers in International Relations*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45005-2\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45005-2_1)
- The White House (2022), “National Strategy for the Arctic Region”, October 2022. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/National-Strategy-for-the-Arctic-Region.pdf>
- Tsiouvalas, Apostolos (2022), “Towards a Greek Arctic Policy? The pathway for a Mediterranean State to the Arctic”, *The Arctic Institute*. [online] [Accessed 14 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/towards-greek-arctic-policy-pathway-mediterranean-state-arctic/>
- Vázquez Orbaiceta, Gonzalo (2022) “Doctrina Marítima de Rusia 2022: ¿Qué ha cambiado?”, Opinion Paper 59/2022. [online] [Accessed 13 August 2023] Available at: [https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2022/DIEEE0110\\_2022\\_GONVAZ\\_Rusia.pdf](https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2022/DIEEE0110_2022_GONVAZ_Rusia.pdf)
- Wall, Colin and Wegge, Njord (2023), “The Russian Arctic Threat”, *CSIS BRIEFS*. [online] [Accessed 17 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-arctic-threat-consequences-ukraine-war>.
- Walsh, Don (2005), “Oceans: 1931: The First Nautilus North Pole Expedition”, *US Naval Institute*, Proceedings, Vol. 131(11). [online] [Accessed 17 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2005/november/oceans-1931-first-nautilus-north-pole-expedition>
- (1932), “Expedición submarina de Sir Hubert Wilkins, 1931”, *Registro polar*, 1(3), 4-5. DOI:10.1017/S0032247400029454
- (2013), “Estrategia de Seguridad Marítima Nacional”, *Ministry of Defence*. [online] [Accessed 19 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/estrategias-publicaciones/estrategias/estrategia-seguridad-mar%C3%ADtima-nacional>.
- (2017), “Código internacional para los buques que operen en aguas polares (Código Polar)”, *Organización Marítima Internacional*. Available at: <https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/es/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Pages%20from%20MEPC%2068-21-Add.1.pdf>

- (2021), “Putin convierte la Flota del Norte de Rusia en un distrito militar aparte”, *Sputnik International*. 11 February. [online] [Accessed 10 August 2023] Available at: <https://sputniknews.lat/20200608/putin-convierte-la-flota-del-norte-de-rusia-en-un-distrito-militar-aparte-1091683916.html>
- (2021), “Three Russian submarines surface and break Arctic ice during drills”, *Reuters*. 26 March. [online] [Accessed 16 August 2023] Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-military-arctic-idUSKBN2BI2RZ>
- (2022a), “Chapter I: The Strategic Context”, *Whitehall Papers*, 100:1, 6-14, DOI: 10.1080/02681307.2022.2030965
- (2022b), “Chapter II: The Balance of Capabilities in the Subsurface Domain”, *Whitehall Papers*, 100:1, 15-41, DOI: 10.1080/02681307.2022.2030966
- (2022c), “Conclusions”, *Whitehall Papers*, 100:1, 96-98, DOI: 10.1080/02681307.2022.2030971.
- (2023a) “Chapter Three: North America”, *The Military Balance*, 123:1, 16-49, DOI: 10.1080/04597222.2023.2162715.
- (2023b) “Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia”, *The Military Balance*, 123:1, 150-207, DOI: 10.1080/04597222.2023.2162717.

---

*Article received: 04 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---



*Ramón ALARCÓN SÁNCHEZ*

*PhD candidate in International Security. IUGM-UNED*

*E-mail: ralarcon50@alumno.uned.es*

*Disinformation, fake news and post-truth:  
a comparative study of general trends,  
research papers in academic security  
journals and newspaper headlines*

**Abstract**

This research paper explores the dynamics and evolution of three terms of great relevance in the contemporary communicative landscape, both in Spanish and English: “disinformation”, “fake news” and “post-truth”. Two different examination approaches are implemented for this purpose. Initially, it combines the *Google Trends* tool, which reflects general search trends for each keyword, with an in-depth analysis of headlines from two prominent media outlets, *nytimes.com* and *elmundo.es*. Thus determining how these newspapers have handled and reflected these issues over time. Subsequently, a systematic review of several academic journals on security. Specifically, by looking for the presence of the terms mentioned in the titles, abstracts or keywords of the research papers. This study not only provides a detailed understanding of the significance and treatment of these terms in both academic and journalistic circles, but is also enriched with a wide range of graphs and tables that illustrate and complement the analysis, offering a clear visual perspective of the findings.

**Keywords**

trend analysis, journal review, *Disinformation Governance Board*, *Order PCM/I030/2020*, *Google Trends*

## I. Introduction

When a researcher wants to delve deeper into a topic, one of the first things he or she will probably do is to gather information in order to ascertain the state of play. To the best of their ability, they will collect and review multiple sources of knowledge: academic writing, legislation, newspaper articles, trends on social media or political speeches. In doing so, they will understand and outline how the issue has changed over time, deepening their understanding of the perspective with which it has been treated.

Unlike other historical eras, the current period is characterised by an enormous amount of information so, while it is easy to access databases and search engines of all kinds, the challenge can be to not get lost in the ocean of information. A methodology must therefore be adopted that describes a state of play appropriate to the research claims, defending the paths taken with a logical and rational approach.

Consider the following example, which anticipates the methodology of this study: Is disinformation a contemporary issue? One way to address the matter is to examine the frequency of the term “disinformation” in the EUR-Lex database of EU legal documents as a barometer of institutional and policy interest. In other words, a kind of “literature review” and “state of play” identifying quantitative trends together with a qualitative assessment.

However, when conducting such investigations, it is useful to consider related keywords, such as “fake news” and “post-truth”. Although each has its particularities, they generally address the manipulation or misrepresentation of information to influence public perception.

Thus, the *National Security Strategy 2021* states that “disinformation campaigns” aim to “distort reality through manipulated content” (Consejo de Seguridad Nacional, 2021, p. 60). They are characterised by “the will to generate confusion and undermine social cohesion; the coordinated use of different media for the creation and dissemination of content aimed at broad audiences; and the malicious intent to discredit or influence the target of the attack” (Consejo de Seguridad Nacional, 2021, p. 60). Consequently, they have a “clear impact on National Security” (Consejo de Seguridad Nacional, 2021, p. 60).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (undated) specifies that a ‘fake news’ is “[n]ews that conveys or incorporates false, fabricated, or deliberately misleading information, or that is characterised as or accused of doing so”.

With regard to “posverdad”, the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (undated) refers to a “[d]istorsión deliberada de una realidad, que manipula creencias y emociones con el fin de influir en la opinión pública y en actitudes sociales” (“[d]eliberate distortion of a reality, which manipulates beliefs and emotions in order to influence public opinion and social attitudes”) as the only meaning. Similarly, *Oxford English Dictionary* (undated-b) specifies “post-truth” as “[r]elating to or denoting circumstances in which

objective facts are less influential in shaping political debate or public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”.

In short, in one way or another “disinformation”, “fake news” and “post-truth” encompass deception, manipulation and lack of objectivity. This can have a negative impact on society, public opinion and politics, especially if it erodes trust in democratic institutions or interferes with electoral processes. It is therefore of interest for geopolitics, security and defence.

Once the keywords have been selected, working with databases involves two main approaches: investigating the presence of the keywords throughout the content or limiting the search to the title of the records. The former assumes a broader perspective, but is likely to yield tangential results and a long list, complicating the analysis. The second is a very narrow filter, estimating that the keyword in the title is most likely relevant. On the downside, significant results are sure to be omitted. There are no easy decisions when faced with a large volume of data: the advantages and disadvantages of each method must be weighed and the most appropriate chosen.

For this case, the EUR-Lex advanced search, accessible at the URL <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/advanced-search-form.html> was chosen. The keywords “disinformation”, “fake news” and “post-truth” are required in the title only. The main reason for using English terminology is that some of the EUR-Lex content is only available in English, such as *Ares(2017)5489364, Communication on fake news and online misinformation*. Sometimes content is only submitted in one of the official EU languages and only translated into English, such as document *92014E003587, Written question E-003587/14 Sergio Berlato (PPE) to the Commission. Disinformation regarding ritual slaughter for meat production* (also available in Italian). Table I was created using content returned by the search engine.

These search rules show a quantitative preference for the term “disinformation” as “fake news” was only used once in 2017 and “post-truth” does not appear. Focusing the analysis on “disinformation”, there is a long gap with no results between 1996 and 2014. Subsequently, the term appears regularly from 2018 onwards. Qualitatively, before 2018 there are only two entries concerning written questions by MEPs. However, records that can be considered more significant can be found as of that year, such as the communication of 26 April 2018 *The fight against online disinformation: a European approach*, and the joint communication of 5 December 2018 *Action Plan against disinformation*. Which leads to the following deduction: the keyword “disinformation” features regularly in the title since 2018 with more relevant references than the written questions of 1996 and 2014; there is indeed increased interest in disinformation in recent years.

With an interdisciplinary approach, this study investigates disinformation through two paths: delving into general interest and journalistic sources; and academic journals. The first yields a broad and current perspective on the phenomenon, especially if the press is judged as a mirror of society to see how disinformation has been presented to

EUR-Lex   Resultados de búsqueda con el criterio «Domain: All, Results containing: disinformation in title, Search language: English», «Domain: All, Results containing: fake news in title, Search language: English» y «Domain: All, Results containing: post-truth in title, Search language: English»				
Fecha	Documento	Tipo de acto	Autor	Título en inglés
12/07/1996 (fecha de envío)	91996E001975	Pregunta escrita	Parlamento Europeo, GOLDSMITH	WRITTEN QUESTION No. 1975/96 by Jimmy GOLDSMITH to the Commission. Disinformation by the European Commission concerning mad cow disease
24/03/2014 (fecha de envío)	92014E003587	Pregunta escrita	Parlamento Europeo, BERLATO	Written question E-003587/14 Sergio Berlato (PPE) to the Commission. Disinformation regarding ritual slaughter for meat production
10/11/2017	Ares(2017)5489364	Evaluación inicial de impacto	Comisión Europea, Dirección General de Redes de Comunicación, Contenido y Tecnologías	Communication on fake news and online misinformation
26/04/2018	52018DC0236	Comunicación	Comisión Europea, Dirección General de Redes de Comunicación, Contenido y Tecnologías	COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach
06/09/2018	EESC-2018-02425-AS	Dictamen provisional	Comité Económico y Social Europeo	Initiative addressing online platform challenges as regards the spreading of disinformation
19/09/2018 (fecha de la votación)	52018AE2425	Dictamen	Comité Económico y Social Europeo	Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach' (COM(2018) 236 final)
05/12/2018	52018DC0794	Informe	Comisión Europea, Secretaría General	REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on the implementation of the Communication "Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach"
05/12/2018	52018JC0036	Comunicación conjunta	Comisión Europea, Secretaría General	JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Report on the implementation of the Action Plan Against Disinformation
06/02/2019 (fecha de la votación)	52018R3908	Dictamen de propia iniciativa	Comité Europeo de las Regiones, Comisión de Ciudadanía, Gobernanza y Asuntos Institucionales y Exteriores	Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions on 'Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach'
05/03/2019	EESC-2018-06302-AS	Dictamen provisional	Comité Económico y Social Europeo	Action Plan against Disinformation
20/03/2019 (fecha de la votación)	52018AE6302	Dictamen	Comité Económico y Social Europeo	Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — Action Plan against Disinformation'(JOIN(2018) 36 final)
20/03/2019	EESC-2018-06302-AC	Dictamen aprobado	Comité Económico y Social Europeo	Opinion - European Economic and Social Committee - Action Plan against Disinformation
14/06/2019	52019JC0012	Comunicación conjunta	Comisión Europea, Secretaría General	JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Report on the implementation of the Action Plan Against Disinformation
10/10/2019 (fecha de la votación)	52019R0031(01)	Resolución	Parlamento Europeo	European Parliament resolution of 10 October 2019 on foreign electoral interference and disinformation in national and European democratic processes (2019/2810(RSP))
05/12/2019 (fecha de la votación)	52019R1053	Dictamen de propia iniciativa	Comité Europeo de las Regiones, Comisión de Ciudadanía, Gobernanza y Asuntos Institucionales y Exteriores	Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Action Plan against Disinformation
10/06/2020	52020JC0008	Comunicación conjunta	Comisión Europea, Secretaría General	JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Tackling COVID-19 disinformation - Getting the facts right
18/06/2020 (fecha de la votación)	52020DP0161	Decisión	Parlamento Europeo	European Parliament decision of 18 June 2020 on setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office (2020/2683(RS0))
25/11/2020 (fecha de la votación)	52020IP0320	Resolución de propia iniciativa	Parlamento Europeo, Comisión de Cultura y Educación, Comisión de Libertades Civiles, Justicia y Asuntos de Interior	European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2020 on strengthening media freedom: the protection of journalists in Europe, hate speech, disinformation and the role of platforms (2020/2009(INI))
31/03/2021	Ares(2021)2230395	Hoja de ruta	Comisión Europea, Dirección General de Redes de Comunicación, Contenido y Tecnologías	European Commission Guidance on strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation
26/05/2021	52021DC0262	Comunicación	Comisión Europea, Dirección General de Redes de Comunicación, Contenido y Tecnologías	COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS European Commission Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation
07/06/2021 (fecha de publicación)	52021SA0009(01)	Anuncio	Tribunal de Cuentas Europeo	Special report No 9/2021 Disinformation affecting the EU: tackled but not tamed 2021/C 215/06
09/12/2021 (fecha de la votación)	52021AE3677	Dictamen	Comité Económico y Social Europeo	Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions European Commission Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation' [COM(2021) 262 final]
09/03/2022 (fecha de la votación)	52022IP0064	Resolución de propia iniciativa	Parlamento Europeo, Comisión Especial sobre Interferencias Extranjeras en Todos los Procesos Democráticos de la Unión Europea, en particular la Desinformación	European Parliament resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2020/2268(INI))
10/03/2022 (fecha de la votación)	52022DP0070	Decisión	Parlamento Europeo	European Parliament decision of 10 March 2022 on setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2), and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office (2022/2565(RS0))
14/02/2023 (fecha de la votación)	52023DP0030	Decisión	Parlamento Europeo	European Parliament decision of 14 February 2023 amending the decision of 10 March 2022 on setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2), and adjusting its title and responsibilities (2023/2566(RS0))

Table I

the public. Subsequently, a review of academic journals adds a rigorous and theoretical approach.

Both paths have a clear geopolitical, security and defence orientation. As an example, it is worth mentioning one of the findings of this work, which will be discussed in detail later on.

Firstly, a particular interest in the term “disinformation” was detected in Spain in November 2020. Upon enquiry, the conclusion is that it was most probably due to *Order PCM/1030/2020*. This order established a Permanent Commission against Disinformation, coordinated by the Secretary of State for Communication and led by the Department of National Security. The National Intelligence Centre is also

included. It thus exposes the strong relationship between geopolitics, security and defence in the fight against disinformation.

Analysing this and other cases, together with reviewing academic security journals, justifies the relevance of this article in a scientific journal on geopolitics, security and defence.

## 2. Methodology: Keyword selection, based on *Google Trends* and justification of journalistic content analysis through headlines from *nytimes.com* and *elmundo.es*

Firstly, the same three terms are chosen as in the introduction, both in their Spanish and English versions: “disinformation” (“desinformación”), “fake news” (“noticias falsas”) and “post-truth” (“posverdad”). The reason is that they guarantee a focused and manageable analysis.

On that basis, the trend for each keyword provides valuable context by illustrating when its popularity increased. *Google Trends* is a well-established and invaluable digital analysis tool as it gathers search interests for each keyword.

However, in order to interpret quantitative data from *Google Trends* correctly — presented in this article as line graphs— it is important to know that it reflects how many searches have been made for a particular term “relative to the total number of searches on Google”. In other words, they “don’t represent absolute search volume numbers, because the data is normalised and presented on a scale from 0-100, where each point on the graph is divided by the highest point, or 100”. Thus, a line “trending downward means that a search term’s relative popularity is decreasing”, although “not necessarily that the total number of searches for that term is decreasing, but that its popularity compared to other searches is shrinking” (Google News Initiative, undated).

Having obtained *Google Trends* data, we must determine which events led to a rise in popularity for each keyword. In other words, the quantitative aspect has to be clarified with the qualitative. Sometimes, the reason seems obvious. Others, however, it may be difficult to match an increase in interest with a particular event. Therefore, this paper presents possible and probable reasons for an increase in the popularity of keywords. Putting caution first, categorical associations are avoided, hence the extensive use of adverbs indicating probability such as “surely” or “possibly”.

For this qualitative check, newspaper articles from *The New York Times* (*nytimes.com*) and *EL MUNDO* (*elmundo.es*) that feature the keywords assessed in their headlines are included in a table format. This makes it possible to quickly and in an informed manner see the prevailing information environment in each period under analysis. These two media were chosen based on objective criteria related to web traffic. In other words, because of their digital prominence or relevance, which makes both key players in the dissemination of information.

To support these assertions, reference should be made to the digital analysis tool *Similarweb*, which classifies the traffic share of websites by segments. In July 2023, *nytimes.com* ranked ninth globally (Similarweb, 2023c) and second in the US in the category “News and Media” (Similarweb, 2023b). It was second only to *yahoo.com*, which acts primarily as a news aggregator. Meanwhile, *elmundo.es* led the ranking in Spain (Similarweb, 2023a). These data can be found in table II.

Similarweb   Sitios web editoriales de noticias y medios de comunicación («News and Media») por cuota de tráfico («traffic share») (julio de 2023)					
En todo el mundo		En Estados Unidos		En España	
Dominio	Cuota de tráfico («traffic share»)	Dominio	Cuota de tráfico («traffic share»)	Dominio	Cuota de tráfico («traffic share»)
yahoo.com	5.63 %	yahoo.com	21.04 %	elmundo.es	6.58 %
yahoo.co.jp	3.16 %	nytimes.com	4.42 %	elpais.com	3.79 %
turbopages.org	1.85 %	cnn.com	4.16 %	abc.es	3.57 %
naver.com	1.83 %	msn.com	2.70 %	elconfidencial.com	3.35 %
qq.com	1.14 %	foxnews.com	2.63 %	lavanguardia.com	3.34 %
globo.com	1.09 %				
msn.com	1.04 %				
news.yahoo.co.jp	1.02 %				
nytimes.com	0.90 %				

Table II

At this point, it is worth explaining why a US newspaper was chosen and in English —*nytimes.com*—, along with one from Spain and in Spanish —*elmundo.es*—. The spectrum of keywords chosen combines Spanish —“desinformación”, “noticias falsas” and “posverdad”— with English —“disinformation”, “fake news” and “post-truth”—. This means that *Google Trends* search trends can be filtered by three regions: “Worldwide”, as the influence of the English language as a lingua franca allows for a global picture; USA for its geopolitical importance; and Spain, because of the particular interest for the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies.

From there, each media outlet offers complementary geographic perspectives. *nytimes.com* shows, first and foremost, the news environment in the US; In doing so, it helps to determine why the popularity of the terms analysed is growing at certain times in the United States; as does *elmundo.es* for Spain. In terms of the international scene, both have an important external projection, which helps to explain the boom in interest in keywords at global level.

The result is a complementary and enriching vision of the topic addressed. Indeed, the fact that each newspaper has a unique idiosyncrasy, with different media coverage or audiences with different languages and cultures, is not an obstacle; rather, it lends a diversity of perspectives.

In any case, it is important to recognise that every media outlet, regardless of its reputation or reach, usually has an editorial line that determines its coverage to a greater or lesser extent. Selecting *nytimes.com* and *elmundo.es* thus impacts the results, representing a limitation of the study. However, no further newspapers were added due to practical constraints and the need to ensure the feasibility of the analysis. Future research could consider a more diverse sample to provide a more complete picture.

Also note that this study does not intend to assess or judge the integrity of these media outlets, but rather to examine their information deployment based on certain keywords.

Finally, the tables grouping headlines from *nytimes.com* and *elmundo.es* should be explained. The content was crawled through Google using the criterion

“site:website intitle:keyword” —e.g., “site:nytimes.com intitle:disinformation”—. Similarly, DuckDuckGo was used with the operator “”keyword” site:website” —e.g. “”disinformation” site:nytimes.com”—. Both are established search engines with relevant web indexing. They are therefore useful for obtaining information, including journalistic pieces.

Additionally, posts on Twitter —or X— of the profiles of *The New York Times* (@nytimes) and *EL MUNDO* (@elmundoes) with the agreed keywords have been reviewed in order to register links to journalistic pieces with the “keyword” in the headline. The advanced search function located at the URL <https://twitter.com/search-advanced> has been used for this purpose.

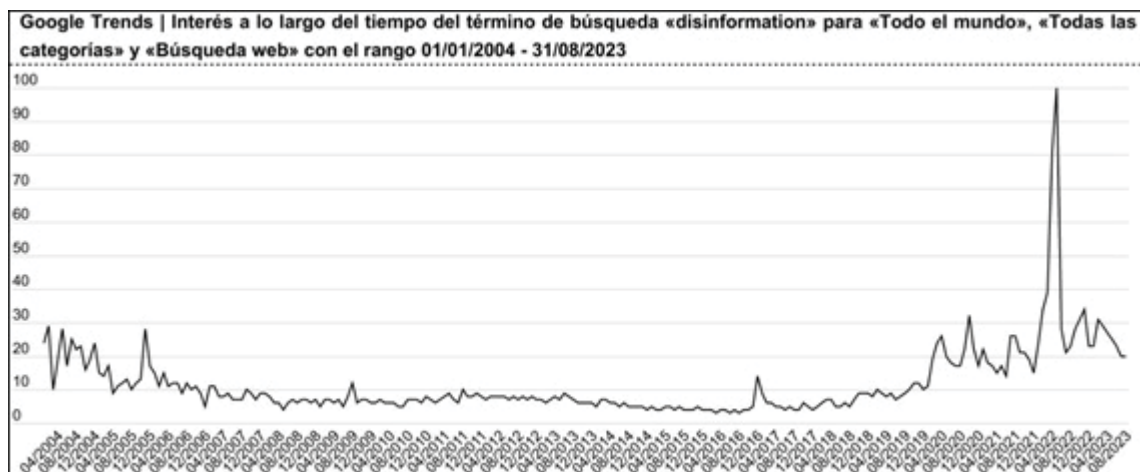
The purpose of these three avenues of enquiry has been to gather as many publications as possible. Likewise, we must consider that digital newspaper content is diverse: articles, podcasts, videos..., which can be current affairs, opinion, analysis, technology, etc. All the results collected by Google, DuckDuckGo and Twitter are taken into account for this study, regardless of their type. Thus we can compare general and journalistic trends with academic trends.

To close this section, it is essential to note that data used in the 13 attached graphs, taken from *Google Trends*, were obtained on 4 September 2023. Due to the changing nature of *Google Trends*, queries made at a later date may show different results.

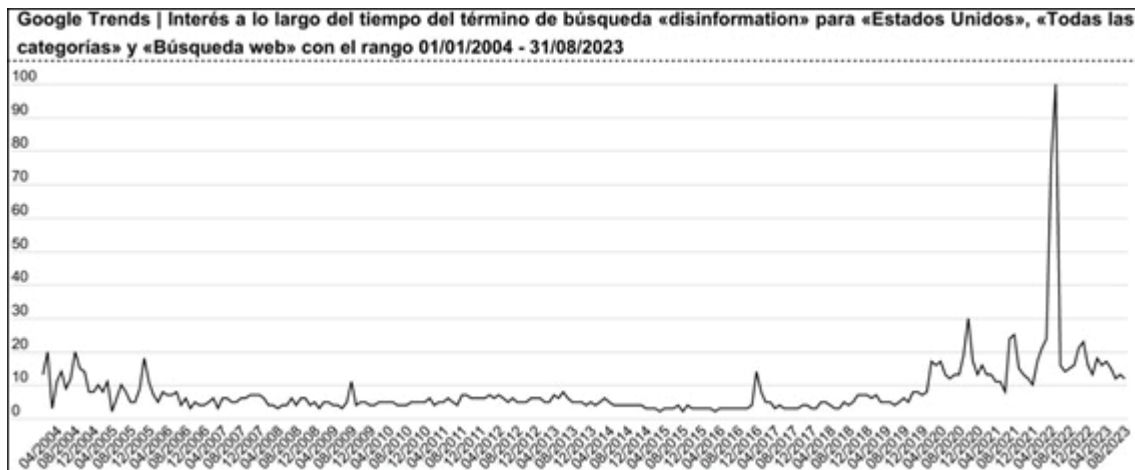
### 3. Analysis of the general trend of keywords and occurrence in the press

#### 3.1. Analysis of the keyword “disinformation”.

In *Google Trends*, the search term “disinformation”, with the options “Worldwide”, “1/1/04 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search”, generates graph 1. With the regional filter activated for “United States”, the trend is very similar, as can be seen in graph 2.



Graph 1



Graph 2

According to Google, improvements to the data collection system were implemented on 1 January 2016 and 1 January 2022. Consequently, the above results may not provide the same confidence, although they are incorporated for information purposes.

The first notable peak was in December 2016, when multiple news reports about the US presidential election held the previous month and possible Russian interference were circulated, probably heightening the sense of suspicion and manipulation.

Similarly, in December 2016 the “SEC. 1287” of the “Public Law No: 114-328” gave the green light to the State Department’s *Global Engagement Center* against disinformation. This set of factors is compiled in table III.

Eventos clave y comunicaciones relacionados con el aumento en la popularidad de «disinformation» en diciembre de 2016				
Fecha	Medio de comunicación/Institución	Autor(es)	Titular/Contenido relevante	Enlace
02/12/2016	CNN	Jim Sciutto y Manu Raju	Democrats want Russian hacking intelligence declassified	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/02/politics/democrats-russian-hacking-intelligence/">https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/02/politics/democrats-russian-hacking-intelligence/</a>
09/12/2016	The Washington Post	Adam Entous, Elen Nakashima y Greg Miller	Secret CIA assessment says Russia was trying to help Trump win White House	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-orders-review-of-russian-hacking-during-presidential-campaign/2016/12/09/3106b300-be2a-11e6-94ac-3d324840106c_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-orders-review-of-russian-hacking-during-presidential-campaign/2016/12/09/3106b300-be2a-11e6-94ac-3d324840106c_story.html</a>
09/12/2016	The New York Times	David E. Sanger y Scott Shane	Russian Hackers Acted to Aid Trump in Election, U.S. Says	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/us/obama-russia-election-hack.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/us/obama-russia-election-hack.html</a>
09/12/2016	CNN	Tal Kopan, Kevin Liptak y Jim Sciutto	Obama orders review of Russian election-related hacking	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/09/politics/obama-orders-review-into-russian-hacking-of-2016-election/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/09/politics/obama-orders-review-into-russian-hacking-of-2016-election/index.html</a>
11/12/2016	The New York Times	Mark Mazzetti y Eric Lichtblau	C.I.A. Judgment on Russia Built on Swell of Evidence	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/11/us/politics/cia-judgment-intelligence-russia-hacking-evidence.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/11/us/politics/cia-judgment-intelligence-russia-hacking-evidence.html</a>
11/12/2016	The Wall Street Journal	Shane Harris	Donald Trump Fuels Rift With CIA Over Russian Hack	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-blames-democrats-for-reports-of-russia-hacking-1481467907">https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-blames-democrats-for-reports-of-russia-hacking-1481467907</a>
12/12/2016	The New York Times	Jennifer Steinhauer	Senate and House Leaders Call for Inquiry of Russian Hacking in Election	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/us/politics/mcconnell-supports-inquiry-of-russian-hacking-during-election.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/us/politics/mcconnell-supports-inquiry-of-russian-hacking-during-election.html</a>
12/12/2016	POLITICO	Brent Griffins	White House rails against Trump for not accepting evidence of Russia hacking	<a href="https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/trump-russia-hacking-white-house-232516">https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/trump-russia-hacking-white-house-232516</a>
15/12/2016	NBC News	William M. Arkin, Ken Dilanian y Cynthia McFadden	U.S. Officials: Putin Personally Involved in U.S. Election Hack	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-officials-putin-personally-involved-u-s-election-hack-n696146">https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-officials-putin-personally-involved-u-s-election-hack-n696146</a>
15/12/2016	NBC News	Ken Dilanian	Kremlin Calls NBC Report Putin Directed Hack 'Laughable Nonsense'	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/kremlin-calls-nbc-report-putin-directed-hack-laughable-nonsense-n696416">https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/kremlin-calls-nbc-report-putin-directed-hack-laughable-nonsense-n696416</a>
16/12/2016	The Washington Post	Juliet Eilperin	Obama says 'we will' retaliate against Russia for election hacking	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/12/15/obama-says-we-will-retaliate-against-russia-for-election-hacking/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/12/15/obama-says-we-will-retaliate-against-russia-for-election-hacking/</a>
23/12/2016	114th Congress		La «SEC. 1287» de la «Public Law No: 114-328» establece el Global Engagement Center con el propósito de «liderar, sincronizar y coordinar los esfuerzos del Gobierno Federal para reconocer, comprender, exponer y contrarrestar la propaganda extranjera estatal y no estatal y los esfuerzos de desinformación dirigidos a socavar los intereses de seguridad nacional de Estados Unidos»	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/114th-congress/senate-bill/2943/text">https://www.congress.gov/bills/114th-congress/senate-bill/2943/text</a>
29/12/2016	The New York Times	David E. Sanger	Obama Strikes Back at Russia for Election Hacking	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/29/us/politics/russia-election-hacking-sanctions.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/29/us/politics/russia-election-hacking-sanctions.html</a>
29/12/2016	DHS y FBI		GRIZZLY STEPPE – Russian Malicious Cyber Activity	<a href="https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/JAR_16-20296A_GRIZZLY%20STEPPE-2016-1229.pdf">https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/JAR_16-20296A_GRIZZLY%20STEPPE-2016-1229.pdf</a>
29/12/2016	DHS, OONI y FBI		Joint DHS, OONI, FBI Statement on Russian Malicious Cyber Activity	<a href="https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/joint-dhs-odni-fbi-statement-on-russian-malicious-cyber-activity">https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/joint-dhs-odni-fbi-statement-on-russian-malicious-cyber-activity</a>

Table III

Interest in the term “disinformation” subsequently remained low until 2020. It did not increase during relevant events, such as the joint communication of the European Commission and the High Representative on the *Action Plan against disinformation* (5 December 2018), or the dissemination of the so-called “Mueller report” (dated March 2019).

From 1 January 2017 to 29 February 2020, *nytimes.com* disseminated at least 30 news pieces with “disinformation” in the headline, grouped in table IV. The paper particularly focused on the intervention of two major powers, Russia and China, as well as the weight and responsibility of prominent social media platforms: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube.

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «disinformation» en el titular (1 de enero de 2017 - 29 de febrero de 2020)				
Fecha de publicación	Fecha de actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
13/04/2017		David W. Dunlap	Exposing Russian Disinformation Since the 1950s	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/insider/exposing-russian-disinformation-since-the-1950s.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/insider/exposing-russian-disinformation-since-the-1950s.html</a>
12/12/2017		Linda Qiu	Fingerprints of Russian Disinformation: From AIDS to Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/12/us/politics/russian-disinformation-aids-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/12/us/politics/russian-disinformation-aids-fake-news.html</a>
23/08/2018		Kate Conger y Sheera Frenkel	How FireEye Helped Facebook Spot a Disinformation Campaign	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/23/technology/fireeye-facebook-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/23/technology/fireeye-facebook-disinformation.html</a>
16/09/2018		Marc Santora y Julian E. Barnes	In the Balkans, Russia and the West Fight a Disinformation-Age Battle	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/16/world/europe/macedonia-referendum-russia-nato.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/16/world/europe/macedonia-referendum-russia-nato.html</a>
21/09/2018		Richard Sandimir	Lawrence Martin-Bittman, 87, Master of Disinformation, Dies	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/21/obituaries/lawrence-martin-bittman-dead.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/21/obituaries/lawrence-martin-bittman-dead.html</a>
19/10/2018		Mike Isaac y Kevin Roose	Disinformation Spreads on WhatsApp Ahead of Brazilian Election	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/technology/whatsapp-brazil-presidential-election.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/technology/whatsapp-brazil-presidential-election.html</a>
26/10/2018		Mike Isaac y Sheera Frenkel	Facebook Removes Iranian Network That Was Spreading Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/technology/facebook-removes-iranian-network-that-was-spreading-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/technology/facebook-removes-iranian-network-that-was-spreading-disinformation.html</a>
31/10/2018		Kevin Roose	Spotting Disinformation Online Before the Midterm Elections	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/31/technology/personaltech/disinformation-online-midterm-elections.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/31/technology/personaltech/disinformation-online-midterm-elections.html</a>
12/11/2018		Adam B. Ellick y Adam Westbrook	Operation Infektion: Russian Disinformation: From Cold War to Kanye	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/12/opinion/russia-meddling-disinformation-fake-news-elections.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/12/opinion/russia-meddling-disinformation-fake-news-elections.html</a>
18/11/2018		Adam B. Ellick	Too Much Information About Disinformation?	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/18/reader-center/russian-disinformation-video.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/18/reader-center/russian-disinformation-video.html</a>
17/12/2018		Renée DiResta	What We Now Know About Russian Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/17/opinion/russia-report-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/17/opinion/russia-report-disinformation.html</a>
31/01/2019		Sheera Frenkel, Kate Conger y Kevin Roose	Russia's Playbook for Social Media Disinformation Has Gone Global	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/technology/twitter-disinformation-united-states-russia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/technology/twitter-disinformation-united-states-russia.html</a>
19/04/2019		Asha Rangappa	How Barr and Trump Use a Russian Disinformation Tactic	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/19/opinion/mueller-report-barr-trump-russian-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/19/opinion/mueller-report-barr-trump-russian-disinformation.html</a>
07/06/2019		Cade Metz y Scott Brumenthal	How A.I. Could Be Weaponized to Spread Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/07/technology/ai-text-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/07/technology/ai-text-disinformation.html</a>
03/07/2019		Chris Hamby	Hacking, Glitches, Disinformation: Why Experts Are Worried About the 2020 Census	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/03/us/2020-census-digital.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/03/us/2020-census-digital.html</a>
25/07/2019		Matthew Rosenberg	Ad Tool Facebook Built to Fight Disinformation Doesn't Work as Advertised	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/25/technology/facebook-ad-library.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/25/technology/facebook-ad-library.html</a>
13/08/2019		Steven Lee Myers y Paul Mozur	China Is Waging a Disinformation War Against Hong Kong Protesters	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-china.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-china.html</a>
19/08/2019		Kate Conger	Facebook and Twitter Say China Is Spreading Disinformation in Hong Kong	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/19/technology/hong-kong-protests-china-disinformation-facebook-twitter.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/19/technology/hong-kong-protests-china-disinformation-facebook-twitter.html</a>
21/08/2019	22/08/2019	Nicholas Confessore y Justin Bank	In the Trump Era, a Family's Fight With Google and Facebook Over Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/21/us/facebook-disinformation-loyd-brown.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/21/us/facebook-disinformation-loyd-brown.html</a>
22/08/2019	26/08/2019	Kate Conger	YouTube Disables 210 Channels That Spread Disinformation About Hong Kong Protests	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/22/technology/youtube-hong-kong-protests-china-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/22/technology/youtube-hong-kong-protests-china-disinformation.html</a>
04/09/2019	05/09/2019	Matthew Rosenberg	Tracing Disinformation With Custom Tools, Bumper Phones and Encrypted Apps	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/04/technology/personaltech/disinformation-politics-reporting.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/04/technology/personaltech/disinformation-politics-reporting.html</a>
26/09/2019		Davey Alba y Adam Satariano	At Least 70 Countries Have Had Disinformation Campaigns, Study Finds	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/technology/government-disinformation-cyber-troops.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/technology/government-disinformation-cyber-troops.html</a>
29/09/2019		Davey Alba	Ahead of 2020, Facebook Falls Short on Plan to Share Data on Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/29/technology/facebook-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/29/technology/facebook-disinformation.html</a>
21/10/2019		Mike Isaac	Facebook Finds New Disinformation Campaigns and Braces for 2020 Torrent	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/21/technology/facebook-disinformation-russia-iran.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/21/technology/facebook-disinformation-russia-iran.html</a>
30/10/2019	01/09/2020	Davey Alba y Sheera Frenkel	Russia Tests New Disinformation Tactics in Africa to Expand Influence	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/30/technology/russia-facebook-disinformation-africa.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/30/technology/russia-facebook-disinformation-africa.html</a>
21/11/2019		Nick Corasaniti y Matthew Rosenberg	Campaigns Say Google Ad Policy Sidesteps Problem of Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/us/politics/google-ads-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/21/us/politics/google-ads-disinformation.html</a>
10/12/2019	12/12/2019	Adam Satariano y Anie Tsang	Who's Spreading Disinformation in U.K. Election? You Might Be Surprised	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/10/world/europe/elections-disinformation-social-media.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/10/world/europe/elections-disinformation-social-media.html</a>
15/12/2019		Davey Alba	2020 Campaigns Throw Their Hands Up on Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/15/technology/2020-campaigns-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/15/technology/2020-campaigns-disinformation.html</a>
20/12/2019		Davey Alba	Facebook Discovers Fakes That Show Evolution of Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/business/facebook-ai-generated-profiles.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/business/facebook-ai-generated-profiles.html</a>
06/01/2020		Raymond Zhong	Akash in Disinformation Before Vote, Taiwan Points Finger at China	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/06/technology/taiwan-election-china-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/06/technology/taiwan-election-china-disinformation.html</a>

Table IV

Increases picked up by *Google Trends* in March and April 2020 were probably linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, *nytimes.com* launched three stories with “disinformation” headlines in these two months, addressing the new coronavirus in relation to Russia, China and the European Union —incidentally, with a significant geopolitical focus— (table V).

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «disinformation» en el titular (1 de marzo de 2020 - 30 de abril de 2020)				
Fecha de publicación	Fecha de actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
28/03/2020	06/10/2020	Julian E. Barnes, Matthew Rosenberg y Edward Wong	As Virus Spreads, China and Russia See Openings for Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/28/us/politics/china-russia-coronavirus-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/28/us/politics/china-russia-coronavirus-disinformation.html</a>
24/04/2020	06/01/2021	Matt Apuzzo	Pressured by China, E.U. Softens Report on Covid-19 Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/24/world/europe/disinformation-china-eu-coronavirus.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/24/world/europe/disinformation-china-eu-coronavirus.html</a>
30/04/2020		Matt Apuzzo	Top E.U. Diplomat Says Disinformation Report Was Not Watered Down for China	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/30/world/europe/coronavirus-china-eu-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/30/world/europe/coronavirus-china-eu-disinformation.html</a>

Table V

For its part, the October 2020 peak could be linked to the November presidential election. In the video *How Homegrown Disinformation Could Disrupt This U.S. Election*, the newspaper examined the potential and detrimental influence of disinformation in the US electoral arena (table VI).

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «disinformation» en el titular (octubre de 2020)				
Fecha de publicación	Fecha de actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
13/10/2020		Emily Bazelon	Free Speech Will Save Our Democracy: The First Amendment in the age of disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/13/magazine/free-speech.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/13/magazine/free-speech.html</a>
15/10/2020	20/01/2021	Julian E. Barnes, Eric Schmitt y Maggie Haberman	Trump Said to Be Warned That Giuliani Was Conveying Russian Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/15/us/politics/giuliani-russian-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/15/us/politics/giuliani-russian-disinformation.html</a>
16/10/2020		Julian E. Barnes	Trump is said to have been warned that Giuliani was conveying Russian disinformation.	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/16/us/elections/trump-is-said-to-have-been-warned-that-giuliani-was-conveying-russian-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/16/us/elections/trump-is-said-to-have-been-warned-that-giuliani-was-conveying-russian-disinformation.html</a>
25/10/2020		Isabelle Niu, Kassie Bracken, Alexandra Eaton, Will Lloyd, Yousur Al-Hlou y Aaron Byrd	How Homegrown Disinformation Could Disrupt This U.S. Election	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/video/stressed-election">https://www.nytimes.com/video/stressed-election</a>
25/10/2020		Isabelle Niu, Kassie Bracken y Alexandra Eaton	Russia Created an Election Disinformation Playbook. Here's How Americans Evolved It.	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/25/video/russia-us-election-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/25/video/russia-us-election-disinformation.html</a>
28/10/2020	30/06/2021	Cade Metz	Disinformation Moves From Social Networks to Texts	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/28/technology/disinformation-moves-from-social-networks-to-texts.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/28/technology/disinformation-moves-from-social-networks-to-texts.html</a>
29/10/2020		Cade Metz	Twitter Bots Poised to Spread Disinformation Before Election	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/29/technology/twitter-bots-poised-to-spread-disinformation-before-election.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/29/technology/twitter-bots-poised-to-spread-disinformation-before-election.html</a>

Table VI

In February and March 2022, *Google Trends* records a rise in interest in the search term “disinformation”, more pronounced worldwide than in the US; probably a consequence of the Russia-Ukraine war. Sanctions, such as those imposed on *RT (Russia Today)* and *Sputnik* by *Council Regulation (EU) 2022/350 of 1 March 2022 amending Regulation (EU)<sup>No</sup> 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine*, among other measures, should be taken into account.

In March of that year Russia also made claims of a military-biological programme in Ukraine funded by the US Department of Defence. (MFA Russia, 2022). In response, UN High Representative for Disarmament, Izumi Nakamitsu, informed the Security Council that she was not aware of the existence of biological weapons laboratories in Ukraine (Noticias ONU, 2022). *EU vs DISINFORMATION<sup>i</sup>* denied some reports

<sup>i</sup> *EU vs DISINFORMATION*, also known as *EU vs Disinfo* or *EUvsDisinfo*, was established in 2015. It describes itself as “the flagship project of the European External Action Service's East StratCom

on the subject, e.g. in *Disinfo: US bio laboratories were involved in creating coronavirus* (EUvsDisinfo, 2022). Table VII shows *nytimes.com* headlines with “disinformation” in the headline during these two months.

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «disinformación» en el titular (1 de febrero de 2022 - 31 de marzo de 2022)			
Fecha de publicación	Autor	Titular	Enlace
01/02/2022	Greg Bensinger	Spotify Backs Joe Rogan's Disinformation Machine	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/01/opinion/spotify-joe-rogan-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/01/opinion/spotify-joe-rogan-disinformation.html</a>
14/02/2022	Jay Caspian Kang	Can We Get Smarter About Disinformation?	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/14/opinion/disinformation-rogan-covid.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/14/opinion/disinformation-rogan-covid.html</a>
02/03/2022	Farhad Manjoo	Putin No Longer Seems Like a Master of Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/opinion/putin-disinformation-social-media.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/opinion/putin-disinformation-social-media.html</a>
07/03/2022	Jay Caspian Kang	Fighting Disinformation Can Feel Like a Lost Cause. It Isn't.	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/07/opinion/fighting-disinformation-education.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/07/opinion/fighting-disinformation-education.html</a>
10/03/2022	Edward Wong	U.S. Fights Bioweapons Disinformation Pushed by Russia and China	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/10/us/politics/russia-ukraine-china-bioweapons.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/10/us/politics/russia-ukraine-china-bioweapons.html</a>
18/03/2022	Jack Nicas	Brazil Blocks Telegram Over Disinformation Concerns	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/18/world/americas/brazil-bans-telegram.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/18/world/americas/brazil-bans-telegram.html</a>

Table VII

Most striking, however, is sharp peak in May 2022, both globally and in the US, likely linked to the *Disinformation Governance Board* (DGB). Announced by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on 27 April (Betz, 2022), it was confirmed the same day by *POLITICO* (Daniels, Bade y Lizza, 2022) and Nina Jankowicz, who would head it as executive director (Jankowicz, 2022a).

In a “fact sheet”, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) explained its role:

“The Department is deeply committed to doing all of its work in a way that protects Americans’ freedom of speech, civil rights, civil liberties, and privacy. In fact, the Disinformation Governance Board is an internal working group that was established with the explicit goal of ensuring these protections are appropriately incorporated across DHS’s disinformation-related work and that rigorous safeguards are in place. The working group also seeks to coordinate the Department’s engagements on this subject with other federal agencies and a diverse range of external stakeholders. The working group does not have any operational authority or capability” (Homeland Security, 2022a).

Criticism, however, mounted. Since May 2022, no fewer than 16 bills have been introduced to end the DGB, prohibit the use of federal funds to finance it, or prevent the Department of Homeland Security from investing in another such entity (Congress.gov, sin fecha). Although all initiatives are at an early legislative stage, they are a sign of the debate that has been stirred up (table VIII).

On 18 May, Jankowicz (2022b) resigned as executive director because the DGB was put on “pause”. On 24 August, almost four months after its announcement, the Department of Homeland Security, following the recommendation of the Homeland

Task Force”. It aims to “increase public awareness and understanding of the Kremlin’s disinformation operations, and to help citizens in Europe and beyond develop resistance to digital information and media manipulation” (EUvsDisinfo, sin fecha). The special report *Disinformation affecting the EU: tackled but not tamed*, while stating that *EUvsDisinfo* had “been instrumental in raising awareness about Russian disinformation”, raised that its integration within the European External Action Service raised “some questions about its independence and ultimate purpose, as it could be perceived as representing the EU’s official position” (Tribunal de Cuentas Europeo, 2021, p. 5).

Proyectos de ley («bills») que mencionan al Desinformation Governance Board							
Congreso	Identificación del proyecto	Título del proyecto	Título corto del proyecto	Promotor del proyecto	Fecha de introducción en el Senado/Cámara de Representantes	Estado del proyecto	Enlace
117th Congress (2021-2022)	S.4124	To prohibit the use of Federal funds for the Desinformation Governance Board of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes		Sen. Cotton, Tom [R-AR]	02/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4124">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4124</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	H.R.7641	To terminate the Desinformation Governance Board of the Department of Homeland Security and to prohibit the use of Federal funds to establish any other similar Board, and for other purposes	Protecting Free Speech Act	Rep. Boebert, Lauren [R-CO-3]	03/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7641">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7641</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	H.R.7648	To prohibit the use of Federal funds to establish a Desinformation Governance Board		Rep. Johnson, Mike [R-LA-4]	03/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7648">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7648</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	H.R.7659	To prohibit the use of Federal funds to establish a Desinformation Governance Board		Rep. Pfluger, August [R-TX-11]	03/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7659">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7659</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	S.4135	To dissolve the Department of Homeland Security Desinformation Governance Board, and for other purposes	Dissolving the Desinformation Governance Board Act	Sen. Hawley, Josh [R-MO]	04/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4135">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4135</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	S.4164	To prohibit the expenditure of Federal funds for the establishment or operation of the Desinformation Governance Board in the Department of Homeland Security	Defund the Ministry of Truth Act of 2022	Sen. Paul, Rand [R-KY]	09/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4164">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4164</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	H.R.7690	To prohibit the use of Federal funds to establish or carry out the activities of a Desinformation Governance Board of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes		Rep. McCarthy, Kevin [R-CA-23]	10/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7690">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/7690</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	S.4191	To prohibit the expenditure of Federal funds for the establishment or operation of the Desinformation Governance Board in the Department of Homeland Security	Defund the Ministry of Truth Act of 2022	Sen. Paul, Rand [R-KY]	11/05/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4191">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/senate-bill/4191</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	H.R.8528	To promote election integrity, voter confidence, and faith in elections by removing Federal impediments to, providing State tools for, and establishing voluntary considerations to support effective State administration of Federal elections, improving election administration in the District of Columbia, improving the effectiveness of military voting programs, and protecting political speech, and for other purposes	American Confidence in Elections Act o ACE Act	Rep. Davis, Rodney [R-IL-13]	27/07/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/8528">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/8528</a>
117th Congress (2021-2022)	H.R.9448	To prohibit the Federal Government from taking certain action relating to social media companies, and for other purposes	Free Speech Defense Act	Rep. Clyde, Andrew S. [R-GA-9]	07/12/2022	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/9448">https://www.congress.gov/bills/117th-congress/house-bill/9448</a>
118th Congress (2023-2024)	H.R.4367	Making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes		Rep. Joyce, David P. [R-OH-14]	27/06/2023	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4367">https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4367</a>
118th Congress (2023-2024)	H.R.4514	To terminate the Desinformation Governance Board of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes	Desinformation Governance Board Prohibition Act	Rep. Bice, Stephanie L. [R-OK-5]	10/07/2023	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4514">https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4514</a>
118th Congress (2023-2024)	H.R.4563	To promote election integrity, voter confidence, and faith in elections by removing Federal impediments to, equipping States with tools for, and establishing voluntary considerations to support effective State administration of Federal elections, improving election administration in the District of Columbia, improving the effectiveness of military voting programs, enhancing election security, and protecting political speech, and for other purposes	American Confidence in Elections Act o ACE Act	Rep. Steil, Bryan [R-WI-1]	11/07/2023	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4563">https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4563</a>
118th Congress (2023-2024)	H.R.4776	To terminate the Desinformation Governance Board of the Department of Homeland Security and to prohibit the use of Federal funds to establish any other similar Board, and for other purposes	Protecting Free Speech Act	Rep. Boebert, Lauren [R-CO-3]	20/07/2023	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4776">https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4776</a>
118th Congress (2023-2024)	H.R.4791	To prohibit Federal employees and contractors from directing online platforms to censor any speech that is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes	Free Speech Protection Act	Rep. Jordan, Jim [R-OH-4]	20/07/2023	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4791">https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4791</a>
118th Congress (2023-2024)	S.2425	To prohibit Federal employees and contractors from directing online platforms to censor any speech that is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes	Free Speech Protection Act	Sen. Paul, Rand [R-KY]	20/07/2023	Introduced	<a href="https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/senate-bill/2425">https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/senate-bill/2425</a>

Table VIII

Security Advisory Council (HSAC), terminated the *Desinformation Governance Board* (Homeland Security, 2022b).

From 1 April to 31 August 2022 —the period between the announcement and the closure of the DGB— *nytimes.com* published at least eleven news items with

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «desinformación» en el titular (1 de abril de 2022 - 31 de agosto de 2022)				
Fecha de publicación	Fecha de actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
15/04/2022		Simon Ostrovsky y Emily Rhyne	Journey to Transnistria: Inside Russia's Desinformation Bubble	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/100000008272335/russia-desinformation-moldova.html">https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/100000008272335/russia-desinformation-moldova.html</a>
15/04/2022		Simon Ostrovsky y Emily Rhyne	How Russian desinformation spreads beyond its borders.	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/15/world/europe/russia-desinformation-transnistria.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/15/world/europe/russia-desinformation-transnistria.html</a>
20/04/2022		Steven Lee Myers y Cecilia Kang	Barack Obama Takes On a New Role: Fighting Desinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/20/technology/barack-obama-desinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/20/technology/barack-obama-desinformation.html</a>
21/04/2022		Neil MacFarquhar y Alina Lobzina	With sunken warship, Russian desinformation faces a test.	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/21/world/europe/russia-moskva-warship-desinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/21/world/europe/russia-moskva-warship-desinformation.html</a>
02/05/2022		Steven Lee Myers y Zolan Kanno-Youngs	Partisan Fight Breaks Out Over New Desinformation Board	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/02/technology/partisan-dhs-desinformation-board.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/02/technology/partisan-dhs-desinformation-board.html</a>
18/05/2022		Steven Lee Myers	A Panel to Combat Desinformation Becomes a Victim of It	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/18/technology/desinformation-governance-board.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/18/technology/desinformation-governance-board.html</a>
09/06/2022		Richard Stengel	Misdirection, Fake News and Lies: The Best Books to Read on Desinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/09/books/books-desinformation-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/09/books/books-desinformation-fake-news.html</a>
14/06/2022		Steven Lee Myers	Deceptive Mailings, False Billboards: Voting Desinformation Is Not Just Online	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/business/voting-desinformation-billboards.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/business/voting-desinformation-billboards.html</a>
06/07/2022		Steven Lee Myers y Eileen Sullivan	Desinformation Has Become Another Untouchable Problem in Washington	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/business/desinformation-board-dc.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/business/desinformation-board-dc.html</a>
08/08/2022		Elizabeth Williamson	The Alex Jones Verdict and the Fight Against Desinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/08/podcasts/the-daily/alex-jones-sandy-hook-defamation-damages.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/08/podcasts/the-daily/alex-jones-sandy-hook-defamation-damages.html</a>
26/08/2022	01/09/2022	Natasha Frost	The Long Tail of Covid-19 Desinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/26/world/australia/covid-desinformation-australia-new-zealand.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/26/world/australia/covid-desinformation-australia-new-zealand.html</a>

Table IX

“disinformation” in the headline. Three dealt with this internal working group: *Partisan Fight Breaks Out Over New Disinformation Board, A Panel to Combat Disinformation Becomes a Victim of It* and *Disinformation Has Become Another Untouchable Problem in Washington* (table IX).

The rise in popularity of the keyword “disinformation” in October and November 2022 may have been influenced by the 12 October conviction of Alex Jones. According to this, the owner of *Infowars* would have to pay USD 965 million “in damages to numerous families of victims of the 2012 Sandy Hook mass shooting for falsely claiming that they were actors who faked the tragedy” (Queen y Thomsen, 2022). It may also have been due to the *Law on the Amendment of the Press Law and Some Other Laws* being passed in Türkiye on 13 October, which stipulates the following:

“Public dissemination of misleading information

ARTICLE 217/A- (1) Any person who publicly disseminates false information about the country’s domestic and foreign security, public order and general health, with the sole aim of creating anxiety, fear or panic among the public, shall be punished by one to three years of imprisonment.” (Resmî Gazete, 2022).

Similarly, the rise may have been linked to Elon Musk’s acquisition of Twitter. On 23 November, the platform discontinued the COVID-19 misleading information policy (Twitter, 2022).

In the interest of offering a comprehensive and current approach, table X shows *nytimes.com* content with “disinformation” in the title from September 2022 to July 2023. The topic was discussed at length, considering its political influence, technological interaction, implication for freedom of expression, international scope and social impact.

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «disinformation» en el titular (1 de septiembre de 2022 - 31 de julio de 2023)				
Fecha de publicación	Fecha de actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
20/10/2022		Steven Lee Myers y Sheera Frenkel	How Disinformation Splintered and Became More Intractable	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/20/technology/disinformation-spread.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/20/technology/disinformation-spread.html</a>
31/10/2022	09/11/2022	Steven Lee Myers	Letters, Tweets, TV: How Midterm Disinformation Has Washed Over Pennsylvania	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/31/technology/midterm-disinformation-pennsylvania.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/31/technology/midterm-disinformation-pennsylvania.html</a>
07/02/2023		Adam Satariano y Paul Mozur	The People Onscreen Are Fake. The Disinformation Is Real.	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/07/technology/artificial-intelligence-training-deepfake.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/07/technology/artificial-intelligence-training-deepfake.html</a>
08/02/2023	20/06/2023	Tiffany Hsu y Stuart A. Thompson	Disinformation Researchers Raise Alarms About A.I. Chatbots	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/08/technology/ai-chatbots-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/08/technology/ai-chatbots-disinformation.html</a>
09/02/2023		Steven Lee Myers	Free Speech vs. Disinformation Comes to a Head	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/09/business/free-speech-social-media-lawsuit.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/09/business/free-speech-social-media-lawsuit.html</a>
14/02/2023		Steven Lee Myers y Nico Grant	Combating Disinformation Wanes at Social Media Giants	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/14/technology/disinformation-moderation-social-media.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/14/technology/disinformation-moderation-social-media.html</a>
11/03/2023		Jamelle Bouie	Disinformation Is Not the Real Problem With Democracy	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/11/opinion/local-media-newspapers-democracy.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/11/opinion/local-media-newspapers-democracy.html</a>
05/04/2023	07/04/2023	Farnaz Fassihi	'Outrageous': Russia Accused of Spreading Disinformation at U.N. Event	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/05/world/europe/russia-un-security-council.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/05/world/europe/russia-un-security-council.html</a>
07/04/2023	10/04/2023	Michael Schwartz, Ivan Nechepurenko, Helene Cooper, Eric Schmitt, Matthew Mpoke Bigg, Thomas Gibbons-Neff y Natalia Yermak	The Latest: War in Ukraine: Leak of War Plans Could Be Disinformation, Ukrainians and Russians Say	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/04/07/world/russia-ukraine-news">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/04/07/world/russia-ukraine-news</a>
04/06/2023		Benjamin Cohen	Einstein and a Theory of Disinformation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/04/opinion/einstein-disinformation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/04/opinion/einstein-disinformation.html</a>
19/06/2023		Steven Lee Myers y Sheera Frenkel	G.O.P. Targets Researchers Who Study Disinformation Ahead of 2024 Election	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/19/technology/gop-disinformation-researchers-2024-election.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/19/technology/gop-disinformation-researchers-2024-election.html</a>
05/07/2023		Michael D. Shear y David McCabe	Ruling Puts Social Media at Crossroads of Disinformation and Free Speech	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/05/us/politics/social-media-ruling-government.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/05/us/politics/social-media-ruling-government.html</a>
05/07/2023		Tiffany Hsu y Stuart A. Thompson	Disinformation Researchers Fret About Fallout From Judge's Order	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/05/business/media/disinformation-researchers-judge-restrictions.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/05/business/media/disinformation-researchers-judge-restrictions.html</a>

Table X

In conclusion, “disinformation” is a term that first generated substantial interest in December 2016, probably because of controversies surrounding the US presidential election. Popularity resurfaced in spring 2020, when the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in October of the same year, in the run up to the US presidential election. In 2022, the term became attractive coinciding with the war in Ukraine. What is most striking, however, is the explosive growth in April and May of that year, almost certainly due to the *Disinformation Governance Board* and the controversy that ensued.

Regarding *nytimes.com* headlines, the links between disinformation, Russia and China, as well as the role of the main digital platforms, were particularly commented. It must be said that these internet giants have taken various measures. For example, to stop “influence operations”, Meta acts against what it calls “coordinated inauthentic behaviour” (Gleicher, 2018). The Twitter Moderation Research Consortium provides data on “information operations” (Twitter, 2023).

### 3.2. Analysis of the keyword “disinformation”.

In *Google Trends*, the term “disinformation” with the options “Spain”, “1/1/2011-31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search”, returns graph 3. The time period starts in 2011 because otherwise peaks appear in the 2000s that are difficult to explain. On 1 January 2011, Google implemented an improvement to the geo-assignment system; therefore, that year was determined as the initial year.



Graph 3

Throughout the 2010s there have been several increases in interest, but it is difficult to link them to specific events. The rise in March 2020 was almost certainly a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, in mid-April, the General Staff of the Guardia Civil asked of the commands the “identification, study and monitoring in relation to the situation created by Covid-19 of disinformation campaigns, as well as publications denying hoaxes and fake news likely to generate

social stress and disaffection towards government institutions” (Lázaro, 2020b). Table XI shows headlines for those two months at the start of the pandemic.

Piezas publicadas por <i>elmundo.es</i> con la palabra clave «desinformación» en el titular (1 de marzo de 2020 - 30 de abril de 2020)			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor	Titular	Enlace
07/03/2020	María Dolores de Cospedal	La libertad de expresión y la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/yodona/festyle/2020/03/07/5e5b5bdf-6c36d38b-4569.html">https://www.elmundo.es/yodona/festyle/2020/03/07/5e5b5bdf-6c36d38b-4569.html</a>
14/03/2020	María Paz García Vera	Ser un héroe de a pie en el estado de alarma: compromiso, responsabilidad y ojo crítico con la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/03/14/5e6bec56f6c39a2a8b4663.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/03/14/5e6bec56f6c39a2a8b4663.html</a>
21/04/2020	Vicente Lozano	Estrategia de desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2020/04/21/5e9da05721efa0d956b8b4626.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2020/04/21/5e9da05721efa0d956b8b4626.html</a>
23/04/2020	Fernando Lázaro	Maraska: "Los bulos y la desinformación son los grandes aliados de esta enfermedad"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/04/23/5ea1795069d98128b4586.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/04/23/5ea1795069d98128b4586.html</a>

Table XI

Similarly, the November 2020 peak was likely linked to *Order PCM/1030/2020*. It prompted at least three columns in *elmundo.es*, along with criticism from Rafael de Mendizábal, then president of the Commission for Arbitration, Complaints and Ethics in Journalism (table XII).

Piezas publicadas por <i>elmundo.es</i> con la palabra clave «desinformación» en el titular (noviembre de 2020)			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
04/11/2020	Ángel Díaz	El invierno será duro. Con la desinformación que hay en las redes, aún más	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/ciencia-y-salud/salud/2020/11/03/5fa1be0d21efa0181c8b466b.html">https://www.elmundo.es/ciencia-y-salud/salud/2020/11/03/5fa1be0d21efa0181c8b466b.html</a>
05/11/2020	Raúl Piña	Un comité de Moncloa vigilará a los medios y perseguirá lo que considere "desinformación"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/05/5fa3c9521efa0d960b458f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/05/5fa3c9521efa0d960b458f.html</a>
05/11/2020	David Sanz Ezquerro	Los editores de prensa alertan: el plan contra la desinformación podría vulnerar la Constitución	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2020/11/05/5fa3e546dd9d208b4608.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2020/11/05/5fa3e546dd9d208b4608.html</a>
05/11/2020	Raúl Piña	Moncloa quiere ahora despolitizar su comité contra la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/05/5fa5ade35d9f863c8b4660.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/05/5fa5ade35d9f863c8b4660.html</a>
05/11/2020	Raúl Piña y Pablo R. Suanzes	Así es la batalla en contra de la desinformación: Europa pide órganos independientes y los países regulan poco	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/05/5fa5981721efa08f168b4667.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/05/5fa5981721efa08f168b4667.html</a>
06/11/2020	Federico Jiménez Losantos	Desinformación, dicen	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2020/11/06/5fa44c9f6c683125e8b45fd.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2020/11/06/5fa44c9f6c683125e8b45fd.html</a>
07/11/2020	Manuel Arias Maldonado	Desinformación y democracia	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2020/11/07/5fa5373521efa06a1c8b456f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2020/11/07/5fa5373521efa06a1c8b456f.html</a>
07/11/2020	José Ignacio Torreblanca	Desinformación desinformada	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2020/11/07/5fa646fa9d9dfbc8b4669.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2020/11/07/5fa646fa9d9dfbc8b4669.html</a>
08/11/2020	David Sanz Ezquerro	Rafael de Mendizábal: "La orden ministerial sobre la desinformación debe ser recurrida y anulada por el Constitucional"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/08/5fa59aa1f6c83c7518b460b.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/08/5fa59aa1f6c83c7518b460b.html</a>
12/11/2020	Pablo Herranz	100 expertos piden a España y otros 70 países luchar contra la desinformación de las redes sociales	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/2020/11/12/5fac771221efa099518b45d7.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/2020/11/12/5fac771221efa099518b45d7.html</a>
13/11/2020	Pablo Herranz	Marieje Schaaak: "Aún es demasiado pronto para saber si ha habido desinformación en las elecciones de EEUU"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/2020/11/13/5fac825721efa0f048b4639.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/2020/11/13/5fac825721efa0f048b4639.html</a>

Table XII

*Order PCM/1030/2020* designates a “structure” for the “fight against disinformation” composed of the National Security Council, Situation Committee, State Secretariat for Communication, Permanent Commission against Disinformation, competent public authorities, as well as the private sector and civil society.

However, the Permanent Commission against Disinformation, as an inter-ministerial working group, was created in March 2019 (Consejo de Ministros, 2019), coordinated by the State Secretariat for Communication (La Moncloa, 2019). All this on the basis of the *Disinformation Action Procedure*, which responded “to the requirements set out in the Action Plan against disinformation adopted by the European Union in December 2018” (Sala de Prensa - DSN, 2019). Initially, this Permanent Commission was announced as “the link with Europe”, assuring that it would place “special emphasis on the reputational element of Spain linked to the territorial crisis in Catalonia and the upcoming electoral processes” (Consejo de Ministros, 2019).

It should be noted that Supreme Court ruling 3798/2021 specified:

“That with rejection of the ground of inadmissibility invoked by the State Attorney’s Office, the contentious-administrative appeal filed by the representation of CONFILLEGAL EDITORIAL, SL against the Procedure for

Action against disinformation, approved on 6 October 2020 by the National Security Council, published by Order PCM/I030/2020, is dismissed, and we must declare and declare that it is in accordance with the Law, confirming it” (Tribunal Supremo. Sala de lo Contencioso, 2021, p. II).

Moving on, the *National Security Strategy 2021* document published on 4 November of the same year —although approved by *Royal Decree 1150/2021 of 28 December*— included “disinformation campaigns” as “risks and threats” (Consejo de Seguridad Nacional, 2021, p. 60).

The March 2022 peak, visible in graph 3, was probably due to the Russia-Ukraine war. Compare with the headlines in table XIII.

Piezas publicadas por elmundo.es con la palabra clave «desinformación» en el titular (marzo de 2022)			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
08/03/2022	EFE	Josep Borrell promete medidas para sancionar a “actores de desinformación maligna”	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2022/03/08/62278998e4d4d8590b6b459a.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2022/03/08/62278998e4d4d8590b6b459a.html</a>
08/03/2022	EL MUNDO - COPRODUCCIÓN	Discurso íntegro de Borrell sobre la desinformación de Rusia y sus peligros en el Parlamento Europeo	<a href="https://videos.elmundo.es/vv/OhXRCx64fg-discurso-integro-de-borrell-sobre-la-desinformacion-de-rusia-y-sus-peligros-en-el-parlamento-europeo">https://videos.elmundo.es/vv/OhXRCx64fg-discurso-integro-de-borrell-sobre-la-desinformacion-de-rusia-y-sus-peligros-en-el-parlamento-europeo</a>
16/03/2022	Editorial	Combatir la desinformación en Rusia es clave	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/editorial/2022/03/16/6230c986fc6c329768b45cf.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/editorial/2022/03/16/6230c986fc6c329768b45cf.html</a>

Table XIII

Throughout 2023, up to July, geopolitical factors such as tension between Russia and the European Union; technological advances, such as artificial intelligence (AI); platform changes, such as Twitter’s policies following its acquisition by Elon Musk; and the settlement whereby Fox agreed to pay \$787.5 million to Dominion Voting Systems to avoid a defamation lawsuit played a notable role, as seen in Table XIV.

Piezas publicadas por elmundo.es con la palabra clave «desinformación» en el titular (1 de enero de 2023 - 31 de julio de 2023)			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
31/01/2023	Javier Zarzaleros	Cuestiones postjudiciales: la Justicia contra la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2023/01/31/63d8e4e366d8f1b9a8b45be.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2023/01/31/63d8e4e366d8f1b9a8b45be.html</a>
10/02/2023	EFE	Los marmolistas también señalan a Cosentino y dicen que hubo una “total desinformación”	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2023/02/10/63e88afe4d4d82e438b45c0.html">https://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2023/02/10/63e88afe4d4d82e438b45c0.html</a>
17/03/2023	Marín Palomino y Felipe Díaz de Vivar	La desinformación como forma de deterioro de la democracia	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/03/17/64143735e454e8b7c8b45de.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/03/17/64143735e454e8b7c8b45de.html</a>
05/04/2023	Clara Gª Sillero, Isabella Carril, Tobias Browne y Miguel Triviño	Tecnología, instituciones, planes estratégicos y castigo a las fake news: estas son las herramientas de la UE contra la poveridad y la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/04/05/642b4c321efa0fe408b45ba.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/04/05/642b4c321efa0fe408b45ba.html</a>
21/04/2023	AGENCIAS	FAPE y DIRCOM se alían frente a la desinformación durante los procesos electorales	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/04/21/64428b15e454e879538b4588.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/04/21/64428b15e454e879538b4588.html</a>
03/05/2023	Raquel Vilaicija	El avance de la desinformación y la inteligencia artificial amenazan la libertad de prensa en todo el mundo	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2023/05/03/64521edde4d4d87c2a8b4595.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2023/05/03/64521edde4d4d87c2a8b4595.html</a>
18/05/2023	Victor de la Serna	No sólo los motores de búsqueda: las plataformas también promueven la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/firmas/2023/05/17/6464c276e4d4d8d15dbb45a9.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/firmas/2023/05/17/6464c276e4d4d8d15dbb45a9.html</a>
27/05/2023	AP	Twitter se retira del acuerdo de la UE contra la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/tecnologia/2023/05/27/6471d92621efa0b73cb457c.html">https://www.elmundo.es/tecnologia/2023/05/27/6471d92621efa0b73cb457c.html</a>
28/05/2023	Raúl Piña y Gema Peñalosa	Blindaje contra la desinformación en las elecciones con el contexto más “peligroso” de la democracia	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-autonomicas/2023/05/28/647200b1e4d4d8a84f8b45b4.html">https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-autonomicas/2023/05/28/647200b1e4d4d8a84f8b45b4.html</a>
08/06/2023	Victor de la Serna	Murdock y el millonario precio de la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/firmas/2023/04/19/643f8a321efa044618b45c0.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/firmas/2023/04/19/643f8a321efa044618b45c0.html</a>
08/06/2023	Victor de la Serna	La desinformación no esperó a la inteligencia artificial	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/firmas/2023/04/06/6422ce521efa0f368b45b0.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/firmas/2023/04/06/6422ce521efa0f368b45b0.html</a>
16/06/2023	HELPMY CASH	Honorarios excesivos y desinformación: ¿cómo evitar los engaños más comunes de las inmobiliarias?	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/economia/ahorro-y-consumo/2023/06/16/6485a57ee4d4d91a708b4595.html">https://www.elmundo.es/economia/ahorro-y-consumo/2023/06/16/6485a57ee4d4d91a708b4595.html</a>
06/07/2023	Federico Jiménez Losantos	La desinformación médica sobre Francia	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2023/07/06/64a6fc3be85ec64228b4579.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2023/07/06/64a6fc3be85ec64228b4579.html</a>
21/07/2023	Malte Pagazaurtundia	Desinformación: el arma rusa contra la UE	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/la-lectura/2023/07/21/64b915468dd8f0c8b456f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/la-lectura/2023/07/21/64b915468dd8f0c8b456f.html</a>

Table XIV

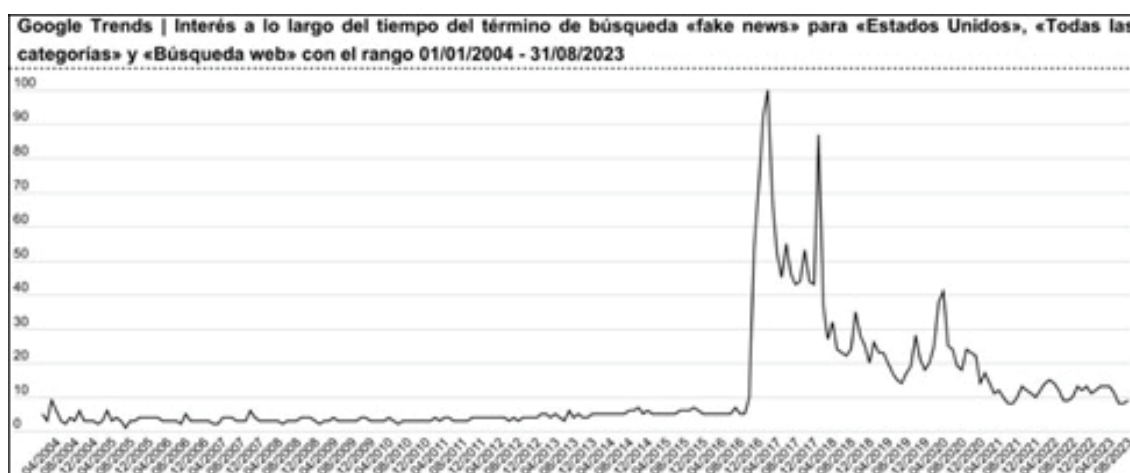
In summary, interest in “disinformation” in Spain increased significantly in March and April 2020, reaching its peak in November with the publication of *Order PCM/I030/2020*. It is striking that in March 2019 there was no significant spike in the popularity of the term when the Permanent Commission against Disinformation was announced. Perhaps the pandemic climate that marked the beginning of the new decade contributed to greater tension in the face of such initiatives. Subsequently, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine almost certainly triggered another upward trend in March 2022.

### 3.3. Analysis of the keyword “fake news”

In *Google Trends*, the search term “fake news” with the options “Worldwide”, “1/1/04 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search” returns graph 4. If the regional filter is set to “United States” we get graph 5.



Graph 4



Graph 5

The focus on fake news clearly began in November 2016, coinciding with the US presidential election and since then, it has never fully faded away. The latter is probably helped by the fact that it is a widely used term, even by non-English speakers.

Graphs 4 and 5 show several high points. The first, in February 2017, was due to the strong inertia that this keyword had been carrying over since November 2016. That autumn month, *The New York Times* launched the editorial *Facebook and the Digital Virus Called Fake News*, claiming that “liars and con artists” had taken over the platform (The Editorial Board, 2016). This initial surge of interest in the term surely contributed to events such as on 11 January 2017, when President-elect Donald Trump told *CNN* reporter Jim Acosta, “You’re fake news” (CNN, 2017).

Analysis of headlines on *nytimes.com* from November 2016 and February 2017 (tables XV and XVI) shows that the newspaper approached this issue from several angles. Among others, its influence on politics and elections; the response of tech giants such as Facebook and Google; global repercussions; examining the “pizzagate” conspiracy theory; and picking up on then Donald Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway’s allusion to the “Bowling Green massacre”.

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «fake news» en el titular (noviembre de 2016)				
Fecha de publicación	Fecha de actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
06/11/2016		Jim Rutenberg	Media's Next Challenge: Overcoming the Threat of Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/07/business/media/médias-next-challenge-overcoming-the-threat-of-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/07/business/media/médias-next-challenge-overcoming-the-threat-of-fake-news.html</a>
08/11/2016		Katie Rogers y Jonah Engel Bromwich	The Hoaxes, Fake News and Misinformation We Saw on Election Day	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/08/us/politics/debunk-fake-news-election-day.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/08/us/politics/debunk-fake-news-election-day.html</a>
14/11/2016		Nick Wingfield, Mike Isaac y Kate Benner	Google and Facebook Take Aim at Fake News Sites	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/technology/google-will-ban-websites-that-host-fake-news-from-using-its-ad-service.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/technology/google-will-ban-websites-that-host-fake-news-from-using-its-ad-service.html</a>
17/11/2016		Paul Mozur y Mark Scott	Fake News in U.S. Election? Elsewhere, That's Nothing New	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/technology/fake-news-on-facebook-in-foreign-elections-thats-not-new.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/technology/fake-news-on-facebook-in-foreign-elections-thats-not-new.html</a>
17/11/2016		Gardiner Harris y Melissa Eddy	Obama, With Angela Merkel in Berlin, Assails Spread of Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/world/europe/obama-angela-merkel-donald-trump.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/world/europe/obama-angela-merkel-donald-trump.html</a>
18/11/2016		John Herman	Fixation on Fake News Overshadows Waning Trust in Real Reporting	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/19/business/media/exposing-fake-news-eroding-trust-in-real-reporting.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/19/business/media/exposing-fake-news-eroding-trust-in-real-reporting.html</a>
19/11/2016		Mike Isaac	Facebook Considering Ways to Combat Fake News, Mark Zuckerberg Says	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/facebook-considering-ways-to-combat-fake-news-mark-zuckerberg-says.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/facebook-considering-ways-to-combat-fake-news-mark-zuckerberg-says.html</a>
19/11/2016		The Editorial Board	Facebook and the Digital Virus Called Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/facebook-and-the-digital-virus-called-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/facebook-and-the-digital-virus-called-fake-news.html</a>
20/11/2016		Sapna Maheshwari	How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html</a>
21/11/2016		Cecilia Kang	Fake News Onslaught Targets Pizzeria as Nest of Child-Trafficking	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/technology/fact-check-this-pizzeria-is-not-a-child-trafficking-site.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/technology/fact-check-this-pizzeria-is-not-a-child-trafficking-site.html</a>
22/11/2016		The Opinion Pages - Room for Debate	How to Stop the Spread of Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/11/22/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-fake-news">https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/11/22/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-fake-news</a>
22/11/2016	22/11/2016	Annemarie Dooling	Algorithms Could Help Social Media Users Spot Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/11/22/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-fake-news/algorithms-could-help-social-media-users-spot-fake-news">https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/11/22/how-to-stop-the-spread-of-fake-news/algorithms-could-help-social-media-users-spot-fake-news</a>
22/11/2016		Pui-Wing Tam	Anti-Clinton Fake News Casts Pizzeria as Front for Crime	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/22/technology/anti-clinton-fake-news-casts-pizzeria-as-front-for-crime.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/22/technology/anti-clinton-fake-news-casts-pizzeria-as-front-for-crime.html</a>
23/11/2016		Liz Spayd	Condemning 'Fake News,' but Running Fake-News Ads	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/public-editor/condemning-fake-news-but-running-fake-news-ads.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/public-editor/condemning-fake-news-but-running-fake-news-ads.html</a>
25/11/2016		Andrew Higgins, Mike McIntire y Gabriel J.x. Dance	Inside a Fake News Sausage Factory: 'This Is All About Income'	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/25/world/europe/fake-news-donald-trump-hillary-clinton-georgia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/25/world/europe/fake-news-donald-trump-hillary-clinton-georgia.html</a>
28/11/2016		Michael P. Lynch	Fake News and the Internet Shell Game	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/28/opinion/fake-news-and-the-internet-shell-game.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/28/opinion/fake-news-and-the-internet-shell-game.html</a>

Table XV

Piezas publicadas por <i>nytimes.com</i> con la palabra clave «fake news» en el titular (febrero de 2017)				
Fecha de publicación	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace	
01/02/2017	Joe Coscarelli	Bacon Shortage? Calm Down. It's Fake News.	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/01/business/bacon-shortage.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/01/business/bacon-shortage.html</a>	
05/02/2017	Jim Rutenberg	The Massacre That Wasn't, and a Turning Point for 'Fake News'	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/05/business/the-massacre-that-wasnt-and-a-turning-point-for-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/05/business/the-massacre-that-wasnt-and-a-turning-point-for-fake-news.html</a>	
15/02/2017	Liam Stack	20th Century Fox Used Fake News to Publicize 'A Cure for Wellness'	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/arts/fake-news-a-cure-for-wellness-movie.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/15/arts/fake-news-a-cure-for-wellness-movie.html</a>	
16/02/2017	Andrew Higgins	Fake News, Fake Ukrainians: How a Group of Russians Tilted a Dutch Vote	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/world/europe/russia-ukraine-fake-news-dutch-vote.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/world/europe/russia-ukraine-fake-news-dutch-vote.html</a>	
16/02/2017	Sapna Maheshwari	20th Century Fox Gives Real Apology for a Fake News Campaign	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/business/20th-century-fox-fake-news-ad-campaign.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/business/20th-century-fox-fake-news-ad-campaign.html</a>	
20/02/2017	Mark Scott y Melissa Eddy	Europe Combats a New Foe of Political Stability: Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/20/world/europe/europe-combats-a-new-foe-of-political-stability-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/20/world/europe/europe-combats-a-new-foe-of-political-stability-fake-news.html</a>	
22/02/2017	Neil MacFarquhar	With Big Red Stamp, Russia Singles Out What It Calls 'Fake News'	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/22/world/europe/russia-fake-news-media-foreign-ministry-.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/22/world/europe/russia-fake-news-media-foreign-ministry-.html</a>	
23/02/2017	Musa Okononga	Fake News Meets German Racism	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/23/opinion/fake-news-meets-german-racism.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/23/opinion/fake-news-meets-german-racism.html</a>	
24/02/2017	Linda Qiu	Fact Check: Trump Blasts 'Fake News' and Repeats Inaccurate Claims at CPAC	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/us/politics/fact-check-trump-blasts-fake-news-and-repeats-inaccurate-claims-at-cpac.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/us/politics/fact-check-trump-blasts-fake-news-and-repeats-inaccurate-claims-at-cpac.html</a>	
26/02/2017	Andrew E. Kramer	To Battle Fake News, Ukrainian Show Features Nothing but Lies	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/26/world/europe/ukraine-key-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/26/world/europe/ukraine-key-fake-news.html</a>	

Table XVI

Another peak, especially pronounced in the US, occurred in January 2018, perhaps linked to the “Highly-Anticipated 2017 Fake News Awards”, exposed on the Republican Party’s website (TEAM GOP, 2018). The next significant dates, mainly at global level, were September and October 2018, probably due to the Brazilian general elections on 7 and 28 October (first and second round).

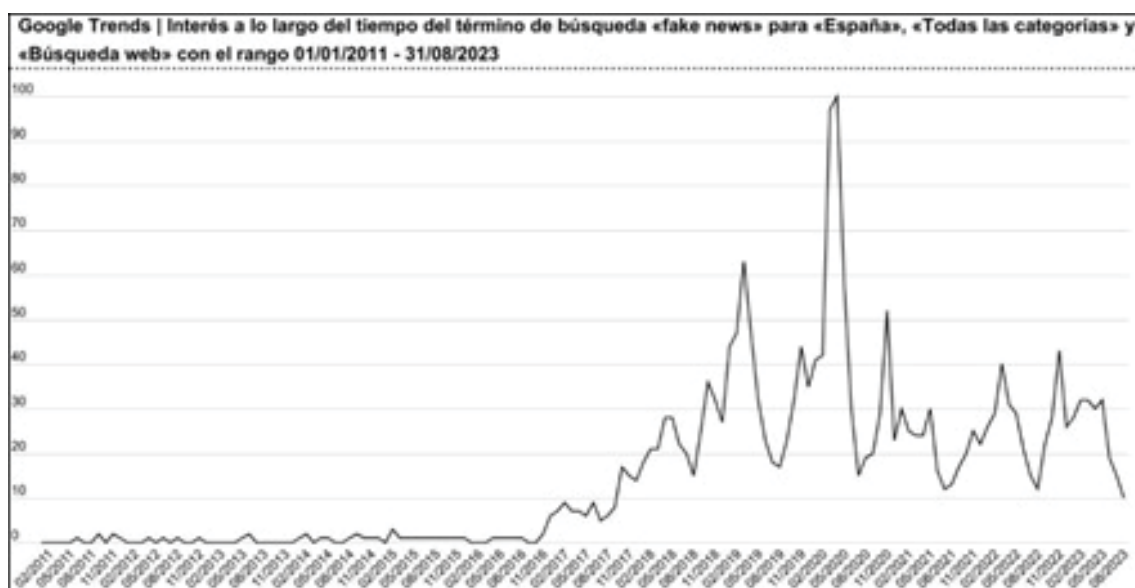
March 2020 also saw a surge in the popularity of “fake news”, especially globally, most likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. By March 2022, it is reasonable to think of a connection to the previously discussed Russian claims of biomilitary facilities in Ukraine, as well as the aftermath of the Russian invasion in general.

Globally, the October 2022 peak could be linked to events already cited, such as Alex Jones being sentenced to pay USD 965 million, the Turkish law on the dissemination

of “misleading information” and “false information”, and Elon Musk’s purchase of Twitter. The May 2023 summit is difficult to correlate with any specific event, although the *Disinformation, fake news and hate speech* conference organised by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME, 2023) may have played a role.

Finally, it is worth noting that the US recorded an increase in September and October 2020, perhaps related to the November presidential election, although interest was much lower than in 2016.

On the other hand, if the search term “fake news” is set in *Google Trends*, with the options “Spain”, “1/1/11 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search”, graph 6 is generated.



Graph 6

Popularity also began in November 2016. There was a peak in October 2017, coinciding with the Catalan independence referendum (known as 1-O), which was suspended as a precautionary measure by the Constitutional Court on 7 September and declared unconstitutional on 17 October. The day after the vote, *english.elpais.com* published the article *There’s fake news in Catalonia too* (Alandete, 2017). A year later, *elmundo.es* published *El referéndum ilegal del 1-O también fue “fake news”* (*The illegal referendum of 1-O was also “fake news”*) (Landaluce, 2018).

The peak in March 2019 may have been due to the proximity of the general election on 28 April. Perhaps the announcement of the Permanent Commission against Disinformation had an influence, although this would be strange as it did not generate interest in the key word “disinformation”.

It seems certain that the peaks in March and April 2020 were the result of the pandemic and its aftermath, and it is possible that Messi’s press coverage of the “fake news” campaign was the reason for his popularity (table XVII). The high point in November 2020 probably had to do with *Order PCM/1030/2020*. A letter to PSOE

militants signed by Pedro Sánchez, the party's secretary general and president of the government, which used the terms “fake news” and “false news” (Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, 2020). It was commented by *elmundo.es* in *Epístola de Pedro a los militantes: el Gobierno, víctima como Trump de las “fake news”* (Pedro's epistle to militants: the Government, victim like Trump of “fake news”) (table XVIII).

Piezas publicadas por <i>elmundo.es</i> con la palabra clave «fake news» en el titular (1 de marzo de 2020 - 30 de abril de 2020)			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor	Titular	Enlace
07/03/2020	Alberto Rojas	'Fake news' como lanzadera de refugiados hacia Europa	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2020/03/07/5e625d3f0dd0ff2188b45e9.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2020/03/07/5e625d3f0dd0ff2188b45e9.html</a>
16/03/2020	Imnael Mannero	Peste negra y 'fake news': la lección que nunca aprendimos	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/2020/03/16/5e6b76cc21efa07c058b4572.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/2020/03/16/5e6b76cc21efa07c058b4572.html</a>
06/04/2020	UE STUDIO	Consejos para no caer en la trampa de las 'fake news'	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/promociones/native/2020/04/06/">https://www.elmundo.es/promociones/native/2020/04/06/</a>
09/04/2020	EL MUNDO	Messi estalla contra las 'fake news': "Menos mal que nadie les cree"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/deportes/futbol/primeradivision/2020/04/09/5e8f96621efa062568b464e.html">https://www.elmundo.es/deportes/futbol/primeradivision/2020/04/09/5e8f96621efa062568b464e.html</a>
21/04/2020	Fernando Lázaro	Una orden interna de la Guardia Civil pidió recopilar bulos y 'fake news' "susceptibles" de generar "desafección" al Gobierno	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/04/20/5efe1142f6c83389b4599.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/04/20/5efe1142f6c83389b4599.html</a>

Table XVII

Piezas publicadas por <i>elmundo.es</i> con la palabra clave «fake news» en el titular (noviembre de 2020)			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
06/11/2020	EL MUNDO - COPRODUCCIÓN	Maraska destaca la transparencia del plan contra las 'fake news'	<a href="https://videos.elmundo.es/index.php/v/27cwtog1Y-maraska-destaca-la-transparencia-del-plan-contra-las-fake-news">https://videos.elmundo.es/index.php/v/27cwtog1Y-maraska-destaca-la-transparencia-del-plan-contra-las-fake-news</a>
06/11/2020	EL MUNDO	Las declaraciones de Irene Montero sobre las fake news en 2018	<a href="https://videos.elmundo.es/v/93jyPIU-Z8-las-declaraciones-de-irene-montero-sobre-las-fake-news-en-2018">https://videos.elmundo.es/v/93jyPIU-Z8-las-declaraciones-de-irene-montero-sobre-las-fake-news-en-2018</a>
07/11/2020	REUTERS	Las 'fake news' en español inundan Internet durante las elecciones en EEUU	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-estados-unidos/2020/11/07/5fa9971621efa054d9b457d.html">https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-estados-unidos/2020/11/07/5fa9971621efa054d9b457d.html</a>
08/11/2020	Victor de la Serna	La realidad derrota al fin las 'fake news'	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-estados-unidos/2020/11/08/5fa1acb9d0ff228b4668.html">https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-estados-unidos/2020/11/08/5fa1acb9d0ff228b4668.html</a>
10/11/2020	EFE	Facebook cierra varias páginas vinculadas a Steve Bannon por propagar 'fake news' sobre las elecciones en EEUU	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-estados-unidos/2020/11/10/5faa42471dd3feb958b462d.html">https://www.elmundo.es/elecciones/elecciones-estados-unidos/2020/11/10/5faa42471dd3feb958b462d.html</a>
19/11/2020	Rafa Latorre	Epístola de Pedro a los militantes: el Gobierno, víctima como Trump de las 'fake news'	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/19/5fb6a069d0ff7e578b4695.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/19/5fb6a069d0ff7e578b4695.html</a>

Table XVIII

The rise in May 2023 could be attributed to the fact that the municipal and regional elections on the 28th prompted a search for this key word, fully integrated into Spanish politics, with statements such as *Feijóo acusa a Sánchez de generar “fake news” con sus palabras en una “deriva” más propia de “regímenes totalitarios”* (Feijóo accusing Sánchez of generating “fake news” with his words in a “drift” more typical of “totalitarian regimes”) (Europa Press, 2023).

Finally, in the field of security and intelligence, *EL MUNDO* has reported at least three noteworthy items: *El director del CNI [Félix Sanz Roldán]: “Estamos preparados para proteger las elecciones de ciberataques, pero no estamos a salvo de las fake news”* (CNI director: “We are prepared to protect elections from cyber-attacks, but we are not safe from fake news”) (Herraiz, 2019); *El CNI publica la primera guía contra las “fake news” para frenar la desinformación en el ciberespacio* (CNI publishes the first guide against “fake news” to curb disinformation in cyberspace) (Europa Press, 2019); and *La nueva directora del CNI [Paz Esteban] pide más medios para “modernizar” el espionaje ante las “fake news” y los ciberataques* (The new director of the CNI calls for more resources to “modernise” espionage in the face of “fake news” and cyber-attacks) (Lázaro, 2020a).

### 3.4. Analysis of the keyword “fake news”.

In *Google Trends*, the term “fake news” with the options “Spain”, “1/1/11 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search” returns graph 7.

Interest started to increase in late 2016. The October 2017 peak may have been related to the referendum in Catalonia. While the one in December may have been



Graph 7

due to the fact that the Popular Parliamentary Group in Congress (2017) presented a non-legislative proposal before the plenary —rejected during its processing— “on the promotion of the necessary measures to guarantee the veracity of information circulating through services connected to the Internet and to avoid interference that could endanger institutional stability in Spain”.

It is difficult to associate the January 2019 peak with a particular event. However, the spikes in March and November 2020 were probably due to the pandemic, *Order PCM/1030/2020* and the previously mentioned letter to PSOE activists, as it contained the keyword “fake news”. The last major peak in March 2022 may have been driven by the Russia-Ukraine war and its aftermath.

For a broad and current perspective, table XIX lists *elmundo.es* headlines containing “fake news” since 2019.

Piezas publicadas por <i>elmundo.es</i> con la palabra clave «noticias falsas» en el titular (1 de enero de 2019 - 31 de julio de 2023)			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor	Titular	Enlace
09/03/2019	Ángel Juanes Peces	Noticias falsas, ataque al corazón democrático	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/03/09/5c825aebfdd9e7208b46ba.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/03/09/5c825aebfdd9e7208b46ba.html</a>
12/04/2019	Melias G. Rebollo	Cristina de Middel expone en la Tabacalera de Madrid sus 'verdaderas' noticias falsas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/2019/04/12/5caf7cd9f0c8329108b4700.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/2019/04/12/5caf7cd9f0c8329108b4700.html</a>
12/04/2019	EFE	El Consejo de Europa alerta de la irrupción de 'noticias falsas' en las elecciones	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/2019/04/12/5cb0ad2af0c83421e8b4613.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/2019/04/12/5cb0ad2af0c83421e8b4613.html</a>
15/04/2019	Javier Espinosa	Elecciones en Indonesia: hackers, papeletas marcadas y noticias falsas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2019/04/15/5cb49655f6c83e97a8b462e.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2019/04/15/5cb49655f6c83e97a8b462e.html</a>
19/04/2019	Pablo Pardo	El otro incendio de Notre Dame: el de las noticias falsas que culpan a los musulmanes y hasta a Macron	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/2019/04/19/5cbb3a3621efa005198b45a0.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/2019/04/19/5cbb3a3621efa005198b45a0.html</a>
09/07/2019	Noelia Marín	Francisco Rosell alerta de que los gobiernos pueden ser "cómplices" de las noticias falsas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2019/07/09/5d24969df0c83d50c8b4643.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2019/07/09/5d24969df0c83d50c8b4643.html</a>
02/04/2020	Germán González	Investigan a un usuario de redes por generar odio sobre menores inmigrantes con noticias falsas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2020/04/02/5e85da5c21efa0f5508b460f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2020/04/02/5e85da5c21efa0f5508b460f.html</a>
30/01/2021	EL MUNDO	Podemos recrudece su ofensiva contra los periodistas con su web de noticias falsas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2021/01/30/60145cea21efa045178b4641.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2021/01/30/60145cea21efa045178b4641.html</a>
08/04/2021	Luis Torras	Cómo las noticias falsas viralizan y dominan la economía	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/economia/actualidad-economica/2021/04/08/606a8b96c838b288b4574.html">https://www.elmundo.es/economia/actualidad-economica/2021/04/08/606a8b96c838b288b4574.html</a>
03/05/2021	EFE	Los periodistas reivindican la libertad de prensa y su papel frente a las noticias falsas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2021/05/03/608fc4c2f0c83cb688b4620.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2021/05/03/608fc4c2f0c83cb688b4620.html</a>
05/08/2021	EFE	El Supremo de Brasil investigará a Jair Bolsonaro por difundir noticias falsas y antidemocráticas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2021/08/05/610b11aae44d8e108b45a6.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2021/08/05/610b11aae44d8e108b45a6.html</a>
20/12/2021	Germán González	La Fiscalía pide 2 años de prisión para usuario de redes por lanzar noticias falsas para generar mensajes de odio sobre menas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2021/12/20/61c039e6e44d8e999b48b4593.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2021/12/20/61c039e6e44d8e999b48b4593.html</a>
12/03/2022	Marilisa Palumbo	Así funciona la propaganda de Rusia: cómo crean y amplifican las noticias falsas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2022/03/12/622c5de9e44d8e46388b45a0.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2022/03/12/622c5de9e44d8e46388b45a0.html</a>
16/09/2022	EFE	Una presentadora de la BBC, condenada a tres años de trabajos forzados en Birmania por "difusión de noticias falsas"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/2022/09/16/63242ba4fdd9e9248b45b8.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/2022/09/16/63242ba4fdd9e9248b45b8.html</a>
01/02/2023	EFE	Rusia condena a ocho años de cárcel a un conocido periodista por difundir noticias "falsas" sobre "la campaña militar"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2023/02/01/63da3c4a4dd999b48b4593.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2023/02/01/63da3c4a4dd999b48b4593.html</a>
15/02/2023	Europa Press	Condenan a seis años de prisión a la periodista rusa Maria Ponomarenko por difundir "noticias falsas" sobre la guerra	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2023/02/15/63eccc9d35ddff74908b4578.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2023/02/15/63eccc9d35ddff74908b4578.html</a>

Table XIX

### 3.5. Analysis of the keyword “post-truth”.

In *Google Trends*, the keyword “post-truth” with the options “Worldwide”, “1/1/04 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search” returns graph 8, while the regional parameter set to “United States” yields graph 9.



Graph 8



Graph 9

The most prominent peak of interest was in November 2016 and since then there have been no significant increases. The spectacular heyday was probably related to the distinction that *Oxford Dictionaries* bestowed by choosing “post-truth” as word of the year. This choice was justified by its increased frequency of use, particularly in the context of the referendum on UK membership of the European Union (“Brexit”) and the US presidential election. The joint use of “post-truth politics” (Oxford Languages, 2016) was also noted.

Research using Google —“site:nytimes.com intitle:post-truth”—, DuckDuckDuckGo —“post-truth” site:nytimes.com— and Twitter’s advanced search indicates that *nytimes.com* has published few news pieces with “post-truth” in the headline, compared to “disinformation” and “fake news”. The 23 found and recorded are presented in table XX.

Piezas publicadas por nytimes.com con la palabra clave «post-truth» en el titular (todos los titulares hallados con Google —site:nytimes.com intitle:post-truth—, DuckDuckGo —«post-truth” site:nytimes.com— y la búsqueda avanzada de Twitter)			
Fecha de publicación	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
10/10/2004	Gary Hart	'When Presidents Lie': The Post-Truth Presidency	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/10/books/review/when-presidents-lie-the-posttruth-presidency.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/10/books/review/when-presidents-lie-the-posttruth-presidency.html</a>
22/12/2011	Paul Krugman	The Post-Truth Campaign	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/23/opinion/krugman-the-post-truth-campaign.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/23/opinion/krugman-the-post-truth-campaign.html</a>
23/08/2016	Michael Barbaro (anfitrión), Charlie Sykes, Sarah Ellison y Jim Rutenberg (participantes)	The Post-Truth Media	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/audio/2016/08/23/podcasts/23runup-media.html">https://www.nytimes.com/audio/2016/08/23/podcasts/23runup-media.html</a>
24/08/2016	William Davies	The Age of Post-Truth Politics	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/24/opinion/campaign-stops-the-age-of-post-truth-politics.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/24/opinion/campaign-stops-the-age-of-post-truth-politics.html</a>
06/09/2016	THE LEARNING NETWORK	Summer Reading Contest Winner, Week 10   On 'The Age of Post-Truth Politics'	<a href="https://archive.nytimes.com/learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/09/06/summer-reading-contest-winner-week-10-on-the-age-of-post-truth-politics/">https://archive.nytimes.com/learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/09/06/summer-reading-contest-winner-week-10-on-the-age-of-post-truth-politics/</a>
13/10/2016	Didi Kirsten Tatlow	'Kiss the Boss' Video Highlights Risks of a Post-Truth China	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/14/world/asia/china-kiss-the-boss-video.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/14/world/asia/china-kiss-the-boss-video.html</a>
04/11/2016	Timothy Egan	The Post-Truth Presidency	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/opinion/campaign-stops-the-post-truth-presidency.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/opinion/campaign-stops-the-post-truth-presidency.html</a>
15/11/2016	Jennifer Schuessler	'Post-Truth' Defeats 'Alt-Right' as Oxford's Word of the Year	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/16/arts/post-truth-defeats-alt-right-as-oxfords-word-of-the-year.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/16/arts/post-truth-defeats-alt-right-as-oxfords-word-of-the-year.html</a>
26/12/2016	Michiko Kakutani	'How Propaganda Works' Is a Timely Reminder for a Post-Truth Age	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/26/books/how-propaganda-works-is-a-timely-reminder-for-a-post-truth-age.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/26/books/how-propaganda-works-is-a-timely-reminder-for-a-post-truth-age.html</a>
27/12/2016	Jonathan Mahler	The Problem With 'Self-Investigation' in a Post-Truth Era	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/27/magazine/the-problem-with-self-investigation-in-a-post-truth-era.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/27/magazine/the-problem-with-self-investigation-in-a-post-truth-era.html</a>
13/04/2017	Molly Worthen	The Evangelical Roots of Our Post-Truth Society	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/opinion/sunday/the-evangelical-roots-of-our-post-truth-society.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/opinion/sunday/the-evangelical-roots-of-our-post-truth-society.html</a>
21/06/2017	Finn Cohen	Noah Hawley on Season 3 of ' Fargo ' and a 'Post-Truth World'	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/21/arts/television/fargo-season-3-finale-noah-hawley-interview.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/21/arts/television/fargo-season-3-finale-noah-hawley-interview.html</a>
15/01/2017	Adam Kirsch	Lie to Me: Fiction in the Post-Truth Era	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/15/books/lie-to-me-fiction-in-the-post-truth-era.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/15/books/lie-to-me-fiction-in-the-post-truth-era.html</a>
19/01/2017	Katherine Schulten y Amanda Christy Brown	Evaluating Sources in a 'Post-Truth' World: Ideas for Teaching and Learning About Fake News	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/19/learning/lesson-plans/evaluating-sources-in-a-post-truth-world-ideas-for-teaching-and-learning-about-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/19/learning/lesson-plans/evaluating-sources-in-a-post-truth-world-ideas-for-teaching-and-learning-about-fake-news.html</a>
21/03/2018	Anna Codrea-Rado	Wolfgang Tillmans Explores the Role of Art in a Post-Truth World	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/arts/wolfgang-tillmans-fake-news.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/arts/wolfgang-tillmans-fake-news.html</a>
23/05/2018	Elizabeth Williamson	Truth in a Post-Truth Era: Sandy Hook Families Sue Alex Jones, Conspiracy Theorist	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/23/us/politics/alex-jones-trump-sandy-hook.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/23/us/politics/alex-jones-trump-sandy-hook.html</a>
18/07/2018	Chris Hayes	Chris Hayes Reviews Michiko Kakutani's Book About Our Post-Truth Era	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/books/review/michiko-kakutani-death-of-truth.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/books/review/michiko-kakutani-death-of-truth.html</a>
14/09/2018	Bari Weiss	Julia Salazar, the Left's Post-Truth Politician	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/14/opinion/julia-salazar-socialism-democrats.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/14/opinion/julia-salazar-socialism-democrats.html</a>
13/03/2018	Adam Popescu	Damien Hirst's Post-Venice, Post-Truth World	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/13/arts/design/damien-hirst-gagosian-paintings-los-angeles.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/13/arts/design/damien-hirst-gagosian-paintings-los-angeles.html</a>
25/10/2018	Ava Kolman	Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html</a>
17/04/2019	Charles Homans	Alex Jones Under Oath Is an Antidote to a Post-Truth Age	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/17/magazine/watch-alex-jones-called-to-account-over-sandy-hook-under-oath.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/17/magazine/watch-alex-jones-called-to-account-over-sandy-hook-under-oath.html</a>
15/10/2019	Laura Chinchilla	Post-Truth Politics Afflicts the Global South, Too	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/15/opinion/politics-global-south.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/15/opinion/politics-global-south.html</a>
24/06/2021	Paul Krugman	Economics in a Post-Truth Nation	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/24/opinion/economy-truth-republicans.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/24/opinion/economy-truth-republicans.html</a>

Table XX

The first came in the context of a review of Eric Alterman’s book *When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences*. Hart (2004) specified that Alterman intended to demonstrate how “one Big Lie leads to the next and then, ultimately and inevitably, results in a “post-truth presidency.” The review was not to the liking of the book’s author, who sent a harsh letter to the publisher (Alterman, 2004).

In *The Post-Truth Campaign*, Krugman (2011) criticised Mitt Romney’s portrayal of then-President Obama “as the second coming of Fidel Castro”; and he “seems confident that he will pay no price for making stuff up”. He went on to state: “Welcome to post-truth politics”. It is interesting to note the use of “post-truth” together with “politics”, as this combination would catch the attention of *Oxford Dictionaries* five years later.

Finally, between 2016 and 2018, there was a significant increase in the number of contents titled with “post-truth”, which slowed down in the following years. The articles covered a variety of topics. For example, how French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour argued “What journalists, scientists and other experts fail to grasp is that “facts remain robust only when they are supported by a common culture, by institutions that can be trusted, by a more or less decent public life, by more or less reliable media”” (Kofman, 2018).

### 3.6. Analysis of the keyword “post-truth”

In *Google Trends*, the term “post-truth” with the options “Spain”, “1/1/11 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search” generates graph 10.



Graph 10

Its popularity began in November 2016, as did “post-truth” around the world and the US. However, there are several particularities. Firstly, with regard to the May 2017 peak, it is possible that a TV3 documentary, *Veritats de mentida*, intended to shed light on “what is now called post-truth”, may have contributed (Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals, 2017b). It had an audience of 402,000 viewers (Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals, 2017a).

Piezas publicadas por elmundo.es con la palabra clave «posverdad» en el titular (todos los titulares hallados con Google —«site:elmundo.es intitle:posverdad»—, DuckDuckGo —«posverdad” site:elmundo.es»— y la búsqueda avanzada de Twitter) - Parte 1/2

Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
05/11/2016	Miquel Urmeneta	La política de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2016/11/05/581ccfa4e56dea4e048b462f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2016/11/05/581ccfa4e56dea4e048b462f.html</a>
20/11/2016	Itaki Gil	La posverdad del fin de ETA y otros cuentos	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2016/11/20/58301c77e56dea9b788b4575.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2016/11/20/58301c77e56dea9b788b4575.html</a>
20/11/2016	José Antonio Marina	Zoom sobre la posverdad...	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2016/11/20/5825521e2704e86368b45c0.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2016/11/20/5825521e2704e86368b45c0.html</a>
21/11/2016	Pedro G. Cuartango	La posverdad de Podemos	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2016/11/21/5831b29e2704e36068b45a2.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2016/11/21/5831b29e2704e36068b45a2.html</a>
23/11/2016	Luis Oz	Posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/2016/11/23/5835e198e2704e987c8b456c.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/2016/11/23/5835e198e2704e987c8b456c.html</a>
11/12/2016	Jordi Sevilla	La 'posverdad' que nos comee	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/economia/2016/12/11/584bc38468aeb0098b45e1.html">https://www.elmundo.es/economia/2016/12/11/584bc38468aeb0098b45e1.html</a>
12/12/2016	Jaime G. Teceño	La posverdad verdadera	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/madrid/2016/12/12/584c3c3446163895b6b4604.html">https://www.elmundo.es/madrid/2016/12/12/584c3c3446163895b6b4604.html</a>
17/12/2016	Ricardo F. Colmenero	La posverdad 'pemea'	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2016/12/17/5854385ce5f9ea82558b466f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2016/12/17/5854385ce5f9ea82558b466f.html</a>
19/12/2016	Irene Lozano	Posverdad, la fuerza de la superstición	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2016/12/19/5856ce6122601d060a8b4632.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2016/12/19/5856ce6122601d060a8b4632.html</a>
02/01/2017	Victor de la Sema	Un año de 'posverdad' en el periodismo	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/2017/01/02/586a5993e2704e10488b4617.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/2017/01/02/586a5993e2704e10488b4617.html</a>
04/01/2017	Gari Durán	Populismo y posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2017/01/04/586e2b02468aeb238b466b.html">https://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2017/01/04/586e2b02468aeb238b466b.html</a>
24/02/2017	Cristina Peri Rossi	En el reino de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/02/24/58af22a458aebf6e8b45a5.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/02/24/58af22a458aebf6e8b45a5.html</a>
10/03/2017	Javier García Martínez	Ciencia en el tiempo de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/03/10/58c1944e2704e32048b456e.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/03/10/58c1944e2704e32048b456e.html</a>
15/03/2017	Teresa López Pavón	Una 'posverdad' como un templo	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2017/03/15/58c8f9d2e2704e23068b4583.html">https://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2017/03/15/58c8f9d2e2704e23068b4583.html</a>
05/04/2017	Raúl del Pozo	Posverdad: bolos y bulos	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/04/05/58e3e187288e3e9c5c8b4697.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/04/05/58e3e187288e3e9c5c8b4697.html</a>
30/04/2017	Juan Soto Ivars	De la posverdad a la poscensura: obsesionados con no ofender	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2017/04/30/5901ea8268e3e2c078b45c3.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2017/04/30/5901ea8268e3e2c078b45c3.html</a>
05/05/2017	EL MUNDO, EUROPA PRESS y SERVIDIA	Patxi López dice sentirse "víctima de la posverdad" tras la oferta de Pedro Sánchez de unirse a su candidatura	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2017/05/05/590cb2b4e2704e28b45e0.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2017/05/05/590cb2b4e2704e28b45e0.html</a>
05/05/2017	EL MUNDO.ES	Patxi López dice sentirse "víctima de la posverdad" tras la oferta de Pedro Sánchez de unirse a su candidatura	<a href="https://videos.elmundo.es/vi0_zoo0q3iv-patxi-lopez-dice-sentirse-victima-de-la-posverdad-tras-la-oferta-de-pedro-sanchez-de-unirse-a-su-candidatura">https://videos.elmundo.es/vi0_zoo0q3iv-patxi-lopez-dice-sentirse-victima-de-la-posverdad-tras-la-oferta-de-pedro-sanchez-de-unirse-a-su-candidatura</a>
17/05/2017	Rosa Villacastin	Antonio Banderas, atacado por el virus de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/blogs/elmundo/extrarosa/2017/05/17/antonio-banderas-atacado-por-el-virus-de.html">https://www.elmundo.es/blogs/elmundo/extrarosa/2017/05/17/antonio-banderas-atacado-por-el-virus-de.html</a>
18/05/2017	Luis María Anson	La posverdad de Sánchez	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/05/18/591c7eba268e3a2a2e8b45e5.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/05/18/591c7eba268e3a2a2e8b45e5.html</a>
20/05/2017	Teodoro León Gross	El 'Caso Banderas' y la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/05/20/591f3843ca474173088b4594.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/05/20/591f3843ca474173088b4594.html</a>
29/06/2017	EFE	El término 'posverdad' entrará este año en el diccionario de la RAE	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/literatura/2017/06/29/59553e59268e3e06068b4696.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/literatura/2017/06/29/59553e59268e3e06068b4696.html</a>
03/07/2017	Raúl del Pozo	'Posverdad' al poder	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/07/03/59594ca6ca4741807c8b45ce.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/07/03/59594ca6ca4741807c8b45ce.html</a>
17/09/2017	Rafael Latore	Cataluña se instala en la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2017/09/17/59bd5b91e58dea5368b45f2.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2017/09/17/59bd5b91e58dea5368b45f2.html</a>
05/11/2017	Héctor Fernández	La 'posverdad' y la mentira	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/alicante/2017/11/05/599e0515e58dea45608b46a3.html">https://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/alicante/2017/11/05/599e0515e58dea45608b46a3.html</a>
15/11/2017	Oiga R. Sanmartín	Qatar y Turquía se presentan a sí mismos como víctimas de las noticias falsas y de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2017/11/15/5a0c3de34616327218b4601.html">https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2017/11/15/5a0c3de34616327218b4601.html</a>
15/11/2017	Luis Oz	Tres luces en la era de la 'posverdad'	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/2017/11/15/5a0c9c59468aeb2e358b45d9.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/2017/11/15/5a0c9c59468aeb2e358b45d9.html</a>
07/12/2017	Impresiones	Un paladín de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/12/07/5a2841d9e2704e4d748b460a.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2017/12/07/5a2841d9e2704e4d748b460a.html</a>
08/12/2017	Rafa Latore	Diario de la posverdad: Ferrov en Bruselas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/08/5a29ab2946163958b456b.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/08/5a29ab2946163958b456b.html</a>
09/12/2017	Rafa Latore	Diario de la posverdad: Melancolía	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/09/5a2ac05aca474119628b45a1.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/09/5a2ac05aca474119628b45a1.html</a>
10/12/2017	Rafa Latore	Diario de la posverdad: El Govern legítim	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/10/5a2a4450468aeb31328b45f4.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/10/5a2a4450468aeb31328b45f4.html</a>
11/12/2017	Rafa Latore	Diario de la posverdad: "Yo, preso político"	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/11/5a2d792e268e3e6f268b45e2.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/11/5a2d792e268e3e6f268b45e2.html</a>
12/12/2017	Rafa Latore	Diario de la posverdad: El 'win win' de Sijena	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/12/5a2ee2ccca474123358b45d9.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/12/5a2ee2ccca474123358b45d9.html</a>
13/12/2017	Rafa Latore	Diario de la posverdad: La trama en una 'Moleskine'	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/13/5a3029a0268e3e9458b4630.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/13/5a3029a0268e3e9458b4630.html</a>
14/12/2017	Rafa Latore	Diario de la posverdad: Ganar en las urnas y perder todo lo demás	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/14/5a31800246163fc0298b4631.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/14/5a31800246163fc0298b4631.html</a>

Table XXI

The increase from September to December 2017 may have been due to the referendum in Catalonia and the socio-political climate at the time, with headlines such as *Cataluña se instala en la posverdad* (*Catalonia settles into post-truth*), from *EL MUNDO* (Latorre, 2017). In addition, one should consider the inclusion of the word in the *Diccionario de la lengua española* in December 2017, as announced in June (Real Academia Española, 2017a) and November (Real Academia Española, 2017b).

The last major peak, in February 2018, was influenced by the programme *Chester*, presented by Risto Mejide, which focused on post-truth, with the intervention of Eduardo Inda and Mila Ximénez (Cuatro, 2018). It had an audience of 1,552,000 viewers (FormulaTV, 2018).

As for the *elmundo.es* headlines that contain “post-truth”, the first thing that stands out when looking at tables XXI and XXII is that the Spanish daily has used this word more times than *nytimes.com*, its English equivalent, especially between 2016 and 2019. Catalonia had a prominent place: in 2017, journalist Rafa Latorre signed a series of articles where he offered his analysis and personal perspective in a socio-politically “delicate” moment.

Piezas publicadas por <i>elmundo.es</i> con la palabra clave «posverdad» en el titular (todos los titulares hallados con Google —«site:elmundo.es intitle:posverdad»—, DuckDuckGo —«“posverdad” site:elmundo.es»— y la búsqueda avanzada de Twitter) - Parte 2/2			
Fecha de publicación o actualización	Autor(es)	Titular	Enlace
15/12/2017	Rafa Latorre	Diario de la posverdad: No maten a los sociólogos	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/15/5a32c39646163f58248b4508.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/15/5a32c39646163f58248b4508.html</a>
16/12/2017	Rafa Latorre	Diario de la posverdad: Pobre de mí	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/16/5a3427fca474186d8b4505.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/16/5a3427fca474186d8b4505.html</a>
17/12/2017	Rafa Latorre	Diario de la posverdad: El más brillante socialista catalán	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/17/5a35661e2260160b438b4644.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/17/5a35661e2260160b438b4644.html</a>
18/12/2017	Rafa Latorre	Diario de la posverdad: La caída de la ciudad patriótica	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/18/5a369f022601683208b4508.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/18/5a369f022601683208b4508.html</a>
19/12/2017	Rafa Latorre	Diario de la posverdad: El juerqueísmo es amor	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/19/5a3824b468aeb3c5588b4501.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/19/5a3824b468aeb3c5588b4501.html</a>
20/12/2017	Rafa Latorre	Diario de la posverdad: Un número uno para la CUP	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/20/5a3974e04616394e158b45a2.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/20/5a3974e04616394e158b45a2.html</a>
21/12/2017	Rafa Latorre	Diario de la posverdad: El último día del bienio suicida	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/21/5a3abb99468aeb5f028b4697.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/12/21/5a3abb99468aeb5f028b4697.html</a>
10/02/2018	Rafael Bachiller	Posverdad, relativismo y ciencia	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/02/10/5a7d0f71268e3e567a8b4638.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/02/10/5a7d0f71268e3e567a8b4638.html</a>
23/02/2018	Carlos Elias	Prensa en la era de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/02/23/5a8ef125468aeb28658b4644.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/02/23/5a8ef125468aeb28658b4644.html</a>
22/04/2018	Editorial	La posverdad del 'proceso' sigue sin ser contestada por Rajoy	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/04/22/5adb782e4616394e688b456e.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/04/22/5adb782e4616394e688b456e.html</a>
04/05/2018	Ana Rosa Sanfeliu	Posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/castellon/2018/05/04/5aec16dca2704e2c0d9b45ea.html">https://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/castellon/2018/05/04/5aec16dca2704e2c0d9b45ea.html</a>
09/06/2018	Lucía Méndez	De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2018/06/09/5b1a645a268e3e74c66b45ec.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2018/06/09/5b1a645a268e3e74c66b45ec.html</a>
13/06/2018	EL MUNDO	La ciencia contra la posverdad y el populismo	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/ciencia-y-salud/ciencia/2018/06/13/5b214780e5f0ea1e4e8b4691.html">https://www.elmundo.es/ciencia-y-salud/ciencia/2018/06/13/5b214780e5f0ea1e4e8b4691.html</a>
26/06/2018	Santiago González	Comunicación y posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/blog/elmundo/elblogdesantiagogonzalez/2018/06/26/comunicacion-y-posverdad.html">https://www.elmundo.es/blog/elmundo/elblogdesantiagogonzalez/2018/06/26/comunicacion-y-posverdad.html</a>
19/09/2018	Raúl Conde	La posverdad de Aznar	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/09/19/5ba12ec4468aeb495a8b4508.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/09/19/5ba12ec4468aeb495a8b4508.html</a>
19/09/2018	Javier Macho	Mentiras, 'fake news' y posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/alicante/2018/09/19/5ba1342346163f7a888b463b.html">https://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/alicante/2018/09/19/5ba1342346163f7a888b463b.html</a>
16/10/2018	Arcadi Espada	Mentira y (pos)verdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/blog/elmundo/elmundopordentro/2018/10/16/mentira-y-posverdad.html">https://www.elmundo.es/blog/elmundo/elmundopordentro/2018/10/16/mentira-y-posverdad.html</a>
03/11/2018	Lucía Méndez	Contra nuestra posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/11/03/5bdca963468aeb41588b458.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2018/11/03/5bdca963468aeb41588b458.html</a>
03/12/2018	John Müller	El Parlamento y la posverdad de la crisis de las cajas	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/economia/macroeconomia/2018/12/03/5c0409966d3f10028b454d.html">https://www.elmundo.es/economia/macroeconomia/2018/12/03/5c0409966d3f10028b454d.html</a>
02/01/2019	Editorial	Posverdad secesionista	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/01/02/5c2bbb821efa0b7a8b4673.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/01/02/5c2bbb821efa0b7a8b4673.html</a>
20/02/2019	Victor de la Sema	Elecciones en tiempos de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/fmas/2019/02/20/5cb6c26f06dd5f34e8b4638.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/fmas/2019/02/20/5cb6c26f06dd5f34e8b4638.html</a>
03/05/2019	Lucía Méndez	'Posverdad' y elecciones	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/05/03/5ccc7e3c0c83b11e8b4599.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/05/03/5ccc7e3c0c83b11e8b4599.html</a>
08/06/2019	Carlos Fresneda	La novela 1984 cumple 70 años en plena era de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/literatura/2019/06/08/5cfa0a721efa018438b456d.html">https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/literatura/2019/06/08/5cfa0a721efa018438b456d.html</a>
03/09/2019	M.M.P.	Un curso sobre patrimonio histórico fija su definición y propone huir de la posverdad que rodea sus límites	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2019/09/03/5d9e85470c6c8172a6b45c3.html">https://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2019/09/03/5d9e85470c6c8172a6b45c3.html</a>
30/10/2019	Raúl del Pozo	Cotorras de la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/10/30/5db9c998fc6c8397308b4634.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2019/10/30/5db9c998fc6c8397308b4634.html</a>
14/12/2019	Lucía Méndez	Los filósofos y la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2019/12/14/5df3e20fdd8b818b46e5.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2019/12/14/5df3e20fdd8b818b46e5.html</a>
29/12/2019	David Sanz Ezquerro	Cuando la posverdad lo invadió todo	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/papel/futuro/2019/12/29/5e0486445d0f6abc8b4500.html">https://www.elmundo.es/papel/futuro/2019/12/29/5e0486445d0f6abc8b4500.html</a>
27/06/2020	Itaki Elkakuria	El Español, frente al abismo: historia de una rebelión contra la posverdad y la asfixia culé	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/deportes/futbol/primera-division/2020/06/27/5ef788c421efa015378b456f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/deportes/futbol/primera-division/2020/06/27/5ef788c421efa015378b456f.html</a>
28/10/2021	Ignacio García de Leñiz Caprile	Bienvenida a la posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2021/10/28/6179260b6dd94b338b45c3.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2021/10/28/6179260b6dd94b338b45c3.html</a>
31/10/2021	Francisco Pascual	La posverdad de la reforma laboral	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2021/10/31/617d95866f6c83e9458b460a.html">https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2021/10/31/617d95866f6c83e9458b460a.html</a>
16/11/2021	Roberto Ruiz Ballesteros	La posverdad de Villarejo	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2021/11/16/619232b21efa00a318b4577.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2021/11/16/619232b21efa00a318b4577.html</a>
23/04/2022	Carlos Fresneda	Guerra y posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2022/04/23/62627e48f0c83762db458f.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2022/04/23/62627e48f0c83762db458f.html</a>
05/09/2022	Raúl del Pozo	Alertado: odio y posverdad	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2022/09/05/6314a99221efa064a8b4508.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2022/09/05/6314a99221efa064a8b4508.html</a>
23/10/2022	Editorial	De la cultura de la cancelación a la posverdad académica	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/editorial/2022/10/23/635437121efa0ff4c8b45a3.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/editorial/2022/10/23/635437121efa0ff4c8b45a3.html</a>
05/04/2023	Clara Gª Sillero, Isabella Carril, Tobias Browne y Miguel Triviño	Tecnología, instituciones, planes estratégicos y castigo a las fake news: estas son las herramientas de la UE contra la posverdad y la desinformación	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/04/05/642b4c8321efa0fe408b45ba.html">https://www.elmundo.es/television/medios/2023/04/05/642b4c8321efa0fe408b45ba.html</a>
25/06/2023	Manuel Arias Maldonado	De la posverdad a la posmentira	<a href="https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2023/06/25/6496a4adfc6c8340038b4577.html">https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/columnistas/2023/06/25/6496a4adfc6c8340038b4577.html</a>

Table XXII

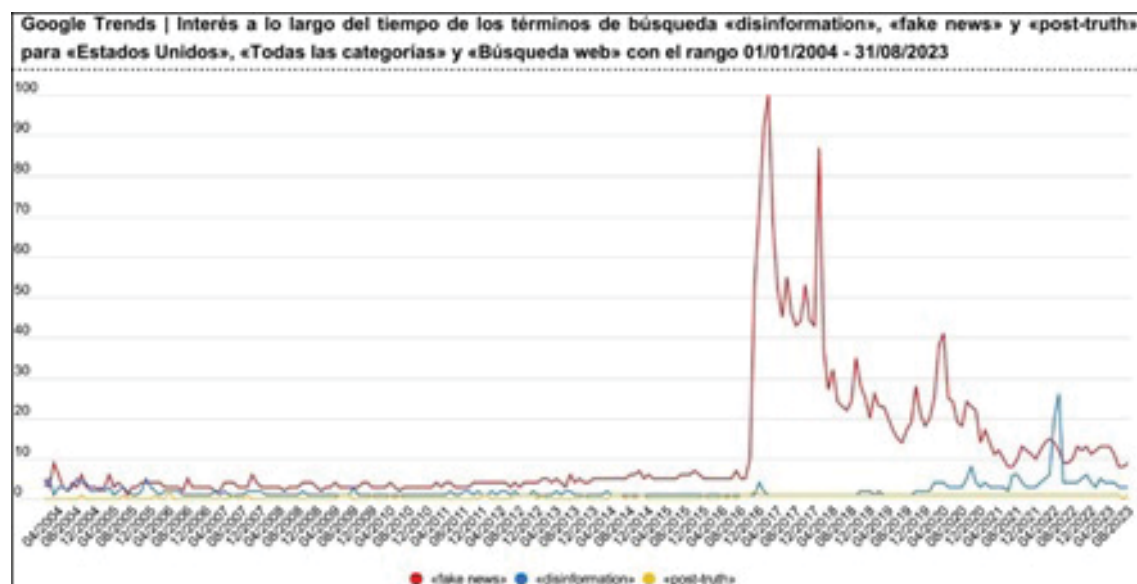
### 3.7. Comparative analysis of the keywords “disinformation”, “fake news”, “post-truth”, “desinformación”, “noticias falsas” and “posverdad”

To close this first part, a comparative examination, always with the data from *Google Trends*, to find out which is the most popular term worldwide, in the US and Spain.

Among other reasons, this is important because the digital media are likely to take this into account, and it would not be unusual for high interest in a term to lead to a headline with that term. Thus, if it is more common to search for “fake news” instead of “noticias falsas” in Spain, newspapers might be inclined to use the English option due to search engine positioning issues. In turn, this linguistic preference could influence the terminology used by society.

#### 3.7.1. Comparative analysis of the keywords “disinformation”, “fake news” and “post-truth” worldwide

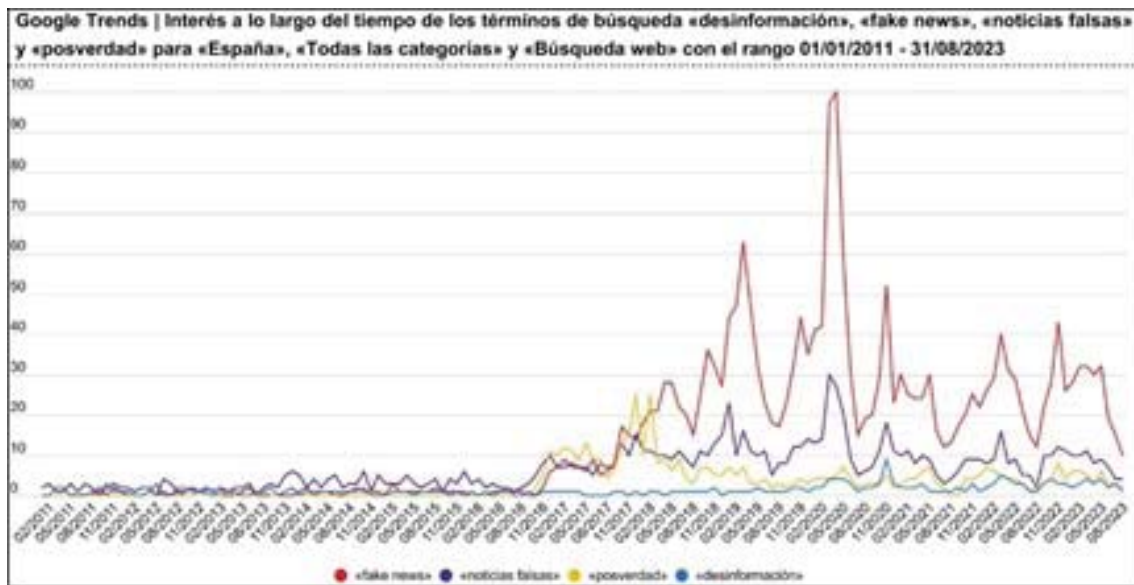
The options “Worldwide”, “1/1/04 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search” give rise to graph 11. The enormous popularity of “fake news” is clearly evident. It is interesting to note the peak of “disinformation” in May 2022, coinciding with the *Disinformation Governance Board*.



Graph 12

#### 3.7.2. Comparative analysis of the keywords “disinformation”, “fake news” and “post-truth” in the United States. US

The options “United States”, “1/1/04 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search” return graph 12. Again, “fake news” is the main keyword, with the exception of the May 2022 peak, when “disinformation” took the lead.



Graph 13

### 3.7.3. Comparative analysis of the keywords “desinformación”, “fake news”, “noticias falsas” and “posverdad” in Spain

The options “Spain”, “1/1/11 – 31/8/23”, “All categories” and “Web search” generate graph 13, showing some particularities.

First, while “fake news” has been of considerable interest, in 2017 and 2018 “post-truth” was particularly strong. In this respect, we must not forget that *elmundo.es* has published more content with this term than *nytimes.com* with its equivalent “post-truth”.

Second, between 2016 and 2017, “fake news” and “noticias falsas” generated almost equal interest, but in the end the English alternative prevailed.

Third, in terms of “desinformación”, the only relevant peak was in November 2020, most likely because of the *Order PCM/1030/2020*.

## 3.8. Conclusions from the trend analysis with a journalistic approach

We can establish that:

1. “fake news” is, in general, the keyword that has generated the most interest around the world, the USA and Spain, according to *Google Trends*. However, in areas such as EUR-Lex there is a preference for “disinformation”.
2. The US presidential election in November 2016 was pivotal in the rise in concern about “fake news”, “noticias falsas”, “post-truth”, “posverdad” and, to a lesser extent, “disinformation”. The atmosphere of mistrust, with allegations of external interference, and Donald Trump’s use of the term “fake news” generated strong interest.

3. Other events catalysing the popularity of the terms include the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as government initiatives aimed at combating misinformation: the *Disinformation Governance Board* in the US, which was eventually cancelled, and *Order PCM/I030/2020* in Spain.
4. Additionally, the headlines of *nytimes.com* and *elmundo.es* highlight three aspects: the role of Russia and China, concerns about the advance of artificial intelligence, and the responsibility of the big tech companies. Of course, they have also commented on relevant political events, such as the situation in Catalonia during 2017 or the “Fake News Awards”, promoted by Trump in January 2018.

#### 4. Selection of academic journals on security with *SCImago Journal Rank* and analysis using the keywords “disinformation”, “fake news” and “post-truth”

First of all, an objective and informed choice of such journals is required. For this purpose, the *SCImago Journal Rank* is used. This indicator expresses “the average number of weighted citations received in the selected year” —2022 for this study—

Revistas académicas sobre «Social Sciences» y «Safety Research» seleccionadas (SCImago Journal Rank 2022)						
Revista	Indicador SCImago Journal Rank	Cuartil	Editor	Cobertura	Última edición al cierre de este estudio	Número de artículos de investigación con «disinformation», «fake news» o «post-truth» en el título, «abstract» o «keywords»
Journal of Peace Research	2.444	Q1	Sage Journals	1964-2023	Volumen 60, número 5 (septiembre de 2023)	2
Surveillance & Society	0.930	Q1	Surveillance Studies Network	2002-2023	Volumen 21, número 2 (julio de 2023)	0
Journal of Global Security Studies	0.928	Q1	Oxford Academic	2016-2023	Volumen 8, número 3 (septiembre de 2023)	2
European Journal of International Security	0.897	Q1	Cambridge Core	2016-2023	Volumen 8, número 3 (agosto de 2023)	2
Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management	0.814	Q1	De Gruyter	2004-2023	Volumen 20, número 2 (mayo de 2023)	1
Journal of Cybersecurity	0.812	Q1	Oxford Academic	2015-2023	Volumen 9, número 1 (2023)	1
Frontiers in Political Science	0.578	Q2	Frontiers	2019-2023	Volumen 5 (2023)	4
Asian Security	0.572	Q2	Routledge	2005-2023	Volumen 19, número 1 (2023)	0
Digital Threats: Research and Practice	0.543	Q2	Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)	2020-2023	Volumen 4, número 2 (junio de 2023)	4
Armed Forces and Society	0.526	Q2	Sage Journals	1974-2023	Volumen 49, número 4 (octubre de 2023)	1
Global Governance	0.448	Q2	Brill	1995-2023	Volumen 29, número 2 (junio de 2023)	0
Perspectives on Terrorism	0.443	Q2	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism	2007-2023	Volumen 17, número 2 (junio de 2023)	1
Terrorism and Political Violence	0.438	Q2	Routledge	1989-2023	Volumen 35, número 7 (2023)	0

Table XXIII

<b>Revistas académicas sobre «Social Sciences» y «Safety Research» descartadas (SCImago Journal Rank 2022)</b>			
Revista	Indicador SCImago Journal Rank	Cuartil	Motivo del descarte
Analytic Methods in Accident Research	5.170	Q1	Focalizada en accidentes
Global Food Security	2.173	Q1	Focalizada en las necesidades alimentarias y nutricionales humanas
Crime Science	1.755	Q1	Enfoque demasiado amplio: desde criminología ambiental a economía, ingeniería, geografía, salud pública, psicología y planificación urbana
Safety Science	1.429	Q1	Enfoque demasiado amplio: aborda desde científicos sociales a ingenieros
Progress in Disaster Science	1.194	Q1	Focalizada en catástrofes y desastres
International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	1.132	Q1	Focalizada en catástrofes y desastres
Journal of Transport and Health	1.050	Q1	Focalizada en transporte y salud
International Journal of Disaster Risk Science	1.015	Q1	Focalizada en catástrofes y desastres
Safety and Health at Work	0.877	Q1	Focalizada en salud y seguridad en el trabajo
IATSS Research	0.854	Q1	Focalizada en transporte
Health security	0.840	Q1	Focalizada en salud
Fire	0.779	Q1	Focalizada en incendios
NanoImpact	0.768	Q1	Focalizada en nanoseguridad, microplásticos y nanoplasticos
Traffic Injury Prevention	0.741	Q1	Focalizada en accidentes de tráfico
Journal of Applied Volcanology	0.731	Q1	Focalizada en vulcanismo
Journal of Transportation Safety and Security	0.717	Q1	Focalizada en transporte
Journal of Safety Science and Resilience	0.665	Q1	Focalizada en catástrofes naturales, peligros medioambientales y de origen humano
Therapeutics and Clinical Risk Management	0.652	Q1	Focalizada en terapéutica clínica
Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology	0.620	Q1	Focalizada en salud
International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion	0.578	Q2	Focalizada en lesiones
ASCE-ASME Journal of Risk and Uncertainty in Engineering Systems, Part B: Mechanical Engineering	0.548	Q2	Focalizada en ingeniería mecánica
European Journal of Risk Regulation	0.547	Q2	Focalizada en la regulación de los riesgos sobre salud, seguridad y medio ambiente en ámbitos políticos
Food Analytical Methods	0.546	Q2	Focalizada en alimentos
International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics	0.513	Q2	Focalizada en ergonomía y salud laboral
WMU Journal of Maritime Affairs	0.506	Q2	Focalizada en académicos, investigadores y profesionales de la industria marítima
Perfusion	0.475	Q2	Focalizada en salud
Journal of Disaster Risk Studies: Jambá	0.472	Q2	Focalizada en catástrofes y desastres

Table XXIV

“by documents published in the selected journal in the three previous years” (Scimago Journal & Country Rank, 2023).

Under “Journal Rankings”, “Social Sciences” is chosen as the “subject area” and “Safety Research” as the “subject category”. Thirteen journals are then chosen, which is a balance between comprehensiveness and practicality. To this end, it is crucial to define the interpretative framework of the word “security”. In this study, “security” is understood in its traditional sense, focusing on geopolitical or technological issues. Specific interpretations of the term not in line with the research objective are omitted. “Safety Research” journals dealing with topics such as accidents or food safety are therefore excluded.

Table XXIII compiles the selected journals. The last column reveals the approach to be followed: to analyse research articles that include the words “disinformation”, “fake news” or “post-truth” in the title, abstract or keywords, which are decisive locations in a paper. Table XXIV lists the excluded journals.

<b>Método de búsqueda de las palabras clave «disinformation», «fake news» y «post-truth» en los artículos de investigación de las revistas académicas seleccionadas</b>			
Revista	Método de búsqueda de artículos	¿El buscador permite filtrar por título, «abstract» y «keywords»?	Enlace al buscador o web desde donde se pueden descargar las revistas/artículos para el análisis manual
Journal of Peace Research	Buscador de Sage Journals	SI	<a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/search/advanced">https://journals.sagepub.com/search/advanced</a>
Surveillance & Society	Manual. Descarga de «Articles» y «Regular Articles» de cada número de la revista y posterior análisis con la búsqueda avanzada de Adobe Acrobat	-	<a href="https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/">https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/</a>
Journal of Global Security Studies	Buscador de Oxford Academic	SI	<a href="https://academic.oup.com/jogss/advanced-search">https://academic.oup.com/jogss/advanced-search</a>
European Journal of International Security	Buscador de Cambridge Core	No	<a href="https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-international-security">https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-international-security</a>
Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management	Buscador de De Gruyter	No	<a href="https://www.degruyter.com/journalkey/jhem.html">https://www.degruyter.com/journalkey/jhem.html</a>
Journal of Cybersecurity	Buscador de Oxford Academic	SI	<a href="https://academic.oup.com/cybersecurity/advanced-search">https://academic.oup.com/cybersecurity/advanced-search</a>
Frontiers in Political Science	Buscador de Frontiers	No	<a href="https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles">https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles</a>
Asian Security	Buscador de Taylor & Francis Online	SI	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/action/doiSearch?AllField=&amp;SeriesKey=fas20">https://www.tandfonline.com/action/doiSearch?AllField=&amp;SeriesKey=fas20</a>
Digital Threats: Research and Practice	Buscador de ACM Digital Library	SI	<a href="https://dl.acm.org/search/advanced?SeriesKey=trsp&amp;target=advanced&amp;editQuery=true&amp;litQuickSearch=false">https://dl.acm.org/search/advanced?SeriesKey=trsp&amp;target=advanced&amp;editQuery=true&amp;litQuickSearch=false</a>
Armed Forces and Society	Buscador de Sage Journals	SI	<a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/search/advanced">https://journals.sagepub.com/search/advanced</a>
Global Governance	Buscador de Brill	A medias (incluye por «Title» y «Alternative Title»)	<a href="https://brill.com/view/journals/gg/gg-overview.xml">https://brill.com/view/journals/gg/gg-overview.xml</a>
Perspectives on Terrorism	Manual. Descarga de las revistas (Perspectives on Terrorism) y posterior análisis con la búsqueda avanzada de Adobe Acrobat	-	<a href="https://pt.icot.nl/">https://pt.icot.nl/</a>
Terrorism and Political Violence	Buscador de Taylor & Francis Online	SI	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/action/doiSearch?AllField=&amp;SeriesKey=tpv20">https://www.tandfonline.com/action/doiSearch?AllField=&amp;SeriesKey=tpv20</a>

Table XXV

There are then two main ways to search for the designated keywords in the research articles of each journal: using a search engine or manually. Table XXV shows how this has been done in each case.

Firstly, the absence of the term “post-truth” is notable, but not surprising. Table I showed no preference for this term in EUR-Lex; table XX showed that *nytimes.com* has a moderate number of articles with this headline; and, as shown in graphs 11 and 12, it does not stand out in popularity either globally or in the US.

It is also remarkable how, after the first article in 2013, with “disinformation” in the abstract, it was not until 2018 that another publication with “fake news” appeared in the same place. Since then, these two terms have been used regularly.

The first academic security journal to appear according to the search criteria described above is *Perspectives on Terrorism*. Dharmawardhane (2013) explores the efforts needed to move forward in post-conflict Sri Lanka, including proper communication to address the problem of disinformation. It addresses how the “Tamil Tigers” accused the Sri Lankan government of “discrimination and ethnic genocide” (p. 32).

Despite the end of the confrontation, Dharmawardhane warns of a powerful external network through which the “Tamil Tigers” produce systematic disinformation campaigns (p. 30). It therefore advises Sri Lankan diplomacy to become more involved

Palabras clave «disinformation» y «fake news» en los artículos de investigación de las revistas académicas sobre seguridad seleccionadas							
Fecha de publicación del artículo de investigación	Revista	Volumen y número de la revista o identificador del artículo	Fecha de la revista	Autor(es) del artículo de investigación	Título del artículo de investigación	Palabra(s) clave (ubicación)	Enlace
12/2013	Perspectives on Terrorism	Volumen 7, número 6	12/2013	Iromi Dharmawardhane	Sri Lanka's Post-Conflict Strategy: Restorative Justice for Rebels and Rebuilding of Conflict-affected Communities	«Disinformation» (+abstract)	<a href="https://pt.ict.nl/article/sri-lankas-post-conflict-strategy-restorative-justice-rebels-and-rebuilding-conflict-affected">https://pt.ict.nl/article/sri-lankas-post-conflict-strategy-restorative-justice-rebels-and-rebuilding-conflict-affected</a>
02/08/2018	European Journal of International Security	Volumen 4, número 1	02/2018	Nicholas Michelsen y Thomas Coley	The field of Strategic Communications: Professionals, a new research agenda for International Security	«Fake news» (+abstract)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2018.9">https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2018.9</a>
22/04/2019	European Journal of International Security	Volumen 4, número 2	06/2019	Alexander Lanoszka	Disinformation in international politics	«Disinformation» (título, +abstract, +keywords), «fake news» (+keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2019.6">https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2019.6</a>
03/01/2020	Journal of Peace Research	Volumen 57, número 1	01/2020	Hannah Smidt	Mitigating election violence locally: UN peacekeepers' election-education campaigns in Côte d'Ivoire	«Disinformation» (+abstract)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319884993">https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319884993</a>
11/06/2020	Digital Threats: Research and Practice	Volumen 1, número 2	06/2020	Xinyi Zhou, Alishay Jain, Vir V. Phoha y Reza Zafarani	Fake News Early Detection: A Theory-driven Model	«Fake news» (título, +abstract, +keywords), «disinformation» (+abstract, +keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1145/3377478">https://doi.org/10.1145/3377478</a>
15/04/2021	Digital Threats: Research and Practice	Volumen 2, número 2	06/2021	Rohit Valecha, Srikrishna Krishnarao Srinivasan, Tejpal Vohry, K. Hazel Kwon, Manish Agrawal y H. Raghav Rao	Fake News Sharing: An Investigation of Threat and Coping: Cases in the Context of the Zika Virus	«Fake news» (título, +abstract, +keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1145/3410025">https://doi.org/10.1145/3410025</a>
28/04/2021	Digital Threats: Research and Practice	Volumen 2, número 2	06/2021	Pratim Milton Datta, Mark Whitmore y Joseph K. Nwankpa	A Perfect Storm: Social Media News, Psychological Biases, and AI	«Fake news» (+abstract, +keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1145/3428157">https://doi.org/10.1145/3428157</a>
21/07/2021	Frontiers in Political Science	Volumen 3, 685295 (identificador del artículo)	2021	Dolores Palau-Sampio	Pseudo-Media Sites, Polarization, and Pandemic Scepticism in Spain	«Disinformation» (+abstract)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.685295">https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.685295</a>
07/02/2022	Digital Threats: Research and Practice	Volumen 3, número 3	09/2022	Shehzeen Hussain, Paarth Neekhara, Brian Dolhansky, Joanna Bilton, Cristian Carlton Ferrer, Julian McAuley y Farinaz Koushanfar	Exposing Vulnerabilities of Deepfake Detection Systems with Robust Attacks	«Disinformation» (+abstract), «fake news» (+keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1145/3464307">https://doi.org/10.1145/3464307</a>
25/03/2022	Frontiers in Political Science	Volumen 4, 848763 (identificador del artículo)	2022	Viktor Suter, Morteza Shahrezayee y Miriam Meckel	COVID-19 Induced Misinformation on YouTube: An Analysis of User Commentary	«Fake news» (+keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.848763">https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.848763</a>
28/04/2022	Frontiers in Political Science	Volumen 4, 858093 (identificador del artículo)	2022	Zining Wang y Jing Xu	An Empirical Research on How to Tackle Infodemic in China: Stakeholders and Algorithms	«Disinformation» (+abstract)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.858093">https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.858093</a>
29/04/2022	Journal of Global Security Studies	Volumen 7, número 2	06/2022	Tobias Lemke y Michael W. Häbegger	Foreign Interference and Social Media Networks: A Relational Approach to Studying Contemporary Russian Disinformation	«Disinformation» (título, +abstract, +keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogac004">https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogac004</a>
22/06/2022	Frontiers in Political Science	Volumen 4, 885362 (identificador del artículo)	2022	Rhys Leahy, Nicholas Johnson Restrepo, Richard Sear y Neil F. Johnson	Connectivity Between Russian Information Sources and Extremist Communities Across Social Media Platforms	«Disinformation» (+abstract)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.885362">https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.885362</a>
19/07/2022	Journal of Global Security Studies	Volumen 7, número 4	12/2022	Tzu-Chieh Hung y Tzu-Wei Hung	How China's Cognitive Warfare Works: A Frontline Perspective of Taiwan's Anti-Disinformation Wars	«Anti-Disinformation» (Título)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogac016">https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogac016</a>
10/11/2022	Journal of Peace Research	Volumen 60, número 5	09/2023	Diego A Martín, Jacob N Shapiro y Julia G Ithart	Introducing the Online Political Influence Efforts dataset	«Disinformation» (+abstract, +keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221092815">https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221092815</a>
18/04/2023	Armed Forces & Society	OnlineFirst	OnlineFirst	Andreas Ventset, Sten Hansson, Merril Rockberg y Man-Lis Madisson	Building Resilience Against Hostile Information Influence Activities: How a New Media Literacy Learning Platform Was Developed for the Estonian Defense Forces	«Disinformation» (+abstract, +keywords), «fake news» (+keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X231163285">https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X231163285</a>
22/05/2023	Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management	Online	Online	Brian J. Murphy	In Defense of Disinformation	«Disinformation» (título, +abstract, +keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1515/jheem-2022-0045">https://doi.org/10.1515/jheem-2022-0045</a>
24/08/2023	Journal of Cybersecurity	Volumen 9, número 1	2023	Ugochukwu Etudo, Christopher Whyte, Victoria Yoon y Niam Yaraghi	From Russia with fear: fear appeals and the patterns of cyber-enabled influence operations	«Disinformation» (+abstract), «fake news» (+keywords)	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/cybercty/ad016">https://doi.org/10.1093/cybercty/ad016</a>

Table XXVI

in the use of information and communication technologies to counter the mass dissemination of separatist ideology (p. 46).

Another interesting fact is that, despite their extensive coverage over time, the *Journal of Peace Research* (1964-2023) and *Armed Forces and Society* (1974-2023) did not feature research articles with the terms “disinformation” or “fake news” in their titles, abstracts or keywords until the 2020s. This does not necessarily imply that they did not address this phenomenon beforehand. However, it is striking that these specific words were not used in strategic places until so recently.

From there, Smidt (2020), in the *Journal of Peace Research*, examines the relationship between UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) and civilians. Specifically, how voter education through these PKOs “reduces violent protests and riots” (p. 199). She argues that while holding credible elections can be a springboard to democratic governance in war-affected countries, they carry a risk of disinformation, i.e. the spread of “false information, rumours and hate speech”, which can legitimise violence (p. 199).

When PKOs are “perceived to be an impartial arbiter, its election-education events have violence-mitigating effects at the individual and subnational levels” (p. 199). Among other benefits, these “election-education events help people resist disinformation campaigns and, consequently, reduce election violence in the forms of violent protests and riots” (p. 200).

Martin, D. A., Shapiro, J. N. & Ilhardt, J. G. (2023), also in the *Journal of Peace Research*, present a dataset on the covert use of social networks to influence policy. This set is based on more than 1,000 media reports and 500 research articles/reports. Its main objective is to analyse how propaganda is promoted, controversial views are defended and disinformation is spread through social networks (p. 1). The most relevant findings include that of the 78 foreign influence efforts identified, 64% were carried out by Russia (p. 2).

Connected to this, Ventsel *et al.* (2023), in *Armed Forces & Society* argue that the “uses of disinformation in international influence activities, such as those propagated by the Russian Federation as a part of its hybrid warfare against its neighbors and NATO allies, pose major challenges to Western democracies” (p. 2). They propose that “military personnel’s motivation to defend their country may be harmed by their exposure to disinformation”. They therefore present a methodological approach as “specific education and training programs should be devised for the military”, building “resilience against information influence activities” (p. 1).

Of course, Russia has attracted disinformation researchers; and to a lesser extent China. Six more articles dealing with these issues are cited below:

1. Lanoszka (2019) examines “the Russian campaign that has targeted the Baltic states since at least the 2014 annexation of Crimea”. Available evidence “strongly suggests that the strategic effects of disinformation are exaggerated”.
2. Lemke & Habegger (2022) investigate how states manipulate social media to spread disinformation, mimicking cultural characteristics to camouflage their intentions and gain followers. They focus on the Twitter activity of two Kremlin-linked media outlets: *RT* and *Sputnik*.
3. Leahy *et al.* (2022) address how Russian information sources feed extremist online communities.
4. Hung & Hung (2022) delve into China’s “cognitive war” over Taiwan. To connect academia with the press, Table IV contains a news item from *nytimes.com*, dated 6 January 2020, entitled: *Awash in Disinformation Before Vote, Taiwan Points Finger at China*.
5. Murphy (2023) argues that disinformation is a politicised and misunderstood term in security disciplines. However, this is not to say that it is not a “demonstrated element of national power”, while states such as Russia “wielded the concept as an effective weapon to undermine and weaken rivals”.

He therefore proposes a framework, based on three criteria, to help identify misinformation and thereby strengthen the term “for security professionals”.

6. Etudo *et al.* (2023) analyse different “influence operations”: political warfare, information warfare, hybrid warfare, disinformation campaigns or election hacking campaigns (p. 3). They describe how they “rely on domestic events tied to a broad macrosocial division (e.g. an act of race violence or protest activity)” (p. 1). The study draws on the “Russian Federation’s coordinated trolling campaign against the USA between 2015 and 2016”. The article notes that, “while strong associations exist between Russian ad emissions on Facebook and societal unrest in the period, those relationships are not statistically causal” (p. 1).

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, there are three articles to mention, published in *Frontiers in Political Science*. In the first, Palau-Sampio (2021) examines five “Spanish pseudo-media” that mimic the appearance of the media, “but provide pseudo-information”.

In the second, Suter, Shahrezaye & Meckel (2022) scrutinise the “theoretical linkages between polarization and misinformation”. They then measure “flow of misinformation about COVID-19 in the comment sections of four popular YouTube channels” —*CNN*, *The Epoch Times*, the World Health Organization and *Fox News*— “for over 16 months using big data sources and methods”.

In the third, Wang & Xu (2022) discuss how in China “various algorithms have been applied to new media platforms to help combat COVID-19”, particularly regarding disinformation (p. 1). The study “proposes a theoretical model called Block, Push, and Intervene”, which “calls for the timely blocking of misinformation and disinformation, precisely delivering authentic information to people affected by the infodemic and intervening in some potential issues in advance” (p. 1).

In the context of another virus, Valecha *et al.* (2021) investigate what conditions lead to a preference for fake news and its transmission. To do so, they conducted a content analysis of tweets about the Zika health crisis (p. 2). Among other findings, they mention that tweets with a threatening tone are more likely to be shared as fake news, due to the anxiety provoked (p. 13).

With regard to technology, these three articles stand out:

1. Zhou *et al.* (2020) propose a “theory-driven model for fake news detection”. For this purpose, it considers “news content at various levels: lexicon-level, syntax-level, semantic-level, and discourse-level” (p. 1). This detection is carried out in a “supervised machine learning framework” (p. 1). In addition, researchers explore possible patterns of fake news and study the relationships between fake news, deception/disinformation and clickbaits (p. 1).
2. Datta, Whitmore & Nwankpa (2021) explore how artificial intelligence and social networks amplify psychological biases, leading to the spread of fake news

(p. 2). To address this problem, they recommend a more equitable and fairer dissemination of journalistic information, with AI designs that do not focus solely on prediction (p. 18). In other words, the dissemination of content on social networks should not depend so much on what the user is deemed to prefer.

3. Hussain *et al.* (2022) investigate fake or manipulated videos. They say that although methods of detecting deepfakes have been developed, such as the use of deep neural networks to distinguish fake AI-generated videos from real videos, these systems are vulnerable. They can be circumvented by “adversarial perturbations”, which cause fake videos to be classified as real (p. 1).

Finally, Michelsen & Colley (2019) state that the “threats arising from shifts in the global media space are encapsulated by contemporary buzzwords like post-truth, fake news and hybrid warfare” (p. 1).

They argue that these changes in communication practices have two significant implications for international security. The first is that “states are often inferior to state challengers in harnessing the contemporary communication environment” (p. 1). The second is that “liberal democracies are especially at risk of subversion by opponents using democratically-enshrined freedoms of expression to propagate disinformation, as shown by concerns about Russian hybrid warfare or the impact of fake news on electoral processes” (p. 2).

From this starting point, the study focuses on “strategic communication”, “a mode of thought and practice promising to enhance state communication; encompassing long-established activities including public diplomacy, public relations, nation branding and information operations” (p. 1)<sup>2</sup>.

#### ***4.1. Selection of the Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos and analysis using the keywords “desinformación”, “disinformation”, “noticias falsas”, “fake news”, “posverdad” and “post-truth”***

The thirteen academic journals selected based on the *SCImago Journal Rank* provide a broad picture of “safety research” in relation to disinformation and related terms. However, they do have certain limits. One of them is the domination of English, which obviates possible valuable contributions in other languages.

To balance and complement, the *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos* (*Revista del IEEE*), published in Spanish and English, is incorporated. It presents a security-focused approach and, in addition, highlights its association with the IEEE,

---

<sup>2</sup> *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, in its issue 2, dealt with “strategic communication” in relation to the war in Afghanistan; specifically, in the article *La comunicación estratégica (StratCom) en los conflictos modernos: el caso de Afganistán* (Rodríguez, 2013).

which is renowned for its dedication to security in its many dimensions. The Institute has a wide repertoire of publications; however, only the journal has been chosen in order to be consistent with the methodology followed so far. Future research could examine other types of work, such as the *Strategy Papers* or the various documents.

The result of the analysis is interesting as it exposes the limits of the established search criteria and helps to incorporate a new keyword for further work. Indeed, after using Adobe Acrobat’s advanced search of IEEE journals from issue 0 (2012) to issue 20 (2022), no article was found that contained at least one of the keywords designated in the title, abstract or keywords section. However, the publication *Manipulación cognitiva en el siglo XXI*, by Luis Astorga González, from issue 16 (2020), is particularly noteworthy. The reason for this is the high presence of keywords (table XXVII).

**Palabras clave analizadas en el artículo *Manipulación cognitiva en el siglo XXI*, de Luis Astorga González, publicado en la Revista del IEEE - Número 16**

Revista	Fecha de la revista	Autor del artículo	Título del artículo	Palabras clave detectadas, incluyendo referencias bibliográficas y enlaces (veces que aparecen en el artículo)	Palabras clave detectadas, sin incluir referencias bibliográficas ni enlaces (veces que aparecen en el artículo)	¿Las palabras clave aparecen en el título, «abstract» o «keywords»?	Enlace
Revista del IEEE - Número 16	12/2020	Luis Astorga González	Manipulación cognitiva en el siglo XXI	«Desinformación» (13), «fake news» (6), «post-truth» (4)	«Desinformación» (9), «fake news» (2)	No	<a href="https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/2208/4210">https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/2208/4210</a>
Revista del IEEE - Número 16	12/2020	Luis Astorga González	Cognitive manipulation in the 21st century	«Disinformation» (9), «fake news» (6), «desinformación» (4), «post-truth» (2)	«Disinformation» (8), «fake news» (2)	No	<a href="https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/2208/4211">https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/2208/4211</a>

Table XXVII

Although none of them are located in the places indicated, it is advisable to review the keywords that Astorga González (2020) chose for his article. They are as follows: “comunicación” (“communication”), “manipulación” (“manipulation”), “conducta” (“behaviour”), “redes sociales” (“social networks”), “Al Qaeda”, “IS” and “Gramsci”. Probably the closest approximation to this study is “manipulation”. Consequently, future research could include the term to gain a broader perspective. That said, the publication:

“Explores the effects that can be generated in modern societies by cognitive manipulation using advanced tools, the media (including the Internet and social networks) and theories of social behaviour and cognitive perception. It also describes how al-Qaeda and the Islamic state have used these techniques as part of their overall strategies” (Astorga González, 2020, p. 15).

Other analyses could consider alternative strategies, such as assessing not only the presence of keywords in the above-mentioned sections, but also their frequency in the body of the text. If a term appears significantly, it could indicate the centrality of that concept, even if it is not present in the three initial highlighted sections —title, abstract and keywords—.

#### 4.2. *Conclusions from the analysis of academic journals on security and overall assessment*

The following conclusions can be drawn from this analysis (for more information on the articles, see table XXVI):

1. Russia and its relation to disinformation campaigns or hybrid warfare have attracted a great deal of academic attention. Of the 18 research articles analysed, at least seven (39%) deal extensively with Russia, either because it is the primary subject of study or because it features prominently. Specifically, they are: *Disinformation in international politics*; *Foreign Interference and Social Media Networks: A Relational Approach to Studying Contemporary Russian Disinformation*; *Connectivity Between Russian Information Sources and Extremist Communities Across Social Media Platforms*; *Introducing the Online Political Influence Efforts dataset*; *Building Resilience Against Hostile Information Influence Activities: How a New Media Literacy Learning Platform Was Developed for the Estonian Defense Forces*; *In Defense of Disinformation*; y *From Russia with fear: fear appeals and the patterns of cyber-enabled influence operations*.
2. On China and its “cognitive warfare” over Taiwan, see the article *How China’s Cognitive Warfare Works: A Frontline Perspective of Taiwan’s Anti-Disinformation Wars*.
3. From a technological perspective, addressing the role of social networks and artificial intelligence, it is worth mentioning *Fake News Early Detection: A Theory-driven Model*; *Fake News Sharing: An Investigation of Threat and Coping Cues in the Context of the Zika Virus*; *A Perfect Storm: Social Media News, Psychological Biases, and AI*; and *Exposing Vulnerabilities of Deepfake Detection Systems with Robust Attacks*.
4. The journal *Frontiers in Political Science* published three articles related to the COVID-19 pandemic and disinformation: *Pseudo-Media Sites, Polarization, and Pandemic Skepticism in Spain*; *COVID-19 Induced Misinformation on YouTube: An Analysis of User Commentary*; and *An Empirical Research on How to Tackle Infodemic in China: Stakeholders and Algorithms*.
5. The remaining articles deal with post-conflict disinformation —*Sri Lanka’s Post-Conflict Strategy: Restorative Justice for Rebels and Rebuilding of Conflict-affected Communities*—; “strategic communications” —*The field of Strategic Communications Professionals: a new research agenda for International Security*—; and how election education through peacekeeping operations can help mitigate misinformation and thus potential outbreaks of violence —*Mitigating election violence locally: UN peacekeepers’ election-education campaigns in Côte d’Ivoire*—.
6. The *Revista del IEEE* analysis emphasises the importance of considering other keywords, and even using different search strategies.

That said, academia is credited with aligning with several of the journalistic interests identified by compiling headlines from *nytimes.com* and *elmundo.es*. Recall that Russia appears in many of these headlines, which also mention China. The role of social media and artificial intelligence, as well as disinformation in the context of COVID-19, has also been discussed on multiple occasions in the press.

However, academic articles on Sri Lanka and the “Tamil Tigers”, “strategic communication” and peacekeeping operations as a way of dealing with disinformation have not been echoed in the reviewed press. In this respect, academia appropriately offers a more theoretical and less topical content, based on a scientific methodology with an exhaustive and rigorous review process, which leads to in-depth and objective analyses. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that academic research is constantly evolving, i.e. subject to revisions, extensions and corrections.

Furthermore, the search criteria set and applied to the journals did not detect any articles on the *Disinformation Governance Board*. This is surprising given that it was possibly the cause of a major spike in interest in “disinformation”, both worldwide and in the US, during April and May 2022. It also triggered a cascade of draft legislation (table VIII).

No article referring to *Order PCM/I030/2020* has been detected either, although it probably generated a large increase in the popularity of the word “disinformation” during November 2020 in Spain. These absences are striking, as the US DGB and the “structure” for the “fight against disinformation” in Spain were created from a security-focused position.

In short, academic-journalistic-general interests (the latter measured with *Google Trends*) sometimes coincide. This is the case of concerns about disinformation and COVID-19, which led to both journalistic and academic articles. The same goes for Russia and its role in disinformation campaigns. However, in other instances this link has not been found, and the lack of academic articles on the DGB and *Order PCM/I030/2020* is particularly notable.

Throughout this paper recommendations have been put forward for future research looking to follow a similar direction to the one addressed here. Some of these suggestions include broadening the keyword spectrum, including more journals, consulting academic databases such as ScienceDirect, or exploring alternative search strategies.

Moreover, as there is an emerging academic interrelationship between disinformation and artificial intelligence, interdisciplinary collaboration is essential. Of course, it is important that experts on disinformation, fake news and post-truth keep up to date by regularly reviewing academic literature combining security and technology.

As an ambitious proposal, we suggest the creation of a database of newspaper headlines from around the world based on the keywords used in this analysis. This tool would allow research to be carried out with a significantly larger volume of data, enabling filtering by country, region or language. When and why the press in certain geographical areas increase the frequency of use of these terms in their headlines could thus easily be discerned.

This resource would enhance the development of qualitative research allowing, for example, analysis of what context the media use the word “disinformation”: referring to military conflicts? social media? electoral processes? Indeed, cross-cultural comparisons

could be made and it would be possible to understand how disinformation varies across cultures, political systems and media.

In short, these proposals would enrich the academic field at the theoretical level and provide practical clarity on disinformation, allowing for the development of strategies against it. Targeted digital literacy programmes could be developed, protecting democratic integrity and helping to maintain trust in institutions, among other initiatives.

## Bibliography

- Alandete, D. (2017). There's fake news in Catalonia too. *english.elpais.com*. 2 de octubre de 2017. <https://bit.ly/4owqaOF>
- Alterman, E. (2004). Presidential Lies. *nytimes.com*. 14 de noviembre de 2004. <https://bit.ly/464nfoR>
- Astorga González, L. (2020). Manipulación cognitiva en el siglo XXI. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. (16). <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/2208>
- Betz, B. (2022). Mayorkas testifies DHS is creating 'Disinformation Governance Board'. *Fox News*. 27 de abril de 2022. <https://fxn.ws/4oARCuH>
- CNN. (2017). Donald Trump shuts down CNN reporter: «You're fake news». *YouTube*. 11 de enero de 2017. <https://bit.ly/4oyJpY2>
- Congress.gov. (sin fecha). Legislative Search Results. *Congress.gov*. <https://bit.ly/470lexJ>
- Consejo de Ministros. (2019). El Gobierno acuerda reinhumar los restos de Franco el 10 de junio en El Pardo. *La Moncloa*. 15 de marzo de 2019. <https://bit.ly/49xFXRF>
- Consejo de Seguridad Nacional. (2021). Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional 2021. *Departamento de Seguridad Nacional*. 4 de noviembre de 2021. <https://bit.ly/3u92mo6>
- Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals. (2017a). El «Sense ficció» «Veritats de mentida», líder del «prime time». *Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals*. 24 de mayo de 2017. <https://bit.ly/3QPOA2A>
- (2017b). Veritats de mentida. *Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals*. 23 de mayo de 2017. <https://bit.ly/476zL13>
- Cuatro. (2018). 'Chester: Posverdad' (04/02/18), completo HD. *Cuatro*. 4 de febrero de 2018. <https://bit.ly/3QRoid5>
- Daniels, E., Bade, R. y Lizza, R. (2022). POLITICO Playbook: Fauci pulls out of WHCD. Is Biden next?. *POLITICO*. 27 de abril de 2022. <https://bit.ly/4otpfPf>

- Datta, P., Whitmore, M. y Nwankpa, J. K. (2021). A Perfect Storm: Social Media News, Psychological Biases, and AI. *Digital Threats: Research and Practice*. 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3428157>
- DG HOME. (2023). CERIS FCT WORKSHOP: Disinformation, fake news and hate speech. *DG HOME*. 11 de mayo de 2023. <https://bit.ly/464nskF>
- Dharmawardhane, I. (2013). Sri Lanka's Post-Conflict Strategy Restorative Justice for Rebels and Rebuilding of Conflict-affected Communities. *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 7(6). <https://pt.icct.nl/sites/default/files/import/pdf/sri-lanka's-post-conflict-strategy-restorative.pdf>
- Diccionario de la lengua española. (sin fecha). posverdad. *Diccionario de la lengua española*. <https://bit.ly/3MEXH3I>
- Etudo, U. *et al.* (2023). From Russia with fear: fear appeals and the patterns of cyber-enabled influence operations. *Journal of Cybersecurity*. 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/cybsec/tyado16>
- Europa Press. (2019). El CNI publica la primera guía contra las «fake news» para frenar la desinformación en el ciberespacio. *elmundo.es*. 23 de febrero de 2019. <https://bit.ly/3QTmq6W>
- (2023). Feijóo acusa a Sánchez de generar «fake news» con sus palabras en una «derivada» más propia de «regímenes totalitarios». *europapress.es*. 27 de marzo de 2023. <https://bit.ly/3u9Sjz6>
- EUvsDisinfo. (2022). Disinfo: US bio laboratories were involved in creating coronavirus. *EUvsDisinfo*. 9 de marzo de 2022. <https://bit.ly/49vi9gZ>
- (sin fecha). About - EUvsDisinfo. *EUvsDisinfo*. <https://bit.ly/3uaGcBV>
- FormulaTV. (2018). 'Salvados' arrasa con su especial de las granjas anotando un magnífico 12,8% y 'Chester' sube a un gran 7,6%. *formulatv.com*. 5 de febrero de 2018. <https://bit.ly/3Szs6En>
- Gleicher, N. (2018). Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Explained. *Meta*. 6 de diciembre de 2018. <https://bit.ly/49xkZSI>
- Google News Initiative. (sin fecha). Google Trends: Interpretar los datos. *Google News Initiative*. <https://bit.ly/3skLjyW>
- Grupo Parlamentario Popular en el Congreso. (2017). XII Legislatura Proposición no de Ley ante el Pleno. Proposición no de Ley relativa al impulso de las medidas necesarias para garantizar la veracidad de las informaciones que circulan por servicios conectados a Internet y evitar injerencias que pongan en peligro la estabilidad institucional en España. (162/000550). *congreso.es*. 19 de diciembre de 2017. <https://bit.ly/3FPaEUK>
- Hart, G. (2004). 'When Presidents Lie': The Post-Truth Presidency. *nytimes.com*. 10 de octubre de 2004. <https://bit.ly/3QvXUay>

- Herraiz, P. (2019). El director del CNI: «Estamos preparados para proteger las elecciones de ciberataques, pero no estamos a salvo de las fake news». *elmundo.es*. 14 de febrero de 2019. <https://bit.ly/3FXhcQY>
- Homeland Security. (2022a). Fact Sheet: DHS Internal Working Group Protects Free Speech Other Fundamental Rights When Addressing Disinformation That Threatens the Security of the United States. *Homeland Security*. 2 de mayo de 2022. <https://bit.ly/3QpugUg>
- (2022b). Following HSAC Recommendation, DHS terminates Disinformation Governance Board. *Homeland Security*. 24 de agosto de 2022. <https://bit.ly/3ufg7Br>
- Hung, T. C. y Hung, T. W. (2022). How China's Cognitive Warfare Works: A Frontline Perspective of Taiwan's Anti-Disinformation Wars. *Journal of Global Security Studies*. 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogaco16>
- Hussain, S. *et al.* (2022). Exposing Vulnerabilities of Deepfake Detection Systems with Robust Attacks. *Digital Threats: Research and Practice*. 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3464307>
- Jankowicz, N. (2022a). Cat's out of the bag: here's what I've been up to the past two months, and why I've been a bit quiet on here. Honored to be serving in the Biden Administration @DHSgov and helping shape our counter-disinformation efforts. *Twitter*. 27 de abril de 2022. <https://bit.ly/4767pEq>
- (2022b). Nina Jankowicz resignation letter. *Homeland Security*. 18 de mayo de 2022. <https://bit.ly/47twybZ>
- Kofman, A. (2018). Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science. *nytimes.com*. 25 de octubre de 2018. <https://bit.ly/47cuVje>
- Krugman, P. (2011). The Post-Truth Campaign. *nytimes.com*. 22 de diciembre de 2011. <https://bit.ly/469bB5o>
- La Moncloa. (2019). Informe del Plan de lucha contra la desinformación. *La Moncloa*. 15 de marzo de 2019. <https://bit.ly/3QzG19k>
- Landaluce, E. (2018). El referéndum ilegal del 1-O también fue 'fake news'. *elmundo.es*. 1 de octubre de 2018. <https://bit.ly/3QxutF5>
- Lanoszka, A. (2019). Disinformation in international politics. *European Journal of International Security*. 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2019.6>
- Latorre, R. (2017). Cataluña se instala en la posverdad. *elmundo.es*. 17 de septiembre de 2017. <https://bit.ly/469SlnZ>
- Lázaro, F. (2020a). La nueva directora del CNI pide más medios para «modernizar» el espionaje ante las 'fake news' y los ciberataques. *elmundo.es*. 10 de febrero de 2020. <https://bit.ly/3Qv7lag>

- (2020b). Una orden interna de la Guardia Civil pidió recopilar bulos y ‘fake news’ «susceptibles» de generar «desafección» al Gobierno. *elmundo.es*. 21 de abril de 2020. <https://bit.ly/47qDshX>
- Leahy, R. *et al.* (2022). Connectivity Between Russian Information Sources and Extremist Communities Across Social Media Platforms. *Frontiers in Political Science*. 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.885362>
- Lemke, T. y Habegger, M. W. (2022). Foreign Interference and Social Media Networks: A Relational Approach to Studying Contemporary Russian Disinformation. *Journal of Global Security Studies*. 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogaco04>
- Martin, D. A., Shapiro, J. N. y Ilhardt, J. G. (2023). Introducing the Online Political Influence Efforts dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*. 60(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221092815>
- MFA Russia. (2022). @mod\_russia: During the course of the special military operation evidence of an emergency clean-up performed by the Kiev regime was found - aimed at eradicating traces of the military-biological programme, in Ukraine, financed by @DeptofDefense. *Twitter*. 6 de marzo de 2022. <https://bit.ly/47oDabA>
- Michelsen, N. y Colley, T. (2019). The field of Strategic Communications Professionals: a new research agenda for International Security. *European Journal of International Security*. 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2018.9>
- Murphy, B. J. (2023). In Defense of Disinformation. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jhsem-2022-0045>
- Noticias ONU. (2022). No hay señales de laboratorios de armas biológicas en Ucrania, insiste la jefa de desarme de la ONU. *Noticias ONU*. 18 de marzo de 2022. <https://bit.ly/4767zM2>
- Oxford English Dictionary. (sin fecha-a). fake news - Advanced search results in Meanings. *Oxford English Dictionary*. <https://bit.ly/46eGUuZ>
- (sin fecha-b). post-truth - Advanced search results in Meanings. *Oxford English Dictionary*. <https://bit.ly/3MABqDS>
- Oxford Languages. (2016). Oxford Word of the Year 2016. *Oxford Languages*. <https://bit.ly/3sqNPDC>
- Palau-Sampio, D. (2021). Pseudo-Media Sites, Polarization, and Pandemic Skepticism in Spain. *Frontiers in Political Science*. 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.685295>
- Queen, J. y Thomsen, J. (2022). Alex Jones must pay Sandy Hook families nearly \$1 billion for hoax claims, jury says. *Reuters*. 13 de octubre de 2022. <https://reut.rs/4oyXo07>
- Real Academia Española. (2017a). Darío Villanueva: «El término posverdad entrará este año en el Diccionario». *rae.es*. 29 de junio de 2017. <https://bit.ly/3u52kNX>

- (2017b). El término posverdad entrará en el Diccionario antes de final de año. *rae.es*. 27 de noviembre de 2017. <https://bit.ly/3u18xKI>
- Resmî Gazete. (2022). Kanun Basın Kanunu ile bazı kanunlarda değişiklik yapılmasına dair kanun [Ley sobre la modificación de la Ley de Prensa y algunas otras leyes]. *Resmî Gazete*. 18 de octubre de 2022. <https://bit.ly/3MAV3Mn>
- Rodríguez, F. S. (2013). La comunicación estratégica (StratCom) en los conflictos modernos: el caso de Afganistán. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. (2). <https://revista.ieee.es/article/view/335>
- Sala de Prensa - DSN. (2019). Consejo de Seguridad Nacional.- 15.03.2019. *Sala de Prensa - DSN*. 15 de marzo de 2019. <https://bit.ly/3u6UweL>
- Sánchez Pérez-Castejón, P. (2020). carta militancia 19\_11\_20. *psoe.es*. 19 de noviembre de 2020. <https://bit.ly/49rx246>
- Scimago Journal & Country Rank. (2023). SJR : Scientific Journal Rankings. *scimagojr.com*. <https://bit.ly/3QPPhsI>
- Similarweb. (2023a). Category Leaders - Spain - All traffic. *Similarweb*. <https://bit.ly/3QQOesl>
- (2023b). Category Leaders - United States - All traffic. *Similarweb*. <https://bit.ly/3QRt65e>
- (2023c). Category Leaders - Worldwide - All traffic. *Similarweb*. <https://bit.ly/4oynaRP>
- Smidt, H. (2020). Mitigating election violence locally: UN peacekeepers' election-education campaigns in Côte d'Ivoire. *Journal of Peace Research*. 57(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319884993>
- Suter, V., Shahrezaye, M. y Meckel, M. (2022). COVID-19 Induced Misinformation on YouTube: An Analysis of User Commentary. *Frontiers in Political Science*. 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.849763>
- TEAM GOP. (2018). The Highly Anticipated 2017 Fake News Awards. *GOP*. 17 de enero de 2018. <https://bit.ly/3svEbj9>
- The Editorial Board. (2016). Facebook and the Digital Virus Called Fake News. *nytimes.com*. 19 de noviembre de 2016. <https://bit.ly/3RiRiSR>
- Tribunal de Cuentas Europeo. (2021). El impacto de la desinformación en la UE: una cuestión abordada, pero no atajada. *eca.europa.eu*. <https://bit.ly/3MBJuEs>
- Tribunal Supremo. Sala de lo Contencioso. (2021). Roj: STS 3798/2021 - ECLI:ES:TS:2021:3798. *poderjudicial.es*. <https://bit.ly/3QpuJGo>
- Twitter. (2022). COVID-19 - Twitter Transparency Center. *Twitter*. <https://bit.ly/464nTvj>

- (2023). Moderation Research - Twitter Transparency Center. *Twitter*. <https://bit.ly/3skw9K3>
- Valecha, R. *et al.* (2021). Fake News Sharing: An Investigation of Threat and Coping Cues in the Context of the Zika Virus. *Digital Threats: Research and Practice*. 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3410025>
- Ventsel, A. *et al.* (2023). Building Resilience Against Hostile Information Influence Activities: How a New Media Literacy Learning Platform Was Developed for the Estonian Defense Forces. *Armed Forces & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X231163265>
- Wang, Z. y Xu, J. (2022). An Empirical Research on How to Tackle Infodemic in China: Stakeholders and Algorithms. *Frontiers in Political Science*. 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.858093>
- Zhou, X. *et al.* (2020). Fake News Early Detection: A Theory-driven Model. *Digital Threats: Research and Practice*. 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3377478>

---

*Article received: 04 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---



*Juan Carlos FERNÁNDEZ CELA*

*Geographer. PhD in Political Science and International Relations*

*E-mail: juancaoi@ucm.es*

*Geopolitical analysis in financial  
contagion scenarios: reconstructing spatial  
chains using their Legal Entity Identifier  
(LEI)*

**Abstract**

This article explores the potential of spatial data for assisting in the geopolitical analysis of the international financial network. It examines the possibilities of using the Legal Entity Identifier Registry (LEI codes), a vast data bank that makes it possible to determine the spatial relationships of international financial intermediaries and their reported investment positions.

The objective is to refine the analysis in two scenarios: first, creating geopolitical codes related to international financial logic, and second, rebuilding the spatial structure of large financial intermediaries and their market positions. This makes it possible to identify contagion channels in the event of a crisis in one or more parts of the chain, which is of great interest to security.

**Keywords**

LEI codes; financial intelligence; geography of finance; financial contagion; geopolitical analysis.

**Cite this article:**

FERNÁNDEZ CELA, Juan Carlos (2023). “Geopolitical analysis in financial contagion scenarios: reconstructing spatial chains using their Legal Entity Identifier (LEI)”. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. **619-634**.

## 1. Introduction

International capital movements are the lifeblood of global capitalism. Without guaranteed financial transactions, economic exchange between countries would simply not be possible. The Asian Trade Bank estimates that 80% of global trade is financed through secure payment transactions, enabling trade even in the most insecure markets (Beck et al, 2019). However, studying the spatial mobility of transnational flows is not only of economic interest, as their behaviour can influence the evolution of specific geopolitical conflict scenarios that may be relevant to security.

Despite its centrality, few studies have paid attention to this issue. Its technical complexity is undoubtedly an obstacle for those unfamiliar with the peculiarities surrounding the cryptic world of finance. Geographers, sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists are not always comfortable studying a subject that, for decades, has been the exclusive preserve of a select group of economists. The significant lack of spatial studies of capital movements by experts from other disciplines has also influenced the prevailing discourse, which has not always considered their impact on numerous segments of society, and especially on international relations.

The geography of finance, an epistemological discipline that straddles economic and political geography, has been trying to bridge this gap for a decade. Although its implementation in Spain is practically non-existent, it has a growing presence in varied countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, China and Russia. The 2008 crisis triggered its expansion, placing capital markets in the spotlight of experts from different areas, in response to the confusion caused by a swiftly spreading economic crisis that was financial in origin, and which subsequently affected other political, demographic and social structural conflicts.

This discipline allows us to understand in some detail how capital flows move in an organised way across the territory through a complex and specialised nodal network. Although they are not predictive, they do have regular movements that can be detected and used to make strategic security decisions. Therefore, understanding their behaviour is not just of theoretical academic interest. It has a lesser-known practical dimension, which can serve as a tool to assist in geopolitical analysis, as well as in planning foreign and security policy relations.

## 2. Background of applying spatial reconstruction techniques to financial chains. The state of play

Perhaps the main problem in the spatial study of international financial movements stems from restrictions on accessing information. The way asset trading is organised through broker-dealers makes it impossible to determine, using public data, who the end beneficiary is or where the real origin of a financial transaction lies. Although there are huge data banks on capital movements, it is no easy task to establish something as

apparently simple as knowing where capital movements are coming from and where they are going.

Financial intelligence units are the main stakeholders in these issues, and they use numerous and complex sources of information. Some are registered and some are informal; some are restricted and some are publicly accessible. Company reports, financial transaction reports, international trade reports, exchange of tax information and registry information are some of the known sources. For example, in Spain, the Fichero de Titularidades Financieras, managed since 2016 by the Executive Service of the Commission for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Monetary Offences (SEPBLAC), is of particular note. It is a gigantic database that gathers information on deposits, safe deposit boxes, cryptocurrencies and other assets belonging to individuals and legal entities.

A key issue is developing algorithms to reconstruct the territorial mobility patterns of financial chains. This is not easy; the BIS (2019) estimates that there are more than 5 trillion trades per day in the foreign exchange market. To improve systems for detecting suspicious transactions involving money laundering or terrorist financing, complex and diverse systems must be put in place. Some informal systems for moving capital, such as *hawala*, are difficult to detect because they do not leave a digital footprint. At other times, artificial intelligence can be used. Techniques designed to understand different environments or the behaviour of capital flows are being developed. Classification algorithms, such as *Support Vector Machines*, are designed to identify suspicious behaviour in cross-jurisdictional transactions. *Analyses of financial transactions* detect dubious patterns or behaviour, such as transfers of large amounts of money to known tax havens. This also happens for movements to accounts of persons or entities linked to illegal activities. *Network analysis* has multiple possibilities, e.g. identifying an entity's financial contacts and transactions. *Big data* techniques allow the combined use of vast amounts of financial and other data, such as luxury goods consumption, to identify patterns and trends. The same is true for *geospatial analysis*, which analyses transactions between countries and regions. *Data mining* detects suspicious behaviour in large amounts of structured and unstructured financial data. *Artificial intelligence and machine learning analyses* is linked to the above techniques and makes it possible to systematise huge amounts of information for the detection of dubious flows. *Risk analyses* explore the possibility that an entity is involved in illegal activities, based on factors such as its location, type of business, financial history, and other relevant variables. Regression techniques; decision trees; neural network development; or the implementation of rule-based models are some of the tools used to develop all these analysis systems.

Despite its many possibilities, there are still obstacles to consolidating reliable models that can work in practice. Pinto and Sobreiro (2022) have reviewed the literature on this issue, pointing out three major shortcomings: the absence of common databases, the need to refine detection techniques in information scenarios of different sizes, and also the need to develop indicators on the effectiveness of existing models. They point to the geographical bias of models depending on their location. This is true of

the methodology for monitoring criminal activities, which may vary according to the geographical area where it is applied. This is not just a jurisdictional issue. Differences in political organisational systems, or the geographical and cultural environment of origin, may influence the design of different detection techniques. An algorithm that is valid in North America may not be as effective in other regions of the world.

Other obstacles stem from the impossibility of accessing information on financial transit flows through non-cooperating countries, which are common destinations for irregular transactions. Poor quality data sources, the use of inadequate indicators, and inaccurate correspondence between registry classifications, are other problems that make it difficult to detect these capital flows.

Another factor is the limitations of the techniques usually used, which are largely linked to the well-known *FATF Forty Recommendations* (2020) for tracing money laundering and terrorist financing. Essentially, the main difficulty is that, if a high threshold is used for information scrubbing, numerous cases of false positives are generated that consume fruitless resources. However, downgrading means that statistically insignificant but qualitatively relevant flows between territories may go unnoticed.

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in refining geographical models for locating irregular capital flows. Alonso and Carrillo (2021) highlight the growing systemic intersection between geopolitics and global finance, especially in monetary policy. They differentiate between financial intelligence analysis - FININT- and market intelligence analysis - MARKINT. Each was designed with different objectives but they have common goals of strategic security interests. Segovia-Vargas, Camacho and Rocha (2021) propose a geographical model based on analysing the operations carried out in Mexican financial institutions. The use of heat maps within its states makes it easier to localise spatial hotspots of movements with a high concentration of suspicious transactions.

Novikova and Kotenko (2014), in a study on the morphology of irregular operations in mobile transfer systems, suggest the possibilities offered by mapping: it does not only make it possible to pinpoint their intensity. It can also be used to identify the territorial scope of criminal networks. The same is true for the model proposed by Colladon and Remondi (2017) for Italy, which detects the regions and countries with the highest trafficking of suspicious flows. In this case, areas with the highest presence of Mafia organisations have a high concentration of illicit practices. As capital flows become concentrated in the central nodes of the financial network, there is a greater possibility of irregular practices. However, they themselves argue that a higher risk threshold is associated with flows at isolated nodes in the network. Therefore, irregular flows occur with individuals or legal entities at points of low centrality and high-value transactions. Segovia-Vargas, Camacho and Rocha (2022) suggest implementing alternative techniques for detecting shell companies in capital transactions linked to money laundering, tax evasion, drug trafficking, corruption and bribery. The aim is to limit the number of false positives that make monitoring by financial intelligence units difficult and expensive. In this case, greater geographical intensity of interactions

does not necessarily mean the existence of suspicious flows. They suggest looking more closely at the intensity of the interaction rather than at the high density geographic heat map.

As can be seen, the current focus is on designing effective techniques that use resources and efforts efficiently. It is certainly not an easy goal to achieve. The complexity of the international financial network, coupled with heterodox capital transfer systems, makes it extremely difficult to ensure the effective supervision of such practices.

The implementation of Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) codes since 2012 adds a new source of information to the existing sources, and could perhaps help in this endeavour. It has an important advantage over other sources because it is publicly accessible, allowing researchers from universities, agencies and private companies to learn about an important part of the international financial network. Regardless of its theoretical interest for geopolitical studies, it has potential for a practical application. For example, it could help to develop *compliance* practices, *Know Your Customer* (KYC) regulatory processes, or techniques linked to developing *forensics* for detecting crimes by financial institutions themselves.

### 3. Geopolitics and financial chains: an asymmetric interaction

As has been seen, a substantial part of financial intelligence space studies are linked to detecting corporate relationship chains that are planned to commission illegal money laundering or terrorist financing activities. This is undoubtedly the most well-known dimension between geopolitics and finance in terms of its practical effects. It is worth remembering that prosecuting financial crimes consolidates cooperation between states, strengthens the credibility of institutions, provides financial resources to sustain them and, in short, endorses the redistributive democratic guarantees of the current Western political system.

However, the intersection between geopolitics and finance goes beyond financial crime. Their relationships develop in a sophisticated environment with a variable geometry. To explore this issue, two caveats must be raised first. The first comes from the danger of false causality. Suppose that there is, simultaneously, a sudden drop in European stock markets and a change of course in the conflict in Ukraine. There would be no shortage of so-called experts ready to correlate the two factors, stating that the change to the conflict situation caused stocks to plummet. But can we really be sure of the correlation? Do we know enough about the background of financial markets to refute this causality? In the absence of a more convincing explanation, we establish relationships that it is not always possible to verify with any rigour, explaining why a geopolitical phenomenon determines a financial movement or vice versa.

The second obstacle stems from the different dimensions in which geopolitical and financial events interact. Attempts have been made, such as those by Caldara and Iacoviello (2018), to correlate daily events and financial developments, which may lead

to a rushed reading of the problem. A geopolitical event need not immediately trigger a financial one. Studying the interaction cannot only be short term, as its consequences affect different structural spheres of power relations between states, which normally move in the medium to long term. For example, the European Central Bank would probably never have accepted the massive purchase of sovereign debt at the worst moments of the financial crisis, were it not for the real danger that the European project could be politically dismantled. Perhaps it was forced to make this decision by the geopolitical risk of returning to a divided Europe, triggering one of the largest financial rescue operations in world economic history. However, the two events did not take place in tandem. It took years after the crisis escalated before a coordinated response was decided. While the collapse of Lehman Brothers was announced in the press on 15 September 2008, intervention in the Greek economy, a consequence of the previous event, was announced on 2 May 2010.

While these caveats prevent us from jumping to hasty conclusions, it does not mean that some considerations cannot be suggested with regard to the variable geometry that occurs on the geopolitical-finance axis.

- One. Some studies have identified how different spatial structures of the international financial network are linked to geopolitical logics (Fernández Cela, 2023). For example, rebuilding the financing map of international terrorism leads to a cross-spatial relationship between countries where ideological precursors, financiers and their victims are located. The 9/11 attacks highlighted the fragility of information systems in determining who was behind their financing. This event triggered expanded measures for automatically exchanging financial information between countries. The US *Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act* (FATCA), and later the OECD's *Common Report Standing* (CRS), were political responses to the practical impossibility of reconstructing international terrorist financing chains. These regulatory reforms have caused a quiet earthquake in the financial world over the last decade, in favour of better controls, knowledge and regulation of international financial transactions.
- Two. It is well known that, since the first third of the 20th century, there has been variable mapping of capital flows to tax havens. However, this logic has changed substantially following the implementation of FATCA and the CRS. Its legal architecture is questioning the country dimension as the basic spatial scale of analysis in capital movements. In terms of the geography of finance, the Westphalian concept of the state is being replaced by that of international financial jurisdiction. Although there are around 200 countries in the world, GLEIF has identified more than 300 different jurisdictions, which makes the study of spatial capital flows even more complex. This means that a London-bound transaction has a different legal environment compared to a transaction in Jersey or Guernsey. On the initiative of the United States, the definition of a tax haven as a place where no taxes are paid is being replaced by the concept of a territory that does not cooperate in the exchange of tax information with third parties. Under this definition, Delaware, by actively cooperating in the exchange

of information, could not be considered a tax haven, although its tax structure facilitates tax avoidance.

- Three. To ensure the system works, it is essential to locate financial centres and tax havens in territories that are trusted geopolitically and legally predictable. It must be remembered that much capital movement is not just a simple movement between points of origin and destination. This is not the time to go into this issue in depth, but it is worth noting that the morphology of capital flows takes different forms depending on their particular nature. It seems unlikely that North Korea's most sensitive financial operations are conducted from London or New York. Nor would it be reasonable to use these centres if Russia were to make attempts to circumvent international sanctions. Financial mapping is also affected by the prevailing climate of international relations. The choice of financial centres and tax havens is key due to cost and legal certainty, and also because of trust and political proximity. The existence of a stable political regime with a repository of sensitive financial information is key to ensuring the confidence of wealthy individuals.
- Four. It is uncontroversial to state that foreign financial relations are a matter of national security. And this does not only affect non-resident holders of sovereign debt, or which countries can control certain companies in key sectors. Knowing the structure of end beneficiaries especially investment funds, and avoiding certain countries having control of strategic companies, is a common intelligence task. There is type of financial mapping that identifies who is a debtor or creditor of whom, or which country controls which company, and having this information is a central issue in economic diplomacy.

This may be particularly relevant for safeguarding the interests of investors in third countries. A financial intelligence unit should provide country risk information to companies considering internationalisation. This is not just a matter of ensuring compliance with contracts. Knowing how their financial markets behave, how their capital supply works, which investment funds have positions in companies in strategic sectors is key information for many related strategic issues.

- Five. Furthermore, analysing these chains can make it easier to understand spatial contagion systems in crisis situations. Valuable information can be gleaned from studying the organisational structures of large global financial intermediation companies. Holding the assets or debt of a subsidiary that is located in a country in economic difficulty, or in geopolitical conflict, can open the door to the contagion of other markets. If it were possible to identify the location of their subsidiaries, the markets where they operate and their positions in bonds and assets, you could reconstruct the spatial contagion chain of the crisis with greater viability, a key aspect when it comes to establishing preventive measures to avoid a repetition of the events of 2008, when a crisis that began in the United States spread to a large part of the world's financial system.

#### 4. Spatial structure of financial chains: the case of LEI codes

The Legal Entity Identifier is a tool that can assist in the geopolitical analysis of international financial interests. It is far from being a panacea. The information it provides is limited, but it can be useful in certain contexts, as described above. The Ministry of Justice (2023) defines this Identifier as “*a global and unique code.../..., which is used to identify legal entities that are parties to financial transactions and to comply with reporting requirements in financial markets*”. This Register was endorsed by the Financial Stability Board in 2012. The *Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation* (GLEIF), based in Basel, is the body responsible for its design and maintenance. It was created to respond to the uncertainty generated during the 2008 crisis by the lack of knowledge about investment ownership chains in the derivatives market. It is a primary source of high technical quality, which is an added value for refining financial intelligence analysis.

Its usefulness for geopolitical analysis is twofold: on one hand, it makes it easier to re-establish dependence in international financial chains. On the other hand, it can be connected to three external registers: the Securities Identification Number (ISIN); the Trading System Identification (TIN)<sup>1</sup>; and the SWIFT code, which recognises the receiver of an international transfer. In other words, LEI codes make it possible to reconstruct part of the territorial chains of corporate relations and to identify some of their investments, whether these are domestic or in third countries. It is designed to establish confidence in the markets when it comes to knowing about specific positions for assets with a high contagion risk.

Knowledge of these structures can be useful for both financial intelligence and geopolitical planning. Identifying who owns which company, its nodal structure, which countries are part of the network, and in which assets they hold investments, is information that can be of interest for a variety of operational and strategic purposes.

Cross-referencing financial records is not easy to obtain or analyse, despite the fact that the information is publicly available. It is even harder when the analysis has a strategic objective, because it was not designed for this function. There is a geopolitical logic to the financial connections in the registers. The problem is developing a model that makes it possible to understand it effectively. The first aspect is related to its management model and spatial organisation. The structure of the information available in the GLEIF identifies two main sets of information: the *Level 1* set contains data about the name and registered office of the legal entity identifiers, among other data. *Level 2* information identifies financial relationship chains from the previous level, determining “who owns whom” (Figure 1). This information is important for geopolitical analysis because, among other data, it provides the addresses of millions of headquarters and subsidiaries of financial intermediaries around the world.

---

1 [Locator for securities that do not have an ISIN code.](#)

Level 1 information shows that the Register had 2.34 million registered companies in March 2023. Given its recent implementation, this figure is expected to increase as the LEI code becomes widely required for new types of transactions, especially for corporate transactions in non-financial sectors<sup>2</sup>. Companies are present in 231 jurisdictions, including almost every country in the world (Map 1). The United States leads with 280,522 registered companies. The second block, in a range between 100,000 and 200,000 entries, are the major Western European economies (UK, Italy, Spain, Netherlands and France) together with China and India. The third tier corresponds to small and medium-sized EU economies, alongside Japan, Canada and tax havens such as the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands and Jersey, all with values ranging from 10,000 to 100,000 registered companies.

365,880 national and international connections have been registered among the 2.34 million identifiers. Most of them correspond to parent companies and subsidiaries located within the same country. However, it is important to pay attention to the connections that are made with other countries. With the significant exception of Japan, the rest of the world's major corporations have a high level of territorial diversification in several countries, under a complex architecture of various legal formulas. No significant relocation of companies registered in Japan to third countries has been detected. This is probably the result of the inheritance of the cross-shareholding *zaibatsu* and *keiretsu* models, two structures in the Japanese financial sector that combine decentralisation without offshoring to third countries.

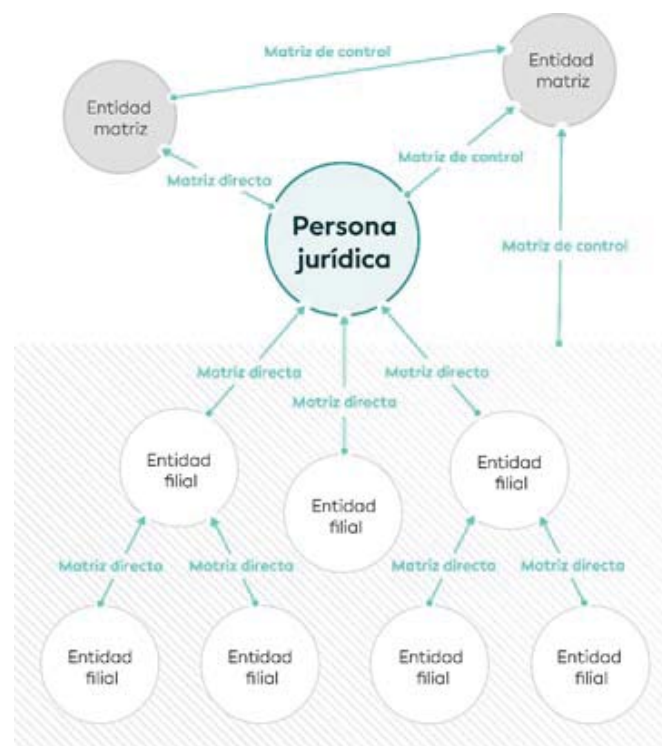


Figure 1.- Organisational structure of the Legal Entity Identifier.  
Fte: GLEIF

<sup>2</sup> The register is updated daily. The golden copy of the data analysed corresponds to the file download on 21 March 2023.



Map 1.- Reported companies with LEI codes (March 2023, in thousands). Fte: GLEIF and own work

Two of its largest Japanese banks, *Custody Bank of Japan* and *The Master Trust Bank of Japan*, are the most interconnected companies in the world. However, despite having more than 6,500 branches, no off-island locations have been detected. This anomalous system of spatial concentration contrasts with US, Chinese or European organisational logic, where the existence of important chains of financial relations in many countries is common practice. The most frequent mapping of spatial relationships fluctuates around the US-UK-EU triangle. This is the case for the major financial companies, which have more than 1,000 subsidiaries: *Amundi Asset Management*, with headquarters in France and present in sixteen countries; *Blackrock Institutional Trust Company*, with headquarters in the United States with subsidiaries in fourteen states; and *Universal Investment*, with headquarters in Germany and located in thirteen countries (Figure 2).

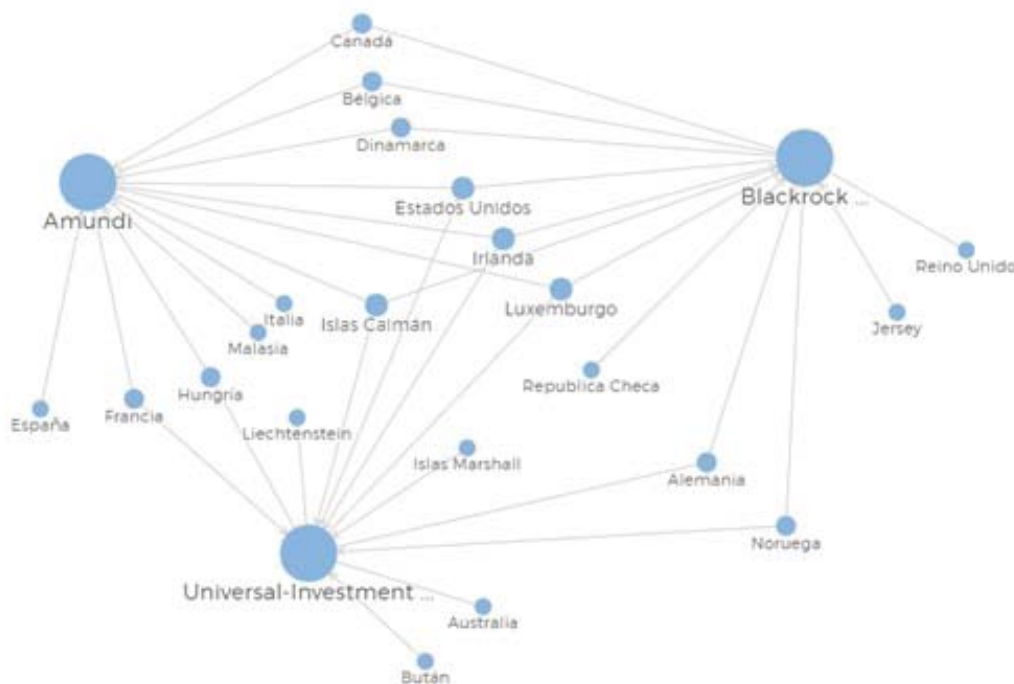


Image 2.- Registered spatial connections of the international financial companies with the highest level of offshoring. Fte: GLEIF and own work

However, what is less well known and has greater relevance for intelligence, are the financial connections that global or regional powers have with other geopolitical zones. Cross-referencing LEI, ISIN, SWIFT and BIC codes, i.e. the network of companies and financial assets they hold, makes it possible to obtain a snapshot of what could be geopolitical hotspots in third regions. This is where the interests of global financial companies can be detected in territories far removed from their headquarters, and which are outside the more obvious sphere of influence of their multinational structures. A second possibility offered by this information is that it can be useful for further delineating the spatial channels of financial contagion transmission in crisis scenarios. This is what happened with the instances of contagion in the 1994 *Tequila Crisis*, or during the 1997 Asian crisis, when the financial crisis spread between widely separated territories through the domino effect of interconnected investments between different world regions. The golden copy of the file finds that the 2.34 million registered companies have declared holdings of 8 million different bonds that they control through their worldwide network of subsidiaries, with an average of 3.3 securities per company.

The international structure of the subsidiaries of financial intermediaries reveals the interests of the world's major geopolitical players in virtually every region of the world. With the aforementioned exception of Japan, the large financial companies of the world's major powers have a large international network that allows them to expand their interests in any country. The origin-destination matrix determines that the European Union has the world's largest network of financial connections to third regions, with 30,653 localised records going preferentially to the rest of Europe, including the United Kingdom<sup>3</sup>. North America, East Asia and South East Asia are other relevant destinations. 22,248 US corporate connections abroad have been recorded. Preferred destination regions are the European Union, the Caribbean, other North American countries and the United Kingdom.



Image 3.- Geopolitical territories of interest due to the financial risk of spatial contagion from the National Bank of Abu Dhabi. Fte: GLEIF and own work

3 It probably overtakes the United States in interconnections because of the distortion caused by comparing a single state and the 27 EU member states.

The rest of the regions are some way behind the others. The UK's major financial interests are concentrated in the EU, North America and the Caribbean. The offshoring of the Chinese financial system is minor and is concentrated in East Asia, the Caribbean and the EU. The opposite is true for India, which has more homogeneous spatial offshoring, spread across the EU, the UK, the Caribbean, the Middle East and South East Asia. Russia has interconnections with Europe, including both the EU and the UK. It is worth noting the presence of several subsidiaries located in some sub-Saharan African countries. Finally, it is important to note that Saudi Arabia's major financial offshoring is to tax havens in the Caribbean.

However, its potential for use also mean it is possible to identify the geopolitical interests of a given financial institution. Knowing the location of their investments, and their branch network, makes it easier to explore their level of dependence on specific regional markets. For example, this is the case with the *National Bank of Abu Dhabi*. It has a sophisticated financial structure with offshoring in nine countries on three continents, with interconnections that make it possible to determine the most likely routes of spatial contagion in the event of a crisis. It has issued 91 bonds in the UK market and 7 in the Swiss market, further internationalising its connections between different regions (Figure 3).

Despite its promising potential for geopolitical analysis, the Register has some important shortcomings that should be highlighted. The first is the limited number of registered companies. Although its use is expected to grow over time, especially if it becomes mandatory for certain transactions in international markets, its volume is still low and segregated to the Western financial environment. The second limitation is that the ISIN code makes it possible to identify bond trading markets, but does not identify the end beneficiaries, as the registered companies function mostly as intermediaries. This is important for the overall assessment of geopolitical dependence because, in practice, behind the intermediaries registered in Hong Kong, London and New York you can find end beneficiaries located in other geopolitical regions.

## 5. Conclusions

The relationship between geopolitics and finance is complex, and in a permanent state of variable geometry. Exploring this relationship necessitates a technical analysis so that their interaction can be understood structurally, because it leads to critical consequences. The geography of finance is a tool that can help to improve the study of finance: finding the logic behind international capital movements is an important step towards understanding this interaction. Differences between territorial jurisdictions are a key factor in this issue.

Perhaps the main difficulty in understanding this interaction stems from the fact that there is no single relationship plane between geopolitics and finance. Their symbiosis produces at least five distinct analysis dimensions. First, financial mapping as an aid to reconstructing illicit activities: money laundering, corruption, drug trafficking

and especially international terrorism are among the most well-known possibilities. Second, international capital flows need secure transit territories. Financial centres, computer servers or tax havens must be located in territories with high levels of geopolitical trust. Third, financial mapping can help to identify end beneficiaries in critical sectors. Knowing that a given state controls an investment fund present in a strategic company is a basic aspect of the work of financial intelligence units. Fourth, it provides an insight into the financial structure of third countries, a strategic aspect for defining the geopolitical codes of international relations. Fifth, it helps to identify possible spatial channels where contagion might spread in crisis situations. Identifying the international positions of large investment funds can make this task easier.

Support Vector Machines, financial transaction analysis, network analysis, *big data* techniques, geospatial analysis, data mining, artificial intelligence and machine learning analysis, risk analysis, regression techniques, decision trees, neural network development and the implementation of rule-based models are some of the tools currently used to detect the behaviour of international financial flows. A lack of shared data banks, the need to refine detection techniques in information scenarios of different sizes and to develop indicators to show the effectiveness of existing models are the main obstacles currently faced.

This article contributes to the topic by suggesting that a new source could be incorporated, which may be of help in certain tasks. The Legal Identity Identifier Register (LEI code) is a promising database because its structure makes it possible to reconstruct parts of international financial chains. Moreover, its connection with other registers, such as SWFIT, BIC and especially the ISIN code, opens a window of opportunity to establish the bond and asset positions of the main international financial intermediaries and the markets in which they operate.

The 2.34 million registered companies form a global nodal network of 365,000 financial connections. With the exception of Japan, all major geopolitical actors have spatially diversified financial structures with a global reach. Geopolitical affinity and a shared cultural environment continue to be the predominant localisation patterns in the logic of these networks. Nevertheless, the Register means interesting connections can be reconstructed, such as connections maintained by Russia in some sub-Saharan African countries.

As this information is publicly available on a company-by-company basis, using it makes it possible to identify the levels of exposure of certain international investors to countries at risk of default. By knowing the spatial structure of branches, and the financial markets where they invest, it is possible to find out more to reconstruct the spatial routes of contagion between countries in the event of an economic crisis.

However, despite these advantages, it is important to note the significant limitations of this source. The information available on GLEIF is very limited, although it is expanding due to its young age. Moreover, reported asset holdings only refer to financial intermediaries, and not to the end beneficiaries of the investment, which

remain unknown. These may be located in third countries that do not appear in the data bank, so it is quite likely that their geopolitical reach is even greater.

Future research is open to the possibility of an in-depth analytical use of this source, which may offer interesting opportunities to find out more about the geopolitical scenario surrounding international capital markets.

## Bibliography

- Alonso, J. M. and Carrillo, J. (2021). El papel de la inteligencia estratégica en el marco del creciente vínculo entre geopolítica y finanzas globales. *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales de la UNAM*, 141.
- Beck, S., Sutken, C., Estrada, C., Doyle, R., & Malaket, A. (2019). Trade and the Legal Entity Identifier. Available at <https://www.think-asia.org/handle/11540/11251> [Accessed 21-09-2023].
- BIS (2019). Sizing up global foreign exchange markets. BIS. Available at [https://www.bis.org/publ/qtrpdf/r\\_qtr1912f.htm](https://www.bis.org/publ/qtrpdf/r_qtr1912f.htm) [Accessed 21-09-2023].
- Caldara, D. and Iacoviello, M. (2018). “Measuring Geopolitical Risk”. *International Finance Discussion Papers* issue 1222. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20191823> [Accessed 21-09-2023].
- Colladon, A. and Remondi, E. (2017). “Using Social Network Analysis to Prevent Money Laundering”. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 67, pp. 49-58. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2016.09.029>
- Fernández Cela (2023). *Geografía Política de las Finanzas*. PhD thesis. Complutense University of Madrid.
- GAFI (2020). FATF Recommendations. Available at <https://www.cfatf-gafic.org/index.php/es/documentos/gafi40-recomendaciones> [Accessed 21-09-2023].
- Ministerio de Justicia (2023). Registradores de España. Available at <https://www.justicia.lei.registradores.org/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1> [Accessed 21-09-2023].
- Novikova, E., and Kotenko, I. (2014). Visual analytics for detecting anomalous activity in mobile money transfer services. *Proceedings*, 9, pp. 63-78. Available at:
- Pinto, S. O., and Sobreiro, V. A (2022). Literature review: Anomaly detection approaches on digital business financial systems. *Digital Business*, 2, 100038.
- Segovia-Vargas, M. J. Camacho, M. and Rocha, J. (2021). “Money laundering and terrorism financing detection using neural networks and an abnormality indicator”. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 169, 114470.

Segovia-Vargas, M. J. Camacho, M. and Rocha, J. (2022). Detection of shell companies in financial institutions using dynamic social network. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 207, 117981.

---

*Article received: 09 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 10 January 2024*

---

*Celia FERNÁNDEZ CALVO*

*Degree in International Relations Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Master in International Law Diplomatic School.*

*E-mail: celiafernandezcalvo@gmail.com*

## *The extension of the Spanish continental shelf*

### **Executive summary**

The expansion of state sovereignty beyond its territorial sea is becoming increasingly attractive in view of technological improvements and the reduced costs of exploiting maritime spaces far from the coast. The four conventions signed at the first United Nations conference on the Law of the Sea in 1958 and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea are the legal basis for delimiting these maritime spaces, divided according to the degree of sovereignty that states exercise over them. The continental shelf, which extends from the outer limit of the territorial sea to a maximum of 200 nautical miles, is one of the most controversial areas. Additionally, coastal states whose continental shelves meet certain requirements were ultimately allowed to apply for an extension of their shelf to 350 nautical miles, known as an extended shelf.

Spain's planned continental shelf in the Atlantic meets these requirements, so the Spanish State has made three requests for extension: in the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay, which includes the FISU area (the acronym for the four countries that submitted the joint application, i.e. France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom); in Galicia and the Area of Common Interest with Portugal; and in the waters adjacent to the Canary Islands.

### **Keywords**

Law of the Sea, extended continental shelf, Limits Commission, Spanish presentation

### **Cite this article:**

FERNÁNDEZ CALVO, Celia (2023). "The extension of the Spanish continental shelf". *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, no. 22, pp. **635-670**.

## Abbreviations

UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
ACI	Area of Common Interest
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
CLCS	Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf
CNUDM	United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea
COCSABO	Commission for the Coordination and Monitoring of Oceanographic Vessel Activities
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
DOALOS	Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat
EMEPC	Mission Structure for the Extension of the Continental Shelf
FISU	France, Ireland, Spain and United Kingdom
IEO	Spanish Institute of Oceanography
IGME	Geological and Mining Institute
IGN	National Geological Institute
IHA	Naval Hydrographic Institute
LENMAR	Maritime Navigation Act 14/2014 of 24 July 2014
MAUC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation.
RD	Royal Decree
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
The Area	International Seabed Area

## I. Introduction

If the Vienna Convention of 1815 is considered the birth of modern international law, the sub-category of the International Law of the Sea does not fully develop until the 20th century, in the post-World War II period. Its origins, however, can be traced back centuries. From the late 15th century onwards, incipient nation-states already began to claim sovereignty over certain parts of the sea and ocean in the context of the *Age of Discovery*, where the possession of large fleets to secure maritime trade and communication routes was crucial for empires such as the Portuguese and Spanish, and later the French and British. Colonisation and occupation of land has been a historical constant accentuated in this period. However, the appropriation of maritime spaces beyond a few kilometres along the coast was a novelty of the Modern Age that soon received the attention of great jurists; the main contributions are described below.

In the 16th century, Spanish theologian and jurist Francisco de Vitoria of the School of Salamanca postulated the idea of freedom of the seas in a somewhat rudimentary way

under the principles of *ius gentium*<sup>1</sup>. But undoubtedly, the most transcendent legacy in the academic debate is Dutch jurist and philosopher Hugo Grotius, who proposed the principle of the freedom of the seas in *De Jure Praedae* of 1604 and, above all, in his magnum opus *Mare Liberum* of 1609, where he defends the non-appropriation and free disposition of these spaces. In any case, his postulates proved successful in the almost century-long academic debate between his ideas and those of English jurist John Selden, a proponent of appropriation in his 1635 work *Mare Clausum*<sup>2</sup>.

Grotius' theoretical contribution was prevalent and put into practice from the 17th century onwards by the great European powers. Over time, however, this freedom was questioned as it led to abuses such as human trafficking and smuggling. Early customary-based rules were progressively developed separating two maritime spaces: the area outside state sovereignty (comprising internal waters and the three-nautical-mile territorial sea) and that outside the sovereignty of any state (the high seas). Paradoxical is the example of the British *Hovering Acts* of 1648 which restricted the use of foreign ships in English trade to prevent smuggling and which are the origin of the modern concept of the contiguous zone, comprising 24 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline.

After World War I, the world saw a revitalisation of international law as a peaceful dispute settlement mechanism. The use of maritime spaces was not exempt from these disputes and for this reason the League of Nations held a first conference in The Hague in 1930 to try to codify matters relating to nationality, the responsibility of states and the territorial sea. Spain participated actively in this conference represented by Antonio Goicochea y Cosculluela, plenipotentiary of Alfonso XIII. Efforts, however, failed due to major disagreements over the delimitation of the territorial sea and discrepancies over new concepts such as the contiguous zone. The failures of the League of Nations in the years leading up to World War II were not conducive to holding subsequent conferences.

It was not until the United Nations was created in 1945 that the issue was raised again. Thus, at the instigation of Arvid Pardo, representative of Malta and later considered the Father of the Law of the Sea, a First Conference was held in 1958<sup>3</sup>, which led to the signing of four conventions on:

1. High Seas, in force since 1962.
2. Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas, in force since 1966.

---

1 Salom Franco, Nicolás. Vitoria y Grocio frente al mar. *Revista Estudios Socio-jurídicos*, 2001. <https://revistas.uosario.edu.co/index.php/sociojuridicos/article/view/191>

2 Ziskind, Jonathan. International Law and Ancient Sources: Grotius and Selden. *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1973), pp. 537-559; Cambridge University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1406000>

3 United Nations Doc. AQ/C, PV.1515 of 1 November 1967. General Assembly Official Records (GAOR). New York, 1968. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/pardo\\_gar1967.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/pardo_gar1967.pdf)

3. the Continental Shelf, in force since 1966.
4. the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, in force since 1964.

A Second Conference was convened in 1960 to resolve disagreements over the delimitation of the territorial sea, but it failed. The issue would not be taken up again until the Third Conference, which began in 1973.

As for Spain, after World War II its activity in international conferences declined to the point of being practically non-existent. Firstly, Spain was not allowed to participate in the 1945 San Francisco Conference for the founding of the United Nations<sup>4</sup>. In addition, on 12 December 1946, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) approved Resolution 39/1 on United Nations relations with Spain, which excluded the Spanish government from international organisations and conferences established by the United Nations because the regime in place following the civil war was considered illegitimate<sup>5</sup>. The resolution recommended the immediate withdrawal of ambassadors and ministers plenipotentiary accredited to the Spanish government; it was approved with 34 votes in favour, 6 votes against, 13 abstentions and one absence<sup>6</sup>.

The dynamics of the Cold War brought about a change in this *status quo* with Resolution 386, adopted by the UNGA on 4 November 1950 with 38 votes in favour, 10 against, 12 abstentions and no absences, repealing the above-mentioned resolution. US Secretary of State himself, Dean Acheson, came to regret the impetus his government had given to Resolution 39/1, thus leading this new repeal resolution<sup>7</sup>. This led to Spain's entry into the United Nations, which finally took place in 1955<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps due to Spain's then recent accession to the United Nations or due to lack of practice in the international dynamics of the time, Spain did not take part in the drafting of the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea.

Spain's active participation in developing the codification of the Law of the Sea began in 1968 when the UNGA requested that the Secretary-General seek Member States' views on the advisability of convening a new conference on the Law of the Sea. The Spanish Government's reply, sent in June 1970, pointed out the need for a new effort to reach a thorough international regulation, particularly to specify the limits between the different marine areas and to complete the regime applicable to each of

---

4 Houston, John. A, The United Nations and Spain, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4. 1952, page 683-709, The University of Chicago Press <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2126447>

5 United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 39 (1946) [*Relations of the Members of the United Nations with Spain*] A/RES/39(I) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/209755>

6 United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 4 (1946) [The Spanish Question]*, 29 April 1946, S/RES/4 (1946) <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3boofi370.html>

7 Glennys J. Young; Spain and the Early Cold War: The "Isolation Paradigm" Revisited. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2022; 24 (3): 43-79. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press Direct [https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws\\_a\\_01088](https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_01088)

8 United Nations General Assembly. *Resolution 386*, 4 November 1950, A/RES/386(V) (1950) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/209546?ln=en>

them<sup>9</sup>, and that this codification effort should be made in *a holistic manner, without thematic limitation*<sup>10</sup>. When the UNGA adopted resolution 2750 (XXV) in 1970 to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea in 1973, the Seabed Commission became the Preparatory Commission for the Conference and the number of its members increased to 86, including Spain<sup>11</sup>. Spain was therefore one of the driving forces behind UNCLOS.

To reinforce this involvement, in 1971 Spain acceded to the 1958 Geneva Conventions with a number of interpretative declarations relating to Gibraltar and others of a technical nature. An important Spanish regulatory development related to the matter also began at that time. Thus, today we find various instruments, framed within Maritime Law, which are compatible with international instruments on the subject ratified by Spain, such as Act 10/1977 of 4 January on the Territorial Sea<sup>12</sup>, Act 15/1978 of 20 February on the Spanish EEZ<sup>13</sup>, Act 27/1992 of 24 November on State Ports and the Merchant Navy<sup>14</sup> and finally the long awaited Act 14/2014 of 24 July on Maritime Navigation (LENMAR)<sup>15</sup>.

Finally, in 1968, preparations began for a Third Conference which, after years of work, adopted the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in Montego Bay in 1982 (UNCLOS) and which has been informally nicknamed the Constitution of the Oceans. During negotiations, the Spanish state considered various legal claims to be detrimental to its national interest, in particular issues relating to the Strait of Gibraltar and the waters adjacent to the rock given the particular legal status of the Strait of Gibraltar deriving from the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713. Hence the Spanish delegation, led by Spanish diplomat José Manuel Lacleta y Muñoz<sup>16</sup>, abstained from voting on the 1982 UNCLOS and did not sign it until 4 December 1984. Spain then took advantage of blockages relating to the codification of the International Seabed Area to not ratify it, but following the Part XI Agreement on the International Seabed Area reached in 1994 and

---

9 Yturriaga Barberán, J. A. *La Conferencia de Derecho del Mar vista desde dentro por un diplomático español*. 1st ed. 2022. Madrid, Publications Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, p. 15.

10 Note from the Government of Spain to the UN Secretary-General concerning the convening of a General Conference on the Law of the Sea. In Yturriaga Barberán, J.A. *La actual revisión del Derecho del Mar: Una perspectiva española. Textos y Documentos; Institute of Political Studies*. Madrid, 1974. Vol. II (2), pp. 357-358.

11 Yturriaga Barberán, J. A. Op. cit. *La Conferencia de Derecho del Mar vista desde dentro por un diplomático español*, p. 16.

12 Act 10/1977 of 4 January 1977 on the Territorial Sea. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1977-465>

13 Act 15/1978 of 20 February 1978 on the Spanish EEZ. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-5340>

14 Act 27/1992 of 24 November 1992 on State Ports and the Merchant Navy. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1992-26146>

15 Act 14/2014 of 24 July 2014 on Maritime Navigation (LENMAR). <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2014-7877>

16 Yturriaga Barberán, J. A. Op. cit. *La Conferencia de Derecho del Mar vista desde dentro por un diplomático español*, p. 110.

the mass ratification of the convention, Spain finally ratified it in 1997<sup>17</sup>; albeit with six interpretative declarations relating to Gibraltar waters and the need for reciprocity in allowing foreign fishing vessels to fish in the Exclusive Economic Zone. The number of states participating in UNCLOS is now so large that even non-participating states, such as the United States, Türkiye and Venezuela, tacitly apply it.

Recently, Spain has been an active player in the development of the 2023 Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Convention under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, which had been delayed due to disagreements over fishing rights<sup>18</sup>. In this case, it was the delegation led by Agustín Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, which was responsible for signing and ratifying the convention<sup>19</sup>.

This paper is based on the need to address the expansion of Spain's maritime borders, specifically in relation to the delimitation of the marine space known as the continental shelf. This interest is supported by the current context of codification of the management and use of marine resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

## 2. The enlargement application procedure

The procedure for requesting an extension of a state's continental shelf from the United Nations is detailed below. It analyses the legal basis, the body responsible for assessing the submission, the deadline given to states to submit the application, the documents provided by the Limits Commission to facilitate the work of the applicants and the content to be included in the applicants' submission.

### 2.1. Legal basis

Article 76 of the 1982 UNCLOS provides for the possibility for States Parties to extend their continental shelf from 200 nautical miles to 350 nautical miles where the geomorphic characteristics of the seafloor and subsoil so allow. Canada, India and

---

17 Instrument of ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, at Montego Bay on 10 December 1982. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1997-3296>

18 Agreement within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N23/177/31/PDF/N2317731.pdf?OpenElement>

19 United Nations General Assembly, *Intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction*, 3 April 2023; [https://www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org.bbnj/files/bbnj5-\\_provisional\\_list\\_of\\_participants\\_as\\_of\\_3\\_april\\_2023.pdf](https://www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org.bbnj/files/bbnj5-_provisional_list_of_participants_as_of_3_april_2023.pdf)

Australia are obvious candidates, however other states, such as Spain, do not appear to project a large continental shelf but have certain points along their coastline that may be eligible for this claim.

### *2.2. The responsible body: the Limits Commission (CLCS)*

UNCLOS created three *ex novo* institutions to enforce its provisions: 1) the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, based in Hamburg; 2) the Enterprise (whose mission is to manage the exploitation of seabed resources in the Area); and 3) the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), which is part of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat (DOALOS) and whose legal regime is found in Annex 2 of UNCLOS.

The last of these institutions is responsible for handling requests to extend the shelf of coastal states. The CLCS was established for the dual purpose of examining requests for continental shelf extension submitted by coastal states, issuing recommendations, and to provide scientific and technical assistance to requesting states in preparing their requests.

It should be noted that the CLCS has no competence to establish the outer limit of the continental shelf. Nor does the International Seabed Authority have any competence in this procedure. The right and power to establish the outer limits of the continental shelf belongs exclusively to coastal states, in recognition of their sovereign rights, as stated in article 77.3 UNCLOS.

The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf is composed of 21 members who must be experts in geology, geophysics or hydrography (according to article 2.1 of Annex 2 of UNCLOS). They serve in their personal capacity, but are elected by the States Parties to the Convention from among their nationals, by a two-thirds majority, taking into consideration the equitable representation of the different geographical regions.

Members sent by a particular state do not participate in the subcommissions that consider submissions made by the state of which they are a national or if they have advised that state in the process of drafting the submission, although they may participate in the general discussions. They should also refrain where there is a conflict of interest between their country and the submitting state. Therefore, in the case of Spanish requests for extension, a CLCS member sent by Spain would not be able to participate in their assessment. It is a fact, however, that no Spaniard has ever been a member of the CLCS and Spain has never paid the expenses of a member of another

nationality. The last term of CLCS members ran from 2017 to 2023, so we will soon have a renewed CLCS, presumably again without a Spanish member<sup>20</sup>.

### 2.3. *Deadline*

The deadline for submitting this request is set out in article 4 of Annex 2 of UNCLOS, which establishes the obligation to submit the scientific and technical details of such limits to the CLCS “*as soon as possible but in any case within 10 years of the entry into force of the Convention for that State*”.

Since the Convention entered into force in 1994, the deadline expired in 2004 for states that had ratified it at that initial time. However, since the CLCS did not start its work until May 1997 and did not establish the procedure until 1999, it was clear that the timeframe initially stipulated was insufficient. In view of the difficulties faced by coastal states in preparing their submissions and considering the limited time available, different alternatives were proposed at the 2001 Meeting of States Parties to the Convention; a deadline extension was finally decided<sup>21</sup>. Thus, taking as a reference the date on which the CLCS Guidelines were adopted, 13 May 1999, the ten years began to run from that date and not from the time of ratification of each State Party that had ratified the convention before that date. This decision was based on the inherent right of the coastal state over the adjacent continental shelf, regardless of its occupation or whether it had made an express declaration to that effect. Therefore, the new deadline for those states that had ratified the Convention before 13 May 1999 was 13 May 2009.

Despite this moratorium, the 2009 Meeting of States Parties modified the manner in which coastal states could comply with this obligation. Although the ten-year deadline and the starting point remained the same, the format of the submission was relaxed and was no longer required to be complete. Partial submissions were allowed to provide preliminary indicative information on the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, as well as a description of progress and estimated date for full submission. This preliminary information should not prejudice the final submission that the coastal state might make in the future.

This alternative was specially designed to provide developing countries the option to stop the clock and avoid running out of time too early. Since the coastal state has an inherent right over its continental shelf as a natural prolongation of the continental

---

<sup>20</sup> United Nations, *CLCS Members from 1997 to 2023*. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/commission\\_members\\_1997\\_2017.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/commission_members_1997_2017.htm)

<sup>21</sup> Decision SPLOS/72 of 29 May 2001 regarding the date of commencement of the 10-year period for making submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf set out in article 4 of Annex 2 of UNCLOS. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/441543?ln=es>

territory, it was considered that it should be understood that this right should not expire due to failure to meet a deadline.

Not surprisingly, the extension of the original deadline led to a marked increase in submissions near the new deadline of 13 May 2009. These were supplemented by partial submissions and preliminary information. No specific deadline was set for all these cases.

Finally, note that the Commission must also consider the submissions of states that became parties to the Convention after 1999 and those that may do so in the future, for which the deadline is not 13 May 1999 but ten years from the time they ratify the Convention. In any case, the first application was made by the Russian Federation in 2001, followed by Brazil and Australia in 2004, Ireland in 2005 and New Zealand in 2006. As of September 2023, the CLCS has received 93 applications, along with ten other revised submissions<sup>22</sup>.

#### ***2.4. Documentation of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) available to coastal states for preparing submission***

The CLCS Regulation, the latest version of which dates from 2008, has two annexes:

1. Annex I: concerning the processing of submissions in case of a dispute between states with opposite or adjacent coasts or in other cases of unresolved land or maritime disputes;
2. Annex 2: on confidentiality.

This document, for internal use by the CLCS, can provide guidance to states when making their requests for information on how the CLCS works and the criteria it uses to analyse requests. In addition, the CLCS has developed two other documents to guide states in their application: the Scientific and Technical Guidelines<sup>23</sup> and the Manual<sup>24</sup>.

The Scientific and Technical Guidelines, published in 1999, specify the procedure to be followed in order to obtain evidence for the delineation of the outer limit of the continental shelf to the coastal state, generally of a geological and cartographic nature.

---

22 Submissions, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982; last updated 17/08/2023 [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/commission\\_submissions.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm)

23 Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), Office of Legal Affairs, *Scientific and Technical Guidelines of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf adopted by the Commission on 13 May 1999 at its fifth session*; New York 1999. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/276889?ln=en>

24 Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), Office of Legal Affairs, *Training Manual for delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles and for preparation of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf*; New York, 2006. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/700597?ln=es>

This is probably the most costly part because it requires the employment of scientific teams with the necessary equipment to carry out the surveys; many states lacking resources cannot afford these costs, so collaborations are often established between neighbouring states to carry out the surveys. The Manual describes the planning and procedure for the preparing submissions. The first edition of the Manual was published in 2006 and is the main guide for coastal states interested in requesting the extension of their continental shelf.

## *2.2. The report to be submitted by coastal states*

As we have seen, the application must contain a detailed technical report on the geomorphological characteristics of the specific section of the continental shelf whose boundaries are to be extended, including information on water depth and thickness of sedimentary layers. Water depth is crucial to establish the transition point between the continental slope and the deepest part. This transition point is located at the 2,500 metre isobath. Sediment thickness plays a key role in identifying points where the thickness of sedimentary layers equals 1% of the shortest distance between that point and the transition point mentioned above. This information is obtained through underwater oceanographic surveys, which also provide data on the resources present on the seabed and subsoil under study.

Submission of this documentation should follow a formal structure consisting of three parts, in accordance with the procedure laid down in the CLCS Regulation: summary, main section and supporting scientific and technical data. The summary should include elements such as the coordinates defining the outer limits of the continental shelf, baselines used to measure the territorial sea, the provisions of article 76 of UNCLOS supporting the submission, Commission members who provided advice, and any unresolved land or maritime disputes.

The main section should thoroughly analyse the data provided, the charts drawn and the scientific methodology employed. The third part requires the coastal state to submit the scientific and technical data supporting its proposal to extend the continental shelf. This data is subject to thorough study and assessment by the Limits Commission.

This documentation is prepared in four key steps.

Firstly, establishing “baselines”. The transition point between the continental slope and the deepest part is used as a reference to draw the lines obtained using the Hedberg and Gardiner formulae defined in article 76.4.a of UNCLOS. The outer limit of the continental shelf is established from the outermost line marking the intersection of these lines.

Secondly, the extension test. At this stage, the coastal state must provide evidence that the natural prolongation of its submerged continental territory to the point of transition between the continental slope and the deepest part extends beyond 200

nautical miles measured from the baselines. If it fails to provide this evidence, the limit of its continental shelf is automatically drawn to a distance of 200 nautical miles.

Thirdly, establishing restriction lines. Article 76.5 of UNCLOS establishes two restrictions on the process of extending the continental shelf: one based on distance (up to a maximum of 350 nautical miles measured from the baselines) and the other based on depth (100 nautical miles measured from the 2,500 metre isobath). Where these restriction lines intersect, the outermost line shall be drawn, comprising the sections furthest from the coast. Where there is no crossing, the line furthest from the coast shall be selected. Submarine ridges are subject to stricter regulations under article 76.6. The outer limit of these submarine ridges is 350 nautical miles. However, at submarine elevations which form a natural part of the continental margin (such as plateaus, emersions, peaks, shoals or spurs), the outer limit may extend beyond 350 nautical miles, provided that it does not exceed 100 nautical miles measured from the 2,500 metre isobath.

Fourthly and finally, drawing the outer limits. With the evidence of extension submitted and the baselines and restriction lines drawn, the coastal state can proceed with the final delineation of the outer limit of its extended continental shelf. If the line obtained from the formulae lies inside the restriction line, this will define the outer limit of the continental shelf. If the line obtained extends beyond the restriction line, the latter will be decisive for the outer limit of the continental shelf. In general, this process results in a combined line that incorporates sections of the baselines and the restriction lines. Following these criteria, the coastal state may make its submission to the Limits Commission.

### 3. The case of Spain

The characteristics of the current Spanish continental shelf, the working group in charge of preparing the request for extension, the delimitation of areas susceptible to extension and, finally, submission by the Spanish State to the CLCS are presented below.

#### 3.1. *The current Spanish continental shelf*

Spain's vast coastline, with 7,880 kilometres, would suggest the possible existence of a large continental shelf. However, the geographical characteristics of the seabed adjacent to the Spanish coast do not support these claims.

As an inland sea, the Mediterranean has no steep slopes like in the Atlantic Ocean. Bordering the eastern and southern part of the Iberian Peninsula there are two Neogene basins covered by the Mediterranean Sea, the Alboran Furrow and the Valencia Furrow

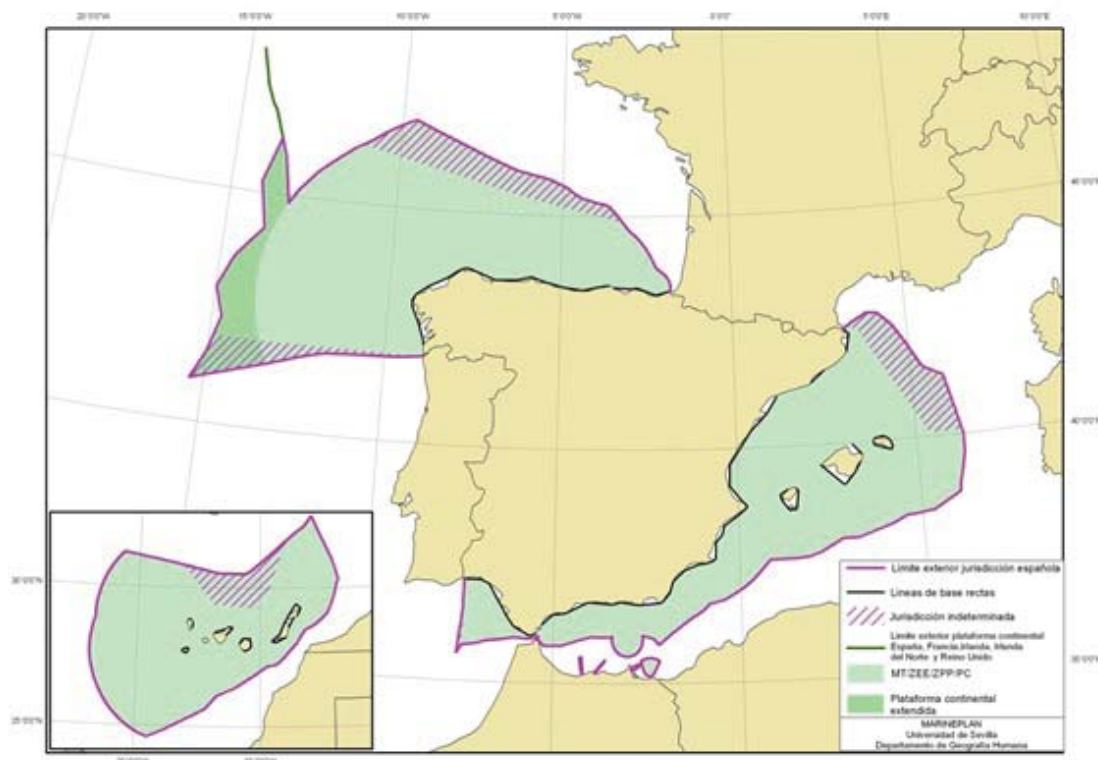
or Catalan-Balearic Basin, both belonging to the Spanish maritime area, but in no area deeper than 3,500 metres.

In the Atlantic, Spain has hardly any natural continental shelf as the outer margin slopes steeply downwards. In the Gulf of Cadiz the shallower area is also quite wide, although it narrows considerably in the Alboran Sea, widening again in the eastern part of the Levantine Shelf.

Therefore, the geographical characteristics of the peninsula are not conducive to a claim for enlargement in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the proximity to neighbouring coastal states also means that an extended shelf, but also a normal 200 nautical mile shelf, is no longer possible. The geological reality imposes the possibility of applying for extension only in the north-west of the peninsula and around the Canary Island archipelago.

### 3.2. The Spanish working group

In contrast to the decisions taken by other neighbouring countries (such as France and Portugal), the Spanish government agreed not to create a new temporary administrative structure. Thus, preparation of submissions to the Limits Commission was entrusted to a temporary working group created *ad hoc* for the first Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay submission and replicated for the following two submissions. This working group is the Scientific and Technical Group for the Extension of the Continental Shelf, made up of scientists and technicians from the Spanish Geological

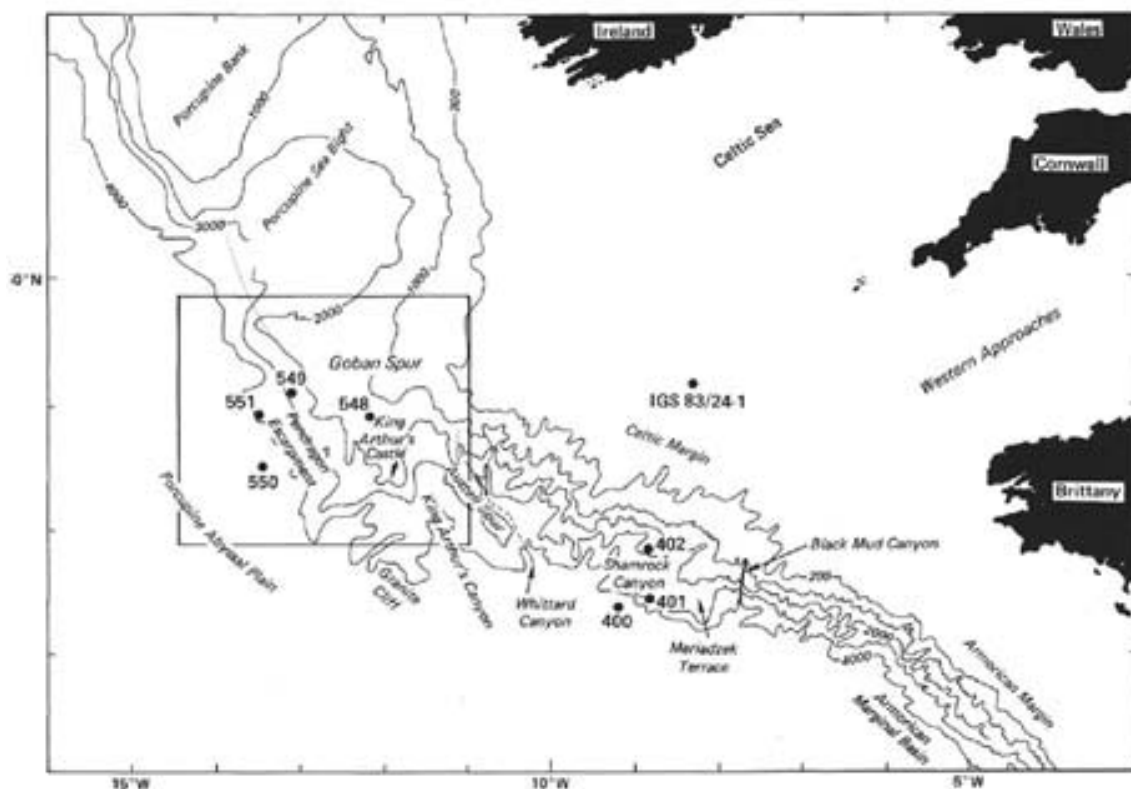


Límites exteriores de la jurisdicción española ante las solicitudes de ampliación. Fuente: Atlas para la planificación nacional marítima de la Universidad de Sevilla <http://hurricane.us.es/atlas/escalacionacional/presentacion.pdf>

and Mining Institute (IGME), which is the group's technical coordinator; the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) and the Hydrographic Institute of the Navy (IHM) of the Ministry of Defence. This group coordinates with France and Portugal, and is under the supervision of the International Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAUC), which is in charge of the oral and written submission to the Limits Commission in New York. It also had logistical support from the Naval General Staff and collaboration from the Commission for the Coordination and Monitoring of Oceanographic Vessel Activities (COCSABO) of the Marine Technology Unit (UTM-CSIC)<sup>25</sup>.

### 3.3. *The delimitation of areas eligible for enlargement in Spain*

As we have seen, despite its extensive coastline, Spain's geographical position prevents it from extending its continental shelf in the south and east of the peninsula, so it was only possible to consider enlargement in the western Atlantic.



Batimetría del margen continental mostrando las regiones de Goban Spur, la plataforma céltica y los Armorican Margins. Fuente: Graciansky, P.D y Poag, C. *Geologic history of Goban Spur, Northwest Europe continental margin* 1985. [http://deepseadrilling.org/80/volume/dsdp80pt2\\_58.pdf](http://deepseadrilling.org/80/volume/dsdp80pt2_58.pdf)

25 Somoza, L., Medialda, T., Rengel, T., León, R.; Vázquez, T.; Bohoyo, F.; González, F. J., *Extensión de la Plataforma Continental española en el Golfo de Vizcaya y Mar Céltico con arreglo al artículo 76 de la Convención de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Derecho del Mar (1982)*. 6th Symposium on the Iberian Atlantic Margin, Oviedo, 1-5 December 2009; <http://www.repositorio.ieo.es/e-ico/handle/10508/3202>

### 3.3.1. The Celtic Sea, the Bay of Biscay and the FISU Area

Within the Atlantic Ocean, the Celtic Sea and the Bay of Biscay present the ideal geomorphic characteristics. The area covered by the 2006 application is therefore in the north of the peninsula, bordering to the north by the outer edge of the extended continental shelf claimed by Ireland, and to the south by the 200 nautical mile limit measured from the baselines of the Spanish coast; it comprises a total area of some 79,000 square kilometres.

The outer limit was determined by identifying the geological features of the ocean floor (regions known by the names, from north to south, Goban Spur, the Celtic Shelf and the Armorican Margins), extending to a deeper sedimentary basin in the Bay of Biscay known informally as the Union Basin, located between the Celtic margin and the northern Iberian margin, an area where possible continental shelf extensions of the four coastal states converge: Spain, France, United Kingdom and Ireland. Determining this part of the outer boundary was the most challenging because the Goban Spur margin is highly irregular, featuring a series of successive geological faults.

Preliminary survey work to delimit the area began in late 2003. These preparations were based on a considerable volume of previous technical data from the four countries, as well as the collection of new data acquired specifically for the joint submission. Such was the case with the seismic survey and sampling campaign named Breogham, carried out by the Spanish oceanographic vessel *Hespérides* and manned by a team of scientists from the four states.

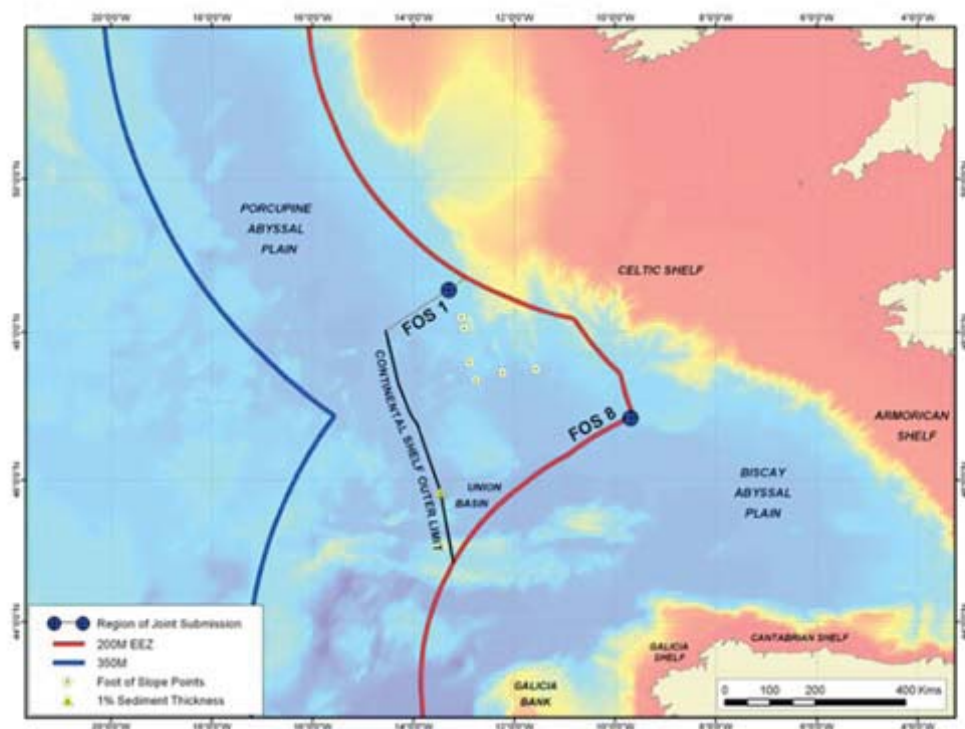


Figure 1 : Limite exterior de la plataforma continental en el área del Mar Céltico y Golfo de Vizcaya

Fuente: Resumen Ejecutivo de la presentación conjunta.

This work accredited the membership formula, confirming that the seabed sediment thickness was greater than the 1% established by the Gardiner formula. Consequently, the outer limit of the continental shelf in the Bay of Biscay was set at 17 fixed points established by applying the Hedberg and Gardiner formulae, and one fixed point located within 200 nautical miles of Spain.

### 3.3.2. Galicia and the Area of Common Interest (ACI) with Portugal

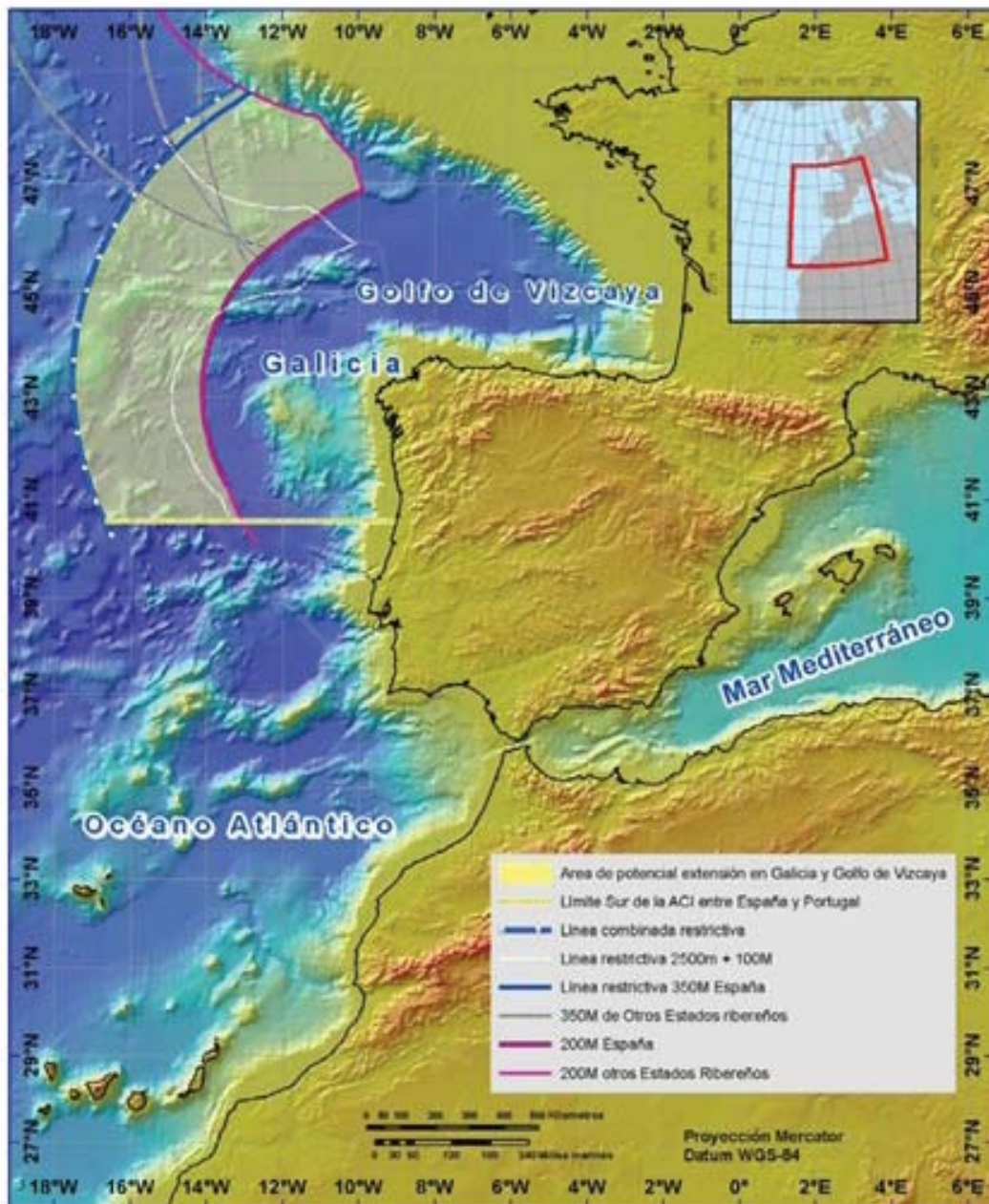


Figura 1: Mapa de la extensión potencial de la plataforma continental de España en el área de Galicia y Golfo de Vizcaya.

Fuente: Resumen Ejecutivo de la presentación española.

Espacios marinos bajo jurisdicción española antes del establecimiento de la plataforma ampliada	
Aguas interiores	14.679 km <sup>2</sup>
Mar territorial	101.700 km <sup>2</sup>
Zona contigua	117.216 km <sup>2</sup>
Zona Económica Exclusiva	758.253 km <sup>2</sup>
Zona de protección de pesca	190.582 km <sup>2</sup>
Plataforma continental en el Mar de Alborán	14.019 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total espacios marinos bajo jurisdicción española</b>	<b>1.196.449 km<sup>2</sup></b>

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir del "Atlas para la planificación nacional marítima" de la Universidad de Sevilla  
<http://hurricane.us.es/atlas/escalacionacional/presentacion.pdf>

The second area where the extension of the Spanish continental shelf was considered was in the maritime areas adjacent to the western coasts of Galicia. This is a strip of ocean floor with continuity with respect to the extended continental shelf in the area of the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay. In this case there was no overlap with France, the UK or Ireland, but there was an overlap with Portugal.

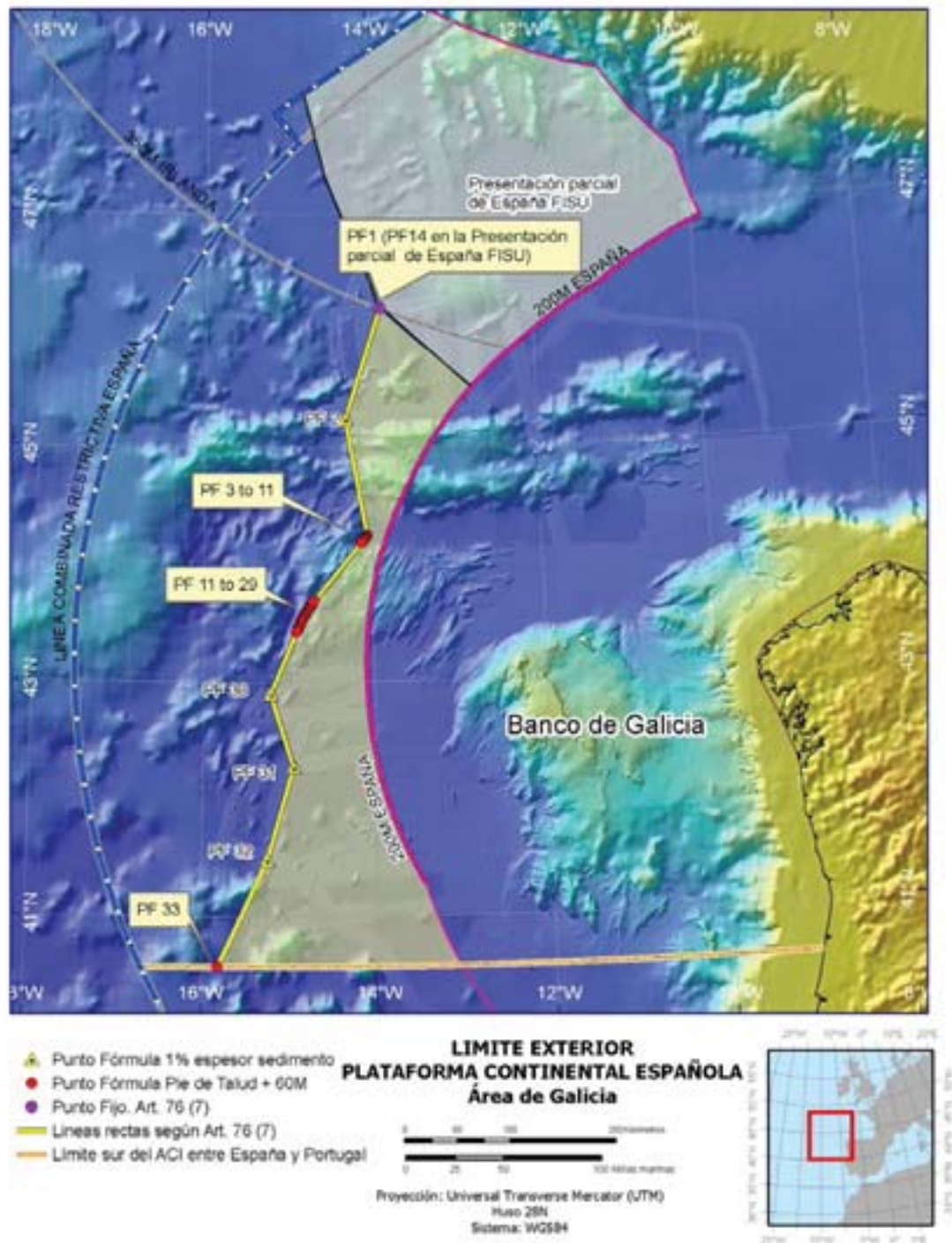
Given the lack of a bilateral treaty for the delimitation of the continental shelf opposite the mouth of the Miño River (finally signed in 2017<sup>26</sup>), the two states jointly decided to create an Area of Common Interest (ACI). The extent of this ACI is bounded on its northern edge by the 41° 52' parallel north, and on its southern edge by the 40° 34' 13" parallel north. These limits include the possible variation in latitude of the equidistant line drawn from the mouth of the river Minho. On the other hand, boundaries to the east and west are defined by lines drawn at distances of 200 nautical miles and 350 nautical miles respectively, measured from the baselines used to measure the breadth of the territorial sea. In total, the area claimed by Spain in this zone is around 56,000 square kilometres.

Within the ACI, both commissions undertook to carry out joint oceanographic research missions to acquire data of common interest, share the information obtained and use the same methodology in determining the outer edge of the continental shelf established in their respective submissions. On the Spanish side, the ship *Hespérides* participated with the Breogham and ESPOR campaigns and on the Portuguese side, the *NRP Joao Coutinho*<sup>27</sup>.

26 Treaty between the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic establishing the closure line of the mouths of the Minho and Guadiana rivers and delimiting the international sections of both rivers, signed at Vila Real on 30 May 2017, published in the BOE (Official State Gazette). [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2018-11228](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2018-11228)

27 Somoza, Luis. *España amplía sus fronteras en el mar*, XX Semana de Estudios del Mar, Fundación ASESMAR 2012.

During these investigations it was possible to conclude that the northern outer limit of the Portuguese continental shelf, given the geomorphological structure of the submarine promontory known in Portuguese as *Esporão da Extremadura*, did not coincide with the outer limit of the Spanish continental shelf, as measured from the geomorphological structure of the Bank of Galicia. In a normal situation, counting only from the geomorphological structures located south of the equidistant line, the outer limit of the Portuguese continental shelf would have been closer to the



**Figura 2:** Detalle de las líneas resultantes de las fórmulas utilizadas para definir el límite exterior de la plataforma continental más allá de las 200 millas marinas en el área de Galicia.

Fuente: Resumen Ejecutivo de la presentación española.

coastline than the outer limit of the Spanish continental shelf. In these circumstances, the two delegations agreed to lower the southern boundary of the ACI so that the southernmost fixed point of the Spanish proposal could be connected to a slope fan

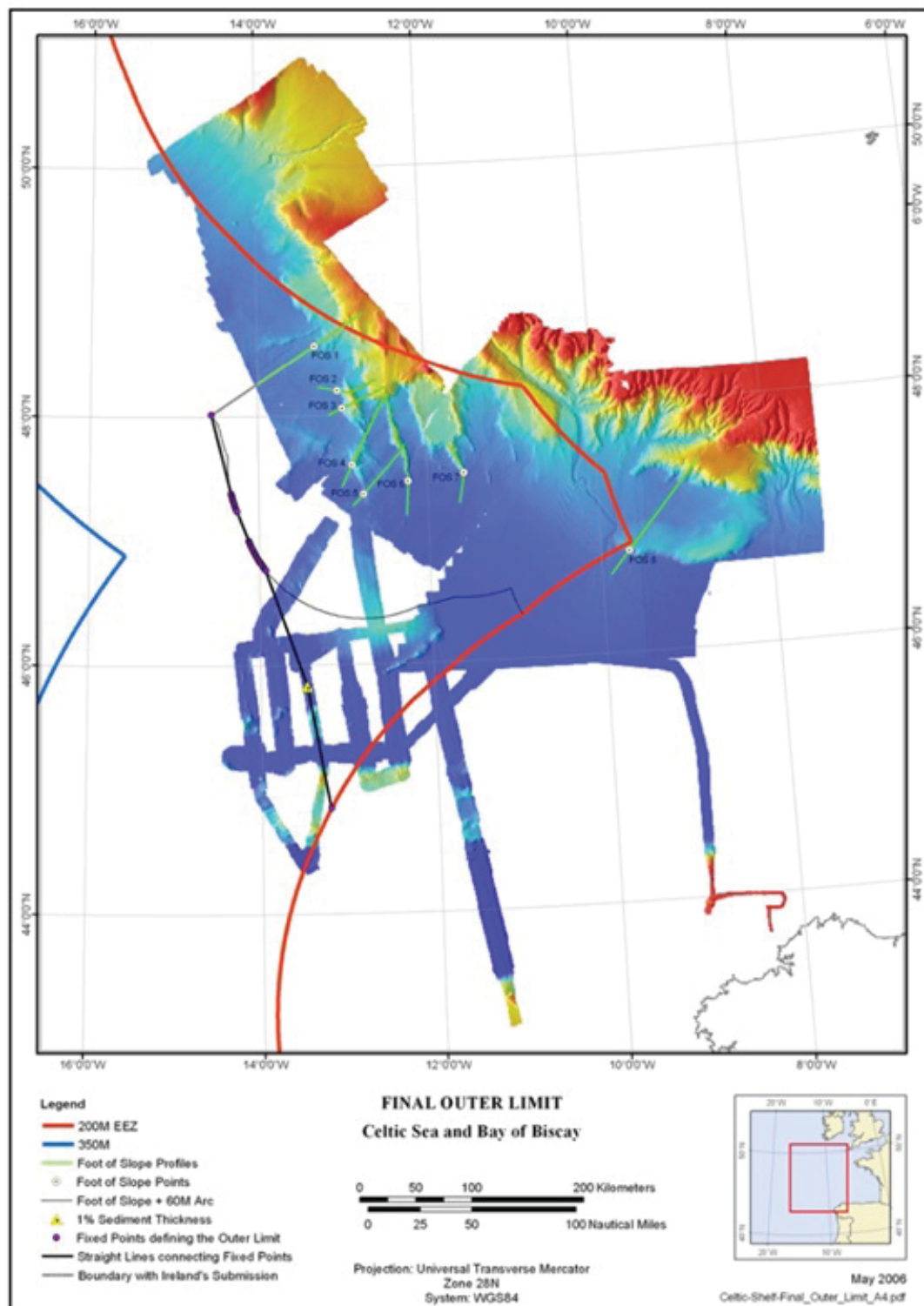


Figura 2: Detalle de las líneas resultantes de las fórmulas utilizadas para definir el límite exterior de la plataforma continental ampliada en el área del Mar Céltico y Golfo de Vizcaya.

Fuente: Resumen Ejecutivo de la presentación conjunta.

[https://www.un.org/Depts/los/cles\\_new/submissions\\_files/frgbires06/presentacion\\_conjunta\\_resumen\\_espanol.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/cles_new/submissions_files/frgbires06/presentacion_conjunta_resumen_espanol.pdf)

located in the *Esporão da Extremadura* and, in reciprocity, the northernmost point of the Portuguese proposal could be connected to a slope fan located in the Bank of Galicia.

### 3.3.2. Canary Islands

The extension of the Canary Island continental shelf may initially seem straightforward given that it is an archipelago in a deep-water ocean. Nothing could be further from the truth, particularly in the western part of the archipelago, where preparing the technical and scientific studies was particularly complex due to the possible overlap with areas claimed by the neighbouring states of Mauritania, Cape Verde, Portugal and, above all, Morocco. Surveys took place between 2010 and 2014 and were carried out by Spanish oceanographic vessels *Hespérides* (which had already participated in previous surveys), *Sarmiento de Gamboa* and *Miguel Oliver*. In addition, information gathered by the four campaigns carried out by the Ministry of Defence in the EEZ in 1999 (the oceanographic vessel *Geco Tau* also participated in this campaign), 2000, 2011 and 2012<sup>28</sup> was also used. Based on this information, Spain drew the outer limit of its continental shelf on its application to the west of the Canary archipelago by establishing the position of 448 fixed points, representing an area of approximately 220,000 square kilometres.

It is also important to underline that the outer limit of the Spanish continental shelf to the west of the Canary Islands is fixed at a distance of 350 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured, as established by Royal Decree 2510/1977 of 5 August<sup>29</sup>, on the western coasts of the islands of La Palma and El Hierro. In this sense, the 2010 act on Canary Islands waters<sup>30</sup> establishes a somewhat confusing perimeter delimitation of the archipelago's waters<sup>31</sup>, which provoked Morocco's protest through various notes verbales. Spain responded to this objection by recalling that the baselines used in the presentation are those defined by RD 2510/1977, thus complying with the rules of international law in force.

---

28 Hydrographic Institute of the Navy Report, year 2012. *Plan de Investigación Científica de la ZEE*; Ministry of Defence, Madrid 2013. <https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/P/D/PDF430.pdf>

29 Royal Decree 2510/1977 of 5 August 1977 on the drawing of straight baselines in implementing Act 20/1967 of 8 April 1967 on the extension of Spanish waters under Spanish jurisdiction to 12 miles for fishing purposes. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1977-23967>

30 Act 44/2010 of 30 December on Canary Islands waters. [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2010-20140](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2010-20140)

31 This act establishes a somewhat different delimitation of Canary Islands waters than that of RD 2510/1977. However, it also contains an additional provision stating that “*The outline of the perimeter contour shall not alter the delimitation of the maritime areas of the Canary Islands as established by the Spanish legal system under current international law*”. Consequently, the Canary Islands Waters Act does not repeal Royal Decree 2510/1977, which establishes the baselines for measuring the territorial sea. In any case, this confusion was enough to prompt Morocco to send several notes verbales to the Limits Commission expressing its disagreement. Finally, Spain clarified the use of the limits established by RD 2510/1977 and was able to prove the non-existence of international disputes as the Moroccan protest lacked any legal basis.

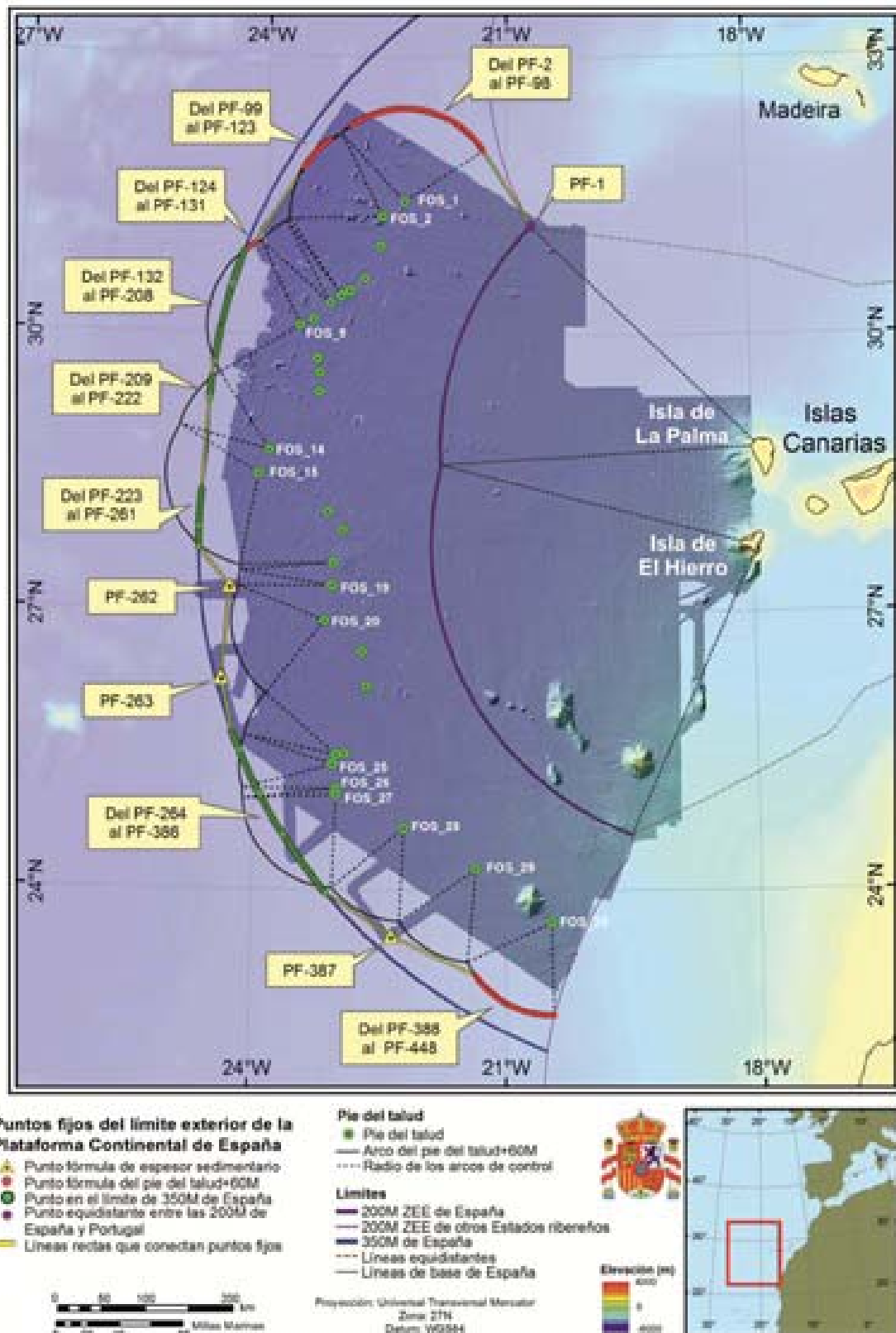


Figura 3: Límite exterior de la Plataforma Continental de España más allá de las 200 millas marinas en el área al Oeste de las Islas Canarias

Fuente: Resumen Ejecutivo de la presentación española.

Posibles ganancias territoriales resultantes de la ampliación de la plataforma continental	
Plataforma continental ampliada en Mar Céltico y Golfo de Vizcaya	~ 79.000 km <sup>2</sup>
Plataforma continental ampliada en Galicia	~ 56.000 km <sup>2</sup>
Plataforma continental ampliada en Canarias	~ 220.000 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>355.000 km<sup>2</sup></b>

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de datos aportados por la CLPC.

### 3.4. Spanish presentations

As seen, States Parties have a period of ten years from the date of deposit of this State Party's instrument of ratification to request the extension of its continental shelf. UNCLOS entered into force for Spain on 14 February 1997, so the deadline for submission to the Limits Commission should have been 2007. However, as previously noted, the deadline was extended to ten years from the adoption of the CLCS Guidelines on 13 May 1999, thus expiring on 13 May 2009<sup>32</sup>.

Spain did not miss this deadline, during which three partial submissions were made: one in 2006 and two in 2009. The first of these was a joint submission (the first of its kind made to the Commission) with France, the United Kingdom and Ireland, concerning the Bay of Biscay and Celtic Sea area<sup>33</sup>. Unfortunately, successive requests for enlargement could not be made jointly with the neighbouring countries. In the case of Portugal, as this country submitted a single global application for of the whole of its continental shelf subject to extension beyond 200 nautical miles, an area of two million square kilometres, only a small part of which overlaps with the Spanish continental shelf. However, the Spanish and Portuguese applications were submitted on the same day and were the result of close technical and legal cooperation. In the case of the request for enlargement in the area adjacent to the Canary Island archipelago, a joint declaration was also not submitted with neighbouring states because of a delay in the collection of scientific data and the pressure imposed before the application deadline.

The enlargement submissions made by Spain to the UN CLCS are analysed in detail below.

32 Decision SPLOS/72 of 29 May 2001 regarding the date of commencement of the 10-year period for making submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf set out in article 4 of Annex 2 of UNCLOS. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/441543?ln=es>

33 Joint submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in accordance with article 76, paragraph 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 with respect to the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay area, ISBN 84-7840-633-6 Spain. [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/frgbireso6/presentacion\\_conjunta\\_resumen\\_espanol.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/frgbireso6/presentacion_conjunta_resumen_espanol.pdf)

	Mar Céltico y Golfo de Vizcaya	Galicia	Canarias
<b>Superficie solicitada</b>	79.000 km <sup>2</sup>	56.000 km <sup>2</sup>	220.000 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Tipo de solicitud</b>	Conjunta	Individual	Individual
<b>Fecha de entrega de información preliminar</b>	No hubo	No hubo	11 mayo 2009
<b>Fecha de registro</b>	19 mayo 2006	11 mayo 2009	17 diciembre 2014
<b>Fecha de presentación</b>	21 agosto 2006	7 abril 2010	26 de agosto 2015
<b>Estado de la solicitud</b>	recomendaciones emitidas el 24 marzo 2009	en estudio	en lista de espera

Las tres presentaciones españolas para la ampliación de la plataforma continental española. Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de datos aportados por la CLPC. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/commission\\_submissions.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm)

### 3.4.I. Presentation for the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay 2006

In this case, the four states involved decided to make a joint application, which was submitted to the Commission on 19 May 2006<sup>34</sup>. This area is also known as FISU, after the acronym of the four countries that submitted the joint application, i.e. France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom. According to British delegate Douglas Wilson, who made the oral presentation to the Sub-Commission on 6 October 2006, the four states could potentially have made separate, overlapping submissions, but considered it more appropriate to take advantage of the possibility of making a joint submission since, following the issuance of recommendations by the Commission, the four states could establish the outer limit of their continental shelf in the region prior to its delimitation among themselves<sup>35</sup>. This joint submission was, in reality, a partial claim made by the four coastal states. It did not refer to the outer limits of the entire continental shelf to which each of the states is entitled, but was confined only to the part of the outer limits in the area of convergence of the continental shelf adjacent to the four coastal states.

The final recommendations were approved by the Limits Commission on 24 March 2009<sup>36</sup> and imply for Spain a total extension of the legal title to the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles of 79,000 square kilometres.

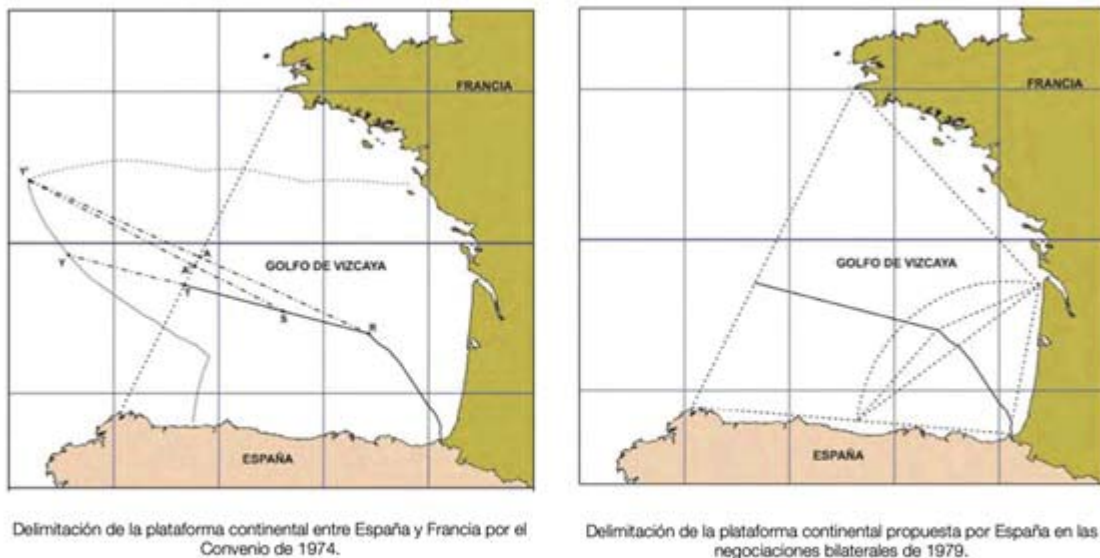
34 Joint submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in accordance with article 76, paragraph 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 with respect to the Celtic Sea and the Bay of Biscay Area [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/frgbireso6/presentacion\\_conjunta\\_resumen\\_espanol.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/frgbireso6/presentacion_conjunta_resumen_espanol.pdf)

35 Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. *Statement by the Chairman of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the progress of work in the Commission, 2 March 2009*. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/655321>

36 Summary of the recommendations of the Limits Commission in regard to the submission made by France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom on 19 May 2006. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/frgbireso6/fisu\\_clcs\\_recommendations\\_summary2009.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/frgbireso6/fisu_clcs_recommendations_summary2009.pdf)

In September 2023, however, delimitation of the areas corresponding to each of the four states is still pending, to be reached by negotiation between the parties. In this case, Spanish maritime space is only adjacent to French maritime space, so negotiations are held at bilateral level with France. However, these negotiations have failed to make progress since 2012. In this particular area there is a previous agreement, the 1974 Bay of Biscay Delimitation Convention between Spain and France<sup>37</sup>, considered by certain jurists as disadvantageous for Spain and more favourable to France because it does not respect the Principle of equidistance<sup>38</sup>.

In 1979, on the definition of the Exclusive Economic Zones by both states up to 200 nautical miles, negotiations for a new delimitation began but failed. CLCS recommendations of 2009 reopened the issue between the two countries, but France's proclamation of an Exclusive Economic Zone in the Mediterranean in 2012<sup>39</sup> prompted Spain to make a formal protest by note verbale to the United Nations and negotiations were terminated<sup>40</sup>.



Fuente: Laçleta Muñoz, J.M. / Almazán Gárate, J.L. / Estepa Montero, M. 2007. El régimen jurídico de los espacios marinos en Derecho español e internacional. Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, E.T.S. de Ingenieros de Caminos Canales y Puertos, Madrid p. 120.

Given the limited economic activity so far in the potential hydrocarbon reservoir in the area, the question arises as to why the French government proclaimed its

37 Instrument of Ratification of the Convention between Spain and France on the Delimitation of the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone in the Bay of Biscay (Gulf of Gascony), in Paris on 29 January 1974. [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1975-14263](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1975-14263)

38 Gutierrez Castillo. *España y sus fronteras en el mar: Estudio de la delimitación de sus espacios marinos*, Dykison, Madrid 2004.

39 Décret n° 2012-1148 du 12 octobre 2012 portant création d'une zone économique exclusive au large des côtes du territoire de la République en Méditerranée <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000026483528>

40 Note Verbale of 23 October 2012, communicated to the UN Secretary General on 27 March 2013; [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/DEPOSIT/communicationsredeposit/mzn94\\_2013\\_esp\\_f.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/DEPOSIT/communicationsredeposit/mzn94_2013_esp_f.pdf)

Exclusive Economic Zone in the Mediterranean while negotiations were underway to extend the continental shelf in the Atlantic. There are two hypotheses about the motivations behind these actions. Some argue that France could have tried to link the two negotiations in a comprehensive approach to obtain a more favourable outcome<sup>41</sup>. Others suggest that Spain, by withdrawing from the negotiating table, sought to link the two disputes in an attempt to achieve mutual concessions in both situations and facilitate a global agreement between the two countries<sup>42</sup>. This stagnation may be due to a lack of industry pressure to develop subsea exploitation projects in these areas, the potential benefits of which seem to be uncertain. The absence of business urgency may delay delimitation in this case. In any case, these strategies have not led to significant diplomatic progress, and in the present day of 2023, the possibility of resolving maritime border disputes between France and Spain seems as distant as it did a decade ago.

Finally, France's proclamation of a great power naval policy, announced in a speech by French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Le Havre in 2009, should also be taken into consideration<sup>43</sup>. For the time being, France has opted for a strategy that allows for the legal coexistence of conflicting claims to the same maritime space, at least in the short term, as long as economic interests do not require immediate delimitation. This strategy entailed an inflexible attitude in negotiations that has been maintained to this day.

#### 3.4.2. *Presentation for Galicia 2009*

In this case Spain submitted an individual application<sup>44</sup> and not jointly with Portugal as the latter had decided to submit a single application for the extension of its platform in all eligible areas. The oral presentation by the diplomatic delegation took place on 13 April 2010. The Spanish working group was also advised by Portuguese Commission member Fernando Maia Pimentel when preparing the application<sup>45</sup>.

---

41 Gutiérrez Castillo, V. L. 2014, La zona económica exclusiva francesa en el Mediterráneo, in Sobrino Heredia, J.M. (dir.), *La contribución de la convención de las Naciones Unidas sobre el derecho del mar a la buena gobernanza de los mares y océanos*, Vol. II, Editoriale Scientifica, Naples.

42 Ros, N., Au-delà de la borne 602: la frontière maritime entre l'Espagne et la France en mer Méditerranée, *Journal du Droit international Clunet*, 4, 2014.

43 Livre bleu, Stratégie nationale pour la mer et les océans. Paris, Premier Ministre, 2009; <https://temis.documentation.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/recherche.html>

44 Partial submission concerning the limits of the Spanish Continental Shelf in the area of Galicia, in accordance with article 76 and Annex 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Spanish Executive Summary 2009. [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp47\\_09/esp\\_2009\\_summary\\_esp.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp47_09/esp_2009_summary_esp.pdf)

45 Partial submission concerning the limits of the Spanish Continental Shelf in the area of Galicia, in accordance with article 76 and Annex 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Spanish Executive Summary 2009. [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp47\\_09/esp\\_2009\\_summary\\_esp.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp47_09/esp_2009_summary_esp.pdf)

Both Portugal's request<sup>46</sup> and Spain's request<sup>47</sup> were submitted on 11 May 2009 and both states informed the Commission, in various notes verbales, of the absence of territorial disputes in the affected area in order to avoid a possible inhibition by the CLCS. However, on 16 May 2009, Morocco did express, also by note verbale<sup>48</sup>, its disagreement with Portugal's request because the claimed area overlapped with areas under its interest; in this case, Morocco did not make any statement on Spain's request.

Collaboration between Spain and Portugal in their respective applications was particularly close, although Spain carried out the bulk of the scientific and technical surveys and then shared them with the Portuguese authorities. Unfortunately, however, this time there was no prior base agreement between the two countries similar to the one reached in the joint application with France, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The lack of a common basis resulted in an exchange of notes verbales initiated by Spain in 2013, in which it did not accept the projection of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Salvage Islands claimed by Portugal on the grounds that they are uninhabited islets and therefore not entitled to it, a position formally defined by Spain since 1978 and repeatedly expressed to Portugal. In any case, the note verbale did not introduce any change with respect to the position defined by the Spanish government on the extension of the Portuguese continental shelf in 2009 and was more a note to avoid possible future accusations of acquiescence on this issue<sup>49</sup>.

In its initial examination of the Spanish application, the CLCS determined that the first requirement had been met by accrediting proof of membership. To date (September 2023), the CLCS has not yet issued its recommendations on either the Spanish or the Portuguese application, but both are under assessment. Unfortunately, the work of the Sub-Commission in charge of examining applications was affected by the interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and it was unable to hold the planned meetings due to the lack of the necessary quorum. However, in the past, the CLCS has made positive assessments of those submissions that establish the continuity of the continental slope between states with adjacent coasts and rejected all those where such continuity is not demonstrated in accordance with the methodology established by article 76 of UNCLOS, so expectations that its recommendations will be favourable to both Spanish and Portuguese claims are good.

---

46 Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), Outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines: Submissions to the Commission: Submission by the Portuguese Republic [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/submission\\_prt\\_44\\_2009.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_prt_44_2009.htm)

47 Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), Outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines, Submissions to the Commission, Submission by the Kingdom of Spain [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/submission\\_esp\\_47\\_2009.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_esp_47_2009.htm)

48 Note verbale from the Kingdom of Morocco to the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding Portugal's submission on the extension of its continental shelf, 16 May 2009 [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/prt44\\_09/mar\\_re\\_prt2009e.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/prt44_09/mar_re_prt2009e.pdf)

49 García Pérez, Rafael. Op. cit. *La ampliación de la plataforma continental de España*. p. 102.

### 3.4.3. *Presentation for the Canary Islands 2014*

On 11 May 2009, just two days before the deadline set until 13 May 2009 for the submission of applications, Spain decided to make a Preliminary Submission and Description of the State of Readiness, in accordance with decision SPLOS/183<sup>50</sup> on the extension of the Spanish continental shelf<sup>51</sup>. At the same application, it undertook to present its proposal for extension within five years, which was actually submitted in 2014. It should be noted that Spain was not the only state to submit a preliminary request at this time<sup>52</sup>: the CLCS received as many as 42 requests in the last weeks of April and early May 2009. Other states, such as Morocco, which ratified UNCLOS at a later date (in 2007) retained the ten-year deadline from ratification for submitting applications. Thus, Morocco submitted a preliminary request on 3 August 2015<sup>53</sup> and on 20 June 2017, just before the expiry of its deadline, and informed the CLCS by note verbale of its intention to submit a more detailed request in the future<sup>54</sup>; something that as of September 2023 has not yet happened.

In any case, the Spanish application was formally submitted on 17 December 2014<sup>55</sup> and the oral presentation took place on 26 August 2015. Just three days later, on 29 August 2015, Morocco expressed its disagreement with Spain's request in a note verbale, also taking the opportunity to express its disagreement with previous requests submitted by Portugal, Mauritania and Cape Verde<sup>56</sup>. As previously mentioned, one of the CLCS requirements for the assessment of a submission is to demonstrate that there are no territorial disputes with other coastal countries in the vicinity of the maritime region under analysis, which the Moroccan note verbale put at risk. It is essential to make it clear that the presentation does not anticipate or prejudge issues

50 SPLOS/183, Decision regarding the workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the ability of States, particularly developing States, to fulfil the requirements of article 4 of annex 2 to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the decision contained in SPLOS/72, para. (a) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/630975?ln=es>

51 Partial submission of data and information on the limits of the Spanish Continental Shelf West of the Canary Islands, in accordance with Part VI and Annex 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 2014 [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp77\\_14/esp\\_2014\\_es.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp77_14/esp_2014_es.pdf)

52 Preliminary information indicative of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, DOALOS, last update 10 March 2022 [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/commission\\_preliminary.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/commission_preliminary.htm)

53 Preliminary application from Morocco, July 2015 [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/preliminary/Mor2015\\_preliminaryinfo.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/preliminary/Mor2015_preliminaryinfo.pdf)

54 Note verbale from Morocco to the UN Secretary-General regarding Decision SPLOS/183 of 20 June 2017: [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/preliminary/1680858.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/preliminary/1680858.pdf)

55 Part I Executive Summary of the Partial Submission of Data and Information on the Limits of the Spanish Continental Shelf West of the Canary Islands, pursuant to Part VI and Annex 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp77\\_14/esp\\_2014\\_es.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp77_14/esp_2014_es.pdf)

56 Note verbale on the Spanish submission for the extension of its continental shelf in the Canary Islands from Morocco to the UN Secretary-General of 10 March 2015 [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp77\\_14/mor\\_re\\_esp77.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp77_14/mor_re_esp77.pdf)

related to the delimitation of borders between nations. These two criteria were verified in the proposal submitted by Spain concerning the area west of the Canary Islands, similar to previous occasions.

However, in this case, the Spanish proposal identifies two overlapping areas with the possible extensions of the continental shelves of neighbouring countries and territories. This led to an exchange of written communications with Morocco and Portugal: while Morocco's communications were aimed at avoiding acquiescence to the Spanish request, Portugal's simply corroborated that there was no conflict<sup>57</sup>. These communications did not question the fulfilment of the legal requirements established by the Spanish submission, nor did they prevent the Commission from carrying out its assessment process, so the Spanish submission was finally accepted for processing, finding that there were no disputes.

In any case, for the time being and presumably due to its workload, the CLCS has not accepted the application for consideration and at present, as of September 2023, it is still on the waiting list to be assessed. Taking into account the above processes, we should expect a resolution in 2024 or 2025.

#### 4. Conclusion

Spain has embarked on a significant process to extend its continental shelf in the Atlantic, submitting three applications to the United Nations Limits Commission. This is an outstanding achievement that reflects the high level of technical and scientific development demonstrated by Spanish public institutions in a technically and chronologically demanding task.

However, it is crucial to understand that this is only the beginning of a complex and lengthy process. The UN Limits Commission has issued recommendations for the first submission, focusing on the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay. This phase has triggered negotiations with France, as Spain will only be able to establish the outer boundary in a definitive and binding manner after accepting the recommendations and publishing the coordinates in the Official State Gazette, which will then be deposited with the UN Secretary-General.

The delimitation process will face additional challenges as Spain will have to formally negotiate with France, Morocco and Portugal in areas of overlapping rights. Although all three submissions were made on the condition that future delimitation would be negotiated, formal negotiations have yet to take place.

---

<sup>57</sup> Note verbale on the preliminary submission of Morocco's request to extend its continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles of 2015 from the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN Secretary-General [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/prt44\\_09/1513044E.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/prt44_09/1513044E.pdf)

As already mentioned, the first recommendation has opened negotiations with France, but these have been suspended for the time being and are not expected to be resumed soon. Regarding the second recommendation, which concerns Portugal, it is expected to be easier to negotiate due to the good relationship between the two countries, although complications could arise over the Salvage Islands. Recommendations for the third request, related to the Canary Islands, have not yet been received, and further complications are anticipated in the negotiations with Morocco.

## Bibliography

### *Official documents and regulations of the United Nations*

Agreement within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N23/177/31/PDF/N2317731.pdf?OpenElement>

United Nations General Assembly, *Intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction*, 3 April 2023; [https://www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org/bbnj/files/bbnj5-provisional\\_list\\_of\\_participants\\_as\\_of\\_3\\_april\\_2023.pdf](https://www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org/bbnj/files/bbnj5-provisional_list_of_participants_as_of_3_april_2023.pdf)

United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 2340 (XXII)* of 1 December 1967, [Examination of the question of the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, and the use of their resources in the interests of mankind]. GAOR. New York, 1968 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/659850?ln=en>

United Nations General Assembly. *Resolution 386*, 4 November 1950, A/RES/386 (V) (1950) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/209546?ln=en>

United Nations General Assembly. *Resolution 39*, 12 December 1946 [Relations of Members of the United Nations with Spain] A/RES/39(I) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/209755>

Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. *Statement by the Chairman of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the progress of work in the Commission*, 2 March 2009. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/655321>

Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), Outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines, Submissions to the Commission, Submission by the Kingdom of Spain [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/submission\\_esp\\_47\\_2009.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_esp_47_2009.htm)

- Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), Outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines: Submissions to the Commission: Submission by the Portuguese Republic [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/submission\\_prt\\_44\\_2009.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_prt_44_2009.htm)
- United Nations Security Council. *Resolution 4 (1946) [The Spanish Question]*, 29 April 1946, S/RES/4 (1946) <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3boofi370.html>
- 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/convemar\\_es.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/convemar_es.pdf)
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea signed in Montego Bay (Jamaica) on 10 December 1982. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/convemar\\_es.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/convemar_es.pdf)
- Decision SPLOS/72 of 29 May 2001 *regarding the date of commencement of the 10-year period for making submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf set out in article 4 of Annex 2 of UNCLOS*. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/441543?ln=es>
- Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), Office of Legal Affairs, *Scientific and Technical Guidelines of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf adopted by the Commission on 13 May 1999 at its fifth session*; New York 1999. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/276889?ln=en>
- Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), Office of Legal Affairs, *Training Manual for delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles and for preparation of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf*; New York, 2006. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/700597?ln=es>
- File R2072/3E/18472/9333 - First Conference for the Codification of International Law, convened at The Hague, the 5th March 1930 - Representation of Spain <https://archives.unigeveva.org/n7g7-ht8y-m6f5>
- Limits Commission Regulations published on 18 April 2008. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No8/309/26/PDF/No830926.pdf?OpenElement>
- Summary of the recommendations of the Limits Commission in regard to the submission made by France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom on 19 May 2006. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/frgbireso6/fisu\\_clcs\\_recommendations\\_summary2009.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/frgbireso6/fisu_clcs_recommendations_summary2009.pdf)
- SPLOS/183, Decision regarding the workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the ability of States, particularly developing States, to fulfil the requirements of article 4 of annex 2 to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the decision contained in SPLOS/72, para. (a) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/630975?ln=es>

Submissions, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982; last updated 17/08/2023 [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/commission\\_submissions.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm)

U.N. Doc A/CONF.39/27 (1969), 1155 U.N.T.S. 331, entered into force January 27, 1980. [https://www.oas.org/36ag/espanol/doc\\_referencia/convencion\\_viena.pdf](https://www.oas.org/36ag/espanol/doc_referencia/convencion_viena.pdf)

U.N. Doc. AQ/C, PV.1515 of 1 November 1967. General Assembly Official Records (GAOR). New York, 1968. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/pardo\\_ga1967.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/pardo_ga1967.pdf)

#### Reports from International Organisations

World Bank, Total fisheries production (metric tons). Data from 2016, the latest year with available data. [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ER.FSH.PROD.MT?end=2016&most\\_recent\\_value\\_desc=true&start=1960&view=chart&year\\_high\\_desc=true](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ER.FSH.PROD.MT?end=2016&most_recent_value_desc=true&start=1960&view=chart&year_high_desc=true)

### *Official documents and regulations of the Kingdom of Spain*

Official Gazette of the Parliament 29 April 2022, 122/000216 Proposed Bill amending Act 22/1973, of 21 July, on Mining. [https://www.congreso.es/public\\_oficiales/L14/CONG/BOCG/B/BOCG-14-B-238-1-CI.PDF](https://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L14/CONG/BOCG/B/BOCG-14-B-238-1-CI.PDF)

Instrument of ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, at Montego Bay on 10 December 1982. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1997-3296>

Instrument of Ratification of the Convention between Spain and France on the Delimitation of the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone in the Bay of Biscay (Gulf of Gascony), in Paris on 29 January 1974. [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1975-14263](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1975-14263)

Act 10/1977 of 4 January 1977 on the Territorial Sea. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1977-465>

Act 14/2014 of 24 July 2014 on Maritime Navigation (LENMAR). <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2014-7877>

Act 15/1978 of 20 February 1978 on the Spanish EEZ. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-5340>

Act 27/1992 of 24 November 1992 on State Ports and the Merchant Navy. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1992-26146>

- Act 44/2010 of 30 December on Canary Islands waters. [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2010-20140](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2010-20140)
- Act 7/2021 of 20 May on climate change and energy transition. [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-8447](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-8447)
- Coastal Act 22/1988 of 28 July 1988 <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1988-18762>
- Note Verbale of 23 October 2012, communicated to the UN Secretary General on 27 March 2013; [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/DEPOSIT/communicationsredeposit/mzn94\\_2013\\_esp\\_f.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/DEPOSIT/communicationsredeposit/mzn94_2013_esp_f.pdf)
- Part I Executive Summary of the Partial Submission of Data and Information on the Limits of the Spanish Continental Shelf West of the Canary Islands, pursuant to Part VI and Annex 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp77\\_14/esp\\_2014\\_es.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp77_14/esp_2014_es.pdf)
- Joint submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in accordance with article 76, paragraph 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 with respect to the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay area, ISBN 84-7840-633-6 Spain. [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/frgbires06/presentacion\\_conjunta\\_resumen\\_espanol.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/frgbires06/presentacion_conjunta_resumen_espanol.pdf)
- Partial submission of data and information on the limits of the Spanish Continental Shelf West of the Canary Islands, in accordance with Part VI and Annex 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 2014 [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp77\\_14/esp\\_2014\\_es.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp77_14/esp_2014_es.pdf)
- Partial submission concerning the limits of the Spanish Continental Shelf in the area of Galicia, in accordance with article 76 and Annex 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Spanish Executive Summary 2009. [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp47\\_09/esp\\_2009\\_summary\\_esp.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp47_09/esp_2009_summary_esp.pdf)
- Preliminary information indicative of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, DOALOS, last update 10 March 2022 [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/commission\\_preliminary.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/commission_preliminary.htm)
- Royal Decree 218/2022 of 29 March 2022 <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2022-6050#:~:text=A-2022-6050->
- Royal Decree 2510/1977 of 5 August 1977 on the drawing of straight baselines in implementing Act 20/1967 of 8 April 1967 on the extension of Spanish waters under Spanish jurisdiction to 12 miles for fishing purposes. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1977-23967>
- State Secretariat for Energy; *Balance Energético de España 1990-2019*, published on 1 September 2023. [https://energia.gob.es/balances/Balances/balandeenergeticoanual/Balance-Energetico-Espana-2021\\_vo.pdf](https://energia.gob.es/balances/Balances/balandeenergeticoanual/Balance-Energetico-Espana-2021_vo.pdf)

Note from the Government of Spain to the UN Secretary-General concerning the convening of a General Conference on the Law of the Sea. In YTURRIAGA, José Antonio de: “La actual revisión del Derecho del Mar: Una perspectiva española. Textos y Documentos”. Institute of Political Studies. Madrid, 1974. Vol. II(2), pp. 357-358.

Note verbale on the Spanish submission for the extension of its continental shelf in the Canary Islands by the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN Secretary-General of 10 March 2015 [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/esp77\\_14/mor\\_re\\_esp77.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/esp77_14/mor_re_esp77.pdf)

Treaty between the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic establishing the closure line of the mouths of the Minho and Guadiana rivers and delimiting the international sections of both rivers, signed at Vila Real on 30 May 2017, published in the BOE (Official State Gazette). [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2018-11228](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2018-11228)

### *Official documents and regulations of other states*

Declaration of Santiago, 18 August 1952 <https://www4.congreso.gob.pe/comisiones/2008/seguimiento-demandaperuana/documentos/DeclaraciondeSantiago1952.pdf>

Décret n° 2012-1148 du 12 octobre 2012 portant création d’une zone économique exclusive au large des côtes du territoire de la République en Méditerranée <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000026483528>

Livre bleu, Stratégie nationale pour la mer et les océans. Paris, Premier Ministre, 2009; <https://temis.documentation.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/recherche.html>

Note verbale from Morocco to the UN Secretary-General regarding Decision SPLOS/183: [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/preliminary/1680858.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/preliminary/1680858.pdf)

Note verbale on Portugal’s submission on the extension of the continental shelf by the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN Secretary-General, 16 May 2009 [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/prt44\\_09/mar\\_re\\_prt2009e.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/prt44_09/mar_re_prt2009e.pdf)

Note verbale on the preliminary submission of Morocco’s request to extend its continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in 2015 by the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN Secretary-General [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/prt44\\_09/1513044E.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/prt44_09/1513044E.pdf)

Preliminary application from Morocco, July 2015 [https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/preliminary/Mor2015\\_preliminaryinfo.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/preliminary/Mor2015_preliminaryinfo.pdf)

**Books**

- Francis, N.N.St., The Continental Shelf Commission, in Nordquist, M.; Moore, J. (eds.), *Oceans Policy: New Institutions, Challenges and Opportunities*, Martinus Nijhoff - Brill, Leiden 1999, pp. 141-146, p. 143.
- García Pérez, Rafael. *La ampliación de la plataforma continental de España*. 1st ed. (2023), Aranzadi.
- Gutiérrez Castillo, La zona económica exclusiva francesa en el Mediterráneo, in Sobrino Heredia, J.M. (dir.), *La contribución de la convención de las Naciones Unidas sobre el derecho del mar a la buena gobernanza de los mares y océanos*, Vol. II, Editoriale Scientifica, Naples 2014.
- Gutierrez Castillo. *España y sus fronteras en el mar: Estudio de la delimitación de sus espacios marinos*, Dykison, Madrid 2004.
- Glennys J. Young; Spain and the Early Cold War: The “Isolation Paradigm” Revisited. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2022; 24 (3): 43-79. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press Direct [https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws\\_a\\_01088](https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_01088)
- Graciansky, P.D & Poag, C. *Geologic history of Goban Spur, Northwest Europe continental margin* 1985. [http://deepseadrilling.org/80/volume/dsdp8opt2\\_58.pdf](http://deepseadrilling.org/80/volume/dsdp8opt2_58.pdf)
- Hein, R.J.; Mizell, K.; Koschinsky, A.; Conrad, T.A., Deep-ocean mineral deposits as a source of critical metals for high- and green- technology applications: Comparison with land-based resources, *Ore Geology Reviews*, vol. 51 (2013), pp. 1-14, p.11; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S016913681200234X>
- Houston, John. A, The United Nations and Spain, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4. 1952, page 683-709, The University of Chicago Press <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2126447>
- Jiménez García-Carriazo, Ángeles. *La ampliación de la plataforma continental más allá de las doscientas millas marinas. Especial referencia a España*. 2018. First Edition. Dykinson, S.L. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv301h2c>
- Magnússon, B.M., *The continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles: delineation, delimitation and dispute settlement* Brill, Nijhoff, Leiden 2015.
- Hydrographic Institute of the Navy Report, year 2012. *Plan de Investigación Científica de la ZEE*; Ministry of Defence, Madrid 2013. <https://publicaciones.defensa.gob.es/media/downloadable/files/links/P/D/PDF430.pdf>
- Pereira, Juan Carlos. *Política Exterior de España. De 1800 hasta hoy*. 2nd ed. 2017. Madrid, Ariel.
- Somoza, L. & Medialdea, T. *La ampliación de la plataforma continental en España*; coord. by Rafael García Pérez, Paulo Neves Coelho, Teresa Ferreira Rodrigues, 2017, ISBN 9789898647986.

- Somoza, L., Medialdea, T., Rengel, T., León, R.; Vázquez, T.; Bohoyo, F.; González, F. J., *Extensión de la Plataforma Continental española en el Golfo de Vizcaya y Mar Céltico con arreglo al artículo 76 de la Convención de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Derecho del Mar (1982)*. 6th Symposium on the Iberian Atlantic Margin, Oviedo, 1-5 December 2009; <http://www.repositorio.ieo.es/e-ieo/handle/10508/3202>
- Somoza, L. *España amplía sus fronteras en el mar*, XX Semana de Estudios del Mar, Fundación ASES MAR 2012.
- Suarez, S.V., Bogdany, A. von; Wolfrum, R; *Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf*, (eds.), A/RES/55/7, New York, 30 October 2000. *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, Vol. 14 (2010), pp. 131-168, p. 138.
- Yturriaga Barberán, Jose Antonio. *La Conferencia de Derecho del Mar vista desde dentro por un diplomático español*. 1st ed. 2022. Madrid, Publications Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation
- Ziskind, Jonathan, International Law and Ancient Sources: Grotius and Selden *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Cambridge: University Press, 1973): 537-559. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1406000>

## Articles

- Blasiak, R; Jouffray J.B.; Wabnitz, C; Sundström, E; Österbloma, H; Corporate control and global governance of marine genetic resources, *Science Advances*, vol.4 (6) (2018).
- De Santo, E.M. Militarized marine protected areas in overseas territories: conserving biodiversity, geopolitical positioning, and securing resources in the 21st century. (2020), *Ocean Coast. Manag.*, p.184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2019.105006>
- Europapress*, El Gobierno anuncia que desmantelará definitivamente el almacén de gas Castor y aprobará el proyecto en pocas semanas, 29 January 2019 <https://www.europapress.es/sociedad/medio-ambiente-00647/noticia-gobierno-anuncia-desmantelara-definitivamente-almacen-gas-castor-aprobara-proyecto-pocas-semanas-20190129124405.html>
- Puche Riar, O; Navarro Come, J; Una historia de la exploración y producción de hidrocarburos en España; (2019) INHIGEO, SEDPGYM [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jorge-Navarro-3/publication/340399397\\_Una\\_historia\\_de\\_la\\_exploracion\\_y\\_produccion\\_de\\_hidrocarburos\\_en\\_Espana/links/5e8727d292851c2f527841ba/Una-historia-de-la-exploracion-y-produccion-de-hidrocarburos-en-Espana.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jorge-Navarro-3/publication/340399397_Una_historia_de_la_exploracion_y_produccion_de_hidrocarburos_en_Espana/links/5e8727d292851c2f527841ba/Una-historia-de-la-exploracion-y-produccion-de-hidrocarburos-en-Espana.pdf)
- Ros, N., Au-delà de la borne 602: la frontière maritime entre l'Espagne et la France en mer Méditerranée, *Journal du Droit international Clunet*, 4, 2014.

*Websites*

Marine Traffic <https://www.marinetraffic.com>

---

*Article received: 09 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 30 January 2024*

---

*Ángel LLORENTE FERNÁNDEZ DE LA REGUERA*  
*Magistrate*

*E-mail: angelj\_llorente@yahoo.es*

## *Canary Islands' waters and the Law of the Sea*

### **Abstract**

Configuring the oceanic space occupied by the waters that connect the different islands in the Canary archipelago is key to measuring the surrounding maritime spaces under Spanish sovereignty or jurisdiction. The lines that trace the perimeter contour of the outer limit of the Canary Islands' waters, as defined in Law 44/2010 and in the Statute of Autonomy, are the starting point for measuring the extension of the territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Canary Islands, under state sovereignty.

This article has been written from a legal perspective and provides some ideas to justify the analogous application of the archipelagic principle to the Canary Islands' waters under our national legislation, in line with similar legislative options adopted by other countries. This principle was introduced in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for archipelagic states. It also reflects on how the International Law of the Sea has evolved, in the more than 40 years since its codification, towards greater environmental protection, as shown by the numerous initiatives on preserving, restoring and conserving the marine environment undertaken by the various United Nations organisations in charge of marine affairs.

### **Keywords**

Oceans, environment and climate; State archipelagos; analogous application of the archipelagic principle; island regime; protection of the marine environment in the Canary Islands.

### **Cite this article:**

LLORENTE FERNANDEZ DE LA REGUERA, Angel (2023). Canary Islands' waters and the Law of the Sea. *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, issue. 22, pp. **601-699**.

## I. The impact of the oceans on the environment and climate

The seas and oceans are the origin of life and are home to many of the ecosystems on which human life depends. They cover almost three quarters of the Earth's surface and, from space, Earth looks like a large blue sphere<sup>1</sup>.

The oceans are important communication routes and the world's most widely used means of transporting goods; 90% of international goods are transported by sea<sup>2</sup>. They are also the habitat of most of the planet's species. Marine fishing, and increasingly aquaculture<sup>3</sup>, provide a livelihood for millions of people around the world. The seabed and subsoil remain practically unexplored, despite the fact that they contain most of the world's strategic mineral resources. Extracting these minerals through underwater mining involves significant environmental risks; using machinery destroys the ocean floor and the marine species that inhabit it, also generating columns of sediments containing heavy metals that can disturb the ocean floor, altering the marine ecosystem and phytoplankton's ability to sequester carbon.

In addition to the oceans' impact on the global economy, their ecological function is also extremely beneficial to the world. The oceans regulate the Earth's climate and temperature, absorbing most of the sun's radiation and more than 90% of the heat produced by global warming. They also act as a buffer to climate change, producing more than half of the oxygen we breathe, storing large amounts of carbon dioxide and absorbing around 23% of annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the atmosphere<sup>4</sup>.

However, the oceans have been warming at an alarming rate in recent years. According to a recent study<sup>5</sup>, in 2022 the global ocean heat content (OHC) was the highest on record, surpassing the previous record of 2021, due to the absorption of greenhouse gases and other anthropogenic substances. Moreover, warming, increasingly acidic oceans are altering the global climate system and, in turn, affecting land and marine ecosystems, as evidenced by the melting of Arctic ice and the growing disappearance of coral reefs.

---

1 In 1972, astronauts on the *Apollo 17* spacecraft, the last manned mission to the moon, took a photograph of the Earth that became famous because it resembled a large *blue marble*.

2 According to data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) gathered by the Ministry for Ecological Transition. See: [https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/costas/temas/proteccion-medio-marino/plan-ribera/contaminacion-marina-accidental/trafico\\_maritimo.html](https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/costas/temas/proteccion-medio-marino/plan-ribera/contaminacion-marina-accidental/trafico_maritimo.html).

3 As extractive overfishing threatens the oceans' living resources, algae, mollusc and finned fish aquaculture is gaining ground. See National Geographic article: <https://www.nationalgeographic.es/medio-ambiente/acuicultura>

4 However, carbon dioxide reacts with seawater, producing carbonic acid which lowers its pH, acidifying the oceans and affecting ecosystems. See the State of the Global Climate 2022 Report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO): <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6d9fcb0709f64904aee371eac09afbdf>

5 *Another Year of Record Heat for the Oceans* (2023). Cheng, L., Abraham, J., Trenberth, KE et al. *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences*. (Accessed 28 April 2023). Available in: [s00376-023-2385-2.pdf](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00376-023-2385-2).

## 2. The role of the UN in protecting the marine environment

Ocean waters are interconnected. The sea has no barriers, so what is done in one place has repercussions in another, just like greenhouse gas emissions, plastic pollution<sup>6</sup> and dumping. This means international cooperation is needed and it is important that the United Nations takes the lead in comprehensively regulating the legal system applicable to maritime spaces and their borders, as well as adopting general, binding measures to prevent, protect and restore the ecological balance of the marine environment and preserve the biodiversity of the oceans.

The international community has been addressing environmental protection and the restoration of biodiversity at a global level, primarily through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which was established in 1972 and is the world's leading intergovernmental authority in this field. UNEP is also the institution in charge of protecting the marine environment and the environmentally sustainable use of its resources<sup>7</sup>, through its Regional Seas Programme and Action Plans; as well as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities<sup>8</sup>.

In terms of the fight against climate change, the most important initiative of the UN system is the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted in 1992 and ratified by Spain in December 1993<sup>9</sup>. It was amended in 1997 by the Kyoto Protocol, in which an agreement was reached to reduce carbon dioxide emissions produced by burning fossil fuels, a cause of global warming. However, the most significant breakthrough came after the 21st Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP 21), where attending parties adopted the Paris Agreement in December 2015<sup>10</sup>. For the first time, under this agreement both developed and developing countries made a commitment to reduce worldwide greenhouse gases, limit the increase in global average temperature to a maximum of 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, not to exceed 1.5 degrees by the end of this century, to achieve climate neutrality so that the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> released into the atmosphere by humans is offset by the amount absorbed naturally by the planet.

The irrefutable environmental impact on the oceans led to the first Oceans Conference in New York in June 2017. It aimed to propose solutions to implement

---

6 The North Pacific central gyre is a convergence zone where clockwise ocean currents act as a holding mechanism and prevent plastic debris from moving. The plastic waste floating on the surface forms the *Great Pacific Garbage Patch*, estimated to be 1.6 million km<sup>2</sup> in size, more than three times the size of Spain. See: [https://web.archive.org/web/20100702192331/http://oceans.greenpeace.org/raw/content/en/documents-reports/plastic\\_ocean\\_report.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20100702192331/http://oceans.greenpeace.org/raw/content/en/documents-reports/plastic_ocean_report.pdf)

7 See: Oceans and Seas | UNEP - UN Environment Programme

8 See: Governing the Global Programme of Action | UNEP - UN Environment Programme

9 BOE, 1 February 1994, No. 27.

10 See: Paris Agreement English (unfccc.int)

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 of the 2030 Agenda on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, bearing in mind that the health of living beings and sustainable economic growth depend on a healthy ocean<sup>11</sup>.

COP 26, held in Glasgow in November 2021, formalised the Climate Deal to fully implement the Paris Agreement. For the first time, the ocean was integrated into the Conference process and it was agreed to organise an annual dialogue between state and non-state actors to explore ways to strengthen ocean-based climate change action, which began in Bonn in June 2022.

The second Oceans Conference, which took place in Lisbon in mid-2022, highlighted the devastating effect of climate change on the oceans and concluded with a declaration that included many non-binding proposals for making progress in protecting the marine environment.

At COP 27, held in November 2022 in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh, binding measures to phase out fossil fuel use were not approved, but ocean-climate action was present in several panel discussions that conveyed the message of making the Paris Agreement *bluer*, making the ocean a place for innovation and real climate action<sup>12</sup>.

At COP 28, held in Dubai in December 2023, despite opposition from some oil-producing and other developing countries, an important agreement was reached to initiate an energy transition to renewable and clean energy to curb climate change, progressively ending the era of fossil fuels<sup>13</sup>. Although the pact does not contain specific commitments to achieve this, an agreement was made to reach net zero emissions by 2050, which will depend on the will of governments. This conference is important because previous agreements have so far focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but have made no reference to the need to reduce fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas, the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

However, it took almost 25 years, until 2006, for UNCLOS to begin discussing what is known as the *Oceans Treaty* to guarantee the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, known as the high seas, whose resources belong to all humanity. After arduous negotiations, an agreement was reached on 4 March 2023, with the final text adopted by consensus in New York on 19

---

11 In December 2017, the UN General Assembly mandated UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) to work with all stakeholders to design a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), to ensure that ocean science supports countries' efforts to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda. See: <https://www.unesco.org/es/decades/ocean-decade>

12 The most important agreement was the creation of a loss and damage fund for countries that are most vulnerable to climate change, although neither how the fund would function nor the beneficiary countries were specified in the agreement. Discussion of this issue was postponed to the climate summit in Dubai where modest progress was made, with several developed countries offering \$700 million to create a fund for this purpose.

13 The draft final agreement is available at the following link: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023\\_L17\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L17_adv.pdf)

June<sup>14</sup>. The agreement contained the commitment to create a global network of marine protected areas<sup>15</sup> covering 30% of the world's oceans by 2030, in compliance with the 30x30 target that had been agreed at COP 15 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal in December 2022<sup>16</sup>, which then was simply a recommendation.

In short, despite evidence from a multitude of scientific studies and being a major concern for civil society, ocean-climate action has only recently begun to receive attention from the world's governments. Analyses of the problems facing the oceans and the various measures to solve them are well known. They have been presented by experts in numerous international fora<sup>17</sup>, but political progress has been minimal and very frustrating. There is a need for homogeneous and binding governance strategies that are reflected in different countries' climate policies so that integrated solutions can be adopted, with a commitment to providing the necessary financial resources so these strategies can be implemented.

### 3. The codification process of the Law of the Sea

Leaving aside concerns about climate and environmental issues in the oceans, coastal states in the international community had long begun to consider the importance of extending their dominion over maritime spaces adjacent to their coasts, mainly for commercial and security reasons. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the need to regulate the use of the ocean and its natural resources also arose, especially fisheries and offshore mineral and energy deposits. This led to the International Law Commission being mandated in 1949 to initiate the complex process of codifying the Law of the Sea which, until then, had been governed by customary law. In 1958, the First UN Conference on the Law of the Sea was held in Geneva, and four conventions were approved (Spain acceded later, in 1971)<sup>18</sup>: the Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone; on the High Seas; on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas; and on the Continental Shelf.

---

<sup>14</sup> The final text of the agreement, in the official UN languages, is available at the following link: [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/2023/06/20230620%2004-28%20PM/Ch\\_XXI\\_10.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/2023/06/20230620%2004-28%20PM/Ch_XXI_10.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> The Treaty has three other main sections dealing with marine genetic resources, including issues related to fair and equitable benefit sharing; environmental impact assessments; and capacity building and the transfer of marine technology.

<sup>16</sup> See press release: COP15: Nations Adopt Four Goals, 23 Targets for 2030 In Landmark UN Biodiversity Agreement | Convention on Biological Diversity (cbd.int)

<sup>17</sup> In this area, reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created in 1988 by UNEP, and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), are of particular note. These reports state that, in recent years, there has been an increase in the average temperature of the oceans, which has led to sea levels rising due to the expansion of their waters.

<sup>18</sup> The Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone and the instrument of accession were published in the BOE of 24 December 1971, No. 307. The Continental Shelf Convention and the High Seas Convention were both published in the BOE of 25 December, No. 308. The Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas was published in the BOE of 27 December, No. 309.

The Geneva Conventions, despite their limited application due to the small number of states that ratified them, were an important antecedent to the compilation process, as they coined the basic concepts of the different marine spaces and regulated their legal system. A major breakthrough was establishing rules for determining the baselines that separate inland waters from the territorial sea, based on the geographical characteristics of coasts. Although a consensus was reached on the starting point for calculating different maritime areas, it was not possible to reach an agreement on the limits of their width (Orcasitas, 1959: 70).

Many nations, especially those that had just gained independence at the time, did not ratify the treaties because they did not satisfy their claims for a greater expanse of maritime space<sup>19</sup> and the fairly widespread claim to extend exclusive economic rights up to 200 nautical miles from the coast, following the precedent of some South American states, such as Ecuador, Chile and Peru (Briceño, 2012: 139-170).

The failure of the Geneva Conventions did not deter the UN from trying to progress in establishing a new maritime order that would gain the general support of the international community; in 1960, the Second Conference on the Law of the Sea was convened to establish the extent of the territorial sea and the fishing zone, however, it ended without agreement.

In 1967, the General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 2340 (22) establishing the *Commission on the Peaceful Uses of the Seabed and Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction*, with a mandate to draw up a proposal for a legal regime for the seabed and ocean floor. Subsequently, Resolution 2749 (25)<sup>20</sup> of 17 December 1970 was adopted, which established that exploiting seabed resources in the area outside national jurisdiction shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole<sup>21</sup>.

On the same date, Resolution 2750 (25)<sup>22</sup> was adopted, which agreed that the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea<sup>23</sup> would be convened in 1973 and expanded the membership of the Seabed Commission, mandating it to act as a preparatory body for the Conference and to draw up the draft articles of a new treaty containing an equitable international regime for marine areas. It would include a mechanism for the area outside national jurisdiction, as well as a list of essential issues related to the Law of the Sea, especially legal regimes for the high seas, continental shelf, territorial sea,

---

19 One of the most controversial issues at the Geneva Conference was precisely the extent of the territorial sea; most naval powers wanted it to be limited to three miles, following the old custom of the range of a cannonball, but this was rejected.

20 See: [a\\_res\\_2749\\_xxv.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

21 In 1967, Arvid Pardo, the Maltese ambassador, made a famous speech in which he argued that the resources of the seabed and its subsoil, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, are the common heritage of mankind.

22 See: [a\\_res\\_2750\\_xxv.pdf \(un.org\)](#).

23 It also had to take into consideration that many of the current UN member states had not participated in previous Law of the Sea conferences and that a universal agreement was needed that would take into account the interests and needs of all states, whether they were developed or developing, landlocked or coastal.

contiguous zone, fisheries and conservation of living resources, the protection of the marine environment and scientific research.

160 states participated in the Third Conference and eleven sessions were held between 1973 and 1982 (Treves, 2008). Three main commissions were appointed in the first period. The first dealt with the international regime of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction, and the second with issues related to the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the exclusive economic zone, the high seas, landlocked countries, closed shelf, narrow shelf or small coast countries, and transmissions from the high seas. The issue of the marine environment was dealt with by the third committee.

Finally, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)<sup>24</sup>, together with Resolutions 1 to 4, which are an integral part of it, was adopted on 10 December 1982 in the Jamaican city of Montego Bay which was chosen as the venue for signing at the end of the eleventh session<sup>25</sup>.

The Convention contains a comprehensive compilation of the Law of the Sea in a single text. It establishes a universal legal regime for the world's oceans and seas and sets the rules governing the uses of the oceans and their resources, while providing a regulatory framework for the future development of specific areas of the Law of the Sea. It has 320 articles and nine annexes. It entered into force on 16 November 1994, following the deposit of the 60th instrument of ratification, and supersedes the 1958 Geneva Conventions. It has been in force in Spain since 14 February 1997<sup>26</sup>.

On 28 July 1994, the UNGA adopted the Agreement on the implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS, on the area beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, which entered into force in general terms on 28 July 1996 and was ratified by Spain together with the other parties at the Convention<sup>27</sup>. All EU countries are parties to UNCLOS and the EU acceded to UNCLOS and the Agreement on the implementation of Part XI in 2003. Subsequently, the 1995 New York Agreement, implementing Part XI of UNCLOS, was adopted for the long-term conservation and sustainable use of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks.

The Jamaica Convention was the result of complex negotiations and compromises that allowed a delicate consensus to be reached that reconciled the general interests of all countries. It succeeded in comprehensively regulating various aspects of the Law of the Sea, including the extent and legal regime of the different maritime areas, which can be summarised as follows:

---

24 See: [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/convemar\\_es.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/convemar_es.pdf)

25 It received 130 votes in favour, 4 against and 17 abstentions, including an abstention by Spain.

26 The instrument of ratification was published in the BOE of 14 February 1997, No. 39.

27 Ibid, 13 February 1997, No. 38.

- **Inland waters:** waters inside the baseline of the territorial sea, including rivers, lakes, ports and inland waters. They have the same status as the mainland and are under the full sovereignty of the coastal state.
- The **territorial sea:** waters that are twelve nautical miles from the baseline, the point from which the band is measured. State sovereignty extends to the airspace, seabed and subsoil of this strip. Vessels belonging to other states have the right of innocent passage, although the coastal state has the right to establish sea lanes and devices to separate maritime traffic.
- The **contiguous zone:** extends from the outer limit of the territorial sea up to 24 nautical miles from the baseline, the point from which the band of the territorial sea is measured. The coastal state may take measures to prevent and punish violations of its customs, fiscal, immigration and sanitary laws and regulations.
- The **exclusive economic zone (EEZ):** extends up to 200 miles from the baseline, the point from which the band of the territorial sea is measured. The coastal state has sovereign rights for the exploration, exploitation, conservation and management of natural living or mineral resources in its waters, and marine seabed and subsoil, as well the right to energy production from water. It also has the jurisdiction to establish artificial islands and structures, for marine research and the protection and conservation of the marine environment. Other states have freedom of navigation, overflight, laying of submarine cables and pipelines.
- The **continental shelf:** may be extended, subject to certain conditions, by 150 miles from the EEZ boundary up to 350 miles, and confers sovereign rights on the coastal state over the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of the seabed and subsoil, although exploitation is subject to specific payments to the International Seabed Authority (ISA).
- The **high seas:** the high seas are beyond the outer limit of national maritime spaces. This area is free and open to all coastal and landlocked states for peaceful purposes. The resources of the seabed, ocean floor and subsoil are the common heritage of mankind. Regulation of the high seas is addressed in Part XI of UNCLOS, which establishes the ISA, based in Jamaica, to control the activities of the high seas and to ensure the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

#### 4. Spanish regulations

Spain, did not wait for the 3rd Conference debates, which were already at a very advanced stage, to conclude and approve Law 10/1977<sup>28</sup> on the territorial sea, to define its concept in accordance with the Geneva Convention and set the band

---

28 BOE, 8 January 1977, No. 7.

width at twelve nautical miles, the extension established by the majority of States, also coinciding with the provisions of Law 20/1967, for fishing purposes, and Decree 3281/1968, for customs purposes and the repression of smuggling. The inner limit of the territorial sea was determined by the low water mark and, where appropriate, by straight baselines established by the government in accordance with international rules. The median criterion was also established as a general rule for delimiting the outer limit, in cases when waters overlapped with neighbouring countries whose coasts are opposite Spanish coasts.

Decree 627/1976 had been issued to develop Law 20/1967, and was subsequently rectified by RD 2510/1977 of 5 August<sup>29</sup>, which established the geographical coordinates used to delimit what was at the time known as *Spanish jurisdictional waters*, and to measure the width of the 12-mile fishing zone. For the Canary Islands, the criterion adopted was to draw straight baselines along the coast and the coordinates of each of the islands of the archipelago were singled out separately, with the exception of the easternmost islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, and the islets of Alegranza, Graciosa, Montaña Clara and Lobos, which were grouped together in order to draw the perimeter where the most salient points of the islands joined.

The coordinates marked in RD 2510/1977 by the Ministry of Defence were subsequently sent to the UN Secretary General (Lacleta, 2005:5)<sup>30</sup>, in compliance with the provisions of Art. 16.2 of UNCLOS, following the guidelines of the office of legal affairs of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea<sup>31</sup>.

Law 15/1978<sup>32</sup> was published shortly afterwards, in which Spain joined the trend followed by most countries to extend the EEZ from the outer limit of the territorial sea to an extension of two hundred nautical miles, counted from the baselines used to measure the width of the territorial sea. The Spanish State proclaimed its sovereignty for the purposes of the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of the seabed and subsoil and the overlying waters of this maritime strip, extending to it the fishing rights established by the previous legislation. This law determines, for the first time and at a national level, the method of measuring the economic zone of archipelagos, starting from straight baselines joining the end points of their islands and islets, so that the resulting perimeter follows the general configuration of each archipelago. It also confirms the median or equidistant line as the system for delimiting the outer boundary of the EEZ with states with opposite or adjacent coasts. For archipelagos,

---

29 BOE, 30 September 1977, No. 234.

30 The author notes the following: [...] “the text of the Decree with the data corresponding to the delineation of these baselines and the coordinates of their end points were communicated to the UN and are published by the UN Office of Ocean Affairs in the volume on baselines, which also contains illustrative maps on pages 281 to 283 of this volume.”

31 Guidelines on the deposits of charts and lists of geographical coordinates under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea can be found at the following link:[https://static.un.org/Depts/los/doalos\\_publications/publicationtexts/DepositGuidelinesSpanish.pdf](https://static.un.org/Depts/los/doalos_publications/publicationtexts/DepositGuidelinesSpanish.pdf)

32 BOE, 23 February 1978, No. 46.

the median is calculated based on the archipelagic perimeter above. However, this legal text was left with its regulatory development pending and did not establish the coordinates of the EEZ corresponding to the Canary Islands archipelago.

However, it should be noted that the part of regulatory text RD 2510/77 that contradicted the later, higher-ranking law 15/1978<sup>33</sup>, should be understood to have been repealed (Morales, 2002). This later law introduced a specific measuring method to configure the baselines of the archipelagos and its second final provision expressly modified law 20/1967, as well as any other regulations that contradicted it. It is important to remember that aforementioned RD 2510/1977 is the result of Law 20/1967, in which the government reserved the right to draw baselines in the places it considered appropriate, in accordance with international regulations, which at that time were represented by the Geneva Conventions. Consequently, I consider that the aforementioned provision lacks effectiveness, as far as the delimitation of Canary Islands' waters is concerned, as international regulations have been subsequently modified, following the entry into force of the Jamaica Convention, and national regulations, through Law 15/1978 and, above all, the Canary Islands Water Law 44/2010. However, it would certainly help, for the sake of legal certainty, if a new regulation were adopted that expressly repeals RD 2510/1977 to correct, at an international level, the geographical coordinates of the Canary Islands' waters and the territorial sea measured from archipelagic baselines, so this new regulation can be sent to the United Nations, under the protection of articles 16 and 47.9 of UNCLOS, together with the coordinates and nautical chart incorporated into the Statute of Autonomy of the Canary Islands.

It would also be appropriate to approve a regulation implementing Law 15/1978, which has already been provided for in its third final provision, specifically establishing the extension of Spain's EEZ in the area of the western Atlantic Ocean by the Canary Islands archipelago and, in compliance with the provisions of Article 75.2 of UNCLOS, to send the UN Secretary-General, for deposit and publication, the charts and geographical coordinates corresponding to the EEZ projected for the Canary Islands waters, as has already been done in the case of the Balearic Islands following the publication of Royal Decree 236/2013.<sup>34</sup>

In this context, it is understandable that our previous laws were not amended when UNCLOS entered into force, as they were based on customary international law and complied with, or did not contradict, the new international treaty. Subsequently,

---

33 The STS of 16 June 2008 (Third Chamber) considers that Law 10/1977 on the territorial sea was tacitly repealed by subsequent Law 15/1978. Its 7th legal basis reads: [...] "from a domestic law point of view, the Exclusive Economic Zone could be understood to govern the two hundred miles that are measured based on the archipelagic principle, since it can be assumed that Law 10/1977 has been tacitly repealed by the subsequent Law of 20 February 1978".

<https://vlex.es/vid/dominio-maritimo-plataforma-continental-42923317>

34 On 31 August 2018, Spain deposited with the United Nations the list of geographical coordinates of the outer limits of the EEZ in the north-western Mediterranean, corresponding to the eastern coasts of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic archipelago.

Law 27/1992 on State Ports and the Merchant Navy<sup>35</sup> was published, Article 7 of which regulated the areas in which Spain exercises sovereignty, sovereign rights or jurisdiction for navigation purposes, including inland waters and the contiguous zone. This fragmented national legislation is compensated for to a certain extent by the direct application of the precepts of UNCLOS, which prevail over domestic law (Art. 96.1 EC) and systematise the extent of marine spaces, the competences exercised over them by the coastal states, as well as the criteria for delimitation in the event of overlapping waters between neighbouring countries.

## 5. The Canary Islands' waters in the Spanish legal system

The Canary Islands' waters were regulated for the first time by Law 44/2010<sup>36</sup>, passed under the 1996 Statute of Autonomy<sup>37</sup>, which addressed a historical claim by Canarian representatives from all political parties<sup>38</sup>.

The law was largely adopted due to a pact between the governing party (PSOE) and Coalición Canaria, which saw the latter political group support the budget law. This could explain a certain level of haste in approving a legal text that called the *Canary Islands' waters* 'archipelagic waters' which, according to Art. 49.1 of UNCLOS, are waters enclosed by the baselines of archipelagos. The baselines that join the extreme points of the islands following the configuration of the archipelago, as defined in Law 44/2010, were those already used in Law 15/1978, and expressly measure the outer width of the Canary Islands' waters<sup>39</sup> corresponding to the EEZ and implicitly measure the inner maritime spaces of the inter-island waters.

Another aspect addressed in Law 44/2010 was the declaration that the Canary Islands waters represented the special maritime area of the Autonomous Community. This was just a theoretical declaration without practical application insofar as, at that time, the Statute of Autonomy only covered the land territory of the islands and did

35 This law was replaced by Royal Legislative Decree 2/2011, of 5 September, which approved the Consolidated Text of the Law on State Ports and the Merchant Navy. The rules on maritime navigation contained in Law 14/2014 of 24 July also regulate some aspects of UNCLOS in this area.

36 BOE, 31 December 2010, No. 318.

37 LO 4/1996, of 30 December 1996 (BOE of 31 December 1996, No. 315) reformed the first Statute of Autonomy of the Canary Islands approved by Organic Law 10/1982.

38 The law's explanatory memorandum mentioned the senator for Coalición Canaria, Victoriano Ríos, who presented one of the first bills on this issue in 2003. Participation in the Foreign Affairs Committee by the Canary Islands deputies José Segura (PSOE) and José Luis Perestelo (Coalición Canaria) was decisive in drafting the final text of the law. In fact, Perestelo and Ana Oramas signed the bill that was finally approved with some modifications, entitled *Delimitation of the Maritime Spaces of the Canary Islands*. See: B-195-1.indd (congreso.es)

39 By the Canary Islands' waters, I generally mean the oceanic space surrounding the Canary Islands archipelago. I use this term in a broad sense to include both the *Canary Islands' waters*, delimited by statute, and the marine spaces over which the Spanish State exercises sovereignty or jurisdiction and which are governed by state and international regulations.

not grant autonomous powers over the strip of sea that joins them. Consequently, in order for the Canary Islands to have their own maritime domain, it was necessary to think of the archipelago as an inseparable group of land and water, rather than as a group of disconnected islands<sup>40</sup>.

However, Law 44/2010 was a precursor to the reform of the Statute of Autonomy subsequently carried out by Organic Law 1/2018 of 5 November (Ovejero, 2004: 186)<sup>41</sup>. Article 4.1 of this law solved the problem by adding the sea to the spatial scope of the Community, together with the islands that make up the archipelago. The current Statute reproduces the full text of the Canary Islands Water Law verbatim and also includes as an annex the same graphic of the perimeter contour of the Canary Islands' waters, as shown below.

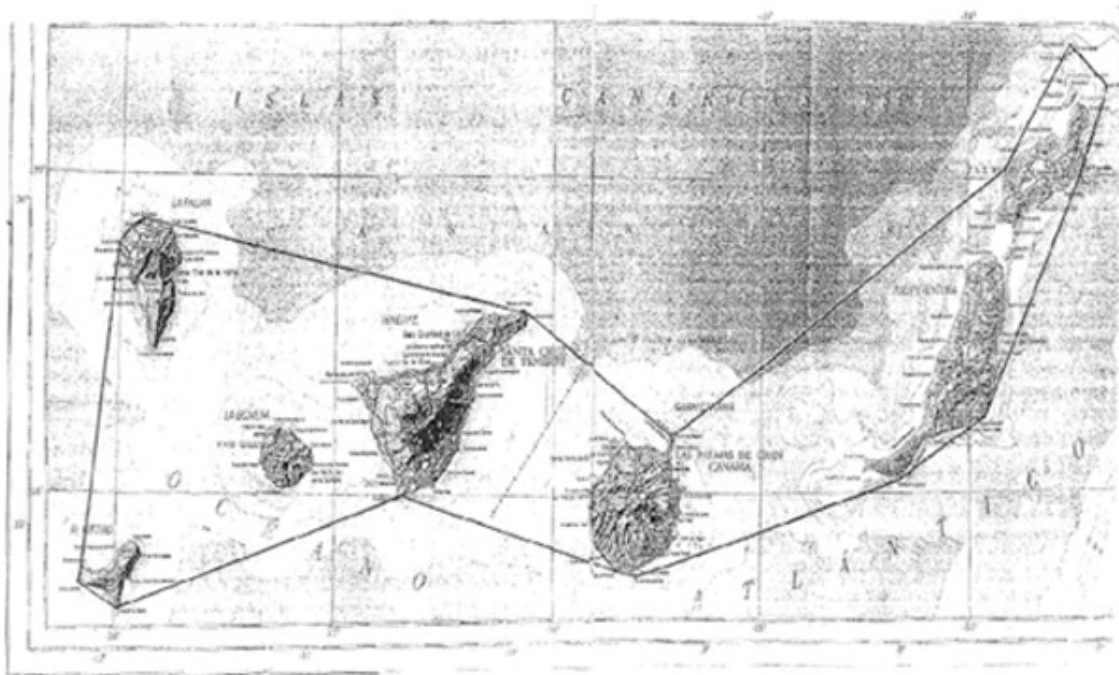


Figure 1. Map of Canary Islands' waters, delimited according to the coordinates established in Annex II of the Statute of Autonomy (LO 1/2018). Source: BOE:<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2018-15138>

Consequently, including the sea as part of the Community's territory, by means of a statutory regulation, has been a fundamental milestone that gives meaning to the definition of the Canary Islands' waters. They are incorporated into the special maritime sphere of the Autonomous Community and governed by autonomous competences that are not reserved for the State.

40 The author points out that: "[...] in the case of the Canary Islands, the surrounding sea could be considered an inherent part of the special nature of the Canary Islands and should therefore be recognised as such. For this to be possible, a reform of the Canary Islands Statute would also have to be carried out, specifically a reform of Article 2, which would recognise the inter-island sea as territory belonging to the Autonomous Community and as an element inherent to its special island state, recognised and protected by the Constitution."

41 BOE, 6 November 2018, No. 268.

Furthermore, Art. 4.5 of the Autonomous Statute reiterated the proviso established in the additional provision of Law 44/2010, which was predictably entitled *Respect for International Law*. This banality could be seen as the legislator reaffirming that the marine spaces surrounding the waters of the archipelago, under Spanish sovereignty or jurisdiction, must be measured from the archipelagic baselines that delimit the Canary Islands' waters, implying that the perimeter contour of these waters has been established by Spanish legislation while taking into consideration international Law of the Sea. In any event, applying the archipelagic principle to the Canary Islands, as provided for by our legislation, is a unilateral legislative act without prejudice to international law, which prevails over domestic law.

## 6. Applying the archipelagic principle to the Canary Islands

When it came to establishing the borders of the Canary Islands' waters, the provisions of UNCLOS regulating maritime spaces of state archipelagos were followed, and it is a matter of debate whether or not they can be extrapolated to a mixed state such as Spain. As is well known, Part IV of the Convention restricts the application of its precepts to archipelagic states that also meet the special characteristics defined in Article 46 b). International regulations are very exact in this area and do not cover any group of islands that geographically form an archipelago; they must also constitute a geographical, economic, political and historical entity of relevance and follow the specific guidelines for drawing baselines listed in Art. 47.

The Community of the Canary Islands meets all the conditions set out in Art. 46 b) and can be considered an archipelago for international purposes. The relevant geographical criteria are definitely met<sup>42</sup>, bearing in mind that the Canary Islands is a volcanic region with an estimated geological age of around 20 million years and its land covers an area of 7,447 km<sup>2</sup>. It is also home to ecosystems that are unique on the planet, due to their biodiversity and large number of endemic species. The Canary Islands archipelago forms part of the Macaronesia biogeographical region, together with the archipelagos of the Azores, Madeira and Cape Verde (García-Talavera, 2021: 16)<sup>43</sup>.

42 The current Statute of Autonomy defines the Canary Islands as an Atlantic archipelago consisting of the sea and the islands and islets that compose it: seven islands with their own administration: El Hierro, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, La Gomera, Lanzarote, La Palma and Tenerife, as well as the island of La Graciosa and the islets of Alegranza, Lobos, Montaña Clara, Roque del Este and Roque del Oeste. La Graciosa was deemed to be the eighth island in the archipelago, instead of being an islet as before. Unlike the other islands, which have their own Cabildo (Regional Government), the island of La Graciosa does not have its own administration; it is part of the Lanzarote municipality of Tegüise, and is governed by the Cabildo of Lanzarote.

43 [...] "In the mid-19th century, English botanist Philippe Baker Webb recovered the name Macaronesia from Greco-Roman mythology." The term comes from ancient Greek and derives from the conjunction of the words *makarion*, meaning happiness, and *nesoi*, meaning islands, clearly inspired by the Roman name for the *fortunate islands* by which the Canary Islands were known.

In terms of the economy, the GDP of the Canary Islands exceeds 42 billion euros, with a GDP per capita of approximately 19,000 euros and a population of almost 2,200,000 inhabitants. These economic and population figures<sup>44</sup> are well above the average for archipelagic states.

Politically, within the Spanish system, the Canary Islands is an autonomous community divided into the provinces of Las Palmas and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, and it exercises the right to self-government as a nationality. Accordingly, Art. 138.1 of the Constitution, in proclaiming the principle of inter-regional solidarity, recognises the constitutionally significant fact that the differential feature of this Community is its status as a series of islands,<sup>45</sup> and this is enshrined in the Statute of Autonomy.

In terms of history, the Canary Islands have been linked to Spain for more than five centuries. They were incorporated into the Crown of Castile at the end of the 15th century under the Treaty of Alcaçovas<sup>46</sup>, while the Azores, Madeira and Cape Verde archipelagos remained in Portuguese hands.

In view of the above, it can be concluded that the natural elements of the Canary Islands make it impossible to conceive of each of them separately, as they intrinsically form a unit as a cohesive archipelago with a special geographical and political character. Furthermore, the economic and historical importance of the Canary Islands is not only in line with the requirements of UNCLOS, but also goes beyond, in historical, economic and population parameters, that of most archipelagic states, especially those known as Small Island Developing States (SIDS)<sup>47</sup>.

Finally, the baselines of the Canary archipelago also comply with the requirements of UNCLOS. In this regard, Art. 47 stipulates that they must be straight lines that, following the general configuration of the archipelago, join the far ends of the islands; the main islands must be included within their perimeter and they should cover an area in which the ratio between the sea area and the land area is between 1:1 and 9:1. The length of the lines may not exceed 100 nautical miles, although, as an exception, 3% of the total number of lines may exceed that length, up to a maximum of 125 miles.

The perimeter contour line that encloses the Canary Islands waters draws an irregular polygon, complying with the relationship between land and sea authorised by UNCLOS. Its shape corresponds faithfully to the distribution of the islands in

---

44 See [TABLE-OF-INDICATORS-OF-THE-ECONOMY-CANARIA\\_2023-01-30.pdf](#) ([gobiernodecanarias.org](http://gobiernodecanarias.org)).

45 Constitutional protection of the Canary Islands, as islands, also entails special features that are distinctive to the Canary Islands, such as the Cabildos, local bodies that are directly and democratically elected, and represent each of the islands.

46 The pact signed in the Portuguese town of Alcaçovas on 4 September 1479, between representatives of King Alfonso V of Portugal and the Catholic Monarchs, divided the Atlantic archipelagos between the kingdoms of Portugal and Castile.

47 Small Island Developing States (SIDS): [Conferences | Small Island Developing States | United Nations] were recognised at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1982 [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992 | United Nations] as a collective of 38 UN member states facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

the ocean. It is laid out in straight lines between the outermost points of each of the islands, and the individual lengths of lines do not exceed 100 miles at any point. Therefore, the configuration of the Canary Islands waters regulated in our positive law is in accordance with all the analysed requirements included in the Law of the Sea.

## 7. The analogous extension of the archipelagic system to specific State archipelagos

The legal concept of an *archipelagic state* was incorporated into the UNCLOS text on the initiative of Indonesia, the Philippines and Fiji. Prior to the Third Conference, a wide-ranging debate took place with conflicting positions. On the one hand, the major powers and countries with foreign archipelagos close to their shores opposed the Convention's introduction of a specific regime for establishing archipelagic baselines, which they considered detrimental to their interests. On the other hand, a group of continental countries with island territories, including Spain (Cervera, 2009:353-359)<sup>48</sup>, were generally in favour of introducing the archipelagic principle (Orihuela, 2011:9)<sup>49</sup>, while archipelagos who were politically established as states claimed that it should apply exclusively to them, an option that finally prevailed, with some restrictions as we have seen.

While it is true that Part IV of UNCLOS covers archipelagic states, it is also true that it does not regulate mixed states that include a continental space and one or more archipelagos in their territory. While there are regulations for islands, regardless of their political status, the specific doctrine for a group of islands that make up an archipelago that is dependent on a state is not covered by the Convention. As Ambassador Yturriaga Barberán explains (Yturriaga, 2022: 237): “The Spanish delegation did not succeed in getting UNCLOS to accept that the archipelagic principle should also apply to archipelagos that are part of a continental state, and UNCLOS remained silent on the matter.” Therefore, the Law of the Sea does not prohibit extending the application of the archipelagic state doctrine to archipelagos that are part of a continental State. In other words, the situation is unregulated but is not prohibited either.

---

48 The author, a member of the Spanish delegation to the 3rd Conference, explains that [...] “the text that emerged from the Convention regarding the regime of the islands is not entirely favourable to Spanish interests, although it was understood that any modification that might have succeeded could have been more detrimental in terms of a more restrictive definition of the marine spaces of islands. Nations such as Algeria, Libya and Morocco sought to introduce amendments to address the negative effect that specific islands belonging to one state might have on the delimitation of the marine spaces of another coastal state, when these islands are located in front of it. For Spain, the baseline system for an archipelago belonging to a continental state is important; hence Spanish opposition to anything that would imply a substantive change.”

49 The author points out that: “Among the states that spoke in favour of extending the benefits of the principle to archipelagic states, either in the Conference Plenary or in the Second Sub-Committee were: Argentina, Chile, Cyprus, Ecuador, Spain, Greece, India, Peru and Portugal. Opponents to its extension included: Algeria, Belgium, Burma, Mauritania, Mauritius, Pakistan (although only in enclosed or semi-enclosed seas), Thailand, Tunisia and Türkiye.”

We are therefore faced with a legal loophole that must be closed by analogous means. *Analogia legis* is a legal technique used to fill possible legal gaps; it consists of applying a legal rule or legal text to a factual situation that is not expressly regulated, and is used in cases which are not expressly excluded and are very similar in nature. According to Art. 4.1 of the Civil Code, analogous enforcement is applicable when a law does not cover a specific case, but regulates another similar case and there is similar reasoning between the two. Analogous interpretation may not deviate from or contradict the rule of positive law taken as its reference point, and it must be applied in its entirety to the unregulated analogous case.

Therefore, in my opinion, it is legally feasible for Spanish legislation to analogously transpose all of Part IV of UNCLOS to the Canary Islands in a way that respects the precepts of an international treaty, which form part of our positive law (Art. 96.1 CE). It is essentially a question of taking inspiration from international regulations<sup>50</sup> to give legal coverage to a situation that is neither expressly addressed nor excluded by these regulations.

The same practice has been followed by several mixed states<sup>51</sup> that have passed unilateral laws applying the international legal doctrine of sovereign archipelagos to their island territories, with some special features. This type of national legislation has generally gone unchallenged by the rest of the international community, which can be interpreted as tacit acceptance. With regard to the Canary Islands' waters, it should be noted that there is no conflict over their extent and the measurement of the territorial sea and contiguous zone, since they do not overlap with the claims of other coastal states. A different issue, which is not addressed in this article, is the problem of delimiting the remaining maritime areas of the Canary Islands waters (EEZ and continental shelf), due to overlaps with Morocco<sup>52</sup> to the east and with Portugal to the north-east. These countries have extended their maritime borders under their internal legislation to limits that partly coincide with those set out in Spanish legislation<sup>53</sup>.

---

<sup>50</sup> A similar precedent was set when many countries extended their Exclusive Economic Zone to 200 miles during the Geneva Convention, when agreement couldn't be reached on its width due to the differing positions of several states. On that occasion there was also a legal loophole which, through customary law, was eventually incorporated into the Montego Bay Convention.

<sup>51</sup> Within the EU, this legislative option has been adopted by Portugal for the Azores and Madeira archipelagos and by Denmark for the Faeroe Islands archipelago, which enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. Other mixed states such as Australia, Canada, Ecuador, India and Norway have also applied the same principle to their archipelagos.

<sup>52</sup> The Permanent Mission of Morocco to the UN issued note NV/ATL/No./114/2015 dated 10 March 2015, in which it expressed its reservations about the expansion of the Canary Islands' continental shelf, due to the interpretation of Law 44/2010 on the archipelagic doctrine and establishment of baselines, which it considered were not in accordance with Part IV of UNCLOS. However, the Permanent Mission of Spain replied to the Moroccan note on 22 April 2015, clarifying that the delimitation of the maritime waters of the Canary archipelago had already been covered by Law 15/1978, prior to UNCLOS.

<sup>53</sup> Apart from domestic law, all three countries are parties to the Montego Bay Convention, the provisions of which prevail and are applicable when resolving disputes. The criterion established in the Convention for settling any dispute concerning the delimitation of the exclusive zone or shelf between States with adjacent or conflicting coasts is that an equitable agreement be reached on the basis of international law, hence the importance of negotiations to achieve this. If there is no agreement, and until such time as agreement is reached, the equidistant rule is applied as an interim solution.

## 8. The regime of islands

On a separate issue, Part VIII of UNCLOS addresses the regime of islands and its Art. 121 simply establishes them as a geological concept, defining them as a natural extension of land, surrounded by water and above sea level. Only artificial islands and rocks unfit for human habitation or without an economic life of their own are excluded. The Convention equates islands to small continents, ignoring criteria such as their independence or whether they belong to a state when it comes to granting them the same territorial sea, contiguous zone, economic zone and even continental shelf as other land areas (Yturriaga, 2022: 236)<sup>54</sup>.

There would therefore be nothing to prevent the individual Canary Islands, according to the strict application of the Law of the Sea, from establishing baselines enclosing their internal waters and from there measuring the width of the territorial sea of each island and of the remaining marine areas. However, taking the island as a reference point would be a departure from Spanish legislation and also lead to an overlap between the majority of island aquatic spaces and their various applicable legal regimes. These would be difficult to resolve, generating confusion and causing legal uncertainty, given the unique location of each island in the ocean, as can be seen in the following image (Martín, 2005), in which the internal waters are shown in blue, and the territorial sea of each island and group of eastern islands, is in red.

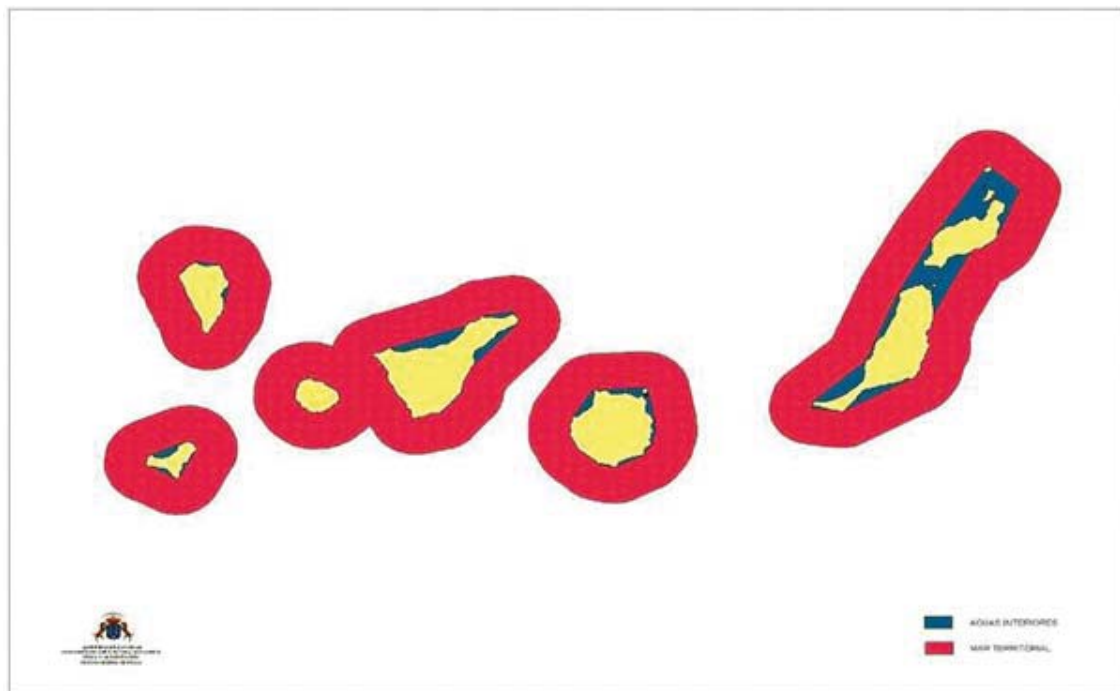


Figure 2. Inland waters and territorial sea enclosure lines, according to RD 2510/77.  
Source: Servicio de Estructuras Pesqueras de la Viceconsejería de Pesca del Gobierno de Canarias.

<sup>54</sup> The author explains that: “The Spanish delegation contributed to the prevailing thesis that islands had the same rights to maritime spaces as continental masses, in contrast to the criteria of countries such as Morocco, Türkiye and Venezuela.”

I therefore believe it to be fair that, in order to establish the contour of the Canary Islands' waters, the Statute of Autonomy has taken the whole archipelago as a reference point, rather than each island separately, in line with the definition of the Canary Islands as an Atlantic archipelago, in which the system of self-government is based on its exceptional geographical location, characterised by its remoteness from the European continent, its island status and the fact it is an Outermost Region<sup>55</sup>. These special differential, statutory and European characteristics explain why the Canary Islands is the only Spanish Community with its own maritime area made up of inter-island waters which, together with the land surface of the eight islands and islets that make up the Community<sup>56</sup>, comprise the area over which it exercises its powers.

UNCLOS provisions only require islands to meet very vague geographical and habitability requirements (no mention, for example, of minimum size or number of inhabitants) in order to configure their water areas. However, this is not the case for a group of islands that comprise an archipelago, which is subject to very comprehensive regulation. As indicated above, archipelagos must not only be a state, they must also have significant geographical features and a relevant historical or economic importance in order for Part IV of the Convention to be applicable to them. However, in the case of the Canary Islands, only the formal political aspect is missing, as has already been explained.

Consequently, the principle that is most suitable and coherent with the Law of the Sea for delimiting the Canary Islands' waters is, in my opinion, the archipelagic principle, as is set out in our legislation. This is also the case due to its clarity and simplicity. However, it is no secret that this issue is not straightforward and that several authors maintain different criteria (Lacleta, 2005; Martin, 2005); although it should be noted that these publications are prior to Law 44/2020.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, some of the authors consulted (Calderon, 2016: 31-33)<sup>57</sup> consider that Spanish legislation lacks international legal effectiveness, as it contradicts the higher-ranking UNCLOS rules, which restrict the application of Part IV exclusively to archipelagic states (Navarro, 2011). There is a middle ground proposed by Professor Eloy Ruiloba<sup>58</sup> (Ruiloba, 2009) and a position similar to the one I hold, given by Professor Esperanza Orihuela (Orihuela, 2011) and shared to

---

55 In political terms, Outermost Regions (ORs) are European regions that are geographically located on other continents and are governed by Community legislation, with some beneficial exceptions such as those provided for in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to help these territories face challenges that hinder their development, generally arising from their remoteness and isolation.

56 It should not be forgotten that the total island and maritime territory of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands covers more than 36,000 km<sup>2</sup>, exceeding the size of historical communities such as Catalonia and Galicia.

57 A more extensive analysis of the different doctrinal positions on this issue is provided in the work cited above.

58 This author proposes a new middle way consisting of broadly applying Art. 7 of UNCLOS so that, taking into account the economic interests of the region, straight baselines can be drawn between the islands.

some extent by José Antonio de Yturriaga (Yturriaga, 2002: 238)<sup>59</sup>. In any case, there is unanimous agreement regards the doctrine that it is unfair, and to a certain extent discriminatory, that Art. 47 of the Montego Bay Convention, on drawing archipelagic baselines, cannot be applied to the Canary Islands. It is also precisely this situation that leads me to step away from an exact interpretation of UNCLOS on this issue, in favour of a teleological interpretation, based on the spirit and purpose of the law.

## 9. Inland waters and the legal regime for archipelagic waters

After the current Statute of Autonomy, I consider that the political debate that arose during the processing of Law 44/2010 on whether the Canary Islands' waters are considered inland waters has been overcome. Although Spanish law does not regulate the legal regime of inland waters, international law assimilates them into national territory over which the State exercises full sovereignty.

It must be emphasised that Spanish law on the Canary Islands' waters is adapted to international regulations and also that the baselines that define them are in accordance with their requirements. I therefore argue that it is not appropriate to equate archipelagic waters with inland waters (Orihuela, 2011:21)<sup>60</sup>; as this would imply an extensive interpretation contrary to international law, which has a separate legal regime for both marine areas<sup>61</sup>. Moreover, not even sovereign island states could do this, as it would contravene Article 49 of the Convention, which includes a special regulation for archipelagic waters, different from inland waters. However, this does not prevent enclosing lines being drawn to separate Canary Islands waters from inland waters, as authorised for archipelagos by Art. 50 of UNCLOS<sup>62</sup>.

In terms of the legal regime, the Convention equates inland waters with land space under full state sovereignty, so innocent passage is not permitted. On the other hand, the legal status of archipelagic waters closely resembles the territorial sea and a regime similar to that used for straits is established. According to Art. 49 et seq. of UNCLOS,

59 The cited author states that: "it is within legal logic to extend *mutatis mutandis* some of the provisions of the Convention - such as those on enclosing all or part of the archipelagic perimeter with straight baselines - to state archipelagos, as was done by the 2nd Commission Chairman Reynaldo Galindo in the Single Official Negotiation Text. Spain missed the opportunity to make an exact interpretation in this regard when it signed or ratified UNCLOS, but it refrained from doing so, perhaps to avoid objections from states opposed to this extension of the archipelagic principle."

60 The author argues that "if these(archipelagic) waters were considered to be internal waters, it would have to be understood that our country's intention is to set a precedent tending not only to extend the application of the archipelagic principle to state archipelagos, but also to modify the legal regime of the waters enclosed within the perimeter."

61 See Arts. 49 and 50 of UNCLOS.

62 Inland waters (located inside the baseline of the territorial sea and including the mouths of rivers, bays, ports, roadsteads and low tide elevations) and the territorial sea, are state maritime and land public property assets, according to Coastal Law 2/2013, enacted to develop Art. 132.2 EC, which states that: "The State's public domain assets are those determined by law and, under all circumstances, include the maritime-land zone, beaches, the territorial sea, the natural resources of the economic zone, and the continental shelf."

sovereignty extends to the airspace above them, as well as to the seabed and subsoil, and vessels of all states enjoy the right of innocent passage. However, transit through archipelagic waters and the adjacent territorial sea can be channelled through sea and air routes suitable for the safe traffic of foreign ships and aircraft, taking into account the recommendations of the relevant international organisation<sup>63</sup>. Under international law, the body responsible for authorising measures to regulate maritime traffic and transit through specific areas is the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) of the United Nations, at the request of the state concerned. Traffic regulation must be based on the need to protect the waters for ecological, socio-economic or scientific reasons and also to prevent environmental risk that may be caused by maritime activities.

The waters of the Canary Islands are subject to intense maritime traffic of all kinds of vessels that travel the great oceanic routes between Europe, Africa and America. Many of these are large vessels transporting oil from Gulf countries and pose a risk of accidental oil spill pollution. In 2003, the Ministry of Public Works submitted the creation of the Specially Sensitive Sea Area (ZMES) of the Canary Islands to the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the IMO. It was approved by a resolution adopted on 22 July 2005, by virtue of which two maritime traffic separation devices were established: a western one between the islands of Gran Canaria and Tenerife; and an eastern one between Gran Canaria and Fuerteventura, indicated on the following nautical chart:



Figure 3. Canary Islands Particularly Sensitive Sea Area.

Source: Resolution MEPC.134 (53) of 22 July 2005 .[https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/KnowledgeCentre/IndexofIMOResolutions/MEPCDocuments/MEPC.134\(53\).pdf](https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/KnowledgeCentre/IndexofIMOResolutions/MEPCDocuments/MEPC.134(53).pdf)

These lanes are compulsory for ships in transit whose origin or destination is not a port in the Canary Islands<sup>64</sup>. It should also be noted that the reporting area for ships

<sup>63</sup> See Art. 53 of UNCLOS, which gives archipelagic states the option to establish passageways that must comply with international regulations.

<sup>64</sup> It established five restricted areas that must be avoided by vessels and a mandatory reporting system for vessels of more than 600 deadweight tonnes intending to travel in the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area and carrying heavy grades of oil.

obliged to participate in the reporting system (CANREP) is delimited on the chart by an outer polygonal line, which reaches up to 12 nautical miles from the territorial sea of the Canary Islands, measured from the archipelagic baselines established in Law 44/2010. This confirms that the IMO did not object to the legal regime for Canary Islands waters which, as far as establishing compulsory shipping lanes is concerned, coincides with the international provisions applicable to archipelagic states.

Furthermore, the airspace over the oceanic surface of the Canary Islands is managed by the public company ENAIRE, which is also responsible, through the Gran Canaria centre, for regulating air navigation in the Western Sahara, in accordance with decisions by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the technical body of the United Nations responsible for the technical and economic regulation of world aviation.

## 10. The Canary Islands search and rescue area

The IMO has adopted important maritime conventions to coordinate the search and rescue obligations of coastal states. The first Convention in this field was the 1974 Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS Convention<sup>65</sup>) which called on states to establish search and rescue facilities and services to assist persons in distress at sea near their coasts.

However, the most important instrument is the SAR Convention<sup>66</sup> of 1979, amended in 2004, which establishes an international system for search and rescue operations, dividing the areas managed by coastal countries into maritime areas. This means that when an accident occurs at sea, the rescue of persons in need of assistance is coordinated by the specialised service responsible for the area in which the accident has occurred. The distribution of SAR areas is based on grounds of operational efficiency, depending on the availability and scope of the rescue resources of the coastal countries that are part of the SAR Convention, who unilaterally notify the IMO of the maritime area for which they are responsible. Rescue demarcations are without prejudice to the delimitation of maritime areas under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of coastal states, which are governed by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Article 98 of this law obliges the master of a ship to render assistance to any person who is in danger of being lost at sea and also encourages the creation of search and rescue services, stressing the need for cooperation between neighbouring states, regardless of the specific areas assigned to them.

Spain acceded to the SAR Convention in 1993 and notified the IMO that its area of rescue responsibility covers a marine area of 1.5 million km<sup>2</sup>, divided into 4

---

65 See: [https://www.imo.org/es/About/Conventions/Paginas/International-Convention-for-the-Safety-of-Life-at-Sea-\(SOLAS\),-1974.aspx](https://www.imo.org/es/About/Conventions/Paginas/International-Convention-for-the-Safety-of-Life-at-Sea-(SOLAS),-1974.aspx)

66 See: International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention)

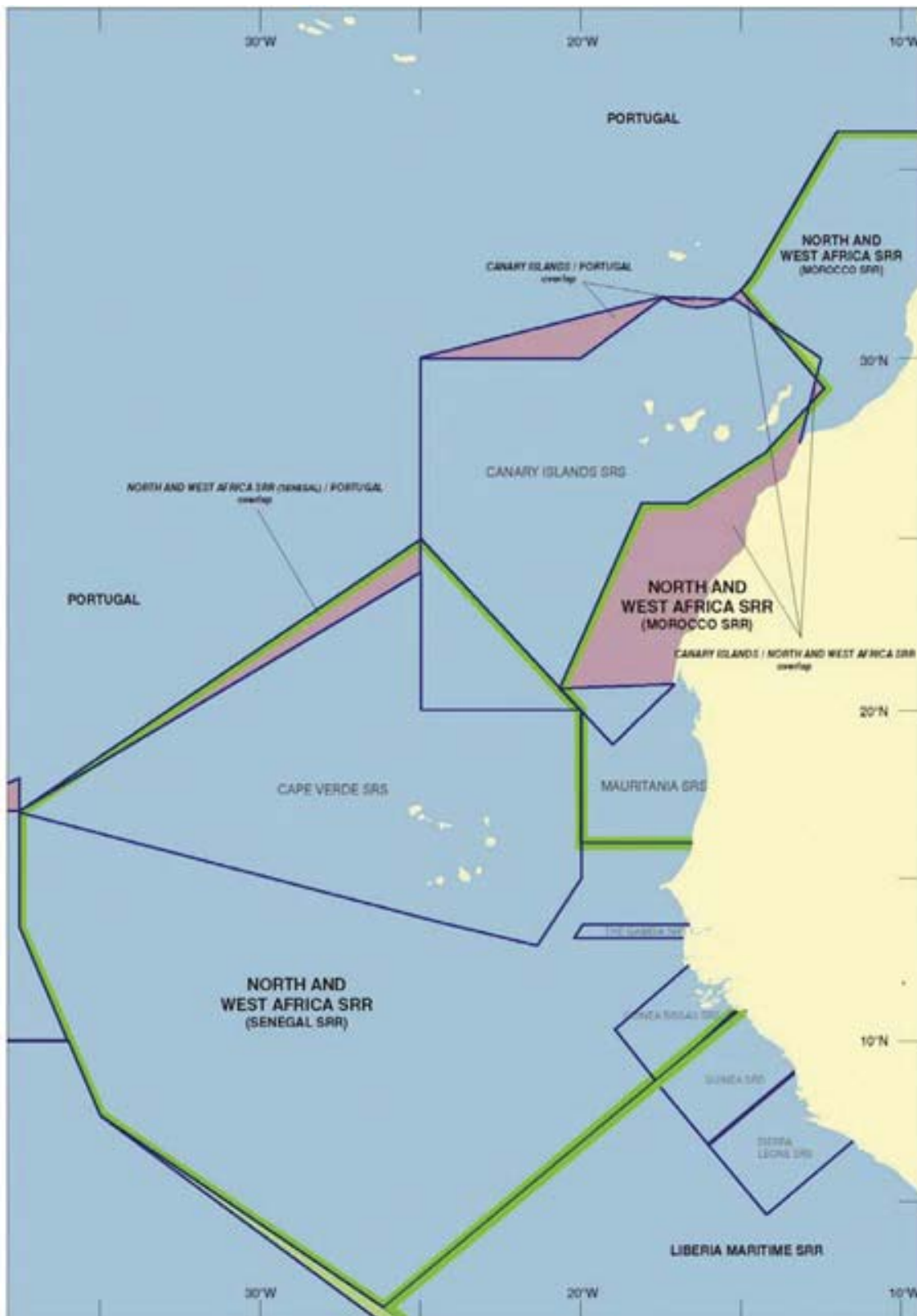


Figure 4. SAR Zone Canary Islands and Morocco  
 Source: IOM. SAR.8/Circ.3 Annex 4, page 6. world index.CDR (uscg.mil)

zones: Atlantic, Strait, Mediterranean and Canary Islands. They are managed by the public company SASEMAR<sup>67</sup> through its 20 maritime rescue centres, which act as Spanish coordination centres for the SAR Convention. The Canary Islands area is the largest area and is coordinated through the Maritime Rescue Centres of Tenerife and Las Palmas; it includes the strip of sea adjacent to the entire coast of Western Sahara.

In turn, Morocco ratified the SAR Convention in 1999 and notified the IMO in 2011 of its areas of responsibility, including the South Atlantic region which is associated with the Dahkla coordination centre, which is under the authority of Casablanca. This area includes the maritime space that projects from the coast of Western Sahara and overlaps with the Canary Islands zone. The maps published by the IMO show this strip of sea as an overlapping maritime search and rescue area between Spain and Morocco, in which both countries share responsibility and must coordinate to respond to emergencies that occur in the common area, as can be seen in the following figure:

## II. Protection of the marine environment of the Canary Islands

The Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands, as part of the Spanish State and belonging to the EU, has taken on important commitments derived from international, European, national and regional regulations on the management of the marine environment, the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its resources.

In this area, Law 42/2007 on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity<sup>68</sup> created the Marine Protected Area concept so it could be integrated into a network of protected marine areas under state and regional power, within the framework of the 1992 United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, known as the *Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit*<sup>69</sup>.

Furthermore, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC, which established general regulations for planning the marine environment with the aim of maintaining a good environmental condition, included the sub-region of European Macaronesia, comprising the Outermost Region archipelagos of Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands, in the Atlantic space. The previous Directive was transposed into Spanish law by Law 41/2010, of 29 December, on the Protection of the Marine Environment<sup>70</sup>, which kept the Canary Islands in the Macaronesian sub-region of the North-east Atlantic, creating the Canary Islands marine demarcation within the

---

67 The Sociedad de Salvamento y Seguridad Marítima (SASEMAR) is attached to the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, through the Directorate General of the Merchant Navy. It was launched in 1993 and its main activity is to save lives at sea, but it is also involved in preventing and combating marine pollution and assisting maritime traffic.

68 BOE, 14 December 2007, No. 299.

69 Spain and the EU ratified the Convention, which calls on parties to create networks of terrestrial and marine protected areas.

70 BOE, 30 December 2010, No. 317.

network of marine protected areas; this is the maritime space in which Spain exercises sovereignty or jurisdiction around the Canary Islands and over which a specific strategy was intended to be developed. Subsequently, Royal Decree 1365/2018, of 2 November<sup>71</sup>, approved the marine strategies, including the Canary Islands strategy, which is currently being drafted. On this point, it is extremely important to stress that the marine environment area of planning and protection corresponding to the Canary Islands demarcation, at a European level, coincides with the oceanic space of the archipelago over which the Spanish State exercises jurisdiction, measured using the archipelagic baselines defined in the Statute of Autonomy. In line with the above, the general framework of the first part of the marine strategy of the Canary Islands demarcation, published by the Ministry for Ecological Transition in 2019<sup>72</sup>, indicates that the surface area of the demarcation covers 48,616,821.86 hectares, which is practically the same size as mainland Spain, as can be seen in the following map:

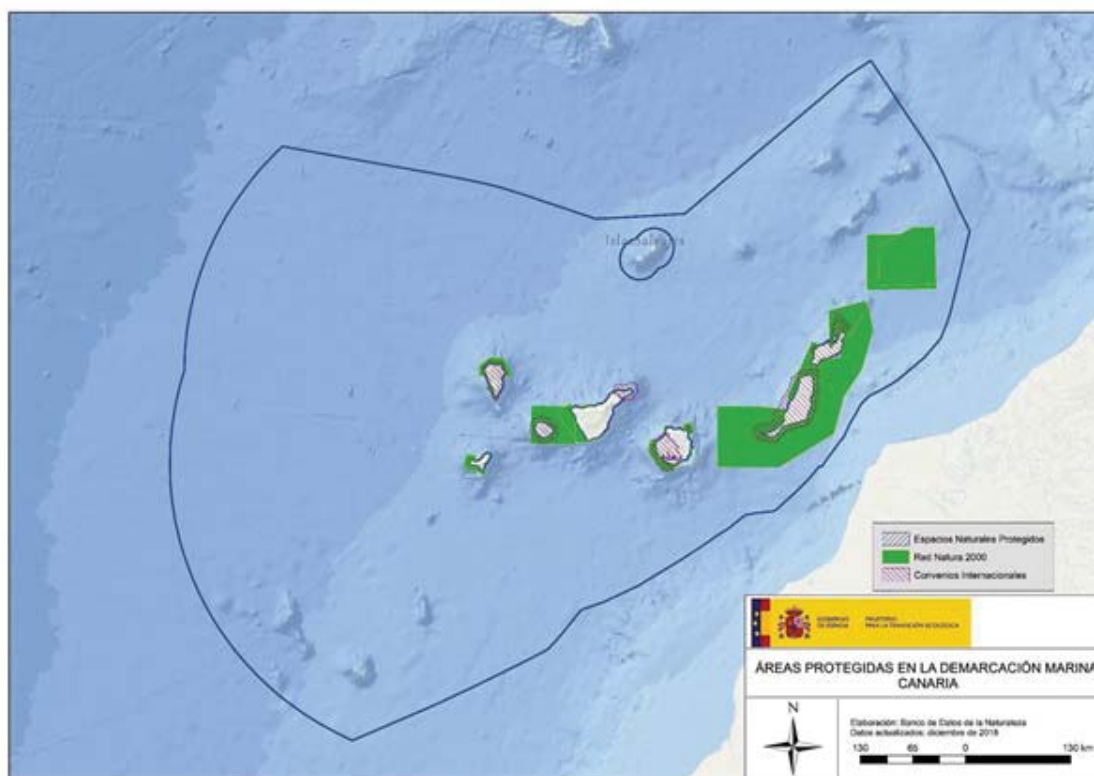


Figure 5. Protected areas in the Canary Islands demarcation. The blue line outlines the marine demarcation of the Canary Islands. Source: Marine strategy for the Canary Islands demarcation. Part I. General Framework. Ministry for Ecological Transition.

In this same context, Framework Directive 2014/89, which was incorporated into Spanish legislation through RD 363/2017<sup>73</sup>, established a general regime for the

71 BOE, 19 November 2018, No. 279.

72 See page 1: [https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/costas/temas/proteccion-medio-marino/parteimarcogeneraldmcan\\_tcm30-498330.pdf](https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/costas/temas/proteccion-medio-marino/parteimarcogeneraldmcan_tcm30-498330.pdf)

73 BOE, 11 April 2017, No. 86.

planning and management of marine areas and to promote sustainable development, while providing for the approval of a specific plan for each of the five Spanish marine demarcations<sup>74</sup>. Finally, RD 150/2023, of 28 February<sup>75</sup>, approved the maritime spatial plans for the five Spanish marine districts<sup>76</sup>, which form part of the marine strategies and are binding for the public administrations. Its main purpose is to promote the sustainability of the growth of maritime economies, the development of marine areas and the use of marine resources.

## 12. Some final considerations

It is clear that, in the more than 40 years that have passed since the Montego Bay Convention was signed in 1982, modern societies have evolved towards greater environmental awareness. The immediate future of humanity will undoubtedly be increasingly linked to the blue economy. Countries in the international community have realised the importance of the oceans for life on the planet, as well as their influence on climate change and global warming, as shown by the numerous initiatives undertaken by the United Nations. The interconnectedness of the seas calls for universal action to preserve a healthy marine environment for the benefit of mankind as a whole.

The paradigm on maritime spaces that inspired the origins of the Law of the Sea, which took sovereignty and the continent as the main concept to which islands are subordinated, is now outdated. There are quite a few cohesive archipelagic regions that, like the Canary Islands, are more socially and economically advanced than some continental states or even most state-like archipelagos, especially when compared to SIDS, many of which do not have the financial capacity to meet their international obligations to conserve and control their maritime spaces<sup>77</sup>.

It is also noted that many unilateral national decisions applying the archipelagic principle to non-sovereign island territories constitute an international practice followed by a good number of states, and there is considerable tolerance for this. I

---

74 The explanatory memorandum stated that the provision was intended to meet the commitments of the European Green Pact, the Paris Agreement, the EU Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030.

75 BOE, 04 March 2023, No. 54.

76 In the case of the Canary Islands, the maritime-land areas protected by international instruments are the Biosphere Reserves of the islands of Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, La Gomera, La Palma, and the Macizo de Anaga in Tenerife. 2 Sites of Community Importance, 13 Special Protection Areas for Birds and 27 Special Areas of Conservation of the Canary Islands Demarcation have been integrated into the European Natura 2000 Network (Directive 92/43/EEC).

77 See: *The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea: A historical perspective* (1998). Overview - Convention & Related Agreements (un.org): [...] "Another major challenge will be to provide the necessary assistance, particularly to developing States, to enable them to benefit from the rights they have acquired under the new regime. For example, many of the states that have established their EEZs are not currently in a position to exercise all their rights and fulfil their obligations under the Convention [...] these are long-term efforts that are beyond the current and possibly short-term capacity of most developing countries."

therefore consider that the sovereignty requirement for shaping archipelagic waters should not be exclusive. In my opinion, it should be extended to certain archipelagic states that, as in the case of the Canary Islands, have a special historical significance or form an intrinsic geographical, economic and political entity, in accordance with Art. 46 b) of UNCLOS, provided that they have the responsibility and capacity to protect and preserve the marine environment, which was already established as a primary obligation for states in UNCLOS (Art. 192), but without ever establishing mandatory measures.

Maritime spaces confer rights on coastal territories, but also entail surveillance, rescue, and conservation obligations. Therefore, in the case of particularly important archipelagos, being committed to protecting the marine environment, which is in the interests of the international community as a whole, should take precedence over formal questions of sovereignty in establishing the contour and outer limit of inter-island waters. In fact, the legislation of the Canary Islands, as a Spanish and European region, is a world leader in terms of the protection and sustainable use of its maritime spaces and resources.

The Law of the Sea, like international law in general, is permanently evolving to adapt to the new realities of a changing world. In addition to worldwide concern over protecting and restoring the marine environment, it is essential that maritime spaces are defined, and their legal regime is regulated, with as much clarity as possible, whether they are state-owned or belong to mankind as a whole, for the sake of legal certainty and to avoid any possible boundary conflicts.

This paper has addressed a problem that was left unresolved during the discussions at the 3rd Conference due to discrepancies that arose between different blocs of countries with opposing interests. A pragmatic consensus-building decision was taken to establish a special legal regime for archipelagic states, but failed to address the regulation of historical or special archipelagos belonging to a continental state. The analogous application of the archipelagic principle by Spanish laws to determine the contour of the Canary Islands' waters is not only in line with the international Law of the Sea, but is also highly respectful of it, since it applies it rigorously and in its entirety to a similar case, which is neither covered nor excluded by UNCLOS.

October 2023

## References:

Allsopp, M., Walters A., Santillo, D., and Johnston. P: Plastic Debris in the World's Ocean. "Documents reports plastic Greenpeace": [https://web.archive.org/web/20100702192331/http://oceans.greenpeace.org/raw/content/en/documents-reports/plastic\\_ocean\\_report.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20100702192331/http://oceans.greenpeace.org/raw/content/en/documents-reports/plastic_ocean_report.pdf)

Briceño Berrú, J.E. (2012). «Análisis de la Declaración de Santiago de 1952 y de la Convención de Lima de 1954 y demostración de su insubsistencia jurídica como

- tratados de delimitación marítima entre Perú y Chile». Instituto de Estudios Internacionales. Universidad Católica del Perú. No. 30, pp. 139-170: <https://revistas.pucp.edu.pe/index.php/agendainternacional/article/view/6266>
- Calderón González, J.A (2016). “La delimitación de los espacios marítimos en Canarias.” TFG, Universidad de La Laguna. Tutor, Ríos F: <https://riull.ull.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/915/3015/%22La%20delimitacion%20de%20los%20espacios%20maritimos%20en%20Canarias%22.pdf?sequence=1>
- Cervera Pery, J. (2009). “La Convención del Derecho del Mar cumple sus bodas de plata con más sombras que luces”. Revista española de derecho militar. Issue. 93: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3233896>
- Cheng, L., Abraham, J., Trenberth, KE and col (2023). “Another Year of Record Heat for the Oceans”, Advances in atmospheric sciences, vol. 40, June 2023, pp 963-974: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00376-023-2385-2>
- Farrow, H. (2022): What is aquaculture? National Geographic. Environment section: <https://www.nationalgeographic.es/medio-ambiente/acuicultura>
- García-Talavera Casañas, F. (2021) Macaronesia: Naturaleza, historias y leyendas, Ed. Kinnamon, Santa Cruz de Tenerife.
- Lacleta Muñoz, JM. (2005) “Las aguas del archipiélago canario en el Derecho Internacional del mar actualmente vigente”. Real Instituto Elcano. Work paper 31/2005: [https://nooilcanarias.files.wordpress.com/2012/12/lacleta\\_pdf.pdf](https://nooilcanarias.files.wordpress.com/2012/12/lacleta_pdf.pdf)
- Martín Ruíz, J.F. (2005). “Los espacios marítimos y el problema de su delimitación en la posición geopolítica del archipiélago canario”. Revista electrónica de geografía y ciencias sociales. University of Barcelona. Vol. 9, issue 185: <https://www.ub.edu/geocrit/sn/sn-185.htm>
- Morales Morilla, C. (2002). «La condición jurídica de los espacios marítimos de Canarias: problemática actual». Anales de la Facultad de Derecho. University of La Laguna, pp. 117-137.  
[https://riull.ull.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/915/18460/AFD\\_19\\_2002\\_06.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://riull.ull.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/915/18460/AFD_19_2002_06.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Navarro Marchante, V. J. (2011). “La problemática jurídica sobre la delimitación de los espacios marítimos del archipiélago canario (a propósito de la Ley 44/2010)”, Revista de Derecho Político, UNED, issue 80, 2011, pp. 149-186: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d542/15778c25e9b11c8203ffb3fb5cfa31eb53cc.pdf>
- Orcasitas Llorente, L. (1959). “El mar territorial en la Conferencia de Ginebra de 1958”. Anuario hispano-luso-americano de derecho internacional. No. 1: 7\_\_ORCASITAS.pdf (ihladi.net)
- Orihuela Calatayud, E. (2011). “La delimitación de los espacios marinos en los archipiélagos de Estado. Reflexiones a la luz de la Ley 44/2010, de 30 de diciembre

- de aguas canarias”. Revista electrónica de estudios internacionales, issue 21, July 2011:<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3826884>
- (2014): “La delimitación de los espacios marinos en España: perspectivas futuras”, in Martín y Pérez de Naclares, J. (dir.): España y la práctica del Derecho Internacional. Madrid, Escuela Diplomática.
- Ovejero Puente, A. M. (2004) “Notas en torno a la problemática del mar territorial en archipiélagos dependientes de Estados compuestos”. Cuadernos de Derecho Público, issue 21 (January-April 2004): <https://revistasonline.inap.es/index.php/CDP/article/view/708/763>
- Ruiloba García, E. (2009), “La delimitación equitativa de los espacios marítimos de los archipiélagos de Estado en Derecho Internacional”, Revista Jurídica de Canarias, issue 14, pp. 479-496.
- Treves, T. (2008). “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.” United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law:[https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/uncls/uncls\\_s.pdf](https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/uncls/uncls_s.pdf)
- Yturriaga Barberán, JA. «La conferencia sobre el Derecho del Mar vista desde dentro por un delegado español». Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. 2022. ISBN: 978-84-19003-02-7.

---

*Article received: 18 October 2023*

*Article accepted: 30 January 2024*

---



*Federico AZNAR FERNÁNDEZ-MONTESINOS*  
*Navy Commander. IEEE Analyst.*

*E-mail: faznfer@fn.mde.es*

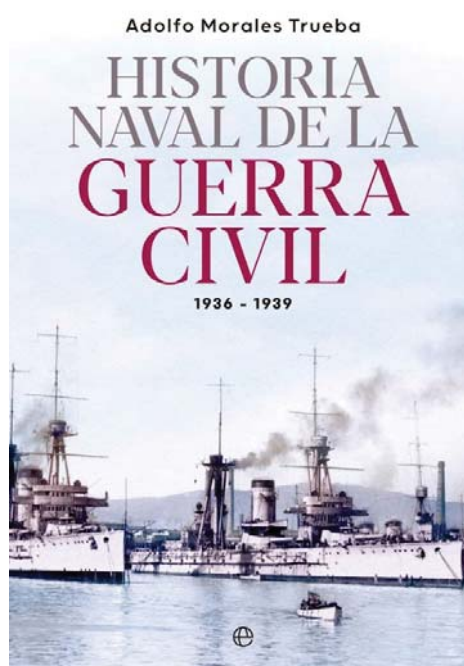
## **RECENSION**

***HISTORIA NAVAL DE LA GUERRA CIVIL, 1936-1939***

*Adolfo Morales Trueba*

*Editorial: La Esfera de los Libros, 2023 (458) pages*

*ISBN: 978-84-1384-554-8*



Freud wrote in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that major conflicts do not occur between major differences, but between minor differences, so that the smaller the difference between the parties, paradoxically, the greater the violence that is unleashed. The key is that there is recognition, differentiation, but not otherness.

That is why the biggest conflicts are civil wars, where violence is extreme. And to recall Carl Schmitt, once initiated, it transcends its causes, generates its own dynamics and can only be understood from a specifically political logic.

Despite the economic importance of its coast —transport, tourism, fishing, etc.— and the fact that it is a peninsula —literally “almost an island”—, Spain ignores the conditioning factors determined by geography and does not pay adequate attention to its maritime dimension, even though this was decisive for its successful civilising project in the past. The sea is neither visible nor of interest beyond where it covers. And this despite having a large fishing fleet.

The strategic model of 18th century Spain was that of an army which, added to the English army, was superior to the French army; and that of a navy which, added to the French navy, was superior to the English navy. But the defeats of Trafalgar first, and the *Disaster of '98*, later, caused the country's naval vocation to decline, although plans by Ferrándiz and Miranda gave it back some of its lustre in the 20th century.

History is always a teacher and is intimately related to strategy. It is better to learn from the experience of the past and its mistakes than to reproduce them from an Adamistic perspective. To paraphrase Mark Twain, history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes. Contradictorily again, only defeat and failure teach; it is therefore worth studying them. Human, all too human.

For most of the 20th century, Naval History has been a field given over to Anglo-Saxon historiography which, since the great work of the Naval Captain (also a laureate; arms and letters) Cesáreo Fernández Duro, *La Armada española desde la unión de los reinos de Castilla y Aragón* (8 volumes, 1894-1903 and still highly recommendable reading), has practically written it from its milestones, silences and references; and has even uncritically praised the instrumentation of History by Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan in his famous work *La Influencia del Poder Naval en la Historia (1660-1783)*.

In this work, published in 1890 and cited by many, as is often the case with the great classics —in other words, without having read it— the History of Spain is used as a counterpoint to that of the United Kingdom with a view to demonstrating the superiority of Naval Power and its possibilities, giving doctrinal substance and coherence to the strategic moves made then by the United States and in the process defaming its strategic rival at the time.

On the other hand, the Civil War has always been of considerable interest and has given rise to extensive literature that has dealt with many of its most important aspects. And it could not be understood in any other way, given the tear that the conflict brought with it. The counterpoint is that this historiography is often based

on ideological positions or seeks to serve a cause when it does not judge the past from current keys.

However, the development of naval operations and their strategic implications are an exception to this. It has been approached by presenting the naval domain as a secondary theatre of operations in a primarily land-based war when this was either not the case or not fully.

The Civil War at sea is an exciting episode that deserves to be told and known. The history of the Navy between 1936 and 1939 involved actions by its surface ships at sea, by its Marine units on the land fronts, by its aircraft in the seas and skies of the peninsula and by its submarines underwater. Many sailors on both sides lost their lives, and large naval units have been lying in the deep ever since.

Land was certainly the decisive theatre but the naval sphere, although uncoordinated with land, played an important role in a conflict. It is a fact that both sides depended on contributions from third countries received by this means. Also because of the not insignificant detail that the bulk of the rebel army was in Africa, which is to say, on the other side of the sea. And the role of the Moroccan forces was not small.

In any case, from an academic perspective, the naval issues of the Civil War have still been insufficiently addressed and it was necessary to fill this historiographical gap.

Thus, more than 25 years have passed since the last major work on this facet of the Spanish conflict, *La guerra silenciosa y silenciada (The Silent and Silenced War)*, published in 1998 by brothers Fernando and Salvador Moreno de Alborán y Reyna. Moreover, it has probably been almost 40 years since it was presented with an extension suitable for the general public.

In recent years, access has been gained to previously unknown documentation to update the analysis of the Civil War at sea with new discoveries and contributions, thus bringing to light previously unknown data.

The problem is that some facts and attitudes are far from being forgotten; indeed, they continue to arouse passions in the naval community to such an extent that it is difficult to deal with them objectively. It could be no other way as such a civil conflict, transferred to a relatively small organisation, generated such waves of pain that they still reach us today. For a long time, this advised oblivion as a kind of therapy for overcoming. The war de facto reconfigured the ranks that remain in place to this day.

In July 1936, the *General Corps Officers' Rank* had 721 officers. Of these, 255 were executed or killed in the first months of the war. And 357 were separated from service for being, or being presumed to be, in a situation of rebellion. This means that 84.8% of the officers had risen up against the Republic. As a result, only 47 General Corps Officers (including 3 midshipmen) fought for the Republic: 6% of the total rank.

Transferring a social conflict—in this case, between officers and subordinate classes—to the confined space of a ship accentuated a polarisation that gave the ship an explosive nature. Unlike the Army, the Navy—with the counterexample of

Vice-Admiral Topete and *La Gloriosa*— had remained practically, until the Civil War, oblivious to the interventionist vicissitudes of 19th-century political life, declaring itself to be a corps with an important technical or professional background that was not at all interested in politics.

But such a thing is neither new nor solely a product of this country's culture and idiosyncrasies. There was the famous mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin* in 1905; the rebellion at the Helsingfors base and the naval schools in Kronstadt or the Baltic Fleet in 1917; of the German fleet in Kiel in 1918; on the *Jan Bart* and the *France* in 1919 to oppose intervention against the Soviets; or, in the case of the British navy, the naval mutiny at Invergordon in 1931.

Finally, the book in question is written by a Marine Infantry Officer, Colonel Adolfo Morales Trueba, who is also a member of the academic community in his capacity as a doctor in International Security, a degree obtained with a doctoral thesis on the naval policy of the Second Republic.

The Colonel has brought together in the subject of this review a matter of a historical nature with his military and naval training, which has resulted in a rich product, based on an approach with the breadth of vision that should characterise special operations officers.

In turn, the work is the translation of his research experience to the field of dissemination, giving accessibility for the general public to the soundness of its basis. The result is an enjoyable and pleasant product to read, which improves our understanding of something that is beginning to be more distant in time and therefore can be more objectively analysed.

His work aims to be dispassionate; he shies away from emotionality as he does from politics. In doing so, he seeks a balance and weighting that does not offend the reader, whatever their political persuasion. To this end, on the one hand, he endows his discourse with an expository dimension, full of facts and names, because war is made by people. On the other hand, he avoids unnecessary judgements and unprofessional qualifications; and without ignoring them, he does not over-expose either the massacres or the subsequent repression in order to focus on the strategic consequences of the operations. The cost, of course, is to deprive the decision process of the psychological framework, but I would not have been able to reproduce it either.

The sea, as always, almost invisible to the citizens of this country, was relevant to the war. Its continuation would not have been possible for the Republic without Soviet supplies, which, it must be acknowledged, were never interrupted and experienced only relatively minor and, in global terms, irrelevant mishaps. Nor was it any less so for the rebels, who received convoys and material support from Italy and Germany. However, as the author argues, the Republic, with more means, could have done more but lacked competent commanders.

The relevance of controlling the sea is particularly evident in the consequences of the lack of this control. Such is the case, as Colonel Morales details, of the serious

strategic error committed by the Republic, which, faced with the difficulties of the government forces in the northern theatre of operations, mistakenly shifted the main fleet resources towards the Bay of Biscay.

The strategic surprise of the entry into service —although not with all its operational means— of the cruiser *Canarias* which, together with the *Almirante Cervera*, was dispatched to the Strait in September 1936, gave the rebel side superiority in the area. This materialised on 27 September in the sinking of the destroyer *Almirante Ferrándiz*.

Thus, between 18 July and 31 October, 13,962 members of the Spanish Army were transferred from Africa to the peninsular theatre by air, the same forces that rose up with the exploitation of tactical control of the Strait of Gibraltar and, as the author emphasises, in barely ten days, 12,000 men crossed along with the necessary war material.

But it is also worth noting that the Republic maintained control of this area until October, which prevented the Army of Africa from crossing en masse as soon as the uprising began, thus giving the government time to organise the defence of Madrid, where during the first weeks of the war only light columns arrived with limited troops, preventing a rapid victory, as was intended.

However, as Colonel Morales demonstrates through multiple examples, both sides conducted the operations with a strongly land-based approach, so that the naval side was not well integrated into the overall planning of these operations. Naval strategy was relevant, and could have been even more so if both sides had realised its importance, had integrated it and given it the necessary attention, something neither side managed to do.

As the author points out, the conduct of the naval war was conditioned more by the mistakes of both sides than by their successes. The rebels committed serious tactical errors, which led to no lesser results: the sinking of the battleship *España*, the cruiser *Baleares* and the transport *Castillo de Olite* (2,112 deaths with no military need). But the Republicans fell into major strategic or operational errors, such as giving up the Strait of Gibraltar or not making a greater effort to occupy Mallorca and thus control the Western Mediterranean.

Despite having most of the fleet's units at its disposal, the Republic did not exploit the superiority of the material available. Professional competence and fidelity belong to different fields. One is not a substitute for the other, however much both are needed.

Moreover, among the many lessons that can be drawn from this work is that war is a political activity but on a military level. For this reason, it requires technical training at all levels, from tactical to strategic, which cannot be ignored, and with organisational spaces in which political intervention must be preventive rather than systematic because of the mismatch created for the lower levels of decision-making and the reactions it requires.

Day-to-day politics should not be transferred to the sphere of the armed forces, subjecting them to its ups and downs and tensions. Armed forces are there to fulfil their intended purposes, not to play politics. According to the author, control of the republican organisation by means of committees was another obstacle for its navy to function efficiently, an extremely difficult task when you are constantly questioning the orders you receive.

Also relevant is the control and centralisation of communications, decisive for the failure of the uprising in the Navy. And I must say that I am proud that my grandfather, Federico Aznar Bárcena —mentioned several times in the book and at other times in his career— was personal assistant to Admiral Miranda, one of those responsible in the 1920s for implementing an effective, telecommunications-based command and control system.

In short, the main value of this book is to present a historiographical study developed with scientific solvency, accessible to the general public and related to a relatively unexplored area. To achieve this it sought a technical and impartial approach, which overcomes the ideological and even fideistic charge often incorporated by traditional references.

---

*Recension received: 20 October 2023*

*Recension accepted: 17 January 2024*

---

*Javier FERNÁNDEZ APARICIO*  
*IEEE Analyst*

*E-mail: jferap1@mde.es*

## **RECENSION**

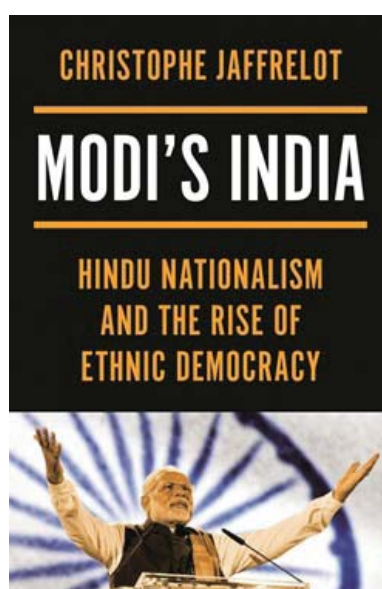
***MODI'S INDIA: HINDU NATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF  
ETHNIC DEMOCRACY***

*Christophe Jaffrelot (2021).*

*Editorial: Princeton University Press, 2021, (656) pages.*

*DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa286>*

*ISBN 978-0691206806*



In 2024, India's prime minister for the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) Narendra Modi will be able to revalidate a third term, something only done by historic Jawaharlal Neru at the beginning of Indian independence (1950-1964) and his daughter Indira Gandhi, albeit in two different legislatures (1966-1977, 1980-1984). Moreover, both did so while leading the no less historic Indian National Congress, while Modi can do it again at the head of the *Hindutva* BJP.

Since winning the first election in 2014, Modi has propelled India into a major power position beyond regional level, but internally the country is experiencing a great deal of ethnic strife, particularly over measures to deal with Muslims, a minority of hundreds of millions of people in the world's most populous country, with a population of over 1.4 billion. An example of this confrontation was the inauguration in January 2024 of the temple dedicated to Ram in the city of Ayodhya, where Modi took centre stage at the ceremony. A temple under the weight of the controversy of a disputed court ruling sanctioning its construction on the site where in 1992 a mob of *Hindutva* rioted and destroyed the then existing and no less historic Babri Masjid mosque, causing dozens of deaths.

Christophe Jaffrelot's 2021 book analyses in three parts and eleven chapters the rise to power of the ethno-nationalist *Hindutva* movement in India, through the trajectory of Modi himself. A before and after in the country's history. Jaffrelot is a renowned French political scientist specialising in India and Pakistan, professor of South Asian politics and history at the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Internationales (Paris), the King's India Institute (London) and research director at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris). Therefore, we are faced with the profuse analysis of a specialist who shows us the end result of meticulous research and exhaustive documentation work.

The first part of the book begins with an introductory chapter in which the author analyses the birth of the *Hindutva* ideology, already very present during the process of India's independence in 1947, although it did not have sufficient support to dispute the power of the secular and more pragmatic Indian National Congress, the protagonist of that independence and of structuring the Indian state, but ultimately incapable of resolving serious internal social, economic and ethnic problems between the different cultures that make up the country. The early *Hindutva* movements of the 1940s and 1950s thus established the idea of the specificity of a unique Indian homeland for Hindus, spiced with a continuous anti-Muslim rhetoric. These movements gradually acquired a doctrinal corpus of widely publicised *Hindutva* authors and, above all, aspired to integrate all Indian Hindu social strata, overcoming caste politics since the importance of the individual was to be subordinated to whether or not he or she was Hindu.

Until the 1960s, Hindu nationalism lacked an organisation that would unite all its ramifications and give rise to charismatic leaders. *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) emerges, a *Hindutva* non-political organisation officially founded in 1925, but lacking in relevance and followers until decades later. Other groups emerged that were persecuted by the Indian National Congress government for their radicalism,

but which eventually came to fruition, such as the BJP itself, founded in 1980 as a new response to the illegalisation of precursor parties; it would draw massively from RSS members above all. One of them would be Narendra Modi. Jaffrelot devotes a second chapter in this initial block to his first period of apprenticeship and rise in the RSS structure. Finally, he rose to media fame when he was elected by the BJP as a gubernatorial candidate in his home state of Gujarat, where he won resoundingly. His mandate includes alleged responsibility for the 2002 ethnic riots, which left dozens dead.

Gujarat was the platform for his candidacy for the BJP in the 2014 general elections. Modi then rolled out a strategy unseen in India, such as his fiery and provocative rhetoric, as well as a continuous presence on social media, always surrounded by young people and bluntly criticising his rivals—especially Congress leaders—as elitist and corrupt. At the same time, an army of *Hindutva* collaborators prevented any criticism of Modi and attacked anyone who did. In the end, this populist and aggressive rhetoric enabled a sweeping victory for Modi and the BJP.

Here Jaffrelot draws attention to a fact. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi can ultimately be blamed for the tools that made the BJP's victory possible. Her policies of absolute control in her own party, Congress, plus the rejection of any alliance with like-minded organisations and, above all, the creation of a single national constituency in India in 1971, were replicated by the BJP: a single leadership and a single discourse, plus the same message for the whole country. Only now this speech and message would be the *Hindutva*, while the undisputed leader would be Modi. In the face of the political and social decline of Congress, the BJP established itself as a party of the future, with a disciplined organisation subordinate to its leadership and with hundreds of thousands of members conscious of its *Hindutva* mission.

Jaffrelot begins the second part of the book by delving into the causes of Modi's victory in 2014. The first is Modi's own projection of a calculated self-image between tradition and modernity, with his publicised interest in technology, social media and even India's space race. This hybrid message resonates in Indian society, where Prime Minister Modi also wants to combine past and present, i.e. not to lose ancestral traditions but also not to renounce the advances and comforts of modernity. Another cause of the predicament is the recipient of the message. According to Modi, Indian society is only Hindu society, which is the majority but not the only one. In his thinking, all other religions, ethnicities and even Hindu politicians who are not religious or are liberal and Western in their outlook, are not India's own.

Modi and the BJP succeeded in neutralising caste divisions as they threatened their project of a unified Hindu nation, not because they fought against the exclusion it entailed. The relationship with the Hindu people is presented as direct and without intermediaries, therefore not responding to opponents, institutions and even less to opposing media with the capacity to mobilise public opinion. Minorities, immigrants or political opponents are portrayed as not belonging to Indian society. A first consequence is the "Hinduisation" of public space, as in the case of the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, marginalising all other sensibilities. The Muslim

community is the main victim of this policy, but also other groups such as Christians, with the BJP authorities calling directly or indirectly for xenophobic demonstrations, sometimes not without violence.

Jaffrelot also takes a closer look at the means that proliferate in Modi's India to control those considered opponents or non-Indians. Surveillance and coercive measures have increased markedly, including lawfare, as evidenced by the leniency towards radical *Hindutva* groups that create disturbances or, equally damaging to democracy, a double standard that rewards the aggressor even when punished in court rulings, something that is increasingly rare. This puts the rule of law itself at risk, as this must also be rejected if it is considered contrary to the Hindu national spirit.

Jaffrelot also analyses how Modi's government has modified the traditional Indian secular postulates that emerged from Congress policies during independence. A welfare state for all is abolished in favour of a so-called "entrepreneurial state" where the population should not ask for any help, but take care of itself, even if it is very poor. Under Modi, the most needy receive benefits and some aid—such as gas connections, the construction of public toilets and housing— but this is presented as an act of charity or a gift from the prime minister and not as an entitlement, even though it is all dressed up in the sacrosanct name of defending the dignity of the poor, and to speak in India of the needy is still synonymous with speaking of millions of people... and voters.

In a third part of the book, Jaffrelot argues that Modi has literally "de-institutionalised" India and changed the rules of the political game. The thought that Indian politics would always be influenced by coalitions and thus follow an inertia that would swing it to the centre was dynamited by Modi's sweeping 2014 triumph and his policies, carried out through a large parliamentary majority with little hindrance from the BJP and its grandiose *Hindutva* proxies.

The author devotes another chapter to the 2019 elections, which Modi also won with a comfortable majority, revalidating his mandate. Jaffrelot calls it pure "electoral authoritarianism" because Modi framed it as a struggle between himself, supported by an effective and well-oiled electoral machinery, and the traditional political castes and dynasties. The *Hindutva* coalition of the BJP won with 45%, but 55% of the vote was against Modi and his allies. Before the elections and for the first time since 1971, the Indian Air Force had bombed Pakistan's border areas, which was a key factor in rallying support for Modi, who was not affected by unemployment, precariousness and poverty rates, especially in rural areas.

Once in power again, in December 2019, an amendment to the country's Citizenship Act endangered Muslims' status as Indian citizens. Thousands demonstrated demanding compliance with the Constitution, the repeal of the amendment and its review by the Indian Supreme Court, but to this day things remain the same and the sword of Damocles hangs over the heads of hundreds of thousands of Muslims in the country.

According to Christophe Jaffrelot, 2019 also marks the definitive consolidation of a *Hindutva* surveillance state in Prime Minister Modi's India. Political opponents

are persecuted and silenced by the use of lawfare against them or harassment by the many members of the BJP and *Hindutva* organisations, who set themselves up as watchdogs and vigilantes in a supposedly just struggle to defend their own positions, which exclude others. Means of repression available to security forces have also been modernised, but above all, managers aligned with the BJP's postulates have been put in charge and therefore suspected of not strictly enforcing the law, which theoretically remains in force and which guarantees equality throughout India, regardless of creed or ethnicity.

In a final chapter, the author looks at the process of marginalisation of the Indian Muslim community, setting out three phases since 2014. The first is where Muslims are marginalised in the social imaginary and expelled from representation in the state, victims of an official negative narrative, which is dangerous because it leads to the justification of certain persecutions. Secondly, political exclusion from public institutions where Muslim representatives—even in large political groups—are ignored and ostracised. This is a more than dangerous exclusion from the democratic political process as this marginalisation in institutions may lead Muslims to seek alternative ways of asserting their rights. The last and current phase is the use of lawfare through court cases that sanction their invisibility in the public life of India, diminish Muslim weight in the history of the country—which is unavoidable but portrayed as an excrescence of a foreign invasion—and legalise what are clearly outrages, such as the court ruling authorising the demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque and the construction of the Ram temple.

In short, Jaffrelot presents a highly topical essay on Modi's India, explaining the inner workings of its development as a global power, especially the impact that Narendra Modi had on its future. The book is also a wake-up call, with abundant quotations and profuse documentation, warning how India is becoming a model of ethnic democracy, heading dangerously into the realm of Illiberalism. Over the past two years since the book's publication, political developments have provided further evidence of this setback.

---

*Recension received: 14 December 2023*

*Recension accepted: 30 January 2024*

---