

IDR

Romanian Diplomatic Institute



POLICY PAPER

no. 32/2022

BILATERALISM – A STRATEGIC OPTION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

**Analysis of the France-Greece and Poland-
United Kingdom Partnerships**

**Mihai Constantinescu
Alexandru Ionuț Drăgulin**



MINISTERUL AFACERILOR EXTERNE

BILATERALISM - A STRATEGIC OPTION IN TIMES OF CRISIS: ANALYSIS OF THE FRANCE-GREECE AND POLAND-UNITED KINGDOM PARTNERSHIPS ¹ *

Mihai Constantinescu ²

Analyst, Romanian Diplomatic Institute

Alexandru Ionuț Drăgulin ³

Analyst, Romanian Diplomatic Institute

Policy Paper Series no. 32 / 2022

Published by: Romanian Diplomatic Institute

ISSN: 2285-8938

Abstract

An international environment marked by systemic crises prompts state actors to rethink the hierarchy of traditional partners, seeking to secure new guarantees. Multilateralism offers significant advantages in addressing systemic or multidimensional challenges (global warming, health crises). Bilateralism provides decision-making reliability and specific operational manoeuvrability. For Greece, the partnership with France complements its relationship with the United States, while Paris seeks a more active involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean amid President Erdoğan's authoritarian regime and the management of offshore hydrocarbon deposits. Brexit, the Polish diaspora, and the recent Belarusian migrant crisis have prompted the United Kingdom and Poland to deepen their bilateral cooperation. Bilateralism serves as an efficient option for specific domains, objectives, and timeframes. Entering into bilateral agreements should not imply a disengagement of signatories from multilateral treaties and frameworks. Bilateral agreements should be leveraged during systemic crises that encumber the decision-making process within relevant multilateral organizations. Bilateralism should be viewed as an instrument to consolidate pre-existing multilateral partnerships. Bilateral agreements represent a more flexible legal alternative to multilateral treaties.

Keywords: bilateralism, crisis, diplomacy, France, Greece, Poland, United Kingdom.

¹ This publication draws exclusively on open-source materials. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the institution.

* The present text is the English translation of the article originally published in Romanian in 2022, reflecting the international context and particularities of that period.

² mihai.constantinescu@idr.ro

³ alexandru.dragulin@idr.ro

INTRODUCTION

In February 2021, on the sidelines of the G7 summit, Emmanuel Macron stated that *"For me, the key is results-driven multilateralism"* (Khalaf, Hall, and Mallet 2021). Eight months later, we witnessed exuberant declarations from French and Greek leaders upon signing a new strategic bilateral partnership between the two NATO states, affirming that *"history wants them together"* (The Economist 2021d). Within a single year, France, along with other Western powers such as the United Kingdom or the United States, caught themselves in the web of an apparently contradictory discourse-offering a rhetoric of guarantees supporting multilateralism, interspersed with unexpected bilateral pacts. What drives this ambivalent stance among major powers? Are we observing a "crisis bilateralism" or a constant phenomenon in international relations? How will multilateralism be affected?

Observing the growing trend of states participating in bilateral agreements and treaties, this study aims to contribute to ongoing debates regarding the utility of building dual-partnership networks in an uncertain international environment. Starting from the premise that an environment shaped by systemic crises (military, economic, sanitary, environmental, etc.) forces state actors to rethink their strategic priorities, we propose a rigorous theoretical and practical analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of bilateralism compared to multilateralism. Using a comparative analysis of two recently publicized European partnerships (France-Greece and Poland-United Kingdom), we offer an updated assessment of both commitments, alongside a set of actionable recommendations for middle powers tasked with prioritizing traditional partners and strategic preferences regionally and globally.

The study is structured into two main parts. The first part contrasts bilateralism and multilateralism, tracing the logical sequence of theoretical debates while highlighting the strengths and shortcomings of both concepts. The second section consists of two case studies: the strategic partnership between France and Greece, followed by that between Poland and the United Kingdom. Analysing these commitments aims to highlight the premises that encouraged bilateral relations, as well as the actual scope of elements included in their joint commitments and their potential impact on Western strategic architecture. Interspersed between these

sections, the methodological approach will be presented, concluding with recommendations and findings derived from the research.

MULTILATERALISM - EVOLUTION, LIMITATIONS, AND THREATS

Brief historical overview

The outcome of World War II was foreseeable, prompting Franklin D. Roosevelt to devise practical solutions for post-war global reconstruction. Stricken by polio, the U.S. President was laying the groundwork for modern multilateralism from his desk in Hyde Park. In Winston Churchill, he found a reliable partner and a visionary leader. Their meetings established the Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks agreements-two foundational pillars that still underpin much of contemporary economic and political relations (Kirby 2020). However, Roosevelt's tenacity came at a critical crossroads for multilateral relations.

On one hand, the Concert of Europe (Vienna, 1815)-shaped by Adam Smith's anarchic liberalism and the lack of robust internal mechanisms (such as a free press, party systems, public opinion)-created persistent friction among partners (Lavelle 2021). These drawbacks were compounded by the revanchist stance of a marginalized France, which ultimately facilitated the collapse of the entire framework. A century later, history repeated itself when the League of Nations, a more sophisticated organization with global ambitions, succumbed to its own inability to convince major powers of its utility. On the other hand, Roosevelt's strategy marked the inception of a global, multidimensional, and inclusive multilateral system. Today, the United Nations encompasses dozens of intergovernmental agencies and remains the primary entity granting legitimacy to regional unions and alliances.

Building upon the vision of the 1940s founding fathers, modern multilateralism gained robustness and practical applicability. The concept advocates for thematic alignment around shared interests. Thus, multilateralism fulfils three primary functions: **collaborative platform:** serves as a medium facilitating cooperation among constituent entities; **policy design center:** promotes thematic alignment to identify and solve sector-specific issues; **implementation agent:** oversees the deployment of agreed-upon solutions (Surdej 2020, 342). To fulfil these roles efficiently, multilateral organizations operate under clear mandates, rules, and procedures defining hierarchies and operational conduct-both in daily activities and during crisis moments (Surdej

2020, 342). Featuring a stable architecture and a favourable cost-benefit ratio, modern multilateralism was implicitly embraced by middle powers, as well as major global actors like the US, Russia, or China, each seeking to consolidate their presence in key regions. In this context, states like France maintain post-colonial influence via economic and military engagements through the Economic Community of West African States (Erforth 2020), while India, leveraging the precarious health context of the pandemic, developed humanitarian and diplomatic assistance mechanisms through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Borthakur and Kotokey 2021). Nevertheless, structural deficiencies restricting the potential of these shared practices have emerged over the years.

Practical and theoretical limitations

Factors affecting the strategic efficiency of multilateralism stem from its core conceptual design. With diverse and typically large memberships, multilateral entities rely on cumbersome internal decision-making processes. Consequently, while a paradigm shift is often fervently advocated (Jacobs, Kiniger-Passigli, and Likhota 2020), powerful states continue to exploit smaller nations' desire to join multilateral frameworks, arbitrarily manipulating organizational goals, decisions, and prerogatives at the expense of consensus.

Firstly, states like China position themselves as guardians of multilateralism, using this conceptual facade to carve out their own spheres of influence (Morris 2021; Ly 2020). By funding organizations such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Beijing attempts to construct a parallel system to the one initiated by Allied powers at Bretton Woods, diluting traditional power spheres. In this game, small, underdeveloped, or regionally low-impact states suffer most. Thus, multilateralism-intended as a unifying concept-becomes constrained by excessive fragmentation. Actions like China's complicate the creation of a uniform, predictable global framework capable of reaching consensus while protecting both collective and individual interests.

Secondly, the current operational capacity of multilateral organizations remains tied to the commitments assumed by major powers within that group. Depending on realigned geostrategic priorities or local public opinion pressures, leading states dictate the depth of their engagement, allocating or withdrawing vital resources. U.S. decisions during the Trump administration disrupted established structures like the UN (Kirby 2020) or NATO (Reid

2019), as well as free-trade mechanisms like NAFTA (the latter being replaced by USMCA to favor the American economy) (Rodriguez 2020).

This trend is further reinforced by recent actions from the UK and Australia. Seeking a primary role on the global stage, they either exited multilateral commitments (Brexit) or voiced intent to reform legacy systems, as stated by former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison regarding the Commonwealth (Kirby 2020). Similarly, Asia faces parallel challenges: amid the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN member states hastily closed borders, disregarding regional commitments (Cameron 2020). Overall, by resorting to such practices, powerful nations undermine the strategic advantages of multilateral affiliation-namely, operational-decisional predictability and the alignment of individual interests at a collective level.

Destabilizing factors of multilateralism

Multilateralism is confronted with both endogenous and exogenous destabilizing factors. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated just how fragile a multilateral system is when facing a crisis of major proportions. During its initial phase, as well as subsequently, the World Health Organization (WHO), the primary global authority in healthcare, faced severe criticism from member states regarding its flawed management of information coming out of Wuhan (Ran and Yuel-Tim 2020). Furthermore, the manner in which COVID-19 vaccine distribution was managed generated additional public dissatisfaction toward WHO leadership.

Exogenous factors, on the other hand, primarily refer to phenomena that systematically erode the international system's multilateral architecture. For instance, sovereignist-populist movements in Eastern Europe built their rhetoric around the perceived threat that multilateral organizations like the European Union pose to national socio-cultural values (Tladi 2020). Another external phenomenon is "contested multilateralism," which gathers state actors around the notion that the old international order fails to deliver an equitable distribution of resources (Faude and Parizek 2021). China stands as the primary actor leveraging this premise to create alternative multilateral organizations-such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank-aimed at destabilizing established global structures.



BILATERALISM – AN ADAPTATION STRATEGY TO THE CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

Introduction - context and relevance

In an international system defined by the diffusion of power among diverse state and non-state actors, shifting regional and global balances, a relative withdrawal of established Western nations, and the emergence of new power hubs, bilateralism has emerged as a pragmatic strategic choice for resolving multifaceted crises. Far from acting as an antithesis to multilateralism, bilateralism expands precisely as trust in international organizations' ability to guarantee a stable security climate declines alongside the rise of non-democratic regimes. This study seeks to identify the key drivers behind the resurgence of bilateral ties, as well as the broader implications of this trend for European and global politics.

Theoretical approaches and practical limitations

Bilateral agreements have frequently marked pivotal turning points in modern history, forming the bedrock of international relations. Landmark instances like the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo, or the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact underscore the decisive role diplomatic pacts play in steering historical events.

As the oldest form of diplomacy, bilateralism dates back to antiquity, when kingdoms and empires turned to negotiation as an alternative to armed conflict; seeking common ground on trade and territorial security regularly drove bilateral talks. This mode of interaction evolved over time, notably with the 15th-century Italian practice of appointing "ambassadors." By the 17th century, France established what can be considered the first modern ministry of foreign affairs. The 20th century ultimately codified these customs into a foundational framework-the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations-regulating both bilateral and multilateral diplomatic practices.

Typologically, bilateral relations categorize states into three main groupings: those maintaining special diplomatic ties (typically immediate neighbors), those with standard working relations, and peripheral states that do not systematically engage in joint partnership-building.

A distinct categorization offered by Joseph Nye (Nye 1999) classifies countries based on national security impacts: states posing a direct threat to the survival of others; states that harm others' interests without threatening their survival; and states that affect others' interests without constituting an active threat.

Cross-border interactions – whether political or non-political – between two societal actors (most commonly two sovereign states) form the foundational core of bilateral diplomatic practice (Ludwig 2021). Broadly speaking, bilateralism describes formal relations between two parties, often applied to direct state-to-state negotiations or agreements. International relations frequently unfold between two nations seeking mutually beneficial solutions to disputes alongside intensified cooperation (Berridge 2015, 48). Thus, bilateralism "differentiates relations on a case-by-case basis, anchored primarily in specific *a priori* considerations or situational requirements" (Ruggie 1992, 71).

Furthermore, bilateralism represents the highest expression of negotiation and diplomatic representation. An envoy's status is defined as the symbolic representation of their home country's national interests. Yet, contemporary diplomacy faces inherent dilemmas: What are the diplomatic ramifications of representing a democratic regime versus an autocratic one? How can divided societies be represented on the international stage? What paradigm shifts stem from the rise of populist movements entering government in certain states?

Addressing the first question requires examining whether a diplomatic agent is fully subordinate to an authoritarian leader (in non-democratic regimes) or receives directives from a collective institution (the foreign ministry) adhering to checks and balances in democratic frameworks. While democracies place diplomats within a matrix of coordination and institutional oversight, representatives of contemporary authoritarian states operate under tighter, highly specific mandates, often serving the arbitrary interests of a single leader or a narrow ruling elite (Jönsson 2018, 23). The shifting balance between democratic and authoritarian states in the 21st century presents a stark departure from the optimistic post-Cold War predictions of liberal democracy's "final victory." This evolution warrants deeper reflection on the parameters of diplomatic representation across democracies and autocracies, along with its broader consequences (Jönsson 2018, 23).

Regarding the second question, Brexit-era Britain and the United States following Donald Trump's election serve as prime examples. Societies in both nations experienced deep political polarization, leaving diplomats with conflicting internal perspectives on key foreign

policy issues. On one hand, this environment seemingly offers diplomats greater operational latitude; on the other hand, the absence of consistent policy directives significantly complicates diplomatic efforts.

The third question anticipates our case study on UK-Poland relations—two states where populism drove decisive shifts in domestic and foreign policy. Populism poses a fundamental challenge to democratic representation by claiming to speak exclusively for the "true people" or the "silent majority." Consequently, those who reject this narrow construct are rendered illegitimate members of society. Populism is inherently anti-pluralist, clashing directly with the foundational principle of coexistence – "live and let live" – that underpins both democracy and diplomacy (Jönsson 2018, 23). The dilemma then becomes: How can a diplomat effectively represent a constituency that lacks trust in diplomatic channels due to populist influence?

The core concepts governing state-level diplomatic relations include: security in all its dimensions, neighbourly relations, shared ideals and interests, mutual antagonisms, regional rivalries, ethnic factors, historical-political legacies, and broader contextual diversity.

In bilateral diplomacy, identifying common ground forms the foundation of relationship-building—especially when shared interests are not immediately self-evident. States respond best when each can achieve specific goals with the other's assistance, adopting a pragmatic approach rather than relying on abstract principles or emotional rhetoric. While principles and logic serve as the vocabulary of state communication, the true bedrock of bilateral relations remains national self-interest (Rana 2018).

The Vienna Convention outlines the core functions of bilateral diplomacy as representation, protection, negotiation, reporting, and promotion. Each function remains central, yet plays out within a far more complex global, regional, and bilateral dialogue agenda. Furthermore, modern bilateral relations are heavily shaped by non-state actors.

The developmental phases of bilateral relations typically progress through: initiating contacts, establishing multi-level dialogue and official visits; signing sectoral cooperation agreements; establishing consultative mechanisms to signal close coordination; developing functional cooperation across culture, media, education, and science/technology (including municipal twinning and inter-regional projects involving non-state actors); and ultimately pursuing regional cooperation as a mature trend.

While globalization and digitalization continue to reshape diplomatic practices, the core mandate remains unchanged: managing information to steer state-to-state relations across a

broad spectrum of issues, driven ultimately by the pursuit of national interest. We inhabit an era of increasingly sophisticated bilateral relations, catalysed by new actors, complex challenges, and evolving international dynamics. Above all, states prioritize predictable bilateral ties-particularly within an international landscape defined by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

Yet, studying bilateralism reveals theoretical limitations that highlight the need for further conceptual refinement. Bilateral analysis often sits awkwardly between conventional analytical frameworks-namely, the international system level and the individual state level (foreign policy analysis). This structural awkwardness has historically favored descriptive historical accounts over robust theoretical modelling. Furthermore, bilateralism research often suffers from self-imposed limitations by attempting to subsume itself entirely under general international relations theories. Key variables, such as individual-level dynamics, are frequently excluded in favour of rigid state-centric models that reduce complex interactions to simple two-state dyads.

Advantages and opportunities

Multilateral strategies offer the distinct advantage of lowering transaction costs by creating a framework where a single set of negotiations engages multiple actors simultaneously. Furthermore, most multilateral treaties establish ongoing forums and summits that streamline future decision-making, resolving disputes with fewer dedicated resources. Conversely, bilateralism allows states to customize rights and obligations for each specific partner. However, because bilateral approaches increase overall transaction costs relative to multilateralism, states face an inevitable trade-off (Thompson & Verdier 2014, 15).

Multilateralism also reduces transaction costs because coordinated negotiations bring multiple options to the table at once, pairing issue areas with compatible offers. A bilateral approach, by contrast, multiplies transaction costs: each new contract must be individually negotiated, protected, and implemented, often leaving certain parties struggling to find attractive alternatives. Finally, by treating members equally, multilateral strategies help avoid the costly delays and friction typical of bilateral negotiations conducted under asymmetric information (Harstad 2007).

Additional arguments for choosing bilateralism stem from multi-level, holistic, and context-sensitive approaches to foreign policy. Bilateralism also enables dynamic, relational transactional processes between social actors, state entities, and non-state groups across the global environment.

Every sovereign state maintains a diplomatic network to better understand, influence, and shape its surrounding international environment. Embassy networks form the operational core of foreign policy formulation. Provided diplomatic posts reach a necessary critical mass, this network can quickly adapt to evolving international dynamics, serving as a proactive tool to advance national interests. Bilateral embassies remain the oldest foundation of diplomatic infrastructure, spanning policy domains from national security and international trade to domestic cooperation.

Bilateral transnationalism is by no means confined to non-European contexts; the trend has been visible within the European Union for years. Originating during the Eurozone debt crisis, the gradual decline in institutional trust and growing concerns over intra-EU solidarity triggered a resurgence of intergovernmental decision-making and flexible coalitions powered by partnerships between like-minded states (Janning 2018).

Europe is currently experiencing a bilateral revival, driven by the functional utility of embassies and strategic realignments relative to major global powers – the US, China, and Russia. International relations have grown increasingly transactional and dominated by state-to-state dynamics. Bilateral diplomacy is trending once again, reflecting the post-Cold War shift away from a rules-based order toward power competition and eroding global governance (Verbeke 2017). Current European debates-from Brexit and migration to the EU's political future-show the Union increasingly functioning as an intergovernmental bargaining arena, with states frequently bypassing European treaty frameworks to pursue direct bilateral pacts. Consequently, concrete evidence shows a clear shift from traditional multilateralism toward bilateralism and ad-hoc coalitions as preferred tools for managing geopolitical crises.

METHODOLOGY

From a methodological standpoint, this study adopts a qualitative approach. Given the dynamic and complex nature of recent geopolitical events, qualitative research methods offer greater nuance in capturing state interactions. To present an updated, cohesive, and

comprehensive picture, data collection spans the 2016-2021 timeframe—a period marked by Brexit, irregular migration challenges, heightened military tensions, and the COVID-19 health crisis.

Specifically utilizing comparative and content analysis, the source material includes official documents, bilateral agreements, government press releases, and selected reporting from local and international media outlets. Regarding case study selection (the France-Greece and UK-Poland agreements), their media coverage, historical context, and multidimensional nature offer fresh insights into how European nations—all NATO members (4/4) and mostly EU members (3/4)—construct bilateral networks that frequently overlap with the broader mandates of the multilateral organizations to which they belong.

STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN - FRANCE AND GREECE

Premises – geopolitical repositioning and economic interests

Brexit pushed France to assume a more active role in global affairs. Becoming the sole EU member state with a veto power on the UN Security Council and possessing nuclear weapons, Paris had to rise to expectations. The first step was renewing its military capabilities: in 2019, its defence budget reached approximately 60 billion euros – a 48% increase compared to the previous year. Concurrently, France consolidated old partnerships and tested the ground for new opportunities to expand its spheres of influence. In the Sahel region, French forces continued to provide periodic support to local government forces. In contrast, in the Indo-Pacific, President Emmanuel Macron sought deepened cooperation with India and Australia. The latter attempt ended in a major diplomatic fallout when Australia abruptly cancelled its purchase of French submarines, choosing instead to procure American military technology as part of the multidimensional AUKUS pact between Washington, London, and Canberra.

Since 2010, the Eastern Mediterranean has emerged as a global hotspot. The discovery of massive natural gas fields, coupled with the Syrian civil war, engaged overlapping economic and military interests in the region. From an energy standpoint, Turkey seeks to become a regional hub to bypass its reliance on supply routes controlled by Russia and Iran; the Erdogan regime leverages the Northern Cyprus area to claim a significant portion of energy surpluses.

Conversely, France uses its solid ties with Greece – and by extension, Cyprus – to secure priority rights in offshore hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation. In 2019, French energy major Total secured exclusive rights over several Cypriot maritime blocks.

Furthermore, Turkey capitalized on its geographic position to conduct military operations undisturbed in northern Syria against Kurdish militias – much to the dismay of French authorities, who required operational manoeuvrability to launch strikes against Islamic State strongholds. Although both nations are NATO allies, Macron and Erdogan repeatedly exchanged accusations of interference in internal electoral processes, colonial reflexes, and dictatorial tendencies. In September 2020, France hosted a summit of Mediterranean EU nations to forge a response to Turkey's assertive behaviour.

Post-2009 economic recovery and proximity to President Erdogan's assertive regime formed the dual premise behind Greece's strategic pivot. In 2021, Thanos Dokos, security advisor to Prime Minister Mitsotakis, stated that Greece's *smart power* strategy rests on three key pillars: building deterrence capabilities; creating new regional alliances while strengthening existing ones; and enhancing national resilience by protecting and modernizing critical networks and infrastructure. In practice, these priorities are advanced through a web of bilateral partnerships designed to bolster Athens' influence across the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. Alongside its multidimensional agreement with France, the Mitsotakis government signed a 2020 mutual defence pact with the United Arab Emirates, as well as a partnership with Egypt establishing an exclusive economic zone. These steps complement standing criticisms regarding how Turkey fuels tensions across Libya and Northern Cyprus.

Greece and France – a multidimensional collaboration

In 2017, Emmanuel Macron arrived in Athens on his first official visit. Accompanied by dozens of French business executives, he pledged unconditional support for Greek efforts toward economic recovery and national defence strengthening (Kathimerini 2017). Macron's message resonated well with local entrepreneurs, with France becoming one of Greece's top eight economic partners by 2019 (Manifava 2020). However, the most compelling evidence of cordial ties lies in the defence sector: since the 1970s, France has provided substantial military hardware to its Mediterranean partner on three separate occasions (The Manila Times 2021).

A new bilateral agreement took shape in 2019 when French Ambassador Patrick Maisonnave signalled Paris's readiness to assist in modernizing the Greek military arsenal (Nedos 2019). Shortly after, in January 2020, Macron and Mitsotakis signed a defence partnership addressing security across the Eastern Mediterranean, migration management, and the protection of Greek and Cypriot sovereignty (Palaiologos 2020). Details emerged in 2021 confirming that over several years, Greece would acquire 18 *Rafale* fighter aircraft and at least three *Belharra*-class frigates (The Star 2021; The Manila Times 2021).

Strategic partnership

In early autumn 2021, shortly after AUKUS was formalized and Australia cancelled its French submarine procurement contract, Paris announced an update to its strategic partnership with Greece. While international media initially reported that the Mitsotakis government pressed to expand defence clauses, French analysts noted that the Macron administration insisted on building a "two-way action mechanism" enabling Greek participation in French-led missions in the Balkans and the Sahel (Tertrais 2021).

This move drew a fierce reaction from Turkey (Daily Sabah 2021b). On the very day the French and Greek leaders signed the partnership, Istanbul hosted a Joint Economic and Trade Committee meeting where Turkey rewarded the financial and logistical support Paris had provided Ankara toward renewable energy targets. Furthermore, on October 14, 2021, the United States and Greece signed a five-year extension to their Mutual Defence Cooperation Agreement (Tertrais 2021). Crucially, the Franco-Greek commitment is framed as an "arrangement" rather than a formal treaty under international law, giving it lower legal standing; consequently, its security guarantees inside the accord remain limited, omitting explicit mentions of "armed force" as an automatic response if either party enters a conflict with a third party (Wichmann 2021).

Trends and perspectives

We appear to be witnessing a segmentation of multilateral frameworks through Franco-Greek style bilateral arrangements. Highly publicized as it was, this renewed agreement reflects Paris's effort to curb U.S. influence across Europe. Two key agreements carry even broader

implications for transatlantic relations, with France at the center of both: first, the treaty signed with Italy, through which Macron and Draghi aimed to set aside differences to establish a new engine of European cooperation (Roberts și Leali 2021); second, the Treaty of Aachen reinforcing the Berlin-Paris axis (France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs 2019). Added to these are the Franco-Croatian strategic partnership and Paris's ambition to act as a mediator in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict (Pollet și Trkanjec 2021; Agerpres 2021).

Apparently, surrounding these moves is President Macron's goal of building EU strategic autonomy centred around a France keen on maintaining its global stature. Yet, these treaties come during a period of volatility. Beyond economic headwinds, the EU core faces shifting political leadership; Emmanuel Macron himself encountered difficulties securing a new mandate in spring 2022. Furthermore, intra-EU bilateral treaties do not solve the challenge of developing a pan-European defence force; instead, they risk fuelling feelings of marginalization among small and medium-sized Eastern European nations.

Segmentation via bilateralism risks undermining collective continental security. Proliferating bilateral deals complicates future attempts to unify European capabilities into a joint defence framework. Developing alliances outside NATO could prove to be a financial and strategic burden-particularly for resource-constrained nations like Greece, which continues to prioritize its NATO membership despite heavy military investments with France (Dokos 2021). Inconsistencies abound even among major powers: Germany continues to supply military hardware to Turkey, while France signs procurement contracts with the Greek military (The Economist 2021a). Germany thus directly interferes with French interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, where President Macron stands as the main proponent of containing Turkey under Erdogan. Crucially, the French presidency of the EU Council (January-June 2022) and Macron's electoral prospects in April 2022 remain central to shaping both his political legacy and the path of European multilateralism.

POLAND - UNITED KINGDOM: COOPERATION WITHIN A FRAGILE CONTEXT

Premises and evolution of bilateral relations

Poland and the United Kingdom share a long history of cooperation during key historical moments, building a tradition of bilateralism that serves both as a research case study

and a practical model for European diplomacy. World War II collaboration is just one example of how high-stakes crises drive shared diplomatic trajectories. Today, mutual NATO membership opens multiple security cooperation avenues across various sectors. Growing shared threats continue to drive joint objectives and deeper strategic partnerships. These ties are further reinforced by the large Polish diaspora residing in the UK. In 2015, prior to the Brexit referendum, UK statistics recorded 831,000 Polish-born residents, with an estimated total of 916,000 Polish nationals (House of Commons Library 2017).

Analysing domestic and foreign political contexts helps clarify the drivers of cooperation while dispelling false assumptions about what fuels bilateralism. Defence cooperation does not depend on internal political regime types; diplomatic ties of this nature are driven primarily by pragmatism and shared security needs. While domestic politics does not dictate alliance formation, cross-sectional analyses show that ideological alignment fosters solidarity between partner nations.

The current international landscape brings the UK and Poland together as two nations seeking partners to preserve the security *status quo* against threats posed primarily by the Russian Federation and states within its sphere of influence. The UK's exit from the EU-driven in part by mass Russian disinformation campaigns-shocked British society and prompted a thorough reassessment of alliance networks, placing renewed emphasis on democratic promotion.

London seeks to reinforce a democratic bloc alongside Washington to counter hybrid threats from authoritarian states. Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson consistently sought ways to leverage constitutional democracy and the rule of law in bilateral interactions, as reflected in the proposed D10 alliance. At the same time, the UK reaffirmed its defence of democratic principles at G7 summits, drawing sharp pushback from China and Russia. British foreign policy remains anchored in continental involvement as a key starting point for its diplomatic strategy.

Poland, meanwhile, remains an EU member state that has drawn criticism regarding its commitment to democratic standards, displaying ongoing scepticism toward Brussels' political values (Mounk 2018, 36). The Polish government, echoing Hungarian stances, opposed the primacy of EU law, calling for limited accountability to EU bodies, reduced institutional checks and balances, fewer judicial interventions, and stronger national sovereignty within the EU.

Poland presents a populist political model that impacts EU unity in the medium term, raising questions regarding citizen rights and liberties. These internal dynamics create vulnerabilities, carrying the risk that democratic erosion becomes structural. Thus, Poland's post-communist transition success has been clouded by post-accession developments. However, positive indicators remain public anti-Russian sentiment provides a strong anchor for national security resilience.

Poland remains among the EU nations most vocal in challenging Brussels' foreign policy line. This stems from populism paired with a departure from constitutional norms (Cooper 2018, 18). Because the line between domestic and foreign policy has blurred, democratic backsliding within a state affects its relations with international partners. International organizations face constant challenges from populist leaderships, as seen in Poland; the UK held a similar stance toward the EU, leaving the bloc following a referendum organized under the Cameron government after intense public debate led by Nigel Farage's party (UKIP, later the Brexit Party).

Despite these friction points, both nations share sufficient common ground to sustain deep bilateral ties. Grounded in shared history, both states prioritize countering Russian expansionism and authoritarian influence. In autumn 2021, Poland faced a severe migrant crisis along its eastern border, orchestrated by the Minsk regime. Contrary to expectations from Moscow and Minsk, the Polish government received EU assistance. European decision-makers recognized the severity of the border situation, viewing the Belarus-Poland crisis as an issue affecting the Union as a whole.

The shift toward bilateralism between Poland and the UK became evident when European institutional responses and intergovernmental consensus failed to yield prompt results. The migration crisis underscored this reality: long debates over EU migration policy and the abandoning of multilateral approaches created space for direct bilateral talks. When the European Commission failed to finalize third country return and readmission agreements for illegal migrants, individual EU member states began negotiating bilateral accords directly. By including sovereignty-sensitive issues-such as intelligence sharing, military, and judicial cooperation-individual states achieved faster, more tangible outcomes than the European Commission (Mattelaer 2019).

Military cooperation served as the primary link reinforcing historical ties, complementing established economic, educational, and cultural links. Setting joint security

goals topped both agendas, serving as the launchpad for armaments partnerships. This shows that, within NATO, existing bilateral agreements are updated to advanced implementation levels.

In December 2015, UK Prime Minister David Cameron opened a new chapter in defence cooperation by announcing annual bilateral summits. In July 2016, Prime Minister Theresa May travelled to Warsaw to meet her counterpart, Beata Szydło, noting that "one of the most critical areas for deepening strategic relations is defence and security cooperation" (Gov.uk 2016).

In December 2017, Warsaw hosted the first intergovernmental defence summit, marking the "first structured, comprehensive Cabinet-level dialogue between the two nations" (*Ibidem*). Both sides agreed on joint measures covering defence, foreign policy, security, business, science, and innovation. Key outcomes included military personnel exchanges, signing a defence cooperation treaty, industrial collaboration, joint support for small businesses, academic exchange plans, and joint efforts against global threats like energy insecurity, counter-terrorism, and organized crime. They also agreed to convene an annual UK-Poland Civil Society Forum starting in 2017 (Dickson 2017).

Additionally, both governments launched a joint project to detect and counter Russian disinformation operations. Each government committed 5 million pounds to the initiative, which included funding for TV Belsat to deliver "impartial, free news coverage to Belarusian citizens" (Dickson 2017). During these talks, the British Prime Minister highlighted Brexit as a catalyst for deeper bilateral ties with Poland rather than an obstacle arising from strained EU relations. To implement these measures, a bilateral Treaty on Defence and Security Cooperation was signed, alongside information and technology exchange frameworks.

In February 2018, Polish Deputy Defence Minister Tomasz Szatkowski met UK Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster in London. Szatkowski underscored the importance of the strategic alliance with London, expressing hope for swift ratification of the December 2017 treaty. Discussions covered NATO's enhanced Forward Presence on the Eastern Flank, close bilateral alignment within NATO, priorities for the upcoming Brussels NATO Summit, UK military deployment in Poland, and joint defence projects. Both parties agreed to boost military interoperability and operational capabilities under Polish armed forces modernization programs (Ministry of National Defence 2018).

The February 2018 talks set the stage for that year's NATO Summit. The UK and Poland reiterated commitments to strengthen their defence partnership within NATO's Eastern European strategy. According to their joint statement, both nations committed to spending at least 2% of GDP on defence and allocating 20% of defence budgets to major equipment. They agreed that ensuring effective NATO deterrence and defence on the Eastern Flank was vital for both countries (Gov.uk 2018). Addressing threats from Russia and its proxy states, both nations emphasized democratic resilience and promoting democracy across Eastern Europe. Their statement noted plans to improve strategic communications and counter disinformation, protect free press, and support independent media in Eastern Partnership nations. Both nations agreed to address hybrid threats through NATO mechanisms, improve crisis management capabilities, identify counter-threat tools, and strengthen ally resilience. The NATO-Ukraine platform for countering hybrid warfare was highlighted as a key tool for joint investment (*Ibidem*).

In December 2021, defence cooperation advanced further with an agreement signed between UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak. The deal focused on Poland's future air defence system utilizing CAMM (Common Anti-Air Modular Missile) technology. Signed during a UK defence visit to Poland, the declaration reaffirmed British commitments to European defence and NATO allies. Discussions also covered the situation along the Poland-Belarus border. The UK side reiterated support for Poland, condemning attempts by the Lukashenko regime to trigger a migration crisis aimed at destabilizing Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania. Secretary Wallace confirmed continued UK support through the deployment of Royal Engineers providing technical and engineering assistance to Polish troops along the border (UK Ministry of Defence 2021).

Opportunities and trends

In an interview granted to the *Warsaw Institute* think tank, Poland's Ambassador to the UK, Arkady Józef Rzegocki, stated that "bilateral relations between our two countries, maintained over hundreds of years and during the most challenging periods, will remain unchanged. We wish to strengthen relations with the United Kingdom across all currently implemented formats. The United Kingdom remains an important partner for Poland, with whom we share common values and a shared perspective on many international issues, across both European and global dimensions" (The Warsaw Institute Review 2020).

The Polish ambassador emphasized the role of bilateral diplomacy in building partnerships during geopolitical crises. “Frequent meetings between the prime ministers and ministers of both countries serve as the primary evidence of this dynamic. The most critical discussion formats include annual intergovernmental consultations, joint meetings of foreign and defence ministers – the so-called *Quadriga* consultations – and the Belvedere Forum, a non-governmental platform designed for Polish and British citizens from all societal sectors (including scientists, business professionals, and students) to meet, address diverse themes, and exchange ideas” (The Warsaw Institute Review 2020).

Regarding military cooperation, the Polish ambassador summarized his country's notable achievements: "Our military relations have likewise flourished, recognizing Poland's military standing worldwide, as well as on NATO's eastern flank, with 150 British troops deployed there. Moreover, Poland and the United Kingdom signed a bilateral defence treaty in 2017 (only the second such treaty the United Kingdom has signed with a European Union state)" (The Warsaw Institute Review 2020).

This summary shows that Poland's successes stem from diplomatic negotiations where both parties presented clear demands and claims. The United Kingdom intensified cooperation with Poland concurrently with its lengthy and costly process of leaving the European Union. Politically, Brexit costs proved substantial for the UK, requiring a realignment of its relations with EU states on new foundations. Bilateralism was favoured precisely because it operates efficiently in contexts supported by favourable historical precedents, with UK-Poland cooperation serving as a clear case in point.

Bilateralism proves to be an optimal solution for the United Kingdom, satisfying the island state's long-standing tradition of minimal continental engagement. This reticence, coupled with the UK's selectivity in choosing partner nations, obliges states seeking bilateral ties to negotiate as efficiently and pragmatically as possible. In the domain of Central and Eastern European security and defence, Poland's interests are more complex and pronounced than those of the UK, resulting in a more developed strategy of persuasion on the Polish side. The results followed swiftly: the United Kingdom responded positively, embracing the long-term objective of utilizing Poland as an "emissary" for its political and military interests.

The crisis condition generated by Brexit ultimately reinforced Polish British bilateral ties. From a transatlantic perspective, it presents an opportunity for Poland (as an EU member) and the UK (as a non-EU member) to pursue greater alignment between NATO and the Union.

Poland's friction with Brussels and the UK's departure from the organization fostered closer ties between the two nations.

Brexit forced the United Kingdom to rebuild its bilateral relationships with European states. The shift toward country-by-country negotiations across Europe stems from the fact that key EU players do not permit non-member states to influence internal EU affairs. The British government under Boris Johnson lacks incentives to contribute directly to EU debates, prioritizing instead the renegotiation of bilateral agreements both within and beyond Europe.

Post-Brexit, the United Kingdom can paradoxically exhibit a far more receptive stance toward European integration in defence and security. The partnership with Poland demonstrates opportunities for both nations to serve as focal points in preserving transatlantic ties under pressure from Western European states-France and Germany in particular. Simultaneously, Eastern European nations gain from tensions between the US and Western Europe: the UK maintains strategic interests in the East through commitments made to Ukraine prior to Brexit, while the US views this approach as optimal for European security.

Recommendations for state institutions specialized in foreign policy centre on adapting to these new dynamics. The coronavirus crisis accelerated shifts already underway prior to 2019. States keeping pace with the digital revolution that leverage bilateral negotiation strategies and techniques will secure greater long-term advantages compared to those choosing inertia.

For Poland, developing bilateral ties has proven to be a successful strategy. Cooperation with the United Kingdom, coupled with a US strategic defence partnership, reinforces its role as NATO's outpost on the European eastern flank. The US Department of State notes that "the United States and Poland share a close partnership regarding NATO capabilities, counterterrorism, non-proliferation, missile defence, human rights, economic growth and innovation, energy security, and regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe" (US Department of State 2022). Conversely, the UK views its relationship with its Polish ally as a guarantee of continued engagement in continental affairs. How the UK and Poland navigate the "Ukrainian crisis"-which rapidly globalized, impacting all actors involved-remains a key dynamic to watch. Ukraine holds top priority on Poland's security agenda, with Warsaw expecting British political support alongside robust security guarantees.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis demonstrates an international trend where states – particularly medium and large powers – turn toward bilateral arrangements to reinforce and occasionally substitute multilateral treaties and accords. Nations like Greece are signatories to at least four agreements, partnerships, and treaties offering national defence guarantees (EU, NATO, US Strategic Partnership, Franco-Greek Strategic Partnership, alongside key treaties with Middle Eastern and North African partners). As this trend sharpens, European states will face choices regarding a clear hierarchy among traditional partners. Based on this research, the following recommendations are proposed for states navigating strategic dilemmas:

- **Bilateralism serves as an efficient option for specific contexts, objectives, and timeframes.** The concept of crisis inherently implies specific, time-bound events requiring targeted international relations approaches. Brexit, the UK's need to solidify its continental presence, the energy crisis, gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the autocratic trajectory of the Erdogan regime prompted the four analysed states to develop bilateral partnerships. The resulting agreements offer clear operational scope-whether equipping the Greek military or reinforcing Poland's flank near Russia;
- **Entering bilateral agreements must not lead to disengagement from multilateral treaties/accords.** As primary pillars of NATO defence in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, both Greece and Poland seek deeper ties with alliance members. However, Athens and Warsaw continue to cultivate privileged relationships with the United States-a clear indication of their desire to leverage the strategic umbrella provided by NATO's strong US presence;
- **Bilateral agreements should address systemic crises that overburden multilateral decision-making.** A core advantage of bilateralism lies in its decision-making agility. Multilateral institutions operate under complex frameworks requiring consensus or qualified majorities to act. Consequently, in crises like the Eastern Mediterranean or Belarus migrant situations, Poland and Greece prioritized bilateral reliance;
- **Bilateralism should serve as a tool to reinforce existing multilateral partnerships.** While some media and analysts suggest recent bilateral deals erode or dismantle the EU and NATO, the analysis confirms that all four states prioritize EU and NATO membership. Even France, despite its critiques of NATO and Turkey, remains committed to joint projects and cross-sector cooperation;
- **Bilateral accords offer a flexible legal alternative to formal bilateral treaties.** Formal treaties create legal obligations that can complicate membership in other structures. In the Franco-Greek case, the arrangement functions outside classic legal treaty bounds, providing flexibility to counter external critiques regarding its impact on NATO while maintaining mutual commitments. However, fewer legal commitments can dilute the security guarantees offered.

Bilateralism and multilateralism should be viewed as complementary dimensions of international relations. While recent events highlight bilateralism, both frameworks serve distinct purposes and coexist closely. Multilateralism remains the primary venue for long-term systemic challenges like climate change, poverty reduction, and pandemic management. It offers small and medium powers key decision-making influence. Yet, when multilateral processes stall, bilateralism provides actionable, regional solutions within reasonable timeframes.

This study underscores these elements of complementarity. Poland (an EU/NATO member and US strategic partner) deepened bilateral interactions with the UK under a structured hierarchy of partners. Greece followed a similar pattern, grounding itself in commitments with the US and France to drive defence and economic development. Bilateralism provides Greece with the agility needed to manage Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean disputes, while helping Poland mitigate post-Brexit impacts through ties with London. Ultimately, bilateralism represents not a retreat in international politics, but an additional layer of protection and influence projection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agerpres. 2021. “Întâlnire trilaterală Franța-Armenia-Azerbaidjan, la Bruxelles.” 16 decembrie, 2021. <http://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2021/12/16/intalnire-trilateral-franta-armenia-azerbaidjan-la-bruxelles--832302>.
- Al-Jazeera. 2021. “Macron Warns Turkey against Election Meddling, Renewing Row.” 2 martie, 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/24/macron-warns-against-turkish-interference-in-french-polls>.
- Al-Monitor. 2020. “Greece, UAE Sign Political, Defense Agreements - Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East.” Noiembrie 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/11/greece-prime-minister-uae-emirates-mbz-turkey-mediterranean.html>.
- Arab News. 2019. “Erdogan ‘Sea Grab’ Threat to NATO Summit.” 3 decembrie, 2019. <https://www.pressreader.com/saudi-arabia/arab-news/20191203/282136408276121>.
- Arkansas Democrat Gazette. 2020. “Europe Summit Keys on Turkey’s Moves.” Arkansas Democrat Gazette. 11 septembrie, 2020. <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/sep/11/europe-summit-keys-on-turkeys-moves/>.

- Athreya, Rishi. 2021. "India's Relations with France and UK in the Indo-Pacific." *Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies* 02 (02): 31–51.
- Berridge, G. R. 2015. *Diplomacy. Theory and Practice*. Ediția a 5-a, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Borthakur, Anchita, and Angana Kotokey. 2021. "Multilateralism in South Asia during the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Indian Perspective." *The Round Table* 110 (4): 448–60.
- Cameron, Fraser. 2020. "EU-Asia Should Defend Multilateralism." *Asia Europe Journal* 18 (2): 217–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-020-00574-3>.
- Cooper, Andrew. 2018. "Populism and the Domestic Challenge to Diplomacy." în *New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century*, edited by Volker Stanzel. Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik Paper 11. German Institute for International and Security Affairs.
- Curtis, John, Louisa Brooke-Holland, and Timothy Robinson. 2017. "Anglo-Polish Relations." <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2017-0144/>.
- Daily Sabah. 2021a. "Ankara, Paris Working to Mend Strained Ties, FM Cavusoglu Says." Ianuarie 2021. <https://www.pressreader.com/turkey/daily-sabah/20210109/281530818656838>.
- . 2021b. "Turkish Defense Minister Akar Warns against Alliances Harming NATO." Daily Sabah. 23 octombrie, 2021. <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkish-defense-minister-akar-warns-against-alliances-harming-nato>.
- Dickson, Annabelle. 2017. "Poland and UK to Sign Joint Defense Treaty as May Visits Warsaw." POLITICO. 20 decembrie, 2017. <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-uk-defense-treaty-as-may-visits-warsaw/>.
- Dokos, Thanos. 2021. "Sailing Safely in Troubled Waters". EKathimerini.Com. Noiembrie 2021. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/opinion/1170916/sailing-safely-in-troubled-waters/>.
- Erforth, Benedikt. 2020. "Multilateralism as a Tool: Exploring French Military Cooperation in the Sahel." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43 (4): 560–82.
- Faude, Benjamin, and Michal Parizek. 2021. "Contested Multilateralism as Credible Signaling: How Strategic Inconsistency Can Induce Cooperation among States." *The Review of International Organizations* 16 (4): 843–70.
- France 24. 2020. "Erdogan Expresses Hope That France Will 'get Rid of Macron' as Soon as Possible." France 24. 4 decembrie, 2020. <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20201204-erdogan-expresses-hope-that-france-will-get-rid-of-macron-as-soon-as-possible>.
- France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. 2019. "Franco-German Treaty of Aachen." France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. ianuarie 2019. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/germany/france-and-germany/franco-german-treaty-of-aachen/>.
- Gov.uk. 2018. "United Kingdom - Poland Quadriga 2018: Joint Communiqué." GOV.UK. 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/united-kingdom-poland-quadrige-joint-communique>.
- . 2021. "UK and Poland Collaborate on Multi-Billion Pound Polish Air Defence Systems." GOV.UK. 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-poland-collaborate-on-multi-billion-pound-polish-air-defence-systems>

- Harstad, Bard. 2007. "Harmonization and Side Payments in Political Cooperation." *American Economic Review* 97: 871–89.
- House of Commons Library. 2017. *Anglo – Polish relations*, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2017-0144/>.
- Jacobs, Garry, Donato Kiniger-Passigli, and Alexander Likhotal. 2020. "Redefining Multilateralism." *Cadmus Journal* 4 (3): 4–19.
- Janning, Josef. 2018. "The Roots of Coalitions: Like-Mindedness among EU Member States – European Council on Foreign Relations." *ECFR* (blog). 7 august, 2018. https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_eu28survey_coalitions_like_mindedness_among_eu_member_states/.
- Jönsson, Christer, and Volker Stanzel. 2018. "Diplomatic Representation: States and Beyond." in *New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century*. Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik Paper 11. German Institute for International and Security Affairs.
- Kathimerini. 2017. "Macron Sends Message of Support Ahead of Greece Visit, in Interview with Kathimerini". EKathimerini. 6, 2017. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/221452/macron-sends-message-of-support-ahead-of-greece-visit-in-interview-with-kathimerini/>.
- Khalaf, Roula, Ben Hall, and Victor Mallet. 2021. „Emmanuel Macron: „For me, the key is multilateralism that produces results”, *Financial Times*, 18 februarie 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/d8b9629a-92b1-4e02-92b7-41e9152d56ea>.
- Kempin, Ronja. 2021. "France's Foreign and Security Policy under President Macron The Consequences for Franco-German Cooperation." SWP Research Paper 4. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: German Institute for International and Security Affairs. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/frances-foreign-and-security-policy-under-president-macron/>.
- Kirby, Michael. 2020. "Multilateralism, Pushbacks, and Adjustment: From the UN Charter to Covid-19." *Indiana Journal in Global Legal Studies* 27 (2): 21–61.
- Lavelle, Kathryn C. 2021. "The Past and Future of Multilateralism." In *The Challenges of Multilateralism*, 245–65. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ludwig, Andreas. 2021. "The Complexity of Bilateral Relations." London. <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/03/25/the-complexity-of-bilateral-relations/>.
- Ly, Bora. 2020. "Sino-EU Multilateralism Relation." Edited by Richard Meissner. *Cogent Social Sciences* 6 (1): 178–84.
- Manifava, Dimitra. 2020. "France Boosts Greek EU Exports". EKathimerini.Com. 27 februarie, 2020. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/249822/france-boosts-greek-eu-exports/>.
- Mattelaer, Alexander. 2019. "The Resurgence of Bilateral Diplomacy in Europe." Bruxelles: Egmont Papers. <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/the-resurgence-of-bilateral-diplomacy-in-europe/>.
- Ministère des Armées. 2021. "Strategic Update: 2021." <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/dgris/presentation/evenements/actualisation-strategique-2021>.

- Ministry of National Defence. 2018. "Polish-British Cooperation - Ministry of National Defence - Gov.Pl Website." Ministry of National Defence. <https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/polish-british-cooperation>.
- Morris, David. 2021. "Geopolitical Shift at a Time of Covid-19 and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: A Case Study of Chinese Innovation in Multilateralism." *Society and Economy* 43 (3): 208–26.
- Mounk, Yascha. 2018. *The People Vs Democracy. Why Our Freedom Is in Danger And How to Save It*, Harvard University Press.
- Nedos, Vassilis. 2019. "Ambassador Maisonnave Sees Multilevel Cooperation between France, Greece". EKathimerini. Noiembrie 2019. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/opinion/interviews/246050/ambassador-maisonnave-sees-multilevel-cooperation-between-france-greece/>.
- Nye, Joseph S. 1999. "Redefining the National Interest." *Foreign Affairs* 78 (4): 22–35.
- Palaiologos, Yannis. 2020. "New Greek-French Strategic Partnership Announced". EKathimerini.Com. Ianuarie 2020. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/248985/new-greek-french-strategic-partnership-announced/>.
- Pollet, Mathieu, and Zeljko Trkanjec. 2021. "Macron to Sign Strategic Partnership in Zagreb before Quirinal Treaty in Rome." Euractiv. Noiembrie 2021. https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/macron-to-sign-strategic-partnership-in-zagreb-before-quirinal-treaty-in-rome/.
- Ran, Mab Hao, and Aaron Chewk YuelTim. 2020. "Dispute Settlement System under Attack. A Move Away from Multilateralism." *Indian Journal of International Economic Law* 12: 1153–70.
- Rana, Kishan. 2018. *Bilateral Diplomacy*. Diplo Handbooks.
- Reid, David. 2019. "Three Charts That Show Why Trump Thinks NATO Is a Bad Deal." CNBC. 3 decembrie, 2019. <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/03/three-charts-that-show-why-trump-thinks-nato-is-a-bad-deal.html>.
- Reuters. 2019. "Are You 'Brain-Dead'? Turkey's Erdogan Raps Macron before NATO Summit." Reuters. Noiembrie 2019, sec. Emerging Markets. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-france-idUSKBN1Y31I0>.
- . 2020. "Egypt and Greece Sign Agreement on Exclusive Economic Zone." Reuters, 6 august, 2020, sec. Emerging Markets. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-greece-idUSKCN252216>.
- Roberts, Hannah, and Giorgio Leali. 2021. "Italy and France Heal Their Rift with a Treaty." POLITICO. Noiembrie 2021. <https://www.politico.eu/article/italy-france-draghi-macron-treaty-rome-paris/>.
- Rodriguez, Sabrina. 2020. "Trump's North American Trade Deal Starts Now. Here's What to Expect." POLITICO. Ianuarie 2020. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/01/trump-usmca-trade-346296>.
- Ruggie, John Gerard. 1992. "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution." *International Organization* 46 (3): 561–98.
- Surdej, Aleksander. 2020. "Multilateralism and International Governmental Organizations: Principles and Instruments." *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy* 14 (3): 337–50.
- Tertrais, Bruno. 2021. "Reassurance and Deterrence in the Mediterranean: The Franco-Greek Defense Deal." 40/21. Fondation pour la recherche stratégique.

<https://www.frstrategie.org/en/publications/notes/reassurance-and-deterrence-mediterranean-franco-greek-defense-deal-2021>.

The Economist. 2020. "A Row between Turkey and Greece over Gas Is Raising Tension in the Eastern Mediterranean." *The Economist*, 20 august, 2020.

<https://www.economist.com/international/2020/08/20/a-row-between-turkey-and-greece-over-gas-is-raising-tension-in-the-eastern-mediterranean>.

———. 2021a. "German Submarines Are Giving Turkey an Edge over Greece." *The Economist*, iulie 2021.

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/07/03/german-submarines-are-giving-turkey-an-edge-over-greece>.

———. 2021b. "The French Armed Forces Are Planning for High-Intensity War." *The Economist*, 31 martie, 2021.

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/03/31/the-french-armed-forces-are-planning-for-high-intensity-war>.

———. 2021c. "French Fury over the American-Australian Sub Deal." *The Economist*, 18 septembrie, 2021.

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/09/18/french-fury-over-the-american-australian-sub-deal>.

———. 2021d. "France and Greece hedge their bets with a new defence pact", *The Economist*, 2 octombrie 2021,

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/10/02/france-and-greece-hedge-their-bets-with-a-new-defence-pact>.

The Indian Express. 2020. "Macron Urges Tough EU Stance against Turkish 'Provocations'" *The Indian Express* (blog). 10 septembrie, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/macron-urges-tough-eu-stance-against-turkish-provocations-6590900/>.

The Manila Times, Global. 2021. "France, Greece Sign \$3B Jet Deal." *The Manila Times*. Ianuarie 2021.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/01/27/news/world/france-greece-sign-3b-jet-deal/833184>.

The Star. 2021. "A Boost for EU Defence." 29 septembrie 2021. <https://www.pressreader.com/malaysia/the-star-malaysia/20210929/281865826626168>.

The Warsaw Institute Review. 2020. *New Chapter: Poland – UK Relations After Brexit*, 18 mai 2020,

<https://warsawinstitute.org/new-chapter-poland-uk-relations-brexit/>.

Thompson, Alexander, and Daniel Verdier. 2014. "Multilateralism, Bilateralism, and Regime Design." *International Studies Quarterly* 58: 15–28.

Tladi, Dire. 2020. "Populism's Attack on Multilateralism and International Law: Much Ado About Nothing."

Chinese Journal of International Law 19 (3): 369–91.

U.S. Department of State, „U.S. Relations With Poland”, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-poland/>

Verbeke, Johan. 2017. "A World in Flux." Bruxelles: Egmont Institute. <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2017/11/SPB92-Verbeke.pdf>

Wichmann, Anna. 2021. "The Entire France-Greece Defense and Security Agreement." *GreekReporter.Com* (blog). 28 septembrie 2021. <https://greekreporter.com/2021/09/28/the-entire-france-greece-defense-and-security-agreement/>.



Our mission. The Romanian Diplomatic Institute (RDI) has the mission to make a substantial contribution to increasing the quality of Romanian diplomacy through training, further education, research, the development of critical and strategic thinking and international networking. A good foreign policy serves as a beneficial domestic policy.

Guiding principles: human resource development, professionalism, respect and dialogue, and responsibility for the community.

Based on the founding legal attributions of the RDI, the further development of the Institute is carried out, according to the needs identified in the MFA, along the following four directions:

- Training and further education of diplomats and other trainees;
- Deepening the research and expertise dimension on regional and functional issues;
- Operating the RDI as a think-tank of the MFA;
- Integration of the RDI into an international network of similar relevant institutes.

Authors: Mihai Constantinescu is an analyst at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute – Department of Expert Analysis, and PhD candidate at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration.

Alexandru Ionuț Drăgulin (PhD) is an analyst at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute – Department of Expert Analysis.

RDI Policy Paper Series
ISSN 2285-8938
ISSN-L 2285-8938

Editing, layout, and graphics: Claudiu Codreanu

Cover photo: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-group-of-flags-CQeqUxPbdJE>

The Romanian Diplomatic Institute - IDR
<https://www.idr.ro/en/> | secretariat@idr.ro
Primăverii 17, Sector 1, Bucharest, 011972