Research for Policy

Ruth Mampuys
Corien Prins
Haroon Sheikh
Paul 't Hart

Navigating a Fragmenting World Order

Challenges and Opportunities for the Netherlands

WRR
THE NETHERLANDS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY

OPEN ACCESS

Springer

Research for Policy

Studies by the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy

This series publishes internationally relevant studies of the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy. Many of the cross-cutting issues that affect Dutch policymaking, also challenge other Western countries or international bodies. By publishing these studies in this international open access scientific series, the analyses and insights of The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) can contribute to the policy debate in other countries.

The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) is an independent strategic advisory body for government policy in the Netherlands. It advises the Dutch government and Parliament on long-term strategic issues that are of great importance for society. The WRR provides science-based advice aimed at: opening up new perspectives and directions, changing problem definitions, setting new policy goals, investigating new resources for problem-solving and enriching the public debate.

The studies of the WRR do not focus on one particular policy area, but on cross-cutting issues that affect future policymaking in multiple domains. A long-term perspective complements the day-to-day policymaking, which often concentrates on issues that dominate today's policy agenda.

The WRR consists of a Council and an academic staff who work closely together in multidisciplinary project teams. Council members are appointed by the King, and hold academic chairs at universities, currently in fields as diverse as economics, sociology, law, public administration and governance, health and water management. The WRR determines its own work program, as well as the content of its publications. All its work is externally reviewed before publication.

Ruth Mampuys • Corien Prins
Haroon Sheikh • Paul ’t Hart

Navigating a Fragmenting World Order

Challenges and Opportunities for the Netherlands

Springer

Ruth Mampuys
The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)
The Hague, The Netherlands

Corien Prins
The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)
The Hague, The Netherlands

Haroon Sheikh
The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)
The Hague, The Netherlands

Paul ’t Hart
The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)
The Hague, The Netherlands

ISSN 2662-3684 ISSN 2662-3692 (electronic)
Research for Policy
ISBN 978-3-032-00647-9 ISBN 978-3-032-00648-6 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6

Translation and adaptation from the Dutch language edition: “Nederland in een fragmenterende wereldorde” by Ruth Mampuys et al., © Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2024. Published by Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). All Rights Reserved.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

This book is a translation and adaptation of the Dutch report *Nederland in een Fragmenterende Wereldorde*, which was published on July 1, 2024, and presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs later that month. In this study, the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) analyses the geopolitical developments through the lens of three types of fragmentation, which result in a complex dynamic that brings to the fore urgent policy questions that confront the government with a balancing act of security, prosperity and values.

At the time of writing of this preface to the international edition, the report has been out for 10 months and the second Trump presidency is in its 100th day. The depth and breadth of the radical policy changes that the new American Government initiated have rattled the markets and governments around the world. It has spawned concerns that the United States is sliding from a bulwark and beacon of liberal democracy into some form of plebiscitarian autocracy and plutocracy. Internationally, it has destabilised old and taken for granted institutions and alliances. It has created not only deep uncertainty but also a need for other governments and non-state actors to adapt rapidly to a situation in which the hegemon of the early decades of the twenty-first century no longer acts as an anchor but as a wildcard. In that sense, it presents an extraordinarily powerful illustration of the multi-layered fragmentation process that our 2024 report tried to capture. Events of the past 10 months and the last 100 days in particular have not required us to change either the diagnosis or the policy recommendations of our 2024 report. If anything, they have validated the thrust of our reasoning and the urgency of the adaptive action we advocate.

This report was prepared by a project group led by Prof. Dr. Mathieu Segers (†) and Prof. Mr. Corien Prins. The project coordination was in the hands of Prof. Dr. Haroon Sheikh. The project group also included council member Prof. Dr. Paul 't Hart, advisory council member Prof. Mr. Ernst Hirsch Ballin and staff members Dr. Ruth Mampuys and Prof. Dr. Arthur van Riel. During various periods, Akudo McGee and the interns Lea Hoopman, Mart van der Wal, Sam Verbruggen, Remco Diepenbroek, Roan de Lisle, Michiel Zimmer, Tirza Smits, Nickel Koch and Sophia Vermaas were part of the project group. Marysha Molthoff, Mitra Javanmardi (communications) and Magda de Wit (project secretary) provided essential support.

For this report, we are grateful for the willingness of many dozens of experts and authorities from both within and outside the country to engage in discussions with us or to participate in one of the Hollands Spoor sessions, round tables and group discussions organised by the project group. Their names are listed in the appendix to this report. We are very grateful to the leadership of the Military Intelligence and Security Service for the detailed briefing they provided to us.

Furthermore, we owe a great debt of gratitude to the external reviewers, who, in a very short time, but with great thoroughness and wisdom, provided comments on a draft version of this report: Prof. Dr. Hylke Dijkstra, Dr. Renée Jones-Bos and Prof. Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

Mathieu Segers was a driving force behind this advisory process. His deep knowledge of European politics, broad erudition and warm collegiality were of great importance to the direction of the broad, ambitious and far-reaching analysis now presented. That he could not hold the pen until the end is one of the tragic consequences of his much-too-early passing. The WRR misses him every day.

The Hague, The Netherlands Ruth Mampuys
The Hague, The Netherlands Corien Prins
The Hague, The Netherlands Haroon Sheikh
The Hague, The Netherlands Paul ’t Hart

Competing Interests The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

Contents

1 Geopolitical Challenges 1
1.1 Background and Key Message 1
1.2 Three Vectors of Fragmentation 2
1.3 Principal Interests 4
1.4 Reading Guide 9
References 9

2 A Fragmenting World Order 11
2.1 Three Vectors of Fragmentation 11
2.2 Fragmentation of Power Centres 13
2.3 Fragmentation of Power Arenas 22
2.4 Fragmentation of World Views 34
2.5 International Institutions in a Fragmenting World Order 43
2.6 Adapting to Fluid and Turbulent Dynamics 46
References 47

3 What Is at Stake? 53
3.1 Introduction 53
3.2 Power Centres 53
3.3 Power Arenas 63
3.4 World Views 72
3.5 Values, Security, and Prosperity at Stake 79
References 80

4 Engaging with a Fragmenting World 83
4.1 Key Message and Findings 83
4.2 False Temptations: Counterproductive Reflexes 88
4.3 Scope for Action and Opportunities for the Netherlands 90

4.4 Recommendations 91
4.5 In Conclusion 106
References 107

List of Experts Consulted 109

Glossary 113

Bibliography 119

Index 129

About the Authors

Ruth Mampuys is a senior research fellow at the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) and a visiting fellow at the Department of Theory and Methodology of the Erasmus School of Law in Rotterdam. At the WRR, she has contributed to research on the evolving fragmentation of the world order, COVID-19 scenarios and role of science advisory systems during crises.

Corien Prins is chair of the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) as well as professor of law and information technology at Tilburg University. As part of her work at the WRR, she was responsible for reports on digital government, digital disaster, artificial intelligence, geopolitics as well as long-term policymaking.

Haroon Sheikh is a senior scientist and project coordinator at the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) and a professor of strategic governance of global technologies at VU University. His research focuses on the intersection of new technology and international relations. At the WRR, he has been a coordinator of projects on artificial intelligence and the fragmenting world order.

Paul 't Hart is professor of public administration, at Utrecht University. He also serves as a Member of the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) of the Netherlands, the Dutch Government's independent think tank advising the Dutch cabinet and parliament about long-range and boundary-crossing public policy challenges. As a council member, Paul has been involved in projects on the fragmenting world order, climate policy and government expertise.

Chapter 1
Geopolitical Challenges

1.1 Background and Key Message

'History is back.' That is what former President of the European Council, Polish politician Donald Tusk, said when he took office in 2014. Russia had invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea. With this remark, Tusk referred to Francis Fukuyama's famous 1989 assertion that history had come to an end. The United States had won the Cold War and a period had ensued in which rivalry between the superpowers had given way to multilateralism, markets had been opened up, and globalisation reigned supreme.[1]

Ten years after his remark, Tusk's message has hit home for many. There are ongoing wars in eastern Europe and the Middle East, alongside many other zones of conflict. It also seems clear what kind of history has returned. Increasingly, there is talk of a 'second Cold War': the world is once again divided into two camps, the fear of war and nuclear attack has returned, and the future at stake is one of either democracy or dictatorship. On closer examination, however, one realises that this is an overly simplistic depiction. Developments are underway that may have consequences as unpredictable as they are dangerous. Confrontations between states are taking on new forms. The traditional instruments of power projection in traditional conflict arenas have been joined by new ones: satellites, cyberattacks, computer chips, artificial intelligence (AI) and information. Moreover, the idea that the world is essentially dealing with a struggle between democracy and dictatorship turns out on closer examination to be an oversimplification as well.

The wars currently taking place in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza are manifestations of a larger phenomenon, one that is described in this report as a *fragmenting world*

[1] In his collection *Europa en de terugkeer van de geschiedenis* (Europe and the return of history), the historian Mathieu Segers investigated the implications for Europe of contemporary geopolitical shifts. Segers (2016).

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*,
Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6_1

order. This phenomenon is forcing European countries to undergo a reorientation. At the heart of this reorientation is the realisation that policy can no longer be crafted from the comfort of a favourable world order: one in which prosperity, security and values were relatively easily aligned. European countries will increasingly find themselves confronted by difficult choices, and although the new geopolitical situation also offers opportunities, developments are primarily shaping a world that is ever more turbulent and uncertain.

In this report, the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) analyses the fragmenting world order and its implications for the Netherlands. However, it is evident that the developments concerned affect not only the Netherlands, but almost all European countries. By implication, while the WRR's key message in this report is directed at the Netherlands, it is not aimed at this country alone. Europe will need to face the reality that:

1. the time is past when it could capitalise on a favourable international context with regard to its values, prosperity and security;
2. costly efforts and sometimes painful choices are unavoidable in order to survive and prosper again in a fragmenting world;
3. these efforts and choices demand commitment right across the full spectrum of government and society.

With this report, the WRR aims to make policymakers and civil-society parties aware of this reality and to contribute to the necessary reorientation. It should be noted that the themes addressed in this report intersect with global challenges in the areas of climate change, demographics, the international division of labour, and migration. Those challenges are discussed here only to the extent that they are directly related to the process of fragmentation.

1.2 Three Vectors of Fragmentation

What do we mean by a fragmenting world order? This does not imply a complete fragmentation; the world is in fact also witnessing integration and the formation of new blocs.[2] Fragmentation needs to be understood in the context of the situation in recent decades, when the United States provided leadership; geopolitical rivalry gave way to international cooperation, shared regulation of trade and reciprocal interdependence; and a dominant ideology of globalisation and global convergence prevailed.[3] Compared to that situation, there are now various centrifugal forces at play. By fragmentation of the world order, we specifically mean a process that is unfolding along three vectors:

1. An increase in the number of power centres;

[2] See also Clingendael and HCSS (2024).

[3] For a quantitative analysis of fragmentation, see Fernandez-Villaverde et al. (2024).

2. The emergence of geopolitics in economic and societal arenas that were previously shielded from it;
3. An increase in the political strength of world views other than the liberal-Western one that has been dominant in recent decades.

As regards the *power centres*, the 'unipolar moment' for the United States that emerged in the late 1980s has come to an end. Comparisons with the post-war period are insufficient to interpret the current situation. Similarly, characterisations such as 'a new American century' or 'a Chinese or Asian century' are also inaccurate and do not provide an effective policy compass. The historical situation most comparable to the present is probably that of the final decades of the nineteenth century, when there were a large number of dissimilar power centres with strong economic ties. Back then, however, most of the great powers were Western, whereas today the global playing field is far more complex.

Currently, a configuration of five superpowers has come to the fore. It includes the United States, China, India, Russia and the European Union. These five actors differ significantly in the nature, scale and scope of their economic, military and 'soft' power. Besides the superpowers, with their varying ambitions for the world order, there is a multiplicity of medium-sized powers, emerging regions and 'swing states' that actively pursue their own agenda. This multiplicity of dissimilar power centres leads to an unstable situation in which the superpowers and various emerging medium-sized powers are developing fluid rivalries and alliances in which each is deploying a suite of means of exerting influence.

All this is linked to the fragmentation of the arenas affected by geopolitics. While several countries again project their power by military means and by leveraging their economic and financial dominance over their rivals, geopolitical action now also occurs in arenas that were hitherto largely free from it. An example of such an arena is he global market for computer chips, in which the Netherlands holds a key position through ASML. Another example is the debate surrounding the pervasive presence of Chinese-manufactured electronic devices, which can be turned into weapons and tools for surveillance. Consider also the mounting concerns about knowledge security at Dutch and European universities and businesses as a result of their international partnerships, and the surge in the number of international students and academic staff from outside Europe.

Fragmentation of geopolitics across a wide array of international (and domestic) arenas therefore means that activities previously viewed as purely economic or social are now being drawn into the realm of geopolitics. Geopolitical power is exercised through such instruments as rare-earth elements, 5G networks, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and information channels, and by deploying migration as a weapon. In many cases, it is not governments but businesses that are the key players, and many of these arenas involve only a handful of multinationals, whose market power makes them of geopolitical importance.

The third vector of fragmentation concerns *world views* that act as frames through which people and institutions perceive, interpret and communicate what is going on around them.

In the present report, we examine the ascendance of a number of world views in international politics that challenge the post-Cold War dominance of the narrative of globalisation and global convergence around liberal-Western values and institutions.

That ideological dominance is a thing of the past. In Russia—but also in China, Türkiye and Iran—a revisionist world view applies: the idea that a fundamental shift in international relations is needed so they can regain the position they once held. Another world view that has gained considerable political and diplomatic currency is post-colonialism, which critically examines the economic, cultural and humanitarian consequences of centuries of Western supremacy. Post-colonial thinking has deep roots and a wide reach in Africa and Latin America, as well as in India, an emerging superpower. This fragmentation of world views is contributing to the emergence of new dividing lines and alliances, which affect not only international politics but also domestic social relationships and political debate.

We will discuss each of these three vectors of fragmentation in greater detail in the next chapter. It is important to bear in mind that the significance of these developments is interpreted differently around the world. From a liberal-Western perspective, fragmentation is experienced as the erosion of a world order that is favourable to the West and that suits it ideologically. In other parts of the world, however, it is more likely to be experienced as the welcome disintegration of a global power structure that is far less favourable—a disintegration that offers scope for other voices and interests.

1.3 Principal Interests

Due to the effects of the three vectors of fragmentation, the current world order is distancing itself ever more emphatically from the patterns and institutions that emerged after the World War II and the end of the Cold War. The new order lies somewhere between a world of fully fluid power politics—a situation of 'no permanent allies or enemies, only permanent interests'[4]—and an order consisting of multiple blocs.

The process of fragmentation is putting a strain on the principal interests that have traditionally shaped Dutch foreign policy, but also those of many other countries. These interests can be envisaged as a triad: (1) the quest for national security and peaceful international relations, (2) the quest for a strong economic position, and (3) the quest for a meaningful international rule of law. Political scientist and former Dutch Minister of Defence Joris Voorhoeve summarised these principal interests as *peace, profits* and *principles*.[5] His historical study of Dutch foreign policy reveals how all-encompassing Dutch diplomacy has always been, and how

[4] This quotation is attributed to Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom almost without interruption between 1855 and 1865.

[5] Voorhoeve (1979).

challenging it has been at times to achieve a workable balance between these three principal policy goals—at times, decision makers felt a need to trade them off against one another. These three goals remain a beacon of Dutch foreign policy. However, the rapidly changing context is making it more difficult to bring about acceptable, supportable and workable equilibria between the three policy goals.

In this report, we take Voorhoeve's conceptual framework as our starting point, but we update its formulation to what we refer to as the 'Triad Framework' of key Dutch foreign policy priorities: security, prosperity and values (see Fig. 1.1). 'Security' involves securing the country's territorial security through diplomacy and defence, but also the collective security awareness and alertness of the public, businesses and institutions. 'Prosperity' represents more than national income and sectoral or corporate interests (the essence of Voorhoeve's *profits*). It also encompasses the consolidation of competitive advantage in the long term, the linking of that competitive advantage to the actual standard of living and—lately—the concept of 'well-being'. 'Values' denotes internationally defined obligations, as well as the universal human rights, international norms and standards that the Netherlands wishes to promote.

It is important to note that the triad framework does not necessarily entail a rigorous trade-off between the three priorities, in which on any given issue a choice in favour of one comes at the expense of entirely foregoing one or two others.

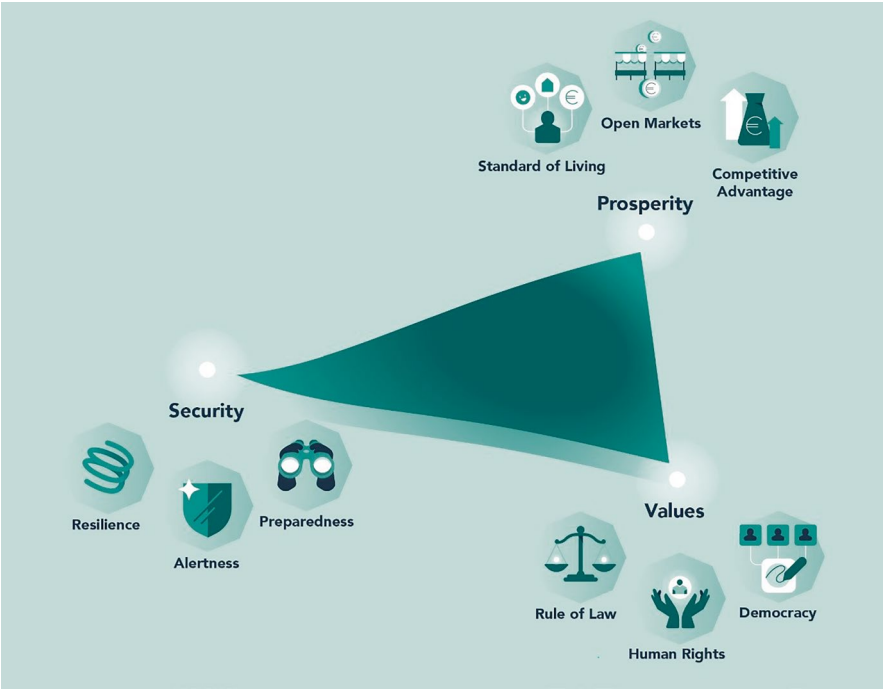

Fig. 1.1 Achieving a balance between the principal goals of Dutch foreign policy

Prioritising the pursuit of one of the priorities may at times entail incurring costs and making concessions in the other domains, but that does by no means imply a permanent downgrade of the importance of those domains.

The significance and importance of the three principal priorities must therefore be continually shaped through policy choices. This is a fundamental political process. Take 'prosperity', for example. A key criticism of the existing international economic order is precisely that the choices made with regard to prosperity have long been framed solely as matters of economic optimisation, whereas they also have a major impact on the distribution of national incomes.[6] The existing order also makes it difficult to promote broader conceptions of prosperity globally, as set out in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Something similar applies in the case of 'values'. These include fundamental rights that have been recognised over time as universal and enshrined in international conventions. Just how these universal values should be incorporated into policy is the subject of public debate, political decision-making and judicial review.

In performing this balancing act, policymakers' room for manoeuvre can be restricted or extended by the operation of international conventions, institutions and alliances. This means seeking a balance *in the space between policy goals*. Furthermore, while each of the three foreign policy goals is essential in its own right for Dutch foreign policy, they are also closely interrelated. Without security or prosperity, it is not possible to enact values; conversely, value-free politics ultimately leads to neither prosperity nor security.

The triad framework outlined here can shed light on what is at stake in individual cases. It anchors debate on goals, costs, benefits, risks and trade-offs. We will utilise the triad framework throughout this report to show how global developments permeate Dutch foreign policy and diplomacy. Meanwhile, these same global developments also affect other European countries. For a large part of the post-war period—especially since the end of the Cold War—the global tides were favourable to the Netherlands and western Europe. The alliance with the United States and the diminished rivalry between the superpowers made the region more secure. The development of the European single market and subsequent globalisation strengthened the Netherlands' competitive advantage. Increasing democratisation, multilateral cooperation and strengthening of the international rule of law created favourable conditions. As a result, the Netherlands substantially reduced its investments in defence (across 20 years, it cut €134 billion[7]) and was able to step up its efforts regarding free trade and human rights.

The current geopolitical order is considerably more complex and challenging. The stakes for the Netherlands are high. DHL's Global Connectedness Index shows

[6] See, for example, Lang and Tavares (2018), an IMF working paper analysing outcomes for 147 countries for the years from 1970 until 2014.

[7] Schinkel (2024).

that it is the most connected country in the world.[8] Because of this hyperconnectedness, the fragmenting world order and the ensuing geopolitical uncertainty could therefore severely impact the Dutch economy and society. By way of illustration, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) has shown that the costs of a scenario in which world trade is extensively 'decoupled' will be extremely high for the Netherlands.[9] Both the Netherlands and many other European countries depend on international cooperation and multilateralism for their national security and for pursuing their values agenda. These are under pressure from fragmentation as well. With the triad framework in mind, various strategic issues loom large where Dutch foreign policy is concerned. First, there is the question of how to strike the proper balance between policy goals in a world that has become more turbulent and unpredictable. Clearly, great efforts are now needed to make up the security deficit. These will come at a high cost and will require commitment not only on the part of the armed forces, but of society as a whole. At the same time, policy must not be allowed to spill over into total 'securitisation', where everything revolves around security at the expense of values and prosperity.

Other strategic challenges concern the Dutch multilateral engagement. How, in the present context, can it reinforce cooperation within existing alliances and institutions? This presupposes a strategic approach to European institutions and policies in areas such as security, defence, industry and innovation. There are also opportunities in the domain of emerging powers and new international alliances. Recognising and leveraging such opportunities calls for a reflection on changing relations and improved awareness of how the world and the Netherlands are perceived from elsewhere.

With this report, the WRR aims to contribute to the necessary reorientation. In that sense, we are building on previous efforts towards that end. In 1995, for example, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs published its *Herijkingsnota* (recalibration memorandum), which addressed changes such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, German reunification, disarmament and the impending eastward enlargement of the EU.[10] The Ministry was ahead of its time in using the memorandum to call for fresh thinking and new emphases in Dutch foreign policy. Its aim was to respond in the most effective manner to a world order that no longer resembled what it had been in previous decades.[11]

Almost 20 years later—by which time the 9/11 attacks had taken place and the Netherlands was about to join the war on terror initiated by the United States—the Dutch government again noted that, given the global turbulence, 'more of the same' in foreign policy would no longer suffice: 'Sustained effective commitment to the

[8] See DHL global connectedness report: https://www.dhl.com/global-en/delivered/globalization/global-connectedness-report.html

[9] CPB (2024). See also WRR (2017).

[10] Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (1995).

[11] Kleistra (2002).

interests and values of the Netherlands requires constant adaptation to the changing context. The world is changing ever more rapidly. Distances are becoming ever smaller. Interests are increasingly situated beyond national borders. Foreign and domestic are inextricably linked. The boundaries between themes are becoming blurred. Policy is increasingly being shaped and implemented in consultation and cooperation with businesses, knowledge institutions and civil-society organisations. Only those who respond flexibly and wisely to these realities will reap the benefits.'[12]

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, several global developments gathered pace. China manifested itself more and more explicitly as a world power. The Arab Spring turned into a nightmare and Islamic State (IS) showed how non-state actors can assume geopolitical importance. The tech giants did the same for multinational enterprises. The expansion of the number of democracies in the world came to a standstill. In fact, that number has declined slightly since 2016.[13] Technologies such as drones and artificial intelligence (AI) took the world by storm, raising questions about 'dual use' (i.e. their deployment for military as well as peaceful purposes).

The Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) sounded the alarm as early as in 2020, stating in an advisory report on European security: 'Europe's security is under pressure from new threats, fundamental geopolitical shifts and changes in the transatlantic relationship: Europe has become vulnerable. The era of US hegemony, in which the United States served as the guardian of the post-war global order, is over. Where Washington would once have taken the lead in the event of an international crisis, this is now no longer the case.'[14] In the ensuing period, 'geopolitics' was a central theme in no fewer than three AIV advisory reports on widely differing topics.[15]

By contrast with Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014, the significance of which was hardly realised at the time, Russia's second invasion—this time of Ukraine—drove home the urgency and far-reaching nature of developments. That urgency was strongly reflected in the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs' policy memorandum of 8 March 2022. In it, the Minister spoke not only of a 'geopolitical earthquake', but also noted that the multilateral system as it had developed after World War II was under strain 'due to changing relationships in power politics', with 'the rules of the game changing and other agendas being pursued.'[16]

[12] Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (2013: 4).

[13] From 95 to 91 countries, or 51% of the total (2023). See https://ourworldindata.org/less-democratic

[14] AIV (2020: 4).

[15] See the AIV advisory reports on Türkiye, human rights, and industrial policy, all from 2022.

[16] See Parliamentary papers: https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2022/03/08/beleidsbrief-buitenlandse-zaken

In the following analysis, the WRR reflects on what this 'geopolitical earthquake' means for the Netherlands.[17] This results in a policy agenda that will require a great deal of effort in the coming years—not only in terms of traditional foreign and defence policy, but also from the Dutch government in general—and involves mobilising and engaging the whole of Dutch society. However, the fragmenting world order compels not only the Netherlands to undertake a radical revision of its policy agenda; the same applies to a large number of other European countries. Consequently, the analysis, insights and conclusions presented in this report can also serve as inspiration beyond the Netherlands.

1.4 Reading Guide

In Chap. 2, we outline what we understand by a fragmenting world order. In it, we go into greater detail regarding the three vectors of fragmentation—power centres, power arenas and world views—and their implications. This chapter forms the empirical core of our analysis.

In Chap. 3, we analyse—on the basis of the Dutch foreign policy triad—how fragmentation affects the basic assumptions underlying Dutch foreign policy, as well as domestic policy to the extent that the latter touches upon global developments. We consider a number of topics that are relevant to the Netherlands, outlining what is at stake for public authorities, businesses and individuals. In doing so, we identify not only threats and limitations, but also potential new opportunities.

The concluding chapter draws together the main points of our analysis. It starts by warning against a number of non-productive reflexes. This is followed by three recommendations, each accompanied by a number of proposals that the WRR believes the Netherlands must adopt in order to hold its own amidst the fragmentation that is a hallmark of the current era.

We present our analysis in a succinct and concise manner because we wish to make our message easily accessible to a wide audience, specifically including policymakers and other parties outside the world of foreign policy and external security.

References

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2020). *Europese veiligheid: Tijd voor nieuwe stappen*. Den Haag.

Centraal Planbureau (CPB). (2024). *Geopolitieke ontkoppelings-en integratiescenario's voor de wereldhandel*. Den Haag.

[17] Because factors such as geographical location, economics and social context affect the implications of a fragmenting world order, the WRR focuses on the European Netherlands in this report and excludes the BES islands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, i.e. the Caribbean Netherlands).

Clingendael and HCSS. (2024). *Barsten en blokken: Confrontatie en samenwerking in een wereld van wisselende coalities*. De Strategische Monitor 2023. Den Haag.
Fernandez-Villaverde, J., Mineyama, T., & Song, D. (2024). *Are we fragmented yet? Measuring geopolitical fragmentation and its causal effects*. University of Pennsylvania and IMF.
Kleistra, Y. (2002). *Hollen of stilstaan: Beleidsverandering bij het Nederlandse Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*. Eburon.
Lang, V., & Tavares, M. (2018). The global distribution of gains from globalization. *Journal of Economic Inequality, 22*(2), 357–381. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10888-023-09593-7
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (1995). *Herijking van het buitenlands beleid*. Den Haag.
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2013). *Voor Nederland, wereldwijd. Samen werken aan toonaangevende diplomatie*. Den Haag.
Schinkel, M. (2024). *Vredesdividend: Het afknijpen van defensie leverde 135 miljard op*. NRC.
Segers, M. (2016). *Europa en de terugkeer van de geschiedenis*. Prometheus.
Voorhoeve, J. (1979). *Peace, profit and principles: A study in Dutch foreign policy*. Nijhoff.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2017). *Veiligheid in een Wereld van Verbindingen*. Den Haag.

Chapter 2
A Fragmenting World Order

2.1 Three Vectors of Fragmentation

It is clear that global relations are changing, but it is difficult to determine if or when that process will lead to a new world order, or how stable that order will be. What is undeniable, however, is that fundamental changes are underway that make the global context within which individual countries operate more complex and challenging. These changes are taking place in a context of three vectors of fragmentation (see Fig. 2.1).

The first vector involves a shift in the number of countries where geopolitical power is concentrated, i.e. the *power centres* (Sect. 2.2). After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the bipolar post-war structure of the global system replaced by a unipolar one.[1] That moment of unipolarity was exceptional in modern history, but it did not last very long. In less than 40 years, a number of superpowers has emerged that differ significantly in size and strength across numerous dimensions. Moreover, these new superpowers are pursuing very different kinds of world orders. In addition to these five—the United States (US), China, India, Russia and the European Union (EU)—there is a multiplicity of medium-sized powers and 'swing states' that are pursuing their own agenda, often playing the superpowers off against one another.

The second vector concerns the various different *power arenas* (Sect. 2.3). From the 1990s on, much of the world assumed that the traditional projection of power in the form of military, economic, and financial 'hard power' would diminish. That assumption has turned out to be false. Not only have the traditional means of projecting power made a comeback, but other power arenas increasingly play a role in geopolitics as well. The 'weaponisation of everything' and 'hybrid warfare' are now commonplace.[2] Whether in terms of rare-earth metals, computer chips, artificial

[1] Krauthammer (1990) and Fukuyama (1992).

[2] Galeotti (2022) and De Wijk et al. (2020).

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*,
Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6_2

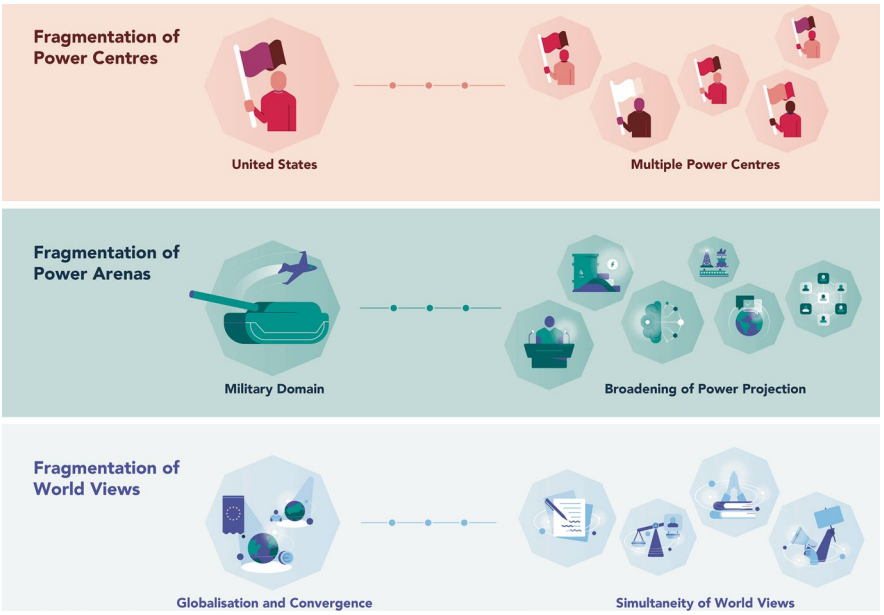

Fig. 2.1 Three vectors of fragmentation

intelligence (AI), or payment systems: the projection of power now literally transcends borders.[3]

Finally, we discuss fragmentation along the vector of *world views* (Sect. 2.4). Since the 1990s, the dominant discourse has been one of globalisation and convergence between countries according to the Western model. In recent years, however, it has become increasingly clear that other, differing world views—which have always existed—are becoming increasingly prominent and are being actively deployed in the political context.

In this chapter, we examine the developments that are taking place along these three vectors (Fig. 2.1). The long-term implications of these developments are as yet uncertain, but what will become clear from our analysis in any case is that sweeping statements about a new American century, an Asian century, a new Cold War between two superpowers, and other simplified interpretations of that nature fail to do justice to global dynamics. At first sight, the world would seem to be dealing with a range of movements in separate domains, but if one looks closely at the sum total of all these movements and also considers them in context, the only possible conclusion is that the world has become not only more complex, but also more ominous.[4]

[3] The first study on this phenomenon was written by two members of the Chinese military, Liang and Xiangshui (1999).

[4] Cf. Sie Dhian Ho and Wijnkoop (2022).

Europe must come to terms with this dynamic in the coming period. The emerging geopolitical landscape compels strategic choices, as we demonstrate in Chap. 3. These international changes are already leaving their mark on the economy and society, with their effects clearly visible even now. That is why it is both urgent and crucial to find a way of dealing with the new geopolitical realities that we outline—not only to ensure the security of the Netherlands, but also to maintain our prosperity and the European agenda of values upon which our society is founded.

2.2 Fragmentation of Power Centres

After the end of the Cold War, only a single 'superpower' remained, namely the United States. The bipolar post-war world order had given way to a unipolar order, in which the US and its Western and 'pro-Western' allies could dominate. Thirty-five years later, that 'unipolar moment' would seem to be a thing of the past. There are now five (potential) superpowers, each with their own dynamics and challenges.[5]

China: A New Superpower

The most important recent shift in the relationship between states is undoubtedly the rise of China. The Chinese regime is pursuing a different kind of world order through highly ambitious diplomatic initiatives and an assertive foreign and defence policy.[6] The best-known of those initiatives is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2014: a vast array of infrastructure projects in various parts of the world, financed with Chinese capital. Despite all sorts of misconceptions about the nature and functioning of this initiative,[7] its scale and scope should not be underestimated. Moreover, it is continuing to expand to include new dimensions, such as the Digital Silk Road, the Space Silk Road, and the Polar Silk Road.[8] Whereas the BRI is relatively well-known, three other major initiatives that were also launched under Xi Jinping's leadership more recently have received far less attention: the Global Development Initiative, focusing on such areas as health care, education, and the alleviation of poverty; the Global Security Initiative, centred on security; and the Global Civilisation Initiative, aimed at fostering cultural cooperation.

The foundation of Chinese power is the country's economy. Since the opening up of that economy under Deng Xiaoping (from 1978 on), China has experienced

[5] In this section on power centres, we examine the most powerful states in a manner similar to classical 'realist' studies such as *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (Kennedy, 1987) and *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (Mearsheimer, 2001). There is a great deal of discussion within that literature about a multipolar world order. As will become clear in our discussion of the fragmentation of power arenas and world views, such a state-focused model is inadequate for understanding the complex contemporary dynamics, in which non-state actors and ideas play a key role.

[6] Stevens (2023).

[7] Jones and Hameiri (2020).

[8] Hillman (2021).

spectacular annual growth, in some cases even exceeding 10%. As a result, China now boasts the world's second largest economy, with a GNP of USD 18.5 trillion behind the United States' USD 28.7 trillion.[9] Given that China's annual per-capita income is still only a quarter of that of developed countries (USD 12,000), it may well catch up with the US within just a few years' time. Of course, the Chinese economy also faces all kinds of structural problems, such as a high level of debt, weak domestic consumption, a lack of raw materials,[10] the effects of Western restrictions and sanctions,[11] and in the longer term a major demographic problem.[12] Regardless of whether its economic growth continues or slows significantly over the next decade, China already exerts enormous influence as a global manufacturing hub and an important (or the most important) trading partner of a large number of countries.

Whereas China often used to be viewed solely as the 'factory of the world', its economy is now also highly innovative. According to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's Technology Tracker database, China is leading in 37 of 44 key technologies, putting it ahead of the US.[13] It has unmistakably become a dominant player in such fields as telecommunications, electric vehicles, and solar panels, while it is also a superpower in fields including artificial intelligence, technology platforms, and biotechnology. On top of that, it is on its way to becoming a key player in emerging technologies, such as quantum technology.[14]

It is a common misconception that China is governed in a largely top-down manner, comparable to the situation in the former Soviet Union. Even though the Chinese government works with 5-year plans and the planning objectives laid down in them, it also allows for input from external parties, for example when it comes to foreign policy.[15] In policy practice, modern techniques of stakeholder consultation are employed, and there is room for bottom-up initiatives, enabling the country to develop a robust innovation system.[16] Many of the regime's long-term ambitions can be found in such publications as *Made in China 2025*, the Chinese AI strategy, *China Standards 2035*—and of course its 5-year plans, the most recent of which added the concept of 'dual circulation': an ambitious plan to reduce China's dependence on Western

[9] According to the IMF (May 2024): https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPD@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/CHN

[10] This applies to energy and agricultural land. On the other hand, China possesses huge reserves of rare-earth metals.

[11] Dikötter (2022).

[12] In the years to 2100, China's population is forecast to shrink from over 1.4 billion to 800 million. In that same period, the population will age enormously. See https://www.un.org/en/desa/india-overtake-china-world-most-populous-country-april-2023-united-nations-projects

[13] See the critical technology tracker from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI): https://techtracker.aspi.org.au

[14] Allison et al. (2021).

[15] Mokry (2023).

[16] Jones and Hameiri (2021); Zeng (2020); Hannas and Tatlow (2020).

technology further.[17] China's military is also becoming increasingly sophisticated, although it still lags significantly behind the US in terms of investment, advanced military technology, and experience of overseas operations.[18] It should also be noted that China's cyber army has built up significant potential within just a short time, for example by shrewdly exploiting the ubiquity of Chinese electronics in Western countries. The Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD) unequivocally reports that 'dozens of Chinese companies are supporting offensive cyber operations by providing software vulnerabilities, malware, anonymous/semi-anonymous attack infrastructure, and specialised software and hardware for digital attacks. The high level of professionalisation and strategic clustering of Chinese hacker units, which work with Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs), give China sophisticated capabilities for launching attacks against rivals and their allies.'[19]

China seeks to expand its influence within existing international institutions, while simultaneously constructing parallel international structures in which it plays a pivotal role. The 2023 agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran brokered under Chinese mediation illustrates the country's rising prominence in the Middle East—a region where until recently the US was the dominant superpower.[20] While China primarily engages economically and diplomatically with the rest of the world, it adopts a more territorial and military posture in its own region—particularly in the South China Sea. A key objective in this context includes 'reunification' with Taiwan on terms dictated by Beijing.

India: A Superpower in the Making

In recent years, India has asserted itself prominently on the global stage. At the Group of Twenty (G20) summit in New Delhi in 2022, for example, it launched the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) as an alternative to China's BRI. Moreover, India has chosen not to go along with Western sanctions against Russia. Instead, it has increased its imports of Russian oil and facilitated its transit. Across the Indian Ocean, it is strengthening ties with countries in the Middle East, East Africa and South East Asia, while seeking new overland connections to Central Asia, in cooperation with Iran.[21]

India is engaged in a unique geopolitical balancing act. After decades of distancing itself, it is now becoming an important partner of the US. It participates in 'the Quad', a strategic consultative forum comprising four of China's geopolitical 'neighbours' (the US, India, Japan, Australia) that seek to form a barrier against potential Chinese expansionism. At the same time, however, it is a co-founder of the BRICS group—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—within which it is

[17] According to the 14th 5-year plan adopted by the National People's Congress in March 2021. English translation available at https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/china-14th-fiveyear-plan/

[18] Cancian (2021).

[19] MIVD (2024:17).

[20] Mariani (2024).

[21] One example of this is the link to the Iranian port of Chabahar.

working with China and other emerging powers specifically to oppose US-Western dominance.

What explains the rise of India as a power centre? For several years now, its economic growth has outstripped that of China. India is now the world's fifth largest economy, after Germany. With per-capita income of one twenty-fifth of that of developed countries, it has significant growth potential. It is also a global player in specific economic sectors, such as information technology services (IT) and pharmaceuticals.

Demographic dynamics play an important role in India's emergence as a superpower: in 2022, it overtook China as the world's most populous country. Moreover, India's population is set to continue to grow for a considerable time to come, its workforce is young (almost half the population are under 25), and the average level of education is increasing. Although this poses a huge challenge for the labour market, the large number of more highly educated younger workers also gives the country potential for growth.[22] However, continued growth of the Indian economy is by no means certain. Issues related to governance, inefficient bureaucracy, the worrying trend towards more authoritarian politics, and the weak state of the country's infrastructure present significant obstacles.[23] Nonetheless, India is becoming increasingly successful at capitalising on its economic potential.

External developments are strengthening India's position on the global stage as well. Its rivalry with China is causing the US to look more towards India as an ally. The Quad is a manifestation of this. Countries including Russia and Japan also view India as a means of counterbalancing the influence of China. Because it is the poorest of the superpowers, many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America assign India a position similar to the leading role it played within the coalition of non-aligned countries during the Cold War. Militarily, India is also growing rapidly. Its defence spending is comparable to that of Russia, although still far behind that of the US and China.

While ethnic and religious conflicts at home and with Pakistan persist, these are less turbulent than a few decades ago. For some time now, the country has been dominated politically by the Hindu-nationalist BJP party, with central government occasionally taking on authoritarian characteristics. Meanwhile, India has unmistakably acquired a unique geopolitical position, with none of the other superpowers able to dominate it. The country is pursuing its own agenda and the world is queuing up to do business. In the longer term, India's balancing act will undoubtedly become more complex, but it is unlikely that the country will turn out to be just an ephemeral geopolitical player.

Russia: The Comeback Superpower

Just how powerful is Russia? Perceptions of the country range from a bygone superpower in danger of becoming irrelevant, to a dangerous, revisionist rogue state that

[22] See Kothari and Khan (2017).

[23] Cf. Mody (2023).

has revived the spectre of a major war in Europe. Russia is undeniably building a sphere of influence of its own, primarily in the former Soviet states. Militarily, it has linked up neighbouring countries in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and economically in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), created in 2015. Publicly, Russia often asserts that this regional integration is in line with the Chinese initiatives and terms it the 'integration of integrations'.[24] In many areas, however, this integration is not running smoothly. China's economic influence in Central Asia and eastern Russia is causing tension between the two countries. Moreover, in order to counterbalance Chinese influence, Russia is attempting to strengthen ties with countries such as India, Japan and Vietnam, all of which have a tense relationship with China. Russia now also has significant influence in European countries such as Hungary and Slovakia, in Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela in Latin America, in Syria in the Middle East, and in the Sahel, where it supports various military regimes.

Although Russia is waging an extremely costly war in Ukraine, it has a strong and experienced military equipped with advanced weapons including hypersonic missiles, drone technology, an offensive cyber capability,[25] and still a large nuclear arsenal. Its political willingness to employ brutal military force gives it a kind of 'dark power', which acts as a strong deterrent. However, the country has more soft power than is often thought. Russia's authoritarian politics, but also its defence of traditional values and religion and its opposition to the West, make it popular in many parts of the world.

Economically, Russia is relatively weak, although it has so far managed to keep its economy going since the imposition of Western sanctions following its (second) invasion of Ukraine. Even so, its economy is smaller than that of Italy (the EU's third-largest economy) and is heavily dependent on fossil fuel production. Nevertheless, it remains a major producer of agricultural goods, fertilisers, metals such as aluminium, and nuclear technology. Russia also has robust technological capabilities in niche areas such as facial recognition software, telecommunications, cybersecurity, and surveillance technology.[26] These are areas in which it leverages its comparative advantages geo-economically.[27] Much recent action on the part of Russia can be understood in terms of its desire to gain access to the world's oceans: the ports of Sevastopol in Crimea and Tartus in Syria, and ships and submarines in the North Sea navigating through the melting North Pole region. Meanwhile, Russia

[24] Since the war in Ukraine, it has sometimes been suggested that Russia is not an independent power centre but in fact China's junior partner. The two regimes speak of a 'borderless partnership', and Western sanctions have certainly made Russia more dependent on Chinese support. However, the suggestion of a complete congruence of interests obscures the vast differences between the two power centres. See Snow (2023).

[25] The MIVD (2024: 13) notes: 'Compared to the first year of the war in Ukraine, the MIVD observed an increase in cyber operations by Russian state actors against European and NATO allied targets in 2023. The MIVD considers it likely that some of these cyber operations were carried out with the aim of acquiring a digital foothold within critical infrastructure in order to be able to sabotage it at a later date. If successful, this could have potentially far-reaching and socially disruptive consequences.'

[26] Soldatov and Borogan (2015); Polyakova and Meserole (2019).

[27] Diesen (2018).

is facing serious demographic challenges that severely restrict its economic development: its population is declining and average life expectancy is low.

In short, Russia is an independent power centre that is strong in some dimensions and weak in others. As a result, it does not enjoy the same power potential as China. Russia is committed to disrupting the current world order, whereas China is seeking to develop a new kind of order.

The US: A Polarised Superpower

At the end of the 1990s, the United States was the sole superpower. Today, it remains the world's most powerful country and strong in all geopolitical dimensions. In 2021, the US military budget was more than twice that of China, the second biggest spender. Moreover, the US military is the only power with the bases and experience to intervene in any part of the world.[28]

The US economy is the largest in the world, highly innovative, and demonstrating strong growth figures. Unlike European countries, China and Russia, the country is not facing demographic decline or rapid ageing. Geographically, it is blessed with abundant resources, ranging from food to energy (shale gas and oil), and does not share any borders with rival powers. The dollar is by far the most important currency for international payments. The US has an extensive network of alliances. Its national creed of freedom, democracy, and opportunity for all still gives it considerable soft power. As the architect and guardian of the post-war world order, the US is Europe's primary ally.

The dominant position of the US is under pressure due to emerging power centres challenging the country. It is also struggling with domestic political polarisation that is testing the robustness of the democratic rule of law, creating political gridlock, and leading to changes in its foreign policy. During Donald Trump's first presidency, the country withdrew from various multilateral alliances.[29] One consistent feature of the past 15 years has been the shift in Washington's geopolitical focus from Europe to Asia.[30] This is also apparent from the two new security initiatives on which the US has focused in recent years: the trilateral AUKUS partnership (with Australia and the UK) in the Indo-Pacific region and the Quad dialogue already mentioned (with India, Japan, and Australia).

At the same time, relations with Europe are under pressure from deep, long-standing political and economic disputes, for instance regarding the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the role and regulation of US Big Tech companies, aviation, and the computer chip industry. Within Europe, doubts are increasing about the US security guarantee. The strong US focus on China and Asia may come at the expense of NATO's effectiveness and credibility.

[28] Since 1945, there have been more than 200 US military interventions in 67 countries. Kushi and Toft (2023); Immerwahr (2019).

[29] Lake et al. (2021: 244).

[30] This has in fact been going on for longer. See Howorth (2015).

Many conclude from this that the EU will quickly need to do more to ensure its own security and must itself become a stronger power centre.[31]

The EU: A Divided Superpower

This brings us to the last of the five major power centres, the European Union. The largest EU Member States, Germany and France, are each medium-sized powers in their own right; however, when viewed as a whole, the EU certainly ranks among the global superpowers. At the same time, the EU still operates only to a limited extent as a cohesive player on the global stage. The former Belgian foreign minister Mark Eyskens expressed the situation long ago as follows: 'The EU is an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm.'[32] Although much has changed since then, that characterisation is still frequently used as of 2024. To put it differently, the extent to which the EU can be considered an independent power centre varies significantly across different dimensions of power.

In the domain of trade and the economy, the EU is second only to the US and ahead of China. Together, these three economic power centres are an order of magnitude larger than the other two superpowers.[33] In sectors such as automotive, aerospace, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, and energy, the EU is a leading player, although its technological leadership is under pressure. However, the size of the single market—combined with the strict requirements for products and services offered in this market—does provide the basis for power through regulation. In some domains, the EU is even described as a 'regulatory superpower'.[34] It should be noted that even though the EU has an internal market, in many respects it does not yet function as an integrated economy. The Draghi Report, published in 2024, highlights the fragmentation of policy and financing within the EU as a major obstacle to achieving sustainable growth and competitiveness.[35]

With 450 million inhabitants, the EU is the third-largest population cluster in the world after India and China, and its size could increase considerably if it is enlarged to include countries such as Ukraine. However, a number of Member States are contending with an ageing and declining population, putting pressure on the EU's economic potential. Moreover, the EU displays consistently lower economic growth than the US, China, and India.

The political weakness that Eyskens referred to is related to the institutional complexity of decision-making within the EU. This complexity arises from the fact that Member States often have widely diverging interests and policy ambitions, that various areas of foreign policy do not fall within the EU's remit, and that no

[31] Such comments are generally made without much reflection on the way Europe's own policies have contributed to the United States' more reserved stance, which predate the presidency of Donald Trump.

[32] Leonard (2018).

[33] O'Neill (2022).

[34] Bradford (2020).

[35] Draghi (2024).

coherent European *demos* has been established that gives it political legitimacy and thus effectiveness. The former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger long ago wondered rhetorically who he should phone if he wanted to get 'Europe' on the line. In many respects, that is still a valid question.[36] Particularly where foreign policy is concerned, the Member States still largely chart their own course, tending to get in each other's way rather than acting together. This became painfully clear recently with the disparate European responses to the bloodshed in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, the EU is now managing to combine its diplomatic forces more often than in the past, for example during the Brexit negotiations and the imposition of sanctions targeting Russia.[37] Under the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen, who has explicitly called for a geopolitically assertive Europe, the European Commission has undertaken numerous initiatives. The Chips Act, the Critical Minerals Act, and especially the Global Gateway—Europe's response to China's Belt and Road Initiative—are examples of joint diplomatic efforts.[38] While the EU is attempting to reduce economic ties with Russia, it is engaged in long-running negotiations on trade agreements with, among others, China, India, and Mercosur (the customs union between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay).

The institutional-political weakness of the EU is noticeable in the economic domain as well. After negotiations lasting 7 years, the EU and China reached a bilateral agreement on investment in December 2020.[39] Less than 5 months later, however, the European Parliament refused to approve the agreement and the arrangements were 'effectively dead'.[40] In a similar manner, the national parliaments of some Member States are also delaying the important EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).[41]

Militarily, a number of EU Member States are medium-sized players. France has its own nuclear arsenal, Germany an advanced defence industry, and Poland is investing heavily in the build-up of its armed forces. Meanwhile, the EU is facing security threats in areas in its immediate vicinity: North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Together, EU countries spend a substantial amount on defence, but

[36] Cf. Sobczyk (2012): 'Kissinger still lacks a number to call Europe.'

[37] Nevertheless, it would seem that when it comes to implementing and enforcing sanctions against Russia, companies from EU Member States do not have much trouble finding all sorts of loopholes and workarounds that seriously undermine the effectiveness of EU sanctions. For instance, figures for exports from EU countries such as Germany to central Asian states like Kyrgyzstan quickly rose dramatically. It takes little imagination to envisage what subsequently happens to the goods concerned.

[38] Ringhof and Torreblanca (2022).

[39] This EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment envisaged not only investment and improved market access, but also sustainable development and labour standards. See https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-andregions/china/eu-china-agreement_en

[40] https://www.politico.eu/article/european-commission-ursula-von-der-leyen-signal-game-over-china-investment-deal-cai/

[41] Hurrelmann and Wendler (2023).

despite various initiatives to increase that spending further, there is still a lack of European military unity and effectiveness. This appears to be changing now that the leaders of government of the Member States presented ambitious plans in March 2024 to improve operational military readiness and to increase investment in defence.[42] The US is the EU's main ally, contributing its huge military capability to NATO. The war in Ukraine has made painfully clear that the EU's territorial security is still very much dependent on US commitment.

Medium-Sized Powers and 'Swing States'

In addition to the five superpowers, there are a large number of existing and emerging medium-sized actors: the UK, Japan, and Türkiye, but also countries rich in raw materials such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar, regional powers such as Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, and Nigeria, and countries with highly strategic technologies such as South Korea and Taiwan. More generally, the African continent—with its 54 countries—is set to play an increasing role on the global stage due to its enormous demographic expansion and other dynamic developments. As an example, the continent has seen increasing regional cooperation and the links between East African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania and Asian countries on the Indian Ocean are also intensifying.[43]

Some of the countries above belong to what is sometimes referred to as the Global South. In the immediate post-war period, many of them attempted to remain unaligned with any of the superpowers. They were often young countries with more on their mind than taking sides geopolitically in the Cold War. Many of them are now in a stronger position. Instead of remaining on the sidelines, they are now pursuing their own agenda and seeking to benefit as much as possible from ties with various different superpowers simultaneously. In other words, these countries have shifted from a policy of non-alignment to one of multi-alignment,[44] which has the potential to offer many advantages. For the superpowers and other countries in the Global North, however, they are now a lot harder to read and influence: whereas they used to be mainly 'weak states', they are now more likely to emerge as 'swing states'.

Fragmentation of Power Centres: Balance

This bird's-eye survey makes clear that the current world order cannot be understood based on a single dividing line or division into blocs (US versus China, West versus the rest, dictatorship versus democracy). It now comprises at least five superpowers and a range of medium-sized powers. It is also becoming clear that the various powers are vastly dissimilar. The US is strong across all dimensions, China in most of them, the EU and Russia in only a few, while India's status as a superpower depends primarily on the pace and potential of its development. This dissimilarity is

[42] See Parliamentary Papers II (2023/24), 22,112, no. 3919 for the Dutch file regarding these European plans.

[43] AIV (2022); Faloyin (2022).

[44] Cohen (2023).

an essential feature of the current world order, because it means that different parties will resort to different instruments depending on the dimension in which they are strong or weak. Whereas the US is able to deploy financial and military power, China more often resorts to trade relations, Russia employs military means, and the EU utilises regulation of market access, supplementary legislation, and economic sanctions.

This complexity also fuels discussion as to whether a multipolar world now actually exists. Some commentators, who emphasise military power and alliances, argue that the US is still the only true superpower, while others assert that there are only two full-scale powers: the US and China.[45] However, such perspectives fail to take sufficient account of the distributed nature of power. The considerations above show that, compared to the 1990s, a process of 'multipolarisation' is taking place, within which different players are accumulating increasing power for themselves in very different ways. The structure of the international system is thus shifting away from post-1989 unipolarity.[46]

However uncertain they remain in many respects, the current power relations are radically different from those during both the post-war and post-1989 periods. The multiplicity and dissimilarity of power centres that has now emerged is most closely reminiscent of the complex and often turbulent relations in the Europe of the final decades of the nineteenth century.[47] Nevertheless, one needs to be wary about drawing analogies with the past. The above makes clear that there are a multiplicity of state actors and a variety of competing visions of the world order, propagated within competing contexts. We will see below that there are also a large number of non-state actors who project power and propagate different world views. Based on a similar analysis, Acharya speaks of 'multiplexity' rather than multipolarity.[48]

2.3 Fragmentation of Power Arenas

The world is not only fragmenting because of the increasing number of power centres, but also because geopolitical power is projected within a growing number of different arenas. The traditional way to project power internationally is in the military arena, which has now come to the forefront again. Ukraine and Israel-Gaza

[45] Shifrinson et al. (2023).

[46] However, we are cautious about using a term such as 'multipolarisation' here, because the regimes of countries such as Russia and China employ the term not only descriptively but also ideologically.

[47] Cf. Diesen (2024); Aribogan (2021).

[48] Acharya (2017); Acharya et al. (2023). Flockhart (2018, 2024) speaks of a 'multi-order world' characterised not only by fragmentation into power centres, but also by a diversity of ideas and identities—comparable to what we refer to as the fragmentation of world views.

are currently the most prominent examples of the increase in armed conflict.[49] As a result, many European countries are now working to increase their defence spending up to or beyond the NATO norm of 2% of GDP.[50] All kinds of new defence initiatives are being developed at the European and NATO levels. In addition, states and blocs are projecting hard power through trade wars, leveraging the size of their economy or the strength of their currency to put pressure on opponents.[51]

While it is important to recognise these traditional forms of international power exertion, we primarily want to emphasise the extent to which *the geopolitical playing field is becoming much broader*. Of course, it is not new for the actors involved to employ non-military assets, such as information or food, as a means of projecting power. Nevertheless, it has become important to take this phenomenon seriously, first of all because the world has never before been so interconnected. From the 1990s on, many believed that mutual dependence would dispel the negative effects of geopolitics. By contrast, mutual connectivity is being utilised for geopolitical purposes—in other words, the 'weaponisation of interdependence'.[52] Indeed, some even refer to the 'weaponisation of everything'.[53] Second, this phenomenon is increasing because new arenas are emerging all the time, for example in the form of technological developments such as AI and quantum, or climate change, which is creating new waves of refugees and increasing opportunities for exploiting the Arctic region.

We will illustrate and discuss this development by referring to seven arenas, which in practice often overlap: geography, raw materials, infrastructure, technology and knowledge, people, international regulations, and media. Certainly in the case of hybrid warfare, this specifically involves the simultaneous projection of power in multiple different arenas.[54]

Geography

Geography has always been a key component of international relations, so there is good reason to speak of 'geopolitics'. Classical strategists explored the dynamics of power projection on land and at sea.[55] Many of the ambitions of today's superpowers discussed in the previous section—such as China's Belt and Road Initiative, the European Global Gateway, and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union—are aimed at the further opening-up and connection of different parts of the world. Here, we examine two domains of geography where significant developments are currently observable, namely the *oceans* and *outer space*.

[49] Obermeier and Rustad (2023).

[50] See previously also WRR (2017).

[51] See also AIV (2023).

[52] Farrell and Newman (2019, 2023).

[53] Galeotti (2022); Leonard (2021).

[54] AIV (2024).

[55] See, for example, Mahan (1890); Mackinder (1904); Spykman (1942). Recently also Sie Dhian Ho and Wijnkoop (2022).

The oceans represent a classic geopolitical arena that is currently gaining renewed significance. Climate change is melting the polar ice caps and rendering some parts of the Arctic Ocean navigable. Part of the interest in the oceans focuses on the resources they harbour (the subject of the following section), such as natural gas and metals. Countries such as Russia also see opportunities for maritime shipping, and hence the projection of power, past the North Pole. To this end, Russia is constructing harbours in its northern cities of Murmansk and Archangelsk, as well as deploying submarines with icebreakers, and has planted its flag on the seabed. However, a number of other countries and actors also have a growing interest in the Arctic region for various reasons, including geopolitical ones.[56]

China claims a large part of the South China Sea, thus leading to conflict with other countries in the region, while the US advocates freedom of navigation there. In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague ruled in favour of the Philippines in a maritime dispute with China over the South China Sea. Moreover, various countries assert different claims regarding the Spratly and Paracel islands and the Scarborough Shoal. According to Taiwanese sources, Chinese ships damaged the Matsu Islands' internet cables in 2023, resulting in a prolonged internet outage. One particular form of power projection in the world's oceans involves the creation of artificial islands, as demonstrated by China in the South China Sea. Such islands can serve as military bases, but also strengthen claims to surrounding territorial waters.

Strategic waterways are a classic geopolitical arena. Attacks by the Houthis in Yemen (on the Red Sea), threatening shipping via the Suez Canal, are an example. Iran regularly threatens to lay mines in the Strait of Hormuz. The Panama Canal and the Strait of Malacca are also viewed as bottlenecks from which power can be projected.[57] In northern Europe, there are increasing concerns about Russian operations, particularly those targeting the North Sea region. This has led to the creation of the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative, a regional maritime alliance between Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK.[58]

Since the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik satellite in 1957, space technology has acquired explicit geopolitical significance. In recent years, the importance of space as an arena for the projection of power has been increasing. A key factor is the emergence of low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites. Technological innovations by companies such as SpaceX have made it cheaper and easier to launch satellites for

[56] Winther and Østhagen (2024).

[57] To bypass these two bottlenecks, China is investing in canals in Nicaragua and Thailand, respectively. See Sheikh (2019).

[58] Bekkers et al. (2021).

communication, observation, and navigation purposes.[59] At the same time, the further development of space technology will also involve potential commercial exploitation through mining, raising questions of ownership rights. Both developments raise far-reaching international legal questions regarding the use of space as a 'new frontier'.[60]

The war in Ukraine makes clear how important space has become: without Starlink's satellites, it would have been much more difficult for the Ukrainian army to communicate after the Russian invasion. This position of power has indirectly enabled Starlink's owner Elon Musk to force the US government to pay him for his services.[61] For the EU, launch sites such as those in French Guiana or Kazakhstan are extremely important to gain access to space. Another important aspect of space is satellite navigation. For a long time, the American GPS system was the only technology available, but for geopolitical reasons there are now alternatives in Europe (Galileo), China (Beidou), and Russia (Glonass), among others. Moreover, countries such as China and India as well as the United Arab Emirates have become new players when it comes to exploring and accessing the Moon.[62]

Raw Materials

The raw materials arena is closely linked to that of geography: energy sources, food, water, and metals are concentrated in specific geographical locations. At a time of growing demand and pressure on ecosystems, the scarcity of these raw materials will only increase, and with it the risks involved in being dependent on them. Because the production and mining of many raw materials occupies a low position in the value chain, little of this activity still takes place in prosperous countries.

Energy sources have long been the subject of geopolitical rivalry. Take, for example, the role of the OPEC cartel of oil-producing countries in the oil crises of the 1970s. One of the biggest shifts as regards fossil fuels is the way the US has become a major energy producer, particularly due to the extraction of shale gas. Where natural gas is concerned, Russia is an important player, not least because it deploys it for geopolitical purposes. In addition, countries including Qatar, Azerbaijan, and Algeria are emerging as producers of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), mainly because this energy source can be transported by ship. This makes countries less dependent on pipelines. Geopolitical use is also made of energy sources such as uranium. Producers include Kazakhstan, Namibia and Uzbekistan, as well as Niger, where an anti-Western regime came to power in 2023.

[59] Davenport (2018); HCSS (2021).

[60] Masson-Zwaan (2017, 2024).

[61] https://www.cnbc.com/2023/06/01/pentagon-awards-spacex-with-ukraine-contract-for-starlink-satellite-internet.html

[62] Davenport (2018).

The transition to renewable energy sources promises to reduce dependence on fossil sources, but producing them requires other raw materials, such as *rare-earth metals*. An overwhelming share of the production of such metals is in the hands of China.[63] Deng Xiaoping reportedly stressed the importance of this sector back in 1992 when he said 'The Middle East has oil; China has rare earths.' China is now threatening to leverage that position, partly in response to export restrictions imposed on the Dutch company ASML. The production of many goods also requires other metals, such as lithium and cobalt. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a major producer of cobalt and Latin America houses the 'lithium triangle', but again Chinese companies wield considerable influence there.[64]

The deployment of *food* as a geopolitical lever has increased significantly in recent years, due to the way various countries may be highly dependent on certain food products. For example, Somalia, Benin, Laos, Lebanon, Türkiye, and Tunisia depend on Ukraine and Russia for between 50 and 100% of their grain. The Russian blockade of the port of Odessa therefore posed an acute global problem for grain exports.

Where food is concerned, a few large private companies play an important role in parts of the value chain, with three major players dominating global seed development: Dow-DuPont (US), Bayer-Monsanto (Germany), and ChemChina-Syngenta (China). Other agrochemical companies such as BASF and Cargill develop key ingredients for food production. Further down the chain, the 'ABCD' trading houses play a central role: Archer-Daniels-Midland, Bunge, Cargill, and Dreyfus. The first three of these are American, while the fourth is Dutch. Large traders such as Glencore (Switzerland) and Trafigura (Netherlands) also wield a great deal of influence. This has given rise to some controversy.[65]

Fresh water is a key raw materials arena. This allows countries where the sources of major rivers are located to exert a great deal of influence on other countries that depend on those rivers for their water supply. In response to the construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile, Egypt threatened war and international mediation became necessary. Tibet is the origin of many rivers that flow down into South and South East Asia, so that dam construction by China has a major impact on countries downstream. Climate change is intensifying fresh water scarcity and water conflicts both within and between states—including Europe.[66]

[63] Pitron (2020).

[64] Scheyder (2024).

[65] Blas and Farchy (2021).

[66] https://www.politico.eu/article/water-fights-will-come-if-europe-doesnt-act-climate-brussels-warn/

Box 2.1 The Geopolitics of Food

A growing world population, overexploitation of natural resources, and climate change are putting pressure on global food supplies. The main stumbling block, however, is not so much food production, but mainly the issue of distribution and international cooperation in that regard.[67] This increasingly involves a geopolitical dimension. Although Europe need not worry immediately about the availability of food, these developments also have implications here that require considerations related to security, values, and prosperity.

The EU is a major global trading partner where food is concerned, but that position also entails risks and dependencies. For example, Europe is a major importer of soya, mainly from Brazil and the US. Soya is an important component of animal feed, which makes it essential for industries like livestock farming. Because of its climate and other factors, Europe is only marginally suited to cultivating current varieties of soya. In addition, soya is less profitable in Europe than other, more lucrative crops. Europe is also dependent on other countries, like Russia and Morocco, for the ingredients for artificial fertilisers. These are vulnerabilities that cannot easily be remedied or compensated for in an acute or changing situation.[68]

Moreover, supplying food in a fragmenting world risks becoming more expensive and inefficient—a development that impacts European prosperity both directly and indirectly. Geopolitical dependencies between regions and food systems, and the risks of potential sanctions and conflicts, have the potential to drive up prices. Grain exports from Odessa or the problems in the Suez Canal or on the Red Sea are examples of such dependencies and conflicts. Food market speculation from within the financial sector can amplify these pricing effects.[69] In theory, the EU could become self-sufficient in terms of food production for the purpose of strategic autonomy. However, such a transition would not come without costs, such as reduced variety, dietary changes, or increases in the EU's own food production. This will have consequences for food prices, land use, and other factors.[70]

(continued)

[67] WRR (2023); see also Koch (2023).

[68] Sources for this paragraph: CBS (2023, 2024); Bohn et al. (2023); Rotundo et al. (2024); Berkhout and De Steenhuijsen (2022).

[69] Opinions are divided as to whether speculation has the effect of driving up prices on the food market. See for example Azoulai and Jaquemart (2023) and IPES (2022), which warn about this effect, whereas empirical research by the CPB and LEI/WUR (Meijerink et al., 2012) shows that this effect is limited, especially in the longer term.

[70] Heimovaara (2023).

Box 2.1 (continued)

The room for manoeuvre is also shrinking when it comes to values. Migration is increasing due to conflicts, poverty, and hunger. At the same time, development aid is becoming more expensive and less efficient, as food becomes more expensive and multilateral cooperation more difficult in a fragmented world.

The above illustrates only a fraction of the complexity of global food production and distribution. The fragmenting world order exacerbates these issues.

The Netherlands enjoys a strong position where food is concerned (seed enhancement, agricultural and food innovation). It could potentially disseminate and share the knowledge that it has in this field, doing so in a way that contributes sustainably and in the long term to self-sufficiency and to self-reliance of the agricultural sector in vulnerable areas. This could be a major step towards alleviating the broader problem.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is also strongly geographical, but it differs from the previous arenas in that it is entirely man-made. Within that arena, we differentiate between physical, digital, and financial infrastructure. The characteristic feature of infrastructure is that it connects. Its deployment for geopolitical purposes mainly takes the form of sabotage, disruption, or surveillance of the flows that are routed through it.[71] China's Belt and Road Initiative has prompted concerns in the West about the potential geopolitical use of *physical infrastructure*. Chinese companies have rapidly acquired major stakes in ports around the world, from Piraeus to Hamburg and Rotterdam. In the case of Hambantota International Port in Sri Lanka, there are concerns about China's use of 'debt traps' (i.e. persuading an economically vulnerable country to take out large loans to co-finance large-scale infrastructure projects, thus giving the lender a great deal of influence over that country). The evidence for this is unclear, however.[72] Besides control and access, there are also concerns about the potential for surveillance through port infrastructure, for example regarding the Chinese company ZPMC, which constructs many of the cranes used at ports.

Digital infrastructure primarily involves telecommunication. China's Huawei has become the largest developers of 5G networks. Many countries have ceased doing business with that company due to concerns about possible surveillance and the potential for deliberate disruption in times of conflict.[73] Cloud services also form

[71] WRR (2017).

[72] https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/Sri-Lanka-s-China-debt-trap-fears-grow-as-Beijing-keeps-investing; Jones and Hameiri (2020).

[73] Hillman (2021).

part of the digital infrastructure. These are largely owned by three US companies (Amazon, Microsoft, and Google), a fact that has raised concerns in the EU. In any case, the entire digital infrastructure is vulnerable to cyberattacks. Its use for geopolitical purposes, for both espionage and disruption, has long been the focus of attention, but a rapidly growing threat calls for even greater efforts to counter it.[74]

Finally, we mention the financial infrastructure in this context. The SWIFT information system is an example of how infrastructure can be used to project power. Although SWIFT is in fact a foundation based in Belgium, it is prone to US pressure due to the significant importance of dollar transactions. The US has already used access to SWIFT and the surveillance opportunities provided by the system against Iran, North Korea, and specific parties in Russia.[75] This has led to alternative systems being set up in Russia (SPFS) and China (CBIPS), and even to the EU developing a separate means of trading with Iran (INSTEX).[76]

Technology and Knowledge

The next arena that we distinguish is of a dual nature. The use and development of the physical technologies involved require knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, this is an arena in which states are highly active, but in which a few major corporate conglomerates are also a significant power factor. In this arena, parties project power by acquiring technology and knowledge from companies and research institutes or, vice versa, by denying other parties access to it. Many kinds of technology and knowledge are now considered to be strategic and have thus become an arena for the projection of power.

The most obvious example is the *computer chip or semiconductor industry*, which some would say is just as strategic as the oil industry was in the twentieth century.[77] Whereas the chips are mostly designed by Western companies, much of the actual production, especially the production in 'foundries', is in the hands of South Korea (memory chips) and Taiwan (logic chips). Because Taiwan's TSMC is so important for advanced chips, the company is sometimes referred to as Taiwan's 'Silicon Shield': it compels the US to protect the island against a Chinese invasion.[78] The Dutch company NXP is a leading producer of chips in several markets, including the automotive market. Manufacturing chips requires specialised machines. The Dutch company ASML dominates the global market in this field. That also makes it the target of geopolitical rivalry through cyberattacks and in the context of tensions between the US and China.[79]

[74] AIVD (2024); DSIT (2024).

[75] Farrell and Newman (2019, 2023).

[76] De Goede and Westermeier (2022).

[77] Miller (2022).

[78] Park (2023).

[79] Hijink (2023).

Power is also projected within this arena with regard to the system technology *artificial intelligence* (AI).[80] While this is a crucial technology for autonomous drones in the context of warfare, its strategic implications are far-reaching and range from faster decision-making and data analysis to advanced planning and disinformation using 'frontier AI', including Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT.[81]

Biotechnology and the medical sciences also have strategic ramifications. China is the world's largest producer of the active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) that are used in many drugs. India is a major producer of inexpensive drugs, but it depends on China for 80% of the raw materials. There are also concerns about the power of the Chinese BGI Group (formerly the Beijing Genomics Institute), a major player in genetics and life sciences. These concerns relate to potential misuse and ethical issues surrounding the acquisition and use of genetic data, among other things for surveillance purposes and human enhancement.[82]

There are other technologies that play a role in this arena. The emerging *quantum technology* has all kinds of geopolitical implications as well.[83] The same applies to uranium enrichment and medical isotopes—fields, for example, in which the Netherlands is a very significant player globally with Urenco, NRG, and Pallas—and battery technology. Chinese companies currently lead the market in electric vehicles. However, much remains unclear in a field where security considerations increasingly conflict with academic freedom and commerce. An additional complicating factor is that China's policy on acquiring technology and knowledge has become extremely versatile and sophisticated over time.[84]

People

Although people are important actors in many of the arenas that we have discussed (for example because of their knowledge of a particular technology), what we are concerned with here is the direct deployment of people in order to project power. The values, convictions, and rights of people are at stake, sometimes with fatal consequences. In the people arena, we distinguish migration, diasporas, and crime.

States exploit *migration* as a means of putting pressure on other countries. According to the American general Philip M. Breedlove (former NATO supreme commander), it was a deliberate strategy on the part of former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and Russian president Vladimir Putin to uproot people and thereby destabilise Europe.[85] Regimes are able to project power by dispatching migrants (Syria), because migration routes cross their territory (Türkiye), or by promoting

[80] WRR (2021).

[81] For an overview, see DSIT (2024).

[82] Yang (2016); https://www.financeasia.com/article/chinese-gene-bank-wants-to-do-for-biotech-what-elon-musk-did-for-space/444207; Allison et al. (2021); Needham and Baldwin (2021).

[83] Allison et al. (2021).

[84] https://www.rathenau.nl/nl/wetenschap-cijfers/werking-van-de-wetenschap/samenwerking/de-opkomst-van-china-als-rd-supermacht; Hannas and Tatlow (2020).

[85] Sie Dhian Ho and Wijnkoop (2022: 5).

the factors that cause migration, such as war (Russia). Russian militias, such as the former Wagner Group, have been instrumental in triggering migration and have gained a great deal of influence in both the Middle East and Africa in recent years.

Governments sometimes deliberately mobilise their *diasporas*. Russia, for example, uses the presence of ethnic Russians in Eastern European countries as a pretext for meddling in their domestic politics. It also issues passports and reaches out to diasporas in Moldova and Georgia. In 2010, a programme of 'illegals' came to light in the US: Russians who had been sent there to gather information.[86] There are signs that China is increasingly making use of its large diaspora for political purposes as well, for example in Australia.[87] In late 2022, it emerged that there are illegal Chinese 'police stations' in a number of countries, including the Netherlands, which may be intimidating citizens of Chinese origin.[88] The regime in Eritrea also seeks to exert influence through its diaspora. Lastly, president Erdoğan positions himself as a protector of Turks and Muslims in Europe, and there has been controversy for years about the 'long arm of Ankara'.[89]

Crime can also be deployed geopolitically. In 2014, it was revealed that Russia was releasing smugglers on the border with Estonia in return for their acting as spies. Transnistria—the area of Moldova that Russia has recognised as independent—was established by a combination of local criminal gangs and Russian imperialists.[90] Regimes that are struggling with their finances are turning to the drugs trade, and government organisations in Iran, Afghanistan, and Venezuela use it to generate income. North Korea is notorious for employing cybercriminals, who have stolen money from poorly secured banks in countries such as Bangladesh and Mexico. Meanwhile, Russia utilises ransomware hacking groups, such as Conti, to launch cyberattacks against foreign institutions and companies.

International Regulations

International regulations are developed by various multilateral institutions. Arrangements regarding international trade have been adopted by the World Trade Organization (WTO), but also the United Nations (UN; UNCITRAL). The UN has established rules in countless fields, ranging from civil and political rights to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Standards are laid down within forums where governments, companies, and experts meet, such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), 3GPP, and oneM2M. The arrangements can potentially be enforced through court rulings or arbitration. The Dutch city of The Hague is home to a number of organisations that have a role in this regard, including the International Court

[86] Galeotti (2022).

[87] Hamilton (2018).

[88] https://nos.nl/artikel/2449767-china-heeft-illegaal-politiebureaus-in-nederland-aanwijzingen-voor-intimidatie

[89] Van der Linde (2013).

[90] Galeotti (2022).

of Justice (ICJ) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) (established partly at the instigation of the Russian Tsar Nicholas II in 1899).

Such bodies have always been the arena for international clashes of ideas and interests, certainly in the history of Western countries. Research into the establishment of international *standards* shows that geopolitical dynamics are once again playing a major role in this.[91] There is now even talk of 'lawfare'.[92] Traditionally, the US and Europe have been the leaders in this field, but in recent years China has been pushing hard for greater influence. Chinese government officials often invoke the perspective that 'third-tier companies make products, second-tier companies design technology, and first-tier companies set standards.'[93] Chinese companies are increasingly successful in this regard. Huawei, for instance, is the frontrunner in the development and patenting of 5G, enabling it to exert a great deal of influence on new standards on a global scale. Moreover, China has an explicit strategy—the China Standards 2035—for becoming a leader in the standards arena.[94] In response to this geopoliticisation, the EU developed a standardisation strategy in 2022 and the US presented its own strategy in May 2023.[95]

For a host of reasons, the effectiveness of multilateral institutions is under increasing pressure—but especially the EU shows that power blocs can enforce rules in ways other than through the arduous path of global institutions mired in deadlock. In areas such as competition, the digital economy, and the protection of personal data and consumers, the EU now sets rules that—given the great importance of the European market—have knock-on effects outside the Union itself. This is how it exercises regulatory influence on a global scale.[96]

Media

The international-political influence of narratives has expanded enormously due to digitalisation and the advent of an entirely new media landscape. In this field, too, the geopolitically driven activities of states are increasing, drawing in the big traditional media conglomerates and major technology platforms, such as X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Telegram.[97] Both classical and social media have become the battleground for these 'wars of consciousness' that target people's perceptions. Not only propagandists and computer scientists are deployed in these wars, but also psychologists and influencers.[98] Here we differentiate between two different forms: propaganda (spread by humans) and automated disinformation (in particular through the use of deepfakes).

---

[91] Rühlig (2021).

[92] A term coined by Liang and Xiangshui in *Unrestricted Warfare* (1999).

[93] Shivakumar (2022)

[94] https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-standards-2035-strategy-recent-developments-and-their-implications-foreign-companies/

[95] The White House (2023).

[96] Bradford (2020).

[97] Cf. García (2024).

[98] Splidsboel Hansen (2021: 186–187).

An interview in 2012 with the then editor-in-chief of the Russia Today television station, Margarita Simonyan, offered an insight into Russia's approach to *propaganda*. Referring to the war in Georgia in 2008, Simonyan stated that the Ministry of Defence was waging the physical war with Georgia, while her TV station was waging the information war against the West.[99] The Netherlands, Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, and Ukraine were confronted with this very directly when, in the aftermath of the downing of flight MH17, Russian channels spread all kinds of theories in order to create confusion about the circumstances of the crash. Russia and China are also known to have spread propaganda about the COVID-19 pandemic on the social media platforms run by the Big Tech companies. Russia Today, Sputnik, and Baltica are prominent examples of media outlets that disseminate Russian propaganda. Early 2024 saw revelations by Czech intelligence services regarding the Voice of Europe media channel, which was revealed to be a vehicle for Russian propaganda. At the time of writing, investigations where ongoing into Russian funding of politicians ahead of the EU elections.

The world was confronted with the *automated dissemination of disinformation* in the wake of the commotion following reports of Russian interference in the 2016 US elections. Back then, these efforts still involved humans—largely operating out of the St Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency—manually creating profiles on social media. Now, however, advances in AI have made it possible for computer systems to do this on a large scale, cheaply and personalised, utilising Large Language Models such as ChatGPT.[100] At the same time, generative AI is now being deployed to develop deepfakes that are increasingly difficult to distinguish from the real thing. For instance, fake audio clips, photos, and videos are circulating on social media with the aim of manipulating public sentiment. Shortly before the 2023 Slovak elections, for example, a fictitious audio recording was circulated in which an opposition politician was supposedly talking to a journalist about buying votes.

Fragmentation of Power Arenas: Balance

While the military, economic, and financial worlds are the classic arenas for the international projection of power, the overview above makes clear that power is now also being projected in many other arenas. These are generally arenas that affect members of the public and companies directly, for example through social media; through fluctuations in the supply, delivery times, and prices of food, energy, and medication; or through elections. In material arenas, scarcity plays an important role, whereas in the case of infrastructure and more intangible arenas, network effects concerning certain flows of trade or information act as a lever for geopolitical influence.

[99] Splidsboel Hansen (2021: 191–192).

[100] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/frontier-ai-capabilities-and-risks-discussion-paper

Instead of a world of mutual dependency, a dynamic is emerging in which *asymmetric dependency* (with one party more dependent than the other) is utilised as a means of projecting power.[101] The parties concerned often use bottlenecks in supply chains or ways of keeping track of others to create this type of dependency.

In this process, other types of actors besides states and their militaries are being drawn into geopolitics. Companies are the central players in many of the aforementioned economic arenas, and this often involves only a limited number of multinationals: Big Tech in the case of information, SpaceX in space, three agrochemical companies in seed production, a handful of container companies, and a few indispensable manufacturers of computer chips. As regards the financial infrastructure, it is a Belgian foundation, SWIFT, through which power is projected—not by Belgium, but by the US. Individual members of the public also play a role, such as influencers, hackers, or journalists.

States and companies are responding to this form of power projection in different ways. For example, they may be building up strategic reserves of raw materials. They may be working to create redundant chains and connections, including by building alternative technical infrastructures for navigation or financial transactions. They may be seeking to become less dependent on certain raw materials through technological innovation. Some arenas, such as food and health care, are governed by multilateral institutions and international treaties, but these are often lacking in arenas such as cyber, chips, and space.

2.4 Fragmentation of World Views

The third vector of fragmentation is that involving world views, by which we mean views and narratives about fundamental issues within society that provide people with a sense of moral orientation and political identity. These world views also offer people a prism through which to interpret international developments. We outline the dynamics that are now operating with regard to world views below.[102] We have seen that state actors are central to power centres and companies play an important role in the various arenas. When looking at world views, other non-state actors come into the picture, such as public intellectuals and religious and social movements.

Of course, there is always a multitude of world views. To a certain extent, every individual creates an image of reality which allows them to orient themselves within society and contextualise developments in a particular light. In the current context, it is

[101] Cf. Farrell and Newman (2019).

[102] A number of matters need to be kept in mind. First, people can subscribe simultaneously to parts of very different—indeed often opposing—world views. Second, every society always contains a multiplicity of different world views. World views can therefore not be strictly tied to countries or societies, but at best to political regimes or movements within those countries. Third, it is important to note that all the world views discussed here have distinctive variants. Some are moderate and of a more open nature, while other variants are extreme and aggressive.

nevertheless appropriate to speak of the fragmentation of world views, given that there are currently different and often opposing world views that have a political effect in the context of international relations. This is a clear shift away from the post-war decades, when the dominant world view involved the struggle between democratic capitalism and totalitarian communism. Although other world views existed back then as well—such as the post-colonial perspective propagated by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries—they were often overshadowed at the global level by that struggle.[103]

Globalisation and Worldwide Convergence

The early 1990s saw the start of a phase in which a different world view became particularly effective politically. The best-known articulation of that world view, which became dominant after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, is Francis Fukuyama's thesis of the end of history.[104] Fukuyama argued that history was tending towards capitalist organisation of the economy and Western-style liberal democracy in the political realm. From the 1970s on, the number of multiparty democracies in the world increased. The theory of democratic peace—with its central thesis that democracies do not wage war with one another—provided an additional reason for optimism at the time.[105]

In economics, there was a growing consensus regarding the liberalisation of markets and specifically the ideology of neoliberalism. In 2005, the journalist Thomas Friedman published his bestseller *The World is Flat*, a panegyric to free trade and globalisation. These would supposedly bring not only prosperity, but also peace. Countries that were mutually dependent would be less inclined to go to war, and the growth of the middle classes would eventually bring the whole world together in a 'global village'.

Central direction was purportedly a thing of the past. US President Bill Clinton jokingly criticised the Chinese government's attempt to regulate the internet: 'The Beijing regime has been trying to crack down on the internet […] Good luck! That's sort of like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall.'[106] In his memoirs, Clinton wrote: 'The world is moving toward interdependence, and there is no way to stop it. We must work together, because there is no other choice'.[107]

The period when the world view of globalisation and global convergence was dominant facilitated an unprecedented expansion of Western international law and its associated institutions. The then-existing three spheres of international law—Western, socialist, and that of the non-aligned countries—'seemingly gave way to the strengthening, expansion, and deepening of a global, general international law

[103] Prashad (2007); Chua (2018) has shown how the US preoccupation with ideology has misconstrued the national struggles of many countries.

[104] There were competing interpretations of global developments at the time, but none was as comprehensive and influential as Francis Fukuyama's 1992 thesis.

[105] Huntington (1991). For a survey of the literature related to the theory of 'democratic peace', see Hegre (2014).

[106] Leonard (2021: 23).

[107] Wright (2018: 10).

along the Western model.'[108] During that period, a broad international legal order was constructed based on the Western constitutional model. Characteristic of its dominance is the way the European model for the protection of human rights, as enshrined in the Council of Europe, was more or less copied by other continents at the time.[109]

Since then, the tide has turned against this world view. The financial crisis, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the return of major wars have raised doubts about the movement of globalisation, global convergence, and the added value of international institutions and international law based on the Western model. Nevertheless, that world view is still a powerful one, especially in the West. Until recently, belief in the peaceful functioning of mutual dependence was the guiding factor behind the German government's decision to install the various Nord Stream pipelines to transport gas from Russia. Deeper economic integration—in German policy terms *Ostpolitik, Wandel durch Annäherung, Wandel durch Handel*—was supposed to pacify the Kremlin, even after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014. But when the full-scale war began in 2022, there was no longer any denying that the Russian regime espouses a very different world view.

Humiliation and Revisionism

The key element of that world view is that the country or people in question are misunderstood or humiliated and therefore deprived of their rightful place in the world order.[110] That wrongful situation needs to be revised—if necessary by force, in some variants of the world view.[111] This world view is therefore often referred to as revisionism.[112] In 2005, Vladimir Putin asserted that the collapse of the Soviet Union was 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century'—a remarkable notion, considering everything that happened during the course of that century.[113] He regarded the Soviet Union as powerful and respected. In his thinking, the collapse of communism in the 1990s did not represent the liberation of the Russian people, as held by the prevalent world view, but rather their humiliation. The Russian president frequently refers in his pronouncements to the distant past.[114] His account of history serves to demonstrate that there is a large and coherent Russian world that extends far beyond the borders of the current Russian state. More recently, Putin has argued that history shows that there has never been such a thing as a separate Ukrainian identity, thus justifying his war in that country.

[108] Lesaffer (2024: 860).

[109] Lesaffer (2024: 861).

[110] Schivelbusch (2004).

[111] See the description of the four strategies employed by revisionist states in Chan et al. (2021: 116–144).

[112] See Davidsson (2006).

[113] See translated excerpts of Putin's address to the nation in 2005 from BBC monitoring. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4481455.stm

[114] See also, for example, Dugin (2012, 2014).

Revisionist thinking also plays a role in China. One view of history that is central to Chinese education is that China used to be the most developed society in the world, but after the rise of the West it was subjected to a 'century of humiliation'. That century ran from the Opium Wars (1840s), in which the British forced China to import opium, up to the end of World War II and the end of Japanese occupation. In 1949, the Communist Party came to power, with the ambition of making China the most powerful country in the world in every respect by 2049.[115]

A recent study groups China and Russia together with Türkiye and Iran in this regard.[116] All these countries are heirs to great Eurasian empires that extended far beyond their present borders. Given this historical background, the leaders of these countries see their countries as being special. This has prompted them to develop a vast sphere of influence within their region in all kinds of ways, with the aim of regaining the countries' lost power and prestige.

Adherents of revisionism can also be found in many other countries. They refer to a glorious past and advocate regaining a more prominent position within their region. These adherents range from nationalist Japanese politicians to members of political movements in Poland, Hungary, and Serbia. Revisionism is also to be found in the invocation of French grandeur and the Brexit campaign in the UK. An American example of this world view can be found in Donald Trump and his followers in the United States. Trump, too, believes that his country was better off in the past ('Make America Great Again') and that it should therefore assert itself more ('America First').

A more moderate version of this world view may be expressed as a legitimate desire for a better position internationally. More extreme versions, however, are accompanied by denial of other countries' sovereignty, hatred of others, and bellicose expansionism. It should be noted that a united bloc of revisionist powers is unlikely. There are serious tensions between many of the regimes we refer to, and the emphasis on restoration of their position is also often directed against other revisionist regimes (the tensions between Türkiye and Russia are an example). Nevertheless, revisionists the world over share a dangerous world view in which the current international order forms an obstacle to achieving their legitimate ambitions.

Populism and Authoritarian Democracy

The key concept in revisionism is a country's relationship with other countries. A world view that often converges with revisionism primarily concerns a country's internal governance. At the heart of this is a rejection of liberal democracy—precisely the form of government that Francis Fukuyama believed represented the end point of history. This rejection can take many different forms.[117]

[115] Metcalf (2020).

[116] Mankoff (2022).

[117] For a more detailed account of these different forms, see Habets (2015).

A prevalent, but politically charged term that encompasses both milder and more extreme forms of this world view is populism. The Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde defines this as an ideology that divides society into two camps: the corrupt elite and the pure people. Moreover, populism holds that politics should be the expression of the pure people's will.[118] Populist narratives have acquired a significant form of soft power in recent years.[119] Moderate forms of populism are proposed as healthy corrections to the governance of countries that have lost sight of certain public interests. These corrections will supposedly pave the way for a form of democracy that will better reflect the values and interests of the people, especially of those groups that fail to thrive as a result of globalisation.[120]

More extreme variants of this world view encroach on fundamental rights and constitutional guarantees, assuming forms that threaten the democratic rule of law. The term 'illiberal democracy' has been in use since at least the 1990s, but in recent years it has mainly been associated with the regimes of Viktor Orbán in Hungary and the PiS party in Poland.[121] An explicitly authoritarian form—'guided democracy'—was developed earlier under Sukarno in Indonesia and later popularised in Russia by the likes of Gleb Pavlovsky and Dmitry Peskov. The Chinese Communist Party also labels its own regime as democratic.[122]

Liberal democracy is now under pressure on a global scale.[123] Although various regimes still rely on democratic rhetoric and the concept of a social contract for their legitimacy, they lack certain core elements of a democracy.[124] Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman have identified this as a new 21st-century form of dictatorship that they term 'spin dictatorship', so as to distinguish it from the 20th-century 'dictatorship of fear'.[125] The strategy involved is that of an 'iron fist in a velvet glove', i.e. public communication and electoral processes are manipulated rather than under total control.[126] Modern techniques of opinion polling and behavioural research and consultation are employed to create the impression of a certain level of responsive and intelligent governance. Critical media are permitted to exist as long as their reach is only limited. These regimes use foreign connections and trade rather than isolation to flourish. They grow rich through exports, buy land and influence abroad, and persuade international companies to defend the regime abroad.

[118] Mudde (2004).

[119] See De Waal and Duyvendak (2022).

[120] Mouffe (2018).

[121] Zakaria (1997).

[122] https://www.europeanguanxi.com/post/a-taste-of-china-s-white-paper-on-democracy

[123] Cf. https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores

[124] Keane (2020a).

[125] Guriev and Treisman (2022).

[126] The underlying study is by Keane (2020a); the quotation is from a summary by the author (Keane, 2020b).

Traditionalism and Civilisation

The fourth world view that has global momentum focuses explicitly on values. Its point of departure is the distinction between universal, progressive values on the one hand and private, traditional values on the other. Adherents of this world view advocate greater scope and recognition for traditional values or the diversity in cultures and civilisations. A moderate version of this is based on the long-standing view that economic processes should always be embedded in local practices, institutions, and historical developments.[127] An example of this is the concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition as the moral foundation underlying Western political regimes.

All kinds of other variants have recently emerged. One example is that of the 'civilisational state'—a term originally coined regarding China, about which Lucian Pye wrote that 'China is a civilisation pretending to be a state'.[128] Chinese authors such as Zhang Weiwei have also recently drawn on this idea to argue that China's development is unique. Weiwei is highly critical of Western politics and criticises the existing interpretation of human rights. He argues that traditional values are equally important.[129] According to Chinese political philosophers such as Zhao Tinyang, a unique concept has developed over the course of Chinese history that is now of interest to the entire world.[130] *Tianxia*—literally 'all under heaven'—stands for the earth as a whole and envisages a common good that transcends all individual states. Because the West has never developed such a concept, international relations remain bogged down in zero-sum competition between states that exploit and are destroying the earth. Zhao Tinyang thus argues for reform of the world order, based on Chinese tradition.[131]

Chinese tradition and civilisation are not only invoked by individual thinkers, but also by the Chinese government. One of the four major initiatives by the current Chinese government is the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI), which advocates a more equal dialogue between the world's different civilisations. Concepts such as *tianxia* are also increasingly common in official government documents.[132] Equality between civilisations also means that such concepts as democracy and human rights do not enjoy universal validity.

---

[127] As opposed to universal dynamics, local traditions make a major difference as to how an economy functions. Examples include East Asian concepts of the 'developmental state', Confucian development, and the broader debate on 'varieties of capitalism' (Hall & Soskice, 2001). More extreme variants include the idea of 'Asian values' as articulated in particular by the long-serving prime ministers of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew (1959–1990), and Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamed (1981–2003, 2018–2020), and Samuel P. Huntington's thesis of a 'clash of civilisations' (1996).

[128] Pye (1992: 235).

[129] Weiwei (2012: 119).

[130] Tinyang (2020).

[131] In contrast to Tinyang's more idealistic vision, Yan Xuetong advances the concept of a 'realistic' Chinese geopolitics based on tradition, see Xuetong (2019).

[132] Bartsch (2023).

The idea of being a 'civilisational state' is also propagated by the governments of other superpowers, such as Russia and India.[133] President Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalism is based on this idea, and it underlies his efforts to change the name of the country India to Bharat. Meanwhile, Russia is increasingly presenting itself as the international guardian of traditional culture. The radical author Alexander Dugin speaks of a revival of traditional culture as part of the 'fourth political theory' (after communism, fascism, and liberalism).[134] Russian organisations are forging links with international organisations centred around the family and with other religious movements, a development referred to as the 'Moralist International'.[135]

Within such world views, the West's abandonment of traditional values and religions is presented as a form of moral decadence. In that context, for example, there is talk of 'gayropa'. In Europe, this world view can be found in Hungary, where Viktor Orbán has called for a cultural counter-revolution against the cosmopolitanism of European institutions.[136] During a visit to Hungary, the Polish president Andrzej Duda—an exponent of the then PiS government that was undermining the independent judiciary and weakening the independence of the media—claimed that the two countries formed the bulwark of the 'real Europe'.[137] This world view also plays a role in legitimising the right-wing conservative identity politics of political parties such as the German Alternative for Germany and the Dutch Forum for Democracy.[138]

What is at stake in this world view? Moderate variants call for the recognition of differences between cultures and the embodiment of economic and political structures within them. However, the more extreme variants of this world view entail greater risks, with individual rights and liberties being denied because they are deemed incompatible with the culture concerned. These variants call the very concept of universal values into question. Under this pretext, repression is justified and criticism of it dismissed as Western imperialism.

Post-colonialism and Anti-imperialism

One striking feature of the responses to Russia's second invasion of Ukraine was how regimes in many African, Asian, and Latin American countries refused to

[133] See Rachman (2019); Sheikh (2020).

[134] Dugin (2012).

[135] Uzlaner and Stoeckl (2022). The title (*The Moralist International*) refers to the Communist International (the Third Comintern), an alliance led by the Soviet Communist Party that was established in 1919 with the aim of establishing communist parties all over the world and to bring about revolution. Because of World War II, the Executive Committee decided to dissolve the alliance in 1943.

[136] The interconnection between different world views is illustrated by the fact that Orbán also used his speech to present his idea of 'illiberal democracy': https://budapestbeacon.com/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/

[137] Coker (2019: 65).

[138] Clingendael and HCSS (2024). Many years ago, the US author Ben Carson coined the term 'culture wars'. Those wars are leading to a new dividing line within societies between supporters of traditional and progressive values, with members of each group identifying more with their counterparts in other countries than with their own compatriots.

condemn Russia or join in with the imposition of sanctions against it. A common refrain involved criticism of the Western stance and the West's attempt to dictate how other countries should conduct their foreign policy. Some saw Russian president Vladimir Putin as a leader who was standing up to Western hegemony.[139] A number of countries in the Sahel and Central Africa have also had coups in recent years that were framed by decidedly anti-French, post-colonial rhetoric.[140]

Criticism of the power of the West and the colonial/post-colonial policies of the US and European countries is nothing new. Pankaj Mishra describes the rise of this sentiment in Asia after Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905.[141] Decades before decolonisation, in 1927, many of the leaders of future ex-colonies already gathered at the League Against Imperialism in Brussels.[142] During the Cold War, many of these decolonised countries belonged to the Third World, situated between the two poles of the capitalist West and the communist Eastern Bloc. Nasser (Egypt), Nehru (India), Sukarno (Indonesia), Nkrumah (Ghana), and Tito (Yugoslavia) were among the leaders who promulgated a post-colonial viewpoint at the renowned Bandung Conference in 1955. They then united in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see above).[143]

Many of those countries—which are now often referred to as the Global or Plural South—are currently in a much stronger position, which is why their voice is gaining weight in international politics.[144] Russia and China in particular are nurturing anti-Western sentiment in Africa, presenting themselves as allies opposing the colonial West. In addition, the recently expanded BRICS group is increasingly evolving into a platform for non-Western—even anti-Western—voices.[145]

Adherents of this world view employ it to criticise the self-perceptions and claims of Western countries and Western partnerships like the EU. 'Brussels' likes to present the history of the EU as a struggle against power politics and imperialism.[146] However, not only were various EU Member States in fact colonial powers, the origins of the EU cannot be separated from colonialism either.[147] For instance, there was controversy recently when Josep Borrell, the diplomat in charge of EU foreign policy, remarked that Europe was a garden because it had replaced war with lasting peace and cooperation, whereas the rest of the world was a jungle.[148] The

[139] Salah (2022).

[140] We take 'post-colonial' to mean that the power structures of the colonial era persist in a different form after the formal process of decolonisation.

[141] Mishra (2013).

[142] Prashad (2007).

[143] Getachew (2019).

[144] See, for example, O'Malley and Thakur (2022) on their role and influence within the UN.

[145] For this perspective, see also Mahbubani (2018).

[146] Geopolitics have played a role in European cooperation from an early stage. See Segers (2013).

[147] Hansen and Jonsson (2014).

[148] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-diplomatic-academy-opening-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-inauguration-pilot_en

European policy of acquiring COVID vaccines and natural gas for its own citizens at the expense of poorer countries created a great deal of resentment as well.

Western countries need to take the post-colonial, anti-imperialist world view seriously. If they fail to do so, relations with countries in the Global South are likely to deteriorate,[149] and they will play into the hands of powers such as Russia, China, and India. Moreover, it will be difficult to advocate elsewhere in the world for the values that the West holds dear and the universal rights embodied in international treaties.

Fragmentation of World Views: Balance

The globalisation and convergence world view that was dominant in the 1990s and 2000s is too limited to understand recent global developments. It now competes with a range of other world views, which enjoy a great deal of support in some parts of the world.[150] Fragmentation along this third vector has created a situation of *different world views existing simultaneously*. This applies across different regions, with revisionism in Russia and undemocratic movements in Eastern Europe being examples.

A similar situation occurs when the government of a single country wields a variety of simultaneous world views to interpret the international arena. The Kremlin, for example, propagates not only revisionism, but also other world views discussed above: guided democracy, an emphasis on traditional culture, opposition to Western neocolonialism, and sometimes even global convergence through globalisation. China does not view matters from a single perspective either: depending on the particular subject, timing, and internal power relations, the regime may promote globalisation, socialism, traditional culture, or post-colonialism. A complicating feature of the fact that countries such as Russia and China have not developed an alternative ideology for democracy is that they proclaim their own regimes to be democratic as well, thereby assigning a different interpretation to the concept of 'democracy'. Contrary to common assumptions, the Chinese regime is not categorically opposed to democracy or human rights.[151] However, its own individual interpretation of these terms can fundamentally undermine their meaning.

This simultaneity of world views opens up possibilities for constantly changing alliances and divisions. The emphasis on civilisation, religion, and traditional culture connects adherents of different religions, conservative political movements and, for example, the anti-abortion movement. The post-colonialism world view had brought about various alliances in the Global South, sometimes including progressive actors.

[149] See Balfour et al. (2022).

[150] It is possible that some degree of convergence may occur over time. According to some commentators, this will manifest itself as a distinction between democracies and dictatorships, according to others a distinction between colonial and post-colonial movements. On the other hand, It is unlikely that such convergence will in fact take place. This is related to the earlier fragmentation of actors and arenas, which brings about significant complexity. It is hard to envision that those actors and motives can be understood from a single overarching perspective.

[151] Oud and Drinhausen (2021).

This is linked to another implication of the fragmentation of world views, namely that these views *cut across domestic and foreign borders*. There is far less of a stable domestic consensus vis-à-vis ideological partners and opponents beyond countries' borders.[152] In quite a few countries, several of the world views mentioned have influential adherents. This can create domestic divisions when it comes to interpreting and dealing with international developments. It also means that a multiplicity of transnational discourse coalitions has sprung up, within which adherents (politicians, scholars, influencers) share a world view and support one another across borders as they pursue their respective domestic political aspirations. This was clearly visible in the international socialist movement of days gone by, and is currently apparent in European and North American populism and traditionalism. A more sinister variant of this is covert foreign discursive influence through such means as money flows and the deployment of bots and deepfakes in online communication.

2.5 International Institutions in a Fragmenting World Order

The three vectors of fragmentation discussed above affect how the international playing field is arranged. They unavoidably affect the role and influence of international institutions. For a long time, Europe and many other Western nations and regions seemed to assume that more and more countries would align themselves (or continue to align themselves) with the international legal order as it was established after World War II and subsequently institutionalised. However, this assumption is proving to be increasingly unfounded. New dominant actors, the geopoliticisation of new arenas, and the increased political power of other world views are diminishing the effectiveness of the existing post-war institutions. Alongside them, new economic and diplomatic alliances are emerging based on principles other than Western ones.

The commitment of countries to the system of international agreements is still based on the concept of the sovereign equality of states.[153] Nevertheless, this supposed equality has always been challenged and eroded by powerful states, and the three vectors of fragmentation that we have outlined create conditions that have

[152] This was also true to some extent in the post-war period, of course. There were communist political parties in the West and issues concerning cruise missiles and nuclear weapons divided the Dutch population. Since the 1990s, the Netherlands has also had an anti-globalisation movement. Back then, however, world views were much more clearly identified with domestic and foreign actors. The Soviet and Chinese regimes were leading proponents of communism, while Western countries were largely opposed to it. After 1989, opposition to globalisation was mainly identified with countries such as North Korea and Cuba. The fragmentation of world views means that this type of identification has become much more difficult.

[153] As regards the problematic effects of the claim of state sovereignty, see Hirsch Ballin (2022), chap. 5, pp. 29 ff.

made it possible to challenge and erode this equality with increasing frequency and emphasis. Moreover, influential allies have either departed from or publicly distanced themselves from international alliances. The potentially far-reaching precedents are well known: the withdrawal from alliances by traditionally loyal allies (the US from UNESCO, the UK from the EU), and ridicule of these key alliances by political leaders of its member states.[154] As a result, the mere existence of international agreements would increasingly seem to be insufficient. Instead, the effectiveness of international agreements and even institutions stands or falls according to the backing—on a case-by-case basis—of enough influential states.

Multilateral consensus is also proving increasingly difficult to achieve. A comprehensive economic partnership between the EU and Canada (CETA) has not yet fully materialised, because the national parliaments of some EU Member States (including France) are delaying and even rejecting ratification. Different world views are instrumentalised in this process.[155] In the meantime, all sorts of 'minilateral' alliances and partnerships between like-minded parties have been emerging. An example is the security partnership between Australia, the UK, and the US (AUKUS), which mainly responds to China's increasing projection of military power in the Indo-Pacific region.

The values recognised as fundamental in the West and that are enshrined in postwar international institutions are less and less regarded as universal. The West is more frequently accused of hypocrisy—an allegation that carries significant political implications. The UN, for example, has been criticised for its supposedly 'obsessive' focus on Ukraine, with the argument being that serious conflicts that have been going on in countless other countries for much longer are apparently of less interest to the West.[156] The fact that China and other BRICS countries are now demanding procedural and policy changes within multilateral institutions is motivated primarily by their desire to overturn the dominance of Western liberal views on universal values within such institutions.[157] This is also shown by cases in which funding for economic development is no longer made conditional on the demands regarding fiscal prudence, human rights, and sustainability that are generally promoted by the West in such institutions as the IMF and the World Bank.[158]

Nevertheless, the process of fragmentation does not imply by any means that the role of international institutions is played out. In recent decades, the raison d'être

[154] In 2019, the French president Emmanuel Macron described NATO as 'brain dead', but he has returned to a full embrace of the alliance since.

[155] Hurrelmann and Wendler (2023).

[156] Min (2022).

[157] Richardson (2020).

[158] Cf. the remarks by the president of the New Development Bank (NDB) of the BRICS countries, Dilma Rousseff: 'As President of the Bank, I am committed to ensuring that our work is done without imposing conditionalities linked to any public policy or private project. Our financial support is provided free of onerous conditions.' https://www.ndb.int/news/ndb-president-dilma-rousseff-reported-to-brics-leaders-at-the-15th-brics-summit/. See also Liao (2015).

and effectiveness of a number of international organisations (IOs) have been challenged on numerous occasions. Based on empirical research, Debre and Dijkstra show that institutional capacity and bureaucratic size play a crucial role in resisting external challenges and pressure.[159] Sufficient institutional capacity and bureaucratic size enable organisations to expend sufficient efforts to achieve strategic coordination with member states. These features also ensure a better initial position for the strategic involvement of intermediary parties and partnerships, such as NGOs, in order to deliver the desired policy.[160] For the time being, it would seem that relatively new IOs, with only modest membership and no centralised structure, are least likely to survive.[161]

This kind of research also reveals another relevant distinction, namely that between IOs which permanently disappear from the arena and those that are 'relaunched' successfully: 'Contrary to death, replacements could potentially signify that a crisis between members might also lead to potential growth for IOs.'[162] Examples include the institutional crisis in which the WTO finds itself. The most acute problem is the paralysis of the dispute settlement mechanism, because the US has blocked the appointment of new WTO members to the Appellate Body since 2019. It is precisely this failure on the part of the WTO that has encouraged a new form of cooperation. Since 2020, several dozen countries, including EU Member States, Australia, Canada and China, have been working on an alternative dispute settlement body outside the WTO. The very existence of the WTO is another example: the organisation was established after it became apparent that the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was no longer able to bring about desirable free trade agreements in certain policy areas.[163]

Even in a fragmenting world order, multilateral international cooperation continues to play a crucial role. There will always be new functional needs for establishing broad international agreements to address global challenges. The emergence of new technologies (AI, quantum, biotechnology) is an illustration of this. Certainly where the EU is concerned, there are major interests in jointly reaching agreement on curbing the projection of power by both non-state actors (for example with regard to competition) and hostile countries (including through export controls).[164]

The need for multilateral cooperation may also be rooted in the wish to strengthen defence and intelligence capabilities. A prime example of the opportunities that exist to bridge gaps between countries with very different world views through multilateral agreement is the partnership agreement signed in Samoa on 15 November 2023 between the EU and its Member States and their former colonies and protectorates (OACPS). A total of 79 countries, representing two billion people, have

[159] Debre and Dijkstra (2021).

[160] Dijkstra (2017).

[161] Elstrup-Sangiovanni (2021).

[162] Benedetta L. Lanza, cited in Debre and Dijkstra (2021: 333).

[163] Howse and Langille (2023).

[164] Okano-Heijmans et al. (2024).

committed themselves to agreements on matters such as peace and security. Some view the agreement as a sign that 'the human rights corpus may be slowly evolving from its paradigmatic western orientation towards a truly universal project.'[165] However, this is not something that everyone will consider feasible or even desirable.

A second reason relates to the role that international rules play as an instrument in the hands of judicial or other enforcement bodies (arbitration). The discussion with regard to IOs focuses primarily on the failure of enforcement and regulatory bodies. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that international agreements regarding human rights, in particular, have demonstrated their added value in recent years—not only in the international context, but certainly also where the scrutinising role of national courts is concerned.[166] In a number of European countries, individuals and interest groups have attempted to force their government to alter policies through the courts.

In the light of the above, a paradox in the fragmenting world order has emerged: precisely because fragmentation creates diverging forces, it also creates new needs for buffering, normative, and limiting international institutions. Whether those needs will take the form of viable new institutions will depend on numerous factors and will differ from case to case. However, it is important to realise that fragmentation need not only lead to erosion and pressure to adapt within existing international institutions; it also creates opportunities for the formation of new ones.[167]

2.6 Adapting to Fluid and Turbulent Dynamics

The three vectors of fragmentation discussed in this chapter have important implications for how foreign policy is conceived and practised. New power relations, the expansion of arenas, and the simultaneity of world views make international relations more unclear and fluid. What is happening, where is it happening, who wants to achieve what, who stands alongside or opposed to whom, according to what rules is the game being played, and what influence do the institutions of the international legal order still have?

These questions will be familiar to policymakers and diplomats, but they are increasingly difficult to answer definitively. Existing ideas and policy theories offer

[165] Michael Goodhart, cited in Carbone (2024). The author concludes: 'More importantly, going beyond the "heaven–hell binary", which draws neat lines between the good North and the bad South, and the "one-way traffic paradigm", which claims that human rights flow from the North to the South, it shows that the human rights corpus may be slowly evolving from its paradigmatic western orientation towards a truly universal project: the EU and Africa have started recognising each other as being holders of diverse yet legitimate perspectives on human rights.'

[166] Tjepkema et al. (2024).

[167] Cf. Dijkstra (2024).

less guidance than they once did.[168] Domestic and foreign political processes are more intertwined.

The fragmenting world order also creates greater turbulence in international relations. We are seeing an increase in 'jockeying for position', more rivalries and violent conflicts, and there is a greater role for non-state actors such as multinationals. Dominant coalitions governed by Western rules are less easy to form and less sustainable. Western narratives and standards are being criticised more often, and Western technological supremacy is under pressure. All this is taking place against a backdrop of ticking clocks as regards tough transnational issues such as climate change, decreasing biodiversity, and the need to deal with global 'system technologies' such as AI. Even so, there are also openings for dealing with multiple fragmentation. In that sense, there will inevitably be a role for international organisations.

Dealing strategically and wisely with this lack of clarity and turbulence requires a great deal of adaptability from national policymakers and other parties. In the next chapter, we discuss the challenges and opportunities that the fragmenting world order presents for the Netherlands and many other Western European countries.

References

Acharya, A. (2017). After liberal hegemony: The advent of a multiplex world order. *Ethics and International Affairs, 31*(3), 271–285.

Acharya, A., Estevadeordal, A., & Goodman, L. W. (2023). Multipolar or multiplex? Interaction capacity, global cooperation and world order. *International Affairs, 99*(6), 2339–2365.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2022). *Slimme industriepolitiek: Een opdracht voor Nederland in de EU*. Den Haag.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2023). *De EURO op het wereldtoneel: De internationale rol van de munt van de EU in geostrategisch perspectief*. Den Haag.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2024). *Hybride dreigingen en maatschappelijke weerbaarheid*. Den Haag.

Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD). (2024). *Jaarverslag 2023*. Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties.

Allison, G., Klyman, K., Barbesino, K., & Yen, H. (2021). *The great tech rivalry: China versus the US*. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Aribogan, D. U. (2021). Global security and cooperation in the post-pandemic period: From the 19th century concert of Europe to the 21st century concert of globe. In M. Seker, A. Özer, & C. Korkut (Eds.), *Reflections on the pandemic in the future of the world* (pp. 325–350). Turkish Academy of Sciences.

Azoulai, L., Jaquemart, K., & Dubost, J-F. (2023). Inflation: When speculators profit from the food crisis. Food.

Balfour, R., Bomassi, L., & Martinelli, M. (2022). *The southern mirror: Reflections on Europe from the global south*. Carnegie Europe.

Bartsch, S. (2023). *Plato goes to China*. Princeton University Press.

[168] As regards his concept of 'multiplexity', Acharya states that 'a multiplex world is like a multiplex cinema—one that gives its audience a choice of various movies, actors, directors, and plots all under the same roof.' Acharya (2017: 277).

Bekkers, F., Teer, J., Kool, D., Van Geuns, L., Bolder, P., Patrahau, I., & Sarel, M. (2021). *The high value of the North Sea*. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS).
Berkhout, P., & De Steenhuijsen, B. (2022, 27 juni). *Oorlog in Oekraïne leert EU belangrijke voedsellessen*. Het Financieele Dagblad.
Blas, J., & Farchy, J. (2021). *The world for sale: Money, power, and the traders who barter the earth's resources*. Oxford University Press.
Bohn, T., Ramaekers, P., Wong, K.F., Dahlmans, D., & Visser, C. (2023). Europese Green Deal: CBAM, ontbossing en veehouderijketen nader bekeken. In: *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Internationaliseringsmonitor 2023-II: Duurzame handel?* (pp. 46–77). Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
Bradford, A. (2020). *The Brussels effect: How the European Union rules the world*. Oxford University Press.
Cancian, M. F. (2021). *Inflicting surprise: Gaining competitive advantage in great power conflicts*. Rowman and Littlefield.
Carbone, M. (2024). Beyond the heaven-hell binary and the one-way traffic paradigm: The European Union, Africa and contested human rights in the negotiations of the Samoa agreement. *Journal of Common Market Studies, 2024*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13609
Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). (2023). *Nederland de grootste importeur van soja, palmolie en cacao van de EU*. Den Haag.
Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). (2024). De Nederlandse agrarische sector internationaal 2024. .
Chan, S., Fe, H., Hu, K., & Hu, W. (2021). *Contesting revisionism: China, the United States, and the transformation of international order*. Oxford University Press.
Chua, A. (2018). *Political tribes: Group instinct and the fate of nations*. Penguin.
Clingendael & HCSS. (2024). *Barsten en blokken: Confrontatie en samenwerking in een wereld van wisselende coalities*. De Strategische Monitor 2023. Den Haag.
Cohen, J. (2023). *The rise of geopolitical swing states*. Goldman Sachs Intelligence.
Coker, C. (2019). *Rise of the civilizational state*. Wiley.
Davenport, C. (2018). *The space barons: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and the quest to colonize the cosmos*. Public Affairs.
Davidsson, J. W. (2006). *The origins of revisionist and status quo states*. Palgrave Macmillan.
de Goede, M., & Westermeier, C. (2022). Infrastructural geopolitics. *International Studies Quarterly, 66*(3). https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqac033.
de Waal, T., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2022). The majority oppressed? On asymmetrical multiculturalism and majority rights. *Comparative Migration Studies, 10*(42). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-022-00319-8.
de Wijk, R., Bekkers, F., & Sweijs, T. (2020). *Hybride dreigingen en hybride oorlog: Consequenties voor de Koninklijke Landmacht*. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS).
Debre, M. J., & Dijkstra, H. (2021). Institutional design for a post-liberal order: Why some international organizations live longer than others. *European Journal of International Relations, 27*(1), 311–339. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120962183
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). (2024). *International scientific report on the safety of advanced AI: Interim report*. UK Government.
Diesen, G. (2018). *Russia's geo-economic strategy for a greater Eurasia*. Routledge.
Diesen, G. (2024). *The Ukrainian war and the Eurasian world order*. Clarity Press.
Dijkstra, H. (2017). Collusion in international organizations: How states benefit from the authority of secretariats. *Global Governance, 23*(4), 601–618.
Dijkstra, H. (2024). *Multilateralism amid geopolitics: Rethinking international cooperation in the 21st century*. Universiteit Maastricht.
Dikötter, F. (2022). *China na Mao: De opkomst van een supermacht*. Spectrum.
Draghi, M. (2024). *The future of European competitiveness—A competitiveness strategy for Europe*. Retrieved from https://commission.europa.eu/document/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en.
Dugin, A. (2012). *The fourth political theory*. Eurasian Movement.

Dugin, A. (2014). *Eurasian mission. An introduction to NEO-Eurasianism*. Arktos Media.
Elstrup-Sangiovanni, M. (2021). What kills international organizations? When and why international organizations terminate. *European Journal of International Relations, 27*(2), 281–310. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120932976
Faloyin, D. (2022). *Africa is not a country. Breaking stereotypes of modern Africa*. .
Farrell, H., & Newman, A. L. (2019). Weaponized interdependence: How global economic networks shape state coercion. *International Security, 44*(1), 42–79. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00351
Farrell, H., & Newman, A. (2023). *Underground empire: How America weaponized the world economy*. Allen Lane.
Flockhart, T. (2018). A multi-order world? *RSA Journal, 164*(3), 26–31.
Flockhart, T. (2024). NATO in the multi-order world. *International Affairs, 100*(2), 471–489.
Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. Free Press.
Galeotti, M. (2022). *The weaponization of everything: A field guide to the new way of war*. Yale University Press.
García, S. C. (2024). Digital expansionism and big tech companies: Consequences in democracies of the European Union. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11*. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02924-7.
Getachew, A. (2019). *Worldmaking after empire: The rise and fall of self-determination*. Princeton University Press.
Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2022). *Spin dictators: The changing face of tyranny in the 21st century*. Princeton University Press.
Habets, I. (2015). Liberal democracy: The threat of counter-narratives. *European View, 14*, 145–154. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-015-0369-z
Hall, P. A., & Soskice, D. (2001). *Varieties of capitalism*. Oxford University Press.
Hamilton, C. (2018). *Silent invasion. China's influence in Australia*. Hardie Grant.
Hannas, W. C., & Tatlow, D. K. (2020). *China's quest for foreign technology. Beyond espionage*. Routledge.
Hansen, P., & Jonsson, S. (2014). *Eurafrica: The untold history of European integration and colonialism*. Bloomsbury Academic.
Hegre, H. (2014). Democracy and armed conflict. *Journal of Peace Research, 51*(2), 159–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433135128
Heimovaara, S. (2023, 18 december). *Het grootste gevaar voor ons voedsel is instabiliteit*. Het Financieele Dagblad.
Hijink, M. (2023). *Focus—De wereld van ASML. Het machtsspel om de meest complexe machine op aarde*. Balans.
Hillman, J. E. (2021). *The digital silk road: China's quest to wire the world and win the future*. Harper Business.
Hirsch Ballin, E. (2022). *Waakzaam burgerschap. Vertrouwen in democratie en rechtsstaat herwinnen*. Querido Facto.
Howorth, J. (2015). Implications of the us rebalance toward Asia: European security and NATO. In H. Meijer (Ed.), *Origins and evolution of the us rebalance toward Asia* (pp. 197–222). Palgrave Macmillan.
Howse, R., & Langille, J. (2023). *Continuity and change in the World Trade Organization: Pluralism past, present and future* (Vol. 117, pp. 1–47). Cambridge University Press.
Huntington, S. P. (1991). The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century. *The Journal of Democracy, 2*(2), 12–34.
Hurrelmann, A., & Wendler, F. (2023). How does politicization affect the ratification of mixed EU trade agreements? The case of CETA. *Journal of European Public Policy, 31*(2), 1–25.
Immerwahr, D. (2019). *How to hide an empire: A history of the greater United States*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES). (2022). *Another perfect storm? How the failure to reform food systems has allowed the war in Ukraine to spark a third global food price crisis in 15 years, and what can be done to prevent the next one*. Special Report IPES-Food.

Jones, L., & Hameiri, S. (2020). *Debunking the myth of 'death-trap diplomacy': How recipient countries shape China's belt and road initiative*. Chatham House.
Jones, L., & Hameiri, S. (2021). *Fractured China: How state transformation is shaping China's rise*. Cambridge University Press.
Keane, J. (2020a). *The new despotism*. Harvard University Press.
Keane, J. (2020b, June 22). *Don't underestimate resilience of the smart new despotisms*. Democracy Digest.
Kennedy, P. (1987). *The rise and fall of the great powers: Economic change and military conflict from 1500 to 2000*. Random House.
Koch, D. J. (2023). *Foreign aid and its unintended consequences*. Routledge.
Kothari, R. K., & Khan, E. (2017). India becoming a global power in the twenty-first century: Rising challenges and newer opportunities. *Atlantica*.
Krauthammer, C. (1990). The unipolar moment. *Foreign Affairs, 70*(1), 23–33.
Kushi, S., & Toft, M. (2023). Introducing the military intervention project: A new dataset on us military interventions, 17762019. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 67*(4), 752–779. https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221117546
Lake, D. A., Martin, L. L., & Risse, M. (2021). Challenges to the liberal order: Reflections on international organization. *International Organization, 75*(2), 225–257. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000636
Leonard, M. (2018, July 24). *Europe for itself*. Project Syndicate.
Leonard, M. (2021). *The age of unpeace: How connectivitiy causes conflict*. Bantam Press.
Lesaffer, R. (2024). *De rechtsstaat. Een geschiedenis van het Westen*. OWL Press.
Liang, Q., & Xiangshui, W. (1999). *Unrestricted warfare*. People's Liberation Army Arts and Publishing House.
Liao, R. (2015, July 27). *Out of the Bretton woods. How the AIIB is different*. Foreign Affairs.
Mackinder, H. J. (1904). The geopolitical pivot of history. *The Geographical Journal, 23*(4), 421–437.
Mahan, A. T. (1890). *The influence of sea power upon history: 1660–1783*. Little-Brown.
Mahbubani, K. (2018). *Has the west lost it? A provocation*. Allen Lane.
Mankoff, J. (2022). *Empires of Eurasia*. Yale University Press.
Mariani, B. (2024). *China's global security vision in a changing world*. PeaceRep, University of Edinburgh.
Masson-Zwaan, T. L. (2017). *Ruimtemijnbouw: Mag dat wel?, Ars Aequi, september*.
Masson-Zwaan, T. L. (2024). Hoe staat het met de regulering van ruimtemijnbouw? *Een update. Ars Aequi, 66*(9), 740–746.
Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. W. W. Norton.
Meijerink, G. W., Shutes, K., Herder, A., & Gelder, J. W. (2012). *Voedselprijzen en speculatie op agrarische termijnmarkten: Literatuurstudie en interviews*. Wageningen University and Research.
Metcalf, M. (2020). The national humiliation narrative: Dealing with the present by fixating on the past. *Education about Asia, 25*(2), 43–50.
Militaire Inlichtingen-en Veiligheidsdienst (MIVD). (2024). *Openbaar Jaarverslag Militaire Inlichtingen-en Veiligheidsdienst 2023*. Ministerie van Defensie.
Miller, C. (2022). *Chip war: The fight for the world's most critical technology*. Simon and Schuster.
Min, K. (2022, May 27). *A world obsessed with Ukraine must not forget the Rohingya*. The Statesman.
Mishra, P. (2013). *From the ruins of empire: The revolt against the west and the remaking of Asia* (Vol. 21, pp. 184–185). Picador.
Mody, A. (2023). *India is broken. A people betrayed, independence to today*. Stanford University Press.
Mokry, S. (2023). *The construction of China's national interest: Between topdown rule and societal ideas*. Universiteit Leiden.
Mouffe, C. (2018). *For a left populism*. Verso Books.
Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541–563.

Needham, K., & Baldwin, C. (July 7, 2021). *China's gene giant harvests data from millions of women*. Reuters.
O'Malley, A. M., & Thakur, V. (2022). Introduction: Shaping a global horizon, new histories of the global south and the un. *Humanity, 13*(1), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2022.0003
O'Neill, S. K. (2022). *The globalization myth: Why regions matter*. Yale University Press.
Obermeier, A. M., & Rustad, S. A. (2023). *Conflict trends: A global overview, 1946–2022*. Oxford University Press.
Okano-Heijmans, M., Gomes, A., & Dekker, B. (2024). *Balancing openness, economic security and national security. The future of export controls on quantum technologies*. Clingendael.
Oud, M., & Drinhausen, K. (2021). *The decoding China dictionary*. Lund University.
Park, J. (2023). *Semiconductors in key European and indo-Pacific economies geopolitical risk in the supply chains into 2030 and beyond*. The Hague Center for Strategic Studies (HCSS).
Parliamentary Papers II. (2023/24). *Fiche: Mededeling Europese Defensie-Industrie Strategie en Verordening Europees Defensie-industrie Programma, 22112, nr. 3919*. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2024Z05362&did=2024D12385.
Pitron, G. (2020). *The rare metals war: The dark side of clean energy and digital technologies*. Scribe us.
Polyakova, A., & Meserole, C. (2019). *Exporting digital authoritarianism: The Russian and Chinese models*. Brookings Institution.
Prashad, V. (2007). *The darker nations: A people's history of the third world*. The New Press.
Pye, L. W. (1992). Social science theories in search of Chinese realities. *The China Quarterly, 132*, 1161–1170.
Rachman, G. (2019, March 4). *China, India and the rise of the 'civilization state'*. Financial Times.
Richardson, S. (2020). *China's influence on the global human rights system. Global China. Assessing China's growing role in the world*. Brookings Institute.
Ringhof, J., & Torreblanca, I. (2022). *The geopolitics of technology: How the EU can become a global player*. European Council on Foreign Relations.
Rotundo, J. L., Marshall, R., McCormick, R., Truong, S. K., Styles, D., Gerde, J. A., Gonzalez-Escobar, E., Carmo-Silva, E., Janes-Bassett, V., Logue, J., Annicchiarico, P., De Visser, C., Dind, A., Dodd, I. C., Dye, L., Long, S. P., Lopes, M. S., Pannecoucque, J., Reckling, M., Rushton, J., Schmid, N., Shield, I., Signor, M., Messina, C. D., & Rufino, M. C. (2024). European soybean to benefit people and the environment. *Scientific Reports, 14*(1), 7612. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-57522-z
Rühlig, T. (2021). *Technical standards: A new realm of China's international influence?* European Institute for Chinese Studies.
Salah, A. (2022). *Why does some of the Arab public support Putin's war in Ukraine? Sada*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retieved from https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2022/06/why-does-some-of-the-arab-public-support-putins-war-in-ukraine?lang=en
Scheyder, E. (2024). *The war below: Lithium, copper, and the global battle to power our lives*. Atria One Signal Publishers.
Schivelbusch, W. (2004). *The culture of defeat: On national trauma, mourning, and recovery*. Picador.
Segers, M. (2013). *Reis naar het continent: Nederland en de Europese integratie, 1950 tot heden*. Prometheus.
Sheikh, H. (2019). *Hydropolitiek. Samenwerking en conflict op zeven zeeën*. Boom.
Sheikh, H. (2020, August 14). *Na de natiestaat komt nu de onbegrensde civilisatiestaat*. NRC.
Shifrinson, J., Slaughter, A., Kausikan, B., Keohane, R., Brooks, S. G., & Wohlforth, W. C. (2023, November/December). *The long unipolar moment? Debating American dominance*. Foreign Affairs.
Shivakumar, S. (2022). *Securing global standards for innovation and growth*. Center for strategic & International Studies CSIS.
Sie Dhian Ho, M., & Wijnkoop, M. (2022). *The Instrumentalization of migration: A geopolitical toolbox*. Clingendael.

Snow, R. (2023). *China and Russia: Four centuries of conflict and concord*. Yale University Press.
Sobczyk, M. (2012, June 27). Kissinger still lacks a number to call Europe. *Wall Street Journal*.
Soldatov, A., & Borogan, I. (2015). *The red web. The struggle between Russia's digital dictators and the new online revolutionaries*. Public Affairs.
Splidsboel Hansen, F. (2021). When Russia wages war in the cognitive domain. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, 34*(2), 181–201.
Spykman, N. J. (1942). *America's strategy in world politics. The United States and the balance of power*. Transaction Publishers.
Stevens, F. (2023). *Chinese assertiveness and the rise of Xi Jinping: Ideational mobilization, elite contestation, and the struggle over regional order*. Universiteit Leiden.
The Hague Center for Strategic Studies (HCSS). (2021). *Strategic alert: Towards a space security strategy*. Den Haag.
The White House. (2023). *United States government national standards strategy for critical and emerging technology*. Washington.
Tinyang, Z. (2020). *Alles unter dem Himmel*. Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Weltordnung.
Tjepkema, M., Smeulders C., & Pijnenburg, A. (2024). Staatsaansprakelijkheid voor het buitenlands en veiligheidsbeleid. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 16*.
Uzlaner, D., & Stoeckl, K. (2022). *The moralist international: Russia in the global culture wars*. Fordham University Press.
Van der Linde, I. (2013, 20 maart). De lange arm van Ankara: Eens een Turk, altijd een Turk. *De Groene Amsterdammer, 137*(12).
Weiwei, Z. (2012). *The China wave: Rise of a civilizational state*. World Century Publication Corporation.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2017). *Veiligheid in een Wereld van Verbindingen*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2021). *Opgave AI, de nieuwe systeemtechnologie*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2023). *Verslag Hollands Spoor 'De geopolitiek van voedsel'*. Den Haag.
Winther, I. N., & Østhagen, A. (2024). *The big picture of arctic geopolitics: An actor-oriented analysis*. Fridtjof Nansen Institute.
Wright, T. J. (2018). *All measures short of war. The contest for the 21st century & the future of American power*. Yale University Press.
Xuetong, Y. (2019). *Leadership and the rise of great powers*. Princeton University Press.
Yang, L. (2016, August 14). *Exploring the future of life economy with BGI co-founder Wang Jian*. Forbes.
Zakaria, F. (1997, November 1). *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy*. Foreign Affairs.
Zeng, J. (2020). *Slogan politics. Understanding Chinese foreign policy concepts*. Springer.

Chapter 3
What Is at Stake?

3.1 Introduction

The fragmentation of power centres, power arenas, and world views affects all European countries—including the Netherlands—in numerous ways. There is a great deal at stake. From the 1990s, these countries were able to benefit from a favourable unipolar world order in which the central policy objectives of prosperity, security, and values were often well aligned (see Chap. 2). The analysis in the present chapter demonstrates that this period has come to an end. The three vectors of fragmentation do not impact equally on the core interests of prosperity, security, and values, and undeniable tensions arise in many areas between these three elements, which together make up the triad of Dutch foreign policy goals. Governments do not need to passively endure these tensions, they can exert influence in various ways. Threats and risks can be mitigated to a certain extent, while opportunities can be seized, although this does require a high degree of vigilance and strategic deployment of governmental agency.

We will explore these tensions in greater detail by focussing—in the context of the three vectors of fragmentation—on a number of issues illustrating what is at stake for the Netherlands as well as for various other European countries (for an overview see Fig. 3.1).

3.2 Power Centres

The Netherlands is committed to multilateralism. Until recently, the 'Pax Americana' and the associated reinforcement of international cooperation represented a favourable development. The Netherlands is a party to more than 6000 treaties, with some hundred international agreements being added each year. International organisations such as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice,

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*,
Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6_3

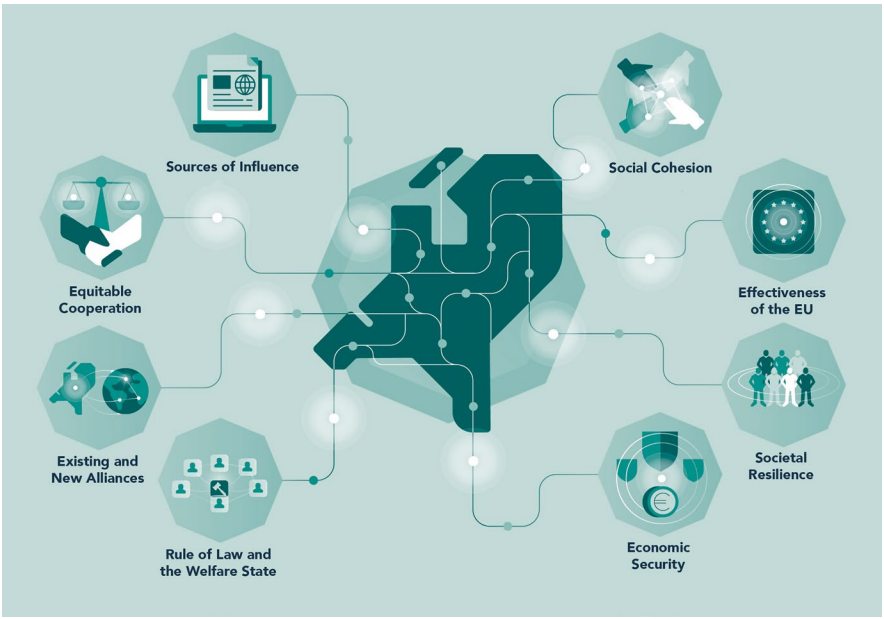

Fig. 3.1 Policy challenges facing the Netherlands

both headquartered in The Netherlands, serve as visible evidence of this global engagement. However, the growing number of power centres and the sharply increased rivalry between them make cooperation on the global playing field increasingly difficult. Over the past decade, for example, leading partners of the Netherlands have withdrawn from partnership organisations. With the departure of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) serving as the most significant example.

The Netherlands is not only committed to multilateralism from a political perspective; it is also heavily dependent on it for its security, values, and prosperity. As international relations evolve in a direction that is unfavourable to Europe, it becomes evident that the Netherlands has a lot to lose: Europe is vulnerable, the threat of war has resurfaced nearby, and the Netherlands may miss out on opportunities in emerging international alliances.

Europe Is Vulnerable

The dynamics of power centres put security across the European continent under pressure while also affecting the internal dynamics of the EU. For instance, Russia's exertion of influence on EU Member State Hungary in order to get the latter to delay and obstruct decisions on support for Ukraine. China, meanwhile, entices Serbia into signing a trade agreement that conflicts with its ambitions to join the EU.

Whether the EU is capable of operating effectively as a global power bloc remains open to question. In the coming years, developments and decisions across numerous policy areas will determine whether it will be able to hold its own

position within the geopolitical power game.[1] In many of those decisions, balancing the core policy interests will play a crucial role.

One of those issues is the further enlargement of the EU, which—viewed in terms of both security and prosperity—would seem to be a strategic necessity. As regards security, enlargement is important to prevent some of the current candidate members from being drawn further into the sphere of influence of Russia and/or China. From the perspective of prosperity, enlargement will give the European single market access to some critical raw materials that it currently lacks. At the same time, however, enlargement of the EU to include various new Member States—particularly those in the Balkans—will create tension where the European values agenda is concerned.[2] For instance, how strictly does the EU want to adhere to the accession criteria in terms of the democratic rule of law (values), given the risks associated with Russia's current sphere of influence (security) and the importance of unrestricted access to various critical raw materials (prosperity)? This issue also relates to the fragmentation of world views: internally, the EU has long been struggling with the rise of 'illiberal democracies'. Further enlargement will open the door to more political regimes of this kind.

The EU will face a number of crucial decisions in the coming years. These pertain not only actual decision-making regarding accession, but also the enforcement mechanisms to be implemented once new countries have become Member States. It is possible that accession may be fast-tracked—in the interests of security—because the EU is prepared to relax the rule-of-law membership criteria for a transitional period. Given the importance of the European values agenda, however, it is essential that, after the conclusion of this transitional period, enforcement of the rule-of-law membership criteria can still be upheld.[3]

Discussions on the future of Europe will involve far more than the usual controversial issues, such as agriculture and migration.[4] The Draghi report has addressed this by outlining the relationship between challenges in three key areas.[5] First, the need to bridge the innovation gap through joint investment in education and research and a coordinated approach to the digital transformation and technological leadership. Second, a commitment to cooperation between Member States so as to reduce the cost of renewable energy and facilitate a low-carbon economy. Third, the report advocates for a stronger European defence industry and reduced reliance on external suppliers, which also applies to critical raw materials and technologies. These challenges make it inevitable for all EU Member States to re-think their commitment to the EU. The Netherlands, for instance, benefits from a strong Europe and is

[1] For more details and various examples, see Princen (2024).

[2] See also Lavrelashvili and Van Hecke (2022); Anghel and Jones (2024).

[3] See, for example, Kloks (2024).

[4] See Hirsch Ballin (2022: Chapter XVIII).

[5] Draghi (2024).

consequently dependent on the outcome of discussions in Brussels and Strasbourg. Armed with the necessary knowledge, sound preparation, and valuable contacts, it is able to exert considerable influence. However, failure to anticipate developments properly or adapt accordingly would put the Netherlands at significant risk of becoming sidelined and finding itself facing a *fait accompli*. History provides ample evidence of this.[6] The evaluation branch (IOB) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded in 2024 that the country will need to make sustained efforts to exert influence within the EU, and that it will only be successful in doing so if it also demonstrates an understanding of the interests of others and gains a better grasp of developments within the European policy process.[7] The renewed focus on positioning within the EU does not apply solely to the Netherlands; the current geopolitical dynamics are also a threat to the national interests of other Member States (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 National Interests Under Pressure

Since its inception, the EU has seen significant economic growth and made great strides in developing a single market. It is a global superpower when it comes to regulation and standardisation. Nevertheless, there are also major differences and varying interests between the Member States. For example, there is a variety of economies, both big (France, Germany) and small (Luxembourg, Estonia), while individual Member States have varying economic and market strengths and interests (For example, Germany: automotive; the Netherlands: agriculture, food, and computer chips; Finland: technology; and Belgium: pharmaceuticals and biotechnology). Geopolitical dynamics outside Europe therefore affect individual Member States in different ways. The electric vehicles trade war affects Germany in particular, while the sanctions on computer chips and the machines for producing them mainly affect the Netherlands. These and other consequences at the level of individual Member States affect their support for EU action in the geopolitical arena. Action to support Ukrainian agricultural exports led to protests about loss of income from farmers in countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic, and major port cities (e.g. Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp) have been targeted in cyberattacks in response to EU sanctions. Political discord within and between EU countries regarding collective assessments and decisions on geopolitical and defence issues render Europe vulnerable.

[6] See Segers (2013).

[7] IOB (2024).

The Threat of War

War—viewed not only from the security perspective, but also in terms of prosperity and values—is the gravest threat arising from the fragmentation of power centres. Mounting Russian aggression currently poses the greatest risk of war where Europe is concerned. For years now, Russia has been attempting relentlessly to create (or in fact recreate) its own sphere of influence in the region that it refers to as its 'near abroad'.[8] Just what the Kremlin's intentions are is unclear, but countries (including NATO partners) in the immediate vicinity of Ukraine are seriously considering the possibility of war with Russia.[9] If it comes to that, not only will economic and military support of EU Member States be required, but the industry may be called upon to mobilise its production chains for equipment and munitions, and logistics hubs—including the Dutch port of Rotterdam—will be crucial for delivering the necessary military equipment to the front.[10] This potentially means that the countries concerned will become targets for Russian military action. One power centre, the United States (US) is critical for European security in this scenario. At the same time, a US President who openly questions Article 5 of the NATO Treaty could well render the alliance ineffective. Cautioning against an EU that is unable to defend itself, French President Emmanuel Macron has stated emphatically: 'Europe is not eternal. Europe is mortal. If we do not take care of it, it will disappear'.[11]

But the threat of war not only comes from Russia. China's increasingly assertive policy with regard to Taiwan and in the South China Sea could lead to a large-scale regional and potentially global conflict in which Europe also becomes involved. A war between China and the US would have disastrous consequences for Europe.[12] After all, China—far more so than Russia—is not only a power centre militarily, but also technologically and economically. Any disruption in the export of computer chips from Taiwan, for example, would have a major impact on the European economy.

The necessity of preparing for possible military conflict is already creating an unbalance within of security, prosperity and values. Increased defence spending assumes a change in how government funding is allocated, usually requiring cuts in spending on such public services as education or health care. Resilience-enhancing

[8] Mankoff (2022).

[9] The Polish government views such a war as possible within 10 years, and Sweden's top military officer stated early in 2024 that its people should be mentally prepared for war. See Simpson (2024).

[10] On 30 January 2024, Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland signed a letter of intent to develop a military corridor to facilitate the movement of troops and materiel between North Sea ports and NATO's eastern flank. Among other things, their plans envisage eliminating infrastructure problems (such as low bridges) and doing away with red tape regarding the transport of munitions. In a statement, the Dutch Ministry of Defence indicated that it is also examining how military rail transport can be given priority over civilian traffic. See https://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2024/01/30/duitsland-nederland-en-polen-willen-snel-militairen-en-materieel-kunnen-verplaatsen

[11] https://www.economist.com/europe/2024/05/02/how-to-rescue-europe

[12] Allison et al. (2021).

measures—stricter security checks and cybersecurity, but also more redundancy features in vital infrastructures such as the power supply—will increase costs and reduce the efficiency of the economy. In this context, the term 'war economy' is being used more and more often. Admiral Rob Bauer (former chair of NATO's Military Committee) has spoken of 'the realistic notion that certain production capacity is no longer available for consumer goods, but is used for defence supplies. That will not go unnoticed by the public.'[13] Moreover, it is realistic to assume that this will not just affect availability of physical products in the shops. In today's high-tech society, other priorities in the digital realm are also paramount, such as linking data sets containing personal data or requisitioning server capacity from companies.[14]

Meanwhile, Dutch society still seems to be immersed in the relative security of a US-dominated unipolar world order—a reality that no longer exists. Anyone who wishes can follow the war in Ukraine 'live' via drone footage on social media, yet for the majority of Dutch people, the conflict in eastern Europe remains a distant concern. Although awareness of a new geopolitical threat is gradually permeating, most Dutch people still do not know how to concretely prepare for this emerging danger. In other words, when a geopolitical threat is concerned, citizens primarily lack the capacity to take action.[15] In June 2024, the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) presented a number of specific recommendations for increasing the country's preparedness and resilience.[16] In addition to the recommended action to be taken, this will also need to involve society's ability to absorb pain and loss. Society will also discover that the choices that need to be made within the triad of security, values, and prosperity are choices that will be painful. Many Dutch people and businesses have become accustomed to a government that steps in with compensatory measures (including financial compensation) in times of difficulty.[17] Accepting that the balance between prosperity and security may well change dramatically will be a bitter pill to swallow. A specific but still relatively minor example: given the limited capacity of Dutch airspace, defence training will need to take precedence over continuing to provide a regular number of holiday flights from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol if a heightened threat situation does in fact arise. Significant differences in the perceived urgency of resilience also exist elsewhere in Europe (see Box 3.2).

[13] https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2511067-een-economie-met-defensie-als-prioriteit-wat-betekent-dat-voor-nederland

[14] Prins (2024b).

[15] WRR (2017).

[16] See AIV (2024).

[17] See the legislative proposal on staff retention in the event of crises such as war, pandemic, and flooding (with compensation to companies through wage subsidies) which was submitted for consultation in 2024. https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2024/05/14/wetsvoorstel-personeelsbehoud-bij-crisis-in-internetconsultatie

Box 3.2 Urgency gap within Europe

For some European countries, the threat of war or violent conflict is highly tangible. Finland, for example, shares a 1343 km border with Russia. As a result, and due to historical memories of the Soviet Union, the country remains keenly aware of a threat from the east and continuously prepares for a possible confrontation. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this concern has become equally pressing for Poland and Romania, both of which have experienced Russian military drones penetrating deeply into their territory on several occasions. The Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have been facing the threat of war much more directly since 2023, due to factors including cyberattacks, the jamming of GPS signals for air traffic, and provocations in border regions with Russia, including those near the Kaliningrad exclave. Clandestine confrontations elsewhere in Europe have also led to action being taken. In October 2024, the UK and Germany signed a far-reaching agreement for structural defence cooperation, including for the development of new long-range weaponry.[18] A number of countries in southern Europe also find themselves confronted more than before by the proximity of conflict zones. In 2024, for example, Cyprus faced an expansion in the presence of US troops and a growing influx of evacuees due to the increasing conflict in the Middle East. In other European countries, such as the Netherlands, the threat of war seems remote. The significant differences in the perceived threat level have resulted in considerable differences between the various countries where societal resilience is concerned. This particularly affects countries which in recent decades have invested little in strengthening civilian preparedness—such as conscription, basic first-aid skills, education—leaving them more vulnerable.

Examples from various countries reveal the potential and strength of a resilient society. Governments have developed programmes for citizens with a focus on developing military skills and defence, tackling natural disasters, or increasing basic skills such as emergency first aid or in-house first aid. These programmes differ as to their content and target groups, and can often be linked to specific threats relevant to the particular country concerned. In the northern and Baltic states, they focus primarily on military skills and defence (the Russian threat), while in Asia and the Pacific the focus is on tackling natural disasters such as earthquakes (Japan), forest fires (Australia and New Zealand),[19] or flooding (Japan, Indonesia, Thailand).[20]

[18] https://www.reuters.com/world/britain-germany-bolster-defence-cooperation-with-new-agreement-2024-10-22/

[19] See the website of the Australian Resilience Corps, https://www.resiliencecorps.org.au/about-us-the-corps/

[20] Juwitasari (2022).

The training programmes that focus on military skills have different aims depending on the country concerned. The emphasis is sometimes also on recruitment for the regular army, while in other cases the focus is more general, namely on increasing the number of people with certain basic skills. Furthermore, a distinction can be made between practical skills (first aid, survival) and mental and communication skills (assessing risks autonomously, developing a strategy, and taking action). Some countries, such as Japan, invest in these skills from a very early age.[21] Finland has a whole range of courses accessible to everyone (both young people and adults), ranging from military skills and survival to cybersecurity and resilience for specific professional groups (like farmers).[22] Sweden, Denmark, and Norway have similar programmes.[23] Many people who have undergone some form of conscription later join or take on an active role in training programmes for the wider community. The 'Scandinavian model' of selective compulsory military service (with only the best people being selected) appears to be particularly successful. Having completed such training is regarded as a valuable credential on a resume and one's later career.[24] The skills concerned in these examples are not only applicable in major disasters, but also in the event of local and regional emergencies and in everyday life (such as assisting at an accident or at public events).

In all cases, it is citizens themselves who are the key to success through their individual commitment to society. It is not only a matter of skills, but also of broad social awareness that security crises are not just something 'out of the history books' or solely the responsibility of national government. Only in this way can resilience permeate the fabric of a society.

Vigilance Towards New Alliances

An enfeebled multilateral order affects European countries in numerous ways. There is currently a heavy focus on developments within NATO and the World Trade Organization (WTO), because their effects are felt directly by the public and by businesses. However, the focus must not be limited exclusively to these familiar alliances, certainly not where governments are concerned. As discussed in the previous chapter the weakening of multilateralism has been accompanied by growing rivalry between major power centres, leading to increased cooperation through new and smaller alliances, whether bilateral, regional or 'minilateral'.[25] Some of these affect individual EU Member States such as the Netherlands only indirectly, for example the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the expanding BRICS

[21] Gavari-Starki et al. (2021).

[22] See the website of the National Defence Training Association of Finland (MPK, Maanpuolustu skoulutus): https://mpk.fi/etusivu/what-is-the-mpk/

[23] Urych and Matyasik (2022).

[24] Braw (2019).

[25] Engelke et al. (2023).

alliance (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Nevertheless, some new alliances do have implications for the position of the Netherlands, for example because states that are important to this country, such as China and the US, participate actively in a way that affects Dutch interests. It is therefore necessary to adopt a proactive and vigilant attitude towards these alliances, driven by both risks and opportunities.

One example is China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), of which the Netherlands is not an official member (Italy was a member for a brief period). This is despite the fact that projects associated with the BRI have consequences for the Netherlands, with the maritime links being the most significant—in particular the Dutch port of Rotterdam. The container company COSCO, for example, took a 35% stake in the port's Euromax terminal in 2016, while the port has been cooperating on data exchange with Logink since 2019, and ZPMC supplies shipping cranes. All three of these are Chinese companies.

Vigilance towards the BRI involves finding a balance between security, prosperity, and values. The BRI offers considerable potential for prosperity: links to the huge Chinese market provide sales opportunities for European companies (food and infrastructure businesses) and products for Dutch consumers. At the same time, however, China is producing increasingly advanced products that compete with those of European origin. This not only puts pressure on Europe's competitiveness, but also raises concerns about sabotage, shutdowns, and espionage. When the Dutch shipbuilder Royal IHC ran into financial difficulties in 2020, the Dutch government provided capital to prevent it from falling into Chinese hands.[26] Even so, it became clear that another Dutch company, Ampleon—formerly part of chip manufacturer NXP—could still pass into Chinese ownership.[27] Digital infrastructure also forms part of the BRI. The Chinese company Huawei supplies network technology to the Netherlands, but it has been excluded from the latter's core telecommunications networks since 2021 for geopolitical reasons.

Rising concerns about the influence of China make India an interesting alternative. That country, in particular, is increasingly focusing on smaller new alliances. One that is relevant as far as Europe is concerned is the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project. Launched at the 2023 G20 summit, it aims to strengthen ties between India, the Middle East, and Europe. Given its rapidly growing economy, India is becoming an increasingly important player on the global stage for trade oriented nations. While this presents opportunities for prosperity, it also creates tension in terms of democratic values, as the Indian government is becoming more authoritarian domestically and more assertive internationally.

Lastly, it is important to be mindful of alliances other than the familiar institutions such as the UN, NATO, and the WTO, given that trusted partners are also increasingly looking towards such alliances. Significantly, the creation of AUKUS

[26] Van der Putten and Kranenburg (2022).

[27] Olsthoorn (2024).

(the trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK, and the US) and the Quad (a diplomatic partnership between Australia, India, Japan, and the US) has shifted some of the security focus of the US towards Asia. Such new alliances are also being sought after in Europe (see Box 3.3).

Box 3.3 Seeking New Partnerships

Europe is actively pursuing new partnerships to strengthen itself geopolitically. However, due to the aforementioned differences among the Member States in terms of interests and socio-economic characteristics, these initiatives often struggle to gain momentum. The EU-MERCOSUR treaty with Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, for example, has been over 20 years in the making and is a potentially historic trade deal for both blocs. There is nevertheless a risk of stalling due to individual Member States' insistence on protecting highly specific national interests.

Another example is the Global Gateway initiative, which the EU launched as an alternative to the Chinese BRI. This initiative aims to encourage smart, clean, and secure connections within the digital, energy and logistics infrastructure and to enhance health education and research systems worldwide. By emphasising sustainability and future-proofing, Europe is seeking to consolidate its image as a normative superpower and to differentiate itself from China's BRI.

Expectations for the Global Gateway Initiative are high and the first flagship projects are already underway. Nevertheless, there are various uncertainties and countries in the Global South view the Global Gateway critically. The two main uncertainties involve mobilising private sector investment—on which the initiative is heavily reliant—and the responsiveness of investors to the actual needs of the recipient countries. Several of the investments do not correspond with the priorities of African partners, or are mainly aligned with the strategic corridors on which the EU relies for obtaining critical minerals for its own green agenda. Some countries also resent the insistence on additional conditions regarding sustainability or view it as applying a double standard.[28] There are in other words significant challenges that need to be overcome if the Global Gateway is to be a geopolitical success.

At the same time, the emergence of new issues and new international relationships also presents opportunities for European countries. One good example is the conference on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) that the Netherlands set up jointly with South Korea in order to establish arrangements for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military domain (and limits on

[28] See ETTG blog. https://ettg.eu/global-gateway-three-years-later/

how it should be used).[29] Such cooperation in the field of AI also illustrates the next vector of fragmentation, i.e. the arenas within which countries project power.

3.3 Power Arenas

Fragmentation is also creating tensions within the Dutch triad where power arenas are concerned, primarily between prosperity and security. Many of the arenas analysed in Chap. 2 involve economic sectors within which the Netherlands traditionally distinguishes between the market and politics and adheres to the belief that mutual dependence will lead to peaceful international relations. With the fragmentation of these arenas, however, the logic of geopolitics has started to infiltrate markets, with a significant impact on businesses and individuals. The projection of geopolitical power also jeopardises crucial democratic processes, such as as free elections and the rule of law.

Another Economic Mindset: Securitisation

On a number of occasions in recent years, the Netherlands and other European countries have encountered states that exploited asymmetric dependencies and vulnerabilities. The clearest example is, of course, the way Russia weaponised the energy supply and the transport of grain. Another example is China responding to ASML limiting supplies by threatening to cease exporting various raw materials, while the US exerted pressure on Europe regarding use of telecommunication networks provided by the Chinese company Huawei.

We argued in Chap. 2 why these examples cannot simply be regarded as isolated developments within separate arenas. All superpowers now increasingly view prosperity in the light of security, with China going furthest in that regard. The concept of 'dual circulation' in its current (fourtheenth) 5-year plan implies that China will entirely eliminate its dependence on foreign countries for vital sectors of its economy.[30] In 2022, it presented the new concept of 'comprehensive national security', in which it distinguished between no fewer than 16 types of security ranging from political and military security to cultural, environmental, and space security.[31] This 'securitisation' of the economy is also increasingly seen in the US, which is not only working to decouple itself from China, but is also projecting power itself through the bottlenecks in the global economy over which it has control.[32] Europe's response to this trend is the ambition of achieving open strategic autonomy through a policy based on—to use the terminology of the European Commission—'de-risking'.[33]

[29] An example of AI diplomacy. See also WRR (2021).

[30] Allen (2023).

[31] Drinhausen and Legarda (2022).

[32] Farrell and Newman (2023).

Securitisation of economic policy has serious repercussions for the relations between major power blocs and places a strain on the principle of the open economy. For example, the European Central Bank (ECB) has warned that geopolitical turbulence could destabilise financial markets, thus impacting the macroeconomic prospects for Europe. Volatility can result in investors becoming cautious about high-risk investment. Banks may well respond by raising interest rates and reducing loans.

Given the importance of foreign trade to the Dutch economy (total imports and exports are 177% of Dutch GDP), the Netherlands is also highly vulnerable to these developments.[34] A simulation study by the Dutch central bank (DNB) shows that the effects of fragmentation on trade, production costs, and inflation will be significantly greater in the Netherlands than in the rest of the eurozone. Moreover, the country's economy will not recover to the same extent as that of the eurozone's.[35] A similar study by the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) shows that decoupling trade relations between the West on the one hand and Russia and China on the other will also have a negative impact on the Dutch economy. Moreover, it will lead to costly redistribution between industries. According to the CPB, the cost of adapting will be high, especially in the short term.[36]

Geo-economic dynamics have prompted policy responses in other countries as well. Japan and South Korea have already been focusing on economic security for a decade or so.[37] Japan, for example, appointed a minister for economic security and introduced targeted legislation, while South Korea set up a specialised institute. Japanese companies can draw on government expertise regarding geopolitical risks and other tools and resources. Conversely, companies are themselves required to share information with the government about the risks associated with their overseas investments. South Korea has set up a specialised institute for geo-economic analysis and advice.

Other countries are focusing on greater public-private cooperation on security, including geo-economic security. The governments of Sweden and Finland actively involve companies in policymaking, and Finland has for decades been running a national security course involving leaders from both the public and private sectors.[38] The aim is threefold: to share knowledge about security threats through lectures, to gain practical experience of crises through simulations, and to establish a network of leaders who know how to contact one another when national (economic) security is at stake.

The Dutch government is currently reorienting to a certain extent, for example by setting up an internal Economic Security Network and a high-level government-wide

[33] See the analysis of the goals and instruments of this policy by Pisani-Ferry et al. (2024).

[34] See Bolt et al. (2023).

[35] Bolt et al. (2023: 12).

[36] CPB (2024).

[37] See, for example, Japan Times 2021 https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/10/05/business/economic-security-minister-agenda/; Global Compliance News 2022 https://www.globalcompliancenews.com/2022/07/10/new-act-on-the-promotion-of-japans-economic-security-enacted240622/; Yonhap News Agency 2022 https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220530007500325

[38] See, for example, Burtsoff (2021).

interdepartmental Strategic Dependencies Task Force (TFSA).[39] Within the TFSA, civil servants hold regular consultations with the business community and other civil-society organisations. Other measures include a security strategy for the entire country (including its overseas territories), the Investments, Mergers and Acquisitions (Security Screening) Act (Vifo) as a means of monitoring foreign investment, the National Security Council (NVR), the National Technology Strategy, and continued development of the Cybersecurity Network (CWN). In recent years, the Ministry of Defence has also initiated a national security course based on the Finnish model to unite the public and private sectors when it comes to security. Within Europe, there are also various initiatives for strengthening economic security (see Box 3.4).

At the EU level, the decision to pursue a de-risking strategy has already been made. Depending on the final form and substance of the policy that emerges at the

Box 3.4 To De-risk or Not De-risk?

De-risking is an important issue for many European countries, but the strategies pursued by individual Member States vary considerably.[40] We can distinguish four different categories: frontrunners, followers, cautious followers, and opponents. The Member States in the first category—which includes the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Italy, Lithuania, and the Netherlands—have long been aware of the various areas where they are dependent on China and began taking measures to clamp down well before any EU-wide strategy came into being. Those measures mainly concerned critical technologies and infrastructure. In 2021, Lithuania came up against direct economic pressure from China in the 'Taiwan affair', as a result of which it decided to pull out of the 16 + 1 initiative with China and block the use of Chinese Huawei technology. France has long been pressing for the introduction of robust economic security measures and a European industrial policy, especially in the wake of geopolitically motivated disruptions in its trade relations with China.

Other Member States—including Belgium, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Sweden—have yet to develop their own national strategy, but have adopted the EU approach as regards de-risking.

Next, there are those Member States—including Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Slovakia—that follow the EU strategy but nevertheless remain cautious, partly for fear that measures might damage relations with China, and that stress the importance of maintaining positive links with the country. The same applies to various Member States that have their own strategy, for instance Denmark, which supports European policy initiatives aimed at strategic autonomy while at the same time remaining pragmatic as regards cooperation with China in such fields as green technology.

(continued)

[39] https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/c6613931-cbcf-4dfe-b2bb-037b82455b11/file

[40] ETNC (2024).

Box 3.4 (continued)

Finally, there are a number of Member States that see little point in prioritising de-risking, citing various arguments for that position. Some, Greece among them, stress the importance of economic cooperation with China, referring to investment in such projects as the Belt and Road Initiative. Hungary is entirely opposed to de-risking, viewing it as pressure from the US and Brussels to isolate China. Bulgaria supports EU policy on de-risking, but maintains that its priorities are concerns about Russia and domestic political issues. The same goes for Latvia.

European level, a number of Member States will be have to make trade-offs between security and prosperity. That will be the case, for instance, if de-risking requires the introduction of more prescriptive rules for the internal market, combined with restrictions on both imports and exports with respect to certain trading partners.[41] Whether or not European policy will be successful depends to a large extent on individual Member States. A study commissioned by the European Parliament states the following: 'The progress made in recent years is welcome and the comparison with Japan and the US shows that the EU has learned lessons from these countries. However, some broad challenges remain. The first concerns the coordination and the degree of Europeanisation of certain measures. Many of the economic security instruments are under control of EU countries, while an effective economic security strategy relies on coordinated action by the entire EU. Furthermore, there are moral hazard risks for both companies and countries when risks are shared but incentives are misaligned. Finally, a European economic security strategy has to be underwritten by the Member States and can only be successful if foreign policy is aligned as well.'[42]

Individual Member States will therefore need to decide which choices they are willing to make. For example, what specific choices is the Netherlands willing to make regarding strategic independence—in which fields, to what extent, and at what cost? Tensions will make themselves felt within the triad framework, for example as regards such issues as diversifying export markets and supply chains (security versus values) and whether the government will require companies to build up additional reserves so as to withstand potential future shocks (security versus prosperity). It is vital, however, that an industrial policy aimed at strategic autonomy should not undermine the internal market or the EU's level playing field. Given its open economy, the Netherlands is particularly sensitive to the effects of other countries' industrial policies.[43]

[41] See Pisani-Ferry et al. (2024).

[42] Chimits et al. (2024).

The business community has long been experiencing the effects of the growing geo-economic trend for some time, at both national and international level. Specifically where companies and other enterprises are concerned, there are multiple tensions and issues that will have a greater impact in a fragmenting world.[44] ASML, the Dutch company that manufactures equipment for producing computer chips, is a familiar example, but there are many more less high-profile companies that are running into all sorts of problems due to geopoliticisation of the market. Geopolitical considerations are often at odds with the logic of the open economy and free trad. This problem has been exacerbated by the diminished effectiveness of multilateral institutions such as the WTO, which was set up to promote free trade and act as an impartial arbiter. For instance, geopolitical tensions mean that companies are facing higher prices, while sanctions are reducing the availability of raw materials. In such situations, how can they meet the energy transition targets set by the EU while at the same time remaining profitable? Finding other sources and suppliers of raw materials can also pose significant challenges, for instance because extracting raw materials within Europe is not profitable or desirable due to the strict environmental requirements imposed by the EU. The policies and regulations of different parties within government also sometimes conflict, putting the environment and sustainability against cost-efficient production and/or national interests and geopolitical positioning.

Against this background of increasing geopolitical tensions, which potential cooperation partners are there, based on what considerations and information? And who decides on this? A further complicating factor is that the board of modern multinationals often has a very international make-up. On the one hand, that fact contributes to the global position and image of a company, but on the other, it can complicate decision-making, and the national and/or geopolitical interests of the company's country of origin will not automatically be decisive. This is at odds with a geopolitical market within which companies are also an indispensable asset for national governments.

Furthermore, globalisation means that production facilities and resources abroad are increasingly under foreign ownership, making decision-making even more complex. Such uncertainty is particularly problematic in the case of investments that demand a long-term perspective, including investments already made on the basis of such a perspective. How can companies position themselves when they have already invested for years in, and are based in, countries with which geopolitical tensions are now emerging? This affects not only investments in bulk production, but also and specifically investments in specialised production lines for limited quantities of highly specific substances (such as fine chemicals). Such production lines cannot be re-located easily or quickly. The nature of competition and rivalry

[43] See also the DNB study (cited earlier) by Bolt et al. (2023: 19).

[44] Based on discussions during the WRR/VNO-NCW meeting on the impact of geopolitical dynamics on Dutch businesses, 18 January 2024.

between companies in European countries has changed as well. Do geopolitical considerations mean that companies should now opt to work with one another more frequently than with companies outside Europe? What are the benefits—and for whom—and what costs are involved?

Open economies like the Netherlands do not generally benefit from a global renaissance of classic industrial policy—although that does not mean there is no room in such countries for smart, creative geo-economic policy.[45] The complex question is how governments can leverage and protect strong strategic positions, for example so as to remain competitive with China in the realm of innovative technologies. Germany, for instance, invested billions in the Intel plant in Magdeburg. Achieving 'technological sovereignty'—with state support—is an important aspect of Germany's de-risking strategy (see above). The United Kingdom is also making efforts to 'cultivate the UK's strengths', with the priority being to 'generate strategic advantage through S&T'. To that end, a National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) has been set up, chaired by the Prime Minister.[46] The Netherlands also boasts a number of economically strong sectors that can be deployed strategically (see Box 3.5).

Box 3.5 The Netherlands as a Geo-economic Player

There are a number of arenas in which the Netherlands is a relevant global player. The Dutch semiconductor industry, with ASML and the rapidly developing Brainport Eindhoven around it, are obvious examples. The Netherlands is also among the biggest exporters of agricultural products and is a leader in research and development (R&D) in the field of food and crop production. Rotterdam has Europe's largest port and the country is a major hub for submarine cables and internet exchanges. The Dutch company AllSeas is a pioneer in the laying of such submarine cables.

With the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC) in Noordwijk and construction of a Galileo Sensor Station on the Caribbean island of Bonaire, the Netherlands is also a potentially important player in space. Dutch universities and companies are leaders in semiconductors, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and emerging technologies such as photonics and quantum computing.

Finally, the Netherlands is among the top five most important digital hubs worldwide. This, too, can offer opportunities: the country possesses a great deal of ICT know-how and is therefore potentially capable of establishing a strong position within Europe and beyond.[47] Vice versa, it means that the Netherlands is vulnerable to hacking, spying, and manipulation, both digital and physical.

[45] See VNO-NCW (2024), and the assessment framework for smart industrial policy drawn up by the AIV: AIV (2022a).

[46] HM Government (2023: 56). This is an updated version of 'Integrated Review, Global Britain in a Competitive Age', presented in 2021.

[47] Ferreiro Gomes and Okano-Heijmans (2023).

An all-important requirement for virtually all countries and all power arenas is a properly functioning digital infrastructure, which is indispensable for society and for prosperity. National economies are highly interconnected, and complex global supply chains cannot be managed without the rapid transfer of knowledge by means of digital technology. A digital infrastructure is also indispensable for a number of critical public services, such as health care, education, and logistics. A digital outage may lead to parts of society being disrupted.[48]

Europe depends for its digital infrastructure on the US and China in particular. In this context, we distinguish between the design/discovery, production/manufacturing, and imposition/installation of digital infrastructure. As far as design/discovery ('elevated' know-how) and imposition/installation are concerned, Europe is particularly dependent on the US. Silicon Valley is still where most software and hardware is designed/discovered (with ChatGPT as one of the latest examples), while 'Big Tech' companies like Amazon and Microsoft control more and more of the submarine infrastructure that connects up continents. For hardware production, Europe is largely dependent on countries such as China (factories, metals) and countries in Central Africa (metals).

Increasing geopoliticisation means that the system of connection through digital technology is becoming ever-more vulnerable. The number of cyberattacks is increasing. Countries are able to disseminate propaganda quickly and easily and gain remote access to critical sectors. This raises the question of how countries can protect themselves, while at the same time harnessing the potential of digital technology to enhance their prosperity and values.

Intelligence services are struggling to find the necessary means to counter vulnerabilities and cyberattacks. The security gap—i.e. the number of threats as opposed to the manpower available to counter them—is widening.[49] For example, the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) must comply with all kinds of legal requirements, whereas attackers from other countries have more room for manoeuvre in that respect. The Netherlands will need to be increasingly mindful of security issues[50]: where are data being stored? Who does the digital infrastructure belong to, and who has access to it? Who designed, produced/manufactured, and installed it? Which sectors are vulnerable and critical? Who are the cyberattackers and how do they operate? How can we cooperate more effectively with foreign partners and what conditions will apply, given the differences in the statutory regulations governing the work of the services in the various countries involved?[51]

Securitisation means that Europe is increasingly having to perform a balancing act within the triad of security, prosperity and values. The expanding arsenal of security legislation and the increasing role of intelligence services may well have

[48] WRR (2019).

[49] Based on discussions during the WRR meeting on digital security and geopolitics (February 2024).

[50] Stolwijk et al. (2024).

[51] Prins (2024a: 432).

implications for the privacy of individuals and companies. Moreover, opting for different parties that have proved their reliability when installing digital infrastructure may have cost implications.

Compromising the Democratic Rule of Law

It is not only economic sectors that are affected by the projection of geopolitical power; democratic processes are just as much a target. The same applies to the facilities that form the foundation of Europe's welfare states. Multiple European countries are facing cyber disruption. Given their heavy reliance on digital facilities, numerous other sectors—including critical infrastructure—are vulnerable to such disruption,[52] for example electricity, water management, social security agencies, health care institutions, and the financial sector. The European Central Bank (ECB) is also concerned about the geo-economic implications of large-scale cyberattacks.[53]

Some states are deploying migration as a weapon, violating human rights and attempting to put pressure on democratic societies where migration is a sensitive political issue. There are also concerns about the projection of power through diasporas, such as the influence wielded by the Turkish regime through 'the long arm of Ankara'.[54] In the media arena, there is growing tension between security and values. *Russia Today* and *Sputnik* have long functioned as channels for Russian propaganda. Additionally, it was revealed in 2024 that Russian influence also operates along unexpected routes, with the Czech secret service disclosing that the *Voice of Europe* news portal had attempted to influence politicians. The risks are also apparent from the many reports of disinformation being circulated so as to influence the outcome of elections.

Policy has now been drawn up for various arenas. Among other things, the EU is working on measures to prevent the weaponisation of migration and the spreading of disinformation, and to protect know-how. Here too, considerations regarding principal policy goals are involved in each case. Academic freedom and scientific independence are core values in an open democratic society, whereas imposing requirements based on knowledge security is at odds with it. However, there are increasing concerns—driven by considerations of both security and prosperity—that commercially valuable know-how is being stolen or used for malicious purposes. Many research activities inherently possess a dual-use nature: research conducted in one country for peaceful purposes can be repurposed elsewhere for military ends (see Box 3.6).

[52] WRR (2019).

[53] See European Central Bank press release on cyber resilience stress test in 2024: https://www.bankingsupervision.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2024/html/ssm.pr240726~06d5776a02.en.html

[54] Van der Linde (2013).

Box 3.6 Knowledge and Knowledge Security at Stake

Knowledge development and innovation are vital for the economy (and its transformation) and for countries' position in the world.[55] Both development and innovation have come under increasing pressure as they are drawn into the realm of geopolitics. Universities and other educational institutions have for many years invested in international and English-language courses and in attracting foreign students. That investment has paid off: the number of foreign students has increased significantly and multiple European universities are now among the global leaders in various scientific fields. Companies have been able to capitalise on this strong position by attracting knowledge and talent that emanates from these educational institutions.

Against the backdrop of a fragmenting world order, however, knowledge and talent are becoming the subject of geopolitical conflict more frequently and more explicitly than before. In 2024, the European Commission made a proposal for ensuring knowledge security in the research sector to bring it more in line with the European economic security strategy.[56] Additionally, individual Member States and companies are putting measures in place to keep their own talented people on board and prevent strategic knowledge and information being leaked.[57]

In this case, the geopolitical rationale conflicts with that of science and innovation. Restricting the influx of foreign students will reduce the available pool of talent, while shielding information is contrary to the concept of academic freedom and scientific progress.[58] As a result, companies and educational institutions are facing a number of difficult challenges in terms of security, values, and prosperity, with little attention paid to foreign policy goals regarding these topics.[59]

Globalisation has resulted in companies' supply chains becoming wide-ranging and complex. Given that so many parties and countries are involved, shielding, protecting, or restricting the dissemination of information is easier said than done. Companies sometimes pay sizeable sums to acquire knowledge from universities through internships or PhD programmes. When does

(continued)

[55] See also AWTI (2023).

[56] European Commission (2024).

[57] See, for example, national knowledge security guidelines in the Netherlands and a research security organisation in Germany: https://english.loketkennisveiligheid.nl/documents/publications/2022/04/07/national-knowledge-security-guidelines; https://sciencebusiness.net/news/germany-mulls-new-research-security-organisation

[58] KNAW (2023).

[59] Based on discussions during the WRR/AWTI knowledge security meeting on 2 October 2023 and the WRR/VNO-NCW meeting on 18 January 2024.

Box 3.6 (continued)
this become bribery and are universities able to resist it (and if so, how)? The same applies to universities when dealing with invitations for foreign conferences. These used to be an important feature of international knowledge sharing and networking, but they now involve the risk of knowledge and information being leaked.

In fundamental scientific research, it is difficult to determine in advance whether the knowledge developed in this way will be of strategic value at a later stage and must therefore be protected or restricted in the context of collaboration with foreign universities or companies.

How and on what basis can a risk assessment be made? Such a risk assessment may well be easier in the case of applied research, but a much more difficult question then becomes which students or researchers should be excluded. Who is responsible for checking their background, how can information be obtained, and who takes the decision on this? How can one ensure that processing their personal data does not contravene privacy and anti-discrimination legislation—values that Europe holds dear? Situations may also arise when researchers themselves become the target of threats when investigating geopolitically sensitive topics. Who can they then turn to for support? In essence, these and countless other issues affect the division of responsibilities between government, businesses, and educational institutions.

3.4 World Views

The fragmentation of world views has wide-ranging effects, once again confronting governments with difficult trade-offs between security, values, and prosperity. Even more than with the other two vectors of fragmentation, global developments affect all levels of government, striking right at the heart of society. We will consider three issues: domestic friction resulting from international developments; the democratic rule of law; and equality in relations with the Global South.

Domestic Frictions Resulting from International Developments
Global developments have an impact on European politics and society. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have led to domestic controversies and tensions throughout the world, the diversity of political convictions has become both visible and audible: in demonstrations and protests, clashes between students and university administrators over calls to end cooperation with institutions that violate human rights, and an increase in anti-Semitic incidents.

In many parts of Europe, there has been an increase in 'affective polarisation', i.e. the feeling that different groups are opposed to one another.[60] Tensions elsewhere in the world are making themselves felt close to home: in the neighbourhood, at school, and right in people's living rooms. An example from the recent past is the controversy about the return of European and Dutch IS women and their children from Syria, which highlighted tension between security (the safety of Dutch society given the potential threat of terrorism) and values (the fundamental rights of Dutch citizens and their children), demonstrating how security decisions made as a result of foreign policy influence domestic issues.

The controversies regarding institutional racism, colonialism, and slavery that have surfaced in former European colonial states are less explicitly tied to a particular situation elsewhere, but they are closely linked to the fragmentation of world views. In the Netherlands, too, this has led to a range of investigations (including self-evaluations) and measures by authorities and public institutions.[61] Nevertheless, differing perspectives continue to simmer, and there is still a long way to go.[62] This is illustrated by the controversy and associated incidents regarding the Dutch cultural phenomenon of Zwarte Piet (Black Pete), a figure in the annual Sinterklaas (Santa Claus) pageant who has traditionally been played by a white person in full blackface makeup, with a curly black wig and hoop earrings. Protesters have campaigned for years to have the ritual stripped of racist elements originating in the colonial era. In response, numerous municipalities have opted for a toned-down version of Piet, with the blackface being replaced by multicoloured ('rainbow') makeup or just a few dabs of soot (supposedly from descending down the chimney). Although there is now far less support for the 'old style' Piet, there are also groups that protest against his disappearance. The clash between the groups for and against has manifested itself in demonstrations and counter-demonstrations during Sinterklaas parades. Local authorities have had to grapple with the difficult choice between security (public order) on the one hand and values (the right to demonstrate) on the other. In some places, that choice backfired and not enough protection was provided for protesters and human rights observers.[63] Conflicts elsewhere in the world are leading to domestic discord not only in the Netherlands, but elsewhere in Europe as well (see Box 3.7).

[60] Reiljan (2019).

[61] Cf. the letter to the House of Representatives from the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations on tackling institutional and other types of racism, 25 January 2023, https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-35764485c104a250295612ec8601a97f17aec0f3/pdf

[62] Frevert (2020: 71). Nevertheless, previous experience during periods of social turbulence does offer insights into what has and has not worked in the past.

[63] See IJV (2023).

Box 3.7 Regional Conflicts That Divide Society

A number of EU Member States have seen increasing domestic polarisation and conflict in response to wars along Europe's external borders. In many European countries, for example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has aroused fierce and conflicting emotions, prompting demonstrations and counter-demonstrations in many cities and at universities.[64] EU Member States have failed to present a united position on the issue at the multilateral level, as became evident in voting on a ceasefire resolution in the UN General Assembly.

A recent comparative study by the Mercator Forum for Migration and Democracy (MIDEM) on polarisation in ten European countries identified the war in Ukraine and its attendant refugee flows as key drivers of polarisation.[65] Italy stands out with its significantly high level of affective polarisation, particularly with regard to migration. Germany, meanwhile, is deeply divided not only on migration, but also on the issue of support for Ukraine.[66]

Threats to the Rule of Law

Beyond society, the fragmentation of world views also affects the rule of law. That fragmentation manifests itself, for example, in legal proceedings instituted by members of the public. In a democratic rule of law, the judiciary plays an important role by reviewing and if necessary correcting government policy. Even regarding foreign and security policy, society—guided by particular world views, may also disagree with political and policy decisions. In recent decades, individuals and interest groups have taken action through the courts to compel the government to alter decisions it has made when security clashed with values (human rights). Examples include the deployment of cruise missiles on Dutch soil in the 1980s, the aforementioned repatriation of IS women and their children, and more recently the delivery of parts for F-35 fighter aircraft to Israel from the Netherlands.

Motivated by different world views, citizens are actively working to compel policymakers and politicians through the courts to make every effort possible to protect the human rights (values) that are at stake in security policy decisions.[67] One example are the legal proceedings and campaigns initiated by members of the public and NGOs to stop the supply of parts for fighter aircraft to Israel (see Box 3.8).

[64] https://aspeniaonline.it/the-gaza-war-a-new-cleavage-for-europe/

[65] MERCATOR (2023).

[66] See Financial Times 2024 'Germany, political extremism and the risks to Ukraine': https://www.ft.com/content/b009c2e6-790f-489d-98e6-c36e856401bb

[67] For details of the discretion that the courts have for review in this area, see Tjepkema et al. (2024).

Box 3.8 Conflicting World Views Before the Courts

Since 7 October 2023, deliveries of spare parts for F-35 fighter aircraft to Israel from various countries have increased significantly. These aircraft—and thus the parts concerned—are being used in attacks on Gaza and Lebanon. Many people therefore view them as a potential weapon for serious violations of the humanitarian law. In various countries, members of the public are using legal proceedings, social and political discussion, and demonstrations to put pressure on their government to comply with international agreements regarding the humanitarian law and the multilateral Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In this issue, arguments emerge that can be motivated by different worldviews.

The core argument is that supplying the aircraft parts violates agreements on human rights when they are very likely to be used for bombing. The Israel-Gaza conflict in particular has led to considerable polarisation in a number of Western countries, with supporters of Israel citing, among other things, that country's right to defend itself and the struggle against anti-Semitism, while supporters of the Palestinian cause refer to decades of colonial occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people.

However, the reason so many countries have become involved in this discussion also has to do with the highly globalised supply chain for F-35 parts, comprising more than 1900 companies located across the countries that operate the aircraft.[68] If one of them were to pull out, it could bring the entire F-35 programme to a halt. The production companies jointly supply a global pool of spare parts that is managed by the US.[69] The US does not wish to have to reach agreement with other countries on the transhipment of parts, and it also has a long tradition of expressing unconditional support for Israel. Those who are taking action believe that these arguments should not override the agreements regarding human rights.

Towards the end of 2023, a number of NGOs in the Netherlands requested a court injunction banning the export of parts for the Israeli F-35s. The appellate court in The Hague ruled in their favour in early 2024, but the Dutch government then took the case to the Dutch Supreme Court (the cassation court), arguing on the grounds of principle that the courts do not have jurisdiction to rule on the matter. The Supreme Court's ruling is expected in early 2025. In the UK, individuals are attempting through campaigns, protests, and even sabotage at companies to get the government to restrict the trade in warplane parts.[70] Legal

(continued)

[68] See also Middle East Eye 2024 'Legal battles loom over supply chain keeping Israeli F-35s flying over Gaza and Lebanon' https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-US-f-35-global-supply-legal-spare-parts

[69] https://nos.nl/artikel/2526413-nederland-zegt-export-van-f-35-onderdelen-aan-israel-niet-te-kunnen-stoppen

[70] See for example: https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/war-gaza-british-officials-warned-criminal-liability-over-f-35-exports-israel

Box 3.8 (continued)
proceedings have also been initiated in Denmark and Canada to compel the government to stop supplying weaponry and parts, including for F-35s.[71]

The fact that various aspects of different world views are involved—globalisation and global convergence, humiliation and revisionism, traditionalism and civilisation, anti-imperialism and post-colonialism—means that it is not just public debate but also judicial proceedings that are affected by the fragmentation of world views.

Likewise, operations of the Dutch intelligence services are another example that we wish to highlight,[72] as they once more involve the complex balance between security and values (in this case, privacy and the secrecy of communications). A specific complicating factor is that the activities of these services take place to a large extent outside the realm of public and political debate and therefore potentially conflict with the principles of public scrutiny and accountability as essential pillars of the democratic rule of law.

Precisely because their work requires the intelligence services to operate in silence and secrecy, public and political debates about their performances are both sensitive and easily skewed. In a world that is becoming more dangerous and complex, the tone of such debates is likely to become increasingly shrill. The Dutch investigative journalist Peter Koop has stressed the importance of a nuanced approach: 'The media reports about Snowden's revelations have caused nightmares for many people, but the original documents reveal a far more complex reality that the intelligence services will now come up against. That will require a nuanced approach, with the basic legal principles of necessity, proportionality, and subsidiarity still being the best guide.'[73] Certainly at a time when world views are capable of sharpening and colouring societal sentiment about how the intelligence services operate, they will need to decide what should remain enclosed within their closed inner world and what can be shared with the political and social world outside.[74]

Cooperation Based on Equality with the Global South

The voice of countries in the Global South is becoming increasingly relevant within international organisations. These countries also possess critical raw materials that are of great importance for the prosperity of EU Member States. The relationship

[71] https://armstradelitigationmonitor.org/overview/canadian-arms-and-palestine/

[72] For a further explanation of these activities, see the threat assessment published jointly by the MIVD, AIVD, and NCTV: AIVD et al. (2022).

[73] Koop (2018: 145).

[74] Unsurprisingly, the services are now working towards greater transparency, as illustrated by the report—in early 2024—about the hack at the MIVD. Two books have also been published that provide further insights into the work of the services: De Graaff (2022); Hijzen et al. (2024).

[75] AIV (2022b).

between them and the West has changed significantly in recent years, with the fragmentation of world views emphatically playing a role. The post-colonial world view exposes and denounces the economic, cultural, and humanitarian consequences of centuries of Western supremacy. This viewpoint has gained a great deal of political currency (sometimes even within Western countries), influencing the debate about the classic Western approach to international 'development cooperation', whereby economic development was financed on condition that the recipient country would comply with the donor country's imperatives in such areas as fiscal prudence, human rights, and sustainability. Examples are to be found in the policy of international organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank, but also in that of individual countries. However, this policy had led to donors coming in for increasing criticism. Besides, there are now other countries and alliances that no longer make economic and trading agreements and commitments dependent on normative conditions. The BRICS countries' New Development Bank (NDB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), for instance, provide loans without attaching conditions regarding such matters as human rights.

With its recent Africa Strategy, the Netherlands is taking steps towards a more equal relationship with countries in the Global South, although that strategy also illustrates the tension that this new attitude entails. The Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) recently advocated 'a Dutch Africa strategy that—against the background of the (geo)political context and from the perspective of Dutch and European interests—seeks to dovetail with African needs and wishes. In this way, European and African countries can jointly define shared interests that enable them to withstand the shocks of an increasingly harsh reality.' For emphasis, the AIV added that this would 'give actual substance to the equal relationship, which is often advocated but not implemented in practice.'[75] Other European countries are also reassessing their policy and strategy on cooperation with the Global South (see Box 3.9).

Box 3.9 The European 'Rediscovery' of Africa

In recent years, a number of European countries have developed their own Africa strategy with a view to strengthening their position on the African continent. All these strategies focus on economic growth, security, stability, and cooperation on migration and the climate.

Germany has opted for a broad economic approach through multilateral structures and the promotion of private partnerships.[76] The post-Brexit UK is seeking new economic opportunities with a focus on trade and the Commonwealth. However, the Chatham House think tank has warned against clinging to the same old patterns, stressing that major investment is needed on

(continued)

[76] https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/mta-joint-futures-39-africa-has-a-lot-of-respect-for-germany-but-this-must-be-preserved

[77] https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2024-09/how-britain-can-catch-race-win-global-souths-trust

Box 3.9 (continued)
the diplomatic front, especially in the light of the UK's colonial past.[77] France is focusing strongly on francophone Africa—where it has recently been losing a lot of ground at a rapid pace—and on military cooperation with African countries. As a result, it is reaching out to other partners in the region and reevaluating its relationship with francophone Africa.[78] Italy is concentrating on North Africa and the Mediterranean region, and is particularly eager to curtail irregular migration. At the same time, it aspires to become an energy hub between Africa and Europe.[79] Estonia, a country with no colonial past, is looking towards security and cyber resilience, leveraging its reputation as a digital frontrunner within Europe to offer digital expertise to African countries.[80]

While the aspiration to ensure equality forms part of the necessary response to the fragmentation of world views, it is proving difficult to achieve in actual day-to-day practice.[81] Moreover, governments have only limited influence on the attitude of the business community when it comes to investing and trading on a basis of equality with countries in the Global South. So far, Dutch companies are showing relatively little interest in those countries, particularly where investment is concerned.[82] This is another issue where there is a conflict between considerations regarding prosperity (the Dutch economy and products and raw materials available for Dutch society), values (a relationship based on equality), and security (limiting the influence of China and Russia in these countries). If the Netherlands wishes to establish a geopolitically robust relationship with countries that matter to it, it will be

[78] https://www.politico.eu/article/france-emmanuel-macron-africa-reset-strategy-francafrique/

[79] https://ecfr.eu/article/dream-bigger-the-next-steps-for-italys-new-africa-strategy/; https://www.euronews.com/2024/05/29/is-italys-new-africa-strategy-a-blueprint-for-europe; https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/Italy-Africa-Fratoianni-the-government%27s-Mattei-plan-and-an-empty-box/

[80] https://www.vm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2021-03/estonias_cooperation_with_african_countries.pdf

[81] See also the Parliamentary report of the Commission debate on the Rutte IV cabinet's Africa strategy and the discussion between members of the House of Representatives and the compilers of related scientific fact sheets: https://www.tweedekamer.nl/debat_en_vergadering/commissievergaderingen/details?id=2023A05293, https://www.tweedekamer.nl/debat_en_vergadering/commissievergaderingen/details?id=2023A03188

[82] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (2022).

necessary to strike a balance and make compromises. One example of this can be found in the AIV recommendations (see above): granting African parties fair and more extensive access to downstream value-creating activities (such as shares in battery production) in exchange for sustainable use of raw materials.

3.5 Values, Security, and Prosperity at Stake

Limited as it may be in terms of perspective and topics, the above analysis does make clear that the effects of global developments permeate the very fabric of society. Multidimensional fragmentation necessitate a comprehensive rethink of supposed 'certainties', an examination of underlying beliefs, and a re-evaluation of the principles underlying policy. Implementing a strategic policy based on awareness and acknowledgement of other world views—and of the history and feelings behind them—hinges on the availability of the necessary knowledge. That this is by no means a given in government circles is illustrated by the following passage from a report on reinforcing the knowledge function of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security: 'One striking finding of our survey was that experts generally refer to Western sources and have little awareness of information sources in the African and Asian world in particular. This means that potentially interesting viewpoints from beyond their familiar Western frame of reference go unacknowledged. Drawing on local sources of information, in addition to identifying developments more broadly, can help create a more balanced picture.'[83]

It is tempting to regard the new uncertainties that confront countries due to the fragmenting world order as a Pandora's box that is better left unopened. After all, difficult debates lie ahead about the price of security in a more turbulent world, how to deal with old and new dependencies, the reliability of existing partners and alliances, and the utilisation and revitalisation of normative frameworks. Furthermore, there is always the argument that small countries like the Netherlands should not overreach on the international stage, especially now that this stage features a whole range of dominant and mutually rivalrous actors. In the final chapter of this report, we argue that the Netherlands—like other European countries—cannot afford to take this approach. An active, responsive, strategic engagement with the fragmenting world order is indeed possible, but it requires considerable effort.

[83] See Kluft and Wilms (2020).

References

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2022a). *Slimme industriepolitiek: Een opdracht voor Nederland in de EU*. Den Haag.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2022b). *Urgentie van een nieuwe Nederlandse Afrikastrategie*. Den Haag.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2024). *Hybride dreigingen en maatschappelijke weerbaarheid*. Den Haag.

Adviesraad voor wetenschap, technologie en innovatie (AWTI). (2023). *In dienst van de toekomst*. Van optimalisatie naar transformatie. Den Haag.

Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD), MIVD & NCTV. (2022). *Dreigingsbeeld statelijke actoren 2*. Den Haag.

Allen, B. (2023). *Beijing rules: How China weaponized its economy to confront the world*. Harper.

Allison, G., Klyman, K., Barbesino, K., & Yen, H. (2021). *The great tech rivalry: China versus the US*. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Anghel, V., & Jones E. (2024). *We need to talk about EU enlargement*. Encompass. https://encompass-europe.com/comment/we-need-to-talk-about-eu-enlargement.

Bolt W, van den End, J. W., de Grip, J., Mavromatis, K., Verhoeks, R., & De Vette, N. (2023). *Geo-economische fragmentatie: Economische en financiële stabiliteit.* De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB).

Braw, E. (2019). *Competitive national service: How the Scandinavian model can be adapted by the UK*. Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI).

Burtsoff, P. (2021). Be prepared. *Monocle, 140*.

Centraal Planbureau (CPB). (2024). *Geopolitieke ontkoppelings- en integratiescenario's voor de wereldhandel*.

Chimits, F., McCaffrey, C., Mejino Lopez, J., Poitiers, N. F., Vicard, V., & Wibaux, P. (2024). *European economic security: Current practices and further development*. Directorate General for External Policies.

de Graaff, B. (2022). *Ongekend en onderscheidend. De geheime geschiedenis van de MIVD*. Boom.

Draghi, M. (2024). *The future of European competitiveness—A competitiveness strategy for Europe*. Retrieved from https://commission.europa.eu/document/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en.

Drinhausen, K., & Legarda, H. (2022). 'Comprehensive national security' unleashed: How Xi's approach shapes China's policies at home and abroad. *Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS).*

Engelke, P., Agachi, A., & Bayoumi, I. (2023). *The future of multilateral peacebuilding and conflict prevention*. Atlantic Council.

European Commission (EC).(2024). *Proposal for a council recommendation on enhancing research security*. Retrieved from https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2024-01/ec_rtd_council-recommendation-research-security.pdf.

European Think-Tank Network on China (ETNC). (2024). *National Perspectives on Europe's De-risking from China*. Retrieved from https://kinacentrum.se/en/publications/national-perspectives-on-europes-de-risking-from-china/.

Farrell, H., & Newman, A. (2023). *Underground empire: How America weaponized the world economy*. Allen Lane.

Ferreiro Gomes, A., & Okano-Heijmans, M. (2023). *Dutch niches for global gateway in the digital domain*. Clingendael. https://www.clingendael.org/publication/dutch-niches-global-gateway-digital-domain

Frevert, U. (2020). *The politics of humiliation: a modern history*. Oxford University Press.

Gavari-Starki, E., Casado-Claro, M. F., & Navarro-Gonzalez, I. (2021). The Japanese educational system as an international model for urban resilience. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(11), 5794. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18115794

Hijzen, C., Jacobs, B., Jansen, R., & van Kampen, F. (2024). *Uiterst vertrouwelijk. Achter de schermen van de Nederlandse geheime diensten*. Querido Facto.
Hirsch Ballin, E. (2022). *Waakzaam burgerschap. Vertrouwen in democratie en rechtsstaat herwinnen*. Querido Facto.
HM Government. (2023). *Integrated review refresh 2023. Responding to a more contested and volatile world*. His Majesty's Stationery Office.
Inspectie Justitie en Veiligheid (IJV). (2023). *Politieoptreden bij de demonstratie van Kick Out Zwarte Piet in Staphorst*. Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid.
Internationaal onderzoek en beleidsevaluatie (IOB). (2024). *Evaluatie van de Nederlandse invloed in de Europese Unie—Grip door begrip*.
Juwitasari, R. (2022). *Saving lives through education for disaster preparedness and awareness: Lessons from Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand*. Heinrich Böll Stiftung.
Kloks, A. (2024). *De toekomst van Europa. Liberale Reflecties, april, 6–15*.
Kluft, S., & Wilms, P. (2020). *Versterking internationale kennisfunctie*. Internationale ontwikkelingen op het beleidsterrein van Justitie en Veiligheid.
Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen (KNAW). (2023). *Kennisveiligheid—KNAW position paper*. Amsterdam.
Koop, P. (2018). De Snowden-onthullingen en ongerichte interceptie onder de Wiv 2017. *Justitiële verkenningen, 1*, 133–147. https://doi.org/10.5553/JV/016758502018044001009
Lavrelashvili, T., & Van Hecke, S. (2022). The end of enlargement? The EU'S struggle with the western Balkans and eastern partnership countries. In T. Lavrelashvili et al. (Eds.), *The EU political system after the 2019 European elections* (pp. 433–454). Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics. Springer.
Mankoff, J. (2022). *Empires of Eurasia*. Yale University Press.
MERCATOR forum migration und demokratie (MIDEM). (2023). *Polarization in Europe; a comparative analysis of ten European countries*. Retrieved from https://forum-midem.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/TUD_MIDEM_Study-2023-1_Polarization-in-Europe_.pdf
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2022). *Gedeelde belangen wederzijds profijt—Beleids doorlichting BHOS artikel 1*. Directie Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie (IOB).
Olsthoorn, S. (2024, May 7). *De stilte rond de Chinese eigenaar van chipmaker Ampleon*. Het Financieele Dagblad.
Pisani-Ferry, J., Weder di Mauro, B., & Zettelmeyer, J. (2024). *How to de-risk: European economic security in a world of interdependence*. Centre for European Policy Reform (CEPR).
Princen, S. (2024). *De herontdekking van de geopolitiek in de Europese Unie*. Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR Working Paper no. 66).
Prins, J. E. J. (2024a). Een internationale rechtsorde voor cyberspionage en intelligence. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 2024*(8), 507.
Prins, J. E. J. (2024b). Oorlogsrechtsstaat. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 2024*(22).
Reiljan, A. (2019). 'Fear and loathing across party lines' (also) in Europe: Affective polarisation in European party systems. *European Journal of Political Research, 59*(2), 376–396.
Segers, M. (2013). *Reis naar het continent: Nederland en de Europese integratie, 1950 tot heden*. Prometheus.
Simpson, B. (2024). *Scandinavia is preparing for war. As NATO expands, Europe's far north is tangibly shifting to combat footing*. Foreign Policy.
Stolwijk, S., Punter, M., Timmers, P., Rabbie, J., Regeczi, D., & Dalmolen, S. (2024). *Towards a sovereign digital future—The Netherlands in Europe*. TNO Vector.
Tjepkema, M., Smeulders C., & Pijnenburg, A. (2024). Staatsaansprakelijkheid voor het buitenlands en veiligheidsbeleid. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 16*.
Urych, I., & Matyasik, G. (2022). Preparing youth for defence: Socialisation, education, and training of young people in Europe for national security. *Security and Defence Quarterly, 38*(2), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/149891
van der Linde, I. (2013, 20 maart). De lange arm van Ankara: Eens een Turk, altijd een Turk. *De Groene Amsterdammer, 137*(12).

van der Putten, F-P., & Kranenburg, V. (2022). *Constraints for engagement with China: Dutch ports and the BRI*. Clingendael.
VNO-NCW. (2024). *Naar een sterker Nederland. Een agenda voor hernieuwd vertrouwen in de toekomst en een weerbaar Nederland*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2017). *Weten is nog geen doen. Een realistisch perspectief op redzaamheid*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2019). *Voorbereiden op digitale ontwrichting*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2021). *Opgave AI, de nieuwe systeemtechnologie*. Den Haag.

Chapter 4
Engaging with a Fragmenting World

4.1 Key Message and Findings

'In the past 30 years, we have become accustomed to peace, freedom, security, and affluence as if it was something natural – like a warm bed, from which it is difficult to wake up.' This was how the outgoing Dutch Minister of Defence, Kajsa Ollongren, opened the Defence and Society conference in the spring of 2024.[1] The present report concludes with an agenda for what should follow that difficult awakening. We will first summarise our analysis and then present three key recommendations, each accompanied by a number of specific proposals.

Having outlined our key message in Chap. 1, we now wish to make it more specific:

1. The time is past when the Netherlands could benefit from favourable international relations. Costly efforts will be needed if it is to sustain itself in an increasingly fraught and turbulent world.
2. Tensions can be expected to arise more frequently within the triad of Dutch foreign policy priorities: the pursuit of values, prosperity, and security. Moreover, the troubled geopolitical waters in which the Netherlands finds itself increasingly impact its domestic socio-political climate. Policymakers will need to find ways to make painful choices, and to legitimate them.
3. The Netherlands must organise itself to confront this new reality. This will affect not only its traditional foreign and security policy actors, but requires mobilisation and involvement of the entire public administration and society as a whole.

Balancing Security, Values, and Prosperity

Dutch foreign policy in the broad sense can be understood in terms of three priorities that are viewed—traditionally and permanently—as essential. Together, these make up the triad of Dutch foreign policy priorities. The first of these priorities is *security*, i.e. a society that is resilient, a system of defence that is credible, and a set

[1] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/toespraken/2024/04/23/toespraak-minister-ollongren-opening-conferentie-defensie-en-samenleving

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*,
Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6_4

of robust alliances to benefit our international security. The second element of the triad comprises specific *values*, such as human rights, a pluralistic democracy, the rule of law, and the international legal order. The third priority is *prosperity*: a world order with open markets within which the economy flourishes and provides the basis for general well-being. The Netherlands will need to be constantly mindful of all three elements of the triad, as they are interdependent.

In this report, the WRR demonstrates that it has become much more difficult to perform that balancing act successfully in the current era. Given the troubled geopolitical waters in which they find themselves, Europe—and by extension the Netherlands—faces more challenging issues than ever before in this century, where the three strategic priorities do not align with one another but rather conflict or even collide. The decisions made by the government and parliament on these matters have a significant impact on the country's international position, as well as on its economy and on Dutch society as a whole.

From a Favourable to a Fragmenting World Order

In recent decades, the Netherlands has benefited significantly from global trends that were favourable to it. From the perspective of the Netherlands, the world became both more democratic and more secure. From the 1970s onwards, the number of democracies steadily increased in what has been called the 'third wave of democratisation'. Post-war European cooperation and the liberalisation of markets that took effect from the 1980s onwards created new economic opportunities, which the new EU Member States particularly benefited from. With the end of the Cold War, the immediate threat of armed conflict disappeared for the Netherlands and those favourable conditions gathered momentum.

From the perspective of the Dutch triad of security, prosperity, and values, the accession of a whole series of former communist states to the European Union from the 1990s onwards presented a win-win-win situation: the European continent became more secure and more democratic, and the internal market expanded. The accession of China (in 2001) and later Russia (in 2012) to the World Trade Organization (WTO) created prosperity, contributing to peaceful international relations and the enforcement of international standards. Their accession also acted as an incentive for increased democratic governance in those countries—or so it seemed at the time.

The global dynamics of those decades yielded all kinds of benefits for Dutch policy. Security, prosperity and values could be aligned more easily than before, with the world becoming more secure and prosperous for the Netherlands. As a result, the Netherlands and the rest of Western Europe were able to avail themselves of what was referred to as the 'peace dividend'. From 1994 onwards, successive Dutch governments made drastic budget cuts in defence spending. Consequently, spending fell well below NATO's then target of 2% of GDP for a long period of time.

In addition, the Netherlands' membership of the world's biggest economic bloc meant that it could set the conditions that external trading partners had to meet. Moreover, the increasing momentum for universal human rights, democracy, and the rule of law was reflected in the creation or strengthening of international

institutions that lent weight to those values. This helped the Netherlands to propagate them in other parts of the world without much risk.

This favourable global situation for the Netherlands has now come to an end. The signs had already been apparent for some time. As far back as 2006, the global trend towards democratisation had stalled. It has now trended downward for quite some time. In 2008, Russia invaded Georgia. In 2014, it occupied the Crimea and invaded Ukraine for the first time. Besides the long-standing conflicts in Sudan, Yemen and Myanmar, war is now raging in Ukraine and Gaza, while various other conflicts and flashpoints have a high potential for escalation, such as in the South China Sea. Since the financial crisis, the ideal of open markets has been under pressure and protectionism has been making a comeback. Countries and blocs are striving for strategic autonomy and numerous trade wars are being waged.

How can these developments be interpreted? In the present report, we speak of a process of fragmentation, but not in the sense that everything is fragmenting and there is no longer any order whatsoever. What we mean specifically is that, compared to the situation in recent decades, centrifugal shifts are occurring along three vectors of fragmentation, namely power centres, power arenas, and world views.

Fragmentation of Power Centres

Given the war in Ukraine, Russia is currently the most immediately threatening power for Europe and, by extension, the Netherlands. Russia is deploying various methods and techniques to expand its sphere of influence. The spectacular growth of China's economy makes that country a superpower that is increasingly coming into conflict with the United States (US). With large-scale projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it is creating an alternative to the post-war world order. India, too, has emerged in recent years as a major power centre occupying a key geopolitical position. For now, however, it is the US that remains the world's most powerful country and a key ally to the Netherlands. At the same time, the American security guarantee for Europe can no longer be taken for granted. Lastly, the EU is an economic power, but it will also need to become increasingly self-reliant as regards other aspects of power as well.

These five superpowers possess very different combinations of power resources and are pursuing different kinds of world order. There are also a multiplicity of medium-sized powers, each with their own independent position and their own agenda. These emerging powers cultivate relationships with the superpowers along multiple vectors (i.e. multi-alignment), resulting in new alliances and partnerships. This goes to show that the fragmentation of power centres does not mean the absence of bloc formation, but rather that—unlike in the 1990s—there are multiple rival powers and partnerships.

Fragmentation of Power Arenas

The pre-eminent arena for projecting geopolitical power is the military one. After years in which the peace dividend set the tone, it is now clear that this power arena is dominant once again and merits our full attention. Other traditional forms of hard power involve making use of currency or the size of a country's economy. In the current world order, however, power is also projected within a considerable number

of more specific arenas, namely geography (in space and on the seas); raw materials and vital resources (energy, food, metals, and drinking water); the physical, digital, and financial infrastructure; knowledge and talent (computer chips, artificial intelligence or AI, biotechnology, quantum computing); individuals (migration, diasporas, and crime); international agreements (standards and regulations); and the media (propaganda and the automated dissemination of disinformation). The fragmentation of these power arenas is taking place across a broad front, with all kinds of global interdependences being harnessed for the projection of geopolitical power and for 'hybrid warfare'.

Fragmentation of World Views

At least from the 1990s onwards, the dominant world view from a geopolitical perspective was one of globalisation and global convergence. Naturally, there were other world views, but they were of less significance. Within just a relatively short period of time, that situation has undergone a drastic change: there is now a whole spectrum of influential world views that conflict with one another, driving and legitimising a political system involving competition and confrontation. Russia's war in Ukraine is in line with a revisionist world view that can also be detected in countries such as China, Türkiye, and Iran. Anti-democratic and anti-rule of law ideas exist in all parts of the world, and are also gaining support again within Western countries. A certain kind of traditionalism unites the Russian Orthodox Church with Christian conservatives in the US and Islamic regimes in the Middle East. An anti-colonial world view is re-drawing dividing lines through the world and is accompanied by a different kind of anti-Western sentiment. This fragmentation of world views means there is not just a single dominant world view, as there was during the Cold War or after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but that differing world views are manifesting themselves simultaneously.

This fragmentation along three vectors has made international relations more complex and turbulent. Moreover, because society and economics are being drawn into geopolitics in all manner of different ways, domestic and foreign policy are becoming increasingly intertwined, with policymakers by no means always able to rely on the support of international institutions under Western leadership. One significant factor here is the way Western norms and practices are increasingly coming in for criticism, not only from afar but also from within. Meanwhile, a number of countries are rapidly developing positions of power in one or more arenas that they may well decide to exploit, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

Implications: The Dutch Balancing Act Is Under Pressure

What do this process of fragmentation and its consequences mean for the Netherlands? For the Dutch, fragmentation has primarily a negative connotation. The time is past when the US and European countries could define the economic and political rules of the global game. The fragmenting world order is putting pressure on all three elements of the Dutch triad and making it more difficult to establish viable trade-offs. Western countries are increasingly facing trade-offs and difficult choices.

Security: The security situation in Europe has deteriorated rapidly and dramatically. The Netherlands may find itself at war once more—something that long seemed unthinkable, but the rivalry between the superpowers now makes it a scenario that must be taken seriously. Moreover, the fragmentation of power arenas means that war can take many different forms. There are already countless attempts, on a daily basis, to hack into the digital systems of businesses and public authorities. In a time of rising international tension, the Netherlands will find itself facing even more attacks on vital infrastructure (both physical and digital) and logistical processes, disinformation campaigns, and other ways of disrupting political processes.

Prosperity: As a competitive trading country, the Netherlands benefits from free and open markets. Now that strategic thinking is permeating economics, this freedom and openness is under pressure everywhere. The economic emphasis is thus shifting from efficiency and cooperation to the reduction of dependencies (also referred to as the pursuit of 'dual circulation', 'strategic autonomy', 'de-risking', and 'de-coupling'). This shift will inevitably involve a loss of prosperity.

Values: Democratic and rule-of-law values are under pressure in many parts of the world. To an increasing extent, the world is confronted by world views that emphasise hostility towards other states and population groups. Many international institutions are becoming paralysed by the formation of blocs, so that the international legal order that was gradually built up in the post-war decades is now in danger of disintegrating.

These three vectors of fragmentation create centrifugal forces, which more frequently and intensively than in recent decades compel choices in the trade-off between security, prosperity, and values. This applies to public authorities just as much as to businesses and civil-society organisations. There are countless examples. For the sake of security, European countries are ceasing to purchase Russian gas. This means they are intensifying economic cooperation with Qatar and Azerbaijan, countries that violate essential values for the EU. India is another example of the dilemma involved. As an alternative to China, India is an important partner where security and economic cooperation are concerned, but that fact reduces the scope for addressing authoritarian tendencies in the policies adopted by the Indian authorities. Conversely, taking a firmer line towards China regarding human rights violations will result in businesses having less access to the Chinese market. A strong emphasis on security can also be detrimental to the economic vitality of certain sectors of the economy,[2] while the vitality of those sectors is in fact crucial for achieving the earning power needed to invest in reinforcing security.

It is important to realise that, in other parts of the world, the reduction in Western dominance resulting from this fragmentation is viewed as something positive, offering opportunities for different voices, interests, and approaches to those of countries such as the Netherlands.

[2] Eski et al. (2023).

4.2 False Temptations: Counterproductive Reflexes

The Netherlands must therefore re-orientate itself in terms of its position in the world. It still has a long way to go when it comes to enhancing its ability to operate strategically and decisively in the present age of geopolitical turbulence, but it is by no means alone in that respect—the whole of Europe is grappling with the implications of the three vectors of fragmentation. This calls for a comprehensive process of reorientation. However, this process may be impeded by a number of counterproductive reflexes. We will discuss three of these: business as usual, simplification, and entrenchment.

Business as Usual

The process of fragmentation has made the global context unfavourable to Europe and the Netherlands, demanding a change in policy. It is precisely under this kind of pressure that policymakers can fall prey to normalcy bias and collective wishful thinking,[3] with uncomfortable developments being marginalised—consciously or unconsciously—and difficult decisions being avoided.[4] However, it is very difficult in a fragmenting world to continue with the 'business as usual' approach of recent decades, which is to maximise all three policy objectives: security, prosperity, and values. Difficult choices need to be made more and more frequently. For example, security considerations make it essential to agree arrangements on raw materials and alternative supply chains with India and multiple African countries. It goes without saying that these will stipulate an economic or political price for agreeing to those arrangements. Moreover, it is by no means guaranteed that linking our values agenda to trade policy and foreign policy will have the intended effect.[5] For countries in the Global South, economic development is more important than values-driven trade. The digital infrastructure offered by China is inexpensive and therefore attractive. If the West wishes to count on the support of the Global South, it will need to make different efforts—and more of them—to gain that support than it has done in the past.[6] Abandoning the business as usual approach also means taking account of extreme scenarios, for instance the potential effects of changes in the political orientation of our key partners and fundamental tensions within our most crucial alliances.

[3] https://www.thebehavioralscientist.com/glossary/normalcy-bias

[4] Maor (2021); McConnell and Hart (2019); Kam (1988); Jervis (2011). This results in an increasing risk of what the 9/11 Commission termed the 'failure of imagination', i.e. rethinking and adjusting matters too little and too late to be able to respond effectively to departures from the trend, emerging threats, and new opportunities that call for policy innovation. https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report_Ch11.pdf. For more about the dangers of wishful thinking, see WRR (2022: 8); OVV (2023: 207).

[5] Pelkmans (2020).

[6] Bunde et al. (2023: Chapter 8).

Simplification

When the gravity of the situation is acknowledged, another temptation arises: the reflex toward simplification. This is an understandable, but problematic response to a world that is becoming more perilous and complex. Take, for example, the misleading allure of the concept of a comprehensive new Cold War. The fragmentation of power centres cannot simply be reduced to two clear-cut opposing camps. The associated idea of de-coupling between the two blocs overlooks the interconnections across various domains. A related simplification involves the belief that democracies will always triumph over autocracies, whereas contemporary autocracies are very different to those of the twentieth century.[7]

There is also a risk of simplification as regards specific countries and regions. For a long time, China was viewed solely as an opportunity, whereas it is now starting to be seen mainly as a threat. That view involves certain misconceptions, namely that China is inherently undemocratic, that its people are totally unconcerned about individual rights, and that the country is run entirely from the top down and based on a master plan. This calls for a more realistic image of China. The same goes for India, which is now often viewed as an opportunity and as offering a solution to concerns about China. A realistic picture of India would take account of problematic internal developments there and the ways in which the country clashes with the West. For its part, the African continent is often perceived as a largely homogeneous group of countries that present a problem mainly because of demographic trends. That view is partly the result of colonial thinking. It also fails to appreciate the diversity of the continent and the potential that some African countries have.[8] A diversified, country-specific approach is needed.

Entrenchment

A final reflex that needs to be guarded against is that of entrenchment. As the world becomes more and more threatening, it is tempting to simply shut it out and seek sanctuary behind one's own walls. Given our analysis, that is an illusion as far as the Netherlands is concerned. First of all, this is because the Netherlands forms part of a major power centre on the world stage—the European Union—within which it can and must operate. Second, the Netherlands is embedded within a web of intergovernmental alliances from which it cannot simply withdraw, and which—one must not forget—make essential contributions to this country's security, prosperity, and values agenda. No longer can any clear distinction be made between 'outside' and 'inside'—flows of goods, information, ideas, and people mean that the world outside is already inside. That is true for every country, but it is definitely so for a trading and knowledge country like the Netherlands that is a hub for many of these different flows. A policy of entrenchment, in which the focus is purely on national priorities and interests, will result in less security, prosperity, and values.

At the European level, the allure of entrenchment is based on the hope that a Fortress Europe will be able to become economically self-sufficient and minimise

[7] Keane (2020).

[8] See, for example, Faloyin (2022).

migration from outside its borders. Total de-coupling is not only undesirable and impossible to achieve, but would also lead to an enormous reduction in prosperity. While there are economic dependencies that need to be addressed, the links and benefits derived from decades of globalisation cannot simply be reversed. De-coupling is extremely costly and in many sectors not even possible. Moreover, the ageing population of many European countries makes it necessary for them to sustain a strategically driven immigration balance for a prolonged period, in particular if they are to retain their public services.[9]

4.3 Scope for Action and Opportunities for the Netherlands

The Netherlands will therefore need to act—and it has the ability to do so. It is often portrayed as a small country with little influence on global developments. That is a false portrayal of the actual situation. The Netherlands may well be geographically small and militarily weak, but economically it ranks just behind the global elite. It owns various key geostrategic assets and enjoys a strong international reputation in a number of fields. There is therefore no need for it to be merely the passive object of the new global interplay of forces. It can in fact play an active part—not only to promote national and European interests, but also to defend the values and institutions founded on international law to which it has committed itself and on which it is itself deeply dependent.

Where *power centres* are concerned, the Netherlands has traditionally had strong ties with the US. The Netherlands also has a substantial voice within the EU and can contribute to its development as a power centre. The emergence of other power centres in Asia, Latin America, and Africa also creates opportunities for the Netherlands where trade and security are concerned.

The country is also a major player in many of the *power arenas*. These include, for example, its businesses (already mentioned several times in the present report) in the field of computer chips (and the machines for manufacturing them); Wageningen University & Research and the Food Valley ecosystem (the food sector); the maritime manufacturing industry; Urenco (enrichment of uranium); the Noordwijk-based European Space Agency (ESTEC); observer membership of the Arctic Council (the North Pole); the Port of Rotterdam in the field of trade infrastructure; the Amsterdam Internet Exchange (AMSIX) and its submarine cables in the field of digital infrastructure; and all kinds of businesses and universities in the field of knowledge and technology. The Netherlands also boasts businesses and research initiatives with great potential in the field of quantum computing and photonics. Moreover, with its strong reputation for multilateralism and as the seat of various international legal institutions, it is able to contribute to the international rule of law.

[9] Staatscommissie demografische ontwikkelingen 2050 (2024) (State Committee for Demographic Developments 2050).

The fragmentation of *world views* raises questions regarding the images (and self-images) and assumptions on which Dutch foreign policy is based, while this fragmentation is expressing itself more and more explicitly in the sentiments voiced within society. Being sensitive to other world views and paying honest attention to underlying motives, emotions, and traditions require soul-searching and a change of attitude, but will also open up opportunities, such as a new approach aimed at more productive relations with African countries[10] or opportunities for a more equal relationship with the Dutch Caribbean where geopolitics are concerned. It is not merely geographical position, but just as much local conditions that determine how one deals with the triad of security, prosperity, and values. In the overseas territories of Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and the BES islands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba), opinions on how to tackle geopolitical challenges differ from thinking in the European Netherlands. The way world views are now undeniably colouring those opinions makes it important to be mindful of them, all the more so given that issues of both foreign affairs and defence are among the tasks and powers of the entire Kingdom of the Netherlands.

4.4 Recommendations

A great deal is already happening, of course, and the Netherlands has been making preparations for embarking on a new course for some considerable time. Even so, the WRR believes that far more is urgently needed. With that in mind, we wish to present three key recommendations, followed by a number of more specific policy proposals. The fragmenting world order compels not only the Netherlands to undertake a radical revision of its political and policy agenda; the same applies to the majority of European countries, meaning that the following recommendations can also serve as inspiration beyond the Netherlands.

Recommendation I: Make the Netherlands more Geopolitically Robust

I.1 Develop and Safeguard the Necessary Expertise

Regarding global uncertainty, Admiral Rob Bauer (the Dutch former chair of NATO's Military Committee) has noted that 'anything may happen at any time' and that one should therefore 'expect the unexpected'.[11] Scenarios that were previously considered extremely unlikely have now become conceivable. The Netherlands therefore needs to become *geopolitically robust*—in other words, develop the capacity to sustain itself in a turbulent environment within which unforeseen but far-reaching developments regularly occur, and within which strategic shocks that upend the entire system cannot be ruled out.

[10] The relationship with other world views (mindsets) is made explicit in the Dutch Africa Strategy 2023–2032, namely on p. 34. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023).

[11] https://www.politico.eu/article/nato-needs-warfighting-transformation-says-military-chief/

The Netherlands must therefore invest in a mix of geopolitical expertise that extends nation-wide.[12] This does not mean more civil servants, but it does mean reorienting the scope and expertise of some civil servants and expanding and enhancing networks to include external sources of expertise. That applies to every Ministry and to all other layers of government. Besides, it is not just a matter of knowledge of international relations; geopolitically savvy professionals in other fields—for example geo-economics and cybersecurity—will also need to be brought in, as well as legal experts who have sufficient geopolitical sensitivity to give shape and substance to the necessary legal instruments, and who also know how regulation can be utilised strategically.

Enhancing geopolitical expertise requires, first of all, *in-depth knowledge of the actors, arenas, world views, and associated dynamics*. Such in-depth knowledge is necessary in a world that has become complex and perilous. Since the end of the Cold War, a great deal of knowledge of Russia's history, politics, and language has vanished in the Netherlands. This will need to be accumulated once more. Knowledge regarding emerging powers such as China and India and regional powers such as Iran and Türkiye—all of which have considerable diasporas in the Netherlands—is also essential. Two good examples in this field are the recently established China Knowledge Network (CKN) and the Russia and Eastern Europe Knowledge Alliance (REKA). The same requirement for knowledge applies to present and future hot-spot regions such as the Sahel, the Caucasus, the South China Sea, the Arctic and Antarctic, and space.

In-depth knowledge of the various arenas is also necessary. Now that the computer chip industry is no longer purely an economic phenomenon but also a factor in geopolitical rivalry, the government needs to be fully informed about developments in that industry so that it can pursue policy within that arena and determine what is in the Netherlands' best interests. Which business could be the next ASML, and how can the Netherlands prepare for it? Knowledge is also needed in order to identify in which respects other countries depend on the Netherlands and which avenues therefore offer opportunities for the Dutch economy.

The fragmentation of world views calls for the development of expertise as well. Only then will it be possible to anticipate the behaviour of foreign actors more effectively, as well as changes and sentiments within society. The war in Gaza makes clear how closely these are linked.[13] Second, it is essential to guarantee that the country has access to *a wealth of sources and interpretations*. The Netherlands is well-situated in that regard, with an extensive network of diplomatic missions and two internationally renowned intelligence services. Dutch knowledge institutions have complex, wide-ranging international networks and outstanding specialist expertise for interpreting geopolitical developments. The public authorities, as well as some civil-society organisations, possess a great deal of expertise when it comes

[12] The WRR has gone into detail about the term 'mix of expertise' in its advisory report *The Expert Government*. For an initial explanation, see WRR (2024).

[13] See Box 3.8, Conflicting world views before the courts.

to utilising digital technology to gather data on global developments. All of these serve as the building blocks for constructing a rich, multi-layered information structure to support both national and international policy.

Furthermore, sufficient high-calibre, transdisciplinary, and culturally diverse analytical capacity is needed to generate the necessary incisive interpretations and ensure that they can be made use of within government and society. Cutbacks in that capacity would be disastrous for the quality of the analyses and advice that help policymakers navigate their way through the geopolitical mists. In a previous report (*Security in an interconnected world: a strategic vision for defence policy*), the WRR recommended setting up both a national security council and a national knowledge institute for security and safety questions. The first of these has in fact been set up, but not the second. As a result, the government relies heavily on external centres of expertise. Such an agency can still be of great value as a support for the strategic culture implied here, which it can nourish with studies, scenarios, and risk analyses. That input could also be used to make Dutch policy more imaginative.

I.2 Ensure That Not only the 'Usual Suspects' of Foreign and Security Policy but also the Traditionally more Domestically Focused Parts of the Government Are Involved in Policymaking

The uncertainties, threats, and opportunities that arise from the fragmenting world order require a government with geopolitical sensitivity and the ability to formulate policy and decisions based on broad national key interests. The 'usual suspects' in the sphere of foreign and security policy are now taking action,[14] but a multitude of other policy domains and all the Ministries are also affected by global shifts. The issue of knowledge security is now being dealt with by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW). The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW) is addressing threats concerning the North Sea, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, and the telecommunication infrastructure (5G). The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) finds itself facing pharmaceutical quasi-monopolies from countries such as China and India and the geopolitical deployment of developments in biotechnology. At the same time, a great deal of policy retains much of a domestic focus, having been developed from departmental perspectives and in coordination with familiar sectoral interests.[15] What is needed is for this to be replaced by a *strategic culture* from within which constituent interests and differing perspectives can be weighed up and assessed. This calls for approaches to policymaking that explicitly involve a wide range of internationally relevant businesses and civil-society organisations that face up to the existence of extreme scenarios, and that place strategic developments on the agenda and address them before they beset the Netherlands.

[14] With sensitivity to new threats and opportunities. See, for example, Ministry of Defence (2023).

[15] See also the report by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the small percentage of civil servants who deal with foreign affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021)). See also Princen (2024) on the necessary sharing of knowledge across departments concerning EU matters.

The fact that it will be possible to create such a system in the Netherlands is demonstrated by the existence of the Netherlands Cyber Security Council, a national advisory body made up of representatives of government, the business community, and academia that focuses on strategic policy and other issues concerning cybersecurity. In addition, the National Security Council has been operating since the end of 2022 and may well become one of the crucial pillars supporting the aforementioned strategic culture at the highest political level. There has also been a noticeable increase in awareness of geopolitical dynamics at some of the specialist Ministries. The Ministry of OCW, for example, recently set up its own network of missions, and many Ministries have specific departments for international affairs. However, more is needed in terms of alignment and coordination, especially as regards relations between different levels of government.

Cooperation and alignment within a strategic culture also involves mobilising other layers of government, for example municipalities. In the face of disruptive developments, other public authorities than the government have important tasks in terms of public order and safety, transport, logistics, and providing shelter for people. Moreover, there are various ways in which authorities such as municipalities operate independently and collectively in international arenas.

Given, for example, the cooperation and tensions between different levels of government during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Netherlands must rethink the way the necessary government-wide coordination is organised. Discussion of this matter often centres on the relationship between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of General Affairs (a relatively small Ministry in the Netherlands). A similar discussion is taking place in Germany, accompanied by serious tensions between the two federal Ministries. This is a situation that the Netherlands needs to avoid. In evaluating Dutch EU coordination—the responsibility of the Ministry of General Affairs—the evaluation branch (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded that such coordination needed to be 'more strategic, more selective, and more skilful'.[16] According to the IOB, heavy workloads have a negative effect on reflection and strategy-making, both of which need improvement if the Netherlands is to play a more prominent and proactive role within the EU.

I.3 Invest in National Resilience and Security

Dealing effectively with a fragmenting world order calls for targeted material investment, even in times of budget constraints. Moreover, this is a matter of long-term development, meaning that the necessary capacity and efforts must be sustained permanently.

Of course, what this involves in any case is a strengthening of the armed forces. This is sorely needed, because it is no longer inconceivable that the Netherlands may become involved in a new military conflict on the European continent. A great deal of overdue maintenance is necessary, new military technology must be developed, and more people will need to be deployed. Enshrining the 2% NATO

[16] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021: 7).

contribution norm in legislation as the country's minimum budgetary defence commitment is a pivotal first step to that end and sends an important signal.[17]

However, national resilience involves far more than strengthening the armed forces, crucial as that may be. In addition to higher defence spending, financial resources are needed to ensure economic and civil resilience, for example to create strategic reserves of oil, raw materials and food, and for major investment in cybersecurity and vital infrastructures. The requisite legal apparatus must also be modernised in order to ensure adequate preparedness and new forms of 'warfare'.[18]

Security presupposes a robust national earning power, while prosperity also requires geopolitically driven investment. If the Netherlands wishes not only to benefit from the opportunities in the various arenas, but also to safeguard its current strategic position within certain economically relevant arenas, it must be able to take the necessary steps to achieve that. The Eindhoven region is a familiar example, but the Netherlands—as previously pointed out—has more cherished jewels in its crown. In both The Hague and Brussels, industrial policy and state aid are complex, contentious issues, but that must not inhibit the investment needed to reinforce strategic positions in vital arenas.

Where investment is concerned, we also mean efforts directly involving new emerging powers and other countries in the Global South. If the Netherlands wishes to secure access to certain countries' raw materials, then those countries will demand other investments in return, as well as contributions to employment. A desire to cooperate more with those countries implies that the Netherlands is willing to make such investments.

I.4 Prioritise Increasing Resilience, but Guard Against Undue Securitisation

'We protect all that we as a nation cherish'—this is the opening statement on the webpage of the Ministry of Defence. However, in a world where actors, arenas, and world views are fragmenting, it is increasingly difficult to identify just what it is we value when specific issues are concerned. The policy challenge is therefore to make today's *sine qua nons* more explicit in our values, security, and prosperity, and to make the necessary trade-offs between them when they cannot be delivered simultaneously or in equal measure. This implies bringing the underlying tensions into the open: tensions between ambitions and costs, between our own self-image and the way Western countries are viewed in other parts of the world, and between divergent political views as to what is in the national interest and something 'that we as a nation cherish'.

In a world that was favourable to the Netherlands, successive governments assigned a lower priority to security, leading to investment falling behind and security awareness waning. A great deal of effort is now required to make up the security deficit.[19] What is required is for security to now be re-incorporated. This

[17] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2024/12/12/tweede-kamer-spreekt-over-vastleggen-navo-norm

[18] Prins (2024).

[19] See previously on this matter WRR (2017).

emphatically does not mean only strengthening the country's armed forces, despite that being one of the *sine qua nons*. Our analysis makes clear that the projection of power now operates within a range of non-military arenas, with what used to be entirely civil arenas now being drawn into the domain of security. Increasing resilience will therefore require a massive transformation. Policy that is economically efficient and promotes broad prosperity will sometimes need to be traded off against policy options that may well be inefficient and burdensome for Dutch society, but that strengthen its resilience. Examples include deciding to stockpile strategic reserves rather than relying purely on just-in-time delivery, or enabling the armed forces to train more intrusively on Dutch territory and in Dutch airspace. At the same time, the country will need to possess and maintain the earning power required to invest in ensuring resilience.

Rapid, substantial 're-incorporation' of security is of great importance, but will involve major challenges. Sacrifices will need to be made. Increasing security will clash more often than not with the other two elements of the Dutch triad, namely values and prosperity. A great deal of effort will be involved in making sound decisions, organising political support for them, and securing the cooperation of public authorities, businesses, and citizens for implementing them. Achieving explicit and properly substantiated trade-offs within the Dutch triad is a necessary condition for this to be successful. It will ensure discipline as regards policymaking and will substantiate one's arguments when justifying geopolitically motivated choices.

Thinking in terms of striking a balance between the three key policy interests will ensure that policymakers do not neglect any of them, but also that they do not turn any of them into an absolute. The policy responses of many countries to the 9/11 attacks showed what can happen when an increase in acute collective fear impacts unfiltered on political decision-making. The result was securitisation of legislation, policy, and enforcement practices to such an extent that it conflicted with standards of democracy and the rule of law. It is indeed essential at this point to step up efforts as regards security, for the simple reason that this element of the Dutch triad has for a long time been neglected, even though the external threats have greatly increased. That said, we must still not lose sight of the values and prosperity elements; the balancing act must continue even in these turbulent geopolitical times. With the triad framework, the WRR offers a perspective that can assist with this balancing act. The analysis in this report shows that the triad can be useful in four different ways.

First, when clarifying *the context in which the balancing act is being performed*: the external context is no longer favourable to the Netherlands and Europe. Security, values and prosperity are no longer aligned with one another; moreover, all three are now experiencing a downward trend. Security is at risk due to armed conflicts and war close to home. Prosperity is under pressure because of increasing protectionism and securitisation of the economy. Values are at stake due to the influence of authoritarian regimes and world views that are also having an impact on Dutch society.

Second, when assessing *the extent to which each element of the triad is properly and firmly factored into policymaking*. Considerable catching up is currently necessary where security is concerned. The Netherlands availed itself of the peace dividend and made major cuts in defence spending. Doing so has made the country

vulnerable. Investing in security applies to both the direct costs of defence and the indirect costs of infrastructure, procurement, and robust supply chains.

Third, so as *to guard against focussing too much on any one particular element of the triad*. Within the fragmenting world order, there is a pronounced trend towards securitisation, which means viewing everything solely through the lens of security. The Netherlands will definitely need to invest more in security, but it can only be secure if it also look after its values and prosperity at the same time. After all, a world without values is also a world that is more insecure, while insufficient prosperity generates insufficient resources for ensuring security.

Finally, looking through the lens of the triad framework shows that there are *no easy answers*. It is precisely by making the elements of the triad explicit that it becomes clear that some painful decisions and trade-offs will be necessary. An uncomfortable message, but one that politicians will need to take to heart. Finding the necessary public support for certain trade-offs requires that citizens know why they need to be made. Dialogue is necessary so as to make clear how the Netherlands—within a turbulent geopolitical context—can balance values, security, and prosperity as effectively as possible and shape them accordingly.

Overview 4.1 For What Purpose Can the Triad Framework of Foreign Policy Be Helpful?

Four ways the framework can help:

1. Clarify the context within which the balancing act between security, values, and prosperity is being performed.
2. Assess the extent to which each element of the triad is properly and firmly factored into policymaking.
3. Guard against focussing too much on any one particular element of the triad.
4. Make it explicit that there are no easy answers and that painful decisions and trade-offs will need to be made.

Recommendation II: Recalibrate the Netherlands' Engagement in Multilateral Cooperation

II.1 Collaborate in Building a Europe That Is a Credible Geopolitical Power Centre but Does Not Relinquish Its Normative Essence

History shows not only that the Netherlands—as one of the founders of European cooperation—can exert a great deal of influence but also that when it failed to keep pace with new developments, it was sidelined and found itself confronted by various *faits accomplis*. The Netherlands therefore needs to continue what Dutch historian and Europe expert Mathieu Segers called its 'journey to the Continent' because, for this country, the EU will continue to be the main platform for exerting collective international economic and political influence.[20] That the EU will need to undergo a rapid major transition under the influence of the fragmenting world order is a given.

[20] Segers (2013).

In the new age in which the country now finds itself, the way the Netherlands engages within Europe will need to focus on strengthening both the EU's geopolitical capacity to act and its geopolitical robustness. Sharing risks and buffers to a greater extent and enhancing collective security are crucial elements of such an approach. This can be translated into four priorities.

First of all, within a more geopolitical EU, the Netherlands will need to deal with *the inherent tension between an EU policy of de-risking and the Dutch preference for economic openness geared to its own economic model*.[21] That tension demands strategic consideration of the price that increased security can be permitted to have as regards external trade and competition-displacing industrial policy, an issue addressed by Mario Draghi in his report on European competitiveness in 2024. The Netherlands must therefore adopt a vigilant and active stance as regards the development of European de-risking policy. At the moment, that policy focuses mainly on diversification of sources, export restrictions and import tariffs, but it needs to be augmented. In the case of imports, for example, de-risking needs to focus on a limited number of product categories for which the cost of disruptions in supply would be high. The Netherlands will also need to be critical when screening European Commission (EC) policy proposals for the effectiveness of the chosen measures and for efficiency, but above all for the retaliation risks that may be involved. Greater attention must be paid to the export blockades and financial constraints that other power blocs may impose on the EU. Risks must also be mitigated by reducing the extent of economic integration with major trading partners with which chronic conflicts either already exist or may in future arise.

Second, the Netherlands must press for *better adherence to the EU's foreign policy*, which is determined collectively by the Member States—compliance that is to a considerable extent lacking. For example, there was a great deal of emphasis on the unity displayed by the EU in imposing sanctions on Russia, whereas actual implementation of those sanctions is being systematically undermined by turning a blind eye to the increasing export of dual-use products from European countries to former Soviet republics in central Asia, which then redirect them to Russia. In the meantime, European shipping companies are transporting Russian oil around the world. This situation cannot be allowed to continue.

Third, as a 'trading nation', the Netherlands must *push for broadening the EU's external economic relations*.[22] At the 2023 G20 summit in Delhi, President Modi responded to China's BRI by announcing the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), with which he aims to improve mutual connectivity. There is a task to give concrete shape to such ambitions better sooner than later. ASEAN (the political and economic association of ten countries in South East Asia) and the African Union—two blocs made up of small and medium-sized powers—also stand to benefit from open markets and multilateral cooperation.

[21] See Box 3.4, To de-risk or not de-risk?

[22] See Box 3.3, Seeking new partnerships.

Fourth, to be successful in this, the Netherlands will need to *reposition itself with regard to the new intra-European balance of power*. For the Netherlands, Brexit meant the loss of an important partner with which it shared much common ground. It now needs to focus more than before on the Franco-German axis, on pragmatic cooperation with the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, and on strengthening ties with the Eastern European countries that are becoming increasingly significant within the EU. Renewed efforts are also being made to boost European cooperation on defence and diplomacy. As we know, the EU is by no means the only relevant forum for this and the EC's methodology is not the only approach. A great deal also takes place within a wide variety of 'minilateral' structures and other multilateral contexts, for example the European Political Community, which includes countries that are not EU Member States but are key players when it comes to security. The way Dutch diplomacy is organised and operates needs to be geared to this variety. It is the nature of the issue and the opportunities for progress that should be decisive, not the existing arrangements and repertoires.

In the midst of all the geopolitical turbulence, it is easy to overlook the fact that European cooperation involves more than the familiar self-interests of the Member States.[23] That cooperation began from the desire for 'war never again' and soon took a turn towards 'prosperity through open borders'. However, there is a deeper underlying level, namely that of Europe as a community of values and as a democratic project. In a fragmenting world order, that normative core of the European project is under pressure from both outside and within. In a geopolitical Europe that focuses entirely on 'safety first', that normative core may even become completely submerged. The Netherlands must strive to ensure that this does not happen. To that end, it must work towards a European Union in which—despite adopting a more robust and disciplined geopolitical stance—the Member States still remain committed to the principles of democracy, fundamental rights, tolerance, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Netherlands will therefore need to press for a Europe that has a robust normative core while at the same time allowing scope for diversity in achieving it.[24]

II.2 Push for Reforms of Existing Multilateral Institutions That Strengthen Their Effectiveness and Credibility

Commitment to the values of institutions such as NATO, the UN, and the WTO and actively working to improve their capacity to act continue to be of crucial importance. Conflicts may well arise between Dutch interests and the actual path pursued by those institutions, but that does not alter the fact that multilateralism should remain the Netherlands' aim at all times. This means that the Netherlands must commit to the constructive reform agendas adopted by these institutions, but also to specific initiatives to strengthen cohesion across institutional boundaries. One example is the recent emphasis on emerging and disruptive technologies within

[23] See Box 3.1, National interests under threat.

[24] WRR (2018).

NATO, on digital sovereignty within the EU, and on cooperation within the EU-US Trade and Technology Council.

Concerns about the firmness of the US security guarantee and US accusations that European members of NATO are not pulling their weight are nothing new. It was not all that long ago that the alliance was in fact declared to be 'brain dead'.[25] Criticism of the UN's effectiveness, internal functioning, and financial accountability has been ongoing for some time. Meanwhile, there is growing dissatisfaction with the paralysis of the UN Security Council, which is increasingly dominated by fragmenting power centres. These trends are in line with such developments as China's influence on the World Health Organization (WHO) during the COVID-19 pandemic, the politicisation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the disfunction of the Human Rights Forum, which in November 2023 had Iran as its chair. *The Economist* devoted a major article to the proposition that the international economic order is 'slowly coming apart', with a WTO that has 'spent more than five years in stasis' and an 'IMF that is gripped by an identity crisis.'[26]

When it comes to the future prospects for these institutions, however, the many sceptical accounts over the past few years fail to tell the full story. Studies now provide a clearer picture of both the success and failure factors and what Schütte calls 'survival politics for international organisations'.[27] These insights point the way to a revision of policy, involving among other things a commitment to institutional reforms that are already on the agenda and the willingness to take seriously the views of the Global South concerning the agenda and decisions of international institutions.[28] It also implies greater focus and prioritisation in the agendas of these institutions, as well as the ability and boldness to opt for unconventional measures.[29]

The Netherlands can contribute by reviewing the fundamentals and scope of more representative international institutions. However, the need to take seriously hitherto underrepresented voices and efforts to democratise international institutions does not mean that the Netherlands should support every demand for institutional reform. Even allowing for the variation in non-Western views, it is obvious that some of those views clash with the Netherlands' interest in economic openness and international security. They may also conflict with a number of core values that have underpinned multilateral institutions since 1944. Of the countries seeking to exert greater influence on the functioning of international institutions, a large proportion are non-democratic, thus automatically raising the question of what interest their governments are articulating.[30] Indeed, authoritarian leaders may well conceal

[25] Cf. Francken et al. (2021).

[26] Quotations from https://www.economist.com/leaders/2024/05/09/the-liberal-international-order-is-slowly-coming-apart

[27] Schütte (2024).

[28] Demir and Jackson (2024); Blokker (2019). See also Box 3.9, The European 'rediscovery' of Africa.

[29] Dijkstra et al. (2024).

[30] Cf. https://ourworldindata.org/democracy

their personal interests behind a rhetoric of alternative (non-Western) values. Revitalising multilateralism means piercing through this smokescreen and investing in links with other parties that uphold values which the Netherlands considers important. The leaders of coups in the Sahel, for example, employ fiercely anti-Western rhetoric, whereas the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has declared itself in favour of democracy.

II.3 In Addition, Forge New International Partnerships to Tackle Emerging Issues That Cannot Be Addressed Within Existing Partnerships

The Netherlands cannot contribute to the survival and direction of existing international institutions alone. The emergence of new issues and new international relations sometimes also calls for new partnerships.

As it has done in the past, the Netherlands can pursue initiatives to establish cooperation procedures, standards, and supervision mechanisms. One good example is the conference on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) that the Netherlands set up jointly with South Korea in order to establish arrangements for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military domain (and limits on how it should be used).[31]

Such initiatives will require a great deal of time and effort, making it extremely important to establish strategic priorities. Two considerations can be helpful in that regard. First, the Netherlands can demonstrate greater initiative in domains where it boasts strong expertise and reputation and thus convening power.[32] The most obvious example is of course the semiconductor industry, in which such businesses as ASML, ASM, and NXP make the Netherlands a global player. The geopolitical pressure on that sector has been clearly apparent for years now. There is therefore good reason for greater coordination with South Korea, which is also a major player in this market (specifically in memory chips) and which, like the Netherlands, is feeling the consequences of China-US tensions. Other key players in this arena, such as Germany, France and Japan, should also be involved.

The food industry is another arena in which the Netherlands is a major player and could therefore establish strategic partnerships.[33] Partners might include the other top exporters (the US, France) and countries that dominate the market for certain raw materials (Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia, and Morocco). Other domains within which the Netherlands has a global position are water management and expertise as regards the effects of climate change on deltas. Countries neighbouring the Dutch Caribbean could become partners. In addition, the Netherlands could play a leading role in the recently launched Greater North Sea Basin Initiative and similar initiatives of this kind.

Second, the Netherlands can enter into partnerships and alliances with countries that have a similar position and interests in the context of international relations: open economies that are competitive and innovative, but that also find themselves

[31] WRR (2021).

[32] See Box 3.5, The Netherlands as a geo-economic player.

[33] See Box 2.1, The geopolitics of food.

surrounded by larger and more powerful countries. Countries in many parts of the world qualify for what might be termed a 'league of small pioneers'.[34] Potential members include South Korea, Singapore, Oman, Chile, Costa Rica, Botswana, Tunisia, New Zealand and, in Europe, the Scandinavian countries, the Baltic states, and Switzerland. While it is true that such a forum would not bring together the world's most powerful countries, the similar position of these countries can still lead to their pursuit of shared interests. Moreover, a forum of this kind would unite countries that are forced to be 'smarter' than their neighbours. Sharing knowledge and best practices between the members could serve as a lever in that regard.

Recommendation III: Mobilise and Work with the Whole of Society

III.1 Explain Clearly How Much Is at Stake and How Significant the Challenges Are

The task here is to ensure thorough public awareness of what is happening in the world beyond our delta and, consequently, what efforts the Netherlands needs to take in terms of adapting. This is by no means a simple task. The main focus of many Dutch people is inward, on their own living environment and on the here-and-now of their day-to-day existence. A sizeable majority, while satisfied with their own lives, are concerned about developments within society and lack confidence in the authorities.[35] Nevertheless, they have little or no idea of the fundamental changes that are taking place throughout the world. Many are unaware that vital public services, their standard of living, and possibly even their freedom may be at stake. For example, few Dutch people appear willing to fight if their country becomes involved in a military conflict (16%), perhaps also because virtually nobody has seriously considered the possibility of war in recent decades.[36]

Public support for a geopolitically robust Netherlands is an essential precondition for embarking on a new course. The basis for that support is a better understanding of what is actually happening, what it means, and what we need to prepare for. There have been sporadic attempts in recent years to ensure such understanding.[37] In the media and at meetings with parliamentarians and government, researchers, senior intelligence officials, and high-ranking military officers have spoken out in no uncertain terms about the rising temperature of geopolitical dynamics and the

[34] https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2019/01/11/hoe-oman-en-chili-nederland-sterker-kunnen-maken-a3483716

[35] SCP (2024).

[36] Survey commissioned in 2022 by the TV programme *Dit is de kwestie* (This is the issue): https://www.motivaction.nl/actualiteiten/nieuwsberichten/weinig-nederlanders-bereid-te-vechten-voor-het-vaderland

[37] The fact that more is needed is also the point of a number of motions in the Dutch House of Representatives. A motion submitted by Member of Parliament Laurens Dassen et al. (6 February 2024) that enjoyed wide support called for a worst-case scenario and an associated strategy (Parliamentary Papers II, 2024a). Another widely supported motion that was adopted (submitted by MP Mirjam Bikker et al. on 14 March 2024) calls for plans to be drawn up—as part of scenario preparation—for the communication of scenarios to the population (Parliamentary Papers II, 2024b).

vulnerable position of the Netherlands and Europe in the face of that development. However, comments of that kind and the channels through which they are communicated reach only a limited portion of the Dutch population. They are not presented at relevant venues and moments, nor expressed in appropriate words and images, in such a way as to tap into the media use and news consumption strategies of 'the average Dutch person', let alone key target groups such as young people. In addition, the warnings are not repeated or repackaged sufficiently, nor are they passed on by people who are able to command the attention of the relevant target groups. To put it bluntly, the reticence and conventionality of the adopted persuasion strategies are in no proportion to the importance of the wake-up call that Dutch society urgently needs. To state the problem even more directly: if politicians and society are to face up to the fact that the Netherlands finds itself confronting existential threats and will need to combat them, efforts aimed at making them aware of this will have to be considerably more strategic, smart, and 'with-it'.

It is important to remember that all this is not just a matter of risk awareness. Citizens must also be provided with the means for dealing with those risks and becoming more resilient themselves. In this way, the government can give them more personal control over the impact of international developments.[38]

III.2 Partner with Businesses, Citizens, and Civil-Society Organisations in a 'Whole of Society' Approach

Fragmentation of the world order affects the whole of society, something that is particularly true when it comes to the projection of power in various different arenas. Many of those arenas are economic and therefore affect businesses, which need to anticipate the effects and respond in their corporate policy. The same applies to civil-society organisations and citizens. These experience the effects of fragmentation in numerous ways,[39] but they are also players, for example through their role on social media, by protesting, by hoarding goods, or by installing (or failing to install) the latest security update on their laptop.

Dutch businesses, organisations, and citizens all have important roles to play and adjustments to make in relation to the geopolitical dynamics described above. By means of their attitude and actions, they can mitigate the effects that the fragmenting world order may have in the Netherlands. The government will therefore need to work closely with businesses, civil-society organisations, and citizens alike.[40]

The government can assist businesses by offering them standardisation and support. The threat of cyber attacks, for example, is becoming increasingly serious, and such attacks often target businesses. Multinationals generally have the necessary resources for countering them, but small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) do

[38] A good example is the motion submitted by MPs Tuinman, Boswijk, Dassen and Ceder, calling for the preparation of a draft brochure—after the Swedish example—describing how the Dutch can prepare for crisis situations (Parliamentary Papers II, 2024c).

[39] See Box 3.7, Regional conflicts that divide society, and Box 3.8, Conflicting world views before the courts.

[40] See Rijksoverheid/Government of the Netherlands (2023).

not. Vulnerabilities specifically at SMEs can have major consequences, given that these enterprises are suppliers to other businesses. The government can foster initiatives within which businesses are already joining forces, such as the Dutch 'Circle of Trust', a partnership to improve the cyber resilience of suppliers.[41]

Conversely, businesses can assist the government. For instance, it is an established fact that—in the event of a crisis, attack, or large-scale outage (for example of digital infrastructure)—public authorities and civil-society organisations have insufficient capacity available. As became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, many large Dutch businesses employ experts (such as IT professionals) who could pitch in to offer assistance in such a situation. It would therefore be wise for the government to make arrangements in advance for accessing the capacity that such businesses can provide in the event of large-scale incidents. The US government has a great deal of experience as regards mobilising the skills and expertise of the private sector, for example in the event of natural disasters. This is experience that the Netherlands can learn from. Significant action is in fact already being taken, for example by the Ministry of Defence through its policy on reservists.[42]

One example of a joint initiative is the national security course set up by the Ministry of Defence and modelled on the approach in Finland. This involves regular workshops that bring together key figures from the public and private sectors and civil society, who learn about security issues, gain experience in dealing with specific risks, and build a network of people who already know and can help each other in times of crisis.[43]

Increasing civil resilience must be assigned high priority. This is also recognised by the Netherlands Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), which 'considers it of national importance that the people of the Netherlands be invited to participate actively in strengthening societal resilience' and advocates for the establishment of participation councils on strengthening such resilience in response to hybrid threats.[44] The Netherlands is in a weak position where this is concerned. Some 50 years ago, the country still had a government-initiated volunteer organisation—*Bescherming Bevolking* (BB), effectively the Dutch civil defence corps—intended to protect the population from the impact of enemy air raids. For numerous reasons, the BB never reached full strength and the supporting legislation was repealed. Currently, the Netherlands only has the Museum Bescherming Bevolking, where the legacy of the former BB is on display.

Increasing the preparedness of Dutch society requires major, multi-faceted, long-term efforts. Examples from the Scandinavian countries and others show how the government can facilitate a form of societal resilience that penetrates deep into the

[41] Set up by ABN AMRO, Ahold Delhaize, Akzo Nobel, ASML, ING, KPN, Philips, Rabobank, and Shell. As regards the need for cooperation between the government and businesses, see also CSR (2024).

[42] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/04/13/defensie-zet-in-op-reservisten

[43] See Rijksoverheid/Government of the Netherlands (2023: 45), note 126. See also AIV (2024: 43–44).

[44] AIV (2024: 44–45).

fabric of society.[45] The governments in those countries offer citizens a wide range of courses to acquire skills that will make them more resilient from an early age. For the present, reintroduction of compulsory military service is not on the political agenda here. The Ministry of Defence hopes to increase capacity by scaling up the 'service year' that was introduced in September 2023.[46] Although this does not yet represent broad societal preparedness, it does contribute to society's ability to continue functioning if large numbers of Dutch defence personnel were to be deployed for the defence of our freedom elsewhere in Europe.

It is not only businesses, but also citizens who will need to offer the government a helping hand. The *Denk Vooruit* (Think ahead) campaign set up by a previous Dutch government advised keeping a stock of essentials in one's home, but was treated with derision at the time. We can now no longer permit ourselves that kind of attitude. Although the Dutch are gradually becoming aware of new geopolitical threats, that does not mean they know what options they have for preparing to confront such threats,[47] nor do they have the mental resilience to cope with potential 'geopolitical pain' and loss. Many Dutch people and businesses have in fact become used to having a government that steps in with compensatory measures (including financial compensation) when life gets difficult.

Citizens and civil-society organisations sometimes launch their own initiatives, with the Dutch Institute for Vulnerability Disclosure (DIVD) being a valuable example. This voluntary organisation endeavours to transfer information to organisations about digital vulnerabilities in a timely and understandable manner, so that they can then get down to work with it. For example, these organisations can then arrange for young hackers to be trained to handle this type of information responsibly. Individual citizens and collectives also stage protests or initiate legal proceedings to compel the government to decide differently on geopolitically relevant issues. Such a mobilisation of different views and countervailing power is an inseparable element of the democratic rule of law. Indeed, it is something to be cherished. It is important, however—all the more so in times of social unrest resulting from geopolitical incidents—to ensure ample scope for dialogue and for learning from one another. This calls for a government that is responsive and cooperative.

Overview 4.2 summarises the recommendations made in the present report.

[45] See Box 3.2, Urgency gap within Europe.

[46] https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/dienjaar/nieuws/2022/11/01/defensie-gaat-vrijwillig-dienjaar-invoeren. See also the Minister of Defence's undertaking to submit a letter to the House of Representatives on the future form of 'the service model', Parliamentary Papers II (2024d).

[47] Despite initiatives on the part of the EU and the Dutch government, there is still no reliable, widely consulted public information channel that can be used in a (cyber) crisis or during a major disinformation campaign.

Overview 4.2 Overview of Recommendations

I—Increase the geopolitical robustness of the Netherlands	I.1 Develop and safeguard the necessary expertise
	I.2 Ensure that not only the 'usual suspects' of foreign and security policy but also the traditionally more domestically focused parts of the government are involved in policymaking
	I.3 Invest in national resilience and security
	I.4 Prioritise increasing resilience, but guard against undue securitisation
II—Recalibrate the Netherlands' engagement in multilateral cooperation	II.1 Collaborate in building a Europe that is a credible geopolitical power centre but does not relinquish its normative essence
	II.2 Push for reforms of existing multilateral institutions that strengthen their effectiveness and credibility
	II.3 In addition, forge new international partnerships to tackle emerging issues that cannot be addressed within existing partnerships
III—Mobilise and engage with the whole of society	III.1 Explain clearly how much is at stake and how significant the challenges are
	III.2 Partner with businesses, citizens, and civil-society organisations in a 'whole of society' approach

4.5 In Conclusion

Much of our interpretation of the significance of global developments for the Netherlands will be familiar to those who follow international relations professionally or who work in that field themselves. For them, this interpretation will mainly serve to reinforce what has previously been asserted by others. For the much larger group of policymakers within public authorities, businesses, and civil-society organisations who do not deal with these matters on a daily basis, we hope that our report will provide a loud-and-clear wake-up call.

The players, playing fields, and rules of the game of global politics have all undergone profound changes in recent years. These developments will undoubtedly continue in the years ahead, but it is by no means clear yet what kind of 'new world order' will emerge from them. At any rate, images that are presented of a second Cold War, or an American or Chinese century, all fall short of the mark. In the meantime, public authorities, businesses, citizens, and civil-society organisations are already dealing—on an almost daily basis—with all kinds of changes in the course of the game, and with speculation about where the game may be heading.

In this report, the WRR has shown that all these actors must learn to deal strategically with new balances of power between the players, with new arenas where the game is being played, and with the increased significance of attitudes towards the game that are very different to our own. Dutch and European players will need to

realise that the dynamics of the game are now characterised by a darker and more turbulent iteration of geopolitical interactions. That development is continuing, leaving no room for dawdling and naivety. Learning to survive and keep up with the game will demand a great deal of effort, money, and resilience. The Netherlands and Europe will by no means always find themselves on the winning side, and will be confronted with pain and setbacks. They will need to tackle the challenges of the fragmenting world order full on if they are not to forfeit their security, prosperity, and values.

References

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2024). *Hybride dreigingen en maatschappelijke weerbaarheid*. Den Haag.

Blokker, N. (2019). NATO as an international organization: Ten brief observations. *34 Emory International Law Review, 29*.

Bunde, T., Eisentraut, S., & Schütte, L. (2023). *Munich security report 2024*. Stiftung Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz.

Cyber Security Raad (CSR). (2024). *Verkleinen van de cyberweerbaarheidskloof*. Den Haag.

Demir, F., & Jackson, V. (2024). *The global south in an era of great power competition. Security in context report 24-01*. April 2024, Security in Context.

Dijkstra, H., Von Allwörden, L., Schütte, L., & Zaccaria, G. (2024). Donald Trump and the survival strategies of international organizations: When can institutional actors counter existential challenges? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 37*(2), 182–205.

Eski, Y., Boelens, M., & Kok, B. (2023). *Tussen uitschakeling en inschakeling. Een verkennende studie naar bewustzijn over statelijke dreiging tegen de Nederlandse haven- en kennissectoren*. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. in opdracht van het WODC.

Faloyin, D. (2022). *Africa is not a country. Breaking stereotypes of modern Africa*. Harvill Secker.

Francken, T., Bogaart, H., & Buysrogge, P. (2021). *NAVO. Hersendood of klaar voor de toekomst?* Doorbraak.

Jervis, R. (2011). *Why intelligence fails: Lessons from the Iranian revolution and the Iraq war*. Cornell University Press.

Kam, E. (1988). *Surprise attack. The victim's perspective*. Harvard University Press.

Keane, J. (2020). *The new despotism*. Harvard University Press.

Maor, M. (2021). Policy persistence, risk estimation and policy underreaction. *Policy Sciences, 47*(4), 425–443.

McConnell, A., & Hart, P. (2019). Inaction and public policy: Understanding why policymakers 'do nothing'. *Policy Sciences, 52*(4), 645–661. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-019-09362-2

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2021). *Tactisch en praktisch. Naar een toekomstbestendige coördinatie van het Nederlandse Europabeleid*. Directie Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie (IOB).

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken.(2023). *De Nederlandse Afrikastrategie 2023–2032*. Den Haag.

Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid (OVV). (2023). *Aanpak Coronacrisis deel 3*. Den Haag.

Parliamentary Papers II. (2024a). *Gewijzigde motie van het lid Dassen c.s. over in Europees- en NAVO-verband oproepen tot een worst case scenario met bijbehorende strategie, 21501 02 nr. 2825*. Retrieved January 18, 2024, from https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2024Z00637&did=2024D01492

Parliamentary Papers II. (2024b). *Motie van het lid Bikker c.s. over bij de voorbereiding van mogelijke scenario's ook plannen opstellen voor de communicatie hiervan richting de bevolking, 21501 20, nr. 2039*. Retrieved March 14, 2024, from https://www.1ekamer.nl/9370000/1/j4nvi0xeni9vr2l_j9vvksvji1pf4wd/vmbkknxzphzc/f=/vmbjjhnqayyk.pdf

Parliamentary Papers II. (2024c). *Motie van het lid Tuinman c.s. bij de vaststelling van de begrotingsstaten van het Ministerie van Defensie voor het jaar 2024, 36 410 X nr. 54*. Retrieved from https://www.eerstekamer.nl/behandeling/20240207/motie_van_het_lid_tuinman_c_s_over/document3/f=/vmajhu6sjsxa.pdf

Parliamentary Papers II. (2024d). *Plenair verslag. (Gecorrigeerd stenogram)*. Retrieved May 30, 2024, from https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2023-2024/79

Pelkmans, J. (2020). Linking "values" to EU trade policy—A good idea? *European Law Journal, 26*(5–6), 391–400. https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12409

Princen, S. (2024). *De herontdekking van de geopolitiek in de Europese Unie*. Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR Working Paper no. 66).

Prins, J. E. J. (2024). Oorlogsrechtsstaat. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 2024*(22).

Rijksoverheid/Government of the Netherlands (2023). *De veiligheidsstrategie voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*. Den Haag.

Schütte, L. (2024). IO survival politics: International organizations amid the crisis of multilateralism. *Journal of European Public Policy, 31*, 3812–3838. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2023.2276757

Segers, M. (2013). *Reis naar het continent: Nederland en de Europese integratie, 1950 tot heden*. Prometheus.

Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP). (2024). *Burgerperspectieven 2024. Bericht 1*. Den Haag.

Staatscommissie demografische ontwikkelingen 2050. (2024). *Gematigde groei—Rapport van de Staatscommissie Demografische Ontwikkelingen 2050*. Den Haag.

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2017). *Veiligheid in een Wereld van Verbindingen*. Den Haag.

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2018). *Europese Variaties*. Den Haag.

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2021). *Opgave AI, de nieuwe systeemtechnologie*. Den Haag.

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2022). *Coronascenario's doordacht: Handreiking voor noodzakelijke keuzes*. Den Haag.

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2024). *Discussienotitie deskundige overheid*. Den Haag.

List of Experts Consulted

J. (Jozias) van Aartsen, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs
M. (Manfred) Aben, Global Vice President Nutrition & Icecream S&T, Unilever
E. (Erik) Akerboom, Director-General, General Intelligence and Security Service
S. (Sylvia) van Alphen, Head of People, Qblox
A. (Adriaan) Andringa, Manager National and International Industrial Policy Program, FME
V. (Veronica) Anghel, Lecturer, Johns Hopkins University and Assistant Professor European University Institute (EUI)
C. (Claude-France) Arnould, Former Director of the European Defense Agency; Former Ambassador of France to Belgium
P. (Piet) Bel, Manager External Relations Security Office, ASML
P. (Pepijn) Bergsen, Research Fellow Europe, Chatham House
C. (Carla) Boonstra, Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the European Union
R. (Ricardo) Borges de Castro, Senior Advisor, European Policy Centre (EPC)
P. (Peter) Bos, Director of the Security Region South Holland, Ministry of Defense
K. (Kathalijne) Buitenweg, The Council of State, Advisory Division
V. (Vincent) Chang, Assistant Professor of the history and international relations of modern China at the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS)
H. (Henk) van Dijk, Vice-President Aerospace Operations, Netherlands Aerospace Centre
M. (Marileen) Dogterom, President, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)
J. (Jorijn) Van Duijn, Consultant & Industry Historian, ASM
J. (Jelena) Džankic, Co-Director Global Citizenship Observatory, European University Institute (EUI)
C. (Chris) Eveleens, Advisor, Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (AWTI)

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*, Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6

E. (Elvire) Fabry, Senior Research Fellow, Jacques Delors Institute
M. (Mohammedbagher) Forough, Associate, German Institute for Global and Area studies
J. (Jarl) Frijs-Madsen, Ambassador of Denmark to the Netherlands
M. (Marisa) Gerards, Ambassador of the Netherlands to India
A. (Arnoud) de Geus, Chief Technology Officer, Sioux Technologies
M. (Marieke) de Goede, Professor of Political Science, University of Amsterdam (UvA)
T. (Thomas) Gomart, Director, Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI)
N. (Naná) de Graaff, Associate Professor in International Relations, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)
J. (Jennifer) Herek, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, University of Twente
B. (Bart) van Hezewijk, Head of Government & External Affairs for Asia, ASML
J. (Jaap) de Hoop Scheffer, Former Secretary-General, NATO
J. (Jan Bart) Houwing, Associate Director Government Affairs & Policy, MSD
E. (Emmeke) Hulshof, Government Affairs Manager Netherlands, ASML
L. (Laure) Jacquier, Director General Netherlands, International Chamber of Commerce, The Hague
E. (Erik) Jones, Professor of European Studies and International Political Economy, European University Institute (EUI)
R. (Renée) Jones-Bos, Former Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
W. (Wim) Klop, Vice-President Science & Innovation, DSM
G. (Guy) Kerpen, Director Government Relations Office Benelux, Philips
D. (Dirk-Jan) Koch, Chief Science Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
B. (Bert) Koenders, Chair, Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV)
K. (Klaas) Kroes, Export Control Consultant, Delft University of Technology
K. (Lauri) Kuusing, Ambassador of Estonia to the Netherlands
M. (Marjanne) de Kwaasteniet, Former Dutch Ambassador, NATO; Special Humanitarian Envoy for Gaza, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
R. (Roger) van Laak, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the European Union
R. (Ralph) Lasage, Project/Program Manager at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)
L. (Rosa) Lokenberg, Policy Adviser Knowledge Security, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)
S. (Sander) Luijten, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the European Union
M. (Martijn) Lucassen, Deputy Director Digital Economy, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy
J. (Juraj) Majcin, Policy Analyst Defence & Security EPC, Friends of Europe
J. (Jesse) Martens, Head of Public Global Affairs, AkzoNobel
V. (Vicky) Masson, Geostrategy Chief of Staff, German Marshall Fund of the United States
T. (Tanja) Masson-Zwaan, Deputy Director International Institute of Air and Space Law, Leiden University

M. (Mikael) Mattlin, Research Professor, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA)
W. (Wouter) Meiring, Innovation Manager and Academic Liaison, Shell Nederland
M. (Milena) Mihajlovic, Program director, European Policy Centre (EPC)
A. (Arthur) Mol, Rector Magnificus, Wageningen University & Research (WUR)
K. (Kalypso) Nicolaidis, Professor of Global Affairs, European University Institute (EUI)
A. (Annemieke) Nijhof, General Director, Deltares
R. (Reint-Jan) Groot Nuelend, Global Public Affairs and Sustainability Lead, DSM
J. (Johannes) Oljelund, Ambassador of Sweden to the Netherlands
M. (Martina) Østerhus, Deputy Head of Mission, Norwegian Embassy in the Netherlands
A. (Andreas) Østhagen, Researcher, The Fridtjof Nansens Institute
P. (Peter) Potman, Dutch Permanent Representative to the United Nations
I. (Ivo) Raaijmakers, Corporate Vice President and Executive Advisor, ASM
M. (Mahmoud) Refaat, President, European Institute for International Law and International Relations (EIIR)
S. (Sebastian) Reyn, Deputy Director Defence Intelligence Service
R. (Roelant) Riedeman, Program Manager Integrated Safety & Security, Utrecht University (UU)
M. (Myrinne) Rietveld, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the European Union
J. (Julian) Ringhof, Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)
J. (Jean-Maurice) Ripert, Former Ambassador of France to NATO, Russia and China
L. (Lukas) Roffel, Group Chief Technical Officer, Thales
A. (Angela) Romano, Senior Assistant Professor, University of Bologna
P. (Paul) Rutten, Partner, McKinsey & Company
H.P. (Henri Paul) Schreinemachers, Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the European Union
M. (Maarten) Schurink, Secretary-General, Ministry of Defense
M. (Monika) Sie Dhian Ho, General Director, Clingendael Institute
I. (Ilkka-Pekka) Similä, Ambassador of Finland to the Netherlands
S. (Sven) Smit, Chair, McKinsey Global Institute
H. (Hester) Somsen, National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism and Director Cyber Security and State Threats
S. (Simon) van der Staaij, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the European Union
P. (Peter) Stein, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the European Union
J. (Jan) Swillens, Director, Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service
N. (Neilas) Tankevicius, Ambassador of Lithuania to the Netherlands
S. (Simone) Tholens, Associate Professor of International Relations, John Cabot University and Assistant Professor, European University Institute (EUI)
C. (Casper) Thomas, Journalist, De Groene Amsterdammer
A. (Angela) van Tilborg, Biomedical Research Policy Advisor, Erasmus MC

T. (Tony) van der Togt, Senior Research Fellow, Clingendael Institute
E. (Edgars) Trumkalns, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Latvia in the Netherlands
E. (Ernst) Ullersma, Vice President Materials & Process Development Center R&D, Canon Production Printing
F. (Frits) Vaandrager, Head of Department of Software Science, Radboud University
S. (Sophie) Vanhoonacker-Kormoss, Professor in Administrative Governance, Maastricht University
C. (Casper) van der Veen, Managing Director Strategy, TNO
T. (Tamar) de Waal, Associate Professor Legal Philosophy and Citizenship, University of Amsterdam (UvA)
B. (Bartjan) Wegter, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the European Union
H. (Hans) van der Weijde, Director Strategy, Programmes and external Collaborations, Tata Steel Nederland R&D
J. (Jaap) Weijermans, Head Integrated Safety & Security, University of Amsterdam (UvA)
C. (Clara) Weinhardt, Assistant Professor International Relations, Maastricht University
M. (Mikael) Wigell, Research Director, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA)
J. (Jan) Zielonka, Professor of European Politics, University of Oxford; Professor of Politics and International Relations at the University of Venice, Cá Foscari

Glossary

3GPP	3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) is an international collaboration between seven telecommunications standard development organizations
ABCD trading houses	The four largest global agricultural commodity trading companies: Archer-Daniels-Midland, Bunge, Cargill, and Dreyfus
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AIV	(Dutch) Advisory Council on International Affairs
AIVD	(Dutch) General Intelligence and Security Service
AMSIX	Amsterdam Internet Exchange
API	Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASML	Advanced Semiconductor Materials Lithography, Dutch company in the semiconductor industry
ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
AUKUS	Australia- UK - United States trilateral security partnership
Beidou	Global navigation satellite system created by China
BES islands	The islands of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba in The Caribbean Netherlands
BGI	Beijing Genomics Institute, now BGI Group, biotechnology company, China
Big Tech	Collective term for the largest and most influential technology companies in the world
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, a forum for cooperation among a still expanding group of leading emerging economies

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*, Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6

CBIPS	Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, Chinese payment system
CETA	EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
CKN	China Knowledge Network, Dutch network
COSCO	China Ocean Shipping Company
CPB	Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation, intergovernmental military alliance in Eurasia
CWN	Cybersecurity Network, Dutch network
DIVD	Dutch Institute for Vulnerability Disclosure
DNB	Dutch Central Bank
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ESTEC	European Space Research and Technology Centre
EU	European Union
EVs	Electric Vehicles
G20	Group of Twenty, intergovernmental forum comprising 19 sovereign countries, the European Union (EU), and the African Union (AU)
Galileo	Global navigation satellite system created by the European Union
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, European Agreement
GCI	Global Civilisation Initiative, China
Global or plural south	Broad term referring to countries, regions, and populations that are primarily located in the Southern Hemisphere, but also encompassing countries outside of Europe and North America
Globalisation	Process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale
Glonass	GLObalnaya NAvigatsionnaya Sputnikovaya Sistema, Global navigation satellite system (GNSS) created by Russia
GNP	Gross National Income
GPS	Global Positioning System, US
Greater North Sea Basin Initiative	Regional maritime alliance between Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK

ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IenW	(Dutch) Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management
IMEC	India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSTEX	Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges, Europea payment system initiative
IO	International organisation
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, The Netherlands
IRA	Inflation Reduction Act, US
IS	Islamic State
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	Information Technology services
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
LEO	Low Earth Orbit, type of satellites
LLMs	Large Language Models, AI
Long arm of Ankara	Reference to the soft power the government of Türkiye allegedly exerts in various European countries
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
Mercosur	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market), customs union between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay
MIVD	Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization, intergovernmental transnational military alliance of 32 member states
NDB	New Development Bank, multilateral development bank established by the BRICS nations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Non-Aligned Movement	Forum of 120 countries that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc
NRG Pallas	Dutch state-owned company specializing in nuclear technology
NSTC	National Science and Technology Council
NVR	(Dutch) National Security Council
NXP	Next eXPerience, Dutch company in the semiconductor industry
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
OCW	Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
OneM2M	Global partnership project constituted by 8 of the world's leading ICT standards development organizations

OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration, intergovernmental organization that provides dispute resolution services to the international community
Power arenas	(this report) Civil domains where increasingly geopolitical power is projected, including resources, infrastructure, geographical area's, media, people, technology and international agreements
Power centres	(this report) State-actors playing a role of geopolitical significance, including superpowers, medium-sized powers, regional and strategic powers
QUAD	Multilateral strategic arrangement between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States
REAIM	Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain, global commission initiated by the Netherlands
REKA	Russia and Eastern Europe Knowledge Alliance
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Eurasian political, economic, international security and defence organization established by China
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SOE	State-owned enterprise
SPFS	Sistema Peredachi Finansovykh Soobscheniy, Russian payment system
SWIFT	Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, international payment system
TFSA	Dutch Strategic Dependencies Task Force
Tianxia	'All under Heaven', Chinese term for a historical cultural concept that denoted either the entire geographical world or the metaphysical realm of mortals
Triad Framework	(this report) Triad Framework of Dutch key policy interests: security, values and prosperity
TSMC	Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, Taiwanese multinational semiconductor contract manufacturing and design company
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
Urenco	Dutch international supplier of enrichment services and fuel cycle products for the civil nuclear industry

US	United States
Vectors of fragmentation	(this report) Three dimensions of fragmentation: power centres, power arena and world views
VWS	(Dutch) Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport
Wagner Group	State funded Russian private military company (PMC)
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
World views	(this report) Conceptions and narratives concerning fundamental issues within society that provide individuals with moral orientation and political identity. These worldviews also serve as a lens through which people interpret and make sense of international developments
WRR	Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZPMC	Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries Company Limited, Chinese state-owned engineering company and the world's largest manufacturer of cranes and large steel structures

Bibliography

Acharya, A. (2017). After liberal hegemony: The advent of a multiplex world order. *Ethics and International Affairs, 31*(3), 271–285.

Acharya, A., Estevadeordal, A., & Goodman, L. W. (2023). Multipolar or multiplex? Interaction capacity, global cooperation and world order. *International Affairs, 99*(6), 2339–2365.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2022). *Slimme industriepolitiek: een opdracht voor Nederland in de EU*. Den Haag.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2023). *De EURO op het wereldtoneel: de internationale rol van de munt van de EU in geostrategisch perspectief*. Den Haag.

Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV). (2024). *Hybride dreigingen en maatschappelijke weerbaarheid*. Den Haag.

Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD). (2024). *Jaarverslag 2023*. Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. Den Haag.

Allison, G., Klyman, K., Barbesino, K., & Yen, H. (2021). *The great tech rivalry: China versus the US*. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Anghel, V., & Jones E. (2024). We need to talk about EU enlargement. *Encompass*. Retrieved from https://encompass-europe.com/comment/we-need-to-talk-about-eu-enlargement

Aribogan, D. U. (2021). Global security and cooperation in the post-pandemic period: From the 19th century concert of Europe to the 21st century concert of globe. In M. Seker, A. Özer, & C. Korkut (Eds.), *Reflections on the pandemic in the future of the world* (pp. 325–350). Turkish Academy of Sciences.

Azoulai, L., Jaquemart, K., & Dubost, J-F. (2023). *Inflation: When speculators profit from the food crisis*. Foodwatch.

Balfour, R., Bomassi, L., & Martinelli, M. (2022). *The southern mirror: Reflections on Europe from the global south*. Carnegie Europe.

Bartsch, S. (2023). *Plato goes to China*. Princeton University Press.

Bekkers, F., Teer, J., Kool, D., Van Geuns, L., Bolder, P., Patrahau, I., & Sarel, M. (2021). *The high value of the North Sea*. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS).

Berkhout, P., & De Steenhuijsen, B. (2022, 27 juni). *Oorlog in Oekraïne leert EU belangrijke voedsellessen*. Het Financieele Dagblad.

Blas, J., & Farchy, J. (2021). *The world for sale: Money, power, and the traders who barter the earth's resources*. Oxford University Press.

Blokker, N. (2019). NATO as an international organization: Ten brief observations. *34 Emory International Law Review, 29*.

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*, Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6

Bohn, T., Ramaekers, P., Wong, K .F., Dahlmans, D. & Visser, C. (2023). Europese Green Deal: CBAM, ontbossing en veehouderijketen nader bekeken. In: *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Internationaliseringsmonitor 2023-II: Duurzame handel?* (pp. 46–77). Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.

Bolt W, van den End, J. W., de Grip, J., Mavromatis, K., Verhoeks, R., & De Vette, N. (2023). *Geo-economische fragmentatie: economische en financiële stabiliteit*. De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB).

Bradford, A. (2020). *The Brussels effect: How the European Union rules the world*. Oxford University Press.

Braw, E. (2019). *Competitive national service: How the Scandinavian model can be adapted by the UK*. Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI).

Bunde, T., Eisentraut, S., & Schütte, L. (2023). *Munich security report 2024*. Stiftung Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz.

Burtsoff, P. (2021). Be prepared. *Monocle, 140*.

Cancian, M. F. (2021). *Inflicting surprise: Gaining competitive advantage in great power conflicts*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Carbone, M. (2024). Beyond the heaven-hell binary and the one-way traffic paradigm: The European Union, Africa and contested human rights in the negotiations of the Samoa agreement. *Journal of Common Market Studies, 2024*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13609

Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). (2023). *Nederland de grootste importeur van soja, palmolie en cacao van de EU*. Den Haag.

Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). (2024). *De Nederlandse agrarische sector internationaal 2024*. Den Haag.

Centraal Planbureau (CPB). (2024). *Geopolitieke ontkoppelings- en integratiescenario's voor de wereldhandel*. Den Haag.

Chan, S., Fe, H., Hu, K., & Hu, W. (2021). *Contesting revisionism: China, the United States, and the transformation of international order*. Oxford University Press.

Chua, A. (2018). *Political tribes: Group instinct and the fate of nations*. Penguin.

Chimits, F., McCaffrey, C., Mejino Lopez, J., Poitiers, N. F., Vicard, V., & Wibaux, P. (2024). *European economic security: Current practices and further development*. Directorate General for External Policies, European Parliament.

Clingendael & HCSS. (2024). Barsten en blokken: confrontatie en samenwerking in een wereld van wisselende coalities. In *De Strategische Monitor 2023*. Den Haag.

Cohen, J. (2023). *The rise of geopolitical swing states*. Goldman Sachs Intelligence.

Coker, C. (2019). *Rise of the civilizational state*. Wiley.

Cyber Security Raad (CSR). (2024). *Verkleinen van de cyberweerbaarheidskloof*. Den Haag.

Davenport, C. (2018). *The space barons: Elon musk, Jeff Bezos, and the quest to colonize the cosmos*. Public Affairs.

Davidsson, J. W. (2006). *The origins of revisionist and status quo states*. Palgrave Macmillan.

de Goede, M., & Westermeier, C. (2022). Infrastructural geopolitics. *International Studies Quarterly, 66*(3). https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqac033

de Graaff, B. (2022). *Ongekend en onderscheidend*. De geheime geschiedenis van de MIVD. Boom.

de Waal, T., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2022). The majority oppressed? On asymmetrical multiculturalism and majority rights. *Comparative Migration Studies, 10*(42). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-022-00319-8

de Wijk, R., Bekkers, F., & Sweijs, T. (2020). *Hybride dreigingen en hybride oorlog: consequenties voor de Koninklijke Landmacht*. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS).

Debre, M. J., & Dijkstra, H. (2021). Institutional design for a post-liberal order: Why some international organizations live longer than others. *European Journal of International Relations, 27*(1), 311–339. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120962183

Demir, F., & Jackson, V. (2024). *The global south in an era of great power competition. Security in context report 24-01*. April 2024, security in context.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). (2024). *International scientific report on the safety of advanced AI: Interim report*. UK Government.
Diesen, G. (2018). *Russia's geo-economic strategy for a greater Eurasia*. Routledge.
Diesen, G. (2024). *The Ukrainian war and the Eurasian world order*. Clarity Press.
Dijkstra, H. (2017). Collusion in international organizations: How states benefit from the authority of secretariats. *Global Governance, 23*(4), 601–618.
Dijkstra, H. (2024). *Multilateralism amid geopolitics: Rethinking international cooperation in the 21st century*. Universiteit Maastricht.
Dikötter, F. (2022). *China na Mao: de opkomst van een supermacht*. Spectrum.
Draghi, M. (2024). *The future of European competitiveness—A competitiveness strategy for Europe*. Retrieved from https://commission.europa.eu/document/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en
Dugin, A. (2012). *The fourth political theory*. Eurasian Movement.
Dugin, A. (2014). *Eurasian mission. An introduction to NEO-Eurasianism*. Arktos Media.
Elstrup-Sangiovanni, M. (2021). What kills international organizations? When and why international organizations terminate. *European Journal of International Relations, 27*(2), 281–310. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120932976
Engelke, P., Agachi, A., & Bayoumi, I. (2023). *The future of multilateral peacebuilding and conflict prevention*. Atlantic Council.
Eski, Y., Boelens, M., & Kok, B. (2023). *Tussen uitschakeling en inschakeling. Een verkennende studie naar bewustzijn over statelijke dreiging tegen de Nederlandse haven- en kennissectoren*. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, in opdracht van het WODC.
European Commission (EC). (2024). *Proposal for a council recommendation on enhancing research security*. Retrieved from https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2024-01/ec_rtd_council-recommendation-research-security.pdf
European Think-Tank Network on China (ETNC). (2024). *National Perspectives on Europe's De-Risking from China*. Retrieved from https://kinacentrum.se/en/publications/national-perspectives-on-europes-de-risking-from-china/
Faloyin, D. (2022). *Africa is not a country. Breaking stereotypes of modern Africa*. Harvill Secker.
Farrell, H., & Newman, A. (2023). *Underground empire: How America weaponized the world economy*. Allen Lane.
Farrell, H., & Newman, A. L. (2019). Weaponized interdependence: How global economic networks shape state coercion. *International Security, 44*(1), 42–79. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00351
Fernandez Villaverde, J., Mineyama, T., & Song, D. (2024). *Are we fragmented yet? Measuring geopolitical fragmentation and its causal effects*. University of Pennsylvania and IMF.
Ferreiro Gomes, A., & Okano-Heijmans, M. (2023). *Dutch niches for global gateway in the digital domain*. Clingendael.
Flockhart, T. (2018). A multi-order world? *RSA Journal, 164*(3), 26–31.
Flockhart, T. (2024). NATO in the multi-order world. *International Affairs, 100*(2), 471–489.
Francken, T., Bogaart, H., & Buysrogge, P. (2021). *NAVO. Hersendood of klaar voor de toekomst?* Doorbraak.
Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. Free Press.
Galeotti, M. (2022). *The weaponization of everything: A field guide to the new way of war*. Yale University Press.
García, S. C. (2024). Digital expansionism and big tech companies: Consequences in democracies of the European Union. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02924-7
Gavari-Starki, E., Casado-Claro, M. F., & Navarro-Gonzalez, I. (2021). The Japanese educational system as an international model for urban resilience. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(11), 5794. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18115794
Getachew, A. (2019). *Worldmaking after empire: The rise and fall of self-determination*. Princeton University Press.

Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2022). *Spin dictators: The changing face of tyranny in the 21st century*. Princeton University Press.
Habets, I. (2015). Liberal democracy: The threat of counter-narratives. *European View, 14*, 145–154. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-015-0369-z
Hall, P. A., & Soskice, D. (2001). *Varieties of capitalism. The institutional foundations of comparative advantage*. Oxford University Press.
Hamilton, C. (2018). *Silent invasion. China's influence in Australia*. Hardie Grant.
Hannas, W. C., & Tatlow, D. K. (2020). *China's quest for foreign technology. Beyond espionage*. Routledge.
Hansen, P., & Jonsson, S. (2014). *Eurafrica: The untold history of European integration and colonialism*. Bloomsbury Academic.
Hegre, H. (2014). Democracy and armed conflict. *Journal of Peace Research, 51*(2), 159–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433135128
Heimovaara, S. (2023, 18 December). *Het grootste gevaar voor ons voedsel is instabiliteit*. Het Financieele Dagblad.
Hijink, M. (2023). *Focus—De wereld van ASML*. Het machtsspel om de meest complexe machine op aarde. Balans.
Hijzen, C., Jacobs, B., Jansen, R., & van Kampen, F. (2024). *Uiterst vertrouwelijk. Achter de schermen van de Nederlandse geheime diensten*. Querido Facto.
Hillman, J. E. (2021). *The digital silk road: China's quest to wire the world and win the future*. Harper Business.
Hirsch Ballin, E. (2022). *Waakzaam burgerschap. Vertrouwen in democratie en rechtsstaat herwinnen*. Querido Facto.
HM Government. (2023). *Integrated review refresh 2023. Responding to a more contested and volatile world*. His Majesty's Stationery Office.
Howorth, J. (2015). Implications of the us rebalance toward Asia: European security and NATO. In H. Meijer (Ed.), *Origins and evolution of the us rebalance toward Asia* (pp. 197–222). Palgrave Macmillan.
Howse, R., & Langille, J. (2023). *Continuity and change in the World Trade Organization: Pluralism past, present and future* (Vol. 117, pp. 1–47). Cambridge University Press.
Huntington, S. P. (1991). The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century. *The Journal of Democracy, 2*(2), 12–34.
Hurrelmann, A., & Wendler, F. (2023). How does politicization affect the ratification of mixed EU trade agreements? The case of CETA. *Journal of European Public Policy, 31*(2), 1–25.
Immerwahr, D. (2019). *How to hide an empire: A history of the greater United States*. Farrar.
International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES). (2022). *Another perfect storm? How the failure to reform food systems has allowed the war in Ukraine to spark a third global food price crisis in 15 years, and what can be done to prevent the next one*. Special Report IPES-Food.
Inspectie Justitie en Veiligheid (IJV). (2023). *Politieoptreden bij de demonstratie van Kick Out Zwarte Piet in Staphorst*. Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid.
Jones, L., & Hameiri, S. (2020). *Debunking the myth of 'death-trap diplomacy': How recipient countries shape China's belt and road initiative*. Chatham House.
Jones, L., & Hameiri, S. (2021). *Fractured China: How state transformation is shaping China's rise*. Cambridge University Press.
Jervis, R. (2011). *Why intelligence fails: Lessons from the Iranian revolution and the Iraq war*. Cornell University Press.
Juwitasari, R. (2022). *Saving lives through education for disaster preparedness and awareness: Lessons from Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand*. Heinrich Böll Stiftung.
Kam, E. (1988). *Surprise attack. The victim's perspective*. Harvard University Press.
Keane, J. (2020a). *The new despotism*. Harvard University Press.
Keane, J. (2020b, June 22). *Don't underestimate resilience of the smart new despotisms*. Democracy Digest.

Kennedy, P. (1987). *The rise and fall of the great powers: Economic change and military conflict from 1500 to 2000*. Random House.
Kleistra, Y. (2002). *Hollen of stilstaan: beleidsverandering bij het Nederlandse Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*. Eburon.
Kloks, A. (2024). *De toekomst van Europa*. Liberale Reflecties, April, 6–15.
Kluft, S., & Wilms, P. (2020). *Versterking internationale kennisfunctie*. Internationale ontwikkelingen op het beleidsterrein van Justitie en Veiligheid. Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum (WODC).
Koch, D. J. (2023). *Foreign aid and its unintended consequences*. Routledge.
Kothari, R. K., & Khan, E. (2017). *India becoming a global power in the twenty-first century: Rising challenges and newer opportunities*. Atlantic.
Krauthammer, C. (1990). The unipolar moment. *Foreign Affairs, 70*(1), 23–33.
Kushi, S., & Toft, M. (2023). Introducing the military intervention project: A new dataset on us military interventions, 17762019. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 67*(4), 752–779. https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221117546
Lake, D. A., Martin, L. L., & Risse, M. (2021). Challenges to the liberal order: Reflections on international organization. *International Organization, 75*(2), 225–257. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000636
Lang, V., & Tavares, M. (2018). The global distribution of gains from globalization. *Journal of Economic Inequality, 22*(2), 357–381. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10888-023-09593-7
Lavrelashvili, T., & Van Hecke, S. (2022). The end of enlargement? The EU's struggle with the western Balkans and eastern partnership countries. In T. Lavrelashvili et al. (Eds.), *The EU political system after the 2019 European elections* (pp. 433–454). Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics. Springer.
Leonard, M. (2021). *The age of unpeace: How connectivitiy causes conflict*. Bantam Press.
Leonard, M. (July 24, 2018). *Europe for itself*. Project Syndicate.
Lesaffer, R. (2024). *De rechtsstaat. Een geschiedenis van het Westen*. OWL Press.
Liang, Q., & Xiangshui, W. (1999). *Unrestricted warfare*. People's Liberation Army Arts and Publishing House.
Liao, R. (2015, July 27). *Out of the Bretton woods. How the AIIB is different*. Foreign Affairs.
Mackinder, H. J. (1904). The geopolitical pivot of history. *The Geographical Journal, 23*(4), 421–437.
Mahan, A. T. (1890). *The influence of sea power upon history: 1660–1783*. Little-Brown.
Mahbubani, K. (2018). *Has the west lost it? A provocation*. Allen Lane.
Mankoff, J. (2022). *Empires of Eurasia. How imperial legacies shape international security*. Yale University Press.
Maor, M. (2021). Policy persistence, risk estimation and policy underreaction. *Policy Sciences, 47*(4), 425–443. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44113980
Mariani, B. (2024). *China's global security vision in a changing world*. PeaceRep, University of Edinburgh.
Masson-Zwaan, T. L. (2017). *Ruimtemijnbouw: mag dat wel?* Ars Aequi, september.
Masson-Zwaan, T. L. (2024). Hoe staat het met de regulering van ruimtemijnbouw? *Een update. Ars Aequi, 66*(9), 740–746.
McConnell, A., & Hart, P. (2019). Inaction and public policy: Understanding why policymakers 'do nothing'. *Policy Sciences, 52*(4), 645–661. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-019-09362-2
Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. W. W. Norton.
Meijerink, G. W., Shutes, K., Herder, A., & Gelder, J. W. (2012). *Voedselprijzen en speculatie op agrarische termijnmarkten: literatuurstudie en interviews*. Wageningen University and Research.
Metcalf, M. (2020). The national humiliation narrative: Dealing with the present by fixating on the past. *Education about Asia, 25*(2), 43–50.
Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (MIVD). (2024). *Openbaar Jaarverslag Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst 2023*. Ministerie van Defensie.

Miller, C. (2022). *Chip war: The fight for the world's most critical technology*. Simon and Schuster.
Min, K. (2022, May 27). *A world obsessed with Ukraine must not forget the Rohingya*. The Statesman.
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (1995). *Herijking van het buitenlands beleid*. Den Haag.
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2013). *Voor Nederland, wereldwijd. Samen werken aan toonaangevende diplomatie*. Den Haag.
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2021). *Tactisch en praktisch. Naar een toekomstbestendige coördinatie van het Nederlandse Europabeleid*. Directie Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie (IOB). Den Haag.
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2022). *Gedeelde belangen wederzijds profijt—Beleidsdoorlichting BHOS artikel 1*. Directie Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie (IOB). Den Haag.
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2023). *De Nederlandse Afrikastrategie 2023–2032*. Den Haag.
Mishra, P. (2013). From the ruins of empire: The revolt against the west and the remaking of Asia. *Picador, 21*, 184–185.
Mody, A. (2023). *India is broken. A people betrayed, independence to today*. Stanford University Press.
Mokry, S. (2023). *The construction of China's national interest: Between topdown rule and societal ideas*. Universiteit Leiden.
Mouffe, C. (2018). *For a left populism*. Verso Books.
Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541–563.
Needham, K., & Baldwin, C. (July 7, 2021). *China's gene giant harvests data from millions of women*. Reuters.
O'Neill, S. K. (2022). *The globalization myth: Why regions matter*. Yale University Press.
Obermeier, A. M., & Rustad, S. A. (2023). *Conflict trends: A global overview, 1946–2022*. Oxford University Press.
Okano-Heijmans, M., Gomes, A., & Dekker, B. (2024). *Balancing openness, economic security and national security. The future of export controls on quantum technologies*. Clingendael.
Olsthoorn, S. (2024, May 7). *De stilte rond de Chinese eigenaar van chipmaker Ampleon*. Het Financieele Dagblad.
O'Malley, A. M., & Thakur, V. (2022). Introduction: Shaping a global horizon, new histories of the global south and the un. *Humanity, 13*(1), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2022.0003
Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid (OVV). (2023). *Aanpak Coronacrisis deel 3*. Den Haag.
Oud, M., & Drinhausen, K. (2021). *The decoding China dictionary*. Lund University.
Park, J. (2023). *Semiconductors in key European and Indo-Pacific economies geopolitical risk in the supply chains into 2030 and beyond*. The Hague Center for Strategic Studies (HCSS).
Parliamentary Papers II. (2023/24). *Fiche: Mededeling Europese Defensie-Industrie Strategie en Verordening Europees Defensie-industrie Programma*, 22112, nr. 3919, March 28, 2024.
Parliamentary Papers II. (2024a). *Gewijzigde motie van het lid Dassen c.s. over in Europees- en NAVO-verband oproepen tot een worst case scenario met bijbehorende strategie, 21501 02 nr. 2825*. Retrieved January 18, 2024, from https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/moties/detail?id=2024Z00637&did=2024D01492
Parliamentary Papers II. (2024b). *Motie van het lid Bikker c.s. over bij de voorbereiding van mogelijke scenario's ook plannen opstellen voor de communicatie hiervan richting de bevolking, 21501 20, nr. 2039*. Retrieved March 14, 2024, from https://www.1ekamer.nl/9370000/1/j4nvi0xeni9vr2l_j9vvksvji1pf4wd/vmbkknxzphzc/f=/vmbjjhnqayyk.pdf
Parliamentary Papers II. (2024c). *Motie van het lid Tuinman c.s. bij de vaststelling van de begrotingsstaten van het Ministerie van Defensie voor het jaar 2024, 36 410 X nr. 54*. Retrieved February 7, 2024, from https://www.eerstekamer.nl/behandeling/20240207/motie_van_het_lid_tuinman_c_s_over/document3/f=/vmajhu6sjsxa.pdf
Parliamentary Papers II. (2024d). *Plenair verslag, 2024D22269 (gecorrigeerd stenogram)*. Retrieved May 30, 2024, from https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2023-2024/79

Pisani-Ferry, J., Weder di Mauro, B., & Zettelmeyer, J. (2024). *How to de-risk: European economic security in a world of interdependence*. Centre for European Policy Reform (CEPR).
Pelkmans, J. (2020). Linking "values" to EU trade policy—A good idea? *European Law Journal, 26*(5–6), 391–400. https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12409
Pitron, G. (2020). *The rare metals war: The dark side of clean energy and digital technologies*. Scribe us.
Polyakova, A., & Meserole, C. (2019). *Exporting digital authoritarianism: The Russian and Chinese models*. Brookings Institution.
Prashad, V. (2007). *The darker nations: A people's history of the third world*. The New Press.
Princen, S. (2024). *De herontdekking van de geopolitiek in de Europese Unie*. Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR Working Paper no. 66).
Prins, J. E. J. (2024a). Een internationale rechtsorde voor cyberspionage en intelligence. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 2024*(8), 507.
Prins, J. E. J. (2024b). Oorlogsrechtsstaat. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 2024*(22).
Pye, L. W. (1992). Social science theories in search of Chinese realities. *The China Quarterly, 132*, 1161–1170.
Rachman, G. (2019, March 4). China, India and the rise of the 'civilization state'. *Financial Times*.
Reiljan, A. (2019). 'Fear and loathing across party lines' (also) in Europe: Affective polarisation in European party systems. *European Journal of Political Research, 59*(2), 376–396.
Richardson, S. (2020). *China's influence on the global human rights system. Global China. Assessing China's growing role in the world*. Brookings Institute.
Rijksoverheid / Government of the Netherlands. (2023). *De veiligheidsstrategie voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*. Den Haag.
Ringhof, J., & Torreblanca, I. (2022). *The geopolitics of technology: How the EU can become a global player*. European Council on Foreign Relations.
Rotundo, J. L., Marshall, R., McCormick, R., Truong, S. K., Styles, D., Gerde, J. A., Gonzalez-Escobar, E., Carmo-Silva, E., Janes-Bassett, V., Logue, J., Annicchiarico, P., De Visser, C., Dind, A., Dodd, I. C., Dye, L., Long, S. P., Lopes, M. S., Pannecoucque, J., Reckling, M., Rushton, J., Schmid, N., Shield, I., Signor, M., Messina, C. D., & Rufino, M. C. (2024). European soybean to benefit people and the environment. *Scientific Reports, 14*(1), 7612. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-57522-z
Rühlig, T. (2021). *Technical standards: A new realm of China's international influence?* European Institute for Chinese Studies.
Scheyder, E. (2024). *The war below: Lithium, copper, and the global battle to power our lives*. Atria One Signal Publishers.
Salah, A. (2022). *Why does some of the Arab public support Putin's war in Ukraine? Sada*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2022/06/why-does-some-of-the-arab-public-support-putins-war-in-ukraine?lang=en
Schinkel, M. (February 15, 2024). *Vredesdividend: het afknijpen van defensie leverde 135 miljard op*. NRC.
Schivelbusch, W. (2004). *The culture of defeat: On national trauma, mourning, and recovery*. Picador.
Segers, M. (2013). *Reis naar het continent: Nederland en de Europese integratie, 1950 tot heden*. Prometheus.
Sheikh, H. (2019). *Hydropolitiek*. Samenwerking en conflict op zeven zeeën. Boom.
Sheikh, H. (2020, August 14). *Na de natiestaat komt nu de onbegrensde civilisatiestaat*. NRC.
Shifrinson, J., Slaughter, A., Kausikan, B., Keohane, R., Brooks, S. G., & Wohlforth, W. C. (2023, November). *The long unipolar moment? Debating American dominance*. Foreign Affairs.
Shivakumar, S. (2022). *Securing global standards for innovation and growth*. Center for strategic & International Studies CSIS.
Sie Dhian Ho, M., & Wijnkoop, M. (2022). *The Instrumentalization of migration: A geopolitical toolbox*. Clingendael.

Simpson, B. (2024, February). *Scandinavia is preparing for war. As NATO expands, Europe's far north is tangibly shifting to combat footing*. Foreign Policy.
Snow, R. (2023). *China and Russia: Four centuries of conflict and concord*. Yale University Press.
Sobczyk, M. (2012). Kissinger still lacks a number to call Europe. *Wall Street Journal.*
Soldatov, A., & Borogan, I. (2015). *The red web. The struggle between Russia's digital dictators and the new online revolutionaries*. Public Affairs.
Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP). (2024). *Burgerperspectieven 2024*. Bericht 1. Den Haag.
Splidsboel Hansen, F. (2021). When Russia wages war in the cognitive domain. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, 34*(2), 181–201.
Spykman, N. J. (1942). *America's strategy in world politics. The United States and the balance of power*. Transaction Publishers.
Staatscommissie demografische ontwikkelingen 2050. (2024). *Gematigde groei—Rapport van de Staatscommissie Demografische Ontwikkelingen 2050*. Den Haag.
Stevens, F. (2023). *Chinese assertiveness and the rise of xi Jinping: Ideational mobilization, elite contestation, and the struggle over regional order*. Universiteit Leiden.
Stolwijk, S., Punter, M., Timmers, P., Rabbie, J., Regeczi, D., & Dalmolen, S. (2024). *Towards a sovereign digital future—The Netherlands in Europe*. TNO Vector.
The Hague Center for Strategic Studies (HCSS). (2021). *Strategic alert: Towards a space security strategy*. Den Haag.
The White House. (2023). *United States government national standards strategy for critical and emerging technology*. Washington.
Tinyang, Z. (2020). *Alles unter dem Himmel. Vergangenheit und Zukunft der Weltordnung*. Suhrkamp.
Tjepkema, M., Smeulders C., & Pijnenburg, A. (2024). Staatsaansprakelijkheid voor het buitenlands en veiligheidsbeleid. *Nederlands Juristenblad, 16*.
Urych, I., & Matyasik, G. (2022). Preparing youth for defence: Socialisation, education, and training of young people in Europe for national security. *Security and Defence Quarterly, 38*(2), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/149891
Uzlaner, D., & Stoeckl, K. (2022). *The moralist international: Russia in the global culture wars*. Fordham University Press.
Van der Linde, I. (2013, 20 maart). De lange arm van Ankara: eens een Turk, altijd een Turk. *De Groene Amsterdammer, 137*(12).
van der Putten, F.-P., & Kranenburg, V. (2022). *Constraints for engagement with China: Dutch ports and the BRI*. Clingendael.
Voorhoeve, J. (1979). *Peace, profit and principles: A study in Dutch foreign policy*. Nijhoff.
VNO-NCW. (2024). *Naar een sterker Nederland. Een agenda voor hernieuwd vertrouwen in de toekomst en een weerbaar Nederland*. Den Haag.
Weiwei, Z. (2012). *The China wave: Rise of a civilizational state*. World Century Publication Corporation.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2017a). *Veiligheid in een Wereld van Verbindingen*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2017b). *Weten is nog geen doen. Een realistisch perspectief op redzaamheid*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2018). *Europese Variaties*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2019). *Voorbereiden op digitale ontwrichting*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2021). *Opgave AI, de nieuwe systeemtechnologie*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2022). *Coronascenario's doordacht: handreiking voor noodzakelijke keuzes*. Den Haag.
Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2023). *Verslag Hollands Spoor 'De geopolitiek van voedsel'*. Den Haag.

Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). (2024). *Discussienotitie deskundige overheid*. Den Haag.
Winther, I. N., & Østhagen, A. (2024). *The big picture of arctic geopolitics: An actor-oriented analysis*. Fridtjof Nansen Institute.
Wright, T. J. (2018). *All measures short of war. The contest for the 21st century & the future of American power*. Yale University Press.
Xuetong, Y. (2019). *Leadership and the rise of great powers*. Princeton University Press.
Yang, L. (2016, August 14). *Exploring the future of life economy with BGI co-founder Wang Jian*. Forbes.
Zakaria, F. (1997, November 1). *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy*. Foreign Affairs.
Zeng, J. (2020). *Slogan politics. Understanding Chinese foreign policy concepts*. Springer.

Index

A
ABCD trading houses, 26
Academic freedom, 70, 71
Act
  chips act, 20
  critical minerals act, 20, 62
Active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), 30
Actors
  non-state actors, 8, 13, 22, 34, 45, 47
Aerospace, 19
Afghanistan, 31
Africa
  Central Africa, 41, 69
  East Africa, 15, 21
  North Africa, 20, 78
Africa Strategy, 77, 78, 91
Ageing, 18, 19, 90
Agreement
  International agreement, 43–46, 53, 75, 86
  Trade agreement, 20, 45, 54
Agricultural, agriculture, 14, 17, 28, 55, 56, 68
Agrochemical, 26, 34
Al-Assad, B., 30
Algeria, 25
Alliances, 3, 4, 6, 7, 18, 22, 24, 40, 42–44, 54, 57, 60–63, 77, 79, 84, 85, 88, 89, 100, 101
Allies, 4
Alternative, 15, 25, 29, 34, 40, 42, 45, 61, 62, 85, 87, 88, 101
Amazon, 29, 69
Ambitions, 3
Ambitious, 13, 14, 21
America, American, 3, 12, 25, 26, 30, 37, 40, 43, 85, 106
America first, 37
Ampleon, 61
Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, 58
Amsterdam Internet Exchange (AMSIX), 90
Analyses, 2, 9
Analysis, 9
Antarctic, 92
Anti-imperialism, 76
Appellate Body, 45
Arab Spring, 8
Arbitration, 31, 46
Archangelsk, 24
Arctic, 23, 24, 92
Arctic Council, 90
Arctic Ocean, 24
Argentina, 20, 62, 101
Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), 75
Army, 15, 25, 60
Article 5, 57
Artificial intelligence (AI), 1, 8, 11–12, 14, 30, 62, 68
Aruba, 91
Asia, 15–18, 26, 41, 59, 62, 90, 98
Asian, 12, 20, 21, 39, 40, 79
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), 77
ASML, 3
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), 99
Asymmetric dependencies, 34, 63
Asymmetry, 63
Attacks, 1
9/11 attacks, 7
AUKUS, 44, 62
Australia, 15, 18, 31, 33, 44, 45, 59, 62

R. Mampuys et al., *Navigating a Fragmenting World Order*, Research for Policy, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00648-6

Austria, 65
Authoritarian, 16, 17, 38, 61, 87, 96
Authorities, 9
Autocracies, 89
Automotive, 19, 29, 56
Azerbaijan, 25, 87

B
Balance, 5–7
Balancing, 55, 83
Balancing act, 6, 15, 16, 69, 84, 86, 96, 97
Baltic, 33, 59, 99, 102
Bandung Conference, 41
Bangladesh, 31
BASF, 26
Beidou, 25
Beijing, 15, 30, 35
Belgium, 24, 29, 33, 34, 56, 65
Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 13, 20, 23, 28, 61, 66
Benefits, 6, 8
Benin, 26
Berlin Wall, 7
BES islands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba), 9
BGI group (formerly the Beijing Genomics Institute), 30
Bharat, 40
  See also India
Biodiversity, 47
Big Tech, 18, 33, 34, 69
Biotechnology, 3, 14, 30, 45, 56, 68, 86, 93
Biotechnologies, 3
Bipolar, 11, 13
Blocs, 2, 4
Bonaire, 9, 68, 91
Borrell, J., 41
Bottleneck, 24, 34, 61
Bottom-up, 14
Brazil, 15, 20, 21, 27, 61, 62, 101
Brexit, 20, 37, 77, 99
BRICS alliance (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), 15, 60–61
Brussels, 41, 56, 66, 95
Budget, budgetary, 18, 84, 94, 95
Bureaucracy, bureaucratic, 16, 45
Business as usual, 88
Business, Businesses, 3, 5, 8, 9

C
Cables, Internet cables, 24, 68, 90
Canada, 20, 44, 45, 76
Canal
  Panama canal, 24
  Suez canal, 24, 27
Capacity, 45, 58, 91, 93, 94, 98, 99, 104, 105
Capitalism, capitalist, 35, 39, 41
Cargill, 26
Caribbean, 9
Catastrophe, 36
Caucasus, 92
Century
  American century, 3, 12
  Asian century, 3, 12
  Chinese century, 106
ChatGPT, 30, 33, 69
ChemChina-Syngenta, 26
China, Chinese, 3, *passim*
China Knowledge Network (CKN), 92
China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), 61
Chip
  chip industry, 18, 92
  chip technology, 18
Chips
  logic chips, 29
  memory chips, 29, 101
Christian conservatives, 86
Civil society, 2, 8
Civilisation, 39–40, 42, 76
Civilisational state, 39, 40
Clash of civilisations, 39
Climate change, 2
Clinton, B., 35
Cloud, Cloud services, 28
Coalition, coalitions, 16, 43, 47
Cobalt, 26
  See also Rare-earth metals
Cold War
  post-cold war, 4
Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), 17
Colonial, colonialism, 35, 41, 42, 73, 75, 86, 89
Communication, online communication, public communication, 14, 17, 25, 28, 31, 38, 43, 60, 61, 63, 76, 93, 102
Communication skills, 60
Communism, 35, 36, 40, 43
Companies, 9, 15, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28–34, 38, 58, 60, 61, 63, 64, 66–72, 75, 78, 83, 86, 94, 98
Competition, competitiveness, 5, 6, 19, 32, 39, 45, 61, 67, 68, 86, 87, 98, 101
Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), 20, 44
Conditional, 44

Comprehensive national security, 63
Conflict, conflicts, violent conflicts, 1, 16, 23, 24, 26–28, 30, 44, 47, 54, 57–59, 67, 71, 73, 76, 78, 84–86, 94, 96, 98–100, 102, 103
Congo, 26
Conscription, 59, 60
Consensus
  multilateral consensus, 44
Controversial, 55
Convergence, 2, 4
Cooperation
  multilateral cooperation, 6, 28, 45, 97, 98, 106
Coordination, 45, 66, 93, 94, 101
Corporate, 5
Corrupt, 38
Cosmopolitanism, 40
Costly, Costs, 2, 6, 7
Council of Europe, 36
Counterproductive reflexes, 88–90
Court
  international courts, 31, 53
COVID-19, 33, 36, 42, 94, 100, 104
Crimea, 1, 8, 17
Crime, criminal networks, 30, 31, 86
Crisis
  financial crisis, 36, 85
  institutional crisis, 45
Criteria, 55
Criticism, 6
Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CBIPS), 29
Cuba, 17, 43
Culture, cultural, 4, 13, 39, 40, 42, 63, 73, 77, 93, 94
Curaçao, 91
Cyber
  cyberattacks, 1, 29, 31, 56, 59, 69, 70
  cybersecurity, 17, 58, 60, 65, 92, 94, 95
Cybersecurity Network (CWN), 65
Cyprus, 59
Czech Republic, 56, 65

D
Dark power, 17
Data
  genetic data, 30
  personal data, 32, 58, 72
Debt traps, 28
Decouple, decoupling, 63, 64
Deepfakes, 32, 33, 43
Defence, 4–7, 9
Democracy
  democratisation, 6, 84, 85
  democratic, 18, 35, 38, 42, 55, 61, 63, 70, 72, 74, 76, 84, 86, 87, 89, 99, 105
  democracies, 8, 35, 42, 55, 84, 89
  illiberal democracy, 38, 40, 55
  guided democracy, 38, 42
Democratisation, 6
Demographics, 2
Deng Xiaoping, 13, 26
Denmark, 24, 60, 65, 76
Dependency, 34
De-risk, de-risking, 63, 65–66, 68, 87, 98
Developed, developing, 3, 8
Development aid, 28
Developmental state, 39
Diaspora, diasporas, 30, 70, 86
Dictatorship
  dictatorship of fear, 38
  'iron fist in a velvet glove', 38
  Spin dictatorship, 38
Digital transformation, 55
Diplomacy, diplomat, diplomatic, 4–6
Disinformation, 30, 32, 33, 70, 86, 87, 105
Disintegration, 4
Dispute settlement body, Appelate Body, 45
Disruption, 28, 29, 57, 65, 70, 98
Diversification, 98
Dollar, 18, 29
Domestic, 3, 4, 8, 9
Dominance, 4
Dow-DuPont, 26
Draghi, M., 98
Drone, drones, autonomous drones, 8, 17, 58, 59
Drugs, 30, 31
Dual circulation, 63
  See also De-coupling; De-risking; Strategic autonomy
Dual-use, 8
Dugin, A., 40
Dutch, 3, 15, 21, 26, 29, 31, 38, 40, 43, 58, 61, 73, 74, 77, 78, 84, 86, 93, 96, 97, 99, 102–106
Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), 8, 58, 77
Dutch central bank (DNB), 64
Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), 69
Dutch Institute for Vulnerability Disclosure (DIVD), 105
Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD), 15
Dutch society, 9

E
Eastern European, 31, 99
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 101
Economic power, 19, 85
Economic, economy, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 14, 16–20, 22, 33, 34, 36, 39, 40, 43, 44, 56, 57, 63–70, 77, 84, 86–88, 92, 95, 97, 98, 100, 103
Economic security, 64–66, 71
Education, 13, 16, 37, 55, 57, 59, 62, 69
Egypt, 26, 41
Elections, 33, 63, 70
Electric vehicles (EV's), 56
Elite, 38, 90
Empire, Eurasian Empire, 37
Empirical, 9
End of History, 35
Enemies, 4
Energy
  renewable energy, 26, 55
Enforcement, 46, 55, 84, 96
Engagement, 7
Enlargement, 7
Entrenchment, 88, 89
Equality, 39, 43, 44, 72, 76, 78
Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip, 31
Eritrea, 31
Espionage, 29, 61
Estonia, 31, 56, 59, 78
Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, 26
Ethnic, 16, 31
EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), 20
Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), 17, 23, 60
Euromax terminal, 61
Europe, 1–3, 6, 8, 13, 15, 17–20, 22, 24–27, 30–33, 36, 40–43, 54–59, 61–65, 67–70, 72–74, 78, 84, 85, 87–89, 92, 96–99, 102, 103, 105–107
European Central Bank (ECB), 64, 70
European Commission (EC), 63, 71
European Parliament, 66
European Political Community, 99
European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC), 68
European Union (EU), 3, 7, 11, 17, 19–22, 25, 27, 29, 32, 33, 41, 44, 45, 54–57, 62, 65–67, 70, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 93, 94, 97–100, 105
Eurozone, 64
EU-US Trade and Technology Council, 100
Expansionism, 15, 37
Expertise, 29, 64, 78, 91–93, 101, 104, 106
Export, exports, 20, 26, 27, 38, 45, 57, 66, 75, 98

F
F-35, 74, 75
Facial recognition, 17
False temptations, 88–90
Fascism, 40
Fertiliser, 17, 27
Financial, financial crisis, 3, 11, 22, 27–29, 33, 34, 36, 45, 58, 61, 64, 70, 95, 98, 100, 105
Financial power, 11
Finland, 56, 59, 60, 64, 65, 104
First aid skill, 59
Food, 18, 23, 25–28, 33, 34, 56, 61, 68, 86, 90, 95, 101
Fortress, 89
Fossil fuel, 17, 25
Foreign policy, 4–7, 9
Fragmentation, 2–4, 7, 9
Frames, 3
Frameworks, 5, 68, 79, 97
France, French, 19, 20, 24, 44, 56, 57, 65, 78, 101
Franco-German axis, 99
Freedom, 18, 24, 30, 70, 71, 83, 87, 102, 105
French Guiana, 25
Free trade, 6
Friedman, T., 35
Fukuyama, F., 1, 35, 37
Funding, 33, 44, 57

G
Galileo, 25, 68
Gap, innovation gap, 45, 59, 69
Gas, natural gas, shale gas, 18, 24, 25, 36, 42, 87
Gaza, 1
  See also Israel-Gaza conflict; Israel-Palestinian conflict
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 45
Genetics, 30
Geo-economic, geo-economically, 17, 64, 67, 68, 70, 92, 101
Geography, 23–25, 86
Geopolitical, 1–9

Geopoliticisation, 67, 69
German, 7
German, Germany, 7, 16, 19, 20, 24, 26, 36, 40, 56, 57, 59, 65, 68, 74, 77, 94, 99, 101
Ghana, 41
Glencore, 26
Global, 2–4, 6–9, 11, 12, 14–16, 19, 21, 26–29, 32, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42, 45, 47, 54, 56, 57, 61, 67–69, 71, 72, 76, 79, 84–86, 88, 90, 91, 93, 101, 106
Global civilisation initiative (GCI), 13, 39
Global Gateway Initiative, 62
Global North, 21
Global market, 3
Global order, 8
Global South, 21, 42, 62, 72, 76–79, 88, 95, 100
Globalisation, 1, 2, 4, 6
Glonass, 25
Google, 29
Governments, 2, 3, 7, 9
GPS
  See also Baidou, Glonass and Galilei
Grain, 26, 27, 63
Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, 26
Greater North Sea Basin Initiative, 24
Greece, 65, 66
Gross National Income (GNP), 14
Group of Twenty (G20), 15

H
Hackers, Hacking, 15, 31, 34, 68, 105
Hambantota International Port in Sri Lanka, 28
Hard power, 11, 23, 85
Hegemony, hegemon, 8, 41
Hindu nationalism, 40
Hindu-nationalist BJP party, 16
History, historical, 1, 3, 4
Human rights, universal human rights, 5, 6, 8, 36, 39, 42, 44, 46, 70, 72–75, 77, 84, 87
Humanitarian, 4
Humiliation, humiliated, 36–37, 76
Houthis, 24
Huawei, 28, 32, 61, 63, 65
Hungary, 17, 37, 38, 40, 54, 66
Hunger, 28
Hybrid, hybrid warfare, 11, 23, 86, 104
Hypocrisy, 44

I
Icebreakers, 24
Identity, 22, 34, 36, 40, 100
Ideology, ideological, 2, 4
Illiberal democracies, 55
Imperialism, imperialist, 31, 41
Income
  annual per capita income, 14, 16
  per capita income, 14, 16
India, 3, 4, 11, 15–21, 25, 30, 40–42, 61, 62, 85, 87–89, 92, 93, 98
  See also Bharat
India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), 15, 61, 98
Indonesia, 21, 38, 41, 59, 101
Indo-pacific, 18, 44
Industrial policies, 8, 65, 66, 68
Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), 18
Influence
  Sphere of influence, 17, 37, 55, 57, 85
Influencers, 32, 34, 43
Information Technology services (IT), 16
Infrastructure
  digital, 61, 69, 70, 86, 88, 90, 104
  financial, 28, 29, 34, 86
  physical, 28
Initiative
  Global development initiative, 13
  Global security initiative, 13
  Global Civilisation Initiative, 13, 39
  Global Gateway Initiative, 62
Innovation, innovative, 7
Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), 29
Institutional crisis, 45
Integration, 2
Intelligence, 45, 69, 76, 92, 102
Interdependence, 2
International Court of Justice (ICJ), 31–32, 53
International Criminal Court (ICC), 53
International institutions, 15, 36, 43–46
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 6, 14, 44, 77, 100
International Organisations (IOs), 40, 45, 47, 53, 76, 77
International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 31
International relations, 4, 23, 35, 39, 46, 47, 54, 63
International Telecommunications Union (ITU), 31
International treaties, 34, 42
Invasion, 8

Investments, 6, 15, 20, 21, 55, 62, 64–67, 71, 77, 78, 94, 95
Iran, 4
Ireland, 24, 65
Islamic, 86
Islamic State (IS), 8
Islands
  Artificial islands, 24
  Spratly and Paracel islands, 24
Israel, 74, 75
Israel-Gaza conflict, 75
Italy, 17, 61, 65, 74, 78
Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 74

J
Japan, Japanese, 15–18, 21, 37, 41, 59, 60, 62, 64, 66, 101
Journalist, 33–35, 76
Judeo-Christian tradition, 39
Judicial, 6

K
Kaliningrad, 59
Kazakhstan, 25
Kenya, 21
Key policy interests, 96
Kissinger, H., 20
Knowledge security, 3, 70, 71
Korea
  North Korea, 29, 31, 43
  South Korea, 21, 29, 62, 64, 101, 102
Kremlin, 36, 42, 57

L
Labour, 2
Language, 92
Laos, 26
Large Language Models (LLMs), 30, 33
Latin America, 4
Latvia, 59, 65, 66
Law
  international law, 35, 36, 90
  rule of law, 4, 6, 18, 38, 55, 63, 70, 72, 74–76, 84, 86, 87, 90, 96, 105
Lawfare, 32
Leadership, 2
League Against Imperialism, 41
League of small pioneers, 102
Lebanon, 26, 75
Legislation, 22, 64, 69, 72, 95, 96, 104
Liberal, liberalism, neoliberalism, 35, 37, 38, 44
Liberal-Western, 3, 4
Liberation, 36
Liberty, liberties, individual liberties, 40
Life sciences, 30
Like-minded, 44
Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), 25
Lithium, 26
  See also Rare-earth metals
Lithium triangle, 26
Lithuania, 59, 65
Logink, 61
Long arm of Ankara, 70
Long-term, 5
Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, 24
Luxembourg, 56

M
Macron, E., 44, 57
Make America Great Again, 37
Malaysia, 33, 39
Malware, 15
Manipulation, manipulated, 33, 38, 68
Manufacturing, 14, 29, 69, 90
Maritime, 24, 61, 90
Market, single market, internal market, 1, 3, 6, 16, 19, 20, 22, 27, 29, 30, 32, 35, 56, 63, 64, 66, 67, 84, 85, 87, 98, 101
Materials, raw materials, critical materials, 14, 21, 23, 25–26, 30, 33, 34, 55, 63, 67, 76–79, 86, 88, 94, 95, 101
Media, 23, 32–33, 38, 40, 51, 58, 70, 76, 86, 102, 103
Mediation, 15, 26
Mercosur, 20
Metals, 11, 14, 17, 24–26, 69, 86
  See also Cobalt; Lithium; Rare-earth metals; Uranium
Mexico, 31
MH17, 33
Microsoft, 29, 69
Middle East, 1
Migration, 2, 3, 28, 30, 31, 55, 70, 74, 77, 78, 86
Militaire Inlichtingen en Veiligheids Dienst (MIVD), 15, 17, 76
Military, 3, 8, 11, 12, 15, 17–19, 21–24, 33, 44, 57, 59, 60, 63, 70, 78, 85, 94, 102, 105
Military power, 22, 44

Military skills, 59, 60
Minilateral, 44, 60, 99
Mining, 25, 26
Ministry, 7, 92–94
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), 93, 94
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ), 7, 8, 56
Ministry of General Affairs (AZ), 94
Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW), 93
Misconceptions, 13, 14, 89
Model
  European model, 36
  Western constitutional model, 36
  Western model, 12, 36
Modi, N., 40, 98
Moldova, 31
Moon, 25
Moral
  moral decadence, 40
  morality, 34, 39, 66
Morocco, 27, 101
Moralist International, 40
Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, 35, 41
Multi-alignment, 21, 85
Multilateral, 7, 8
Multinational, multinationals, 3, 8, 34, 47, 67, 103
Multiparty, 35
Multipolarity, multipolarisation, multipolar, 13, 22
Multiplicity, multiplicity, 3, 11, 22, 34, 43, 85
Municipalities, 73, 94
Murmansk, 24
Musk, E., 25
Muslim, 31
Myanmar, 85

N
Namibia, 25
Narrative, 4
Nasser, G.A., 41
National, 4–8, 18, 20, 35, 44, 46, 47, 56, 60, 62, 64, 65, 67, 69, 90, 93–95, 104, 106
National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), 68
National Security Council (NVR), 65
Navigation, 24, 25, 34
Nehru, J., 41
Neocolonialism, 42
Netherlands, 2, *passim*
  See also Kingdom of the Netherlands
Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), 7, 64
Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), 2, 7, 9
New Development Bank (NDB), 45, 77
New Zealand, 59, 102
Next eXPerience (NXP), 29, 61, 101
Nicaragua, 17, 24
Niger, 25
Nigeria, 21
Nkrumah, K., 41
Non-alignment, 21
Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), 45, 74, 75
Non-state, 8, 13, 22, 34, 45, 47
Non-state actors, 8, 22, 34, 45, 47
Nord Stream, 36
Normalcy bias, 88
Norms, 5
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 17, 18, 21, 23, 30, 44, 57, 58, 60, 61, 84, 91, 94, 99, 100
North pole, 17, 24, 90
Norway, 24, 60
NRG Pallas, 30
Nuclear, 1

O
Oceans, 15, 17, 21, 23, 24
OneM2M, 31
Online communication, 43
Open strategic autonomy, 63
Opium, 37
Opportunities, 2, 7, 9
Orbán, V., 38, 40
Order
  global order, 8
  legal order, 36, 43, 46, 84, 87
  world order, 1–4, 6, 7, 9, 11–47, 54, 60, 85, 99
Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), 45
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), 25
Ostpolitik, 36

P
Pakistan, 16
Palestine, Palestinian, 74, 75
Paradox, 46

Paraguay, 20, 62
Parliament, 20, 21, 44, 47, 66, 84, 102
Partnership, partnerships, 3, 17, 18, 41, 44, 45, 54, 62, 77, 85, 98, 101–102, 104, 106
Pavlovsky, G., 38
Pax Americana, 53
Peace dividend, 84, 85, 96
Peace, peaceful, 4, 8, 35, 41, 46, 83–85, 96
Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), 24
Peskov, D., 38
Pharmaceuticals, 3, 16, 19, 56, 93
Philippines, 24
Photonics, 68, 90
Pipelines, 25, 36
Plural South, 41
Poland, 20, 37, 40, 56, 57, 59, 65
Polarisation, 18, 73–75
Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB), 56, 93, 94
Policy, foreign policy, 2, *passim*
Policymakers, 2, 6, 9
Politics, political, 3, 4, 6, 8, 12, 17–20, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37–40, 42–44, 47, 54–56, 63, 66, 70, 72, 74–77, 86–88, 91, 94–98, 105
Population, 14, 16, 18, 19, 27, 43, 87, 90, 102–104
Populism, populist, 37–38, 43
Port, Port of Chabahar, Port of Rotterdam, Port of Sevastopol, Port of Odessa, Port of Piraeus, Port of Hamburg, port of Antwerp, Hambantota international port Sri Lanka, 15, 17, 26, 28, 56, 57, 61, 68
Portugal, 65
Post-colonial, post colonialism, decolonialisation, 4, 76
Poverty, 13, 28
Power arenas, 9
Power centres, 2, 3, 9
Preparedness, 58, 59, 95, 104, 105
Principle, principles, 4
Priorities, 5, 6
Privacy, 70, 72, 76
Problem, problems, problematic, 14, 26–28, 45, 57, 67, 89, 103
Profits, 4, 5
Propaganda, 32, 33, 69, 70, 86
Prosperity, 2, 5–7
Protectionism, 85, 96
Putin, V., 30, 36, 41

Q

Qatar, 21, 25, 86
Quad, 15, 16, 18, 62
Quantum, 14, 23, 30, 45, 68, 86, 90

R

Rare-earth metals, 11, 14, 26
Realities, 2, 8
Recalibration, 7
Regime, regimes, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 30, 31, 34–40, 42, 43, 55, 70, 86, 96
Regions, regional, 3, 6, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 27, 37, 42, 43, 57, 60, 74, 92, 103
Regulation, regulatory, 2, 18, 19, 22, 23, 31–32, 46
Reliance, 55, 70
Religious, 16, 34, 40
Reorientation, 1, 2, 7
Reserves, 14, 34, 66, 95, 96
Reservists, 104
Resilience, 58–60, 70, 78, 94–97, 104–107
Resources, 18, 24, 27, 64, 67, 85, 86, 95, 97, 103
Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM), 62, 101
Restrictions, 14, 26, 66, 98
Reunification, 7
Revision, revisionism, revisionist, 4, 9
Rhetoric, 38, 41, 101
Rights
  human rights, 5, 6, 8, 36, 39, 42, 44, 46, 70, 72–75, 77, 84, 87, 100
  individual rights, 40, 89
  universal rights, 42
Right-wing, 40
Risk
  risk assessment, 6, 25, 27, 40, 53, 55–57, 60–62, 64, 66, 70, 72, 85, 89, 96, 98, 103, 104
Rivalries, 1–3, 6
Rivers, Nile, 26
Robust, robustness, 14, 17, 18, 65, 84, 91–93, 95, 97–99, 102, 106
Romania, 59, 65
Royal IHC, 61
Rule of law, 4, 6
Russia and Eastern Europe Knowledge Alliance (REKA), 92
Russian Orthodox Church, 86
Russian World, 36
Russia, Russian state, 1, 3, 4, 11, 15–18, 20–27, 29–31, 33, 36–38, 40–42, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 66, 70, 78, 84, 85, 92, 98

S
Saba, 9, 91
Sabotage, 17, 28, 61, 75
Safety, 73, 93, 94, 99
Sahel, 17, 41, 92, 101
Sanctions, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 27, 41, 56, 67, 98
Satellites, low earth orbit (LEO) satellites, starlink satellites, 1, 24, 25
Saudi Arabia, 15, 21
Scandinavian, 60, 99, 102, 104
Scandinavian model, 60
Scarcity, 25, 26, 33
Scenarios, 7
Scientific, scientific independence, 70–72
Sea
  North sea, 17, 24
  Red sea, 25, 27
  South China sea, 15, 24, 57, 85, 92
Securitisation, 7
Security, 2, *passim*
Self-sufficient, 27, 93
Semiconductor, semiconductor industry, 29, 68
Serbia, 37, 54
Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 61
Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries Company Limited (ZPMC), 28, 61
Ships, 17, 24, 25
Short term, 64
Silicon Shield, 29
Silk road, digital silk road, space silk road, polar silk road, 13
Simplification, simplify, simplified, 12, 88, 89
Simultaneous, simultaneity, 23, 42, 46
Sint Eustatius, 9, 91
Sint Maarten, 91
Sistema Peredachi Finansovykh Soobscheniy (SPFS), 29
Skills
  basic skills, 59, 60
  first aid skills, 59
  military skills, 59, 60
  practical skills, 60
Slovakia, 17, 65
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), 103, 104
Social media, 32, 33, 58, 103
Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT), 29, 34
Society
  society as a whole, 7, 83, 84
  civil society, 2, 8, 65, 87, 92, 93, 103–106
Soft power, 3, 17, 18, 38
Software, 15, 17, 69
Solar panels, 14
Somalia, 26
South Korea, 21, 29, 62, 64, 101, 102
Sovereignty, 37, 43, 68, 100
Soviet states, Soviet Union, 11, 14, 17, 24, 35, 36, 59
Soya, 27
Space, 6, 23–25, 34, 68, 92
SpaceX, 24, 34
Speculation, 27, 106
Spin dictatorship, 38
Spratly and Paracel islands, 24
Standard of living, 5
Standards, standardisation, 5, 20, 32, 47, 56, 62, 84, 86, 101, 102
State-owned enterprises (SOEs), 15
Strait, Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, 24
Strasbourg, 56
Strategic autonomy, 65, 66
Strategic Dependencies Task Force (TFSA), 65
Strategic, strategy, 7, 13–15, 21, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34, 38, 45, 55, 62, 65, 66, 68, 71, 72, 77, 79, 84, 85, 87, 91, 93–96, 98, 101–103
Strategic technologies, 21
Submarine, 17, 24, 68, 69, 90
Sudan, 85
Sukarno, 38, 41
Superpower, superpowers, 1, 3, 4, 6, 11–23, 40, 56, 62, 63, 85, 87
Supply, supply chains, 26, 33, 34, 58, 63, 66, 69, 71, 74, 75, 88, 97, 98
Supremacy, 4
Surveillance, 3
Sustainability, sustainable, 19, 20, 44, 62, 67, 77, 79
Sweden, 24, 57, 60, 64, 65
Swing states, 3
Syria, 17, 30, 73

T
Taiwan, 15, 21, 29, 57, 65
Tanzania, 21
Tariffs, 98
Technology platforms, X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, Telegram, 14, 32
Technology, technologies, 8, 14–17, 23–25, 29–30, 32, 45, 47, 55, 61, 65, 68, 69, 90, 93, 94, 99

Telecommunications, 61, 63
Territory, territorial, 5, 15, 21, 24, 30, 59, 65, 91, 96
Thailand, 24, 59
The Hague, 24, 31, 75, 95
Third wave of Democratisation, 84
Third world, 41
Threat, threats, 8, 9, 20, 29, 54, 56–60, 73, 76, 84, 89, 99, 103, 104
3GPP, 31
Tianxia, 39
Tibet, 26
Tito, J.B., 41
Top-down, 14, 89
Totalitarian, 35
Trade, free trade, 2, 5, 7, 19, 20, 22, 23, 31, 33, 35, 38, 45, 56, 61, 62, 64, 65, 67, 75, 85, 88, 90
Trade agreement, 54
Trade-off, trade-offs, 5, 6
Tradition, 39, 75, 91
Traditional, traditionalism, 1, 9, 11, 17, 22, 23, 32, 39–42, 85
Trafigura, 26
Transatlantic, transatlantic relationship, 8
Transformation, digital transformation, 55, 71, 96
Transition, 26, 27, 67, 97
Transnational, 43, 47
Treaty, treaties, 53, 62
Trend, 16, 63, 67, 84, 85, 88, 89, 96, 97, 100
Triad Framework, 5–7, 66
Trump, D., 18, 19, 37
TSMC, 29
Tunisia, 26, 102
Türkiye, 4
Tusk, D., 1

U
Ukraine, 1, 8
Uncertain, 2
UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 31
UN General Assembly, 74
Unipolar, 3
United Arab Emirates (UAE), 25
United Kingdom (UK), 54
United Nations (UN), 31, 41, 44, 61, 99
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 44
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 100
United States (US), 1–3, 6–8, 57
Universities, 3
Uranium, 25, 30, 90
Urenco, 30, 90
Uruguay, 20, 62
Uzbekistan, 25

V
Vaccines, 42
Value chain, 25, 26
Values
  universal values, 6, 40, 44
  progressive values, 39, 40
  traditional values, 17, 39, 40
Vectors of fragmentation, 2–4, 9, 11, 12, 43, 46, 53, 72
Venezuela, 17, 31
Vietnam, 17
Vigilance, 53, 60–63
Violent conflicts, 59
Voice of Europe, 70
Voices, 4
Von der Leyen, U., 20
Vulnerable, vulnerabilities, 8, 63, 69

W
Wageningen University & Research, 90
Wagner Group, 31
Wake-up call, 103, 106
Wandel durch Annäherung, Wandel durch Handel, 36
War, 1, *passim*
  Culture war, 40
  Opium war, 37
  Post war, 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 18, 21, 22, 35, 43, 44, 84, 85, 87
  War on terror, 7
  World War II, 4, 8, 37, 40, 43
Warfare, hybrid warfare, 11, 23, 30, 86, 95
Washington, 8
Water
  drinking water, 86
  fresh water, 26
Water management, 70
Weaponisation of everything, 11, 23
Weaponisation of interdependence, 23
Weapons, weaponisation, 3, 70

Well-being, 5
Western
  anti-western, 25, 41, 86, 101
  non-western, 41, 100
  pro-western, 13
West *vs*. the rest, 21
Wishful thinking, 88
Withdrawal, withdrawn, 44, 54
World Bank, 44, 77
World Health Organization (WHO), 100
World Trade Organization (WTO), 31, 45, 60, 61, 67, 84, 99, 100
World views, 3, 4, 9

X
Xi Jinping, 13

Y
Yemen, 24, 85
Yugoslavia, 41

Z
Zero-sum, 39