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CENTRAL EUROPE AFTER RUSSIAN MILITARY AGGRESSION AND BALTIC SECURITY

CENTRAL EUROPE

Guest Editor Jaroslav Ušiak

- Jaroslav Ušiak* Navigating New Waters: Russian Military Aggression on Ukraine and Effects on the Visegrad Group
- Peter Rada*
Laura Nyilas The Liberal World Order's Future from the Central and Eastern European Point of View
- Lucia Husenicova* State of Democracy in Central Europe after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine
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BALTIC SECURITY

- Ricardo Rodríguez* Evolution of Baltic Security: Analysis of Threats and Strategic Responses

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EDITORIAL NOTE/NOTA EDITORIAL

Antonio Marquina¹

Director, UNISCI

This special issue of the Journal is dedicated to the Visegrad states in Central Europe and their political and security approaches. In addition, the Journal presents the reorganisation of security and defence in the Baltic Sea region following the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO, prompted by the fears of these two governments that Russia's interventionist and expansionist policies, which legitimise the use of force in contrast to what is enshrined in the United Nations Charter, would pose a major threat to their security.

In the case of the Visegrad countries, the various articles present the evolution of perceptions and approaches to security induced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the strengthening of populist approaches of various kinds in these countries. In this sense, it is pointed out how the transformation of the world order is perceived and addressed in these countries, where globalisation is receding and regionalisation seems to take precedence; the tension between liberalism and realism; and the growing discourse against a liberal international order - a term rather demonised by the political elites - and the political agenda implemented in the European Union. If the Russian invasion initially led citizens to support their governments in their anti-Russian policies, domestic problems, political demagoguery and the economic situation have had a more significant impact on the growing polarisation of societies, without underestimating the importance of propaganda, Russian disinformation and the strong expansion of its anti-liberal narrative.

In any case, the differences between the Visegrad countries were and are significant. They stem from history and national traumas, their different geopolitical orientations and the different populist roles of their governments. These disparities are evident in the contradictory foreign policies of the various countries on key issues such as the war in Ukraine and its aftermath, sanctions against Russia, energy security, support for Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees, policy towards China and its worrying European agenda, as well as strategic priorities and European integration and commitment to the defence of the EU, despite being members of NATO and the European Union.

The risk of increasing fragmentation of the Visegrad 4 is a reality and, as one of the articles points out, new frameworks for cooperation should be developed. This is a sensitive issue for the EU, which has not been sensitive enough to the different realities of these countries and has resorted to somewhat primitive policies in the face of complex issues. This is an issue of vital importance for the survival of the EU, where it needs to put its foot on the wall, not only to prevent the obvious infiltration of Russia and a populism on the right and on the left that sets democracy back, but also to reflect with greater clarity on the dilemmas posed by the new world order and the priorities of the reforms to be undertaken, including their impact on a growing anti-liberal narrative; what is essential in the short and medium term, with a possibly less

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ideologised treatment, and what is perceived more as an appendage that has finally become a priority in the EU.

After this first block of articles, several specific studies explain Hungary's foreign policy, its military modernization and its shortcomings, the weakening of partnership and cooperation with China and the impact of the war on The Three Seas Initiative.

The issue closes with an explanation of the new reorganization of security in the Baltic, which has become an arc of coastal countries belonging to NATO and which creates important dilemmas for Russia's expansive approaches.

We would like to thank the authors, especially guest editor Jaroslav Ušiak, and the reviewers for their generous contributions.