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FUTURE SCENARIOS

CONFLICT –IDENTITY –STATEHOOD:
PERSPECTIVES FOR THE EU AND ITS
EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD

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Introduction

Ulrich Schneckener, Iris Rehklau, Sebastian Schäffer

Thinking about someone's personal future is often not an easy task. It is even more challenging, if this is done for a whole region and together in a group. The participants of our workshop "*Conflict –Identity –Statehood: Perspectives for the EU and its Eastern neighbourhood*" held at the Yurii Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University from 30. September to 05. October 2019 took this challenge.

This publication is a documentation of the results that students from German, Moldovan and Ukrainian universities have produced after an intensive week of working together. After an intercultural workshop, thematic lectures prepared the mixed groups for their task: to stand in the year 2030 and look back at the developments that happened in their four different worlds:

- The future is weirder than I expect.
- The future is what I expect.
- The future is better than I expect.
- The future is worse than I expect.

Before working in their assigned groups, all participants collected so-called drivers, which would set framework for their analysis. Together with the organisers over 40 possible drivers have been clustered together and reduced to the following five:

1. Resources
2. Social developments
3. Regional political developments
4. International political developments
5. Peace and security

The outcomes are certainly weird, what we expect, better and worse, but not necessarily in this order. This is by no means an assessment of the effort each and every one has put into writing their worlds, but a mere observation. As we stated, the task is difficult enough, however, to judge what is weird, better or worse becomes different depending from which angle you look back to the events that led to the future our groups lived in.

This exercise is also not meant to provide a strategic forecast, the method aims to introduce a new aspect to the discussion with an imaginary component that provides a scope of reality. What we learn from this workshop, as it is a continuation of a series of similar events held over the past years, is that there seems to be a more pessimistic view on the developments in international politics. Something that is certainly influenced by current events.

Furthermore, even if in one scenario the United States of Europe are established, in all worlds the European Union appears rather as an object of analysis than an actor. While (hopefully) none of the scenarios will become the world we will live in in 2030, it gives us an outlook to possible developments and their consequences in the region.

We would like to thank our partners, first and foremost Anatolyi Kruglashov (Yurii Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University) for helping with the logistics in Chernivtsi but also for the valuable input, which has also been provided by Nadja Afanasieva (Ukrainian Institute for International Politics, Kyiv) and Sergiu Musteață (State Pedagogical University “Ion Creangă”, Chișinău). We furthermore are very grateful for the financial support of the DAAD, which made the whole cooperation possible. Last but not least, we are very thankful for all the hard work everyone has put into creating the scenarios. We hope to have contributed a little bit to making a better future together.

The editors

STIVEN TREMARIA, MARZIA RAZA, OLEKSII YAKOVIICHUK, IRINA COJUHARI, DIANA STROICI

Scenario 1: The future is weirder than I expect

MAGICAL REALISM: FROM BRUSSELS TO TIRASPOL

The world as we witness in 2030 was not even a remote possibility until the end of 2019. The erstwhile European Union (EU) began to experience early existential shocks only 10 years ago in May 2020 with the onset of the “Donbas Spring.” In an overwhelmingly positive independence referendum, the Donbas region seceded from Ukraine triggering a pervasive separatist wave across Europe. The events in Donbas set off a domino effect of successful independence movements in Catalonia, Corsica, South Tyrol, Flanders, and Bavaria regions.



Whereas continental Europe became the site for a dramatic collapse of nation-states, the former Eastern Partnership countries saw the emergence of a regional alliance with Moldova, Ukraine, the Donbas, Georgia, and Belarus as member countries. The alliance known as the United States of former Eastern Partnership (USFEP) has its headquarters in Tiraspol. The organization is currently led by Alexander Lukashenko. While his economic and social policies are important to understand the dramatic rise of USFEP, the collapse of the EU and its substitution with the USFEP in the region should be seen in a wider context. This scenario traces some major events leading to the emergence of the current status quo in Europe.

International political developments

The disintegration of the European states order caused by a wave of nationalist movements brought about a proliferation of intrastate conflicts at the regional scale, which resulted in the destruction of the national economic apparatuses and a collapse of the EU. Likewise, the rise of nationalism sparked an escalation of imperialist antagonisms between world powers and an increase of armed conflicts across the globe. In 2022, a war broke out between Russia and China after the annexation of Siberia by the latter for the exploitation of the natural resources in the Siberian forest. As a consequence, Europe faced simultaneous crisis in the Western and in the Eastern borders and plunged into a crisis of governance, which resulted in the emergence of a new regional order based on middle-rank powers.

Among them, the USFEP achieved to consolidate as the dominant actor in Eastern Europe, thus beginning the so-called *Tiraspol Era*. As a result of a non-aggression and collaboration pact signed with Russia after the outbreak of the Sino-Russian war, the USFEP succeeded in establishing friendly relations with Russia – which allowed an end of the Russian occupation of Crimea and its accession to the USFEP – and becoming a buffer zone between Western Europe and Central Asia. Internationally, the USFEP remained neutral toward the different disputing parties, which enabled it to focus on its own internal political and economic consolidation.

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Regional politics

In December 2019, after negotiations in the Normandy format, the parties achieved an agreement concerning local elections in the uncontrolled part of Donbas region. After the Donbas region proclaimed independence, the Ukrainian government failed to control the domestic ethno-nationalist movements, and President Zelenskyj was blamed for allowing the elections to happen. Apart from the ethno-nationalist mobilization, there was a wave of other demonstrations, claiming more autonomy for all regions. As a result, governmental control over the regions was lost.

After dividing into smaller national units and introducing mutual sanctions, Western European countries experienced war and famine. During this time, the Eastern agricultural regions became the main provider of food supplies to Europe. Ukrainian, Moldovan, and Georgian oligarchs exploited weaker regulatory control to privatize the fertile territories in order to increase the share of profits from the European market. The process of privatization led to complete chaos.

The oligarchs preferred to have a strong authoritarian leader to bring political stability and to control the situation within the region. Thus, the position of the regional strongman was offered to Alexander Lukashenko in exchange for economic loans for private enterprises. The oligarchs foresaw that the candidature of Lukashenko would be supported by the population of all countries as the older population which lived in the Soviet Union was used to a strong leader and expressed a general acceptance for the person of Lukashenko.

The first problem confronting Lukashenko was stabilizing Ukraine, the Donbas, Moldova, Georgia, and Belarus. The solution was found in a confederation comprising these countries under the banner of USFEP. Choosing as capital one of the cities from the participating countries would cause new troubles. Lukashenko decided to move the capital to Tiraspol, which had just moved out of Russian influence as the Sino-Russian war inflicted heavy losses on the Russian side.

As the partnership with Russia was no longer endowing Lukashenko with military and developmental aid, he decided to adopt a neutral disposition. Tiraspol was a smaller city in comparison to Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Chişinău. It was easier to establish a new capital there instead of the bigger and less safer cities in the region, more so as Lukashenko feared violent resistance against his regime in the earlier days of its founding. The new regional federation of USFEP proclaimed full religious and language freedom.

A few years into the presidency, Lukashenko began to concentrate power in his hands and gradually moved towards building Communism in the USFEP. In the first step, collective properties were built by nationalizing the oligarchs' enterprises. In this process, several small-scale businessmen as well as oligarchs who refused to comply with the injunctions of the government were persecuted and sentenced to death. These steps enjoyed popular support, indicating the rise of a cult-based politics centred on the personality of Lukashenko, who was heavily popularized as "father of the federation".

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Resource-related developments

The economic rise of USFEP was facilitated by multiple factors. Intrastate wars in Western Europe deluged the USFEP with a high demand for food products, leading to rapid export-led growth. The main exports comprised of Ukrainian corn, Moldovan apples and wine, and Belarusian potatoes. The financial revenues from food exports were invested in the modernization of agricultural production as an increase in demand necessitated more productivity. Apart from that, the money was also utilized for huge investments in infrastructure and a general improvement in social service delivery was seen in the last decade. Most importantly, USFEP acquired major shares in many Western European industries in automobile, pharmaceutical, and technological research sectors. The war-induced economic recession caused a remarkable decline in the value of Western companies, whose assets were available for less than half the price in the market and subsequently bought by USFEP.

This is why the federation succeeded in developing a regionally competitive STEM industry.

As a consequence of these developments, USFEP became an attractive destination for migrants. The government particularly focused on vocational skill development in the STEM fields and supported many foreign and local students and practitioners to develop indigenous technological resources in order to reduce the region's dependence on the United States and Russia.

Social developments

The economic boom experienced by USFEP, as well as the technological advances achieved, allowed the federation to realise the utopia of Communism. Under President Lukashenko, a collective farm community was established, whose revenues allowed the central state to ensure for all citizens free education, a comprehensive welfare system, free healthcare, high pensions and build a new society aligned with Communist values and comprised by honest citizens and best practices.

However, the blossoming federation attracted millions of economic refugees from the neighbouring Western countries, particularly from Romania and Poland. Although many of these migrants were able to integrate into society as farmers, not of all of them could be easily converted to the new ideology of President Lukashenko, and thus pave the way to increasing internal social tensions.



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Peace and security

At least at an aggregated level, the USFEP reflects prosperity and stability. However, this may not be true if certain local developments, as well as the violent rise of the federation are taken into account. Like most states, violence was deeply embedded in the state-building process of the federation, including its rise as a regional power. Lukashenko unleashed iron-fisted oppression of Ukrainian, Moldovan, Donbasian, Georgian, and Belarusian oligarchs, in order to implement his socio-economic agenda. The facilitation provided by Russia in this process led many to question if Lukashenko was acting in the interests of the community of people represented by the USFEP, or whether he was a sentinel of Russian interests. This sentiment was strong and widespread but it did not result in popular anti-Lukashenko resistance as he embarked on a successful economic modernization program and repressed opposition heavily. Lukashenko proclaimed many reasons for his state and society-

building programs, and one of them was making USFEP “self-sufficient in all areas”. The collapse of the EU coupled with a retreat of NATO from Europe were also instrumental in the rise of Lukashenko as a stabilizer for the region.

Today, the USFEP army is responsible for the region’s external security, but as well as for the suppression of dissent, popular resistance, and political rivals in order to keep internal order. Potential conflict lines are clustered around regional disparity in growth, language, ethnicity, and disparity in economic development. It is expected that the totalitarian appetite of the Lukashenko government to standardize and homogenize differences, instead of accepting them, will split open many potential conflict flashpoints in the future.

Closing remarks

The collapse of the EU and the end of the Brussels Era can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it led to the consolidation of a regionally resonant bloc in Eastern Europe, which has been able to secure overwhelming economic development and better living standards for its population. On the other hand, under the new regional status quo, a withering away of civil and political liberties has also been witnessed. A fragile internal peace and political instability within USFEP provide then the omen for an ephemeral order.

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Scenario 2: The future is what I expect

THE EAST - STILL A THRILLER?

It's the year 2030. The world is still suffering from violent conflicts and uncertainty about its future. The EU still exists in the former borders but resembles a patchwork quilt. The Western Balkans entered the EU in 2025 (North Macedonia, Montenegro), 2026 (Albania), respectively 2027 (Bosnia and Herzegovina), afterwards a period of enlargement fatigue has occurred. The deepening of cooperation takes place within certain clusters of states. The economic cooperation between the member states is still strong, the single market expanded.

The successor of Igor Dodon is now ruling Moldova. Identity conflicts between Russian influenced regions and the main part of Moldova are still frozen and draining the resources of the country. The government is dominated by the pro-Russian Party PSRM, following an anti-NATO, anti-EU and socialist dominated course. The massive brain drain led to further economic frustration and stagnation where young people are still lacking any perspective.

In terms of Ukraine, the issue of Crimea is not on the agenda of the international community anymore. The pro-European leader is still aiming for further integration with the EU but is deeply stuck in its own domestic issues, mostly caused by the need for financing the development, rebuilding, and reintegration of the Donbas region.

Russia is lead by Alexej Smirnov who is following the path Putin has told him to choose (pulling the strings in the background). Russia has set a position to influence Ukrainian and Moldovan politics in order to change the country's foreign policy in the parliament towards their own interests. If you ask an average person in Europe "How the future looks like" the only response you can get is shrugging their shoulders.

The EU and NATO will nevertheless continue to support Ukraine.

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International political developments

Asia's rise continued and the global dominance by the West is subsequently diminished. The further growth of powers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America was leading to an increasingly multi-polar world in which the core of the European Union has no other choice than to merge their different foreign policies. After Brexit had to be postponed again, Boris Johnson received a vote of no confidence in parliament and Jeremy Corbyn became the new prime minister. After a second referendum, almost 60 percent of the British citizens finally decided to stay in the European Union.

After the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the integration of Ukraine was leading to the conflict with Russia and a military coup in Ukraine in 2021, the EU decided to reform its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Under the revised policy, the EU decided that any kind of further ambitions and influence in the region faces unpredictable reactions from the Russian side but also within the divided Ukrainian society. Instead

of continuing with geopolitical ambitions, the EU put a focus on stability and security. After North Macedonia and Montenegro joined in 2025, Albania in 2026 and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2027, Serbia and Kosovo could still not find a solution on the status of their relationship. Greece, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the Republic of Cyprus still did not recognize the Republic of Kosovo.

Concerning Ukraine, the Russian foreign policy remained the same. The strengthening of the political association and economic integration of Ukraine with the EU continues. The legal status of Crimea did not change, as it is left out of the world's agenda. The USA still formally supports Ukraine in its attempts to fight corruption and resist Russia's recurrent pressure.

Social Developments

As a result of further participating in the EaP, the Association Agreement and the free visa-regime have strengthened the development of the civil society in Ukraine. The social impact of non-governmental organizations and other civic movements have increased during the last ten years.

Speaking of social developments, the EU is concerned about the ongoing anti-European development in Moldova. The People proved by the 2021 Referendum and the 2024/2028 elections, that the anti-western rhetoric is not limited to the political elite. The Investments and cooperation are implemented in the course of the EaP did not seem to work out well. The ongoing Brain Drain towards European countries which even increased after the constitutional change 2021 shows that the few pro-European people tend to leave the country. The development also goes ahead with a high unemployment rate, especially among the youth.

In the case of Ukraine, a heavy effort in sustaining the country's social sector through investments into education and medicine development does not prevent a massive brain drain in Ukraine as well. The youth still looks for a better life abroad. Massive corruption remains a major problem, slowing down the economic development of the country and its social areas. Ukrainian reforms in healthcare are halted, and the healthcare system is even resembling the soviet model. The migration to the West continues, the population steadily declines. Decentralization reform is successfully implemented in 2029.

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Regional Political Developments

Concerning Moldova, the European Union was long time optimistic to see another EaP target country to develop towards a democratic state. Taken into account the solid relations between the EU and Moldova, the corruption scandal that occurred in 2014 in which more than one billion dollars disappeared, has been a turning point (shock). From there on, the European Union was careful by providing any further resources to the country. Nonetheless, it remained (until today) a part of the EaP. The EU's reaction after the financial scandal, first of all, was to cut all further investments and to wait for further investigation. All new investments had to be even more appropriated to a certain goal.

Regarding regional political development, Moldova discovered some drastic changes, beginning in 2020. The former Prime Minister Maia Sandu, who got into power against the will of the constitutional court and mainly due to the support coming from the European Union, lost the 2020 elections after the

countrywide protest. With Sandu, the European Union lost a strong partner within Moldova. Her replacement, Ion Ceban, a member of the socialist party, alarmed the EU with his strong pro-Russian and anti-European course.

From a European Union position, the regional development, especially in Moldova, had a huge impact on its Eastern cooperation strategy. The 2021 referendum, which turned Moldova into a presidential system, was seen as the first step towards an authoritarian state, led by a small political elite and oligarchs. As a reaction to this development, the European Commission decided in November 2021 to bind further EU investments to special conditions. For Moldova as the only country within the EaP are now EU observers obligatory to control the money flow.

Following the implementation of the Minsk agreements, the separate districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts obtain autonomy, after the elections take place there in 2020.

Local separatist paramilitary start leaving arms after gaining political power. The local government, which is formed from former separatist figures, declares a pro-Russian policy, opposing further integration with the rest of Ukraine. After the military coup in 2021, president Zelenskyi is accused of treason but seeks asylum in Israel. Middle-aged diplomat Taras Melnyk supported by the pro-European and militarist parties is elected president in 2022. Melnyk pursues a pro-EU and pro-NATO foreign policy and has an anti-Russia approach. The government is still stuck with its domestic policy. The ongoing political polarization of society is combined with public frustration caused by an economic slowdown, devaluation, and inflation.

As a result, at the 2027 presidential elections, Taras Melnyk is replaced by Ihor Oleh - an experienced economist. Oleh preserves Melnyk's foreign policy. Diplomatic and economic relations with Russia remain unchanged. Oleh's presidency is accompanied by slow but steady economic growth, as foreign investments from the EU and the USA increase.

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Scenario 2: THE EAST – STILL A THRILLER?

Peace and security

The EU Peace and Security strategy in Eastern neighbourhood differs between Ukraine and Moldova. Despite the fact that the EU is reducing its actions in the region, Ukraine can still be seen as a stabilizing country in the neighbourhood. This is first of all due to the pro-European Government that is still aiming for stronger economic ties to the EU as well as fostering the political relationship. In general, the EU would appreciate further cooperation, though an obligatory prerequisite is to first solve the inner Ukrainian conflicts in order to deepen the partnership.

The peace and security perspective in Moldova is getting more and more complicated. Moldova cannot be seen as a guarantor for stability anymore. The 2024 elected President Andre Borsch is leading Moldova away from the EU, towards pro-Russian politics. The fact that Russia started already since 2022 to increase its troops in Transnistria by recruiting young Moldovans is completely ignored by Borsch and can be seen as a highly aggressive, anti-European

act. The European Union, therefore, tried to come up with a geopolitical investment plan in order to reduce Russian influence and to fight Russian propaganda. Until today, the EU invests heavily in the Moldovan energy infrastructure to make the country less dependent on Russian gas.

Public resentment on one side of the society and a political celebration of peace on the other are followed by a sudden military coup by Ukrainian armed forces in 2021. One day the country wakes up to the Su-27s flying over the president's administration in Kyiv. Ukrainian army de-occupies Donbas by short, fast, and efficient warfare. This results in a large number of casualties. The remaining pro-Russian military groups are pushed to the border. Therefore in 2021, the border is finally re-established after its absence since 2014. Since the frontline is moved on the border with Russia, occasional armed conflicts occur there, the conflict is frozen. Reintegration is still going on, with little to no success. Many of the internal and

external refugees return to their homes. The region remains a target for Russian propaganda, after Ukraine's unsuccessful attempt to win the minds of Donbas via informational reintegration. The region's population, which does not seem to abandon the idea of separatism, remains a ticking time bomb for the country's integrity.

Resources

In the last decade, the EU tried hard to become independent of Russian gas deliveries.

Hence, significant developments took place concerning energy cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries.

Several agreements were signed between the EU and the countries of the EaP that improved and renovated the current infrastructure such as the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP) pipeline and the case of Moldova

shows how resources can also be used for strategic reasons.

Due to high military spending and the costly rebuilding of liberated regions of the country, Ukraine experienced a financial crisis, followed by a recession. Recently integrated districts of Donbas, still suffering from the effects of the massive collapse of the economy, remain underdeveloped, not receiving subsidies from the central government. The rising economic gap between Donbas and the rest of the country, specifically the prospering hromadas in the west of the country.

The land reform takes place in Ukraine in 2019, yet agricultural land remains inaccessible for foreign investors. This is changed in 2023, when the land market is opened for foreign companies, allowing them to purchase land for agricultural purposes. Despite the visible progress in energy diversification, Ukraine continues being dependent on gas, oil and mineral supply from Russia.

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Scenario 3: *The future is better than I expect*

Unicorn is awake

The United States of Europe

Abstract

“We will have those big United States of Europe, which will crown the old world just as the United States of America crown the new one.”

Victor Hugo
(French novelist.
1802-1885)

The scenario provides a comprehensive analysis of the European perspectives on the regional development of Eastern Partnership in 2030. In particular, it focuses on the access and the use of strategic resources of the countries, their regional foreign policy objectives of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and the response to environmental changes. The special role in the shaping of United States of Europe (USE) the picture has been assigned to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (LGBTQ*) communities. Specifically the scenario gives an overview how pivotal was their role the in peaceful resolution of the resource war in 2022, re-birth and re-institutionalization of the EU and integration of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia as sovereign states into the institutionalized concept of United States of Europe.

In 2019 the international community thought that due to the numerous issues the European Union would collapse and each Member State would follow its own development path. Despite the fact that everyone expected Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia to sign a treaty on closer cooperation with Russia in the field of defence, economics, and social policies and the abovementioned countries would be fully dependent on its “big brother” it never happened.



Furthermore, after 2016 the Brexit process was launched and took place in 2020 many Europeans were concerned about the prospects of the EU since never in its history had it been that economically fragile and insecure about protection of its borders, full of scepticism to the institutions and politicians.

Contrary to all forecasts and euro-scepticism, the United States of Europe were established in May 2023. Responding to the initiative of Germany and France the members of the European Union have managed to reach a closer format of cooperation. They created a Parliament of the United States of Europe, a European Government and an Institution for the European Regions. In addition, the national Governments were replaced by the European Government and every Region now is voting his own Government to represent and forward the regional interests in the European Institutions. Due to this smooth procedure of decision-making and restructured system of then wide bureaucratic apparatus, the member states do usually reach consensus.

The UK did not join the United States of Europe because of the hard Brexit conveyed back in March 2020. This, in turn, undermined the economy of the island state and weakened the political and social power of the whole country.

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International political development

In 2030, the international relations between the countries all over the world were normalized. The United States of Europe gained political independence in the economic and ecological fields raising to the level of a political global player like i.e. the USA, China and Russia. Now they do maintain trade connections with countries all over the world.

Belarus, which has finally managed to abolish the death penalty and diversified its market is a association state is likely to join the the USE in 2034 since it had started a successful coherent harmonization process in 2026.

Since 2028, the relations with Russia were fully normalized and the sanctions were removed. Russia signed a treaty to assure financial support to rebuild the infrastructure in the East European Countries. Furthermore, Russia became an important geostrategic partner for the United States of Europe to protect and safe the Arctic and its nature.

The United Nations started various programs for an efficient development in political, economic, social and technological relationships for the states. Despite all these efforts the Third World War (TWW) started in September 2022. Therefore, China, Russia, India, Brazil and Iran fought against each other because there was not enough water for the entire world. Overall, renewable water resources were supposed to grow in Russia by 8–10% by 2045. Previously, China funded a project to bottle water from Russia's Lake Baikal (22–23% of the world's fresh surface water). However, due to the uneven distribution of freshwater China had enough incentives to attack Russia in the neighbourhood of Lake Baikal. In December 2022, China intervenes in Tajikistan (having huge potential in developing groundwater basins in Aral Sea and hydropower resources). In the ensuing events, the set of anti-war riots happened all over the world. The early ones did take place in Europe with the protests of the LGBTQ* community in the states of the United

States of Europe. These protests were the beginning of a peace movement all over the world. The wave of protests leftist and LGBTQ* movements gained higher popularity and started to demand the peaceful resolution of the ongoing freshwater resources conflict. While other people were thinking how to divide or how to get resources, in the LGBTQ* community became concerned about the protection of the human rights and a peaceful world without any violence.

Most populated countries - Iran, Brazil, India - got involved into the water distribution conflict, which eventually escalated into the full-scale Third World War. The USA intervened in the conflict. However, it did not take any side. Neither did Europe. The American government became a mediator in TWW. The reasoning of Europe's non-involvement was its weakness. It could not protect itself. Furthermore, the EU has better conditions for access to water. Eventually, the EU understood that if they did not reform itself it would be involved in the war and included into the spheres of interests

of the states, where it would be hard to survive like in 1945. Therefore, they decided to change their state system and include other countries that followed the European course. As a result, they reformed the EU into the United States of Europe in May 2023. The United States of Europe became surprisingly prosperous in comparison to the other world players.

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Social development

During the beginning of the TWW the LGBTQ* community in Europe creates an idea of a peaceful and bright future for Europe. The idea of the community was firstly a stronger Europe with more cooperation in every political field and with own sovereignty and independence from the USA, Russia and China. They called their idea the United States of Europe. Secondly, they had the idea that every country in the world should share its resources. Therefore, they started to cooperate to save the global nature and invest in environmental and alternative technologies. In the first six months of the Third World War, launched the protests on the streets in Europe and the unicorn becomes a symbol of a bright and peaceful future for the community.

In the years before TWW starts, the LGBTQ* community in Germany became powerful because Michael Roth became the first gay chancellor of Germany. Roth as a representative of the Social Democratic Party won the elections in Germany in 2021.

He fought for the rights of the LGBTQ* community in Germany and the EU. In this case that was the reason why he paid attention to the protests of the LGBTQ* community worldwide. Since the USA declared itself as a neutral party to the TWW, the American government found it essential to elaborate on the agenda of distribution of key world resources and a strategy to put an end to the world war. Together with the old and new European member states, Food and Agriculture Organization and other UN agencies the USA and Germany became the driving forces to create the liberal programme on equal and even resource distribution programme. In the part that concerns the European future the agenda comprises the idea of institutional and enlargement transformation under the name of the United States of Europe. France immediately supported it.

In 2025, the Parliament of the United States of Europe passed a resolution to protect the Rights of LGBTQ*, to which 24 countries of the USE already became parties. Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia had reservations.

Strengthened cross-border contacts between local authorities, communities and civil society organizations improved the living conditions of local communities in the border regions through joint projects (Technical Science Progress, Social Innovation and Adaptation Program, Communication Development).

As it was mentioned previously LGBTQ* movements empowered by the support of the international agencies and USE institutions demanded the peaceful resolution of the ongoing freshwater resources conflict. The facilitation the people-to-people links in social sphere, culture, education and sports promoted the multi-cultural diversity and social integration of ethnic minorities across the border and latest regions.

The European Government introduce one current for the whole United States of Europe. The investment process were simplified and the international relations strengthened and created a unified cultural space. In addition, the financial markets in the USE became more stable and flexible.

Even more the European Government involved a single system of general social protection. They created a pension system, social insurance system, medical insurance and various types of monetary assistance for the European Citizens.

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Resources

In July 2024 after the liberal agenda on creation the resolution of even resources distribution was issued and implemented the now having fully distanced itself from all the traditional sources in the USE elaborated sensible food and environmental policies inside the union. Furthermore, inside the USE a special Fund on Strategic Resources, which is accountable before the International Resources Fund as a UN Special Agency.

According to the climate change and the lack of resources in especially of water, the USE invested in alternative technologies and in sustainable energies. The sectors and key resources that are creating the biggest environmental impact (food, housing and mobility) are analysed and controlled from a life-cycle and value-chain perspective. Concerning the energy system of the USE, it became renewable and furthermore need no more oil or gas. In order to stay committed to the “zero emission” strategy the Parliament voted for the law that imposes a tax on the cars using petrol. In addition, they solved the

lack of water issue. In 2026, scientists created a new strategy on reclaimed water, which was implemented by two thirds of the USE members in 2028.

In the countries previously known as Eastern Partnership (EaP) states Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia due to the cohesion funds support, their GDP/capita increased to the level of 70-80% of the USE average. In fact, the above mentioned states had no more incentives to have any trade interactions with Russian market. The USE no longer needed to import the Russian gas and oil by creating alternative sources of energy. The discussion on the initiatives like NordStream/NordStream 2 no longer exists.

Regional political development

The United States of Europe managed to solve the conflict in the Eastern Ukraine while the territories of then ongoing and frozen conflicts (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Gagauzia, Donetsk and Luhansk regions) were reintegrated into Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine respectively. They joined the USE in August 2024. As a result of the competent multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2028-2035 enlargement and the cohesion funds established the three states succeeded in developing their economies and increasing their GDP/capita. Because of the full integration of the countries within the Russian sphere of influence, the Kremlin ceased to push for its regional cooperation initiatives like the Eurasian Economic Community.

During the Third World War Crimea became out of focus of the Russian agenda since before the annexation in 2014 the Crimean peninsula was fully dependent on the continental Ukraine freshwater resources. During 2014-2022 Moscow officially provided the territory with its own resources. Since Russia became involved into

the resource conflict, it became no longer interested in support of Crimea's welfare. The majority of the population of the peninsula went back to continental Ukraine in search for better conditions. After entering the United States of Europe human rights conditions for the ethnic minorities in Ukraine stabilized as the result of coherent internal politics. Therefore, the majority of the population inhabiting Crimea before 2022, in particular Crimean Tatars, returned to the peninsula feeling safe enough to re-build their political, cultural and social identity.

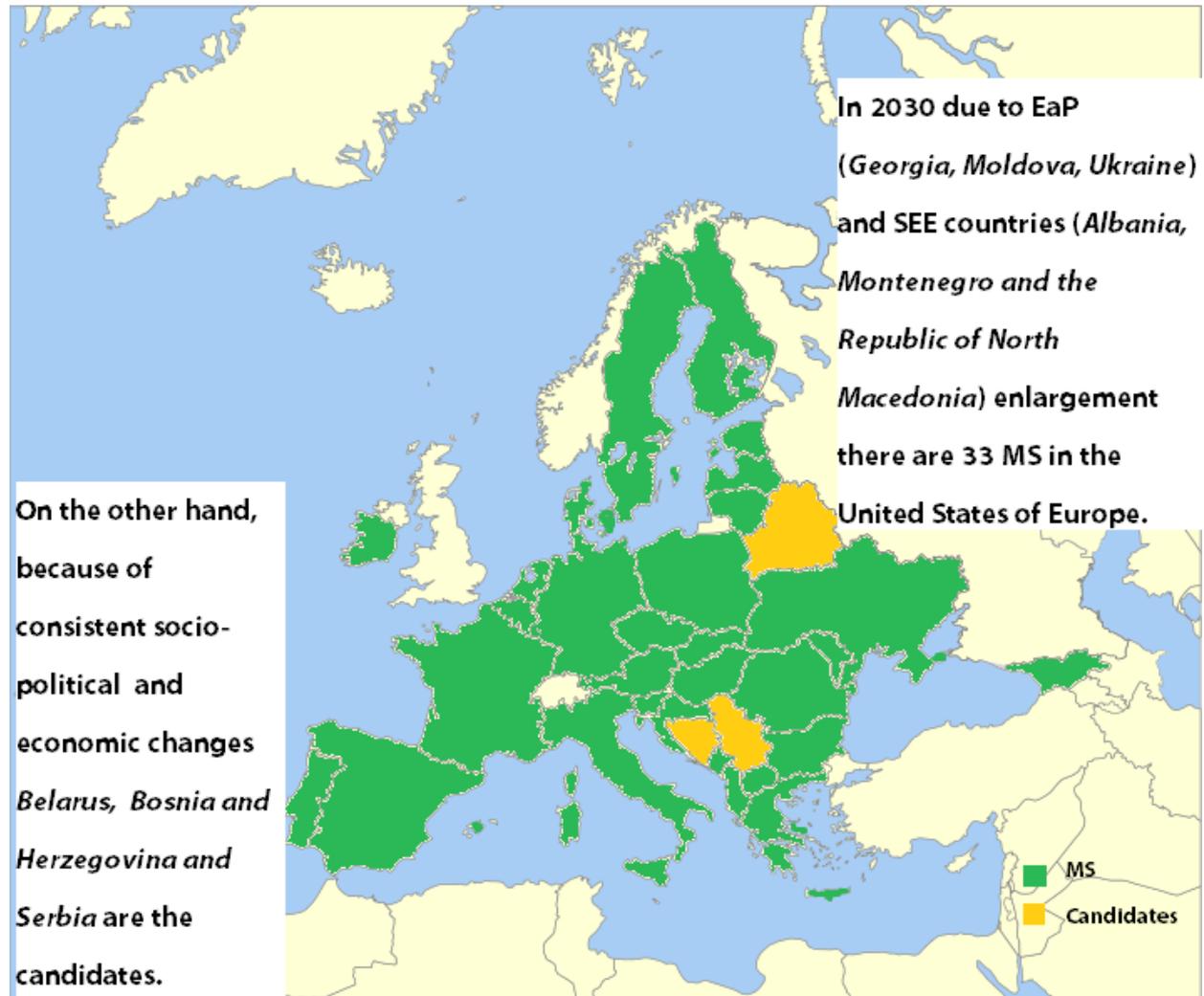
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Scenario 3: Unicorn is awake - The United States of Europe



Peace and security

The time after the peace was reached, no major interstate conflicts occurred anymore. In 2025 USE became a defensive union having a proper border control policy and military expenditures of 2% of the member states GDP. The European military also has humanitarian missions to help countries all over the world with resource problems. Due a better defensive and security policy, the United States of Europe developed the strategy of permanent structured cooperation on security and defence forces (PESCO) and became a defensive union. The main strategy of PESCO is to prevent the fourth world war or any other violent conflicts in Europe or between other countries. This, in turn, helped reach strong corresponding border control, especially what concerns the border between Russia and the United States of Europe.

Considering the international developments the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was disbanded and is replaced by a worldwide peacekeeping organization.

Conclusion

Today the queer unicorn of Europe, our parents did not believe in, fully enjoys its rights and responsibilities. On the one hand, the scenario demonstrated that there were enough incentives to build the United States of Europe without borders and with respect and protection for the minorities. The civil societies of the United States of Europe are characterized by a high level of tolerance and diversity. The USE characterised by a high quality of democracy and respecting human rights. Due to the healthy institutional structure, peace no war, hunger, evil and racism. On the other hand, a scenario explained how the major political crisis might influence the international agenda whereas the marginalized groups (in this case - LGBTQ* communities) can become empowered to move it towards conflict resolution and further closer and revitalized regional cooperation.

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Scenario 4: The future is worse than I expect

Problems don't know no borders

Amid weakened European Union (EU) coherence and emboldened Russia, the Eastern European countries are marked by reemerging conflicts in the Caucasus and in Ukraine. In the absence of a clear European prospect, these countries turned towards membership in the Eurasian Economic Union and unsustainable financing from China. The decrease in standards of living and the democratic backsliding are combined with an environmental problem in the region, resulting in a poor and non-competitive economy. With the majority of young and qualified people emigrating to Western Europe, the Eastern European social security systems and labor markets became dysfunctional. The business climate is mostly unreliable and lacks the support of foreign financial institutions and foreign investors.

This fragile situation led to weakened borders, internal political and identity crises, allowing players such as Russia to interfere in domestic politics and ultimately, to annex territories. The world in 2030 is a sophisticated, multi-layered situation, where negative socio-economic, political, and security issues have merged together.

Resources

The main resources problems in 2030 for the Eastern European region are deforestation, loss of soil fertility, pollution of water resources, lack of hydrocarbons, and reduction of human resources due to the migration process and aging population.

Everything started in 2020 when Germany became a new energetic hub in the European area that worsened Ukraine and Moldova's position as important transit territories. This situation originates back to the opening of the "Nord Stream 2". Right after that, Russia started a new "gas war" with Ukraine and Moldova in order to stop their EU integration.

In the same period of time, the EU had huge internal conflicts over its future. Euroscepticism rose on the basis of a lack of bright prospects. Unfortunately, the EU stopped its financial support and closed markets for the non-EU Eastern countries in order to maintain unity between the members of the Union who needed financial support, and because of the vague implementations of the reforms demanded by the EU that were made in the region.

With these processes in the background, Ukraine and Moldova have enlarged their cooperation with

the Eurasian Economic Union and have developed a large number of economic arrangements with China, such as free-trade agreements.

Chinese investments in the agricultural sector have had an adverse impact on soil and groundwater, through the extensive method used by the Chinese to grow agricultural crops. By the mid-2020s, much of Ukraine's and Moldova's agricultural sector was controlled by Chinese investment funds, which also had a negative effect on the economic potential of both countries, as significant portions of their economy depended on agricultural exports.

Ukraine's plan to build hydroelectric power stations to reduce dependence on Russian gas had negative consequences, including the deterioration of relations with neighboring Moldova through the construction of a set of such power plants on the Dniester river. Illegal logging in the Carpathians remained a major problem during these years, causing an increased number of early spring floods and landslides.

In this way, the countries have faced a constant instability of their resources. The spill-over effect can be seen in the social-economic developments as well as in the political and regional affairs.

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Scenario 4: Problems don't know no borders

Social developments

The failure in the EU-Eastern integration can be correlated with many outcomes, but none of these had a positive effect in the region. The unemployment rate in Ukraine (2019) was 9.4 and reached 16.5 in 2020. The same goes for Moldova, which increased circa three times in the same period, from 3.4 to 10.2. Added to this is the strongly growing number of young citizens from Moldova and Ukraine that migrated to Western and Central Europe, to countries such as Germany, France, and Poland for better education and work opportunities. Both countries' birth rates are continuously decreasing, especially in Ukraine. The other side of the coin shows an aging population. What is left for the ones that stay in Eastern Europe are less qualified jobs and lower salaries. The EU decision in 2021 to cancel the visa-free agreement had a major impact on the youth seeking a more comfortable and reliable life in socio-economic terms, since the Schengen visa costs now 80€ for short-stays and 115€ for long-stays. In this sense, the

economic problems in the domestic level impact the transit towards the Western states. The lower stratum of society is doomed to stay in the country, even if they wish otherwise. In most cases the people that have the opportunity to leave are confronted with less well-paid jobs and lack of perspective in their countries of destination.

The above-mentioned situation impacts the health-care system since the "brains" of these states are no longer living there. There are only a few medical specialists and where they are, services are unaffordable to most of the population. Added to that is the long-lasting reality of corruption in the region, it expresses itself in low-quality services and lack of accountability of different public and private actors.

Additionally to the exodus of the population in Moldova and Ukraine, a 6,5MMs degrees earthquake in Vrancea region of Romania in 2023 put further strains on the population and its resources. It caused severe damages in most of Moldova, destroying the majority of Soviet-era apartment blocks and leaving thousands of people displaced. As a result, the now homeless population moved to Romania and Ukraine, which increased inter-ethnic tensions, as well as the need for housing, food, and jobs. For many Ukrainian citizens, this movement of people represented a burden because of the fragile economy in the country. Besides not having enough for themselves and the support of the government, regions had to provide its poor infrastructure for this displaced population. The language and identity issues were raised with Romanian ethnics coming up as an outside factor in a country that already has the Ukrainian-Russian languages friction.

The previous warning that, if the EU fails to integrate the East it fails as a pan-European project proved to be true. The Eastern Partnership came to a stalemate and therefore did not bring welfare development. On the other hand, the joining of Moldova and Ukraine into the Eurasian Economic Union made it nearly impossible for the EU to integrate them in the future.

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Regional political developments

Local civil society, in the absence of support by the EU and United States of America (USA), became very weak and vulnerable to government pressures on funding and policy stances. The oversight of decision-making processes becomes a harder mission, making it easier for the governing elites to avoid scrutiny over corruption, misuse of public funds, as well as state capture.

One of the starting points for Ukrainian instability was the process of application of the “Steinmeier Formula” to the Donbass conflict in 2020. This idea immediately provoked discontent with a large part of the population, making it a major point of conflict within Ukraine. Unfortunately, the worst fears were justified; while the international observers were unable to ensure free and democratic elections, manipulations by the separatists were wide-spread. Thus, the Kremlin proxy parties acceded to the Ukrainian Parliament, increasing their influence over the Kyiv government. Ukrainian society became more polarized

because of the different views on the future of the country. The Western part wanted to continue integration to the EU, while South and Eastern Ukraine supports integration into the Eurasian Economic Union.

Using a boom of popularity, Moldova’s President Igor Dodon manages to get voters’ approval to obtain larger legislative and executive power, minimizing the competences of the Parliament in Chişinău. In 2023, the Transnistrian conflict settlement talks are concluded with a federation proposal, which enables Transnistria and Gagauzia to have veto powers on decision-making within the Moldova Federation.

Having largely pro-Russian governments and sufficient economic pressures, Ukraine and Moldova joined the Eurasian Economic Union in 2026. Becoming a member, however, did not bring any positive results in the fight against corruption and the so-called “good governance”, due to its negligent requirements for admission.

Romania, Poland, and Hungary increased their pressure on the Ukrainian government because its dependence on credit lines, investments and market expansion in those countries. The common goal of Ukrainian neighbours was to force the authorities to adopt a special law for Romanian, Hungarian and Polish languages in the whole territory of Ukraine. After 2030 those languages will have become official languages next to Ukrainian. This will break the Ukrainian unity, and weaken the whole political situation in Eastern Europe because other European countries will be afraid of growing the separatism factor among the minority population. This will cause mistrust and tension in the region.

This leads to less opportunities for the future European membership and weakens the neighbourhood policy development for all European countries.

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Scenario 4: Problems don't know no borders

International political developments

Failed negotiations on the renewal of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the suspended implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces (CFE) Treaty led to the re-emergence of the nuclear threat in Eastern Europe and the rearmament race in the region. NATO's lack of coherence towards Russia is more prominent when the Member States such as Germany and Hungary showed reluctance during the Kremlin's violations of the CFE and INF treaties, as well as the Minsk Agreements. In light of this, the USA drastically reinforced its armed presence in Poland, the Baltic region, and Romania. Despite increased political violence inside the country, the USA manages to maintain its international status of global benevolent hegemony, but struggles to exert political influence within Europe, in the absence of former German and French allies. Thus, an increased armed presence becomes the only option left to deter Russia. After several incursions of the Russian operatives and aircraft in the Baltic islands, Sweden and Finland

have started working within the NATO Membership Action Plan, but several NATO Allies block their accession amid fears of "angering" the Russian Federation.

Much more than NATO's, the EU's foreign and security policy has become a subject of direct conflicting views of Member States, with the multi-speed Europe becoming a multi-vector Europe. Largely due to several electoral victories of Russia-friendly populist governments in Germany and Italy, but also appeasement initiatives led by France, the EU sanctions are lifted against Russian and Belarusian government officials. They have previously been accused of orchestrating systematic oppression of the opposition and coordinating the Crimea annexation. As a result, trade of dual-use products with Russia and Belarus is allowed and flourishes, accelerating rearmament and regime consolidation. Between 2022 and 2024, certain Eastern EU Member States, such as Poland, Romania and the Baltics, chose to ignore most of the EU Council meetings, making it

possible for the EU core to adopt controversial decisions on foreign policy and commercial regime. The EU remains to be a purely economic project with deep political divides on how to develop and enlarge.

As part of its neo-colonialist foreign policy, the People's Republic of China has managed to expand its network of "One Belt One Road" loans for infrastructure development in the former Eastern Partnership region, the Western Balkans, and the North and Eastern African states. Unable to pay back unsustainable loans, several states, such as Serbia, Ukraine, and Greece, chose to concede strategic infrastructure objectives to the Chinese state and Chinese "private equity" firms. This does not necessarily translate into a fully-fledged hegemony of Beijing in the Eastern Hemisphere, but important levers of worldwide influence are obtained by the Chinese Communist Party.

With Turkey entering a long economic recession, the Black Sea basin suffers from the domination of the Russian fleet, despite increasing concerns from Romania, the UK, and the USA. Russia becomes more powerful in Eastern Europe because it uses the energy supply as a strong mechanism for influencing the European decision-makers, and causing effective struggle within NATO and with its potential members. By destabilizing Europe, Russia feels free to improve its political influence in Eastern Europe, and in the near future, it will try to replace the U.S. in the Middle East.

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Scenario 4: Problems don't know no borders

Peace and security

Overall, the security situation has deteriorated. NATO, as the main guarantor of security, has faced a difficult internal crisis. Ukraine and Moldova, once potential members, have increasingly come under the influence of Russia. Russia's economic pressure and the EU's lack of interest have contributed to the change of geopolitical orientations. Another influential security player – the USA – did not want to clash with Russia over a common policy interest in China, namely the containment of a new superpower.

As a result, Russia gradually absorbed neighbouring states into the Eurasian Economic Union, first economically and politically, and subsequently in military terms. A joint army was created and joint (but in fact Russian) military bases were formed on the Black Sea shore where Ukrainian military forces used to be. Thus, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov were transformed into the footholds of the Russian army, as it was in the Soviet era.

Crimea remains part of the Russian Federation, while the rest of the southern Ukrainian territory become increasingly closer to the Kremlin after a federalization of Ukraine was completed in 2024.

The Transnistrian army got territorial jurisdiction after a referendum on Moldova's federalization in 2023, causing unease with the government in Kyiv. Gagauzia does not hold a permanent armed contingent, but is able to deploy a small police force. Not accepted by the Romanian-speaking population, Moldova's federalization raises the degree of inter-ethnic violence, with riots and hate crimes conducted by underground terrorist groups increasing year by year.

Georgia's rejection of the Eurasian Economic Union membership was not received well in the Kremlin, causing the nearly complete halt of bilateral trade, the energy ties, and the closing of the border checkpoints for more than four years. The US' attempts to secure Tbilisi's energy needs through the new Batumi LNG terminal succeed at first, but the 2027 drone attacks, supposedly coming from Abkhazia, significantly diminished most of the processing capacity. This leaves Georgia in a stressful situation, having to rely almost entirely on Azerbaijani gas and petrol.

Last, but not least, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict reignited already in 2025 at full scale in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Outlook

After 2030, Eastern Europe will be under significant influence of Russia and financial pressures from China, lacking a unified EU as well as presence by the USA. The Eurasian Economic Union will suffer from bad governance, centralization of power in Moscow, economic inefficiency and autocratic tendencies. Conflicts remain frozen in the Caucasus, but intra-national violence is becoming more common in the whole of the former Eastern Partnership. The EU remains unable to show unity, let alone exert influence in the Eastern neighbourhood, despite attempts to restore the Transatlantic relations. In its pursuit to become the new hegemony, China makes significant steps to convince Russia to lean on her side in the fight for the overthrow of the United States from the throne of global leadership.

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DISCLAIMER

Responsibility for the information and views set out in this publication lies entirely with the authors of the respective scenarios. The groups were randomly distributed and consisted of participants from German, Moldovan and Ukrainian universities.

Scenario 1: The future is weirder than I expect. “Magical Realism: From Brussels to Tiraspol”

Stiven Tremaria, Marzia Raza, Oleksii Yakoviichuk, Irina Cojuhari, Diana Stroici

Scenario 2: The future is what I expect. “The East - Still a Thriller?”

Jannis Moss, Florian Voss, Anton Lysnichenko, Deniza Hakguden and Valentina Enachi

Scenario 3: The future is better than I expect. “Unicorn is awake - The United States of Europe”

Karyna Koliadych, Timo Spreen, Oleksandra Lisova, Vlad Calin

Scenario 4: The future is worse than I expect. “Problems don’t know no borders”

Anatolii Chaban, Andressa Timm Bauer, Anton Koretskyi, Cristian Vlas

The seminar was conducted at the Yurii Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ukraine.

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