



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Regional Powers in Relation to the Future of Europe: A Game Theory Classification

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ABSTRACT

The role of regional powers in the prosperity of the European Union (EU) is an issue that has not received the attention it deserves in studies concerned with shaping policies, promoting stability and fostering cooperation within and outside the EU. Regional powers, such as Germany, France, and Italy, were among the founders of the EU and played a key role in promoting the project of European integration. Agreements such as the Treaty of Rome (1957) and then the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) have been guided by the commitment of these countries to build a more united Europe. Regional powers contribute to stability and security within the European region and beyond. For example, France and Germany have promoted conflict resolution policies, especially in the Western Balkans. Support for regional cooperation projects and agreements such as the Berlin Process are concrete examples. The prosperity of these initiatives, whose objective is the integration of the Western Balkans, also seen from the prism of game theory, offers a useful framework for understanding the relations between European regional powers and their influence on the future of Europe. The strategic decisions of these actors will determine whether the continent will follow a path of cooperation, fragmentation or conflict.

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INTRODUCTION

After the British decision to leave the European Union, the question was raised not only within the EU, but also by the regional powers, with an emphasis on the states in the process of joining the EU, how relations with Britain should be restructured. Great. The negotiations between Great Britain and the EU were about finding the best possible ways for continuing cooperation and deepening it. In this context, Article 50 of the EU Treaty was applied. However, individual authors continue to examine these issues using game theory as well.

For all negotiating parties, the question was which of the negotiating strategies would be applied. A game-theoretic approach implies that the EU – regardless of what is economically feasible in the short term – must play a tough negotiating strategy if it cares about the long-term plan. In the meantime, it has been proven that the issues that have been useful in the short term for Great Britain, have turned out to be useful in the long term for the EU as well.

Meanwhile, in this period, the will of London to return to the Balkans was significant, especially in relation to the dialogue between Kosova and Serbia, but also in the positioning around the north of Kosova and the intentions for its re-annexation by Serbia. It was precisely Great Britain that gave the first alarm regarding the possibility of military intervention by Serbia to make the annexation of the north a completed act.

This role was also played by the commitment of Turkey, but also of other regional powers, which, as we will see in this essay, will have a significant role in the construction and prosperity of the future of Europe.

1. Application of game theories in negotiation

Game theory examines situations where actors make strategic decisions that affect each other. In the context of Europe, regional powers (eg, Germany, France, Italy, post-Brexit United Kingdom, Poland, etc.) play different roles in the political, economic and geopolitical stability, integration and development of the continent.

Game theory examines situations where actors make strategic decisions that affect each other. In the context of Europe, regional powers (eg, Germany, France, Italy, post-Brexit United Kingdom, Poland, etc.) play different roles in the political, economic and geopolitical stability, integration and development of the continent.

Game theory provides a useful framework for understanding the relationships between European regional powers and their impact on Europe's future. The strategic decisions of these actors will determine whether the continent will follow a path of cooperation, fragmentation or conflict.

The game theory has also proved ideal in the case of analyzes about the expected negotiation between Great Britain and the EU. In the case of the negotiation for the exit of Great Britain from the two existing variants, the strategy that was most suitable was chosen - the one that guaranteed the right compromise, taking into consideration: Access to the European internal market (EU-BM); The immanent need to preserve the free movement of persons (PF) and the fact that payments should continue to be made in the EU. [Busch... 2016,]

1.1 Classification of games according to European dynamics

Cooperation games:

Positive sum games: Focus on mutual benefit through integration and cooperation, such as the European Union (EU) and efforts to build a common market.

Example: The role of Germany and France as the engine of the EU in advancing common policies and strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union.

Games of conflict and competition:

Zero-sum games: Occur when one actor benefits at the expense of another, often in geopolitical and economic contexts.

Example: Competition for influence in the Western Balkans between the EU and other actors outside Europe, such as Russia or China.

Coalition games:

1. Actors can form coalitions to maximize their common interests.

Example: The Visegrad Group (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) that influences EU policies, especially on issues such as immigration and national sovereignty.

Games of uncertainty and information asymmetry:

2. Actors act in conditions of ambiguity or lack of information about the intentions of others.

Example: Managing energy crises and climate change, where national interests may conflict.

1.2 Factors influencing the behavior of regional powers

1. **Economic power: Germany and France, as the largest economies, have a greater weight in European decision-making:** But Albania and Kosova on the one hand, calculated as a unique political and geographical unit on the one hand and Serbia on the other, also have significant weight in European decision-making.
2. **Geography:** Countries like Poland and the Balkan states are among the areas of strategic interest between the EU and the East. The extremely tolerant attitude towards Serbia during

the whole period of the war in Ukraine, even when it tests the possibilities for the disintegration of Bosnia and penetrates deep into Montenegro, already making its internal occupation a complete act, but above all the extreme tolerance in relation with its behavior with Kosovo, proves the fact that the Balkans remain an area of strategic interest only as a whole.

3. **History and political identity** : Political traditions and historical relationships shape the strategic orientations of regional powers.
4. **International influence** : The interaction of European powers with actors outside Europe, such as the USA, Russia and China.

1.3 Scenarios of the future of Europe through game theory

1. **Deeper integration** : Major powers cooperate for a stronger and more integrated Europe, minimizing conflicts within the Union.
2. **Fragmentation and multipolarity** : Regional powers pursue independent policies, creating a politically and economically fragmented Europe.
3. **The return of nationalism** : The strengthening of national agendas weakens the EU and increases competition between countries.
4. **Expanding global cooperation** : Regional powers are becoming more integrated into international mechanisms to address global challenges. Regional powers play an important role in shaping Europe's future, influencing economic, security and integration policies. Here are some key aspects of their impact:

2. THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A REGIONAL POWER

Integration and unity: The EU remains one of the biggest regional powers, influencing economic, environmental and political standards across the continent. It faces challenges to maintain unity among member states, especially in contexts such as Brexit and divergences on domestic policies. Now, when the third year of war is coming to an end in its neighborhood, in Ukraine, the EU as a regional power takes on even more specific weight.

The war in Ukraine and the role of the European Union (EU) as a regional power are interrelated topics related to geopolitics, security and global politics.

Expansion: The scope for expansion towards the Western Balkans and other countries directly affects regional stability and the aspirations of small countries for European integration.

The EU has built a strong position as a regional power through economic, political and diplomatic mechanisms. However, its role in the Ukraine crisis has highlighted its challenges and limitations:

Diplomacy and sanctions: The EU has imposed numerous sanctions on Russia after the annexation of Crimea (2014) and after the full occupation of Ukraine (2022). These sanctions include trade bans, asset freezes and travel bans.

Economic and military support: For Ukraine, the EU has provided large financial aid and indirect military assistance, including training and equipment for Ukrainian forces.

Energy security: The war has highlighted the EU's dependence on Russian energy. The bloc has taken steps to reduce dependence on Russian gas and oil, including diversifying supplies and shifting to renewables.

2.1 The war in Ukraine and the impact on the EU

- **Internal unity:** The conflict has in some cases strengthened the unity of EU member states, but it has also highlighted differences in different countries' approaches to Russia and Ukraine.
- **Economic impact:** The war has caused rising energy prices and high inflation

in EU countries, challenging the union's ability to maintain economic stability.

2.2 The war in Ukraine and the impact on the EU

EU enlargement: The war has fueled discussions about integrating Ukraine and other Eastern European countries into the EU as a way to bolster regional stability and prevent Russian influence.

2.2.1 Strategic impact

- **Changing security architecture in Europe:** The EU, together with NATO, is pursuing strategies to increase defense on Europe's eastern borders.
- **Global role:** Through its stance on war, the EU is trying to reinforce its role as a respected global actor and promote the rules-based international order.

The EU, as a regional power, is playing a key role in the response to the war in Ukraine. However, challenges related to security, energy and internal unity will determine how effectively it can maintain its position as a powerful global and regional actor in the future.

3. RUSSIA

Russia has historically been a regional and global power, and the war in Ukraine has highlighted its geopolitical ambitions and the challenges that accompany those ambitions. The war, which began in February 2022 following a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, has had far-reaching regional and international consequences. Here are some main aspects:

3.1.1 Russia as a regional power

Russia has sought to maintain and expand its influence in the post-Soviet space, which it sees as an area of strategic interest. In this context, Russia has justified interventions in Ukraine under the pretext of protecting its interests and those of Russian speakers in the region.

In the service of national interests and its growing weight in claims to maintain regional power status, Russia has built organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union to maintain influence over neighboring countries.

Russia is one of the major regional powers and a highly influential global actor, particularly through its role within international organizations and alliances such as the BRICS. This alliance, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, was formed to promote a multipolar world order, where developing countries and those with large non-Western economies have a greater influence on affairs global. Russia has a strategic position connecting Europe, Asia and the Middle East. It controls a significant portion of global gas and oil reserves, giving it a major influence on regional and global energy markets.

Russia remains one of the major military powers, with high technological capabilities and nuclear weapons. This enables it to play an important role in regional and global stability.

Russia has invested in relations with the countries of the post-Soviet space, through organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), aiming to maintain its influence in these areas.

3.1.2 The war in Ukraine and the implications

The war in Ukraine has shown Russia's limitations and weaknesses as a regional power:

- **Ukrainian resistance:** The strong resistance of the Ukrainian army and people, supported by Western military and economic aid, has challenged Russian ambitions.
- **International isolation:** The West has imposed harsh economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia, limiting its influence.
- **Military mobilization:** Russia has encountered difficulties in mobilizing new forces and in logistics, which has undermined its image as an invincible military power.

3.1.3 Regional consequences

- **Impact on neighbors:** Russia's open aggression against Ukraine has alarmed other countries in the region, such as Georgia, Moldova and the Baltic states, which now demand stronger security guarantees from NATO and the EU.
- **Economic impact:** The sanctions and economic decline of Russia have also affected its neighbors that are economically connected to it.

3.1.4 Global reaction

- **The West**

3.2 BRICS and the role of Russia

BRICS was created to challenge Western dominance in international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Russia, as one of the founding members, plays a key role in this organization through several mechanisms:

1. **Economy and finance:** Russia is supportive of the development of alternative financial institutions such as the New Development Bank (NDB), which aims to finance infrastructure and development projects in member countries. But Russia's inclusion within the BRICS group also underlines a shift away from the West. Expanding Russia's cooperation with Brazil, India, China and South Africa serves to strengthen economic relations beyond the Western sphere and also has the potential to develop political significance. The decision to create a joint development bank, taken at the fifth meeting of the BRICS countries in March 2013 in Durban, South Africa, can be seen as an attempt to break the Western dominance in the international financial system. [Crawford....2013]
2. **Multilateral politics:** BRICS represents a platform for Russia to cooperate with other large and developing countries, promoting its geopolitical interests in a way that counters Western isolation.
3. **Technology and energy cooperation:** Russia has shared its technological expertise and energy resources with BRICS member countries, building strategic relations and contributing to global energy security.

3.3 What aligns Russia with other BRICS countries?

A Russian strategic concept describes the initiative to create BRICS as "one of the most important geopolitical events at the beginning of the new century". of the future cooperation of BRICS.[Crawford....2013] Therefore, the long-term goal of the Russian Federation is for the union to evolve from a dialogue forum to a strategic cooperation mechanism that allows them to jointly find solutions to current global challenges. The main concern of the members is now the desire for a reform of the international financial architecture, in whose decision-making bodies, they judge, developing countries are underrepresented. The rejection of violations of the principle of sovereignty and the recognition of the principle of non-interference in national affairs have been identified as convictions that unite the countries in this mechanism called BRICS.

Moscow's ambitions in particular are huge. Her proposals for intensifying cooperation between the BRICS range from cooperation in the financial system to cooperation in the agricultural sector and in the scientific sector, to the promotion of tourism and cooperation in space research. In view of economic and demographic developments, it should not be expected that Russia will be able to play the role that countries like China or India will play in the future. Precisely because Russia is becoming aware of this fact, it is interested in institutionalizing cooperation within the BRICS framework. The last meeting of the heads of the BRICS countries proved that it is no longer an economic coalition, but a geopolitical counterweight to the West. The heads of the delegations that went to Kazan also agreed on this. Twelve countries have meanwhile applied for membership, and more than thirty want to belong to the "alternative club". These dozen aspiring countries include countries such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Congo-Kinshasa, North Korea and Syria.

Through its involvement in BRICS, Russia pursues two main goals:

First, it wants to challenge Western dominance. This applies not only to the decision-making bodies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but also to the US dollar as a global reserve currency.

Second, Russia wants closer ties with China, with which it also cooperates within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which emerged in 2001 from the Shanghai Five group founded five years earlier. Especially since Russia's economy cannot keep up with the rise of other BRICS countries, it is looking for connections and opportunities for cooperation, sales markets and investments. By increasing energy trade with China, Russia is trying to reduce its dependence on Europe and open new markets. Beijing, for its part, has economic and political interests in cooperation: As the world's second-largest energy consumer, China benefits from Russian energy supplies, which are pumped directly through a pipeline from Russia's Skovorodino to Danqing in China since 2011. In addition, China wants to limit US influence in Asia. [Crawford....2013]]

As is well known, it was the economic analyst Jim O'Neill who coined the BRIC emerging markets acronym in 2001. Through his article entitled "Building the Best Economic BRICs" he claimed to highlight the potential for growth and investment in Brazil, Russia, India and China. According to him, this potential and formation as an economic balance should have political effects in the long term.

The BRICS quintet now make up about 40 percent of the world's population, while together they account for more than 20 percent of global economic output. Consequently, the preconditions for playing a decisive role in reorganizing the global balance of power are good - if they can maintain the pace of development of the first years and have a common political agenda, which means moving towards a New Order, as emphasized more and more loudly in the political centers of the East. "The process of forming a multipolar world order is underway, it is a dynamic and irreversible process," Putin said at the official start of the meeting in Kazan [23.10.2024], a city in the Russian republic of Tatarstan. The BRICS strategy is in line with "the aspirations of the largest part of the global community, the so-called global majority". [Tageschau.2024]

Let's remember that a total of 36 countries participated in the three-day meeting in Kazan. This was the 16th meeting of this community of states. The first was in 2009, which was held in Russia, with founding members Brazil, Russia, India and China. A year later, it will be joined by South Africa. Four new countries joined last year: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Now the nine members of the BRICS group account for half of the world's population. Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates are important producers of oil and gas, while Egypt and Ethiopia are the main players in Africa due to the fact that they have large populations.

The regional powers united within BRICS consider themselves to have many common political interests, with an emphasis on the battle to reshape the coming New World Order.

They claim that they can be imposed especially when it comes to reserves of raw materials, since in this case the BRICS plus states would be in a dominant position as a block.

With the inclusion of Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, they have 43 percent of global oil production and a very large share of global reserves. Almost 40 percent of the rare earth reserves needed to make batteries for electric vehicles, energy storage and microelectronics are in China's hands... When it comes to raw material supplies, the BRICS-plus group could potentially put the West under pressure that may exceed that caused by the OPEC oil embargo of 1973. [FIW, 2024]

However, Russia today faces major restrictions due to Western sanctions, which have affected its economy. However, the alliance with the BRICS countries has provided an alternative route for trade and cooperation.

While Russia remains an important power, China and India also have powerful positions within the BRICS. This can bring competition, but also opportunities for balanced partnerships.

4. POLAND AS A REGIONAL POWER

Since the early 1990s, Poland has supported Ukraine to join Western democracies and integrate into the European Union. The background of this support is mainly geopolitical: Poland's security can be increased by having a democratic and pro-European Ukraine as its neighbor. [Maatsch,2024]

In the twenty years of its EU membership, the relationship between Poland and the EU has experienced rise and fall. Given the current challenges facing the European Union, such as the war in Ukraine and the possibility of enlargement in the Balkans, it is expected that Poland will take on increased responsibilities as the largest EU member in Central and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, as one of the powers of this region, to create the right balance within the EU itself.

Poland has an important role as a regional power within the European Union (EU), and its position is strengthening for several main reasons:

- **Geostrategic position**
Poland is located in an important position between Western Europe and Eastern Europe, serving as a bridge between these regions. This position gives importance to security and energy issues, especially in the face of perceived threats from Russia.
- **Growing economy**
Poland has one of the largest and most dynamic economies in Eastern and Central Europe. It is the fifth largest in the EU (after Germany, France, Italy and Spain), and its steady economic growth makes it a powerful regional actor.
- **Politics and regional influence**
Poland is the leader of the Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia), a bloc that often presents an alternative vision to some EU policies, especially on issues of national sovereignty, immigration, and climate policies.
- **Security and protection**
Poland is one of the countries that spends the most on defense in relation to its GDP within the EU and NATO. Its role in strengthening NATO's eastern border and commitment to support Ukraine after Russian aggression has raised its international profile.

4.1 The future of the EU and the challenges

- Poland has often expressed reservations about some EU integration policies, emphasizing national sovereignty over shared EU competences. This has occasionally brought clashes with the European Commission, especially over the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.
- However, Poland remains committed to the EU as a strategic project for its security and economic development, although it may seek reforms to review the balance of power between Brussels and member states.
- With its economic development, defense investments and its strategic importance in the stability of the region, Poland has the potential to become one of the main pillars of the EU in the future. However, its success in this role depends on its ability to harmonize its positions with those of the wider bloc and on relations with key partners such as Germany and France.

Poland will continue to play an active role in shaping the future of the EU, balancing national interests with European priorities.

5. On the edge of the new order

In the year we left behind, important events of a global geopolitical character followed one another, while the processes of world transformation, which began with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, continue and seem not to will not end even in 2025.

The new world order that is knocking at the crumbling gates of the old order, which failed to meet the demands of the time, is marching on, imposing itself more and more as necessary.

The new relations between the existing superpowers, with the emergence of **BREXIT**, are taking a new direction of development. In this context, the new regional powers with ever-increasing influence, especially at the regional level (India, Brazil, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel), are trying to reposition themselves in accordance with their national interests.

In this new realignment, China and Russia as the central axis of BREXIT, somewhat similar to France and Germany, which for more than half a century were the axis of the EU, openly claim to return to new influential powers in the Order of New information, thus openly challenging the United States of America.

All this competition, logically, generates increasing conflicts, such as the case of Ukraine or that of Syria, since we are openly dealing with tendencies to disrupt the interests of the various powers that were established, and therefore we also have an increase in risks for security from the outbreak of conflicts in other areas as well, where mutual interests would be violated. The occupation by the Israeli army of the former buffer zone of the Golan Heights last week, expanding his control of the 2,814-meter-high Mount Hermon on the Syrian-Lebanon border is just the beginning. The Golan Heights are a strategic point from which to monitor the depth of Syrian territory, as well as northern Israel and the Sea of Galilee as a key source of drinking water, whose northeastern coast also belonged to Syria until the 1967 war.

As things stand now, Israel may be the biggest winner of the wars started. He destroyed the Gaza Strip to the point of making normal life impossible, while sacrificing his reputation with most of the international community, but in the medium term at least he disabled Hezbollah and turned Lebanon into a completely dysfunctional state, unable to present any long-term security threat or competition to Israel. It did the same with Syria, of course with the support or at least the tacit consent of the US, and most likely in cooperation with Turkey, considering that the Assad regime was hated by both

Tel Aviv and Ankara. Israel in the long term would guarantee its security, and in fact a dignified existence even in the framework of the New Order, despite the fact that it remains surrounded and unique in the "sea of the Arab and Islamic world".

5.1 Albanians and Jews

Albania and Albanians, especially Kosova in the middle, share some historical and geopolitical parallels with Israel in the context of the new world order that is being formed. These similarities relate especially to national identity and the struggle for survival.

Both peoples have experienced long periods of survival under external pressures, such as occupations and persecutions. Albanians have gone through Ottoman, Slavic and other invasions, while Jews have faced historical persecutions, including the Holocaust. Kosova at the end of the 20th century faced the Serbian apartheid.

For both peoples, culture and language have been used as the main pillars for maintaining national identity, helping both peoples to survive.

Both Albanians and Jews have a powerful diaspora that has played an important role in supporting their states. The Albanian diaspora has contributed to the independence of Kosova and the development of Albania, while the Jewish diaspora has been vital to the creation and support of the state of Israel.

In addition to these common elements, there are three factors that bring Israel, Albania and the Albanians closer together: first, their strategic and geopolitical position; the second, the alliance with the US and the West and the third, history.

Albania and Kosova are located in a strategic area in the Balkans, which is of great interest to global powers, as is Israel's position in the Middle East. Both are seen as important allies for the West in their regions.

Albania and Kosova have built close relations with the USA and the EU, becoming part of the Western order. Also, Israel has strong ties to the US and a key role in Western global politics. Both nations use their unique history to build international relations and strengthen their positions on the global stage.

In the new world order, Albania [Kosova within it] and Israel can be found alongside similar alliances, pursuing policies that strengthen their role as small but strategically important states.

CONCLUSION

Albanians have a special role and perspective in relation to the future of Europe, based on their history, geography and aspirations for integration into the European Union.

Albania and Kosova are two Albanian states that intend to become part of the EU. Albania is a candidate country and has started membership negotiations, while Kosova has signed the Stabilization-Association Agreement and is trying to strengthen relations with the EU. This shows a commitment of Albanians to integrate into European structures, sharing values such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

As in the case of the negotiations with Great Britain, when it was leaving the EU, also in the negotiations of Brussels with Tirana and Pristina during the process of approximation and membership in the EU, the question is raised which of the negotiation strategies will be applied. A game-theoretic approach implies that the EU has no logical reason to play a tough negotiation strategy if it is interested in its accelerated expansion in this part of the continent's geography. Albania and Kosova are located in a strategic position in the Western Balkans, a region that is at the center of EU enlargement policies. The role of the two Albanian republics as stability factors, engagement in the fight against corruption and organized crime, and the promotion of regional cooperation are important aspects for the future of Europe.

Albanians are an integral part of the vision for a more united, stronger and more diverse Europe. The full integration of Albania and Kosova into the EU, either separately or in the form of an Albanian Federation, would not only strengthen regional stability and development, but also enrich diversity and solidarity within Europe itself.

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