



Global Waves, Regional Strike: Europe on the Frontline of Instability

January 2025

Author: Center for Strategic Prognosis

Duplication, distribution, public display and use for commercial purposes is prohibited without the express permission of the author. Partial use of the material for academic and other non-commercial purposes is permitted with proper citation of source and author.



I. Introduction: An Evaporating World

The beginning of 2025 finds Europe at a crossroads. The world order, which was created after the end of the Cold War, is disintegrating in waves of economic, security, and political upheavals, which no longer come only from the periphery but also from the very core of the global architecture. Europe, which for decades built its collective identity by positioning itself as an area of stability, today faces new realities, such as geopolitical fragmentation, hybrid wars, energy shocks, and migration waves, which increasingly cross the borders of the EU and become its internal phenomenon.

At this point, we identify two key features of this global environment: the deconcentration of power and the erosion of trust in institutions. The traditional powers can no longer maintain the order they created by themselves; at the same time, emerging powers, such as China, India, and Turkey, are acting in accordance with regional interests, but without the willingness to assume global responsibility. In such a context, Europe becomes one of the few territories where all the global vectors of instability collide.

II. Security Upheavals: From the Eastern Front to the Digital Battlefield

European security in 2025 is no longer just a matter of relations with the Russian Federation. It includes a wider belt of crisis, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and further to the Middle East and North Africa. On the eastern borders, the war in Ukraine is nearing its [full third year](#), without any clear military solution and with growing [fatigue of the Western allies](#). New US President Donald Trump has announced a review of US support, causing European capitals to fear a "strategic vacuum".

At the same time, some changes are noticeable in the Russian strategy: Moscow is intensifying cyber and propaganda operations, attempting to [weaken the political unity of the European Union from within](#). [Social networks](#) and [generative artificial intelligence](#) are becoming a key weapon in the war of narrative creation and perception manipulation, through which numerous operations are conducted – from [undermining support of Ukraine](#) to [influencing electoral processes](#) in key member states. Exactly because of that, it is worth mentioning the fact that, during 2024, the majority of registered disinformation campaigns worldwide had a geopolitical motive – with a focus on [energy policies](#), [migrations](#), and the [Russo-Ukrainian conflict](#).

Besides the Eastern front, increasing attention is being directed towards the South. Namely, North Africa, along its entire perimeter – from Libya to the Sahel, is becoming the [new penetration space for Russian and Chinese interests](#), while instabilities in [Chad](#), [Sudan](#), and [Niger](#) generate a [new wave of migrations towards the Mediterranean](#). [Italy](#), [Greece](#), and [Spain](#) lie along the frontline of this pressure, while the Central European countries are increasingly facing internal divisions, torn apart between humanitarian responsibility and national security.

Ž

Duplication, distribution, public display and use for commercial purposes is prohibited without the express permission of the author. Partial use of the material for academic and other non-commercial purposes is permitted with proper citation of source and author.



In such a context, European security increasingly depends on the ability of the Union to link foreign policy, defense, and technological capacities into a single response to multifaceted threats. Focusing on the development of a common defense policy, the resilience of critical infrastructure, and the control of information space, the European Union is entering a period of redefining its strategic priorities.

III. Energy Transition and the New Geoeconomic War

Energy security remains the foundation of the [European strategy of survival](#) in times of crises. After the Russian gas [lost its dominant role](#), Europe turned to [LNG terminals](#) and [renewable sources](#). However, the new dependence on [American liquid gas](#) and [Norwegian oil](#) only partially reduced the risks, at the same time creating some new ones – high prices, market instability, and limited control over energy chains.

The paradox of the European energy transition is in the fact that the [Green Agenda](#) has become a geopolitical agenda. The competition for [lithium, cobalt, and rare minerals](#) has grown into a [silent war for strategic resources](#). China controls over [70% of global battery and solar panel production capacities](#), while Europe is attempting to create its own “safe supply chains” within the EU. However, it is precisely in this endeavor that the biggest dilemma lies: Can Europe simultaneously be a climate leader and a geopolitical actor? Or will it become a space of transitional dependence between American energy sources and Chinese technology?

These processes have direct consequences for social stability. [The rise in energy prices](#) during 2024 has caused a series of protests, spreading from [Warsaw](#) to [Brussels](#), in which the energy prices were only the “icing on the cake”, among other questionable issues. Political movements that are opposing the “[Brussels Green Dictate](#)” are gaining momentum, using the dissatisfaction of the middle class as a weapon against integration. In this way, Europe is gradually slipping into “[energy populism](#)”, where ecological and economic tensions are becoming a new battlefield of ideologies.

IV. Political Tectonic Changes: The Crisis of Democracy and the Return of the State

The democratic order in Europe is not solely under foreign but under internal pressure as well. [The decline of trust in institutions, media, and political elites](#) has created a sort of vacuum that is currently being filled by a movement with clear [anti-Semitic](#) and anti-European rhetoric. During 2024, right-wing-oriented populist parties achieved significant success in [Germany, the Netherlands, and France](#), while in Hungary, Slovakia, and Italy, they are already part of the ruling coalitions.

This trend is not isolated – it, in fact, represents a reflection of global reaction to the sense of loss of control. The population senses that geopolitical and economic decisions are being made by “unknown structures” outside national frameworks. The return of the state as a primary actor in the economy, industrial politics, and security is becoming a new consensus, even among liberal governments. France and Germany speak of “[European protectionism](#)”, while Poland and Hungary insist on “[sovereign development](#)”. All the previously said has resulted in a deeper fragmentation within the European Union

Duplication, distribution, public display and use for commercial purposes is prohibited without the express permission of the author. Partial use of the material for academic and other non-commercial purposes is permitted with proper citation of source and author.



– not only along the East-West axis, but also along the North-South, wealthy-poor, and industrial-postindustrial axis.

Thus, Europe loses its strongest instrument: unity as a kind of political capital. Without it, the Union's foreign policy loses weight, and its reactions to crises become slow and unpredictable.

V. The Three Scenarios for the European Future

If these processes continue, it is indicative that Europe, in the next five years of its existence, will have to choose one of the three projected strategic paths:

1. **Europe of Resistance**, which would project it as a continent that mobilizes around a common security policy, develops its own defense industry, and reduces energy dependence. This is a scenario that mostly reflects the state of "European maturity", but at the same time requires political will and financial cohesion, which is currently lacking.

2. **Europe of Adaptation**, which would project Europe as a continent that accepts the new division of the world and focuses on preserving social stability, without major ambitions in global politics. In this scenario, the European Union would project itself as a "post-geopolitical comfort zone", sacrificing in the long term its current and potential influence in world politics.

3. And finally, as the worst option – **Europe of Disintegration**, in which scenario populism, energy crisis, and security fears lead to complete political paralysis. In such a problem setting, institutions inevitably retreat, especially at the EU level, and national governments strive and act intensively independently. Although the least likely, it is important to note that this scenario is already mentioned in revisionist scenario projections, whereby certain actors seek to destabilize the European periphery.

The fate of Europe - both as a continent and as a Union - depends a lot on its ability to redefine its role in a global system that is no longer centralized. Will it return to itself, as a political project, or will it become an arena where others shape the rules of the game?

VI. Conclusion: Europe Between the Sea and the Waves

Europe today is like a continent standing on the shore and watching the incoming waves - economic, migration, technological, and security, hoping that the small wave will not turn into a tsunami. Each individual "wave", by itself, does not have the potential to significantly collapse Europe, but it is indicative that their overlapping and combined action has the potential to create a state of permanent instability. Therefore, Europe's key defense lies not only in armaments or energy, but also in intellectual cohesion – the ability to understand one's own position in a changing world.

The world is no longer looking for a new hegemony, but for a new balance. In this search, Europe will have to make a decision: whether it will remain a passive actor, which sporadically and weakly reacts to individual waves, or whether it will learn to "swim" in the turbulent waters of the 21st century.

Duplication, distribution, public display and use for commercial purposes is prohibited without the express permission of the author. Partial use of the material for academic and other non-commercial purposes is permitted with proper citation of source and author.