



ELIAMEP Outlook, Predictions for 2024

Special edition

Edited by:

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December 2023
Policy Paper #150/2023

ELIAMEP | Policy Paper # 150/2023

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A changing world?

Maria Gavouneli

There are times when the sound of the shifting tectonic plates of history rings out a little more clearly. The start of 2024 finds us with two wars underway, any number of more or less frozen conflicts, at least two to three failed states in the neighbourhood, and a tsunami of elections on the way around the world—in the United States, the European Union, Japan, India—whose democratic legitimacy is entirely commensurate with the instability and ambiguity they would generate. Old alliances are reforming, new groupings are coming into being, our world is changing. We are too close to events to make out the direction they are taking, but the sense of movement is clear and powerful.

It is easy to make out the lines of demarcation that divide up our world. Our European family inhabits a privileged space in which peace reigns still, but we are on the edge of a parallel universe that is being torn apart by war. The flames of the brutal conflict in Gaza are being fanned by the total inability of all the parties involved to come up with a viable solution to the Palestinian problem, while in Syria, Lebanon and closer to home in Libya, the state structures remain in ruins. Just beyond lies a world of wealthy authoritarianism—in Iran and the Gulf states, in China—and desperate, devastated millions from Yemen to sub-Saharan Africa, who sink into fanaticism while trying to escape through migration. Population movements have always been a crucial feature in human history. But the toxicity with which migratory flows are addressed in rich and stable Europe highlights the insecurities of all of us who consider the prosperity and social cohesion we have enjoyed over the last three generations to be our birthright, and yet know full well that our ageing societies cannot remain viable without our stepping outside our oh so cosy comfort zone.

The desires, perspectives and views of the Global South in all its multi-coloured cacophony are far from our own belief in a secure world founded upon the principles and rules of international law we have put in place in the aftermath of the devastating wars of the 20th century and once thought indestructible. The reactions to the ongoing tragedy in Ukraine are a case in point. Russia's attack on an independent state is a brutal violation of the cornerstone obligation not to use force, and therefore constitutes a direct challenge to the common rules on which the international system is founded and based. For the rest of the planet, however, the war is just an intra-European conflict, which should end as soon as possible, when both sides quit their childish posturing. The absolute and deafening absence of the UN and all the multilateral institutions which, until recently, provided the reference point where consensus limited state power in a dynamic counterpoise of collective action to unilateralism, are equally typical.

And it is here, perhaps, that the secret of the coming year—the coming era—lies. In the bipolar world of old, the two sides were clearly defined with a vertical line demarcating their economies, societies and approach to security: one was either with the West or with the Eastern bloc, and the few states in the middle were all gravitating towards one pole or the other. The clarity of this absolute division made the system very stable indeed. Our own multipolar world is one of overlapping horizontal divisions, in which a democracy can rely on authoritarian China economically, but may well seek Western cover for its security. The inherent structural instability is aggravated by the impermanence of our new,

temporary partnerships. This volatility is also reflected in the effort to coalesce into new groupings like the BRICS, but the absence of a centre of gravity and the cohesion that comes with common policies is still very much in evidence. And all of this while the planet is changing dramatically as a direct result of the climate crisis, and the Anthropocene is being tested by one of its own products: artificial intelligence.

With these thoughts in mind, we once again asked ELIAMEP's researchers to share with us their take on the world and on what 2024 holds in store. If there is a common thread running through the many different themes that follow, it is the dark shadow cast by the instability brought by the brutality of war and the generalized anxiety of an era in transition.

Dimitris Kourkoulas describes a dystopian Mediterranean, while Gabriel Haritos documents the multiple challenges facing Israel amidst a brutal war.

Following on from 2023's only good news, Alexandros Diakopoulos (with Petros Liakouras, Kostas Yfantis and Constantinos Filis) sets out to chart the future of Greece-Turkey relations in 2024, while Panagiotis Tsakonas talks about the shared hopes of our two countries. Ioannis Grigoriadis completes the picture with his assessment of what lies ahead for Turkey in the coming year.

The next theme is our European family, which has seen better days, according to Loukas Tsoukalis. Spyros Blavoukos describes the high stakes of the upcoming European elections, while Angeliki Dimitriadi and Ioannis Armakolas examine two critical policies for the Union: respectively, migration and asylum policy, focusing on both their domestic and international parameters, and the current state of play and prospects for EU enlargement in South-East Europe.

Manos Matsaganis completes the picture with the outlook for the European and world economy, while Ronald Meinardus takes a closer look at the evolution of Greek-German relations.

The final section deals with our larger neighbourhood and the shared problems facing the planet. Katerina Sokou talks about the huge question mark hanging over the US elections, George Tzogopoulos describes a stabilized China, while I.-A. Zepos looks ahead to the prospects for Greek-Indian cooperation in an expanded Indo-Pacific corridor. Emmanuella Doussis and Mihalis Kritikos wind up our Outlook for 2024 with a consideration of the enormous challenges which the climate crisis and artificial intelligence pose for our future.

Five, fifteen, twenty years from now, when the dust has settled and a new order slightly or very different from our own has emerged, we will be able to look back and easily identify the decisive events of the new era. Until then, let us make it through 2024 happy and joyful.

The Mediterranean is on fire

Dimitris Kourkoulas

At the beginning of 2023, the prospects for the tumultuous Mediterranean region were already ominous. However, no one could predict the even more tragic developments with the terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the ongoing bloody conflict and unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip.

The Mediterranean, and the Eastern Mediterranean in particular, has once again demonstrated its ability to surprise us—usually in a bad way, since it is currently in the throes of growing chaos.

The trend which saw the Mediterranean's southern shores converging economically, culturally and politically around a European model began to reverse direction almost 20 years ago. The vision of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation making the Mediterranean a sea of peace, stability, cooperation and prosperity for all the peoples of the region, fostering understanding between different cultures with full respect for international law, has completely collapsed, just as expectations for a sustainable solution to the Palestinian issue have collapsed.

Today, the Mediterranean is not a sea that unites but a barrier that separates two worlds with enormous inequalities.

Over the last decade, the two shores of the Mediterranean have not only failed to move closer but, on the contrary, moved further apart. Socio-economic development, cultural and social values, governance and demographics followed different paths that reinforced not only discomfort but also hostility towards Europe.

According to World Bank data, the per capita income of people living on the southern shores of the Mediterranean is six times lower than of the EU. Europe's population is ageing rapidly, while that of the southern shore is significantly younger: 31% of people there are under 14 years of age, compared to 15% in Europe. Since 1990, the population of the EU has grown by 6.5%, while that of the ten countries in our southern neighbourhood has risen by 72%.

Social and economic conditions will continue to deteriorate in 2024. As the horizon for a better future for the populations of the region recedes, so will the intensification of disappointment and despair, fuelling extremist ideologies and increasing anti-Western and anti-European sentiments, fuelled by forces seeking to regain influence in the region, such as Moscow, Ankara, and Tehran.

The successive crises that have hit most of the southern Mediterranean countries have created, for the time being, an irreversible sequence of negative developments. Unrealistic expectations from the so-called Arab Spring quickly gave way to the ongoing civil wars in Syria and Libya, the collapse of debt-ridden Lebanon, the arms race between Algeria and Morocco, the spread of Islamic terrorism, and the increase in refugees. Optimism was replaced by despair. Young people are leaving their countries due to war, lack of freedom, unemployment and a bleak outlook for their future. And as if all these wounds were not enough, the climate crisis began to affect the Mediterranean more than other regions of the planet, with very negative impacts on significant economic activities.

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After the difficult period of the global COVID epidemic, the shock of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the rise in energy and food prices came. Most non-European countries in the Mediterranean distanced themselves from European policy towards Russia, either abstaining or voting against European proposals in many UN votes. The Russo-Ukrainian war created additional conditions to deepen the gap with Europe and the West. The influence of the European Union in the countries of the region is steadily decreasing, and phenomena of 'autonomy' are multiplying in countries that traditionally followed European strategic choices. A characteristic example is Turkey, which does not follow Western sanctions against Moscow, as well as Morocco, which abstains from condemning the Russian invasion in UN votes.

There are no visible prospects for the revival of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, while the situation in Syria will continue to export instability with the flow of refugees and the consolidation of Russia's military presence on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean, in Latakia and Tartus.

Some optimism for the signing of an agreement on Iran's nuclear program, which prevailed after the assumption of the American presidency by Biden, has definitively evaporated after the attack by Hamas in Israel and the currently controlled confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, which has close ties with Tehran.

2023 started with very bad omens for the Mediterranean region. 2024 begins with even more ominous signs. The dramatic developments in Gaza create explosive conditions in Europe's relations with the peoples of the region and further erode their already shaken relationship. The continuation of hostilities in Gaza and their possible expansion into Lebanon will endanger the stability of many Arab countries and may deepen the rift with Europe, even at the interstate level.

The only consolation that could emerge from this bleak landscape would be the realization by Europe that a comprehensive policy towards our southern neighbourhood is required. Perhaps a blow to the illusions that we can be safe when our neighbourhood is plagued by instability and conflicts.

The only consolation that could emerge from this bleak landscape would be the realization by Europe that a comprehensive policy towards our southern neighbourhood is required.

Israel in a war of multiple challenges

Gabriel Haritos

The war which began on 7 October 2023 has radically altered Israel's political agenda. The final months of 2023 had nothing in common with the months of protest and institutional crisis that preceded them. The failure of the state apparatus to foresee and prevent the tragic events that occurred has shattered the average Israeli citizen's confidence in the military establishment, which was perceived until recently as invulnerable, incorruptible and ready for every threat. Israeli society expects those responsible for this serious failure to be held accountable, despite the prevailing belief that Israel will win on the battlefield. When this war is over, the political, military and judicial establishments know that they will be held to account. What remains unclear, however, is whether the question "Who is to blame?" will receive an answer within 2024, given that no one knows when the war will end.

The defining feature of the war which began on 7 October is that it involves multiple active fronts. Officially, there is just one front and that lies in Gaza. However, the other still unofficial but active fronts in South Lebanon, the West Bank, Syria, Iraq and the Red Sea could broaden the scope of the conflict.

A war on many fronts

The defining feature of the war which began on 7 October is that it involves multiple active fronts. Officially, there is just one front and that lies in Gaza. However, the other still unofficial but active fronts in South Lebanon, the West Bank, Syria, Iraq and the Red Sea could broaden the scope of the conflict.

Although the government in Beirut does not want to embark on any further adventures, Hezbollah seems willing to assume the role of agents provocateurs for Iran and repeat the war of 2006. As a result, the Israel-Hezbollah front became active during the very first days of the current war, with the organization's leader Hassan Nasrallah referring to a "war of attrition". However, Israel is now demanding the immediate implementation of the Security Council Resolution of 17/01/2006 which stipulates that South Lebanon should be brought under the control of the Lebanese Armed Forces and that Hezbollah should disarm and withdraw north of the Litani River. If diplomatic efforts by the US, France and Germany fail, it is estimated that it is only a matter of time before Israel declares a parallel war against Hezbollah, taking advantage of the increased Western military presence, which serves as a deterrent against Iran. Moreover, Israeli society seems ready to support such a development, so that civilians will be able to return safely to their homes on the Lebanese border—just as the civilians who abandoned their ruined homes on the Gaza border hope to do.

An unprecedented aspect of this war is the new front opened up by the pro-Iranian Houthi rebels in the Red Sea. This front brings with it the risk of the conflict spreading beyond Israel's immediate neighbourhood. Thus, over and beyond the US, Britain and the numerous other countries whose economies have been impacted by the closure of the Bab Al-Mandab strait, Saudi Arabia may well view the current situation as an interesting opportunity to counter Iranian regional revisionism while maintaining its pro-Western momentum with a view to normalizing relations with Israel in the future.

Finally, having learned to use the Palestinian Authority's security forces to its own advantage, particularly in terms of intelligence gathering, Israel now feels in a position to deal with the mobility that characterizes the front in the West Bank.

The next day for Gaza

Despite opposition from the Biden administration, Israel will insist on bringing the Gaza Strip under its military control. They have already imposed a 1–2 km perimeter security zone on the ground, which will be accompanied by limited clearance operations (possibly when the activity in South Lebanon is intensifying). The idea of a "multinational civil administration" in Gaza will be encouraged, in which those Arab countries that have normalized their relations with Israel (Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Morocco, Bahrain) will also participate, with the expectation of a Saudi presence later. If the White House rejects a proposal along these lines, Israel will try to buy time, hoping that the Republicans return to power in 2025.

However, observers believe that the US and the international community will seek a solution diametrically opposed to Israel's aspirations, in which the Palestinian Authority regains control over Gaza. With the Americans pushing for the democratization of the Palestinian Authority, they will want to attract Islamist voices willing to distance themselves from their previous involvement with Hamas in its current radical form. Arab and Muslim governments are also expected to take part and encourage the democratization process in the institutions of the Palestinian Authority. Qatar and Turkey will be willing to do so, while Algeria may just prove useful in this regard, mainly due to a series of "Palestinian reconciliation" initiatives undertaken in the past by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. However, both the inner circle of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah 'deep state' will carefully weigh up the pros and cons before (and if) they respond positively to the call.

Netanyahu's future

The outbreak of the war and the participation of Benny Gantz, a reconciliatory figure, in the national unity government under Netanyahu will extend the latter's prime ministership until the military operations are at an end. Since Netanyahu is now not expected to present his defence before April, no verdict can be reached in the trials, which are crucial for Netanyahu's political future, for a considerable length of time. Nonetheless, if he is found to have been negligent in respect to what did and did not happen on October 7, his political future will be under serious threat.

Greece-Turkey relations in 2024

Alexandros Diakopoulos, Konstantinos Filis, Kostas Ifantis, Petros Liakouras

The past year was one of the calmest in Greek-Turkish relations, with the rapidly improving bilateral climate culminating in the recent High Cooperation Council meeting and the adoption of the Athens Declaration.

This time a year ago, the two countries were already in their third year of tensions stemming from Ankara's revisionist power politics. Given that 2023 was an election year in both countries, there were many who thought that the situation could go off the rails and develop into a major crisis or even a hot episode. In fact, the exact opposite happened. The past year was one of the calmest in Greek-Turkish relations, with the rapidly improving bilateral climate culminating in the recent High Cooperation Council meeting and the adoption of the Athens Declaration. Which goes to show that it is impossible to make predictions with any certainty in multifactorial situations such as international relations.

To a large extent, Turkey's volte face can be ascribed to three factors:

- i) Erdoğan realizing that his aggressive and revisionist policy in the Eastern Mediterranean was not yielding anything worthwhile (except in the "special" case of Libya). In fact, it had backfired by creating friction with countries in the region and with the West. The rallying of neighbouring states against Turkish aggression was also consigning Turkey to the sidelines. As far as the tensions with Greece in particular were concerned, the policy had proved counter-productive: while Turkey had failed to gain any tangible benefits, it had been denied both congressional approval for the modernization of its F16 fleet, an unprecedented development, and permission to purchase Eurofighters, thanks to a veto by the German Chancellor;
- ii) The ongoing war in Ukraine, the repudiation of all forms of revisionism by the Western allies, and Turkey's difficult position within the Atlantic Alliance in the wake of its attempts to blackmail NATO over Finland and Sweden's applications to join the Alliance and Ankara opting not to apply sanctions against Russia; and
- iii) Turkey's economic problems, which had been aggravated by the earthquake, and Ankara's consequent need to improve relations with the West, primarily with a view to securing funds with which to get the economy back on its feet and reconstruct the areas struck by the quake. Greece's immediate response and assistance with the rescue efforts also played an important, albeit auxiliary, role.

So relations between the two countries are volatile, multidimensional and currently playing out on three partly-intertwined levels. Given how the two countries are bound together by their geography, history and joint participation in the Atlantic Alliance, Turkey is at one and the same time Greece's "ally" and a potential economic and trading partner, but also a strategic competitor in the context of Ankara's revisionism.

The first two levels are specified and prescribed in both the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and the "positive agenda". However, the third level, which is where the hard core of the tensions resides, is far more dangerous and tricky to address. We are still in the very early stages of the process, and the two countries do not seem for now to agree on either the number or type of disputes they are being invited to resolve. It therefore remains to be seen whether the first two strands will facilitate a joint approach to the third, or serve as bulwarks to prevent relations being derailed by the nations' systemic rivalry.

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Against this backdrop, the "Athens Declaration" is significant on multiple counts: though not legally binding, it produces a powerful political commitment not to rock the boat—for the near future, at least. This gives Greece the space and time it needs to strengthen various aspects of its power which had fallen behind as a result of the economic crisis and/or long-standing pathologies. At the same time, it provides both countries with much-needed calm and stability, given their geographical proximity to loci of instability and the more generalized international disorder. Stability is also crucial at this stage in the light of changes within the international system, the uncertainty of the outcome of the 2024 US elections, and the inherent weaknesses of the EU.

However, with a period of calm ensured and the risk of conflict removed, international interest in resolving Greek-Turkish issues will diminish. Turkey will be able to negotiate a new customs union with the EU or upgrade its air force not as a threat but as a partner of Greece. The Athens Declaration commits the two countries to avoiding unilateral acts, while also favouring the maintenance of the status quo. It is a mutually beneficial quasi-moratorium. Given that fossil fuels are increasingly unlikely to be exploited (especially after COP 28), Turkey's continental shelf is no longer a powerful incentive for Ankara to delimit its maritime zones, especially since the status quo is currently in its favour. Because any settlement of the continental shelf and EEZ disputes, however favourable to Turkey, would entail a smaller area of international waters being available for operational training and fishing.

To convince/pressure Turkey into agreeing to a solution, Greece will therefore need to develop a comprehensive strategic plan and involve the EU and our strategic partners in its drafting, however much Turkey does not want third-party 'interference' in our bilateral relations. An agreement will require a great deal of effort, some tough decisions, realism, bipartisan consensus and time—lots of it—to achieve. Otherwise, the political dialogue and exploratory contacts will once again reach an impasse.

So, all the signs indicate that 2024 will be a period of calm for Greek-Turkey relations, though not the year in which the issues fuelling tensions between the two nations will finally be resolved. Even in a best case scenario, a solution is expected to take longer to achieve. The only thing that could disturb this calm, barring some unexpected development, would be a deterioration in the Cyprus issue that prompted Turkey to fall back on provocations. Should the dialogue on Cyprus resume, however, it would help to consolidate and sustain the current positive climate.

Hope for the best, but there's no room for complacency

Panayotis Tsakonias

In last year's Outlook, we expressed our concerns that 2023 could turn out to be the "most difficult" year yet for Greek-Turkish relations. Our concerns were not founded entirely in the fact that—though the year was ending with Greek-Turkish tensions at lower and/or more controlled levels than the two years that preceded it (2021 & 2022)—it was anything but certain that 2023 would bring with it a return to a state of 'conflictual normality' in the stand-off between Greece and Turkey. They related mainly to the unprecedentedly extreme rhetoric ("we will come suddenly one night") the Turkish president had chosen to employ, which questioned not only Greece's sovereign rights but also its actual sovereignty over certain islands and islets in the Aegean.

We therefore predicted—taking also into account certain systemic realities, such as Turkey steering a course increasingly independent of the West (US and EU) plus its enhanced geopolitical significance in the light of the ongoing war in Ukraine—that Turkey was unlikely to abandon its policy of maintaining parallel fronts of controlled tension with Greece and the Republic of Cyprus; especially in 2023, the centenary of the signing of the Lausanne Treaty, which the founder of the "New Turkey" had declared himself keen to revise.

During this period, Mr Erdoğan's interest will, of course, be limited to keeping relations with Greece at the current level of relative normality and stability and will not extend to efforts to resolve the Greek-Turkish dispute.

However, a series of particularly significant events during 2023 (devastating earthquakes in Turkey, the formation of strong governments in Turkey and Greece, the outbreak of a new conflict in Greece and Turkey's backyard, namely the Middle East, and the ongoing war in Ukraine) obliged the Turkish president to make a tactical retreat vis-a-vis Greece and led to a temporary détente between the two countries. In fact, President Erdoğan's official visit to Athens in December 2023 not only strengthened the "road map" the two countries had agreed to follow (primarily in relation to the Confidence-Building Measures and the bilateral "positive agenda" centred on the addition of issues of common interest, such as the migration challenge, civil protection and the response to natural disasters); it also led to the signing of the Athens Declaration on "Friendship and Good Neighbourly Relations". The latter has managed to introduce additional institutional checks and balances, and especially of "value-based" commitments to be undertaken by Turkey towards Greece. In fact, Mr Erdoğan granted an interview to a Greek newspaper prior to his visit to Athens in which he went so far as to acknowledge and accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, albeit on certain conditions.

All these developments, along with the agreement to set in motion the next steps in the rapprochement process—which include exploring the two sides' positions via "Political Dialogue" (i.e., the upgraded Exploratory Contacts) on the issues relating to key differences, as well as the planned visit by the Greek Prime Minister to Turkey next spring—allow us to predict with relative certainty that the waters will remain calm for the first half of the upcoming year at least. During this period, Mr Erdoğan's interest will, of course, be limited to keeping relations with Greece at the current level of relative normality and stability and will not extend to efforts to resolve the Greek-Turkish dispute.

In the new year, as wars rages in Ukraine and the Middle East, Turkey will remain a useful but simultaneously problematic partner for the West, having been further delegitimized by its active support for Hamas. It is positive that both the Biden administration and the

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EU seem determined to set certain terms and preconditions for their future as well as their current relationship with Turkey. In so doing, they increase the pressure on the Turkish president while limiting his options, especially with regard to the pursuit of ambitious goals that clash with those of the US and/or the EU.

However, the time Mr Erdoğan needed and 'bought' through his tactical volte face and re-engagement with Greece may prove unnecessary from autumn 2024 on, especially if, as early November and the US presidential elections draw closer, a second Trump presidency begins to seem increasingly likely. Similarly, the European elections at the end of the first half of the new year may lead to changes in the balance of power within the EU that give Turkey more room to manoeuvre as well as to pursue its ambitions than it has had to date. The possibility of major change in both the US and the EU makes predicting the outlook for Greek-Turkish relations in the latter half of 2024 extremely difficult. Consequently, Greece has every reason not to leave things to chance. Rather, Greece should take pains to build further on what has already been achieved at the bilateral level through smart and courageous initiatives at the multilateral level—primarily in an EU context, where it can contribute to the agenda set for EU-Turkey relations—, no matter how the nationalists and the "permanently worried" in Greece react.

Critical issues for Turkey in 2024

Ioannis N. Grigoriadis

2023: an assessment

The consolidation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rule over Turkey was the most significant political news of 2023. Neither the painful earthquakes of 6 February 2023 nor the unprecedented mobilization of the opposition was enough to bring change to Turkey's political arena. Despite disappointment at the delayed mobilization of the ill-prepared Turkish state apparatus in the wake of the earthquakes, the Turkish public continued to consider the incumbent president to be the best qualified of the electoral candidates to handle crises such as these, even if they also considered him responsible for them. The centenary of the Republic of Turkey on 29 October 2023 passed by almost unnoticed as the Turkish government sought to capitalize on the anti-Western reflexes of Turkish public opinion in the aftermath of the tragic events in and around Gaza.

Meanwhile, developments in the court case seeking a ban on the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi—HDP*) drove the decision to transfer the party's activities into a new political formation. The institution of the Party of the Greens and the Left Future (*Yeşiller ve Sol Gelecek Partisi-YeşilSol Parti-YSP*), subsequently renamed the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (*Halkların Eşitlik ve Demokrasi Partisi-HEDEP-DEM*), protected the institutional interests of the Kurdish political movement, since the new political formation could not be prosecuted on the basis of the old case files.

High-Stakes Municipal Elections

The municipal elections of March 2024 will be a milestone for the Turkish opposition. The opposition coalition under Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu suffered a heavy defeat in the 2023 electoral showdowns. Its decline was compounded by the coalition's post-election dissolution and the decision of the "Good Party" (*İyi Parti-İYİP*) to field its own candidates in the upcoming municipal elections. It should be remembered that both İmamoğlu and Yavaş were only elected in the March 2019 elections because they ran as part of a broad coalition of opposition forces. Repeating this success will be much more difficult outside the alliance. The two mayors will have to prove that they are still popular across the political spectrum, despite the setbacks suffered by the opposition coalition in the May 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections. The re-election of İmamoğlu, in particular, as mayor of the metropolitan municipality of Istanbul would make him the opposition's natural leader and consolidate the dual-leadership model that seems to have been chosen following Özgür Özel's recent election as leader of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-CHP*).

Rebooting Relations with the United States

Rebooting diplomatic relations with the United States has emerged as a Turkish foreign policy priority after Erdoğan's victory in the May 2023 double elections. This explains Ankara's efforts to de-escalate the tensions between it and Greece, Israel and other US allies. The Turkish parliament's ratification of the treaty allowing for Sweden's accession to NATO, coupled with the granting of approval for Turkey's purchase of the latest variant of the F-16 aircraft, will be a first step and demonstration of goodwill, but there are a host of other issues that also need to be discussed, with the wars in Ukraine and Gaza at the very top of the list. Turkey's stance in the run-up to the presidential elections in the United

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States will also be of interest. The possible re-election of Donald Trump will be presented as an opportunity to fully restore relations between the United States and Turkey. Turkey being allowed to rejoin the F-35 co-production programme will be its primary demand and objective.

Initiative for the Establishment of New International Organizations

Claiming a leading role for Turkey among the "emerging powers" is one of the Turkish president's avowed ambitions. His systematic criticism of the international security and economic development system that has been in place since the end of World War II is also underpinned by this objective. The phrase "the world is bigger than five" refers to the privileged position enjoyed by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and to the Organization's inability to override the veto of any one of them. Severe criticism of the United Nations over its inability to effectively manage major humanitarian crises, such as the one ongoing in Gaza, is likely to be accompanied by a further step: an initiative to establish new international organizations charged with promoting international peace and economic development; the emerging powers will exert greater or complete control over these new bodies. Although the idea was tabled some years ago and has been much discussed, concrete steps have not yet been taken towards its implementation. An initiative of this sort aimed primarily at China, India and the Gulf States could either support economic development or protect international peace and security. Even if the initiative came with assurances that Turkey would both remain a member of the UN and the other organizations that oversee the international system and respect its treaty obligations to them, it would still constitute a further symbolic step towards Turkey's assertion of its strategic autonomy and independence of the Western security system. However, the success of such a project presupposes both the participation of a sufficient number of states from the non-Western world community and their willingness to dedicate significant financial, diplomatic and military resources to ensure the project's success. A mobilization of this sort would be hard to bring about.

Claiming a leading role for Turkey among the "emerging powers" is one of the Turkish president's avowed ambitions.

Europe has seen better days

Loukas Tsoukalis

I wrote in last year's Outlook that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis had thrown Europe's ambitions of strategic autonomy into disarray. Europe's military and energy dependencies leave little room for manoeuvre in an era in which weapons have the first word and economic relations are weaponized for political ends. I wrote that, in a best-case scenario, Europe would be able to adjust to the new reality, but the process would be long and hard.

The year now ending has shown us that Europe is making progress. It is doing things now that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. But the problem is that the world is moving at a faster pace. It seems to be hurtling headlong towards the cliff edge, though I try to banish the image from my mind.

The war in Ukraine grinds on without any prospect of peace in sight. And as European unity becomes ever more fragile, it is becoming increasingly hard to show solidarity with Ukraine in the provision of armaments and financial aid, as well as refugee reception and sanctions against Russia. The green light given so recently to Ukraine's accession to the EU though important offers a long-term prospect.

And now we have another war in Europe's backyard, this time between Israel and the Palestinians (or Israel and Hamas, if you prefer). Divided and unable to influence developments in any meaningful way, Europe can only watch on from the sidelines and fret about additional refugee flows from the levelled Gaza Strip and the resurgence of terrorism in European countries. More and more Europeans are also realizing that their stance towards this new war is costing Europe—and, still more so, the United States—their credibility in the Global South and the Muslim world in particular.

The further enlargement of the EU, with the prospect of the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova joining the bloc, is presented now as an immediate priority. But everyone knows, or should know, that the EU is not ready to welcome new members and that the candidate countries are not expected to meet the basic conditions for membership for the foreseeable future at least. What's more, the need for a workable Union of 35 or more members has put the issue of EU reform on the table. But is the will there? For many, probably not. I hope 2024 will bring with it a clearer picture of where we are heading and how we are going to get there. It is not to be excluded that the Union will continue to play the delay game, as it has been doing with the countries of the Western Balkans for years.

Europeans have begun to openly discuss the possibility of Trump's re-election to the White House, which could mean the end of the Atlantic Alliance and, indeed, of American democracy. They talk in low voices behind closed doors so as not to be overheard, clearly ill at ease and most likely unable to draw up a common strategy. If the worst comes to the worst, European countries will probably each follow their own separate path: some will flatter the leader of the superpower and others will avoid taking sides, but only a few will struggle to build alliances of the capable and the courageous to confront a very difficult situation.

We also have our own European elections coming up in June 2024. So far, the polls have indicated a decline in the strength of the parties that make up the large pro-European majority in the European Parliament—the Christian Democratic centre-right, the Socialists

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and centre-left, the Liberals and the Greens—and a corresponding rise in support for nationalist and far-right parties. Campaigning under the banner of the refugee issue, those on the far right of the political spectrum are also exploiting the accumulated discontent of social strata who feel left behind by the rapid changes and no longer enjoy the social provisions they once did. If the Eurosceptic Right becomes too strong, the EU will become even less governable. After the elections, the new leadership of the European institutions will be chosen for the next five years. Let us hope that short-sighted cynicism will not prevail, as it often has in the past.

The new European Pact on Immigration and Asylum is finally scheduled for ratification in 2024. But the implementation of the agreed measures will present a new set of issues and the political problem arising from the ongoing refugee/immigrant flows towards Europe will remain largely unresolved, however much we may wish the opposite was true. Political tensions within and between member states will consequently remain, while Schengen will also be sacrificed on the altar of national control ... to prevent more refugees/immigrants from entering (whichever) country.

We are facing a crisis of democracy with many extremely weak governments in Europe. Meanwhile, Franco-German cooperation, which has often been the driving force behind European integration in the past, is currently underperforming.

The state has made a powerful come-back to protect borders, economy, society and environment. For the EU, the big questions boil down to whether European defence cooperation will proceed in any meaningful way; whether industrial policy will be mainly national or European, with all this will imply for the internal market and the positioning of the European economy in the international division of labour; whether Europe's institutions will contribute to social cohesion in any meaningful way; and how fast the green transition can proceed now that the changes required are set to cost everyone more. And we still don't know the answers.

We are facing a crisis of democracy with many extremely weak governments in Europe. Meanwhile, Franco-German cooperation, which has often been the driving force behind European integration in the past, is currently underperforming. Macron does not come forward as often as he once did, because there aren't many now who can follow his lead and because his position in France itself is considerably weaker than it was. As for Scholz, struggling as he is to keep the government of a rather ill-matched coalition together in Germany, his focus is very much on the home front. No, Europe has surely seen better days. But hope dies last.

European elections 2024: Waiting for the "Barbarians"

Spyros Blavoukos

Every living organism mobilizes its immune system in response to external invasions and threats. Failure to do so indicates a system that is in decline and nearing the end of its life cycle. A reaction, even if it fails to cure the system, indicates that the system is functional and alert. In political terms, the rise of populist political forces in Europe which espouse an anti-systemic and anti-EU rhetoric is an undeniable reality. Of course, during 2023, the election result in Poland, with the victory of the coalition led by former European Council President Donald Tusk raised hopes that the country's democratic backtracking could be brought to a halt. However, political developments at the national level in Hungary, Slovakia and the Netherlands, as well as the regional level in Germany, show that the problem is widespread and that the electoral contests upcoming in 2024—and, above all, the election for the new members of the European Parliament in early June—will once again see 'barbarians' of one sort or another elected to office.

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Predicting a result six months before an election is a risky undertaking, and even more so when basic information—including who the candidates will be for the post of Commission President—remains unknown, to the limited extent that these factors influence the result. After all, political time is notoriously hard to estimate, given that a torrent of developments can literally turn everything upside down in a very short space of time. In the Netherlands, there were no indications that Geert Wilders would win such a resounding victory in November, not even in the final polls before election day. In Greece, too, the polls have repeatedly failed to capture groundswells of this sort in voter preferences. Voters who opt for anti-systemic candidates tend to refrain both from participating in polls and openly declaring their political beliefs, so any forecast of how these forces will perform in the upcoming EU elections could end up being very wrong indeed. However, there is no denying the anti-systemic trend, and one would expect our democratic and liberal political forces to react to it. Indeed, the intensity of that reaction is the best indicator of the current health of the European project.

In the previous European elections, in 2019, similar concerns and fears mobilized voters en masse, resulting in the highest turnout since 1994 (at just over 50%). A mass mobilization of this sort will also be crucial this coming June. This is because, as experienced by the majority of the European electorate in their daily lives, the benefits of European integration are too broadly distributed to mobilize the demos, which tends to take them for granted or know little about them. In contrast, the costs of unification, whether in the form of a loss of sovereignty, an ongoing social transformation or a purely economic burden, create protest groups characterized by greater militancy and solidarity. Some of these groups articulate a—typically far-right—discourse of political radicalization, while others resort to simplistic populist approaches. In any case, their audience is largely both pre-defined and "captive". Without ignoring these disaffected groups, the mobilization of the "great silent majority" of European citizens is the primary challenge, since it will determine the electoral outcome.

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A mobilization campaign should focus on highlighting the key challenges and high stakes of the five-year political cycle that will begin in 2024. Rapid regional destabilization with evolving and new security threats, the prospect of further EU enlargement, institutional reform—possibly through the introduction of differentiated levels of integration, climate change and the additional migration flows this leads to, and the digital transformation of the economy and society are just some of the rapidly-evolving challenges we will have to

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face as the European Union over the next five years. These challenges relate to challenges that are better and more effectively addressed at the European, rather than the national or regional, level. Still, care must be taken as to how these issues are framed and presented. It will not be enough to simply present and cite the EU's achievements, however important they may be and how insightfully and incisively they are communicated. It will be essential both to link them to people's daily lives and to tailor them to specific categories of citizen. Whether the mass mobilization we need this summer occurs will depend on how successfully the campaign makes it clear that the EU project is the best possible option for tackling this long list of critical challenges in the long term. In other words, how Europe votes will hinge on whether we can create a long-term vision for Europe's future.

However, no matter how effectively the silent majority is mobilized and how Europe votes in the elections, the next political cycle will provide the main political families in the European Parliament with the opportunity to prove their political maturity. Especially if anti-European forces are sufficiently well represented to potentially oppose and obstruct initiatives aimed at deepening EU integration, it is crucial for the stability of the system that those parties that support the European project join forces and cooperate effectively, despite any ideological differences they may have. There are institutional counterweights in place. The question is whether we will be able to employ them if the worst comes to the worst and we need to. But that is another conversation, one for the day after the European elections.

2024: a challenging year for asylum, but with opportunities for legal migration

Angeliki Dimitriadi

2023 was an important year for migration and asylum in the European Union (EU), but also worldwide.

The European Union Agency for Asylum estimates that by the end of 2023, at least one million asylum applications will have been lodged with the EU in a year of increased flows compared with 2022. Of the member states on the bloc's external borders, Italy came under the most pressure numerically in 2023 with 152,731 arrivals by sea: three countries of origin—Syria, Tunisia and Egypt—account for the bulk of these arrivals. Greece and Spain also recorded an increase compared to 2022, though the numbers were far smaller, with 43,370 and 51,342 arrivals respectively up to the start of December 2023 based on data available from UNHCR. Although the EU has dealt quite successfully with the influx of Ukrainian refugees, with four million or so now under the EU Temporary Protection Directive, for arrivals from outside Europe, policy proposals have focused on "closing" the borders. The dominant rhetoric has painted the EU as an attractive destination for asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East.

However, the evidence indicates a different reality. Globally, according to UNHCR, the number of refugees was poised to reach 36.4 million in 2023, with the vast majority receiving protection outside the European Union. For example, the majority of Syrian refugees, some 3.4 million people, continue to reside in Turkey, while around five million Afghans are currently living in Iran and Pakistan.

Although Europe is not at the epicentre of the population movement, it is and will continue to be a recipient of irregular migratory flows and asylum seekers in the year ahead. Managing those flows while respecting human rights will remain a challenge.

Following the political agreement reached between the European Council and Parliament on 20 December 2023, the New Pact on Immigration and Asylum will likely be voted into law by mid-2024. The legislative proposals have come under widespread criticism, mainly on their impact on human rights, yet the practical aspects of implementation will also be especially challenging. That the Regulations will be correctly applied is also far from certain, especially if the pressure increases on a country's borders.

The prioritization of deterrence over protection policies will continue in 2024. The dissatisfaction felt by European citizens is reflected in their preference for radical policies which far-right parties incorporate in their political platforms (see the Netherlands). Far-right parties are expected to gain ground in both the upcoming European elections and some national elections held in 2024 (see Austria and Portugal); this will serve to reinforce the doctrine of deterrence at a time when the emphasis should be on the integration of migrants and the provision of legal routes to protection.

Instead, 2024 will see efforts aimed at reaching further agreements with third countries on returns and prevention of arrivals. The EU will continue to assign an unequal share of the bloc's "burdens" and responsibilities to its peripheries, while also shifting a disproportionate degree of responsibility onto third countries, which will be unable to keep their end of the bargain in the long run. At the same time, it is likely that the

...the lack of effective sharing and solidarity between Member States (a problem which is not adequately addressed by the New Pact on Immigration and Asylum), combined with the rise of the Far Right, will gradually lead several Member States to explore ways of offshore asylum processing.

externalization of asylum processing, which was judged impracticable in the past as well as—and above all—contrary to the principles and values of the EU, will lose its taboo status. It is no coincidence that the issue was raised recently in Germany, a country that was formerly opposed to such measures, but which has been the main recipient of refugee and migration flows into the EU since 2015. The political situation in the Member States increases support for extreme proposals, which also stem from the EU's inability to form a single asylum space. In other words, the lack of effective sharing and solidarity between Member States (a problem which is not adequately addressed by the New Pact on Immigration and Asylum), combined with the rise of the Far Right, will gradually lead several Member States to explore ways of offshore asylum processing.

...2024 is set to be a critical year for the preservation and protection of asylum, but it will also be an opportunity to invest in legal migration.

On the other hand, the EU needs labour migration. Rather than high-skilled migration, the primary need is for low-skilled workers, the majority of whom will be sought in the same countries that are now being called upon to function as guardians of the EU's borders, from Tunisia and Morocco to Turkey and Pakistan. The need to attract migrants will inevitably lead in 2024 to the development of legal migration routes into Europe, even in countries like Greece which were reluctant to introduce such measures until now. Member States will have to make themselves appealing if they are to attract—and retain—migrants. They will be called upon to furnish the incomers with rights and meaningful benefits in addition to their wages, which will be done through beneficial and sustainable cooperation agreements with their countries of origin. In conclusion, 2024 is set to be a critical year for the preservation and protection of asylum, but it will also be an opportunity to invest in legal migration.

Southeast Europe

Ioannis Armakolas

The year now ending saw the continuation of older trends and some more recent ones associated with the ongoing war in Ukraine. Socio-economic problems in the region have persisted. American efforts to reduce the region's dependency on Russian energy, as well as to raise the stakes for a Chinese economic presence, continue unabated. Pressure on countries not fully aligned with the West's policy on Russia continued. Security volatility raised concerns, primarily in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Problems with democracy and the rule of law remain salient in all non-EU countries in the region. Montenegro, formally the frontrunner for EU accession, found itself in political limbo and made only meagre progress vis-à-vis reforms. Bosnia-Herzegovina's political crisis continued, fed primarily but not exclusively by the undermining of the common state by Bosnian Serb leader Dodik, the main pro-Russian politician in the region and a close ally of Hungary's Orbán.

...in 2024, the Western Balkans will have to navigate domestic political volatility, security problems and an uncertain 'restart' in enlargement policy.

EU enlargement policy, traditionally the main driver of positive change in the region, has failed to elicit policy reform or enthusiasm among political elites or publics. That is because, despite the rhetoric about a new momentum and a geopolitical imperative for enlargement, the Balkans have seen little to convince them the EU is ready to change its ways, make good on its promises and provide the region with crucial help in its reform efforts. Instead, for yet another year, the 'new momentum' was essentially limited to Ukraine and Moldova, which were given the green light to start accession negotiations. Bosnia-Herzegovina may join them in March 2024, if it manages to complete the requested reforms.

Incidentally, the acrimony over Ukraine's accession and the resistance put up by a single country, Hungary, will likely amplify those voices that would like to see the consensus requirement scrapped altogether in the intermediate steps of accession policy; this could be achieved as part of the institutional overhaul that will probably be required before further accessions. This will not be good news for countries which traditionally use and misuse their veto in the context of the the enlargement policy.

Thus, in 2024, the Western Balkans will have to navigate domestic political volatility, security problems and an uncertain 'restart' in enlargement policy. Kosovo and its relations with Serbia will revolve around the politico-diplomatic and security consequences of the violent Banjska monastery incident, where clashes between Serbian paramilitaries and Kosovo police left four people dead. The incident provided the Kosovar government a way out of a difficult diplomatic position and put the international spotlight back on Belgrade and the clandestine activity of Serbian security and intelligence institutions in Serb-inhabited North Kosovo. There are clear signs that Kosovar PM Kurti's strategy of gradually extending his government's de facto control to North Kosovo is bearing fruit, aided by a series of unnecessary, badly planned and dangerous escalatory moves by the political leadership of the Kosovo Serbs and by Belgrade. In the coming months, Kurti is likely to maintain the same strategy, while continuing to duck the issue of the formation of an Association of Serb Municipalities, which is seen as a hot potato that cannot be resolved without serious concessions by Belgrade towards its de facto recognition of Kosovo.

President Vucic, diplomatically weakened after the Banjska incident, will be pressured by Americans and Europeans to start delivering on the Ohrid Agreement, which was verbally

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accepted by the two sides in February 2023 and contains elements of de facto recognition. Vucic will likely aim to concede on the less painful elements of the agreement, while trying to regain the diplomatic upper hand. His diplomatic manoeuvres may be eased by his party's comfortable victory in the recent Serbian elections, or by the question of sanctions against Russia no longer being in the limelight.

North Macedonia is bracing for a twin election year that is very likely to return to power the right-wing VMRO-DPMNE, a party which fiercely opposes the Prespa Agreement and the compromise deal with Bulgaria. A victim of its daring foreign policy compromises, but still more so of its failure to boldly pursue the transformation of the country, centre-left SDSM risks entering a deep crisis should it fall from power after a massive defeat. In contrast, ethnic Albanian DUI, an almost permanent partner in government, will attempt to collect enough MPs to maintain the upper hand in the negotiations for forming a government. The VMRO-DPMNE will do what it can to avoid such a development. The party will find itself in a tight spot if it does not find a way to grudgingly accept the constitutional amendments that are a precondition for opening the first negotiation cluster for EU accession. Further delays in this process will strike a death blow to the country's reform efforts and will likely also jeopardise the hard-won inter-ethnic harmony. Diplomatic tensions with Greece are also likely.

For Albania, a successful year will leave a bitter aftertaste, after Greece effectively put a break on its EU accession process due to the crisis over Himara mayor-elect Beleris. Albania performed well in the UN Security Council presidency, successfully completed the screening process in view of opening its first negotiating chapters, successfully hosted the first-ever Berlin Process Summit in a Western Balkan country, and continued its relentless pursuit of judicial and rule of law reform. However, the mismanagement of the Beleris case by the Albanian authorities, coupled with Greece's insistence that this was reason enough to disregard Albania's otherwise stellar rule of law performance, denied Tirana the chance to open negotiating chapters. Greece has elevated the Beleris case to a new de facto conditionality for Albania. It remains to be seen how the Albanian authorities will handle the issue in the coming months, and whether Greece will persist with an approach reminiscent of its veto policy against North Macedonia prior to the settlement of the name dispute.

The economy in Greece, Europe and the world in 2024

Manos Matsaganis

Predictions are always risky, but they're even trickier than usual right now that the prospects for the European (and Greek) economy in 2024 depend on the outcome of events that are either ongoing or will not be happening until the middle or end of the year.

Next year's most crucial contest for the future of Europe will be the US presidential elections (5 November 2024).

There are multiple sources of uncertainty. First and foremost, the war in Gaza, which does not look like it will be ending any time soon. The military response to the brutal Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 was arguably inevitable, but the levelling of the Gaza Strip will neither restore stability to the region nor ensure Israel's security. Deeply divided internally, Europe has proven incapable of taking positive action, and has resigned herself to watching on from the sidelines.

As long as the strategic autonomy of the EU remains a distant aspiration, democracy in Europe will be at risk.

The war in Ukraine is another source of uncertainty. Its continuation not only endangers Europe's energy security; it is also a reminder of the constant threat Russian aggression poses to peace and democracy everywhere. Hungary vetoed military aid to Ukraine at the recent EU summit (14–15 December 2023), while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Washington (12 December 2023) failed to convince the Republican majority in the House of Representatives to release funds for continued US support to his country's war effort. However, the unanimous decision taken by the leaders of 26 Member States (made possible by Hungarian President Viktor Orbán abstaining) to open accession negotiations with Ukraine was a strategic defeat for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Furthermore, it brings closer a future agreement for a just end to the war, which might involve Ukraine agreeing to painful territorial losses in exchange for security guarantees against Russia. EU membership is one of these guarantees.

Next year's most crucial contest for the future of Europe will be the US presidential elections (5 November 2024). Until now, the security and prosperity of Europe has relied on the NATO umbrella and US defence spending. The prospect of a possible victory for Donald Trump next November shows that US support cannot be taken for granted. In the near future, ensuring the inviolability of European borders will depend on the sacrifices (only financial, one hopes) of Europe's citizens themselves. As long as the strategic autonomy of the EU remains a distant aspiration, democracy in Europe will be at risk.

Of course, European citizens have no say in the US presidential election, but their vote in the upcoming European elections (6–9 June 2024) will determine the make-up of the European Parliament. The current majority (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals, and Greens) often disappoints, and is frequently criticized from all directions. Still, the alternatives seem worse. The victory of the democratic coalition led by Donald Tusk in the recent Polish elections (15 October 2023) shows that the attempt of far-right populists, enemies of Europe and friends of Russia (and China), to change the balance of power in Europe is not a foregone conclusion.

If geopolitics (and simple politics) affects the European economy indirectly, EU economic policy has a direct impact on it. The revision of the Stability Pact will define the framework within which Member States conduct their fiscal policy. To date, the indications are far from encouraging: the return of rigid rules (with exceptions) does not provide a real incentive for national governments to combine fiscal stability with sustainable growth through productive investment. On the other hand, for the time being, the ECB's monetary policy seems to be oriented towards maintaining the current interest rate in the Eurozone

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(4.5%). The European Commission's latest forecasts (15 November 2023) foresee inflation in the EU falling to 3.5% in 2024 (from 6.5% in 2023). The cost of relatively high interest rates is the weak growth of the European economy (1.3% in 2024, up from 0.6% this year).

The outlook for the Greek economy in 2024 is positive: GDP growth will be higher (2.3%) and inflation lower (2.8%) than the EU average. On the other hand, despite a slight fall in both, unemployment (10.7%) and debt (151.9% of GDP) will remain high.

The same applies to the external deficit, which though lower than last year remains the highest in the EU (-6.6% of GDP in 2023). Notably, both Spain and Portugal—which, like Greece, reported huge external deficits prior to the crisis of the 2010s—are now running sizeable surpluses (+2.5% and +1.6% of GDP respectively).

The persistence of the external deficit highlights the difficulties the Greek economy faces as it strives to pull free of the trap of cheap growth, and its specialization in low-productivity activities paying low wages and producing goods that are barely competitive in international markets. The much-anticipated upgrade of the country's productive model remains beyond the country's reach.

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Greek-German relations in 2024: Heading for even better days?

Ronald Meinardus

The bad days have been consigned to the past. We have entered a new and positive phase in Greek-German relations. 2023 was a good year for relations between the two countries. And 2024 is expected to be even better. At least that is the declared aim of the governments in Athens and Berlin.

There are several indicators that can be used to measure the quality of bilateral relations. One key indicator is the statements made by political leaders. Since both countries are members of NATO and the EU, their leaders meet regularly. Over time, personal relationships develop and their growing familiarity manifests itself in leaders addressing each other by their first names and in the familiar form.

In January 2023, Greek-German relations hit a new high with the official visit of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou, to Berlin. The media spoke of an "extremely cordial atmosphere". Greece and Germany share "a common vision and common values", President Sakellariopoulou declared.

A second highlight were the talks between Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin mid-November. Due to the timing of the meeting, the media focused on Berlin and Athens' positions on the war in Gaza and on Turkey, since the Turkish president was expected in the German capital shortly afterwards. Scholz and Mitsotakis agreed on both points. Unlike similar meetings in recent years, the talks could be described as an exercise in harmony at the highest level, without a single point of disagreement. An enthused Chancellor spoke of a "new era" in relations between the two countries, with the Greek Prime Minister responding thus: "A friend in need is a friend indeed, and we will be seeking closer cooperation with Germany".

Indeed, current conditions are more conducive to improvements in bilateral relations than they have been in years. This is mainly because certain "structural" factors that overshadowed the relationships until recently have become less central of late. According to a poll conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the negative perceptions of Germany in Greece can be ascribed to three main factors: Berlin's behaviour during the economic crisis, the crimes of the Wehrmacht during World War II coupled with Germany's handling of Greece's reparations claim, and finally Berlin's stance on Greek-Turkish issues.

The economic recovery in Greece and substantial improvement in Greek-Turkish relations mean that neither issue is currently a sticking point. The days when German politicians exerted influence on Greek domestic politics are a thing of the past. In fact, the German media are full of praise for Greece's economic reforms, with the German finance minister saying Germany could learn from the Greeks. Accusations of Berlin siding with Ankara in Greece's dispute with Turkey have become less grave in the light of the de-escalation in the Aegean. Finally, the current Greek administration does not seem to intend to raise the issue of German crimes in World War II, and above all of reparations, which could jeopardize future improvements in bilateral relations.

During Mitsotakis' visit to Berlin, Olaf Scholz clearly expressed Germany's expectations of bilateral relations in the years ahead: "We want to cooperate more closely in the economy,

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in energy and in climate protection. The list of our bilateral projects is long and I am pleased that we are continuing to promote them jointly."

...there remains a huge discrepancy between the quality of official relations in all areas (politics, economy, culture) and public perceptions of Germany. Germany's popularity ratings in Greece remain at rock bottom.

There will be many more opportunities to do so in 2024. Germany is still Greece's most important trading partner and German companies among its most important investors. There are signs that German investment will grow further in the new year. The Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF) will be a highlight in bilateral economic relations, since Germany will be the honoured country this year. Mr Mitsotakis has already invited Olaf Scholz to Greece for the event. Playing an important coordinating role in all this is the Hellenic-German Chamber of Commerce, which will be celebrating its centenary in 2024. At the same time, the German Archaeological Institute, another pillar of bilateral relations, will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of its foundation. Both dates are a reminder of the long tradition of close ties between the two countries.

Nevertheless, there remains a huge discrepancy between the quality of official relations in all areas (politics, economy, culture) and public perceptions of Germany. Germany's popularity ratings in Greece remain at rock bottom. "We have a 14% popularity rating", German Ambassador Andreas Kindl noted with regret at the recent Athens Security Forum. "Our goal is to increase this to 17%", the diplomat added.

This is a modest target, considering that Germany enjoyed an approval rating of almost 80% prior to the financial crisis, when it was the Greeks' most popular country.

US: A year of anticipation and jeopardy

Katerina Sokou

The well-known adage that it is difficult to make predictions, especially about the future, is even more true of 2024. If one had to make just one about what the New Year will bring the United States, it is who will be on the ballot in the presidential elections: As the incumbent president, Joe Biden is unlikely to lose the Democratic nomination, while former president Donald Trump is almost fifty(!) percentage points ahead in the battle for the Republican nomination. The contest between them, however, is expected to be close, and will probably be decided by just a few thousand votes, as was the case in the last two presidential contests.

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That said, the possibility of an unforeseen event overturning the facts as we know them, perhaps even who ultimately competes for the White House, is bigger than usual. Such a "black swan" could come in the form of a health issue which forces President Biden to withdraw from the contest, or Donald Trump being convicted by the courts. In fact, former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, himself a contender for the nomination until recently, hazarded a prediction of his own: that the former president may not be able to vote in the election, as he will be in jail. Still, even in such a case, the US Constitution would not prohibit him from being a candidate!

The prognosis for the progress of the legal cases against the former president is also uncertain. Although he faces no fewer than 91 charges, the US Supreme Court will judge on whether he can be tried on the most serious of them all: incitement to rebellion. Nonetheless, his judicial tribulations may have political consequences, as 31% of Republicans and 59% of all Americans irrespective of political affiliation say they would not vote for Trump if he were convicted. Still, given the delaying tactics his legal team is employing, it is likely no court will have passed judgement before the November 5 elections. As for the various state challenges to his nomination, these are more likely than not to be overturned by the Supreme Court.

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The campaign is sure to focus on the weaknesses of both contenders, and less so on the actual policy issues. That said, the prevalent sense of insecurity helps the opposition, while the Republicans' targeting of abortion favours the Biden administration.

As for the economy, if the Fed manages to prevent a recession, as now seems likely, the positive economic climate will favour Biden's candidacy. On the other hand, the ongoing migrant crisis on the country's southern borders is undermining the Democrats, and there are growing political arguments for the president to seek a compromise on immigration control with the Republicans in Congress, which would also free up the aid he has requested for Ukraine.

Despite its centrality for global security, US foreign policy plays only a minor role in US elections. However, the continuation of the war in Ukraine may provide Trump with arguments against more aid to that country. And as long as Israel's war in Gaza continues, President Biden's support for Israel will alienate a portion of the Democratic Party base. The chances of either war ending in 2024 are low. This is because, even if it does not materialize, the possibility of Donald Trump returning to the presidency will impact developments in 2024 far beyond the borders of the US. In particular, Russian President Vladimir Putin believes that Western support for Ukraine is already on the wane, and the

fact that Trump has said he will stop military aid to Ukraine if elected gives him an incentive to draw the war out until November.

Turning to the European Union, it would be wise for the bloc to prepare for Trump's possible re-election and assume a larger share of the responsibility for its own security, for the provision of military aid to Ukraine, and for dealing with instability in the Middle East.

Similarly, the possibility of a second Trump presidency gives Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu an incentive to push back against pressure from the Biden administration to scale down the war in Gaza, end the policy of violent settlement in the West Bank, and accept the prospect of a Palestinian state. This is because President Trump was one of the strongest supporters of Netanyahu's policy during his term in office, while the Republican Party does not widely share the Biden administration's concerns about the impacts of the war in Gaza. As for the Turkish President, knowing how important Sweden's NATO membership is for the White House, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will continue to procrastinate until the elections, or until President Biden offers him a good deal.

As far as Sino-American relations are concerned, 2024 is expected to be relatively calm, as the Biden administration seeks to de-escalate tensions, having already agreed to resume military communications to avoid accidents. As long as China's economy remains weak, the Chinese leadership will not want to rock the boat, even as the elections in Taiwan give it an opportunity to do just that.

Turning to the European Union, it would be wise for the bloc to prepare for Trump's possible re-election and assume a larger share of the responsibility for its own security, for the provision of military aid to Ukraine, and for dealing with instability in the Middle East. Moreover, like every international actor operating under the auspices of international law, the Union should actively support the institutions and policies promoting global security in 2024, while there is still a US president who believes in it in the White House.

China in 2024

George Tzogopoulos

Instability has emerged as a new norm in the international system in recent years. The ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East confirm this. In this context, any development that can help bring about relative calm at the global level is welcome. 2023 ended relatively well for Sino-American relations, which are the driving force of international relations. Although the year started badly with the bizarre balloon incident, the remainder played out in a logical fashion. Senior members of the Biden administration including Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen visited Beijing, paving the way for the meeting of Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping in San Francisco in November.

2023 was also the year in which China returned to normality after the COVID-19 pandemic. After three years of strict restrictions, life became easier for Chinese citizens, but also for visitors to the country. Without mandatory quarantine, travel could resume. This allowed foreign observers to resume their study of China in greater numbers, since conducting research in the country had become extremely complicated in 2020–2022, due to the impossibility of face-to-face contact.

The performance of the Chinese economy is linked to the new conditions that have emerged since the pandemic. Existing problems such as the management of the real estate market, plus efforts by the US and EU to decouple themselves from China both technologically and in terms of investment, have had an impact. Nonetheless, the Chinese economy has now stabilized. The World Bank has forecast 5.2% growth for China in 2023 and 4.5% for 2024. The initial estimate was slightly lower, but was later revised when the Chinese economy performed better than expected. This could well happen again in the months ahead. The Chinese government is implementing a mix of fiscal and monetary policies to ensure economic growth. The investment agency Moody's doubts that it will succeed, however. It recently downgraded China's credit rating due to high local debt, prompting an angry reaction from the Communist Party, which pointed out that Chinese central government debt is actually far lower than that of other countries when measured as a percentage of GDP.

China's foreign policy in 2024 is expected to be characterized by continuity. The outcome of the Joe Biden-Xi Jinping meeting in San Francisco was positive, and it is in Beijing's interest to maintain the relatively good climate. The major sources of friction between China and the US will remain in place, but how they are managed will be critical. 2024 is, of course, an election year in the US, and as we know China is an issue on which the Democrats and Republicans agree. Although it is in the interest of the Biden administration to avoid a crisis with China in the run-up to the US presidential elections, the tone of the domestic debate on the future of Sino-American relations could well become increasingly aggressive.

China will also work towards improving its relations with Europe in 2024. The Sino-European summit of December 2023 has already shown that there is potential for further cooperation, despite their differences. To facilitate cooperation in tourism, the Chinese government will be implementing a pilot programme in 2024 allowing French, German, Italian, German and Spanish citizens to visit China for two weeks without a visa. Of course, 2024 is an election year in Europe as well as the US, and it is possible that there will be a

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change in European leadership. However, the outcome of the US presidential election will have an even greater impact on how the EU perceives China.

Greece will continue to monitor developments and strive to keep its harmonious cooperation with China ongoing as far as possible. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visited China last November hoping to boost Greek exports and attract more Chinese tourists, among other things. Since Air China now flies direct from Athens to Beijing three times a week, it would certainly be helpful for Greeks wishing to travel to China in 2024 if Greece were added to the countries in the aforementioned pilot visa programme. The Greek side should certainly look into this in the months ahead.

Generally speaking, the conditions are in place for 2024 to be a year free of surprises in China's relations with the West. Competition and tensions are expected to continue, but should not lead to a clash. At least, this is the situation 2024 inherits from 2023; however, as pointed out at the start, instability is now the new norm in the international system.

Greece-India Relations: The Outlook For 2024

Yannis-Alexis Zepos

History makes it clear that India was far less *terra incognita* for Greece than other Asian countries. Thus, quite apart from Alexander the Great's campaign in the subcontinent in antiquity, Greeks from the Ottoman empire had begun to move there, and in particular to the Bengal region, in the 18th century and would continue to do so in greater numbers during the period of British colonial rule. In India, they would develop noteworthy professional, economic and business activity over time, which included Ralli Brothers, a commercial firm that enjoyed its heyday in the 19th and 20th centuries and still exists today in nationalized form.

Following Indian Independence in 1947, ties of cooperation and trust began slowly but surely to develop between Athens and New Delhi at the state and political leadership level. These ties were based primarily on the involvement and support of the Non-Aligned Movement, to which India belonged, in the Cyprus Issue at the UN, but also on the personal relationship that developed between Prime Minister Nehru and Archbishop Makarios.

Of course, their relationship did not necessarily extend to promoting relations between Greece and India in the field of economic cooperation, which developed at a slower pace and continue to evolve today.

We should note and recall that, in all South Asia, it is primarily India that has enjoyed democratic governance since independence in an achievement rendered more striking still by the vastness of the country and its population.

In this context, viewing and evaluating India in the light of its post-1947 performance, it becomes clear that, despite what can look from a Western perspective like occasional peculiarities in its political, economic and social conditions, the country is clearly hurtling full speed ahead towards an important future.

Revisiting its history, India has for some time now been waging a campaign to enlarge the UN Security Council, insisting that the conditions at the time the Organization was set up have changed radically and that it is no longer possible for countries as important, large and populous as India and others around the world (including Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Nigeria and Japan) to be omitted from the Security Council.

Greece has accepted the Indian position in principle, although the question of Security Council enlargement is still under negotiation, and is expected to remain so for some time and for various reasons.

India is, of course, one of the BRICS (along with Brazil, India, China and South Africa), a bloc which added several new members at its recent Annual Meeting and is now seeking to strengthen its role internationally and increase its political and economic clout.

This is a difficult era we are living through, one in which the world we knew since the end of World War II has ceased to exist in the form we had grown used to and counted upon.

The project certainly provides a new and extremely promising area in which bilateral relations between the two countries can flourish, while also providing momentum in the sphere of economic opportunities, prospects and investments that can be developed bilaterally with India.

Even the safety net provided by the UN can no longer be taken for granted, and it is crucial that the World Order be restored, so there are once again clear rules and limits ring-fencing what states and societies can do.

India today it is an important, emerging country in Asia, with growth rates that are expected to have made it the world's third largest economy by 2030. A remarkable percentage of its 1.4 billion citizens are extremely affluent and familiar with Greece and its history thanks to their excellent education. It is noteworthy that Indian textbooks do not present Alexander the Great as a conqueror, but as an admirer of Indian culture and philosophy.

They are an audience we should target in the economic and tourism policies we draw up for India—policies which unfortunately remain undeveloped due to our lack of imagination and knowledge of the modern Indian reality.

Having served as Greek Ambassador to India for just short of five years, I believe that Greece has nothing to lose and a great deal to gain from placing a far greater emphasis on developing its bilateral relations with India across the board. This could prove beneficial in many areas in the long and perhaps even medium term, while fostering conditions of understanding and cooperation in the international arena.

It is worth mentioning that an important Indian construction company—GMR, an airport specialist—has already undertaken the construction of the new airport in Kastelli, Crete, in collaboration with Terna, a Greek concern.

It is, of course, especially interesting that Greece-India relations have begun to acquire a new image. In 2023, the visit of India's Prime Minister to Athens kick-started Indo-Hellenic relations in many areas including strategic cooperation, which has had the potential to drive positive developments for years and could usher bilateral relations into an entirely new era.

The recent talks in Athens between the two Prime Ministers, Messrs Mitsotakis and Modi, and their mutual commitment to ensuring that this first crucial contact is built upon in a meaningful way, allows us to look at the future of Greek-Indian relations overall in a new light.

In this context, we should pay especial note to the agreement reached this year in New Delhi, in the context of the G20 meeting, to create an economic corridor from the Indian Ocean through the Middle East to the Mediterranean, and specifically from India to the Mediterranean and Greece through the Suez Canal. This opens up serious prospects for cooperation between Greece and India, but also with other intermediate countries along the route, which would be of interest in terms of Greece's relations with the Global South.

The decision to create this corridor has already been endorsed by major international actors including the United States and the European Union.

The process of implementing this corridor will be neither easy nor quick, however. Serious decisions and choices will be required to create a climate in which the project can be brought to fruition; this will certainly involve other countries with an interest in becoming part of this ambitious project.

However, both Athens and New Delhi have engaged with these issues in the meantime. The project certainly provides a new and extremely promising area in which bilateral

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relations between the two countries can flourish, while also providing momentum in the sphere of economic opportunities, prospects and investments that can be developed bilaterally with India. In this field, subject to our developing the appropriate infrastructure, Greek ports could also be included as transit points for Indian goods destined for Eastern and Western Europe.

Climate diplomacy: from negotiation to implementation

Emmanuella Doussis

2023 was the warmest year on record. Levels of global heating we expected in 2040 have arrived much earlier. The prolonged heatwaves, devastating fires and biblical floods we experienced this summer are conclusive proof that human development has now exceeded nature's limits. The climate crisis is now testing both the resilience of democracy and the cohesion of society through its impact on food security, migration, water scarcity, biodiversity, natural disasters and social inequalities.

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Three decades on from the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we know what is required to bring climate change back under control: cooperation and coordination, bold financial support--for the vulnerable, in particular--, and an immediate end to our fossil fuel addiction with a rapid shift to clean energy. We also need to be better prepared to adapt to the new conditions the destabilization has introduced, and to enhance the resilience of society, cities, infrastructure and the productive sectors of the economy to climate change.

The annual global climate conference (COP 28) which took place a few weeks ago in the United Arab Emirates, a predominantly oil-producing country, failed to include a robust commitment to the phasing out of fossil fuels in its final text. The text calls for "Transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050". Which is to say it reinforces the go-slow approach to fossil fuel decoupling, which has long been the default position of countries that continue to produce fossil fuels. The text makes particular reference to low-emission technologies and renewable energy sources, saying they should be generating three times the power they are now by 2030, but also to nuclear energy and low-carbon hydrogen as means for boosting efforts to replace the energy currently produced from fossil fuels.

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This weakened compromise confirms the pessimistic forecasts we made last year. Trust in multilateral diplomacy had already been shattered when political priorities changed after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and energy security and climate change mitigation became conflicting goals. Now the new war in Gaza has come along to disturb our already fragile global diplomacy still further, with many countries rushing to secure their fossil fuel reserves rather than eliminating their dependence on them. But if we really do want to limit the rise in the Earth's average temperature to 1.5 degrees, which is the key goal of the Paris Agreement, we will have to admit to ourselves that there is no longer a place for new fossil fuel extraction.

Global climate cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations is important, but it is not a panacea. Nor does it provide comprehensive and holistic solutions to the climate crisis. Insisting on continuing to pursue a global agreement serves only to lower the bar to the level of the lowest common denominator.

Climate diplomacy could pay dividends if it were focused more on action and less on setting targets. If we explored ways in which we could implement concrete solutions for the future in practice. In each of the economy's polluting sectors, fossil fuels will have to be replaced by clean technologies and practices. It is a process of transition. New

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technologies have already been developed and markets, infrastructure, business models and jobs are remoulding themselves so they can adapt to them. Cooperation in specific areas, coupled with the provision of coordinated support for the right actions, could contribute to further progress. For example, if the use of renewable energy is to become more widespread, our electricity grids will have to be upgraded first. Coalitions of the willing can initiate change, and coalitions of influential actors can help them take off.

However, there can be no climate transition without an equally profound change in society. The implementation of certain policies exacerbates inequalities, as the economic burden is shifted onto the weakest. Solutions to the climate crisis should not be limited to technical issues, and need to have a social dimension. We need to look seriously at how we can protect the most vulnerable. We also need to enhance society's resilience, so it can deal with interconnected simultaneous crises in the years ahead. It is clear these changes cannot be achieved by the "invisible hand" of the market. We need a stronger state which is capable of fulfilling the state's role responsibly, serving the needs of the most vulnerable, providing the necessary safety nets, and cutting funding to activities which impede our well-being. If well-being is not shared, if it is not affordable and attainable for all, the ensuing large-scale social unrest could bode ill. Worse still, the disruption would come about through radicalization and a turn towards extremism. The rise of populism in Europe and elsewhere is extremely worrying, especially as the European elections draw near. Can the populists do what needs to be done? How can they deal with the climate crisis if they don't believe it is real?

Artificial intelligence: are the challenges of the new era already here?

Michalis Kritikos

The next-generation Generative AI tools will not only be more accessible still to the average user. They will also make it harder to distinguish between human- and computer-generated material, raising thorny legal issues in relation to intellectual property along with serious ethical dilemmas concerning human creativity and its coexistence alongside the more 'creative' aspects of artificial intelligence.

All manner of predictions, both utopian or dystopian, have been made about artificial intelligence, but the exponential nature of the technology means that none have hit the mark. The dynamic nature of technology and the ongoing spread of innovative ideas and applications make tech-related forecasts a very risky business. Of course, that does not mean we cannot make initial assessments and predict that certain dynamic trends will emerge.

In the year now ending, ChatGPT and other similar models have not only brought this technology closer to the man on the street, they have also made AI's iconoclastic challenges even more real and the need for control still more compelling. 2024 is expected to be marked by the commercial dominance of this type of AI, which brings benefits to the tech companies that supply the models and the infrastructure that 'trains' them, but also—crucially—to the non-tech companies that will adopt it to reduce production costs and boost productivity.

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One of the biggest challenges for the year ahead will thus be laying solid foundations for the responsible use and effective control of the most advanced version of this technology. In Europe, the foundations for such a framework were recently put in place, following a series of dramatic marathon meetings, with the adoption of the General Regulation on Artificial Intelligence. Which means the year ahead will be devoted to preparing state administrations and companies to comply with the new rules of the game, which seek to ensure transparency in the design and use of AI. At the same time, other international organizations including the Council of Europe and UNESCO are expected to adopt rules on AI use which focus on the need to protect human rights. Alongside the legislative attempts to chart and monitor this dynamic technology, 2024 is expected to witness increased reactions to and against the widespread use of ChatGPT-4 by multiple actors including universities, research centres, scientists, along with artists and men and women of letters, who we saw mobilize in 2023's major Hollywood screenwriters' strike.

Within this framework, we can expect to see two main trends emerging: First, both specialists in legal compliance vis-a-vis the implementation of specific high-risk applications and experts in text authentication (watermarking, data curation etc.) becoming increasingly in demand, given that ethical/regulatory standards will soon be essential in numerous areas, even at the international level. Second, a new market emerging focused exclusively on the creation of artificial intelligence products whose

comparative advantage will lie in their being designed to comply with specific legal or ethical rules.

Still more importantly, it remains to be seen whether the coming year, with the challenges it poses, will push the political system into providing support for those who are likely to become collateral damage of the ongoing technological revolution.

But 2024 will be crucial in terms of AI use for one more reason: it is the biggest election year in decades, with electoral contests upcoming in the US, the EU, India, Japan, Mexico and other populous countries. The fear is that the new AI systems will be used to manipulate public opinion and/or specific population groups—through microtargeting, big data analytics and deep fakes—and alter the election result in one way or another. At this point, it is worth noting that the European Digital Services Act, which is expected to put the fundamentals in place for the protection of (digital) citizens on 19 major tech platforms and beyond, will come into force in 2024.

In other words, the year to come may well prove decisive both in terms of whether the technological predictions of the dominance of Generative AI prove well-founded (a crucial element here will be whether vast pools of personal data will be available or not), and whether the voices calling for the temporary prohibition or strict regulation of certain creative applications will be heeded in the interim period between now and our amassing the experience and know-how required to control an evolving technological phenomenon.

Still more importantly, it remains to be seen whether the coming year, with the challenges it poses, will push the political system into providing support for those who are likely to become collateral damage of the ongoing technological revolution: the elderly, who are generally not equipped to enjoy any of its benefits; the children who will inevitably become still more addicted to a virtual reality whose allure will to grow in parallel with its degree of personalization; and those who will be rendered 'disposable' or even 'redundant' by the rapid automation of the creative tasks they currently perform.