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The Conflict Potential of International Politics: A Media Geographical Research of the European Mental Space

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Abstract. The article presents the results of a media geographic research of the European mental space. The theoretical and methodological tools of media geography as a new direction in humanitarian research are adapted by the author to study the mental landscapes of different countries that are transforming in the context of digital reality and the mediatization of all spheres of public life. This study focuses on analyzing Europeans' interests in the field of international relations. The empirical basis of the study is the statistics of Internet users' requests in European countries on topics substantively related to international politics. The research methodology involved implementing different methods (rank analysis, factor analysis, cluster analysis) in a space-time coordinate system. Rank analysis revealed which topics of international politics Europeans are most interested in, and how they feel about them. Based on the study results, several factors were identified that characterize the Internet users' behavior of different European countries in relation to events and processes in the international field. Cluster analysis illustrated the similarities and differences in Europeans' reactions to potential international conflicts. The study's findings enabled us to draw several conclusions that classify European countries according to their priorities when reacting to current international crises: the first group includes Sweden, France, Great Britain, Belgium and Spain, whose Internet audiences are focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; the second group consists of Serbia, Finland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, with a focus on political processes involving Russia. Interpretation of the obtained results makes it possible to form ideas about conflict zones in the European mental landscape in the context of international relations, which can become the basis for predicting the social behavior of the population of European countries and the nature of Europeans' response to international politics.

Key words: international relations, mental landscape, European countries, international conflicts, rank analysis, factor analysis, cluster analysis

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Конфликтогенный потенциал международной политики: медиагеографический анализ европейского ментального пространства

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Аннотация. Представлены результаты медиагеографического исследования европейского ментального пространства. Теоретико-методический инструментарий медиагеографии как нового направления в гуманитарных исследованиях адаптирован автором для изучения ментальных ландшафтов разных стран, трансформирующихся в условиях цифровой реальности и медиатизации всех сфер общественной жизни. В фокусе исследования — анализ интересов европейцев к области международных отношений. Эмпирическую базу исследования составила статистика запросов интернет-пользователей европейских стран по темам, существенно связанным с международной политикой. Методология исследования строилась на основе имплементации разных методов (рангового анализа, факторного анализа, кластерного анализа) в пространственно-временную систему координат. Ранговый анализ показал, какие темы международной политики и в какой тональности интересуют европейцев больше всего. Факторный анализ дал возможность составить представления об интернет-поведении резидентов европейских стран, определить несколько компонентов, характеризующих сходства и различия в реакциях интернет-пользователей, и выделить группы стран по сближающим или разъединяющим их характеристикам. По итогам анализа выявлены факторы, иллюстрирующие поведение интернет-пользователей разных европейских государств в отношении событий и процессов в международном поле. Кластерный анализ проиллюстрировал сходства и различия реакций европейцев на потенциальные международные конфликты. Результаты исследования позволили сформулировать несколько выводов, позволяющих классифицировать европейские страны по приоритетам реагирования на актуальные международные конфликты и кризисы: первая группа включает Швецию, Францию, Великобританию, Бельгию и Испанию, интересы интернет-аудиторий которых ориентированы на палестино-израильский конфликт; вторую группу составили Сербия, Финляндия, Чехия и Венгрия с фокусом на политические процессы с участием России. Интерпретация полученных результатов дает возможность сформировать представления о конфликтогенных зонах на европейском ментальном ландшафте и векторах его трансформации в контексте международных отношений, что может стать основой для прогнозирования социального поведения населения европейских стран и характера реагирования европейцев на международную политику.

Ключевые слова: международные отношения, ментальный ландшафт, европейские страны, международные конфликты, ранговый анализ, факторный анализ, кластерный анализ

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Introduction

The modern period of human history is characterized by greater turbulence in international relations. National leaders are increasingly voicing demands for the democratization of international life, the formation of a new world order, and the renewal

of international organizations. International conflicts and crises of recent years indicate an accelerating disintegration of a unified political, economic, and information space. In a 2023 report, analysts at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) noted that political leaders have once again returned to the misconceptions

of a century ago, when statesmen viewed armed conflict as “a useful policy tool.”¹ Russian experts also observe that armed conflict is once again becoming an acceptable tool for resolving international disputes, a method of “problem resolution previously resorted to primarily by individual Third World countries...” (Asmolov & Babaev, 2024, p. 165). In the academic discourse, proposals are being made to revise international agreements and discuss a world treaty based “on mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, a mutual commitment to non-aggression and non-interference in internal affairs, tolerance, equality, and mutually beneficial cooperation” (Freeman, 2024).

The global media disseminate information about the likelihood of global conflicts that threaten the very existence of humanity. Internet user queries indicate growing interest in topics such as “third world war,” “conflicts,” “disasters,” “crises,” and “nuclear apocalypse.” In this context, the task of studying the mental landscapes of countries around the world, shaping them in the context of digital reality, the transformation of international relations, and the mediatization of all spheres of public life, is becoming increasingly important.

The international policy of any country (especially European ones) represents, in a certain sense, a drift within the coordinates of a multidimensional space of political practice and time. Policy implementation and the determination of the trajectory of an international actor in the global political arena can be linked to the use of conflict-generating and conflict-sustaining potentials, as well as peacekeeping, diplomacy, and conflict prevention resources. The specifics of these goals are determined by the state’s national interests or external constraints

of one kind or another, including allied obligations, coalition interests, the dictates of force, ideological doctrines, religious dogmas, and so on.

The dynamic structure of a state’s international policy, when viewed as a holistic system, can hardly be accurately outlined even in its basic contours, due to its complexity. However, today it is possible to objectively identify the attractors, centers of gravity, and foci of such a policy. In the context of the mediatization of the public sphere, individual fragments of a state’s policy can be digitized. As an example, a country as an object and subject of the economy is statistically described multidimensionally and in detail—from the volume of gross domestic product (GDP) to the number of hospital beds per capita, and so on. In recent years, Russian and foreign scholars have focused on applied quantitative analysis, using methods to digitize certain parameters of international relations and constructing mathematical models to identify patterns in international processes (Abaev, 2011; Akayev, 2009; Degterev, 2011; 2017). Quantitative methods and computer modelling have become part of modern international studies (Degterev, 2015; Okunev & Zakharova, 2023; Caballero, Lunday & Deckro, 2020; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2013). The development of models for the quantitative assessment of international relations by integrating various methods (for example, the interpretative structural modelling method, the Bayesian network model, the expectation maximization algorithm, the method of constructing complex networks, spatial analysis, etc.), as well as a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis, are the subject of the work of Russian and foreign research teams (Ma et al., 2025; Okunev et al., 2020).

¹ Mingazov S. Analysts Announced a Record Number of Regional Conflicts in the World in 30 Years // Forbes. December 11, 2023. (In Russian). URL: <https://www.forbes.ru/society/502216-analitiki-iiss-zaavili-o-rekordnom-za-30-let-cisle-regional-nyh-konfliktov-v-mire?ysclid=lzi8hj16md224154255> (accessed: 21.09.2024).

International Politics in Focus of Media Geography

In the era of Internet development and digitalization of society (including the emergence of digital social science (Nikolaichuk, Yanglyaeva & Yakova, 2023)), it is possible to digitalize a virtually infinite number of social characteristics, including indicators of individual interest in various aspects of international politics at any time (in real time) and in any geographic location. The use of such opportunities underlies the methods and techniques of media geography (Couldry & McCarthy, 2004; Salovaara-Moring, 2004; Falkheimer & Jansson, 2006; Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Yakova & Yanglyaeva, 2019; Yanglyaeva, 2023), a new field within the Russian humanities that studies the mediatized public sphere in a spatiotemporal coordinate system.

A study of the European mental space was conducted using a media-geographical approach to identify the state of conflict in international relations. Big data from the *Google* search engine served as the empirical basis for the analysis.

This study examines the conflict-generating potential of European states' international politics as a complex, multidimensional object whose characteristics can be described by the level of interest and demand for information about a particular aspect of political practice among Internet users located in a given country. A ranking analysis of *Google* statistics allowed us to determine the popularity of Internet queries for various items (related to current international political topics), which, in media-geographic terms, provide insight into the corresponding morphoscultures on the mental landscape² of European countries

(Nikolaichuk, Yanglyaeva & Yakova, 2018, pp. 143–144). It should be noted that, in this study, the composition of Internet users whose queries were included in the sample for analysis correlates, to a certain extent, with the circle of individuals playing a particular role as actors in the political process (the segment of the Internet audience interested in international politics).

The study was conducted in stages, sequentially applying several methods united by a media-geographical focus (emphasizing the dynamics of the spatio-temporal characteristics of the object of study): rank analysis, factor analysis, and cluster analysis. In the first stage of query statistics analysis, 18 categories were selected from several dozen search results related to various aspects of the international politics of European states, presented in normalized form as topics (words and phrases in different languages that stand for the same concept). The *Google* search engine labels the most popular queries as “topics.” Eighteen categories (out of 90 analyzed words and phrases substantively related to international politics and marked as “popular” and “super popular” in *Google Trends*) topped the ranking list of relative popularity of Internet user queries in the European countries studied, following a ranking analysis, and were selected for factor analysis. The category names correspond to the wording of European Internet user queries:

1. *International Organizations*

1.1. European Union (EU)

1.2. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

1.3. United Nations (UN)

2. *Key Countries*

² In media geography, a *mental landscape* is a way of thinking and the attitude toward socially significant phenomena and processes of residents of a particular locality or territory. It is the result of the transformation of a person's spiritual and material worlds, social ideologies, and state symbols. The mental landscape acts as a semantic center in the formation of a hierarchy of identity (national, regional, local) and shapes territorial identity. *Semantic morphoscultures* are specific morphoscultures of the mental terrain that correlate with various local variations in the state and dynamics of public consciousness. See: (Nikolaichuk, Yanglyaeva & Yakova, 2018, pp. 143–144).

- 2.1. USA
- 2.2. People's Republic of China (PRC)
- 2.3. Russia
- 3. *Ideological Concepts*
 - 3.1. Communism
 - 3.2. Anti-Semitism
 - 3.3. Globalism
 - 3.4. Nazism
 - 3.5. Anarchism
 - 3.6. Euro-Atlanticism
- 4. *Religions*
 - 4.1. Islam
- 5. *Conflict Generators*
 - 5.1. Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (PIC)
 - 5.2. European Migrant Crisis (EMC)
 - 5.3. Ukrainian Conflict (UC)³
 - 5.4. Inflation
 - 5.5. Third World War (TWW)

To ensure the symmetry of the matrix of quantitative characteristics, 18 European countries are included in the analysis.⁴ A ranking analysis of the *Google Trends* statistics allowed us to determine the level of interest (relative popularity) of Internet users in the selected countries for each topic for the period from January 1, 2014, to October 1, 2024 (Table).

The numbers (scores) in the table indicate the level of interest in the topic relative to the highest indicator among all countries worldwide for a given country during the specified time period. A score of 100 indicates the highest level of popularity for a query, while a score of 0 indicates that a country for which there is insufficient data on the query in question.

Scores are calculated by *Google Trends* based on all queries on the topic (keywords).

The primary data presented in the table enables for a more comprehensive analysis. The average relative popularity of the analyzed topics made it possible to identify the main focuses of international politics for a group of European countries—that is, which topics, characterizing conflict potential, can be considered priorities in their political practice.

A rank distribution of the average relative popularity by topic for the 18 selected countries revealed that there are common European policy focuses. The most pressing topics in the context of conflict potential for European Internet users are those related to historical traumas caused by the memory of the two world wars (so-called “frustrating phobias”) and their projection into the future (the specter of a “third world war,” the absolutization of the importance of the NATO bloc). The issue of the danger of a resurgence of Nazism in its various interpretations ranks highest, primarily because it is an issue exclusively on the European agenda (it is completely irrelevant in other macroregions of the world). However, it should be kept in mind that the task of “combatting the revival of Nazism in the European region” is constantly being emphasized by the United States for a specific group of EU countries (which does not include Serbia, Poland, or Greece). The high rating of anarchism in Europe is also associated with the danger of instability and the fear of a radical escalation of conflicts.

³ In *Google Trends*, queries related to the topic of special military operations in Ukraine are collected under the categories “Russian-Ukrainian war” and “Ukrainian conflict.”

⁴ The following European countries were selected for analysis: 1. Austria, 2. Belgium, 3. Great Britain, 4. Hungary, 5. Germany, 6. Greece, 7. Denmark, 8. Italy, 9. Spain, 10. Netherlands, 11. Poland, 12. Portugal, 13. Serbia, 14. Finland, 15. France, 16. Czech Republic, 17. Switzerland, 18. Sweden. The sample was based on international rankings of countries' influence. See: Jones L. Ranked: World's Most Influential Countries, 2024 // CEOWORLD. April 4, 2024. URL: <https://ceoworld.biz/2024/04/04/ranked-worlds-most-influential-countries-2024/> (accessed: 22.11.2024); Most Influential Countries // U.S. News. URL: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/most-influential-countries> (accessed: 22.11.2024).

Relative Popularity of Queries in the Google Trends Service: Matrix of Initial Data

Countries	Categories																	
	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	4.1	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5
Austria	57	40	17	24	7	5	22	36	7	66	25	1	5	6	64	15	44	67
Belgium	51	60	15	19	6	4	20	24	12	41	33	25	12	25	36	12	24	39
United Kingdom	32	30	11	35	6	5	27	38	15	66	26	1	11	22	39	8	39	100
Hungary	52	35	9	18	8	4	29	20	12	45	23	25	1	1	33	19	38	64
Germany	41	49	12	30	9	5	18	43	7	81	24	1	5	6	100	21	34	61
Greece	28	45	8	14	6	2	23	11	4	46	96	1	1	5	13	5	17	40
Denmark	55	52	22	28	5	5	30	23	31	77	53	1	1	22	51	3	37	34
Italy	29	52	16	18	6	4	39	17	17	60	14	100	2	22	5	34	21	88
Spain	26	28	13	19	5	5	44	13	11	85	85	1	2	24	10	12	22	54
Netherlands	32	34	10	23	5	4	19	23	14	36	33	1	10	17	22	7	29	53
Poland	36	51	8	18	8	4	35	17	19	30	25	1	1	6	11	2	50	33
Portugal	34	41	16	19	5	5	36	13	11	59	42	1	1	20	11	9	31	42
Serbia	23	46	19	18	13	3	27	13	23	41	21	1	1	3	14	10	11	64
Finland	37	81	12	16	9	4	28	21	31	53	53	1	3	10	27	7	25	47
France	18	22	14	21	5	5	21	37	11	51	36	50	14	28	19	10	33	24
Czech Republic	51	64	9	20	8	4	59	18	7	64	34	25	1	8	30	4	55	45
Switzerland	26	37	30	27	7	5	23	30	12	57	37	25	1	16	36	15	41	44
Sweden	45	64	22	27	7	4	38	35	41	100	39	1	9	37	55	5	40	35

Source: compiled by T.S. Yakova based on the results of an analysis of Internet statistics of queries in the Google Trends service.

Regional priorities include inflation and the future of the European Union (although interest in the EU is muted compared to NATO), the European migration crisis, and communism. Despite all the propaganda campaigns, Europeans are more indifferent to such “peripheral” issues as relations with China and Russia, as well as Islam and the “Ukrainian conflict.”

Comparative Factors of the Nature of International Politics in the Mirror of the Behavior of Online Audiences

To answer the question of what determines the differences and similarities in the nature of international policy in each country, a matrix of initial data (see Table) was analyzed, providing a general picture of the online behavior

of residents of European countries, using descriptive factor analysis.⁵ The factor analysis identified six factors, each of which combined several analyzed themes:

Factor 1: Nazism, USA, European migrant crisis, China, UN.

Factor 2: Communism, Islam, anti-Semitism.

Factor 3: Ukrainian conflict, Euro-Atlanticism, anarchism, third world war.

Factor 4: Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Russia (negative value).

Factor 5: Inflation, European Union.

Factor 6: Globalism, NATO.

The factors were interpreted based on the factor loading matrix data. According to the calculations, the six identified factors explain approximately 80% of the variation in the original characteristics. While this is a fairly good result, the number six itself indicates the extreme complexity of the research object and the (positive) absence of multicollinearity—that is, a strong correlation between the independent variables, which complicates the assessment and analysis of the overall result.⁶

The first factor (explaining 24.4% of the variance) links themes that indicate a country's alignment with US policy as the “agreed” standard of international policy. From the context of US foreign policy rhetoric in recent years, recommendations can be identified for European countries on these themes, which are united by the first factor: active political prevention of neo-Nazism, a democratic perception of migration

processes, close ties with the US and support for its policy towards China, and cooperation at the UN. The top countries for this factor include Germany, Austria, the UK, and Sweden, which “saved” its neutrality after joining NATO. The bottom performers are Hungary, Greece, Serbia, partially Catholic countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal), and Finland.

Despite its apparent ideological focus, the second factor (15.2% of the variance) is difficult to interpret. On the one hand, the level of Internet user interest showed that in those European countries where interest in communism remains, concern about Islam and anti-Semitism is low. However, it should be noted that while communist doctrine is popular in Spain and Italy with positive connotations, in Poland and the Czech Republic the opposite is true: here, interest in the topic is rooted in “overcoming the past,” embedded in decommunization policies. Islam is unpopular in these countries for religious reasons. Therefore, the second factor identified can be linked to opposition to the controversial practice of Islamization. The top performers here include France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Hungary. At the bottom of the list, in addition to the previously mentioned countries, are Greece, Serbia, and Portugal.

The third factor (13.7% of the variance) linked variables such as the “Ukrainian conflict,” “Euro-Atlanticism,” “anarchism” (with the opposite sign), and “third world war.” This factor can be interpreted as an indicator of efforts to build up military potential

⁵ The essence of factor analysis is to isolate from the entire set of variables only a small number of latent, independent groupings within which the variables are more strongly related than those belonging to different groupings. Factor analysis assumes that known variables depend on a smaller number of unknown variables and random error. Reducing the initial data by identifying a smaller number of sets of closely related variables allows for a better description of the specific characteristics of the object of study. For more details, see: (Ananina, 2018). The analysis was conducted using the factor analysis program from the *SPSS Statistics* statistical package, principal component analysis with Kaiser normalization, and varimax rotation.

⁶ The number of factors in factor analysis refers to the number of independent variables to which a large number of variables are reduced. Variables that are highly correlated are combined into a single factor. As a result of determining the structure of relationships between the variables, the number of factors is significantly smaller than the original number.

for conflict. In media outlets, for propaganda purposes, this activity is labelled with clichés such as “fighting for peace,” “restraining the aggressor,” etc. Italy ranks first here, with its residents confidently leading in interest in Euro-Atlanticism and the Ukrainian conflict. This is likely due to Italy’s belated inclusion in the pool of countries actively supporting US and NATO policies. It should be noted that, according to 2023 data, Italy is one of the largest centers of the Ukrainian diaspora in Western Europe (approximately 380,000 legally residing Ukrainians⁷), which explains the high level of interest in this topic among the country’s online audience. The northern province of Villa d’Aosta leads in Internet searches, while Venice holds first place for the “Euro-Atlanticism” tag (activity is only noted with the start of the special military operation (SMO)). Sweden ranks at the bottom of the list.

The fourth factor (explaining 11 % of the variation in the original indicators), linking “Russia” and “Palestinian-Israeli conflict” (with the opposite sign), may characterize certain priorities in responding to specific international crises. Russia, as a state entity, is currently firmly embedded in Western international conflict discourse and is viewed as a potential “enemy” in some (not all) countries. However, for Sweden, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Spain, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is far more important than Russia, while for Serbia, Finland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, the Russian vector is more significant than the Middle East.

The fifth factor (9.3 %) is clearly linked to the use of the EU for collective overcoming of economic difficulties (inflation) and regulation in the conflict-ridden financial sector. Here, the leaders are “small” countries, which are unable to combat financial crises on their own.

The sixth factor (accounting for only 7.2 % of the variation in the initial characteristics) linked “globalism” and “NATO,” which to some extent characterizes the level of national agency of states, although the initial data cannot be considered completely reliable. Countries with “incomplete” sovereignty include the new NATO members Sweden and Finland.

Classification of Countries by Similarity of Responses to Potential International Conflicts

Internet statistics obtained through the use of media geographic tools allow us to classify countries by the nature and characteristics of their political practices in the context of international conflictology. To address this issue, we employed a classification analysis method known as cluster analysis. Its main purpose is to divide a set of objects and characteristics under study into homogeneous (In a certain sense) groups, or clusters.

We highlight the following advantages of cluster analysis. First, it enables us to classify objects not by a single characteristic, but by several. Second, unlike most mathematical and statistical methods, cluster analysis imposes no restrictions on the type of objects under consideration, enabling us to examine a variety of source data of virtually any nature. Cluster analysis methods are often used in humanities research to develop typologies, classifications, or test hypotheses. In the context of this study, the work of E.A. Zakharova (2023) and B.G. Mirkin (2011), Smirnov & Malafeev (2020), and Xu & Wunsch (2005)

⁷ The Ukrainian Community in Italy: Annual report on the Presence of Migrants. Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of Italy, 2023. URL: <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/ukrainian-community-2023> (accessed: 13.10.2025).

have all applied this method to analyze various aspects of international relations.

Based on the cluster analysis, 18 European countries can be roughly divided into two unequal groups that differ significantly from each other. The minority consists of countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Serbia, and Finland. However, Italy falls completely outside the European ensemble—it is unlike any other country in the context under consideration. This is an unexpected finding that requires closer examination. It is possible that *Google's* system is somehow “mistuned” to this country, suggesting that there are purely instrumental issues.

At the same time, valuable information about the “proximity” of countries can be gleaned by examining the dynamics of their clustering in the calculations. The first and second steps of the similarity search revealed groups such as “Austria — Germany — Great Britain” and “Belgium — Netherlands — Switzerland,” with France joining this group in the third iteration. The following groupings also emerged in the third and fourth steps: “Hungary — Poland — Czech Republic,” “Spain — Portugal — Greece,” “Denmark — Sweden,” and “Serbia — Finland.” In most cases, the calculations point to a factor in the similarity of countries’ behavior in this context, such as simple geographic proximity, their membership in the same European subregion. The results of the cluster analysis suggest that “counteraction” to the potential for conflict is carried out on a kind of collective zonal principle; that is, countries neighboring a (potentially) conflict zone are primarily concerned about stability and security, while those more distant from one another are.

Conclusion

A media-geographical study of the social behavior of European Internet users, based on big data analysis (on topics substantively related to international politics), identified the audience priorities of these countries. Internet users navigate the information space by consuming mediated products, expressing their interests based on the resulting meanings, and allowing for general conclusions about the nature of media consumption. Studying audience media behavior allowed us to identify the most conflict-prone factors and zones in the European mental landscape. An analysis of search statistics revealed that Europeans are most interested in those phenomena, events, or facts of international politics that, in a certain interpretation, demonstrate their concern or anxiety about the possibility of new conflicts and confrontations.

Factor analysis proved to be quite effective in studying the mental landscapes of European countries within a media-geographical coordinate system. This method revealed several components (factors) characterizing the interests of Internet users, which either unite or divide the politically active segment of Internet audiences in European countries (factors 1–4 of the six factors identified).

The first factor identified a group of countries most actively seeking to conform to the standard course of international policy as dictated by the United States: Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. Several recent events in real-world politics have confirmed the similarity in the international policies of these states: neutral Austria’s intention to increase its participation in NATO military exercises (2024);⁸ a new defense agreement between the United

⁸ 2025: Austrian Armed Forces Plan 33 Exercises and Training Sessions Abroad // *Militär Aktuell*. December 3, 2024. URL: <https://militaeraktuell.at/en/2025-austrian-armed-forces-plan-33-exercises-and-training-sessions-abroad/> (accessed: 13.10.2025).

Kingdom and Germany (July 2024);⁹ and the accession of Sweden and the United Kingdom to the European approach to long-range strikes (October 2024).¹⁰

For the second factor, the basis for similarity was determined by opposition to the conflictual practice of Islamization (France, Belgium, the United Kingdom). In these countries, the share of Muslim populations has grown significantly in recent years.

For the third factor, indicating active efforts to increase the potential for military conflict, a clear leader has emerged: Italy (the media behavior of this country's online audience requires a more in-depth analysis in the context of domestic political processes).

The fourth factor revealed two groups based on their response priorities to specific international crises: the first group includes

Sweden, France, the UK, Belgium, and Spain, whose online audiences' interests are focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; the second group consists of Serbia, Finland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, with a focus on Russia.

The identified factors only provide a sketchy representation of the components of European countries' mental landscapes that can influence the differences and similarities in their international policies. However, even a preliminary interpretation of the obtained results provides insight into the conflict-prone zones of the European mental space, reveals the dynamics of European reactions to international events and processes, and can serve as a basis for predicting the social behavior of the population in the context of the international policies of the leadership of countries in this region.

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⁹ Allison G. UK and Germany Sign New Defence Agreement // UK Defence Journal. July 25, 2024. URL: <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/uk-and-germany-sign-new-defence-agreement/> (accessed: 13.10.2025).

¹⁰ Osborne T. UK, Sweden Join European Ground-Launched Cruise Missile Effort // Aviation Week. October 21, 2024. URL: <https://aviationweek.com/defense/missile-defense-weapons/uk-sweden-join-european-ground-launched-cruise-missile-effort> (accessed: 13.10.2025).

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