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Esentepe Mah. Yüzbaşı Kaya Aldoğan Sk. No: 4 İç Kapı No: 209 Şişli-İstanbul

[www.briqjournal.com](http://www.briqjournal.com) • [editor@briqjournal.com](mailto:editor@briqjournal.com)

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## Principles of Publication

At a time when US ambitions for a unipolar world order have lost their appeal, a new order is taking shape thanks to the multipolarization of world politics and the acceleration of cooperation between developing countries, rejecting the globalism of imperialist states. Under these conditions, the new agenda of global cooperation should respond to the needs and aspirations of developing countries seeking joint development and solidarity under the guidance of public-driven projects. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -put forward in 2013 by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China- provides a suitable opportunity and a sound foundation for the implementation of this new agenda of global cooperation.

BRI is an epoch-making move to re-implement the concept of the Silk Road, which dates back 2,000 years, to a time when China was immensely contributing to global prosperity and the development of trade and cooperation. The revival of this concept entails a much more comprehensive approach that also incorporates rail and sea transport, and digital systems.

BRI proposes to bring together over 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America –together accounting for nearly half of the world's gross domestic product– for prosperity and development at the initiative of China. Unlike the Western-centered world order, BRI seeks peaceful collaboration for improving global trade and production towards common goals for humanity. It firmly rejects crude imperialist exploitation. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was a conduit for the flow of gunpowder, spices, silk, compasses and paper to the world. Today, it offers artificial intelligence, quantum computers, new energy and material technologies, and space-age visions to developing countries. In addition, the New Silk Road provides incentives and opportunities for the development and implementation of bio-economic schemes in stakeholder countries against the threat of climate change and other environmental threats that bring the entire ecosystem to the brink of extinction.

Türkiye has a significant role –real and potential– in accelerating South-South cooperation. Türkiye is conveniently located as Asia's farthest outpost to the West. It assumes a critical position as a pivotal country on BRI's North-South and East-West axes. However, China's development and BRI's contribution to the future of humanity have remained to a large extent underrecognized and superficially evaluated in Turkish academia, media, and politics. This is mainly because Türkiye's academics, media professionals, and policy makers have been observing China using Western sources. In the same manner, China and BRI's other potential partners have been viewing Türkiye through a Western lens.

BRIQ has committed itself to developing an in-depth understanding of the present era, with a particular emphasis on the new opportunities and obstacles on the road to the New Asian Century.

BRIQ assumes the task of providing direct exchange of views and information among Chinese and Turkish academics, intellectuals, and policy makers. In the meantime, this journal will serve as a platform to bring together the intellectual accumulation of the whole world, especially developing countries, on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative, which presents a historic opportunity for the common future of humanity.

BRIQ is also devoted to publishing research and other intellectual contributions that underline the transformative power of public-driven economies, where popular interests are upheld as the basic principle, ahead of individual profit. The fundamental tasks of BRIQ are to demonstrate how BRI can contribute to the implementation of this public-driven model, and to help potential BRI partners -including Türkiye- to realize their real potential.

BRIQ stands for the unity of humanity and a fair world order. It will therefore be a publication for the world's distinguished intellectuals, especially those from Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas: the defenders of a new civilization rising from Asia on the basis of peace, fraternity, cooperation, prosperity, social benefit and common development.



## Submission Guidelines

BRIQ features a broad range of content, from academic articles to book reviews, review essays, interviews, news reports, and feature articles.

The Editorial Board can issue calls for papers for special issues and invite authors to contribute manuscripts; however, it also welcomes unsolicited submissions.

Submissions are invited in English or Turkish. All submissions are to include a short biography (150-word limit) and should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to briq@briqjournal.com Articles or other content that have been previously published or are under review by other journals will not be considered for publication.

BRIQ follows American Psychology Association (APA) style, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, <https://www.apastyle.org> and uses American English spelling.

BRIQ applies a double-blind review process for all academic articles.

Academic articles should be between 5000 and 9000 words in length, including abstracts, notes, references, and all other content. Please supply a cover page that includes complete author information, and a fully anonymized manuscript that also contains an abstract (200-word limit) and five keywords.

Book reviews should not exceed 1,000 words; review essays covering two or more works can be up to 3,000 words.

News reports consisting of brief analyses of news developments should not exceed 1,500 words; feature articles comprising reporting and analysis can be up to 3,500 words.

Please contact the Editorial Board for interview proposals.

# EDITORIAL

## The Global South Calls for Cooperation, Development, and Peace Amid NATO's Belligerent Actions

NATO, established in 1949 as the primary military organization of the Atlantic Alliance, initially comprised 12 member countries. Over time, the Alliance has undergone several transformations, with its most recent strategic concept adopted on June 30, 2022. By April 2023, the number of members had grown to 31, following a new wave of expansion in the post-Cold War era.

The notable aspect of NATO's new concept lies in its transformation into a global organization. It recognizes that the "communist threat" of the Cold War era has been replaced by the revisionist attitude of Russia, China, and those aligned with them. Both the current US national security document and NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept emphasize the global struggle between democracy and autocracy.

According to this perspective, the Atlantic Alliance and its allies align themselves on the "democracy front," while states led by Russia and China are portrayed as part of the "autocracy front." The criterion used by the US and NATO to categorize governments in non-allied countries as "autocracies" or "democracies" hinges on whether they align with the Atlantic Alliance's interests. Consequently, under this front-oriented strategy, the rest of the world is perceived as being on the opposing side.

As the world moves towards a multipolar landscape, it is noteworthy that the United States is asserting its claim as the sole pole to its allies, particularly in Europe, and to the rest of the world. This imposition runs counter to the objective interests of its allies. In its pursuit to maintain unipolarity and dollar hegemony, US leadership aims to transform NATO into a global war apparatus. This is done under the pretext of promoting "democracy/human rights" and other similar ideals. The Atlantic Alliance, along with NATO and other partnerships, exerts interference in the internal affairs of nations, seeks economic dominance, and promotes a political culture of belligerency. In contrast, nation-states that adhere to the principles of the UN Charter prioritize peace and cooperation as their interests. Developing countries across Asia, Africa, and South America are gravitating towards cooperation in alignment with their objective interests.

The current scenario exemplifies a clash between two divergent strategies in the international arena. On one hand, there is the pursuit of Atlantic hegemony and the imposition of war. On the other hand, developing countries are staunchly advocating for a peaceful global order. They fortify their national states against hegemonic influences and promote cooperation based on principles such as mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, common development, and shared progress. This constructive initiative, being gradually built within the developing world, is gaining increasing influence and serves the best interests of humanity.

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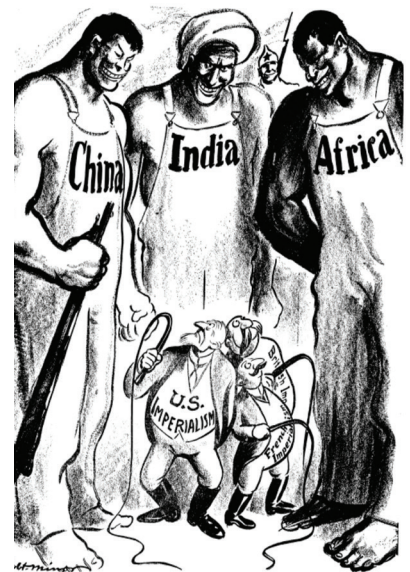


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# Is Brain-Dead NATO Near Euthanasia?



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**FAHRI ERENEL\***Assoc. Prof.  
İstinye University**AHMET GEDİK\*\***Doctoral Student  
İstanbul University

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*\*Fahri Erenel graduated from the Military Academy in 1980 in the department of economics. He completed his BA in Sociology and International Relations; his MA in National and International Security; Educational Administration and Supervision; Occupational Health and Safety; and his PhD in Human Resources Management. Between 1980 and 2010, he served at various levels in the Turkish Armed Forces. He is a B-class occupational safety specialist. He became an Associate Professor in Management and Strategy in 2017. He held various positions on the administrative and academic staff at Altınbaş and Kent Universities. He is still working as a lecturer at İstinye University, Department of Political Science and Public Administration. He is also the author of six books.*

*E-mail: ferenel@istinye.edu.tr*

*\*\*Ahmet Gedik, graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, Department of Public Administration (French) in 2016, studied at IEP de Lyon, in Lyon, France, for a year with an exchange program during his undergraduate education. He completed his master's degree in the Galatasaray University Social Sciences Institute Political Science program. He is continuing his doctorate education at the Istanbul University Institute of Social Sciences, Political Science, and Public Administration program. He speaks French and English.*

*E-mail: agedik@istinye.edu.tr*

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## ABSTRACT

Since its establishment in 1949, NATO has been a political and military international organization that constitutes one of the most important actors in the international system. Although the prestige and advantages of being a NATO member in a bipolar world have been questioned from time to time after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the Alliance has continued to sustain itself and, especially in the 2000s, has tended to expand. The acceleration of NATO's development and change after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) suggests that the focus of this international organization is not only on the Eastern Bloc but also on the need to organize for other current and future focal points. Those who argue to the contrary suggest that in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR, which was the focal point of NATO, and in an international system moving between unipolarity and multipolarity, the existence and purpose of the organization has become meaningless. The structure of NATO has been criticised due to factors such as the criticism of NATO's mission to protect Europe within the European Union (EU), especially in France, and the desire of the member states of the Union to take part in the mission to protect Europe themselves. Within the scope of this analysis, NATO's actions and its position in the face of crises, especially in the 2000s, will be examined, and how the reflections of its actions in the face of these political and military crises shed light on the future of the organization will be discussed. In this context, issues such as what the Alliance countries, especially in Europe, expect from NATO in the face of the recent crises will be analysed.

**Keywords:** Defence, deterrence, NATO, power, war

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## Introduction

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM THAT emerged after the Second World War caused the world to be stuck between two poles, and in these two poles, the dominant powers directed or influenced the other powers. Historian A.J.P. Taylor said, "The purpose of great power is to be able to make great wars. But the way to remain a great power is not to enter such a war." This reminds us that the post-war order is an important issue (Heilbrunn, 2018: 9). The bipolar world order led by the Soviet Union and the United States of America (US) as the

East and West Blocs reveals the capacity of these two superpowers. In this respect, NATO, as a military organization tool of the Western Bloc, has acted in this direction and become an important instrument to continue its deterrence instead of an open challenge. However, despite all this time, it has become questionable whether NATO will continue to exist as a deterrent power instead of a fighting force as in the first days of its establishment. The potential loss of power in the current situation, especially with war and regional conflicts, has raised the issue of whether the Alliance is in a phase of disintegration and division.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, first, the unipolar world dominated by the US and then the multipolar new world order, which has gradually become more prominent in the current period, perhaps gave NATO back its lost reason for existence. We have seen a NATO that enlarges, transforms into an independent structure from thirty-one member states, and becomes rivals to Russia and China in different dimensions instead of the Soviets. And at the moment, sustainability is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed for NATO and the states that comprise the organization.

With the impact of the Russia-Ukraine tension that emerged in the first months of 2022, a war environment is being experienced in a part of the international system. For NATO, the former “enemy” superpower is at war, which is being waged against a country that has expressed its desire to join NATO. This situation, similar to the Cold War years, caused the US, the leader of the other pole, NATO under its leadership, and indirectly European countries to position on the other side of the war. As a defense organization, will NATO protect its allies against war and conflict, as discussed in the 2022 concept? Or will this organization, which has expanded its field of interest and activity with a global approach and whose goal is to expand, be dragged into new wars?

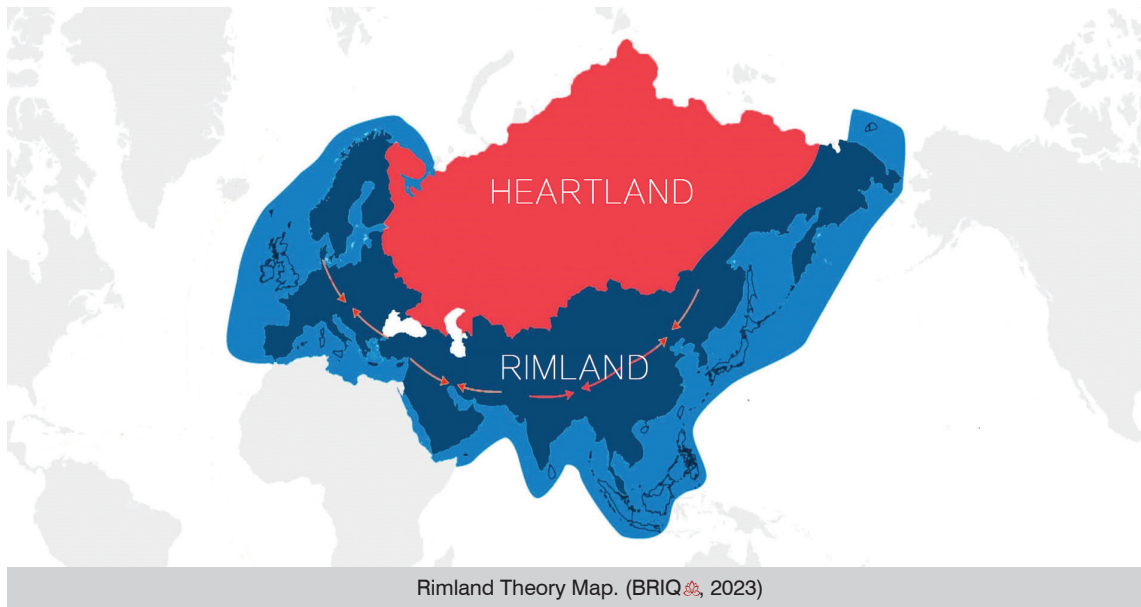
In other words, will NATO take a positive role in ensuring world peace and continue its development, as it did in the Cold War era, or will it begin the process of disintegration as a growing and expanding organization? In this analysis, first of all, the establishment of NATO and the position of the US in the organization will be briefly discussed, and then the decision-making mechanisms of the organization and its blockage points will be examined. Finally, the question of the future of NATO will be discussed.

## **The Foundation of NATO and the Position of the US**

After World War II, the US signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949 for the “protection of Europe” and to balance the Soviet military presence. The treaty entered into force on 24 August 1949. Although the purpose of the Alliance is collective defense in the text of the treaty, it is designed as a complement to the Marshall Plan, which is a product of the US’s effort to revive Europe against the Soviet Union (Hobsbawm, 2006:322). In this context, NATO took its place on the stage as an actor in the play, whose script was written by the US.

The US, which took the place of England after World War II, has taken the strategic idea of the former hegemonic power, which is pushing the Soviet Union back, preventing its access to the sea, and keeping it fragmented for the continuation of the hegemonic order. Therefore, after the war, it was decided to accept Spykman’s Rimland theory first and implement Kennan’s strategy to contain the USSR, and communism was chosen as the ideological enemy. NATO was designed as a tool for the implementation of such hegemonic thinking (Gürdeniz, 2022). In Spykman’s Rimland Theory, the region extending from the east of Europe, which we can define as Eurasia, to Siberia and China is also defined as the Heartland, and it is stated that coastal regions are the key to controlling the World-Island (Foster, 2006). The edge region, namely Eurasia, includes the Heartland, and whoever controls this region will eventually control the World-Island, Spykman says. Whoever controls the World-Island, will soon control the world. Therefore, NATO’s enlargement policy can be interpreted as controlling the Heartland (Erenel, 2021: 11).





The US has always been the most important member of NATO compared to other member states. In the words of Lord Ismay, NATO's founding secretary general and military adviser to Churchill during the war, "NATO was established to keep the Americans inside, the Russians outside, and the Germans under control". Later, the purpose of its existence was lost and became questionable (Maunder, 2016; Guérot, 2016: 55). However, this ontological wavering was short-lived. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO tried to transform itself rapidly, especially in the 1990s, in the face of various threats. With the historic decisions taken at the 1999 Washington Summit, the Alliance could carry out "out-of-area" military operations. In this direction, NATO became usable for solving crimes and problems such as weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, the drug trade, racism, and human trafficking. Thus, after the 1999 Summit, the organization's job description and operation area changed, and the mission undertaken was designed in accordance with the new conditions of the period. Defined as a defense and military

international organization, NATO has gradually turned into a general security organization (Irondele and Lachmann, 2011; Polat, 2020:335-336).

The fact that the US determines policies and strategies on problems and issues concerning the entire Alliance without adequate dialogue shows the organization's founding purpose. At the NATO Summit held in London in 2019, the "plan to designate the PYD/YPG as a terrorist organization" presented by Türkiye was not accepted, and only a general statement was used in the summit's final declaration, such as "the alliance will continue to fight all forms of terrorism". Although there is discussion among its members, in the final declaration, in line with the desire of the US, the statements of "acting together as an alliance against China" and "safe and flexible systems should be trusted in the transition to 5G technology", again against China, indicate that decision-making mechanisms are not functioning in coordination, and rhetoric and actions that do not take into account the interests of the US cannot find a place in the alliance (Alpar, 2021).

This shows that NATO's concerns and interests regarding other European states are kept in the background behind the interests of the US. In other words, it can be concluded that security concerns may be valid for other states within limits set by the US. In these examples, it's clear that NATO's decision-making mechanism differs in formality and operation.

### **NATO's Decision-Making Mechanism**

Although NATO's decision-making mechanism has remained stable in its basic lines since its establishment, it has undergone partial changes in the face of some unexpected situations. NATO's highest decision-making body is the North Atlantic Council, where every member of the Alliance has one vote. Decisions in the North Atlantic Council are taken unanimously, not by a majority (NATO, 2022). Therefore, the approval and vote of all the member states are required. This situation changed due to the tension between NATO and France during the Charles de Gaulle period of France, which was called the Fifth Republic and switched to a semi-presidential system. Charles de Gaulle, who did not want to be a symbolic president, proposed a new foreign policy doctrine for France with the new French regime. In this direction, he tried to put France in a prime position in the bipolar world in a way that would not be too close to or engaged with any pole. This has worked. Therefore, France under Charles de Gaulle left the military wing of NATO in 1966 (Vasse, 2009). The Defense Planning Committee was established to handle military issues while the North Atlantic Council remained. After the return of France to the military wing of NATO in 2009, this situation was no longer concerning (Chevènement, 2009).

It is considered that NATO, as an organization,

has grown excessively while trying to adapt to environmental conditions on the one hand, grows old on the other, and is experiencing the Behemot Syndrome, which means that the speed of reaction to events decreases as a result of the overgrowth of the organizational structure, becoming unwieldy (Fasola and Lucarelli, 2008). 2020; Keçecioglu, 2008:192). The most effective example of a low reaction rate is the necessity of taking decisions unanimously. At its establishment, the ninth article of the North Atlantic Council officially states that decisions are to be taken unanimously and that it meets regularly twice a year with the participation of the member states' foreign ministers. While unanimity is emphasized in the decision-making process, open voting is not carried out. An agreement is reached on whether there is an objection through negotiations with the members. Negotiation and dialogue methods are used to overcome objections (Özsoy, 2022: 105).

If one of the member states uses its veto right only for political or legal reasons, NATO's decision-making mechanism and process may be interrupted and blocked. For example, North Macedonia has been waiting years to become a member due to the Greek veto. Suppose a country vetoes any NATO decision for political or private reasons. In that case, that country can be questioned (Tarakçı, 2016:1). Because all the decisions to be taken in the North Atlantic Council must be accepted by the member states, the council cannot pass the decision. Again, as a good example, Sweden and Finland quickly applied for NATO membership after the Ukraine War, but Türkiye's attitude due to Sweden's supportive position towards terrorism interrupted the membership process and, indirectly, the decision-making process.



Finland accession ceremony to NATO, Brussels, Belgium. (Estonian Foreign Ministry, 2023)

Similarly, Türkiye declared that it did not want Rasmussen, the former NATO Secretary General, to be involved but had to accept it when it was alone in its request (Kool et al., 2021). After NATO's Bucharest 2008 Summit, Albania and Croatia joined the alliance, and rhetoric that Ukraine and Georgia could become NATO members began to emerge. However, after Russia's harsh reaction to the participation of Georgia and Ukraine in NATO, the attitude towards the membership of these two countries has changed in the alliance's member states. Even though the Cold War is over, the danger that is insisting on an issue that will disturb Russia and even seeing it as a national security problem that may cause new crises in the international system has been one of the most important obstacles in opening the path to membership for Ukraine and Georgia.

At the same time, NATO has the appearance of a multinational company due to its structural features. The problems these companies experience

continue to be experienced to a large extent. In other words, NATO, when viewed as a whole, has a multinational structure that includes military and civilian personnel from many nations. Because different cultures' human resources work in the same channel, countries have different perspectives on security problems, their geopolitical importance, proximity to the forces identified as threats, and tensions between countries can seriously delay joint decision-making.

As the number of member states increases, NATO's decision-making mechanism becomes more debatable. The fact that the alliance, which started with twelve founding members, continues to exist with twenty-eight member states today and the expectation of an increase in the number of members in the near future may make it increasingly difficult to take a unanimous decision. The veto rights of each member slowed down the decision-making process regarding some crises and conflicts, especially in the post-Cold War period. US political

scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski proposes that decisions in NATO should be taken by a majority instead of a unanimous vote (Brzezinski, 2009: 15; Tarakçı, 2016:1).

### **With the end of the Cold War, the bipolar international system ended, and the USA remained the only superpower in the world.**

Changes in environmental conditions, organizational corrosion caused by aging, and expansion that is difficult to manage have caused NATO's effectiveness to decrease and become unwieldy. In the unipolar world order after the Cold War, the US's strategies to create a New World Order were reflected in the organization's existence. Aiming to take precautions against the threats it has identified with seven concepts since its establishment, NATO is about to prepare the eighth one with the vision of NATO-2030. It will probably revise this concept with the start of the Ukraine-Russia War.<sup>1</sup> Frequent concept changes delay the war preparation and adaptation process, making testing and developing the concept with joint training and exercises difficult.

#### **The Future of NATO**

NATO's new roadmap is clearly included in the 2022 Strategic Concept. In this concept, NATO is presented as a kind of combined military power of the US and the European Union (EU), where the US and the EU focus on maintaining the global leadership of the Atlantic system in an integrated manner, despite the declining military, economic, and political powers, and put

their ideological powers to new heights. It is seen that they rely on the rule-based international order they have determined. However, the extent to which this system is complied with when it comes to Atlantic interests has also been seen in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, and in Türkiye in the 15 July Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO) coup attempt and the conspiracy cases before it (Gürdeniz, 2022).

With the end of the Cold War, the bipolar international system ended, and the US remained the only superpower in the world. As stated by John O'Sullivan, one of the intellectual supporters of the seventh President of the US, Andrew Jackson, a "vigorous and fresh country presented by God" had a "sacred duty on behalf of the nations of the world" (Wilsey, 2017; Gomez, 2012). With the disintegration of the USSR, a group calling themselves the neoconservatives put forward the New American Century Project (Al-Kassimi, 2017). In a study they presented to the Pentagon in 1992, Vice President Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz argued that in the post-Cold War period, the US needed to lead in a way that would realize its interests by establishing a unipolar order (Gaddis, 2002: 50-57; Gözen, 2014:120).

It is seen that the emphasis on the unanimous decision-making mechanism and presenting NATO as a defense organization where the members have the right of veto is to cover up the US's aim of using the organization as an attack and occupation device. Throughout the seventy-three-year history of NATO, despite many demands, the question of why Article 5 of the treaty has not been applied to other members other than the US clearly shows that NATO is a US-based organization and that the interests of other member countries remain insignificant.

In the post-Cold War era, in which US hegemony indisputably dominated world politics, conflicts or wars were not absent; on the contrary, many military operations were carried out under the name of combating terrorism. From the end of World War II to the period of the 11 September attacks, the data of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London reveal that 22,456,000 people lost their lives, and there were 188 military conflicts in ninety countries during this fifty-five-year so-called peace process after World War II (Degirmencioglu, 2007:85).

Another important issue is the perception of security and the perceptions of the member states towards any phenomenon or event. The security perception of each country differs according to its geographical, political, and cultural conditions. Although security threats are often general, this issue can become subjective when national interests come into play. The changing and differing perceptions of the members on security also cause collective difficulties in producing solutions against security threats. In other words, it is impossible for terrorism and acts of terrorism in a region to be perceived or accepted as a threat or a problem for all members of the organization.

According to classical realism, states inevitably use or manage non-state actors for their national interests in a system where chaos is dominant. So, if turmoil in one region is necessary for one state's interests, it may threaten the interests of another state. It has not been possible to create and implement a common security policy not only for NATO but also for the EU, despite all the integration efforts of the union. Here, too, similar reasons lie in the change of security policy according

to states and regions. For example, it is quite natural that the level of security attributed to France, which attaches great importance to the Mediterranean politically, economically, and socially, is not the same as that of Germany. NATO has serious problems reaching a consensus on any certain threat, which causes NATO to become dysfunctional and only habitually survive (Erenel & Gedik, 2022).

NATO tends to be an increasingly globalized organization under the influence of the US. On the other hand, for France, NATO's mission for European defense is inadequate and American-centered (Casin & Gedik, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary either to "Europeanize" NATO or to have Europe be defended by the European states themselves. Macron's discourse on NATO in 2019—which also inspired the title of this work—points to exactly this. Regarding Gaullism, which constitutes French foreign policy, the defense of Europe should be left to Europeans, not Americans. This foreign policy strategy of France, which we can define as exceptional, continued throughout the Cold War period (Bozo, 2008). Being "friend, ally, and disconnected" from the US created an area of action for the French in the bipolar world (Védrine et al., 2018). For this reason, US hegemony in NATO is not something that member states accept unconditionally.

The US's intervention in the Middle East after 9/11 under the umbrella of NATO, benefiting from the organization's facilities and military capacity and reflecting its national interest as the general interest of the organization, caused the reaction of France and the then President Jacques Chirac (Lequesne, 2007). It has led to harsh criticism not only from Chirac but also from other EU countries.

The US is also looking for a legitimate basis for its hard power by using NATO military support in operations such as the Iraq and Afghanistan interventions. In short, the US does not hesitate to instrumentalize NATO in line with its national interests. For example, the NATO member states provided all kinds of support, especially military and medical aid, to the Afghanistan Operation. However, the process of initiating operations by the US has developed somewhat within the framework of the *fait accompli* method. A similar phenomenon was experienced in the Libyan Intervention. Here, not the US, but France, under the leadership of Nicolas Sarkozy, who returned to the military wing of NATO in 2009, started the intervention in Libya on 19 March 2011, with the support of the US and England, and NATO officially took over the operation on 30 March 2011. Therefore, the legal procedure came from behind the actions to legitimize them.

### **The USA does not hesitate to instrumentalize NATO in line with its national interests.**

NATO accepts members with an open door policy. That is, it has a positive approach towards countries that want to become members and wants the alliance to expand until it holds the Heartland. NATO is not just a military organization. Under current circumstances, NATO offers its members an ecosystem. This ecosystem includes arms trade, technology transfer, credit, and economic aid and support (Akdeniz, 2022: 13). While NATO aims to continue its expansion and growth with its open door policy, it also tries to avoid being an introverted ecosystem. The military technology and weapons used are transferred to the member countries. In fact, it is desired to provide sustainability so that

the military ecosystem is the same in all member countries. However, as a natural result of growth and expansion, its mobility decreases and the decision-making mechanism is exposed to entropy. To avoid this, the organization seeks areas to use its unused energy and, so to speak, opens up problem areas. It also needs conflicts and tensions to keep itself more dynamic and active. As the Russia-Ukraine War shows, there is also the issue of creating more tension than usual and increasing the size of the threat (Akdeniz, 2022: 13).

In an interview he gave in 2019, Macron made a remarkable description of NATO's impasse by saying, "What we are experiencing right now is NATO's brain death," referring to the Trump administration's decision to withdraw its forces from Syria without consulting NATO. In addition, the subject of the 56th Munich Conference held in 2020 was determined to be "Westlessness" (Courmont and Deportes, 2022; Baverez, 2020; Tokatl, 2022: 75).

Members of the organization are reluctant to implement the choices they support due to different security perceptions. An example of this behavior is the decision of NATO member countries at the 2014 summit to allocate 2% of their GDP to defense spending over ten years until 2024 (NATO, 2014). In theory, the target was approved as a resolution, but there were no legally binding provisions to impose sanctions on countries that did not comply with their obligations. Consequently, failure to bear these costs reflects the reluctance of the majority of members to fulfill their obligations to NATO.

It is known that the former president of the US, Donald Trump, who has undertaken almost all the costs of the Atlantic Alliance alone, has expressed his desire to leave NATO many times throughout 2018 (Ucler and Bulut, 2021: 44; Béraud-Dureau and Giegerich, 2018). The fact that the US has brought this idea to the table for the first time since



France's President Emmanuel Macron meets with visiting NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg at Elysee Palace in Paris, France, Nov. 28, 2019. (Xinhua/Gao Jing)

the establishment of NATO can be seen as the beginning of an important paradigm shift in terms of questioning the alliance's future. However, it is not yet clear to what extent the US, which withdrew from many agreements in 2018, will be able to implement this idea.

Today's world is too complex for a single nation to rule. Although the US has won the wars it entered militarily, it has not reached the desired end state. This shows that the US lags behind the colonial British Empire in dealing with various ethnic groups. Despite successful colonial administrations in places like India, the British Empire only survived for a little more than a century (1815-1918). The US Empire, on the other hand, started to show signs of collapse

in its sixtieth year (1944-2004) (Değirmencioğlu, 2007:87).

According to the American economist Herbert Stein, "If something cannot continue, it will stop." It is clear that the US cannot continue with its current policies and economic structure (Perry, 2018: 52-54). Unrivaled power has begun to prepare its own end. The US's economic, military, technological, and political superiority may continue in the next twenty to twenty-five years. Still, with the increasing power of its rivals (EU, the People's Republic of China, Russian Federation, India) and with the effect of anti-US sentiment in world public opinion, it is considered that the powers will be more balanced over time (Değirmencioğlu, 2007: 91).

The hegemonic entity, which can be defined as the Western or Euro-Atlantic structure, makes move after move to delay the decline and collapse in the inevitable global leadership war. In a press conference with the NATO Secretary General, Biden's use of the words "NATO instead of Finnization of Europe", making a scathing reference to the Finnish model, which means neutrality policy in European security jargon, summarizes the situation. Now the Third World (Hybrid) War has officially begun. States are taking positions; the ranks are becoming clearer. The situation is not much different from the polarization of the First and Second World Wars (Gürdeniz, 2022).

**Today's world is too complex for a single nation to rule. Although the US has won the wars it entered militarily, it has not reached the desired end state.**

To increase its dominance on the Asian continent in the face of rising powers, the US has begun to participate more in the alternative formations it has built outside of NATO. While the US guarantees its national security with the new formations QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and AUKUS, which it tries to establish by collaborating with its allies in the Asia Pacific region in the face of the rising Chinese threat, it tries to limit the movement area of the rising or rival powers (Tokatlı, 2022: 80). New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam later joined QUAD, which consisted of Australia, India, Japan, and the US. AUKUS, on the other hand, consists of Australia, the US, and England (Martynova,

2023; Upadhyaya, 2022). Although AUKUS is a tripartite military agreement between these three states, it has not yet become an alliance. This agreement complements ANZUS, the military alliance between Australia and the United States in force since 1951, while excluding New Zealand, which has denied nuclear ships access to its territorial waters under the nuclear-free zone policy implemented in 1984 (Cheng, 2022).

Concerning NATO's survival, forecasts are primarily influenced by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War and a potential Asia-Pacific war involving China. Given this new strategic vision of NATO, two major events are likely to significantly impact how the organization will evolve in the future. The first is that NATO will continue to function due to the US alliance with the EU and NATO during the Russia-Ukraine War. The fact that Sweden and Finland started the process of joining the organization as soon as the conflict started is an indicator of this (Akdeniz, 2022: 16). This process is envisaged to equip fourteen members with USSR weapons (many of which were once part of the USSR), to equip potential new members with Western/NATO weapons, and to be completed in fifty years, given the life-span of these weapons. This growth will undoubtedly depend on the US maintaining its place as the dominant power in the world. Although it seems unlikely, the EU is far from achieving the goals set out in its strategic orientation and the creation of a European Army. Although China, its biggest global rival, is very close, it has not yet been able to prevent the US desire to rule the world militarily. The second potential development concerns the problems that all major organizations may experience due to disorder. In this context, the division or disintegration of NATO is the most important question (Akdeniz, 2022:16).





## Conclusion

The US's distrustful behavior towards NATO's EU member states has accelerated the efforts to create a new European Security Architecture autonomous from the US. The Strategic Compass, issued to direct the activities, continues the efforts to create an autonomous military force. While discussing the future of NATO after the Ukraine-Russian War, it is considered that the shaping of the EU security architecture will gain momentum. NATO will not have much importance for the United States after the problems with Russia are somehow resolved. Both its financial resources and the difficulties it faces as a global power can pull the US out of the hegemonic seat of power. Western countries are also aware of the approaching reality, and it can be said that

they can gradually increase their efforts to return to a Europe without the US. Due to the administrative difficulties brought about by the seventy-three years of NATO's life, it can now be predicted that such organizations with broad participation, especially those for security purposes, may be replaced by regional and smaller organizations.

If England is considered the master of diplomacy in the West, then China is the master of diplomacy in the East. In the last hundred and ninety-five years, the country that has participated in or started the most wars and conflicts in the world is England, the symbol of Western civilization. China ranks tenth in initiating conflicts and fifth in participating in any of them (White, 2017; Henrich, 2020). In general war tendency, England ranks first, the US fifth, and China tenth (Akgül, 2015: 503-510).

As a temporary solution, it is reasonable to assume that China will refrain from engaging in such a war until it reaches a certain level of naval and air competency. The United States can put pressure on NATO, even if it is inappropriate for NATO to take any action that provokes China. A closer relationship between China and Russia could emerge due to political pressure from the United States and potentially NATO. This could lead to a return to bipolarity in the world. 🌸

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> NATO's Seven Strategic Concepts define the Alliance's strategy and outline NATO's enduring purpose and nature, its key security tasks, and the challenges and opportunities it faces in a changing security environment. It also identifies elements of the organization's approach to security and provides guidelines for its political and military adaptation. The first Strategic Concept was published in 1949, the second in 1950, during the Korean War, the third in 1954, the fourth in 1966, the fifth in 1991, the sixth in 1999, and the seventh in 2010. Finally, another document was published in 2022, called the New Strategic Concept.

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Editor-in-Chief of the Russian National Defense Magazine  
**Igor Korotchenko**

# “Türkiye-Russia cooperation determines the course of developments in Eurasia”



*Russian journalist and military expert Igor Yuryevich Korotchenko is the Editor-in-Chief of the magazine National Defense and the founder and director of "World Arms Trade Analysis Center" LLC. He has been a member of the Public Council of the Russian Ministry of Defense since February 8, 2012. Between 2012 and 2013, he served as the Chairman of the Public Council of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. Igor Yuryevich Korotchenko is also a retired colonel.*

"From Russia's strategic alliance perspective, driven by a healthy pragmatism, Türkiye can always be seen as a reliable partner. Today, the two most important actors determining the course of economic and political events in Eurasia are Russia and Türkiye. These two countries have achieved political and economic stability in the Black Sea, so the view that Russia and Türkiye need to form a geopolitical alliance is very popular. Today, the conditions for further strengthening Turkish-Russian cooperation are developing. In addition, regarding the fight against international terrorism, joint counter-terrorism exercises of the Russian and Turkish Special Operations Forces should be held."

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**Russian National Defense Magazine Editor-in-Chief Igor Korotchenko answered Kubilay Çelik's questions.**

### **NATO's Expansion Threatens the World Peace**

*What do you think are the primary and secondary objectives of NATO's enlargement policy since 1991?*

**Igor Korotchenko:** We see NATO constantly expanding. First, instead of maintaining a neutral line between Russia and the NATO bloc, this expansion is taking place on the territory of the former Warsaw Pact countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Looking at it, we see that NATO is the source of all problems. They have been busy pushing their military bases towards the Russian border for three decades. Countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia became part of NATO. Recently, Finland was accepted into the NATO ranks.

The struggle in Ukraine is taking place as a result of this crisis. The reason for this is again Ukraine's desire to become a part of NATO. That's

why NATO's war machine spreads like a cancerous tumor worldwide. This certainly threatens both Russia and other countries.

### **NATO's Deception and the Political Mistake of the Russian Leadership in the Past**

*Russia was shown among NATO's partner countries after 1994 and was not considered a threat in NATO texts until 2014. What do you think was the purpose of this policy of the US and NATO?*

**Igor Korotchenko:** Igor Korotchenko: This was a hoax by NATO so that Russia would not resist the alliance's expansion. NATO named Russia a different kind of partner and proposed various cooperation programs. When Russia asked why NATO was expanding, it replied that it was for the fight against international terrorism. Thus, NATO deceived Russia.



Azov Battalion with NATO, Ukrainian, and Nazi flags. (QQ, 2022)

And today, the North Atlantic Alliance has landed on Russian borders, and NATO has no reason to hide its aggressive ambitions anymore. NATO sees Russia as a military enemy. NATO wants to enter a new and large-scale war with Russia and destroy it.

Unfortunately, the Russian leadership at the time believed in NATO's promises of partnership. This was a huge political mistake. This results from insufficient work by Russian intelligence and Russian security officials. Ultimately, this was a successful disinformation operation led by NATO. Indeed, NATO ensured that Russia was not opposing NATO enlargement in the most active way possible. Therefore, unfortunately, as a result of this deception, the strategic situation of Russia today on its western and southern borders has seriously deteriorated.

*After Russia intervened in Ukraine, it seems Washington followed a policy to revive NATO, especially to force Europe to act with the United States. How does the Ukraine crisis relate to the NATO enlargement initiative? What kind of*

*assessment would you make when you compare the goals of the US and the results of Russia's intervention?*

**Igor Korotchenko:** This was a special military operation against NATO and the political power's continued actions to destabilize the region after signing a peace agreement with the political power and documenting that Ukraine would never become a NATO member. In other words, everything has been tried to resolve the crisis peacefully. However, the US put pressure on Ukraine. As a result, Ukraine declared its allegiance to the West, avoiding any political negotiations with Russia.

Russia wanted to negotiate the Ukraine issue with the US and made many requests to discuss the emerging issue in Ukraine politically. However, no one wanted to seek a diplomatic solution to the situation. Under these conditions, Russia had no other option but to launch a military operation. Of course, the Ukraine crisis is linked to the enlargement of NATO. The culprits behind the events in Ukraine

are the US and the Zelensky government.

Today, NATO and Washington are creating problems for Russia by paying for extremist ideas that are the enemy of all humanity and by trying to ensure NATO's eastward expansion. Alongside the countries of the former Soviet Union, NATO plans to lure Ukraine, Sweden, and Moldova into the North Atlantic Alliance.

### Interaction with Türkiye in the Fields of Energy and Economy will be Expanded

*How do you evaluate the attitude of Europe in the current crisis, which has an interest in cooperating with Russia on many issues, especially energy? Do you think European countries will continue their current policies? What changes are you expecting?*

**Igor Korotchenko:** The US sabotaged the pipelines between Europe and Russia with its special operations. It damaged Russia's energy cooperation with Europe by damaging the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 lines. The European Union is reevaluating its gas supply from the US. This will be liquefied natural gas. The US aims to have a European economy that is not more competitive compared to the American economy.

Presently, it is unlikely that Russia's and Europe's energy disputes will resume in the coming years. Yes, we continue to supply oil and gas today, but this supply is significantly limited by the ceiling prices set as part of the relevant European Union decisions. Therefore, Russia will redirect oil and gas supplies from the European market to Asia, especially China and India. These regions will be our most important buyers.

With the initiative of President Putin and President Erdogan, Türkiye's transformation into an energy distribution center was supported. We are interested in expanding the scope of economic and energy interaction with Türkiye. Thus, Russian gas and Russian oil enter Türkiye. And now, these fuels continue to be distributed to other suppliers through Türkiye. This results from Türkiye's geopolitical and strategic superiority in the world.

### Türkiye and Russia should Cooperate for the Security of the Black Sea

*Being a NATO member, Türkiye also maintains a policy of friendship with Russia. How would you evaluate Türkiye's position in terms of US aims and Türkiye's actions?*

**Igor Korotchenko:** Türkiye is a country with great opportunities and a strong economy that is shaping the new economic reality. In my opinion, the economic relations between Türkiye and Russia are driven by a solid pragmatism that also comes from the past of Turkish and Russian diplomacy. Türkiye's participation in economic sanctions against Russia will primarily harm the Turkish economy. For this reason, the Turkish state is actively developing its projects in Russia instead of imposing any sanctions against Russia. First, Türkiye supplies several products we cannot buy on the European market. Apart from that, Russia is building a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu, Türkiye. Russia, on the other hand, sees Türkiye as an important partner in the field of military-technical cooperation. Therefore, if Türkiye cannot buy American F-16 and F-35 fighter jets, Russia's Su-35s and Su-57s will be an alternative to the American supply.

From Russia's strategic alliance perspective, Türkiye can be seen as an ever-reliable partner driven by healthy pragmatism. Today, Russia and Türkiye are the two most important actors determining the course of economic and political events in Eurasia. These two countries have unequivocally ensured political and economic stability in the Black Sea. For this reason, the view that Russia and Türkiye need to form a geopolitical and strategic alliance is very popular.

Today, the conditions for further strengthening Turkish-Russian cooperation are developing. And, of course, we hope that Türkiye will gain strong momentum in political and economic development with the healing of the wounds caused by the terrible earthquake in Türkiye. Russia is eager to develop a relationship that Turkish leaders will be ready for. Therefore, we evaluate the future of Russian-Turkish relations extremely positively. Yes, Türkiye is a NATO member country, but this does not prevent Ankara from actively maintaining and advancing its relationship with Russia. I think providing the necessary conditions for Russia and Türkiye to carry out bilateral naval maneuvers to ensure security in the Black Sea would be beneficial. In addition, taking into account the fight against international terrorism, joint counter-terrorism exercises of the Russian and Turkish Special Operations Forces should be held.

### **Russia-China Cooperation will Develop to Deter the US**

*Russia and China are considered threats in NATO's last strategic concept, adopted in 2022. On the other hand, Russia and China are also strengthening their relations more and more.*

*How would you evaluate Russia and China's separate and joint policies against the hegemony of the US?*

**Igor Korotchenko:** The US considers Russia and China enemies. Therefore, Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow and meetings with President Putin were extremely important. An agreement was reached on the strategic partnership concept. It was decided not to be a military ally but to manage security efforts in a certain manner of coordination based on mutual benefit. This continuation of joint military patrol missions will help Russia establish a strategic aviation and missile attack warning system. This partnership involves exchanging intelligence information and strengthening economic cooperation, including military technical cooperation. Therefore, the alliance between Moscow and Beijing will deter the US, weaken US hegemony, and ensure that the US behaves reasonably when making political and economic decisions.

*Do you think there is a danger of nuclear war? If so, how can this be avoided?*

**Igor Korotchenko:** Of course, the existence of conditions that can create this situation is a fact. The only way Russia can avoid nuclear war is to balance the military power of the United States and impose financial impossibilities against its current aggressive mentality. Today, only Washington has the potential to retaliate against Russia. Therefore, the mission of the Russian nuclear forces is a peacekeeping mission that will protect our world from the Third World War and the nuclear threats that the United States may deploy. 🌸



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# China-NATO Relations: History and Reality



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**YI SHAOXUAN \***

Master's Student  
Shanghai University

**YANG CHEN \*\***

Assoc. Prof.  
Shanghai University

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*\*Yi Shaoxuan is a master's candidate majoring in Political Science at the College of Liberal Arts and a research assistant at the Center for Turkish Studies at Shanghai University. Her research fields include China-Türkiye Relations and Turkish Election Politics.*

*\*\*Yang Chen is an Associate Professor in the Department of History of Shanghai University's College of Liberal Arts and Executive Director of the Centre for Turkish Studies at Shanghai University. He has published two books about Türkiye and several papers in journals such as Critical Sociology, Sociology of Islam, Belt & Road Initiative Quarterly, and Arab World Research. His main research areas are political Islamic movements in Türkiye, party politics in Türkiye, Türkiye's foreign policy, and China-Türkiye relations.*

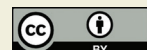
E-mail: [ycwf2008@163.com](mailto:ycwf2008@163.com)

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4840-6427>

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past 70 years, the relationship between China and NATO has undergone the following stages: isolation and hostility (1949-1972), strategic collaboration (1972-1989), political opponents (from 1989 to early 21st century), and engagement and dialogue (2002-2020). After the Cold War, NATO continued to develop towards globalization. Its policies and actions gradually extended from the Euro-Atlantic region to the Middle East, Central Asia, and Asia Pacific, intervening in Asian affairs. With the United States' strategic contraction from the Middle East and withdrawal from Afghanistan, the "Asian version of NATO" has become a tool created by the United States to curb China's rise. However, EU countries, India, ASEAN, Japan, and others may not necessarily remain united with the United States. China will continue to develop itself, but at the same time, it will also maintain cautious contact, dialogue, and cooperation with NATO.

**Keywords:** China, great power competition, NATO, United States, Asia version of NATO

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## Introduction

AFTER THE COLD WAR, DUE TO THE disintegration of the Soviet Union as its biggest rival, NATO faced a crisis of legitimacy. To this end, NATO began to shape new legitimacy through transformation. In this process, NATO began to attach importance to member expansion and non-traditional security challenges, hoping to transform from a security community to a political community in the new international environment. In addition to military cooperation, it also provides a platform for political exchanges and consultation between the two sides of the Atlantic, with the intention of seeking new sources of legitimacy for itself.

In 2014, the relationship between NATO and Russia became tense, and in this context, China's

rise also sparked tension between the United States and its allies. The rupture of NATO-Russia relations and the intensification of Sino-US frictions have sparked debates about a "new Cold War". Within this context, the United States hopes that NATO can be a powerful tool to resist China's rise, especially to create an "Asian version of NATO" to contain China. Following this, the relationship between China and NATO has become a question worth exploring.

Under this background, this article includes the following parts: firstly, the four stages of the development of China-NATO relations; secondly, NATO's intervention in Asian affairs; thirdly, the creation of the "Asian version of NATO"; and fourthly, the impossibility of the "Asian version of NATO".

## Historical Evolution of the Relationship between China and NATO

Of the five permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations, China has the most distant relationship with NATO since they have been hostile to each other since their birth in 1949. What's more, since they are geographically distant from each other, China and NATO have long lacked direct interaction and contact. But as two important international players, China and NATO have also influenced each other explicitly or implicitly. Over the past 70 years, the two sides have had their share of hostility, collaboration, fierce clashes and communications (Ze & Wei, 2020). Yet, currently, the two face a more serious confrontation. The history of the relationship between the two sides can be broadly divided into the following phases:

### Phase One: Isolation and Hostility (1949-1972)

NATO was established in April 1949 with the aim of “keeping the Germans down”, “keeping the Russians out”, and “keeping the Americans in” (Wei, 2013). But the primary aim of the US in forming NATO was to unite the Western European countries and contain the growth of the communist movement in Europe, represented by the Soviet Union. Similarly, NATO also regarded the newly established China as a proxy for the Soviet Union in East Asia, especially since the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Then, the US declared China a ‘hostile country’ and imposed a total ban on all US exports to China, forbidding US ships from docking at Chinese ports and restricting Chinese exports to the US.

At the same time, the NATO-controlled Coordinating Committee for Export to Communist Countries formed the “China Committee” in 1952, which imposed an

embargo on China that was twice as strong as the one imposed on the Soviet Union, which was only lifted in 1957. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, its foreign policy was “one-sided” and allied with the Soviet Union. Hence, its view on NATO was entirely negative, considering it an “aggressive North Atlantic bloc” and condemning its actions.

### Phase Two: Strategic Collaboration (1972-1989)

The international situation changed significantly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Firstly, the US and the Soviet Union had reached a terrifying balance of military power. Secondly, China and the Soviet Union parted ways due to ideological differences, and there was even a possibility of war between the two sides. Thirdly, the United States was stuck in the mire of the Vietnam War and forced to implement a strategic contraction. Against this background, the visit of President Richard Nixon to China in 1972 opened the door to Sino-American contacts and brought about a major change in Sino-American-Russian relations.

At this time, China even considered that the Soviet Union had replaced the US as the greatest security threat, and its diplomatic strategy changed from “Fight with two fists” (namely, fighting the US and the Soviet Union simultaneously) to “One Battle Line, One Large Area”. One Battle Line refers to the United States, Japan, China, Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye and Europe. At the same time, one large area refers to the United States, Japan and all the countries that can be united against Soviet Union's expansionist momentum.

In 1974, Chairman Mao Zedong proposed the Three-World Theory, arguing that Europe and NATO member countries such as Canada belong to the Second World, with which China could unite.

The common need to confront the Soviet Union led China and NATO to form a de facto strategic collaboration during this period. At this time, NATO members became China's main suppliers of foreign weapons, although there was no formal correspondence between the two sides.

### **Phase Three: Political Opponent (1989-2002)**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the common ground for cooperation between China and NATO was disappearing, while a huge gap in the ideological sphere came to the fore. Sino-American and Sino-European relations cooled sharply. The US began to ban arms exports and military technology transfers to China. In particular, the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia on 8 May 1999, in which three Chinese journalists died, was the first frontal conflict between China and NATO. This incident provoked strong protests among the Chinese people and caused China's relations with NATO to fall (Xiong, 2000). In addition, low-level official contacts that had been maintained until then were broken. Russia also changed its Soviet-era hostility to the West and began to seek membership in NATO. Eventually, a 'cold peace' between Russia and the West emerged as NATO expanded eastwards. Russia, as a result, gradually shifted from being entirely pro-Western to an East-West 'double-headed eagle' policy. Against this backdrop, it became a consensus between Russia and China to work together strategically to safeguard their interests.

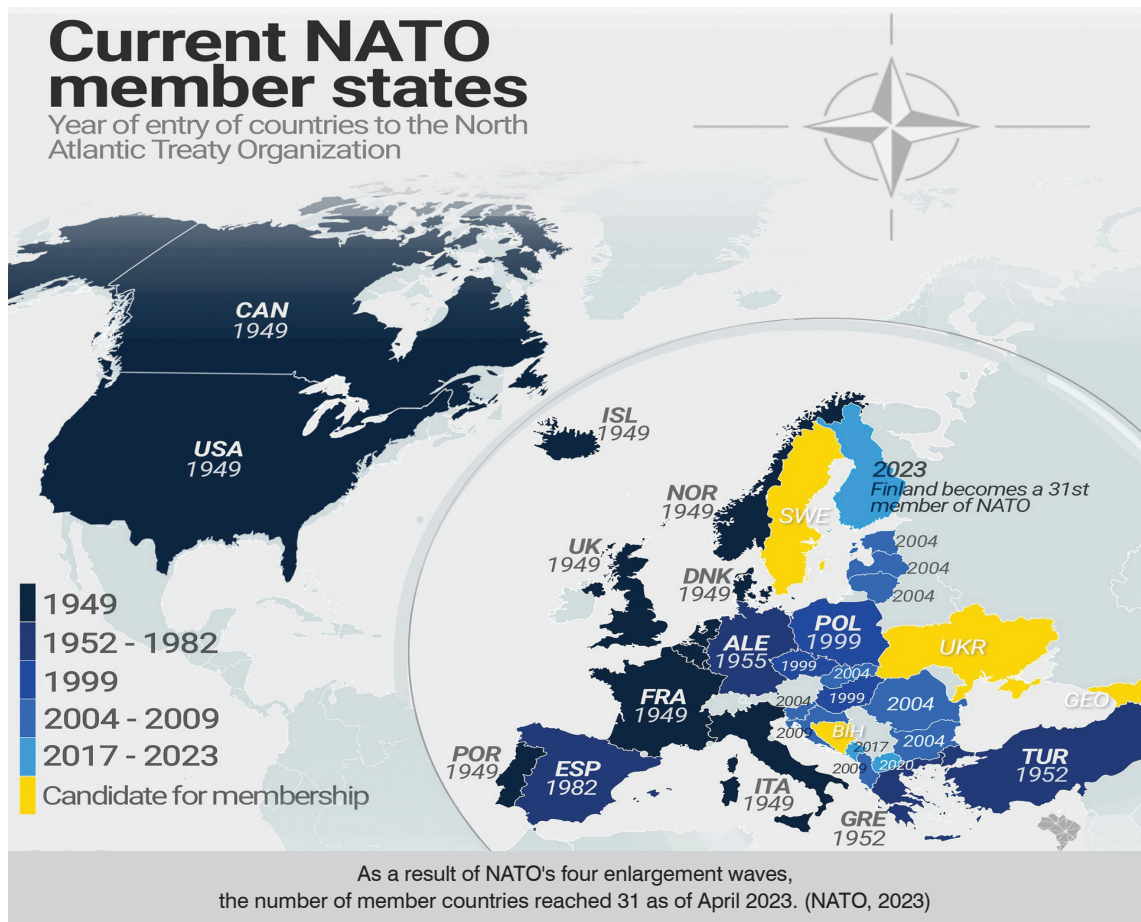
### **Phase Four: Engagement and Dialogue (2002-2020)**

After 9/11, the United States changed its perception of security threats, with terrorism and the proliferation

of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) ranked as the number one security threat to the United States. As a key tool of the US, NATO's strategy has also undergone significant adjustments. In particular, the Prague Summit of NATO in November 2002, known as the "Reform Summit", identified three main directions for reform. The first was to define a new mission, varying from a defensive military organization to a military alliance targeted against terrorist organizations. The second was to continue NATO's eastward expansion by admitting new members, including Lithuania, Bulgaria and seven other Central and Eastern European countries, into NATO in 2004. The third was to explore new capabilities and improve NATO's deployment capacity and flexible response capability. Since then, the Europeanizing, globalizing and loosening characteristics of NATO have become increasingly evident.

Using the US's anti-terrorism goals, Russia expressed goodwill to the US and improved its relations with NATO. Russia and NATO signed the Rome Declaration on 28 May 2002. The two established the NATO-Russia Council, with NATO offices in Moscow and Russian officials working in the NATO headquarters. After 9/11, the US changed the terms of its positioning of China as a strategic competitor and instead considered China a key partner in the fight against terrorism (Xue, 2021). The US-led NATO has repeatedly expressed its willingness to engage in security dialogue with China.

Given that diplomacy with the US is of top priority, China and NATO have begun to engage and communicate. This is conducive to boosting trust between China and the US, preferable to China's security and stability to its west, and beneficial to China for playing a greater role through multilateral diplomacy. As of 2020, the two sides have held their ninth China-NATO political consultation meeting. Of course, China's association with NATO in this period is still in its infancy.



### The Transformation of NATO and NATO's Involvement in Asian Affairs

After the end of the Cold War, NATO faced a crisis of legitimacy with the disappearance of the Soviet Union. To maintain NATO as a tool of US supremacy, adding new defense functions and geographical defense areas was necessary to eliminate the legitimacy crisis brought about by the decline of traditional threats (the Soviet Union or Russia). In the aftermath of 9/11, non-traditional security issues such as terrorism and drug-related crime occurred frequently. Such incidents are not only concentrated in Europe and the United States,

thus providing an opportunity for NATO operations to move beyond the traditional NATO defense areas and to realize the concept of “globalization”. This manifested in two ways. Firstly, NATO member states or partnership countries gradually extended beyond Europe to the neighboring non-European countries. Secondly, NATO’s extra-territorial operations changed from “Europe’s homeland defense” to “dealing with global crises”.

NATO is a transatlantic alliance; hence its Asian policy is not aimed at creating or reshaping Asia’s political and security architecture. Rather, it is aimed at responding to various problems arising in Asia and forming certain rules and mechanisms. Those are essentially complementary to the Euro-

Atlantic political and security framework. Therefore, based on NATO's security strategy and the level of significance of different parts of Asia to NATO's security interests, NATO's Asian policy is mainly focused on three sectors: the Middle East, Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific.

### **NATO's Central Asia policy is more out of geopolitical consideration than a real threat.**

NATO's involvement in Asia is mainly reflected in two major areas: On the one hand, to participate in peacekeeping, counter-terrorism and reconstruction missions in Afghanistan under the mandate of the United Nations. On the other hand, to establish and strengthen security cooperation with its Asian partners through multiple mechanisms, for instance, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council mechanism, the Mediterranean Dialogue mechanism, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative mechanism and the Global Partnership Mechanism (Dong, 2020).

For the Greater Middle East, NATO has proposed the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. It was because the Middle East has historically been the greatest source of instability along the Mediterranean coast, the Arabian Peninsula and the Eurasian continental plate. It is also the region with the highest number of conflicts globally. Particularly since the Arab Spring, the Middle East has been plagued by refugee problems, illegal immigration, terrorist attacks and international criminality. The above problems directly affect peace and stability in the Middle East and indirectly constrain NATO's efforts to build a Euro-Atlantic regional security order. Therefore, NATO needs to contain the contradictions and

conflicts in the Middle East region and control and reduce the security threats that fundamentally challenge NATO.

To this end, NATO's policy for the Middle East region mainly includes the following elements. First, continue solidifying the security alliance between NATO and Middle East allies, partner countries and dialogue countries, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other countries, utilizing economic and military assistance to maintain an effective political and military presence. Second, to minimize or weaken the heterogeneous forces in the Middle East, including Syria, Iran and other countries, various terrorist organizations and extremist religious organizations. So that in that case, they cannot directly or indirectly threaten NATO and interfere with certain major strategic decisions of NATO in the Middle East. Third, it will continue to combat traditional and non-traditional security threats in the Middle East and eradicate the breeding ground for terrorism, refugee problems, illegal immigration and piracy from the source. In other words, to eliminate the various conflicts in the Middle East.

For the greater Central Asian region, NATO's policy can be concluded as such: to actively combat various terrorist forces in Central Asia, to form a strategic hold on Russia, to form a deterrent to Iran, and to form a strategic constraint on the western region of China. Therefore, NATO's Central Asia policy is more out of geopolitical consideration than a real threat and focuses on two aspects. On the one hand, it has started a war against terrorism in Afghanistan and cooperated with Central Asian countries to combat various extremist and terrorist forces. On the other hand, it has used the war in Afghanistan to establish military bases in many Central Asian countries and maintain a long-term military presence in Central Asia.



Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea were invited to the NATO Summit held in Madrid in June 2022. (China Daily, 2022)

For the Asia-Pacific region, as it is far away from NATO and NATO's core security interests, its previous policy towards the Asia-Pacific region is more cautious and restrained. Rather preventive security policies are formulated due to this reason. For one thing, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand were included in the "Partnership for Peace" program, making them NATO partner countries. These countries have also interacted frequently with NATO and have gradually become the driving force behind the implementation of NATO's Asia-Pacific security strategy. Their actions have made a difference in the strategic shape of the Asia-Pacific region. On the other hand, NATO has also established close cooperation with China's neighboring countries, such as supporting Mongolia to become a NATO partner country and holding military exercises with Mongolia, with the obvious intention of exercising strategic restraint against China and Russia.

It is clear from the above that NATO's Asian policy is still fragmented and does not form a complete and mature system but only a complement to the Euro-Atlantic regional security policy. Nonetheless, although NATO's Asian policy ostensibly advocates political and security cooperation, it has always emphasized competition and confrontation. The policy and its practice have had a certain impact on Asia's political and security landscape and, to a large extent, have contributed to the continued local adjustment of the Asian strategic landscape.

### **"China as Primary Rival" and the Creation of an Asian Version of NATO**

Since 2010, Sino-US relations have been characterized by ups and downs, with more competition than cooperation. The Obama administration launched a series of strategies to contain China, including the "Return to



Asia-Pacific” and “Asia-Pacific Rebalance”. It had given the cold shoulder to China’s proposal for a “new type of major power relationship between China and the US”. A major debate took place in the US about the threat of China and how to contain its rise, and an anti-China strategic consensus gradually emerged in the US. After taking office, Donald Trump launched a new wave of accusations and attacks on China, launching a trade war and introducing documents and bills that explicitly refer to China as the main threat to the US. It has been trying to position China as a “revisionist state” and treating the US-China relationship as a strategic rivalry (US Department of Defense, 2019). Under the new Biden administration, the US launched a concerted campaign of repression against China, with a four-pronged approach: human rights, security, economy, science and technology, further continuing the competitive dynamic between the US and China (Feng & Hua, 2022).

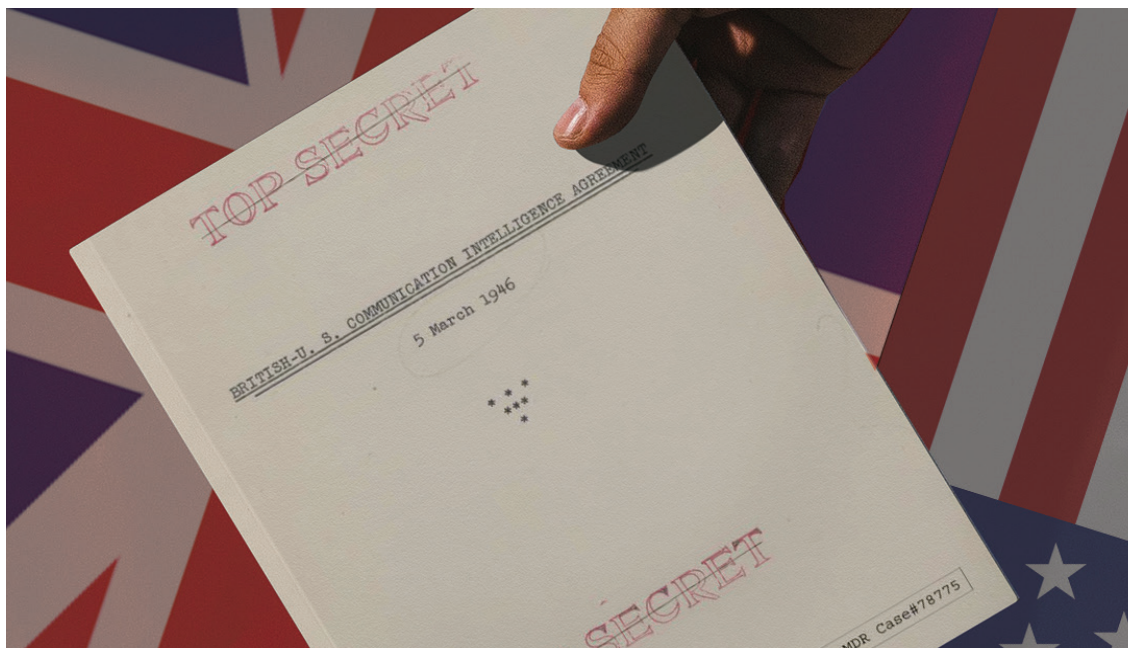
**With a strategic retreat from the Middle East and a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the US is focusing on creating an Asian version of NATO to contain China.**

The deterioration of US-China relations as a tool for the US pursuit of world hegemony has also led NATO to increase its hostility towards China. In June 2021, NATO members listed China as a security threat for the first time in a communiqué, saying its “overt ambitions and overconfident behavior as a systemic

challenge to the rules-based international order and security-related areas of the alliance”. In an interview, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reiterated that countries, including China, are challenging NATO interests, security, and values. He also stated that Beijing uses economic leverage, coercion, and mixed means to advance its regional interests (Wei, 2022). On 11 April 2023, Jens Stoltenberg also said that China refused to condemn Russia, responding to Russian “propaganda” and helping Russia boost its economy. This is a tendentious political discourse that attempts to equate China with Russia and ties it to Russia, NATO’s “main rival for the decade”.

With a strategic retreat from the Middle East and a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the US is focusing on creating an Asian version of NATO to contain China. In contrast to the previously fragmented nature of NATO’s involvement in Asian affairs, the current process of NATO’s Asianization has entered a phase of organization building.

Since 2020, the four-nation security dialogue organized by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) has been escalating. Interactions at the level of foreign and defense ministers were established and gradually extended to bilateral and multilateral coordinated military exercises in the security field. The aim is to highlight the military presence and deterrence and gain more geopolitical benefits by bringing the Philippines and Vietnam into the South China Sea and establishing the “QUAD+” mechanism. In non-traditional security, especially in science and technology security and bio-pharmaceuticals, they are trying to establish supply chains and industrial chains that exclude China (Xing, 2022).



On March 5, 1946, the United States and the United Kingdom signed the UKUSA, known as the Five Eyes Agreement, which includes electronic intelligence cooperation between the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023)

The Australia-UK-US “Trilateral Security Partnership” (AUKUS) program claims that the US, UK and Australia will strengthen cooperation in nuclear submarines and promote information and technology sharing in high-end military areas. This regards areas such as hypersonic weapons, cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technology and other undersea technology cooperation (The Chinese Embassy in the UK, 2023). The US, UK and Australia’s submarine program clearly intends to provide an underwater blockade of China’s maritime power against China’s increased influence in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. This is a breach not only of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) but also of maritime peace in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is no coincidence that the Five Eyes Alliance has a clear anti-China bias in information security. For example, the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have all banned Huawei and ZTE from

their 5G communications networks and pressured other countries to make similar decisions. At one point, there was talk of the intelligence-sharing group forming a “three-eyed alliance” between the US, Japan and South Korea in East Asia (Beijing Daily, 2023). It was reported that the president of South Korea and the United States will sign a document in Washington on April 2023 to strengthen cyber security cooperation between the two countries, build a U.S.-Korea intelligence alliance, and discuss the inclusion of Japan in the future. This means a “three-eyed alliance” between South Korea, the United States, and Japan is on the agenda, according to South Korean media. If the US succeeds in mobilizing the intelligence agencies of Japan and South Korea to serve the US strategy and form an alliance with them, the first thing they will investigate is the confidential information of the neighboring Asian countries, and the implications for China are self-evident.

The essence of the United States trying to establish the “Asian version of NATO”, or “NATO Asia”, is to require the relevant countries and regions to serve its own strategic planning. Furthermore, it allows the United States to intervene in their internal affairs and interfere with their sovereign independence. The most common means of achieving this are exploiting Japan’s fear of the Chinese threat, Taiwan’s desire for independence, the hostile dynamics between North and South Korea, and establishing military cooperation agreements to tie more Asian countries to the US chariot.

For example, the “factual list of U.S.-Taiwan relations” on the US State Department website has been substantially updated to remove phrases such as “Taiwan is part of China” (Lei, 2022). It also promotes the deepening of relations between Japan and Taiwan. In addition, it has used the Sino-Indian border dispute to draw India into confrontation with China and renamed its Asian strategy the “Indo-Pacific Strategy”, highlighting the importance of India. In the end, South Korea and Singapore are seen as potential allies and a “new NATO” in Asia is established with the US allies as the core.

### **Will the “Asian Version of NATO” be Successful?**

At the Madrid summit in June 2022, NATO leaders formally adopted a new Strategic Concept, which is second in importance only to the North Atlantic Treaty. The document states that the core assumptions underlying the 1991, 1999 and 2010 NATO Strategic Concepts have been broken down. In particular, the view that the Euro-Atlantic region is at peace, that there is no global power competition and that the international security order is predictable and cooperative no longer fits the current security environment (Cai, 2022).

The main factors posing a shock to NATO’s security are the following: First, the rise of China is driving the shift of global power from the Euro-Atlantic region to the Indo-Pacific region. Second, accelerating scientific and technological innovation will affect NATO’s collective defense capabilities. Third, climate change, food security and other non-traditional security challenges impact NATO’s crisis management. Fourth, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has led to various complex challenges facing NATO. For this reason, NATO has the drive and demand to globalize, especially in Asian affairs, and has formed many small groups, such as QUAD and AUKUS. However, following this, the question becomes, will the US be able to do what it wants with an “Asian version of NATO”? There are several factors to consider when answering this question.

First, European countries lack a unified view of dealing with the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, especially on issues related to China (Ming & Zheng, 2020). Unlike the strategic rivalry between China and the US, China and Europe cooperate more closely and share many common interests. China is an important market and major trading partner for Europe, and the two economies are highly complementary. In the context of its sluggish economic growth, the ongoing crisis and the UK’s exit from the EU, closer economic cooperation with China is important for Europe. In addition, China and Europe have common interests in maintaining stability in the Middle East, nuclear non-proliferation, cyberspace and other international security issues, as well as in upholding multilateralism, combating climate change and providing international public goods. More importantly, Europe also advocates strategic autonomy from NATO and US control, which is crucial for Europe to become a strategic force in the international landscape.

Secondly, changing the US “Asia-Pacific Strategy” to the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” signals that relying on previous allies alone will not achieve the goal of containing China and that India must be brought into the picture. However, India is precisely the shortest part of the US Indo-Pacific strategy, and Russian-Indian relations constitute an important constraint if it is to truly pursue the goal of “Breakaway from Asia and stand with the US” (Juan, 2022).

### **Japan, India, and Australia, whose number one trading partner is China, have no real fears of a military invasion by China.**

Besides, India’s views and interests do not coincide with those of the United States, Japan, Australia and other countries on many issues. India is not deeply involved in issues such as the South China Sea and Taiwan. Regarding climate change, India and China, both developing countries, have very similar positions. On high-end technologies, while India is reluctant to adopt Huawei’s 5G technology, it is also unwilling to see US technology dominate the Indian market. More importantly, India still has a tradition of non-aligned diplomacy. Although the US has brought India into the “four-nation mechanism”, there are conflicts between the US and India around economic and arms deals, which will also impact the US in building alliances.

Thirdly, China’s growing economic and trade cooperation with neighboring countries means the US will face greater resistance to the so-called “Asian version of NATO” in this region. ASEAN, which has overtaken the EU as China’s largest trading partner, is no longer the ASEAN of the 1998 financial crisis and has achieved rapid economic

development in a peaceful and stable environment. It will not willingly agree to US attempts to target China, increase regional tensions and thus weaken ASEAN’s central position (Han, 2021).

Furthermore, Japan, India and Australia, whose number one trading partner is also China, have no real fears of military invasion by China. Japan and India have historical territorial disputes with China, and it is more in their national interest to manage their differences than to confront China (Global Times, 2021). From China’s perspective, it will also strengthen its full cooperation with ASEAN, Japan, India and other Asian countries, contrasting with the US pressure on Asian countries.

Fourth, the multiple sub-groups the US uses to contain China, such as the Five Eyes Alliance, AUKUS and QUAD, may link up and create a mutually offsetting effect (Xiang & He, 2023). The NATO alliance system is hierarchical, of which the Anglo-Saxon states, namely the UK and the US, are the core. The UK and the US can help Australia develop nuclear submarines, but not India, Japan and South Korea, reminding them that they are not the core force but merely helpers or fighters. For India, Japan and Australia, the fundamental reason for their participation in the US-led “Asian version of NATO” is also to contain China, whose rise has substantially changed the distribution of power in the region. In time, if China’s strength far exceeds the overall strength of these countries, it may be time for the four-nation mechanism to end.

### **Conclusion**

The international environment facing China is not ideal, especially as the competition between China and the United States is intensifying. This is fundamentally due to the “zero-sum game” mentality of the US in dealing with relations

with the rising powers. In the face of Western repression, China cannot retreat and must “dare to fight and fight well”. Therefore, China’s attitude towards NATO is clear: it considers NATO to be a product and remnant of the Cold War, a military and political bloc under US hegemony, and one of the cornerstones of the US-dominated world order.

China opposes NATO’s eastward expansion and its constant squeezing of Russia’s security space, which it sees as the root cause of the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. China is concerned that NATO wants to include Mongolia as an alliance partner, which would increase the possibility of Western countries conducting military training close to China’s borders. China has expressed misgivings about NATO’s military presence in the Middle East and Central Asia, which threatens the security of China’s western borders. China is wary of and strongly opposes the “Asian version of NATO”, a trap for peace and stability in Asia. At the same time, however, China and NATO have maintained cautious engagement, dialogue and cooperation. While conflicts are more pronounced in traditional security areas, there is also considerable scope for cooperation in jointly addressing various non-traditional security threats.

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# NATO: From Control of the Western Territorial Line to Control of the Wider International Territory




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**EMİN GÜRSES\***

Prof. Dr.  
Sakarya University  
Yeditepe University

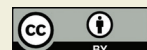
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*\*Emin Gürses was born in Rize, Türkiye. He graduated from the Institute of Education (HND, Rize, 1975–1977) and completed his B.Sc. at Marmara University (1980-1984). Gürses visited Hammersmith & West London College for a study program (1985-1988) and completed a Pg.Dip. Economic Development at the Polytechnic of North London (1988-1989). He holds an M.A. degree in Politics from the University of London (1989-1990) and a PhD degree in Politics & International Relations from Boğaziçi University (1991-1995). During his doctoral studies, he visited the London School of Economics between 1992 and 1994. He gave lectures at the University of Istanbul, Department of International Relations (1997-1998). Since 1999, he has been teaching at Sakarya University and Yeditepe University as part of the Department of International Relations. Besides, he also lectured at the National Security College. His articles include: 'Paradigms in International Relations'; 'Centrality of Central Asia'; 'Realism and Idealism in U.S. Foreign Relations'; 'Competition vs. Security in the Balkans'; 'Ankara Moscow Relations: From Solidarity to Containment', 'Geopolitical Rivalry in Eurasia, The Rise and Fall of Violent Kurdish Nationalism in Türkiye', 'Ideological Basis and Tactics of the Organized Ethnic Terrorism: The Cases of IRA, ETA, and PKK'; 'Mackinderian Geopolitics, 'NATO and Greater Middle Eastern Project', published in journals. He has published several books, including 'Anatomy of Separatist Terror: IRA, ETA, and PKK' (1997); 'Nationalist Movements and the International System' (1998), 'Human Rights Diplomacy' (2001), 'New Middle Eastern Map' (2012), 'International Relations: Theory and Practice' (2019).*

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## ABSTRACT

The US initially organized NATO, a regional military alliance, as the security pillar of the international system. It planned to regulate the power-security (economic, political, and military) problem in Western Europe and the Mediterranean according to its interests. The containment policy was a strategy pursued by the US against the Soviet Union between 1947 and 1991. The admission of Türkiye and Greece to NATO in 1952 was a continuation of the containment policy against the Soviet Union. The disintegration of the Soviet Union with the end of the Cold War also paved the way for the US to add new countries to NATO in the 1990s and 2000s. The enlargement of NATO and the policy of containment against the Soviet Union were carried out in line with the interests of the US. Especially in the 1980s, steps were taken to open and develop these markets by imposing appropriate rules. The US aimed to maintain its effectiveness in the wide European geography together with the countries it included in NATO. To meet the increasing needs of the existing market, efforts were made to open new areas in Western Europe, where NATO was established. However, a full consensus on security on the Euro-Atlantic line could not be reached. The process of assigning NATO a task to protect new areas of interest, namely all areas in which the US and some of its allies operate or want to operate, has been started following changing imperial demands. How this process develops will be determined by the attitudes of social, regional, and international actors.

**Keywords:** Containment, hegemony, NATO, territorial control, Cold War

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## Introduction

ALTHOUGH IT IS OFTEN CLAIMED THAT alliances are formed for defensive purposes, it is also noted that formation processes are structured against certain threat perceptions, including economic, political and ideological purposes. (Russett, 1971, s.262-89; Trauschweizer, 2016, s. 166-94; Fang & Johnson & Leeds, 2014, 775-809; Synder, 1999, 102-119; Synder, 1997; Osgood, 1968).

When countries enter into alliances, they

calculate that their interests will be protected among the efforts for a common purpose. It can be said that countries that think they have enough power to realize their own goals may act and enter into an alliance to reduce the cost, shorten the time, or justify the country's action through the alliance. The United States of America (US) reorganized NATO, a regional military alliance at the beginning, to organize the power-security (economic, political, and military) problem in Western Europe and the Mediterranean in a way that suited its interests after World War II.

### **The Problem of Line Security in the Cold War**

The Cold War process began when the NATO Treaty was signed in April 1949. It was clear that in this process, NATO would be controlled by the most powerful military force, the United States. Contrary to the Monroe tradition, the US, which started to become a party to the military-political-economic relations of Europe in every field with the World Wars and especially the Cold War, aimed to protect its interests first.<sup>1</sup> The admission of Türkiye and Greece to NATO in 1952 was a continuation of the policy of containment of the Soviet Union. Nine days after West Germany (German Federal Republic) was admitted to NATO, the Soviet bloc countries gathered in Warsaw on May 11–14, 1955, and the Warsaw Pact was signed on May 14 (Nogee & Donaldson, 1988, 110). The effort to expand NATO's sphere of influence was followed by the inclusion of Spain as the 16th member of NATO in 1982.<sup>2</sup> The disintegration of the Soviet Union with the end of the Cold War also paved the way for the US to add new countries to NATO in the 1990s and 2000s.

While the US was attempting to rebuild the capitalism of Western Europe, which had come to a standstill with World War II, it started to interfere directly in the internal relations of Europe by creating military-political-economic cooperation. The Marshall Plan was brought to the agenda in 1947 to keep Europe economically within the interests of the US. This plan aimed to revive the European economies under the hegemony of the US<sup>3</sup> and thus prevent possible radicalization that may occur in these areas and a shift towards

the Soviet bloc (Harman, 1999, 544).

The US emphasis on economic relations with Europe also showed that the US economy could not be isolated from the international capitalist economy, which is the reason for its existence, and that it had to be involved in the markets of developed countries. Although it was stated that the emergence of Washington and Moscow, which were in cooperation during and after the war period as representatives of two different political-economic structures, constituted the main basis of the tension in the new process, as it was understood over time, the primary cause of the tension was economic. For this purpose, in the new international system that the US wanted to build post-World War II, NATO was structured as a security organization, the UN as a political organization, and the World Bank and IMF as economic organizations.

Washington gave weight to military structuring in Europe, believing that the spread of Socialist/Communist ideology would endanger the US market in Western Europe. The deployment of US troops to Europe was intended to intervene as a player. The necessary conditions for this were created by the Cold War. Through NATO, Washington aimed to control the Western European line, where the United States had vital interests.

It was stated that NATO emerged as a result of the beginning of the Cold War, and the embargo imposed on Berlin by the Soviet Union in 1948–1949 played an important role in this. It is also stated that the United Nations reached an agreement on November 13, 1948, which was accepted by Moscow but rejected by the West. The US used helping the people who were starving due to the blockade in



Berlin for propaganda purposes and thus had the opportunity to blame Moscow. (Thomas, 1969; Rawnsley, 1999, 31).

### **Decision-makers in Washington expressed that NATO being against the Soviet Union was vital to US interests in Western Europe.**

In the report titled “Assessment of the Current Process in US Foreign Policy,” dated February 24, 1948, prepared by George Kennan, the Political Planning Director of the US Department of State at the time, to present to the Secretary of State, George Marshall, it was reminded that the US held 50% of the world’s wealth and constituted 6.5% of the world’s population. Kennan continued, stating that the duty of those who govern the US is to establish the type of relationship necessary to maintain this inequality in a way that will not harm national security in the future, and “all our attention should be directed primarily to our national goals everywhere. We should not deceive ourselves that we have the luxury of thinking of others and of helping the world” (Report by the Policy Planning Staff, 1948).<sup>4</sup>

In this report, which mentions three long-term possibilities for Western and Eastern Europe, Kennan mentions the possibility that Germany or Russia may control this geography, as well as a federal European structure, and states that it is necessary to choose a European federation that includes Western and Eastern Europe. This political tradition was brought to the fore on different occasions by decision-makers in US foreign

policy during the Cold War period. Suggesting a realistic foreign policy for the US in this period, Prof. Morgenthau also stated that, as an unrivaled superior power in the Western hemisphere, the US always strived to maintain a privileged position (Morgenthau, 1952).

Washington believed that the Soviet Union was threatening the Western European market. Decision-makers in Washington expressed that NATO being against the Soviet Union was vital to US interests in Western Europe. While Washington acknowledged that Europe’s role and responsibility would increase in the new security arrangement, he continued to emphasize that NATO would play a leading role, at least in the medium term, due to its existing organization.

In the speech of the then US Secretary of State (1989–1992), James Baker, at the West Berlin Press Club in 1989, it was stated that it was important to end the division in Europe and to maintain the relationship between the US and Europe in terms of politics, military, and economy (United States Information Service, 1989). In the same speech, Baker stated that NATO was essential for maintaining the link between North America and Europe while also suggesting that NATO was a flexible organization and could adapt to rapidly changing situations.

At NATO’s London Summit on July 5–6, 1990, the leaders of NATO countries agreed on the restructuring of the alliance (The Independent, 1990). When French President Mitterand’s idea of a European Confederation brought forward the claim that NATO could be excluded from Europe, the NATO secretary general opposed this, thinking it would pave the way for European instability.



Margaret Thatcher with other summit leaders at the 1990 NATO London Summit.  
(Akiyama, 1990)

The British foreign minister of the time, D. Hurd, emphasized that NATO was important for European security, indicating that London was of a similar opinion to Washington on the future role of NATO in Europe (NATO Review, 1990). For Washington, Britain was one of the most important guarantees of European-North American unity in Europe. Former US foreign minister H. Kissinger stated that the US should play a supportive role in the new European security system and emphasized that NATO should keep up with new developments but maintain its presence there due to possible conflicts that may arise in the European geography (Newsweek, 1989).

In the statement published in the meeting held in Brussels on January 10–11, 1994,

the leaders of the North Atlantic countries stated that they gathered for the renewal of the alliance in light of the historical change affecting the European continent and that efforts would be made to develop the European Security and Defense Identity by using NATO's facilities and capabilities (Hill & Smith, 2000, 217). The Declaration of Euro-Atlantic Cooperation was published at the Madrid meeting of the North Atlantic Council on July 8, 1997. At the meeting where the decision to invite the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to NATO membership talks, it was stated that the member states of the North Atlantic Council gathered in Madrid to shape the new NATO as it entered the 21st Century (Hill & Smith, 2000:237).

In February 2001, US President Bush (2001–2009) and British Prime Minister Blair (1997–2007) supported Bush’s European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) efforts to improve defense capability (in which NATO did not intervene).

### Europe’s efforts towards a security structure that could exclude NATO created constant discomfort in Washington.

The joint statement stated that the ESDP would be supported to the extent that it strengthens NATO’s capabilities (Terriff, Weber, Croft, & Howorth, 2001). Here, it is seen that London and Washington are not parties to a structure independent of NATO. In his speech at the European Security Policy Conference in Munich on February 3, 2001, D. Rumsfeld, the then US Secretary of Defense (2001–2006), emphasized that attempts to reduce NATO’s effectiveness would be a confusing repetition or upset the transatlantic link (Hill & Smith, 2000, 233–34).<sup>5</sup> Former US Secretary of State (1993–1997) Warren Christopher and former Secretary of Defense (1994–1997) William Perry also suggested restructuring NATO and making it a force that could intervene in situations where the common West’s interests might be harmed (Christopher & Perry, 1997).

The Prague Summit on November 21–22, 2002, was an important turning point for

NATO. At the summit, it was emphasized that NATO must prepare its forces to take action when necessary, and it was decided that effective military power is essential to maintaining security in the Euro-Atlantic region. Therefore a NATO Response Force should be established to send to the required regions. The European intervention force, which was stated to be 60 thousand people, would use NATO infrastructure, but when Greece rejected Türkiye’s request to participate in the decision-making process of this force, Türkiye opposed the use of NATO’s facilities by the European intervention force. On the other hand, a NATO intervention force consisting of 21 thousand people was brought to the table by the US. This development is important regarding the US’s efforts to keep NATO in the EU’s geography.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, the President of France (1959–1969), Charles de Gaulle, expressed doubts about relations with Washington. In his letter to the then US President Lyndon Johnson, dated March 7, 1966, France’s decision was expressed as “to ensure our full sovereignty in our geography”, “to end participation in the combined command”, “to remove the troops from NATO’s control” and “to change the form of our alliance without changing its essence” (Permanent Representation of France to NATO, 2017). Charles de Gaulle brought the French naval forces out of NATO’s control. It also gave notice to NATO to remove its headquarters from France. It withdrew its troops from NATO on June 21, 1966.



Closing ceremony of NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) facility at Rocquencourt, near Paris, on March 30, 1967. (NATO, n.d.)

This development complicated Gaullé's relations with the Washington administration. In a letter dated March 22, 1966, written in response by US President Johnson, there was a clear sense of astonishment. In his letter, Johnson wrote that it is difficult to believe in this attitude of France, which "makes a special contribution to the security and development of the West", and that "France, an old friend and ally, will be put on hold whenever France wants to assume its leading role again" (Western European Union Assembly General Affairs Committee, 1967). Eventually, France returned to NATO's military wing in 2009.

Europe's efforts towards a security structure that could exclude NATO created constant discomfort in Washington. Against this development, which may have led to the exclusion of American forces from Europe

in the medium and long term, Washington aimed to maintain its effectiveness in the wide European geography together with the countries it included in NATO in the post-Cold War period. It was seen that, in response to the efforts of France and Germany for a European-centered security structure, the UK made efforts to organize the European defense system in a way that would be integrated with NATO and that a full consensus on security could not be reached in the Euro-Atlantic line in the 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Effort to Extend the Line of Control through NATO**

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer from the Netherlands, elected the new NATO secretary general in

January 2004, stated at a press conference with US President George W. Bush that NATO could not remain neutral to the events in Afghanistan (June 29, 2004). In the statement published at the meeting attended by the leaders of the North Atlantic Council member states, it was decided to deploy the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and it was emphasized that contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan was NATO's main priority (NATO Press Release, 2004). These statements showed that NATO's fields of activity were being expanded.

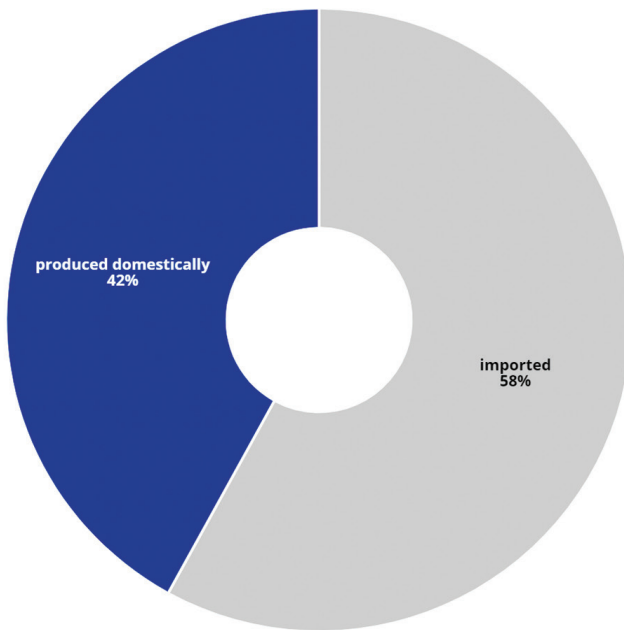
**Today, many developed European countries must meet their energy needs from other areas.**

In Western Europe, where NATO was deployed, efforts were made to open up new areas for the increasing market needs of the international capitalist economy, whose existing market was led by the US. It was brought to the agenda primarily due to its proximity to Eastern Europe's geography, which the Soviet Union controlled. Especially in the 1980s, steps were taken to open and develop these markets by imposing appropriate rules. For this reason, the idea that democracy can only happen with a free market was propagated, and attempts were made to prove it true.<sup>7</sup>

It was clear that the free market understanding would privilege imperial

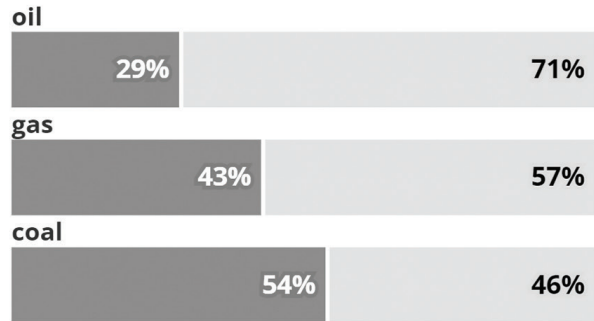
centers with a comparative advantage.<sup>8</sup> The geography of the Greater Middle East, which can also be called the Islamic geography, was also highlighted because it contains energy resources, which are the most suitable product in terms of providing the material resources necessary to maintain hegemony in the new system and therefore continue to play a vital role in the hegemony race today. It is clear that the areas where energy resources are located would play an important role in reorganizing the share taken from the system in the restructuring process that took place in the transitional periods. The sharing problem in this process led to an increase in uncertainty.

Today, many developed European countries must meet their energy needs from other areas. In the 1990s, following the end of the Cold War, Japan-centered East Asia and Germany-centered Western Europe came to the fore as centers that could be an alternative economic power to the United States. However, over time, it became clear that the dependence of these centers on foreign energy was an important problem. It was known that these power centers were shown as a risk in the 1992 Pentagon report (Tyler, 1992).<sup>9</sup> In the report, the efforts of the countries that could be an economic alternative to the US in the areas where energy resources are concentrated would have reduced their energy dependence. It was emphasized that this situation would pave the way for alternative power centers such as Germany, France, and Japan to stand on their own and act independently in world politics.



### Russia is the main provider of imported energy for the European Union

● Russia ● other



Energy production and import rates of the European Union. (Eurostat, 2020)

If Europe met its energy needs primarily from the Russian Federation, the Middle East, or North Africa and established its own army outside the control of the US, it could disrupt the international order that the US established after World War II. In 1947, the expectation of the Washington administration to be able to adequately benefit from the European market, which depended to a significant extent on the prosperity of the US and the economic standing of Europe, could have been in vain. A Europe in which Eastern Europe was controlled by Germany and North Africa was controlled by France could exclude the United States from the region or narrow its economic sphere of activity. As Dr. H. Kissinger pointed out, it could risk turning the US into an island on the edge of Eurasia

(Newsweek, 1989). The effort of the United States to control the North African and Middle Eastern markets and resources, along with the Western European and Eastern European markets, was deemed essential for the project to be successful and for the hegemony to be sustained.

America's post-Cold War regional and international activities were based on this account. NATO's turn towards Eastern Europe was related to the effort to control wider Europe. A new line of control was created towards Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Bulgaria (The New American, 2003). With the inclusion of these countries in NATO, the effort to secure this line continued. For the US, it was important to prevent Germany's efforts to control these markets and its rapprochement with Russia

by expanding its sphere of influence eastward. Dr. Kissinger expressed his uneasiness that Germany could claim a leading role in Europe and that a rapprochement with the Russian Federation might arise (Kissinger, 2001).

### **From Geopolitical Alliance to Economic Competition**

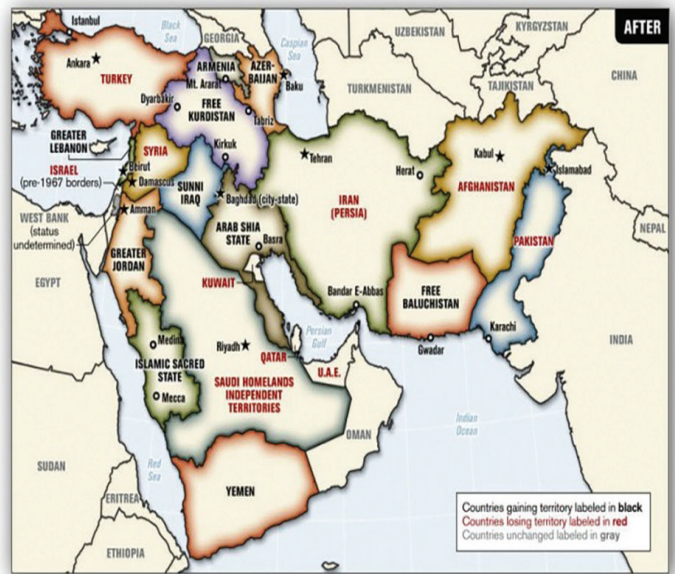
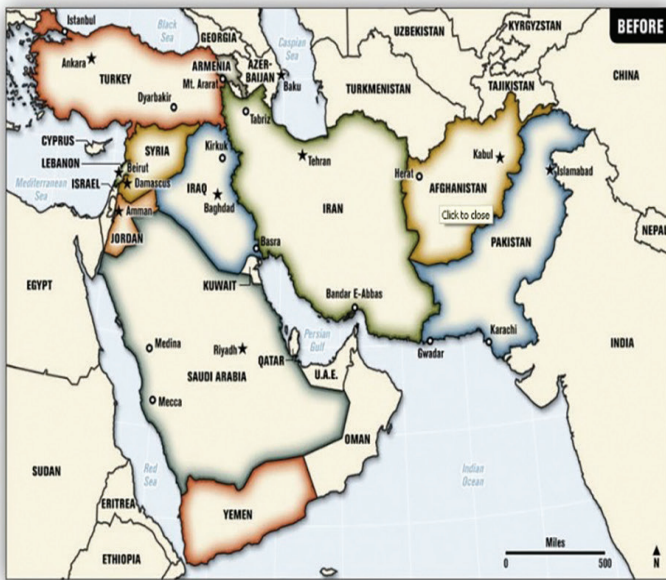
The containment policy implemented by the US against the Soviet Union during the Cold War began to be implemented against the liberal capitalist countries, which were former allies and new rivals, in the post-Cold War period, although not as harshly. In the new process, the old allies disagreed over sharing the market (O'Loughlin, 1996, 133).<sup>10</sup> The struggle was about whether the market could be controlled, and as was seen in the case of the People's Republic of China, they did not have a problem with communism as long as they kept the market open. Many who defined the Soviet Union as the devil's empire in the 1980s because it closed the market continued to have close relations with communist China.

In the strategy put forward by then-US President George W. Bush (2001–2009), the 'Greater Middle East Project' was put forward to create more freedom for the Middle East. It was envisaged that the West would support some West Asian and Arab countries, especially those with energy resources, to strive for democracy, market reforms, and human rights (A Forward Strategy for NATO, 2004). "We fight for democracy because the larger the pool of democracy, the greater our security and well-being," said Anthony Lake,

director of the US National Security Council, in 1995 (Ikenberry, 2004). On the other hand, Brzezinski said that if the democratization of the Middle East was not rushed and there was an election, bin Laden would win in Saudi Arabia (Brzezinski, 2004).

**The convergence of the EU with central and eastern European countries by expanding its borders to the east occurred at the same time as the USA expanded its influence with NATO in this region. This indicated a regional rivalry in the wider European region.**

In the 1990s, the US started discussing the Greater Middle East issue. In 1995, they established a division at Rand Corporation called the Greater Middle East. While defining this, they started from Afghanistan and drew a line that included the east of the Caspian, the Caucasus, the geography of western Asia, and North Africa. Defining the area of vital US interests as a region starting from western India and extending to the Mediterranean Sea, it was proposed to give NATO a role that includes India (Kemp & Saunders, 2003; Lewis, 1995; Lesser & Nardulli & Arghavan, 1998; Kissinger, 1994). This geography is mostly Islamic, where energy resources are concentrated. Some included the Balkans in this area. In the 1990s, they discussed the events in the Balkans and the lack of timely intervention in the conflicts as a part of Washington's effectiveness in Europe.



US Colonel Ralph Peters, in his article *“Blood Borders: How a Better Middle East Would Look Like”*, laid out the objectives of the Greater Middle East Project as shown on this map. (Armed Forces Journal, 2006)

The European countries, which needed the help of NATO and, therefore, the US, by failing to stop the civil war, facilitated the work of those in Washington trying to get involved in the region. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national security adviser of the Carter era (1977–1981), the failure of NATO here would weaken both NATO and America’s global leadership (Federici & Cafentzis, 2000, 35). With this intervention, the US could show that there was still a European power there.

The convergence of the European Union (EU) with central and eastern European countries by expanding its borders to the east occurred at the same time as the US expanded its influence with NATO in this region. This indicated a regional rivalry in the wider European region (Hardy,

1995). According to Carpenter, if the Bush administration could not prevent the growing divergence in interests and policy approaches between Europe and the US, it would have difficulty maintaining the new mission it wanted to impose on NATO (Carpenter, 2003, 511).

It started in Afghanistan after 9/11 (2001). Afghanistan is an important route for transporting Kazakh-Turkmen energy resources to the Indian Ocean. After Afghanistan, Iraq was seen as an important area of operation in the westward expansion of the Greater Middle East project. With the invasion of Iraq, Russian and French companies, which had acquired significant energy investment rights there, were excluded from the region. It was also noteworthy



that Syria and Iran aimed to prevent the connections there, and these countries were intimidated into adopting a condescending attitude towards the US (Taheri, 2003).

### **Finland's membership was made in accordance with the policy of containment of the Russian Federation.**

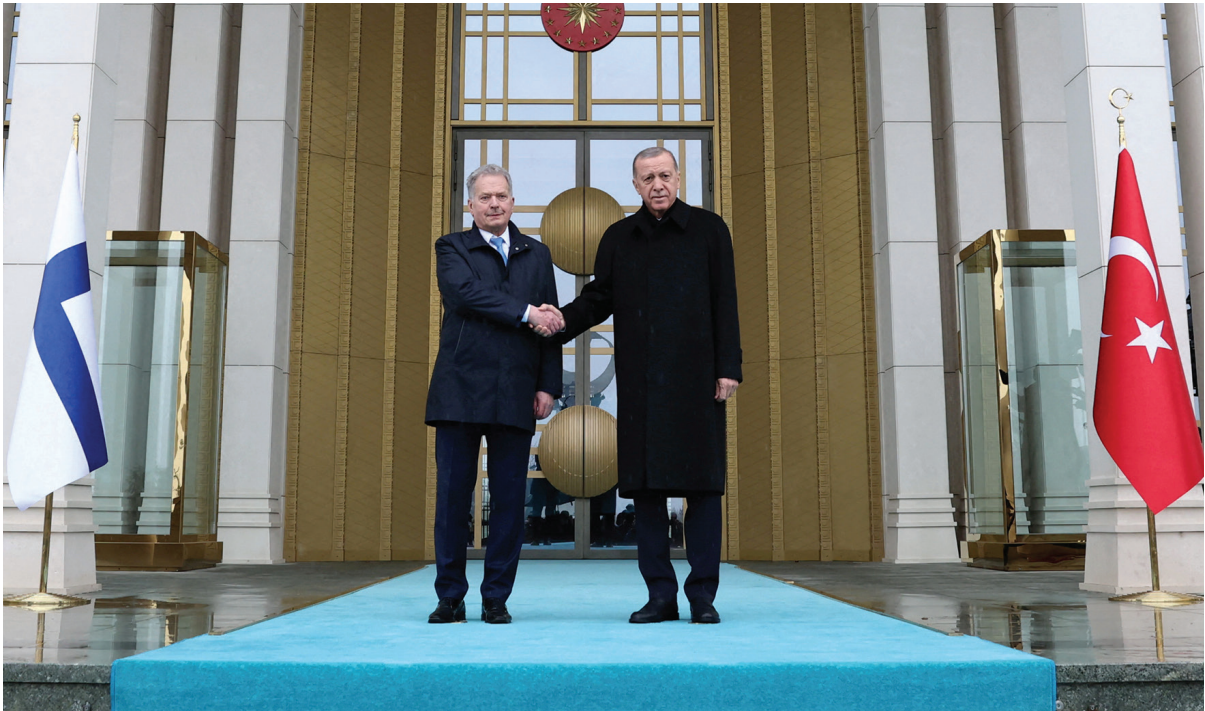
Türkiye's refusal to accept this role also impacted the idea of northern Iraq as a regional operation center. Northern Iraq's Mediterranean connection was sought. Their intense interest in Cyprus can also be considered in connection with this. A line needs to be established from the northwest of Iran to connect northern Iraq to the Caspian. Then needs to be a revolt against the Azeris or the Kurds in northwest Iran. It is known that the uprising and the repressive practices that followed have been used as justifications for humanitarian intervention. As emphasized in the Carter Doctrine, it was stated that the main purpose was to ensure US-centered control of the energy resources in the region (Carter Doctrine, 2005).<sup>11</sup> It is known that they have not been successful in these attempts, but control efforts with different methods continue.

In the article titled "The Greater Middle East Initiative," published in the March 29, 2004, Policy Brief magazine of the US-based think tank the Carnegie Endowment

for International Peace (founded in 1910), the G-8 was to be held in June 2004 under the name of the Bush administration's "Broader Middle East Initiative." It was stated that he would announce a project at the summit. The "Greater Middle East" geography included the Arab world, Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, and Türkiye. It was aimed at democratizing the region and transforming it economically and politically. In fact, it was clear that they were aiming for forms of government suitable for them. The form of government in Saudi Arabia was not mentioned (Ottaway, M., & Carothers, T., 2004).

US Republican Senator Chuck Hagel, at the security seminar titled "US, NATO, and the Greater Middle East" held in Brussels on January 23, 2004, stated that the threats to NATO come not from the big powers but from the small ones, and NATO needed to be more involved to bring stability to the Greater Middle East. Türkiye was trying to be convinced to play an important role in the Greater Middle East Project and was said to have the potential to influence this geography, as stated by Chase, Hill, and Kennedy (1996, 47).

In March 1999, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were admitted to NATO. On March 29, 2004, NATO admitted seven new countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). This brought the number of NATO members to 26. The number of members increased to 30, with Albania and Croatia (2009), Karabakh (2017), and North Macedonia (2020).



Meeting of Finnish President Sauli Niinisto and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in March 2023.  
(Presidential Press Office, 2023)

The efforts to ensure the eastward expansion of NATO planned by the Washington administration, together with some of its allies, were blocked by Türkiye's veto. With the abolition of the veto, the way for Finland's membership was cleared. It was accepted for membership on April 4, 2023. Ankara vetoed Sweden's membership application on the grounds that it protected terrorist organizations in its country. Finland's membership was made in accordance with the policy of containment of the Russian Federation. As before, Moscow stated that this development threatens the security of Russia (The Guardian, 2022; Jakarta Post, 2023).

At the Istanbul Summit, the role that NATO could play in the enlarged Middle

East with the new definition was discussed. In his speech at Galatasaray University, NATO Secretary General Scheffer stated that NATO is "no longer a passive organization for deterrence but an alliance on the move."<sup>13</sup> In his statement before the Istanbul Summit, Scheffer stated that the summit could create an opportunity for NATO to create a framework for the area stretching from the Mediterranean to the wider Middle East (Scheffer, 2004, 6).

Dick Cheney, the US Vice President from 2001–2009, also gave clues about the project in his speech at the World Economic Forum held in Switzerland on January 24, 2004. It was expressed that it was in everyone's interest to promote freedom and democracy in the Greater Middle East.

While the United States had conflicts with its former allies in its effort to secure the market and keep it out of the control of competitors, it also continued its activities against potential alternative powers such as the Russian Federation. Russia faced a containment policy around itself, and the US tried to cut its connection with Iran in the Caucasus by controlling Georgia (NATO, 2006). Georgia's efforts to be included in NATO were made to move the US control of NATO over a wider area. However, the effort of the US and some of its allies to extend NATO to the Caucasus to both expand the area of control and narrow the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation faced the reaction of Moscow (Reuters, 2008). After Russia intervened in Georgia in August 2008, the US took a step back.

**Dr. Kissinger mentioned before the end of the Cold War: "...if you fail to prevent the alliance of Germany and France, and they do ally with Russia, it will be a great disaster," in his article in Newsweek in December 1989.**

Iran saw cooperation with Russia as a counterweight to the United States. On the other hand, France continued its stance in favor of Washington to maintain its traditional influence in African geography.

Some state that the Greater Middle East Project was a positive effort to emphasize the dissemination of democracy in the region. H. Kissinger, a former US Secretary of State,

said, "The best and indeed the most sensible choice is to adapt American-style economic and political priorities for the entire world" (Kissinger, 2001, 252). This statement can be seen as an expression of an effort to seek legitimacy to justify their imposition.

After the Cold War, tensions increased as the international system was not settled. After the post-Cold War system could not be established for more than 30 years, the different powers Washington and the allies wanted to control began acting differently. On this subject, Dr. Henry Kissinger mentioned before the end of the Cold War: "...if you fail to prevent the alliance of Germany and France, and they do ally with Russia, it will be a great disaster," in an article in Newsweek in December 1989 (Kissinger, 1989). Those who thought that they would not have difficulty controlling this system calculated that the Soviet Union could not resist the US policies and that the Russian Federation and others, which took its place, could be brought to heel in the same way. However, as the new power centers increasingly put forward their demands, the Washington administration began to find it difficult to oppose them. 9/11 was thought of as an opportunity to control the new system, but this development, in which allegations were made that it occurred because precautions were not taken, did not work even though it allowed the US to intervene as far as Afghanistan through NATO (Vidal, 2002).

Due to the high costs, direct conflicts between the major countries were avoided. The power race continued to seize hegemony in the system booty through other local or regional actors.



Syrian and Russian soldiers stand guard at a military position in the recaptured neighborhood in the Eastern Ghouta countryside of Damascus, Syria, on April 1, 2018. (Xinhua/Safarjalani, 2018)

While the efforts to establish new alliances in the Eurasian geography continue, Washington, which has to intervene in everything in the unipolar system, has difficulty meeting this cost. As the reactions and resistance increased in different countries against the efforts to impose on others, the Washington administration became more aggressive in its policy of intimidation. These aggressive policies will put the United States and its affiliates in a difficult position in their international economic activities, where they gain the most. Since these developments will reflect negatively on the welfare of the country's people, they can potentially increase social opposition in their society and among their close allies.

### **The Impasse of Imperialist Policies**

In the first half of the 20th century, centrally developed countries were at each other's throats to get a bigger share of the world economy. Due to the high cost of these experiences, the major countries started to develop new methods in the sharing wars. Especially after World War II, ethnic and religious movements were used in the surrounding countries that were to be subjugated. In this way, the demands to be imposed on the surrounding countries were brought to the agenda when the governments in these countries had difficulties, especially in the face of the demands of ethnic and religious groups.

There was a constant change in the appearance of imperialism in the last quarter of the 19th century, and there were differences in its methods.

During the 20th century, although some centrally developed countries sometimes disagreed about maintaining international influence, the imperialist structure of the international system did not fundamentally change. The change is observed in the approaches and methods used. It aims to direct the opposition to the existing system to other areas. The cost of maintaining activity in the environment using an ethnic-religious card, one of the most important methods left its mark on the last quarter of the 20th century, was also high for neighboring countries such as Türkiye, which was the target of imperial impositions. It is known that the Washington administration resorts to controlled instability, using it to remove obstacles to its effort to maintain its hegemony, and uses instability and provocations when military actions are necessary for this purpose (Escobar, 2002).<sup>12</sup>

Maintaining hegemony has a cost. For this reason, central countries have entered a race over the control of energy resources. The issue of northern Iraq can be understood within this framework. Washington wants to establish new structures to help the US control the energy resources in the Gulf and the Caspian basin and establish states it can keep under its control. Efforts to create a troubled region that will have to follow policies at odds with its neighbors and, therefore, dependent on the US are being carried out in Iraq and the northeast of Syria. The existence of 261 billion barrels (estimated) of oil reserves in Saudi Arabia, 96 in Kuwait, 112 in Iraq, 93 in Iran, and 160–200 billion barrels (estimated) in the Caspian basin (also approximately trillions of cubic meters of natural gas) shows the reason for the competition of central countries in this region (Oil & Gas Journal, 2003). Developed countries,

which use the resources they transfer from the surrounding countries to satisfy some of the demands of their societies, continued to preach that the people of the developing countries can get rid of the negative conditions they are in with liberal globalization, while Kissinger expressed that globalization is another name for American hegemony (Kissinger, 1999, 7).

### **The Field of Geopolitical Competition Expands**

The geography of the Greater Middle East, stretching from Afghanistan to Morocco, as well as Eurasia, extending from Hungary to China, being part of the geopolitical rivalry, shows the relationship between geography and politics and is expressed in the political, economic, and military efforts for the control of the geographical areas where the strategic resources are located in the world. Therefore, the region has been at the center of discussions (Abu-Lughod, 1989, 343-5; Gills & Frank, 1996, 86).

In the first half of the 20th century, Germany and Britain's efforts to influence Europe were replaced by the competition between the US and the Soviet bloc in the second half of the century, as the US came to the fore as the strongest military-industrial power. In the 1990s, the strength race gained a new dimension, but it has not been completed yet. In this process, the states that want to reach their specific goals in the strength race in the international system have made an intense effort to determine which methods should be used in this race and their priorities. The world is witnessing new geopolitical competition in the first quarter of the 21st century.



Brzezinski, the national security adviser of former US president Jimmy Carter (1977–1981), emphasized the importance of Eurasia and stated that 60 percent of the world’s national income and three-quarters of the known energy resources were located in this geography (Brzezinski, 1997, 31). Brzezinski stated that as much as the US needed the whole world’s market and resources, Eurasia needed American dominance for stability and emphasized that there is an inevitable process of interdependence (Brzezinski, 1997, 36).

In today’s world, where competition is about the seizure of resources, it is seen that the control of energy resources is one of the basic conditions for ensuring international effectiveness, and it is seen that research that tries to explain geopolitical competition without reference to resources is highlighted. Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations”

is an example (Huntington, 2003, 22-49).<sup>13</sup> He argues that hegemony can be sustained through imperial solidarity. He also states that healthy cooperation with Europe will support America’s superpower position (Huntington, 1999, 48). Charles A. Kupchan from the US Council on Foreign Relations draws attention to the fact that the future clash of civilizations may not be between the US and the rest of the world but between developed Europe (Kupchan, 2002, 42-44).

The control of resources has political, military, and economic dimensions. While the effectiveness of the US at a certain regional level brings along its privilege in energy, possible rival powers such as Germany, France, and Japan have chosen to stay close to the US due to their lack of energy resources in their geographies and their lack of structures to control the regions where the resources are located.

The Russian Federation, on the other hand, continues to be an important power center with its self-sufficient resources. The Russian geostrategist Alexander Dugin published his book *Fundamentals of Geopolitics* the same year Brzezinski published his book *The Great Chessboard*. In this work, he explored the ways of a new structuring in Eurasia and thus estimated how to block US activity in this geography. He discussed an axis that included Russia, Germany, Iran, and Japan at the base of this bloc. This project highlighted Moscow's demand for a multipolar world order against the unipolar system the US had attempted to build (Dunlop, 2004, 41-57; Shlapentokh, 2001, 29-37).

**For the USA to maintain its hegemony in the international system, it is necessary to control the system's military, political, and economic pillars as they were after World War II and allocate the necessary resources for this.**

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), where a significant portion of the world's oil reserves are located, continues to be active in the world energy market as an organization dominated by Islamic countries. Developed industrial countries that are highly dependent on foreign energy (natural gas, oil, etc.) act in cooperation with the US to meet their needs. It is also noteworthy that the countries that produce the most oil in the world, such as Saudi Arabia, where Washington's effectiveness is high, sometimes try to follow an alternative

foreign policy and turn to alternative markets in the new Eurasia for oil production. However, they need US-centered solidarity in security matters.

The priorities of the US and some of its allies in international investments through international oil companies, and thus the income they provide, significantly contribute to the economic gains essential for international hegemony. For the US to maintain its hegemony in the international system, it is necessary to control the system's military, political, and economic pillars as they were after World War II and allocate the necessary resources for this.

### **NATO Expansion by Creating Crisis: The Russia-Ukraine War**

The beginning of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has created new opportunities for the US to increase the effectiveness of NATO again. In 2019, French President Macron's statement that NATO was brain dead caused discomfort in centers such as Washington (The Economist, 2019; The Guardian, 2019). However, starting in 2014, Moscow's decision to annex Crimea with a referendum and the attempt to protect the Russian population in the Donbas region started a new security debate in European geography, and in some of its reports in recent years, Washington's security strategies towards the Russian Federation were also mentioned. In the same report, it was stated that the military assistance and consultancy of the US in the Ukraine-Russia conflict could provide significant advantages in terms of increasing the expenses of Russia without causing a provocation that could lead to the spread of the conflict (RAND Corporation, 2019, 4).

The Ukraine war allowed the Washington administration to restructure NATO's effectiveness as a control mechanism in the wide European geography while putting a barrier in front of the discussions and attempts to exclude NATO from Europe (Chatham House, 2023). The US and some of its allies, who want to control the line, will want to extend their control to an area level, that is, to some parts of Eurasia and Africa, if they are successful in these efforts. In the Caucasus, when the Russian Federation blocked the control mechanism they wanted to establish through Georgia, they had to step back. It is seen that they have difficulties in Ukraine, which they have chosen as their new control area. Following Dr. Kissinger's warnings, they took an important step in blocking the rapprochement of their European allies, especially Germany, with Moscow, but as Kissinger stated, they faced new problems. Some allies, such as Washington and London, who have difficulties taking a step back, think that Russia's victory in the war would be an important step back for the United States after all NATO's efforts, as NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stated as the reason for this difficulty (Stoltenberg, 2023).

While Prof. John J. Mearsheimer also stated that the US and its European allies played a provocative role in the Ukraine issue (Mearsheimer, 2014), Kissinger, who saw the cost of the war and its risk of spreading, suggested to Zelenski and his allies to adopt a compromising stance in order to end the war (Carbonaro, 2002; Bella, 2022; Kissinger, 2014).

While the problems in relations between the US and the UK and some of their Western allies in Europe were increasing, the Chinese President Xi visited Moscow, and during his meeting with the President of the Russian Federation, Putin stated that their countries play a driving force in the geopolitical change in the world (Lemaître & Ruisseau, 2023; Ellyatt, 2023; Aljazeera, 2023). Considering that China is shown as a target after Russia in the Western press and some Western leaders' statements and that the US, UK, and Australia have established a joint military pact in the region, he sees that these developments are linked to Russia's resistance.

The US-British alliance is disturbed by the fact that India meets its energy needs, especially from Russia (Chang, 2023; Sen, 2022; Naqvi, 2023). It is because the energy cooperation between India and Russia prevents the success of the embargo against Russia. In addition to the rising social reactions in European geography, the inability to control China and Indian Prime Minister Modi's refusal to accept the termination of energy cooperation with Russia made it difficult for Washington and London to build a new international system under their control, relying on a military structure like NATO.

### Conclusion

In addition to powers such as the Russian Federation, it was pointed out that NATO could face a long-term competition problem with China and the US (The National Security Strategy of the United



States of America, 2002, 26-7; Brezinski, 1997; Kissinger, 1994, 826). The high rate of development in China increases its energy needs. It was stated that China would want more say in the geopolitical competition over oil production centers, increasing its problems with the US, which does not want partners with alternative power and resources (Segal, 1998; Ricks, 2000). The embargo imposed by the US due to its problems with Iran was evaluated as an opportunity by the Chinese administration. While China had the opportunity to sign an energy agreement with Iran, which had difficulties in the market due to the US embargo, this situation also allowed Iran to breathe economically (Fassihi & Myers, 2021).

The attitude of the Washington administration, which tries to threaten the countries of the Gulf region through Iran, has been seen as an opportunity for China. The Chinese administration used the economic relationship it established with Tehran to relieve the tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran and succeeded in bringing the two countries together. The meeting between Iran and Saudi Arabia clearly disturbed the Washington administration.

It is stated that Washington has difficulties in its efforts to control the international system. Charles A. Kupchan, who served as a member of the Clinton administration's national security council and worked at Georgetown University, stated that with the emergence of centers such as a united Europe, it would be difficult for the US unipolar system to last even ten

more years (Kupchan, 2002, 62; Baun, 2004, p. 27-38). On the other hand, it is also recommended that governments follow an increasingly intrusive policy to maintain control. Robert Kagan from the Carnegie Foundation suggested that American hegemony be preserved, and intervention should be considered before crises occur. He also stated that this is necessary to be a global superpower (Kagan, 2001).

While Washington recommends action wherever NATO interests are threatened (The National Security Strategy of the US, 2002), it was emphasized that the US always had the right to use military force in any country in the world when there was a threat to its interests (Shuia, 2004: 34). Having added Europe after World War II to the American continent, which the Monroe Doctrine essentially defined as the sphere of interest by emphasizing that Washington would act to protect US interests wherever they existed, the Washington administration redefined this sphere with the new realities that emerged after the Cold War.

The process of giving NATO a task to protect new areas of interest, namely all areas in which the US and some of its allies operate or want to operate, has been started following changing imperial demands. The US and its close allies aim to shift NATO's control areas from the western territorial line to the wider international territorial area faces great difficulties. How this process will develop will be determined by the attitudes of social, regional, and international actors. 🌸

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In his speech at Harvard University on June 5, 1947, US Secretary of State George Marshall warned that America's prosperity was due to Europe's recovery. See (LaFeber, 1989, 456)

<sup>2</sup> In 1999, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary joined, and in March 2004, Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, and Slovakia became members.

<sup>3</sup> Hegemony: A situation in which a state or a class controls its sphere of activity and other states or classes are forced to submit to the demands of the hegemonic power or class. While states are called hegemons at the world system level, classes are called hegemons within the state.

<sup>4</sup> The US Department of State Policy Planning Staff was created on May 7, 1947. Its purpose was to develop long-term policies.

<sup>5</sup> US President Bush stated they would keep US military power at a level other countries could not reach. (CNN International, 2002, December 2).

<sup>6</sup> G. Robertson, the NATO secretary general at the time, accused France, Germany and Belgium by saying that they were aiming to destroy NATO. (Buhl, 2003)

<sup>7</sup> Marc Grossman, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs at the US Department of State. In his speech, "American Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century," he said, "There is no democracy without a free market". In the same speech, Grossman stated, "The United States has never been more integrated with the global system in its history, and American power is the main key to diplomatic success." (Grossman, 2022)

<sup>8</sup> According to the charity Oxfam, developing countries face the barrier of tariffs when exporting to rich developed country markets. This is four times higher than that of rich countries. These barriers cost developing countries \$100 billion. This figure is twice the amount of aid that developing countries receive. See (Vass, 2002, 937). The debt interest paid by the economies of the developing countries is higher than the profits of the multinational companies from their international investments. See (The Guardian, 1998). According to Dicken, MNCs significantly impact integrating local economies with the global economy. This negatively affects developing countries because of the sudden changes in the world economy. See (Dicken, 1998, 276).

<sup>9</sup> When the Pentagon's 1992 Draft Defense Planning Manual was leaked to the press, it sparked considerable controversy. Paul Wolfowitz, who was the undersecretary of the defense ministry at the time, played an important role in this draft, where the main purpose was to prevent the emergence of a rival country in the former Soviet geography or anywhere, and that the geography where there are sufficient resources to contribute to the transformation of an alternative power center into a global power is a hostile power. It is emphasized that it should be prevented from passing into control. It is stated that the US strategy should focus on preventing the emergence of potential global competitors in the future (New York Times, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> According to Richard J. Barnet, the most important problem faced by the US is economic, and the source of the problem is not the Communist world but the capitalist countries (Barnet, 1990, 72).

<sup>11</sup> On September 24, 2002, US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said about the Iraq intervention: "Iraq is floating on a sea of oil." If Iraq is to be invaded, it will be because of oil, not because of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, or Saddam Hussein. (Wright, The Guardian, 2003, June 4).

<sup>12</sup> 9/11 can also be seen as the beginning of such a legitimacy process, says Vidal. See. (Vidal, The Observer, 2002)

<sup>13</sup> G. O. Tuathai says the purpose of Huntington's thesis is to turn global politics into a clash of civilizations. See. (Tuathai, 1998, 170-76).

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International Relations Expert  
**Akmaral Batalova**

## **"The objectives of the Organization of Turkic States, Russia and China are not at odds"**



*Akmaral Batalova is an expert on international relations, reporter and film producer. She is also the founder and Executive Director of the Al Farabi World Heritage Public Foundation. She was born in Almaty, Kazakhstan, graduated from the Mass Media Faculty of Kazakh State University, the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Diplomatic School of Madrid and has a Master's degree in International Relations from the Complutense University (Spain). Akmaral Batalova observes the situation in the Middle East, focusing on the humanitarian crisis in Syria, writes articles and makes documentaries and does humanitarian work in Syria*

**“US needs NATO as a military instrument to maintain and strengthen its global influence through military expansion. On the contrary, Asian countries are primarily interested in the stable development of their economies and are ready to cooperate economically with all countries. For this reason, I think that, in these conditions, where all the rules of the world order are violated, Asia is trying to create a safe future where the economies of the countries in the region can be balanced and the conditions for a peaceful environment can be provided, creating a center of gravity.”**

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**International Relations Expert Akmaral Batalova from Kazakhstan answered Ali Erdem Köz’s questions.**

*The Astana Process has achieved decisive success in resolving the Syrian crisis. What do you think is the secret to the success of this model? How would you evaluate the possibility of developing this model to solve other regional problems in the future?*

**Akmaral Batalova:** Kazakhstan is a peaceful, multi-religious, multi-ethnic country with a large Muslim population. We have established friendly relations with our neighbors in the region, even in the current conditions where many negotiation platforms established in the past have lost their neutrality. Astana Garden is excellent for everyone as an impartial negotiation platform for conflict resolution. Time has shown that other formats that emerged during the protracted Syrian crisis were ineffective and unsustainable. Phrases such as “The Astana Process,” “The Astana Guarantors,” and “The Astana Trio” have become accepted terms in international literature when discussing issues in the Middle East.

The Astana Process for the peaceful resolution

of the Syrian crisis has become a vivid example of success because, for the first time, it was possible to start direct negotiations “on the ground” between the direct parties to the conflict, the Syrian government and the armed opposition. At the same time, the guarantor countries had the opportunity to get in touch with and influence the warring parties in real terms.

I want to emphasize that the most important result of the Astana Process is the cessation of active conflict and the prevention of the deaths of many people. The agreement on creating four different ceasefire zones, signed in May 2017, helped reduce the intensity of the hostile attitude of the warring parties and spawned the process of national reconciliation.

Another feature of the Astana Process is that, for the first time in the history of international relations, negotiations for peace in the Middle East are traditionally held in the center of the Eurasian continent, not in European or Arab capitals.

The Astana format is also a unique example of how efficiently major regional actors can interact with each other: Sunni Türkiye and Shiite Iran, NATO member Ankara, and NATO rivals Moscow and Tehran.

Negotiations with the participation of parties involved in the conflicts in Syria from inside and outside played an active role in protecting Syria's territorial integrity. During the negotiation process, all guarantor countries strive not only to achieve the goals in line with their national interests but also to consider the interests of all players affected by the Syrian issue. I would like to particularly note the atmosphere of respect that the Astana format has, including the hospitality of the Kazakh side. And, of course, it makes it possible to say that this approach to resolving any crisis without imposing dominance or imposing the opinion of one side, taking into account the national interests of all participants equally, has an important place in the negotiation experience of international meetings. The Astana platform should be considered, developed, and used for further peace processes and for building a security architecture across the region.

### **The Unipolar World System is Over**

*The Ukraine crisis is in its 14th month. How would you evaluate the reasons and background of this crisis, which brought Russia against the US and NATO, regarding the balance of powers worldwide, the goals and objectives of the US, and the positions of Russia and China?*

**Akmaral Batalova:** I'm sure we are all aware that the conflict between Russia and the US/NATO started much earlier, not with the Ukraine crisis. President Putin's Munich speech, or rather, the reaction of Western countries to this speech, can be considered

the driving force of the second Cold War. In a speech at a security conference in Germany in 2007, the Russian President said that the imposition of the unipolar model of the world, that is, the legal system of one state, namely the United States, on all other states is "not only unacceptable but also impossible" and that the only decision-making mechanism regarding the use of military force can only be the UN Treaty. He then noted that the US failure to comply with the "Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe" violated the security guarantees given by the West during the collapse of the USSR.

As you know, at the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, there was a situation of NATO expansion in three different waves towards the east, towards the borders of the Russian Federation. In 2021, Putin urged Western leaders three times to come together to discuss the rules of the game in the context of the geopolitical and geo-economic transformation of the world and proposed to create a single, indivisible security architecture for all European countries. Unfortunately, the West did not accept these initiatives of the Russian President. The US and EU also ignored the "red lines" that Moscow drew during the meeting of the two presidents, Putin and Biden, in July 2021 and the Russia-NATO and Russia-US negotiations in November and December of the same year.

Western countries perceived Putin's speech in Munich in 2007 not as a call to change the current geopolitical situation by taking into account the national interests of other states but as a challenge to the world order based on their own ideas. It is now clear that the unipolar world system is coming to an end not only because of Russia's intervention in Ukraine, but also because of the desire of other large states such as China, India, Türkiye, Brazil, South Africa, as well as the Islamic world and most of the countries in the Pacific region to strengthen their state





sovereignty and ensure that their national interests are taken into account in interaction with other participants in international relations.

The world witnessed that military actions in Ukraine, actively promoted by the United States, turned into a war between Russia and the European members of NATO. If we go back to history and remember that the main causes of the First and Second World Wars were Washington's attempts to prevent a strong political and economic union between Russia and Germany, it is better understood why the war is now raging in the center of Europe and why the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline was blown up.

From the Kremlin's point of view, the US desire to deprive Russia of its Black Sea Fleet base in Sevastopol, Washington's attempts to limit Russian access to the Black Sea, and the possibility of deploying military bases in Ukraine should be mentioned. For Russia, Ukrainian territory, very close to its borders, was seen as a vital strategic security threat. Unfortunately, these concerns were not taken into account.

Thus, the intertwining of a vicious circle of

mutually conflicting interests of geopolitical, regional, and local actors and the historical past led to the war that has now tragically hit the two Slavic peoples, left the entire region on its toes, and brought the world to the brink of nuclear catastrophe.

## Asia Strives to Become a Centre of Gravity for Peace and Development

*The Shanghai Cooperation Organization appears to have expanded to include countries in separate camps during and after the Cold War. In addition, global initiatives within the scope of economic cooperation, such as the BRICS, Belt and Road Initiative, are increasingly becoming centers of attraction. How would you evaluate the US's attempts to enlarge NATO and the partnership and cooperation initiatives with the center of gravity based on their opposition or parallelism with each other?*

**Akmaral Batalova:** The difference between the policies of the United States and China lies in their approaches, as you have correctly pointed out.

China uses the SCO to expand its geographic influence through economic cooperation. In addition to economic cooperation, BRICS is needed as a tool for the creation of a dollar-independent financial system and the transition to payments in national currencies by the member states.

**It would be naive to evaluate the events in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and other countries without the influence of the US.**

If we pay attention to the US strategic documents, for example, the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and other publicly available documents, the US refers to China and Russia as their common strategic enemies. In the doctrinal documents adopted in November 2022, the entire world is referred to as the US national interest zone. According to the definition of White House strategists, the world is divided based on the threats posed by China and Russia.

In their understanding, Russia directly threatens a free and open international system by “recklessly trampling on the fundamental laws of the international order.” In contrast, the PRC is the only competitor with both the intent to change the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological strength to achieve that goal. In other words, China poses the most serious and systemic challenge to the United States. In contrast, Russia poses a

serious threat to its vital national interests both within the United States and abroad. Although it presents it as co-operation with a growing network of US allies and partners to achieve common goals, it is clear that the US needs NATO as a military instrument to maintain and strengthen its global influence through military expansion.

It would be naive, to say the least, to evaluate the events in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and other countries without the influence of the US. On the contrary, Asian countries are primarily interested in the stable development of their economies and are ready to cooperate economically with all countries. For this reason, I think that, in these conditions, where all the rules of the world order are violated, Asia is trying to create a safe future where the economies of the countries in the region can be balanced and the conditions for a peaceful environment can be provided, creating a center of gravity.

**OTS is the bridge between west and east, north and south**

*Kazakhstan and some other Central Asian Turkic Republics are members of the Organization of Turkic States on the one hand and the SCO and the Collective Security Organization on the other. Some sections argue that the Organization of Turkic States is against Russia and China. Considering this argument, how would you evaluate the place of the Asian-centered developing world countries initiative of the Organization of Turkish States?*

**Akmaral Batalova:** Kazakhstan is an ancestral country of the Turkic world.

Therefore, it is engaged in further developing and strengthening comprehensive interaction between the peoples of other brotherly countries. In addition to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSÖY), the Turkish Parliamentary Assembly, and the Turkic Academy were established with the initiative of Kazakhstan for the cultural and spiritual rapprochement of the Turkic peoples.

The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, proposed, based on the creation of a “Digital Library”, to mutually open the archives of Turkish countries and to prepare a “road map” for the study of the common written heritage of our peoples and to draw a road map on it in the future. We all need to examine, protect, and pass on the invaluable legacy of the ancient Turkish civilization to future generations.

It is clear that modern geopolitical and geo-economic contradictions negatively impact the economy, transport, and logistics of the Eurasian continent. It is, therefore, particularly important to help strengthen the belt of stability that unites our states today. The population of the Turkish states is approximately 150 million, and the total area of these countries exceeds 4.5 million km<sup>2</sup>. Their GDP is approximately 1.5 trillion dollars, ranking 13th in the world economy. At the same time, mutual trade between our countries constitutes only 4% of the total foreign trade volume. The rest is covered by third countries.

Therefore, at the Organization of Turkish States summit in Samarkand in September last year, it was decided to develop strategic

cooperation areas such as trade and transportation. In addition, the lands of the organization's member states are a bridge between the West and the East, the North and the South. An example is the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor, which passes over three countries of the Turkic world (Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan) and connects China with European countries. Organization of Turkish States member states are interested in increasing cargo traffic, coordinating logistics, and finding alternative routes to existing rail and road routes. For example, Kazakhstan allocated \$35 billion to develop the transportation and logistics industries in the last 15 years and plans to invest another \$20 billion by 2025.

As for your question about the opposition to Russia and China, I think the Organization of Turkic States is an interstate organization created to expand the interaction of Turkish-speaking countries in politics, economy, science, education, transportation, and tourism.

In my opinion, the statutes and program documents, including the “Strategy of the Organization of Turkish States” adopted for implementing the Expectations for the Turkic World 2040 program at this stage, do not conflict with China in any way. None of the activities of the Turkish world are contrary to the aims and objectives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, nor the principles of friendship, partnership, and mutually beneficial cooperation between Russia and China. We hope this continues in the future. 🌸

# An Unconventional Reading of China's Foreign Economic Policy: A Phase of Fluidity and Transformation



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**DIGBY JAMES WREN\***

Dr.  
International Relations Institute of Cambodia  
Royal Academy of Cambodia

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*\*Dr. Wren holds research degrees in both International Relations and Public Diplomacy and is currently a Senior Special Advisor and Director of the Mekong Research Centre at the Institute of International Relations (IRIC), Royal Academy of Cambodia (RAC), Advisory Board Member of the Belt and Road Caucus for Asia- Pacific (BRICAP) and Advisory Board member of the Pakistan Institute of International Relations and Media (PIIRM). Dr. Wren is also the Associate Editor of Taihe Observer in Beijing and a regular guest on China Global Television and radio Networks (CGTN) and Bloomberg TV and Radio current affairs programs.*

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## ABSTRACT

This article applies Marxist analytical tools to analyse the competing debates about the BRI's historic origins, deployment, and integration. The article contends that Marxist notions of sub-national regions and spatial fixes have the potential to inform analysis of the BRI's transnational connectivity extensions and present it in different terms than is usually allowed in conventional readings of China's foreign economic policy. Adopting such a perspective is particularly apposite given that China's government has subscribed to such a worldview since assuming power in 1949. Marxist approaches to international relations, political economy, and geoeconomics deepened with Gramscian approaches to political and cultural hegemonic discourse and practice. Analysis of the historical determinants and contemporary trajectory of BRI deployment considered Giovanni Arrighi's works and his use of Braudel's *la long duree* to contextualise the analysis.

**Keywords:** Multipolarity, multilateralism, Belt and Road Initiative, global economy, Three Worlds Theory

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## Introduction

CONTEMPORARY IR THEORY, DOMINATED by Western schools of thought (Muppidi, 2012), clouds the lens of analysis when Chinese foreign economic policy, including the BRI, is the focus of attention. China's construction of a worldview, which integrates indigenous philosophy and culture, has its roots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when China assimilated intellectual ideas from Japan and elsewhere to modify its system of governance while maintaining territorial sovereignty and limiting colonial encroachment (Deng, 1998; Noesselt, 2015). The ideas of non-alignment and non-exclusionary regionalism developed by Nehru and fellow Asian and African leaders in the 1950s differed substantially from the military blocs of the classic European balance of power model (Grabowski, 2019).

Mao Zedong's Three Worlds Theory (Wang,

2011) offered new thinking on IR, foreign policy, warfare, and strategy. Moreover, the communitarian teachings of Confucius and Mencius are often referenced in the construction of Asian values and provide an alternative to European and Anglo-American liberal individualist values. Arrighi (2007: 329) argues that strong central supervision by Chinese political power never rejected "the Confucian ideal of social harmony in favour of a view of unfettered struggle in the marketplace." Thus, the notion of a distinctively East Asian international order is often premised on deep Confucian political, social, and cultural affinities, which are at odds with the liberal prescription of democratic peace (Acharya & Buzan, 2010). In this view, liberal intervention in East Asia, such as in Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, can be seen as an attempt to split the region from its historic links to China for Washington to impose its evangelical vision of political and cultural authority.

A key contribution, therefore, is to illustrate how China's indigenous Marxist IR theory has provided new perspectives on the theory and practice of global governance. Leading Chinese IR scholars, such as Wang (2021), Yan (2021) and Yang (2021), are informed by Chinese history, philosophy, and culture, and provide improved analytical frameworks and better theoretical tools to understand the relationship between China's foreign policy and the deployment of the BRI (Smith, 2017). One example is Zhao Tingyang (2006), who wrote that China's problems cannot be explained by European and Anglo-American theories because they generate tropes and motifs of China, such as the China threat, debt trap diplomacy, and the rise of China theses. For Zhao (Do, 2015: 23), realist and liberal theorising, which ignores traditional Chinese thought and its unique system of worldview, values, and methodology, "can explain conflicts, but only Chinese thought can fully explain harmony." In this holistic view, Confucian thought provides the impetus for creating a harmonious world order of inclusivity that minimises inequality and promotes collective responsibility.

While Chinese scholars have sought to develop a new theory of a harmonious international political system, Xi Jinping's vision for National Rejuvenation has been the most visible attempt to put such ideas into practice. Xi's vision of a pluralistic and harmonious community of shared values "preclude[s] the idea of one civilisation imposing itself on another" (Dellios, 2017:227). The BRI's win-win concepts of trust building and mutuality are deeply rooted in China's philosophical past. Confucianism and yin-yang both view "harmony as including opposition as a productive force" (Wang, 2018: 6), which supersedes the Hegelian-Marxist dialectics of struggle; thus, each side requires the other to maintain the system. Moreover, the distinctive teachings of both

Daoism and Confucianism, often viewed through the prism of hierarchy, value non-interference. This means the Chinese cultural understanding of win-win cooperation views success and prosperity as a mutually entailing process in which China's national interest is viewed as mutual interest (Ames, 2007; Dellios, 2017). Thus, Xi's plan for National Rejuvenation is built on a vision of "a community of common destiny" and avoidance of regional or global hegemony (Dellios, 2017: 231).

In light of these general findings, the remainder of the article summarises and reflects on the key internal and external developmental determinants, innovations, deployments and implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

### **A New Substructure for Global Economic Development**

A thorough appreciation of the BRI's significance requires recognition that the initiative forms part of a larger and longer-running mission of National Rejuvenation. The BRI is fundamental to China's pursuit of the Two Centenary Goals, the constitutional addition of Ecological Civilisation and the reframing of economic advancement within the Dual Circulation paradigm. China's pursuit of National Rejuvenation was also affected by its relations with other regional and global powers. For instance, between 2017 and 2021, China's implementation of the BRI project was significantly impacted by the escalating Sino-American "strategic competition" (Lippman et al., 2021: 1) and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This article offers a corrective view of the BRI, rooted in Marxist historical analysis and Gramscian approaches to hegemony. It finds that China is a culturally distinct yet natural nation-state with a legitimate claim to seek advancement within its

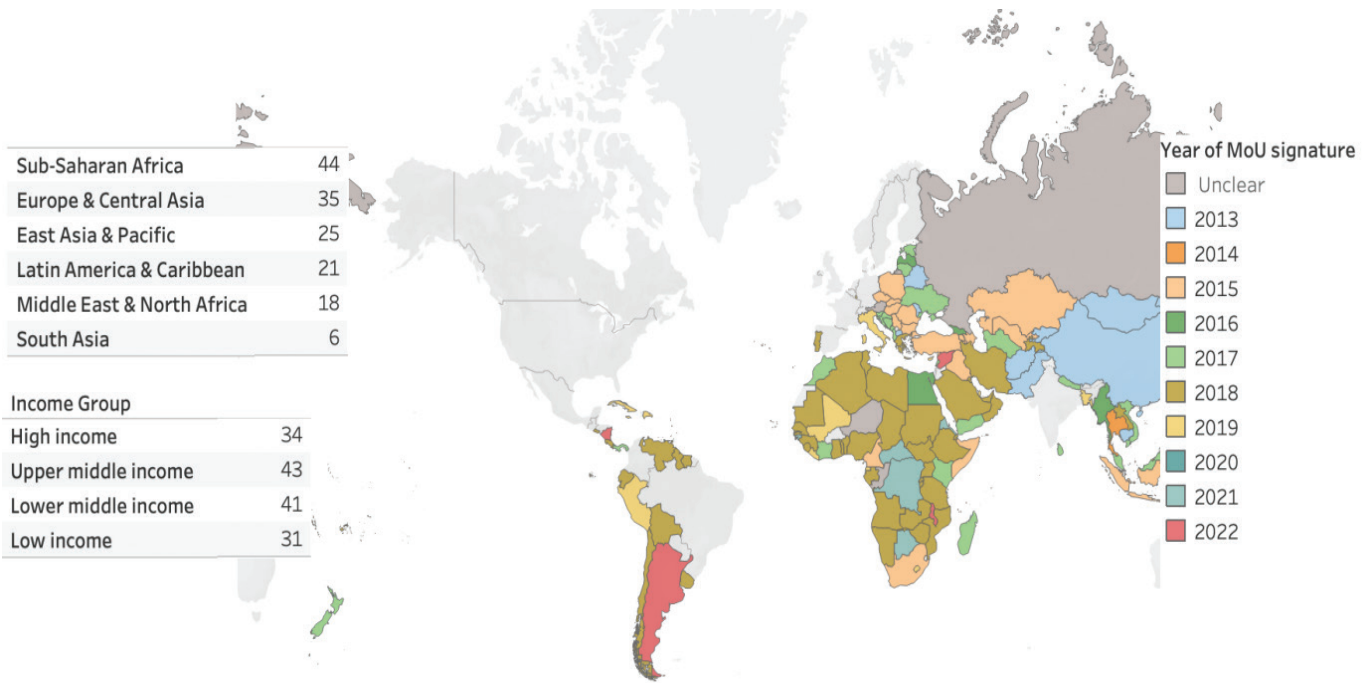
national interest (Deng, 1974). This explains China's consistent approach to strengthening its offensive/defensive arrangements in its near periphery, protecting its merchant fleet from piracy (Erickson & Strange, 2012), and a minimal need for overseas military installations (Brewster, 2018; Liu & Yin, 2018). China has leveraged a web of bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral networks and forums to gain diplomatic traction. China's so-called 'wolf-warrior' diplomacy (Zhu, 2020) is often referenced to highlight China's robust counter to legacy liberal state accusations and allegations of human rights abuses, military/naval assertiveness and political influence. However, the 2021 Canadian attempt to garner votes in the UN about China's alleged human rights and forced labour practices in Xinjiang revealed China's growing multilateral and diplomatic influence. Canada's ambassador to the UN circulated a document that garnered the support of over 40 countries. However, not one was a Muslim state, and China countered with a document supported by over 60 countries, which included almost all Muslim states, many of which are BRI partners (Liu, 2021).

**Beijing's deployment of the BRI is grounded in Chinese notions of reciprocity outlined in Xi Jinping's formula for "a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation".**

Marxist analysis of the BRI's origins and operations reveals that the BRI material substructure is pan-continental, primarily centred on developing countries, and harnesses global trade and investment as a key means to check and reverse emerging trade protectionism and regional economic blocs (Dakila, 2020; Global Times, 2020; Amendolagine,

2021). Thus, analysis has reached quite different conclusions than the consensus from most Western politicians, scholars, and media outlets, whose narratives about the BRI tend to obscure facts pertaining to its deployment and purported benefits as well as its challenges. In particular, this article argues that realist assessments of the BRI, which focus on wealth and power, ignore the contextual importance of Chinese philosophical influence on the conceptualisation of the BRI and how internal and external forces are balanced to create harmonious relationships, whether economic, political, or social. Western political elites often ignore or fail to grasp the theory and practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. To do so requires a fuller understanding of the complex amalgamation of cultural, social, ecological, political, and economic organisational concepts included in Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Marxism, such as 'yin-yang' (Wang & Zou, 2011) or 'the principal contradiction' (Xinhua, 2017).

Similarly, Beijing's deployment of the BRI is grounded in Chinese notions of reciprocity outlined in Xi Jinping's formula for "a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation" (Xi, 2017: 3). As such, external reciprocities require renewal or reform of the international system, including respect of political sovereignty and avoidance of external conflict. Internally, continuing reform based on Marxist notions of a 'better state of being' (Yilmaz, 2016; Eskelinen et al., 2020) underpins the identification of 'the principal contradiction', which in post-Mao China, is state-led responses to improve the material well-being of citizens (Xinhua, 2017). These internal and external yin-yang equilibria have evolved into the theoretical model of a Dual Circulation, which encompasses a better state of being as universal and embeds the notion into constructing the BRI.



By December 2022, 48 countries had signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with China to cooperate under the BRI framework. (Fudan University, 2023)

What are the key internal and external developmental determinants, innovations, deployments and implications of China’s Belt and Road Initiative? The research supports the argument that the BRI constitutes a new global material infrastructural substructure. Moreover, the BRI has accelerated an emerging multipolar order and, more specifically, a China-EU-US “tripolarity” of trade and investment (Dent, 2004: 214). This does not, however, equate to a new tributary system, which relied on ritualised interaction with the middle kingdom, as some observers assert (Doğan, 2021; Freymann et al., 2021). Rather, Xi’s ‘community of shared future for mankind’ equates to a new approach to multilateralism, non-interference, and consensus-building. For the 84% of the world’s population that lives in the global south, China’s economic

development model offers a clear alternative to the colonial period, endless wars, financial bubbles, and perceived economic, technological and vaccine apartheid of the so-called rules-based order.

**The Extension of China’s Economic And Political Influence**

The BRI and its structural siblings, namely Dual Circulation, Ecological Civilisation and Digital Transformation, are often framed as geostrategic and geoeconomic challenges to the rules-based order that has governed international relations since the Industrial Revolution (Liu, 2019). However, Washington, and to a lesser extent, its allies, seem unwilling or incapable of adapting to the new paradigms for development and governance, which emanated from Western



philosophical thought and its later assimilation and adaptation to primarily Asian influences. Thus, the US-led alliance network has turned away from liberal and later neo-liberal economic competition manifested in globalisation and global governance. Rather, the rules-based order increasingly relies on economic sanctions (Coates, 2020) and, more recently, knowledge exclusivity, including limits on Chinese students' access to advanced scientific studies in US universities (Chen, 2021; Hollingsworth et al., 2021) and technology and export bans (Soliman et al., 2020; Ye, 2021). This article argues that US sanctions and export restrictions, exercised to constrain economic development in recalcitrant nations and arrest the decline of US technological advantage (Darby & Sewall, 2021), may constitute what former Iranian President Rouhani (2005) labelled "technological apartheid."

### **The BRI's focus on economic development has increasingly turned toward adopting and evolving "digital industrialisation and industrial digitalisation".**

The BRI's focus on economic development has increasingly turned toward adopting and evolving "digital industrialisation and industrial digitalisation" (Xi, 2021c: 2), constituting the core of an emerging Sino-digitalisation of global industry and telecommunications. As such, BRI partner countries increasingly benefit from the cost advantages of China's capacity for innovation at speed and scale – the smartphone and computer markets in Africa, India, ASEAN, and China are all currently dominated by Chinese producers using

US patents, components, and software. During the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for semiconductor chips, a key component of all electronics, was impacted by major supply disruptions. The resulting shortages, however, were largely a direct result of the Trump administration's 2018 trade and tech war with China (Brown, 2021).

In 2018, Xi Jinping told a joint meeting of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Engineering that independent technological and institutional innovation was the only path to reach the "commanding heights" (Qiushi, 2018: 3) in scientific and technological competition. Furthermore, to ensure that "key and core technologies are self-developed and controllable (...) the initiatives of innovation and development must be securely kept in our own hands" (Qiushi, 2018: 3). Additionally, prime resources should be focused, and strategic planning made to deal with "key areas and stranglehold problems" (Qiushi, 2018: 3). Henceforth, China's indigenous semiconductor production and industrial digitalisation was upgraded to a national core goal and Chinese technology industries began concerted efforts to remove US software/hardware components and licenses by 2025. In other words, a key consequence of US securitisation and sanctions over semiconductor supply chains, 5G and other technologies was accelerating China's digitalisation processes (Li, 2021). As such, the BRI has become a digital substructure for telecommunications (5G), computing, AI and big data, logistics, biotech, and fintech. This digital road supports the lucrative and expanding superstructures of e-commerce, social media, payment platforms, entertainment and share-economy applications adopted by commercial and consumer markets in Asia, Africa, and increasingly the US and Europe.



The 19th Meeting of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the 14th Meeting of the Chinese Academy of Engineering were inaugurated on May 28, 2018 at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, the capital of China. (Xinhua, 2018)

China is creating new digital standards, due in part to cultural, social and language particularities but in larger part as a response to the US-instigated trade-tech war and a renewed push for self-reliance. China is also accelerating knowledge dissemination to its BRI partner countries via advanced telecommunications that have moved beyond simply globalising trade and knowledge. As such, global challenges are recognised in all corners of the world as the primary danger to humanity's very existence:

With the future of the Planet being the key to the destiny of humanity, the 'Planetisation' of our policies may be the new form of globalisation, a more humane approach to globalisation (Raffarin, 2021: 7).

China's capacity to conceptualise, organise, and deploy large-scale and long-term initiatives, both internally and externally,

cannot be matched by the core liberal states. Additionally, the long list of US-led political, diplomatic, economic, and military operations that target China's periphery and BRI extensions are seen in Beijing as having varying degrees of short-term effectiveness, but over the longer term, only hasten declining US global power projection. Pertinent evidence in this regard includes the ineffectiveness of American sanctions against China for alleged systemic repression in Xinjiang and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, a return to the JCPOA and China's 25-year development agreement with Iran, US warmongering over Taiwan and acquiescence to the One China Principle, overestimating EU support for US leadership and underestimating EU strategic autonomy. The significant contradictions between core liberal state anti-China political rhetoric and China's patent centrality in global

trade networks can be seen as evidence of China's continental rescaling of the global political, economic, and security architecture toward multilateralism, multipolarity, and planetisation. In other words, despite concerted asymmetric and hybrid assaults by the fractious US-led coalition of core liberal states, the BRI's public roads (Xi, 2021a) and provision of global public goods constitute a secure and stable material substructure for long-term global economic development that supports an emerging continental alignment of trade blocs. These trade blocs include the EU, CEEC, RCEP, USMCA, CPTPP, EEU, AU, GCC, and Mercosur, in which China remains the single largest member or external partner. In this view, China exerts increasing influence in the "three prosperous 'triad' regions (North America, East Asia, and Europe) [which] dominate the world economic system" (Dent, 2004: 214).

### **China is not alone in its vision of a multipolar order less constrained by an exploitative US-led liberal order.**

Beijing's deployment of the BRI has largely benefited from the US pursuit of foreign and trade policies designed to constrain and contain China's national rejuvenation. While China made relative economic gains as the US prosecuted its War on Terror, the advancement of national rejuvenation benefited proportionally more from its accession to the WTO in 2001. These analogous paths reflect the "relative global shift from geopolitics to

geoeconomics" in the practice of international relations (Dent, 2004: 214; Beeson, 2018). The practice of neo-liberalism and interventionism by the US, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, set the US on a course of domestic political polarisation and obscurantism vis-à-vis internal governance and factual evidence about the rise of China. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli (1975) posits that freedom produces prosperity greater than tyranny or corrupt republics. In *The Leviathan*, Hobbes (2018) discusses the notion that freedom is the power to act without interference, where the absence of interference by external actors is what confirms the presence of freedom. These proto-realist arguments support China's statements and claims of the importance of non-conflict, non-interference and non-aggression as pillars of its foreign policy (Yang, 2021).

China is not alone in its vision of a multipolar order less constrained by an exploitative US-led liberal order. While liberal values retain a degree of attractiveness globally, partial, but not complete, rejection of the US-led liberal order is growing as an increasing number of governments seek systems that are not "Western, not liberal, not liberal democracies, maybe not even democracies [...] because they have proved more successful in responding to global economic turmoil" (Boyle, 2016: 35). Orbán's statement referred to the imposition of liberal values and legal restrictions had made it increasingly difficult for countries such as Hungary and Poland to engage in a new type of economic nationalism that could protect their interests in the global economy. There is much debate over the causes of the rise of illiberalism (Zakaria, 1997; Kalb, 2018; Posen, 2018; Hendrikse, 2021).



The "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence", first formulated by the then-Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and later adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement, express the aspirations of today's world. Zhou Enlai (middle) and Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Ali (right) and his wife (left) during the Bandung Conference. (Xinhua, 1955)

However, the negative consequences of neo-liberalism, the post-2001 US-led War on Terror, the US-induced Global Financial Crises, and China's economic success were contributing factors. The mass movement of refugees from conflict zones, rising government debt, increasing trade competition with China, and neo-liberal reductions in the provision of public goods and services exacerbated social tensions. In Greece, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria and Germany, neo-Nazi parties gained momentum, and right-wing populism saw modest election success in France and the UK (Boyle, 2016). The 2016 election of Donald Trump signalled that illiberalism had also festered in the US and would become alarmingly apparent as the global

COVID-19 pandemic rapidly spread.

The greatest failure, however, lay with the United States, which catastrophically failed to manage its own epidemic, much less lead others in managing theirs. Against this background, any hope of a return to the previous liberal order premised on US power is now extinguished (Boyle, 2020: 51).

China looms large in US Realist analysis of the declining influence of the liberal order and US capacity to maintain proportional control of global supply chains (Ikenberry et al., 2022). The US-led geoeconomic pressure and primarily maritime security deployments have contributed to the diversification of China's global trading network. Moreover, the net effect of the

US-instigated and continuing trade-tech war, which restricts knowledge and technology transfer, constitutes a new form of knowledge apartheid and has further motivated China's efforts to construct advanced technology supply chains free of US-controlled intellectual property rights.

**The concept of a community of shared future for mankind includes the moral universalism of Confucian and Daoist thought about societal and natural harmony.**

For Chinese leaders, Donald Trump's blaming of China for the pandemic (Pan, 2021: 42) and the core liberal states' record of COVID-19 cases and deaths is another example of a failure of Western leadership – a “Westfailure.” For Pan (2021: 40), Westfailure demonstrates “the racialised politics of security and insecurity in Western security thinking and practice [and] undermined the self-image of Western security and superiority vis-à-vis the rest of the world.” As such, the legacy liberal state policy response to vaccine research, production, and distribution constituted a form of vaccine apartheid. Beijing's pandemic response displayed a moral approach to global challenges upheld in China's vision for the BRI and its governance.

In contrast to the increasing “neuralgia and anxiety” in the US (Wang, 2021: 4), China's economic vigour can, in large part, be attributed to the pursuit of private and

public advantages and the ability of citizens to acquire goods for enjoyment resulting from rising material wealth (Xinhua, 2021b). This freedom is closely associated with Marxist notions of equitable distribution of economic development and expressed within the vocabulary of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Likewise, the concept of a community of shared future for mankind includes the moral universalism of Confucian and Daoist thought about societal and natural harmony (Zhao, 2006; Wang & Zou, 2011). Understood in this way, freedom is promoted as a pillar of the BRI economic development model in several ways. First, the BRI is an open inclusive model that does not insist on geopolitical or ideological alignment. Second, the BRI economic development model has a high degree of flexibility, ensuring adaption to both the legacy and new infrastructure development initiatives of partner countries. Third, China relies on an extensive network of consensus-building consultative frameworks and forums. Fourth, China promises and practises both non-interference and non-intervention. As such, the BRI economic development model requires continuing optimisation of its governance, finance and sustainability, particularly in face of legacy liberal state criticisms (CFR, 2021) and attempts to mount counter initiatives such as the “B3W” (Build Back Better World) (G7, 2021: 24). More recent US-led counter initiatives, such as the Quadrilateral (Mahbubani, 2021) and AUKUS arrangements (Strangio, 2021), display a hybrid model of both hard (military) and soft (economic) components.

## Implications

The adoption of the Gramscian perspective on hegemonic and counter-hegemonic great power competition (Gramsci, 1971; Yilmaz, 2014) reveals that since at least the Obama era ‘pivot to Asia’ (FPI, 2014), the democratisation of global economic development has become subject to ideological narratives of (US) liberal democracy versus (Chinese) illiberal authoritarianism (Biden, 2021: 9). Moreover, the pernicious, and largely unsubstantiated human rights allegations, and consequent sanctioning, emanating from Washington obscures evidence of both regional and global economic vitalisation achieved via the BRI material substructure of connectivities. Primarily motivated to constrain China’s development and stability, the US seeks to form a democratic club of former imperial and legacy colonial states to prolong American hegemony and bolster its declining influence in the global multilateral hierarchy, of which it was the major architect (Wren, 2020).

There is contention surrounding whether the BRI was part of China’s grand strategy to extend its political, economic, and possibly military influence to undermine the so-called liberal rules-based order centred on US economic predominance and military preponderance. However, Xi Jinping has consolidated the CPC policy direction, consistent with the reformist faction originating with Deng Xiaoping, and peace and development continue to characterise the new era. China’s economic influence continues to accumulate as a result of its increasing trade volumes along the BRI southern sea and western land extensions. Significantly, the BRI

allows China to increasingly diversify resource acquisition, especially in Africa and Central Asia, and consequently exercise greater proportional control of commodity pricing as trading volumes in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Shenzhen (Petry, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Ongoing construction on all BRI corridors has consolidated and extended the transport network, including surrounding industrial parks, FTZs, and SEZs. The launch of the BRI corridor into the Bay of Bengal through Myanmar was delayed due to the military’s rejection of the 2020 election results (Chan, 2021). Nevertheless, the first cargo shipment from Singapore via Yangon Port arrived in China’s southwestern city of Chengdu in August 2021 (CGTN, 2021).

Significant negative narratives, primarily from Washington, about China’s pursuit of its national goals are supported with little or no factual evidence. Rather, Xi’s characterisation of the BRI as a “public road” connecting over 170 countries and organisations that includes third-party cooperation (Xi, 2021a: 8) holds true. Furthermore, the BRI’s official alignment with the UN 2030 SDGs and continuing reform of sustainability and governance policies, often following constructive criticism emanating from bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral forums, demonstrates a high degree of institutional adaptability. China increasingly emphasised that the BRI was fundamental to both the internal Central and Western Development Plan (China Daily, 2021) and the Northeast Revitalisation Plan (CSET, 2021: 80; Xinhua, 2021). In response to the challenging global environment, China has repositioned its economy toward Dual circulation. This entailed directing the BRI’s further

deployment toward non-state investment in construction, manufacturing, logistics, and services that offer extensive synchronicity between China's internal strategic assets and external resources, markets, and consumers globally. Moreover, the success of the AIIB and its cooperative framework points the way for future collaborative refocusing of multilateral financial institutions. A pertinent example is that India, which, despite its continuing reticence to participate in either the BRI or RCEP, remains the largest single recipient of AIIB loans, including significant loans for health and COVID-19 response (Krishnan, 2020; PTI, 2020).

**Russia's strategic partnership with China is especially relevant when considering China's efforts to revitalise connectivity choke points such as Iran, Syria, and Venezuela.**

China has recognised that to confront conflict, global pandemics, pollution, terrorism, corruption and climate change, a tripartite cooperation and coordination mechanism can be realised with the EU and US. Furthermore, the UN and G20 would be included in such an initiative. Thus, the initial extreme competition posture of the Biden administration (Japan Times, 2021) was perceived in Beijing as a geostrategic window of opportunity in which the shift in global wealth and power, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, allowed time for China to transition its economy and industrial-manufacturing base towards a vision of a new

global economic development framework. This has been confirmed by the recent "recoupling" policy of the Biden administration (Moriyasu, 2021; Tiezzi, 2021: 5) and reaffirmation of the "Taiwan Agreement" (Reuters, 2021a: 1). As such, the US accession to China's terms on trade, most notably in expanding trade deficits, and security concerns (One China Policy) confirms the view that the BRI's role as the new material substructure for global trade and investment has strengthened Beijing's hand when dealing with Washington.

The strengthening of Sino-Russian cooperation following the 2007-2008 GFC and the imposition of US and EU sanctions on Russia following its 2014 annexation of Crimea is of great importance. Russia's long border with China and geographical extent, stretching from the Pacific to the Baltic, ensures its indispensable partnership role in the deployment of the BRI. Russia's increasing provision of energy commodities via the BRI was exemplified recently during power outages in China's industrial northeast (Qi, 2021; Reuters, 2021b). Russia's strategic partnership with China is especially relevant when considering China's efforts to revitalise connectivity choke points such as Iran, Syria, and Venezuela. In particular, the Sino-Russian strategic partnership is significant for the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asian economic integration. Post-conflict Afghanistan presents a new set of challenges against a background of multilateral cooperation on managing strategic space as multipolarity amplifies. Beijing's efforts to counter legacy liberal state assaults include key BRI nodes such as Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Horn of Africa, Greece, and Hungary.

To conclude, the BRI has multilateral significance second only to the United Nations. It bears a measure of global responsibility to coalesce its partner countries around planetary challenges such as pandemics, climate change, famine, and conflict. In this view, the BRI is not only an economic development model that constitutes a new global material substructure for trade and investment but also manifests China's commitment to global economic growth, human security, and environmental protection. Thus, BRI optimisation is central for the realisation of both China's Long Range Goal of realising socialist modernization by 2035 (SCIO, 2020) and its second Centenary Goal "to develop a rich, powerful, democratic, and civilised modern socialist country by 2049" (Lee, 2020: 2). Ultimately, the BRI is a fundamental pillar of the CPC's determination to realise China's National Rejuvenation and therefore, its contribution to peaceful planetary cooperation and more harmonious world order.

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# A 'New Era' in the New Middle East: China, Russia and the Reinvention of the South



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**RAMZY BAROUD\***

Dr.  
Journalist-Writer, Palestine

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*\*Dr. Ramzy Baroud is a syndicated columnist, the author of six books and the Editor of The Palestine Chronicle. Baroud has a PhD in Palestine Studies from the University of Exeter. His books include 'My Father was a Freedom Fighter' and 'The Last Earth'. His latest book, co-edited with Professor Ilan Pappé, is 'Our Vision for Liberation: Engaged Palestinian Leaders and Intellectuals Speak Out'. Baroud is currently a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA).*

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## ABSTRACT

Who would have expected that the BRICS nations could rise and become the potential rival of the G7 countries, the World Bank and the IMF combined? That once seemingly distant possibility now has real prospects which could change the equilibrium of world politics. The more successful BRICS becomes, the weaker Western hegemony over the South will be. Although some Western politicians and media insist on downplaying the group's role in shaping the new world order, the change seems real and irreversible. Even before the Ukraine war commenced in February 2022, much evidence pointed to the fact that Russia and China's goal was hardly temporary or impulsive. The very language of multipolarity has defined both countries' discourse for years, a discourse that was mostly inspired by the two countries' displeasure with US militarism from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, their frustration with Washington's bullying tactics whenever a disagreement arises, be it in trade or border demarcations, the punitive language, the constant threats, the military expansion of NATO and much more. While it is too early to determine, with any degree of certainty, the winners and losers of this new configuration, it is almost certain that a US-western-dominated world is no longer possible.

**Keywords:** BRICS, Sino-Arab relations, Global South, New Era, New Middle East

## Introduction

THE WORLD IS CHANGING. IT HAS BEEN undergoing a seismic change that long preceded the Russian-Ukraine war and the recent US-Chinese tensions in the Strait of Taiwan.

What has taken place since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022, and the provocative visit by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taipei in August of the same year (Huang, 2022), is an acceleration of existing global shifts that ranged from the emergence of new economic alliances, geopolitical formations, turf wars and, of course, competing political discourses. These changes are fully displayed in the Middle East, Africa, and, indeed, much of the Global South.

## The New Economic Model

Who would have expected that the BRICS nations could rise and become the potential rival of the G7 countries, the World Bank and the IMF combined? That once seemingly distant possibility now has real prospects which could change the equilibrium of world politics.

BRICS - an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - was supposedly coined (Goldman Sachs, n.d.) by the Chief Economist of Goldman Sachs in 2001 as a reference to the world's emerging economies. It was then known as BRIC; the "S" came later when South Africa formally joined the group in 2010.

The group's first official summit was held in 2009. Back then, the discussion seemed largely abstract. It wasn't until 2014 that BRICS began taking serious steps towards greater integration when the nascent alliance, now including South Africa, launched the New Development Bank with seed money of \$50 billion (NDP, 2023). This decision meant that the group was now ready to take its first practical steps in challenging the dominance of the West over international monetary institutions, namely the World Bank and the IMF.

**For decades, the US's greatest weapon has been the dollar which, with time, stopped being a normal currency per se and became a commodity.**

The global geopolitical conflict resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war has driven the massive expansion underway at BRICS, especially as financially powerful countries have shown interest in the initiative. They include Argentina, the UAE, Mexico, Algeria and, particularly, Saudi Arabia.

Recent financial reports suggest that BRICS is already the world's largest gross domestic product (GDP) bloc. It currently contributes 31.5 percent to the global GDP, ahead of the G7, which contributes 30.7 percent (Raghavan, 2023). One of the greatest opportunities and challenges facing BRICS now is its ability to expand its membership base while maintaining its current growth. Helping new members maintain economic and political independence is particularly vital.

The IMF and World Bank are notorious for basing their financial support of countries, especially in the Global South, on political conditions. This is often justified under the guise of human rights and democracy, although it is related entirely to privatization and opening markets for foreign investors, usually Western corporations. As BRICS strengthens, it will have the potential to help poorer countries without pushing a self-serving political agenda or indirectly manipulating and controlling local economies.

With inflation hitting many Western countries, resulting in slower economic growth and causing social unrest, nations in the Global South are taking the opportunity to develop their economic alternative. This means that groups like BRICS will cease being exclusively economic institutions. The struggle is now very political.

### **Rivaling the Dollar**

For decades, the US's greatest weapon has been the dollar which, with time, stopped being a normal currency per se and became a commodity. Wars have been fought to ensure that countries like Iraq and Libya remain committed to the dollar (Recknagel, 2000). Following the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Baghdad returned to selling oil in US dollars. This struggle over the dollar's dominance was also felt painfully in Venezuela, which has the world's largest oil reserves and yet was reduced to abject poverty for attempting to challenge the supremacy of Washington and its ubiquitous currency (Worldometer, 2023).

Although it will take time, the process of reducing international reliance on the US dollar is now in full swing. In March 2023, Brazil and China announced a trade agreement allowing them to use their currencies, the real and the yuan, res-



Leaders attending the 42nd Southeast Asian Nations Association (ASEAN) Summit pose for a group photo outside the event in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, on May 10, 2023. (Xinhua, 2023)

pectively (Betz, 2023). This step shall prove consequential, encouraging other South American countries to follow suit. The move was neither the first of its kind nor will it be the last.

One of the main decisions taken by finance ministers and central bank governors of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at their March 2023 meeting in Indonesia was to reduce their reliance on the US dollar (Devonshire, 2023). They agreed to “reinforce financial resilience... through the use of local currency to support cross-border trade and investment in the ASEAN region.” This, too, is a game changer.

The BRICS countries are leading the charge and are set to facilitate the rearrangement of the world’s economic and financial map (Seidel, 2023). While the West is busy trying to keep its economies afloat, it remains wary of the changes underway in the Global South. Washington and

other Western capitals are worried. They ought to be.

Following a meeting between US President Joe Biden and 40 African leaders at the White House in December 2022, it was clear that African countries were not interested in taking sides in the ongoing war in Ukraine (Abutaleb & Ryan, 2022). Consequently, US Vice President Kamala Harris flew to Africa on March 26, 2023, to meet regional leaders to push them away from China and Russia (Signe, 2023). That effort is likely to fail. A perfect demonstration of Africa’s refusal to abandon its neutrality was seen at the press conference between Harris and Ghana’s President, Nana Akufo-Addo, on March 28. “There may be an obsession in America about Chinese activity on the continent,” Akufo-Addo told reporters, “but there is no such obsession here.” (Wootson, 2023)

Arguing that BRICS is a purely economic group ignores much of the story. The timing of its expansion, the stern political discourse of its members, potential members, and allies, the repeated visits by top Russian and Chinese diplomats to Africa and other regions in the Global South, and so on, all indicate that BRICS has become the South's new platform for geopolitics, economics, and diplomacy.

The more successful BRICS becomes, the weaker Western hegemony over the South will be. Although some Western politicians and media insist on downplaying the group's role in shaping the new world order, the change seems real and irreversible.

### 'The New Era'

Since the Sykes-Picot was signed in 1916 between old colonial powers, France and Britain, with a minor, but still significant involvement of Tsarist Russia, the Middle East and North Africa, along with Central Asia, was divided into various spheres of influence (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). Global priorities then were almost entirely Western. The Bolshevik revolution in 1917 was a watershed moment in world history, as it sowed the seeds for a possibility of a new global bloc to rival Western domination (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023).

It took decades for that new bloc to emerge. In 1955, the Warsaw Pact was born (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023), unifying the Soviet Union and its allies against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a Western military alliance that saw the light six years earlier (Haglund, 2023). The rivalry between both camps was expressed in fierce economic competition, a political Cold War, a low-grade military conflict, and two ideological discourses that defined our understanding of world politics in much of

the 20th Century. All of this came to a bitter end in the early 1990s. NATO won, while the Warsaw Pact disintegrated rapidly and in the most humiliating fashion. It was "the end of history," Francis Fukuyama declared (Fukuyama, 1993). It was the age of Western triumphalism and, by extension, more colonial wars, starting in Panama, then Iraq, Serbia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

China factored in all this, not as a major global political player, but as a worthy adversary and prized ally. The historic visit by US President Richard Nixon to Beijing in 1972 thwarted efforts to unify the East as US-Western imperialism (Kraus, 2022). That trip, which supposedly 'changed the world,' per the assessment of then-Ambassador Nicholas Plat, was, indeed, consequential. It was the beginning of the end of the Soviet as it gave Washington a massive advantage over rivals. But history is now being reversed in ways a few geopoliticians have successfully predicted.

### Enter Xi Jinping

The final exchange, caught on camera between visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian host and counterpart, Vladimir Putin, summed up the current geopolitical conflict, still in its nascent stages, between the United States and its Western allies on the one hand, and Russia, China and their allies, on the other (Davidson & McCurry, 2023). Xi was leaving the Kremlin following a three-day visit, starting on March 20, that can only be described as historic. "Change is coming that hasn't happened in 100 years, and we are driving this change together," Xi said while clasping Putin's hand. "I agree," Putin replied while holding Xi's arm. "Please take care, dear friend," he added (Muzaffar, 2023).

In no time, social media exploded by sharing that scene repeatedly. Corporate Western media analysts

went into overdrive, trying to understand what these few words meant. “Is that part of the change that is coming, that they will drive together?” Ian Williamson questioned in *The Spectator* (Williams, 2023). Though he did not offer a straight answer, he alluded to one: “It is a chilling prospect, for which the West needs to be prepared.”

Xi’s statement was, of course, uttered by design. It means that the strong Chinese-Russian ties, and possible future unity, are not an outcome of immediate geopolitical interests resulting from the Ukraine war or a response to US provocations in Taiwan. Even before the Ukraine war commenced in February 2022, much evidence pointed to the fact that Russia and China’s goal was hardly temporary or impulsive (CNN, 2022). Indeed, it runs deep.

The very language of multipolarity has defined both countries’ discourse for years, a discourse that was mostly inspired by the two countries’ displeasure with US militarism from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, their frustration with Washington’s bullying tactics whenever a disagreement arises, be it in trade or border demarcations, the punitive language, the constant threats, the military expansion of NATO and much more.

One month before the war, I argued with my co-writer, Romana Rubeo, that both Russia and China might be at the cusp of some kind of unity. That conclusion was drawn based on a simple discourse analysis of the official language emanating from both capitals and the actual deepening of relations. At the time, we wrote:

“Some kind of an alliance is already forming between China and Russia. The fact that the Chinese people are taking note of this and are supporting their government’s drive towards greater integration – political, economic and geostrategic – between Beijing and Moscow indicates that the informal and potentially formal alliance is a long-term strategy

for both nations (Baroud & Rubeo, 2022)”.

Even then, like other analysts, we did not expect such a possibility to be realized so quickly. The Ukraine war, in itself, was not indicative that Moscow and Beijing would grow closer. Instead, Washington’s response, threatening and humiliating China, did most of the work. The visit by Pelosi to Taiwan in August 2022 was a diplomatic disaster (Singleton, 2022). It left Beijing with no alternative but to escalate and strengthen its ties with Russia, hoping the latter would fortify its naval presence in the Sea of Japan. In fact, this was the case.

But the “100 years” reference by Xi tells of a much bigger geopolitical story. As Washington continues to pursue aggressive policies – with US President Joe Biden prioritizing Russia and his Republican foes prioritizing China as the main enemy of the US – the two Asian giants are now forced to merge into one unified political unit with a common political discourse. “We signed a statement on deepening the strategic partnership and bilateral ties which are entering a new era,” Xi said in his final statement (RFE/RL, 2023).

This ‘no-limits friendship’ (Robinson, 2023) is more feasible now than ever, as neither country is constrained by ideological confines or competition. Moreover, they are both keen on ending the US global hegemony, not only in Asia and the Pacific but also in Africa, the Middle East and, eventually, worldwide.

On the first day of Xi’s visit to Moscow, Russia’s President Putin issued a decree in which he wrote off debts of African countries worth more than \$20 billion (Eruyur, 2023). Moreover, he promised that Russia is “ready to supply the whole volume sent during the past time to African countries particularly requiring it, from Russia free of charge ..” (TASS, 2023) should Moscow decide “not to extend the (grain) deal in sixty days.”

For both countries, Africa is a major ally in the upcoming global conflict. The Middle East, too, is vital. The April 6, 2023 agreement, which normalized ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia, is earth-shattering, not only because it ended seven years of animosity and conflict but because the arbitrator was no other than China itself. Beijing is now a peace broker in the very Middle East dominated by failed US diplomacy for decades (Gritten, 2023).

What this means for the Palestinians remains to be seen, as too many variables remain at work. But for these global shifts to serve Palestinian interests in any way, the current leadership, or a new leadership, would have to slowly break away from its reliance on Western handouts and validation and, with the support of Arab and African allies, adopt a different political strategy.

**Regions that have long been dominated by the US and its Western allies are processing the changes and potential opportunities.**

The US government, however, continues to read the situation entirely within the Russia-Ukraine war context. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken responded to Xi's trip to Moscow by saying that "the world should not be fooled by any tactical move by Russia, supported by China or any other country, to freeze the war (in Ukraine) on its own terms (The Telegraph, 2023)". It is rather strange but also telling that the outright rejection of the potential call for a ceasefire was made by Washington, not Kyiv.

Xi's visit, however, is truly historic from a geopolitical sense. It can indeed be compared, in both scope and possible consequences, to Nixon's visit to Beijing, which contributed to the deterioration of ties between the Soviet Union and China under

Chairman Mao Zedung (Kraus, 2022). The improved relationship between China and the US helped Washington further extend its global dominance while putting the USSR on the defensive. The rest is history, one that was rife with geostrategic rivalry and divisions in Asia, thus, ultimately, the rise of the US as the uncontested power in that region.

Regions that have long been dominated by the US and its Western allies, like the Middle East and Africa, are processing these changes and potential opportunities. If this geopolitical shift continues, the world will, once again, find itself divided into camps. While it is too early to determine, with any degree of certainty, the winners and losers of this new configuration, it is almost certain that a US-western-dominated world is no longer possible.

**China and the New Middle East**

An obvious problem with most Western media's political analyses is that they tend to be short-sighted and focused mostly on variables that are of direct interest to Western governments. These analyses are now being applied to understanding official Arab attitudes towards Russia, China, global politics and conflicts.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping prepares to lead a large delegation to meet with Arab leaders in Saudi Arabia in December 2023, Western media conveys a sense of dread. The Chinese leader's visit "comes against the backdrop" of the Biden Administration's "strained ties with both Beijing and Riyadh" over differences, supposedly concerning "human rights and Russia's invasion of Ukraine," Reuters reported (El Yaakoubi & Zhu, 2022).

The same line of reasoning was parroted, with little questioning, by many other major Western media sources, falsely suggesting that 'human rights', along with other righteous reasons, are the main priority



of the US and Western foreign policy agenda. And, since these analyses are often shaped by Western interests, they tend to be selective in reading the larger context. If one is to rely exclusively or heavily on the Western understanding of the massive geopolitical changes worldwide, one will surely be misled. Western media wants us to believe that the strong political stances taken by Arab countries, such as neutrality in the case of war (El Yaakoubi & Zhu, 2022), growing closeness to China and Russia, lowering oil output, etc., are solely to 'send a message' to Washington or to punish the West for intervening in Arab affairs (Sheppard, Brower, & Al-Atrush, 2022).

However, seen through a wider lens, these assumptions are either half-truths or entirely fabricated. For example, the OPEC+ decision to lower oil output in October 2023 was the only reasonable strategy to apply when the global market's demand for energy was low (Meredith, 2022). Additionally, Arab neutrality is an equally reasonable approach considering that Washington and its Western allies are not the only global forces that matter to the Arabs. It is equally untrue that the Middle East's growing affinity with Asia is borne out of recent dramatic events, but a process that began nearly two decades ago, specifically a year following the US invasion of Iraq. In 2004, China and the Arab League established the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) (BRICS Policy Center, 2016).

### The Forum

CASCF officially represented the Chinese government and all 22 members of the Arab League, eventually serving as the main coordination platform between China and the Arabs. This has given China the advantage of investing in a collective strategy to develop trade, economic and political ties with the entirety of the Arab world. On the other hand, Arabs

had the leverage of negotiating major economic deals with China that could benefit multiple Arab states simultaneously.

An extremely important caveat is that CASCF was predicated in what is known as the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" (Jiabao, 2004). Based on the Westphalian norms of state sovereignty, the five principles seem to be founded on an entirely different paradigm of foreign relations, compared to the West's approach to the Middle East and the Global South, in general, extending from the colonial periods to the neo-colonialism of post-World War II: mutual respect for "territorial integrity and sovereignty", "non-aggression", "non-interference", and so on.

Chinese-Arab relations follow this model to this day, with very little deviation. This validates the claim that collective Arab political attitudes towards China and Xi's visit to the Middle East are hardly an outcome of any sudden shift of policies resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war. This is not to suggest that Arab and Chinese relations with the US and the West had no impact on the nature of the speed of Chinese-Arab ties. Indeed, the Chinese model of 'peaceful coexistence' seems to challenge the henceforth *modus operandi* at work in the Middle East.

In 2021, China announced projects to build a thousand schools in Iraq, a piece of news that occupied substantial space in Arab media coverage (AFP, 2021). The same can be said about China's growing economic – not just trade – influence in Arab countries (Freidin, 2022). China's lucrative Belt and Road Initiative, announced in 2013, fits seamlessly into the political infrastructure of Arab-Chinese ties built in previous years (McBride, Berman, & Chatzky, 2023). According to the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, Riyadh was the largest recipient of Chinese investments within the BRI during the first half of 2022 (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2022).

Starting in March 2022, Saudi Arabia agreed in principle to sell its oil to China using the Chinese Yuan instead of the US dollar (Said & Kalin, 2022). This decision was confirmed a few months later during Xi's visit to Saudi Arabia in December. Once fully implemented, it will have irreversible repercussions on the global market and the dollar's future status. Assuming that such mammoth changes in global geopolitics were an outcome of the immediate need for the Arabs to 'send a message' will continue to impair the West's ability to truly appreciate that the changes underway, not only in the Middle East but worldwide, are part of permanent shifts to the world's political map. The sooner the West achieves this realization, the better.

Considering all of this, it would be misguided to suggest that large political entities like China and Arab countries combined are shaping their foreign policy agendas, thus staking their futures, on knee-jerk political reactions to the attitude of a single American President or administration.


### Conclusion

The road ahead is not entirely clear. But numerous signs, accompanied by tangible changes, suggest that the world, as a whole, is changing. However, this change is more visible in some regions than others. The geopolitical tug-of-war between old and new global superpowers is most visible in the Middle East and Africa, in addition, of course, to the East Asia and Pacific regions. Each one of these regions also has its own re-ordering of power dynamics.

In the Middle East, for example, Iran seems to be breaking away from its West-imposed isolation, while Saudi Arabia is challenging its old client regime status. The latter move is particularly troubling for Washington, as it challenges two layers of Western domination of the Middle East, that which followed

the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, thus dividing the region into sub-regions under Western 'protection' and influence, and also the post-Iraq invasion-Middle East, which consequently was seen as the exclusive domain of the United States, Israel, and their western allies.

Russia and China are now staking claims in the region, though using mechanisms wholly removed from the Western style of old colonialism and neo-colonialism. While the Russians are tapping into their long Soviet tradition of cooperation, the Chinese are resorting to a more ancient history of friendly trade and cultural exchanges. Now that Beijing has developed a more candid and unapologetic approach to foreign policy, China's status as a new superpower shall demonstrate its effectiveness in the Middle East in unprecedented ways. The Iran-Saudi Accords were a tremendous achievement for the new politically-oriented China. However, the road ahead is still challenging, as the region is rife with foreign contenders and old and new conflicts. For China to succeed, it must present itself as the new just and fair model, away from the West and its violent legacy.

*(The managing editor of the Palestine Chronicle, Italian journalist Romana Rubeo made significant contributions to this article.)* 

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## DMITRIY BULIN



To Bell the Cat (2021)\*

*The series, "The Topsy-Turvy World", is a dialogue with the work of the great Northern Renaissance artist Pieter Brueghel the Elder. Pieter Brueghel, also known by the nickname "peasant", often used the Dutch folklore - proverbs and sayings that reflected the vices and everyday stupidity of a person. Proverbs and sayings used in the paintings of Pieter Brueghel still exist in almost all languages. They accumulate psychological archetypes characteristic of people at all stages of the development of human civilisation. In the series "The Topsy-Turvy World", artist, Dmitriy Bulin rethinks the old Flemish proverbs and offers his own version of their modern reading. Saying 'To bell the cat' is meaning; to take risk on behalf of others.*

\* From the exhibition 'Codex Rescriptus' in Multimedia Art Museum of Moscow in 2022. Digital print.



## NIZAR SABUR

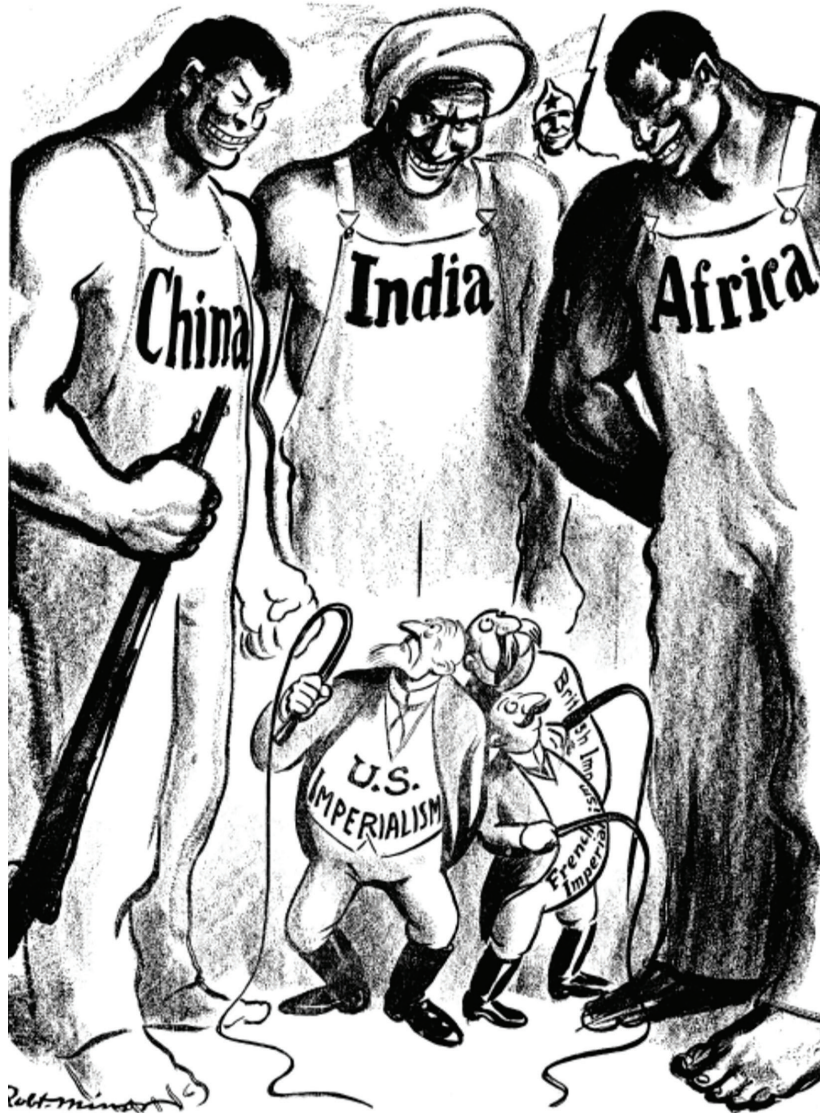


War. Blood Stain. (2012)\*

*Nizar Sabur, who takes creativity as a social tool, in order to speak and to reveal pain and give light of hope, is considered a living classic of the Syrian school of painting. Of course, the tragic events taking place on Syrian soil in recent years, deeply affect the attitude of Nizar Sabur. His pain, his love for his homeland, his attempt to comprehend what was happening were reflected in his paintings. The work of Sabur is also inseparable from the history and culture of his homeland: the traditions of Syrian school of painting can be seen in his intensive pictorial manner and unique colours of his works.*

\*From the exhibition "Life does not die" at The State Museum of Oriental Art.

## ROBERT MINOR



On the International Slave Plantation\*

Robert Berkeley “Bob” Minor (15 July 1884 - 26 January 1952) was a political cartoonist and journalist. He was a prominent member of the American Communist Party from 1920. In 1904, at the age of twenty, Robert Minor began working for the *San Antonio Gazette*. Minor joined the illegal American Communist Party in 1920. Under the underground pseudonym “Ballister”, Minor was sent to the Soviet Union as a representative of the American Communist Party on the Executive Committee of the Communist International. In 1945, he briefly served as General Secretary of the Party. As a journalist and activist, he travelled in many parts of the world.

\* *Daily Worker*, June 27, 1925.

