

War in Ukraine:

US, Russia, China and the Return of the Multipolar World

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Abstract

The war in Ukraine has precipitated a tectonic yaw in socio-political world affairs. The gravitational center of the world economy is shifting from the Atlantic to east of the Urals. The conflict threatens the global order as Russia and China grow closer in their aligned efforts to break the United States' longstanding unipolar dominance of global affairs.

This paper argues that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been long foretold by warnings ignored, assurances broken and geo-political moves made. The war in a socio-historical context is placed under the lens of the European Union's dangerous reliance on Russian energy, and Moscow's ability to sidestep the damning consequences of Western sanctions. In the process, Russia has increased its outreach to China, a willing partner in the disruption of the West's designs.

"War in Ukraine" examines the growing entente between Russia and China, a result of events in Ukraine, which has strengthened China's evolving position as the U.S.'s greatest adversary. This is where the seismic shift rattles the global order, should Russia and China become more linked in devotion to one another, forced or no. This is what famed geopolitical strategist Sir Halford McKinder predicted 120 years ago when he wrote, "the empire of the world would be in sight."

Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has passed the half-year milestone. The resulting war is the largest military confrontation in Europe since World War II.¹ Ukrainian cities lay in ruin from constant bombardments and missile strikes from Russian forces. By April 1 – just 35 days after the initial incursion across Ukraine's eastern border – more than 7.1 million of the country's people had been displaced, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).² In May, the United Nations put the number of those who had fled their homes in Ukraine at more than 12 million.³

The destruction of Ukraine grows daily. Washington and its coalition of the willing struggle to help Ukraine defend itself, while doing their best to prevent further disruption to the global economy. Punitive measures meted out to Russia include economic sanctions,⁴ trade embargoes⁵ and the confiscation of the assets of Russian leaders.⁶ Billions of dollars from Western-bloc countries now support the Ukrainian resistance.

On a recent visit to Kyiv, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi told Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, "America stands firmly with Ukraine. We are here until victory is won."⁷ The shipment of allied military equipment to Ukraine seems

¹ Dan Bilefsky, Richard Pérez-Peña, and Eric Nagourney, "The Roots of the Ukraine War: How the Crisis Developed," *New York Times (Online)*. Accessible from <https://www.nytimes.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-europe.html> (2022).

² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Country Profile: Ukraine," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ukraine>.

³ BBC, "How Many Ukrainian Refugees Are There and Where Have They Gone?," BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60555472>.

⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury, "United States : U.S. Treasury Announces Unprecedented & Expansive Sanctions against Russia, Imposing Swift and Severe Economic Costs," U.S. Department of the Treasury, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0608>.

⁵ International Trade Administration, "Update, Russia Sanctions, and Export Controls," International Trade Administration, <https://www.trade.gov/russia>.

⁶ Jonathan Ponciano, "Seized Russian Oligarchs' Assets Could Be Used for Ukraine Aid under Senate Bill," *Forbes Media*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanponciano/2022/03/15/seized-russian-oligarchs-assets-could-be-used-for-ukraine-aid-under-senate-bill/?sh=2cb5e95b2b9c>.

⁷ Al Jazeera, "Us Speaker Nancy Pelosi Visits Ukraine, Meets President Zelenskyy," Al Jazeera Media Network, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/1/pelosi-visits-kyiv-meets-with-ukraine-president>.

never-ending. Michael McFaul, an academic and diplomat who served as U.S. ambassador to Russia from 2012-2014, says, simply, “the imperative must be to arm Ukraine to the teeth.”⁸

Alexander Vindman, former director for European affairs at the National Security Council, argues that U.S. support is critical to maintain the integrity of agreements created to promote global cooperation on issues of security, trade, health and monetary policies. The retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel believes such backing for the battered and beleaguered Ukraine can be a game-changer: “The United States can shore up regional stability, global security, and the liberal international order by working to ensure a Ukrainian victory.”⁹

For some analysts, the war in Ukraine is the result of a never-ending power struggle; the U.S. should have contained Russia when it was most vulnerable – after the collapse of the Soviet Union. General George Patton argued just that as World War II grinded to its conclusion in 1945 and the U.S. had the chance to drive Russian Bear back to its original borders, rather than ceding Berlin.¹⁰ Yet, some see the struggle in Ukraine as threatening the very structure of post-Cold War stability – the future of global order hinges on the outcome of that struggle.¹¹ One thing is certain: a new cold war has the potential to be far worse than the first.¹²

Scholars and foreign policy experts have been warning for decades that if the West continues to threaten Russia’s vital interests in the region, political, even military

⁸ Michael A. McFaul, "Lessons Learned. How Not to Squander Ukraine's Chance," *Ukrainska Pravda*, <https://www-pravda-com-ua.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.pravda.com.ua/eng/columns/2022/07/14/7358081/index.amp>.

⁹ Alexander Vindman, "America Must Embrace the Goal of Ukrainian Victory: It's Time to Move Past Washington's Cautious Approach," *Foreign Affairs* May 11, 2022, no. Accessible from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-05-11/america-embrace-ukraine-victory-goal> (2022).

¹⁰ Robert Kagan, "The Price of Hegemony: Can America Learn to Use Its Power?," *ibid.*, 2022 May-June.

¹¹ Tanisha M. Fazal, "The Return of Conquest? Why the Future of Global Order Hinges on Ukraine," *Foreign affairs (New York, N.Y.)* 101, no. 3 (2022).

¹² Mary Elise Sarotte, "I'm a Cold War Historian. We're in a Frightening New Era.: Guest Essay," *New York Times (Online)* (2022).

confrontation would result.¹³¹⁴ The current war in Ukraine has been long foretold.¹⁵ The West has chosen to ignore the warnings, breaking security assurances while engaging in activities that have threatened Russia.¹⁶

Speaking at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin told a group of Western leaders:

*[NATO eastward expansion] represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust ...what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr. Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: 'The fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee.' Where are these guarantees?'*¹⁷

In a speech at Yale University in 2018, French-born Russian-American journalist Vladimir Pozner noted that the response given to Putin in 2007 was that the guarantees were made to the Soviet Union and not Russia.¹⁸ The guarantees Putin was referring to were those given to the Soviet Union by Western victors of the Cold War in the 1990s.¹⁹

Chas Freeman Jr., a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia and assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs is more to the point. He has said he was

¹³ A. Lieven, "Russia Has Been Warning About Ukraine for Decades. The West Should Have Listened," *Time*, Jan. 25, 2022. Accessible from <https://time.com/6141806/russia-ukraine-threats/> 2022.

¹⁴ Stan Resor, "Opposition to Nato Expansion," The Arms Control Association, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997-06/arms-control-today/opposition-nato-expansion>.

¹⁵ Christopher Zambakari, "Long in the Making: The West's Complicity in the Crisis in Ukraine," *Georgetown Public Policy Review* April 1, Accessible from <http://gppreview.com/2022/04/01/long-in-the-making-the-wests-complicity-in-the-crisis-in-ukraine/> (2022).

¹⁶ National Security Archive, "Nato Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard," National Security Archive, The George Washington University, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>.

¹⁷ President Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy," Presidential Executive Office's Information Office, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

¹⁸ Vladimir Pozner, "How the United States Created Vladimir Putin," (Yale University's YouTube Channel. Accessible from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8X7Ng75e5gQ>, September 27, 2018).

¹⁹ National Security Archive.

“stunned” by the Ukraine invasion,²⁰ that it was an “impetuous decision,” and a “comparable blunder” to Tsar Nicholas’s invasion of Japan in 1904, with the potential for similarly disastrous consequences.²¹

The present moment feels like a turning point: Russia’s assault on Ukraine has raised the risk of a wider war between nuclear powers. Not since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 has the world been so publicly reminded of the possibility of a nuclear confrontation.²² Just four days after the February 24 invasion of Ukraine, Putin ordered his country’s nuclear forces put on “special alert.”²³

The reckless and preventable conflict in Ukraine has already produced worldwide consequences.²⁴ As a result of the chaos levied against Ukraine, the costs of energy, wheat, corn and sunflower oil – important Ukrainian exports – have hit record prices on the global market.

The difficulty of bringing Russia and Ukraine together in a peaceful end to the fighting must take into account a complex pill hard to swallow: a durable, lasting solution must be based on a process historically informed and analytically robust. Absent a decisive

²⁰ Aaron Maté, "Us Fighting Russia 'to the Last Ukrainian': Veteran Us Diplomat," The Grayzone, <https://thegrayzone.com/2022/03/24/us-fighting-russia-to-the-last-ukrainian-veteran-us-diplomat/>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Robin Wright, "What Does Putin's Nuclear Sabre Rattling Mean?," The New Yorker, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/what-does-putins-nuclear-sabre-rattling-mean>.

²³ BBC, "Ukraine Invasion: Putin Puts Russia's Nuclear Forces on 'Special Alert'," The British Broadcasting Corporation, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60547473>.

²⁴ Amir Handjani, "Ukraine War Is Causing a Commodities 'Super Cycle' and Likely Global Food Crisis," Responsible Statecraft <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/03/16/ukraine-war-could-cause-a-global-food-crisis/>.

military victory, a diplomatic political settlement is the only viable option to end the conflict in Ukraine.^{25,26,27}

In matters of war and peace, and crime and punishment, facts matter. History, context, chronology and responsibility coalesce to suggest causality.²⁸ In order to understand the emerging new world socio-political order, we must revisit history, context, chronology and the event itself. We must consider and investigate the responsible actors involved in a given development. Scholar and political analyst Mahmood Mamdani says we must “rethink existing facts in light of rethought contexts, thereby to illuminate old facts and core realities in new light.”²⁹

Facts do not speak for themselves, offered the late philosopher and Holocaust survivor Hannah Arendt. Facts need a context, she argued, or they are easily manipulated by the storyteller: “It is this fragility of facts that makes deception easy up to a point, and so tempting,”³⁰ Arendt asserted. In contested political matter, the philosopher’s so-called “defactualization” reflects a “disregard for reality”³¹ and the impossibility of meaningful, results-possible discussion.

While most of the world has been stunned by the images of the horrifying carnage in Ukraine, less has been said or written about the strengthening alliance between Russia

²⁵ Barry R. Posen, "Ukraine's Implausible Theories of Victory: The Fantasy of Russian Defeat and the Case for Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, no. Accessible from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-07-08/ukraines-implausible-theories-victory> (2022).

²⁶ Anatol Lieven, "How the War in Ukraine Can Be Ended," *Current Affairs*, <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2022/05/how-the-war-in-ukraine-can-be-ended>.

²⁷ Anatol Lieven, Sarang Shidore, and Marcus Stanley, "Avoiding the Dangers of a Protracted Conflict in Ukraine," in *QUINCY BRIEF NO. 23* (New York: Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Accessible from <https://quincyinst.org/report/avoiding-the-dangers-of-a-protracted-conflict-in-ukraine/>, 2022).

²⁸ Patrick Lawrence, "The Causes of Things," *ScheerPost*, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/07/28/patrick-lawrence-the-causes-of-things/>.

²⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers : Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Lying in Politics: Reflections on the Pentagon Papers (Book Review)," *The New York Review of Books* 17 (1971).

³¹ *Ibid.*

and China. The U.S. and China – both sideline participants on opposite ends of the support spectrum – are in a deepening competition across economic, military and technological spheres. Both conflicts – the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the uncertainty of U.S.-Russia-China relations – are capable of reordering the world in troubling ways.

Says American historian and educator Alfred McCoy, “At the core of recent conflicts at both ends of Eurasia is an entente between China and Russia that the world hasn’t seen since the Sino-Soviet alliance at the start of the Cold War.”³²

But, exploration of the root-causes of the conflict in Ukraine must be reviewed to bring context into the disturbing future of U.S. and Sino-Russian relations.

The history leading to Russia’s provocative incursion is rooted in the Cold War. That decades-ago geopolitical chess match began because of events in Russia, and because of U.S. policies, dishonored assurances and NATO’s eastward expansion.

The war in Ukraine reveals a tectonic shift taking place in Eurasia – the Ground Zero of socio-political world affairs is shifting from the West to the East.^{33,34} The gravitational center of the world economy is shifting from the Atlantic to east of the Urals. The war in Ukraine is unraveling the stretched threads of long-ago measures designed to bring a more stable peace among the Cold War participants. The bloody conflict threatens the resulting global order as Russia and China grow closer in their alignment. McCoy, a specialist in U.S. foreign affairs, explains that what China is trying to do is to “break Washington’s steel chains that have long stretched from Eastern Europe to the Pacific.”³⁵

³²Alfred McCoy, "The Geopolitics of the Ukraine War: Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping in the Struggle over Eurasia," TomDispatch, <https://tomdispatch.com/the-geopolitics-of-the-ukraine-war/>.

³³ Alfred W. McCoy, *In the Shadows of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of Us Global Power*, Dispatch Books (Newburyport: Haymarket Books, 2017).

³⁴ Patrick Smith, *Time No Longer Americans after the American Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

³⁵ Alfred McCoy, "Eurasia’s Ring of Fire: The Epic Struggle over the Epicenter of U.S. Global Power," TomDispatch, <https://tomdispatch.com/eurasias-ring-of-fire/>.

As if the above mix isn't dangerous enough, the rise of China poses a lethal threat to neoliberal ideology and U.S. primacy in the post-World War II global architecture of governance. The world's largest economy by purchasing power measures, China has emerged as the greatest trading nation, one set to challenge the U.S. position in the world politically, economically and militarily.³⁶ James K. Galbraith, economist of note and professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, argues the global dollar-based order has remained unchallenged "mainly by instability elsewhere and the lack of a credible alternative or compelling reason to create one."³⁷ Further, the U.S. has maintained its global hegemony because there has been "no clearly different, functionally superior economic development model,"³⁸ And, he warns, trust in the U.S.-led economic and political arena is eroding.

War foretold

What is happening today in Ukraine is what I call a "war foretold."³⁹ As noted earlier, Cold War events come into play. Let me make this case: Attempting to impose a military solution to a political problem will – already has – endanger more innocent people.⁴⁰

³⁶ Knoema, "Gross Domestic Product Based on Purchasing-Power-Parity in Current Prices," Knoema, <https://knoema.com/atlas/ranks/GDP-based-on-PPP>.

³⁷ James K. Galbraith, "The Dollar System in a Multi-Polar World," Institute for New Economic Thinking, <https://www.ineteconomics.org/perspectives/blog/the-dollar-system-in-a-multi-polar-world?fbclid=IwAR13W6K49y2fWDTENMiUdw02GY242e03NYIZFEmtDWLFFITA2KI092K6dAo>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Christopher Zambakari, "War Foretold: Ukraine's Crisis, 30 Years in the Making," *The Fletcher World Forum* September 13. Accessible from <http://www.fletcherforum.org/home/2022/9/13/war-foretold-ukraines-crisis-30-years-in-the-making> (2022).

⁴⁰ Open Letter, "We Call on Biden to Reject Reckless Demands for a No-Fly Zone," Guardian News, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/11/we-call-on-biden-to-reject-reckless-demands-for-a-no-fly-zone>.

The conflict in Ukraine did not happen suddenly or overnight. It didn't happen over the course of a single month or even two or three. It is a war long *foretold*,⁴¹ precisely because it has for decades *been ignored by the architects of the U.S.-led NATO alliance*.⁴² Writing in October 1995 – almost 30 years ago – author, journalist and foreign policy wonk Anatol Lieven predicted⁴³ the coming crisis between Russia, Ukraine and the West:

*The really major question for Russia is Ukraine, and there can be no doubt that unless in the meantime international relations, Russian-Ukrainian relations, and NATO itself have been utterly transformed, moves towards NATO membership for Ukraine would trigger a really ferocious Russian response, involving a complete collapse of cooperation with the West, an urgent hunt for allies elsewhere, and various kinds of ruthless pressure on Kiev to change its policy.*⁴⁴

That's a war foretold.

On June 26, 1997, a group of 50 prominent foreign policy experts sent an open *letter* to U.S. President Bill Clinton, outlining their opposition to eastward expansion by NATO, which was in the process of admitting new members from former Warsaw Pact⁴⁵ countries in eastern Europe.⁴⁶ NATO's expansion plans *violated* a pledge then-U.S. President George H.W. Bush had made to Russian leaders at the end of the Cold War. The pledge: not to expand NATO eastward.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Resor.

⁴² Senator Bernie Sanders, "Prepared Remarks: Sanders Senate Floor Speech on Ukraine," U.S. Senate, <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/prepared-remarks-sanders-senate-floor-speech-on-ukraine/>.

⁴³ Anatol Lieven, "Russian Opposition to Nato Expansion," *The World Today* 51, no. 10 (1995).

⁴⁵The Warsaw Pact was a collective defense treaty established in 1955 by the Soviet Union and seven other Soviet satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

⁴⁶ Resor.

⁴⁷ C. J. Polychroniou, "Chomsky: Us Approach to Ukraine and Russia Has 'Left the Domain of Rational Discourse'," Truthout, <https://truthout.org/articles/us-approach-to-ukraine-and-russia-has-left-the-domain-of-rational-discourse/>.

The 1997 letter warned that “the current U.S.-led effort to expand NATO” was “a policy error of historic proportions,” adding, “We believe that NATO expansion will decrease allied security and unsettle European stability.” The message to Clinton emphasized:

In Russia, NATO expansion, which continues to be opposed across the entire political spectrum, will strengthen the nondemocratic opposition, undercut those who favor reform and cooperation with the West, bring the Russians to question the entire post-Cold War settlement, and galvanize resistance in the Duma to the START II and III treaties. In Europe, NATO expansion will draw a new line of division between the ‘ins’ and the ‘outs,’ foster instability, and ultimately diminish the sense of security of those countries which are not included.⁴⁸

While building and protecting its sphere of global influence, generations of American policymakers have renounced the concept of such a demesne. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2008 declared a new world order “in which great power is defined not by spheres of influence or zero-sum competition, or the strong imposing their will on the weak.”⁴⁹ Successor Hillary Rodham Clinton declared in 2010, “the United States does not recognize spheres of influence.”⁵⁰ Next, defense secretary John Kerry announced in 2013, “the era of the Monroe Doctrine is over,”⁵⁸ and his successor, Antony Blinken, added in 2021, “(O)ne country does not have the right to exert a sphere of influence. That notion should be relegated to the dustbin of history.”⁵¹

But, throughout centuries, the U.S. has continued to exert its very own sphere of influence.

Political scientist Graham Allison, whose specialty is the analysis of crisis decision making, added in 2020:

⁴⁸ Resor.

⁴⁹ Secretary Condoleezza Rice, "Secretary Rice Addresses U.S.-Russia Relations at the German Marshall Fund," U.S. Department of State, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/09/109954.htm>.

⁵⁰ Preeti Aroon, "Clinton: U.S. Has ‘Steadfast’ Commitment to Georgia’s Sovereignty," Foreign Policy (FP), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/07/06/clinton-u-s-has-steadfast-commitment-to-georgias-sovereignty/>.

⁵¹ Secretary Antony J. Blinken, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken at a Press Availability," U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-a-press-availability-9/>.

[T]he entire world had become a de facto American sphere [in the heady aftermath of the Cold War]. Spheres of influence had given way to a sphere of influence. The strong still imposed their will on the weak; the rest of the world was compelled to play largely by American rules, or else face a steep price, from crippling sanctions to outright regime change. Spheres of influence hadn't gone away; they had been collapsed into one, by the overwhelming fact of U.S. hegemony.⁵²

Four former U.S. ambassadors to Moscow, including the esteemed George Kennan, Thomas Pickering, Jack Matlock, and the present head of the CIA, William Burns, have all warned the U.S. and its Western allies against encroaching on Russia's sphere of influence and bringing NATO ever closer to Russia's borders.⁵³ Ukraine and Georgia membership in NATO was always a red line for Russia.⁵⁴

In essence, the rug was being pulled out from under the no-expansion pledge by the very players who had authored the covenant, and the 1997 letter writers were concerned there would be dramatic circumstances.

The war in Ukraine has revived a long debate about what happened at the end of the Cold War. Some Western scholars and policy makers reject the Soviet/Russian policymakers' claim that the U.S. promised the Soviet Union in the 1990s NATO would not expand into Eastern Europe.⁵⁵ U.S. government documents declassified in 2017 provide evidence supporting the Soviet/Russian position that an informal assurance was made to the Soviet Union: NATO would not expand in post-Cold War Europe.⁵⁶ However, these vows were never codified and instead the "United States used guarantees against NATO expansion to exploit Soviet weaknesses and reinforce U.S. strengths in post-Cold War Europe."⁵⁷

⁵² Graham Allison, "The New Spheres of Influence: Sharing the Globe with Other Great Powers," *Foreign Affairs* (2020).

⁵³ Lieven, "How the War in Ukraine Can Be Ended".

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No-Nato-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *The Washington quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2009).

⁵⁶ National Security Archive.

⁵⁷ Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Deal or No Deal?: The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit Nato Expansion," *International Security* 40, no. 4 (2016).

Returning to the 1997 memorandum arguing against NATO expansion,⁵⁸ the empty promises, broken pledges and assurances given to Russia have been largely ignored,^{59,60,61} including then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's adamant "not one inch eastward" pledge about NATO expansion in 1990.⁶² The declassified documents provide records that Baker assured Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "Neither the President [Clinton] nor I intend to extract any unilateral advantages from the processes that are taking place."⁶³ Additionally, Baker reported, the Americans understood that "not only for the Soviet Union but for other European countries as well it is important to have guarantees that if the United States keeps its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction."⁶⁴ And three years later, in a February 1990 meeting in Ottawa, Canada, Secretary Baker offered a similar, if couched, assurance, this time to Eduard Shevardnadze, Russian minister of foreign affairs, stating, "And if U[nited] G[ermany] stays in NATO, we should take care about nonexpansion of its jurisdiction to the East."⁶⁵

Earlier this year, Eileen O'Connor, a former reporter for ABC and CNN who also worked as an attorney in Russia and Ukraine, wrote in *The New York Times* about the fools-errand nature of Western sanctions:

⁵⁸ Resor.

⁵⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign affairs* (New York, N.Y.) 93, no. 5 (2014).

⁶⁰ Lieven, "Russian Opposition to Nato Expansion."

⁶¹ Noam Chomsky and David Barsamian, "Welcome to a Science-Fiction Planet: How George Orwell's Doublethink Became the Way of the World," TomDispatch, <https://tomdispatch.com/welcome-to-a-science-fiction-planet/>.

⁶² National Security Archive.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

*Russian scholars have long noted that the absence of private property rights and impartial legal authority [in Russia] lead to state actors holding the power that determines the lives of Russians in every way. Beyond its borders, Russia has since the 15th century exerted its power through military aggression. In a country where power is nearly everything, sanctions and lost fortunes alone will not change that fundamental dynamic.*⁶⁶

Sanctions or no, for Putin and Russian leaders, Ukraine represents a national security matter. For Putin, the objective of the war is, says reporter O'Connor, "to defend Russian territory and sovereignty against Western dominance." As far as Putin is concerned, the West has ignored Russia for too long, and denied it superpower status.⁶⁷

Double standard

More history: For the most part, the use of force is prohibited between states, according to the UN Charter. There are two exceptions: enforcement of a UN-authorized use of military force to maintain peace and security (Chapter VII of the charter), and the right of collective self-defense (Article 51 of the Charter).⁶⁸

Yet, since the founding of the UN in 1945, there have been a number of military interventions that have *not* carried such authorization, and the U.S. has been a participant in such use of force.⁶⁹

The U.S. financial and military involvement in Vietnam's civil war in support of the South Vietnamese state in the 1950s and 60s is a classic example. In 1998, the U.S. and the United

⁶⁶ O'Connor Eileen, "Putin Cares About Only One Thing, and It's Not Oligarchs: Guest Essay," *New York Times (Online)* (2022).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Grenville Clark and Louis B. Sohn, "Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," in *World Peace through World Law: Two Alternative Plans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁶⁹ Sidita Kushi and Monica Duffy Toft report that the U.S. has conducted almost 400 military interventions since 1776, with half of these interventions happening between 1950 and 2019 Sidita Kushi and Monica Duffy Toft, "Introducing the Military Intervention Project: A New Dataset on Us Military Interventions, 1776-2019," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2022).

Kingdom, citing the threat from the manufacture and storage of clandestine Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by Iraq President Saddam Hussein, launched a three-day aerial bombardment of sites suspected of holding WMDs – an operation called “Desert Fox.” Even if WMDs were discovered – they weren’t – the action was in violation of the UN Charter. Because, according to the charter, no single nation or collective possesses unilateral enforcement authority, the implementation of Operation Desert Fox was an illegal act of aggression under international law. Other examples abound. Most recently, in April, U.S. President Joseph Biden’s Indo-Pacific coordinator, Kurt Campbell, warned the Solomon Islands the U.S. will take “unspecified action” against the South Pacific nation should its recently concluded cooperation agreement with China “pose a threat to U.S. or allied interests.”⁷⁰ (The small Pacific Islands country has subsequently characterized the warning as a threat of invasion).

In his analysis, constitutional scholar Louis Fisher, offers a broad socio-historical analysis of the presidential military actions that violate the U.S. Constitution, tracing the history of executive power from the Founding Fathers to current U.S. presidents. He notes that from President Truman forward, presidents have unilaterally engaged in military actions abroad, including Eisenhower’s covert operations in Iran and Guantanamo. Kennedy supported the invasion of Cuba and, in violation of statutory policy, Reagan became involved in the Iran-Contra affair. Trump bombed Syria after its use of nerve gas, and assisted Saudi Arabia with military operations in Yemen. These actions and initiatives - - under the U.S. Constitution -- require joint action by both elected branches.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Associated Press, "Us Warns Solomon Islands of Response over Security Pact with China," (Tehran: SyndiGate Media Inc. Accessible from <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-04-22/us-officials-land-in-solomons-to-discuss-china-pact-concerns>, 2022).

⁷¹ Louis Fisher, "Presidential Military Actions That Violate the Constitution," ed. Zambakari Christopher, et al., vol. 1, *The Kurdish Crisis in the Middle East (Winter Special Issue)* (Phoenix, Arizona: The Zambakari Advisory. Accessible from <http://www.zambakari.org/special-issue-winter-2020.html>, 2020).

Simon Waxman, widely published senior editor at Harvard University Press, recently cited a number of such unauthorized actions, and noted the hypocrisy of international law and the rule-based global order. Asks Waxman:

Where was [the rule-based global order] in 2003? Where was it when NATO bombed Yugoslavia in 1999? When the United States bombed Libya in 1986? When the United States supported a coup in Honduras in 2009, or the coup in Iran in 1953? Where, for that matter, was it when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, to muffled grumbling abroad? Russia has repeatedly targeted civilians in Syria while the rest of humanity yawns. None of these actions was authorized under the UN Charter or other conventions governing the laws of war, the backbones of the alleged global order.⁷²

What is often referred to as the “American-led open-democratic political order”⁷³ or “U.S.-led liberal, rules-based international order”^{74,75} favors the strong. The U.S. has been able to make use of, circumvent, disregard or act unilaterally when it suits its national interest. Time and again, rules are applied to declared enemies, while most-favored allies are exempt. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Adam Johnson, a Stanford University English professor, contends, “If any other country engages in aggressive war without U.S. sanction, they are said to undermine the ‘liberal, rules-based order.’⁷⁶ But such an order

⁷² Simon Waxman, "What Rule-Based International Order," *Boston Review* March 2. Accessible from <https://bostonreview.net/articles/what-rule-based-international-order/> (2022).

⁷³ G. J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," *International relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no. 2 (2005).

⁷⁴ Ben Scott, "The United States and the Rules-Based Order " Lowy Institute, <https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/features/usa-rules-based-order/>.

⁷⁵ Robert Kagan, "The Twilight of the Liberal World Order," (Washington, DC The Brookings Institution. Accessible from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-twilight-of-the-liberal-world-order/>. 2017).

⁷⁶ Johnson also lists a number of international treaties that the U.S. refused to ratify: “including the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention of 1958, the Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1962, Convention on the Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages of 1962, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, Minimum Age Convention of 1973, the Moon Treaty of 1979, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996, Kyoto Protocol of 1997, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998, Convention on Cluster Munitions of 2008, or the Arms Trade Treaty of 2013” Adam Johnson, "The Nyt's

never existed, it's not an actual document or a series of laws. 'Rules-based' simply means 'American rules' that the U.S. and its NATO allies assert when it suits them."⁷⁷

So, what about this proxy war the U.S. is fighting while Russia and China appear to be drawing closer to each other? A proxy war is one in which a major power instigates or supports a conflict, but does not fully participate. Former CIA director and one-time U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, says of the Ukraine mess, "We are engaged in a conflict here. It's a proxy war with Russia, whether we say so or not,"⁷⁸ reasoning:

*I think the only way to basically deal with Putin right now is double down on ourselves, which means to provide as much military aid as necessary ... Make no mistake about it: Diplomacy is going nowhere unless we have leverage, unless the Ukrainians have leverage, and the way you get leverage is by, frankly, going in and killing Russians. That's what the Ukrainians have to do. We've got to continue the war effort. This is a power game. Putin understands power; he doesn't really understand diplomacy very much.*⁷⁹

Mathu Joyini, the South African ambassador to the UN, believes the proxy war being carried out by the U.S. and its Western allies in Ukraine does not represent the pursuit of a noble goal. Rather, she says, it is exercised for the geopolitical advantage to be gained and national interests to be served. On another note, Joyini also believes that while the UN was founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of future wars, what is happening today in Ukraine is further evidence of the need for the reformation of the UN Security Council, "free from the legacy of the Cold War so that it can genuinely be the space where the community of nations comes together to resolve conflict and build a more just and peaceful world."⁸⁰

Casually Racist, Arrogant Chauvinism in Two Paragraphs," Substack Inc., <https://thecolumn.substack.com/p/the-nyts-casually-racist-arrogant>.

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⁷⁸ Jeremy Scahill, "The U.S. Has Its Own Agenda against Russia," The Intercept <https://theintercept.com/2022/04/01/russia-ukraine-proxy-war-washington-diplomacy/>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ambassador Mathu Joyini, "Statement by South Africa at the Emergency United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Ukraine," Department of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa, <http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/2022/unga0301.htm>.

Putting definitions and evidence of proxy positioning aside, Robert Kagan, neoconservative scholar and frequent critic of U.S. foreign policy, notes, "Putin alone is to blame for his actions, but the invasion of Ukraine is taking place in a historical and geopolitical context in which the United States has played and still plays the principal role, and Americans must grapple with this fact."⁸¹ Trying to make sense of the war without taking into account the social-historical context only further obscures the dynamics that led to the conflict in the first place. Such a vacuum of reference further fuels the contention between nation parties. Furthermore, knowing the root causes of the war can help pave the way to a possible solution to end the war. As long as the diagnosis of the problem is incomplete or lacking background and frame of reference, solutions will be elusive.

False equivalency

Most troubling is the assumption that Putin is not waging a defensive war against possible border-flirting NATO expansion, but, instead, is bent on resurrecting the former Soviet Union while conquering and holding the whole of Ukraine.⁸² Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, journalists Liana Fix and Michael Kimmage contend:

*In ordering an invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin acted impulsively. Were he now to think strategically, he would cut his losses and look for a way to finish the war. His larger political aims are already out of reach. He cannot control Ukraine and will struggle to partition a country opposed to Russian occupation. Moscow has only an expensive and forbidding military path ahead of it, which together with sanctions will place sizable burdens on Putin's regime.*⁸³

⁸¹ Kagan, "The Price of Hegemony: Can America Learn to Use Its Power?," 10.

⁸² Lieven.

⁸³ Liana Fix and Michael Kimmage, "What If Russia Makes a Deal? How to End a War That No One Is Likely to Win," *Foreign Affairs* no. March 23, 2022. Accessible from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-23/what-if-russia-makes-deal> (2022).

Surprisingly, this is not a war of occupation. Putin knows the futility of wars of occupation. His experience comes firsthand. He was a KGB officer during the Soviet Union's 1979-89 decade-long habitation of Afghanistan. He need look no further than the subsequent U.S. occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq for evidence of the futility of such an undertaking. Certainly, the imposition of sanctions against Russia and individuals attached to the country's leadership and commerce could discourage an occupation or siege of much length of time – as a reminder, reporter O'Connor poo-pooes the effectiveness of sanctions. The continuation of sanctions during an occupation of Ukraine could raise the possibility of internal strife and local dissent within Russia's own borders. Could an occupation provide the necessary time for Ukraine to marshal the necessary forces and weaponry to challenge the oppressor's ultimate success? If Putin's motivation in Ukraine is to neutralize its western neighbor, if his actions are fueled by his insistence that NATO establish no military bases in Ukraine, and if the invasion of Ukraine is intended to dissuade that country's interest in NATO and EU membership, then permanent occupation of Ukraine is not likely the best vehicle.

Russia remains a nuclear-armed country, and NATO and the U.S. have ruled out a military intervention in Ukraine. Countries with nuclear warheads are less likely to engage in a direct war but are more likely to resort to proxy warfare. In the words of foreign relations expert Kenneth Waltz, "Nuclear weapons dissuade states from going to war more surely than conventional weapons do."⁸⁴ In the last 80 years, there has been no war between two nuclear powers where a such an arsenal was deployed. The logic of mutually assured destruction that defined the Cold War applies in Ukraine.⁸⁵ The assumption here is that two nuclear powers will not go to war for fear of mutually assured destruction. The longer the conflict continues, the worse off Ukraine will be.

⁸⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *The American Political Science Review* 84, no. 3 (1990): 743.

⁸⁵ Zack Beauchamp, "Why the Us Won't Send Troops to Ukraine," VOX, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2022/2/25/22949351/ukraine-russia-us-troops-no-fly-zone-nuclear-weapons>.

Renewed Sino-Russian entente and rise of the petro-ruble and petro-yuan

Enter a wildcard in all that is transpiring in Ukraine. Enter China, a force once referred to as “The Sleeping Giant.”

Economic expert Ellen Brown argues that in some ways Russia and China have adopted similar playbooks to the U.S. game plan in the 19th and 20th centuries:

Foreign critics have long chafed at the ‘exorbitant privilege’ of the U.S. dollar as global reserve currency. The U.S. can issue this currency backed by nothing but the ‘full faith and credit of the United States.’ Foreign governments, needing dollars, not only accept them in trade but buy U.S. securities with them, effectively funding the U.S. government and its foreign wars. But no government has been powerful enough to break that arrangement.⁸⁶

Until now, the U.S. has fended off challenges by virtue of its dominance international of institutions (including the UN, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, NATO, and the Organization of American States). Boasting the world's most powerful military, a huge economy, and the supremacy of the dollar in the global marketplace hasn't hurt.⁸⁷ Until now, no country has successfully challenged the hegemony of the dollar as a reserve currency in the global marketplace, which was adopted in 1944.

Now, a very real challenge to the dollar comes from Russia and China, both seeking to break the Anglo-American-controlled finance system for the first time in history. In response to invasion-spurred sanctions instituted by Western countries, the Putin administration has moved to require purchases of Russian energy in Russian rubles or

⁸⁶ Ellen Brown, "The Coming Global Financial Revolution: Russia Is Following the American Playbook " Scheerpost, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/04/04/ellen-brown-the-coming-global-financial-revolution-russia-is-following-the-american-playbook/>.

⁸⁷ Lilia Costabile, "Continuity and Change in the International Monetary System: The Dollar Standard and Capital Mobility," *Review of Political Economy* 34, no. 3 (2022).

gold instead of the dollar or Euro.⁸⁸ Despite Russia's GDP being less than a tenth of the U.S.'s or China's, economist Brown notes that Russia is a major global supplier of key commodities including "not just oil, natural gas and grains, but timber, fertilizers, nickel, titanium, palladium, coal, nitrogen, and rare earth metals used in the production of computer chips, electric vehicles and airplanes."⁸⁹ As a result of Putin's rubles-or-gold dictate, the Russian ruble rose in value on global exchanges. The effect has been reminiscent of the 1970s, when the petrodollar – crude oil exports revenues – propped up the value of U.S. dollar in the global marketplace.

The debate over Russia's demand that foreign buyers pay for gas in rubles has tested the resolve of European governments to take a hard line against Moscow over the war in Ukraine. Poland, Bulgaria and Finland have refused to comply with Moscow's demand that importers pay for gas via ruble accounts with Gazprombank, and their supplies have been cut. Meanwhile – listen for the sirens and the bells going off in the background – Russia continues to knot closer economic ties with China and other non-Western countries. As an example, its September agreement to begin switching payments for gas supplies to China to yuan and rubles instead of dollars is a move-over announcement to reduce its reliance on the U.S. dollar, the euro and other hard currencies in its banking system and for trade.

Russia generates as much as a billion dollars a day through its energy exports.⁹⁰ Since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Europe's continued reliance on Russian energy has pumped nearly \$40 billion into Putin's coffers. Roughly 30 percent of the gas comes via

⁸⁸ Stephen Alpher, "Russian Lawmaker Suggests Nation Could Accept Bitcoin for Oil Payments," Yahoo! News, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/russian-lawmaker-suggests-accepting-bitcoin-161918687.html?guccounter=1>.

⁸⁹ Ellen Brown, "The Coming Global Financial Revolution: Russia Is Following the American Playbook " ScheerPost.com, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/04/04/ellen-brown-the-coming-global-financial-revolution-russia-is-following-the-american-playbook/>.

⁹⁰ Steven Mufson, "Ukraine's Pipelines Are Still Carrying Russian Gas to Europe," *The Washington Post* (Online). Accessible from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/03/28/ukraine-russian-gas-europe-naftogaz/> (2022).

pipelines through Ukraine.⁹¹ Overall, Europe imports 40 percent of its gas from Russia, and an additional 70 percent is supplied by state-run supplier Gazprom to Western Europe.⁹² According to a report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), "Russia earned EUR 93 billion in revenue from fossil fuel exports in the first 100 days of the war," and the EU "imported 61 percent of this, worth approximately 57 billion EUR."⁹³

Even before the war in Ukraine, Russia and China were drawing ever-closer. In 2014, Russia announced a pivot to China with a deal to build two natural-gas pipelines to carry a fifth of China's gas imports.⁹⁴ Alongside the energy pipeline, China agreed to build a \$242 billion,⁹⁵ 4,300-mile high-speed railway⁹⁶ from Beijing to Moscow.

Western sanctions have drawn the two Communist regimes closer together. According to geostrategist Brahma Chellaney, "By effectively putting Russia, the world's richest country in natural resources, in Beijing's pocket, the [Western] sanctions will yield major

⁹¹ Svitlana Romanko, McKibben, and Amy Goodman, "Europe Buys \$38b in Russian Energy since Invasion; 30% of the Gas Comes Via Pipelines in Ukraine," Democracy Now!, https://www.democracynow.org/2022/4/7/ukrainian_pipelines_russian_gas_embargo_europe.

⁹² Rochelle Toplensky, "Weaning Europe Off Russian Gas Will Take Time; Pipeline Diplomacy with Moscow Has Built an Interdependence That Will Take Years to Unwind," *Wall Street Journal (Online)*. Accessible from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/weaning-europe-off-russian-gas-will-take-time-11644236762>, Feb 07, 2022 2022.

⁹³ Lauri Myllyvirta et al., "Financing Putin's War: Fossil Fuel Imports from Russia in the First 100 Days of the Invasion," (Helsinki, Finland Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA). Accessible from <https://energyandcleanair.org/publication/russian-fossil-exports-first-100-days>, 2022).

⁹⁴ James Paton and Aibing Guo, "Russia, China Add to \$400 Billion Gas Deal with Accord," Bloomberg News, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-11-10/russia-china-add-to-400-billion-gas-deal-with-accord#xj4y7vzkg>.

⁹⁵ Steve LeVine, "China Is Building the Most Extensive Global Commercial-Military Empire in History," Quartz, <https://qz.com/415649/china-is-building-the-most-extensive-global-commercial-military-empire-in-history/>.

⁹⁶ RT News, "Moscow to Beijing in 2 Days: China to Build \$242bn High-Speed Railway," RT News, <https://www.rt.com/business/225131-russia-china-speed-railway/>.

dividends for a resource-hungry China, including allowing it to dictate the terms of the bilateral relationship and secure greater access to Russian military technology.”⁹⁷

Again, history must be acknowledged as a teacher. At the end of World War II, the U.S. embarked on a mission to consolidate and build a new global order. This led to the creation of many Bretton Woods institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The U.S. actually played a lead role in setting up regional bodies and treaty organizations, an effort to expand American power overseas. Included were the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (the Rio Treaty of 1947), NATO in 1949, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in 1954, the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (Manila Pact of 1954), and the Middle East Treaty Organization, better known as the Baghdad Pact of 1955 and subsequently known as the Central Treaty Organization. These groups have since allowed the U.S. to build between 750-800 military bases in more than 70 countries and territories abroad.^{98,99}

The U.S. preference regarding the operational function of the UN and EU – or, in a U.S.-perfect world – is that Washington is able, whenever it deems it necessary, to unilaterally unleash its military resources to defend its vital interests, ensuring unfettered access to key markets, energy supplies and strategic resources. If either the UN or EU were to disagree with the U.S., quite simply the U.S. reserves the right to do whatever is in its national security interest.

But, if Russia poses complexities for the West, it is China that offers, quite possibly, an even greater adversary or, at the least, a peer competitor. The threat that China poses to the U.S. global position is unlike any the U.S. has faced since the Cold War due to the

⁹⁷ James Griffiths, "War in Ukraine Could Put Russia Deeper in China's Pocket Than Ever. Here's How Beijing Could Use That Economic Leverage," *The Globe and Mail Inc.*, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-war-in-ukraine-could-put-russia-deeper-in-chinas-pocket-than-ever-what/>.

⁹⁸ Jonathan Stevenson, "Overseas Bases and Us Strategic Posture," *Adelphi Series* 60, no. 484-486 (2020): 9.

⁹⁹ David Vine, "Where in the World Is the U.S. Military?," *POLITICO*, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/us-military-bases-around-the-world-119321/>.

nature, scale and size of China and its economy. Says FBI Director Christopher Wray, "There is just no country that presents a broader threat to our ideas, our innovation and our economic security than China."¹⁰⁰ And, echoing the director's contention, a March 2021 Interim National Security Strategy Guidance reports, "China ... is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system."¹⁰¹ The U.S. Department of Defense has identified countering China's military capabilities as a top priority.¹⁰² As one more example of the seriousness of China's profile, Daniel Russel, a vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, says the scenario is this: "It's the administration saying, keep your eye on national-security challenges from Russia, but in the big scheme of things, the principal challenge to the U.S. and the international order the U.S. is committed to is coming from China."¹⁰³

Sleeping giant? Certainly a metaphorical giant, but no longer sleeping.

The war in Ukraine has revised an old Cold War binary mindset, Western-style internationalism that sees the world as good vs. evil, a "rules-based international order" vs. "authoritarian order" and freedom vs. tyranny. As Yale professor of law and history Samuel Moyn contends, this slippery-slope way of thinking could bring a far more serious confrontation with a more capable adversary.¹⁰⁴ Moyn writes in Britain's *Prospect* magazine that this Cold War, Russian-U.S. rhetoric, "lionising ourselves as free and the

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Wray, "Countering Threats Posed by the Chinese Government inside the U.S.," Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/countering-threats-posed-by-the-chinese-government-inside-the-us-wray-013122>.

¹⁰¹ Jr. President Joseph R. Biden, "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance : Renewing America's Advantages " (Washington, DC: The White House. Accessible from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>, 2021).

¹⁰² Ronald O'Rourke, "Renewed Great Power Competition: Implications for Defense – Issues for Congress," (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service. Accessible from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R43838.pdf>, 2022).

¹⁰³ Lingling Wei, "Blinken China Speech to Affirm Beijing as Main U.S. Rival; the Speech, Postponed after Secretary of State Tested Positive for Covid-19, Is Expected to Emphasize the Administration's View of China," *Wall Street Journal (Online)*, May 04 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Moyn, "How to Stop a New Cold War," *Prospect*, April 7, 2022. Accessible from <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/essays/how-to-stop-a-new-cold-war> 2022.

rest of the world as unfree, has summoned the spectre of a singular autocratic enemy.”¹⁰⁵ China is that enemy, and Moyn asks the question: Why, rather than building democracies that deserve the name – for their own citizens, and as a universal model – have we chosen to stoke confrontation?”¹⁰⁶

According to a World Bank report, China’s GDP stood at more than \$19.6 billion in purchasing power parity in 2017.¹⁰⁷ The U.S. boasted a \$19.5 billion GDP. Together, the two powers accounted for one third of global GDP. India, at \$8 billion GDP, was the third-largest economy, followed by Japan, Germany, and Russia. China’s growth is fueled by its central management of the economy, its large-scale capital investment and rapid expansion of manufacturing and production.

Recent forecasts by UK-based Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) show that China will overtake the U.S. to become the world's largest economy by 2030, five years earlier than the pre-pandemic prediction.¹⁰⁸ The report notes that China is expected to grow at a rate of 5.7 percent annually from 2020-25 and 4.7 percent annually from 2025-30 and 3.8 percent annually from 2030-35.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, the U.S. economy will grow at a rate of 1.9 percent annually from 2022-24 and then slow to 1.6 percent in the years after that.¹¹⁰ This report is consistent with the IMF predictions that China’s total GDP could equal that of the U.S. in 2027 to 2028.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ World Bank, *Purchasing Power Parities and the Size of World Economies : Results from the 2017 International Comparison Program* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Accessible from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33623>, 2020).

¹⁰⁸ CEBR, "World Economic League Table 2022," in *13th edition* (London, United Kingdom: The Centre for Economics and Business Research. Accessible from <https://cebr.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/WELT-2022.pdf>, 2021).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 69.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ cited in Huang Renwei, "What Does the Future between the Us and China Look Like?," ScheerPost.com, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/07/24/what-does-the-future-between-the-us-and-china-look-like/>.

Perhaps the most sobering lines of a 2012 Center for Homeland Defense and Security report are these: “The empowerment of individuals and diffusion of power among states and from states to informal networks will have a drastic impact, largely reversing the historic rise of the West since 1750, restoring Asia’s weight in the global economy, and ushering in a new era of ‘democratization’ at the international and domestic level.”¹¹²

Again, “Restoring Asia’s weight in the global economy, and ushering in a new era of ‘democratization’ at the international and domestic level.”

The center’s report, “Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds,” continues,

*Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power, based upon GDP, population size, military spending, and technological investment. China alone will probably have the largest economy, surpassing that of the United States a few years before 2030 ...*¹¹³

This is a tectonic shift that will change the order of the current liberal world standings, and it doesn’t even take into account a technology race that the U.S. appears to be losing to the Red Dragon.

In his book, “*The New Silk Roads*,” Peter Frankopan notes that important decisions shaping this and the next century will not be made in the West “but in Beijing, Moscow, in Tehran and Riyadh, in Delhi and Islamabad, in Kabul and in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan, in Ankara, Damascus and Jerusalem.”¹¹⁴

Chinese President Xi Jin Ping knows of the shift, is aware of changing direction of power. In a paper prepared for Harvard’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the leader is quoted: “Technological innovation has become the main battleground of the global playing field, and competition for tech dominance will grow unprecedentedly

¹¹² National Intelligence Council, “Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds,” (Washington, D.C.: National Intelligence Council. Accessible from https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf, 2012).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads : A New History of the World*, New History of the World (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

fierce.”¹¹⁵ Xi has already announced intentions to “develop indigenous capabilities, decrease dependence on foreign technology, and advance emerging technologies.”¹¹⁶ For the U.S., one-time Google CEO Eric Schmidt sounds an alarm: “[T]he United States now faces an economic and military competitor in China that is aggressively trying to close our lead in emerging technologies.”¹¹⁷ He adds, “Unless these trends change, in the 2030s we will be competing with a country that has a bigger economy, more research and development investments, better research, wider deployment of new technologies, and stronger computing infrastructure.”¹¹⁸

For veteran journalist Patrick Lawrence the arrival of the multipolar world was the September 11 attack on U.S. soil. From that day, Lawrence argued that the United State had 25 years to decide how it plans on handling the emergence of competing powers and a multipolar world.¹¹⁹ Two decades later, he argues the U.S. has made that decision that it will not accommodate emerging powers gracefully. It will put up “utmost resistance.”¹²⁰ For John Mearsheimer, the world became multipolar around 2016, when unipolarity ended with the death of the liberal international order.¹²¹ In the new political order, Mearsheimer contents “the United States and China will lead bounded orders that will compete with each other in both the economic and military realms.”¹²²

¹¹⁵ Graham Allison et al., “The Great Tech Rivalry: China Vs the U.S.,” in *Avoiding Great Power War Project* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School. Accessible from <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/great-tech-rivalry-china-vs-us>, 2021).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ P. Smith, *Somebody Else's Century: East and West in a Post-Western World* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010).

¹²⁰ Patrick Lawrence and Robert Scheer, “Will Biden Provoke War with China?,” *ScheerPost*, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/06/03/patrick-lawrence-robert-scheer-can-the-us-handle-a-multi-polar-world/>.

¹²¹ John J. Mearsheimer, “Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order,” *International security* 43, no. 4 (2019).

¹²² Ibid., 8.

Unipolar, bipolar and multipolar

World order can be distinguished by its polarity in terms of power distribution within the state-led system.¹²³ There is unipolarity (one dominant power), bipolarity (two dominant powers) or multipolarity (more than two dominant powers). For example, the Cold War contest between the Soviet Union and U.S. created a bipolar world with two core centers of power. When the Cold War ended, the U.S. enjoyed a brief moment of unipolarity as the Soviet Union collapsed.

Some 30 years ago, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Charles Krauthammer argued that to see the U.S. as anything but the world's "unchallenged superpower"¹²⁴ was fantasy. U.S. policymakers may "dress unilateral action in multilateral clothing," he wrote, but for the foreseeable future, the U.S. would be "the only country with the military, diplomatic, political and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict."¹²⁵ The U.S. could not retreat from the world because, according to Krauthammer, "The alternative to unipolarity is chaos," he wrote. "If America wants stability, it will have to create it."¹²⁶

Now, according to political scientist and international relations expert John J. Mearsheimer, it is the liberal international order that has accelerated China's rise, and ultimately transformed the system from unipolar to multipolar.¹²⁷

Russia's instigation of the crisis in Ukraine has further reaffirmed the multipolarity of the world. For some scholars, the war in Ukraine has ushered "the rebirth of the liberal world order,"¹²⁸ characterized by an "unprecedented degree of unity in the liberal world."¹²⁹

¹²³ Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, "Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability," *World politics* 16, no. 3 (1964).

¹²⁴ Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign affairs (New York, N.Y.)* 70, no. 1 (1990): 23.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹²⁷ Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order."

¹²⁸ Lucan Ahmad Way, "The Rebirth of the Liberal World Order?," *Journal of democracy* 33, no. 2 (2022).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

What is striking is the shallow character in the unity of purpose, how divided the world has become: divided over the war, reluctant to decouple from dependence on Russian energy, technology transfer, military equipment or simply bilateral trades with Russia. The war in Ukraine is revealing the limits of the U.S.-led Western order and the declining ability of Western powers to act unilaterally to compel regional players to carry the bidding of Washington, the bidding of NATO and its membership.

An event that added tightening screws to the history of alliance between China and Russia was the 2008 Bucharest Summit; NATO announced then and there that Croatia and Albania would become part of the international body and agreed that Georgia and Ukraine would, in the future, be admitted.¹³⁰ Russia viewed such a move as an existential threat and a turnabout from the now-hollow-sounding “not one inch eastward” promise; Moscow vigorously protested the announcement. It is not difficult to imagine Russia once more looking east and asking China, “Are you following this?” and “Want to help?”

The Bucharest Summit stands not alone in moves that have poked the Russian bear. While the gathering of 14 years ago resulted in NATO expansion eastward against old assurances of the opposite, in June of this year, U.S. forces and NATO allies began joint naval exercises with Ukraine in the Black Sea. The in-your-face scale of the military “games” garnered an immediate outcry from Moscow. At one menacing point in the exercises, the HMS Defender, a Type 45 destroyer from the UK’s Carrier Strike Group, sailed within 12 miles of the Crimean coast as it headed toward Georgia.¹³¹ Even Ukraine’s citizens were skeptical of the maneuvers: Surveys in 2019 and 2020 showed just 21 percent of the sampling supported the idea of NATO exercises near Russia.¹³²

¹³⁰ NATO, "Bucharest Summit Declaration: Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.

¹³¹ BBC, "Hms Defender: Russian Jets and Ships Shadow British Warship," <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57583363>.

¹³² Gerard Toal and John O'Loughlin, "Ukrainians in Our Survey Weren't Enthusiastic About Nato Exercises Close to Russia," *The Washington Post (Online)*. Accessible from

The growing relationship between Moscow and Beijing is not lost on President Biden. The U.S. commander in chief has reportedly warned Chinese President Xi Jinping that China would face the ever-proverbial “consequences” if it were to provide material support to Russia amid the war in Ukraine. The call is part of longstanding U.S. efforts to check the emerging Sino-Russian betrothal, which threatens U.S. influence over the Eurasian landmass, says historian McCoy, adding that, as U.S. global power declines, China and Russia “are going to emerge as the new centers of global power on the planet.”¹³³

McCoy further contends that China’s ascension is different from that of previous great powers.¹³⁴ The behemoth of a country is not relying on building a blue-water navy like the British or a global aerospace armada akin to America’s. Instead, it is “using its cash reserves to reach deep within the world island to the heart of Eurasia in an attempt to thoroughly reshape the geopolitical fundamentals of global power, using a subtle strategy that has so far eluded Washington’s power elites.”¹³⁵ This shift threatens to unravel the geopolitical balance that has shaped the world for the past five hundred years. McCoy notes that the National Intelligence Council – a bridge department between the U.S. intelligence community and policy makers – in one of its signature *Global Trends* reports, places China’s growth above that of the UK, U.S. and Japan in previous decades.¹³⁶

Again, history must be given its day in court as one considers the in-progress, not-slowing geopolitical partnerships between a pair of global players. The entente between the former Soviet Union and China goes back to the 1950s and the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, a document effected in the shadows of the Cold War and as

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/01/19/ukrainians-our-survey-werent-enthusiastic-about-nato-exercises-close-russia/> (2022).

¹³³ McCoy.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 158.

¹³⁶ Cited in *ibid.*

China's Communist regime was finding its legs. At the time, Mao Zedong, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party sought the support of the Soviet Union, and Soviet boss Joseph Stalin was telescoping a strategic partner to protect his interests in the Far East and Mongolia. The Treaty of Friendship laid the foundation for Sino-Soviet cooperation and partnership in the 20th century.

The relationship was further nudged in 1997 when Russia and China – joined by border neighbors Kyrgyzstan, Kazakstan and Tajikistan – concluded a joint declaration on the desirability of a multipolar world, with no one country dominating the international order. "Some are pushing toward a world with one center," said Russian President Boris Yeltsin upon signing the agreement with Chinese President Jiang Zemin and the leaders of the three countries along the shared 4,300-mile border. "We want the world to be multipolar, to have several focal points. These will form the basis for a new world order."¹³⁷

More recently, as Russia and China work to break U.S. dominance over a Eurasian landmass that is home to 70 percent of the world's population, there is more evidence the long engagement is nearing formal consummation. An example is China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). A massive infrastructure program of railways, energy pipelines, highways and streamlined border crossings, the BRI could expand the international use of Chinese currency and create as many as 50 special economic zones, turning the "middle of nowhere"¹³⁸ into the center of the world economy. The Council of Foreign Relations, a nonprofit U.S. think tank, reports:

¹³⁷ CNN, "China, Russia Sign Pact," Cable News Network, Inc., <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9704/23/russia.china/>.

¹³⁸ Ben Mauk and Andrea Frazzetta, "Can China Turn the Middle of Nowhere into the Center of the World Economy?," *The New York Times*, Feb 01, 2019/ JAN. 29, 2019.

[T]he vast collection of development and investment initiatives would stretch from East Asia to Europe, significantly expanding China's economic and political influence. Some analysts see the project as an unsettling extension of China's rising power ... Meanwhile, the United States shares the concern of some in Asia that the BRI could be a Trojan horse for China-led regional development and military expansion.¹³⁹

For years, China has been engaged in what Nadège Rolland calls its “southern strategy,”¹⁴⁰ the creation of a grand coalition in its lower stretches – think Indo-Pacific region, remember the recent China-Solomon Islands bilateral security cooperation agreement – to constrain U.S. strategic ambitions there. Rolland, a senior fellow of political and security affairs at the National Bureau of Asian Research, argues that Chinese policymakers are building a global sphere of influence comprising “non-Western, and largely nondemocratic world”¹⁴¹ – what she calls the “global south.”¹⁴² If China succeeds in shoring up support by unifying the global south, Rolland warns that U.S. global hegemony could come to an end.¹⁴³

Russia and China are not exactly monogamous partners, if you will. Moscow and Tehran have jumped into bed on a recent \$40 billion project, a deal tying together the resources of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and Russia's state-owned multinational energy giant Gazprom. At a time when Western sanctions have hindered access to technology and slowed the development of gas exports in Russia and in Iran, Gazprom will help NIOC in the development of the Kish and North Pars gas fields and also six oil fields, while also participating in the completion of liquefied natural gas projects and the construction of gas export pipelines. In the future, the project will connect Russia, Iran

¹³⁹ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

¹⁴⁰ Nadège Rolland, "China's Southern Strategy: Beijing Is Using the Global South to Constrain America," *Foreign Affairs*, no. June 9, 2022. Accessible from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-06-09/chinas-southern-strategy> (2022).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

and India by sea, road, rail, and eventually a game-changing Iran-to-India oil pipeline.¹⁴⁴ The memorandum of understanding signed by the two countries must be viewed in further context, coming as Putin was traveling to Tehran to meet with Iranian and Turkish leaders in the face of mounting economic pressures resulting from Western sanctions against the invasion of Ukraine.

China's turn. A March 2021 agreement between China and Iran worth \$400 billion will enable tech transfer, infrastructure development and oil sales between the two countries. The economic and security deal will help ease Iran's international isolation and also reflects China's growing interest in expanding its profile in the region – a region that has been a strategic preoccupation of the U.S. for decades, notes *The New York Times*.¹⁴⁵

But, really, such partnerships as those developed with Iran by Russia and China are but the tip of a Titanic-sized iceberg. The two powers are taking orders from and fulfilling commitments to any number of countries that are helping swing the world order away from its current Western base.

History is littered with examples of “dynasties” that did not last forever. The Grecian Empire gave way to the Roman Empire. The Byzantine Empire met its end at the hands of the Ottomans. In the Americas, the Mayan, Incan and Aztecan empires came and went as an invader's thirst for riches destroyed entire civilizations. Many are those in the international government, sociopolitical and cultural realms who are certain U.S. dominance cannot, will not, last forever. What one-time CIA Director William J. Fulbright described as the U.S. “arrogance of power”¹⁴⁶ – the Cold War tendencies to “dictate the

¹⁴⁴ Patrick Lawrence, "21st Century Order," ScheerPost, <https://scheerpost.com/2022/07/26/patrick-lawrence-21st-century-order/>.

¹⁴⁵ Farnaz Fassihi and Myers Steven Lee, "China, with \$400 Billion Iran Deal, Could Deepen Influence in Mideast," *New York Times*, Mar 27, 2021 2021.

¹⁴⁶ J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1966).

bounds of legitimate debate and sound policy to the rest of the world”¹⁴⁷ – is being challenged, not by Russia only, but by a committed-to-world-relevance China.

Russia and China are posturing to introduce their own global currencies in opposition to the longstanding power of the U.S. dollar. The moves are not coincidence or happenstance, says Russian economist Sergei Glazyev:

*We are currently working on a draft international agreement on the introduction of a new world settlement currency, pegged to the national currencies of the participating countries and to exchange-traded goods that determine real values. We won't need American and European banks. A new payment system based on modern digital technologies with a blockchain is developing in the world, where banks are losing their importance.*¹⁴⁸

The Chinese, meanwhile, have developed an intricate system of banks to fund the country's growth internally and to finance capital formation. These development banks fund the ambitious BRI and multilaterally loan funds through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Each bank acts as a diversified alternative to the U.S.-dominated Bretton Woods institutions.

Among the punitive measures taken by the West as a result of the invasion of Ukraine has been the removal of Russia from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), which allows banks to share with one another information about financial transactions. However, Russia and China had moved to develop alternatives to SWIFT before the Western action. Additionally, as early as 2014 when sanctions were imposed for Moscow's annexation of Crimea, a domestic credit card system was in place, designed to remedy reliance on Western financial companies.

According to Huang Renwei, executive vice president of the Institute of Belt and Road and Global Governance, a key factor in China's growing strength is that it boasts the

¹⁴⁷ Murtaza Hussain, "Not One Bloc or the Other: Ukraine War Shows Emerging Post-American World," The Intercept <https://theintercept.com/2022/03/26/ukraine-russia-india-africa-stance/>.

¹⁴⁸ Sergey Yuryevich, "'Events Like This Happen Once a Century': Sergey Glazyev on the Breakdown of Epochs and Changing Ways of Life," Saker Analytics, <http://thesaker.is/events-like-this-happen-once-a-century-sergey-glazyev-on-the-breakdown-of-epochs-and-changing-ways-of-life/>.

world's largest market capacity and, by extension, will have the greatest strategic advantage in the decades to come as it competes with the U.S. If China's 1.4 billion population can double its GDP per capita of \$10,000 to \$20,000 per capita it becomes \$28 trillion economy. The U.S. will be hard pressed to reach such an eye-popping number by, say, 2030 – it would take a figure of \$90,000 per capita.¹⁴⁹ In the end, Renwei notes, the size of the market will determine the level of political power, which will become the power to create the rules of the market.

¹⁴⁹ Renwei.

Conclusion

Modern war rarely ends in decisive military victories. Left behind are devastation, death and destruction. An imperfect political settlement that gives peace a chance is better than fighting a righteous war and hoping to achieve decisive military victory.

Earlier this year, on May 19, the editorial board of *The New York Times* shared with its readers what many credible experts have believed since the beginning of the war: There is no military solution to the political crisis in Ukraine; the more entrenched and protracted the conflict continues, the greater the probability the U.S. and its NATO allies will be drawn into a nuclear confrontation with Russia. The only viable option is through a diplomatic political settlement that addresses the core issues fueling the war.¹⁵⁰ *The Times* board wrote in its editorial, “A decisive military victory for Ukraine over Russia, in which Ukraine regains all the territory Russia has seized since 2014, is not a realistic goal ... Russia remains too strong,” adding that “rousing proclamations” will not bring negotiation closer.¹⁵¹ If anything, the War in Ukraine has shown the limits of American power in corralling a global coalition to support its proxy wars – 165 of 195 nations, including South Africa, Mexico, India and China have all refused to join in the sanctions against Russia.¹⁵²

The world, says elder statesman Henry Kissinger, is on the edge of a dangerous disequilibrium: “We are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it's supposed to lead to.” Equally troubling, he adds, “You can't just now say we're going to split [China

¹⁵⁰ Posen.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² John V. Walsh, "On Ukraine, World Majority Sides with Russia over Us," Popular Resistance, <https://popularresistance.org/on-ukraine-the-world-majority-sides-with-russia-over-us/> . .

and Russia] off and turn them against each other. All you can do is not to accelerate the tensions and to create options, and for that you have to have some purpose.”¹⁵³

The challenge for America in a new emerging world order will be less about stopping the rise of other powers and more about finding its place among world powers. Unipolarity is best understood as a short-lived occurrence in world affairs, and the geopolitical conditions that enabled the rise of the U.S. are unlikely to repeat this century.

Unipolarity in global governance is an unstable power structure, especially in comparison to multipolarity.¹⁵⁴ In the words of economist Galbraith, “Multi-polarity, in short, could be bad for oligarchy but good for democracy, sustainability, and public purpose. From these points of view, it would come not a moment too soon.”¹⁵⁵

Diversity in powers around the world makes for greater options and democratizes the global arena. The architecture of global governance is moving from an intermittent unipolar world to a multipolar world with different centers of power, multilateral security arrangements and a shifting balance of power from the traditional Western world to the East. In this new emerging world order, military power projection alone will not suffice to prevent American predominance from declining, and the U.S. will have to accommodate emerging powers and accept that it may not always control the Eurasian landmass.¹⁵⁶

The introduction of alternatives to the hegemony of the dollar-based order will also help revive U.S. manufacturing and self-reliance on critical goods while offsetting strong

¹⁵³ Laura Secor, "Henry Kissinger Is Worried About 'Disequilibrium'; the 99-Year-Old Former Secretary of State Has Just Published a Book on Leadership and Sees a Dangerous Lack of Strategic Purpose in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Wall Street Journal (Online)*, Aug 12, 2022 2022.

¹⁵⁴ Nuno P. Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security* 36, no. 3 (2011).

¹⁵⁵ Galbraith.

¹⁵⁶ Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States' Unipolar Moment," *International security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 7-41.

reliance on traditional energy sources. By diffusing the burden of leadership, delegating some tasks to regional powers, the U.S. can redirect valuable resources inward.

So, it is time for the U.S. to make a decision.

What this could mean for a country divided, a nation torn apart politically and socially, is a greater – and a necessary – inward focus. While a side eye must be cast toward the melding of non-Western alliances and their impact on the U.S., internal challenges in the U.S. have been put on the backburner for too long. The advancement of what should be our real “national interests” – education, healthcare, environment, infrastructure, race relations and social services – are at stake.

If China succeeds in creating additional innovative and game-changing infrastructure projects, expands its portfolio of international partnerships and continues to grow its economic power around the world,¹⁵⁷ a seismic shift in global power takes place, or, as Sir Halford Mackinder predicted almost 120 years ago in his *Geopolitical Pivot of History*, “the empire of the world would be in sight.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Alfred McCoy, "The Geopolitics of American Global Decline: Washington Versus China in the Twenty-First Century," TomDispatch, <https://tomdispatch.com/alfred-mccoy-washington-s-great-game-and-why-it-s-failing/>.

¹⁵⁸ H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904).

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