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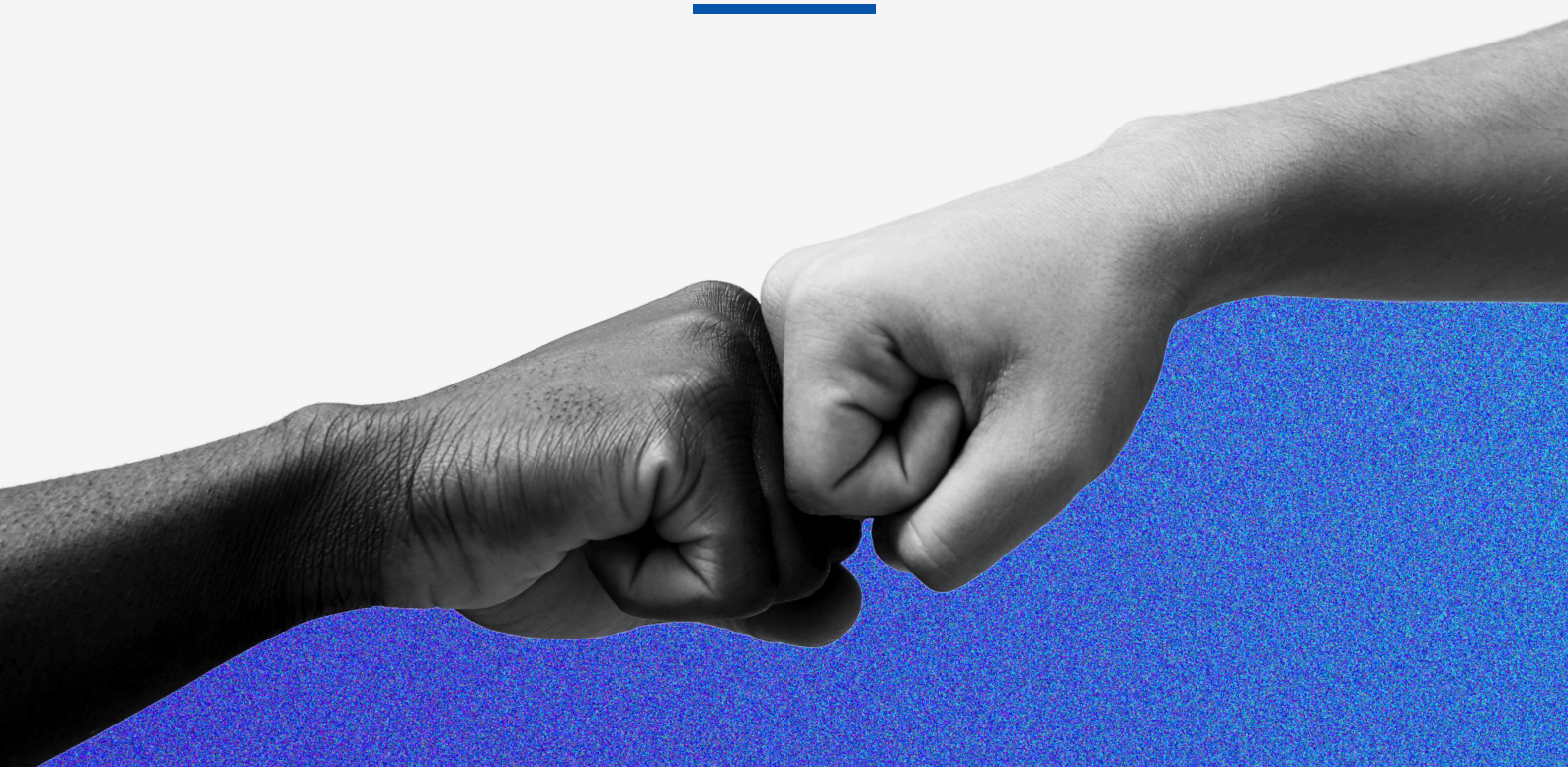

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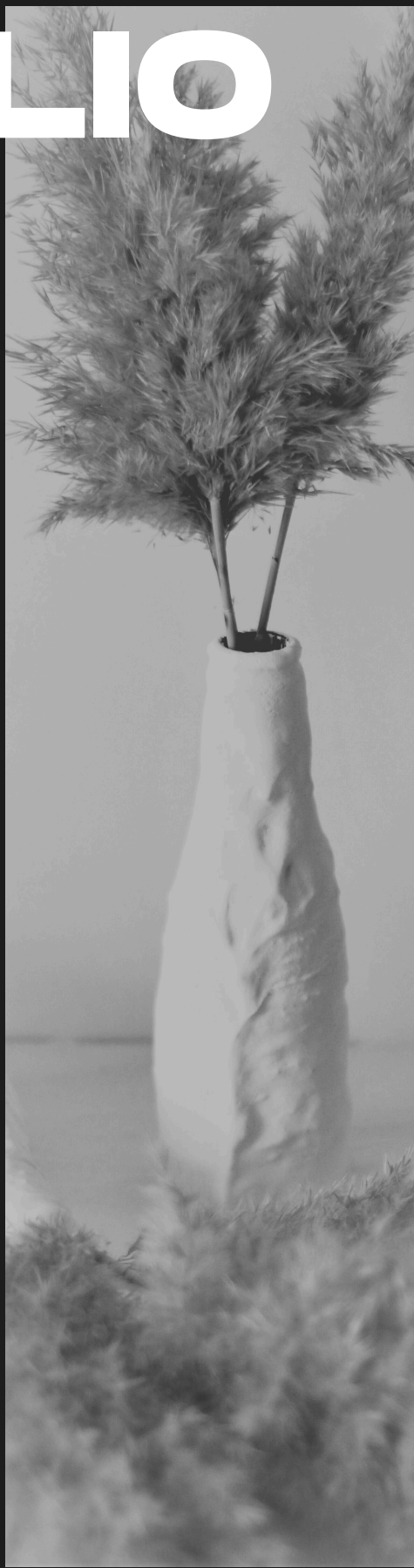

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The Global Stakes of America's Choice in 2024: Multilateralism vs America First

The 2024 election is a critical turning point that will shape America's global leadership.

CHRIS GOWE

The events of the past two months have seen the 2024 United States presidential race entirely upended. After President Joe Biden's disastrous debate performance in late June and the failed assassination attempt on former President Trump at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, in early July, the overwhelming sentiment reflected in many pundit forecasts and betting markets was that Trump's victory had been all but sealed. Biden crawled from the rubble of the June debate looking like he wasn't fit to govern for the next few months, let alone the next four years; Trump emerged from the failed assassination attempt looking downright heroic.

That has all changed seemingly overnight now that Biden has dropped his bid for re-election and Kamala Harris has ascended to the top of the 2024 Democratic ticket. What was once looking to be a Trump-led Republican landslide in the making has shaped up to be a highly competitive race, with Kamala quickly closing the polling gap with Trump in key battleground states and entirely overtaking him in others. Now, Kamala is ahead in the key battle-

CHRIS GOWE, is a MA candidate at the Seoul National University Graduate School of International Studies. His research interests include the U.S. ROK Alliance and security, nuclear proliferation issues pertaining to North Korea and the greater Northeast Asian region.

Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

ground states and entirely overtaking him in others. Now, Kamala is ahead in the key battlegrounds of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin in the latest polling. As the race currently stands, Trump and Harris remain in a close contest, but Harris's success in erasing Trump's polling lead and overcoming his fundraising advantage is a remarkable achievement.

While the Democratic candidate and the trend of the race may have changed in dramatic fashion, the fundamental choice Americans face in this election in terms of policy remains essentially the same. This is especially true in the realm of foreign policy. Harris differs slightly from Biden on some issues, but the overall posture and vision for the U.S. role in the world that Harris stands by will likely follow the same course set by Biden. It is markedly at odds with Trump's vision for U.S. foreign policy.

Until 2015, there was broad bipartisan consensus between Republicans and Democrats on the U.S.'s role in global affairs, particularly in upholding the post-World War II liberal international order through multilateralism, institutions, and military/economic alliances. Of course, this consensus did not preclude debate on specific foreign policy issues. For instance, Democrats and Republicans often clashed over trade agreements, military interventions, and the degree of emphasis on human rights in foreign policy. These debates, though significant, did not fundamentally challenge the shared belief in U.S. global leadership. This changed with the emergence of Trump and his America First doctrine, which shifted the Republican Party toward a more unilateral, nationalistic approach.

During his first term, Trump viewed international relationships in myopic financial and transactional terms, often hyper-focusing on the cost to the United States of various security arrangements and paying seemingly little attention to the strategic value of America's long-standing alliances. He also shocked allies and partners by repeatedly praising autocratic rulers such as Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin.

In polling, Republican support for an active global role for the U.S.

was recorded as lower than that of Democrats for the first time in 2016, and the disparity has grown since then. Demonstrative of this shift solidifying over time is survey data from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, which shows that for the first time in nearly five decades of polling on this topic, a majority of Republicans in 2023 preferred that the U.S. stay out of world affairs. Notably, the data also revealed that Trump Republicans are "much more negative" than other non-Trump Republicans about the U.S. role in the world, the U.S. alliance system with Europe, and defending allies in general.

For the first time in nearly five decades of polling on this topic, a majority of Republicans in 2023 preferred that the U.S. stay out of world affairs.

The world has lived through the ramifications of four years of Trump at the reins of U.S. foreign policy and nearly four with Biden at the helm. Given the highly divergent governing styles and worldviews that each president represents, along with the track records of their respective administrations, what are the implications of four more years of Bidenesque foreign policy under Harris versus that of America First 2.0 under Trump? This article aims to explore how the 2024 election will shape outcomes in terms of U.S. leadership in the world, particularly concerning the U.S.-China strategic competition, the Taiwan Strait, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Russo-Ukrainian war, and North Korea.

BIDEN'S FOREIGN POLICY TRACK RECORD

Over the past four years, Biden has had to deal with a number of thorny international issues. He oversaw the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021; early 2022 saw Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the U.S. has since been Ukraine's primary arms and ammunition supplier; and on October 7th, 2023, Hamas launched a major incursion into Israeli territory, leading to a massive U.S.-backed retaliation from Israel and a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

No doubt one of the weakest points of Biden's foreign policy track

record is the withdrawal from Afghanistan from July to September 2021, a highly chaotic operation that left 13 American service members killed in action, stranded U.S. citizens and Afghan allies, and left behind $7 billion of military equipment. Both Trump and Biden were bent on ending "America's longest war," and the Trump administration set in motion the withdrawal from Afghanistan through a withdrawal agreement it negotiated with the Taliban in February 2020. Under Trump, the U.S. reduced troop levels from 13,000 to 2,500, even amid continued attacks by the Taliban on Afghan forces.

Although Biden simply followed through on the withdrawal plans set out by Trump, his administration's decision to execute the withdrawal on a slightly delayed timeline—despite the Taliban's noncompliance with the agreement and U.S. intelligence assessments that the Afghan government would likely collapse—turned out to be disastrous. While working to end the 20-year failed exercise in militarized nation-building may have been the right move in the long run, the logistical failures and the sense that America was abandoning Afghan translators and supporters on the ground could nonetheless prove to be an indelible stain on U.S. credibility and Biden's legacy.

On the other hand, Biden will no doubt get a lot of credit for bringing back a more traditional internationalist approach to U.S. foreign policy after four years of Trump's unconventional and recalcitrant posture. Under the Biden administration, the U.S. rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement, led a massive effort to help Ukraine defend itself against Russian aggression following its invasion, and ushered in a new era of multilateralism in Asia to counter China via AUKUS, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral cooperation. The U.S.-South Korea alliance also received a major upgrade under Biden via the Washington Declaration, a joint statement that announced the creation of a Nuclear Consultative Group and reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to extended deterrence against the North Korean nuclear threat. U.S. allies in Europe and elsewhere have welcomed a more amicable Washington that is committed to collective defense under NATO Article 5 and that stands strongly against

challenges to the liberal international order.

ISRAEL - PALESTINE CONFLICT

Given that Biden and Harris have thus far presented themselves as being in virtual lockstep on foreign policy, Harris will no doubt have to fend off attacks tying her to Biden's missteps. However, unlike an incumbent, she may have more of an opportunity to chart a new course and distinguish herself from her current boss on some issues. One potential area for distinction was thought to be the Israel-Hamas conflict, which has caused growing frustration among younger and progressive voters.

Harris has not yet outlined a detailed policy plan on the issue, but she has called for a ceasefire and expressed more concern over the humanitarian crisis than Biden has, reportedly urging the White House to be more sympathetic toward Palestinians. Even so, her national security advisor has stated that she does not support an arms embargo on Israel, signaling that significant policy shifts may be unlikely. Harris's record also suggests continuity with mainstream Democratic support for Israel, as she consistently backed military aid during her time in the Senate. Protesters have repeatedly interrupted Harris's speeches at campaign events in recent weeks, underscoring the challenges she will face in balancing pressure from the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and the longstanding U.S. foreign policy stance to which the general electorate is more sympathetic. Harris would also clash with Netanyahu on the issue of Iran, given her previous stance of supporting a return to the JCPOA, the deal that previously halted Iran's nuclear program in exchange for unfreezing Iranian assets and which Trump abandoned during his first term.

A second Trump administration would also be solidly pro-Israel, but Trump's recent statements have been mixed (calling on Israel to "finish up your war"), and he has yet to offer any specific steps he would take to bring about peace in the region. When interviewers or commentators press Trump on his plans to address the conflict, he falls back on his typical refrain that "only he" can

solve the conflict and that the war wouldn't have happened in the first place if he had been in office (a baseless claim he also repeats with regard to the war in Ukraine). Trump has shown no compassion for Palestinians, and he has pledged to cut off all U.S. aid to Palestine should he win back the White House (he previously cut more than $20 million in aid during his first term). Other policies during his first term were also unabashedly pro-Israel, from relocating the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem to withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal. A second Trump term would likely see a return to this style of policy, with an emphasis on backing Netanyahu's right-wing nationalist plans for the region.

CHINA

A hypothetical Harris administration would also be unlikely to diverge significantly from Biden on China policy. As Vice President, Harris has been tasked with traveling throughout Southeast Asia to shore up support from Indo-Pacific allies amid the U.S.-China strategic competition. During a trip to the Philippines in 2022, she reiterated the United States' "unwavering commitment" to defend the archipelago nation in the event of Chinese attacks in the South China Sea. She also struck a combative tone when speaking on the issue of China's intellectual property violations and dumping during the 2019 primary campaign.

A Harris administration's approach to China would likely maintain the Biden administration's "small yard, high fence" doctrine: upholding targeted sanctions, implementing friendshoring strategies in critical industries, maintaining continuity on Trump-era tariffs, and adopting a "tough on human rights issues" stance vis-à-vis Xinjiang. Given Harris's record of championing human rights, she may be even tougher than Biden when it comes to Xinjiang and other related issues. The downside to this approach is that it makes it more difficult to address global issues that have traditionally required a working relationship with Beijing, namely climate change and the North Korea nuclear problem.

China is one area where there is little daylight between America

First Republicans and internationalist Democrats, as both sides have tried to one-up each other in showing who can be tougher or more competitive against the Asian power. For his part, Trump has said that he would double down on the policies of his first-term trade war by increasing tariffs to 60-100% on all Chinese imports to the U.S. Trump has long been obsessed with the trade deficit and sought to gain an advantage for America through tariffs and trade war tactics (in practice, the tariffs have resulted in a bilateral reduction in the deficit with China but an increase in the deficit with other trading partners like Mexico and South Korea). Trump would also bring a hardline approach to China policy, but his focus would be more on the economic dimension of the great power competition.

TAIWAN

When it comes to Taiwan, Biden has on multiple occasions broken with the official U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity" by suggesting that the U.S. would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion. Given the hit that U.S. credibility took regarding its security commitments during the Trump presidency, what U.S. allies and partners in Asia really want is strategic clarity, not ambiguity. Taiwan will be watching closely to see what kinds of statements Harris and Trump make regarding a commitment to Taiwan's defense, and whether the U.S. is indicating that it will militarily intervene or merely arm the island while sending warning signals to Beijing. Given Harris's record of strengthening alliances with ASEAN and other Asian partners as VP, and her statements pledging to deepen "unofficial ties" with the island, a continuation of the Biden administration's approach of supporting Taiwan and opposing unilateral actions to change the status quo would likely be on the horizon.

For his part, Trump made waves in Taipei last month after complaining that "Taiwan doesn't give us anything" and suggesting that Taiwan compensate the U.S. for its defense (Taiwan spends millions of dollars on U.S.-made arms every year). Trump's record on Taiwan was mixed during his first term —

drawing praise from the Taiwanese after taking a call from President Tsai Ing-wen as president-elect, but later reverting to recognizing the "One China" policy while speaking to Chinese President Xi Jinping. Ultimately, the pro-Taiwan advisors in Trump's orbit steered the administration toward more support for the island nation, and his administration approved major arms sales to Taiwan, including dozens of F-16 fighter jets. Given Trump's recent statements on Taiwan and the influence of his advisors on previous decisions, it's unclear whether a similarly supportive approach toward Taiwan would be undertaken in a second Trump presidency.

The China hawks who previously influenced Trump's foreign policy, like John Bolton, have mostly left his orbit, and more isolationist figures elevated in a second term may enable Trump's more transactional approach to the island. His insistence that Taiwan should "pay us for defense" underscores his view of the relationship as a business deal, suggesting that his support for Taiwan's defense may depend on perceived economic gains for the U.S. rather than security or geopolitical considerations. Notably, he has repeatedly refused to commit to defending the island in the event of an attack from China. Additionally, some speculate that Trump could use Taiwan as a bargaining chip in negotiations with China on trade and high-tech competition, potentially scaling back support once he extracts concessions from Beijing. Whether Trump would defend Taiwan in a crisis remains unclear, with his decisions likely to be influenced by internal cabinet dynamics.

RUSSO - UKRAINIAN WAR

The war in Ukraine is an area where significant policy differences exist between the Biden-Harris administration and Trump. Since the start of the conflict, Biden has overseen the provision of tens of billions of dollars in military aid, including advanced weapons systems like HIMARS rocket launchers and Patriot air defense systems. His administration has also been instrumental in rallying NATO allies to support Ukraine and imposing wide-ranging sanctions on Russia. Assuming cooperation from Congress, a

President Harris would likely be able to maintain this level of military and financial assistance to Kyiv. Harris, who has aligned herself with Biden's foreign policy throughout their time in office, would likely focus on continuing to strengthen the international coalition supporting Ukraine while holding Russia accountable for war crimes and human rights violations.

The GOP, traditionally the more hawkish party on Russia and Vladimir Putin, is now divided over the extent of U.S. support for Ukraine going forward. Some in the conservative think tank sphere have argued that supplying Ukraine with military equipment dilutes U.S. warfighting capabilities and would make it harder for the U.S. to prevent China from taking Taiwan. Other more traditional Republican internationalist voices on the right have made the case for balancing both theaters and increasing military spending to restock depleted and thinly spread U.S. assets. Trump's VP pick, JD Vance, has argued for European nations like Germany to support Ukraine on their own without U.S. assistance, and Trump himself has long been skeptical of funding for Ukraine.

In June, Trump threatened to cut U.S. aid to Ukraine if reelected, leading Kyiv's allies to scramble to secure long-term funding amid the uncertainty the 2024 election poses for Ukraine's ability to continue to ward off Russian assaults. Trump advisors also reportedly presented the former president with a plan that would have the U.S. withhold funding for Kyiv unless it enters peace talks with Russia. It is unlikely Kyiv would accept such a proposal, given that its position is that peace can only be sought when Russia withdraws from Ukrainian territory. Ukraine is also in a better position than it was a few months ago, having successfully captured territory in the Russian Kursk region—territory that, if held, could serve as a useful bargaining chip in future negotiations.

NORTH KOREA

Whoever is sworn in on January 20th next year will face a changed and more volatile international landscape than the one that existed when Biden took office just three and a half years ago. The first hot

war in Europe since World War II has exacerbated the bifurcation in the international system, where liberal democracies and authoritarian nations increasingly find themselves at odds on security and economic issues. Cooperation across these ideological divides—essential for addressing critical global challenges—has been harder to come by since Russia's February 2022 invasion and amid intensified U.S.-China competition.

One such issue is North Korea, where progress toward denuclearization and any related diplomatic processes has traditionally required the participation of China, which keeps the Kim regime afloat by engaging in sanctions-skirting trade and providing aid. The war in Ukraine and the U.S.'s preoccupation with countering China in other areas have provided ideal cover for North Korea to hunker down and accelerate its weapons development and military modernization programs. Russia's global pariah status has elevated North Korea's importance to Putin (or rather lowered Putin's status to that of the DPRK), and the two countries have deepened their cooperation since Russia's winter 2022 invasion. North Korea is believed to have sent Russia nearly 5 million artillery shells as well as dozens of ballistic missiles to aid in its conflict with Kyiv. In exchange, the DPRK has received technology to help it deploy spy satellites, along with other conventional military vehicles like tanks and aircraft.

Biden's policy approach to North Korea—telegraphing an openness to renewed dialogue with the DPRK with "no preconditions" while simultaneously focusing on pressure and sanctions—has failed to produce any positive results. The next administration would be well-positioned for a long-overdue course correction on this issue. Unfortunately, given the tendency for other more "pressing" geopolitical conundrums to overshadow the Korean Peninsula, a Harris administration would most likely continue Biden's approach to Pyongyang, which is itself simply a copy-and-paste of Obama's "strategic patience," rather than take an active approach toward finding a diplomatic avenue forward.

Obama famously warned Trump about the urgency of the North Korean nuclear threat shortly after the 2016 election. This warning

motivated Trump to take DPRK weapons development seriously, and he prioritized the issue as president despite it being a non-issue during his campaign. Trump deserves credit for breaking with the status quo of U.S. policy on North Korea and pursuing aggressive top-down diplomacy with the Kim regime in 2018 and 2019. But his strategy, too, ultimately failed. The summits in Hanoi and Singapore produced little in the way of substantive results, with the same vague promises of denuclearization that had been given by previous North Korean leaders.

Despite these diplomatic efforts, North Korea remained defiant, showcasing its largest ICBM ever, the Hwasong-17, in 2020 and continuing on a path of accelerated nuclear weapons development. Trump's approach may have failed to achieve lasting results, but he could still pursue further diplomacy if he returns to the presidency. However, such a strategy could put him at odds with South Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol, who favors a policy of containment and deterrence over engagement with Pyongyang. Yoon has strengthened South Korea's alliance with the U.S., focusing on isolating North Korea diplomatically and economically unless there is tangible progress toward denuclearization.

A second Trump term might also see renewed tensions over the U.S. military presence in South Korea. During his first term, Trump demanded a significant increase in South Korea's financial contribution to U.S. forces stationed there—a demand that could resurface and strain the alliance. Additionally, Trump's more hawkish stance on China could widen the gap between U.S. and South Korean policies, particularly as South Korea attempts to balance its security ties with the U.S. against its economic relationship with China.

North Korea may see a potential Trump return as an opportunity to restart nuclear negotiations. According to a high-ranking North Korean defector, Pyongyang is preparing a strategy aimed at securing sanctions relief and economic aid if Trump is re-elected. North Korea's growing ties with Russia, particularly in missile technology, and the further deterioration of U.S.-China relations have also reduced its incentive to pressure the U.S. to lift sanctions,

potentially complicating future negotiations. Ultimately, while Trump might be inclined to pursue more diplomacy with North Korea, the challenges and dynamics in the region suggest that any new approach will face significant hurdles.

The 2024 U.S. presidential election is set to be a pivotal moment in determining the direction of American foreign policy. The race presents a stark contrast between Kamala Harris's commitment to multilateralism and alliances—reflective of the Biden approach thus far—and Donald Trump's "America First" doctrine, which prioritizes national interests and often takes a unilateral path.

Harris, building on Biden's record, would likely continue to emphasize rebuilding and strengthening alliances, supporting global institutions, and addressing international challenges through cooperation. Her administration would maintain strong ties with NATO, push back against authoritarian regimes, and engage in multilateral efforts to counter universal threats like climate change and global pandemics. Harris's potential foreign policy would be marked by strategic partnerships, particularly in Asia, and a sustained commitment to Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression.

Trump's unpredictable stance on issues like Taiwan, Ukraine, and relations with North Korea and China could lead to significant shifts in global dynamics, especially if he follows through on his isolationist tendencies.

On the other hand, Trump's return to the presidency would likely bring a reassertion of the America First ideology that characterized his first term. His approach often involved withdrawing from international agreements, pressuring allies to bear more financial burdens, and prioritizing direct deals that served immediate U.S. interests. While this may resonate with voters seeking a focus on domestic concerns, it risks alienating allies and reducing America's influence on the global stage. The long-term consequence of such a course would likely be an emboldened and more influential China and Russia, who would not hesitate to fill the void left by the U.S. Trump's unpredictable

stance on issues like Taiwan, Ukraine, and relations with North Korea and China could lead to significant shifts in global dynamics, especially if he follows through on his isolationist tendencies.

Ultimately, the election will determine whether the U.S. continues to engage with the world through the lens of shared responsibilities and global leadership, or pivots toward a more insular, transactional approach. The implications of this choice will be far-reaching, affecting not only American foreign policy but also the broader international order for potentially decades to come.

Has the Biden Administration Been Successful?

Biden navigated domestic achievements while grappling with foreign policy challenges.

MARCUS MILDENBERGER

"I made a lot of mistakes in my career, but I gave my best to you," President Joe Biden declared while addressing a roaring crowd during the opening night of the 2024 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Biden's speech, originally planned for the convention's final day before his sudden withdrawal from his campaign and endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris, was, as CNN's Van Jones described, "an old lion's last roar." As Biden ends his presidency, passing the Democratic torch to Harris, his fifty-year career of public service will finally conclude. As a United States Senator, Vice President, and President, his time in office was certainly filled with many mistakes, missteps, and failures but will ultimately end in a remarkably effective presidential term at a time of profound political polarization and razor-thin congressional margins.

MARCUS MILDENBERGER, is a recent graduate of American University's School of International Service, where he received an MA in International Affairs specializing in U.S. foreign policy and national security.

Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

Biden's legislative accomplishments stimulated economic growth following the COVID-19 pandemic, invested over a trillion dollars into crumbling American infrastructure, and recommitted the U.S. to combating climate change. Biden's tenure has been far from perfect, challenged by historic levels of U.S. inflation, a chaotic southern border, hypocritical foreign policy rhetoric, and an inflamed Middle East. As Joseph Robinette Biden's term comes to an end, this article asks: have four years of the Biden administration been successful?

DOMESTIC AGENDA

The Biden Administration inherited a nation in disarray following the January 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol and two years of the COVID-19 pandemic that had killed 400,000 Americans by the time he assumed office in January 2021. One of the first legislative successes of Biden's presidency was stabilizing the American economy and getting the pandemic under control through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The nearly $2 trillion package addressed vaccine distribution and allocated billions in emergency funding for small businesses, childcare, and personal protective equipment. It also provided Americans with a third round of direct stimulus in the form of $1,400 checks, the most generous direct financial assistance for civilians in the world. The effects of most legislation are often not immediately felt, and the pandemic's human and economic costs continued to increase throughout Biden's first year in office. However, there is little doubt that the American Rescue Plan had an immensely stabilizing effect and will be viewed as Biden's first of many successful legislative accomplishments.

Following the passage of the American Rescue Plan, the Biden administration accomplished what successive presidents had failed to do: improve America's collapsing infrastructure. Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, commonly known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which allocated $1.2 trillion of investment in America's roads, bridges, broadband networks, airports, and waterways. Over 40,000 projects have

begun since the law's signing, creating over 300,000 jobs. These projects will likely take years to complete, but the initial impact of this legislation was monumental for addressing crumbling infrastructure and will surely be felt for generations to come.

Additional legislative successes include the CHIPS and Science Act, signed into law in late 2022. The CHIPS Act will strengthen U.S. supply chains and enhance the domestic production of semiconductors, authorizing $280 billion in spending to support further research and manufacturing of the essential component used in practically every electronic device. It also saw significant investments in higher-level STEM education programs for training non-college technical workers. The law's implementation has faced challenges, such as a shortage of highly skilled workers and bureaucratic delays, yet the bipartisan bill was a crucial step in leveling the technological gap between the U.S. and China at a time when computing technology and artificial intelligence have become booming industries.

To address the continued lack of funding for veteran healthcare, President Biden signed the PACT Act in 2022. The law increased funding for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and expanded healthcare and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. Two years later, over a million claims through the PACT Act have been made, with nearly a million more U.S. veterans across all 50 states receiving benefits—a resounding success in taking care of the nation's veteran population.

In a historic first, Joe Biden nominated Ketanji Brown Jackson to the U.S. Supreme Court, replacing retired Justice Stephen Breyer. The first former public defender to serve on the court, Justice Jackson will continue to provide a diverse perspective to a system dominated by prosecutors. Additionally, the Senate approved a combined 205 district and circuit court judges nominated by President Biden, the most in the first four years total of Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama, and equal to Donald Trump.

On immigration, the Biden administration has struggled to articulate how it will reform America's outdated system. Biden reversed Trump's family separation policy, but his administration's border policies went nowhere in a gridlocked Congress, providing critics an opportunity to blame the president for surges of immigration. Border patrols encountered over 2.2 million migrants crossing illegally in 2022, an all-time high. Unable to deter significant migrant flows, Biden turned toward executive action and ordered a crackdown on asylum claims. The administration also directed border control to shut down the border if illegal crossings surpass 2,500 individuals. Ultimately, Biden's actions have not made U.S. immigration more humane, orderly, or secure and will most likely lead to drastically longer processing periods for immigrants.

THE ECONOMY

One of Biden's greatest challenges has been navigating through four-decade highs of the U.S. inflation rate. Wages struggled to keep up with the dramatic cost increases, which peaked at 9.1% in June 2022, with cumulative inflation closer to 20% throughout Biden's four years. Widespread supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic and unprecedented federal spending to revive the economy gave indications of an economic recession, reflected in the President's approval ratings, which dropped below 40%, also in June 2022.

One of the misplaced critiques of the Biden administration's economic policies has been the dramatic increase in gas prices under his term, peaking at $5.07 per gallon in the summer of 2022. While the President has little market control over gas prices, prices have steadily gone down, and domestic oil production and exportation have surged. Today, the U.S. is producing more crude oil than any other nation on earth and ever in human history while exporting more fossil fuel than ever, accounting for over 80% of globally produced fossil fuels.

Fortunately for Biden and American consumers, inflation has

started to fall, consumer confidence has risen, and faith in the trajectory of the U.S. economy has slowly been restored. The U.S. economy has experienced solid growth over the past four years and has regained all pandemic GDP losses while surpassing every other G7 nation in terms of economic recovery measured by GDP. Wages have continued to regain ground on inflation, and the stock market has also seen consistent growth with all-time highs for the S&P 500.

Job creation under the Biden presidency has been another success. The U.S. created over 15 million jobs while Biden was in office, 11 times more than the last three Republican administrations combined. While unemployment claims reached highs of 15% in 2020, today claims have steadily decreased. Biden also became the first sitting President to join a union strike when he walked the picket line with members of the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) at a General Motors parts center outside Detroit in 2023. One month later, the UAW secured a significant wage increase and benefits package with America's Big Three automakers: Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis.

THE ENVIRONMENT

One of the stark differences between the Trump and Biden administrations is their approach to climate change and the risks a warming planet poses to humanity. While the Biden administration's climate policy has been far from perfect, it has taken steps to reduce emissions and re-engage with allies on reducing the future effects of rising global temperatures. The Biden Administration reversed the Trump decision to leave the Paris Climate Agreement on his first day in the Oval Office, recommitting the U.S. to cutting carbon emissions, regulating the use of fossil fuels, and transitioning the U.S. to a more renewable economy. The Biden administration also canceled the controversial Keystone XL pipeline project, a victory for Native American tribes and environmentalists.

Another legislative success came in the signing of the Inflation

Reduction Act (IRA), one of the largest investments in the American economy and the first comprehensive climate legislation in U.S. history. Costing approximately $800 billion over the next decade, the IRA provided the largest investment in America's economy and infrastructure since the New Deal. The law created more than 20 tax incentives for clean energy, manufacturing, and reducing greenhouse emissions to better transition the economy for future climate-related threats. Additionally, the law allowed for Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices for ten of the most commonly used medications, a massive achievement for reducing American healthcare costs. Not a single congressional Republican voted for its passage, with many pointing to the law's large price tag while downplaying the threat of rising global emissions, despite evidence that increasing carbon emissions will have long-term economic consequences. The IRA is not only a vital step in ensuring future generations a cleaner planet and reducing the consequences of climate change's destructive effects, but it will also chip away at high medication prices while supporting the future of the Affordable Care Act.

Biden has re-committed the U.S. to the NATO alliance, expanded new partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, and stood up to global autocrats like Vladimir Putin.

FOREIGN POLICY

Another stark change between the Trump and Biden administrations has been the re-engagement with allies on key foreign policy challenges. While Trump pursued a more unilateral foreign policy, often transactional, Biden has re-committed the U.S. to the NATO alliance, expanded new partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, and stood up to global autocrats like Vladimir Putin.

In the first year of the Biden presidency, U.S. foreign policy was consumed by the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Biden has successfully avoided a direct confrontation between American forces and Russians while providing Ukrainians with vital support in dismantling the Russian army. The United States has given $175

billion in military assistance to support the Ukrainian government and a slew of weapons to defend against Russian advances. Biden helped unite a transatlantic and trans-Pacific coalition to sanction Russia and support Ukraine, which, despite early military stalemates and ongoing congressional challenges, has been his greatest foreign policy success. Today, Ukraine has restored some partial battlefield mobility through unbelievable willpower and Western support, even making incursions into Russian territory. This war will carry on to the next administration; however, the Biden administration has done a remarkable job of standing up for Ukrainian sovereignty and providing the necessary tools for the Ukrainian army.

One of the Biden Administration's earliest missteps was the predictably chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in September 2021. The end of America's longest war was, on its face, a success, but the manner in which U.S. forces exited the country weakened American credibility with allies on the ground in Afghanistan and cost 13 U.S. service members their lives. A month after the U.S. withdrawal, the Afghan government and national security forces were overrun by the Taliban, who have increased their crackdown on women's rights and extrajudicial killings.

In Asia and the Indo-Pacific, Biden has made improvements to diplomatic relations with once-adversarial nations like Vietnam while expanding existing partnerships with the Philippines and upgrading relations with Indonesia. While his grand strategic shift in pursuit of U.S. objectives in the Indo-Pacific to counter growing Chinese influence was an early policy priority, this momentum has stalled, a costly misstep.

The most recent challenge for the Biden administration has been balancing financial and military support for Israeli military operations in Gaza with voters demanding accountability for crimes committed against Gazan civilians with U.S. weapons. In the wake of Hamas' barbaric October 7 attack, the U.S. immediately granted $14.3 billion of assistance as part of a sweeping $106 billion aid package, including replenishing U.S. weapons to Ukraine and providing humanitarian aid to both Israel and

and the Gaza Strip. Biden initially warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of the risks of running into Gaza with no war objectives or long-term strategy, similar to the American reaction to the September 11 attacks that committed thousands of U.S. troops and trillions of dollars to the Middle East. There was widespread hope that Biden could leverage support for Netanyahu to quickly negotiate the freeing of hostages while mitigating the suffering of innocent Palestinian civilians. Over the past 11 months, that hope has completely evaporated.

While American allies and the international community have called for investigations into Israeli and IDF war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the killing of journalists and medical professionals, the Biden administration has refused to cooperate. While the administration has supported similar investigations into Russian perpetrators of the same crimes against Ukrainians, regarding Israel, Biden has refused to do the same. Biden announced the construction of a pier in Gaza to assist in delivering humanitarian aid, which was only necessary due to an Israeli siege on aid entering the strip. The pier cost over $230 million and was a disaster from the beginning, breaking numerous times before the U.S. abandoned the project altogether.

In March, as Israeli forces approached Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah, one of the last refuges for displaced Palestinians, the President vaguely offered a red line: if IDF operations continued to target refugee encampments in Rafah, some form of U.S. military assistance would be suspended. Intense IDF airstrikes followed, killing hundreds of Palestinians with no policy change from the Biden administration, which has since continued to send more weapons to Israel.

Since the war in Gaza began, the U.S. has supplied Israel with more than 10,000 massive 2,000-pound bombs, dozens of F-15 warplanes, and thousands of Hellfire missiles, allowing the IDF to kill Palestinians at a shocking rate. U.S. military assets, including the GBU-39 bomb dropped on a United Nations school in June that killed 32 people, including seven children, have abetted an expanding Middle East conflict at a time when the administration

should be better positioning itself for future conflicts in Asia and the South China Sea. While the administration has continued to claim the conflict has not expanded outside Israel and Gaza, this is simply not true, with upticks in violence in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. Furthermore, U.S. forces stationed across the Middle East have increasingly become targets for Iranian-backed proxies who see the U.S. as Israel's chief military sponsor. The Biden administration's military, financial, and diplomatic support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has damaged America's global reputation and accelerated the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians living in Gaza — a colossal failure.

Biden's greatest foreign policy missteps and challenges have come in the final year of his administration.

Biden's greatest foreign policy missteps and challenges have come in the final year of his administration. He has abandoned the rhetoric on human rights accountability in favor of longtime American allies, foregoing calls to hold Saudi Arabian officials responsible for the death of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi and ignoring Palestinian suffering at the hands of the Israeli military and government. Biden's messaging has also become less effective and truthful regarding America's role in ongoing international conflicts as his presidency has continued. This June, while addressing the nation, Biden claimed that "the United States is not at war anywhere in the world." While the U.S. has not officially started any wars under the Biden administration, the U.S. military has been active across the world, launching strikes targeting Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

As Joe Biden prepares to leave office, his administration will have grown the American economy, given assurances to American allies on certain key issues, and recommitted the U.S. to combating climate change. Despite domestic successes, his administration has struggled to leverage an end to the war in Gaza, address an outdated immigration system, and articulate its policy victories to the masses.

U.S. Presidents have two constituencies: the people and history. While Biden's administration has been plagued by historically low domestic approval ratings, he has also been one of the most effective presidents in modern history. Biden will be remembered for historic investments in the future of America, reviving America's economy after COVID, and unwavering support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia. However, his administration will also be frustrated that it did not achieve more or provide its successor with a more navigable geopolitical future. Still, despite widespread political polarization and a historically unproductive Congress, Biden has been successful in laying a foundation for future American progress and prosperity.

Biden's Decison

Biden’s sudden withdrawal from the race has shaken the political landscape.

JOHN GIALLORENZO

To say Biden's announcement that he would be stepping back from his campaign for reelection came as a surprise would be an understatement of the century. While there had been calls for him to step away from the campaign from the very beginning, he had remained adamant that he would be on the ballot in November. Those who questioned his capabilities or called for him to bow out of the campaign were often ridiculed and mocked on the belief they were merely partisan muckrakers. Then he debated Trump on national television and had a very poor showing. What exactly caused this poor showing will likely never be known, but it seems that very few, even within his own party, understood what was going on until the debate. This sparked numerous calls from members of his own party for him to withdraw, including his former colleague, President Barack Obama. It was reported that after the debate, he went to a family retreat with close confidants and family members to discuss his next steps. Ultimately, he chose to stay the course.

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Photo Source POTUS

In the immediate lead-up to his announcement, there were some hints that he was seriously considering stepping down. Specifically, he publicly stated the only way he would stop his campaign was if he was medically unable to continue. Shortly thereafter, he announced that he had caught COVID again and canceled a series of campaign events while he recovered. During this recovery period, a tweet appeared on his account stating that he was withdrawing and urging people to vote for Kamala Harris, along with a picture showing a letter to the same effect with his signature. It is unclear how much notice was given to various members of his staff, but it seems that this came almost as suddenly for them as for the rest of the country. Initially, there was shock, and some believed that his account had been hacked, but as the dust settled, it became clear that Biden's time as the candidate was over.

The public was largely divided along ideological lines. Conservatives questioned the legality of what appeared to be a palace coup of the highest office in the country, believing that Biden had either been forced to withdraw or was unaware that someone with access to his Twitter had withdrawn for him. There is no way to know for sure what happened, but the main point of contention was how sudden it was and Biden's long absence from public view after the announcement. Liberals were divided. Some were grateful that Biden was putting his personal pride aside and allowing someone with a better chance to run. Others were skeptical, unhappy with many of Biden's policies and the generally limp-wristed approach that the Democratic Party has been using for decades. To them, this was an attempt to ensure that the moderate faction of the party remained in power by giving such short notice that more radical candidates wouldn't have time to gather steam, essentially forcing the torch to be passed to Kamala Harris, who would largely maintain Biden's policies. While many grumbled about it, few actually took action, and Harris would later be officially recognized as the candidate shortly after the announcement.

Liberals were divided. Some were grateful that Biden was putting his personal pride aside and allowing someone with a better chance to run.

Politically, the Democratic Party quickly coalesced around Kamala Harris despite much media speculation that others would step forward to challenge her ascent. While a handful of Democratic governors and former candidates may have had a chance to challenge her, none stepped forward, likely wanting to bide their time and run a full campaign in the future. Kamala was also the only candidate who could access the funds donated to the Biden campaign, which was a significant amount at the time. It is unclear how Biden views his health and age. During his 2020 campaign and his 2024 campaign, he downplayed or outright denied that his health and age had anything to do with his ability to be president. Since his decision to step down as the candidate, he has not made many public appearances or spoken on why he made the decision. Despite that, his health and age were becoming increasingly concerning for many voters, especially in his base.

A more likely reason for his decision is a combination of political pressure and public opinion. The two are more linked than one might expect. Democratic senators, representatives, party leaders, and governors all began calling for Biden to step down specifically because the public opinion polls were getting worse and worse. They were getting worse because his performance at the debate was so bad that it made his age and health seem like severe detriments to his ability to be president, and this was only compounded by a series of appearances immediately after the debate. Obama called him and urged him to step down, and members of Congress started openly calling for him to quit the campaign. It was becoming clear to everyone that if Biden did not bow out of the campaign, he would be campaigning alone, essentially dooming him. At the same time, it was looking less and less likely that he'd be able to win in November, even with the support of his party.

There doesn't seem to be any evidence that Biden wanted to stop his campaign. He was a career politician with decades spent in the Capitol Building and White House. He often talked about how much he enjoyed serving his country as a politician and how much it meant to him that he was elected president. Some reports also hinted that he felt it was finally his turn to call the shots after

playing sidekick to successive Democratic leaders. There also doesn't seem to be much evidence that his family, much maligned as they were during his presidency, wanted him to step down until shortly before the decision was made. Although he may have made the decision, it likely wasn't something he looked forward to or even enjoyed doing, merely a pragmatic response to the situation that was developing.

Initially, there were concerns that the Democratic Party would devolve into infighting and remain essentially rudderless in the lead-up to the election. However, the opposite happened, and the party almost immediately rallied behind Kamala Harris. While there have been questions about the party's ability to unilaterally transfer primary votes from one candidate to another, it doesn't seem like that will impact the campaign or party in the near term. At the same time, Biden's withdrawal can be, and is, seen as a last-ditch effort by the party's moderate/old guard faction to retain control of the party. The moderate and radical wings of the party have locked horns repeatedly over each election prior to 2024, where the two remained remarkably docile. This was chalked up to a tradition of not challenging a sitting president and a belief that Biden being the candidate would help the radical wing in the long run. A spectacular Biden failure in November would discredit the moderate faction and give the radicals the opportunity to run the party for a time. Some believe that was the true reason behind Biden's decision: handing the reins to Kamala in the hopes that she could beat Trump and buy the moderate faction four more years of rule in the party.

The schism within the Democratic Party can be attributed to many points in time, but the contemporary iteration of this divide can mostly be traced to the 2016 election. Bernie Sanders ran his most successful campaign yet and galvanized large swaths of young voters who were just shaping their political ideology. At the same time, the real conditions on the ground were shifting farther and farther from the assumptions that the Democratic old guard relied on. This left a lot of middle-aged and older Democratic voters feeling abandoned and that the party was out of touch, driving them to support the outsider, Bernie. On the other side, Hillary

Clinton largely ran as a stock standard Democratic candidate but with the added spice of potentially being the first female president. The two ran a heated campaign against each other all the way to the Democratic National Convention, where a winner had to be proclaimed. After a whole host of allegations, leaks, revelations, and gaffes, Hillary Clinton was proclaimed the Democratic Nominee. Many felt that not only had the candidacy been stolen from Bernie by backroom dealings and technicalities — a feeling only exacerbated by the fact that the head of the party was literally on Hillary Clinton's payroll — but that he had a better chance of winning in November. Ultimately, Hillary lost in 2016, and the radical wing that had been supercharged by Bernie's campaign blamed the moderates and their fear of alternative approaches.

In 2020, things were less volatile thanks to a complete overhaul of the process to ensure nothing like 2016 could ever happen again. However, the almost simultaneous resignation of every primary contender except Joe Biden had many seeing flashbacks to the party bosses orchestrating outcomes rather than genuine primary democracy. Many of these primary opponents receiving lucrative cabinet positions after Biden's win only heightened feelings that a deal had been struck behind the scenes. Again, the reason was often attributed to the moderate faction's fear of change driving them to pick candidates who will run predictable campaigns, even if they are less likely to succeed. Some worry, or hope, that Robert Kennedy Jr. will act as a lightning rod for the voters who are either too ideologically opposed or too frustrated with the moderate Democrats to physically vote for a moderate while also hating conservatives, especially Trump. This would be similar to when Theodore Roosevelt ran under his own third party, fighting for the same pool of voters as William Taft. Neither of them received enough votes to win, allowing Woodrow Wilson to coast into the White House. However, between Taft and Roosevelt, they received more votes than Wilson, leading many to believe at the time and today that had one of them not run, the other could have won.

The new campaign is still in its very early stages, and it is unclear exactly what their strategy will be. At the time of writing, Kamala has only just announced when she will start releasing policy

information, so only time will tell how similar or different she will run this campaign compared to Biden. That being said, it is expected that Kamala will likely run as a continuation candidate, attempting to broadly maintain Biden's positions. Much like how Biden ran as a continuation of the Obama regime with only a few about-faces on issues that turned out to be unpopular with voters. The United States is no stranger to electoral messes. A similar situation occurred when Robert Kennedy was assassinated shortly before being made the candidate. Much like today, a new candidate had to be selected on short notice and rev up a campaign with not much time before the election. This will likely go down as an important event for historians to study and political scholars to keep in mind as time goes forward. Because of how similar Biden's positions and Kamala's positions are, this likely won't impact the political and cultural divide that has been gnawing at the United States for over a decade. Had a more radical or hardline candidate replaced him, the situation may have been less calm, but that is something left to novelists.

Internationally, his decision was probably quite irksome to many foreign onlookers. Many foreign countries, both friends and foes, watch American elections and begin to prepare for both candidates so that when one wins, they are already prepared for the shifts in American policy. While Biden and Kamala will likely have significant amounts of policy overlap, that is currently just a guess, and generally, world leaders dislike basing their countries' security on a single guess. Especially when many of them have likely interacted with Biden at least once and have a general idea of his views, values, and modus operandi, whereas Kamala seems to have had less exposure to other world leaders. Assuming Kamala doesn't unveil any incredibly controversial or unprecedented policies, this is unlikely to change much with America's foreign relations.

It is difficult to predict how Biden's legacy will shape up. Many of his policies were designed around long-term rewards instead of immediate gratification, so it may be that once these investments mature, he will be heralded as one of the great minds of our time. Alternatively, it is possible a second Trump presidency will undo

much of his work before it gets off the ground, as is tradition when parties swap places in the Oval Office. Or even that, as time marches on, his projects will face unforeseen crises and never reach their intended effect, as so often happens with long-term government projects. Much of his policies depended on intense borrowing, which is not unheard of for Democratic presidents, but adds to a slow-burning crisis that Americans will need to address eventually. His contribution could color how people view his reign two, three, four generations from now when the buck eventually stops.

Internationally, his policies are broadly popular. He played the opening moves of the war in Ukraine expertly, both disarming much of the prepared Russian propaganda and preemptively dispelling the inevitable European knee-jerk reaction that the war wasn't happening and, if it was, it wasn't their problem. He also maintained and expanded much of Trump's policies regarding China, which is likely to be seen as prudent domestically. He was unable to strike an Iran Deal 2.0, but that was probably a blessing in disguise, seeing how things have turned out in the Middle East lately. Not being tied at the hip to Iran allows the United States both a wide range of potential actions and is likely one of the only reasons Tel Aviv is still answering the phone.

Unfortunately, the Biden presidency did not deliver on its Unity promise. The country is as, if not more, divided now than it was in 2020, with the first credible assassination attempt on a president or presidential candidate in nearly half a century capping off his time as the Great Uniter. He did little to soothe sectarian tension between various ethnic groups within the country, even as many of his strongholds began calling for aid. Likewise, his biggest plan to address the tensions between income brackets failed before it even started, with Congress stopping his massive IRS hiring campaign. It seems that any desire to combat wealth-related social problems died with it, as both his and Kamala's campaigns have consistently stoked emotions over the "One Percent."

He did deliver on his promise of an open border. Although it is impossible to tell exactly how many people were able or allowed to

enter the country under his watch, the social ramifications indicate that it was a considerable amount. Many of his most ardent supporters would likely count this as a win, but as time has gone on, many of his less ideological supporters seem to disagree. A major point of contention among them is how much money their local governments must spend to support massive groups of people that are allowed into the country but not allowed to do anything in said country. Businesses are penalized for hiring them because they don't have proper documentation, many of them don't have the money to buy or rent land, which is part of why they came here in the first place, so the local government has to care for them while the federal government promises to eventually get involved.

Biden's decision was the best move he could have made at that stage in the game. Time will tell if it was too little too late or the right call at the right time. He gave the Democratic Party a fighting chance in the election, even if the way in which it was done raises serious questions regarding ownership of votes and how much intention matters when voting. In the long term, this could all be a trivia fact or just forgotten entirely if Trump wins. If Kamala is successful, then it will likely ensure at least another decade of moderate Democratic control of the party and mostly the continuation of what America has been doing for the last four years. Ultimately, the Democratic Party put all their eggs in one basket, knowing that eventually, they'd need a second one. After four years, not a single name came to the fore as a potential Biden protégé, forcing the party to back the only name big enough to run. When it turned out that he likely couldn't handle the responsibilities of being president into 2028, he was pragmatic enough to step aside, and the party apparatus acted with record speed to put the only other known name on the ballot. Now, all we can do is sit back and wait for November to see how all the chips fall into place.

Who is the Best Candidate for China?

China observes quietly as U.S. candidates battle, reflecting a strategic calculation.

SHIYU LI

Recent developments in the U.S. presidential election have been particularly noteworthy. Events such as an assassination attempt on Donald Trump, Joe Biden's withdrawal from the race, and Kamala Harris's emergence as the new Democratic nominee have made the election a global focal point. Amidst these occurrences, one notable aspect is China's reticence. As the world's second-largest economy, China has historically been a significant subject of discussion, particularly in the context of the Thucydides Trap. Given its growing global economic influence, China's policies have long been central to U.S. presidential elections.

However, China's silence on the matter has become a new trend. This highlights a broader concept of human adaptability, exemplified by East Asian travelers who have adjusted to longer flight times when avoiding Russian airspace en route to Europe. This 'new normal' has seamlessly integrated into their travel routines. Travelers may no longer recall that the flight duration between Beijing and Warsaw was once nine hours before

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Illustration by FA Editor Team

Russia closed its airspace. The readiness of passengers to accept a journey of more than 11 hours reflects their adaptability to changing circumstances. Similarly, the impact of the U.S. presidential election on Chinese elites and the general population is a subject of considerable interest in international relations. It is plausible that individuals are recalibrating their perspectives in response to the evolving geopolitical landscape.

The initiation of a trade dispute by Donald Trump in 2018, marked by the imposition of tariffs and other trade barriers on China, created apprehension among Chinese policymakers and the public.

This phenomenon is exemplified by the collaborative efforts between Beijing and Washington in 2003 to curtail Chen Shui-bian's referendum, which aimed to formalize Taiwan's separation from China by establishing a new constitution. Additionally, the East Asia Strategy of U.S. President Barack Obama (2008–2016), known as the Pivot to Asia, sparked extensive policy discussions and academic debates in China, underscoring the significance of U.S. policies for both Chinese elites and the general public. However, Beijing's shift in approach did not occur abruptly. The initiation of a trade dispute by Donald Trump in 2018, marked by the imposition of tariffs and other trade barriers on China, created apprehension among Chinese policymakers and the public. This unease can be partly attributed to the experiences of the current Chinese generation (born between the 1950s and 1990s), who grew up during a period of normalized U.S.-China relations since 1972. The idea of the U.S. once again targeting China was hardly considered conceivable, given the prevailing ideological discourse in China, which had shifted towards comparisons of national economic capabilities and living standards with those of the Western world.

Professor Zhang Weiwei, a prominent Chinese scholar of international relations at Fudan University, offers an interesting perspective. He emphasizes the "superiority of the China model" and describes the Belt and Road Initiative as "an unprecedented change in five thousand years." His views reflect the sentiments of Chinese scholars born after the 1950s and are respected by political elites in Beijing. Zhang advocates for China's political and eco-

nomic system, encouraging Chinese citizens to be confident and see themselves as equals to the West, based on China's unique governance experience and the rise of the middle class, rather than focusing on ideological confrontation. During the initial three years of the China-U.S. trade war (2018-2021), China actively sought to resolve the trade dispute with the U.S. through negotiations.

This was evidenced by the dispatch of negotiation teams, including President Xi Jinping's special envoy, to Washington for consultations on multiple occasions. Notably, Chinese CCTV News consistently focused on the China-U.S. trade war in its international coverage prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019. These instances collectively suggest that Chinese elites and the public initially struggled to adapt to the trade restrictions imposed by the U.S. The global political landscape has undergone significant developments over the past five years, marked by increasingly strained relations between China and several Western nations. This tension has been exacerbated by the global pandemic, the continuation of tariffs on Chinese imports by the Biden administration, and Western concerns over China's reluctance to impose sanctions on Russia.

These multifaceted factors have subtly influenced Chinese attitudes toward interactions with the West and the pursuit of reconciliation. The impact of these complex geopolitical dynamics on the perspectives of Chinese political decision-makers and the general populace is evident. Educator and writer Jiang Xueqin, based in China, has highlighted the indifference of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people toward the U.S. presidential election, a sentiment that reportedly intensified in 2020. Xueqin has emphasized the long-term struggle between the United States and China to shape the international order, asserting that both Trump and Biden were seen as key figures in initiating and institutionalizing a "Second Cold War." This perspective reinforces the Chinese belief that the election of a new president would not significantly change U.S. policy toward China, as demonstrated by Biden's actions during his tenure.

Currently, Chinese political leaders appear open to negotiations

with the United States, despite prevailing negative attitudes among the Chinese public. This willingness was evident when Beijing hosted U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Janet L. Yellen and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in April 2024. However, despite these diplomatic meetings, Beijing has consistently maintained a firm stance toward Washington. Chinese officials have responded to unfriendly statements from Yellen and Blinken with strong rhetoric, particularly concerning geopolitical and trade disputes between China and the U.S. Furthermore, China's lack of interest in the 2024 U.S. presidential elections reflects the prevailing public sentiment in China, indicating diminished concern about U.S. policies targeting China. Meanwhile, disruptions in bilateral people-to-people communication have emerged for various reasons.

Some notable examples include the cessation of NBA game broadcasts on China's CCTV Sports Channel since 2020 and a sharp decline in the number of U.S. students in China, dropping from 12,000 to fewer than 1,000 over the past five years. In an analysis dated August 7, 2024, Ian Bremmer, President of Eurasia Group, a leading geopolitical risk advisory firm, highlighted China's perception of a bipartisan consensus in the United States to impede its natural growth and expansion of influence. Bremmer suggested that Chinese leaders view the differences between the two major political parties as revolving around the choice of economic and political tools, as well as the timing and manner of their implementation, rather than their fundamental objectives. This outlook reflects the Chinese leadership's strategic approach to foreign policy, particularly in the context of its relations with the United States.

A Bloomberg perspective, aligning with the analysis presented by Ian Bremmer, suggests that neither candidate in the U.S. presidential election represents an ideal choice for China. This viewpoint was articulated by a former Chinese diplomat, who once served as a translator for the late leader Deng Xiaoping. The diplomat opined that one candidate is inclined to push the world toward conflict through Cold War logic, while the other is likely to enforce sanctions and tariffs on China, in line with an America-first

agenda. He emphasized that, regardless of the election outcome, China should engage with the elected leader as they are, without harboring unrealistic expectations. Notably, Chinese officials have been advised to refrain from discussing the U.S. election or are permitted to express their views only on condition of anonymity, in adherence to the prescribed conduct for party cadres.

The Chinese leadership is expected to pursue foreign policy agendas that reflect long-term considerations, particularly in their interactions with the United States. However, the emphasis of the aforementioned discourse centers on the public perspective, highlighting the limited understanding of international politics among the Chinese public. This limitation is attributed to a lack of exposure to political participation and elections, leading to a simplified view of Western political dynamics. For instance, the Chinese public often categorizes political parties and candidates as either pro-China or anti-China, hindering their ability to grasp the nuanced intricacies of political systems and electoral processes in other countries. This, in turn, may foster a perception that Western politicians are uniformly hostile toward China.

Moreover, China's long-term foreign policy considerations are not solely focused on the potential easing of trade tensions with the United States. The adaptability of the Chinese leadership plays a crucial role in shaping their strategic thinking. Over the past five years, their strategies have been influenced by the possibility of China facing complete isolation by the West, particularly regarding strategic reserves. This adaptability is a response to risks perceived during events such as the trade war initiated by Donald Trump, the extradition case of Meng Wanzhou, and the comprehensive sanctions imposed by Western countries against Russia.

The concept of "a small yard and high fence" has gained prominence in China's official documents and academic analyses. This phrase reflects Beijing's recognition that Chinese technological and foreign policies should prioritize self-reliance and security. It also informs China's stance on multilateral cooperation, including the potential enlargement of BRICS and a closer examination of Global South dynamics. From the U.S.

perspective, the upcoming debates between presidential candidates are expected to highlight their respective China policies. However, it is also crucial to consider the prevailing public sentiment regarding Sino-U.S. relations. This analysis aims to provide a fresh perspective by focusing on the mental states of the Chinese leadership and the public, and how these influence the China-U.S. relationship.

A World with More Isolationist America

Trump's second term could redefine alliances and disrupt global stability.

BILLY AGWANDA

The prospect of a second Trump presidency after the 2024 elections raises considerable speculation about the potential direction of U.S. foreign policy, especially in light of his administration's substantial departure from traditional U.S. foreign policy practices. Epitomized by an "America First" agenda, Trump prioritized national sovereignty, economic interests, and displayed a disdain for multilateralism. Often, making extensive strategic changes in foreign policy can be challenging due to the complex interplay of domestic and international factors, which create momentum favoring continuity over change. However, in the U.S., the Constitution distributes foreign relations powers between the executive and legislative branches, granting some powers exclusively to the president, others to Congress, while leaving some unassigned.

This separation of powers has led to significant debate over the respective roles and limits of the president and Congress in foreign affairs, particularly on issues such as military operations, foreign aid, intelligence, international

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agreements, trade, and immigration. For example, while only Congress can declare war, U.S. presidents, in the post-9/11 era, have ordered military forces into conflicts such as Iraq, Libya, and Syria without congressional authorization. Similarly, in the domain of immigration, U.S. presidents are constitutionally bound to execute federal immigration laws, but there is much debate over how much latitude they have in doing so. For instance, Republican lawmakers criticized the Obama administration for ignoring the law when it established programs shielding undocumented immigrants from deportation. Likewise, many Democratic lawmakers said Trump overstepped his constitutional and statutory authority when he attempted to block migration from seven Muslim-majority countries. Given that substantive influence on foreign policy in the post-Cold War period has tended to typically, though not always, fall to the president, there have been radical shifts in U.S. foreign policy, with the trend of executive dominance reaching new heights under Trump.

Alas, the conflict between the executive branch of government and the U.S. Congress on foreign policy has often been referred to the federal courts, including the Supreme Court, to provide interpretations on questions involving foreign affairs powers. Yet, even in such circumstances, the courts operate under very strict judicial restraints, especially in cases the courts deem as "political questions." For example, in one of the disputes that involved the Obama administration and Congress over the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, the court argued that only the U.S. president "could make the specific decision of what foreign power he will recognize as legitimate." Furthermore, beyond the discourse on which institution wields more influence, there has been debate on what the nature of U.S. foreign policy should be. In the immediate post-Cold War period, when the U.S. was the only genuinely global power across military, political, economic, and socio-cultural spectrums, proponents of an isolated U.S. foreign policy argued that such an approach carried the strategic advantage of avoiding the constraints that come with seeking international cooperation, thus enabling swift and decisive American responses to international challenges. On the other hand, globalists argued that despite American primacy in world

affairs, global interconnectedness and interdependence created complexities that necessitated multilateral cooperation.

U.S. UNILATERALISM DURING TRUMP'S FIRST PRESIDENCY

To understand the potential foreign policy trajectory of a second Trump term, it is imperative to explore key elements of his initial tenure, which was characterized by an agenda to reassert American power while simultaneously reducing its international commitments. His administration's economic and trade policy was perhaps the most defining foreign policy element, in which he emphasized the "protection of American industries and jobs" through the use of tariffs and trade wars. The withdrawal from the trade-oriented Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the climate-focused Paris Agreement, and the renegotiation of NAFTA—which he termed the "worst trade deal ever made"—into the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) were pivotal moments that demonstrated his preference for bilateral over multilateral agreements. Trump sustained his critique of many international commitments, asserting that bilateral partners and multilateral institutions were taking advantage of the U.S. for security guarantees and trade agreements. This skepticism led to additional U.S. withdrawals from key international arrangements such as the World Health Organization (WHO), and his administration's subsequent hardline stance against NATO, even going as far as questioning the value of the alliance.

For Trump, international institutions have tended to constrain rather than amplify American power, thus reverting to unilateralism was seen as imperative to give the U.S. more leverage to take decisive actions. Indeed, this unilateralism was evident in the killing of Iran's most powerful military commander, General Qassem Soleimani, pressuring Britain into excluding the Chinese firm Huawei, compelling NATO allies to increase their contributions to collective defense, and pressuring Canada and Mexico to renegotiate NAFTA. However, on the broader spectrum of U.S. foreign policy, these "successes" came with far-reaching

implications. While Europe has been unable to counter America's financial power, it did not comply with Trump's demand to abandon the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal with Iran, which remains tenuously intact. Additionally, despite significant American pressure, Iran has not been forced to negotiate on American terms even after the death of General Soleimani. Moreover, while NATO countries are contributing more to defense, France and Germany are now advocating for Europe to accelerate efforts to build a more autonomous defense capability and reduce their reliance on the U.S. for security.

Repeatedly, the insistence on demonstrating American strength, on winning, and on being seen as victorious had unintended impacts. Trump came to power promising to end what he described as Washington's naïveté, which he claimed was enriching the rest of the world at America's expense. He vowed to be a great dealmaker. However, his record shows more deals destroyed than created. Even on issues where Trump might have enjoyed broad international support—such as nuclear disarmament and countering Chinese aggression—he undermined agreements and alienated allies. He waged a trade war against China largely on his own, announced the drawdown of American forces from Germany without prior notification to Berlin, and sought to dismantle the Iran nuclear deal single-handedly. This unwavering commitment to unilateralism forced American allies to alter their behavior and disrupted their long-held faith in the U.S.-led Western alliance.

FOREIGN POLICY UNDER A SECOND TRUMP PRESIDENCY

As Americans head to the polls in November 2024, one question that has encapsulated observers of U.S. foreign policy is what it would look like under a second Trump presidency. Based on precedent, if Trump were to win, it is likely that his primal instincts would be fully at play, perhaps reflecting continuity with his administration's foreign policy during his first term in office.

Regarding the Trans-Atlantic alliance, there is no doubt that Trump has, in the past, raised legitimate concerns about the sustainability of U.S. global obligations as part of multilateral alliances. However, what seems to elude the former president is that America's desire to provide global leadership comes with greater commitment, especially in the midst of an international system that has transformed substantially. Indeed, while American power is still the greatest, it has nonetheless waned compared to a decade ago, and even more so compared to the decade before that. Thus, while there is logic in seeking to withdraw from some of its grand strategic commitments, doing so comes at the cost of accelerated and diminished global influence.

In the past, Trump has threatened to oversee the withdrawal of the U.S. from NATO, to the point where Congress became concerned and passed legislation making it impossible for presidents to pull out of the alliance without the approval of the Senate or an Act of Congress. However, this barely allays concerns, because the issue is not just whether Trump would try to have the U.S. leave the alliance, but whether it would act in concert with its NATO partners. It is likely that Trump will not only call for a drastic increase in NATO spending by allies but also seek a radical reorientation of the alliance. This could, for instance, take the shape of an American commitment to provide a nuclear umbrella in Europe and guarantee airpower through its existing bases in Turkey, Germany, and England, in exchange for shifting the bulk of infantry, logistics, and artillery roles to allies. This would drastically reduce the security role of the U.S. within the alliance, except in times of great crisis.

Moreover, this radical reorientation may also take the form of a refusal by the U.S. to commit to Article 5 of the NATO treaty in the event of an attack on members that have not yet met the target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense, due to at least two important reasons. First, invoking Article 5 requires consensus, meaning it can only be operational if all members agree that an attack has occurred and authorize action. The disagreement of one member, especially a powerful one, could therefore thwart consensus. Second, even in the event that Article 5 is invoked, the

provision for members to respond as "deemed necessary" provides flexibility that could allow a member to refrain from providing substantive support.

Beyond the scope of Article 5, a second Trump presidency may put additional pressure on NATO's deterrence role. In the past, particularly during the Cold War, NATO was considered to have successfully deterred an attack by the Soviet Union, and this deterrence has also largely been effective against plans for a conventional attack by Russia on the alliance, including during a time when the alliance is providing substantial military support to Ukraine. To a large extent, this deterrence is anchored on the American nuclear umbrella, which acts as a key deterrent to Russia. However, a second Trump presidency would raise concerns about this deterrence policy, given his past comments telling Russia to "do whatever the hell they want" against allies who don't spend enough on their defense. Although France and the UK have nuclear capabilities, they do not provide the same level of deterrence as the U.S. does against Russia.

Trade and economic policy have consistently been central to Trump's agenda and manifested in the form of economic nationalism. Indeed, while his stance on various other issues has evolved over time, his focus on trade has remained constant. During his first term in office, Trump's success in advancing his trade agenda was facilitated by the unique aspects of the U.S. political system and Constitution, which, despite granting Congress clear authority over taxation (including tariffs), also allows considerable flexibility for a president and the executive branch to take action on trade and economic matters. Part of Trump's rhetoric prior to and during his first term in office was that he is a "tough and shrewd" negotiator in business, and that he would do away with trade policies that largely benefited other countries at the expense of U.S. economic interests. In 2018, he tweeted (now on X) that "trade wars are good, and easy to win," after signing a series of executive actions that imposed tariffs on imported metals from Canada, Mexico, the EU, India, and China. However, given the influence of the U.S. economy, domestic economic policies have tended to have far-reaching implications

on the global economy. Thus, the unprecedented imposition of tariffs on key bilateral trade partners triggered reciprocal tariffs on U.S.-produced commodities such as motorcycles, whiskey, juices, and soybeans. The impact of this economic reciprocity was so significant that the U.S. administration disbursed USD 28 billion to farmers to mitigate the losses incurred from the trade war with China.

The re-election of Trump in the forthcoming elections could have far-reaching implications for the international order.

Yet, during his campaigns, Trump has reiterated his intention to extend the trade wars to an even greater degree, proposing to implement a universal baseline tariff of 10 percent on the majority of foreign products and specifically 60 percent or more on products imported from China. Additionally, Trump has proposed several additional tax cuts, including eliminating federal income taxes on Social Security benefits, the money service workers like waiters and ride-share drivers earn from tips, and has promised to reduce the corporate income tax rate from 21 percent, which he had approved in 2017, to 15 percent. For Trump, bolstering the U.S. economy necessitates creating additional jobs, and imposing higher tariffs on foreign goods would encourage more domestic production, create more local jobs, and reduce the import-export gap. However, despite Trump's insistence on the continuation of this international trade policy, research shows that while there was success in reducing imports and increased production in some industries like steel and semiconductors, the tariffs nonetheless resulted in higher consumer and production prices for factories dependent on imported inputs. Moreover, due to retaliation, exports of certain U.S. products also declined.

The re-election of Trump in the forthcoming elections could have far-reaching implications for the international order, which has largely been anchored on multilateralism, alliances, and the promotion of democratic values. These tenets, however, appear to be in direct conflict with Trump's foreign policy priorities, which mainly emphasize national sovereignty, economic nationalism, and a transactional approach to international relations. It is likely that a second term for Trump could accelerate the further decline

of the liberal international order, as the U.S. continues to undermine and even withdraw from multilateral institutions and agreements. On a structural governance level, this trend could lead to the disintegration of the global order into a multipolar world, where power is concentrated in regional blocs or individual states, potentially creating an unpredictable and unstable international environment, with a greater potential for conflict and competition between major powers.

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What is the Global South?

The Global South ascends, disrupting power dynamics and rewriting the rules of global influence.

BERK TUTTUP

The term "Global South" emerged in the latter half of the 20th century, gaining prominence as a critique of the traditional North-South divide in international relations. The "Global South" refers to countries located in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These regions share a common history of colonialism, economic dependency, and socio-political struggles. Unlike their more economically advanced Northern counterparts, these countries often face substantial developmental challenges. The Global South concept transcends geographical boundaries; it encapsulates a critique of global inequalities and power imbalances, highlighting the shared experiences of underdevelopment, colonial exploitation, and ongoing struggles for economic and political autonomy. This framework is crucial for understanding contemporary global dynamics, particularly in terms of international trade, economic policies, and diplomatic relations.

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Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

Geographically, the Global South encompasses diverse climates, landscapes, and natural resources. From the vast deserts of Africa to the dense rainforests of the Amazon and the fertile plains of South Asia, these regions are rich in biodiversity and natural wealth. However, economically, they often lag behind their Northern counterparts. According to World Bank data (2023), the average GDP per capita in Sub-Saharan Africa was approximately $1,800, compared to $50,800 in North America. This stark disparity underscores the economic challenges faced by the Global South. Economies in these regions often rely heavily on agriculture and raw material exports, making them particularly vulnerable to global market fluctuations. For instance, East Asia & Pacific has an average GDP per capita of $16,000, benefiting from diversified economies with substantial industrial bases, while South Asia's average stands at $2,500, reflecting ongoing struggles with poverty and development.

Moreover, challenges such as poor infrastructure, inadequate healthcare, and limited educational opportunities further exacerbate economic disparities. Latin America and the Caribbean, with an average GDP per capita of $9,500, highlight both progress and persistent inequality, often influenced by political instability and external debt. Economic volatility is evident in the significant differences in growth rates across the region. While countries like India and Vietnam have experienced rapid economic growth, others, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, remain trapped in cycles of poverty and conflict. These examples underscore the heterogeneous nature of economic development within the Global South.

The social and political landscape of the Global South is shaped by deep-seated inequalities and power imbalances. Post-colonial legacies continue to manifest in various ways, including persistent socio-economic disparities, systemic corruption, and political instability. Socially, these countries face substantial disparities in wealth distribution, educational attainment, and access to healthcare. Politically, many Global South nations contend with challenges related to governance, corruption, and internal conflicts, with autocratic regimes complicating their development trajec-

tories and international standing. To illustrate the varied experiences within the Global South, consider the following case studies.

CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

As Africa's most populous country and largest economy, Nigeria presents a vivid example of these dynamics. Despite its substantial oil wealth, Nigeria faces severe socio-economic disparities, with over 40% of its population living below the poverty line. Corruption is endemic, affecting all levels of government and public services. Politically, Nigeria has struggled with instability, particularly due to the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and separatist movements in the southeast. These issues underscore the challenges of managing post-colonial legacies, including arbitrary borders and ethnic divisions.

India offers another poignant illustration. Despite its rapidly growing economy, the country still harbors stark inequalities. Approximately 22% of its population lives in poverty, and there is a significant rural-urban divide in access to education and healthcare. The legacy of British colonialism remains evident in ongoing struggles with caste-based discrimination and communal violence. Politically, India has maintained a stable democracy but faces challenges such as corruption, political patronage, and frequent regional conflicts.

South Africa's history of apartheid has left a profound impact on its social and political structures. Despite the end of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic government in 1994, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. The Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, remains high. Corruption, particularly highlighted by the state capture scandal involving former President Jacob Zuma, illustrates ongoing political challenges. Additionally, the country faces significant social issues, including high crime rates and xenophobic violence against immigrants.

In Latin America, Brazil's experience reflects the enduring impacts of colonialism and slavery. As the largest economy in the region, Brazil has significant wealth but suffers from severe income inequality and poverty. The favelas, or informal settlements, are a stark representation of this disparity. Politically, Brazil has faced substantial instability, highlighted by the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the widespread corruption investigations under Operation Car Wash, which implicated numerous politicians and business leaders. Socially, issues such as racial inequality and inadequate public services continue to pose significant challenges. These case studies illustrate the diverse manifestations of post-colonial legacies across the Global South, highlighting the intricate relationships among socio-economic disparities, political instability, and governance challenges.

COUNTRIES THAT MAKE UP THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The diversity of countries within the Global South presents a complex picture of development, governance, and global influence. While countries like Brazil and India are emerging as major players on the global stage, their internal challenges reflect the broader struggles of the Global South. Brazil, despite its significant wealth and large economy, continues to grapple with severe income inequality and political instability. These internal contradictions raise critical questions about the sustainability of its development model and its capacity to exert influence both regionally and globally.

India's rapid economic growth positions it as a key actor in South Asian and global politics. However, ongoing issues of poverty, caste-based discrimination, and infrastructural deficits underscore the limitations of this growth. India's experience highlights the broader challenge faced by many Global South countries: the difficulty of translating economic growth into inclusive development that benefits all segments of society. This challenge is further compounded by political dynamics that often prioritize short-term gains over long-term structural reforms.

South Africa's post-apartheid journey reveals the enduring impact of historical injustices on contemporary social and economic realities. Despite being the most industrialized nation in Africa, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. This inequality, coupled with high unemployment and social unrest, indicates that the legacy of apartheid is far from resolved. South Africa's experience highlights the importance of addressing historical legacies through comprehensive social and economic policies that promote inclusion and equity.

Indonesia, as the largest economy in Southeast Asia, plays a critical role in regional stability and economic integration. However, the environmental challenges it faces, such as deforestation and climate change, pose significant risks to its long-term development. These environmental issues are not merely local concerns but are emblematic of the broader sustainability challenges facing the Global South. As these countries seek to grow and industrialize, they must also navigate the complex trade-offs between economic development and environmental preservation.

REIGONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, BRICS represents a significant portion of the world's population and economic output. The group focuses on promoting economic growth, development, and multipolarity in international relations. BRICS members collaborate on initiatives like the New Development Bank, which funds infrastructure and sustainable development projects, reflecting their shared goal of reducing Western dominance in global finance.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes ten member states in Southeast Asia. ASEAN aims to promote economic growth, social progress, and regional stability through collaborative efforts and integration initiatives. It plays a critical role in regional diplomacy, conflict resolution, and economic cooperation, facilitating a collective response to challenges such as trade disputes and security threats.

The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of fifty-five member states. It seeks to promote unity, economic development, and political stability across Africa. The AU is instrumental in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and fostering economic integration through initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), which aims to create a single continental market for goods and services, boosting intra-African trade and economic growth.

HISTORICAL BACKGORUND

The end of the Cold War marked a significant shift in global dynamics, with the dissolution of the bipolar world order dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. The Global South, which had been a battleground for ideological conflicts during the Cold War, encountered both new opportunities and challenges in the post-Cold War era. With the decline of superpower rivalries, many Global South countries sought to redefine their foreign policies and economic strategies. This period witnessed a surge in democratization movements, economic liberalization, and regional integration efforts. Countries like South Africa emerged from apartheid to establish democratic governance, while others embraced market-oriented reforms to spur economic growth.

The post-Cold War era also saw the rise of new economic powers within the Global South. China, in particular, embarked on a path of rapid economic transformation, becoming a global economic powerhouse. India's liberalization policies in the early 1990s laid the foundation for its emergence as a major player in the global economy. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), established in 1961, played a pivotal role in the political landscape of the Global South during the Cold War. NAM sought to provide a platform for countries that did not align with either the United States or the Soviet Union, advocating for national sovereignty, non-intervention, and peaceful coexistence. NAM's significance extended beyond the Cold War, as it continued to champion the interests of the Global South in the international arena. The

movement emphasized economic cooperation, development, and solidarity among member states. Despite challenges and criticisms, NAM remains relevant as a forum for discussing issues pertinent to the Global South, such as economic inequality, climate change, and sustainable development.

GLOBALIZATION PROCESS AND RISE OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Globalization has been a double-edged sword for the Global South. On one hand, it has facilitated economic growth, poverty reduction, and integration into global markets. Countries like China, India, and Brazil have successfully leveraged globalization to lift millions out of poverty and transform their economies into major global players. However, this integration into the global economy has also exposed these countries to significant risks, including trade imbalances, dependency on raw material exports, and vulnerability to global financial crises. The 2008 global financial crisis serves as a stark reminder of these vulnerabilities, as many developing economies in the Global South were severely impacted, highlighting their dependence on external markets and the fragility of their financial systems. The crisis also underscored the unequal power dynamics in global economic governance, where decisions made by a few powerful economies can have far-reaching consequences for the rest of the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed and exacerbated these vulnerabilities. Its economic and social impacts were particularly devastating for the Global South, where health systems were already strained and economic safety nets were limited. The pandemic disrupted global supply chains, leading to significant economic contractions, especially in countries heavily reliant on tourism, remittances, and export-driven economies. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that many countries in the Global South experienced their worst economic downturns in decades, pushing millions into extreme poverty and reversing years of development gains. Moreover, the pandemic highlighted the unequal distribution of global resources, particularly in terms of

vaccine access. While developed countries secured the majority of early vaccine supplies, many Global South nations faced significant delays in procurement, resulting in prolonged public health crises and slower economic recoveries. This disparity underscored the inequities in the global health system and raised critical questions about global solidarity and the mechanisms of international aid and cooperation.

The rise of developing countries in the global economy has challenged the traditional dominance of Western powers, contributing to a more multipolar world order. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has also shown how fragile this rise can be in the face of global disruptions. The pandemic has intensified existing challenges such as income inequality, unemployment, and debt burdens, while also creating new ones, including increased digital divides and heightened geopolitical tensions as countries compete for limited resources and strategic influence. As the Global South navigates the post-pandemic recovery, lessons learned from both the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic will be crucial. These events have underscored the importance of building more resilient and diversified economies that can better withstand global shocks. They have also emphasized the need for a more inclusive and equitable global economic system that addresses the specific needs and challenges of developing countries, ensuring they are better equipped to handle future crises.

Globalization has thus created both opportunities and challenges for the Global South. While some countries have been able to capitalize on these opportunities to achieve rapid economic growth, others have struggled to cope with the pressures and risks associated with global economic integration. The uneven impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the need for comprehensive reforms in global governance to ensure that the benefits of globalization are more evenly distributed and that developing countries are not left behind in the global recovery. The strategic importance of the Global South is increasingly recognized in contemporary world politics.

PLACE AND IMPORTANCE OF GLOBAL SOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD POLITICS

The Global South is now a key driver of global economic growth. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), emerging markets and developing economies accounted for over 60% of global GDP growth in the past decade. Countries like China and India have undergone remarkable economic transformations, contributing to global economic dynamism and shifting the center of economic gravity toward the South. Economic development in the Global South is characterized by diverse trajectories and challenges. While some countries have achieved rapid industrialization and urbanization, others remain dependent on agriculture and natural resource exports. The World Bank's data shows that the East Asia and Pacific region, driven by China's growth, had an average annual GDP growth rate of 6.3% from 2010 to 2020. In contrast, Sub-Saharan Africa's growth rate was 3.1% during the same period, reflecting the disparities within the Global South.

The Global South also plays a crucial role in the global energy landscape due to its abundant natural resources. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Venezuela are major oil producers, while Brazil and Indonesia are significant exporters of biofuels and natural gas. Energy demand in the Global South is rising rapidly, driven by economic growth, urbanization, and population increases. Energy security and sustainability are critical issues for these countries, as many face challenges in ensuring reliable and affordable energy access for their populations. Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power offer potential solutions, but their adoption is often hindered by financial, technological, and infrastructural barriers. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) reports that while renewable energy capacity in developing countries has been increasing, significant investments and policy support are needed to scale up deployment and achieve sustainable energy transitions.

The Global South is home to the majority of the world's population, with significant demographic implications for global politics and

economics. According to the United Nations, Africa's population is projected to double by 2050, reaching 2.5 billion. Similarly, South Asia, particularly India, is expected to experience substantial population growth, making it the most populous region in the world. This demographic expansion presents both opportunities and challenges. A young and growing population can fuel economic growth, innovation, and an expanding labor force. However, it also requires significant investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure to harness the demographic dividend. Failure to meet these needs could result in social unrest, unemployment, and increased migration pressures.

The Global South's integration into global trade has significantly reshaped international markets. Emerging economies have become major players in global trade networks, contributing to the diversification of trade flows and reducing the dominance of traditional economic powers. According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), developing countries' share of global merchandise exports increased from 28% in 2000 to 43% in 2020. Trade partnerships within the Global South are also expanding, as seen with initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and South-South cooperation frameworks. These efforts aim to enhance intra-regional trade, reduce dependency on Northern markets, and foster economic resilience. The success of these initiatives depends on addressing trade barriers, improving infrastructure, and advancing regulatory harmonization.

GLOBAL POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES: THE ROLE OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Global South plays a strategic role in the power struggle between China and the United States. As both nations seek to expand their influence, the Global South becomes a battleground for competing economic, political, and military interests. The region's vast natural resources, growing markets, and geopolitical significance make it a critical arena for global power dynamics.

Alliances and partnerships within the Global South are crucial for shaping the global power balance. Countries in the Global South often navigate complex diplomatic landscapes, balancing their relations with China, the United States, and other regional powers. Organizations such as BRICS, ASEAN, and the African Union provide platforms for collective action, enabling Global South countries to assert their interests and enhance their bargaining power.

Strategic initiatives, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, highlight the competing efforts to forge alliances and secure influence in the region. These initiatives involve significant investments, trade agreements, and security collaborations, reflecting the high geopolitical stakes. The Global South has the potential to act as a strategic balancer in the competition between China and the United States. Traditionally viewed as mere pawns in great power rivalries, Global South countries could leverage their collective influence to shape the dynamics of Sino-American relations and global governance.

Countries in the Global South possess significant collective power that can be harnessed to achieve strategic autonomy and enhance their bargaining positions. By forming coalitions and leveraging regional organizations such as BRICS, ASEAN, and the African Union, Global South nations can negotiate more favorable terms with both China and the United States. This approach enables them to avoid dependency on a single power and pursue development goals aligned with their own interests. Strengthening regional economic and political integration through initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the ASEAN Economic Community can reduce reliance on external powers and create stronger, more resilient regional economies.

Engaging with a variety of international partners, including the European Union, Japan, and emerging economies like India and Brazil, allows Global South nations to diversify their economic and diplomatic relationships and reduce dependency on China or the U.S. Additionally, platforms like the Non-Aligned Movement

(NAM) provide opportunities for collective bargaining for better trade terms, investment deals, and political support in international forums. The Global South can play a pivotal role in reshaping global governance structures to reflect a more multipolar world order. By advocating for reforms in international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund, Global South countries can ensure that their voices are heard and their interests represented. This shift towards a more inclusive and equitable global governance system can help address the power imbalances that have historically marginalized the Global South.

Strengthening regional integration and South-South cooperation is crucial for the Global South to enhance its strategic position. Initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) offer platforms for economic collaboration and development. By prioritizing regional integration, Global South countries can build resilient economies, reduce dependency on external powers, and foster sustainable development.

FUTURE POTENTIAL AND RISKS

The potential for economic development in the Global South is significant. With continued investments in infrastructure, technology, and human capital, the region can achieve sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. Diversifying economies, enhancing trade, and fostering innovation are key strategies for unlocking this potential. Technological innovation is a critical driver of development in the Global South, where the young and dynamic population presents opportunities for digital transformation, entrepreneurship, and technological advancement. Promoting innovation ecosystems, enhancing digital literacy, and addressing digital divides are essential for leveraging this technological potential.

However, political instability remains a significant risk for the Global South. Issues such as governance challenges, corruption,

internal conflicts, and authoritarian tendencies can undermine development efforts and regional stability. Strengthening democratic institutions, promoting good governance, and addressing the root causes of conflict are crucial for mitigating these risks. Climate change poses another severe threat to the Global South, exacerbating vulnerabilities and endangering livelihoods. The region is particularly susceptible to climate-related impacts such as extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and resource scarcity. Investing in climate resilience, sustainable development, and international cooperation is vital for addressing this existential challenge.

Inequality and poverty remain persistent challenges in the Global South. Despite economic growth, many countries continue to grapple with significant socio-economic disparities and high poverty rates. Addressing inequality through inclusive policies, social protection programs, and equitable access to resources is essential for achieving sustainable development and fostering social cohesion. The Global South's role in contemporary international relations is multifaceted and critical to the evolving global order. Traditionally viewed through the lens of economic underdevelopment and political marginalization, the Global South now finds itself at the forefront of global economic growth, geopolitical strategies, and the redefinition of global governance structures. This article has explored the historical, economic, and political dimensions of the Global South, highlighting both its challenges and its potential to act as a strategic balancer in the ongoing rivalry between major powers, particularly China and the United States.

A central argument presented is the heterogeneity of the Global South, encompassing countries with diverse economic capacities, political systems, and social structures. Despite these differences, these nations share common challenges rooted in their colonial histories, economic dependencies, and ongoing struggles for development and political autonomy. This shared experience underpins the concept of the Global South, which transcends geographical boundaries to critique global inequalities and power

imbalances. The economic landscape of the Global South is marked by stark disparities both within and between countries. While some nations, such as China and India, have leveraged globalization to achieve rapid economic growth, others remain trapped in cycles of poverty and conflict, exacerbated by poor infrastructure, inadequate healthcare, and limited educational opportunities. The article emphasizes the importance of addressing these economic disparities through targeted investments in human capital, technological innovation, and regional integration to foster more inclusive and sustainable development.

Politically, the Global South faces significant challenges, including governance issues, corruption, and internal conflicts, many of which are legacies of colonial rule and further complicated by the pressures of globalization. However, the rise of regional organizations such as BRICS, ASEAN, and the African Union reflects a collective effort to assert greater autonomy and influence in global affairs. These organizations are instrumental in promoting economic cooperation, conflict resolution, and the pursuit of a multipolar world order that better reflects the interests and aspirations of Global South countries.

The strategic rivalry between China and the United States presents both opportunities and risks for the Global South. On one hand, this competition allows Global South countries to leverage their strategic importance to secure better economic deals, attract foreign investment, and enhance their geopolitical standing. On the other hand, there is the risk of being caught in the crossfire of great power politics, potentially leading to increased dependency on one of these powers or even the re-emergence of neo-colonial dynamics. This article argues that by adopting a strategy of diversified partnerships, collective bargaining, and regional integration, the Global South can mitigate these risks and enhance its strategic autonomy.

Looking ahead, the Global South's future is marked by significant potential but also considerable risks. Economic development and technological innovation offer promising avenues for growth and poverty reduction, but these gains must be carefully managed to

ensure they are inclusive and sustainable. Political instability, climate change, and persistent inequality remain major threats that could undermine the progress made in recent decades. Addressing these challenges will require concerted efforts at both the national and regional levels, supported by a reformed global governance system that is more equitable and responsive to the needs of developing countries.

In conclusion, the Global South is not merely a passive participant in the global order but an active agent with the potential to reshape international relations in profound ways. By asserting their collective influence, strengthening regional cooperation, and advocating for a more just and inclusive global system, the countries of the Global South can play a pivotal role in shaping a future that is more balanced, equitable, and sustainable. This article has sought to illuminate the complexities and opportunities that define the Global South's place in the world today, offering insights into how these nations can navigate the challenges ahead and seize the opportunities that lie before them.

What Does President Putin Really Want?

Putin's ambition to restore Russia's power reshapes global dynamics.

KEVIN DOREMUS

Understanding what Russia wants is not merely an academic exercise; it is crucial to comprehend the dynamic nature of international politics. As we observe the ongoing war in Ukraine, it becomes increasingly evident that Russia's actions are not isolated events but part of a broader strategy rooted in historical and cultural constraints. Russia's current approach reflects its everlasting quest for status and recognition on the world stage. Over the years, Russia's relationship with the West has gone from pragmatic cooperation to rivalry, leading to a realignment of its foreign policy towards non-Western powers, particularly China. This shift is not only reshaping regional politics but also challenging the rules-based order that the US has led. By examining the underlying motivations of Russian foreign policy, we can better understand the drivers of its current behavior and possibly forecast future actions.

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Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

To understand the motivations behind Russia's foreign policy, it is essential to understand the historical roots of its quest for status. Russia's desire to be seen as a great power is not new but rather a continuation of policy that dates back to its imperial period. During the time of the Tsars, Russia consistently sought to assert its influence on European politics. This can be seen following the Truce of Yam-Zapolsky when the Vatican negotiator, Antonio Possevino, did not view Ivan IV as equal to European kings or emperors. Later on, Russia would engage in wars with Türkiye and Sweden. In particular, one of the justifications for war with Sweden was that Sweden insulted Peter I's honor. The quest to be seen as an equal among major powers intensified over the years under the Russian Empire and the early days of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was not just a geopolitical loss for Russia; it was a profound blow to its identity and prestige. This was what President Putin called a geopolitical catastrophe. Today, Russia's actions can be seen as part of an ongoing effort to reclaim its status and recognition, influenced by both its imperial past and the legacy of the Soviet Union.

From Ivan the Terrible to Putin, Russia has felt the need to obtain great power status. In Larson and Shevchenko's book, Russia sought status in multiple ways. As Russia focused on its foreign policy towards the West, it was not seen as being part of the European monarchies. Some Russian leaders engaged in wars to show that Russian power was comparable to European kingdoms. Others, such as Peter the Great, sought to import certain aspects of Europe, believing that if they could assimilate these elements, Russia would become more European and be welcomed into the great power club. Fast forward to the end of the Soviet Union, Russia was at its peak as a major power. The US and the USSR were two superpowers at the top of the world. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the territorialization that the Soviets implemented not only resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union but also of what used to be the Russian Empire. Not only was the Soviet Union gone, but the Russian Empire also lost territory, and Russia lost its prestige of being a great power. If we are to ask what Russia wants, it is a return to great power status, in which it is considered equal to countries such as the United States.

To comprehend Russia's actions, we need to examine the concept of ontological security. It is a term that originates from sociology and psychology. Originally, this concept came from R.D. Laing and Anthony Giddens, which highlights the importance of stability and continuity in life. Jennifer Mitzen applies this concept to international politics. She defines ontological security as the need to experience oneself as a continuous, whole person in time, which also applies to states. For states, this means projecting and maintaining a coherent identity that aligns with their historical and cultural narratives. The Russian state that existed before Vladimir Putin continued even after he passed away.

The government must ensure that it maintains its strong sense of identity. Just like individuals, a state wants its identity to be respected and acknowledged. It seeks to project its identity in a positive light or as prestigious. To protect its identity, a state may resort to tactics that may seem irrational to outsiders but are understood and appreciated within its local community. Sometimes, a state's sense of identity may take precedence over physical security or economic stability, leading to prolonged conflicts or hostilities. The fear of losing one's sense of identity can cause a state to feel insecure, and it may establish routines with other states to alleviate this anxiety. However, traumatic disruptions in social interactions with other countries can lead to feelings of ontological insecurity, causing unexpected or dramatic behavior from states.

In Russia's case, this sense of self is deeply tied to its historical role as a great power, one that has been repeatedly challenged since 1991. The fall of the Soviet Union and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance challenged Russia's ontological security, leading to a profound identity crisis. This necessitated the need to restore Russian status and to protect it from identity erosion. This drives many Russian actions, including the invasion of Ukraine.

Suppose we apply the idea of ontological security to Russia. Throughout history, the Russian state has consistently sought the status and recognition of other major powers worldwide. Russia perceives itself as a major power, comparable to the United States

and China, and views itself as the center of Eurasia, responsible for bringing enlightenment and development to the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and acting as "a guarantor of peace in the Caucasus." This self-perception was a significant factor during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War when Russia felt compelled to defend its image as a dominant power in Eurasia. Russia's identity as a culturally distinct and civilizational state meant that it could not tolerate former parts of the Russian Empire being integrated into the Western sphere of influence. When this identity as a major power in Eurasia was threatened, Russia sought various methods to restore its stability and status.

The application of defending this sense of self is evident in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Prior to the invasion, the Kremlin published an article by President Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," in which he referred to the two Slavic nations as "one people." This view is not unique to Putin; other Russian leaders have historically shared this belief. For example, as documented in Vladislav M. Zubok's Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union, other Russian decision-makers in the 1990s shared the view "that the borders of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan were the products of the Bolsheviks' cynical manipulation of nationalism in order to construct their totalitarian empire." The idea that Ukraine should be part of Russia has deep roots, and the 2014 Maidan Revolution, which disrupted the social interaction between Russia and Ukraine, caused profound ontological insecurity for Russia. From the Kremlin's perspective, the invasion of Ukraine was necessary to restore its ontological security, despite the substantial costs involved.

This concept of ontological security is not unique to Russia. Other states, such as China and the United States, also deal with their own identity challenges. For instance, China's rise is not just about economic and/or military power but also about reclaiming its historical status in Asia. "Never forget national humiliation" is one of the driving messages from the Chinese Communist Party. The humiliation of losing territory to colonial powers in the 1800s drove the quest for status. Similarly, the United States' foreign policy often reflects its self-perception as a global leader and defender of

democracy. In the 1890s, the United States was dealing with economic downturns, social issues, and reconstruction following the American Civil War. At this time, the United States experienced an identity crisis and began to become more activist on the global stage. By comparing these examples, it can be seen that the quest for ontological security is common.

While the concept of ontological security offers a compelling framework for understanding Russia's actions, it is crucial to note that this is not the only lens through which to view Russian actions. There are significant debates in the field of political science and international relations regarding how one should interpret Russian actions. Structural realists, for instance, might argue that Russia's behavior is less about identity and more about security concerns. For them, Russia's actions to annex Crimea and invade Ukraine and Georgia were motivated by the need to secure its borders and maintain a strategic buffer against NATO expansion. Structural realists, such as John Mearsheimer, argue that the expansion of NATO influenced Russian behavior and that allowing nuclear weapons based in Ukraine to be returned to Russia opened the chance of war. This viewpoint interprets Russia's actions as rationally designed to ensure its survival in an anarchic world.

Structural realists, such as John Mearsheimer, argue that the expansion of NATO influenced Russian behavior and that allowing nuclear weapons based in Ukraine to be returned to Russia opened the chance of war.

However, social constructivists offer different perspectives. They focus on how the roles of identity, norms, and historical narratives shape a state's behavior. From a constructivist viewpoint, Russian actions are not merely about material concerns like security or economics but are deeply rooted in a historical self-conception as a great power. This perspective looks at how Russia socially interacts with the world and how it develops its identity. Yet, focusing on material and non-material aspects separately provides a limited view. Integrating these scholarly perspectives allows for a more nuanced look at Russia. For instance, Deborah Welch Larson, Alexei Shevchenko, and Andrei Tsygankov have all documented the continuity of Russia's quest for status and recognition throughout

its history. They note that economic and security concerns still matter, but when paired with ontological security, one can see how Russia might interpret those concerns. By considering these different viewpoints, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations behind Russia's actions on the global stage.

FOREIGN POLICY TODAY

In examining the current state of affairs, it is crucial to explore Russia's evolving social interactions and strategic partnerships with countries such as China, Iran, and Türkiye. Over the past few years, these relationships have deepened, reflecting a prominent shift in Russia's foreign policy as it distances itself from the United States, Great Britain, and the European Union. The partnership with China has moved beyond economic cooperation to include military assistance and shared political interests in creating a multipolar world. Russia's ties with Iran have also strengthened, driven by mutual interests in Syria and a shared opposition to U.S. policies in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Türkiye, despite its NATO membership, has increasingly cooperated with Russia, particularly in energy trade. These alliances signal a broader strategy where Russia seeks to build a multipolar world, reducing its reliance on Western powers and positioning itself as a key player in non-Western parts of the world.

Russia's continuous quest for status is clearly demonstrated by its strategic appeal to the Global South. As Natalie Sabanadze says, "[Russia's] aim is uncontested regional hegemony that can best be guaranteed in the multipolar world. This requires weakening the US and its allies through pressuring them in many directions simultaneously." This strategy involves creating as many pressure points as possible for the United States and Europe. Instead of focusing solely on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the United States and its allies have to focus on the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. By spreading out over multiple fronts, the ultimate aim is to weaken Western influence. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the fact that roughly two-thirds of the world's

population resides in countries that have chosen not to sanction Russia.

The result is that states that hold about two-thirds of the world's population are not sanctioning Russia. Although Russia may not be respected as a power in Europe or America, it is still respected in other parts of the world. While Russia may struggle to gain respect as a power in Europe, it continues to seek respect and recognition from other parts of the world. Historically, Russia has always been driven by a desire for status and recognition. From the era of the Tsars, it sought to build an empire that would be granted membership in the club of European powers. The Soviet Union then elevated Russia to the status of a global power. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been on a quest to reclaim the status that it believes it rightly deserves.

As we look to the future, Russia's quest to maintain or even gain more status is far from over. The state's identity has been challenged time and again, but Russian leaders have chosen to fight to preserve their current identity. Whether through military actions, alliances, or economic moves, Russia is likely to find a way to remain a player on the chessboard of global politics. The international response to the invasion of Ukraine is going to be crucial. The actions taken now will set the tone for the future and what is tolerated. We may see shifts in alliances and strategies among powers as they respond to Russia's persistence. Some may choose not to support sanctions because it would be too costly or because their interests have changed. In this dynamic, anarchic world, Russia's persistence in maintaining its status will likely continue to drive its policy. Whether these efforts will restore Russia to its former glory or lead to its further isolation remains to be seen. What is clear is that Russian leaders are willing to go to great lengths to ensure that their country remains a formidable force in the world.

Echoes and Lessons from The Korean War and the Ukraine War

Historical conflicts' impact on modern diplomacy.

SEUNGHWAN SHANE KIM

Though separated by decades and distinct geopolitical landscapes, the Korean and Ukrainian Wars exhibit striking historical and strategic parallels. This year marks the 74th anniversary of the Korean War, making it a poignant moment to reflect on these similarities. Due to the similarities between the two wars, many experts recommended that the Korean armistice model be implemented in the Ukraine War to stop the expansion of the war. By examining the historical, geopolitical, and strategic similarities in these two wars, it is essential to determine what lessons can be drawn for Russia, the United States, and the international community and find any alternatives for reducing this conflict.

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Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

THE KOREAN WAR AND UKRAINE WAR IN HISTORICAL PARALLEL

The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when North Korean forces, backed by the Soviet Union and China, crossed the 38th parallel and tried to invade South Korea. Historically, this invasion was predicated on the belief that the United States would be unwilling or unable to mount a substantial military response. Several factors contributed to this miscalculation.

The United States had significantly demobilized its military forces after World War II, reducing the number of soldiers from eight million in 1945 to 684,000 by 1947. This drastic reduction led to a perception that the US was unprepared for another large-scale conflict so soon after the war. It was part of a broader trend of reducing military expenditures and shifting focus to economic recovery and domestic issues. This was the reason that led to another fundamental underestimation of the US commitment to containing communism globally. The North Korean leadership, supported by Soviet and Chinese assurances, misjudged the Truman administration's readiness to respond militarily to aggression in Korea as part of its broader strategy of containment, articulated in the Truman Doctrine. They underestimated the Western partners, including the United States' ability to galvanize the allies into action and respond swiftly.

Furthermore, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung and his Soviet and Chinese backers believed the United States was more focused on Europe, particularly the emerging Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union. The belief was that Asia was of secondary importance to US strategic interests, and thus, the US might not intervene decisively in the Korean Peninsula. This belief was reinforced by US Secretary of State Dean Acheson's speech in January 1950, which outlined America's defense perimeter in the Pacific and notably excluded Korea. North Korea and its allies interpreted this speech as an indication that the US would not defend South Korea, thereby encouraging the invasion.

Similarly, the Ukraine War, which can be traced back to Russia's

annexation of Crimea in 2014, illustrates a comparable underestimation of Western resolve. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia believed its actions in Ukraine would meet minimal resistance from the West.

This belief was rooted in historical precedents, where previous aggressive moves by Russia, such as in Georgia (2008) and earlier in Ukraine, met with limited and short-lived Western responses due to a lack of consensus among NATO member states. The Kremlin's strategy seemed to rely on the assumption that the West would eventually acquiesce. This was articulated by Dmitry Medvedev in 2022 at Russia's National Security Council. According to the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute, he recalled the 2008 Georgia conflict, suggesting that the West would tire of confrontation and seek negotiations, viewing Russia as too significant to ostracize completely.

THE ONGOING PROXY WAR AMIDST GLOBAL REORGANIZTION

The Korean War, which erupted in 1950, took place in a bipolar world dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. After World War II, these two superpowers emerged, each championing opposing ideologies: capitalism and democracy led by the US and communism led by the Soviet Union. The division of Korea at the 38th parallel into Soviet-backed North Korea and American-backed South Korea epitomized this global ideological confrontation.

The conflict in Korea quickly escalated into a proxy war, with the North receiving substantial military and logistical support from the Soviet Union and China, while South Korea was bolstered by a coalition of United Nations forces, predominantly composed of US troops. This war became a battleground for the larger Cold War struggle, with each side aiming to prove the superiority and resilience of its political and economic system.

The Ukraine conflict exhibits characteristics of a proxy war between the Western powers, led by the US and NATO allies, and

an authoritarian or revisionist bloc that includes Russia and, indirectly, China. Through economic ties and diplomatic backing, China's tacit support for Russia underscores its strategic alignment against Western influence. The Western response, characterized by extensive military aid to Ukraine, economic sanctions against Russia, and diplomatic efforts to isolate Moscow, mirrors the strategic dynamics of Cold War proxy conflicts. The war in Ukraine, much like the Korean War, is a microcosm of a larger struggle, this time between liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes. Concurrently, this war occurred during a global reorganization towards multipolarity, alongside a stronger US-Sino rivalry. It highlights the geopolitical fault lines and shifting alliances that define the contemporary international order.

LIMITED WARS: KOREAN AND UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

Both the Korean War and the Ukrainian War have been characterized by strategic decisions to limit the scope of the conflict, even though the situation in Ukraine has recently evolved after the United States allowed Ukraine to use its weapons to strike inside Russian territory.

During the Korean War, the United States intervened strategically to prevent an escalation into a direct military confrontation between the major powers, especially China. President Truman's "limited war" policy restricted the use of nuclear weapons and prohibited bombing military infrastructure outside of the Korean peninsula, such as in Manchuria. This was because the United States wanted to avoid massive military retaliations from China and the Soviet Union, which could potentially lead to another World War. The United States was not ready to prepare for another major world war, leading the Truman administration to prioritize containing the communists behind the 38th parallel.

The Ukraine conflict exhibits characteristics of a proxy war between the Western powers, led by the US and NATO allies, and an authoritarian or revisionist bloc that includes Russia and, indirectly, China.

LESSONS FROM THE ECHOES OF BOTH WARS

One of the key lessons from the Korean War that can be applied, especially to Russia, is the critical importance of recognizing and rectifying strategic miscalculations. During the Korean War, North Korea, backed by the Soviet Union and China, underestimated the resolve of the United States and its Western allies. This miscalculation ultimately led to a significant consolidation of Western efforts, resulting in a robust military and political response from the United States and UN member states. Similarly, Russia must realize that its initial miscalculations regarding Western reactions have led to an unprecedented consolidation of the Western front. NATO and even IP4 nations (South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand) have come together more decisively than anticipated at the Washington NATO summit, providing substantial military aid and imposing severe economic sanctions. Thus, Russia should abandon any notion of achieving total victory, understanding that continued aggression will only strengthen the Western alliance against it.

The Korean War underscores the importance of an alliance-based approach to international conflicts for the United States. The success of the US-led coalition during the Korean War demonstrated the power of collective security and international solidarity. In the context of the Ukraine War, the US must ensure it continues to leverage its alliances effectively. One of the critical lessons of this alliance-based diplomacy is to avoid sending mixed or ambiguous signals, as occurred with the annexation of Crimea and earlier events in Ukraine. Such ambiguity can embolden aggressors and risk leading to a permanently divided Ukraine. Clear, consistent support for Ukraine and a unified stance among Western allies are essential to counter Russian aggression and support Ukraine's sovereignty. Although the US's foreign policy might differ depending on the result of the November US presidential election, this should remain a foundational aspect of US foreign policy.

Additionally, the Korean War provides a historical precedent for the importance of seeking peace and consensus amidst ongoing

conflicts and global reorganization. Despite the intense hostilities during the Korean War, significant efforts were made by the United Nations Command and numerous affiliated nations to negotiate an armistice, leading to a ceasefire and the establishment of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). While not a formal peace treaty, this outcome created a relatively stable situation by stopping the devastating war. Like the international community in the 1950s, the current international community should find a diplomatic resolution that brings lasting peace to the region and should not halt top-level and grassroots dialogues. The numerous wars like the Ukraine War, including the Israel-Hamas war, and disputes occurring amid this global reorganization highlight the necessity of concerted efforts toward conflict resolution. The Ukraine War should catalyze renewed diplomatic initiatives to establish a stable and peaceful regional order.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Despite possible lessons learned from these two wars, challenges are still ahead. The United States has its presidential election in November, a critical event that could influence US foreign policy. The outcome of this election will determine the legislative agenda and could have significant implications for international relations, particularly regarding the Ukrainian conflict. Depending on which party and which candidate gains control, there could be shifts in the US approach to supporting Ukraine and the alliance-based approach. A change in leadership to Donald Trump might lead to a reassessment of military aid, economic sanctions against Russia, and diplomatic strategies. Any signs of reduced support or a pivot in policy could embolden Russia and impact the conflict dynamics. Additionally, the elections could lead to a greater focus on domestic issues, as seen in recent Pew Research Center polls showing that only 23% of Americans prioritized supporting Ukraine. This shift could potentially divert attention and resources from international engagements and influence the US's ability to lead international coalitions effectively.

Another significant development is the increasing cooperation

between North Korea and Russia. This growing partnership presents several strategic challenges and has the potential to destabilize regional and global security. North Korea and Russia have been exploring ways to enhance their military and technological cooperation. Such collaboration could lead to the exchange of advanced weapons systems and technologies, bolstering North Korea's military capabilities and complicating security dynamics in East Asia. Moreover, Russia, facing international sanctions and economic isolation due to its actions in Ukraine, may seek closer economic ties with North Korea, which has already been shown to receive millions of ammunition from North Korea. This increased cooperation between North Korea and Russia could also complicate diplomatic efforts to address security concerns in the Korean Peninsula and Eastern Europe. It could encourage North Korea to pursue more aggressive policies, knowing it has the backing of a major power like Russia.

Ultimately, the echoes of the two wars share commonalities in various factors and lessons drawn from the Korean War: the need for strategic clarity, strong international alliances, and a persistent pursuit of peace. By learning from historical precedents, Russia, the United States, and their respective allies should better navigate the complexities of the Ukrainian conflict. This approach will not only help mitigate the immediate impacts of the war but also contribute to a more stable and peaceful international order in the long term. However, the upcoming US elections and the increased cooperation between North Korea and Russia present significant hurdles in achieving these lessons, making geopolitics in Europe and Asia more complicated.

The Looming "Trump"sunami of Europe

Trump's second term could drastically impact Europe's security and economy.

LORENZO IZZI

In 2024 nearly half of the global population has been eligible to vote for an election. From the European Union parliament's elections to Taiwan's presidential elections, this year has witnessed dramatic in national establishments and nearly half of the people of the world have had the opportunity to express their thoughts. Americans will be no exception, and the November 2024 election is likely to have dramatic impacts on the world regardless of the outcome. For example, it is expected that Donald Trump, were he to be elected, will pursue a protectionist economic policy with tariffs, while Kamala Harris presents a more balanced approach to foreign policy. Keeping this mind, and waiting impatiently for the outcome of this election, this article aims to analyse the effects of a second Trump administration over European security and economy. Firstly, I shall critically analyse the effects of the first Trump administration over these issues to then build up a prediction of the effects of a second term. In these regards, it is to be said that experts consider a second trump presidency to be more radical and with tangible effects on the rest of the world compared with his first term for a number of reasons, which will be highlighted in this article.

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Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

FIRST TRUMP PRESIDENCY

The 2016 American presidential elections were held during a political turmoil characterized by a perception of loss of control over migration flows by political elites and a subsequent lack of trust from the electoral base in the entire Western world. In addition, looking at the international sphere, Brexit seriously questioned the existence of a European community, and China's economy was predicted to overtake the U.S.'s in almost a decade. Meanwhile, governments in the West were facing increasing contestation during an election period. In this setting, Donald Trump's campaign showed the world how voters can be emotional when things do not go as planned, and he managed to win the elections with the famous slogan "Make America Great Again" (MAGA).

He promised an isolationist foreign policy based on the idea that the United States should give up its role as a global supplier of security, particularly to those states that, Donald Trump said, were free-riding on shared obligations. On the economic side, Donald Trump promised protectionism. He firmly criticized free trade agreements, particularly those with Pacific nations through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), claiming that these were fundamentally opposed to the interests of the American manufacturing sector. Additionally, he promised a 45% tariff on all goods imported from China. Europe was not exempt from this process either, as Donald Trump once mentioned that the EU is "worse than China, just smaller." Thus, when he took office, he dismantled the TPP and imposed tariffs on foreign goods like solar panels, steel, and washing machines in the hope of protecting American firms from competition. He also placed tariffs on all goods imported from China and initiated an inflammatory trade war between the two countries without any cooperation or coordination from allies.

This lack of coordination left Europe in an inconvenient position. On one hand, the European market remained open to Chinese imports, while on the other, European manufacturers faced increased hurdles in their exports to the United States. While this process has not necessarily resulted in a shift in European politics

towards China, significant steps were undertaken by national governments in the hope of fostering better trade relationships with Beijing. The Italian government, for example, signed up for the New Silk Road initiative alongside some Eastern European countries. However, this does not mean that Europe has become a China-dependent economy, as Europe has managed to find other markets for exports thanks to its single market, which provides it with a strong position in the world economy.

At the same time, Trump's promise to end Washington's supply of security worldwide was a false one. Instead, he pursued a Reagan-style "peace through strength" approach, which views military power as a necessity for peace. Thus, Donald Trump did not end the U.S.'s role as a global power, but his approach was not without consequences for Europe. First and foremost, the unpredictability of his decisions raised questions about the solidity of European security. Secondly, in line with Obama's "pivot to China," Trump's foreign policy was primarily directed towards China.

This move has left Europeans facing a much less secure future in the event of major aggression, as EU leaders could no longer count on the U.S. to fulfill its international obligations through NATO's Article V. However, Europeans responded firmly to this sense of insecurity by reinvigorating the seemingly "brain-dead" Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), leading to further EU integration through military mobility and a common fund for research. To sum up, Donald Trump's first administration was characterized by unilateralism in both the international economic order and the international security order. While the first macro-area directly affected European nations through tariffs, in the second macro-area, although nothing substantial happened, everything was marked by unpredictability.

Nonetheless, Europe seemed to have passed the test, as the consequences of the Trump tariffs did not lead to a crisis in Europe due to the deep level of European integration in the area. This integration prevented the EU from becoming a Chinese-dependent market. Moreover, Trump has had the unintended effect of uniting Europeans towards a long-term project of common defense, as the

supply of security from the other side of the Atlantic has been questioned, though NATO still exists and played a central role in supporting Ukraine in 2022. However, it is important to note that scholars and experts of American foreign policy have observed that Trump's first term was not as radical as it could have been due to internal resistance in the bureaucracy, particularly from the Pentagon.

As a matter of fact, Donald Trump went after the first line of permanent executives in the Departments of State and Defense, which might signal that fierce disagreement and even sabotage were directed towards the president's directives. Experts suggest this will not be the case should Trump be elected again, as he managed to replace most of the antagonists, and it is not clear whether four years of Biden have fully restored the previous establishment. Thus, should Trump enter the White House in January 2025, the expectation is to see the most radical administration and policies in the history of the United States. The next section will present different possible scenarios for a second Trump presidency.

As mentioned in the previous section, experts believe that a new Trump administration would be much more radical than the previous one because he has more experience in office and has targeted everyone who disagreed with him. Additionally, the decision to have a radical right-wing populist like J.D. Vance as his running mate signals that he is ready to go all in. This is bad news for Europe, as Mr. Vance has expressed fierce criticism of U.S. involvement in European security issues, such as U.S. military aid to Ukraine. Furthermore, as outlined in Agenda 47, the official electoral program of the Trump-Vance ticket, they plan to ensure that American allies will pay their share in the global security system.

For Europe, this means contributing more to NATO, which, however, is difficult to do in the short term due to the high level of public debt that European countries have accumulated over the years. Countries like Italy or France are far above the threshold of 100% of their GDP in debt, which means they are trapped in a

vicious cycle of creating new debt to pay off the existing one. In this scenario, a further increase in military expenditures would be politically difficult, especially after years of welfare cuts. If Europeans fail to contribute their fair share, a new scenario could emerge. While campaigning, Trump said that he would encourage Putin to "do whatever the hell he wanted with such countries." Besides Trump's characteristic rhetoric, the message for Europeans is clear: Donald Trump will not defend you if you don't pay. It may sound concerning at first glance, and after almost 80 years of NATO, it would be natural to feel threatened; however, this situation may lead to a better long-term outcome for Europeans, as this insecurity could foster integration in defense and make military expenditures more cost-efficient and less politically painful.

However, in the short term, halting support for Ukraine and pushing for peace talks would seriously compromise European security, as it would legitimize territorial aggression and annexation by Russia. As it stands, should Ukraine be forced into peace talks, it would likely have to give up most of the occupied provinces; otherwise, Putin would hardly accept any agreement. Although much can happen between now and January 2025, Ukraine is unlikely to retain possession of all the occupied provinces and therefore would not be in the most favorable position at the negotiating table, which would compromise the EU's legitimacy and the path towards Ukraine's accession. Thus, while there may be some medium-term benefits, a Trump administration could put the continent into serious trouble.

On the other hand, speaking about European manufacturers, a Trump administration would not be good news, as he aims to impose a blanket tariff on all imports from abroad. Considering that the U.S. consumer market is of vital importance for Europeans, this will surely have consequences for the wealth of European small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs), which have been hit in the past two years by soaring inflation and energy prices. Secondly, unlike during the last Trump presidency, China does not present the same market opportunities, particularly for the tech sector, for several reasons. Firstly, the war in Ukraine has damaged business with China, as European airlines face an embargo on Russian airspace,

leading to increased transportation costs to the Far East. Secondly, Xi Jinping is subsidizing China's internal tech market to make China a leader in innovation, effectively compromising market freedom.

European SMEs, which largely rely on excellence as a market strategy and target affluent consumers, thus face unfair competition from the two biggest consumer markets and the two richest economies in the world. Whether this will result in rising unemployment and economic recession depends on the European Commission and the businesses themselves, which must find either new markets or new strategies to compete with giants who are not adhering to the rules of market economies. Climate change policies and diplomacy are likely to be impacted as well, as both Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance believe there is no climate emergency. The first Trump administration withdrew from the Paris Agreement and advocated for the continued use of fossil fuels. In Agenda 47, it is reported that the Trump-Vance administration aims to "stop the electric vehicle mandate and cancel burdensome climate regulations."

Although all of this is linked with the potential trade war with China, which currently holds a semi-monopoly on green technologies and rare materials necessary for electric engines, this will be a problem for Europe as well. Given that the Commission has imposed a ban on the production of fuel and petrol-based engines for all car manufacturers within the EU single market, the U.S. market is likely to be vital for European manufacturers. However, if Donald Trump does not impose the same ban on sales of such cars, then European car makers will be harmed, as they will lose a significant portion of their market to Asian or American manufacturers. This may lead to different outcomes as discussed previously, as EU manufacturers could either move to other markets or relocate production outside of the EU to continue making fuel-based cars.

Thus, to sum up, a second Trump administration is likely to have effects on European defense both in the short and medium term. In the short term, Trump may harm European security by pushing Ukraine into peace negotiations from an unfavorable position and

legitimizing aggression to pursue objectives. However, in the medium to long term, Trump's rhetoric and demands for increased military spending may foster integration towards a common security and defense policy. Looking at his economic policy, a blanket tariff on all imports from abroad would seriously harm European businesses, especially considering that China is now pursuing a similar policy. Therefore, if Trump is elected, Europe may find itself in the uncomfortable position of having the two biggest and richest markets closed off. The same applies to the car sector, which is linked to climate change, as the Commission has imposed a ban on the production and sales of petrol and fuel-based vehicles, while Donald Trump aims to stop this mandate, with potentially disastrous consequences for climate change.

American voters have the ball now. November 2024 will surely be an election to watch. The two candidates represent the two souls of America, with Kamala Harris embodying the American dream—the idea that all citizens have equal opportunities to succeed—and Donald Trump representing the disillusionment of a nation that no longer believes in this dream. American voters will now have the power to decide which country they want to live in, and Pennsylvania is likely to be the state that will determine the outcome. As for Europeans, the difference between the two administrations is likely to spur some disagreements, and Trump certainly does not prioritize Europe. However, whatever the result, Europeans must now learn to stand on their own, because the MAGA movement is not a characteristic of Donald Trump alone; it is an entire movement likely to influence American politics in the next decade regardless of who sits in the White House, and Europe must be ready to face it.

The Israeli – Palestinian Issue

From 1948 to the Present

JAMES BOWDEN

There is no other small nation that has driven so much of world history or that of the Middle East as the State of Israel and the conflict within it between its two distinctive peoples. A nation the size of New Jersey, one of the smallest states in the United States, has come to define the Middle East in the minds of many and has created one of the most intractable international issues the world has known. The conflict has been the longest-lasting and most consistent foreign policy challenge over the last 75 years. During this time, the conflict between the two peoples in this narrow land has challenged the foremost intellectual minds of Great Britain, America, France, and the Soviet Union/Russia. This issue has evolved over the decades, experiencing periods of intense contention as well as calm observation, but it has never left the international scene.

While most people are familiar with the Palestinian-Israeli issue from 1948 to the present, the conflict actually precedes the establishment of the Israeli state by a few years. During the Second World War, the Grand Mufti of Palestine at-

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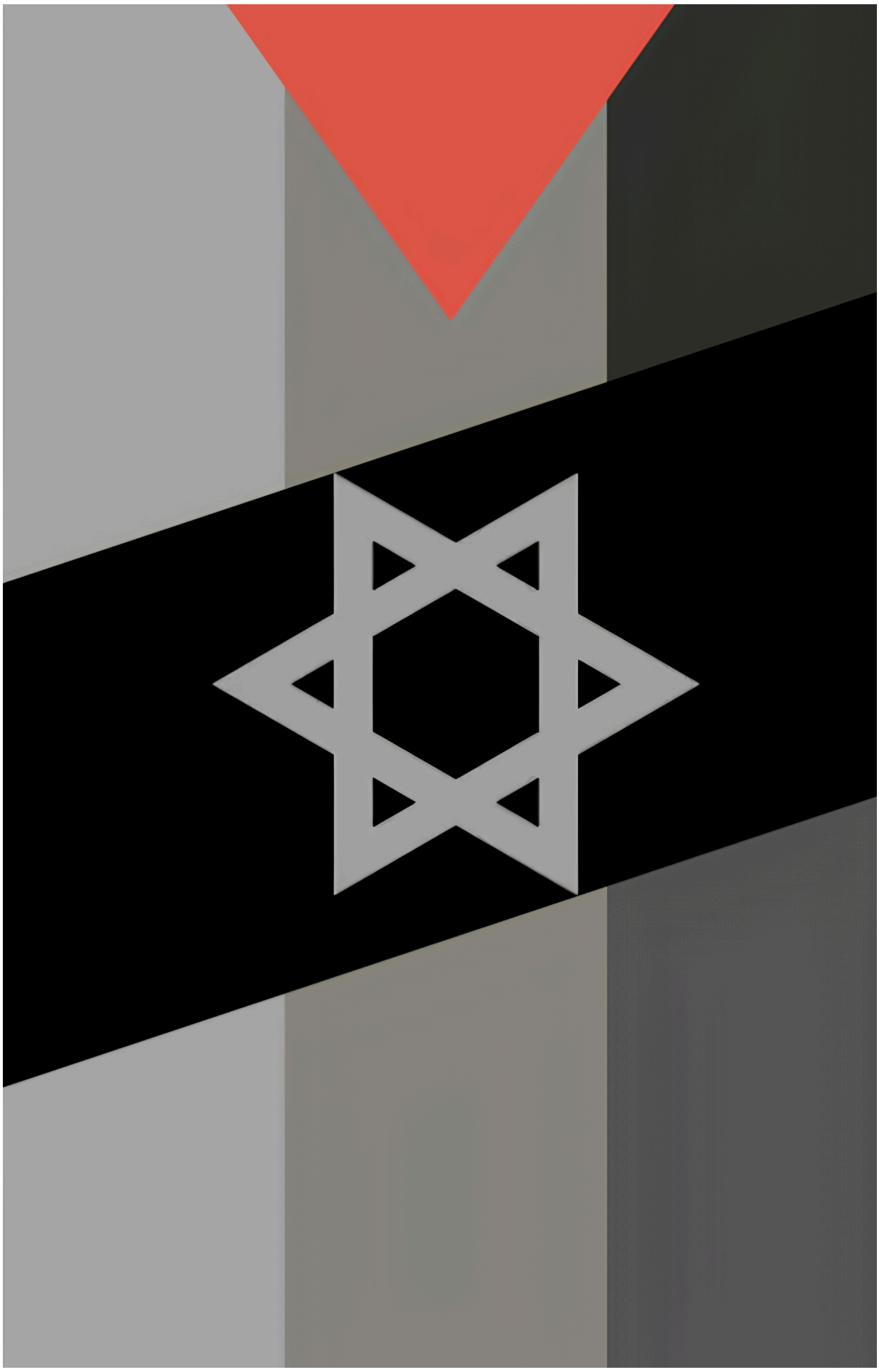

Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

tempted to eliminate the Jews in Palestine through violence. He sought weapons from the German and Italian governments, intending to arm his followers and remove the Jews who had been in the land for centuries, long before the post-Holocaust European Jews arrived. The plan was never executed, and the Mufti was forced to leave Palestine. He wandered through Europe and parts of Africa but never returned to Palestine. It was in 1948 that his ideas found their fullest expression, albeit through different means. After the Holocaust, the Jews who arrived from Europe carried deep bitterness, anger, and resentment toward anyone and everyone. They saw the world as an obstacle and were determined to make the pre-war promises and hopes of Zionism a reality, even if it meant embracing terrorism. This animosity exacerba

The Palestinians were displaced from their homes, forced to leave their jobs, possessions, ancestral homes, and land, and in some respects, their dignity, to survive and simply continue on.

This began what could be labeled the Second Hundred Years War. The significant battle years are well-known: 1948 marked the fight for independence, 1956 saw Israel's invasion of Egypt, 1967 brought Israel's expansion at the expense of the Palestinians, and in 1973, Israel was threatened and nearly lost its position in the region due to a near-fatal blow from Egypt and Syria. These battles were fought between Israel and its neighbors, but within this context, the Palestinian people were deeply impacted, their lives forever changed. The Palestinians were displaced from their homes, forced to leave their jobs, possessions, ancestral homes, and land, and in some respects, their dignity, to survive and simply continue on. The transition of refugee camps into permanent homes testifies to the international community's inability to address the issue.

The aforementioned battles are among the most visible signs of the conflict between these two peoples forcibly merged, but they are not the only forms of resistance. The predominant form of Palestinian resistance against Israel and its expansion has been through terrorism and more personal acts of violence. These forms of resistance include fighting Israeli confiscation of homes through the legal system, attacking Israeli settlers, setting fire to their cattle

lands or olive groves, and conducting other general acts of social disobedience. These aspects of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict were mostly hidden, not reported on or noticed by the outside world, which was focused on other events. However, the world would soon be forced to take notice as tensions boiled over in the intifadas.

The First and Second Intifadas caught the unobservant world by surprise. The Palestinian people had had enough, and the eruption of street violence quickly escalated, finally revealing to the world the frustration and anger they felt after decades of local oppression. After decades of being relegated to second-class status and denied systemic rights in the lands occupied by Israel, the intifadas were the visible outrage of a people denied the ability to express themselves in a manner not related to some form of terrorism. The intifadas took the cause of Palestinian statehood and freedom from groups such as the PLO and PFLP and brought it back into the hands of the people.

This brought the world's attention to Israel and what was happening, even if many were discovering the root issues for the first time. The Second Intifada was also an expression of this anger and resistance, though it may have been deadlier than the first. Between 2000 and 2005, there were 581 Israeli deaths and 3,781 wounded Israelis. This toll represents slightly fewer deaths than on October 7, 2023, when the majority were either killed or taken captive, with very few wounded. However, the Second Intifada did not engage the general public as much as it captured the attention of world leaders. It refocused nations on finding potential solutions to the long-running, seemingly intractable issue, marked by the proposals of the Two-State Solution and the Roadmap to Peace. The Bush Administration attempted to resolve the issue peacefully while it was heavily engaged in the war on terror in the region. Neither of these efforts gained traction, especially not in Israel itself. Around this time, global attention became divided, leading to fewer conferences, fewer plans, and diminished hopes of changing the situation. With the 2005 Israeli evacuation of Gaza and the elections that divided the political leadership of the Palestinians between HAMAS and the PA, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cooled

in the eyes of the world as a critical issue. The roadmap and the two-state solution continued to be mentioned, but there was an undeniable decline in interest and fervor towards finding a solution. In the intervening years, both Israelis and Palestinians found a means by which they could peacefully coexist alongside each other, with occasional outbursts of violence and rocket fire from Gaza.

This unstable coexistence came to a halt on October 7, 2023, when elements of HAMAS and randomly recruited men crossed the security barrier separating Israel and Gaza, killing 635 Israeli civilians, 395 Israeli soldiers and security personnel, 75 foreign workers, and 40 infants. This resulted in a death toll of 1,139 people, the largest single-day death toll in Israel's history. It may seem simplistic to state it in such terms, but the world went to sleep with a peaceful Middle East and woke up to the largest conflict the region has experienced since the 2003 Iraq War. The world had changed overnight, and we are still living in the light of that conflict, with its outcome uncertain.

One of the greatest impacts of Israel's presence and its conflict is the attention it brings to the Middle East region at large. Prior to the creation of Israel, the region was primarily the preserve of a minority of scholars interested in its ancient heritage or the issues concerning various Arab peoples. With the establishment of Israel, the audience and those concerned with events in the region, particularly Israel, expanded to include many religious and non-religious peoples.

The religious focus drew in those interested in how developments fit with their perspectives on how the world might end. In the secular arena, the interest was more on the political, social, and military dynamics of the region, often aimed at resolving the issues between the two parties. As a result, Arab studies and Arabic language programs emerged, driven by those who wished to understand the broader region to devise foreign policy solutions. Neither approach, especially the religious one, should be casually dismissed. U.S. presidents Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush, , and the religiously influenced Ronald Reagan all attempted to address the

Palestinian-Israeli conflict with personal knowledge of the perceived biblical implications of their efforts. Even the current foreign policy concept of the Abraham Accords speaks to a basic tradition in the Torah of Abraham's role and ability to live in relative peace with his neighbors.

The Palestinian question has driven a large part of world politics. During the Cold War, both the Soviet Union and the United States sought to put their unique stamp on the conflict and its resolution. The problems of a nation that can be traversed in a single day are some of the largest and most intractable issues regularly dealt with at the United Nations. If the Israeli-Palestinian issue were removed from history, there is a significant chance that the Middle East region would be reduced to those oil and natural gas-producing nations. The politics of only those states and the lives of those within them would be of utmost concern, while the interests and needs of Palestine and the surrounding nations would be secondary or tertiary, only arising significantly in area studies or NGOs. With the conflict and its regional implications, it has become an integral part of foreign policy considerations, and organizations do not have to expend significant investments in bringing people to understand the importance of resolving the conflict.

The nature of the conflict and the participants poses the question of whether certain policy objectives will always remain elusive, especially when the two main parties are unwilling to compromise. The two parties must be willing to negotiate to reach a conclusion; otherwise, foreign policy should be oriented towards not a resolution but a containment of the issue. This almost happened with the Abraham Accords.

The Abraham Accords were brokered in a manner allowing for the tacit acknowledgment of the existence of Israel, setting aside issues of its legitimacy. However, even that goal remains elusive as we have witnessed Israel's willingness to provoke Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and even Egypt during what was essentially the Israeli-HAMAS War. The current war has delayed the furtherance of the Abraham Accords by possibly up to five years. The reconstruction of Gaza will be a significant factor in that timeframe; indeed, the years needed to

develop and execute a Gaza reconstruction plan will greatly delay Saudi Arabian and Israeli rapprochement. The Knesset's rejection of the Two-State Solution and the likelihood that this rejection will remain permanent also raises further questions about whether there should be a shift in foreign policy approaches and whether as great an emphasis should be placed on this issue by international actors. The fundamental question is whether it is fruitless to help a country unwilling to help itself in the most meaningful ways. Is there a means of shifting focus onto the Palestinians that excludes the involvement of Israel in those plans? This cannot be answered here but ought to be explored.

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How Does America See China?

Strategic competition, cooperation, or confrontation?

NATE FISCHLER

U.S.-China strategic rivalry is the primary feature of a new geopolitical era, one that closes the door on the so-called unipolar moment when the United States was the only world power, an era that existed from the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s to the closing years of the 2010s. The strategic rivalry between the United States and China has increasingly defined the global geopolitical landscape in recent years, with the world starting to reorganize into antagonistic geopolitical camps. This competition is unfolding across various dimensions, including economic, technological, and military spheres, with its roots entrenched in economic competition, trade wars, and an intensifying battle for technological supremacy. This rivalry has also led to a severe downturn in mutual sentiment between the peoples of each country.

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Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

EARLY CONTACT

To begin, a brief overview of the history of the bilateral relationship is instructive. U.S.-China contact has always been primarily motivated by trade and began in 1784 when the American ship Empress of China docked in Guangzhou, marking the start of exchanges between the two nations. The newly independent United States sought Chinese tea, porcelain, and silk, exchanging them for fur, ginseng, and cotton. While this mission broke Great Britain's tea monopoly, trade was skewed in China's favor due to high demand for Chinese goods in the United States and limited demand for American goods in China, aside from silver. The Qing Dynasty's Canton System restricted foreign trade to the city of Guangzhou and imposed high tariffs, with the imperial authorities only accepting payments in silver. This drained U.S. reserves of the metal and highlighted China's dominant global economic position, which informed its ambivalent approach to foreign trade, as its self-sufficiency in natural resources meant it was not dependent on the outside world, which it largely regarded as backward and inferior. Early American views on China, on the other hand, largely centered around consumer demand for its luxury products, the cumbersome and expensive trade of which brewed resentment among American merchants and policymakers towards China.

CENTURY OF HUMILIATION

Trade dynamics shifted after China's defeat by the British in the First Opium War in 1842, which forced it to open more ports to foreign merchants. This subsequently led to the first treaty between China and the United States, the 1844 Wangxia Treaty, granting American merchants trade rights equal to their British counterparts. This shift marked the beginning of China's so-called "century of humiliation," which brought about the end of its more than two millennia-spanning imperial system and hegemony in Asia, destroying its status as Asia's preeminent power. As Chinese power waned, other Western powers and Japan began to carve up its territory, including in a Second Opium War that saw minor but direct hostilities between the United States and China. In

subsequent decades, the United States sought to preserve China's territorial integrity to prevent its own exclusion from the China market and total domination by the other outside powers. Meanwhile, American missionaries began flocking to China, making lasting impacts on Chinese education and healthcare, creating a legacy of both goodwill and resentment that is emblematic of the relationship to this day. The collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 brought about severe upheaval that limited interactions for a time, but the United States supported the nationalist government that soon found itself in a civil war against Mao Zedong's communists. During World War II, the United States and China were allies against Japan – which also saw a pause in the civil war – but post-war, the Chinese civil war resumed, culminating in communist victory in 1949, setting the stage for future U.S.-China relations that had already oscillated radically between cooperation and hostility.

BEGINNINGS OF THE COLD WAR

The United States refused to recognize the newly victorious People's Republic of China, instead recognizing the Republic of China, which had fled to Taiwan for exile, perpetuating the civil war on paper if not in practice (which has technically never been resolved). The erstwhile World War II allies thus soon found themselves on opposite sides of the emerging Cold War, leading to decades of hostility and estrangement and the quick emergence of a hot war on the Korean Peninsula from 1950 to 1953. The United States and China engaged in direct hostilities with one another in defense of their respective Korean allies — South Korea for the former and North Korea for the latter — which resulted in splitting the two Koreas into a new status quo that endures to this day, marking the only major armed conflict between the two to date. The risk of repeating a similar situation arose in the Vietnam War the following decade, with the United States ambivalent to invade North Vietnam for fear of Chinese intervention, which likely had a determinative impact on the outcome of that conflict.

RAPPROCHEMENT

Still, the military victory of China's ally in Vietnam was not emblematic of a broader shift in favor of global communism. To the contrary, an opportunity for rapprochement between the United States and China presented itself in the form of the Sino-Soviet split, a geopolitical rift that began emerging in the late 1960s within the communist world between China and the Soviet Union, driven by ideological differences and divergent national interests. Perhaps ironically for China, this meant it was now antagonistic to the newly established Socialist Republic of Vietnam that it was instrumental in creating because Vietnam aligned itself closely with the Soviet camp. The United States and China's mutual interest in opposing the Soviet Union led to U.S. President Richard Nixon's pioneering trip to Beijing in 1972, where he met with Chinese leader Mao Zedong. This mutual interest and China's broader diplomatic isolation drove a slowly unfolding normalization process that culminated in 1979 with U.S. recognition of the PRC while ending recognition of the ROC. These developments rendered the United States and China largely strategically aligned for the duration of the Cold War, exemplified by both countries' enduring hostility to Vietnam, which China also invaded in 1979, and neither country recognized until the post-Cold War era (in China's case, it restored recognition in 1991). For the United States, geopolitical interest drove rapprochement, but the massive economic opportunities afforded by normalization sustained it.

ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT

Doing business in the China market became exceptionally lucrative for U.S. companies. The 1980s and 1990s saw rapid economic growth in China, driven in large part by reforms initiated by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who opened the country to foreign investment and trade in earnest following Mao's death, a critical ideological shift enabling the bulk of the economic relationship. The United States became a key partner in China's economic development, with U.S. companies investing heavily in Chinese manufacturing and the U.S. market becoming a top destination for

Chinses exports. This period saw China integrate into the global economy, culminating in its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001. The relationship was not without its bumps, as the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown led to widespread condemnation from the United States and resulted in a temporary freeze in high-level diplomatic engagements. Nonetheless, emblematic of the relationship's key drivers was that economic cooperation continued and deepened despite this issue and others. Ultimately, ideological divergences during the Cold War came to mean little in subsequent decades, eclipsed first by mutual antagonism to the Soviet Union, then by the promise of fortune in the China market. Nonetheless, China's meteoric rise has put it on a collision course with U.S. power, with Western assumptions that a wealthier China would become a more liberal one proving naive, at best. This dynamic has led to a new era of strategic rivalry as a newly emboldened and powerful China seeks to at least equalize, if not overtake, the United States.

SHAPING THE RIVALRY

Developments in recent years have significantly impacted the dynamics of the U.S.-China strategic rivalry. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, highlighted vulnerabilities in global supply chains and accelerated efforts by both countries to reduce dependence on each other while causing friction in international relations, exemplified by a bottoming out of relations between China and Australia after the latter called for an official investigation into the origins of COVID-19 (which emerged in Wuhan, China), an investigation that never materialized. The pandemic also intensified technological competition, particularly in areas like biotechnology and digital infrastructure. Reconfiguring global supply chains has led to phenomena such as so-called "decoupling" (a reference to separating the economies of the two countries), "near shoring" (placing manufacturing closer to the end user, implicitly not in China from the U.S. perspective), and "friendshoring" (placing manufacturing in friendly countries, again implicitly not in China).

The U.S. Biden administration's approach to China has involved building stronger regional alliances to counter China's growing clout and influence. This has included initiatives like the Quad (a strategic partnership between the United States, Japan, India, and Australia) and AUKUS (a security pact between the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia that seeks to deliver nuclear-powered submarines to Australia and serve as a forum for collaboration on emerging technologies such as hypersonics, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence), which aim to strengthen regional security and technological collaboration. Additionally, ongoing tensions in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait have underscored the strategic dimensions of the U.S.-China rivalry. China has responded to these dynamics by deepening partnerships with Russia and Iran (while Russia has likewise deepened security collaboration with North Korea and Iran) and competing for influence among neutral countries in strategically vital regions like South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

Despite the Cold War proving rather anticlimactic in terms of U.S.-China ideological rivalry, that dimension remains a part of the ongoing competition. China is driven to prove the superiority of its system over conventional Western liberalism, with the United States motivated to do the same vis-a-vis China's system. This is highlighted by disagreements and conflicts over China's treatment of Hong Kong in recent years — where Beijing has acted to limit the territory's sovereignty through various legislation — and over Xinjiang, where the United States alleges China is committing crimes against humanity against the local Uyghur ethnic minority and other Central Asian ethnic groups that predominantly practice Islam.

ECONOMIC COMPETITION AND TRADE WARS

The economic competition between the United States and China has been a central element of the evolving rivalry, with trade wars and tariffs becoming prominent tools of this contest. The U.S.-China trade war, which began in earnest in 2018 under the Trump administration, marked a significant escalation in economic

hostilities. The United States imposed tariffs on billions of dollars' worth of Chinese goods, citing issues like intellectual property theft, forced technology transfers, and the trade deficit between the two nations. China responded with tariffs of its own, leading to a tit-for-tat escalation that disrupted global supply chains and increased costs for consumers and businesses worldwide.

Despite the Phase One trade deal signed in January 2020, which saw China agree to increase purchases of U.S. goods and services, the fundamental issues driving the trade conflict remain unresolved. The Biden administration has largely maintained these tariffs, with some modifications, signaling that the economic rivalry is far from over and will continue under either another Donald Trump presidential administration or a Kamala Harris-led United States when the new U.S. president is inaugurated in January 2025. The trade war has also spurred both countries to seek greater economic self-reliance, largely through reconfiguring global supply chains, with China focusing on its "dual circulation" strategy that aims to reduce dependence on foreign markets while boosting domestic consumption.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION RACES

The competition between the United States and China has increasingly shifted towards technology and innovation, with both nations vying for leadership in critical areas such as 5G, artificial intelligence, renewable technologies, electric vehicles, and semiconductors, among others. This technological rivalry is not just about economic dominance and control of supply chains — though that plays a large motivating role — but also about gaining strategic advantages in national security (as these technologies have key defense applications) and global influence (since demonstrating technological prowess to foreign nations is a means of soft power and coalition building).

One of the most visible fronts in the U.S.-China technological rivalry has been the race for 5G dominance. China's Huawei has emerged as a global leader in 5G technology. However, the United States has

raised concerns about Huawei's ties to the Chinese government and the ruling communist party, arguing that the company's equipment is outfitted for espionage and surveillance. This led to the United States banning Huawei from its 5G networks in a series of moves from 2019 to 2020 and pressuring its allies to do the same. The United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Sweden, India, and France have all similarly taken at least some measures to restrict the proliferation of Huawei technologies in their countries.

The United States has also implemented export controls that severely restrict Chinese access to key technologies, including semiconductors, which are crucial for 5G infrastructure and military technology, targeting companies such as Huawei as well as SMIC, China's largest semiconductor manufacturer. As a result, Huawei's global market share has declined, but China has continued to push forward with its 5G rollout, aiming to cover much of the country with 5G networks. Meanwhile, the United States has worked to strengthen its own 5G capabilities, investing in domestic firms and collaborating with allies to develop alternative 5G solutions.

Artificial intelligence is another critical area where the United States and China are competing for supremacy. Both countries recognize AI's potential to revolutionize industries, military capabilities, and economic productivity. China has outlined ambitious goals to become the global leader in AI by 2030, supported by significant government investments and a large pool of data vital for AI development. In these areas, China has a seeming advantage. The United States, however, remains a leader in AI research and innovation, thanks to its strong academic institutions, private sector investments, and global talent pool. The rivalry in AI is not just about technological innovation but also about setting global standards and norms for AI use, which will shape the future of the technology that has the potential to reshape the world. As such, whichever power can most influence AI use cases, regulations, and industry norms will reap substantial geopolitical advantages.

At the same time, semiconductors are the backbone of modern

technology — powering everything from home appliances to vehicles to smartphones to supercomputers — and the U.S.-China rivalry in this sector has become increasingly pronounced. The United States has historically dominated the semiconductor industry, an advantageous position made stronger by close collaboration with other traditional semiconductor powerhouses like Taiwan, South Korea, and the Netherlands, but China has been rapidly building its capabilities, recognizing the strategic importance of semiconductors for economic and military prowess. The United States has sought to strengthen its semiconductor industry through initiatives like the CHIPS Act, which provides funding to support domestic semiconductor manufacturing and research. U.S. export restrictions likewise focus on semiconductors to prevent China from achieving breakthroughs that could allow it to reach technological parity in this field, such as 5nm and below and advanced logic chips. In response, China has accelerated its efforts to develop a self-sufficient semiconductor industry, investing heavily in research and development and seeking to reduce its reliance on foreign technology, and has still managed to achieve advancements in the industry despite U.S. efforts to curb its capabilities.

MILITARY POWER

The military balance between the United States and China is a critical factor in their strategic rivalry. The United States has long been the dominant military power globally, with a network of alliances and military bases that ensure its influence across the world. However, China's rapid military modernization over the past two decades has significantly altered the strategic landscape, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, though not yet beyond, especially as U.S. coalition building has proven instrumental in keeping China contained within the so-called first island chain, a geopolitical concept consisting of a series of islands that stretch from the Japanese archipelago, through Taiwan, and down to the Philippines and Borneo.

China will find it difficult to assert credibility as a global military

power if it is unable to project maritime power beyond the first island chain. As such, it is no surprise that China's military expansion has been most evident in its growing naval capabilities. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has rapidly expanded, both in terms of the number of ships and technological sophistication. China now boasts the largest navy in the world by the number of ships, including advanced destroyers, aircraft carriers, and submarines, though it still trails the United States in terms of high-end hardware; for example, the United States has 11 active-duty aircraft carriers, while China has three.

This naval expansion is a central element of China's strategy to project power and assert its claims in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the South China Sea. In response, the United States has sought to maintain its military dominance in the region through various means. This includes the deployment of advanced military assets, such as aircraft carrier strike groups and stealth bombers, to the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. has also invested in new technologies and capabilities, such as hypersonic weapons and missile defense systems, to counter China's growing military power. Since Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s 2022 election victory, the Philippines has undergone a substantial pivot back into the U.S. camp, allowing a de facto basing arrangement that gives U.S. forces exclusive access to nine military facilities in the country, including several in near proximity to and facing the hotspots of the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.

The United States has increased its military presence in the Indo-Pacific region, building mutually reinforcing partnerships with the likes of Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Taiwan, and to a lesser extent India, Indonesia, and Vietnam, while China has continued to assert its claims in disputed territories, raising the risk of conflict. U.S. diplomatic efforts have yielded significant fruit, highlighted by a trilateral arrangement between the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Though driven primarily by South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, Japan-South Korea reconciliation marks a historic pivot in the region with the United States acting as matchmaker, reflecting the growing threat perceptions not only in Washington but also closer to China's shores among most of its

neighbors, who are significantly increasing military spending and rapidly arming.

Despite these efforts, the military balance in the Asia-Pacific is becoming increasingly contested. While the United States still maintains significant advantages in areas such as air power and global reach, China's ability to challenge U.S. military dominance in its near seas is growing. Moreover, competition continues to evolve in the Indian Ocean, as China now maintains six to eight warships there after having no military presence just two decades ago. This shifting balance of power has significant implications for the strategic rivalry between the two nations, as it raises the risk of military confrontation, particularly in the context of Taiwan and contested areas like the South China Sea.

TAIWAN

The PRC's foundational policy of eventual unification with Taiwan also poses a risk, given that the use of force remains on the table. It is likely that Chinese leader Xi Jinping regards the Taiwan issue as central to his legacy, which, when combined with the potential strategic benefits of taking Taiwan — including breaking the U.S. hold over the first island chain and potentially seizing Taiwan's world-class semiconductor sector — increases the likelihood of an invasion.

However, China is not yet ready for an invasion. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is instructive in this respect because the sanctions applied to Russia by the West and its partners subsequent to the invasion would be more devastating for China by orders of magnitude. While Russia is self-sufficient in energy and food, the sanctions it is experiencing are difficult but ultimately manageable. China, on the other hand, is a net importer of both energy and food, with trade disruptions posing a significant risk of food and energy shortages. One singular waterway also has massive strategic implications: the Malacca Strait, lying between the Malay Peninsula to the northeast and the Indonesian island of Sumatra to the southwest. A blockade of this critical waterway by an adversarial

navy in an armed conflict scenario would cripple Chinese trade.

As such, China is constructing a network of ports and inland infrastructure to minimize the criticality of the Malacca Strait, largely accomplished through the Belt and Road Initiative. A non-exhaustive list of relevant projects is as follows: Ream Naval Base, a deep-sea port in Cambodia; the Funan Techo canal, a canal in Cambodia giving it direct access to the sea; Kyaukphyu, a deep-sea port in Myanmar; Hambantota, a deep-sea port in Sri Lanka; Gwadar, a deep-sea port in Pakistan; and Khalifa, a deep-sea port in the United Arab Emirates. Other projects are under consideration, such as the Kra landbridge, which would circumvent troublesome Southeast Asian waterways by splitting the Kra Peninsula in Thailand and allowing oceangoing vessels to cross it.

All of these projects could conceivably host Chinese warships, but China has thus far not shown strong indication that it is willing to deploy significant assets in permanent basing situations abroad. The Port of Doraleh in Djibouti is China's only official overseas military base, which opened in 2017. In this sense, it does not come close to matching the United States in terms of global reach, but it may not want to, instead applying a tighter focus to particular strategic goals like circumventing the Malacca Strait.

Therefore, China will not likely launch an invasion of Taiwan in the near term, but the extent of both its military modernization and its ability to link logistical networks to itself over inland Eurasian routes will play critical roles in terms of its readiness, at which point an invasion will become far more likely, though, as should be noted, far from inevitable. Given this reality, the United States is prioritizing deterrence in the region to forestall a war in the first place.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

The South China Sea is one of the most contentious flashpoints in the U.S.-China strategic rivalry. China claims almost the entirety of the South China Sea as its sovereign territory, based on the so-called "ten-dash line" (changed on maps from the “nine-dash line”

in 2023), a demarcation line not recognized by international law, as demonstrated by a 2016 international arbitration decision determining that China's claims are invalid. China's claims overlap with those of several Southeast Asian nations, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei, leading to a series of territorial disputes. However, only the Philippines and Vietnam have actively contested Chinese claims in recent years, with the Philippines significantly intensifying its assertiveness over its own claims during the Marcos administration.

To assert its claims, China has engaged in an extensive campaign of island-building and militarization in the South China Sea. Since 2013, China has constructed artificial islands on previously submerged reefs and rocks, equipping them with military facilities, including airstrips, radar systems, and missile batteries. These actions have transformed the South China Sea into a heavily militarized zone, allowing China to project power beyond its shores and bringing its strategic influence closer to the critical Malacca Strait.

The United States has strongly opposed China's actions in the South China Sea, viewing them as a challenge to international norms and freedom of navigation. In response, the U.S. conducts regular Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs), sending naval vessels through disputed waters to challenge China's maritime claims and support the counterclaimants, primarily the Philippines. These operations are designed to demonstrate that the United States will not accept Chinese control over the South China Sea, though it remains unlikely either party is interested in a potential world war over what are mostly uninhabited islands, reefs, and features.

Nonetheless, over the past year, the South China Sea has emerged as a more active hotspot than the Taiwan Strait, with regular clashes between Chinese and Philippine maritime forces over their countervailing territorial claims. These skirmishes, which typically involve boat rammings, pointing military-grade lasers, and deploying water cannons, have thus far stayed below the threshold of an "armed attack" that would trigger U.S. intervention per the

terms of the 1951 Mutual Defense Agreement between Washington and Manila. As such, China is motivated in this context primarily by two things: to demonstrate to the Philippines that the United States is not a reliable partner that will protect it, and to discourage Philippine sovereignty claims and actions that reinforce it, such as by trying to get the Philippines to withdraw its small marine contingent from the disputed Second Thomas Shoal. These dynamics are likely to stay within the so-called "gray zone" of warfare, though unintended incidents or fatalities could alter this dynamic and spark escalation.

LOOKING FORWARD

The U.S.-China strategic rivalry is likely to intensify across multiple fronts, with significant implications for the global order. In the economic sphere, both countries are likely to continue pursuing policies aimed at reducing their economic interdependence while seeking to build stronger ties with other countries that are frequently mutually antagonistic. This could lead to the fragmentation of the global economy into competing blocs, with the U.S. and China at the center of each. This is exemplified by international organizations such as BRICS (an acronym for its first five members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). The group aims to enhance cooperation and foster economic, political, and cultural exchanges among its member countries, with high ambitions such as developing an alternative to the U.S. dollar, with the U.S. currency's continuing global dominance being a point in Washington's favor. BRICS is likewise attracting new members, with countries like Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Thailand joining, committed to joining, or likely to commit to joining.

However, there are still vectors for cooperation, and the difficulties of complete decoupling reduce the likelihood of armed conflict. Areas of cooperation where the two countries could find common ground include actions addressing climate change, nuclear proliferation, combating drug trafficking, space exploration, and counterterrorism, though it is true these vectors are also tenuous and depend on broader goodwill in the bilateral relationship to be

viable. At the same time, decoupling such comprehensively tied economies will not only be long and arduous, but doing so completely might also be impossible, or at least impossible within a reasonable timeframe. These factors all point to intensifying competition and geopolitical tensions, though a forecast leading to direct conflict between the world's two strongest countries is not yet a clear or inevitable one.

The New Threat to Democracy: AI

AI's influence on elections and global power calls for urgent action to protect democratic values.

ARUSHI KAUR

The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has sparked many debates on the ethical implications of its use cases and prompted a deeper conversation on potential technological sentience. AI, however, is not necessarily a recent development but rather a technology that has simply become more advanced and accessible over the years. ChatGPT, Gemini, Character.ai, and QuillBot are just some examples of increasingly popular AI tools that can be leveraged by anyone around the world with access to a smart device. While such tools have been utilized to improve operational efficiency in sectors such as finance, education, and tech, it is no surprise that the misuse of AI for malicious intent has raised significant security concerns around the world.

Generally, AI software is often marketed as a tool to aid in decision-making and reduce human error. However, what logic does AI use to make certain decisions, and what determines that a decision was indeed appropriate? How does one define human error—and more importantly, who defines it? AI-

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Illustration by Artificial Intelligence

based automation is also linked to operational efficiency with the eventual reduction of overhead costs; however, is this "automation" more integral than safeguarding the jobs that it has replaced? Even if these trade-offs are somewhat justifiable, perhaps the most relevant concern in the digital age is AI's role in shaping human beliefs and institutions. What is AI's role in this scenario, and should it even have a role to play?

Several countries fell victim to pre-polling AI-related incidents, depicting the proliferation of misinformation through social media platforms.

A major testament to this development is the 2024 election year. In 2024, around 70 countries were scheduled for national parliamentary and presidential elections. Several countries, however, fell victim to pre-polling AI-related incidents, which depicted the proliferation of misinformation through various social media platforms. From deepfake videos to other forms of biased AI-generated content, governments have struggled to restrict and regulate the flow of such misinformation. A non-profit publication named Rest of World collected information about instances of AI-based misinformation from several countries holding elections, such as India, Pakistan, Venezuela, and South Korea. A commonality found among these countries was AI-generated content used to convey a politically biased message to persuade voters in favor of a particular party.

Unlike others, South Korea's government introduced an amendment to the Public Official Election Act to ban the use of deepfakes for campaigning during the 90 days before election day. However, in India, for example, pop culture was utilized as a medium to connect with social media users. Specifically, clips from Bollywood movies were altered by replacing actors' faces with politicians. Though these clips are often created for entertainment purposes, they do play a role in influencing a viewer's opinion of a particular party or candidate based on the nature of the character associated with them in such clips. Given India's socio-cultural diversity and ethno-religious history, politics is often intertwined with caste, ethnic groups, and religion. Specifically, there exists a threshold of sensitivity regarding politics, which, if violated, can

potentially spark widespread violent conflict or further division between different communities. That said, in a democratic country experiencing a rampant increase in smartphone and social media usage, media regulation can come at the cost of an individual's freedom of expression.

India's neighbor, Pakistan, faces a similar challenge, where political leaders from opposition parties have called for the boycott of elections through misleading deepfakes. For example, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party leader Imran Khan was seen giving a speech after winning the election despite being in jail. Essentially, an AI-generated audio track of Khan's voice was embedded with an older video of him giving a speech. Similarly, Donald Trump was seen endorsing Khan once again in an old video with a generated audio track created using Parrot AI. Although this video was declared a deepfake by a fact-checking organization, there is a possibility that, had this been a more refined and realistic deepfake, Trump's false endorsement of Imran Khan could have had negative repercussions in the United States, Pakistan, and any of their adversaries. It is imperative to note that the relevance of these deepfakes lies in the matter of authenticity and the extent of trust the public has in official government media communications.

If deepfake technology improves to become virtually indistinguishable from authentic media, controlling the spread of misinformation and disinformation will require equivalent efforts from the government to create advanced AI detection technology, yet even this is not a lasting solution. While AI-generated content may impair public trust in a government, the opposite is possible as well. For example, the Journal of Democracy explained how AI-generated letters issued to policymakers throughout the United States could convey a false consensus on particular issues. Furthermore, policymakers would essentially deem non-existent matters to be the legitimate concerns of the general population. Consequently, there arises a chasm or an implicit barrier between the government and the general population, as genuine concerns are miscommunicated, making the election and lawmaking process rather ineffective and inefficient.

This dynamic poses several implications for the legitimacy of the institution of democracy, not only in the United States but in other democratic countries around the world. In a democracy, the right to free speech implies that an individual can vocalize their opinion; however, if that opinion is artificial and inauthentic, should that freedom be granted? This connects back to the paradox of regulating media content without infringing on the right to free speech by allowing unrestricted online content. Threats to democracy existed even before the public release of AI technology, where threat actors were able to execute cyber campaigns to fulfill certain strategic objectives. One of the most applicable examples of this is Russian interference in the 2016 US elections.

Essentially, Russian operatives employed tactics such as disinformation campaigns, social media manipulation, data leaks, and cyberattacks directed at weakening election-related infrastructure to skew the election in favor of Donald Trump. By proliferating inflammatory content, manipulating online political discussions, and employing APT groups such as Fancy Bear to steal and leak sensitive government information, Russia strategically undermined institutional democratic practices intended for fair and free elections. That said, due to the accessible nature of AI software over the past 2-3 years, both internal and external actors with political, financial, or espionage-related motives have been able to deploy more advanced and efficient cyber campaigns to threaten a state's sovereignty and internal security.

As a result of such advanced and widespread campaigns, the integrity of democratic institutions continues to deteriorate. Given this situation, countermeasures to defend against the misuse of AI must be of utmost importance for all democratic governments. Some examples of countermeasures include employing digital literacy campaigns, promoting ethical AI development, establishing stricter regulations and compliance standards, and developing advanced fact-checking tools. Digital literacy campaigns involve educating voters about biased AI-generated content and disinformation, and helping them understand how to identify credible sources to inform their decisions accurately. Secondly, by promoting ethical AI development, potential biases in existing AI

training models can be avoided, which can help reduce discriminatory practices such as voter targeting and the marginalization of particular groups.

Establishing stricter regulations and enforcing compliance with security standards can also help ensure transparency, protect private information, and provide better incident response guidance in the case of a cyberattack. Lastly, developing advanced fact-checking tools for filtering AI-generated content can help counteract the spread of false information by flagging online content that is inaccurate. If all of these countermeasures are utilized in a cohesive effort, the consequences of misusing AI can lead to increased awareness about how to optimize one's right to free speech. A final concern regarding this matter relates to the notion of the balance of power. A core principle in international relations, the balance of power refers to the equal distribution of power among states to avoid creating a dominant world power. The balance of power in today's multi-polar system is somewhat disparate or skewed, with Global North states being more influential and dominant than the Global South. While states like China and India have become prominent global powers, other states in the Global South have yet to acquire the same degree of influence. In the case of AI, the ability to purchase, maintain, and develop AI technology is limited to states with adequate power and resources.

Such an imbalance can result in issues regarding global governance, with states potentially disagreeing on how to regulate the use of AI due to differing priorities. Furthermore, centralized decision-making could arise from the conglomerate of states that are the primary developers and suppliers of AI technology for the world. This could lead to a lack of transparency in how AI models are trained and cause biased decision-making and regulation that benefits certain states at the expense of others. Moreover, centralized control over AI regulation could potentially exacerbate economic disparities by giving states equipped with AI-specific advantages, such as improvements in productivity, market leadership, and opportunities for startups and innovation. Given

these developments are relatively recent, a cohesive and united effort from all states can help mitigate the impact of AI's threat to democracy and protect the future of human autonomy.

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The Future of Global Order: Is There a Need for a New World Order?

SIBADITYA PAL

A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order

BY RICHARD N. HAASS

Richard N. Haass, an American diplomat who served as the President of the Council on Foreign Relations for twenty years, presents a compelling case for the reform of the current global order in A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order. The book, which was originally published in 2017, discusses problems and ideas that continue to be at the forefront of international relations discourse seven years on. With 2024 being a year of elections in several parts of the world, most pertinently in the United States where a second Trump term could drastically alter geopolitical dynamics in Europe, the South China Sea, Taiwan, and in active conflict zones like Ukraine and the Middle East, A World in Disarray remains unquestionably relevant and, perhaps more than ever, merits reading and discussion. The book itself has three parts whereby Haass seeks to analyze the origins of the present world order, identify the problems that cause instability within it, and devise a viable solution.

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In the first part of the book, Haass explores the development of the international system from the mid-seventeenth century through to the end of the Cold War. This sweeping analysis condenses around 350 years of history into three chapters, though the watershed moments that the author identifies and outlines should be recognizable to most students of international relations. Haass begins with a short reflection on the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and the order that it engendered in continental Europe. Haass, quoting the historian Peter Wilson, writes, "Westphalia's significance lies not in the number of conflicts it tried to resolve, but in the methods and ideals it applied... sovereign states interacting (formally) as equals within a common secularized legal framework regardless of size, power or internal configuration." This model would then give way to the balance of power arrangement devised by diplomats such as Castlereagh, Talleyrand, and Metternich at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars ravaged Europe.

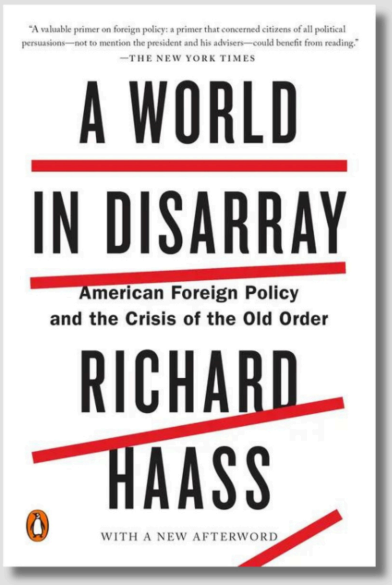
Fundamentally conservative in nature, the agreement reached at the Congress of Vienna sought to prevent a repeat of the chaos caused by the French Revolution through the creation of the Quadruple Alliance (the members of which were Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain) and the Holy Alliance (a pact between Austria, Prussia, and Russia, the conservative great powers). The system that emerged as a result of the negotiations was to be buttressed by the 'Concert of Europe,' whereby diplomats of the great European powers would seek to further their interests within the confines of the aforementioned balance of power arrangement. While the according of this level of power to diplomats allowed skillful operators like Bismarck to maintain a delicate balance and avoid a pan-European war, nationalist-secessionist forces in the Balkans, the expansionist proclivities of the German Empire, and an entrenched system of alliances (the Triple Entente and the League of the Three Emperors) dragged the continent into the First World War.

After Germany's loss, the imposition of the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles caused resentment within German society, a disgruntlement that the Nazi Party used to come to power and

begin transforming the country into a fascist state while allying with the similarly fascist Italy. Nazi Germany would later ally with Imperial Japan, a nation with which it shared expansionist ambitions. Ultimately, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the Anschluss (the Nazi annexation of Austria) seven years later would end up chipping away at the post-World War I order that was characterized by the League of Nations' founding principles and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, both of which were explicitly anti-war. Following the failure of Britain's policy of appeasing Nazi Germany by allowing them to annex Sudetenland unimpeded, the former declared war on Germany after the Nazi invasion of Poland.

Following the unimaginable destruction caused by the Second World War, a new bipolar international order emerged. The protagonists of this order, the US and the USSR, were able to maintain its stability through a careful balancing act that Haass attributes to the presence of an extensive arsenal of nuclear and conventional weapons on both sides, limited trade, and diplomatic and technocratic efforts including arms limitation treaties (like the NPT, SALT I and II, and the INF Treaty), the creation of the Washington-Moscow hotline, and scientific collaboration. Despite occasional flare-ups like the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and diplomatic successes like the détente, the order remained fairly stable, which meant that the two superpowers were able to avoid direct conflict. The bipolar order was not the only order during the Cold War period, though. The other order was a Western liberal one populated by America and its allies. This was undergirded by security cooperation through NATO and economic cooperation through the Bretton Woods institutions, primarily the World Bank and the IMF. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this order would come to embody the international system and expand rapidly as new democracies and liberal economies joined in huge numbers.

In the second part of the book, Haass examines the condition in which the post-Cold War world order finds itself. The author's argument in this section rests on the position that the present order has failed to adapt to the speed of change in geopolitics and international relations brought about by new waves of



democratization market expansion, and technological progress. Power, as he writes, "is more distributed in more hands than at any time in history. The same holds for technology. Decision making has come to be more decentralized. Globalization, with its vast, fast flows of just about anything and everything real and imaginable across borders, is a reality that governments often cannot monitor, much less manage. The gap between the challenges generated by globalization and the ability of a world to cope with them appears to be widening in a number of critical domains." This situation, for Haass, is characteristic of the twenty-first century's "nonpolar" system, wherein power and political leverage are shared by many states, a considerable number of which (like China, India, and Brazil) grew at an exponential rate owing to market liberalization in the 1990s.

With the interests of these parties being diffuse and, in many cases, divergent, the mechanisms within the United Nations have become increasingly inadequate in facilitating the formation of a consensus on critical issues among its member states. This is because the Security Council, the only organ of the United Nations whose resolutions are binding under international law, has devolved into a platform where political competition between the United States and illiberal powers like China and Russia causes the

aforementioned states to regularly use their veto power to protect their interests and those of their allies. Besides, the non-permanent status of nations like Germany, Japan, and India, all of which are major economies and regional leaders, contributes to making the Council somewhat unrepresentative and unreflective of the twenty-first century's global power distribution. Furthermore, the lack of a permanent international forum wherein states can interact with other pillars of modern polity like the innovation and technology industry and social media companies on matters like developments in artificial intelligence also hinders the present world order's ability to account for changes brought about by scientific progress that will play a very influential role in the politics and international relations of the future.

To some extent, Haass' diagnosis of the problems that undermine the post-Cold War order's efficacy is similar to that of liberal scholars like G. John Ikenberry. The latter, in his work entitled "The End of Liberal International Order?", writes that the world order that emerged in the 1990s is now facing a 'Polanyian' crisis brought about by market overstretch and the assimilation of a large number of states into the global liberal economy at breakneck speed. This phenomenon caused the erosion of the security community that characterized the Western liberal order during the Cold War era (by way of falling defense expenditure) and instead rendered unrestrained financial globalization the defining feature of the international system. The result of the liberal order's inability to keep up with the speed of these developments was the 2008-09 financial crisis, which laid the ground for socio-economic inequality and the rise of populism in the West. Consequently, internal instability in Europe and in the United States began to define the political agenda, which detracted from these states' capacity for building on their relations with democracies in other regions of the world while countering the rise of China and Russia.

Where Ikenberry and Haass differ somewhat, though, is in their proposed solution to the crisis facing the present order. The former emphasizes the need for strengthening the transatlantic security community (NATO) and reintroducing some form of 'embedded liberalism,' i.e., strong welfare mechanisms within states that could

help in curbing the affinity that the disaffected masses have with the populist movement and, as a result, allow liberal democracies to focus on maintaining the sanctity of the liberal international order while tackling the often malign influence and explicit expansionism of illiberal states like China and Russia. Haass, however, having used a broader approach in analyzing the problems facing the post-1990 international system, recommends the creation of an amended order ("World Order 2.0") wherein both states and corporations participate actively.

The third part of the book is centered around the features of 'World Order 2.0' and the kind of foreign policy that it is supposed to be characterized by. Haass writes in unequivocally clear terms that the fundamental objective of the amended order should be the prevention of great power competition to avoid the disastrous consequences of any conflict between them. Moreover, in Haass' view, such a system will also enable cooperation among the United States and its primary competitors, whom he identifies as Russia and China. This, he believes, can be achieved using a policy of "integration." Such a policy would entail the US being wary of what China and Russia perceive as threats to their interests and security, while also working closely with their diplomats on issues where they might find agreement.

To better explain his idea, Haass propounds that the US, to deter China from pursuing an aggressive policy in the South China Sea, should maintain and bolster its military presence in the Asia-Pacific. Foreign policy towards Russia, though, would require military restraint on America's part in order to avert a situation wherein Article 5 of NATO is triggered owing to Russian insecurity or expansionism. Therefore, the ex-President of the Council on Foreign Relations suggests that NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia be "put on hold" because "(n)either comes close to meeting NATO requirements, and going ahead would not only further alienate or provoke Russia but would also add military commitments that the United States is not in a position to fulfill." These considerations, though, the author says, must go hand in hand with diplomatic efforts on matters such as the climate crisis that make Russia, and perhaps more pointedly China, feel like

responsible stakeholders in the global system.

Haass also recommends a course of action for the US to adopt in various regions of the world. This includes signing trade pacts and conducting capacity-building operations with Latin American and African states to help them in undermining terrorism and organized crime, holding high-level strategic meetings with the leaders of South Asian countries like India and Pakistan with a view towards easing diplomatic hostilities between the two nuclear-armed neighbors and thereby averting a global security crisis, and protecting energy interests and Israeli security in the Middle East while also making efforts to 'selectively cooperate' with Iran and "to discourage the further nuclearization of the region" despite the failure of the Iran Nuclear Deal. With the foreign policy groundwork laid for 'World Order 2.0,' Haass finally proceeds to an explanation of its features.

Fundamentally, the new order would be characterized by three amendments to the current system. First, policymaking on issues that are primarily dealt with at the domestic level but have global importance would be predicated on a form of multilateralism based on the idea of 'sovereign obligation,' whereby states would be "expected not just to live up to agreed upon behaviors but also (to) make sure that no third party carried out prohibited actions from their territory and that any party discovered to be so doing would be stopped and penalized." Therefore, Haass writes, "(t)he goal should be to get governments to commit to adopting certain best practices at home in areas that inevitably affect global efforts to deal with common challenges." Consequently, issues such as global warming and emissions standards, immigration, counterterrorism, and law enforcement would be handled at the domestic level by states within a normative framework that, as a matter of principle, has global support and acceptance. It is important to note that the author does not provide any mechanism for enforcing compliance beyond naming and shaming, which he believes could lead to a reduction in foreign investment and tourism.

Secondly, multilateralism in 'World Order 2.0,' besides being dictated by the notion of sovereign obligation, would be based on

the formation of "coalitions of the willing." Such international groups would initially operate informally and involve countries whose participation and mutual cooperation is absolutely mandatory to solve certain global issues. As Haass writes, "what matters is that the bias favors getting things done with those who matter most rather than favoring inclusion for its own sake." The third and last aspect of the new order would be the active participation of corporations and other major players in today's polity, such as NGOs, in relevant policymaking, crisis resolution, and capacity-building operations. This would entail, to adduce the example that Haass provides in the book, representatives of states working with pharmaceutical companies, the Gates Foundation, the WHO, Doctors Without Borders, and other NGOs to deal with public health crises. Similarly, meetings for regulating cyberspace and formulating appropriate legislation would be held in the presence of representatives of companies such as Apple, Google, Facebook/Meta, and Microsoft, among others. In many cases, heads of local councils could also be formally included in discussions to tap into their knowledge of relevant localities.

Upon review, the recommendation that 'World Order 2.0' be formed emerges as the most salient feature of Haass' work. While the arguments presented in favor of it would have made compelling reading when the book was originally published in 2017, one can rebut some of the former American diplomat's ideas with the benefit of hindsight. For example, a restrained foreign policy towards Russia that creates avenues for potential collaboration is no longer viable owing to its invasion and ongoing occupation of Ukraine. As a result of this act of Russian belligerence, Ukraine submitted an official application for NATO membership in 2022, thereby detracting from Haass' argument. Furthermore, Israel's response to the October 7 Hamas attack has divided the American body politic on the subject of the nation's foreign policy. While the Biden administration's contribution to the Israeli effort since October 7 has been substantial, debates in Congress and the country at large have created a rift within the United States' political system, with many being uncomfortable with the degree of material support for the IDF's excesses and flagrant violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza.

Besides, the escalation of tensions between Iran and Israel, which peaked with the Israeli bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus and later with Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Iranian soil, has made 'selective cooperation' with the Islamic Republic impossible. The situation has also not been helped by the repeated failure of talks to negotiate a renewal of the Iran Nuclear Deal. In addition to the active conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, Iran's commitment to disrupting the stability of the current order, North Korea's illegal testing of nuclear weapons, and China's policy of constantly undermining American strategic interests have rendered a global consensus on Haass' vision of 'sovereign obligation' unattainable. However, the idea of forming ad-hoc international contact groups that include both state and non-state actors to solve specific problems continues to be immensely interesting and relevant, though it could perhaps be made more potent with the inclusion of Ikenberry's argument for the reintroduction of 'embedded liberalism.'

Such an arrangement would not only help in tackling the cost-of-living crisis that was initially caused by COVID-related supply chain issues and exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but would also, to some extent, curb the rising support for populism among those left feeling disaffected by their inability to afford bare necessities. With this in mind, one can justifiably conclude that 'A World in Disarray' is essential reading for students of international relations and geopolitics—not only because it proposes innovative solutions to some of the problems facing the present world order but also because it allows the reader to reimagine and reframe the arguments that the world has left behind in the seven years since the book was published.

At the Crossroads of Liberal Democracy: The Rise of Populism

AAKIL VISRAM

Anti-Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy

BY WILLIAM A. GALSTON

In an age where populism is surging globally, liberal democracies are grappling with its profound effects. Increasing distrust of institutions, the spread of fake news, and the embrace of strongmen have put democracy in peril. William A. Galston's book, Anti Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy, thoroughly examines these populist and anti-pluralist movements within established democracies, shedding light on the rising discontent and antipathy toward traditional liberal norms.

While Francis Fukuyama famously argued in The End of History that the spread of liberal democracy marked the endpoint of humanity's ideological evolution, Galston warns that such optimism may have been premature. He skillfully combines theoretical insights with empirical and historical evidence to demonstrate the vulnerabilities of liberal democracies, exposing how right-wing populists manipulate and weaken liberal ideals in their quest for power. Galston offers a strategic roadmap for those commit-

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ted to steering Western societies back to prosperity and countering the populist challenge. His introduction also addresses the inherently divisive nature of liberal democracy, which restricts the human tendency for cruelty and aggression, as Augustine described with the term libido dominandi. Overall, Galston's work serves as both a cautionary tale and a thoughtful examination of the ideological conflicts that threaten the very foundation of liberal democracy.

The book first explores the "crisis of democracy," rooted in empirical evidence that highlights the global decline of democratic systems. In the first chapter, Galston provides a nuanced examination of several underlying factors contributing to this decline. These factors include severe economic disparities, particularly uneven growth, social challenges like mass immigration, and a growing cultural divide between urban and rural populations. Additionally, Galston highlights the political consequences of persistent gridlock in democratic systems, especially in Western societies post-Berlin Wall. This combination of forces has fuelled public demand for authoritative political figures, paving the way for populist leaders who, according to Galston, have effectively capitalized on this demand.

In the subsequent chapter, Galston delineates four foundational elements essential to the functioning of liberal democracies: the republican principle, democracy itself, constitutionalism, and liberalism, alongside a commitment to market economies. He argues that these pillars are currently under threat from the surge of populism. Aligning with dominant scholarly interpretations, Galston defines populism as a political ideology centred around the dichotomy between a virtuous, unified people and a corrupt elite (Chapter 3). He contends that populism, with its rejection of checks and balances and its antipathy toward pluralist democracy, is fundamentally incompatible with the principles of liberal democracy.

Galston proceeds to offer a historical analysis of the emergence of populist parties in Europe, focusing on countries such as Hungary, Poland, and France (Chapter 4). His analysis suggests that populist voters are united by their dissatisfaction with recent economic trends, their desire to protect Western culture from perceived threats like Islam, their aversion to immigration, and their deep distrust of EU bureaucrats. Given these dynamics, Galston concludes that the antidote to populism in Europe must go beyond purely transnational approaches and incorporate a robust, pluralistic form of nationalism.

Turning his attention to the United States, Galston examines the roots of

populist movements within the American context (Chapter 5). He identifies several transformative developments, including the widening economic divide between urban and rural areas and stagnant wages in low-skill jobs. These factors, coupled with pressures from immigration and international trade, have left specific segments of the population feeling alienated and left behind. Galston further argues that political polarization in the U.S. has reached unprecedented levels, particularly within Congress, rendering the government increasingly ineffective. Populist leaders have tapped into this discontent by pledging to "break the rules" to "set things right." Although Galston acknowledges that American institutions have largely withstood the populist challenge, as evidenced by the Trump presidency, he stresses that the rise of populism serves as a stark reminder that liberal democracy should not be taken for granted.

In the final chapters, Galston outlines a series of political strategies to counter the populist threat to democracy in the United States. He proposes a range of economic policies aimed at stimulating growth and ensuring a more equitable distribution of benefits (Chapter 6). These include pursuing full employment, implementing wage-enhancing measures, increasing capital gains taxes, and expanding broadband access to rural areas. Additionally, he recommends encouraging population growth through state-supported childcare programs and adopting aspects of the Canadian immigration model. Galston also advocates for political reforms such as revising federal budgetary procedures to prevent government shutdowns and decentralizing decision-making to the local level. To make these measures successful, Galston stresses the need for a cultural shift in American political discourse to bridge deep polarization and hold officials accountable for legislative stagnation.

Nevertheless, Galston acknowledges that such a shift requires strong democratic leadership (Chapter 7). He argues that strong leadership is not inherently contradictory to democratic principles, provided it is rooted in a mandate from the people. Reflecting on past American leaders who guided the nation through difficult times, Galston suggests that effective democratic leadership hinges on persuasive communication and strategic timing. However, he also recognizes the tension between the hierarchical nature of leadership and the egalitarian ethos of democracy—a tension particularly evident in populism's anti-elitist rhetoric. In his final analysis, Galston discusses some of the enduring yet manageable shortcomings of liberal democracy (Chapter 8). Despite these flaws, he concludes that the greatest strength of liberal democ-

racy is its capacity for adaptation, which must be leveraged again to confront the populist challenge.

"Anti-Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy" is notable for its articulate and methodical writing style, which effectively elucidates complex political concepts while engaging a scholarly audience. Galston's prose is characterized by clarity and precision, reflecting his deep understanding of political theory and democratic governance.

One of the book's strengths is its structured approach to presenting intricate ideas. Galston navigates complex topics with a clear and logical progression, making sophisticated arguments accessible without compromising their depth. For example, his discussions on the erosion of democratic norms are presented with a balance of technical detail and straightforward language, demystifying the implications of populist movements for readers who may not be well-versed in political science.

However, while Galston's writing is generally clear, his academic tone occasionally leans towards the dense. Although precise, the book's reliance on jargon and theoretical frameworks might pose challenges for general readers who lack a background in political theory. Terms like "deliberative democracy" and "institutional resilience" are used extensively. While crucial for a comprehensive understanding, their frequent appearance might hinder readability for those unfamiliar with the terminology. However, for readers with a background in political science, the terminology should be relatively easy to grasp.

Galston's style is also marked by meticulous attention to detail and a rigorous presentation of evidence. His use of empirical data and historical examples is both deliberate and effective, reinforcing his arguments with concrete illustrations. Yet, this depth of detail sometimes contributes to a formal tone that may not appeal to all readers. While this scholarly approach enhances the book's credibility, it can also make the text feel somewhat inaccessible to those looking for a more engaging or less technical exploration of the issues at hand.

Regrettably, while offering a thorough examination of populism's rise and its impact on liberal democracies, the book's originality is somewhat limited. Galston's analysis, though comprehensive, does not significantly diverge from existing discourse on the subject. His exploration of populism is grounded in well-established theories and frameworks, with familiar themes such as the threats posed by populist movements to democratic institutions and the challenges of economic inequality. Although Galston meticulously reviews these

issues and provides practical policy recommendations, the core ideas do not break new ground. Much of his analysis aligns with the perspectives of other scholars like Jan-Werner Müller and Cas Mudde, who have similarly examined the tension between populism and liberal democracy.

One notable strength of Galston's work, however, is his insightful exploration of the urban-rural divide, a critical factor in understanding the socio-political dynamics driving contemporary populism. By referencing David Goodhart's A Road to Somewhere, Galston effectively highlights the distinct experiences and perspectives that shape populist sentiments in both urban and rural contexts. He recognizes that contemporary cities, often viewed as cosmopolitan hubs, are also epicentres of finance-driven economic inequality, which significantly contributes to the grievances fueling populist movements. Galston's ability to address how urban centres both contribute to and are affected by populism adds a nuanced layer to his analysis, offering readers a deeper understanding of one of the most influential factors in the rise of populist sentiment today.

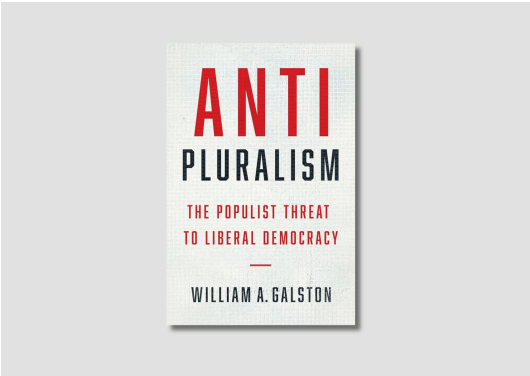
On the other hand, while Galston's book is rich in empirical data and historical examples, it largely reiterates points made in previous works rather than offering ground-breaking insights or novel theoretical contributions. His proposed solutions to counteract the rise of populism, though practical and well-considered, do not introduce new paradigms or radically different approaches from those already discussed in the literature. Galston's focus remains on the broader ideological and historical context of liberal democracy, which, while valuable, leaves out a more nuanced discussion of how rural and urban populisms differ in their origins and implications, and how these differences might shape the future of liberal democracy.

This approach aligns with Galston's broader orientation as a practical political thinker. Drawing extensively from the history of political thought, he ultimately reaffirms the liberal democratic state, combined with advanced industrial and capitalist economies, as the political framework best suited to navigate the contradictions of modernity. Galston argues that economic growth is essential to mitigate public discontent and advocates for democratic empowerment paired with redistribution. His perspective suggests that populism, while disruptive, can be managed through intelligent liberal policies that co-opt elements of populist grievances, ultimately defusing potential threats to the democratic order.

However, though practical, this strategy of co-optation may be seen

as lacking in ambition. Galston's work suggests that liberal democracies can continue to survive by incrementally adapting to challenges rather than fundamentally rethinking the political and economic structures that have given rise to populist discontent. While admirably straightforward and grounded in historical precedent, his analysis may leave some readers seeking a more transformative vision for the future of liberal democracy. The pragmatic approach he advocates underscores the limitations of his political vision, particularly in an era that increasingly calls for a bold reimagining of democracy and the global rules-based order.

To conclude, Galston's analysis is both a sobering reminder and a call to action, highlighting the fragility of democratic institutions in the face of rising discontent and authoritarian tendencies. By anchoring his arguments in historical precedent and empirical evidence, he effectively underscores the urgency of addressing the socio-economic inequalities and cultural divides that fuel populism. However, the book's strength in methodical analysis also reveals its limitations. Galston's reliance on established theories and well-worn arguments, while thorough, does not venture into groundbreaking territory, leaving readers with a sense of déjà vu rather than fresh insights. His proposals for combating populism, though practical are rooted in incremental adaptation rather than transformative change, which may seem insufficient given the scale of the challenges he describes. While Anti-Pluralism is a valuable contribution to the discourse on populism and democracy, its cautious approach may not fully satisfy those seeking a visionary reimagining of liberal democracy's future. Galston's work is crucial for understanding the current political landscape, but it ultimately champions a form of resilience that may need to be re-evaluated in light of an increasingly complex and volatile world.



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