

*"Those who have the privilege to know, have the duty to act."* — Albert Einstein

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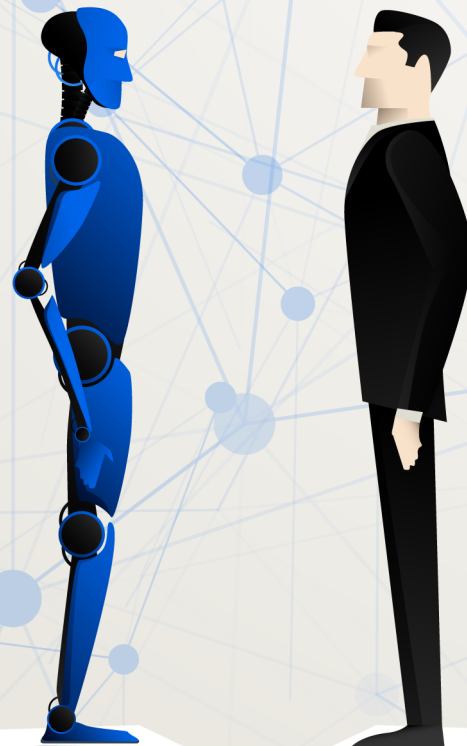
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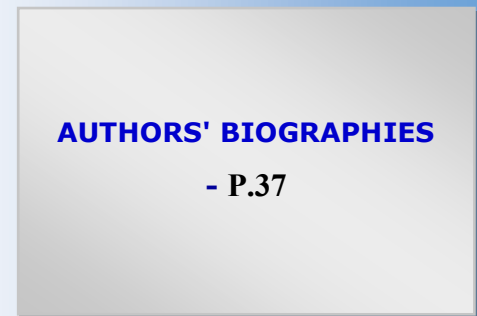
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## EDITORIAL



## Multipolarism, an Accelerated Irreversible Transformation, Generating a New Stage in the Existence of the Entire World

PhD. ing. Stelian TEODORESCU

*„Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world ”*

*Nelson Mandela*

This past decade, the world has been facing an irreversible impulse in the global geopolitical transitions, including through an intense fragmentation and reconfiguration of the regional and world order. For example, this is largely due to increased visibility and more intensive studies regarding many regions in the world, which are emerging more and more visibly as centers of gravity at a global level, marking the fact that the shift towards multipolarism is certainly an accelerated and irreversible process.

Thus the world order was reset, and, in the midst of extreme chaos and failed governments, the US emerged like a beacon of hope. The newly independent states wanted to rebuild in the image of America. In such a context, nations around the world have gone into a frenzy to improve their economic and social and political circumstances. However, the US was perceived worldwide as an individual hegemon, and all those states, doubtful of Washington's intentions, they are still engaged in a fierce and often difficult to understand competition to increase their own influence in many important areas, including that of defense and security.

As a result of the deep transformations that take place on the regional and global level, of the connections and interactions that are developed especially between the main state actors, but also between them and various non-state actors, new models of political, economic, military, cultural, informational, social, demographic interdependence emerge and, more recently, ethnic and religious, but also new types of international



Source: [https://www.123rf.com/photo\\_3134223\\_political-chess-game.html](https://www.123rf.com/photo_3134223_political-chess-game.html)

and transnational relations that are often categorized as atypical.

Therefore, the dynamics and predictability of the current geopolitical and geostrategic environment are strongly influenced by the sometimes incomprehensible transformations of the relations between the main global actors, as well as by an increased leeway and the significant influence of some new regional actors. All these developments and findings lead to the establishment of a new world order based on multipolarism.

As neoliberalism dictates, the singular rise of one state compels others to balance their influence, which, in turn, can only be achieved by individually increasing one's own influence, especially in various regions, but also throughout the world. It is also the case of smaller nations, which experience extremely high growth rates due to the catch-up effect and in such a process acquire aspirations for their own interests. Smaller powers do not have to spend as much as major powers on defense or global initiatives and can use that to secure a significant budget for economic and social development (eg. Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, etc.). In the case of research and development, smaller states can only acquire the latest technology or at least receive assistance from their friendly states to procure it, thus saving time and money initially spent on its development (eg. Russia-India /USA-South Korea etc.). With a number of such nations operating in close proximity to each other, a race to assert dominance in a region or even the entire world is initiated, which often leads to political and/or even military clashes (see India-Pakistan nuclear tests, 1998). As a result, the lone hegemon, fearing such a development as a threat to itself, would then try to counter these rising states by forming alliances either with them (eg. China-Pakistan) or against them (eg. China-India).

Although the term "geopolitical architecture" was not explicitly formulated in theoretical constructions, in most cases it is referred to as a systemic reality that can be defined as the result of the coexistence and interaction of numerous global and regional subsystems, made up in turn of national systems, the entire structural and functional organization being subject to a permanent flow of changes, which requires multiple reconfigurations of the system and, implicitly, continuous self-regulation. As a result, the disappearance of one or more specific elements of international relations organization systems triggers the self-regulation of the system through a structural and functional reconfiguration, based on diffusion processes in the chain.

With the assertion of several such international actors and the imposition of their influence in various regions, but especially with the increase of their involvement in issues related to state, regional and world security, serious contradictions appeared and continue to appear between their interests and the expansion various homogenous or heterogeneous blocs, but based on certain common state interests.

Thus, many of the interaction models of the last three decades bear the imprint of conflictual logic, receiving alongside the traditional treatment, in a realistic spirit, another dimension extracted, either from the reflection of the new realities, or from various intellectual speculations and prejudices.

Nowadays, we can find that all over the world there has been an intense and irreversible shift from unipolarism to multipolarism, the new diverse, and in many cases atypical, alliances now appearing as hegemons have a catalytic effect on other states, or various groups of states, which support the continuity of the process of balancing power and influence and thus starting the birth of a domino effect specific to today's developments throughout the world.

As is well known, Russia and China have proclaimed the emergence of a "new multipolar order" in a joint statement at the opening of the summits of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) and of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in February 2022. But we can see that this new multipolar order harmonizes the resentments of the developing world against the West, because authoritarian states are not the only ones promoting multipolarism.

One of the main reasons for such a change in the centers of gravity is the China's continuous rise and the resulting geopolitical complications, especially among Asian states dependent on the Chinese economy. Influential Asian states with a different economic and political weight - often grouped in the category of "middle powers" - were particularly vulnerable to the dilemma: security vs. economic interests.

The somewhat expected event, Russia's war in Ukraine, it has, in turn, sped up particularly complex global assessments. On the one hand, US allies in the Indo-Pacific region - Japan, South Korea, and Australia - have chosen to punish Russia with economic sanctions and non-lethal military aid to Ukraine. On the other hand, a significant number of states - led by China and India - remained apparently non-committal. These states highlighted the growing divergence between the North and the South, citing the war's asymmetric impact on the developing world.

Undoubtedly, on the regional level, there are many states ready to replace the US as regional power poles, some of which may even aspire to the role of great power in the future. One of the eloquent examples that has such an evolution is China, a state actor that, over the following decades, can become a superior

power economically, financially and militarily speaking, above the current big international actors. India is another example in this sense, the economy of this country being among the fastest developing economies in the world and, as a result, in the next decade its development rate is expected to increase so it will “catch up with” the first three big international powers.

Great and middle powers around the world increasingly consider their own distinct perspectives in a multipolar world. In 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine marks a “*Zeitenwende*” – a turning point or a new era – in global politics. O. Scholz’s statement that an “epochal tectonic shift” towards a decidedly multipolar world order, not only seems inevitable, but it could also revive an effective multilateralism for many countries in the world.

In the Indo-Pacific region, most so-called middle powers – from economically wealthy Japan, Australia and South Korea, to growing India and the emerging states of Southeast Asia – are asserting their rising global profiles, and do not present themselves as passive subjects to the fads of a new bipolarity.

Carefully analyzing the transformations that have taken place and continue to take place at a regional and global level, we can observe that they are taking place with an increasingly accentuated dynamic and are marked by profound changes in terms of the countries’ ability to establish areas of influence.

It has become very clear that we are witnessing the reconfiguration of the geopolitical architecture both regionally and globally, in this world that we categorize as multipolar, foreshadowing specific geopolitical developments that determine the evolution of the structural elements of each entity.

In this context, the USA, a power with a dominant military potential that manifests itself worldwide, China and Russia, countries in the process of consolidating their role as great powers at the regional and global level, as well as regional power poles such as Japan, India (Asian continent), Saudi Arabia and Iran (Middle East), Brazil (South America).

However, the tensions existing today in certain regions are the result of the intersecting interests of these international actors, each separately, claiming the formal recognition of the regional power pole status, an indispensable status for participating in the process of adopting strategic decisions at a global or regional level.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



## The Concept of "Change" in the Assessment of International Relations in the 21st Century. New Concepts and Paradigms

Mona AGRIGOROAIEI

*“Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards. It takes both passion and perspective. Certainly all historical experience confirms the truth - that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible. But to do that a man must be a leader, and not only a leader but a hero as well, in a very sober sense of the word. [...] He alone has the calling for politics, which is sure not to be he will collapse when the world, in his view, is too stupid or too base for what he wants to offer. Only he who, in the face of all this, can say 'In spite of everything!' has the calling for politics.”*

*Max Weber – Politics as a Vocation<sup>1</sup>*

### Abstract

*The world has not been the same throughout centuries. Evolution and involution, wars and revolutions, technological and economic changes, etc., have all accompanied human history and international relations. If history and international relations were a symphony, change is its main theme, a theme that can be found continuously, in recurrence, of course in different variations.*

*This essay will assess what kind of theory of change we might find to more adequately define the future of international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*I will summarize some of the existing theories of change and a couple of new concepts – hazarded change vs. default change. I will also have a multidisciplinary approach, at the crossroad between the field of international relations and organizational theory, introducing into our discipline the concept of “change management in international relations”. Change management would be a good way for international leaders not to wait for events to rush dangerously over their stressed and busy heads, but a way to control events and define a better future for humanity.*

**Key words:** *change, theories of change, international relations, accidental change, predetermined change, change management.*



Source: <https://www.fssp.uaic.ro/departamente/stiinte-politice->

<sup>1</sup>Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p.30, <http://f2.american.edu/dfagel/www/Class%20Readings/Weber/PoliticsAsAVocation.pdf>.

This previously mentioned quotation – in Max Weber’s “Politics as a Vocation” made me choose this subject.

I believe a world leader (in the true sense of the word) must not be just an occasional politician that sees himself in power temporarily, a politician who aims at being a demagogue and manipulate the conscience of the masses. He/she must be **a visionary with a vision for the future, with a blueprint for the next generations of human beings, and who manages change with precision and determination to apply that blueprint for the future of our species!** He must be a visionary who does not give up his ideas and ideals, despite the difficulties, despite the harshness of the international life of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So a world leader must manage change in international relations and manage it successfully and selflessly!<sup>2</sup>

The research question of this paper is: ***What kind of theory of change might we find to more adequately define the future of international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*** And here, I’ll look at a pair of new concepts – dangerous change vs. default change. I will summarize some of the existing theories of change and a couple of new concepts – **hazarded change vs. default change**. I will also have a multidisciplinary approach, at the intersection between the field of international relations and organizational theory, introducing the concept of “**change management in international relations**” into the discipline of international relations. Change management would be a good way for international leaders not to wait for events to rush dangerously over their stressed and busy heads, but a way to control events and define a better future for mankind.

Few scholars have analysed “change” in international relations. I will here evaluate the theories of Michael Wesley, Aseema Sinha and K.J. Holsti, before introducing my new approach to the theory of change.

In the article “*Constructing a Theory of Change in International Relations: Paths of Disruptive and Incremental Change in World Politics*”, Aseema Sinha sees another characteristic of change. She defines global change “*as a change in three dimensions: power or interests, ideas and institutions. Thus, international change can be revealed by changes in the global distribution of power, changes in the ideological commitments of nations and non-state actors, and reorientations in the functioning institutions or the creation of new institutions, defined broadly to include informal regimes or rules and norms*” she finds a typology, distinguishing between slow incremental change and disruptive change. The process of change as continuity/change within institutions leads, according to Sinha’s theory, to *endogenous change with a cumulative cause* – a slow and cumulative or incremental change (eg: economic modernization in Germany, followed by a decline) or an endogenous change with threshold effects – a disruptive change (eg: perestroika and glasnost reforms in the USSR, made by Gorbachev).

Instead, the entire system can change and is perceived as a revolutionary realignment or change – *an endogenous slow revolutionary change* and as an incremental or cumulative change (eg Cold War or détente or balance of power) – an *exogenous disruptive change* (eg First World War II, World War II). (see table 1).

Michael Wesley analyses three different approaches to change in international relations: “teleology”, “cyclicity” and “episodism”. In his work “***Teleology, Cyclicity and Episodism: Three Competing Views of Change in International Relations***”, he divides the teleological approach into liberal and critical variants: “*For liberals, progress in international relations results from the slow triumph of human interests over human passions, concerns materials on emotional impulses [...] Stripping off the intellectual cloak of the functioning of the present order, critical writers intend to expose the inequities and injustices of the present system as a first step towards changing this system. In this concept, human agency in the evolution of international relations is refined to the international relations scholar himself – a radical agent of change.*”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Of course, we distinguish here between leaders such as Lenin, Stalin or Hitler - who dreamed of utopias like communism or fascism, killing millions of human beings in the last century, and visionaries like Woodrow Wilson - who created the very foundations of the current regulations regarding the international law of nations, first of all regarding war as a crime and peace as a common good that all nations should enjoy!

<sup>3</sup>Aseema Sinha, *Building a Theory of Change in International Relations: Pathways of Disruptive and Incremental Change in World Politics*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325209397\\_Building\\_a\\_Theory\\_of\\_Change\\_in\\_International\\_Relations\\_Pathways\\_of\\_Disruptive\\_and\\_Incremental\\_Change\\_in\\_World\\_Politics](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325209397_Building_a_Theory_of_Change_in_International_Relations_Pathways_of_Disruptive_and_Incremental_Change_in_World_Politics).

<sup>4</sup>Wesley, Michael. "Teleology, Cyclicity and Episodism: Three Competing Views of Change in International Relations". *Change!: Combining Analytical Approaches with Street Wisdom*, edited by Gabriele Bammer, ANU Press, 2015, p.3 JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16wd0cc.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16wd0cc.8).

Process of change→ Outcome↓	Slow and incremental or cumulative	Disruptive
Continuity/change within institutions Change within institutions/system	<b>I. Endogenous change: cumulative cause</b> Economic modernization in Germany, followed by decline Economic growth in China, India  Technological changes Internationalization of production and changes in supply chain Military Modernization, for example in Japan, Germany, and now China	<b>II. Endogenous change: threshold effects</b> Gorbachev's reforms: glasnost and perestroika Hungary's decision to allow free passage to Austria in 1989; this led to the ultimate fall of the Berlin wall.
The whole system changes or revolutionary realignment or change Systemic	<b>III. Endogenous revolutionary change</b>  Cold War or détente or balance of power Rise of BRICs and G-20  Reform of global institutions, e.g., IMF reform, UN Security Council reform	<b>IV. Exogenous change</b>  Wars: WWI, WWII  End of WWII with bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Fall of the Berlin wall  Fall of the Soviet Union

Source: A similar table can be found in Streeck and Thelen (2005, 9). I have modified the table to make it relevant for global examples and my argument.

Table 1: Aseema Sinha, *Typology of Change*<sup>5</sup>

The characteristics of change seen through the lens of teleology, according to M. Wesley, are that change is progressive and unidirectional, it can alternate between periods. It is an optimistic theory of change, at odds with the cyclical view of change. *The cyclical theory of change* has at its heart the idea that we can find parallels between historical events and those happening today in order to learn how to behave today. "Taking inspiration from Machiavelli, cyclicalists believe that the role of international relations is to provide clear political advice about the current and future state of the cycle of history". The third theory<sup>6</sup> – episodism – conceives of change as episodic and unpredictable in timing, magnitude and direction. "It is a concept of international relations as a field of human activity that tends toward routines and stagnation, accumulating over time structures and forces of inertia that are periodically overwhelmed by underlying changes."<sup>7</sup>

I don't think this concept of **teleology of change** is well explored in Wesley Michael's article. He labelled it "teleological", that is empty of its meaning. "*Teleology – from the Greek "telos" refers to an action that is purposefully planned. Teleology means orientation toward a definite goal. Action is considered to be intentional acting or working in constant reaction. Teleology is thus fundamentally different from simple stimulus-response relationship*"<sup>8</sup>. As I introduce the term predetermined change in the international relations theory, we will see that this type of change is namely **teleological** – goal-oriented, toward a predetermined action driven by a goal and achieved through a strategy. Wesley Michel's theory is flawed in analysing this point!

I think the most prominent author dealing with the subject of "change" in international relations is K.J. Holstein. In the article – "*The Issue of Change in the Theory of International Relations*", he studies the many sides of change in international life:

- Markers of change: trends, major events, major achievements, significant social / technological innovations;

<sup>5</sup>Idem, p.4.

<sup>6</sup>Wesley, Michael. *op.cit.*, p.5.

<sup>7</sup>Idem, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, Sigrid. "Mecanisme de schimbare teleologică". *Management Review*, vol. 20, nr. 2, 2009, pp. 126-137. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41783609. Accesat la 6 februarie 2021, p.1.



- Concepts of change: change as replacement, change as addition, dialectical change, change as transformation;
- Systemic levels and lower levels of change;
- Change and international institutions and the possibilities of institutional change.

In this article we also have Rosenau's idea regarding change: "To Rosenau, global change occurs only when the system parameters turn into variables. When defining parameters, a sense of the distinction between ephemeral and critical change is obtained."<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these theoretical conceptions of change, we would like to introduce through this article the concepts of hazarded change vs. default change and change management.

Most events in the world are not planned. They simply appear. A kind of accidental change would be the COVID pandemic. Leaving aside the conspiracy theories about COVID, we believe that no one had planned for a virus like COVID-19 to appear, develop, gradually evolve into a pandemic. COVID-19 has changed society. Humanity will never be the same because it sent globalization to the history books first. But attempts to deal with and manage this pandemic, such as mass containment, hygiene measures, changing legislation, etc. They could be considered an attempt to make a predetermined change that halts the course of a dangerous change and alters the dangerous variables with a desired course of action.

Hence, we define accidental change in international relations as an event or set of events that occurs spontaneously, unplanned.

On the contrary, a predetermined change **is a course of action that leaders consciously plan to implement change on an international level.**

A predetermined change cannot be performed randomly. I propose the introduction of the term "change management" from organizational theory into international relations. The management of change at the international level would be the goal of "homo teleologicus". *'Homo teleologicus can be characterized according to the Roman philosopher Lucius Seneca with the proposition adjudicated by: "to dream", "to be able" and "to dare"'*.<sup>10</sup>

A predetermined change would be, at the same time, a teleological change that means goal oriented change, or just a goal."<sup>11</sup>

In organisational theory there are many models on how to implement change management at the level of an organisation. We can adapt them to the entire international system.

We analyse a simpler change model in managing the changes in this introductory essay.

According to this essay, the management of change can be implemented in eight stages, as follows:

1. Define change.
2. Select the team that manages change.
3. Identify management sponsorship and secure commitment.
4. Develop an implementation plan, including metrics.
5. Implement the change – in stages if possible.
6. Collect and analyse data.
7. Quantify gaps and understand resistance.
8. Modify the plan as needed and return to the implementation stage.<sup>12</sup>

We will also consider that the change will only occur if the Gleicher formula is put into action.

"The Gleicher formula was developed by Gleicher and Beckhard. In Hungary, it is also known as the 4EL model.

We will also consider that the change will only occur if the Gleicher formula is put into action.

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According to the Gleicher formula:  $D \cdot V \cdot F < R$ , a change can only occur if the product of the multiplication is greater than the resistance.

D = Dissatisfaction;

V = Vision;

F = First concrete steps;

<sup>9</sup>K.J. Holsti, *Problema schimbării în teoria relațiilor internaționale*, p.13, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/46511/WP26.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup>Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, Sigrid, *op. cit.*, p.13.

<sup>11</sup>Idem, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup><https://asq.org/quality-resources/change-management>.

R = resistance”<sup>13</sup>.

I agree that in recent years, “many change management *gurus* have focused on soft issues such as culture, leadership and motivation. Such elements are important for success, but managing these aspects is not enough to implementing transformation projects. ... What is missing, we believe, is a focus on the not-so-fashionable aspects of change management: the hard factors”<sup>14</sup>.

And one of the most important and urgent issues that should be the subject of change management at the international level is the total nuclear disarmament of all states. All state leaders should agree that nuclear weapons must be destroyed because a world without them would be more peaceful and without the danger of a nuclear holocaust that can endanger the survival of our species. It is a vision that, in my opinion, could save us from the bleak possibility of our extinction. This vision must be greater than the resistance of states and world leaders to preserve their nuclear advantages, because there is a greater interest at stake than the narrow power politics of our generation: the survival of humanity.

I have dealt in this essay with the interesting topic of “change” in international relations. We have evaluated some of the existing theories of change. My contribution is that I introduced the terms “hazardous/hazardous change” in international relations as opposed to “predetermined change” and “change management” at the interdisciplinary intersection of international relations and organizational theory. These ideas can be developed further. This is only an introductory sketch in this topic.

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<sup>13</sup>Gergely Nemeth, *Management consulting handbook: innovation, renewal, sustainability.*, Edition: 5<sup>th</sup>, Chapter: *Managing Change – Change Management*, Editura: Editura Academiei, Editori: Poór Józse, pag. 361, (PDF) [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314235747\\_Managing\\_Change](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314235747_Managing_Change)

<sup>14</sup><https://hbr.org/2005/10/the-hard-side-of-change-management>

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



### Prospects for Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance in the Midst of Global Disorder

*Marcello IANNARELLI (Italy)*

#### Introduction: The World Disorder

The post-Cold War unipolar world order seems to have become outdated. The emergence of China, and of other so-called developing countries, as key players in the international political scene, has undermined the liberal system based essentially on the international rules promoted by the Western developed countries.

Repeated financial and banking crises, the rising inequality, the monetary policies of major central banks, a revival of protectionism and the Covid-19 pandemic had already slowed down post-Cold War economic globalization. The U.S.-China rivalry, the war in Ukraine, with the associated implementation of severe economic sanctions, are now profoundly exacerbating the geopolitical tensions, fragmenting international relations between East and West and North and South, slowing down the process of economic integration and undermining international cooperation, while also jeopardizing the ability of the international community to address global challenges, such as world security, climate change, and the prevention of new pandemics.



*Source: <https://www.ceccarbusinessmagazine.ro/studiu-inteligenta-artificiala-va-redefini-sectorul-serviciilor-financiare-in-urmatorii-doi-ani-a5973/>*

Against this backdrop of global geopolitical upheaval, which could also be called world disorder, we are witnessing the overbearing role that artificial intelligence is taking on, not only through its powerful impact in our daily lives, but also with its potential capability to upset the balance of power among the great powers.

#### The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Global Politics

Artificial intelligence (AI), a concept once confined to science fiction stories, has become an inescapable reality of the modern world. It is not limited to domestic or industrial applications, and to the significant advances it has brought to areas such as medicine, agriculture and meteorology. Today it powers an impressive array of technologies, from predictive analytics to virtual personal assistants and autonomous

vehicles. Its reach has rapidly extended beyond technological domains, significantly altering our daily lives and interactions.

AI, like other technologies, has a dual nature: its applications can be both civilian (commercial) and security or military. China and the United States have spent billions of dollars in recent years to develop autonomous weapon systems. This greatly broadens the spectrum of traditional warfare, and artificial intelligence could transform armed conflicts as nuclear weapons did in its time.

Artificial intelligence already plays a crucial role in defense and security, with applications ranging from target recognition by drones to advanced cyber defense tools, including facial recognition technologies for national security. These advances offer opportunities for better protection and more effective defense, but they also raise important ethical and regulatory issues.

As an example, AI-driven autonomous weapon systems that can select and strike targets without human intervention are a growing concern. Indeed, AI-coordinated groups of drones can overwhelm enemy defenses, making de-escalation and arms control more complex, and undermine international disarmament treaties and norms of warfare.

Moreover, the line between civilian and military applications of AI is very indefinite. An autonomous system created to fly an airliner can also fly a fighter bomber. An application to create a vaccine can also build and spread a virus. And there is another significant source of risk. Until now there have been few powers with large destructive capabilities, conventional or nuclear. Instead AI is a tool that can be easily used by a multiplicity of actors. In fact, AI algorithms are easier to copy and disseminate than physical objects. No technology has, so far, been so easily and rapidly accessible on a global level. It's true that the creation of AI models requires large resources, powerful computers and high computing power, but the use of such models that could serve for insidious cyber attacks is also possible by individuals in possession of common devices, in some cases even a smartphone.

As Henry Kissinger pointed out in his book "The Age of AI: And Our Human Future", "assessing the nuclear balance was quite simple. Nuclear warheads could be counted and their destructive power was well known". In contrast, artificial intelligence and cyber capabilities are dynamic, not stably fixed and difficult to track. "Once trained they can be easily copied and used by rather small machines. And detecting their presence or verifying their absence is difficult, if not impossible".

The very rapid progress of AI makes it a powerful technological, economic, political and military tool. Embedded in the digital revolution, AI will help determine the international order for decades to come, and will transform the axioms of geopolitics through new relationships between nations, territories, space-time dimensions and immateriality. The field of geopolitics, warfare and deterrence, is likely to undergo the greatest transformations due to AI.

As early as September 2017, Vladimir Putin stated that "Whoever becomes the leader in AI will be the master of the world". Russia, however, does not currently appear to be a leading power in this race. The two major powers currently competing for dominance in the field of AI are the United States and China. Therefore, we can assume that the American and Chinese digital empires are likely to dominate international geopolitics in the coming years. Chinese authorities have already launched a gigantic plan to achieve world leadership in this field by 2030 by linking commercial and military development of AI, including through synergy with domestic digital giants such as Baidu.

### **The Path toward a Global Governance of AI**

It's sure that AI is profoundly influencing global politics, offering opportunities and challenges in the fields of defense, security and surveillance, but it remains uncertain how to address and regulate this evolving phenomenon to ensure citizens' rights, global security and peace. The risk of a Third World War facilitated by AI cannot be excluded, as Elon Musk, the head of Tesla and SpaceX, warned in an open letter to the United Nations, along with 115 other leaders in AI and robotics.

"Artificial intelligence", Commission President von der Leyen said in his State of the Union address to the European Parliament on Sept. 13, 2023, "is proceeding in increments that its creators did not anticipate. Accessible, powerful, adaptable, it will be deployed for civilian and military uses. AI will improve health care, boost productivity and enable climate change management. But today, experts say, it is a priority to reduce the risks of extinction from a pandemic or nuclear war that AI could cause. AI, therefore, needs a framework that rests on three pillars: boundaries, governance and guided innovation".

And indeed, AI seems to have become a global priority. From Secretary-General António Guterres to the heads of state and government of the most representative countries, including Biden and Xi Jinping, all

have stressed the need to create a global governance for AI, even if there is no concordance on what is meant by global governance and what legal or policy instruments it should materialize.

However, a number of international actors have issued statements or taken actual legislative action that emphasize the importance of ethics and regulation in AI.

During the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, in August, the Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the importance of creating a robust AI governance framework and standardization to enhance the security, reliability, control, and equity of AI technologies. Xi Jinping has also proposed, in October, “The Global Initiative for Artificial Intelligence Governance”, during the opening ceremony of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

The UN Secretary-General took the initiative, last October, to create a High-Level Advisory Board on AI, a multi-stakeholder body charged with analyzing the situation and making recommendations for international AI governance.

The G7, meeting Oct. 30 in Japan, launched the G7 Leaders’ Declaration on the Hiroshima Artificial Intelligence Process. These countries affirm that AI should be “developed, adopted and used in a way that respects the principles of ethics, trust and accountability”.

In late October, President Biden issued an executive order aimed at ensuring that the United States take the lead in realizing the potential and managing the risks of artificial intelligence by setting new standards for AI safety and security. On November 1 and 2, 28 governments and the European Union presented at the U.K.-sponsored AI Security Summit joined the Bletchley Declaration, which recognizes the opportunities and risks associated with AI, particularly highly capable and potentially harmful “frontier AI”. The declaration stresses the need for international cooperation to address AI risks, including those related to cybersecurity and biotechnology, emphasizing the need for understanding and early action.

Other important international and national initiatives could also be mentioned, such as The “Declaración de Santiago” issued during the Latin American and Caribbean Ministerial Summit held in Santiago de Chile on October 23-24, 2023, which addresses issues related to artificial intelligence in the region.

As a first result, in December, the U.N. Secretary-General’s advisory board on AI has published an interim report entitled “Governing AI for Humanity”, in which it calls for AI to be anchored in international law, human rights and sustainable development goals. The document does not yet propose specific solutions but defines the problems to be addressed and indicates the methodologies that will be followed in the coming year to try to solve them. The experts identified five principles that should guide the formation of new global AI governance institutions: Inclusiveness, Public Interest, Centrality of Data Governance, Universal, Networked and Multistakeholder, and International Law.

The report also suggests seven key functions for AI governance, such as:

1. regularly assess the status of AI and its future developments;
2. strengthen collaboration among nascent governance institutions around the world based on international norms and within a UN-approved global governance framework;
3. harmonize standards, security and risk management frameworks;
4. promote international multi stakeholder collaboration to benefit AI for economic and social purposes;
5. supporting international collaboration on data, as well as computing capacity;
6. talent to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
7. monitoring risks and coordinating response to emergencies and developing binding accountability standards.

A public consultation is now open and everyone can send in a feedback until March 31, 2024. The UN Advisory Body on AI will publish its final report ahead of the Summit of the Future in the summer of 2024.

With reference to the European Union, on December 9, 2023, the Council presidency and European Parliament negotiators reached a provisional agreement on the proposed harmonized standards on artificial intelligence (AI), the so-called “Artificial Intelligence Act”.

The draft regulation aims to ensure that AI systems placed on the European market and used in the EU are safe and respect the fundamental rights and values of the European Union.

The main idea is to regulate AI based on its ability to cause harm to society by following a “risk-based” approach: the greater the risk, the stricter the rules.

As the first legislative proposal of its kind in the world, it has the ambition to set a global standard for regulating AI in other jurisdictions.

## **Conclusions**

Artificial intelligence is a powerful technology that is destined to become increasingly pervasive, more effective, more widespread, more affordable and more autonomous, with a powerful impact in international relations and world geopolitics. So it needs effective regulation.

Recent propositions for global governance that have been put forward by various international actors have as a common denominator a normative character, more or less cogent, aimed at inducing each member to make good use of AI systems. Moreover, although within different substantive approaches, some points, such as Security and Accountability, International Collaboration, Protection of Human Rights, and Building Inclusive Governance, with the involvement of a wide range of actors, governments, businesses, civil society, and academics, are present in most of the proposals.

However, the path to effective, shared global governance of AI still seems fraught with difficulties.

Major powers see immense advantages in AI, especially defense-applied AI, and will not easily accept constraints that slow down its development, leaving them behind others. Above all, neither the United States nor China, powers that aspire to world hegemony, will accept losing assumed competitive advantages.

In the Biden - Xi Jinping summit, which was held on the sidelines of the Apec summit last November in San Francisco, Artificial Intelligence was discussed, but no significant accord was reached on the subject, they only agreed on the creation of a group of experts to discuss the risks associated with AI.

Regulating on a global scale the use of AI in a scenario characterized by the rivalry between the United States and China, the clash between the West and Russia, and the dissatisfaction of the global South may be possible, but highly unlikely. It is necessary, first and foremost, to re-establish a constructive dialogue among the major powers to limit security risks and lay the foundations for a new world economic and political order, a new international governance, which should take into account the growing weight of other groups of countries, outside the G7 and the sphere of advanced countries in general.

In addition, all regulations and policy interventions will need to be able to keep pace with the rapid technological advancement of AI systems. Current institutional governance models may not be adequate. It may be necessary to envisage new ones that might be better tailored to the exponential development of AI.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



## The Repercussions of Absolute Dependence of Technology in Wars

*PhD. Mohamad AL MOKDAD (Lebanon)*

The evolution of warfare across the ages has been characterized by dynamic transformations, with each era introducing new tools and technologies that redefine the nature of conflict. Today, the armies of countries are distinguished by the extent to which they follow the technological revolution, as the reliance on advanced means of warfare has become more evident than ever before. The appeal of precision-guided munitions, autonomous systems, and interconnected networks promise unparalleled military capabilities.

In this article we will analyze the advantages that technology gives military forces, while also highlighting the technical and ethical dilemmas posed by autonomous weapons and the potential vulnerabilities that arise from over-reliance on high-tech systems.

There is no doubt that the use of advanced technology in wars brings many advantages, which contributes to increasing effectiveness and efficiency on the battlefield. Technology allows the development and deployment of precision-guided munitions, such as laser-guided bombs and GPS-guided missiles. This accuracy, in turn, reduces the possibility of collateral damage and civilian casualties, as military forces can target specific structures or enemy locations with greater accuracy. Technological progress also allows the creation of smart weapons that can modify their path or target in real time, which leads to improving the overall accuracy of strikes. It reduces the risk of unintended damage.

The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs), and other automated systems allows military forces to conduct reconnaissance, surveillance, and even combat operations without directly endangering the lives of soldiers. Soldiers can also operate certain military systems from a safe distance, reducing exposure to danger. For example, it enables remote-controlled vehicles to dispose of explosive bombs without being physically present.

Advanced technology allows sophisticated signal interception and cyber intelligence operations, and monitoring enemy communications and cyber activities contributes to a comprehensive understanding of an



*Source: <https://digipedia.ro/este-possibila-o-noua-tehnologie-de-transmitere-datelor/>*

Adversary's capabilities and intentions. Advanced communications systems facilitate network-based warfare, allowing military units to share information in real time. This enhances coordination, decision-making and the overall effectiveness of military operations.

Encryption and secure communications protocols also protect military communications from interception and unauthorized access, which is critical to maintaining operational security and preventing information leakage.

At the same time, states with superior military technology gain a strategic advantage over adversaries, deterring potential conflicts and affecting the balance of power in geopolitical relations.

While the incorporation of advanced technology into warfare offers many advantages, absolute reliance on technology also presents a host of challenges and vulnerabilities. As military systems become more interconnected and dependent on digital infrastructure, the risk of cyber attacks increases. Adversaries target communications networks, command and control systems, and critical infrastructure, disrupting military operations and compromising sensitive information.

Cyber capabilities enable adversaries to conduct espionage and information warfare, infiltrate military databases to gather intelligence, spread disinformation, or manipulate data. This can lead to strategic misinformation and confusion. Sometimes the complexity of modern military technology leads to the risk of technical malfunctions. Malfunctions can occur in software, hardware, or communications systems, resulting in the loss of critical capabilities and compromising mission success.

Adversaries may exploit vulnerabilities in high-tech weapons systems. For example, intercepting or manipulating signals that control unmanned systems or identifying vulnerabilities in cybersecurity measures could render advanced military technologies ineffective. Sometimes cutting-edge technologies become targets for reverse engineering by adversaries, allowing them to replicate or negate the advantages of these systems.

As military systems advance technologically, the training and skills needed to operate and maintain them become more specialized. Gaps in training or insufficient experience among personnel may lead to operational inefficiencies and errors. The most dangerous is excessive reliance on technology, which reduces human decision-making in critical situations and may lead to an inability to adapt when faced with unexpected circumstances.

In a related context, the development of autonomous weapons raises ethical questions regarding delegating lethal decision-making to machines. Precision-guided munitions and advanced technologies do not guarantee complete avoidance of civilian casualties. Technological glitches or misinterpretation of data can cause unintended harm to non-combatants.

Balancing the benefits of advanced technology with the need to mitigate these challenges requires continued efforts in research, development and international cooperation. Effective cybersecurity measures, redundancy in critical systems, and a human-centered approach to technology integration are critical to addressing the vulnerabilities associated with absolute reliance on technology in warfare.

While advanced technology, such as precision-guided munitions, aims to reduce civilian casualties, there is no guarantee of complete accuracy. The risk of collateral damage remains, and technological failure or misinterpretation of data could lead to unintended harm to non-combatants.

The moral principle of proportionality asserts that the use of force must be proportional to the military objective. Determining the appropriate level of force and weight of potential harm to civilians is a challenge in the context of modern warfare.

The development and deployment of covert technologies can lead to a lack of transparency and accountability. Addressing these ethical challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes policymakers, military leaders, technology developers, and the general public. Ongoing dialogue, adherence to international legal standards, and adherence to ethical principles are essential to overcoming the ethical complexities associated with the heavy reliance on technology in war.

As for the strategic repercussions of technological dependence in the military context, they are multifaceted and include advantages and challenges. While advanced technology can provide a significant advantage in conventional warfare, it also presents vulnerabilities that may limit the ability to adapt and respond, especially in the face of unconventional or asymmetric threats.

Balancing technological progress with the need for adaptability is critical to ensuring that military forces can effectively address a wide range of threats, from conventional conflicts to unconventional and asymmetric challenges. Strategically, a balanced approach that takes into account high technical capabilities and adaptability is essential to maintaining a flexible and effective military force.

In the interconnected landscape of modern warfare, where drones and the humming gears of autonomous machines become the background, ethical considerations stand as a silent sentinel. The specter of



civilian casualties, the ethical nuances of autonomous weapons, and the grave responsibility borne by those with the power of advanced technologies demand our unwavering attention.

As we look to the future, the strategic chessboard of global geopolitics is unfolding with ever-evolving dynamics. The vulnerabilities exposed by the sheer reliance on technology underscore the need for flexibility, adaptability and strategic foresight. The lessons of history teach us that technological prowess alone cannot insulate us from the unpredictable fluctuations of conflict.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



## India – Moving Closer to the European Union in the Context of a Competition with China and Pakistan, but also of an Unclear Relationship with Russia

*„You have learned the rules of the game. All you have to do is play better than anyone else ”*

*Albert Einstein*

### Introduction

As the intense strategic confrontation between the US and China dominates many foreign policy debates, another important competition has been going on for some time, but quietly. India and China's fight for influence in South Asia will likely prove crucial to Washington's strategy to keep the region "free and open" from Chinese coercion. And the good news, at least for now, is that New Delhi – an increasingly close US and EU partner – has largely succeeded in fending off Beijing's growing influence in the region.

In its history, India has supported traditionally the principles of strategic autonomy and non-alignment as the basic tenets of its foreign policy. However, recent years have seen marked changes, particularly in its security and economic ties with the European Union (EU), that suggest a recalibration of India's outlook.

This development can be attributed to the growing influence of the 'China factor' in India's calculations – a potential game-changer and relationship-changer of the EU-India relations. Since 1947, New Delhi has maintained a position of ambivalence and reluctance to commit to any security understanding or agreement in the world. The only notable exception was its relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which was born out of the necessity generated by global developments and was influenced by the US' position in relation to Pakistan and China.



Source: <https://indusresearch.in/india-in-a-new-multipolar-world/>

### India Is in a Fierce Competition with China and Pakistan, but also in an Unclear One with Russia

Now, the regional and global context has changed significantly. The resurgence of the great power competition, global shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, its revelations regarding the energy interdependence and, ever more fully, the economic one between the countries in the world and, most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have highlighted the challenges, including tension-generating ones, that India faces in its

relationship with China, ever since Xi Jinping became its leader.

China would also like confidence-building to remain a strictly bilateral matter and does not want organizations such as the G20 and the SCO, or the other three BRICS member states – Brazil, Russia and South Africa – or even ASEAN-led institutions to play any part in the process of hypothetical normalization. In doing so, China challenges India's multilateral aspirations and de facto reduces New Delhi's ability to collectively manage the consequences of China's rise for itself and the region.

The “China factor” in India's foreign policy can be divided into three main variables:

a) Firstly, the long-standing disputes at India's border with China remain a critical concern. Recent clashes, including the fatal episode in June 2020, which resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese victims, marks a culmination of recurring disputes along the Line of Effective Control (LAC). These clashes are fueled by the lack of a common border demarcation and increased infrastructure development by both sides. Tensions have been further exacerbated by the changing dynamics of their bilateral relationship, particularly over economic power and defense expenditures, but also due to Xi Jinping's influence on China's foreign policy. Under his leadership, China has taken a much stronger and more proactive stance on sensitive issues related to the country's sovereignty claims over other territories such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, the South China Sea and, what it is crucial for New Delhi, and the Sino-Indian border.

In such a context, a multitude of issues have prevented the relations between India and China from calming down. Their importance has grown over time; among others, the overall context of the bilateral relationship was marked significantly by India's support for the Dalai Lama, India's disagreement and rejection of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the noteworthy trade surplus in favor of China, which reached 100 billion in 2022, India's participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the close Sino-Pakistani relations.

As long as investments in infrastructure and consequent militarization of border areas increased on both sides, India and China will continue to have different views and disagree significantly over their shared border, lacking a mutually agreed demarcation. Ministerial-level talks set up to cool tensions, simply repeat the same story; they reach no concrete results and fail to assess clearly the situation on the ground. This empty rhetoric may temporarily minimize tensions between the two countries, but fails to generate any significant progress. India is no longer content with “business as usual” with China, and this only serves to illustrate that unless progress is made, disputes on the Sino-Indian border will intensify further in the coming years.

In June 2020, China and India concluded a phase of managing their differences along the LAC, with no further deaths reported. Since then, they have entered a new phase, as Rana Mitter<sup>1</sup> also pointed out, in which they have to deal with “state that no longer apologizes for being authoritarian” and which is currently the second most largest economy in the world, namely China.

Indeed, since the landmark agreement between Rajiv Gandhi<sup>2</sup> and Deng Xiaoping<sup>3</sup> in 1988, to put aside border disputes and pursue cooperation in other areas such as trade and culture, the relationship between the two countries has undergone a significant transformation.

b) Secondly, India is increasingly concerned about Sino-Russian alignment. Due to a different set of geopolitical developments, the Sino-Russian relations have been improving steadily, even before the invasion of Ukraine. The two countries are linked by their joint position as a competitor or even an adversary to the US.

<sup>1</sup>Rana Shantashil Rajyeshwar Mitter (born 11 August 1969) is an Indian-born British historian and political scientist specializing in the history of the Republic of China. He is the chair of US-Asia relations at the Harvard Kennedy School. Until 2023 he was Professor of History and Politics of Modern China at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford, former director of the Oxford China Centre. His 2013 book *China's War with Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival* (titled *Forgotten Ally: China's War with Japan, 1937-45 for US publication*), about the Second Sino-Japanese War, was well received by critics.

<sup>2</sup>Rajiv Ratna Gandhi (20 August 1944 – 21 May 1991) was an Indian politician who was the sixth Prime Minister of India from 1984 to 1989. He took office after the assassination of his mother, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, to become the youngest Indian Prime Minister at the age of 40. He served until his defeat in the 1989 election and then became the Leader of the Opposition, Lok Sabha, resigning in December 1990, six months before his assassination.

<sup>3</sup>Deng Xiaoping (22 August 1904 – 19 February 1997) was a Chinese revolutionary and statesman who served as Supreme Leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC) from December 1978 to November 1989. After the death of Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, in 1976, Deng gradually rose to supreme power and led China through a series of far-reaching market economy reforms, earning him the reputation of the “Architect of Modern China”.

In such a context, we can say that, we expected India's no veto policy in almost all UN-level votes against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This shows that its partnership with Russia remains strong. Although India has changed its political and diplomatic narrative, in Russia's case it became obvious that it has still chosen to abstain rather than explicitly condemning the invasion of Ukraine. A key reason is India's dependence on imported military technology and equipment from Russia, a longstanding situation dating back to the Cold War.

However, we can mention without reservation that another very influential factor is his reluctance to accept Russia's rapprochement with China, such a Moscow-Beijing relationship being cataloged as the biggest threat to India.

Russia joining the already existing Pakistan-China hostile axis would be catastrophic for India. It is significant to point out that in the past, New Delhi has relied on Moscow's support to step up and balance its regional security concerns in relation with China and Pakistan. However, as relations between Moscow and Beijing appear to be growing closer, Russia's involvement in India's security policies is visibly on the decline, but a major estrangement will require a longer time, at least provided Russia desires and pursues it.

These elements point out that India's relationship with Russia is deeply rooted in history, but maintained out of necessity for both their interests. India is aware of the Sino-Russian alignment, but remains pragmatic, opting for strictly personal decision-making solutions. Signing agreements with Russia to purchase more oil at a relatively low price is just one example of this approach.

c) Thirdly, China's presence in India's immediate neighborhood has been a cause for concern for several years, but since Xi Jinping came to power and quickly adopted a more assertive foreign policy from which South Asia is not exempt, these concerns have become more important. In fact, China has actively sought to influence the region by leveraging political ties and massive investment through the BRI, which includes all South Asian countries except Bhutan<sup>4</sup> and India. This puts Beijing and New Delhi in direct competition, engaging in a geo-economic rivalry to gain influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Pakistan is key in this context given its historical hostile rivalry with India. Sino-Pakistani relations have a solid foundation that dates back since the Cold War and have strengthened further since 2015 with the establishment of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a major component of the BRI. However, due to the recurring economic and political turmoil in Pakistan, the success of this endeavor, and thus of bilateral economic relations, has been called into question.

China's influence in South Asia also extends into the Indian Ocean, covering the island nations of Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The political situations in these countries are in a constant state of change, this whole process influencing China and India's relations with them.

Beijing has exerted more control over the entire Indian Ocean over the past two decades. It created a network of military and commercial facilities, and strengthened its economic relations with countries in the region. In 2022, Sri Lanka's obligations towards China increased to \$7 billion, while the Maldives owes China about 40% of its GDP. These economic dependencies have eroded India's influence in its immediate vicinity. New Delhi has built strong diplomatic ties with other countries in the region through diplomacy and initiatives such as maritime security cooperation with all in the region. China's investments in the region have now drawn New Delhi into an economic competition in which, ultimately, they might have difficulty sustaining it.

New Delhi still exercises a dominant role in South Asia and especially in the Indian Ocean, but as China strengthens its position in the region, India remains determined to prevent Chinese hegemony in Asia, repeatedly stressing that a multipolar world begins with a multipolar Asia and seeking partnerships with a variety of countries, including the US and the EU. Beijing is concerned about India's growing military ties, particularly with the US, and tends to consider India's intentions through the lens of its own rivalry with the US. India's inability to fend off China at its border further diminishes New Delhi's influence over smaller regional states, namely Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and even the Maldives, by absorbing financial, military and administrative resources which could be spent on the expansion of India. It also raises questions about India's relative power and its ability to protect smaller neighboring countries from Chinese coercion. This imposes further isolation on New Delhi in the region that also includes its main rival, Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh – despite its historic ties to India – has increasingly engaged in defense cooperation with China, which was the country's largest arms supplier between 2010 and 2020, totaling 73.6% of

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<sup>4</sup>The Kingdom of Bhutan (translating as "Land of the Dragon"), officially the Kingdom of Bhutan, is a country in South Asia located in the foothills of the Himalayas, bordering India to the south, east and west, and China to the north. Between Bhutan and Nepal lies the Indian state of Sikkim, and West Bengal separates the state from Bangladesh.

foreign military purchases it made. In contrast, Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with Beijing, and the 2017 Doklam<sup>5</sup> standoff has only further exacerbated the sensitivity of border issues between the two states.

On April 27, India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu at the end of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) defense ministers' meeting in New Delhi. The meeting was yet another attempt to find a way out of the three-year conflict along the disputed border, which began in May 2020 when Indian and Chinese forces clashed in the Galwan Valley. Since then, officials from both countries have met for 18 rounds of talks to try to agree on a troop disengagement from the area, but without success.

India – a key and beneficiary state in the contest democrats vs. autocracies – seems most involved in the idea of a multipolar Asia and a multipolar world. India has not only raised its global profile through diplomatic expertise, but has also emerged as a leader in the developing world. More importantly, India strives to amplify the voices of the Global South as part of a much larger ambition: to shape a multipolar world that rejects great power politics, reflects today's diversity and is based on inclusive cooperation. A large number of India's multipolar objectives are oriented towards creating opportunities for its own growth.

India is trying to transform itself into a globally recognized responsible power which produces significant changes, through his long-standing goal of gaining a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), although the evolution of Indian foreign policy has often been seen through the prism of non-alignment. This is evidenced by India's recent handling of the Russia-Ukraine war and the West vs. Russia. India has skillfully projected itself as a neutral centerpiece between ideological rivals, with China and the West competing for India as leverage in Indo-Pacific geopolitics. Modi's appeal for peace and not of V. Putin's war at the September 2022 SCO summit exemplified India's new push toward great power status, a key aspect of its multipolar worldview.

### **India is Getting Closer to the European Union (EU)**

Overall, India has been forced to rethink its traditional policy of non-alignment due to China's expanding presence around its borders, its close ties with Russia, and its increased involvement in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. As a result, New Delhi has sought to strengthen relations with actors who share similar strategic objectives, particularly in the area of defense and security.

Strengthening India's position in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region is consistent with Europe's own interests in free trade and supply chain resilience, as well as supporting a multipolar world order.

One of the key actors targeted by New Delhi in the development of the cooperation process in the previously outlined area is the EU. The first EU-India consultations on security and defense took place in June 2022 in Brussels, heralding a new stage in bilateral engagement. During these consultations, both sides discussed ways to increase cooperation in "co-development and co-production of defense equipment, including India's participation in PESCO".

The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is a legal framework within the EU's security and defense policy, designed to enhance defense cooperation between member states that wish to take it further. The inclusion of PESCO in these discussions illustrates the potential for improved cooperation in this area between the two partners, especially given India's over-dependence on Russia for arms and ammunition imports. As such, security cooperation is likely to become an increasingly prominent component of the EU-India relationship in the future, being only one part of the bigger picture. Negotiations for an EU-India free trade agreement were relaunched in June 2022, with the launch of the Trade and Technology Council, a bilateral forum that marks a new phase of bilateral cooperation between the two entities.

This is partly due to the mirror effect of the Sino-Russian alignment, as the EU seeks to reduce its dependence on China, and India is trying to reduce its dependence on both Russia and China for the supply of military products and equipment and its reliance on imports, respectively.

In this context, India's strategic partnership with France is a significant catalyst for positive developments in EU-India relations. Between 2017 and 2021, France was India's second largest arms supplier, after Russia and ahead of the US. This relationship is unique and in some ways even stronger than the one with the US. Unsurprisingly, however, China is India's most significant security threat, surpassing even India's perceived historical threat, Pakistan. Despite the shared concern about China, there is still significant reluctance from New Delhi to Washington, making France a potential key partner in reducing India's dependence on Russia. In this context, maritime security is an area with great potential for deepening EU-India relations.

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<sup>5</sup>Doklam is an area of Bhutan with a high plateau and a valley. This area has been depicted as part of Bhutan on Bhutanese maps since 1961, but is also claimed by China. The dispute has not been resolved despite several rounds of border negotiations between Bhutan and China. The area is of strategic importance to all three countries.

The security environment in the Indo-Pacific area is becoming increasingly unstable and “congested” due to traditional security trends such as increased military budgets, acquisition of ships and anti-ship missiles in the region, as well as non-traditional security trends, such as global warming and competition for marine resources. The EU-India relations in this area have been strengthened through the first joint naval exercises held in June 2021 and the establishment of a regular security dialogue. More recently, at the EU-Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum held in Stockholm in May 2023, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar explicitly invited the EU to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, paving the way for a dialogue more comprehensively on the Indo-Pacific region.

The multiple channels of communication established by the two sides are essential to enable India to better understand Europe’s security situation and for Europe to understand India’s concerns in its neighborhood and the Indo-Pacific region.

Improving knowledge about India and analyzing the impact of Sino-Indian relations on EU-India ties will improve the predictability and reliability of the EU-India relationship as a whole. The EU should adopt a firmer and more determined stance on Sino-Indian relations, particularly on the Sino-Indian border disputes, to build confidence in the relationship with India. However, for its part, India needs to induce a true perception of rapid and real rapprochement with the EU. Given his current position on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, New Delhi cannot expect the EU to break its mostly apathetic attitude when China decides to redraw Sino-Indian borders again. As the war in Ukraine continues, we will see to what extent the EU and India are able to act in favor of their common concerns as very good and reliable allies.

These consecutive commitments should boost India’s relations with European countries. This is also an opportunity for India and European countries to resolve their differences on the perception of strategic threats emerging from Russia and China. Continuing with the accelerated diplomatic activity, India welcomed the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, as well as the Foreign Ministers of Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the Netherlands in New Delhi on the occasion of the Raisina Dialogue, during April 25-27, 2023. In addition, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Germany, Denmark and France from 02-04 May 2023.

Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, European countries along with the US have been insisting that India join them and oppose Russian aggression, a call to which India has not responded or heeded so far. India’s Foreign Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, while addressing the Raisina Dialogue, highlighted how Europe chose not to respond when the rules-based order was threatened in Asia.

### **In the Current Context of Global Developments, the EU's Relations with China Are Significantly Getting Colder**

European countries have been highly critical of Russia for its war against Ukraine. However, these countries have been careful to take a firm stance on China, despite rising friction between the two entities – so far. After China’s refusal to criticize Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, the discord between Europe and China became increasingly evident.

As we well know, the EU-China Summit took place on 01 April 2023, after two years. However, the meeting failed to bridge the widening gap between the EU and China. The EU raised issues such as the war in Ukraine, sanctions against Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and human rights violations, including in Hong Kong. China has not addressed these criticism. Instead, China has expressed a preference to advise the EU to pursue strategic autonomy through disengagement from the US. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, called this meeting the “dialogue of the deaf”, as the EU and China are clearly moving in opposite directions and seek mutual support on political issues that cannot be resolved.

The tensions have made two previous successes in China-Europe relations look like failures: a bilateral investment treaty and China’s popular bid to engage in Central and Eastern Europe. The EU and China concluded a first round of negotiations for a Comprehensive Investment Agreement (CAI) in December 2020. This agreement was intended to create a level playing field for investors in both markets. But in May 2021, less than six months after the negotiations ended, the European Parliament voted to freeze the legislative process for ratifying this agreement.

This movement has come following disputes between Brussels and Beijing, in which both sides have imposed sanctions and counter-sanctions on officials from the two entities. From the beginning, this deal was seen as benefiting China more than the EU. The deal has also been criticized by the US, with the deal now facing an uncertain future as relations between the EU and China show no signs of improvement.

China’s cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is going through rough times. Through the 17+1 initiative, which was launched in 2012 as 16+1, China intended to invest in infrastructure

development in Central and Eastern Europe, which is relatively less developed than Western Europe. However, Lithuania, which resigned in 2021, criticized China for creating divisions within the EU through this grouping. Other Central and Eastern European countries are also unhappy with the functioning of the 17+1. Moreover, China's taking Russia's side in the latter's war against Ukraine is a cause for concern for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Mareike Ohlberg, a senior fellow in the Asia program at the US German Marshall Fund, said: "China's rapprochement with Russia and its blaming of NATO is absolutely unacceptable for most of Central and Eastern Europe. The Chinese government does not seem to understand, or does not want to understand, that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is seen as an existential problem for most countries in the region."

### Conclusions

In the context of developments at the global level, it is significant to emphasize that, since the Russia-Ukraine war, India has taken steps to distance itself from Russia and get closer to the EU, but especially to the West. Similarly, it is relevant that European countries recognize the strategic threat that China poses not only to India but also to the international rules-based order. European countries are already showing some encouraging signs of strengthening relations with India. During von der Leyen's visit, India and the EU agreed to launch the India-EU Trade and Technology Council to address key trade, economic and technology challenges. Also, in the last two years or so, the EU, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have formulated their respective policies regarding the Indo-Pacific region. Greater engagement between India and European countries would enable them to address common concerns about strict rule-based order and freedom of movement and navigation. Closer relations with India would benefit European countries, not only economically, but also in terms of their expansion in the Indo-Pacific region.

The EU has declared India a priority partner in its 2021 Indo-Pacific strategy, but its relationship with New Delhi has long been characterized as not living up to its full potential. Europe's growing disillusionment with China over the past two years has created the need and set the stage for further strengthening of relations with India. The EU should prioritize the establishment and implementation of the EU Indo-Pacific Cooperation Strategy, the EU-India Free Trade Agreement, the Trade and Technology Council and the Connectivity Partnership to demonstrate its commitment and to effectively go beyond symbolic cooperation with India.

While it is in China and India's interest to settle the dispute, Beijing seems unwilling to engage in real negotiations on the LAC, instead expressing the hope that the two sides could move past the issue and build mutual trust. The dispute between India and China along the border is illustrative of the growing rivalry between the two countries, which is shaping the security landscape and strategic environment of South Asia. China is gaining power and influence in the Indo-Pacific – where India has long been the dominant power – and is using it as yet another arena for its strategic rivalry with the US.

The real concern in New Delhi is that Beijing, with whom he has clashed several times along their disputed land border, plans to stretch a web of alliances to encircle India - on land and sea - and eventually replace it as the dominant power over South Asia. It is significant to mention here that all countries in the region, except Bhutan, are part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a vast economic plan for investment and infrastructure development. Beijing has also secured access to key ports along the Indian Ocean, including Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka and Chittagong in Bangladesh, developments that have made New Delhi worried about the so-called string of pearls strategy aimed at blocking India.

Of course, Pakistan remains an intractable issue due to long-standing sovereignty and territorial disputes over the Kashmir region, as well as the partnership between Islamabad and Beijing. However, we can say that bilateral relations between India and Pakistan have not deteriorated appreciably allowing him to closely follow the development of the situation in the region to ensure his interests.

If India fails to prevent Chinese influence to deepen in South Asia, it could also seriously jeopardize the US Indo-Pacific strategy.

Given Europe's trade with the region and the complex interplay of relations between China, the US, India, Russia and the EU, this dynamic of developments will have serious consequences not only for the region, but also for Europe and even the whole world.

It is not out of the question that India will continue to prioritize its partnership with Russia in the hope that Moscow could persuade Beijing to change its behavior. Ultimately, however, if India concludes that China is successfully encircling it after all, this raises the possibility of a war between the two great powers. Neither of these outcomes is desirable, and to avoid them, Washington should seek to support New Delhi's efforts not only to stay ahead of Beijing in South Asia, but also to further widen the gap between the two states in favor of India.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



### Adapting Speed in Turbulent Times

*Jean-Louis TERTIAN (France)*

#### Lessons from Recent Crises

Crises like the COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine have revealed flaws in terms of responsiveness and self-sufficiency with major consequences on strategic independence. This statement is true both for countries and for companies. But we know for a long time that every crisis is not only a source of threats but also of opportunities. The recent crises also highlighted a crucial issue: time management.

Responsiveness and the ability to act quickly proved to be powerful assets. But there is an additional condition: a strategic vision allowing to move away from the immediate and focus on long term objectives. That implies to many opposites: allow and facilitate reaction to a threat on one side, register the action in the long term of anticipation on the other side.

One of the first lessons from the recent crises underscored the importance of maintaining stock and an adequate production capacity. The pooling of resources in times of crisis have shown its limits, national tendencies resurfacing quickly in period of crisis.

Our time is witnessing many upheavals, in the realms of digital technology and climate change. In these turbulent times, the ability to react quickly allows above all to prolong or re-establish dominance on other actors.

#### The Return of Strategic Thinking is Needed

In many cases, quick reaction is not enough. The resurgence of high intensity warfare in Europe impacts energy, food and migration flows.

From the three factors which facilitated globalisation: cheap money, cheap energy and cheap labour, all collapsed, creating new paradigms.

To prevent being caught off guard, the development of strategic thinking capabilities is crucial. To that regard, the COVID-19 crisis has served as a test for the strategic independence of nations.



*Source: <https://ziare.com/conferinta-privind-viitorul-europei/conferinta-privind-viitorul-europei-cetateni>*



As we navigate from one crisis to another, we witness the emergence of another imperative: open mindedness. Looking busy can be satisfactory in the short term, especially in a professional context. But it raises the risk of hindering the development of long term strategic frameworks. Such a lack of preparedness is striking. Let's remember the strategic surprises emphasized by Edward Luttwak as well as the black Swan events theorized by Nassim Taleb.

### **Energy as a Game Changer**

Energy issues are at the epicentre of any reflection on sovereignty. The Ukrainian crisis and the measures taken against Russia have raised fears of supply disruptions that Moscow does not hesitate to exploit in response to waves of sanctions.

Reindustrialization would represent a significant upgrade, given the decades—at least since the first oil shock—of steps in the opposite direction. Can the combined shock of COVID-19 and the Ukrainian crisis cause a 180° turn? There are no shortages of obstacles to overcome because supporters of deindustrialization are, in fact, numerous. They have a strong media presence and significant influence, especially in the digital sphere, rallying around environmental defence, the fight against dehumanization of work, and advocating for energy sobriety.

The shortages that we experienced during the COVID-19 crisis and which were accentuated during the conflict in Ukraine are the direct consequence of a choice made for decades in Western countries, that of relocating the negative externalities linked to industrial production.

When the supply chain works, it is employment that is the first “victim” of offshoring. But when the logistics circuits are disrupted or blocked, it is the question of the supply of products and therefore of strategic independence that is raised.

### **The Digital Acceleration Forces Changes**

Another area in accelerated mutation is the digital sphere.

At a time of constant demands from social networks and continuous information that require immediate responsiveness, is it still possible to plan for the long term? And if it was appropriate to reverse the question? If it was the fact of being part of the long term that made it possible to overcome the continual buzz of daily demands?

Although algorithms offer to do it for us, we must - and cannot - do without thinking, memorizing when all knowledge is easily stored and available on our computers and smartphones. It is a question of will. “We are not born a man, we become one”, Erasmus already said.

### **Coupled to a Deceleration in Some Advanced Countries**

Everything does not accelerate in economic life. In industrialized countries, in France in particular but not only, there are moments when we decelerate. This deceleration can have its virtues: it allows for taking the time to explain, to engage with stakeholders, and to ensure a level of consultation and reflection that is not typically associated with emerging economies.

However, in the current period of upheaval that we are experiencing, slowing down is akin to riding a bicycle at the risk of falling.

In his book “Faster! France Sick of Its Time”, Guillaume Poitrinal observes a world that is racing ahead while France seems to be slowing down. Many lament finding themselves, like modern Sisyphus, condemned to carry their burdens indefinitely. Some praise slowness in general, with movements like “slow food” gaining popularity.

This emphasis on individualism raises questions about our collective ability to think and act in the general interest. While we may not delve into the role of the sacred in our society, the pursuit of the general interest is a topic of contemporary relevance. With the digital explosion, everything is moving fast - and faster and faster - in modern life. Decision-making tends to speed up as well. Concomitantly, like the contemporary world, it becomes more complex. There is a paradox here: on the one hand, to stay in the race, you must be able to decide quickly, even urgently; on the other hand, maintaining one's discernment in the face of the abundance of information means taking the time to reflect.

One way to resolve this contradiction is to delay decision-making until the last possible moment.

In the stock markets, studies have shown that a lunch break can help stabilize the system. One of many lessons: in the high-speed war game of high-frequency trading is that it's not always the fastest who wins. In the proliferation of competing algorithms, it is often the strategy more than the speed that makes the difference.

It emerges that the slowing down of decision-making is curiously consubstantial with the development of an accelerating society. This is due both to the increasing complexity of situations and to the consideration of a larger number of stakeholders. The phenomenon is therefore natural and a sign of the progress of society.

The acceleration of history - Michelet and Halévy have shown this - is certainly not the privilege of our time. Technical advances (wheel, printing press, steam engine, electricity, etc.), the development of trade, revolutions and wars have often given the impression that time is speeding up. However, with the digital age, this acceleration becomes somewhat infinite.

### **The Acceleration of Decision-Making in times of Crises**

In a crisis, heaviness disappears behind necessity. Urgency unravels decision-making processes that previously seemed hopeless. It has been observed many times in history. The COVID-19 crisis bears witness to this in its own way. Urgency makes it possible to shorten consultation deadlines. Declaring an emergency speeds up decision-making, hence the temptation for any government to use crises to create a sense of urgency.

We are in an era of interdependence of decision-making processes: the responses to be provided by one country must consider those adopted by the others.

Crises accentuate trends and redefine balances. Depending on their ability to adapt, the protagonists grow stronger or weaker - in a Darwinian fashion, as it were. To be responsive, you must have a long-term vision, hence the importance of open-mindedness. This requires preparation and a clear strategic vision. Slowing down can be fatal in a rapidly changing environment.

### **Combining Speed and Values/Objectives**

In this regard, the military world shows us daily its ability to combine human values and risk-taking, despite the capacity and budget reductions that have accompanied the “peace dividend”.

The current geopolitical upheaval makes such a review of priorities even more necessary as the armed forces will have to strengthen themselves in many areas, including intervention capacity, resilience or operational availability.

An example that illustrates the tempo difference between the major players, China and the United States, is that of the American decision of October 2022 to ban the export to China of electronic elements containing American chips. This ban is intended to curb China’s progress in the technological and military fields. She points out that the two countries are not in the same time frame. As in chess, the United States seeks to take or regain the advantage in the short term; as in the game of go, China deploys its strategy over the long term, more discreet encirclement strategies.

In the mean time, China announced late December 2023 that it was going to ban the export of technology to make rare earth magnets, showing then its ability to play game with the US to that regard.

### **How to Develop a Path to the Future**

With the acceleration of economic, energy, scientific, military and geopolitical changes, a vision of the future is essential under pain of undergoing the changes imposed by the other actors.

Faced with simplistic slogans, we must go beyond beliefs and assume the complexity of situations, and therefore of solutions, and return to an ethic of responsibility. Which is neither simple nor inspiring! This means returning to an ethic of responsibility and accepting the complexity of the world.

Although it does not put lives directly at stake, economic warfare requires, like military combat, courage and perseverance. At all levels, it is up to those in charge, in the words of General Burkhard, Chief of the French Defence Staff, “to maintain a sacred fire at the level of the human collective”. It is at this price that we will be able to maintain the cohesion necessary for the defence of strategic sovereignty.

The courage required to confront long-term crises begins with confronting reality. It entails stepping out of Plato’s cave and observing the world as it truly is. Only then can we begin to nurture hope.

However, this change must come with a review of the tempo. We should prepare for a radical shift in our approach to the priorities and interests of our countries.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



### **The Situation in the Middle East from an Interethnic Point of View. The Importance of Collective Identity and the Conflict between Israel and Hamas**

*Andreea Cristina STANCA*

#### **Foreword**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict illustrates a complex landscape of deep tensions and divergences between the two communities. This is the complete picture of an interethnic conflict and reveals a multitude and diversity of aspects that shape the dynamics of the conflict and, last but not least, proves the difficulty of finding a solution and creating a path to peace. The deepening of the conflict comes from the polarization of the two groups, the construction of two distinct collective identities, stereotypes, differences between us and them, and fears about the future. Specifically, the recognition of the right to exist or rule of one of the groups, creates fear for the other. Therefore, conflict can arise when one of the groups considers that its own existence is implicitly linked to the existence of the other group. In the case of the Palestinians, there are long-term fears caused by the exclusionary actions taken by Israel, the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories and the division of the Palestinians between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. As for Palestinian radical or terrorist organizations, they create fear for Israelis, but also for the State of Israel. In this case there are serious security fears. So fears fuel the conflict, with both groups fearing that their existence as a collective may come to an end.

#### **The Importance of Identity in Interethnic Conflicts**

The analysis focuses on the vital role that collective identities play in perpetuating this type of conflict. An important aspect that needs clarification is related to the inclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the sphere of interethnic conflicts. First of all, the foundation of this conflict is the existence of two distinct groups that fight over the same territory. The justification of the right over this territory involves historical, religious, symbolic, cultural or linguistic arguments. So both Israelis and Palestinians have built more or less solid arguments to demonstrate why they, and not the others, should control that territory.

The arguments formulated in view of the justification of the right to manage the territory, also contributed to shaping the Israeli and Palestinian collective identities. We can clearly see that, over time, the conflict deepened and began to encompass more and more aspects. In the past year, an Israeli-Palestinian debate resurfaced online, regarding the origin of Jesus Christ. Whether having a propagandistic purpose or not, we can see that this discussion falls within the strategy of promoting or consolidating collective identities. In the debate about the origin of Jesus Christ, historical arguments can be formulated in order to justify the right to rule the disputed territory.

Hence, identity plays a crucial role in an interethnic conflict, with the identities of the two groups occasionally becoming incompatible and largely divergent. Moreover, how one group differs from another enters the sphere of collective identity, creating stereotypes and differences between us and them. On the same note, exacerbating the qualities of one's own group and highlighting the faults of the other are strategies political leaders often employ in interethnic conflicts. Following the statements of Hamas leaders, we notice that the

importance of resistance against the Israeli occupation and the struggle against the State of Israel is emphasized. At the same time, speeches by Israeli officials focus on national security and the state's right to self-defence. Therefore, some collective identities' principles are drawn up. For example, for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the identity is drawn around the struggle against the occupying state; the Palestinians consider themselves fighters for the liberation from the occupation of an oppressive state. For Israelis, an important aspect of collective identity relates to the need for protection and security of one's homeland. The purpose is to create or strengthen collective identity and differentiate it from that of the enemy. Therefore, it is possible to try and polarize the identities of these communities, the result being the deepening of the conflict and the production of a more pronounced break between the two communities.

### **Can Violence Be Rational in Interethnic Conflicts?**

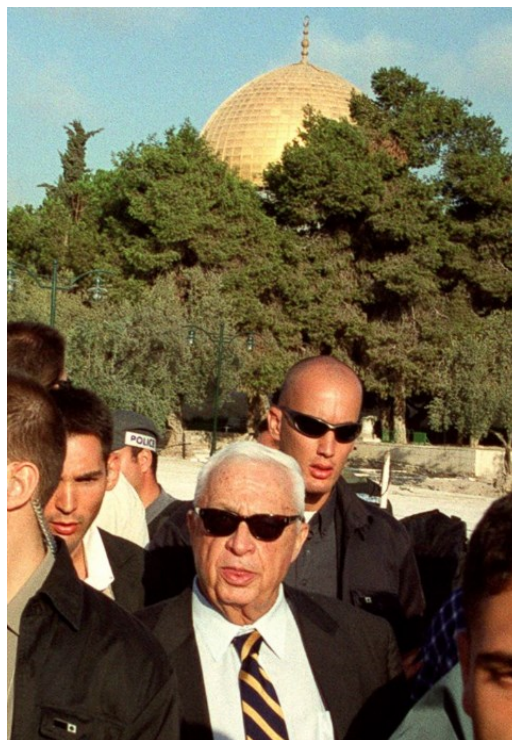
Conflicts can arise not only from the interaction between state actors, but also when there is violence between various ethnic groups. The model proposed by the theory of rational choice that explains why violence may be a viable option demonstrates that violence is a rational response to the long-term fears of these communities. Specifically, violence can be considered rational in the context where the group fears the future. So violence is fuelled by the fears of long-term communities. Within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict there are a multitude of examples that support this previous idea.



*(Photo taken by Laurent Rebours during the Al-Aqsa Intafada*

*Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/palestinians-throw-stones-reporters-notebook/story?id=55200067> )*

If we look at the contexts in which the two Palestinian uprisings occurred, the first and second Intifadas, we see that Palestinians were fearing the future, among other things, and believed the elements of their collective identity were at risk. During the first Intifada, an element that illustrates the importance of identity in interethnic conflicts is the one related to citizenship. Palestinians were considered Arab Israelis, Jordanians, or resident Palestinians depending on the area where they lived. Another interesting aspect is Israel denying the Palestinians their identity, preferring to consider them Arabs. In this context, the conflict led to a strengthened Palestinian identity in order to counter the injustices committed by Israel. As for the second Intifada, it started when the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other Israeli officials set foot on the esplanade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the most important symbols of the Muslim world.



*(In the foreground, Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel on the esplanade of the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000. Sursa: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/palestinians-throw-stones-reporters-notebook/story?id=55200067> )*

Considering the unfolding of the events in the 90s and early 2000s, the visit of the Israelis on Temple Mount can only be considered as the spark that ignited the violence. However, the importance of the event and its role in the dynamics of the conflict should not be diminished. Nevertheless, as far as the communities; fears regarding their future, the Palestinian revolt fits into the logic of the rationality of violence. Specifically, Palestinians feared that Muslim and Palestinian religious and cultural symbols were in danger, and they reacted violently.

### **The Terrorist Attack Led by Hamas on the 7th October and the Reaction of the International Public Opinion**

The continued escalation of this conflict implicitly leads to periods of crisis involving tens of thousands of civilian and military casualties. At the same time, changes are taking place among the political, economic, social spectrum and last but not least in terms of the international image of those involved. It should also be noted how periods of crisis lead to the polarization of the international public opinion. In the current context, there are daily demonstrations supporting either the Palestinian cause or the State of Israel. But how many of these fight for peace, having a neutral and impartial character?

The main slogan of the demonstrations for the Palestinian cause, *From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free*, not only inspires hatred, but is a message that calls for violence and the extermination of Israelis.

Considering the role identity has in interethnic conflicts, we can highlight the importance of this aspect in the current situation. Since the terrorist attack led by Hamas on 7<sup>th</sup> October, so far, the public opinion has been divided between the two camps, expressing their support in demonstrations. Within the events, we observe the existence and promotion of stereotypes and slogans that express hatred and contempt for the other group. Thus, the international public opinion identifies with one of the camps, expressing appreciation for the collective identity of the group they campaign for, while looking at least negatively at the identity characteristics of the other group. The influence that media channels exert on public opinion should not be ignored either. The current situation reiterates the existence of propaganda and misinformation coming from various media outlets, which amplifies the feelings and beliefs of supporters of both camps. Thus we can clearly see how the differentiation between *we*, those surrounded by virtues, and they, the enemies lacking appreciation, is accentuated in crisis situations like the current one.



*(Banner used in current demonstrations - photo by Gayatri Malhotra, October 24, 2023 ,*

*Source: <https://www.laprogressive.com/the-middle-east/river-to-the-sea> )*

## **Conclusions**

What conclusions can we draw from current events? First of all, crisis situations involve the polarization of the public opinion. Furthermore, the existence of hatred is highlighted. Even if in general people lean towards one of the sides, in crisis situations they express their beliefs much more strongly, visibly and publicly. However, the role of these demonstrations is to create a favourable image of the supported group and to highlight disrespect towards others. This can in no way contribute to the cessation of hostilities, nor does it pave the way for peace, but deepens the conflict by accentuating the differences between the two groups, stereotypes and contempt. If the beginning of 2023 brought to the forefront of events the judicial reform proposed by Netanyahu, the year 2024 is greeted by a sensitive, tragic situation with devastating effects: hostages captured by Hamas who are still in the Gaza Strip, tens of thousands of victims among Palestinian and Israeli civilians, the beginning of a humanitarian problem in the Gaza Strip that will last for a long time and last but not least, the impossibility of drawing a path to peace.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



## What is One Belt One Road Initiative?

*Mehmet Berat Sumeroglu (Turkey)*

The People's Republic of China has undertaken a project aimed at rejuvenating the historic Silk Road by leveraging 21st-century opportunities. This initiative seeks to establish comprehensive land and sea connections across Asia, Africa, and Europe through six economic corridors. The project prioritizes five key areas: policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, trade promotion, financial integration, and fostering enhanced people-to-people interaction.

In 2013, the Chinese President Xi Jinping brought the project to the forefront during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. By 2014, the specific land and sea routes were delineated. Initially coined as “One Belt One Road” (OBOR), the “belt” aspect encompasses land and rail connections, along with infrastructure projects spanning from China to Europe within the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Simultaneously, the “road” component encompasses maritime trade routes and ports extending from the South China Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, as part of the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road.



Source: <https://www.cadtm.org/A-critical-look-at-China-s-One-Belt-One-Road-initiative>

In 2016, the project underwent a nomenclature change, transitioning from “One Belt, One Road” to the more inclusive “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI). This endeavour, central to Xi Jinping’s foreign policy, seeks to bolster trade, stimulate economic growth, and deepen regional connections. Notably, the initiative attained constitutional status in China in 2017.

The initiative spans over 70 countries, encompassing 65% of the world’s population, and entails extensive infrastructure investments in roads, railways, ports, airports, power generation plants, and telecommunication networks. Turkey, too, is actively participating through the Central Corridor Initiative, involving a rail network extending to Georgia and Azerbaijan, traversing the Caspian Sea, and proceeding through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on route to China. This initiative, envisioning a novel economic link between Asia and Europe, is anticipated to act as a catalyst for China’s economic ascent, holding considerable significance for the nation’s geopolitical and geo-economic objectives, regional dominance, and global role.

While China emphasizes the initiative’s potential to bring prosperity and economic growth to all

participating countries, certain American and European experts and politicians adopt a more critical stance. Specifically, they characterize the infrastructure projects as manifestations of “China’s debt trap diplomacy”, contending that it could intensify countries’ reliance on China and elevate their indebtedness levels.

Over the past decade, the initiative has engendered substantial impetus in China’s foreign trade. From 2013 to 2022, the trade volume between China and the participating nations soared to \$19.1 trillion, exhibiting an annual average growth rate of 6.4%.

Bilateral investments within the framework of the BRI amounted to \$380 billion, with Chinese investments constituting \$240 billion of this total.

The initiative has given rise to distinctive investment and financing mechanisms. China established the Silk Road Fund (SRF) to underwrite the project, with the fund deploying \$22 billion across 75 projects as of August 2023.

Furthermore, China took the lead in establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to extend international financing for global infrastructure projects, with a particular focus on the Belt and Road Initiative. Originally established in 2014 by 57 countries led by China, with an initial equity capital of \$100 billion, the AIIB’s membership has grown to 109 nations, incorporating 52 new countries in subsequent years.

To date, the AIIB has approved loans amounting to \$43.6 billion for 227 projects within the purview of the Belt and Road. Notably, the development loans disbursed by the bank have, in certain years, surpassed those extended by the World Bank.

The year 2049, marking the centennial celebration of the People’s Republic of China, has been designated as the terminus for the project, rendering it the foundational pillar of China’s national strategy in the 21st century.

### **One Belt one Road Initiative as a Global Project**

The New Silk Road initiative, designed to foster unity among Central Asian nations, streamline transportation, and invigorate regional economies, represents a paramount and central facet of China's overarching foreign policy strategy. Rooted in the imperatives of Chinese geopolitics and economics, this project spans Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, with China serving as its epicentre. The initiative seeks to integrate various facets, including transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, and energy networks. As time progresses, the project aspires to evolve beyond mere trade law harmonization, encompassing customs agreements, regional trade activities, and strategic partnerships.

Characterized as a manifestation of the “win-win” policy paradigm, this initiative addresses myriad needs within China. Its overarching objective is to extend financial and industrial investments, catalyse transportation infrastructure development, and offer growth opportunities, particularly to developing nations.

According to Sarvari and Szeidovitz, Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative stands out as “the pivotal element in China’s global engagement” and provides insights into China’s aspirations within the global order (Sarvari and Szeidovitz, 2016: 4). Within the current framework of international relations, this reflects a transitional phase marked by China’s ongoing integration into the processes of globalization. Notably, China’s restructuring and comprehensive participation in globalization are not synonymous with reshaping the existing order to conform to its preferences; rather, they entail the inclusion of developing nations in a global partnership.

Sarvari and Szeidovitz underscore a crucial distinction between China’s Belt and Road Initiative and conventional alliances. According to the scholars, the initiative does not pursue direct political objectives (Sarvari and Szeidovitz, 2016: 5). In essence, the initiative delineates national objectives on one front and global as well as geopolitical goals on another.

Conversely, discussions surrounding the global and economic dimensions of the Belt and Road Initiative prompt comparisons with the Marshall Plan. On June 5, 1947, during a speech at Harvard University, George C. Marshall articulated that his “policies are not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, despair, and chaos” (The Harvard Gazette, 2017). The United States initiated this plan shortly after the conclusion of the Second World War, aiming to provide financial aid to the war-ravaged nations of Western Europe for reconstruction. According to Wang Yiwei, while the Marshall Plan exemplified a mutually beneficial arrangement for both Europe and the United States, it also solidified the dominance of the US-led Bretton Woods system, paved the way for the formation of NATO, and contributed to political divisions in Europe, ultimately positioning the U.S. as the principal beneficiary of the Marshall Plan (Yiwei, 2019: 21).

Nonetheless, parallels between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Marshall Plan exist, as both seek to internationalize the currency of the sponsoring state and generate significant capital, surplus capacity, and productivity through foreign investments. Despite these similarities, fundamental disparities distinguish the



two strategies. While the Marshall Plan aimed to alleviate poverty in Europe, prevent another global conflict, and counter the Soviet Union, the Belt and Road Initiative aspires to forge a robust partnership with the EU by adapting to the prevailing global order, secure new markets, integrate economically disadvantaged regions into the global economy, and mitigate potential conflict zones.

In addition to the aforementioned considerations, the project is envisioned to unfold across five primary dimensions within the integration process. These dimensions encompass:

- a.) Policy,
- b.) Regional cooperation among partner states,
- c.) Provision of essential infrastructure and establishment of standards in the countries along the route,
- d.) Trade-capital link,
- e.) Establishment of cultural-social connections.

Furthermore, this initiative serves as a catalyst for advancing economic development, fostering scientific progress, and promoting cultural interaction across the regions spanning the Eurasian continent, including Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Mediterranean countries, and Europe. Research indicates that it acts as a driver for integrative investments, enhances productivity, and contributes to economic growth between nations, thereby holding the potential to alleviate poverty.

Consequently, through this initiative, China aspires to establish a comprehensive global trade network that emanates from both the eastern and western regions, extending all the way to Europe. Furthermore, by opening up new export markets, China actively contributes to mitigating the challenge of overcapacity within its domestic capital sphere. Simultaneously, given its burgeoning industrial and economic sectors, China finds itself in need of additional energy resources (Kutluay and Tutar, 2019: 621). In this context, the Belt and Road Initiative is strategically positioned to facilitate China's access to new energy resources, particularly through engagement with energy-rich states situated along the routes encompassed by the initiative.

### **What China Stands to Gain from this Initiative and Why Is It so Eager?**

Esteban and Zhou contend that the impetus behind the Belt and Road Initiative stems from geo-economic considerations. The inadequacy of infrastructure and developmental imbalances within the Eurasian region not only impedes regional economic advancement but also presents a potential threat to political stability in China's Western regions (Esteban and Zhou, 2018: 490). Within this context, the imperative of sustaining stable economic growth has prominently featured on the agenda of Chinese policymakers. Consequently, in November 2013, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China made a decisive commitment to foster multilateral cooperation, formalizing this intent through the establishment of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road framework.

The ancient Silk Road conjures the imagery of caravans navigating the expanse of the Taklamakan Desert, forging a link from western China to the Roman Empire. While historically serving as a conduit for trade and cultural exchange, the Silk Road has undergone a transformative resurgence under Chinese President Xi Jinping. It has evolved into a formidable foreign policy strategy marked by extensive integration and connectivity, spanning across Asia, Europe, and Africa (Bhattacharya, 2016: 309). The monumental scale of this undertaking, encapsulated in the Belt and Road Initiative, underscores China's most ambitious aspirations for power in its history.

Within the framework of this initiative, China aspires to assume a pivotal role as a significant political actor in international relations. Through proactive foreign policies enacted in alignment with the initiative, China is positioning itself strategically in Asia and beyond. This signifies China's pursuit of its vision to emerge as a major global power within the international relations system and to shape the contours of the global financial markets in tandem with its economic prowess.

However, the initiative extends beyond mere economic cooperation, aiming to foster multilateral relationships and effect meaningful integration to address global challenges. China's historical background, technological and financial innovation, abundance of skilled personnel, and geostrategic importance collectively position it as the vanguard of this global initiative. In essence, the Belt and Road Initiative seeks to fortify the Eurasian linkage between the world's most dynamic markets, namely Asia and Europe.

By forging connections across Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans, and the broader Eurasian continent, China endeavours to enhance its reach into regional markets. Simultaneously, it seeks to alleviate its surplus foreign reserves, diversify its energy sources, broaden trade routes, and effectively translate its escalating economic influence into political leverage.

Concurrently, effective control and acceleration of transportation stand as pivotal priorities for China. In this vein, the primary thrust of the Belt and Road project initially focused on physical infrastructure,

exemplified by endeavours such as the construction of oil and gas pipelines in Central Asia and the establishment of high-speed rail corridors in Southeast Asia. The overarching objective of the One Road One Belt initiative is to forge new linkages between Europe and Asia by leveraging rail networks and revitalizing the Silk Road. While the transition to railways may initially appear as a regression, the contemporary landscape of production chains is profoundly influenced by ownership structures within these chains. Timely deliveries constitute a crucial precondition for modern production chains. Cargo flights, while ensuring just-in-time delivery, are subject to considerations of weight and size, and the cost-effectiveness of railways emerges as a decisive factor (Li and Schmerer, 2017: 205).

In this context, transcontinental railways have made significant strides in recent times, contributing to the reduction of both time and cost in international shipments. Notably, transcontinental railways offer a substantial decrease in transportation costs in comparison to ocean transport. Furthermore, they present a 40% reduction in transportation costs when compared to air transport. Another advantageous aspect of railways lies in their ability to facilitate the transportation of goods from inland regions to areas distant from the sea. Consequently, the New Silk Road introduces novel opportunities for the transportation of diverse goods, intermediate products, and other commodities.

However, as highlighted by Cui, China's impetus for this initiative extends beyond logistical efficiency to encompass a desire to exercise control over global transportation and trade infrastructure. The ambition is to establish a system where all roads intersect at China's nexus (Cui, 2018: 17).

The second impetus for China involves the cultivation of what is termed "soft infrastructure". This category encompasses enduring bilateral trade agreements forged through aid packages (Cui, 2018: 17). Consequently, the bilateral agreements negotiated within the framework of the Belt and Road project essentially manifest as foreign aid packages. In reciprocation, this initiative seeks to bolster China's soft power and concurrently dismantle impediments to trade with numerous nations.

An illustrative case is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which endeavours to address Pakistan's persistent energy challenges and establish an alternative route connecting Xinjiang, the Western region of China, to Pakistan. This initiative involves a series of energy projects, railways, and highways, envisaging a comprehensive solution to Pakistan's energy woes (Cui, 2018: 17). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor holds considerable advantages for both nations. China stands to gain profits for its construction and hydropower enterprises, while Pakistan can access loans through foreign investments, thereby contributing to the country's economic well-being and bolstering its international political standing.

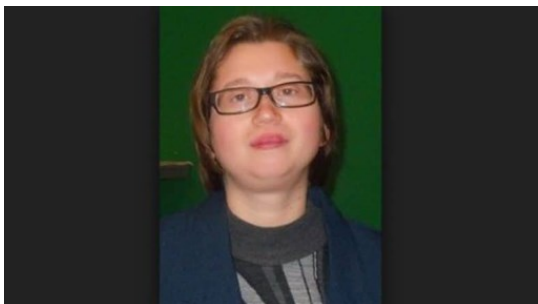
In summary, since its initiation in 2013, the Belt and Road has evolved from a conceptual framework to a tangible roadmap and from theoretical constructs to realized projects. President Xi Jinping's visit to Duisburg in March 2014 marked the nascent stage of the "One Belt, One Road" concept, a phrase unfamiliar to many at the time, which has since become commonplace globally, particularly in academic discourse. Furthermore, an examination of the economic corridors on the map indicates that the initiative has transcended the confines of "one road" and "one belt", expanding to encompass numerous "roads" and "belts". Concurrently, the proliferation of railway lines akin to the Yuxinou Railway is burgeoning rapidly, with over 20 Chinese cities engaging in significant collaborations with Central Asian and European trading partners. Notably, extensive projects, including new sea ports, airports, bridges, highways, oil and gas pipelines, and industrial parks, are actively underway at various locations along the initiative's route.

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