



**SPECIAL ISSUE: CRUCIAL ELECTIONS IN THE WEST AND
TURBULENT TIMES IN THE WORLD**

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1993-2024 THIRTY-ONE YEARS OF POLICY FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS

REALPOLITIK, INTERNATIONAL LAW AND DEMOCRACY



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Undoubtedly we are currently facing turbulent times in the international system. These include the war in Ukraine, the conflicts in Gaza and the broader Middle East and the US-China intensifying antagonism. Several analysts have already indicated that they miss the old times of the Cold War; that despite the tensions at the time there was an element of stability and specific rules of engagement. Within this framework it is also noted that the current escalation of conflicts in various parts of the world may entail unique risks.

Under these circumstances international law is invoked as a means to address crises or even provide solutions. While such an approach may sound promising, it is unfortunate that it has very serious limitations.

International Law is invoked circumstantially by the various powers; and this is done for their own perceived interests. When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022 the West reacted in multiple ways. And Russia has become since then the most sanctioned nation in the world. In the case of Cyprus the Turkish aggression has been consistently tolerated by the West. Turkey is considered as a strategic partner of the West despite of its inconsistent record, while Russia is seen as a foe. And, certainly, Cyprus is not the only country in which international law is grossly violated and ignored. It is also acknowledged that Cyprus is not the only country/place in which the violations of international law are ignored.

One of the questions raised is whether we could hope that the influence of international law on the international system will be enhanced. Within this framework it is essential to revisit the role of the UN. While in the case of the war in Gaza the UN tried to position itself, in the case of Ukraine its presence has not been particularly notable. It could be said that Russia as a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN could block any major decision. Nevertheless, the Secretary General of the UN Antonio Guterres could have taken initiatives for ending the war. There are certainly questions about the role of the UN in the current international system. Most people would agree that ways must be found so that it becomes more effective.

This brings us to another issue. Can we expect to have some generally accepted basic rules in the international system of power politics? If that is achieved then we can talk about a paradigm shift. Some people thought after the end of the Cold War that the end of history had arrived. This meant that liberal democracy had triumphed and the major issue was its further spreading. Furthermore, with the collapse of the Soviet Union the issue of geopolitical strategic antagonisms was in one way or another perceived that it became irrelevant and/or outdated.

Yet these perspectives have not been confirmed. At the socioeconomic level the Neo-Liberal Paradigm (II) – the one that has prevailed in the Western World since the dawn of the 21st century – has led to greater inequality and the shrinking of the middle class. There is certainly a distinction between the neoliberal practices in the 1970's and the 1980's with those of the 21st century. The first one had the support of the middle class and even part of the working class. The second one had no limits in its profound support of market-oriented paradigms with as little state intervention and/or public engagement as possible. This has led to increased inequality, the shrinking of the middle class and the worsening of the economic prospects especially for specific groups including the younger generations. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that there has been an attempt to turn the clock back.

At the geostrategic level the current developments in Ukraine, the Middle East and in the relations between the US and China does not confirm the hypothesis about the end of history. Indeed, it can also be said that the 11 September 2001 attack was perhaps one of the major events which reminded people that the end of history had not arrived.

One of the questions therefore that may be raised today is what factors may lead to a major change in the international system. Can democracy be a force or catalyst of change? In theory the answer is yes. It could also be said that the results of the 9 June elections for the European Parliament did not indicate any enthusiasm for the war in Ukraine. The very recent results of regional elections in Saxony and Thuringia in Germany clearly show the continuation of the rise of the far-right and populist groups in the country, and, in broader terms, in the entire EU. The far-right AfD has risen as a major victor of the election, winning in Thuringia and coming second in Saxony, very close to the winning CDU. The new far-left populist BSW, which has also used pro-Russian and anti-immigrant rhetoric, came third in both elections, despite only being established at the beginning of 2024. It remains to see the outcome of the US Presidential elections of 5 November 2024 and the impact on the international system.

COPING WITH CRISES: AMERICA'S CHOICES IN A VOLATILE WORLD



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While it is true that the American election on November 5th will primarily be decided by domestic issues, the outcome of the presidential race and the composition of the new U.S. Congress will have a significant ripple effects the world over. With that in mind, the focus of this article will be to provide a brief overview of how Vice President Kamala Harris, former President Donald Trump, and Congress have currently positioned themselves on three pressing international crises – Ukraine, the Middle East, and China – and look deep into the crystal ball to predict what is likely coming down the pike in each case.

Keeping Fingers Crossed in Kyiv

The United States has played a pivotal role in bolstering Ukraine's prospects of fending off the Russian onslaught that has persisted since 2022, and for its eastern regions and Crimea since 2014. The assistance provided by Washington has not always been timely, nor without political wrangling, but the Biden administration and a bi-partisan majority in the House and Senate have maintained the flow of weapons and aid to Kyiv despite Russian threats of escalation from without, and by the "America First" contingent from within.

Vice President Harris has tied herself closely to the Ukraine policy espoused by President Biden. In June 2024, Harris met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Ukraine Peace Summit which captured images of two leaders committed to show a united front, despite some remaining disagreements on the use of American materiel to mount a counterattack against Russian territory. Following Harris's ascension to the top of the Democratic ticket, she used a moment in her historic speech at her party's convention in August to send a strong signal to her partners in Ukraine: "I helped mobilize a global response – over 50 countries to defend against Putin's aggression. And as president, I will stand strong with Ukraine and our NATO allies". Though short on details, Kyiv couldn't have asked for a clearer commitment to continuity in January 2025, than they received that evening. Sticking points remain, particularly related to American restrictions on the use of its weapons, but

the Harris administration can be viewed as reliable and predictable as Kyiv continues to defend its soil until they successfully expel the Russians.

For Donald Trump, there is a certain degree of predictability as well, but in a completely different way. On the campaign trail, the former president has repeatedly railed against alleged Ukrainian corruption, the mismanagement of American funding, and whether Kyiv is worth defending at all. At a 2024 rally in South Carolina, Trump suggested that Russia ought to have free reign to conduct its assault on its neighbor, declaring: "In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want". These ill-considered provocations on one end of the spectrum are compounded by announcements on the other end boasting of being able to resolve the conflict within days of taking office, though it remains unclear how that might transpire without surrendering sovereign Ukrainian territory to Moscow. What is clear, however, is that Trump will consistently oppose funding for Ukraine, pitting those priorities against spending money on domestic programs. It is worth noting (as I will do again throughout this article), that there is frequently a gap between Trump's rhetoric and actual policy prescriptions. That is precisely where the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 becomes a useful guide. Though Trump has publicly distanced himself from the Project, it is axiomatic that it is the blueprint for the second Trump administration, and therefore, carries weight. In this document, authors blame military aid to Ukraine for America's own diminished stocks. It declares that any U.S. involvement must be fully funded by others, and should be limited to military aid alone (presumably purchased from American weapons manufacturers). There is also a somewhat surprising nugget in the 922-page document that acknowledges the Ukraine has the right to defend itself, contradicting Trump's assessment of the situation.

Though it is a surprising admission, it is fully consistent with public opinion and the overwhelming majority of Congress. To date, the House and Senate have passed legislation appropriating aid worth \$61 billion to Ukraine. And though that package was delayed by Trump himself and his allies in the House, the final bills passed 79-18 in the Senate, and 311-112 in the House of Representatives. Some analysts have suggested that President Biden will attempt to push one final Ukraine aid package through during the lame duck session between November and January, before he leaves office and the new Congress takes its seats. That will come as welcome relief in Kyiv, but more will need to be done.

Whether Harris or Trump prevail in November, Ukraine will find staunch allies in the halls of Congress and even in the White House. Hawkishness towards Russia runs quite deep in Washington, going back to the days of the Cold War, and the voting tallies in both chambers are a clear indication of that ongoing support. A Harris administration will be a willing partner alongside a supportive Congress, so this is without question a more favorable outcome for Kyiv. A Trump presidency, however, creates many more roadblocks for

continuing funding for Ukraine, but these are not insurmountable. The main question will be as before, how long can the inevitable funding be delayed, and how many Ukrainians will perish while they wait for the President and Congress battle amongst themselves.

From the Middle East to Michigan

This year, the war in Ukraine and the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza became linked by Congressional funding, but are treated very differently in Washington. In response to the October 7th terrorist attack on Israel, the Biden administration (including VP Harris), Donald Trump and the vast majority of Congress gave Israel the green light to respond, and to do so with an arsenal provided, in part, by the United States. When the risk of this conflict expanding to a regional conflagration emerged with threats from Tehran, the U.S. went so far as to send an aircraft carrier as a deterrent to those considering escalation. As the Israeli offensive continued and Palestinian civilian casualties mounted, the unshakable support from Washington for its erstwhile ally began to show cracks. The human suffering in Gaza became increasingly difficult to defend, and the photos beamed back to the United States resulted in protests on American campuses and in the streets. In a general election year, every action and utterance by candidates is politically charged, and comes with benefits and consequences. Harris, Trump and Congress have all made their calculations on Middle East policy with mixed results.

For Vice President Harris, the policy toward this conflict has proven to be a very difficult needle to thread. On the one hand, she has been a dependable ally to Israel within the administration and during her time in the Senate, yet unconditional support is not the luxury of a national candidate who must also rely on the votes of Muslim-Americans, young people and the average voter who demands accountability from Israel on human rights grounds. In states with a large Arab-American population like Michigan, a handful of votes on election day could be the difference between a Trump or Harris presidency. In Harris's convention speech, she said that she "will always stand up for Israel's right to defend itself and I will always ensure Israel has the ability to defend itself". She then pivoted deftly to conceding that Israeli actions had tragically resulted in the death of thousands of Palestinians. "So many innocent lives lost," she said. "Desperate, hungry people fleeing for safety, over and over again. The scale of suffering is heartbreaking" While the conflict rages on, Harris has settled on the position of pushing all sides to agree to an immediate ceasefire and release of hostages.

Donald Trump's position on the Middle East conflict is less nuanced, and that suits him well from a political perspective. He has declared repeatedly that Israel has no closer friend than Trump, and he points to the success of his previous administration in negotiating the Abraham Accords, moving the U.S.

Embassy to Jerusalem, and regional economic development as evidence. Trump maintains close relations with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, at the expense of transforming support for Israel from a non-partisan issue in Washington to a highly partisan one. What should be an easy feather in his cap with Jewish voters is undermined by Trump's insistence that anyone of the Jewish faith who votes for Harris ought to "have their heads examined". This approach has alienated many voters in the Jewish community, and may ultimately be a net negative for Trump.

On the horizon, two main factors will set the trajectory of this relationship. The first is whether Netanyahu survives politically in Israel. If he remains prime minister during a new Trump administration, the ties will be even stronger than they are at present. With a Harris administration, one can expect a frosty personal relationship, and delicate public displays of friendship given the political sensitivities at home. While Harris's policies are less defined on the road ahead in the region, Project 2025 is singularly focused on leveraging the Abraham Accords to increase trade and investment between Israel and her neighbors, continuing military support, and solidifying security cooperation with the Gulf States and Egypt when the conflict ultimately recedes. Either president in 2025, should have the support of Congress to continue the support of Israel as needed. An existing memorandum of understanding already commits the U.S. to approximately \$3,8 billion per year to military aid for Israel, and there is no reason to believe that won't continue. Given that several members of the House, who have been outspoken against Israeli actions in Gaza, have been defeated, there is little opposition to Israel left, regardless of the situation on the ground.

Avoiding the Thucydides Trap

There aren't many topics upon which Republican and Democrats in Washington agree these days, but the notion that China poses the greatest threat to American primacy in shaping the international order is one of them. The differences between the Trump and Biden administrations in dealing with the myriad challenges presented by China on issues from industrial espionage to unfair trade practices, human rights violations to increasing military assertiveness, are more stylistic than substantive. The Democrats have tended to rely on delicate language, conventional economic policy tools, and classic military deterrence, while Republicans have taken a similar approach, but with more aggressive and unpredictable rhetoric. In the current American election campaign, the focus for both parties vis-à-vis China has been to talk about the risk of China's ascension in the context of boosting American competitiveness in the world, rather than focusing on security issues related to Taiwan or incursions in the South China Sea.

At her nomination acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, Kamala Harris underscored that economic message by boldly announcing that “America, not China, wins the competition for the 21st century”. Beyond that, the Harris campaign has been light on details, but her administration will likely pursue the approach taken by her predecessor, in the form of Joe Biden’s “invest, align and compete” policy towards China, focusing on key issues such as restricting access to semiconductors, competing for critical minerals, and protecting intellectual property. On Taiwan, the policy of strategic ambiguity will likely continue, so long as Beijing maintains the status quo in cross-strait relations.

If former President Trump’s first term gives us a window into the second, it is likely to be a contentious relationship with China, with an administration staffed by the return of China hawks. The steel and aluminum tariffs imposed during his first term, vocal critiques of Chinese aggression in the region, and the steady drumbeat of policy to offset China’s trade practices, will no doubt feature again in a Trump 2.0. The declarations of affection and admiration for Chinese President Xi Jinping are unlikely to soften Beijing’s position toward a new Trump administration, as those words have been empty in practice. In the Project 2025 roadmap, there is a clear focus on overtly confronting China on the geopolitical and economic fronts, as China is mentioned in the document 475 times compared to 25 mentions of Ukraine, and just 10 mentions of Israel. The prescription calls for a multi-pronged policy that counters China on land, sea, air, cyber, and in the Arctic and space. It seeks to build on a Biden era creation – the China Mission Center – by supporting sufficient funding to create a “whole of government” approach to tackling this massive challenge.

Congress, for its part, shares a general suspicion and hawkish orientation towards China. In the current legislative session, dozens of bills have been introduced to address support for Taiwan, combat Chinese economic coercion, trade practices, human rights abuses in Xinjiang, and belligerence across the region. There has also been significant activity around trying to curb Chinese support for the Russian military campaign in Ukraine. According to a recent Pew Survey, 81 percent of Americans currently have a negative view of China. From the bottom up to the top down, confronting China and its growing role in the world is one of the few certainties on the horizon for the next administration, whoever occupies the Oval Office.

The Known Unknowns

The trend toward volatility around the globe is only exacerbated by the uncertainty created by this inflection point on the horizon in the U.S. elections. The days in which there was relative agreement on foreign policy issues, or that politics stopped “at the water’s edge” are long gone. Today, both domestic and international affairs are view in the American context

through a highly partisan lens. This is not a recipe for good policy or stability, no matter one's political leanings. In the course of this article, one has seen continuity in some quarters, and dramatic divergences in others. It will certainly take months after the election for the dust to settle to have a reasonable view of how the November results will reshape the international order. One thing, however, is certain: the United States can only plan for the crises in front of them, but it's the ones that have yet to emerge that will present the real challenges in the years ahead.

EUROPEAN SECURITY CRISIS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



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European security has always depended on relations between the East and the West. And today, more than ever, European security depends on the state of relations between Russia and the West –EU, US/NATO. These relations have gone over the past thirty years through several stages – high expectations, missed opportunities, the current unprecedented crisis embodied in the Ukrainian conflict and entered the stage of unknown future.

I. Big expectations

The culmination of great hopes for the future relations between Gorbachev's USSR and the West was the Paris Summit in 1990. But the very concept of European security was crafted in the Cold war time. The Helsinki Agreement of 1975 actually marked the formal end of World War II, since it recognized all European national borders that existed at that time (including two Germanys and the Baltic States as part of the USSR). The second main outcome of the Helsinki Summit was the emergence of the very concept of collective European security. This was a conceptual breakthrough, because before that, European security was divided between two military blocks – NATO and Warsaw pact.

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 set ground rules for their interaction. The *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)* today known as OSCE became a key element of the détente process during the Cold War.

Three pillars of collective European security concept have been introduced by the Helsinki process: indivisible security with its famous Helsinki Decalogue, comprehensive security and co-operative security.¹

¹ "The Indivisibility of Euro-Atlantic Security" Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut 18th Partnership for Peace Research Seminar. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Vienna Diplomatic Academy, 04.02.2010. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/f/41452.pdf>

The principle of indivisible European security was confirmed in the Paris Charter for New Europe in November 1990: “Security is indivisible and the security of every participating State is inseparably linked to that of all the others. We therefore pledge to co-operate in strengthening confidence and security among us and in promoting arms control and disarmament”. It was the highest point of Grand détente between the USSR and the West and their leaders invested big hopes and expectations in their future relations although the world was still bipolar.

The Paris summit should deal with the new political situation in Europe after the revolutionary developments in Central and Eastern Europe, and draw a new political map of Europe. Gorbachev used the metaphor of a “Common European Home”. However the Bush administration approached Gorbachev’s policy of detente with great skepticism. Western historians agree that the Soviet Union in 1990 was promised an inclusive and cooperative future European security order. Yet, from the very beginning, European security in the US strategy was centered exclusively on NATO without Russia, which meant that the Paris Charter shared vision of the common future did not last long. The US approach was built on the belief that “The CSCE – Just a Dream”: “the real risk to NATO is the CSCE”.²

Who lost the Cold War?

The Paris summit happened in 1990 but one year later the USSR disappeared from the map. Thirty years after the disintegration of the USSR, which marked the end of the bipolar era, arguments as to who lost the Cold war continue unabated both in Russia and the West. This question is not only of academic value, but is directly related to the current crisis between Russia and the West. The predominant opinion in the West was that the USSR had lost the Cold War. President George Bush did not treat Gorbachev as a (future) partner, but as a (defeated) enemy.³

This conclusion seems to be erroneous. The USSR was created for confrontation. So, détente was unnatural and hostile environment for the Soviet Empire. It was détente that demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the Soviet economic and political model under normal, non-military and non-confrontational conditions.

² Nunlist C., Aunesluoma J, Zogg B. *The Road to the Charter of Paris. Historical Narratives and Lessons for the OSCE Today*. OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, 2017. Available at:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.17134.92487> (accessed 12.03.2024).

³ Ibidem.

II. Lost opportunities

Why it went wrong

Moscow is widely viewed in the West as a violator of the post-bipolar status quo after Russia's incorporation of Crimea and the beginning of its special military operation in Ukraine. Actually, the collapse of the post-bipolar security order in Europe was not a one-time phenomenon. It didn't start with the Caucasus war or the Ukrainian conflict, but with Yugoslavia. NATO's expansion coincided with its massive use of force against Yugoslavia and its dismemberment, first and foremost recognition of Kosovo's independence, which sent a certain message to Moscow. The negative impact of this fact on the post-bipolar European security is fully ignored by the West.

The end of bipolarity had a paradoxical impact on European and global security. On the one hand it removed the threat of a global conflict and paved the way for the creation of a new post-bipolar system of collective European security. On the other hand, the collapse of the USSR persuaded the West that there was no need to change anything in its policy. Consequently, the end of bipolar confrontation did not result in a big Peace conference to establish a new order in Europe.

In line with this logic Europe was divided between two security institutions NATO became responsible for the post-Communist Europe, while OSCE – for the territories to the east from Vienna. This predetermined a change in Moscow's initially extremely favorable attitude towards the OSCE, having created the impression that the OSCE was a second-rate institution for the second-rate countries in Europe. The accession of the Baltic States to NATO in 2004 can be viewed as the second step in the division of the post-bipolar Europe or more precisely of the post-Soviet space, which could not but send a certain message to Kremlin.

George F. Kennan called the expansion of NATO into Central Europe “the most fateful error of American policy, a mistake of historic proportions in the entire post-Cold War era and “the beginning of a new Cold War”. Kennan, the architect of America's post-World War II strategy of containment of the Soviet Union, believed, that expanding NATO would damage beyond repair U.S. efforts to transform Russia from enemy to partner.⁴ He predicted that it would inevitably cause “a bad reaction from Russia”. One cannot agree more with George Kennan. It is NATO's enlargement that has had a significant negative impact on Russia's domestic evolution, no matter whether this was used as an excuse for Russia's ideological, political and military hardening or reflected sincere fears of NATO's military threat.

⁴ James Goldgeiser. “The US Decision to Enlarge NATO: How, When, Why”. June 1, 1999. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-u-s-decision-to-enlarge-nato-how-when-why-and-what-next/>

Within two decades since the Paris Charter Summit, every one of the ten principles of the CSCE's Helsinki Final Act (1975), has been violated. Great powers started to apply these principles selectively according to their foreign policy interests and preferences. For themselves and their allies they always prefer nations' right for territorial integrity, for their opponents – nations' right for self-determination. And lastly, the process of NATO's expansion created a new contradiction in the post-bipolar European security that did not exist in the Cold war time: nations' right to freely choose security alliances and nations' right to oppose their enlargement if they are viewed as a threat to their national security.

III. Unprecedented crisis

The Ukraine conflict can be viewed as a quintessence of the conflicting perceptions of Russia and the West about acceptable foundations of the post-bipolar European security. All the gains of the Helsinki process including the concept of collective security have been curtailed. The block thinking in the approach to European security is reinstating in the Russia-West relations elements of the Cold War. Yet, there are differences between two Cold Wars. The question is which of the two wars is more dangerous?

Today, an escalation of the Ukraine conflict into a big military conflict between Russia and NATO with the most dramatic consequences is a reality. From this point of view, the current military state of affairs is more dangerous than the last Cold War, because at that time there was no open military conflict in Europe and there were clear red line the border between the GDR and the FRG.

Today there are no clear red lines. They are being blurred by the very development of the military conflict – the delivery of new Western weapons that can be used against Russian territory. This forces Russia to rely on nuclear weapons like never before. In other words, in the absence of clear red lines, the threat of nuclear conflict is higher than during the Caribbean crisis.

International context

At the same time global confrontation is not feasible at the moment. Multipolarity softens tensions between Russia and the West. The West is not as monolithic on a number of issues as it was during the former Cold War. For the first time in its history, China has become an important factor of European security and its silent pragmatism puts Beijing on the side of its own interests. The same can be said about India, Turkey and countries of the Global South. They try to be equidistant from the parties of the conflict and ease international tensions. So, as long as the world remains multipolar,

global confrontation is not feasible. Maintaining multipolarity requires international players to exercise foreign policy restraint.

International economic ties still remain global, which is a positive factor. Anti-Russian sanctions are the most telling evidence to the fact. The real difficulty with imposing sanctions is that not all agree with their legitimacy. Economic interests of different actors mitigate tensions.

Is there a way out?

A ceasefire agreement is the first but necessary step in a long and difficult peace process. It seems the only realistic alternative to the endless slaughter. Both sides have put forward their peace plans, which, it seems, cannot be brought to a common denominator. However in the absence of a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict, "freezing" the status quo is not the worst option if a conflict is frozen properly in accordance with the UN mandate on a multilateral basis. If this prerequisite had been provided for by the Minsk process, there would be no conflict in Ukraine today.

Uncertain future

Whatever the scenarios of the Ukraine conflict evolution, it is clear that its outcome will determine the future architecture of European security. If we discard the most dramatic scenario of a nuclear conflict, the range of options is not very wide. Given deep divides between Russia and the West, two models of Europe that could result from the Ukraine conflict are feasible now.

One model is **"Europe of the Berlin crisis of 1948-1949 or 1961"**, which means a new divide of Europe and Ukraine like it was in the time of bipolarity symbolized in a divided Berlin. This model may appear if a ceasefire does not lead to a peace treaty. Surely, in relation to our days, this comparison should not be taken literally; it is just a figure of speech, which reflects the highest degree of international tension and extreme instability. This model will exclude any cooperation of Russia-West on the pressing international issues. Most likely, American nuclear weapons would be deployed on the territory of Ukraine. In terms of arms control Russia's relations with the West would remind unmanaged competition of 1945-1970.

The role of international organizations, primarily of the OSCE, will be nullified. Moscow might systematically block consensus and the field operations. In turn the Western states would join together in an effort to sideline Russia. This confrontation could result in Moscow's decision to withdraw from the OSCE, which would mean the collapse of the organization

The second model is more optimistic – **“Europe of the Berlin agreement of 1972”** that opened a window for settling the most urgent issues in Europe and led to the Helsinki Act of 1975. In the context of this scenario there will be possible to come back to peaceful coexistence and limited cooperation on European security, which would require again an inclusive nature and framework of the OSCE. So, under the best case scenario the OSCE countries will have to come back to the unfinished job of the past and to think about the legal foundation of indivisible security.

In conclusion

The future of European security will depend on how and when the conflict will end. Its future will also depend on the ability of the West and Russia to stay realistic in the most difficult times. [Hans Morgenthau](#) (1904-1980), one of the leading twentieth-century figures in the study of international politics wrote: “The individual may say for himself: *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus* (Let justice be done, even if the world perish)”, but the state has no right to say so in the name of those who are in its care.⁵

⁵ Morgenthau, H.J. (1973). *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 5th ed. New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf.

OUR WORLD IN TURMOIL

Wars are meaningless unless they bring a better peace



Robert Mood
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A legacy of hubris and fear

The nature of war is still a "clash of actively opposing wills comprised of violence, chance, and rational thought". With intellect and emotions competing for attention, I might add. While additional domains and new tools drive a rapidly changing character of war. The latter flows from - and interacts with - war's human dimensions.

The wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan might for some argue that also modern wars are primarily about weapons, equipment, and destruction. However, the survival of Hamas and heroic resistance of Ukrainians confirm that, in line with military philosophy, war is still a duel between human wills. Paraphrasing Marcus Aurelius: The effect of destruction on morale, is more important than the destruction itself. A case in point is how hubris, fear and the urge to exact retribution have driven political decision-making in the West after the September 11th terror. The resulting "with us or against us" atmosphere, that justifies violations of international law, with references to superior values we claim to live by, are coming back to haunt us.

Western military leaders nurture integrity, step up to responsibility, and measure success in practical end-states. Their political masters avoid responsibility and measure success in winning debates, and elections. Hence, military leaders and politicians do not speak the same language. Generals that have seen the consequences of war advice against it, while politicians seek to demonstrate determination to their domestic audiences and allies. When generals advise that wars almost never end the way you want, that they are harder to end than to start, and that decisionmakers own the resulting problems, politicians rarely pay attention.

There is always more than one perspective. The Russian attack on Ukraine, the war(s) in the Middle East and the sabre rattling over Taiwan are also about avoiding the final defeat in the Cold War, winning the war of 1948 and to avoid a humiliating defeat in the Chinese civil war of 1949. Rather than

generations born after, hungry for domination and expansion, willing to use military means.

We are in for larger - and more ugly - wars unless our political leaders shoulder their responsibility to go beyond the popularity contest and see eye to eye from different perspectives.

A multi-polar challenge

After 1991, Norway chased the peace dividend and reduced our military structure more than 85%. In spite of our wealth, we abandoned UN peace operations and are left with small, high-quality units and Special Forces that we deploy to impress key allies during Western military interventions.

Hence, the High North is poorly protected, vulnerabilities are plenty, and deterrence beyond the nuclear strategy of NATO is weak. In the event of aggression with a combination of cyber, propaganda, sabotage and classical military means - the hybrid concept - we are unprepared. The new Nordic unity in NATO is for now dominated by well-meant political statements without much practical substance.

If war broke out in this demanding terrain and climate, the deliberations in Washington DC, Berlin, Istanbul and Paris about units, logistics and domestic priorities would dwarf those related to Ukraine.

Ambitions

The US used to have an ambition to fight two major wars simultaneously. Today's ambition is limited to fight and defeat China or Russia. If the US is busy in Asia or the Middle East, European NATO members would have to handle a war on its own. An operation far beyond its capabilities without US military means and leadership.

The North-East Sea route, the advantageous location for space related activities, the minerals on the seabed as well as oil and gas resources argue China's interests in the High North will grow, and Russia's strategic ownership will strengthen. Since the US no longer have a "two major wars simultaneously" capability, they will have to choose in the event of concurrent wars in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the High North. Hence, those eager to challenge the US and the West have many opportunities with a combination of hybrid and classical means - should they synchronize efforts.

The strategic context of the incursion by Ukrainian forces in the Russian Kursk region should also be carefully studied. Beyond the obvious, we must ask ourselves; Could it open a new understanding of Red Lines and Nuclear deterrence? A state associated with the US and NATO - closely advised and

supplied by the US and many other individual NATO members - invaded the territory of a nuclear state. What could be the implications for NATO territory as a sacred red line? For Nuclear deterrence in Europe and Asia?

Back to the future

Ukraine and Gaza are laboratories of warfare, evolving the character of war itself and redefining the challenging political/military interface. International law is set aside and the UN is but a spectator. What will be the added implications of the revolution in military affairs, spurred by autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence? I do not know. But I do know the unthinkable will happen again. When it does, I sincerely hope we have more responsible leaders to guide us through than those of today's world.

ELECTIONS IN TURBULENT TIMES - CONSEQUENCES FOR EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY



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The international situation is currently characterised by high insecurity linked to conflicts and threats, highlighting the need for enhanced defence efforts. On the other hand, policies delivering more security may be constrained by the outcome and consequences of crucial elections in Western countries. Highly mediatised wars like those in Ukraine and Gaza, Russian aggressiveness and Chinese assertiveness, but also less visible conflicts in Africa (Sudan, DR Congo, Sahel) or potential conflicts in East Asia / South China Sea (Taiwan, Philippines) increase to various degrees and in different forms risks and threats to European security. Will this increased demand for security be met by adequate security policies? Electoral processes in Europe and America this year may influence the offer of policies.

The European Parliament (EP) elections of 9 June 2024 saw a slight increase in turnout to 51,1%. Mainstream pro-European political parties (European People's Party, Socialists and Democrats, Renew/Liberals, Greens), despite their weakening, still hold a comfortable majority. They were able to elect Ursula von der Leyen for a second mandate as Commission President on 18 July. Radical right parties rose in numbers, they now form three political groups instead of two in the previous legislature (EP Research Service 2024). A recent study shows that they are averse against EU integration, insist on national sovereignty and have similar positions on migration, green policies or family values; but they are deeply divided when it comes to relations with Russia and China (Balfour, Lehne 2024). It will be harder to construct majorities in the EP concerning contentious issues such as green policies and migration, and this in a global environment where the EU is needed more than ever to deliver on cross-border objectives. The disastrous election outcome in the two biggest member states implies that the Franco-German motor of integration will not function in the foreseeable future. (Zuleeg 2024)

Beyond altering the composition of the Parliament, which is co-legislator with the Council, radical right and populist parties increasingly influence developments in member states, either directly when participating in government or indirectly by causing political instability and when other parties

move closer to their positions. Since in security and defence policy decision-making lies with the Council and requires unanimity, changes in national governments will have a bigger impact.

The European Council on 27 June agreed the EU political priorities for the new legislature. In the Strategic Agenda 2024-29 priorities have shifted reflecting international developments and citizen's views. Compared with the Strategic Agenda 2019-24 the most obvious changes are the importance granted to security and defence as well as enlargement, the addition of new elements on competitiveness and the salience of democracy. With respect to security and defence the focus is put on strengthening the Union's defence readiness by: scaling up capacity and the defence industry; reducing strategic dependencies; an active defence and foreign policy; more investment in the technological and industrial base and more joint procurement; stronger cooperation with transatlantic partners and NATO - given the membership overlap between the two organisations (European Parliament 2024). These priorities are well justified; the biggest challenge now will be implementation.

The UK snap elections on 4 July 2024, with Labour winning a large majority (63% of seats), can also have an influence on EU security and defence policy. Despite Brexit, the UK military and intelligence capacities, bilateral defence cooperation agreements, participation in NATO, as well as shared interests and similar challenges such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are factors which warrant EU-UK cooperation in this policy field. Labour wants a "UK-EU security pact" which should include closer coordination not only on military security, but also on economic, climate, health, cyber and energy issues; it should be in line with NATO collective defence and bilateral relations with partners such as France, Poland, Ireland and Germany. While PM Starmer ruled out any movement on Brexit (return to the single market or the customs union, formal mandatory adoption of EU law), deepening cooperation in foreign and security policy could open up scope for cooperation in other fields in the future.

Throughout the Brexit negotiations the EU side made sure that for the participation in EU programmes the standard rules for third countries apply, without any decision rights for the UK. In view of common challenges, not least the future European security order, the UK participation in the European Political Community (EPC) offers a welcome venue. The latest meeting of the EPC took place in and was chaired by the UK; but the role and the future of this forum remains vague. (Giuashvili 2024) The EU could consider establishing structured security cooperation with the UK in a balanced way through a specific model (a security pact or a common strategic initiative), based on partnership and complementarity to cooperation in NATO (Cloos 2024; King 2024 highlights areas / issues for cooperation; von Ondarza 2024 proposes modalities of cooperation).

The Presidential election in the US next November will be another important event for EU security and defence policy. The significance of NATO for European security, including the nuclear umbrella, combined with the preponderant role of the US (roughly 70% of total defence spending of NATO countries), and statements by former President Trump, make an electoral victory of the Republican candidate, understandably, worrying for Europeans. The US might reduce its military and financial assistance to Ukraine and/or disrespect the alliance commitments under article V of the Washington Treaty. Even if Trump is not elected, the US will continue insisting on higher defence spending by Europeans. The pivot of US foreign policy to Asia-Pacific under President Obama implied progressive_disengagement from the EU neighbourhood, presumably only temporarily reversed by the war in Ukraine.

Burden sharing between the US and Europe is not a recent debate; it has a long history during the cold war and beyond (Lindstrom 2005). After 1989 all NATO members, including the US, benefitted from the “peace dividend” by reducing defence spending, though the US kept their spending in GDP terms much higher than European countries (Cepparulo, Pasimeni 2024). Differences in the level of defence spending between the US and Europe are *per se* not an issue. Europe does not have to be on a par with the US since the latter as a global power pursues objectives which are not shared by the Europeans. However, there is a problem to the extent that Europeans have been free-riding, avoiding to take on responsibility and bearing the cost for their own security. This may either not be possible any longer (in case a future US administration would not tolerate it) or the price for so doing could rise considerably.

The price to pay is not just defence spending; it also entails the cost for aligning with the policies of the protecting power even when they go against European interests. In particular the Russian invasion of Ukraine has revealed Europeans’ profound dependence on the US for their security. But “Europe becoming an American vassal is unwise for both sides. Europeans can become a stronger and more independent part of the Atlantic alliance...” (Puglierin, Shapiro 2023). At the same time, defence spending is intrinsically linked to industrial interests; Europeans do more than two-thirds of their military procurement in the US, starving European companies of much-needed investment; this point is made forcefully by Ischinger (2024).

The European and American elections will have an impact in several policy fields. When it comes to EU defence there are challenges and motivations leading to change. As shown elsewhere (Revelas 2024), EU defence policy could shift from crisis management to common defence; this is institutionally feasible, the political conditions appear now more favourable than in the past and the industrial, economic underpinnings of common defence are well understood and acted upon. Investing in EU defence is a political priority not only in the current circumstances, but also in the long term. Crucial in this

perspective are both foresight and strategic thinking, for example exploring the potential and the conditions for the mutual assistance clause foreseen in article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty or preparing for an EU pillar in NATO. In parallel, the EU should continue making full use of its diplomacy and soft power to contribute to stability and predictability in international relations, working with like-minded partners while reaching out to all other actors.

There is no time for complacency. Europeans must adapt rapidly to a harsher international environment, without the certainties of the past concerning reliance on US security guarantees. Abandoning long held beliefs, esp. comfortable ones, is never an easy step. Yet, reason commands that the EU develops the policy and the means for its own security. The EP elections did not yield results which would hinder decisively such efforts. Elections in member states complicate the picture as radical right and populist parties are progressing. These political forces, once in power, will be confronted with the dilemma of increased insecurity combined with a possibly unreliable US ally; yet, populist parties do not excel in responsible behaviour when dealing with real world problems. The biggest danger for Europe would be to neglect efforts for its own security. In this sense, US electoral developments may even be salutary as they tend to increase awareness among Europeans about the real issues at stake. One thing is clear, security is a valuable good, and it does not come for free. The sooner, we Europeans, realise this simple truth, the better it will be for our security, and for Europe's sovereignty.

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USA-CYPRUS RELATIONS AMID THE USA'S 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



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Since Cyprus gained independence from Britain in 1960, USA-Cyprus relations have experienced significant fluctuations. The cold war, the 1974 Turkish invasion and the assassination of the USA's ambassador Roger Davies during anti-American riots in the same year were pivotal events shaping relations. However, by 2024, USA-Cyprus relations seem stronger than ever, marked by the establishment of a strategic dialogue between them, usually established with NATO members, which Cyprus is not. The strategic dialogue will encompass six main areas: security, energy, trade, economic cooperation, research, and cybersecurity, and will take place through regular meetings between delegations from both countries. Meanwhile, Cyprus is working towards lifting the US arms embargo and visa restrictions. Despite these achievements, the upcoming Presidential elections in October 2024 could potentially impact this newfound strength in bilateral relations.

It is evident that under the Biden's administration, relations between the United States and Cyprus have reached unprecedented levels of cooperation. During this period, there has been continued military and energy cooperation, as well as a boosted support in a bilateral, bi-communal federation in Cyprus, aligned with UN resolutions. One noteworthy example of this partnership is the Cyprus humanitarian sea corridor initiative, which aimed to provide aid to Gaza with substantial logistical and structural support from the U.S. Although the project faced logistical challenges and was ultimately deemed unsuccessful, it underlines the deepening coordination between the two states. Consequently, it looks like the USA favours a strengthened

relationship with the Republic of Cyprus, due to its strategic importance as a stabilising force in a volatile and unstable region. Therefore, it would be unwise to assume that a potential Kamala Harris victory in the upcoming November election (continuation of Democrats administration) would result in a shift in these relations.

On the other hand, understanding what a potential Trump victory would mean for USA-Cyprus relations is more complex, as a change to a Republican administration is likely to result to key changes to US foreign policy. Thus, it would be sensible to examine Trump's 2017-2021 administration when he oversaw the White House. In fact, it was during his administration when initially the US Congress voted to lift the decades-old arms embargo on Cyprus, allowing for greater military cooperation. This move marked a considerable shift in U.S. foreign policy, indicating a commitment to deeper military cooperation with Cyprus. Some may argue the lifting of the embargo was a strategic counter to Turkey's purchase of the S-400 missile system from Russia, despite Turkey's NATO membership. It also signalled a broader effort by the U.S. to boost ties with Cyprus and Greece, in part as a response to Turkey's actions and its increasing coalition with Russia. Moreover, the lift of the arms embargo also stressed the U.S. desire to weaken Cyprus's dependence on Russia, as proved by the 2015 agreement which granted Russian military use of Cypriot ports. The lift of the arms embargo signals that the US pursues a more trustworthy and stable partner in the Middle East, while guaranteeing that Cyprus would align with the Western and NATO interests.

Despite the factors discussed, the impact of a potential Trump administration on future USA-Cyprus relations remains uncertain due to Trump's known unpredictability and unconventional foreign policy approach. It is worth mentioning that USA-Cyprus relations may ultimately depend on USA-Turkey relations. Historically, USA has managed to balance its relationships and interests between Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. Given Greece's inclusion on the F-35 programme and Turkey's exclusion due to its purchase of the S-400 missiles, a Trump administration might either escalate support for Cyprus as part of a broader strategy to counterbalance Turkey's influence or seek to stabilise relations with Turkey at Cyprus's expense.

The stark reality is that the key Greek national issues, such as the resolution of the Cypriot issue and sovereignty disputes with Turkey over the Aegean Sea, are not high on the agendas of the presidential candidates nor are a priority for US foreign policy. In fact, it is perhaps one of the few times Greek lobbying is weak. Still, even when the presence of Greek lobbying was supposedly strong, it did not automatically translate into influential relationships and achievements. To elaborate, the election of Jimmy Carter was seen as favourable for the Greek-Cypriots as he promised support for a solution to the Cyprus Problem and the continuation of the arms embargo on

Turkey to pressure them to cooperate for a resolution in Cyprus. However, geopolitical complexities in the region at the time, including the strategic importance of Turkey within NATO, influenced his actions. As a result, Carter was eventually pressured to lift the arms embargo on Turkey to maintain NATO unity, a decision that ultimately disappointed Greek Americans. Hence, this instance illustrates that regardless of the upcoming winner of the 2024 Presidential elections in October, politics are unpredictable, and nothing can be taken for granted.

Overall, the Democrats are not expected to shift their foreign policy interest's trajectory dramatically for the foreseeable future, yet significant shifts are always a possibility. This means consistent dedicated support for Cyprus cannot be guaranteed neither under a Harris or a Trump administration, as geopolitical dynamics are continuously evolving. It is therefore evident that a Trump administration could more likely introduce new uncertainties, while an extension of the Democrat's administration would likely maintain the current foreign policy trajectory. A notable project is the plan for the construction of a new naval base at *Mari* in Cyprus, which is believed to foster closer collaborations with the United States. This is not still confirmed, but speculations suggest it could grant access to US military activities. Evidently, it seems that Cyprus is becoming a trustworthy and strategically valuable partner in a wider unstable region, evidenced by the current war in Gaza. Although a Harris administration is expected to maintain the current foreign policy trajectory, something that Cyprus favours, geopolitical dynamics are always subject to change, making a dramatic shift in policy unlikely but not impossible.

THE US AFTER THE ELECTION: STATUS QUO ANTE OR TRANSACTIONAL DIPLOMACY?



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Some elections matter, and some elections - despite deep internal political changes - don't matter at all for their albeit limited geopolitical implications. Nowadays, the date to point at the geopolitical calendar is the 5th of November 2024.

Major foreign policy developments in Ukraine, Israel, and the Indo-Pacific will mostly depend on the November elections in the US. The ongoing electoral campaign in America means that, until the 5th of November, there will not be any concrete solutions to the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Europe. On the one hand, a Harris victory means preservation of the *status quo ante*: military and financial support for Ukraine, but no field involvement, a pendulum approach with Israel and a silent and not-so-boasted tough stance on China, following Biden's footprints. The current President, in fact, has maintained the tariffs on imported goods from China implemented by Trump and broadened the spectrum including semiconductors and EV tech. At the end of July 2024, Biden put on the table further possible export sanctions on semiconductors to China. More likely, Kamala Harris will continue on this auto-pilot path. On the other hand, a more probable election of Donald Trump - with positive polls in his favour - will reshuffle all the cards in the foreign policy table, except for China. Regarding China, Donald Trump will have the same approach as in 2016-2020: tough and noisy, different from Biden's similarly tough but silent approach. Trump's goal will be to militarily contain China within the First Island Chain and push Beijing into a trade war. Nevertheless, he recognizes Xi's leadership and influence on Putin, thus seeking to possibly involve him in a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine. However, there is an interesting note on Trump's declarations on Taiwan, as he stated that the US will defend Taiwan vis-a-vis China only if the island country pays its defence due to Washington. A purely transactional - and definitely Trumpist - approach to defence policy, similar to the stances on supposed freeriding NATO allies in Europe. This harsh language serves to bolster his MAGA electoral base, which is growing tired of financing the defence of allies around the globe. Is it a credible threat, or is it just a negotiating strategy to force Taiwan to invest more in defence before Trump

arrives in the Oval Office? Perhaps it might be, but American AI stocks have just slumped after Trump's declarations. Regarding the wars in Europe and the Middle East, all the warring parties are waiting for the next US President to come. At this stage, Joe Biden does not have the political standing nor the authority to broker deals between the belligerents. In the case of a Trump election, the first political act of the President will be trying to broker a deal between Putin and Zelensky. Given the transactional approach of Trumpist diplomacy, it is likely that a possible deal between Russia and Ukraine will leave out players like the EU and push for the presence of Xi Jinping, a supporter of the Russian cause. Traditional diplomatic peace forums that we have witnessed until now will leave room to bilaterals and trilaterals, in which Trump will be the deal maker and the supposed "adult" in the room. Forums such as G7, NATO and UN will play a limited part in Trump's peace strategies, and they will surely be the target of Trump's firebrand propaganda. The most probable point of agreement on Ukraine for Trump could be as follows: the eastern part of Ukraine will end up under Russian influence or directly annexed by Russia, while the rest of Ukraine will be welcomed by NATO or, most probably, in the EU. Knowing Trump, he would be happy not to have Ukraine in NATO, as it can be considered as the last defence free-rider lining up in Europe. Regarding Israel, Trump will use his personal, long-standing, and strong friendship with Netanyahu to force him to slow down military operations while revamping the Abraham Accords with the friendlier side of the Arab world, which is under strain following the October 7th attack by Hamas. Hence putting Israel again in dialogue with the Gulf monarchies, a line of communication abruptly interrupted. Trump will still allow Netanyahu to surgically strike Hamas to inflict as much damage as possible before a definitive cease-fire, which will probably not lead to a definitive peace framework in the region. Trump could be capable of brokering a meeting between Netanyahu and Mohamed Bin Salman, but the tycoon will have a hard time with Abu Mazen in the West Bank: the two never really got along on a personal level. The hope for the West is a change of leadership in Ramallah, but at this time the alternative to the elderly Abbas could be a more radicalised leadership perhaps influenced by Hamas. The Palestinian issue will probably be cast aside by Trump and his advisers, and the focus will shift again on the relationship between Israel and the Gulf Monarchies.

POST-ELECTION US FOREIGN POLICY: LIMITED ROOM FOR DIVERGENCE DESPITE POLARIZATION



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As the 2024 US Election nears, students of international politics consider how the result might impact US foreign engagements. Although foreign policy is a secondary topic in the pre-election debate, the US's global role, power dynamics, and conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East provide intriguing areas for discussion. At the same time, mounting competition between the USA and China and related fears of a potential clash over Taiwan generate questions about the policies each candidate could promote in case of election. True, Harris might adopt a tougher stance on Russia compared to Trump and may apply more pressure on Israel than her Republican counterpart. Trump could escalate bilateral competition with China beyond what President Biden did, while Harris might try more to engage Beijing within a rules-based international order. However, a President's ability to implement foreign policy is limited by the international system's characteristics and the state of global relations, which are more influential than personal policy preferences. Despite the highly polarized US political system, foreign policy and security strategy options remain largely consistent across political parties and leadership styles. So, to understand potential nuances in US foreign and security policy post-election, we need to consider not only the candidates' profiles and their staff but also the characteristics of the international system.

The international system is currently marked by a resurgence of intense great power competition. Great powers have always played a key role in global power distribution, which influences state behavior. Shifts in power distribution and polarity lead to changes in these behaviors, marking periods of systemic transition that are often unstable, especially in relations among great powers. This is the case when it comes to the contemporary international system: a system in transition and power re-distribution. The shift in power distribution indicates that uncontested unipolarity is ending and that the USA is not a sole superpower any more setting the rules of the international system in a hegemonic manner. This transition has increased tension and rivalry among great powers, reaching levels not seen since the Cold War. Tensions arise from China and Russia's revisionist aims, prompted by past US overexpansion and subsequent perceived weaknesses.

These revisionist policies led the USA to a strategic shift, as outlined in the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS), issued by the Trump administration. This new approach identified China and Russia as rival powers threatening US security, moving away from the post-Cold War approach. It formed the basis of US policies to counter Beijing and Moscow's influence, marking a return to both hard and soft balancing in great power relations. To verify that this approach signifies a break with the past, one can have a look at all previous post-Cold War National Security Strategies and will find that none of them had addressed other great powers as threatening US security. The G. W. Bush NSS focused on non-state asymmetric threats and rogue states, not great powers, as global power distribution then favored Washington to an undisputed degree. The NSS highlighted this approach in its very first sentence: "United States possesses unprecedented— and unequaled— strength and influence in the world". The Obama 2010 NSS retained focus on terrorism as the paramount source of security threats and treated other great powers in a rather inclusive and cooperative manner. In 2015, after Russia annexed Crimea and China acted assertively in the South China Sea, the 2nd Obama Administration's NSS recognized Russian aggression and challenges from China's policies but did not label them as threats.

The 2017 NSS marked a lasting change, not just a Trump-era shift, as evidenced by the Biden administration largely maintaining the same approach. In both 2020 Interim NSS and the final 2021 NSS, Biden administration lashed out on Russia and China and marked the dangers stemming from these two countries trying to revise the so-called rules-based international order. At the same time, the two documents declared US readiness to reclaim leadership in international institutions.

In this context, both a 2nd Trump or a Harris administration are likely to follow a similar strategic framework. While there will be differences in handling key foreign policy issues, both will recognize that their policy options are limited by systemic factors. US-China relations are unlikely to improve significantly as long as China challenges US leadership and the US seeks to counter it. Even Trump's isolationist stance cannot change this dynamic, as seen in his first term. Harris may aim to end the Gaza conflict and prevent regional escalation by strongly encouraging (or even trying to force) Israel to negotiate, but will not abandon this key ally to avoid signaling weakness. Trump might push Ukraine to negotiate with Russia, possibly involving territorial concessions, but will avoid giving Russia a clear victory that could embolden the Russian-Chinese axis. In other words, although the two candidates may seem to represent opposing viewpoints, their foreign policy decisions are likely to align more closely than their campaign rhetoric currently reveals.

CRITICAL TIMES FOR WESTERN DEMOCRACIES



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Recent elections in Europe and the upcoming elections in the US show the rise of anti-democratic forces. These political forces reflect frustration with the inability of traditional democratic parties to address daily concerns about the economy, migration, foreign policy and other domestic issues. Ironically, authoritarian systems like those of Russia and China exploit public frustration to undermine further the credibility of democratic politics. The use and misuse of social media has made a bad situation worse.

In few weeks, the US will be going through a critical presidential election. Europe is quite familiar with the risks posed by Trump's reelection. In his earlier presidential term, Trump undermined traditional principles of post war American foreign policy and allowed himself to be manipulated by Putin, the North Korean dictator and other petty dictators around the world. Trump's recent policy statements show that nothing has changed in his thinking or in his rhetoric. Once again he presents himself as "all knowing" and not in need for advice by experts in domestic or in foreign policy. Following the failed assassination attempt against him, Trump is now promoting himself as "blessed by God" to complete his mission...Unfortunately, the Republican Party is at a loss about what to do with Trump. There is no political will to confront him or his dictatorial tendencies. The tradition of checks and balances in the US political system is now at risk.

President Biden, who succeeded Trump, run a successful presidency based on traditional American foreign and domestic policy principles. The US came to the aid of Ukraine following the Russian invasion and built a coalition of NATO and other countries to support Ukraine. Sadly, no such consensus exists over what to do to address the Israeli invasion of Gaza. Biden's withdrawal from the upcoming presidential race has revitalized the Democratic Party's campaign. If Vice President Harris wins the election, we will see the continuation of American post war foreign policy. In contrast, Trump's election will put at risk all the principles that guided US foreign policy since the end of WWII. Trump is surrounding himself with "yes men" totally loyal to him. Recent Supreme Court decisions support his quest for absolute power.

Having lived in the US on and off since the early 1950's, I have seen the ability of the US to address, on a bipartisan basis, issues like segregation, Viet Nam, the anti-communist hysteria of the 1950's, civil rights, etc. As we approach the November elections the American political system is polarized, if not broken. The undermining of democratic politics in the US started decades ago with Republican leaders like Newt Gingrich. Now extreme confrontational politics have become the norm. The legacy my generation is leaving is not positive. The US political system set up in 1776 was and remains a work in progress. The struggle since independence has been that of attaining the principles of the American Declaration of Independence. The November election will be one more test of this process. European countries and the EU in particular will need to seriously consider the consequences of a potential Trump victory and show the necessary unity and leadership to cope with the challenges facing the Atlantic partnership.

DANGEROUS ELECTIONS IN THE WEST: A POLITICAL COMMUNICATION BRINGING BACK TO THE YEARS 1860-1914?



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In many ways the political situation in Europe can be parallel with the 1860-1914 years that led to the suicide of Europe and of European civilizations in the tranches of First World War. Europe and American political thinking evolved a lot following the “scramble to Africa”, especially in how they conceived diplomacy. As showed by Patrick Cohrs in his impressive and massive book *The New Atlantic Order. The Transformation of International Politics* (2022), Western political thinking became more and more ideologized during the decades leading to the First World War. Of course, such evolution was slow but it was nether the less irresistible. Political thinking became trapped in a combination of nationalist, jingoistic and degraded power politics thinking. Instead of keeping with the tradition of the Concert of Europe, established after the final defeat of Napoleon and the Vienna Congress (1814-1815) that was successful in managing European tensions and international crises in the Americas until the war of Crimea (1853-1856), European powers and the US became trapped in a zero-sum gamer type of thinking. This thinking is derived from the realist school of IR and consists in viewing one’s game as only possible if the other side loses. Such thinking then makes the search of a compromise simply impossible.

Political communication at this time also changed and took a clear racial turn to form a sort of “civilisational nationalism” that opposed Western powers (Britain, France the US) against those judged under developed (Colonial sphere, China) and those judged immoral and decadent (German and Austro-Hungary Empires). Political scientist Max Weber explained that, in this period, the elites of the “most advanced” powers also became obsessed with measuring global hierarchy, the “rise and fall” of nations and empires, and all form of progress. Thinking about progress became linked to social Darwinism to form a “civilizational Darwinism” thinking. The combination of “civilizational nationalism” and of “civilizational Darwinism” made political elites centered their discourses (implicitly or explicitly) on the idea that what nations and states were engaged in was essentially a struggle for the survival of the “fittest” civilization.

There are similarities between these elements and what we can observe in the US and Europe at the occasion for the 2024 elections, mostly European elections, French Parliamentary elections and upcoming US Presidential election. These elections are showing that political discourses are getting more and more ideologized. It is not the exact same ideology as in the years 1860-1914, but an evolved version of it that is based on the idea that the “West” has the best political systems and values as it “won the Cold war”. This ideology is combined by a new cult in science (positivism namely) to form a sort of “positivist liberal internationalism” that argues that development and peace in the world can only be guaranteed by the spread of Western political regimes and values against countries seen as rivals and threats (China, Russia, Iran, etc.).

Positivism applied to political science research method contributed to put aside factors of human behaviour that were long identified by Thucydides. As such perceptions and emotions were considered as not scientific and not worth of being a subject of research. When emotions were taken into account in analyses of international relations, they often tend to be studied from a utilitarian, or at least rationalist, point of view. Morgenthau is to some extent responsible for this, no doubt in spite of himself, by including fear in the highly rationalist model of nuclear deterrence.

This approach evacuates all subjectivity, social ties and emotions in social relations. Positivism makes us imagining the worst-case scenario: this is especially true in hardcore realism and liberalism. For many positivist security scholars, international actors are driven by external forces that push them in a particular direction. Future threats are deduced from past trends, as if the social world advances in a linear fashion. Finally, alarmism assumes rational, self-interested and strategic actors struggling for power and resources. In this competitive universe, there is no room for real cooperation, social ties, or anything which we can liken to an international society with “constitutional structures” or the development of a new regional order. This alarmism is rational insofar as the threatening actions are not attributed to actors driven by passion or revenge, but to cold self-interest or historical forces. A current argument in West-European and North American literatures are what they call the China threat or the Russian Threat. These countries are often presented as homogeneous actors that “rise” and appear to be intent on imposing its will on the world in a near future through a long-standing strategic plan.

Positivism denies any place for heterogeneity, creativity, and social connections between actors. While categorization and typification are necessary for any science to “know” certain aspects of social reality, nomological positivism tends to reify these categories and, for example, personify aggregations with given interests and emotions, such as the desire of “China” to dominate. This unification can make actors appear particularly

powerful and dangerous. If actors are perceived as unified, such as “Russia,” “China,” “North Korea,” or “Iran,” it becomes easier to attribute a coherent will to them. It is often forgotten that foreign policy actions are more often the result of compromise than coordinated policy. The positivist logic also leads to understand concepts only in their Euro-Atlantic understanding. As such, a “democracy” can only be a political construction matching with the Euro-Atlantic understanding. Any other model is not a “true” democracy, can’t be qualified as such and is in fact a manipulatory attempt by corrupted elites to pretend to be a democracy. The conclusion is to assume cultures, histories, civilizations are all equal.

In his book *Le Naufrage des Civilisations* (2019), Amim Maalouf explains that globalisation, facilitated and supported by technological development, is forcing the different components of humanity closer together to such an extent that these different components are tending to become increasingly uniform. Yet there is a paradox: people adhere to doctrines and ideologies that glorify particularism. People are coming together more and more every day, and the clash of identities is becoming increasingly violent. Such violence could be observed in the latest French parliamentary elections when Rassemblement National was accused by Emmanuel Macron’s party and by other pro-EU parties of being willing to turn France into a sort of new Nazi regime; or when Jean-Luc Melenchon’s party and activist refused to accept their defeat and warned for a violent uprising if they could not form the future government.

During the Cold war, Henry Kissinger distinguished between two types of foreign policy. Western foreign policies were structured around the use of rational, objective data, resulting in diplomatic cables that were easy to interpret and from which everyone could make a cost/benefit calculation; and on the other hand, Eastern foreign policies were built around opaque, internal, irrational and emotional factors. In conclusion, there was nothing new in the West, and when reference was made to irrational desires, these had to be translated into scientific, neutral and credible language. Now, it is the over way around: “Eastern” diplomacy is rational, engages with *Realpolitik*. The latest example being the key Chinese influence in the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement. In contrast, European diplomacy is inaudible because it became too emotional: it is out of question to negotiate with Putin because Putin is made in public and official discourses the embodiment of Evil. Indeed, Rivals of the West are qualified in medical terms of “diseases” to form a bipolar understanding of world politics in order to create legitimacy to support the discourses that the world is entering a “new Cold war” with set of alliances forming on each side (expansion of NATO and of the BRICS). Just like it was inconceivable for European elites (either French, Germany or British) to find a compromise before 1914 and during the war without the total defeat of the opponent, it is inconceivable in the West today to find

appeasement or compromise at the international level (with Russia for example) or with non-pro-EU movements in the sphere of domestic politics.

Instead of acknowledging that political systems need to be modified to accommodate new power equilibrium and dynamics, those in power (either political parties of dominating countries) engage in politics of blaming those supporting these new forces. As such, those seen (from the West) as challenging “their” authority should be severely punished or “sanctioned”. The use of the word “sanction” is revealing because it is problematic. The idea of sanction in its semantics refers to the idea of a judged thing, a judgement rendered by an impartial court and sanctions a social behaviour considered as unacceptable. The objective is therefore twofold, when, used by a State: to punish an actor deemed to be deviant but also to limit the room for manoeuvre of a rival power wanting to change the rules of the international system. The use of the term ‘sanction’, in an indeterminate way to encompass all measures taken against a state, hides under a legal terminology, often improper, a will to impose its values and perpetuate the existing order. Far from defending a vision of a universally accepted international order, ‘sanctions’ participate in the imposition of a specific interpretation of the existing order.

Because of their ideological turns the years 1860-1914 and the period starting from 2022 share surprising similarities. Knowing how the period 1860-1914 ended and the consequences that the war in Ukraine is putting on Western social and economic life (lack of trust in national and EU institutions, important weakening of the economy, etc.), European leaderships should be exercising caution and engage in a honest and non-emotional thinking about where are the interest of their countries instead of buying US rational about world events, or they may find themselves dealing with the same consequences as their predecessors had after 1918.

ELECTIONS AND THE NEW POLITICAL LANDSCAPE



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expressed are personal.*

A common thread runs through many of the elections taking place around the world this year: a rise in populism and nationalism, a move towards protectionism and centralised power, and a tendency for voters to oust incumbents. There is also a notable anti-war sentiment amid escalating conflicts. This trend is particularly evident in the European elections, where the political landscape is becoming more divided and fragmented. While the centre and centre-right retained a reduced majority in the new parliament, the far right made significant gains and some incumbents, notably in France and Germany, suffered humiliating defeats. These results cannot be decoupled from the socio-economic changes of the past two decades and the state of the economy, nor can they be understood in isolation from war and conflict and the growing divide between the public and its elites. This analysis examines these issues in detail.

European elections: A shift to the right as the mainstream holds

In the European Parliament, the mainstream parties of the centre and centre-right - the European People's Party of the Christian Democratic tradition, the Socialists and Democrats and the centrist-liberal Renew Europe - saw their collective majority reduced. Their seats in parliament fell from 442 to 401 and their share of the popular vote from 63% to 56%.

Far-right parties, though not homogeneous, increased their seats from 138 to 187 and their share of the vote from 19% to 26%. This may sound modest, but their votes at national level were in many cases significantly higher, notably in France, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Austria and others.

There are three far-right groups in the European Parliament: The Patriots of Europe, which includes France's National Rally and Hungary's ruling Fidesz party; the European Conservatives and Reformists, which includes Italy's Brothers of Italy; and the Europe of Sovereign Nations, which includes Germany's Alternative for Germany. All prioritise national sovereignty over further European integration, emphasise immigration control and the

preservation of national identity. With the exception of the European Conservatives and Reformists, they also oppose continued military aid to Ukraine and favour a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

Anti-war sentiment looms large

The parties that won votes and seats in the European elections tended to be anti-establishment and anti-war, particularly on Ukraine. Anti-war sentiment is larger than the results suggest. A poll by the Eurasia Group's Institute for Global Affairs, a pro-NATO institution, in its report 'The New Atlanticism: Where Americans and Western Europeans Agree and Disagree', published in June, found that 94% of Americans and 88% of Western Europeans support peace negotiations to end the war in Ukraine. Participants in the survey were asked to choose several reasons for their support for peace negotiations. The most common were the high human cost of the conflict, fears of escalation and concerns about the West's ability to sustain long-term military support for Ukraine.

Incumbents defeated in France and Germany

At the national level, the election results were more dramatic, particularly in France and Germany. In France, Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally won 31.4% of the vote, while the centrist coalition, including Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance, won an embarrassing 14.6%. In response, Macron dissolved the National Assembly and called new legislative elections, which were held on 30 June and 7 July.

In Germany, the coalition parties that form the government - the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Free Democrats - won a combined 31% of the vote. The far-right Alternative for Germany came second with 15.9%, behind the Christian Democrats with 30%.

The snap election in France

President Macron's gambit didn't work but did manage to deny the National Rally a majority in the National Assembly, aided by the manipulative nature of the electoral system.

Specifically, the National Rally, which received the highest number of votes, 37%, received the smallest number of seats, 142, in the 577-seat Assembly. On the other hand, the Popular Front, an alliance of left-wing parties, won the largest number of seats, 188, with only 26% of the vote. Emmanuel Macron's Ensemble alliance secured 161 seats with 25% of the vote. The result is a hung parliament, which may not bode well for France's future, but that is another matter.

The French electoral system is designed to be manipulated. It is a two-round system, held on two consecutive Sundays, on a constituency-by-constituency basis. In the first round, only candidates with 50% or more of the vote are elected. The second round is between the top two candidates and those with more than 12.5% of the registered voters in their constituency. It is then a first-past-the-post system. What happened was that the Popular Front of left-wing parties and Macron's Ensemble worked together to increase their chances of winning. They strategically withdrew candidates and forced the vote in the direction of their remaining candidate. The result was fully engineered.

The United Kingdom

France was not the only country to hold a snap election in July. The UK also held a general election on 4 July instead of in the autumn. As in France, the result had more to do with the electoral system than the popular vote. It is also first-past-the-post system, where each constituency is contested separately. It is a brutal system because the more fragmented the political landscape, the easier it is for the largest party to win a large number of seats with a relatively small share of the vote.

Labour won 33.7% of the vote, giving it 411 seats - almost two-thirds of the total. Compared to the 2019 election, Labour slightly increased its share of the vote by 1.6 percentage points and more than doubled its number of seats. Given the favourable conditions for Labour to win, its failure to increase its share of the vote significantly is a defeat. The economy was bad, and people were unhappy. Real per capita income has barely moved in a decade and a half. Inflation was high until recently, and the Conservatives had been in power since 2010.

Labour's victory was due to the electoral system and the fragmentation of the political landscape. The Conservatives suffered defeat. They received 23.7% of the vote and 121 seats, losing 19.9% of the vote and 251 seats compared to what they won in 2019. The Liberal Democrats won 12.2% of the vote and 72 seats, while the far-right Reform UK party, led by Nigel Farage, won 14.3% of the vote and just 5 seats.

More importantly, these elections show that people are losing faith in the mainstream parties. In France, the far-right National Rally and the left-wing Popular Front alliance are bypassing Macron's centrist party and the old-fashioned centre-right. A similar trend may be unfolding in the UK.

Shifts in European society

European societies have been shifting over the past 20 years, similar to trends in the United States. The global financial crisis of 2008 and the euro crisis of 2010-2014 effectively changed the socio-economic fabric of Europe. The subsequent recoveries have been weak compared to previous cycles. Growth and productivity lagged behind. Wages remained relatively stagnant in real terms and employment became increasingly precarious. Societies became less inclusive and income inequalities increased. Public and private debt ratios rose significantly in many cases, making the outlook for monetary policy highly uncertain. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 marked a turning point in globalisation, with global supply chains diverted to friendlier shores in an increasingly protectionist and fragmented global economy.

Enter EU enlargement!

The EU has made significant commitments to enlargement, first to the Western Balkans and then to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. While enlargement is understandable for the Balkans, it is less so for the latter three, including Ukraine. Enlargement is a long process, and this one will be more difficult and riskier than the big bang enlargement of 2004. But first, it will require internal reform in the EU and will put pressure on the budget.

Conclusion

With few exceptions, all G7 leaders are losing their legitimacy. They are either being voted out of office or losing popularity. Leaders lose popularity and legitimacy when their plans fail, and their policies do not work. Europe faces stagnation and chaos, and the United States the most polarised and divisive election in its post-war history.

In this context, it is not surprising that some countries, large and small, have seen a realignment of the party system and the rise of the far right. Old divisions over immigration, the economy and the green transition are coming to the fore. Then there is nationalism, plain and simple, and Euroscepticism.

These were long-standing issues. The vote also reflected divisions in Europe over the war in Ukraine, defence and security. Unsurprisingly, all the war parties lost in the election - the Social Democrats, the centrists of the Renew Europe group and the Greens. This issue goes to the heart of foreign and security policy. More importantly, the commitments made in relation to the war in Ukraine are very risky for the European Union, especially as the United States will be turning its attention to Asia and its rivalry with China. Europe will be left alone to manage these commitments. It will be increasingly divided.

THE UK GENERAL ELECTION 2024 AND FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES



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The UK General Election of 2024 is one of the most pivotal in recent history, not only for its domestic implications but also for its potential to reshape the United Kingdom's foreign policy. The British Conservative Party, after being in control of the state since 2010, has suffered a major defeat from the Labour Party, whose leader Sir Keir Starmer has become the new Prime Minister with an absolute majority in the new composition of the House of Commons. The 2024 election comes at a time of significant global geopolitical instability and rising tensions, most notably, the war in Ukraine, rising confrontation between China and the West, the war in Gaza and the potential spread of the conflict in the Middle East. Domestically, the country is grappling with economic instability, social inequality, and a growing sense of political disillusionment among the electorate. This article explores how the outcome of the 2024 election will impact the UK's foreign policy, particularly concerning its role in global conflicts, relations with key allies, and its position on international organizations.

To understand the potential shifts in foreign policy, it is essential to examine the main political parties and their platforms. The Conservative Party, led by the now-former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, has maintained a robust foreign policy stance, emphasizing the importance of national security and the UK's role as one of the main global players. Under the conservative leadership, the UK has taken a hardline approach to Russia for waging a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, championing strict economic sanctions against Russian political establishment, oligarchs, and export of military and dual-purpose goods and technologies. The British government is also one of the main providers of the military support for Ukraine. The Conservatives have also advocated for strong relations with the United States, while being more cautious in dealings with China, often highlighting concerns about potential national security threats. Last, but not least, the Conservative government had very difficult relations with the European Union, championing Brexit and, afterwards, choosing not to maintain close ties with the block.

The Labour Party, traditionally more inclined toward diplomacy and multilateralism, is campaigning on a platform that promises a partial recalibration of the UK's foreign policy. Under Starmer's leadership, Labour has indicated a willingness to engage more with international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union. They advocate for a foreign policy that prioritizes human rights, climate action, and global cooperation over military intervention. Labour's stance on Russia in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine is close to the one of the previous government, emphasizing the continuation of economic and military support for the victim of Russian aggression. As regards the war in Gaza, the Labour government has been continuously calling for unquestionable respect for international law and the protection of civilians, as well as a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. The Liberal Democrats, known for their pro-European stance, are advocating for closer ties with the European Union, including potential re-entry into the single market. They also emphasize the importance of addressing global challenges such as climate change through international cooperation. The recent election has marked their sharp rise in popularity, having multiplied their number of seats several times from 11 in 2019 election to 72 in 2024, becoming the 3rd largest group in the House of Commons.

So, let us observe some of the crucial international challenges, which demand reaction from the British government, and compare the positions of the Conservative and Labour on them. First, the UK's response to the war in Ukraine has been a defining aspect of its foreign policy under the Conservative government. Continued support for Ukraine, including military aid and sanctions against Russia, has been central to the UK's strategy, and no changes are expected to come with a change in government, with Prime Minister Sir Starmer and Foreign Secretary Lammy restating their commitment to continue providing aid to Ukraine. Then, China's rising global influence and assertive foreign policy present a complex challenge for the United Kingdom. The Conservative Party has been cautious, often critical of China's human rights record and its activities in Hong Kong and the South China Sea, as well as the efforts of China to increase its importance as a global superpower through the Belt and Road Initiative. This has led to a cooling of relations between the two nations, with the UK aligning more closely with the US in its approach to China. Labour, while sharing concerns about China's human rights issues, has suggested a more nuanced approach that balances criticism with engagement, particularly in areas such as trade and climate change, advocating for stronger emphasis on human rights and value-driven policy of engagement. This could result in a less confrontational UK-China relationship, focusing on cooperation where possible while still addressing areas of disagreement. Moving on, Brexit has redefined the UK's relationship with the European Union, and the 2024 election could open a next chapter of it. The Conservatives have largely embraced a hard Brexit, prioritizing sovereignty and control over borders, which has led to strained relations with the EU. Labour, however, has signaled a willingness to mend

ties with the EU, potentially seeking closer economic cooperation and re-engagement with certain EU institutions. The recent visit of the Prime Minister Starmer to France almost immediately upon his appointment, as well as his statements, in which he expresses the willingness of his government to negotiate a comprehensive mutually beneficial agreement between the UK and the EU, provide empirical evidence of an ideological shift in the British foreign policy regarding the block. While rejoining the EU is not currently on the table, a Labour government could pave the way for a more collaborative relationship, particularly in areas such as trade, security, and environmental policy. The UK's role in international organizations such as NATO, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization is another area where the election outcome could have significant implications. The Conservatives have maintained a strong commitment to NATO and have been active in promoting free trade through the WTO. Labour, while also committed to NATO, has indicated a desire to strengthen the UK's role within the UN and other multilateral institutions, focusing on diplomacy and conflict resolution. This could lead to a shift in how the UK engages with international organizations, potentially emphasizing global governance and collective security over unilateral action. Finally, the Labour has been much more critical of the Israeli action in Gaza, prioritizing a ceasefire deal, while, as the Conservatives, fully recognizing the legal right of Israel to defend itself in accordance with the UN Charter. The previous government of Sunak, on the other hand, prioritized diplomatic and non-lethal military assistance, while being less critical of Israel.

In conclusion, the 2024 UK General Election represents a critical juncture for the nation's foreign policy. The change of the ruling party has led to revision of the Great Britain's stances regarding several ongoing global conflicts and geopolitical tensions. The impact of this impetus for change is likely to have a long-lasting impact on the international arena in the years to come, since the UK is one of the most powerful global players.

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