https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_gsirescu.2024.ch4

COMPETING VISIONS OF WORLD ORDER: HOW CHINA, THE US, THE EU AND RUSSIA CONCEIVE THE TRANSITION TO MULTIPOLARITY

Slobodan JANKOVIĆ and Aleksandar MITIĆ[1]

Institute of International Politics and Economics, Serbia

Abstract: Prior and in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine, the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the People's Republic of China launched a series of strategic documents, revealing their conceptions of the current and future world order. While these documents differ in form, they are based on common understanding that the Western-led "rules-based order" (RBO) is undergoing a transition towards multipolarity.

For the U.S. and the EU, the logical objective is to keep as much of the RBO intact as possible, and to absorb the changing international context to their advantage. China and Russia, on the other hand, are pursuing visions of change of world order – political, military, economic, ideological, cultural and normative – which would go beyond cosmetic changes reminiscent of a *status quo*.

This paper aims to present and analyse these differing visions of world order and their perspectives in the transitioning of global political trends, as all the major powers promote strategic narratives in line with strategic documents. Authors contrast the competing visions of world order and discuss how they relate to the realities of each power's statecraft capabilities.

Keywords: Russia, China, U.S., EU, World Order, multipolarity.

World order and the clash for the redistribution of power

In the age of instability, great powers compete with their visions for the increasingly multipolar world order. This has been the case particularly

[1] The paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the research project "Serbia and challenges in international relations in 2024", financed by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, and conducted by Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, during the year 2024.

since Russian President Vladimir Putin's 2007 Munich speech, the first open diplomatic challenge to the "unilateral moment" of U.S. dominance in international politics, economy and media, followed shortly after by the formation of BRICS, as a symbol of rising Sino-Russian cooperation. Washington's counter efforts ensued to limit the reach of this expansive challenge. These dynamics changed the course of transformation of the global order which had been initiated with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The transition towards multipolarity coincided with the eruption of the Western economic crisis from 2008, and the subsequent political bankruptcy of the era of liberal globalisation and humanitarian interventions, which backfired with a migration crisis. The European Union documents of strategic posture lined up with Washington's. The moral underpinnings of Western documents, which had been already hurt during the attacks on Yugoslavia and Iraq, further lost their broader public appeal following the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 and the war in Gaza in 2023-2024, weakening the rhetoric of the rules-based order (RBO) (Jones 2011)[2]. Although phrases and wording on the rules-based order will continue, there is a serious question whether anyone will believe it. The transition towards multipolarity is marked by "uncertainty and the fight for legitimacy of states in international relations" (Mitić and Matić 2022, 251). States use strategic communication, framing and narratives to pursue this legitimacy. Yet, they must make sure to connect the words and the deeds, and "to close the say-do gap" as one of the key elements of successful strategic communication (Mitić 2018, 143).

However, aside questions of popular opinion, the issue of the changing world order is connected to one of the central arguments of IR theories, namely its character. Every theory departs from a certain position in time and space, and the decision to employ it has an ideological background. Indeed, Cox argued that theories are more likely ideologies (Cox 1981, 128). The absence of the authority at the global level led many political scientists from Realist to English school to conclude that, unlike in internal politics where clear official hierarchy is present, the outside realm is ruled by anarchy. Realists start from the Hobbessian assertion that sovereigns act among themselves in a natural state, which is a state of anarchy. A reasonable question arises from this situation: is there a possibility of order in an anarchical environment?

[2] Even in the USA, three months into intervention in Libya, more Americans disapproved than approved it.

A former Australian intelligence analyst and author of a book on his country's strategy, Sam Roggeveen explained that "the international realm is anarchical not in the sense that it is chaotic, in fact, it displays an extraordinary amount of order and cohesion, but in the sense that there is no higher authority with a monopoly on the legal use of violence. It's every state to itself" (Roggeveen 2001)[3]. International law and organisations are examples of order in the structure without a higher power. International institutions, intergovernmental organisations and international law are just tools that do not have the ultimate power over the action of agents, without the will of the strong agents to press those not adhering to mentioned tools. When great powers (strong agents) constantly behave contrary to the tools of international ordering, transformation is occuring.

Lake, however, argued there is no inherent reason why hierarchy cannot be built in relations among sovereign states. Furthermore, some states are subordinate to others (Lake 2009, 13-15). Cooperation among states can be thus among partners, but also between the dominant and subordinate states. Global order, when it is stable, be it bipolar or multipolar, is characterised by a set of regional hierarchies (Janković 2021, 64-68). These regional hierarchies may have one hegemon power, or two and more regional powers (Lake 2009b). In times of changing international orders, these hierarchies are partially or fully in transition.

International order is the structure in which actors or agents (states and non-state actors) operate. Of course, the order refers to certain modus of organising the agents, and presumes certain rules accepted by others in the order. As Bell said, "*International* order is a pattern or structure of human relations such as to sustain the elementary or primary goals of social coexistence among states" (Bell and Thatcher 2008). But while this definition is quite neutral, the content of the rules-based order actually differs. Namely, as said above, every order, in order to fulfil the prerequisites of being called as such, assumes certain pattern, classification and organisation. Soldiers are lined up orderly or disorderly. If they are in order, there is some line, some sort of pattern that we perceive as orderly. Aside this, Bull understood that world order achieves different meanings in the West and elsewhere (Bell and Thatcher 2008, 84-85). This refers to different contents which EU, China, Russia or the United States promote in organising the global order.

[3] Sam Roggeveen, director of the Lowy Institute's International Security Program, is the author of *The Echidna Strategy: Australia's Search for Power and Peace*, published by La Trobe University Press in 2023.

After the bipolar period and a short unipolar moment, the competition of rising great powers China and Russia with a previously dominant power – the U.S. and its EU and NATO partners – occurs in the context of a series of conflicts, wars, migrant and economic crises. Amid the standoff between roughly two camps and four major players (fourth being the fragile EU), with conflicts in Georgia, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and the US Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at containing China's rise, all of them published revised strategies.

A new moment in the rising clash of great powers or elites that want to shape the world and international order was the pandemic of fear, with COVID-19 rapidly strengthening previously present changes in supply chains, economic organisation and demographic slowdown. As Copley noticed, the global transformation reached the boiling point in 2020 with the end of the growth policies, deterioration of public and general population health and demographic trends. (Kopli 2022, 35). Such remarks are perhaps more appropriate for the West, which for the past few centuries had an upper hand in international politics and economy. Russia, China, United States and the EU are in competition through various instruments (conflicts and cooperation in international organisations; unilateral, bilateral and multilateral activities) in order to build, maintain or restore a certain type of order.

In that dire situation, great powers did not miss the opportunity to start a war which - albeit not direct in the presence of nuclear arms - represents a clash for the redistribution of power. This confrontation is announced or acknowledged in the strategic documents defining the position of the powers in international affairs.

The United States: a hegemon on the defensive

A declining, yet still leading great power

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States of America has been the world's leading great power. Its normative, economic, diplomatic, cultural, and particularly military power has thrived throughout the Cold War bipolar era, despite formidable opposition from the Soviet Union throughout the entire period. It succeeded in turning a revolutionary, inward looking People's Republic of China into an ally in the containment of the USSR and a partner in the globalization process. It set up a dominant foothold in Europe through an official post-1945 policy aimed at setting conditions for the establishment of NATO and the future European Union (Holcombe, 1953). In the process, the U.S. attracted both many admirers and enemies throughout

the world. Victorious at the end of the Cold War era, the U.S. logically enjoyed a sense of "all-time-high" domination from the early 1990s on. Its eastward NATO enlargement and "global policeman" interventionist policy of a "lone superpower", at times in full breach of international law and UN Charter, further inspired awe and anger. At the height of its "unilateral moment", the U.S. masterminded the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, at the same time attacking a European country, disregarding Russia's opposition in the UN Security Council, and even physically destroying the Chinese Embassy in the bombing of Belgrade. In the aftermath, with Moscow and Beijing incrementally getting closer and pushing for multipolarity in opposition to U.S.-led policies of geostrategic expansion, Washington started to feel increased pressure and sense of overstretch, heightened by its prolonged War on Terror. Despite Vladimir Putin's warnings on the need to end unipolar domination and NATO eastward enlargement, as well as Xi Jinping's growing contestation of U.S. containment policy in the Indo-Pacific, Washington remained undeterred. However, unipolar domination began to wear off throughout the 2010s, following the effects of the global economic and financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, America's domestic polarization and rising assertiveness of state and non-state adversaries worldwide.

A return to great-power rivalry

Coming full circle, following the humiliating retreat from Afghanistan in late August 2021, Washington turned back to great power rivalry (Mitić 2023a, 30). Already in early September 2021, President Joseph Biden met with Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, with the aim of concluding talks on the "U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership" aimed at countering the Russian Federation (U.S. Department of State 2021). In mid-September 2021, the U.S. signed an agreement with the United Kingdom and Australia on the formation of the AUKUS strategic partnership aimed at containing the expansion of Chinese power in the Pacific. At the December 2021 "Summit for Democracy", Biden designated Moscow and Beijing as key "autocratic" challengers. Following the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the U.S. focused on forging and maintaining a firm Trans-Atlantic alliance with members of the European Union against Moscow. The U.S. provided leadership in financial and military assistance, as well as diplomatic and informational efforts aimed at creating a narrative on the "Russia threat" for European security, reminiscent of the height of the Cold War. Nonetheless, Washington in

parallel pursued its key competition with China in the Indo-Pacific. It boosted bilateral (Taiwan, Philippines), trilateral (AUKUS, US-Japan-South Korea), quadrilateral (QUAD, Chip 4) and multilateral (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework) cooperation aimed at containing China's rise, while at the same criticising Beijing for its "no-limit partnership" with Moscow, in place despite China's uneasiness about the conflict in Ukraine.

How to defend the "rules-based order"?

During the larger part of the Cold War era, U.S. presidents had various approaches to strategic national security documents. When George Kennan, an American diplomat in Moscow, sent his 8,000-word "Long telegram" to the State Department in 1946, analysing the motives of Soviet conduct around the globe, he could not have assumed that it would trigger the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, and become, together with the subsequent 1950 National Security Council paper NSC-68, one of the most influential and foundational documents of U.S. Cold War foreign policy. John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford did not craft documents resembling a national security strategy, and it is only with Jimmy Carter that began an uninterrupted line of such documents. Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski commissioned Harvard professor Samuel Huntington to search for alternatives to the Nixon-Kissinger strategy of détente, with the aim of highlighting the "Soviet menace", the importance of NATO and the maintenance of forward U.S. defence in Europe, as adopted in the Presidential Directive 18 (PD-18) on "U.S. National Strategy", a precursor to today's National Security Strategy documents (Chin, Skinner and Yoo 2023, 105). By 1986, the U.S. Congress adopted a requirement for each president to write a national security strategy. Since then, it is "*the* strategic planning document for the making and execution of U.S. foreign policy", as an "umbrella strategy guiding other high-level U.S. strategy documents – including the national defense strategy, quadrennial defense review, and national military strategy" (Chin, Skinner and Yoo 2023, 104). It serves to communicate the administration's foreign policy at home and to foreign audiences, and as such "provides a window into the contours and constants of American grand strategy" (Chin, Skinner and Yoo 2023, 104). In the analysis of National Security Strategy documents over time, Chin, Skinner and Yoo point to continuity and change in various aspects. In terms of key regional focus, most of the documents in the Cold War and early post-Cold War era focused on Europe and East Asia. During the U.S. "War on Terror", from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s, the Middle East was the main

focus. However, since 2017, the Middle East dropped and East Asia rose to top place in terms of references (Chin, Skinner and Yoo 2023, 117). Similarly, the focus of national security strategies during the Cold War era was on great-power rivalry. The post-Cold War era documents "de-emphasized focus on major-power rivals and instead focused on growing non-traditional and transnational threats", such as terrorism (Chin, Skinner and Yoo 2023, 119). Yet, "the shift back toward great-power competition began with Obama and has only continued", with Trump identifying China and Russia as main challenges (Chin, Skinner and Yoo 2023, 120).

Joseph Biden's 2022 "National Security Strategy" elevates rivalry with Russia and China to new heights. It acknowledges that "the post-Cold War era is definitely over", and a "competition is underway between the major powers between the major powers to shape what comes next" (The White House 2022, 6). But, while "the international environment has become more contested", the U.S. "remains the world's leading power", "outpacing" other large countries, and the idea that it "should compete with major autocratic powers to shape the international order enjoys broad support that is bipartisan at home and deepening abroad" (The White House 2022, 7). Biden's strategy argues that Moscow and Beijing pose different challenges: Russia poses "an immediate threat to the free and open international system, recklessly flouting the basic laws of the international order today, as its brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has shown" (The White House 2022, 8). On the other side, China is "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective" (The White House 2022, 8). The U.S. must consequently defend the "rules-based order" it has largely spearheaded in the last decades, and which is under threat from Beijing and Moscow, which "now seek to remake the international order to create a world conducive to their highly personalized and repressive type of autocracy" (The White House 2022, 9). Thus the U.S. "will support and strengthen partnerships with countries that subscribe to the rules-based international order" (The White House 2022, 42). The phrase "rules-based order", as an updated variant of the Western liberal international world order, has featured prominently during the Biden presidency. Examining the inflation of the use of the term in Washington's discourse, Walt argued, half-jokingly, that "a ready ability to use the phrase 'rules-based international order' seems to have become a job requirement for a top position in the US foreign-policy apparatus" (Walt 2021). The "rules-based order" has been interpreted in two ways. First, as a concept based on principles of international law plus "the standards and

recommendations of international standard-setting organisations and conferences and rules made by non-state actors" (Dugard 2023, 225). Second, as "the United States' alternative to international law, an order that encapsulates international law as interpreted by the United States to accord with its national interests" (Dugard 2023, 225). Talmon considers that the term "rules-based order", in fact, "blurs the distinction between binding and non-binding rules, giving the impression that all States and international actors are subject to this order, irrespective of whether or not they have consented to these rules" (Talmon 2019). He points to the fact that while international law is "general and universal", the "rules-based order seems to allow for special rules in special–sui generis cases" (Talmon 2019). Perhaps the most prominent interpretation of "sui generis" cases under the "rules-based order" has been the case of the "unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo" in 2008, masterminded by Western powers despite strong warnings by Moscow and Beijing (Mitić 2023b, 44).

The focus and terminology of the National Security Strategy is reflected in other U.S. national strategies. The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review argues that the "security architecture in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions are a critical U.S. strategic advantage over those governments which challenge the global rules-based international order (U.S. Department of Defense 2022a, 1). This implies, as set in the 2022 National Defense Strategy, "deterring" China, "defending" against Russia and "denying" Iran (U.S. Department of Defense 2022b, 15).

A (not so) gloomy 2040 forecast

Looking beyond the timeframe of Biden's presidency and the outcome of the 2024 elections, the National Intelligence Council in its forecast for the year 2040 outlined five different scenarios describing possible global futures. In three of them, international challenges become "incrementally more severe, and interactions are largely defined by the US-China rivalry": "Renaissance of Democracies", in which the U.S. "leads a resurgence of democracies", "A World Adrift", in which China is "the leading but not globally dominant state"; and "Competitive Coexistence", in which the U.S. and China "prosper and compete for leadership in a bifurcated world". In the other two scenarios, the focus is less on US-China rivalry, and more on radical change: "Separate Silos" paints a world in which "globalization has broken down, and economic and security blocs emerge to protect states from mounting threats", while "Tragedy and Mobilization" is about

"revolutionary change on the heels of devastating global environmental crises" (National Intelligence Council 2021, 109).

China: between building a "community of shared future for mankind" and challenging Western "rules-based order"

"Peaceful rise" or "threat" to the rules-based order?

Since the outset of the 21st century, one of the fundamental questions for researchers and policymakers regarding the structure and functioning of world order has been whether the rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is a "threat" or an "opportunity", and whether it will be peaceful or not. Meanwhile, Beijing has structured a narrative of its "peaceful rise", aimed at "building a community of shared future for mankind". While deeply enshrined in the Westphalian system of national sovereignty, 21st century China has also sought to reinvigorate its traditional values and worldviews based on Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism. Key principles of Confucianism put emphasis on diplomacy, peaceful and mutually beneficial external relations (*ren*, benevolence), as well as stability, order, international norms and conflict prevention (*li*, propriety); Taoist concepts of *wuwei* (nonaction) relate to the importance of dialogue and negotiation, *Yin* and *yang* emphasize balancing own interests with the interest of other nations; meanwhile, the Legalist concept of *tianxia* (All-Under-Heaven) puts China in the position of a central power responsible for maintaining harmony and stability (Stekić, 2023a). Nevertheless, Western powers, and Washington in particular, have rather pointed to the "China threat", increasingly arguing it is a "partner", "competitor" but also a "systemic rival". While there are substantial nuances among the world's "rest", the sheer number of participants in Beijing's flagship "Belt and Road Initiative" (155 countries, or over two-thirds of UN members) points to the fact that its growing global clout incites largely positive connotations.

China's growing world order interdependence and clout

Since its creation in 1949, the PRC has had different approaches to world order, in line with its own domestic development projects and statecraft capacities, as well as regional and global dynamics. Following the civil war and the country's formation, Mao Zedong focused on consolidating China internally. This meant at first stabilising its borders and finding ways to

avoid foreign meddling in the country's own affairs. The 1950 "Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance" and the 1954 "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence", confirmed in a joint statement with India, provided a basis for early stabilization. The "Five principles" (mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence) were subsequently included in the 1982 Constitution of the PRC. Yet, China's interests, combined with Mao's anti-imperialist, Marxist-Leninist revolutionary policies, increasingly clashed with those of global powers. From the imbroglios of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the first Taiwan crisis (1954-1955), to the Sino-Soviet split (early 1960s) and the Sino-Indian conflict (1962), Mao's China – troubled by internal development difficulties – was not in a position to play a decisive role in world order politics (Lanteigne 2020).

The U.S. entanglement in the Vietnam War and Soviet Union's increasingly active security role globally, however, triggered an interest in Washington to seek rapprochement with Beijing in view of its potential Asian balancing act. The U.S. did not initially envision China as a global actor, content to see it as a counter-balance to Soviet influence. Combined with Deng Xiaoping's policy of "reform and opening-up", and in the backdrop of the war in Afghanistan from 1979 on, the PRC grew increasingly intertwined with Western-led globalization economy and security interests in dwindling down the "Soviet threat".

The end of the Cold War, the breakup of the Soviet Union and the vanishing of the Warsaw Pact, ran in parallel with West-China tensions over the June 1989 events on Tiananmen Square. While the U.S. started losing interest in China's geopolitical role, it continued promoting business cooperation with China amid its awe-inspiring growth rates in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, Beijing settled its border disputes with Russia and the Central Asian states, resulting in the formation of "The Shanghai Five group" (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) in 1996, a precursor of the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization" launched in 2001. China adopted its first White Paper on Defence in 1995, rejecting the possibility of a global war, focusing on economic development and defensive posturing (China White Paper 1995). Yet, the Third Taiwan Crisis (1995-1996) reinvigorated uneasiness in Beijing. One of the defining moments in Beijing's change of perception on the world order has been the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 (Mitić, 2023b). Set at the height of the "U.S. unipolar moment" and

at the time of NATO's "soul-searching" 50th anniversary, the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade killed three Chinese journalists, sparked unprecedented public outcry in China and led to a strategic change of perception in Beijing over relations with the US. The Chinese leadership saw in the Belgrade bombing "the onset of a new era of US unilateralism" and, shortly after, adopted the "New Security Concept", which aimed to "improve the view towards a multipolar world order as a response to US global dominance" (Ghiselli 2021, 23). In the "Sino-Russian Joint Statement" on December 10, 1999, Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Russian President Boris Yeltsin proposed to "push forward the establishment of a multi-polar world on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter and existing international laws in the 21st century" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 1999).

Throughout the 2000s, Beijing furthermore saw increasing threats to territorial integrity and sovereignty: from the election of the pro-independence leader in Taipei, Chen Shui-Bian, in 2000, to a number of "colour revolutions" both around Russia and within China (Hong Kong in 2004, Tibet in 2008, Xinjiang in 2009), as well as the Western masterminding of the "unilateral declaration of independence" of Serbia's province of Kosovo by Albanian separatists. Beijing saw in these events not only a "Western hand", but also Western negligence for the sanctity of international borders and international law. China's gradual rapprochement with Russia – within BRIC(S), the SCO, bilaterally with Moscow - its rising maritime forces, agile reaction to the global financial crisis, but also its strategic assessment on the nature and future of world order, raised concern in Washington, fuelling a narrative of the "China threat". Under Barack Obama and his Department of State Secretary Hillary Clinton, the Biden administration turned more hostile towards Beijing, describing South China Sea as an issue of U.S. national interest and laying ground for Washington's "pivot to Asia".

In Beijing, times were changing too. Deng Xiaoping's long-standing policy of "hide capabilities and bide time" (*Tao Guang Yang Hui*) gave place to a policy promoted by China's new president Xi Jinping – "striving for achievement" (*Fen Fa You Wei*). For the supporter of the new policy and eminent Chinese scholar Yan Xuetong, the approach of "moral realism" meant that Beijing should selectively reward those who "want to have a constructive role in China's rise", while punishing those who are hostile (Yan 2014). He argued that strategic allies are more important than economic profit. Beijing boosted the SCO and BRICS, the People' Liberation Army

(PLA), and particularly the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). Under Xi, China launched the "Belt and Road Initiative" in 2013, complemented with a number of strategic partnerships in Europe and Asia, with a view of finding alternatives to the possible clogging of its traditional maritime routes, as well as with an objective to boost development projects in the Global South, severely threatened by the aftermath of the world economic and financial crisis, as well as Western disinterest. China's BRI strategic narrative framed the initiative as "win-win", "mutually-beneficial cooperation", "sharing the fruits of development", with the objective of building a "community of shared future for mankind", in respect for multipolarity and the central role of the UN (Xi, 2014 and 2017). The BRI is, indeed, a complex narrative which can be seen as a system narrative (as its presents an alternative vision to the existing world order), an identity narrative (about the projection of China's values and power) and an issue narrative (about specific infrastructure and investments objectives envisioned by the BRI) (Mitić 2022).

China's global initiatives – an early blueprint for the new world order?

In the wake of the new geopolitical context and the Covid-19 pandemic, China launched in the early 2020s a series of "global initiatives", which can be viewed as complimentary to the BRI, and as such, an indication of how Beijing perceives the transformation of world order.

China launched its "Global Development Initiative" (GDI) in September 2022 during the UN General Assembly, with an objective of accelerating the goals of the 2030 UN Agenda, which had been threatened by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and sluggish support for Global South development from traditional Western donors in the wake of new geopolitical realities and economic constraints. The GDI is seen as a "potent and transformative force" within the emergence of new multilateral paradigms reshaping the dynamics of global governance and international cooperation (Stekić 2023b, 326). While some analysts have seen the GDI as a replacement for the BRI, others insist the BRI and the GDI should be seen as "parallel tracks", with the BRI being oriented towards economic growth, the hardware and economic corridors, while the GDI is development-oriented, focusing on development, software, knowledge transfer and capacity building (Mulakala, 2022). The GDI considers development as "master key to all problems", a "prerequisite for safeguarding world peace" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2021). It focuses on reducing inequality among

nations, "leaving no country and no one behind". The initiative focuses on multilateralism, support for the United Nations, the strengthening of North-South cooperation, the deepening of South-South cooperation, as well as the enhancement of representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries in global governance. For this, it counts on the synergy with the BRI, BRICS, G20, APEC, the African Union initiatives, the UN and China-ASEAN. Nevertheless, it stresses the need for an "open world economy" and global connectivity.

President Xi introduced the Global Security Initiative in April 2022, and he set the context outright by underscoring that "changes of the world, of our times, and of history are unfolding in ways like never before" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, 2022a). Although Xi certainly had in mind overall changes towards multipolarity, as well as changes occurring due to digitalization, climate change, and the implications of the still ongoing fight against COVID-19, the more specific context was certainly the ramification of the Russian special operation in Ukraine, which had started two months earlier, on February 24. The context of the conflict in Ukraine particularly highlighted principles such as the rejection of the Cold War mentality, bloc confrontation, unilateralism and unilateral sanctions, double standards, and pursuit of one's own security at the cost of others' security, as well as support for taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, building a balanced security architecture, and resolving disputes through dialogue and joint work (Mitić 2023c, 267). Xi furthermore called 'on all countries to uphold a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security' and focusing on the centrality of the UN system (Cao, 2022). The formal presentation of the GSI Concept Paper in February 2023 had a prelude in the publication by the Xinhua News Agency for a major report titled "US Hegemony and its Perils", in which it accused the US of "abusing hegemony", and "imposing rules that serve its own interests in the name of upholding a 'rules-based international order" (Xinhua 2023a). The following day, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the GSI Concept Paper with six core concepts and principles: (1) the need for a new vision of security – common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable; (2) respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; (3) deep commitment to the principles of the UN Charter and opposition to the Cold War mentality, hegemonism, and unilateralism; (4) commitment to indivisible security; (5) commitment to peaceful and negotiated solutions instead of war and unilateral sanctions; and (6) commitment to security in both traditional and non-traditional domains, which have become intertwined, particularly in the fields of terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity, and biosecurity (Ministry

of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2023a). China thus presented the GSI not only at a timely moment, following the outset of Russia's military operation in Ukraine, but also insisted that the unveiling of the initiative was due to the unprecedented changes and fallacies of the existing, albeit rusting, international security architecture and mechanisms. It was able to demonstrate the instability of the world security order and its rules/principles, thus making the case that the time was ripe for a change based on the principles of its GSI (Mitić 2023c, 273)

Xi announced the "Global Civilization Initiative" (GCI) in March 2023, calling for the respect of diversity of civilizations, the diversified paths to modernization and people-to-people exchange. His arguments suggest an opposition to Westernization as the only model of modernisation, and to Western values as universal (Mitić, 2023d, 129). The appeal of these ideas is particularly high in Asia, where a number of countries have created their own sustainable models of development and modernization, without necessarily aligning with Western norms of the rules-based order. Same with the idea of protecting the diversity and heritage of traditional values. In a clear reference to the West, Xi called to "refrain from imposing their own values or models on others", "from stoking ideological confrontation" and from "feelings of superiority" (Xinhua 2023b).

When presenting its "Global AI Governance Initiative" in October 2023, China reiterated that "all countries should commit to a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2023b). In the field of AI governance, this includes "respecting other countries' national sovereignty and strictly abiding by their laws when providing them with AI products and services", while "opposing using AI technologies for the purposes of manipulating public opinion, spreading disinformation, intervening in other countries' internal affairs, social systems and social order, as well as jeopardizing the sovereignty of other states". Thus, China argued for discussions within the UN framework to establish "an international institution to govern AI, and to coordinate efforts to address major issues concerning international AI development, security, and governance".

Finally, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the BRI, in September 2023, the State Council of the PRC published its white paper "A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions", outlining the achievements of the initiative and the principles for the way forward. In the paper, Beijing argued that the 10 years of the BRI showed that it had "nothing to do with self-interest and protectionism", but rather with

"confronting the hegemonic thinking of certain countries that seek supremacy" (State Council of the PR of China 2023). Furthermore, in reference to Western accusations, it argued that "there is no iron law that dictates that a rising power will inevitably seek hegemony", an assumption which "represents typical hegemonic thinking and is grounded in memories of catastrophic wars between hegemonic powers in the past". Beijing firmly argued in favour or pursuing development and revitalization through own efforts, rather than "invasion", "expansion" and the "subjugation of others". It argued that "standing at a crossroads, humanity is faced with two opposing options: either revert to Cold War confrontation or act for common wellbeing of humanity through cooperation and win-win results. It warned that the "tug of war between these two options will shape the future of humanity and our planet in a profound way". For China, the goal of "building a community of shared future" does not mean replacing one system or civilization with another, but it is a new approach to international relations, global governance and international exchange based on the premises that countries with different social systems, ideologies, histories, cultures and levels of development coming together to promote shared interests, shared rights, and shared responsibilities in global affairs. For China, it is only by establishing a global community of shared community that emerging countries and established powers can avoid falling into the Thucydides trap. Thus, China opposes actions that "undermine the international order, create a new Cold War or stoke ideological confrontation in the name of the so-called rules-based order". Instead, it focuses on the UN Charter, that for the world, "there is only one system, which is the international system with the United Nations at its core, that there is only one order, which is the international order based on international law, and that there is only one set of rules, which is the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter" (State Council of the PR of China 2023) .

The EU – an economic power in search of geopolitical lifeline

Has the EU lost its strategic objectives?

The European Union of 27 countries, judging by the mere data regarding population, economy and the sum of armies, should be a great power with a strong sphere of influence, or at least should be an agent of democratisation and prosperity around it. Yet, the history of its various common foreign and

defense policies does not approve this prospect. Before assessing the key document defining Brussels' official global posture in the new environment, it is necessary to point to the legacy of previous EU common security and defense outputs.

The bureaucratic discourse employed by the EU apparatus, Brussels-affiliated think tanks and part of academia blurs reality. Reports on EU missions lack any proper expression of failure. Thus, the EU (despite having a dead link for reports on completed reforms) was, or still is, officially successful, and has never failed in Guinea Bissau, in Chad, in the Central African Republic, in Libya (EUBAM), in the Mediterranean (Sophia), in Afghanistan (EUPOL) ... despite evidence they were, or are, all failures. After proclaiming in vain its wish to intervene in Libya, or even to conduct the save and rescue operations, EU did not manage to act, albeit France and UK acted together with US. The final result of the NATO operation in Libya (2011) was instability on EU borders and less secure supply of oil (from Libya) (Janković and Gajić 2015, 60-62). While each mission has its peculiarities, with a possible exception of those in Southeast Europe, it is hardly to sincerely name one that could be qualified as accomplished with favourable outcome. How could one characterise the phrases on the official site of EU External Action: "Since 2013 EUBAM Libya is proud to play its part as an EU Civilian Mission committed to contributing to the security of Libya and its borders and to greater stability in the region… Under the EU flag, Member States deploy border management, coast guards, justice monitors, military, police or prison advisers and experts to contribute to stability in the Mediterranean, the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Caucasus and the Middle East" (EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya 2023).

From the 2020s perspective, one could consider that before the EU missions, these regions appeared more stable. Libya existed, while today it is torn apart, and the EU cannot protect the borders of the divided country. In 2011, in the midst of the Arab Spring, the focus of EU was on strengthening of human rights and democracy, while NATO was engaging in a military intervention in Libya (European Parliament 2011). Sahel drifted away toward cooperation with Russia and China. It is no strange then, that even the Brussels-aligned *EU Observer* headlined: "Why aren't EU's CSDP missions working?" (Larsen 2021).

The day after the Brexit referendum in 2016, and in view of the approaching US elections (with unexpected Donald Trump's victory), with a rising presence of Russia in the East Mediterranean, the EU replaced its

old, unsuccessful Security Strategy with a new one - *A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy.* In the foreword, then High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini boasted the Union as being "... in the world's G3. We are the first trading partner and the first foreign investor for almost every country in the globe" (EEAS 2016, 4). Meanwhile, China was becoming the main economic partner of the EU's south and eastern neighbours.

The 2016 strategy seemed to advance a more reality-driven approach. It invoked the "principled pragmatism", which sounded as a spring of a rationality in usually ideological approach to the world (EEAS 2016, 8). Yet, at the same time it continued to promote a formula that later became a buzz word of US strategy, namely the "rules-based global order." EU announced that by promoting the mentioned order it will "contribute to a peaceful and sustainable world." The rules-based order is further explained as a "multilateral order grounded in international law, including the principles of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Tocci argued the UK had contributed significantly to the text, despite the firm opposition of official London to the strengthening of the defence and security position of the Union. In fact, Tocci slightly criticised those who (apart from London) "continue to view NATO as the ultimate framework for security and defence" (Tocci 2016, 2). In line with the previous history of EU defence and security policies, NATO reinvigorated its position as a focal point for Union member countries, widening its membership. The EU remained stuck with the RBO, which is most often regarded as a cynical misnomer for Washington's arbitrary hegemony, and is resolutely rejected by the so-called Global South, which accounts for four-fifths of humanity (Trifković 2023).

Since 2014, the EU was aligned with the US and UK policies of restraining Russian influence, and sanctioning it in order to punish Russia for the annexation of Crimea and support for the Donbass Russian-speaking guerilla. In 2021, the EU High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell stated that, in relation to Russia, the Union will adopt an approach of principled pragmatism (Comision Europea 2021).

A Strategic Compass for a feeble geopolitical structure

Since March 2022, EU has another strategic document, the *Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*. In this document, crafted after the first wide EU threat analysis, conducted in 2020, Brussels is not opposing unilateralism

(characterising US foreign policy behaviour in recent times), as it would bring unwanted criticism toward the American establishment, which has had the upper hand on EU foreign policy decisions. The main opposition to multilateralism is – sovereignty, or a "strict sovereignist approach" (sic). Multipolarism is essentially seen as something negative, as it is a derivative of a sovereign approach in politics, qualified by the EU as a "return of power politics". Sovereignty and multipolarism are in EU strategic documents connected with aggression, power politics and change of borders:

> "The EU is a determined supporter of effective multilateralism and it has sought to develop an open rules-based international order, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, universal values and international law. This vision of multilateralism prevailed internationally following the end of the Cold War. Today, it has come under strong questioning, through the shattering of universal values and a lopsided use of global challenges, by those promoting a strict sovereignist approach that constitutes in reality a return to power politics" (EEAS 2022).

Russia is a threat for the EU in this document, and Brussels is announcing vendetta: "These aggressive and revisionist actions for which the Russian government, together with its accomplice Belarus, is entirely responsible, severely and directly threaten the European security order and the security of European citizens. Those responsible for these crimes, including targeting civilians and civilian objects, will be held accountable." (EEAS 2022, 17. The EU operates in a hostile environment, and it needs the strategy "to guide the necessary development of the EU security and defence agenda for the next ten years" (EEAS, 5).

China is "a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival." Concerns on Chinese modernisation of military apparatus are expressed, and in particular its challenging of "the rules-based international order and our interests and values" (Ibid, 18).

Unlike China and especially Russia, the key and most important among EU partners is the US: "partners and like-minded countries in the UN, NATO and G7. In this context, the United States remain the EU's staunchest and most important strategic partner and are a global power contributing to peace, security, stability and democracy on our continent" (Ibid).

Key words taken from *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence* are: "resilience", "rapid" and "willingness to act". The authors of the Compass thus announce a "quantum leap forward" in order to "increase our capacity and willingness to act, strengthen our resilience, and invest more and better in our defence capabilities". Previously mentioned objectives are to be gained through

four pillars: act, invest, partner and secure. (Ibid, 10, 15, 25) Even the basic content analysis of these pillars induces a fairly limited scope of action and aspirations. Acts should be rapid and there should be a readiness to deploy up to 5,000 troops, which is 12 times less than planned by the UK and France under the St. Malo agreement in 1998. "At the EU summit in Helsinki in the year 1999, the headline goal was the creation of the European Rapid Reaction Force – ERRF consisting of 60.000 soldiers able to deploy in the theatre of war in 60 days. Fifteen EU member states decided to establish an armed force for rapid action (rapid reaction force - RRF) of 60.000 soldiers at the EU Council Meeting in Nice in 2002" (Janković and Gajić 2015, 41). The US was obstructing the creation of an independent, strong EU military capable of autonomous operations back then. NATO is constantly keeping the US in Europe, assuring seniority in bilateral relations for Washington (Janković 2019, 168).

While the EU officially tries to behave like a great power, producing documents of global reach, it is proportionally losing economic and demographic global footprint. At the same time, the West in general is internally becoming more divisive, turning against its cultural and spiritual heritage and adopting various measures ascribing to the cancel culture. (Janković 2022, 188, 193). This in turn is increasingly dividing societies in EU, making them additionaly weak in international conflicts.

Brussels' behaviour resembles partners in the Western hierarchy, with Washington planners at the top of the structure. Therefore, the EU strategy is limited in scope, although it acts in a "hostile environment", with a range of threats. It aims to deal mostly in the cyber sphere. For the hard security, it relies on NATO, and bilateral partnership with US and Western partner countries, such as Japan, the United Kingdom and Australia. It is opposed to multilateralism based on a concept of distinct sovereign great powers and their hierarchical webs of partnership.

Russia's multipolar (re)vision

Is the time (now) right for multipolarity?

One of the leading Russian thinkers and *de facto* councillors on foreign affairs of the Russian political elite, Sergey Karaganov, once prominent supporter of the policy of Euro/Russia cooperation, on several occasions underlined the strategic shift in Russian policy. He repeated it at the end of 2023:

"In contemporary world, everyone goes for itself. This is a wonderful multipolar, diversified world... We have to rediscover ourselves,

> understand who we are. Great Eurasian power, north Eurasia. Liberator of peoples, guarantor of peace and a military-political core of the world majority. This role is predestined for us. By the way, due to our cultural openness that we have inherited again, from our history, we are uniquely prepared for this world. We are religiously open. We are nationally open. This is all we are defending now. More and more we are understanding that at home most important issues are Russian spirit and Russian culture" (Шестаков 2023).

Russia pursues an "independent and multi-vector foreign policy driven by its national interests and the awareness of its special responsibility for maintaining peace and security at the global and regional levels" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2023a). Hence, the leadership in the Kremlin promotes Moscow as one of the centers of the multipolar world. But the idea is not something new. Yevgeny Primakov launched it in the 1990s. Back then, amid the unipolar moment, part of the Russian elite ideated the return of great power politics and ways to challenge Western domination. A multi-vector foreign policy of Russia was formulated. The multi-vector policy is another expression of the Primakov doctrine, which is at the heart of the Russian foreign policy (Барский 2016). Back then, Moscow wanted to be at the table with the US, EU and UK make decisions. It wanted to be part of the Western circle. But when the US withdrew from the ABM Treaty, it became clear that enmity toward Russia had not disappeared with the fall of communism (Boese 2002). In the 2008 Concept, Moscow announced that the "balanced and multi-vector character of Russia's foreign policy is its distinguishing feature… Our national interests today make it imperative to actively promote positive agenda covering the whole spectrum of international problems. Russia fully recognizes its responsibility for maintenance of security both globally and regionally, and is prepared to take joint actions with all other States concerned aimed at finding solutions to common problems" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008) The language was milder, and it was the beginning of the reactive challenging to the spread of US hegemony and provocations on the borders of Russia, such as the Orange revolution in Ukraine 2004, and the short Georgian war in 2008.

Order of sovereigns

The current concept adopts a much more decisive and great power discourse in its document defining foreign policy strategy. A year into the

war, after 15 years from the latest Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation approved then by President Dmitri Medvedev, on March 31, 2023, the President of Russia Vladimir Putin approved a new version of the Foreign Policy Concept. Authors adopted a mix of Eurasianism and Russian school approach of philosophy of history[4] (Jankovic 2023, 17-20). The document resembles a messianic posture of US strategies, with differently formulated objectives and certainly affirming multipolarity. It is clearly challenging the eroding world order. In this document, there is an expressed "commitment to promote the formation of a more just and sustainable international system based on the principles of international law and cooperation between states" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2023b).

Russia is presented as a special country with "a historically unique mission aimed at maintaining global balance of power and building a multipolar international system, as well as ensuring conditions for the peaceful progressive development of humanity on the basis of a unifying and constructive agenda" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2023a).

Sovereignty is clearly positive in the Russian new concept of foreign strategy, which is in line with the previous strategic posture of Russia. Multipolarity is associated with the global balance of power and national independence:

> "Russia is one of the sovereign centres of global development performing a historically unique mission aimed at maintaining global balance of power and building a multipolar international system, as well as ensuring conditions for the peaceful progressive development of humanity on the basis of a unifying and constructive agenda" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2023a).

Back in the 1990s, Primakov had started a trilateral cooperation between Moscow, Beijing and New Delhi in the moment of Russian economic

[4] On Eurasianism: Aleksandr Dugin, *Chetvertaia politicheskaia teoriia: Rossiia i politicheskie idei XXI veka*, Saint Petersburg: Amfora, 2009; Šubrt Jiri, Šulc Irina, "The Eurasianism concept: Russian vs Western perspectives. Journal of the Belarusian State University. Sociology. 2020;3:42–48. https://doi.org/10.33581/2521-6821-2020-3-42-48; On Russian philosophy of history see: Нарочницка, Наталија, *Русија и Руси у светској историји*, СКЗ Београд 2008; Тихомиров Л. А., *Религиозно-философские основы истории*, М, 1997; Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, London 1936.

grievances and loss of political weight in the international arena. It was the way to counterbalance the growing Western influence permeating the societies of what was once called in the West the Second and the Third World.

The creation and development of BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the strengthening of bilateral Sino-Russian cooperation, are mechanisms of competitive challenging of the crumbling unipolar world order. BRICS in particular is a vehicle of eroding and decomposing previously US-led regional hierarchies from the Middle East to the Latin America and Western Africa.

The 2019 Sino-Russian summit on the anniversary of the operation Overlord (allied attack on German positions in northern France in June 1944) sealed the strategic alliance of Moscow and Beijing (Dinucci 2019). Two leaders, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, signed:

a) an intergovernmental agreement to extend the use of national currencies, (the ruble and the yuan), to commercial exchanges and financial transactions, as an alternative to the still dominant dollar;
b) the intensification of efforts to integrate the Belt and Road Initiative, promoted by China, and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), promoted by Russia, with the "aim of creating a greater Eurasian partnership in the future."

This cooperation was extended in the years to come, and particularly enhanced at the Beijing summit in early February 2022, at the opening of the Winter Olympic Games, when Putin and Xi declared a "no limits partnership".

Conclusion

The handshake between Putin and Xi in February 2022 stands in stark contrast with the one between Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong 50 years earlier, in February 1972. The 1972 handshake paved the way towards Sino-U.S. cooperation which curbed Moscow's influence throughout the rest of the Cold War and contributed to the demise of the Soviet Union. The 2022 handshake, this time between Moscow and Beijing, was a stark confirmation of the unprecedented level of strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and China in the challenging of the U.S.-led Western "ruled-based order". This cooperation managed through a difficult challenge following Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine, with Western countries strongly urging Beijing to distance from Moscow and even

sanction it. Nothing of sorts occurred. Beijing refused the Western narrative on the conflict in Ukraine, particularly pointing out at its origins in NATO's eastward expansion. The two countries and leaders continued strong strategic partnership, enhanced and enlarged BRICS and the SCO, as well as economic and energy cooperation. Their cooperation and resistance to Western pressure was particularly reflected in the fact that no country outside of the "political West" imposed sanctions against the Russian Federation over the conflict in Ukraine.

This challenging of the RBO is reflected in the analysis of our paper. The U.S. and the EU are two great powers which are willing to continue and preserve the leading role they had in the previous decades, with US becoming clearly the leader of the camp. Russia and China are challengers, and together are eroding, and have eroded, the previous structure of the world order, which is becoming multipolar. Beyond challenging, in the current phase of transition, China and Russia are also setting bases for multipolar regional orders with different hierarchies. They both support the sovereign, Westphalian arrangement in international politics, while the US seeks to contain the changes, followed by the EU. Both Western actors criticize sovereignty, and seek to stop transformation toward multipolarity, seen as something negative. The relations of examined powers toward the challenged and preferred world order can be presented in the table, together with the key terms of such strategic positioning.

Great power	Posture related to challenged world order	Preferred world order	Key strategic positioning
US	Defensive	Western-led RBO	Defend the RBO, contain challengers
EU	Defensive	Western-led RBO	Resilience, transatlantic reliance, geopolitical soul-search
Russia	Offensive	Multipolar	Multipolarity and sovereignty
China	Offensive	Multipolar	New global initiatives for the "community of shared future for mankind"

Source: Authors

As long-time hegemon, Washington is logically seen as the locus of attention for analysts of world order transformation. Despite a myriad of global challenges, ascendant challengers, reduced soft power in the Global South and internal political and societal polarization, the United States is still the primary great power. Yet, the dynamics of global transformation over the last two decades, and particularly in the last several years, show that no one can bet safely on Washington retaining such status.

The EU pursues its soul-searching. An economic great power, but a geopolitical skeleton, the EU remains in defensive posture, focusing on its resilience from what it perceives as external threats – from Russia and China, illegal migrations and terrorism. It remains fully reliant on U.S.-led NATO, despite appeals for "strategic autonomy".

Moscow's operation in Ukraine has shown that it has set up a red line for NATO's "open-door" enlargement policy. Together with its enhanced role in Eastern Mediterranean and Sahel, it has regained a geopolitical posture. It has succeeded in overcoming unprecedented Western sanctions by turning its economy and exports towards Asia, Africa and Latin America, accompanied by multilateral formats, of which BRICS+ is of particular importance, thus forging a multipolar order based on sovereignty.

China has a comprehensive, systematic response to the world order crisis. It underlines that it does not intend to challenge the world's system. Rather, it proposes its own sets of principles, and announces the desire to strengthen its normative power in order to balance the U.S.-led Western rules-based order. To achieve these objectives, beyond its rising power, it counts on allies within BRICS+, the SCO, BRI partners in the Global South, as well as its global initiatives (GDI, GSI, GCI, GAII), but also understanding among certain Western partners, particularly in Europe. On the other side, the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza have further disrupted global supply chains, transport corridors, and imposed new sanctions. Competition with the U.S. over AI, semi-conductors and rare minerals has led to further export restrictions, particularly in technology. However, China's continued and intensified cooperation with Russia, its boosting of BRICS, its more proactive role in world's security, diplomatic affairs and infrastructure projects, from South Asia through the Middle East to the Balkans – is for the West a continued proof of China's will to transform the "rules-based world order".

References

Documents

China White Paper. 1995. *White Paper – China: Arms Control and Disarmament*. Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

Comision Europea. 2021. *EU-Russia relations: Commission and High Representative propose the way forward*. 16 de junio de 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/ip_21_3010. Accessed on 4 February 2024.

EEAS. 2016. *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe - A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*. Brussels: Europan Union External Action. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf Accessed on March 13 2024.

EEAS. 2022. A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence. Brussels: European Union External Action. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en Accessed on March 13 2024.

EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya. 2023 "20 years of Civilian Crisis Management Missions". *EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya – EUBAM Libya*. 06.02.2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eubam-libya/20-years-civilian-crisis-management-missions_en?s=327

European Parliament. 2011. *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean.* Joint Communication to The European Council, The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions, COM (2011) 200 final, Brussels, 8.3.2011.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. 1999. *Sino-Russian Joint Statement.* Accessed on February 4, 2024. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/200011/t20001115_678986.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. 2021. *Global Development Initiative – Building on 2030 SDGs for Stronger, Greener and Healthier Global Development (Concept Paper).* Accessed February 10, 2024. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/GDI/wj/202305/P020230511396286957196.pdf

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. 2022. *Xi Jinping Delivers a Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual*

Conference 2022. Accessed on February 11, 2024. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202204/t20220421_10671083.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. 2023a. *The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper*. Accessed on February 14, 2024. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC. 2023b. *Global AI Governance Initiative*. Accessed on February 16, 2024. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/202310/t20231020_11164834.html

National Intelligence Council. 2021. "Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World". www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends

State Council of the PR of China. 2023. *A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions*. Accessed on February 16, 2024. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202309/t20230926_11150122.html

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2008. "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation" Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation. *Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union*. 12 July 2008. Accessed on February 12, 2024. https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/foreign_policy_concept_english.pdf

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2023a. "The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation", approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 229, March 31, 2023, *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*. https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2023b. "Press release on Russia's main foreign policy results in 2023". *The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*. 30 December 2023, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1923985/

The White House. 2022. *National Security Strategy*. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf

U.S. Depatment of Defense. 2022a. "Nuclear Posture Review". https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF

U.S Department of Defense. 2022b. "2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America". https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/

2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF

U.S. Department of State. 2021. "U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership". https://www.state.gov/u-s-ukrainecharter-on-strategic-partnership/

United Nations Association of Australia. 2015. "The United Nations and the Rules-Based International Order", https://www.unaa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/UNAA_RulesBasedOrder_ARTweb3.pdf Accessed on 2 February 2024.

Monographies, articles, and Internet

Bell, Coral and Meredith Thatcher. 2008. *Remembering Hedley*, The Australian National University.

Berdyaev, Nicolas. 1936. *The Meaning of History*. London, http://www.new.dli.ernet.in/handle/2015/186110

Boese, Wade. 2002. "U.S. Withdraws from ABM Treaty; Global Response Muted". *Arms Control Association*, July/August 2002, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002-07/news/us-withdraws-abm-treaty-global-response-muted 11/05/2023.

Cao, Desheng. 2022. "Xi calls on countries to uphold peace". *China Daily*. Accessed on February 13, 2024. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202209/22/WS632b32a1a310fd2b29e79034.html

Cox, Robert W. "Theory Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations". *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 1981, Vol. 10, No. 2, 126-155. doi.org/10.1177/03058298810100020

Chin, John J, Kiron Skinner, and Clay Yoo. 2023. "Understanding National Security Strategies through Time". *Texas National Security Review.* 6 (4): 104-124.

Dinucci, Manlio. 2019. "Russia-China: The Summit Which the Media Ignored". *Global Research.* June 12, 2019, https://www.global research.ca/russia-china-summit-media-ignored/5680360

Dugard, John. 2023. "The choice before us: International law or a 'rules-based international order'?". *Leiden Journal of International Law*. 36: 223-232.

Ghiselli, Andrea. 2021. *Protecting China's Interests Overseas: Securitization and Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holcombe, Arthur N. 1953. "An American View of European Union". *The American Political Science Review*. 47 (2): 417-430

Janković, Slobodan Aleksandar Gajić. 2015. "EU Security Policy in North Africa and in the Middle East". *Serbian Political Thought*. No. 1/2015, Year VII, Vol. 11, pp. 39-69.

Janković, Slobodan. 2019. "Nato Road to Serbia: Why 1999?", in: Nebojša Vuković (ed.), *DAVID vs. Goliath : NATO war against Yugoslavia and its implications*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics: Faculty of Security Studies. pp. 155-176.

Janković, Slobodan, 2021. "Israel: Middle East objectives of the regional power after the Lebanon war (2006)", in: Slobodan Janković. *Convergence and confrontation: the Balkans and the Middle East in the 21st century*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics pp. 59-82. https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_conv_conf.2021.ch3

Janković, Slobodan. 2022. "World Trends from 2022". *Српска политичка мисао* [Serbian Political Thought], Vol. 77, број 3/2022, стр. 179-200.

Jones, Jeffrey M. 2011. "Americans Shift to More Negative View of Libya Military Action", *Gallup*. June 24, 2011, https://news.gallup.com/poll/148196/americans-shift-negative-view-libya-military-action.aspx

Kopli, Gregori. 2022. *Novi totalni rat 21. Veka (The New Total War of the 21st Century and the Trigger of the Fear Pandemic*). Belgrade: Čigoja štampa.

Lake, David A. 2009a, *Hierarchy in International Relations*. Ithaca – New York: Cornell University Press.

Lake, David A. 2009b. "Regional Hierarchy: authority and local International order". *Review of International Studies*. Vol. 35, "Globalising the Regional, Regionalising the Global", February 2009. 35–58. doi:10.2307/20542777

Lanteigne, Marc. 2020. *Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Larsen, Henrik. 2021. "Why aren't EU's CSDP missions working?", *EU Observer*, 22. Jul 2021, https://euobserver.com/opinion/152502 accessed: 24/1/2024.

Mitić, Aleksandar. 2018. „The Strategic Framing of the 2015 Migrant Crisis in Serbia". In *Migrants, Refugees and the Media: The New Reality of Open Societies*, edited by Sai-Felicia Krishna-Hensel. New York: Routledge. 121-150.

Mitić, Aleksandar and Petar Matić. 2022. "Strateški okviri osporavanja vojne neutralnosti Srbije". *Srpska politička misao*. Posebno izdanje 2022, 245-266.

Mitić, Aleksandar. 2022. "Mapping the Obstructive Narratives on China-CEEC Cooperation". In Horvath, Levente (ed.) *Results and Challenges: 10*

Years of China-CEEC Cooperation. Budapest: John Von Neumann University, 32-59.

Mitić, Aleksandar. 2023a. "Statecraft Repertoires of China and the U.S. Before and During the Conflict in Ukraine". *The Policy of National Security*. 24 (1): 29-59.

Mitić, Aleksandar. 2023b. "From Globalisation 'Friend' to Global 'Foe': The Evolution of the US Strategic Narrative on China's Rise". *The Review of International Affairs*. LXXIV (1189): 31–56.

Mitić, Aleksandar. 2023c. "The Strategic Communication of China's Global Security Initiative". In Stekić, Nenad and Aleksandar Mitić (eds.). *New Chinese Initiatives for a Changing Global Security*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, 263-279.

Mitić, Aleksandar. 2024d. "China's New Initiatives and the Shaping of Eurasia's Strategic Environment". In Proroković, Dušan and Ekaterina Entina (eds.). *Eurasian Security after NATO*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, 113-140.

Mulakala Anthea. 2022. "China's Global Development Initiative: soft power play or serious commitment?" *DevPolicy Blog*. https://devpolicy.org/chinas-gdi-soft-power-play-or-serious-commitment-20221018/

Roggeveen, Sam. 2001. "Towards a Liberal Theory of International Relations". Sydney: Center for Independent Studies. https://www.cis.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/images/stories/policy-magazine/2001-autumn/2001-17-1-sam-roggeveen.pdf

Roggeveen, Sam. 2023. *The Echidna Strategy: Australia's Search for Power and Peace*. Victoria: La Trobe University Press.

Stekić, Nenad. 2023a. *A Hesitant Hegemon: Layers of China's Contemporary Security Policy*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics

Stekić, Nenad. 2023b. "China's Global Development Initiative in the Age of New Multilateral Paradigms". In Stekić, Nenad and Aleksandar Mitić (eds.). *New Chinese Initiatives for a Changing Global Security*. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics, 325-338.

Talmon, Stefan. 2019. "Rules-based order v. international law*?" German Practice in International Law*. January 20, 2019. https://gpil.jura.unibonn.de/2019/01/rules-based-order-v-international-law/

Tocci, Nathalie. 2016. "Interview with Nathalie Tocci on the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", The

International Spectator, 2016 VOL. 51, NO. 3, 1-8 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2016.1216744 Accessed on 4 February 2024.

Trifković, Srdja. 2023. "Living in interesting times". *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, December 2023, https://chroniclesmagazine.org/columns/the-american-interest/living-in-interesting-times/ Accessed on 24 December 2023.

Walt, Stephen. 2021. "China Wants a 'Rules-Based International Order,' Too". *Foreign Policy*. March 31, 2021. https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/31/china-wants-a-rules-based-international-order-too/

Xi, Jinping. 2014. *The Governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Xi, Jinping. 2017. *The Governance of China II*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Xinhua. 2023a. "U.S. Hegemony and Its Perils". Accessed on February 15, 2024. https://english.news.cn/20230220/d3a4291d44f2499ea20710ae272ece72/c.html

Xinhua. 2023b. "Global Civilization Initiative injects fresh energy into human development". *The State Council Information Office of the PR of China.* Accessed on February 14, 2024. http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-03/19/content_85177312.htm

Yan, Xuetong. 2014. "From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement". *The Chinese Journal of International Politics.* 7 (2): 153-184

Кирилл Барский. 2016. "«Восточный вектор» начертил Примаков", *Международная жизнь*, № 10, 2016: 41-66 .

Александр Дугин. 2014. *Евразийский реванш России,* Алгоритм 2014.

Наталија Нарочницка. 2008. *Русија и Руси у светској историји*. СКЗ Београд.

Лев А. Тихомиров. 1997. *Религиозно-философские основы истории*, М, 1997.

Слободан Јанковић. 2023. *Жаришта светског рата*, Catena mundi, Институт за међународну политику и привреду, Београд.

Евгений Шестаков. 2023. "Сергей Караганов: Россия закончила свое европейское путешествие", https://rg.ru/2023/12/27/kuda-techet-reka-2024.html accessed: 20/01/2024.