The War in Ukraine: War for Multilateralism or New Bipolarity?

الحرب في أوكرانيا: حرب من أجل التعددية أم ثنائية قطبية جديدة؟

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Abstract:

President Putin justifies Russian aggression against Ukraine as a struggle against Western unilateralism and a step toward a multilateral world order. The United States and EU frame the conflict as a defense of Ukrainian sovereignty and freedom against Russian expansionism. The war's consequences are severe for the EU, while less dire for the United States. Sanctions have weakened Russia, but its economy has been bolstered by China and BRICS partners. China's rise now presents a formidable economic, technological, and military challenge to both the US and Russia. In response, these former rivals are considering common strategies, such as a potential "Taiwan trap," to distance China internationally. This maneuvering aims to secure natural resources and spheres of influence for themselves. The emerging alignment suggests a potential return to a new bipolarity, sidelining both the EU and China to the benefit of the US and Russia.

Key words: Ukrainian war, Bipolarity, Multilateralism, Chinese threats, Taiwan trapping.

Introduction:

Among Russian President Vladimir Putin's justifications for the Russian armed forces' aggression against Ukraine in 2022, the "Special Military Operation in Ukraine," was to combat American unilateralism in favor of a new world order where multilateralism will reign supreme. The balance of power will be governed by the major powers, respecting each other at the political, economic, and military levels, but above all, the preservation of territorial integrity and the sanctification of state sovereignty.On the other hand, the United States and its Western allies, who are involved in the proxy war in Ukraine, defend their right to protect their Ukrainian ally, the main front against Russian hegemony in Eastern Europe. The consequences of the military confrontation since 2022 have been catastrophic for the EU and Ukraine, but not so much for the United States and Russia.

Certainly, the sanctions imposed on Russia following its aggression against Ukraine have weakened it without paralyzing its economy or its war effort. It is true that they constitute a limitation on its financial and technological capabilities, but they have been replaced by those of its Chinese neighbor and, above all, by its allies through the BRICS organization. On the other hand, the United States has benefited from these sanctions, especially in the energy sector. However, China has always been and will remain the main enemy/competitor for the two great powers since the Cold War and to this day.

The war in Ukraine is a veritable political, economic, and military quagmire for the EU, engulfing the peace, prosperity, and, above all, the development of its members. Economic, political, and military crises only weaken the EU as long as the war continues. The challenge remains to contain the Chinese threat and weaken it through a direct military confrontation with the United States in Taiwan. So, officially for Russia, the war in Ukraine is a war for a multilateral world, and for the United States and its vassals it is a war for freedom, democracy and the preservation of American and Western hegemony.

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However, the objectives of this war for the two great powers may be quite different, such as the sharing of natural resources, especially those of the Arctic, spheres of influence, and global markets—a binary rather than a quaternary division. To this end, the objective of this research is to demonstrate whether there are other objectives in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict than those officially announced by the two great powers, and also to demonstrate the real danger that China represents for the United States and also for Russia. This leads to the fundamental question:

- Are there other objectives in the Russo-Ukrainian war than those officially announced, and what is the strategic dimension of the danger posed by China for the United States and Russia?

Two hypotheses have been proposed to address this issue. The first is that the war in Ukraine will allow the United States to end the EU's military and financial influence, and for Russia to weaken the EU and control new areas of influence in Eastern Europe. The second hypothesis is that a joint Russian and American strategy could, in the future, stem the strategic threat posed by China to the two great powers, such as the outbreak of armed conflict in Taiwan.

The objective of this research is to demonstrate that the war in Ukraine could undermine the interests of the two great powers, the United States and Russia, in order to share natural resources and global areas of influence, as in the past. This return to a new bipolarization requires first of all stemming the growing threat posed by China, a dangerous competitor for both the United States and Russia, after having weakened and distanced the EU from the international scene.

It is important to demonstrate that the interests of the two great powers that divided the world after the end of World War II can continue, even if it is necessary to change certain principles of the old bipolarity and establish a common strategy that will defend their interests. The EU and China represent a strategic threat to Russian and American interests.

In order to address the above-mentioned issue, this research has been divided into two main parts: the first part is devoted to satellite states and new zones of influence in American and Russian strategies, and the second part addresses the problem of China, a dangerous competitor of Russia and the United States.

Part 1: Satellite States and New Zones of Influence in American and Russian Strategies

The return of US President Donald Trump to power for his second term in 2025 has only strengthened his position regarding the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. For him, if he had been in power when the conflict broke out, the war would never have occurred in 2022. They say there is indeed a common strategy between the two great powers, which was unfortunately interrupted by the term of Democratic President J. Biden.

No one can deny that since the end of World War II, Europe has remained attached to the United States, first on security issues, then on economic and financial levels. This burden America is dragging remains one of the major obstacles to reducing its ever-growing debt, preventing it from fully devoting itself to preserving its security and economic hegemony in the face of a China that threatens American interests. This section of the research is devoted to analyzing Euro-American relations over the past few decades in order to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of this alliance, and also to highlight the issues and challenges for Russia in the face of the emerging Chinese power.

1. The EU: The Political, Economic, and Military Burden of the United States

In 2018, US President Donald Trump solemnly declared that Europe must pay for its military protection and that the EU had been profiting from the United States for years for its trade, while criticizing its lack of military commitment through NATO, and that the time had come for change as quickly as possible.[1]

Even during the Cold War, the United States was ready to declare US/European interdependence in order to build common and mutually beneficial goals. Even after the creation

of the EU, the United States saw this new European construction as a positive step for the transatlantic partnership. Nevertheless, the European Economic Union and then the EU have always been a competitor to American industry and agriculture. The trade balance became negative for the USA, the 1970s (1973) oil crisis, and the GDP of EU member states exceeded that of the United States for four decades, with a few exceptions, until 2015.

But, behind the commercial competition, American fears also manifest themselves in the strategic domain (foreign policy and defense), because since the 2003 Gulf War, the European objective of defense autonomy has increasingly appeared within the EU, and the United States has perceived the term as a sign of distrust, if not more, ingratitude towards the American benefactor.[2]

1.1. American Foreign Policy in Transatlantic Relations

In its transatlantic foreign policy, the United States relies little on Europe. It considers it to be mired in a weak ideology. It therefore distrusts international institutions because it fears their ineffectiveness. Therefore, it relies on itself and on bilateral relations to address its priority: national and international security in all areas.[3]

After the Cold War, the United States and Europe continued to maintain close diplomatic, economic, and trade relations (NATO, the EEC and then the EU, the WTO, etc.). The United States is the EU's largest trading partner and its main investor, and vice versa, but today there are some tensions in several areas (Naves, 2018). Finally, the US-EU rapprochement remains ambivalent pending a unification of the positions of EU member states. While Donald Trump has labeled the EU an enemy, his successor has tried to ease these tensions, especially in the trade sector, which has seen many disputes and almost stagnant cooperation. A warming of relations was observed after the NATO-EU summit in June 2021.[4]

A decompression of tense relations between the EU and the United States was observed during the term of Democratic President J. Biden, but upon President Donald Trump's return to power (2025), the crisis of the tariffs imposed by Trump resurfaced with more tensions. Customs duties allowed the United States to put pressure on its EU partners because their market is immense.

1.2. The Euro-American Alliance: Dependence and Submission

In order to put an end to feelings of dependence and submission to the United States, Europe has prioritized competition with the United States regarding the economy and, above all, security through NATO.

Trade relations still constitute the heart of disputes (such as the Banana Conflict), and while Europe limits itself to the Lomé Agreement, the United States always responds that this is contrary to global trade rules (European customs barriers to American imports). Also, disputes over GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), the Battle over Beef, and the tax haven scandals of American companies have prompted the EU to file a complaint with the WTO.

Competition has also affected GDP, with the EU's GDP surpassing that of the US, as well as the aeronautics and space sectors. This competition is legitimized by a fear of American domination, or the image of a Europe subject to state constraints, but French firms succeed in establishing themselves in the United States, demolishing the image that globalization only serves the interests of the United States.[5]

As for the security sector, the idea of two partners prospering economically apart is far from over, as the dependence of both in the economic and security spheres is strategic. Increasingly, European dependence on the Americans is being called into question, especially in the security sector. Let's not forget that France succeeded in acquiring nuclear weapons in 1960. France understood that it could be independent and no longer rely on the United States (the unfortunate experience of the 1956 Suez War).[6]

However, American protection through NATO constitutes an insurance against any danger that threatens Europe; dependence on the United States is among the many advantages of the Euro-American alliance. But after the fall of the Soviet bloc and the establishment of the new world

order, the United States wanted to further strengthen its supremacy, even at the expense of its "Western partners." After the creation of the EU and the disappearance of the Russian enemy, the logical step was to get rid of NATO as a consequence of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1991. However, NATO still exists; worse still, it poses a real threat to European stability, and the war in Ukraine is proof of this instability.

EU members understood well before the outbreak of war in 2022 that it was time for Europe to consider independence from NATO because the latter was experiencing brain death (President E. Macron). American diplomat G. Kennan, for his part, was certain that NATO's eastward expansion would be the biggest mistake in American foreign policy since the Second World War. Enlargement will harm Russia in all areas because it is unjustified. However, it will establish a Cold War sentiment and will be perceived by the Russians as an act of war justifying their quest for security guarantees.[7]and war broke out in 2022.

While NATO appears useless after the fall of the Eastern Bloc, it nevertheless remains very useful for Europe as well as for the United States. NATO member states supply (80%) in value to the United States, and the European arms market represents nearly (60%) of American arms exports. NATO constitutes a threat to peace, reinforcing Russia's fear of being encircled (siege complex) by this organization. Also, NATO constitutes a tool of American domination over member countries, it allows it to maintain its protectorate over them, but D. Trump's statements on Article 5 of the treaty have called into question any credibility of this transatlantic alliance. [8]

According to NATO, non-US allies together spend less than half of US defense spending; they represent two-thirds of the alliance's defense spending as a whole.[9]

Finally, the "burden-sharing" approach the United States has toward Europe is as old as defense alliances, as this burden is primarily a military presence, but also a US demand for a rebalancing of the economic burden. These American demands have always been supported by the US Congress in order to obtain compensation for the costs of the US presence in Europe, as well as increased defense spending and, finally, a more active contribution to common security. [10]

2. Russia's New Zones of Influence: Issues and Challenges

Among Trump's election campaign promises was to improve Russian-American relations, but these were hampered by Russiagate (suspicion of Trump's team's collusion with Russia during the election campaign) and the congressional law imposing economic sanctions on Russia for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its military intervention in Syria in 2016.[11]

Russia and China, the two major powers, categorically reject the American unilateralism that has persisted since the fall of the USSR. By asserting themselves as nuclear and world-renowned economic powers, the crisis of multilateralism is taking hold in international relations in a climate of destabilization that has been widespread since the 21st century. Since then, Russia has been seeking new areas of influence and new markets for its military production.

2.1. Strategic Issues in Russian Foreign Policy

There are several strategic issues facing Russia, but the most relevant and relevant to this research will be cited as the reconstruction of Russia, Ukraine, and Russian influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus, especially after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, followed by the aggression against Ukraine in 2022, which will be detailed in the second part of the research.

Since NATO's eastward expansion, Russia has outlined a strategy of opposition to the West in favor of a foreign policy based on a multipolar world, countering Western unilateralism dominated by the United States, which has only brought destabilization to this world in international relations, both regionally and internationally. After Vladimir Putin came to power, he managed to channel national political trends that did not completely break with the communist past and retained nostalgia for a time when the USSR shared the management of international affairs with the United States, benefiting the two great powers of the time. Therefore, Vladimir Putin's Russian diplomacy asserted itself more and more in the Balkans and inexorably opposed any attempt in the Caucasus and began an implacable war against the Chechens.[12].

But, the expansion of NATO towards the east put an end to Russian hopes on the "near abroad" and poisoned relations with the Western world and the consequence was very quickly seen by the military intervention in Georgia in 2008, annexation of Crimea in 2014 and finally Ukraine in 2022.

Russia has always considered NATO and EU enlargement an act of aggression against it. In order to maintain and exercise its influence, Russia defines the concept of "near abroad—Ruskimir" as a Russian world that extends beyond Russia's borders. This is due to the fact that the Russian diaspora worldwide represents between 25 and 30 million Russian speakers who speak, think, and feel Russian, an inevitable cultural and political lever of influence.[13]

It should be noted that, a few months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, tensions increased in the Caucasus and Central Asia, with two conflicts erupting in the former Soviet republics: Armenia against Azerbaijan and Tajikistan against Kyrgyzstan, resulting in hundreds of deaths. The cause was obvious: undefined borders were the cause of the outbreak of these conflicts. A weakened Russian power after the fall of the USSR was unable to maintain order around the lands bordering southern Russia and the Caspian Sea between two other powers, China to the east and NATO member Turkey to the west.[14]

Regarding the strategic issue of "The reconstitution of the former USSR," we refer to the statements of Vladimir Putin, who said: "Those who do not regret the fall of the USSR have no heart, and those who want to restore it have no head."[15]

The older generations retain a real nostalgia for the USSR, but the new generations aspire to greater freedom and a more developed country than those of the past. However, they all unite around a powerful Russia on the international stage.[16]

On the economic level, the economic weapon is an instrument of political violence and would be useful for seizing economic power when it is hostile and even weakens the dominant social strata.[17]

Thus, the strategy of international punishment through economic sanctions can contribute to the downfall of the hostile subject. Since the annexation of Crimea, the aggression against Ukraine in 2022, and to date, Western sanctions against Russia have had the opposite effect. For example, in July 2023, Russia achieved a high growth rate, while that of Western countries has significantly declined despite the barrage of Western sanctions.

The reason is that, since the fall of the USSR, Russia has strengthened its agreements with post-Soviet countries, especially in the hydrocarbon sector. It will remain the energy, military, and cybernetic center of its territory, and third-party states still depend on it. The gas conflicts between Russia and Ukraine since 2005 bear witness to this fait accompli [18]. Therefore, the real problem concerns the presence of a real competitor worthy of Russia in the energy sector.

2.2. The Chinese Danger to Russian Interests

In its information report to the French Senate (July 2022) on behalf of the Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Armed Forces Committee on the broad directions of American foreign policy and transatlantic relations, the foreign policy priority is and will remain China. China is described as the main threat to the United States by all US strategic documents and even as:

" The most serious long-term challenge to the international order."

To this end, states see their supremacy as likely to be challenged by China in all areas, without exception. The United States predicts a timeframe of no more than a decade for this strategic rivalry, which will be decisive. Therefore, Chinese influence and ambitions must be contained so that they can never achieve their objectives.[19]

For Russia, China is a strategic ally in all areas. It is one of the founding members of BRICS, like Russia, the savior of Russia sanctioned by the West. Nevertheless, it represents a real threat through its ambitions and technological advances, and more recently, its competition in the arms industry and the manufacture of fighter jets, which proved their effectiveness during the

Pakistan-India conflict (2025). The Chinese space station, more efficient than the ISS, has only increased the fear of major powers, including Russia.

But the greatest Chinese threat to Russia is Chinese immigration to Siberia (120 million Chinese at the borders and 33 million in border towns). Russia suffers from the problem of demographic decline (more than 17 million km² for a population of 146 million inhabitants), on the other hand China has an area of (9.6 million km² for a population of 1.4 billion inhabitants), the problem is that Russia has 11% of the world's agricultural land and China only has 7% of Chinese agricultural land, therefore, Siberia is the perfect escape for Chinese food security but which will have serious consequences on geopolitics in the near future.

Another threat posed by China to Russian interests is China's growing influence in Russian areas of influence, such as Eastern European countries, Kazakhstan for example, where China's role is increasingly important, especially in the economic sphere and in certain areas such as investment and infrastructure projects. China is close to ousting Russia from its dominant position in Kazakhstan's economy.[20]

It is true that China constantly asserts that it does not seek to dominate the world, but simply to defend its interests, unlike countries influenced by Christianity and Islam, which have developed a desire to spread their worldview and convert other peoples to their faith. China seeks only to become a respected world power and has not, and will never have, any colonial or territorial ambitions beyond the restitution of Hong Kong, Macao, and, in the future, Taiwan, which is nothing other than exercising its right to the liberation of its occupied territories. [21]

However, the economic aspect cannot be separated from the political aspect. All strategy and decision-making at the political level is directly linked to economic interests. Once China becomes a major economic power, and in the near future, it will no longer be satisfied with the respect so sought after in the past, given the many internal and external challenges it must overcome, such as the completion of the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative), the problem of China's aging population, agricultural land that no longer meets the growing needs of the population, digitalization and the adoption of artificial intelligence to the detriment of the local workforce, global warming through CO2 emissions, and a communist regime that is only sustained by the country's economic growth. All these challenges encourage China to go beyond respect in its domestic and international policy.

Part 2: China, the Dangerous Competitor of Russia and the United States

Officially, the United States considered the USSR and then Russia the only adversary to fear until Donald Trump came to power in 2016, when he unveiled the other enemy to be wary of: "China." An arrogant and powerful China, both economically and militarily, China is the key to global hegemony for Russia and the United States. The Chinese claim that their development is purely peaceful, but their weight can only upset the balance of power among the world powers. As for the "enemy brothers," the United States and Russia, it is best to recall the ties that have always existed for over a century, such as the sale of Russian Alaska to the Americans (1867), the alliance between the USSR and the USA during World War II, the Cold War, which never ended in military confrontation, where the veto power in the Security Council perfectly replaced this confrontation, not to mention Putin's assistance after the events of September 11, 2001, and Putin's desire to join NATO, but without success. Therefore, between the United States and Russia, there will always be common ground in the future to redistrict the world into zones of influence between the two former powers, provided they get rid of the new intruder, China.

This second part of the research is devoted to the objectives of the war in Ukraine and the crisis of multilateralism, then, it will be a question of demonstrating the real danger posed by China to Russian and American interests.

1. The War in Ukraine and the Crisis of Multilateralism

At the end of the Cold War, the United States assumed global leadership despite its Russian competitor, which, due to its military power and strategic geography during the Soviet era, was unable to continue to act as a counterweight on the international stage, and the balance was disrupted. The collapse of the USSR gave way to other potential actors such as emerging countries, but unfortunately, these countries were no match for American power. The latter assumed the role of global policeman, with the sole responsibility of preserving world peace, even if it meant venturing unilaterally into wars, even without any UN cover, to the detriment of international law.

It is true that the United States has not always had a unilateral foreign policy, they were the basis for the creation of the UN, the IMF, the World Bank and other organizations, but it is especially in the era of D. Trump that "The crisis of multilateralism" was relaunched by the famous slogan "America first". Defying the UN, he denounced the Paris agreement on climate which was signed by all the members of the organization, withdrew from UNESCO and the Iran-Nuclear agreement, he transferred the American embassy to Tel Aviv, questioned trade agreements arrogating to himself the right to decide which country could trade with Iran. [22]

After D. Trump's return to power in 2025, his foreign policy became more belligerent, with a tariff war declared against all countries, even his allies like Canada and those in the EU, particularly China and then the BRICS countries; the continued arming of Ukraine to maintain the conflict; absolute military and political support for Israel against Gaza in order to exterminate the civilian population through genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity; then aggression against Iran (July 2025); and finally, preparations for a military confrontation with China.

1.1. The Russo-Ukrainian Conflict: Ending American Unilateralism

In its "special operation" of February 22, 2022, Russia put forward several pretexts such as security issues and identity questions, because between the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine there are Russian authoritarian excesses in Ukraine such as the granting of former historical lands, and even if security guarantees were offered to Russia to end this war, it will not be able to accept them. [23] Because there are many other pretexts for this war.

Russia advocates the revival of a new world order based on a multilateralism decreed but far from the West, because since the fall of the USSR it has found itself powerless in the face of NATO strikes in Kosovo (1999), powerless in the Security Council to exercise its right of veto for more than a decade, accepting the humiliation of the arrogant victors selling out international law (Iraq 2003). Russian President V. Putin blames the dysfunctions of the system on "the unipolarity of the world", therefore, behind the war in Ukraine there is the Russian desire to fight with the West and to challenge its hegemony quite simply by accelerating the dismantling of the international order. [24]

For the West, the international order must continue to exist according to Western principles and vision, and no one has the right or the power to claim a new international order involving a new vision, that of a multilateralism based on respect for others. But is it truly multilateralism that Russia defends, or simply a pretext for a return to a new Bipolarity? Certainly, during the Security Council's public debate on "effective multilateralism" on April 24, 2023, at its 9308th meeting, where Russia chaired the council, the head of Russian diplomacy accused the West of undermining the UN Charter for their own benefit, and the latter accused Russia of violating all principles by attacking Ukraine. This is mere media propaganda in the eyes of international opinion, because we must never forget that this charter was enacted by the two blocs of the time. Also, let us not forget that the two members of the council have flouted one of the pillars of the established order (Non-use of armed force), the United States in Iraq (2003) and Russia in Ukraine in (2022) where the UN appears out of the game. By getting rid of the false pretenses imagined by previous violations, the Russian president detects the keystone of the international security system (the non-use of force outside of articles 42 and 51 of the IONU charter). [25]

1.2. The Russo-Ukrainian Conflict: Ending the Euro-American Alliance

Officially, the war in Ukraine is aimed at ending American hegemony in Eastern Europe and favoring multilateralism based on respect for others. However, unofficially, it weakens the EU's economic and military potential. Today, the EU is struggling to manage this war, which erupted just after the COVID-19 pandemic, with its serious socio-economic consequences. It is now forced to adjust its military and economic aid to Ukraine.[26]

After the Russian aggression, EU leaders were certain that the economic and financial war against Russia would quickly bring it to a halt. Greater Russia had a GDP slightly higher than that of Spain. However, the impact of the sanctions will be minimal for the EU. Russia is taking a hit, but the collapse has not occurred. For its part, the EU is facing double-digit inflation due to catastrophic energy prices, and European leaders have had to release huge sums to support citizens' purchasing power. [27]

The sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea in September 2022 was the work of the United States, not Russia, as several Western countries accused. The United States also considered that Nord Stream 1 and 2 gave Moscow significant leverage over Germany and Western European countries. Washington has always been hostile to Nord Stream 1, which was commissioned in 2012, and then to Nord Stream 2, which had not been commissioned before its suspension at the start of the conflict in Ukraine.[28] However, the United States has become the leading exporter of liquefied LNG to Europe, driving prices to record levels, boosting American coffers at the expense of the EU. Even the aid to Ukraine approved by the US Congress would directly benefit the American economy through investment in arms manufacturing, which would then be sent directly to Ukraine. [29]

During Trump's 2024 election campaign, the Republicans favored a significant reduction in military aid to Ukraine; however, the Democrats favored prolonging the conflict. Democrats or Republicans, the loser in this war is the EU and Ukraine; the winner is the United States, because the war cannot last indefinitely and peace must be negotiated sooner or later.

The war in Ukraine would put an end to the American unilateralism that has reigned supreme for more than three decades. This unilateralism must disappear in order to reestablish a Bipolarity that benefits both former powers. However, this implies a transition phase, which is multilateralism between the great powers, especially the emerging powers, must take place in international relations. The war in Ukraine has weakened the EU, forcing it to withdraw from the race towards the transition phase. The Taiwanese trap is perfect for displacing China, so the world will have no choice but to accept the return to a new Bipolarity with new zones of influence for both winners.

2. China: The Common Enemy of Russian and US Interests

China has always held a historical disdain for multilateral institutions, but after the Cold War, it made them one of its pillars of power assertion. They are a privileged arena where power plays are played, with each side trying to exploit these organizations for its own ends. China uses multilateralism as a bulwark against American hegemony within several organizations: the UN, WTO, BRICS, and the list goes on. As for the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, it is unequivocally an anti-hegemonic partnership, essentially embodied in the sale of arms and the transfer of Russian technology to China. Russia exports desperately needed goods, such as military equipment and energy resources, while China provides investment and manufactured goods at competitive prices. [30]

The BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) represents a real danger to American interests, but also to Russia. For the latter, the BRI is one of the main factors in the loss of influence in Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan). Furthermore, Russia, under sanctions, is dependent on the powerful Chinese economy. China is also Russia's competitor in the Arctic through the Polar Silk Road. Also, the BRI is perceived by the United States as a tool for restructuring global governance dominated by the United States. Thus, Sino-Russian cooperation in the Arctic and

Central Asia directly threatens American interests worldwide. Chinese indebtedness and influence in BRI partner countries, a "debt trap," could allow it to take control of strategic assets such as resources and ports in the future, threatening American interests. This final part of the research aims to demonstrate that a likely solution to weaken China will be a Sino-American confrontation called "trapping China in Taiwan," and ultimately demonstrate that it is possible to establish a Russo-American bipolarity.

2.1. Trapping China in Taiwan

There is no point in retracing China's belligerent history in the South China Sea, and particularly in Taiwan, but the most important question is whether China will be able to restrain itself and not initiate its reunification project with Taiwan, planned for 2049, before that date. Tensions continue to grow between the two great powers, with the United States provoking China on numerous occasions, ranging from the election of independence activist Tsai In Wen in 2016 as Taiwanese leader, the visit of White House Speaker N. Pelosi in 2022, to Tsai In's visit to the United States in 2023. China perceives these events as purely provocative and responds with military exercises surrounding the island for three days.[31]

However, Sino-American tensions are not limited to China's annexation of Taiwan, but also to Chinese territorial claims in the sea between China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The United States protests China's stranglehold on the region by sending warships and aircraft carriers simply to challenge Chinese sovereignty over the South China Sea.

Since 2020, the South China Sea has become the scene of military maneuvers between the two great powers, with missiles and spy planes heralding a dangerous escalation that could lead to an armed conflict sooner than expected.[32]

Recent actions perceived by China as US provocations in Taiwan and the South China Sea include:

- Speech by the US Secretary of Defense at the Shangri-La Dialogue (May-June 2025), where the Pentagon chief accused China of preparing for a potential invasion of Taiwan by 2027, denouncing Chinese military maneuvers around the island and the militarization of islets in the South China Sea. [33]

- Increased military support for Taiwan: The Trump administration has proposed doubling funding for arms shipments to Taiwan in 2026, from $500 million to $1 billion, and is pushing for official recognition of Taiwan, a move considered highly provocative by Beijing. [34]

- Cooperation on AI and drones: Taiwan has reached an agreement with the United States to develop an AI-based command and control system and new drone capabilities, which China sees as a direct threat to its sovereignty. Taiwan is the ideal trap for a direct armed conflict between China and the United States, as with the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the conflict will be supported by North Korea, Russia and perhaps other actors such as Iran on the Chinese side and, for the United States, by members of NATO, the EU and of course South Korea and Japan.

2.2-A return to a new bipolarity?

The possibility of a return to Cold War-style bipolarity after a hypothetical distancing of China from the international scene seems credible in some ways. It is true that relations between Russia and the United States have been marked by persistent tension for more than two decades (Crimea 2014, Ukraine 2022), and also several strategic issues such as military competition between the two great powers, NATO expansion into Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and sanctions against Russia—all of which run counter to a possible strategy aimed at sharing the world's natural resources and new zones of influence between the two.

However, Donald Trump's first term and then his second give us a glimpse of efforts toward normalization in the interest of the two great powers against a dangerous enemy like China. China's economic and military power makes the likelihood of its withdrawal from the international scene very low, unless China is directly involved in an armed conflict that could weaken its economic and military power. The "Taiwan powder keg" would be the perfect setting for a confrontation

with the United States. Therefore, China's withdrawal from the international scene is highly likely, and it will allow Russia to reposition itself as an autonomous power or alongside other, less powerful allies like China.

While the bipolarity of the past was based on ideological and military opposition, the new bipolarity would be based on an equitable sharing of the world's natural resources and zones of influence that would maintain the geopolitical balance between the two great powers. It is important to recall some points of convergence between the two presidents, Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump:

- Ideological proximity and worldview, such as the rejection of globalism and international institutions, as well as the cult of authoritarian leadership and a shared charisma.
- Direct and provocative discourse, breaking with that of liberal elites. [35]
- Geopolitical and economic interests, such as energy and space research, strategic rapprochement against China, and negotiations on Ukraine.
- Personal relations and direct communications, such as phone calls, mutual admiration between the two leaders, and a Russian diplomatic gesture (the release of the American hostage). [36]
- Specific shared issues, such as criticism of the Ukrainian president and the suspension of certain measures against Russia.

These points of rapprochement are of great concern to the EU and also to China.

Conclusion:

Today, the United States and Russia (Trump/Putin) are aware of the real danger posed by China's economic, military, and especially technological power, which directly threatens their shared strategic interests. The United States remains the world's leading power, but weakened by a public debt that exceeds $36 trillion (2025), it still cannot curb its continued growth, hence Trump's slogan "America First" and the declaration of a trade war against China.

Putin's Russia wants to revive its greatness, but is weakened compared to the USSR of yesteryear and has no choice but to maintain strategic relations with its Chinese neighbor. A China that is developing in all areas and with exceptional speed, to the point of threatening Russian interests both regionally and globally. The war in Ukraine has drawn Russia directly into the conflict, and the United States by proxy in order to weaken and distance the EU from the international scene. As for the conflict in the China Sea (Taiwan), it would draw the United States directly into the conflict and Russia by proxy, in order to weaken and distance China from the international scene. "The equitable sharing of tasks and also that of results", a binary rather than a quartenary sharing, and the Trump/Putin tête-à-tête on August 25, 2025 in Alaska in the black limousine confirms the suspicions of an agreement concluded unofficially in the past between the two powers.

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