GRF GLOBAL OUTLOOK REPORT 2023

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GRF
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2023

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In 2011, he co-founded Linktera Information Technologies and currently serves as a Co-Founder and General Manager. Linktera, under Aksoy's leadership, departed from traditional consulting approaches and the classic customer-supplier relationships. Instead, they focused on creating an ecosystem based on internal entrepreneurship and collaboration, becoming a technology provider that delivers over 300 projects annually to more than 100 companies, including over 25 banks.

Specializing in financial services, technology, and strategic management, Aksoy continues to collaborate with universities, technoparks, and private sector initiatives. He also serves as a Board Member of the Technopark Entrepreneurs Association. He speaks English and Chinese, is married, and a father of two.

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Selim Yenel was born in 1956 in Istanbul. He entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 1979. His first posting was the Turkish Delegation to the OECD in Paris between 1981 – 84. From there he went to the Turkish Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan (1984 – 86). After coming back to the MFA he was posted to the Turkish Delegation to the UN in New York (1988 – 92). From 1994 till 1999 he was at the Turkish Delegation to the European Union in Brussels. He returned to Ankara and dealt with EU matters up until the opening of accession negotiations (1999 - 2005). Subsequently in December 2005 he was posted as Ambassador to Vienna until October 2009 when he returned to Ankara as Deputy Under-Secretary for Bilateral Political Affairs and Public Diplomacy. From December 2011 till January 2017 he was posted as Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Turkey to the European Union. Upon his return to Ankara he became Undersecretary at the Ministry of EU Affairs until July 2018 when the EU Ministry and Foreign Ministry merged. In 2019 he was appointed as First Deputy Secretary General at the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Organization. In January 2020 he became President of Global Relations Forum. His book analyzing Turkey's EU accession process was published in December, 2022.

He is married and has a son and a daughter.

PREFACE

2023 has been another eventful year. Firstly, it was meaningful for Turkey as we commemorated the centenary of the establishment of the Republic. We are happy to note that despite some obstacles, the reforms and changes that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk brought on have taken hold. The people have embraced the gains.

Early in the year, Turkey suffered devastating earthquakes that hit the south east of the country. This had a profound effect, as thousands of people lost their lives and many more were left without their livelihood. It will take time to heal the wounds and suffering. On the political side, the Parliamentary and Presidential elections held last May did not bring a change of government. The economy has remained a major concern with rising inflation. Turkey continued to try mending fences with the countries it had strained relations with. There have been positive signs with Greece and a number of Middle Eastern countries. However the Hamas attack and the subsequent Israeli reaction caused Turkish - Israeli relations, which were slowly developing, to reverse course. The relationship with the European Union remains precarious. Turkish – US relations have not progressed much either.

Regarding the international front, while we may have turned a page on health issues we were struck with regional conflicts that had global consequences.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has continued, although Kyiv has not only checked the onslaught but has even gone on the offensive. Nevertheless, after nearly two years, the war seems to have reached a stalemate and those who support Ukraine have become more vocal on finding a negotiated settlement. Naturally, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy wants an all-out victory but the facts on the ground make it unrealistic for the time being.

A surprise development was the deliberately vicious attack in October by Hamas against Israel. The expected massive counter attack by Israel has caused over ten thousand deaths, sending the recent positive developments in the Middle East into a tailspin. As Saudi Arabia and Israel were slowly warming up to each other, the Hamas attack pushed back any hope for an opening. Nevertheless, at the joint Arab League and Islamic Conference meetings, a number of Arab countries prevented certain measures against Israel. So although Iran may seem to have benefited in the short run, we will see whether relations between Israel and the Arab states can be restored. Although still a long shot, a two state solution may finally be realized.

The rivalry between US and China continued throughout the year, although the meeting between the two Presidents held in November sought to ease the tension. As the world was focused on the two regional conflicts, many were wary of a Chinese advance on Taiwan. The situation remains tense with many unknowns such as how far would the United States commit itself to Taiwan's protection in case China attacks the island.

All of these issues were in the forefront of disinformation activities. Truth has fallen to the wild and fake claims which continue to confuse people on what is 'real'. Due to the advances in cinematography and in using the latest technology, there are claims that what is seen on social or even mainstream media is actually manufactured.

The fact that artificial intelligence has taken over the headlines mostly in alarming ways have added fuel to these arguments. The benefits of using AI are overrun by alarmist developments

2023 had its share of elections. The Polish parliamentary elections brought back a more balanced government while the presidential elections in Argentina gave power to a populist. Although the elections in the US are to take place in 2024, the shadow of former President Donald Trump continues to loom over many of the issues mentioned above. If Trump is elected the international landscape will no doubt be much different in 2025. One of the most likely casualties will be the fight against climate change. Despite the fact that the world has seen the most extreme weather conditions during the last decade, disinformation and conspiracy theorists have managed to distort reality on this matter, and Trump is one its most ardent disbelievers.

While our world continues to be embroiled in problems old and new, we have compiled a number of articles written exclusively by our members. This year's issue will also be published in English and Turkish for the first time.

Looking at the rapid pace of current global developments, we first take on *"The Transformation of the Global System and Turkey"*, as well as *"Reflections on the Future of European Security Architecture"*.

The latest developments between Israel and Hamas call for looking at *"Between Regional and Global Power Balances, The Iran - Saudi Arabia Normalization Agreement"*. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has made us think of "China, the US and the Colliding Spheres of Influence in the South Pacific - AUKUS, Taiwan and Beyond".

As world headlines are consumed with AI, we look at *"Beyond Automation: AI as a Catalyst for Economic and Occupational Resistance"*.

Finally, 2024 is shaping up to be a year of elections. Nearly half of the world's population will be able to vote, including in Indonesia, India, Russia and many other countries. But perhaps the most important of all, in terms of its potential impact, is *"2024: The Year of the US Election"*.

We hope you enjoy and find food for thought in this year's report.

AS THE WORLD TURNS

Selim Yenel
Ambassador (R); President, Global Relations Forum (GRF)

People place a high value on dates. They are no less important for nations. Especially for commemorating significant occurrences. Few commemorations, such as the end of World War I, keep people in touch with their past. The fact that certain events have been designated as holidays is another effort to keep them in people's minds. Countries remember specific dates, sometimes even the precise day, but after a while, only the year is remembered. Everything grows hazy as generations pass. Perhaps it is because new incidents take their place. Though the precise dates may elude us, we can still recall that the Second World War ended in 1945 or that the Iron Curtain fell in 1989.

Dates are now commonly used to illustrate comparable events. Things like the horrific attacks on the United States on September 11th have come to be referred to by this phrase. What occurred in Israel is now being compared to a '9/11' type event.

Tragedies, crises, and wars have always been a part of the world. However, the influence of recent innovations is growing in significance as the world is shrinking at an exponential rate due to technological advancements and the instantaneous flow of knowledge.

The major occurrences of these last two years will almost certainly have lasting effects. Russia continued its incursion of Ukraine notwithstanding its humiliation on the battlefield. Amid a period of relative tranquillity in the Middle East, the Hamas assault on Israel has already caused widespread concern throughout the region and around the world.

The conflict in Ukraine compelled the European Union to reconsider enlargement. For quite some time, enlargement has been the EU's most effective foreign policy instrument. For many who desired membership, it has been a profoundly transformative experience. However, the EU currently confronts a dilemma.

The next enlargement phase was supposed to be towards the Balkans throughout the last decade. Following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the EU created a new concept, such as the Western Balkans. Potential members in the region include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia, which split apart from the former Yugoslavia, as well as Albania. However, as a result of the most recent expansion, the EU has decided to move cautiously on this matter.

Because of policies that violate fundamental rights and the rule of law in Hungary, Poland, and, to a lesser extent, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, harsher standards are being applied to new candidates. The last enlargement took place ten years ago.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine gave a new meaning to enlargement. Ukraine submitted applications to join NATO and the EU. Moldova and Georgia did the same. President Macron of France responded by proposing the creation of a brand-new organization known as the 'European Political Community', which would include all of Europe's nations with the exception of Belarus and Russia. This may be interpreted as an attempt to divert attention away from EU and NATO expansion.

As a matter of fact, there has been debate over various membership types for a very long time. Occasionally, there has been discussion of making a distinction between those who support deepening and those who wish to integrate more quickly. There have been proposals for two-speed, two-stage, distinct geometry, and à la carte Europe. Many European think tanks and certain EU capitals are revisiting these concepts in the wake of Russia's attempted invasion of Ukraine. It's still unclear if this is the right time to take action.

Europe is divided. The EU currently consists of twenty seven nations, with six prospective Western Balkan countries as future members. On its outskirts are an old member, an old candidate, a country that declined membership, an island country, a country in the midst of Europe with close relations, three former Soviet republics that never intended to be members, and a massive country in the east with its vassals. They are all involved in Europe's future. Europe used to be the focal point of global politics. Over the last few decades, this has gradually changed. The world has more important issues than to be concerned about what happens in the old continent. This has been demonstrated by the various reactions of what used to be called the 'third world' to the Russian invasion.

The Middle East has come back to the top of the agenda. There seems to be more to the Hamas attack on Israel than meets the eye on the vast chessboard. Is it part of a strategy to keep the United States occupied not just in Europe with the Russia – Ukraine conflict, but also in the Middle East? Due to Congressional holdups, the Biden administration is already having trouble providing military supplies to Ukraine, and the EU is not a power that can cover such a void. Since the Obama administration, the US has attempted to focus on Asia, although events abroad have precluded such a shift. Is it a Chinese strategy to keep Washington busy, or is it another player pushing China to exploit such an advantage? We might have a better understanding in 2024, but while we write this study, the world is preoccupied with regional wars that have global ramifications.

The United States' foreign policy is scrambling to achieve stability. Although President Joe Biden had all the credentials for an informed foreign policy, he has failed to maintain a balanced perspective in the Middle East. While the entire world denounced Hamas's unprovoked and malicious attack, Israel's response was far more destructive, with thousands of civilians killed in this senseless war. Whether or not we agree on the basis for these attacks, they all have one element in common. Countries are not waiting anymore for a negotiated or diplomatic resolution to issues that have been postponed for years, if not decades. Violence is viewed as the sole means to attain objectives. One specific example occurred in the Caucasus. After three decades of waiting, Azerbaijan decided to take matters into its own hands. With a better-equipped and trained army, they marched in to reclaim Karabakh, which the international community had already acknowledged as Azeri territory, but could not resolve.

At the end of the year, Venezuela threatened neighbouring Guyana with seizing a major portion of its land based on a sham referendum in which only Venezuelans took part. Venezuela's rejection of the International Court of Justice's jurisdiction is yet another smack in the face to the international rules-based system. This order, which was designed by the United States after World War II, is challenged more than ever. The Security Council has become non-functional and without reform, which is not expected to happen any time soon, is bound to be obsolete. There is debate on whether the world is transitioning from a unipolar to a bipolar or multipolar order. Instead of polarity, I believe we might refer to layers. With the emergence of regional players such as Brazil, India, and Turkey, among others, these countries are only one rung below the superpowers. They have the ability to influence their surroundings and are not as dependent on the superpowers as they were during the Cold War. We will undoubtedly see them in action more and more as they attempt to spread their weight in the coming years.

The irony is that almost all of the world's problems may rely on whether Donald Trump is re-elected President for a second term. If his first term and subsequent remarks after he lost the Presidential election in 2020 give any indication, we should expect volatility to be the norm. He was unprepared during his first term, but now he has a Republican Party ready to back him up. Despite his unruliness, he remained relatively restrained in his first four years, but it is conceivable that he will become unhinged in a possible second term. As a result, the US presidential election will be vital for the entire world.

Apart from international conflicts and rivalries, we also face internal and external difficulties that transcend national boundaries. Artificial intelligence is being re-examined. While it is not a new concept, it has become a reality and influences day-to-day living. Is it a threat to humanity or a step forward? The short answer is that it depends on how it is used, just like any new idea or discovery. Or, more sinister, by whom.

As technology advances at a rapid rate, disinformation has become a growing problem. Although fake news is also nothing new and is actually an ancient ruse, it can now reach millions of people and influence their opinions in far more sophisticated ways. Throughout history, there have always been challenges to truth. False information spreads more easily when people's attention spans get shorter. Using this strategy, populists gain ground everywhere. Numerous election outcomes have been impacted by misleading information. It is common for people to accept as true what they already suspect without verifying it, so ludicrous claims might be accepted as fact. Fear of immigration and the recession are convenient targets to exploit.

Climate change is another worldwide issue. However, the globe is now again divided into believers and detractors. Despite the fact that extreme weather conditions are becoming more frequent, it is difficult to get everyone on board to develop solutions to this threat. The COP meetings that take place every year make incremental progress which remains insufficient compared to what happens in the real world. Even the European Union struggles to meet targets. Already, whether the 2035 deadline for electric vehicles should be delayed is being debated by some member states.

We will continue to be confronted with non-state actors. Not just militias or terrorists, but also major businesses like IT companies. They already wield more power than the majority of nations because they dominate new technology. Again who controls what and whether there are sufficient rules to what these advances may bring about will be decisive.

This brings us to leadership or lack thereof. Among the major powers it used to be the US that would take the lead on dealing with major issues. This is changing. The world is disintegrating into actual and virtual domains over which governments have little or no influence. Existing international institutions lag behind innovations, while new ones that should manage AI and other advancements have yet to be formed. In the past, nations have typically come together in the aftermath of catastrophes like wars or natural disasters. Whether we will be able to avoid commemorating new dates in the future depends on getting our act together. Again looking back, we should not be startled by new surprises in 2024.

2024: THE YEAR OF THE US ELECTION

Evren Balta

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The United States is preparing for elections in 2024. Undoubtedly, these elections are important not only for the US but for the whole world. The US is the guardian and dominant power of the international order established after World War II. Changes in the exercise of this power can cause tremors all over the world with a domino effect, affecting national and international balances. In other words, the domino effect is not limited to US foreign policy. Shifts in the US institutional, economic and political model also affect the whole world. Therefore, this year, we are entering an election period in the US that could be extremely critical globally, and that is drawing everyone's attention.

What makes these elections so special is that they are likely to witness the return of Donald Trump, who lost the presidency in 2020 after one term in office amid extraordinary crises and a neck-and-neck race. In fact, in the latest polls, Trump is either tied or ahead of Joe Biden in the presidential race.[1] Although there is a search within the Democratic Party for non-Biden candidates who might have a better chance against Trump, this does not seem very likely.

How is it that Donald Trump, who four years ago, after the life-and-death elections won by Joe Biden, refused to accept the results, attempted a coup d'état claiming that they were rigged, encouraged and incited his supporters to storm the Capitol building, and was put on trial for this insurrection, is now likely to run again and even win the elections? Who are the voters who voted for Trump despite all the irregularities and illegalities?

The Trump Electorate

Arlie R. Hochschild was looking for an answer to the same question in her book that became one of the most read books in the immediate aftermath of Trump's 2016 victory.[2] He was finding and spending time with the 'shy Trump voters' in their own lands, whom research companies had difficulty finding because they lied about who they would vote for. Indeed, Hochschild found that across the country, states where the American right was strong were poorer on average.

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[1] Kagan, Robert. "A Trump Dictatorship is Increasingly Inevitable", *Washington Post*, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/11/30/trump-dictator-2024-election-robert-kagan/

[2] Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right* (New York: The New Press, 2018).

They received a smaller share of the emerging sources of American prosperity, such as the IT industry, and in many cases were left out of it altogether. They also have, on average, higher numbers of young single mothers, higher divorce rates, weaker health systems, more obesity, more trauma-related deaths, and higher infant mortality rates. The difference in life expectancy between a Republican state like Louisiana and a heavily Democratic state like Oregon was the same as the difference between the United States and Nicaragua.

In the 2016 elections, this group of voters, increasingly radicalized by the American right, disconnected from the American left, full of anger and frustration, and Trump would discover each other. His failure, his incompetence, his inability to speak, his unnecessary boasting and, above all, his constant humiliation, criticism and even judgment by groups seen as the establishment, would allow these angry voters to embrace him as one of their own. The more the establishment picked on him, the more these voters would embrace him.

Gwynn Guilford writes that she decided to follow Trump to his rallies and become part of the crowd supporting him when she felt that she could not understand what was happening in the 2016 election.[3] Trump's bizarre personality, which did not recognize any political norms, was not a negative for this group of voters, but rather a perfect opportunity to convince them that only he could deal with the establishment. Rally attendees told Guilford that he "*says everything we talk about around the dinner table but are afraid to say in public, without fear.*" Trump's rallies went far beyond a party program. Addressing white voters in particular, he was telling these people who had lost their privilege who the country really belonged to (you!), who deserved to live here (you!), and who should get a bigger piece of the economic pie (you!) and who should be punished for the decline (the elites!). At those rallies, Guilford argued, the moral authority was not established by Trump, but rather by the tens of thousands of people who shared, however briefly, great enthusiasm and deep anger.

This unity included, as Justin Gest has argued, the formerly unionized, mostly white, industrial workers of America who felt like they were disappearing. Despite their great historical role in building their country, American workers now saw themselves as economically precarious and culturally on the margins.[4] As Katherine J. Cramer has shown in her exquisite ethnographic study of rural communities in Wisconsin, this coexistence most often involved American farmers and rural communities. They were predominantly white and male, although there were also women, and to a lesser extent Hispanics and blacks,

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[3] Guilford, Gwynn. 2016. "Inside the Trump Machine", *Quartz*, 2016, https://qz.com/645345/inside-the-trump-machine-the-bizarre-psychology-of-americas-newest-political-movement

[4] Gest, Justin. *The new minority: White working class politics in an age of immigration and inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

touched by fear and anger. As the structural priority of the American economy shifts to other sectors, these privileged groups of the old order had three basic demands: redistribution of resources, power and respect.[5]

In the 2020 elections, Trump did not lose the support he received from these groups, but rather he lost the elections due to the mobilization of Democratic voters over issues such as abortion rights and freedom of the press. Trump's voters, who had been galvanized by Trump's claim that "the elections were stolen", organized, with Trump's explicit support, the January 7 raid on the US Congress, which will go down in US history as a black mark. Trump has many ongoing lawsuits over his role in this raid, as well as over his overstepping/violations of authority during his presidency. But despite all this, Trump has managed to become a major actor in the 2024 elections. Moreover, it is likely that he will enter this new electoral race with the support of groups that he has not traditionally received support from. Indeed, as John Judis and Ruy Teixeira argue, these groups have recently included black and Hispanic voters and recent immigrants, who traditionally form the backbone of the Democratic Party.[6] Some observers have even argued that Trump voters are no longer as distinguishable as they used to be, and that urban and educated groups that have traditionally been Democratic Party voters have also started to support Trump.

Rage Against the System

Long before Trump was even a contender for the presidency, in his 2004 book *What's the Matter with Kansas* (2004), Thomas Frank questioned how the state of Kansas, once famous for its left-wing radicalism, had become the culture wars' most enthusiastic soldier.[7] American voters were angry at a political order that no longer promised them anything, and at its representatives who deceived them with false promises. Frank would argue that this was a quiet anger from below that had the potential to change the entire political landscape and would shape American politics in the near term. According to Frank, the success of the American right was that ordinary people solidified and instrumentalized their values as everything they knew as constant evaporated. As job security, the idea of owning a home, and the ideal of a better life for their children evaporated, the American right organized the frustrations and anger of the American people through demands such as abortion and individual armament, and directed this anger against the ruling groups they coded as 'the establishment'.

Trump became a leader who combined this very familiar prescription of the

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[5] Cramer, Katherine J. *The politics of resentment: Rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[6] Teixeira, R. and Judis, J.B., 2023. *Where Have All the Democrats Gone? The Soul of the Party in the Age of Extremes.*

[7] Frank, Thomas. "What's the Matter with Kansas?." *In Social Stratification*, pp. 1035-1036. Routledge, 2018.

American right with his own unique style. He deviated from the traditional position of the right, advocating not to preserve institutions but to tear them down and rebuild them. He began by destroying the duplicitous leadership of the Republican Party, which Hacker and Pierson characterized as "plutocratic populist",[8] and bringing it to the point where it was subservient to him. He got his power precisely because he pretended to be anti-system. Because for many voters, the system had ceased to function and no longer represented their demands or aspirations. However, it would be wrong to read the Trump electorate as one that only seeks to overthrow the system. Indeed, Trump has the ability to present himself as a 'law and order' candidate while opposing the system. He claims that the system is no longer defending law and order in the captivity of some 'liberal' minority groups. He builds his campaign on the message that the country's cities are decaying. He blames the Democrats for this decay, who have promoted the ideology of 'wokeness' (a concept that promotes social awareness, inclusiveness and racial/gender/social equality), surrendered to it and weakened the police force. He conflates agendas such as anti-immigration with the 'bread and jobs' agenda. As Kagan so eloquently put it, *"Trump benefits from the dysfunction of institutions because he has a simple answer to that dysfunction: himself."*

Biden and 'the Establishment'

It is impossible to understand Trump without looking at who he is up against. Because all over the world, voters don't vote for the candidate they like more, they vote for the candidate who has a better chance of winning against the candidate they hate more.[9] Trump's opponent is obviously Joe Biden. Biden not only represents the system, but in his current physical state he symbolizes a rotten system that is about to collapse and is only moving forward by pushing from behind. This essentially reinforces the point that no matter what Biden does, he is an inadequate candidate against Trump.

During his campaign, Biden said he would make policy for the middle class. Accordingly, he implemented the American Job Creation Plan to modernize infrastructure and create jobs. He expanded social programs to address issues such as affordable health care, education and child poverty. He proposed changes to the tax code, including increases in taxes on high-income earners.[10] But this program, also called 'Bidenomics', came too late and was too narrow in scope. Moreover, although wages have recently begun to rise in response to inflation,

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[8] Hacker, Jacob and Pierson, Paul., *Let Them Eat Tweets*, W.W. Norton, 2020.

[9] Abramowitz, Alan I., and Steven Webster. "The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of US elections in the 21st century." *Electoral Studies* 41 (2016): 12-22.

[10] Barker, Tim, and J. W. Mason. "Is there an Alternative? The macroeconomics of the Biden Administration." *Dissent* 69, no. 1 (2022): 44-54.

high inflation has crushed the purchasing power of American wage earners. The housing crisis has made big cities unlivable and led to the exodus of the working population. The effort to open up to Trump voters by organizing politics around class and social justice did not bear the expected fruit immediately.

More importantly, the American elites have launched an all-out organized struggle against this rising protectionism, increased social spending and worker activism. Unlike the 2016 campaign, today the Trump campaign is much more organized and richer. This support is likely to grow even more once Trump emerges from the primaries as the Republican nominee, and it is likely to draw back big capital groups like the Kochs, who have withdrawn their support from Trump.

Losing Your Own Base

The Middle East crisis will also complicate Biden's job just before the elections. Since October 7, the position taken by the Biden administration on Palestine - despite all the divisions within the Democratic Party - has mobilized college campuses to criticize the hypocrisy of the American government. It has also alienated Arab and Muslim voters, who now have a considerable electoral weight in the US, from the Democratic Party. In a close election, especially in critical states, the loss of these voters will be difficult to recover.

Add to this the fact that young and educated voters, who have traditionally supported the Democratic Party, are looking for a third way. Unable to convince the Republican base, all the while unable to satisfy his own, Biden may have to compete with a third candidate like Cornel West who can attract the protest votes of Democratic voters.

Finally, it should be said that unlike countries like Turkey, where voting rates are traditionally high, it is more difficult for US voters to vote than not to vote. The elections are held on a Tuesday and therefore there are no holidays. It is necessary to take time off work or go to the polls after working hours. One out of every two voters does not vote in elections, and a portion of the ones that do vote by mail which has its own share of problems. Because the non-voting rate is so high, the increase and decrease in voter turnout has a significant impact on the outcome of the elections. Voting rates increase in contested and critical elections, especially when candidates who appeal to voters compete. The biggest problem for Biden, who failed to create a stir when he was elected, is that he may not be able to bring Democratic Party voters to the polls.

In the 2022 midterm elections, the Supreme Court's decision on abortion played an important role in mobilizing Democratic Party voters. In these elections, Democrats will call voters to the polls by underlining the dangers of a possible Trump regime.

What Happens If Trump is Elected?

In recent months, Robert Kagan published an op-ed in the Washington Post in which he argued that Trump's re-election as President would mean a slide into dictatorship.[11] Because Trump was preparing to use his already powerful presidential powers even more boldly this time. He was finally going to take back his presidency, which had been fraudulently usurped by his own loyal electorate. Every means at his disposal had been used. All systems of checks and balances were helpless against Trump. In the event of his election, the American system had to prepare for a new era of erosion of freedom of expression and fundamental rights.

Indeed, Donald Trump's presidency between 2017 and 2021 has put serious pressure on democratic norms and institutions in the United States. This period, Kagan argued, would also be characterized by 'fake news' attacks on the media, challenges to the independence of the judiciary, and a serious witch hunt against Trump opponents. He also argued that, if re-elected, he could use various legal manipulations to maintain his hold on power. This was reinforced by Trump's refusal to commit to a peaceful transfer of power during the 2020 presidential election and his claims of electoral fraud without providing substantial evidence. Moreover, the Trump administration's past practices, such as the controversial travel ban and immigration policies that have led to the separation of families at the US-Mexico border, are likely to continue in this new era in ways that undermine human rights and the rule of law.

The Global System and Trump

In short, Trump's re-election will certainly accelerate the democratic retreat in the US and around the world. But his presidency will also have many consequences for the international system. During Donald Trump's presidency from 2017 to 2021, his foreign policy was characterized by a distinctive "America First" approach in which national interests took precedence in international relations. The Trump administration pursued a protectionist trade policy, renegotiating agreements such as NAFTA and engaging in a trade war with China marked by tariffs and economic tensions. The former president has taken a tough stance against China, emphasizing concerns about trade imbalances and intellectual property theft. In the Middle East, he played a role in brokering normalization agreements between Israel and some Arab countries, while at the same time withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal. Trump's approach to international organizations such as NATO was also quite negative. On the one hand, he said that the US would withdraw from NATO, and on the other, he pressured allies to

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[11] Kagan, Robert. "A Trump Dictatorship is Increasingly Inevitable", *Washington Post*, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/11/30/trump-dictator-2024-election-robert-kagan/

meet their defense spending commitments. Overall, Trump's foreign policy has focused on redefining US global relations through unconventional diplomacy, a transactional style and an emphasis on national interests.

There is no sign that he will backtrack on these policies if re-elected. However, after Trump lost the elections, there has been a significant change in the global system. Russia invaded Ukraine. We can assume that Trump's victory will be perceived by Russian leader Vladimir Putin as a green light to make major advances in his agenda.[12] Especially with regards to the war in Ukraine, Trump has often called for de-escalation. He claims that he can end the war in 24 hours, although he does not say what his concrete policies will be. It is highly likely that the US under Trump will reduce the scope or enforcement of sanctions against Russia, and slow down the delivery of supplies to Ukraine. This will be justified as a US priority. Add to this the concern about the US withdrawal from European defense. Trump's close team of advisors, if not Trump himself, frequently expresses this desire.[13] It is precisely for this reason that in recent months, in the event of Trump's election, Congress has passed a law stating that no US President can unilaterally withdraw from NATO.[14] Efforts to make the system Trump-proof ('Trump-proofing') through similar decisions are already accelerating.

Finally, although Trump has taken a hawkish stance on China, it has been mainly economic, in line with his "America First" policy. We can also worry that in the event of tensions between China and Taiwan, the Trump administration might not take military measures to stop China, which would make China more expansionist in the Pacific.

All in all, a new Trump presidency in 2024 seems to be on the horizon, with serious repercussions for both the US and the rest of the world. **But even if Trump loses the election, the polarization and changing dynamics in American politics will continue to shape future elections and domestic politics.**

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[12] Luce, Edward. "The World cannot Hedge Against Trump", *Financial Times*, 2023, https://www.ft.com/content/4953c927-758b-4498-9562-3858aa5e2d62

[13] Ganesh, Janan. "What to Expect from a Second Trump Term", *Financial Times*, 2023, https://www.ft.com/content/3b15d02c-9835-481d-8ee7-b1ebcebe23e6

[14] Kelly, Laura. " Congress approves bill barring any president from unilaterally withdrawing from NATO", *The Hill*, 2023, https://thehill.com/homenews/4360407-congress-approves-bill-barring-president-withdrawing-nato/#:~:text=Congress%20approves%20bill%20barring%20any%20president%20from%20unilaterally%20withdrawing%20from%20NATO,-by%20Laura%20Kelly&text=Congress%20has%20approved%20legislation%20that,The%20measure%2C%20spearheaded%20by%20Sens.

REFLECTIONS ON FUTURE EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

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The Russian war against Ukraine has brought a dramatic change to the challenging international security environment with particular implications for the future European security architecture. At a time when Europe's cooperative security arrangements are no longer functional, European countries need to address how to bring an end to the ongoing war in Europe by achieving not just security for Ukraine but broader stability to the continent too. Progress in this field requires astute defense arrangements, arms control instruments, confidence and security building measures (CSBMs), and creative thinking that goes beyond the bounds of traditional alliances.

Russia's aim was clear as evidenced by its proposals it put forward in December 2021 for a NATO-Russia security agreement, and a parallel Russia-US one. During that time some analysts were contemplating whether it could be possible to avert the possibility of war by initiating a negotiating process that would aim at putting in place new arms control and disarmament instruments together with a set of CSBMs that would serve peace and stability in the European continent.[1] From the proposals tabled by Russia, it was clear that they were not just about Ukraine. Those proposals entailing, inter alia, no forward deployment of forces from 1997 dispositions, and no more NATO enlargement were unrealistic, hence without being a good basis to launch such a negotiating process. However, one may argue that Ukraine's security, European stability and Russia's relationship with the continent are intertwined.

Ukraine has been fighting courageously against Russia in defending its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, it remains dependent on Western support in provision of arms and ammunition. NATO allies have stepped up political and practical support, including strengthening Ukrainian resilience through countering Russian hybrid activities that include waves of systematic disinformation campaigns, assisting repairs to energy infrastructure and protection from missile attacks, as well as strengthening long-term force interoperability.

In the past, the focus was on support from individual allies. Yet the invasion has fundamentally changed the landscape for the Alliance collectively. Ukraine is now NATO's de facto frontline against Russia, which has been qualified as

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[1] İldem, Tacan; Ülgen, Sinan; Kasapoğlu, Can. "Ukrayna Krizine Diplomatik Çözüm Arayışları & Türkiye", *EDAM*, January 2022, https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/220121-Ukrayna.pdf

the most significant and direct threat to the Alliance's security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area by NATO's new Strategic Concept[2]. When the war is over, Ukraine's security will require NATO's continued commitment and support.

There is an understandable but not so useful mental fixation on how NATO might fulfill its commitment from the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO. What matters most, now, is the continuation of Western arms, ammunition and training at a scale sufficient for Ukraine to win the war. In this context, potential security guarantees need to be discussed and put in place to deter further Russian aggression should the war come to an end.

Apart from the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, security challenges persist elsewhere in the 57-participating States' OSCE area, including parts of the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

The ongoing war underlines that the fundamental principles enshrined first and foremost in the Helsinki Final Act[3] and in all other founding documents of the OSCE, not to mention the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act,[4] are as important and valid as ever. Those principles include, respect to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, refraining from the threat or use of force, the inviolability of internationally recognised borders, and every state's right to choose its own security arrangements, whether to belong to a military alliance or not.

The war in Ukraine will be a long one which many define it as a 'war of attrition'. The outcome of the war is unknown. However, whether Russia prevails as a victor or is defeated will certainly have ramifications for the future of European security.

In this type of warfare, peace can only be restored when a status quo acceptable to both sides is achieved, or in the case of the defeat -absolute or relative- of one side. For the Ukrainians, that defeat could be prompted by lack of support from the West, whether militarily or politically, and Putin most probably has been betting on the latter scenario to obtain at least part of what he wants from Ukraine, which includes the expansion of Russia in Ukraine's east and south. Should Western support stagger, or should Russia manage to annex vast territories of Ukraine, then the West will have failed to guarantee the global inviolability of borders in Europe. Russia would then stop for a while in order to regain

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[2] *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, June 2022, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf

[3] *Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe Final Act*, 1975, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf

[4] *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France,* NATO, 2009, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm

strength, but that would only be a strategic pause before the Kremlin's next move in contesting the post-1991 settlement in Europe and beyond. Targeting NATO countries cannot be ruled out, but the move might come possibly by proxy in places such as the Western Balkans, where tensions continue to mount and the peace settlements of the 1990s have long shown signs of fatigue.

If Russia continues to pursue its pattern of aggressive behavior guided by its interpretation of history and the challenge stemming from its revisionist approach upending the rules-based international order, a new European security architecture that would include Russia is not possible.

Under the present circumstances there is no way to revert to 'business as usual' in relations with Russia. Nevertheless, the West should not make the mistake of excluding Russia from any security arrangement forever. The reality dictated by geography and history requires the West to have a long-term goal of enabling Russia's return to the security order underpinned by the fundamental principles enshrined in the UN Charter and the founding documents of the OSCE. It will depend on the new circumstances offered in the post-war period, and especially on how Russia would choose to behave.

2025 will be the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. We need to engage in a serious reflection process that would produce the necessary outcomes for an inclusive, resilient, and good functioning European peace and security architecture in cognizant of the importance of the three distinct dimensions that the OSCE work is built on, no matter whether the OSCE is right now paralyzed to deliver what it is expected to provide in the current dire circumstances.

During such a reflection period, ways and means to consolidate the full implementation of fundamental principles that underpin European security could be contemplated. In doing so, these principles should in no way be revisited or renegotiated. In this context it would be essential to address the question of how respect to sovereignty and territorial integrity of states could be ensured. Aggression as a tool of statehood should be discredited. How to eliminate the notion of spheres of influence would need to be part of this reflection.

Gray areas that have been created by the protracted conflicts are sources of instability in Europe. Frozen conflicts have the potential to eventually evolve to hot conflicts. Therefore, OSCE's conflict resolution instruments need to be revised. As it is the case right now, containment of any conflict should not be something that OSCE bodies and institutions can take pride in. In its practices, those instruments should avoid any sense of discrimination or examples of double standards that would jeopardize the credibility of the organization. In this respect, the failed performance of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been a salient case in point.
The arms control and disarmament instruments for Europe had been going

through a real stress test for some time and right now they have become dysfunctional. The important thing would be to agree on a set of legally binding arms control arrangements and CSBMs that would address the security concerns of all. There are instruments which proved to be dysfunctional like Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE)[5] and Open Skies[6] Treaties which are legally binding, and OSCE's Vienna Document[7] containing a set of politically binding CSBMs which may serve as a basis for instruments necessary for the new European security architecture. The Vienna Document, the CFE and the Treaty on Open Skies were seen by the OSCE as "a web of interlocking and mutually reinforcing arms control obligations and commitments that together enhance predictability, transparency and military stability and reduce the risk of a major conflict in Europe".

The original CFE Treaty was negotiated and concluded during the last years of the Cold War and established comprehensive limits on key categories of conventional military equipment in Europe (from the Atlantic to the Urals) and mandated the destruction of excess weaponry. The treaty proposed equal limits for the two "groups of states-parties", the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. In 2007, Russia 'suspended' its participation in the treaty, and on 10 March 2015, citing NATO's alleged de facto breach of the Treaty, Russia formally announced it was "completely" halting its participation in it as of the next day. On 7 November 2023, Russia withdrew from the treaty, and in response the United States and its NATO allies suspended[8] their participation in the treaty.

The CSBMs negotiations that led to the adoption of the Vienna Document in 1990 is a politically binding agreement that provides for the exchange and verification of information about armed forces and military activities. It was updated in 1992, 1994 and 1999 to account for the changing needs of OSCE participating States. The latest update introduced a chapter on regional measures that provides a framework for bilateral verification activities. Participating States in September 2010 agreed to start updating its chapters V, on the notification of military activities, and IX, which concerns the conduct of inspection and evaluation visits.

The Vienna Document requires participating States to:

- provide each other with information about their military forces annually, including about manpower and major conventional weapon and equipment

[5] *Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe*, OSCE, 1989, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/9/14087.pdf

[6] *Treaty on Open Skies*, OSCE, 1992, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/5/14127.pdf

[7] Vienna Document on Confidence and Security-Building Measures, OSCE, 2011, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/4/86597.pdf

[8] *North Atlantic Council statement on the Allied response to Russia's withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe*, NATO, November 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_219811.htm

systems, as well as deployment plans and budgets.

- notify each other ahead of time about major military activities such as exercises.
- accept up to three inspections of their military sites per year. Some sensitive areas are excluded.
- invite other States to observe certain activities. It also encourages States to permit journalists from all participating States to cover the activities.
- to consult and cooperate in case of unusual military activity or increasing tensions. The Vienna Document encourages participating States, for example, to voluntarily host military visits to dispel concerns.

In the 2000s, military tensions started to return to Europe. In addition to the boosted deployments of NATO and Russia in close proximity to one another in multiple domains, a host of new or dramatically improved conventional capabilities fielded brought a significant level of uncertainty to the already complex security environment.

While trying to project a plausible vision for any future security arrangement for Europe one may determine that military drivers of potential Russia-NATO conflict include military activities or exercises in strategically sensitive locations; enhanced readiness; massing of forces; violations (or perceived violations) of airspace or maritime borders; proximity of forces or capabilities; long-range strike deployments; and threats to vulnerable lines of communication. Innovative conventional arms control measures could address these drivers, thus increasing warning and decision-making time, making it difficult to launch surprise attacks, and lowering overall tension. It would be important to incorporate measures that would reduce risk of confrontation because of any misunderstanding or miscalculation.

While determining new restrictive measures for any future conventional arms control regime for Europe, maintaining those numerical limitations contained in the CFE Treaty in the categories of weapons would not be enough, since technological advancement in weapons systems could have diminished the sole importance of such numerical limitations. Therefore, emerging and disruptive technologies, AI being primus inter pares, and their impact on the future arms control regime should be part of the reflection and negotiation process.

The following non-exhaustive measures could be taken into consideration as areas of focus in any future conventional arms control regime for Europe:

- Limitations on the deployment of forces and critical military weapon systems with high technology, military activities, training and exercises close to strategically sensitive locations;
- Limitations on no-notice exercises in sensitive locations;
- Limitations on large-scale military forces massed along borders;

- Limitations on those capabilities that have the potential to create anti-access area-denial (A2AD) capacity for any individual state to the detriment of the security interests of other states, especially those in the region that it is located;
- Limitations on those capabilities that could strike numerous targets in medium and long range from land, sea and air;
- Limitations, based on geographical regions, on precision guided munitions (PGMs), advanced radar systems and electronic warfare capabilities; geographical restrictions to long-range PGMs;
- Limitations on forces or capabilities which are in proximity or with advanced technology that reduces decision-making;
- Ensuring that ballistic missile defense architecture and long-range strike platforms do not constitute sources of instability within the context of regional security;
- Commitments to refrain from hybrid tactics that include disinformation campaigns and cyber-attacks;
- And finally, a renewed understanding on the basic variables of future deterrence.

A legally binding conventional arms control regime that would replace the CFE Treaty needs to be complemented by politically binding CSBMs similar to the Vienna Document that will enumerate commitments for military transparency and stability. No doubt when circumstances are ripe in the future, negotiation and signing of a new treaty for intermediate range nuclear forces (INF)[9] in Europe would solidify security and stability in the continent.

In conclusion, one needs to emphasize how important it would be for the West to launch a long-term reflection process for a viable conventional arms control regime regarding Europe, since being deprived of functional and reliable legally binding instruments would be detrimental to the maintenance of a rules-based international order that the West rightfully insists on. Therefore, the governments of the West should not continue treating arms control as a secondary issue and instead give it the priority it deserves. At the same time, it would be incumbent on the countries of the West, in their ambition to preserve a rules-based order, to act in a consistent and coherent manner. While advocating the need to uphold international law and implement all valid legal instruments in Europe, to keep a blind eye to those blatant violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, in other geographies, like in Gaza, will be an enduring alibi for undermining the standing and credibility of the West.

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[9] Lopez, C. Todd. "U.S. Withdraws From Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty", *U.S. Department of Defense*, August 2, 2019, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1924779/us-withdraws-from-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-treaty/

CHINA, THE US AND THE COLLIDING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC - AUKUS, TAIWAN AND BEYOND

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While there is a general consensus that the rising powers in Asia, especially India, China and ASEAN countries, will gradually increase their influence in the international system throughout the 21st century, the question of whether this development will lead the system into a more confrontational environment or whether these players will find a competitive but peaceful way to coexist with the established global or regional powers, especially the United States and Japan, is one of the major debates in the discipline of international relations. In this context, the position of the People's Republic of China, which has openly questioned both the dominant role of the Western world in the system and the values associated with it, and has argued that the existing rules and institutions in the system should be changed to give it a greater say, is a special case in point. Starting in 1978, China accelerated its economic liberalization process by becoming a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001. Today, China is the world's second largest economy, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a nuclear power, and a determining player in the system, both in terms of its international trade volume and its vital role in supply chains. The rapid rise of China, whose rise cannot be prevented or curbed, and whose role in the world economy (despite reservations about its political system) means that no one, including the Western world, has much interest in a deep economic crisis or political instability in this country, is generally perceived as a threat in its own geography (North Korea and Myanmar being the exceptions). Moreover, China's stance on the Taiwan issue and its claims to maritime territories in its neighborhood make this threat vital for some countries. In the rapidly transforming geopolitical environment of the South Pacific, a significant number of regional powers are looking for a solution by tightening their ties with the US as a reassurance. This is because there is no country in its geography that can balance China militarily, politically or economically on its own.

This note will first discuss China's intensifying armament policy due to its role in the perception of China as a threat, then focus on the counter-initiatives of countries that perceive a threat from China, particularly the establishment of AUKUS in the South Pacific, and finally discuss the scenarios for the future of Taiwan, which lies at the intersection of tensions in the region.

1. China's Armament Policies

Since 1964, there is no doubt that China is one of the world's most important military powers,[1] being the only country other than the United States and Russia to possess a 'nuclear triad'; i.e. the only country capable of launching its nuclear weapons from submarines, from land through ballistic missiles, and from bomber aircraft; and is gradually improving its ballistic missile capabilities as evidenced by its extensive space program. However, while the possession of nuclear weapons is an important indicator of a country's overall military power, the increase in conventional weapons capacity should be monitored much more carefully, as nuclear weapons are mainly held for deterrence purposes, i.e. their operational utility is limited.

In recent years, the People's Republic of China has stepped up its efforts to increase its conventional military capacity, gradually reducing its dependence on foreign (largely Russian) arms and military equipment production and improving both the quality and quantity of its armed forces.[2] China's annual military expenditures have reached 250 billion dollars, placing it second in the world behind the United States.[3] In the last ten years of Xi Jinping's presidency, the country's military capacity has been increasing, a fact that has been underlined in the regime's propaganda discourse and supported by a discourse that flatters national pride. Moreover, the fact that Xi is also the chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Chinese Communist Party gives him a direct decision-making role over the policies pursued by the military. The Chinese armed forces, officially known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA), are legally conceived as the military wing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which means that they also have a specific ideological mission.

While the last decade has seen capacity building in almost every component of the Chinese military, Beijing has placed particular emphasis on the development of its naval forces.[4] The priority given to the naval forces is also linked to the fact that the Taiwan issue ranks first among the foreign policy priorities of the CCP led by Xi Jinping. In this context, it is worth recalling that the party's authorized mouthpieces, Xi in particular, have repeated at every opportunity that it is inevitable that Taiwan will eventually and at all costs be reunited

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[1] According to SIPRI data, China has 410 nuclear warheads as of 2023. In this respect, it is behind Russia, which has about 6,000 nuclear warheads, and the United States, which has 5,500 nuclear warheads, but it has a nuclear power almost on par with France and Britain. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, China, https://www.sipri.org/research/armaments-and-disarmament/nuclear-weapons/world-nuclear-forces/china

[2] Guisnel, Jean. "L'armée chinoise met les bouchées doubles", *Le Point Géopolitique*, No 12, October-November 2023, pg. 14-19.

[3] China Power Team, "What does China Really Spend on Its Military?", November 9, 2023, https://chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/

[4] The Chinese armed forces have a manpower of around 2.5 million, including 970,000 in the ground forces, 400,000 in the air force, 260,000 in the navy, and 500,000 in the gendarmerie and other paramilitary units.

with the Chinese mainland. In order to achieve this, first and foremost, the Chinese navy must ensure absolute maritime sovereignty in the Taiwan Strait. Likewise, every day brings a new example of Beijing's maximalist demands for sovereignty in the South China Sea. The sharing of these maritime areas, which are of economic as well as strategic importance, creates a complex equation that concerns Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei as well as the People's Republic of China in terms of oil and natural gas resources as well as fisheries, and from which the parties cannot easily back down.

As Admiral John C. Aquilino, commander of the US forces in the Indo-Pacific region, pointed out in his assessment of his area of responsibility immediately after his appointment, the Chinese military has been building military bases in this region, especially on the three reefs in the Spratley archipelago, filling the sea by *fait accompli,* deploying airstrips, air and sea defense missile batteries, laser cannons, electronic warfare and advanced radar systems.[5] Moreover, there are regular frictions between the US and Chinese navies in these waters, with the US defending freedom of navigation in what it considers the high seas, while Chinese authorities claim that their territorial waters and airspace are being violated. The regular and increasing number of US navigation operations are supported by France, which has overseas territories in the Indo-Pacific region, and French navy ships pass through the Taiwan Strait at least twice a year.[6] During these transits, the Chinese navy's requests for identification are not responded to, emphasizing that these waters are not recognized as China's territorial waters. The ships of the Chinese navy, whose requests remain unanswered, have not yet made any serious efforts to obstruct the US or French warships, except for escorting them closely and occasionally intercepting them and making their navigation difficult. However, the increasing number and severity of such frictions, which have become routine, make it impossible to rule out the possibility of a conflict one day.

China's displays of military power in the East and South China Seas, through which 60 percent of international maritime trade passes, have particularly unsettled neighboring countries. In this context, air and naval operations, especially in the Taiwan Strait, are increasingly intensified, and Chinese forces launch intensive military activities such as drills around the island as a warning during Taiwanese officials' visits abroad, especially to the United States, or during the visits of important foreign delegations to Taiwan. In this context, the number of violations in areas that Taiwan recognizes as its security zone has reached hundreds every year.

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[5] Associated Press. "US Admiral Says China Has Fully Militarized Islands", *Politico*, March 20, 2022.

[6] The French Senate, "La stratégie française pour l'Indopacifique", Rapport d'information, January 25, 2023, https://www. senat.fr/rap/r22-285/r22-285_mono.html

While it is natural for the People's Republic of China's growing military capacity to cause concern to neighboring countries, it is a controversial issue among experts whether this capacity has yet reached a level that can successfully wage a war in more distant geographies. First of all, the capacity of the Chinese air force to reach and operate at long ranges is not yet comparable to that of the United States. For example, despite having the third largest military air fleet in the world with close to three thousand fighter jets, the Chinese Air Force still has a very limited number of transport aircraft and especially vehicles for aerial refueling.[7] Therefore, there is a limit to what the Chinese Air Force can do without having military bases far from the mainland. It is precisely for this reason that when it comes to the development of China's military capacity, attention is more often focused on the navy.

The level of development of the Chinese Navy in recent years has been followed by experts with admiration mixed with concern. According to calculations based on tonnage, every four years the Chinese navy grows as much as the entire French navy. Equipped with all types of military ships, submarines, cruise missiles and an ever-improving radar capacity, in addition to aircraft carriers, which have increased to three as of 2023, the Chinese navy has considerably increased its range, especially with the port use privileges it has obtained in several countries bordering the Indian Ocean (Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, etc.), as well as with the opening in 2017 of its first overseas military base in Djibouti, a strategically located country in the horn of Africa. China's negotiations with the United Arab Emirates, Mozambique and Namibia suggest that the possibility of opening new naval bases in these countries is not far away.[8] These initiatives in the Indian Ocean are referred to as China's 'String of Pearls' strategy.

This development of China's naval capacity is not only a result of China's desire to establish influence in its neighboring geography, but also a natural consequence of the fact that a significant portion of China's foreign trade is still conducted by sea. China indeed pays special attention to the security of maritime trade routes in order to transport oil and natural gas from the Middle East or minerals from African countries to China on the one hand, and manufactured goods produced in China to world markets on the other. Since 2008, China has been conducting anti-maritime banditry operations in the Indian Ocean from Indonesia to the Gulf of Aden. Moreover, China now has the capability to evacuate tens of thousands of its citizens from distant countries by mobilizing its naval forces, as seen during the Libyan crisis in 2011. In sum, the Chinese navy, which thirty years ago could

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[7] The US Air Force has 300 long-range transport aircraft (Lockheed C-5M Super Galaxy and Boeing C-17A Globemaster) and 526 refueling aircraft, while the Chinese Air Force has 130 (Xi'an Y-20, Xi'an Y-8C, Xi'an Y-9) and 20, respectively.

[8] Hudson, John. Nakashima, Ellen & Sly, Liz."Buildup resumed at suspected Chinese military site in UAE, leak says", *The Washington Post*, April 26, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/04/26/chinese-military-base-uae

not undertake a mission beyond ensuring the security of its own coasts, has now become one of the world's few navies capable of rapid military intervention in distant geographies.[9]

In addition, it is important to remember that China's recent remarkable progress in artificial intelligence and 5G technologies has also bolstered the capacity of the Chinese military. The Chinese military has also become one of the world's leading nations in electronic warfare, UAV and UCAV technology, air and sea defense missiles, satellite systems and cyber warfare capabilities. Having built 17 warships, including two nuclear submarines in 2022 alone, doubled the air force's capacity to produce fifth-generation J-20 aircraft, successfully launched 64 missiles out of the atmosphere, placed 160 new satellites in Earth's orbit, and built 120 new silos for its nuclear weapons, there is no doubt that China's military capacity growth, both in terms of quality and quantity, has been rapid and dramatic. However, remembering that the ultimate test of a country's military power is the actual battlefield, it must be said that the Chinese military has not been subjected to a serious test since the brief intervention in Vietnam in 1979. So far, China has not engaged in extensive military operations in far-flung geographies, nor has it developed the ability to operate in military coalitions (leaving aside regular initiatives with Russia or Iran, which are essentially small-scale exercises). Even the ability of the different components of the People's Liberation Army to operate jointly under the conditions of a large-scale military operation has not been tested. Therefore, while the improvements on paper cannot be underestimated, questions remain as to what China's actual military capability is. What is certain is that China's investments and initiatives to develop its military capabilities are a decisive phenomenon that many global and regional powers are carefully watching as they formulate their security and defense strategies. The 2021 AUKUS treaty is a typical example of this.

2. Coalitions Against the Threat From China: The AUKUS Example

Xi Jinping's proactive foreign policy, supported by a nationalist rhetoric, and China's systematic increase in its military capacity, of course, leads other players who perceive a direct threat from this country to take measures. In this respect, it is observed that countries in East Asia, in particular, are developing their own military capacities while strengthening their alliance ties with countries outside the region, particularly the United States. The most typical examples are the changes in the defense policies of countries such as South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. At the political level, formations such as the Quad, which brings together Japan, Australia, India and the United States,

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[9] U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, "China Military Power", January 2019, https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Images/News/Military_Powers_Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf

bring together countries in the Indo-Pacific region that are trying to coordinate their policies in response to China's rise.

The military initiative that has been frequently mentioned in this geography recently has been the AUKUS agreement. On September 15, 2021, the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia announced the signing of a trilateral military cooperation treaty, noting that the treaty in question does not constitute a military alliance, but is complementary to the AUKUS alliance established by the United States, Australia and New Zealand in 1951. The day after the announcement of the treaty, the Chinese Foreign Ministry criticized this formation, claiming that the AUKUS would encourage nuclear proliferation and threaten global peace, leaving no one in any doubt as to which country this treaty was designed to target.[10]

On the occasion of this agreement, at the cost of a serious diplomatic crisis in bilateral relations and the payment of 550 million euros in compensation, the Australian government canceled the submarine sales contract previously signed with France and decided to first purchase nuclear submarines from the United States and Britain and then to engage in joint production. The Australian government justified this decision by citing the recent breakthrough of the Chinese navy, and explained Australia's desire to have a much faster and more effective submarine fleet by the vital interests of the country. This position is in line with Australia's Defense Strategy, published on July 1, 2020, which states that "the current strategic environment is more uncertain and life-threatening than at any time since the 1930s and 40s."[11]

Apart from submarine construction, the AUKUS agreement also envisages information sharing on sensitive issues, including artificial intelligence technology, and the joint development of cyber warfare capabilities. In April 2022, the parties also announced an agreement on the joint production of hypersonic weapons.[12] Although China and Russia have criticized the fact that the US and Britain will transfer nuclear technology and materials such as enriched uranium to Australia, which does not have a military or civilian nuclear infrastructure, the US rejects the criticism by stating that this cooperation does not mean that Australia will acquire nuclear weapons and that there is no violation of the Non-Proliferation

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[10] Courrier International. "Sous-marins australiens : la Chine s'insurge contre la prolifération nucléaire", *Courrier International,* September 17, 2021, https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/alliance-sous-marins-australiens-la-chine-sinsurge-contre-la-proliferation-nucleaire

[11] Australia Ministry of Defence, "2020 Defence Strategic Update", July 1, 2020, https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update

[12] United Kingdom Parliament, "Hypersonic Missiles", Research Briefing, https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0696 /

Treaty (1968).[13] The AUKUS text, which is not an alliance treaty in the classical sense, is considered to be an innovative model of cooperation that goes beyond cooperation in the field of military technology and defense industry and aims at the fusion of the arms production infrastructures of the three countries.[14]

In March 2023, the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia came together again to publicize the results of an intensive 18-month consultation process and announced the Optimal Pathway action plan within the scope of AUKUS.[15] It is a detailed and comprehensive action plan for the next 30 years, with the ultimate aim of enabling Australia (which has allocated a budget of $250 billion) to master nuclear submarine construction technology. This will involve extensive formation, infrastructure building, the joint development of submarine designs and finally their construction in Australian shipyards, with a detailed timetable. Moreover, the Submarine Rotational Force West, which was announced during this meeting and will be established from 2027 onwards, will allow nuclear submarines of the US and UK navies to use military ports in Australia, creating an infrastructure that the US can use in the South Pacific if needed, except for the island of Guam, which is within the range of Chinese ballistic missiles. In this way, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom will over time achieve an integrated deterrence capability and the capacities of the armed forces of the three countries will become interchangeable.[16] This last concept implies a higher level of interdependence than the concept of 'interoperability', which means being able to work/operate together.[17] Considered together with the 2023 NATO's new strategic concept, in which China is explicitly mentioned for the first time, an environment is emerging in which the US and its allies are reinforcing their presence in the South Pacific against China's military rise and interlocking different alliances with different cooperation models. While it is beyond the scope of this study to assess the extent to which countries such as India, Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines will/can participate in these alliance initiatives, it is worth remembering that military cooperation with these countries is also part of this equation.

In the face of these formations and initiatives, the People's Republic of China will find justification to further accelerate its arms race. Moreover, in the case of the naval forces, the annual production capacity of even a single one of the

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[13] Karataş, Dilara. "ABD, Avustralya ve İngiltere'yi Çin'le karşı karşıya getiren anlaşma: AUKUS", *Anadolu Ajansı*, September 14, 2023, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/abd-avustralya-ve-ingiltereyi-cinle-karsi-karsiya-getiren-anlasma-aukus/2991684

[14] Vincze, Hajnalka. "AUKUS : un nouveau modèle de partenariat sous stéroïdes", *Magazine DefTech*, October 20, 2023

[15] Australia Submarine Agency, *Optimal Pathway*, https://www.asa.gov.au/aukus/optimal-pathway

[16] US Department of Defense, "CNO: AUKUS Builds Upon Three Nations' Close Naval Ties", June 26, 2023, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3439788/cno-aukus-builds-upon-three-nations-close-naval-ties/

[17] Townshend, Ashley. "Making AUKUS Work for the US – Australia Alliance", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 16, 2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/03/16/making-aukus-work-for-u.s.-australia-alliance-event-8052

19 military shipyards of the Chinese navy exceeds that of the total US military shipyard production capacity. In other words, it is impossible to be sure that the outcome of this arms race, which will span the first half of the 21st century, will be the same as the outcome of the US-Soviet arms race during the Cold War.[18] In fact, Xi Jinping, in his speech to the National People's Congress on March 13, 2023, described the alliance initiatives in the South Pacific as a provocation and said, "We must transform the People's Liberation Army into a great steel wall that will effectively protect national sovereignty and security as well as our development."[19] In the same speech, Xi Jinping emphasized the inevitability of Taiwan's reunification with the motherland, and it is clear that AUKUS and similar initiatives will not be enough to change China's stance on the Taiwan issue, which China considers as a vital interest.

3. The Gordian Knot of US-China Relations: Taiwan

The fact that in February 2022, from the very first day of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, pundits started discussing the question "will China take a similar initiative in Taiwan?" is enough to show how critical this issue is for the future of the international system. While it is known that the Beijing leadership is determined to resolve the Taiwan issue in its favor, and that Xi Jinping even sees resolving this issue as an opportunity to make personal history, there are question marks over the method of resolution. Therefore, there is an increasing number of scenarios on whether the People's Republic of China could create a military *fait accompli* on the island of Taiwan and what the US position would be in the face of such an attempt.

The report published by the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in January 2023 is the most comprehensive recent study on these scenarios.[20] As the study emphasizes, such a military venture, and the possibility of the US and China being dragged into a war as a result, has become a daily topic of discussion in US military circles. Moreover, Taiwanese officials frequently claim that such a conflict could take place before the end of Xi Jinping's current term in office, in 2027 at the latest.[21] Although 22 of the 24 military scenarios discussed in the report envisage the US emerging victorious and China defeated

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[18] Hendrix, Jerry. "The Navy Needs More Public Shipyards", *National Review*, February 5, 2023, https://www.nationalreview.com/2023/02/the-navy-needs-more-public-shipyards/

[19] Bagshaw, Eryk."Riled by AUKUS, Beijing builds military and diplomatic defenses", *The Age*, March 14, 2023, https://www.theage.com.au/world/asia/riled-by-aukus-beijing-builds-military-and-diplomatic-defences-20230314-p5crzr.html

[20] Cancian, Mark. Cancian, Matthew & Heginbotham, Eric."The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 9, 2023, https://www.csis.org/analysis/first-battle-next-war-wargaming-chinese-invasion-taiwan

[21] Hawkins, Amy."Taiwan foreign minister warns of conflict with China in 2027", *The Guardian*, April 21, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/21/taiwan-foreign-minister-warns-of-conflict-with-china-in-2027#:~:text=Taiwan's%20foreign%20minister%20has%20said,need%20to%20be%20serious%20about.%E2%80%9D

from such a conflict thanks to US military bases in Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, it is not easy to predict the global economic, military and diplomatic consequences of such a conflict. This is precisely why, as the title of the report emphasizes, a military confrontation over Taiwan is likely to be nothing more than 'the first battle of the next war'.

It should be noted that a military intervention on this island, which is 180 kilometers away from China's mainland and rises like a fortress in the middle of the sea with its geographical structure, is not very simple. The difficulties of such a military operation are better understood when we take into account the fact that the defense systems at 14 points that could allow a landing operation on the island are being strengthened day by day, and that, considering the periods of storms in the Taiwan Strait, the weeks suitable for a comprehensive amphibious operation during the year are few. Of course, PRC authorities also takes these realities into account, and although it is gradually increasing its military pressure on the island, it finds it more appropriate for the time being to wait for the Taipei administration to collapse from within using hybrid warfare tools, and for this island of 23 million inhabitants and 32 thousand km2 in size to be spontaneously reunited with mainland China.

The main strategic position of the US on Taiwan is to deter Beijing from carrying out such a military intervention, rather than waiting for a possible Chinese intervention in Taiwan and then trying to fend it off militarily. This is why US President Joe Biden emphasizes at every opportunity that American troops will not hesitate to defend Taiwan, even though there is no binding military alliance between them.[22] Although neither side is likely to be fully certain of the other's military intentions, as the January-February 2023 spy balloon crisis between the two countries demonstrated, mutual trust is almost non-existent, which increases military risks.

However, as is now customary in China-US relations, with bilateral trade volume reaching $760 billion in 2022, periods of crisis are followed by periods of détente until the next crisis. The year 2023 also began with the Taiwan issue frequently on the agenda and many high-level meetings canceled due to the balloon crisis, but there were no shortage of signs of détente throughout the year. In June, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken visited China and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen expressed her desire for healthy economic relations with China.[23] Moreover, the year 2023 has ended in a relatively positive mood, with the leaders

[22] Brunnstrom, David & Hunnicutt, Trevor."Biden says U.S. forces would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion", *Reuters*, September 19, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-says-us-forces-would-defend-taiwan-event-chinese-invasion-2022-09-18/

[23] Rappeport, Allan. "Yellen Says U.S. Wants 'Healthy' Economic Ties With China", *The New York Times*, November 10, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/10/business/yellen-china-economy-relations.html#:~:text=Treasury%20Secretary%20Janet%20L.,Yellen%20said

of China and the United States meeting in San Francisco on the occasion of the APEC summit. While it is unlikely that all issues between the two countries can be resolved in a single meeting, the restoration of the military dialogue that was suspended in the summer of 2022 following Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, and statements of mutual confidence-building are nevertheless promising. Judging by these gestures, it seems that the US and Chinese governments have decided to ease the tensions between them for the time being. For the US, it is not desirable for the Biden administration to risk opening a third front in the Taiwan Strait while the Ukraine War continues and the Israeli-Palestinian crisis deepens. For China, problems such as an aging population, slowing economic growth, and rising youth unemployment prevent it from pursuing an adventurous foreign policy and encourage it to be cautious.[24] Moreover, a thaw in relations with the US is critical for the Chinese economy, whose economic growth is still heavily dependent on foreign trade. Indeed, on November 15, 2023, the leaders of the two countries held a four-hour meeting, showing the international community that they are aware that the world is demanding stability and highlighting issues such as climate change or the joint fight against the fentanyl trade, a narcotic drug, to show that bilateral cooperation continues. Xi Jinping even felt the need to emphasize how positive the mood was by announcing that next year new pairs of panda bears, whom he described as "China's best diplomats", would be presented to US zoos. Nevertheless, for the time being, it is impossible to say that the serious problems between the two countries, especially the Taiwan issue, are on the road to resolution.[25] Therefore, a more realistic prediction is that the 'panda effect' will not be enough to save these two countries from falling into the '*Thucydides Trap*', as Graham Allison describes it, in the medium term.

[24] Crabtree, James. "With two wars raging, China tests America in Asia", *Foreign Policy*, November 7, 2023, https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/07/china-philippines-us-biden-alliance-asia-south-china-sea/

[25] Magnier, Mark. "Joe Biden reaffirms stance on Taiwan in meeting with Xi Jinping", *South China Morning Post*, November 16, 2023, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3241702/joe-biden-reaffirms-stance-taiwan-confirms-agreement-new-talks-meeting-apec-sidelines

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GLOBAL SYSTEM AND TURKEY

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In interpreting what we observe, we generally employ cognitive maps that we have developed in our earlier observations. While this is indispensable in perceiving, interpreting and using our observations, it also harbors a problem. Cognitive maps that we have developed through our previous observations guide us to make our new observations fit the existing maps, although sometimes what we observe may contain phenomena that are different, calling for their revision. The mismatch between our cognitive maps and our observations leads to what is known as cognitive dissonance. In order to feel the dissonance, however, the observer has to sense that there are discrepancies between his existing cognitive map and his observations. It is equally possible for someone to insist on forcing the 'different' observation to fit an existing map and not appreciate that it is different.

Why have I started writing this article by pointing out that cognitive maps may sometimes stand in the way of our perceiving changed realities? There seems to be much speculation these days as to whether the global system is reverting back to bipolarity or progressing toward multipolarity, Before joining this speculative process, it may be useful to dwell briefly upon the concepts of 'pole' and 'polarity' so as to evaluate whether they are suitable to describe the current configuration of states in the global system.

The Rise and Fall of the Bipolar System

The word 'pole' entered the vocabulary of international politics after the Second World War. There were, of course, groupings among states and competitive relations between them in earlier periods in history. These relations were never described as being 'polar', however. Was this because nobody had thought of using the word 'polar', or was it because the order that emerged after the Second World War displayed important differences from earlier configurations? My feeling is that the post-Second World War order was substantially different from previous ones. As it began to form toward the end of the war and took more definitive form after it, the two camps were manifestations of two rival *weltanschauungen*, or world views. The political, economic and social life of countries in each camp would be organized accordingly.

Those countries that came under Soviet occupation were forced to accommodate themselves to a system that gave the Communist Parties the monopoly of power. The Communists claimed to represent Marxist ideology that placed the interests

of the working class as the highest value that guided them in ruling society. In their system, the major means of production would be owned and much of production would be achieved by the state. Despite encountering serious resistance, they forced countries that they rendered into satellites to conform with their model. As a consequence, those countries that came under Soviet domination grew into a bloc that promoted trade and a division of labor among themselves while minimizing economic interactions with the rival bloc.

In regions that had come under American and British (and French) rule at the end of the war, it was expected that market economies driven by private enterprise operating under a liberal democratic system would prevail. In fact, in American occupied West Germany and Japan such systems were developed under American sponsorship. But more generally, the United States developed a set of institutions that would constitute the pillars of global economic and political governance. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) would focus on maintaining the stability of exchange rates, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, or the World Bank for short) would finance infrastructural investments while the World Trade organization (WTO) would focus on removing barriers to international trade. Among these, the founding of the WTO had to be postponed for lack of consensus. It was replaced by negotiating rounds. The other institutions were established quickly, despite the fact that members of the Socialist Bloc did not take part in them.

The main institution in political governance would have been the United Nations. Shortly after its founding, however, this organization veered away from its prescribed function of building and maintaining global peace and evolved into an instrument of rivalry between the blocs that were led by the Americans and the Soviets. Turning to the field of security, the Americans brought their allies together under two defense organizations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The Soviets responded by bringing their allies together under the Warsaw Pact.

To sum up, these groupings, usually referred to as the Eastern and the Western Blocs, were groupings of countries that had minimum economic interaction, that organized their domestic politics differently and tried to export their ideologies to the rest of the world. Their internal cohesion was high. Those countries that were outside of these blocs, calling themselves non-aligned, tried to maintain their distance, but tried to develop mutually beneficial economic relations with both sides.

After the major problems between the blocs were brought to solution and both sides got used to the idea of a divided Europe, the relations between the two poles acquired stability, The parties moved their competition to other regions

of the world. The existence of poles did not imply, however, that their internal solidarity was strong or their internal relations were harmonious. For example, the Soviet Bloc was shaken on several occasions by internal rebellion. There were anti-government uprisings in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956) and in Prag (1967). While uprisings did not occur in the Western Bloc, internal conflict was not lacking. In 1956, the Americans stopped Britain and France invading the Suez Canal. They also stopped Turkey in 1964 from landing in Cyprus to spare their kin from being murdered by the Greeks. These conflicts, however, were treated as within-bloc matters from which the other bloc abstained from interfering. It was assumed that the leader of each pole would tend to bring about a solution to the problems.

The stability that obtained between the two blocs invited the adoption of new steps in enhancing mutual trust and predictability. As relations advanced, the two sides were able to sign agreements that imposed limitations on nuclear and conventional weapons. A rather striking development in this regard was the softening of relations between the Federal German and German Democratic republics, a product of Germany's division between the Soviets and the Allies after the war. Despite such advances, however, both sides were broadly persuaded that the bipolar world was here to stay and that we would continue to live under it.

In retrospect, it is easier to see that the Soviet economy was simply not strong enough to stand the competitive relations that prevailed between the two blocs. In the end, the Soviet Union collapsed out of economic exhaustion. It appears that two developments were critical in affecting this result: the entering of the Soviets into the Afghan war and their engagement in competition with the Americans in space armaments, a process that later came to be dubbed Star Wars. The excessive cost of these engagements led the Soviets to disbanding the Warsaw Pact and then witness the break-up of their Union. It is not particularly useful to ask whether the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the demise of the Soviet Union might have been avoided if a different set of policies had been pursued. The reality is that, despite the prediction of even Sovietologists that the Soviet Union would live a long life, both the Pact and the Union collapsed in a relatively short time, bringing with them the end of the bipolar world.

Without proceeding further, let us summarize the characteristics of the bipolar system:

1. The two blocs were divided into two camps distinguished by the pursuit of rival ideologies,
2. Each camp was led by a superpower. Other members of the camp yielded, if sometimes reluctantly, to the leadership of the super power that headed the

camp. In return, they got security guarantees against encroachments of the opposite camp,

3. Economic and political relations between the two blocs were limited and open to the oversight of the leader of the bloc,

4. The poles tried to reduce the likelihood of conflict between them, but competed fiercely against each other in other parts of the world.

Unipolarity: An American Dream

Observers whose mindsets were conditioned to thinking in polar terms concluded that since the bipolar system had collapsed, the world would now move into a unipolar stage. Some prominent authors argued that America's unipolar moment had arrived. Others put forth similar ideas. But it quickly became apparent that the end of bipolarity had not produced unipolarity; rather, it had led to the decline of the polar status of the rival pole.   Expressed more accurately, the world was no longer perceived as being divided into poles. To begin with, once the bipolar system ended, those countries that were members of the Western pole, felt that they were now at greater liberty to pursue policies that would reflect better their interests and therefore they would accord lesser weight to American preferences. But possibly more interestingly, America displayed some feeling that it had been relieved of carrying the burden of its Allies. It became increasingly clear that bipolarity was a dialectical relationship. Once one of the poles was gone, the entire system was transformed. Under the circumstances, it did not seem to be particularly meaningful to talk about unipolarity.

The Global Society and Its Gradual Demise

The collapse of the socialist way of organizing societies opened the way to the diffusion of liberal economic values around the world. With security questions clearly pushed into a secondary position, 'globalization' became the order of the day. The idea was to make goods, capital and entrepreneurial talent move freely throughout the world so as to organize production most rationally, a process from which all societies would presumably benefit. Goods would become cheaper and become available throughout the world. Poorer regions would be blessed with higher levels of employment. It may be no coincidence that the World Trade Organization, whose aim was to eliminate barriers to international trade that was intended to be formed after World War II but could not for lack of international consensus, finally came into existence during this time.

An outcome of economic globalization was the rapid rise of China as an economic actor in the global system. The rates of economic development achieved by China were formidable. It was predicted that within the foreseeable future, the Chinese economy would match and then surpass the American as the largest

in the world. In response, the United States tried to develop mechanisms that would allow it to consolidate its leading role in the global economic system. The Americans developed comprehensive commercial agreements such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement, 1992), TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, 2014) and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership, 2016) that would bring regional countries together in economic communities in the Atlantic and the Pacific regions. Both but particularly the latter was designed, among other things, to stand in the way of Chinese economic domination of the globe and more specifically the Pacific region.

The process of globalization was favored mostly by countries with developed market economies whose corporations moved their capital and production around the world to bring cheap products to global markets. Yet, it gradually became apparent that production was moving away from developed economies to the less developed regions of the world, creating unemployment in the former. Political movements challenging globalization began to gain ground in many societies. While all economies were trying to cope with the outcomes of globalization that they considered problematic, the most dramatic response came from the United States that had been one of the major driving forces behind the globalization process. Donald Trump conducted a successful presidential campaign on the theme of MAGA or "Make America Great Again," which was no more than saying that America should return to producing goods to meet its own needs and not import cheap products from around the world, particularly China. To make his case more persuasive, Mr. Trump also added a security dimension to his approach and argued that many of the items on which the United States had come to rely but produced abroad nowadays were critical for American security and should therefore be produced domestically.

As President, Mr. Trump adopted a general policy of withdrawing the United States from various international engagements that he thought were simply taking advantage of his country and imposing burdens on its economy. Accordingly, he forced a major revision of NAFTA, while TTIP and TPP were simply dropped, generating a crisis of confidence in America's dedication to delivering on its international commitments. The crisis in fact grew deeper as Mr. Trump complained that America had too many commitments abroad and the burdens of these commitments should be assumed by others. Of particular importance was his inclination to withdraw from European defense within the NATO framework and leave it to the Europeans.

Mr. Trump lost the election before he implemented his MAGA vision. Furthermore, the American political establishment resisted the changes he proposed, thereby slowing the realization of the transformation he had in mind. Joe Biden, his successor, on the other hand, tried to restore America as the major economic and

security force in Europe and in the Pacific. He tried to persuade the Europeans and allies in the Pacific that America was not withdrawing but was still the leading force on whom they could rely, but the apprehension about how much the American could be trusted continues. It is always possible that Mr. Trump or someone like him could return to the American presidency. Furthermore, isolationist ideas appear to appeal to a significant constituency in the United States that elected presidents, whatever their personal persuasion, cannot fully ignore.

Not unlike Trump, Biden sees China as the main emerging rival and has tried to mobilize friends in the Atlantic and the Pacific to contain China. It is possible that he hopes to reinstate a bipolar order in which his country would lead one of the poles. Yet, as can readily be seen, the earlier conditions that produced bipolarity are lacking. There is considerable trade and investment between China and other major economies of the world. China does not represent an alternative economic model that is challenging the Western world, but rather it allows a partially capitalist economy to operate also in the country while the Communist party maintains monopoly on political power. Hence, competitive-adversarial and cooperative relations often need to be conducted simultaneously. There is considerable reluctance in Europe, Latin America and other parts of the world to fully join forces with the United States to treat China as the other pole in an emerging bipolar world. In fact, many countries hope to be beneficiaries of the somewhat-elusive Belt and Road project that the Chinese have been pushing.

An unexpected move on the part of Russia to take over parts of Ukraine has rekindled a NATO fever in Europe. Particularly former Warsaw Pact members that have joined both NATO and the European Union are concerned that Russia is interested in reconstituting itself as a superpower that will threaten their security. While whether Russia, under the best of circumstances, has the wherewithal to become a superpower again is debatable, the concerns of the former Soviet territories like the Baltic countries and former satellites like Poland or Romania are understandable. Two points are noteworthy, however. First, some NATO members like France and Turkey feel that confrontational relations with Russia is not desirable. Second, China has been hesitant to extend unqualified support to Russia in its adventure in Ukraine. Both of these points suggest that conditions do not support a return to a bipolar world.

If we may return to the heading of this section which was concerned with the rise and fall of globalization, it is clear that the hopes of a globalizing world in which capital, goods and entrepreneurial talent would move freely and in which the relations between states would be peaceful is gone. The major powers themselves have become aware of the problems unbridled globalization may impose on them. Therefore, the process has slowed down. In the meantime,

security questions have ascended in importance such that relations between states have come to include as many competitive and adversarial dimensions as cooperative ones. Where does this take us? A new bipolar world, a multi-polar world or a world with different characteristics?

How the World Looks Today

In trying to identify the direction toward which the global system is heading, let us begin by briefly identifying where the major actors stand. We have already noted that the United States would like to retain its dominant position in the world and mobilize friendly countries to act together with it to contain China. It is not clear that European countries are interested in forming an American led united front against China. The United States had also hoped that Russia might be integrated into the European community of states but it has become apparent that this is not likely to happen. It has joined forces with its European partners to contain Russian expansion. Although there are differences regarding how relations with Russia should be conducted, cooperation within NATO to resist Russian encroachments to change the map of Europe will likely continue.

What about Europe? We might begin by noting that not all European countries, most notably Great Britain and Turkey, are members of the European Union. Cooperation between the European part of NATO and EU security organizations has so far proven difficult since Turkey vetoes Cyprus and conversely Cyprus and Greece veto Turkey in schemes that assume full cooperation between the parties. While this problem alone is already a critical source of discord in allowing Europe to become a more important autonomous force in global security, there are, in fact, more critical problems impediments. First, the Union is a club of members of varying sizes and differing foreign policy interests. Particularly the larger members are reluctant to submit the conduct of their foreign and security policies to an EU apparatus. They prefer to continue to formulate and implement their own policies, effectively undermining the rise of the EU as a major international actor, capable of developing and carrying out its own external relations. Second, in its origins, the EU was conceptualized as an instrument that would render war between Germany and France an impossibility. Germany, recognizing that most EU members are apprehensive about a militarily powerful Germany, has behaved with restraint in developing its security capabilities. France has fancied itself as the major security provider for the EU, but neither have the means to fulfill that role nor do most members find France's aspiration credible. Recent changes in German security policy in the face of the Ukrainian challenge may not lead to greater security cohesion in the EU, but rather to a resurgence of an repressed question as to who shall lead European defense. This is likely to undermine the already modest role of the EU as a global security actor.

China has tried to portray itself as a mature power interested in maintaining global peace. For example, it has recently brought the Saudis and the Iranians together and has presumably succeeded in affecting a modus vivendi such that the relations between the two countries will become normalized. It may work to achieve similar results elsewhere. It has also become more assertive during the recent years in its neighborhood, however, not only claiming islands in the South China Sea that currently belong to other countries, but in becoming more vocal in arguing that Taiwan is a part of China. Although it has been increasing its naval presence in the region, it is doubtful that it will invade the areas it claims. Particularly with regard to Taiwan, it is likely to run into American resistance. China also has had border issues with India and has on occasion employed limited military means to bring about changes. The India-China border flares up now and then, but there is little indication that either party has an interest in allowing skirmishes to develop into a more comprehensive conflict.

As its relations with the United States and western Europe have soured, Russia has tried to draw closer to China. The two countries have, on many occasions, confirmed their indissoluble friendship, yet such pronouncements have to be approached with caution. China has stopped short of offering unqualified support to Russia in Ukraine. There appear to be two built-in strains in their coming together in a 'pole.' Firstly, Russia perceives itself as a super power and would therefore not accept a secondary status to China within the alliance. Secondly, Russia constitutes a natural target of expansion for China. It is known that some of the Russian towns east of the Urals already have significant Chinese populations that have moved there recently. In addition, the Chinese Belt and Road project goes through countries that Russia considers its own backyard. It is unlikely to welcome growing Chinese influence within these regions. These realities will inevitably produce tensions, rivalries and competitive relations between the two countries.

The United States has hoped and tried to court India as an ally with whom it would join forces against China. While India has been willing to engage in cooperation and happily acquire weapons from the United States, it has shown little interest in developing a more permanent institutional linkage, particularly one in which it would be placed in the position of an American client state. India, it appears, would like to maintain its autonomous role as a major regional power. It has recently surpassed China in population. While China's pace of economic development has slowed down and the reluctance among major powers to continue to be reliant on China for sophisticated electronic items and machines has grown, India has improved its economic performance and acquired greater confidence to hold its own as an international actor.

Regional Groupings with Lower Cohesion

It may not be necessary to complete our tour of the world and look at every region, major country or group of countries. We may identify some common aspects of state behavior that characterize most countries these days. Countries continue to belong to regional or even universal groupings - that is, they constitute constellations within which members interact more intensely with each other than with others. Nevertheless, most countries behave autonomously in pursuit of their interests and no longer submit to the unqualified leadership of a more powerful regional or universal actor. This is possible because polarity has ceased to characterize the relations between states. By way of example, Saudi Arabia, historically strongly tied to the United States, has not hesitated to work with China to make amends with Iran, and it is considering purchasing military equipment from Russia while also acquiring American military hardware. Latin American countries, including those closely linked with the United States, are searching for ways to increase their economic cooperation with China. Closer to our part of the world, NATO has failed to adopt a fully common policy against Russia. Hungary has opposed NATO policies. Meanwhile Turkey, though not challenging NATO openly, has tried to be more cognizant of and responsive towards Russian concerns.

The proclivity to act autonomously has brought in two tendencies to contemporary state behavior in international politics. First, it has become possible for states to belong to more than one grouping, even if their degree of involvement in various groupings might be at different intensities. Second, interactions within organized groups of states, even those like the European Union that constitutes a more integrated community, have acquired a somewhat transactional character.

In conclusion, how shall we describe the current international system? I hope that the discussion so far may have persuaded the reader that using expressions like 'pole' or 'polar' fails to describe our contemporary reality. What we are moving toward is a permeable, low cohesion, multi-centered global system. By permeable, I mean groupings with which it is relatively easy to establish multi-dimensional linkages. By low cohesion, I refer to the ability of a member of a grouping to pursue autonomous policies that may or may not be in harmony with the preference of other members of the group. Multi-centered points to the presence of many centers with some countries affiliating themselves with more than one center, depending on issues and interests.

Will this be permanent or temporary? If temporary, how long will it last? These are all interesting questions that none of us may answer at this time. Suffice it to remember that the order that emerged after the Second World War lasted around half a century. The erosion of that system is continuing, but no specific order has

yet replaced it. We are likely to be going through a period of prolonged change.

Looking At the New World from a Turkish Perspective

Finally, what do these observations imply for Turkish foreign policy? Briefly, if the world is moving in a multi-centered direction, it seems appropriate that Turkey should cultivate multifarious relations with various centers. Putting too much faith in one linkage in a fluid and changing environment would be far from being prudent. It is also to be noted that with its critical location, historical linkages, and potentially multiple economic ties, Turkey can constitute one of the centers of a multi-centered world. It goes without saying, however, before assuming such a role, Turkey needs to restore the health of its economy, and return to a foreign policy characterized as institutionalized, professionalized, guided by national interest rather than ideology and not subject to volatility shaped by the preferences of individuals.

BETWEEN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL POWER BALANCES, THE IRAN - SAUDI ARABIA NORMALIZATION AGREEMENT

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The Middle East region, whose political predictability has been extremely volatile over the past decade, was marked by a surprise agreement in 2023: Iran - Saudi Arabia Normalization Agreement. Signed on March 10, 2023 in Beijing under China's diplomatic mediation, the agreement envisages the restoration of diplomatic relations 7 years after they were severed following the 2016 execution of Ayatollah Sheikh Nimr Bakr Nimr, a Shiite cleric in Saudi Arabia, for organizing Shiite protests against the kingdom with Iran's support. The agreement draws attention to the rapprochement in Iran-Saudi Arabia bilateral relations, which have been frosty since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, but where geopolitical tensions have escalated due to new ideological and sectarian fault lines that have shaken the region after the 2011 Arab Spring. However, the significance of the deal is not limited to these bilateral relations between the two major regional powers. It is a multilateral agreement involving China, which is considered to be China's first diplomatic victory, and is at the center of two other multilateral agreements of interest to the region: The 2020 US-brokered Ibrahim Accords between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and the 2023 US-brokered agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia. This series of multilateral agreements involving both other regional powers and two major global powers offers clues to the changing balance of power in the region, while also reflecting a longer-term global power transition. Therefore, the Iran-Saudi Arabia normalization agreement should be analyzed separately in terms of bilateral relations, regional relations and global relations.

Normalization Agreement in the Framework of Iran-Saudi Arabia Rapprochement On March 6 and 10, Iran and Saudi Arabia sent delegations to Beijing for high-level talks mediated by China and announced a trilateral agreement in a joint statement issued on March 10. In the statement, the parties emphasized their intention to "resume diplomatic relations between them and reopen their embassies and missions within two months at the latest" as well as the principles of "respect for the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs".[1] The sides also agreed on the entry into force of the Agreement on General Cooperation in the Fields of Economy, Trade, Investment, Technology,

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[1] Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Sweden, "Joint Trilateral Statement by the People's Republic of China, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Republic of Iran", March 10, 2023, http://se.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw_0/202303/t20230311_11039241.htm

Science, Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Agreement on Security Cooperation, signed in 1998 and 2001 respectively, but never implemented.[2] Following the agreement, the sides officially resumed diplomatic missions after a 7-year diplomatic hiatus. On June 6, the Iranian Embassy in Riyadh and on June 8, the Iranian Consulate in Jeddah and the Permanent Representative of Iran to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) were officially reopened,[3] and Saudi Arabia's Tehran Embassy formally resumed its activities on August 6.[4]

There is an ideological power struggle between the two countries, the seeds of which were sown with the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and whose regional impact is profound. Having transformed the project of political Islam into a state capacity through a popular Islamic revolution, Iran declared itself the central state of the Islamic world, with its official rhetoric claiming to be the protector not only of the Shiites of the region but also of the 'oppressed' peoples of the entire Islamic world. Iran's new definition of identity in the post-revolutionary period meant that the competitive advantage of Saudi Arabia, home to the two holy cities of the Islamic world, was shaken. Indeed, Saudi Arabia supported Iraq in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, which further reinforced this identity of an oppressed Shiite Islamic state in Iranian state memory. After the Arab Spring of 2011 and the Syrian civil war, Saudi Arabia and Iran's relations, which remained frosty throughout the 1990s, nevertheless maintained diplomatic relations, turned into a more intense regional rivalry on the axis of new ideological and sectarian fault lines that emerged in the region. The Syrian civil war, in which Iran and Saudi Arabia intervened through proxy forces, was one of the most intense regional rivalries, while Yemen, where the current government is supported by Saudi Arabia and the Houthi Ansarallah Movement, which is engaged in an armed struggle against the government, is supported by Iran. Other countries in the region that witnessed political repercussions of the sectarian tension between the two regional countries were Lebanon, Iraq and Bahrain, which have significant Shiite populations and have been home to Shiite political mobilization.

Although the reason for the seven-year break in diplomatic relations appears to be the execution of the Shiite cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Nimr Baqir Nimr by the Saudi state in 2016, the real reason is the regional power struggle that has engulfed the two countries since 2011 and the accompanying security challenges. Indeed, the main problem for Saudi Arabia is Iran's dense network of alliances, the so-called 'axis of resistance', based ideologically on anti-Americanism, anti-

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[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Şahin, Haydar. "İran'ın Cidde Konsolosluğu 7 yıl aranın ardından yeniden açıldı," June 8, 2023, *Anadolu Agency*, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/iranin-cidde-konsoloslugu-7-yil-aranin-ardindan-yeniden-acildi/2917097

[4] "IRNA: Suudi Arabistan'ın Tahran Büyükelçiliği 7 yıl aradan sonra yeniden faaliyete başladı," *TRT Haber*, August 9, 2023, https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/irna-suudi-arabistanin-tahran-buyukelciligi-7-yil-aradan-sonra-yeniden-faaliyete-basladi-787339.html

Zionism and Shiite political Islam doctrine, operating under Iranian leadership in a wide geography ranging from Palestinian resistance organizations, Lebanese Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria in the west of the Arabian peninsula, to the Shiite government of Iraq and Iran in the east, and the Houthis of Yemen in the south.[5] These Iranian-backed groups, which are essentially sub-state in nature, have a transnational impact as they do not limit their sphere of activity to their own states but also organize operations against other countries in the region. In this respect, the 'axis of resistance' is seen by Saudi Arabia as a tool to accelerate Iran's indirect intervention in regional countries and escalate tensions in the region. Indeed, in a 2017 interview, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia emphasized that it is impossible to engage in dialogue with Iran and its "fundamentalist ideology" that seeks to "control the entire Islamic world" and spread the Shiite doctrine.[6] Similarly, Saudi Arabia blames Iran, the patron of the axis of resistance, for all the missile attacks carried out by Yemen's Houthis that have targeted Saudi military installations.[7] This is the reason behind Saudi Arabia's firm opposition to Iran's ballistic missile program along with the United States and its declaration in 2018 that if Iran continues its nuclear activities, they will also produce nuclear weapons.[8] For Iran, which has intensified its 'axis of resistance' activities under the rhetoric of 'fighting ISIS terrorism', Saudi Arabia is the main source of terrorist acts in the region. In fact, Iran blames Saudi Arabia for the ISIS terrorist attack on the Iranian parliament and the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini in 2017.[9] Similarly, former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani blamed Saudi Arabia's "support for terrorists in Yemen and Syria" for the problems between the two countries.[10]

The resumption of diplomatic missions between the two countries, which blame each other for the cycle of political and military instability, militarization, militancy, and terrorism that has plagued the Middle East over the past decade, is an important first step in opening up the possibility of diplomatic solutions to the military and political problems that concern both countries in the region, and enriching cooperation between the two countries through economic, trade, investment, and cultural activities. The normalization between Iran and Saudi

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[5] "Iran denies 'hegemon' plans, denounces Saudi and Israel," *Al-Jazeera*, February 18, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/2/18/iran-denies-hegemon-plans-denounces-saudi-and-israel

[6] Associated Press. "Iran is seeking 'to control Islamic world', says Saudi Arabian prince," *Guardian*, May 2, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/02/iran-is-seeking-to-control-islamic-world-says-saudi-arabian-prince

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] Reuters. "Saudi crown prince says will develop nuclear bomb if Iran does: CBS TV," Reuters, March 15, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-iran-nuclear/saudi-crown-prince-says-will-develop-nuclear-bomb-if-iran-does-cbs-tv-idUSKCN1GR1MN

[9] Erdbrink, Thomas. "Raising tensions, Iranians again link Saudis to terror attacks in Tehran," NewYork Times, June 13, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/13/world/middleeast/iran-saudi-arabia-terrorism.html

[10] "Rouhani: Saudis 'should stop backing terrorists," *Al-Jazeera*, August 30, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/8/30/rouhani-saudis-should-stop-backing-terrorists

Arabia, which was finalized in 2023 under China's mediation after two years of diplomacy, is accompanied by different motives for Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian Case for Normalization

The year 2021 is of key importance in terms of initiating normalization steps. The 2021 Iranian presidential elections were won by Ibrahim Raisi, who represented the conservative wing of Iran's foreign policy, which was largely supported by the former Revolutionary Guard Corps, and a new process began in Iran's foreign policy. The first act of the new foreign minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, who defined his foreign policy orientation as "balanced foreign policy, dynamic diplomacy and smart interaction", was to engage in intensive diplomacy with Middle Eastern countries.[11] This was in stark contrast to his predecessor Javad Zarif's foreign policy, which focused on relations with the western world and sought the cooperation of the countries in the region even to resolve the issues that bind relations with the western world, such as the nuclear program and ballistic missiles. The first attempts at mediation in this context were made by two other Middle Eastern countries, Iraq and Oman, which hosted a series of diplomatic talks in 2021-22.

To understand the Iranian conservatives' orientation towards the Middle East, it is important to look back to 2020, a year full of misfortunes. The beginning and end of 2020 were marked by two assassinations. In January 2021, Qassem Soleimani, the architect of the axis of resistance and commander of the Quds Forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), was assassinated by the United States in Iraq along with his Iraqi counterpart and fellow Hashd al-Muhdi al-Muhandis, while Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the architect of Iran's nuclear program, was assassinated by Israel, according to Iranian authorities. The assassination of Soleimani raised big questions about the future of the axis of resistance, and expectations of its weakening gained momentum. Some of the developments that fueled these expectations were the lack of experience of Soleimani's replacement Ismail Qaani in the Middle East, the Shiite militias on the Iraq - Syria line experiencing an existential crisis with the threat of ISIS and the end of the sectarian conflict, the liquidation of some militia forces after the assassination in order to control intelligence weaknesses, and internal reactions to the political partyzation of Shiite militias in Iraq. Therefore, a new strategy was needed for the continuity of the alliance, the foundations of which were laid in the early years of the Islamic Republic and which has enjoyed its golden age in the last decade. Indeed, in 2021, powerful Iranian-backed Shiite militias such as the Iraqi Hezbollah Brigades and Asaib Ahl al-Haq began to announce

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[11] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. "Iran FM holds first meeting with Tehran-based foreign ambassadors," September 15,l 2023, https://en.mfa.gov.ir/portal/newsview/669778

an anti-Israel defense in response to various assassinations.[12] The appointment of former IRGC commanders to key government posts after the 2021 elections won by the conservatives would also provide the political support needed for the survival of the axis of resistance alliance.

In this context, another important development for Iran in 2020 was the Ibrahim Accords, signed under the mediation of US President Donald Trump, which envisaged diplomatic normalization between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. It is the second rapprochement agreement Israel has signed with countries in the region, after Egypt and Jordan. It envisages not only the opening of diplomatic relations and the opening of embassies by these Arab countries with Israel, but also cooperation, including with the United States, on security and economic issues of concern to the entire Middle East region.[13] The fact that Morocco and Sudan joined Israel's agreement with the Gulf states later in the same year is significant in terms of the possibility of Israel signing rapprochement agreements with other countries in the region. This is because long before the sectarian fault line that wounded the region in 2011, there was another, much older and deeper fault line created by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Ibrahim Accords are an important step not only in repairing this deep-rooted fault line, but also in reaffirming the presence of the US in the region, whose relations with its regional allies have been volatile.

The Ibrahim Accords are a threat to the regional policy of Iran, whose ideological existence is based on anti-Americanism, anti-Zionism and (Shiite) political Islam. In essence, the axis of resistance was an alliance that brought together Palestinian organizations, the Syrian regime, Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran in opposition to the US and Israel in the region. It was only after the establishment of a Shiite Arab state in Iraq following the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2011 sectarian conflicts that this alliance transformed into a network of alliances in which Shiism was more visible by incorporating Shiite militias along the Iraq, Syria and Yemen lines. In this respect, Iran's axis of resistance in the region feeds on both the fault line created by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the sectarian fault line. While the sectarian fault line is slowly losing its influence with the disappearance of the ISIS threat, the repair of the other Israeli-Palestinian centered fault line through the Abraham Accords doubles the existential crisis Iran's axis of resistance is experiencing. One of the most frightening scenarios for Iran is the possibility that the Abraham Accords will be extended to Saudi Arabia, another major

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[12] Malik, Hamdi. "How Iraqi Militias Are Exploiting the Gaza Conflict," *The Washington Institute*, May 16, 2021, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-iraqi-militias-are-exploiting-gaza-conflict ; "Iraqi militia now part of anti-Israel 'equation of deterrence," New Arab, June 17, 2021, https://www.newarab.com/news/iraqi-militia-now-anti-israel-equation-deterrence

[13] US State Department. "Abraham Accords Peace Agreement," September 15, 2020, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UAE_Israel-treaty-signed-FINAL-15-Sept-2020-508.pdf

regional power, and that this country will join the bandwagon of Arab states normalizing relations with Israel.

In light of these motives, Iran's main expectation from the Saudi Arabia deal is the revival of the old local vision. Although the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia marks a new era in bilateral relations, it is not an entirely new vision for Iran's regional policy, but a persistent continuation of the old policy in a new guise.

The Saudi Case for Normalization

From Saudi Arabia's perspective, the normalization agreement seems to be driven by a very global vision, in contrast to Iran's localism. This global vision is closely linked to the 2030 Vision announced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2016.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 can be defined as a project to modernize and strengthen the independence of Saudi Arabia, whose economy is heavily dependent on oil and whose security depends on security guarantees from superpowers, in line with the new codes of the transforming global system. In terms of the economy, Vision 2030 aims to reduce dependence on oil in the face of the green economy model that is gaining importance with climate change, to emphasize Saudi Arabia's geo-economic position as a global logistics hub connecting three continents, to become an investment destination to attract global capital, and to turn Saudi Arabia into a travel, leisure and sports hub attracting 150 million visitors a year.[14] Some of the concrete steps expected to be taken include transforming the Saudi oil company ARAMCO from an oil-producing company into a global industrial conglomerate, increasing the share of non-oil exports in GDP from 16% to 50%, transforming the Saudi Public Investment Fund into the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, expanding large Saudi companies across borders and becoming more active in global markets, privatizing state-owned assets, increasing the role of local and international companies in energy, real estate, healthcare and finance, and reforming transparency and accountability.[15] This economic transformation is expected to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy while creating new jobs for the country's young population and contributing to overall prosperity. On the security front, the Kingdom is investing in the localization of the defense industry, aiming to reach the capacity to produce half of the state's military needs.[16] This is important not only to reduce foreign dependence in the defense and security sector, but also to invest in other industrial sectors such

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[14] "Vision 2030," *Vision 2030 Website*, https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/rc0b5oy1/saudi_vision203.pdf

[15] *Ibid., p. 57-61.*

[16] *Ibid., p. 48.*

as industrial equipment, communications and information technology, and to create new jobs.[17]

With Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is repositioning itself both regionally and globally. The Kingdom, which is currently the 19th largest economy in the world, aims to become one of the world's 15 largest economies.[18] Another important goal is to raise Saudi Arabia's position in the Logistics Performance Index from 49th to 25th and to make the country the region's biggest logistics power.[19] These goals signal a different relationship model with global actors than before. Indeed, Saudi Arabia, one of the two most important regional allies of the United States, appears to be getting closer to other global powers and emerging powers that aim to present an alternative to the liberal global order. In this context, the Kingdom signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with China in 2022, having signed a series of strategic partnership agreements with many Middle Eastern countries, especially oil-rich states.[20] Similarly, BRICS announced in August 2023 that it was inviting 6 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, to become full members by the new year.[21] Saudi Arabia's new global vision requires normalizing relations not only with Iran but with all countries in the region. Since 2011, a Middle East divided along ideological and sectarian fault lines and plagued by conflict, instability and violence has been a serious obstacle to Saudi Arabia's goal of becoming a rising global economic power by attracting foreign investors, transforming into a cultural, sports and entertainment center and becoming a logistics hub. Therefore, integration and cooperation with Islamic countries and other regional countries is an important element of the 2030 Vision.[22]

In this context, Saudi Arabia sees the rapprochement agreement it signed with Iran as important in terms of preparing a diplomatic ground for the solution of the problems, even if it is ambitious for the total elimination of the security problems stemming from these two regional powers. The two countries are still at odds in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, but Saudi Arabia hopes to rebuild relations on the basis of shared pragmatism through cooperation in other areas, and to provide the necessary regional infrastructure to realize Saudi Arabia's economic ambitions.[23] For Saudi Arabia, therefore, the normalization agreement

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[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid., p.47.*

[19] *Ibid., p. 61.*

[20] Nereim, Vivian. "China and Saudi Arabia Sign Strategic Partnership Agreementas Xi Visits Kingdom," *The New York Times*, August 12, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/08/world/middleeast/china-saudi-arabia-agreement.html

[21] Isilow, Hassan. "BRICS announces expansion with inclusion of 6 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran," Anadolu Agency, August 24, 2023, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/brics-announces-expansion-with-inclusion-of-6-countries-including-saudi-arabia-iran/2975152

[22] Vision 2030, s. 58.

[23] Farouk, Yasmin. "Riyadh's Motivations Behind the Saudi-Iran Deal," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 30,

is informed by a more global vision rather than Iran's local vision. However, whether local or global, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the deal is a harbinger of significant potential transformations.

Changes in the Global Balance: China's Role in the Middle East

China's successful involvement in Middle East diplomacy, having managed to put two regional rivals in the negotiating seat, is surprising but not unexpected. While it is questionable whether China will be able to carry its economic growth ambitions of the 2010s to the reestablishment of international political balances, the "Belt and Road Initiative" launched in 2013 and the "Global Security Initiative" announced in 2023 signaled that China was preparing for a long-term global power transition on the US-China axis. Although both projects envisage a long-term transformation of the global economic, political and security system, repeated references to the Middle East region within the framework of these initiatives, as well as initiatives such as the "China-Gulf Cooperation Organization Strategic Dialogue" in 2010 and the "Arab Policy Document" published in 2016, have shown that China has a special interest in the region.[24]

China's "Belt and Road Project" can be defined as a mega-development project consisting of infrastructure, transportation and investment projects in more than 70 mostly low- and middle-development countries, including the Turkic republics of Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and Eastern European countries.[25] The primary reason for the special importance attached to the Middle East in this project, which covers such a wide geography, is that China, which has become the production workshop of the world, needs Middle Eastern oil in order to turn this gigantic production wheel and to realize the power transition in the US-oriented global system in its favor.[26] In this context, China has signed strategic partnership agreements with 12 Arab countries and cooperation agreements with 21 Arab countries in the context of the Belt and Road project, while 15 Arab countries have joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which manages the financing of the project.[27]

2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/03/30/riyadh-s-motivations-behind-saudi-iran-deal-pub-89421

[24] Eslami, Mohammad & Papageorgiou, Maria. "China's Increasing Role in the Middle East: Implications for Regional and International Dynamics," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, June 2, 2023, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2023/06/02/chinas-increasing-role-in-the-middle-east-implications-for-regional-and-international-dynamics/

[25] Uzun, Ezgi. "Küresel güç geçişi çerçevesinde Çin-İran anlaşması," *Anadolu Agency*, April 5, 2021, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/kuresel-guc-gecisi-cercevesinde-cin-iran-anlasmasi/2198314

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] "BRI brings development of China and Middle East closer than ever," *The State Council Information Office of the People's Repulic of China*, May 10, 2023, http://english.scio.gov.cn/m/beltandroad/2023-05/10/content_85278499.htm

Among these countries, Saudi Arabia is the leading oil exporter to China, and Iran is the third largest oil exporter to China after Saudi Arabia and Russia, even though its oil sales have been hampered by sanctions.[28] In this context, the 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement signed between China and Iran in March 2021 envisages a total Chinese investment of $400 billion in Iran's strategic sectors such as oil production, logistics infrastructure, defense and information technology.[29] With this agreement, Iran, which has been subjected to economic and political isolation due to international sanctions and its military activities in the region, would be able to sell oil to China, albeit at lower prices, attract substantial investment and strengthen its international legitimacy by taking another global power with it against the United States. China would also sign various investment and infrastructure agreements with anti-US and anti-Israeli Axis of Resistance allies such as Syria and Iraq, which have emerged from protracted conflict and are in need of financial funding for the reconstruction of their countries, thus contributing to their economic empowerment and indirectly contributing to the expansion of networks between the Axis of Resistance allies through the port, railway and highway projects it would fund. Indeed, Iraq was the country whose infrastructure projects and oil sector received the most funding under the Belt and Road Project in 2021.[30] China also signed a strategic agreement with the Syrian regime in September 2022, not only announcing that it would contribute to the reconstruction of the country's collapsed economy, but also contributing to the international legitimacy of this ally by calling on the international community to lift the unilateral sanctions imposed on Syria.[31] Thus, China's presence in the Middle East not only breaks Iran's isolation and provides a counterbalance to the US influence in the region, but also coincides with Iran's local vision for the future of the axis of resistance.

For Saudi Arabia, relations with China again bear the traces of its global vision. As part of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement it signed in December 2022 with China, its largest oil importer and largest trading partner, Saudi Arabia announced that it had agreed to sign a 'harmonization plan'

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[28] Jash, Amrita. "Saudi-Iran Deal: A Test Case of China's Role as an International Mediator," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, June 23, 2023, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2023/06/23/saudi-iran-deal-a-test-case-of-chinas-role-as-an-international-mediator/

[29] "Metn-e Farsi-e nehai-e piishnevis gerardad 25 sale Iran va Chin," Eghtesad News, March 30, 2021, https://www.eghtesadnews.com/بخش-سایر-61/348927-متن-فارسی-و-راهبردی-نهایی-پیش-نویس-قرارداد-ساله-ایران-چین-ایران-چین-افشای-اسناد ; Çabuk, Ali Asgar."Çin ile 25 yıllık işbirliği anlaşması Tahran'da nasıl yankı buldu?" NTV, March 30, 2021, https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/tahranda-cin-ile-25-yillik-isbirligi-anlasmasi-nasil-yanki-buldu,evHBb9hwH065BZ6KgQTwnA

[30] Reuters. "Iraq top recipient of China's Belt and Road Initiative financing for infrastructure projects in 2021, study shows," SCMP, February 2, 2022, https://www.scmp.com/business/china-business/article/3165611/iraq-top-recipient-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative

[31] Cash, Joe. "China's Xi calls on West to lift sanctions against war-ravaged Syria," *Reuters*, September 22, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/xi-china-is-willing-work-with-syria-upgrades-ties-2023-09-22/

between the Belt and Road Project and the Vision 2030 goals of social reforms and economic diversification.[32] In this context, in addition to the traditional hydrocarbon sector, cooperation in sectors such as the digital economy, green development, transportation and mega projects that Saudi Arabia is just starting to develop comes to the fore.[33] As part of the 2030 Vision, the NEOM city project, which is planned to be fully powered by renewable energy sources, and King Abdulaziz Airport, which is intended to be an important interconnection hub, are being financed by the Belt and Road Project.[34] Although Saudi Arabia emphasizes that its rapprochement with China "does not mean turning its back on the US", its membership in the BRICS, which includes China, and its steps to support China's influence in the regional economy are likely to shake US dominance in the region in the long run.[35]

From China's perspective, controlling instability in the region seems essential for its growing influence on the regional economy through the strategic partnership agreements it has signed with Middle Eastern countries and the Belt and Road Project to bear fruit. As a matter of fact, the Middle East region is one of the important sub-headings of the "Global Security Initiative", which was announced in 2022 based on the motto of "creating a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture by taking into account the principle of indivisibility of security".[36] The document emphasizes non-proliferation, promoting collective security, strengthening dialogue among regional countries and supporting a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict.[37] China's mediation of the normalization agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is also closely linked to promoting dialogue between the two countries in order to secure existing and potential economic activities in third countries in the region where all three countries have interests, to strengthen its economic influence in the region and, in the long run, to support the political power transition between it and the United States to its advantage. With this agreement, China, which can take Saudi Arabia, a long-term ally of the US in the region, on one side and Iran, with which it has

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[32] Radwan, Rawan. "Saudi Arabia, China emerge as comprehensive strategic partners as Chinese President Xi Jinping wraps up state visit," *Arab News*, 10 Aralık 2022, https://www.arabnews.com/node/2213756/saudi-arabia

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] Jash, "Saudi-Iran Deal: A Test Case of China's Role as an International Mediator," https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2023/06/23/saudi-iran-deal-a-test-case-of-chinas-role-as-an-international-mediator/

[35] "China and Saudi Arabia Sign Strategic Partnership Agreementas Xi Visits Kingdom," August 12, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/08/world/middleeast/china-saudi-arabia-agreement.html

[36] Aytekin, Emre. "Çin Devlet Başkanı Şi, "Küresel Güvenlik Girişimi" önerisinde bulundu," *Anadolu Agency,* April 21, 2022, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/cin-devlet-baskani-si-kuresel-guvenlik-girisimi-onerisinde-bulundu/2569707

[37] "The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper," *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, February 21, 2023, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html

long-term problems, on the other, is creating an alternative political bloc with the potential to expand by disrupting the traditional political balances in the region. Therefore, it is possible to say that the transformation of the region into a center of competition between global powers directly brings about regional transformations.

Changes in the Regional Balance: From Abraham Accords Expansion to the Aqsa Flood Operation

While the potential impact of the normalization agreement on global transformations is likely to be long-lasting, its impact on regional balances is immediate and immediate. This is because the agreement is in response to and in the middle of two multilateral agreements centered on Israel. The 2020 US-brokered Ibrahim Accords between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which were later expanded to Morocco and Sudan, were of great importance for two important Gulf states, after Egypt and Jordan, to re-affirm Israel's presence in the region and to enter a process of diplomatic normalization.[38] It is possible to say that the agreement, which envisages cooperation on important issues such as trade, investment, defense, transportation, renewable energy, cyber security, tourism and water, has strengthened Israel-Gulf ties in a short time. Within two years, the volume of trade between the United Arab Emirates and Israel increased tenfold, a special fund was established to support infrastructure, water and electricity projects in the region, a free trade agreement was signed with a 96% reduction in customs duties, and investments were made in different sectors.[39] More important than this economic integration between Israel and the Gulf, however, was the reach of the agreement to other Arab countries, reinforcing Israel's legitimacy in the region and its possible regional repercussions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, in 2023, rumors gained momentum that the deal would extend to another Gulf country, Saudi Arabia, this time under the mediation of US President Joe Biden.[40]

In 2023, Israel and Saudi Arabia appeared to be close to a normalization agreement that could be signed within the year. Saudi Arabia's expectations from the United States for the deal included a NATO-level mutual security agreement that would require the United States to defend Saudi Arabia in the

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[38] US State Department, "Abraham Accords", https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UAE_Israel-treaty-signed-FINAL-15-Sept-2020-508.pdf

[39] Akıncı, Şerife. "İkinci yılında Abraham Anlaşmaları ve gelinen nokta," *Anadolu Agency*, September 22, 2022, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/ikinci-yilinda-abraham-anlasmalari-ve-gelinen-nokta/2691849

[40] Friedman, Thomas L. "Biden is weighing a big Middle East deal," *New York Times,* July 27, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/27/opinion/israel-saudi-arabia-biden.html

event of an attack by Iran, a civilian nuclear program under US supervision, and the provision of more advanced military equipment, such as an anti ballistic missile defense system against Iranian medium- and long-range missiles.[41] On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's main expectation from Israel was to preserve the possibility of a two-state solution to the Palestinian problem.[42] By signing the normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia, Iran aimed to prevent Saudi Arabia from joining the bandwagon of Arab countries normalizing relations with Israel and to draw it towards a China-oriented regional alternative to Israel and the United States. However, for Saudi Arabia, the common denominator of these two multilateral agreements, they are not alternatives but potential complements. On the one hand, the Kingdom is trying to find an economic position on the Chinese axis in line with its Vision 2030, and on the other, it needs extended security guarantees from its traditional ally, the United States, until it develops its domestic military capacity and reduces its dependence on foreign aid. Moreover, it wants these security guarantees against Iran, which has signed a normalization agreement but still clearly cannot trust its nuclear program and ballistic missiles. Normalizing relations with Iran was therefore not an alternative to a potential normalization with Israel. Moreover, normalization with Iran is only part of a broader regional normalization trend Saudi Arabia is pursuing in 2023. Indeed, the Kingdom had already taken a number of normalization steps in the region, such as spearheading the return of Bashar al-Assad-led Syria to the Arab League and reviving strained relations with Turkey over the Jamal Khashoggi affair.[43]

Hamas' Operation Aqsa Flood, launched on October 7 against Israel in general, was a turning point for this second US-led, Israel-centered multilateral normalization deal. This was because Hamas was an ally of the Axis of Resistance, with Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah and Yemen's Ansarallah movement openly supporting Hamas against Israel. Although it is debatable whether Iran ordered the attack or not, it seemed to be an appropriate ground to show that the alliance was now trying to be revitalized around anti-Israel sentiment, going beyond the sectarian fault line. The subsequent Israeli military operation in Gaza, which created a humanitarian crisis, was an opportunity to reaffirm the vitality, competence and legitimacy of the axis of resistance alliance in the region. Yemen and Lebanese Hezbollah launched multiple attacks on Israel, while Iran's foreign minister, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, visited the allies of the axis of resistance and held close contacts with many countries in the region, including Turkey, Qatar and

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Salem, Paul. "The oncoming Saudi-Israeli normalization," *The Middle East Institute*, September 5, 2023, https://www.mei.edu/publications/oncoming-saudi-israeli-normalization

Saudi Arabia.[44] At the height of the escalation, the main concern for the United States was that the axis of resistance would launch an all-out military campaign against Israel, causing the Gaza war to spread throughout the region. As a matter of fact Iran, the Ansarallah Movement, Lebanese Hezbollah and Iraqi Shiite militia forces continue to make small and medium-sized military moves against Israel and the US presence in the region. However, although Iran's conservative leadership kept the option of a large-scale military intervention on the agenda despite the domestic anti-war public opinion, it was understood that it aimed to gain the support of other countries in the region, in addition to the axis of resistance, for such an intervention. In other words, Iran, the patron of the axis of resistance, hoped to use the moral high ground of its forty years of strategic interest in the Palestinian issue to organize the entire region around anti-Israel sentiment and thereby consolidate its local vision.

Although Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has stated that a normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia will take place after the Gaza war, it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia will sign a US-led agreement in the short term.[45] On the contrary, Saudi Arabia has developed a discourse that rejects Israel's self-defense argument and questions the validity of its military aggression under international law.[46] In this context, the fact that the first two stops of the diplomatic committee set up by the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to persuade the international community to call for a ceasefire, led by Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, were China and Russia, suggests that Saudi Arabia is moving away from Israel at the regional level and towards an alternative axis that opposes the US at the global level and aims for systemic transformation.[47] This time, the axis of China, Iran and Saudi Arabia seems to have found common ground on Palestine, as in a joint statement on December 15, they called for an immediate halt to the operations in Gaza.[48]

[44] "Iran and Turkey, along with other Muslim countries, need to take more powerful measures in support of the Palestinian nation," *Nour News*, November 26, 2023, https://nournews.ir/En/News/155972/Iran-and-Turkey,-along-with-other-Muslim-countries,-need-to-take-more-powerful-measures-in-support-of-the-Palestinian-nation

[45] Flatley, Daniel. "Netanyahu Still Sees Peace Deal With Saudi Arabia After Gaza Fighting," Bloomberg, November 10, 2023, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-11-10/israel-hamas-conflict-netanyahu-sees-saudi-arabia-peace-deal-after-gaza-fight

[46] Alghashian, Aziz. "How Saudi Arabia Could Use Its Leverage in Gaza", *Foreign Policy*, December 28, 2023, https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/18/saudi-arabia-israel-gaza-mbs-leverage/

[47] *Ibid*.

[48] All-Khazen, İbrahim. "China, Saudi Arabia, Iran call for immediate cease-fire in Gaza," *Anadolu Agency,* December 15, 2023, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/china-saudi-arabia-iran-call-for-immediate-cease-fire-in-gaza/3083847

Conclusion: Question Marks on the Future of Normalization

Looking at the developments since the signing of the agreement in March 2023, it is possible to say that the Saudi-Arabian Normalization Agreement is on a positive trajectory in fulfilling its promises. The two countries have resumed diplomatic relations as stipulated by the agreement. In addition, their joint political work and unity of position on the regional crisis caused by the Al Aqsa Flood and the Gaza Operation signaled that they could act together on political and security issues of regional concern. These are important signs for the redefinition of relations between two regional rivals whose relations have been volatile since 1979.

On the other hand, there are two question marks over the future of the agreement. The first one concerns the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states, which the agreement insistently emphasizes. Iran, which has based its foreign policy on the doctrine of "cross-border security" rather than national security since its foundation, is unlikely to reorganize its relations with the sub-state actors it has supported along the axis of resistance on the basis of these two principles. The most Iran can do in this regard is to grant a controlled independence to the militia groups it has nurtured and nurtured after they reach maximum power, and to act in a relatively more equal alliance with them, but one in which the relationship between patron and client does not completely disappear. Another question mark concerns the "ideology of development". It is not impossible that the enthusiasm for economic development that brings China, Iran and Saudi Arabia together in the countries of the third region, where all three countries have interests, will not hit wounds in their domestic politics based on identity and ideology that have not yet fully healed. The questions of which regions the development corridors will pass through, which identity groups will benefit more from the funds, and who will manage potential conflicts of interest along the way could create new crises. The new test for the Middle East region, which is willing to undergo a process of restructuring after two decades of conflict and instability, seems to be geoeconomic rather than geopolitical. It remains to be seen how these three countries will meet this new test.

BEYOND AUTOMATION: AI AS A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL RESISTANCE

Co-Founder and CEO, LinkTera Information Technologies

Foreword

As the storm clouds of artificial intelligence (AI) gather, conversations about its impact on our jobs are intensifying. The prevailing fear is that AI will render our skills irrelevant, reminiscent of a favorite movie of mine, Top Gun: Maverick. Despite intending to watch something new on every flight, I inevitably find myself captivated by Maverick's defiance against all odds.

Remember that scene where Capt. Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell argues, "It's not the plane, it's the pilot"; it resonates with our situation today. While everyone talks about AI taking over, just as Maverick emphasizes the importance of the pilot, we understand that AI is crucial, but it's not the sole solution.

The discussions surrounding AI's reshaping of our work landscape are loud and unsettling. But much like Maverick's refusal to succumb to the belief of becoming obsolete, a similar sentiment echoes among us — "Yes, AI will influence things, but not immediately. Not today."

Amidst this profound shift, there's a resolute belief that human adaptability and skills will continue to hold significance. Even as we consider the potential impact of AI, Maverick's timeless words linger: "It's not the plane; it's the pilot". This implies that even in a time when technology advances, the human touch and expertise remain indispensable. The future may change, but the role of human ingenuity isn't fading away. Not today. Not tomorrow.

Introduction

In the landscape of modern advancements, the integration of AI stands as a pivotal force redefining industries, reshaping workflows, and revolutionizing how we perceive work. The profound impact of AI transcends mere automation; it promises a radical transformation across various sectors, offering unprecedented potential for efficiency, innovation, and growth.

In today's technological landscape, AI is often likened to the transformative impact of electricity in its time. "AI is the new Electricity", a phrase[1] gaining traction,

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[1] Andrew Ng, computer scientist and co-founder of Coursera.

aptly captures the monumental influence AI possesses. Much like electricity revolutionized the world by powering industries, homes, and innovations, AI is reshaping the way we work, interact, and innovate.

Similar to how electricity illuminated homes and powered machines, AI's integration is enhancing efficiency, automating processes, and amplifying productivity across various sectors. Just as electricity became an indispensable utility, AI is increasingly becoming an integral part of modern life, infiltrating industries from healthcare and finance to entertainment and transportation.

The analogy between AI and electricity extends beyond their transformative abilities, announcing a new era akin to a technological and economic Renaissance. Just as electricity sparked a wave of unprecedented innovation, giving birth to revolutionary inventions such as light bulbs, telephones, televisions and new production methodologies, AI is similarly igniting a modern-day renaissance and fostering the creation of intelligent systems, autonomous vehicles, personalized recommendation algorithms and many others.

However, just like the adoption of electricity, the widespread implementation of AI presents its own set of challenges. Similar to how electricity brought about changes in the workforce and necessitated new skills and training, the deployment of AI is significantly transforming job roles and employment landscapes. This shift requires an emphasis on continuous learning and development of new competencies to ensure that the workforce can adapt to and benefit from these technological advancements, while appropriate regulatory frameworks ensure their effective and beneficial integration into society.

AI doesn't only affect the number of jobs available, but also the nature of work itself. In the past, machines primarily performed tasks requiring strength or speed. Now, AI is capable of handling complex cognitive tasks. Policymakers must approach the integration of AI with foresight, ensuring that its benefits are harnessed equitably and responsibly. Just as electricity changed the world in ways unimaginable in its inception, AI holds the potential to redefine industries, reshape economies, and profoundly impact human lives.

This article doesn't have exact answers about what jobs will be like. It's about looking at how AI is used now and humbly predicting how it might be used later in some jobs and fields. Throughout this article, we will delve deeper into the realm of artificial intelligence and explore its transformative impact on our work methods.

AI: A Transformative Force - Learning from the Industrial Revolutions

The First Industrial Revolution, marked by the advent of the steam engine, reshaped societies during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. James Watt's enhancements to the steam engine revolutionized manufacturing, transportation, and agriculture, fueling efficient production in textile factories and propelling steamships and railways. This period also saw the gradual adoption of electricity, a groundbreaking advancement that accelerated progress. The late 19th century saw the introduction of electricity, particularly with Thomas Edison's practical electric lighting and power systems, flourishing industries. Factories operated around the clock, productivity surged, and urban centers thrived with the introduction of conveniences like lighting, heating, and electric appliances. These technologies not only transformed production methods but also reshaped societies, transitioning economies from agrarian to industrial, prompting urbanization, altering labor dynamics, and redefining societal norms. The First Industrial Revolution, powered by the steam engine and electricity, laid the groundwork for subsequent technological advancements, shaping the interconnected, industrialized world we live in today.

However, after the initial introduction of electricity, exponential growth in production was not immediately realized. The production processes mirrored those established during the steam engine era, resulting in only marginal improvements. The Second Industrial Revolution, termed the 'Technological Revolution,' emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when innovators reexamined factory layouts, refined manufacturing processes, and embraced technological innovations on a larger scale. Innovations like Henry Ford's assembly line revolutionized production methodologies, showcasing a shift in efficiency and mass production. Advancements in steel production, chemical manufacturing, and the adoption of new materials further accelerated progress. This era also saw the rise of telecommunication systems, such as the telephone and radio, enabling faster communication and connectivity across distances. Scientific discoveries fueled technological innovations, contributing to the development of consumer goods and industrial processes. The Second Industrial Revolution reshaped the global economy, boosting output, economic growth, and industry expansion, setting the stage for the technology-driven innovation and globalization we witness today.

The Third Industrial Revolution then built upon the innovations of its predecessor, centered around the proliferation of computers, the internet, and mobile technology. Emerging from the latter half of the 20th century into the 21st century, this revolution was characterized by the widespread adoption of digital technologies reshaping society. The invention of the transistor, development of integrated circuits, and birth of the modern computer by visionaries like Alan

Turing and pioneers at companies like IBM propelled computational power. As the expense of computation decreased by an annual average of 37 percent from 1945 to 1980,[2] various changes unfolded: telephone operators faced redundancy, General Motors introduced the first industrial robot in the 1960s, and the 1970s witnessed the advent of self-service technology through airline reservations systems.[3] In the subsequent decades, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, computing "costs plummeted at an even faster rate, averaging a decline of 64 percent annually, coinciding with a remarkable surge in computational capabilities.[4] The creation of the internet connected the world, revolutionizing communication, information access, and global connectivity. The subsequent advent of mobile technology, particularly smartphones, brought the internet to billions, enabling constant connectivity, instant communication, and vast information access. These technologies altered how people interact, work, and conduct business, leading to the digitization of industries, rise of e-commerce, and evolution of a global knowledge-based economy. These pillars underpin ongoing innovations in artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data analytics, and the Internet of Things (IoT), shaping our contemporary landscape and driving us towards a technology driven future.

Building upon its predecessors, the Fourth Industrial Revolution converges digital, physical, and biological domains, propelled by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. AI, a culmination of research and innovation, stands as the cornerstone of this revolution, integrating into society and industry, ushering in transformative changes. Using machine learning algorithms, AI systems analyze vast volumes of data, enabling predictive insights, task automation, and development of autonomous systems. This revolution redefines how humans interact with machines and augments human capabilities through technology. Industries undergo disruptive changes as AI optimizes production processes, enhances precision in healthcare, drives smart infrastructure development, and revolutionizes transportation through autonomous vehicles. The fusion of AI with other technologies like blockchain, quantum computing, and biotechnology amplifies its impact, presenting unprecedented opportunities and challenges. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, anchored by AI, signifies humanity's pursuit of innovation, reshaping economies, redefining work paradigms, and promising continuous technological evolution to improve lives.

Across the different industrial revolutions, work, business, jobs, and how things are made changed a lot. First, machines helped in factories, making things faster

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[2] Nordhaus, William D. "Two Centuries of Productivity Growth in Computing" *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 67, No. 1, 2007, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-economic-history/article/two-centuries-of-productivity-growth-in-computing/856EC5947A5857296D3328FA154BA3A3

[3] Gordon, Robert J. "Is U.S. Economic Growth Over? Faltering Innovation Confronts the Six Headwinds", *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Working Paper, August 2012, https://www.nber.org/papers/w18315

[4] Nordhaus, 2007.

and the same. Then, electricity and assembly lines made work more efficient. Later on, computers and the internet made the world smaller and changed how we do business.

Now, in the Fourth Industrial Revolution with AI and technology, more things are done by machines. This changes jobs and needs new skills. Every revolution changed how we work, businesses, jobs, and how things are made, making new ideas and changing the whole world.

What is AI?

Artificial intelligence, or AI, isn't new. It started in the 1940s and 1950s when computer science began. There are lots of ways to make computers copy how we think. The name "artificial intelligence" was made in 1956 by John McCarthy. He, along with Allen Newell and Herbert Simon, is important in starting this field.

Artificial intelligence (AI) represents the concept of enabling computers to perform tasks that usually need human intelligence. It's like teaching machines to learn, reason, and solve problems on their own. AI empowers computers to understand information, communicate in a human-like way, tackle complex challenges, and undertake tasks that involve critical thinking.

Think of AI as a system that trains computers to think logically, adapt, and find solutions, akin to how humans approach problem-solving. It involves feeding computers various examples so they can learn and comprehend things better. For instance, AI aids in recognizing spoken language, guiding autonomous robots through intricate environments, or personalizing recommendations based on browsing habits.

Recent Progress in AI

The landscape of technological advancement has undergone a remarkable transformation, reminiscent of Gordon Moore's influential prediction in 1965 about the accelerating growth in computing capabilities and the subsequent decrease in the cost of computing power. This trend, known as 'Moore's Law', has brought forth monumental changes, akin to the significant disparity between the staggering $5 million cost of the fastest supercomputer in 1975 and the accessibility of an iPhone 4 with comparable performance, available at a mere $400 (For comparison, the price of the CDC-7600, considered the world's fastest computer from 1969 to 1975, was equivalent to $32 million in 2013 at an average inflation rate of 4.3 percent per year since its launch in 1969). This stark contrast

vividly illustrates the profound impact of Moore's Law, reflecting not just the evolution of technology but the exceptional democratization and affordability of computing power over the years.

Table 1. The progress of computing measured in cost per computation per second deflated by the price index for GDP in 2006 prices
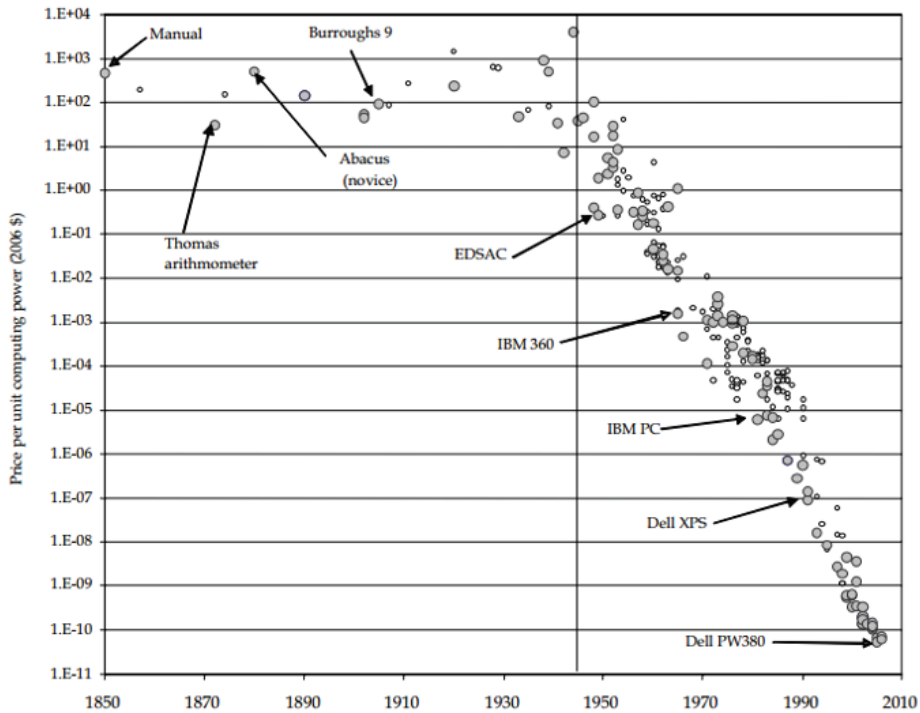
Source: Nordhaus (2007) Two Centuries of Productivity Growth in Computing

In recent years, the realm of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has undergone the same revolution, largely driven by advancements in machine learning and computational capabilities, reminiscent of the transformative trajectory envisaged by Moore's Law, even much more. Machine learning, particularly with the advent of deep learning models, has seen unprecedented progress, leveraging vast computational resources at increasingly affordable prices. These advancements have propelled breakthroughs in various AI applications, notably in natural language processing (NLP). Cutting-edge transformer models such as the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) series have revolutionized language understanding, translation, and content generation, fostering a new era of interaction between humans and machines.

Table 2. The blessings of scale: AI training runs, estimated computing resources used. Floating-point operations, selected systems, by type, log scale.
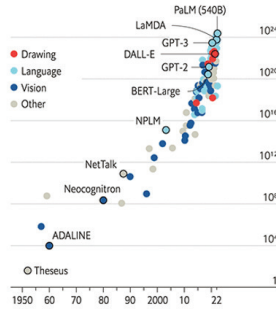
Source: Sevilla, J. et al. "Compute trends across three eras of machines learning", arXiv, 2022.

Furthermore, the exponential increase in computational power has significantly propelled progress in reinforcement learning, a subset of AI that focuses on teaching agents to make sequential decisions by interacting with environments. This has resulted in AI systems mastering complex tasks, showcasing remarkable feats in domains like gaming, robotics, and autonomous vehicles.

Table 3. State-of-the-art AI performance on benchmarks, relative to human performance
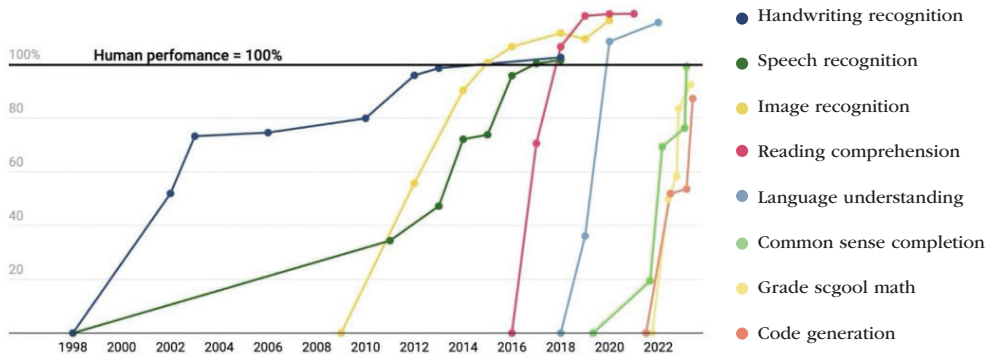
For each benchmark, the maximally performing baseline reported in the benchmark paper is taken as the starting point which is set at 0%. Human performance number is set at 100%. Handwriting recognition = MNIST, Language understanding = GLUE, Image recognition = ImageNet, Reading comprehension = SQuAD 1.1, Reading comprehension = SQuAD 2.0, Speech recognition = Switchboard, Grade school math = GSK8k, Common sense completion = HellaSwag, Code generation = HumanEval. Chart: Will Henshall for TIME; Source: ContextualAl

The convergence of AI and computational advancements has democratized access to AI technologies. What was once limited to research labs and large corporations has now become increasingly accessible to smaller businesses and individual developers. Cloud computing services offering scalable resources

have empowered startups and entrepreneurs to explore AI-driven solutions without substantial initial investments in infrastructure, fostering a vibrant ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship. The evolution of AI propelled by the convergence of technological advancements has marked an unparalleled era of innovation and transformation. As a result, AI has surpassed humans at a number of tasks and the rate at which humans are being surpassed at new tasks is increasing. This progress, reminiscent of Moore's Law, has significantly reshaped industries, offering new horizons and opportunities for businesses via new approaches amongst various sectors.

Consider image recognition, where AI has made substantial progress using convolutional neural networks (CNNs). These networks excel in accurately identifying and categorizing objects within images, leading to applications in fields like medical imaging, security systems, and autonomous vehicles. This progress showcases AI's remarkable capacity to interpret visual data and make sophisticated classifications, highlighting the rapid evolution of technology.

Similarly, language understanding has seen a significant transformation with the emergence of natural language processing (NLP) breakthroughs. Transformer-based models such as BERT and GPT have elevated language comprehension to new heights, enabling more coherent language generation, translation, and content summarization. These advancements represent AI's notable ability to understand and process language intricacies, marking a substantial leap forward in communication between machines and humans. OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard are increasingly being utilized for tasks such as creating outputs – presentations and editing spreadsheets or articles, showcasing their broad applicability in various content creation domains.

Advancements in speech recognition technology, powered by deep learning models like recurrent neural networks (RNNs), have led to impressive accuracy in transcribing spoken language into text. These developments have found applications in virtual assistants, transcription services, and voice-controlled devices, demonstrating AI's growing capability to interpret auditory data effectively.

Handwriting recognition, once a challenging area for AI, has seen significant improvements through machine learning algorithms, particularly deep neural networks. These systems now exhibit notable accuracy in recognizing and interpreting handwritten text, aiding data entry and enhancing usability for touch-based devices.

Furthermore, AI-driven decision-making systems, including recommendation engines and personalized content delivery, have undergone considerable

enhancement. Advanced algorithms leveraging machine learning techniques process vast amounts of user data to generate tailored recommendations across various platforms, greatly improving user experiences and interactions.

In the realm of autonomous driving, AI-powered systems employing computer vision and deep learning techniques have made substantial strides. These technologies enable vehicles to perceive and analyze their surroundings in real-time, facilitating autonomous navigation and laying the groundwork for future transportation systems.

The recent strides made in AI across diverse domains exemplify the rapid and expansive growth of technology. These advancements underscore AI's increasing ability to interpret, process, and act upon complex data, driving innovation and reshaping various industries in profound ways, indicative of the tremendous potential held within the field of artificial intelligence. As we navigate this era of rapid technological advancement, a continued focus on leveraging AI's potential while addressing challenges related to shift in employment and regulatory frameworks regarding ethical considerations will be imperative to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth in the realm of Artificial Intelligence.

AI and Employment: What Tasks Will be Affected

Given the concerns raised by recent studies about AI's effect on jobs, let's look to history for guidance in understanding how work might evolve in an AI-driven era and how AI's adoption might impact employment. To understand it correctly let's go back to our AI and Electricity analogy and see employment by sector amongst Industrial Evolutions. It is clear that technology has created large employment and sector shifts, but also creates new jobs.

History shows us that technological progress typically brings about gradual changes instead of immediate job losses. It consistently introduces new ways of working. However, the arrival of AI introduces a new aspect. It's not just about automating physically demanding tasks, as in past industrial revolutions, but also involves automating cognitive tasks. Human adaptability through education ensured labor predominance.[5] However, AI influence into cognitive tasks challenges this adaptability.[6]

Although there will be challenges in employment due to the automation of cognitive tasks, current jobs will not vanish. On November 24, 2016, AI pioneer Geoffrey Hinton stunned the radiology profession by saying: "We should stop

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[5] Goldin, Claudia & Katz, Lawrence F. *The Race Between Education and Technology* (Harvard: Harvard University Press), 2009

[6] Goldin, Claudia & Katz, Lawrence F. *The Race Between Education and Technology* (Harvard: Harvard University Press), 2009.

training radiologists now. It's just completely obvious that within five years, deep learning is going to do better than radiologists". However, this hasn't happened. In fact, in just 8 years, there are more practicing radiologists anywhere around the world, and growing concern over shortages.

Table 4. Share of total employment by sector in the United States, 1850 – 2015 (% of jobs)
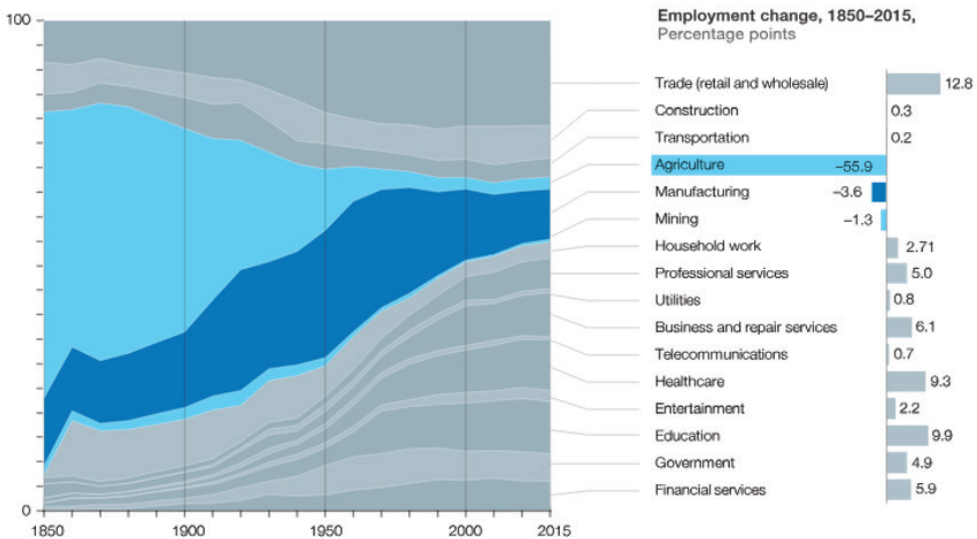
Source: IPUMS USA 2017; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

If we even just focus on the following few sample tasks done by radiologists, we can see that not all tasks can be automated (automatable tasks are shown bold).

1. Provide advice on types or quantities of radiology equipment needed to maintain facilities.

2. Perform interventional procedures such as image-guided biopsy, percutaneous transluminal angioplasty, transhepatic biliary drainage, or nephrostomy catheter placement.

3. Administer or maintain conscious sedation during and after procedures.

4. Interpret images using computer-aided detection or diagnosis systems.

5. Develop treatment plans for radiology patients.

6. Treat malignant internal or external growths by exposure to radiation from radiographs (x-rays), high energy sources, or natural or synthetic radioisotopes.

7. Conduct physical examinations to inform decisions about appropriate procedures.

Therefore, not all human workers will be replaced by AI. AI will complement and enhance most workers' capabilities. As in our example, for many of the cases AI will replace some of the tasks of workers. Researchers have devised an approach, the Suitability for Machine Learning – SML index,[7] offering a framework to assess tasks ripe for automation. This index helps categorize tasks, distinguishing between those readily automated and those reliant on human cognitive and social abilities. Based on the research on almost 1000 occupations the following results have been established:

Table 5. Frequency Counts of Occupational Task Proportions Above Ninetieth, Seventy-fifth, and Fiftieth Percentiles

Lowest and Highest 5 SML Score Occupations

| Low SML occupations	SML	High SML occupations	SML
Massage therapists	2.78	Concierges	3.9
Animal scientists	3.09	Mechanical drafters	3.9
Archeologists	3.11	Morticians, undertakers, and funeral directors	3.89
Public address system and other announcers	3.13	Credit authorizers	3.78
Plasterers and stucco masons	3.14	Brokerage clerks	3.78
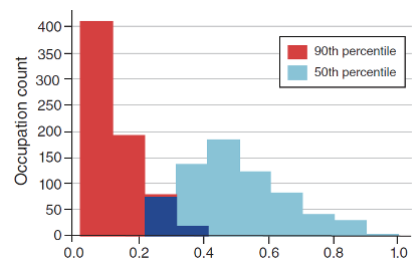
Source: What Machines Can Learn? Brynjolfsson, Mitchell, and Rock, MIT Libraries, May 2018

Not only Brynjolfsson, Mitchell, and Rock, but many others conducted research on the probability of computerization of jobs. Another analysis ranks jobs based on the likelihood of being computerized, offering an interesting perspective on the susceptibility of different professions to automation across various job sectors, and also sheds light on the impact of automation.[8] As a result, 700 occupations are sorted and categorized by occupations from those least likely to be computerized to those most likely. Among the 700 jobs observed through this analysis, "Recreational Therapists" have been found to have the lowest probability of computerization, while 'Data Entry Keyers' have been identified as the occupation with the highest likelihood of automation. This ranking system underscores the varying degrees of vulnerability across diverse job roles, emphasizing the need for a proactive approach in anticipating upcoming workforce transitions. As history has proved, some professions will be terminated completely as technology advances AI and ML capabilities.

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[7] Brynjolfsson, Erik; Mitchell, Tom & Rock, Daniel. "What Can Machines Learn, and What Does It Mean for Occupations and the Economy?". *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, No. 108, 2018.

[8] Frey, Carl Benedikt, & Osborne, Michael. "The Future of Employment. How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerization?", *Oxford Working Paper*, 2013.

Table 6. Number of workers needing to move out of current occupational categories to find work, 2016–30 (1 block = ~ 1 million)
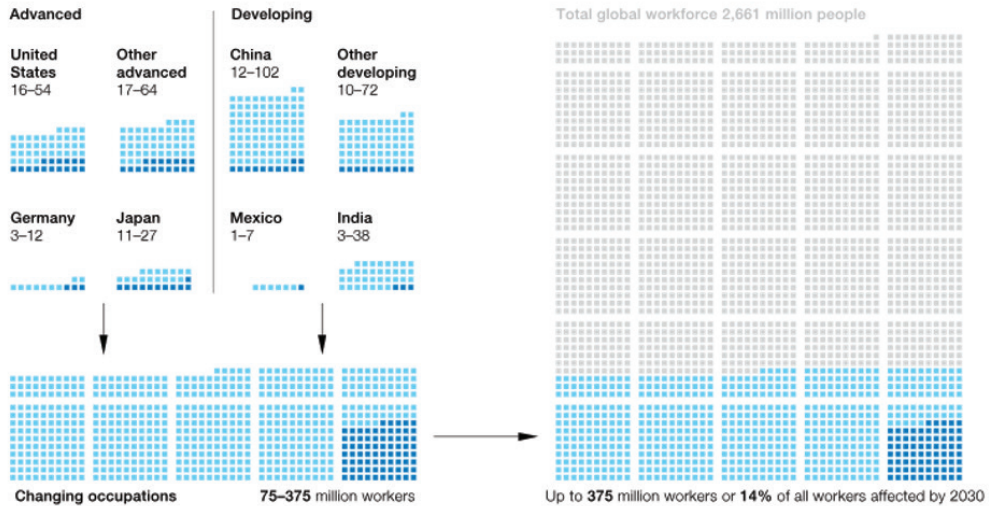
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

According to further analyses spanning multiple sectors and industries, globally, up to 375 million workers are anticipated to seek alternative occupations or industries as their current roles become increasingly automated. The period to 2030 marks a critical juncture where individuals across diverse occupational categories must adapt to the evolving employment landscape. Such transitions necessitate comprehensive strategies at individual, organizational, and governmental levels. Initiatives fostering lifelong learning, skills development programs, and comprehensive retraining opportunities are essential to facilitate the smooth transition of workers from occupations prone to automation into roles that emphasize uniquely human abilities, such as creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Addressing the upheaval caused by automation demands proactive measures to mitigate potential job displacement, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive workforce capable of thriving in an AI-driven era.

Summary and Further Advice

Technology has historically been the key driver of increased industrial productivity. Advancements in AI technologies will open a broad set of economic possibilities. Previously laborious activities like data entry and administrative duties are now efficiently handled by AI systems, the best practices of high-skill workers in a company are accessible by other workers. This not only saves time but also empowers human workers to invest their efforts in strategic and creative

endeavors, thereby boosting overall productivity. Additionally, AI-driven analytics have reshaped decision-making within businesses. Swift AI algorithms analyze extensive datasets, offering valuable insights that inform data-driven decisions. Companies gain a competitive edge by foreseeing market trends, personalizing customer experiences, and optimizing strategies based on these insights.

Machine learning can transform many jobs in the economy, but complete automation will be less impactful than the reengineering of processes and reorganization of tasks. However, individuals and organizations – including governments – need to manage this reorganization process proactively. On an individual level, adopting a mindset of continuous learning is crucial. Employees whose jobs may change due to automation should actively participate in lifelong learning, developing new skills and competencies that align with technological advancements. Soft skills like adaptability, problem-solving, and effective communication are essential, along with unique human abilities like creativity and emotional intelligence.

The integration of AI is reshaping work dynamics, offering unparalleled efficiency, innovation, and strategic advantages. To truly transform work in the modern era, businesses must balance the challenges with the opportunities. Cultivating a culture of adaptability and learning is essential. Encouraging ongoing training, mentorship, and knowledge sharing in the workplace is key. Supporting employees with reskilling and upskilling opportunities will enable them to excel in roles that emphasize human-centric skills. Agile strategies should guide resource allocation, ensuring innovation and creativity flourish alongside AI integration. On the governmental level, policymakers are instrumental in facilitating a smooth transition. Investing in educational reforms that prioritize STEM and digital literacy is crucial. Governments should establish safety nets and retraining programs for workers affected by automation. Forward-thinking policies that promote innovation while fostering an inclusive economy are essential for successful navigation through this transition.

New technology has always generated alarming labor market predictions, yet these have rarely materialized. Humans possess many skills difficult to automate, even with advanced AI. Technology can enable people to focus more on customer service, artisanal work, innovation, education, and more. Furthermore, AI, ML and Automation will create new services, products, opportunities and therefore jobs, while increasing the efficiency and reliability of those already existing. These developments can spur growth, potentially increasing labor demand. So even in an era of rapid technological advancement, the human element and expertise remain vital. As I stated in the beginning, the future may evolve, but human ingenuity and creativity will continue to be central, not only today but also tomorrow.

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