

The Second Cold War: It Began in Syria and Erupted in Ukraine

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Introduction

Over the past decade, newspapers and political analyses in both the Arab world and the West have repeatedly discussed the United States' withdrawal from several regions, above all the Middle East. Much was written about the “vacuum” this would supposedly leave behind and about the powers that might move to fill it. Many geopolitical shifts were therefore interpreted as attempts to occupy the space left by a retreating American giant. Syria stood at the heart of these debates, particularly as the apparent flexibility of U.S. policy was often read as the beginning of a broader American disengagement from the region. This perception was reinforced by Donald Trump's attempts to withdraw from Syria, the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan, and announcements of an intended drawdown in Iraq.

Yet the Biden administration appeared to view the matter differently. Political statements alone are never sufficient evidence of policy, but foreign-policy behavior pointed in the same direction. At the summit with Arab leaders in Saudi Arabia in July 2022, President Joe Biden stated unequivocally that the United States would not leave behind a vacuum for Russia, China, or Iran to fill, and that it was not going anywhere.[1]

Syria—and the intense competition among governments and regional and international powers on its territory—may not always have been explicitly named in such statements, but it lies at the heart of the new bargaining and alignments that first became visible there. The Biden administration appeared intent on making those alignments clearer and more decisive amid the global disorder that has marked the opening decades of the twenty-first century.

The World After the End of the Cold War and the Soviet Collapse

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Eastern Bloc disintegrated and the Cold War that had shaped global geopolitics throughout the second half of the twentieth century came to an end. The Western camp, led by the United States, celebrated victory and emerged as the world's strongest, wealthiest, and most technologically advanced power center. The result was the era of the American unipolar world.

The United States opened this new era with the war to liberate Kuwait following Saddam Hussein's invasion.[2] Military operations began in 1991. Among the war's most important consequences was a global demonstration of American

power: U.S. forces became a guarantor of security in the world's most important energy-exporting region and showed that Washington possessed both the capability and the willingness to use military force when it judged its interests required it. The centrality of American military power was reinforced during the wars in the former Yugoslavia,[3] where the United States proved to be the only power capable of decisively bringing a decade of conflict in the heart of Europe to an end.

Economically, the Western camp began to impose its vision of the global economy through trade-liberalization agreements and the expansion of international economic institutions. Under the banner of a "new world order," the United States succeeded in exporting the neoliberal economic model[4] to many countries, including within the European Union.

By the end of the twentieth century, the neoconservatives[5] had risen to power in Washington under George W. Bush, seeking to reap the strategic rewards of America's military and economic successes during the 1990s. At the beginning of the new millennium, the international arena contained no genuine rival capable of matching the United States economically, militarily, or politically. Russia was still struggling with the consequences of the Soviet collapse and the turmoil of the 1990s, while China continued its quiet economic ascent without provoking a direct strategic confrontation.

In that environment, the neoconservative project—often associated with the idea of an "American century"—translated into the wars in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, while economic policy continued to favor trade liberalization and the freer movement of capital. The expansion of neoliberal economic policies in Europe and across emerging economies, however, contributed to structural vulnerabilities that culminated in the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, the greatest shock to the post-Soviet international order and a major warning about the foundations of the global political economy.

Despite the failure of the United States to achieve its objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan, and despite the financial crisis, Washington did not abandon its ambition to lead the world in the twenty-first century. Under Barack Obama, it changed methods. His administration announced the "Pivot to the Pacific," whose underlying objective was to preserve American global leadership in the twenty-first century.[6] China remained at the center of that strategy as the largest and most serious long-term challenger to U.S. primacy.

The neoconservative experience had demonstrated that overwhelming military power did not guarantee strategic success. Obama therefore emphasized containment, diplomacy, and direct confrontation only as a last resort—a threshold he did not cross even after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. His administration also pursued more engagement with China and adopted a more flexible diplomatic approach toward Iran, eventually producing the 2015 nuclear agreement.[7][8]

In the Arab world, after the uprisings of 2011, the Obama administration sought a relatively peaceful transfer of power in Egypt, the region’s largest and most consequential Arab state. In Syria, however, it preferred not to enter into direct confrontation with Russia and Iran. It delegated much of the Syrian file to regional allies, particularly the Gulf states and Turkey, while pursuing a policy of containment and conflict management.[9] Syria had by then become one of the clearest arenas of proxy warfare,[10] with consequences extending directly into the interests of China, Russia, and Iran.[11]

The European Union, meanwhile, did not resist the transition toward neoliberal economics. Politically, economically, and militarily, it remained closely tied to the United States, shared Washington’s concern about China’s rapid rise, and benefited from the opportunities created by the opening of Russia and Eastern Europe after the Soviet collapse. Yet the gains of the new world order were not distributed as evenly among Western societies as they had been during much of the second half of the twentieth century. The financial crisis therefore shook Europe as deeply as it shook the United States, and the remedies adopted on both sides of the Atlantic often amounted to temporary repairs rather than structural solutions.

Against this backdrop, and amid the Western effort to preserve its global position, far-right politics gained ground in both Europe and the United States. Donald Trump reached the White House, far-right parties advanced across Western Europe and took power in parts of Eastern Europe, and Britain left the European Union.

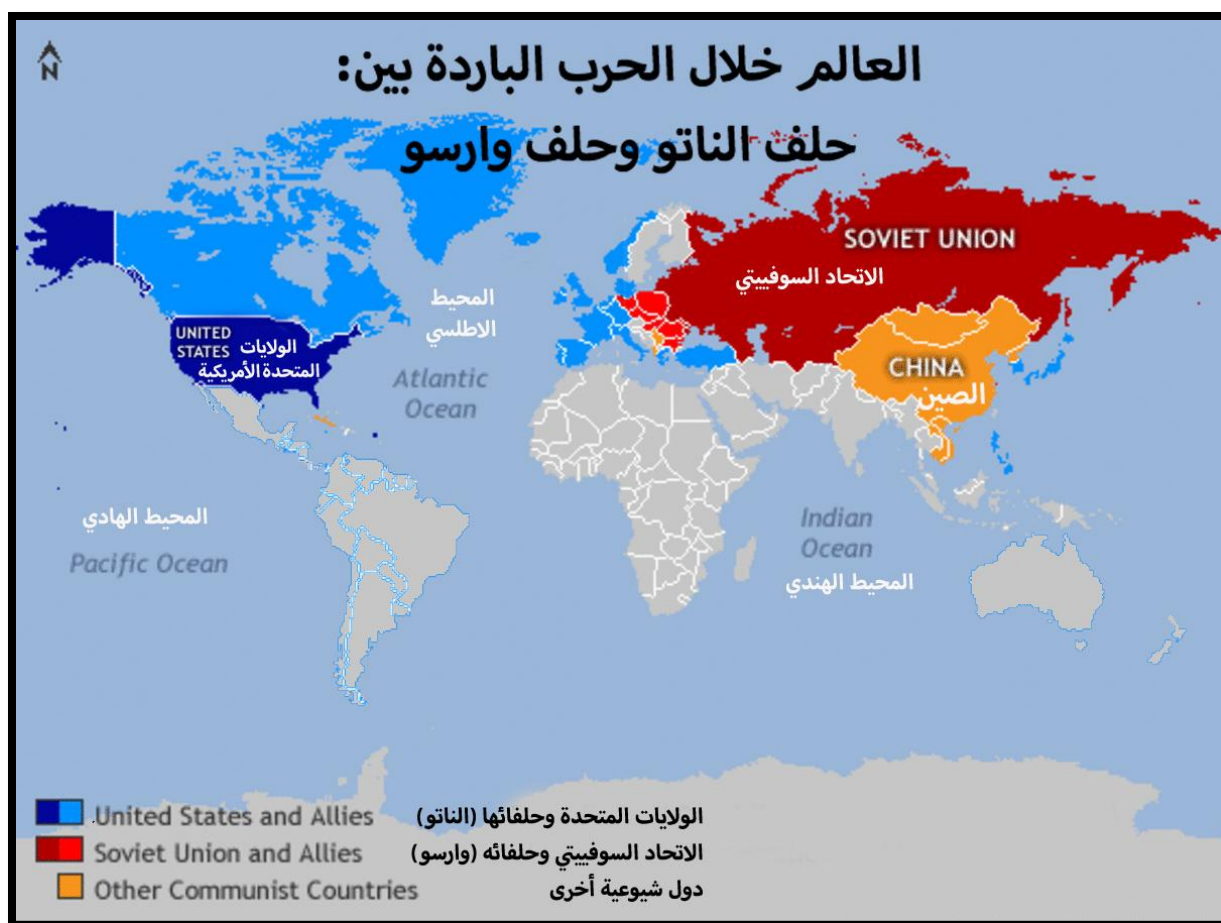
Vladimir Putin succeeded in restoring a degree of order and power to the Russian Federation after the chaos of the 1990s. He brought the Chechen wars[12] to an end and presided over a strong economic recovery following the post-Soviet collapse. Yet the political and economic system he built remained highly centralized and dependent on natural resources—above all oil and gas—and on

foreign investment. Russia did not become a modern institutional democracy capable of competing economically with the West or China on equal terms. Putin's increasingly risky external ambitions became visible with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and were preceded by the war in Georgia.[13]

Putin also moved to strengthen Russia's relations with China, Iran, and Turkey. All four states share strategic concerns in and around Central Asia, while Russia, China, and Iran also share a hostile or semi-hostile perception of the Western alliance and tend to see themselves as recurring targets of Western pressure.

Putin nevertheless misread the direction of Western and American geopolitics. Like many others, he interpreted apparent U.S. retrenchment as an opportunity for Russia to expand. At first, events seemed to confirm his judgment. Western resistance to the annexation of Crimea was weaker than he had expected, and after the Assad regime's chemical attack on Ghouta in 2013, the Obama administration turned to Moscow for an arrangement that would avoid direct U.S. military involvement in Syria.

On the strength of these experiences, Putin decided in 2015 to expand Russia's military presence abroad and test the power he had rebuilt over the previous fifteen years. Russia intervened militarily in Syria to stabilize Bashar al-Assad's regime, having concluded that the United States would not prevent it. The intervention also allowed Moscow to demonstrate military weight within its broader strategic relationship with China. Syria had become a theater of major strategic importance to every power involved.



Putin's ambitions grew further after Donald Trump entered the White House in 2016.[14] Trump's approach was widely perceived as unusually accommodating toward Putin. The arrival of Joe Biden therefore represented a major change and a challenge to Moscow's calculations.[15] Putin launched a second and much larger military gamble in Ukraine in early 2022, before the new U.S. administration had fully emerged from the domestic and international disruption of the Trump years. Instead, Russia found itself trapped in a prolonged war and subjected to the most severe Western sanctions it had faced since the Soviet collapse. The Russian adventure in Ukraine became a classic example of strategic calculations colliding with realities on the ground.

China, by contrast, welcomed Trump's departure after four years of profound disruption in U.S.–Chinese relations. Biden was hardly Beijing's preferred American president, but his administration appeared more predictable. Russia's invasion of Ukraine nevertheless confronted China with difficult choices. Beijing followed its long-standing practice of maneuvering between competing powers: it did not clearly endorse the invasion, but neither did it align with the West against

Russia. The war thus created opportunities for China to increase Russia's dependence on Chinese economic support while resisting Western pressure.

The Ukraine crisis also came immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, from which China emerged economically less damaged than many Western states. Beijing consequently appeared more confident that its economic weight would give it greater room to pursue an independent foreign policy and reduce the West's ability to pressure it as severely as it had pressured Russia. Although China did not formally endorse Russia's war, it used the crisis to challenge the Western narrative and assign a substantial share of responsibility for the conflict to Western policy.

The Road to a Second Cold War

Many expected Biden and America's Western allies to retreat under the pressure of the economic and energy crises unleashed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. From the perspective of immediate economic costs, such an expectation was understandable. Yet the Biden administration and a significant number of Western governments appeared to reach a different conclusion.

Russia's war presented the West with two broad choices. The first was to repeat the response adopted after the annexation of Crimea: impose additional sanctions, wage a political and media campaign against the invasion, absorb Ukrainian refugees, and enter a long cycle of diplomacy, negotiations, and bargaining. The second was far more confrontational: dramatically increase economic and political pressure on Russia, make a return to normal relations extremely difficult for Putin's government, provide Ukraine with extensive logistical and military support without entering the war directly, and push Moscow toward near-total political isolation.

Western leaders understood that the first option could effectively rescue Putin from the consequences of his Ukrainian gamble. Russia had long experience managing confrontation with the West, both during and after the Soviet era, and could potentially absorb significant economic losses while Putin consolidated his domestic and international position.

The second option, by contrast, amounted to a red line against further Russian expansion and an attempt to reassert the global weight of the United States and its allies. The cost to the West would be substantial, but primarily economic; direct Western military intervention in Ukraine remained highly unlikely. Over the

longer term, and particularly from the perspective of U.S. strategy, those economic losses could potentially be absorbed or recovered.

Strategic calculations are not measured solely in immediate economic gains and losses. The long-term geopolitical cost of retreating before Putin's attempt to impose Russian power militarily could outweigh short-term economic pain. The war also delivered a shock to European policymakers, exposing the strategic cost of economic dependencies that had accumulated over decades.

Energy security is one of the clearest examples. A basic principle of economic security is diversification: when domestic production is insufficient, states should avoid allowing a single supplier—especially one with whom political relations are unstable—to acquire the leverage to dictate political choices. Europe's dependence on Russian energy violated that principle. Russian natural gas accounted for a very large share of European imports, and in countries such as Germany the dependence was even greater. For wealthy and technologically advanced European states, such exposure represented a major strategic error.

The United States was not economically dependent on Russia to the same degree. Its direct economic losses were therefore likely to be smaller than Europe's. As the strongest power in the Western alliance, Washington had greater room—and stronger incentives—to pursue confrontation with Moscow.



The presence of Biden in the White House also mattered. Long before the invasion, Biden had expressed deeply critical views of Putin.[16][17] Once president, his tone became more measured, but the relationship remained cold, particularly because of anger over Russian interference in U.S. elections. At the same time, Biden's principal foreign-policy priority was to repair relations with traditional allies damaged during the Trump presidency and to restore a more predictable framework for managing competition with China. In the hierarchy of American economic interests, Russia remained less important than those relationships.

For these reasons, and because Putin had crossed a major threshold by launching a large-scale war against a sovereign European state, Biden—supported by other Western leaders—chose the second course: refusing to accept a new Russian fait accompli imposed by force.

At the same time, neither Biden nor other Western leaders appeared willing to risk direct military confrontation with Russia. Such a confrontation could escape political control and expand into a wider, potentially nuclear war in which there would be no meaningful victor. The resulting strategy therefore combined escalating economic, political, and military support for Ukraine with deliberate avoidance of direct NATO–Russia war.

Russia predictably responded with greater rigidity and refused to retreat from its objectives in Ukraine. The confrontation therefore appeared likely to continue for months and perhaps years. The Biden administration first focused on reassuring European allies and helping them manage the economic and energy consequences of reducing dependence on Russia. For several months after the invasion, much Western effort also went into mobilizing broader international opposition to Moscow—but the international response was far from uniform.

China maintained its balancing posture: it formally distanced itself from the invasion but refused to confront Russia and instead argued that Western expansionism had helped create the conditions for the war. Beijing sought both to pressure the West politically and to deepen Russia's economic reliance on China, strengthening China's senior position in the bilateral relationship.

India, under its right-wing government, judged that preserving its relationship with Russia was more important than joining the Western confrontation. Its long-standing rivalry with China also gave New Delhi an incentive to prevent Moscow

from becoming wholly dependent on Beijing, particularly because Western powers had historically remained outside the core balance of that Asian rivalry.

Turkey's calculations were similarly shaped by its own interests. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had failed to secure sufficient Russian support for Ankara's preferred arrangement in northern Syria, and Turkey had also disagreed with Moscow over Azerbaijan and Armenia and over Libya. At the same time, Turkey had condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and maintained strong relations with Ukraine, its Black Sea neighbor. Ankara therefore leaned closer to the Western position on the Ukraine war while preserving the diplomatic posture of a relatively neutral mediator. The West, in turn, increasingly needed a functional strategic relationship with Turkey as confrontation with Russia deepened.

Arab positions were more varied. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates did not formally endorse the invasion, but their political and media posture often appeared more sympathetic to Russia than Western governments expected. Riyadh and Abu Dhabi were also reluctant to compensate immediately for disruptions in global energy markets by significantly increasing oil production. Qatar adopted a more cautious and comparatively balanced position.

The Shadows of the Second Cold War

Many expected Washington to make significant concessions to Gulf states—particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—and to China in order to recruit them into a broader anti-Russian coalition. Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia and his summit with Arab leaders suggested otherwise.[18] The administration went as far as it was prepared to go in normalizing Biden's personal relationship with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, but Saudi reluctance to increase oil production did not force Washington to accept Riyadh's and Abu Dhabi's principal demands, including stronger backing for their policies in Yemen and a harder line against Iran. At the same time, Biden stated clearly that the United States would not withdraw from the Middle East.[19]

The administration also signaled that it would not accept China using the Ukraine crisis to extract benefits from both sides. Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022—the highest-level visit by a U.S. political figure in twenty-five years[20]—was followed by visits from other American lawmakers and officials.[21] Together with expanding U.S.–Taiwan contacts, including in the military sphere, these moves sent Beijing a message: Washington would not accept a deliberately

ambiguous Chinese position designed to capture the economic and political benefits of the Russia–West confrontation while avoiding strategic costs.

Confrontation with China, however, carried very different costs from confrontation with Russia. The Biden administration therefore paired political signaling over Taiwan with an economic strategy aimed at reducing dependence on Chinese manufacturing in critical sectors. Washington approved approximately \$280 billion in legislation supporting semiconductor and high-technology production in the United States.[22] The strategic purpose was broader than industrial policy: it reflected a Western reassessment of dependence on Chinese supply chains after the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how vulnerable even wealthy states had become in essential goods.

Despite the fierce rhetoric surrounding Taiwan, a Chinese military campaign would be extraordinarily costly. China is vastly larger than Taiwan in population, economy, military power, and territory, and Taiwan is not recognized as an independent state by the United Nations. Yet Taiwan is also a wealthy, technologically advanced, institutionalized democracy with significant military capabilities and substantial Western—especially American—support. Even a victorious Chinese campaign could therefore impose enormous costs and risk a prolonged conflict.

These geopolitical and economic shocks suggested that Western states, together with historical allies such as Japan and South Korea, remained confident in their collective economic strength and were prepared to carry the confrontation with Russia through its consequences. Their objective was not only to resist Moscow militarily through support for Ukraine, but also to reshape parts of the global economy in ways that strengthened their economic security and reduced the ability of Russia—the world’s second-largest military power—to exploit future opportunities for coercion.



The costs of these crises would be immense: economic, political, and humanitarian. Developing and poorer states would likely bear the harshest burden, alongside Russia itself. Wealthier countries and China would also suffer, but their losses were expected to be more manageable.

In sum, Biden and other Western leaders did not appear interested in returning to Obama's model of containment, monitoring, and negotiated crisis management, nor in reproducing Trump's volatile and highly personalized foreign policy. The emerging approach demanded clearer alignment: states would increasingly be pressed to define where they stood in the confrontation with Russia, while those attempting to remain strategically ambiguous would find it harder to collect benefits from both camps. The Russia–West confrontation had become the largest and most intense since the end of the original Cold War.

The Middle East and the Second Cold War

Israel remained committed to its historic alliance with the West and formally rejected Russia's war in Ukraine, while preserving a narrow but durable channel of communication with Moscow. Western governments largely accepted this balancing act and did not expect Israel to go much further.

Turkey likewise maintained strong relations with Ukraine and rejected Russia's wars against it, while keeping a functional relationship with Moscow. Biden's arrival in the White House after Trump also created an opportunity to repair Turkish–Western relations after years of political friction, including the crisis surrounding Ankara's purchase of Russia's S-400 missile system.

The war in Ukraine demonstrated that Turkey and the West continued to need one another strategically. Putin's increasing willingness to use military force as an instrument of foreign policy gave both sides reason for concern. If Russia succeeded in imposing its objectives in Ukraine, the strategic implications would extend well beyond Ukraine itself. From this perspective, closer Turkish–Western cooperation became increasingly difficult to avoid.

Turkey nevertheless continued to seek greater Western support on its most complicated neighboring issue: Syria. Washington and other Western governments had not adopted Ankara's position toward Syrian Kurdish organizations opposed by Turkey, nor Erdoğan's plan to establish a Turkish-controlled security umbrella across northern Syria. Ankara therefore continued to seek support or accommodation from Russia and Iran, while understanding that both Moscow and Tehran viewed Turkey as a durable member of the Western strategic system.

Iran initially attempted to maintain some distance from Russia after the invasion of Ukraine, hoping that a more balanced position might facilitate limited rapprochement with the West. As the confrontation intensified and nuclear negotiations failed to produce results acceptable to Tehran, Iran moved more openly toward Russia. In strategic terms, the Iranian system remained bound to a partnership of necessity with Russia and China,[23] while preserving pragmatic understandings with Turkey.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt did not openly endorse Russia's invasion, but their posture remained comparatively favorable to Moscow and generated frustration in Washington and European capitals. The energy crisis highlighted the strategic importance of Gulf producers and deepened Western concern over the direction of Arab Gulf policy. Europe and the wider Western alliance, however, retained the capacity to absorb the energy shock over time. The longer-term question was whether growing mistrust with Washington and Europe would ultimately serve the interests of Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Qatar adopted a more cautious position, avoiding direct alignment with Russia while also avoiding an unnecessarily sharp confrontation with Moscow. That balance appeared sufficient to maintain a workable relationship with the United States.

Syria: The Deferred File in the Second Cold War

Syria was not a central priority for the Biden administration when it entered the White House.[24] The escalating confrontation with Russia, however, returned the Syrian file to greater strategic relevance and pushed Washington further away from the Obama-era policy of simply managing the conflict while allowing Russia considerable freedom of action in Syria.[25]

This did not mean that the United States was preparing to accelerate a final settlement in Syria. It did mean, however, that Washington was unlikely to allow Russia to convert its influence in Syria into leverage in the confrontation over Ukraine. The renewed American firmness toward Russia and Iran was visible in U.S. military action inside Syria in August 2022, publicly addressed by Biden.[26] The message was that Moscow and Tehran could not assume that previous understandings with Washington would remain unchanged.

This U.S. position also frustrated Turkey. The Biden administration continued to reject Erdoğan's preferred arrangement for northern Syria and remained unwilling to abandon its partners in the Autonomous Administration and the Syrian Democratic Council. Turkey's maneuvering among Russia, Iran, and even messages toward the Assad regime was therefore an effort to find another route to its objectives before the global confrontation hardened further and forced Ankara into closer alignment with the West.

Yet Russia and Iran were now operating under unprecedented pressure in their confrontation with the West. Their ability to consolidate control in Syria through the Assad regime—and with a degree of American acquiescence—had consequently become weaker than it appeared only a year earlier.

Inside Syria, Bashar al-Assad was among the first leaders to declare full support for Putin's war in Ukraine.[27] In doing so, his regime severed what little remained of any possible political bridge to the West. The regime also sent thousands of Syrian fighters affiliated with it to support Russia's war effort in Ukraine, further tying its position to Moscow.

The institutions and bodies representing the Syrian opposition, meanwhile, did not significantly alter their approach as the international system moved toward sharper polarization. They remained distant from the broader international confrontation and even from the struggle among major powers unfolding over Syria itself. They showed little capacity to take even symbolic initiatives that could establish a clear political position or attempt to use the emerging Second Cold War to advance the Syrian cause.[28]

Conclusion

U.S. policy and that of its allies appeared determined to carry the crisis unleashed by Putin's invasion of Ukraine as far as possible without entering a direct military confrontation with Russia. At the same time, Washington did not want other powers to profit indefinitely by playing both sides of the Russia–West divide. The emerging American strategy therefore pointed toward a Second Cold War: a global confrontation in which governments would face growing pressure to position themselves in relation to Russia and the Western camp.

The firmness of the Biden administration toward China and the Gulf states illustrated this direction, as did its willingness to accept substantial economic risks. China's ultimate position would be one of the most important variables determining how intense and dangerous this new Cold War could become.

In the Middle East, Turkey, Israel, and Qatar appeared to be following paths closer to the West while maintaining varying degrees of balance. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt had not yet, in this analysis, settled on a strategic vision that would prevent them from misjudging the relative strength of the competing camps.

None of this implies that U.S. or Western policy has historically served the interests of peoples in the region. In recent decades, it has often failed even to serve the interests of Western societies themselves. Nor can the role of Western policies in entrenching Middle Eastern crises, complicating the Syrian conflict, and obstructing the early national and democratic character of the Syrian revolution be ignored.

Yet Syria's fate had become increasingly dependent on developments in the international balance of power. Political realism therefore required comparing Russia's and Iran's unwavering support for the Assad regime with Western policies and with the actual distribution of global power. From that perspective,

the Western camp led by the United States remained the stronger side. Aligning with Russia carried substantial risks for states and for the Syrian revolutionary cause, while neutrality by Syrian political actors risked becoming passivity: an inability to act, initiate, or secure political gains that might eventually contribute to a settlement in Syria.

Syria was the first country to experience a proxy war of such scale, complexity, and density of overlapping interests among major international and regional powers in one of the world's most strategically important regions. Syrians paid the most devastating and tragic price for that international struggle. Ukraine then became the second major arena of proxy warfare within barely a decade. Through these two conflicts, the outlines of a Second Cold War began to emerge—one that may reshape the geopolitical map of the international system.

References and Notes

The references below reproduce the sources and explanatory notes used in the original Arabic study. Titles have been translated into English where appropriate; original links are retained.

- [1] Remarks by President Joe Biden at the GCC+3 Summit, White House, 16 July 2022. Original source: <https://bit.ly/3Cf58KD>
- [2] On 2 August 1990, Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Kuwait following disputes, formally framed around oil fields and other bilateral issues.
- [3] The Yugoslav wars comprised ethnic conflicts, insurgencies, and wars of independence between 1991 and 2001, ultimately contributing to the breakup of Yugoslavia into Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.
- [4] Neoliberalism refers here to an economic model that reduces direct state control and expands the role of the private sector, on the premise that this increases economic efficiency. Its modern political rise is closely associated with Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom.
- [5] Neoconservatism emerged as an influential U.S. political current in the latter twentieth century and reached its strongest influence during the George W. Bush administration (2000–2008). Prominent figures included Paul Wolfowitz, Elliott Abrams, Richard Perle, and Paul Bremer.
- [6] David B. MacDonald / source cited in the original Arabic paper as “The American Pivot to the Pacific,” JSTOR Journal, Vol. 67, No. 4, Canada after 9/11 (Autumn 2012), pp. 1073–1094. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42704948>
- [7] Official White House source cited in the original paper: <https://bit.ly/3AixsKu>
- [8] Alaa Alkhatib, “The U.S. Withdrawal from the Iranian Nuclear Agreement,” InfoSalam, 11 May 2018. <https://bit.ly/3C38d02>
- [9] Alaa Alkhatib, “U.S. Policy Does Not Need to Resolve the Syrian Crisis,” InfoSalam / Harmoon Center, 11 June 2016. <https://bit.ly/3Ais764>
- [10] Proxy wars are conflicts in which one or both local belligerents are connected to an influential external actor seeking to advance its interests through war fought on another territory.

- [11] Alaa Alkhatib, “The International Conflict and the Syrian Crisis: Causes and Endgames,” InfoSalam, 1 September 2018. <https://bit.ly/3QK4Dfj>
- [12] The Chechen wars were fought in two major phases: 1994–1997 and 1999–2009.
- [13] The 2008 Russo-Georgian War, also known as the South Ossetia War.
- [14] Alaa Alkhatib, “The Trump Phenomenon and the Global Fundamentalist Backlash,” InfoSalam, 18 April 2017. <https://bit.ly/3wibrsP>
- [15] “Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on European Energy Security to the Atlantic Council Energy and Economic Summit,” Istanbul, Turkey, 22 November 2014. <https://bit.ly/3TcXTJd>
- [16] Joe Biden remarks at a Democratic Party meeting amid reports of Russian interference in U.S. elections, CNN, 19 July 2016. <https://cnn.it/3pKw6lG>
- [17] Biden remarks to The New Yorker concerning his 2011 visit to Moscow, reported by Reuters, 19 June 2014. <https://reut.rs/3ThCheC>
- [18] “President Biden Meets Middle East Leaders in Saudi Arabia,” The Washington Post, source cited in the original paper. <https://wapo.st/3Q6cHGM>
- [19] See reference [1].
- [20] Amy Gunia, “A Wake-Up Call: Pelosi’s Visit Has Irreparably Damaged U.S.–China Relations,” TIME, 5 August 2022. <https://bit.ly/3pTRJjs>
- [21] Reuters report on U.S. lawmakers visiting Taiwan amid Chinese anger, August 2022. <https://reut.rs/3Kx3HJA>
- [22] Business Insider report on President Biden signing the \$280 billion CHIPS and Science package, 9 August 2022. <https://bit.ly/3e5rAeQ>
- [23] Alaa Alkhatib, “Russia, China and Iran: An Enduring Alliance,” Geroun Network, 15 December 2016. <https://bit.ly/3Trb9Kk>
- [24] Alaa Alkhatib, video: “What Will U.S. Policy Under Biden Look Like in the Middle East? Which Leaders Welcome Biden and Which Are Concerned?”, 26 January 2021. <https://bit.ly/3AwWeFN>
- [25] Alaa Alkhatib, “U.S. Policy Does Not Need to Resolve the Syrian Crisis,” Harmoon Center, 11 June 2016. <https://bit.ly/3AU9uFQ>
- [26] CNN Arabic report on U.S. retaliatory strikes against Iran-backed groups in Syria, 26 August 2022. <https://cnn.it/3wF6x9x>

[27] Reuters, report on Bashar al-Assad's support for Putin over Ukraine, 25 February 2022. <https://reut.rs/3KxSOXD>

[28] Alaa Alkhatib, "Why Don't Syrians Visit Ukraine in Support and Solidarity?", Harmoon Center, 8 February 2022. <https://bit.ly/3ABqfnA>