

Navigating between Stasis and Chaos: Crafting a Course through Disruptive Storms

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I Setting the Scene



Homer located Scylla and Charybdis on the Strait of Messina between Sicily and Calabria.¹

Scylla – a rock shoal off Calabria – is said to be a six-headed sea monster; Charybdis is a whirlpool off the coast of Sicily. The twin hazards posed a daunting threat to ships, risking destruction and death.²

Odysseus followed Circe's advice, choosing to sail closer to Scylla, because losing a few men to her was better than risking the ship and entire crew to the maw of Charybdis.

Fearing that his crew would refuse to sail forward if they understood the danger that Scylla posed, Odysseus withheld Circe's advice about the danger that Scylla posed.

As they passed, Scylla snatched six of his best men—one for each head. It was a harrowing sacrifice, but the rest survived.

We are at an historical inflection point, defined by a shift in the geo-economic center of gravity from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific; a lesser capacity by the United States to project power across the globe to maintain the “rules-based international order” that it redefined after the collapse of the USSR in 1991; heightened geopolitical tensions pitting great powers – notably the US, Russia and China – against one another, within what Russia and China perceive to be their spheres of influence; a [weakening of national governance](#) in a highly connected world triggering social tensions and the rise of nationalist populism; and system-wide stresses on the environment due to the impacts of a growing, rapidly urbanizing human population on the earth system.³

This disruption is occurring as mutually agreed rules are fracturing, also because of the sense in the “Global South” that the West is applying the values and principles of the “rules-based international order” inconsistently vis-à-vis Russia in Ukraine, Israel in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran, and in wars in Sudan, and countries in the Sahel. Conflict management and resolution are rendered greatly more difficult by the erosion of widely-accepted principles of international law – *jus cogens* – to which those seeking to mediate between conflicting parties, can turn in addressing conflicts.

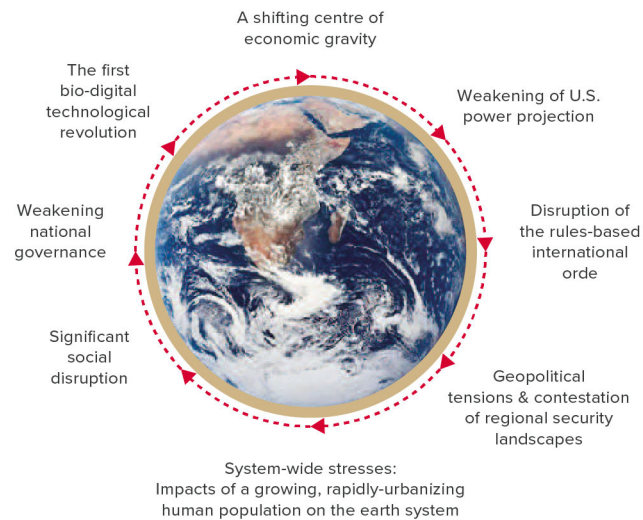
¹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book XII, The Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, The Cattle of the Sun. 8th BCE, Project Gutenberg - <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1727> [retrieved July 1, 2025].

² Incidit in Scyllam cupiēns vitāre Charybdem (into Scylla he fell, wishing to avoid Charybdis. [The Alexandreis: A Twelfth-Century Epic, verse translation by David Townsend, Broadview Editions 2007, p.120, line 350.] [retrieved July 1, 2025].

³ Cleary, Sean, *The World in 2030_post the onset of COVID-19* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357187557_THE_WORLD_IN_2030_post_the_onset_of_COVID-19 [retrieved July 1, 2025].

Eight Trends that will shape the Decade

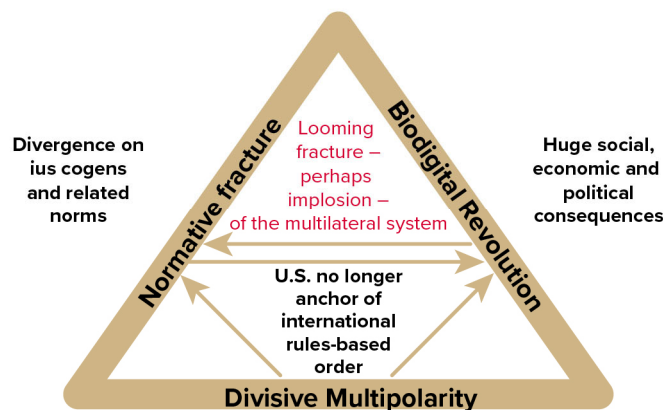
1. A shifting centre of economic gravity
2. Weakening of U.S. power projection
3. Disruption of the rules-based international order
4. Geopolitical tensions and contestation of regional security landscapes
 - Between the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia
 - In the Russian sphere of influence
 - In the East China and South China Seas
5. The first bio-digital technological revolution
6. Significant social disruption
7. Weakening national governance
8. System-wide stresses: Impacts of a growing, rapidly urbanizing human population on the earth system



Source: Own representation.

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Looming fracture – perhaps implosion – of the multilateral system



Source: Own illustration.

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Aggravating this challenge, we are on the cusp of the deepest and most wide-ranging technological revolution in human history – involving not only **GenAI** and other innovations in information technology which pose **challenges to digital trust**, but breakthroughs in biotechnology like **AlphaFold**, and including **CRISPR-Cas9** and other transformative capabilities in **genetic engineering**; all converging with **nanotech** capabilities; and advanced experimentation in **neuro-technologies**. This conflation of transformative technologies is redefining both the meaning of *knowledge* – long assumed to be a human prerogative, but now potentially available to **generative pre-programmed transformers (GPT)** with the potential to evolve into **artificial general intelligence** – and even the essence of *human ontology*.

II Introduction

The plates of the world order shifted tectonically between 2022 and 2024, exposing individual states and international organization, including the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank,⁴ to great stress, with some institutions, including the UN Security Council and the World Trade Organization, failing in their missions.

The war in Ukraine after Russia's invasion on February 22, 2022 has continued for over three years, causing widespread destruction of civilian lives and infrastructure, and diverting resources across Europe and in Russia from social spending and investment, into armaments and military logistics. A second war in the Middle East triggered by Hamas' invasion of southern Israel on October 7, 2023, led to Israel's war on Hamas and other jihadist groups in Gaza and the West Bank, and widened to include Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, Syria and Iran. Meanwhile, the conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese army and the *Rapid Support Forces*, has led to nearly 25 million people – half of Sudan's population – requiring aid, as famine has taken hold, and 11 million people have fled their homes, some three million to other countries.⁶

The *SIPRI Yearbook 2024* recorded that “[g]lobal security continued to deteriorate throughout 2023, as it has for the past decade. There were major armed conflicts in Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine; military spending rose for the ninth successive year to its highest ever level; ecological disruption continued and 2023 was the hottest year for at least 174 years. International stability was under pressure from intensifying confrontation between the great powers. As a result, the entire six-decade-long nuclear arms control enterprise is at risk of terminating.” Moreover:

Contestations about the shape of the international order hinge on the relationship between the legitimacy of its rules and norms, and the distribution and exercise of power.

The international order includes principles intended to govern and limit armed conflict, but the effectiveness of their implementation is being weakened by division and rivalry among leading powers, as well as by the structure and deep roots of many of today's conflicts, and the actions of key governments and their leaders.⁷

⁴ Hamilton, Matthew. What Is Bretton Woods? The Contested Pasts and Potential Futures of International Economic Order: Calls for a new Bretton Woods elide considerable disagreement. There are many competing views of the post-1945 international economic order, and each generates alternative understanding of how Bretton Woods should guide today's proposed reforms. Carnegie Endowment, October 22, 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/10/what-is-bretton-woods-the-contested-pasts-and-potential-futures-of-international-economic-order?lang=en>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

⁶ Nichols, Michelle. Sudanese need protection, but conditions not right for UN force, says Guterres. Reuters, October 28, 2024. https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sudanese-need-protection-conditions-not-right-un-force-says-guterres-2024-10-28/?utm_source=dailybrief&utm_content=20241029&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DailyBrief2024Oct29&utm_term=DailyNewsBrief, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Yearbook 2024: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security – Summary*. Oxford University Press on behalf of SIPRI, 2024.

World Nuclear Forces

Country	Year of first nuclear test	Military stockpile			Retired warheads	Total inventory
		Deployed	Stored	Total		
United States	1945	1,770	1,938	3,708	1,336	5,044
Russia	1949	1,710	2,670	4,380	1,200	5,580
United Kingdom	1952	120	105	225	–	225
France	1960	280	10	290	**	290
China	1964	24	476	500	–	500
India	1974	–	172	172	**	172
Pakistan	1998	–	170	170	**	170
North Korea	2006	–	50	50	**	50
Israel	**	–	90	90	**	90
Total		3.904	5.681	9.585	2.536	12.121

** = not applicable or not available; – = nil or a negligible value.

Source: World Nuclear Forces, January 2024.

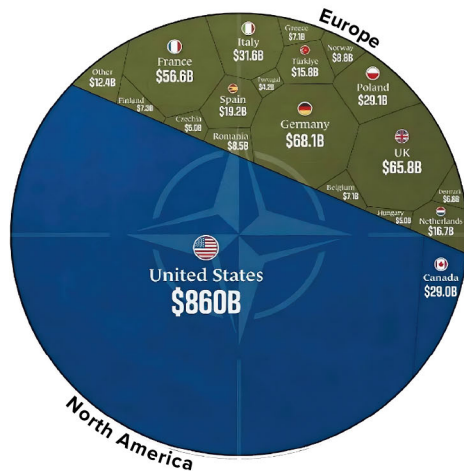
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When the USSR collapsed in 1991, many Western officials hoped that nuclear weapons would cease to be the defining mark of superpower rivalry. Instead, Vipin Narang and Pranay Vaddi assert, the bomb is “back with a vengeance.” Russia has threatened to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine. China has increased its arsenal, and the legal and diplomatic guardrails have eroded. These authors counsel that the United States must “deter and protect its allies from multiple nuclear-armed great-power rivals” by upgrading its nuclear capabilities, reviving arms control talks with China and Russia, and placing nuclear affairs again at the forefront of US grand strategy. Failure to do that, “could [lead to] a full-blown nuclear arms race” – or cause the US to face an adversary that uses a nuclear weapon because the United States “appears to be unwilling or unable to deter such an attack.”⁸

In this context, wider military spending has surged, also in NATO, with *per capita* expenditure reverting to levels last seen at the end of the Cold War in 1991.

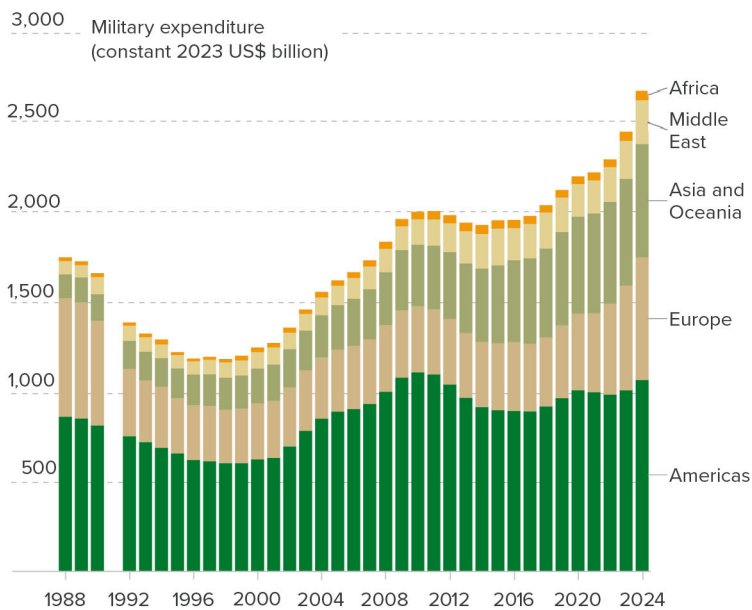
⁸ Narang, Vipin and Pranay Vaddi. How to Survive the New Nuclear Age: National Security in a World of Proliferating Risks and Eroding Constraints. Foreign Affairs, July/August 2025. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/how-survive-new-nuclear-age-narang-vaddi?s=ESPAZ005L1&utm_medium=promo_email&utm_source=edit&utm_campaign=post_release_narang_vaddi_prospects&utm_content=20250702&utm_term=ESPAZ005L1, [retrieved July 2, 2025].

NATO Defense Spending 2023



Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Apr. 2025.

World Military Expenditure, by Region, 1988–2024



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Global military expenditure in 2024 rose by 9.4% in real terms to \$2,718 billion in 2024, the highest global total ever recorded and the 10th year of consecutive increases.

The five biggest spenders in 2024 were the United States, China, Russia, Germany and India, which together accounted for 60% of global military spending.

The United States' military spending was \$997 billion in 2024, while China's was \$314 billion. Russia's military spending grew by 38% in 2024 to an estimated \$149 billion, equivalent to 7.1% of Russia's GDP.

III Major Conflicts and Their Consequences

President Trump expressed an intent to negotiate an end to the Ukraine war both before and after his inauguration, and President Putin indicated willingness after President Trump's inauguration to engage in dialogue.⁹ NATO undertook contingency planning, establishing a new NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) mission in Wiesbaden to coordinate military aid to Ukraine from January 2025,¹⁰ with Washington signaling an intent to end military deliveries to Ukraine, and requiring European allies to assume responsibility for their own security. The Hague NATO Summit on June 24–25 did not reaffirm the pledge first made to Ukraine and Georgia in 2008 – and every year since then – that they would eventually join the alliance. The allies also did not say, as they have since 1994, that NATO is open

⁹ Maynes, Charles. Putin congratulates Trump and says he's 'ready' to engage in dialogue. NPR, November 7, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/2024/11/07/nx-s1-5183184/russia-putin-ready-engage-trump>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

¹⁰ NATO Defence Ministers agree plan to lead coordination of security assistance and training for Ukraine, address deterrence and defence, NATO, June 14, 2024. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_226442.htm#:~:text=With%20a%20command%20in%20Wiesbaden%2C%20Germany%2C%20NATO%20will,to%20the%20long-term%20development%20of%20Ukraine%E2%80%99s%20Armed%20Forces, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

to new members, although they did not formally abandon that policy, as many European leaders support expansion to contain what they believe are Russia's imperialist ambitions.¹¹

By mid-July 2025, no substantive progress has been made in the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine: The Kremlin has increased its attacks on civilian targets in Ukrainian cities; Ukraine has launched a well-prepared attack on Russian strategic aircraft, and Moscow has claimed that it has secured effective control over the whole of the Luhansk Oblast after grinding infantry assaults. President Putin spoke on June 30 of plans for the socioeconomic development of occupied Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia and Kherson oblasts, calling these areas “Donbas and Novorossiia.” Presidential Aide Vladimir Medinsky said that Russians and Ukrainians are “one people” with an “historical homeland,” referring to the “ancient Russian lands on both sides of the Dnipro (River), Novorossiia, and Crimea.” This uncertainty prompted GlobSec to update its 2022 and 2023 scenarios for the war, with a new set of seven scenarios for 2025/26.¹²

Breakdown of Scenarios' Probability

Scenario 1 “Hybrid Type World War III: Acute regional Conflicts and wars across the Globe with „Blurring“ of the war in Ukraine into wars in the Middle East, Caucasus, Balkans, Asia-Pacific, etc”.	20%
Scenario 2 “Focus: The Russian war in Ukraine. War of attrition with maintaining the current level of intensity of hostilities; Europe and the US providing the optimal level of military and financial assistance”.	13%
Scenario 3 “Focus: The Russian war in Ukraine. War of attrition with Russia making breakthroughs along the frontline amid mobilisation of Russian resources and withdrawal of us military support”.	4%
Scenario 4 “Focus: The Russian war in Ukraine. War of attrition with lowered intensity of hostilities due to draining out of resources on both sides”.	38%
Scenario 5 “Focus: The Russian war in Ukraine. Ceasefire and transition to peace process under conditions unacceptable for Ukraine”.	11%
Scenario 6 “Focus: The Russian war in Ukraine. Ceasefire on reasonably acceptable terms for both Ukraine and Russia with patchy peace process and no sustainable peace”.	12%
Scenario 7 “Focus: The Russian war in Ukraine. Ceasefire and transition to peace process which addresses Ukraine's interests and security”.	2%

Source: Seán Clearly.

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In the circumstances, military spending is increasing further. At the NATO Summit in The Hague, the 32 allies declared: “Allies commit to invest 5% of GDP annually on core defense requirements as well as defense-and security-related spending by 2035 to ensure our individual and collective obligations.”

Spain announced that it could not meet the target, and others voiced reservations, but the investment pledge includes a review of spending in 2029 to monitor progress and reassess the security threat posed by Russia. Realists observed that the declarations avoided President Trump's repudiating the USA's obligations under Article 5, while allowing a decade for other allies to increase their spending.

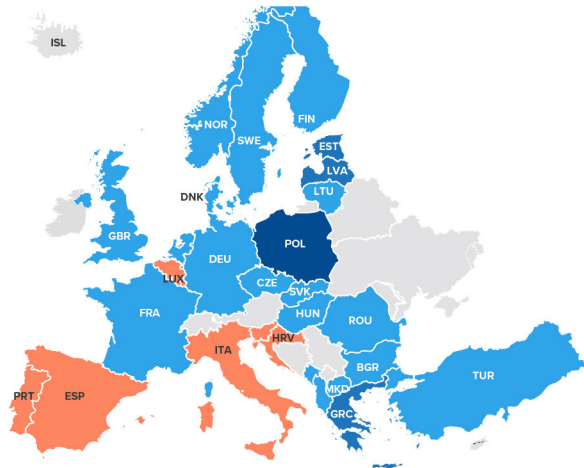
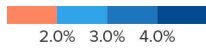
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- ¹¹ Graham, Thomas. The precarious future of NATO's open door policy. Engelsberg Ideas, July 3, 2025. <https://engelsbergideas.com/essays/the-precarious-future-of-natos-open-door-policy>, [retrieved August 8, 2025]. Graham counsels that NATO should not expand further to the East but should work to craft arms-control agreements to reduce tension along the frontier with Russia.
- ¹² Osmolovska, I. and V. Nazarov, H. Maksak, O. Moskalets, and N. Bilyk. Seven Security Scenarios on Russian War in Ukraine for 2025–2026: Implications and Policy Recommendations to Western Partners. GLOBSEC Ukraine and Eastern Europe Programme Publications, 2025.

NATO allies agree to spending hike

Members of the 32-nation NATO alliance have committed to spending 5% of gross domestic product on defense by 2035, Last year, most members met the previous goal of 2%.

Estimated share of GDP spent on defense in 2024

Based on 2015 prices

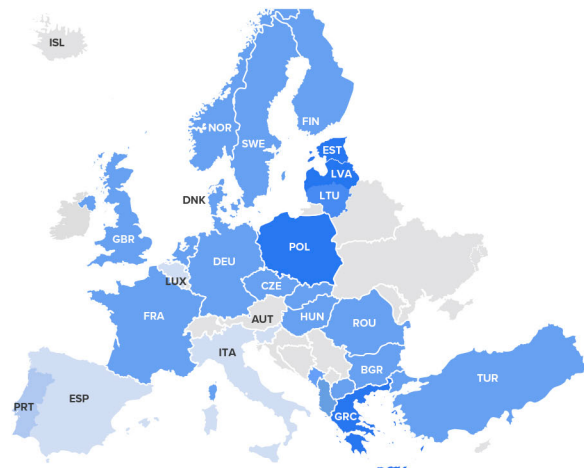


NATO member Iceland has no military. Members Canada (1.37%) and United States (3.38%) not shown.

Source: AP reports; NATO.

Most NATO Members to Meet 2% Spending Goal

Defense expenditures as a share of GDP, 2024 estimates



Note: US (3.38%) and Canada (1.37%) not on map

Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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Especially as NATO is to review the security environment in its theatre in 2029, it is necessary to assess realistically the potential threat posed by the Russian Federation – at least while it is headed by Vladimir V. Putin, and possibly thereafter – to assess how to address the need for security. Thomas Graham has offered a throughfall perspective of three historical Russian impulses that may underpin Putin's goals: the impulse to expand control to enhance security;¹³ to return to Russia state lands lost since the Mongol conquest of *Kievan Rus* in the mid-13th century; and the desire to reunite the three branches of the *greater Russian nation* – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, whose lands, per Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, included Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and southern Siberia (northern Kazakhstan). Graham notes that Putin used elements of all three rationales in setting out his vision before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.¹⁴

Each of those narratives has different implications for Russia's relationship to Europe. As one does not know which of them drives Putin and may impel his successors, Europe must devise a strategic framework to contain Russia's ambitions by reducing the salience of expansionism for Russian security. One means of doing that is to revisit the *European Security Treaty* under negotiation in 2009. The first two articles provided that all actions by each state party to the Treaty "shall be implemented with due regard to security interest of all other parties"; be in compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter for European Security and other OSCE instruments; and that any decision taken by any state party to the Treaty in the framework of any of its other alliances,

¹³ Договор между Российской Федерацией и Соединенными Штатами Америки о гарантиях безопасности, Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации, 17.12.2021. https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/, [retrieved July 8, 2025].

¹⁴ Graham, Thomas. The Limits of Putin's Ambitions. Wachenheim Program on Peace and Security. Council on Foreign Relations, June 20, 2025. <https://www.cfr.org/article/limits-putins-ambitions>, [retrieved July 8, 2025].

shall not derogate from the security of any other party to the Treaty.¹⁵ An agreement based on such a Treaty should be embedded in a UN Security Council resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to restrict any party to a European Security Treaty, including President Putin, from violating Art. 2 (4), read together with Art. 2 (7) of the Charter, vis-à-vis Ukraine or any European state.

IV Fracture of the World Order

Several authors have described 2025 as the year in which the post-1945 world order was dismantled,¹⁶ citing Israel's attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran on June 13, which prompted retaliation by Iran, and was followed by a strike by the US Air Force on Iran's Fordow and Natanz enrichment plants, and the Isfahan Nuclear Technology Center, using GBU-57A/B MOPs delivered by B-2 Spirit bombers, and Tomahawk missiles launched from US Navy submarines. The strikes were undertaken without UN Security Council approval, in violation of Art. 2(4) of the UN Charter¹⁷, while the bombing of nuclear facilities violates the provisions of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty¹⁸ and is contrary to the guidance of the International Atomic Energy Agency.¹⁹

¹⁵ The draft of the European Security Treaty. President of Russia, November 29, 2009. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/6152>, [retrieved July 8, 2025].

¹⁶ See e.g. Kinstler, Linda. Are we witnessing the death of international law? A growing number of scholars and lawyers are losing faith in the current system. Others say the law is not to blame, but the states that are supposed to uphold it. The Guardian, June 26, 2025. https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/jun/26/are-we-witnessing-the-death-of-international-law?lid=yaii24macqkq&utm_source=EMAIL&utm_medium=email_marketing&utm_campaign=MK_SU_SOINewsletter_UKROW_010725&utm_term=Email_ROW&utm_content=Email_ROW.

See also Brian Brivati. Israel, Iran and the US – why 2025 is a turning point for the international order, Daily Maverick, July 1, 2025. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2025-07-01-israel-iran-and-the-us-2025-a-turning-point-for-international-order/>; Clark, Christopher. The End of Modernity: A crisis is unfolding before our eyes—and also in our heads. Foreign Policy, June 30, 2025. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/06/30/modernity-globalization-politics-history/>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

¹⁷ UN experts condemn United States attack on Iran and demand permanent end to hostilities. Office of the UN Commissioner of Human Rights, June 26, 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/un-experts-condemn-united-states-attack-iran-and-demand-permanent-end>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

¹⁸ Treverton, G. F. CIA Support to Policymakers: The 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities. Studies in Intelligence Monographs, 2013.

See also DNI Gabbard Opening Statement as Delivered to the HPSCI on the 2025 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, March 26, 2025: "The IC (Intelligence Community) continues to assess that Iran is not building a nuclear weapon and Supreme leader Khomeini has not authorized the nuclear weapons program that he suspended in 2003. We continue to monitor closely if Tehran decides to reauthorize its nuclear weapons program. In the past year, we've seen an erosion of a decades long taboo in Iran on discussing nuclear weapons in public likely emboldening nuclear weapons advocates within Iran's decision-making apparatus." <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/congressional-testimonies/congressional-testimonies-2025/4061-ata-hpsci-opening-statement-as-delivered>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

¹⁹ "In this regard, the IAEA recalls the numerous General Conference resolutions on the topic of military attacks against nuclear facilities, in particular, GC(XXIX)/RES/444 and GC(XXXIV)/RES/533, which provide, inter alia, that 'any armed attack on and threat against nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes constitutes a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter, international law and the Statute of the Agency'. Furthermore, the IAEA has consistently underlined that 'armed attacks on nuclear facilities could result in radioactive releases with grave consequences within and beyond the boundaries of the State which has been attacked', as was stated in GC(XXXIV)/RES/533." Director General Grossi's Statement to UNSC on Situation in Iran, International Atomic Energy Agency, June 13, 2025. <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/director-general-grossi-statement-to-unsco-on-situation-in-iran-13-june-2025>.

See also "The IAEA has consistently underlined, as stated in its General Conference resolution, that armed attacks on nuclear facilities should never take place and could result in radioactive releases with grave consequences within and beyond the boundaries of the State which has been attacked." IAEA Director General Grossi's Statement to UNSC on Situation in Iran, International Atomic Energy Agency, June 22, 2025. <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/iaea-director-general-grossi-statement-to-unsco-on-situation-in-iran-22-june-2025>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

See also McKenzie, Jessica and Sara Goudard. The war lasted 12 days. The environmental impact on Iran may last decades. Bulletin on the Atomic Scientists, July 7, 2025. <https://thebulletin.org/2025/07/the-war-lasting-12-days-the>

On July 6, leaders of the BRICS+ group condemned the attacks on both Gaza and Iran, called for reforms of global institutions, and presented the bloc as a haven for multilateral diplomacy amid violent conflicts and trade wars. At the group's summit in Rio de Janeiro, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva described the BRICS+ as akin to the *Non-Aligned Movement* of developing nations that resisted joining either Russia or the United States in the Cold War.²⁰

Robert Kelly of the Pusan National University has argued that the Israeli and US strikes on Iran have validated Pyongyang's decision to accelerate its nuclear weapons program to secure immunity against pre-emptive strikes, and thereby contributed to the collapse of non-proliferation by suggesting to other near-nuclear states that this is their best option.²¹

This raises important questions about the proper path forward in respect of Iran's nuclear program. President Trump has said that he envisions renewed negotiations after the Twelve Day War. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on July 8 that Russia can take delivery of, and *down-blend*, Iran's enriched uranium stockpile to levels suitable for use in Iran's nuclear power plants. Russia received 11,000 kgs of enriched uranium from Iran in December 2024 in exchange for uranium for commercial use in the context of efforts to restore the JCPOA and offered thereafter to accept Iran's enriched uranium to "assist" the US-Iran nuclear negotiations before the Twelve Day War. Russia supports Iran's right to enrich uranium to levels suitable for commercial use.

Nicolas Lerner, France's Director-General of External Security, said on July 8 that that the US and Israeli strikes "very ... seriously damaged ... and extremely delayed" Iran's nuclear program, and that the strikes had "destroyed" a small part of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile, but that most of it was unaffected. He said that France had "indications" of the location of the stocks, but could only confirm this when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had resumed verification activity at Iran's nuclear facilities. Meanwhile, David Lammy, Britain's Foreign Secretary, said on July 8 that the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) could trigger the snapback mechanism under the JCPOA if Iran did not engage constructively, "step back" from its "nuclear ambitions," and resume access for IAEA inspections.²²

Rym Momtaz of the Carnegie Endowment has argued that resolution of the potential risk of Iran developing nuclear weapons in the aftermath of the strikes requires a constructive approach, not least because the US strike on June 22 did extensive damage to the facilities and Iran's enrichment capacity in the short-term, while the longer-term impacts are less clear.

As the strikes also decisively weakened Iran's military capabilities, she argues that there is a diplomatic window to use the US intervention to resolve the threat, by leveraging the E3 and engaging Arab partners, China and Russia in support.

environmental-impact-on-iran-may-last-decades/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=The%20%20big%2C%20beautiful%20bill%20%3A%20Fewer%20clinics%2C%20unhealthier%20people&utm_campaign=20250707%20Monday%20Newsletter, [retrieved July 7, 2025].

²⁰ BRICS leaders condemn Gaza and Iran attacks, urge global reforms. Reuters/Japan Times, July 7, 2025. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/07/07/world/politics/brics-global-reform/?utm_source=pianodnu&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=72&tpcc=dnu&pnespid=_vcxiyfp7kjp_vwrphlpxuodux4dsckpiguirk4.skyvprwdsocwhjs7qkg3izrt75jofx4, [retrieved July 10, 2025].

²¹ Kelly, Robert E. Strikes on Iran Validate North Korea's Nuclear Sprint: The United States and Israel are speeding up the collapse of nonproliferation. Foreign Policy, July 7, 2025. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/07/07/trump-iran-israel-nuclear-proliferation/>, [retrieved July 8, 2025].

²² Reddy, Ria et al. Iran Update, Institute for the Study of War, July 9, 2025. <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-updates>, [retrieved July 10, 2025].

She asserts that the E3 could help restore IAEA inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities, influence Tehran's strategic calculus, and help craft an agreement that reduces the Israeli government's pretext for resuming the war.

France has advocated controls wider than those under the JCPOA, to preclude Iran from developing military nuclear capabilities, constrain its ballistic missile program and restrain its support of militias across the Gulf and Levant. This has increased the E3's credibility with Israel and Arab governments.²³ A senior US official said on July 11 that Iran had asked the US for support with a domestic, peaceful nuclear program, permitting low-level uranium enrichment in Iran, and sanctions relief. The United States has demanded that Iran accept IAEA supervision of the removal of the enriched nuclear material and enrichment equipment still in Iran; limit its missile program; and end its support for the Axis of Resistance.

This would offer an opportunity to craft a regional security and economic architecture that includes the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Iran and Israel. No state in the Gulf or the Levant, including Turkey, will tolerate a regional *status quo* shaped and sustained by an Israeli hegemon, but it may be possible, now that Iran's capabilities have been seriously disrupted, to craft a collective regional security regime, underpinned with economic benefits – possibly including a civilian low-enrichment uranium consortium under IAEA supervision – to create comity and opportunity for all.

V Impacts of the Strikes on Iran on International Humanitarian Law

Several commentators have pointed out that the assaults on Iran by Israel and the US have distracted attention from the actions of Israel in Gaza which are the subject of proceedings in both the International Criminal Court (ICC)²⁴ and International Court of Justice (ICJ)²⁵.

On February 6, President Trump issued an executive order authorizing sanctions on the ICC over the court's "illegitimate" actions against the US and its "close ally Israel."²⁶ On February 4, he had withdrawn the US from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and directed agencies to withhold US contributions

²³ Momtaz, Rym, The Small Window for an EU-U.S. Diplomatic Push on Iran: To turn U.S. strikes on Iran's nuclear program into a long-term resolution, Washington should seize the moment and cooperate with France, Germany, and the UK on diplomatic talks. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 1, 2025. https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/07/the-small-window-for-an-eu-us-diplomatic-push-on-iran?lang=en&utm_source=ctw&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=btnlink&mkt_tok=ODEzLVhZVS00MjIAAAGbZczVEf8HHeifjwW7PZFPBbM4Vixyaen-gA9CWt2JAYkiCCHzscKUSfERWNxtgyTwGWbqJuYWsm8b7E0y3c0TSTMY8KYrgGmxYngJNv3It

²⁴ ICC arrest warrants against Netanyahu, Galland and Deif: The ICC stated: "“With regard to the crimes, the [Court's Pre-Trial Chamber I] found reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Netanyahu ... and Mr. Gallant ... bear criminal responsibility for the following crimes as co-perpetrators for committing the acts jointly with others: the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts.” And: “The Chamber found reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Deif ... is responsible for the crimes against humanity of murder; extermination; torture; and rape and other form of sexual violence; as well as the war crimes of murder, cruel treatment, torture; taking hostages; outrages upon personal dignity; and rape and other form of sexual violence.” ICC issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant and Hamas commander. UN News, United Nations, November 21, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/11/1157286>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

²⁵ Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel): Latest Developments. International Court of Justice. <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>; and Request from the UN General Assembly for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, including Gaza and the West Bank: Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Latest Developments. International Court of Justice. <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

²⁶ Executive Order 14203: Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court. The White House, February 6, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

to the UNHRC and other UN bodies, including UNESCO, while undertaking a review of US funding to all international organizations.²⁷

Late in May, the US and Israel introduced the *Global Humanitarian Foundation* (GHF) as a new aid mechanism for Gaza run by private security contractors operating in safe zones approved by Israel. After the deaths of over 500 Palestinian civilians approaching delivery points to secure food, over 170 international charities called for end to the GHF operation on July 1.²⁸ Along the way, on June 4, 2025, the US had vetoed a draft resolution in the UN Security Council, co-sponsored by the ten elected members, calling for an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The draft received 14 votes in favor, but the US envoy described the draft as “unacceptable” as it failed to condemn Hamas and drew a “false equivalence” between Hamas and Israel.²⁹

On May 7, as Prime Minister Netanyahu travelled to meet President Trump, Israel’s Defense Minister Katz announced a plan to relocate Palestinians in Gaza to a “humanitarian city” to be constructed on the ruins of Rafah, to prepare for their relocation to other countries. Although a leading Israeli international lawyer described the plan as a “blueprint for crimes against humanity,”³⁰ Prime Minister Netanyahu repeated the proposal during his discussions with President Trump, in the context of President Trump’s proposal for the redevelopment of the Gaza Strip for commercial purposes.³¹ The *Financial Times* published information on design elements of the proposal developed by the Boston Consulting Group (BCH), with the support of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

²⁷ Executive Order 14199: Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations. The White House, February 4, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-and-ending-funding-to-certain-united-nations-organizations-and-reviewing-united-states-support-to-all-international-organizations/>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

²⁸ Le Poidevin, Olivia. Over 170 charities call for end to deadly new Gaza aid distribution system. Reuters, July 1, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/over-170-charities-call-end-deadly-new-gaza-aid-distribution-system-2025-07-01/>, [retrieved July 6, 2025].

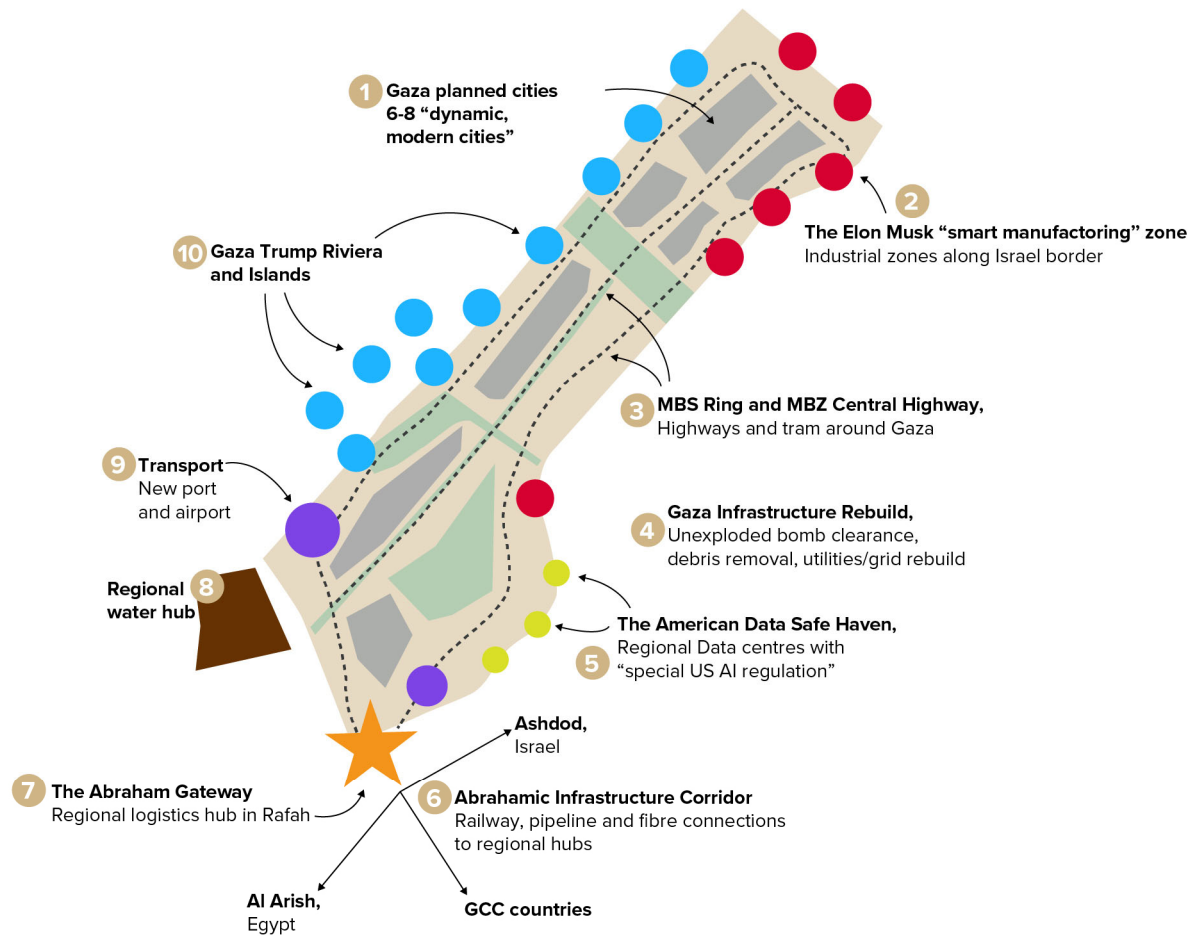
²⁹ Mishra, Vibhu. US vetoes Security Council resolution demanding permanent ceasefire in Gaza. UN News, June 4, 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1164056>, [retrieved July 6, 2025].

³⁰ Graham-Harrison, Emma. Israeli plan for forced transfer of Gaza’s population ‘a blueprint for crimes against humanity’: Military ordered to turn ruins of Rafah into ‘humanitarian city’ but experts call the plan an internment camp for all Palestinians in Gaza. The Guardian, July 7, 2025. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/07/israeli-minister-reveals-plan-to-force-population-of-gaza-into-camp-on-ruins-of-rafah?utm_term=.686c9b45bc5013ce5aba8892b9202eef&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayUK&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTUK_email, [retrieved July 8, 2025]; see also an open letter by 16 Israeli international law experts saying that the plans to concentrate the population of Gaza in a “humanitarian city” constitute a manifestly illegal order, while implementing the plan would be a war crime and a crime against humanity. Israel at War, Haaretz, July 11, 2025. <https://us18.campaign-archive.com/?e=779e704690&u=d3bceadb340d6af4daf1de00d&id=0add72ae1f>, [retrieved July 12, 2025].

³¹ Trump says US will ‘take over’ and ‘own’ Gaza in redevelopment plan. Al Jazeera English. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2TlpHnD1Fs>; Netanyahu, Trump discuss forced transfer of Palestinians out of Gaza. Al Jazeera. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8WuEXIVohME>, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

10 'Mega Projects' for Gaza

FT rendering of an image from the Great Trust slide deck



Source: Megaprojects for Gaza, Chartbook, a newsletter from Adam Tooze: Tony Blair's staff took part in 'Gaza Riviera' project with BCG, Financial Times, 9 July 2025 - https://www.ft.com/content/0b1bc761-c572-4b61-882a-fb4467259dcd?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email [retrieved 9 July 2025]

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Meanwhile, Russia is continuing its griding advance in Ukraine despite rulings from the ICJ³² and extensive evidence of Russian war crimes.³³ Enforcement mechanisms are weak and President Putin is drawing out the deal-making process proposed by President Trump, while launching broader attacks on civilian targets.³⁴ President Trump's commitment to brokering a settlement in Ukraine has wavered, but after the US suspended deliveries of air defense systems to Ukraine, he committed to restoring them after an unsatisfactory call with President Putin on July 3.³⁵

VI Efforts to Restore the "Rule of Law"

Pakistan, which has the Presidency of the UN Security Council in July, scheduled a signature debate on July 22 on the *peaceful settlement of disputes*, in light of the Council's inability to respond decisively to protracted crises, noting that resolutions adopted by the Security Council on Gaza have proved largely irrelevant, while the Council's response to conflicts more generally had become performative and ineffective due to vetoes by the Permanent Members.

A growing number of UN member states assert that the Security Council is not using the Charter's provisions for *diplomatic conflict resolution*, and some speakers at the opening of the General Assembly in September, when the UN marks its 80th anniversary, plan to call for a new focus on this underused UN tool.

In light of Pakistan's special interest in the Kashmir dispute, Islamabad plans to use the debate on July 22 to assert that diplomacy is a viable alternative to the use of military force, and that the Council needs to act more frequently under Ch. VI of the UN Charter.³⁶ On July 24 it will seek to advance UN cooperation

³² Ukraine filed a case under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, challenging Russia's justification for its invasion – that Ukraine was committing genocide in the Donbas region. On March 16, 2022, the ICJ issued an order on Provisional Measures providing that Russia must immediately suspend military operations in Ukraine, and that both parties should refrain from any actions that could aggravate or extend the dispute. The ICJ issued a judgement on February 2, 2024: Case 182 – Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation): Document Number 182-20240202-SUM-01-00-EN. <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203515>, [retrieved July 6, 2025].

³³ The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has recorded attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure; torture in detention facilities in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia; sexual violence; and unlawful deportation of children to Russia. Commission of Inquiry finds further evidence of war crimes in Ukraine. UN News, October 20, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142617>. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova over the abduction of Ukrainian children; and for senior Russian military officials for directing attacks on civilians and civilian objects. Ukraine: Situation in Ukraine, ICC-01/22. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations/ukraine>; Arrest warrant issued for Putin over war crime allegations. BBC, March 17, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-europe-64994087?page=2>, [retrieved July 6, 2023]; and Quell, Molly. Europe's top human rights court finds Russia committed major international law violations in Ukraine. AP News, July 9, 2025. https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-russia-european-human-rights-court-mh17-1bac36842f8a4cfe0e3e787f0fab0c1f?utm_source=onesignal&utm_medium=push&utm_campaign=2025-07-09-Breaking+News, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

³⁴ Arhirova, Hanna. Russia launches largest missile and drone barrage on Kyiv since war in Ukraine began. AP News, July 5, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-russia-war-attack-missile-drone-58bc08ddcf1038fb409999c56b11e9fa>, [retrieved July 6, 2025]; Lu, Christina. Overnight Attack. World Brief, Foreign Policy, July 9, 2025. <https://link.foreignpolicy.com/view/644279e2aced183da612c745o6md1.37n/b8ea2fcc>, [retrieved July 10, 2025].

³⁵ Harward, Christina et al. Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment. July 8, 2025. <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-8-2025>, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

³⁶ Chapter VI: Pacific Settlement of Disputes
Article 33

The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice. The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means.

with regional and subregional organizations – including the European Union, the African Union, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – on conflict prevention and counterterrorism, the dialogue among civilizations, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.³⁷

VII Tensions between the US and China, and with the BRICS+

The US National Security Strategy³⁸ and National Defense Strategy³⁹ of 2022 characterize China as “the only country with the intent to reshape the international order, and increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do so”; and as “our most consequential strategic competitor for the coming decades.” The US Department of Defense stated: “The 2022 National Defense Strategy ... places a primary focus on the need to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence against China. It also advances a focus on collaboration with a growing network of U.S. allies and partners on shared objectives.”⁴⁰

Tensions with China, heightened by Russia’s war in Ukraine, and sharpened by the conflict between Israel and Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, in respect of which Washington and Beijing have divergent perspectives, have deepened the schism between the West and the “Global South,” with Africa, the Arab

Article 34

The Security Council may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

Article 35

Any Member of the United Nations may bring any dispute, or any situation of the nature referred to in Article 34, to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly. A state which is not a Member of the United Nations may bring to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly any dispute to which it is a party if it accepts in advance, for the purposes of the dispute, the obligations of pacific settlement provided in the present Charter. The proceedings of the General Assembly in respect of matters brought to its attention under this Article will be subject to the provisions of Articles 11 and 12.

Article 36

The Security Council may, at any stage of a dispute of the nature referred to in Article 33 or of a situation of like nature, recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment. The Security Council should take into consideration any procedures for the settlement of the dispute which have already been adopted by the parties. In making recommendations under this Article the Security Council should also take into consideration that legal disputes should as a general rule be referred by the parties to the International Court of Justice in accordance with the provisions of the Statute of the Court.

Article 37

Should the parties to a dispute of the nature referred to in Article 33 fail to settle it by the means indicated in that Article, they shall refer it to the Security Council. If the Security Council deems that the continuance of the dispute is in fact likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, it shall decide whether to take action under Article 36 or to recommend such terms of settlement as it may consider appropriate.

Article 38

Without prejudice to the provisions of Articles 33 to 37, the Security Council may, if all the parties to any dispute so request, make recommendations to the parties with a view to a pacific settlement of the dispute.

³⁷ Banjo, Damilola. Pakistan Is Still Betting on the UN Charter. PassBlue, July 1 2025. https://www.passblue.com/2025/07/01/pakistan-is-still-betting-on-the-un-charter/?utm_source=PassBlue+List&utm_campaign=a1760f2546-RSS-ST_SetonHall_22Mar2025&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4795f55662-a1760f2546-55051982, [retrieved July 2, 2025].

³⁸ National Security Strategy, October 2022, The White House. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>, [retrieved July 31, 2025].

³⁹ US Department of Defense. National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. US Department of Defense Strategy Documents, No. AD1183539, 2022.

⁴⁰ Lopez, C. Todd. DOD Releases National Defense Strategy, Missile Defense, Nuclear Posture Reviews. DOD News, Oct 27, 2022. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3202438/dod-releases-national-defense-strategy-missile-defense-nuclear-posture-reviews/>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

world and Latin America becoming the fulcrum of a tectonic dislocation. This has also had an impact on Europe's relations with China.⁴¹

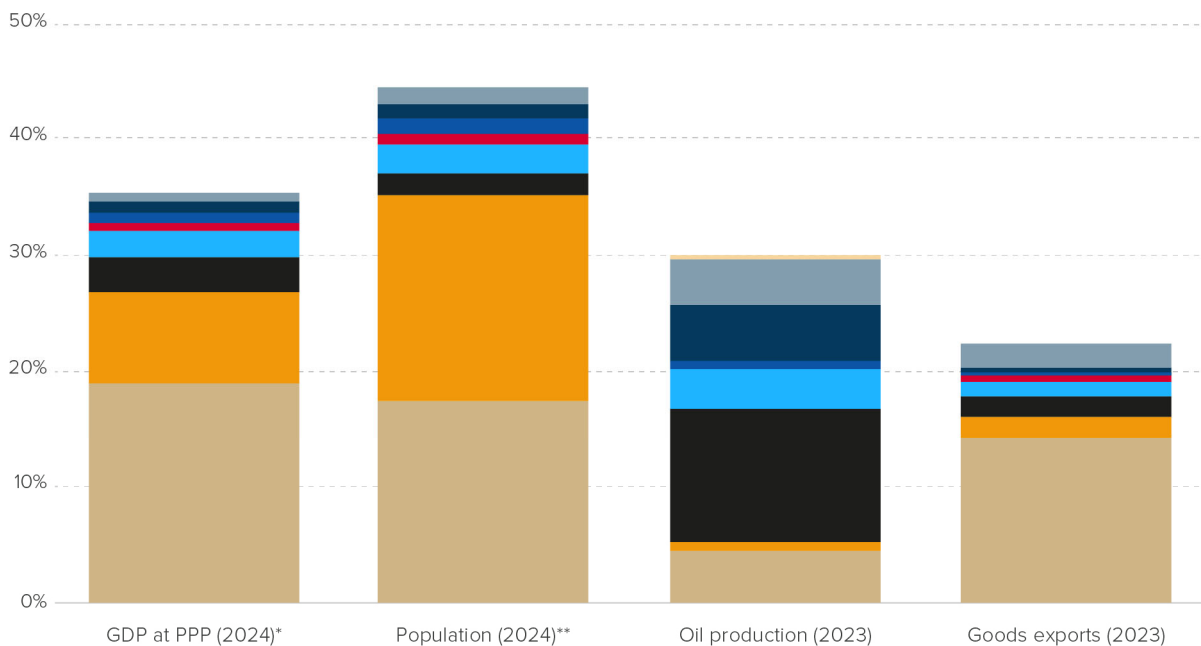
Parenthetically, the advances in the nuclear and missile programs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have, meanwhile, reinvigorated discussions on the merits, drawbacks and modalities of nuclear capability for the Republic of Korea. While Washington's reassurances to Seoul to prevent proliferation have defined the US-ROK alliance in recent years, the Trump presidency has reinvigorated the nuclear debate in the ROK,⁴² and in the US.⁴³

The expansion of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the UAE, and the inclusion of the African Union in the G20, sustained this fractal momentum during Brazil's presidency of the G20 in 2024, and South Africa's presidency in 2025.

The Global Clout of the New BRICS

BRICS countries' share of global GDP, population, oil production and goods exports

Original members: South Africa Brazil Russia India China
New members: Ethiopia United Arab Emirates Iran Egypt



* IMF estimates as of April 2024 ** UN estimates, medium variant

Sources: IMF, UN Population Division, Energy Institute, WTO.

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Tensions with Washington since President Trump's inauguration have reduced the capacity of the BRICS+ – which also admitted 13 partner countries with partial membership benefits in October 2024⁴⁴

⁴¹ See e.g. Tercovich, G., L. Comerma, et. al. Europe's Eyes on Taiwan: Strategic Ties, Different Perspectives. Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy, No. 16/2025, 2025.

⁴² Kim, Jina and Luis Simón. Nuclear Puzzles: What can South Korea Learn from NATO's Experiences as a Nuclear Alliance? CSDS Policy Brief, November 28, 2024. <https://csds.vub.be/publication/nuclear-puzzles-what-can-south-korea-learn-from-natos-experiences-as-a-nuclear-alliance/>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

⁴³ Lee, Rachel Minyoung and Jenny Town. Move Past the Nuclear Impasse on the Korean Peninsula: The Trump administration should define new goals for North Korea and manage the alliance with South Korea. Stimson Center, November 20, 2024. <https://www.stimson.org/2024/move-past-the-nuclear-impasse-on-the-korean-peninsula/>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

⁴⁴ Norton, Ben. BRICS grows, inviting 13 new 'partner countries' at historic summit in Kazan, Russia. BRICS held a summit in Kazan, Russia in October 2024, where it invited 13 "partner nations" to join, after adding four

– and the G20, as the US stayed away from key G20 ministerial and sherpa meetings in 2025, and will succeed South Africa to the G20 presidency in 2026, making the future role of the organization unclear.⁴⁵

The Biden administration had earlier retained the \$360 billion of tariffs and sanctions imposed on the PRC by President Trump and applied new export controls to restrict Beijing's access to advanced technology. It banned US investment in sensitive dual-use technologies in China, quadrupled tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, tripled those on steel and aluminum, and doubled the duty on semiconductors. Several US Governors signed laws preventing state pension schemes from investing in Chinese equities. President Biden had issued an Executive Order and a *Memorandum on Advancing the United States' Leadership in Artificial Intelligence; Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Fulfill National Security Objectives; and Fostering the Safety, Security, and Trustworthiness of Artificial Intelligence*,⁴⁶ seeking to ensure US dominance in military applications of AI.

VIII Disruption of the International Trading System with Unilateral Tariffs

Arguing that US tariffs on imported goods will promote the revival of domestic manufacturing, protect national security and compensate for a reduction in income taxes, President Trump has imposed a series of steep tariffs affecting most goods imported into the United States, with the average effective US tariff rate rising over tenfold between January and May 2025. After subsequent adjustments, the average effective rate had been reduced to 15.8% in mid-June.⁴⁷

Trump raised steel and aluminum tariffs to 50%, those on imported cars to 25% and indicated likely tariffs on a range of other sectors. His use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) on "Liberation Day," April 2, 2025, to impose broad, universal tariffs on all imports was stayed by federal courts pending oral arguments due to be presented on July 31.

A universal 10% tariff took effect on April 5, with far higher tariffs for 57 major trading partners planned for April 9, although these were suspended for three months after a sharp market reaction. Baseline US tariffs on Chinese goods reached 145%, with Beijing imposing reciprocal tariffs on US goods of 125%, although after negotiations the US reduced its tariffs to 30% and China lowered its duties to 10%. China agreed to resume exports of critical rare earth elements it had curtailed in retaliation.

new members. These are the most important takeaways from the historic meeting. Geopolitical.economy.com, October 28, 2024. <https://geopoliticeconomy.com/2024/10/26/brics-13-partner-countries-summit-kazan-russia/>, [retrieved July 8, 2025].

⁴⁵ The G20 was created after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1998 to align the most important industrialized and developing economies through their Finance Ministers, to enhance economic and financial stability. The first summit of G20 leaders in 2008 was a response to the widely perceived need for constructive collective action after the onset of the global financial crisis. It evolved into a major forum for discussion of economic and other pressing global issues, but it has not proven cohesive or particularly effective in recent years. Tensions between high- and low-income states have marked discussions on climate change, economic development, responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout from the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. The inclusion of the African Union led Brazil to seek to use the G20 to strengthen the influence of the Global South. South Africa followed in this vein, but the Trump administration has opposed the agenda. See also Siripurapu, Anshu, Noah Berman and James McBride. What Does the G20 Do? Council on Foreign Relations, November 15, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-does-g20-do>, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

⁴⁶ Memorandum on Advancing the United States' Leadership in Artificial Intelligence; Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Fulfill National Security Objectives; and Fostering the Safety, Security, and Trustworthiness of Artificial Intelligence. The White House, October 24, 2024. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/10/24/memorandum-on-advancing-the-united-states-leadership-in-artificial-intelligence-harnessing-artificial-intelligence-to-fulfill-national-security-objectives-and-fostering-th>, [retrieved July 31, 2025].

⁴⁷ The Budget Lab at Yale. State of U.S. Tariffs: June 17, 2025. <https://budgetlab.yale.edu/research/state-us-tariffs-june-17-2025#:~:text=The%20Budget%20Lab%20%28TBL%29%20estimated%20the%20effects%20all,as%20if%20they%20stayed%20in%20effect%20in%20perpetuity>, [retrieved July 6, 2025].

The uncertainty triggered by the tariffs – still unresolved in mid-July – led to the US Federal Reserve, OECD and World Bank reducing GDP growth projections in 2025, and thereafter.⁴⁸ Thereafter, on July 6, President Trump threatened an additional 10% tariff on countries aligned with the BRICS+ while the group was meeting in Rio de Janeiro. A statement from the summit had condemned the bombings of Iran, called for a more open global trade regime and INF quota realignment, and announced loan guarantees to speed investment in member countries through the New Development Bank.⁴⁹

The day after the BRICS+ Summit, President Trump sent personal letters to the leaders of 14 states advising them of steep tariffs increases, ranging from 25-40%, with some of the harshest directed at developing nations in southeast Asia, including 32% for Indonesia, 36% for Cambodia and Thailand and 40% for Laos and Myanmar.

Bangladesh was advised of 35%, while Tunisia, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, South Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina were told they faced 30% tariffs, with levies of 25% disclosed to Japan and the Republic of Korea, Washington's longstanding East Asian allies.⁵⁰

The fact that these presidential communications were made while US Secretary of State Rubio was making his first official visit to Asia for meetings with ASEAN and at the East Asia Summit in Malaysia, was surprising. The State Department announced that the Secretary was "focused on reaffirming the United States' commitment to advancing a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific region ... defending the need to rebalance US trade relationships."

President Trump also announced a 50% tariff on imported copper, and said that pharmaceutical imports might face tariffs of 200%.⁵¹ On July 9, President Trump threatened Brazil with a 50% tariff due to the charges against former President Jair Bolsonaro for inciting a coup to overturn his 2022 election loss. The US had a trade surplus of \$7.4 billion with Brazil in 2024. Algeria, Brunei, Iraq, Libya, Moldova, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka also received letters imposing new tariffs. On July 12, President Trump imposed 30% tariffs on exports from the European Union and Mexico.⁵²

President Lula described Brazil as a "sovereign country with independent institutions that will not accept being lectured by anyone" and warned of countermeasures under Brazil's Economic Reciprocity law.⁵³ Mexico and the European Union were more circumspect.

⁴⁸ World Bank Group. Global Economic Prospects – June 2025. World Bank Group Flagship Reports, 2025.

⁴⁹ BRICS Summit signs historic commitment in Rio for more inclusive and sustainable governance. At the 17th high-level leaders' meeting, BRICS adopted 126 commitments covering global governance, finance, health, artificial intelligence, climate change, and other strategic areas. BRICS Summit 2025, July 6, 2025. <https://brics.br/en/news/brics-summit-signs-historic-commitment-in-rio-for-more-inclusive-and-sustainable-governance>, [retrieved July 7, 2025].

⁵⁰ Trump tariffs explained: what's changed and why have Asian countries been hit so hard? The shifting timeline of Trump's tariffs, the most significant US tariff increase in nearly a century, has roiled global markets and caused widespread confusion. Trump delays tariff hikes again but announces new rates for some countries. The Guardian, July 8, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/08/trump-tariffs-explained-whats-changed-and-why-have-asian-countries-been-hit-so-hard>, [retrieved July 8, 2025].

⁵¹ Jones, Callum. Trump threatens to escalate trade war amid confusion over new tariff rates: US president announces tariffs of up to 200% on foreign drugs and 50% on copper as he continues to shift plans. The Guardian, July 8, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/08/trump-tariffs-trade-war-confusion>, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

⁵² Madhani, Aamer. Trump announces 30% tariffs against EU, Mexico to begin Aug. 1, rattling major US trading partners. AP News, July 12, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/trump-tariffs-eu-mexico-66bf84d97dcd69bbd1f1108e42283afd>, [retrieved July 12, 2025].

⁵³ Breuninger, Kevin. Brazil will respond to Trump's 50% tariff with 'reciprocity,' says da Silva. CNBC News, July 9, 2025. https://www.cnbc.com/2025/07/09/trump-brazil-tariffs-bolsonaro.html?utm_source=dailybrief&utm_content=20250710&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DailyBrief2025july10&utm_term=DailyNewsBrief, [retrieved July 10, 2025].

IX Responses by Other Western Powers and Impacts on the Developing World

This assertion of economic (and military) “might” by great-powers has led the EU to adopt a geopolitical approach to economic statecraft, aligning economic security with broader foreign policy goals through economic interventionism.⁵⁴ Domestic economic protectionism, “friendshoring” and disruption of pre-existing supply chains is the inevitable consequence. President Trump’s pressure on other NATO members, endorsed by Secretary-General Rutte, to raise their military expenditure to 5% of GDP by 2035, has led defense-related think tanks across NATO countries to develop strategies to counter Russia in the face of uncertainty about US commitment.⁵⁵

Europe and Canada cannot, of course, assume the erstwhile role of the US in enforcing a global order, as they lack the military power, economic influence and political unity that this would require.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, huge reductions in US foreign aid due to the closure of USAID and the adoption of a trade-based, rather than aid-based, model will have startling effects. USAID programs were slashed by 83%, affecting health, education and humanitarian services across 133 countries. Preliminary projections suggest that these cuts could lead to over 14 million preventable deaths by 2030.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Balfour, Rosa, Eugenia Baroncelli, Lizza Bomassi et al. Geopolitics and Economic Statecraft in the European Union. Carnegie Europe, November 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/11/geopolitics-and-economic-statecraft-in-the-european-union?lang=en>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

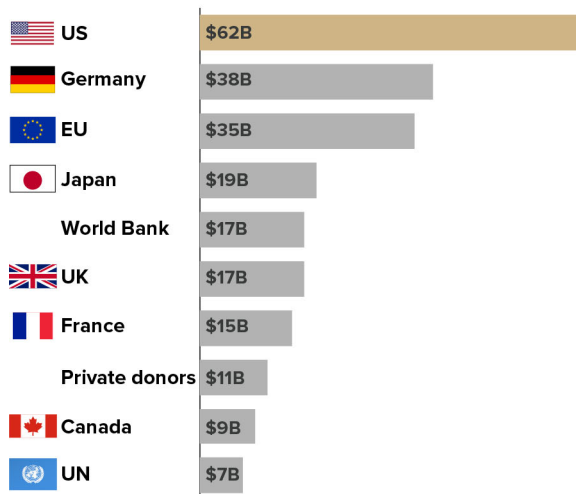
⁵⁵ See e.g. The Vandenberg Coalition & McCain Institute. The Russia Policy Platform: A Conservative Strategy for Countering Russia. Vandenberg Coalition Reports & Statements, 2024; Bruegel, November 20, 2024. https://www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/european-defence-industrial-strategy-hostile-world?mc_cid=9a615a7e50&mc_eid=2af4a6f2fc; Parlow, Anita. Hybrid War and National Security: NATO, the US, and the West. Kennan Institute, Wilson Center, November 8, 2024. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/hybrid-war-and-national-security-nato-us-and-west>; Larsen, Henrik. Towards a Europeanised NATO. International Center for Defense and Security, 2025.

⁵⁶ Esteban, M., M. Otero-Iglesias et al. Quest for Strategic Autonomy? Europe Grapples with the US China Rivalry. European Think-Tank Network on China Report, 2025.

⁵⁷ Thompson, Dennis. More Than 14 Million Will Die Following U.S. Foreign Aid Cuts. Health Day, US News, July 7, 2025. <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2025-07-07/more-than-14-million-will-die-following-u-s-foreign-aid-cuts>; see also for the effects of wider cuts to programs of the National Institutes of Health: The cost of US funding cuts. The Lancet, Vol. 6, Issue 3, 100703, March 3, 2025. <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhl/article/PIIS2666-7568%2825%2900022-4/fulltext>, [retrieved July 7, 2025].

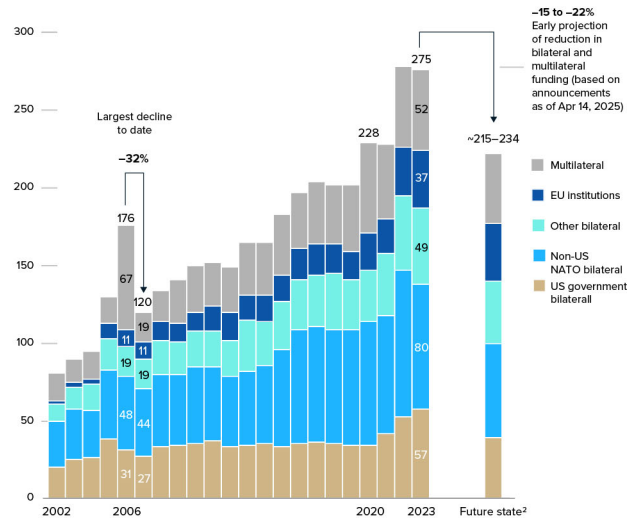
Millions at risk from US aid cuts

Biggest foreign aid donors



Recent announcements could imply a 15 to 22 percent reduction in global official development assistance.

Total global official development assistance,¹ \$ billion



¹As defined by the OECD; this excludes "other official flows," private sector instruments, and private development finance.
²Projection of 17% is based on estimates from public announcements as of Apr 14, 2025, (42% for US, 40% for UK, 38% for Netherlands, 35% for France, 25% for Belgium, 1% for Switzerland, 6% for Sweden) taken proportionally from bilateral and multilateral spend based on current channel mix; projection of 20% is based on an assumed 30% reduction across all non-US NATO countries and a 42% reduction for US government contributions across both bilateral and multilateral spend. In the future state, assistance is likely to be increasingly allocated toward donors' geopolitical priorities and domestic resourcing needs.

Source: Center for Global Development; ForeignAssistance.gov; International Monetary Fund; OECD

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Source: Data for 2023.

Diversion of spending from Overseas Development Assistance to defense by major European donors – including the UK, Germany and France – will exacerbate these effects.⁵⁸

It is clear that this weakens the "soft power" of Western countries vis-à-vis developing and least-developed countries, and China acted swiftly to seize the opportunity. In the *China-Africa Changsha Declaration* on June 11, the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that China was signing an agreement of *China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development*, to extend tariff-free admission for all goods exported to China by all 53 African countries that maintain diplomatic relations with the PRC.⁵⁹

Recognizing this, Stephan Klingebiel and Andy Sumner of the *German Institute of Development and Sustainability* (IDOS) have argued the need for the West to rethink the foundations of development cooperation and rebuild multilateral credibility to navigate in a more pluralistic and geopolitically divided global order.⁶⁰

X Restructuring the Global International Order

The restructuring of the UN Security Council has been under discussion in the United Nations since then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan convened a *High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, which delivered a report entitled *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, in 2004.⁶¹ Although the

⁵⁸ Huckstep, Sam et al. Charting the Fallout of Aid Cuts: Which Countries Will be Hit Hardest, as Multiple Donors Cut Budgets? Center for Global Development, June 12, 2025. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/charting-fallout-aid-cuts>, [retrieved July 7, 2025].

⁵⁹ Eswatini is excluded as it still maintains diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan).

⁶⁰ Klingebiel, S. and A. Sumner. Four Futures for a Global Development Cooperation System in Flux: Policy at the Intersection of Geopolitics, Norm Contestation and Institutional Shift. IDOS Policy Brief, 2025.

⁶¹ UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change; United Nations Secretary General. *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*. United Nations Publications, New York: UN Department of Public Information, 2004.

report laid the groundwork for the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission for Post-conflict Reconstruction, shaped the debates around the doctrine of *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P), and set out a compelling case for reform of the Security Council,⁶² entrenched interests among P5 members and disagreement on the potential allocation of additional permanent seats obstructed implementation of the Panel's recommendations.

This notwithstanding, the need for reform is clearer than ever.

The veto rights of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council in respect of any UN enforcement action have enabled the US, Russia (and before it, the USSR) and China to frustrate collective action to advance peace and security.

Since 1991, Russia has vetoed resolutions on Syria (notably after its engagement in support of Bashar al Assad), Sudan, Mali (after the deployment of the Wagner state-backed mercenaries), Georgia and Ukraine (after Russia's invasions of each), as well as a resolution prohibiting the deployment of weapons in outer space and one framing climate change as a "threat to international peace and security."⁶³

Since 1991, the United States has vetoed resolutions criticizing Israeli settlements, Israeli military action, and ceasefire and humanitarian resolutions on the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as resolutions proposing UN membership for Palestine, and asserting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over US peacekeepers.

China has tended to veto resolutions that impinge on the principle of national sovereignty, specifically one on Macedonia because of a reference to Taiwan; on Myanmar, where Beijing cited concerns on sovereignty; Syria, where it opposed condemnation of the Assad government and investigation of the use of chemical weapons; and Gaza, where its posture has largely aligned with that of Russia.

The exercise of vetoes in the UN Security Council has caused other states, notably those in the Global South, to question the commitment of the US to the Charter's provisions prohibiting the use of force by the US and its allies. Acknowledging this, and recognizing that it is the product of the nationalistic *realpolitik* of the US and Russia, is essential if we are to restore a robust legal order. Several initiatives are underway and two conceptually-related proposals deserve mention here:

- The Global South Perspectives Network, the Inclusive Society Institute, the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability, HumanizaCon and the Africa Think-Tank Dialogue convened a strategic dialogue to examine how middle powers, also from the Global South, can recalibrate global governance, revive multilateralism and help democratize international institutions.⁶⁴
- Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro have argued for a new approach to the composition and regulation of international institutions, suggesting that an effective system for international peace and security

⁶² Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. A more secure world: Our shared responsibility [A/59/565]. https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/hlp_more_secure_world.pdf, [retrieved July 31, 2025].

⁶³ Akhtar, Syed Ali and Pranav Ganesan. The UN Security Council and Climate Security: Reflections on the Unsuccessful Draft Resolution. *OpinioJuris*, February 14, 2022. <https://opiniojuris.org/2022/02/14/the-un-security-council-and-climate-security-reflections-on-the-unsuccessful-draft-resolution/>, [retrieved July 6, 2025].

⁶⁴ The role of Middle Powers in (Re)balancing the Global Governance System and Reviving Multilateralism and the UN (2025). <https://www.inclusivesociety.org.za/post/the-role-of-middle-powers-in-re-balancing-the-global-governance-system-and-reviving-multilateralism>, [retrieved July 10, 2025].

requires empowerment of more state actors to uphold legal norms, rendering them more legitimate and resilient.⁶⁵

- For this purpose they counsel coalitions of midsize and small countries to defend the prohibition on the use of force; advocate a larger role for the UN General Assembly in enforcing the Charter's prohibition on force without collective approval; and propose regional or issue-specific coalitions to advance shared goals.⁶⁶

This outcome can only be achieved if a conference of UN member states is convened under Art. 109, to review and alter the Charter under Art. 108, to allow for smaller states to secure such capabilities.⁶⁷ If a General Conference of UN member states is to be called to review the Charter, it can use the Purposes of the UN, set out in Art. 1,⁶⁸ and the Principles, defined in Art. 2,⁶⁹ of the Charter, as its starting points.

⁶⁵ Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro. *Might Unmakes Right: The Catastrophic Collapse of Norms Against the Use of Force*. Foreign Affairs, June 24, 2025. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/might-unmakes-right-hathaway-shapiro>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

⁶⁶ Such coalitions have begun to form: The Council of Europe, for instance, has announced that it is establishing a court to gather evidence against Putin and other Russian leaders and eventually try them for the crime of aggression in Ukraine, and members of the so-called Hague Group – Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Malaysia, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa – are working to enforce decisions made by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court regarding the war in Gaza. In May, foreign ministers from the African Union and the European Union vowed to strengthen their partnership on peace, security and economic matters, offering a potential starting point for a peace coalition that does not rely on the United States.

⁶⁷ UN Charter: Article 109:

1. A General Conference of the Members of the United Nations for the purpose of reviewing the present Charter may be held at a date and place to be fixed by a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Assembly and by a vote of any seven members of the Security Council. Each Member of the United Nations shall have one vote in the conference.

2. Any alteration of the present Charter recommended by a two-thirds vote of the conference shall take effect when ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations including all the permanent members of the Security Council.

3. If such a conference has not been held before the tenth annual session of the General Assembly following the coming into force of the present Charter, the proposal to call such a conference shall be placed on the agenda of that session of the General Assembly, and the conference shall be held if so decided by a majority vote of the members of the General Assembly and by a vote of any seven members of the Security Council.

Article 108:

Amendments to the present Charter shall come into force for all Members of the United Nations when they have been adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly and ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two-thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all the permanent members of the Security Council.

Charter of the United Nations: Chapter XVIII – Amendments: Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs. https://legal.un.org/repertory/art108_109.shtml, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

⁶⁸ UN Charter Article 1

The Purposes of the United Nations are:

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;

To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;

To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and

To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

⁶⁹ UN Charter: Article 2

The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the Purposes stated in Article 1, shall act in accordance with the following Principles.

Other efforts have, meanwhile, been made to improve the efficacy of the UN in maintaining international peace and security. The original “Uniting for Peace” resolution passed in 1950, allows the General Assembly to act when the Security Council fails to maintain international peace due to a veto cast by a Permanent Member, by enabling the Assembly to convene an *Emergency Special Session* to make non-binding recommendations for collective measures, including sanctions or peacekeeping.⁷⁰

1. Russia’s exercise of its veto in the UN Security Council had frustrated adoption of a resolution condemning Russia’s invasion on February 24, 2022. By majority vote after the veto, the Security Council called for an Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly, indicating that Russia’s veto had “prevented it from exercising its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”

The General Assembly thus convened an *Emergency Special Session* and adopted Resolution ES-11/1 on March 18, 2022 by 141 votes for, five against and 35 abstentions, showing that the General Assembly can support the maintenance and restoration of international peace and security in the face of the Security Council’s inaction.⁷¹

A series of subsequent resolutions were later passed by the General Assembly on matters related to the invasion of Ukraine under the same rubric.⁷²

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1. The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.
 2. All Members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present Charter.
 3. All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.
 4. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.
 5. All Members shall give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the present Charter, and shall refrain from giving assistance to any state against which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action.
 6. The Organization shall ensure that states which are not Members of the United Nations act in accordance with these Principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security.
 7. Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.

⁷⁰ Resolution 377A(V), “Uniting for peace” adopted by the General Assembly on November 3, 1950. [https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/377\(V\)](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/377(V)), [retrieved July 9, 2025].

⁷¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, March 2, 2022 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/ES-11/L.1 and A/ES-11/L.1/Add.1)] ES-11/1. Aggression against Ukraine. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/ES-11/1>, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

⁷² Key Uniting for Peace Resolutions on Russia’s invasion:

1. A/RES/ES-11/1 (March 2022)

Passed during the 11th Emergency Special Session.

Vote: 141 in favor, 5 against, 35 abstentions.

Content:

Condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Demanded immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces.

Reaffirmed Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

2. A/RES/ES-11/6 (February 2023)

Marked the first anniversary of the invasion.

Vote: 141 in favor, 7 against, 32 abstentions.

Content:

Reiterated the call for Russia’s withdrawal.

2. Lichtenstein also introduced a resolution (A/77/L.52) in the 76th Session of the General Assembly, GA/12417 on April 26, 2022, after further criticism of the Security Council's inaction on the war in Ukraine, with the purpose of holding the P5 Council members accountable for their use of the veto.

The General Assembly adopted the resolution unanimously, requiring its President to convene a meeting of the Assembly within ten working days of the exercise of a veto in the Security Council by one or more Permanent Members, for a debate on the situation on which the veto was cast, unless the Assembly is already meeting in an Emergency Special Session on that situation.

For this purpose, the Assembly invited the Council, under Arti. 24 (3) of the Charter, to submit a special report to the Assembly on the use of the veto, at least 72 hours before the debate is to take place.⁷³

Despite these initiatives, however, the United Nations has been unable to bring an end to the fighting in Ukraine in over three years since Russian troops entered that country in its “special military operation.” It is also worth noting that 11 *Emergency Special Sessions* of the UN General Assembly were convened between 1956 and 2014, without achieving any significant results.⁷⁴

1. Preparing for a UN Conference under Art.109, to review and alter the Charter

Despite the difficulties that convening a General Assembly session under Art. 109 of the UN Charter will undoubtedly face, there is no realistic alternative if one is to restore the capability of the United Nations to meet the needs defined in the Charter.

It is worth noting that the China has contributed meaningfully to the debate on global governance in the past decade with its *Global Development Initiative*,⁷⁵ *Global Security Initiative*⁷⁶ and *Global Civilization Initiative*,⁷⁷ and its *Proposal of the People's Republic of China for the Reform and Development of Global Governance*,⁷⁸ the last of which Beijing delivered in anticipation of the *UN Summit of the Future* in September 2024. Proposing that these be studied, interrogated and discussed *en route* to, and in, a UN General Assembly session under Art. 109 does not constitute endorsement of the specifics of the proposals, but does suggest that they merit careful scrutiny and discussion.

Emphasized the need for a just and lasting peace in line with the UN Charter.

Called for accountability for war crimes.

3. A/RES/ES-11/7 and A/RES/ES-11/8 (February 2025)

Adopted on the third anniversary of the invasion.

Two competing resolutions:

L.10 (Ukraine and EU-backed): Reaffirmed Ukraine's sovereignty and demanded Russia's withdrawal. Passed with 93 votes in favor, 18 against, 65 abstentions.

L.11 (US-backed): Initially omitted references to Russian aggression but was amended to include them. Passed with 93 in favor, 8 against, 73 abstentions

⁷³ General Assembly Adopts Landmark Resolution Aimed at Holding Five Permanent Security Council Members Accountable for Use of Veto, GA/12417. Seventy-sixth Session, 69th & 70th Meetings, April 26, 2022. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12417.doc.htm>, [retrieved July 9, 2025].

⁷⁴ Emergency Special Sessions. General Assembly of the United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency.shtml>, [retrieved July 9, 2025]

⁷⁵ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Global Development Initiative Building on 2030 SDGs for Stronger, Greener and Healthier Global Development (Concept Paper). September 21, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/GDI_140002/wj/202406/P020240606606193448267.pdf

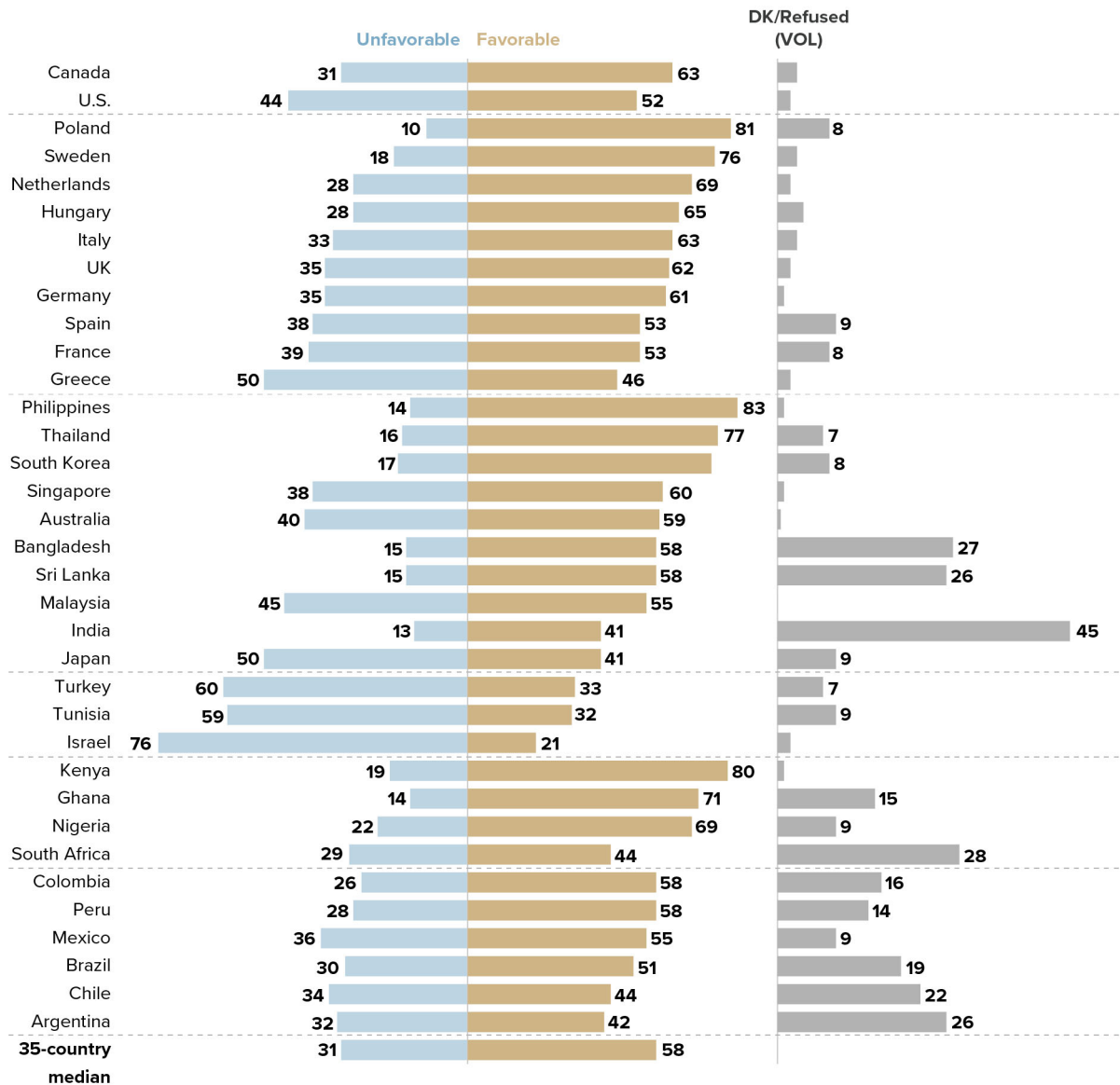
⁷⁶ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper. February 21, 2023. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html

⁷⁷ Wang, Yingwu. Implementing the Global Civilization Initiative to Write a New Chapter of World Civilizations. May 6, 2023. http://cm.china-embassy.gov.cn/fra/zxxx/202305/t20230506_11071361.htm

⁷⁸ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance. September 13, 2023. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367498.html

People around the World generally see the UN more Favorably than not

% who have a(n) ____ opinion of the United Nations



Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

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A recent survey undertaken by the Pew Research Center indicated that citizens in most countries around the world have a generally favorable opinion of the United Nations. The 35-country median in the Spring 2024 Pew Research Global Attitudes Survey is 58% favorable and 31% unfavorable.

Most European countries surveyed record a favorable view – Greece being the exception; Japan was the only Asian country to reflect a predominantly unfavorable assessment, although high percentages of respondents in Bangladesh (27%), Sri Lanka (26%) and India (45%) were uncertain of their views.

All African and Latin American countries surveyed had predominantly favorable views of the UN, although South African respondents recorded a high (28%) level of uncertainty.

Tunisia (59%), Turkey (60%) and Israel (76%) expressed strongly unfavorable views

2. Challenges within the US Political and Normative System

Persons in the “Western” democratic tradition have taken US leadership of the “West” largely for granted since the end of World War II in 1945/46. Without the Marshall Plan,⁷⁹ the reconstruction of Europe would have been far more difficult, and the emergence of the European Union from its origins in the European Coal and Steel Community would have been improbable.⁸⁰ The United States was dubbed *l’hyperpuissance* by Hubert Védrine after the fracturing of the USSR in 1991.⁸¹

Mistakes made due to hubris in the period after 1991 culminated in the decision of the George W. Bush administration to invade Iraq in 2003 without UN Security Council authorization, dividing NATO allies in Europe, and triggering further fractures in the Broader Middle East.⁸² The onset of the *Global Financial Crisis* in 2008, with its origins on the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the United States a year earlier, and the *Occupy Wall Street* protests⁸³ which began in 2011, deepened divides within societies, but also drew major powers together in the G8, and notably in the G20 in 2008, to address the financial crisis and its consequences.

These circumstances long enabled US citizens born since World War II to believe in the exceptionalism of their society, and to assume that their premier economic position and dominant military power reflected their inherently superior status. Since the end of the global financial crisis, however, that ethos has been crumbling, also in the face of widening social divides due to the increasing financialization of the economy. President Trump’s election in 2016 reflected the disruption of the US and international political order established after 1946. While the Biden presidency saw a reversion to familiar principles and policies, President Trump’s victory in 2024 reflected both the waning appeal of conventional policies in the face of demographic and technological disruption, and the opportunity to advance simplistic populist nativism as a political response to social discontent.

The most recent polls reflect the sharp political divides in the US polity, with most US citizens still celebrating their heritage, but far fewer their present circumstance: A 2024 Pew survey found that 72% of US respondents felt their country was once a good model for the world, while only 19% believed that it still is. Likewise, recent decades of rising political polarization have converted the two-party system, a source of institutional strength designed to protect against anti-democratic impulses, into a core weakness, now exploited to consolidate power.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Marshall Plan (1948), National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/marshall-plan>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

⁸⁰ History of the European Union 1945-59. European Union. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59_en, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

⁸¹ Védrine, Hubert, *L’hyperpuissance américaine*. <https://www.hubertvedrine.net>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

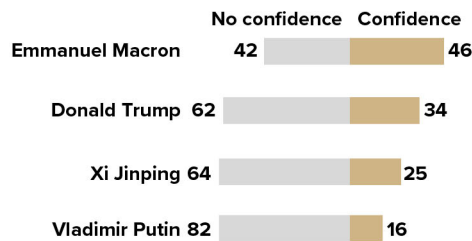
⁸² The Iraq War 2003 – 2011, Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/iraq-war>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

⁸³ Occupy Wall Street. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Occupy-Wall-Street>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

⁸⁴ Campante, Filipe and Ray Fisman. The Institutions Protecting US Democracy Have Turned Into Traps: America’s two-party system has long been intended as a barrier against an extremism. Polarization is making it an accelerant instead. Bloomberg, July 3, 2025. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-07-03/us-democracy-s-strengths-turned-out-to-be-weaknesses?cmpid=070525_WKNDNL&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=250705&utm_campaign=weekendnl, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

The most recent Gallup poll records that, while registered Republicans continue to celebrate their “American” identity, Democrats’ pride in “being American” tumbled to 42% in early 2020, at the end of President Trump’s first term, and to 38% in 2025, early in his second.⁸⁵

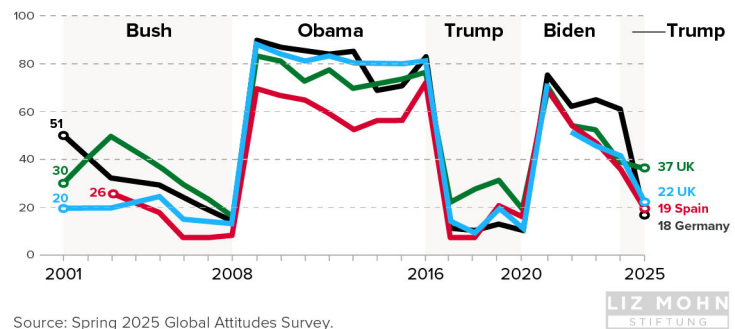
Confidence in Macron, Trump, Xi and Putin
Median percent who have confidence in ___ to do the right thing regarding world affairs



Note: Percentages are medians based on 24 countries.
Source: Spring 2025 Global Attitudes Survey.

Confidence in U.S. Presidents in Western Europe

Percent who have confidence in each U.S. president to do the right thing regarding world affairs



Source: Spring 2025 Global Attitudes Survey.

Likewise, current Pew research reflects that, across 24 countries outside of the US, majorities said that they consider Trump to be “arrogant” (80%), “a strong leader” (67%) and “dangerous” (65%).

Far lower percentages believe that he is “honest” (28%), “well-qualified” (41%), “diplomatic” (41%) or “able to understand complex problems” (42%).

Confidence in Trump is lowest in Canada, Mexico and Western Europe, with the exception of Hungary. He fared better in Israel, India, Nigeria and Kenya.⁸⁶ Clearly, political division at home, and the President’s profile abroad, does not position the United States to lead reform of the global system.⁸⁷

XI The Role of the EU in Reconstruction

The Pew Center poll also recorded the shifts in the confidence of Western European societies in recent US presidents, and the relative levels of confidence of the global sample in Presidents Trump, Macron (the only European leader recorded in the poll), Xi and Putin. Not surprisingly, Western European publics recorded markedly higher confidence in Presidents Obama and Biden (at the beginning of his term), although that fell sharply after the half-way mark. Global publics recorded most confidence in President Macron (46%), followed by Trump (34%), and Xi (24%), with Putin (16%) bringing up the rear.

This suggests that there is a case to be made for leadership by one or several EU leaders in helping to reconstruct the global order at this fragile moment. To do that successfully, Europe will need to capitalize on its comparative advantage and distinctive competencies. These are clearly, as I argued at the Trilogue in 2024, “effective deployment of diplomacy, focused on conflict prevention, management and resolution,

⁸⁵ Sanders, Linley and Amelia Thomson-Deveaux. National pride is declining in America. And it’s splitting by party lines. AP News, June 30, 2025. https://apnews.com/article/patriotism-america-national-pride-decline-poll-gallup-0411dd2f28329a6b640d404db8626d3f?user_email=0dbab6d3feab7934bc66ee62a8b5f69f671bbcf03257178a197cfb861e3b93c&utm_medium=Afternoon_Wire&utm_source=Sailthru_AP&utm_campaign=AfternoonWire_June30_2025&utm_term=Afternoon%20Wire, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

⁸⁶ Wike, Richard, Jacob Poushter, Laura Silver and Janell Fetterolf. U.S. Image Declines in Many Nations Amid Low Confidence in Trump. Pew Research Center, June 11, 2025. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2025/06/11/us-image-declines-in-many-nations-amid-low-confidence-in-trump/>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

⁸⁷ Lawler, Dave. Trump seen as arrogant, dangerous and strong. Axios, June 11, 2025. https://www.axios.com/2025/06/11/trump-strong-dangerous-leader-global-poll?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiospm&stream=top, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

and, in association with other advanced economies and major emerging powers, on rebalancing the global economic system, and ... the global institutional architecture.”⁸⁸

1. EU Engagement with China – and Possible Means to End the War in Ukraine

As European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa prepare for their summit with Chinese leaders later in July, tensions between the EU and China have intensified.

While many in the EU believe that China has supported Russia’s war in Ukraine, Beijing maintains that it has not provided lethal weapons to either party in the conflict and has exercised strict controls on exports of dual-use items. It asserts that China’s manufacturing capacity would have enabled Russia to overwhelm, Ukrainian forces if Beijing had supported Moscow’s war effort. China, however, also argues that it seeks peaceful ties with Russia, with which it shares a 4,300-kilometer border, as this is essential for China’s prosperity.

While negotiations on economic relations between the EU and the PRC will necessarily be robust, reflecting the interests of each party,⁸⁹ it is possible to craft a constructive partnership to accelerate an end to the war in Ukraine, and a durable peace.

Beijing’s actions after President’s Putin’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 did not indicate support for Russia’s invasion. China’s strong aversion to interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states – a pillar of PRC foreign and national security policy – is reflected in the statement by Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Munich Security Conference on February 19, 2022: “The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of any country should be respected and safeguarded ... Ukraine is no exception.”

President Xi Jinping spoke in the same vein in video calls with Presidents Macron and Scholz on March 8; President Biden on March 19; and with EC Commission President von der Leyen and then-Council President Michel, on April 1, 2022.

After Beijing had issued a 12-point *Statement on a Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis* on February 24, 2023, outlining a proposal to end the war, premised on an immediate ceasefire, and an end to further weapons deliveries to both parties by foreign actors,⁹⁰ EC President von der Leyen accompanied President Macron to Beijing for discussions with President Xi early in April 2023. These discussions, while constructive, have not yet led to a ceasefire, or an end to the war.

Creation of a viable *European Security Architecture*, premised on the principles of the European Security Treaty that was under negotiation in 2009, and which incorporates the principle of “indivisible security” also endorsed by Beijing, will be essential for this purpose.⁹¹ This should be embedded in a UN Security Council resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter, that will effectively preclude any party to the treaty, including President Putin, from violating Art. 2 (4), read together with Art. 2 (7) of the Charter, vis-à-vis

⁸⁸ Cleary, Sean. UN Pact for the Future – International Cooperation in a Polarized World. In: Liz Mohn Stiftung (ed.), International Cooperation in a Polarized World – in Search for a Contemporary Structure, Background Paper Trilogue Salzburg 2023. Gütersloh 2023, p. 54–74.

⁸⁹ Zhou, Xiaoming, A few suggestions for the EU if it sincerely wants to reset China ties, South China Morning Post, July 4, 2025. https://www.scmp.com/opinion/china-opinion/article/3316776/few-suggestions-eu-if-it-sincerely-wants-reset-china-ties?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article, [retrieved July 7, 2025].

⁹⁰ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs. China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis, February 24, 2023. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367485.html, [retrieved July 11, 2025]

⁹¹ The draft of the European Security Treaty, President of Russia. November 29, 2009. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/6152>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

Ukraine or any European state.⁹² Securing Beijing's cooperation in implementing a settlement on this basis, and its commitment to guaranteeing enforcement through the UN Security Council, would powerfully influence President Putin, and greatly strengthen the effect of a peace agreement.

Such engagement should be conducted with care, as Beijing's present position on Ukraine is not entirely clear.⁹³ That said, the EU is best placed to explore and interrogate it at present with a view to securing a durable peace. Every political project of substance must address not only the symptoms evident in a crisis, but also the underlying causes. Palliative care, responding only to superficial pain, offers no solution.

European leaders at the fourth Ukraine reconstruction conference in Rome on July 10 expressed uncertainty about the territorial extent of Ukraine under a future peace plan. The present US-led plan is expected to include territorial concessions by Ukraine. A report by the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) has indicated that the reconstruction costs in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson would amount to some €200 billion and would accrue to Russia if Ukraine is required to concede control of the four oblasts in a peace settlement.⁹⁴ This has important implications.

2. Ensuring European Security

Meanwhile, France and the UK have announced a nuclear security agreement, ensuring that they will collaborate to deploy nuclear weapons if Europe faces a major military threat. Europe must also assess, mitigate and manage the risks inherent in Russia's military expansion, by harmonizing defense industrial standards, and facilitating joint production and procurement. Sharing costs to limit wasteful expenditure and accelerate the programs needed to advance a common defense strategy is clearly essential. Increasing national defense spending will be wasteful without an effective common policy. Translating that into collaborative production and procurement is the only cost-effective path.⁹⁵

3. Rebalancing the Transatlantic Alliance

There is likewise a need to rebalance the Transatlantic alliance, whose strength in future will depend on its ability to bridge political divides, harness technological innovation and deliver solutions to the defining challenges of the 21st century. The decisions made by the United States, Europe and their allies will determine if the partnership remains a pillar of global order or is sidelined by the shifting balance of power. The German Marshall Fund of the United States convened a *Transatlantic Taskforce* to craft recommendations to rebalance and strengthen the alliance over the five years to 2030, leading to five

⁹² UN Charter: Article 2

The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the Purposes stated in Article 1, shall act in accordance with the following Principles.

4. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

7. Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.

⁹³ Toth, Mark and Jonathan Sweet. Xi Jinping is waging a proxy war against Trump in Ukraine. The Hill, July 10, 2025. <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/5391779-xi-jinping-is-waging-a-proxy-war-against-trump-in-ukraine/>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

⁹⁴ Wintour, Patrick. Concern that Ukraine will be split up casts shadow over reconstruction talks: Leaders meet in Rome amid forecasts that more than a third of rebuild costs could fall to Russia if Ukraine concedes land. The Guardian, July 10, 2025. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/10/concern-ukraine-will-be-split-up-reconstruction-talks?utm_term=.68708fc6144877038913166aa20f616d&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayUK&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTUK_email, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

⁹⁵ Blockmans, Steven. Roadmap Towards a Common Defence for Europe. Centre for European Policy Studies Policy Brief, 2025.

strategic steps to rebalance the alliance for adaptive, resilient cooperation in a fast-evolving landscape. The taskforce called for implementation of a phased and orderly security transition plan; delivery of high-impact joint US-European industrial projects; streamlining procurement and strengthening innovation; demonstrating the benefits of transatlantic competitiveness to domestic constituencies; and forging strategic partnerships beyond the transatlantic core.⁹⁶

4. Capitalizing on, and Strengthening, Economic Capability

Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank, has argued that Europe must strengthen its geopolitical credibility, economic resilience and legal and institutional integrity if it is to play its proper role – and enhance the standing of the euro – in this fractured era.⁹⁷ She has recommended completing the single market, reducing regulatory burdens and building a robust capital markets union, and argues that strategic industries – including green technologies and defense – should be supported with coherent, EU-wide policies and financed jointly.

To capitalize on the EU's reputation for respect for the rule of law and the independence of key institutions, she argues for reform of the EU's institutional structure to eliminate the blocking power of a single veto by adopting more qualified majority voting in critical areas. President Lagarde's proposals must be read together with the earlier reports on strengthening the EU's institutional capability, and competitiveness, by Enrico Letta⁹⁸ and Mario Draghi⁹⁹.

5. Defense and Revitalization of the UN system

To mitigate the risks of the erosion of the rules-based international order, Europe will also need to act more decisively in defense of the United Nations system, because of the assault on the organization by the Trump administration. The US has been the largest contributor, providing 22% of the UN's core budget, but shortly after President Trump's inauguration, the White House announced a six-month review of US membership of all international organizations and treaties, aiming to reduce or end US funding in August, before the opening of the General Assembly in September, to those that the administration deems misaligned with US interests.

The closure of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and sharp reductions in most aid programs have greatly weakened UN-related humanitarian programs. The removal of some 1,300 persons from the US State Department is likely to exacerbate this.¹⁰⁰ The core concept of collective responsibility for the principles of the UN Charter – preserving global peace and security, protecting human rights and advancing development – is under threat, and those who place stock in its importance

⁹⁶ de Hoop Scheffer, Alexandra, Georgina Wright, Martin Quencez and Eamon Drumm. Rebalancing Transatlantic Relations – A Roadmap for 2030. German Marshall Fund of the United States. June 24, 2025. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/rebalancing-transatlantic-relations-roadmap-2030>, [retrieved July 12, 2025].

⁹⁷ Lagarde, Christine, Europe's "global euro" moment. ECB Blog, June 17, 2025. <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/blog/date/2025/html/ecb.blog20250617~7de14a39c3.en.html>, [retrieved June 30, 2025].

⁹⁸ Letta, Enrico. Much More Than a Market: Speed, Security, Solidarity – Empowering the Single Market to Deliver a Sustainable Future and Prosperity for All EU Citizens. Report commissioned by the European Council. Brussels, 2024.

⁹⁹ Draghi, Mario. The Future of European Competitiveness: A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the EU, 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Lee, Matthew, Farnoush Amiri and Manuel Balce Ceneta. State Department lays off over 1,300 employees under Trump administration plan. AP News, July 12, 2025. https://apnews.com/article/layoffs-diplomats-state-department-trump-rubio-bfdb867b7bd5b6570819d404a7782e?user_email=0dbab6d3feab7934bc66ee62a8b5f69f671bbcf03257178a197cfb861e3b93c&utm_medium=APNews_Alerts&utm_source=Sailthru_AP&utm_campaign=NewsAlert_Jul11_2025_07:37AM&utm_term=AP%20News%20Alerts

must step into the breach.¹⁰¹ This is another area in which the EU can find common cause with China and other states. Beijing has prioritized the UN Charter – not least because of its emphasis on the sovereign equality of states, and the principle of non-interference in their international affairs – in all its international policy documents in the past decade.¹⁰²

6. EU Commitment to the Protection and Evolution of National Democracy

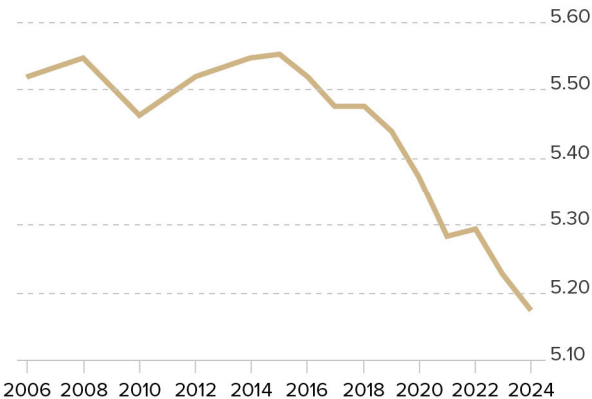
The principles on which the United Nations was founded in 1945, other than the veto powers reserved to the five permanent members of the Security Council, are derived from the principles of democratic governance familiar to the Western founding partners. These principles were further developed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A),¹⁰³ and elaborated in the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.¹⁰⁴ They are premised on the *sovereignty of the people*, and the obligation of each state to protect, and facilitate, the well-being of its citizens and those legally within its borders.¹⁰⁵

7. Democratic Decline

The Economist Intelligence Unit’s (EIU) report on the state of democracy in 2024¹⁰⁶ clarifies the decline of representative democracy over the past decade.

Charting democracy’s ups and downs, 2006 to 2024

Global average Democracy Index score out of 10 (10 = best)



Source: EIU.

Democracy Index 2024

by regime type

	No. of countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	25	15.0	6.6
Flawed democracies	46	27.5	38.4
Hybrid regimes	36	21.6	15.7
Authoritarian regimes	60	35.9	39.2

Note: “World” population refers to the total population of the 167 geographies (165 countries and 2 territories) covered by the Index. Since this excludes only micro states, this is nearly equal to the entire estimated world population.

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¹⁰¹ Tisdall, Simon. The UN is our best defence against a third world war. As Trump wields the axe, who will fight to save it? The Guardian, July 6, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jul/06/the-un-is-our-best-defence-against-a-third-world-war-as-trump-wields-the-axe-who-will-fight-to-save-it>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

¹⁰² See e.g. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Proposal of the People’s Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance, September 13, 2023. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367498.html, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

¹⁰³ United Nations. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

¹⁰⁴ United Nations. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Adopted 16 December 1966, By General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].
United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. https://treaties.un.org/doc/treaties/1976/03/19760323%2006-17%20am/ch_iv_04.pdf, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

¹⁰⁵ Cleary, Sean. Rebuild After the Crisis on Three Pillars: Equity, Security and Sustainability. 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit. Democracy Index 2024: What’s wrong with representative democracy? <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2024/>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

At present, only 6.6% of the world population, in 24 countries, live in what the EIU characterizes as *full democracies*, with another 38.4% in 46 countries described as *flawed democracies*. Over half the world's population – 54.9% in 96 countries – are in countries governed by what the EIU classifies as either *authoritarian* or *hybrid regimes*.

The US administration's radical deconstruction of USAID and its curtailment of policies related to the promotion of democracy abroad raises the question of what the European Union ought to do to support the principles on which the member states and the Union itself are founded. Some argue that democracy-promotion programs no longer enjoy support in many once-committed democratic governments, as citizen support for democracy has weakened in those countries.

The EIU has noted that while over 70 countries, inhabited by some 4.2 billion people, more than half the world's population, held elections in 2024, including eight of the ten most populous countries – Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia and the US – elections were cancelled in Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Kuwait, Mali and Romania, while dozens of polls were neither free nor fair, with ballot-rigging in Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Iran, Mozambique, Pakistan, Russia and Venezuela.

The EIU argues that governments and parties in many democracies have become estranged from their citizens and are no longer responsive to their needs. In many advanced democracies, governments no longer consult the public on important issues, leading large numbers of citizens to think that democracy, in its present form, is not working for them. The rise of populist parties over the past decade reflects problems with traditional parties and the systems they have developed. These problems have arguably reached a tipping point, requiring discussion of necessary changes to make political systems truly representative and to restore trust in democracy.

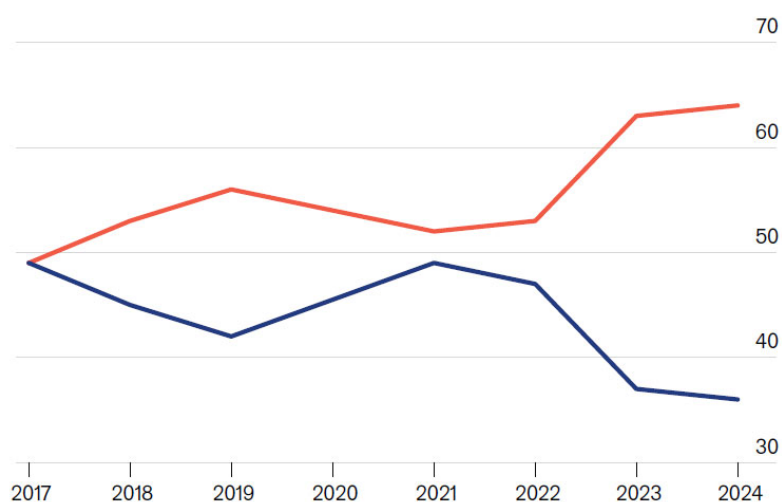
Satisfaction with democracy across 12 high-income, democratic countries is down in recent years

Median % who are satisfied with the way democracy is working in their country

— Satisfied
— Dissatisfied

Note: Percentages are medians across 12 advanced economies: Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Starting in 2021, U.S. data is from Pew Research Center's online American Trends Panel; older data is from telephone surveys.

Source: Pew Research Center.



8. Addressing the Future of Democracy

In an informative paper, Thomas Carothers, Rachel Kleinfeld and Richard Youngs of the Carnegie Endowment have discussed six important issues that require deep reflection and active engagement by persons who support democracy to overcome the malaise. They define these as: leadership and

coordination, strategic differentiation and prioritization, the West-rest divide, narratives and models, methods, and overall framing.¹⁰⁷

It can be argued, however, that representative democracy is no longer systemically appropriate in a digital age and that a greater degree of direct participation by citizens in policymaking, governance and even forms of adjudication – by expanding the role of digitally-enabled, direct democracy – is both feasible and necessary to re-engage younger voters and respond more effectively to citizens' needs.¹⁰⁸

We can do this in increasingly sophisticated ways by employing a range of digital twins of socio-ecological systems at different scales, to allow us to hypothesize, postulate, test, process feedback, adapt and learn how best to advance participatory resilience and inter-generational sustainability.¹⁰⁹

XII Non-traditional Security Threats

The threats to humanity are, of course, not limited to those arising from military aggression, economic mercantilism or the implosion of the social contract within states and national communities.

The *Institute for Economics and Peace* has identified 50 countries, home to 1.3 billion people, facing severe ecological threats, from water scarcity to food insecurity, which are multipliers of social tensions and catalysts for conflict. Actionable solutions exist: Targeted climate finance can yield transformative results, and water capture and agricultural enhancement can prevent resource conflicts, making a compelling case for preventive action. Relatively modest investments, properly directed, can yield significant returns in both climate resilience and social stability.¹¹⁰

But we are far from a satisfactory equilibrium. Ahead of COP29 in Baku, the World Meteorological Organization reported that the global average temperature from January-September 2024 was 1.54°C above the pre-industrial level, with the preceding 10 years being the warmest on record, with ocean heat rising, and Antarctic-sea ice at the second lowest level on record, while glacier loss was accelerating. Extreme weather and climate events have led to massive economic and human losses.¹¹¹

The *IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*¹¹² in 2018 warned that global warming had to be contained to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels to avert catastrophic disruption. Climate-related risks to growth, livelihoods, health, food security and water supply will rise with warming of 1.5°C from those in 2018 and increase dramatically further with 2°C. The decline in marine fisheries with 2°C of warming will be double that at 1.5°C. Maize harvests will fall by over twice as much. Insect ranges, including those of pollinators, will decline threefold. Sea levels will rise by a further 5 centimeters, putting another 10 million people at risk. The number of people experiencing extreme heat with 2°C warming will be double that of a rise of 1.5°C.

¹⁰⁷ Carothers, Thomas, Rachel Kleinfeld and Richard Youngs. What Future for International Democracy Support? Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 7, 2025. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/07/what-future-for-international-democracy-support?lang=en>, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

¹⁰⁸ Cleary, Sean. Governance and Government, Festschrift. ResearchGate, July 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367253796_Governance_and_Government_Festschrift/stats, [retrieved July 11, 2025].

¹⁰⁹ Building a highly accurate digital twin of the Earth. Destination Earth - <https://destination-earth.eu/>, [retrieved July 31, 2025].

¹¹⁰ Institute for Economics & Peace. Ecological Threat Report 2024 – COP 29 Edition. Ecological Threat Report 2024, 5th ed., 2024.

¹¹¹ World Meteorological Organization. State of the Global Climate 2024. WMO Statement on the State of the Global Climate, No. 1368, 2025.

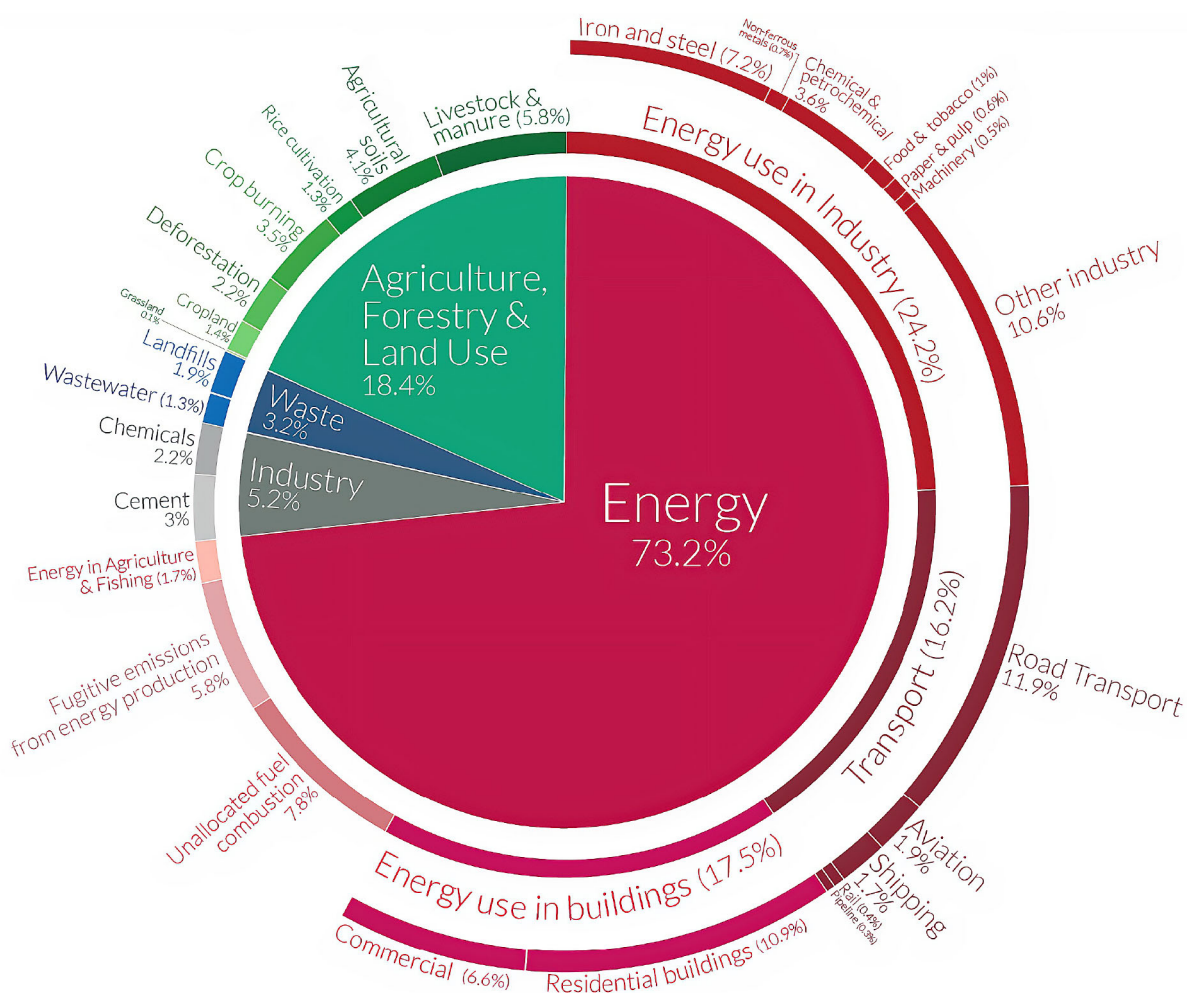
¹¹² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Special Report Global Warming of 1.5 °C. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

In 2018, the IPCC said that limiting warming to 1.5°C and achieving *aggregate net zero* greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 required us to slash global emissions by 2030, 45% below 2010 levels. To achieve that, it said, we shall have to remove 1,000 gigatons of CO₂ from the atmosphere by 2100, through terrestrial carbon sinks, bioenergy coupled to carbon capture and sequestration, and direct air capture.¹¹³

Achieving this requires a sophisticated combination of *mitigation* – aligning technological solutions with appropriate finance and behavioral incentives to contain emissions – and *adaptation* – enabling vulnerable, low emitting, less-developed societies to adapt to the harm already wrought and still being caused by GHG emissions in the advanced and highly-industrialized emerging economies, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.¹¹⁴

Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector

This is shown for the year 2016 – global greenhouse gas emissions were 49.4 billion tonnes CO₂eq.

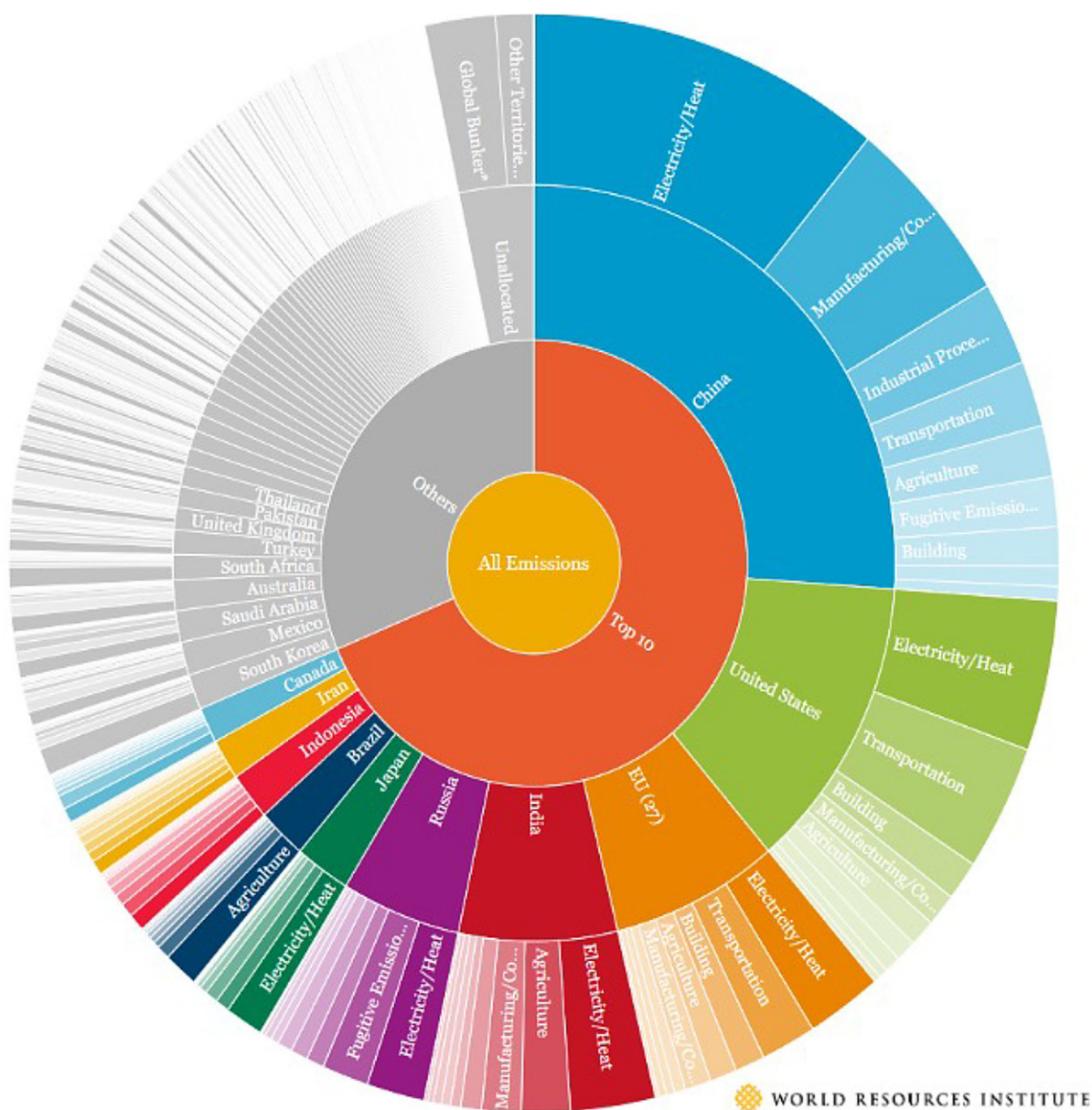


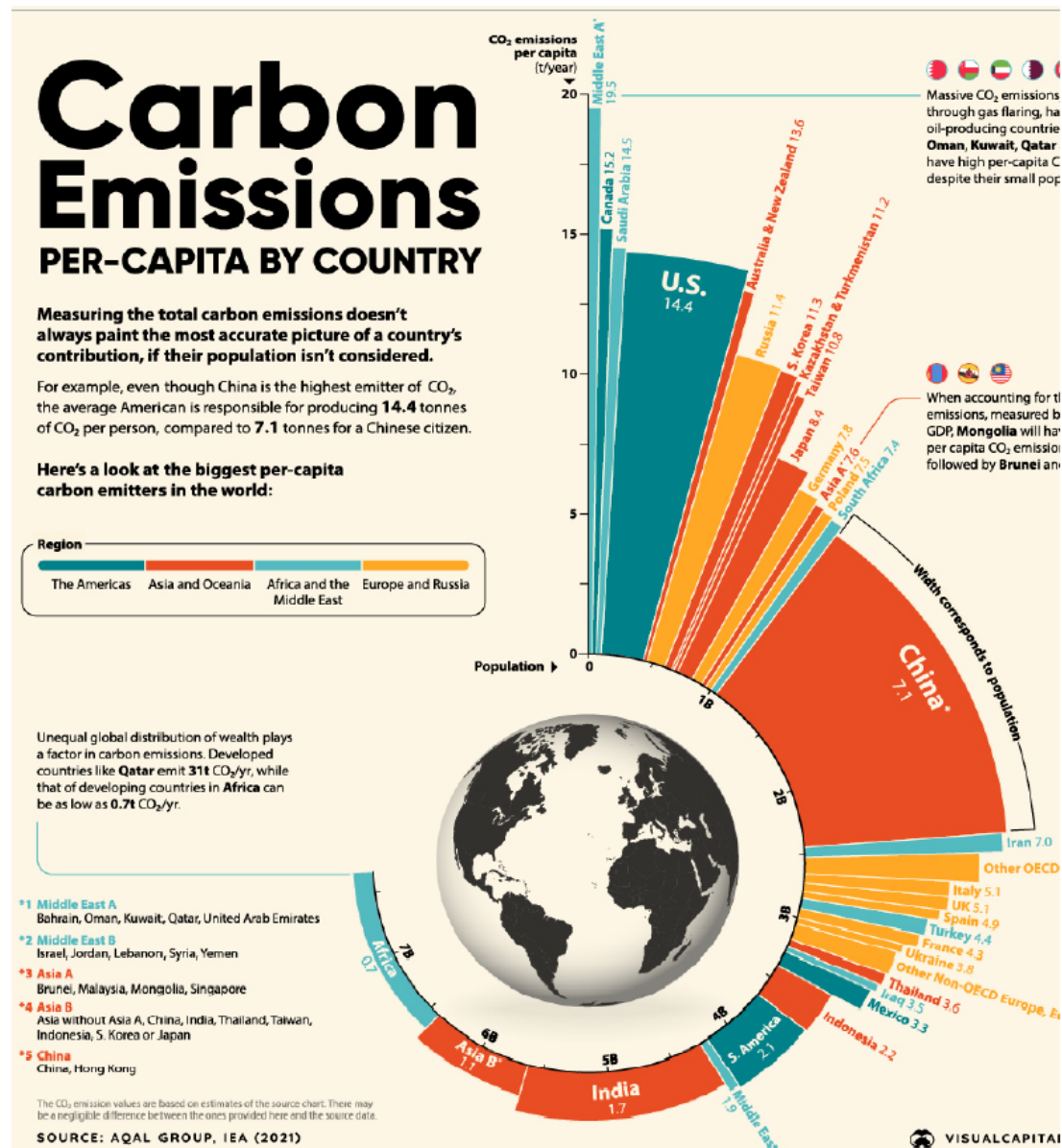
Source: Ourworldindata.org – Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems.
Climate Watch, the World Resources Institute (2020). Licensed under CC-BY by the author Hannah Ritchie (2020).

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¹¹³ Cleary, Sean. Carpe Diem! Climate Innovation Summit, Dublin, 2018.

¹¹⁴ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The 17 Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>





Many delegates from Developing Countries left COP29 in Baku disappointed that the \$300 billion pledged by developed countries for adaptation fell far short of the estimated \$1.3 trillion required each year until 2035 to enable developing countries to shift to a low-carbon economy and adapt to climate extremes. The shortfall was sharpened by the statement that a “wide variety of sources” would make up the shortfall. COP29 President Babayev acknowledged that the deal was “imperfect,” but said it was “a major step forward.” The Chair of the African Group of Negotiators, Ali Mohamed, described the agreement as “too little, too late, and too ambiguous in its delivery.”

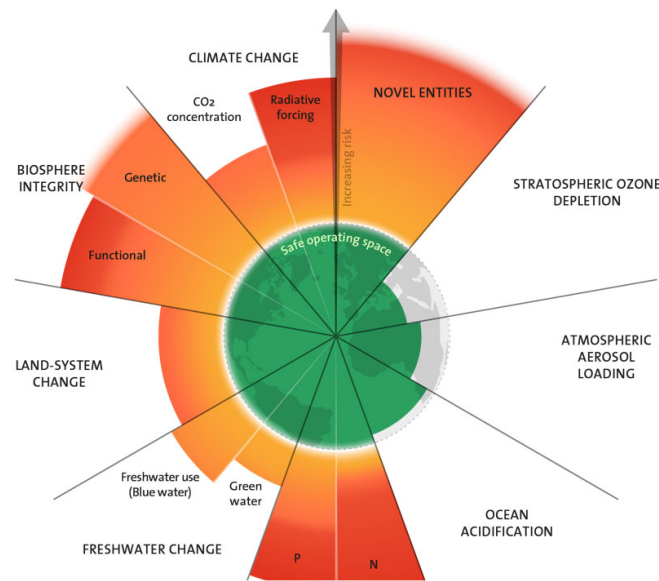
Even more critical as a threat to international security is the fact that six of the nine planetary boundaries defined by Johan Rockström of the *Stockholm Resilience Centre* and his co-authors in and after 2007¹¹⁵ have already been breached.

¹¹⁵ Rockström, J., W. Steffen, K. Noone et al. A Safe Operating Space for Humanity. *Nature*, Vol. 461, 2009, pp. 472–475; Rockström J., K. Vohland, W. Lucht, H. Lotze-Campen, E. U. von Weizsäcker and T. Banuri. Making progress within and beyond borders. In: Schellnhuber, H.-J., N. Stern, M. Molina et al. (eds.). *Global sustainability: A Nobel cause*. Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 33–48.

Six of the nine planetary boundaries have been breached

Stockholm Resilience Centre, 13 September 2023

<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2023-09-13-all-planetary-boundaries-mapped-out-for-the-first-time-six-of-nine-crossed.html>



The integrated impact of these breaches cannot be calculated, but the scale of their effects in a complex, (partially) adaptive system comprising *humanity in the bio-geosphere* will be hugely disruptive.

XIII Need for Reconstitution of Coherent and Constructive “Collective Action”

It is clearly impossible to address the range of systemic risks¹¹⁶ that confront humanity, or to manage the *global commons*¹¹⁷ and *global public goods*¹¹⁸ successfully, unless we succeed in restoring an understanding of the need for, and a broad commitment to, coherent well-focused, *collective action*.

Elanor Ostrom received the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences with Oliver E. Williamson in 2009 for her “analysis of economic governance, especially the commons.” She offered eight rules for managing the commons: understanding and agreeing the scope, clarifying the rules, ensuring participatory decision making, monitoring outcomes, managing and resolving conflicts, and applying sanctions where needed.¹¹⁹

These are the same principles that underpin public international law, some parts of which are specific, being embodied in treaties, binding only on the parties to those instruments, while some are more extensive peremptory principles of international law (*jus cogens*).¹²⁰ The latter are international legal principles acknowledged by the global community as so fundamental that they cannot be violated or

¹¹⁶ World Economic Forum. The Global Risks Report 2025. https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2025.pdf; Eurasia Group. Top Risks 2025, Eurasia. <https://www.eurasiagroup.net/issues/top-risks-2025>; Prendleloup, Chloé. Energy Transitions and Ecological Security Risks. Council on Strategic Risks (Center for Climate and Security, Fellowship Briefer Series), Briefer No. 77, 2025.

¹¹⁷ Hardin, G. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, New Series, Vol. 162(3859), 1968, pp. 1243–1248; Rockström, J., L. Kotzé, S. Milutinović et al. The planetary commons: A new paradigm for safeguarding Earth-regulating systems in the Anthropocene. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2024.

¹¹⁸ Buchholz, W. and T. Sandler. Global Public Goods: A Survey. *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 59(2), 2021, pp. 488–545.

¹¹⁹ Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

¹²⁰ International Law Commission. Analytical Guide to the Work of the International Law Commission: Peremptory norms of general international law (*Jus cogens*). https://legal.un.org/ilc/guide/1_14.shtml, [retrieved July 10, 2025].

ignored.¹²¹ Extending this to the constitutional principle of the *rule of law*, the Salzburg Statement on “The Critical Role of Lawyers in Safeguarding the Rule of Law” employed the definition earlier advanced by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

The Rule of Law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions, and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency. (UNSG Kofi Annan, 2004 S/2004/616)

The Law Fellows Network asserted that the *rule of law* is essential for equal access to justice; human rights; public health; the protection and preservation of the natural environment for current and future generations; peace and security; economic development; and the responsible use and governance of technology; and defined the *Foundational Value of the Rule of Law*:

- The rule of law is the foundation for a life of freedom, without fear, where justice is accessible to all.
- The domestic rule of law is best protected in a system with separation of powers, where the law is certain and the product of an open, transparent and inclusive participatory process.
- Justice, as a key tenant of the rule of law, is inextricably linked to universal human rights and clear norms and standards. This includes the provision of access to remedy by means of an independent and impartial arbiter and representation by a competent lawyer.
- Companies both benefit from and uphold the rule of law when operating in accordance with human rights and environmental standards.
- The rule of law contributes to states’ internal and external peace and security and their economic well-being. It requires that states comply with their obligations under international law, including the prohibition on the use of force.¹²²

Applying these principles to international relations, Hedley Bull had asserted almost five decades earlier that a global society had to comprise “...a group of states, conscious of...common interests and common values...conceiv[ing] themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations to one another.”¹²³

Achieving this condition does not require all states to align all societal values, but it does require all to recognize a certain quantum of common interests that justify subordinating national discretion, in certain cases, to achieve collective purposes.

¹²¹ LegalBrief AI. Peremptory norm – Meaning in Law and Legal Documents, Examples and FAQs. <https://www.legalbriefai.com/legal-terms/peremptory-norm>, [retrieved July 10, 2025].

¹²² Salzburg Global. International Law and the Future of Nations: A Statement from Salzburg Global. Salzburg, 2025.

¹²³ Bull, H. The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics (Chapters 1–3). New York: Columbia University Press, 1977

It does not require *nations* to abandon their cultures, or *states* to abnegate their national interests, but it does require them to recognize that the *exclusive* pursuit of national interests, uncaring of the effect that this has on others, undermines aggregate human welfare.¹²⁴

International security in a highly connected world cannot be achieved by seeking to impose exclusive national, or civilizational, values by force, or by cynically asserting the superiority of particular national interests. It is only attainable through serious and honest efforts to craft a balance of interests and a normative framework that can enable human, national, regional and global security.

Coexistence by over 8 billion people on one planet demands compromise and a willingness to craft transnational détente, reflecting a recognition that the sustained application of force, or compelling economic pressure, to advance sectional interests at the expense of others is socially, economically and morally debilitating.

Only acceptance of the principle of *shared responsibility* for constructive collective action can advance global security. We must re-engage with the implications of this simple truth.¹²⁵

XIV Collective Action in the Context of Complex (Partly-)adaptive Systems

The challenge, of course, is that human societies constitute archetypally complex systems, with many strongly interdependent variables, feedback loops, extreme sensitivity to initial conditions, and a non-Gaussian distribution of outputs, all resulting in multiple (meta)stable system-states, where a small change in societal conditions can precipitate a major change in the system. This makes it impossible for governments to control outcomes, much though many might prefer to do so.

On the international scale, the challenges are exponentially greater. We are where we are today, largely because we adopted an economic model premised on exceptionally high global financial and supply chain connectivity, in pursuit of optimal economic efficiency. As societal tensions rose progressively over the past two decades, in part due to the “financialization” of many economies and weakened performance by national governments, the construct of an “international community” fractured, and the instruments of the global polity – the UN, IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organization – proved incapable of bridging the gap.

This must be urgently remedied. All periods of relative international stability over history have been characterized by a dynamic equilibrium (a “balance of power”), within a normative system whose legitimacy is accepted by all state actors capable of disturbing it. Every effort must now be made to restore that condition.

The UN Secretariat has sought to address this need over the past five years – with UN@75, through the UN Secretary-General’s report on *Our Common Agenda*,¹²⁶ and the work of the *High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism*,¹²⁷ to the *Summit of the Future* and the *Pact for the Future* that emerged

¹²⁴ Cleary, Sean. UN Pact for the Future – International Cooperation in a Polarized World. In: Liz Mohn Stiftung (ed.), *International Cooperation in a Polarized World – in Search for a Contemporary Structure*, Background Paper Trilogue Salzburg 2023. Gütersloh 2023, p. 54–74.

¹²⁵ Shrivastava, P. and S. Dixon-Declève (eds.). *Enduring Peace in the Anthropocene*. Reports to The Club of Rome series, 2025.

¹²⁶ United Nations. *Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General*. New York: United Nations, 2021.

¹²⁷ United Nations University. *Breakthrough for People and Planet: Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future*. Report of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism. Tokyo: United Nations University, 2025.

from it.¹²⁸ We must take the next steps in this process – despite all the obstacles – if we are to avoid the predictable and dangerous consequences of the conflation of nationalist populism, primitive mercantilism and surging military spending, amidst a disregard for international law¹²⁹ now upon us in the midst of an extraordinary post-industrial, bio-digital revolution.¹³⁰

The Industrial Revolution (1760–1860) – which comprised little more than the Spinning Jenny and the steam engine – bought the American and French revolutions, the Napoleonic wars, the transformation of the British political system, the end of Empires across Europe and the Mediterranean in the wake of the revolutions of 1848, and the shift in the center of global economic gravity from Asia to Western Europe. The vastly more profound and complex bio-digital revolution on which we are now embarked will have far greater economic, social and political impacts.

Managing these will require much deeper understanding of the nature, potential opportunities, evolutionary potential, and risks associated with the emerging technologies, as well as an appreciation of the purpose for which each is to be deployed, the norms that should guide its application, and the instruments and institutions required to ensure universal compliance. Avoiding a catastrophic technological arms race is imperative. The statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency¹³¹ and the Non-proliferation Treaty are instructive precursors, but the scale and speed of the evolution of digital technologies shows the limits of these instruments and the importance of more adaptive instruments.¹³²

Amidst these challenges, provocative rhetoric, unwarranted military expansion and wanton use of economic instruments that will harm the welfare of other states are both counter-productive and potentially highly dangerous.

To achieve success in this remarkable global transition, European states will have to play a leading role in an international project that should be undertaken and coordinated across the European Union¹³³, and, as far as possible, the Council of Europe¹³⁴ and the European Political Community¹³⁵. It will not be easy or cost-free – major historical transitions never are – but it is essential if we are to avert the most dangerous consequences of the present moment.

¹²⁸ United Nations. Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations. United Nations, 2024.

¹²⁹ The absence of mutually agreed rules of engagement – evident in the sense in the “Global South” that the West is applying the values and principles of the “rules-based international order” inconsistently vis-à-vis Russia in Ukraine, Israel in Gaza, Lebanon, and now Iran, and in wars in Sudan and in the Sahel – renders conflict management and resolution greatly more difficult. The erosion of widely-accepted principles of international law – including *jus cogens* – on which those seeking to mediate between conflicting parties, or use public international law to address disputes, can rely is profoundly threatening.

¹³⁰ Humanity is on the cusp of the deepest and most wide-ranging technological revolution in human history involving not only GenAI and other innovations in information technology, which pose challenges to digital trust, political processes and economic opportunities, but breakthroughs in biotechnology like AlphaFold and CRISPR-Cas9 and other transformative capabilities in genetic engineering, all converging with advances in nanotech and advanced experimentation in neuro-technologies. This conflation of transformative technologies is redefining the meaning of knowledge – long assumed to be a human prerogative, but now potentially available to generative pre-programmed transformers (GPTs) based on large language models (LLMs) which may evolve into artificial general intelligence – and thus challenges the essence of human ontology.

¹³¹ International Atomic Energy Agency. The Statute of the IAEA. <https://www.iaea.org/about/statute>, [retrieved July 12, 2025].

¹³² Kaspersen, Anja and Wendell Wallach. Envisioning Modalities for AI Governance: A Response from AIEI to the UN Tech Envoy. Artificial Intelligence & Equality Initiative. Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, September 29, 2023. <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/media/article/envisioning-modalities-ai-governance-tech-envoy>, [retrieved July 12, 2025].

¹³³ European Union. https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en, [retrieved July 1, 2025].

¹³⁴ Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal>, [retrieved May 30, 2025].

¹³⁵ EPC Observatory. <https://epc-observatory.info/what-is-the-epc/>, [retrieved May 30, 2025].

XV Reverting to the Metaphor

Circe's advice to Odysseus to sail closer to Scylla, recognizing that she would likely swallow a few of his crew, rather than risk sacrificing the whole ship and all the sailors to the fury of Charybdis, seems apt at present. It will serve no purpose, however, to seek to conceal the risks that we face.

The most challenging times require insight into context and clarity of purpose; recognition that complexity precludes certainty about the future; a determination to press forward while tacking and adjusting the sails to accommodate unforeseen conditions; and inspired leadership to cause others to follow, while learning continuously from their insights and discoveries.

Carpé diem!

XVI Summary of the Findings

- We are at an historical inflection point characterized by an unusual number of geopolitical conflicts, while the rules governing the international system are in dispute.
- This has led major state powers, notably the Russian Federation and the United States, to act militarily, politically and economically outside of the peremptory rules of the international legal system, in pursuit of what they define as their national interests. Russia has repeatedly struck civilian targets in Ukraine and caused large-scale destruction of life and property. Israel has capitalized on Washington's support to implement radical military actions in response to the terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians by Hamas on October 7, 2023, inflicting massive harm on civilians and civilian property in Gaza, and striking targets in Lebanon and Iran – including nuclear facilities in the latter – without UN Security Council authorization. The US likewise struck Iranian nuclear facilities with GBU-57A/B Massive Ordnance Penetrators and missiles without UN Security Council authorization.
- Other state actors – in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa – are unnerved and disturbed by these acts and divided in their assessment of the proper responses. The PRC and the BRICS condemned the strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. The US posture, and the support extended by other Western states to Israel's military campaign, has led to deep cynicism in many states about the meaning, and prospect of survival, of the "rules-based international order."
- The UN Security Council has been unable to act to advance its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Efforts made by the UN General Assembly under its *Uniting for Peace* mandate have been ineffectual. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), although seized of putative violations of international law in these conflicts, have been unable to effect timely outcomes, and the US administration has imposed sweeping sanctions – asset freezes and travel bans – against judges and officials of the ICC, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory.
- The US administration has imposed punitive tariffs against a large number of countries without reference to the World Trade Organization, ostensibly to secure revenue to cover the effects of tax reductions for US citizens under a law passed by Congress and signed by the President. A variety of justifications have been asserted at different times, including the existence of trade deficits with certain countries, and non-tariff measures affecting US exports. High tariffs are threatened against Brazil to induce the country's President to cause the courts to abandon prosecution of his predecessor for an attempted insurrection to overturn the results of the 2022 presidential election. Certain countries have imposed countervailing measure against the US. The continuing uncertainty associated with these actions has led the World Bank and OECD to revise growth prospects downwards for 2025 and two years thereafter.

- The US Administration has closed down USAID; sharply cut funding for hundreds of aid programs in developing and least developed countries; withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement, the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, and the World Health Organization. It has begun a formal review of its membership of UNESCO, and of all international organizations supported by the United States.
- The US President has called into question the continuing commitment of the United States to Art. 5 of the NATO Charter, demanded that all NATO allies boost their military spending to 5% of GDP by 2035, and required European NATO allies to assume primary responsibility for the defense of Ukraine, *en route* to a ceasefire and settlement of the war on terms that are to be negotiated by the US and the Russian Federation – unless the US chooses to walk away from the talks, if it appears that Russia and Ukraine will not agree on the terms.
- All this is occurring amidst a sharp decline in the appeal and efficacy of representative democracy around the world, spurring nativist populism; and on the cusp of a bio-digital technological revolution radically transforming our social, economic and political systems.

XVII Policy Recommendations

- The European Union should use the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the United Nations in 2025 to advance a General Conference of Members of the United Nations under Arts. 108 and 109 of the UN Charter in order to review the Charter to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century.
- The European Union should engage diplomatically with the PRC, in the context of Beijing's proposals to end the war in Ukraine, building on the visit to China by President Macron and President von der Leyen in April 2023, and with the United States, in the context of President Trump's proposals for a ceasefire and a durable peace, to use the draft European Security Treaty (2009), backed by a UN Security Council resolution, supported by France, the UK, US and China, to end the war in Ukraine. This should be done within the framework of a revised, constructive, transatlantic relationship, building on NATO and the OSCE, while strengthening the strategic autonomy of the EU.
- The European Union, with the support of the UK, should engage constructively with the US and the PRC, as well as the G20, to effect reform of the World Trade Organization to restore a rules-based global trading system to replace the arbitrary use of tariffs, and check the drift to nationalist-mercantilist disorder.
- The EU should reflect deeply on the weakened state of representative democracy and engage constructively with states that embrace popular sovereignty and the obligation of governments to ensure the security of their citizens and advance their well-being, and should consider how best to use emerging digital technologies to promote broader and more constructive citizen engagement and enhance the efficacy of governmental processes.
- As an adjunct to this process, the EU must increase its efforts to secure the broadest possible international agreement on the regulatory principles that will apply to the *development and deployment* of AI and related large language models (LLMs), the *norms* that must inform the principles, and the *institutions and instruments* needed to enable the constructive use of AI and related technologies, while preventing where possible – and effectively inhibiting in all cases – uses that cause societal disruption, or otherwise pose threats to safety and human security.

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