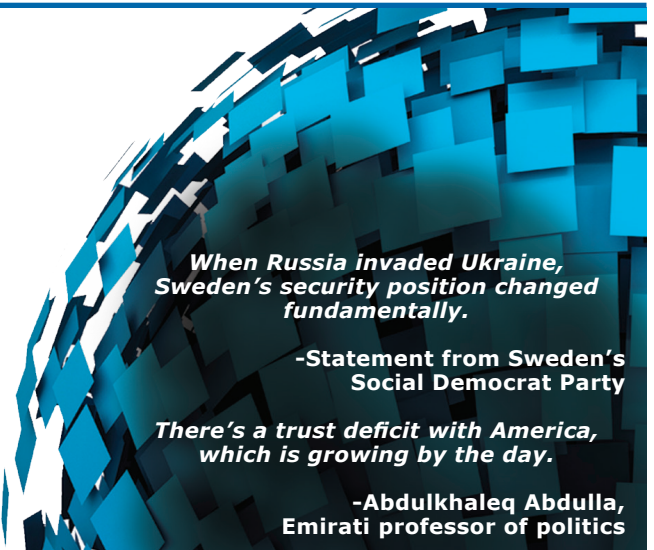


ALLIANCES MATTER, AGAIN: A RESHUFFLING OF FRIENDS, FRENEMIES AND ADVERSARIES CREATES ANOTHER NEW WORLD ORDER



CONTEXT & DYNAMICS

The ground is rumbling beneath the feet of world leaders, and that rumbling is signaling a shift in the "tectonic plates" of global alignment. The pandemic, stressed economies and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have refocused leaders' attention on what is happening in the world, and what is happening is a search for expanding alliances that can provide not just physical security but economic security and financial strength. Geo-economics has become more effective at securing new alliances, and China has become its most successful practitioner, but not the only one. Countries are looking after their own interests first, and that has started to shift alliances, especially around China, across the Middle East and into the Indian subcontinent. A challenge to globalization is surfacing from new alliances with different perspectives on how economies should grow and under what kind of rules.

IMPLICATIONS

- Oil prices will remain high even after the war in Ukraine subsides.
- The China-Russia alliance will create tensions across the Eurasian land mass.
- Countries that only look inward could get outmaneuvered in new globalized alliances.
- Whose version of globalization (e.g., universal free trade; distributed technology; trade restricted to allies; geo-economic alliances) proves most effective will benefit for decades.
- The division between countries that favor government-centered action and those that favor private-sector-centered action will become more pronounced.
- The "inefficiencies" of democratic governments will make them slow to react in a world of geo-economic diplomacy.
- Spending on defense and weapons research will continue to increase.



A Different World Order

The war in Ukraine has gotten a lot of attention in the West. That attention has led to speculation about what is coming next: a cyber-war that will take down critical infrastructure; nuclear attacks that will create more havoc in Europe; hypersonic missiles fired that will lead to the ultimate concern: World War III. What is not being discussed, however, might be just as critical in the months and years ahead. For instance, what if signals are pointing toward **a shifting order in global alliances**, a shift that could foretell conflicts ahead, as global power gets realigned?

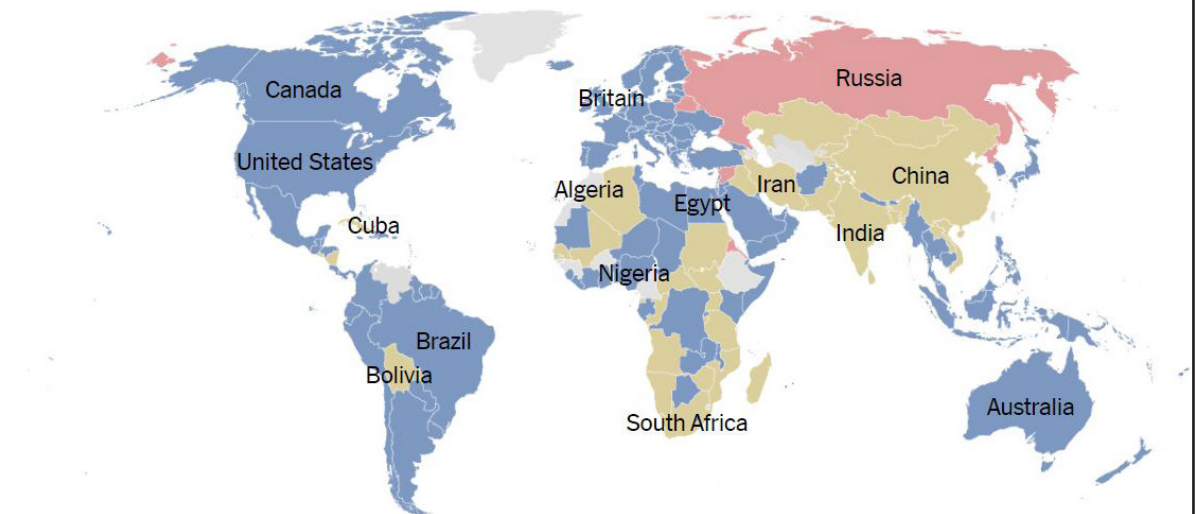
Worried citizens of the world are starting to assess how a coming battle, whether “hot” or “cold” in execution, would play out. A hint appeared when the United Nations General Assembly passed a measure condemning Russia “in the strongest terms” for its intentional breach of international law: 141 of the 195 members voted their support, while five voted against it and 35 abstained. (*Axios*, 3/2/22)

Just what those different votes indicated is important. Citizens in the countries that voted with Russia or abstained, including China, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Iraq and South Africa, represent, in aggregate, more than half of the world’s population. That is, **leaders representing a majority of the world’s population did not support the condemnation of Russia for**

its invasion. Yet those numbers also signal another way to look at that vote: **The total gross domestic product (GDP) of the 141 countries that voted to demand that Russia “unconditionally withdraws all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine” accounts for much more than half of the world’s GDP.** (*Financial Times*, 3/25/22; *New.co.uk*, 3/3/22)

Votes on UN resolution to condemn Russian invasion

■ Yes ■ No ■ Abstain



Notes: Vote took place on March 2, 2022. Some countries did not formally submit votes. • Source: United Nations • By The New York Times

The 35 nations that abstained were seeking to balance their realities with the conflicts among international powers. Thailand, for instance, has allowed its military to train with U.S., Chinese and Russian forces, and it buys weapons from all three. Bangkok, like decision-makers in other countries in the region, is acting in accordance with a popular saying in Southeast Asia: “When the elephants fight, the grass gets trampled.” (*New York Times*, 4/25/22)

So is the current international conflict between the wealthy and the poor, between the masses and the elite, between old money versus emerging money, and between those with dynamic economies and those without? Or,

more aggressively, is this a conflict between autocracy and democracy, as some rhetoricians have insisted?

Hardly. It has more to do with the ways in which individual countries are aligning themselves with countries that can supply them with what they see as **critical resources**, whether those resources are natural, military or economic. Such geo-economic connections are leading them toward new geo-political alignments. That is, as countries look out for themselves and as leaders access any method to remain in power, they are seeking ways to make their economies dynamic and their borders secure, and for many countries that means identifying other countries that can provide what is needed and align with them.

Rather than worrying only about the risks of falling into World War III, leaders of the world might need to pay more attention to efforts being made by countries away from the hot war to realize **a different world order**. An examination of these activities can clarify the risks involved.



Where Alignment Has Been

Between 2008 and 2019, world trade, relative to global GDP, actually shrank by five percentage points. Five years ago, foreign direct investment (FDI) between China and the U.S. reached \$30 billion; today, it barely

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manages \$5 billion. That last item suggests wider shifts in economic arrangements.

◆ The U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council seeks to promote the “spread of democratic, market-oriented values,” including mitigating climate change and strengthening supply chains.

◆ The CoRe Partnership, launched in 2021, brings together Japan and the U.S. to promote cooperation in new technologies, including mobile networks and biotech.

◆ China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), originally called the Silk Road Initiative, includes, as of March this year, 146 countries, some with formal agreements and others with informal accords, to support building infrastructure projects, including rail, roads, ports, airports, telecommunications and power generation. (*Economist*, 3/19/22; *Northern Miner*, 3/7/22; *Green Finance and Development Center*, 3/22)

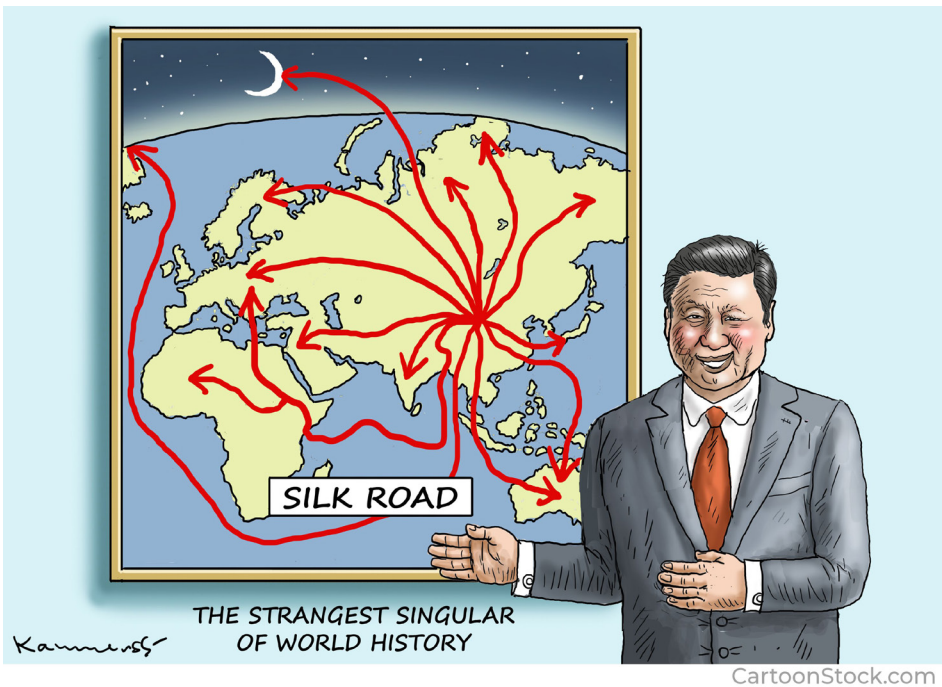
The nine BRI countries with the largest project commitments (2005-19)

Country	Spent in the 15 years US\$ billions
Pakistan	42
Saudi Arabia	32
Malaysia	26
Indonesia	26
UAE	26
Ethiopia	23
Russia	21
Algeria	21
Angola	20

Given that China's President Xi Jinping officially announced the BRI in 2013, the above chart, which starts in 2005, reveals that China was well into deploying its capital toward critical countries even before giving the initiative an official label. China's approach to the BRI is to fund infrastructure projects, and that diverges from much of other countries' international activity. For highly developed countries, the motivations behind much of their international engagement are to spread democracy, enhance free trade and aid human rights; China and its partners focus mainly on infrastructure needed to support economic activity. China's use of capital does not include pressure to install a specific form of government or to abide by a particular economic model. The reason is simple: Beijing wants to prove to the world that its model of government is effective and worthy of a global superpower. That leads to a second reason for China's international strategy: to undercut what Beijing sees as a U.S. global hegemony and to transition to a truly multipolar world, a view that Beijing shares with Moscow.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made that divergence more pronounced. For one signal of how geo-economics is influencing geo-politics, consider this: When the UN General Assembly voted to expel China's ally Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, **every country listed in the BRI chart did not vote in favor of the resolution.** They voted against it, abstained or did not vote at all. Geo-economics is leading geo-politics. (*UN News*, 4/7/22)

Something is changing in the way countries are becoming aligned, and it has less and less to do with political theory and more and more to do with economic growth. Specifically, China is the leading proponent and practitioner of this developing way of creating alliances, and Beijing's aggressiveness in the area of diplomacy and geo-economics is matched by countries in the Middle East and elsewhere as they too become assertive in expressing their own power.



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China: Leading Practitioner

In the current environment, the China-Russia arrangement deserves attention first. China invaded Vietnam in January 1979, mostly in response to the Soviet Union's political intrusion into that country. By March of that year, Deng Xiaoping had decided to declare victory and withdraw. For most of the time since then, Sino-Soviet and then Sino-Russian relations have been icy, at best. (*Guardian Weekly*, 4/1/22)

That makes the February joint announcement from Xi and Putin that Russia and China enjoy a "friendship without limits" surprising to those who had not been paying attention to Beijing and Moscow's emerging relationship.

- ◆ China has become Russia's largest source of imports and the largest destination for Russia's exports.
- ◆ China's purchase of Russian crude oil this past December surpassed its purchase of crude from Saudi Arabia (and China is Saudi Arabia's biggest oil customer).
- ◆ Six days before Russia invaded Ukraine, China announced its plans to purchase 100 million tons of Russian coal, a contract worth more than \$20 billion.
- ◆ In the days before the invasion, Chinese hackers attacked Ukraine's infrastructure, disabling key military communications systems.

◆ In the final hours before the invasion, China announced plans to purchase wheat from Russia, despite concerns about plant disease in the crop.
(*New York Times*, 2/27/22)



In 2017, Xi announced that China was entering a “new era” and that it must “take center stage in the world.” In keeping with that change in self-identity, China launched projects that have it advocating and even leading a security and economic order across the Eurasian land mass and Indian Ocean while establishing Chinese centrality in global institutions. Russia’s giant land mass and extensive fossil fuel reserves made Moscow critical to the early success of the BRI. And so, Russia agreed to “synergize” the Russian Eurasian Economic Union with China’s BRI. Essentially, China and Russia became strategic partners. (*Foreign Policy*, Summer/20; *The Diplomat*, 11/9/18 and 3/18/22)

When we last visited China’s focus on expanding alliances, in 2020, we noted that Beijing was signing an infrastructure deal with Iran for \$400 billion, expanding the BRI into Europe by signing Italy to an extensive infrastructure contract, providing funds to Pakistan and contributing to Turkey’s sovereign wealth fund to bolster that country’s sliding economy. Also, China was using institutions, such as the Silk Road Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Asia Development Bank and the Chinese Investment Corporation, as well as supporting the New Development Bank (*a.k.a.* the BRICS bank), to move money in support of the BRI. All of this we concluded served one purpose: “to form allegiances through economic agreements that will eventually affect political arrangements” (see [IF 4112](#)).

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While the world seems focused on Ukraine and the “war crimes” that Russian troops have committed there, China has used its offstage time to further its goal of taking “center stage in the world.” Even as political leaders and media in developed countries concentrate on the war in Ukraine and seek to fortify relations with allies in order to apply more sanctions on Russia, Beijing has been completing geo-economic agreements that will lead eventually to geo-political alignment. And it all starts with active diplomacy.

◆ Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi just completed a tour of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal, and then hosted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Beijing, the first trip abroad by the Russian official since his country invaded Ukraine.

◆ Wang hosted an Afghanistan-focused assembly with foreign ministers from Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

◆ President Xi spoke on the phone with the leaders of Cambodia, Indonesia and South Africa, and he spoke twice with the president-elect of South Korea, Yoon Suk-yeol.

◆ Despite ongoing Chinese disputes with Nepal and India, Wang made surprise visits to both countries.

◆ China announced a planned security deal with the Solomon Islands, a critically situated archipelago in the South Pacific, near Australia and New Zealand.
(*South China Morning Post*, 4/3/22; *Guardian Weekly*, 4/1/22)

Beijing’s rapid-fire diplomacy was seeking to maintain the economic connections it had established prior to Russia’s Ukraine incursion. For example, earlier this year, Beijing had invited a high-level delegation from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including its secretary general and the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain, to discuss the start of a “strategic partnership,” which would include rapidly moving toward a free-trade agreement. All of these participants are part of the Belt and Road Initiative. Also, Beijing was trying to benefit from the January-first start of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a trade agreement among 15 Asia-Pacific countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and others. (*South China Morning Post*, 1/12/22; *ASEAN.org*, 1/1/22)

A recent virtual meeting between China and the EU did not go well, as Europeans insisted that Beijing not back Russia and challenged Beijing to pressure Moscow into removing all troops from Ukraine. More than one-quarter of China's global trade is with Europe and the U.S., so keeping China-EU trade activity on an even keel is a priority of Beijing's. Prior to the virtual summit, Beijing insisted that to continue the summits, the EU must stop supporting organizations, such as the UN, when they claim Chinese human rights violations. Europe rejected that idea. The EU said that progress on trade could not move forward until China removes its trade boycott with Lithuania, a condition that Beijing rejected. The main topic of conversation was Russia's invasion of Ukraine. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made the Continent's position clear: "It is a defining moment because nothing will be like it was before the war." Perhaps anticipating a rough time at the summit, President Xi opted out of the EU meetings and sent in his stead Premier Li Keqiang, who told the EU that Beijing would pursue Ukraine peace in "its own way." And that is how the summit ended. (*Economist*, 4/2/22; *Reuters*, 4/1/22)

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"Eight hours of negotiation and all you can say is you agree to disagree??"

More Countries Seek Leverage

China and its strategic partner Russia are not the only countries pursuing a different way to organize the world. Countries in places such as the Middle East and the

Subcontinent have taken to exerting their own power and to aligning themselves in ways that benefit them.

Middle East – When U.S. President Joe Biden made calls to the leaders of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia to ask for more oil production to slow price increases, neither leader even took his call. Meanwhile, officials at the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) told the EU that sanctions against Russia would worsen supply shocks and, more critically, that OPEC would not add production just to slow price increases, because the cause of price inflation was political and not related to supply and demand. And the UAE's energy minister added a point of emphasis: the UAE would not do "something unilateral" to increase output. In other words, OPEC and its affiliated countries, including Russia, are unified on this issue. As a result, the U.S. had to release oil from its strategic reserves; at 180 million gallons, this was the largest release ever for the U.S. (*Yahoo!*, 4/12/22; *Financial Times*, 3/14/22; *The Hill*, 3/31/22)

While the Saudis and OPEC pursue their own best interests, Israel has expanded its relationships with Arab countries, with the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco having normalized relations with Tel Aviv. At Sharm el-Sheikh earlier this year, Israel's foreign minister met with his counterparts from Egypt and the UAE. One week later, the foreign ministers of Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco and the UAE met with both the Israeli and U.S. top foreign ministers. Despite its long-term relationship with the U.S., Israel has not supported sanctions against Russia, and its trade with the UAE increased 20-fold in 2021 over the prior year. (*Economist*, 4/2/22)

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been at loggerheads with Israeli leaders on his support for the political activities of Islamic factions in other countries, hosted Israel's President Isaac Herzog, the two regional powers' first in-person meeting since 2007. Also, Turkey, a member of NATO, voted to condemn Russia in the UN

General Assembly vote but has chosen not to participate in the ensuing international sanctions. Yet in late April, Erdogan closed Turkey airspace to all Russian jets and planes carrying troops. Moreover, Erdogan and Putin have discussed using their own currencies to advance trade, thereby circumventing Russia's removal from the SWIFT system for dollar-based trade. In addition, Erdogan visited Abu Dhabi to meet with the Emirati crown prince, and then Erdogan shut down the ongoing trial of those who allegedly killed Jamal Khashoggi, transferring the trial to Saudi Arabia, essentially ending Turkey's investigation and likely opening friendlier relations with Riyadh. (*New York Times*, 3/23/22 and 3/27/22; *Guardian Weekly*, 4/15/22; *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 4/25/22)

Leaders in the Middle East have observed Washington pulling back from deep involvement in the region and have concluded that Russia's war in Ukraine and the international sanctions placed on Moscow are likely lessening Russia's ability to act decisively in the Middle East. They have also noticed that China has become the world's largest buyer of the Middle East's crude oil. Given that the region's young leaders want to modernize their economies, they are looking favorably on China, which has been more than willing to share with them new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, 5G, drones and smart-city systems. Dynamics in the region are shifting. (*Financial Times*, 9/17/21)

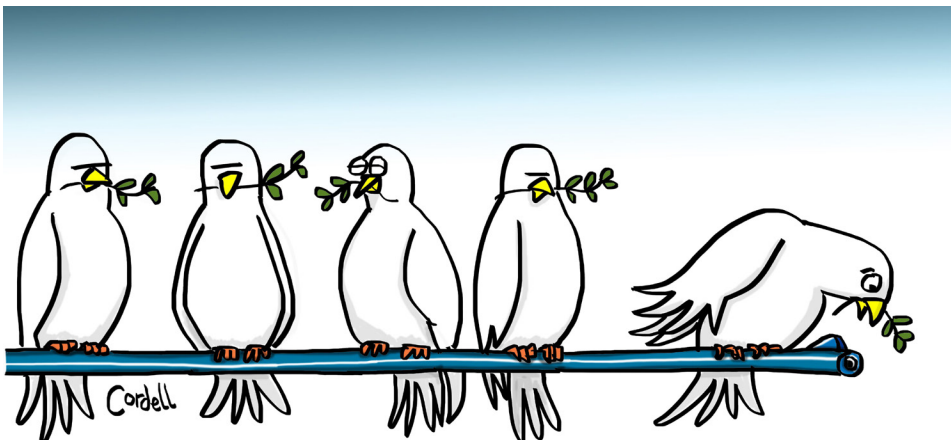
The UAE, which has been a longtime buyer of U.S. weaponry, announced plans to buy fighter jets from China.

The UAE's efforts to play one global power against another is made clearer by acknowledging two facts: First, the Emirates host a large U.S. military base at Al Dhafra, from which fighter planes flew missions into Afghanistan and against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Second, the UAE hosts a secret Chinese-run detention site in Dubai that targets, detains and deports Uighurs, who have "escaped" from China, and this despite the fact that Uighurs are followers of Islam, like Emirate leaders. Also, the UAE, which has been a longtime buyer of U.S. weaponry, announced plans to buy fighter jets from China. (*Foreign Policy*, Winter/22)

The UAE abstained from the UN General Assembly vote and has been aggressive in support of the Arab world's efforts to exploit its geo-economic power to become a geo-political force. The UAE invited Syria's Bashar al-Assad to visit Abu Dhabi, where he was accorded a head-of-state reception and met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed. Assad had not visited a fellow Arab country since 2011. (*Economist*, 3/26/22; *China Daily*, 2/25/22)

What we are witnessing is a coalescing of Middle Eastern countries into a more unified source of influence and power. As this takes place, leaders in the region, having realized that the U.S. is pulling back from supporting several allies in the region and that Russia has its hands full with sanctions and international condemnation resulting from its war in Ukraine, have decided to take control of their region. Instead of following international influences, leaders seem to be more and more focused on their own needs... and their own economic influence. They are asserting their oil and gas power, and working their own diplomatic perspectives across most of the region.

The Subcontinent – India, in a manner similar to countries in the Middle East, has found success playing global political powers against each other to get what it wants. India likes favorable economic relations with the U.S. and wants to continue purchasing military goods from Russia. Maintaining the military pipeline to Russia motivated India's UN representative to abstain on the General Assembly's criticism of Moscow's Ukraine invasion, perhaps because India is the world's largest importer of Russian weapons. India is leery of China's overtures to make peace because the two countries continue to fight over specific sovereign



"Hey guys, I don't want to worry you, but..."

boundaries. India wants to protect itself against further Chinese conflict by making friends with both Washington and Moscow, and it joined Australia, Japan and the U.S. to form the so-called Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or simply the Quad, as a defense tactic against China. Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov went to Delhi in early April hoping to sustain trade agreements. At those meetings, India requested a timely delivery of Russia's S-400 anti-aircraft missile defense system and other military equipment it ordered in 2020. It was due for delivery in India this past December. India, which did not buy Russian oil in January or February but which in the months prior to that typically purchased roughly 12 million barrels per month, suddenly bought 14 million barrels of Russian oil in March and April. (*New York Times*, 4/2/22 and 4/18/22; *CNBC*, 9/27/21; *Bloomberg*, 6/23/20; *BBC*, 4/14/22)

India's neighbor, Pakistan, recently voted no confidence in the government of Imran Kahn, who had visited Moscow days prior to Russia's launch of the war with Ukraine and who had instructed his minister at the UN to abstain in the UN General Assembly vote. Pakistan's new leader, Shebaz Sharif, has as his most urgent needs: to mend relations with the U.S. and secure better loan requirements from the IMF, which in February resumed a \$6 billion facility to Pakistan. (*Financial Times*, 3/16/22)

As one Japanese citizen explained, the Russian invasion "flipped my worldview."



"Finally we have something in common...mutual distrust."

A Defining Moment

When the European Commission's von der Leyen told the Chinese that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was a defining moment in international relations, she seemingly represented the attitude of citizens of countries aligned with the European continent. As one Japanese citizen explained, the Russian invasion "flipped my worldview." He was referring to his changed perspectives on the risks associated with Russia and China in the Pacific Ocean. (*Economist*, 4/2/22)

Countries in alignment with von der Leyen's "defining moment" perspective include most European countries (except, perhaps, Hungary), North American countries, Australia, New Zealand and several Asian countries, including Japan, South Korea and Indonesia.

For them, a sovereign nation's borders should not be overrun by a foreign military, and they are vocal supporters of what is typically called the rule of law.

Furthermore, historically neutral countries, such as Switzerland, joined the sanctions against Russia and voted against Russia in the UN General Assembly resolution. Finland and Sweden, also historically neutral countries, are moving rapidly toward joining the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization (NATO), their leaders motivated by a majority of their citizens saying they would like to join the common-defense organization. Both Germany and Japan have pushed away from their post-World War II position of being nonmilitarized countries and provided weapons to Ukraine and have added money to their own military budgets. Germany even halted the approval process for the \$11 billion Nord Stream 2, which would have delivered gas directly from Russia to Germany. (*Guardian*, 4/11/22; *Financial Times*, 3/22/22 and 3/25/22)

Japan has become more concerned about its relationships across Asia, as it considers moves by China and Russia in its region. With the Ukraine invasion, "the ground has shifted," as the U.S. ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, explained the reactions among Tokyo's leaders. Japan entered into an agreement with New Zealand to share intelligence. Given Tokyo's past deals with the U.S., Britain and Australia, Japan has essentially become a member of the "Five Eyes," the 75-year-old intelligence alliance between the U.S., Britain, Australia,

Canada and New Zealand. During the Japanese holiday, Golden Week, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida travelled across the region to fortify existing relations, mostly as a defense against China's aggressive moves in the region. Japan, the third-largest economy in the world, has more than \$259 billion invested in unfinished projects in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, compared to China's \$159 billion unfinished projects in the region. Japan wants to secure its relationships with regional countries, while encouraging those countries to follow Japan's lead in sustaining sanctions against Russia. (*New York Times*, 4/12/22 and 4/22/22; *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 4/13/22; *Economist*, 8/14/21)



Shifting Alliances

Russia's invasion of Ukraine did not by itself break down international alliances because they were changing before the attack. But the Russian military advance into a foreign country accelerated those changes and forced countries to consider where they are in global alignments and where they would like to be.

China continues to make geo-economic moves, but it faces some problems: the spread of COVID-19 at home has forced lockdowns in Shanghai and elsewhere, triggering economic stresses; the continued slowdown in its economic capabilities, with the Shanghai equities

market falling 17 percent from mid-December to mid-March; and its alliance with Russia, which is close and ongoing but causing concern in Beijing that it might negatively affect the Middle Kingdom's largest foreign markets in Europe and the U.S. In an interesting twist to the story, Chinese oil companies could pay rock-bottom prices to buy the oil and gas resources being left behind by Western companies as they pull out of Russia. China has expanded its already active diplomacy and is winning friends by providing resources without making demands on recipients' politics or economies. (*New York Times*, 3/12/22 and 4/13/22)

Russia is finding itself in a bit of a pickle, having miscalculated its likely fortunes in a "military operation" in Ukraine. Putin and other Kremlin officials might also be somewhat surprised by the relative strength of European unity, U.S. support and Asian countries' concerns. Yet Russia still has friends in the Middle East; in fact, Putin and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman just had their second phone conversation since Russia's Ukraine invasion. They discussed "ways of enhancing [the two countries] in all fields of bilateral relations." Russia also still supplies Europe and other customers a considerable amount of crude oil and natural gas, thereby funding its military operations, actually upping its output this year by roughly one million barrels per day. However, international sanctions are stymying Russia's economy, and that could cause long-term problems, such as its recent default on foreign debt, the first such Russian default since 1918. (*CNN*, 4/11/22; *Financial Times*, 3/31/22; *Asian Herald*, 4/17/22)

Middle Eastern countries have shifted their alliances more than most regions, with a huge change in which global powers they find attractive. Arab cohesion and Israeli alliances represent trouble for Iran, which might need to sign a nuclear deal with the U.S. and other countries just to break free of its own international sanctions. The region's shift away from collaboration with the U.S. and toward economic and technological coordination with China has become clear.

India and countries with raw materials, such as Chile and the Congo, find themselves in an enviable position, able to negotiate with larger global powers from leveraged positions. For India, its need for military weapons and for economic growth has it playing Russia and the U.S. for favorable responses while pushing back against China...for now. As countries move toward renewable energy and electric vehicles, smaller countries with substantial natural commodities will be able to play global powers against one another for advantage and price.

Some commentators say that the pandemic threatens globalization, while others say the Russian invasion of Ukraine challenges globalization. While both have unquestionably exerted an enormous amount of pressure on international trade, shifting alliances might be the most enduring challenge to globalization of the past several decades. Countries aligning in new ways, with varying needs and multiple strategies and using geo-economics as a point of entry, could represent a challenge to the free-market version of globalization. Just what the word "globalization"

While the pandemic and the Russian invasion have unquestionably exerted an enormous amount of pressure on international trade, shifting alliances might be the most enduring challenge to globalization of the past several decades.

will mean in the near future remains cloudy.

When wartime activities and aggressive diplomatic moves settle down, global trade might be as divided among players as it was during the Cold War, but with different partners and different purposes. The main reason for this change in trade activity is that emerging power centers focused on economic influence are shifting countries' alliances and realigning players. In short, Alliances Matter, Again, as they threaten the *status quo* and suggest emergence of yet

another New World Order.



Some of our previous looks at this topic:

- inThought 11/18/21** Shifts In The International Order: The U.S. Checks Its Identity And Others Make Moves - What's Next?
- inF 1616** Xi's High Wire Act, 11/15/21
- inF 1612** China Coming Out Of The Pandemic, 8/4/21
- inF 1608** China Brand Strategy Meets Dual Circulation, 4/9/21
- inF 1606** "Cyber Now" And "Cyber Rattling": Escalation In Crime, Espionage And Warfare Gets Costly...And Very Risky, 3/22/21
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- IF 4201** Eyes On Iran: From The Saudi Trifecta To A Regional Realignment, 1/13/21
- IF 4112** Alliances, Agreements And Reserve Currencies: Geo-Politics, Geo-Economics And An Emerging Alternative To The Bretton Woods Economic Structure, 8/24/20
- IF 4108** New Putin Seeks Old Putin's Leverage In A Changing World: Having Lost Prestige, Russia's Autocrat-In-Chief Looks Around For Vulnerabilities To Exploit, 7/8/20
- IF 4021** The Year Of Overt Grievance: Uprisings Everywhere And How To View Them, 12/9/19
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- inF 1403** Russia Making Moves Abroad, 3/11/19
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- IF 3911** China Is Thinking Worldwide: From Ecosystems To Geo-Economics, China Is Making Moves, 7/5/18
- IF 3910** Russia's Revival: Disrupting The West And Connecting With Asia, 6/21/18
- IF 3902** My Consensus Is Better Than Your Consensus: Beijing And Washington And Their Two Versions Of The Political Economy, 2/7/18
- IF 3508** The Russian Feint (And Putin's Judo): Vladimir Putin And The Ressurrection Of Russian Civilization, 5/28/14