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Global Challenge Faced by the West:

**It Is Essential to Invest in Security and
Defense Capability in Order to Be Able to
Safeguard our Independence**

Daniel Koštoval, Senior Fellow, Prague Center for Transatlantic Relations

The text draws on interviews with experts and on relevant documents and information from authoritative sources.



International relations have been undergoing a radical intensive transformation in recent years. The fact that they are constantly evolving is nothing new, on the contrary, it is a natural development. States join forces, invest, grow richer and their standing improves, or make bad decisions and their capabilities and standing decline relative to others. These processes have been going on for decades. With the end of the Cold War in 1989–1991, it looked like the main global rivalries were over and the future belonged to liberal democracy, trade and peaceful relations. Francis Fukuyama’s 1992 book, the *End of History and the Last Man*,¹ was symbolic. It followed up on his 1988 essay, the *End of History?*, published prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of the Cold War and an ideologically divided world. The book’s basic message can be summarized as follows: the end of the Cold War is not only the end of an era in international relations, but also the end of the development of ideologies, whereby humane Western liberal democracy is the continuing evolutionary maxim and will establish itself globally. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the last days of 1991, a bipolar world with the possibility of targeted global destruction ceased to exist. At that moment, not only the West, with the USA in the forefront, breathed a sigh of relief. Many countries and peoples, the Czechs among them, actually threw off their Communist shackles with enthusiasm and were able, of their own volition, to start building a free society, an independent state and prosperity based on a market economy and private ownership. It is apparent today that liberal democracy not only is not the desired goal in many countries, but that Russia, China and other countries want to expand their power under the “anti-West” banner, and do so deliberately at the expense of the West, including changing political conditions and the life of society wherever their power reaches.

¹ FUKUYAMA, F. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.

Introduction

Powers such as China and Russia are trying to change the global balance of power and increase their influence and ability to determine “the rules and solutions” at the expense of the West. Russia is on a trajectory of efforts to return to the great power spotlight, ideally as a superpower, thus it is a power that wants to regain “lost ground” vis-à-vis the West, while seeking payback. Despite the fact that from a great power perspective, Russia is in a sense on a downward trajectory which it is trying to turn into an upward trajectory, it has a great common denominator with China.

Russia is demanding a fundamental change of the security system in Europe. It demands its zone of influence as a security buffer zone – completely in line with 19th and 20th century logic. In December 2021, Russia submitted (separate) proposals to NATO and the USA as to how to prevent the conflict in Ukraine.² These must be viewed as essential because, following their rejection,³ Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In its proposals, Russia demanded a return to the ‘security’ setup that existed prior to May 27, 1997. The ghost of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact being invoked by Moscow is once again hovering over Europe, and Russia’s proposals are undoubtedly ultimately detrimental to the interests of many states in Central and Eastern Europe, including the Czech Republic. Ukraine is currently experiencing the clash of its elementary security interests with Russia’s great power and revanchist approach in its worst form – a military aggression. From its subjective perspective, China has been on an upward trajectory as a rising power since the foundation of the Communist Party (1921) and the establishment of China as a Communist state (1949).⁴ The ultimate goal is to become a great power⁵ and then a global power (a superpower) equal to, as well as independent of, the strongest powers in the world. Implicitly, it can be inferred that China is seeking to achieve the position of the number one global power, replacing the USA. This approach is contained in the following strategic documents: *White Paper on China’s Military Strategy* (2015)⁶ and *White Paper on China’s National Defense in the New Era* (2019).⁷ It also seeks out a change in the situation on the global level, and, in a sense, is also seeking payback from the West for China’s decline in the 19th century (i.e., the Opium Wars) and for the subsequent Japanese aggression in the first half of the 20th century.⁸ Both countries are trying to form blocs of countries under the “anti-West” banner. The most visible and dynamic anti-unipolar group in the name of

² The Russian proposal for the USA can be found [here](#); the proposal for NATO [here](#).

³ The USA and NATO’s responses, confirmed as authentic, were published [here](#).

⁴ The political concept of the Communist Party of China, in the form of the importance of two centennials, is currently one of the symbols and political tools for a continuing rise.

⁵ One of the important documents, in which this ambition was officially expressed as a “modern Socialist great power with Chinese characteristics”, is the *Report on Work* (full title: *Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*). It was adopted at the 19th assembly of the Communist Party of China in October 2017. The document is available [here](#).

⁶ *White Paper on China’s Military Strategy*, available [here](#).

⁷ *White Paper on China’s National Defense in the New Era*, available [here](#).

⁸ A very complete and erudite description can be found for instance in this book: WESTAD, O. A. *Restless Empire – China and the World Since 1750*. London: Random House Group, p. 515.

building a multipolar world is **BRICS** (2009/10) – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa. The grouping started off in the late 1990s as “**RIC**” – Russia, India, China. Following the decision to expand BRICS in 2023, the group grew to include Argentina, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Ethiopia. Whatever the opinions in the Western media may be, what needs to be taken seriously is that these countries are interested in creating an economic pole independent of the West, or rather an alternative pole, if not an actual system, and, among other things, a new independent payment arrangement (immunity from sanctions). Although the group is heterogeneous politically, the fact that India, which wants to be neutral towards the West, is allied with Russia, which is openly anti-Western, and China, which has a more moderate rhetoric than Russia but is all the more consistent in concrete actions and military ambitions, lends a great weight to Russia and China’s anti-Western efforts. That weight will also be further enhanced by the admission of new members.

China is also developing its Shanghai Cooperation Organization,⁹ and Russia its Eurasian Customs Union or a military ‘alliance’ under the title ODKB.¹⁰ From the perspective of the political and military situation at the global level, the Russian-Chinese cooperation, which is taking on the dimension of a pragmatic alliance under the heading of a strategic partnership, is one of the most crucial factors.¹¹ Militarily, the alliance is being developed through military exercises – both ground and naval – even after the Russian attack against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Both Russia and China are defining and purposefully developing a model of the state, of the life of society and of the interaction between state and society different from that followed in the West. Although each time due to different reasons and traditions, it is about constructing an all-encompassing management and governance of the state and society from a single center, with society and the individual citizens structured into a hierarchical system with no room for individuality, spontaneity, independence and free action. In both cases, the central authority tries to develop corporatist and collectivist solutions following up on historical traditions. A more detailed analysis is provided below.

We cannot, however, compare today’s Russian and Chinese regimes with the Soviet Union and the original Communist doctrine. Russia’s agenda is not a world Communist revolution and destruction of the very essence of the “bourgeois imperialist society and state establishment.” Nor is it China’s agenda, although this is something we would be more likely to expect in light of its continuing Communist rule. The Communist Party of China does not, however, strive for a world revolution; it has instead modeled itself on Soviet-style Communism from the outset in terms of controlling, managing and developing the state and society. Class struggle, in the sense of world revolution, did not even interest Mao Zedong himself. The absolute control and transformation/re-

⁹ <http://eng.sectesco.org/>

¹⁰ <https://en.odkb-csto.org/>

¹¹ The last contribution in the building of the Russian-Chinese alliance is a statement entitled *Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development* of February 4, 2022.

education of the Chinese population according to the Communist Party's needs was, however, highly desirable – to that end, Chinese Communists were willing to kill tens of millions of people at a minimum since 1949.¹² the Stalinist-style Soviet Union was, especially in the first ten years of Communist rule in China, the absolute model – which was also why there was an army of Soviet advisors working in China at the time. Although neither Russia nor China seek a world revolution based on the axiom of class struggle, they do seek to expand their power. And wherever their power reaches, Moscow and Beijing bring their ways, practices and 'rules'. In this regard, they are as much an existential threat to the territories of interest and the Western way of life as the Soviet Union was before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Examples of this include South Ossetia after 2008, Crimea after the Russian occupation in 2014, or Hong Kong.

The System of International Relations – Yesterday and Today

Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bipolar world of the Cold War was replaced by a unipolar world headed by the USA. Washington and the rest of the world found themselves face to face with this reality virtually overnight. Demands then began to pour in on Washington, especially from the West, to act as the world's policeman. Part of the complexity of the situation for the USA was that an overwhelming majority of the conflicts to be confronted were national in nature – with the virtually exceptional case of the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait in the early 1990s. US interventionism after 1990 was also due, over time, to the influence of neoconservatives in the USA. The long engagements in Iraq (which also created a rift with Paris and Berlin) and Afghanistan revealed the limits of the options available to the US-led West and angered many non-Western states. Under the influence of the neo-conservatives, the US approach to the "Arab Spring" has made the position of the West in the non-Western world even more precarious.

With the dawn of the new millennium, **both Russia and China** decided to fulfill the concept of a multipolar world. The goal of and need for a multipolar world has been repeatedly mentioned by the leaders of these countries. The goal is to fight against the American (Western) unipolar world ruled by a single superpower (the West). It is therefore about diminishing the influence of the USA (the West) for the benefit of Russia and China so that they can preserve and strengthen their sovereignty and independence and pursue their 'legitimate' interests. Both countries are united in that they base their approach on the creation of an internal force that will enable them to put forward their interests. For both of them, this means that in addition to important economic foundations, they want to spread their own unique culture (building on their history) and build sufficiently strong and modern armies. Both countries have therefore

¹²Nobody is currently able to identify the precise numbers. There is information, however, on the scope of the violence and qualified estimates. These are described for instance in the following books: WESTAD, O. A. *Restless Empire – China and the World Since 1750*. London: Random House Group, in particular pp. 285-332. COURTOIS, S., WERTH, N., PANNÉ, J., PACZKOWSKI, A., BARTOŠEK, K., MARGOLIN, J. *Černá kniha komunismu – zločiny, teror, represe*. Svazek II. Praha: Paseka, 1999, pp. 5-92.

embarked on the restructuring and development of their armies which are supposed to be able to operate in support of regional and global interests, rather than just defend their territories.

The father of **Russia's concept of a multipolar world for the 21st century** is Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister from January 1996 to September 1998 and subsequently the Russian Prime Minister up until May 1999. He published the concept in 1996 in his article *International Relations on the Eve of the 21st Century: Problems and Prospects*.¹³ He was inspired by Alexander Gorchakov, the Russian Foreign Minister after the lost Crimean War, who chose a foreign policy of survival as a great power based on internal renewal of the state. On this basis, Gorchakov began to assemble an anti-unipolar group in order to build a multipolar world in the form of **RIC** and subsequently **BRICS**. Primakov's approach was adopted by Vladimir Putin. In his key policy document, *Russia at the Turn of the Millennium*,¹⁴ published in late 1999, he announced a political program for rebuilding a great power with its own sphere of influence – as described in more detail below. All domestic and foreign policy actions fall under this program. Russia is looking for 'allies' sharing the same goal in this regard. **China** is the main ally in this sense. Thanks to its massive economic growth since the 1970s, China began to emerge in the 1990s as an international player in its own right. Beijing became aware of its own strength and started displaying new ambitions as to China's standing in the world. China subscribed to Moscow's concept of reducing the US (Western) influence by "building a multipolar world". In the 1990s, China began to covet superpower status.¹⁵

In 2001, China was admitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO), in 2010, it became the second largest economy in the world by nominal GDP, and experts predict it will overtake the USA by approximately 2030. In 2014, the World Bank declared China the largest economy in terms of total GDP by purchasing power parity.

The Communist Party of China views China under its rule as a country moving in a linear fashion towards a power of global proportions, equal at least to the world's most powerful countries (with the USA being the number one target). The periodization of China's development and the projections of its future development vision is consistent with this – see below for more details. Above all, it is consistent with China's foreign

¹³ PRIMAKOV, E. M. *International Relations on the Eve of the 21st Century: Problems and Prospects*. IN: *International Affairs*. 1996 (10), pp. 3-13.

¹⁴ The document is the basis of the Russian "Grand Strategy", and therefore also the foreign and security policies. It was published in the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* newspaper on December 30, 1999, and at the same time, published on the official website of the Russian office of the government under the name of Vladimir Putin as the Prime Minister – two days before Vladimir Putin became the Russian President on January 1, 2000, after Boris Yeltsin resigned by way of a resignation announced on December 31, 1999. The Russian original of the document is available [here](#) and the English translation [here](#).

¹⁵ Identified for instance in the following studies:

SCHULZE, P. W. *Multipolarity and Multilateralism: Cooperative or Rival Cornerstones of a New World Order? Dialogue of Civilizations*. Berlin: Research Institute, 2019, pp. 2-3.

EISENMAN, J. and HEGINBOTHAM, E. Building a more "Democratic" and "Multipolar" World: China's Strategic Engagement with Developing Countries. IN: the *China Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (November 2019), pp. 55-83.

policy which is stepping up its ambitions in proportion to its growing capabilities, thus constantly shifting the horizons of what China wants to achieve, or rather China's role in the world.

Russia and China – an alliance of convenience. Russia wants to survive (return) as a great power and China wants to develop into a superpower. Unlike Russia, it has been capable of building an economy that encompasses every aspect (technological, corporate, business) that the US and EU economies have. In some cases, such as 5G networks, China's Huawei currently actually outperforms its Western competitors.

China's human and economic potential makes it a global strategic challenger (unlike Russia) of the Euro-Atlantic community who is openly focusing on the leader of this community – the USA (just like Russia). Russia relies on its military capabilities and its role as a player capable of generating problems. China wants an overall expansion based on continued socio-economic development – the armed forces are to create suitable conditions and protect these development interests.

The West currently has less influence in international relations than in the 1990s, often because of its own mistakes and internal crises. The existence of a multipolar world, with poles carrying different weights, is indeed a reality. This is a consequence of political mistakes made by the West (the failure in Afghanistan or the “Arab Spring” can serve as a symbol), economic crises, and internal political crises based on the polarization and atomization of society (also as a result of social networks set up primarily to suit the business interests of their creators). Specifically, the European part of the West is grappling with a demographic crisis, loss of competitiveness, overgrown bureaucratization and excessive redistribution and subsidies at the expense of the market economy, and – last but not least – with the fact that politics is largely driven by ideology without any regard for reality. Ideological and unrealistic approaches in the fight against climate change lead to policies that have the potential to destroy the industrial and resource base and energy stability and security in the EU. This ultimately threatens the competitiveness and weight of the EU in the world.¹⁶ These policies also make countries like Saudi Arabia focus on other parts of the world. This is also because non-Western parts of the world are becoming more and more important economically, and at the same time, countries such as China, India and South Africa do not impose their internal politics and social life on their political, economic and military partners.

Today's system of international relations is thus characterized by a bloc of the West, a bloc of the anti-West, and countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America which are being competed for. At the same time, there are countries with their own regional-global

¹⁶ We set goals and limits at the EU level but we do not invest enough funds into innovation and infrastructure. As a result, many of the goals set forth in the European Green Deal are impossible to achieve from today's perspective for the time being due to the non-existence of technologies, and we do not know whether they will even be “invented and put into practice” within the relevant time frame. Even the current EU Commissioners, including Věra Jourová, admit this: she states that the goals of the Green Deal are based “in a way (...) on the trust that technologies will become more advanced, that by directing investment funds somewhere, we will facilitate the development of new technologies which will carry us to the ideal of clean Europe“, see an interview with Věra Jourová available [here](#).

ambitions on these continents. India is an example, as is Vietnam, for instance. While these countries do not want to be anti-Western, they are not interested in solving the problems of the West and have absolutely no problem cooperating with countries from the anti-Western bloc in the pursuit of their interests. This is also true for a number of African countries. The existence of the BRICS grouping and its expansion symbolizes the above-mentioned trends.

A multipolar world with poles of varying weight is a reality. Searching for balance in a system established in this manner is complex and may lead to regional conflicts, as well as conflicts of a strategic importance. The world has reached a stage where countries aspiring to create “their own” poles have begun to feel sufficiently well established and the time has come to fill in grey zones and a no man’s land between the individual poles. The topical question thus is where the borders between the individual poles will be. The Russia-China alliance on its anti-West march plays an important role in the setting of borders in the emerging balance of power. In the West proper – in the European part, and especially in France¹⁷ – there are also foreign policy concepts aimed at a greater autonomy which are negatively disposed towards the USA, which in fact leads to partial political competition and potentially to a rift within the West itself; and ultimately to its weakening. As a result of China’s growing ambitions, the USA has also been increasingly focused on the Pacific region and lacks the capacities and resources to focus on the Pacific and Atlantic regions in parallel to the same extent. The European part of the West, however, lacks the capacity and sufficient will to invest in its own capabilities to compete in the global arena without the USA. These spinoff or atomizing tendencies could potentially have very negative consequences for the West as a whole, particularly when a large bloc of countries, that ultimately harbor negative or even hostile feelings towards the West, is beginning to form.

The West – Political Values

The West is first and foremost a political term for a group of states that base their political and economic system, and the definition of the relationship between the state and society (citizens), on a very specific basis. This basis is defined primarily by a set of rules and principles – written and unwritten – that clearly define the nature of governance: governmental powers, civic rights, guarantees for the protection of politicians in public office, as well as the protection of politicians in opposition. They equally clearly define the nature of an economic system based on a market economy or the nature of the legal system.

¹⁷ In the second half of the 1990s, France came up with the agenda of European defense identity which was developed into the “EU strategic autonomy” slogan, autonomy meaning the independence of the USA. When President Macron addressed French ambassadors in 2019, he elaborated on the foreign policy concept of creation of a “European pole” independent of the USA which would incorporate Russia as well. His appearance is available [here](#). In his address to ambassadors in 2022 in connection with China and Chinese-American relations, Macron declared that France is to play the role of a balancing power with its own independent agenda ensuring independence and freedom of decision-making for France (and by extension, for the EU). Macron’s appearance is available [here](#).

In addition, however, to a specific set of rules, the West and its current political and economic form is the result of a specific historical and cultural evolution and, last but not least, a specific religious evolution. For a particular country to be part of the West, it need not have gone during its history through everything that had occurred on the path leading to the emergence of the system and way of life represented by the West today. It does not even have to have the same religious and cultural foundations. It has to, however, apply a clearly defined set of rules and principles to the life of the state and society. These are the result of development in a specific and geographically defined space and time, which can be defined as the Euro-Atlantic area with its origins in the European part of the Mediterranean, then a center of gravity in Western Europe, and then with the addition of a large weight in the form of the United States of America. The American Revolution and the subsequent emergence of an independent United States of America are major contributions to the development of the system and values represented by the West today. The Industrial Revolution – the economic and technological changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, originating in the Netherlands and Great Britain – made an equally fundamental contribution. It was precisely that specific development that produced, in an evolutionary way, a set of rules and principles that enabled and unleashed at that moment an economic development based on freedom, financial products, creativity and invention and ultimately new technologies. These facilitated the emergence of completely new economic sectors and, above all, a previously unprecedented intensification, productivity and efficiency. It can therefore be said that the gradual emergence of the West has brought about a process of transition from manual labor to innovation-oriented industrial machine production and intensive agriculture not dependent on the number of human hands.

The West – a set of political, economic, legal and other rules and principles:

Non-violent change in power according to defined – democracy:

- Free elections based on universal adult suffrage regardless of sex or wealth.
- Pluralism – free competition between individuals and political movements and parties (organizations).

Guarantee of freedoms and human rights:

- Politically: freedom of association and freedom of political expression, protection of politicians in public office, protection of politicians in opposition (e.g., immunity), civic principle, limited state.
- Economically: freedom of enterprise, market economy, guarantee and protection of private ownership.
- Human rights: guarantee and protection of fundamental human rights (see the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Rule of law:

- The law applies to everyone equally, with the Constitution as the fundamental law.
- No one is above the law, no one – not even the president or a political party – is ‘the law’.
- Laws are primarily adopted by the lawmakers who represent citizens with the right to vote.

System of government:

- Division of powers – executive, legislative and judicial.
- System of checks and balances between the various powers.

Legal system:

- Independence of courts.
- A system based on evidence and proof of guilt.
- In the public sector, what is not allowed is forbidden, and in the private/civil sector, what is not forbidden is allowed.
- Reviewability of judicial decisions.
- An independent body to review the constitutionality of actions taken by the government and the parliament.

This system of values and principles released an unprecedented political and economic power which has a magnetic pull. During the Cold War, people fleeing unfree countries were not only those who were politically persecuted, but also a large number of people seeking economic freedom or opportunity or artistic freedom. The motivation for today’s migration waves to the USA is the same.

Russia and China – a Conscious and Deliberate Alternative to the West

Russia

In his key political document, *Russia at the Turn of the Millennium*,¹⁸ Vladimir Putin declared at the turn of 2000 that Russia was and will be a great power based on specifically Russian values. Putin argued that Russia can survive as a great power only on the basis of internal renewal and strengthening. He views the decline to a power of the second or even third order as a threat to national security and the essence of the Russian state.

Before Putin begins formulating such specific Russian values and attitudes, he describes three lessons learned by Russia as of 2000:

¹⁸ See footnote 14.

- USSR's achievements at the horrendous cost of a social experiment for society. An ideological approach to the economy condemned the USSR to fall behind the West permanently. It traveled down a dead-end road.
- Russia exhausted its limits of political and socio-economic upheavals, cataclysms and radical transformations. Continued revolutionary and radical transformations will lead to collapse. The responsible strategy is evolution in conditions of political stability.
- The 1990s in Russia eloquently show that Russian renewal cannot be built on textbook abstract models and schemes, or on a mechanical emulation of the experience of other states. Every country, including Russia, is obliged to seek its own path. The future of Russia lies in the organic combination of universal models with the Russian reality.

With this introduction, Putin prepared the ground for his program based on specific Russian values and approaches. The slogan of the day was stability and prevention of impoverishment of the population. It should be noted that the 1990s in Russia did not mean functional democracy, the rule of law and a market economy, as was the case in present day Czech Republic or the United States. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a loosening of the situation and attempts at a radical economic transformation occurred. The Soviet legislation was not, however, replaced by new legislation. The private sector emerged, the state was collapsing, civil servants and employees in failing companies did not receive wages, while the nouveau riche on the other hand acquired fabulous wealth at dizzying speed. This was often through wild privatization, which was frequently practically robbery in broad daylight, or by exploiting huge gaps in the legislation and the state's ability to act. This was perceived as unfair. Moreover, the emergence of a group of very wealthy people – the 'oligarchs' – resulted in the fact that they started trying to exert a major influence over Russian internal politics. For the Russian population, this period became in a sense a perversion under the slogans of democracy and a market economy. This naturally tarnished the Western model of the operation of state and society, and it was futile to explain that the Russian reality of the late 1990s, which involved a decade of chaos and lawlessness, was not what the notions of democracy, rule of law and market economy really mean.

Vladimir Putin stipulated that if Russia is to stand a chance of a decent future, the solution for Russia's development must be based on the "Russian idea" – a combination of certain universal values,¹⁹ with traditional Russian values that "withstood the test of time". **He argued that the achievement of the set goals, and in particular the survival of Russia as a great power, is only possible on the basis of such a combination of the Russian idea with a strong state and an efficient economy.**

Traditional Russian values include the following (summary):

¹⁹ Reading Putin's text today makes it apparent that he certainly did not reject the principles that made the West prosper – such as free enterprising, trade, travel and creativity. He puts these principles under the summary term "universal values".

- **Patriotism:** striving to make one's country more beautiful, wealthier, stronger, happier.
- **Great state – great power:** Russia has been and will be a great country. This is due to the inherent characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence. This has determined the Russian mentality and the politics of the state throughout Russia's entire history.
- **Statism:** Russia will not become another version of the United States or England, where liberal values have deep historical traditions. In Russia, the state – its institutions and structures – has always played an extremely important role in the life of the country and the nation. For a Russian, a strong state is not an anomaly; it is not something to be fought against, but rather a source and guarantor of order, the initiator and main driving engine of any change.
- **Social solidarity:** In Russia, the attraction to collective forms of life has always prevailed over individualism. Paternalistic sentiment is deeply rooted in Russian society. Most Russians are accustomed to associating the improvement of their situation not only with their own efforts, initiative and entrepreneurship, but with the assistance and support of the state and society. This is the reason why it is impossible not to take them into account.

Vladimir Putin drew up a program for Russia and implemented it with purpose every year of his rule – both on a national level and in foreign policy. In his second term after 2004, he added the fear of a “violent coup” organized by the West and measures designed to prevent such a coup in Russia.²⁰

This is a concern about a change in the Russian regime that in his eyes occurred for instance:

- In Georgia at the turn of 2004 – the “Rose Revolution”, a repetition of parliamentary elections in response to opposition protests and the replacement of President Eduard Shevardnadze with Mikheil Saakashvili.
- In Ukraine, first the “Orange Revolution” when protests erupted after the 2004 presidential elections in which Viktor Yanukovich defeated Yushchenko. As a result, the second round of elections was repeated with Yushchenko as the winner. Subsequently, in 2013 (after winning the 2010 presidential election), Yanukovich refused to sign the association agreement with the EU based on an offer of financial assistance from Russia – even though he was engaged in serious negotiations about the agreement in the people's eyes. Opposition protests – the “Euromaidan” – broke out, as a result of which, after using force against demonstrators, Yanukovich fled Ukraine for Russia with Moscow's

²⁰ For instance, a law was adopted, seemingly modeled on the USA, pursuant to which any organization receiving financial support from abroad is to be designated as a “foreign agent”. In practical terms, the Russian state ensures that any organization enjoying foreign financial support, especially from Western countries, ceases to operate and exist.

assistance in February 2014 and the Ukrainian parliament stripped him of the presidency. While Russia considers this development unconstitutional and illegitimate, it has maintained its embassy and ambassador in Kiev even after 2014.

Russian values under the heading of the Russian Idea, combined with a strong state able to act, control and monitor consistently, create a system in Russia that is quite different from that of the Western countries. First and foremost, there is a contradiction in that in the Western system, the state is limited and controlled by constitutional safeguards and rules. In Russia, in contrast, the state is the prime driving force and determinant of all the life of the state and society. In this sense, the safeguards and constitutional rules in Russia are subordinated to the will of the state and the power of the president, or rather, the Russian president guards the processes that are supposed to ensure a great Russia with a global role and influence. The formal existence of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation does not affect this in any way.

The above is **embodied in the Russian constitution** – the Russian political system is based on a written constitution.²¹ The president is the strongest player in the system, we could say this is a “super-presidential system” which otherwise exhibits features of representative democracy – in this regard, **Chapter 4 of the Russian constitution** (Articles 80–93) is crucial.²²

The president:

- Is elected directly.
- Has a legislative initiative vis-à-vis the parliament.
- Can issue decrees which are binding and which are not subject to approval by any other body. The sole condition is that they must not be in conflict with the constitution and federal laws.
- Has the right to veto laws approved by the parliament, may be outvoted by a two third majority in the parliament.
- Has the right to dissolve the parliament if it refuses to approve a candidate for prime minister proposed by the president three times.
- In the event of a vote of no confidence in the government, he can (but does not have to) dismiss the government and propose a candidate for prime minister, or he can dissolve the parliament (Duma) and convene new parliamentary elections.
- Determines both domestic and foreign policy, with corresponding powers to appoint senior officials and direct all the relevant government agencies, including the intelligence services and the armed forces.

The Russian constitution was adopted in 1993. It was amended by the Russian parliament in 2020. Among other things, the president’s term of office was extended from 4 to 6 years. Under the Russian constitution, a maximum of two consecutive terms

²¹ The Russian constitution in English is available [here](#).

²² [Chapter 4](#) of the Russian constitution – President of the Russian Federation

is permitted. Vladimir Putin consequently left after two terms in office (2000–2008) and became Prime Minister for one presidential term; it was quite obvious, however, that he held the reins of power firmly in hand even as Prime Minister. In 2012, he was re-elected as President, and because pursuant to the amended new constitution, a presidential candidate can run for office for two consecutive terms, Vladimir Putin can be president until 2036. He will be 84 years old by then – so he has managed to set up the “constitutional system” to ensure a lifetime rule for himself.

Freely formed political parties are permitted in Russia, i.e., opposition parties can be elected to the parliament (Duma) in parliamentary elections. In practice, this is impossible because government authorities and their branches have many means, including police and judicial, at their disposal for excluding opposition politicians and political parties from political competition. Only parties (politicians) perceived as supporters of both the principal policy of the state represented by the president, and the president are allowed.

China

The key documents of the Communist Party of China, and by extension the People’s Republic of China, define the values, self-perception and political mythology of the Communist Chinese regime. The Chinese leadership is systematically consistent, and therefore which particular document or political speech is cited is not entirely of the essence. Despite this fact, the Report of Chinese President Xi Jinping (General Secretary since 2012, President since 2013) presented to the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017 does constitute a certain milestone for the present.²³ It expressly defines the ambition to become a great power of the first order. This document is also important in that it sets out a political and military ambition further elaborated in the still applicable 2019 *White Paper on China’s National Defense in the New Era*.²⁴

The values of today’s China are the values of the Communist Party of China. The Chinese constitution provides for the leading role of the Communist Party – see the part on the political system in the People’s Republic of China below. In China’s case, the values of the Chinese Communist state must be viewed in conjunction with its political mythology about the role of the Communist Party in China’s evolution. It is an integral part of the values of Communist China because it treats China’s development and its achievements as the outcome of the deeds and leadership of the Communist Party of China.

At the top of the pyramid of Chinese Communist thought, defining the values of the Chinese political regime and the vision of China’s direction, is the slogan of

²³ The report is available [here](#).

²⁴ *White Paper on China’s National Defense in the New Era*, available [here](#).

“national rejuvenation” under Communist leadership. The aim is to return China to the global map as a power of the first-order after its nineteenth century,²⁵ caused by domestic chaos and foreign aggression. According to Chinese Communist mythology, the West was the aggressor. According to this mythology, this went on until the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, while in the 20th century, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, Japan, alongside the West, was the dominant aggressor. In Communist jargon, attaining national rejuvenation means overthrowing imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism.

Eras according to the Communist Party of China:

Since 2004, China’s self-perception is that of a country in a new era of ‘rejuvenation’.

Sequence of individual eras:

- 1947-1977 – revolution
- 1978-1989 – recovery
- 1990-2003 – building comprehensive national power
- 2004-2019 – rejuvenation
- 2020-2049 – fully building a modern socialist country in the spirit of rejuvenation – the goal is that at the end of this period, China will become a global leader based on comprehensive national power and international influence.

In summary, China under Communist rule views its evolution as linear, from the acquisition of power to the building of a superpower equal to – and independent from – the world’s strongest powers in a multipolar world. Based on this development, it sees its place in the world as justified and appropriate to the historical greatness of the Chinese nation.

Two centennials: the Communist Party of China added the concept of two centennials to its political mythology, which both develops the idea of rejuvenation under Communist leadership and serves as a tool for mobilizing efforts to achieve the defined goals:

- First centennial (1921-2021): this century was dedicated to “rebellion and foundation”. It encompassed the development of the Communist movement in China, from the foundation of the Communist Party of China in 1921 to 2021. This phase included the struggle against colonial and imperialist domination, the Communist Revolution and the creation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. This period was associated with the desire for national independence, social justice and political liberation.
- Second centennial (1949-2049): This century is referred to as the “great rebirth”. The CPC pledged to continue building a “social-socialist modern superpower with Chinese characteristics”. This stage includes

²⁵ Starting with the first Opium War in 1840. The West was ‘represented’ by England in this sense.

the strengthening of national wealth, technological progress, international influence and innovation. The Chinese Communist Party emphasizes the need to observe Marxist-Leninist values while adapting its policies to current conditions here.

The political values of the People's Republic of China as defined by the Communist Party of China:

- **The leading role of the Communist Party of China:** the Communist Party as the sole decision-maker, mover and controller is at the core of the political doctrine of the Communist Party of China. It is no different from its archetypes with the Communist Party of the USSR at the forefront in this regard.
- **Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong's thinking:** Chinese Communists place primary emphasis on the precepts of state management. At the core of this value is the dictatorship of the Communist Party ('the people'). Collectivism and the stated goal of improving the socio-economic life of the Chinese people as a more effective alternative to Western capitalism is also, however, an important political value.
- **Socialism with Chinese characteristics:** in order to preserve and further develop its power, the Chinese Communist Party works with the term "socialism with Chinese characteristics", adding Chinese ingredients to the original foreign concept – imported from the Soviet Union – so that it would suit Chinese conditions and the power interests of leading Chinese politicians. The result is the addition Mao Zedong's ideas, Deng Xiaoping's theories, etc. to Marxism-Leninism. It is a content that keeps evolving according to the power needs of the Chinese Communist Party.
- **Patriotism:** this is a fundamental value which directly follows up on the main slogan of "national rejuvenation". The Chinese Communist Party plays on the emotions of Chinese society and poses as the guarantor of securing Chinese national interests based on 'proof' that only the Chinese Communist Party defended Chinese interests, Chinese unity and Chinese independence face to face with imperialist expansion and aggression. Patriotism is viewed as the main value to achieve "national rejuvenation" by building China as a great power of the first-order. This is seen as a natural state of affairs, or rather the Chinese Communist Party claims it to be China's natural right.

The political system of the People's Republic of China is based on "four cardinal principles" formulated by Deng Xiaoping in 1979;²⁶ since 1982, they are part of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (in Article 1):²⁷

- Upholding the Communist path.

²⁶ Four cardinal principles, see [here](#).

²⁷ The Constitution of the People's Republic of China in English is available [here](#).

- Upholding the people's democratic dictatorship.
- Upholding the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.
- Upholding Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought (as the leading idea of the party and the state).

The political system of the People's Republic of China thus stems from the Communist Party of China which controls all state institutions. The selection system of the Communist leadership is as follows:

- The Communist Party Congress (approximately 3,000 people, the number is not fixed, currently 2,980 people), which is held at five-year intervals, elects the Central Committee (approximately 350 people, of that, approximately 200 are full members and approximately 150 are 'candidates' with an advisory vote).
- The Central Committee elects:
 - Members of the Politburo of the Central Committee (25).
 - Members of the Permanent Committee of the Politburo of the Central Committee (7).
 - The Central Military Commission (5-10 persons; manages the Chinese armed forces).
 - The Secretary-General of the Central Committee.

China's current leader Xi Jinping is also the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, President and Chairman of the Central Military Commission. This is a tradition in the People's Republic of China, with exceptions, and has been the rule since 1993.

According to the constitution, the All-China People's Congress (2,980 members) is the supreme body. Members are elected by regional assemblies according to China's administrative districts. These assemblies are in turn elected by assemblies at a lower, sub-regional level. Candidates are approved and nominated virtually exclusively by the Communist Party of China. The All-China People's Congress elects the president and approves the prime minister. It always meets in March for about 14 days, with the Permanent Committee of the All-China People's Congress, which is virtually the main legislative body, operating for the rest of the year.

In the Chinese political system, there is nobody with a mandate to 'check' or 'examine' the constitutionality of the decisions and laws passed.

In China, a rule that the Secretary-General and the president should not be elected for more than two terms has been applied in recent years. As regards the current leader, Xi Jinping, he was elected for a third term.

Formally, there are other political parties besides the Communist Party of China. They are associated within the United Front, which is managed by the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, a branch of

the Central Committee apparatus. Opposition parties are not permitted. The permitted political parties, associations and professional associations serve as ‘consultative’ and ‘advisory’ entities to the Communist Party of China and have no decision-making powers. Censorship officially exists in the People’s Republic of China.

Russia and China – Common Features

It is apparent from the above that what Russia and China have in common is their rejection of the Western notion of the state and society. **Their goal is an all-encompassing state, control of society by the state, collectivism at the expense of individual freedom in the Western sense, a single center of power and rule by a narrow group of individuals – the elite.**

Russia and China do not impose their organization of the state and society on us. However, wherever their influence/control reaches, they inevitably want to reshape political matters and the life of society in their own image. It is therefore not an ideological threat in the form of spreading a fundamental breakup of societies, e.g., through class struggle and the imposition of a Communist dictatorship by destroying enemies. The present day situation is much more reminiscent of the situation in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the incompatibility of the Russian and Chinese notions of society and the state with the Western notion still constitutes a fundamental threat to Western countries and territories threatened by the power ambitions of Russia and China. It is then a politically existential threat for these countries and territories.

Russia and China’s Agenda in International Relations

Both Russia and China want to be great powers, i.e., they want to expand their power vis-à-vis the outside world. They see the West, with the USA at the forefront, as the main obstacle. The slogan and concept of building a multipolar world is to help expand their power in international relations first and foremost at the expense of the West, whether by pushing out countries and territories that want to belong to the West or expanding their influence where the West does not dominate – for example, in Africa. The reasons are naturally also economic – strengthening their own economic power and independence, access to raw materials, improvement of trade opportunities. Both countries have their great power status deep at the root of their self-image. Great power is seen as a “natural state” to which Moscow or Beijing have a “natural right”. In both cases, it is the West that is seen as the enemy to this “natural state and right”.

Both countries have been cultivating patriotism which relates to the traditional values and greatness of Russia and China, respectively. The aim is to mobilize and discipline the population in order to achieve the great power (size-based) status.

As regards the perceptions of both countries, it is then the West that denies Moscow and Beijing, respectively, direct control over territories that constitute the core of their empires in their eyes. Russia seeks to reintegrate both Ukraine and Belarus. China is claiming ‘back’ the sea off its coast (called the “South China Sea” in Chinese political

rhetoric) and the reintegration of Taiwan, which it considers to be its twenty-third province.

Both countries practice “horizon shifting” in their foreign and security policies, i.e., gradually stepping up their power ambitions in their foreign policy parlance. The growing ambition is in proportion to their own sense of increasing power, or rather their determination to act more vehemently and forcefully vis-à-vis the outside world. This gradual approach is, however, a mere tactic: the ultimate goal is to maximize power in order to attain great power status at the first global level. This goal is at the core of the definition of the existence of the current Russian and Chinese political regimes. Feelings also play a role, however, in the behavior of both countries:

1. The inevitability of action if they feel that the possibilities for achieving the ultimate goal would be closing as a result of international developments.
2. Opportunities to progress towards the ultimate goal as a result of a favorable situation or as a result of the perceived weakness or occupation of other players, especially the West.

Russia

Vladimir Putin has been acting exactly in line with the political program embodied in the document *Russia at the Turn of the Millennium*²⁸ and in the spirit of the shifting of horizons. The various versions of Russian strategic documents, such as the national security strategy (formerly concept) or the foreign policy concept, etc., reflect this. In the latest version of the *Military Doctrine*, NATO is described as the “principal military threat”.²⁹ the latest version of the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation* then notes in paragraph 34 that there is a “growing struggle for spheres of influence” and that “the importance of military force as a tool to achieve geopolitical goals is growing”. Paragraph 35 then identifies NATO as a protagonist who “attempts to exert pressure on Russia through its actions, thus contributing to the increase in military dangers and military threats of the Russian Federation”.³⁰ the 2023 version of the RF Foreign Policy Concept then develops a narrative of inevitability of action (“special military operation in Ukraine”) in response to the “hostile behavior of the West”.³¹ Commensurate with these assessments and goals, Russia strives to restructure and develop its armed forces and invest in new weapon systems for both tactical and strategic levels. It is also investing in the development of production capacities.

If we look, however, at the sequence of events, it is Russia that is escalating its ambitions and behavior in order to attain the great power status and frequently beyond the limits of international law:

²⁸ See footnote 18.

²⁹ The 2014 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation in English is available [here](#).

³⁰ *National security strategy of the RF of 2021*

³¹ *Foreign policy concept of 2023*

- Following the loss of pro-Russian allies inside Ukraine, it occupied Crimea in 2014 and deliberately supported the separatist movement in Donbas.
- In July 2021, Vladimir Putin published an article entitled *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*,³² in which he postulates that Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are a single nation and that Russia would defend this nation even beyond the borders of present day Russia. This is a new quality in the Russian ambition vis-à-vis the surrounding world – up until July 2021, Russia claimed it would defend “Russian citizens” even outside its borders.
- In December 2021, Russia submitted separate draft agreements, or rather conditions to NATO³³ and the USA,³⁴ in which Russia is willing to resolve the Ukraine crisis non-violently. In the proposal to NATO, Article 4 demands that NATO members admitted before May 27, 1997 do not deploy their weapons and troops in the territory of NATO members after that date; Article 6 demands that NATO cease expanding³⁵ and Article 7 calls for a ban on the military activities of NATO/NATO members in the territory of the countries of Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. If Articles 6 and 7 are an attempt to contain the West, Article 4 demands a return to the status before the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary (formerly members of the Warsaw Pact) joined NATO. A debate arose in the West as to what exactly this was supposed to mean, the prevailing opinion being that it did not mean the termination of NATO membership. That the somewhat convoluted wording of Article 4 is indeed aimed at termination of NATO membership of all the states that joined the Alliance after 1997 has been confirmed by the Russian diplomat Boris Bondarev.³⁶
- On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a military operation to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, or rather to preserve the Ukrainian territory for its integration into the “Russian pole” in a multipolar world, i.e., the “Russian world” that is supposed to be able to be a great power. Russia thus self-fulfilled the assessment made in its current strategic documents that the danger of using military force to achieve geopolitical goals is growing.

³² The article published on July 12, 2021, is available [here](#).

³³ [Draft agreement with NATO](#)

³⁴ [Draft treaty with the USA](#)

³⁵ Both Russia and China believe that NATO expansion is the plan of the USA and other original NATO members for tormenting and surrounding Russia and growing closer to China. The reality of international political life is that the countries outside the Alliance strive for NATO membership because they want to boost their security and defense, and for NATO itself it is a bit of a political and technical conundrum in practice. The closer a country is to Russia, the keener it is to become a NATO member. If for Ukraine the question of NATO membership made it in a way more valuable to Russia before 2014, after Crimea was occupied and separatism ignited in Donbas in 2014, NATO membership is a genuine goal and a real life and death value for Ukraine.

³⁶ See article *Ruští diplomaté se změnili v roboty, tvrdí náměstkyně amerického ministra* by Alex Švamberk, available [here](#).

China

China declared it would attain the status of a great power by 2049. In connection with this goal, the latest edition of the *White Paper on China's National Defense in the New Era* was adopted in 2019.³⁷ It follows up on the *White Paper on China's Military Strategy* of 2015.³⁸ These documents embody the Chinese military ambition – through its modernization and transformation, the army must be able to support the enforcement of Chinese defense and development interests on a global scale. To be able to fulfill its political ambitions, China made a fundamental decision embodied in a strategy in 2015 – what is crucial are not the capabilities of the ground forces, but of the navy which will enable China to project its power on a global scale and support Chinese interests both in relation to seas and oceans and in general. Accordingly, the said documents stipulate guidelines for the restructuring and reconfiguration of the armed forces for the benefit of the navy. The goal is to make a shift from the ability to protect territorial waters and the economic zone to a navy operating globally on open oceans. This means inter alia building combat groupings around an unspecified number of aircraft carriers (Chinese experts and US NAVY analysis speak of six aircraft carriers by 2040).³⁹ There is an emphasis on strategic nuclear response capability,⁴⁰ use of space and mastering of complex operations with a key emphasis on the use of informatization and information from cyberspace. Two milestones are defined – by 2035, the Chinese armed forces are to be modernized (i.e., to reach the standard of modern armies), and by 2050, they are to be in the category of the best armies in the world.

The military strategy clearly declares that China's strategic interests are growing. The armed forces are to “uphold the leadership of the CPC and the socialist system, safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests, and safeguard the important period of strategic opportunities for China's development...”.⁴¹ In this regard, both documents then provide clear instruction for investment in capability development – the purchase of new weapons systems and science and research focusing on the development of the new weapons systems required to fulfill the defined military strategy. This resulted in a growing share of investment into important weapons systems. In 2010–2017, it accounted for 33.2–41.1% of the country's total defense budget.⁴² The logic of ever shifting horizons is apparent – development interests are constantly shifting towards ever more global horizons, and the development of military

³⁷ See footnote 7.

³⁸ See footnote 6.

³⁹ Some Chinese experts talk about six aircraft carriers by 2035 and military logistic bases abroad. An article by Chinese female experts on Chinese military capabilities and Chinese political elites: CHAN, M. and RUI, G. China will build four nuclear aircraft carriers in drive to catch up with the US Navy, experts say. IN: *South China Morning Post*, February 6, 2019; the article is available [here](#). Aviation Week journal published an article by Bradley Perrett: *Chinese Carrier Aircraft Fleet Is Poised for Rapid Growth* on June 20, 2023, where he provides the 2022 US NAVY analysis.

⁴⁰ China declares its policy is not to be the first one to use nuclear weapons.

⁴¹ *White Paper on China's Military Strategy*, Chapter II. Missions and Strategic Tasks of China's Armed Forces, paragraph 4.

⁴² *White Paper on China's National Defense in the New Era*, table 2 in annexes.

capabilities should naturally correspond to this fact. The aim is to achieve at least parity with the US.

The latest edition of the *White Paper on China's National Defense* of 2019 expressly notes that the main competitor/opponents are the USA, followed by NATO with deployment of units in Central and Eastern Europe and frequent exercises and expansion. It is noted that strategic and military rivalry is on the rise. There is a noticeable shift in assessment according to the 2015 *White Paper on China's Military Strategy* as compared to the 2019 *White Paper on China's National Defense*, in the sense of aggravation of the situation in the security environment.

The South China Sea illustrates China's horizon-shifting approach. The "nine-dash line" is mentioned – China is trying to gain control over the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands.⁴³ In addition to the expansion of the perimeter of territorial waters, the economic zone and the ability to project military power, this involves an aggressive acquisition of lucrative and industrially important crude oil resources. China makes it increasingly clear that it views the South China Sea as its territorial waters and economic zone and is not prepared to negotiate about this in any way. It is invoking the argument of historical right and actually generating facts by building artificial islands with military bases.

Given China's great power ambitions, economic interests and ability to project power, the key objective in the building of a navy with global capabilities is to build a network of foreign naval bases. Access to the Middle East is a priority. This is confirmed by the Sino-Iranian negotiations on the establishment of a long-term strategic partnership.⁴⁴ In 2017, Sino-Iranian naval military exercises were held for the first time. In September 2021, Iran became a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and in 2023, a member of BRICS. In January 2022, China, Russia and Iran held their third joint naval exercise in the northern Indian Ocean.

Methods of the Russian and Chinese March against the West

Both Russia and China wish to expand their power in international relations. Many countries want to improve their position, and this is equally true for individual countries in the West. The basic difference is that Russia and China view themselves as entities engaged in a long-term struggle with the West. From their point of view, they are fighting against the Western influence on their countries (censorship, Internet restrictions, persecution of organizations with Western funding, etc.), and they additionally want to push the West out of the international life and system both

⁴³ A brief summary of developments and facts can be found for instance in [this video](#).

⁴⁴ In July and August 2020, the media provided information on Sino-Iranian negotiation about a treaty that would establish a strategic partnership based on economic and military cooperation; see for instance the following article: FAZZIHI, F. and MYERS, S. L. *Defying U.S., China and Iran Near Trade and Military Partnership*. IN: the *New York Times*, July 21, 2020. Link to an 18-page document – a draft of the Sino-Iranian Treaty – can be found in this article: SALEH, A and YAZDANSHENAS, Z. *Iran's Pact with China is Bad News for the West*. IN: *Foreign Policy*, August 9, 2020.

geopolitically and economically. The mentality of constant struggle fosters the attitude of “let us use **any and all** available means in our legitimate struggle for a legitimate position in the world”. Thus, alongside classic interstate, intergovernmental and business relations, both Russia and China cultivate a range of semi-official and unofficial relations along party, cultural, business or individual lines, and above all, activities intended to ‘invisibly’ weaken the will of the West to defend itself. For both countries, the ideal is to achieve their goals in a non-military fashion – through material incentives, intellectual accommodation, confusion/deviuousness, weakening of the will to act, sowing internal discord, swaying domestic and foreign policy in their favor, etc. Intelligence operations are essential in this regard. In this context, economic and technological espionage, i.e., the theft of any requisite technology and intellectual property, is a perfectly logical and justified step, as it improves and enhances Moscow and Beijing’s power.

For both Russia and China, this is nothing new. Both countries draw on Cold War experience and Soviet methods. Reinhard Gehlen, the first director (President) of the German Federal Intelligence Service (1956–1968), described this aptly: “Psychopolitics and disinformation play an important role on the Soviet and Communist side (...). The Soviet Union strives to achieve both direct political advantage – for example, the political dependence of states on the basis of economic or arms supplies – and indirect influence on the consciousness of their peoples. Marx already stated that an idea becomes a political force when it takes over the consciousness of the masses. In today’s political practice, this means that every political action contains consciousness-forming elements, but also that every consciousness-forming political action can and is supposed to produce political consequences directly or indirectly. Our Western political philosophy calls this entire complex of questions psychopolitics; the Soviet side refers to ‘dezinformacia’ in this context. The literal translation – disinformation, fake information – only reflects the insufficiently factual content of this term. What is actually meant here is not just fake information, but generally any targeted information intended to influence the recipient in a certain predetermined sense.”⁴⁵

Today’s Russia does not base its rhetoric on Marxist-Leninist logic, and therefore does not use Communist terminology and rhetoric. It does employ, however, the very method of using any and all means available. In this respect, also thanks to the revolution in digital and information technologies, it further developed the original methods used by the Communist party, the KGB and the GRU. Russia formulated a “new-generation warfare”. Chief of General Staff Gerasimov published an article in 2013,⁴⁶ where he infers that states are in a permanent state of war of varying intensity.

⁴⁵ GEHLEN, R. *Tajná služba v akci*. Praha: Naše Vojsko, 2010, p. 240.

⁴⁶ GERASIMOV, V. Hodnota vědy v předvídání. IN: *Vojenno-promyšlennyj Kurier*, No. 8 (476) of February 23, 2013. The Russian original can be found [here](#), the English translation [here](#). Generals Chekinov and Bogdanov elaborated on his theses in their article *Povaha a obsah nové generace válčení* for the Russian magazine *Vojenskoe myšlení: Vojenaja Mysl*, No. 10, October 2013. English version: The Nature and Content of a New-Generation Warfare. IN: *Military Thought*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 12–24.

According to him, to achieve the desired goals, it is essential to engage in a non-linear fashion all the available non-military (diplomatic, economic, information, cyber, intelligence, corruption) and military means, including nuclear weapons, in an effort to achieve the defined goals by non-military means where possible, or by deploying military forces with minimum resistance on the part of the opponent. The occupation of Crimea in 2014 involved the engagement of all the aspects and means of the Russian approach as published by Gerasimov. In the case of both the occupation of Crimea and the Russian aggression against Ukraine launched on February 24, 2022, threats that nuclear weapons would be used against the West were employed in order to deter any action according to the logic of escalation for the purpose of de-escalation.⁴⁷ This was proven by a retrospective analysis conducted by analytical firms in the field of megadata processing. It was ascertained, through the monitoring of certain algorithms, that the information and cyber war was launched by Russia in relation to Crimea two years before the actual (at first covert – the “little green men” in uniforms without state insignia) military intervention. Since 2013/2014, this has manifested itself in the form of information warfare, disinformation campaigns, etc. directed against NATO, the EU and their individual members, with the aim of undermining their unity and their will to act, and ideally to cause the disintegration of these organizations.⁴⁸

The Communist Party of China continues to use Communist rhetoric, in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism based on the Soviet model, brandishing terms such as “peaceful cohabitation”, “peaceful coexistence”, “harmonious development”, “peace-building”, etc. Their concrete deeds, however, contradict their words, confirming that “peace” or “peaceful coexistence” are viewed as a tool to buy time and build sufficient power of its own to achieve the ultimate goal of becoming a global superpower, ideally replacing the US as the leading power. In 1931, Soviet ideologue and longtime Comintern leader Dmitry Manuilsky stated: “Certainly, we are not yet strong enough to strike today. Our time will come in twenty or thirty years. To win, we need the element of surprise. The bourgeoisie must be put to sleep. That is why we will start by igniting the most theatrical peace movement ever seen. It will come with electrifying proposals and extraordinary concessions. The capitalist countries, stupid and decadent, will happily work towards their own demise. They will fall into the trap of opportunity of a new friendship. And then we will crush them with a clenched fist.”⁴⁹

In 1999, two colonels in the Chinese army, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, published a book, *Unrestricted Warfare*.⁵⁰ They argued that in light of the military superiority of the USA, any and all means available must be employed in order to overcome this superiority and defeat the USA. Chinese strategic and military thinking therefore

⁴⁷ Originally see the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation* of 2016, available [here](#). Currently President Putin’s decree No. 355 of 2020 on nuclear deterrence; the document is available [here](#).

⁴⁸ In response not only to Russian information warfare and disinformation campaigns, the Czech Ministry of Interior established the Center against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats as of January 1, 2017. Russian information-disinformation campaigns targeting European states are analyzed for instance by the think-tank Evropské hodnoty (European Values). A number of studies and analyses can be found [here](#).

⁴⁹ GEHLEN, R. *Tajná služba v akci*. Praha: Naše Vojsko, 2010, p. 232.

⁵⁰ The English translation of the book is available [here](#).

moved ahead of that of Russia by a decade. Its essence is the concept of “paralyzing and undermining” the enemy by degrading the will of its people and waging an armed conflict.⁵¹

As a result of their strategies, both countries are actively waging information and disinformation operations and cyber-attacks against the US and European countries (EU member states)⁵² in order to realize their ambitions through aggressive hybrid means.

Conclusion – Consequences for the West and for the Czech Republic

The nature of the political systems in Russia and China differs fundamentally from the Western political system. The systems are incompatible. Russia and China view their authoritarian systems as a necessary and correct means of national self-assertion. In their struggle to limit the power of the West, they are offering their model and their methods to other countries. They apply their political values and their political systems harshly, however, wherever their power reaches. The occupied parts of Ukraine or Hong Kong can serve as examples of this.

Russian and Chinese interests in general and vis-à-vis the West in particular overlap to a large degree. As a result, they are ready to cooperate with one other and suppress their divergent interests and disputes. For the West, this constitutes a challenge of global proportions – political, economic and military. Both countries have been behaving rather in the spirit of the 19th century thus far, so one cannot speak of a truly effective bloc. Both Russia and China have thus far maintained a mentality of a primarily independent course of action. The frequency and intensity, however, of cooperation is growing. China in principle also supports Russia as regards the issue of Ukraine. If the Russian-Chinese cooperation is increased, the Moscow-Beijing axis (with the addition of a number of other states, such as Iran or the DPRK) will pose a greater challenge to the West than the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis was in the 1940s – technologically, in terms of raw materials, economically, politically and militarily.

Russian and Chinese goals and interests are rooted in deep political and historical values, transformed into political values which reflect their beliefs and convictions about themselves. Both countries are deeply convinced that it is their birthright to be power players at the global level. In this respect, neither Russia nor China can be expected to change their approach on the basis of a single agreement or a single ‘battle’. Their advance can possibly be slowed down or halted only by an effective barrier built

⁵¹ A very solid summary can be found in Mark Thomas’s article *The Chinese Roots of Hybrid Warfare of August 2022*.

⁵² On July 30, 2020, the European Council adopted historically the first sanctions against six individuals and three institutions from China, Russia (military intelligence service GRU) and DPRK; the information and decisions of the European Council are available [here](#). Russian cybernetic and information operations directed against Great Britain are identified in the *Report of Committee of Parliament* (Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament) of July 21, 2020.

for that purpose. Such a barrier must primarily have the nature of real power and the ability to act. This is the only value and reality that the Russian and Chinese regimes ultimately understand.

In Russia's case, the territory of interest includes the part of Europe that used to be part of the Warsaw Pact (the Eastern Soviet bloc), save for East Germany integrated into the Federal Republic of Germany. In this sense, this territory is the direct target of all the techniques available to bring it at least under Moscow's sphere of influence. China certainly acts both in parallel and in synergy. This is inescapable logic inferred from its goals and interests. The common interest in diminishing the power and influence of the West and expanding their own power and influence is at the core of political thought in both Russia and China. One of the basic techniques is to undermine the cohesion and will of the West in every possible way. The existence of a unified bloc of the West is the most serious problem for both Russia and China in their quest for a fundamental change of the situation on the global level.

Not a single country in Europe on its own boasts sufficient strategic weight and depth face to face with Russia and China. As investments into security and Europe have been neglected, European countries (EU plus Great Britain) do not carry global strategic weight even as a group. The United States could in all probability handle a challenge from Russia or China on their own, but most certainly not if Russia and China formed a truly effective bloc under the anti-West banner.

The nature of the strategic challenge to the West is absolute as regards the lives of states and nations. Russia and China are both mobilizing all the resources and capabilities available. For the West to withstand this challenge, it will have to be able to do the same within its own value system. Awareness of the nature of the challenge that Russia, China and others represent is crucial. The West can then hope for adequate investment and measures in the areas of security and defense in 'peacetime', so that ideally the principle of deterrence would work and actual aggression would not occur at all.

The West has to also realize that its political values do not necessarily have to be the dream in countries outside the West. Having said that, we can still be good allies and partners at the level of international relations. This does not mean we should abandon our political values in our own countries. It means not imposing our way of life – at the level of the state and society – on those who do not yet want it, or perhaps do want it but are in a situation where they want to develop their country (perhaps gradually) in their own way, commensurate to the existing internal political, internal social and regional situation. Afghanistan is a typical example, and demonstrated the clear limits of the import of a political setup from outside.

This does not mean, however, we should not assess and hold views on the situation in countries outside the West. *A contrario* – we should be able to tell our citizens and companies what risks may await them in the countries concerned.

Summary: We should defend our way of life at home, but should not impose it on others forcefully, and we should actively search for partners and allies at the global level. If

the countries of the West consistently apply their own values at home, the outcome will be a strong society, an efficient state, economic prosperity and technological development – i.e., an example worth following and a development required to survive.

Recommendations:

- Investments into security and defense capability in such a way as to make the state and society resilient against non-military attacks while creating a military deterrent. Specific investments in the resilience of infrastructure, cybersecurity and national defense capability. A need to invest in the ability to perform rapid security analyses at the central government level and the ability to make rapid decision-making is an integral part of the above. The capabilities of the army are the cornerstone of deterrence.
- The West is facing a challenge at the global strategic level. The response must take place at the nation-wide and society-wide levels. As regards investments into security and defense, the principle of minimum sufficiency (against identified threats) in 'peace' time must be respected so as to avoid excessive economic costs that would threaten economic development. It is also essential to accept that minimum sufficiency amounts to investing a minimum of 2% of the GDP per annum into national defense in peacetime. A working mobilization system of human and material resources and production capacities needs to be established. The functionality of this system at the requisite level (quality and quantity) ought to be demonstrated so that the psychological principle of deterrence would work. Only this kind of system will ensure effective defense in the event of aggression at times of inter-state conflict at the strategic level.
- Investments into access to raw materials and energy security with the aim of maximum self-sufficiency possible.
- Strategic goal: prevent the creation of an anti-West bloc headed by Russia and China. This will require a very active non-ideological foreign and security policy.
- Development of effective existence of organizations and tools ensuring the unity of the West's efforts and providing an effective strategic weight and depth against potential aggression.
- The West (in particular EU member states) ought to formulate foreign and development policies that would lay true foundations for independent and sustainable development in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, rather than feed a sense of colonialism in new forms. The West can then hope to find new partners and allies in the context of the challenge posed by the anti-West countries.
- Investments into the ability to understand the trends and processes in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Developments in countries such as Niger are not on the level of schematic assessment – "democracy vs. military junta". The convictions and feelings in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are much more complex and often stem from an effort not to be overly dependent on any great power. It is essential to build information and analytical capabilities and invest into the capabilities of the foreign service (diplomacy) and intelligence services.

- Investments into technical education, innovation and new technologies which will make it possible to overpower the potential aggressor in terms of quality. In the system of education, to provide information and education on the political value system in our own countries and on the essence of political systems outside Western countries. The goal should be to raise awareness about threats and develop the determination to face them. An emphasis ought to be placed on modern history and its assessment in light of our constitutional order and value system. Understanding the developments in individual regions of the world is of no lesser importance.

ABB

**HOME
CREDIT**

 **AT&T**

 **Microsoft**

B **Bakala
Foundation**


NADACE ČEZ

BCG **BOSTON
CONSULTING
GROUP**


**PALE
FIRE
CAPITAL**

**Bubenik
Partners**
PARTNERS TO LEADERS


PPF
FOUNDATION


ČESKÁ
spořitelna

SKODA

Deloitte.

 **strive** |  **care**

direct
pojišťovna



Google

VIGO Investments