
ВОПРОСЫ ВЫПУСК 12(88), 2022 ПОЛИТОЛОГИИ

Научный журнал

Журнал «Вопросы политологии» включен
в Перечень рецензируемых научных изданий
ВАК при Министерстве науки и высшего образования РФ
по политическим наукам, в которых должны быть опубликованы
основные научные результаты на соискание ученой степени
кандидата наук, на соискание ученой степени доктора наук

Журнал включен в Перечень научных изданий
рекомендованных ВАК Республики Узбекистан
для публикации основных научных результатов диссертаций
по политическим и философским наукам

МОСКВА, 2022

ВОПРОСЫ ПОЛИТОЛОГИИ

Научный журнал

ISSN 2225-8922

Журнал включен
в Перечень ВАК РФ

Учрежден

ООО «Издательство
«Наука сегодня»

Журнал зарегистрирован
Федеральной службой
по надзору в сфере массовых
коммуникаций, связи и охраны
культурного наследия

Рег. № ПИ № ФС77-46176
от 12 августа 2011 г.

Журнал издается ежемесячно

Журнал включен в базу РИНЦ
(Российский индекс
научного цитирования)

Включен в каталог
Ulrich's Periodicals Directory
Пятилетний
импакт-фактор журнала: 0, 376

Адрес редакции:
115598, г. Москва, ул. Загорьевская,
д. 10, корп. 4, цокольный этаж,
помещение 1, комната 7-1, офис 4
Тел.: (910) 463-53-42

Интернет-ресурс:
www.voprospolitolog.ru
E-mail: voprospolitolog@yandex.ru

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не совпадать с мнением редакции.
При перепечатке ссылка
на журнал обязательна.

Научные статьи, публикуемые
в журнале подлежат обязательному
рецензированию.

Ответственный редактор
Шурина С.С.

Перевод
Чернышова Е.В.

Компьютерная верстка
Загуменов А.П.

Подписано в печать 23.12.2022

Формат 60×84/8. Объем 56,25

Печать офсетная.

Тираж – 1000 экз.

(1-й завод – 500 экз.)

Заказ № 736

Отпечатано в типографии
ООО «Белый ветер»

115054, г. Москва, ул. Щипок, 28

Тел.: (495) 651-84-56

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Абрамова О.Д. (д.п.н.)

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Шурина С.С. (к.п.н. – ответ. редактор)

ISSN 2225-8922 (print)

12 выпусков в год и

4 выпуска в год переводной (англ.) версии

Языки: русский, английский

<http://voprosplitolog>

Входит в перечень рецензируемых научных изданий ВАК РФ

Включен в каталог периодических изданий Ульрих (Ulrich's Periodicals Directory: <http://www.ulrichsweb.com>)

Материалы журнала размещаются на платформе РИНЦ Российской научной электронной биб-лиотеки, Electronic Journals Library Cyberleninka

Подписной индекс издания в каталоге агентства Роспечать 70035

Цели и тематика

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Научный журнал издается с 2011 года в издательстве «Наука сегодня». С 2016 года издается переводная (англ.) версия журнала. С момента своего создания, журнал ориентировался на высокие научные и этические стандарты и сегодня является одним из ведущих политологических журналов России.

Цель журнала – способствовать научному обмену и сотрудничеству между российскими и зарубежными политологами.

Журнал предназначен для публикации результатов фундаментальных и прикладных научных исследований. Тематическая направленность журнала отражается в следующих постоянных рубриках: «История и философия политики», «Политические институты, процессы и технологии», «Политическая регионалистика и этнополитика», «Политическая культура и идеологии», «Политические проблемы международных отношений и глобализации».

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Полные сведения о журнале и его редакционной политике, требования о подготовке и публикации статей, архив (выпуски с 2011 года) и дополнительная информация размещена на сайте: <http://voprosplitolog.ru>

Электронный адрес: voprosplitolog@yandex.ru

ISSN 2225-8922 (print)

12 issues a year plus

4 issues a year of the translated (eng.) version

Languages: Russian and English

<http://voprosplitolog>

Included in the list of peer-reviewed scientific publications of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation

Included in the Ulrich's Periodicals Directory

Materials of the journal are placed on the RSCI platform of the Russian scientific electronic library – Electronic Journals Library Cyberleninka

Subscription index of the journal in the Rospechat Agency catalogue is: 70035

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The scientific journal is published since 2011 at the “Publishing House “Science Today”. Translated (eng.) version of the journal is published since 2016. Since its inception, the journal was guided by high scientific and ethical standards and today it is one of the leading political science journals in Russia.

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Б. ВАНКОВСКА

профессор политологии и международных отношений факультета философии Университета Святых Кирилла и Мефодия, Македония, г. Скопье

ДВИЖЕНИЕ К ГЛОБАЛЬНОМУ НАТО: ПРОТИВОСТОЯНИЕ С КИТАЕМ

Статья направлена на деконструкцию идеи «глобального НАТО», или, лучше сказать, множественных НАТО по всему миру. В течение достаточно долгого времени Североатлантический альянс распространял свое влияние, включая политическое влияние, военную технику, живую силу, базы, разведку и т.д., в основном в сторону границ России – пока не уперся в стену. Логично предположить, что война на Украине уже была в планах у Вашингтона; однако трудно сказать, был ли это план или просто возможность, поскольку Запад недооценил готовность России к ответу. После мадридского саммита ключевой стратегический вопрос заключается в том, насколько далеко на восток пойдет (будущая) глобальная НАТО. Независимо от того, насколько широкая общественность сосредоточена на событиях в Украине и их (не)преднамеренном ущербе (с точки зрения экономического спада, инфляции, энергетического кризиса и т.д.) для коллективного Запада, эта война является лишь прелюдией к более важному столкновению – в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе и, вероятно, в глобальном масштабе. (Следующий) ключевой соперник – Китай, то есть держава, которая имеет фактический потенциал быть не только превосходящим экономическим гигантом, но и державой, которая может активно переформировывать новый международный порядок.

Ключевые слова: НАТО, Китай, глобальная безопасность, Украина, милитаризация.

B. VANKOVSKA

*Professor of political science and international relations,
Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius
University, Skopje, Macedonia*

HEADING TOWARDS A GLOBAL NATO: PIQUING CHINA?

The article aims at deconstruction of the idea of “global NATO”, or better multiple NATOs across the globe. For quite some time the North Atlantic Alliance had been spreading its reach, including political influence, military equipment, manpower, bases, intelligence, etc. mostly towards Russia’s borders – until it hit the wall. It is logical to assume that the Ukraine war has already been in the cards in Washington; yet it is hard to say if it was THE plan or just a possibility due to the West’s underrating Russia’s readiness to respond. After the Madrid summit the key strategic question is how far to the east would (future) global NATO go. No matter how much the general public is focused on the developments in Ukraine and their (un)intended damages (in terms of economic recession, inflation, energy crisis, etc.) on the collective West, that war is just a prelude to a more important clash – in Asia-Pacific, and probably on a global scale. The (next) key rival is China, i.e. the power that has factual potential to be not only a superior economic giant, but also a power that may actively re-shape the new international order.

Key words: *NATO, China, global security, Ukraine, militarization*

Introduction. Any credible analysis of the potential ‘globalization’ of NATO should start with debunking the myths surrounding the organization. The first one refers to the attribute of the ‘most powerful military alliance in the human history’. NATO was established, modelled, transformed and (and still is being) used as a vital instrument of the US foreign policy. In other words, there is no NATO without USA. No other member-state is an equal to the American hegemon or can replace it. NATO has always served to cover up the US security, political and military ambitions. Having embedded itself within the framework of the Chapter VII of the UN Charter, NATO represents an internationally acceptable cloak for numerous actions that are in clear violation of international law [3; 18; 31]. The Western media and academia have helped create the fake image of an (invincible) alliance as a force for good. However, an in-depth analysis depicts the low support among some of its member-states [11]. For decades an image of a purely

defensive alliance had a role of sugarcoating its aggressive nature [10]. The military might of USA is superior by all parameters to its own allies and foes too, but the history teaches that the military capabilities might not be sufficient to win a war (or even to conduct a successful military intervention). Vietnam and Afghanistan are two examples that first come to mind [21]. Thus the real question reads: is NATO truly as militarily powerful, efficient and dominant against any potential enemy as its self-portrayal tends to indicate? The answer based on statistical data and aggregate of total military power of the member-states may be misleading because the Alliance has never put its full and joint capabilities in action. The Afghanistan debacle and the proxy war in Ukraine suggest the possibility of an opposite answer.

The Ukraine case is instructive as it shows the consequences of pushing a major power into a corner [13]. What follows now is the boomerang effects (collateral damages) of the sanctions against Russia. The massive military assistance to Ukraine produce self-inflicting wounds to the Western/European allies and their populations and it is likely that they will only worsen in the coming period. The financial black holes are popping up everywhere. NATO bloc is just about to experience the costs of waging war, especially during the winter 2022/2023. NATO's military efficiency is questionable when it comes to facing a respectable rival (or rivals). It's worth recalling the chaotic way in which NATO forces evacuated from Afghanistan, but Ukraine also offers numerous examples of lack of plans, capabilities, coordination and – most importantly – results on the ground and beyond. In spite of the changeable situation on the ground, it still seems that NATO's involvement in Ukraine will spell a defeat for the West. Even a Pyrrhic victory is not an option, since Russia cannot afford to lose this war no matter what [28].

There is a true dilemma if NATO is just a paper tiger after all [29]. The USA uses the military capabilities (and budgets) of its allies as auxiliary forces in addition to the 'division of labor' principle introduced in NATO. On the ground, others pay the highest bill in human lives or economic costs, while the US remains on a safe distance. However, the US allies have their limitations and are not necessarily trustworthy candidates for cannon fodders (despite the fact that some countries such as Poland and the Baltic states are more willing to directly confront Russia than others).

One should not underestimate the internal political schism in the States [32]. The fragmentation and demise of the USA has been predicted since long ago by many analysts but most agree that the process would be nasty, protracted and bloody. The USA's internal divisions and socio-economic problems have certain impact on its hegemonic functions, and one could only assume they will grow in a near future rather than decrease, especially having in mind the militant rhetoric of the Democrats regarding their main political opponent(s) [22].

The military arsenals of many NATO member-states are almost depleted due to the excessive military involvement in Ukraine's defense. They are emptied to the degree of having not enough armament for one's own national defense, which may be interpreted in two ways: either the proportions of projected military threats for their national security have been (intentionally) exaggerated so far, which is particularly true to the militarily most powerful state in the world (USA) – or the ultimate defense means is seen in the nuclear security. Or both. Other smaller and weaker NATO member-states (such as Macedonia and Albania) are making purchases they can hardly afford and at huge social costs for their own societies and populations.

The effects will be visible quite soon and in some of them the public will openly display anti-NATO sentiment. All this raises the question of the credibility of security risks around which NATO has mobilized around for years. The USA (and consequently NATO) have seen enemies and threats literally everywhere in the world, with Russophobia and Sinophobia on the top. The main profiteer of such a policy has been the military-industrial complex – mainly in the States, but also in some other countries who are key military producers and dealers be they NATO member states or not (Germany, Great Britain, France, Sweden, but also Japan, etc.). According to SIPRI reports, for the five years (2017 to 2021), the US accounted for 39 percent of major arms deliveries worldwide, over twice what Russia transferred and nearly 10 times what China sent to its weapons clients [9]. In addition, as many as 103 nations, i.e. more than half of the member states of the UN, are the US's customers. It was believed that during Trump administration, the US has turned NATO into an arms fair that works around the clock no matter if there was/is a real or fake threat. Biden administration however has shown better in this kind of deals. This policy is taking its toll at home with an army of exasperated citizens who prefer warm homes and food to achieving military 'security' elsewhere in the world.

Is Global NATO a Myth or Real Threat? There is an Orwellian contradiction even in the term of "global NATO". Originally defined as regional (i.e. "North Atlantic"), the alliance is now showing its geostrategic ambitions far to the Pacific and even Arctic (while losing the military ground on the European soil). The new strategic approach, which names NATO's enemies (Russia and China) de facto spells the end of the original NATO and its founding documents and principles [14]. Actually, there is nothing new, only things get clearer now when the propaganda fog is disappearing.

The original (1949) NATO, with all its consequent modifications and transformations, has always been just a chimera. Since the very beginning, i.e. the end of the WWII, the Western European countries have become militarily dependent on the USA, or made believe that their ultimate defender will be the US military. (Something similar was going on with Japan, the other loser of the WWII). In the meantime the Europeans were building their economic potential and creating an

alter ego in a form of EU's 'soft power' [17]. At the end of the day, it seems the Western European wellbeing has been made on exploitation of cheap resources from Africa and other parts of the Global South, including cheap labor force, getting energy supplies (cheap gas and oil from Russia) and lately on cooperation with China in various infrastructure and other projects. Now that the things in the world changed dramatically, their economic prosperity becomes a pipe-dream.

Concerning the idea of building a global military alliance (or alliances), it is important to keep in mind that the USA and Europe share certain cultural, political and ideological background and traditions, which cannot be said about the relations between USA and its non-European allies, especially in Asia. Today's Anglo-Saxon NATO is a result of decades-long work (and even persuasion of some countries to embrace the military concept and higher spending) and cooperation, a process in which all have been equal but some were/are more equal than the others. Today's NATO rests on a mutual understanding that USA is THE hegemon, while the others mostly obey and purchase its military equipment and in return expect military protection if needed. Any alliance/group is as strong and powerful as its weakest member is. One should just check Macedonia's hilarious military power (or better, weakness) to see that NATO's collective image does not correspond to the reality. Another myth of NATO concerns its internal cohesion and solidarity. Even the famous Article 5 (on mutual defense) does not automatically imply full military support by all member-states.

Building smaller (or diverse) versions of NATO across the globe requires time, resources and political will – all factors being quite unpredictable at the time being. So far the Asia-Pacific initiatives of the USA (not of NATO/Brussels who is not consulted about anything important) are on a level of confidence building, tightening cooperation, and selling weapons. During the process there are competing plans between the member-states and their military-industrial complexes. Australia's purchase of nuclear submarines at expense of France and in favor of the Hegemon nevertheless shows how far can go this competition. But, according to military experts, Australia has almost no chance to buy any submarine from current US building program any time soon. The latest report to US Congress reveals the superpower will struggle to meet its own submarine-building targets for decades [25].

The USA remains the best 'salesman' of fear. Along with fear come concrete arms purchasing deals, and occasionally loans and assistance. In this way, the US's allies become not only economically but also militarily dependent on the Hegemon. Having been unable to fully arm its allies, the US administration uses strong rhetoric, such as the one recently addressed to North Korea. Thus, the media report that Washington has offered Seoul the 'full range' of its military capabilities to deter North Korea, including US nuclear forces [5]. In other words, the USA is going nuclear, at least in words, for the sake of 'defending' its allies. Obviously, it is just saber-rattling – i.e. the USA is using overtly and

exaggeratedly threatening actions or statements that are meant to intimidate an enemy by suggesting possible use of force.

Decision-making process in NATO is an obstacle for the US rather than an asset. Therefore, the US administration bypasses NATO whenever something concerns its 'national interests'. Projecting an alleged 'NATO's global empire' is a solely USA idea, which can hardly be made realistic. Mostly of all, the USA is overstretching its military capabilities far beyond its real capacity to confront its rivals, and it goes with a big internal price. At the same time, the other great powers and their allies make adequate moves in an opposite direction, strengthening their political and economic ties (such as Shanghai Security Cooperation Organization, for instance) [35]. The Empire is in decline and as many other empires in history, in its last stage it manifests and relies on its military power but realistically speaking it looks ridiculous. The only 'non-funny' matter is the nuclear danger, willingly or by accident. It is something that not even the best experts in the world can predict or even prevent.

The current concept of NATO globalization is nothing but an image of the US military influence's expansion. Anglo-Saxon NATO has enough intra-organizational complexities at hand and it is hard to expect that this model could be applied elsewhere. The current picture mirrors a rather fluctuating and unfinished (not fully institutionalized if ever) situation. For instance, the African continent has been under US military control through bilateral agreements with the weak and corrupted governments, which established military cooperation, including deployment of military bases on their territories.

US Secretary of Defense denied any intention to establish Asian NATO, but at first sight the actions on the ground speak otherwise [20]. On 2022 NATO summit, Japan, S. Korea, Australia, and New Zealand were invited as observers/guests. As well-known, the summit's conclusions detected threats posed by China, i.e. China was defined as a malicious power. Beijing reacted immediately [15]. The US's "pivot to Asia" policy relies on a few initiatives, i.e. military and political alliances that are expected to only *resemble* NATO (as new NATO is not possible). They include Quadrilateral Security Dialogue – Quad 2.0 made of USA, India, Japan and Australia [19]; AUKUS (2021) – a mini Asian NATO (as it is usually named) is a military alliance made of USA, Australia and UK [4]. Its end result is augmentation of the alleged China threat and increased military budget and nuclearization of Australia. Partners in Blue Pacific (PBP) were promoted in summer 2022 to get together USA, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and UK in order to counter development opportunities provided by China's Belt and Road Initiative [7]. More or less, each of them has a goal of keeping the key states in the wider region within the anti-China fold. The configurations of each initiative is changeable depending on the geographical and geopolitical scope.

Obviously, the USA faces a *mission impossible* to get all the (possible, old and new) partners under one (institutionalized and legally determined) umbrella.

In that respect, QUAD has been least successful due to India's reluctance to entertain a military pact against its important neighbor China, but also to disturb the economic developments related to BRICS+. Despite the existing grievances and constant militarization, Japan is also a bit reserved and careful in measuring the military security benefits (from USA) versus economic benefits (trade with China). New Zealand's position is rather ambivalent: a country that acknowledges its belonging to a nuclear-free world/zone, is gradually being lulled to believe that its security depends on a military pact with nuclear powers. It is in contradiction to its ratification of and abiding to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2021.

The vision of a new global NATO is just a chimera and a tool of pressure on China. The US still relies mostly on the bilateral relations with each of the respective states in Asia and Pacific region as a more effective tool for achieving its goals. These configurations of states make it very difficult (if not impossible) and too time-demanding and cost-ineffective endeavor to plan an alliance similar to the one with HQ in Brussels. The analysis of the mutual/bilateral relations among these Asia-Pacific states displays a complex picture of states with different histories, cultures, interests concerning China (and the USA), economic priorities, military build-up, etc. On the other hand, the Ukraine war has shown clearly that defense arrangements are *facing a capability gap* – in other words, the wishes go far beyond the real possibilities even when it comes to the most powerful partner (USA).

It is no secret that the belligerent US establishment has already started its war against China [23]. It takes different forms and channels but the main goal is weakening one's development, including the military/security posture. In addition to the visible (although, in our view, long-term) initiatives for global NATO, the USA is doing everything possible to provoke instability in Russia's and China's neighborhood. For instance, the deadly conflict continues to play out in Southeast Asia's Myanmar, as a part of a wider US effort to destabilize, divide, and destroy nations partnered with China in pursuit of China's encirclement and containment [12]. The same applies to the Philippines: its government is closely tightened to the US power interests in the region and many experts warn that the country is likely to be another pawn or proxy of the US. One should not disregard the long-term policy of instigating colored revolutions for the sake of regime(s) change in various parts of the world [30; 34].

Within this comprehensive 'containment policy' of the West/USA, Taiwan remains the most sensitive issue for China [33]. One could say that Taiwan today may easily become a new Ukraine episode in the global war of attrition – something that has already been announced by some US scholars [26]. The US establishment has had a long-term influence in Taiwan but officially has been recognizing one China policy. This position has been gradually changing, especially after the Ukraine war. The verbal (Biden, Blinken) and concrete actions of

provocations (Pelosi's and US congressmen's visit, overt and generous military aid, etc.) they are all in violation of China-USA agreement [27]. It is not hard to assume that the US cares about Taiwanese as much as they do about Ukrainians – they would sacrifice these societies and populations as pawns and chips in the strategy of encircling China and pulling on its resources and energy in a phantom-like war. According to the critical analysts in the US, the main point is that the *US is not using diplomacy; it is overtly using weaponry* [6].

Militarization of American foreign policy has at least three decades of practicing. U.S. launched 251 military interventions since 1991 [16]. The U.S. approach is a military-first, and often a military-only approach. This state arms who it wants and whenever it wants. Taiwan's military aid has one goal – to aggravate China! And to pay off the military-industrial complex. However, an overt war confrontation in the Asia-Pacific is unlikely so far, because the US strategy still is focused on diminishing and weakening the economic and global power of China and its other rivals. It would be too risky for the States to engage in military confrontation with Russia and China simultaneously. On the other hand, China's prospects may reflect Russia's ones, especially if the US manages to provoke another military conflict over Taiwan.

Conclusion: Towards the Endless War. NATO is an extension of US foreign policy objectives – and nothing more. It is a chimera, so one should pay more attention to its core – the USA. Furthermore, the effects of the Ukraine war as well as the endless ambitions to make it a global rather than regional security organization will have negative effects on the 'original NATO', which is already in crisis (for instance, the heightened tensions between Turkey and Greece) [2].

One should not give too much importance to the empty talks about a 'global NATO'. First of all, it could hardly be a classical military/security organization as we know it. The name is/would be misleading, i.e. the multiplication of NATO-like clones would have nothing to do with North-Atlantic region. Also to establish bureaucratic, institutional and military (interoperable) structures would be too costly and too time-consuming efforts. The US Secretary of Defense and his aides, for instance, would not be in a position to attend all the meetings and mediate in the decision-making processes on different meridians across the world. Seen through the USA interests, such a NATO would be a waste of time for something they can achieve with no such troubles. In a divided and changeable multipolar world, for USA is important to keep the instruments of control and disciplinary power over its allies, which serve as auxiliary forces. Nevertheless, the talk about a 'global NATO' reflects the true essence of the US global policy; that is a *full spectrum dominance* [8].

US imperialism of containing China is just euphemism for war (by various means, including merciless propaganda and incidents but not full-scale military confrontation). The US has been in a state of permanent war: i.e. war is the primary business of the U.S. Empire and the bedrock of the U.S. economy. Bearing

in mind its military superiority on a global scale, it is understandable that they are unable to respond to any other economic and political power adequately – i.e. by economic or political means. The warmongering (war games) are a way of sucking out the energy of the rivals and distracting their other non-military ways of development and spreading global influence in the multipolar world. Therefore, it is important for the US rivals not to get into the American trap of eternal militarization and arms race, while pushing aside the other priorities. As things go on now, the US may face a same destiny as the former USSR, which collapsed under the pressure of its internal contradictions, socio-economic decline due to the military exhaustion and military defeat away from home.

It is likely that the ‘original NATO’ would face a further internal split over member-states burden sharing as the Ukraine war won’t end any time soon, despite the controversial news from the ground about forthcoming victory. The projected 2 percent of GDP for military purposes among the member-states might not be enough to meet all projected needs because in relative terms the amount will decrease due to the economic and financial crisis. In other words, Anglo-Saxon NATO has caught itself in an internal arms race and spiral it will hardly manage to break. The Ukraine war caused an effect of imminent threat for the European allies; there is still no such situation in Asia-Pacific region – so far. China is in a position to follow and learn what would follow in a similar situation, especially if Taiwan becomes a ‘new Ukraine’ and China is portrayed as ‘new militant rival’ like Russia.

The world scene is changing by a day. Multipolar system is in the making and the US is losing the global war of unquestioned dominance. However, the humanity (as well as China as a part of it) is in a danger of losing the compass of international law and international order. NATO as it is (with its overtly exposed ambitions) and as it would like to be is something completely different from what we have known so far about international organizations, their principles, decision-making, socialization, activities, etc. The UN system is in a comatose state, and the so-called Western-made phrase ‘rules-based-order’ de facto means disorder for everyone else outside the Western sphere of interest who is not obedient [1]. The cloud of nuclear danger remains heavy and realistic – more realistic than a conventional war with China or Russia.

Unfortunately, the world today is entangled into a disinformation war – and the West is winning it by turning the narrative that it is the ‘non-democracies’ that spread the fake news. Under such circumstances, the intellectuals, analysts and think-tanks are disciplined to the level of being obedient pawns in the game. Disinformation and propaganda are powerful tools in these hybrid war efforts: opposition is silenced, while all wars start with fake pretexts and go on based on lies. Therefore, it is very difficult to distinguish the true information/fact from the intentionally created lie but the distrust in Western media should be vivid. The socio-economic worries of Western or pro-NATO societies will become even

greater. This is a double-edged sword: on one hand, it may initiate anti-war mood and movements, while on the other hand it may give a rise of far right (fascist) forces (a situation similar to that of the raise of Nazism and fascism in Europe).

Currently, the USA are using exactly the same tactics in East Asia as the one that led to the war in Ukraine. This is a recipe for yet another war. It's a terrifying scenario, but one should be prudent enough not to get involved into the US trap. It is important to keep in mind that the insistence of the USA, dragging Europe along, as well, in maintaining hegemony throughout the world takes place at a time when the economic power of the West is declining. The only prudent response of the non-Western powers, mainly China, should be building more peaceful partnerships across the world, establishment of a new more just financial system and comprehensive cooperation.

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