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A worrying reality:

Neither Russia nor China can be contained

In a rapidly changing geopolitical context, the West faces a troubling reality: neither Russia nor China can be contained. It is a new multipolar era that exposes the flaws in Western strategies, weakens traditional alliances, and disrupts the established world order.

In a rapidly changing geopolitical context, the West has come face to face with a worrying reality: neither Russia nor China can be contained. The new multipolar era reveals the shortcomings of Western strategies, breaks traditional alliances and knocks over the previous world order.

The leaders of Russia and China met to agree on a further joint strategy. Is the talk between Putin and Xi a ‘political signal’?

These and many other questions were touched upon by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President XI Jinping during a one-and-a-half-hour video conference on January 21.

The leaders of Russia and China met to agree on a further joint strategy.

“We are coordinating our steps on other multilateral forums as well: in the UN and its Security Council, in the SCO, the G20, APEC. We are jointly in favour of building a fairer multipolar world order, we work to ensure indivisible security in Eurasia and the world as a whole. I can confidently say that the foreign policy connection and the joint Russian-Chinese work objectively plays an important role in international affairs”, the Russian President stated.

During the talk with Putin, Xi Jinping promised to defend, together with his Russian colleagues, the rights of the two countries, earned in blood during the Second World War.

“In the new year, I am prepared to raise Russian-Chinese relations to new heights with you, to withstand external uncertainties on the basis of maintaining the stability and stress resistance of Chinese-Russian relations in the name of the development and flourishing of the countries, international justice and equality”, said the Chinese President.

Is the talk between Putin and Xi a ‘political signal’?

The inconvenient reality reveals the ineffectiveness of containment strategies in the face of the rise of Russia and China. Despite economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure, Russia continues to strengthen its position in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, while China extends its influence through massive investments and initiatives such as the “new Silk Road”. This inability of the West to contain these emerging powers highlights the limits of its traditional policies and questions its global leadership. Moreover, this rise in power exacerbates the fragmentation within the West. Divergences on the management of geopolitical challenges create tensions between the United States, the European Union and NATO, weakening cohesion and compromising the capacity to respond to global threats. Threat insofar as the only point of agreement between Democrats and Republicans in the Western space is to consider China and Russia as existential threats. This situation is accelerating the transition to a multipolar world order, redefining traditional alliances and reducing Western influence on the global chessboard.

As a result, the current geopolitical and geostrategic evolution is disrupting the post-Cold War world order. The dynamic rise of China and Russia illustrates this transformation. With its rapidly expanding economy, China, now a leading global economic power, is extending its influence across the four corners of the world. Simultaneously, Russia is regaining a position of international leadership thanks to its strategic energy policy. The once hegemonic liberal world order is being challenged with the growing isolation of the United States, epitomized by the nationalist and protectionist shift initiated under the new Trump administration . Moreover, nationalism and protectionism are gaining popularity in the West, profoundly impacting national economic policies. At the same time, global governance is experiencing turbulence, with institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO under fire. Regional conflicts, from Syria to Ukraine, from Palestine to Israel, from Libya to South Sudan, exacerbate this dynamic.

The patent failure of containment strategies

Without a shadow of a doubt, the current geopolitical dynamics, as mentioned above, highlight the ineffectiveness of the containment strategies adopted by the United States, the European Union and NATO to limit the growing influence of Russia and China, which is part

of a historical continuity. Despite unprecedented economic sanctions, Russia is strengthening its presence around the world, while China, through the “[Belt and Road](#)” Initiative, is expanding its global footprint through strategic infrastructure investments. These sanctions have paradoxically consolidated Vladimir Putin’s leadership in Russia on the global chessboard and pushed the country to develop new trade partnerships, reducing its dependence on the West. For its part, China has been able to circumvent the restrictions thanks to local technological innovation and strengthened economic alliances with emerging countries. This strategic reorientation towards Russia and China highlights the appeal of their development model, thus accentuating the limits of traditional Western policies. Faced with this development, the West must imperatively rethink its approaches in an increasingly multipolar international context, calling into question its historical supremacy.

The fragmentation of the West is evident

The West’s strategic cohesion, once a cornerstone, is now a thing of the past. The failure to contain the geopolitical ambitions of Russia and China has exposed deep fractures within the West, exacerbating differences over how to manage these threats. While Germany and France favor diplomatic and economic approaches to Russia because of their energy interests (despite aggressive rhetoric from political elites), Poland and the Baltic states opt for stronger security postures, influenced by their geographical and historical proximity. Similarly, complex economic relations with China divide European countries between commercial opportunities and security concerns. This division extends to NATO, where Turkey’s independent policies, such as the [purchase of Russian S-400 systems](#), call into question the cohesion of the alliance. Financial and strategic disputes between the United States and some European allies add a further layer of complexity, weakening the coordinated response to threats (China and Russia are still considered existential threats in the Western space). For the United States, the traditional leader of the West, policies perceived as unilateral, such as the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the WHO or the potential imposition of tariffs, erode the trust of allies. These internal dynamics weaken the West’s position on the world stage, reducing its influence in the face of emerging powers (which it was supposed to contain) and redefining the balances of power in a rapidly changing world.

A new multipolar world order

In a rapidly changing global context marked by the emergence of a new multipolar order, the geopolitical scene is undergoing a dramatic redefinition of alliances. The rise of Russia and China as major geopolitical actors is redrawing international relations to the detriment of the traditional influence of Western nations. These emerging powers offer new economic

opportunities and alternative political support, attracting many countries that are reassessing their strategic positions in the face of a changing global system. At the same time, Russian and Chinese strategies for expanding spheres of influence, notably through massive investments in Africa and Asia or strategic alliances in Latin America, are weakening the once uncontested dominance of Western powers. This new balance is challenging the liberal international system, weakening institutions such as the United Nations and the WTO. The [multipolar governance models](#) promoted by Russia and China challenge the principles of unipolarism, eroding the moral and political authority of the West. Thus, this profound upheaval signals an irreversible transformation of the world order, challenging Western predominance and opening the way to an era of growing rivalries on a global scale.

From the above, we can deduce that the West's inability to contain Russia and China marks the end of an era and the beginning of a new multipolar world order. Faced with this inescapable reality, strategies and alliances must be reinvented to navigate a transformed and increasingly fragmented geopolitical landscape.

It can be said that the US foreign policy, based on containing Russia and China, is nothing more than a sale of illusions, in the sense that neither Russia nor China can be contained.

[Mohamed Lamine KABA](#), January 28, 2025

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