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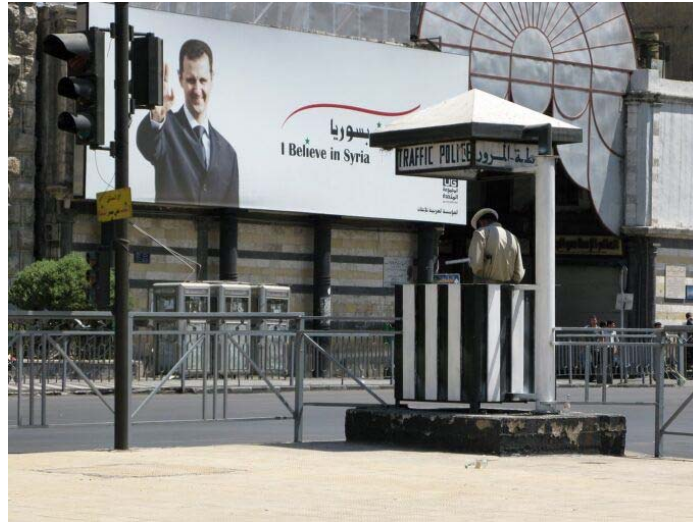
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Proxy Conflicts and The Neo-Cold War



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“I don’t mind paying for the police and for streets and sanitation, or road work, bridges, trains, food subsidies and welfare. But I don’t want to pay for bombs to fight proxy wars in the middle of nowhere against enemies in the night.”

— Wasalu Muhammad Jaco (Lupe Fiasco)

The Neo-Cold War—announced in 1997 with a joint declaration from leaders in Beijing and Moscow asserting their opposition to global hegemony (i.e. unipolar American dominance), accelerated by the Russian invasions of northern Georgia and Crimea (threatening US/EU interests), as well as expansion from the Chinese and Russians to control Africa and dislodge Western power, and which has now dramatically intensified with the Russo-Ukrainian War and ever expanding Middle East Crisis—is rapidly evolving into more violent and unpredictable proxy conflicts.

While the alliances are looser in this Cold War than the previous one (an example being the IDF functioning as American mercenaries but the Israelis still maintaining relations with the Chinese and Russians, despite each power sharing ever increasing military and economic ties to the Iranians, who are mortal enemies to the US/West), the general overview can best be described as the US and its allies in Western sectors of the American empire who are intent on preserving the current “rules-based order” (euphemism for American global preeminence) facing off with an alliance of China, Russia, Iran and their closest allies (North Korea, South Africa, Belarus, Venezuela, Cuba, Syria, Axis of Resistance, etc.) who are intent on expanding Chinese-led institutions and forging a new global order controlled primarily by BRICS powers, of which Beijing is the strongest.

The primary non-aligned powers—India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Indonesia, Egypt, Brazil, and, increasingly, Turkey—all share robust or expanding relations with both sides of the Neo-Cold War and don’t want to be dragged into any unnecessary conflicts that could derail their efforts at becoming regional hegemony themselves.

YEMENI CIVIL WAR

An outlier being the Yemeni Civil War that erupted on Saudi Arabia’s borders and directly threatened their strategic interests in Yemen. Thus, the US was easily able to coerce the Saudis into leading the intervention as American forces played a logistical, advisory and special operations/airstrikes role in the war. The Yemeni government was being threatened by the Houthis—an Iranian proxy and political-militant organization in the Axis of Resistance—and this drew in the attention of the Saudis and Emiratis who want to contain Iranian power and expand their own in the region. This interest lines up directly with American goals, who have long wanted to take out the Iranians, which is how this civil war in Yemen essentially evolved into a regional proxy conflict within a greater proxy war between the US and Iran.

Forces from Morocco, Qatar and Sudan also played a role in the Saudi-led intervention. This conflict, winding down and in the negotiation process to end hostilities, has reignited in the last year with the Houthis forcing a semi-blockade of the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden during Israel’s war on Gaza, prompting US and British intervention, among other American allies (colonies). While the risk for this conflict expanding into a direct war between the US and Iran exists, it’s not very likely and the result of this proxy conflict is best described as a draw, barring any future developments that extend or expand the war. The Saudis and Emiratis want the war to end and it’s increasingly obvious the Houthis are not going to be dislodged from power in Western Yemen. American and British air power can only do so much. Washington is most likely to cut their losses in terms of taking out the Houthis in Yemen, as

that would require ground operations from the US military, and even then, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, it's unlikely to produce a desired result in the end.

SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

Another outlier where a more non-aligned power involved themselves in a proxy conflict is Turkey's intervention in the Syrian Civil War to support the opposition forces of their choosing battling against Assad, the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces)/Rojava and ISIS/affiliates of Al-Qaeda. This resulted in Turkish occupation of portions in northern Syria to support the Syrian National Army (SNA) where Ankara has been seeking to consolidate its power and further encroach on territory in Rojava with large populations of ethnic Kurds. It should also not go unmentioned that Turkey, who intervened supposedly to fight ISIS and affiliates of Al-Qaeda, has been verifiably confirmed to have supported such non-state actors in their attacks on ethnic Kurds and the self governing autonomous region of Rojava during the war since the earliest days of their invasion.

The civil war in Syria was mostly a loose collection of intertwining factions that all had complex relations with one another. By 2014, the Iranians and their proxy in Hezbollah were deployed across Syria to support Assad, prompting US military invasion. The US officially intervened with airstrikes in support of the Syrian rebels and began arming the groups as well. US special forces were also deployed to neighboring Turkey in order to help train these forces. This prompted Russian intervention a year later in support of Assad, which helped turn the tide as Moscow committed far greater resources to the war than Washington. US ground operations began a year later but Washington only used special operations and a limited number of troops to fight in Syria. Assad's rule was seemingly entrenched with troops from Russia, as well as Iran and Hezbollah, permanently stationed in the country, while Ankara was set consolidating power with the pro-Turkish factions of the Syrian Opposition as their proxy exercising control in the territories they occupy.

Meanwhile Iranian proxies in the Axis of Resistance had been increasingly targeting US forces in Syria over the last year and this caused real concern in Washington about the future of America's involvement there. Some US officials were even publicly discussing the possibility of a US military withdrawal altogether, which would only have served to strengthen Russian and Iranian power in Syria (as well as Turkish), of which the Chinese were starting to get involved by signing a strategic partnership with Assad last fall. Assad had also joined the Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Beijing was eyeing future naval ports in the eastern Mediterranean near the Suez, as well as Syria's oil and gas for their large

population. Also worth noting is that China—a top 5 weapons supplier to the world—had been actively arming all pro-Assad forces in the war.

The results of this proxy conflict were emerging as a strategic defeat for the US Government. Despite American commandos rolling Russian and Syrian forces in the Battle of Kasham, displaying superior military capabilities, they'd not been able to dislodge Assad and remove the regime from power, which was always the primary goal. As said, Washington was simply never interested in committing enough military resources to do anything but occupy part of northeastern Syria (Rojava) in order to steal their oil into neighboring and US-controlled Iraq, as Donald Trump himself admitted. This was primarily because by 2014 the American public simply wouldn't tolerate large scale troop deployments to the Middle East after the debacles in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, Obama was forced by public opinion to use special operations, airstrikes and a small number of US troops to fight in Syria, while American adversaries committed nearly 50k troops combined and far more military power. Turkish forces intervening in 2016 only caused further complications for Washington and their strategic objectives as their defacto colony in Ankara was backing a separate proxy in the war. In the grand scheme of global power, the Syrian Civil War had been emerging as a victory for Chinese, Russian and Iranian interests.

By 2017-2018 the Islamic State (ISIS) had been defeated in Syria and most rebel strongholds had fallen to Assad. The Idlib ceasefire of 2020 mostly held despite skirmishes until the most recent Turkish-backed offensive from the SNA and Hay' at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, the remnants of Al-Qaeda in Syria) swept through the country and reignited the conflict. Turkey's proxy forces rapidly seized territory from the Assad regime, massacring people in the process, and faced increasingly little resistance as they marched on Damascus. Primarily because Assad—after years of civil war, brutal crackdowns on dissent and economic destitution—had no popular support whatsoever. Who really wanted to die for the Assad regime at this point?

Erdoğan is eyeing an opportunity to advance his imperial strategy of Neo-Ottomanism and simply wanted to takeout Assad while removing as many Kurds as possible from Syria-Rojava with the Turks and their proxies using US-made weaponry and diplomatic cover. It has been well known for years that all rebel forces across Syria have been armed by the CIA. By 2016 roughly 1\$ out of every \$15 in the pentagon was going towards operations in Syria. This operation “Timber Sycamore” was scaled back during Trump's rule but still very much alive under Biden. Washington's objective has been to gain strategic influence and force Assad's regime into collapse. Any headway made in Syria would be thought of as a strategic

gain if Assad—Moscow, Tehran and Beijing’s proxy—were to fall. Though the US Government professes to support Kurdish independence, Washington lets Turkish forces massacre Kurds and attack Rojava with impunity, as we witness time and time again. All the corporate American regime ever cared in Syria about was stealing their oil and blunting Iranian, Russian and Chinese expansion.

The general sentiment across Syria seems to be that Assad was a ruthless monarch and brutal dictator who was never going to step aside willingly. This was then exploited by local rebel factions (SNA, HTS, etc.) that are well known to be violent and inflict misery themselves. Even those at the heart of the Rojava Revolution in the SDF have been arbitrarily detaining people (many children) in inhumane conditions based on the civil conflict. Where this all ends up going in the end, no one knows. This is a chance for Syria to move closer towards democracy and ensuring the rights of all people in Syria-Rojava, including ethnic minorities and previously marginalized communities.

Make no mistake, the people of Syria are in the streets celebrating the fall of Assad, who reportedly fled Damascus in the middle of the night and has not been seen or heard from since. A plane carrying Assad initially took off heading east from the capital before turning northwest and heading towards the Mediterranean coast, which was a stronghold of Assad and has also been home to Russian naval and air bases. After flying over the central city of Homs, the plane made a U-turn and started flying eastwards again while also losing altitude. The plane’s transponder signal was reportedly lost when it was flying at an altitude of roughly 1600 feet. Analysts from Middle East Eye have been suggesting there’s a strong possibility the plane was taken down by rebel forces or crashed as it was an older model plane. Though no plane crashes were reported in the area.

Assad was fleeing in desperation. He would likely have met a fate similar to that of Gaddafi in Libya. In recent days he raised wages for his soldiers by 50%, with an economy highly unstable and actively in contraction, highlighting the distress his regime was facing. So what exactly happened to allow such a dramatic turn of events?

Assad’s friends in Russia and Iran are simply far busier and weaker now than they were from 2011-2018 when they propped his regime up the first time, and China—wary of overseas military intervention, at least for now—was not coming to his rescue. With Moscow’s war in Ukraine still raging, with the Americans and Israelis hammering the Iranian empire’s proxy network in the region over the last 14 months, as well as threatening military action against Tehran, whose forces are strategically designed to fight on the defensive, a large scale

intervention from Russia and Iran to secure Assad's rule was simply impossible. Moscow and Tehran are facing their very own 'Fall of Saigon' moment in Syria.

What is most likely to happen is much more misery for ordinary Syrians, Kurds and other ethnic minorities regardless of Assad having been removed from power. The problems in Syria, though Assad was a significant contributor to them, are not solely with the previous regime. There are longstanding sectarian divisions and ethnic tensions that will not be easily overcome, nor the fact that those who've seemingly grabbed power in Damascus (the SNA/HTS/Free Syrian Army, the Turkish and Western mercenaries used), as mentioned, are well known to brutalize local populations. Kurdish peoples fleeing Aleppo told journalists for the Rojava Information Center that rebel forces were telling them "wherever you go, we will get you, if you go to Afrin, if you go to the Euphrates, either way we will get you." These forces are also continuing their attacks on SDF-controlled territory in Rojava even after the fall of Assad. The SDF's Manbij Military Council report heavy clashes ongoing as the Turkish-backed SNA continue attacking across multiple fronts in Manbij, even reaching the city's entrances.

There's a very real possibility that Syria goes the route of Libya in 2011 and slips further into chaos and destruction as the factions who've seized power have no governing experience on large scales whatsoever. There's also no guarantee that the rebel forces who united to overthrow Assad will want to share power or allow for democratic elections to take place. The Israeli's, meanwhile, have launched a ground operation in southern Syria near the occupied Golan Heights in order to establish a buffer zone and secure their position in light of the Syrian rebel advances.

There's simply so much up in the air at the moment that it's impossible to make concrete predictions on where things will end up, but what seemed to be a proxy conflict resulting as an American and Western defeat only a few weeks ago has now been turned upside down and Washington's long term objective of removing Assad from power has been achieved. This is certainly a significant strategic win for Erdoğan's Neo-Ottoman empire but the criminals at the head of the American empire may be the ultimate beneficiaries as this was most certainly a setback for the imperial interests of the Russians and Iranians. Therefore a loss for the rising Chinese empire—who Moscow and Tehran are increasingly reliant on—in their Cold War with America.

SUDANESE CIVIL WAR

Russia initially backed the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) materially in this war while maintaining relations with Sudan's government. Moscow then publicly shifted to supporting

Sudan's forces in the spring while the African Corps (previously the Wagner Group) of Russian mercenaries and the Emiratis still help to arm the RSF, though supplies from the UAE have become increasingly vital in recent months. Russia, being the imperial power with the most influence in Sudan, has simply been protecting its interests in whoever wins. Their friends in Beijing and Tehran, meanwhile, also actively arm the Sudanese Government with weapons and equipment that wind up being used in mass killings, particularly in Darfur. The Chinese and Russians both own a majority of the industrial mines in Sudan and are eyeing ports for military bases on its coast.

Meanwhile the US had likely been trying to use Ukrainian commandos to increase its influence in Sudan's post-revolutionary government. Reports indicated that operatives of the "Timur" unit of Ukraine's primary intelligence unit (GUR) had been active in Sudan. While their leader never confirmed nor denied their presence in Sudan, he said, "wherever there are soldiers, officers, or persons engaged by the special services of the Russian Federation, we catch up with them." Videos also surfaced of Ukrainian special forces capturing Russian mercenaries and RSF fighters. These reports, though unconfirmed by the parties involved, were given a veil of truth by the Economist who indicated earlier this year that certain US congressmen were aware of the Ukrainian military activity in Sudan. The US has also been steadily increasing foreign investment and economic aid to the post-revolutionary Sudanese regime.

With the expansion of Ukrainian troops into Sudan, using US military and intelligence assistance in all likelihood as Kyiv can't even run large-scale logistical operations near their own borders without such support, it should be clear that the corporate American regime was backing Sudan's Government, who they've made headway with in recent years after the revolution (coup) that toppled dictator Omar al-Bashir (long time ally of Moscow and Beijing) with mercenaries they effectively own given Ukraine's status as a defacto American colony.

Russia withdrawing its public support for the RSF was about getting Sudan's government to end cooperation with Kyiv, which they have. Reports suggest that, during Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov's Spring visit, Sudan pledged to abandon military cooperation with Ukraine, while Russia agreed to halt assistance to the RSF. The RSF, as noted, has become increasingly reliant on support from the UAE in the face of diminishing Russian supplies since the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin and Russia placing more support with government forces. Kyiv sought to disrupt the RSF-assisted flow of Sudanese gold that was helping Russia get around the international sanctions. In changing support from the RSF to

the strictly Sudan's armed forces, Moscow would temporarily forgo the gold shipments that have helped the Russian economy. The diminishing size of these shipments due to Sudan's conflict, however, removed much of Moscow's incentive to continue its support for the RSF. Meanwhile, the Libyan port of Tobruk is essentially now a Russian naval base. Should Russia possess naval bases in both Libya and Sudan, they will have an opportunity to establish supply lines into landlocked nations in the African interior that now host units of Moscow's Africa Corps. Despite headway being made by Washington, Russian and Chinese power is still the dominant force in Sudan. But while the US may have a long way to go in order to upend Russian and Chinese control of Sudan, any strategic gain made in the strongholds of geopolitical rivals will be seen as a positive development by Washington in this Cold War. While it's unlikely to occur, Sudan itself represents tremendous strategic value and control of the shipping lanes in this part of the world is certainly something that major conflict can breakout over.

LIBYAN CRISIS

Speaking of Libya, this became a front in the Neo-Cold War in 2011 when the US/NATO intervened to topple the Russian-backed and long time American enemy Muammar Gaddafi. After the massive Arab Spring protests threatened the rule of his regime, the Obama-Clinton White House initiated an invasion of Libya using a naval blockade from American and British vessels, air power and material support for rebel forces of the National Transitional Council that formed during the civil war. After 8 months of bombing campaigns and fighting Gaddafi was captured and executed. Gaddafi, though a ruthless dictator intent on preserving his own interests, had actually help turn Libya into a modernizing state with something of a future. This was all undone with his death and fall of the regime.

The civil war and proliferation of armed groups in Libya resulted violence, instability and another civil conflict from 2014-2020. A ceasefire has been in place since, with skirmishes from time to time between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Government of National Unity that was set up in 2021 to unify rival factions in Tripoli. The Tripoli based unity government—the US/EU/Western proxy in this conflict—controls western Libya while the LNA, under the command of the brutal Khalifa Haftar, exercises control in the eastern part of the country. Russian special forces and troops in their Africa Corps help secure Haftar's rule in eastern Libya. Libya is currently facing severe economic crises, and though improvements have been made since 2020, significant challenges remain to get the country back to where it had been prior to 2011. Barring any unforeseen future developments, the result of this proxy conflict seems to have emerged as a draw.

WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

While the War in Afghanistan started during the heights of the unipolar moment and peak of US dominance in 2001, the longest running war in American history slowly evolved into a proxy conflict not unlike the Soviet-Afghan war of the 1980's but in reverse. Taliban officials and military commanders often spoke of how "Iran, Russia and China were the three countries who were providing help" against US forces and the American occupation. US intelligence confirmed this several times in the latter years of the war. When the Americans withdrew from Afghanistan, the Taliban walked right in and took over.

Though strategic goals were largely accomplished, as the primary objectives for the US Government were to steal Afghan resources and prevent or destroy internal development, the American empire suffered a significant defeat in the Neo-Cold War with the immediate collapse of their puppet Afghan government in Summer 2021. The Taliban now firmly rules Afghanistan, have joined Beijing's BRI and Chinese multinationals have begun their own process in looting the country. Russia—Beijing's junior partner in this Cold War—have even removed the Taliban from their state sponsors of terrorism list and are set to increase their own presence in Afghanistan along side China. Iran, again highlighting the looser relations of this Cold War, remains skeptical of the Taliban and, despite providing assistance to their forces against the US military, don't necessarily want such an unstable neighbor to their east. At this stage Western power has no room to maneuver in Afghanistan and this will not change anytime in the near future. The West is looking to consolidate its power elsewhere in the Middle East.

ISRAELI-HAMAS WAR / ISRAELI-HEZBOLLAH WAR

The Israeli-Hamas war has been raging for the last 14 months, with the Israelis functioning as clear American and Western mercenaries relying on US economic, military and diplomatic support to wage their war on Gaza. Hamas, for their part, belong to the Axis Resistance and rely on support from the Iranians, as well as the Turks (another thorn in Washington's relations with Ankara), to project power. Hamas' soldiers have also been seen using Chinese, Russian and North Korean arms while fighting the IDF. Footage last summer from Middle East Eye showed Hamas using Chinese anti-tank missiles against the Israelis, confirming that they've managed to at least somewhat get around the complete blockade of Gaza, as well as the fact that this conflict is part of the wider Neo-Cold War between the interests of the US/West and China/Russia.

This war has since expanded into Southern Lebanon with the Israelis launching major military operations against Hezbollah, supported by the US. Hezbollah had been launching

daily attacks on the Israeli occupied Golan Heights and northern Israel since the IDF's assault on Gaza began. This has caused widespread damage and abject suffering across Lebanon, in particular Beirut and its southern communities. A recent ceasefire brokered by the US and France has been violated over 100 times by Israeli forces but it generally seems to be holding together for the moment. In my opinion this will likely turn into an enduring ceasefire as the Israelis are stretched incredibly thin militarily on multiple fronts and can't achieve many territorial gains against the well entrenched forces of Hezbollah.

The real purpose of Israel's military operations in Lebanon the last few months have been to force Hezbollah to withdraw from the border, move heavy weaponry north of the Litani River, and into a ceasefire where they have to refrain from attacks on northern Israeli territories. These attacks were being conducted in order to divert Israeli military resources to the north and help Hezbollah's friends Hamas with their war against the IDF in Gaza. Given that any Hezbollah missiles used to attack Israeli forces in the Golan Heights or northern Israel will now be viewed as attacks on Israeli sovereignty during the ceasefire—igniting the restart of the war—the Israeli regime has gotten exactly what it wanted in Lebanon. Hezbollah couldn't end the war on Gaza with military power and now they've effectively been forced out of the fight. This has now been an essential green-light in the complete ethnic cleansing of northern Gaza and the forcible transfer of Palestinians from the area under the threat of starvation and murder. These crimes against humanity will only be exacerbated by the incoming Trump regime that has fielded the most pro-Israel cabinet in American history.

RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

The most significant and obvious proxy conflict that's raging in the world today remains the Russo-Ukrainian war. The War in Ukraine began with Russia's invasion of Crimea, a result of the Maidan Revolution where Moscow's lapdog was swapped for an American/EU puppet of their own choosing. The Donbas phase of the war (2014-2022) was mostly a draw with separatists in eastern Ukraine functioning as proxies for Moscow, receiving support from Russian special forces, while the Ukrainians exist as merely American/EU/Western mercenaries. This war greatly expanded, and the Neo-Cold War along with it, when Russia launched its full scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Far from merely a noble endeavor to defend Ukraine from Russian imperialism, the war is really being waged by the American empire as a means to grind down the industrial capacity of Russia and weaken them economically, as well as militarily, to the point that they can no longer threaten their interests in Europe, the Middle East or globally. From a geopolitical perspective, the US has been waging a total siege on Russian imperial interests.

However, what's largely been obscured in the framing of this war as an American-Russian proxy conflict is how Moscow cannot afford this war absent their relations with the Chinese, who are propping up their war effort with non-lethal aid, diplomatic support and by buying more oil/gas from Russia than ever before with plans only to increase military, economic and political ties. The Neo-Russian empire, as I call the post-Soviet regime of the Russian Federation, is beginning to function as a defacto Chinese proxy against the American empire and Western dominance in global affairs. Russia remains a regional power able to secure its interests, while the Chinese will gradually control more and more of their sphere of influence (empire) by being a far stronger power and one all parties (Russia, Iran, North Korea, South Africa, etc.) will have to rely on for economic and, increasingly, diplomatic and military support.

Russia has a larger military footprint at the moment, which China exploits by its multinationals investing heavily in locales backed by Russian forces. They function essentially as beat cops for Chinese interests, much as US allies in the EU, Japan, Israel and elsewhere are for the American empire. Over time, though, the Chinese military will likely surpass Russia's global reach, as they've already seemingly passed them in terms of technological and military capabilities. China simply has a far larger corporate portfolio to protect, while diplomatically Beijing is the only real lifeline for Russia, Iran, etc.

The deployment of North Korean troops to Ukraine has surely made the war more global, and this was likely the reason the US Government escalated tensions further by allowing Ukraine to use US/Western/NATO weapons to target Russia directly. The most interesting aspects of this war at this stage are how far US military involvement gets, whether Trump and the Republican Party will force Ukraine to cede territory in exchange for peace, and if the Chinese eventually cross the lethal aid redline set by the West. I suspect they won't, fearing economic sanctions in response. With Pyongyang intervening in Ukraine, Beijing can at once aid Russia with North Korean arms and troops while simultaneously maintaining the facade of limiting their support for Moscow's war.

POSSIBLE CONFLICTS ON THE HORIZON

There are many parts of the world with ongoing tensions that could result in escalating conflicts that spark a regional war or even World War III as is the fear in the new era of international politics we've entered over the last couple decades. Some more likely than others.

The Arctic

Tensions in the Arctic between the US/NATO and Russia have been simmering for years now. Though this region is ultimately unlikely to see any major military operations, the possibility can't be ruled out. There's a great game taking place between world powers for the untapped resources in this region and Moscow is winning at the moment. Russia and China are intent on piggybacking their interests in the Arctic together, including utilizing Russia's icebreakers to navigate the "Northern Sea Route" along its Arctic coastline, which allows for shipping lanes to Asia, primarily by opening up passages through the icy waters of the Kara, Laptev, East Siberian, and Chukchi Seas, facilitating faster and more efficient cargo transport between Europe and Asia compared to traditional routes. Russia's military buildup in the region has dwarfed that of the US/NATO who are playing catch up. Ultimately any geopolitical actions in the Arctic circle are most likely to be driven strictly by economic and business means. Though, given that the region is also where any missiles during a potential nuclear war between the US and Russia would need to traverse, security and military considerations will certainly play a role in force posture.

Korean Peninsula

Tensions are also rising on the Korean Peninsula and the dictator running North Korea has been making very public threats to use military force against the South Koreans. In my opinion, this is unlikely to spiral into open war as that would immediately trigger US military intervention. North Korea knows it can't win a full on war with the US and Washington wants to avoid this as North Korea possess nuclear weapons. Hence, not an easy target to pick on for the American empire. Kim Jong Un is likely using rhetoric to flex their muscles in order to gain financial and political concessions from the international community, as well as the lawless politicians and corporations that control it.

South China Sea

Another part of East Asia with tensions rising precipitously is in the South China Sea between the Chinese and Filipinos. With China encroaching on the sovereignty of not only the Philippines but several other countries with territorial claims in the region, war is certainly possible but any open conflict between China and the Philippines would also mean immediate US military intervention. Rather than resort to force or an unwarranted escalation that brings direct conflict, China is far more likely to assert its claims by harassing Filipino vessels routinely (for example, the Chinese Navy and Coast Guard have been seen using water guns to attack Filipino ships passing by) and expanding its military capacity in the South China Sea piece by piece. Over time China simply seeks to become a greater economic lifeline for developing countries like the Philippines than the US. Beijing likely hopes

American colonies in Asia—such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, etc—will simply fall into their hands as historical trends continue to unfold with Chinese power on the ascent and American hegemony in noticeable decline.

Taiwan

The most real scenario for a Sino-American war (or World War III) in the coming years remains in Taiwan. It is the primary chain of containment in America's island chain strategy from Korea and the Japanese islands down to Taiwan and the Philippines that suppresses Chinese power by restricting their capacity to project military power. There's a reason Joe Biden broke strategic ambiguity during his rule by asserting that American forces would in fact defend Taiwan militarily should the Chinese invade the island a la Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Which is why the most likely scenario for this war to start isn't by a full frontal invasion with simultaneous attacks on US military assets in the region—though this gives Beijing the greatest chance of winning the war swiftly—but by an economic blockade of Taiwan imposed by the Chinese Navy.

At this point the onus will be on Washington to decide what to do. Does the US militarily intervene and immediately spark World War III or do they sit back and do nothing fearing the potential nightmare of such an outcome? In this scenario Beijing may never have to kill a single American to take Taiwan. If the US refuses to defend Taiwan, then American security commitments will begin to evaporate. After all, if the US won't defend Taiwan from attack, then would they defend any other allies from similar actions? The US security and alliance system in East Asia would collapse and this may have ramifications that go far beyond a single region for the American empire. While I find it difficult to imagine China pulling this trigger, given current global trends and the opportunists who helm states across the world, it's a very real possibility that can't be ignored.

Venezuela

With Trump returning to the White House and major combat operations ceasing in the War on Terror, a more likely possibility of US military intervention is in Venezuela. Marco Rubio is expected to take an even more overtly hawkish stance on Latin America than previous secretaries of state and Venezuela possess the worlds largest known oil reserves, as well as many other resources needed for steel production, aluminum production and emerging technologies the US looks to compete with China on. With Maduro threatening to invade their oil-rich neighbor in Guyana within the last year, Washington could be thinking it's become time to unilaterally make an example of Maduro in the Western hemisphere—long dominated by the American empire for multiple centuries at this point—and preemptive US

military action is always most likely against a foreign regime who is largely unable to defend themselves as in Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.

Any invasion would require deployments of 100k troops or more, similar to that of Iraq. While not an imminent risk of danger, conquering Venezuela is something that's been on the minds of planners in Washington for more than a century at this point. A major achievement for US planners occurred in the early 1920's when Woodrow Wilson succeeded in kicking the British empire out of Venezuela. At the time Britain was significantly weakened by the First World War and forced to focus resources on areas of more pressing concern in their empire.

Venezuela was important to the US because the world was shifting to an oil-based economy at the time. The US was by far the largest producer of oil, and remained so until around 1970, but Venezuela was an important oil resource for US planners. So kicking British interests out of there was very important. Venezuela also had other resources, such as iron, and US corporations enriched themselves in Venezuela for decades while the US supported a series of authoritarian regimes to keep the people in line until Chavez came to power in 1998 and began threatening US interests and policy in the region.

The "Kennedy tapes," the secret tapes of the Cuban missile crisis, are not overly revealing since almost everything in them already came out in one way or another, but they did reveal a few things. One of these was an explanation of one of the reasons the Kennedy's were concerned about nuclear missiles in Cuba. They were concerned that they might be a deterrent to a US invasion of Venezuela, which they thought might be necessary because the situation was getting out of hand with so much unrest and instability via coups in recent years. Missiles in Cuba might deter a US invasion.

Noting that, Kennedy said that the Bay of Pigs was just and proceeded forward with the operation. The corporate American regime can't face any such deterrent to its dominance in the region. If you think Venezuela openly defying the Monroe Doctrine by signing strategic partnerships with China and Russia in recent years doesn't mean an American invasion is on the table, then just consider this quote from Trump as he was campaigning to win back control of the White House: "When I left, Venezuela was ready to collapse. We would have taken it over, we would have gotten all that oil." Now that he and his cabinet of war hawks will have the power to use the US military however they see fit, we would be foolish to not consider the possibility of an American invasion to conquer Venezuela.

Iran

Perhaps the most likely possibility for US military action in the coming years—given the Middle East Crisis and current political uncertainty in the region—is against Iran, though this comes with significant risks. Any invasion of Iran and overthrow of the regime in Tehran would require using air and naval power to allow room for ground operations. Iran is prepared for all of this and war game scenarios have shown Iranian forces can easily sink US Naval vessels. The US military would also have to traverse rugged and mountainous terrain to get to Tehran, which would slow any invasion, and most analysts believe this would require upwards 1.5M+ soldiers to achieve. Almost ten times as many troops as the US committed to Iraq at any given time. Not to mention that once they arrive in Iran, they'll be facing the 17th largest military in the world (1M+ troops), one of the world's top artillery powers, and the 8th most rocket projectiles in the world. The human and material costs of such a conflict would be immense for service members themselves, let alone the civilian casualties that any direct war between the US and Iran would produce. This possibility is unfortunately something that has to be taken serious. "The ceasefire deal in Lebanon," per the fascist Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu, "now means Israel will focus on Iran's threat." In other words, the American empire could be shifting focus from its axis (or proxies) to the main hub in Tehran.

THE NEW GREAT GAME

We should all hope these wars stay cold, especially as far as great power clashes are concerned. But where the second Cold War (Britain's "Great Game" with the Russian empire from the mid-1800's to the end of the century was really the first Cold War, while the American-Soviet proxy conflicts of the 20th century were the second) featured an empire battling against another who was always far weaker in terms of economic and military strength (the military reach and economic power of the American empire was always far greater than that of the Soviet empire), the Neo-Cold War features a pair of superpowers, more or less, on par with one another.

Not at all unlike how the British empire viewed the Germans expanding as a threat to their interests, while Berlin simply wanted to expand the portfolio of its economic elites and dominate as much of the world as possible, a la Britain. The Germans were ambitious and a threat to British imperialism; this is why both World Wars happened. Fast forward over a century later and we have an ambitious rising power in China who, like the Germans a century earlier, increasingly possess the economic, military and political power to challenge the dominance of the American empire. The biggest difference here? Both empires possess the innate ability to destroy all life on earth with their nuclear arsenals. If the Neo-Cold War

doesn't stay cold, we may be forced to live in a reality far uglier than anything we could possibly imagine.

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