

THREE GEOPOLITICAL SCENARIOS WITH GLOBAL IMPACT

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Abstract: *Although it seems chaotic, the international environment is shaped by predictable forces, nurtured by interest and lust for power and domination. However, sometimes, as Nassim Nicholas Taleb pointed out, "black swans" can happen, meaning events that come as a total surprise and have a major effect. This article refers to three predictable geopolitical developments with significant impact on the global power competition, namely: the re-election of Donald J. Trump as US President; Chinese global financial initiative, including a new Asian bloc currency and a new gold/currency benchmark; and the extension of the asymmetric war between Israel and HAMAS. Three foreseeable geopolitical dynamics, which can however be influenced by chance ("black swans"). The study is linear, starting with the hypotheses, continuing with data collection, data analysis and synthesis and ending with conclusions. The research methods belong to geopolitics and combine data analysis and synthesis with inductive-deductive and ambispective methods. The data used are exclusively from open sources and include official documents, literature and journalistic sources.*

Keywords: *Donald J. Trump; China; BRICS; de-dollarization; Israel – HAMAS war; "Arab autumn".*

This article provides an analytical perspective on three potential geopolitical developments that could unfold in the near future. Each of the three scenarios has a medium probability and can have a significant impact, generating reconfigurations of the regional and global geopolitical game. The study design is linear, starting with the formulation of working hypotheses, continuing with data collection, data analysis and synthesis and ending with the formulation of conclusions. The research methods used belong to geopolitics and combine data analysis and synthesis with inductive-deductive and ambispective methods. The data used are exclusively from open sources and include official documents, literature and journalistic sources.

1. Donald Trump's victory in the November 2024 presidential election

Barring any unforeseen events, Donald J. Trump, former USA President, will most likely be the Republican Party's nominee in the November 2024 US presidential election. According to American polling companies, he is credited with a chance of winning against his Democratic challenger, the incumbent President, Joe R. Biden [„FiveThirtyEight”, 23.05.2024]. President Trump's re-election to the highest office in the US executive is viewed with concern by some analysts, who anticipate sudden and drastic changes to US policies on trade, energy, immigration, climate change and foreign partnerships.

❖ Trade

According to campaign claims, once in office, Mr. Trump will impose a 10% general import tariff, which will increase stock market tensions and trade costs, including for European goods. His administration will also block negotiations on a new *US-Mexico-Canada Agreement* (USMCA), the geo-economic format that replaced the *North America Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA). A new Trump administration will exit or renegotiate the US presence in the *Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity*, the multilateral framework for regional economic cooperation launched by the Biden administration. New trade and investment restrictions are expected in the relationship with China, to discourage outsourcing of manufacturing and to stimulate industrial relocation, especially to Middle Belt states. In other words, the incoming Trump administration will return to protectionist, sovereigntist, *America First* trade policies, which could create some disruptions in the global trading system. Unilateralist, neo-mercantilist policies that encourage exports, discourage imports, control the capital flow, and centralize currency to increase the foreign exchange reserves held by the government.

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❖ **Energy and climate change**

Today, energy policies are inextricably linked to climate change discourse. The decisions of the former Trump administration to transform the US into a global energy superpower are already well known. In this regard, it is expected that the energy policies of the (potential) next administration will continue in the same neo-mercantilist and unilateralist register, with an emphasis on the exploitation and commercialization of fossil fuels, including the so-called "shale revolution" that has turned the US into a net energy exporter. In this sense, we can expect the lowering oil prices policies, in parallel with a decrease in government support for "green" industries (whose projects exceed \$ 1 trillion) [Volcovici V., 17.05.2024]. Policies explained by at least two arguments:

- fossil fuels ensure a secure and predictable energy production;
- "green" industries rely on strategic minerals such as lithium, cobalt, gallium, germanium, indium, graphite, essential minerals in the production of batteries and solar panels.

China is the world's third largest producer of lithium [Pistili M., 2024], the mineral used in lithium-ion batteries, and produces more than 75% of the world's refined cobalt. The Chinese market is the world's largest consumer of cobalt, with more than 80% of its consumption used in the rechargeable battery industry [Distribution of refined cobalt]. China also produces 96% of the primary gallium used globally, including in battery manufacturing [Distribution of gallium production], and over 90% of the global production of germanium, a mineral used in solar panels, which China has been stockpiling since 2017 [U.S. Geological Survey, Jan. 2018]. China produces over 60% of the global indium used in batteries, solar panels and control rods for nuclear reactors (Indium-115) [Leading countries] and over 77% of non-metallic graphite, the essential mineral in lithium-ion and zinc-carbon batteries [Distribution of graphite production]. Last but not least, China monopolizes the global production of rare earths [Distribution of rare earths] and their finished products: permanent magnets (neodymium-iron-bromine, samarium-cobalt) and nuclear batteries (promethium). Magnets based on terbium, gadolinium, neodymium, dysprosium are fundamental components in the production of wind turbine generators. In other words, by developing "green" industries, the US is becoming dependent on Chinese strategic minerals, and the West is replacing dependence on Russian hydrocarbons with dependence on Chinese strategic minerals. Problematic issues in the context of the bipolar Sino-American hegemonic competition, a competition that will largely shape American geopolitical behavior under a new Trump administration.

On the other hand, in the EU, decarbonisation policies are an imperative of the European Commission. To this end, generous incentives have been launched for companies to invest in clean energy and "green" technologies. These technologies are based on components and sub-assemblies manufactured outside Europe, in particular in China (world leader in "green" technology production), the USA, Taiwan and South Korea. As hegemonic competition between the US and China intensifies, especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and tensions around Taiwan, the Americans are likely to ask the Europeans to limit imports of sub-assemblies from China or to introduce tariffs and anti-dumping.

China could retaliate, as it has already done [Baskaran G., 08.01.2024], by blocking exports of strategic minerals, especially REM and graphite, gallium and germanium (essential in semiconductor production) [He L., 22.09.2023], increasing the costs of decarbonisation. In these conditions, which overlap the sanctions on hydrocarbon and mineral imports from Russia, we are likely to see a European return to carbon-based technologies and limited support for financing the energy transition of emerging markets.

❖ **Illegal cross-border migration**

On illegal cross-border migration, the Trump administration's policies aimed at limiting and penalizing the phenomenon, including by building a wall to increase the capacity of controlling the border.

Also, the Trump administration embraced the *Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy* (RAISE) Act in August 2017. The RAISE Act seeks to reduce levels of legal

immigration to the United States by halving the number of green cards issued. These policies are expected to continue and even tighten. In this regard, in an interview with "Time" newspaper, Donald Trump said his future administration will deport between 15 million and 20 million people that are undocumented in the USA [Wolf Z.B., 01.05.2024].

❖ US political and strategic partnerships

But the most significant transformations are expected in the field of US political and strategic partnerships. In this regard, there are several "hot files", starting with financial and military support for Ukraine; the Russian-American relationship and the Sino-American relationship; and continuing with the War between Israel and Hamas; the American influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America; the US relationship with India, Turkey, Pakistan and the Arab states; the situation in the Korean Peninsula and the alliances in the Indo-Pacific zone; and especially with the bilateral relationship with European partners and the future of NATO. At first glance, there is a general increase in volatility in US foreign policy. On closer examination, the risk of this volatility is somehow reduced.

Why do we say this? For the simple fact that the 2024 world and the geopolitical game are not the same as the 2016 ones. The room for maneuver on the US-China-Russia trilateral has been limited and we are witnessing a bipolar reconfiguration of the international system, with a unimultipolar bloc led by China, and a Western bloc led by the US. It is, therefore, quite unlikely that a future Trump administration will dramatically shift the center of gravity of the geopolitical game. "Make America Great Again" (Mr. Trump's campaign slogan) reaffirms America's global hegemonic role. A hegemony that cannot be achieved through a 19th century isolationism, when America was nothing but a former British colony in search of identity. So, it is hard to believe that there will be tectonic shifts in America's alliances and partnerships with the World. Moreover, the Trump administration may be more intransigent with Russian-Chinese interference in its sphere of influence in Europe, South America, South Asia or Africa. But that doesn't mean there won't be different approaches regarding "hot" issues such as the wars in Ukraine and Gaza or the trade relations with China, Japan and European partners.

After claiming a year ago that he would immediately resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by forcing peace, Mr. Trump recently declared that "*Ukraine's survival is important to the US*" [„Reuters”, 18.04.2024]. Then, during the June 2024 debate with President Joe R. Biden, former President Donald J. Trump reaffirmed that he will end the Russia-Ukraine war in one day. A significant alternation in attitude, mirroring the new international *status quo* and the need for *a way-out from the Russia-Ukraine war of the future administration*. As a result, the potential Trump administration might continue, for a while, to support Ukraine's war effort, widening, in exchange, the negotiating leeway for a ceasefire or a negotiated peace.

He also said that Europe, which should be the most interested in Ukraine's survival, should equally share with the US the economic burden of the war: "*as everyone agrees, Ukrainian Survival and Strength should be much more important to Europe than to us, but it is also important to us! GET MOVING EUROPE!*" [Ibid.]. A statement that heralds a re-tensioning of the relations with the Europeans. Especially in the context of French policies regarding Europe's strategic decoupling from the US and the assumption of a "strategic compass" favoring European military industries over the American ones. This tension is amplified by the already well-known European financial contributions to the NATO budget dispute. Contributions that might rise up to 3% of the GDP. This new quota has been unofficially reported as having been proposed by the Polish President, Andrzej Duda, during a recent meeting with Mr. Trump [Ibid.]. How real it is, we shall see. The re-tensioning of the relationship with the Europeans, might impact NATO cohesion, though logically such an event cannot come up. In a negative scenario, NATO might suffer a "reshaping", somehow similar to the Europe of multiple speeds. We might be confronted with a multiple speed NATO, with a "hard core" of total partners and a "soft core" of "rebels" like Turkey, France or Hungary.

In any case, as during the 2016-2020 term, a future Trump administration will support US military institutions, will increase the defense budget, will support research projects in unconventional areas and, perhaps, will halt denuclearization policies by reducing the nuclear military arsenal.

In the Gaza War, the incoming Trump administration is unlikely to unconditionally support the Netanyahu government. Moreover, a temporizing of the American political, economic and military support for the Jerusalem government might happen. Being logistically and economically connected to the War in Ukraine, the Gaza War is scattering America's resources. On the other hand, an American offensive against the Muslim Brotherhood might start, due to its close ties with Iran, Russian Federation and China, and its efforts to push the Islamic zone towards the multipolar bloc. This offensive involves strengthening ties with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE, Oman, Egypt and India (the Asian bridgehead that can counterweight China's global hegemonic ambitions), as well as reconfiguring partnerships with Turkey and Qatar. This is why it is hard to believe that a future Trump administration will unconditionally support Netanyahu government in its decisions regarding the Palestinian population (and the territories) in Israel.

Therefore, the potential return of the Republican Trump administration will change the global game but not in the drastic way predicted by some analysts. We will see a return of neo-mercantilism and unilateralism in US trade policies, a relaxation of "green" energy policies, a tightening of the cross-border migration policies, and an American hegemonic repositioning in the context of the bipolarity.

2. China's launch of the global financial initiative, including a new Asian bloc currency and a new gold/currency benchmark

On March 28, 2015, the Chinese government published the document entitled *Vision and actions on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*, known to the general public as the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI). In essence, the BRI represented the first affirmation of China's hegemonic aims over the landmass of the Eastern Hemisphere and the Global South. Conceived as a geo-economic mega-project, BRI directs Chinese economic and political presence across four continents - Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America, and four oceans - the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic and Arctic. A gigantic masterplan based on state corporatism, derived from the well-known "*one country, two systems*" strategy of Deng XiaoPing (1904-1997), which made China the main beneficiary of globalization.

In 2023, Beijing published two other initiatives aimed at strengthening the calongside the BRI. Both were announced on April 21, 2022, by Chinese leader XI Jinping (b.1953), at the *Boao Forum for Asia* (Asia's Davos, the Asian equivalent of the World Economic Forum). The first one, the *Global Security Initiative* (GSI), is a new collective security format for the BIS states. An institutional format designed to secure the BRI's strategic corridors and, with them, China's position as hegemon. The second one, the *Global Civilizational Initiative* (GCI), is a gigantic investment plan in the '*third world*'s infrastructure, a kind of BRI in the Global South [Global Civilization Initiative, 19 March 2023]. The Chinese Civilizational Initiative will be implemented "*respecting the diversity of civilizations, advocating the common values of humanity, valuing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and strengthening international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation*" [Ibid.]. These hard-power hegemonic masterplans for the Global South are complemented by a series of other initiatives aiming at strengthening the Chinese dome, namely: *BRI International Green Development Coalition*; *Silk Road e-commerce cooperation*; *the annual Global Digital Trade Expo*; *the Belt and Road Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Action Plan and Global Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance Initiative*; *the Chinese government scholarship "Silk Road Program"*; and *the Liangzhu Forum*, that comprises *the Silk Road International League of Theaters*, *the Network of Silk Road Arts Festivals*, *the International Alliance of Museums of the Silk Road*, *the Silk Road International Alliance of Art Museums and Galleries*, *the Silk Road International Library Alliance* and *the International Tourism Alliance of Silk Road Cities*. A smart-power strategy that aims at creating a future Beijing-led socialist global governance, a Chinese alternative to the Western "*rules-based international order*" [R. Evan Ellis, 01.06.2023]. Hegemonic desires complemented by China's efforts to coagulate a 'multipolar bloc' around the two institutional mechanisms it leads: the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

These strategic plans are added to the policy of de-dollarization of transactions within the uni-multipolar bloc, replacing the US dollar as the main currency of deposit, transaction and reference in bilateral trade transactions. This policy, explicitly included in the financial mechanism of the BRI, aims at replacing the Bretton Woods system - America's instrument of financial power, in the uni-multipolar bloc. Consequently, it is only a matter of time before China's next hegemonic initiative, aimed at a new financial system, a new currency or monetary unit, a new gold or silver-based standard system. A return to the financial *status quo* of the Cold War era, when the states of the *Council for Mutual Economic Assistance* traded in transferable rubles, the scriptural monetary unit based on the Soviet ruble, a kind of cryptocurrency *avant la lettre*.

What will be the geopolitical impact of such an event? Given China's dependence on Western markets, it's hard to believe that a total decoupling of the uni-multipolar bloc's financial system from the Bretton Woods system will follow. But, there will be implications for the US Treasury Department's ability to continue to monitor the SWIFT financial transfer network and to impose effective sanctions on foreign entities and individuals, as recently happened with Russian Federation assets after the invasion of Ukraine. In other words, it will affirm the sovereignty of the uni-multipolar bloc in relation to the US and will enshrine the bipolarity of the international system. A measure designed to protect the vital interests of the main players in the uni-multipolar bloc:

- *the Chinese corporate state*, interested in protecting its economic advantages against the risk of de-globalization through a return to protectionism;
- *and the Russian expansionist state*, interested in protecting its economic and financial system against painful financial sanctions.

3. The Israel-Hamas war becomes a regional war¹

The extension of the Israel-Hamas armed confrontation into a regional war may have a considerable impact, due to the "geostrategic status of Palestine/Israel as the center of gravity of the Eastern Hemisphere continental mass, where the reverberations of the crises spread concentrically, gradually engulfing neighboring spaces. In the present case, the crisis is mainly spreading across Europe, Transcaucasia, North and East Africa, West and South Asia". [Popescu, p.247]

Through Israel's overblown response, the current intifada has turned into a "civilizational aggregator that could trigger a conflict of global proportions. A potential conflict that, once escalated, will go far beyond Israel's borders. By engaging the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood global Islamist network alongside HAMAS and by anchoring the confrontation within the global geopolitical competition of strategic corridors, geopolitical blocs and related spheres of influence. A potential civilizational conflict built on an ideological mix between the 'Palestinian cause' and radical Islamism. A conflict that unites the secular and Islamist strata of Islamic societies and communities into an anti-Zionist and anti-Western bloc!" [Ibid., 248]

For months now, "*Free, free Palestine*" has been the slogan heard loud and clear in major Western capitals. Weekly marches and actions in support of the Palestinian cause orchestrated by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood have put pressure on Western governments. In the US, discontent over Israel's handling of the military crisis in Gaza has undermined the electoral base of the Democratic Party, known for its pro-Palestinian leanings, and has intensified criticism from anti-Zionist Jewish communities [Ibid., p.248]. Anti-Israel discourse has monopolized the public space, making forgotten the spark that reignited the conflict, namely the HAMAS attack on October 7, 2023. Moreover, the same discourse also omitted the stark reality that "the wars that led to the total abandonment of the 1947 UN plan to partition Palestine into two Semitic states were started and lost by the Arabs. And, as in any war in history, once conquered, the territories remain in the possession of the victorious one, if he has the power to defend them. And, for decades, Israel had that power.

¹ This fragment is a summary of the analysis published in: Alba Iulia Catrinel Popescu, *Geopolitical and security analysis of the Middle East*, Military Publishing House, Bucharest, 2024, pp. 247-257. The book has not been translated into English.

Over this force-field, that engages the energies of two civilizational spaces – Islamic and Jewish, overlaps the geopolitical game of the two global competitive blocs, structured since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022. A game of strategic corridors and energy stakes, aimed at decoupling Europe from Russian gas and building alternative, secure transport routes. Which at the time of the HAMAS attack had recorded four successes for the Western bloc:

- The Israel-Lebanon maritime border agreement, which was very important for securing the planned Israel-Turkey undersea gas pipeline that would have turned Turkey into a Levantine gas pipeline hub;

- The agreement on a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Turkish President Erdogan, that should have taken place by the end of 2023. On that occasion, the bilateral agreement on the pipeline project to transport Israeli gas to European pipelines was supposed to be signed [Azriel, 29.08.2023];

- The new India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor that was announced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the New Delhi G20 forum, in 2023. The corridor was supposed to take Saudi Arabia out of the uni-multipolar bloc and to bring it back into the Western bloc, and was supposed to be in direct competition with the masterplan for a North-South connectivity corridor among India - Iran - Azerbaijan - Russian Federation – Europe (INSTC);

- The negotiations for a peace agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel, announced by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2023 [„FRANCE 24”, 22.09.2023], negotiations which automatically sacrificed the '*Palestinian cause*'. [Popescu, pp.249-251]

Geopolitical challenges amplified by the geopolitical and security imperatives of the Russian Federation:

- to reduce the mass-media pressure and Western support capacity for Ukraine;
- to thwart Europe's chances of benefiting from the Levantine gas;
- to increase dissent among members of the Western bloc;
- to control the Islamist secessionist potential of the Muslim minorities compactly located in the south-western and southern border regions of the federation. [Ibid., p.251]

To achieve these objectives, Moscow has sacrificed her relations with Israel by inviting HAMAS leaders to talks. [Czerny, 31.10.2023]

Russian effort to draw the Islamic world is a joint decision with China, the hegemon of the Asian/multipolar bloc, that has imagological capitalized on the American request to intervene in support of easing tensions in the Levant [„France 24”, 14.10.2023]. That request was the US recognition of China's regional hegemony and the signal of the returning to the East-West bipolarity. The returning to the Cold War paradigm of two power blocs, this time separated by an "iron arc" running through the middle of the Ponto-Baltic Isthmus and the Sahel corridor of recent Russian-orchestrated coups.

The Asian bloc also includes Iran, the Middle Eastern Shiite theocracy known for its aggressive rhetoric against Israel and its nuclear military program. Iran supports the Houthi militias and Hezbollah, the latter linked to HAMAS since the Popular Arab Islamic Congress times (sponsored by the Sudanese branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood) [Patterson, 2011, 157]. This takfirist connection between Hezbollah and HAMAS entails the danger of drawing Shia militants into the conflict against Israel on an independent track from Iran. In the event of a Western attack on Iran, it is possible that the Persian state and its allies will mechanically blockade (by sinking ships) the Straits of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb and seriously disrupt oil supplies to Asian (India, Japan, South Korea) and European consumers. Such an action would lead to an unprecedented rise in oil prices, which would hit the already weak economies of Europe and bring great financial benefits to the Russian Federation, strengthening its war potential vis-à-vis Ukraine. [Popescu, p.252]

On the other hand, Europeans and Americans - already facing overlapping crises (leadership, geopolitical, economic, social) generated by the SARS-COV II pandemic, the war in Ukraine and especially by the Marxist subversion of the Western capitalist scaffolding - will have

to manage the risks of a new wave of migration. A wave of migration that risks to burden the welfare budgets of Western countries and to swell the ranks of Islamists in the neighborhoods of the major metropolises, which have been turned into *no-go-zones* for "non-believers". Islamists controlled by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, who have been called to jihad by their "brothers" from HAMAS. [„Reuters”, 11.10.2023]

To all these risks, another one is added – the fall of the secular Egyptian regime of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi under the impact of HAMAS-controlled refugee waves and the Islamist pressure from Sudan and Libya. Such a scenario would turn the Levantine Mediterranean into an area of radical Islamism and would open a new corridor of illegal migration to a Europe already oversaturated with Islamist migrants. An Islamist Egypt could lead to a possible heating of hotbeds of instability in Africa (Libya; East Africa - Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Shabaab; North and West Africa - Al Qa'ida in the Maghreb, Boko Haram), the Levant (Syria; Lebanon) and the Balkans (Kosovo), which could end up in new waves of illegal cross-border migration in Europe and elsewhere. The consequences could be disastrous and should be coupled with a potential rise in oil prices in the geo-economic context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

A geo-economic context that brings Qatar to the fore. On the one hand, Qatar is an important sponsor of the HAMAS regime in Gaza [Mounier, 14.10.2023], and on the other it is the main supplier of gas to Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. European dependence on Qatari hydrocarbons reduces the ability to respond and complicates the positioning of European chancelleries towards the two warring sides. [Popescu, pp. 252-255]

On NATO's eastern flank, Turkey, increasingly Islamist, de-Kemal-ised and more involved in the Hanabillah Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood through its leader, Recep Tayyp Erdogan, is increasingly signaling towards the Eastern bloc, becoming the catalyst for regional anti-Israeli [Gumrukcu & collab., 11.11.2023; Berman, 25.10.2023] and anti-Western energies. [Popescu, pp. 252-255]

And, last but not least, monarchies and political regimes that have signed peace or economic agreements with Israel. All these regimes could face existential risks of Islamist insurgency, coups, power-shifts and abdication if the inter-civilizational conflict spreads. The most vulnerable are the Saudi monarchy through Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince, intensely criticized by Saudi Wahhabis for the liberalism of his reforms [Karataş], and the Jordanian Hashemite monarchy, accused of breaking tradition and betraying the Palestinians [Markin, 17.05.2024]. Two of the most influential America's allies in the region. [Popescu, p.255]

Over the Ocean, the situation is equally complicated. The current Democratic administration must position itself among the geopolitical imperative of helping Israel, finding a solution for Ukraine, and preserving the electoral base of Islamist, anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian voters. An extremely difficult task, which heralds a fierce presidential contest this autumn, amplified by the Israeli problem, stuck between territorial partition and continued war. [Ibid., p.255]

This patchwork of geopolitical challenges overlaps the "aversion of the Islamic world to America's (the West's) interference in its internal affairs and, in particular, to its unconditional support for Israel, since the founding of the Jewish state until today. Aversion that could reach unprecedented proportions. All the more so because behind the anti-Western propaganda machine is the network of influencers and media offices financed by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and anti-Zionists [Lax, 26.03.2024; Abrams, 07.11.2013]. This state of affairs, coupled with the rifts straining the Islamic world, will force the US's regional allies to distance themselves from the hegemon so as not to capitalize on the grievances of their co-religionists. Discontents which, amidst the general excitement, could trigger massive protests, anarchy, violence and their possible abdication/overthrow of power. In other words, it could trigger an "*Arab autumn*" directed, this time, against America's allies in the region! We can therefore say that the current crisis in the Levant is the "*litmus paper*" of the stability of the global status quo". [Popescu, p.256]

CONCLUSIONS

Any of the three scenarios has a medium probability. Any of the three scenarios expresses the *de facto* existence of bipolarity in the international system. A bipolarity that also includes civilizational aspects, in the spirit of the neo-Atlanticism anticipated by Samuel P. Huntington (1927-2008) in his seminal work on the clash of civilizations. A bipolarity that unites non-Western civilizations into a uni-multipolar bloc led by China.

Of all the scenarios, the most powerful and far-reaching geopolitical impact, if it materializes, may be the expansion of the Israel-Hamas conflict, since through its mismanagement, Israel has become a civilizational aggregator of the Islamic world. The possible re-election of Mr. Donald Trump as US President is next, mainly because of the neomercantilism and economic unilateralism of his policies. And finally, China's hypothetical global financial initiative, which due to Beijing's economic interconnections with the Western zone, is unlikely to produce consistent structural changes in the global financial system.

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