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**Date: 31 May 2026**

# **From Beijing to the Persian Gulf: Global Power Reconfiguration, Iran, and the Emerging Multipolar Order**

## **Introduction**

The international system is undergoing one of the most significant geopolitical transitions since the end of the Cold War. For more than three decades, the United States occupied a dominant position within a largely unipolar international order. Today, however, profound political, economic, technological, and strategic transformations are reshaping the foundations of global power. The continuing war in Ukraine, the crisis in the Middle East, intensifying competition between the United States and China, the consolidation of strategic cooperation between Russia and China, and growing political polarization within Western societies have collectively contributed to a changing international landscape.

In this evolving environment, traditional assumptions regarding the distribution of power, the management of international crises, and the capacity of any single state to shape global affairs are increasingly being questioned. Major powers are adjusting their strategies to a more complex and competitive geopolitical reality

in which economic influence, technological innovation, energy security, and control of strategic trade routes have become as important as conventional military capabilities.

Against this backdrop, the near-simultaneous visits of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin to Beijing have attracted considerable international attention. Although these visits occurred under different political circumstances and reflected distinct national priorities, together they illustrate the growing centrality of China in contemporary global affairs. At the same time, they raise broader questions regarding the future balance of power, the evolving role of regional actors such as Iran, and the emergence of a more multipolar international order.

## **1. Trump in Beijing, Putin in Beijing; Iran at the Centre of Global Power Reconfiguration**

The world today is entering one of the most sensitive geopolitical transition phases since the end of the Cold War. The international order, which for more than three decades was shaped under the undisputed leadership of the United States, is now facing profound political, economic, and military challenges. The war in Ukraine, the crisis in the Middle East, intensifying competition between Washington and Beijing, the expansion of strategic cooperation between Russia and China, and growing domestic divisions within the United States all represent developments capable of transforming the structure of global power.

Within this context, Donald Trump's visit to Beijing and his meeting with China's leadership attracted significant attention from political and media circles worldwide. The importance of this meeting was not limited to bilateral U.S.–China relations. Rather, it reflected Washington's broader attempt to manage a series of simultaneous challenges extending from East Asia to the Middle East and from the Ukrainian conflict to domestic economic concerns within the United States.

Before discussions regarding the implications of Trump's visit had subsided, Vladimir Putin also travelled to Beijing for high-level consultations with Chinese leaders. Although the timing of the two visits may be viewed as a diplomatic coincidence, their broader significance points to China's increasingly central role in contemporary international affairs. Beijing is no longer merely an economic power; it has become one of the principal centres of strategic decision-making in the international system, a reality that both Washington and Moscow are compelled to acknowledge.

Trump arrived in Beijing while confronting a complex set of domestic and international challenges. Economically, the United States continues to face concerns regarding public debt, inflationary pressures, rising military expenditures, and uncertainty surrounding long-term economic growth. Politically, internal polarization has reached levels that many observers regard as among the most serious in modern American history. Internationally, the war in Ukraine, instability in the Middle East, and strategic rivalry with China have further complicated Washington's foreign-policy agenda.

Compounding these challenges are apparent contradictions within Trump's own political messaging. On the one hand, he has frequently emphasized the need to reduce foreign military commitments and bring costly conflicts to an end. On the other hand, he has repeatedly advocated pressure campaigns and, at times, threatened the use of military force against adversarial states. Such inconsistencies have generated uncertainty among allies and critics alike, raising questions regarding the coherence and predictability of future American foreign policy. Some commentators have also questioned the consistency of Trump's decision-making style and its implications for strategic planning.

Putin's visit to Beijing occurred under significant circumstances. The war in Ukraine continues to shape Russia's strategic environment, while instability in the Middle East and growing tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz have introduced additional uncertainties into global energy markets. Under conditions of sustained Western sanctions and economic pressure, Russia increasingly views strategic cooperation with China as a necessity rather than a policy option. Consequently, Moscow has sought to deepen bilateral cooperation with Beijing across a broad spectrum of sectors, including energy, trade, technology, finance, and security.

Amid these developments, one issue that often receives less attention is Iran's evolving position within the broader transformation of global power relations. Contrary to perceptions that portray Iran solely as a regional concern, Tehran has become an increasingly significant variable in the calculations of major powers. Its geopolitical location, substantial energy resources, role in Gulf security, and influence over critical international trade routes have elevated its strategic importance beyond the boundaries of the Middle East.

What is unfolding in the region today is therefore not merely a regional conflict but part of a wider geopolitical competition concerning the future structure of international order. The United States seeks to preserve its traditional influence and strategic presence; China aims to expand its global reach and economic leadership; Russia seeks to prevent the consolidation of an exclusively Western-

cantered international system; and Iran strives to safeguard its interests and maintain its strategic role within this evolving environment.

Despite sustained political pressure, economic sanctions, and direct and indirect confrontations involving the United States and Israel, Iran has demonstrated a capacity for resilience. Expectations in some political circles that the Iranian political system would rapidly collapse have not materialized. Instead, Iran remains a consequential actor whose actions continue to influence regional and international calculations.

From this perspective, the successive visits of Trump and Putin to Beijing should not be viewed merely as isolated diplomatic events. Rather, they represent elements of a broader geopolitical process in which multiple international crises—from Ukraine to the Middle East, from Taiwan to global energy security—have become increasingly interconnected. Decisions taken in one arena now generate consequences far beyond their immediate geographical context.

The broader significance of these developments lies in the growing interdependence of global geopolitical challenges. Energy security, strategic competition, regional conflicts, and great-power rivalry are becoming progressively linked within a single international framework. As a result, the central question facing policymakers is no longer whether these issues are connected, but how they will interact in shaping the future international order.

Whether China will ultimately succeed in balancing competing interests among major powers, or whether the international system is moving toward a new era of intensified geopolitical competition and emerging blocs, remains one of the defining questions of the contemporary global landscape.

## **2. Iran, Taiwan, and the Limits of U.S. Power in the Emerging Global Order**

While the preceding discussion has focused primarily on the significance of Trump's and Putin's visits to Beijing and China's growing role in the reconfiguration of global power, a broader question must also be addressed: what position does Iran occupy within this emerging geopolitical landscape, and why have developments in the Middle East, the Strait of Hormuz, and even the Taiwan issue become increasingly interconnected within a single strategic framework?

For many years, a considerable number of Western analysts argued that economic sanctions, political isolation, and sustained external pressure would eventually

compel Iran to retreat from its strategic positions and accommodate the demands of the United States and its allies. Regional developments over the past decade, however, suggest that these expectations have not been fully realized. Rather than being marginalized, Iran has largely maintained its position within regional security equations and, in several instances, has emerged as a significant actor influencing the balance of power across the Middle East.

Iran's strategic importance extends beyond military capabilities or regional influence alone. Its geographic location at the crossroads of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz places it at the centre of one of the most critical energy corridors in the world. A substantial proportion of global oil and gas exports transit through this maritime route, making stability in the region a matter of international concern. Consequently, tensions involving Iran carry implications that extend well beyond the Middle East and directly affect global energy markets, trade networks, and broader geopolitical calculations.

Recent confrontations and periods of heightened tension involving Iran, the United States, and Israel have further underscored the sensitivity of this strategic environment. The significance of Iran is therefore not limited to regional security concerns; it has become an issue embedded within wider global calculations involving major powers. Washington, Beijing, and Moscow each approach developments related to Iran through broader strategic lenses that incorporate energy security, regional stability, and global power competition.

Among the major powers, China possesses particularly strong incentives to maintain stability in the Persian Gulf region. Despite substantial economic diversification and technological advancement, China remains heavily dependent on imported energy resources to sustain long-term economic growth. Any prolonged disruption in Gulf energy flows would impose significant economic costs and potentially affect broader development objectives. Consequently, Beijing has demonstrated a growing preference for political solutions, regional stability, and the de-escalation of conflicts that could threaten critical energy supply routes.

The importance of stability in the Strait of Hormuz extends beyond China. Other major Asian economies, including Japan, India, and Pakistan, also benefit from uninterrupted energy flows through this corridor. For these states, regional stability is not merely a political objective but an economic necessity. Their continued growth and industrial development depend, to varying degrees, upon secure access to energy resources transported through the Gulf.

Russia's position differs in certain respects but ultimately leads to similar concerns regarding regional instability. While higher global energy prices may generate economic advantages for Moscow under specific circumstances, Russian policymakers also recognize that large-scale instability in the Middle East could create broader security complications and contribute to heightened uncertainty across Eurasia. Consequently, Russia has generally sought to avoid scenarios that could lead to uncontrolled regional escalation.

In contrast, the United States confronts a more complex strategic environment. Although Washington remains the world's most powerful military actor, it no longer enjoys the degree of strategic freedom that characterized earlier decades of American predominance. The cumulative costs of prolonged military engagements, rising public debt, growing domestic political polarization, and increasing public scepticism toward foreign interventions have all imposed significant constraints on American decision-making.

These structural limitations have become increasingly visible in contemporary U.S. foreign policy debates. Questions regarding strategic priorities, resource allocation, and the sustainability of global commitments have intensified as Washington attempts to address multiple crises simultaneously. The challenge is not merely one of military capability but also of political consensus, economic capacity, and strategic focus.

Within this context, contradictions in Donald Trump's political messaging have attracted considerable attention. Trump has frequently presented himself as a critic of costly foreign wars and prolonged overseas commitments. At the same time, however, he has repeatedly endorsed maximum-pressure strategies and, on occasion, advocated the use of military force to achieve political objectives. These competing approaches reflect broader tensions within American strategic thinking regarding the balance between restraint and coercion in foreign policy.

Such inconsistencies have led many observers to question Washington's ability to pursue ambitious objectives across multiple regions simultaneously. Managing strategic competition with China, maintaining commitments in Europe, addressing instability in the Middle East, and preserving influence across the Indo-Pacific collectively require substantial political, economic, and military resources. The ability of any single power to sustain such commitments indefinitely is increasingly subject to debate.

Within this broader framework, Taiwan occupies a particularly important position. For China, Taiwan is not merely a political dispute but a matter closely connected to national identity, territorial integrity, and historical legitimacy.

Chinese leaders consistently view the issue as central to national reunification and long-term strategic objectives.

For the United States, however, Taiwan represents one of the most significant strategic leverage points in East Asia. The island occupies a critical geographic position within the broader Indo-Pacific security architecture and plays an important role in regional deterrence strategies. Consequently, developments in cross-strait relations possess implications that extend well beyond the immediate interests of Beijing and Taipei.

The Taiwan question therefore illustrates a broader reality of contemporary geopolitics: regional disputes increasingly possess global consequences. What might once have been considered localized issues are now integrated into larger networks of economic interdependence, technological competition, military strategy, and great-power rivalry.

Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the contemporary international system is the growing interconnectedness of geopolitical crises. The war in Ukraine, instability in the Middle East, tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, and developments in the Taiwan Strait are no longer isolated events. Rather, they form part of a broader strategic environment in which developments in one region can rapidly influence calculations in another.

This interconnectedness has placed considerable pressure on the strategic resources of the United States. Simultaneously managing competition with China, supporting allies in Europe, responding to Middle Eastern crises, and maintaining global military commitments presents challenges that are qualitatively different from those faced during the immediate post-Cold War era. As a result, even close American allies have begun to raise questions regarding Washington's capacity to effectively manage multiple major international crises at the same time.

Against this backdrop, China and Russia have sought to expand their influence within the evolving international system. Both powers recognize that the nature of global competition is changing. Economic strength, technological innovation, energy security, industrial capacity, and control over strategic transportation routes increasingly complement traditional measures of military power. In this emerging environment, influence derives from a combination of capabilities rather than from military strength alone.

From this perspective, the visits of Trump and Putin to Beijing symbolize more than routine diplomatic engagement. They reflect deeper structural transformations in the global distribution of power and acknowledge China's

growing centrality within international affairs. Although Washington and Moscow pursue different objectives, both increasingly recognize that Beijing occupies a pivotal position within the emerging global order.

Ultimately, perhaps the most significant conclusion arising from these developments is that the contemporary world can no longer be managed through simple, unilateral approaches. The United States can no longer exercise uncontested influence in the manner that characterized earlier periods of predominance, while China and Russia likewise cannot pursue their objectives without considering the reactions of other major and regional actors.

What is emerging instead is a more complex, multi-layered, and competitive international order in which global powers, regional states, economic actors, and strategic institutions all contribute to shaping future outcomes. Within this evolving framework, Iran cannot be viewed merely as a regional crisis or diplomatic issue. Rather, it has become a structural variable within broader geopolitical equations that connect the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea, Ukraine to East Asia, and energy security to technological competition.

Understanding the future trajectory of global politics therefore requires recognizing these interconnections and appreciating the extent to which regional developments are increasingly embedded within wider patterns of systemic change. The emerging international order is not defined by isolated crises, but by the interaction of multiple strategic arenas whose outcomes collectively shape the future balance of global power.

### **3. Conceptual Reconfiguration: The Decline of U.S. Hegemony, the Israel Factor, and the Deepening Logic of Global Competition**

In continuation of the earlier analysis of Trump's and Putin's visits to Beijing and China's central role in the evolving global order, an additional analytical layer must be introduced in order to better understand the structural constraints shaping United States foreign policy and the broader trajectory of contemporary international politics. This layer concerns the gradual erosion of U.S. hegemonic capacity and the increasingly complex internal and external factors shaping its global strategy.

Within this analytical framework, the perspective associated with retired U.S. Army Colonel Douglas Macgregor is often cited as one interpretative lens.

According to this view, the gradual decline in America's ability to unilaterally manage the international system cannot be explained solely by the rise of peer competitors such as China and Russia, or by economic and military overstretch. Instead, it must also be understood through the internal architecture of decision-making within Washington itself, including institutional fragmentation and competing domestic political constraints.

From this standpoint, U.S. foreign policy is increasingly shaped by domestic political forces and embedded networks of influence that constrain the range of strategic choices available to policymakers. As a result, the United States no longer operates with the same degree of coherence and autonomy that characterized the immediate post-Cold War unipolar moment. Strategic decisions are increasingly filtered through domestic political considerations, interest-group pressures, and electoral dynamics, thereby limiting policy consistency in long-term geopolitical planning.

One of the most debated dimensions of this framework concerns the role of pro-Israel political networks and lobbying structures within U.S. policymaking. In this interpretation, American Middle East policy—particularly during various administrations, including that of Donald Trump—is seen as being shaped not only by strategic calculations but also by domestic political costs associated with diverging from established pro-Israel policy orientations.

It is argued within this line of analysis that such constraints reduce the autonomy of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, embedding it within a complex web of commitments and political sensitivities. As a result, policy formulation becomes less a product of purely strategic reasoning and more a negotiation between domestic political imperatives and international geopolitical objectives.

At the domestic social level, signs of growing divergence between public opinion and established political institutions have become increasingly visible. Student protests, civil society activism, and expanding criticism of unconditional U.S. support for Israel reflect, according to some analysts, a widening gap between segments of the American public and elite-level foreign policy consensus. If sustained, such trends could contribute to deeper political polarization within the United States and further complicate the formulation of coherent long-term foreign policy strategies.

At the regional level, these internal dynamics intersect with a rapidly evolving Middle Eastern security environment. The long-standing assumption that Israeli military superiority, combined with strong U.S. backing, could sustain a stable

regional order is increasingly being challenged by the emergence of new regional actors and the consolidation of states such as Iran as enduring strategic players.

In this context, Iran is not merely a regional actor but a structural variable in broader equations of energy security, Gulf geopolitics, and global trade routes. Its position ensures that developments involving Iran are systematically integrated into the strategic calculations of major powers, including the United States, China, and Russia.

Simultaneously, the interconnection between regional crises and great-power competition has become more pronounced. The war in Ukraine, the Middle East conflict, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, and the Taiwan issue are increasingly embedded within a single interconnected geopolitical system. Within this system, localized developments generate cascading effects that extend far beyond their immediate geographic boundaries.

China's role within this evolving structure has become increasingly central. As a rapidly rising economic and technological power, Beijing seeks to maintain a delicate balance between sustaining economic relations with the West, deepening strategic coordination with Russia, and managing regional tensions in a way that avoids direct confrontation with the United States. This multidimensional strategy positions China as a pivotal actor in the shaping of emerging global order dynamics.

Russia, in turn, views strategic alignment with China not merely as a tactical adjustment but as a long-term structural necessity. The continuation of the war in Ukraine, combined with sustained Western sanctions and broader geopolitical constraints, has reinforced Moscow's reliance on deeper cooperation with Beijing across economic, technological, and security domains.

Within this broader configuration, the near-simultaneous presence of Trump and Putin in Beijing should not be interpreted simply as a diplomatic coincidence. Rather, it reflects a wider structural transformation in global power relations in which China occupies a central node connecting competing strategic interests between Washington and Moscow.

At the core of this transformation lies a fundamental shift in the nature of global competition. Power in the contemporary international system is no longer defined solely by military capability. Instead, it increasingly reflects a composite structure involving economic strength, technological innovation, energy security, financial systems, and control over critical supply chains and trade routes.

This evolution has significant implications for the concept of U.S. hegemony. The decline of American hegemony should not be understood as a sudden collapse of

power, but rather as a gradual reduction in the United States' capacity to unilaterally shape global outcomes. This erosion is driven by a combination of internal political fragmentation, external strategic overstretch, and the structural rise of alternative centres of power.

In this context, the role of Israel within U.S. foreign policy debates is often discussed as part of a broader structural argument about constraints on American strategic autonomy. While interpretations vary widely, this factor is frequently incorporated into analyses that seek to explain the persistence of certain policy continuities in U.S. Middle East strategy despite changing global conditions.

Ultimately, what emerges is a global system characterized by increasing complexity and interdependence. No single actor—whether the United States, China, or Russia—possesses the capacity to independently determine the trajectory of international politics. Instead, global outcomes are shaped through continuous interaction among great powers, regional states, and economic actors operating within a highly interconnected strategic environment.

Within this framework, the decline of U.S. hegemony is best understood not as an end point, but as a transitional phase in the emergence of a more fragmented and competitive global order, in which the distribution of power is increasingly diffuse and multidimensional.

## **Conclusion:**

The world is headed to Towards a Fragmented and Multipolar Global Order. The analysis presented across the preceding sections suggests that the contemporary international system is undergoing a profound structural transformation rather than a temporary phase of instability. The convergence of major geopolitical crises—including the war in Ukraine, tensions in the Middle East, instability in the Strait of Hormuz, and strategic competition over Taiwan—indicates that global politics is increasingly organized around interconnected rather than isolated conflict systems.

The successive visits of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin to Beijing, while formally diplomatic in nature, symbolically reflect China's expanding role as a central node in global strategic coordination. Beijing is no longer positioned solely as an economic power but increasingly functions as a critical reference point in the recalibration of global power relations among the United States, Russia, and a wider set of regional actors.

Within this evolving structure, the United States continues to possess unmatched military and financial capabilities, yet its ability to translate these capacities into

unilateral global outcomes is increasingly constrained. Domestic political polarization, fiscal pressures, strategic overstretch, and shifting global alignments collectively contribute to a gradual erosion of traditional hegemonic flexibility. This does not imply a sudden collapse of American power, but rather a transition toward more conditional and contested forms of influence.

At the same time, China's rise and Russia's strategic repositioning reflect the emergence of alternative centres of power that are not merely reactive but increasingly proactive in shaping global agendas. These actors are operating within a system where economic interdependence, technological competition, and energy security are as decisive as military capabilities in determining influence and strategic outcomes.

Within this broader configuration, Iran occupies a structurally significant position. Its geopolitical location, control over critical energy corridors, and integration into regional security dynamics ensure that it functions not as a peripheral issue but as a systemic variable in global strategic calculations. Developments involving Iran therefore reverberate across multiple geopolitical theatres, linking the Middle East with East Asia and global energy markets.

Taken together, these developments point toward the gradual emergence of a more fragmented, multipolar, and competitive international order. Rather than a single dominant power structure, the global system is increasingly characterized by overlapping spheres of influence, shifting alliances, and issue-specific coalitions. In such an environment, strategic outcomes are no longer determined by unilateral authority but by continuous negotiation among multiple centres of power.

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