

## The Shifting Global Order and Its Repercussions for Al Sharq Region

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### Concept Paper

The global order has been going through a significant transformative phase as a result of many drastic developments. The non-western global powers, China and Russia, are deepening their clout in their zones of influence, albeit through different strategies. Moreover, the covid-19 pandemic-induced political and economic problems have been compounded by the crisis of Ukraine war. These dramatic changes are expected to yield a multipolar, if not non-polar, world order.

Intensified confrontation between global powers is re-shaping regional politics in many ways. On the one hand, a number of countries at Al Sharq region are in a quest to increase their influence and regional hegemony, capitalizing on the vacuum resulting from global powers' competition. On the other hand, as the world politics approaches a cold war-like polarization, keeping an independent path has become very challenging for Al Sharq regional powers, which have become under mounting pressure to take side in this confrontation.

Therefore, today more than ever, Al Sharq region countries are in need of charting their future amidst many threats and ambiguities. In a region with a remarkable geopolitical significance, maintaining political stability and economic development will not be an easy endeavor. Hence, Al Sharq Strategic Research invites experts, scholars and policymakers to contribute to discussions on the themes seen below.

### Theme 1: Making Sense of the Shifting Global Order

At a time when Ukraine becomes an area of settling scores between Russia and the West, the political and the economic consequences of the Covid pandemic are still unfolding, and the debates regarding the demise of the post-Cold war system come to the fore, it is of significance to have a realistic assessment concerning the repercussions of the shifting global order on Al Sharq Region.

This theme aims at making sense of the shifting global order by addressing the very nature of these transformations and the continuity and rapture between the pos-cold war order and the emerging one. Additionally, it sets sight on discussing what principles should guide Al Sharq Region countries while determining their political alignments amidst numerous uncertainties emanating from the aftershocks of the shifting global order.

## **Theme 2: The Delicate Balance of Multipolarity in the Middle East**

Middle East is currently one of the hottest spots of international powers competition, given its geopolitical significance and its irreplaceable contribution to the global energy market. This competition has altered political dynamics in the region and forced regional powers to reconsider their strategic alliances.

For instance, President Joe Biden's electoral victory and US withdrawal from Afghanistan as a manifestation of the US retrenchment in the Middle East to focus on Asia-Pacific, led the Gulf countries to hedge their bets through diversifying their international allies. As a consequence, Russia becomes able to increase its footprint in the Gulf countries by offering to be a security provider. Likewise, China is currently emerging as a significant regional actor by amplifying its clout in the regional economy through massive investments and technology agreements in the Gulf region.

From their side, Turkey and Iran have been showing their assertive intention of becoming regional hegemons. Both countries, specifically after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, amplified their regional agency by involving in different conflicts such as Syria, Libya, and Yemen. Over the years, Turkey, due to numerous disagreements, fell out with the US administrations and came closer to Russia and China to an extent that led some Western circles to question its position in the Transatlantic Alliance and the Western Bloc. Similarly, Iran's overt support to Russia in the Ukraine war and its domestic problems have further strained its relationship with the West.

This theme intends to investigate the autonomy quest of Iran, Turkey, and the Gulf countries in a volatile region grappling with chronic problems. Moreover, the theme aims at delving into to what extent Turkey and the Gulf Countries can maintain a delicate balance between the US, Russia, and China. Lastly, the theme targets to look into the challenges and opportunities that the current transitioning period provides for regional cooperation.

## **Theme 3: The Great Power Competition and its Implications on North Africa**

For almost a decade, North African countries have been plagued with instability and regional rivalries. Starting with Libya, which, since the demise of Muammar Gaddafi, has been passing through a turbulent transition with the hopes for political transformation were replaced by the despair of the civil war and ensuing territorial fragmentation. Furthermore, the intervention of regional and global powers such as Russia, France, UAE, Egypt and Turkey, threw the country into political limbo to become an area for struggle between competing influences.

Libya's eastern neighbor, Egypt, nowadays, not only suffers from the practices of a highly autocratic regime but also faces an intense economic crisis compounded by the economic recession worldwide. All of this happens when the systemic rupture brought about by the

Russian Invasion of Ukraine is entirely on display, populism and nationalist sentiments are on the rise in Europe, and the demand for liberal governance practices is in decline.

In the westernmost part of the Arab geography, the level of tension between Morocco and Algeria is escalating due to their disagreements on the Western Saharan conflict as well as the Moroccan-Israeli normalization move. This theme aims at focusing on how the changing global order has had an impact on North African geopolitics thus far. It also intends to present a general overview of whether there is a change in the approaches of global powers towards North Africa and, if so, how these changes affect North African rivalries.

#### **Theme 4: South Asian Dilemma in a Changing Global Order**

Given its geopolitical location, South and Southeast Asia become a primary battlefield where the competition between the US and China intensifies. Pakistan is one of the prominent examples for the south Asian countries' dilemma in the current moment. On the one hand, China is dramatically increasing its influence in the country through investments and loans. On the other hand, the Pakistani military, which has an enormous impact on the country's political scene, sends cordial messages concerning its good ties to the US. Imran Khan's loss of power as a result of the tension he experienced with the military and the rise of his rival Shehbaz Sharif to power, makes the Pakistani experience a noteworthy area of focus in the debates for the shifting global.

Malaysia, also, is another noteworthy example. A few months before his rise to power, Anwar Ibrahim emphasized that he wanted to see a neutral Malaysia in the great power competition intensifying in the Asia-Pacific. Now, as he assumed the premiership, it is worth delving to see if Malaysia will be able to chart its independent way. The position of Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, in the struggle of great powers is also an essential topic of discussion. This theme aims to examine the strategic choices made by Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia in order to adapt to the new challenges and uncertainties.