

# Hubris Invites Nemesis

Xi meets Putin in Moscow. The world will never be the same again.



Niccolo Soldo ✓

Mar 22

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According to the Ancient Greeks, *Nemesis* was “....the goddess of righteous indignation and the punisher of hubristic boasts.”

*Pausanias*, the ancient Greek geographer, had this to say about *Nemesis*:

{1.33.2} About sixty stadium-lengths from Marathon as you go along the road by the sea to Oropos stands Rhamnous. The houses [oikēseis] for human habitation are on the coast, but a little way inland is a sacred space [*hieron*] of *Nemesis*, who of all the gods [*theoi*] is the most inexorable toward humans who-commit-outrage [*hubristai*]. It is thought that the wrath [*mēnīma*] of this goddess [*theos* feminine] countered the foreigners [*barbaroi*, = Persians] who landed at Marathon. Scornfully thinking that

nothing stood in the way of their capturing Athens, they were bringing a piece of Parian marble for the making [*poiēsis*] of a trophy [*tropaion*], as if their task were already finished. <sup>1</sup>

Harvard Professor of Classics **Gregory Nagy** defines the concept **in the following way**: “*nemesis* indicates the process whereby everyone gets what he or she deserves”.

Isaac Newton’s **Third Law of Motion** states that “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction”.

For the past three days now, Chinese President Xi Jinping has been meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow for talks. The subjects range from strengthening already growing economic ties, to cooperating in **shaping a new global order**, one that is commonly referred to as “multipolarity”. The main point of this visit is to loudly announce that Beijing has Moscow’s back in its conflict with the US-led West, knowing full well that if the Russians fail, they are next on the chopping block.

Make no mistake, the two leaders were **very blunt** as to the purpose of their meeting:

In a joint statement, the two leaders took aim at the West, accusing the United States of undermining global security.

**"The parties call on the United States to stop undermining international and regional security and global strategic stability in order to secure its unilateral military advantage," Russia and China said in the declaration.**

They also expressed "great concern" over NATO's growing presence in Asia.

On Monday, Xi and Putin held four and a half hours of talks, calling each other "dear friend."

What this announcement represents is the formation of a *de facto* alliance that seeks to counterbalance US global dominance. It also serves to undo Richard Nixon’s **famous trip to China**, where the Americans and the Chinese agreed to work together, splitting the communist world in half, giving greater leverage to the USA over its main rival, the

Soviet Union. Most importantly, it announces the arrival of the USA's new global nemesis, one that is entirely a product of its own *hubris*.



## How Did We End Up Here?

The end of the Cold War left American foreign policy planners with a problem: in light of the collapse of its main rival, what would be America's purpose on the global stage going forward?

While many Americans were convinced that they would benefit from a “**peace dividend**” via the downsizing of the US military, a “New World Order” was already being constructed atop the ruins of the old one. Capitalism and the free market were seen not just as victorious over the command economy, but as ‘**inevitable**’ by **triumphalists like Francis Fukuyama**. Globalism was ushered in to provide the new economic architecture of the global system, one that would be erected by the Americans and their allies for their own financial and corporate interests, but marketed as ‘beneficial to all’.

A new security architecture would have to be put into place alongside the economic one, with NATO being chosen for that task despite **false assurances** to the Soviets that it would not move towards its borders. Already in 1993, George Soros made the argument that NATO and only NATO had the **ability and perceived credibility to fill in the security vacuum** left by the USSR's collapse:

The United Nations might have become an effective organization if it were under the leadership of two superpowers cooperating with each other. As it is, the United Nations has already failed as an institution which could be put in charge of U.S. troops. **This leaves NATO as the only institution of collective security that has not failed, because it has not been tried. NATO has the potential of serving as the basis of a new world order in that part of the world which is most in need of order and stability.** But it can do so only if its mission is redefined. There is an urgent need for some profound new thinking with regard to NATO.

.....

The original mission was to defend the free world against the Soviet empire. **That mission is obsolete; but the collapse of the Soviet empire has left a security vacuum which has the potential of turning into a "black hole."** This presents a different kind of threat than the Soviet empire did.

The 1990s was marked by the expansion of US power, economically, militarily, and culturally, with no check on it as Russia was busy looting and impoverishing itself, while China was still very poor, albeit modernizing rapidly. The conceit was that economic privatization and political liberalization in Russia would result in the birth of a liberal democracy in that country. This conceit extended to China, where the theory went that increasing economic openness would create a class of wealthy Chinese that would go on to challenge the monopoly on power held by its Communist Party, creating an opening for the development of liberal democracy in that country as well.

America was riding high. It had the world's strongest military, the most powerful economy, and was implementing a new global order based on its own style of governance, one shown to be superior to all the others. No challengers were on the horizon, and its most recent one had all but surrendered to it, moving towards adopting

its political and economic values. Little wonder as to why many consider the 1990s to be the high water mark of US power on the global stage.

### Cut 9/11 Joke from Norm Macdonald Live



(sorry, I couldn't resist)

## 9/11

Having won the economic debate (up until that point in time) and possessing the greatest arsenal in the history of mankind, the USA needed to round out its case for global hegemon status. The only way to do this was via a threat, whether real or manufactured, to its stated core values so that the 'beast' could be slayed and its hegemony extended. Radical Islam was introduced to play this foil to American "freedom" and "democracy", giving the USA a justification to expand its empire.

This was the moment that the **neo-conservatives** were waiting for; a new force dubbed "Radical Islam" had attacked US soil out of "hatred" for its "freedoms". A rejection of American liberal democracy by people and groups from states outside of the US orbit provided the grounds for the USA to invade and occupy both Afghanistan and Iraq, while threatening to do the same to Iran, Syria, Lebanon (and others). According to US foreign policy planners and promoters, people in these countries were "suffering under

oppression” and were “yearning for democracy and freedom”...and the only way to free them would be to bomb them. The USA now had a new opponent; one that would necessitate military intervention, higher defense spending, and an expansion of US hegemony.

Concurrently, the USA was actively destabilizing states all over Eurasia via “**colour revolutions**”, with the intent of installing pliant regimes in countries not yet within its orbit. 9/11 saw a massive global outpouring of support for the USA from countries that included Syria (who assisted the CIA with capturing wanted Salafi terrorists), and Russia. The Americans were cut a lot of slack, only to see the goodwill accorded to them quickly dissipate as Washington worked to change one regime after another. The invasion of Iraq proved to be a turning point in attitudes towards the USA, with the colour revolutions cementing that turn.



Mikhail Khodorkovsky in a cage in a Russian courtroom (image: Business Insider)

## Russia Goes Off-Script

When Vladimir Putin entered office on January 1, 2000, he was largely an unknown quantity to most. All we knew was that he was a medium-level ex-KGB officer who was stationed in the DDR, and that he quickly rose through the political ranks during

Yeltsin's final term as President of Russia. Seen as a "man we can do business with", western interests played a "wait and see" game.

The disastrous Yeltsin Presidency soured Russians on free market capitalism and democracy. Putin was a breath of fresh air to them, and support for his presidency rose rapidly as the Russian Army crushed Chechen separatists backed by foreign Islamic radicals. Cementing his support was his "taming of the oligarchs" whereby he offered the richest Russian businessman a choice: stay out of politics and keep your businesses and money, or challenge him and lose it all. Most took the deal.

Initially, the West saw Putin as necessarily cleaning up the corruption that had all but completely destroyed the country over the past decade. It was the **arrest of Vladimir Khodorkovsky**, a darling of western financial interests (but a massive thief during the 1990s), that began the shift in the West towards an anti-Putin position. By arresting Khodorkovsky, Putin underlined the fact that business interests would not run Russia, security interests instead would take precedence.

Russians are paranoid about their national security, having been invaded several times from the West in the past 200 years alone, spilling an incredible amount of blood in the process. As Putin worked to consolidate power in Russia, the USA helped topple a pro-Russian regime in Georgia in 2003, and another one in Ukraine in 2005, while NATO kept moving closer to its western border. Compounding these fears, both new regimes openly sought NATO membership, an option denied to Moscow.

The new pro-western regime in Ukraine collapsed due to internal squabbling, and Georgia suffered the embarrassment of a Russian invasion after a misguided attempt at trying to assert its sovereignty over breakaway South Ossetia in 2008 via its fledgling military. Putin's Russia said "not one step further".

Alongside this insistence of national security came the rejection of liberal democracy in Russia in favour of what was termed "**managed democracy**". This entailed the limiting of political participation to 'patriotic' political parties, ones that were not backed by external forces. "Managed Democracy" was interpreted in Western media as "authoritarianism" or "autocracy" at best, "dictatorship" or "totalitarianism" at worst. Not only was Russia attempting to halt the spread of US hegemony in its periphery, it

also rejected America's core values, ones that the Americans insisted were universal. Russia had become a 'competitor' to the US-led system, and therefore a problem. The resolution would be found in regime change in Moscow.



## A String of American Foreign Policy Failures

Iraq did not turn into a bastion of liberal democracy in the Middle East. The “Green Revolution” in Iran failed. The Arab Spring was a debacle. **Post-Gaddafi Libya** remains a catastrophe. A resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan made the American puppet regime little more than the City Council of Kabul. Bashar Assad remains in power in Damascus.

In less than a decade, much of the world did a 180 in its views of the USA. Long gone was the outpouring of sympathy in the wake of 9/11, with suspicion and/or hatred becoming much, much more common. At the same time, American power remained unrivalled, necessitating a respect for it.

The financial crisis of 2008 put an end to the idea that free markets and liberal democracy are the best options for any country. People began to look to China, Singapore, and elsewhere for inspiration on how to avoid the demoscclerosis that afflicts western liberal democracies and their increasingly ossified structures. The slow down in

social mobility in the West vs. the rapid rise of China in particular led many to question the assumptions that had dominated the post-Cold War world.

This created a problem for the USA. The core values upon which the New World Order (or “rules-based order”) were based were in fact not universal, as the Americans once thought. Not only was Russia challenging US values, but so now was China, and doing so successfully. Making matters worse, the Chinese showed no interest in political liberalization, with 2008 providing them justification for the continuation of their one-party system. Alongside Russia, China was now too a problem.

The failure to remove Bashar Assad from office in Syria represents a significant turning point in US Empire. There is no doubt that sans Russian intervention in that country’s civil war, Damascus would have fallen to militant Sunni Islamists, with the inevitable sectarian massacres that would have resulted, as seen in Libya, Iraq, and elsewhere. Russia’s surgical intervention (aided by Iran) to save the Ba’athist regime served as an open rejection of US regime change strategy not just in region, but globally as well. Given a green light in Libya, the Russians (and the Chinese as well) rejected repeating their mistake when it came to Syria.

The failed attempt to overthrow Assad in Syria also brought to the fore all the hypocrisies of US foreign policy. From labelling Islamist radicals as “moderate rebels”, through to occupying 1/3rd of the country without valid justification, the USA’s reputation took a significant hit in much of the world. By this point, almost no one believed that the USA had benign interests and altruistic goals.

Rather than re-assess and reset its foreign policy strategy, the Americans instead chose to double-down, insisting that yes, its stated values are indeed universal, and that “inside of every foreigner is an American trying to get out”.



## “Rules-Based Order”

There is no agreement as to the definition of “rules-based order”, a phrase that is constantly trotted out by USA and its allies. I will present some attempts at a definition of what it is supposed to mean.

### The Quad (2016):

Policymakers and strategists increasingly refer to the “rules-based order” (RBO). A variety of governments and institutions, including the US, Australia, Japan, India, Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, the EU, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), are using the concept. Germany’s 2020 Indo-Pacific Guidelines refer to the RBO 17 times and Australia’s 2016 Defense White Paper 56 times. The latest joint leaders statement of the Quad – a cooperation format between the US, Australia, India, and Japan – reaffirmed their “**resolve to uphold the international rules-based order where countries are free from all forms of military, economic and political coercion.**”

### Ex-Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne (2020):

- the rules that protect sovereignty, preserve peace and curb excessive use of power, and enable international trade and investment;
- the international standards related to health and pandemics, to transport, telecommunications and other issues that underpin the global economy, and which will be vital to a post-Covid-19 economic recovery;
- and thirdly, the norms that underpin universal human rights, gender equality and the rule of law.

### The Atlantic Council:

The system is predicated on a set of norms and principles pertaining to global security, the economy, and governance. It consists of: a set of rules encouraging peaceful, predictable, and cooperative behavior among states that is consistent with liberal values and principles; formal institutional bodies, such as the United Nations (UN) and NATO, that serve to legitimize and uphold these rules, and provide a forum to discuss and settle disputes; and the role of powerful democratic states to help preserve and defend the system. In the security realm, the system is characterized by formal alliances in Europe and Asia, in addition to rules that protect state sovereignty and territorial integrity, and place limits on the use of military force and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. In the economic domain, the rules-based system has served to promote an interconnected global economy based on free markets and open trade and finance. Finally, in the realm of governance, the rules-based system advanced democratic values and human rights. **The system has never been fixed, but has evolved over time**, with major periods of adaptation and expansion at major inflection points after World War II and at the end of the Cold War.

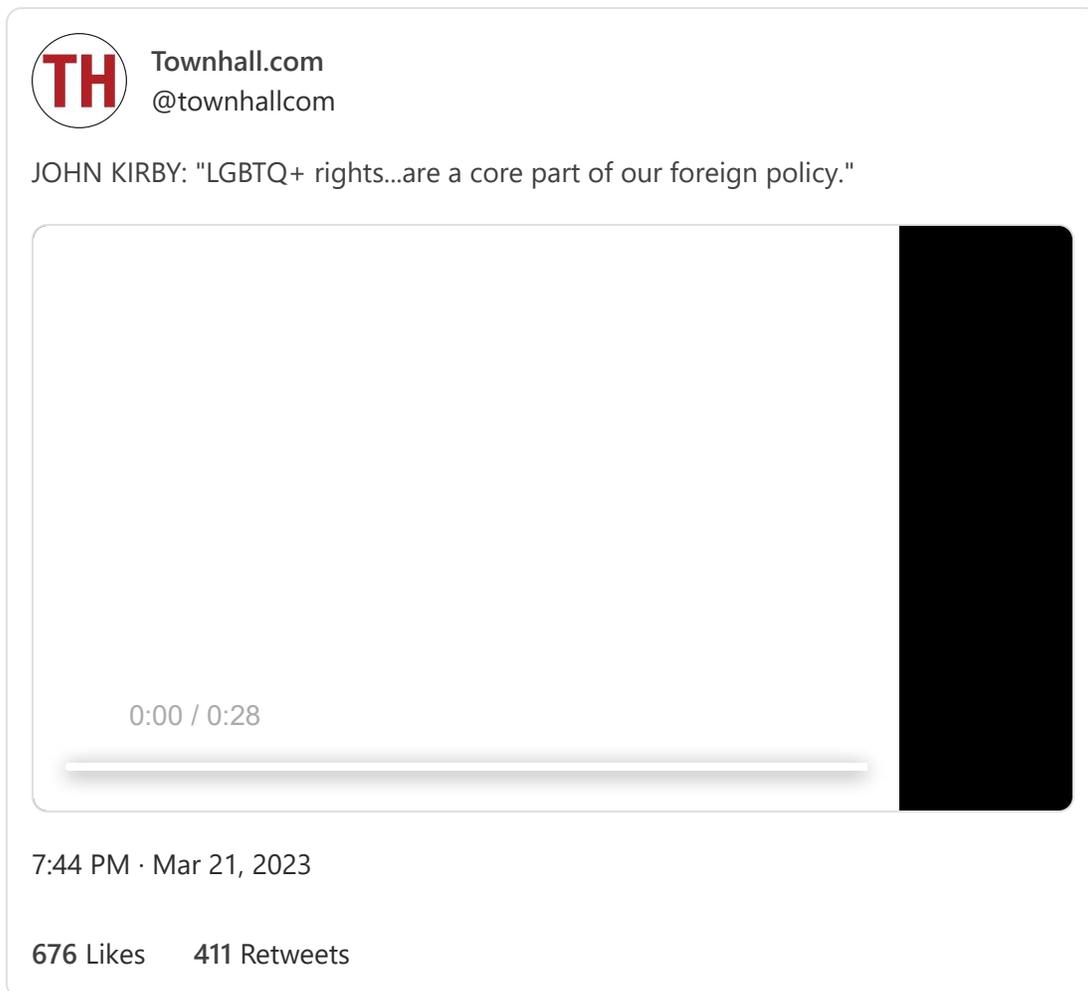
Please note three things from the above quotes:

1. some overlap in definitions, but just as much variance
2. how easy it is to spot US violations of said rules
3. ambiguity in definition

It's this last point that is the most interesting, because it concedes the fact that the rules are constantly changing, making it difficult to adhere to. Even worse, who is making these rules, and who gets to decide on their adoption?

The constant appeal to an ever-changing set of rules that don't form a strict definition of "rules-based order" combined with American behaviour on the global stage highlights just how hypocritical and self-serving the USA is in the eyes of many. This has led to a collapse in trust of the USA on several continents, and a loss in the legitimacy of its global leadership.

Amplifying this problem is the US intention of stamping its rapidly-evolving social mores onto the rest of the world via coercion and/or threat. Just yesterday, US National Security Council Spokesman **John Kirby** had this to say:



**TH** Townhall.com  
@townhallcom

JOHN KIRBY: "LGBTQ+ rights...are a core part of our foreign policy."

0:00 / 0:28

7:44 PM · Mar 21, 2023

676 Likes 411 Retweets

The image is a screenshot of a tweet from the account 'Townhall.com' (@townhallcom). The tweet text reads: 'JOHN KIRBY: "LGBTQ+ rights...are a core part of our foreign policy."' Below the text is a video player showing a video of John Kirby. The video player has a progress bar at the bottom indicating '0:00 / 0:28'. The video content is mostly obscured by a large black redaction box on the right side. Below the video player, the tweet is dated '7:44 PM · Mar 21, 2023' and shows engagement metrics: '676 Likes' and '411 Retweets'.

A core policy of the USA's overall foreign policy is the re-ordering of other countries' societies to reflect the American domestic one. To adopt these mores is to embrace liberal democracy. To reject this cultural colonialism is to be authoritarian. Exporting newly-adopted social values globally by hook or by crook is without a doubt the best example of the hubris that now dominates the American ruling elites.

The insistence on turning the rest of the world into America by force or coercion indicates an ideological fervour that now dominates US foreign policy planning. I wrote about this new mania two years ago, and how it is creating a new America, one that is very, very different from the one that many of us grew up with:



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## The Desquamation of America

[Read more](#)

2 years ago · 58 likes · 28 comments · Niccolo Soldo

The exporting of this ideology globally is what spurred me to write "Turbo America" almost a year ago:



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## Turbo-America

"Don't get me into a shooting war with the Russians", Obama told his CIA Chief during the Syrian Civil War. This quote has resonance, because it testifies the fact that different parts of the massive US Government work largely independent of one another, sometimes at cross-purposes. Syria (again...

[Read more](#)

a year ago · 191 likes · 84 comments · Niccolo Soldo

A turbo-charged America powered by its own hubris seeks to extend its hegemony globally, and also aims to transform societies across the entire globe to reflect its own constantly-evolving values at home.



## The Die Has Been Cast

By the time it became obvious that Joe Biden would become the next President of the USA in 2021, I was conducting a constant debate within my own head as to whether his foreign policy would see the USA first take on Russia or China. While that debate raged between my ears, the third option grew louder and louder: they would take on both at the same time.

A little under a year ago, the third option presented itself as the one that was chosen, leading me to write the following essay:



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## Hubris

Arrogance is commonly defined as the excessive pride one has in relation to others. Hubris is beyond arrogance, as it is the condition of that same excess of pride combined with an extreme self-belief in one's own abilities, oblivious to all others. The difference between these two terms is important to understand, as it not only relates to individuals that we must deal with on a consistent basis in our lives (or worse; one or the other may describe you or I), but it is also valuable in comprehending the larger world around us, specifically international relations between states...

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10 months ago · 66 likes · 68 comments · Niccolo Soldo

In it I wrote the following:

Nic, what the fuck are you getting at? Okay, okay, I'll get to the relevance: Hubris is the present condition of the USA on the global stage. This is best exemplified by two current facts:

1. the USA seeks to confront and reduce the power of both Russia and China simultaneously to preserve its own hegemony
2. the USA is doing absolutely nothing to pit these two targets against one another in order to engage in the tried and tested strategy of *divide et impera* (divide and conquer)

This unwillingness to turn China against Russia and vice versa and instead pushing the two together in an anti-American alliance shows us that the USA is so utterly confident in its own ability to shape the world in its desired image that such logical and historically successful strategies as divide and conquer don't even enter into

their own calculations. They will take on both, and even incentivize both of them to work together to try and stop them in their ambitions.

For the past decade, I've tortured myself in trying to figure out whether the USA would take on Russia or China first. The thought of them moving against both at the same time occupied a large part of my thinking, but it simply seems to fantastical to happen. Yet here we are. **The USA has already conceded that it is currently engaged in a proxy war with Russia in Ukraine**, and it hopes to keep that front occupied by a Europe that has been arm-twisted into raising its military spending to satisfy this strategy (and line the pockets of arms dealers in particular).

Over the past year, every single one of you has watched as the USA has done absolutely nothing to try and split China from Russia. Instead, they have done everything to facilitate what we just witnessed in Moscow over the course of the past three days.

The question is: why?

Why have the Americans made this alliance so easy to initiate? Is it due to arrogance and/or over-confidence in their own strength?

Marxists will insist that capitalists require a boogeyman in order to perpetuate the economic system. Progressive intellectual **Randolph Bourne** went as far as to claim that "war is the health of the state", which some have interpreted as violent conflict being a necessary condition to save an endangered capitalist system. Does this give US elites too much credit? Defense contractors are making out like bandits with the support for Ukraine in its war against Russia, for example.

As **Anusar Farooqui** put it: "The question for us is whether this forced marriage is in our interest. Ans: No. We've solved China's Malacca dilemma for it."

We are going to have to wait for an answer to this question.



## Beijing and Moscow Choose Multipolarity

It is fair to say that Beijing is the senior partner in this relationship, but that is besides the point (and a **cope currently embraced by many hawkish western analysts**).

We can now make several conclusions with the utmost of confidence.

1. Beijing realizes that they too are in an existential fight with the USA
2. China has Russia's back in Ukraine
3. China's peace overtures regarding the war in Ukraine are a follow-up to its successful Middle Eastern diplomacy, placing Beijing at the centre of any negotiated outcome to the war, a role that has for decades been the preserve of the USA on the global stage
4. Russia's economic reorientation to the East means that China has secured itself a wealth of resources with which to power its economy and military and continue its modernization

5. Russia adopting the Chinese Yuan for **payment settlements in Asia, Africa, and South America** gives a shot in the arm to “de-dollarization”
6. Russia will benefit from greater **foreign direct investment** in its economy, offsetting the effects of sanctions
7. Other states will see that an alternative to the nebulous “rules-based order” is being formed
8. India will continue to **play both sides against one another** to extract maximal benefit for itself
9. The end to the war in Ukraine is nowhere in sight as neither side cannot afford to lose face (prestige), more so the Russians, for whom this is an existential conflict
10. The globe will be increasingly bifurcated politically and economically, as pressure will begin to be applied to China via **sanctions and the closing of western markets** to some of their products and services
11. Many states will be stuck in the middle, often forced to choose between dealing with one or the other

The writing has been on the wall for some time now. One month ago, the Chinese issued a **formal denunciation of US unipolarity** via their news service Xinhua in the form of an essay. Vladimir Putin followed suit by **penning a piece** celebrating the “future-bound partnership” between Russia and China for Chinese media.

The Americans have a lot of tools at their disposal to spoil this relationship and the challenge that it poses to its hegemonic ambitions. At the same time, one can't escape the feeling that they are blinded by their own arrogance. At the recent Munich Security Conference, French President Emmanuel Macron made the **startling admission** that he was “.....shocked by how much credibility we are losing in the Global South.”

The “we” being referred to by Macron is The West.

Much like how China owes its present success in large part due to its rapprochement with the USA that began with Nixon's visit in 1972, this new alliance owes its entire existence to America's elephant-in-a-china-shop foreign policy of the past three decades.

- 1 Nagy, Gregory. "Eight glimpses of Marathon in Scroll 1 of Pausanias." *Classical Inquiries*. July 14, 2016



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Niccolo Soldo  Mar 22  Author

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Apologies to those who find me repeating myself, it cannot be helped as context is important. Please forgive me.

I aim to have the next colour revolution series entry out tomorrow.

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Newport smoker Mar 22  Liked by Niccolo Soldo

Don't want to say it will be totally irrelevant, it will have some big trade/economic impact but with these two I'm very "believe it when I see it". They made it very explicit they weren't in a military alliance. If xi actually said to putin "I'm going to support you like the west supports Ukraine. Go for it. Full war economy and mobilization, we have your back, loans, consumer

goods, whatever you need" then it's really a paradigm shift, I have doubts that this is the arrangement though

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