

CRYSTALLIZATION OF NEW (SUB)REGIONAL ALLIANCES IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CONFRONTATION (U.S. + EU vs. PRC)

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Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has spurred the processes of global restructuring that have been underway over the past few years. The world is moving towards a total change in the model of further development, including due to the ongoing technological revolution. Although the clear outlines of the new world order have not yet been determined, the leaders of the global reformatting process are the United States and China, which have long been part of a single transnational economic system, but due to radical technological changes are trying to find a new balance of power and interests.

The consequence of these processes is the formation of new regional alliances, as well as a radical change in the global economic model, which will be defined by a new paradigm of U.S.-EU-China relations and the growing role of emerging players (India, Latin America, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East).

At the same time, the subject of relations with China reveals a whole range of internal contradictions within the transatlantic community. This is evidenced by the appeals of a number of EU political elites to the idea of "strategic autonomy". France takes a particularly active role in this discourse. Such projects cause discord between Western capitals, potentially weakening the ability to respond effectively and timely to security challenges, including the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Another key dimension of global competition is developing relations with the so-called Global South in the areas of supply of mineral resources critical to industry and security of logistics links. Therefore, in order to identify the main trends in the confrontation between China and the West in the Global South, this paper analyzes the competition between the EU and China on the African continent in such areas as trade in goods and services, the arms market, and the level of political contacts.

1. The new architecture of China's foreign policy in the context of confrontation with the United States

China's growing strategic competition with the United States is a core factor influencing domestic and foreign policy of the former. In the eyes of the Chinese leadership, "blackmail, deterrence, blocking and pressure" are being used against China, which leads to greater focus on military and national security issues. In this regard, Beijing continues to strengthen the People's Liberation Army (PLA), especially its naval and aviation components, and is building up its nuclear arsenal. In addition, China is seeking to achieve technological self-sufficiency and independence from the West. At the same time, Beijing is pursuing a policy of increasing the dependence of other countries on China. The PRC is more actively using the capabilities of the Chinese diaspora abroad and is trying to bolster its own influence in the regions it considers key to achieving world leadership.

Currently, the following main directions of China's foreign policy can be identified, which are likely to be dominant in the short and medium term:

1. Strategic competition with the United States. According to forecasts for 2023 by leading Chinese think tanks, geopolitical competition between China and the United States will be a determining factor in Beijing's efforts to become a world leader. Although the official position of Chinese diplomacy on the importance of maintaining stable and predictable relations will remain unchanged¹, anti-American rhetoric will be present in some form in official statements of the Chinese leadership and policy documents, media narratives, and disinformation campaigns. Moreover, China's efforts will be aimed at preventing Washington from creating a coalition of like-minded countries, especially in the Indo-Pacific and European regions; Beijing will try to counteract economic and digital protectionism by economic partners and the division of the world into democracies/authorities. At the same time, China will keep open channels of communication with Washington and prevent the escalation of tensions, while trying to obtain concessions from the United States through cooperation in non-conflict areas such as environmental protection, climate cooperation, etc.

2. Attempts to boost its influence in Europe. Given the complicated relations with the United States, Europe remains an essential market and source of technology for China. The unwillingness of a large part of European businesses to lose the Chinese market allows Beijing to deepen trade and investment ties with European companies and thus increase its influence on EU governments. Within this setting, China is also trying to weaken transatlantic ties between the EU and the U.S. by consistently and systematically promoting the so-called concept of Europe's "strategic autonomy" on international platforms and in bilateral relations. It is expected that China will periodically demonstrate constructiveness in its relations with the EU, readiness for dialogue and improvement of relations, distancing itself from Russia,

¹ MERICS China Security and Risk Tracker 01/2023, URL: https://merics.org/en/tracker/merics-china-security-and-risk-tracker-012023?check_logged_in=1

etc.² However, given that Beijing's strategic documents and goals do not change, such steps are aimed at creating an image of China as a friendly and constructive country, creating preconditions in the EU for lifting restrictions on exports of modern semiconductor products and technologies to China, and enhancing economic cooperation.

3. *Protecting China's key interests.* China is likely to pursue a more aggressive policy towards countries that, in Beijing's view, threaten China's "sovereignty, security and development interests". This primarily concerns the U.S. military ties with Taiwan, strengthening the military capabilities of U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific region; criticism of China's human rights violations in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, Tibet, and Hong Kong, etc. It is anticipated that China will continue its military pressure on Taiwan, try to bring to power the PRC-friendly Kuomintang political party, discredit Taipei's relations with Washington, and aggressively respond to the deepening of Taipei's international ties with other countries, including by imposing economic sanctions. Furthermore, Beijing will continue its so-called "wolf warrior diplomacy"; will enhance its information outreach in the international environment to make "China's voice heard"; will conduct influence operations abroad, including those aimed at using the potential of the Chinese diaspora in foreign countries³.

4. *Deepening relations with Russia.* Despite the fact that Beijing claims that relations with Moscow are not an alliance or a military-political bloc, and the transfer of lethal weapons by China is still unlikely, China is expected to step up its strategic cooperation with Russia in the economic, information, technological, and defense spheres. In addition, it is likely that cooperation will expand in areas that were previously restricted. In particular, this applies to the production of nuclear weapons in connection with China's plans to substantially increase its nuclear potential from 350 to 1,500 warheads⁴. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the Russian company Rosatom has begun supplying China with raw materials for the production of nuclear weapons, which increases the importance of cooperation with Moscow, including for China's achieving world leadership⁵. This reduces the likelihood that China will play a constructive role in resolving the Russian-Ukrainian war, act as a mediator, or put pressure on Russia to stop its aggression. Reinforcing cooperation is now seen by both countries as critical to countering the United States.

² An example is the statement by Chinese Ambassador to the EU Fu Cong that "friendship without borders" with Russia is a rhetorical device, URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2023/04/5/7396547/>

³ An example is China's creation of so-called "secret police stations" in dozens of countries abroad, URL: <https://apnews.com/article/china-us-overseas-secret-police-stations-c6198ea361d07500604a80f0d31573cc>

⁴ Global nuclear arsenals are expected to grow as states continue to modernize—New SIPRI Yearbook out now. URL: <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/global-nuclear-arsenals-are-expected-grow-states-continue-modernize-new-sipri-yearbook-out-now>; China set to expand nuclear arsenal to 1,500 warheads by 2035, US says.

⁵ Russia Reportedly Supplying Enriched Uranium to China. URL: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3323381/russia-reportedly-supplying-enriched-uranium-to-china/>

5. Achieving technological independence from the West. This course was confirmed by the inclusion of a separate section on “Science, Technology and Innovation” in the report of Chinese leader Xi Jinping on the results of the 20th CPC Congress, which was not in the 2017 report. The new section stated that education, science, technology, and talent will be the strategic driving forces behind China’s transformation into a “modern socialist country”.⁶ The course to ensure China’s own technological independence, in the context of limited access to U.S. technologies, will lead to the continuation of the “Made in China 2025” industrial policy; strengthening of Beijing’s efforts to develop relations with the EU to obtain advanced technologies (including dual-use); training of specialists in leading European universities; scientific and academic exchanges; acquisition of technologies through pressure on foreign companies; recruitment of foreign scientists and engineers; and theft of information through cyberattacks.

Probably, the actualization of technological self-sufficiency is a consequence of the West’s sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. In this regard, Beijing is trying to build up its technological independence in order to reduce the impact of Western sanctions in the event of its aggression against Taiwan.

6. Strengthening China’s influence on the so-called “Global South”. Beijing is expected to focus on fostering ties with developing countries, BRICS and the SCO, positioning itself as a promising investor, reliable and peaceful partner that does not interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries. To this end, loans will be provided under the Belt and Road Initiative (including on non-transparent terms, which leads to corruption of local governments), and the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and Global Security Initiative (GSI) will be promoted to create an alternative world order.

It is assumed that through the ideological concepts outlined in the GSI, China will try to build a bloc of countries that share China’s views on security and global governance in order to confront and ultimately reform the Western-dominated world order. In addition, Beijing hopes to limit other countries from joining the United States and the West in the so-called anti-China coalition. In this aspect, Beijing’s efforts will be focused primarily on the countries of the so-called “Global South”.

Thus, in addition to uninterrupted access to resources, the strategic goal of Beijing will be to create a China-oriented network of friendly countries to counterbalance the West and to support its ambitions to reform global governance. This could increase China’s competition with Europe and the United States in Africa, Latin America and other regions, and contribute to China’s closer cooperation with Russia to push Western countries out of these regions.

⁶ Full text of the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. URL: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202210/t20221025_10791908.html



2. The EU in search of a consolidated policy towards China: “strategic autonomy” or alliance with the United States?

The Kremlin’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine has stimulated the evolution of views on the place and role of the West in the international coordinate system that will be formed as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war. However, as of today, we have to state that despite the consolidation in struggle against Russia, the Euro-Atlantic community still has contradictions in supporting the U.S. policy of strategic confrontation with China.

1. The United States focuses on regional formats to contain China. Russia’s attack on Ukraine has not shaken Washington’s confidence in the priority of the threat posed by China, which has ambitions to become a new global economic, military, and political pole. Notably, the draft U.S. military budget for 2024 contains the Pentagon’s largest-ever request for the “Pacific Deterrence Initiative” (\$9.1 billion), which is 40% more than in 2023⁷.

An important element of the strategy of the White House, regardless of a possible change of administration in 2025, will be the formation of new international platforms for interaction and strengthening military-technical cooperation within existing regional alliances aimed at deterring China. The “triad” of the main allied international formats on which the United States will rely in the Indo-Pacific and East Asian theaters includes the AUKUS bloc (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia), the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue—QUAD (Australia, India, the United States, Japan) and the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP) (the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia and New Zealand). In this context, it is worth noting the growing trend of imbalance between the U.S. regional policy and the economic interests of European allies, which will strengthen the arguments of supporters of the idea of an autonomous EU policy in the Indo-Pacific region.

2. NATO is developing partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Against the backdrop of growing tensions over Taiwan, a priority for NATO, as the fundamental security institution of the West, is to unify the vision of the threats posed to the Alliance by Beijing’s current policy. Therefore, at last year’s NATO summit in Madrid, China was recognized as a “strategic challenge”, which can be considered a success of American diplomacy. At the same time, the White House has stepped up its attempts to involve NATO countries in the design of Beijing’s deterrence belt in the Indo-Pacific region. It was the first time in the history of NATO summits to feature the leaders of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. The involvement of the U.S. Asian allies significantly expands the scope of NATO as a global security organization, including by putting on the Alliance’s agenda issues that were previously perceived in Europe as the exclusive prerogative of Washington. For example,

⁷ Pentagon’s \$842B proposed budget focuses largely on China as war rages in Ukraine. URL: <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-03-13/pentagon-military-budget-troops-pay-9481513.html>

Seoul has accompanied its interest in expanding cooperation with NATO with a package of proposals appealing to European members of the Alliance, such as ensuring uninterrupted supply of semiconductors, assistance in the construction of nuclear power plants and modernization of energy facilities, and intensification of military-technical cooperation⁸, the potential of which can be seen in Poland's multibillion-dollar contracts with South Korean arms manufacturers.

During the next NATO summit in Vilnius, one of the main topics will be the consolidation of the Western policy of containing China. However, the harsh rhetoric against Beijing by skeptical countries is unlikely to meet with unanimous support, which will once again demonstrate the differences between the Allies in assessing the level of threats from China.

3. Formation of a bloc of countries skeptical of China in the EU. Within NATO, Washington can count on the support of a number of Central and Eastern European countries and the Baltic states for its concept of containing China. The conditional leaders of the bloc of European countries skeptical of China are currently Lithuania and the Czech Republic, but the trend toward revising relations with Beijing in the region is likely to grow in the near future. An important marker of this process will be the intensification of European countries' contacts with Taiwan. The drift of CEE countries in the opposite direction from Beijing highlights the deep crisis of Chinese investment and logistics formats (14+1, Belt and Road Initiative) in the EU's eastern territories. In the political sphere, China's pro-Russian neutrality is pushing most governments in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states to define China's foreign policy as a source of threats to information and technological security.

4. EU priorities in relations with China. Beijing's unexpected interest in the Russian-Ukrainian war, evidenced by the so-called "peace plan", combined with the demonstration of "unlimited friendship" with Moscow during the visits of Chinese top leaders to the Kremlin, has stimulated debate on the EU's consolidated position in relations with China. From the EU's point of view, China's desire to enhance its international prestige by participating in the diplomatic process to end the war makes the topic of Ukraine a marker for democratic countries in their relations with Beijing.

In her keynote speech on EU policy toward China, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen prioritized reducing the EU's vulnerability to a wide range of security factors caused by Beijing. At present, the following main directions of the EU's derisking policy in relations with China can be identified: 1) formation of a common policy based on the protection of the EU's economic interests; 2) responsible management of strategic differences of interests and values; 3) coordinated but independent approach to relations with China in the field of high technology; 4) reduction of the EU's vulnerability to Chinese imports, especially in critical raw materials; 5) reassessment of the investment agreement in terms of

⁸ South Korea's Important Achievement at the NATO Summit. [URL:https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/south-koreas-important-achievement-nato-summit](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/south-koreas-important-achievement-nato-summit)

strengthening the protection of sensitive technologies from China; 6) development of partnerships with the Global South on issues of concern in relation to China's activities. At the same time, von der Leyen emphasized the need to preserve opportunities to cooperate with Beijing on issues such as climate change, biodiversity, pandemic preparedness, nuclear non-proliferation, and global financial stability⁹.

5. New accents in the policies of Germany and France towards China. As of today, the EU's policy towards China is a combination of different national interests and priorities, which often contradict one another. Brussels does not have effective control over national initiatives towards China. For its part, Beijing prefers to develop bilateral relations with European countries, primarily Germany and France. In the economic sphere, Germany remains China's key partner as the latter's largest trading partner in the EU (in 2022, the total trade turnover between the countries reached €236.9 billion)¹⁰. Geopolitically, the dialogue with France is of particular interest to the Chinese leadership, as Paris has historically claimed to be the architect of the EU's "strategic autonomy", which resonates with Beijing's interest in stimulating potential and deepening existing splits in the transatlantic environment.

Attention should be paid to the differences in interests of Berlin and Paris concerning relations with Beijing. According to press reports, the German government and the business community still hope to conclude a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) with China¹¹. At the same time, the German government publicly declares its desire to avoid past mistakes made in relations with Russia. After a recent visit to Beijing, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock confirmed that Berlin will try to depart from the concept of "change through trade", according to which the West wanted to achieve political change in authoritarian regimes by fostering trade ties¹². Therefore, Berlin is likely to coordinate its negotiating position on the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with the EU and encourage Beijing to step up its dialogue with Brussels.

Meanwhile, the French president's statements made after his talks with the Chinese leader caused a stir. This is not the first time that Emmanuel Macron has voiced ideas about Europe's "strategic autonomy". This time, however, he chose particularly harsh language about reducing the EU's dependence on the United States, which actually calls into question the possibility of a consolidated Western policy on relations with China. In contrast to the position of the European bureaucracy, which sees "strategic autonomy" as an expansion of the EU's

⁹ Speech by President von der Leyen on EU-China relations to the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Centre. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_23_2063

¹⁰ German business calls for renegotiation of China investment agreement. URL: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-china/news/german-business-calls-for-renegotiation-on-china-investment-agreement/>

¹¹ The Rise and Demise of the EU-China Investment Agreement: Takeaways for the Future of German Debate on China. URL: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rise-and-demise-eu-china-investment-agreement-takeaways-future-german-debate-china>

¹² Germany's Baerbock says parts of China trip 'shocking'. URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-baerbock-says-parts-of-china-trip-shocking/a-65375303>

defense capabilities, Paris suggests implementing the “third way” approach as an alternative bloc created to counter the paradigm of global Sino-American rivalry.

Building a comprehensive economic model for the development of Europe’s relations with China is possible only if the EU institutions play a leading role in the negotiations. However, the accumulation of security problems and the general level of distrust due to the history of the pandemic, the mutual practice of applying sanctions, and Beijing’s limited support for the aggressor side in the Russian-Ukrainian war have led to a dead end in the search for a common EU policy. As of today, the EU leadership is focusing on identifying common risks and finding opportunities to preserve certain areas of cooperation with China. The prospects for the implementation of these programs remain doubtful, given Beijing’s reluctance to engage in a direct dialogue with Brussels, which, from the Chinese side, is preparing the EU for systemic competition with China. Under these conditions, the gap in the approaches of European capitals to China policy will only grow. The wing of pragmatic countries, in particular Germany and France, will continue to balance the EU’s security concerns with the interests of its own business in the Chinese market. European countries skeptical of China, with the support of the United States, will deepen regional coordination in the field of information and communications security and develop contacts with Taipei. Accordingly, the project of European strategic autonomy in the French president's version is unlikely to be implemented, at least in the short term.

3. Global confrontation between the U.S.-EU and China on the African continent

As noted above, the establishment of new regional formats of cooperation and partnerships is accompanied by growing competition between the United States, the EU, or China for the countries of the so-called Global South. This subsection analyzes the most important, from the point of view of the authors, tools for global players to project their influence on the example of the African continent, in particular: trade in goods and services, the arms market, and the level of political contacts.

In order to obtain generalized data, the material will analyze Africa on a regional basis using specific countries as examples.

1. The African continent as part of the economic confrontation between China and the United States. Trade is one of the key tools for global players to project their influence on the continent. In 2022, China’s exports to Africa amounted to \$164.49 billion, while imports totaled \$117.51 billion¹³. In both cases, these are record values. It is worth noting that after a drop in 2015, China’s trade with Africa continues to grow every year.

¹³ China-Africa trade soars on spike in commodity prices – <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Trade/China-Africa-trade-soars-on-spike-in-commodity-prices>

In 2022, the main consumers of Chinese exports in Africa were South Africa (\$24.2 billion—14.7% of China’s exports to the continent), Nigeria (\$22.3 billion—13.6%) and Egypt (\$17.1 billion—10.4%). In 2022, China imported the most from South Africa (\$32.6 billion—27.7% of China’s imports from the continent), Angola (\$23.1 billion—19.7%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$16.7 billion—14.2%) [converted from RMB to USD at a rate of 0.15].

Given that China’s exports to Africa grew by \$18.97 billion from 2021 to 2022, it can be concluded that Beijing has moved to further diversify its exports to the continent (a drop in exports to Nigeria and Egypt against a moderate increase in South Africa). In turn, imports rose by \$11.75 billion over the same period, with Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo accounting for more than half of this figure.

As for the West’s position, U.S. trade with the continent remains steady (\$25 billion in exports, \$36 billion in imports), showing neither rapid ups nor downs¹⁴. However, Africa is not of significant economic interest to the United States. The European Union is a different story. In 2022, EU exports (excluding the UK) to Africa amounted to \$181.4 billion and imports to \$232.7 billion^{15 16}. For the EU, trade with Africa accounts for 6.2% of total exports (\$2.926 trillion) and 7.4% of total imports (\$3.146 trillion) in 2022^{17 18 19}. Accordingly, we can conclude that the EU is stepping up its trade with Africa. For example, in 2021, the EU’s exports to Africa amounted to \$149.4 billion, and imports from Africa to the EU amounted to \$148.6 billion. The difference in exports for 2022 is \$32 billion in favor of 2022, and in imports—\$84.1 billion, also in favor of 2022. Thus, EU-Africa trade increased by \$116.1 billion from 2021 to 2022. While the same indicator for China and Africa increased by only \$30.7 billion (\$251.3 billion in 2021 and \$282 billion in 2022). We can assume that the situation of rapid (compared to 2021) growth in EU trade with Africa may be due to the large-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. This has led to a reorientation of part of the European market to Africa. Therefore, this situation only emphasizes the sharpness of the economic confrontation between the EU and China on the African continent.

In 2022, EU exports to South Africa amounted to \$27.6 billion (\$2.4 billion more than China), to Nigeria—\$19.4 billion (\$2.9 billion less than China), to Egypt—\$21.6 billion (\$4.5 billion more than China). The difference in these countries is \$4 billion in favor of the EU. The difference between EU and Chinese exports to the continent in 2022 is \$16.9 billion in favor

¹⁴ DATA: CHINA-AFRICA TRADE – <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-china-africa-trade>

¹⁵ European Union Exports: EU 27E: Africa: Total – <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/european-union/eurostat-trade-statistics-by-sitc-european-union-africa/exports-eu-27e-africa-total>

¹⁶ European Union Imports: EU 27 excl UK (EU 27E): Africa: Total – <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/european-union/eurostat-trade-statistics-by-sitc-european-union-africa/imports-eu-27-excl-uk-eu-27e-africa-total>

¹⁷ European Union Total Exports – <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/european-union/total-exports>

¹⁸ Exports of goods - total – <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/teiet010/default/line?lang=en>

¹⁹ European Union Total Imports – <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/european-union/total-imports>

of the EU. Presumably, similarly to China, the EU is diversifying its exports to the continent: in 2022, EU imports from South Africa amounted to \$27 billion (\$5.6 billion less than China), from Angola—\$14.2 billion (\$8.9 billion less than China), from the DR Congo—\$2.5 billion (\$14.2 billion less than China)^{20 21 22}. If we consider the difference between China's and the EU's imports to the continent in 2022 of \$115.2 billion in favor of the EU, as well as the previously mentioned fact that 61.6% of China's imports come from the three countries mentioned above, we can conclude that the EU market is currently more important for most African countries than the Chinese market.

That is why, taking into account all the above facts, the EU's economic influence on the continent is more powerful than China's.

2. Arms trade. According to SIPRI data for 2018–2022, China accounts for 9.8% of arms exports to Africa, ranking second on the continent between the United States (16%) and France (7.6%). It is currently known that China exports arms to 17 countries on the continent. However, Chinese weapons can be found in at least 35 African countries.

China exports a wide range of military equipment to the African continent. However, in many cases, these are outdated tanks and guns. Only a few countries, such as Algeria, Gabon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal, receive much newer Chinese equipment. Given the fact that China is scaling up supplies to Algeria, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Senegal, one can conclude that Beijing is making efforts to take Russia's place in the African arms market and compete with France and the United States on the continent.

For instance, Algeria is one of the largest arms buyers in Africa, accounting for 1.8% of the world's total arms imports. Algeria used to buy two-thirds of its weapons from Russia, but in early November 2022, Algeria and China signed a memorandum of strategic cooperation for five years²³. Negotiations have also begun with the Chinese company NORINCO on the purchase of Chinese SY-400 air defense systems²⁴. In April 2023, a report appeared stating that China was financing the Polisario Front and providing it with weapons through Iran²⁵. Given that the Sahrawi rebels are supported by Algeria, it can be assumed that the latter's cooperation with China in the field of arms may also relate to this issue.

With Russia losing ground, competition in the African arms market between the West and China is likely to escalate. Prior to the large-scale aggression against Ukraine, the Russian Federation was the undisputed leader in arms exports to Africa, accounting for 40%. However, given that Moscow faces difficulties in supplying weapons to the continent due to

²⁰ European Union Imports from South Africa – <https://tradingeconomics.com/european-union/imports/south-africa>

²¹ European Union Imports from Angola – <https://tradingeconomics.com/european-union/imports/angola>

²² European Union Imports from Congo – <https://tradingeconomics.com/european-union/imports/congo>

²³ Algeria, China sign 5-year strategic cooperation pact – <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20221108-algeria-china-sign-5-year-strategic-cooperation-pact/>

²⁴ Algeria continues military buildup with new Chinese SY-400 ballistic missile acquisition – <https://www.military.africa/2022/11/algeria-continues-military-buildup-with-new-chinese-sy-400-ballistic-missile-acquisition/>

²⁵ Is Morocco China's Next Target? Opinion – <https://www.newsweek.com/morocco-chinas-next-target-opinion-1795689>

sanctions, as well as a lack of weapons for combat operations and the disruption of contracts, other arms suppliers are getting an opportunity to expand their market share²⁶.

3. The current dynamics of China's political relations with particular African countries.

Despite the fact that China has embassies in almost all African countries (with the exception of Eswatini), there are only a few of them whose political relations are of great geopolitical importance to China²⁷. First and foremost, Djibouti is a case in point. This East African state is home to the only foreign Chinese military base. In February 2014, Djibouti and Beijing signed a defense, security, and strategic partnership agreement, which included the military base agreement. In January 2023, it became known that Djibouti had reached an understanding with the companies of the Hong Kong Aerospace Technology Group on the construction of a commercial spaceport in the country. On December 9, 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Djibouti President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh in Saudi Arabia²⁸.

One of the indicators of the political importance of an African country for China is the number of ethnic Chinese workers in it, as well as the total number of ethnic Chinese living on its territory. For example, in 2020, Algeria had the largest number of Chinese workers (over 18 thousand)²⁹. However, while according to some estimates, 200 thousand Chinese lived in Algeria in the early 2010s, this figure is now 37 thousand^{30 31}.

The next largest countries are Nigeria (8.6 thousand workers), Ethiopia (8 thousand workers, 41 thousand Chinese in total), DR Congo (6.7 thousand workers), Angola (6 thousand workers and 54 thousand Chinese in total, a reduction from 300 thousand)^{32 33 34 35}. China is building up special political relations with those countries where its diaspora is present in the economy.

At the same time, it should be underlined that China's diplomacy on the continent is not always conducted directly through Xi Jinping, but through other Chinese officials. In 2022, the Chinese president met in person only with Algerian Prime Minister Aymen Benabderrahmane in Saudi Arabia. In addition to meeting with the top officials of Djibouti

²⁶ Ukraine Has Ground Down Russia's Arms Business – <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/21/ukraine-russia-arms-business-weapons-exports-africa/>

²⁷ Chinese Embassies > Africa –

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/2490_665344/2493_665350/index.html

²⁸ Xi Jinping Meets with President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh of Djibouti –

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202212/t20221210_10988607.html

²⁹ Number of Chinese workers in Africa from as of 2020, by country – <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1259279/number-of-chinese-workers-in-africa-by-country/>

³⁰ China's Impact And Risks In Algeria –

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120501100531/http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10ALGIERS123>

³¹ Chinese in Algeria – https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/19206/AG

³² China's Impact And Risks In Algeria – <https://web.archive.org/web/20120501100531/>

³³ Chinese in Ethiopia – https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/19206/ET

³⁴ Chinese in Angola – https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/19206/AO

³⁵ How Angola's honeymoon with China came to an end – <https://www.theafricareport.com/202465/how-angolas-honeymoon-with-china-came-to-an-end/>

and Algeria, in Saudi Arabia, during the China-Arab summits and China-Gulf Cooperation Council summits Xi Jinping met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Earlier, in November 2022, the Chinese leader met with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in Indonesia on the sidelines of the G20 summit. It is important to note that Xi Jinping also met personally with Senegalese President Macky Sall.

In general, compared to previous years, the Chinese president has not visited Africa in 2022. Instead, the “work” of meeting with African leaders in 2023 was started by Foreign Minister Qin Gang, who met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba, Angolan President João Laurenço, Beninese President Patrice Talon, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in early January 2023.

China has indeed stepped up its political contacts with African countries, but it is worth noting that, with the exception of Djibouti, the “special character” of its political relations with them is actually based on economic interests. Despite the fact that China has a long history of diplomatic relations and economic cooperation with many countries on the continent, its political influence in Africa is still in its formative stage. One should not overestimate it. The example of the outflow of Chinese from Angola, the “debt-trap diplomacy” in relation to Zambia, Kenya, and Tanzania, and cases of racism among the Chinese against Africans show that African countries are quite cautious about “friendship” with China³⁶.

4. Enhanced EU diplomacy on the African continent. As for the United Europe, it is worth noting that the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, visited Mozambique and Kenya in September 2022, and earlier this year he paid visits to Botswana and South Africa. The revitalization of the EU’s diplomatic missions to the African continent was triggered by Russia’s large-scale aggression against Ukraine. However, it has to be stated that the EU does not have a real (not declarative) common policy towards Africa. Each EU member state acts on the continent depending on its own interests. For example, the French Operation Barkhane against Islamists was supported by Estonia, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and Denmark, while most EU countries stood aside. The situation around Western Sahara is also indicative in this context. The EU generally recognizes the right of the Sahrawis (a local ethnic group) to self-determination. Yet, Spain has changed its position and supports Morocco’s plan to “autonomize” the region.

In light of this, it is worth noting the growing dynamics of visits by the leaders of Europe’s largest economies to African countries, in particular Germany and France. Paris has traditionally been particularly active in Africa: in March 2023, French President Emmanuel Macron visited Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola, and last summer he paid a visit to Cameroon, Benin, and Guinea-Bissau. In general, while losing influence in Mali and Burkina Faso, France is trying to increase its

³⁶ China-Africa relations – <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/01/china-africa-relations>

presence in former Portuguese (Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe), British (Sierra Leone, Gambia), Belgian (Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda) and Spanish (Equatorial Guinea) colonies. France remains the most politically and militarily active on the continent, continuing to control such associations as ECOWAS and ECCAS and to influence the G5 Sahel. Currently, about 3 thousand French military personnel are deployed on the continent (mostly in Niger and Chad). France provides training and education for the military of a large number of West African and Central African states.

Conclusions

The Russian-Ukrainian war has accelerated the emergence of new alliances and formats of cooperation in the global dimension. The tendency to form new (sub)regional alliances or reorient existing partnership formats is gaining momentum. However, the positioning of states in relation to the situation in Ukraine is only one of the criteria underlying the structuring of the future world order. The transformation of international relations is based on competition in the spheres of human activity that ensure sustainable economic development and technological dominance.

An analysis of the new architecture of China's foreign policy in the context of global confrontation shows that Beijing is trying to weaken transatlantic ties between the EU and the United States. China's foreign policy is aimed at developing bilateral relations with European countries. At the same time, the Chinese leadership is growing distrust of EU institutions due to the mutual practice of applying sanctions and trade restrictions. As for the United States and its allies in the Indo-Pacific region, China will pursue a more aggressive policy of confrontation. Moreover, Beijing is increasing its technological independence in order to reduce the impact of sanctions in case of intensification of the military scenario over Taiwan. That said, China does not aim to form new regional alliances under its own patronage. Instead, China will enhance the existing tools for projecting financial and security influence—the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and Global Security Initiative (GSI), as well as the loan programs under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Against the backdrop of China's growing regional ambitions and the aggravation of the security situation around Taiwan, the United States will focus its efforts in the coming years on strengthening defense cooperation with allies in the Indo-Pacific region. The main international alliances on which the United States will rely in implementing its policy of containing China will be AUKUS, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP). At the same time, Washington will stimulate deeper cooperation at the NATO level with its allies in the Indo-Pacific region, which may become one of the central topics of the Alliance's summit in Vilnius.

The EU, for its part, is focusing on identifying common risks and finding opportunities to

preserve certain areas of cooperation with China. However, the implementation of these programs is currently hampered by disagreements between the wing of countries that are skeptical about cooperation with China due to security concerns and pragmatic countries that do not want to lose economic benefits. At this, the key parameters of the economic dimension of EU-China relations will be formed within the framework of the discussion on the feasibility of concluding a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) with China. As for the political dimension of EU-China relations, the key trend is seen in the attempts of European capitals to influence Beijing's position on the Russian-Ukrainian war, in particular by conveying the position that supporting Moscow with weapons will lead to sanctions from the EU.

One of the key conclusions regarding the emergence of new regional alliances led by the United States, the EU, or China is that competition for the countries of the so-called Global South is on the rise. Therefore, this study analyzes the trends in projecting the geopolitical influence of the United States, the EU, and China on the example of individual countries on the African continent. In particular, it is important to note the growth of the EU's trade with Africa in 2022, which is a consequence of the large-scale aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, the authors point to the tendency to diversify trade relations within the framework of the EU and China's economic strategy and, accordingly, to prioritize cooperation with individual countries of the continent. It should also be mentioned that competition between Western countries and China in the African arms market is growing due to substantial weakening of Russia's position. The authors also recognize the rather low intensity of China's diplomacy at the level of the country's leadership. Restrictive measures due to the pandemic have become a significant contributor to this.

Consequently, Ukraine's main task will be to create conditions for entering new technological, industrial, and economic chains that will be built on the global stage. This requires an in-depth study (with an update of future needs) of potentially important technologies, promising production chains, as well as the identification of regions, countries, organizations, etc. that could become a source of necessary minerals, energy, advanced developments and technologies, elements of promising technological and production cycles, as well as consumer markets.

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