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Strategic Trends 2023: Key Developments in Global Affairs

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The ‘Strategic Trends 2023: Key Developments in Global Affairs’ publication delivers a thorough analysis of the pivotal trends shaping international security in 2023, serving a diverse readership.

Brian G. Carlson’s chapter ‘China, Russia, and the Future of World Order’ delves into the intricate geopolitical landscape sculpted by Russia’s and China’s influences. Throughout the chapter, Carlson dissects these nations’ multifaceted challenges and ambitions to the existing global framework. He inserts the readers into the complex realm of international diplomacy, where the looming shadows of Russia and China traverse historical epochs and contemporary power dynamics, revealing pivotal moments of convergence and divergence in their interests, often demonstrated through the institutions they are part of. From Russia’s strategic manoeuvres in Ukraine to China’s calculated restraint, the narrative unveils the delicate equilibrium in their partnership amid mounting concerns about authoritarian threats to the prevailing world order.

As he proceeds through the chapter, Carlson reveals the annals of history, tracing the evolution of international institutions and alliances. He sheds light on the aspirations and disillusionments of pursuing a liberal international order. China’s rise is at the heart of his analysis, highlighted by ambitious projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which reflect its intent to redefine global norms and institutions. Within China’s ambitions lies a fundamental challenge to the existing world order, exemplified by its goal to establish a Sinocentric global framework. This ambition, juxtaposed

with Russia's disenchantment with Western hegemony, sets the stage for a monumental clash intertwined with ideological struggles, forming the crucible of global governance in the 21st century.

The subsequent chapter, authored by Sophie-Charlotte Fischer and titled 'Silicon Curtain: America's Quest for Allied Export Controls against China', explores the evolving dynamics of technological competition between the United States and China. Fischer navigates through the historical context of multilateral export controls, emphasising the imperative for the United States to garner support from technologically capable allies to safeguard its technological supremacy.

Fischer's analysis of the Biden administration's strategic shift towards coordinated export controls with allies offers insights into contemporary efforts to deny China access to critical technologies. There it can be seen that allied export controls face uncertainties amid China's ambiguity regarding the Ukraine war, the potential repercussions for European security if China backs Russia militarily, the escalating tensions over Taiwan prompting closer US-allied coordination on tech sector controls targeting China, and the 2024 US elections potentially shaping future US-China policy, with both parties expected to maintain a firm stance.

Névine Schepers' chapter, 'Alliances and Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Europe and Asia', examines nuclear deterrence's dynamics. The chapter marks 2022 as a pivotal juncture, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis and witnessing significant global nuclear risk assessment developments. Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, accompanied by thinly veiled atomic threats, underscores the pervasive influence of nuclear arsenals in contemporary geopolitical calculations. Similarly, China's rapid atomic expansion and assertive manoeuvres in the Asia-Pacific intensify concerns for US allies, necessitating a robust commitment to the US nuclear umbrella.

Schepers illuminates the complexities of US allies, mainly NATO members and states like Finland and Sweden, who are eyeing NATO membership amidst growing atomic risks and how North Korea's prolific missile testing and expanding nuclear arsenal further accentuate the imperative of bolstering deterrence through alliances, notably exemplified by South Korea's partnership with the United States. The interdependence of commitments to different allies highlights the strain on US alliance systems in Europe and Asia amidst simultaneous crisis scenarios. It underscores the interconnectedness between these regions, anchored in their reliance on US security assurances and the imperative of mitigating evolving risks through investments in conventional capabilities.

The fourth chapter, 'How India Navigates a World in Transition', looks at India's foreign policy strategy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. The author, Boas Lieberherr, explores the intricate dynamics influencing India's strategic position as global power shifts continue to unfold. Lieberherr's analysis sheds light on Modi's approach to reshaping India's foreign policy landscape in the

context of an increasingly assertive China and the BJP's rise to power. He adeptly navigates through various viewpoints regarding Modi's foreign policy trajectory, acknowledging interpretations that frame it as a departure from past administrations while noting continuity elements. This examination offers readers a grasp of the complexities inherent in India's diplomatic manoeuvres. At the core of Modi's foreign policy agenda lies the revitalisation of India's economy and the pursuit of strategic autonomy. Lieberherr brings to the fore Modi's endeavours to rebrand India's 'Look East' policy as 'Act East', signaling a strategic pivot towards deeper engagement in Southeast and East Asia.

However, the chapter also highlights the challenges hindering India's foreign policy aspirations, including resource constraints within the Ministry of External Affairs. Lieberherr takes the ideological underpinnings of Modi's foreign policy, specifically the influence of Hindu nationalism, and investigates how Modi employs cultural and religious diplomacy to shape India's global image while appealing to domestic audiences. Providing timely insights into India's defense issues and the reforms initiated by the Modi government, Lieberherr explores efforts to modernise the armed forces and bolster indigenous defence capabilities through the 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) initiative.

Much like its predecessor, 'Strategic Trends 2022', the 2023 edition maintains its focus on key themes such as the Russia-China relationship, US-China competition, nuclear arms discussions, ongoing references to the Ukraine conflict and the evolving dynamics of India's alliances. It showcases how these disparate events are increasingly interconnected and potentially wield greater significance in global politics, showing no signs of immediate resolution or easing. While the edition strives to capture global trends, it notably overlooks discussions concerning Latin America and Africa, opting instead for a pronounced emphasis on European, North American and Asian subjects. This editorial decision inadvertently neglects comprehensive coverage of diverse regions, leaving readers interested in these areas wanting pertinent information. The text is approachable for those with minimal exposure to international relations literature. Even so, the abundance of examples might pose a slightly more significant difficulty for general readers.