

THE REALM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TIME: FURTHER DECONSTRUCTION – CHRONICLE NEXUS (PART II)

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GLOSSES ON THE TUMULTUOUS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS LANDSCAPE WITH A FOCUS ON THE PRESENT AND FUTURE INTERPLAY BETWEEN NATIONAL INTERESTS AND FOREIGN POLICY & DIPLOMACY

Abstract. As a complementary continuation of the narrative in PART I, in this PART II we intend to follow *the Interests-Diplomacy tandem's journey* through the tumultuous landscape of the actual international system, one seen by analysts as being arrived at a *historical inflection point*¹. National interests are approached here as an uncontested perennial factor in molding and directing the realm of international relations, being laid indestructibly and intimately at Diplomacy's foundation. Generally, the process of defining the international profile for any country would not be complete without integrating fully the country's national interests, in conceptual, substantive, and semantic terms. Eventually, any international order, as, in our vision, *the Quadrilateral P(lus) Global Order (QPGO)*, represents an interplay among the national interests, starting with those of the major players on the respective stage. All that with the caveat that the national interests would reach their full transformative potential only in conjunction with the diplomatic profiles of the states-actors in the respective order (a critical issue we intend to discuss in PART III). In the same context, the equation national interests – foreign policy profile would be deeper understood when identifying and taking into account at least one or two symbols *cum* metaphors as variable specific for each nation's Diplomacy. Finally, if all this narrative is one from the perspective of a "traditional Diplomacy", it would be equally relevant to determine "the fate" of national interests against the potentially emerging of new patterns of Diplomacy, for instance *Post-Diplomacy* and *Hybrid Diplomacy*, as we see them, in the last section of this paper, as being foreshadowed by evolutions at the encounter line between the present ubiquitously heavy pressuring coronavirus Pandemic and the time's global geopolitical foggy horizon.

Keywords: *Global Diplomacy; Multilateral Diplomacy; Bilateral Diplomacy; Global Health Diplomacy in the Year 2020; COVID-19.*

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¹ Richard N. Haass and Charles A. Kupchan, "The New Concert of Powers. How to Prevent Catastrophe and Promote Stability in a Multipolar World", *Foreign Affairs*, March 23, 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2021-03-23/new-concert-powers>.

National Interests at the Pandemic's Time – A Kaleidoscopic Overview

“National interests are generally accepted as the guiding compass that indicated the directions of each country's foreign policy.”²

The one and consequentially *Diplomatic Tenet* “*carved in stone*”, namely “The Pursuit of the National/Vital Interest(s)”, has never ceased to steering the course of international relations. For the last one year and a half, its perennial “traction role” for the Foreign policy and Diplomacy has been coalesced to operate also in direct relation with the Pandemic challenges and corresponding medical needs, that in addition to the “traditional” realm of Foreign policy and Diplomacy.

As concept and policies, *the National/Vital Interest(s)* don't require too many words to be defined and, after that, to be articulated in practical terms. In return, an in-depth review of the domestic background, in political, social and economic terms, as well as of the external geopolitical context, would imply a lengthier narrative. That would lead the way toward a better understanding of the motivation, the substance and even the semantic pattern of a certain matrix of National Interests.

After more than twelve months of having the humanity confronted with a *once-in-a-century Pandemic, caused by the virus “baptized” SARS-CoV-2, a never-before-seen pathogen*, it has become widely accepted that what the world had been dealing with hadn't been a *Black Swan event* – one “defined as unpredictable, having severe consequences and a so-called hindsight bias”, but rather, “Covid-19 was a Grey Rhino event, one that is highly probable, with a high impact, and yet neglected. A Grey Rhino event is not random, but occurs after a series of warnings and visible evidence.”³

Seeing COVID-19 as “a biological entity with sociological roots and geopolitical effects”⁴ is helping us to understand that, from among the major *societal consequences* of this historically civilizational *turning point*, one of particular relevance has been *the resurrection of the Nation-State*, along with its privileged institutional framework – *the Government*, comprehended as a complex statecraft machinery having structurally integrated, at its very core, *the dedicated institutions in charge of Foreign Policy and Diplomacy*. Whatever the prevalent “colour” for what we could legitimately call *Mother Nature Messenger*, the novel coronavirus Pandemic led to a global crisis with no parallels in living memory and *Governments around the world were forced to deal simultaneously with a catastrophic health emergency, massive economic shocks and serious social disruption*.⁵

² Hana Alhashimi, Andres Fiallo, Toni-Shae Freckleton, Mona Ali Khalil, Vahd Mulachela, Jonathan Viera (eds.), *The Future of Diplomacy After COVID-19: Multilateralism and the Global Pandemic*, New York, Routledge; 1st edition, May 2021, p. 3.

³ <https://www.rics.org/de/wbef/megatrends/markets-geopolitics/covid-19-and-the-european-economy-black-swan-or-grey-rhino/>.

⁴ An Xiao Mina, “This pandemic isn't a swan—it's a canary”, 11 August 2020. <https://meedan.com/blog/this-pandemic-isnt-a-swan-its-a-canary/>.

⁵ https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3116000/coronavirus-crisis-has-jolted-india-strengthen-itself-and-step?utm_medium=email&utm_source=mailchimp&utm_campaign=enlz-OpinionDaily&utm_content=20210104&tpcc=enlz-.

Against this overall backdrop, “while it will take time to determine which government interventions were most effective, all acted. It is clear already, however, that those who acted expeditiously and forcefully fared better overall. The take-away should be that governments not only matter – they’re essential.”⁶ *This doesn’t mean that all governments had been automatically successful in their unexpectedly new endeavours, given the bewildering menu of tasks to be fulfilled, with rarely enough resources – not less a sound political will – to be used.*⁷

What seems uncontested is that *Diplomacy, and the specific Interests it was called for to defend and promote, have genuinely proved themselves as some of the most valuable, even if less visibly at times, health/medical-friendly among the arrays of the Governmental functions and institutions called to combatting the Covid-19 Pandemic, in both political and pragmatic terms.*

All that with a caveat: answering the specific demands relating to combating the Pandemic and its fallout, hadn’t prevented Diplomacy – diplomatic institutions, specific interests and personnel resources attached –, to *dealing also with and solving foreign policy issues from other areas than the health sector, some of them related to the “traditional” sector of the national and regional security, others connected to the permanently evolving geopolitical landscape, regionally and globally.*

In our view, it is at this Pandemic time that the Diplomacy’s intensely sought and valued beneficial intervention in the affairs of countries/states have been best reflecting one of its very *epitomic characteristic*, namely the one that’s made possible due to the *inner resilience proper to the principles and practices incorporated into that unique human activity known as DIPLOMACY: that marking characteristic quintessentially articulated through a simple pair of tropes – defending and promoting the national interest(s). In other words – the pursuit of the national interest(s), which are frequently qualified also as vital for the survival/wellbeing of the nation/state.*

Consequently, every dossier assembled with the purpose of solving a State/Governmental problem/set of issues in the area of foreign policy, *in the Pandemic time too*, wouldn’t merit being entitled “diplomatic file” unless having clearly defined, from the very first paragraph, the national interest(s) involved. *For the case in point of the novel coronavirus Pandemic, letting unattended even the apparently most insignificant topic from a very vast and dramatic medical agenda would equate with an unpardonable infringement on a given nation’s vital interests, frequently with a connotation of national security.*

The diversity of inputs, human resources included, have been making *the elaborating and implementing on the “national interests”, in medical/health terms, as well as in the political, security, up to the semantic terms, a process of maximum complexity.* One decisive factor in this regard it’s been the very “quality”, *determination and ambitions of the political leadership* involved.

⁶ Robert Cardillo, “Today’s World Through the Lens of 2020”, *The Cipher Brief*, JANUARY 5, 2021. https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column/cipher-brief-expert-view/todays-world-through-the-lens-of-2020?mc_cid=cb9597808b&mc_eid=3def7a625d.

⁷ “Take ‘the case’ of the US federal government”, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/usa/2021-02-16/present-re-creation>; <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>.

As a relevant example, here is the American case at the beginning of the coronavirus Pandemic's Year Two, with the entangled nature of *three categories of interests* seemingly staying behind the incidents which targeted, on January 6, 2021 – *the Epiphany Day*, the Washington's Capitol, *the core locus* of the American (parliamentarian) democracy: "(i). the downtrodden forcing their existence into the faces of an elitist Congress who serve very powerful interests instead; (ii). the delusive manipulation of desperate people by Donald Trump, a master manipulator who for his own interests has somehow convinced millions of Americans that he is their champion whose re-election was stolen from them; (ii). as long as Congress and the rest of the Establishment continue to ignore ordinary Americans' interests and serve only their own, the anger and the desperation in the land will explode, rendering the events of the Wednesday, January 6, 2021, merely a dress rehearsal for what may well turn into a full-blown insurrection. Congress must understand this before it's too late."⁸

Or, here is the case of the King of Morocco: "Normalization of Morocco's relations with Israel, a solitary decision of the king... No one was consulted and no one was made aware. Neither the Parliament nor any political party has been even informed of this decision. Even the head of government learned of the decision by reading a dispatch from the MAP" (the official press agency).⁹

The Pandemic time has proved a notable context for several other developments with regard to the interplay between the *national interests* and Diplomacy interplay, perceived in all its amplitude of *the multifarious Diplomacy's guises hypostasized against the stockpile of the Pandemic's challenges*:

(i). The package of heavy problems related to the Pandemic's containment, treatment for people contaminated, preventive vaccine etc., legitimately draws the attention of Governmental institutions, the Diplomatic ones included, on the necessity to finding out and making really operational *a balance between national interests* per se and *common interests*, as expressed at a group level, sub-regionally, regionally and even globally.

If it were to make reference to "a general principle and practice", the really pressing and vital needs relating to the evolving Pandemic, overflowed over a nation like an avalanche, had obliged, at first sight, the Government from one country or another to privilege the citizens of its own state, respectively, to look primarily for pursuing *the national interests*. Only that, in enough instances, such an "*individualistic strategy*" has not been without "*political and geopolitical side effects*", up to a negative impact on the sustainability of the overall international diplomatic drive on the subject-matter.

Ultimately, the very nature of the Pandemic as a global crisis has brought to light *the need to working also based on common interests*. Before anything else,

⁸ Joe Lauria, "Capitol Incident a Dress Rehearsal. The storming of the Capitol may just be a harbinger of things to come", *Consortium News*, 8 January 2021. <https://consortiumnews.com/2021/01/08/capitol-incident-a-dress-rehearsal/>.

⁹ Omar Brouksy, "Morocco. Normalization with Israel, a solitary decision of the king", *Orient XXI*, December 21, 2020. <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/maroc-normalisation-avec-israel-une-decision-solitaire-du-roi,4382>.

for the “handful of shared international issues – pandemics, climate change, and nuclear nonproliferation”¹⁰ a meaningful and productive approach cannot be but *the shared/common interests, furthered into common – regional & global cooperation*.

Agreeing with such a geopolitical logic should not equate with fully letting aside, in light of a concrete issue or another, the very *national interest*, but finding a way to having *the “national dimension”* ingrained into the convened *shared interests*. Otherwise, the *common interests themselves would become impaired, with the diplomatic demarches involved possibly to reach a dead-end*. Unfortunately, that appeared as a “lesson” from some developments in the complex process of “the Vaccine Race/Battle/Vaccine Diplomacy”. “The global challenges of our times require diplomats to assume a dual responsibility: to promote their country’s interest and to advance the interests of the global community. As has repeatedly become clear in such areas as health and the environment, there is a need to develop an approach that safeguards certain ‘global public goods’, or ‘global commons’”.¹¹

A “lesson” branched into other effective foreign policy principles and on the ground operations: “accelerating global challenges – from the pandemic to the climate crisis to nuclear proliferation – (will) only to be solved by nations working together and in common. We can’t do it alone”¹², as President Joseph Biden underlined in his first foreign policy speech.

Notably, an alternative expression to “*common interests*” would be “*overlapping interests*” and that mainly when the phrase is called up to “*contour*” a given area of the would-be overall “*common interests*” between two countries. An example: “*Russia and Finland have overlapping approaches and priorities when it comes to working in multilateral regional formats in northern Europe.*”¹³

Meanwhile, given the Chinese innermost complex political matrix, maybe without parallels worldwide, the leadership in Beijing had been considering necessary, as reaffirmed from the beginning of Pandemic’s Year Two, to underline that there exist also *a set of national interests called “core interest(s)”* – “a sacrosanct category usually reserved for territorial and sovereignty claims”¹⁴. Hence, *the Chinese would never let them to be “adjusted” so as to be assimilated into a set of “common/joint interests”*.

In recent months, concern has grown that the rising tension between the United States and China in *regions defined by Beijing as core interests*, and, before anything else, Taiwan, is liable to lead to friction, and even a military

¹⁰ https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2021-01-19/how-contain-putins-russia?utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=tw_daily_soc&utm_source=twitter_posts.

¹¹ Iona Kickbusch, Haik Nicogolian, Michael Kazatchkine, Mihály Kökén, “A GUIDE TO GLOBAL HEALTH DIPLOMACY. Better health – improved global solidarity – more equity”, Global Health Centre, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, 2021, pp. 37, 40.

¹² “Remarks by President Biden on America’s Place in the World”, U.S. Department of State, FEB 04, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>.

¹³ https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4574102.

¹⁴ Julian Gerwitz, “China Thinks America is Losing. Washington Must Show Beijing It’s Wrong”, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2020, p. 66.

conflict. This tension, particularly in *the South China Sea*, raises questions about Chinese policy: whether China's core interests will expand and spread to additional regions as its military and strategic capabilities grow; whether the Chinese classification of the South China Sea as a core interest is a sign of change and expansionism; and whether China will classify regions not currently included in Chinese sovereignty as part of its core interests.¹⁵

Equally notable has been *Beijing Diplomacy's consistency as a "first line defender" of the Chinese "core interests"*, capitalizing, in time and "tous azimuts", on every favorable occasion in this regard:

– *China-Iran*: "Joint Statement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Islamic Republic of Iran and People's Republic of China": "Both sides strongly support each other regarding issues pertaining to their core interests such as independence, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity."¹⁶

– *China-Saudi Arabia*: "During the year 2020, which has been a very extraordinary year, China and Saudi Arabia' heads of state talked over phone three times, in which they firmly supported each other on issues concerning each other's core interests and major concerns."¹⁷

– *China-Russia*: "The bilateral relationship has come through tests, but the two sides will continue supporting each other firmly in issues related to each other's core interests."¹⁸

A second substantive development during the Pandemic for the equation international relations/Diplomacy – national interests, was *the rightful acknowledgement, at the high level of politicians and decision-makers, as well as among the referential analysts and academia circles, of the connections and interplay that there should exist between a country's foreign policy and its domestic policy, and that in a dual sense: a successful national diplomacy would depend on the state of the internal situation, respectively, the foreign policy could and should work on the purpose of improving the domestic situation.*

Notably, in a speech as Presidential candidate, on July 11, 2019, Joe Biden argued that "our policies at home and abroad are deeply connected".¹⁹ Almost 20 months later, on February 04, 2021, in the first speech by now President Joseph Biden Jr., held at the Department of State, one of the particularly striking messages was about "the interconnection between domestic and foreign policy". The US 46th President highlighted in front of the American Diplomatic Corps, on the one hand, that "Diplomacy is back at the centre of our foreign policy" and, on the other hand, that "There's no longer a bright line between foreign and domestic policy."²⁰

¹⁵ Eyal Propper, "China's Core Interests and the Rising Tension with the United States: Implications for the World Order", INSS, *Policy Analysis*, Volume 23, No. 4, October 2020.

<https://strategicassessment.inss.org.il/en/articles/chinas-core-interests-and-the-rising-tension-with-the-united-states-implications-for-the-world->

¹⁶ <http://www.president.ir/EN/91435>.

¹⁷ http://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil/wangyi/202102/02/content_WS60189a3fc6d0f72576944ef9.html

¹⁸ <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-03-22/China-Cooperation-with-Russia-needed-in-increasingly-unstable-world-YQ4yXz18yY/index.html>.

¹⁹ <https://joebiden.com/americanleadership/>.

²⁰ "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World", U.S. Department of State Headquarters, 4 February 2021.

In an analysts' wording: "The first task now for an internationalist president is to make a success of domestic – and domestic means economic – policy. To borrow the familiar adage, if the US wants leadership abroad, it has to be strong at home."²¹

One month after President's Biden Remarks, and in the same place, at the US Department of State, Antony J. Blinken, in his "maiden speech" as the new American Secretary of State, considered useful to underline that "Our domestic renewal and our strength in the world are completely entwined. And how we work will reflect that reality."

Interestingly enough, the *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, a document released by the White House in the same day with A. J. Blinken's speech, contains a paragraph on the domestic policy – foreign affairs interplay: "Because traditional distinctions between foreign and domestic policy – and among national security, economic security, health security, and environmental security – are less meaningful than ever before, we will reform and rethink our agencies, departments, interagency processes, and White House organization to reflect this new reality."²²

In light of all of the above, it could be more than instructive to mention here the variant of the above-mentioned "familiar adage" which was articulated and used effectively by one of the most outstanding Romanian diplomats, conspicuous on the entire European continent between the First and Second World Wars, Nicolae Titulescu: "Give me a good internal policy and I will give you a good external policy".²³

And here is a relevant echo, over an arc of time of almost one century, to this very strong assertion – given that Nicolae Titulescu was elected twice President of the League of Nations in Geneva (1930 and 1931): "Increasing the EU's capacity to be a global actor also means ensuring consistency between the EU's external actions and its internal policies. A united and coherent EU voice in global fora is essential in order to maximize our role and influence. The EU must 'deliver as one' to 'succeed as one'".²⁴

As a conclusion to this section of our Part II narrative, we would stress that, *one cannot speak of a country's robust and dependable Diplomacy without a clear definition of the national interest, as we cannot envisage really solid national interests without having them firmly anchored in the domestic situation, including its goal for further transformation for the people's welfare.*

All these in a generally normal time. At the present uniquely peculiar juncture that the entire world has been faced with for the last 15 months, we have had *a major variable to reckon with – the novel coronavirus Pandemic.* Relevant in this regard could be the fact that a study dedicated to "The Future of Diplomacy

²¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/134d7289-805e-472d-8e99-f1d0d5dd52f4>.

²² "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance", The White House, March 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

²³ http://europolity.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Vol.8.No_.1.2014_43-55.pdf

²⁴ *Joint Communication to The European Parliament and the EU Council on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism*, Brussels, 17 February 2021, p. 2.

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/en_strategy_on_strengthening_the_eus_contribution_to_rules-based_multilateralism.pdf.

After COVID-19” had the first chapter dedicated to the “Disruptions in the practice of diplomacy as brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic”.²⁵

And the authors found that the respective “disruptions were clearly demonstrated in at least three dimensions: global, national and individual”: with the advent of the pandemic and the unprecedented challenges related to it, “there appeared also new global diplomatic narratives; the diplomatic machinery were tasked with new responsibilities, in line with national strategies to tackle COVID-19”; elements related to diplomats’ travel and their normal vis-à-vis face-to-face interactions, one of the most recognizable features of diplomacy, had been seriously impeded during the pandemic time, being replaced with “virtual” alternatives and “surrogates” from the area of digital diplomacy.

Eventually, such a “*filtered*” *Diplomacy* through the Pandemic requirements and pressures has been getting the profile of a *Post-Diplomacy*, a topic to be further explored in this paper.

*Today’s World:
A Structured Vision and Major Geopolitical Landmarks
Fuelled by the Interests-Diplomacy Equation*

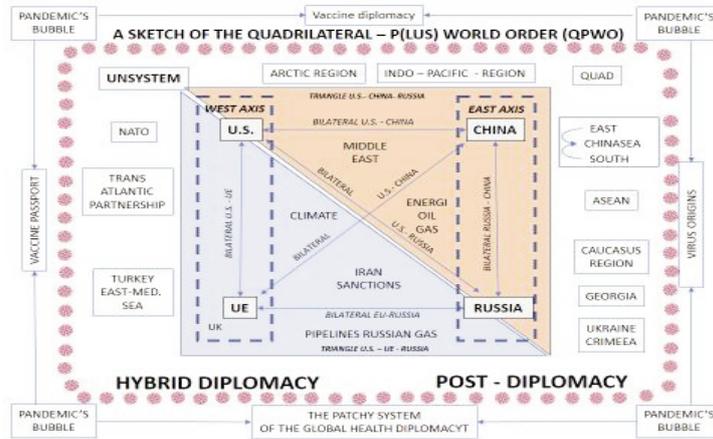
In a sense, since January 2020, if not earlier, as some sources would claim, the humanity have been enveloped in a one-in-a-century “pathogenic cocoon”, in other words a “Pandemic bubble”, altering the countries and peoples’ evolutions towards progress and welfare, whatever the previous dynamics in this regard, here and there. All that equated with an impressive coalescence of forces and means channelled toward the commanding medical needs of the time. The structured human civilization had entered a process of being squeezed almost to the limits but its stock of inner energy seems still capable to preserving plenty of other deeply rooted activities and operations.

Against this backdrop and using an adequate *Geopolitical Lens*, in conceptual, analytical and practical terms, it would be possible to distinguish and further reach a firmer view, against the foggy horizon of today’s global geopolitics, on what we consider as being a very epitome of the present international system, namely a *Quadrilateral P(Lus) World Order (QPWO)*, whose sketch is presented attached²⁶.

At his very juncture, in historical and civilizational terms, an outline, even condensed, of *the QPWO* would allow for a better scrutiny of the interplay between, on the one hand, *the interests of the QPWO’s core – the four Globally Postured Powers, U.S., China, EU and Russia*, and, on the other hand, revealing basic lines in their specific *national diplomatic profiles*, as well as echoing the *geopolitical games* involving them. And, as a key to open the gates for such a particular universe we will be seeking for a *Diplomacy’s defining symbol cum expressive metaphor* in the case of some of QPWO’s major players.

²⁵ Hana Alhashimi (Editor)..., *Op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

²⁶ The technical assistance in finalizing the respective sketch was granted by Mr. Andrei Cretoiu, a renowned Graphic Designer IT Specialist to whom I am grateful.



This would be indeed a challenging demarche, especially given the limited number of pages available here. Anyway, such a “quantitative restraint” should not prevent us in making reference, from the very beginning, to a sort of strange coincidence appeared towards the end of our writing time.

“Global Trends 2040. A More Contested World” is a publication of the *US National Intelligence Council*, dated March 2021²⁷, which has developed scenarios describing a range of “possible global futures”. Three key questions or “uncertainties” helped to shape these scenarios. • How severe are the looming global challenges? • How do states and nonstate actors engage in the world, including focus and type of engagement? • Finally, what do states prioritize for the future? Using this epistemological framework, *the NIC document’s authors have identified five plausible, distinctive, and illustrative stories of the future*. Each reflects the key themes of shared global challenges, fragmentation, disequilibrium, adaptation, and greater contestation.

One of those five scenarios is called “Separate Silos”: “The world is fragmented into several economic and security blocs of varying size and strength, centred on the United States, China, the EU, Russia, and a few regional powers, and focused on self-sufficiency, resiliency, and defence. Information flows within separate cyber-sovereign enclaves, supply chains are reoriented, and international trade is disrupted. Vulnerable developing countries are caught in the middle.” The centrality of the four powers – *the United States, China, the EU, Russia* – in both “Separate Silos” and our *QPWO* could make someone inclined to speak about a kind of overlapping between the two approaches. But that is just an apparent concurrence given that *the NIC scenario* has as *the time horizon the year ... 2040*, while what we aim to in our paper is dealing with the *QPWO* as a integrative and holistic view on the present global order.

The composite designation *P(LUS)*, would demarcate, *first*, the *corpus* of the *Novel Coronavirus Pandemic’s* manifestations and challenges – in medical, social,

²⁷ https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf, pp. 5, 108-109.

economic footings, and their consequences for and requests from the Government appropriate institutions, in the framework of relations with other states and international organizations, and that given the Pandemic's extensive agenda and its many pressing points.

With the passage to the Pandemic's Year Two of existence one can speak of *a complex international medical agenda, practically a "compact" structured in a triad of major issues*. With our *sui generis* allotted titles, they are: (i). *The Race for COVID-19 Vaccination*. (ii). *The Pandemic's lingering "trade mark": recurrent hurdles and counter-hurdles on the freedom of travel*. (iii). *Looking for probes on the thorny issue of the novel coronavirus/COVID-19 origins*.

Each of the three basic components of the present "Global, Regional and National Health Agenda" cannot be considered but as a "work in progress mode".

Worth observing also is that the medical needs generated by the actual novel coronavirus Pandemic have been mirrored in *the most extensive range of interests ever emerged in the modern world*, larger even from those specific to a world war situation. We say that because, in the drive aimed at containing the Pandemic's spread, together with efforts related to the healing process and preventive measures, starting with the vaccination, *there have been practically interested all persons actually living on the Planet Earth, both in their individual capacity and as a structural component of a large array of institutions*.

Against this unique backdrop, each of the three above-specified dimensions of the present Global Pandemic Health Agenda is coming into the game with a *variable geometry of the compact interests-institutions, the diplomatic ones included*.

From this point of view, it is the *COVID-19 Vaccination* which seemingly has been overwhelming in all aspects, not less *the intricate interests, effectively of a Planetary scale*, and their interplay with the implementing structures, the specific Diplomacy's role too.

The second dimension of the present Global Health Agenda in the wake of the Pandemic's medical requirements, which could be called The Pandemic's lingering "trade mark": *recurrent hurdles and counter-hurdles on the freedom of travel*, could be considered as mostly being in a "work in progress mode". The rollout of several syntagms accumulate by April 2021 – "Vaccine Passport", "standard vaccination certificate", "Immunity passports", "digital health passports", "digital vaccination certificate", "smart yellow card" – have just been mirroring the large array on interests involved, from those of Governments directly interested, of Greece, for instance, due to the share of its tourism industry, to non-governmental organizations, international/multilateral institutions, as WHO which already by December 2020 stated its opposition to "immunity passports", but not to "an e-vaccination certificate, an electronic vaccine certificate".

Third, if for the vaccine process and the freedom of travel during the Pandemic time one could have been witnessing *a global general interest, for discovering the virus' origins the number of actors directly involved appears limited to just three major players: one nation – China, and one multilateral organization – The World Health Organization (WHO), and a sort of "referee" – the US* The interests' matrixes for each part of this critical *Triad* had come out

so divergent that a solution, be it one of compromise, in the diplomatic sense, remained, till the beginning of April 2021, more than elusive.

Second, *P(LUS)* stands also for elements of the foreign policy and diplomatic actions undertaken by other states/nations, non-states entities too, mostly in interplay with the four Great Powers' interests and their effective Diplomacy.

Altogether, *QPWO* had been functioning as *an incubator* for *Diplomacy's Many Guises*, in bilateral, regional and multilateral patterns, in direct or indirect connection with the unfolding Pandemic. A generous source of diplomatic actions and geopolitical nodes has been engendered by the very interactions, internally within *QPWO*, among the *core-Four* great powers and that in various formats.

The *Bilateral formats* are starting with *the relations between US and China*, considered, in political and media circles, as *the most important bilateral relationship at the passage between the second and the third decades of the 21st century*, plus the relations *US-Russia and U.S.-EU*, after that the relations *China-EU*, *China-Russia* and, *EU-Russia*.

Forming two entrenched axes of the world, the interconnections *US-EU*, as *the Western axis*, respectively, *Russia-China*, as *the Eastern axis* are acknowledged as having a particular relevance due to their *political and even ideological connotations*: the first, as the realm of democracy, respect for human rights and actions for an international order based on rules, generally a value-driven world, the second, covering the Planet's areas of authoritarianism, even "a harder brand of authoritarianism", as in the case of China²⁸, together to the disregard of democratic governance.

For the sake of accuracy, one should not underestimate the more intricate connotation of *China-Russia* relationship, which could be seen in dynamics even as a sort of *China-Russia partnership* visible on the regional and global geopolitical and geo-economic horizon, a potential already starting to be fully tapped: "The new architecture of 21st century geopolitics is already taking shape, with China providing multiple trade corridors for non-stop economic development while Russia is the reliable provider of energy and security goods, as well as the conceptualizer of a Greater Eurasia home, with "strategic partnership" Sino/Russian diplomacy playing the very long game."²⁹

The *Triangular formats* regard mainly the interactions *US-China-EU*, but also the relations developed by *US-EU-Russia* and by *EU-Russia-China*.

Eventually, as Elizabeth C. Economy, a notable voice from the New York Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), noticed: "We're almost at a point where the world is looking as though it might be bifurcated into one that is led by China and perhaps Russia and one that is led by the United States and its Asian and European allies."³⁰

²⁸ "The China Plan: A Transatlantic Blueprint for Strategic Competition", Atlantic Council, The Scowcroft Centre for Strategy and Security, March 2021, p. 7.

²⁹ Pepe Escobar, "China-Iran pact paves way for alternative to Suez. How Eurasia will be interconnected as Belt and Road Initiative develops high-speed railways network", *Asia Times*, 2 April 2021. <https://asiatimes.com/2021/04/china-iran-pact-paves-way-for-alternative-to-suez/>.

³⁰ CFR's Elizabeth C., Economy on The President's Inbox, podcast, Jan 26, 2021. https://www.cfr.org/podcasts/transition-2021-how-will-biden-handle-china?utm_source=dailybrief&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DailyBrief2021Jan26&utm_term=DailyNewsBf.

Indeed, the issue of *allies* is of utmost importance for *QPWO resilience*. “Reaffirming and Reimagining America’s Alliances”³¹ was entitled the first speech held at NATO Headquarters, on March 24, 2021, by the new Secretary of State, Antony Blinken. The seasoned diplomat combined the inventory of the U.S.-European Allies “common threats” with a critical caveat that it was like *music to the Allies ears*, given that the speech was coming just a few days after the American-Chinese meeting in Anchorage, Alaska: “The United States won’t force our allies into an “us or them” choice with China... We know that our allies have complex relationships with China that won’t always align perfectly. But we need to navigate these challenges together...to close the gaps in areas like technology and infrastructure, where Beijing is exploiting to exert coercive pressure.”

Practically, each of *the core-Four* has been ardently looking for allies and close partners, distributed either individually or in bigger or smaller *groups*, structuring their foreign policy agenda. On March 12, 2021, the US President and the Prime Ministers of Australia, Japan and India held, virtually, the first ever summit meeting of *the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*, known also as *Quad Group*. Significantly entitled “*The Spirit of the Quad*”, the final *Joint Statement* of the Quad’s Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to quadrilateral cooperation between the four countries united in *a shared vision for the free and open Indo-Pacific*.³² By March 2021, China’s *Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)* has reached *a total of 139 countries included*, “a truly global endeavour: thirty-nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa have joined the initiative, as well as thirty-four in Europe and Central Asia, twenty-five in East Asia and the Pacific, eighteen in Latin America and the Caribbean, seventeen in the Middle East and North Africa, and six in South Asia.”³³

Following the Japanese Prime Minister *Yoshihide Suga* visit to Washington (16 April 2021), a commentary published by the American magazine NEWSWEEK, on April 18, 2021, had the title: *Joe Biden Sees Japan's Yoshihide Suga as New 'Ally in Chief' as China Tensions Rise*.³⁴ Eventually, if we add all core-Four’s allies and closer partners one would cover almost the entire Planet, hence an additional legitimacy for the *QPWO concept*. What is also notable is that some

³¹ “Reaffirming and Reimagining America’s Alliances”, Speech of Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 24 March, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/reaffirming-and-reimagining-americas-alliances/>.

³² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>.

³³ These 139 members of BRI, including China, account for 40 percent of global GDP, and that signify that sixty-three percent of the world’s population lives within the borders of BRI countries. “It is clear by now that BRI is about much more than securing China’s trade routes and energy supplies as well as exporting its industrial over-capacities to far-away construction projects. The initiative is a key part of Xi Jinping’s grand foreign policy design to increase China’s influence in its regional neighbourhood and beyond.”

“Countries in China’s Belt and Road Initiative: Who’s in And Who’s Out”, David Sacks, Council on Foreign Relations, 24 March 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/countries-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-whos-and-whos-out> MERICS, MERICS Belt and Road Tracker, accessed 10 November 2020, <https://merics.org/en/bri-tracker>.

³⁴ https://www.newsweek.com/2021/05/07/joe-biden-sees-japans-yoshihide-suga-new-ally-chief-china-tensions-rise-1584541.html?utm_source=pushnami&utm_medium=Push_Notifications&utm_campaign=automatic&UTM=1619003150670.

of those bilateral and group close relationships do have the added-value of *strategic partnerships*. In the telephone discussion, held on 28 January 2021, between the new US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and his EU counterpart, Josep Borrell, the two “discussed the importance of renewing the EU-US strategic partnership in order to address jointly the pressing global challenges.”³⁵

Beyond mutually acceptable rhetoric, a basic geopolitical lens would reveal possible worrying intricacies at the level of both the bilateral and triangular format of interaction. Practically, one should be careful on the operational consequences inherent to the complex geopolitical content implied by the trilateral formats of states’ interactions within the *QPWO*. There are two relevant cases. First, *the Triangle US-UE-China*: the US’ unhappiness with EU interest in intensifying businesses with China helped by concluding economic/investment agreements with that country.³⁶

The Triangle US-UE-Russia, the critical Trans-Atlantic Cooperation, *i. e.* close multi-layered American-European security cooperation, which risks being affected by the EU/Western-European countries looking to having their energy needs satisfied through importing gas from the Russian Federation (*Nord Stream 2*, the underwater twin pipeline that would transport natural gas from Russia directly to Germany).

Notably, almost two months after Blinken – Borrell reaffirmed, as mentioned above, the mutual trust in *the EU-US strategic partnership*, the head of the American Diplomacy came out with a strongly worded statement: “Nord Stream 2 is a bad deal – for Germany, for Ukraine, and for our Central and Eastern European allies and partners... this pipeline is a Russian geopolitical project intended to divide Europe and weaken European energy security...”³⁷

The diplomatic and geopolitical interactions within *QPWO* are also underlining the relevance of *oceans and seas*, as *the waters* generally come to calibrate *essential formats of diplomatic encounters*, examples of the day being the case of the recently rejuvenated *Transatlantic Partnership*, or, on the other side of the geopolitical spectrum, the fresh flashpoints related to *areas of hot geopolitical disputes – South-East Asia Sea, East Asia Sea, South-eastern Mediterranean Sea, up to the dispute between Egypt and Sudan, on one side, and Ethiopia, on the other side, on the common use of the Nile’s water, and the water issue globally* (US Vice President Kamala Harris recently warned that the next wars will not be over oil but over water). *The Indo-Pacific region is increasingly the centre of global geopolitics*. “It’s where so much of the history of the 21st century is going to be written.”^{38,39} *Even the EU feels the need for a strategic*

³⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/92260/united-states-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-spoke-secretary-state-antony_en.

³⁶ https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-trade-deal-china-media-war-industry-soft-power/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter&fbclid=IwAR2dNUVpoNuJF2mAz70RgBX3sp6YplXWCPNLp-

³⁷ “Nord Stream 2 and Potential Sanctionable Activity”, Press Statement, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary Of State, Department Of State, March 18, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/nord-stream-2-and-potential-sanctionable-activity/>.

³⁸ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-austin-japanese-foreign-minister-toshimitsu-motegi-and-japanese-defense-minister-nobuo-kishi-at-a-joint-press-availability/>.

³⁹ <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-japan-expand-indo-pacific-economic-cooperation/>.

*approach for the Indo-Pacific.*⁴⁰ *The South China Sea and the East China Sea have been two areas of much contention.*⁴¹ *The Eastern Mediterranean Region is another distinct area of geopolitical conflicts.*⁴² The Arctic region, *where the interests related to the waters had been corroborated to those on the natural resources, and generally, to security considerations, had recently become a topic of higher attention for the QPWO realm:* “As great power competition between the United States, Russia, China, and other near-peer nations heats up, states are looking at leadership in the Arctic as a critical pillar of great power status... Russia portrays its posture in the Arctic as mostly defensive in nature, but Moscow possesses cruise missile and unmanned drone capabilities in the region.”⁴³ *Russia is rebuilding many of its Arctic military capabilities that had fallen into disrepair at the end of the Cold War*⁴⁴. *The US together with NATO forces have carried out exercises in Arctic waters, and China is becoming increasingly interested in the economic potential of the region and the possibilities for shipping offered by the melting of boreal sea ice. In its 2018 “Arctic policy” China even described itself as “a ‘near Arctic state’.*⁴⁵

As the basic source of resilience for the entire system of *Foreign policy and Diplomacy*, the interests should also be seen in the light of their particular versatility, at the national, regional and global levels, an issue nurturing enough challenging cases-studies within *QPWO*. A suggestive such national case is further offered by *India*: “The U.S.-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership is both broad as well as multifaceted... India is one of the most important partners in the Indo-Pacific region to us. We welcome India’s emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the region...”⁴⁶ On February 17, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey #Lavrov held a meeting with Indian Foreign Secretary @harshvshringla, who arrived in #Moscow to take part in the consultations between the Foreign Ministries. Both sides expressed intention to strengthen the Russian-Indian Special & Privileged Strategic Partnership in every possible way (a Tweet). Turkey represents also an emblematic case with regard to the versatility of the tandem interests-Diplomacy in the overall *QPWO* realm.⁴⁷

Essentially, any of the formats of interactions among the core-Four, as well as in the case of the Four Great Powers’ relations with other players on the

⁴⁰ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/94898/eu-needs-strategic-approach-indo-pacific_en.

⁴¹ “China’s Maritime Disputes”, A Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) InfoGuide Presentation.

<https://www.cfr.org/chinas-maritime-disputes/#/>.

⁴² Agneska Bloch, Israa Saber, “What’s Driving the Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean?” LawFare Blog, 25 January 2021. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/whats-driving-conflict-eastern-mediterranean>.

⁴³ “IntelBrief: Arctic Region Features Prominently in Russia’s Military Strategy”, The Soufan Centre (TSC), 21 April 2021. <https://thesoufanCentre.org/intelbrief-2021-april-21/>.

⁴⁴ Nick Paton Walsh, “Satellite images show huge Russian military buildup in the Arctic”, CNN, 5 April 2021. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/04/05/europe/russia-arctic-nato-military-intl-cmd/index.html>.

⁴⁵ “The Arctic, a key region for the EU and global security”, A blog posts by EU High Representative Josep Borrell, EEAS homepage, 3 February 2021. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/92500/arctic-key-region-eu-and-global-security_en.

⁴⁶ <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departments-press-briefing-february-9-2021/#post-217536-INDIA>.

⁴⁷ IntelBrief: “The Geopolitical Implications of Turkey’s Relationship with Central Asia”, The Soufan Centre, 25 March 2021. <https://thesoufanCentre.org/intelbrief-2021-march-25/>.

international arena of the moment, represents a framework for revealing the very characteristics of the national foreign policies and diplomacies, in terms of legitimacy conferred by the national interests(s), as well as with regards to strengths/weaknesses and innovative actions, generically speaking “the Diplomatic profile of a given country”. If we intend to deal with the critical issue of “*national diplomatic profiles*” in a PART III to this paper, what we can already do here is to outline several “*national*” symbols *cum* metaphors as the inner variables capable of revealing *the very essence of a country’s Diplomatic Profile*.

We have to acknowledge that the push for such an endeavour came after reading the inciting assertion that “America is a diplomatic fox, while Beijing is a hedgehog fixated on the big idea of reunification”, assertion made by the shrewd commentator Niall Ferguson who was “speculating” that “A Taiwan Crisis May Mark the End of the American Empire”.⁴⁸

Practically, Ferguson applied to “the realm of great-power politics” a rationalization of the “distinction”: “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing”, a “distinction” borrowed from the ancient Greek poet Archilochus via the philosopher Isaiah Berlin. Ferguson’s narrative looks indeed challenging: “Today, there are two superpowers in the world, the US and China. The former is a fox. American foreign policy is, to borrow Berlin’s terms, ‘scattered or diffused, moving on many levels.’ China, by contrast, is a hedgehog: it relates everything to “one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision... “⁴⁹

China’s leader Xi Jinping, with his rather *unfathomable profile* could be hard to bear a physical resemblance with a *hedgehog*, but there is no doubt that his Diplomacy has been “*profiled*” by the *hedgehog trade-mark*. In his speech, in January 2021, at the *Fifth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*: “General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that it is necessary to accurately understand the key factors that determine the direction of major changes in the world unseen in a century, recognize the general trend of “rising in the east and falling in the west...”⁵⁰ In April 2021, the Chinese President’s address to the annual Boao forum for Asia in the southern Chinese island province of Hainan, was full of “hedgehog-isms”: “Equality, mutual respect and trust should be at the forefront when countries are dealing with each other... The destiny and future of the world should be decided by all nations, and rules set up just by one or several countries should not be imposed on others... It is unpopular to arrogantly instruct others and interfere in internal affairs”.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Niall Ferguson, “A Taiwan Crisis May Mark the End of the American Empire. America is a diplomatic fox, while Beijing is a hedgehog fixated on the big idea of reunification”, BLOOMBERG, 21 March 2021. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-03-21/niall-ferguson-a-taiwan-crisis-may-end-the-american-empire>.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ <https://archive.ph/Xjwea#selection-503.0-511.133>.

⁵¹ https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3130247/xi-jinping-rebuked-nations-who-arrogantly-instruct-others-and?utm_medium=email&utm_source=mailchimp&utm_campaign=enlz-scmp_china&utm_content=20210420&tpcc=enlz-

As for the U.S., maybe it wouldn't be hard to imagine the new American Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, *with his facial foxy profile, attitude also – undoubtedly energized by the sly-fox with decades old involvement and experience in US foreign policy, nobody else but the actual President Biden – “running”*, during just the second half of March 2021 as it follows: first, essentially “after”, in diplomatic terms, the Chinese – from Tokyo, to Seoul, to Anchorage, Alaska, immediately after that, “running”, perhaps in a more diplomatic mode, “after” the Europeans – as he travelled to Brussels/NATO and Brussels/UE, in addition to meetings with not less than 10 European foreign ministers who happened to be in the “European capital” at the time, plus separate talks with Turkey's foreign minister, and, finally, running “after” the entire world, through a virtual travel to UN Secretariat in New York, for talks with UN officials, including presiding, virtually also, a meeting of the UN Security Council.

Remarkably, the Brussels dense diplomatic tour, even if by its program could had mirrored “the foxy side” of the present American Diplomacy, ended in “a perfectly hedgehog mode”: Secretary of State Blinken' speech, held at NATO Headquarters, focused on *one and only topic* which have been underlying the US foreign policy since President Biden took office, namely, “Reaffirming and Reimagining America's Alliances”.⁵² The motivation for the respective speaking topic imbedded also a sort of hedgehog objective: “the three categories of threats that US and its allies are facing today”: the military threats from other countries, with China and Russia directly “nominated”... the non-military threats, from many of these same countries – the technological, economic, and informational tactics that threaten our security... global crises like climate change and COVID-19.

In addition to the “foxy” resemblance previously mentioned, one can identify two more relevant patterns as a symbol *cum* metaphor defining the US Diplomacy:

(i) With President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration ceremony, on 20 January 2021, in Washington, *the US Foreign Policy* had been facing a *Crossroads* hardly encountered in the recent times, and that taking, at first sight, the apparent pattern of a *definite Bifurcation – from Trump's to Biden's Diplomacy*. Nothing unusual given an entrenched American practice and experience: “New administrations that differ in partisan orientation from their predecessors have a habit of reorienting American foreign policy”.⁵³ The essential element for the particular year 2021: “The 45th US President's Diplomatic Legacy, nurtured by ‘America First’ Mantra⁵⁴, it's being swapped by the 46th President's Change of Paradigm, envisaging ‘Re-Engaging America Globally’”.

⁵² <https://www.state.gov/reaffirming-and-reimagining-americas-alliances/>.

⁵³ https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/03/building-u-s-asian-teamwork-against-china/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NR%20Daily%20Saturday%202021-03-13&utm_term=NRDaily-Smart.

⁵⁴ Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, considered “*disruption*” as the quintessential one word best describing former President Trump's diplomatic legacy: “... *the disruption set in motion by the Trump administration was neither warranted nor wise.*” Richard Haass, “Present at the Disruption. How Trump Unmade U.S. Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2020.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-11/present-disruption>.

(ii) Fifteen months after the break out of the coronavirus Pandemic worldwide and in “*the cockcrow*” of a new American Administration, one can identify, based on the language specific to the sport game privileged by the Americans, a new category of *symbol cum metaphor* helping to getting closer to the essence of today’s American Diplomacy: (a) “Biden took off running once he hit the ground.”⁵⁵ “The moment Biden stepped into the Oval Office, he was ready to sign as many executive orders as he could, undoing actions taken by his predecessor. Many of those orders came as no surprise as he had previously indicated he would issue them, especially those regarding foreign policy and universal concerns, as was the case with re-joining the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization. There was nothing gradual in his approach. One moment he moved to reengage with Europe and revive the Western alliance, the next he sent cautionary signals to his country’s international adversaries, China and Russia.” “(all these) ...very powerful symbols on the first day of the importance of multilateralism for the US Administration.”⁵⁶ (b) “Biden will quarterback his own team”: “Working with superb picks who are at once a symbolic rebuke to Trump and capable of the tough work of repairing the damage that Trump has done.”⁵⁷ “America’s ability to ‘unite the world’ presumably depends on its internal unity.”⁵⁸(c) Third phrase from the world of American tough sport games relevant for the start of Biden’s Administration: “In practical terms, alliances are an important base line, and that power is situational.”⁵⁹

As for *symbols cum metaphors epitomizing the Diplomacy of other powerful players on the present international arena*, we have here space just for some “*embryonic*” formulations, with the hope of an extended presentation in Part III.

China, as an emerging great power and careful to avoid too deep scars left by its policies and measures related to the Pandemic’s origins and developments starting with its very early stages, has initiated and concretely implemented, during the last 15 months, a large array of diplomatic actions, started with “*Mask (Aid) Diplomacy*”, going through “*Wolf Warriors Diplomacy*” up to “*Vaccine Diplomacy*”. All this is inspiring us to advance here a *dual symbol cum metaphor* essentially characterizing the present *Chinese Diplomacy*: (i) The “*Shadow Play*”, in which the Chinese are acknowledged masters – for instance, the case of *the rhetorical embrace of International Relations’ and Diplomacy’s “grand” concepts and principles* (example, *the multilateralism*) but with little application “on the ground”, or even with a distorted/perverted practical projection, so that the respective “*grand’ concepts and principles*” would be pushed far from their

⁵⁵ Strangely enough, the respective analogy was noticed for the first time by an astute non-American observer, the Egyptian scholar Abdel Moneim Said: *Biden’s diplomatic offensive. Deciphering Oval Office signals*, Al-Ahram Online, 18 February 2021. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/404198/Opinion/Biden%E2%80%99s-diplomatic-offensive-.aspx>.

⁵⁶ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/db210127.doc.htm>.

⁵⁷ David Rothkopf, “Joe Biden’s National Security Picks Are the Best in Decades”, *Daily Beast*, 24 November 2020. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/joe-bidens-national-security-picks-are-the-best-in-decades>.

⁵⁸ <https://worldpoliticsreview.s3.amazonaws.com/WPR-Biden-Presidency-US-Foreign-Policy-103020.pdf>

⁵⁹ Mathew Burrows and Robert Manning, *Op. cit.*

“*original essence*”. This aspect is underlined in the referential book “*China & the World*”, in the *Chapter* entitled “*Is China a Responsible Leader in Global Governance?*” Given the actual global evolutions and challenges, the interrogation in case is an acute one, hence a proposed two-parts answer to it in the quoted book, the second one asserting that: “Performance legitimacy concerns are likely to increase as China shifts from a declaratory leadership position on global governance to actual implementation. This is already evident in the cases presented (in the book), revealing a significant gap between Beijing’s rhetorical stance and its capacity to implement policies.”⁶⁰ (ii). The reality of the Chinese Diplomacy’s multifarious guises, as hypostasized by Beijing’s foreign policy during the pandemic time, would, among other consequences, inescapably be leading to a particular contextualization of the idiom “not seeing the forest for the trees”. And where it happens to exist “glade zones”, “We’ve seen in recent years China acting more repressively at home and more aggressively abroad.”⁶¹ As one can observe, in particular with an adequate “periscope”, the proxies in implementing the respective aggressiveness in the Chinese external relations are “the Wolf Warriors Diplomats”.

In an overview on the issue from a longer distance – echoing the saying: go a little farther and you have a better perspective on a given thing – *Bernard-Henri Lévy* sees essentially “three battles” China has been engaged in relation to the Coronavirus: “the battle for control of names”, “the battle for control of the story”, and, the third one, “the battle whose avatars are ‘the wolf warriors’ of China’s armed diplomacy to signal to those who have not yet caught on that globalization of the twenty-first century will be Chinese or will not happen at all”.⁶²

Russia: an over-all symbol cum metaphor epitomizing *Kremlin’s Diplomacy* as a major tool of foreign policy during the pandemic time would be, in our view, a rather peculiar one, intimately connected with the particulars of Russia’s posture, in geographical, geopolitical and cultural-civilizational terms. Just with the Pandemic’s passage into its Year Two of existence, we could have been witnessing a regionally and globally meandering journey of the Russian interests and the corresponding attending Diplomacy, with major “stopovers” and landmark flashpoints along the “route”, practically in all cardinal points. Eventually, the respective structured narrative illustrates a kind of Russian “*pop-up Diplomacy tous azimuts*” as a daily pattern of Moscow’s foreign policy unfolding. Against this backdrop, we would suggest that, comparatively with the *sui generis* “rule” observed by Diplomacy in general – “If it is needed two to Tango, the Diplomatic Dancing equally needs two”, seemingly *Kremlin’s Diplomacy* is rather privileging, figuratively saying, a kind of “Kazachok” Pirouettes (Kazachok being that Russian folk dance in which, stimulated by a generally nice music, the performer executes high kicks from a squatting position).⁶³

⁶⁰ David Shambaugh (ed.), *China & the World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 176.

⁶¹ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-with-yuki-morikawa-of-tv-asahi/>.

⁶² Bernard-Henri Lévy, *The Virus in the Age of Madness*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2020, pp. 88-89.

⁶³ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/kazachok>.

Undoubtedly, *the Russian “Kazachok Diplomacy”* would generate maximum tensions in the relations with *“the targeted partner”*, which could be either institutional structures – foreign Governments/ministries of foreign affairs, or simply *“impersonal”* generic principles, but also human beings in person when holding positions of diplomatic responsibility, a true case-study in this regard being that of the *High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell*, whose *“ambitious”* official travel to Moscow, on February 7, 2021, *“benefitted”* from a highly *“provocative choreography”*⁶⁴ set up by the Russian hosts, known for their indisputable mastering of such Diplomatic technicalities and intricacies (Mr. Serghei Lavrov has been at the head of Moscow Diplomacy for more than 16 years).

“The personal context” could become particularly *“exciting”*, but also *“questioning”*, if, by their own *“words”*, American and other Western leaders could give the impression that they are extending themselves the Russians an *“invitation”* for what finally could prove a *“Diplomatic Kazachok Dance”*. A first basic answer for this interrogation is well known for the American Presidents, former President Bill Clinton having as an unequivocal mantra: *“words have consequences”*.⁶⁵ If one would like to see a set of such *“consequences”* it would be enough indulging into the case started with a short question, followed by an even shorter answer: *“So you know Vladimir Putin. You think he's a killer?”* *“Mmm hmm, I do,”*.⁶⁶ Not less relevant being *the echo* from the opposite side: *“In childhood, when we argued with each other, we said: ‘He who calls names is called that himself.’... “When we evaluate other people, or even other states and nations, we are always facing a mirror, we always see ourselves in the reflection, because we project our inner selves onto the other person.”*⁶⁷

As such, starting with mainly *words*, the set for a challenging Russia-US Kazachok diplomatic dance was fixed. Of course, this should be seen as part of an overall Russian approach when interplaying with foreign *“partners”* based on a more or less evident *Kazachok sort of script* but with clear general lines which were reminded lastly by President Vladimir Putin in his *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly*, on April 21, 2021: *“I just have to make it clear, we have enough patience, responsibility, professionalism, self-confidence and certainty in our cause, as well as common sense, when making a decision of any kind. But I hope that no one will think about crossing the “red line” with regard to Russia. We ourselves will determine in each specific case where it will be drawn.”*⁶⁸

⁶⁴ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/russia-receives-borrell-with-provocative-choreography/>.

⁶⁵ *“Words have consequences. The good ones and the bad ones, the ones that bring us together and the ones that drive a wedge through our heart.”* Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton (1995, Book I) 25 April 1995. From the U.S. Government Publishing Office www.gpo.gov, p. 599.

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PPP-1995-book1/html/PPP-1995-book1-doc-pg597.htm>.

⁶⁶ President Joe Biden interview with ABC News' George Stephanopoulos, 17 February 2021.

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/news/story/biden-talks-cuomo-putin-migrants-vaccine-abc-news-76490303>.

⁶⁷ President Vladimir Putin Meeting with public representatives of Crimea and Sevastopol, via videoconference. 18 March 2021. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65172>.

⁶⁸ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65418>.

Given that [EU foreign policymaking is] “still a work in progress, and it will still be a work in progress for a long time because we don’t share the same view of the world”⁶⁹, an overall symbol *cum* metaphor epitomizing its very essence should be looked for, before anything else, at the intersection of at least two directions.

First direction is that of “*facts on the ground*”, starting with the critical medical challenges and effective needs of the time. It is against this backdrop that, during 15 months of the Pandemic, there had been at least “moments” which could determine an analyst to write: “The European Union’s vaccine management is a metonym for the EU: a tragic farce in the hands of ideologues as obtuse as they are inefficient.”⁷⁰ Or, milder put, “2021 has been, so far, a crash course in geopolitics for the EU. From a dispute with big pharma to a set of disproportionate countersanctions from China, EU foreign policy is under pressure. If the EU were a company, its shareholders would not be pleased with the first quarter results. The EU and its member states ought to go back to foreign policy basics and take the lessons from the last three months to sharpen their collective role in the international order.”⁷¹

Second direction would be to *analysing the state, at this Pandemic time*, of two overall symbols which have been marking, from the very inception of the EU, its identity, in political and geopolitical terms, implicitly impacting the EU Diplomacy’s profile.

We would start the discussion with *the major EU symbol represented by the official anthem of the European Union*, in particular with the fact that *there are no words to the respective anthem, which consists of music only*. Undoubtedly, by the universal language of music, which comes from the Ninth Symphony composed in 1823 by Ludwig Van Beethoven, when he set music to the “*Ode to Joy*”, this anthem could ethereally express the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity. Only that, an official anthem without words could mean missing the chance to bring to the fore “the essential story”, and, as such, “the core... history” of the respective body-politic and geopolitical.

“*No words – no story*” cannot but deny the indispensable core-logic for the EU’s Diplomacy. The void created as such had to be filled by the cacophony of various other sides, before anything else the members states, in addition to the EU’s diverse leaders (“the three Presidents”, first), EU specific institutions too, each with their human resources. The overall missions, influence and work’s resultant of all these wouldn’t always lead to results in favour of strengthening the EU posturing and role, regionally and globally. Eventually, we would rather

⁶⁹ Josep Borrell, Interview with *The Financial Times*, 13 September 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/a6ab4c81-50d3-4aaa-9bf1-e6593b394047?segmentid=acee4131-99c2-09d3-a635-873e61754ec6>.

⁷⁰ Drieu Godefridi, *The European Union: From a Single Market to a Tragic Farce*, Gatestone Institute International Policy Council, 2 April 2021. <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/17193/european-union-tragic-farce>.

⁷¹ Ricardo Borges de Castro, *EU crash course in geopolitics: Lessons from the foreign policy 'battlefield'*, The European Policy Centre (EPC), 31/03/2021. <https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/EU-crash-course-in-geopolitics-Lessons-from-the-foreign-policy-battl~3d1e7c>.

witness an EU embodying a choir on several voices, when the harmony provided by a unique voice is what would really help defending and promoting EU's interests.

Meanwhile, the political and geopolitical "atmosphere" specific to this continuing Pandemic proved extremely fertile for further *weakening* "the EU unique voice", and, as, such, threatening the necessary balance implied by a second major EU symbol – "United in diversity", the motto of the European Union. Enough regional evolutions during the Pandemic time led to an interplay between more national interests, and, respectively, less common interests and goals, *i. e.* "diversity" prevailing to the detriment of "United", as such intensifying the EU system's entropy. Concrete and various signs on such evolutions could have been witnessed practically daily. Be it only the quasi-senseless kaleidoscopic program of the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Brussels, 23-25 March 2021, it would seemingly be enough to have "a Henry Kissinger of the day" asking again: "Who do I call if I want to speak to Europe?"

In the opinion of the Romanian scholar *cum* academic and former high official involved in building the relations between Romania and EU, Vasile Pușcaș, "The recent global pandemic crisis has shown European citizens that European integration is the solution, not the problem of the serious situation we are going through. That is why I believe that it would be appropriate for the leaders of the European institutions and the Member States to mobilize for a re-establishment of the European Union on the basis of its basic integrationist principles... all European state actors and politicians should quickly join the site of European reconstruction."⁷² And what is going without saying is that the EU Diplomacy, as principles, goals, institutions, leadership too, should be part and parcel of the respective "site of European reconstruction".

Hopefully, a dynamic process for a EU "reconstruction", if it will happen in reality, "on the ground", could be enough inspirational for putting down the *libretto* missing from the present EU anthem but so much needed in instilling a true sense of unity.

Finally, one cannot let aside looking for a *symbol cum metaphor* in the case of *Multilateral Diplomacy*, even if that branch of the Traditional Diplomacy has been so severely impacted first by the technicalities incubated in the trying conditions proper to a Pandemic time. Beyond those travails, it is to be remarked that, more than ever the multilateral fora/conclaves that have managed to be convened, virtually, in quasi-totality, within and outside the UN system realm, during the last 15 months, resembled the unfolding of a *Greek drama*. Essentially, as in the past, the participants were split, at the last resort, in two groups, on the one hand, *the Protagonists*, those who are usually playing the key-roles and directing the process towards a certain end, and, on the other hand, *the Chorus*. Elaine Fantham, a professor emerita at Princeton University, points

⁷² Vasile Pușcaș, *Criza pandemică – factor de favorizare a integrării sau dezintegrării europene? Piața Financiară, Comentariul Lunii, [Pandemic crisis – a factor in fostering European integration or disintegration? FINANCIAL MARKET Review, The Commentary of the Month,] Romania, March 2021, pp. 36-37.*

out that “the Greek chorus is governed by three basic rules. It may talk to the protagonists but cannot do much with the information it receives (such as pass it on to others); it does not necessarily understand what is really going on; and it cannot affect the main action, no matter what it says or knows.” A potentially case in point: President Biden invited 40 “world leaders” to the virtual *Leaders’ Summit on Climate*⁷³ he hosted on April 22 and 23, 2021. Given the cast for a Greek Drama, would it be too risky to imagine how the 40 guests would be split in “Protagonists” and “Chorus” when the list of participant leaders included Prime Minister Gaston Browne, Antigua and Barbuda and President Xi Jinping, People’s Republic of China, President David Kabua, Republic of the Marshall Islands and President Vladimir Putin, The Russian Federation, Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, Bhutan and Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Australia, President Félix Tshisekedi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and President Emmanuel Macron, France, and so on?

*Fathoming the Contours of Emerging New Patterns of Diplomacy
At the Encounter Line Between the Ubiquitous Heavy Pressuring Pandemic
And the Time’s Global Geopolitical Foggy Horizon*

The huge *volume* of uninterrupted diplomatic activities during the Pandemic time, in medical and non-medical areas, as it was outlined in the precedent sections of this paper, should not take the limelight from another evolution. Indeed, looking through a broad enough geopolitical lens, one cannot and should not underestimate some important developments experienced by Diplomacy during the last 15 months, from those regarding “the technicalities”, some of them discussed at the beginning of PART I, others approached in more recent studies, as *The missing sense of peace: diplomatic approachment and virtualization during the COVID-19 lockdown*.⁷⁴

Of particular relevance has been the package of elements impacting, in a sense gradually, on Diplomacy’s very substance and concrete “mission statement” as well.

First, it has been the “Medical/Health ‘Diplomacy’” veering to occupy an ever more extended space of the international stage, a drive which over the last few months appeared “crowned” by “Vaccine Diplomacy”.

As a matter of accuracy, it is to be said that this is not quite a totally new trend in the global Diplomacy, at least not in semantics and taxonomy. “*Vaccine Diplomacy’: Historical Perspectives and Future Directions*” is a paper published already in... 2014, where the author – Peter J. Hotez – advanced and elaborated on a couple of relevant “definitions”: “Vaccine diplomacy is the branch of

⁷³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/26/president-biden-invites-40-world-leaders-to-leaders-summit-on-climate/>.

⁷⁴ Isabel Bramsen, Anine Hagemann , “The missing sense of peace: diplomatic approachment and virtualization during the COVID-19 lockdown”, Abstract, *International Affairs*, Volume 97, Issue 2, March 2021, pp. 539–560, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaaa229>.

global health diplomacy that relies on the use or delivery of vaccines, while vaccine science diplomacy is a unique hybrid of global health and science diplomacy.”⁷⁵

As for some practical fallout, even by that time there were detectable a kind of potential and concrete opportunities offered by the two categories of the new Diplomacy’s structures in the context of the overall realm of the international relations. *First*, “*Vaccine diplomacy*” was already seen as a tool for the promotion of a given country’s foreign policy, including for diplomatic relations with what was known as being, until then, “*adversarial nations*”. *Second*, relatively away from the geopolitical tensions, “*Vaccine science diplomacy*” could lead to the development and testing of some highly innovative neglected disease vaccines.

What is particular, seven years later, is that the novel coronavirus Pandemic’s needs, challenges and consequences have been pushing further, as scale and intensity, the two structures and together with them the entire realm of global Diplomacy. Looking attentively enough, one can say that *the realm of international relations could be nearing a kind of quasi-inflection point* and that in the sense that, along “*traditional forms of Diplomacy*”, one can discern the emergence of what we would call *new patterns*, with two of them having their “contours” more clearly out from the actual foggy geopolitical horizon – “post-diplomacy”, respectively, “hybrid diplomacy”.

The “state” of “post-diplomacy” has been foreshadowed concretely by the ever-growing share of “*Medical & Vaccine Diplomacy*” in the overall international relations as the world entered the third decade of the 21st Century. With the Pandemic’s passage to its Year Two of existence, we have been witnessing how the international medical, political and geopolitical tapestry it’s been dotted by “*Vaccine Diplomacy*” undertakings unknown in Diplomacy’s History, as frequency and as health and equally geopolitical consequences.

If “*vaccine diplomacy*” doesn’t necessarily represents the newest entry to the common Pandemic-Diplomacy lexicon, for sure it becomes one of the most intensely used these days, a type of messenger for a *Diplomacy’s new state, one where the “Classic Diplomacy” could have been entering a “relocation drive” into a Post-Diplomacy realm*. And that not at all with scholastic motivations but a very practical purpose: “the irresistible attraction felt by quite a few countries, mainly from the category of ‘great powers’, but also emerging powers, to using their jabs to strengthen regional ties and enhance their own power and global status”.⁷⁶

Thomas J. Bollyky Director of the Global Health Program and Senior Fellow for Global Health, Economics, and Development, Council on Foreign Relations, in a *Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States House of Representatives*, First Session, 117th Congress, 18 March 2021, underlined

⁷⁵ <https://journals.plos.org/plosntds/article?id=10.1371/journal.pntd.0002808#s2>.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0002808>.

⁷⁶ Michael Jennings, “Vaccine diplomacy: how some countries are using COVID to enhance their soft power”, *The Conversation*, 22 February 2021. <https://theconversation.com/vaccine-diplomacy-how-some-countries-are-using-covid-to-enhance-their-soft-power-155697>.

that: “The manner in which these vaccine diplomacy efforts are being conducted suggest that they are more a means of cementing spheres of influence rather than advancing global health equity and bringing this pandemic under control as soon as possible.”⁷⁷ In a more detailed approach, here are several of the findings of an insightful study elaborated under the aegis of *Think Global Health*: “five months into the largest vaccination campaign in world history, global rollout has been marked by deep inequity. Nine countries are responsible for three-quarters of all doses administered worldwide, whereas 54 nations have yet to administer a single shot; one way to bridge this gap between the vaccine-haves and vaccine-have-nots would had been for countries with early access to doses to donate some of their supplies to other nations without sufficient access, particularly those struggling with surging cases. As of the first week of April 2021, Think Global Health has identified 19 countries that have donated a total of 27.5 million doses to 102 nations; if donors are not distributing COVID-19 vaccines on the basis of need or equity, what is driving donations? China, India, Israel, and Russia, the four countries that have taken a global approach to vaccine diplomacy – i.e., providing vaccines to at least ten countries on three continents or more – have largely done so in alignment with their national and strategic interests. Of the 56 countries to which China has pledged doses, all but one are participants in its Belt and Road Initiative. Another potential motivation for Chinese donations is ensuring or incentivizing support for Beijing’s positions on Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. The study’s conclusion is that, though vaccine diplomacy can help narrow the gap between vaccine-haves and have-nots, the majority of donations given thus far have fallen short. Rather than advance global equity or provide relief to those most in need, donations have cemented traditional spheres of influence. In the world of vaccine donation diplomacy, a friend in need, is a friend indeed.”⁷⁸

A small bunch of takeaways from other analyses and comments on the subject-matter come also to illustrating, in quasi-totality, the one real leitmotif beyond the declaratory self-assumed statement of *Vaccines as “global public good”*⁷⁹: “The coronavirus vaccine has dominated global diplomacy recently as countries jockey for supplies. Vaccines are the new diplomacy, but it’s not all that different to the old diplomacy. Vaccine diplomacy is now a front-line foreign policy issue. In the midst of a pandemic, vaccines are a new diplomatic currency alongside the traditional bargaining chips of aid and military prowess. There are opportunities for those who successfully navigate the diplomatic minefield of

⁷⁷ https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20210318/111345/HHRG-117-FA00-Wstate-BollykyT-20210318.pdf?utm_source=thinkglobalhealth&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=T.

⁷⁸ Samantha Kiernan, Serena Tohmeand, Kailey Shanksand, Basia Rosenbaum, “The Politics of Vaccine Donation and Diplomacy. Is a friend in need a friend indeed?” *Think Global Health*, April 8, 2021.

https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/politics-vaccine-donation-and-diplomacy?utm_source=thinkglobalhealth&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=T.

⁷⁹ https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3124092/china-juggles-vaccine-diplomacy-drive-demand-covid-19-doses?utm_medium=email&utm_source=mailchimp&utm_campaign=enlz-scmp_global_impact&utm_content=20210304&tpcc=enlz-.

the global vaccine rollout.”⁸⁰ “Moscow and Beijing have used their homegrown formulas (of vaccines) as powerful diplomatic tools, enabling them to curry favour with poorer nations that have largely been left out of the race to inoculate the world.”⁸¹

In concrete terms, *vaccine diplomacy has already furthered a number of goals for Moscow: It has helped deepen divisions within the European Union, sending a shipment to Hungary before regulators approved it for the entire bloc; stirred domestic discord in Ukraine by highlighting slow Western vaccine supplies to the country; and circulated disinformation in Latin America that undermined public confidence in vaccines made in the United States.*⁸² Meanwhile, there have been accumulating evidence that “vaccine diplomacy wasn’t the exclusive domain of major powers.” Aspiring regional powers, the most illustrative example being India, plus some smaller countries, have been “increasingly stepping into the ring too, garnering goodwill by selling or donating vaccine doses.”

Besides “*Medical/Vaccine Diplomacy*”, another factor which would lead to *increasing the share of “non-traditional” ingredients and branches in the overall global Diplomacy*, and as such accelerating the process by which *Post-Diplomacy* could be taking a more concrete shape, is related to “*Science Diplomacy*”.

The rapid pace of technology development and innovation in the world makes scientific collaboration between nations indispensable. Particularly in the wake of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0), “*Science Diplomacy*” between states would generate an ever more essential cooperation through information-sharing initiatives, creating mutual solutions to various complex and challenging problems, ones that prevent the individual states from realizing the true potential the advanced technology development capabilities provide them. *The technologically driven diplomacy* does more than ensure a country, a group of countries or a region remaining competitive on the global stage.

And of really crucial importance for strengthening *the contours of an emerging “Post-Diplomacy”* is the fact that “*Science Diplomacy meets health diplomacy*”. The document which included this assertion – *A Guide to Global Health Diplomacy. Better health – improved global solidarity – more equity*⁸³ bringing to the fore some “recent examples”.

It is uncontested that, as for now, the nexus Global Health Diplomacy, including Vaccine Diplomacy, and Science Diplomacy have proved fertile incubators for elements of an emerging *Post-Diplomacy*.

⁸⁰ Emilio Casalicchio and Jacopo Barigazzi, “New global vaccine fight follows old diplomatic playbook”, *Politico.eu*, March 25, 2021. <https://www.politico.eu/article/new-global-vaccine-fight-follows-old-diplomatic-kl/>.

⁸¹ Alena Kudzko, Shane Markowitz, “The Increasingly Crowded Field of Vaccine Diplomacy”, *WPR*, 18 March 2021.

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29500/beyond-china-and-russia-vaccine-diplomacy-is-an-increasingly-crowded-field>.

⁸² https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/19/world/europe/russia-coronavirus-vaccine-soft-power.html?campaign_id=51&emc=edit_mbe_20210329&instance_id=28592&nl=morning-briefing%3A-europe-edition®i_id=50870034&segment_id=54394&te=1&user_id=897f19e8c3a5a79c072804bf263fa853.

⁸³ Ilona Kickbusch, Haik Nicogolian, Michael Kazatchkine, Mihály Kökén, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

In our view, the reality that “sanctions are now a central tool of governments’ foreign policy” represents yet another important evolution playing in favour of accentuating the *Post-Diplomacy* profile on the present international diplomatic and geopolitical tapestry. A trend that couldn’t but be further intensified given that those who thought Joe Biden would sound *a retreat*, comparatively with Donald Trump strong sanctions’ drive, “*were quickly set straight*”, the 46th US President first few months in office have also seen a host of new sanctions. On April 15th America announced sweeping sanctions against Russia for election-meddling, cyber-attacks and more. A month earlier America and Western allies had imposed asset freezes and travel bans on several Chinese officials for their role in human-rights abuses in Xinjiang. Since Mr Biden took office America has also sanctioned officials deemed to have undermined Hong Kong’s autonomy; announced curbs on China’s access to American technology for supercomputers; and targeted companies linked to the junta behind Myanmar’s coup. “Generally, governments increasingly see sanctions as a way to try to change other states’ behaviour in situations where diplomacy alone is insufficient, but military intervention is seen as too risky or heavy-handed. Also, as the use of sanctions has grown, so has their variety.”⁸⁴

Meantime, one has to consider *Hybrid Diplomacy* as another new “state” of Diplomacy which seemingly it’s being now going through *the birth pangs*, especially since the outburst the Pandemic. A concrete case in point would be, in our view, *the present US-China relationship – quasi-unanimously considered the most consequential bilateral relations in the entire international system*, and which, at this stage of the unfolding transition from the 45th to the 46th US Presidents, could be seen as a blending of “catchphrase diplomacy” and “geopolitical dogfights”.

Not strange to the same Diplomacy’s “hybrid state” would be *the US – Russian Federation relationship*, particularly in light of evolutions’ timeline, including in rhetorical terms, between the White House and the Kremlin over the last few weeks.

Epitomizing the case of the US-China relations from the perspective of an emerging *Hybrid Diplomacy* are the talks, as protocol of unfolding and as substantive content, occasioned by the 2+2 meeting held in Anchorage, Alaska, corroborated with the preliminary preparatory American initiatives and demarches on the meeting, plus the Anchorage’s fallout.

As for the case of the US – Russia relations, maybe nothing would be more emblematic for putting them in the context of a “Hybrid Diplomacy” than the date of 15 April 2021, when the White House issued not less than three consequential documents on the same subject-matter, a rather unique happening in the history of modern/classic Diplomacy, in addition to them being also released a Statement from NATO: Executive Order on Blocking Property with Respect to Specified Harmful Foreign Activities of the Government of the Russian Federation, signed

⁸⁴ <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2021/04/21/sanctions-are-now-a-central-tool-of-governments-foreign-policy>.

Joseph R. Biden Jr.⁸⁵ A Letter on Blocking Property with Respect to Specified Harmful Foreign Activities of the Government of the Russian Federation, To the Congress of the United States, signed Joseph R. Biden Jr.⁸⁶ – Fact Sheet: Imposing Costs for Harmful Foreign Activities by the Russian Government.⁸⁷ – North Atlantic Council Statement following the announcement by the United States of actions with regard to Russia.⁸⁸

The most striking legal, political, diplomatic and geopolitical aspects related to the three White House's documents, echoing completely in the NATO Statement, are that it was after several decades that a US President proceeded to issuing “an Executive Order declaring a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States posed by specified harmful foreign activities of a foreign government”, this time the Government of the Russian Federation.

The bottom line being that, the respective *Executive Order* “sends a signal that the United States will impose costs in a strategic and economically impactful manner on Russia if it continues or escalates its destabilizing international actions.” The core of this message – “costs in a strategic and economically impactful manner” come to reveal the very substantive essence of what we call *Hybrid Diplomacy*, namely the appeal, beyond of the “traditional” diplomatic tools, to strategic and economic elements, which, in the modern definitions and understanding translate the vital interests of the respective country and the hybrid means in having them promoted and defended.

Essentially, a pervasive and strong strategic-military dimension is present in the American relations with each of the two powers: in the case of China – Taiwan, in the case of Russia – Ukraine/Crimea, hence the respective relations' legitimation as building-blocks for the emerging *Hybrid Diplomacy*. “This past week (by the middle of April 2021), Russia and China simultaneously escalated their separate military activities and threats to the sovereignty of Ukraine and Taiwan respectively – countries whose vibrant independence is an affront to Moscow and Beijing but lies at the heart of US and allies' interests in their regions.”⁸⁹ As a new development with regard to the military dimension of the emerging *Hybrid Diplomacy*, the United States military has more recently engaged in a form of “*cognitive warfare*” following the latest encounter between its warships and the Chinese navy.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/04/15/executive-order-on-blocking-property-with-respect-to-specified-harmful-foreign-activities-of-the-government-of-the-russian-federation/>.

⁸⁶ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/15/a-letter-on-blocking-property-with-respect-to-specified-harmful-foreign-activities-of-the-government-of-the-russian-federation/>.

⁸⁷ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/15/fact-sheet-imposing-costs-for-harmful-foreign-activities-by-the-russian-government/>.

⁸⁸ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_183168.htm.

⁸⁹ Frederick Kempe, Op-ed: “China, Russia deepen cooperation in what could be Biden's defining challenge as president”, CNBC, 18 April 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/04/18/op-ed-china-russia-cooperation-could-be-bidens-biggest-challenge.html>.

⁹⁰ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3129122/us-navy-warns-china-were-watching-you-destroyer-shadows>.

In the light of all of the above, there have been arising a legitimate interrogation on the risk of a *hot war*. In the views of the well-known analyst George Friedman, now with the think tank Geopolitical Futures (GPF): “Much has been made of China’s seemingly unending potential to invade Taiwan – nearly as much as Russia’s buildup near Ukraine, which many believe is little more than a pretext for a future war. Lurking behind this is the age-old fear that Russia and China will team up to undermine the United States, say, by launching simultaneous attacks. This isn’t inconceivable, but neither is it likely... the likelihood of war, let alone a coordinated war, is low. Neither China nor Russia is so desperate as to risk defeat or a long, bleeding war. And each is acting as if it is not serious about war; instead, they are advertising the threat. Of course, all things are possible, but this seems farfetched.”⁹¹ But the same issue can be approached through another angle: “It will take repeated, candid conversations between US and Chinese political leaders- as well as discussions among military officers, enlivened by war games in which both parties threaten or even use nuclear weapons – to help leaders on both sides internalize the unnatural truth that war is no longer an acceptable option. Helping leaders across both societies realize the implications of this big idea poses a still larger challenge.”⁹²

It’s useful to have such a “prediction” corroborated with the fact that “US tech still wants to work with China”. A survey of 1,578 members of the US tech community released March 15 delivers a clear verdict: they think *Washington’s China tech policies are too restrictive*. 57% agreed or strongly agreed that “US restrictions on Chinese tech companies have gone too far,” while only 16% disagreed. 60% said that US tech companies should work more closely with Chinese tech firms. 58% agreed or strongly agreed that “a cold war with China could cripple US tech companies.” It is against such a backdrop that, in April 2021, in the audience of the annual *Boao conference – China’s top government-sponsored business forum*, sometimes dubbed the Chinese version of the World Economic Forum in Davos – there were present prominent business US leaders including *Apple’s* Tim Cook, *Tesla’s* Elon Musk, *Blackstone’s* Stephen Schwarzman and *Bridgewater’s* Ray Dalio.

Presently, the Russian-Turkish bilateral relationship, as well as the Foreign policy of each of Russia and Turkey, could be considered another package of cases illustrative for *Hybrid Diplomacy*, in the sense of considering that the interests at play could be best served by a mixture of classical diplomacy and hard power. The analysts have observed that Presidents Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan have come “to share a bond in hard power that is

⁹¹ George Friedman, “The Unlikelihood of a War with China and Russia”, GPF Geopolitical Futures, 14 April 2021. https://geopoliticalfutures.com/the-unlikelihood-of-war/?utm_source=GPF+Free+Newsletter&utm_campaign=e86b29ed5d-20210417_weekly_digest&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f716b3bf65-e86b29ed5d-

⁹² Graham Allison, *Destined for War, Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* London, Scribe Publications, Reprinted 2020, p. 209.

reshaping regional politics and posing awkward problems for Turkey's Western allies" and the two countries' bilateral relations have been marked accordingly: "In November 2020, they ended the fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia by striking a bargain that gives Russia a military presence in Nagorno-Karabakh and Turkey an economic stronghold in the South Caucasus. That deal represents one of the biggest geopolitical shake-ups since the end of the cold war, when Russia and Turkey were on opposite sides. It also carries a message about the use of hard power and the reality of a multipolar world. Both sides understand that 'it is not the balance of forces that matters, but the readiness to use them'."⁹³

With the belief that the perspectives of an emerging *Post-Diplomacy*, going through *Medical/Vaccine Diplomacy*, respectively of an emerging *Hybrid Diplomacy*, are worthwhile following closely from now on, there remains, almost in parallel, to answer the question with regard to the substantive profile of a diplomat in those not at all unlikely futures circumstances, i.e. how much will remain and how much will be extrapolated from what has been particularly focused until now with regard to values, skills, qualities in a "model" Diplomat: "A diplomat serves many roles: ... an early-warning radar for troubles and opportunities; a builder – and fixer – of relations; a maker, driver, and executor of policy; a protector of citizens abroad and promoter of their economic interests; an integrator of military, intelligence, and economic tools of statecraft; an organizer, convener, negotiator, communicator, and strategist. Diplomatic engagement is not a favour to an adversary, but a means of reconnaissance and communication. It is a way to better understand trends, assess motivations, convey determination, and avoid inadvertent collisions... Effective diplomats embody many qualities, but at their heart is a crucial trinity: judgment, balance, and discipline. All three demand a nuanced grasp of history and culture, mastery of foreign languages, hard-nosed facility in negotiations, and the capacity to translate American interest in ways that other governments can see as consistent with their own – or at least in ways that drive home the costs of alternative courses... professional diplomats have an obligation to offer their honest judgments, however inconvenient... diplomats are constantly called to manage inevitable trade-offs – among tactical choices, between short – and long-term goals, of practical interests and less tangible values. Diplomacy is often unavoidably transactional..."⁹⁴

For sure, the *Digital Diplomacy* will be integral part to *Post-Diplomacy*, so that the future diplomats must have the requested skills in this regard.

⁹³ "The odd couple Putin and Erdogan have formed a brotherhood of hard power. But the bond is brittle", *The Economist*, 27 February 2021. https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/02/23/putin-and-erdogan-have-formed-a-brotherhood-of-hard-power?itm_source=parsely-api.

⁹⁴ William J. Burns, *The back Channel. A Memoir of American Diplomacy And The Case For Its Renewal*, New York, Random House, 2020, pp. 10, 12, 407-13.

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