

## **Clash of Narratives: Between the Narrative of Transformations, Actors, the International System, International Organization, Putin's Resurgence, China's Rise; and the Post... Narrative**

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### **Abstract:**

According to the "political narrative" approach, we will attempt to address the most significant Western narratives, including the narrative of revolution, the narrative of the Arab Spring, the narrative of democratic transition, the narrative of combating terrorism, and the narrative of new actors, among others. We will explore how counter-narratives can adapt and innovate, such as the narrative of return, the return of the past, glory, nationalism, and serving oppressed peoples, the narrative of the rise of China, and the new global economic system. Then, we will discuss why there is always a "post-narrative"; post-Russian war, post-"Hamas," post-war, and so on. We will also examine how some Western narratives rise to the forefront of events, spread, and are adopted through the use of dominant political media, while the narratives of Russia, China, and oppressed nations recede. However, the narrative of the new international order, international organization, and UN reform continue to interact and resist, in order to justify the "given" and the "meaning" of new old narratives.

**Keywords:** international system and organization, reform narrative, radical change narrative, rise of China narrative, Russia's return narrative.

### **Introduction:**

There have been, and continue to be, long periods of transition in the Middle East, to the extent that the United States could no longer adapt to the changing transformations and interactions, after once being the creator and always having the "upper hand" in these shifts. The U.S. has dealt with the region—Maghreb-Arab—according to its own vision, not as it actually is on the ground. This is because fundamental changes are indeed occurring, and as Arabs and Muslims, we have no choice but to adapt to them for long periods. A new world is

taking shape, through strategic transitional shifts that signal the end of one system and the beginning of a local, regional, and global one, along with social discontent, democratic incapacity, economic recession, a financial system under immense pressure, military tensions, technological impacts, and increasing population growth. Therefore, there is a need for awareness from us and for us, before seeking and discussing concepts, and the prevailing distrust in "the system" as a term that has been circulated for long periods, and the "unstable" factors that never remain constant. Our situation has become like that of "those who control nothing," as Matthew Hancock and Nadine Zahawi say, with successive crises and endings in a geometric sequence, over and over again. Thus, we attempt to understand the cause of this chaos, destruction, and sabotage of everything—material and intellectual—that exists. How is all this happening? Why do some call for democracy while others, such as thinkers, reject it, as Churchill did when he considered democracy "the worst form of government"? Between preservation and revolutionary change lies the fragile, scattered, and lost truth. Are we truly facing the end of the international organization in its new form, or a transformation in the international system? Does this represent a positive factor, or is the existing situation in need of policies and reforms, with change occurring gradually rather than radically, as idealists always hope? Therefore, is there more that can be done beyond what was or what currently exists? We just need to make cosmetic, yet beneficial, surgeries on the approach, process, and effectiveness of the vast number of organizations, with the United Nations and its specialized and multiple agencies at the forefront. How can the most important existing narratives in international political thought be justified?

To what extent are Western and old narratives fragile in comparison to the rising world narratives led by China and Russia, particularly the narrative of reform, such as "UN reform," among other narratives? What are the key features of the desire to rebuild from different backgrounds, ideas, and aspirations, and how do they impact the creation of policies at the local, regional, and international levels? How can we listen to the voices calling for radical change in the UN body, the International Court of Justice, and other UN agencies, which have been able to play certain roles and pressure major actors to halt their human rights violations, even though their actions are not mandatory but voluntary? Can we build upon this, and is radical change perhaps overstated, rushed, and filled with emotion and impulsiveness?

There is an urgent desire in our region, the Arab-Maghreb, to revive a new spirit, with both official and unofficial local actors contributing to it, seeking independence in decision-making and choice. There is also a push to re-institutionalize and spread the narrative of reforming the Arab League, and before that, the UN, to revive the dream of prosperity and welfare, away from international interventions.

### **Secondary Hypotheses:**

- In the Arab-Maghreb region, there are traditional and new actors who have the ability to mobilize ambition and the street, giving it a "new role" and "new energy" in policies, institutions, and new formations.
- The transformations occurring in the Arab-Maghreb region have been influenced by psychological, social, and economic factors, which pushed ruling powers to make

concessions, both partially and semi-fully, but not absolutely. They maintained the rules of the game and decision-making, albeit in new forms at the forefront.

- The narratives of the international system, international organization, radical change, and reform all contribute to shaping policies and creating scenes and convictions desired by major powers, followed by medium and small powers in international relations. The most important of these is the return of the narrative of UN reform, aiming to serve the West and renew its hegemony through both old and new mechanisms.
- A comprehensive view of the key narratives: the "transformation" in the Arab-Maghreb region and the creation of choice between the roles of traditional "state actors" and the new "state and non-state actors": A study of the psychological, social, and economic causes and a look at the characteristics of "movement," as well as the horizons of official and popular regional and international aspirations, and their political implications.

### **1-The Middle East Region Between International Actors and Key Regional Political Narratives:**

**1-1- The Concept of Political Narrative:** A political narrative is shaped by a political actor who tells "what happened" and, from their perspective, links events in a way that serves their point of view. This narrative may expand to provide causal links between those events. The political actor here pursues their goals within a political space, attempting to convince both local and international audiences through storytelling so that they accept their actions, whether a new organization or system they wish to establish locally, globally, or regionally, or at least cooperate with them and comply with their goals efficiently, while understanding the minimum of what they want. This is where we refer to the "silent war," entering political practice through language and political narrative. There are many themes in Western political narratives since the beginning of the new millennium, including the narratives of mobilization, revolution, change, democracy, security, counterterrorism, the Arab Spring, and so on. All these narratives carry a perspective that depends on reality and political events, and will be analyzed from a particular viewpoint.

The second feature of the narrative is its selective nature, where a certain understanding or perspective is adopted through selective practices that draw attention to what is intended to be highlighted. This influences the objectives that are sought. The third feature of the narrative is the choice of time and causality, imposing a certain pattern of causality between events, which makes the narrative meaningful. For instance, the Israeli narrative spoke of counterterrorism and self-defense, among other narratives that emerged after the events of October in occupied Palestine in 2023. This highlighted how resistance to occupation became framed as terrorism, and the right to self-defense was accepted as an Israeli action, despite the fact that Israel, as an occupying power, has no right to speak about self-defense as a norm, law, and principle in human relations. However, the Israeli narrative rose to the surface of events and the international media forefront. Therefore, the Israeli political narrative does not reflect reality as it is, but as a given, (A. R. Emma, 2012, pp. 5-7) However, despite this, it has lost its narrative and expressive power, despite attempts by Western countries. Even before the Gaza events,

there were many narratives aimed at creating a rift and changing centers of influence and decision-making at the Arab level, under the guidance of parties outside the region, including the following:

### **1-2- Mobilization, Revolution, and Change Narratives: "Color Revolutions" as a Narrative Approach to Achieving the Desired Transformation:**

The idea of mobilization, revolution, and transformations has extended to all fields and sectors, both locally and even to major and medium-sized countries, both East and West. It has reached the point of dismantling the relationship between military, security, and political institutions, and attempting to rebuild them with new concepts, alternative ideas, and different alliances. Examples include the Sudanese case and the movement of the "Rapid Support Forces," "Libya," and the multiplicity of internal and international actors, especially in the post-Ukrainian-Russian war world. More recently, the war on Gaza since October 2023 has made Palestine a focal point for the rise of revolutionary forces resisting imperialist projects, embodied in the "Hamas" organization. These forces have contributed and continue to contribute to the repositioning of decision-makers, the creation of the future, and the re-centering of power. This is true for both the West and the Gulf countries, which seek to engage in new, conciliatory, non-confrontational strategies, without taking into account the interests of historical actors who are still resisting to ensure their presence and survival, and avoiding normalization with Israel at the expense of the survival and influence of these actors who are still gaining popularity and presence—actors that Israel and its allies seek to uproot.

There have been long periods of transition in the Middle East, to the extent that the United States could not, and is no longer able to, adapt to the changing transformations and interactions. It deals with the region according to its own perspective, not as it is in reality. Indeed, radical changes are taking place, and all we, as Arabs and Muslims, can do is adapt to them for a long period of time. A new world is being shaped through transitional strategic shifts that signal the end of one system and the beginning of a global system, accompanied by social discontent, democratic failure, economic recession, a financial system facing enormous pressures, military tensions, technological impacts, and an increasing population growth rate. Hence, there is a need for awareness before action, as the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Gomaa, says, and for discussing concepts and the prevailing distrust in "the system" as a term that has been circulated for long periods, and the "factors" that are unstable and never remain the same. Our situation has become like that of those "in control of nothing," as Matthew Hancock and Nadine Zahawi describe it, where successive collapses and crises occur in a geometric sequence, over and over again. Thus, we attempt to understand the reason for this chaos, destruction, and sabotage of everything that exists, both materially and intellectually. How is all of this happening? Why do some call for democracy and institutionalization of organizations, while others, like thinkers, reject it, as Winston Churchill did, who considered democracy "the worst form of government"? Between preservation and revolution, the fragile and fragmented truth lies. Between enslaved scenarios, such as the "Black Swan," and potential outcomes, nations have risen and fallen, with "regimes" of both religious and non-religious, civil and non-civil character, and shocks and counter-shocks occurred, producing new realities. There are

successful states and failed ones, new beginnings, political interactions, and societies that have led everyone toward both safe and unsafe spaces, along with acute crises, as occurred with the events of what is called the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt since 2011.

"A new vote has been cast towards 'moving' goals and a 'new world' filled with dreams and illusions, which presents entirely new and different frameworks of thinking if we wish to understand and predict. Between 'fixed patterns' and 'moving patterns,' we must pause here to understand; to understand the interactions, actors, and factors that have become more complex, and the rules that are on the verge of transformation, if not already transformed. How regional and international countries intervened, supported, and then retreated, abandoned, and proposed, it later became clear that these were merely illusions and experiments that succeeded according to the 'theory of the glowing light'—attracting everything that is shiny with the aim of trapping and ensnaring in the snare of democracy and its claws. Today, the event and the crisis factor in the Middle Eastern region arise, prompting us to once again strive and call for overcoming the current situation through a complete break with reality and with the international organization. On one hand, Western countries aspire, through the 'green growth' policy, to consider today's environmental entry, or 'environmentalization,' to promote transformations they wish to impose on all international powers in order to create new, mutated interests that are essentially the same. They then rely on the trap game, war, and crisis to bring about new changes, as they always do through creating and fabricating crises to reach policies.

The United States, seeing no escape from the tsunami of awareness spreading internationally, led by China and Russia, today wants, through what is happening in our Arab regions and the African Sahel, to take 'the second step' before transitioning to a new world that appears outwardly new but is only desired for itself, to maintain the same practices and hegemony for itself and its allies. This has led some parties and currents to adapt and adjust their orientations so that they can continue in 'the game,' even if they initially overcame other civil forces, whether interest groups, fierce opposition, and power balances, and international road games abroad. But other parties want to fish in the waters of fabricated and inevitable crises. In the end, some have declared their surrender and withdrawal, while others have fallen into the 'trap of confusion' when they faced the new reality.

After religion was once an advantage, it became a republic of fear, especially from abroad, which presented a problem and pushed many Arab societies back to square one, the 'usual,' 'expected,' and 'internally and externally accepted' interaction pattern, despite the opposition remaining both inside and outside, who were surrounded and silenced, both internally and internationally. Thus, the Middle East and the Maghreb region have known a period of instability and disorder, losing direction, experiencing levels of 'systemic' and 'asymmetric' and 'less intense' conflicts, which led to disintegration and weakness in countries, the occupation of countries like Libya, the collapse of states, and the division of states like Sudan. The 'Arab human gathering' remains waiting for the 'settled stability' that has not yet come. So, what is the current situation, and what is expected from all of this in light of such instability and other factors (A. R. Emma, 2012, pp. 6-9; Mohamed, 2012) And how the main actor, the state, remains within the concept of the 'return of the narrative of the nation-state,' caught between the dialectic of advancement and competition. Consequently, states continue to

struggle for survival. On the opposite side, it seems that international organizations, especially the Arab ones like the 'Arab League' and the United Nations behind it, often hear rising voices and increasing demands for reform, and even more so for abandoning them in favor of a new international organization and a complete break with the past, as European countries did previously when the League of Nations failed to overcome many wars and crises. Is it possible to achieve this, or is the 'narrative' of reform alone sufficient, or perhaps the 'narrative of rupture,' similar to the narrative of abandoning the United Nations body and a complete break with the past?

### **1-3-Transformations in U.S. Positions Regarding the Changes in the Middle East: 'The Narrative of Transformation':**

After the United States supported the 'Arab Spring revolutions' as a means to win Arab public opinion, whether in Egypt, Tunisia, or even in the Gaza Strip during Obama's era, and attempted to present itself as a supporter of transformation and democratic consolidation, it backtracked once the revolutionary momentum settled. In contrast, it supported counter-revolutionary movements. Despite the Arab concessions in all fields and issues, the United States continues to demand more, which has limited the options for Arab leadership in the Middle East, particularly in Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, including Fatah and Hamas. The situation remained as it was, with the status quo continuing, and the entry into a 'negotiation circle' regarding the form of power, the state, and the position of each entity and group in governance. Efforts were made to improve the negotiating terms, legal conditions, and so on, leading to a 'labyrinth.' Subsequently, the Palestinian national movement entered into successive crises, (Nadia, 2012, pp. 12-21) and today, the United States and its ally Israel are working to change the centers of decision-making in the Middle East, shifting them from Hamas in favor of a renewed Palestinian Authority. This represents a new narrative.

### **1-4- The Second Player in the Region and Transformations in Its Roles: 'The Narrative of the Nation-State' as the Main Actor and the Supra-State Actor 'The United Nations Organization':**

International actors face various challenges; some face the challenge of 'legitimacy,' others face the challenge of 'popular acceptance,' and still others face the challenge of 'survival' itself, as is the case today with the United Nations, especially in the context of the Israeli war on Gaza since October 2023. Voices have risen calling for the overcoming of the United Nations organization, meaning there is a challenge to its survival and continuity, as it has failed to provide even the most basic services in Gaza and to stop the aggression against it, particularly the failure of its agency, UNRWA, in performing its duties, which is a large part of its legitimacy at the Palestinian, regional, and international levels. Through its agencies, the UN provides services such as security, order, peacebuilding, as well as educational and health services. Recently, the legitimacy of this organization has been challenged. Before discussing the United Nations and the ongoing debate surrounding it, it is useful to start with states as the main actor, and highlight the key states, especially in the Middle East, and the main challenges



and roles they play, and how, in turn, they influence the legitimacy, survival, and continuity of the United Nations' actions.

We will address the main roles of the most significant international actors in the Middle East and their impact on regional and global transformations:

**A) Turkey and the Narrative of Zero Problems and the Pivot to the East:** Since the 'Justice and Development Party' (AKP) came to power, its foreign policy has witnessed many structural and deep transformations, particularly in attempting to 'pivot to the East' towards countries in the Arab region that are Muslim. This has manifested both intellectually and in practice. After Ahmet Davutoğlu succeeded in aligning Turkey's political sociology with Erdoğan's foreign policy, aiming to serve Turkey's civil society's economic and trade interests, and after he successfully redefined the relationship between politics and the military under the AKP, Turkey shifted towards the Middle East, despite Turkish generals always rejecting any external Turkish orientation towards the Middle East, as Turkey's 'Kemalist' direction had been towards the West. Subsequently, foreign policy decisions under the ruling party in Turkey began to be made solely from the office of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, without any influence from the Kemalist generals. Turkey abandoned coups, with scholars like Dariush Zahdi, a researcher at the Institute for International Studies at the University of California, and Gokan Basik, an associate professor of International Relations at Zerv University in Turkey, noting that the rising industrial, commercial, and financial bourgeoisie, largely tied to the AKP, required oversight. This emerging middle class voluntarily chose democracy and participation through civil society and the market.

The structural transformations in Turkey's foreign policy were not only at the level of strategic thought, orientations, movements, and diplomatic stances, but also at the level of the structure and decision-making mechanisms, which became entirely removed from the influence of the Kemalist generals who were radically opposed to Turkey's return to the East, fearing it would lead to a conflict of interests with the West, which had previously led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. All of this had a clear impact on Turkish regional politics concerning issues such as Afghanistan and Libya, for instance, when Turkey refused to send troops to fight in Afghanistan or Libya as a NATO member. Instead, Turkey contributed to aid operations and humanitarian relief. Turkey began to engage more with a political discourse aimed at influencing the street, unions, and business forums, in order to build a regional and international image. It worked on improving its relations with all Middle Eastern countries, intervened in the Syrian, Kurdish, and Israeli crises, and, in each of these files, Erdoğan's actions reflected a renewed commitment to ensuring the dignity and life of the Turkish citizen, considering this citizen the cornerstone of his policies, which derive significant momentum from both the Turkish and Arab and Islamic streets. All these factors influenced the reshaping of decision-making centers and the renewal of reformist and adaptive narratives for the Middle East, striving to remain within a turbulent domain.

With the rise of Islamic movements to parliamentary legitimacy in the Mediterranean region of the Arab world (Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco), a significant space was opened for Turkey's economic diplomacy in the Arab region and Africa. Turkey shifted its focus more towards the

deep structures of tribal Africa, meaning the African communities and the political anthropology of these societies. This approach became the foundation of diplomatic traditions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Turkey relied primarily on African religious leaders who met at conferences in Turkey with Turkish religious leaders. Turkey benefited from the rise of Islamists to power after the Arab Spring events, which are historical transformations that suggest Turkey could be the biggest strategic, political, and economic winner. Whenever there was regional concern dominating all official and popular circles, Ankara appeared as a strategic and balanced partner in its political assessments, thus supporting governments with an Islamic Brotherhood orientation. For (Khaled, 2012, pp. 22-32) a time, this contributed to the narrative of the Brotherhood, terrorism, and its relationship to the threat to Israel. In the end, Israel, with its allies, succeeded in dismantling the Brotherhood's presence in Egypt, leading Turkey to abandon its support for the Brotherhood. All of this occurred within the narrative of counterterrorism.

### **B/- The Narrative of "New Players" in the Arab Region and Their Political Roles:**

Many new actors have emerged, playing significant roles in the development of the Arab region and influencing key issues and policymaking. For instance, Egypt, under its leadership, has shaped both domestic and foreign policies, often considering the position and actions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), with President Gamal Abdel Nasser using the PLO to serve Egypt's foreign interests. These actors continue to be influenced by the region's developments while also affecting them, particularly since the independence of Arab countries. New patterns of influence have emerged, with internal dynamics within the Arab states shaping new actors, such as the Mahdi Army in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, all of which are continuously evolving. These groups' ability to adapt politically and organizationally to changing national and regional contexts has granted them increasing influence. Hezbollah in Lebanon, for instance, has dynamically adjusted to the shifting realities of the region, transitioning from rejecting elections to participating in them and moving away from the idea of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon. Studies suggest that the roles of such non-state actors,<sup>1</sup>(Ahmed Rabe Emma, 2012, pp. 34-35) including Hezbollah and Hamas, are as significant as that of the state itself. As a result, power shifts have occurred, benefiting even long-standing terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda. These developments reflect the ongoing state of revolution in the Arab region, marked by struggles over legitimacy, international relations, and the capacity to adapt. While this discussion focuses on domestic actors within the Arab region, it also acknowledges the wider international impact of organizations such as NATO, the Arab League, and multinational corporations, as well as the evolving role of terrorist groups and political movements.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "non-state actor" refers to any group or organization that enjoys autonomy, i.e., the degree of freedom it has in pursuing its objectives, representation, i.e., its ability to represent its followers and supporters, and influence, i.e., its capacity to make a difference in a particular issue compared to another actor's influence on the same issue.



### **C/- The Possession of "Armed Power" by New Actors and Their Impact on National Security in Arab Countries: "The Narrative of Counterterrorism:**

At the regional level in the Arab world, there are non-state armed actors who possess weapons and wish to use them to achieve their objectives, despite not being integrated into the state and its official institutions. These actors include street gangs, militias, tribal leaders, warlords, terrorists, mafia gangs, private security companies, and mercenaries. While traditional non-state actors emerged alongside the rise of the "nation-state," with their roles being clear and well-known, the new non-state actors present increasing dangers to the nation-state, potentially threatening its sovereignty and leading to disintegration and failure. These actors are often created by the intelligence agencies of major powers to undermine the policies of states that could pose an immediate or future threat to their interests on a regional and international level. In contrast, some new actors have emerged in countries that are still in the process of formation, such as Hamas in Palestine, which seeks to remain an influential player due to its deep roots in Palestinian society. Its credibility grew after its 2008 election victory, but regional and international parties aimed at its decline and dissolution. Consequently, Hamas continues to struggle for survival within a hostile international environment, as it represents an ideological movement that threatens and stands in opposition to their interests. The promotion of the "post-Hamas" narrative, both in terms of normalization and the removal of Islamic manifestations in Palestinian society, reflects Israel's awareness of the existential threat posed by Hamas. Similarly, movements born from local and regional conditions are often designed to serve as reliable agents for pressure and the implementation of specific agendas for certain parties, such as Hezbollah in a weakened state, or groups like the Mahdi Army in Iraq, or the Islamic courts in Somalia. These types of actors often take on state-like functions, such as maintaining security, order, and providing public services like health and education. Their relationship with the state is highly complex. They may adopt projects aimed at dismantling the state in the area they occupy, with the goal of establishing an alternative state, while maintaining strong alliances with neighboring states. A predominant feature of their activity is the desire to change the existing internal and regional status quo, often challenging the state and competing for legitimacy and power. The situation with Hezbollah in Lebanon demonstrates how such competition can escalate into violent conflict, with the spread of the narrative of "disarming the resistance.

### **4- The Arab Spring Revolutions and the Emergence of New Actors with New Roles: "The Narrative of Revolution:**

During this period, the activity of multinational companies, particularly in the field of information technology, increased. Companies like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube played a major role in driving these Arab revolutions, serving as tools for mobilization, coordination, and organization in the early stages of the revolution. They provided platforms for support, dialogue, and activism through short video clips on YouTube explaining specific political concepts or offering brief analyses of events that captured the attention of the Arab public, either specifically or collectively. Online debate initiatives were also launched, such as live discussions with officials on certain issues, prepared and facilitated through interactive systems

with YouTube users. Additionally, YouTube frequently ran training programs targeting students and youth in general, focusing on the concepts of representation and civil society activities. These initiatives were implemented across most Arab countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and others. Google, therefore, played and continues to play roles not only as a search engine but also as a driver of change through initiatives that go beyond merely enhancing technological skills. These initiatives have a broader impact, shaping culture, orientations, relationships, and aspirations, reflecting a liberal democratic model that empowers individuals, promotes democratic values, and encourages criticism and change. They foster the idea that everything is possible, not impossible. This raises questions about the relationship between the U.S. government and Google, which has led some Arab and non-Arab countries to block certain social media sites, as was the case with the Gulf countries blocking YouTube during the Arab uprisings, as well as in China, Russia, and elsewhere, as part of efforts to combat and counter Western narratives.

Thus, there has been a shift in the nature of the new actors who exploited the Arab uprisings or were part of them, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its rise to manage state affairs, their entry into parliament during Morsi's presidency, their pressure on the course of the Palestinian issue, the opening of the Rafah crossing, and other events. Additionally, "Hamas" advanced and took control of the Gaza Strip through transparent elections since 2007. However, it has faced and continues to face challenges regarding the legitimacy of its authority internally and its independence in foreign policy. Despite its control over Gaza and the formation of an independent government, Hamas, following the Palestinian reconciliation after the regime change in Egypt, accepted the idea of integrating into the Palestinian Authority. This reconciliation is expected to end its sole control over the Gaza Strip and impose restrictions on its foreign policy, potentially demonizing its relationships, particularly with Iran, Syria, and Israel. It seems that the signs of change began with the events of the "Flood of Al-Aqsa" in October 2023 and the Western promotion of the narrative of self-defense and the elimination of Gaza's terrorists, primarily Hamas, alongside the spread of the "post-Hamas" narrative. Some Gulf media channels, in addition to the spread of images and videos on social media platforms, especially TikTok, have contributed to dismantling these ideological narratives, preventing their acceptance, and exposing their lack of credibility regionally and internationally.

#### **A/- Hezbollah as a Model and the Narrative of Confronting Iranian Influence: Iran's Proxies in the Region:**

Hezbollah is considered a non-state actor that faces the challenge of maintaining its legitimacy both internally and externally due to its organizational structure and behavior, which ensures its continued existence. Despite Hezbollah's representation in the Lebanese government since 2005, it still maintains control over the southern suburbs of Beirut and continues to challenge the authority of the Lebanese government. The events of May 2008 serve as an example of this, where the party resorted to military force to secure a number of ministries, ensuring its influence on decision-making within the Lebanese government, through what is known as the "blocking third." Additionally, Hezbollah's statement regarding the need for the party to defend Lebanese oil wells in the Mediterranean positions itself as a partner to the

Lebanese government in protecting its resources, providing a new justification for the party's continued possession of weapons and reinforcing the "party as a source of protection and power" narrative. This occurs at a time when the issue of the party's weapons has not been resolved internally, signaling that the party is seeking a new source of legitimacy for its armed nature, which may not necessarily be tied to the resistance against Israeli occupation.

### **B/- New Virtual Actors: "The Cybersecurity Threat Narrative:**

A new development has emerged in the post-Arab Uprisings world, characterized by new forms of actors. Revolutionary forces in Arab countries have started to form new coalitions, seeking alliances with revolutionary forces in other countries, offering advice on revolution tactics, how to escalate actions, and how to confront security forces. These forces may have contributed and continue to contribute to the creation of cross-national powers that influence decision-making on both internal and external levels. There are many examples of this, with networks appearing on the internet that are complex and ambiguous in their structure and goals, aiming to influence decision-making. These networks operate within the web, particularly through platforms like YouTube and the internet in general. As such, non-state actors have emerged to stay, adapting to the circumstances, transformations, and changes taking place in our Arab region. How they do so remains a key factor in their ongoing influence. (Ahmed Rabe Emma, 2012, pp. 34-35)

## **2-Revolutionary Transformations and Their Impact on Institutionalization and International Organization: "The Narrative of Transformation"**

In most cases, transformation, according to historical experiences, tends to look towards the past rather than the uncertain future. Russia seeks to restore the glory of its imperial and old political history, adhering to the "nation-state" narrative. Similarly, Turkey aims to revive the Ottoman Empire in a new form, known as the "new Ottomanism." This represents a return—a return to colonialism, a return to the past, a return of refugees, with every actor wanting a return to nationalistic elements and identity. So, what new transformation are we talking about? What new developments? The narrative of nationalism, identity, and religion returns, alongside the return of old geographical maps.

There is a situation at the Arab level where action precedes thought, leading to a regression of the Arab political mind. The Arab revolutions revealed that the Arab world suffers from widespread intellectual and scientific drought, resulting in serious setbacks in the capabilities of the Arab political mind, making thought constantly and permanently subordinate to action. In all the revolutions that succeeded, and in those that have not ended yet, such as the events in Gaza, spontaneous actions preceded thought by many steps. Thinkers and researchers were scrambling behind the events to offer "dried" explanations or "pre-packaged" analyses, devoid of substance, tasteless, expired, and unsuitable for intellectual consumption. This indicates a failure of the Arab cultural elites in their ability to create events and in their inability to follow events logically. Thus, populism and the preoccupation of academics with securing political positions prevailed. The events in Gaza contributed to lifting the veils off the peoples, who recognized new paths internationally and nationally, and they took to the streets,

demanding and raising their voices loudly against Israel and its allies. There is now a need for change to dismantle the existing structures, and for a change in the intellectual framework of individuals and societies, so as to reorder political and moral values within both the state and society. Today, the individual is capable of transitioning from mere state-driven actions to becoming a conscious and active entity, involved in interacting with and altering reality. The individual can present a revolutionary action that breaks away from the current international norms.

The structural crisis and the lack of statehood in the Arab region, where the state is weak if it exists at all, means that the individual can move from the stagnation of statelessness and instability to a new dynamic, shifting from maintaining the status quo to changing it. This is because there are international parasitic forces wanting to preserve the current situation and benefit from its corrupt "authoritarian and despotic" nature. Therefore, today, international political discourse aligns with oppressed peoples in creating a new symbolic narrative and searching for new symbols of protection, gathering to confront all forms of current international political arrogance. Thus, a mental image is currently forming between states and oppressed peoples, either for reform or for a complete and radical revolution in action, rejecting the current international game altogether and staying outside the official framework. There can be cooperation between the state and societies to work towards a new institutionalization of international action and dismantling the international paternalistic guardianship imposed by major actors who want to maintain the status quo, reorganizing the international public space and dismantling the current hierarchical, authoritarian value system within international society, as it perpetuates a superior, elitist culture.

The events in Gaza have shown that there is an international will to remove the Israeli occupation, Nasr (p. 57) one of the main reasons for everything happening in the Middle East. This could lead to the reformation and planting of the international field, reshaping the map and agricultural field of international actions, either by re-irrigating old crops or by replanting them from the ground up, uprooting the main international actors contributing to this international setback, and not standing by international legitimacy or human rights slogans, which turn out to be hollow, devoid of meaning, and often applied not for and with the weak, but against them. (Khalil, 2012, pp. 70-73)

## **2-1-Restructuring the International System: Between Reformist Failure and the Stubborn International Consensus: "The Narrative of the International System"**

Today, the situation, society, and international discourse face the dialectic and dilemma of restructuring or rebuilding the existing international system. Perhaps the correct starting point is for decision-making bodies, clubs, and centers at the international level to acknowledge their mistakes and the excesses of the current system in the face of peoples suffering under oppression, poverty, destruction, and colonization. Many manifestations of violence in the international system, disorder, and clashes between identities, nationalities, movements, and sects have emerged. This makes the urgent need for academic, ruling, and influential elites to focus on a restructuring strategy, avoiding hesitation, confusion, slowness, and tension from less developed, influential, and progressive states. The corruption of the American strategic

doctrine since the beginning of the new millennium has been reflected and further highlighted by the invasion of Iraq. This exposed the corruption and misjudgment of the leaderships of great powers, including the United Nations, which did not intervene adequately or effectively to neutralize the warring and conflicting parties. It limited itself to providing aid to many conflict areas worldwide, misjudging the scale of new actors and the threats they posed.

This demonstrated the extent of the corruption of the unipolar central system led and controlled by the United States. Many regions around the world ignited, especially in the post-Russian-Ukrainian war era, which was planned by the United States as a liberal state that wanted a proxy war with Russia to halt the rise of Russia and China to the leadership of the global system and to obstruct this path. Many actors took advantage of this to increase their movements and actions, indicating that international despotism in managing the international system led many to demand restructuring, regulation, and change, ranging from radical changes as Russia is doing today, to flexible changes as China adopts, and gradual changes by rising international powers.

The performance of the United Nations Security Council has been characterized by arrogance, injustice, and superiority, ignoring the voices of oppressed peoples under occupation. It has refused to make many international decisions in support of liberation movements and just causes globally, instead continually supporting major powers, including the United States and its allies. It is always clear that there is a gross failure of the United Nations in advocating for just causes. Some are calling not just for restructuring but for rebuilding from scratch. What are the most important mechanisms for rebuilding on the one hand, and restructuring on the other? And which one is more suitable and preferable for the current stage?

## **2-2-The Narrative of "Rebuilding" and "Radical Change of the International System," and the Narrative of "Gradual Reform":** There are narratives that only call for:

The necessity of abandoning absolute Western liberal ideologies and achieving balance among existing international actors, without leaning in favor of one set of systems and actors at the expense of others.

The process of political reform and voting methods and membership within the United Nations, especially the Security Council, is the best path forward.

The need to adopt, at a minimum, the rotating presidency of the Security Council among various old and new actors, and to expand the veto system and its participants, not limiting it to just the five major powers.

Dr. Hosni Abidi, in this context, emphasizes the necessity for the free nations of the world to keep pace with the ongoing transformations at the level of the international system. He stresses that Third World countries, including Algeria, must struggle—together with their friends and allies on the international stage and through the concerted efforts of their diplomats and ambassadors both in other countries and within international organizations—to take the initiative and propose collective efforts to amend, or even change, the structure of the international system. According to him, the world is heading toward a new international order whose shape and features cannot yet be predicted. Therefore, countries that wish to play any

role in this new order must assess their assets and capabilities in order to determine their goals and challenges, and to understand the potential role they might play in shaping it.

He adds that Algeria could even play a role that is not a luxury, but rather a necessity in this process. This is imposed by regional, international, and security challenges. Moreover, all other countries—especially after the events in Ukraine and Gaza—are required more than ever before to assess their assets and sources of power before setting goals, as these goals reflect their capabilities. According to Abidi, there must be a policy in place that ensures the achievement of objectives and the identification of priorities and battles that can be won without significant loss. He also reiterated his position by noting the emergence of indicators pointing toward the shift to a new international order. Among these is the consensus among global leaders and politicians on the inevitability of moving toward a new world order. Interestingly, even the same country that has led the international order for decades—the United States—now believes that a new international system is needed, especially before other countries move to create one in which the U.S. would have no part. Several indicators have prompted Western elite experts to urge the United States to rethink the international system, including its humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the war on Gaza. According to Abidi, one of the signs of the fragility of the current international system is the Ukraine war, which demonstrated the renewed importance of military power and revived the concept of territoriality. The idea that the world was heading toward integration and the end of borders has proven to be false.

In fact, countries remain firmly committed to the significance of borders and territorial sovereignty. Additionally, the rise of China as a global military and economic power signals the collapse of the unipolar system. China and Russia had allowed the United States to lead the world alone for fifty years, which led to the U.S. being drained, as it faced challenges it could not sustain for long, particularly those in the Middle East. This has affected its capacity to continue leading the international system. Moreover, the "war on Gaza" by the Israeli occupation has resulted in the marginalization of international legitimacy and the United Nations. The U.S. objections to Security Council resolutions that would have been in favor of the Palestinians illustrate that the United States views the UN with disdain and believes that the United Nations has no effective role in establishing international peace and security. The UN Charters, in its view, are often ineffective, and it is rather club diplomacy, secret diplomacy, and behind-the-scenes maneuvering that can sometimes resolve international crises—a reality that has indeed been observed. Recent events have also confirmed the absence of international law and highlighted that small, non-compliant states are the ones playing key roles. Today, Southern countries can only hope to maintain their independence—that is, the most they can achieve is to preserve their sovereignty—which is, in itself, considered an accomplishment, given the turbulent conditions in most of the Global South due to asymmetric threats posed by armed groups and organizations.

**2-3- The UN Secretary-General Guterres' Call for a New International Order as the Most Significant Narrative in the Post-Gaza War and Ukraine War Era:** The UN Secretary-General had previously, in May 2023—following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war—



called for the need to reform the Security Council and the Bretton Woods system. In other words, he was advocating for structural, rather than radical, reforms. He renewed these calls once again in 2024.(Sky, 2020)

**Josep Borrell Calls for an End to the Era of Western Dominance in the Post-Gaza War World:** The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, explicitly expressed his call for a fundamental restructuring of the Western system. He stated that the era of Western dominance has come to an end. He warned, “If the current global geopolitical tensions continue to evolve into a West-versus-the-rest dynamic, Europe's future may become bleak.” According to him, the era of Western dominance is already over. He added that although this was theoretically understood, “we have not always drawn the practical conclusions from this new reality.”

Borrell further emphasized that the situation has worsened following the Ukraine crisis and the increasing escalation in the Middle East. He pointed out that the West is being accused of double standards and called for countermeasures—through actions, not just words. The war in Ukraine, he said, has revealed the contours of a new world order that is beginning to take shape with the rise of China (the narrative of China’s rise) and Russia (the narrative of Russia as a great power), both militarily and economically. These powers have entered into open confrontation with the United States and Western countries across multiple regions in a struggle for influence—including in the Pacific, Atlantic, and across the African continent. The war in Ukraine intensified the polarization and alignments between the traditional Western powers and the emerging powers, a dynamic that was further exacerbated by the war in Gaza. The Gaza conflict exposed deep imbalances in the international system, particularly within the Security Council, due to the dominance of Western powers over key decision-making positions. This has turned the most important international decision-making body into a hostage to the will of a few individuals, at the expense of international law.

As a result, voices calling for the reform of the Security Council have grown louder and more urgent, in light of the moral bankruptcy reached by Europe and its leader, the United States. This has prompted the diplomacy of peoples and the Global South to take action, activating several fronts in the international arena—especially with South Africa’s bold move to bring a case against Israel before the International Court of Justice. Despite immense international pressure to prevent it, South Africa succeeded in bringing the Israeli entity before the ICJ. Thus, the international humanitarian community needs only to activate its mechanisms, remain steadfast, and maintain a legal and diplomatic sense of responsibility, to act continuously and consistently in applying pressure and reforming the institutions active in international and regional affairs.

For example, the Arab world—or what is known as the Arab Group—is currently working to prevent the dismantling of the UN agency UNRWA. The Arab Group at the United Nations has officially requested the President of the General Assembly, during its 78th session, to convene an extraordinary emergency session to discuss the status of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which is facing attempts to dismantle it by the Zionist occupation and Western countries under the pretext that it includes

members of the Palestinian resistance. This is seen as an attempt to change long-term political standards and procedures affecting Muslims, and to eliminate UNRWA's role in protecting the rights of Palestinian refugees. Such actions pose a threat to international humanitarian law. Therefore, calls to abandon this UN body are radical, misguided, and do not serve oppressed peoples. The United Nations, despite its flaws, still plays a key role around the world in combating terrorism and addressing many international issues. What is needed today is significant reform—particularly of its most important body, the Security Council—in terms of its structure and working methods. It must embody greater unity and coherence, and regain the authority it has largely lost, especially in the face of Israel, which behaves as a state above international law and above all others. According to António Guterres, the current direction of the international order is leaning toward chaos and toward multipolarity without institutions—something that, in his view, will have chaotic consequences (Sh, 2024)

### **3-The Second Position Advocating Restructuring as “Sufficient”: The Narrative of Reform**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, has repeatedly stated in various international forums that the international and financial system is “in crisis,” and he has called for urgent action to meet the pressing needs of developing and emerging economies. In a speech he delivered at the opening of the Paris Summit “for a New Global Financial Pact,” Guterres said that the Sustainable Development Goals are veering off track, and that the most fundamental goals—regarding hunger and poverty—are moving in the wrong direction after decades of progress. In 2023, he noted that over 750 million people around the world do not have enough food, and tens of millions are teetering on the brink of extreme poverty. This situation has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Guterres also pointed out that 52 countries are either defaulting on their debts or are dangerously close to doing so, with most of these being among the least developed countries. He referred to a policy brief he had previously issued, which included a proposed plan to reform the international financial structure so it could provide a safety net for all countries. He said: “While we work toward implementing the deep reforms that are needed, we can take urgent action today to address the immediate needs of developing and emerging economies. For this reason, I proposed an annual \$500 billion stimulus package for the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at supporting investments in sustainable development and climate action. “The Secretary-General explained that the plan includes concrete steps that world leaders can take now, such as “establishing an effective debt-relief mechanism that supports payment freezes, longer lending terms, and lower interest rates for middle-income countries facing vulnerabilities, particularly climate-related ones. “Guterres added that world leaders could expand concessional financing for countries in need by more broadly reallocating unused Special Drawing Rights and using innovative mechanisms to boost global liquidity. (Special Drawing Rights are international reserve assets created by the IMF to supplement member countries' official reserves and help provide liquidity.)

### **Steps to Defeat Poverty and Hunger**

Guterres emphasized: “If we take these steps together, they will help defeat poverty and hunger, boost developing and emerging economies, and enhance investments in health, education, and climate action.” He said in his speech that the world need not wait for a full overhaul of the international financial system to take action: “We can take steps now and then make a leap toward global justice.” He acknowledged that today’s world faces limitations on international cooperation, making problem-solving more difficult. However, he said, “Solutions are not impossible—we can begin now.”

### **A Call to Develop Multilateralism**

In a lecture delivered at the Paris School of International Affairs, Guterres addressed the challenges facing the world. Speaking to students, he said: “The international situation has rarely been as bleak as it is now,” referring to crises such as climate change, wars, uneven recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. He added that most organizations and multilateral mechanisms were built in the post–World War II era and reflect the balance of political and economic power of that time. But after 80 years, “the world has changed dramatically, and international institutions must reflect that reality and represent all peoples and continents.” He stressed that multilateralism must be reshaped from the top down.

### **Reform on All Fronts**

Guterres also discussed the need to change course, rebuild bridges, and reform collective action across all areas, including the international financial system, climate, peace and security, and emerging technologies. He stated: “There is an urgent need to increase cooperation on climate action,” emphasizing that “we must be more ambitious on two fronts: mitigating climate change and achieving climate justice.” The Secretary-General noted that international cooperation on peace and security is currently in a state of paralysis, with existing tools no longer adequate. “We need to rethink our approach to peace and security,” he said, proposing a new agenda for peace that addresses the issue holistically, identifying the root causes of conflict and preventing the spread of war. Guterres also highlighted the challenge posed by new technologies, including artificial intelligence and social media platforms, saying: “Misinformation and hate speech—especially against women—are spreading across the internet like wildfire.” He added that AI poses a challenge to our collective understanding of reality, which is why he is calling for the adoption of a Global Digital Compact that would bring together governments, regional organizations, the private sector, and civil society. He also announced that he would appoint a High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence. (Guterres, 2024)

In other words, Guterres' calls—including his most recent one on 26/02/2024—are limited to internal structural reforms within the international and regional systems. He also called for the adoption of a new African regional system. Therefore, in general, there are those who believe that the current necessity is merely restructuring rather than reconstruction. Guterres has emphasized the urgent need for serious reform of the Security Council—both in its composition and in its working methods. He made this point during a speech in Geneva before the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, where he stated that the

Security Council lacks unity and that this severely, perhaps fatally, undermines its authority. He added that the Security Council needs serious reform in both its composition and methods of operation. He also stated that nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Guterres noted that, for the first time during his mandate, he invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter in order to exert maximum pressure on the Council to do everything in its power to end the bloodshed in Gaza and prevent further escalation. However, he admitted that this was not enough, and that international humanitarian law continues to come under attack.

### **3-1- The Call for "Reforms Against Corruption and Bureaucracy Within the UN Body: The Narrative of Reform":**

Both former U.S. President Donald Trump and United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres had previously called for reforming the United Nations in 2017. (Trump, 2017) On September 18 of that year, Trump and Guterres appeared together at the UN headquarters (© AP Images). President Trump urged the United Nations to adopt broad reforms so that the international organization could “regain the trust of people around the world. During an event held to support the reform agenda proposed by Secretary-General Guterres, Trump emphasized the need for change, stating: “We pledge to be partners in your work,” addressing Guterres directly. “I am confident that if we work together and advocate for truly bold and brave reforms, the United Nations will become stronger, more effective, and fairer, and it will emerge as a greater force for peace and harmony in the world. “Secretary-General Guterres himself criticized the widespread bureaucracy within the organization, remarking, “Even someone determined to undermine the United Nations couldn’t have come up with a better way to do so than by imposing some of the rules we created ourselves. “President Trump urged Guterres to “fully exercise his authority to break through the bureaucracy, reform outdated regulations, and make decisive decisions to advance the core mission of the United Nations. “The reforms proposed by Guterres aim to address several problems, including: Mismanagement, Fraud, and Corruption in Peacekeeping Operations. There have also been concerns about peacekeeping missions that are ill-defined, ineffective, and lacking measurable benchmarks for success. Other issues include the inflated costs of the United Nations and the unfair distribution of the peacekeeping budget among member states. President Trump stated, “In order to honor the people of our nations, we must ensure that no member state shoulders an unequal share of the burden—whether military or financial.”

Experts have proposed reforms to protect the independence of the UN’s internal oversight mechanisms and the independence of whistleblowers—those who expose corruption. Further reforms could help reduce or refocus peacekeeping missions that do not meet their intended goals, redirecting them toward achievable and measurable standards. The issue of excessive costs will be addressed through a comprehensive review of ongoing peacekeeping missions and the amount each country contributes to the United Nations. Trump said, “The citizens of member states deserve to see the value that the United Nations provides, and it is our duty to show it to them.” To date, 129 member states have signed on to the reform package. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, urged all 193 UN member states to support the reform plan, stating, “We are always stronger when we speak with one voice.”

### **3-2- U.S. Strategic Orientations Since the Beginning of the Millennium and the Emphasis on American Leadership Within the International System:**

If we refer to the U.S. strategy issued in 2012, it focuses on maintaining global leadership and dominance as a priority for 21st-century defense, along with adapting to the prevailing global balance of power. This involves a return to strategic containment and direct military presence in areas vital to the main global competitor of Washington. The situation is not much different in the case of Russia and its foreign orientations. Moscow's positions and actions reflect a strong desire to reassert itself on the international stage with the spirit of a global pole and a heavyweight international power—at least in certain regions and concerning specific issues. Europe, too, is leaning toward a more traditional model of interactions and relations. The recent rise of Germany and its articulation of a national security strategy point to a notable German ascent. There is a noticeable gap between Germany and the other major powers, particularly the United Kingdom and France, which brings to mind the historical rivalries between European powers over the past two centuries. The world today appears to be reverting to earlier eras, where global interactions were marked by direct competition and conflict over influence, resources, and interests—namely raw materials, trade and navigation routes, and consumer markets. There are even parallels between the current stage and certain periods of colonial expansion, when military movements dominated the global power competition, and naval fleets were the most frequently used instruments.

We are witnessing a return to the logic of economic sanctions as a form of punishment, where the prevailing belief is not to abandon that logic, but to intensify it—adjusting only the type, form, or scope of punishment. What's being pursued against China is not just economic competition and political pressure, but rather a policy of containment, encirclement, and confrontation. It would not be surprising if China, in turn, activates its military operations and strategic presence—whether within its immediate sphere of influence or beyond, possibly at points of concentration or strategic interest that intersect with U.S. or Western interests. This mirrors what Russia has already done and continues to do.

In recent years, Russia had largely responded passively and with restraint to American moves close to its borders, both geographically and politically—such as the deployment of missile defense systems and close cooperation with former Soviet republics. However, Moscow has adopted a much more assertive approach in recent matters, such as its stance on the revolution in Libya, where it declared it would not allow a repeat of the Libyan scenario, as it did in Syria and more recently in Ukraine. The world, therefore, is reverting to older patterns of interaction among its main powers, while other actors are responding naturally by adopting the same models and, in many cases, the same tools (Majid & Ala, 2024).

Germany, in its current resurgence, is not directly seeking to impose any form of dominance over the countries of the European continent. Rather, it aims to structure relationships in a serious manner that aligns with its rising role and current strength. Germany does not aspire to play the role of the "international leader" within the European Union, as it refrains from intervening in every situation. However, it tends to assert its positions whenever it senses a threat to its direct economic interests or core spheres of influence. (Samah Rashid, 2012, pp. 88-89)

**3-3- The Return of Putin's Russia: The Narrative of the Russian Comeback:** Since Vladimir Putin's re-election in 2012, Russia has steadily embarked on a course of action that responded directly to the narrative of "Western unipolarity." At that time, Putin warned the West that if he returned to power, he would not tolerate unilateral moves on the global stage by Western partners who often disregard Russia's opinions and interests. This rhetoric formed the basis of a distinctly Russian narrative countering Western powers—a narrative that proved its strength once it was put into action. Russian leadership began preparing speeches and taking concrete steps on the ground to confront the rules of unilateral conduct in international economics and politics. Their aim was to make the West understand that dialogue, cooperation, and joint efforts in combating terrorism, arms control, and other shared challenges are the only viable paths to peaceful coexistence. Otherwise, Western policies would face an appropriate response and correction from Russia.

Russia has worked to secure a place among the world's leading powers. Putin emphasized that Russia's strength and international standing are more essential than ever. He committed to continuing the enhancement of military capabilities and defense spending to ensure maximum readiness for combat and rapid deployment. He also stressed that arming Russia is necessary to counter the United States and NATO, especially in the area of missile defense.

Hence, Russia will not abandon its strategic deterrence capabilities, relying on nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles as a fundamental guarantee of its existence, survival, and vital security—along with its fleet of submarines. According to Putin, the world is changing rapidly. Globalization paths hide numerous and varied dangers, and the economic crises and shocks occurring in various parts of the world are encouraging some to solve their problems at others' expense through military pressure. Putin believes that there are destructive forces in certain regions that threaten the security of nations. He sees countries that attempt to export democracy while violating international law and the sovereignty of others as allies of these destabilizing forces. As a result, Putin has become synonymous with the "narrative of the Russian comeback," reasserting Russia's role as a major power on the international stage. He has already launched the "Eurasian" project—an ambitious union that he seeks to establish with several former Soviet republics in military, economic, and political dimensions. (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 47-97) The "Russian narrative" today acts as a response to American narratives, shifting the focus toward themes of Russian identity and the historical stature of the state as a great power distinguished by Orthodox moral and ethical superiority. It aims to reclaim elements of its strength and to uphold the principles of sovereignty and stability in the face of the narrative of "American unipolarity." (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 104-105)

**3-4- The Return of China, the Narrative of China's Rise, and Its Impact on International Systems and Organization:** The world is witnessing the developments happening in China, both domestically, regionally, and internationally, particularly in terms of its economy. These changes have a significant impact on the current and future stages of international politics, and they will have far-reaching consequences at all levels. Economically, China is generating massive financial surpluses, with a large market and growing military strength. China's increased spending on arms is having noticeable effects on the arms race in East Asia, with



Taiwan receiving increased support from the United States in the form of advanced defensive weapons. This has led to strategic concern from the U.S. and the West in general, regarding the rising power of China and its desire to become the dominant state, as the U.S. power declines. In this context, Henry Kissinger has emphasized that the relationship between the U.S. and China will be pivotal in determining the shape of the global system in the 21st century. He also notes that to understand China and its uniqueness, it is necessary to act accordingly. Martin Jacques similarly predicts that the future of the world will be shaped by China's internal dynamics—its society, politics, and economy—as well as its unique historical experience and cultural heritage. He believes China will change the current global system in a more radical and profound way than any other global power. However, Kissinger argues that there is a balance between the U.S. and China in terms of power, geographical influence, and historical and cultural uniqueness. This balance makes it impossible for either side to dominate the other. If one party attempts to do so, both will face losses, especially if their relationship turns into conflict and confrontation. Instead, they must create a global environment that allows both to evolve and move forward without conflict—a process of co-evolution.

Despite the existence of theories asserting that China is focused on internal reforms, there are challenges it faces in managing the relationship between the government and society, such as corruption and coexistence with these issues. These challenges determine whether China will play the role of a rising power or not, especially after the increasing calls for the fall of authoritarian regimes, which may find significant support from the West within China. As a result, the ruling institution is working on adapting because it is at a critical juncture, innovating rather than directly confronting the United States. This issue is often portrayed as a Western narrative to reinforce Western identity, stimulate collective memory, and circulate these narratives in daily speeches to counter opposing narratives—many of which are fabricated. This creates a powerful means of shaping the attitudes and behavioral choices of the public. Thus, the narrative created by Western powers against China, Russia, and others serves to justify political rhetoric. (Ali, pp. 09-10)

The political legitimacy of both domestic and foreign policies, the defining of roles, frameworks, strategies, and their interests regarding a specific issue—these are all influenced by Western narratives against Russia or China and their affiliates. These narratives are aimed at attracting Western alliances and actors in the East, West, and the Middle East, as well as justifying new transformations, as seen with the United Nations, UNRWA, and the narrative of terrorism and its links to Hamas. They also aim to cement new power dynamics within the international system. After the United States concluded its narrative of humanitarian intervention and terrorism, it is now selecting new narratives, such as the rising Chinese narrative within the international system over the past decade, portraying China as seeking dominance, among others. These narratives serve to justify certain policies against these countries, which are crafted in decision-making laboratories and black boxes. The U.S. consistently tries to support its narratives with specific and effective conditions, and if they fail, it retreats to revisit them at an opportune time, as seen with the UN reform narrative. If this doesn't succeed, the narrative of reforming the UN serves as an alternative narrative, according to the context at hand. All of these remain to serve its interests within its strategic domain.

Additionally, the rise of new major powers in the international system, especially Russia, supports alternative competing narratives, such as the Western political change narrative versus Russia's narrative of preserving the nation-state. Russia has used this to support and sustain the Syrian regime's survival and continuation (Karen, 2012, pp. 159-163).

**3-5- Narratives of the International System and Organization:** These determine how the international organization is structured, the nature of the international system, the key actors within it, and the core interactions, both confrontational and cooperative, that are established and potential. In comparison with other levels that are more open to participation and influence from various powers and actors, the major and great powers emerge here as central players, either as proposers in developing the dominant narratives at this level, or as key parties within them. All these narratives are employed to either grant or strip legitimacy from the strategic choices of different parties, to justify the international policies of major states, and to legitimize certain policies, such as the narrative of UN reform. However, this remains a general narrative that lacks precision, and no international actor has previously provided a complete vision for the nature and method of reform for this organization—only generalities to justify the interventions of major international actors, and to influence and employ it to legitimize specific practices. Even calls for the complete abandonment of the UN could lead to the creation of a confrontational atmosphere, bringing the situation back to square one, to a point before the League of Nations, thus justifying and establishing war. Therefore, up until now, the narrative of UN reform, or the narrative of finding an alternative, lacks credibility or the elements of strength have not been fully realized. In fact, it contains more elements of weakness than strength, as it remains merely individual initiatives that have not spread and lack widespread support.

**3-6- The Effectiveness of UN Reform as an Urgent and Immediate Narrative:** The actors delivering this narrative, as well as the nature of the recipients of this message, must be highly conscious and responsible, by building relationships, expanding the scope of the narrative movement and action, and not limiting themselves to mere lamentations. There should be an expansion of communication networks, and it is crucial not to restrict the formulation of messages solely to active states, whether major or rising, while considering the characteristics of the targeted audiences with such an idea. The media environment should be utilized, acknowledging that governments alone are not capable of adopting such a narrative, and involving other actors in the production of the reform narrative if it is to succeed. The use of information and communication technology should be employed, along with leveraging the narrative's key contributors, such as China and Russia, who possess material power, influence, and international impact.

The availability of material and institutional power, as well as networks for international alliances, enables a more diverse set of agents to produce, export, develop, and disseminate the UN reform narrative through traditional and modern media, both locally and globally, and through research centers to promote it. Various forms of elite cultural products, such as education, scientific research, films, and TV series, should also be utilized to reduce the

momentum of counter-narratives that may be presented by the U.S. and its allies to suppress reform initiatives.

The reform narrative for the UN, as a strategic narrative, requires linking it to relevant concepts and fields, such as propaganda, political communication, soft power, and critical geopolitics, to avoid reinventing the same wheel that solely serves America and its allies.

### **3-7- How and When Do Eastern Narratives Succeed Against Western Narratives:**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has frequently acknowledged the overwhelming dominance of Western media, supported by extensive financial resources and a vast communication apparatus. This dominance has enabled Western narratives—such as those concerning terrorism—to prevail globally. For instance, the widespread adoption of the United States' counterterrorism agenda was largely facilitated by its control over media discourse, bolstered by military, conceptual, and institutional support, including that of the United Nations. Without such strategic backing, the global acceptance of this narrative would have been unlikely.

In today's international landscape, major powers seeking to maintain or enhance their influence rely heavily on media strategies to promote their policies and reshape global narratives. In response to this dominance, alternative powers such as Russia and China have encountered deliberate efforts by the West to marginalize their voices—evident in the closure of Russian-language media outlets like Russia Today, which broadcast in multiple languages. China, for its part, has sought to resist American narrative dominance by crafting counter-narratives through new media platforms and independent digital infrastructure.

Similarly, the success of emerging narratives from the Global South—such as Africa's "Africa Rising" discourse—depends on developing a strong, autonomous media presence capable of competing in the context of fourth-generation warfare. This includes safeguarding data and privacy through trusted partnerships, as Algeria has done with the establishment of a national data center in collaboration with Huawei, intentionally distancing itself from Western digital oversight.

Algeria's efforts were highlighted during the recent conference titled "Africa's Media Agenda: A Strategy for Positioning African Media," which presented key recommendations for empowering African narratives. These included the need for Algeria to spearhead the creation of a powerful and influential African media infrastructure and the broader call for Africa to represent itself—by itself—through its own media institutions.

Resisting Western media hegemony, which has long sought to dominate and distort Africa's image, is a strategic imperative. Western narratives have historically portrayed Africa through a lens of pessimism, backwardness, and crisis. To counter this, there is an urgent need to establish African media conglomerates capable of promoting alternative, optimistic narratives—such as "Africa of Generosity" or "Africa on the Rise"—which offer meaningful visions for the continent's future and challenge degrading colonial-era portrayals.

Innovation and soft power play a central role in this transformation. Africa must craft compelling narratives rooted in its own realities, turning them into tangible sociopolitical projects. This requires a media industry that is politically grounded, socially engaged, and

equipped to detect and resist covert external influence, including media funding from foreign intelligence agencies.

Strategic awareness and media literacy are essential for confronting external narrative manipulation. Developing a deep-rooted African political media industry—accessible through popular channels like radio—can bring messaging closer to the people and foster grassroots engagement. Furthermore, a unified African media network is vital for the production and consumption of indigenous cultural content.

To consolidate this effort, intensive media campaigns must also promote structural reforms within global governance institutions, particularly in support of democratizing the United Nations and reforming the Security Council's voting mechanisms. Promoting a continental shift towards sustainable African media cooperation and championing a narrative of "Africa for Africans" will be crucial for redefining Africa's global image and asserting its agency in world affairs (Khaled, 2019, pp. 3-4).

### **Conclusion:**

The success of the narrative surrounding "UN reform" hinges on the existence of robust political and media mechanisms capable of promoting, legitimizing, and defending it within international arenas. This narrative must be articulated in line with the aspirations of its proponents—not distorted or co-opted by dominant Western powers that aim to preserve their global hegemony.

Similarly, the vision of a new and equitable world order—both political and economic—can only materialize when its advocates are able to forge broad-based alliances, build consensus, and unify their message on the global stage. This narrative can prevail if it effectively counters the misrepresentations and manipulations that undermine genuine reform efforts rooted in justice, equality, and a rejection of domination—trends that continue to define the current geopolitical landscape.

To confront prevailing narratives of racial or national superiority, it is essential to focus on political branding strategies that resonate with populations across continents. Amplifying the voice of the people and ensuring their active participation is critical. Only through a truly inclusive and accountable international system—where all actors are subject to the same legal and moral standards—can a just global order be realized.

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