

A Review of 2024 From the Oceans and the Seas.

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The world has entered a period of geopolitical reckoning. The year 2024 has perhaps witnessed the bloodiest and most brutal developments of the last 80 years. The upcoming period will witness the revolutionary changes of the geopolitical clash period. The main determinants of this process have been the collapse of the neoliberal economic model after 2008 crisis, China's emergence as a naval power while turning into an economic giant, and Russia's resistance against the US and NATO on the Ukrainian front.

Geopolitical and geoeconomic fluctuations have entered a resonance phase after a long hiatus. The US is regressing in Ukraine despite the impositions of the Rimland geopolitics and the extraordinary logistical and financial support to Kiev in the last 3 years. The geopolitics of Israel, which cannot be separated from the US, is advancing thanks to the jihadist terrorist gangs established by the US and the tremendous political, legal and logistical support provided by the US to Israel, as exemplified in Syria. The world of globalization, neoliberalism and unipolarity is now coming to an end. We are entering 2025 in such a conjuncture. When we look at the developments concerning the oceans and seas in 2024, we see a similar picture to what is happening on land. The year 2024 witnessed revolutionary events and developments in maritime geopolitics and geoeconomic and maritime power perspectives.

As the Ice Melts, Hegemon Sea Geopolitics Loses

When we look at it from a geopolitical perspective, the most important development was undoubtedly the opening of the northern sea route (NSR) in the Arctic Ocean. The Panama-flagged, non-Ice Class, 294-meter-long PANAMAX class container ship named "Flying Fish 1" carrying 5000 containers (TEU) arrived in Shanghai, China on September 25, 2024, less than three weeks after its departure from Saint Petersburg, Russia. During this 8000-mile voyage, the ship maintained an average speed of 16 knots and most importantly, did not need the Russian icebreaker ships. Thus, Russia not only proved to the world maritime trade system that it has the shortest sea transportation route connecting the continents, but also, for the first time in the last two centuries of world history, it has a sea transportation route under its own control in the Shipping Routes dominated by the Anglo-Saxon maritime hegemony.



Container / Panamax, IMO 9200811 ([Source](#))

It is clear that this transportation route will make a great contribution to Asian powers shipping efforts that will be blockaded by ocean powers in other regions in times of war. Inevitable counter-moves came from the US leadership during the process that brought about this revolution. The first was the rapid admission of Sweden and Finland to NATO, and the second was the transformation of Norway into an American military forward base as a coastal state in the Arctic Ocean. In this context, the new US President Trump, who will take office on January 20, 2025, who wants to make Canada, which has the longest coastline in the Arctic Ocean after Russia, the 51st state of the US, and his desire to purchase Greenland, which controls the entrance and exit to the Arctic Ocean, which is affiliated with Denmark, should be evaluated within the framework of the US's geopolitical goals in the Arctic Ocean and the rimland geopolitics.

It is a fact that the US will not tolerate a maritime transportation route that can provide wartime support to China outside of Russia's own control, but it is extremely difficult to prevent this. Because Russia has the clear strategic advantages in the Arctic both geography wise and force structure wise. On the other hand, China has rapidly developed cooperation with Russia in the Arctic Region after the Russia-Ukraine War. For example, Russian and Chinese bombers occasionally conduct joint patrols off the coast of Alaska. Similarly, Chinese and Russian coast guard ships passing through the Bering Strait conduct joint exercises and patrols in Arctic waters at certain times each year. China defines itself as a Near Arctic State. It does not only have geopolitical interests in the region. It has many common investments with Russia, primarily in energy and rare earth metals.

The Houthis' Invisible Sea Power

The second development undoubtedly includes the asymmetric risks and threats at sea

posed to Israel and pro-Israeli merchant marines by states and non-state actors those hostile to Israel, which the West defines as the axis of resistance. In this context, despite being subjected to numerous air and missile attacks by both the US and the UK, as well as Israel, the threat of the Yemeni Houthis, who apply typical Anti-Access and Area Denial tactics in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, continues. This situation is actually a result of the use of technological capabilities in a way that creates an asymmetric effect and the proliferation of explosives. This reveals how effective non-state actors are in the period of great powers competition through technology transfer or military aid.

Russia Leaving Syria

One of the most important developments of 2024 has undoubtedly been the change of regime in Syria by a Jihadist Gang supported by US and Israel. In parallel with this development, Russia's moving away from the Tartus Naval Base and Hmeymim Air Base after the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria is important in terms of the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Although the new regime has not officially asked Russia to abandon both bases, there are media reports that Russia has transferred some of its military material in these bases to Libya. In this context, it cannot be expected that American neocons and naval strategists will allow Russia to establish a base very close to the Suez Canal within the framework of the geopolitics of the border zone and not to put pressure on the pro western regime.

Underwater Cables and Pipelines

One of the important maritime incidents in 2024 was the cutting of the seabed communication cable between the Swedish island of Gotland and Lithuania on November 17, 2024. NATO circles were quick to attribute this incident to sabotage by Russia and even a Chinese merchant ship in the region. However, these accusations of Western circles were ignored except by neocon publications such as CNN and the New York Times.

A similar situation occurred in February 2024 in the Bab El Mandeb Strait. The internet seabed cable connecting Europe and Asia was damaged. Serious problems were experienced in India and the Gulf states. Although the Houthis were initially blamed, it was later understood that the damage was caused by a trawling fishing vessel. Approximately 100 seabed cable damage incidents occur in the world every year. Of these, 40% are recorded as fishermen, 16% as ship anchors, 5% as earthquakes and 5% as damage caused by third parties. However, in the event of war, attacks on these cables will undoubtedly be inevitable. Since the cables in question serve the common interests of all parties during periods of peace and tension, it is known that operations are carried out for the purposes of reconnaissance, surveillance and, in some cases, communications intelligence (COMINT) over the cables rather than active attacks. In the upcoming period, the protection or destruction of critical seabed infrastructures within the scope of seabed warfare will continue to be one of the important fronts of naval warfare.

China and the Western Pacific Balance

As we enter 2025, the U.S. and China rivalry could reach the stage of armed conflict in 2027/2028 as it was declared in the **Roadmap Document** for the Navy prepared by the 33rd Commander of the US Naval Forces, **Admiral Lisa Franchetti**. It seems that China has gained the upper hand in naval warfare in the Western Pacific Ocean. The main reason

for this is not only the numerical superiority in favor of China among the naval and air force assets. The main factor that has transformed the Chinese Navy from a defensive to an offensive strategic transformation in a short period of 30 years is its shipbuilding capacity. This capacity is developing every passing day in the fields of naval, commercial ships and unmanned surface /subsurface vehicles. Today, China has 48 diesel-electric, 65 submarines and 395 surface warships. The navy is planned to have 85 submarines and 435 surface ships by 2030. China currently controls 64.7% of all new merchant ship orders in the world.

In parallel with these developments, the US Naval Intelligence Directorate (ONI) announced that China's merchant shipbuilding capacity is 232 times greater than that of the US as of 2024. A similar comment was made by US **Navy Secretary Del Toro**:

“China can produce in one year the same number of ships that the US can produce in 7 years.”

Today, China has achieved a similar success in the field of shipbuilding as the US achieved in World War II. This development is also reflected in the naval capabilities. China builds the machinery, electronic systems and weapons of its warships without external dependency. China's ability to build 6 nuclear ballistic missile submarines and 6 nuclear attack submarines after 2010 is the most important example of this capacity. In China, approximately 200 thousand people were working in the State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC) alone as of 2023. If those working in the remaining 1,100 shipyards are taken into account, more than half a million workers are employed in the shipbuilding sector in China.

On the other hand, the US continues its activities at every level for build-up, basing and shaping the operational environment in the Western Pacific in tandem with 2027/2028 conflict scenario with China. While there are 53,700 US military personnel in 85 separate land, sea and air bases in Japan, there are 25,400 US Military personnel in 70 separate bases in South Korea. US Navy has started to permanently deploy nuclear attack submarines to its colony island, Guam, in 2024. 2000 US marines are being transferred to Guam from Japan/Okinawa. It is worth to remind that this island is the closest American territory to China. Also, Guam is equipped with Aegis system for Ballistic Missile Defense. Weapons sales to Taiwan and programs to train Taiwanese armed forces have been increased. In addition to the existing 5 American bases in the Philippines, 4 new bases have been granted the right to US force deployments and military build up. In addition, American missile systems that will hit China's interior along with anti-ship missile systems are being deployed to this country. The joint nuclear attack submarine construction project with Australia within the framework of AUKUS is progressing, albeit slowly. 2,500 American marines are deployed in Australia/Darwin. The use of airfields and ports in Papua New Guinea has been granted to the US. The Fijian Government has also granted the US Forces basing and build up rights in the island. These activities in the Western Pacific domain will no doubt intensify even more in 2025.

2025 and the Period of Insanity That Will Continue

Stability in the global order is maintained under the unconditional leadership of a sovereign state that is accepted worldwide. After 1945, this hegemon was the US. If the global leader becomes corrupt, falls into the power trap and becomes a threat to the global consensus itself, rising powers will challenge this dominance. The US fell into this position especially after 2001. When the hegemon collapses, the balances are disrupted. In 2019, the era of competition between great powers began. Thus, the dynamics of conflict and instability

became evident everywhere. The collapsing hegemon, the US, will risk everything to maintain its power and continue its world leadership. This even includes nuclear war.

In 1991, [the Nuclear Doomsday Clock](#) was at its safest in history. In those years, there were 17 minutes until the midnight (apocalypse). Today, there are only 90 seconds left. How did US Presidents manage to reduce the risk of nuclear doomsday from 17 minutes to 90 seconds in the last 34 years? The ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East today, along with new crises and regime change efforts created by the US every week, are the answer to this question. The root cause of these wars and crises is China and Russia challenging the impositions of the hegemon that is declining but relies on wars. As a result, since the hegemon will not voluntarily give up its position, the current crises will grow even bigger and a final showdown will be reached.

The Israel Factor

Another reason for the current chaos is Israel, which has become an inseparable part of the US geopolitics since the 1970s. The Israel first created a security belt around itself and then proceeded to realize the theological dream of 2700 years ago in the lands from the Nile to the Euphrates. When Israel was founded in 1948, it was a socialist state. Today, it has become a completely religious and expansionist state.

On the other hand, it is a state that has managed to direct and shape the US foreign policy in the Middle East. The 1995 “Clean Break Report” prepared jointly by US neocons and Netanyahu, rejecting the Palestinian state, is the strongest evidence on this issue. After the Cold War, the US changed the map or regime of 6 Middle East/Africa countries within this framework. It did this in partnership with Israel and NATO. Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan and Somalia were directly shaped according to the geopolitical interests of the US and Israel, and were ultimately subjected to military interventions, coups, civil wars and chaos that resulted with the deaths of hundreds of thousands. Unfortunately, Turkiye also took an active role alongside the US in this process after 2002. After the December 8, 2024, victory of the neocons and Israel in Syria, Iran seems to be in the next hit list.

The US and Its Potential to Create Turmoil

The US continues its global struggle for control of strategic choke points of maritime transportation, water, food and energy resources with all its power in its spiraling period of decline and collapse. The aim is to have a situational advantage over its rivals in the economic, military and technological fields when the great showdown period is commenced. For this purpose, it is aimed to cancerize and melt the power of the rivals through small crises, proxy wars, civil wars, coups and regime crises to be created. The US uses the soft power it has had since 1945 for this purpose, especially to attract the international system to its side. For this purpose, concepts such as human rights, democracy, free market economy, globalization and rule-based world order are the concepts most used by the media of the establishment to mislead the world public opinion. Military interventions, civil wars and map changes were carried out in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Sudan and Somalia through these concepts. Hundreds of thousands of dead, ongoing civil wars and cancerous regime problems were created. In countries like Turkiye, first sham legal cases and then actual coup attempts were organized with FETÖ-type organizations affiliated with the CIA, MI6, BND and MOSSAD.

The US and Its Decreasing Reputation

The US has never hesitated to throw the rest of the world into the fire for the peace of Israel and the continuation of its own global leadership. However, a new world has been established today. The absolute dominance of the US in every field is no longer the case. The multi-polar world system makes its influence and presence felt in every field. The effectiveness of the West's use of organized and brute military power with the mantras of democracy and human rights, or the rules-based world order, is decreasing day by day. The unconditional support for Israel's genocides has destroyed the reputation and credibility of the US. Finally, the destruction of a state by jihadist fundamentalist organizations with a million-dollar bounty on their heads in Syria has opened deep wounds in the US record after the examples of Iraq and Libya. The US has now become a state that pursues wars, chaos and destruction that will delay its own collapse, not global peace and stability.

Today, the struggle between the globalists representing the neocon and neoliberal system within the US and the nationalists led by Trump, who prioritize economic development and superiority, will determine the global security structure of the future. While the US has gained unfair profits through the financial/capital structure of globalization, leaving production to China has accelerated its end. As the US continues to act outside of its power, the internal decay and the inevitable reckoning will accelerate its collapse. Although it is expected that Trump will prioritize the containment of China with economic superiority, it should not be expected that there will be any deviation from the rimland geopolitical goals that aims ocean and sea dominance, which constitute the goal of the US geopolitics.

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Featured image: A Type 052C destroyer, Changchun, in Butterworth, Penang, Malaysia in 2017 (Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

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