

## FROM YALTA TO THE UNKNOWN: STATE FOREIGN POLICY FEATURES IN THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SYSTEM

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### Abstract

States face increased geopolitical volatility and uncertainty during transitional periods in the international relations system. Ensuring national security and strategically strengthening a country's position internationally have emerged as the primary objectives of state foreign policy. States should be keen to form significant relationships with countries with similar long-term interests. Clear identification and consistent pursuit of national interests are crucial, as genuine partnerships can only develop when shared strategic priorities are recognized and effectively advanced. A state committed to its national interests naturally attracts authentic allies and accurately identifies its adversaries, whereas neglecting these interests leads to isolation and vulnerability. Within this context, a fundamental task of state foreign policy is the implementation of strategic initiatives that enhance a state's global position without sacrificing core interests for the sake of external actors. As the international system moves towards an uncertain future, decisive interest-based foreign policy is essential for the states that aim to gain a stable and influential role in the new world order.

**Keywords:** *international relations system, world politics, international legal system, foreign policy, national interests, allies.*

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## Introduction

It can be argued, without exaggeration, that states act in foreign relations guided primarily by their national interests rather than by international law.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, states, driven by these interests, often engage in actions that contradict their obligations under international law, including multilateral and bilateral agreements. To justify such actions, states frequently refer to distorted interpretations of international legal norms. During the operational phase of the international relations system (IRS), the tendency of states to act despite the international legal system is restrained by the superpowers that established the system to preserve their privileged positions based on a shared interest in stability.<sup>3</sup>

However, during the transition period of the IRS, this deterrence mechanism ceases to function. Moreover, superpowers may seek to exploit or provoke international processes to bolster their positions while weakening their opponents in the struggle to shape the new IRS.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the foreign policy of states during the transition period of the IRS exhibits distinct characteristics compared to the operational phase of the IRS. Professional discussions of these characteristics are particularly significant, given that the world has been in a transition period since at least 1991, moving from the Yalta-Potsdam system toward a new IRS.

For this analysis, we will continue to rely on the previously formulated working definition of the IRS: “The system of international relations encompasses the universal structures of international cooperation and the normative framework of international law (the international legal system), created or modified by the primary actors in international relations—superpowers that emerged victorious from a world war—to manage international politics.”<sup>5</sup> The transition period of the IRS is defined as the interval between the termination of one IRS and the establishment of the next. In the current transition period, intense international processes are unfolding, with states remaining the most active actors in international relations compared to other entities and non-governmental participants.<sup>678910</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Shavarsh Kocharyan, “Some General Manifestations of Transition Periods of International Relations Systems,” *Journal of Political Science: Bulletin of Yerevan State University—International Relations, Political Science* 15, no. 3 (2024): 5–11, <https://doi.org/10.46991/BYSU.D/2024.15.3.005>.

<sup>4</sup> Kocharyan, “Some General Manifestations,” 8.

<sup>5</sup> Kocharyan, “Some General Manifestations,” 7.

<sup>6</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

The purpose of this article is to examine key characteristics of state foreign policy during the transitional phase of the international relations system (IRS), in contrast to its functioning during more stable periods.

### Main Objectives of States' Foreign Policy in Transition Periods of IRS

The development of a state's primary foreign policy goals is shaped by how the public, the media, professional communities, and the political elite perceive the current international landscape. These perceptions can be categorized into three types (see Table 1). This classification is somewhat conditional, as, in practice, the three perceptions may coexist within a single state in varying combinations and proportions. In the cases of the first and second perceptions, unlike the third, there is no clear recognition that the current international situation stems from the transition period of the international relations system (IRS), which may conclude with the establishment of a new IRS.

**Table 1: Perceptions of the Current International Situation, Main Foreign Policy Goals of States, and Policies Aimed at Creating the Necessary Conditions**

Perception	Main goals of state foreign policy	State policy aimed at creating the necessary conditions
1. The IRS continues to operate but with temporary interruptions.	Ensuring security. Establishing peace.	Rely, first of all, on the treaties to be signed or in force, the international legal system, and the universal structures of international cooperation.
2. Hereafter, the law of force is tolerated in the world.	Ensuring security. Expansionist policy.	To strengthen and develop relations, first of all, with those states whose interests correspond to the expansionist ambitions of the given state.
3. The world is undergoing a period of transition, one that will ultimately culminate in the establishment of a new IRS.	Ensuring security. Strengthening the position of the state as much as possible in anticipation of confirmation in the new IRS.	To strengthen and develop relations, first of all, with those states whose long-term national interest coincides with the long-term national interest of the given state.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (London: Allen Lane, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, updated ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Richard Sakwa, "The International System and the Clash of World Orders," *China International Strategy Review* 6 (2024): 39–57.

Holders of the first perception fail to recognize that the phenomena they view as temporary defects are, in fact, manifestations of the transition period of the international relations system (IRS). These issues tend to intensify and can only be resolved through the establishment of a new IRS. If a state's goals and corresponding foreign policy are based on the first perception (see Table 1), it will inevitably encounter the non-fulfillment of obligations by other states under bilateral or multi-lateral international agreements, as well as the ineffectiveness of universal structures of international cooperation, both characteristic of the IRS transition period.<sup>11</sup> Merely pursuing peace is insufficient for effectively developing relations with other states or securing genuine allies. Given the increasingly aggressive policies of states during the transition period of the IRS, relying solely on the pursuit of peace in foreign relations exposes any state to significant risks, including losses of human lives, territory, and sovereignty.

According to the second perception, interstate relations have reverted to a reliance on the "law of force," a principle rooted in past millennia. In reality, the evolution of the international legal system—from the Versailles-Washington system to the Yalta-Potsdam system—established the inadmissibility of the law of force. The current rise in the unpunished use of force in international relations is yet another symptom of the IRS transition period.<sup>12</sup> For a state guided by the second perspective, foreign policy centers on maximizing gains at the expense of weaker states to boost its own power and secure advantages. In this approach, stabilizing international relations and ensuring accountability for expansionism or crimes against humanity receive little attention (see Table 2).

**Table 2: The Practice of Holding States Accountable for Expansionism, Military Crimes, and Crimes against Humanity by Approving the New IRS**

Transition period	World war initiated states	Compensation by territories	Other compensations	Limitations of sovereignty	Liability for crimes
From Westphalian to Vienna	France	All conquered	None	None	None
From Vienna to Versailles-Washington	Germany	All conquered and part of one's own	Money (repaid in about 100 years), military equipment	Army size, military equipment, and a demilitarized zone in the state	None

<sup>11</sup> Kocharyan, "Some General Manifestations," 8.

<sup>12</sup> Kocharyan, "Some General Manifestations," 10.

From Versailles-Washington to Yalta-Potsdam	Germany, Japan *	All conquered and part of one's own	Money, military equipment, factories, technology, means of transportation, manpower, tangible and cultural values	Prohibition of having an army, military industry, occupation rule, and control of domestic life	Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials, from 1945 to the 21st century trials of individual criminals
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\*On September 3, 1943, Italy signed the capitulation agreement and formally joined the war against its former ally, Germany.<sup>13</sup>

Table 2 indicates that the punishment for expansionist policies has become increasingly severe, encompassing accountability for genocide and other crimes against humanity. This trend of harsher penalties is linked to another development: the progressive evolution of international law from one system to the next, accompanied by improvements in international structures designed to uphold it. However, during the transition period of the international relations system (IRS), these international structures lose effectiveness, and international law either fails to function or operates selectively, reflecting the interests of individual superpowers. With the establishment of a new IRS, the transformed interests of superpowers necessitate the protection of the international legal system and the restoration of effective international institutions.

A state that is not a superpower but pursues an expansionist policy may underestimate the risk that a superpower, acting in its interests during the transition period, might initially overlook, support, or even encourage that state's expansionism or crimes against humanity. Yet, once a new IRS is established, the same superpower, guided by its redefined interests, is unlikely to continue its support. Instead, it may support those calling for accountability for the expansionist state, sometimes concealing its own earlier involvement. When a state aligns with the victors of a world war, it is less likely to face consequences for its actions. In contrast, previous international relations systems were often created after the defeat of great powers that pursued expansionist policies.

The distinction between the foreign policies of states based on the second and third perceptions (see Table 1) is relatively fluid. Throughout the ongoing transformation of the IRS, the foreign policy strategies of most states display elements of both of these perceptions. In both cases, securing an ally is a critical condition

<sup>13</sup> Howard McGaw Smith, "The Armistice of Cassibile," *Military Affairs* 12, no. 1 (1948): 12–35.

for achieving the primary foreign policy objectives. Moreover, both perspectives acknowledge a pragmatic reality: without shared interests, true alliances cannot be formed, regardless of existing bilateral or multilateral agreements.

The key difference in the third perception lies in its emphasis on selecting allies based primarily on long-term common national interests. In the context of this analysis, ‘long-term national interest’ refers to a state’s interest that remains consistent across both the operational and the transition periods of IRS. Examples include the United States’ efforts to maintain its hegemonic status, China’s ambitions to achieve regional dominance, Russia’s control of Crimea as a foundation for its power, and Turkey’s aim to secure a territorial link with Azerbaijan and, through it, the Turkic-speaking states of Central Asia. Iran’s push to develop a Persian Gulf–Black Sea transport corridor that bypasses Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as the ongoing efforts of Russia, Iran, and Turkey to preserve their influence over the South Caucasus and Central Asian states, also illustrate these priorities. Naturally, these interests are not exhaustive; each state pursues additional objectives, often shaped by broader global ambitions.

Genuine alliances are built on several well-established principles: there are no eternal allies or eternal enemies, only enduring interests that should guide a state (as articulated in Lord Palmerston’s 1848 speech); the primary mission of a state at all times is to ensure its external security; when safeguarding external security, states rely primarily on their capabilities; and if a state does not fight for its security whenever possible, no other state will do so on its behalf. Consequently, a state seeking to strengthen and develop relations with another state or states based on shared interests must clearly define and actively pursue its national interests in practice. Moreover, these documented interests must be realistic, aligning with the state’s capabilities during a given period.

During the transition period of IRS, states tend to articulate their national interests more openly and explicitly. A state’s clear documentation of its national interests and their consistent pursuit in practice are essential prerequisites for forming genuine alliances, beyond mere contractual agreements. When a state actively pursues its national interests, it gains both allies and adversaries. Notably, its primary adversaries are often those already opposed to it due to conflicting national interests. Thus, a state that pursues its national interests secures both real allies and adversaries. Conversely, if a state fails to pursue its national interests, it is left without true allies and faces only adversaries.

The phrasing in Table 1, “strengthening the state’s position as much as possible in anticipation of confirmation in the new IRS,” requires clarification. “Strengthening positions” refers to actions such as increasing influence over other states, asserting control over disputed territories, securing dominance over strategically im-

portant freight routes, energy transit corridors, and raw material resources, participating in various international relations platforms, and shedding a negative image—such as that of an aggressor, war criminal, or perpetrator of genocide—while attributing such labels to adversaries.

Before elaborating on the phrase “in anticipation of confirmation in a new IRS,” it is worth noting a key characteristic associated with the establishment of an IRS. The adoption of a new IRS establishes a status quo in international relations that is either impossible or extremely difficult to alter during the system’s operational period. For a state, losses incurred during the transition period of the IRS become irreversible, or nearly so, once the new IRS is formalized. the inviolability of interstate borders in Europe, established in 1945 by the Yalta-Potsdam system, remained unchallenged until the system’s dissolution allowed changes such as the collapse of the USSR and the former Yugoslavia, the unification of Germany, and the peaceful disintegration of Czechoslovakia. Similarly, the loss of significant Armenian historical territories was solidified with the establishment of the Versailles-Washington system in 1921–22—a unique case, as the Ottoman Empire, a part of the defeated coalition in the First World War, had perpetrated the Armenian Genocide in the Armenian homeland.

Therefore, by strengthening their positions during the transition period of the IRS, states aim to secure their achievements within the framework of the emerging IRS. The concept of ‘strengthening positions as much as possible,’ as outlined in the second perspective of Table 1, refers to reinforcing positions at any cost, including aggression and crimes against humanity, in anticipation of future validation under the new IRS. This logic is evident in the actions of Hamas during the military conflict with Israel that began on October 7, 2023. A central question in this context is why Hamas chose to carry out the massacre and kidnapping of Israeli civilians with such extreme brutality.<sup>1415</sup> Could they not have anticipated the wave of outrage that would likely create additional obstacles to Palestinian independence?

On the other hand, the UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which called for the establishment of a Palestinian state, was increasingly being disregarded. Meanwhile, Israel had begun establishing relations with various Arab states that were once its enemies and supporters of the Palestinian struggle for in-

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<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch, “October 7 Crimes against Humanity: War Crimes by Hamas-Led Groups,” July 17, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/17/october-7-crimes-against-humanity-war-crimes-hamas-led-groups>.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and Israel, 56th sess., 18 June–12 July 2024, A/HRC/56/26,  
<https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/a-hrc-56-26-auv.pdf>

dependence.<sup>16</sup> This raised a real risk that the question of a Palestinian state could be sidelined on the international agenda with the endorsement of the new IRS. According to the reasoning of certain circles, particularly within the Arab world, the October 7 massacre was intended to force the issue of Palestinian independence back into international focus. Notably, since October 7, nearly all states have referenced the UNGA Resolution 181 (II) in their declarations, and several have expanded the list of countries recognizing the State of Palestine. This also prompts the question of why, following October 7, Israel has consistently committed military crimes and crimes against humanity against the Arabs of Gaza.<sup>17</sup> After all, such actions fuel anti-Jewish sentiment and protests in many countries, including Israel's ally, the United States. Two core dilemmas confront Israel: First, it opposes Palestinian independence; second, absorbing the two autonomous Palestinian territories into Israel is demographically untenable, as it would undermine Israel's identity as a Jewish nation-state. According to the presumed logic of certain Jewish circles, a potential resolution to these challenges lies in the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian Arabs. The massacre of Jews on October 7 provided a convenient pretext to pursue this policy in Gaza. It can be inferred that, at the current stage of the conflict, Israel seeks not only to eliminate the prospect of a Palestinian state but also to significantly reduce the Arab population in the Palestinian territories, with the tacit approval of the new IRS framework.

It is highly relevant to note that the absence of a unified and effective international response to the brutal massacre of Israelis by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and Israel's ongoing policy of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza serve as a compelling indicator of the current transitional state of the IRS. Another sign of this transitional phase is the disregard or distortion of international law by superpowers as they seek to claim territory and legitimize their expansion within the framework of a new IRS.

For instance, the territorial ambitions of superpowers have become more pronounced: the United States regarding Greenland and Canada,<sup>18</sup><sup>19</sup> China to Taiwan,<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> TRT World, "The Eight Arab States That Openly and Unabashedly Deal with Israel," July 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/the-eight-arab-states-that-openly-and-unabashedly-deal-with-israel-33551>.

<sup>17</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Report ... Inquiry*, A/HRC/56/26.

<sup>18</sup> Will Weissert and Zeke Miller, "Trump Refuses to Rule Out Use of Military Force to Take Control of Greenland and the Panama Canal," *AP News*, January 8, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-biden-offshore-drilling-gulf-of-america-fa66f8d072eb39c00a8128a8941ede75>.

<sup>19</sup> Alison Durkee, "Trump Serious about Wanting to Annex Canada, He Says in Super Bowl Interview," *Forbes*, February 10, 2025, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisondurkee/2025/02/09/trump-confirms-hes-serious-about-wanting-canada-as-51st-state/>.

and Russia toward eastern Ukraine.<sup>2122</sup> Each of these examples has its distinct characteristics, and they cannot be considered equivalent under international law. Nevertheless, regardless of the justifications provided, all three cases demonstrate a policy of territorial expansion by superpowers during the IRS transition period.

A clear understanding of the dynamics of this transitional phase in the IRS enables a state to pursue a foreign policy that minimizes losses in an increasingly aggressive environment while strengthening its position on the international stage, guided by realistic national interests.

### **Challenges in Implementing States' Foreign Policy during the Transition Period of the IRS**

When implementing their foreign policy during the transition period of the international relations system (IRS), states must contend with a complex mosaic of interests. On some issues, their interests may overlap or partially align with those of other states, while on others, they may directly conflict. These interests include the struggle between superpowers for a decisive role in shaping the new IRS and/or replacing the hegemonic state with a new hegemon; the superpowers' desire to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war; the interests of superpowers and regional powers, and how these interests transform in specific regions due to competition for influence in the emerging IRS; the superpowers' efforts to delegate or impose certain processes on other states to strengthen their positions while weakening their opponents in the contest for the new IRS; and the ambitions of regional powers to establish themselves as leaders and secure a more influential role in international processes.

Therefore, during the transition period of the IRS, a state must prioritize its national interests to prevent significant losses, while also considering the interests of other relevant states to pursue a realistic foreign policy that enhances its position. This process requires careful consideration of the interests of both superpowers and regional actors, whether directly or indirectly connected to initiatives stemming from the state's national interests.

Consider the creation of the Persian Gulf–Armenia–Black Sea freight corridor. This initiative aligns with the long-term interests of several countries, including Iran, India, Georgia, China, and Russia.

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<sup>20</sup> Xi Jinping, “Full Text of the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” October 16, 2022, chap. 13, 51–52, <https://english.www.gov.cn/2022special/20thcpccongress/>.

<sup>21</sup> Vladimir Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” July 12, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

<sup>22</sup> Vladimir Putin, interview by Tucker Carlson, February 9, 2024, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews>.

**Iran:**

1. The corridor, which routes through Armenia and bypasses both Turkey and Azerbaijan, reduces Iran's dependence on these countries and diversifies its cargo transportation routes to Russia and Europe.
2. It serves as an additional barrier to the establishment of a direct territorial link between Turkey and Azerbaijan (including Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan) at the expense of Armenia's sovereignty. Such a link would increase Iran's reliance on Turkey and Azerbaijan for northward cargo transport, while also facilitating Turkey's connection via the Caspian Sea to the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia, thereby expanding Turkish influence in both the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

**India:**

1. The corridor ensures diversification of India's cargo transportation (via the Mumbai and Iranian Chabahar ports) to European and Russian markets, bypassing Turkey and Azerbaijan.
2. It acts as an additional obstacle to the establishment of a Turkey-Azerbaijan territorial connection at Armenia's expense, which would enhance Turkey's influence in Central Asia and strengthen Pakistan, Turkey's ally and India's regional rival.

**Georgia:**

1. The corridor diversifies Georgia's cargo transportation options and reduces its dependence on Turkey and Azerbaijan.
2. By establishing this route, Georgia becomes an intermediary hub for cargo transport to Europe and Russia, and vice versa.
3. It hinders the creation of a Turkey-Azerbaijan territorial connection at Armenia's expense, which would otherwise position Georgia as an additional link for cargo and potentially energy transit between Turkey and Azerbaijan.

**China:**

1. The corridor diversifies China's cargo transportation routes to European and Russian markets, integrating with the Belt and Road Initiative.
2. It obstructs the establishment of a Turkey-Azerbaijan territorial connection at Armenia's expense, thereby limiting Turkey's influence in Central Asia, including China's Uyghur Turkic-speaking region.

**Russia (long-term interests):**

1. The corridor diversifies Russia's goods transportation routes through the Caucasus, reducing dependence on Turkey and Azerbaijan.
2. It serves as an additional barrier to a Turkey-Azerbaijan territorial connection at Armenia's expense. Such a connection would increase Russia's reliance on Turkey and Azerbaijan for southern cargo routes, while also enabling Turkey to

connect via the Caspian Sea to the Turkic-speaking states of Central Asia, thereby expanding Turkish influence in both the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

The creation of the Persian Gulf-Armenia-Black Sea shipping corridor runs counter to the long-term and current interests of Turkey and Azerbaijan, outlined above. The national interests of these states prioritize establishing a territorial connection between Turkey and Azerbaijan at the expense of Armenia's sovereign territory. Instead of supporting the Persian Gulf-Armenia-Black Sea freight corridor, they favor launching a Persian Gulf-Azerbaijan-Black Sea freight corridor. Weakening the positions of China, Iran, and Russia in the South Caucasus and Central Asia through these initiatives aligns with the United States' interest in maintaining its hegemonic status and establishing a unipolar International Relations System (IRS). Additionally, diminishing Iran's influence serves Israel's current strategy to contain Iran, its primary adversary, and potentially use Azerbaijan's territory as a military bridgehead against Iran. However, strengthening Turkey by opening this corridor conflicts with Israel's ambition to become the leading state in the Middle East, positioning it against both Turkey and Iran.

Thus, Armenia faces a critical choice: either pursue the creation of the Persian Gulf-Armenia-Black Sea corridor, guided by its national interests (which, as a next step, does not preclude Armenia's equal participation in a Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan-Central Asia freight corridor, provided Armenia's full sovereignty is maintained—a scenario that would also align with China's interests), and secure genuine allies; or yield to the demands of Turkey and Azerbaijan, risking isolation during potential future aggression from Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, without reliable allies.

During the transition period of the IRS, states must also consider the changes in the priorities of the superpowers and the interests of the powers related to the tactics of the struggle for the new IRS.

Consider Russia's stance on the creation of a Turkey-Azerbaijan corridor (encompassing Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan) at the expense of Armenia's sovereignty. As noted earlier, this corridor conflicts with Russia's long-term interests. However, at the present stage, Russia does not oppose its creation and appears content to maintain a measure of control over it. This approach can be attributed to the evolving nature of Russia's priorities, shaped by tactical considerations in the broader struggle for influence within the new international relations system (IRS):

1. In opposition to the United States, Russia is advocating for a multipolar IRS and, despite significant contradictions, seeks to strengthen ties with Turkey to weaken Ankara's links to the US-led West as much as possible.
2. The ongoing military conflict in Ukraine and the trade and economic sanc-

tions imposed on Russia by Western states have increased Russia's reliance on Turkey and Azerbaijan, especially because of the transit of sanctioned goods through their territories.

3. Mutual trust between Armenia and Russia has significantly eroded. As a result, Russia now negotiates regional issues that affect Armenia's interests directly with Turkey, treating them as part of a broader agenda. This negotiation follows a pattern in which Russia concedes, or partially concedes, on certain issues in exchange for gains, or temporary advantages, on others.

As the IRS undergoes transition, superpowers pursue a dual strategy: on one hand, they provoke processes, including military conflicts, to weaken their opponents' positions; on the other, they strive to avoid direct involvement in these conflicts. They achieve this by delegating or pressuring other states, including their allies, to initiate conflicts or engage in ongoing ones. The resulting losses to these states are largely disregarded, as the primary objective is to undermine opponents in the struggle for the new IRS at any cost. Consequently, every state should, as far as possible, refrain from prioritizing the interests of others, including those of its allies, over its vital interests.

Consider Georgia's stance on the Ukrainian military conflict. According to the current Georgian authorities, the U.S.-led collective West is pressuring Georgia not only to join trade and economic sanctions against Russia but also to open a second military front against Russia.<sup>23</sup> Citing the devastating consequences of the conflict in Ukraine—hundreds of thousands of casualties, millions of refugees, lost territories, and a shattered economy—the ruling “Georgian Dream” party argues that involvement in a conflict with Russia would be catastrophic for Georgia and its people, a nation far smaller than Ukraine. The current government believes that the August 2008 military conflict with Russia, which resulted in the permanent secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the foreseeable future, was instigated by the previous government under Western influence.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the Georgian government contends that the collective West is orchestrating conditions for a color revolution in the aftermath of the parliamentary elections held on October 26, 2024. According to these claims, the objective is to bring to power political forces sympathetic to Western interests. Recent developments in and around Georgia following the elections appear to lend credence to these claims.

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<sup>23</sup> Civil Georgia, “PM Again Talks ‘Second Front’ and Criticizes Opposition,” March 24, 2023, <https://civil.ge/archives/533404>.

<sup>24</sup> Civil Georgia, “Domestic Reactions to Ivanishvili’s Announced Intention to Apologize to Ossetian Brothers and Sisters,” September 16, 2024, <https://civil.ge/?p=624405>.

## Conclusion

In the previously published article, I proposed evaluating the processes taking place in international relations during the period of the IRS's operation based on the common interest of the superpowers, aimed at maintaining the IRS they formed.<sup>25</sup> During the transitional period of the IRS, the processes were evaluated based on the absence of a common interest and the conflicting interests arising from the ongoing struggle between superpowers to assume a decisive role in shaping the new system. This proposed approach offers an opportunity to view the current transition period — from Yalta-Potsdam to the newly emerging IRS — from a slightly different perspective and to analyze/explain the increasingly aggressive foreign policies of states.

During the IRS transition period, ensuring states' primary mission of external security becomes more complicated. At the same time, new opportunities arise for states to strengthen their positions on the international stage and secure a favorable position within the new IRS. Taking advantage of the climate of impunity, as well as the tolerance or support of certain powers and/or superpowers during the transitional period, states seek to advance their interests at any cost, including through military action and even crimes against humanity. For great powers, this pursuit is further driven by the aspiration to become regional leaders. For superpowers, the motivation also includes the desire to play a decisive role in shaping the new IRS. The more a state strengthens its position, the more it strives to achieve regional power status, and regional powers that succeed in this endeavor often aim to attain superpower status.

In an increasingly aggressive international environment, ensuring external security and consolidating a state's position are unattainable without the formation of alliances. However, during the transition period of the IRS, states frequently fail to fulfill or selectively fulfill their obligations under international treaties. This transitional period, therefore, both complicates the fulfillment of the state's primary mission — ensuring external security — and creates opportunities to strengthen the state's standing in the global arena and secure its place in the emerging IRS. Real alliances between states are only possible when their long-term or vital interests align. The pursuit of a state's national interests is a necessary condition for forming genuine alliances.

Finally, in order to effectively implement strategies aimed at strengthening its external position — while avoiding becoming a tool for advancing other states' interests at the expense of its own — a state cannot ignore the permanent, current,

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<sup>25</sup> Kocharyan, "Some General Manifestations," 5.

and evolving national interests of superpowers, powers, and regional states during the transitional period of the IRS.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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