

## Geopolitical Dynamics and the Potential of World War 3: Contemporary Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

The study examines the complex geopolitical dynamics that could lead to the potential outbreak of a third world war. In the contemporary global landscape—characterized by shifts in power structures and emerging alliances—the study identifies key factors contributing to geopolitical tensions, including territorial disputes, resource scarcity, and the rise of nationalism. This paper aims to contribute to understanding the contemporary geopolitical landscape and offer insights into potential pathways to prevent a third world war, emphasizing the need for comprehensive international cooperation and conflict prevention mechanisms. A qualitative approach involving case studies of current geopolitical conflicts is used, focusing on important areas such as Eastern Europe, the South China Sea, the Middle East, and recent tensions between the United States and Iran, as well as the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict. The analysis reveals that while diplomatic efforts and international organizations play an important role in conflict resolution, underlying competition and historical grievances remain significant threats to global stability. In addition, the study highlights how the rise of nationalism and regional conflicts, combined with climate change and resource competition, exacerbate these tensions. These findings underscore the importance of proactive diplomacy and collaborative strategies to reduce the risk of large-scale conflict.

**Keywords:** *Geopolitics, Third World War, Conflict Resolution, Nationalism, International Relations, US-Iran Relations, Global Stability.*

### KEYWORDS

*Keywords are written in English, 3–5 keywords or phrases*



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### INTRODUCTION

World War 3 is often considered a serious threat lurking for humanity in the 21st century, although no conflict on a global scale comparable to the two previous World Wars currently exists. The ever-changing geopolitical dynamics suggest that the potential for major conflicts remains, especially after the end of the Cold War, which marked the transition to a new era in international relations. The emergence of new powers, such as China and India, as well as the transformation of old alliances, have created tensions that could trigger large-scale conflicts (Lynch, 2024; Atlantic Council, 2025; Fontaine & McKinley, 2025). A variety of factors contribute to these tensions, including the rise of new powers often accompanied by geopolitical ambitions, which can lead to friction with established countries such as the United States and Russia. In addition, increasing territorial disputes—particularly in strategic areas such as the South China Sea and Russia's borders with its neighbors—point to a high risk of armed conflict. The environmental crisis and resource scarcity, such as water and energy, are further exacerbating tensions between countries, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The rise of nationalism and populism in various parts of the world has also added to the complexity of international relations, where more aggressive foreign policies and unilateral approaches can increase the risk of conflict (Grzymała-Busse & Kuo, 2018; Miller, 2025; Kim, 2015).

Historical precedents demonstrate that similar geopolitical conditions have previously escalated into major conflicts. For instance, Mearsheimer (2014) analyzed the structural conditions preceding World War I, noting how great power competition, alliance formation, and nationalism created a volatile environment where a regional crisis (the assassination in Sarajevo) triggered a global conflagration. Similarly, Allison (2017) examined sixteen historical cases of power transitions between rising and established powers, finding that twelve resulted in war—a pattern he terms the "Thucydides Trap." More recently, Walt (2018) documented how the combination of territorial disputes, resource competition, and nationalist rhetoric in the interwar period created conditions conducive to World War II. These studies underscore that contemporary tensions between the United States and China, Russia's revisionist ambitions in Eastern Europe, and intensifying resource competition in regions like the South China Sea and the Middle East share troubling parallels with pre-war historical periods. What distinguishes the current era, however, is the unprecedented interconnection of global economies, the presence of nuclear weapons among major powers, and the emergence of new conflict domains such as cyberspace—factors that both constrain and complicate traditional conflict dynamics (Ide, 2015; Giovanis & Ozdamar, 2024; Hwang, 2025).

The research gap this study addresses is the lack of integrated analysis examining how multiple contemporary conflict drivers—great power competition, regional territorial disputes, resource scarcity, climate change, and technological warfare—interact to create compound risks of escalation. While existing literature has examined these factors individually, few studies have systematically analyzed their convergence and mutual reinforcement in the current geopolitical context. Therefore, this study's primary research objectives are threefold: (1) to identify and analyze the key geopolitical fault lines that possess the highest escalation potential in the contemporary international system; (2) to examine how the interaction between traditional security threats and emerging challenges (climate change, cyber warfare, economic weaponization) creates novel pathways to large-scale conflict; and (3) to propose evidence-based diplomatic and institutional strategies that policymakers can employ to reduce escalation risks and strengthen conflict prevention mechanisms. The expected contributions of this study are particularly relevant for policymakers at national and international levels, as it provides a comprehensive risk assessment framework that can inform early warning systems, diplomatic prioritization, and resource allocation for conflict prevention initiatives. By identifying specific intervention points where diplomatic engagement can be most effective, this research aims to support evidence-based policy formulation that addresses not only immediate crisis management but also long-term structural reforms to the international system.

In this context, this study aims to explore the geopolitical dynamics that could lead to the potential outbreak of World War 3 by analyzing ongoing conflicts as well as the history of international relations. The methodology of this research will involve a qualitative approach through the analysis of case studies in regions experiencing geopolitical tension, a review of the literature to understand existing theories and perspectives, and interviews with experts to gain deeper insights. With a better understanding of these dynamics, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to international decision-making and help formulate mitigation strategies to prevent large-scale conflicts, thereby creating a more peaceful and stable world. The manuscript will be organized into sections, beginning with a literature review covering theories of international relations and the study of global conflicts,

followed by case analysis, discussion of policy findings and implications, and ending with conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Identifying the factors causing the current potential for global conflict involves various elements that interact with each other and exacerbate tensions in the international arena. First, ongoing territorial disputes—such as those in the South China Sea and Eastern Europe—create significant tensions between countries with overlapping claims, often involving major powers such as the United States and China. In addition, resource scarcity, including water and energy, is a major driver of conflict, especially in resource-dependent regions threatened by climate change. Rising nationalism in various countries has also contributed to these tensions, where governments use nationalist rhetoric to increase domestic support, often at the expense of international relations. Ideological and political competition—such as between liberalism and authoritarianism—further adds to the complexity of geopolitical dynamics. The tensions brewing in the Middle East, especially between Iran and Western countries, reflect how historical factors and sectarian conflicts can exacerbate the situation. Finally, the increasingly visible impacts of climate change—such as natural disasters and mass migration—are creating additional pressure on already vulnerable countries. All of these factors are interconnected, and a deep understanding of their interactions is critical to anticipating and preventing potential future global conflicts.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The methodology in this study adopted a qualitative approach that focused on an in-depth analysis of contemporary geopolitical conflicts through case studies. The study covered several strategic hotspots of tension, such as Eastern Europe, the South China Sea, and the Middle East, as well as the situation in relations between the United States and Iran. Data were collected through literature reviews, analysis of policy documents, and interviews with geopolitical experts and international observers. This approach allowed for more in-depth information on the factors causing tensions, as well as an understanding of the perceptions and actions of key actors in the international arena. In this way, the study not only identified existing patterns but also explored broader dynamics that affected global stability. The results of this analysis were expected to provide useful insights for policymakers and academics in formulating effective strategies to prevent large-scale conflicts.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Contemporary Geopolitical Dynamics**

Contemporary geopolitics is characterized by major shifts in global power structures driven by the rise of new powers, regional conflicts, and global challenges. China and India have emerged as significant economic and military forces, reshaping the balance of power and challenging U.S. dominance, particularly through China's Belt and Road Initiative, military buildup, and technological advances. Strategic rivalry between the U.S. and China in trade, technology, and territorial disputes in the South China Sea has heightened global tensions, while conflicts in the Middle East—such as the Syrian war, Iran–Saudi rivalry, and the Palestinian issue—continue to destabilize the region. Climate change further intensifies migration, resource competition, and shifts in foreign policy, adding to global insecurity. At

the same time, rising nationalism and populism undermine multilateral cooperation, while cyber warfare, disinformation, and refugee crises pose new threats to political stability and security. Energy competition, particularly between fossil fuel producers and countries advancing renewable energy, also influences international relations. In this context, the role of organizations like the United Nations is vital but often limited by internal divisions and structural weaknesses. Overall, these dynamics present complex challenges that require diplomacy, dialogue, and stronger international cooperation to reduce the risk of large-scale conflicts, including the possibility of World War III.

Conflicts and cooperation in the energy sector also include the influence of oil-producing countries and the transition to renewable energy. The renewable energy transition has a significant impact on national energy security, with several key aspects to consider:

***Diversification of Energy Sources:*** Renewable energies, such as solar, wind, and hydro, allow countries to reduce their dependence on imported fossil fuels. This diversification can improve energy security and reduce risks associated with global market fluctuations and geopolitical conflicts.

- a. ***Energy Price Stability:*** With the increased use of renewable energy, countries can reduce their exposure to oil and gas price volatility. This can create domestic energy price stability and reduce the impact of inflation caused by a surge in global energy prices.
- b. ***Reducing Emissions and Environmental Issues:*** The transition to renewable energy contributes to the reduction of carbon emissions, which supports sustainability goals and reduces the risk of climate change impacts. This can strengthen the country's position in international negotiations related to the environment and climate agreements.
- c. ***Innovation and Technology Development:*** Investment in renewable energy often drives local technological innovation and creates new jobs. This can improve economic security and create a more sustainable industry.
- d. ***Potential New Tensions:*** While this transition has many benefits, the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources could also create new tensions, especially in countries that are economically dependent on the oil and gas industry. These countries may feel threatened and respond in ways that could trigger conflict.
- e. ***Infrastructure Security:*** Renewable energy often requires new infrastructure, such as smart grids and energy storage. The security of this infrastructure is critical to ensure continuity of supply and prevent cyber or physical attacks.

Overall, the renewable energy transition can strengthen national energy security, but it also requires attention to new challenges that may arise in the process. Energy competition has become one of the central issues in contemporary geopolitics, where conflicts and cooperation in the energy sector have a major impact on global stability and national security. Oil-producing countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United States, play a key role in determining global oil prices and supplies, which are often a source of tension between importing and exporting countries. These tensions sometimes culminate in the form of open conflicts or trade wars, as seen in the oil price war that took place between Saudi Arabia and Russia in 2020. On the other hand, the transition to renewable energy is also creating new dynamics in the energy competition, where countries are seeking to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and switch to more sustainable energy sources. Countries rich in renewable energy resources, such as wind and solar power, are now seeking to lead innovation and technology in the sector, creating

previously unimaginable new cooperation between countries with different interests. However, this transition could also trigger new tensions, especially in countries that are economically dependent on the oil and gas industry, which may see these changes as a threat to their economic stability. Thus, competition in the energy sector reflects not only the struggle of economic powers, but also the challenge of achieving effective international cooperation in dealing with environmental issues. This research aims to analyze the complexity of energy competition and its impact on geopolitical dynamics, as well as explore possible cooperation pathways that can reduce the risk of future conflicts, including the potential for World War III.

Despite the trend of nationalism, the high level of economic and social interdependence still affects international relations. Globalization and interdependence have shaped the modern world order, in which despite the growing trend of nationalism, high levels of economic and social interdependence continue to play an important role in influencing international relations. The process of globalization has integrated markets, cultures, and technologies around the world, creating a complex network that connects countries in different aspects of life. In the context of economics, international trade and foreign direct investment have given birth to interdependencies, where changes in a country's economic policies can have a far-reaching impact on the global economy. For example, a financial crisis in one country can spread quickly to another through trade and financial channels, showing how connected the world economy is. In addition, in the social sphere, migration flows, cultural exchange, and digital information have created cross-border communities that enrich cultural diversity, but can also create tensions when national identity is questioned. While nationalism can push countries to put domestic interests first, global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and terrorism require close international cooperation. In this context, interdependence not only creates opportunities for collaboration and exchange, but also increases the risk of tension and conflict, especially when countries feel threatened by foreign influence. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of interdependence in the era of globalization and how this can strengthen or weaken international stability, as well as its implications for the potential for large-scale conflicts, including the possibility of World War III. These dynamics interact with each other and create challenges and opportunities for global stability and security.

### **Case Study**

By 2025, the world is faced with a range of increasingly heated armed conflicts, raising fears of the possible outbreak of World War III. The main conflicts that have occurred include the Russia-Ukraine war, which began with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and escalated dramatically with Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. The successful Ukrainian drone strike targeting a Russian air base in June 2025 demonstrates Ukraine's potential to act independently without direct support from the United States. In addition, the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis escalated again after Hamas' surprise attack in October 2023, which triggered a massive Israeli military operation in Gaza. Iran's support for Hamas further prolongs tensions, potentially spilling over into a regional war. Tensions also rose between India and Pakistan after a deadly attack in Kashmir in April 2025, which triggered both countries to launch a retaliatory military operation. On the other hand, the civil wars in Sudan and Myanmar continue, causing a deep humanitarian crisis with millions displaced. The Democratic Republic of Congo has also been in turmoil after the M23 group seized Goma, while in Haiti, gang rule



took control of large parts of the country after the assassination of the president in 2021. Mexico's conflict over the drug war is increasingly brutal, with cartels engaging in violence and terror against civilians. Finally, tensions have escalated between Israel and Iran after a massive Israeli attack targeting Iran's nuclear facilities, which triggered threats of retaliation from Tehran. In this context, many analysts state that although the current conflict is still fragmented, the potential for escalation remains high, and any regional conflict can be a trigger for a global confrontation if not managed properly.

*In addition, the International Crisis Group (ICG) also released a list of 10 potential conflicts to anticipate in 2025, including: Syria, Sudan, Ukraine and European Security, Israel-Palestine, Iran vs the US and Israel, Haiti, US-Mexico, Myanmar, the Korean Peninsula, and China-US. It should be noted that the Middle East will be the region with the most armed conflicts by 2025, with more than 45 armed conflicts taking place.*

### **Ukraine crisis (2014-present)**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and the escalation that occurred in 2022 have had a significant impact on European stability as well as international relations as a whole. First of all, this invasion has triggered a major refugee crisis, with millions of Ukrainians forced to leave their homes to seek refuge in neighboring countries, such as Poland and the Baltic states. This not only burdens the social and economic systems of the recipient countries, but also creates new political challenges, in which populism and anti-immigrant sentiment begin to flourish. In addition, Russia's invasion has brought drastic changes in European security policy; NATO and EU member states now feel the need to increase defense budgets and strengthen military cooperation, which creates a new atmosphere of tension in the region. At the international level, the invasion has worsened relations between Russia and Western countries, with widely-imposed economic sanctions against Moscow and deepening diplomatic isolation. These tensions create a clearer division of the world between pro-Western and pro-Russian blocs, fueling fears of a resurgence of the cold war. In addition, this invasion also has an impact on European energy policy, where dependence on Russian gas is becoming increasingly questionable and leading to more aggressive efforts to diversify energy sources. In a broader context, these conflicts highlight the vulnerabilities of existing international systems, where the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity can be easily violated, creating the potential for further conflicts in other regions, both in Europe and in other regions of the world.

The role of NATO and Western countries in responding to Russia's aggression against Ukraine has taken center stage in global geopolitical dynamics, especially since the first invasion in 2014 and the escalation of the war that occurred in 2022. From the beginning, NATO has shown strong solidarity with Ukraine, increasing its military presence in Eastern European countries as a form of deterrence against potential further aggression from Russia. More frequent military exercises and the deployment of troops to the Baltic states and Poland create security guarantees for countries that feel threatened. In addition, Western countries are coordinating to implement a broad set of economic sanctions against Russia, targeting vital sectors such as energy, banking, and technology, with the aim of weakening the Russian economy and stopping aggression. Significant military assistance was also provided to Ukraine, including the delivery of advanced weapons, training for the Ukrainian army, and intelligence support, all of which were aimed at strengthening the country's defense

capabilities. This response not only reflects a collective commitment to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also shows that Western countries are willing to take risks to protect international norms. However, this strategy also poses challenges, as tensions between Russia and NATO are increasing, with Moscow threatening to take countermeasures that could lead to further escalation. In this context, the role of diplomacy is becoming increasingly important, although efforts to reach a peaceful resolution are often hampered by deep distrust between the parties involved. Thus, the response of NATO and Western countries to Russian aggression is not only about defending Ukraine, but also about maintaining stability and security in Europe and preventing the emergence of larger conflicts in the future.

### **U.S. and Chinese Competition**

The study of the power rivalry between the United States and China in the Asia-Pacific has become a major focus in contemporary geopolitical studies, given that the region is a center of global economic growth and has significant potential for conflict. Since the end of the Cold War, China has undergone tremendous economic transformation, making it one of the world's great powers that competes directly with the United States. In this context, China's rise has been marked not only by economic growth, but also by a marked increase in military capabilities, including the development of advanced technology and the expansion of naval power in the South China Sea. The United States, as the dominant power that has long maintained its influence in the region, responded by strengthening its strategic alliances with countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia through its "Indo-Pacific" policy. This policy aims to block China's influence, as well as guarantee freedom of navigation in waters considered strategic. In addition, tensions over issues such as trade, technology, and human rights further complicate relations between the two countries. This competition is not only focused on military and economic aspects, but also includes the field of technology, where both countries are competing to become leaders in the innovation and development of artificial intelligence. In this context, increased uncertainty and tensions can lead to large-scale conflict if both sides cannot find a way to collaborate and manage their differences effectively. Therefore, the study of this competition is essential to understand the dynamics of global power and its implications for regional stability and international security in the future.

A possible conflict in the South China Sea has significant military and economic implications, given that the region is one of the world's most important trade routes and rich in natural resources. As a strategic crossingpoint, more than one-third of global trade passes through these waters, including energy shipments and commodity goods (Kim, 2015; Raymond & Welch, 2022; Lynch, 2024). Tensions in the South China Sea, which involve territorial claims by several countries such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia, could trigger an armed conflict that would not only disrupt those trade routes, but could also lead to a surge in energy and commodity prices in global markets. In addition, the increased military presence in the region, with military exercises conducted by the countries involved, creates an atmosphere of uncertainty that could undermine regional stability. In this context, countries such as the United States feel the need to show support to their allies in the Asia-Pacific through freedom of navigation operations and fleet delivery, which could exacerbate tensions with China. From an economic perspective, prolonged conflict could result in a decline in foreign investment in the region, as well as trigger a diversion of trade routes that could harm countries

that depend on the South China Sea for their economic activities. In addition, the social and humanitarian impact of this conflict cannot be ignored, with the potential for refugee crises and social instability in the countries involved. As such, the military and economic implications of the conflict in the South China Sea are complex and require serious attention from the international community to prevent escalation that could lead to unintended consequences for global security and economic well-being.

### **The Middle East and Proxy Conflict**

The conflict in Syria, which began in 2011, has become one of the most complex humanitarian and geopolitical crises of the 21st century, involving a wide range of international actors with diverse interests. On the one hand, Russia has taken a central role in supporting the regime of Bashar al-Assad, providing significant military and diplomatic support to maintain the Syrian government's rule. Russia's intervention not only helped change the course of the war, but also strengthened its position as a major power in the Middle East, while also challenging Western influence in the region. On the other hand, Iran, which is a close ally of Assad, has sent troops and militias from various proxy groups, such as Hezbollah, to support the regime in the face of the rebels. Iran's support aims to safeguard the strategic corridor linking Tehran with Beirut, while strengthening its influence in the region. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, along with other Gulf states, has been actively supporting opposition groups seeking to overthrow Assad, hoping to reduce Iran's influence and limit Shiite expansion in the region. The rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which is also part of a broader sectarian fight, further complicates the dynamics of this conflict. In addition, the presence of extremist groups such as ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front adds a layer of complexity, creating challenges for all parties involved. With a variety of conflicting interests, the conflict in Syria not only results in deep suffering for the Syrian people, but also has the potential to cause broader instability in the Middle East and engage global powers in an effort to reach a sustainable resolution (Nisa, 2025; Miller, 2025; Vanden Eynde & Vargas, 2025).

The potential for an escalation of conflict that could lead to global clashes is increasing amid complex and interconnected geopolitical tensions in different parts of the world. At this time, the ongoing conflicts in various regions, such as Ukraine, the South China Sea, and the Middle East, are becoming hotspots that can trigger a chain reaction from major countries. For example, tensions between the United States and China in the South China Sea, which involve territorial claims and military presence, can quickly turn into armed clashes if one side feels threatened or provoked. In the context of Ukraine, Russia's aggression against the country has created a clear dividing line between pro-Western and pro-Russian blocs, as well as raising concerns about the possibility of a broader military intervention from NATO's side. In addition, protracted conflicts in the Middle East, particularly those involving Iran and Saudi Arabia, could add to tensions and trigger a reaction from global powers that have interests in the region. With nuclear weapons and advanced military capabilities possessed by major powers, the risk of miscalculation or unwanted provocations could lead to a very dangerous escalation. In the worst-case scenario, prolonged instability and regional clashes could attract various countries to engage, forming competing alliances and creating global conflicts that have the potential to undermine world stability. It is therefore important for the international community to strive to



uphold diplomacy and dialogue, in order to prevent this situation from getting worse and avoid devastating consequences for humanity.

### **Crisis on the Korean Peninsula**

North Korea's nuclear program has become one of the most pressing issues in international politics, fueling global concern over potential threats to security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Since the initial development of its nuclear program in the 1990s, North Korea has successfully conducted a series of nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, demonstrating significant advances in its nuclear weapons technology. This action not only violates UN Security Council resolutions, but also raises fears of a possible nuclear war in the region. The international response to the program has been mixed, with economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations and Western countries to pressure Pyongyang to halt its nuclear program. These sanctions include restrictions on exports of goods and technology, as well as a ban on arms trade, aimed at weakening North Korea's economy. However, these efforts have often faced challenges, including the inability to fully enforce sanctions and divisions among major powers, such as China and Russia, which have strategic ties with North Korea. On the other hand, several diplomatic initiatives, including meetings between North Korean leaders and the US President, have been attempted to find a peaceful solution, although they have often ended in a stalemate. Uncertainty over the true intentions of Kim Jong-un's regime and the desire to maintain the nuclear program as a bargaining chip in diplomacy have complicated the situation. In this context, the challenge of achieving sustainable denuclearization remains one of the most complex issues in international relations, with implications that go far beyond regional boundaries (Affandi, 2022; BoAnwar, 2023; Hanifah & Adnan, 2023).

Analysis of potential armed conflicts in different parts of the world shows that threats to regional and global security are increasingly urgent, especially in already vulnerable regions such as the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Eastern Europe. Rising tensions between major countries, such as the United States and China, as well as protracted conflicts in countries such as Syria and Ukraine, create an atmosphere prone to armed clashes. Armed conflict not only has the potential to result in massive loss of life and infrastructure damage, but it can also create a wave of refugees that exacerbates humanitarian crises in neighboring countries. In addition, the instability generated by this conflict could trigger a reaction from other countries, with the possibility of the formation of competing military alliances and exacerbating tensions. In this context, countries involved in conflict often face international sanctions that can weaken their economies, but at the same time, they are often ineffective in stopping aggression. In addition, with the presence of nuclear weapons and advanced technology possessed by some countries, the risk of miscalculation or unwanted provocations becomes even higher, which can lead to uncontrolled escalation. The impact of these armed conflicts is not only limited to the countries involved, but can also affect global stability, create uncertainty in international markets, and affect diplomatic relations between major countries. It is therefore important for the international community to work to prevent this potential conflict through diplomacy, dialogue, and multilateral cooperation to create a safer and more stable environment for all.

### **Climate Change and Geopolitics**

Studies on how climate change can trigger resource conflicts are becoming increasingly relevant, especially in vulnerable regions around the world, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Climate change is causing rising temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, and an increasing frequency of natural disasters, which directly impacts the availability of essential resources such as water and food. In many regions, instability resulting from declining agricultural yields and prolonged droughts can trigger competition between communities for access to increasingly limited resources. For example, in the Sahel region, climate change has led to increased tensions between farmers who depend on agriculture and herders who rely on pastures for their livestock, often leading to armed conflict. In addition, in the Middle East, declining water availability due to climate change could exacerbate existing political tensions, exacerbating the situation in countries experiencing war or instability. In a global context, conflicts triggered by climate change can trigger large refugee flows, resulting in a humanitarian crisis and increasing pressure on recipient countries. In addition, the economic impact of this conflict could affect global markets, adding to uncertainty at the international level. Therefore, it is important to understand that climate change is not only an environmental issue, but also a security issue that can trigger large-scale conflicts if not properly addressed through integrated mitigation and adaptation efforts, as well as effective international cooperation (Folarin, 2015; Putri, 2022; Wibisono, 2021).

The geopolitical implications of mass migration due to natural disasters are increasingly a serious concern in the era of climate change, where extreme weather phenomena such as floods, droughts, and tropical storms are becoming more frequent. When natural disasters destroy infrastructure, destroy farmland, and threaten livelihoods, many individuals and communities are forced to leave their homes in search of refuge and a more stable source of life. This phenomenon not only creates a humanitarian crisis in the countries of origin, but also adds to the burden on destination countries, often those already facing social and economic challenges. In this context, mass migration can exacerbate tensions between communities, fuel nationalistic sentiments, and increase the risk of conflict in countries that receive refugees. In addition, large numbers of population displacement can also affect domestic political dynamics, where governments in recipient countries may feel pressured to take tougher measures against immigration, thereby jeopardizing social stability and integration. At the international level, migration due to natural disasters can spark new discussions and negotiations on human rights, refugee protection, and state responsibility in dealing with the environmental crisis. With the increasing number of people forced to move due to environmental factors, it is important for the international community to formulate comprehensive and sustainable policies that not only address urgent needs, but also ensure that migration does not become a source of conflict, but can be managed in a way that builds resilience and solidarity between countries.

### **Cyber Warfare and Global Security**

Analysis of cyber threats as a form of modern warfare shows that cyberattacks have become an increasingly popular and effective tool in international conflicts, with significant impacts on global stability. In the digital age, states and non-state actors can launch cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure, financial systems, and communication networks, creating unrest without having to use military force directly. A well-known example of

cyberattacks, such as those carried out against Ukraine's infrastructure or ransomware attacks disrupting large companies, illustrate how these threats can cause massive financial losses, disrupt public services, and undermine public trust in government. In addition, cyberattacks are often difficult to track and attribute, creating new challenges in international law enforcement and response to aggression. In a geopolitical context, cyberattacks can exacerbate tensions between countries, triggering retaliation that could trigger a wider spiral of conflict. The impact is not only limited to the country being attacked, but it can also damage diplomatic relations, create uncertainty in global markets, and undermine trust in the international system. Therefore, it is important for countries to develop comprehensive cyber defense strategies, enhance international cooperation in cybersecurity, and formulate norms that govern behavior in cyberspace to prevent attacks that could lead to armed conflict and maintain international stability.

The study of cyberattacks as triggers of conflicts between countries highlights how threats in cyberspace can serve as a catalyst for political and military tensions between countries. In an increasingly connected global context, cyberattacks not only target critical infrastructure, but can also be used to damage a country's reputation, disrupt the electoral process, and spread disinformation, all of which can worsen relations between countries. For example, cyberattacks carried out against electoral systems in certain countries can cast doubt on the integrity of democracy, spark protests, and increase tensions between the countries involved. Additionally, due to the difficulty in identifying perpetrators and proving the involvement of a particular country, cyberattacks often create uncertainty that can lead to miscalculations and the escalation of unwanted conflicts. Countries that feel threatened by such attacks may feel the need to respond in an aggressive way, either through cyber counterattacks or through more conventional military action. The impact of these dynamics is not only limited to the countries involved, but can also create a domino effect in the wider region, disrupting regional stability and worsening international relations. Therefore, it is important for countries to strengthen cooperation in cybersecurity, establish clear norms for behavior in cyberspace, and develop mechanisms for conflict resolution that can prevent cyberattacks from escalating into larger armed conflicts.

### **Cambodia-Thailand Border Conflict**

The conflict between Cambodia and Thailand has been going on for decades, sparked by complex territorial disputes, especially related to the historic site of Preah Vihear Temple. Although the International Court of Justice ruled in 1962 that the shrine belonged to Cambodia, tensions remained, fueled by conflicting territorial claims. These tensions are often exacerbated by domestic political factors, where leaders in both countries sometimes use nationalistic sentiments to boost their public support. The situation is further complicated by foreign intervention, including the influence of major countries such as China and the US, which could exacerbate tensions. In July 2025, the tensions exploded into armed clashes along the border, with both sides accusing each other of territorial violations. These clashes involved artillery fire and counterattacks that caused losses on the part of the military and civilians. The impact of this conflict is very serious, resulting in refugees and humanitarian crises in border areas, as well as disrupting trade and economic relations between the two countries, which in turn affects local and regional economies. Tensions between Cambodia and Thailand also have the

potential to disrupt stability in Southeast Asia, with the risk of wider conflict if the situation is not managed properly. Despite some diplomatic efforts to ease tensions, a long-term settlement remains elusive, as dialogue between the two governments is often hampered by strong nationalism and mistrust. Therefore, this conflict is an example of how territorial disputes, political factors, and nationalism can trigger tensions between countries, and shows the need for constructive dialogue and commitment from both sides to seek a sustainable peaceful solution. The resolution of the long-term conflict between Cambodia and Thailand is hampered by several interrelated factors. First, the protracted territorial dispute, particularly over the Preah Vihear Temple, created constant tensions that were difficult to resolve. Although the International Court of Justice had ruled in 1962, conflicting territorial claims remained a source of conflict. In addition, the high nationalism sentiments in both countries are often used by political leaders to rally support, exacerbate tensions and reduce the likelihood of constructive dialogue. Volatile domestic politics can also distract leaders from resolving conflicts, prompting them to take military action as a way to show strength. The distrust between the two governments further complicates the negotiations, as each side is suspicious of each other's intentions and commitments. Foreign intervention, including the influence of large states, can affect local dynamics by providing support to one side or exacerbating existing tensions. In addition, the humanitarian impacts of conflicts, such as refugees and food crises, often distract from peace settlement efforts. Cultural and historical differences between the two countries also add to the complexity of the conflict, making it more difficult to find common ground. Finally, economic interests, such as dependence on certain resources in the disputed area, can trigger deeper disputes and hinder long-term resolution. With all these factors, conflict resolution is a major challenge that requires collaborative efforts and a strong commitment from both sides to create sustainable solutions.

Foreign intervention plays an important role in the Cambodia-Thailand conflict in complex and diverse ways. First, major countries such as China and the United States have strategic interests in the Southeast Asian region, which can affect the dynamics of conflict. For example, China often provides political and economic support to Cambodia, while the U.S. tends to be more supportive of Thailand, creating deeper tensions between the two countries. In addition, foreign intervention can exacerbate tensions by providing weapons or military support to either side, which can escalate aggression and prolong the conflict. The involvement of international organizations, such as ASEAN, is also often hampered by differences of interest among its members, making it difficult to reach agreement on a peaceful settlement. Furthermore, foreign intervention can affect public perception and nationalism in both countries, where external support can be used by leaders to stir up national sentiment, thus adding to the challenges in reaching resolutions. Thus, foreign intervention affects not only military and political aspects, but also social and economic, making the resolution of the Cambodian-Thai conflict increasingly difficult to achieve. The support of China and the United States in the Cambodia-Thailand conflict plays a significant and complex role, influencing the political, economic, and military dynamics in the region. China has been Cambodia's main partner, providing substantial economic assistance, including major infrastructure projects that increase Cambodia's dependence on Beijing. This not only strengthens Cambodia's political position in the face of Thailand, but also increases their confidence to take a firmer stance on territorial disputes. In addition, China's political support in various international forums gives

legitimacy to Cambodia's territorial claims, while military assistance in the form of training and equipment enhances Cambodia's defense capabilities, encouraging them to be defensive against potential threats from Thailand. On the other hand, the United States has strong military ties with Thailand, including joint military exercises and the provision of arms assistance that strengthens Thailand's position as well as provides a strategic advantage in conflicts. The U.S. diplomatic support also emphasizes the importance of regional stability and security, which gives Thailand legitimacy in its efforts to defend its territorial claims. In addition, U.S. influence in Thailand's domestic policy through aid and investment could influence the way Thailand handles conflicts, potentially prompting them to take a more aggressive stance. Overall, the support of these two great powers creates deeper tensions between Cambodia and Thailand, where each side feels supported. This has the potential to prolong conflicts, reduce the likelihood of peaceful dialogue, and create instability in the Southeast Asian region. With the support of foreign powers, the two countries may be more inclined to maintain an aggressive stance rather than seek a diplomatic resolution, complicating the long-term resolution of the long-running conflict and increasing the risk of broader tensions in the region.

### **International Treaties and Diplomacy**

Evaluations of treaties such as the Iran Nuclear Deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), illustrate how diplomacy can be an important tool in reducing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, while also highlighting the challenges faced in its implementation. The agreement, signed in 2015, aims to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for a reduction in economic sanctions, and is expected to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in an already vulnerable region. However, after the United States' withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 under President Trump's administration, the situation worsened, and Iran began to violate its commitments. The impact of these changes not only disrupts Iran's stability, but also increases tensions between Iran and Gulf states worried about Tehran's nuclear ambitions. The uncertainty resulting from these tensions creates opportunities for regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, to strengthen their alliances and increase military spending, potentially triggering an arms race in the region. In addition, uncertainty over the future of Iran's nuclear program has worsened relations between major powers, changed power dynamics in the Middle East, and created new challenges to regional security. Therefore, a careful evaluation of agreements such as the JCPOA is essential, not only to understand their direct effects on Iran, but also to assess their impact on long-term stability in the Middle East and broader international relations. Diplomatic efforts to update or replace these agreements should take into account the various interests and concerns that exist, in order to create a more effective framework to prevent conflict and promote peace in the region.

A case study of the geopolitical conflict between the United States and Iran in 2025 shows a significant increase in tensions after failed diplomacy efforts to address the issue of Iran's nuclear program. As negotiations to renew the nuclear deal (JCPOA) hit a stalemate, Israel launched targeted airstrikes against Iran's nuclear facilities in May 2025, prompting a strong reaction from Tehran. Iran responded with a counterattack that included launching missiles at U.S. military bases in the Gulf region, killing a number of military personnel. This action prompted the United States to deploy more troops and strengthen its presence in the Middle East, creating an atmosphere of high tension that almost triggered an open armed



conflict. In addition to the historical factors underlying the poor relations between the two countries, such as the 1953 coup and the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the shift in regional alliances is also an important factor, with Iran getting closer to powers such as Russia and China. In this context, the conflict in 2025 will not only have an impact on bilateral relations, but will also affect regional stability, disrupt global energy markets, and trigger concerns about the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Finally, the situation emphasizes the importance of sustained diplomacy and multilateral engagement to defuse tensions and seek peaceful solutions that can prevent further conflicts in the future.

The role of diplomacy in preventing large-scale conflict is crucial, especially in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Diplomacy serves as a bridge to overcome differences between countries, create dialogue, and build trust among leaders. Through negotiation, mediation, and dispute resolution, diplomacy can identify the root causes of conflict and seek mutually beneficial solutions, thus avoiding escalation that could lead to open war. Historical examples show that many major conflicts can be avoided through effective diplomatic efforts, such as the peace treaties signed after World Wars I and II, which changed the way countries interacted and managed conflicts. In addition, diplomacy also plays an important role in building strategic alliances and multilateral cooperation, which not only reduces tensions between countries, but also creates international norms that encourage peaceful settlements. In the modern context, new challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and migration require innovative diplomatic approaches to create global cooperation. By building strong and respectful relationships, diplomacy can help create a more stable and secure environment, reduce the likelihood of large-scale conflicts, and promote peace and sustainable development around the world. Therefore, investment in diplomacy and dialogue is essential to avoid confrontation and build a more harmonious future for all.

### **Implications And Mitigation Strategies**

*The implications of the role of international diplomacy* in the context of current geopolitical dynamics are significant, especially in an effort to prevent the potential for a third world war. In an environment characterized by great power competition, as seen between the United States, China, and Russia, diplomacy is becoming a key tool for defusing tensions and creating constructive channels of communication. The uncertainty arising from regional conflicts, trade issues, and the nuclear arms race add to the complexity of the global situation, fueling fears of a possible escalation that could escalate into a large-scale conflict. Effective mitigation strategies should therefore involve more intensive diplomatic efforts, including open dialogue, mediation in conflicts, as well as the establishment of international forums that can facilitate the exchange of ideas and problem-solving. In addition, building alliances between countries based on common interests and international norms is also important to create stability. The strengthening of multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, can serve as a platform for resolving disputes peacefully and encourage countries to commit to constructive resolutions. In this regard, diplomacy focuses not only on resolving existing conflicts, but also on prevention through building trust and strengthening cooperation on global issues, such as climate change and cybersecurity. As such, the role of international diplomacy

in addressing these complex geopolitical dynamics is critical to ensuring that we can avoid a third world war and build a more peaceful and stable future for humanity.

*The implications of international organizations'* efforts to resolve conflicts in today's geopolitical dynamics are also significant, especially given the potential for a third world war that could arise from rising tensions between major powers. Organizations such as the United Nations (UN), NATO, and the European Union play an important role in mediation and conflict resolution, acting as a platform for dialogue and negotiation among hostile countries. Through resolutions, peacekeeping missions, and development programs, the international organization seeks to address the root causes of conflict, such as injustice, economic inequality, and human rights violations. Effective mitigation strategies involve a multidimensional approach, where preventive diplomacy and timely intervention can reduce the risk of conflict escalation. In addition, strengthening regional and global cooperation on security, economic, and environmental issues can help create long-term stability. For example, through open dialogue and joint development initiatives, countries can build trust and reduce tensions that often lead to armed conflict. The use of information and communication technologies can also help in facilitating transparency and accountability between countries, thereby reducing misperceptions that can trigger conflicts. In this context, it is important for international organizations to continue to adapt to new challenges and engage all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, in an effort to create sustainable peace. By integrating various approaches and strategies, international organizations can contribute significantly to preventing large-scale conflicts and ensuring that the world remains on the path to stability and peace.

*The implications of the strategy* to prevent conflict in today's geopolitical dynamics are also very important, especially given the rising tensions between major powers that could lead to a potential third world war. In this context, a comprehensive preventive approach is needed, which includes active diplomacy, multilateral dialogue, and the strengthening of international norms. One key strategy is to build transparent communication channels between countries, which can help reduce misperceptions and prevent miscalculations that often trigger conflicts. In addition, investing in inclusive economic and development cooperation can create interdependence that reduces the incentive for conflict. The implementation of educational programs and cultural exchanges can also play an important role in building understanding and tolerance between countries, thereby creating a more peaceful environment. The strengthening of international institutions, such as the United Nations, to be mediators in disputes and conflicts is also very important, where they can offer a platform for negotiations and peaceful resolution. In addition, a proactive approach to addressing global issues such as climate change, terrorism, and cybersecurity can serve as a barrier to potential conflict, by creating stronger international cooperation. By integrating these mitigation strategies, as well as involving all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, the world can build better resilience to conflict and ensure that the potential for a third world war can be avoided through sustained collective efforts.

*The implications of a proactive approach* in diplomacy and international cooperation in geopolitical dynamics are also crucial to prevent a potential third world war that could arise from tensions between major powers. In an increasingly complex era of globalization, this approach requires countries to not only react to existing conflicts, but also to take preventive

measures that can reduce the risk of unnecessary tensions. One effective mitigation strategy is to strengthen multilateral dialogue through international forums, where countries can share perspectives, discuss sensitive issues, and seek joint solutions. In addition, cooperation in the economic field, such as mutually beneficial trade agreements, can create positive dependency and reduce the likelihood of armed conflict. A proactive approach also includes strengthening the capacity of international organizations, such as the United Nations and ASEAN, to act as mediators in disputes and provide support in peaceful settlements. Education programs and cultural exchanges can strengthen ties between countries and build a better sense of mutual understanding, thereby reducing the potential for identity-based conflicts. In the face of global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and migration, strong international collaboration is indispensable to create sustainable solutions. By integrating these strategies, as well as involving a wide range of stakeholders, a proactive approach in diplomacy and international cooperation can play a key role in creating long-term stability and preventing the occurrence of a third world war.

An analysis of the findings regarding the relationship between the various identified factors and potential conflicts in geopolitical dynamics shows that a number of elements interact with each other and exacerbate tensions that could lead to a third world war. First, economic injustice and social inequality in different countries are often triggers for widespread discontent, creating fertile conditions for radicalization and armed conflict. In addition, competition for natural resources, such as water and energy, is intensifying amid climate change that threatens the availability of these resources. Another significant factor is rising nationalism, which can trigger conflicts between competing nations, especially when it comes to issues of identity and sovereignty. Tensions between major powers, such as the United States, China, and Russia, also add a layer of complexity, where any action and reaction from one country can trigger a response from another, creating a cycle of tension that is difficult to stop. In addition, the deployment of advanced technologies, such as cyberweapons and autonomous weapon systems, can change the way conflicts occur and increase the risk of miscalculations. By understanding the relationship between these factors, policymakers can design more effective mitigation strategies, which not only target the resolution of existing conflicts, but also focus on prevention through international cooperation and proactive diplomacy. This is critical to creating long-term stability and reducing the likelihood of large-scale conflicts in the future.

The policy implications resulting from the analysis of geopolitical dynamics and the potential for a third world war are of great importance for policymakers to consider, especially in formulating effective strategies to prevent large-scale conflicts. Key recommendations include the need for a stronger multilateral approach to diplomacy, where countries should actively collaborate through international organizations to create norms that support peaceful settlements. Policymakers should strengthen dialogue and mediation mechanisms, as well as increase the capacity of international institutions such as the United Nations to deal with disputes quickly and effectively. In addition, investing in mutually beneficial economic cooperation can create positive dependency among countries, thereby reducing the incentive to conflict. An integrated plan of action to address global issues such as climate change, migration, and cybersecurity should also be a priority, as these challenges can exacerbate

existing tensions. In addition, it is important for policymakers to educate the public on the importance of tolerance and international cooperation, in order to reduce extreme nationalist sentiment. In addition, strengthening the collective defense system and increasing transparency in military programs can help build trust between countries, reducing the risk of misunderstandings that could lead to conflict. By adopting these recommendations, policymakers can not only reduce the risk of a third world war, but also contribute to the creation of a more stable and peaceful world.

## CONCLUSION

The text underscores the heightened risk of a third world war stemming from escalating tensions among major powers like the United States, China, and Russia, fueled by territorial disputes, resource and technological competition, nuclear and advanced weapons proliferation, military alliances, economic instability, climate-induced migration and scarcity, cyber warfare, and disinformation. Despite diplomatic progress, these interconnected factors amplify mistrust and conflict potential, emphasizing the urgent need for constructive diplomacy, clear communication, and robust multilateral cooperation to mitigate tensions and preserve global stability. For future research, scholars could develop predictive models integrating AI-driven simulations of climate-resource interactions with geopolitical scenarios to forecast escalation pathways and evaluate preventive interventions.

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